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WHITE PAPER SERIES

DECENTRALIZATION AND THE FUTURE OF SYRIA: ECONOMIC RECOVERY, GOVERNANCE, AND PEACEBUILDING ACROSS REGIONS

Could the Aleppo Agreement be a Model for the Integration of Syria?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One year after the Assad regime's fall, Syria remains fractured. Initial hope has turned to fear and distrust amid staggering sectarian violence and the exclusion of key regions from parliamentary elections. The coming period will decide if Syria reunifies as a sovereign nation or faces lasting fragmentation.

The country is currently divided between two dominant blocs. In Damascus, the interim government traces its roots to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), an Al Qaeda offshoot that once ruled Idlib. The Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) emerged from the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) defeat of ISIS. Whether Syria survives as a unified state depends on whether these blocs can compromise—and whether they embrace inclusion as a foundation for peace and economic recovery.

The interim government faces two existential threats: a crisis of legitimacy and economic collapse. Sectarian killings of Alawites, Druze, and Christians in areas under or contested by Damascus have reignited fears about President Ahmad Al Sharaa's jihadist past. Meanwhile, over 90% of Syrians live below the poverty line. The World Bank warns that extreme poverty will deepen in 2025 without urgent intervention.

In this volatile landscape, lessons from successful post-conflict transitions can serve as a compass to help guide Syria on a path toward inclusive governance and sustainable peace.

International research consistently shows that involving women in governance and peace negotiations significantly reduces the risk of conflict resurgence. Increasing women's participation in the economy is strongly associated with higher rates of economic growth.

This White Paper compares how the interim government in Damascus and DAANES approach inclusion—particularly of women—in economic development, governance, and peacebuilding. It assesses whether these efforts align with evidence-based best practices drawn from decades of global research.

Economic Growth

1) **Best Practice:** Equal labor force participation of women could raise Syria's long-term GDP per capita by up to 74% (World Bank, 2024). Currently, women's labor force participation stands at just 13.3%, compared to 62.8% among men.
2) **Damascus:** Officials have questioned women's roles in key sectors, undermining the potential for economic growth.
3) **DAANES:** Officials established a "Women's Economy" to expand female employment, known in Arabic as Al-Iktisad al Marra and in Kurdish as Aborîya Jin. However, challenges persist.

Governance Structures

1) **Best Practice:** In post-conflict states, women holding ≥30% of parliamentary seats correlates with near-zero risk of conflict relapse.
2) **Damascus:** October elections excluded key regions. At the time of writing, only 4% of those selected as new members of parliament are women—even less than under the Assad regime. The cabinet includes one woman—also its only Christian.
3) **DAANES:** A 100-member Democratic People's Council serves as the local parliament, where about 45% are women. Women serve in top leadership roles. A co-chair system ensures gender parity across institutions; currently 488 women serve as co-chairs alongside their male counterparts.

Peace Negotiations

1) **Best Practice:** Peace agreements with female participation are 20% more likely to last two years—and 35% more likely to endure fifteen (UN Women, 2015).
2) **Damascus:** No women serve on its negotiation committee.
3) **DAANES:** Four of eight negotiators are women.

Language Rights

1) **Best Practice:** Education in the mother tongue is more cost-effective, reduces dropout rates, leads to better academic results, particularly for girls, and improves levels of literacy in both the mother tongue and the official or majority language (UN, 2020). UNESCO classified Kurdish as a "vulnerable" language in Syria. Aramaic, which is spoken by the

Assyrian Christian minority, is classified as a "critically endangered" language (UNESCO, 2010).

2) **Damascus:** Article 4 of the Constitutional Declaration makes Arabic Syria's only official language.

3) **DAANES:** Article 7 of the Social Contract recognizes Arabic, Kurdish, and Aramaic as official languages. DAANES has introduced language curriculum in schools that teaches Kurdish and Aramaic in addition to Arabic.

Despite stark differences between the interim government and Kurdish authorities, both sides were able to compromise in a local agreement in Syria's second largest city of Aleppo. Women negotiators helped secure Kurdish-language education, recognition of local authorities, and female inclusion in security forces. Though women were only present on one side, the agreement fostered trust and social cohesion.

In stark contrast, in other contested regions of Syria including the coastal areas in the west and Suwayda in the south, government or government-aligned forces were implicated in massacres that primarily targeted the Alawite and Druze communities. In the Druze majority province of Suwayda, officials in Damascus dismissed calls for decentralized security. The interim government refused to allow a community-nominated woman leader to serve as governor, instead appointing a man from outside the province with a Sunni Islamist background, although the Druze are not Sunnis. When the interim government then attempted to seize control of Suwayda by force in July, violence exploded, deepening societal divisions, and eroding public trust in Damascus. While the full extent of the humanitarian crisis is still emerging, human rights organizations have documented that government or government-affiliated forces took part in extrajudicial killings of Druze men and women in July (Amnesty International, 2025). Furthermore, the decision to exclude Suwayda, Raqqa, and Hasakah—almost one-third of the country—from the parliamentary elections in October, further entrenched mistrust in Damascus.

This White Paper contends that Syria's most viable path to unity lies in adopting inclusive, decentralized models of governance—exemplified by DAANES and the Aleppo Agreement, where the interim government and Kurdish authorities found a peaceful compromise. Without such a framework, Syria risks renewed conflict and fragmentation, as seen in horrific violence in Suwayda and the coastal regions.

Table 1: Summary of Syrian Regions that Have Made Efforts for Economic and Political Inclusion

International Guidance on How Inclusion Can Lead to Economic Growth, Improved Governance, and More Durable Peace Treaties	Which Syrian Regions Have Made Credible Efforts to Advance These Goals?		
	Idlib Norwest Syria under HTS	Northeast Syria under the DAANES	Interim Govern-ment in Damascus
Increasing Women's Labor Force Participation Can lead to Increased GDP	no	yes	lack of data
Including Women in Governance Can Pre-vent Conflict Resurgence	no	yes	limited
Including Women in Peace Negotiations Can Increase Durabil-ity of Agreements	no	yes	no

The paper concludes with policy recommendations grounded in comparative case studies from Northern Ireland and the Philippines, demonstrating how inclusive negotiations have led to durable peace. Inclusion is not a luxury—it is a strategic necessity if Syria is to survive as a unified state.

INTRODUCTION

The sudden collapse of the Assad regime in December 2024, following the withdrawal of Russian and Iranian support, marked the end of over fifty years of dynastic rule. In place of Bashar al-Assad, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), an armed group that emerged out of Al Qaeda, has taken over the reins of government in Damascus. This abrupt power transition, marked by the fading away of Russian and Iranian influence in Syria, has dramatically altered the regional balance of power, prompting comparisons to the geopolitical reordering after the fall of the Soviet Union (Khatib, 2024). This is a historic moment of both opportunity and potential peril.

Led by interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, HTS formed the Syrian Transitional Government (STG), pledging to unite the country. Given his background as an Al Qaeda leader, many Syrians, including moderate Sunni Arabs and ethnic and religious minorities, harbor deep suspicion towards him and question whether he has in fact abandoned his past as a radical Sunni extremist. If the STG in Syria succeeds in establishing a democratic and representative government during this critical transition period, the potential benefits could be far-reaching. Such a shift may pave the way for the voluntary return of refugees whose skills, resources, and networks are vital to reconstruction and economic revitalization.

The prospect of transitioning from a Russian and Iranian-backed authoritarian regime to one aligned with U.S. and regional partners represents a historic opportunity for the United States. In May, the Trump Administration appointed Tom Barrack, the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, to also serve as Special Envoy for Syria (Szuba 2025). His appointment underscored a recalibration of U.S priorities and elevated Syria to the forefront of American foreign policy.

