

SECURITY PROVISION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN POST-WAR SYRIA:
A SECURITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT AMONG THE SYRIAN DIASPORA IN GERMANY

Assessing Security Providers in Syria before the War

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Berlin & Beirut
2020

This security needs assessment aims to contribute to open access information on good governance and security sector reform in Syria. It was specifically designed to understand citizens' needs and identify entry points for citizen-oriented security sector reform efforts. It analyses how the Syrian security system would need to change in order for Syrians to feel safe and secure in post-war Syria.

The survey's online questionnaire consists of 63 questions in Modern Standard Arabic. Between March and August 2018, 619 Syrians living in Germany completed the questionnaire. They came from all 14 Syrian governorates. On average, participants were 29 years old (born in 1989).

This working paper is part of a series. For an overview of the survey's objectives, content, and participants, please refer to the Introduction to the Survey and Sample Group Composition, which may be found along with all other working papers by scanning the QR code or accessing the link below:



<https://www.lanosec.de/ssr-survey-syria/>

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Published in 2020 by Lanosec and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin, Beirut.
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This publication has been financed and supported by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. The views and opinions expressed in this publication are solely those of the original authors. They do not necessarily represent those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.13457>

Executive Summary

This working paper assesses the strengths and weaknesses of Syrian security providers before the war, and offers an overview of their most important deficits. Together with an analysis of citizens' needs, this assessment is key to gaining a comprehensive picture of the security sector.

Survey results

According to survey participants, security providers did not respond to the needs of citizens and provided low-quality services before the war. They lacked training and equipment, and their roles and responsibilities overlapped. There was a strong and unanimous perception that they did not apply the law equally and fairly to all citizens.

Deficits linked to unequal and unfair treatment were the most prevalent. Security providers suffered especially from *Favouritism/nepotism*, *Bribery*, *Abuse of power*, and *Widespread corruption*. Shortcomings dealing with transparency, communication, and the image of security providers followed subsequently. Institutional deficits, for example, *Lack of competence*, *Overlapping powers*, and *Inadequate training and education* were perceived as less important. Security providers' *Lack of resources* was rated the least important deficiency.

Conclusions

Current political developments in Syria, and the likelihood that the regime will win the war militarily, limit the prospects for comprehensively reforming the Syrian security sector. However, it is important for international actors working in and on Syria to keep in mind how Syrians envisage an ideal security sector for post-war Syria, and to analyse the deficits and dysfunctions of Syria's security sector before the war. Without taking these into consideration, long-term stability and peace will be doomed to fail. This, therefore, prompts several recommendations for

further academic research as well as policy analysis and development:

- » **Call for and support citizen-oriented security provision.** State security providers should respond to the needs of all Syrians. An inclusive debate on how to achieve this is necessary. Strategies for clearly distinguishing the core mandates of the security forces should be developed and discussed in transparent forums that allow civil society representatives to share ideas, proposals, and security needs.
- » **Map and evaluate all pre-war Syrian security institutions** and their transformations during the war. Existing research, particularly assessments of deficits and challenges, must be further complemented. In addition, the current legal framework regarding equal treatment of all citizens should also be revised in line with international standards. Clear recommendations must be developed on how to adjust the legal framework and ensure the implementation of measures to protect all genders, minorities, beliefs, etc.
- » **Advocate for the elimination of all forms of corruption, bribery, favouritism, and nepotism** in all state institutions, including the security sector. As a first step, the current legal framework needs to be analysed in that regard. Once reviewed, recommendations should be developed on how to adjust this framework based on international standards and on how to implement its provisions.

