



حركة حراس المساواة
Guardians of Equality Movement

LGBTQIA+ Individuals In Syria After The Fall Of The Assad Regime

Syrian queers
are here
to stay

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العابرات



Executive Summary

The challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in Syria surpass those encountered by this community in other countries. Wars and conflicts have led to increased violence, repressive legislation, and social stigma. Therefore, empowerment projects play a vital role in supporting these individuals by aiming to improve their financial, professional, and educational status, enhance psychological and social support, provide legal protection, build capacities, and contribute to changing the negative societal perception. Additionally, these projects help in establishing support and advocacy networks.

Since the onset of military developments in northwest Syria at the end of November 2024, violence against LGBTQIA+ individuals has escalated significantly. During this time, requests submitted to the Guardians of Equality Movement organization surged, prompting an emergency response that included providing urgent services. The organization also mobilized efforts through a network of GEM members on the ground and various sources within Syria to counter a wave of false and misleading news about the LGBTQIA+ community. Additionally, it verified the authenticity of images depicting the arrest of LGBTQIA+ individuals on December 31, 2024.

The organization also directed its media efforts toward promoting a culture of security and safety in alignment with the evolving situation. Simultaneously, it engaged with the management of several applications used by LGBTQIA+ individuals in Syria to enhance security and protection measures.

These efforts came at a time when the first two months of 2025 saw waves of violence against several Syrian transgender women in multiple cities. Videos surfaced showing armed individuals arresting, beating, and threatening them with death and mutilation. The organization made it a priority to highlight these acts of violence.

In the context of advocacy, the Guardians of Equality Movement incorporates security considerations and the sensitivities and complexities of LGBTQIA+ issues in Syria into its strategy for developing and implementing long-term empowerment and advocacy plans.

However, the humanitarian response faces significant challenges in achieving its goals. This paper outlines the key needs and priorities of LGBTQIA+ individuals, as well as the challenges faced by organizations dedicated to supporting sexual and gender minorities.

The paper highlights key findings from an extensive World Bank study that establishes a strong link between a country's economic prosperity and the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals in society. It also presents conclusions from a comprehensive study on the limited funding allocated to support gender and sexual diversity issues in the Middle East.

Recommendations

To Empower and Protect the LGBTQIA+ Community in Syria: Contributing to Stability, Security, and Nation-Building.

Recognizing the LGBTQIA+ community as an integral part of Syrian society and as key contributors across all sectors in achieving prosperity and progress in Syria, this paper recommends the following actions:

- Explicit inclusion of the Syrian LGBTQIA+ community in donors' humanitarian policies for Syria.
- Donors should set clear percentage targets for the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals, acknowledging that they represent approximately 10% of the population.
- The presence of LGBTQIA+ individuals should be considered in reconstruction support efforts as an indicator of stability, freedom, and dignity.
- Open specialized resettlement programs for LGBTQIA+ Syrians at risk.
- Criminalize all forms of torture in Syria, especially those rooted in gender-based prejudice.
- Support LGBTQIA+ initiatives in building civil peace in Syria, as this community possesses unique capacities to bridge divides across fragmented Syrian communities.
- Ensure both direct and indirect inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community in peacebuilding and recovery efforts.
- Facilitate asylum, resettlement, and temporary protection procedures for LGBTQIA+ individuals in vulnerable situations, including those living with HIV, ethnic and religious minorities, persons with disabilities, and others.
- Raise awareness on issues related to gender identity, sexual orientation, gender, and mental and sexual health.
- Support the empowerment of LGBTQIA+ individuals politically, economically, psychologically, socially, and legally.
- Back emergency responses tailored to the needs of the Syrian LGBTQIA+ community.
- Ensure geographical inclusivity in all interventions, especially in camps and internally displaced persons (IDP) settlements.
- Promote awareness through mental health and psychosocial support materials, safety guidelines, and dedicated resources for LGBTQIA+ individuals in Syria via email, social media platforms, and official websites.

Introduction

For more than fifty years, Syrians have lived under the weight of an authoritarian regime that transformed life concepts and produced cultures that reshaped society, reinforcing further marginalization and stereotyping. The description of it as a “kingdom of terror” under the rule of both Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar was not an exaggeration in the eyes of millions of Syrians.

Discussing the general situation in Syria is enough to illustrate how LGBTQIA+ individuals lived over the course of half a century, facing compounded difficulties and challenges, especially on the security front. Many were subjected to kidnapping, detention, torture, and even murder, alongside social stigma, discrimination in the labor market and education, and difficulty accessing healthcare and aid. These challenges led to a dire economic and social situation for them.

