



Global Harmony
Empowering Communities, Cultivating Positive Peace



DT Institute

Transitional Justice and the Humanitarian-Development- Peace Nexus in Syria

Community and Institutional Perspectives



JUSTICE | RECOVERY | PEACE





Contents

Executive Summary	02
Introduction	05
Methodology	09
Community Perspectives	10
Organizational Perspectives	16
Recommendations	20
Notes and References	23

Executive Summary

Report at a Glance

This report explores how donors, international and national NGOs, and Syrian government actors might incorporate transitional justice considerations into the humanitarian and development response in Syria. It presents insights from group interviews in June 2026 with 56 residents of Darayya and Yarmouk Camp, most of whom were victims of wartime violations, as well group interviews in June 2026 with 19 members of the Syrian government and non-governmental organizations working on transitional justice and the humanitarian and development response. As follows are the report's main findings:

- Interviewees emphasized that the humanitarian and development response in Syria needs to consider victim status alongside need. They viewed the provision of aid and services to victims of grave violations and their families as an integral form of recognition, reparation, and justice. They said that failure to incorporate this lens into the humanitarian and development response risks alienating victims and further damaging the country's social fabric. Various suggestions were raised in this respect, among them:
 - Vocational training and small grants for female heads of household whose husbands, and/or sons, had forcibly disappeared during the war,
 - Scholarships, and a portion of university seats, reserved for children whose parents were killed in the war,
 - Comprehensive health care for those wounded in detention or in attacks against civilians, including surgeries that are currently classified as cosmetic.
- Interviewees from the Syrian government and NGOs emphasized the nascent Syrian state is dealing with massive, competing pressures and resource constraints, meaning an official reparations program at this time is not feasible. Instead, they pointed to prioritizing victims in development and humanitarian programming as a stopgap mechanism that could provide a measure of reparation and acknowledgement absent an official reparations program.

1 Syrian Arab Republic: 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (April 2026), OCHA, April 2, 2026, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2026-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-april-2026>; Common Country Analysis: Syria 2025, United Nations, March 31, 2026, <https://syria.un.org/en/312773-common-country-analysis-syria>; 2025 UN Country Annual Results Report - Syria, United Nations, March 31, 2026, <https://syria.un.org/en/312775-2025>