Assessing Security Providers in Syria before the War

For decades before the war, Syrian security institutions were accused of repression and violence against citizens. The abusive security sector contributed heavily to the outbreak of the civil war and the humanitarian crisis that followed. Understanding the modus operandi, the structure, and the conditions of the Syrian security institutions before the war is important to develop a more comprehensive picture of the sector, helping to grasp the root causes that led to the war and the preconditions that shaped the role of state security providers therein. Assessing Syria's pre-war security providers, considering their strengths, weaknesses, and persistent deficits, combined with an analysis of citizens' needs is key to designing sustainable security sector reform programmes. This paper assesses security providers in Syria before the war. Core aspects revolve around the questions of whether they delivered security services according to the needs of citizens; and if they demonstrated specific deficits.

Neglected security needs and low-quality service provision for citizens

85% of all survey participants rejected the statement (61% fully disagreed and 24% somewhat disagreed) that Syrian state security providers (the army, police, and intelligence agencies) responded to the needs of citizens before the war (Question 19, Figure 1). The security sector was either unable or unwilling to do so. Instead, it appeared to be designed to fulfil other purposes, such as the protection of the regime and the ruling elite.

Table 1 categorises fully disagree and somewhat disagree answers according to age, level of education, and last area of residence in Syria. The older or the more educated survey participants were, the more they fully disagreed with the statement. Survey participants from the Governorate of Aleppo apparently saw their security needs less addressed by security providers than respondents from the Governorate of Damascus or other governorates. Perhaps security providers in the Governorate of Aleppo were more repressive and less citizen-oriented, resulting in this perception. Throughout the entire survey, participants

Figure 1
Before the war in Syria, security providers responded to the needs of the Syrian people. [Q19]

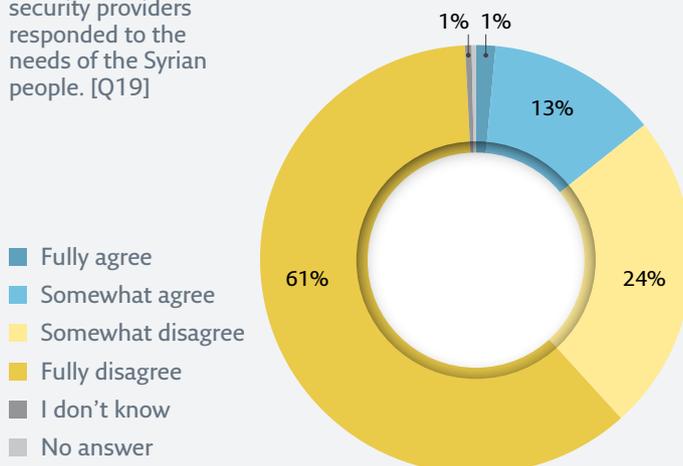
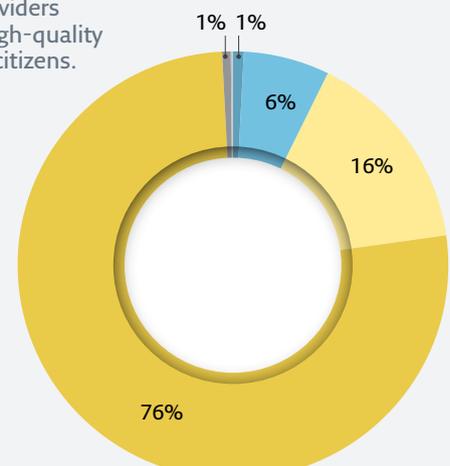


Figure 2
Before the war in Syria, security providers delivered high-quality services to citizens. [Q20]



from the Governorate of Aleppo often responded differently than those from other governorates, including Damascus (see, for example, Working Paper 2: Insecurity and Injustice in Syria before and during the War and Working Paper 4: Experiences with the Syrian Justice Sector before and during the War). This suggests that the behaviour of security forces in Aleppo differed from that in other governorates. Further research would need to be undertaken to validate these hypotheses.

