



Politics in Syria: Mapping Active Political Parties and Movements

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Introduction

For a decade, the conflict in Syria has deeply fractured social bonds and political infrastructures. A prolonged period of violence toward its citizens, urban destruction, and economic collapse has resulted in over half of Syria's population being displaced, leading Syrians into a perpetual cycle of moving from one place to another, through displacement, seeking asylum, and migration. On the ground, Syrian forces have been drawn towards creating self-defense zones, where international and regional interests are entangled with local dynamics, perpetuating a cycle of instability. Amidst this turmoil, public affairs have undergone significant transformations, reshaping Syria's political landscape.

The political fragmentation observed during the conflict mirrors the shifts and developments that have carved out new avenues for political engagement. Over the last thirteen years, numerous new parties have emerged, alongside many political alliances and coalitions, with actors in Syria's civil domain actively participating in politics. This evolving political scene is structured around three pillars: parties, alliances, and civil society organizations.

This report offers an insight into the current Syrian political climate by identifying the key players and circumstances that have given rise to these new entities. Through the lens of the aforementioned political structures, it provides a comprehensive overview of the political movements, parties, and forces, positioning each within the Syrian political arena. This document is part of a broader research effort led by IMPACT Research to delve into the Syrian political realm, examining its operational dynamics, the ongoing shifts, the interconnectedness of social ties within political projects, the economics of Syrian political entities, and their political culture.

In preparing this report, we utilized a mix of primary and secondary sources, including interviews with members of political parties and civil society organizations, as well as male and female researchers specializing in the Syrian political sphere, and former international officials involved with Syrian affairs. We also analyzed website data, official statements, social media platforms, research papers, and press and local reports, employing a methodology based on the membership bases of the parties and their capacity to exert influence and effect change. This

work was informed by an existing catalog of political entities, facilitating extensive research into the Syrian political context.

The report highlights the key political entities currently active in Syria, without delving into the history of their evolution or analyzing their positions within the Syrian political landscape. Given Syria's unique situation, our research team has proposed new classifications for these political structures, providing examples of each without prioritizing or comparing them.²

An overview of Syria's political environment

For several decades, political activity in Syria was largely restricted to the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, operating within the framework of the National Progressive Front. However, the 2011 Syrian uprising paved the way for a resurgence of political diversity, enabling the rise and growth of numerous new coalitions, parties, and movements. The initial peaceful demonstrations, followed by armed conflict, were powerful enough to instigate significant structural changes, impacting the traditional Syrian political landscape and leading to the formation of various new blocs, parties, movements, and opposition groups that previously had no involvement in politics. This period also saw the emergence of armed factions and political and civil entities with substantial influence and diverse ideological orientations. Since 2018, the number of political entities across different areas of control has been on the rise.

The political and civil landscape in Syria has shaped the nature of public affairs, defining the objectives and organizational structures of active political entities and their participation in collective alliances. These parties vary in their intellectual and ideological leanings, encompassing nationalist, religious, leftist, and liberal perspectives. The past decade has witnessed the emergence of new forms of political engagement, including regional parties with ethnic affiliations, particularly noticeable in eastern Syria and As-Suwayda.

It's crucial to differentiate between political parties and civil society organizations in terms of their objectives, operations, and the extent to which they align with their foundational frameworks. Political parties are permanent entities that seek grassroots support at the local

² The complete list can be found on: [Impactres.org/papers/politicalparties](https://www.impactres.org/papers/politicalparties)

level to gain power and implement specific policies. They are instrumental in organizing and mobilizing people, educating the public politically, training leaders for national initiatives, developing and enforcing socio-economic programs, and critiquing governmental authority to prevent abuse of power.

Civil society organizations and NGOs, on the other hand, participate in the social, political, and cultural spheres, contributing to political and social inclusivity. They serve as platforms for individual and collective learning, applying knowledge for the public good. These organizations act as a check on power, offering channels for participation, integration, and the independent exercise of power, without the pursuit of profit. They are characterized by structured organization, autonomy in operation and management, legal recognition, defined work programs, and the capacity for implementation. Their goals include fostering participation and responsibility in administrative, financial, and political governance, and advocating for interests. Civil society activities encompass charitable and social welfare, involvement in development, and empowering citizens to positively influence decision-making processes at both local and national levels. While both political parties and civil society organizations aim to shift the power balance in society, they differ in their methods and the pursuit of power, with civil society entities not seeking governmental power.

Before the 2011 Syrian uprising, despite restrictions on political activities, various parties, movements, and coalitions were active in Syria. Some aligned with the regime's policies, while others operated covertly within Syria, facing suppression, or openly from abroad. Syrian political entities can be broadly categorized into two main groups:

- I. **Parties of the National Progressive Front:** These parties operate under the dominance of the ruling Ba'ath Party, complying with its demands in exchange for certain limited benefits. This group includes the Syrian Communist Party, the Democratic Arab Socialist Union, the Arab Socialists Movement (Damascus branch), and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.
- II. **Opposition parties:** These parties function outside the control of the Ba'ath Party and the National Progressive Front. They have faced suppression, with their activities banned, leaders threatened and detained, and meetings prohibited even at the grassroots level. This has compelled them to operate clandestinely within Syria or to work from abroad, away from significant influence. The opposition is categorized into three main factions: **The**

Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, prohibited from all political and social activities since 1980 following an armed clash with the government; the **National Democratic Rally**, established in 1979 as a counterpoint to the National Progressive Front, pledging no allegiance to Hafez al-Assad, comprising five parties with leftist, nationalist, and Arab ideologies, including the Arab Democratic Socialist Union, the Syrian Communist Party - Political Bureau, the Arab Revolutionary Workers Party, and the Arab Democratic Socialist Ba'ath Party, along with the Arab Socialist Movement. Additionally, there are **Kurdish political parties and blocs**, which have seen divisions for organizational and ideological reasons since the formation of the first Syrian Kurdish political party in 1957, resulting in over 30 parties spanning various political ideologies. These parties maintain strong connections with major Kurdish parties like the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Iraq, the Kurdistan Workers' Party in Turkey, and some Palestinian factions in Lebanon. Kurdish parties and movements have also kept in touch with their Syriac Assyrian counterparts. However, they did not back the Syrian opposition parties following the suppression of the communist movement in the 1980s, until the onset of the Damascus Spring movement and the publication of the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change, which saw significant participation from key Syrian Kurdish parties.

Syrian Kurdish parties champion the legitimacy of peaceful political engagement, advocating for political, cultural, and social rights for Kurds, including the recognition of Kurdish national identity in the Syrian constitution. They call for the repeal of exceptional laws and special decrees, restoration of Syrian citizenship to those deprived of it, and an end to the Arab Belt Project.³ Their programs emphasize democracy as the sole pathway to fulfilling these demands, which has led to their suppression and restriction by the Syrian government, similar to other opposition groups. Subsequently, Kurdish entities like the Kurdish Democratic Alliance in 1992 and the Kurdish Coordination Committee in 2006 were established. The Kurdish Political Council, formed in 2009 and comprising eight political parties, became one of the largest

³ Between 1974 and 1975, around four thousand Arab families, whose lands were submerged by the Euphrates River due to the construction of the Tabqa Dam, were relocated. They were settled in villages and on lands previously confiscated from Kurdish owners. In total, 335 Kurdish villages were affected, impacting a population of over 150,000 people.

Kurdish blocs in Syria, eventually leading to the creation of the Syrian Kurdish National Council in 2011.

Post-2011, the Kurdish political landscape split into two primary factions: the Syrian Kurdish National Council (KNC), backed by the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria (KDP-S), and the People's Council of Western Kurdistan, supported by the Democratic Union Party (PYD). Despite four negotiation attempts yielding three agreements on a supreme Kurdish authority and the governance of Kurdish-majority areas, unity was short-lived. The Kurdish National Council allied with the Syrian opposition in 2013, while the Democratic Union Party joined the Syrian Democratic Council, governing northeastern Syria and aligning with the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change.

This fragmentation does not reflect the state of the broader opposition, which saw a break from political deadlock during the first decade of Bashar al-Assad's presidency. The period ignited political parties and movements to more openly state their positions, foster internal dialogue, and form ideologically diverse opposition blocs.

The transition from Hafez to Bashar al-Assad marked a potentially new era, with Bashar's inaugural speech before the People's Assembly on July 17, 2000, signaling a move towards constructive criticism and transparency. His early acts included releasing hundreds of political detainees, offering a hopeful shift after long-standing repression.

This period also saw intellectuals initiating informal political forums to stimulate dialogue on political and civil society issues, notably the National Dialogue Forum by Riad Seif, and the Jamal al-Atassi Forum by Suhair al-Atassi. By 2001, Syria had witnessed the emergence of 170 forums and civil society revival committees, collectively voicing a call for sweeping political and judicial reforms. However, the modest reforms introduced by Bashar al-Assad were quickly rolled back, the opposition was suppressed under the guise of national unity and stability, and Riad Seif's efforts to form a new political party were thwarted. In February 2001, political forums were forcibly shut down.

By 2004, the Kurdish uprising in Qamishli, a city in eastern Syria, emerged as a significant event that disrupted the political deadlock. The regime of Bashar al-Assad responded with security crackdowns and arrests, affecting thousands in the region. This uprising and related

incidents in al-Hasakah significantly rattled the Syrian political landscape. The National Democratic Rally set up a delegation to liaise with both the security forces of the regime and the Kurdish political parties. Faced with the regime's stubbornness and ongoing repression, ties between the Syrian opposition and Kurdish political parties strengthened. This unity led to a consensus on the Kurdish issue, laying the groundwork for creating a national opposition coalition, the Damascus Declaration.

