



Flawed elections: The Syrian People's Assembly of October 2025

By Assaad Al Achi

Introduction

Syria witnessed a major historical defining moment on December 8, 2024. After 14 years of conflict and 54 years of rule, the Assad regime finally fell. What seemed impossible just a week before has finally happened and Syria is finally free. A military coalition led by Hayat Tahrir Al Sham (HTS: a designated terrorist organisation as per UNSCR 2253 that has ruled the Idlib enclave since 2016) overthrew the regime in an 11-day bloodless offensive marked by a new narrative wanting to be more inclusive and conciliatory.

This dramatic development brought with it an immense wave of hope coupled with fears and worries about the transition period. Key questions emerged: what will the new Syria look like? How will the new leadership in Damascus handle issues of representation, legitimacy, reunification and diversity, especially given its Salafi jihadi background? What new institutions will emerge and how will the country be governed?

The events of December 2024 ushered in a long-awaited transition process with key milestones among which the establishment of a new legislature to handle all legislative matters during the transition period. Early on the new rulers in Damascus communicated that it considered free and fair general elections as impossible in the current context and slowly defined an indirect election mechanism. However, many questions remained: what kind of legislature will be established? On what basis? Will it replicate the Shura Council model in Idlib (the enclave governed by HTS since 2016)?

This brief will look into the details of this mechanism: tools, processes, practices, and the results of the process. It will examine this mechanism from a five-tiered lens: how representative is the new legislature? How inclusive? How diverse? What are the processes in place to ensure transparency and accountability?

Finally, it will make recommendations for the future based on the results of the process and the analysis.

Brief background on Syria post 08/12/2024

The first major political step after the Assad regime fell was the "Victory Conference" of January 29, 2025. There were many speculations that a National Congress will be held however all these speculations proved false when Ahmad Al Sharaa gathered all armed factions allied to him during the December offensive to pledge allegiance and appoint him as interim president. Major decisions taken at the conference include:

- › Abolition of the 2012 constitution
- › Dissolution of the People's Assembly (parliament) and all its committees
- › Dissolution of the Arab Socialist Baath Party and all member parties of the National Progressive Front
- › Dissolution of all armed factions

Moreover, the conference gave the appointed interim president the authority to appoint an interim legislative council and the drafting of an interim constitution or constitutional declaration.

The second step was the National Dialogue Conference on February 25, 2025 where around 1000 individuals gathered at the Presidential Palace to discuss the foundations of the new Syria and issues of governance and identity. Major recommendations from the conference include:

- › Protecting Syria's territorial independence, unity and integrity
- › Adopting an interim constitutional declaration
- › Creating an interim legislative council
- › Upholding all human rights and women rights
- › Establishing a meritocratic system
- › Creating a national transitional justice process

The third step was the adoption of the interim constitutional declaration on March 13, 2025. Most important articles related to the creation of the legislative council include:

- › Article 1: The Syrian Arab Republic is an independent, fully sovereign state. It is an indivisible geographical and political unit, and no part of it may be relinquished.
- › Article 3.1: The religion of the President of the Republic is Islam, and Islamic jurisprudence is the principal source of legislation.
- › Article 14.1: The State shall protect the right to political participation and the formation of parties on national foundations according to a new law.
- › Article 24: 1. The President of the Republic shall form a higher committee to select members of the People's Assembly

2. The Higher Committee shall supervise the formation of sub-committees at district level, and these shall select members of the electoral committees who will elect two-thirds of the members of the People's Assembly.

3. The President of the Republic appoints one-third of the members of the People's Assembly to ensure fair representation and efficiency.

- › Article 26: 1. The People's Assembly shall assume legislative authority until a permanent constitution is adopted and legislative elections are organised in accordance with that constitution.

2. The term of the People's Assembly is thirty months, renewable.

While the Victory Conference of January 2025 gave the interim president the authority to appoint the entire legislative council, the constitutional declaration limited that right to a third of the council (and with a specific mandate to ensure fair representation and efficiency) and has provided for an indirect election process for the remaining two thirds. It also defined the initial term of the assembly to be thirty months.