Table 1: Results of Questions 19 & 20 according to age, level of education, area of residence, and sex [Q19 & Q20]
Values: Fully disagree & somewhat disagree

	Before the war in Syria, security providers responded to the needs of the Syrian people. [Q19]		Before the war in Syria, security providers delivered high-quality services to citizens. [Q20]	
	Fully disagree	Somewhat disagree	Fully disagree	Somewhat disagree
Age				
Born before 1980	72%	22%	84%	10%
Born 1980-1985	55%	28%	75%	17%
Born 1986-1990	69%	15%	81%	10%
Born 1991-1994	61%	28%	78%	16%
Born 1995-1997	54%	25%	68%	22%
Born after 1997	45%	35%	68%	23%
Level of education				
Secondary school without certificate	54%	30%	74%	17%
Baccalaureate	59%	25%	75%	17%
Technical diploma	56%	26%	69%	21%
Bachelor's	67%	21%	79%	14%
Master's	62%	19%	83%	9%
Area of residence				
Governorate of Aleppo	66%	21%	78%	15%
Governorate of Damascus	56%	28%	70%	23%
Other governorates	62%	23%	79%	12%
Sex				
Men	61%	25%	78%	14%
Women	59%	19%	63%	27%

In addition to not feeling protected in their individual security needs, survey participants were also dissatisfied with the quality of security services provided. The combination of both aspects indicates that security providers were protecting and serving citizens inadequately. 92% of all survey participants responded negatively to the statement that security providers (the army, police, and intelligence agencies) delivered high-quality services to citizens before the war (Question 20, Figure 2). Only 1% were fully satisfied with the service provision.

The distribution of responses by age and educational background is similar to that observed in the previous question (see Table 1). Although younger participants largely rejected the statement, older participants

were even more critical. The same applied to educational backgrounds: from secondary school without certificate to master's, fully disagree answers gradually increased. One explanation might be that participants with a higher educational background had different or greater service provision expectations. Also, more men than women took a critical position towards the quality of service provision. To explore the question of whether security providers were unwilling or unable to meet citizens' expectations of high-quality services, it is worth looking at the specific deficits of the security sector in the next section.

Deficits in training and equipment of security providers

Only 16% of survey participants responded positively to the statement that security providers were well trained and equipped before the war (see Figure 3; fully agree and somewhat agree answers combined). Adding this to the fact that security providers did not respond to the needs of citizens and provided low-quality services, they were also limited in their ability to operate, due to inadequate training and equipment.

Once again, women were less critical of the training and equipment of security providers than men: 58% of all men fully disagreed, compared to 37% of all women. It is possible that men represented their families more often at government institutions, including the security providers, than women. While physically visiting offices or police stations they may have noticed a lack of equipment, or inappropriate behaviour caused by inadequate training. In addition, men may have observed and experienced security providers' poor levels of training and equipment during compulsory military service. Another possible reason could be that men hold, or express, more negative views of the security sector in general than women, and thus are more critical of its training and equipment.

A discriminatory security sector

98% of respondents rejected the statement that security providers (the army, police, and intelligence agencies) applied the law equally and fairly to all citizens (Figure 4; fully disagree and somewhat disagree answers combined). Compared to the three previous questions (Questions 19, 20, and 21), where results were split between a large majority and a detectable minority, Question 22 yielded a negligible minority.

Figure 3
Before the war in Syria, security providers were well trained and equipped. [Q21]

