

Donors' Conference for Türkiye and Syria 20 March 2023 A gender-sensitive aid is a priority

In view of the Donors' Conference for the people of Syria and Türkiye affected by the earthquake, due to take place on 20th March 2023 in Brussels, Syria Gender Advocacy Group and EuroMed Feminist Initiative ask the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission to ensure a gender-sensitive aid, responsive to the needs of women and girls.

Over a decade now since the beginning of the armed conflict in Syria, socio-economic struggles, poverty, political instability, overall violence, and **gender-based discrimination continue to paint the reality of the Syrian population. The crisis has disproportionately affected the lives of women and girls in Syria: they still register higher rates of poverty than men and face an increased risk of violence against Women and girls (VAWG).** VAWG crimes remain widely underreported due to lack of shelters and support services for women, lack of accountability for perpetrators, lack of legal framework addressing VAWG as well as persisting legal discrimination, predominantly in personal status law and penal code. In a report issued by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Syria was still ranked as one of the five hardest places for a girl to grow up, women and girls continue to be particularly exposed to a range of safety issues, including sexual violence, child labour and ongoing trauma.

The deadly earthquake that has affected both Syria and Turkey has increased the need of humanitarian aid in Syria and have **exacerbated the existing suffering of the women affected**, who have to face additional challenges in a very unstable part of the country worsening the continuum of violence they are experiencing.

EuroMed Feminist Initiative and the Syria Gender Advocacy Group ask decision-makers to keep the needs of women and girls as a priority in the political process and to pursue their financial engagement to address the growing needs faced by women and girls.

Considering this context, EuroMed Feminist Initiative and the Syria Gender Advocacy Group address the Donors' Conference to take into account the needs and the rights of women and girls and apply a gender perspective in all stages of the earthquake response, by:

- **Establishing international monitoring mechanisms to ensure the transparency and accountability of aid to the affected population that include women and girls** and its delivery to the Syrian areas affected by the earthquake regardless of the location of people in need and regardless of any political consideration.
- Ensuring to this end **meaningful consultations of women and girls and participation of women's organizations and feminist organizations** in the design of the earthquake response and the development of feedbacks' mechanisms on the provision of aid to the affected population.

- Including **women's reproductive health supplies** in relief aid, planning for **provision of relevant services** to combat VAWG in terms of prevention, protection and rehabilitation as well as for **options to continue of the education** in the crisis.
- On the spot ensuring women's **full and equal access to humanitarian aid**. Involving to that end **local women's and feminist organizations and gender experts** in aid's distribution mechanisms and in relief teams is essential.
- **Putting in place protection mechanisms for women and girls exposed to harassment and human trafficking** while benefitting from aid.
- **Sustaining the engagement of the international community beyond the emergency**, pursuing financial support to meet the growing needs of women and girls in Syria, including through the provision of dedicated funding to women's organisations and feminist organisations.

We reiterate our ask to the organisers of the upcoming Brussels Conference on Syria and the Future of the Region to invest to urgently end the armed conflict in Syria **while pressing forward the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA) supporting the full and equal participation and leadership of women in peace negotiations and the peacebuilding process overall.**

Syria Gender Advocacy Group (GAG) was formed to raise awareness and mobilise local communities in Syria as well as to advocate on local, national, and international level, on the need to combat VAWG as a key to enabling women's participation at all levels.

EuroMed Feminist Initiative is a policy network that provides expertise in the field of gender equality and its link with democracy building and citizenship and advocates for the right of peoples of self-determination.