

Housing, Land, and Property Violations in Northern Syria from Victims' Perspectives



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Syrian organizations hosted a Brussels Conference VI side event highlighting the impact of HLP violations on local communities

On 05 May 2022, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) and civil society partners held a side event for [Brussels Conference VI](#). Victims and representatives of Syrian organizations working to illustrate Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) violations against local communities in Syria, especially in the North.

Testimonies and findings by representatives of Hevdesti (Synergy), PÊL - Civil Waves, Serêkaniyê/ Ras al Ayn platform, Dudari Center for Peace-Building provided examples of common HLP violations and highlighted one of their key impacts – demographic change. Cases of demographic change across Syria are a growing cause for concern. During this Brussels VI side event, experts and victims discussed how patterns of demographic change are often discriminatory and target ethnic and religious minority communities. In the case of northern Syria, these communities are often Kurdish and Yazidi.

Following Turkish military operations, Kurdish-majority regions in Northern Syria have suffered systematic seizures and lootings of properties, as well as ongoing human rights violations such as arbitrary detentions, blackmail, and torture by opposition Syrian National Army (SNA) factions. Panelists provided multiple examples of how locals of northern Syria were forced to sign papers surrendering their properties under threat of detention and torture. These violations often threaten women and girls, subjecting them to gender-based violations like sexual assault and forced marriage to the members of military factions.

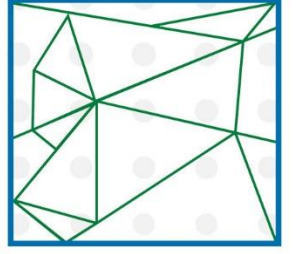
These violations continue against local communities despite Turkey's new plans to resettle one million Syrian refugees in the same region – many of whom are not originally from the area. The result will be demographic change, with Kurdish locals displaced from their original communities as part of a larger discriminatory “Arab Belt” project.

Our conversation, which is available to [watch](#), demonstrates the serious impact of HLP violations on local communities and which threaten to keep Syria unsafe and unstable. Communities who are suffering HLP violations are often powerless to stop these violations, allowing perpetrators to continue committing crimes with impunity. Syrian organizations are attempting to support victims by documenting violations; however, this issue must be addressed by the international community.

The Brussels Conference sets the tone for global engagement with the Syrian crisis. It is therefore vital that participants in this year's conference:

1. Facilitate humanitarian aid for the internally displaced in dire need, giving special attention to women and girls.
2. The current situation in Syria does not offer the conditions of safe return. Participants to this year's Brussels Conference must commit to create an environment providing the possibility for the return of displaced persons and refugees. Civil society organizations must be a part of this process.
3. Donors must ensure that their donations do not support projects of demographic change, and instead support projects helping to support local communities restore their homes and return home. Pursuing this, an independent mechanism must be created to investigate and monitor the aid and early recovery projects making sure they are in line with international standards of human rights.
4. The EU should recognize Turkey as an occupying force according to the Geneva Conventions of 1951 to encourage Turkey to take responsibility for the safety and security of the Syrian communities it is currently occupying.

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About Us:

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization monitoring human rights violations in Syria. Founded in 2015, STJ has been based in France since 2019.

STJ is an impartial and independent Syrian human rights organization operating across Syria. Our network of field researchers monitor and report human rights violations occurring on the ground in Syria, while our international team of human rights experts, lawyers, and journalists gather evidence, examine emerging patterns of violations, and analyze how violations break domestic Syrian and international law.

We are committed to documenting violations of human rights committed by all parties in the Syrian conflict and elevating the voices of all Syrians victimized by human rights violations, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, class, and/or gender. Our commitment to human rights monitoring is founded on the idea that professional human rights documentation meeting international standards is the first step to uncovering the truth and achieving justice in Syria.



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