

Syria- Decree No. 13 Decades of Kurdish Citizenship Deprivation Put to the Test of Remedy and Redress



A Comprehensive National Framework is Urgently Needed to Address the Accumulated Consequences, Integrate Naturalization into Transitional Justice, and Provide Full Reparations to Victims of the 1962 al-Hasakah Census

October 2026



Funded by
the European Union



CEASEFIRE
centre for civilian rights



Syria: Decree No. 13: Decades of Kurdish Citizenship Deprivation Put to the Test of Remedy and Redress

A Comprehensive National Framework is Urgently Needed to Address the
Accumulated Consequences, Integrate Naturalization into Transitional Justice, and
Provide Full Reparations to Victims of the 1962 al-Hasakah Census

This publication was funded by the European Union, and in partnership with the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Syrians for Truth and Justice – STJ/ the publisher and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights.





Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	4
2.	Background	5
3.	Decree No. 13: Citizenship Provisions and the Scope of the Remedy.....	6
3.1.	Citizenship provisions and covered groups	6
3.2.	The decree and implementing instructions	7
3.3.	“Granting” and “Restoring” citizenship: meaning and legal implications.....	8
3.4.	Limits of rights recognition or retroactive exceptions?	9
4.	From the Decree to the Application: How Do the Procedures Work Once Applications Are Accepted?.....	10
4.1.	Access to information and understanding the procedures.....	11
4.2.	Required documents and the authorities approached by applicants	12
4.3.	Timelines and the clarity of their enforcement.....	13
4.4.	Variations in legal status: incomplete registration and partial family regularization	14
4.5.	Status of processing: varying stages and pending outcomes	15
5.	Administrative Process: Procedural Hurdles and Access Challenges.....	15
5.1.	Distribution of administrative responsibilities	16
5.2.	Incomplete previous records and pending applications.....	17
5.3.	Individuals Residing Outside Syria: Limitations of Proxy Submissions and Procedural Hurdles	18
5.4.	Evidentiary difficulties and data correction challenges.....	20
5.5.	Citizenship designations on forms and the protection of ethnic identity	24
5.6.	Appeals and judicial review: textual safeguards versus practical barriers	25
6.	The 1962 Census and the Divergent Legal Status of Denationalized Populations	26
7.	The Roots of Citizenship Deprivation and Its Connection to Land, Resettlement, and Arabization Policies	27
8.	The Social and Intergenerational Consequences of Statelessness	28
9.	Restoring Citizenship and Addressing Accumulated Socioeconomic Rights	29
10.	Recommendations and Legal Analysis.....	30
11.	The Desired Citizenship: Dignity, Security, and the Future of the Next Generation.....	31



1. Introduction

Decree No. 13 of 2026 seeks to turn the page on decades of exclusion and address the cumulative impacts of the 1962 census by restoring the civil and fundamental rights of those deprived of Syrian citizenship. Yet its practical implementation faces severe administrative and bureaucratic challenges that risk reducing its text to unfulfilled promises.

Jomerd Hamo, a stateless Syrian Kurd from al-Qahtaniyyeh/Tirbepî, submitted an application for Syrian citizenship under [Decree No. 13 of 2026](#). Despite completing the interview and fingerprinting and receiving an official receipt bearing his photo, the fate of his eight children, some of whom have reached adulthood, remained uncertain because their names were not included in the application, even though [Executive Decision No. 144/M](#) allows the head of the household to submit a family application for himself, his spouse, and his minor children. According to his testimony to Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), he was informed during the application process and subsequent follow-ups that his children's registration would come only after he first obtained citizenship, followed by the validation of his marriage. Consequently, Jomerd's children remain outside the application process to this day, holding no official proof other than neighborhood council (the commune) certificates issued by the former Autonomous Administration, with no clear timeline for when these procedures might conclude, potentially stretching for months or longer.

In contrast, the path of Jwan Abdo, also a stateless Kurd, highlights disparities in administrative practices. He brought his children and grandchildren to the Municipal Stadium center in Qamishli at the committee's request and provided detailed information and documents about his family, including his daughter living outside Syria. After document verification and data entry, he received a receipt confirming the application, and all family members were included. However, according to his latest follow-up, the case remained "under review," with no clarification of the remaining steps or the completion date.

Meanwhile, Evan Ramo, a stateless Kurd living in al-Malikiyah/Dêrik, spoke to STJ about the extensive obstacles he and his wife faced while following up on their files, including errors in his and his son's data and a notification that the correction of his son's name would be postponed until after identity cards were issued. Furthermore, the family learned of his wife's interview appointment late, via the application, and when they visited the committee at the Municipal Stadium center in Qamishli, they were told verbally that she "will not get an ID." His attempts to request a review of her status were stonewalled. Evan notes that when he complained to the committee judge, the official responded: "Do not you want Kurdistan [a separate region]? What do you need a Syrian identity for?"

Evan's testimony raises a critical question about the implementation mechanisms of Decree No. 13: How can we ensure that processing citizenship deprivation becomes an administrative practice that safeguards the dignity of those affected and prevents their rights from being frozen based on political stances attributed to them?

These three cases reveal a stark divergence in post-application outcomes. While Jomerd's children remain excluded from the process, Jwan's paperwork included his family members without a final decision confirming that their civil registry records were complete, and Evan's experience involved data corrections and case review, along with fears of political profiling. These cases highlight the importance of tracking procedures beyond initial registration, through record completion, document issuance, and the preservation of dignity.

Against this backdrop, the present report raises its core questions: How was Article 4 of Decree No. 13 implemented? What stage have applicants' applications and their families reached? What factors still separate the regularization of their legal status from the actual exercise of their rights?

The report tracks the latest documented stages through the end of September 2026, distinguishing among application registration, adjudication, civil registry finalization, and document issuance. It also examines how these stages affect family reunification, education, employment, property, and freedom of movement, and presents the testifiers' aspirations for equality, political participation, and redress. It draws on previous pathways solely to explain ongoing, unresolved situations, without conflating past outcomes with the achievements of the new decree.

2. Background

On 16 January 2026, Syria's transitional President, Ahmed al-Sharaa, issued [Decree No. 13](#) of 2026, which addresses the cultural, linguistic, and civil rights of Kurds in Syria, including measures to address the deprivation of citizenship stemming from the exceptional 1962 census in al-Hasakah. Article 4 of the decree provides: "All laws and exceptional measures resulting from the 1962 census in al-Hasakah Governorate are hereby repealed, and Syrian citizenship shall be granted to all Syrian residents of Kurdish origin residing in the country, including those whose civil status has not been registered, with full equality in rights and duties."

Article 7 further tasked the relevant ministries and authorities with issuing the necessary implementing instructions.

This report focuses on the implementation of these instructions. Drawing on testimonies from people deprived of citizenship, it traces the procedures for obtaining citizenship, applicants' experiences, the difficulties they face in completing their

applications, and their expectations regarding the civil and political rights they hope to exercise after regaining citizenship.

Methodologically, the report is based on in-depth interviews with ten people who experienced deprivation of citizenship, as well as testimony from a lawyer. All interviews were conducted in person, and informed consent was obtained to publish the testimonies included in this report, including the use of real names or pseudonyms, according to each interviewee's preference.

STJ also obtained a memorandum submitted by the legal office of the [Kurdish National Council \(KNC\)](#) to the General Directorate of Civil Affairs in Syria, calling for procedures to be facilitated for people applying for citizenship both inside and outside Syria.

The report presents the status of each application based on the latest statement or update available from the person concerned. The submission of an application or the taking of fingerprints does not, in itself, constitute confirmation that citizenship has been granted or that the relevant identity documents have been issued. The report does not, of course, claim that the findings drawn from the available testimonies can be generalized to all applicants. Most of the documented cases remain under consideration, following case-specific procedures, and no final decision has yet been issued in most of them.

