

CSSR REGIONAL OUTREACH

– *Istanbul*

Mission Summary Report

20-21 September 2023

MISSION SUMMARY

The OSE-Syria Civil Society Support Room (CSSR) conducted a regional outreach mission with Syrian civil society from 20-21 September 2023 in Istanbul, Türkiye. The regional visits aim at having regular and direct exchanges with Syrian women and actors from Syrian civil society and provide updates related to the work of the CSSR and the broader political process.

In Istanbul, the team – comprised of OSE-Syria and its implementing partners – held a series of meetings over the span of the two-day mission with 27 Syrian interlocutors, including several think tanks, business associations and organizations and networks working on humanitarian aid, development, peace building, human rights and women’s empowerment.

The consultations continue to be important opportunities for Syrian civil society to inform OSE Syria of developments on the ground, of key concerns of Syrians and provide key messages regarding the UN-facilitated political process.

Syrian interlocutors briefed on the recent developments northwest Syria and in Sweida, the worsening economic situation and the demands for a political solution. Participants discussed how to increase women’s participation and advancement in social, economic and political life, as well as continued protection concerns, human rights concern and the increasing pressure on refugees, the lack of progress regarding the detained, abducted and missing persons. Participants formulated recommendations, including on improving local governance and security and providing humanitarian relief and early recovery.

The OSE-Syria team briefed interlocutors on the recent developments of the political process, including on the Constitutional Committee, steps-for-steps, the broader political process, the Women’s Advisory Board, as well as on the CSSR activities.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF SYRIAN CIVIL SOCIETY INTERLOCUTORS

- ◆ Expressed concern that the Arab initiative and the reintegration of Syria into the League of Arab Nations did not yield political and economic benefits to the Syrian people.
- ◆ Noted with grave concern the deteriorating economic situation in all parts of Syria.
- ◆ Noted their support to the economic, social and political grievances and demands of the people of Sweida and their call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 2254.
- ◆ Noted the role of civil society in developing local governance and decentralization framework that would provide increased governance, security, and livelihood to the people.
- ◆ Participants raised the alarming humanitarian situation, the downward trend in aid assistance going to Northwest Syria and the dire impact it had on basic goods, specifically food baskets with visible signs of malnutrition of women and children.
- ◆ Expressed concern regarding the resumption of cross-border assistance under the new mechanism without the guarantees of a Security Council resolution.
- ◆ Participants raised concerns related to the lack of recognition of university degrees outside of government-controlled areas and the consequences for youth future and employment opportunities.
- ◆ Women warned of the lack of civic space for women in Northwest Syria and of their protection needs.
- ◆ Representatives of Syrian business associations expressed their interest in supporting confidence-building measures and the political process.
- ◆ Recommended that the Women’s Advisory Board (WAB) expand its outreach to more women groups and networks in Northwest Syria and increased representation in the political process.

CSSR, 2023

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.

CONTACT