

FIVE PRIORITIES FOR PROTECTING CHRISTIAN PRESENCE AND EQUAL CITIZENSHIP IN SYRIA

A Position Paper of the Levantine National Council

Brussels – September 2026

DOCUMENT ONE

Introduction

Christians in Syria are not a temporary community in the history of the country, nor are they a foreign population in need of external protection. They are an integral part of the Syrian social fabric and of the history, culture, and civilization of the Levant.

From this perspective, the **Levantine National Council** believes that protecting the Christian presence cannot be achieved through exceptional measures or sectarian privileges. It can only be achieved by building a state that protects the rights of all its citizens, guarantees equality before the law, respects religious and cultural diversity, and prevents discrimination and exclusion.

The future of Christians is inseparable from the future of Syria itself. If Syria becomes a just state that embraces all its citizens, Christians will be able to live, participate, return, and build their future in their homeland. If the state remains vulnerable to domination, exclusion, or weak rule of law, no community will ultimately be secure.

Accordingly, the Levantine National Council identifies five interconnected priorities:

PRIORITY ONE: EQUAL CITIZENSHIP AND CLEAR CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES

Citizenship is not merely a political slogan. It is a constitutional and legal right.

The Council calls for a constitution that explicitly guarantees:

- Full equality among citizens without discrimination based on religion, denomination, ethnicity, language, gender, or political opinion.
- Freedom of religion, belief, conscience, and the practice of religious worship.
- Equal access to all public positions and political offices, including the highest offices of the state.
- An independent judiciary and the rule of law.



- The prohibition of legislation or practices that establish religious or sectarian discrimination.
- The peaceful transfer of power through free and transparent elections.

Guarantees of citizenship must not depend on political practice or goodwill. They must be constitutionally and legally protected.

PRIORITY TWO: SECURITY, CIVILIAN PROTECTION, PROPERTY, AND PLACES OF WORSHIP

There can be no meaningful discussion of the future of Christians, or of any Syrian community, in conditions of insecurity or weak rule of law.

The Council therefore calls for:

- The protection of civilians without discrimination.
- The protection of churches, monasteries, cemeteries, religious sites, and cultural institutions.
- Protection of private and public property against unlawful seizure or appropriation.
- Prevention of forced displacement and demographic change imposed through coercion.
- Combating sectarian incitement and hate speech.
- Ensuring that victims have access to justice and effective legal protection mechanisms.

A church, a cemetery, and a home are not merely physical structures. They are part of a community's memory and its right to remain rooted in its homeland.

PRIORITY THREE: SAFE AND DIGNIFIED RETURN AND RESTORATION OF RIGHTS

Displacement and emigration must not become a permanent reality.

The Council supports the right of Syrians to return to their places of origin, provided that such return is:

Voluntary, safe, dignified, sustainable, and based on a free and informed decision.

A meaningful return requires:

- Restoration or legal resolution of property rights.
- Restitution of unlawfully confiscated property or fair compensation where restitution is not possible.



- Rehabilitation of infrastructure and essential services.
- Local security and effective protection under the law.
- The reopening of schools, healthcare facilities, religious institutions, and cultural centers.
- Access to employment and sustainable livelihoods.

Return is not sustainable if people are merely allowed to cross a geographical boundary. They must be able to rebuild their lives.

PRIORITY FOUR: PROTECTION OF IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

Preserving the Christian presence does not mean simply ensuring that individuals remain within Syria's borders.

Presence also means:

- Language and heritage.
- Schools and education.
- Cultural institutions.
- Churches and monasteries.
- Cemeteries.
- Archives and historical records.
- Historical place names and collective memory.
- The transmission of culture to future generations.

The Council believes that protecting Christian identity, languages, and historical cultures in Syria must take place within the framework of the unity and sovereignty of the Syrian state, rather than through isolation, separation, or closed communal entities.

PRIORITY FIVE: MEANINGFUL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

It is not enough for Christians to be represented symbolically in selected institutions.

The objective must be to move:

From symbolic representation to meaningful participation in decision-making.



