

# **The Syrian Citizen Charter**

*The Aspired Future of Our Country*



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# Introduction

**The dialogue** and peacebuilding processes in Syria have been largely dominated by a top-down approach, and many components of Syria's population remain excluded from expressing their vision for the future of Syria or the challenges they believe need addressing first. Hence, the «Syrian Citizen Charter» aims to convey messages in a bottom-up approach from all the components of the Syrian people to stakeholders in local, Arab, and international political decision-making positions regarding the reopening of the political process in Syria. The Charter also aspires to serve as a conceptual and key source to hold international and local actors and organizations responsible for responding to the needs and demands of Syrians in the citizenship and peacebuilding processes.

The «Syrian Citizen Charter» is a sum of numerous discussion sessions on five key themes: Values and principles, the Syrian identity, the Syrian civil society, peacebuilding and political processes, and transitional justice. The sessions were held with diverse groups of young and adult men and women from all Syrian societies, encompassing people of different ideological, political, religious, sectarian, and ethnic backgrounds living in Syria and abroad.

The updated version of the Charter at hand presents the outputs of two series of discussion sessions. The first series was held during 2021 in Syria, France, Germany, Turkey, Poland, and Denmark, and was attended by around 500 participants. The second series was held in 2023 in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Germany, and online, and was attended by around 120 participants.

These discussion sessions were attended by a diverse array of Syrian actors including civil society organizations and individuals from different academic fields and ideological, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds based in Syria and around the world including in Lebanon, France, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, and Turkey.

All sessions included comprehensive notetaking of the discussions and participants' inputs. The on-site and online sessions were structured as World Cafés to allow for spontaneous discussions. Participants in on-site sessions sat at different tables while online participants were assigned to virtual break-out rooms, both divided and labelled according to the five themes of the Charter.

Within each of the aforementioned tables and break-out rooms, a set of questions was prepared to fa-

facilitate discussions around the theme, its feasibility, its potential for societal and political approval, and the obstacles it might face. After discussing, each group would leave messages addressed to decision makers. Groups would then rotate between tables\break-out rooms so that each theme is discussed by all groups, allowing space for diverse perspectives and opinions.

The multiplicity and timeline of sessions helped the organizers in generating accumulative knowledge, as the Charter was consistently updated to include new inputs and reduce redundancy. Participants' inputs were also taken into consideration in terms of writing and editing processes, the use of gendered language, and sensitivity to diversity and inclusion of all Syrian people. Hence, this Charter is a living document and is subject to constant updating based on recurring discussions in periodic meetings unbound by time or space. This process is deliberately designed to engage Syrians from all backgrounds and geographies across different periods of time to capture the changes imposed by each phase of the conflict and beyond.

It should be noted that this Charter does not claim to seek achieving conciliations or agreements, but is rather an attempt to induce the broader thinking of Syrians about the Syria they aspire to. Recognizing that diversity is a key factor in political and peacebuilding processes in Syria, this induction process adopted diversity in engaging all Syrians.

The process of preparing the «Syrian Citizen Charter» represents a crucial opportunity to discuss important and controversial topics around the desired future of Syria. Creating this opportunity demanded fostering trust and transparency among participants as a key prerequisite.

The distribution of Syrians across different areas in Syria and abroad entails differences in spaces of expression in terms of the freedoms allowed for them; not all Syrians can express their opinion in the same way. This factor was taken into consideration during the sessions, for example, certain terms were tailored to suit the context of those residing in Syria; «transitional justice» was replaced with «social justice» and «peacebuilding process» was coupled with «away from the political process». Additionally, the text of the Charter was edited to meet these nuances, and numerous procedures for the safety and privacy of participants were in place.

*«This is the first time I express my opinion freely.» -2021.*

*«I wish I had taken part in such sessions back when I was in Syria» -2021.*

*«For the first time in my life I feel like someone is listening! I can't believe I'm participating in a workshop discussing the future of Syria» -2021.*



# Vision Statement

**We, the citizens of Syria, seek to articulate a clear vision for the future of our country. We are driven by the desire to achieve peace, safety, freedom, justice, and equality for all Syrian societies.**

**Because we believe that there cannot be one vision, but multiple ones, we adopted free dialogue in our recurring discussions, and came up with this statement based on our experiences and expertise in Syria before and during the war, acknowledging the different experiences of all those involved around the concepts of identity, affiliation, citizenship, loss, insecurity, lack of livelihoods, displacement, and asylum. This diversity in inputs enriched the «Syrian Citizen Charter» with a holistic vision encompassing the different experiences, ideas, and visions of Syrians for our aspired Syria.**

## Our Aspired Syria

- A democratic, independent, pluralistic, and unified country. Represented by elected officials who exercise powers given to them and are subject to transparency and accountability.
- A state whose priority is to secure the basic economic needs of Syrians as discussed alongside economic development in the parliament, where the decisions made do not contradict the sovereignty of Syrians over their land.
- A state that is inclusive and respectful of the diverse backgrounds and ideological, partisan, political, racial, ethnic, religious, and sectarian affiliations of its citizens.
- A state that derives its legislation from laws that guarantee human rights, where everyone is equal before the law in their rights and duties.
- A country where women exercise the right to participate in all political, economic and social roles under the constitution and the effective laws that guarantee that right and provide safe spaces for women wherever needed.
- A country where all citizens have equal access to free, high-quality education and are prepared to



access fair employment opportunities.

- A country where local and international media can operate freely and without security impediments, allowing for the media to be a true and integral 4th authority.
- A state that adopts true and effective separation of executive, legislative, and judicial authorities and subjects its institutions to accountability, transparency, and reform.
- A country where the power of the parliament is derived from the people to serve the people, where political and governmental representatives are held accountable publicly before the parliament within the transparency systems practiced in democratic countries.
- A state whose local administrations are elected and decentralized, where women are fairly represented to ensure the inclusion of women's needs, allowing local administrations to engage all citizens and acknowledge their needs. Such administrations can offer comprehensive reforms and services through municipalities.
- A country that celebrates all of its cultural and artistic components, and actively works towards showcasing its diverse and rich cultural potential through locally and internationally supported cultural endeavors.
- A state whose priority is the safety and security of Syrians in the country and abroad.
- A state that gives the utmost priority for children and their mental health through family and educational counseling programs in schools.

