

*Submission on the second periodic report of Syria to the United Nations  
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women  
May 21, 2014*

We write in advance of the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and its review of the Syrian Arab Republic to highlight areas of concern regarding the Syrian Arab Republic government's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This submission addresses Articles 2, 3, and 5 of the Convention, with reference to Articles 10 through 14. Additionally, the submission is based on General Recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. The submission focuses on detention of and violence against women and support for women disproportionately affected by the conflict, all of which were previously highlighted by the Committee in its list of issues and questions in relation to the second periodic report of the Syrian Arab Republic and the replies of the Syrian Arab Republic to this list of issues and questions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, "List of Issues and Questions in Relation to the Second Periodic Report of the Syrian Arab Republic," CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2, October 28, 2013, [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FSYR%2FQ%2F2&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FSYR%2FQ%2F2&Lang=en) (accessed May 9, 2014); Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, "List of Issues and Questions in Relation to the Second Periodic Report of the Syrian Arab Republic: Replies of the Syrian Arab Republic," CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2/Add.1, January 22, 2014, [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FSYR%2FQ%2F2%2FAdd.1&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FSYR%2FQ%2F2%2FAdd.1&Lang=en) (accessed May 9, 2014).

The submission is based on Human Rights Watch research conducted in Iraqi Kurdistan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey between March 2012 and April 2014. The violations documented took place between April 2011 and October 2013. In interviews with over 140 refugees from 12 governorates of Syria, as well as 44 service providers and representatives of civil society and international humanitarian agencies, Human Rights Watch documented sexual and physical assault, torture and harassment of women, including women arbitrarily detained by government forces. In addition, Human Rights Watch documented the impact on women of indiscriminate attacks against civilians by government forces. While Human Rights Watch has also documented abuses by non-state armed groups in Syria, this submission will focus on violations by government and pro-government forces.<sup>2</sup>

Our findings reveal critical concerns about treatment of female activists, detainees and conflict-affected women in the Syrian Arab Republic by government and pro-government forces, which we encourage the Committee to address in its review of the State party.

### *Special Note on General Recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations<sup>3</sup>*

Since anti-government demonstrations began in Syria in March 2011, armed conflict between government and anti-government has severely impacted civilians in much of the country. The unlawful conduct of hostilities by

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<sup>2</sup>See Human Rights Watch, "You Can Still See Their Blood": Executions, Indiscriminate Shootings, and Hostage Taking by Opposition Forces in Latakia Countryside, October 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/10/10/you-can-still-see-their-blood>; "Syria: Extremists Restricting Women's Rights," Human Rights Watch news release, January 13, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/13/syria-extremists-restricting-women-s-rights>.

<sup>3</sup>UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Comment 30, Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations (November 1, 2013), Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted, UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/30, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/GComments/CEDAW.C.CG.30.pdf>

parties to the conflict has resulted in high numbers of civilian deaths and displacement, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearances.<sup>4</sup> As outlined in general recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, the State party is obligated to uphold the Convention during times of conflict, including by taking measures to ensure prevention of and accountability for human rights abuses, particularly gender-based violence, at the hands of both state and non-state actors.<sup>5</sup> General recommendation 30 notes the complementarity of the Convention and international humanitarian, refugee and criminal law, and that this complementarity protects women's rights in times of armed conflict.<sup>6</sup> As such, the government of the Syrian Arab Republic is obliged to demonstrate efforts to guarantee women's rights and address abuses of women's rights in its territory, even in conflict.

