



## Empowering Victims to Counter Hate Speech in Syria

### *Policy Recommendations Based on Community Dialogue Outcomes*

Syria is witnessing a sustained rise in hate speech amid complex political and social transformations, the absence of comprehensive justice pathways, and a continued erosion of trust across communities. This phenomenon manifests in direct incitement, exclusionary practices, social stigmatization, and the political and media instrumentalization of victims' experiences—contributing to the reproduction of marginalization and undermining recognition and redress.

Findings from the community dialogues indicate that excluding victims from the public sphere—or speaking on their behalf without their meaningful participation—is a key driver of both the production and amplification of hate speech. This escalation is further compounded by the lack of justice and accountability, as well as the absence of equal recognition for all victim groups, which reinforces perceptions of discrimination and deepens polarization.

At the same time, the public sphere is shaped by selective and politicized narratives, weak professional documentation practices, and the growing influence of digital spaces in amplifying harmful discourse and spreading misinformation—particularly in post-regime contexts marked by heightened political and identity-based tensions.

Against this backdrop, empowering victims and ensuring their meaningful participation in shaping public discourse represents a practical entry point for reducing hate speech, rebuilding trust, and fostering more balanced narratives. Addressing this issue therefore requires a comprehensive approach that links justice, representation, and media, and recognizes victims as active agents in shaping public narratives.

These recommendations draw on the outcomes of six community dialogue sessions held in Qamishli, Al-Hasakah, Raqqa, Salamiyah, Afrin, and Homs between 5 and 12 April 2026. A total of 88 participants took part, including 48 women. These insights informed a broader analysis and the development of the recommendations below.

### **1) State and Public Authorities**

- Adopt a comprehensive legal and institutional framework on victims' rights that ensures equal recognition without discrimination.
- Advance justice, accountability, and reparations processes to strengthen trust and address impunity.
- Ensure meaningful and leadership-level participation of victims in transitional justice processes, alongside enhanced transparency and access to information.
- Develop legal and regulatory frameworks to address hate speech, including criminalizing incitement and harmful generalizations, while upholding the principle of individual responsibility.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of policies and measures aimed at reducing hate speech.

### **2) Media and Content Producers**

- Adopt and enforce professional codes of conduct that uphold victims' dignity and prevent politicization, exploitation, generalization, and incitement.
- Meaningfully involve victims in shaping media narratives and increase their direct representation in the public sphere.
- Develop editorial and technical tools to counter hate speech and misinformation.
- Strengthen the capacity of media professionals in conflict-sensitive and trauma-informed reporting.

### **3) Civil Society Organizations**

- Design and implement sustainable victim empowerment programmes, including psychosocial support and long-term accompaniment.
- Create safe and inclusive dialogue spaces to promote understanding and reduce polarization and incitement.

- Support victims' self-organization and connect their priorities to justice and recognition processes.
- Strengthen community-based documentation practices to ensure accuracy, professionalism, and credibility.

#### **4) Victims and Victim-Led Groups**

- Promote and support victim-led initiatives, taking into account geographic diversity and different patterns of violations.
- Strengthen victims' capacities in advocacy, documentation, and engagement with media and decision-makers.
- Develop community memory initiatives that contribute to building narratives grounded in recognition and justice.
- Foster solidarity among victims across divides in ways that help reduce polarization.