The fall of the Assad regime in Syria has sparked a glimmer of hope for change. Although it may not be the magical solution to all of the country’s problems, it certainly removes the largest sources of violence and terrorism in the region, some of the most criminal in the modern era. It is highly likely that the regime’s fall will reduce violence against marginalized groups, which we hope will improve in the future.



Background

Over the past decade, Syria has been one of the most dangerous countries for LGBTQIA+ individuals in the region. This was the conclusion of a [research](#) study conducted by the Guardians of Equality Movement, which found a rise in the number of sexual and gender minorities targeted in Syria. These individuals faced a dual threat of harm or even death.

Before the Fall of the Assad Regime

The Syrian regime criminalized homosexuality based on Article [520](#) of the constitution. A [study](#) by the Guardians of Equality Movement quoted a Syrian lawyer stating, “The law in Syria is subject to manipulation, and penal laws may be used incidentally to criminalize same-sex relationships.” He further added that LGBTQIA+ individuals are often denied access to a lawyer when they are arrested.

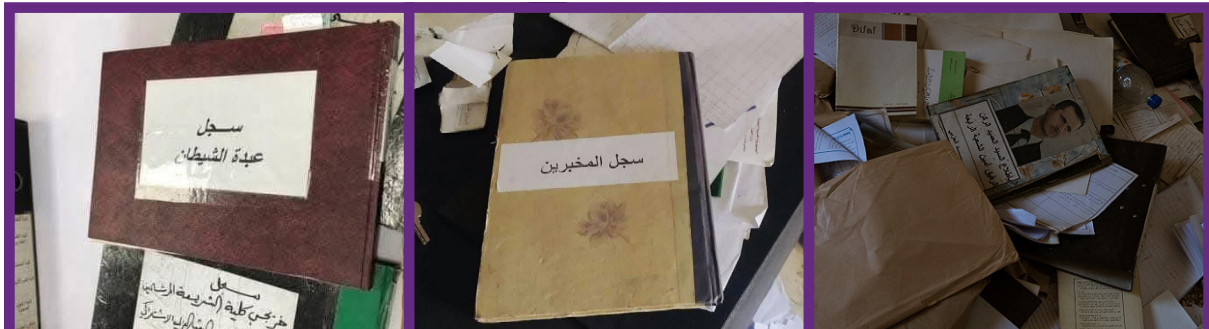
The Guardians of Equality Movement documented the testimony of a former detainee in the regime’s prisons who was an LGBTQIA+ individual. In its research, the organization stated that sexual and gender minorities in Syria often face compounded torture due to their gender identity, especially if they do not conform to normative appearances. Recently, a Syrian transgender woman appeared in a [report](#) published on YouTube, where she spoke about the intense torture she endured during her detention in the regime’s prisons because of her appearance.



Shots from a video on Snap Shot/YouTube which tells the story of a trans woman, Sham.

It became even more evident after the fall of the regime that it had been gathering information on LGBTQIA+ individuals, spying on them, and monitoring their movements. In the early days following the regime's fall, Syrians circulated an image of papers and documents found inside one of the security branches in Syria, with the label "Sodomy File Damascus" written on them.

In areas formerly under opposition control, both the Unified Arab Penal Code of 1965 and the law of "Hirabah" derived from Islamic Sharia were relied upon. Both of these laws criminalize homosexuality and impose penalties that could include death.



Leaked Syrian intelligence documents expose the Assad regime's surveillance tactics over its own people.



Saydnaya Prison near Damascus is one of the world's largest jails for political prisoners.

After the Fall of the Assad Regime

Syrians were divided between those who welcomed and those who criticized the new constitutional declaration in Syria, which was announced in March 2025. Many were waiting for a comprehensive constitution that would usher in a new chapter of peace and the building of a just society. According to the constitutional declaration, the transitional phase will last for 5 years. However, there are no clear signs of a near consensus on a comprehensive constitution that aligns with the country and its population's nature. This deadlock arises from several factors and affects key issues impacting the lives of citizens, such as reconstruction, sanctions, the economic situation, and issues related to women's rights, the status of sexual and gender minorities, as well as the overall security situation and the spread of weapons.

Since the fall of the previous regime on December 8, 2024, requests for support and assistance from LGBTQIA+ individuals in Syria submitted to the Guardians of Equality Movement have increased by 70%. The organization, in collaboration with human rights activists, has documented a series of serious violations faced by Syrian LGBTQIA+ individuals. These violations include entrapment through dating apps, home invasions, kidnapping, arbitrary detention, torture, humiliation, threats of physical violence and mutilation, as well as other dangerous practices such as forced filming and defamation, exposing the victims to escalating and ongoing risks. These violations were carried out by groups affiliated with the current government as well as armed non-governmental groups.