The Damascus Declaration of 2005 brought together political parties, organizations, and national figures across a spectrum of religions, sects, ethnic backgrounds, and political ideologies in Syria, ranging from the far right to the far left. Signatories of the Damascus Declaration included long-standing opposition movements such as the National Democratic Rally and the Muslim Brotherhood, minority groups like the Kurdish and Assyrian parties, and notable figures from the Damascus Spring movement, including Michel Kilo and Riad Seif.⁴

Intellectual and political disparities began to erode the unity of the Damascus Declaration, revealing the challenges of aligning the interests of leftist and secular parties with those of Islamist parties and movements. The inclusion of the Muslim Brotherhood in the National Salvation Front in Syria, led by the former Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam after his defection in 2006, further strained relations within the Damascus Declaration coalition. Disagreements over leadership in December 2007 led to intense disputes between the leftist and nationalist opposition, represented by Hassan Abdul Azim and Fateh Jamous, and another faction comprising liberal Islamists alongside groups led by Riad al-Turk and Riad Seif. During this period, Kurdish and Assyrian parties found themselves sidelined.

Subsequently, authorities arrested twelve founding members of the Damascus Declaration, and internal leadership disputes crippled the coalition. Some factions formed new alliances or went into exile. In 2009, the coalition appointed new leadership abroad but maintained a presence in Syria with reduced historic opposition representation.

This period marked a defining moment for the Syrian opposition, crystallizing their visions and setting a precedent for future political alliances, particularly evident during the Syrian revolution, which played a significant role in shaping the modern political landscape of Syria.

⁴ For more on the Damascus Declaration: [carnegie-mec.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48515](https://www.carnegie-mec.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48515)

In March 2011, the Syrian revolution erupted, dramatically altering Syria's political scene. Initially spontaneous and fragmented, the revolution gained momentum from a new generation of activists who, facing brutal repression from security and military forces, saw the urgent need for regime change and an end to decades of Assad family rule. Amidst this upheaval, the Assad regime attempted to introduce reforms, repealing the emergency law in place since 1963, abolishing Article 8 which favored Ba'ath Party members, and enacting new election and party laws. However, these measures were overshadowed by severe repression and violence against protestors, thrusting the country into an ongoing conflict.

Active political parties in Syria

In Syria, joining a political party is the most prevalent form of political engagement. Despite the emergence of community movements and cross-border groups, which represent a growing trend with significant theories of change, party membership continues to be the dominant approach among the Syrian elite. This could be attributed to the overlap of experiences between past Syrian opposition efforts and revolutionary activities during the Arab Spring, the ongoing Assad regime era, or the fact that political activities became more entrenched, widespread, and intensified during the revolution against the Assad regime.

To analyze the active political parties in Syria, we categorized them based on their political ideologies, objectives, national or ethnic affiliations, and operational regions into three main groups: Parties in regime-held territories, opposition parties in areas under the control of Turkish forces and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, and parties in regions governed by the Syrian Democratic Forces. This classification is distinct in some aspects but less clear in others. Assigning a party to one category does not preclude its association with another, depending on the perspective.

This report will highlight specific parties and groups as examples of each category to illustrate this classification. The selection is based on the size, influence, and significance of the party or group within the broader Syrian context.

I. Nationalist parties

1. Arab parties

The Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party holds a significant position as an Arab party that has governed Syria and shaped Syrian society for many decades. Conversely, the People’s Party occupies a unique role, heavily drawing on tribal affiliations in both its membership and strategic approaches. Meanwhile, the Development and Modernization Party aims to actualize the ideas of development and modernization frequently mentioned in President Bashar al-Assad’s speeches, without fully embracing Arab nationalist ideology. In a similar vein, the Democratic Conservative Party concentrates on integrating Arab nationalist ideals, attempting to blend tribal customs with democratic principles.

a. Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party

The Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party emerged from the merger of the Arab Ba’ath Movement, established by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar in 1947, and the Arab Socialist Party, founded by Akram al-Hourani in 1950.

Since seizing power, the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party has only been part of the National Progressive Front, established in 1972, which the Ba’ath Party not only leads but also dominates. It has the authority to assign roles within its ranks, select ministerial candidates, and sometimes allocate ministries without specific portfolios. The activities of the Front’s parties are strictly controlled and conducted solely under the Ba’ath Party’s directives.

Article Eight of the 1973 Constitution explicitly declared the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party as the guiding force of society and the state, leading a national progressive front aimed at harnessing the collective efforts of the populace towards the aspirations of the Arab nation.

Ideologically, the party marries Arab nationalism with socialism, positioning itself as “a popular nationalist revolutionary movement dedicated to achieving Arab unity, freedom, and socialism.” Central to its beliefs is the unity and freedom of the Arab nation, which it views as inherently entitled to exist within a single state and to freely utilize its resources.⁵

⁵ Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party, al-Jazeera, 25 December 2014.

In the 1960s, the Ba’ath Party’s economic approach was characterized by state capitalism, marked by opposition to foreign investment and certain private national sectors, alongside efforts to redistribute wealth within Syrian society.

However, this stance softened following challenges faced by Arab nationalist governments in the 1970s. Moving away from its earlier socialist policies, such as industry nationalization, education expansion, basic goods subsidies, and state ownership of land and resources, the party’s socialist ethos has gradually faded, especially under Bashar al-Assad’s leadership. At its 2005 conference, the Ba’ath Party adopted a “Social Market Economy” strategy, shifting towards a model where the private sector plays a crucial role in economic development and job creation.⁶

The organizational framework of the Ba’ath Party includes a mini-central leadership, a central committee, provincial branches, city divisions, and rural teams, ensuring its presence across all government-controlled areas of Syria. The party also operates Student Union offices in every foreign embassy in Syria.

On October 7, 2018, the Ba’ath Party announced updates to its internal regulations, including renaming some of its centers and offices. The “Regional Command” was renamed “Central Command”,⁷ and the role of “Regional Secretary”, held by Bashar al-Assad, became “Secretary General”. Similarly, the “Assistant Regional Secretary” position, held by Mohammed Saeed Bekheitan, was changed to “Assistant Secretary-General”, and the term “national conference” was updated to “general conference”.

The 2018 local elections signaled Bashar al-Assad’s intent to restore the Ba’ath Party to its central role during his father’s era as a gateway to public sector employment and a means of extending or reclaiming local control. The Ba’ath Party also played a crucial role in shaping electoral lists.⁸

⁶ Joseph Daher, “The political economic context of Syria’s reconstruction : a prospective in light of a legacy of unequal development”, European University Institute, 6 March 2019, <https://bityl.co/L8Vh>

⁷ The Baath Party’s regional leadership includes: Hilal Hilal, Ammar Saati, Ammar Al-Sibai, Mahdi Dakhllallah, Muhsen Bilal, Hoda al-Homsy, Hussein Arnous, Yasser al-Shoufi, and Ali Ayyoub.

⁸ Agnes Favier and Marie Kostrz, “Local Elections: Is Syria Moving Towards Regaining Central Control?”, European University Institute, February 3, 2019, <https://bityl.co/L8WB>, p. 11.

The Ba'ath Party's Supreme Leadership Committee sets the criteria for Ba'ath candidate nominations and decides on their representation on the National Unity (previously National Progressive Front) lists.⁹ While candidate selection is purportedly based on recommendations from party branch leaders, the process is opaque and likely coordinated with governors and state security services.¹⁰

In the September 2022 elections, party members maintained their dominance over local administrative bodies. Internally, the reliance on militia leaders within the party ranks diminished.¹¹

b. People's Party

Founded in 2021 by Nawaf Trad al-Mulhim, a tribal leader who received official authorization from the Syrian government, the People's Party boasts a membership of approximately 10,000.¹² It has formed alliances with the Youth Party and the Solidarity Party, both of which operate within areas under government control.

The People's Party draws heavily on tribal affiliations for its membership base and activities, aligning with a nationalist ideology akin to that of the Ba'ath Party. Its operations are primarily focused in Homs, with offices in Homs and Damascus where it organizes conferences and meetings. The party wields considerable influence over Homs' tribes, playing a key role in mediating settlements and reconciliations between opposition members and the government. The People's Party is distinct in that it does not engage in military actions, relying instead on financial contributions from Nawaf al-Mulhim for its operations. It maintains positive relations with Russia, Iran, and certain Arab Gulf countries, though it lacks official representation in these nations.

⁹ For more on this topic: <https://cutt.ly/GwT08ALK>

¹⁰ Agnes Favier and Marie Kostrz, "Local Elections: Is Syria Moving Towards Regaining Central Control?", European University Institute, February 3, 2019, <https://bit.ly/L8WB>, pp. 12-13.