*«We got to this point because we do not know each other. We were not allowed to speak about sectarianism and intolerance, and we were not able to express our opinions. We are a multi-sectarian society in the first place. When we get to know each other, when we reject sectarianism and political considerations and focus on individuals' potentials, only then will we be able to build the future of Syria we aspire to» -2021*



# Values and Principles

The discussion on values and the questions posed during the recurrent sessions sought to approach the hypotheses of values that Syrians believe are central to citizenship, and thus are hoped to be present at both the personal and governmental levels in governance and in the development and implementation of the constitution and laws. Hence, the values were presented by the organizers in two types: desired General Values and Personal Values, as follows:

- **General values:** Dignity, tolerance and respect, freedom, equal rights and duties for all citizens, respect for human and citizenship rights, legal, social, and economic justice, equal opportunities, accountability, and separation of powers.
- **Personal values:** Credibility, integrity, honesty, humanity, loyalty, respect, and acceptance.

Accordingly, general principles were sought to frame and operationalize these values, these are:

- The principle of free and fair elections.
- The right of all components of the Syrian state to partake in decision-making.
- The principle of coexistence based on tolerance and acceptance of others and of the sectarian, demographic, and ethnic diversity in Syria.
- The principle of freedom of speech.
- The principle of partisan multiplicity.
- The principle of equal education and employment opportunities for all.

These values and principles derive their importance from the fact that they aspire to a peaceful future in Syria at both the individual and governmental levels when incorporated in the constitution, political institutions, family systems, schools, universities, and all the active social and civil entities in civil society. The incorporation and administrative and institutional activation of these values will have a key active role in raising awareness and in fostering these values in society in the future.

The discussion sessions then led to the conclusion that general values should be determined by the law and the state's institutionalization policies, while personal values are voluntarily, bound by citizens and

their diverse visions and affiliations, especially that Syria is diverse in ethnicities and religious, racial, and sectarian affiliations. Thus, the hypothesis that determining values starts from the up down can be applied to the constitution's establishment of equal rights and duties for men and women, where gender-sensitivity and gender rights are incorporated in all applicable articles and procedures, and where the personal status law is abolished and replaced by a family law that guarantees the rights of all society and family members, including children. Such construction of the constitution and its corresponding laws shall lead to a change in the societal treatment of women and children, allowing them to enjoy their disputed rights that are currently hostage to individual behavior and the lack of legal consequences.

Most of the discussions aspired to a federal, decentralized state where the three powers are separated on the administrative level, a state that adopts transparency and accountability in regular monitoring of all institutions, and ensures governance in a way that guarantees the rights of all citizens and promotes diverse societal participation, including the imposition of women's quota systems.

The discussions also reiterated the importance of establishing a democratic system that fosters the values of civil society and the principles of its involvement in political and societal decision-making, and guarantees the freedom of speech on all levels, allowing for political diversity and separation of powers in the three authorities and in the government such as in interior, defense, and security administrations. According to participants, such a system would ensure a government that protects and upholds the human rights of all citizens, which in turn would make prisons correctional facilities rather than places for punishment and violations, and facilitate the release of detainees from political detention centers and subject these centers to the legislative authorities that are protective of freedom of speech and political diversity.

Moreover, the discussions tackled the administrative context produced by the conflict, which resulted in the emergence of the concept of regionalization in the political process, namely regional decentralization and the separation of the three legal, legislative and executive powers at the governmental, administrative, regional and local levels (based on the National Framework for Regional Planning). A group of participants saw regionalization as a possible path towards resolving the Syrian crisis, and a reality that cannot be overlooked in the formations of local administrations. According to them, decentralization would bring the views of conflicting parties from all Syrians groups closer together and guarantee the inclusion of their vision for post-crisis Syria.

These discussions and visions constituted a basic structure for seeking the implementation of justice in a way that guarantees ethical competition, not equality, which generates trust between citizens and gov-

*«Society values are derived from humankind. They are not imposed, but are rather the result of interactions between society members» -2021.*

*«Not once we have spoken about our visions and values positively, but there seems to be hope»-2024*

*«The Charter starts with respect, and hence all groups must be respected» -2024*



ernmental and private institutions on one hand, and between the citizens of the unified state of Syria on the other. Trust in turn generates respect for the different social narratives of all Syrian components, and an empathy that celebrates the visions of all individuals away from stereotypes, prejudices, incitement, and irrational profiling, as peacebuilding begins with unveiling and respecting all experiences, especially those lived by Syrians during the conflict.

The points raised in the discussions were in line with the Charter's vision in reaffirming that equal access to education for all citizens is a fundamental value that allows for equal access to employment, healthcare, and services. The government is thus responsible for the provision of high-quality services to all Syrians, as they all have the right to live in a country that respects them as human beings, and government services (i.e. infrastructure, healthcare, and basic health insurance) should not be restricted to certain geographic areas. Equality in those regards reinforces the value of citizenship and belonging, which reflects positively on the efficiency of Syrians, their interactions with their country, and their feeling of justice and dignity as key values in reviving the sense of patriotism and the desire to build a future Syria safe for coming generations.

The opinions brought to the table indicate that the government's commitment to general values shall contribute to the realization and promotion of personal values; the commitment of government institutions and local administration to the values of transparency and accountability shall promote the values of honesty and credibility socially.

It was also reiterated that personal values cannot be imposed, as each human group has its particularities. Western personal values are not suitable to all human components in Syria. Hence, it is a necessity to guarantee individuals' rights in choosing the value and behavior systems suitable for them, and to realize that importing certain values from other groups could make some Syrian groups feel a threat to their societal security, which contradicts the right of people to determine their daily life as guaranteed by social justice. This sheds light on the importance of promoting societal values in line with democratic freedoms of belief, attire, and openness, as these values do not contradict citizens' daily lifestyle choices, but are rather part of the democratic systems that guarantee coexistence, tolerance, and the prevalence of constructive dialogue, ultimately leading to human and civilizational progress.

The discussions showed a clear interest in several themes that promote positive societal values, including:

- Providing childcare for children who lived through the conflict and were affected by poverty, homelessness, and displacement, as well as stateless children through registering in official civil registries and enrolling them in intensive psychological and educational programs that ensure building their safe and human citizenship.
- Placing governmental and civil attention towards Syrian groups excluded from governmental registries like Kurds and Yazidis, and towards achieving equality in rights and duties in terms of culture, language, belief, and equal access to employment.
- The principle of reconciliation and social and societal peacebuilding processes must be interwoven into all political and economic building processes, which will allow for healing at the levels of citizenship and belonging.



# The Syrian Identity

**The** intersectionality between the effects of the conflict on Syrians and the Syrian identity provoked multiple discussions among participants around individual and collective identities, participants also approached the relation between the concept of identity and the sense of belonging based on personal and collective social, religious, and political experiences.

