

Research and Management Team
Local Administration In Syria

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Introduction

The need for citizens to manage their own affairs has emerged from the background of the diminished control of the central government over wide areas in Syria, as well as the absence of entities that are capable of managing the citizens' affairs due to the close affiliation of the old institutions to the security apparatus and the corrupt regime.

The citizens have led several attempts of autonomy, the most prominent of which was the example of Daraya in Rif Dimashq where the military council was forced to execute the decisions of the city local council.

Some attempts of autonomy have succeeded while others have failed. In some areas several local councils were formed in competition with each other. All such practices played an important role in raising awareness towards the need of the local administration as well as the challenges involved with the process.

Often, people appoint themselves to run these councils and provide the needed services. In other cases, the elders of the city appoint certain individuals to perform this leadership role. There have also been cases where the citizens conduct elections in order to select their representatives for the local councils.

The local councils, in fact, have witnessed several political conflicts. Such conflicts were especially clear among the councils of the Kurdish-majority areas; less obvious, but not less severe, conflicts occurred among other councils. Certain powers sought control over these local councils either to monopolize their resources and aids, to achieve political gains, and in some cases to promote certain ideologies and beliefs. However, these conflicts failed to disrupt the development of the local administration and throughout the projects, new young and potential leaders arose.

The purpose of this research is to provide an analysis about the status of the current local administration in Syria. We are aware, nevertheless, that this research is not perfect but is rather a modest attempt by us Syrians to understand the new leadership setting.

We thank all those who have helped with providing information for this research and have supported our efforts.

1. Research Methodology

This research was conducted by a group of researchers over a period of two months in the cities of Aleppo and Ayn al Arab / Kobani inside Syria and within Gaziantep city in Turkey.

Our research relied mainly on primary sources of information gathered through the conduction of interviews, either directly or over Skype, with members of the various local councils.

The research also relied on previously published studies and books addressing the local administration in Syria. Additionally, the expertise of researchers in the fields of law, local administration, and elections were also utilized.

In this research, we tried to focus on describing the status quo through an unbiased and impartial approach. Our purpose here is to provide as much information as possible for those concerned with the local administrative affairs within.

We do not perceive our work as final since this research poses numerous questions which need further studies to be answered and understood.

2. Local administration in Syria before the revolution

Under the rule of King Faisal bin Hussein I (1918 – 1920), the Syrian state was introduced to the decentralized administrative structure where the constitution divided Syria into locally administered cantons. These cantons were run by decentralized representative bodies, as King Faisal was convinced that the diversity of affiliations in Syria necessitates a decentralized system in the country. However, this system was soon interrupted by the introduction of the French mandate of Syria.

Under the French Mandate, Syria was introduced to the modern form of local administration when Decision No. 5 / L.R was issued on January 10, 1936. This introduction also provided for the establishment of local councils at provincial centers, districts, and villages with the primary goal of expressing the needs and aspirations of the citizens, in addition to levying taxes and providing social need confirmation letters. The Decision remained in force until the enactment of the Local Administration Law in 1957.

Since Independence, the local administration in Syria was associated with the enactment of the Local Administration Law No. 496 on December 21, 1957, which abolished the above mentioned French decision and its amendments. The new Law adopted a form of dual local administration made up of local councils and municipal councils where the latter were regulated under Decision No. 160 established in 1956, (i.e. municipal councils appeared prior to the Local Administration Law). This legislation provided for the establishment of local councils in provinces, districts, and villages. Each province center established a provincial local council and each district center established a local council. The election mechanism adopted to select the members of these two councils relied on a proportional approach where three-quarters of their members were elected and the remaining members were appointed (Article 79 of Law 496). Local councils and municipalities were granted some administrative and consultative authority, particularly in regards to local public services including health, roads, and urban planning. Such authorities were provided for in articles 140, 139, 39, 129, 128, 127, 125, 8 of Law No. 496 and articles 58, 68, 54 of Municipalities Law No. 172 issued on January 23, 1956.

In the first article of Law No. 172, established in 1956, the municipality is defined as follows: a legal character with financial independence authorized to perform all relevant territorial functions including organization, maintenance, and beautification. It further oversees the preservation of public health and ensures the comfort and safety of the citizens. In addition, it applies all necessary procedures to develop the social, health, and urban aspects of the district.

Practically, the local administration of the state was a realistic reflection of the centralized authority's orientation. In addition to the strict conditions imposed on membership illegibility at the local councils, the centralized authority did not adopt an electoral process

under Law No. 496 to select the members of the councils under the pretext of the deteriorated political circumstances. These circumstances being the unrest of the country and the Turkish threats to invade the country under the reign of Jalal Bayar.

It is worth mentioning that prior to the Local Administration Law No. 496 of 1957, the Law of Street and Neighborhood Officials (Mukhtar) councils No. 215 was issued on March 29, 1956.

Before the end of the Union Era between Egypt and Syria, Law No. 152 of 1961 was issued and provided for the application of Local Administration Law No. 124 of 1960 to be enacted in Egypt (the southern state) and in Syria (the northern state). However, the law was not put into effect, as it was abolished upon the separation between Syria and Egypt following a military coup (named the separation coup) staged on September 28, 1961. Thus, Syria enacted the former legislations prior to the unity.

Under the rule of Hafez al-Assad and on November 5, 1971, Local Administration Law No. 15 was issued and provided for the division of Syria into administrative entities entitled to a legal representative (province, city, town, countryside, and village of a population exceeding 5,000 people) and administrative entities without a legal representative (region, district, neighborhood, farm, and village of a population less than 5,000 people). Thus, this change united the local administration. This contrasted the former legal system which adopted a dual-administration form where the provincial and local councils represented the local administration and municipal councils represented the municipal administration.

Several other laws and legislative decrees were issued later to execute the Local Administration Law No. 15; including the enactment of the local administration law and the local councils elections law.

The local councils were marginal, had limited authorities, were unable to reflect the concerns of the citizens, and were incapable of providing good services. These issues evolved due to the fact that the councils were all the product of predetermined elections and were dominated by members of the ruling Baath Party and the member parties of the National Progressive Front.

Local Administration Law No. 15 remained in effect in Syria until Legislative Decree No. 107 of 2011 was issued by Bashar al-Assad during the Syrian revolution. The Decree provided for passing of the new local administration law which consists of 11 chapters and 161 articles. Article No. 161 of this Decree abolished all previous decrees and laws related to local and municipal councils.

The new local administration law applied decentralization of authorities and responsibilities and defined the administrative units as governorates, cities, towns, and municipalities. The law also established the Higher Council of Local Administration and simplified the former administrative structure by replacing the five administrative units defined by law No. 15 of

1971 with four administrative units. Additionally, the law stipulated the formation of joint interim administrations between the administrative units used to implement joint projects, as well as established offices tasked with coordinating services between all concerned authorities upon implementing service facilities and infrastructure plans. By this law, new administrative positions were introduced to the local councils, including provincial secretary and city / town director. These positions targeted to establish a legal reference at the administrative units and enhance the administrative decentralization through electing the head of the local councils as determined by the members of the council. The head of council chaired the executive office, except for the province center where the governor was head of the Executive office. The governor was appointed by a legislative decree issued by the President of the Republic and represented the centralized authority. The provincial local council was chaired by an independent character reporting to the governor concerning all issues that need coordination with the central authority.

3. Local administration in Syria during the revolution

3.1. Current reality of the local administration in Syria

Local councils in Syria currently represent the administrative structure in charge of operating the daily requirements of the citizens in the absence of the state. However, the councils are undergoing a developmental process to gradually become the core of the civic administration, which is the local pillar of the emerging state in Syria and at the present time. The councils exist in various forms in the areas outside the regime's control.

Since the outbreak of the revolution, a humanitarian crisis has emerged due to the regime's brutality which has affected the lives of a large number of citizens within every city and village. Hence, people had begun to help each other and provide few basic services to those in need. Soon the needs had increased and were no longer addressable by small groups or individuals without the cooperation and coordination of others.

Therefore, local councils were formed to express the people's sense of responsibility and their ability to manage their own affairs, depending on their expertise and capabilities. This refuted all claims about the inevitability of chaos and neglect at their areas in the absence of al Assad's regime.