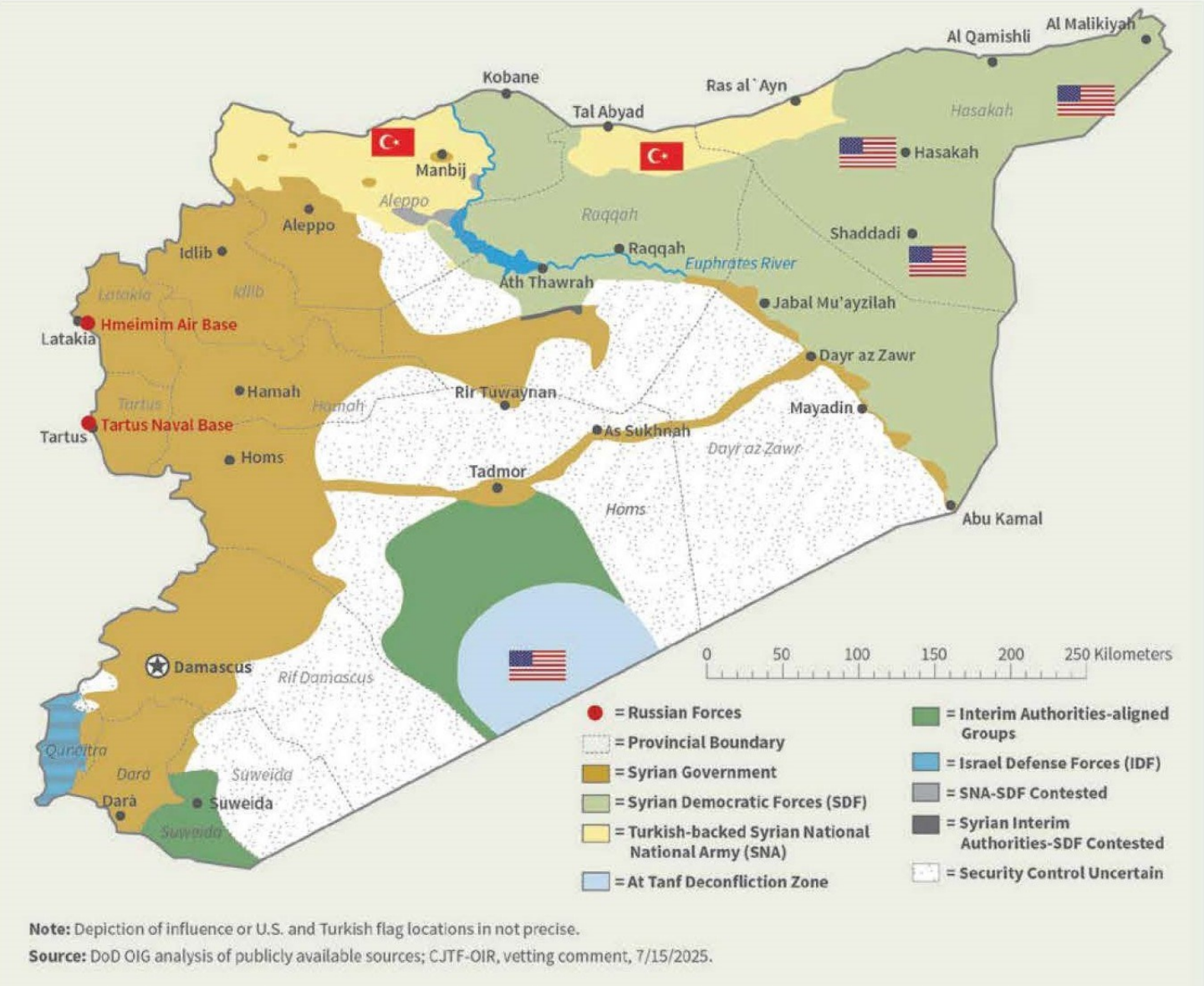
The Syrian Transitional Government (STG) faces formidable obstacles to national consolidation, with effective control limited to approximately 60-70% of the country. Rather than pursuing inclusive governance or confidence-building measures to bridge Syria's fragmented zones of authority, the interim administration under Ahmad al-Sharaa has adopted a coercive and exclusionary posture. Sectarian violence targeting Alawite, Druze, and Christian communities has raised concerns about the regime's commitment to pluralism and reconciliation. A UN Report found that the massacres that primarily targeted Alawites in the coastal areas in March likely amounted to war crimes and that members of the new Syrian government's armed forces took part in the killing spree (Goldbaum, 2025).

Tensions escalated further when interim authorities held parliamentary elections in October that excluded entire regions of the country, including Hasakah, Raqqa, and Suwayda. This decision effectively disenfranchised nearly one-third of the country during Syria's first parliamentary elections since the fall of the Assad regime. Furthermore, the "elections" were not based on the principle of "one person one vote" but rather a tightly controlled appointment process. Only 4% of the new members of parliament are women, and only two are Christians. No Druze candidates were elected. The remaining one-third of parliament will be directly appointed by Al Sharaa himself. Rather than fostering national unity, these actions have deepened mistrust and reinforced existing territorial and communal divisions.

In contrast, the Aleppo Agreement stands out as a rare instance of negotiated compromise. In Syria's second-largest city, decentralized security arrangements were brokered between STG-aligned forces and Kurdish groups, allowing for localized autonomy while maintaining a cooperative framework. This stands in stark relief to the violent confrontations in the coastal areas in the west and Suwayda in the south. In the Druze -majority heartland of Suwayda, a failed attempt by the interim government to assert control resulted in the displacement of over 192,000 people (UNOCHA, 2025). This report contends that the Aleppo model offers a viable template for integration and stability in other contested regions of Syria.

Map 1 illustrates the extent of territorial fragmentation in Syria. It also illustrates the approximate balance of power between the two largest blocs: the Syrian

Map 1: Territorial Fragmentation in Syria



Source: Lead IG Report to the U.S. Congress, page 22

Transitional Government with control in western Syria, and the SDF and Autonomous Administration controlling northeast Syria. Turkey occupies a large strip of territory along the northern border, while Israel maintains a foothold in the south.

METHODOLOGY

The absence of comprehensive economic and governance data across Syria's four zones of control—particularly disaggregated sub-economic indicators—poses a critical barrier to effective policymaking. The lack of regional data is especially problematic given the stark differences across Syrian regions in terms of governance structures and levels of gender inclusion. At this defining moment in Syria's recovery and reconstruction, these blind spots risk undermining strategic planning. This report aims to begin to fill this lacuna, based on intensive fieldwork in Syria and online interviews. The lead author conducted numerous research visits to Syria over the past decade, including two extensive visits after the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 - January 2025 and again in the summer of 2025. In-depth interviews were conducted in Damascus, Suwayda, Idlib, Homs, Deraa, Aleppo, Afrin, Maaloula, and Qamishli. The

second author conducted interviews online with numerous participants in different regions of the country. The third author contributed desk research.

WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN SYRIA: COMPARING THE MODELS IN IDLIB AND NORTHEAST SYRIA

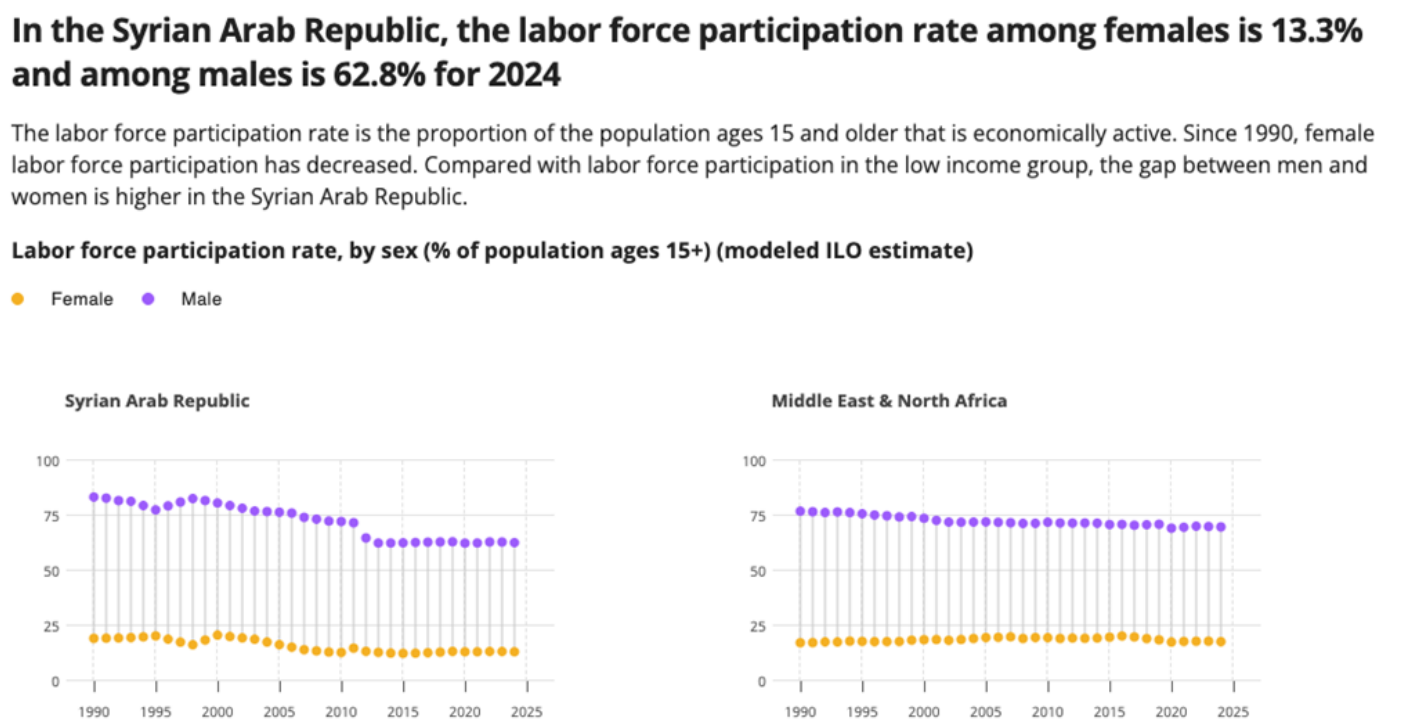
As Syria faces the enormous task of rebuilding, it is imperative that it take advantage of the potential of its entire population. This will require allowing women to make contributions to economic growth and development. In 2021, Syria ranked 152 out of 156 countries in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (pg.10). This places Syria among the world's lowest performers in closing the gender gap across crucial areas such as economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health, and political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2021). [1]

In 2024, the World Bank estimated that the labor force participation of women in Syria was just 13.3%, compared to 62.8% among men (World Bank, 2024). However, this figure must be treated with caution due to the lack of sub-national data. Without localized data, national averages risk obscuring critical nuances that could inform policy.

As part of the research for this report, the authors reached out to economists and local organizations in both Damascus (held by the interim government) and in Northeast Syria (held by the SDF) and requested data on labor force participation by gender, and their assessment on overall economic conditions. The unpublished report provided by an economist based in Damascus did not include an assessment of labor force participation but did state that: "The persistence of long queues of Syrian youth at immigration and passport offices vividly illustrates the ongoing search for employment abroad, symptomatic of insufficient domestic job creation" (Arbache, 2025). The authors did receive an estimate for female labor force participation in the local government in Northeast Syria, which is considerably higher than the World Bank estimate.

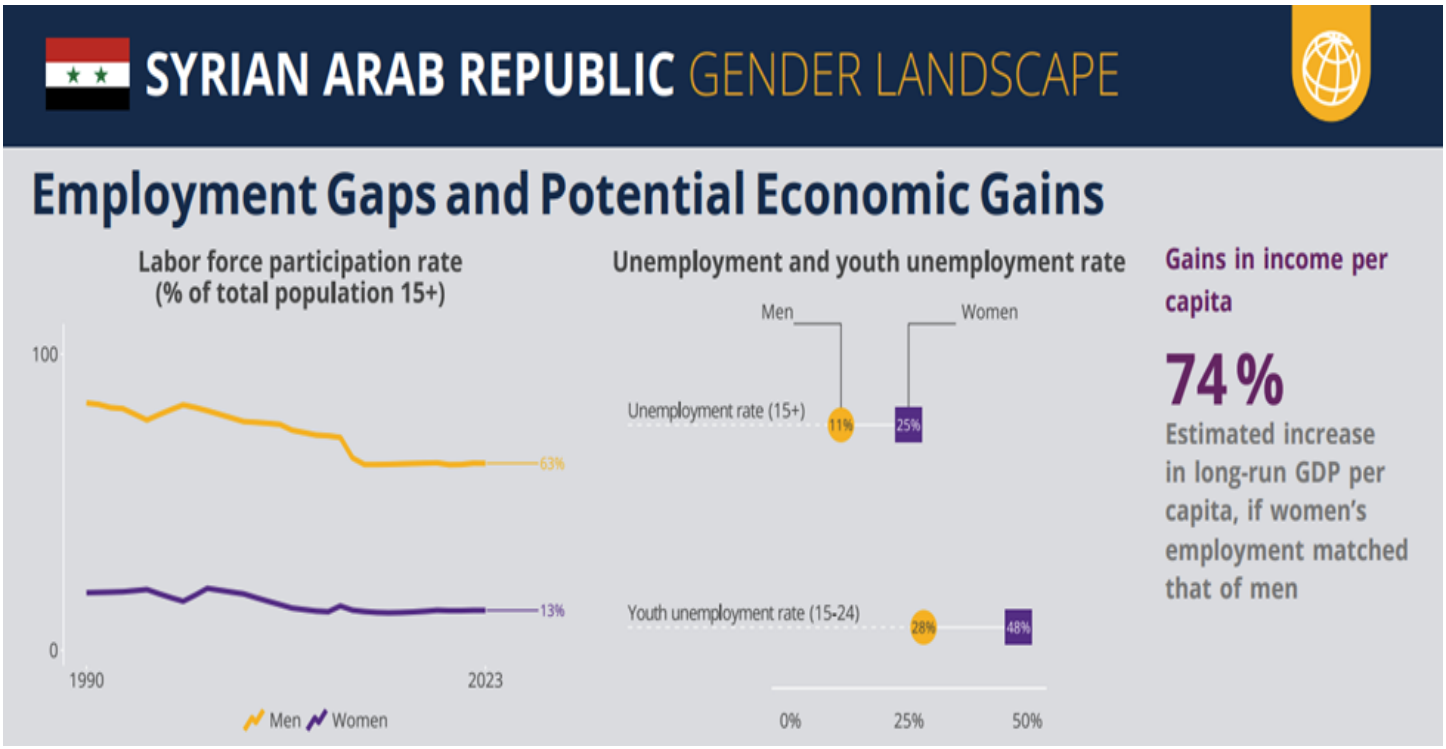
In the local government in the Northeast, known as the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), women's labor force participation is

Figure 1: Labor Force Rate Among Syrian Females and Males



Source: International Labour Organization, 2025

Figure 2: Syrian Gender Landscape



Source: The World Bank Group - Syrian Arab Republic Gender Landscape

estimated to be as high as 44.39%, and among males is 55.61%. This data was provided to the authors by the General Registry of Social Affairs, an organization that is part of the DAANES. Many women also work in the agricultural sector. This region covers between 25 - 30% of the territory of the country—an area about the size of Croatia—with a population of between three to five million people. It is inherently difficult to estimate population size and labor force participation, given the ongoing displacement caused by years of military conflict. A significant number of people from areas such as Afrin, Manbij, and Ras al-Ayn have relocated to DAANES-controlled areas. Thousands of families are still living in IDP camps across Northeast Syria.

Because the data cannot be verified, it should be treated with caution. The numbers do illustrate, however, that there appears to be considerable regional variation in terms of female labor force participation, which is likely attributable to the different governance models. This is not surprising given that the HTS model in Idlib has been based on a Salafist ideology which restricts women's role in the economy and public sphere. By contrast, the governance model in North and East Syria has actively sought to increase women's role in the economy, security forces, and civil society. These differences are summarized in Table 1.

What is clear is that the economic case for increasing women's participation in the workforce is compelling. **In 2024, the World Bank estimated a 74% increase in long-run GDP per capita, if women's employment matched that of men** (Fiuratti Pennings and Torres, 2024). The IMF also predicted that closing the gender gap could have a transformative impact on productivity and increase GDP per capita (Lagarde, Finance and Development, 2019).

