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Ensuring mechanisms to combat violence against women and girls in Syria during the early recovery phase

Syria Gender Advocacy Group side-event to Brussels Conference “Supporting the future of Syria and the region”

STATEMENT

29 April 2024, Brussels

In view of the Brussels VIII Conference on “Supporting the future of Syria and the region”, Syria Gender Advocacy Group (GAG), Musawa and EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) organised a side-event on the 29th of April 2024 on “Ensuring mechanisms to combat violence against women and girls in Syria during the early recovery phase”.

Syria Gender Advocacy Group discussed the continuous precarious situation of women and girls in Syria, which has been affirmed by the outcomes of local dialogues held inside Syria, as well as by the findings of the study on “Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Syria: Laws, Knowledge, Awareness and Attitudes” and the mapping of services for victims of VAWG carried out in 2023. These actions took place within the frame of the project “Implementing the Common Agenda to Combat Violence Against Women and Girls and Promote Inclusive Peacebuilding Processes in Syria”, funded by the European Union (EU).

- The side-event underlined the vital importance of the participation of Syrian feminist and women’s rights organizations and local women initiatives in all places where decisions are made and policies are designed for the future of Syria to ensure that women’s rights, needs, and concerns are considered, and that no one is left behind.
- Participants underlined that early recovery cannot be an alternative to a political solution, but it can alleviate Syrians’ suffering for a while. By adopting these measures and ensuring their effective implementation, it is possible to effectively monitor the early recovery process in Syria, ensuring fair distribution to women and men in all Syrian regions and taking into account the unity of the Syrian State.
- Convinced of the importance of the Brussels Donors’ Conference as a strategic platform for amplifying the voices of Syrian women inside and outside Syria, the side-event emphasized the importance of applying a gender perspective to all early recovery projects in Syria. This approach will contribute to reducing the gender gap in all areas and combating violence against women and girls in Syria, who continue to suffer the effects of armed conflict and related new forms of violence against them.

Therefore, Syria Gender Advocacy Group and EuroMed Feminist Initiative urge the international community to take urgent further steps to support the priorities of Syrian women’s rights organisations who play a major role in addressing the needs, concerns and human rights of women and girls in Syria:



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1. Set a minimum 30% quota in the financial pledges to Syrian feminist organizations, and women-led organizations and initiatives.
2. Ensure the participation and representation of Syrian feminist organizations and women-led organizations and initiatives in designing and implementing early recovery processes on political, economic, legal, educational, social and humanitarian levels, as well as in food security programs.
3. Develop a gender-sensitive monitoring mechanism to ensure that early recovery processes are participatory and address adequately women's needs, concerns and rights, ensuring justice for all.
4. Make sure that early recovery processes include services for victims of all forms of violence against women and girls: from prevention programs, to shelters, legal counselling, and psychosocial support.
5. Support the development of civil society action plan for UNSCR 1325 to ensure women's participation in the political process in accordance with UNSCR 2254.
6. Adopt and apply a comprehensive approach to protecting women and girls from violence in all relief programs, especially those related to food security, and include measures and procedures to combat this violence.
7. Cooperate with local and international humanitarian monitoring networks to ensure that relief and food programs address real needs on the ground.
8. Support programs that aim to change social norms and target areas that face recurrent food insecurity and rising food prices in order to prevent early and forced marriages.
9. Enact a close and sustained cooperation between the international community, the Independent Foundation for Missing Persons (IIMP) and Syrian women's rights organisations to provide the necessary support that can help overcome political and security obstacles to uncover the fate of missing persons. These efforts must reach beyond merely documenting violations or providing psychological or material support and must include steps to restore trust among citizens, in order to promote lasting peace.

Syria Gender Advocacy Group (GAG) advocates on a local, national, and international level for the need to combat VAWG as a key priority to enable women's participation at all levels. To achieve this goal, GAG raises awareness and mobilises local communities in Syria.

EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) is a policy platform that provides expertise in the field of gender equality and its link with democracy building and citizenship, and advocates for political solutions to all conflicts and the right of peoples to self-determination.