

Common Position Paper The Future of Christians and Historically Rooted Communities in Syria Religious Freedom, Equal Citizenship, Constitutional Guarantees and a Democratic State for All

1. Introduction

Christians are not a foreign, temporary or marginal presence in Syria. Christianity is one of the region's original religious traditions and an integral part of Syria's historical, cultural, social and spiritual fabric.

For centuries, Christians have contributed to Syria's religious life, education, culture, economy, public institutions, social coexistence and national development. Their continued presence is essential not only for Christian communities themselves, but also for Syria's pluralism, stability and future as a democratic and inclusive state.

The future of Christians in Syria cannot be separated from the future of Syria as a whole. No community can live securely in a country where citizenship is unequal, rights are selective, political participation is restricted, or identity becomes a basis for exclusion.

This Position Paper presents common principles for the future of Christians and historically rooted communities in Syria. It is intended as a shared framework for dialogue with Syrian decision-makers, European institutions, Members of the European Parliament, international organizations, governments, civil society actors and the diaspora.

2. Our Vision for Syria

We support a democratic, pluralistic, non-sectarian and constitutionally neutral Syrian state governed by the constitution, the rule of law, accountable institutions and equal citizenship.

Syria must not become a state of one religion, one confession, one ethnicity, one language or one political ideology. The state must belong equally to all its citizens.

No religion, confession or religious institution should govern the state or enjoy legal or political superiority over others. At the same time, constitutional neutrality must not mean hostility toward religion. It must mean that the state protects all religions and beliefs equally and guarantees their free and public presence.

A democratic Syria must be a state for all Syrians, where Christians, Muslims, Druze, Yazidis and all other religious communities enjoy equal rights and responsibilities under the constitution.

3. Equal Rights, Not Special Privileges

Christians in Syria do not seek special privileges, separate citizenship or rights that should not also apply to others.

What we seek for Christians — security, religious freedom, political participation, protection of property, cultural and linguistic rights, dignity, and the possibility to remain in their homeland — must be part of a just and democratic Syria for all.

Equal citizenship does not mean erasing identity. It means that every citizen enjoys the same rights before the law, while every historically rooted community can preserve its identity, language, culture, heritage and institutions within a united Syrian state.

Any right, protection, recognition, institutional possibility or public accommodation granted to one religion or community must be equally available to all others.

4. State Neutrality and Freedom of Religion or Belief

A future Syrian state must treat all religions and beliefs equally before the law.

Freedom of religion or belief must be guaranteed in law and in practice. This includes the right to worship freely, build and maintain places of worship, manage religious institutions, protect religious property, educate future generations, celebrate religious traditions, preserve religious heritage and live openly without fear, discrimination or coercion.

Religious freedom must be a fundamental constitutional right, not a privilege granted by the state and not a right dependent on political loyalty.

The state must not privilege one religion over another, nor allow any religious community to receive rights, protection or public recognition that are denied to others.

5. Inclusive Citizenship and Non-Discrimination

A future Syria must treat all citizens equally before the law, regardless of religion, confession, ethnicity, language, gender, social background, political opinion, personal status or region.

The state must not restrict, exclude or discriminate against any citizen because of what they believe, how they think, which community they belong to, or from which historical, cultural or regional background they originate.

No citizen should be forced to abandon, hide or deny their identity in order to enjoy equal citizenship.

A future Syrian constitution should recognize the country's full religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity, and guarantee equal citizenship, freedom of belief, freedom of expression, political participation and protection from discrimination for all.

6. Democratic Governance and Access to Public Office

A future Syria must be built on democratic governance, constitutional legitimacy, free political participation, the rule of law, judicial independence and accountable public institutions.

All citizens must have equal access to public office, including the highest offices of the state, without religious, confessional, ethnic or linguistic restrictions.

No citizen should be excluded from becoming president, minister, member of parliament, judge, military officer, public official or local representative because of religion, confession, ethnicity, language or cultural background.

A democratic and constitutionally neutral state cannot restrict eligibility for public office to members of one religion or confession. Such restrictions contradict equal citizenship, non-discrimination and the principle that the state belongs equally to all its citizens.

Democracy in Syria must not be reduced to majority rule alone. It must include constitutional safeguards, peaceful transfer of power, judicial independence, protection of human rights, decentralised participation and mechanisms that prevent domination or exclusion by any religious, ethnic or political group.

7. Christianity as an Original and Public Presence

The Christian presence in Syria must be recognized as an original and integral part of the country's identity.

Christianity in Syria is connected to ancient churches, historical communities, local languages, sacred places, monasteries, schools, cultural traditions, social institutions and forms of communal life that have shaped Syria over centuries.

Protecting the Christian presence is therefore not only about protecting individuals or church buildings. It is also about protecting heritage, language, culture, education, property, institutions, political participation and the right to remain.

Christians must not be treated only as a humanitarian concern, a vulnerable minority or a collection of separate church communities. They are citizens, civic actors, political participants and members of historically rooted communities with legitimate rights in Syria's future.