Waves of Violence Against Syrian Transgender Women

At the beginning of 2025, there was an escalation in violence, torture, and hatred targeting sexual and gender minorities in Syria. Multiple videos showed security forces storming a New Year's celebration in the Jaramana area, detaining the attendees after photographing them and taking them to the local police station. According to witnesses, they were released the following day.

Another video showed the moment armed groups without official affiliation stormed a house where several Syrian transgender women were living in the Jaramana area. Meanwhile, images and videos from the cities of Damascus, Latakia, and Aleppo sparked widespread reactions among Syrians.



Images and videos circulating on social media show Syrian trans women facing violent assaults.

All the images and videos, which were gradually shared during the first and second months of this year, showed an increase in cases of assault, violence, harassment, discrimination, physical and sexual torture, and death threats against LGBTQIA+ individuals. This was accompanied by hate speech and incitement to violence, openly and proudly expressed by armed groups affiliated with the current Syrian government, as well as by non-governmental armed groups.

These violations represent a blatant violation of fundamental human rights enshrined in international charters and treaties, most notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which upholds the inherent dignity and rights of every individual. Additionally, the Convention Against Torture, derived from human rights principles, obliges countries, including Syria, to prevent acts of torture on their territory.

Syrian transgender woman Randa was one of those featured in the videos from Damascus, Latakia, and other cities. She recounts the terrifying times she and other transgender women in Syria endured during their arrests. Randa’s suffering from violence, torture, and defamation continues to this day, as she tells us.

Randa, who faced brutal beatings, harassment, threats of death and mutilation, and defamation during her arrest, now finds herself accused by the authorities of engaging in prostitution and being associated with the previous regime. She completely denies these charges.



As for the Jaramana party that was raided by security forces on 31/12/2024, we contacted Zain, a pseudonym for one of the attendees. He states that he was subjected to assault and suffered a head injury, bruises on his body, and “burnt parts of his hair extensions” during his arrest. This incident, which was a profound shock, further compounded his difficulties, especially in focusing on his studies. Additionally, he faced financial problems due to accumulating debts, and psychological pressure due to his national identity being held as collateral for the debts he owed.

Revenge... High-Level Security Risks

Several factors associated with the shift of power in Syria increase the likelihood of additional security risks for LGBTQIA+ individuals in the country. This is confirmed by the founder and executive director of the Guardians of Equality Movement, who highlights the most prominent of these factors:

- **Impact of Power Shift:** Chaos in accountability and law enforcement.
- **Increased Regional Mobility:** The removal of security restrictions on movement raises the likelihood of revenge and crimes committed under the pretext of so-called “honor.”
- **Societal Radicalization:** Years of state violence and prolonged chaos have enabled the rise of extremist ideological movements.

The previous ruling Regime has sown instability in the region, increasing its fragility, especially for vulnerable and marginalized communities. Therefore, warning about the rising levels of violence now does not mean that the former regime was protecting LGBTQIA+ individuals; rather, it actively contributed to their suffering.

Founder and Executive Director of the Guardians of Equality Movement

Since the fall of the regime, coordinators at the Guardians of Equality Movement have documented a strange phenomenon that has intermittently appeared on LGBTQIA+ individuals' private social networks. Fake accounts have been posting photos of others while exposing their gender identities, accompanied by defamatory statements and accusations.

The organization has been unable to determine the exact motives behind this trend. However, it believes that panic and fear of the unknown have spread within the community due to shifts in power and waves of false information flooding social media platforms.

Our community members are anxiously awaiting the outcomes of the ongoing changes, as fears of the unknown prevail within society.

Field Coordinator of the Guardians of Equality Movement in Damascus.

LGBTQIA+ Individuals: Ongoing Chapters of Violence

Instability has been the defining theme of life for Syrians for over 14 years. However, the consequences of this instability have been even more severe for LGBTQIA+ individuals from Syria, including those who have attempted to escape beyond the country's borders.

Sandy, a Syrian trans woman, crossed her country's borders in 2012, seeking refuge in Beirut after enduring domestic violence due to the rejection of her identity. However, there, she faced new forms of persecution and violence. With deep sorrow, she recounts being sexually assaulted by the landlord of the property she was living in, resulting in severe physical injuries. Following the attack, she was forcibly evicted and left homeless, living on the streets for more than two months.