¹¹ Bilal Sattouf and Sasha Al-Alou, "The reproduction of local regime authority and its impact on the return of displaced persons: the southern Idlib countryside as a model", Omran Center for Strategic Studies, May 35, 2023, [Arabic text] <https://bit.ly/L8X6>

¹² Research team estimates.

c. Development and Modernization Party

The Development and Modernization Party was launched in 2020 with official approval from the Syrian government and is led by Osama Marsha. It has a membership of around 5,000 individuals.¹³ The organizational structure of the party includes a central leadership, a central committee, as well as branches and divisions. Operating within areas under government control, the party has established offices in Aleppo, Damascus, Latakia, and Quneitra. It focuses on civic engagement, vocational training, and enhancing women's participation in politics, despite the predominance of male leadership. The party is financially supported by affluent members who, in return, gain personal advantages such as media visibility or opportunities to forge connections with security and governmental figures, leveraging these relationships for business expansion.

The Development and Modernization Party has formed an alliance with the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, although this partnership is confined to shared events and initiatives and exists outside the framework of the National Progressive Front. Politically, the party aligns with the development and modernization narrative advocated by President Bashar al-Assad but does not explicitly embrace Arab nationalist ideology. Its economic stance remains ambiguous due to the diverse intellectual backgrounds of its members.

d. Democratic Conservative Party

Established in 2017, the Democratic Conservative Party is an Arab nationalist political party with a military orientation, active in the eastern regions of Syria. It is led by Mani' al-Jarba, son of Humaydi Daham al-Hadi al-Jarba, the sheikh of the Shammar tribe. Prominent figures in the party include Amal Al-Rab'u and Akram Mahshush, with its membership tallying between 1,000 and 500 individuals.

While the Democratic Conservative Party has not formed any political alliances, it champions Arab nationalist ideals and seeks to merge tribal traditions with democratic governance principles. The party leans towards the perspective of the Syrian Democratic Council externally and has ramped up its activities in northeastern Syria after being officially recognized by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. It operates offices in Qamishli and in Tal

¹³ Research team estimates.

Kochar, a key location for the al-Jarba family and the Shammar tribe. The Shammar tribe also has a military wing, the Al-Sanadid Forces, which collaborates with the Syrian Democratic Forces. Financial backing for the party comes from the leadership of the Shammar tribe, and its international engagements mirror those of the Syrian Democratic Council.

2. Kurdish parties

Since the 1950s, Kurdish elites have been actively engaged in politics. During the 1960s, as nationalist ideologies swept through Syria and Iraq, Syrian Kurds formed leftist political parties that opposed the Ba'ath regime. Despite facing repression by the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, Kurdish elites managed to organize and adapt their political forces within the constraints of party structures, establishing a significant presence in Syria's political landscape.

a. Democratic Union Party (PYD)

The Democratic Union Party (PYD) was established in 2003 amid a restructuring of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that led the creation of local Kurdish parties across various countries, these parties have ideological connection to the main party, later a few coordination mechanisms were introduced within the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy congress (KADEK), Kurdistan Committees Congress (KKK) changed later in 2007 to Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), a coalition of. Key figures in the PYD include Aldar Khalil and Saleh Muslim, with a membership of around 5,000 people, with a much larger supports base. On January 21, 2014, the PYD set up the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, and on December 10, 2015, played a significant role in forming the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), aiming to provide a political coalition with other parties in the NES. The party then joined the Kurdish National Unity Parties, encompassing all supporters of the Autonomous Administration in North and East of Syria. The PYD promotes the concept of a democratic nation, drawing significant inspiration from Murray Bookchin's ideas on libertarian municipalism. It opposes the creation of a Kurdish state on ethnic lines, advocating instead for decentralization within Syria.

The PYD is primarily active in al-Hasakah, Kobani, Aleppo, Damascus, and formerly Afrin, with over 15 offices in al-Hasakah and one in Kobani. The party supports the People's Protection Units (YPG) that founded the Syrian Democratic Forces SDF in 2017, which is the

parent organization for various military factions. The party maintains strong international ties directly or through the SDC, enabling it to forge relationships with the United States, Russia, and several European countries, and to establish offices in those regions.

b. Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria (PDK-S)

The Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria (PDK-S) was established in 1957 and is currently led by Muhammad Ismail¹⁴, following Saoud al-Mulla's departure from public service. Notable members include Kamiran Hajo and Abdul Hakim Bashar, with the party boasting over 40,000 members. The PDK-S played a key role in establishing the Kurdish National Council and stands as its largest member party. It has aligned itself with the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, contributing to the Negotiating Committee for the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and the Syrian Constitutional Committee.

The PDK-S advocates for centrist nationalist ideals and economic liberalism, supporting the creation of a federal Syria. It shares a similar outlook and relies on financial support from the Kurdistan Democratic Party. The party's activities span northeastern Syria, Kobani, Afrin, Aleppo, and Damascus domestically, and extend to Iraqi Kurdistan and some European countries internationally. It operates 9 offices in al-Hasakah, one in Kobani, and has a representative office in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The PDK-S does not recognize the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and refuses to obtain a work permit from it without forming a partnership. It maintains strong ties with the Kurdistan Democratic Party, and endorses Peshmerga Roj in Iraqi Kurdistan¹⁵. Financial backing comes from the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq, along with member subscriptions. The PDK-S oversees several civil organizations, including the Kurdistan Democratic Students and Youth Union, the Kurdistan Democratic Youth Union, Women of Kurdistan – Syria, and the Kurdistan Teachers Union – Syria, enhancing its influence in northeastern Syria. Additionally, the party has established external relations with Turkey, the United States, France, and Russia.

¹⁴ Several parties may share the name or variations of the name due to separation and defections

¹⁵ A military force of Syrian Kurds in Kurdistan Region-Iraq

c. Yekiti Kurdistan Party - Syria (PYK-S)

The Kurdistan Yekiti Party - Syria (PYK-S) was established in 2000 following a split from The Kurdish Reform Movement - Syria into two factions: the Kurdish Democratic Unity Party in Syria, led by Ismail Omar, and the Yekiti Kurdistan Party - Syria, under the leadership of Suleyman Ousso. Key figures in the party include Fuad Aliko and Ibrahim Berro, with a membership ranging between 1,000 and 5,000 individuals. The PYK-S played a significant role in creating the Kurdish National Council in Syria and is a member of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces.

Identified as a left-wing nationalist party, the PYK-S advocates for the establishment of a federal Syria and operates primarily in northeastern Syria, Kobani, Iraqi Kurdistan, and some European countries. Despite having offices in the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria regions like Amuda, Tal Tamr, Ma'bada, and al-Malikiyah, it does not recognize the Autonomous Administration nor seeks licensing from it. The party supports the Peshmerga Roj forces. Funding for the PYK-S comes from the Kurdish National Council, which itself is financed by the Kurdistan Democratic Party. Additionally, the party maintains positive relations with Turkey and has established communication channels with the United States, France, and Russia.

d. Kurdish Democratic Unity Party in Syria (Yek-Dem)

The Kurdish Democratic Unity Party in Syria, established in 1993, is led by Muhyiddin Sheikh Ali, with Mustafa Mashayikh being one of its key leaders. It advocates for a national, liberal ideology and supports the decentralization of Syria. The party has a membership that varies between 500 and 1,000 individuals.

Operating primarily in the northeastern regions of Syria, including Aleppo and Kobani, the party's most significant presence was in Afrin until the Turkish military operation commenced on January 20, 2018. It also has a presence in Iraqi Kurdistan, Germany, and some countries in the Arab Gulf. The party maintains offices in al-Hasakah, Qamishli, Ma'bada, al-Malikiyah, Amuda, Kobani, and Aleppo, focusing solely on civil activities.

Funding for the party comes from member subscriptions in Europe and the Arab Gulf. It maintains its external relations through the Syrian Democratic Council and has managed to

establish connections with non-official civil organizations abroad through its international cadres.

e. Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria (PDPKS)

The Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party (PDPKS) was established in Syria in 1976, emerging from the first split within the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria (PDK-S). Abdul Hamid Darwish, a prominent figure in the Kurdish political movement since 1957, led the party from its inception until his passing on October 24, 2019. Before his death, Darwish played a key role in creating a leadership team that included notable party members like Salman Heso, Ali Shamdeen, and key political bureau members such as Ahmed Barakat, Salah Darwish (Abdul Hamid's brother), and Ahmed Suleiman. Following Darwish's death, the party did not name a new president until its congress in December 2023 in which two organizations have evolved maintaining the same name with different agendas . The PDPKS has approximately 5,000 members and played a significant role in founding the Kurdish National Council.

The party advocates for decentralization and a shift towards a free-market economy, aligning its external stance more closely with that of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Its activities are mainly focused in al-Hasakah and Iraqi Kurdistan, with an expanding presence in some European countries.

The PDPKS operates seven offices within the al-Hasakah governorate, concentrating on political and social initiatives. It oversees the Ukhti Youth Association and maintains strong connections with Russia and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Iraqi Kurdistan.

3. Other nationalist parties

a. Assyrian Democratic Organization

The Assyrian Democratic Organization, founded in 1957, serves as the political voice for the Assyrians in Syria. Under the leadership of Daoud Daoud, with notable figures like Gabriel Gawrieh and Karam Daula playing significant roles, the organization boasts around 5,000 members. It is part of both the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and the Peace and Freedom Front. The organization champions Assyrian-Syriac-Chaldean nationalism, advocating for the recognition of Syriac rights and the establishment of

a secular Syrian state. It has also endorsed a document with other Syrian opposition groups advocating for a civil state.

Emphasizing a shift towards economic liberalism, the organization aligns with the external policies of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces but opts not to register with the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. Its activities span across northeastern Syria, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United States, Turkey, and Australia, with offices in Qamishli and al-Hasakah. Focusing on political engagement through its coalition membership and civil initiatives via the Eridu Center for Civil Society and Democracy, the organization steers clear of military involvement.

