



The [Human Rights Council](#) this morning opened its [thirty-seventh session](#) , hearing addresses by António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations and Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

UN SG António Guterres welcomed the adoption of a [resolution](#) by the [Security Council](#) demanding a cessation of hostilities throughout Syria for at least 30 days.

“But Security Council resolutions are only meaningful if they are effectively implemented”, he emphasized. “And that is why I expect the resolution to be immediately implemented and sustained, particularly to ensure the immediate, safe, unimpeded and sustained delivery of humanitarian aid and services, the evacuation of the critically sick and the wounded and the alleviation of the suffering of the Syrian people. As you know, the United Nations is ready to do its part.”

The Secretary-General also singled out the plight of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, noting that they were one of the most discriminated against populations in the world.

The High Commissioner of Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein [reminded](#) the Council of the plight not only of Eastern Ghouta, but also the other besieged areas in Syria; the humanitarian disasters of Ituri and the Kasais in the DRC; Taiz in Yemen; Burundi; and Northern Rakhine in Myanmar as they “have become some of the most prolific slaughterhouses of humans in recent times ---. And given this is my last address as High Commissioner at the opening of a March session, I wish to be blunt.”

The High Commissioner specifically addressed the permanent members of the UN Security Council, urging them to “end the pernicious use of the veto.”

“The responsibility for the continuation of so much pain lies with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. So long as the veto is used by them to block any unity of action, when it is needed the most, when it could reduce the extreme suffering of innocent people, then it is they – the permanent members – who must answer before the victims.”

[According](#) to Zeid, oppression is “fashionable again”, and he warned of the return of the security state as well as the retreat of fundamental freedoms in every region of the world.

“Xenophobes and racists in Europe are casting off any sense of embarrassment – like Hungary’s Viktor Orban who earlier this month said “we do not want our colour... to be mixed in with others”.”

“Do they not know what happens to minorities in societies where leaders seek ethnic, national or racial purity?”, Zeid asked the Council. “When an elected leader blames the Jews for having perpetrated the Holocaust, as was recently done in Poland, and we give this disgraceful calumny so little attention, the question must be asked: have we all gone completely mad?”

“We will therefore celebrate, with passion, the [70 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), which incarnates rights common to all the major legal and religious traditions. We will defend it, in this anniversary year, more vigorously than ever before and along with our moral leaders – the human rights defenders in every corner of the globe – we will call for everyone to stand up for the rights of others.”