### **Articles 2, 5 and 12: Violence against Women by Government Forces**

The State party recognized its obligation to protect women from violence in its reply to the Committee's list of issues and questions in relation to the Syrian

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<sup>4</sup> See Human Rights Watch, "You Can Still See Their Blood"; "By All Means Necessary!" Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes Against Humanity in Syria, December 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2011/12/15/all-means-necessary-0>; *In Cold Blood: Summary Executions by Syrian Security Forces and Pro-Government Militias*, April 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2012/04/09/cold-blood-0>; *Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground Prisons since March 2011*, July 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2012/07/03/torture-archipelago-0>; *Death from the Skies: Deliberate and Indiscriminate Air Strikes on Civilians*, April 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/04/10/death-skies>; "No One's Left": Summary Executions by Syrian Forces in al-Bayda and Baniyas, September 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/09/13/no-one-s-left-0>; *Razed to the Ground: Syria's Unlawful Neighborhood Demolitions in 2012-2013*, January 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/01/30/razed-ground-0>; Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, "Without a Trace: Enforced Disappearances in Syria," Conference Room Paper (December 19, 2013), <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoSyria/ThematicPaperEDI%20Syria.pdf> (accessed May 6, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> CEDAW, CEDAW/C/GC/30, paras. 15, 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 19-20.

Arab Republic's second periodic report.<sup>7</sup> However, Human Rights Watch research has found ongoing violence against women by Syrian government and pro-government forces. Women reported physical abuse, including beatings with pipes and weapons, during home raids by security forces. Eight women told Human Rights Watch that they were abused or detained by security forces during targeted searches for or attempted arrests of male relatives identified by the government as opposition supporters. Shayma, 20, (all names are pseudonyms) said that government forces beat her on the head and neck with metal rods in August 2012 when they raided her home in Daraa in search of her husband and brothers, alleged supporters of the armed anti-government Free Syrian Army. She suffered long-term memory loss, confusion and fatigue due to her injuries.

Government and pro-government forces have also targeted female activists for abuse. Seventeen female activists told Human Rights Watch that government forces physically assaulted them during peaceful demonstrations or in government-operated detention facilities. Maryam, 27, described an attack on a peaceful demonstration by security forces in Midan, Damascus, in August 2011. Maryam ran away, but when a wall blocked her path, a member of the security forces caught her and began beating her on her back. A friend intervened, claiming that Maryam had not been at the demonstration and was simply passing by, and the man released her.

Sixteen women who had been detained told Human Rights Watch that security forces subjected them to severe physical abuse and torture, including electric shock, *shabeh* (hanging the victim from the ceiling by the wrists so that the feet are completely suspended or barely touching the ground), *dulab* (forcing the victim to bend at the waist and place her head, neck, legs and sometimes arms inside a car tire so that she is immobilized and cannot protect herself from ensuing beatings) and *falaga* (beating the victim with sticks, batons, or whips on the soles of the feet). Human Rights Watch has documented systematic use of these and other forms of torture in 27 government-run detention facilities.<sup>8</sup> Fatima, 23, was detained at the al-Zahiriyyah police station in Aleppo in June 2012 after providing medical

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<sup>7</sup> Government of Syrian Arab Republic, CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2/Add.1, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> See Human Rights Watch, *Torture Archipelago*.

relief to civilians. Police used electric shock in an effort to force her to reveal names of anti-government activists:

*It felt like blood exploding in my mind. It took me 10 minutes to breathe after that. They said, "Ok, that is just a sample - talk." I said, "I have nothing to say." They gave me a second shock. Once they took off the blindfold and showed me the voltage machine; they were making it higher. "Do you want to talk or not?" I was silent. They gave me a third shock.*

Several former detainees described beatings, often for hours at a time and repeatedly over the course of several days, weeks or months. Women said that security forces slapped and hit them, beat them with electric cords, pulled them by the hair, tied their hands behind their backs in stress positions for lengthy periods of time and threatened to crush their fingers with pliers.

