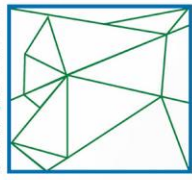


► Syria: Gender-sensitive transitional justice as a basic requirement to support the transitional path



This paper is an output of a dialogue session held by Syrians for Truth and Justice as part of its project "Bridging the Gap between Syrians and the Constitutional Committee", supported by the National Endowment for Democracy.

The project aims to build the capacity of a diverse group of Syrians in northern Syria, on several topics; social justice, transitional justice, diversity and inclusion of minorities, gender and the constitution, and political participation. A sixth topic will be chosen by the participants themselves.

The mentioned project seeks to enhance communication between representatives of local communities in Syria and members of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, in order to ensure inclusiveness and guarantee that broader views of Syrians are represented in the constitutional process.

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## Contents

<b>1. Executive Summary:</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Introduction:</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Transitional justice, women, and peace:</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Social Justice and Gender Justice:</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5. Women's leadership and political participation:</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>6. Women in the Syrian Constitution and Litigation</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>6.1 Discrimination against Syrian Women in the Nationality Law:</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>6.2 Gender Prejudice in the Syrian Personal Status Law:</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>6.3 Discrimination against Women in the Syrian General Penal Code:</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>6.4 Labor Law between Theory and Practice:</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>7. Women in the Northern and Northeastern Syria:</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>7.1 De Facto Authorities in Northern and Northeastern Syria (2011-2023):</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>7.2 Women in Northern and Northeastern Syria before 2011:</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>7.3 Women and the Autonomous Administration of North and Northeast Syria:</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>8. Recommendations:</b> .....	<b>18</b>



*The new Syrian constitution should explicitly stipulate gender equality in all spheres of life, using gender-inclusive language that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender, or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes*

## 1. Executive Summary:

After more than a decade since the conflict in Syria began, and considering the local, regional, and international discussions on the political transition, the constitutional reform, and the existence of mechanisms to ensure the achievement of sustainable peace, **the concept of gender-sensitive transitional justice emerges as one of the basic mechanisms to support the transitional path in Syria.**<sup>1</sup>

To promote social justice and the women's right to participate in the discussions on conflict, peace, and transitional justice mechanisms in Syria, and in order to reach gender-sensitive transitional justice, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), along with Syrian female activists, held a workshop to discuss gender-based discrimination with a focus on the regions of northern and northeastern Syria. During the workshop, participants identified and analyzed the reality of women there, discussed accountability and justice strategies from a gender perspective, and addressed the required reforms and implementation steps.

This paper is a summary of the workshop's outcomes. It consists of several main sections; It addresses transitional justice, women, and peace, then it discusses social and gender justice. It explains women's political participation in Syria and explores gender discrimination in the Syrian constitution and laws. Moreover, it discusses the reality of women in the northern and northeastern regions of the country, and finally it presents several recommendations.

Finally, it is worth noting that transitional justice mechanisms usually focus on past violations of women's rights and often fixated on conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) and gender-based violence (GBV) directed purposefully against women by repressive regimes. While sexual violence is an important aspect of conflict, it is not the only gendered form of violence. In conflicts, women face social and economic rights violations, such as displacement or lack of access to food, housing, or healthcare.<sup>2</sup> A focus on sexual violence without also highlighting women's active roles as citizens, peacemakers, and combatants contributes to the notion that women are only passive victims and excludes them from all aspects of justice and peacebuilding. Therefore, this paper addresses women's reality in the applicable Syrian legislation, and the necessity to participate in the transitional justice process, taking into account the gender perspective. The paper explains the aspects of discrimination that must

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<sup>1</sup> "Gender" refers to the socially constructed relationship between women and men and the attributes, behavior, and activities each is expected to adhere to. Gender differences are determined and reinforced by cultural, historical, ethnic, religious, and economic factors. Gender is often wrongly conflated with 'sex', which refers to the biological differences between women and men. UN-ESCWA. Accessed on 24 May 2023. <https://www.unescwa.org/sd-glossary/gender>

<sup>2</sup> We were like caged birds, this gave us wings to fly: A review of UN women programming on gender-sensitive transitional justice. June 2019. UN-women. Accessed on 25 May 2023. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/A-review-of-UN-Women-programming-on-gender-sensitive-transitional-justice-en.pdf>

be combated or changed so that the justice process is inclusive and addresses the full range of human rights violations.

## 2. Introduction:

By the end of 2011, the peaceful protests in Syria became an armed conflict where many regional and local powers got involved, which caused a severe humanitarian crisis that had the greatest impact on children and women.<sup>3</sup>

Syrian women proved the effectiveness of their participation in the popular movement, but they continued to suffer from inherited political, legal, religious, and social obstacles that impeded their ability to participate in public life. Patriarchal norms and structures have always had a significant impact on economic, political, and social plans which limited women's access to rights and resources, as well as decision-making tools. This created a gap in Syrian society as senior and leadership positions were occupied by men.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the structure of the Syrian State limits the ability of women to actively participate in the society, as it lacks the foundation of a civil state that guarantees the rights of all its components. The successive Syrian constitutions, for example, marginalize several groups of people (this is not confined to the representation of women in public life, but rather affects citizens of various ethnic, religious, and social components). In addition, several legal provisions remain dead letter, especially those related to values of citizenship and freedoms.