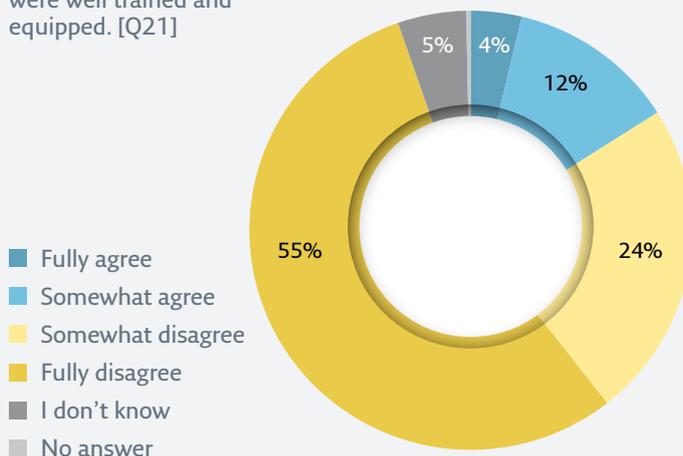
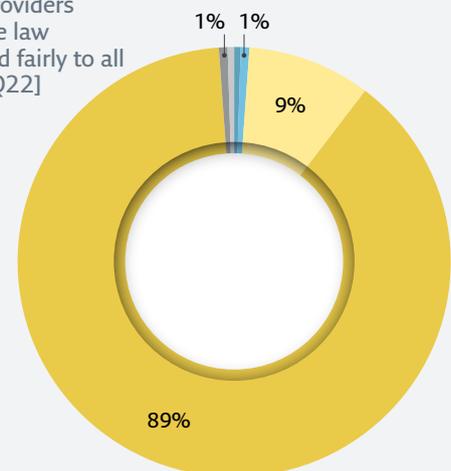
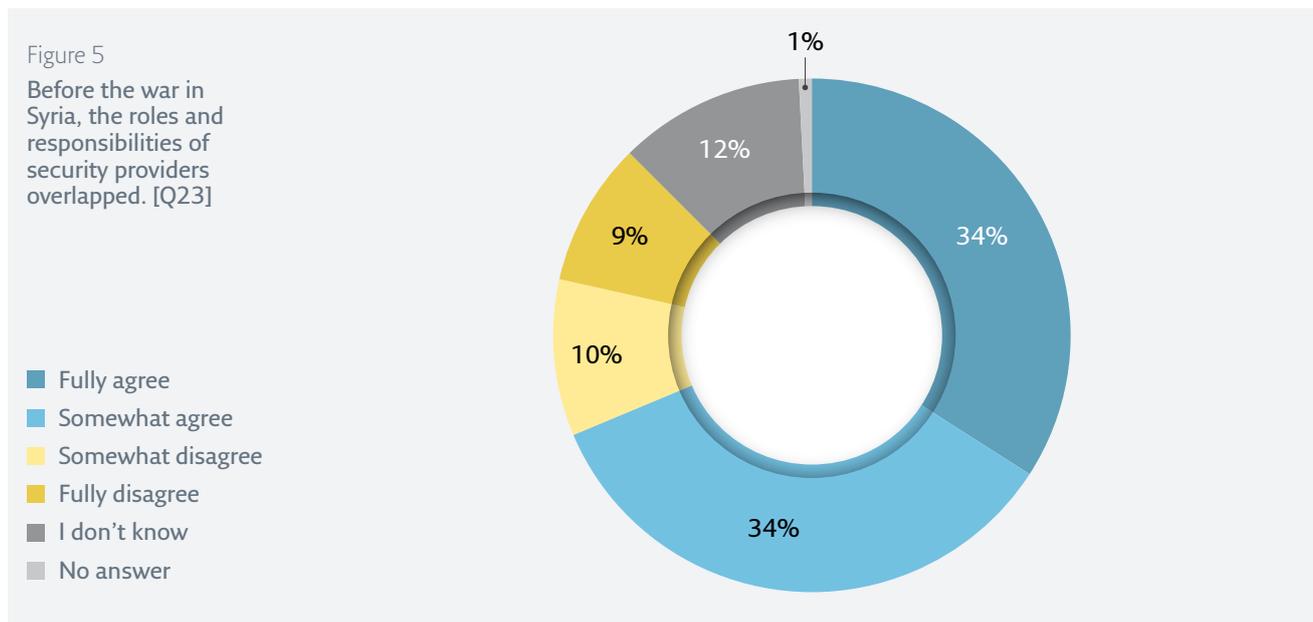


Figure 4
Before the war in Syria, security providers applied the law equally and fairly to all citizens. [Q22]





Consequently, nearly all participants shared the opinion that security providers acted in a discriminatory and unfair manner, giving preference to certain citizens or groups of citizens over others. This implies a very significant distrust of security providers on the part of Syrian citizens. It touches upon crucial principles for functioning security sectors, such as non-discrimination, the rule of law, transparency, and accountability (for participants' assessment of the characteristics of a functioning security sector, refer to Working Paper 6: General Notions of Ideal Security Provision).

