



## THE KEY ROLE OF SYRIAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SYRIA

Side-event to Brussels Conference on Supporting the future of Syria and the region 2023

### STATEMENT

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*In view of the Brussels VII Conference on “Supporting the future of Syria and the region”, Syria Gender Advocacy Group (GAG) and EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) organised a side-event on 9th of June 2023 on “The role of Syrian Women’s Rights Organisations in the Future of Syria and the Region” and alert the international community on the precarious situation of women and girls as they continue to bear the brunt of the protracted Syrian crisis.*

*Given our conviction of the importance of the Brussels Donors Conference as a strategic platform that allows to amplify the voices of Syrian women inside and outside Syria, the side-event emphasized the key and indispensable role Syrian women’s rights organizations and local women initiatives play, despite all the challenges they face, in advocating, assisting and coordinating all efforts towards highlighting and addressing the multiple needs of women.*

*The side event underlined the vital importance of the participation of Syrian women’s rights organizations and local women initiatives in all places where decisions are made and policies designed for the future of Syria, to ensure that women’s needs are considered, and no one is left aside.*

**Syria Gender Advocacy Group therefore has the following main asks to the international donor community:**

- 1. Set a minimum 30% quota in the financial pledges to Syrian women’s rights organizations and local women’s initiatives.**
- 2. Enable the participation of Syrian women’s rights organizations and local women’s initiatives in designing, implementing and monitoring of early recovery processes in the political, economic, legal, educational, social areas.**
- 3. Support Syrian women’s rights organizations and local women’s initiatives in the development of guidelines for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace, and security, to enable women’s full participation in Syria peace building process, in line with UNSCR 2254.**



## Syrian context

- 1- Under an authoritarian regime that ruled Syria for decades, women suffered discrimination and violence at the political, legal, economic, and social levels. This discrimination and violence escalated after the peaceful revolution of 2011 turned into an armed conflict that exacerbated social and economic conflicts, poverty, political instability, rampant violence, and gender-based discrimination. Women continue to have higher poverty rates than men and to face increasing risks of violence, which hamper their effective participation in all fields.
- 2- The failure of the UN to reach to a political solution based on UNSCR 2254, and to support the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace, and security, further hindered women's direct and meaningful participation in decision-making positions related to peacebuilding.
- 3- The devastating earthquake that struck the country increased the need for humanitarian aid. It also created additional challenges that exacerbated the already deteriorated conditions of Syrian women in Syria and in neighbouring countries. Women rights organizations and activists have not been associated to the consultations on the earthquake response.
- 4- Women's rights organizations and local women's initiatives play a critical and indispensable role in sustaining the local communities despite the many factors that hinder the creation of communication channels among them. These factors include the protracted crisis, mass displacement, bans on civil society organizations, travel restrictions, security restrictions of the Syrian regime and the de facto authorities.
- 5- Refoulement of Syrian refugees has been escalating in some neighbouring countries and some European States, in addition to forced return of some of them, even though Syria is not considered a safe and secure country<sup>1</sup>. This leads to additional violence on women and girls.
- 6- Although women often bear the heavier brunt of crises, as of 2021, still, only 2% of budgets target women's empowerment or gender equality.<sup>2</sup> Syrian women's rights organizations experience lack of adequate support and budgets allocation aiming to achieve gender equality and empower women in all fields, which poses challenges in achieving full and substantial participation of women in decision-making processes.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.es.amnesty.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Report\\_You\\_re\\_going\\_to\\_your\\_death\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.es.amnesty.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Report_You_re_going_to_your_death_ENG.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://devinit.org/resources/funding-for-gender-relevant-humanitarian-response/gender-relevant-international-humanitarian-assistance/>



**Syria Gender Advocacy Group urges the international donor community to enhance the support of Syrian women's rights organizations and local initiatives in shaping the future of Syria.**

## **1- Political process at the local, national, and international levels**

- Support Syrian women's rights organizations and local women's initiatives in the development of guidelines for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace, and security, to enable women's full participation in Syria peace building process, in line with UNSCR 2254 and under the umbrella of Geneva Process.
- Include women's rights organizations and local women's initiatives in developing an international gender-sensitive monitoring mechanism to ensure voluntary, safe and dignified return of women and men refugees.
- Enhance the role of women's rights organizations who are working on the files of detainees, forcibly disappeared and forced displacement. Allow International commissions of inquiry to access detention centres and prisons together with women's rights organizations.
- Support the participation of women's rights organizations in the transitional justice processes on local, national, and international levels to ensure they are gender sensitive.
- Support the on-going advocacy work of women's rights organizations for the adoption of a gender-sensitive constitution and legislation.

## **2- Freedom of action of women's rights organisations and local women's initiatives**

- Secure long-term funding for women's rights organizations and local women's initiatives and allocate for them at least 30% quota of the financial resources granted to Syrian civil society.
- Call upon the UN to put pressure for lifting the ban on women's rights civil society organizations and support their independence and freedom of action.
- Create favourable conditions to enable dialogue and coordination among women's rights organizations and local women's initiatives, and with international stakeholders in order to integrate the gender perspective in all Syrian-related files.
- Establish a special committee to make sure that civil society organizations are exempted from sanctions, to facilitate their work on the ground and guarantee their security.



- Support study and research conducted by Syrian women's rights organizations on the status of women in Syria and host countries to design projects fully based on actual needs.

### 3- Humanitarian aid and early recovery

- Enable the participation of women's rights organizations and local women's initiatives in designing, implementing and monitoring of early recovery projects.
- Support innovative economic empowerment programs for the effective and concrete participation of women in early recovery, adopting Nexus approach.
- Support women-led environmentally friendly production cooperatives and projects.
- Support the work of women's rights organisations linked to women's housing, land, and property (HLP) rights in the early recovery phase.
- Support the establishment of efficient mechanisms to enable drop-out girls to return back to school, adult education programs, and university scholarships, making use of the Handbook *ABC for a Gender Sensitive Education* and the *Manual for Teachers on Gender Sensitive Education*.
- Support women's rights organisations who provide services to victims of VAWG, as psychosocial support, case management, sheltering, legal counselling.

*Syria Gender Advocacy Group is composed gender experts who provide expertise in social, political, legal, economic, education and cultural fields varies.*

*Syria Gender Advocacy Group advocates for Syrian women's right and for the integration of the gender perspective into all Syrian files.*