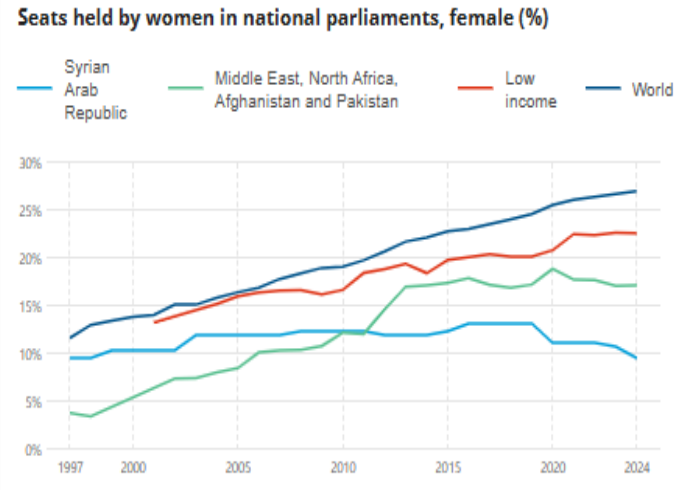
Clearly, there is a consensus among experts from the IMF and the World Bank that increasing women's participation in the labor force is a key lever for economic growth in Syria. Despite this, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Idlib and now the interim government in Damascus have implemented policies that restrict women's access to employment. In stark contrast, the Autonomous Administration in Northeast Syria has made concerted efforts that align with the IMF and World Bank recommendations on closing the economic gender gap. These efforts include initiatives to expand women's roles

in local governance, support female entrepreneurship, and integrate women more fully into the formal economy. **Because the IMF and World Bank do not collect or report sub-national data for Syria, these localized reforms remain largely invisible in their assessments of Syria's economic trajectory. The ILO is planning to conduct its first labor force survey since the fall of the regime. However, officials have reported that the interim government has not granted them permission to conduct the survey in the Northeast or areas outside its control, and that they will have to rely on subcontractors to collect the data.**

Historically, Northeast Syria has been the most economically underdeveloped region of the country, with some of the highest levels of poverty. Deliberate steps were taken by the Assad regime to prevent the development of local industry, such as Decree 49 of 2008. Local entrepreneurship was hampered by the centralized nature of Assad rule, whereby even the construction of large buildings in the Jazira canton required permission from Damascus. For Kurds and Yezidis who had been rendered stateless through the creation of arbitrary legal categories known as *ajanib* and *maktoum*, it was impossible even to own property.

After the forces of the Assad regime withdrew from the Northeast in mid-2012, local officials in the Autonomous Administration undertook the herculean task of attempting to economically develop their region, in the midst of a brutal war against the Islamic State. This included efforts to increase women's labor force participation. The DAANES launched an ambitious plan to create a "Women's Economy," known in Kurdish as *Aborîya Jin* and in Arabic as *El Iktisad el Marra*. As part of this initiative, cooperatives have been established, some of which are mixed-gender while others are all-women cooperatives. Like co-ops elsewhere in the world, they are owned by the employees and are intended to foster cooperation rather than competition. The women's cooperatives are intended to increase women's labor force participation, and to increase women's financial independence (Holmes, 2024).[2]

Figure 3: Seats Held by Women in Syrian Parliaments



Source: The World Bank Group - Syrian Arab Republic Gender Landscape

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE IN SYRIA: COMPARING THE MODELS IN IDLIB AND NORTHEAST SYRIA

We turn now to the question of women's representation in governance. According to World Bank data, in 2024 only 9.6% of seats in the national parliament were held by women (World Bank, 2024). The October 2025 elections for the transitional parliament resulted in just 4% of 140 seats being held by women. These were the seats that were selected through a regime-aligned committee; the remaining 70 seats will be selected directly by Al Sharaa himself. At the time of writing, those seats have not yet been allocated.

The parliamentary data does not account for regional differences. This is a major shortcoming given that about 40% of Syria has been outside the control of the central government in Damascus. In Idlib, women's participation in the economy and governance structures was severely limited after HTS assumed control of the province (Zelin, 2022; STJ, 2024; Khurma, 2025). According to a report by Syria Direct published in July 2024, "Women's participation in institutions governing northwestern Syria is 'virtually nonexistent,' even though there are no legal prohibitions on them holding positions

in either Salvation Government or Syrian Interim Government bodies." (Dhiab, 2024).

Supporters of the interim government claim that HTS has moderated their positions. Some of Al Sharaa's initial appointments after the fall of the regime, however, were hardline Islamists. One particularly notorious example was the first Justice Minister, Shadi Al-Waisi, a man who oversaw public executions of two women in Idlib in 2015. This decision sparked outrage in some sectors of Syrian society. Hind Kabawat, a member of Syria's Orthodox Christian community said in January that the interim government should consider replacing him "as soon as possible" (Omar and Gubash, 2025). Several months later, Al-Waisi was replaced as Justice Minister with Mazhar Al-Wais, and Hind Kabawat went on to become the Minister for Social and Labor Affairs. She is currently the only woman and only Christian in the new cabinet of the interim government (Gall, 2025).

Image 1: Co-Chairs of the Legislative Council in Tabqa

Photo credit: Clara Bennett

In Northeast Syria, a co-chair system was created in which men and women share power in various institutions at all levels. This includes a co-chair system to govern cities and municipalities, as well as a co-chair

Image 2: Co-Chairs of the Trade Dispute Union

Photo credit: Clara Bennett

system for institutions of the local government. The system of co-chairs was originally established in Kurdish-majority cities such as Qamishli and Kobane but has since spread across all regions under SDF control, including Arab-majority cities such as Raqqa and Tabqa (Holmes, 2024).

According to data provided to the authors by the General Registry of Social Affairs in September 2025, there are currently 488 women in co-chair positions throughout North and East Syria. Images 1 and 2 depict male and female co-chairs of various institutions and include representatives from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. They show how the male and female Co-Chair system established across Northeast Syria has increased women's participation in the labor force and local government.

HOW INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESSES LEAD TO MORE SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

Research supports the link between inclusive peace processes and sustainable outcomes. The equal participation of women in peace processes increases the probability of an agreement lasting at least two years by 20% and at least fifteen years by 35% (UN Women, 2015). Peace negotiations that incorporate gender inclusion are directly related to stronger economic outcomes and increased stability (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). Furthermore, countries with substantial gender gaps are more likely to be engaged in foreign and domestic conflicts (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

Examples such as the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) involvement in the Good Friday Agreement and the Bangsamoro Peace Process in the Philippines, exemplify how gender representation not only furthered peace processes but led to greater economic development.

Northern Ireland: NIWC Involvement in the Good Friday Agreement

For decades, Northern Ireland was politically divided by sectarian conflict between Protestant Unionists and Catholic Nationalists. The violent conflict left severe social and economic damage, with thousands of civilian casualties and a significant decline in foreign investments and the country's GDP (Dorsett, 2013). In 1973, a previous attempt at peace, the Sunningdale Agreement, failed due to widespread opposition. Notably, women were not present during the negotiations or agreement.

In 1996, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) was formed in response to the lack of gender representation in Northern Irish politics. The Coalition emerged during a period where sectarian violence discouraged women from entering the formal political system, contributing to mistrust between Catholic and Protestant women (Rynder, 2002). The NIWC was founded by Monica McWilliams, a Catholic academic, and Pearl Sagar, a Protestant social worker (Cowell-Meyers, 2014). Initially beginning as a movement to achieve "equitable and effective political participation" for women, the NIWC went on to play a leading role in the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) (Cowell-Meyers, 2014).

Representatives from the NIWC insisted that the GFA not only focus on constitutional arrangements but also address social concerns. The lack of party affiliation allowed the NIWC to facilitate dialogues with various political parties. The NIWC managed to negotiate the inclusion of gender equality language in the document, stating that women have the right to full and equal political participation (Cowell-Meyers, 2014).