Nine of the 17 female detainees Human Rights Watch interviewed reported sexual harassment or assault in government detention facilities; four reported being raped, some on multiple occasions. Experiences of sexual violence ranged from sexual touching, including groping of breasts, to vaginal and oral rape. Some women said that members of the security forces sexually harassed them by threatening rape, asking detailed questions about their sexual histories, and forcing them to undress in front of men. Amal, 19, said that an interrogator and two security officers raped her while she was detained at the Military Intelligence Branch in Tartous in October 2012:

*[The first rape] lasted for a half hour or more. [The interrogator] dressed and went out. I was on the floor. The next person came. It was a half hour more. [He] said to everyone outside, "Come and see." [With] the third one, the door was open. It was in front of whoever was in the corridor.<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> See "Syria: Detention and Abuse of Female Activists," Human Rights Watch news release, June 24, 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/24/syria-detention-and-abuse-female-activists>.

In its reply to the Committee's list of issues and questions, the State party says that employees of its military, police and law enforcement units are bound by legal standards that prohibit them from engaging in abuse and torture and that require perpetrators of such acts to be held accountable.<sup>10</sup> Testimony from Human Rights Watch interviewees indicates that not only have members of government forces committed such violations, but that those who do are not held to account. None of the women interviewed by Human Rights Watch who suffered abuse said that she had any indication that the perpetrators were investigated or significantly disciplined for their actions. Maysa, 30, told Human Rights Watch that she was beaten, threatened with torture, and raped on two separate occasions by a security officer in June 2012 while detained in the Air Force Intelligence Branch in Mezze, Damascus. She reported the first rape to a commanding officer who was interrogating her. He slapped the perpetrator, but Maysa said that the same attacker raped her again the following evening. Though the perpetrator was transferred from the facility after Maysa identified him again, a prison guard at the same branch forced Maysa to perform oral sex on him twice in July 2012. He assaulted Maysa in a corridor out of view of security cameras, which ostensibly monitor behavior and help protect detainees from abuse. By failing to take sufficient measures to stop abusive behavior by its security forces or hold those who commit such abuses accountable, the government of the Syrian Arab Republic neglected to actively prevent or address violence against women by its own agents and allowed such practices to continue with impunity.

In its initial list of issues and questions in relation to the second periodic report of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Committee requested that the State party detail measures taken to ensure that female survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) access essential medical and psychological care, as well as economic and social support.<sup>11</sup> The State party replied that survivors of GBV

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<sup>10</sup> The State party's reply states that its army, police and law enforcement personnel "are subject to professional, behavioural and ethical codes of conduct that do not permit and do not tolerate any infractions or violations, whatever their nature; any such infraction or violation is dealt with in accordance with the law, which provides that every individual is accountable for his actions" (Government of Syrian Arab Republic, CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2/Add.1, p. 5).

<sup>11</sup> CEDAW, CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2, para. 12.

may seek shelter and assistance, including health and psychosocial services, in “care centres” run by the Ministry of Social Affairs or community organizations.<sup>12</sup> Survivors told Human Rights Watch that they did not receive any of the medical and psychosocial services that are critical for survivors of sexual violence. While social stigma may prevent survivors of sexual violence from accessing available services, women told Human Rights Watch that they were not aware of any such services or that services were no longer functioning. Women in detention faced clear obstacles to accessing services; they said that even the most basic medical care was often unavailable.

The State party said that it continues to provide free medical care to all citizens, including health and mental health services at shelters for the displaced and in mobile clinics.<sup>13</sup> Yet interviewees told Human Rights Watch that lack of functional services or access to services impacted survivors of all forms of violence, including physical abuse and torture inside and outside of detention. Even where services may have been operational, women reported that insecurity would prevent them from seeking assistance. The risk of death or injury from shelling, bombings and sniper attacks, and the perceived risk of sexual assault by armed groups, often limited women’s mobility.

The Syrian government has also carried out repeated indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population through the use of artillery, air power, and chemical weapons.<sup>14</sup> In 2013 alone, the Syrian monitoring group Violations

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<sup>12</sup> Government of Syrian Arab Republic, CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2/Add.1, p 13.

<sup>13</sup> Government of Syrian Arab Republic, CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2/Add.1, pp. 20-21.

