

Closing statement

The political eligibility of the Syrian civil space

June 5 and 6, 2023

On June 5 and 6, 2023, over 180 representatives of Syrian civil society organisations gathered at the Institut Du Monde Arabe, Paris, to launch **Madaniya**, through an inaugural conference. **Madaniya** is a Syrian-led and funded initiative, independent of foreign and political influence with a mission to protect the Syrian civic space and support the pioneering role of civil society in building Syria's future. Representatives included civil society institutions, grassroots organisations, victim groups, syndicates and unions, research centres, and media outlets from various regions in Syria, neighbouring countries, and the rest of the world. As part of the launch, **Madaniya** hosted officials and diplomats from the European Union Commission, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and Turkey. Guests also included officials from the United Nations, the Syrian Commission for Negotiations, and many representatives of international institutions and active personalities in the Syrian file.

The launch comes in light of the challenges facing Syrian civil society organisations, and the pressures exerted by the de facto political and military forces, both local and international, in order to push this civil space into areas that are not within its nature, vision, or role. This conference also confirms that the role of the Syrian civil society organizations is not limited to service provision and project implementation. Rather, the role of this civil space expands to political expression without leaving its civil role and confirms the determination of Syrian women and men to participate in deciding the future of their country, free, democratic, and sovereign, that respects human rights.

Madaniya is the product of Syrian civil actors to exercise their political right to have an independent will and an independent decision-making process regarding the future of their country. It is a space that allows them to organise their ranks and present their vision for a solution in Syria at all local, regional, and international levels, and in all developmental, human rights and political sectors. The civil society space, after a decade of attempts during which civil actors accumulated experience, knowledge, and success, has today become a critical mass that has the power to influence the current political processes.

From this launch, the conferees commit to the principles that unite the broader spectrum of Syrian women and men, represented by the unity, independence, and territorial integrity of Syria on the basis of equal citizenship. They also affirm the need to find a political solution that achieves the aspirations of the Syrian people in accordance with international resolutions, foremost of which are Security Council Resolutions No. 2118 and 2254, ensuring (1) the release of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons by the Assad regime and the rest of the parties to the conflict, (2) the access of humanitarian aid to all Syrian women and men without discrimination, obstacles or restrictions, (3) the support for refugees and their protection from discrimination and forced deportation until a political solution is achieved that provides the appropriate conditions for their safe, voluntary and dignified return, (4) the continuation of holding the Assad regime and its allies accountable for their crimes, in addition to all the perpetrators of violations from all sides, and (5) standing firm against any regional or international efforts to normalize or rehabilitate the Assad regime.

Madaniya takes its first step today with the efforts of a wide range of representatives of civil society institutions, while continuing to work diligently and at an accelerated pace to mobilise all Syrian civil



#MadaniyaConf2023

actors inside and outside Syria, and in all sectors. Despite the organisational and structural differences of **Madaniya**'s members, their belief in a common system of values based on rights, and on a common vision for the future of their country, makes **Madaniya** a promising platform in the Syrian civil space.

After decades of the Syrian fight for democracy, and over 12 years since the beginning of the Syrian uprising in 2011, we Syrian women and men, are still striving, ceaselessly, to reach a state that fulfils the aspirations of Syrian women and men, despite the difficult state that our country is going through, and the division between de-facto forces that are dominated by several foreign countries. Due to the complete stagnation of the political process, the increase in normalization trends, and the absence of a real international movement to address this reality, the Syrian civil society remains steadfast in upholding the values of the democratic movement of the Syrian people, women and men, and their aspirations for freedom and a decent life. Despite the political, military, social, economic, and human rights challenges facing Syrian women and men today, they still have the ability to produce new visions, strategies, work approaches and programs that enable them to step towards achieving their goals. **Madaniya**'s meeting today laid down the foundation for its members for their joint work in the future within a democratic environment that celebrates freedom, difference, and diversity, to serve their country and respect the sacrifices of their people.

Paris

June 6, 2023