Syria ranks amongst the last on gender equality indexes, such as the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 of the World Economic Forum.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in 2021 Syria was ranked 153 out of 156 countries considered for the review of the World's Best Countries for Women.<sup>6</sup>

GBV practiced within families and public spheres, is not a new phenomenon in Syria. However, as a result of the armed conflict, GBV that women experienced before the conflict expanded and new forms of violence emerged<sup>7</sup> including political violence, sexual assault, rape, 'honor' killing,<sup>8</sup> poverty, displacement, human trafficking, abandon kids,<sup>9</sup> forced

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<sup>3</sup> On the 11th anniversary of the conflict, Syria remains the largest displacement crisis in the world, and women and children are paying the heavy price (Arabic). 15 March 2022. UN news. Accessed on 25 May 2023.

<https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/03/1096342>

<sup>4</sup> Lama Kanout. In the Core or on the Margin: Syrian Women's Political Participation. December 2016 The Syrian Feminist Lobby. Accessed on 25 May 2023 [https://docs.euromedwomen.foundation/files/ermwf-documents/7294\\_sflsyrianwomenspoliticalparticipation.pdf](https://docs.euromedwomen.foundation/files/ermwf-documents/7294_sflsyrianwomenspoliticalparticipation.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Global Gender Gap Report 2020. World Economic Forum. Accessed on 19 May 2023.

[https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> RANKED: The World's Best Countries For Women, 2021. 11 June 2021. CEOWORLD Magazine. Accessed on 19 May 2023. <https://ceoworld.biz/2021/06/11/the-worlds-best-countries-for-women-2021/>

<sup>7</sup> Syria: War's Toll on Women. 2 July 2014. Human Rights Watch. Accessed on 25 May 2023.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/02/syria-wars-toll-women>

<sup>8</sup> Syria: 185 Cases of "Honor Killing" since 2019. 25 November 2022. Syrians for Truth and Justice. Accessed on 25 May 2023. <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-185-cases-of-honor-killing-since-2019/>

<sup>9</sup> Syria: Over 100 Cases of Child Abandonment between 2021 and 2022. 2 March 2023. Syrians for Truth and Justice. Accessed on 25 May 2023. <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-over-100-cases-of-child-abandonment-between-2021-and-2022/>

prostitution, forced veiling, the spread of polygamy, forced child marriage,<sup>10</sup> child recruitment,<sup>11</sup> etc.

**Achieving equality in Syria and combating GBV after the conflict requires broad legal and procedural changes. Syria should follow an inclusive comprehensive approach to achieving transitional justice that prioritizes women survivors and focuses on accountability, truth, compensation, guarantee of non-recurrence, ending impunity, and the exclusion of sexual violence crimes from amnesty provisions.**

### 3. Transitional justice, women, and peace:

Given the important role of transitional justice processes providing accountability and redress for past human rights violations and supporting their non-recurrence, embedding gender sensitivity is a legal and political priority for gender equality.<sup>12</sup> The necessity of including comprehensive gender-sensitive approaches to transitional justice processes, is reflected in international normative and legal frameworks, such as the Beijing Platform of Action,<sup>13</sup> general recommendation No. 30 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),<sup>14</sup> and the nine UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security<sup>15</sup> that link international peace and security with gender equality, including:

- Resolution No. 1325 of 2000 and its subsequent resolutions, which calls for increased representation of women at all decision-making levels and the establishment of gender-sensitive mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict and for the post-conflict reconstruction.
- Resolution No. 1820 of 2008 that calls for the recognition that CRSV is a tactic of warfare, stresses the need to exclude international crimes of sexual and gender-based violence, from amnesty provisions, and emphasizes on the importance of ensuring that all victims of sexual violence, particularly women and girls, have equal protection under the law and equal access to justice.

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<sup>10</sup> Early Marriage Hits High Rates in Some Areas of Syria. 17 September 2020. Syrians for Truth and Justice. Accessed on 25 May 2023. <https://stj-sy.org/en/early-marriage-hits-high-rates-in-some-areas-of-syria/>

<sup>11</sup> Northeastern Syria: Complaints about Child Soldiers Falling on the Autonomous Administration's Deaf Ears. 13 January 2022. Syrians for Truth and Justice. Accessed on 25 May 2023. <https://stj-sy.org/en/northeastern-syria-complaints-about-child-soldiers-falling-on-the-autonomous-administrations-deaf-ears/>

<sup>12</sup> Transitional Justice and National Action Plans on Women, Peace, and Security in the Middle East and North Africa Region. October 2022. UN-women. Accessed on 25 May 2023. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/10/transitional-justice-and-national-action-plans-on-women-peace-and-security-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-region>

<sup>13</sup> Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The United Nations. Accessed on 25 May 2023. <https://archive.unescwa.org/our-work/beijing-declaration-and-platform-action>

<sup>14</sup> General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations. CEDAW/C/GC/30. 18 October 2013. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Accessed on 25 May 2023.

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/GComments/CEDAW.C.CG.30.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> The nine UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security are: No. 1325 of 2000, No. 1820 of 2008, No. 1888 of 2009, No. 1889 of 2009, No. 1960 of 2010, No. 2106 of 2013, No. 2122 of 2013, No. 2242 of 2015, and No. 2467 of 2019.