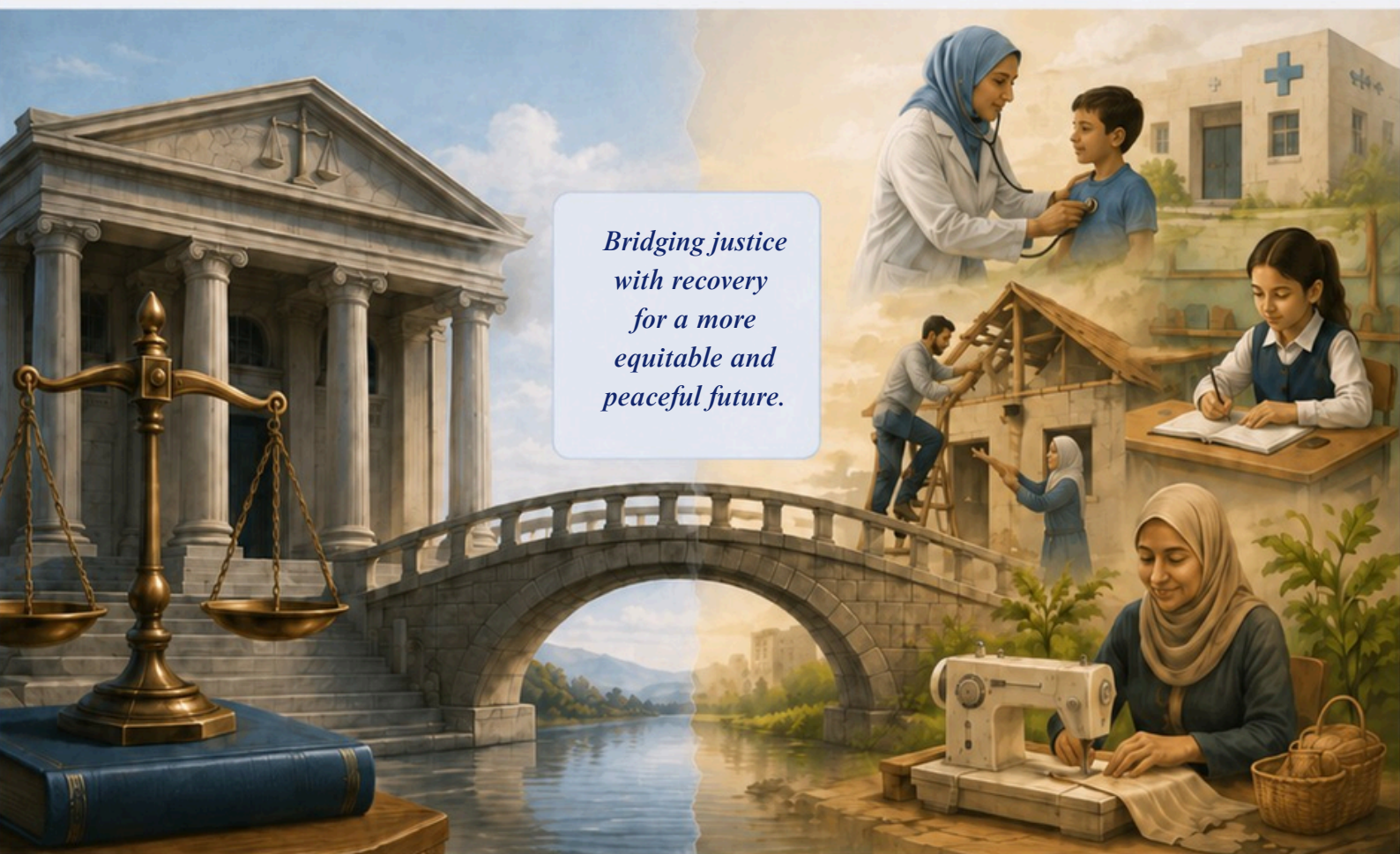
2 Ibid

Executive Summary

- Interviewees stressed there is an urgent need to investigate and reveal the fate of the hundreds of thousands of Syrians who disappeared in detention. This issue is at intersection of transitional justice and development. It is about truth-telling and confronting past abuses, while it also has severe, ongoing impacts on people's mental health and economic well-being, for example by precluding children from receiving inheritance:
 - Interviewees raised several avenues for donors and NGOs to address this issue. Suggestions included providing legal support to families struggling to secure death certificates for disappeared loved ones; and providing equipment to laboratories in Damascus working to identify remains.
 - As for suggestions aimed at government actors, interviewees suggested administrative reforms to simplify the process for securing death certificates and property transfers; fast-tracking cases related to the disappeared through the judiciary; and establishing dignified grave sites.
- Interviewees stressed the need for ongoing consultations with victims in designing humanitarian/development programs, and in the work of the transitional justice process. These consultations were described as a way for NGOs and nascent government institutions to build trust with affected communities. They were also described to promote healing. Some participants relayed feelings of being ignored after suffering grave violations, which compounded their suffering.
- Across the discussions, participants consistently emphasized that transitional justice should not be treated as a stand-alone legal or institutional process. Rather, it should be systematically integrated into humanitarian and development planning. This requires stronger coordination between transitional justice institutions, particularly the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the National Committee for Transitional Justice, the National Commission for Missing Persons, humanitarian and development actors, and international partners to ensure that recovery efforts contribute not only to meeting immediate needs, but also to recognition, reparations, social cohesion, and the prevention of future conflict.

Justice is More Than Accountability

Transitional justice is not limited to courts or legal proceedings. It also means ensuring that victims and their families have access to the essential services and opportunities they need to rebuild their lives with dignity.



“ Justice means more than rebuilding institutions, it means rebuilding lives.



Healthcare Education Livelihoods Housing

Source: Community and institutional dialogue sessions, June 2026.

Introduction

Overview of humanitarian and development situation

Syria's humanitarian and development situation is dire after 14 years of war. Poverty and food insecurity are pervasive, essential health, education, and economic infrastructure are in urgent need of repair, millions of returnees require assistance to rebuild their homes and lives, and the country is widely contaminated with explosive ordnance.² The following figures sourced from recent UN documents indicate the massive scale of need across in Syria:¹

Key Humanitarian and Development Indicators



15.6M

15.6 million people require humanitarian assistance, including 5.5 million internally displaced people (IDPs)



13.3M

13.3 million people are food-insecure



12M

12 million people have limited access to water and sanitation



6.2M

6.2 million people need shelter repair



32%

32% of children at out of school or only attending school occasionally



67%

67% of people live on less than \$3.65 per day



Economic Pressures

More than 50% percent of youth, and up to 74% of women are unemployed.

