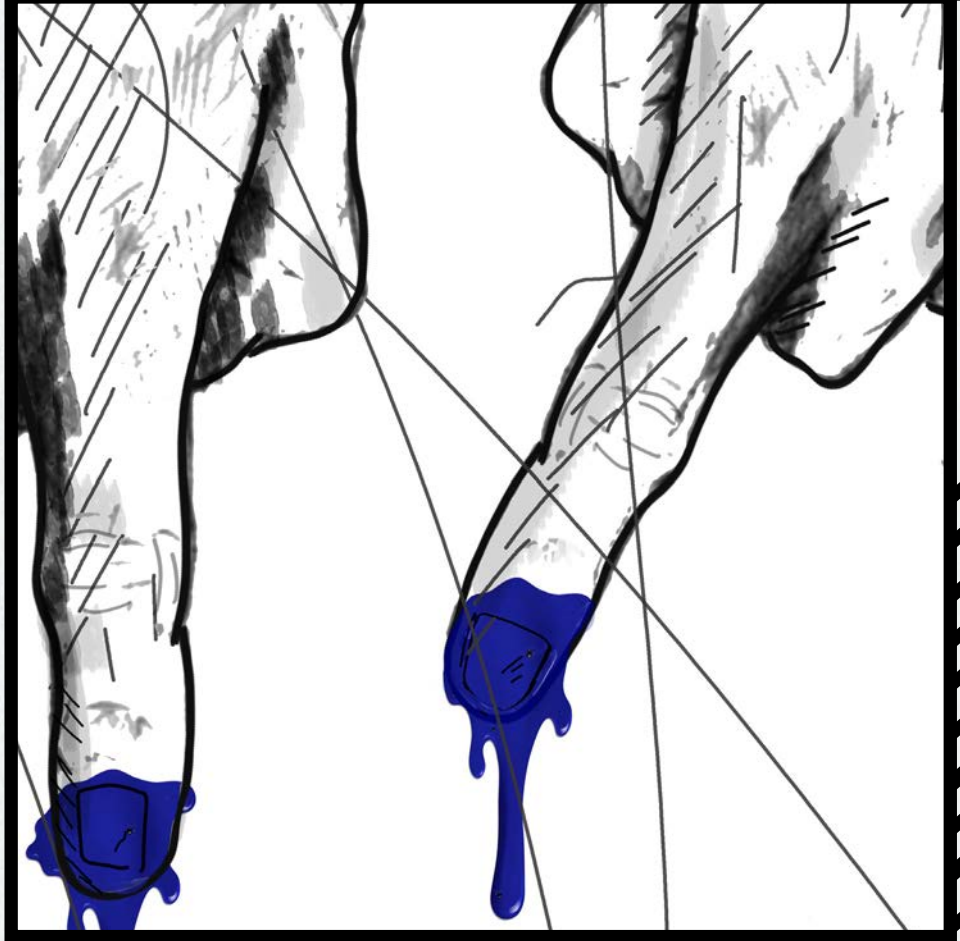


WAPR 2022



Glimpse



KeshMalek.Org



KeshMalekOrg



KeshMalekSyria

Published with support by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Commercial use of all media published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is not permitted without the written consent of the FES.

Kesh Malek

Glimpse aims to shed the light on the Syrian Civil Society which was revived after the Syrian revolution in 2011, showing the civil initiatives and sharing inspiring stories led by grass-roots and civil society movement inside and outside Syria. Glimpse is envisioned to be a reliable resource for readers interested in knowing more about Syria, the history, the society, and the thousands-year-old civilization.

As a youth workgroup coinciding with the beginning of the Syrian revolution in Aleppo Northern Syria "Kesh Malek" was formed. Its first activities were sharing and taking part in the peaceful movement, demonstrating and spreading demonstrators' demands of "Freedom, justice, and dignity." The paigns driven by the group's long term vision to reach a better future for Syria. As "an independent democratic pluralistic state, respects human rights and devotes citizenship and justice values."

PRESERVATION
OF THE SYRIAN
MEMORY AND
STRUGGLES

4

HEALTH CARE
SYSTEM IN
NORTHERN
SYRIA'S
STRUGGLE

6

Qabaseen
- Electing
Women
Empowerment
Committees

8

E-LEARNING
IN SYRIA

12

NEWS

14

INDEX

Preservation of the Syrian memory and struggle

Huda Sarjawe, a Syrian writer, tells the stories that inspired her motivation to publish her book “Victim’s Revelation”

After the Syrian-Russian military takeover of her city, she had to move to Ezaz city in Northern Aleppo’s countryside. She is a lawyer and has a degree in Law and Political Science. She is currently studying International Relations at Aleppo University in Northern Syria. She worked at her town’s local council for four years as the first elected females’ member in 2014. She also worked in multiple organisations for social awareness campaigns focusing mainly on women.