- Resolution No. 2106 of 2013 that draws attention to the importance of a comprehensive approach to transitional justice and calls for the strengthening of efforts to end impunity for perpetrators of CRSV.
- Resolution No. 2467 of 2019 that calls to ensure the opportunity for the full and meaningful participation of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence at all stages of transitional justice processes, including decision-making roles, to increase the likelihood that transitional justice outcomes constitute effective redress.

While transitional justice is recognized as an essential tool to overcome violence and move toward sustaining peace, transitional justice processes have too often left women and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence behind. Their voices were silenced by mechanisms that do not address the legal or cultural barriers to women's participation, and a lack of expertise on how to incorporate diverse women's perspectives meaningfully into transitional justice processes and their outcomes.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, it is important to focus on reaching gender-sensitive transitional justice in Syria and consider it a priority to reach sustainable and equitable gender-sensitive peace, and to achieve justice from a gender perspective.

## 4. Social Justice and Gender Justice:

Social justice is closely linked to gender justice, as sustainable social and economic development cannot be achieved without taking into account the gender perspective. Gender equality is the first step towards social justice because it allows equal access to rights, resources, and opportunities. It is a condition of development and a matter of sustainable peace and security.

The definition of gender is not limited to the women-men dichotomy. Addressing gender in the justice sector requires addressing the needs, opinions, and experiences of everyone regardless of their gender identities and expressions.

In authoritarian societies, men own political, economic, and social powers, while women have less authorities and opportunities. They face several forms of discrimination, whether economically, politically, socially, or legally.

Integrating gender perspective in the justice sector is necessary to achieve equal access to justice, to counter impunity for crimes (GBV), to ensure that laws protect the rights of everyone, and to guarantee that justice institutions are representative, effective, and fair.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> We were like caged birds, this gave us wings to fly: A review of UN women programming on gender-sensitive transitional justice. June 2019. UN-women. Accessed on 25 May 2023.

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/A-review-of-UN-Women-programming-on-gender-sensitive-transitional-justice-en.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Eleanor Gordon. Tool 4: Justice and Gender. 27 February 2020. Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance DCAF. Accessed on 19 May 2023. <https://www.dcaf.ch/node/13592>

Achieving gender justice requires the establishment of effective mechanisms for accountability and redress, activating and maintaining these mechanisms, accessing, and controlling resources, and having the ability to make choices.<sup>18</sup> Gender justice is “the freedom to choose different ways of being and living, based on equal distribution of resources, equal possibilities to exert influence, and equal respect regardless of gender”.<sup>19</sup>

This definition of gender justice is directly related to the State's obligation to provide a comprehensive response to address inequality and its consequential damages.

## 5. Women's leadership and political participation:

Since the Syrian Arab Ba'ath Party has assumed power in Syria, women were excluded from influential political life, especially as successive governments have established and fully controlled different general unions, such as the General Union of women and the National Union of Syrian Students. The laws and decrees that established these unions gave them the power to monopolize their field of work.<sup>20</sup> Article No. 66 of Law No. 33 of 1975 which established the General Union of Women (it was canceled by Legislative Decree No. 16 of 2017), prohibited the formation of any other unions for women. Practically, the Union did not focus on promoting women's rights, raising their awareness, or combating violations against them. On the contrary, it increased the vulnerability of women before the authority of religion and traditions, which was supported by legislation.<sup>21</sup>

The Syrian legislation does not prohibit women from assuming public and political roles. However, it does not include any affirmation of this right. For example, while Articles No. 26(2) and 34 of the Syrian Constitution of 2012<sup>22</sup> guarantee equal participation of (male and female) citizens, in political, economic, social, and cultural life, Article No. 84(4) explicitly excludes women from the right to become a President of the Republic. It stipulates that a President should not be married to a non-Syrian “woman”.

Furthermore, although there are legal provisions that explain the parliamentary elections, they do not mention the gender quota.

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<sup>18</sup> Justice and gender equality before the law in the region of the Arab State (Arabic). The United Nations. Accessed on 19 May 2023. <http://genderjustice.unescwa.org/defenition.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> Gender Justice. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Accessed on 19 May 2023. <https://feminism-mena.fes.de/topics/gender-justice>

<sup>20</sup> No Room to Breathe. State Repression of Human Rights Activism in Syria. 2007. Human Rights Watch. Accessed on 25 May 2023. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2007/10/16/no-room-breathe/state-repression-human-rights-activism-syria>

<sup>21</sup> The General Union of Women, a futile journey from establishment to dissolution. 10 March 2018. Syrian Women for Democracy. Accessed on 25 May 2023. <https://cswdsy.org/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%8C-%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%91%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86/>

<sup>22</sup> Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic 2012. Syrian e-Government Web Portal. Accessed on 25 May 2023. <https://egov.sy/page/en/137/0/Constitution.html>



Moreover, an assessment of UN Women on gender equality and justice before the law in the region of the Arab countries indicates that the Syrian legislation lacks provisions that criminalize violence against women in politics or during elections.<sup>23</sup>

## 6. Women in the Syrian Constitution and Litigation

The Syrian Constitution of 2012 stipulates that citizens shall be equal in rights and duties without discrimination among them on grounds of sex, origin, language, religion, or creed and that the State shall guarantee the principle of equal opportunities among them.<sup>24</sup> However, Syrian laws, including the Personal Status Law, the Penal Code, and the Nationality Law, grants men more power.