Review of key presidential decrees and decisions related to the electoral process

It took the interim president exactly three months after the adoption of the constitutional declaration to form the “Higher Committee for the Elections of the People’s Assembly” via Presidential Decree (Decree 66) on June 13, 2025. The 11 members of the committee are:

- › Mohammad Taha Al Ahmad: Committee president, Director of the Arab World’s desk at the Syrian Foreign Ministry, and former minister in the Salvation Government of HTS from Hama
- › Hassan Aldghaim: Director of the Department of Morale Affairs of the former Syrian National Army and spokesperson of the National Dialogue Conference of February 2025 from Idleb
- › Imad Barq: Former minister in the Syrian opposition Interim Government, and vice-president of Aleppo University from Homs
- › Lara Aizouky: Researcher and civil society activist from Tartous
- › Nawar Najmeh: Committee spokesperson and medical doctor from Damascus
- › Mohamad Ali Mohamad Yassin: Deputy director of the Department of Morale Affairs of the former Syrian National Army and member of the former Syrian Opposition Coalition from Rif Damascus
- › Mohamad Kheder Wali: Researcher, civil society activist and member of the former Syrian Opposition Coalition from Amuda
- › Mohamad Yasser Kahaleh: Secretary General of the Political Affairs Department, Army defector, and former member of HTS political bureau from Rif Damascus
- › Hanan Al Balkhi: Journalist and former ambassador to Norway of the Syrian Opposition Coalition
- › Bader Jamous: President of the former Syrian Negotiation Commission and former president of the Syrian Opposition Coalition from Rif Damascus
- › Anas Al Abdeh: Former president of the Syrian Negotiation Commission and former president of the Syrian Opposition Coalition from Rif Damascus

Out of the 11 members: 2 are women, 2 are from the minorities (one Christian, one Ismaili), 6 are affiliated with the former Syrian Opposition coalition, and only 2 are directly affiliated with HTS. Although efforts were made to include women and minorities, it remained largely tokenistic with the majority firmly held by Arab Sunni men affiliated with the Syrian Opposition Coalition or HTS.

