

Syria/Qamishli: “Youth Voice, Tomorrow’s Energy” –YOVO Marks International Youth Day



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On 12 August 2026, the Youth Voice Network (YOVO) launched a large-scale youth event in the city of Qamishli/Qamishlo, titled "Youth Voice, Tomorrow's Energy," on International Youth Day. The event brought together civil society organizations and institutions, as well as young women and men, to strengthen their participation in public life, highlight their talents and creativity across various fields, and create broader spaces for them to voice their issues and needs and help shape solutions.

YOVO was established on 23 April 2026 through an initiative by White Hope and TBS. It is an independent, nonprofit youth network that seeks to represent and empower young women and men without discrimination, provide a safe and inclusive space where they can express themselves, take initiative, and exert influence, and strengthen their participation in civic action through capacity building, partnership development, and support for youth-led initiatives.

The event was attended by young women and men, as well as a number of active civil society organizations and institutions, including Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), the Barzani Charity Foundation (BCF), and several associations and organizations working in youth support and civic engagement.

The event featured presentations on youth success stories, during which several young women and men shared their experiences and initiatives and emphasized the importance of providing an enabling environment that offers young people genuine opportunities to participate, develop their capacities, and contribute to positive change in their communities.

During the event, Saman Sheikh Saeed, a dentist and supervisor of the TUFF team, was recognized for establishing a youth running group and raising awareness of healthy lifestyles.

Sheikh Saeed said,

"I found it distinctive because it targeted young people, and of course, it will benefit both young people and society."

He also noted that the YOVO Network has an opportunity to organize similar events regularly and maintain an active on-the-ground presence to raise awareness of the Network and encourage young women and men to participate. He stressed the importance of ethical, health, cultural, and sports awareness.

The event also featured a musical performance by the youth band Minor Music, followed by an open discussion among young women and men and representatives of the associations and organizations contributing to the YOVO Network. The discussion addressed the main challenges and issues facing young people, as well as solutions and

proposals to activate their role and strengthen their participation in various areas of public life and civic action.

For his part, Ali Nawaf al-Hassan, founder of the volunteer group for free blood donation in support of thalassemia patients and others, described the YOVO Network as "a positive and valuable step for young women and men," offering them an opportunity to share their ideas and initiatives and to contribute to their communities.

During the event, al-Hassan was also recognized for his initiative and his support for patients and community engagement. He told STJ,

"I encourage every young man and woman to take the initiative and engage in any positive activity that creates a meaningful experience for others, because one's own motivation is the primary source of every initiative."

A key part of the discussion focused on expanding the Youth Voice Network's activities across different areas of Syria, thereby creating broader opportunities for young women and men to participate, connect, and exchange experiences and initiatives. A recommendation was also made to establish a dedicated youth space in the city of Qamishli/Qamishlo, providing a safe and inclusive environment for young people to meet, engage in dialogue, and develop youth initiatives and activities.

Many representatives of the organizations participating in the event also affirmed their readiness to support young women and men by ensuring the genuine representation of their issues and needs; providing them with support across various fields; building their capacities; empowering them; and encouraging them to advocate for their rights.

The event also featured an arts-and-crafts exhibition organized by the Ahlam Saghira Association/Small Dreams Association and the Mashari' Saghira Team/Small Projects Team. The exhibition showcased paintings, drawings, artworks, and pottery, providing a platform to highlight participants' creativity and increase the visibility of youth and community initiatives.

As part of its support for the Network's work, STJ [joined](#) YOVO's Advisory Board, underscoring its continued commitment to advancing civic initiatives and to strengthening the role of young women and men as active partners in building a society founded on justice, human rights, the rule of law, and civic participation.



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.