This includes participation in:

- Constitutional processes.
- Legislative and executive institutions.
- Local governance.
- Political and party life.
- Transitional justice and political-transition mechanisms.
- Policies relating to diversity, rights, and freedoms.

The Council further believes that Christian representation must not be reduced to church institutions alone. It should include political, civic, cultural, youth, women, and community voices.

WHAT DOES THE LEVANTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL ASK OF THE EUROPEAN UNION?

The Council calls upon the European Union to translate its stated principles into practical standards in its engagement with Syria's political transition by:

1. Supporting a constitution that guarantees equality, freedom of religion and belief, and non-discrimination.
2. Supporting state institutions that genuinely represent all Syrians.
3. Including representatives of Christians and historically rooted communities in relevant political dialogues concerning Syria's future.
4. Supporting programs to protect religious sites, cemeteries, heritage, and property rights.
5. Linking reconstruction and development programs to measurable standards of rule of law, human rights, and equal citizenship.
6. Supporting voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return, including property rights and livelihoods.
7. Supporting independent mechanisms for documentation, accountability, and transitional justice.



THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT

The Levantine National Council does not present itself as an actor seeking protection from abroad. It presents itself as a Syrian partner prepared to contribute to state-building.

The Council is committed to:

- Unifying the civic and political voice of Syrian Christians.
- Supporting dialogue among Syria's different communities.
- Documenting violations affecting civilians, property, and heritage.
- Supporting stability and sustainable return.
- Empowering youth and women.
- Developing educational, cultural, and economic initiatives.
- Building institutional partnerships with Syrian and international actors.

CONCLUDING MESSAGE

We do not ask for privileges.

We ask for equality.

We do not ask for guardianship.

We ask for partnership.

We do not ask for symbolic recognition.

We ask for constitutional and legal guarantees.

And we do not seek a Syria that merely protects Christians. We seek a Syria that protects **all its citizens**, because protecting Christians in Syria cannot be separated from protecting the state of equal citizenship itself.

Levantine National Council

Christian in our identity, Syrian in our citizenship, and partners in our state.



DOCUMENT TWO

AL-SOURA AL-KUBRA

FROM A LOCAL INCIDENT TO A QUESTION OF DIGNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

A Documentation and Position Paper of the Levantine National Council

Brussels – September 2026

Introduction

Some events may initially appear local and limited in scope. Yet when they affect human dignity, memory, property, and the right to one's homeland, they become matters that extend far beyond the boundaries of a single location.

This is the context in which the **Al-Soura Al-Kubra** case must be understood.

The displacement of residents from Christian villages in the area, together with damage affecting religious sites, cemeteries, property, and collective memory, should not be treated simply as a temporary humanitarian issue or as an isolated incident disconnected from the future of the communities that have lived there for generations.

For the Levantine National Council, this is not simply about protecting stones or buildings.

It is about:

human dignity, memory, property, identity, and the right to return.

I. WHY AL-SOURA AL-KUBRA MATTERS

During the Council's visit to the area, what was observed was not merely physical damage.

A cemetery represents the memory of families.

A church represents the history of a community and its right to practice its faith.

A home represents a person's relationship with his or her land.

A village represents the continuity of a community across generations.

When the inhabitants of such villages are displaced, the danger is not limited to the loss of housing. It extends to the possible loss of their relationship with the place itself.

The Council therefore considers the protection of these sites not merely a Christian concern, but part of protecting Syria's historical memory and diversity.



II. DISPLACEMENT MUST NOT BECOME PERMANENT CHANGE

The Council emphasizes that displacement, regardless of its causes, must not become a mechanism through which permanent demographic change or the loss of rights occurs.

Any serious response must therefore guarantee:

- The right of residents to return.
- Protection of property.
- Prevention of unlawful seizure or appropriation.
- Documentation of property rights.
- Protection of churches, cemeteries, and historical sites.
- Security for returning residents.
- The economic and social conditions necessary for sustainable community life.

Return does not simply mean opening a road back to the village.

It means restoring the ability to live there.