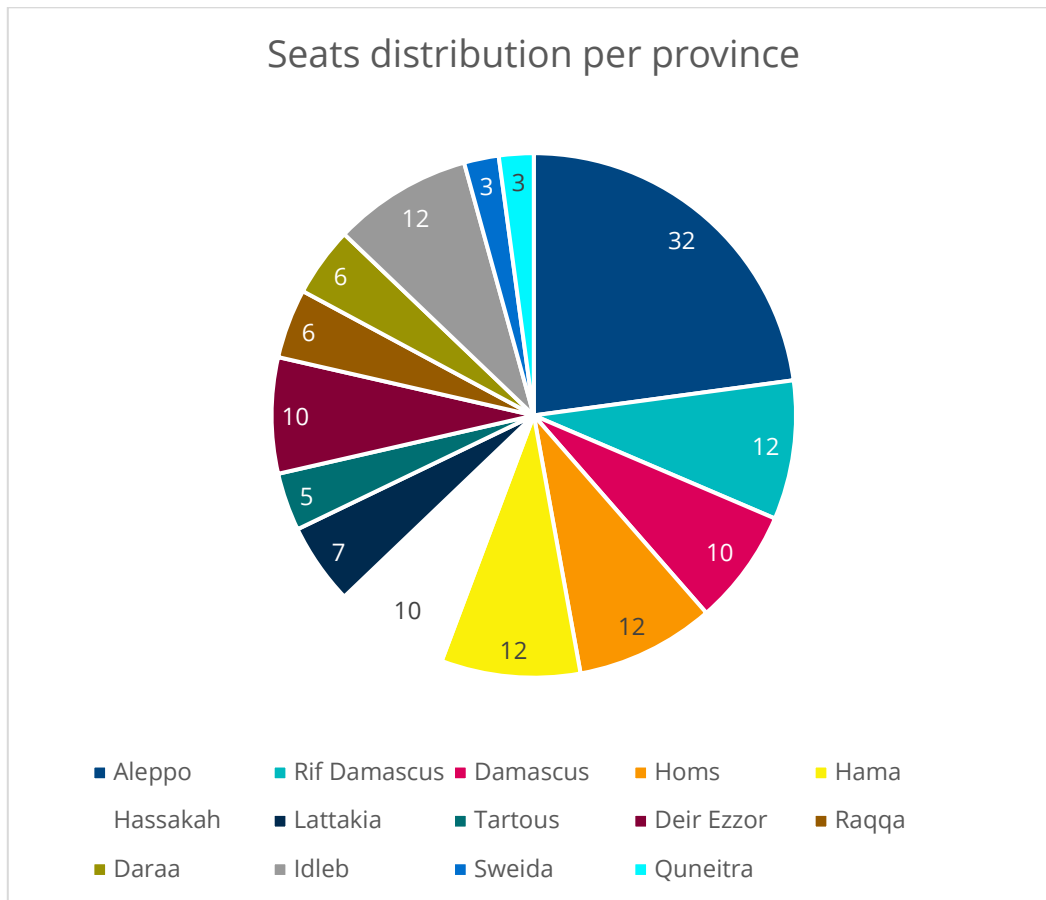
The Higher Committee immediately started a consultation process across the country to discuss the formation of electoral committees in each governorate and the establishment of subcommittees and appeal committees. The consultation process ran through August 2025. It included visits to all Syrian provinces except Raqqa, Hassakah and Sweida. Representatives from Raqqa and Hassakah were invited to Damascus to meet with the Higher Committee. No consultations were made with representatives from Sweida. People from all walks of life were included in these meetings with a focus on people working in the public sphere (politicians, national or local figures, civil society, business people). Dedicated consultation visits were made to Muslim and Christian religious leaders in Damascus.

Presidential Decree 143 of August 19, 2025 adopted the “Interim electoral system for the People’s Assembly”. Main points include:

- › Total seats: 210
- › Two thirds of seats to be chosen based on this electoral system (140 seats)
- › One third to be appointed by the interim president (70 seats)
- › Subcommittees and electoral committees to be established at district level

- › Appeal committees to be established at governorate level
- › Only members of electoral committees can be candidates for a parliamentary seat
- › Distribution of parliamentary seats per district are per the population census issued by decision 1378 of the Ministry of Local Affairs on October 27, 2011
- › The number of members of each electoral committee is equal to the number of parliamentary seats allocated to the committee times fifty if possible and in no case less than times thirty.
- › The President appoints the Higher Committee for the Elections of the People's Assembly
- › The Higher Committee appoints:
 - A five-member legal committee for legal advice and follow-up
 - No less than three-member subcommittees at each district level
 - Appeal committees at each governorate level made of judges based on nominations from the Ministry of Justice
 - Electoral committees at each district level based on lists drawn by the subcommittees after consultations with the local communities. The following should be taken into consideration in the formation of each subcommittee:
 - 70% professional leaders and 30% notables
 - Diversity of technical expertise
 - Community diversity
 - Displaced people representation
 - A minimum 20% women representation
 - Representation of victims and their families as well as people with disabilities
- › Elections are to happen on a specific date to be announced in each district. Polling stations will open for a period of three hours which can be extended to a maximum of six hours
- › No voting by proxy is allowed
- › Candidates to the subcommittees and electoral committees should be:
 - Syrian national before May 2011
 - Registered or resident of the district
 - Older than 25 years
 - With a clean criminal record (except for cases of political or security nature)
 - Did not run for presidential elections after 2011
 - Was not a member of or did not run for the People's Assembly post 2011 unless he/she can prove his defection
 - Not a supporter of the former regime or terrorist organizations in any form
 - Not a member of the armed forces or the security apparatus
 - Not in a high governmental position
 - Not a member of the higher committee, the subcommittees or the appeal committees (for membership in the electoral committees)
- › Candidates for the subcommittees should deposit their candidature to the higher committee. Appeal will be open for two days after publication of provisional list. Final list to be published three days after. Appeal open to all citizens
- › Candidates for the electoral committees should deposit their candidature to the district subcommittee. All candidatures should be approved by the higher committee. Appeal will be open for two days after publication of provisional list. Final list to be published three days after. Appeal open to all citizens
- › Campaigning is limited to members of the electoral committee
- › Election results are open to appeal for a period of three days. Maximum five days later the higher committee should publish the final results. Appeal open to candidates only
- › Election day was fixed to be October 5, 2025.