Sarjawe is also a trainer in legal and political related subjects such as Governance, Constitution, Elections and Negotiations. She works at The Next Day, a civil society organisation that focuses on the democratic transition in Syria. She advocates for more female agency and representation, namely in the high-ranking positions inside and outside Syria.

How was the idea of the book brought up and developed?

Sarjawe explained, “my book came as part of a project I worked on with the Transitional Justice Academy where my idea of the book; “Victim’s Voice” was developed. She further commented, “writing the book was part of my fundamental message to

save the victims’ memories. During the Syrian revolution, detainees and survivors of Assad’s jails were deemed as one of the most psychologically traumatized. Their cause has been overlooked for years and civil society support has not effectively helped them to transition back to normal life”.

She continued, “the inspiration and passion to write this book came from this overwhelming and humbling situation that cannot be forgotten nor tampered with. Such tampering with the truth contributes to creating false details of history for the generation to come which is something this book seeks to combat.

She also said, “writing books also helps academics, who work in researching Syria, get a real sense of the struggles from the victims themselves. As such, maximising the outreach of the Syrian detainees’ cases and advocating for their victimhood. Having said that, it also provides victims with a safe space where they can express themselves, feel acknowledged as well as supported by society.

What does the book tell us about?

The book contains eleven stories of both victims of enforced disappearance themselves and some told by a family member of the disappeared. The book delves into the nitty-gritty details of the horror. Sarjawe said, “some of the obstacles that faced me throughout the book writing process was that some of the in-

terviewees suffered immensely in prison and could not carry on telling their stories. Others feared the repercussions on their imprisoned family members.

In the case of the female victims, they feared the social stigma associated with imprisoned females who were not convinced that telling their stories were important, while others feared vengeance”.

Why are books that narrate the Syrian victims’ stories important?

Documentation is a prime tool for fighting and resisting oppressors. Some try to manipulate the narrative surrounding the victimhood of the imprisoned and survivors and twist it in a way that does not reflect the truth of what happened. Documentation of survivors is a pivotal means that allows them to partake in the collective memory of the Syrian struggle and reengage them with their societies so they can feel reintegrated and included.

This can also allow them to have an active role in the public space as members of the society or researchers who will engage in social awareness campaigns or activities. The diversification of the stories brings about a variety of perspectives to the Syrian Revolution’s archive for the coming generation to study and learn about.

Every single contribution is a pivotal element in the Syrian memory. Archives are repositories of collective memory, and it is an archivist’s duty

ggles

to document not just facts, but the emotions, memories and the feelings of those affected by a tragedy.

These memories give future researchers the ability to comprehend a more complete representation of the Syrian tragedy. History and memory are both recalled through interpretation and a diverse scope of eyewitnesses. Just as the trained historian is the best equipped for providing a history of an event, so are the trained writers, journalists, and archivists to document it and preserve it for the generation to come.

Is the Syrian archive enough?

Although a lot of written material has been and is being produced about the Syrian conflict over the past years, a small part of it is about the enforced disappeared people. The gravity of the enforced disappeared people in Syria is significant and is deemed one of the prime subjects in the political sphere; yet little is being done to support documentation production. Civil society and social groups should assist survivors in order to write their personal experiences directly and publish them. This would give the written materials more authenticity and it would be more reflective of the personal experience of the victims of the Syrian tragedy. This is the case across all sectors and becomes particularly vital amongst the marginalized, such as survivors of enforced disappearance in warzones.



التوثيق : هدى سرجاوي
الصياغة الأدبية : فراس الرحيم
الرسوم : رامي عبد الحق



Qabaseen - Electing Empowerment Com

In northern Syria, last November, an election for the head of the Local Committees was held amongst female residents of Qabaseen city in Idlib's countryside. Female constituents were encouraged by candidates in the Local Committee election to partake in the electoral process. The candidates proposed their plans if they were to be elected, displaying a wide range of promises. The election aimed to expand the Local Committee's membership so it would have a more inclusive and diverse representation of the city's residents.