The Assyrian Democratic Organization has established a significant presence within al-Hasakah's Christian community. Initially supported by the National Coalition, it has since adapted to the Coalition's reduced backing by soliciting donations from the international community. The organization enjoys a positive relationship with the United States and leverages its coalition membership to facilitate interactions with various countries.

b. Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP)

This party views pan-Syrian nationalism as a unified identity. It challenges the Sykes-Picot borders, advocating for the concept of "Greater Syria". They strive to accomplish their objectives by maintaining ongoing engagement with communities and committing to structure the national economy to benefit the nation's overall interests. The Youth Party for Development and Change, for instance, embraces a secular Syrian nationalist stance and outlines its economic policies focused on equitable wealth distribution.

Antoun Saadeh established the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) in Lebanon in 1932. This party disputes the Sykes-Picot borders as the basis for its territorial claims, instead advocating for the unification of "Greater Syria", an expansive area that includes modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Kuwait, the Sinai Peninsula, the Shatt al-Arab waterway, Cilicia, and Cyprus. The SSNP believes that infiltrating societies is the most effective strategy for gaining power. While the party's economic policies are somewhat vague, it promotes organizing the national economy to prioritize production, fair labor practices, and safeguarding national and state interests.

Members of the SSNP were accused of assassinating Colonel Adnan al-Malki on April 22, 1955, leading to a ban on the party and the persecution of its members in Syria. However, the SSNP gradually reasserted itself, joining the National Progressive Front as an observer member in 2001 and becoming an official member in 2005. The party eventually fragmented into three wings: the Hardan Wing, led by Safwan Salman; the Intifada Wing, led by Juliette Habib; and the Markaz Wing, under secretive leadership. It maintains three political offices, including a public one headed by Assaad al-Hardan and two secretive ones.

The SSNP's alliances vary across its different factions, with internal disputes surfacing in 2008. The Hardan Wing aligns with the Ba'ath Party, whereas the Intifada Wing rejects this alliance. The party operates both in Lebanon and Syria, with central leaderships for the Hardan and Markaz Wings in Lebanon and for the Intifada Wing in Syria. It has offices throughout Syrian territory, both public and secret. Despite not being officially licensed by the Syrian government, the Intifada Wing operates in areas under government control.

In 2013, a decision was made to organizationally separate the Syrian and Lebanese branches of the party, despite objections from Hardan, then the leader of the party in Lebanon. Rami Makhoul pledged allegiance to the Syrian head of the party, Issam al-Mahayri, before a general conference in Damascus, formalizing the split. Reports suggest that Rami Makhoul played a role in the division, leveraging the multiparty law. Since the split, the Syrian branch's activities have been associated with the al-Bustan Charitable Society and its affiliated militias. The party has also supported the Syrian government forces in the civil war through the Nusur al-Zawba'a (Eagles of the Whirlwind) militia.¹⁶

II. Leftist parties

Syrian leftist parties have significantly influenced the country's political and historical landscape. Despite their variations, disagreements, and divisions, these parties consistently showcased the diverse nature of Syria's political scene. Notably, the Syrian Democratic People's Party has been instrumental in strengthening leftist nationalist ideology within the country. Meanwhile, the Communist Labour Party has faced early internal divisions, and the

¹⁶ Sawsan Muhanna, "Rami Makhoul and His Role in the Split of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party," Independent Arabia, May 28, 2020, [Arabic text] <https://bit.ly.co/L8Yt>

People's Will Party has distinguished itself on the international stage by aligning with the Moscow Platform of the Syrian Opposition.

a. People's Will Party

The Communist Will Party, also known under the banner of the National Committee for the Unity of Syrian Communists, is a left-leaning political entity and a constituent of the Popular Front for Change and Liberation. Established in 2011 under the leadership of Qadri Jamil, a former member of the Syrian Communist Party (Bakdash faction), this party emerged as a platform for dissent. During its founding year, it allied with several opposition groups but failed to secure formal recognition from the government. Jamil, who is noted for his connections with both the Syrian regime and the Russian government, assumed a role within the Syrian government in 2012 and contributed to the drafting of a new constitution. Despite running for parliamentary election, he later disavowed the election results, alleging manipulation.¹⁷

The party aligns itself with the Moscow Platform of the Syrian Opposition, as outlined in the 2015 UN Security Council Resolution 2254, and is notably active, particularly among the educated younger population. It has engaged in numerous negotiation efforts, advocating for political solutions and dialogue over conflict, while also openly contesting the positions of other opposition groups.¹⁸

Politically, the party opposes foreign military involvement and the arming of opposition forces, advocating instead for negotiations with the current regime. The party re-published Qasioun newspaper and, regarding the 2021 presidential elections, stated that its support would hinge on the election's potential to resolve the ongoing crisis and empower the Syrian people to shape their own future, though it expressed skepticism about the election's effectiveness in achieving these aims.

In August 2020, the party signed a memorandum of understanding with the Syrian Democratic Council in Moscow, signaling a shared view that the Syrian crisis has been exacerbated by external meddling. Both parties committed to pursuing a unified and democratic vision for

¹⁷ National Committee for the Unity of Syrian Communists (People's Will Party), Carnegie Middle East Center, <https://bitly.co/L9VC>

¹⁸ Ali Asaad, "Qadri Jamil's Party: A mixture of Suq al-Hal and Suq al-Buzuriyya", Al-Modon, November 24, 2018, [Arabic text] <https://bitly.co/L9VH>

Syria, emphasizing that a political resolution is the sole path forward. The agreement highlighted key issues, such as finding a democratic resolution for the Kurdish question and upholding the autonomy of northern and eastern Syria.¹⁹ The party also maintains robust ties with Russia, positioning itself as a mediator between the Syrian government and opposition factions, leveraging Russian backing and media influence to its advantage.²⁰

b. Syrian Democratic People's Party

Founded in 1973 by Riad al-Turk, one of Syria's most influential political parties was initially named the Syrian Communist Party - Political Bureau. At its Sixth Congress in 2005, the party underwent a significant transformation, changing its name to the Syrian Democratic People's Party, and moving away from Marxism-Leninism towards a commitment to socialist democracy.

Following al-Turk's resignation, leadership passed to Abdullah Hawsha and then to the current leader, Ghayath Oyun al-Sud. The party operates with a central secretariat, keeping the identities of its members confidential, especially since many reside within Syria. Notable members have included Riad al-Turk, George Sabra, Faeq al-Mir, and Talal Abu Dan.²¹

Over the years, the party has joined several key alliances, such as the National Democratic Rally in 1979 and the Damascus Declaration in 2005. Despite having fewer than 100 members, it has been active in opposition platforms formed in the wake of the revolution, including the Syrian National Council in 2011 and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces in 2012.

The party champions Syrian left-wing national thought, emphasizing the significance of a free economy alongside social development, and advocates for Arab unity and cooperation. It has a presence in Europe, Canada, and various Arab nations, though it has not established offices in all Syrian governorates. Its international efforts include the formation of a Diaspora Organizations Committee and a Foreign Relations Office.

¹⁹ Amin al-Assi, "SDC and Qadri Jamil's Understanding: Consolidation of Russian Influence," Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, September 1, 2020 [Arabic text], <https://bityl.co/L9VL>

²⁰ Ali Asaad, "Qadri Jamil's Party: A mixture of Suq al-Hal and Suq al-Buzuriyya", Al-Modon, November 24, 2018, [Arabic text] <https://bityl.co/L9VH>

²¹ The party's official page on Facebook, June 1, 2013, <https://fbook.cc/4iTG>

The party's structure includes a Central Committee, a general secretariat, a national council, and a national conference that convenes every three years. It disseminates its ideas through al-Rai newspaper, Atyaf magazine, and the al-Rai website, which serves as a platform for free expression.

Globally, the party aligns with the Global Progressive Alliance and the Social Democratic Forum in the Arab World, advocating for peaceful engagement yet recognizing the necessity of external military support and arming the opposition under specific circumstances. Its financial support is derived from membership fees, donations, and various investments.

c. Communist Labor Party

Following the 1967 defeat, the Middle East witnessed a surge in radical movements among nationalist and leftist groups, leading to the establishment of various organizations in Syria, including the Communist Labor Party. Founded in 1976 as the League for Communist Action, it was renamed in 1981 during a conference in Lebanon.

The party primarily attracts students and Arab nationalists and stands out for its dynamic, non-dogmatic approach to politics and theory, in contrast to the Stalinist ideologies of other leftist groups. From the outset, it embraced an internationalist perspective, connecting the destinies of working-class people regionally and globally, while also not shying away from critiquing the Soviet Union's regional policies.

Notably, the Communist Labor Party is among the most ethnically and religiously diverse leftist parties in Syria, featuring significant female participation, albeit with limited representation in leadership roles.

The 1980s and early 1990s saw the party facing government crackdowns, leading to a decline in its activities. In 1990, the party staged a protest with detainees' families in Damascus, and in 1992, Abdul-Aziz al-Khair, among others, was arrested for their association with the party. The Soviet Union's collapse led some members toward liberalism rather than Marxism.