It is worth noting that while all women face discrimination, women from ethnic and religious minorities suffer from intersecting violations which puts them in a more subordinate position.<sup>25</sup>

The following table shows the most important constitutional articles related to women in Syria, either explicitly or implicitly:

Article 17	The right of inheritance shall be maintained in accordance with the law.
Article 19	Society in the Syrian Arab Republic shall be based on the basis of solidarity, symbiosis, and respect for the principles of social justice, freedom, equality and maintenance of human dignity of every individual.
Article 20	1. The family shall be the nucleus of society and the law shall maintain its existence and strengthen its ties. 2. The State shall protect and encourage marriage and shall work on removing material and social obstacles that hinder it. The State shall also protect maternity and childhood, take care of young children and youth and provide the suitable conditions for the development of their talents.
Article 23	<b>The State shall provide women with all opportunities enabling them to effectively and fully contribute to the political, economic, social, and cultural life, and the State shall work on removing the restrictions that prevent their development and participation in building society.</b>
Article 26(2)	2. Citizens shall be equal in assuming the functions of public service, and the law shall determine the conditions of assuming such functions and the rights and duties assigned to them.
Article 33(3)(4)	<b>3. Citizens shall be equal in rights and duties without discrimination among them on grounds of sex, origin, language, religion, or creed.</b> 4. The State shall guarantee the principle of equal opportunities among citizens.
Article 34	Every citizen shall have the right to participate in the political, economic, social, and cultural life and the law shall regulate this.
Article 40	1. Work shall be a right and a duty for every citizen, and the State shall

<sup>23</sup>Justice and gender equality before the law in the region of the Arab countries. Syria- Legal and civil aid (Arabic). The United Nations. Accessed on 19 May 2023. <http://genderjustice.unescwa.org/M2x.aspx>

<sup>24</sup> Article 33(3)(4) of the Syrian Constitution of 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Syria: 10 facts about the 1962 special Census of al-Hasakah. 4 October 2019. Syrians for Truth and Justice. Accessed on 24 May 2023. <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-10-facts-about-the-1962-special-census-of-al-hasakah/>

	endeavor to provide for all citizens, and the law shall organize work, its conditions, and the workers' rights. 2. Each worker shall have a fair wage according to the quality and output of the work; This wage shall be no less than the minimum wage that ensures the requirements of living and changes in living conditions. 3. The state shall guarantee social and health security of workers.
Article 45	Freedom of forming associations and unions shall be based on a national basis, for lawful purposes and by peaceful means which are guaranteed in accordance with the terms and conditions prescribed by law.
Article 48	The law shall regulate Syrian Arab citizenship.
Article 84	The candidate for the office of President of the Republic should: 1. Have completed forty years of age. 2. Be of Syrian nationality by birth, of parents who are of Syrian nationality by birth. 3. Enjoy civil and political rights and not be convicted of a dishonorable felony, even if he was reinstated. <b>4. Not be married to a non-Syrian wife.</b> 5. Be a resident of the Syrian Arab Republic for no less than 10 years continuously upon being nominated.

Although the constitution explicitly refers to gender equality, it lacks clear text that promotes non-discrimination against women. Moreover, it does not mention mechanisms to implement its rules, leaving this task to laws that either contradict the constitution or place restrictions on women's rights based on religion and social norms.<sup>26</sup> Further, there is no national action plan, policy, or allocated budget to enforce the laws related to combating violence against women and girls.

Syria has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),<sup>27</sup> but it has reservations on some articles.<sup>28</sup> For example, Article 2 which includes the States Parties' obligation to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices which constitute discrimination against women. The reservations were canceled by Legislative Decree No. 230 of 2017 "in a manner that does not contradict the provisions of Islam". These reservations are consistent with the discrimination against women in Syrian laws, including the Personal Status Law, the Penal Code, the Nationality Law, and the Labor Law, as well as with the permanent order of the Minister of Interior No. 876 of 1979, which places restrictions on the movement and travel of married women<sup>29</sup> and contradicts Article No. 33 of the constitution.

<sup>26</sup> Christian Women's Status in Syrian Law. 21 March 2023. Syrians for Truth and Justice. Accessed on 24 May 2023. <https://stj-sy.org/en/christian-womens-status-in-syrian-law/>

<sup>27</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Accessed on 24 May 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

<sup>28</sup> Syrian reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Arabic). Modern Discussion. 27 December 2004. Accessed on 19 May 2023. <https://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=28801>

<sup>29</sup> Applying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Syrian law (Arabic). 27 May 2021. Syrian Women for Democracy. Accessed on 19 May 2023. <https://cswdsy.org/%D8%AA%D8%B7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%82->

Moreover, no article in the Syrian constitution prohibits discrimination against women, which violates Article No. 5(a) of CEDAW that stipulates that “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women”.<sup>30</sup>

## 6.1 Discrimination against Syrian Women in the Nationality Law:

Article No. 9 of CEDAW states that “1-States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband. 2-States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children”. Syria had reservations on this article because according to the Syrian Nationality Law, women do not have the right to give their nationality to their children.