Although Qabaseen City held elections, many local authorities lack the autonomy to run elections as their authority falls under complete control of armed actors, who do not hold democratic practices in high regard. Other major obstacles for facilitating elections include; the Syrian population in northern Syria being intermixed, encompassing a diverse range of people from different parts of Syria who are squeezed into a small geographical location. Furthermore, election organization is made even more challenging to facilitate due to social inequalities and internal polarization within local communities.

Modest Capabilities in Pursuit of Fostering Democracy

The head of the sub-committees, Hana Al-Ateya, who co-managed and oversaw the operational process of the election explained that awareness campaigns were held for those who wished to participate in the election process. The campaigns included explanations of the candidates' roles and responsibilities to their stake-

holders.

According to participants in the elections, voting in its essence has been a long forgotten right which they have been deprived from by the Assad regime. One local voter, Said Asma, commented; "We believe in voting and contributing to our society, and the change in power dynamics it brings about. Transitioning power between different political actors helped to provide locals with better social services, and positive rivalry to benefit the population, not control it."

Asma also explained that the election, while modest, was a big step to change the negative feeling around elections and apathy towards them which has become a mainstream perception. He hoped that these negative perceptions could change into positive ones that would leverage change in the long run in regards to the view of elections' impact and importance.

The head of the local sub-committee, Al-Ateya, explained that elections are particularly important to reintroduce because the current or upcoming authorities in Syria will not be able to transition to democracy unless those authorities are faced with public pressure to do so. In addition, positive perceptions about elections, in their lives and communities, leverages a tolerant democratic ecosystem.

The election Process

Prior to the election, local organizers

of the election opened their doors to civilians to register their names to be candidates for the Local Women Empowerment Offices. Candidates' required qualifications were published across different platforms. Potential candidates were required to meet a minimum of a high-school diploma, and to be at least 20 years old for their submission to be accepted. Such requirements aimed to encourage the younger generations to be included in the democratic process.

Eight candidates took part in the elections, and 360 people voted in them. Publicity encouraging people to vote featured across social media platforms. Al-Ateya said, "Candidates had the time to hold open discussions to explain their plans, and convince civilians to vote for them. Public engagement was vital to enrich the democratic process and engage public opinion to convince voters based on their future projects and their qualifications. We worked throughout the preparation process to underscore the importance of debating, and that difference as well as disagreements are part of the process. Votes were counted after the voting process finished by a group of representatives from the local council, and civil society actors in order to ensure transparency was upheld."