The Damascus Spring era, following Bashar al-Assad's rise to power, saw many ex-members spearheading forums and discussion groups, including Munif Mulhim's Left Forum, until it was halted by security forces. In August 2003, the party re-entered the political scene with a

publication titled “Now”, under Abdul-Aziz al-Khair’s leadership in 2005. However, many veterans felt it no longer represented their ideals. While active in the millennium’s first decade, some members chose to oppose the Assad regime individually rather than collectively. In the 2011 uprising, the party co-founded The National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change. Abdul-Aziz al-Khair was forcibly disappeared in 2012, with no updates since.²²

Despite internal splits, the faction led by Abdul-Aziz Al-Khair remained integral to the National Coordination Committee, with Safwan Akash, a key figure, becoming secretary of the Syrian Negotiations Commission.²³

Other party members initiated the **Mouatana** (Citizenship Movement) in April 2011, aligning with the Damascus Declaration and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces.²⁴

Additionally, Fateh Jamous initiated the **Path of Peaceful Change movement** in 2012, aiming for regime appeasement, contrary to revolutionary goals, facing widespread criticism. This movement aligned with the People’s Will Party and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.²⁵

In 2019, Rateb Shabo launched **Nawat for a Future Syria group**, also known as Nawat Watan (Nucleus Nation), advocating for state citizenship, secularism, and the rule of law.

A faction in Latakia formed the **Damascus Declaration Committee**, promoting political liberalism and supporting the Syrian revolution. Beyond these groups, party-affiliated activists and writers continue to support Syrians domestically and in the diaspora.²⁶

²² Joseph Daher, “The Communist Action Party in Syria: A Rich Political History (1 of 2)”, Story Untold, October 23, 2020, [Arabic text] <https://bitly.co/L9wF>

²³ Wael Sawah, “The Prospects of the Communist Labour Party in Syria”, al-Nas News, March 9, 2021, [Arabic text] <https://bitly.co/L9xS>

²⁴ Interview conducted by the research team with Burhan Nassif.

²⁵ “Internal Opposition Nominates Its Cadres for Regime’s Parliamentary Elections”, Syria TV, July 14, 2020. [Arabic text] <https://bitly.co/L9xg>

²⁶ Wael Sawah, “The Prospects of the Communist Labour Party in Syria”, al-Nas News, March 9, 2021, [Arabic text] <https://bitly.co/L9xS>

III. Islamist parties

The history of Islamist organizations in Syria is deep-rooted and marked by numerous events and shifts. **The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria**, established in 1945, has long been a significant political entity in the country. Following the 2011 revolution, a variety of new Islamist groups and parties appeared. Some of these espouse Islamic principles with a focus on local and national issues, while others have a global perspective, aiming to create an Islamic caliphate. These groups vary in their ideologies and tactics. Furthermore, the rhetoric of certain groups has evolved from international to domestic focus, influenced by military developments and shifts in regional power dynamics. The subsequent sections will highlight the key Islamist factions and parties active in Syria's political landscape.

a. Muslim Brotherhood in Syria

The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, established in 1945 under the leadership of Mustafa al-Siba'i as its Supreme Guide, has been actively involved in Syria's political scene since 1946, holding seats in the People's Assembly and participating in government until 1963 when the Ba'ath Party came to power. The Ba'ath regime, aiming to diminish the Brotherhood's influence, officially banned the group in 1964. Tensions within the Brotherhood's leadership and its opposition to President Hafez al-Assad's government led Marwan Hadid to form the Fighting Vanguard in 1979, a faction that operated independently and took up arms against the Assad regime. This prompted Assad to enact Law 49 in 1980, making membership in the Brotherhood punishable by death. Under the guidance of Ali Sadreddine al-Bayanouni, elected in 1996, the Brotherhood initially engaged in covert talks with the Assad regime, but after talks failed, it sought alliances with other opposition groups. In 2001, they unveiled the National Honor Pact at a Syrian opposition conference in London and later endorsed the Damascus Declaration for Democratic Change in 2005, and helped establish the National Salvation Front in exile in 2006, though it left the Front in 2009. By 2010, a leadership change occurred in Istanbul, with Mohammad Riad al-Shaqfeh taking over as Supreme Guide.

In 2014, amidst calls for reform within the group, the Brotherhood conducted elections for its Shura Council, marking the beginning of a new era in its history. Mohammad Hikmat Walid was elected as the new Supreme Guide and was re-elected in 2019.

The Brotherhood has been a key player in organizing the Syrian opposition against President Bashar al-Assad's regime. In October 2011, it played a pivotal role in forming the Syrian National Council in Istanbul, where it represented the strongest Islamic component. The group was also instrumental in establishing the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces in November 2012. While supporting the Shields of the Revolution Council, it maintained a degree of distance from direct affiliation.

The Brotherhood's political vision promotes the establishment of a civil state grounded in Islamic values, emphasizing pluralism, democracy, and citizenship. In March 2012, it released the Covenant and Charter document outlining its aspirations for a post-Assad Syria, advocating for a modern, democratic, and pluralistic civil state. Internationally, the Muslim Brotherhood has fostered strong relationships with Turkey and Qatar, reflecting its strategic alliances and influence.

b. National Promise for Justice and Constitution Party (Waad)

The National Promise for Justice and Constitution Party, known as Waad, was established in 2014 with backing from the Muslim Brotherhood. Mohammad Hikmat Walid initially led the party at its inception, later passing the baton to Muhammad Zuhair al-Khatib in 2019. The party's leadership team consists of notable members including Muhammad Zuhair al-Khatib, Khaled al-Shabib, Ammar al-Asaad, Mo'az al-Jahoush, Amer Fares, Abdel Moneim al-Hamidi, Ibrahim Jouaid, and Mariam Abdelsalam, and it boasts around 500 members.²⁷ To date, Waad has not engaged in any political coalitions and espouses a national and local focus with an Islamic perspective, prioritizing domestic issues over international Islamist concerns. The party is particularly invested in improving education, alleviating poverty, and enhancing women's political involvement, aiming to challenge the conventional perception of Islamist parties.

Waad's organizational framework includes a council of elders, a legislative council, and an executive council. Its operations are primarily in areas of northern Syria under Syrian opposition control and in Turkey. The party maintains a sole office in Syria, located in Akhtar in Aleppo's northern countryside, which is licensed by the local council. Without any branches abroad, Waad actively organizes meetings and seminars, provides scholarships for students,

²⁷ Interview conducted by the research team with Abdel Moneim al-Hamidi, head of the party's office in northern Aleppo.

and sustains itself financially through member contributions and donations. It operates without an armed division and maintains formal relations solely with Syria, reflecting its focused approach on constructive political and social engagement.

c. Party of Liberation (Hizb ut-Tahrir)

The Party of Liberation, also known as Hizb ut-Tahrir, was established in Jerusalem in 1953 by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, a judge and alumnus of al-Azhar University. It expanded into Syria during the 1960s, gaining a presence in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama. The party faced significant persecution under both Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar al-Assad. A particularly harsh crackdown occurred at the end of Hafez al-Assad's rule in 1999, when the Air Force Intelligence launched a comprehensive campaign against the party, arresting 900 of its members and supporters for allegedly plotting a coup. With the onset of the Syrian revolution in 2011, many of those detained on charges of affiliation with the party were released, although some leaders remained imprisoned by the regime. The Party of Liberation has always focused on political and intellectual engagement, along with advocacy work, without establishing a military branch. It advocates for the creation of an Islamic caliphate.

In northern Syria, the party's membership is limited to around 200 individuals, located primarily in two villages in northern Idlib and in al-Atareb and al-Sahhara in the western countryside of Aleppo.²⁸ The party maintains a radical stance and has criticized the Free Syrian Army and other opposition groups for engaging in corrupt practices and straying from the original objectives of the Syrian revolution.

IV. New parties

In our survey of the political landscape in Syria, we noticed the presence of several micro-parties that defy traditional political labels such as leftist, conservative, or nationalist, though many exhibit liberal inclinations. In recent years, the fragmentation of larger parties has led to the rise of new groups and individuals who have aligned themselves with small-scale,

²⁸ Amin al-Assi, "Hizb ut-Tahrir is an extremist party in northern Syria with no political influence", Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, August 30, 2020 [Arabic text] <https://tinyurl.com/mryyw6t7>

modestly funded parties. These parties often focus their efforts on specific sectors and geographical areas.

a. Future Syria Party

The inaugural conference of the Future Syria Party took place in Raqqa on March 27, 2018, attended by 800 delegates from across Syria, along with 100 guests from various political parties, blocs, institutions, and civil councils. The event concluded with the election of an 81-member General Council. Ibrahim al-Qaftan was elected as the party president, with Hevrin Khalaf serving as the Secretary-General.²⁹ On May 6, 2022, Abdulhamid al-Mehbash succeeded al-Qaftan as president, and the party became a member of the Syrian Democratic Council.

The Future Syria Party is committed to promoting the diverse national, religious, and cultural identities within the Syrian nation. It was founded with the goal of extending the governance model of the Syrian Democratic Council to areas recently liberated from ISIS, focusing its activities in northeastern Syria. Licensed by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, the party is financially supported by the Syrian Democratic Council and maintains positive relationships with the United States and France.

b. Syrian Brigade Party (al-Liwa)

The Syrian Brigade Party was established in 2020, with its political leadership comprising Malik Abu al-Khair, the party's founder, and Samer al-Hakim, head of the party's military division. The party boasts around 700 members³⁰ and has formed alliances with traditional opposition parties in As-Suwayda.