3.2. Distribution of local councils

Local councils were formed in the majority of the Syrian provinces as an administrative and service alternative for the state. They are classified into two categories in terms of their nature and role:

1. Local councils of the Local Administrative Councils Unit which represent all Syrian provinces. Each local council has a group of affiliated smaller provincial local councils. Some of these councils are located outside Syria for security reasons, especially those representing the areas under the regime's control.
2. Kurdish local councils of the Kurdish National Council in Syria and the West Kurdistan Parliament. These councils are located in the Kurdish majority areas, exclusively in Aleppo and Al Hasakah provinces, and in the provincial centers of Aleppo, Damascus and Raqqa.

3.3. Democratic practice of the local councils

Initially, individuals and small groups provided services to a large number of people in a good and sustainable way, and most financial or in-kind support was received from Syrians at home or abroad. But the needs continue to increase. Consequently, fundraising campaigns outside Syria were initiated and addressing individuals, organizations, and countries. In regards to decision-making mechanisms, decisions concerning the distribution of aids were taken in accordance with the individuals who provided the support. However, the increased needs demanded a much more organized distribution of aids in a fair manner

apart from quotas and affiliation considerations. Furthermore, the need to provide basic services including water, electricity, sewage and waste disposal has also emerged and is addressed by the people through the establishment of local councils. Despite the numerous challenges before the local councils, including the attempts to politicize the service and relief work, their efforts remained focused on rationalizing their work and segregating it from the ongoing political conflicts. This was accomplished through coordinating with the various groups and communities in addition to conducting seminars and training courses.

Due to the exceptional circumstances of Syria, it is inevitable for the selection and representation practices to be defective, as is the case with any elections conducted under inappropriate conditions. Nevertheless, representation and election attempts on ground deserve appreciation. In reference to the reality on ground, local councils are obliged to fully operate in cooperation with the revolutionary opposition groups whether they are civil or militant. They also play an important role in providing civil services to those groups to gain the needed support to maintain their functionality and popular foster under any circumstances.

3.4. Structure and internal regulations of the local administration

- Preparatory Committee

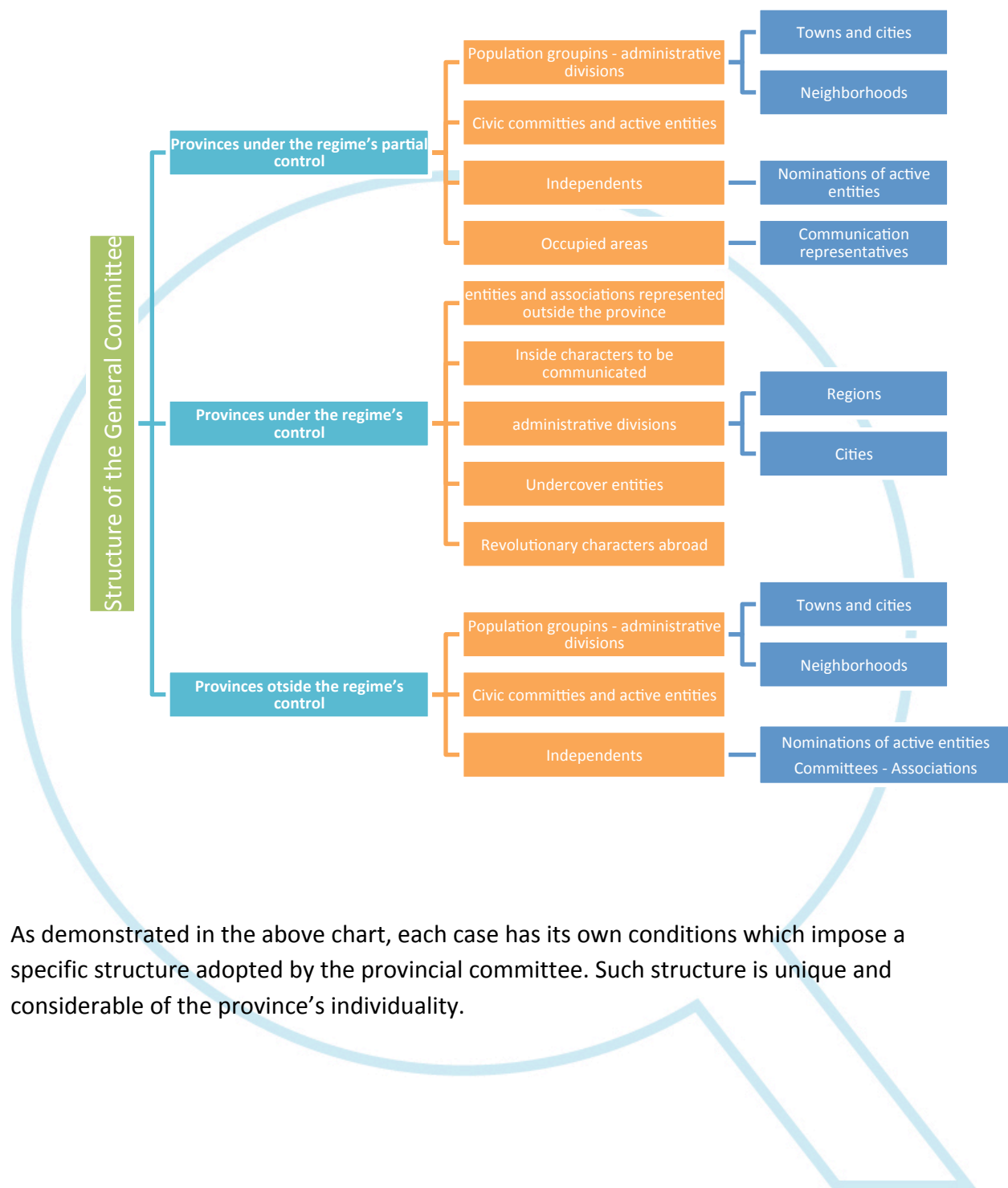
Local council elections are conducted by forming a preparatory committee. This committee includes the majority of the revolutionary entities in order to select representatives of communities, groupings, and civic organizations tasked with forming a general electoral body. By observing the current Syrian reality, we can identify the basic principles and standards that would help the Preparatory Committee in establishing the Provincial Electoral Committee.

- Provincial Electoral Committee of local councils

The Provincial Electoral Committee consists of a number of individuals selected from civic groupings and active civil forces and committees. These members are supposed to be of competence and expertise, as well as have the capability to perform assigned responsibilities. These responsibilities include providing a voice to the citizens whom they represent in the electoral process, observing the work of the council as well as its institutions, and communicate the suffering and needs of the citizens in order for the competent authorities to take action.

According to the Syrian reality we have three cases, each of which has specific conditions, which govern the structure of the provincial committee namely:

1. Provinces outside the regime's control.
2. Provinces under the regime's control.
3. Provinces under the regime's partial control.



As demonstrated in the above chart, each case has its own conditions which impose a specific structure adopted by the provincial committee. Such structure is unique and considerable of the province's individuality.

Provinces outside the regime's control

1. **Population:** Each specific number of citizens has one representative. Population is the most important factor in determining the number of representatives of each region at the Provincial Electoral Committee, according to the regulations of the Ministry of Local Administration, Relief and Refugees.
2. **Races and religions:** The Provincial Electoral Committee must include all races and religions available in the province in accordance to the agreed upon proportions which are estimated by the Preparatory Committee.
3. **Civic committees and active entities:** In most provinces, particularly in the areas outside the regime's control, a group of civic and revolutionary committees, including a large number of activists, provide various services to the people and are considered to be an influential power in the province. These committees must be represented in the Provincial Electoral Committee by varying proportions according to the estimation of the Preparatory Committee, which are based on its collected statistics.
4. **Independents:** We have numerous legal individuals in Syria that enjoy a great rebellious history and effectively participate in all revolutionary, civic, relief, and sometimes militant activities. However, these individuals have not been incorporated in an organized body; therefore, they are represented according to their independent character at the Provincial Electoral Committee. These characters are introduced through the nominations of committees, groupings, and organizations, and are then appointed by means of majority.

Provinces under the regime's partial control

The above mentioned criteria was adopted in structuring the provincial committee in the areas outside the regime's control. Whereas the following measures were adopted in the areas that are still under the regime's control:

1. Revolutionary leaders in these areas are nominated as an electoral body representing their areas and are selected from the revolutionary leaders that either reside at those areas or moved after the withdrawal of the regime out of several parts of the province to settle in the areas that are outside the regime's control. They are nominated according to mechanisms that ensure confidentiality and take into account the security situation of those individuals as necessary.
2. Civic and humanitarian institutions which are secretly active in these areas.