With work, future change becomes Inevitable

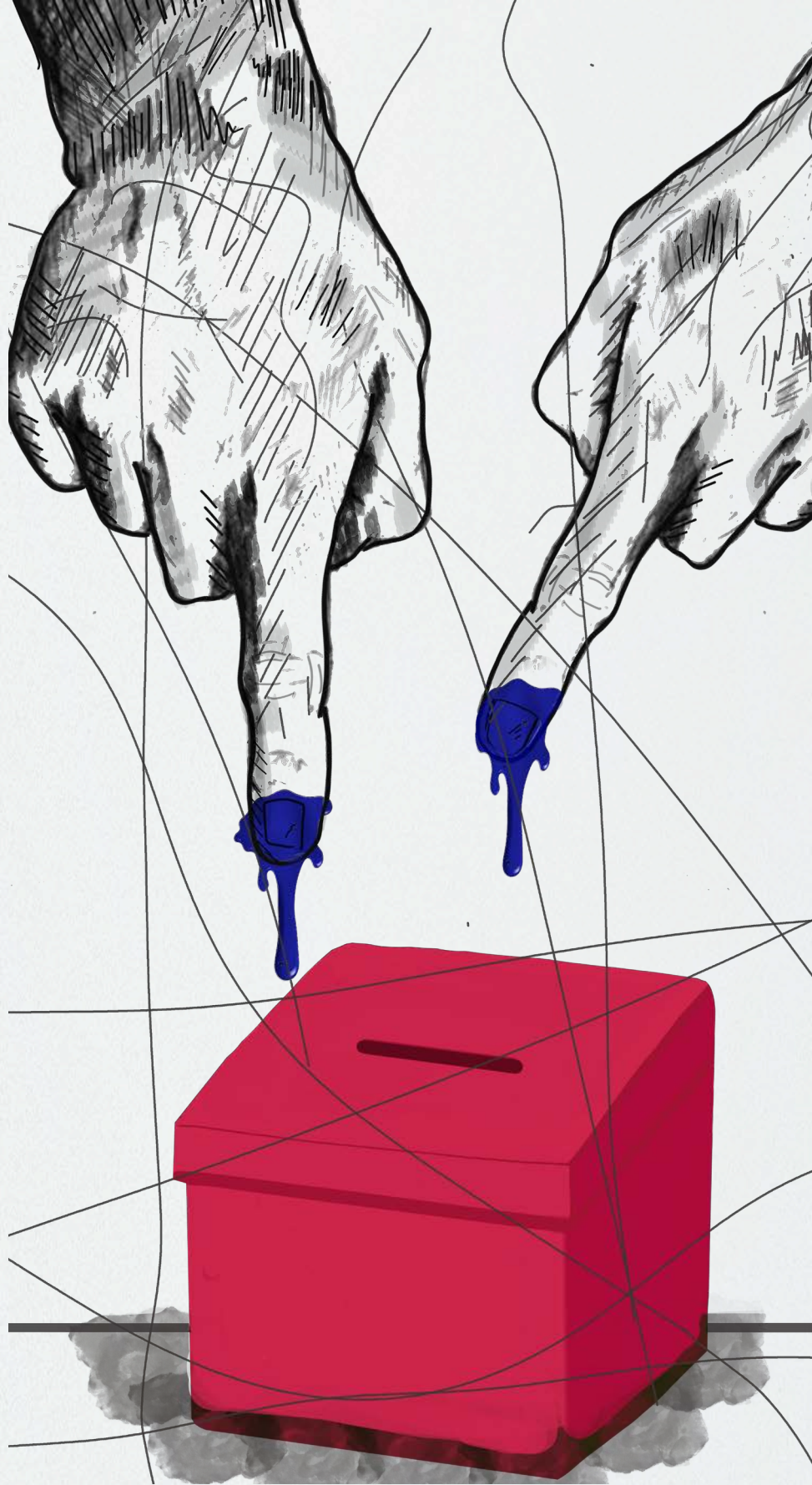
The Local Administrator explained that elections aimed to underline the importance of the democratic

g Women nmittees

process in Syria. He argued that facilitating platforms to hold elections at a micro-level helps pave the way for future endeavors. Furthermore, this will encourage multiple entities in different parts of northern Syria to imitate this practice, and adopt a democratic agenda in their governance.

Hiam Al-Ali, one of the election facilitators, explained that this election process helps raise women's awareness about the importance of their voice and why taking action, either as a voter or candidate is a positive step towards advancing women's interests and equality as well as creating a better future for the country as a whole. She went on to say, "more positive perceptions around democratic practices are being introduced to the public. People have always strived to have their voice heard, and see its real life impact which they have been deprived from for decades by the Assad regime. Voting candidates in or out of positions adds to holding authorities accountable for their actions whilst holding public roles. Moreover, elections pave the way for more accountability measures in the future, which come as a result of societies institutional development and more importantly, recovery from the war. The more democratic framework we adopt in our institutions, regardless of how small it is, the more positive and valued society feels about itself."

The main obstacle to advancing democratic processes to other areas and expanding democratic



practices remain complex. The establishment of local authorities and security forces across northern Syria as well as the socio-economic struggles and lack of financial resources leaves democracy at the margin of interest for those holding public office.

Health care system Syria's Struggle

Undergoes more financial struggle as funds countries to dry out: Reasons and Ramifications

The health sector in northern Syria is completely dependent on financial grants provided by various international organizations, unlike the situation in most countries, where it is usually partially or fully funded by the state. At a time when the health sector in north-western Syria, in particular, is under great pressure from limited capabilities and an increasing need due to the continued violations by the Syrian regime and its military allies, and in conjunction with the waves of the Covid-19 virus, which has reached a thousand positive case daily. The decision to cut support affects about nine major hospitals and medical centers in the city of Idlib. This situation will herald another humanitarian catastrophe, adding to the suffering of one million people, most of whom have been affected by displacement to live in this area.

Dynamics and reasons:

Hospitals and medical centers

in Idlib Governorate are operated by grants provided by international organizations such as the World Health Organization and Doctors Without Borders and others, either directly as projects to support the health sector or in coordination with local organizations and bodies such as the Idlib City Health Directorate. The grants cover the wages of medical staff and logistical supplies such as fuel and generators, in addition to medical supplies and medicines.