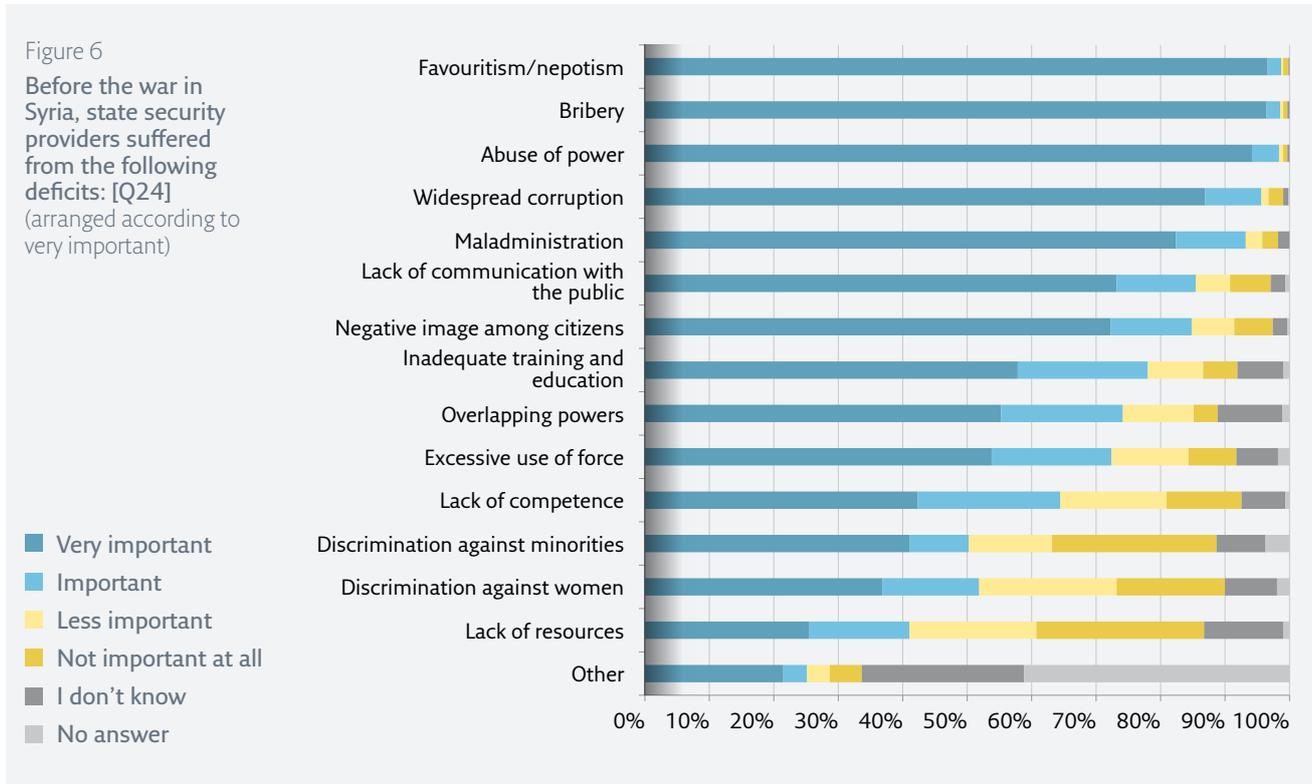
Overlapping roles and responsibilities of security providers

As shown in Figure 5, survey participants demonstrated highly contrasting opinions of the overlapping roles and responsibilities of security providers (the army, police, and intelligence agencies). More than two thirds believe that the roles and responsibilities of the security providers overlap, although one fifth disagree. It may be that the mandates of security providers were unclear to the extent that it was not possible to associate a certain mode of operation or clothing with a specific actor. Possibly, there were so many security actors for a limited set of tasks that an overlap seemed inevitable. Additional research needs to elucidate the reasons for this perceived overlap. For further information on participants' knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of selected security institutions, refer to Working Paper 5: Transparency of the Syrian Security Sector.