The discussions concluded that the concept of identity intersects with the sense of belonging and with citizenship, and that identity is a concept of two magnitudes; an **individual identity** shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and lived social and political contexts, and a **social identity** defined by social classifications based on the person's social group(s), gender, physical ability, and other considerations such as the person's age group, economic class, ethnicity, nationality, race, and religion.

Participants deduced a relation between the sense of belonging and being part of social groups, physical spaces, and multiple personal and social experiences. They also deduced that citizenship is the link between an individual and the state in which they live. It was emphasized that the aforementioned link was flawed due to injustices endured by Syrian citizens in terms of equal access to economic opportunities and different basic services including healthcare, education, and entertainment, and due to the deprivation of citizens from active participation in politics and in building national governance systems, resulting in a flawed commitment of citizens to their duties towards their country, government, and society.

Participants agreed that the approach of «All Syrians are one» towards a unified Syrian identity, which was advocated for by nationalist and political movements in the late 19th century, remains an approach governed by prejudices and fear of the «other». Hence, the issue did not start after the proxy war that erupted after 2011, but is a historical one. From that perspective, we can establish the hypothesis that the concepts of Syrian identity and belonging are problematic and require debating and discussion to reach a common vision that embraces the diversity that makes Syrian societies rich and unique.

The exclusionary articles in the Syrian constitution and the corresponding exclusion in legislation and implementation create discrepancies in the sense of belonging and citizenship among the residents of Syria. This was reiterated in multiple sessions, for example, participants believed that any legal, institutional, or legislative regulation and article such as «The president of the country must be Arab», «Arabic is the state's only official language», or referring to citizens in such articles as «Syrian Arab citizens» will inevitably lead to the exclusion of members of non-Arab groups like Armenians, Kurds, Assyrians, and others. Other examples of exclusion include confining the presidency of Syria to a certain sect or religion, and making it exclusive to men. Such types of discourse disregard a multitude of components that comprise the Syrian identity. They also pave the way for divisions, adversity, intolerance, intimidation, and restriction of freedoms.

However, discussing cultural and social diversity in Syria as a positive factor to citizenship did not disregard other factors that weaken the sense of Syrian citizenship, including, but not limited to:

- Homelessness, Displacement, and Asylum: Issues of identity and belonging were examined in the light of shaken sense of security and exposure to racism embedded in the integration policies imposed by host societies and countries.
- The deteriorating economic and political situation in Syria has weakened the sense of belonging to a state that cannot protect its citizens nor secure their basic needs of food, water, and shelter, which in turn affected the meaning of citizenship in its aforementioned vertical and horizontal magnitudes.
- The protracted ongoing conflict and the resulting politicization of social, classist, tribal, and cultural divisions and exacerbated fear of the «other» components of Syria have led to a retreat to narrow identities and a prevalence of prejudices and social stereotypes.
- The displacement of Syrians and their division as Syrians in Syria, Syrians abroad, and Syrian in refugee camps have become a determinant of Syrian identities and have widened the gaps between them, as these determinants are governed by differences in living conditions, lived experiences, and contingent class positions.

It was repeatedly agreed upon that all Syrians from different religious, ethnic, cultural, geographic, and social groups need to feel free, protected, and safe in their country, and that the Syrian state is responsible for securing all their rights to lead a dignified life and commit to their respective duties. Accordingly, the political and social circumstances that have impeded freedoms and rights over the last decade should be seriously addressed and changed.

*«Syrian identity is a term that only exists outside Syria; there is no such concept in Syria. We are unaware of it, and we were not raised on it, except for the national identity» -2021*

*«Identity is not an ID card; we are a people with a historical rich identity that lived through the ages» -2024*



The discussions between Syrians living in Syria and abroad revealed that they experience aspects of citizenship and the sense of belonging differently, in summary:

- The meaning of the concepts of identity, belonging, and citizenship vary according to each participant's experiences and to what they aspire for under a civil state.
- The meaning of each participant's individual sense of belonging is derived from belonging to a geographical location.
- The meaning of each participant's sense of belonging is also derived from their cultural background and what it entails, including pride in values, norms, customs, traditions, food, attire, and language.
- There are other factors that impact the shape and significance of identity for Syrians; as some identify more with religion or Arabism, while others identify with race, ethnicity, or being part of a minority.

These nuances unveiled differences in the ways participants perceived and interacted with the concepts of identity and belonging to Syria culturally, geographically, and politically. Moreover, the discussions on the feeling of citizenship revealed question marks around the mere existence and extent of citizenship in the first place.

The numerous discussions presented commonalities and differences in how different groups of Syrian refugees experience the discussed concepts:

Syrian refugees in neighboring countries and the west: Syrian refugees have to go through integration policies in host countries. Often times, as they begin to correlate their Syrian belonging and their new one, trying to capture both belongings and assume both identities, they come face-to-face with the clashing values of two countries, and the denial of their language and traditions. These groups of Syrians face the additional challenge of consolidating their children's connection to their mother country through reinforcing the original values they knew in Syria. Syrian parents face this challenge alone, as they find no support from host communities to achieve that endeavor. Participants expressed their fear of dissolving into their new communities, but also expressed gratitude for the support given to refugees by Western governments in terms of education, employment, and equal opportunities, comparing it to the Syrian state and the exclusion and marginalization participants endured within a system of corruption and nepotism.

Another group are refugees who walk away from their belonging to Syria as a result of their frustrating experience with citizenship inside Syria. They embrace their new belonging as an opportunity for their families to thrive within democratic political systems and open dialogue spaces. They also see it as a perfect chance for their children to live in unbiased environments with equal access to experiences and opportunities, a chance that the parents themselves did not have in Syria. Furthermore, some Syrian refugees resort to changing their names and surnames to Western or Turkish ones. One participant said, «Many Syrians burnt their Syrian passports upon obtaining their second nationalities». Another

participant explained such behaviors, «Your sense of belonging is defined by what the state provides for you and the way you feel towards it as a result; Do you feel like a citizen, a slave, or a person with power and agency?».

Another group of refugees still feel a strong connection to Syria, and even become «more Syrian» in their behaviors. They return to their narrow former religious, sectarian, and tribal affiliations; they take pride in being genuine people who have not abandon their roots, and are often stigmatized by host countries for having a lifestyle that «impedes their integration in society».

**Lastly**, the discussion moved to the new generation of Syrians who arrived to asylum countries at a very young age or were born there. This group lives a conflict between a combination of complex identities. Participants spoke about how the mentioned group have lost their Arabic language, and therefore became out of touch with their parents and grandparents, as communicating the inherit values, heritage, culture, history, and beliefs became a new obstacle in talking to children about the meaning of belonging and the Syrian identity and how to practice these concepts and take pride in them.