¹ Syrian Arab Republic: 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (April 2026), OCHA, April 2, 2026, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2026-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-april-2026>; Common Country Analysis: Syria 2025, United Nations, March 31, 2026, <https://syria.un.org/en/312773-common-country-analysis-syria>; 2025 UN Country Annual Results Report - Syria, United Nations, March 31, 2026, <https://syria.un.org/en/312775-2025>

² Ibid

Humanitarian and Development Response

Overview of humanitarian and development response

The Syrian government, United Nations, and a constellation of international and national NGOs are spearheading the humanitarian and development response in Syria.³ This response includes such interventions as the provision of emergency food assistance, tents, hygiene kits, and cash; repairing shelters; mine survey and clearance; livelihoods and education support; and repairing and improving access to essential infrastructure. Funding shortfalls have constrained this response across various sectors and spurred prioritization of those deemed most in need, particularly IDPs.⁴

In April 2026, the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced four priority realms for the country's recovery and humanitarian response: 1) repair of essential infrastructure 2) resumption of basic services 3) strengthening of socio-economic resilience 4) rebuilding public institutions, alongside mine and explosive ordnance clearance.⁵ The UN has stated that it will align its own approach with these priorities.⁶ In addition, in early 2026 the Syrian government announced its intention to facilitate returns from IDP camps, and close all remaining camps, by the end of the year.⁷

Despite the dire situation, recent UN reporting has also noted hopeful indicators including early signs of limited economic recovery, sanctions relief, and reintegration into the global community.⁸ This reporting has noted Syria's potential to transition from immediate humanitarian relief to longer term reconstruction and development.⁹



This response includes

- Emergency food assistance, tents, hygiene kits, and cash
- Repairing shelters
- Mine survey and clearance
- Livelihoods and education support
- Repairing and improving access to essential infrastructure



Four priority realms

- Repair of essential infrastructure
- Resumption of basic services
- Strengthening of socio-economic resilience
- Rebuilding public institutions

Alongside mine and explosive ordnance clearance

³ For an overview of the UN-led response, see: Syrian Arab Republic: 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (April 2026)

⁴ Syrian Arab Republic: 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (April 2026)

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Releases Announcement of Recovery and Humanitarian Need Response Priorities in Syria, Syrian Arab News Agency, April 2, 2026, <https://sana.sy/locals/2441108/>

⁶ 2025 UN Country Results Report

⁷ The Syrian government puts the camp file on the solutions table before the end of 2026, The New Arab, January 5, 2026, <https://tinyurl.com/3mkamfx4>

⁸ Syrian Arab Republic: 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (April 2026); Common Country Analysis: Syria 2025

⁹ Ibid

State of Transitional Justice in Syria

Overview of humanitarian and development response

Syria's new government issued a constitutional declaration in March 2025, whose 49th article stipulated the establishment of a national body to achieve transitional justice. This was followed two months later by a presidential decree setting up the National Committee for Transitional Justice (NCTJ). To date, the most notable transitional justice developments have been court trials for certain members of the deposed Assad regime.¹⁰

Human rights actors have criticized the fact that the new government's view of transitional justice is limited to violations committed by the Assad regime, ignoring those carried out by other groups during the war and immediately after the regime was toppled.¹¹ Other criticisms of the transitional justice process include the fact that certain former regime members have been granted amnesty for political considerations. Recent protests in Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, Palmyra, and the Damascus countryside have demanded faster and more decisive action against Assad-era perpetrators.¹²



March 2025:
Constitutional Declaration



May 2025:
National Committee for
Transitional Justice (NCTJ)

Transitional Justice Pillars



Truth Telling



Accountability



Reparation



Reconciliation



Guarantees of
non-Recurrence

¹⁰ Selective and Discriminatory: How Decree 20/2025 Failed to Produce a Comprehensive Approach to Transitional Justice in Syria, Syrians for Truth and Justice, November 12, 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/3a47ksue>; Transitional Justice...Is Syrian Criminal Law Fit for Purpose?, Enab Baladi, May 3, 2026, <https://tinyurl.com/m527d7dd>

¹¹ Will Syria's streets turn into field courts instead of transitional justice?, Independent Arabia, June 16, 2026, <https://tinyurl.com/3r4cw6m3>

¹² Syria: Transitional Justice between Victims' Anger and the State's Worry the Street will Slip out of Control, Al Quds Al Arabi, June 20, 2026, <https://tinyurl.com/3akey35j>

Aim of this report

This report seeks to identify how donors, international and national NGOs, and Syrian government actors might incorporate transitional justice considerations into the ongoing humanitarian and development response. The idea for this report came from the Global Harmony team's collective decades of experience working on the humanitarian and development response in Syria, including seeing firsthand how many victims of grave human rights abuses feel ignored by current programming. The team believes that the humanitarian and development response must consider the needs and aspirations of victims to promote sustainable peace and avoid sowing the seeds of future conflict.

Guidance from the UN Secretary General, the United Nations Development Program, and the International Center for Transitional Justice all recommend viewing transitional justice through the lens of sustainable development. The transitional justice pillar of reparation has been highlighted as one area where victims' needs and priorities can be incorporated into both immediate-term humanitarian aid and longer-term development work.