These events, along with the psychological trauma Sandy endured, had a profound impact on her physical and mental health. The loss of her identity documents further complicated her situation, making it even more difficult for her to access essential services and legal assistance.

The young Kurdish Yazidi man, Yazan (a fictitious name), never expected that the scenario of his deportation from Turkey would escalate to the point of multiple sexual assaults. As soon as he crossed the Syrian border from the northwest last year, after being deported by Turkish authorities to his hometown of Afrin, one of the security checkpoints discovered his sexual orientation by inspecting his phone. He was then arrested and taken to the security center in the Azaz area, north of Aleppo.

Yazan was charged with "engaging in sex with men for money" and was detained for four months, during which he endured a journey of psychological and physical suffering that left lasting negative effects on his mental and physical health. As he tells us:

Prison guards took turns beating, torturing, and sexually assaulting me.

The young man was released after paying a bail of \$300 on December 12, 2024. Later, the court sentenced him to either pay a fine of \$1,000 or leave the country within a year from the date of his arrest.

Yazan's suffering did not end there! After his release, he learned of his mother's death. He wanted to attend her funeral but was unable to due to receiving death threats from his family. He knew all too well the seriousness of these threats, as he had survived a brutal attack by his brother in May 2024. He was stabbed multiple times in his back and side, leaving him hospitalized for nearly a month, as he recounts.

Bervan, a trans woman from Idlib

Bervan is currently struggling to survive with her elderly mother in a displaced persons camp in rural Idlib. Her journey of transitioning from a man to a woman has not been easy. She was married to a woman when she was still a man, and after her identity was discovered by her family and relatives, she faced numerous incidents of violence, bullying, and death threats.

Through its protection department, the organization was able to find her a home, covering the costs of transportation, the first month's rent, and the security deposit. However, she is still in a difficult financial situation due to her inability to work and the accumulating debts she faces.

In an instant, life can turn into a nightmare

Aamir, a Syrian young man living in Aleppo who benefited from the cash-for-education program provided by the Guardians of Equality Movement, found himself scared and anxious during a verbal altercation with a hospital guard in the early days of the liberation, when he was rushing his father to a hospital in the area.

He recounts what went through his mind during a verbal altercation with one of the masked guards, after the guard asked Aamir to step away from his mother and sister, claiming it was for "separation" and warning them that the "Al-amir" would impose a punishment of 100 lashes on Aamir if he was seen with them.

The questions that kept running through his mind during the argument were: "What if he searches my phone and finds out my gender identity? Things could spiral out of control." This incident eerily reminds us how daily life can turn into a nightmare for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

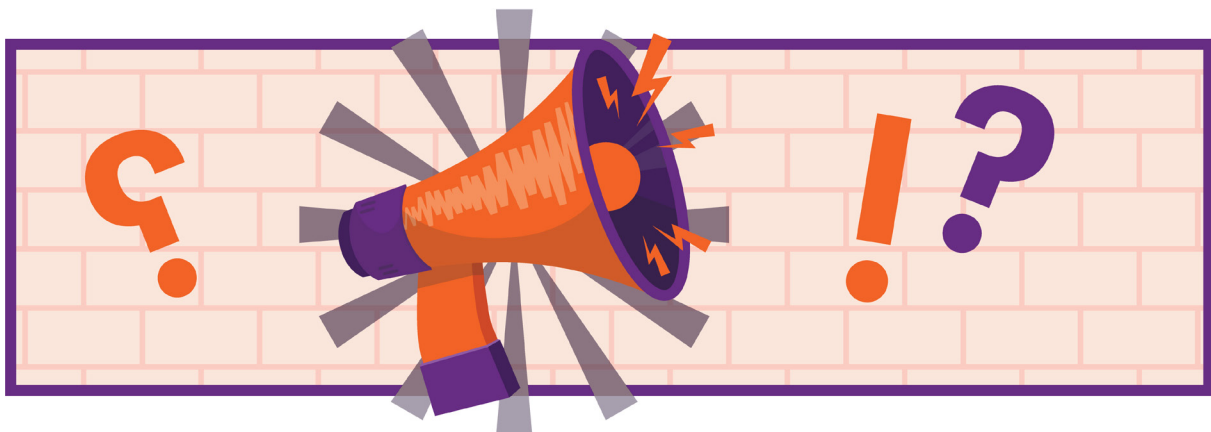
Fake News and the Domino Effect

The historical turning point in Syria on December 8, 2024, was accompanied by a wave of fake, misleading, and false news, as social media platforms became flooded with inaccurate news

stories. A study by the World Health Organization reveals that more than 50% of internet users in 24 countries rely on social networks as a source for following news and updates. The study also indicates that many of these users determine the credibility of news based on the level of engagement it receives.