III. A CEMETERY IS NOT JUST STONE

Perhaps nothing illustrates the significance of this issue more clearly than the cemetery.

A cemetery is not simply land containing graves.

It is evidence that families lived there.

That generations were born and died there.

That people have roots that do not disappear merely because they were forced to leave.

The Council therefore calls for the protection of Christian cemeteries and other sites of memory from desecration, destruction, or interference, as well as systematic documentation of any damage sustained.

Protecting cemeteries is not only a religious or humanitarian act. It is also a message of security to the living: that their rights and memories will not disappear.

IV. FROM DOCUMENTATION TO ACCOUNTABILITY



A serious response requires moving from competing narratives toward systematic documentation.

The Council therefore proposes:

1. Documenting damage through photographs, video, and field records.
2. Identifying damaged sites, buildings, and properties.
3. Preserving available property records and documentation.
4. Recording testimonies from residents and displaced persons.
5. Establishing a reliable chronology of events.
6. Referring serious violations to appropriate investigative and accountability mechanisms.
7. Ensuring that perpetrators of serious violations do not enjoy impunity.

The Council does not seek to issue premature judgments or replace judicial institutions. Its objective is to ensure that facts do not disappear with time.

V. RETURN BEGINS WITH SECURITY AND ENDS WITH A LIFE

The return of residents to their villages cannot be reduced to geographical movement.

It requires:

Security + property + housing + employment + education + church + services + the rule of law.

The Council therefore calls upon Syrian and international actors to address displacement and return through comprehensive programmes rather than emergency assistance alone.

A return that does not provide security, housing, livelihoods, education, and legal protection is not sustainable.

VI. WHAT DO WE ASK FOR?

The Levantine National Council calls for:

1. Immediate protection of religious and humanitarian sites

Protection of churches, cemeteries, properties, and historical sites against further damage or interference.



2. Independent documentation

Support for independent and credible mechanisms to document damage and violations.

3. Protection of property rights

Prevention of unlawful confiscation, appropriation, or alteration of property rights.

4. Investigation and accountability

Serious investigations into grave violations and accountability for those responsible in accordance with the law.

5. Conditions for return

The creation of security, legal, and economic conditions enabling voluntary, safe, and dignified return.

6. Protection of memory

Rehabilitation and preservation of churches, cemeteries, and historical sites as part of Syria's national heritage.

7. Rebuilding life

Linking reconstruction to housing, education, essential services, and employment—not merely to the reconstruction of buildings.

VII. WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO EUROPE?

Because this is not merely a sectarian or local issue.

It tests a much larger question:

What kind of Syria will emerge after years of conflict?

A Syria in which every citizen can return home, protect his or her property, practice their faith, and live in safety?

Or a Syria in which displacement becomes the first step toward losing land, memory, and rights?

Europe, with its institutions, experience, and political and development tools, can help prevent temporary displacement from becoming a permanent reality.



It can support:

- Documentation.
- Heritage protection.
- The rule of law.
- Rehabilitation of affected communities.
- Sustainable return programs.
- Property rights.
- Transitional justice and accountability.

THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT

The Levantine National Council does not present this case as a sectarian demand.

It presents it as a test of the principle of citizenship.

If a displaced Syrian Christian can return safely to his or her village and regain the right to a home, a cemetery, and a church, this means that the rule of law is beginning to regain its meaning.

If this cannot happen, the problem is not confined to one village.

It concerns the future of citizenship itself.

MESSAGE

We do not want our villages to become museums.

We do not want our churches and cemeteries to become mere archaeological sites visited after their communities have disappeared.

We want the future, not a museum.

We want families to return.

We want schools to reopen.

We want church bells to ring again.

We want cemeteries to be protected.

We want homes to be secure.



And we want people to live safely and with dignity in the places to which their memory and history belong.

This is not a demand for the past.

It is a demand for the future.

Levantine National Council

Dignity for every person, security for the homeland, and justice that does not expire with time.