The NIWC successfully negotiated for the agreement to address issues such as integrated education, mixed housing, and victims' rights for domestic/sexual abuse. The resolution of the conflict allowed Northern Ireland to focus on expanding its economy. Greater stability contributed to expanding tourism and encouraging foreign investments (Brownlow, 2023). By 2019, Northern Ireland's GDP had grown 27% in real terms, largely due to the social and economic improvements addressed by the NIWC in the GFA (Brownlow, Jordan, Turner, 2023).

Philippines: The Bangsamoro Peace Process

For almost five decades, violent conflict between the Philippine government and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the southern Philippines claimed thousands of lives and displaced communities across Mindanao (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d). Previous attempts at peace in 1976, 1996, and 2008 failed to include women and were ultimately unsuccessful amidst continuing violence.

The Comprehensive Agreement of Bangsamoro (CAB) was reached in 2014. In contrast to previous attempts, the CAB included various perspectives of previously neglected groups, most notably women. Women constituted 22% of negotiators and 27% of signatories for the Comprehensive Agreement of Bangsamoro, far exceeding global averages for formal peace negotiations (UN Women, 2024). The involvement of women negotiators led to gender provisions being included in

the final document and winning key provisions for women in the new autonomous region (Duque-Salazar, Forsberg, Olsson, 2022).

The negotiations were led by Miriam Coronel Ferrer, the first woman to sign as chief negotiator of a peace agreement with a non-state armed group (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d). Ferrer focused not only on military arrangements but also on addressing social, political, and economic concerns such as education, healthcare, gender equality, and infrastructure development.

Following the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BARMM), poverty rates in the region fell as infrastructure developments and international investments increased (World Bank Group, 2024). The creation of the BARMM benefitted the region economically and allowed the Philippine government to reallocate resources to focus on external threats to its sovereignty, such as China's assertive behavior in the South China Sea.

Implications for Syria's Transition and the March Agreement between the STG and SDF

These international cases offer crucial insights into how inclusive peace processes can further reconstruction efforts. They represent different types of conflict, which are both present in the Syrian crisis. Northern Ireland was an example of sectarian or intra-religious conflict (between Catholics and Protestants), whereas the conflict in the Philippines was communal in nature (between the Christian majority and Muslim minority).

The Syrian conflict is complex and multi-layered, driven by two major axes of violence. This included state violence by the Assad regime against civilians, and non-state extremist violence led by various jihadist groups, such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. With the fall of the Assad regime, it is now the second type of extremist violence that has come to the fore. The Syrian crisis reflects both the sectarian tensions seen in Northern Ireland—manifested in violence between extremist Sunni Muslims and minority groups like Alawites and Druze—and the communal divisions observed in the Philippines between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Image 3: SDF Commander Mazloum Abdi (on the left) and STG Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa sign the March 10 Agreement

Source: Wikimedia Commons, 2025

The March 10 agreement between Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa and SDF commander Mazloum Abdi was an important milestone in the post-Assad transition. It signaled a willingness by both sides to compromise and avoid armed confrontation. Moreover, it stipulated the integration of both civil and military institutions, including border crossings, the airport, and oil and gas fields (Al Tamimi, 2025). It did not, however, provide any details on how the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) would be integrated into the new Syrian armed forces. Furthermore, it made no mention of women, although women comprise approximately 30% of all fighters in the SDF. Women commanders played an important role in the defeat of the Islamic State and continue to serve in leadership positions in the SDF. By contrast, the armed forces of the new Syrian government, and the HTS out of which they emerged, have historically excluded women from serving in military forces. For a full translation of the agreement, see Appendix 1.

THE ALEPPO AGREEMENT: A COMPROMISE THAT SECURED GAINS FOR WOMEN AND KURDS

As Syria's largest city prior to the war, Aleppo has played a major role in the cultural, political, and economic life of the country. Today, Aleppo features a highly diverse

population, including Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, and Kurdish neighborhoods. After the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011, Aleppo became divided into three distinct regions of control. From July 2012 until December 2016, eastern Aleppo was controlled by a coalition of rebel groups including the Free Syrian Army (FSA), the Levant Front, and al-Nusra, while western Aleppo remained under the control of the Assad regime. Squeezed between the two was a third zone of Kurdish control, where some half million residents lived in the Kurdish majority neighborhoods of Sheik Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah, who were protected by Kurdish YPG/YPJ forces.

Image 4: Nouri Sheikho and Hefin Suleiman, co-chairs of the Sheik Maqsoud Council in Aleppo, and signatories of the Aleppo Agreement in April 2025

Photo credit: Amy Austin Holmes

During this time, the Kurdish neighborhoods developed their own political, cultural, and educational institutions, and their own security forces that protected the area. They effectively became a semi-autonomous zone, neither under the control of the Assad regime, nor under the control of the rebel groups that it viewed with some suspicion because of their ties to Islamist groups. The Kurdish region of Aleppo essentially developed the same political system as in Kurdish-led areas in north and east Syria. Now known as the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), this region encompasses about one-third of the territory of Syria (Holmes, 2024).

One of the main features of the governance model of the DAANES is a co-chair system where women and men share power at all levels, including in local councils, as described previously. Two of the leaders of the local council in the Kurdish neighborhoods of Aleppo are Hefin Suleiman and Nouri Sheikho, who signed the Aleppo Agreement (see Image 4).

Another distinguishing feature of the Autonomous Administration has been the introduction of the previously banned Kurdish language. In an interview with Ms. Suleiman and Mr. Sheikho, the two co-chairs touted the creation of Kurdish schools in Aleppo as one of their proudest accomplishments during this period.

> *"We now have three Kurdish schools in Aleppo. Before 2011, there were none. There are ten schools in total that are operating now. Seven of them still teach the regime curriculum. But even those schools – we convinced them to start teaching at least two hours of instruction in Kurdish."*[3]

Their demands for education in their native tongue align with UN experts, who have advocated for the necessity of education in the mother tongue in countries around the world. The UN Special Rapporteur Fernand de Varennes made the case by stating that education in the mother tongue is:

> *"... more cost-effective in the long term; reduces dropout rates; leads to noticeably better academic results, particularly for girls; improves levels of literacy and fluency in both the mother tongue and the official or majority language; and leads to greater family and community involvement" (UN, 2020).*

In explaining the rationale behind their determination to introduce Kurdish language instruction, Suleiman

compared the situation of Kurds in Aleppo to that of Armenians prior to the war, saying:

> *"For a long time, Armenians had special schools where they could learn and teach in their own language, but there were millions of Kurds without any rights to learn their own language."*[4]

The Aleppo Agreement was the first practical implementation of the March Agreement between Abdi and Al Sharaa. It effectively demonstrated that the two sides could agree not only on paper, but also on the ground. The signing of the Aleppo Agreement sparked city-wide celebrations and fireworks lighting up the sky over the ancient city.

The Aleppo Agreement marked a pivotal moment both in terms of security coordination and also in advancing gender inclusion in post-conflict governance. Female members of the Asayish (the Kurdish security forces) retained their positions, ensuring that hard-won progress in gender representation within security institutions was not rolled back. In a further step toward institutional integration, police forces from both sides agreed to adopt a unified identity under the name "Internal Security Forces," wear the same uniform, and jointly manage checkpoints. This cooperation symbolizes a functional merger of security apparatuses and also lays the groundwork for trust-building and operational cohesion between formerly divided authorities.

One of the key points of contention centered on the role of women. The interim government stipulated that women should not be stationed at the shared checkpoints alongside men. This position contrasts with established practice in Northeast Syria, where it is common for women and men to serve alongside each other, both in the police and in the military structures of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). As a compromise, the Kurdish side agreed to the interim government's demands regarding gender segregation in the shared checkpoints. Women will, however, continue to serve as police forces at checkpoints located within the two neighborhoods.

Map 2: Kurdish-Controlled Areas of Aleppo

Source: Liveuamap, 2025

Furthermore, the Kurdish neighborhoods maintained the right to continue running their distinct form of semi-autonomous governance, including the right to continue teaching the Kurdish language. The two neighborhoods have the right to full and fair representation in Aleppo's Provisional Council, as well as the Chambers of Commerce. Civil institutions in the two neighborhoods will work in coordination with civil institutions and provide services to them without discrimination through the municipality branches located in the two neighborhoods. See Appendix 2 for the full text of the Aleppo Agreement.