The discussion transcended identity and belonging in asylum to a deeper older issue that existed in Syria during and before the conflict, which is the conceptual build of citizenship within the structure of the relationship between citizens and the state. During the conflict after 2011, this issue has resulted in many types of retreat to narrower sectarian, racial, religious, and ethnic identities and in restricting the citizenship of citizens to their limited geographies. Participants discussed the role of factors like corruption, nepotism, and unequal opportunities within the Syrian state in the shift from a sense of belonging to the state towards a sense of fear from it and a search for ways to reinforce the sense of safety. This has imposed narrower affiliations on the sense of citizenship since before the conflict, as it was conditioned by the extent of the citizens' ability to access governmental and intelligence apparatus to secure financial gains, positions, or services. On the other hand, citizens who do not have inside connections feel threats to their access to fair employment opportunities and to their fair share of education and services, and end up seeking alternatives for their citizenship within their tribes and groups. Hence, the conceptual build of citizenship in Syria has led to elevated resonation with cultural, social, and religious identities. Recognizing that Syria has diverse demographic components, it can be deduced that Syrian identity is a multitude of identities rather than one, as each group has its own traditions, customs, arts, and racial or ethnic affiliation, and each individual has their own affiliations as well. Despite that cultural diversity is a positive factor that enriches countries, the presence of this diversity in the absence of citizenship and a collective Syrian identity has contributed to an inclination towards narrower affiliations, and the multiple cultural identities became a new reason for alienation and prejudices among Syrian groups.

The fragile sense of citizenship in Syria increased the feelings of injustice and lack of trust, making the question of identity and meaning of belonging issues of concern to Syrians, especially after they were introduced to cultures of other countries through social media and the experiences of refugees in the West. Being introduced to the circumstances in democratic countries that generate citizenship including the rule of law and equal opportunities have elevated the Syrians' hope for Syria to become a democratic country where elections are authentic and the concept of justice is applied in all aspects of life.

# The Syrian Civil Society

During the discussions, many voices called for the necessity of collaboration between all civil society organizations and initiatives and for a fair geographic distribution of civil efforts to move away from pre-judging and excluding certain areas based on the authorities in charge. Otherwise, it would be pointless to talk about the importance of civil society when organizations practice exclusion and discrimination. Participants had high hopes around the role of civil society inside Syria and abroad, given that civil society is expected to be religiously, militarily, politically, and societally impartial, and to be humanitarian and inclusive to the voices of all Syrian components. Describing civil society organizations as impartial provoked controversy around whether to consider unions and government federations as part of civil society, especially that those bodies are affiliated with and governed by the ruling party in Syria, the Syrian government, and intelligence branches, which makes their role in representing the demands of their members a mere formality that serves the image and political agenda of the government.

The discussion sessions aspired to see a Syrian civil society that is multicultural, politically and ideologically diverse, and democratically and inclusively representative of all Syrian components. Participants spoke about the need for civil society to exercise its role in election processes, whether at the national governmental level or at the level of local administrations. Participants emphasized that this role should transcend advocacy for causes and fair electoral programs to include intensive campaigns to raise societal awareness on the importance of exercising the national right of citizenship and participation in the political process in Syria.

Despite the importance of the political role of civil society, there was also focus on the importance of activating the role of community organizations in promoting positive social values, ways to deal with the mental and behavioral circumstances that accompany conflicts, and combatting pollution. Participants believe that the road to sustainable peace and conflict resolution is smoother when civil society assumes its societal role in healing communities after wars and conflicts.

The discussions concluded that the role of civil society in Syria is a pressing need, not a luxury. However, the fact that Syrian civil society had been governed for decades by a totalitarian political rule has deprived Syrians from experiencing a transparent and independent civil society. Hence, it has become im-



perative to reconsider the work nature and structure of Syrian civil society organizations, including their funding, agendas, and policies through two lenses; transparency and accountability on one hand, and the political, militant, and religious independence of civil society on the other.

Based on the discussions and the ideas shared by participants and organizers, this Charter identifies the roles expected from Syrian civil society, including society members. These roles are important to Syrian societal and political affairs and to the peacebuilding process, are subject to discussion and re-writing, **and include:**

- Creating safe spaces for dialogue between local societal components to facilitate meeting one another and mitigate potential political, religious, and social conflicts.
- Reaching out to others to build trust and lay bridges for mobilization, and organizing activities and meetings between different local societal groups to listen to individual concerns and break stereotypes.
- Contributing to resolution of conflicts as a key step towards conciliation processes that entail different measures including accepting others and mastering nonviolent dialogue skills.
- Raising societal awareness on the citizens' key role in societal and national peacebuilding processes.
- Establishing networks and alliances to amplify the voices of all Syrian societal components in peacebuilding processes at three levels. 1) Networking and collaborating with all local community organizations to work on societal projects related to peacebuilding processes and activating the concepts of citizenship and social cohesion. 2) Building transparent alliances with decision makers and all international organizations and actors to reinforce the peacebuilding process by supporting the Civil Society Support Room. 3) Coordinating the joint work between all Syrian civil society representatives in the diaspora and countries of asylum towards a fair representation of the causes and concerns of all Syrians.
- Connecting Syrians abroad who influence decision making to their peers in local communities in Syria to work together for conflict resolution and transitional justice.
- Ensuring women have a presence equal to men in peacebuilding processes, whether they are participating as individuals or as representatives of civil society organizations.
- Ensuring support for youth to empower them towards economic, political, and social self-determination.

*«Civil society must play a critical role in the political process in Syria and in raising community awareness and peacebuilding» -2021*

*«We need a civil society that is in touch with reality, connected to society, and an advocate of its needs and interests. This is not a luxury in Syria» -2024*

*«Civil society in the absence of democracy is but a mirage» -2021*



- Building communication bridges with the conflict generation of children and adolescents living in Syria, in neighboring countries, in refugee camps, and in asylum countries to understand their needs and ensure they are represented in all decisions and initiatives carried out by civil society.
- Shifting the approach of civil society organizations from reactive to proactive. This can be done through deliberate civic action, starting from monitoring and identifying concerning patterns and then facilitating and conducting research on these patterns in order to understand the root causes behind them and develop conclusions, recommendations, and solutions. This research can then inform what projects civil society organizations are supposed to establish and manage, including researching conflict issues in Syria and entry points to peacebuilding.
- Ensuring that the Syrian constitution is written on a basis of active citizenship that entails the participation of all Syrian societal and political components through civic democratic representation.
- Civil and aid work must be accompanied with parallel programs of economic and vocational recovery and rehabilitation, in addition to awareness programs on the types and role of advocacy at the local and international levels and on strategic interventions to make and influence policies.
- Networking and collaborating with non-governmental organizations founded or run by displaced and refugee women as they have the advantage of accessibility to groups of women otherwise underrepresented in the economic and political spheres.
- Supporting the type and scale of advocacy carried out by Syrian civil society organizations in Syria and abroad to form political pressure lobbies at the local and international levels.