DOCUMENT THREE

OUR VISION FOR SYRIA

FROM PROTECTING PRESENCE TO PARTICIPATING IN BUILDING THE STATE

A Political and Strategic Vision Paper of the Levantine National Council

Brussels – September 2026

Introduction

The question facing Christians in Syria is no longer simply:

How do we survive?

It has become:

How do we remain, participate, and build?

This transformation lies at the heart of the vision of the **Levantine National Council**.

The Council does not view the Christian presence as a closed defensive project, nor does it see Christians as a community waiting for external guarantees. Rather, it sees itself as part of a broader national project aimed at building a just Syrian state that embraces all its citizens.

Protecting Christians cannot be separated from protecting the state of citizenship.

Protecting diversity cannot be separated from the rule of law.

And stability cannot be achieved without justice and meaningful political participation.

I. THE STATE WE WANT

The Levantine National Council envisions a future Syria as:

A state for all its citizens, not a state of one community against another.

A state founded on:

- Equal citizenship.
- The rule of law.
- Judicial independence.

- Political pluralism.



- Peaceful transfer of power.
- Respect for fundamental freedoms.
- Freedom of religion, belief, and conscience.
- Non-discrimination.
- Meaningful political participation.
- Protection of cultural and historical diversity.
- The unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Syria.

State neutrality toward religions does not mean hostility toward religion or the exclusion of faith from society. It means that the state must not become an instrument for imposing one religion or denomination upon its citizens and must guarantee equal freedom and protection for all.

II. CHRISTIANS ARE PARTNERS IN THE STATE, NOT GUESTS

Christians are not guests in Syria, nor are they a community that needs permission to remain.

They are part of its history, society, and culture.

At the same time, the Council rejects reducing Christians to a closed sectarian category.

The Christian representation we advocate must be:

Civic, political, cultural, community-based, ecclesial, and pluralistic.

Churches have their spiritual role.

Civil society has its role.

Political actors have their role.

Youth and women have their roles.

The diaspora has its role.

None of these dimensions should be reduced to a single representative body.

III. RIGHTS DO NOT CONTRADICT THE UNITY OF SYRIA

The Council defends the rights of historically rooted communities to:

- Language.



- Culture.
- Education.
- Heritage.
- Community institutions.
- Protection of historical sites.
- Religious worship.

These rights, however, must be understood within the framework of:

The unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the Syrian state.

We do not call for separate entities.

We do not advocate sectarian power-sharing.

We do not seek closed areas based on religious or ethnic identity.

We seek one Syrian state in which historically rooted communities can preserve their identity, culture, and rights without fear or exclusion.

IV. FROM SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Democracy is not measured only by the number of seats allocated to a community.

It is measured by citizens' ability to influence decisions.

The Council therefore calls for the participation of Christians and historically rooted communities in:

- Constitutional processes.
- Legislative institutions.
- The executive branch.
- Independent institutions and the judiciary.
- Local governance.
- Political and party life.
- Transitional justice mechanisms.



- Reconstruction and development programs.

Access to public office must be based on competence and citizenship, not religious affiliation.

V. DECENTRALIZATION AS A MEANS OF PARTICIPATION, NOT DIVISION

The Council believes that carefully designed administrative and political decentralization can:

- Bring decision-making closer to citizens.
- Improve public services.
- Strengthen local participation.
- Protect cultural particularities.
- Reduce excessive centralization.

However, the decentralization supported by the Council must remain **within a unified and sovereign Syrian state**.

It must not become a pathway toward partition or the creation of areas closed along sectarian or ethnic lines.

VI. RETURN IS NOT ONLY A HUMANITARIAN ISSUE

When a Christian leaves Syria, the country does not simply lose a resident.

It loses:

- A citizen.
- A family.
- Human capital.
- A professional.
- A student.
- An investor.
- A teacher.
- A doctor.
- An entrepreneur.



Addressing emigration therefore requires a national policy that tackles its underlying causes:

Security, employment, education, housing, rule of law, and political stability.

Young people cannot reasonably be asked to remain in a country in which they cannot see a future.