With a focus that aligns closely with the Druze community's identity, the party aims to implement federal governance in As-Suwayda. Its operations are primarily based in the As-Suwayda Governorate, though it also maintains a leadership hub in France. Internal meetings

²⁹ Hevrin Khalaf was killed on October 12, 2019, by members of the Syrian National Army (formerly known as the Syrian Free Army) during the 2019 Turkish military offensive into northeastern Syria.

³⁰ Personal information provided by the research team.

take place in the city of As-Suwayda, and its military presence is notably established in the village of Ar-Raha.

c. Syrian Liberal Party (Ahrar)

The Syrian Liberal Party, also known as Ahrar, was established in 2020 with founding members Yasmine Merei, Khaled Bitar, and Danny al-Baaj. Bassam al-Kuwatli is at the helm of the party, which has a membership of 53 individuals.³¹ Initially, the party joined the Syrian Democratic Meeting Alliance but eventually withdrew due to the alliance's lackluster activities. The party is characterized by its commitment to political liberalism and social-economic liberalism.

The organizational structure of the party includes a general assembly comprising all members, and a political committee of 10 members elected to serve four-year terms. For every 10% of its membership, there's one representative seat, and the party leadership is made up of three individuals: the president and two deputies. Additionally, there's an oversight and transparency committee tasked with dispute resolution within the party, an executive secretariat handling administrative duties, and several specialized committees. Funding for the party comes from donations and member subscriptions.

The Syrian Liberal Party is active in opposition-controlled areas of northern Syria, Turkey, and various European countries, though it does not maintain any official representation in these locations. Its activities include regular meetings and engagements with both Syrian and non-Syrian opposition parties. While the party does not have formal external relations, it occasionally engages in brief and transient meetings with external entities.

d. The Youth Party for Construction and Change

The Youth Party for Construction and Change, established in 2021 under the leadership of Parwin Ibrahim,³² boasts a membership of over 5,000.³³ Since 2011, it has secured a license from the Syrian Ministry of Interior. The party operates offices in Damascus, Latakia, Qamishli, and Aleppo, including central leadership offices, provincial branches, and city branches. It

³¹ Interview conducted by the research team with Bassam al-Kuwatli, a member of the party's leadership.

³² The political bureau includes: Muhammad Ali Hashash, Issam Kadouri, Muhammad Al-Kate', Ayman al-Ajaz, Basil Hokan, Muhammad Dib Akash, Vera al-Omar, Hazar Keifu, Parwin Ibrahim, Jaafar Mashhadiya, Muhammad Firas Nadim, and Muhammad Sabsabi.

³³ Interview with a leading figure of the party conducted by the research team via Zoom on November 25, 2021.

played a significant role in establishing the National Front on August 1, 2020. Politically, the party embraces secular Syrian nationalism, and it champions the equitable distribution of wealth as a key economic principle.

Non-partisan political alliances and formations

The Syrian political landscape is home to over 10 alliances, encompassing a diverse range of parties and political groups. These alliances often share common intellectual leanings or political stances. For instance, the National Progressive Front is known for its socialist and leftist ideology, while entities like the Syrian National Council and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces unite various Syrian opposition parties under a shared goal of opposing the Assad regime, regardless of their individual ideological beliefs.

There are alliances within Syria that also oppose the regime but choose to operate from within government-controlled areas. These include the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change and the National Democratic Front (Joud). On the basis of nationalism, groups such as the Kurdish National Council and the Syrian Turkmen Assembly have aligned with the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces. In response to these, nationalist alliances like the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM) have emerged, aiming for dialogue with groups like the Kurdish National Council.

Moreover, the Syrian Democratic Meeting Alliance was established with a focus on secular, democratic, and liberal principles. In northeastern Syria, alliances that incorporate both Kurdish and Arab parties, such as the Peace and Freedom Front and the Syrian Democratic Council, have been formed, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of the country's political affiliations.

I. Formal party alliances

a. National Progressive Front

Established on March 7, 1972, the National Progressive Front is comprised of 13 political parties and trade union federations. These include the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, the Arab Socialist Union Party, the Syrian Communist Party, the Unified Syrian Communist Party, the

Socialist Unionist Party, the Arab Socialist Movement, the Democratic Socialist Unionist Party, the National Covenant Party, the Arab Democratic Union Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the General Federation of Trade Unions, the General Union of Peasants, and the National Union of Syrian Students. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party has been participating in the Front's meetings as an observer since late 2001 and became an official member in 2005.

The Front operates under a central command, which is led by the Regional Secretary of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, Bashar al-Assad. It features representatives from each of its member parties, with the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party securing a representation formula of half plus one compared to the other parties, ensuring it always has more than 25% of the seats in the People's Assembly.

b. The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces

The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces came into being on November 11, 2012, in Doha, with Moaz al-Khatib elected as president. Riad Seif and Suheir al-Atassi were named vice-presidents, and Mustafa al-Sabbagh took on the role of secretary-general.³⁴

Initially comprising 63 members, the coalition responded to calls for broader representation by expanding to 113 members. These individuals represent a wide array of opposition and revolutionary groups in Syria, including but not limited to the Syrian National Council, the Syrian Revolution General Commission, the Local Coordination Committees, the Arab Socialist Union Party, and many others. These members come from diverse political, revolutionary, and civil backgrounds, including the Free Syrian Army leadership, various councils, and unions, reflecting the broad spectrum of opposition to the Assad regime.

The coalition's structure includes a general assembly with 86 seats and a presidential body led by Hadi al-Bahra, who also represents the opposition in the Constitutional Committee.

³⁴ Following al-Khatib's resignation on March 24, 2013, George Sabra temporarily led the National Coalition until Ahmed al-Jarba was elected president on August 6, 2013. Badr Jamous took on the role of Secretary-General, with Abdulhakim Bachar, Mohammad Farouk Tayfour, and Noura al-Ameer serving as vice-presidents. The leadership of the National Coalition has seen several opposition figures at its helm, including Hadi al-Bahra starting July 8, 2014, Khaled Khoja from January 4, 2015, Anas al-Abdah as of March 5, 2016, followed by Riad Seif on May 6, 2017, and Abdulrahman Mustafa on May 6, 2018. Anas al-Abdah returned to the presidency on May 6, 2019, succeeded by Nasr al-Hariri on May 6, 2020, and most recently, Salim el-Muslat took over on July 12, 2021.

Alongside al-Bahra are Secretary-General Haytham Rahmeh and three vice-presidents. A political body of 19 members, including notable figures like Hadi al-Bahra and Ahmed Tomeh, is part of the coalition's governance.

The National Coalition is composed of 21 diverse political, civil, and military groups, such as the National Bloc, the Damascus Declaration, the National Action Movement for Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Association of Syrian Scholars, the Kurdish National Council, the Association of Independent Syrian Kurds, the Syrian Tribal Council, the Assyrian Democratic Organization, the Revolutionary Movement, the Syrian Future Movement, and the Syrian Turkmen Council. This coalition also includes local councils, factions of the Free Army, and individual activists.

Additionally, the National Coalition oversees various agencies and committees aimed at governance and rebuilding efforts. These include the Syrian Interim Government, the Support Coordination Unit, the Syria Reconstruction Trust Fund, the Syrian Olympic Committee, and the Syrian Supreme Hajj Committee. It also features 12 specialized committees such as the Refugee Affairs Department, the Communities Office, the Strategic Studies, Consultations and Documentation Working Group, the Civil Society Organizations Working Group, the Information and Communication Department, and the Legal Committee, each focusing on specific aspects of Syria's recovery and development.

The National Coalition is dedicated to building a civil, democratic, and inclusive Syria that acknowledges and respects the diversity of its society. It adheres to core principles focused on safeguarding national sovereignty, maintaining Syria's territorial integrity, ensuring the unity of the Syrian people, and committing to the democratic process. Key goals include the overthrow of the Assad regime and its infrastructure, dismantling its security apparatus, holding perpetrators of crimes accountable, and laying the groundwork for a society that values pluralism and democracy.

The Coalition gained recognition as the Syrian people's legitimate representative from supportive international countries at the Marrakesh Conference in Morocco on December 12, 2012. It manages its international relationships through delegates in various countries and maintains representation in significant international organizations like the United Nations, the European Union, and the Arab League.

c. The Kurdish National Council in Syria

The Kurdish National Council in Syria was founded on November 26, 2011, serving as the political representative for Syrian Kurds in international arenas. It encompasses 11 parties, including the the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria, the Yekiti Kurdistan Party - Syria, the Kurdish Democratic Unity Party in Syria, the Kurdish Democratic Equality Party in Syria, the Kurdish National Democratic Party in Syria, the Kurdish Reform Movement in Syria, the Kurdish Democratic Left Party in Syria, the Kurdish Reform Movement in Syria, the Kurdish Future Movement in Syria, the Kurdistan Vanguard Party - Syria, and a number of other civil organizations.³⁵and endorses the Roj Peshmarga as an armed force.

At its inception, the Council was structured to include a General Assembly of 26 members, comprising 15 party leaders from within the Council and 11 independent members. On July 29, 2020, it played a role in establishing the Peace and Freedom Front, collaborating with Syria's Tomorrow Movement, the Arab Council of the Jazira and the Euphrates, and the Assyrian Democratic Organization. The Rojava Peshmerga, formed in 2012, stands as the sole military wing of the Kurdish National Council.

