

## 130 Syrian Organizations Urge Donors at Brussels VIII Conference to Prioritize Urgent Humanitarian Issues in Northeast Syria

*Syrian organizations signing this statement call on the international actors at the Conference to adopt a more inclusive humanitarian approach, place pressing humanitarian issues and needs in northeast Syria at the core of discussions, and support efforts of recovery to cease the wave of emigration and enhance stability.*

On April 30, 2024, Brussels will host the Day of Dialogue, involving Syrian civil society as one of the events of Brussels VIII Conference on Syria, organized annually by the European Union, and aiming at raising funds and allocate them to humanitarian support projects for Syrians. The Conference is an annual opportunity to reiterate the ethical duty towards the ongoing humanitarian plight that has persisted for over 13 years due to the conflict in Syria, and the shape of international engagement. It also ensures that humanitarian assistance is not politicized or diverted in ways that exacerbate the already fragile humanitarian conditions.

The Brussels VIII Conference, this year, comes at a time when areas of northeastern Syria are experiencing unprecedented dire humanitarian conditions, owing to the damage left by a series of Turkish deliberate and repeated airstrikes against the crumbling infrastructure, energy facilities, and objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. Such actions constitute a clear violation of international humanitarian law, according to the Independent International [Commission of Inquiry](#) on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI), which also stressed that these strikes have denied more than one million people to access water and electricity for weeks. In parallel with the attacks on civilian objects, the COI said that “several civilians were killed in the Turkish airstrikes, within a pattern of Turkish drone attacks. Such attacks may amount to war crimes.”

The unlawful bombardment by the Turkish Army on areas in north and east Syria in late 2023 and early 2024, has deeply affected the lives of more than five million native people in the region, including Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, and Syrians, in addition to approximately one million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This has exacerbated the existing catastrophic humanitarian crisis, with 80% of energy facilities completely damaged. Fuel and electricity production experienced a significant decline, while cooking gas production ceased entirely. The price of imported gas increased fifteenfold, at a time when residents increasingly rely on fuel and gas to cope with electricity shortages. Compounded and specific impact was therefore created on women, girls, and the elderly.

In addition to the deterioration of public services in different sectors, [water crisis](#) persists, as politicizing water looms over the issue. Since early 2023, water from Allouk Water Station

has been interrupted more than 20 times, and sometimes the interruption has lasted for months, denying more than half a million people, including the IDPs, and the enforced migrants, from their right to access sufficient and safe water for drinking. Moreover, decreasing Syria's portion of water from the Euphrates River and constructing dams on different rives, from the Turkish side, has impacted the lives of more than five million people, including women.

Despite the generosity shown by some donor countries since the first donor conference for Syria, previous editions witnessed a regrettable and surprising marginalization towards Syria's northeast. Last year, 107 Syrian organizations sent a [letter](#) to the European Union, expressing their disappointment for neglecting local essential issues, and marginalizing regions and communities of northeast Syria during Brussels VII Conference 2023. In the letter, the organizations called on the EU to adopt a more inclusive approach for Syrian issues.

The Syrian organizations signatory to this statement, while urging organizers of the Brussels Eighth Conference to adopt a comprehensive and impartial approach towards humanitarian issues across Syrian, demand to draw attention to the following recommendations. These recommendations have been formulated based on in-depth consultations between local and international organizations operating in northeast Syria, as well as on extensive and focused discussions with local communities to bring together the most pressing humanitarian issues and needs, mitigate migration flows, and promote stability.

The overall outcome of these in-depth discussions yielded the following recommendations:

### **1. To Support Humanitarian Response:**

Main United Nations stakeholders and agencies, the European Union Member States, international donor countries, and non-governmental international organizations should increase the humanitarian funding to meet the pressing humanitarian needs in northeast Syria, including the provision of food and medical assistance, shelter, and clean water.

Food and water security should be prioritized, and pressure should be placed to ensure that all Syrians have access to potable and usable water while safeguarding water resources from political tensions. Similarly, supporting activities to repair agricultural production facilities and securing basic needs for strategic crops like wheat is essential, as well as ensuring modern irrigation systems for all areas. Additionally, enhancing the support for local civil society organizations to provide direct humanitarian assistance to the locals and IDPs.