The Council therefore calls for national and international programmes supporting:

- Small businesses.
- Local investment.
- Vocational education.
- Universities.
- Youth employment.
- The return of skilled professionals.
- Women's empowerment.
- Links between Syria and its diaspora.

VII. JUSTICE IS A CONDITION FOR STABILITY

A stable state cannot be built upon wounds that remain unaddressed.

The Council therefore supports:

- Truth-seeking.
- Documentation of violations.
- Accountability for those responsible for grave crimes.
- Reparations.
- Restitution of rights.
- Resolution of property claims.
- Reconciliation based on truth and justice.

The Council rejects collective revenge or punishment based on communal identity.

Responsibility must be individual, and justice must be grounded in law.



VIII. YOUTH AND WOMEN ARE NOT MARGINAL ISSUES

The future of both the Christian presence and Syria as a whole will depend to a significant extent on whether young people can envision their future within the country.

Youth and women must therefore be part of:

- Decision-making.
- Political life.
- Education.
- The economy.
- Civil society.
- Institution-building.

A modern state cannot be built through a political culture that excludes half of society or treats young people merely as an audience.

IX. WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL OFFER?

The Levantine National Council believes that its role is not limited to presenting demands.

It is committed to contributing to solutions through:

1. Civic and political representation

Building an inclusive space for the Syrian Christian civic and political voice, beyond partisan and sectarian fragmentation.

2. National dialogue

Contributing to dialogue with Syria's different communities and national political actors.

3. Documentation

Contributing to the documentation of violations affecting civilians, property, religious sites, and heritage.

4. Protecting presence

Developing initiatives in education, culture, youth, family, and economic development.



5. International partnerships

Building institutional relationships with European and international actors on the basis of equality, clarity, and mutual respect.

6. Supporting return

Contributing to the conditions necessary for the safe, dignified, and sustainable return of displaced persons and those who have emigrated.

X. WHAT DO WE WANT FROM EUROPE?

We do not want Europe to choose a sectarian side inside Syria.

Nor do we want Europe to replace Syrians.

We want Europe to help create the conditions in which Syrians themselves can build a just state.

The Council therefore calls upon the European Union to:

1. Support an inclusive political transition.
2. Support a constitution guaranteeing equality and freedom of religion and belief.
3. Support the rule of law and judicial independence.
4. Support the participation of all communities in political life.
5. Recognize the protection of diversity as a component of stability.
6. Support voluntary, safe, and dignified return.
7. Protect property rights.
8. Support transitional justice and accountability.
9. Support the protection of religious and historical heritage.
10. Direct development programs toward job creation and reducing forced migration.
11. Engage with representatives of Syrian Christian civic and political society as Syrian partners in dialogue, rather than treating them solely as religious or humanitarian actors.



XI. FROM PROTECTING PRESENCE TO BUILDING THE STATE

After years of war and displacement, it was natural for Christians to focus on the question of protection.

The next stage requires a larger question.

It is not enough to protect our presence within a weak state.

We must contribute to building a state that protects everyone.

It is not enough to demand a place within the state.

We must be partners in shaping its future.

And it is not enough to preserve churches and cemeteries.

We must preserve the people who worship in them, the families who live around them, and the young people who want to build their future there.

CONCLUSION

The vision of the Levantine National Council is not a Christian project detached from Syria.

It is a Syrian vision that emerges from the experience, concerns, and rights of Christians, but reaches a broader national conclusion:

There can be no secure future for Christians without a just state; no just state without equal citizenship; no equal citizenship without constitutional protection; and no lasting stability without meaningful participation, justice, and the rule of law.

We want a Syria in which Christians do not need special protection because they are equal citizens protected by law.

We want a Syria in which Muslims do not fear Christians, Christians do not fear Muslims, and no community fears another.

We want a state founded not on domination, but on citizenship.

Not on exclusion, but on partnership.

Not on unresolved wounds, but on justice and reconciliation.

From protecting presence to participating in building the state.

From declared rights to constitutionally and legally guaranteed rights.



From fear of the future to participation in shaping it.

Levantine National Council

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and goodwill among all people.