In the Syrian queer context, the impact of rumors about campaigns to hunt down and target LGBTQIA+ individuals in Homs in central Syria resembled the effect of dominoes, leading to a chain reaction of panic. This rumor was fueled by news of the murder and disappearance of several young Syrian men, who were said to be LGBTQIA+ individuals.

While news of killings and disappearances in Syria has been routine for the past 14 years, with nearly 50 civilian victims reported in the first ten days of this year, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, investigations by GEM concluded that the report about the “hunting and targeting of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Homs” was inaccurate and false. As a result, the organization worked through a network of contacts and reporters on the ground to debunk and prevent the spread or promotion of any false or misleading news, based on a security perspective to avoid drawing attention from the Syrian street and stirring up incitement against the LGBTQIA+ community.



The organization verified the identity of one of the missing individuals and one of the victims, and took care to delete the missing person’s account on the dating app used by the LGBTQIA+ community in Syria. However, it found no evidence to confirm the first individual’s death or the other’s disappearance based on their gender identity, especially given the objective reasons for the security chaos in Homs and the occurrence of familial revenge operations due to the shift in authorities.

The Guardians of Equality Movement officially requested that the management of several apps used by LGBTQIA+ individuals in Syria enhance security and protection measures. The organization is still collaborating with international organizations to explore the best ways to strengthen protection measures for users.

A report by France 24 in French quoted the director of the Syrian “Takkad” platform, which specializes in detecting false news in the Syrian context, commenting on what the report described as a wave of fake and misleading news about Syria that has spread recently. “The goal of this news is to disrupt the fragile transition efforts and peacebuilding in Syria,” he said. He added, “The main topics of fake news often revolve around societal divisions, identity-based narratives, and false accusations of violence by the new administration.”

The humanitarian situation and challenges of humanitarian response

Our field response over the past three years has demonstrated the difficulty of reaching LGBTQIA+ individuals in Syria, and vice versa—the difficulty these individuals face in accessing services and humanitarian aid. Many of them also fear revealing their identity.

LGBTQIA+ individuals in Syria face significant difficulties in receiving aid, and delivering support can sometimes be extremely dangerous.

The organization recognized this challenge through its experience during the [earthquake](#) and, thanks to exceptional efforts, was able to overcome many obstacles. Today, it continues to struggle to ensure that aid reaches those who need it among sexual and gender minorities while taking security and protection considerations into account.

According to experts, LGBTQIA+ individuals in Syria face a range of challenges and dangers, especially those who are visibly out. These include denial of education, employment, and humanitarian aid, as well as social stigma, the risk of arrest, abduction, torture, or even execution.



Previously, the Guardians of Equality Movement successfully developed empowerment and advocacy plans while carefully considering the complexities and sensitivities of intervention. The organization has implemented well-structured programs such as capacity building, protection, emergency response, and support for local organizations serving LGBTQIA+ individuals in the Middle East, particularly Syrian refugees. Today, it is focused on implementing programs aimed at empowering LGBTQIA+ individuals, but this effort faces several challenges:



In Damascus

The field coordinator of the Guardians of Equality Movement in Damascus and its countryside observes that, despite the removal of the fear of arrest by the previous regime for LGBTQIA+ individuals, a sense of caution and fear of the unknown still lingers within some groups. “This is evident in changes in clothing styles and the avoidance of wearing accessories.”

Although the space for communication, flexibility, and access to information has expanded compared to the past, our coordinator in Damascus expresses concern over the uncertainty of the situation: “There is a margin of ease, but no one knows how long it will last.”

Needs and Priorities

The field coordinator in Damascus emphasized that the top priority now is establishing communication networks and providing psychological, social, and financial support. Additionally, facilitating asylum and resettlement applications in countries that uphold the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, intersex individuals, trans people, and non-binary individuals is crucial.

He also highlighted the following needs:

- Empowerment, education, and raising awareness among LGBTQIA+ individuals first.
- Increasing public awareness of human rights and gender issues.



Northwest Syria

LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to face significant challenges following the fall of the Syrian regime, exacerbated by shifts in power and security chaos. This was emphasized by the coordinator of the Guardians of Equality Movement in northern Syria, who noted that the risks of reaching LGBTQIA+ individuals in these areas remain unchanged. Since northwest Syria has long been under opposition control, LGBTQIA+ individuals there remain “cautious,” and communication, visibility, or gatherings are “extremely difficult—if not impossible.”