› The 140 seats were distributed as per the chart below:



Although the electoral system tried to address issues of diversity that is of utter importance for the transition period in the ethnically and religiously diverse Syria it did not impose tools to realize them, nor did it define targets except for geographical distribution and women representation. All other forms of inclusion and diversity are left to the members of electoral committees with no quotas or targets in place.

Criteria for the selection of committee members are vague and not measurable. There is no explanation or details around the decision making within the higher committee, subcommittees and appeal committees.

An agreement was signed with five civil society organizations (LACU, The Day After, GLOCA, Stabilization Support Unit, Syrian Networks League) to train subcommittees and electoral committees on the electoral process, transparency measures, and simple conflict resolution mechanisms.

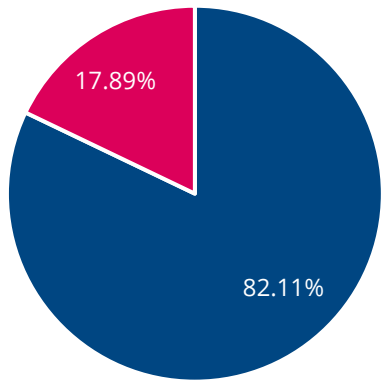
Electoral committees were not established and elections were not held in:

- › Kobani in Aleppo governorate (2 seats)
- › Raqqa governorate (6 seats)
- › Hassakah governorate (10 seats)
- › Sweida governorate (3 seats)

Therefore, elections were for a total of 119 seats.

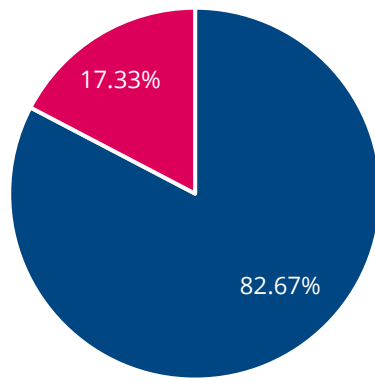
Gender diversity in electoral committees:

National Gender distribution



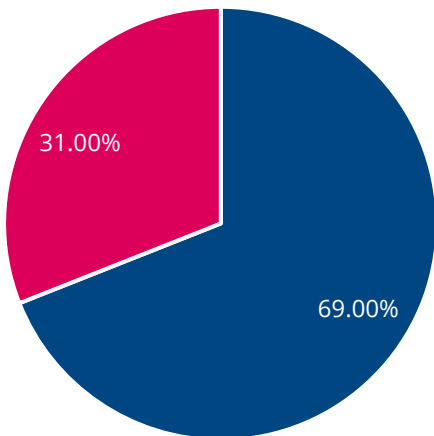
■ Men ■ Women

Idleb Gender distribution



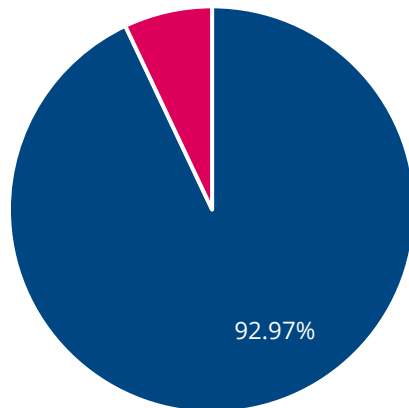
■ Men ■ Women

Damascus Gender distribution



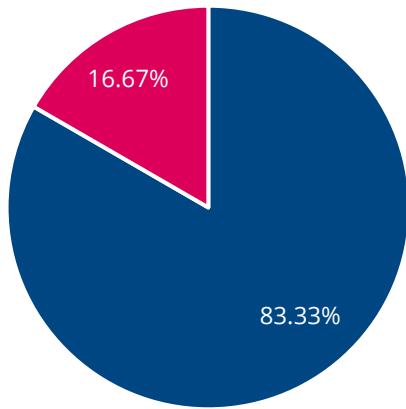
■ Men ■ Women

Deir Ezzor Gender distribution



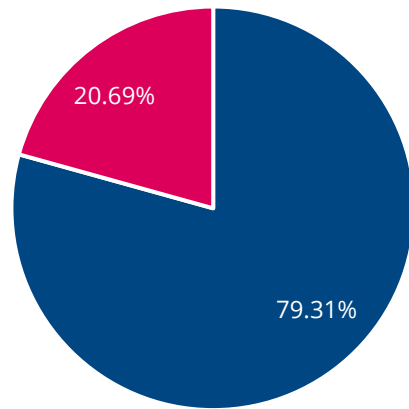
■ Men ■ Women

Daraa Gender distribution



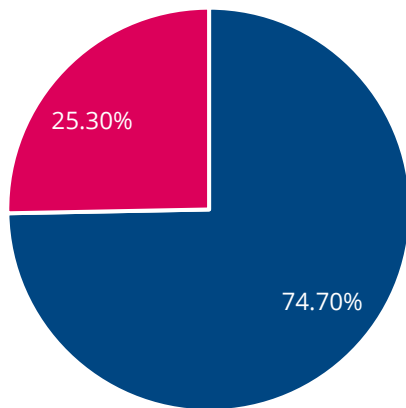
■ Men ■ Women

Quneitra Gender distribution



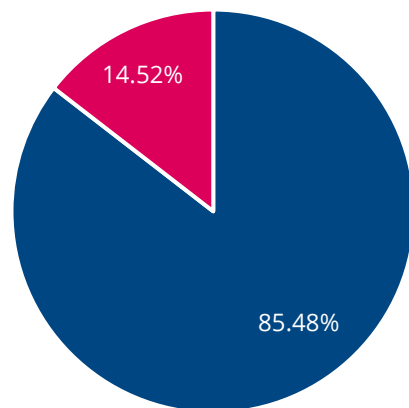
■ Men ■ Women

Tartous Gender distribution



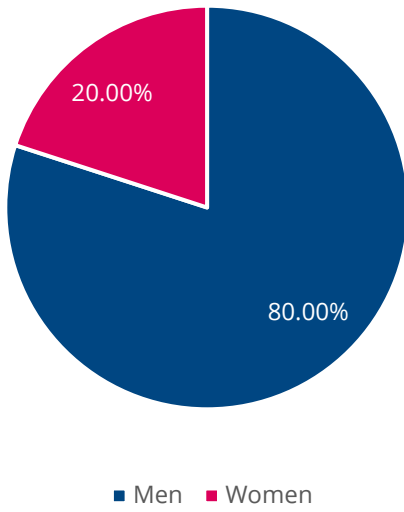
■ Men ■ Women