<sup>14</sup> See Human Rights Watch, *Death from the Skies; Attacks on Ghouta: Analysis of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria*, September 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/09/10/attacks-ghouta-0>; “Syria: Strong Evidence Government Used Chemicals as a Weapon,” Human Rights Watch news release, May 13, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/13/syria-strong-evidence-government-used-chemicals-weapon> “Syria: New Barrel Bombs Hit Aleppo,” Human Rights Watch news release, April 29, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/28/syria-new-barrel-bombs-hit-aleppo>; “Syria: Unlawful Air Attacks Terrorize Aleppo,” Human Rights Watch news release, March 24, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/24/syria-unlawful-air-attacks-terrorize-aleppo>; “Syria: New Deadly Cluster Munition Attacks,” Human Rights

Documentation Center reported over 34,000 deaths due to chemical weapons, shelling, and barrel bombings.<sup>15</sup> Asma, 25, suffered severe injuries in August 2012 when a fighter jet bombed a block of homes in Azaz, killing over 40 civilians and wounding over 100 more. The likely targets were two nearby Free Syrian Army facilities.<sup>16</sup> Asma's husband and two of her four children, ages 9 and 3, were killed in the attack. When Asma was freed from the rubble, a gaping wound across her abdomen exposed her internal organs. She spent three months in the hospital in Gaziantep, Turkey, including several weeks in intensive care.

Human Rights Watch encourages the Committee to ask the State party questions about and recommend that the State party fully implement the following:

- The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should establish, implement, and disclose a plan of action outlining measures to be taken to end abuse, including harassment and physical and sexual violence, by members of government forces and pro-government militias against women outside of detention, including for peaceful activism or due to their alleged political affiliation or that of their friends or relatives. The government's plan of action should include clear measures to hold perpetrators of these abuses to account.
- The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should establish and disclose a plan of action outlining measures to be taken to end abuse, including harassment, ill treatment, torture, sexual violence, and denial of medical services to women in detention. The plan of action should include clear measures to hold perpetrators of these abuses to account.

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Watch news release , February 19, 2014,

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/02/18/syria-new-deadly-cluster-munition-attacks>.

<sup>15</sup> Violations Documentation Center, "The Yearly Report on the Martyrs of Dignity's Revolution 2013," April 2014, <http://www.vdc-sy.info/index.php/en/reports/1396786562#.U2v1FoFdWSo> (accessed 8 May 2014).

<sup>16</sup> See "Syria: Fighter Jet Bombing Kills Over 40 Civilians," Human Rights Watch news release, August 16, 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/08/16/syria-fighter-jet-bombing-kills-over-40-civilians>.

- The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should make public the professional, behavioral and ethical codes of conduct to which its army, police and law enforcement personnel are held. The government should establish and disclose a plan of action to enforce adherence to these codes by members of forces under its control, and to ensure investigation of and disciplinary action against those who do not abide by these codes.
- The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should establish and disclose a plan of action ensuring that survivors of physical abuse, torture and sexual violence, particularly those in detention or other government-operated facilities, have access to vital and comprehensive services, including medical and psycho-social care.

### **Articles 2 and 15: Arbitrary Detention and Access to Justice**

Like their male counterparts, female activists have been subject to arbitrary arrest and detention by government forces in Syria. Thirteen interviewees told Human Rights Watch that they were arbitrarily detained by government forces or pro-government militias for peaceful activism, offering medical care to opposition fighters, and providing humanitarian aid to civilians. Some were arbitrarily detained for alleged anti-government activities of male relatives.

Detainees interviewed by Human Rights Watch consistently reported that they were denied due process. Many former detainees told Human Rights Watch that they were not informed of charges against them at the time of detention. They were not granted access to a lawyer or, in most cases, permitted visits from family members. Often they were held in detention for months before being informed of any charges or brought before a court; some had no contact with a lawyer, judge or court during the entire length of their detention and were never informed of the grounds on which they were being held. Those who went before a judge said that they were not given an opportunity to refute allegations against them, nor was clear evidence presented to support the charges. Charges typically included “terrorism” and assisting opposition fighters or groups.