We look at everything happening around us with hope, but we are certain that the change we seek will not happen today. That is why we continue our work despite the harshest conditions and the most difficult times.

Coordinator of the Guardians of Equality Movement in Northwest Syria.

Needs and Priorities

Our coordinator in Northwest Syria prioritizes psychological and gender-specific support, as the LGBTQIA+ community continues to face additional psychological and social crises due to the deterioration of conditions caused by the Syrian war:

“It is also crucial to have a humanitarian response that addresses the needs of LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly displaced persons who have lost their homes. We must start with the most affected areas and camps.”

Additionally, the following needs are highlighted:

- Assistance with transportation and repair services.
- Economic and social empowerment.
- Financial support for the poorest.



Hama

We are at risk of being threatened or killed at any moment by our family, the community, and security forces.

Rayan, a gay Syrian man living in Hama.

Rayan, a young gay man living in Hama, shares with us the situation of the LGBTQIA+ community in his city. He describes the material condition of the community as acceptable: “While most of us live in a state of material sufficiency, we are severely lacking in the feeling of security.” As a result, he believes that providing legal protection for LGBTQIA+ individuals should be a priority in the current phase: “We are at risk of being threatened or killed at any moment by our family, the community, or even by individuals with some form of security affiliation.”

In response to our question about whether he has faced harassment in Syria due to his gender identity or witnessed violations against the LGBTQIA+ community, he said, “Naturally, members of our community in Hama are afraid of being visible in public, and we meet in secret.” Therefore, he has not experienced or witnessed any harassment. However, he shared that he was physically attacked in Beirut, Lebanon, during a visit there earlier: “We were at a café in Beirut when a group of soldiers from the so-called ‘Soldiers of God’ attacked us. We were a large group of LGBTQIA+ individuals.”

Rayan expresses his concerns about the new security reality, seeing it as more difficult due to the Islamic nature of the new regime. He adds, “Under the previous regime, bribes could be paid if you were detained. But for these people, we are nothing but a black mark.” Rayan also shares warnings he received from his friends about traveling to Homs due to reports that speak of “luring individuals from the community through dating apps.”



Homs

To gain insight into the situation in Homs and the most urgent needs for sexual and gender minorities in Syria, we contacted a Syrian academic from the LGBTQIA+ community, who preferred to remain anonymous. He recently conducted a field visit in Syria, focusing on the Homs and Idlib governorates, and shared his perspective on the needs in order of importance:

- Sexual education and awareness campaigns
- Financial support for the poorest
- Providing job opportunities through empowerment projects and sustainable local development
- Offering university scholarships within Syria
- Vocational and creative training courses



Syrian Coast

In the Syrian coastal area, our field coordinator pointed out that they are currently relying entirely on the internet to reach and understand the situation of LGBTQIA+ individuals. He noted that this situation applies to all members of the community:

Due to fear, LGBTQIA+ individuals in Latakia and Tartus are currently exercising caution.

He also expressed concerns that the inability of LGBTQIA+ individuals to meet in person could have negative effects on their mental health, highlighting the psychological difficulties many are facing, especially as many have stopped working and studying.



The Field Situation

The region witnessed military clashes marked by severe violations against civilians. The violence erupted on March 5 when remnants of the former regime launched attacks against internal security forces of the current Syrian government in Latakia and Tartus. The situation deteriorated over consecutive days, resulting in a humanitarian disaster, with thousands displaced. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the death toll has reached 878, including 225 civilians, 204 security forces, and 449 civilians and unarmed fighters.

The Syrian Ministry of Defense has faced accusations of committing violations during military operations against remnants of the former regime in Latakia and Tartus. While the Syrian presidency acknowledged abuses by its security forces and vowed to hold perpetrators accountable, activists reported the involvement of non-state armed groups in targeting civilians. Meanwhile, a committee was formed to investigate crimes committed on the Syrian coast.

In its first statement after being established, Yasser Al-Farhan, a member of the fact-finding committee, stated that the committee had begun its work on the ground and would submit its findings to the country's president.

The coordinator of the Guardians of Equality Movement in the Syrian coast suffered damage to his home due to military operations and clashes, with armed groups looting its contents. Fearing assassination due to his Alawite identity, he was forced to flee with his family. He confirmed heavy security presence in predominantly Alawite neighborhoods, which remain deserted, with homes abandoned and commercial properties damaged.

Meanwhile, many families continue to suffer from a difficult humanitarian situation, according to the field coordinator in the coastal region. Many of them are taking shelter in agricultural groves and caves in the mountains, while media cameras have documented young men and families crossing the Syrian border toward Lebanon.