# Peace-building and Political Process

## Peacebuilding and Political Process

**This theme** explores participants' opinions, based on their experiences, on the possible mechanisms for success in the peacebuilding and political processes in Syria.

Participants highlighted discrepancies in the experiences, knowledge, and interest of Syrians in participating in peacebuilding and political processes, citing that some Syrians believe that their participation is necessary and that decision makers must listen to all components of the Syrian people, while others believe that the ways to accessibility and participation are limited and ineffective in influencing international and local decision making.

Some activists and civil society organization representatives complained from the marginalization of their participation, being limited to consultancy in the international community reports rather than the important roles in the political process where their voices and concerns are heard.

Below is a summary of the discussed obstacles and challenges that face the Syrian civil society and limits its effective and holistic participation in peacebuilding and political processes:

- The deteriorating economic situation has shifted the priorities of Syrians in Syria towards securing their basic needs and developing their vocational skills for survival. Syrians abroad on the other hand are burdened with having to integrate, with the traumas of exile, and with having to find decent employment, all at the expense of developing their cultural, political, and intellectual skills necessary to understand peacebuilding process.
- Syrian's lack of access to information on peacebuilding processes, whether the United Nations' process in Geneva or the Astana process under the auspices of Russia, Turkey, and Iran. The reason for this scarcity in information is the lack of transparency that increased the gap between Syrians and the actors in these processes and led to more distrust in the agendas of major international actors and their concern for the interests of Syrians and for ending the conflict. In addition to the lack of accountability mechanisms that Syrians can resort to if these processes lead to agreements that go against the public Syrian aspirations.
- The diminishing human rights and freedom of speech and the tight security control in Syria limit the participation of Syrians inside Syria in comprehensive peacebuilding procedures.
- The divisions within the Syrian opposition powers and their lack of a concurrent clear vision for the future of Syria renders the presence of their members at negotiation tables pointless, and leads to additional divisions in the position towards peacebuilding and political processes.

- Syrians have divided stances towards UN and international resolutions. For example, some Syrians endorse UNSC Resolution 2254\*, while others are skeptical of it, citing its potential connection to normalizing ties with Israel. Similarly, some Syrians approve to the sanctions against Syria by the United States and Europe, while others see them as unjust and an obstacle to peacebuilding.

There is therefore a growing sense of pessimism around the effectiveness of the peacebuilding and political process and the fact that it is a protracted process that lacks the necessary commitment and political will of both the international community and the Syrian regime.

Participants in all the sessions showed increased interest in this theme, and were eager to share their ideas that they believe are necessary prerequisites to launch the peacebuilding and political processes in Syria, these ideas included:

- A safe, arms-free environment for Syrians.
- Local and international guarantees that enable the return of refugees.
- A true, effective economic plan that allows internally displaced individuals to return to their localities.
- The active, wide-scale participation of Syrians in official and unofficial political processes in Syria. This can be done through the establishment of civic platforms to carry out active participation mechanisms, including providing dialogue spaces to build constructive social relationships between Syrians from all groups across Syria and abroad.

*«I am willing to return to Syria and participate in the peacebuilding process and help build the future of Syria; but I need guarantees of my safety and a common ground to be reached» -2021*



A wide-scale development of conflict management, non-violent communication, and peacebuilding

- methods and tools. This requires awareness and engagement on the part of societal influencers, including religious figures, tribal leaders, and civil and political activists.

Civil society inside Syria must carry out its designated role in monitoring the political process and

- guiding it towards stability, and in bridging the cultural and societal wedges between Syrian communities that were exacerbated during the conflict.

The educational system in Syrian must be considered an integral part of peace and nonviolence pro-

- cesses. Educational curriculums are key to these processes, as they help raise awareness on justice, gender equality, and the rights of others to difference and citizenship. Moreover, curriculums should be inclusive of all cultures in Syria, and everyone should enjoy the right of learning the spoken language of their Syrian community, including those other than Arabic.
- The peacebuilding and political process in Syria should benefit from the support and expertise of Syrian civil society organization spread across Europe.

\* United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, adopted unanimously on December 18, 2015, calls for a ceasefire and a political settlement in Syria and describes a roadmap for a political transition in Syria.

- Drafting a comprehensive participatory social contract for Syria that focuses on political, economic, social, cultural, and legal equality and justice for all Syrians.
- An independent constitution committee drafts a new constitution that aims to establish a democratic Syria. The constitution articles must abide by the principles of citizenship, justice, and the rule of law, and should be based on the International Bill of Human Rights and guarantee the rights of all Syrians without political, social, racial, or ethnic biases.
- Gendering the constitution to achieve the legislative and executive activation of women's roles and guarantee their right to political, economic, and social representation.
- Allowing the participation of Syrians abroad in presidential and local administration elections under unbiased international supervision.
- Paying serious and swift attention to the welfare of children born and raised in camps. This should include systems to minimize class and education gaps and to address the mental harm and discrimination endured by displaced Syrian children in order to achieve sustainable social peace.
- Abolishing the exclusion of any Syrian societal components from peacebuilding and political processes.
- Supporting the participation of Syrians in refugee camps in the peacebuilding process through a unified political decision to support the efforts of civil society organizations in that regard.
- Seeking an understanding of UN resolutions rather than accepting them. To do so, civil society initiatives should open dialogues Syrian societies around the process of making these decisions, and carry the approving and objecting Syrian voices back to decision makers.
- Incorporating the concept of regionalization in the political process, namely regional decentralization and the separation of the three legal, legislative and executive powers at the governmental, administrative, regional and local levels (based on the National Framework for Regional Planning). Regionalization can be a possible path towards solving the Syrian crisis.
- Restoring the human connections between Syrians in Northeast Syria, Northwest Syria, Government controlled areas, and abroad. This can be done through cultural and social initiatives to promote positive relationships.