Provinces under the regime's control

Structuring the committee in these areas is a tough mission since communication within the areas under the regime's control is difficult and involves the dangers of arrest or

annihilation. Therefore, the Preparatory Committee may resort to alternative measures to create a legitimate structure including:

1. Communicating with the entities and committees outside the province which they represent and speak on its behalf.
2. Entities and undercover institutions which are active in the province.
3. Several revolutionary leaders at home and abroad, which represent the province and participate in supporting the revolutionary movement.

It is necessary to take into account the representation of the majority of administrative bodies of the province by adopting the above mentioned procedures, or any other appropriate alternatives.

Relationship between the militant and revolutionary leagues with the provincial committee

It is only natural that the provisional committee must represent civilians primarily; however, the Syrian reality embraces numerous overlaps between civic and militant personnel. Most military personnel are primarily civilians with no official military status. Several military leagues are involved directly or indirectly in civic issues and provide urgent and essential services. Therefore, each preparatory committee is left to estimate the representation proportions according to the reality of the province. These entities are represented by their political office or nominated political leaders (in case the matter is decided by the Preparatory Committee in agreement with the military powers).

Relationship of civil society organizations with the provincial committee

Civil society organizations are non-governmental organizations represented in the provincial committee and work to fulfill the project of the local councils. The civil society organizations support the committee with all required executive cadres, expertise, qualifications and enterprises that contribute to the establishment of its institutions. The duty of the Preparatory Committee is to visit these organizations, convince them of its project, and gain their in-kind and logistic support. This is important because these organizations constitute groupings for the activists, contribute to the success of the project and promote it on all social, political and economic levels.

Over representing

Over representing means the criteria by which some areas in the province are entitled to have a greater number of representatives compared to the other areas. This occurs even when provinces are equal on other levels. Over representing factors include:

1. Revolutionary participation; which means the revolutionary movement and its effectiveness.
2. Number of martyrs.
3. Level of destruction.

3.5. Democratic experience: elections and mechanisms

Aleppo Province

First term

Aleppo is the largest and most prominent Syrian province for several reasons, including the regime's loss of control over large areas in its countryside and city as well as its important location on two border crossings with Turkey (Salamah and Jarablos crossings). The local councils experience in Aleppo is the most comprehensive local administration examples in Syria since the outbreak of the revolution.

The Preparatory Committee was formed at the beginning of 2013 to select 224 representatives of towns, groupings, and districts to be members at the Provincial committee of the local council of Aleppo. Upon completion of preparations, these members were invited on March 1, 2013 to elect the 25 members of the city council of Aleppo, as well as the 29 members of the provincial local council of Aleppo. The elections were conducted in Gaziantep city with the presence of the Head of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, Mouath Al-Khatib. After completion of the first phase, the members elected the executive offices, head of the local council, deputy, and secretary general.

Second term

Upon completion of the first term of the provincial local council of Aleppo on September 5, 2013, a preparatory committee was formed to select the new members of the provincial committee of the provincial local council of Aleppo. This included its five smaller councils of Aleppo city, eastern countryside, western countryside, northern countryside, southern countryside. The preparatory committee was assigned to select the representatives of towns and districts for the second term of the provincial local council, and following the completion of the selection process, the election date was determined and the following was concluded:

- Members of the provincial local council of Aleppo's western countryside were elected from the representatives of the western parts of Aleppo's countryside at the provincial committee by 5 independent members.
- Members of the provincial local council of Aleppo's northern and eastern countryside were elected from the representatives of the northern and eastern parts of Aleppo's countryside at the provincial committee by two independent departments (northern 9) (eastern 8).
- Members of the provincial local council of Aleppo's southern countryside were elected from the representatives of the northern parts of Aleppo's countryside at the provincial committee by 3 independent members.

- As for the city council of Aleppo, it was elected by two ballots. One ballot box for the city council of Aleppo to elect 25 members, and one ballot box to elect 18 representing members for the city of Aleppo at the provincial local council of Aleppo. The members were nominated by the people in the residential towns.

After the completion of elections in all departments of Aleppo province, the winning members were declared and they were invited to swear the legal oath and elect the head of the local council, as well as his deputy and secretary general.

After swearing the legal oath before the electoral and preparatory committees, the head of the electoral committee invited the most senior member to run the session. Upon the request of the members of the provincial local council at the electoral committee, the head of the electoral committee supervised the elections of the heads of local councils. The invitation was accepted and the elections were supervised.

Three candidates were nominated for chairing the provincial local council of Aleppo; Mr. Abdul Rahman Dadam was elected as head of the council.

Three candidates were nominated for the position of secretary general and Mr. Ahmad Eido was elected as secretary general and head of the executive office.

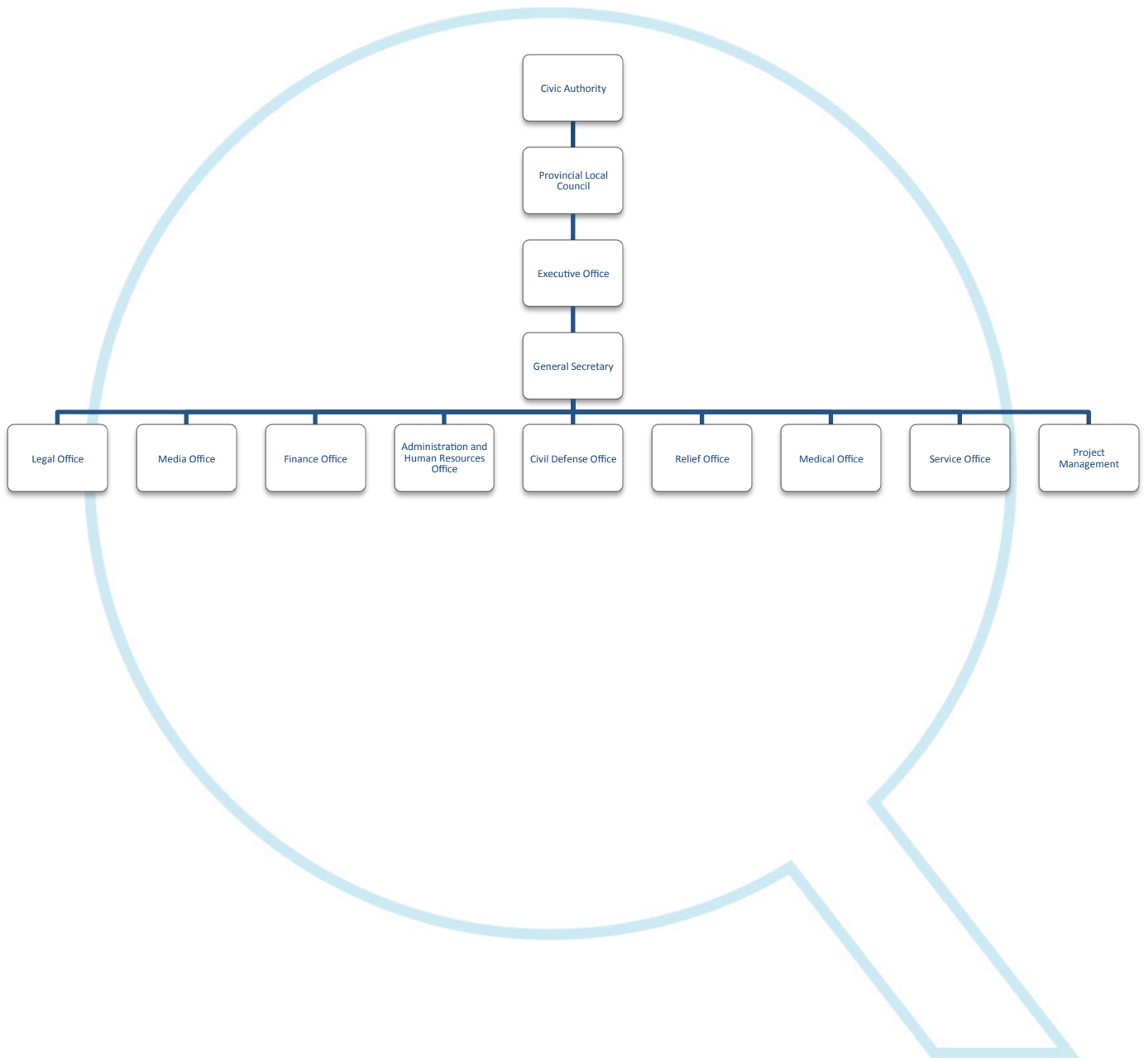
Three candidates were nominated for the position of deputy and Mr. Abdul Ghani Bakri was elected.

After the completion of the chairmanship committee elections, an urgent meeting was requested to be held to elect the executive offices of the provincial local council of Free Aleppo in response to the critical circumstances of the province.