3. Decree No. 13: Citizenship Provisions and the Scope of the Remedy

3.1. Citizenship provisions and covered groups

Article 4 of Decree No. 13 of 2026 is significant because it combines the repeal of laws and exceptional measures stemming from the 1962 al-Hasakah census with the granting of Syrian citizenship to citizens of Kurdish origin residing in Syria. It also expressly includes unregistered persons (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*) and grants them full equality in rights and duties.

This differs from [Decree No. 49](#), issued in April 2011 by Bashar al-Assad, which limited citizenship to those classified as foreigners of al-Hasakah (*ajanib al-Hasakah*) and did not extend it to the thousands unregistered (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*).

From this perspective, the new decree's significance lies in its explicit inclusion of the unregistered persons (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*). However, the practical realization of this inclusion still depends on their ability to establish their status and complete the required procedures, given the documentary and civil-registration gaps resulting from their prior deprivation of citizenship.

At the same time, the phrase "residing in Syria" raises a fundamental question about the status of people who have left the country, including refugees and family members

living abroad. The provision does not specify a reference date for determining residence, nor does it clarify whether it refers to physical presence in Syria at the time of application or to habitual residence interrupted by displacement, refuge, or other circumstances.

Therefore, the government should announce clear, specific criteria and procedures for those residing outside Syria, the displaced, and returnees, ensuring they can benefit from citizenship regularization on an equal footing with residents inside the country. This would help prevent displacement or refuge from becoming an additional obstacle to addressing the consequences of citizenship deprivation.

Nevertheless, this ambiguity does not necessarily mean that people living outside Syria are categorically excluded, as evidenced by those whose family members have submitted applications and by what was [reported](#) by the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), which cited the General Directorate of Civil Affairs as saying the ministry had “decided to grant an additional period to the children of Syrian Kurds residing outside the country whose applications had been submitted by their relatives, in order to ensure that all eligible persons have an opportunity to complete the required procedures.”

This is despite the fact that neither the decree nor [Decision No. 144/M](#) explicitly mentions people living outside Syria.

3.2. The decree and implementing instructions

Article 7 of Decree No. 13 of 2026 tasked the relevant ministries and authorities, each within its mandate, with issuing implementing instructions necessary to give effect to the decree’s provisions. The decree thus established the legal framework for granting citizenship, identified the groups covered by the provision, and affirmed equality in rights and duties, while leaving executive authorities to regulate the procedures for implementing these provisions.

Within the hierarchy of legal norms, implementing instructions rank below laws and decrees. Their function is to interpret and clarify legal provisions and to regulate the procedures for their implementation; they may not contravene or amend the decree or restrict its scope of application.

On 20 February 2026, the Syrian Ministry of Interior [issued](#) Ministerial Decision No. 144/M, which sets out the implementing instructions for granting Syrian citizenship to Kurdish citizens covered by Decree No. 13 of 2026.

According to the Ministry of Interior, in statements published through its official channels, the decision requires those seeking Syrian citizenship to submit a formal application at designated centers. Applications may be submitted either individually

using Form No. (1) or as a family application by the head of household using Form No. (2). Applicants must also provide a letter of identification from the local mukhtar and a proof-of-residence document establishing residence in Syrian territory, along with any other official document demonstrating such residence.

The Ministry of Interior designated application centers in the governorates of Damascus, Aleppo, Raqqa, and Deir ez-Zor, with one center in each governorate, as well as five centers in al-Hasakah Governorate.

Article 9 of the decision provides: “If it is established that the information submitted is inaccurate or that any of the registration documents has been falsified, the application shall be canceled, and legal proceedings shall be initiated against the person concerned in accordance with applicable law.”

3.3. “Granting” and “Restoring” citizenship: meaning and legal implications

Restoring citizenship matters because it requires rectifying a prior deprivation and recognizing a right from which individuals were deprived, including the legal and civil consequences of that deprivation, which in some cases have extended across generations. Against this backdrop, the use of the phrase “Syrian citizenship shall be granted” in Article 4 of Decree No. 13 of 2026, despite its connection to the repeal of the exceptional measures resulting from the 1962 census, raises a fundamental question: Should the cases covered by the decree be treated as instances of acquiring citizenship anew, or as the restoration of a pre-existing right and the resolution of the consequences of its deprivation?

In an interview with STJ, a Kurdish lawyer who closely follows citizenship regularization for Kurds in Syria criticized the use of the term “granting” rather than “restoring” citizenship in Decree No. 13. In his view, the former may suggest that citizenship is being bestowed by the state as a humanitarian gesture, rather than recognized as reflecting individuals’ original belonging to the country and their right to citizenship.

The lawyer confirmed that the process of restoring citizenship refers to civil records that existed before the 1962 census, which he says still exist, using them as a reference without treating them as the sole basis for correcting individuals’ legal status. In his reading, addressing the census’s effects requires “restoring the standing of these records and building on them to address the deprivation that resulted from it.” He links this distinction to the state’s responsibility for the consequences of citizenship deprivation, stating:

“When we say restoration of citizenship, this means that the state assumes and bears full responsibility for all the consequences resulting from the implementation of that census.”

The lawyer further considers that Article 4 may provide a path for affected persons in both the foreigners of al-Hasakah (*ajanib al-Hasakah*) and unregistered (*maktoumeen/maktoumi alqayd*) categories to pursue judicial claims for compensation for the harm they have suffered. This interpretation matters because it recognizes that remedying the situation of affected people goes beyond issuing citizenship documents to include acknowledging prior deprivation and addressing its consequences.

The practical importance of this issue becomes clear when considering how a person's civil registration will be recorded and, more importantly, from what date citizenship will be legally recognized. According to the details published regarding Decision No. 144/M, "the names of approved applicants shall be entered, according to family classification, into a dedicated statistical system and then transferred to the official electronic civil affairs system, following the completion of all stages of objection, in preparation for registering them in the records of Syrian citizens" (Article 7).

This provision outlines the registration process for approved applicants but is silent on whether registration has retroactive effect, meaning it rectifies the prior deprivation and its consequences from the period of deprivation, or prospective effect, meaning citizenship takes effect from the date of application or another date determined by the administration. It is therefore important to clarify the legal date from which citizenship and its associated rights take effect, and to distinguish that date from the mere issuance or receipt of an identity card. This distinction is essential to ensure that rectifying the prior deprivation restores the rights lost as a result of it and addresses its legal and civil consequences.

3.4. Limits of rights recognition or retroactive exceptions?

The regularization of citizenship status under Decree No. 13 of 2026 raises a fundamental question about the date from which citizenship takes effect and the consequences of that date for applying legal requirements to exercise various rights. A distinction must be made among the date on which citizenship is legally recognized, the date on which civil registration is completed, and the date on which an identity card is issued. These dates should not be presumed to be the same, nor should it be assumed that the relevant rights take effect only from the date on which the citizenship document is received.

This distinction is illustrated by employment in positions governed by the Basic Law for State Employees No. 50 of 2004. [Article 7](#) requires that a person have held Syrian citizenship for at least five years, subject to specified exceptions. This requirement raises a question about its application to persons covered by Decree No. 13: should the five-year period be calculated from the date their citizenship applications are regularized? Or could their citizenship be recognized as having existed from an earlier date based on a legal interpretation or exception? The phrase "Syrian citizenship shall

be granted” in the decree, by itself, does not resolve this question, nor does it establish how the requirement has actually been applied to persons covered by the decree.

Political participation presents a similar challenge. For instance, under the interim electoral system for the People’s Assembly ([Decree No. 143](#) of 2025), members of an electoral body must have held Syrian citizenship prior to May 1, 2011, though it explicitly carved out an exception for beneficiaries of Decree No. 49 of 2011. Since candidacy is restricted exclusively to members of these electoral bodies, this creates a major question: Are individuals whose citizenship is regularized under Decree No. 13 eligible to participate if this prior-date requirement remains in place? And how can that requirement be reconciled with the principle of equality guaranteed by the decree? It is worth noting, however, that restricting voting and running for office to members of selected bodies is a general rule in that electoral system, so it does not single out or target those previously deprived of citizenship.