In sum, the Aleppo Agreement signaled a willingness for both sides to compromise and find an agreement on a wide range of issues pertaining to security, governance, education, language rights, humanitarian access, and the release of prisoners. Importantly, women's rights and achievements were not sacrificed in the process.

Partial Agreements, Practical Gains: Lessons from the Aleppo Model

The stalled progress on the March agreement between Ahmad al-Sharaa and Mazloum Abdi—along with the massacres in Suwayda and Syria's coastal region—underscores the urgent need for practical, localized

models of cooperation. The Aleppo Agreement enabled prisoner exchanges and a relative calm between government and SDF-affiliated forces. Moreover, following this arrangement—which stemmed from the broader understanding between the SDF and the Syrian interim government in Damascus—security dynamics eased between SDF-controlled areas and government-held zones in Aleppo. This in turn stimulated commercial activity between traders in Aleppo under Damascus's authority and those operating in areas administered by the Autonomous Administration. Civilian movement between the two zones also became more flexible and less burdened by security challenges. In addition, the flow of oil from SDF-controlled areas to government-held parts of Aleppo and surrounding areas reportedly saw improvements, including the resumption of oil flow after a two-month halt following the collapse of the Assad regime. This recovery was made possible through the agreement and the broader, ongoing talks between the Syrian government and the SDF[5] (Al-7al Net, 2025).

This model of decentralized cooperation in Aleppo should be replicated—especially in conflict-prone areas such as Suwayda, where empowering local communities (including women) might have prevented recent bloodshed.

THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO MARGINALIZE DRUZE LEADERS AND SUBJUGATE SUWAYDA

Immediately after the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, leaders of the Druze community in Suwayda put forth a proposal for appointing a local civilian woman, Mohsana Al-Muhaythawi, as governor—a move that could have laid the foundation for cooperative local governance (See Image 5). Ms. Al-Muhaythawi has years of experience serving in the local administration of Suwayda. She was widely viewed as an effective representative of the Druze community, listening to their concerns and assuring the continued delivery of services despite the hardships of the conflict.[6]

Image 5: Mohsana Al-Muhaythawi, whose nomination to be governor of Suwayda was blocked

Photo Credit: Amy Austin Holmes

The nomination was blocked by President Ahmad Al-Sharaa, who instead appointed Mustafa Bakour, an Islamist figure from Idlib and former commander of Jaysh al-Izza, a militia that had previously fought against the Assad regime. The decision further escalated tensions between Suwayda and Damascus. Through such an appointment, Al-Sharaa seeks to revive the tradition of extreme centralization that characterized Hafez al-Assad's era, when local communities were granted no meaningful authority to represent themselves. This time, however, Al-Sharaa is attempting to place that extreme centralization directly in his own hands by empowering Sunni figures close to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham across the country. Under Hafez al-Assad, for example, the governor of Idlib was often appointed from Suwayda and was typically a Druze figure. Dr. Tawfiq Salha—a member of the Ba'ath Party's Regional Command—served as governor of Idlib from August 15, 1975, until March 18, 1980. Later, Zaid Hassoun, a Druze from the Golan Heights, held the same position from October 29, 1984, until August 6, 2000, (Thawra, 2025 and Al-Araby, 2021).

Image 6 shows a poster distributed in the streets of Damascus in May 2025, after HTS took power. The poster urges women to adhere to Sharia dress codes,

including wearing the hijab, avoiding tight or decorated clothing, and refraining from styles resembling men's attire. Although this dress code is not being imposed, it has led to fears that the interim government under Ahmad al-Sharaa will try to impose the 'Idlib Model' on all of Syria.

Image 6: Poster advocating for women to wear the hijab outside the Four Seasons hotel in Damascus. May 2025

Photo Credit: Syrian citizen (identity protected)

THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

In August 2025, the Christian parish of Deir Atiyah, a suburb of Damascus, issued a strongly worded statement condemning the decision to exclude members of the Christian community from the executive office of the municipal council (Al-Modon Media, 2025). The statement described the move as "a dangerous precedent that threatens the unity of the local community and undermines the spirit of coexistence that has characterized Deir Atiyah for decades."

Such an unprecedented absence of Christian representation—given that Christians were traditionally included in municipal councils prior to the fall of the Assad regime—is a dangerous indicator. It may mark the beginning of a broader exclusion of the Christian voice in post-Assad Syria. Since the parliamentary elections were indirect, based on voting through a committee, the lack of Christian representation in Deir Atiyah effectively translated into the absence of their voice in the parliamentary process as well. (Al-Modon Media, 2025).

Image 7: Meeting between the committees representing the interim authorities in Damascus (on the right) and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, June 2025

Source: Al-Akhbar, 2025

Although the cabinet of President al-Sharaa includes a Christian minister, Hind Kabawat—the sole woman in the Syrian government—the broader issue of Christian representation at the local level remains unaddressed. This was highlighted by the absence of Christian participation in the municipal council of Deir Atiyah. Kabawat, who has long opposed the Assad regime, has maintained close ties with Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), now dominant in Damascus, a relationship that traces back to the group's earlier control of Idlib in northern Syria. Genuine inclusivity, however, requires engaging a wider spectrum of Syrian Christians, particularly those politically and ideologically distant from HTS. Recently established groups, such as the **National Levantine** and the **American Alliance**, both of which oppose HTS and include Christian members, should also be consulted and integrated into discussions of representation to ensure diversity. (Al Jazeera, 2025).

Furthermore, unarmed, marginalized communities—like Alawite-majority neighborhoods such as Al-Sumariya near Damascus—face forced displacement and arrests, in contrast to areas like Suwayda and SDF-held regions,

which have managed to resist government pressure due to their relative strength or external backing, as in the case of Israel's intervention in Suwayda. (Shaheen and Sewell, 2025).

ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS AND CHALLENGES BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND NORTHEAST SYRIA

Despite tensions and setbacks, negotiations are ongoing between the STG and the DAANES. As the photo above indicates, the negotiating committee representing the interim government in Damascus includes six members, all of whom are men. By contrast, the committee representing the Autonomous Administration includes eight members, four of whom are men and four of whom are women. The DAANES committee includes members from diverse ethnic and religious groups including Arabs, Kurds, and Syriac Christians, and who belong to different political parties.

Members of the Mixed-Gender Negotiating Committee representing DAANES:

1) Fouza Youssef (Democratic Union Party)
2) Abdulhamid Al-Mahbash (co-chair, Future Syria Party)
3) Ahmed Youssef (DAANES Financial Board)
4) Sanharib Barsoum (co-chair, Syriac Union Party)
5) Sozdar Haji (General Command, SDF & YPJ)
6) Maryam Ibrahim (co-chair, Board of Social Affairs & Laborers)
7) Yasser Suleiman (deputy co-chair, Democratic Peoples Council of NES)

Members of the All-Male Negotiating Committee representing the Syrian Transitional Government:

1) Mohammad Qanatri (Deputy Director of the America Desk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
2) Mohammad Abdul Ghani (Director of Internal Security, Aleppo Governorate)
3) Masoud Batal (Head of the Afrin file in Internal Security)
4) Ziad Fawaz Al-Ayesh (Deputy Minister of Interior, Civil Affairs)

PARLIAMENTARY "ELECTIONS" EXCLUDE ALMOST ONE THIRD OF SYRIA

The Higher Committee for People's Assembly Elections announced on August 23 that the parliamentary elections scheduled for October would not take place in Suwayda, Hasakah, and Raqqa. In order to justify their exclusion, Hassan Dugheim, spokesperson for the Preparatory Committee of the Syrian National Dialogue Conference, cited a lack of infrastructure, and claimed the seats would be reserved until conditions improve.[7] Northeast Syria, however, has held elections in parts of its territory before, casting doubt on this explanation. Furthermore, the region has had its own local parliament since 2018, which is now known as the Democratic People's Council.