Concerning the elections of the city council of Aleppo, 25 local council members were elected and they were invited to swear the legal oath before the electoral committee, and then elect the head and deputy. Two candidates were nominated to chair the council and Mr. Abdul Aziz Maghrabi was elected. Two candidates were nominated for the position of deputy and Mr. Britta Haji Hasan was elected.

All former procedures were performed in Free Aleppo province in the areas outside the regime's control.

A chart illustrating the executive offices of the provincial local council of Aleppo



Azaz city, which is under the jurisdiction of Aleppo province:

After the withdrawal of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) from Azaz city, the local council elections were declared and announced on the gates of mosques and public squares inviting the citizens to participate in the local elections in the city. 320 citizens attended the elections, after which an orientation session about the council and its work was conducted. Candidacy for the city council of Azaz was announced and after completion of the candidacy procedures, the elections were publically processed through a ballot box at sight. Following the voting process, the boxes were opened and the votes were counted. Azaz was entitled of 20 members and according to the sequence of votes, the results were declared. After the completion of the preliminary elections, the elected members elected the executive offices and the head of the council.

Azaz is an exception to the general rule which says members of the provincial electoral committee are selected from all social categories and groupings. The situation of the city and the circumstances were suitable to hold free and open elections for all citizens without exceptions.

Due to the success of the democratic experience in Aleppo province, the interim Syrian government following its establishment decided in its weekly meeting concluded on March 28, 2014 the following:

To form the provincial local councils of Quneitra, Idlib and Rif Dimashq according to the standards adopted in the elections of the provincial local council of Aleppo.

Rif Dimashq Province

A preparatory committee was formed to select the electoral committee in Rif Dimashq Province. Then, a circular was issued by the Ministry of Local Administration, Relief and Refugees affiliated to the interim government identifying the mechanisms of the local council elections in Rif Dimashq. The date of the elections was scheduled on April 19, 2014.

At 12:30 PM, the elections began and were characterized by transparency and integrity. The electoral process took a long time due to the multiplicity of election centers. The electoral process was monitored by the Electoral and Appeals Committee. The votes were sorted before the attending participants and the ID's of the voters were directly verified by voice, image, personal identification, and academic certificate on display screens.

The elections began by accepting candidacy for chairing the provincial local council. The number of candidates amounted to four namely: Hussein Bakri by 14 votes, Muhannad Boiadani by 4 votes, Bashar al-Sayed Hasan by one vote and Osama Natouf by 30 votes.

Engineer Osama Natouf was elected head of the provincial local council by the majority of votes. In addition, candidacy was accepted for the position of deputy, to which both Hussein

Bakri and Nizar Al-Smadi have been nominated and received 33 and 14 votes respectively. Hence, the Judge Hussein Bakri was elected.

Additionally, candidacy was accepted for the 10 executive offices and the nomination lists included 24 candidates. The members of the local councils of East Gouta, Kalamoon and West Gouta participated over Skype.

Tartus Province

Due to the security conditions, the foundation meeting of the provincial local council of Tartus was concluded in Antioch, Turkey on February 22, 2014 where the members of the provincial local council were elected and distributed over its affiliated executive offices.

The provincial local council of Tartus includes 33 members the majority of whom are from Banias city. The remaining members are from Tartus city and its countryside, and were approved by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. Upon agreeing on the names of the provincial local council of Tartus members, they were approved by the Ministry of Local Administration of the interim government.

Quneitra Province

A preparatory committee was formed to select the 61 members of the provincial committee which will conduct the elections of the provincial local council of Quneitra. On March 20, 2014 31 members of the provincial local council were elected and following the preliminary elections, the elected members elected the head, deputy, secretary general, and the executive offices. After which, the interim government approved the results according to the below decision.

Daraa Province

Due to the expiration of the current local council's term of service and the inability to conduct any elections as a result of the current security conditions, a committee was formed to execute the work of the council until a new one is elected, according to the below decision.

Afterwards, candidacy for the membership of the preparatory committee is announced where the revolutionary groupings and entities have the right to nominate their members, and independents also have the right for candidacy by submitting the below nomination forms.

After receiving the nomination forms, a decision was issued declaring the selected members of the preparatory committee in charge of electing the members of the provincial committee of the local council of Daraa. This included determining a date for forming the provincial local council of Daraa upon completion of preparations.

Idlib Province

The below decision was issued by the Ministry of Local Administration of the Syrian interim government declaring the members of the preparatory committee in charge of electing the members of the provincial committee of the local council of Idlib , and determining a date for forming the provincial local council of Idlib upon completion of preparations.

Hama – Latakia - Al-Hasakah Provinces

With regards to these provinces and due to the expiration of their provincial local councils' term of service, the Ministry of Local Administration issued several decisions requesting the revolutionary and civic entities to nominate their candidates for the preparatory committee (the committee is in charge of electing the members of the concerned local councils within a specified period). The Ministry is now preparing the electoral process of these provincial local councils.

As for the electoral law to be adopted, the Minister of Local Administration of the Syrian interim government issued a decision stressing the importance of abiding to the laws in force (interim regulations and procedures issued by the ministry) to avoid nonconformity.

The Ministry of Local Administration has recently called to organize a workshop on May, 19, 2014 for the heads of legal offices in city and provincial local councils, judges, and human rights committees. The purpose of the workshop is to revise the Local Administration Law No. 107 of the year 2011 and consider its application in light of the current situation.

3.6. Women's political role in Syria:

Women had an important role in the peaceful revolutionary movement since the beginning of the Syrian revolution. Their activity was especially noticed in demonstrations, teaching, and within the media. Furthermore, women have proved their excellence in relief and medical work. However, with the escalation of the military operations against civilians by the Assad regime and the militarization of the revolution followed by the emergence of several Islamic extremist forces, such as the ISIS which took control over large areas outside the regime's control and imposed traditions and customs alien to the Syrian society, the female presence on the political arena has diminished. Consequently, the role of women on ground has dramatically declined.

For so long, Syrian women have participated in the revolutionary movement alongside the men and suffered numerous consequences: persecution, arrest, torture, death, and displacement. However, the new political scene has alienated the women and it seems that the opposition has excluded the women from their projects for the transitional period. This is largely influenced by the fact that women are rarely placed in decision-making positions in the declared revolutionary bodies including (the Syrian National Council and the Syrian National Coalition) and have no participation in the civic activities of the local councils.

Women's representation at the Syrian Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces has not exceeded 20%, and constituted less than 7% at the Syrian National Council. The National Coordination Committee, like the rest of the opposition political blocs, has no representation of women within its ranks. Additionally, numerous committees have mere nominal presence of women since they are excluded from any decision-making positions.

In surveying the local councils in Syria, we find that women are rarely, if ever, represented in city councils or local / village councils (except for mere nominal representation in some).



A photograph of a female voter at the provincial local council elections in Aleppo, 12/05/2013

The situation takes a dramatic turn in the Kurdish majority areas where women have representation that amounts to 40% in the autonomous government, the interim legislative councils, and the West Kurdistan Parliament. Women are involved in various institutions running a security center (Asaish) or taking part in the war within militant groups (Women's Protection Unit: YPJ). As for the representation of women at the Kurdish National Council, it has not exceeded 10% and the women have no responsibilities or authority by those granted by the West Kurdistan Parliament.

Reasons of the declined political involvement of the Syrian women

- The continuance of the killing and the systematic destruction committed by the regime's forces which targeted the populated residential areas and led to the displacement of a huge number of civilians: the remaining male majority is fighting in various areas.
- The spread of extremist militias such as Daash and the presence of a number of unorganized militias.
- Persistence of the inferior perception against women and their rights and important political role in society due to the tribal cultural heritage.
- The absence of the support of female voters' due to the fact that voting is apportioned according to electoral lists and political affiliations.

- Exploiting religion in the electoral battle against the election of women to diminish their capabilities and prove their ineligibility to run or win the elections.
- The failure of the female candidate to create a popular base by working among the local community during the candidacy period.
- Difficulty to meet the voters and communicate with them, especially men, due to social practices and boundaries.

4. Local administration in the Kurdish majority areas

Since July 19, 2012, the Syrian security authorities have started to withdraw, initially from Ayn al Arab (Kobani) and continued its gradual withdrawal from the other Kurdish areas located in the northern parts of the country, namely Aleppo province (Afrin and Ayn al Arab) and Al Hasakah province (Qamishli, Amuda, Al-Darbasiyah, Ayn al Arab, Al-Qahtaniyah, Al-Malikiyah, Al-Maabadah and Al-Jawadiyah). Thus, several Kurdish parties and particularly the Democratic Union Party (PYD) took over the security headquarters, the Governors building, and other governmental departments.

