



June 2026

Elections in the Northeast Pave the Way for Syrian Parliament to Convene, But Spark Debate About Representation

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Syria is now one step closer to operating its first post-Assad Parliament. On May 24, 2026, by-elections were held in the districts of Hassakeh, Qamishli, Al-Malikiyah and Ayn al-Arab, in the Northeast of the country. When the first round of voting happened, on October 5, 2025, these regions – which house a significant Kurdish population – were under the control of the Autonomous Administration in North and East Syria, meaning voting did not take place there. Thus, the elections were closely watched, as they represented a test of the AANES' integration into the central state, a process that began in January 2026 after the military collapse of the autonomous administration.

The May elections allowed for 11 seats of the People's Assembly to be filled. Among the elected candidates, six are Arabs, and five are Kurds. A "balanced" result that was praised by the government, but still drew criticism from many Kurdish parties, which argued that they were politically sidelined. Some members of other minorities, including Christians but also women, also expressed grievances regarding their (lack of) representation. Meanwhile, Transitional President Ahmad Al-Sharaa is expected to "correct" the weak representation of some groups, given that the transitional electoral law grants him the ability to appoint 70 MPs out of the total 210.

How it works

Syria began its parliamentary elections in October 2025, following a complicated indirect model criticised by some as undemocratic, but deemed necessary by others¹. The Parliament comprises 210 MPs, 70 of whom are appointed by the President. The 140 other seats are elected by a pool of voters selected by the government. These voters are supposed to be selected from the "notables" of each region and meet specific criteria: they should hold Syrian citizenship since before 2011 and be "acquainted with their regions." Selected voters also must not have a criminal conviction, must not currently or formerly be a member of the army or security forces, must be at least 25 years of age, must not hold an executive position within the state administration, must possess "good conduct and character," and must not express overt hostile positions towards any "local

¹ Mixed Reactions Following First Post-Assad Parliamentary Elections – The Syria Report
<https://syria-report.com/mixed-reactions-following-first-post-assad-parliamentary-elections/>

component,” i.e., sectarian or ethnic groups. Former MPs or ministers can serve on the electoral body only if they can prove they defected from the former regime².

Below is the distribution of seats per region³:

Governorate	District	Number of Seats
Aleppo	Total Aleppo	32
	Aleppo City (Jabal Semaan)	14
	Azaz	3
	Al-Bab	3
	Al-Safira and Deir Hafer	2
	Atareb	1
	Jarablus	1
	Afrin	3
	Ayn Arab	2
	Manbij	3
Rural Damascus	Total Rural Damascus	12
	Rural Damascus Centre and Yabroud	3
	Douma	3
	Al-Tall	1
	Qutaifah	1
	Nabek	1
	Darayya	1
	Zabadani	1
	Qatana	1
Homs	Total Homs	12
	Homs City	8
	Rastan	1
	Qusair and Mukharram	1
	Palmyra	1

² Explainer: Syria’s Upcoming Parliamentary Elections- The Syria Report
<https://syria-report.com/explainer-syrias-upcoming-parliamentary-elections/>

³ Decree No. 24 Setting the Distribution of the People’s Assembly Seats
<https://syria-report.com/decision-no-24-setting-the-distribution-of-peoples-assembly-seats-among-districts/>

	TalKalakh	1
Hama	Total Hama	12
	Hama City	5
	Suqaylabiyeh	2
	Salamieh	2
	Masyaf	2
	Mhardeh	1
Idlib	Total Idlib	12
	Idlib City	3
	Maarat Al-Numan	2
	Jisr Al-Shughour	2
	Harem	2
	Ariha	2
	Khan Sheikhoun	1
Deir-ez-Zor	Total Deir-ez-Zor	10
	Deir-ez-Zor	5
	Al-Boukamal	3
	Mayadeen	2
Damascus	Total Damascus	10
Hassakeh	Total Hassakeh	10
	Qamishli	4
	Hassakeh City	3
	Al-Malikiyah	2
	Ras Al-Ayn	1
Lattakia	Total Lattakia	7
	Lattakia City	3
	Jableh	2
	Qardaha	1
	Haffah	1
Daraa	Total Daraa	6
	Daraa City	3
	Izraa	2
	Sanamein	1

Raqqa	Total Raqqa	6
	Raqqa City	3
	Tel Abyad	2
	Tabqa (Al-Thawra)	1
Tartous	Total Tartous	5
	Tartous City	2
	Safita	1
	Banias	1
	Draikish and Sheikh Badr	1
Suweida	Total Suweida	3
	Suweida City	1
	Shahba	1
	Salkhad	1
Quneitra	Total Quneitra	3
	Quneitra City	2
	Fiq	1

Elections were held in most districts on October 5 last year. In March 2026, after the beginning of the integration process, elections were also held in the Raqqa governorate⁴. The governorate of Hassakeh and the district of Ayn Arab in Aleppo followed in May. Suweida, which is led by Druze spiritual leader Hikmat Al-Hijri, remains the only governorate where elections were not held.

Results of the May by-election

The by-election held in May filled 11 seats. In the district of Al-Malikiyah, only two candidates ran (one Arab and one Kurd), meaning they were elected by acclamation. Nawar Najmeh, spokesperson for the Higher Committee for the Election of the People's Assembly (HCEPA), hailed the vote as a "major success," citing exceptionally high participation among electoral college members — in some areas exceeding 96 or 97 percent." He argued that the turnout reflected a genuine desire to engage in the political process⁵.