II. Political alliances based on political affinity

a. The National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change

The Coordination Committee was founded on October 6, 2011, with the goal of consolidating the opposition's demands and pursuing national democratic reform in Syria. Its membership comprises opposition figures and parties, including the National Democratic Rally, which is made up of five parties, with the Arab Democratic Socialist Union being the largest. Other members include the Arab Revolutionary Workers Party, the Communist Labor Party, the Arab Socialist Movement, the Syriac Union Party, and the Democratic People's Party, although the latter wasn't represented in the committee's Executive Office. Additional participants are the Marxist Left Assembly, the Together for a Free and Democratic Syria Movement, and independent groups working to rejuvenate civil society in Syria.

³⁵ Several Kurdish leaders have served as president of the Council, including Abdulhakim Bachar starting on October 26, 2011, followed by Ahmed Suleiman on February 29, 2012, Ismail Haqqi on July 30, 2012, Faisal Youssef on August 31, 2012, Taher Safouk on May 12, 2013, Ibrahim Berro on July 1, 2015, and Saud al-Mulla on December 11, 2017.

At its inception, the committee also included four Kurdish parties, with Salih Muslim from the Democratic Union Party and Nasr al-Din Ibrahim from the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria serving on the Executive Office.

Presently, the committee's roster includes the Arab Democratic Socialist Union, the Communist Labor Party, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria, the Democratic Union Party, the Syrian Democratic People's Party, the Syrian Communist Party – Political Bureau, the Arab Socialist Movement, the Syriac Union Party, and the National Society for Anti-Zionism and Support of Palestine.

The committee is led by General Coordinator Hassan Abdul Azim and originally featured an Executive Office of 25 members.³⁶

On June 24, 2023, the committee entered into a partnership agreement with the Syrian Democratic Council following a series of collaborative discussions.³⁷ Playing a significant political role within the Syrian Negotiations Commission, the committee actively releases statements regarding ongoing events in Syria.

b. Syrian National Council

The Syrian National Council was formed in Istanbul on October 2, 2011. It is composed of several groups including the National Bloc (Group of 74), the Damascus Declaration, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Local Coordination Committees in Syria, and the Supreme Council of the Syrian Revolution, along with various independent figures. The council's General Secretariat, featuring 26 representatives from these constituent groups, is responsible for electing an executive office of eight members. This office includes a president, whose term is renewable every three months. Burhan Ghalioun led the National Council from its inception in October 2011 until he stepped down following his re-election on May 15, 2012. Abdulbaset Sieda, a representative of the Kurdish bloc within the council, was elected president on June 11, 2012, and was later succeeded by George Sabra in November 2012. The influence of the National Council waned following the establishment of the National Coalition of Syrian

³⁶ Majdouline Hassan, Noura Ghazi, Amal Nasr, Saleh Muslim Mohammed, Muhammad Nasser Hamo, Mohammad Sayyid Rasas, Munther Khaddam, Munir Mohammad Bitar, Arif Dalila, Haytham Manna, Khalaf Dahoud, Hassan Abdel-Azim, and Ahmad al-Asrawi.

³⁷ "Partnership between the Democratic Council and the Coordination Committee could be crucial for Syria", Kurdish Center for Studies, July 1, 2023, [Arabic text] <https://nlka.net/archives/9884>

Revolutionary and Opposition Forces on November 11, 2012, after which it became a component of the National Coalition.

c. Syrian Turkmen Council

The Syrian Turkmen Council was founded on March 29, 2013, serving as the political representation for Syrian Turkmen parties, including the Syrian Turkmen Movement Party, the Syrian Turkmen Bloc, the Syrian Turkmen Ennahda Party, and the Turkmen Loyalty Party. Leadership has passed through several presidents, namely Samir Hafez, Fayeze Amr, Abdulrahman Mustafa, Emin Bozoglan, and Wajih Jumaa, with the council boasting a membership of 500 individuals.

Since its inception, the Council has been a part of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary Forces and has formed an alliance with the Kurdish National Council within the coalition. Despite representing Syrian Turkmen, the council eschews nationalist rhetoric in favor of promoting a unified Syrian identity and supporting socio-economic development. Its activities are primarily based in Turkey and northern Syria, with offices located in the town of al-Ra'i, north of Aleppo, as well as in Ankara, Gaziantep, and Hatay in Turkey. The Council regards its relationship with Turkey as a strategic alliance.

The organizational structure of the Council includes a general assembly of 500 members, a central council of 50 members, a judicial committee of 10 members, an executive office of 7 members, and an internal arbitration committee. The Council is actively involved in hosting conferences, seminars, and workshops. However, it faces financial challenges due to reliance on limited funding from Turkish civil society organizations. Internal issues have also impacted the Council, leading to a halt in operations since 2020 and the resignation of its last president, Wajih Jumaa.

d. Syrian Democratic Meeting Alliance

The Syrian Democratic Meeting Alliance was formed in Paris on January 26, 2020. This alliance brought together a diverse array of groups including the Syria Declaration, the Syrian Democratic Alliance, the National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria, the Syrian Bloc, Mouatana (Citizenship Movement), the Syrian National Assembly, the Syrian Women's Political Movement, the Together for a Free and Democratic Syria Movement, the Syrian

Liberal Party (Ahrar), the People’s Party, the Communist Labour Party, the Democratic Action Group, WATAN Foundation, the Assyrian Democratic Organization, and the Nawat Watan (Nuclear Nation) group. Karam Daula was chosen to lead the interim leadership of the alliance. However, early on, the alliance faced challenges due to differing visions and objectives among its member groups, which ultimately led to its disbandment.³⁸

e. National Democratic Front (Joud)

The National Front was established on May 18, 2021. It brought together a diverse coalition of groups and parties including the Syrian Movement for Construction and Renewal, the National Society for Anti-Zionism and Support of Palestine, the Syrian Democratic Turkmen Movement, the Social Democratic Party, the Syrian Communist Party (with John Nasta representing its Political Bureau), and the National Initiative in Jabal al-Arab. Additionally, the coalition included the Syrian Youth Assembly, the Syrian Bloc, the Bina al-Watan Assembly, the Arab Socialist Movement, the Arab Democratic Socialist Union Party, the Arab Democratic Socialist Ba’ath Party, and the Communist Labor Party. It also encompassed communists from Jabal al-Arab and a group of independent members of the National Coordination Committee.

Mohsen Hizam was elected as the leader of the Front’s central body. Suleiman al-Kafiri took the role of the executive body’s head, with Dr. John Nasta serving as the consensus vice-president. Ahmed al-Asrawi was appointed as the executive body’s secretary, and Muhammad Malak became the head of the information office.

The National Democratic Front is mainly composed of the National Coordination Committee’s members. Thus, its political discourse doesn’t diverge significantly from the Committee’s, nor does it introduce a new political stance within the Syrian context. However, it does enable the Committee’s parties to forge new and broader alliances with other groups within the Front that have an on-the-ground presence in areas under the Syrian regime’s control.

f. Syrian Democratic Council

The Syrian Democratic Council was established in the city of Derik, northeastern Syria, on December 9, 2015. It serves as the political arm of the Syrian Democratic Forces within the

³⁸ An interview conducted by the research team with Bassam al-Kuwatli, a leadership member of the Syrian Liberal Party (Ahrar).

Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, acting as both a guiding body and a political umbrella for the Autonomous Administration and the Syrian Democratic Forces.

In its inaugural meeting, the Council elected its political and executive bodies, comprising 43 individuals from various political parties and independent backgrounds. Haytham Manna, representing the Qamh Movement, and Ilham Ahmed, from the Democratic Society Movement, were initially elected as co-presidents. Subsequently, Riad Hammoud Darar was elected as a co-president on February 25, 2017, and Amina Omar assumed the role of co-president on July 16, 2018. On September 6, 2018, the Council, from Ain Issa in Raqqa's countryside, announced the establishment of the General Council for the Autonomous Administration. This announcement also introduced a series of principles aimed at resolving the Syrian crisis. These principles emphasized rejecting military solutions in favor of a Syria-driven resolution with international support and guarantees, promoting negotiation and dialogue, organizing a constituent council through a broad Syrian national conference, and establishing a transitional government with extensive authority.

On April 18, 2023, the Syrian Democratic Council launched an initiative aimed at addressing the Syrian crisis. This initiative underscored several key principles, including acknowledging the rights of Syrian groups, ensuring equitable wealth distribution, and advocating for the withdrawal of Turkish forces from Syrian territories.³⁹

g. Peace and Freedom Front

The Peace and Freedom Front was founded in Qamishli on July 29, 2020, with Ahmed al-Jarba at the helm. Its formation brought together the Assyrian Democratic Organization, the Kurdish National Council, Syria's Tomorrow Movement, and the Arab Council in the Jazira and Euphrates region. This alliance, however, didn't alter the operational dynamics of the member parties. The inaugural meeting saw the participation of Saud al-Mulla, leader of the Kurdish National Council, Daoud Daoud, head of the Assyrian Democratic Organization, alongside Ahmed al-Jarba.

³⁹ Abdul Halim Suleiman, "The Autonomous Administration launches an initiative to resolve the Syrian crisis," Independent Arabia, April 19, 2023, [Arabic text] <https://bitly.co/L9Sb>

The Front recognizes Syria as a nation of diverse nationalities, cultures, and religions, advocating for a constitution that protects the rights of all societal elements. It emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the Kurdish people's national identity, viewing the Kurdish issue as integral to Syria's broader national and democratic challenges. Advocating for decentralization and the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity as pathways to resolving the Syrian crisis, the Front has managed to garner initial support from international players, including Turkey, Russia, and the United States.