According to Dr. Yahya Nehme, a hospital officer in Idlib Health Directorate, the number of medical facilities for which funding has stopped or their funding contracts have expired has reached nine hospitals in Idlib Governorate, one of which has been completely closed, Al-Ikhlās Hospital in Al-Janudiyah as well as Al-Salam Hospital in Harem - Kafr Takharim Hospital for maternity - Save a soul Hospital for children - Almadenah Hospital in Kilis - Rahma Hospital in Darkush - Barisha Hospital - Rajaa Hospital in Atmeh - Ain al-Bayda Hospital.

Dr. Nehme attributes the reason for cutting the funding of the medical sector, and the limiting of the grants provided, as being seen as just a

mere project within the different projects of the donor organizations, not as a sustainable project that serves the region and its residents. That is, as soon as the predetermined grant period expires and in the event that it is not renewed, the medical facility simply closes except in the case of securing another donor or working voluntarily within very limited capacity. This is the case for most hospitals whose grants have been suspended or have expired recently. Chief among the hospitals is the Al-Rahma Hospital in the town of Darkoush - Idlib, which is one of the largest public hospitals in northern Syria.

Dr. Ahmed Ghandoura, Director of Al-Rahma Hospital in Darkoush, said, "we were informed of the decision to stop the hospital's funding this September, one month before the end date of the grant, which is not enough time to try to secure alternative support as donor organizations usually inform the hospital three months in advance of such decisions to give a chance to remedy the matter. But I think that the reason for this step comes in regards to the donor countries' exhaustion and having to direct their resources internally, after Covid-19 exhausted the capabilities of these

m in Northern

countries.”

No funding at the peak of need:

The health sector in northern Syria has always faced various difficulties, due to a lack of resources compared to the increasing need. Since the beginning of the Syrian revolution, the Syrian regime and its allies have strategically targeted medical centers and civilian facilities, but the current situation is one of the most difficult challenges that this sector has faced; containing the spread of the pandemic and the daily medical needs of the population in addition to the Syrian regime’s violations of the ceasefire in the southern countryside of Idlib which claimed 100 lives in the last four months. Today, the challenge of stopping or reducing funding comes to sound the alarm of a humanitarian catastrophe which compounds the problems in northern Syria.

The north-western region of Syria is currently witnessing the second wave of Covid-19. 76,967 cases have been recorded, according to a report by the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) published this month, and the occupancy rate of intensive care units has reached

93% with medical personnel suffering from a severe shortage of necessary supplies, according to the same report.

Doctors Without Borders described the current wave of the Covid-19 virus in northern Syria as the worst in the country, in addition to the inability of the medical system to cope with the lack of oxygen and breathing equipment necessary for the bad cases.

According to a report issued by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs “OCHA”, the lack of funding will affect the medical sector as a whole, yet despite the increasing spread of Covid-19 and the pressures on the health sector, this sector has received only 17% of the aid allocated to it in the year of 2021.

The latest danger, posed by some medical facilities closing or reducing their capacity, is the inability to secure oxygen for a deficit rate of more than 50%, according to a statement by the Syrian Civil Defence.

Dr. Ahmed Ghandoura - Director of Al-Rahma Hospital, explained, “stopping the support means consuming the reserves of medicine and fuel needed to operate the generators and to secure the necessary oxygen

for Covid-19 patients and others”.

Where next:

Eight facilities out of the nine that were defunded are currently working voluntarily. These facilities have applied an emergency plan to consume medicine and fuel reserves, in the hope that the efforts will succeed in renewing funding contracts or finding other donors.

Yahya Nehme - Hospital Officer in Idlib Health Directorate, said, “we were able to secure partial support for only two facilities, and we are still working to reach out to donors to explain the seriousness of the situation unless funding is fully restored to the medical sector in Idlib.”

E-LEARNING

Is online-based education in the time of the pandemic an option in northern Syria?

Last September, children across the world started heading back to school after prolonged lockdowns and uncertainty about their future. The past months have demonstrated the important role schools play, not just as a place for education but also as a space to meet and to develop social skills that children need, namely in Syria where the war has already deprived them of schooling for many years. A teacher in Mara'a in north-western Syria, Ahmad Al-Qasem, said, "Once children were at school, they started to re-connect, meet up with their peers and enjoy the social and versatile space it provides. School is a place where children develop their social skills and make better progress in education since teachers can personally monitor their development and provide guidance where needed.

Downsides of online education

Al-Qasem argues that, while distance learning during the pandemic has enabled children to carry on with their education, the experience of this type of learning has proven its lack of efficiency to deliver a quality education that would contribute to children's development.