Rif Damascus Gender distribution

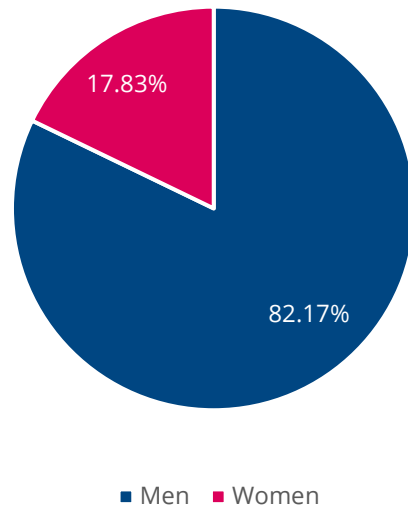


■ Men ■ Women

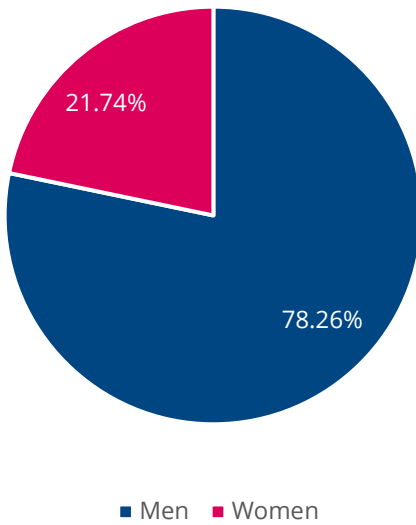
Lattakia Gender distribution



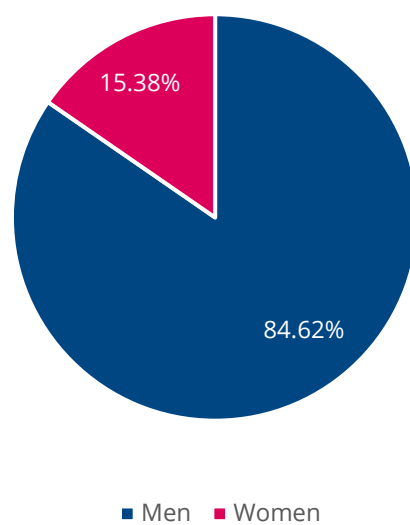
Hama Gender distribution



Homs Gender distribution



Aleppo Gender distribution



Results of the electoral process

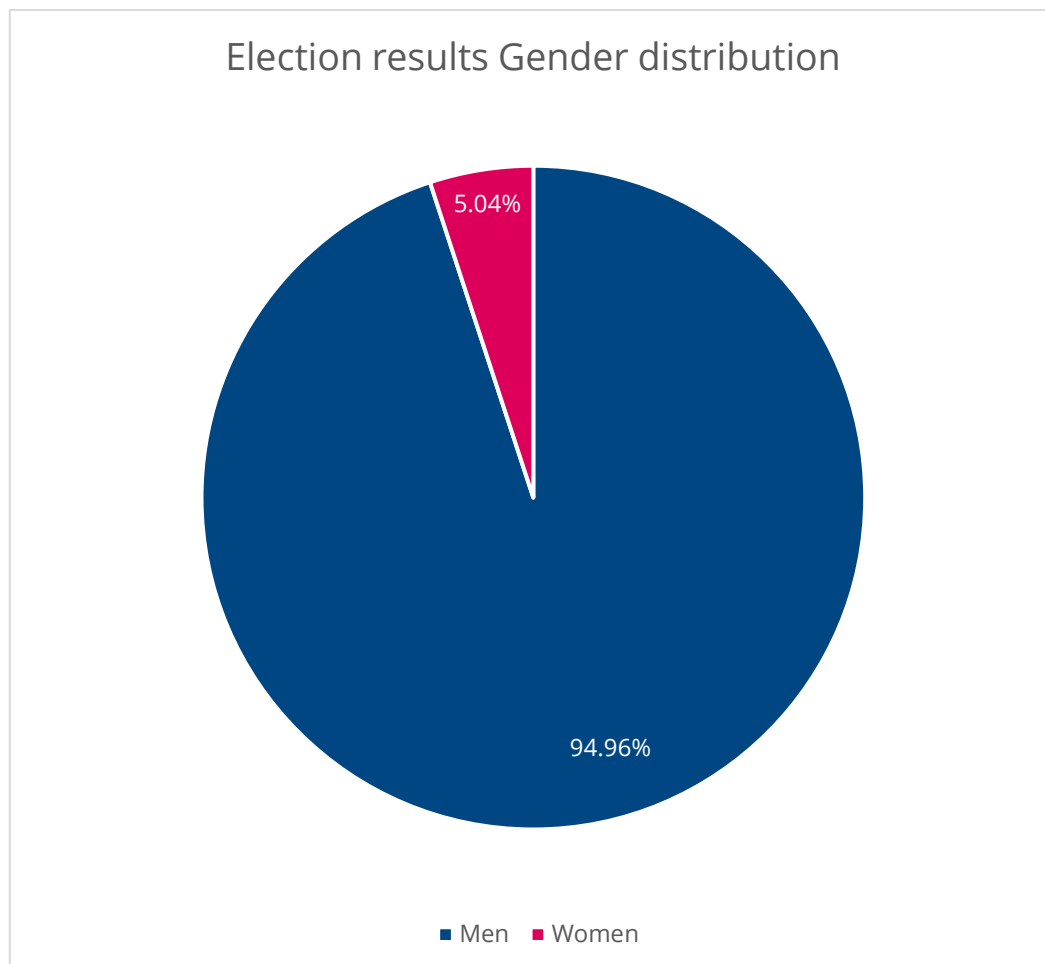
As premised, elections took place on October 5, 2025 to fill 119 seats at the People’s Assembly. Voting day was uneventful with small crowds forming in major cities like Aleppo and Damascus where voting had to be extended for the full six hours permitted.