8. Historically Rooted Communities and Their Rights

A future Syrian constitution should recognize the existence and contribution of historically rooted religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural communities in Syria.

Such recognition must not be understood as a threat to Syria's unity or as a demand for privileged status. It is a democratic guarantee that Syria's diversity will be protected within a united state.

Historically rooted communities, individually and collectively, should have the right to preserve and express their identity, use and teach their historical and mother languages, protect their cultural, religious and historical heritage, establish and maintain cultural, educational, social and media institutions, and participate in decisions affecting their historical presence, language, culture, education and heritage.

They must also be protected from discrimination, forced assimilation, cultural erasure and forced demographic change.

These rights should apply equally to all historically rooted communities in Syria and must not create separate citizenship, undermine equal citizenship or threaten the unity of the state.

9. Non-Sectarian Representation

The future of Christians in Syria should not be addressed through a millet-style approach in which Christians are treated only as separate church communities, confessional segments or regional minorities.

Churches have an essential spiritual, social and historical role. Their voice must be respected. However, the political, civic, cultural and constitutional rights of Christians must not be reduced to church hierarchies or religious representation alone.

Christian representation must include religious, civic, political, cultural and community voices. Political and civic representation should complement, not replace, the spiritual and social role of the churches.

This approach avoids both exclusion and sectarian fragmentation.

10. Political Participation and Representation

Christians and historically rooted communities must have meaningful political participation in Syria's future.

This includes participation in constitutional processes, national dialogue, elections, political parties, parliament, local councils, public administration, reconstruction planning, security arrangements and decisions affecting the future of the country.

Representation must not be symbolic. Representatives must be able to influence decisions that affect security, property, education, cultural life, religious freedom, local governance and future presence in the country.

Participation should be democratic, civic and accountable, and should not be limited to appointments, token representation or externally selected voices.

11. Cultural, Linguistic and Educational Rights Syria's

diversity is part of its national identity.

A future Syria should guarantee the right of historically rooted communities to preserve, teach, develop and publicly express their languages, cultures, traditions and historical memory.

Where historically rooted communities have a significant local presence, constitutional and legal arrangements should allow their languages, culture and heritage to be reflected in education, cultural life and local public institutions.

These rights are not privileges. They are part of Syria's obligation to protect its full cultural and linguistic diversity and to prevent forced assimilation or cultural erasure.

12. Security, Return and Property Rights

The continued presence of Christians and other historically rooted communities in Syria requires security, dignity and trust in the future.

Displaced persons must have the right to return voluntarily, safely and with dignity. Return must be made practically possible through security guarantees, protection of property, access to services, livelihoods, schools, places of worship and functioning local institutions.

A future Syrian legal framework must include effective mechanisms for restitution, compensation, reconstruction and protection against illegal property seizure, intimidation, demographic pressure and discrimination.

The protection of homes, churches, schools, community institutions, archives and historical sites is essential for the continuity of local communities.

13. Local Participation and Decentralised Governance

A democratic Syria should allow meaningful local participation in decisions affecting daily life.

Inclusive decentralised governance can strengthen trust, prevent marginalization and allow local communities to contribute to Syria's future within a united state.

Local participation is particularly important in education, language, culture, municipal services, development, reconstruction, heritage protection and local security under the rule of law and legitimate state institutions.

Decentralisation must not be used to divide Syria. It should be used to build a more participatory, accountable and united state.

14. Justice, Accountability and Reconciliation

Syria cannot achieve sustainable peace without addressing past and ongoing violations.

Justice must be based on truth, accountability, legal responsibility, restitution and reconciliation. Accountability must be individual and legal, not collective or sectarian.

We reject impunity, revenge, collective punishment, sectarian incitement, forced displacement, illegal property seizure, forced assimilation, cultural erasure and forced demographic change.

Reconciliation must be built through justice, dialogue, equal rights, respect for diversity and guarantees that violations will not be repeated.

15. Women and Youth

The future of Syria depends on women and youth.

Women play a central role in preserving families, education, community resilience, faith, culture and social life. Their participation in leadership, civil society and decisionmaking must be strengthened.

Young people need security, education, employment, dignity and realistic opportunities to build their future in Syria. Without hope and opportunity, emigration will continue and the presence of Christian and other historical communities will weaken further. **16.**

Constitutional and Political Demands to Syrian Decision-Makers

We call on Syrian political and institutional actors to ensure that any future Syrian constitutional and legal framework includes:

1. A democratic, pluralistic, non-sectarian and constitutionally neutral state.
2. Equal citizenship and freedom of religion or belief for all.
3. Equal treatment of all religions, beliefs, ethnicities, languages and communities before the law.
4. Equal access to all public offices, including the presidency, without religious, confessional, ethnic or linguistic restrictions.
5. Recognition of Syria as a shared country for all its citizens and historically rooted communities.
6. Constitutional protection of the identities, languages, cultures, heritage and institutions of historically rooted communities.
7. The right of individuals and communities to self-identify without coercion or imposed classification.
8. Meaningful participation of Christian political, religious, civil society and community representatives in national dialogue and institutions.
9. Fair political and local participation, not merely symbolic representation.
10. Protection of religious, cultural and historical heritage as part of Syria's national heritage.
11. Security guarantees, property rights, restitution and safe return for displaced persons.
12. Rejection of sectarianism, discrimination, forced assimilation, cultural erasure, demographic engineering and collective punishment.
13. Judicial independence, accountable public institutions and the rule of law.
14. Inclusive local participation in reconstruction, governance, education, culture and development.
15. Participation of women, youth and civil society in rebuilding the state.