### **2. To Support Stability-Promotion Mechanisms:**

Adequate support should be provided to community and sustainable development projects and programs in northeast Syria. These initiatives would contribute to strengthening stability and improving life conditions for the locals. Examples include building schools and hospitals, providing employment opportunities, and undertaking projects to construct and improve infrastructure in the area. This includes providing necessary support for efforts to

repair infrastructure and vital facilities destroyed by the deliberate and announced attacks by Turkey, such as power stations, water and health facilities, and civil infrastructure.

There is also a need to support efforts of enhancing dialogue and political settlement in the region through funding projects that consolidate dialogue and understanding between different parties to achieve peace and lasting stability.

### **3. To Enhance the Capacities of Syrian Local Organizations:**

In order to achieve the objective of the Brussels Conference in mobilizing vital financial support to alleviate the crisis of basic needs for Syrians, it is crucial to allocate a readily accessible financial block for local organizations, to be used for addressing the most urgent humanitarian needs. Additionally, efforts should be made to enhance the capacities of Syrian local organizations, facilitate their access to resources and grants to ensure effective and impactful provision to local communities in northern and eastern Syria, and better meeting the resident' needs. Supporting programs aimed at fostering coordination and partnerships between local and international non-governmental organizations is also essential.

Furthermore, it is important to support the development of local administration in the region, enhance its capacity to provide essential services and manage local affairs effectively. Likewise, supporting programs aimed at improving governance, enhancing transparency, and developing effective and meaningful mechanisms for reporting, complaints, and ensuring effective redress for victims.

### **4. Justice in Supporting IDPs Camps and Seeking Solutions:**

Tens of thousands of IDPs in camps in northeast Syria [are not receiving sustained or adequate aid](#), thereby negatively impacting their basic rights. The [assistance](#) provided by UN agencies to the camps is inconsistent, leaving some camps, especially the "informal"-*unrecognized* ones, without sufficient or sustained aid. Therefore, UN agencies should conduct an assessment to ensure that the minimum global standards for humanitarian response in such sites are being met and widen the scale of services provision to encompass the residents.

International donors should increase funding to respond to the protracted nature of displacement in northeast Syria and provide weather-appropriate shelters, sufficient sanitation, and adequate access to food, clean drinking water, health care, and education.

### **5. To Support Victims and Survivors Initiatives and Advocate for Their Causes:**

International donors should direct their efforts towards providing comprehensive and integrated support to victims and survivors. This includes providing necessary funding for initiatives aimed at supporting the victims and enhancing their rights. Additionally, it is crucial to provide necessary support for their psychological recovery and social integration and support efforts aimed at promoting accountability and justice is necessary.

Likewise, it is essential to provide necessary support for programs aiming at empowering victims and survivors to represent themselves and advocate for their rights. Supporting programs for effective representation and participation of victims and survivors in decision-making processes and accountability mechanisms is crucial to ensure that their voices are heard, and their needs and demands are met.

#### **6. To Promote an Inclusive Peace Process for All Syrians:**

The United Nations and the European Union must work towards advancing a political solution that includes all components of the Syrian society. Any sustainable and effective peace project in Syria cannot be accomplished without being inclusive of all segments of the Syrian population.

For this purpose, the UN should ensure the existence of all political actors, as well as the independent Syrian civil society in political negotiations. Moreover, it should broaden the diversity in selecting members of the current Syrian Constitutional Committee, and particularly provide seats for agents representing communities in northeast Syria that is currently underrepresented. The constitution cannot be expected to be a fruitful step towards a comprehensive peace process unless all components of the Syrian population are involved in its drafting.

#### **7. To Handle Sanctions Carefully and Ensure Their Periodic Review:**

The struggle to combat impunity and achieve accountability is among the top priorities of transitional justice. In light of this, the United Nations, the European Union, and the countries participating in the Conference should support accountability initiatives led by the Syrian civil society and the international community to hold all perpetrators accountable and subject them to sanctions.

While ensuring that the sanctions imposed on Syria do not become a tool exacerbating the economic situation of Syrians, and to avoid inflicting harm on Syrian communities, it is imperative to establish an independent mechanism overseen by the United Nations to conduct impartial assessments of the effectiveness of the sanctions and study their impact on civilian populations regularly.

