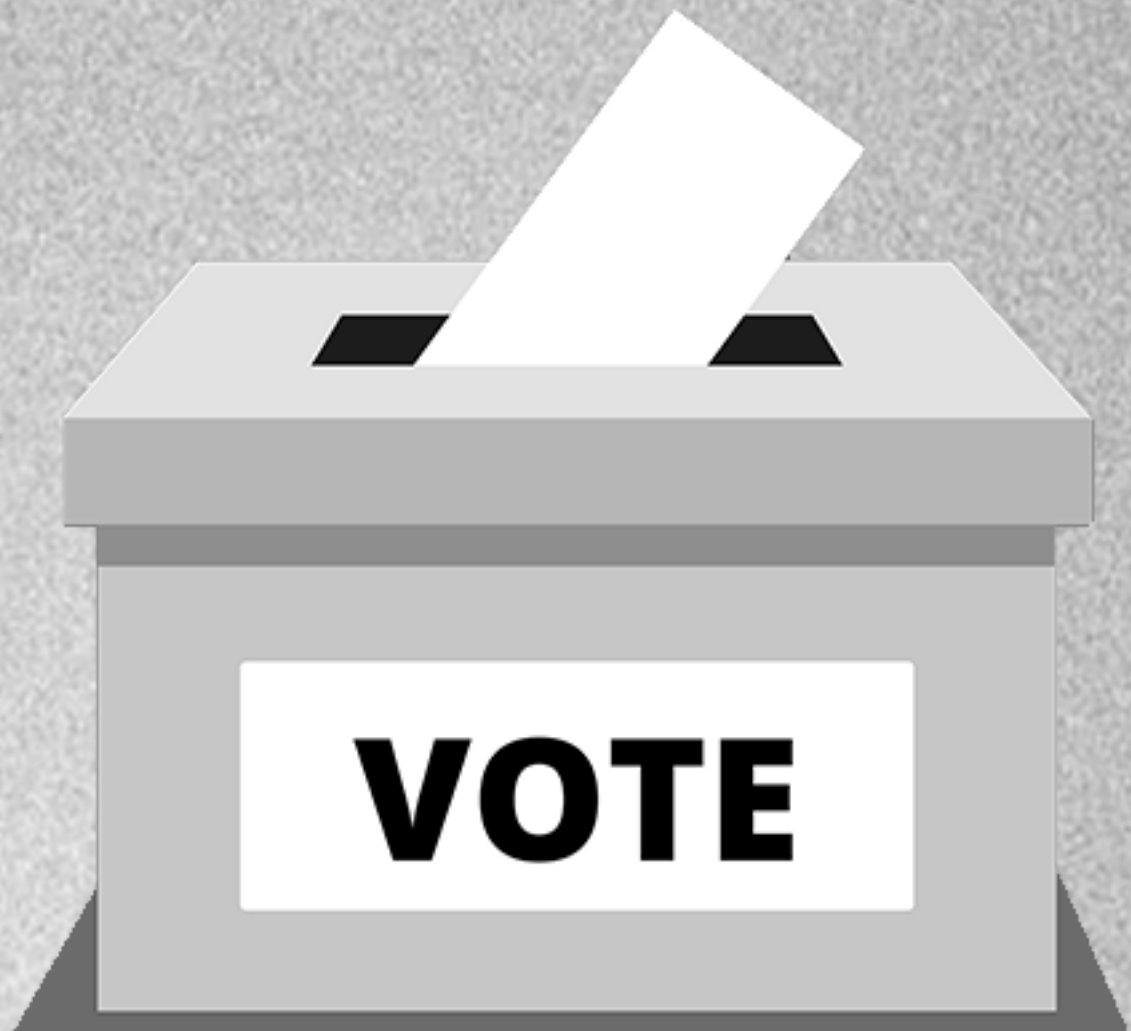




**Syria's parliamentary elections:
undemocratic and unrepresentative
of the diversity of Syrians including refugees**

Access Center For Human Rights

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The Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) expresses deep concern over the structure and nature of the parliamentary elections held in Syria. While many have deemed the elections as a defining step in the country's political transition, ACHR maintains that these elections remain undemocratic and unrepresentative of the diversity of Syrians, many of whom continue to be displaced and remain refugees. At this significant transitional period in Syria's history, the inclusion of a wide spectrum of representation and voices through a democratic electoral process is fundamental to fostering civic values, pluralism and the principles of democratic participation. The new temporary electoral framework, established by Decree 143¹ earlier this year by Syrian interim president Ahmed al-Sharaa, introduced a province-based system of electoral colleges across 60 districts overseen by an 11-person Supreme Committee for the People's Assembly Elections. Under this system and in line with Chapter 3 Article 3(4) of the decree, two-thirds of the 210 parliamentary seats are filled by these electoral colleges and one-third appointed directly by the president (70 seats). The decree also grants the president the authority to name replacements for any member who loses their seat (Article 45). Approximately 1,578 candidates were approved to run in the election. The new parliament will serve a 30-month term while preparing for future elections.

The election process is not one of popular and direct electoral voting but relies on indirect voting by electoral colleges and direct presidential appointments. This system grants undue power and authority in the presidency - conferring it with the power to appoint one-third of members of parliaments, appointing the Supreme Committee (which in turn selects two thirds of the members), and to choose replacements for elected members – meaning that the president can effectively shape a parliamentary majority composed of members he directly or indirectly selected. The lack of transparency in the selection of the members of the electoral colleges and the lack of genuine checks and balances on the presidency and its powers renders the process vulnerable to manipulation and executive dominance and incentivizes personal loyalties over genuine democratic consultation and engagement.