Addressing these issues requires establishing the precise legal effective date of citizenship and clarifying how it impacts the conditions for exercising various rights, thereby giving full effect to the principle of “full equality” enshrined in Article 4.

At the same time, a distinction must be made between questions raised by our analysis of the provisions and actual restrictions documented in practice. The available data does not, at this stage, document any cases in which individuals were denied employment or excluded from political participation specifically because of the date their citizenship was regularized under the new decree.

Moreover, recognizing citizenship from an earlier date does not automatically remedy all consequences of past deprivation. While correcting a person’s legal status removes certain barriers, addressing educational, professional, and property losses, as well as resolving past family-status issues, requires specific procedures tailored to each domain. Therefore, determining the temporal effect of citizenship is vital to providing redress, but it cannot substitute for an independent framework designed to address past harms and restore full rights.

4. From the Decree to the Application: How Do the Procedures Work Once Applications Are Accepted?

On 1 April 2026, the Syrian Ministry of Interior [announced](#) that it would begin accepting citizenship applications from persons covered by Decree No. 13, starting on 6 April, in the governorates of Damascus, Aleppo, al-Hasakah, Raqqah, and Deir ez-Zor. The Ministry explained that the first stage of the process involves receiving applications and reviewing the submitted documents, in preparation for completing the procedures for granting citizenship.

The testimonies collected by STJ allow a clear tracing of the experiences of a number of applicants, from learning about the procedures and beginning their applications through to the latest stage documented in each case at the time of the interviews.

4.1. Access to information and understanding the procedures

The people whose testimonies STJ documented relied on a range of sources to learn about the procedures and follow up on their applications. These included social media pages, mukhtars, lawyers, and staff at application centers, as well as direct communication and electronic channels after applications had been registered. Knowing that the decree had been issued, or even being aware of Implementing Decision No. 144/M, did not necessarily mean that applicants understood the steps required or the sequence in which they had to be completed, even for those who had previously gone through lengthy administrative procedures without reaching a resolution.

Jomerd Hamo, an unregistered (*Maktoum al-qayd*) person from the city of al-Qahtaniyyeh/Tirbesspî, said he learned about the decree from his village's Facebook page and then asked how he could benefit from it:

"I was asking people about the procedures so I could start the application, and I intended to handle it myself if it was not too costly."

He later submitted his application at the Municipal Stadium Center in Qamishli. He said the application-receiving committee later contacted him via WhatsApp and asked him to return for a follow-up appointment.

The verbal guidance Jomerd received shaped how he structured his family's paperwork. According to his account, a mukhtar issuing residency certificates outside the center advised him to apply alone, telling him to register his children only after securing his own citizenship and formalizing his marriage. He added that the committee members processing the applications later gave him the exact same advice, even though some of his children were already adults. He recalled:

"We are illiterate and do not understand how these legal processes work. [...] We trusted what they told us, and now our children have been left out of the naturalization process."

Interviewee Kawa Ali described his follow-up process, saying he used the Central Administration of Civil Affairs [website](#) to track his application status but struggled to understand what the system's status updates meant. He noted:

"It shows that my application is stalled at the final result stage. I do not know precisely what that stage entails."

These two experiences highlight a clear need for applicants to receive accessible, clear guidance in their native language on the structure of family paperwork and the exact meaning of each processing stage. They also underscore the need for transparent channels for inquiries, requests for missing documents, and application corrections.

On 19 June 2026, the Syrian Ministry of Interior [announced](#) the launch of the Civil Affairs mobile application, which aims to “facilitate civil transactions and services electronically with speed, accuracy, and security.” The Ministry said the application offers services such as appointment booking and document verification, as well as the ability to “track and check the status of naturalization applications using an application number.”

Although the application launched roughly two months after registration for unregistered persons began, it enabled several applicants to track their progress more easily. At the same time, however, the testimonies documented in this report, alongside field monitoring of the administrative process, highlight the urgent need to establish dedicated communication channels for Kurdish-speaking inquiries. Furthermore, they underscore the need to present the decree’s instructions and implementation provisions much more clearly within the Civil Affairs application.

4.2. Required documents and the authorities approached by applicants

According to published details on [Decision No. 144/M](#), applicants may submit applications individually or as a family unit. They must include a mukhtar’s identification certificate, proof of residence, and other documents supporting the applicant’s status. Center committees receive, register, and review the files; conduct interviews; and take photographs and fingerprints. They then forward the applications to subcommittees and central committees. These bodies ultimately compile lists of approved and rejected applicants for the Minister’s final approval.

The testimonies documented by STJ reveal inconsistencies in the documents applicants requested or provided across review stages. Jomerd stated that he submitted proof-of-residence documents and photographs and received an application receipt without any requests for additional proof. During a later follow-up visit, he answered several questions, had his fingerprints taken, and received a second receipt bearing his photograph.

Meanwhile, Blenk Fattah traveled to the Ad Darbasiyah center after large crowds prevented him from registering in Qamishli. He submitted proof of residence for himself and his brother in Amuda, along with family identification documents. According to his account, staff requested detailed names and birthdates for family members and grandparents but did not ask for supporting paperwork to verify those details. He recalled:

“They did not ask us for any supporting documents beyond what we submitted [...] they only asked for family information.”

By contrast, Kawa Ali said that at the al-Jawadiyah/Çilaxa center, he presented an old school ID and an old family card, used to collect rations from the state consumer cooperative, to prove his prior residence in Syria. Conversely, Sirwan Mustafa brought school certificates and an old civil-status document, but center staff told him they were unnecessary at that stage.

These experiences reveal a distinct lack of uniformity in the documentation required or accepted, both across individual cases and between stages of the same application. This underscores the urgent need for clear standards for requests for supplementary evidence and transparent guidelines for acceptable alternative documents when primary records are missing. Furthermore, including the names of individuals residing outside Syria in an application does not automatically guarantee their eligibility for citizenship or exempt them from subsequent screening procedures.

4.3. Timelines and the clarity of their enforcement

Decision No. 144/M established a 30-working-day window for application submissions, beginning on 6 April 2026, the date committee operations launched. After this initial period expired, the deadline was [extended](#) by 15 days on 7 May for centers in al-Hasakah, Qamishli, and al-Jawadiyah/Çilaxa.

The decision also sets strict operational schedules: 20 working days for center committees to refer files after the submission window [closes](#), and 10 working days for subcommittees to forward them. It also allows applicants to appeal subcommittee rulings within 15 days of notification. These deadlines govern distinct procedural stages; none, taken alone, guarantees a timeframe for a final decision on an application or for the issuance of personal identity documents.

Given these administrative hurdles, applicants need sufficient time to compile documentation and correct errors, especially by extending submission deadlines when necessary. This flexibility must reflect the realities of individuals living abroad and those struggling to prove their status or access physical application centers. All active deadlines and subsequent extensions must also be communicated publicly and transparently to ensure that procedural cut-offs do not inadvertently bar eligible individuals from regularizing their status and reclaiming their full rights.

The testimonies documented by STJ also highlighted the relative ease of submitting applications compared with past attempts. Sirwan Mustafa noted:

“There was no difficulty in submitting the applications, and no notable expenses to speak of.”

He explained that he finalized his submission the day after his initial visit because office hours had ended. He contrasted this experience with two previous attempts, each costing about \$800 without granting citizenship, costs tied strictly to legacy administrative pathways rather than Decree No. 13.

Similarly, Blenk described the new registration process as “easier,” even amid heavy crowds that forced him to visit another center and meet a two-day completion timeline. However, he drew a sharp distinction between a smooth application process and the actual outcome, stating:

“We managed to register easily despite the massive turnout and chaos, but I remain unconvinced until I actually see the results.”