#### **Organizations and Associations Signing the Statement:**

1. ACCESS
2. Accountability Advocates Organization
3. Act For Afrin
4. Adil center for human rights
5. Afrin Platform
6. Ajyal Organization for Development
7. Al-Ahd
8. Al-Raaed Development & Empowerment & Education

9. Al-Raja Organization for Relief and Development
10. Al-zajel
11. Albaghooz Hope for Development
12. Almasa Center for Studies, Research, Consulting, Women's Rights, Empowerment and Training
13. Amal Al-Furat
14. Analysis and Strategic Study Organization (ASO)
15. Anwar Al-Ghad Organization
16. Aras Association
17. Areej Organization
18. Ashna for Development Organization
19. Ashti Center
20. Assyrian Society for Subsidy and Development
21. Ataa Al-Baghooz Organization
22. Atyaf Association
23. Awda For Development
24. Bader Organization for Development and Community Media
25. Baladna
26. BALLOON Org
27. Better Hope for Al-Tabqa
28. Better Tomorrow organization
29. Bridges of Peace for Development
30. Bukra Ahla Association for Relief and Development
31. Buzoq for Development
32. Center for Research and Protection of Women's rights
33. CLEMENCY
34. Coalition of Civil Society Organizations in North and East Syria
35. Community Solidarity Organization
36. Dan for Relief and Development
37. DAR Association for Victims of Forced Displacement
38. Development Seeds Center
39. Development shurooq organization
40. Dijla Organization for Development and Environment
41. Dya al-Aml Association
42. Ebdaa Organization for Development
43. Edraak Organization for Development and Peace
44. Emaar AL- Mansura
45. Engineering for Services
46. Enmaa Al-Jaxer Development
47. Ensaf for Development
48. Environmental Protection Association (EPA)
49. Euphrates NGO
50. Fajr Org
51. Fayd Organization for Development
52. For Them
53. Future Makers Team
54. Gyan Humanitarian Organization
55. HDF Humanitarian
56. Hevy for Relief and Development
57. Hjeen Organization Techicin
58. HLD
59. Hope Smile Organization

60. Inaash Organisation For Development
61. Insight Orgnaization
62. Ishtar Development Organization
63. Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights
64. Jsor Al-amal
65. Kobani for Relief and Development
66. Malva Organization for Arts and Culture
67. Mary for Culture
68. Mltka Al-Nhren
69. Nasmel Amal Organisation
70. Nawras Development Organization
71. New Horizons
72. Noon for Development and Support for Women and Children
73. Noor Al-Huda Charity Association
74. North press agency
75. Nudem Organization
76. Nujeen Association of Community Development
77. Okaz
78. Optimism Youth Organization
79. Oxygen Shabab
80. Payam Center for Mental Health and Human Development
81. PEACE SHE LEADERS NET WORK
82. PÊL- Civil Waves
83. Pioneers of Peace
84. Publish Path
85. Purity
86. QRD
87. Radiance of Hope
88. Rafekatuna Org
89. Rahma Orgnaization for studies and sesquiquadrate
90. RÊ for rehabilitation and development
91. Rescue and Relief Team
92. Restore Hope Association
93. RFD
94. Rights Defence Initiative - RDI
95. RojHilat for Relief and Development
96. Rose for support and empowerment
97. Sahem Organization for Cooperation and Development
98. Salam Organization
99. Sanabel Al-Furat Organization
100. Sara organization to combat violence against women
101. SCSD
102. Serê Kaniyê Displaced Persons Committee
103. Serê Kaniyê/Ras al-Ain Platform
104. Shaqayiq al-khayr
105. SHARE FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
106. Shaushka Women's Association
107. Slav Organization for Civic Activities
108. Sphere for Development
109. Stability Support Center
110. Swaedna Organization for Relief and Development
111. Synergy Association For Victims

112. Syriac Cross for Relief and Development
113. Syrians for Truth and Justice
114. Tal Abyad forum for civil society
115. Tara Development Organisation
116. TARAHOME
117. Tayif Humanitarian Organization
118. The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
119. Together for Jarnya
120. Totol foundation for Relief and Development
121. Weqaya Association
122. Wessal Organization
123. Wheat and Olive Platform
124. White Hope Organization
125. White Human Organization
126. Women For Peace
127. Women Initiatives (WI)
128. Youth for Change
129. Zacon Organization
130. Zameen organisation