*«I'm one of 22 million people who aspire for peace, peace for everyone» -2021*

*«It's important to ensure better participation of women, especially in the political and economic spheres and decision-making positions» -2021*





- Beginning reparation processes for all citizens affected by the conflict in Syria and restitution of rights.
- The army, Jihadi, and militant actors involved in war crimes in Syria must confess to the context of damage they have caused.
- All political prisoners must be released and must receive material and non-material compensation.
- Sanctions on Syria must be revised to avoid inflicting harm on citizens and to make sanctions better targeted towards political and militant actors.

# Transitional Justice / Social Justice

**The discussions** on translational justice focused in general on the impact it has on the political process for sustained peace, especially in the areas of exploring and analyzing the root causes of the conflict in order to understand its background and measure the human and material damages it inflicted. However, the feasibility of transitional justice in Syria was a point of controversy for participants, in a reflection of the diversity in positions towards the matter among Syrians as a whole. For example, some participants expressed their full endorsement of social justice as a measure that guarantees the prevention of retaliation and exclusion, as it entails the preservation of demographic, ethnic, religious, sectarian, and cultural diversity in conflict areas, and leads to a settlement that establishes a common ground for peacebuilding processes. Other participants on the other hand strictly rejected transitional justice out of fear that it may fail or prolong the process of finding solutions, as translational justice entails accountability of all decision makers and actors involved in the conflict and violence, meaning that it would be rejected by those who have and still benefit from the war.

*«Lastly, all those with Syrian blood on their hands must be held accountable, be them from the Syrian opposition forces or the Regime» -2021*

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Additional reasons for why Syrians are less likely to engage in transitional justice/social justice issues include:

- Syrians' lack of trust in political affiliations.
- The feeling that «no one is safe» in Syrian communities prevents Syrians from engaging in any political movement or discussion.
- The exacerbated social and political divisions between Syrians both inside Syria and abroad contributed to intolerance, and fear of the other and of going into unguaranteed reconciliations with them.
- The constitution articles that disregard ethnic, racial, sectarian, and religious diversity establish for divisions between Syrians. This in turn creates discrepancies in the ways Syrians experience citizenship and belonging, pushing them towards biased identities instead of a collective Syrian one.
- Syrians in general, and youth in particular, wish to leave Syria in search for a safe future.
- Large numbers of Syrian youth and children who were born or raised during the conflict struggle with psychological and ideological traumas due to violence, loss, and the disintegrated social fabric in their communities. This has created distrust in the effectiveness of political solutions.
- Fears that the Syrian regime would not abide by the measures of transitional justice, as there are no articles in the Syrian institution that enforces the implementation of agreements made with the international communities. This fear also applies to areas outside the Regime's control, as the lack of governments and legislative authorities reduces these settlements to formalities with no implementation or accountability.

Based on the discussed obstacles to the track of transitional/social justice, participants proposed a set of suggestions to help activate that track, including:

- Separating the army authority from the authority of the government heads or leaders in areas outside the regime control.
- Holding all soldiers and militant perpetrators accountable, keeping into consideration that the true and main responsibility lies on militant and political leaders who made the decisions of killing civilians.
- Transitional justice must entail demanding public transparency by the Syrian government and other authorities across Syria in regard to the implementation of settlements, trials, budgets and budget allocation, all under a system of public accountability.
- Redrafting the constitution must be a priority of transitional justice. The constitution must be written in a manner inclusive of the right of all Syrians to citizenship in order to establish a democratic, civic, and free Syrians state. Additionally, the personal status law must be abolished and replaced by family laws that ensure equal rights and duties for men and women and prioritize children's rights. Moreover, laws mandating equality between men and women in political and economic representation must be enforceable and not obstructed by exceptional or auxiliary articles.

- Restoring the trust in peacebuilding and transitional/social justice processes requires that decision makers listen to local voices in communities and make decisions in line with community needs rather than the needs of external actors who claim to represent the Syrian people on international platforms.
- It's important to activate the role of youth in social justice processes. This is because the experiences of new generations and their visions for the future of Syria must be built upon, and because their exclusion from the process would push them towards leaving Syria, losing them as an active actor in economic and social development.
- Establishing a security plan that guarantees the safety of all Syrian people, based on the establishment of an interim military council comprised of qualified civilians from all Syrian geographies, so that residents have military governance of their respective areas to ensure their safety until the procedures of accountability, stability, and retaliation prevention are in place. The interim military council abides by work mechanisms outlined in the transitional settlement, and is subject to public accountability through representative elections. During the transitional period, officers and soldiers known for their integrity receive training to work under the national protection mechanisms that ensure the safety of all Syrians. After the transitional period, the interim military council is dissolved and the protection of democratic Syria is assigned to the new military leadership.
- Abolishing mandatory enlistment and replacing it with voluntarily service, accompanied by allocating stipends for volunteer soldiers and providing them with decent living standards and efficient medical insurance.
- Dissolving all Syrian intelligence services in regime areas and holding accountable all those who abused their power and took part in arbitrary arrests, torture, and corruption, and reestablishing a civic security system to regulate intelligence services with the sole role of protecting the people instead of maintaining the ruler.
- Dissolving all security apparatuses of authorities outside regime areas and holding violence perpetrators accountable, and reestablishing a civic security system to regulate intelligence services with the sole role of protecting the people instead of maintaining the ruler.
- Ensuring the independence of the judicial system. Judicial decisions must be impartial and not subject to influence by other branches of government (executive and legislative), nor to influence by private and political interests, the ruling party, and intelligence services.
- The Ministry of Defense should be fully subordinate to civic authority, not the ruler, and should be led by a state minister and two deputies; one parliamentary and one administrative. The Ministry of Defense works together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to develop Syria's security policies.
- The measures of transitional/social justice must be limited to a binding time period.

*«There is no safety anymore, not even among siblings. The whole system must change»  
-2021*

*«I fear for Syria to become divided into five countries; a Turkish one to the North and Northwest, an American one to the Northeast, an Israeli one to the Southwest and a Russian one to the West» -2021*

*«I fear we are at the stage of destruction instead of construction; no one is talking on behalf of Syria or working for the better of the country anymore» -2021*

*«We are a violent society raised to the idea that discipline whips were made in heaven»  
-2021*

*«It's important to ensure better participation of women, especially in the political and economic spheres and decision-making positions» -2021*





# Recommendations to Decision Makers

We are all decision makers. This includes Syrian individuals, civil society organizations, initiatives, and consortiums, Syrian politicians from different affiliations, and Syrian economic and military actors, in addition to collaborations with stakeholders in the international community.

Our aspired future for Syria depends on our collective collaboration. Thus, the «Syrian Citizen Charter» seeks to deduce the demands and aspirations of Syrians to inform drafting a constitution that guarantees the rights of all Syrians, and to establish for peacebuilding and transitional justice processes.