For Kawa Ali, the process required traveling from Iraqi Kurdistan to Syria with his children to submit the application, followed by another return trip for an interview on 26 July 2026. During this follow-up, he discovered that the al-Jawadiyah/Çilaxa center committee had omitted his two young children from the application, forcing him to file a separate request to include them.

4.4. Variations in legal status: incomplete registration and partial family regularization

The cases examined in this report do not stem from a uniform legal or registration status. Some interviewees were unregistered (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*), whereas others had previously secured citizenship or preliminary documentation but had not completed registration in the national Civil Affairs database or obtained their personal identity cards. Furthermore, some families have had the status of certain members regularized, while others remain entirely outside the process.

The latter scenario is exemplified by Rouj Issa, who noted that although his name was entered in the family booklet, his entry in the national Civil Affairs database remained incomplete, and he was redirected to follow up on a previously pending file. Describing his remaining hurdles, he stated:

“I still need to get my name fully integrated into the database, provide fingerprints for my ID card, obtain the family booklet, register my marriage, and register my child.”

Similarly, Sarbest Shekhi stated that through a prior administrative track, he obtained a national ID number and a civil-status extract, yet he remains in limbo, waiting for his identity card and the resolution of his family’s status .

Nabil’s account further illustrates partial family regularization: his brother, Mohammad Khair, was excluded from a prior process for failing to complete the verification procedures. Nabil recounted:

“Approval was granted for all of us to obtain citizenship, except for Mohammad Khair.”

Likewise, Jwan reported that one of his brothers had previously obtained citizenship, while he himself remained unregistered (*maktoum/maktoum al-qayd*).

These experiences underscore the critical need to assess each individual’s legal and civil registration status separately. One family member’s citizenship does not mean the deprivation affecting other relatives has ended or that their legal status is fully resolved.

4.5. Status of processing: varying stages and pending outcomes

By the time the interviews were conducted, the cases STJ documented had reached various stages of the procedural pipeline. Jomerd submitted his application and was later called back for a follow-up visit, during which he answered several questions, had his fingerprints taken, and received a receipt bearing his photograph. However, his testimony provided no confirmation that a final decision granting him citizenship had been issued, that his civil registration had been finalized, or that he had received his identity card. Furthermore, his children remained excluded from the application.

For Sirwan Mustafa, the documented progress of his application was limited to submission and receipt collection. He noted that the staff member registered the application under his deceased father’s name, despite being explicitly informed of the father’s passing. By the time of the interview, he had received no follow-up communication and could not find his name on the reviewed lists. His account left it unclear why the application was registered in his father’s name or how this might affect his ability to track or resolve his case.

Blenk Fattah similarly stated that he received an application receipt dated 14 April 2026, but received no subsequent outreach and could not find his name on the initial public lists he checked.

Kawa Ali had advanced to the interview, photography, and fingerprinting stage and was awaiting a final determination. His testimony likewise offered no confirmation of completed civil registration or the issuance of personal identity documents. Rouj Issa, by contrast, continued to face systemic hurdles in finalizing his prior application and in having his status properly integrated into the electronic database.

5. Administrative Process: Procedural Hurdles and Access Challenges

The testimonies documented in this report show that submitting certain applications has become easier and less financially burdensome than before Decree No. 13. However, they also highlight persistent difficulties in finalizing administrative procedures, resolving legacy civil-registration records, and tracking the status of family members residing abroad. These obstacles vary by case: some stem from divided



responsibilities among relevant authorities, while others involve document availability, local office practices, and the clarity of guidance provided to applicants.

In light of these findings, implementing regulations must establish clear procedures for resolving incomplete applications and outstanding cases from prior administrative tracks. They should explicitly designate the authorities responsible for overseeing these files and formally recognize documents and steps already processed. Furthermore, any supplementary requirements must be strictly limited to filling actual gaps, sparing applicants from submitting new applications or repeating procedures they have already completed.

Meanwhile, Kamal Jolly's testimony highlights the harsh practical challenges of strict personal attendance mandates in cases involving illness. He stated that although he informed the committee that his sister suffered from a severe neurological condition that made travel extremely difficult, the committee insisted on her physical presence, forcing him to transport her. During the appointment, staff demanded proof of their sibling relationship, prompting him to present family photographs and videos of them together.

This incident underscores an urgent need for publicly accessible procedures that accommodate individuals unable to attend in person due to illness or disability, and that clearly define alternative verification methods and acceptable evidence.

5.1. Distribution of administrative responsibilities

Decision No. 144/M allocates responsibility for citizenship procedures among the center committees, subcommittees, and the central committee. The central committee reviews recommendations and objections, compiles lists of approved and rejected applicants, including reasons for refusal, and submits them to the Minister of Interior for final ratification. Thus, the central committee lacks final decision-making authority; its role is strictly confined to receiving applications, conducting reviews, and forwarding files to higher administrative levels.

A Kurdish lawyer interviewed by STJ criticized the limited mandate of local committees, emphasizing their deep familiarity with local demographics and regional realities. He noted:

“The subcommittees should have had a broader role than merely making recommendations. They tell us that the committee only proposes, while the ultimate power to accept or reject applications rests entirely with the central committee.”

Nevertheless, multiple administrative levels make it difficult to determine the cause of delays in any particular case. Identifying where a file has stalled requires knowing when



it was referred, which authority currently holds it, and which procedure remains to be completed.

This critique of constrained local powers aligns with proposals in a memorandum drafted by the KNC's legal office in Syria – STJ obtained a copy – and sent to the General Directorate of Civil Affairs regarding Decision No. 144/M. The memorandum proposed granting subcommittees the authority to approve and adjudicate applications directly, or appointing central committee representatives in each governorate, thereby streamlining the process to two committee tiers and vesting final decision-making authority in the subcommittees.

5.2. Incomplete previous records and pending applications

Files initiated through administrative procedures before Decree No. 13 that remain incomplete require tailored solutions based on the procedural stage reached and the steps already completed. In some cases, an applicant's legal status was formally regularized, but civil registration or the issuance of associated identity documents remained incomplete. In others, the process yielded no final outcome, and several individuals were entirely excluded from family-wide applications.

Rouj Issa stated that the committee directed him to follow up on his pending application. After visiting Damascus, he was told to wait for the Civil Affairs offices in al-Hasakah to resume operations before his registration could be entered into the electronic system. According to his account, this administrative bottleneck continued to prevent him from obtaining identity documents, formalizing his marriage, and registering his child.

Meanwhile, Jwan reported that he tried to follow up on his application between 2011 and 2024 without obtaining citizenship, only to be told that his dossier had been destroyed in a fire in Damascus. He subsequently resubmitted his paperwork through the new pathway. His situation contrasts with that of Mohammad Khair, Nabil's brother, who was excluded from a previous family application because he failed to complete the verification procedures, while the rest of his family secured citizenship.

These cases underscore the pressing need to clarify the legal status of legacy files, determine which previously completed documents and procedures remain valid, and designate the authority responsible for finalizing civil registrations or addressing the status of individuals excluded from past regularizations. Furthermore, transparent guidelines must specify when a previous file can be resumed versus when a new application is required, with explicit justifications, to ensure applicants are not unfairly burdened by duplicating procedures they have already completed.

5.3. Individuals Residing Outside Syria: Limitations of Proxy Submissions and Procedural Hurdles

Families with members residing outside Syria face distinct obstacles regarding the viability of proxy submissions, the precise scope of family-wide applications, mandatory personal-attendance rules, and available procedural timeframes. Assessing these cases requires a clear distinction between initial application registration, interviews and verification, civil registration finalization, and the issuance and receipt of identity documents. Including an individual residing abroad in a family application does not constitute final approval for citizenship or guarantee that procedures can be completed in their absence.