Security forces in the Kurdish areas of Syria (air forces security, military security, political security, state security, criminal security, the police, and the region directorate) represent the actual presence and function of the state. The withdrawal of the regime resulted in a security, administrative, and legal void which needed to be filled in order to provide services to the citizens on all levels. This consequent void constituted an enormous burden for the local councils as they found themselves required to bridge the gap and perform the duties of the public. These duties include providing public security, health, and Judicial services; providing the police administration; managing the public facilities and other vital sectors including electricity, water, bakeries and other services; and providing aids and accommodation for the displaced people who sought refuge in those areas.

4.1. Local administration in the Kurdish majority areas before the revolution

The affairs of the Kurdish areas were managed by the district directorates, security agencies, several governmental departments, and numerous city and local councils. The city and local councils were affiliated to the Ministry of Local Administration and were elected every four years through the elections of the local administration. The Baath ruling party and the National Progressive Front parties held the largest share in the elections.

Dereliction and neglect have characterized the functions of the city and local councils as well as the other public facilities in those areas. Several areas in 2007, including Ayn al Arab (Aleppo's east countryside), have witnessed an attempt to establish a public service committee in which civic and social figures are represented (lawyers, doctors, engineers and social reformers) in addition to members of the Baath Party. Their main mission was to provide services. The idea was initiated by a group of prominent social and partisan Kurdish individuals, some of whom were members at the Kurdish Democratic Alliance in Syria. The

concerned authorities objected the formation of such a committee explaining that its formation comes at a time of inappropriate security conditions, and some of the founding members were summoned to the Palestine Division affiliated to the military security apparatus in Damascus. Thus, the committee was dead before it was even born.

4.2. Local administration in the Kurdish majority areas during the revolution

Local councils of the two Kurdish councils (Kurdish National Council and West Kurdistan Parliament) were established at the Kurdish majority areas before the withdrawal of the Syrian regime in July, 2012. The local councils in the other regions of the country, which are affiliated to the Local Administrative Councils Unit, were established after the withdrawal of the security forces from those areas.

The Kurdish National Council was established on October 26, 2011 in Qamishli city (al-Hasakah province) and included a number of Kurdish political parties, revolutionary coordination committees, and independent national representatives. Later on, several smaller local councils, affiliated to the Kurdish National Council, were formed in each Kurdish majority areas and in several major cities in Syria with Kurdish populations (Al-Hasakah, Aleppo, Raqqa and Damascus).

West Kurdistan Parliament (Rojava) was founded on December 16, 2011 and in turn established other affiliated councils known as the (People's Councils) in the majority of the Kurdish areas. These councils were backboneed by organizations affiliated to the Movement of Civil Society (TEVDEM). TEVDEM was founded at the beginning of July, 2011 as an incubator for all Syrian Kurdish formations close to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and its imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan.

The West Kurdistan Parliament, one would say, operates in cooperation with the TEVDEM and further approves its charter. Upon declaring the democratic autonomous government in 2014, the Council was still in action, although operation priority was allocated to the three executive councils (Afrin, Kobani and Jazira) which are considered local administration governments and are tasked with executive, legislative and judicial responsibilities.

Local councils affiliated to the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces have been formed and included civil activists and members of the revolution coordination committees. However, these councils lacked any presence of political party representatives and could not compete against the two Kurdish councils in most areas since they were not declared. Consequently, their existence underwent a great debate.

The Kurdish National Council and the West Kurdistan Parliament have established several affiliated local councils that are connected to the two central councils in the Syrian Kurdish areas. These councils are known for being explicit and having established headquarters in all city centers after the withdrawal of the regime's forces from the Kurdish areas. However, the civic local councils affiliated to the Local Administrative Councils Unit were not formally

declared, except on a limited scale due to the ongoing political conflicts in the Kurdish areas and the fact that the utmost priority was allocated to the Kurdish national crisis rather than the Syrian crisis. Distrust in their official statements and the frequent criticisms against the Coalition and some of its leaders by the National Coalition and its affiliated entities of the supporters of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the West Kurdistan Parliament, have also influenced the lack of declaration of the coalition.

The Kurdish National Council has affiliated local councils in the following areas: Afrin, Aleppo, Ayn al Arab, Raqqa, Tell Abyad, Al-Darbasiyah, Amuda, Al-Hasakah, West Qamishli, East Qamishli, Al-Qahtaniyah, Al-Jawadiyah, Al-Malikiyah, Al-Maabadah, Al-Rmelan, Tell Tamr and Damascus.

On the other hand, the West Kurdistan Parliament has a series of councils, named the People's Councils, which are distributed over the entire Syrian Kurdish areas: Afrin, Aleppo, Raqqa, Ayn al Arab, Damascus, Al-Hasakah, Al-Darbasiyah, Amuda, Al-Qahtaniyah, Al-Maabadah, Al-Malikiyah and Qamishli. It is necessary to point out that the West Kurdistan Parliament has smaller councils covering a cluster of villages in the countryside.

The West Kurdistan Parliament, as one of the formations of Öcalan Movement, is currently the most influential and dominant entity in the Kurdish areas in Syria. This is largely due to having security forces (ASAISH) as well as militant groups (People Protection Units). Presently it constitutes an actual authority in the majority of Kurdish areas while the Kurdish National Council and the local councils of Local Administrative Councils Unit have a very limited practical role.

4.2.1. Challenges before the provision of services

The Kurdish areas have undergone several phases during the Syrian revolution especially after the security and administrative void. The Supreme Kurdish Committee, which was declared in 2012 when the two Kurdish councils (Kurdish National Council and West Kurdistan Parliament) concluded the Howler Agreement sponsored by Head of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Mr. Massoud Barzani, tried to monopolize all communal and public entities by issuing a number of decisions entitling it to control the public movement in the Kurdish areas of Syria. Although the Supreme Kurdish Committee has not lasted for more than a few months and has lost its actual presence on ground, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the West Kurdistan Parliament were working on behalf of the committee until declaring the autonomous government of the Kurdish areas of Syria.

Decisions issued by the Supreme Kurdish Committee included the formation of its Service Committee on February 1, 2013. This banned the distribution of victuals by any entity, association, or organization not affiliated to the Supreme Kurdish Committee, and it also forbid the distribution of victuals or other aids unless under the supervision of the

committee. The decision also provided for storing all humanitarian aids allocated to the Kurdish areas at the Supreme Kurdish Committee's warehouses.

Thus, the aforementioned decision has practically eliminated the work of all relief committees in the Kurdish areas of Syria, unless they chose to work under the supervision of the Supreme Kurdish committee. However, no tangible or functional presence of the committee on the said date was recorded, but rather the West Kurdistan Parliament was working on behalf of the committee.

Accordingly, several relief committees were dissolved in the Kurdish areas including the Independent Relief Committee in Kobani. In one year this committee provided astonishing services despite the difficult circumstances. Other relief committees, associations, and entities coped with the issues in Syria by either accepting to store their received aids in the warehouses of the Supreme Committee represented by the West Kurdistan Parliament or work under its supervision.

The two councils, National Kurdish Council and the local council of the provincial local councils of Aleppo and Al Hasakah, suffer numerous pressures and are not able to provide the necessary services in their areas since the West Kurdistan Parliament, along with some of its allies, monopolizes all sectors in the Kurdish communities and does not allow the two councils to provide any relief services. The two councils are incapable of implementing their projects or providing the intended services since they lack the proper funding and the qualified experienced personnel. For example, local councils of the Kurdish National Council include representatives of parties, women, and coordination committees who are not conditioned to have the required expertise and qualifications to join these councils.

The work of the councils suffers another constraint represented in the absence of accurate statistics or records that would enable them to provide services for the citizens properly.

It is clear that the obstacles before the work of the local councils of the Kurdish National Council and the National Syrian Coalition are much bigger than those before the people's councils of the West Kurdistan Parliament. The latter have authorities, financial capabilities, and experienced staff who were tempted to join them for their powerful status in the Kurdish areas, while the other first does not.

Moreover, the internal differences within the Kurdish National Council constitute great obstacles before the Council as well as within its local councils.

4.2.2. Structure and internal units

The structure of the West Kurdistan Parliament consists of:

- Presidency of the council: a 'dual-chairmanship' model (man and woman) is adopted and the heads of the council are elected by the General Congress.