The displacement crisis continues, with the number of refugees fleeing to northern Lebanon surpassing 21,000. Urgent protection requests to the Guardians of Equality Movement from the Syrian coast have surged, with all applicants expressing terror over displacement and siege.

“The situation after what happened on the coast is catastrophic. Thank God we’re still alive! But we die a thousand deaths every day.”

A beneficiary of the services of the Guardians of Equality Movement describes the situation on the Syrian coast.

LGBTQIA+ individuals in Syria often face heightened risks during military escalations or humanitarian crises.

Meanwhile, Syrians have expressed solidarity with the coastal events. Protests inside and outside Syria demanded accountability for perpetrators and condemned crimes against civilians. Local initiatives, including Wasl Network, the Houran Team, and the Idlibi Platform, have launched humanitarian campaigns to provide aid and support.

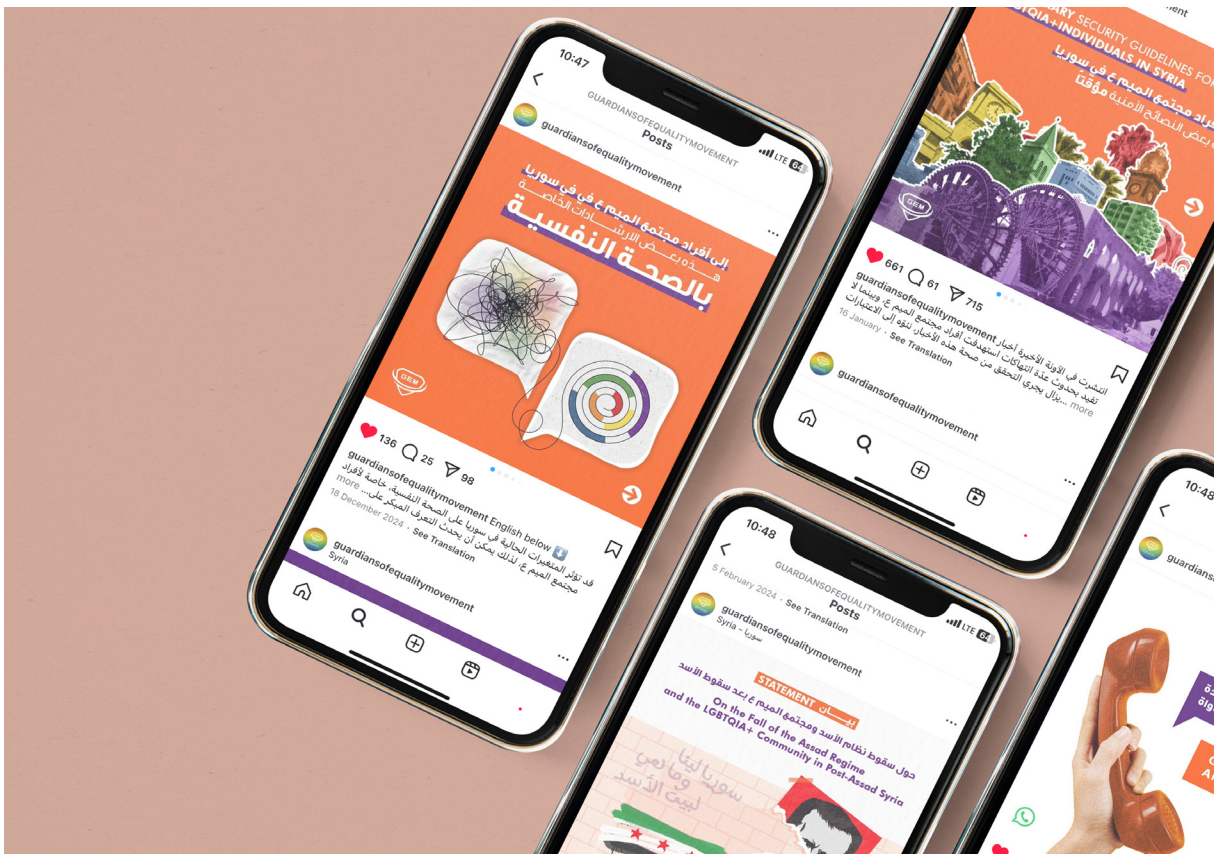
GEM Response

Since the early hours of the escalation that led to the collapse of the previous regime, the Guardians of Equality Movement launched an urgent and comprehensive response upon receiving hundreds of requests via email and their online platforms regarding protection services, resettlement, mental health support, and more. The number of requests submitted to the organization increased by 60%, alongside rising security vulnerabilities as one of the consequences of the change in power.