We encourage Syrian civil society activists to use this Charter to advocate for its vision. And we ask international donors and decision makers at all levels to adopt the «Syrian Citizen Charter» to help them collaborate and coordinate in a fair, effective manner and carry out their role in rebuilding the country societally, politically, militarily, and economically.

Based on the discussion sessions we coordinated between June 2021 and January 2024; we present **participants' recommendations to decision makers:**

## To the International Community

- Adapt the sanctions on Syria in a fair manner. The current sanctions unfairly equate the Syrian people with the Syrian politicians and military personnel involved in the bloodshed of civilians.
- Provide and facilitate economic support for the reconstruction of Syria.
- Activate and enforce international laws, activate Article 7 of the UN Charter, and enforce the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2254 within a binding timeline.
- Establish an international team of negotiators to ensure a fair representation of all Syrian communities in international platforms to communicate the demands of all Syrians indiscriminately.
- Guarantee safe and free mobility for Syrians inside Syria and abroad.
- Select civil society representatives in international platforms within criteria that is appropriate and

truly representative of civil society.

- Monitor the situation and hold accountable all those involved in lawlessness, corruption, killing, and political detention. Demand the release of all detainees and provide protection for them.
- The international community must abide by the principles of support, transparency, justice, and impartiality when engaging in the political process in Syria.
- Ensure presence on the grassroots level when addressing the issues and demands of Syrians. Conduct fair and impartial analyses away from the agendas and interests of major countries.

### **To The United Nations**

- Acknowledge the key role of Syrian civil society in peacebuilding processes and provide it with the necessary logistic and financial support to carry out its role professionally.
- Incorporate the concepts of equality and transparency in proposed development programs, and focus on early recovery processes.
- Ensure that support reaches its righteous beneficiaries in all Syrian territory through effective monitoring mechanisms.
- Adopt neutrality and impartiality when making decisions regarding peacebuilding processes and political, economic, military, healthcare, and aid operations in Syria.
- Reconsider the development strategies and support procedures for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries, refugee camps, and asylum countries in Europe.

### **To the Syrian Government**

- Hold free and fair parliament elections, proceeded by a political process supported by integral and impartial international bodies under the supervision of the United Nations. This shall ensure the results of parliament elections to be fairly representative of all Syrians and their political and ideological affiliations, and ensure achieving women's quotas and a high representation of younger men and women.
- Benefit from the experiences of (democratic) advanced countries to define the structure of the Syrian state and a governance that guarantees the rights of all Syrians.
- To the current Syrian President: Think of the Syrian people and their fate.
- Change the name of the Ministry of Culture into the «Ministry of Culture and Creativity».
- The Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Culture and Creativity should work together to support rehabilitation projects for tourist destinations such as old roofed markets, and for historical places and intangible heritage.
- To the Ministries of Tourism and Culture and Creativity: You share big part of the responsibility to promote awareness and belonging to the Syrian identity through paying more attention to raising awareness on Syrian heritage and the consecutive civilizations that inhabited all of Syria through the ages without exclusion.

- Involve women in decision making at all levels as an undeniable necessity in building the future of Syria, and move from the intention of involvement to actual decision making and implementation.
- Empower women and provide political and economic education.
- Ensure the safety of citizens and provide safe spaces for expression of opinions.
- Adopt transparency when making economic and local development plans, accompanied with public accountability measures.
- Discuss reconstruction plans with elected public representatives in the parliament, and abide by the concepts of transparency and accountability in decision making and implementation.
- Abide by accuracy and credibility in the issuance and authentication of official documents. To do so, open communication channels must be established between the Syrian government and other ruling authorities across Syria that issue such documents, and corruption and falsification of documents must be prevented.
- After establishing transparent collaboration and coordination between the Syrian government and other authorities in Northeast and Northwest Syria and ensuring the accuracy of documents, the official documents issued by these authorities such as IDs, marriage, divorce, and death certificates, and sale contracts must be officially recognized.
- Develop plans to mitigate the immigration of youth, and additional strategies to encourage them to return to Syria and work and live there.
- The Ministry of Economy and Trade must adopt plans to establish for an economy that bases employment, the establishment of small and large projects, and bidding on merit and qualifications, not on political alliances and nepotism.

## **To Syrian Politicians**

- Work on securing the safe return of IDPs and refugees to their localities. This can be done through agreements and decisions to bind all parties in Syria to respect the international laws on protection of human rights and refugee rights and monitor them in action.
- Seek and demand the drafting of a new constitution inclusive of the rights of all Syrians and Syrian societies in order to pave the way for a democratic Syria.
- Recognize the rich diversity in Syria in all governmental and institutional regulations and procedures, without the exclusion of any regional, ethnic, religious, racial, or gender identities under vague labels such as «Syria is one» that often favors a single identity over other identities in Syria.
- Treat civil society as partner in political, economic, and societal decisions, and do not exclude civil society from reconstruction and peacebuilding processes, taking into consideration the necessity of founding a legal reference frame for civil society, under which it can carry out an effective role in the development of the country.
- Start preparations for partisan plurality and independence through demanding political, cultural, and ideological openness without restrictions on freedoms.
- Coordinate with Arab countries hosting Syrian refugees to maintain their right to dignified life.

- Prioritize the file of detainees among political demands, including revealing their fate and the burial places of deceased detainees.
- Take serious action towards providing reparations to the families of martyrs and those affected by material damages.
- Collaborate with civil society on developing plans for mental and social programs to reintegrate detainees into societies.
- Prioritize justice for Syrians and restoration of their rights in the transitional justice settlements, away from rigid individual, religious, or partisan opinions and ideologies. In other words, work towards consensual agreements, where there are no winners or losers.
- Ensure that the concepts of transparency and accountability are incorporated in all decisions and procedures.
- Politicians from all Syrian authorities including in Northeast and Northwest Syria, Non-governmental organizations, and the Syrian government must work to consolidate the concepts of Syrian identity and citizenship through a democratic system that recognizes all components in Syria and their respective cultural particularities.
- Transparency must be an utmost priority during the political process. This can be done through providing regular and accessible information to citizens on the process.
- Reconsider the top-down approach of the peacebuilding process that disrupted the constituency's trust in politicians. The «constituency» must encompass all societal components, including civil society, so that the work of politicians inside Syria and abroad can be considered as responsive to the constituency and its demands.
- Political terms and programs imported from the West must be adapted to the Syrian context.
- It is the responsibility of Syrian politicians to propose programs and projects aimed at raising the awareness of second generation of immigrants, i.e. those born outside Syria, on the diverse cultural affiliations and identities in Syria.
- Apply governance to peacebuilding and political processes.
- Agree to lift all foreign influence on Syrian affairs, and to prevent foreign political and military interests from influencing the political process in Syria. This includes the use of veto in the United Nations Security Council.