- Government Office: consists of 7 members elected by the General Congress of the Council as well.
- Permanent Council: consists of 63 members elected by the General Congress of the Council.

The Government Office and the two heads of the council constitute the 'Presidency committee' of the West Kurdistan Parliament.

People's Councils of the West Kurdistan Parliament structure represent a smaller version of the umbrella council.

The structure of the Kurdish National Council includes:

- Presidency of the council: Head of the Kurdish National Council and two deputies.
- General secretariat of the council: membership includes representatives of each political party involved in the Council by 15 members representing independents, women, and coordination committees.
- Kurdish National Council: consists of 75 members elected by the Kurdish National Congress.

Local councils of the Kurdish National Council structure represent a smaller version of the umbrella council. It is important to note that each district is entitled for a proportioned representation at the Kurdish National Congress, the Kurdish National Council and the general secretariat for independents, women and coordination committees; the partisan representation in the Congress, Council, and the Secretariat is determined by each political party.

The local councils of each council are linked to the umbrella council by a hierarchical structure and they report to the umbrella council politically by executing its instructions and submitting periodic or urgent reports about the developments in each area. As for services, the local councils adopt decentralization practices and enjoy wider authorities. However, all depends on the individuality of each area.

4.2.3. Democratic autonomous government: councils and committees

Members of the local councils of the Local Administrative Councils Unit are appointed since no elections in the Kurdish areas of Syria were conducted; the criteria of appointment also remains unclear in nature.

In the Kurdish National Council and its affiliated local councils, the independent members are elected as the voting committee produces candidates nominated based on personal considerations and relations to the Kurdish political parties. On the other hand, representatives of women and coordination committees are selected based on a quota system. The Kurdish political parties select their own representatives in the Kurdish National Congress which elects the Kurdish National Council or conduct internal elections in the

central committees and political partisan committees where the representatives of each party are elected. It is worth mentioning that the composition of the Kurdish National Congress includes 45% party representatives and 55% independents and representatives of women and coordination committees where the latter are elected after the regional communities, associations, and organizations submit their nominations to the local congress of each district. Thus, each entity organizes internal elections during which a secret voting is conducted and the selected members are referred to the local congress where candidacy papers are presented before the members of the congress to be elected by secret voting. The elected members are then referred to the Kurdish National Congress where the Kurdish National Council is elected.

The electoral experience of the West Kurdistan Parliament differs from that of the Kurdish National Council. Before the first congress in 2011, the preparatory committees of the West Kurdistan Congress led an intensified media campaign in preparation for the elections of the congress and determined the dates to start the electoral process in all the Kurdish areas and cities with Kurdish populations (Al-Hasakah, Aleppo, Raqqa and Damascus). Indeed, polling stations were distributed throughout cities, towns, and countryside where the people voted. Candidates of each district were also elected through city, town, and village councils. In other words, the electoral process before the congress consisted of two rounds: the first round is to elect the candidates of the cities, towns, and villages in each area and the second round included the election of the candidates representing each area at the congress. Thousands of voters have participated in these elections, according to the statistics of the PYD.



Elections of West Kurdistan Parliament in Damascus

Relationships and communication mechanisms

Relationships between the councils in the Kurdish areas are confined within the context of their regions; every local council reports to the umbrella council as its referential authority.

Accordingly, the local councils of the Kurdish National Council report to the umbrella council (Kurdish National Council) and maintain relationships with the civic and communal entities in their regions. Relationships, on the other hand, with third parties attempting to secure funding or foreign institutions are limited to the umbrella council and are exclusively coordinated by it.

The People's Councils of West Kurdistan Parliament are also confined to regional relationships, particularly with close organizations. The relationships between these councils and the local councils of the Kurdish National Council are fluctuant as they were intense and cooperative after signing the howler agreement and establishing the Supreme Kurdish Committee. Suspending the work of the supreme committee interrupted these relationships. The West Kurdistan Parliament and the People's Councils have distinctive foreign relationships, particularly with organizations affiliated to the Öcalan Movement in Turkey.

The local councils of the provincial local councils of Aleppo and Al Hasakeh report to the provincial local council of its jurisdiction. They also have relationships with the local councils of the Kurdish National Council, but they cannot be described as good or distinctive

although both parties are affiliated to the Syrian National Coalition where the Kurdish National Council joined the coalition and became one of its components.

Communication between the local councils of the Kurdish National Council and their allies is done through printed documents and social networking websites.

The local councils of the West Kurdistan Parliament communicate with their allies through printed documents, social networking websites (particularly Facebook), their official websites, the Ronahi satellite channel which broadcasts from Belgium and has studios in some Kurdish Syrian areas, and radio stations created at several areas including Afrin, Jazira and Kobani (Ayn al Arab).

The local councils of the coalition have poor communication potentials since they lack a supporting popular base in the Kurdish Syrian areas and only communicate over Facebook at best.

Sources of funding

The West Kurdistan Parliament is well supported financially due to the rigid donation scheme imposed on its allies. Following the administrative and security void in the Kurdish areas of Syria, the Parliament was turned into the absolute authority. They started levying taxes on commercial through its local councils; collecting bills of electricity, water, and services; and established a customs department in each region.

In this context, the situation of the Kurdish National Council and its local councils differs as they lack the required funding resources. The presidency of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq was their only source of funding; it used to finance the umbrella council which in turn distributes proportions of funds over the regions. However, the local councils of the Kurdish National Council complain about the scarcity of funds. Representatives and members of the local councils said they have not received any subsidies, except for food baskets, by the Syrian National Coalition, although the Kurdish National Council is under the Syrian National Coalition. The majority of the local councils of the Kurdish National Council cannot afford to cover their expenses and their member parties assume some of the financial burdens. Moreover, the only funding resource of the local councils of the Local Administrative Councils Unit is the provincial local council to which they report. They do not have a popular base or allies to support them financially due to their limited influence in the Kurdish street.

Relationship with the militant groups

The Free Syrian Army (FSA) has no presence in the Kurdish Syrian areas except for partial and temporary presence in Afrin and Ayn al Arab. The People's Protection Units (YPG) established by the TEVDEM have spread over the entire Kurdish Syrian areas and have been involved in armed confrontations with the FSA, Nusra Front, and more recently the ISIS.

We cannot precisely determine whether there is any relationship between the local councils of the coalition and the FSA since the latter has no presence in the Kurdish areas. Furthermore, the local councils deny any relationship with any militant groups including the FSA and the Islamist armed organizations.

Additionally, the Kurdish National Council and its local councils in the Kurdish Syrian areas have no relations with FSA or the People's Protection Units. There are few meetings that take place at some areas based on their circumstances, especially if they experience armed conflict. These relations cannot be characterized as positive since the Kurdish National Council has a clear stand against the militarization of the revolution. However, some Kurdish political parties represented in the Kurdish National Council (the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Party and the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria) have at times resorted to forming armed brigades, typically small sized and included merely dozens of members who were trained by the People's Protection Units. The Syrian Kurdish Democratic Party later withdrew from the Kurdish National Council and is currently coordinating with the Democratic Union Party. This continues while its brigade still carries out its functions under the People's Protection Units and the Democratic Progressive Party has withdrawn from the brief coalition with the People's Protection Units.

The West Kurdistan Parliament and its local councils are on a close terms with the People's Protection Units since both entities are affiliated to the Öcalan Movement in Syria. The aforementioned parliament and local councils have no relationships with the FSA or the armed Islamist militias. It should be noted that in recent months a relative change has took place in the People's Protection Units and factions of the FSA (including the rebels of Raqqa) fought together against Daash in Ayn al Arab countryside.

The model of Ayn al Arab / Kobani – Aleppo Province

Ayn al Arab is located at the eastern countryside of Aleppo province and has a population of approximately 150,000 people (when including its countryside, its total population amounts to half a million people). The city has experienced a populated density since the arrival of the displaced people from other areas. The city is 4,000 km ² and consists of 4 districts: Ayn al Arab, Shiyoukh Tahtani, Sarrin, and Jalabiyah.

Ayn al Arab and its countryside have involved in the Syrian revolution since April, 2011. It was the second Kurdish region after Amuda to organize demonstrations against the regime. The Syrian governmental authorities (security, police and city director) withdrew from Ayn al Arab on July 19, 2012 leaving the region in a huge security and administrative void that was occupied by the Kurdish National Council and the West Kurdistan Parliament.