In a [statement](#) published by Hawar News on 7 April 2026, Aziz al-Muhaymad, Director of Civil Affairs in al-Hasakah, explained that a head of household could submit an application on behalf of children residing outside the country, with their residence outside Syria noted in the application. He said that, at a later stage, they would be required to complete the procedures in person at the permanent committees in Damascus. However, the statement did not clarify what was meant by “at a later stage,” when these individuals would be required to appear in person, or what period they would have to complete the procedures. He also said individual applications were not available to people living outside the country and that no instructions had been issued for applications through Syrian embassies or by proxy from outside Syria.

Additionally, on 11 June 2026, the General Directorate of Civil Affairs [announced](#) an extension of the interview deadline for individuals residing abroad whose relatives had previously submitted applications on their behalf. While the announcement confirmed the legitimacy of proxy submissions, it did not specify the extension’s duration, outline the exact steps required to complete the procedures, or clarify the legal status of individuals for whom no proxy application was filed before the submission deadline.

Kamal Jolly’s testimony sheds further light on the practical complexities of family-wide applications. He stated that during his initial visit to the Municipal Stadium Committee in Qamishli, he asked about submitting applications for two brothers living abroad. According to his account, staff confirmed that the brothers could be included in the family file upon submission of accurate data and supporting documents. Kamal then gathered information on his brothers, their children, and their marriage dates, and provided proof-of-residence documents and recent identification certificates. However, officials later informed him that the registration of his brothers’ children would be deferred until they physically returned to Syria to file separate applications. While this account confirms that proxy applications for his brothers were accepted and that children’s registrations were postponed, it provides no guarantee of final citizenship approval or completed civil registration.

By contrast, Nabil's testimony illustrates the profound impact of ambiguous guidance on individuals who ultimately refrained from filing altogether. Because his brother, Mohammad Khair, was excluded from a prior family regularization predating Decree No. 13, Nabil did not submit a new application on his behalf when the decree took effect. He explained that insights from discussion sessions hosted by local civil-society organizations led him to believe that applications were strictly limited to residents inside Syria, an assumption reinforced by the decree's text on in-country presence.

Later, Nabil learned from another unregistered (*Maktoum/Maktoum al-qayd*) individual that family applications could include siblings living abroad. He then consulted a member of the Qamishli receiving committee, who confirmed that he could have filed on behalf of his brother, provided the brother completed the steps in person upon returning. However, when Nabil subsequently consulted the committee chair, he was told that the submission window had closed and that applications should have been filed within the designated timeframe. Consequently, Mohammad Khair remained locked out of past regularizations due to missed verification procedures, while failing to secure a slot under the new mechanism. This case does not reflect a substantive rejection of a reviewed application; rather, according to the witness, registration became impossible because the deadline had passed.

These testimonies underscore a stark divide among individuals whose names were successfully listed pending final processing, those who missed the application window entirely, and children whose registrations were deferred. These hurdles multiply exponentially when an entire family resides abroad with no relative in Syria to file or track applications on their behalf. Nabil further emphasized the exorbitant travel costs and severe logistical barriers to returning for some families, turning rigid personal-attendance mandates into an obstacle far beyond paperwork.

Addressing these administrative bottlenecks requires issuing transparent, publicly accessible guidelines that clearly define who may file and track proxy applications, the precise scope of family-wide filings, and the regulatory framework for handling children, adults, siblings, and families residing entirely abroad. Furthermore, these instructions must explicitly detail personal-attendance requirements at each procedural juncture, establish viable alternatives for individuals unable to attend in person, and outline streamlined pathways for finalizing civil registration, issuing documents, and ensuring secure delivery.

Such reforms must include clear deadlines and reopen the application window for eligible individuals whose registration was blocked by vague public guidance or by travel constraints. Whenever feasible, authorities should use legacy files and documents they already possess. Additionally, applicants must receive formal written confirmation of their inclusion, along with a transparent tracking system to notify them of missing documentation, upcoming appointments, or required administrative steps.

In this context, Nabil proposed allowing applications to be submitted through diplomatic missions or authorized legal representatives. Similarly, the KNC's memorandum urged establishing formal processing procedures through state diplomatic missions abroad, accepting official asylum documentation as supporting evidence, and recognizing duly certified powers of attorney for completing applications. The memorandum further recommended allowing relatives up to the fourth degree of kinship to track the cases of unregistered individuals, both domestically and abroad, and to represent them during mandatory interviews when personal attendance is obstructed by compelling, documented hardships. These proposals aim to resolve severe access and completion barriers, though they remain advisory policy recommendations until formally adopted by the competent official authorities.

5.4. Evidentiary difficulties and data correction challenges

The ability of individuals covered by the decree to submit documentation and establish their legal status varies significantly by their prior administrative category. A Kurdish lawyer interviewed by STJ explained:

"The records of the foreigners of al-Hasakah (*ajanib al-Hasakah*) contained complete, comprehensive civil-status registrations maintained in parallel with citizen records. However, unregistered (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*) persons lack any comparable baseline and are currently forced to rely on fragmented, scattered documents to prove their status."

At the same time, testimonies documented by STJ reveal striking inconsistencies in the documentation required of or accepted from applicants, as well as in the guidance they received on properly compiling and finalizing their family files.

The table below presents these experiences as described by the applicants, without treating them as a uniform list of requirements or assuming that differences in the documents across cases, by themselves, establish differences in the standards applied by different application centers:

Interviewee	Application Center	Documents Reported as Submitted or Brought	How They Were Handled and Additional Evidence Requested
Jomerd Hamo	Municipal Stadium Center, Qamishli	Proof-of-residence documents and passport photos.	He said his application was registered and that he received a receipt without being asked to provide any additional supporting documents. During a later visit,

Interviewee	Application Center	Documents Reported as Submitted or Brought	How They Were Handled and Additional Evidence Requested
			he answered several questions, had his fingerprints taken, and received a receipt with his photo.
Blenk Fattah	Ad Darbasiyah	Two proof-of-residence documents, one for himself and one for his brother residing in Amuda, as well as identification documents for his family members, including brothers and sisters residing outside the country.	According to his account, he was asked for detailed information about his family members and grandparents, including their names and dates of birth, but was not asked to provide additional documents to substantiate the information.
Kawa Ali	al-Jawadiyah/Çilaxa	An old school identification document and a family document previously used to obtain supplies from the state consumer institution.	He said he submitted these two documents in response to a request for proof of his prior residence in Syria. His account does not clarify whether he was specifically asked to provide them or whether he chose them to satisfy the request for proof of residence.
Sirwan Mustafa	Municipal Stadium Center, Qamishli	School certificates and an old civil-status document.	He said staff told him they did not need these documents at that stage. This does not mean the documents were rejected or that they could not be requested later.
Jwan Abdo	Municipal Stadium Center, Qamishli	Proof of residence, a letter of identification from the mukhtar, proof of third-grade enrollment,	He said they asked him to bring his children and provide detailed information about the family. He said the documents were verbally confirmed valid, entered electronically, and that he

Interviewee	Application Center	Documents Reported as Submitted or Brought	How They Were Handled and Additional Evidence Requested
		electricity bills in his wife's name, and a government document regarding his home after it was destroyed.	received a receipt. According to his follow-up, the application remained "under review".
Kamal Jolly	Municipal Stadium Center, Qamishli	Recent and older identification certificates, school certificates, a family booklet used by people whose civil status had not been registered to obtain food supplies, dating from 1989, and family photographs and videos used to verify his relationship with his sister.	He said he was asked to provide water and electricity bills, explaining that the subscriptions were in the names of his brother's two wives. He said the committee recorded the submission of nine pieces of evidence confirming their civil status as unregistered (<i>makktoomeen/maktoumi-alqayd</i>). However, he did not specify all nine items or clarify whether the water and electricity bills were actually submitted with the file.