### **To executive, legislative, and judicial authorities**

- Respect and support people's right to dignity and freedom of speech, and combat the corruption affecting justice and equity.
- Ensure that the Syrian legal frameworks meet people's basic needs.
- Develop laws and systems to minimize the spread of violence among Syrians and contribute to resolving conflicts permanently.
- Develop laws to prevent all violence against women, girls, and children.

- Separate the judicial authority from other authorities.
- Draft a social contract for Syria that prevents classist and religious discrimination.
- Develop constitutional and executive laws that oblige civil society organizations to follow transparent and accountable procedures and grant them civilian powers to participate in decision-making.
- Allow Syrians to choose between civil and religious marriage.

## **To Military Actors**

- The Ministry of Defense should be fully subordinate to civic authority, not the ruler, and should be led by a state minister and two deputies; one parliamentary and one administrative. The Ministry of Defense works together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to develop Syria's security policies.
- Protect the borders of the country and ensure the safety of the state and people of Syria.
- Use arms to protect Syrians, not to kill them.
- Reintegrate soldiers into civilian life.
- Act impartially and disarm all individuals, tribes, and groups.
- Dissolve all armed groups and seek the cease of military operations in Idlib and liberated areas.
- The military authority must specialize in military affairs only, without interfering in other state and community affairs like construction or the economy.
- Military loyalty must be to the Syrian people and not to a person, group, party, religion, race, or sect.
- Abolish mandatory enlistment and replace it with voluntarily service with reduced duration, accompanied by granting volunteer soldiers their full human and citizenship right, increasing their stipends to ensure decent living standards, providing them with efficient lifelong health insurance.

## **To Civil Society**

- Create networks between all civil society organizations, associations, and initiatives of all affiliations inside Syria and abroad. Reach consensus on an inclusive media platform whose role is to shed light on all political, civil, and public events as a means for public transparency and for coordinating efforts and ideas and opening dialogue channels with all Syrians.
- Civil society organizations must abide by constitutional and executive laws regarding establishment procedures, transparency, and accountability.
- Activate the role of civil society in facilitating accessibility to cultural centers, clubs, and activities to promote the expression of the culturally diverse Syrian identity. The same role must be carried out with Syrians in the diaspora and asylum countries.
- Civil society organizations and UN agencies must abide strictly to transparency when distributing funding and aid.
- Facilitate dialogue channels between Syrian societal components to discuss concepts that were disrupted by the conflict, such as identity, belonging, and citizenship. Additionally, coordinate work-



shops on the themes of transitional and social justice, political processes, and peacebuilding processes.

- Move from aid and emergency initiatives towards endeavors that focus more on the long-term strategic development of the country and on the economic empowerment of Syrian citizens.
- Support youth groups through focusing on capacity building and trainings for a sustainable future.
- Amplify women's voices and support their causes through raising wide-scale public awareness on women's rights, violence against women and girls, and how citizenship rights obligate all parties to consider women's rights a prerequisite to peacebuilding and a human right, not a luxury.
- Establish family community centers to target family building, family needs, and children's physical, mental, and educational needs.

### **To Religious Leaders**

- Extend community bridges, transcend differences, and promote tolerance and acknowledgment of Syria's diversity and the right of all people of all religions, sects, and ethnicities to leave in dignity, justice, and equal rights.
- Focus on spiritual matters and on reinforcing believers' morale away from interfering in political life, as the role of religious leaders in the peacebuilding process is expected to be a constructive one, not a divisive one through sectarian and religious strife.
- Democratic freedoms do not refute religion, but preserve everyone's freedom in their religious or non-religious choices.

### **To Education Authorities**

- Develop educational curricula on an ongoing basis in line with societal and humanitarian changes, away from retaining outdated traditional concepts.
- It is the responsibility of education authorities to introduce Syrian children and youth to the diverse cultural identities they belong to. This knowledge shall foster understanding and respect for Syria's cultural diversity, and facilitate tolerance in future generations.
- Work excessively on removing all forms of discrimination between children and youth in schools, institutes, and universities. This is to ensure everyone are equal in education opportunities, quality, and modern methods, to the point where Syrians no longer see private education as necessary.
- Improve the quality of schools for children with disabilities through enhancing services, staying up-to-date with education methods, and providing mental and social services in these facilities.
- Abide by the principles of transparency, credibility, and evaluation in all areas of education including decision making, procedures, and implementation, as these principles are a key guarantor towards developing education and enhancing the quality and usefulness of practical learning.
- Promote the culture of psychosocial therapy in schools by designating experts to work with children and youth through supporting classes and initiatives.

- Establish for a culture of equal rights and duties and justice in gender roles between boys and girls.

### **To parents and caretakers**

- Ensure that children keep an open mind that accepts differences and acknowledges that Syria is a diverse country and that this diversity is what makes their belonging to the Syrian identity unique.
- Stop reducing the role of females to marriage and reproduction; girls are humans with full human and citizenship rights in education, work, and political participation.
- Stay up-to-date with developments and changes to be able to keep up with the ideological and conceptual differences in newer generations and be able to interact with these in a civilized manner.
- Adhere to humanitarian values and prioritize them in raising children; openness to globalism and social media connected the new generations to Earth and global values.
- Children's rights recognized by international charters and human interactions are known to children, and should not be ignored so that families can achieve harmony and build strong positive relationships.
- Fathers and mothers should exert mutual respect, and mothers must be respected in front of their children to ensure that children are balanced, nonviolent, and capable in building balanced relationships at school, within the community, and with their spouses and children in the future.

### **To Syrians Abroad**

- Syrian immigrant businesspeople must contribute to the progress of the transitional period through supporting projects that target capacity building of Syrian youth and economic assistance to wide segments of Syrians.
- Maintain relationships with people in Syria, whether through communicating with relatives and communities, or through supporting civil society organizations with expertise acquired abroad.
- Do not lose hope in return to Syria.
- Do not abandon your role in elections and in deciding the fate and transitional justice for Syria.
- Ensure fostering your children's sense of belonging to Syria.
- Communicate the voices of Syrians inside Syria to decision makers abroad and to other populations through sharing their stories, dreams, and hopes, or through establishing online channels to communicate these voices in meetings, film, or digital fairs.