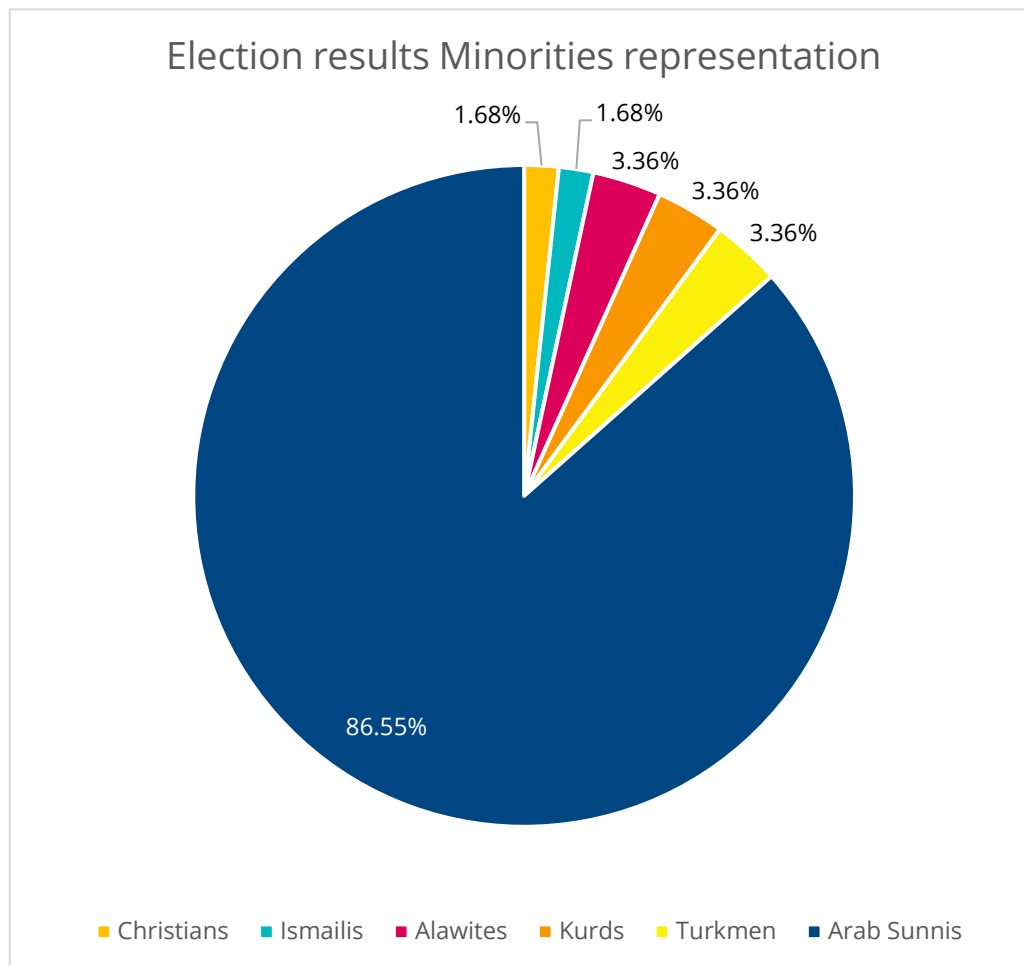
The manual vote counting process was very slow as every ballot had to be checked, read twice, and confirmed by the legal committee in the polling station. Candidates, their legal representatives, and even members of the electoral committees had the right to appeal any vote on the spot and check for validity and accuracy. Vote counting in Damascus and Aleppo city were broadcasted live on social media.