These procedural guidelines matter because they directly affect file completeness and progression to later stages. According to Jomerd Hamo, the instructions he received led him to submit his application without including his children. Similarly, Kawa Ali learned during his interview that his two young children had been omitted, prompting him to file a separate request to have them added. Meanwhile, for Sirwan Mustafa, it remained entirely unclear why his application was registered in the name of his deceased father or how this would affect the ongoing tracking and processing of his case.

In addition to failing to include family members, Evan Ramo described several errors he found while reviewing his documents with the committee: his marital status was incorrectly recorded as "divorced," his son's name was entered as "Zarousht" instead of "Zardasht," and his date of birth was recorded incorrectly. When he requested that

his son's name be corrected, he was told that such an amendment was not possible before the identity cards are issued.

Although his testimony does not clarify how these errors were ultimately resolved, it underscores the critical importance of allowing applicants to review and correct their personal data before it is permanently recorded in official civil registries and identity documents.

By contrast, Jwan's testimony indicates that he was never informed of any specific deficiencies requiring correction and that he received verbal assurances that his paperwork was in order. He noted:

"We also checked via an application, and it showed that our file is still under review. I simply do not understand what is still under review."

His experience mirrors that of Kawa Ali, who also struggled to interpret the precise procedural meaning of the status displayed on the electronic tracking platform.

Meanwhile, Kamal's testimony shows that even when applicants have mandatory documentation, those records are often registered in other people's names because of systemic constraints stemming from prior statelessness. When asked to provide utility bills, he explained that the electricity accounts for his home and his brother's home were registered in the names of his brother's two wives because, as unregistered (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*) persons, they had been legally barred from registering utility services in their own names. This case underscores the urgent need for flexible administrative guidelines on household or residential documents registered under third parties, ensuring authorities do not penalize applicants for lacking formal documents in their own names when historical disenfranchisement directly prevented them from obtaining them.

These testimonies cannot pinpoint the exact cause of processing delays in individual cases; however, they reveal a severe lack of transparency for applicants about whether a file is pending administrative action or awaiting supplementary steps from the applicant. Clear, timely notification of missing documentation or required actions is especially crucial, given that strict legal deadlines govern the process. Decision No. 144/M distinguishes among application intake windows, inter-committee referral deadlines, and appeal periods, yet none of these timeframes guarantees a deadline for a final decision, document issuance, or final delivery.

Accordingly, robust application-tracking mechanisms must enable individuals to identify the exact stage their file has reached, the responsible administrative authority, any outstanding gaps or required actions, the date of official notification, and the specific timeframe available for completion. Furthermore, applicants must have a formal opportunity to review family data and correct substantiated errors before files

advance to subsequent stages or documents are issued based on erroneous records, with the competent authority and correction procedures clearly designated.

In light of these difficulties, the KNC's memorandum called for "accepting witnesses as evidence or supporting proof when the documents specified in the decision are unavailable," including electricity bills. It also proposed recognizing rulings from Syrian Sharia courts as official documents.

5.5. Citizenship designations on forms and the protection of ethnic identity

The application process opened amid controversy over the inclusion of the designation "Syrian Arab" on the forms of some Kurdish applicants. Two reports published by [Enab Baladi](#) and Syria TV examined the appearance of this designation and the questions it raised about the distinction between citizenship and ethnic identity. Syria TV's report included an image of a form bearing the designation, while both reports, drawing on statements by researchers, discussed concerns that an administrative legacy associated with previous exclusionary policies might persist and the possible implications for applicants' confidence in the citizenship regularization process and their sense that their Kurdish identity is respected. The reports also noted that, at some centers, staff corrected the designation by striking out the word "Arab" and retaining "Syrian."

In a statement to STJ, a member of the citizenship application-receiving committee in Qamishli, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly, explained that the instructions received by the committee required either "Syrian" or "*maktoum al-qayd*" to be entered in the nationality field. The designation "Syrian Arab" generally appears on forms completed individually outside the application center, while the committee strikes out the word "Arab" when it notices it. He acknowledged, however, that some cases may pass through without the correction being made inadvertently.

Aziz al-Muhamad, Director of Civil Affairs in al-Hasakah, also addressed the controversy in an official [clarification](#) published by Syrian News Channel on 13 April. He said that the inclusion of the designation "resulted from individual errors made by applicants when completing the forms and does not represent an official policy." He confirmed that the applicable instructions require only "Syrian" in the nationality field, emphasizing respect for Kurdish identity and facilitating citizenship for persons covered by the decree.

The controversy illustrates how sensitive the description of personal data is for people whose prior deprivation of citizenship was tied to policies that affected their identity and rights.

5.6. Appeals and judicial review: textual safeguards versus practical barriers

Decision No. 144/M includes explicit legal safeguards for challenging administrative determinations and seeking judicial review. Under the published provisions, any individual adversely affected by a subcommittee's findings may submit a written objection to the Central Committee within 15 days of formal notification. The decree also permits adversely affected parties to challenge Central Committee rulings before administrative courts under State Council Law No. 32 of 2019 and its amendments.

The core challenge, however, lies not merely in the textual existence of these safeguards, but in whether applicants are genuinely aware of them and able to exercise them in practice. The decree mandates posting subcommittee results on physical notice boards, whereas the General Administration for Civil Affairs uses digital platforms to publish interview [schedules](#). This divergence requires a clear administrative distinction between interview call lists and substantive application results, the latter of which legally triggers the right to object. Applicants must be formally and transparently notified of any adverse decision, the specific legal reasoning behind it, and the exact deadline for filing an appeal.

Evan Ramo's testimony highlights critical vulnerabilities in exercising review rights after missed interview appointments. According to his account, neither he nor his wife received direct notification of her scheduled interview and learned of it only after checking the tracking app while they were away from Qamishli. Arriving after hours, they returned the following day, just one day after the official appointment. He reported that a staff member dismissed them, saying, "Go away; you will never get an identity card," and directed him to file an "appeal." However, the employee at the desk allegedly refused to process the request, saying, "Go away; I will not file an appeal for you," and, when pressed for a reason, retorted, "I have no time, and my head hurts."

This incident alone does not establish that a formal appeal was rejected or identify the legal basis for refusing to process it. It does, however, raise a practical question about whether appeal mechanisms are effectively accessible to people who were not notified in time or could not attend their scheduled appointment, and about which authority is empowered to receive an appeal and determine whether it may be submitted after the deadline.

In Damascus, several Kurdish families received formal rejections after their applications were deemed incomplete, citing "failing to provide the required documentation establishing coverage under the citizenship procedures." In a [report](#) published by Rudaw on 19 August 2026, Ali Derki, a resident of the Ruken Al Din neighborhood, said his application was rejected for lacking mandatory Syrian documentation, prompting an emotional appeal to the authorities:

"We do not want to spend our entire lives without an identity."

Rudaw also cited Taghreed al-Hariri, a member of the unregistered (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*) persons registration committee at the Damascus Civil Affairs Directorate, who reported that about nine family applications were rejected for lacking documentation proving that their members were Syrian Kurds, while four others were denied because certain members held Turkish citizenship. Conversely, Saad al-Sheikh, Director of the Legislation Department at the Ministry of Justice, maintained that rejected applicants retain the right to file formal objections and substantiate their claims with available evidence, clarifying that initial-stage rejections “do not mean” a definitive denial of citizenship.

6. The 1962 Census and the Divergent Legal Status of Denationalized Populations

The deprivation of citizenship from Syrian Kurds is directly linked to the exceptional census conducted in al-Hasakah Governorate on 5 October 1962, under [Legislative Decree No. 93](#), which mandated it. This [census](#) and its subsequent administrative measures resulted in large numbers of Kurds being stripped of their citizenship. Over time, the effects of this deprivation extended to subsequent generations, meaning the issue eventually encompassed both individuals who were directly denationalized and those born stateless due to their families’ legal status.