In mid-2013, the city and its countryside witnessed armed confrontations between the People's Protection Units of the Democratic Union Party and factions of the FSA. The armed clashes broke out again at the end of the same year and are ongoing till date, but this time

the conflict was between the People's Protection Units and Daash. This militant conflict put the city under siege, restricted the freedom of movement, and deprived it of aids. Opening the border crossing (Murshid Pienaar Ayn al Arab) in Turkey for emergency and relief cases contributed to the life-saving delivery of humanitarian aid to the region.

Councils in the region

Currently, the region has three councils: the West Kurdistan Parliament, the Kurdish National Council, and the Civic Local Council. The democratic autonomous government has been recently declared in the region which has become a canton governed by an executive council consisting of one head, two deputies and 22 heads of committee (the executive council represents a government and the committee represents a ministry). The region also has an interim provincial legislative council.

The local council of the Kurdish National Council was formed in November 2011 upon the return of the region's delegates from the Kurdish national conference held in Qamishli on October 26, 2011. The council is renewed after every national conference as the local council formed in 2011 was renewed following the Kurdish national conference in 2013.

The local council of the Kurdish National Council consists of 25 members: 11 party representatives, 9 independents, 3 representatives of coordination committees, and 2 women representatives.

The People's Council of the West Kurdistan Parliament was formed at the beginnings of 2012 following the return from the general conference of the council held in Malikiyah and Derek on December 16, 2011. The local council of the West Kurdistan Parliament was declared after the local conference held elections in the city in the presence of nearly 100 members, where it elected its committees and offices by secret ballot with a dual-presidency model in accordance with the umbrella council. The dual-presidency model is a tradition adopted by the PKK and its affiliated organizations. It is not only followed in Syria, but also in Turkey, Iraq and Iran, and it stems from valuing the status of women in society.

The local council of the provincial local council of Free Aleppo was formed in March, 2013 and it includes 20 members whom are appointed by the founders of the council based on their willingness to work with the council.

Relationship between the councils and the militant groups in Kobani / Ayn al Arab

The local council of the Kurdish National Council has no relations with any militant group. Several meetings were held between the council and the People's Protection Units to contain the problems and discuss the situation of the region and its administrative borders. These topics of discussion have resulted from the outbreak of the armed conflict between the People's Protection Units and the armed groups since 2013. The council does not have a military wing since it believes in the peacefulness of the revolution and stands against its militarization. Several meetings were also held between the council and factions of the FSA

in 2013 since the Council was supervising the implementation of the ceasefire agreement between the two clashing sides (People's Protection Units and the FSA).

The provincial local council of Free Aleppo denied any relationships with any militant group and stated that its relationships are limited to civic authorities.

The People's Council of West Kurdistan Parliament has remarkable relationships with the People's Protection Units, Free Syrians Brigade, and Kurds Front Brigade: it has no relationships with the other Syrian armed groups.

Resources of funds

The local council of the Kurdish National Council receives its funds from the general secretariat of the Kurdish National Council. The council stressed that the received amounts are insignificant. Thus, the council depends on the represented parties and resorts to collecting donations during the harvest season. The local council of the West Kurdistan Parliament, on the other hand, receives its funds from the umbrella council and has no financial problems as it is more organized and has financial policies based on investments and donations from its wide popular base. In addition, it collects taxes and bills for the services it provides to the citizens in the region after having transformed into the absolute authority.

The civic local council receives its funds from the provincial local council of Free Aleppo, but it complains about the poor communication with the provincial local council due to the security situation in the city of Ayn al Arab.

Democratic process in the councils

Following the Kurdish National Congress in 2011, the local council of the Kurdish National Council was established. The council included 11 independent members and representatives of 8 Kurdish political parties as well as representatives of coordination committees. The independent members participated in the congress activities. They were previously elected by a preparatory committee composed of selected party representatives and 5 independent members of 84 members in order to attend the electoral conference held in one of the region's villages in October, 2011.

The selection mechanism of the independent voting committee tasked with electing the representatives of the region at the second Kurdish National Congress held in January 2013 has changed. An independent preparatory committee has divided the voting committee into western countryside villages, eastern countryside villages, southern countryside villages, civic groupings, civic and social characters, and women and coordination committees. The allocation of the seats per group has specified a number of representatives for each group:

* Civic community entities, by 49 voters, entitled to nominate 4 candidates for the electoral round.

- * City sector, by 22 voters, entitled to nominate 2 candidates.
- * Eastern countryside, by 17 voters, entitled to nominate 1 candidate and the same criteria applies to the southern and western countryside.
- * Women, by 65 voters, entitled to nominate 2 female candidates.

Accordingly, 182 voters have attended the meeting by 117 males and 65 females.

They elected 11 independent members for the Kurdish National Congress while parties appointed their representatives.

Currently, the local council of the Kurdish National Council includes 25 members in addition to a series of offices and committees.

On February 23, 2012, the People's Council of West Kurdistan Parliament held its first preliminary conference in Kobani / Ayn al Arab in the presence of about 260 members. Members included the representatives of the city and its countryside, who have been elected by the village and city councils and the Democratic Union Party's members. The council concluded its conference by electing two heads of council and an executive office composed of 31 members. It also elected the members of the People's Court and created 17 affiliated committees.

We do not have any information about the mechanism adopted in selecting the members of the civic local council of the provincial local council of Free Aleppo.

Relationships between the councils in the region

The relationship between the Kurdish National Council and the People's Council of the West Kurdistan Parliament could be described as fluctuant as they have great coordination, convergence, and understanding in the short period that followed signing the howler document (2012) and establishing the Supreme Kurdish Committee. However, the relationship is currently turbulent.

The relationship between the local council of the Kurdish National Council and the Civic Local Council is weak. Only one meeting has taken place between them; there is a total absence of coordination between the two.

The relationship between the local council and the People's Council of West Kurdistan Parliament is nonexistent.

4.2.4. Democratic autonomous government: councils and committees

The Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its allied parties and organizations in the Kurdish areas in addition to several entities representing the Arab and Assyrian elements declared the autonomous government in the Kurdish areas of Syria and divided the Kurdish areas into three provinces: Jazira, Kobani (Ayn al Arab) and Afrin.

Initially, the executive council declared the province of Jazira on January 21, 2014. This was followed by declaring the executive office of Kobani (Ayn al Arab) province on January 27, 2014 and the executive office of Afrin province on January 29, 2014.

It should be noted here that Jazira province, with Amuda as its capital, consists of the following districts: Ayn al Arab, Al-Darbasiyah, Amuda, Qamishli, Al-Qahtaniyah (Terbesbeh), Al-Maabadah (Karaki Lki), Al-Rmelan, Al-Malikiyah (Derek) and Al-Hasakah. Kobani province, with its capital Kobani city (Ayn al Arab), includes: Koban (Ayn al Arab), Tell Abyad, Raqqa, Jarablos and Manbij. Afrin province with its capital Afrin city includes Afrin and Ezaz.

Each province (Jazira, Kobani and Afrin) is run by an executive council consisting of a head of executive council, two deputies, and 22 heads of the committees.

Committee of each executive council includes foreign affairs, defense and self-protection, interior affairs, local administration and municipalities, finance, labor and social affairs, education, agriculture, health, trade and economy, families of martyrs, culture, transportation, youth and sports, environment and tourism and antiquities, religious affairs, women and family affairs, human rights, food supply, communication, justice, and energy.

Previously, an interim legislative council (functioning as parliament) was formed in each province. The interim legislative council was tasked with appointing a representative to form the executive council. Accordingly, Mr. Akram Hissou is head of the executive council of Jazira province, lawyer Anwar Muslim is head of the executive council of Kobani, and Mrs. Hivi Mustafa is head of the executive council of Afrin.

Prior to declaring the autonomous government, a committee composed of the Democratic Union Party and its allies drafted the constitution of the interim autonomous government named the 'social contract of West Kurdistan'.

Heads of the declared administrations describe them as interim civic administrations the purpose of which is to bridge the security and administrative gap. However, facts on ground require the formation of a supreme constitutional court and high electoral commission in addition to an electoral plan for the three provinces to create elected legislative councils instead of the interim councils. On April 17, 2014, the interim legislative councils of the three provinces passed the Political Parties Law. Additionally, the three executive councils cooperate with other entities based on their centralized authoritarianism and their diligent attempts to legalize all aspects of the community. This includes the subjection of the revolutionary entities in the three provinces under a security license issued by the ASAISH, which was declared prior to the autonomous government but currently works under its umbrella.