Further, voting did not occur in all governorates and was postponed in Raqqa, Hasakah and Suwayda due to “security and logistical challenges” — leaving large portions of the population, including significant minority communities, entirely unrepresented. In the absence of organized political pluralism, a diversity of representation and wide democratic consultation is especially necessary for a genuine electoral process to be widely recognised as legitimate by citizens. The participatory process of voting itself was shaped by selective and exclusionary conditions. For instance, Article 21 of the decree seemingly excludes Syrian refugees and provides non-binding quotas of representation for women (20%), and persons with disabilities (3%), “when possible”. Despite significant barriers to political participation, many Syrian refugees have expressed a genuine willingness to participate in the elections, even under difficult circumstances and political pressure highlighting how Syrians (including refugees) remain deeply committed to shaping Syria's political future and to have their voices heard in processes that directly affect their lives and their futures.²

Ensuring broad representation from a cross section of Syrian society in political bodies (including parliamentary bodies) and upholding the principles of democratic participation is both a fundamental human right and a necessity during this transitional period. Elections are an important participatory process in which citizens can meaningfully debate, consult, engage, and propose visions for the future. Without this genuine space, the election process remains deeply undemocratic and risks prioritising the consolidation of authority over fostering pluralism and genuine representation and works as an exercise in projecting legitimacy of an unelected government.

Further, the failure to ensure the participation of Syrian refugees in the current elections, and the absence of substantial amendments to the electoral and appointment mechanisms, will lead to their exclusion from ongoing political processes and from participation in the decisions to be adopted by parliament. As a result, the phase during which decisions will be passed into law will proceed without genuine refugee representation, effectively excluding them from contributing to the shaping of one of the most pivotal stages in the country's modern history.

ACHR calls on the interim authorities to commit to a truly inclusive and democratic electoral process that reflects the diversity of the Syrian people, restores political plurality, and limits executive dominance in accordance with democratic principles and human rights norms. Further, ACHR calls for the inclusion of a wide spectrum of voices in public political participation by supporting mechanisms that allow Syrian refugees to engage in voting and other political processes.

1-Decree 143 of 2025: <https://sana.sy/presidency/2267661/>

2-L'Orient du Jour – Bassil urges Lebanon to block return of Syrians who left to vote, 6 October 2025. See: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1480014/bassil-urges-lebanon-to-block-return-of-syrians-who-left-to-vote.html>