Responses to this statement were similarly divided between male and female survey participants. A higher percentage of men believed that security providers' roles and responsibilities overlapped (71% for men vs. 49% for women). Women, meanwhile, were more likely than men to select *I don't know* (31% of all women vs. 9% of all men).

Specific deficits of security providers before the war

After assessing the image of Syrian security providers (the army, police, and intelligence agencies) before the war in five statement questions, survey participants rated fourteen potential deficits of security providers in detail (Figure 6).



The four most important deficits all concern discriminatory practices by security providers. They reach more than 95% of very important and important answers aggregated: *Favouritism/nepotism* (in hiring processes, or in terms of privileged treatment); *Bribery*; *Abuse of power*; and *Widespread corruption*. Syrians faced a dilemma. On a systemic level, corruption was denounced as detrimentally impacting the effectiveness and functioning of the Syrian security sector long before the war. However, the only solution for individuals to create security in an environment of favouritism, bribery, and corruption, was very often to partake in and make use of the same corrupt system (see Working Paper 1: Safe Spaces and Protection in Syria before and during the War).

Again, these results reflect a tremendous lack of trust from participants that the Syrian security sector applies the law equally to all citizens. At the same time, survey participants placed less importance on discrimination against certain groups of citizens, such as women or minorities. It appears this issue was denounced especially by those participants who felt discriminated in Syria before the war: among the most common and serious types of insecurity and injustice, discrimination ranks first for answers in the open-ended variable. All of these deficits need to be addressed on all levels; not only on the technical or individual levels, but also that of the senior strategic leadership. They are likely to be prevalent across all Syrian state institutions, and to be manifestations of a certain institutional culture. Reform efforts, especially for these four deficits, should be components of a larger, comprehensive reform aimed at good and effective governance, rather than being addressed only intra-sectorally within the security sector.

The second most important group are deficits linked to transparency, communication, and the image of security providers. 85% (very important and important answers combined) of survey participants stated that there was a *Lack of communication with the public* and that security providers had a *Negative image among citizens*. It is possible that survey participants had traumatic experiences with security providers themselves before and during the war (for further information on state repression and violence, consult Working Paper 2: Insecurity and Injustice in Syria before and during the War). Security institutions may have contacted citizens primarily for surveillance and information collection, instead of reaching out to them for citizen-oriented

purposes, such as asking about their needs or preventative community policing. The government presumably promoted an overall lack of transparency among security providers. Further research on this topic should be conducted. For a set of recommendations regarding transparency, refer to Working Paper 5: Transparency of the Syrian Security Sector.

Institutional deficits are the least important, except for *Maladministration*, which reaches the highest importance within this group. *Inadequate training and education* as well as *Overlapping powers* are more important deficits than *Lack of competence*. Overall, these three rank mid-table. When looking at no importance (not important at all and less important) and importance (very important and important), more participants stated that security providers did not suffer from a *Lack of resources* before the war (46% vs. 41%).

Overall, survey participants felt unsafe and insecure, both before and during the war, and mostly placed responsibility for violence and repression on state security providers, especially intelligence agencies (see Working Paper 1: Safe Spaces and Protection in Syria before and during the War and Working Paper 2: Insecurity and Injustice in Syria before and during the War). Thus, it was surprising that *Excessive use of force* did not rank among the most important deficits. This might indicate how grave the other deficits were.