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“[Transitional justice] is an enabler for the prevention of conflict and serious violations, for sustaining peace, for accountability and the rule of law, for social cohesion, societal healing, and reconciliation, and for sustainable development and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 16.”

- Guidance Note of the Secretary General, Transitional Justice: A Strategic Tool for People, Prevention and Peace

Methodology

Community Perspectives

Community perspectives summarize insights from two group discussions in Darayya and Yarmouk Camp in June 2026. A total of 43 women, and 13 men participated in these group discussions, most of whom were victims of wartime violations. The sessions consisted of three phases: 1) An introduction to transitional justice followed by an open dialogue 2) A stress management session introducing healthy coping techniques within a trauma-informed care framework, emphasizing emotional safety, grounding, and self-regulation strategies 3) A listening session focused on participants priorities and their thoughts on how to make development and humanitarian programming fairer and more responsive.

56 participants
43 women
13 men

“Two communities: Darayya and Yarmouk Camp”

Three Phases

1)	An introduction to transitional justice followed by an open dialogue
2)	A stress management session introducing healthy coping techniques within a trauma-informed care framework, emphasizing emotional safety, grounding, and self-regulation strategies
3)	A listening session focused on participants priorities and their thoughts on how to make development and humanitarian programming fairer and more responsive

Institutional Perspectives

Institutional perspectives summarize insights from three data sources

1. Two group dialogue sessions in Darayya and Yarmouk Camp in June 2026 (separate from the above) featuring representatives from institutions involved in transitional justice and the humanitarian and development response. These included a member of parliament, a civil activist working on the forcibly disappeared file, a member of the National Committee for Transitional Justice, an official with the Social Affairs and Labor Ministry, a member of the NGO Forum, a local government official, the head of a local reconciliation committee, and the head of the Global Harmony foundation. These discussions revolved around the representatives perspectives on the transitional justice process and how to integrate justice priorities into the humanitarian and development response.
2. An online survey distributed in June 2026 to one representative each from the NCTJ, the Directorate of Social Affairs in the Damascus Countryside, the NGO forum, and a civil activist working on the forcibly disappeared file. These surveys focused on how to better align the humanitarian and development response with transitional justice considerations.
3. A group interview with 7 members of the Global Harmony team, conducted remotely in June 2026, which focused on how to better align the humanitarian and development response with transitional justice considerations.



Darayya community dialogue sessions in June, 18, 2026



Section 1

Community Perspectives



“

“For a lot of families in Darayya, feelings of justice start with being able to return to a safe home, to secure an education for their children, and to access services that help them rebuild their lives. Acknowledging the suffering of victims and listening to their stories, respecting their experiences, that's another essential step towards recovery. Therefore, in my opinion, transitional justice programs will be more effective if they're connected to projects to rebuild homes, to psychological and social rehabilitation, to supporting education and livelihoods, so people can feel that justice is not just a theory or political idea, but a real process that helps them to regain their dignity and their future.”

- Female participant in Darayya session



1.1 Providing services to victims and their families is justice

Participants in the dialogue sessions expressed a strong belief that victims, and their families, should receive comprehensive humanitarian and development support as recognition of their suffering and as necessary part of any transitional justice process. They stressed that integrating victim status alongside need in the design of aid and development programs constitutes a form of recognition and reparation. Participants identified a series of services they thought should be delivered to victims and their families depending on individual circumstances. These services include:

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“I lost my leg during the war. If I were in another country, like Europe, I would have gotten a salary, they would have looked after my needs. My rights need to be preserved in our country too. I should get benefits to help me live and keep my children alive.”

-Male participant

1.1.1 Health Care

Participants said that health care for those wounded in the war or during periods of detention was an essential part of transitional justice. They noted that certain surgeries, such as corneal transplants for those who lost their sight while detained, are currently classified as "cosmetic," depriving patients of coverage, and that this designation should be changed.

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“Sometimes I try to breathe deeply but instead of relaxing I feel like I'm suffocating from the pressure.”

- Female participant

“I cry until I tire myself out and fall asleep.”

- Female participant

1.1.2 Psychological support

Many of the participants in the dialogue sessions were dealing with high levels of stress and trauma, as Darayya and Yarmouk were sites of siege and heavy fighting during the war. Some of the male participants were wounded in war, in addition to having lost relatives, homes, and jobs. They are struggling today to provide for their families. As for the female participants, many had lost their husbands and sons who were breadwinners, forcing them to face the hardships of life alone while putting on a brave exterior. Accordingly, one main theme of the dialogue sessions was the need for comprehensive, long-term psychological support for victims and their families as part of a transitional justice process.