III. Non-partisan political formations

In Syria's political landscape, there's been a rise in non-partisan groups that engage in political activities without the intention of gaining or holding onto power. These organizations operate based on civil society principles, serving as intermediaries between the government and citizens, like the Civil Society Support Room, or focusing on humanitarian and relief efforts, as seen with the Syrian Forum and the Syrian Networks League. Others, like the Syrian Islamic Council, aim to exert political influence. Some organizations have been founded on specific grounds, such as the Syrian Council of Clan and Tribes, which is based on tribal affiliations, and the Free National Assembly of Employees of Syrian State Institutions, which is organized around professional lines. Additionally, there are groups like the Syrian Women's Political Movement, dedicated to advancing and protecting women's rights, indicating their focus on particular societal interests.

a. Syrian Islamic Council

The Syrian Islamic Council was founded on April 14, 2014, under the leadership of Osama al-Rifai, with a Board of Trustees comprising 21 members.

This Council is engaged in advocacy and the issuance of fatwas, focusing its efforts in Turkey and opposition-held territories in northern Syria, as well as operating clandestinely in areas controlled by the Syrian regime. It has established offices in Istanbul, Gaziantep, and other Turkish locations with significant Syrian populations, and maintains an office in Azaz, northern Syria. The Council is known for its conservative Islamic stance and holds considerable sway among the Sunni communities in northern and northeastern Syria, including regime-controlled

regions. It also exerts moral influence on opposition factions, which regard it as a source of legitimate authority.

The Council encompasses over 40 Islamic legal entities and associations, among them the Syrian Scholars Association, the League of the Ulema of Sham, Sham Khotaba Association, the Zayd bin Sabit Foundation, and the Islamic Sham Organization. It primarily relies on donations from its affiliated bodies and member contributions for funding, although it faces challenges due to limited financial resources.

b. Syrian Women's Political Movement

The Syrian Women's Political Movement was established on October 24, 2017, with founding members including Hiam al-Shirout, Nibal Zaitouneh, Amal al-Salamat, Muzna Dureid, and Soraya Hijazi. The movement is led by a General Secretariat, comprising seven women elected by its General Authority. The current Secretariat members are Nidal Jojak, Soraya Hijazi, Ghina Al-Shomari, Khuzama Darwish, Suad al-Aswad, Suha al-Kasir, and Hiyam Al-Shayrout.

With 164 members, the movement aligns its political efforts with feminist principles. While it has not formed any political alliances, it is open to collaboration with various Syrian political entities aimed at overthrowing tyranny, without committing to any particular economic doctrine. Many of its members are affiliated with political parties and movements of diverse ideologies.

The movement's structure is organized into a general body encompassing all members, a General Secretariat of seven women elected during the annual conference, alongside specialized committees and offices. It operates across all of Syria, as well as in neighboring countries, Europe, and America, though it does not maintain any formal representative offices either domestically or abroad. The movement actively publishes policy papers addressing Syrian issues from a feminist perspective and is funded by international organizations supporting administrative activities within and outside Syria.

c. Free National Assembly of Employees of Syrian State Institutions

The Free National Assembly of Employees of Syrian State Institutions was founded on December 15, 2012. It consists of several opposition figures who have left the regime, including

prominent individuals like Riyadh Hijab, Khaled Shihab Eddin, Riyadh Naasan Agha, Farouk Taha, Abdel Latif al-Dabbagh, Bassam Barabandi, and Abdul Aziz al-Khateeb.

Led by Judge Khaled Shihab el-Din, the assembly boasts around 5,000 members, primarily from professional and academic backgrounds. While the assembly has expressed opposition to many policies of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, it is a member of the coalition and has one representative within it.

The assembly's activities are concentrated in Syrian opposition-held areas, Turkey, the United States, and several Arab Gulf countries. It operates through offices in Qatar and Turkey, representing its interests and facilitating its work in these regions.

d. Syrian Council of Clan and Tribes

The Syrian Council of Clan and Tribes was established on December 21, 2018, under the leadership of Rami al-Dush. The council's central office features notable members such as Abdel Aziz al-Meslet, Ahmad Tu'mah, Amer al-Bashir, Hajim al-Shayesh, Faisal al-Sultan, Mohammed Azzam al-Sukhni, Mohammad Nasif, Mahmoud Al-Hamoud, Hassan al-Issa, and Abdullah al-Turkawi. By 2020, Salem al-Meslet took on the role of leading the General Secretariat of the Council, which consists of 150 members.

The Council is a part of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and pursues a national political strategy without a specific economic focus. Its organizational structure includes the Secretary-General, the General Secretariat, and the Advisory Board, along with branches and administrative offices. The Council operates in the northern rural areas of Aleppo and Raqqa, as well as in Turkey, maintaining offices in northern Syria near Azaz, and in Afrin, Ras al-Ain, and Tal Abyad. Additional offices are located in Gaziantep, Urfa, and Mersin, Turkey.

The Council wields significant influence within the Arab tribal community in the northern rural regions of Aleppo, Raqqa, and Hasakah. It also encompasses representatives from Kurdish and Turkmen tribes in the area, highlighting its inclusive approach to representation and advocacy within the region.

IV. Civil society groups

When delving into the political landscape of Syria, it's essential not to overlook the role of civil society organizations. In a study conducted by IMPACT Research, a survey of nearly a thousand civic action groups revealed a complex and interlinked network both within and outside of Syria. The conflict years saw the Syrian civil domain expand, fostering new leadership within the broader political spectrum and leading to the rise of organizations progressively engaging in political activities.

Central to Syrian political efforts are advocacy, programs aimed at fostering stability, and initiatives to raise awareness. The relationship between civil society groups and public matters is inherently dynamic and interconnected. For illustrative purposes, we've highlighted a selection of these groups, aiming to shed light on their contributions rather than making broad generalizations.

a. Syrian Civil Society Platform

The Syrian Civil Society Network, established in 2019, encompasses nine alliances of Syrian civil society organizations based in the diaspora. It serves as a hub for coordination, priority setting, consensus building, and harmonizing advocacy efforts of Syrian civil society networks and alliances. This platform offers a range of services, including facilitating information exchange, advocacy, expanding the influence of Syrian civil society networks, and bolstering their engagement in policymaking processes. It arranges meetings with activists and networks within Syria, across different control zones, and is involved in organizing numerous activities with international entities.

Included within the platform are networks focused on relief, such as the Union of Syrian Civil Society Organizations and the Syrian American Medical Society, alongside others dedicated to advocacy and political initiatives, like the SHAML Coalition and We Exist. It also features national networks from overseas, including the Syrian Charities & Associations Network in the UK (SCAN UK), the Association of German-Syrian Aid Associations, and the Voices for Displaced Syrian Forum.

The platform maintains robust connections with local, regional, and international partners, benefiting from a straightforward structure that enhances its adaptability and sustainability.

While it does not act as a representative for its members, it provides a collaborative space for coordinating and supporting collective actions. Its operations are funded by contributions from partner entities and international organizations.

b. Madaniya platform

The Madaniya platform was launched following a proposal by Syrian businessman Ayman al-Asfari and several Syrian civil activists, aiming to enhance the "political effectiveness" of Syrian civil society, particularly among the diaspora. Its inaugural meeting took place in Paris in 2022. Ayman al-Asfari leads the platform's administrative body, which consists of 30 individuals, including notable figures such as Mazen Darwish, Abdulrahman Alhaj, Raed Al-Saleh, Ibrahim al-Olabi, and Samer Chamsi-Pasha. The platform engages in outreach to Syrian communities and official international entities.

Madaniya unites Syrian civic activists both within Syria and abroad, rallying them around common values rooted in rights and justice. It aims to create a cohesive civil space that overcomes divisions, promoting a sense of ownership and belonging among Syrians. Leveraging the collective resources, capabilities, expertise, and political clout of Syrian civil participants, Madaniya strives to ensure that Syrians play a pivotal role in decision-making at local, regional, and international levels.

Conclusion

Today's Syrian landscape is remarkably fragmented and stands on the brink of potential collapse. Over the last decade, the unfolding events have significantly sculpted the political scene. This interplay between the stark realities on the ground and the political climate is continuously evolving, potentially giving rise to new political frameworks while rendering old ones obsolete. Amidst this flux, the rich diversity within the Syrian political sphere warrants reflection.

This diversity has sparked a notable political consciousness among Syria's political, cultural, and social sectors. Despite the harsh realities of war and its ruinous impacts, a movement fueled by hope for a brighter Syrian future has emerged, shaping the political milieu and being shaped by it in return. While it may be premature to forecast the outcomes of this varied political landscape, one evident shift is the broadening of the political horizon of Syrian society, influenced significantly by the Syrian diaspora.

As we embarked on this report, our goal wasn't merely to argue a point with supporting examples. Instead, we aim to delve into the intricate web of Syrian political entities, using the Syrian political climate as our primary analytical framework. Our exploration will cover Syria's economy, political culture, and the influential role of its youth. We will also tackle the contrasting visions and ideas within Syria, its recent developments, and how these may influence the quest for a political resolution. These topics mark the beginning of our comprehensive report.