Simultaneously, the organization's team in the documentation and advocacy departments has been working on designing intervention plans that align with the changes resulting from the shift in authority.

The emergency response covered many areas, such as:

- Protection and digital security services
- Urgent transportation and shelter services
- Advocacy and urgent reports



Stages of the GEM's Response to LGBTQIA+ Individuals After the Fall of the Assad Regime

Rapid Response

This phase lasts from the moment of the regime's collapse up to three months. During this stage, the organization focuses on providing emergency financial aid, case management, psychological support to prevent post-traumatic stress disorders and psychological trauma, as well as short-term food and shelter assistance.

Emergency Response

This phase lasts from 9 to 15 months after the fall of the regime, depending on the security context. During this phase, the Guardians of Equality Movement will focus on providing medium-term assistance such as shelter, psychosocial support, expanding the scope of rapid response efforts, and creating activities similar to the rapid response phase, including:

- Emergency financial aid
- Food baskets
- Ready-to-eat meals
- Safe and innovative shelter solutions

Recovery

The Guardians of Equality Movement is already planning for the recovery phase. Based on previous experiences, data, and insights gained from emergency management, the organization has developed its perspective on the importance of planning for the recovery phase, as follows:

- Specialized mental health programs for trauma.
- Capacity-building programs for active organizations and service providers to work sensitively with individuals regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).
- Livelihood and capacity-building programs.
- Shelter support programs for individuals who have lost their homes.
- Social support programs and peacebuilding between communities.

Lack of Funding Hinders Adequate Response

In an extensive [study](#) by the COAR Center, funded by the European Union, it is suggested that one of the approaches to assist Syrian LGBTQIA+ individuals in the short term involves capacity-building programs, supporting local and regional organizations, implementing measures to improve safety and protection, and focusing on sexual culture, health, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The study also found that, in the long term, it is crucial to focus simultaneously on advocacy and raising awareness.

Only 1.3% of international development aid directed towards LGBTQIA+ issues goes to the Middle East, according to [research](#) by Funders For LGBT Issues and the Global Philanthropy Project. This indicates a funding gap for operations aimed at empowering and advocating for the LGBTQIA+ community and providing humanitarian assistance to its members.

Donate to Our Campaign:



Empowerment and Awareness

The staff at the Guardians of Equality Movement are working hard to create plans that align with the changing realities in Syria. As a result, empowerment, development projects, and sexual awareness, education, and knowledge dissemination have been placed as top priorities. The importance of these efforts lies in:

- Enhancing the mental and social well-being of LGBTQIA+ individuals
- Implementing capacity-building programs and encouraging active participation in community-building for the future
- Improving the general attitude towards LGBTQIA+ issues, contributing to changing negative perceptions and taking steps toward a safer and more just society
- Providing legal protection and building support and advocacy networks
- Improving the living, educational, and professional standards of LGBTQIA+ individuals
- Raising awareness about safe sexual practices within the LGBTQIA+ community

Economic Prosperity and the LGBTQIA+ Community

In conclusion, here is a summary of an extensive [study](#) by the World Bank that shows the strong connection between economic prosperity in a country and non-discriminatory laws. The study found that the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals can enhance productivity, contribute to the economy, and foster prosperity. In the Syrian context, simply decriminalizing LGBTQIA+ individuals could lead to noticeable economic improvements in a short period.

The research provided empirical results about the link between equal opportunities for sexual and gender minorities and development, where “wealthier countries tend to be more inclusive” of members of these communities.



Recommendations

To Empower and Protect the LGBTQIA+ Community in Syria: Contributing to Stability, Security, and Nation-Building.

Recognizing the LGBTQIA+ community as an integral part of Syrian society and as key contributors across all sectors in achieving prosperity and progress in Syria, this paper recommends the following actions:

- Explicit inclusion of the Syrian LGBTQIA+ community in donors' humanitarian policies for Syria.
- Donors should set clear percentage targets for the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals, acknowledging that they represent approximately 10% of the population.
- The presence of LGBTQIA+ individuals should be considered in reconstruction support efforts as an indicator of stability, freedom, and dignity.
- Open specialized resettlement programs for LGBTQIA+ Syrians at risk.
- Criminalize all forms of torture in Syria, especially those rooted in gender-based prejudice.
- Support LGBTQIA+ initiatives in building civil peace in Syria, as this community possesses unique capacities to bridge divides across fragmented Syrian communities.
- Ensure both direct and indirect inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community in peacebuilding and recovery efforts.
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حركة حراس المساواة
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