Against this background, stateless individuals fell into two distinct categories with different civil-registration statuses. The first category consisted of the foreigners of al-Hasakah (*ajanib al-Hasakah*) who were registered in specialized alien records maintained by civil-status departments and held documents known as “red cards.” The second category consisted of unregistered persons (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*), whose names had never been entered into civil-status records and who relied on identification certificates issued by mukhtars. Thus, while both groups experienced the deprivation of citizenship, the existence of formal baseline [registration](#) for the foreigners of al-Hasakah (*ajanib al-Hasakah*), as opposed to the complete absence of such records for unregistered persons (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*), created a fundamental divergence in available documentation and the legal pathways required to regularize their status.

On 7 April 2011, [Legislative Decree No. 49](#) was issued, granting Syrian Arab citizenship to individuals registered as foreigners of al-Hasakah, (*ajanib al-Hasakah*) while systematically excluding unregistered persons (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*). STJ [documented](#) cases in which individuals in the latter category obtained citizenship after first rectifying their status to foreigners of al-Hasakah, (*ajanib al-Hasakah*), while many others could not complete this complex pathway. The 2011 measure therefore failed to bridge the legal and registration disparities between the two groups or to comprehensively resolve the broader crisis of citizenship deprivation.

7. The Roots of Citizenship Deprivation and Its Connection to Land, Resettlement, and Arabization Policies

The deprivation of Syrian Kurds of their nationality directly intersected with the state's broader land, resettlement, and Arabization policies, producing structural consequences that could not be resolved solely through administrative corrections in civil registries. The exceptional [census](#) in al-Hasakah Governorate was conducted on 5 October 1962, pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 93, issued on 23 August of that year, during the secessionist period preceding the Ba'ath Party's rise to power in March 1963. Limited to al-Hasakah and conducted in a single day, the census and its subsequent measures stripped large segments of the Kurdish population of citizenship, with repercussions cascading across succeeding generations.

According to [Human Rights Watch](#), Kurds were required to prove continuous residence in Syria since at least 1945, under threat of denationalization. Consequently, citizenship became entirely contingent on an individual's ability to produce historical documentation meeting this arbitrary threshold, resulting in fragmented legal statuses even within the same household.

Although the exceptional census and the "Arab Belt" policies were not implemented at the same time, their corrosive effects converged deeply in the lives of affected populations. Statelessness severely restricted individuals' ability to register property and secure related civil rights, while state-led land expropriation, redistribution, and forced demographic resettlement radically altered land ownership patterns in Kurdish-majority border regions.

French historian Jordi Tejel has [argued](#) that these measures must be understood as interconnected components of a broader state strategy to reshape the demographic and political fabric of northeastern Syria. Similarly, in "The Kurds of Syria: Political Parties and Identity in the Middle East", researcher Harriet Allsopp observes that the 1962 census was not merely a technical verification procedure but part of a systematic state trajectory dating back to the late 1950s, aimed at enforcing official Arab identity and curbing Kurdish political presence. Allsopp explicitly links the census to the "Arab Belt" project, treating both as mutually reinforcing instruments designed to transform the region's demographics and obstruct Kurdish national aspirations.

Accordingly, redressing the legacy of citizenship deprivation cannot be reduced to merely entering names into civil registers or issuing identity documents. True remediation requires confronting the accumulated impacts on property, housing, and socioeconomic rights stemming from the intersection of statelessness with historical land confiscation and demographic engineering.

8. The Social and Intergenerational Consequences of Statelessness

The repercussions of citizenship deprivation extended deeply into social relations, marital choices, and family formation. Sarbest Shekhi recounts that a prospective bride's family rejected his brother's marriage proposal after learning he was unregistered (*Maktoum/maktoum al-qayd*), justifying their refusal:

"You are unregistered; in the future, our daughter's children will also be unregistered and barred from continuing their education."

Sarbest noted that this experience fundamentally altered his own marital choices, leading him to abandon proposals to Syrian citizen women and instead marry his cousin, citing their shared familial background and stateless status as the deciding factors.

These anxieties also affected women in households. According to Sarbest, another family withdrew from a prospective marriage arrangement involving one of his sisters because of pervasive fears about the legal hurdles of validating marriages, registering children, and securing travel documents. While these accounts reflect the witness's lived concerns and do not, in themselves, establish the legal status that would have resulted from each marriage, Sarbest noted that one of his sisters ultimately married a relative and was entered in his family booklet as unregistered (*maktouma/maktoumat al-qayd*).

This experience aligns with Rouj Issa's testimony, whose civil registration and acquisition of an identity document remained inextricably tied to his ability to legally validate his marriage and register his child. Summarizing his precarious waiting period, he stated:

"I must first obtain the family booklet and validate my marriage so that I can register my child."

Together, these testimonies illustrate how an unresolved legal or civil-status bottleneck permeates everyday family life, leaving vital procedures concerning children indefinitely suspended.

These accounts reveal the profound social dimensions of citizenship deprivation, in which an individual's administrative categorization becomes a determining factor in marital decisions and generates acute fears about children's future legal status and educational access. From this perspective, acquiring citizenship and its associated identity documents is not merely an administrative formality; it is an essential prerequisite for improving family welfare and breaking the intergenerational cycle of statelessness.

9. Restoring Citizenship and Addressing Accumulated Socioeconomic Rights

Decree No. 13 integrates provisions on nationality and the repeal of exceptional measures stemming from the al-Hasakah census with broader guarantees of cultural identity, linguistic rights, and non-discrimination. This comprehensive framework allows for an examination of remedies for statelessness far beyond the mere issuance of identity documents, while remaining firmly anchored in the text's explicit parameters. Crucially, revoking exceptional measures does not automatically invalidate historical property transactions or trigger an automatic right to state compensation without formal legal proceedings establishing fault, liability, and the applicable standard of redress.

The urgent need to address these broader socioeconomic consequences is starkly illustrated by the testimony of Kawa Ali, who noted:

“Our properties and real estate, mine and my siblings’, remain registered in the names of citizen relatives,”

He expressed deep concern about whether they could recover formal ownership after their naturalization, as this grievance extends well beyond civil status correction and calls for a dedicated administrative mechanism to secure property rights that stateless individuals were historically forced to register through third parties due to legal barriers.

The issue of reparations takes on a different dimension in the testimony of Sarbest Shekhi, a father of four whose children's education was abruptly curtailed after the sixth grade because of systemic denials of documents. Noting that his son is now 21 and his daughter 18, he questioned whether their lost educational opportunities could ever be redressed:

“Our certificates were never recognized, so we dropped out. When they demanded Syrian documents, we could not provide them, so our children had to stop going to school too. I do not know how we can claim our rights or seek compensation for our education now that we have reached this age.”

At the same time, Sarbest views the current documentation process with cautious optimism, hoping it will ease future marriage registration, property ownership, and travel for his children. Yet this expectation does not erase the family's historical losses; he advocates tangible livelihood compensation, such as agricultural land or a regular income stipend. His testimony thus draws a sharp distinction between prospective relief from statelessness and retrospective redress for accumulated harms.

Interpreting Article 4 of the decree, a Kurdish legal expert suggests that formally repealing the 1962 census measures could, in theory, open avenues for affected individuals, particularly foreigners of al-Hasakah (*ajanib al-Hasakah*) and unregistered

persons (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*), to bring civil claims against the state for damages stemming from decades of disenfranchisement. While this legal reading highlights the state's institutional responsibility, it remains an interpretive perspective rather than an indication that Decree No. 13 establishes an automatic right to compensation or defines clear procedural pathways to pursue it.

