



Alternative Development Forum on Syria II

17-18 March 2024

9:00 - 17:00 CET

11:00 - 19:00 Damascus time

Location: “Old Chapel”, Campus University of Vienna

For 13 years, the ongoing Syrian conflict showed the failure of violence-based strategies imposed by local, regional and international warring actors. Through institutionalising political tyranny, fragmenting societal relations, and investing in conflict economies, even the minimum of bearable living conditions for the Syrian population could not be achieved.

The strategies of political actors during the last few years showed their persistence to cause severe harm and damage to people, institutions, and nature as human insecurities, inequalities, grave violations, and deprivation are on the rise. At the same time, there is an absence of any strategy to overcome the conflict in a just and sustainable manner. Yet, few proposals emerged that called for normalising oppressive forces and conflict elites.

In recent years, other factors and events that complicated the scene in Syria and the region, such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine, global economic stagflation after COVID-19, Arab normalisation with Israel, “Abraham Accords”, the Earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria in February 2023, and most recently the Gaza's catastrophe. These factors are mounting pressure on people and hindering the transformation towards peace and justice.

Given these enormous challenges, the Forum assures the importance of the independent, participatory, and critical knowledge production associated with the expanding role of society to form the pathways and processes that fulfil people's aspirations and interests. This form of knowledge production can support establishing public spaces for Syrians to design their alternative future and expand the social congruences as the first step to overcoming the foundation of the conflict.

This Forum will capitalise on the first development forum held in December 2022. The participants (60+) discussed several themes and policies that need to be developed, including emancipatory citizenship and political transformation, social and solidarity economy, integrated development strategies, and research methodologies within the Syrian conflict.

To accumulate on this process, this year, the forum will focus on building societal foundations to transcend conflict and present recent research on concepts such as solidarity, identity politics, human security, trust and cooperation. The research outputs will serve as a tool to discuss inclusive and Syria-led development as a perspective to work towards a just future.

The Development Forum 2024 accumulates on the previous efforts of the Syrian civil society. It aims to develop societal paths and evidence-based alternatives aligned with societal priorities. These alternatives can influence a broader national dialogue to overcome the conflict. This forum will foster a continuous process to expand the research and dialogue efforts to pursue the desired goals.

The overall objective of the forum is an evidence-based public dialogue as a path to reclaim the role of Syrian society to transcend the conflict.

Specific goals

- A. Develop a public space for Syrians to think and work out evidence-based alternatives for the future.
- B. Develop options for resisting submission to hegemonic forces.
- C. Expand societal congruences among Syrians.

Priorities of the dialogue

Based on preparatory workshops, the following themes have been suggested to the forum:

- Build the foundations of inclusive and participatory institutions and sustainable peace.
- Develop social relations based on solidarity, trust, justice and non-discrimination.
- Promote human development and human protection.
- Develop the social solidarity economy.
- Invest in environmental sustainability.

Time (CET)	Session	Details
Day 1: Sunday, 17 March		
9:00 - 9:45	Opening session: Introduction to the Forum Petra Dannecker Rabie Nasser	The main objectives and framework.
9:45 - 12:00	Session 1: Potential social congruences to transcend conflict (Discussion Groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the major themes/priorities that can be subject to congruences among Syrians within <u>(Themes below)</u>? - What are the main challenges/enablers that hinder or enhance social transformation <u>(Themes below)</u>? - Who are the supporters or spoilers? Themes: Social solidarity, Economic Development, Citizenship and democracy, Justice and equality, and Social development. Cross-cutting Topics: Refugees, Gender, and Environment
12:00 - 13:30	Lunch break	
13:30 - 15:00	Session 2: Social Solidarities in Syria (Research Presentation and Discussion) Ahmad Korabi Eymen Dasuki Abdullah Alkafri Ramia Ismail Maya Rahabi (Moderator)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research results. ● Discussants. ● Dialogue.
15:00 - 15:15	Coffee break	
15:15 - 16:45	Session 3: Identity Politics in Syria (Research Presentation and Discussion) Yasser Munif Talip Alkhayer Wajdi Wahbi Jelnar Ahmad (Moderator)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research results. ● Discussants. ● Dialogue.
19:00	Joint dinner	

Day 2: Monday 18, March 2024

<p>9:00 - 9:45</p>	<p>Opening session: Recap of day 1 & introduction to day 2</p>	<p>Summarising and Opening sessions.</p>
<p>9:45 - 11:30</p>	<p>Session 4: Overlapped Development Nodes and Transformative Policies (Panel Discussion) Salam Said Mohamad Kiki Mohamad Alasadi Moutasem Syoufi (Moderator)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research results ● Discussants ● Dialogue
<p>11:30 - 12:30</p>	<p align="center">Lunch break</p>	
<p>12:30 - 14:00</p>	<p>Session 5: Measuring In/Security (Research Presentation and Discussion) Omar Dahi Firat Demir Muna Abbas (Moderator)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research results ● Discussants ● Dialogue
<p>14:00 - 14:15</p>	<p align="center">Coffee break</p>	
<p>14:15 - 15:45</p>	<p>Session 6: Building Societal Foundations Rana Yazaji Rabie Nasser</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can social actors implement a transformative process? - What are the principal policies and interventions to enhance (Themes below) and overcome conflict? <p>Themes: Social solidarity, Economic Development, Citizenship and democracy, Justice and equality, and Social development. Cross-cutting Topics: Refugees, Gender, and Environment</p>
<p>15:45-16:30</p>	<p>Concluding Session: Closing Remarks Aziz Al-Azmeh</p>	<p>Concluding remarks and future steps.</p>