1.1.3 Livelihoods support

There was consensus among participants that livelihoods support to victims and their families was an integral part of transitional justice. Various suggestions were raised in this respect, including: Funding for small projects operated by female heads of household, primarily the wives and mothers of deceased victims. Participants stressed that enabling these women to become self-sufficient was preferable to charitable handouts. Vocational training to enable these women to successfully integrate into the workforce. The provision of vocational training, trade tools, and other in-kind aid to young men who suffered wartime violations. Reserving a percentage of public sector jobs that are awarded in annual employment fairs for the children and wives of martyrs.

“My son left me his kids, and no one asks what they need. They need their rights, special schools, scholarships, In the days of the regime there were special schools for the children of martyrs from their army, lots of benefits, scholarships. As for today, despite the difficult situation and the oppression, after the fathers paid their blood as a price for freedom from an authoritarian regime, no one is looking after their needs. At most, they say, there's kafala. I don't want kafala, temporary payment, I want them to take an interest in our kids with special educational and person-building programs. I want them to invest in our children so they can feel dignified, that they have a future in their country, that they've proved of their fathers.”

- Female participant

1.1.4 Education

Participants suggested the provision of remedial lessons and scholarships, and the dedication of a percentage of university seats, to the children of war victims. As with the other services in this section, they envisioned this educational support as part of a transitional justice process.

“My house is in the al-Khaleej area [a neighborhood in Darayya], it's destroyed and until now we can't get in to take over the land and build on it. They've done nothing for us in this respect. We're going from house to house paying rent. If they give me land, I'll build it, or I'll put a tent down. The important thing is I have my own place.”

- Female participant

1.1.5 Housing

Participants said support for rebuilding their homes was a crucial step towards achieving justice. They emphasized that long-term residents whose homes were destroyed should not be overlooked during housing assistance programs, and called for transparent, equitable criteria that recognize displacement histories, property rights, and conflict-related harms. They also stressed that solving disputes over property was important to preserving long-term civil peace and noted that many people do not know which organization or governmental body to approach to help navigating property issues. Finally, several criticized the condition of "actual residence" for receiving rebuilding support, noting that many displaced people cannot reside in their destroyed homes to meet these criteria.

“I have one demand - that the Yarmouk camp is entirely rebuilt, with its 36 schools, its homes, public parks, hospitals and mosques.”

- Male participant

1.1.6 Reconstruction

Participants said that reconstruction of their damaged or destroyed neighborhoods was an important part of the justice process.

“After a year and a half of liberation, I have no breadwinner, I lost my husband 11 years ago. What do I benefit from dialogue sessions? I've seen no recognition until now of the martyrs or support provided to us. Some people say they don't want material support, but I say the opposite. I need it. I've got girls who are now adolescents, they need special things I can't give them on my own.”

- Female participant

1.1.7 Cash grants

Participants suggested the provision of cash grants to victims and their families as a form of justice. Suggestions included monthly salaries, as well as reactivating insurance and retirement benefits for the families of former public sector employees.

“My husband, my sisters and my brother were arrested and disappeared, and we know nothing about them. I want a grave I can take my children to so they can visit and honor their father.”

- Female participant

“I keep going [to the government] and saying to them, 'my husband was a detainee and he's dead.' They say, 'we want proof.' OK fine, but how am I supposed to get it? My children are deprived of their father's inheritance; he was detained and disappeared and their grandfather and grandmother are dead. The rest of the family refuses to acknowledge their right to anything.”

- Female participant

1.2 Locating the forcibly disappeared is justice

Participants in the dialogue sessions emphasized that locating relatives who had disappeared into the Assad regime's network of prisons was a critical part of reparative justice and healing. As many of the disappeared are deceased, this means identifying gravesites as quickly and accurately as possible to facilitate the grieving process and the honoring of the dead. Participants complained of overcomplicated and lengthy bureaucratic and legal procedures to secure death certificates for their detained and disappeared relatives. These bureaucratic hurdles have serious repercussions for families' psychological and economic well-being such as complicating the receipt of inheritance. As one example, the head of the Darayya Reconciliation Council shared the story of a woman whose four sons had disappeared at security checkpoints. The civil registry still lists her sons as alive, and to prove they are deceased, she needs to procure witnesses and documents and undergo complex legal procedures. He noted that current Syrian law does not adequately address these types of cases and requires swift change.

“I lost my son who was a humanitarian worker. This is the first time anyone has invited me to talk about his death. During the years of the former regime, no one ever asked me.”

- Female participant

“People want to be heard before they're given aid. The humanitarian organizations that ignore this need find themselves dealing with beneficiaries who are not thankful, and sometimes hostile.”