It is worth to note that Article No. 48 of the Syrian Constitution states that “The law shall regulate the Syrian Arab citizenship”. Based on the Nationality Law No. 276 of 1969,<sup>31</sup> a Syrian mother does not give her nationality to her children if the father is not Syrian. However, this law allows a Syrian man to give his nationality to his children regardless of the mother's nationality. This discrimination is a violation of women's rights, and it has harmful effects on children, especially if there is a reason that prevents them from obtaining the nationality of their non-Syrian father, which leads to their statelessness, and to the deprivation of all rights related to nationality. As a result, they might be deprived of the inheritance of their Syrian mother, as stipulated in Article No. 836 of the Syrian Civil Code.

## 6.2 Gender Prejudice in the Syrian Personal Status Law:

The Syrian Personal Status Law strengthens the traditional role of women and reinforces their stereotypical image as housewives. It does not equate men and women, but rather always gives men superiority. For example, the law does not consider “disciplining” or raping a wife a crime. It allows a woman’s “guardian” to force her to marry. It also includes several

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[%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D8%A3%D8%B4%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84/](#)

<sup>30</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York. Accessed on 19 May 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

<sup>31</sup> Legislative Decree No. 276 of 1969 on the Syrian Arab Nationality (Arabic). Website of the Syrian Parliament. Accessed on 26 May 2023. <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=8182&ref=tree&#:~:text=%D9%8A%D8%AC%D9%88%D8%B2%20%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AD%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A8%D9%8A%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9%20%D8%A8%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%85,%D8%AA%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%81%20%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9%20%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D9%85%D8%B3%20%D8%B3%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA%20>

other forms of discrimination and violence against women, which promotes the values of the patriarchal system as sacred values of a society.

According to Article No. 16 of CEDAW “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women: (a) The same right to enter into marriage; (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent; (c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution; (d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount; (e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights; (f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount; (g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation; (h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration”. This Article also states that all necessary action shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

However, Syria has reservations on this Article because it contradicts the Syrian Personal Status Law No. 59 of 1953 and its amendments of 1975, 2003, and 2019.<sup>32</sup> This law regulates family issues such as marriage, divorce, childbirth, eligibility, will, lineage, and inheritance.

Personal Status Law consistently reinforces discrimination against women. For example, Articles No. 1, 8, 12, 14, 67 (and their amendments) on defining marriage, Article No. 16 on the minimum age of marriage (18 years for men and 17 years for women, noting that underage marriage is not void or voidable), and Article No. 37 on the right of a Muslim man to have more than one wife at the same time. The latter Article is not abolished through various amendments although it constitutes an insult to women, a discrimination against them, and a derogation of their rights.<sup>33</sup>

The gender prejudice of the Personal Status Law can also be noted in Articles No. 257, 277, and 297 that regulate inheritance for Muslims and non-Muslims. This law is derived from the provisions of Islam which gives a female half of a male’s share in inheritance. This law was applied to all Syrian citizens until 2006 when Personal Status Law for Catholic No. 31 of

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<sup>32</sup> The amended Personal Status Law (until 2020) (Arabic). Syrian Lawyer Club. Accessed on 23 May 2023. <https://www.syrian-lawyer.club/%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%AE%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-pdf/>

<sup>33</sup> Michel Shammas. Discrimination against women in Personal Status Laws in Syria (Arabic). August 2021. Harmoon Center For Contemporary Studies. Accessed on 23 May 2023. <https://www.harmoon.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%8A%D8%B2-%D8%B6%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%A9.pdf>



2006 was issued. Article No. 180 of the latter states that male and female children and grandchildren inherit equal shares.<sup>34</sup>

In 2011, Article No. 308 of Personal Status Law was amended by Legislative Decree No. 76 to state that the regulation for Christians and Jews (regarding inheritance, will, and other personal status issues) shall apply.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to the discrimination of Personal Status Law, several local norms and traditions deprive women of their legal right to inherit because of fear of social stigma.<sup>36</sup> According to the study titled “Women's Inheritance in Syria; in Law, Traditions, and Reality” women in Syria are deprived of their right to inherit because the society, despite its religious diversity, clings to customs and traditions more than to laws.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned, Personal Status Law No. 59 of 1953 privileges men over women in several other critical life matters, including giving men the right of guardianship, granting a husband the right to divorce his wife without a legitimate reason (he does not need to file a lawsuit or to have the consent of his wife), and depriving a woman of her right to spousal support if she works without her husband's permission.

### 6.3 Discrimination against Women in the Syrian General Penal Code:

The General Penal Code No. 148 of 1949<sup>38</sup> includes provisions that discriminate against women and facilitate violence against them. Under the law, some forms of violence against women can be carried out with near impunity.

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<sup>34</sup> In 2011, Law No. 7 was issued to regulate inheritance for the Greek Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox, then in 2012, Law No. 4 was issued to regulate wills and inheritance for the Armenian Orthodox. Moreover, in 2017, Law No. 2 was ratified regulating inheritance for Evangelical Protestant.