Table 2: Before the war in Syria, state security providers suffered from the following deficits: [Q24]
Value: Very important

	Share of all men	Share of all women
Favouritism/nepotism	97%	95%
Bribery	97%	96%
Abuse of power	95%	91%
Widespread corruption	88%	83%
Maladministration	84%	68%
Lack of communication with the public	75%	63%
Negative image among citizens	74%	59%
Inadequate training and education	61%	36%
Overlapping powers	57%	45%
Excessive use of force	53%	56%
Lack of competence	44%	31%
Discrimination against minorities	40%	45%
Discrimination against women	35%	49%
Lack of resources	26%	20%

Men and women shared approximately the same opinions regarding the deficits *Favouritism/nepotism*, *Bribery*, *Abuse of power*, and *Widespread corruption* (see Table 2). The largest difference, with 25 percentage points for very important answers, can be found for *Inadequate training and education* (61% vs. 36%). Again, men may have undergone compulsory military service and thus know a core security provider from the inside providing them with better knowledge about actual shortcomings. It also may be the case that men were in direct contact with security providers more often than women, in order to resolve conflicts or request assistance on behalf of their family members. This close contact might have revealed a lack of training or education of security officials. Also, potentially for the same reason, more men than women attributed high

importance to *Maladministration*. On the other hand, women criticised discrimination more strongly than men did. This may be linked to women's personal experiences dealing with security providers. For example, having fewer women serving in the security institutions could lead to a perception among women of being inadequately treated by male officers. In addition, more women than men found *Excessive use of force* and *Discrimination of minorities* to be very important deficits.

Recommendations

Current political developments in Syria, and the likelihood that the regime will win the war militarily, limit the prospects for comprehensively reforming the Syrian security sector so as to turn it from an oppressive regime-protecting sector into one that provides security in accordance with the needs of Syrian citizens. However, it is important for international actors working in and on Syria to keep in mind how Syrians envisage an ideal security sector for post-war Syria, and to analyse the deficits and dysfunctions of Syria's security sector before the war, which led to a huge lack of trust between citizens and state security institutions. Without taking these into consideration, any future approach for peacebuilding and establishing stability in Syria will be doomed to fail in the long run. This, therefore, prompts several recommendations for further academic research as well as policy analysis and development:

- » Call for and support citizen-oriented security provision. Citizens largely distrusted the Syrian security sector before the war, men even more than women. State security providers should respond to the needs of all. An inclusive debate on how to achieve this is necessary. Strategies for clearly distinguishing security forces' core mandates should be developed and discussed in transparent forums that allow civil society representatives to share their ideas, proposals, and security needs, even if such planning remains at the scenario level.
 - » Map all pre-war Syrian security institutions and their transformations during the war. Further complement existing research on them and assess their deficits and challenges. Develop recommendations based on identified citizen needs. Publish the results, also in Arabic, to increase transparency of the Syrian security sector and to initiate a debate on its reform among civilian stakeholders, e.g., diaspora groups outside the country or civilian delegations to peace negotiations.
 - » Revise the current legal framework regarding equal treatment of all citizens; men and boys, women and girls; based on international standards. Once reviewed, develop recommendations on how to adjust the legal framework so that it protects all sexes, minorities, beliefs, etc.
 - » Advocate for and work towards the elimination of all forms of corruption, bribery, favouritism, and nepotism in all state institutions, including security providers. As a first step, revise the current legal framework in that regard. Once reviewed, develop recommendations on how to adjust the legal framework based on international standards and on how to implement its provisions.
 - » It is not recommended to solve issues by further increasing the budget of the security sector. Lack of resources was a lesser issue for survey participants. From citizens' perspective, the available resources should rather be reallocated to correct prevalent deficits that negatively affect the citizen- and service-orientation of the security services. The ultimate goal should remain to better serve the security needs of Syrian women and girls, men and boys, and, hence, existing resources should be used accordingly.
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