

# CSSR Regional Consultations

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## Outputs and Recommendations

– *First Group*

June 21-23, 2021

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# FIRST PILLAR: THE POLITICAL FILE AND THE CONSTITUTION

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- ◆ The Constitutional Committee should be reformed so that it is representative of all Syrians both internally and in the diaspora, in particular representatives from north-eastern Syria and Syrian refugees and their civil organisations in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), in order to produce a modern, comprehensive national constitution and sophisticated social contract that meets the aspirations and ensures the rights of all Syrians.
  - ◆ The political process should be accelerated through the election of a Constitutional Assembly and the conducting of transitional elections under the supervision of the United Nations (UN) as the international mediator and sponsor of the political process and intra-Syrian peace negotiations.
  - ◆ Women's inclusion in the Constitutional Committee and the constitutional process must be ensured in a binding and effective manner, and women should comprise no less than 30% of representatives, because women have vital roles to play in contributing to the achievement of stability in Syria.
  - ◆ Channels of communication should be established between the Constitutional Committee and the Women's Advisory Board (WAB) so as to exchange views and proposals benefitting the political process.
  - ◆ Work is needed to make the political process fully intra-Syrian under the umbrella of the UN so as to exclude international interventions and especially regional ones attempting to implement their own agendas, impede peace efforts, and further their own interests over the interests of the people of Syria.
  - ◆ The step-by-step strategy cannot achieve success in the Syrian case because it will hinder and delay a solution and reduce the chances of success.
  - ◆ To achieve a real and just settlement characterised by permanency and stability, it is necessary to rely on the principle of consensus and not on the principle of majority and minority views, especially with regard to existential issues.
  - ◆ UN Security Council Resolution 2254 should form the foundation of any comprehensive political settlement process in Syria and should be the fundamental pillar of the political process, and all stakeholders should fully comply with it.
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## SECOND PILLAR: INCLUSION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS, PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

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- ◆ Meetings should take place between the WAB and representatives of civil women's organisations and civil society actors in north-eastern Syria to support the political process and provide it with women's perspectives from these areas so that the concerns of women in these areas are fully taken into account.
  - ◆ Steps should be taken to remedy the lack of adequate representation of civil society organisations (CSOs), especially women's groups and those located in north-eastern Syria and the KRI, within the structures, bodies, and meetings that discuss the Syrian situation such as the Constitutional Committee and others.
  - ◆ Steps should be taken to remedy the lack of transparent and clear criteria for selecting members of the Constitutional Committee and the WAB to ensure the inclusion of all Syrians regardless of the geographic areas in which they live. The selection process should therefore be based on clear and transparent criteria.
  - ◆ There is a need to open channels of communication by holding periodic meetings and encounters between local and Syrian organisations, on the one hand, and between Syrian organisations and international organisations and actors active in Syrian affairs, on the other hand.
  - ◆ Influential international parties, the regime, and the opposition tend to ignore civil society and its role, especially with regard to the lack of any civil society representation in the chairmanship of the Constitutional Committee. Therefore, steps need to be taken to correct this situation and prevent the civil component of the Constitutional Committee from being seen as an honorary presence, but rather to be viewed as playing the most important role in creating balance.
  - ◆ Civil networks and alliances should be supported in order to allow greater opportunity for Syrians from the whole country and the diaspora to air their views, which will contribute to preparing the ground for efforts to reach a just and comprehensive solution.
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## THIRD PILLAR: HUMANITARIAN AND PROTECTION ISSUES

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- ◆ There is a need to stabilise the crossings between the various regions inside Syria and between Syria and neighbouring countries and to ensure that they are seen as corridors for humanitarian aid, so that they are not subject to any political or military agendas, and operate under clear mechanisms subject to the supervision of the UN and its bodies and by virtue of international resolutions that are binding on all stakeholders.
  - ◆ The appropriate conditions need to be put in place for the return of refugees and displaced persons to their home areas. This should be based on securing the economic and social requirements of and providing decent livelihoods for the population, on the one hand, and securing refugees' safe and voluntary return without the threat of prosecution and unaffected by security concerns, on the other hand.
  - ◆ A mechanism needs to be found to ensure that the Semalka/Peshkhabu border crossing that links the KRI and north-eastern Syria is kept open, operates in accordance with clear and permanent mechanisms and procedures, is not affected by political tensions between the two parties, and is recognised as an international corridor for this purpose.
  - ◆ It should be fully acknowledged that the victims and those affected by the Syrian war are not fairly and justly included in the political process and in the activities related to the affairs of Syria, especially women, youth, and displaced persons.
  - ◆ Fact-finding and follow-up committees should be established in the areas controlled by the armed factions backed by Turkey in Afrin, Ras al-Ayn and Tell Abyad, in order to identify the human rights violations that are continuously occurring in these areas, and to ensure the safety and security of the property and possessions of the local populations.
  - ◆ Refugees and displaced persons need to be protected and provided with adequate care, especially those residing in the camps of north-eastern Syria, especially al-Hawl and Washokani camps, which contain the persons displaced from Ras al-Ayn and are not recognised as humanitarian camps.
  - ◆ Civil society organisations and activists and women in north-eastern Syria regions need to be protected and supported in order for them to safely undertake their roles in the political process.
  - ◆ UN intervention is necessary to stop forced displacement and demographic change in certain areas such as Afrin, Ras al-Ayn, and Tell Abyad.
  - ◆ The UN must fulfil its obligations in terms of international conventions on rivers and transboundary international waters to ensure the equitable distribution of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers' water and prevent stakeholders from politicising river water and using it as a bargaining chip.
  - ◆ Activists should be protected from arbitrary detention, and UN and civil society representatives should visit prisons and assess the status of detainees held by all parties, while a committee comprising representatives from local CSOs should monitor prison conditions. The necessary facilities should be
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provided that allow this committee to operate continuously and prevent committee members from being exposed to exploitation, while also granting the committee's work the required international character.