Furthermore, children need to learn discipline, commitment and good behavior at the same time

as their academic journey at school. Although children would learn a great deal of it at home, school remains a pivotal place where children are given the opportunity to apply the knowledge they learn at home, make mistakes and learn from them.

On the practical side, despite students' and teachers' passion and endeavors to maintain a positive attitude to carry on the online learning phase, this experience was an utter struggle for teachers, children, and their parents. Unlike first world countries, places like Syria were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Online education is a leisure for a lot of the population in northern Syria as a great proportion of the population do not have reliable internet access or are unable to afford one.

The lack of stable technology as well as a lack of electricity and phones in order to run classes over WhatsApp have contributed to undermining the educational objective and its deliverable success to students in northern Syria. In addition, the disproportionate distribution of NGOs' technological support coupled with an immense scale of needs make it difficult to tackle the technological and equipment imbalances.

Al-Qasem argues that online learning perpetuates education inequalities between families; those who can afford paying for extra tutoring and those who cannot. Poverty also often means not having a designated space at home devoted to study-

ing, equipped with internet connection. Families have reduced internet access and some do not even own a computer or smartphone. Al-Qasem, who is a math teacher at a primary school, said that one of the most challenging aspects of distance learning for his students was the lack of a strong and stable internet connection and access to a smartphone device.

Hiba Abdullah, a university student in northern Syria considered her online-learning experience as poor and unsatisfactory. She commented, "class or physically attending a school or university allows us to engage with our peers in intellectual and enriching conversations as well as engaging in social and educational activities. We get to ask questions and properly engage in the class without internet connection disruptions or electricity cuts. It might have been a good experience if we had 24/7 electricity and good internet connection, but this is not the case unfortunately."

On the psychological side, children who come out of intense war circumstances, which many have not recovered from, need an element of normality, stability and community which is what schools offer and foster. Having to replace school with online learning, may have worked, but only where there is no means of holding physical education like what happened during the pandemic. Otherwise, considering taking online education beyond Covid-19 has far less benefits for future generations— at least in countries where

G IN SYRIA

crises run rampant and school is the only place where children can study, socialize and play.

As a result of the war, millions of Syrian children were deprived of their right to education. Since 2011, they endured a fragmented studying experience, having to move many times due to being forced by displacement and bombardment. While NGOs and families are trying to restore what the generation has lost, online education came to disrupt these efforts once again.



NEW

1- "Election of the Students' Bureau of Sham University"

In the beginning of the month of April, the Union of Free Syrian Students, in cooperation and coordination with the Stabilization Support Unit, held the General Conference for the election of the members of the Student Bureau of the University of the Levant

Twenty-five male and female candidates competed in the elections, which were held in the presence of representatives of civil society organizations and observers

Eleven members of the executive bureau of the university's student bureau and 12 members of the Free Syrian Students Union were elected.

2- "Civil Defense" increases the representation of women in its General Assembly by 20%

The Syrian Civil Defense announced a 20% increase in women's representation in its general assembly, In a statement, the Defense Ministry said the women's centers are a basic pillar of its humanitarian work and its efforts to provide diverse services to all segments of Syrian society of all affiliations.

Women in Syria have fought a battle for nearly 11 years under difficult social and economic conditions, the defense said, noting that Syrian women have been leaders in education, leadership and generation-building.

The organization has around 33 women's centers

WS

in Aleppo, Idlib, Rif Latakia and Rif Hama provinces, and employs about 260 female volunteers, which has helped build trust between female volunteers and communities and enabled them to better provide services, the statement said.

Female volunteers work in several areas, most notably health services and awareness-raising, as well as in rescue operations and helping civilians.

The statement said the Civil Defense Department continues to develop the skills of female volunteers in all fields and expand their work to other important areas needed by local communities.

Source - Enab Baladi

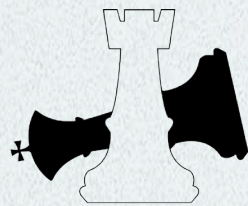
3-Kesh Malek Launches it's Digital platform

As part of its objectives in promoting civil education, active citizenship and Gender equity, Kesh Malek

launched its digital platform, to provide a curriculum in civil education and Gender educations principles for arabic speaking youth in Syria and abroad.

The platform know in it's internal testing phases and will be available for public in the second half of May

nto the Syrian civil society



Kesh كَش
Malek مَلِك