



## **Syria: Joint Statement on Restrictions on the Use of the Kurdish Language in Public Space**

27 Syrian organizations call for the recognition of the Kurdish language, alongside other languages in Syria, as official languages, and urge an end to policies of linguistic discrimination and exclusion

The undersigned Syrian organizations are following with deep concern and strong condemnation the attempts by the transitional authorities in Damascus to restrict the use of the Kurdish language in al-Hasakah Governorate. This was recently demonstrated at the Justice Palace in the city center, where the Syrian government insisted on excluding the Kurdish language from the main external signboard.

This unjustified act has provoked widespread disapproval and raised genuine concerns regarding the seriousness of the transitional authorities' commitment to respecting linguistic plurality, particularly given that only one language was used to identify an official institution in a city characterized by ethnic and cultural diversity and inhabited by Arabs, Kurds, Syriacs, and others.

The undersigned organizations consider that the recent practices of the Syrian authorities stand in stark contradiction to the International Bill of Human Rights, as well as to the principles and provisions of the Interim Constitutional Declaration, which explicitly states that the State shall "guarantee the cultural diversity of Syrian society in all its components, and the cultural and linguistic rights of all Syrians" (Article 7). These practices also contradict Article 2 of Decree No. 13 concerning Kurdish rights.

The exclusion of the Kurdish language from public space reflects the persistence of exclusionary and culturally hegemonic policies that Syrians, particularly Kurds, have endured for decades through systematic measures aimed at denying their national, cultural, and linguistic identity, and erasing their presence from public life.

The undersigned organizations recall the importance and centrality of preserving cultural and linguistic diversity in building a sustainable peace in Syria founded on acceptance and respect for diversity. They further stress that such preservation constitutes a fundamental safeguard against the recurrence of conflict in a country that has endured 14 years of devastating violence and decades of authoritarianism and oppression against Syrians, including Kurds, Syriac-Assyrians, and others.

Out of concern for the success of the transitional process, and to ensure that cultural and linguistic marginalization does not become yet another factor contributing to instability, the spread of hate speech, the reproduction of tensions and divisions, and the undermining of civil peace in Syria, we call on the authorities to comply with their international obligations and respect the International Bill of Human Rights, which prohibits policies of discrimination and exclusion.

Constitutional and legal recognition of the Kurdish language as an official language constitutes the restoration of a natural right following decades of Kurdish political and human rights struggle aimed at preserving the language and securing its official recognition. It also reflects the extent to which the current Syrian government is

genuinely committed to ensuring the participation of all Syrian components in shaping the future of their country during the transitional period.

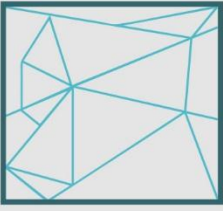
Accordingly, the undersigned Syrian organizations call on the transitional authorities to:

1. Constitutionally recognize the Kurdish language as an official language of the country, and ensure its use in public space, education, and official transactions.
2. Ensure that all State institutions support and promote the use of local languages in Syria, including through the adoption of relevant laws and legislation.
3. Issue immediate directives requiring respect for Syria's diversity and promoting the use of languages in public space without exceptions, while refraining from adopting any exclusionary or discriminatory policies prohibited under international human rights law.
4. Comply with Syria's international obligations and provide the appropriate environment and necessary support for the preservation of the languages spoken in Syria, including the Kurdish language, while guaranteeing their free and unrestricted use.
5. Constitutionally guarantee the right of all Syrian communities to learn and teach their mother tongues, and integrate this right into the educational and cultural policies of the Syrian State.
6. Criminalize attempts to forcibly assimilate diverse languages and cultures into a single linguistic or national identity, classify such acts as forms of racial discrimination, and recognize linguistic and cultural diversity as a source of strength and richness for Syria.
7. Amend the Interim Constitutional Declaration to explicitly recognize Syria's cultural and linguistic diversity and ensure its incorporation into the permanent

### **Signatory organizations:**

1. ASO Consultancy & Strategic Studies
2. Ahrar - Syrian Liberal Party
3. The Union of Intellectuals
4. The Humanitarian and Development Cooperation Organisation (HDC)
5. ACHTI Center
6. Ahlam Saghira
7. Artist Team
8. Ambassadors for People With Disabilities

9. Analysis and Strategic Studies
10. Ella Organization for Development and peace building
11. PÊL – Civil Waves
12. Environmental Green Tress Association
13. Dar Association for Victims of Forced Displacement
14. Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ)
15. Synergy Association for Victims
16. RÊ for Rehabilitation and Development
17. TEVIN. Independent Think Tank for Kurdish Affairs
18. Shawishka Association for Women
19. Mbader Association for Community Development
20. Ronî Peywend for Community Leadership
21. Peace She-Leaders Network
22. Kobani Organization for Relief and Development
23. Malva for Arts and Culture
24. Rose Organization for Support and Empowerment
25. Nextep Organization
26. Yalda Community Center
27. HÊZ Awareness



## ABOUT STJ

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) started as an idea in a co-founder's mind while attending the U.S. Middle-East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program (LDF) in 2015. The idea became a reality and flourished into an independent, non-profit, impartial, non-governmental human rights organization.

STJ's beginnings were more than humble; initially, it only reported stories of Syrians who experienced arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, or torture. Planted in fertile soil, the seed of this project grew into an established human rights organization licensed in the Middle East and the European Union. STJ today undertakes to detect and uncover violations of all types committed in all Syrian parts by the various parties to the conflict.

Convinced that Syria's diversity is a wealth, our researchers and volunteers serve with unfailing dedication to monitor, expose, and document human rights violations that continue unabated in Syria since 2011, regardless of the affiliation of the victims or perpetrators.