- Female participant

1.3 Ongoing consultations promote healing and trust in institutions

Another theme to emerge from the interview sessions was the necessity of ongoing consultations with victims in designing humanitarian/development programs, and in the work of transitional justice mechanisms. These consultations were described as a way for NGOs and the government's new institutions to build trust with affected communities. Some participants relayed feelings of being ignored after suffering serious violations, which compounded their suffering. They stressed that it was important to avoid 'selective listening' only to certain affected populations, and to widen the circle of participation as much as possible. Some said that merely listening to victims helped them feel someone was looking out for their welfare.



Section 2

Organizational Perspectives



2.1. Aid and development activities should consider victim status; failure to do could lead to marginalization and social fissures

One clear theme to emerge from the organizational interviews was the idea that the humanitarian and development response in Syria must incorporate a justice lens into its programming: alongside need, programs should consider who is suffering health, economic, and other impacts of grave violations. There was consensus among participants that failure to incorporate this lens risks alienating victims and damaging the country's social fabric.

Participants pointed to two main ways to bring justice-based considerations into humanitarian and development programming:

- 1 Target various types of victims—including former detainees, families of the forcibly disappeared, torture victims, war wounded, forcibly displaced people, and those who had their property confiscated—for livelihoods, health, education, and other programming, according to each victim group's needs.
- 2 Bring victims into the design and monitoring process for interventions to ensure their perspectives are considered on a continuing basis.

Risks of Ignoring Victim Status

-  Marginalization
-  Loss of recognition
-  Reduced trust
-  Perceptions of injustice
-  Damage to social cohesion

Yarmouk community dialogue sessions in June, 25 2026



"Priority Groups"



Former detainees



Families of the forcibly disappeared



Torture victims



War wounded



Forcibly displaced people



Those who had their property confiscated

"Disregarding this group of people [the war wounded] will not only disrupt social recovery but will threaten the civil peace in the long term. Feelings of marginalization after victimization generate intense resentment...there is a pressing need to work towards recognizing, and supporting the rights of the war wounded as an essential part of reparations in any justice process. This will reaffirm their rights as citizens after they made sacrifices, we ought to preserve them in the Syrian historical narrative."

- Mr. Bahjat al-Hajar, Deputy Minister for Social Affairs and Labor

"Ignoring the issue of the disappeared in development and recovery programming could lead to ongoing feelings of injustice and marginalization for thousands of impacted families. This will negatively impact social trust and cohesion."

- Ms. Amneh Khouliani, leading Syrian human rights defender and the Founder and Executive Director of Addaky Centre

Development as Interim Reparation and Legal Reform



2.2 Targeted Programming as a Stopgap

Institutional participants emphasized the nascent Syrian state is dealing with massive, competing pressures and resource constraints, meaning an official reparations program at this time is not feasible. Instead, they pointed to prioritizing victims in development and humanitarian programming as a stopgap mechanism that could provide a measure of reparation and acknowledgement absent an official reparations program. Notably, several institutional participants said that before the dialogue sessions, they had not considered viewing the development and humanitarian response through the lens of reparation or transitional justice. This indicates that additional dialogue sessions may yield creative and unforeseen approaches to integrating these files.



2.3 Legal Reform is Needed to Further the Transitional Justice Process

Institutional actors stressed that comprehensive legal reforms are needed to advance the transitional justice process in Syria. Parliamentarian Moayed Habeeb noted that the Syrian People's Assembly was embarking on a 'legal revolution' to replace Assad-era laws, and that reforms would focus on strengthening social cohesion, providing reparation to victims, and strengthening popular participation in decision-making. Other participants pointed to specific, needed legal reforms to advance transitional justice, mainly simplifying the process for issuing death certificates and property transfers (see section 1.2).



Death certificates



Property transfers



Social cohesion



Participation in decision-making



Rule of law

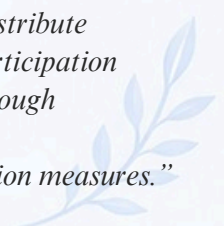


Transparency

“

“We in the People's Assembly are working along several avenues: first, passing laws to strengthen national reconciliation and social cohesion to rebuild trust. This requires special committees and the participation of NGOs, especially those working on the same file. Next, guarantees of reparation and justice for victims, to ensure their rights, and the establishment of clear and transparent mechanisms to address all the economic, social, psychological, and political impacts of the war. Third, connecting rebuilding to the principles of transitional justice: it's important to distribute resources fairly, with equal development opportunities...fourth, strengthening social participation in decision making. Sustainable development is not imposed from above, but is built through participation...last, strengthening the rule of law and building trust in institutions, via implementing the law and strengthening transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption measures.”