<sup>35</sup> Masa al-Mawsili. Women's inheritance in Syria in Law, Traditions, and Reality (Arabic). December 2022. Harmoon Center For Contemporary Studies. Accessed on 23 May 2023.  
<https://www.harmoon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AB-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> The Right of Syrian Women to Inherit: Absent in the rural and semi implemented in the cities (Arabic). 3 October 2022. The Mediterranean Network for Feminist Information. Accessed on 19 May 2023.  
<https://medfeminisiwiya.net/2022/10/03/%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%91-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1%D8%AB-%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%A8-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%81-%D9%88/?lang=ar>

<sup>37</sup> Masa al-Mawsili. Women's inheritance in Syria in Law, Traditions, and Reality (Arabic). December 2022. Harmoon Center For Contemporary Studies. Accessed on 23 May 2023.  
<https://www.harmoon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AB-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> General Penal Code No. 148 of 1949 amended by Legislative Decree No. 1 of 2011 (Arabic). Website of the Syrian Parliament. Accessed on 23 May 2023.  
<http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=55151&cat=12278#:~:text=%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%20148%20%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85,%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%85%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A%201%20%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%202011>

In a study titled “Jurisprudence Related to Women in the Syrian Penal Code”,<sup>39</sup> the researcher addresses in detail the inconsistency of the Penal Code with CEDAW and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The study concludes that although the Penal Code contains articles that provide protection for women (such as Articles No. 490, 500, 501, 504, 505, 509, 529, 263), it lacks articles that criminalize violence against them. Moreover, the study classifies violence against women according to the Syrian Penal Code into two groups; crimes that affect religion and family (Articles No. 473, 474, 476), and crimes that affect ethics and morals (Articles No. 504, 505, 506).

The Penal Code includes several articles that perpetuate a patriarchal culture and discriminate against women in terms of determining the criminal nature of an act, the means of proof, and the severity of the punishment.

For example, Article No. 473 starts with the sentence “The ‘adulterous’ woman shall be punished...” instead of “Anyone who commits the crime of adultery shall be punished”. The law punishes any woman who commits this ‘crime’ with a more severe penalty than a man (unless he is married). The same article distinguishes between the method used to prove the act of adultery, as evidence against men is not accepted “except if it emerged from written letters and documents that he wrote”. As an additional example, while Article No. 474 criminalizes the act of adultery committed by a woman, it is allowed for a husband to practice it “outside the marital house”.<sup>40</sup>

The Syrian legislator does not recognize marital rape. Article No. 489 states that “He who coerces anyone, apart from his wife, to have sexual intercourse, using violence or threat, shall be sentenced to at least fifteen years’ imprisonment with hard labor. Moreover, Article No. 508 stipulates that the perpetrator of rape can be exempt from punishment if he marries the victim. This article was repealed in 2020 after it constituted (with the help of society) a decades-long violation of women’s rights by presenting them to rapists as gifts or rewards.

In addition, Article No. 548 of the General Penal Code provides that men can escape punishment or receive reduced sentences if they kill a female member of the family and/or the man with whom they are allegedly committing “adultery” or other “vicious sexual relations”. According to this Article a man who surprises his wife or a close female relative while committing such acts shall be exempt from liability. In 2009 Legislative Decree No. 37 was issued to change the penalty to imprisonment for at least two years. Then, in 2020, Legislative Decree No. 2 was issued to abolish Article No. 548. However, a judge can still

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<sup>39</sup> Ruhada Abdoush. Jurisprudence Related to Women in the Syrian Penal Code. Kalamoon Journal for Human Sciences, Issue No. 16. July 2021. pp. 129-153.

<sup>40</sup> Discrimination against women in the Syrian Penal Code (Arabic). Syrian Women’s Forum for Peace in cooperation with Hivos Organization. Accessed on 23 May 2023.

<http://wfp-d.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/07-%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%8A%D8%B2-%D8%B6%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A.pdf>

consider “mitigating circumstances” if a crime is committed with “honorable motive”<sup>41</sup> or as a result of “extreme anger”.<sup>42</sup>

## 6.4 Labor Law between Theory and Practice:

Labor Law No. 17 of 2010<sup>43</sup> regulates women's right to work. The law includes a special chapter (number three) related to the employment of women. Article No. 2(a) stipulates that in applying the provisions of this law, it is forbidden to violate the principle of equal opportunity or equal treatment or to discriminate between workers in terms of race, color, gender, marital status, creed, or political opinion.

However, despite the existence of the text that supports women, the failure to activate these articles and the absence of implementation mechanisms (especially in workplaces that include a large number of female workers) leads to depriving women from their rights and limits their ability to work.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the rate of female participation in the Syrian labor market is low.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, women perform unpaid housework and care activities like cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children and the elderly. As a result, they have less time to engage in paid labor, or work longer hours, combining paid and unpaid labor. Women's unpaid work subsidizes the cost of care that sustains families and contributes to improving their economic situation. Yet, it is rarely recognized as “work”.

Finally, it is worth noting that Syria has not ratified several conventions issued by the International Labor Organization, such as the International Labour Administration Convention No. 150 of 1978, the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention No. 156 of 1981, and the Maternity Protection Convention No. 183 of 2000.<sup>46</sup>

## 7. Women in the Northern and Northeastern Syria:

The workshop organized by Syrians for Truth and Justice has focused on the reality of women in northern and northeastern Syria from the political, legal, social, and economic

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<sup>41</sup> Article No. 192 of the Syrian General Penal Code No. 148 of 1949 (amended by Legislative Decree No. 1 of 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Article No. 242 of the Syrian General Penal Code No. 148 of 1949 (amended by Legislative Decree No. 1 of 2011).