10. Recommendations and Legal Analysis

The right to nationality is a foundational human right that underpins the enjoyment and exercise of a broad range of civil, political, and socioeconomic rights. Although Syria's 2025 Constitutional Declaration does not explicitly enshrine the right to nationality, Article 10 affirms absolute equality between Syrian men and women and prohibits all forms of discrimination. Consequently, nationality status must never be subject to discrimination based on ethnicity, linguistic background, or national origin. Furthermore, Article 12 provides that fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in international treaties ratified by Syria form an integral part of the constitutional order. International human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Syria is a state party, place paramount importance on the right to nationality and protect individuals against arbitrary deprivation.

In light of the systemic gaps and administrative challenges associated with implementing Decree No. 13 of 2026, STJ presents the following targeted recommendations:

1. The permanent Constitution of Syria must explicitly recognize nationality as an inherent, inalienable right of all Syrians and prohibit the deprivation of citizenship except through a final judicial decree issued in full accordance with fair-trial guarantees.
2. Enact a permanent, comprehensive law that addresses the status of all historically denationalized and stateless populations, particularly foreigners of al-Hasakah (*ajanib al-Hasakah*) and unregistered persons (*maktoumeen/maktoumi al-qayd*), and treats nationality as an established right rather than a discretionary privilege, while eliminating restrictive application windows.
3. Legally mandate that individuals whose citizenship is recognized under these procedures be treated, for legal purposes, as having held nationality from birth, thereby safeguarding accrued rights and preventing future legal preadjudication of prior periods of statelessness.
4. Mandate the consolidation of family applications into unified administrative files to prevent fragmentation and eliminate the risk that children or dependents remain unregistered due to divergent procedural tracks.
5. Exempt male beneficiaries of citizenship regularization from compulsory military service as a vital transitional measure to ease deep-seated applicant anxieties

and partially address the material and psychological toll of decades of disenfranchisement.

6. Simplify evidentiary requirements and establish accessible submission and tracking channels for applicants residing abroad, through Syrian diplomatic and consular missions, to spare vulnerable populations from prohibitive travel burdens and costs.
7. Mandate the digital publication of all committee decisions, with explicit written justifications for rejections and clear, accessible appeal timelines before competent courts, expressly permitting testimonial and witness evidence when official historical documents are unobtainable.
8. Immediately upon approval, expedite the entry of newly recognized citizens into the central national civil-affairs database to prevent protracted administrative delays in issuing official identity documents.
9. Establish a comprehensive national program, integrated into the transitional justice framework, to address the cumulative socioeconomic impacts of statelessness, and complement it with a formal public apology from the Syrian government for historical human rights violations, thereby fostering genuine social inclusion and equal citizenship.

11. The Desired Citizenship: Dignity, Security, and the Future of the Next Generation

The individuals whose testimonies STJ documented link the regularization of their citizenship status to tangible, long-overdue improvements in their daily lives, including family registration, property ownership, continued education, labor market access, freedom of movement, and civic participation. Yet these aspirations are tempered by persistent anxieties about ongoing discrimination, fears forged over decades of systemic denial of educational, professional, and stability milestones that have cascaded across generations.

Jwan Abdo encapsulates this fundamental demand:

“It is not reasonable for this process to end simply with us obtaining Syrian identity cards. I want identity cards and educational certificates for my children, my home registered in my name, and the comprehensive resolution of all the rights we were denied.”

His words set a practical benchmark for evaluating any citizenship regularization scheme: its genuine capacity to empower affected individuals to manage their affairs, secure their legal rights, and ensure their families' full access to rights and services.

The future of their children is central to these testimonies. Jwan describes the abrupt disruption of his daughters' education and the profound pain of watching their

aspirations dissolve after years of study, movingly comparing a child cut off from educational opportunities to “a bird with a broken wing.” Consequently, the remedy extends far beyond issuing an identity document; it demands confronting the structural legacy of educational deprivation by enabling children to reclaim lost academic records and by providing meaningful pathways for continuing education and vocational rehabilitation.

Nabil’s testimony introduces a critical dimension: the compounding effects of time. He advocates targeted administrative measures to address the professional and pension entitlements of individuals whose naturalization was delayed until they reached ages that severely curtail employment prospects or retirement benefits, and calls for arrangements that account for opportunities foregone because of their prior legal status. These demands are framed as proposals for equitable redress that require clear statutory frameworks rather than automatic rights or exemptions triggered solely by the decree. These sentiments intersect with Sarbest Shekhi’s concerns about his children’s lost education and with Noubar Ismail’s reflections, a researcher with STJ, who noted that securing his citizenship came only after pivotal lifetime opportunities had already vanished. Meaningful redress therefore requires identifying historical harms, determining actionable restitutions, and establishing formal compensation mechanisms where a legal basis exists.

These aspirations, however, unfold within a Syrian political landscape where civic and political participation remains heavily constrained by transitional governance arrangements and sweeping executive powers. The 2025 interim electoral [framework](#) established an electoral-college system in which electoral bodies select two-thirds of the People’s Assembly, with the president appointing the remaining third, and it strictly restricts candidacy to members of those bodies. Consequently, acquiring citizenship does not inherently confer the right to universal suffrage, nor does it automatically guarantee freedom of association, freedom of expression, or meaningful leverage over public decision-making. Fulfilling these broader expectations ultimately depends on an institutional framework anchored in the protection of fundamental freedoms, judicial independence, and genuine, equitable opportunities for political representation and accountability for all Syrians.

Evan Ramo’s testimony introduces another essential dimension of dignity tied to the day-to-day treatment of applicants in administrative centers. The remark he attributes to an official he describes as the committee’s judge, appearing in the report’s introduction, directly links an identity card application to an imputed political stance. While this account alone does not prove that political bias drove the administrative decision, it highlights deep-seated concerns about how such subjective perceptions might influence applicants’ treatment.

Restoring public trust therefore requires processing citizenship applications strictly according to transparent, publicly stated criteria, treating applicants with full respect,



and establishing reliable channels to lodge complaints about mistreatment without any risk of reprisal or adverse impact on pending civil files.

In this sense, individuals deprived of citizenship face two twin demands: ending the exclusion directed at them because of their legal status and Kurdish origin, and participating on an equal footing in building a public life that protects the rights of all. Their statements expressing a desire to choose their representatives reflect an aspiration for active citizenship, rather than a right that becomes practically available simply by receiving an identity card, as the meaning witnesses attribute to citizenship extends to participating in shaping its future.

Article 4 of Decree No. 13 of 2026, with its stipulation of “complete equality” in rights and duties, establishes a benchmark for evaluating the impact of addressing citizenship deprivation on the lives of those covered by it. Fulfilling this principle requires that they be able to exercise their civil and political rights on an equal footing with other Syrians, that barriers associated with their previous status be removed, and that there be legislative clarity to prevent citizenship regularization from becoming a legal status that imposes additional restrictions and keeps their citizenship curtailed.

In this context, redress is an essential part of the remedy, acknowledging the injustice that occurred, establishing avenues for material and moral remediation and compensation, and addressing damages related to family constraints, education, work, and property on a case-by-case basis. This requires a clear legal framework and accessible mechanisms that recognize that years of deprivation may have prevented affected persons from obtaining the documents needed to prove their rights and losses.

Restoring political rights requires removing obstacles specific to these groups and guaranteeing freedom of expression, organization, participation, and representation for all Syrians. Thus, the decree’s success depends on how much those covered by it feel they are equal citizens, can defend their rights and influence their country’s future, and are reassured that their children will not inherit the deprivation they experienced.





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.



ABOUT Ceasefire

The Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights aims to empower civilians in situations of armed conflict or prevailing insecurity to document violations of their rights; to seek justice and accountability for violations of civilian rights; and to develop the practice of civilian rights protection and raise public support for the promotion of civilian rights.

This publication was funded by the European Union, and in partnership with the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Syrians for Truth and Justice – STJ/ the publisher and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights.



Funded by
the European Union