- Moayed Habib, Member of the People's Assembly



Recognition, Fairness and Conflict Sensitivity

2.4 Acknowledgement of Harm

Participants stressed that acknowledgement of victims' suffering was an urgent and necessary step towards healing and justice. They suggested various forms of symbolic and material acknowledgement including official statements, group memorials, dialogue sessions, and reserving an employment quota for victims in justice-related institutions. Participants noted that when humanitarian or development aid is presented without such acknowledgement, it can have adverse results.

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“Focusing only on material needs, without addressing the previous violations and injustices, may impact the ability of interventions to treat the causes of conflict in a sustainable way.” **Representative from the NCTJ**

2.5 Avoiding Perceptions of Unfairness

Another theme to emerge from the institutional interviews was the idea that humanitarian and development programs must avoid the appearance of favoring certain areas and groups over others. Participants said that programming runs the risk of deepening social fissures if it is not based on a close study of local conflict dynamics. Publishing clear and transparent standards for beneficiary selection was suggested as a potential check on these perceptions.

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“Humanitarian and development programs can lighten tensions when they are based on close studies of conflict dynamics. Otherwise, they can have opposite results, if it's understood that one group is being favored over another.” - **Representative from the NGO Forum**

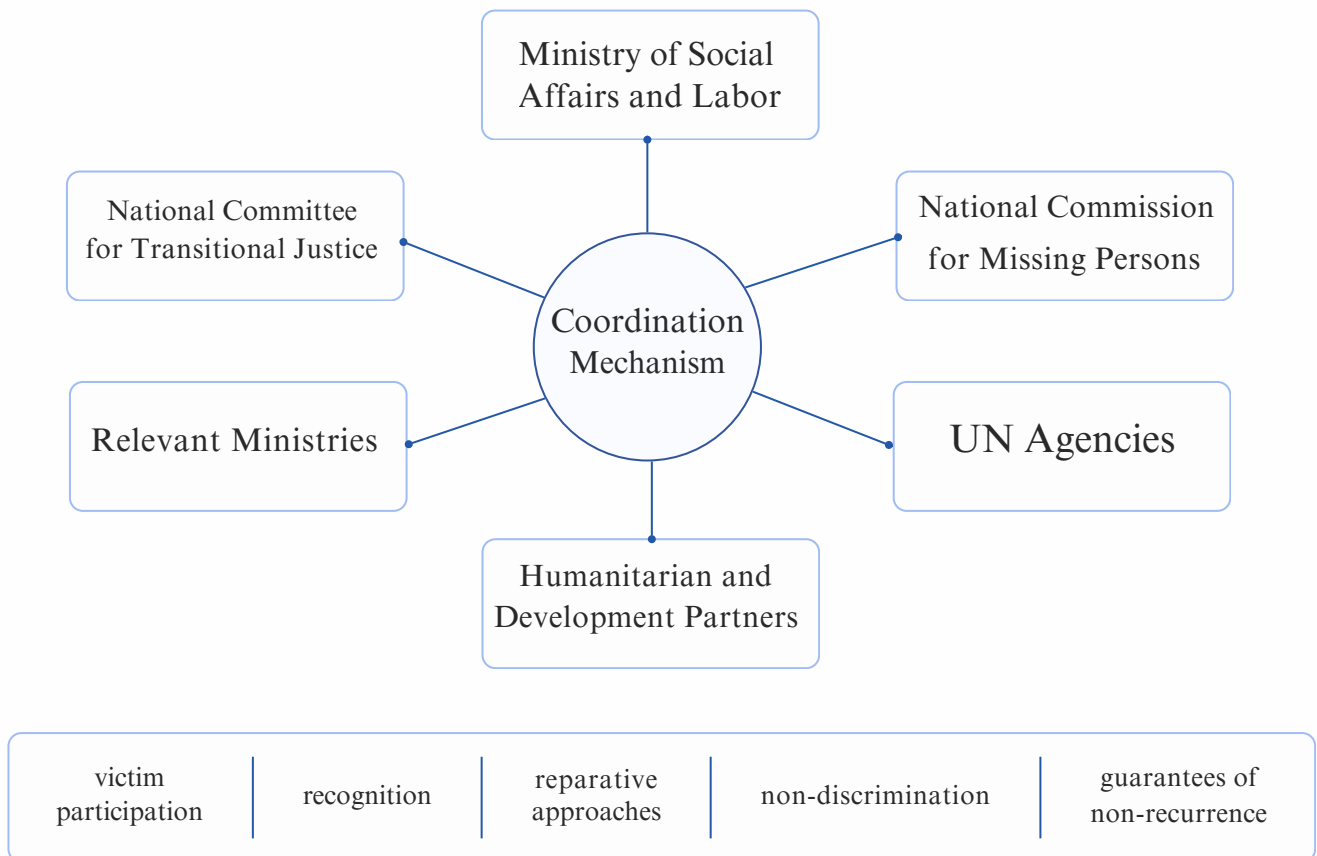
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“Certain interventions can lead to an increase in tensions if they do not rely on a precise evaluation of needs or if some members of society feel there is discrimination or unfairness in the distribution of services and aid. Therefore, the impact of humanitarian and development work depends to a large extent on planning and implementation mechanisms, and the extent to which local society is involved in various stages of the work.” - **Representative from the Rif Damascus Directorate of Social Affairs.**