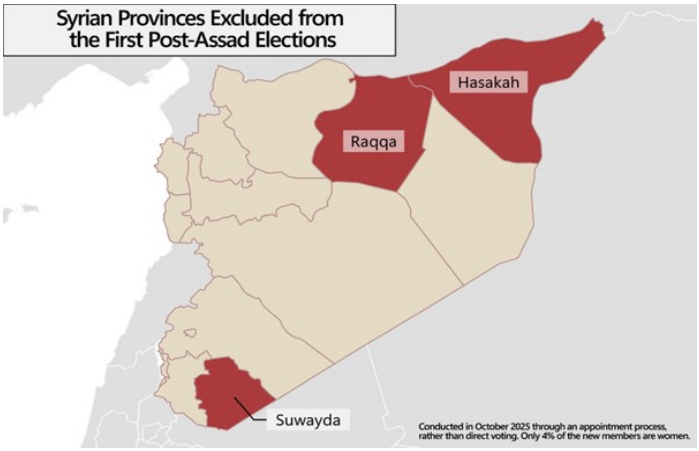
The decision by the interim government in Damascus to exclude major regions of the country from participating in the first parliamentary elections in post-Assad Syria is highly significant. Together with Hasakah, Raqqa, and Suwayda, the additional absence of elections in the Turkish-controlled cities of **Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ain** further undermined the legitimacy of the process (Jusoor News, 2025). Both the northern cities remain outside Damascus's authority and are administered through governance and security structures closely tied to Ankara rather than the interim Syrian government in Damascus. Taken together, these omissions mean that **almost one third of Syria's territory and population did not participate in the first parliamentary elections since the fall of the Assad regime.**

The structure of the elections further entrenched centralization and exclusion. The hybrid system grants 140 seats through local electoral colleges selected by regime-aligned committees, while another 70 seats are directly appointed by President Ahmad al-Sharaa himself. This combination leaves little room for authentic local representation.

At the same time, the conditions for candidacy appear designed not only to regulate participation but also to prevent genuine opposition voices from entering the political process. While baseline requirements such as age

(25 years old) and clean criminal records are standard, other provisions exclude broad swathes of society. Candidates must have held Syrian nationality prior to May 1, 2011, which disenfranchises naturalized Syrians, refugees, and displaced communities. They are barred if they ever served in the People's Assembly or ran for office after 2011 unless they can prove "defection." Individuals who served as ministers, governors, or security officials are automatically disqualified, as are anyone branded as a supporter of the "defunct regime," a "terrorist organization," or an advocate of secession, partition, or foreign support.

Map 3: Syrian Provinces Excluded from the first Post-



Source: Original Map produced by Samuel West Robertson

This restrictive framework, combined with the exclusion of key regions, illustrates that the parliamentary "elections" in October were more of a charade to create the appearance of legitimacy, rather than intended to produce meaningful representation. To make matters worse, the sham elections risk replicating the very patterns of marginalization and centralization that contributed to Syria's fragmentation. For non-Arab minorities such as Kurds, Syriacs, Armenians, and Circassians, the constitution's continued definition of Syria as the "Syrian Arab Republic" only deepens their alienation. The result is a process that undermines confidence in national unity, reinforces the Syrian Democratic Forces' reluctance to accept a comprehensive settlement with Damascus, and highlights the fragility of Syria's post-conflict political order.

CONCLUSION: THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT HAS EXCLUDED WOMEN, MINORITIES, AND WHOLE REGIONS OF SYRIA

Inclusion is an essential component of good governance. In post-conflict societies especially, inclusion is not a luxury but a necessity—precisely because conflicts often develop in response to systemic exclusion. When citizens feel excluded from their own governance structures, or that they are not allowed to actively participate in fundamental decisions impacting their lives, they may resort to violence. Excluding people from negotiations or peace processes that directly affect them, incentivizes them to act as spoilers. As a result, everything can unravel.

Increasing women's participation in the labor force is a key lever for economic growth in Syria. If women's employment in Syria matched that of men, the gains in income per capita could be as high as 74%, according to the World Bank. Despite this, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Idlib and now the interim government in Damascus have actively implemented policies that restrict women's access to employment. In stark contrast, the Autonomous Administration in Northeast Syria has made concerted efforts that align with the IMF and World Bank recommendations on closing the economic gender gap.

This White Paper underscores the vital role women play in resolving violent conflict across a spectrum of contexts. Drawing on case studies from Northern Ireland, the Philippines, and Syria, it highlights how women have contributed meaningfully to peacebuilding in conflicts marked by distinct forms of violence. Northern Ireland exemplifies sectarian or intra-religious conflict between Catholic and Protestant communities. The Philippines presents a case of communal violence between the Christian majority and the Muslim minority. Syria, meanwhile, embodies a complex convergence of both conflict types—including sectarian violence between

extremist Sunni Muslims and Alawite and Druze communities and communal violence between Muslims and non-Muslims such as Christians and Yezidis. These diverse cases illustrate not only the multifaceted nature of modern conflict but also the adaptive and transformative impact of women's engagement in peace processes.

Syria is at a pivotal turning point. It could either repeat the mistakes of the past, and replicate patterns of systemic exclusion, or move forward in a new direction. While the March Agreement between the SDF and Damascus was a breakthrough and signaled a willingness to integrate and compromise, it raised more questions than answers. The agreement was vague on how integration should take place and made no mention of women. Furthermore, at the time of writing, progress has stalled as many of the points are being ignored. The interim government in Damascus appears to interpret the agreement as a way to simply pressure the SDF to hand over the oil resources and disarm, while ignoring other points of the agreement that are necessary as prerequisites or confidence-building measures.

In April of 2025, the Aleppo Agreement was signed between Damascus and Kurdish authorities in Aleppo, marking a milestone in Syria's transitional process. **This White Paper has identified the Aleppo Agreement as a model that could be replicated in other contested regions of the country, as it embodies the principles of compromise, unity, and inclusion—critical foundations for Syria's recovery and long-term stability.**

To overcome its profound challenges and build a foundation for economic growth and lasting peace, Syria's leaders must ensure that voices from across the country's diverse social fabric are represented in governance and empowered to shape the nation's future.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT IN DAMASCUS AND THE DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION IN NORTHEAST SYRIA

1) Encourage decentralized security and governance arrangements as a pathway to integration while avoiding violence, such as the Aleppo Agreement. Consider replicating the model of the Aleppo Agreement in Afrin, Suwayda, Ras al-Ayn (Serekaniye), the Tishreen Dam area, and other contested parts of Syria.
2) Continue regular meetings and negotiations, both in Damascus and in Northeast Syria. Because inclusive peace processes are linked to improved outcomes, women should be encouraged to be part of these negotiations.
3) Establish benchmarks based on the evidence-based best practices outlined here regarding inclusive economic growth, governance structures, and peace negotiations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES AND PARTNER COUNTRIES:

1) Provide guidance on establishing benchmarks on inclusive economic growth, governance structures, and peace negotiations.
2) Support for the interim government should be conditioned on establishing an equal partnership with the DAANES and genuine outreach to Syria's diverse communities.
3) Encourage the interim government to consider implementing some of the programs that have led to greater stability and inclusion in Northeast Syria.
4) Condition any lifting of sanctions in the U.S. Congress on guarantees for equal citizenship in the Syrian constitution and the protection of minorities. This should include granting local communities the freedom to represent themselves through a decentralized authority, and the accountability of those responsible for violations and crimes in Suwayda and the Syrian coast.
5) Maintain the U.S. presence in Northeast Syria and establish smaller Forward Operating Locations in the

south and in the coastal areas. This will ensure that local agreements are upheld, provide stability, and prevent Russian or Iranian attempts to reassert their influence.

6) U.S. officials and other international stakeholders should take a balanced approach to their mediation efforts. Previous public statements by U.S. officials that the U.S. had "complete confidence" in the interim government likely emboldened the STG to attempt to seize Suwayda by force, which resulted in mass displacement and civilian casualties.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WORLD BANK, IMF, ILO AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

1) International institutions should 1) make every effort to collect sub-national data from all regions of Syria, especially regarding women's participation in governance and the labor force and 2) prioritize capacity-building for Syrian organizations to collect this data across all regions of control.

