



STATEMENT

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF THE ASSAD REGIME: REFLECTIONS ON ACCOUNTABILITY, JUSTICE, HUMAN RIGHTS IN SYRIA.

Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR)

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The year following the sudden fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 has been marked by historic and fundamental changes in Syria, initially bringing in a new sense of hope and optimism for Syrians and especially to millions of Syrian refugees. Despite initial optimism, Syria continues to face significant human rights, justice and accountability challenges that must be addressed to face the past and ensure future stability.

In commemoration of the anniversary, ACHR recalls the countless Syrians who demanded justice, freedom and civil rights and as a result, suffered grave human rights violations at the hands of the Assad regime - those who were detained, tortured, forcibly disappeared, displaced from their homes and made refugees abroad, and deprived of their basic freedoms and protections. While the significant shift in power is key political milestone, the enduring demands of the Syrian uprising and the underlying human rights principles it espoused, should continue to steer Syria in this next chapter. Respect for human life, accountability and justice for past abuses, inclusive and representative participation in governance, and the protection of all communities no matter religion, ethnicity, sect, gender or political affiliation—are essential and fundamental conditions for Syria to begin a transitional process towards genuine justice, recovery and lasting peace.

Despite the overarching and pervasive narrative that Syria is now safe, Syria continues to face multiple and overlapping security, political, economic and humanitarian challenges. Widespread violence in the coastal regions in early 2025, the sectarian massacres in March 2025, ongoing tensions and violence in Sweida since July 2025, and Israeli incursions all demonstrate that conditions continue to remain unstable and unsafe. Further, significant internal displacement, widescale destruction of homes and infrastructure, contamination by explosive remnants of war, ongoing housing land and property violations, a weak economy and a prolonged humanitarian crisis all pose serious protection risks to Syrian civilians and shape refugee perceptions of return.

Despite these realities inside Syria, host countries in the region have increasingly adopted restrictive and coercive policies pushing Syrians to return at a time when the minimal conditions for safety are unmet. In Lebanon, Syrian refugees continue to face forced evictions, violent and arbitrary arrests and security raids, detention, enforced disappearances as well as structural discrimination, growing anti-refugee rhetoric and face significant legal barriers to secure their legal protection. While many refugees have chosen to return despite these challenges, others are unable or unwilling to return at this current time for complex reasons. The international community must ensure their rights as refugees must be protected, the principle of non-refoulement must be upheld, and the key protection principles of safety, dignity and voluntariness must remain the cornerstone of refugee return policies.

Further, as Syria slowly rebuilds itself, the international community and Syrians alike must ensure that human rights, justice and accountability are not treated as independent of stability, but as the core and necessary guarantees that prevents the return of the same conditions that sparked violence. Comprehensive transitional justice, accountability, truth-telling, reparations for survivors, and genuine legal and political reform are the key pillars that can safeguard a better chapter forward.



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