17. Recommendations to the European Union and International Actors

We do not ask the European Union or international actors to govern Syria or impose a political model on Syrians.

We ask them to use their political, diplomatic, economic and institutional tools to support principles necessary for a stable, inclusive and democratic Syria.

The European Union, Members of the European Parliament, governments and international organizations should:

1. Place freedom of religion or belief, equal citizenship, constitutional neutrality, human rights and democratic governance at the centre of engagement with Syria.
2. Support the principle that Syria must be a state for all its citizens and not defined exclusively by one religion, ethnicity, language or political identity.
3. Engage directly with Christian political, religious, civil society and community representatives from inside Syria.
4. Support constitutional guarantees for equal treatment of all religions and beliefs.
5. Support constitutional recognition and protection of Syria's historically rooted religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural communities.
6. Ensure that humanitarian aid, reconstruction, stabilization and normalization efforts do not reinforce sectarian fragmentation, exclusion or demographic injustice.
7. Link future political engagement, reconstruction support and normalization steps to measurable progress on human rights, rule of law, equal citizenship, religious freedom, safe return, property restitution and inclusive political participation.
8. Support independent documentation of violations, attacks on civilians, property seizure, attacks on places of worship and attempts to erase historical identity or heritage.
9. Support safe, voluntary and dignified return by addressing the legal, security and economic conditions that make return possible.
10. Support programs for language, culture, education, heritage protection, youth, women and community resilience.
11. Treat Christian representatives not only as religious community representatives, but also as civic and political partners in governance, constitutional reform, reconstruction, coexistence and Syria's future.

18. Role of the Diaspora

The Syrian Christian diaspora should support the voices and priorities of Christians and historically rooted communities inside Syria.

Its role should be to strengthen advocacy, documentation, humanitarian support, cultural preservation, youth engagement, community resilience and dialogue with European and international institutions.

The diaspora should promote unity and coordination, and avoid reinforcing divisions based on churches, regions, parties, names or identities.

Differences in self-identification must not become a reason to deny shared rights. Constitutional protection should be broad enough to protect communities regardless of the historical or contemporary names individuals use to identify themselves.

19. Coordination and Follow-Up

The participating political and civil actors should consider establishing a practical coordination mechanism around these principles.

This mechanism should not replace existing parties, churches, councils or organizations. Its purpose should be to coordinate around agreed principles and shared priorities, including joint policy messages, advocacy with the European Union and international actors, consultation with churches and civil society, follow-up meetings, monitoring of political and legal developments, and preparation of practical legislative and constitutional proposals.

The aim is to build a common platform around shared principles, not to erase existing institutional identities.

20. Our Message

We do not want the question to be: How can Christians be protected after they leave Syria?

But rather: How can their continued presence in Syria become safe, free, dignified and productive?

We do not want a Syria that merely protects minorities as weak groups. We want a Syria where no citizen needs special protection simply because they are different, and where no historically rooted community is forced to abandon its identity in order to enjoy equal citizenship.

We do not seek privileges. We seek equality.

We do not seek guardianship. We seek partnership.

We do not seek symbolic recognition. We seek constitutional and legal guarantees.

We do not want Christians to be guests in Syria's future. We want them to be full citizens and full partners in shaping and building it.

21. Conclusion

Christians are not remnants of Syria's past. They are part of its present and must be full partners in shaping its future.

Protecting the Christian presence requires more than protecting churches. It requires equal citizenship, freedom of religion or belief, protection of property and heritage, meaningful political participation, accountable institutions, cultural and linguistic rights, and justice in response to violations.

The protection of historically rooted communities is not a threat to Syria's unity. It can be one of the foundations of Syria's unity and stability.

A united Syria does not mean a forcibly homogenized Syria. It means a Syria that has room for the diversity of its people.

We want Syria for all Syrians: a democratic, pluralistic and constitutionally neutral state that respects religion, conscience, ethnicity, language, culture and difference; protects individual and collective rights; and guarantees Christians and all historically rooted communities their full right to remain, participate and shape the future of their homeland.

From protection of presence to participation in building the state.

From fear to citizenship.

From symbolic representation to genuine partnership.

From declared rights to constitutionally and legally guaranteed rights.

Signed by:

Assyrian Democratic Party in Syria

Syriac Union Party in Syria

Levantine National Council