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November 2026

سوريون من أجل الحقيقة والعدالة
Syrians For Truth & Justice

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Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), represented by its Co-Founder and Executive Director, Bassam al-Ahmad, participated in the 14th edition of the World Forum for Democracy, organised by the Council of Europe at the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg on 2 and 3 November 2026, under the theme "Rupture or renewal? Democratic security for the future."

The Forum is an annual platform that brings together policymakers, activists, researchers, civil society representatives, and young people from around the world to discuss the challenges facing democracies and highlight innovative initiatives that strengthen participation and inclusion in democratic societies. This year's edition focused on "democratic foresight", understood as the ability of democracies to anticipate future developments to strengthen democratic security across Europe. The first day was devoted to assessing the state of democracy under the theme "Democracy Is Under Pressure", while the second day focused on testing responses against possible future scenarios.

STJ's representative attended four sessions over the two days. On the first day, he attended the session entitled "Living Together: How Does Intercultural Inclusion Strengthen Our Democracies?", organised by the City of Strasbourg and moderated by Robin Wilson, Council of Europe Adviser on Intercultural Integration. The session examined the extent to which integration policies adopted by local authorities can foster social cohesion and strengthen democratic security. He also attended a session entitled "Strengthening Societal Resilience to Disinformation." On the second day, he attended the session "Strengthening inclusive democracy free from hate speech", as well as another session entitled "AI and Democracy: Opportunities, Risks and Governance Challenges." Both sessions were held under the Forum's "Democracy Innovation" theme.

The Forum concluded with a closing ceremony at which the Swiss association KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz was announced as the recipient of the 2026 Democracy Innovation Award.

In her closing remarks, Tanja Gonggrijp, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, said that participants had spent the two days hearing about projects from a wide range of places, from northern Limburg to rural islands. She noted that many of those involved were working under difficult conditions and addressing complex issues, yet were nevertheless succeeding in making a tangible difference. Describing their work as "essential and remarkable", she expressed her hope of welcoming them again next year.

The association's two co-founders, Elisabeth Stern and Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti, took to the stage to receive the award. Stern stated that climate protection is a human right

and that governments have a responsibility to protect their populations from the impacts of climate change.

Both co-founders said they were deeply moved that a hall full of people had voted in their favour. Wydler-Wälti added that politicians who had heard this collective expression of support would no longer be able to ignore them.

They explained that their next step would be to return home and get some sleep before continuing their advocacy efforts through a tour of several European countries, during which they would screen a documentary about their cause and engage in discussions with the public.

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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.