Recommendations

Overarching recommendation

Institutionalize the integration of transitional justice across humanitarian and development planning. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, in coordination with the National Committee for Transitional Justice, the National Commission for Missing Persons, relevant ministries, UN agencies, and humanitarian and development partners, should establish coordination mechanisms to ensure that recovery, social protection, livelihoods, and reconstruction programs systematically incorporate transitional justice principles, including victim participation, recognition, reparative approaches, non-discrimination, and guarantees of non-recurrence.



Recommendations to Donors and NGOs

To donors, and international and local NGOs

1. Consider victim status, alongside need, in the design and implementation of humanitarian and development interventions. This means bringing victims into the design and monitoring process, as well as targeting victims, and their families, for health, mental health, livelihoods, reconstruction, and education support.

2. Programming on the forcibly disappeared file, which risks turning into a long-standing source of pain and grievance if left unaddressed. Concrete programing suggestions include:

- **Legal support** to family members of the forcibly disappeared, who are struggling to navigate the complex procedures needed for death certificates and property transfers.
- **Technical support** to enable national laboratories to more rapidly and effectively identify remains that are regularly being discovered near Damascus. Currently, these laboratories lack adequate equipment.

3. Ensure that humanitarian and development programs are designed and delivered through a trauma-informed lens. Alongside mainstreaming psychosocial support, e.g., through including brief stress management interventions, programs should seek to avoid re-traumatization, recognize the impact of trauma on individuals and communities, and foster safety, dignity, and agency. Material interventions, such as livelihoods support or the reconstruction of local green spaces, can also yield substantial mental health and psychosocial benefits by restoring stability, purpose, and social connection.

4. For programs that deal with rebuilding homes, remove the "actual residence" requirement, as many homes are too damaged to serve even as temporary domiciles. Consider perceptions of unfairness regarding the provision of rebuilding support to recently arrived displaced people, versus long-standing residents.

5. Ramp up legal interventions designed to address housing, land, and property issues, which are emerging as a major driver of conflict.

Recommendations to the Syrian Government

To the Syrian government

- 1** Integrate transitional justice into humanitarian and development policies and programs. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, working jointly with the National Committee for Transitional Justice, the National Commission for Missing Persons, relevant ministries, UN agencies, and humanitarian and development actors, should establish coordination mechanisms to ensure that recovery, social protection, livelihoods, reconstruction, and community development programs systematically incorporate transitional justice principles, including victim participation, recognition, reparative measures, and conflict-sensitive programming.
- 2** Simplify legal and administrative procedures for families to secure death certificates for their relatives who had forcibly disappeared during the war and transfer their property. Grant legal cases dealing with missing persons priority in the judicial system.
- 3** Establish small offices for the NCTJ across Syria's provinces, including in rural and hard-to-reach areas, to facilitate communication with victims and their families.
- 4** Establish well-maintained and dignified grave sites for the forcibly disappeared.
- 5** Push forward symbolic recognition and memorialization initiatives for victims and their families. Many interviewees expressed a need for recognition of their wartime suffering and sacrifice.
- 6** Implement a strategy for regularly communicating transitional justice updates to the public and schedule regular, open dialogue sessions.
- 7** Establish offices in local police stations staffed by female police to facilitate the reporting of sensitive cases related to sexual and gender-based violence. Victim interviews indicate a significant justice gap in this regard.

Notes and References

1. Syrian Arab Republic: 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (April 2026), OCHA, April 2, 2026, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2026-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-april-2026>; Common Country Analysis: Syria 2025, United Nations, March 31, 2026, <https://syria.un.org/en/312773-common-country-analysis-syria>; 2025 UN Country Annual Results Report - Syria, United Nations, March 31, 2026, <https://syria.un.org/en/312775-2025-country-results-report-syria>
2. Ibid.
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16. This finding from the dialogue sessions is corroborated by recent UN country-level reporting. See: Syrian Arab Republic: 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (April 2026)