The government of the Syrian Arab Republic enacted a sweeping Counterterrorism Law (Law No. 19) in July 2012 whose overbroad definition of “terrorism” allows for the arrest and conviction of peaceful activists and other civilians for allegedly aiding terrorists. Charges brought under the guise of countering violent militancy actually amount to such acts as distributing humanitarian aid, participating in peaceful protests, and documenting human rights abuses.<sup>17</sup> To oversee these cases, the government also enacted a law establishing a Counterterrorism Court (Law No. 22), but the Court is not required to adhere to standard trial procedures as per international law (Law No. 22, Article 7). According to Legislative Decree 55, enacted by the government of the Syrian Arab Republic on April 21, 2011, a person may be held for a maximum of 60 days without charge for crimes including terrorism offenses. In many instances, however, former detainees told Human Rights Watch that they were held for periods of time that significantly exceeded the 60-day limit.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the Committee’s request for detailed information about female detainees, the State party failed to provide such information in its reply.<sup>19</sup> The State party writes that “deliberate attempts are being made in certain quarters to inflate the numbers of women being held in detention to exploit the issue for political purposes.”<sup>20</sup> However, the State party has continued to deny access to detention facilities by internationally recognized independent monitors, thereby prohibiting clarity on numbers of detainees and conditions of detention. In its reply, the State party also says that it will appoint a lawyer to any accused woman who has not retained one, yet Human Rights Watch’s interviews with former detainees indicate that women in detention

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<sup>17</sup> See “Syria: Counterterrorism Court Used to Stifle Dissent,” Human Rights Watch news release, June 25, 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/25/syria-counterterrorism-court-used-stifle-dissent>; Human Rights Watch, *Lost Inside Syria’s Black Hole for Doing Their Jobs*, “Courts”, video slide show, August 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/lost-in-syrias-black-hole>.

<sup>18</sup> See Human Rights Watch, “Syria: Detention and Abuse of Female Activists”; *Lost Inside Syria’s Black Hole for Doing Their Jobs*.

<sup>19</sup> CEDAW, CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2, para. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Government of Syrian Arab Republic, CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2/Add.1, p. 8.

were typically neither permitted access to a lawyer of their choice nor appointed one by the state.<sup>21</sup>

Further, the State party's response indicates that family members have a right to information about the detainee's location and grounds for her arrest.<sup>22</sup> Women who have been detained by the State party told Human Rights Watch that, in most cases, they were not permitted contact with family members nor were family members informed of their whereabouts or the grounds for their detention. Dima, 52, was detained in the Air Force Intelligence Directorate in Damascus from March to October 2012. She said that when her mother and sister inquired about her at the facility, they were told that Dima was not there and no women were being held there.

Human Rights Watch encourages the Committee to ask the State party questions about and recommend that the State party fully implement the following:

- The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should immediately cease arbitrary detentions of civilians and release all arbitrarily-held detainees, including those held for non-violent opposition to the government, human rights activism and humanitarian work.
- The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should modify its laws on counterterrorism to meet the State party's obligations under international law, including by revising its overbroad definition of "terrorism" and referring cases to courts that respect international fair trial standards.
- The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should respect its obligation to ensure due process for all detainees, including access to

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> The State's party's reply states that "any citizen may go to the Ministry of Justice to enquire about a member of his or her family (man or woman) who is being held or detained. The Ministry responds to every such enquiry within 15 days, providing information about the place of detention and reasons for the arrest of the person in question, if his or her whereabouts are known" (Government of Syrian Arab Republic, CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2/Add.1, p. 8).

and provision of lawyers to detainees, and uphold detainees' right to a fair and speedy trial.