<sup>43</sup> Labor Law in the Syrian Arab Republic No. 17 of 2011 (Arabic). Website of the Syrian Parliament. Accessed on 23 May 2023.

<http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=5589&nid=4598&First=0&Last=79&CurrentPage=0&mid=&refBack=>

<sup>44</sup> Firas Haj Yahya. Women's Rights in Syria Between Reality and Hope (Arabic). March 2021. Harmoon Center For Contemporary Studies. Accessed on 23 May 2023.

<https://www.harmoon.org/researches/%d8%ad%d9%82%d9%88%d9%82-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b1%d8%a3%d8%a9-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a8%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%82%d8%b9-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%a3%d9%85/>

<sup>45</sup> Labour inspection, gender equality and non-discrimination in the Arab states: guidebook. International Labour Organization. 08 July 2014. Accessed on 23 May 2023.

[https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS\\_249296/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_249296/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*

perspectives. This region includes several population compositions (ethnic, religious, and sectarian), different social customs and traditions, and a diversity of political, economic, and social relations.

## 7.1 De Facto Authorities in Northern and Northeastern Syria (2011-2023):

After the outbreak of protests in 2011, the region was successively controlled by various forces. In 2014, the Syrian government lost its control on Northern and Northeastern Syria and the Islamic State (ISIS) began seizing control of the territory. Then the Global Coalition<sup>47</sup> declared war against ISIS, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)<sup>48</sup> emerged as the ground forces of the Coalition. In coordination with the Global Coalition, the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC)<sup>49</sup> and SDF took over control after the forces of the Syrian government left the area, and after several battles with ISIS.<sup>50</sup> These forces announced the establishment of the Autonomous Administration of the North and Northeast Syria (AANES), which governed a large territory of al-Hasakah, al-Raqqa, Deir Ezzor, and Aleppo.

## 7.2 Women in Northern and Northeastern Syria before 2011:

Residents of northern and northeastern Syria, particularly the Kurds, suffered decades of marginalization in the political, economic, and social fields, which was greatly reflected on Kurdish women as they suffered from multiple restrictions. This emerged clearly in 1962 because of the exceptional census in al-Hasakah that stripped Syrian Kurds of their Syrian citizenship. Kurdish women were especially affected as they were denied many rights which other Syrians enjoy, such as the right to vote, the right to own property, and the right to have marriages and births legally recognized. They were not entitled to passports and thus could not exercise the internationally guaranteed right to freedom of movement and to legally leave and return to their own country Syria.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, the focus on Kurdish identity and political freedom had a great impact on Kurdish women as it established the dominance of political freedom over social freedom. This led to the marginalization of women's issues and problems in favor of the concepts of national identity and freedom from oppression. In addition, freedom of women was restricted because social values of Kurdish society –which are considered as an indicator to measure national belonging– are reflected in women's personality, behavior, and actions, that are passed on from one generation to another.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The Global Coalition, official website: <https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/>

<sup>48</sup> The Syrian Democratic Forces, official website: <https://sdf-press.com/en/>

<sup>49</sup> The Syrian Democratic Council, official website: <https://m-syria-d.com/en/>

<sup>50</sup> When the Islamic State Comes to Town. RAND Corporation. 2017. Accessed on 23 May 2023. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1970.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1970.html)

<sup>51</sup> Decades of Statelessness & the Absence of Basic Rights. 6 July 2021. Syrians for Truth and Justice. Accessed on 23 May 2023. <https://stj-sy.org/en/decades-of-statelessness-the-absence-of-basic-rights/>

<sup>52</sup> Rosen Sheikh Musa. The Role of Women in the Kurdish Society in Syria (Historical Approach) (Arabic). Kalamoon Journal of Intellectual, Social and Political Studies and Research. 2 August 2017. pp. 313-327.



Within this context, women in northern and northeastern Syria have participated in public life. However, they were governed by traditional social rules that imposed the dominance of men.

### 7.3 Women and the Autonomous Administration of North and Northeast Syria:

When ISIS controlled the region, women suffered from patterns of restrictions.<sup>53</sup> Later, the AANES issued its constitution (officially titled Charter of Social Contract)<sup>54</sup> which included several articles related to women's rights and freedoms. For example, Article No. 11 forbids exploitation, monopoly, and the objectification of women. Also, Article No. 12 stipulates that the Democratic Federalism of Northern Syria adopts the co-presidency system in all political, social, administrative, and other fields. It considers it a main principle in equal representation of both genders. The co-presidency system contributes to organizing and establishing the democratic confederate system of women as a special entity. Moreover, Article No. 13 states that women's freedom and rights and gender equality shall be guaranteed in society. Further, Article 25 stipulates that using violence, manipulation, and discrimination against women shall be considered a crime punished by law.