- ◆ The UN must intervene to prevent the forced repatriation of Syrians from countries where they have been given asylum, especially from Europe, due to the lack of conditions conducive to their return, in particular stability and security, as well as the lack of decent livelihoods in Syria.
- ◆ A UN-recognised branch of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should be established in north-eastern Syria that will ensure the proper distribution of the necessary humanitarian aid.
- ◆ The effects of the spread of the coronavirus in north-eastern Syria among displaced persons in Syria and refugees in the KRI need to be mitigated and vaccines need to be procured globally to protect people against the virus.
- ◆ Greater attention needs to be paid to education and the state of the education system in north-eastern Syria by recognising all national languages and the academic certificates issued in these languages, and transferring the expertise and techniques of online distance education to north-eastern Syria to reduce education-related immigration.

## FOURTH PILLAR: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

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- ◆ Work should be instituted to support stability in all regions of Syria by supporting CSOs, rehabilitating infrastructure, and supporting and developing economic projects in order to ensure that there will be no new waves of migration. This is especially important in light of the difficult economic conditions, in particular after the implementation of the Caesar Act and the deterioration of the value of the local currency, as well as the poor rainfall in recent years and the low income of the population, which is mostly dependent on agriculture.
  - ◆ International bodies and donors need to undertake a continuous needs assessment to ensure that support and aid are distributed to areas in north-eastern Syria and Syrian refugees in the KRI in the same way as to the rest of the areas in neighbouring countries, and inside Syria itself to the areas controlled by the opposition and the Syrian regime, and those under self-administration.
  - ◆ There is a need to support development and other projects that reduce environmental pollution due to the significant deterioration of the environment in recent years, which has led to an increase in the spread of many chronic diseases.
  - ◆ Work is needed to draw attention to the many social problems afflicting Syrians, such as increasing unemployment; suicide; child marriage; high divorce rates, especially among young women; domestic violence; low literacy rates; and the increasing school dropout rate due to poor economic conditions, weak financial liquidity and increasing family burdens.
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- ◆ The economic situation has been greatly affected by the sanctions imposed under the Caesar Act, including the work and activities of CSOs, especially voluntary local organisations that depend for their income on individual donations.
- ◆ International intervention is needed to stop the destruction of natural resources such as the uprooting and burning of trees and the smuggling and destruction of antiquities by armed groups, especially in Afrin.
- ◆ The role of CSOs needs to be redefined so that each organisation is responsible for its own work and competence, and support is distributed fairly and in a balanced manner and is linked to a CSO's competence, while international and UN oversight and accountability should be ensured.
- ◆ Psychological support should be provided especially for young people and women, particularly after the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to activate the role of women and increase youth involvement in public life.
- ◆ A clear and permanent mechanism for remittances should be implemented in all regions of Syria, especially north-eastern Syria, in order to help achieve economic development, provide job opportunities through legal means, and prevent fraud and exploitation.
- ◆ It is necessary to pay increased attention to detainees and missing persons, including communicating with their families, protecting them, and fairly supporting them in expressing their voices to the relevant international forums.

## QUESTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

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- ◆ How will decision-making be made truly Syrian?
  - ◆ Does the Special Envoy have a plan to develop the work of the Constitutional Committee and expand it to include all relevant components and extend its powers accordingly?
  - ◆ Is it possible to draft a constitution that is acceptable to two conflicting parties who do not trust each other?
  - ◆ Is there any point in continuing with the work of such a committee, e.g. "evaluating its current and expected work and stating its findings"?
  - ◆ To what extent are decisions made according to the principle that funded organisations are effective and non-funded organisations are ineffective?
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## **CSSR, 2021**

The Civil Society Support Room (CSSR) was established in January 2016 by the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria as a mechanism to consult with a broad and diverse range of civil society actors. Through the CSSR, civil society actors can meet, interact and provide their insights and ideas to the Office of the Special Envoy, relevant United Nations actors, as well as international stakeholders.

This mechanism aims at rendering the UN mediation process more inclusive.

The overall supervision and guidance of the CSSR rests with the OSE-Syria. NOREF Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution and Swiss Peace foundation have been mandated by the OSE to provide methodological expertise, operational and technical support to the process.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the UN standpoint.

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