2) If further data confirms this report's findings that Northeast Syria has made measurable progress on key economic indicators, such as increased women's participation in the labor force and local government—a known growth driver—it could become a model for other regions. These insights may guide locally tailored solutions to Syria's wider economic challenges.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

1) **December 8, 2024:** Fall of Assad Regime

2) **December 18, 2024:** Obaidah Arnaout, a former government spokesman and a current senior official now overseeing governance in Homs, tells an interviewer that "the essence of women, by their biological and psychological nature, does not suit all state functions, such as the Ministry of Defense." He further suggests that it was "too early to speak about women's work in the judiciary." These remarks surfaced amid reports of female judges being sidelined in Syria's Ministry of Justice.

3) **December 30, 2024:** One of the very few female senior officials in the new administration, Aisha al-Dibs, who headed the women's affairs portfolio, publicly states that women should "not go beyond the priorities of their God-given nature," emphasizing that their primary duty lies in serving their husbands and children at home (BBC, Dec 2024).

6) **December 31, 2024:** Druze leaders call for appointment of a woman to represent Suwayda. The STG refuses and instead appoints a man from outside Suwayda with an Islamist background.

7) **February 2025:** The interim government convenes a National Dialogue that lasts one single day. Critics viewed it as rushed and as lacking adequate representation from Syria's diverse constituents. Many key members of the Syrian diaspora were either not invited, or not given enough time to make travel arrangements to Syria. None of the officials from the DAANES were invited to attend.

8) **March 2025:** Violence in Coastal areas against Alawites; a Reuters Investigation finds that the "chain of command led to Damascus."

9) **March 10, 2025:** Agreement between interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa and SDF commander-in-chief Mazloum Abdi to integrate the armed forces. The agreement makes no mention of how or if women in the SDF would be integrated.

10) **April 1, 2025:** Aleppo Agreement between interim government and Kurdish authorities

11) **May 14, 2025:** President Trump meets with STG interim president Ahmad al-Sharaa in Saudi Arabia

12) **June 22, 2025:** A suicide bombing in the Mar Elias Greek Orthodox church in Damascus kills over 30 people as they worship. Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah claimed responsibility. The attack came after Muslim sheikhs visited different neighborhoods of Damascus, asking Christians to convert to Islam.

13) **July 7, 2025:** The United States revokes the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designation from Hayat Tahrir al Sham.

14) **July 9, 2025:** Tom Barrack, the U.S. Special Envoy to Syria, says that Washington has "complete confidence in the Syrian government and the new Syrian government's military."

15) **July - August 2025:** Massacres in Druze-majority Suwayda as STG forces attempt to assert control

16) **August 14, 2025:** UN Report finds that violence on the coast in March that primarily targeted Alawites likely amounted to war crimes.

17) **October 5, 2025:** the first parliamentary elections are held since the fall of the Assad regime. Instead of direct voting, the elections took place through a tightly-controlled appointment process and Suwayda, Hasakah, and Raqqa were excluded from participating.

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NOTES

[1] For more comprehensive data on women's economic security in Syria, please refer to the WomenStats database. Womanstats.org. Accessed October 5, 2025.

[2] For an analysis of the economy in Northeast Syria, see chapter 6 "Delinking from Damascus: The Economic Underpinnings of Political Autonomy" in Statelet of Survivors: The Making of a Semi-Autonomous Region in Northeast Syria, Oxford University Press (Holmes, 2024).

[3] Interview with Nouri Sheikho and Hefin Suleiman, conducted by Amy Austin Holmes in Aleppo, summer 2025.

[4] Interview with Nouri Sheikho and Hefin Suleiman, conducted by Amy Austin Holmes in Aleppo, summer 2025.

[5] Based on conversations with Aleppo-based reporter, Abdulrahman Ismael, and five citizens from Aleppo conducted by Hadeel Oueis, September 2025.

[6] Interview with Mohsana Al-Muhaythawi conducted by Amy Austin Holmes in Suwayda, December 2024.

[7] Based on a conversation with Hassan Dugheim conducted by Hadeel Oueis via Zoom, September 2025.

Appendix 1:
Full Text of the Agreement between STG Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa and SDF Commander Mazloum Abdi, Signed on March 10, 2025.

Translated by Aymann Jawad al-Tamimi

On the basis of a meeting held between Mr. President Ahmad al-Sharaa and Mr. Mazloum Abdi on Monday 10 March 2025, the following agreement was made:

i. Ensuring the rights of all Syrians in representation and participation in the political process and all the state's institutions on the basis of competency, regardless of their religious and ethnic backgrounds.

ii. The Kurdish community is an indigenous community in the Syrian state and the Syrian state ensures its rights in citizenship and all constitutional rights.

iii. Ceasefire over all the Syrian lands.

iv. Merging all the civil and military institutions in northeast Syria within the Syrian state's administration, including the border crossings, airport, and oil and gas fields.

v. Ensuring the return of all displaced Syrians to their localities and villages and ensuring their protection by the Syrian state.

vi. Supporting the Syrian state in its fight against Assad's remnants and all the threats against its security and unity.

vii. Rejecting calls for division and hateful rhetoric and attempts to spread internal strife between all the components of Syrian society.

viii. The executive committees will work and strive to implement the agreement by the end of this year.

Appendix 2:
Full Text of the Aleppo Agreement, Signed on April 1, 2025

Text of the agreement between the Civil Council of Habib al-Ashrafiyah and Sheikh Maqsoud and the committee assigned by the Presidency of the Republic to implement the agreement with the Syrian Democratic Forces

Based on the desire to promote coexistence, preserve civil peace, and achieve the goals of the Syrian revolution for freedom and dignity, and based on the belief that consensus among the various components of the Syrian people is the best way to confront the current challenges, the following has been agreed upon:

First: The Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh neighborhoods, which have a Kurdish majority, are considered neighborhoods of the city of Aleppo and are administratively affiliated with it. Protecting and respecting the social and cultural privacy of the residents of these two neighborhoods is essential to promoting peaceful coexistence.

Second: The provisions of this interim agreement will apply until the joint central committees agree on a sustainable solution.

Third: The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Internal Security Forces, bears the responsibility for protecting the residents of the two neighborhoods and preventing any attacks or harassment against them.

Fourth: In order to preserve civil peace and the safety of civilians, to prevent armed manifestations in the two neighborhoods, and weapons will be the exclusive property of the Internal Security Forces affiliated with the Ministry of Interior in the two neighborhoods

Fifth: Remove earthen barriers from public roads, while keeping the main checkpoints under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior's Internal Security, until security and stability are restored in the two neighborhoods.

Sixth: Military forces, with their weapons, will withdraw from the two neighborhoods to the area east of the Euphrates.

Seventh: Two Internal Security centers will be established in each of the Ashrafieh and Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhoods.

Eighth: Freedom of movement will be guaranteed for the residents of the two neighborhoods, and the prosecution of any person who was wanted before the agreement and whose hands were not stained with the blood of Syrians will be prohibited.

Ninth: A coordinating committee will be formed to facilitate movement between the city of Aleppo and the regions of north and east Syria.

Tenth: Committees will be formed in the two neighborhoods to implement the agreement on the ground.

Eleventh: Civil institutions in the two neighborhoods will work in coordination with civil institutions and provide services to them without discrimination from the rest of Aleppo's neighborhoods through the two municipality branches located in the two neighborhoods.

Appendix 2:
Full Text of the Aleppo Agreement, Signed on April 1, 2025

Twelfth: Prisons will be emptied by both parties in Aleppo Governorate, and all prisoners captured after the liberation will be exchanged.

Thirteen: Granting the two neighborhoods the right to full and fair representation in the Aleppo Provincial Council, as well as in the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and all fields, in accordance with the governing laws.

Fourteen: Preserving the service, administrative, and educational institutions, municipalities, and local councils existing in the two neighborhoods, until the joint central committees agree on a sustainable solution.

Issued on April 1, 2025
78854
Representatives of the Committee - Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Abdul Ghani.
Co-chair of the Council: Aba Nouri Sheikho
Masoud Battal
Hefin Suleiman

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