- The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should maintain and disclose records with detailed information about all detainees, including number of detainees disaggregated by age, sex, and location as well as the grounds for detention, charges against the detainee, court proceedings, and sentencing. Such information should be readily available to concerned parties, including detainees' family members.
- The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should grant internationally recognized independent monitors access to all detention facilities, both official and unofficial, in the territory of Syria.

### **Articles 2, 3, 10, 11, 13 and 14: Support for Civilian Women in Conflict**

In Syria, violations such as indiscriminate attacks in civilian-populated areas impact women significantly. Women typically become caretakers for family members who are injured or living with conflict-inflicted disabilities. They also become *de facto* household heads in such cases, or when faced with male family members' death or detention. More and more, women are the primary or sole provider for their families. The State party acknowledges the need for increased support of female-headed households in its reply to the Committee and says that it has established programs to support Syrian women, and female household heads in particular, through income-generation projects and vocational training as well as cash assistance and material grants.<sup>23</sup> Human Rights Watch interviewed 29 female household heads, including widows, family members of the missing and detained, and relatives of men with injuries or disabilities resulting from the conflict. None of these women, even those who lived in government-held areas, had received any support from the government of the Syrian Arab Republic, whether financial, vocational, or otherwise. Women told Human Rights Watch that they relied on extended family for financial support; in many cases, women reported that they became refugees at least in part due to financial insecurity or lack of employment opportunities.

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<sup>23</sup> Government of Syrian Arab Republic, CEDAW/C/SYR/Q/2/Add.1, p. 3.

Civilians also suffer due to government restrictions on humanitarian operations. The government of the Syrian Arab Republic has blocked access to humanitarian aid both across borders and to areas under siege, resulting in widespread malnutrition and, in some cases, death.<sup>24</sup> Khalida, 24, was living in the Yarmouk Palestinian camp in Damascus, an area besieged by the government since December 2012. She said that when the United Nations Relief and Works Administration (UNRWA) was finally permitted to distribute food in January 2014, people were desperate. “An old woman fell and people were stepping on her because they were trying to get food. I helped her up. She got up and just pushed me away and ran for the food,” Khalida said.

Despite the passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2139 (2014), which demands lifting of sieges and facilitation of cross-border humanitarian aid, the government of the Syrian Arab Republic has continued to restrict aid delivery through border crossings held by non-state armed groups and to civilians in areas under government siege.<sup>25</sup> These actions violate international humanitarian law, which requires all parties to a conflict to allow and facilitate rapid, unimpeded passage of humanitarian aid to civilians at risk, including in areas under siege.<sup>26</sup>

Human Rights Watch encourages the Committee to ask the State party questions about and recommend that the State party fully implement the following:

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<sup>24</sup> See “Syria: Defying Security Council on Aid Access,” Human Rights Watch news release, March 28, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/28/syria-defying-security-council-aid-access>.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2139 (2014), S/RES/2139 (2014), adopted February 22, 2014, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2139> (accessed May 12, 2014); Human Rights Watch, “Syria: Defying Security Council on Aid Access”; United Nations Security Council, “Implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014): Report of the Secretary-General,” S/2014/295, April 23, 2014, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/208](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/208) (accessed May 12, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> See International Committee of the Red Cross, *Customary International Humanitarian Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), rules 53 to 56.

- *The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should provide detailed information on selection criteria and processes to determine beneficiaries of government-funded assistance to vulnerable populations, including female-headed households.*
- *The government of the Syrian Arab Republic should ensure that women from all geographic areas and social, religious and economic groups have access to government-funded support for vulnerable women, including female-headed households. The government should disclose how and by whom beneficiaries of such assistance are determined.*
- *To ensure compliance with Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), the government of the Syrian Arab Republic should facilitate cross-border and internal aid operations through the most direct routes possible, including via borders held by non-state armed groups, and immediately permit access to all civilian populations by humanitarian aid operations as well as unimpeded civilian entry and exit to and from these areas.*