However, some analysts have a critical view. A segment of the Kurdish population feels sidelined, as most of the winning Kurdish candidates are affiliated with the

⁴ Election results announced for Raqqa, Tabqa constituencies – SANA
<https://sana.sy/en/syria/2303542/>

⁵ Syrian election official says parliament set to convene after completion of voting – SANA
<https://sana.sy/en/syria/2318932/>

Kurdish National Council (KNC)⁶. This came after ten Kurdish parties – affiliated with the AANES, unlike the KNC - rejected Syria's transitional parliament formation, arguing their community would be “underrepresented” and demanding a quota of no less than 40 seats for Kurds⁷.

While, before 2011, KNC-affiliated parties were the most influential among the Kurdish community, the war changed the balance of power. The Union Democratic Party, known as PYD under its Kurdish acronym and the backbone of the AANES and its fighting force, the SDF, is now considered as influential, although its rapid collapse at the beginning of this year weakened its appeal.

In total, nine members of the Kurdish community have secured seats in Parliament throughout the electoral process so far. In an interview with news agency *Rudaw*, Fasla Youssef, MP for the region of Hassakeh, said she would wear the Kurdish traditional attire and take her parliamentary oath in the Kurdish language during the first session of Parliament⁸. Mrs. Youssef is a cadre of the KNC.

The fact that AANES' parties boycotted the elections raises questions about the integration process, although talks are still ongoing between Damascus and the Syrian Democratic Forces (military wing of the AANES). The latter is likely to be allocated seats as part of Sharaa's quota.

Criticism also came from some members of the Christian minority. Assyrian activist Suleiman Youssef told Syria TV that Christian candidates were effectively blocked by a coordinated Kurdish-Arab arrangement within the electoral colleges, and that at least one Assyrian candidate in Hassakeh was deliberately excluded. Committee spokesperson Nawar Najmeh – himself a Christian - acknowledged the gaps in Christian and women's representation but suggested they could be corrected through the 70 seats to be appointed by President Ahmad al-Sharaa, while rejecting the notion of ethnic or religious quotas in the electoral system.⁹

Contrary to Lebanon, where a specific number of seats is allocated to each community, or Jordan, where minorities get a minimum quota, Syria's election law does not provide any such allocation.

⁶ Syria's Northeast Elections Ignite Debate Over Kurdish and Christian Representation – The Syrian Observer (Translation from Syria TV)
<https://syrianobserver.com/syrian-actors/syrias-northeast-elections-ignite-debate-over-kurdish-and-christian-representation.html>

⁷ Kurdish Parties Reject Syria's New Parliament Mechanism, Warn of Marginalization – The Syrian Observer (Translation from Syria TV)
<https://syrianobserver.com/syrian-actors/kurdish-parties-reject-syrias-new-parliament-mechanism-warn-of-marginalization.html>

⁸ Interview with Rudaw - https://x.com/rudaw_arabic/status/2058625927974686759

⁹ Syria's Northeast Elections Ignite Debate Over Kurdish and Christian Representation – The Syrian Observer (Translation from Syria TV)
<https://syrianobserver.com/syrian-actors/syrias-northeast-elections-ignite-debate-over-kurdish-and-christian-representation.html>

President Sharaa is also likely to appoint the three MPs representing Suweida and correct the lack of representation of the Druze community that resulted from the postponement of the election in this area.

Mr Sharaa is expected to use his right to appoint 70 MPs to compensate for the under-represented groups - mainly, all the minorities and women. However, this also means that these groups will be politically indebted to the President, providing him with more political leverage.

While religious and ethnic minorities represent anywhere between 20 and 25 percent of the population, this does not translate into a similar share of elected MPs because of the geographical distribution of the population. Christians, for instance, are present almost across the whole territory, but wherever they are they represent a minority, making it much more difficult for Christian MPs to get elected.

Parliament ready to meet?

In that context, the inaugural session of the future Parliament is expected to take place in June. According to the Saudi pan-Arab news website *Asharq al-Awsat*, Syria's transitional administration has set a tentative date of June 8 for the first session of the new parliament. Sources told the news outlet that Sharaa's appointee list was "largely finalized" and has been shaped in part through negotiations with the Syrian Democratic Forces (the military branch of the AANES), with the government reportedly promising increased representation for eastern regions, potentially including more than ten figures from provinces previously under SDF control, alongside better representation of the Druze and Christian communities as well as women. The members of the HCEPA are also expected to be included among the presidential appointees¹⁰. Al-Modon, a Beirut-based news outlet, reported similar information¹¹.

Analysts hope that an operating parliament would finally be able to vote on bills that are key to the success of the political transition in Syria, including a political parties' law as well as other economic and political reforms. The budget, for instance, is supposed to be adopted by Parliament. Other prerogatives of the Parliament include ratifying international treaties and granting general amnesty.

¹⁰ Al-Sharaa's quota is ready'... and June 8 is the date for parliament's convening" - Asharq al-Awsat (in Arabic)

<https://aawsat.news/gf9r5>

¹¹ "The Syrian Jazira Elections Revive the Long-Delayed People's Assembly - Al-Modon (in Arabic)

<https://www.almodon.com/amp/arabworld/2026/05/25/%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B9%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B9%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AC%D9%84>

There is little hope, however, that the Parliament can serve as a counterpower to Ahmad Al-Sharaa, who has been ruling the country without checks and balances¹². The President has had a significant influence on the appointment and election of MPs. He appointed all the members of the HCEPA, who selected the notables who elected the MPS; and he will appoint directly 70 additional MPs.

The term of the Parliament, called "the People's Assembly" in Syria, is thirty months.

¹² "The Deferred Promise... The Transitional Phase in Syria and the Absent Political Parties Law" - Al-Majalla (in Arabic)
<https://www.majalla.com/node/328309>

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