Moreover, several bodies and institutions for women have been established including the "Women's Authority", affiliated with the Executive Council of the AANES,<sup>55</sup> the "Kongra Star", affiliated with the Democratic Union Party in Syria,<sup>56</sup> and the "Women's Council in North and East Syria".<sup>57</sup>

In the territories governed by the AANES, the participation of women in the institutions is far from the traditional norms and is protected by a form of legal immunity. Women are involved in civil, social, media, and military institutions. Furthermore, the AANES issued several laws to protect women including the Women's Protection Law which advanced the equality of men and women, prohibited forced marriage and polygamy, and allowed civil marriage.<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, practically, many women in northern and northeastern Syria experience GBV and face the strict ideological context that imposes gender stereotypes and exposes women to social, political, and military exploitation. Moreover, the obstacles that previously prevented women from playing an influential role in society are not abolished, especially that

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<sup>53</sup> Rule of Terror: Living under ISIS in Syria. A/HRC/27/CRP.3. 19 November 2014. Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. Accessed on 23 May 2023. <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/27/CRP.3>

<sup>54</sup> Social Contract of the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria. The Rojava Information Center. Accessed on 23 May 2023. <https://rojvainformationcenter.com/storage/2021/07/2016-Social-Contract-of-the-Democratic-Federation-of-Northern-Syria.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> The Women's Authority. The official website of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (Arabic). Accessed on 26 May 2023. <https://eb.smne-syria.com/category/13>

<sup>56</sup> The official website of the Kongra Star. Accessed on 26 May 2023. <https://kongra-star.org/eng/>

<sup>57</sup> The official website of the Women's Council in North and East Syria (Arabic). Accessed on 26 May 2023. <http://iin-jivan.com/>

<sup>58</sup> The political participation of Syrian women in the three spheres of influence (Arabic). 10 June 2021. Al-Furat Center for Studies. pp. 138-190. Accessed on 23 May 2023. <https://firatn.com/?p=2636>

the AANES does not apply its laws in all areas similarly.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, many girls are deprived of education and forced into early marriage and child recruitment. Also, there is discrimination against women in matters of personal status, especially divorce, custody, and polygamy, all of which are linked to the traditions of the society.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, women still experience the overlap between the AANES and the Syrian government authorities (such as in the courts and civil registry offices). People who do not agree with the AANES model (which is based on a civil law that does not consider religion as a source of legislation) often resort to Syrian government institutions in the region, especially in cases related to women, such as marriage, divorce, nationality, and inheritance.<sup>61</sup> Also, in practice, the prevailing customs and traditions in society are still more powerful than civil status laws, penal laws, or laws related to inheritance and custody.

## 8. Recommendations:

Based on the discussions of the workshop held by Syrians for Truth and Justice on gender-based discrimination, the importance of women's participation in the transitional justice process in Syria, and the need to build accountability and justice strategies from a gender perspective, the following recommendations are made:

1. To issue a law that eliminates violence against women and includes various types of gender-based violence, whether physical, psychological, or sexual.
2. To emphasize the responsibility of the State to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for crimes related to sexual and other violence against women and girls, and to exclude these crimes from amnesty provisions.
3. To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in the Syrian constitution, and to provide for measures and mechanisms to implement the legislation in order to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of the principle of the equality of men and women.
4. To revise Syrian laws to abolish or amend articles that perpetuate discrimination based on race, gender, or religion.
5. To use gender-inclusive language that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender, or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.
6. To cancel all the reservations on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), particularly the reservation on the right of women to pass their nationality to their children.
7. To respect the rights guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two international covenants on political, economic, and social rights, the seven major

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<sup>59</sup> Women's Quota... (6) Women in Northern and Eastern Syria... Few years and a great achievement (Arabic). 27 January 2021. Women's News Agency (JINHA). Accessed on 23 May 2023. <https://jinhaagency1.com/ar/alsyast/alkwta-alsayyt-6-almrat-fy-shmal-wshrq-swrya-snwat-qlylt-wanjaz-kbyr-2180>

<sup>60</sup> Turning the Tide: Syrian Women's Rights Organisations on the Transitional Justice Map. 27 July 2023. Dawlaty and The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Accessed on 23 May 2023. <https://www.wilpf.org/publications/turning-the-tide-syrian-womens-rights-organisations-on-the-transitional-justice-map/>

<sup>61</sup> The Syrian Jazeera... Women are governed by two laws and two authorities (Arabic). 26 January 2021. Siraj and Daraj Media. Accessed on 23 May 2023. <https://sirajsy.net/ar/?p=5904>

international treaties, and other international agreements ratified by the Syrian State, as well as the customary international law and the laws of the International Labor Organization which stipulate that international laws have priority over national laws.

8. To establish a special entity for women that aims to empower them and to promote gender equality in all government plans and programs. This entity shall play a fundamental role in promoting the rights of women and in documenting the reality of their lives. It shall have the authority necessary to perform its functions and to monitor, investigate, research, educate, advocate, advise and make decisions.
  9. To take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men, in the political, social, economic, and cultural fields. Moreover, to increase women's representation by imposing gender quotas in the State's institutions at all levels and in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with public and political life.
  10. To promote a culture of gender equality and work to change the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women in order to eliminate prejudices and customary and all other practices that are based on the idea of the superiority of men or on stereotyped roles for men and women.
  11. To ensure that women and girls receive the same conditions for career and vocational guidance and enjoy the same employment and educational opportunities and equal remuneration. Also, to ensure the reduction of female student drop-out rates and the prevention of child marriage.
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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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