Local and foreign media outlets were allowed to be present in all polling stations throughout voting and vote counting. The polling station in Damascus saw a visit by the interim president and the presence of foreign diplomats in observation capacity.

However, civil society organizations and electoral watchdogs were not allowed in polling stations. There was no international election monitoring mission in place.

Election results were as below in terms of inclusion and diversity.





It is clear from the charts above that election results failed on every measure of representation, inclusion and diversity. Indeed only 6 women were able to get elected and minority representation is severely lacking. For reference, it is estimated that the following is the current make up of the Syrian population:

- › 10% Kurds
- › 10% Alawites
- › 5% Christians
- › 3% Turkmen
- › 3% Druze
- › 1% Ismailis
- › 68% Arab Sunnis

The results overinflated the Arab Sunni representation and confirmed yet another time the monolithic power structure being developed post Assad.

It is clear that electoral committees were not able to reflect the Syrian ethnic and religious diversity in the election results. This would have been important in order to allow Syria's transition process to be adequately inclusive and thus to enhance its chances for success.

While voting day did not witness major security incidents, there were many intimidations leading to it. Several candidates were bullied by their communities to withdraw their candidature (especially among minority groups). One Alawi candidate was assassinated.

Conclusion and Recommendations

While efforts were made to ensure some level of inclusion and diversity, these efforts went in vain unfortunately. The electoral process as designed, and especially the electoral committees' composition and voting process, structurally did not allow for Syria's diversity to be reflected in the election results. The process was rushed and did not take into consideration local sensitivities. Several governorates were deliberately excluded pending future political arrangements. It is clear that the current provisional electoral system is flawed and far from adequate and a move to direct elections is very much needed. While it is definitely understandable why holding national elections is impossible in 2025 (security situation, lack of civil documentation, lack of national population census, huge displacement inside and outside the country, etc) that should not be the case anymore at the end of the assembly's mandate in thirty months.

The following are some key recommendations to the current Syrian authorities and to the international community.

To the Syrian authorities:

- › The President should use his one third appointment to remedy the severe lack in gender and minorities representation and inclusion.
- › Elections should be held as soon as possible and practical in places where no elections took place. Lack of these elections directly affects the legitimacy of the new assembly.
- › The constitutional declaration should be amended to provide for more balance between the executive and legislative branches as well as to create a checks and balances system. The current constitutional declaration puts too much power in the interim president's hand leaving space for abuse and despotism.
- › Work should begin immediately on drafting a comprehensive election law that provides for direct elections at all levels (local, national, and presidential).
- › Priority should be given to holding local elections once the new law is adopted.
- › The current assembly in its current format lacks legitimacy to act as a Constitutional Committee and to adopt long lasting and structural laws. Remedies should be put in place to address questions of diversity and inclusion.
- › Civic education should be added to the national curriculum and a nationwide campaign should be launched about the importance of elections and exercising one's right to vote.
- › A new party law should be promulgated as soon as possible to allow for political life to finally resume.
- › Ensure proper women representation.
- › Given Syria's social fabric, it is recommended that it adopts a proportional electoral system rather than a majority one.

About the Author

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