4.2.5. Domestic and foreign relations of the provincial executive councils

The relationship between the provincial executive councils and the local councils of the Kurdish National Council and the local councils of the coalition is extremely weak, if not

nonexistent. The executive councils perceive themselves as local governments in charge of ruling the Kurdish areas of Syria, and believe that all other councils, entities, and movements must exclusively work through them.

The Kurdish National Council in Syria has not acknowledged yet the declared autonomous government and therefore its local councils do not acknowledge the governments of the three provinces and avoid any contact with them. The reason behind this attitude is the statement of the Kurdish National Council accusing the West Kurdistan Parliament of disclaiming their agreement on naming the project as 'transitional administration of the Kurdish and mutual regions'. It is also a result of the declared democratic autonomous government promotions "slogans and concepts devoid of Kurdish nationalism and it attempts to defame the symbols of nationalism and the Kurdish flag and abolish the role of the Kurdish parties that do not comply with its opinion." In addition to the mutual vision of the two councils, stated in the howler document created on November 23, 2012, it is stated that the solution lies in the federal form of the state and constitutional recognition of the existence of the Kurdish people in addition to ensuring their national rights by the constitution.

The relationship between the executive councils of three provinces and the local councils of the Local Administrative Councils Unit is weak if not nonexistent. There is reference to the position of the Syrian National Coalition against the Democratic Union Party and the declared autonomous government in the north in addition to the hostility of the Democratic Union Party against the coalition and the opposition abroad.

Instead of establishing domestic relationships, the new executive councils resorted to focusing on foreign relations. A delegation of Jazira province headed to Kurdistan Region of Iraq and held several meetings in Sulaymaniyah with the leaders of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and in Qandil Mountain with the leaders of the PKK. During this time period, a delegation of the executive councils of Kobani province went to Turkey and held a series of meetings with the Kurdish civil society organizations as well as several Western embassies. Unfortunately, the Turkish authorities refused to welcome the delegation.

Notes:

It is necessary to refer to an essential point related to the Kurdish areas in Syria, which is related to the withdrawal of the ruling regime's executive authorities. It is true that the regime has evacuated its security forces, regional governors, and police officers. The regime still holds a presence through the cross-correlation between the centralized governmental departments, directorates, and ministries. The municipal councils, moreover, affiliated to the regime are still performing their functions. The city of Qamishli has a special situation that differs from the rest of the Kurdish areas due to the fact that the regime still has a military and security presence there. This constitutes one of the obstacles to the work of the non-affiliated local councils.

The local councils of the Kurdish National Council and the West Kurdistan Parliament are not limited to providing services but are also political councils. They have allies and followers in the Kurdish Syrian street. The service and relief aspect of their work is only one side of their other various responsibilities. For example, when established these councils were primarily concerned with leading and organizing the Syrian Kurdish citizens in addition to representing them in all forums and organizing demonstrations and rallies in most Syrian Kurdish cities. These councils ultimately report to the two umbrella councils in regards to decisions specifically those issued at their conferences which are mainly political since the service and relief aspects were never a priority. This differs in some circumstances such as after the security void in the Kurdish areas of Syria and at the start of receiving the displaced people in the northern parts of the country.

5. Detailed research concerning the status of several local councils (cities – provinces)

5.1. Provincial local councils:

5.1.1. Provincial local council of Aleppo:

The provincial local council of Aleppo was formed in March, 2013 in Gaziantep, Turkey where the general committee was elected by the smaller local councils which have met at the time.

Elections

The first elections were conducted during the meeting of the smaller local councils of the province at Gaziantep. The electoral lists and their regulations were defined by a group of lawyers. The council now has what is called the Local Administrative Councils Unit regulations, but it is subject to amendments according to the reality of Aleppo province. Other elections were conducted in the province in September, 2013.

Structure

The provincial local council consists of the councils of the center (Aleppo) and the local councils of the countryside of the province while the documented organizational chart indicates the presence of: head of the council, deputy, secretary and executive office. They believe this structure is good and proper for facilitating communication and work.

Current capabilities and key projects

Launching the council's directorates was the most remarkable project implemented by the council; it reflected the council's concern for rebuilding the state institutions.

The council has 8 directorates including legal affairs, civil status, civil defense, seed multiplication, mills, health, transportation, and education. In addition, it aspires to establish an agriculture directorate.

Heads of the council said education and civil defense are the most successful directorates, whereas seed multiplication constitutes 20% of the council's budget.

Important future projects

The council has an ambitious plan focused on purchasing wheat and potato from producers and implement projects focused on fast ambulatory care, physical therapy, and blood bank drives. The civil defense directorate needs greater support due to the troubled circumstances of the province and the huge need of services.

Required qualifications

The council believes its administrative structure in this regards is distinct since it has high educational qualifications including holders of masters, PHD, and engineering degrees.

Requirements for the coming six months

The council needs to initiate development projects including an integrated yeast plant in a safe area, as well as a fishery.

Communication and relationships

The Council believes it has excellent internal communications and a great follow up of its affairs.

The relationship between the council and the other provincial local councils is limited. Its communication with the Local Administrative Councils Unit is good, but the council's relationship with the coordination and support unit and the interim government is troubled due to the council's reservation against the mistakes of some members of the government. These mistakes include their coordination with the heads of directorates of the council without consideration of its hierarchal structure and administrative cycle. The council is indifferent to the Syrian National Coalition.

The Council expressed its readiness to join the Ministry of Local Administration of the interim government provided that the government displays a flexible attitude to maintain a balance between centralization and decentralization.

Transparency

The council denies any cases of corruption within its structure, but it acknowledges some delay in delivering its financial reports. The council has a system of accounting and a financial audit. It aspires to establish a reporting culture among all staff. It also refers to the fact that it has numerous smaller councils tasked with publishing financial reports to the public.

Donors

The council communicates regularly with its donors who are mostly European, Canadian, and American. They hope, however, that the communication with the donors will be through the interim government, which has not been accomplished so far.

Relations with the militant groups

The council has a good relationship with the Mujahideen Army which adopts the visions of the council. They also have a strong relationship with Al-Tawhid Brigade affiliated to the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front who has handed over 2200 acres of land belonging to the Ministry of Agriculture to be invested by the council upon the council's request.

The council's relationship with Daash, on the other hand, is rocky due to the fact that the council suffers the presence of Daash in the areas of El Bab, Manbij and Ayn al Arab.

Effectiveness of the Council

The council believes it has achieved, within its capabilities, some reasonable results but its services are modest compared to the needs of citizens in the province.

Media

The council is generally poor in this aspect as it lacks the necessary expertise and needs more proficient journalists.

5.1.2. Provincial local council of Idlib:

Establishment and democratic experience

The idea of forming the council emerged from the work of the coordination committees on ground and the need for donors to have a legitimate entity to communicate with.

Therefore, the activists were invited to a general conference during which the members of the executive office and the general secretariat were elected.

The elections were scheduled to be conducted after 6 months, but the plan was interrupted by the security conditions of the province. Thus, the service term of the council was extended for 6 more months in order to follow up the implementation of its projects. The elections are planned to be conducted in two months.

Idlib province contains 140 councils and every 7,000 people are entitled to form a council.

The Council has a developed regulation chart in addition to a legal committee as well as judiciary committee which monitor and oversee the elections.

In regards to the internal electoral process, the council said it is forming a preparatory committee which receives recommendations, appeals, and candidate list. Afterwards, the elections will take place with high transparency to ensure the council represents all groups and communities.

Structure

The council consists of the head of the council, deputy, secretary, and the executive office, which – they believe – is an effective and good structure.

Current capabilities and key projects

The mill project is the most important project implemented by the council where it purchases wheat and produces bread to be sold at reasonable prices in order to respond to the needs of the province.

The council, moreover, initiated several other projects including water, electricity, and bakery projects; in small enterprises (sewing and raising cattle); as well as health projects. The council also plans to initiate an ambulatory scheme and mills directorate.

The most prominent requirements of the council in the coming phase are launching the projects focusing on water, electricity, health, bakeries, and mills.

Required qualifications

The council has not depended previously on qualifications standards in selecting its members and staff. The only criterion adopted was the level of involvement in the revolutionary activity. However, it plans on recruiting a variety of specializations. The council currently includes, among its 11 members, two members holding a master's degree in law and one holding a PhD in education.

Communication and relationships

The relationship between the council and its smaller local councils remains strong. They hold regular meetings alternatively in the affiliated cities and towns and document their visions and proposals for the development of the council's performance.

The relationship between the council and the other provincial local councils is limited. Their communication occurs at untimely intervals due to the security conditions of the majority of the provinces. In this case, communication is achieved through Skype. The council's relationship with the provisional local council of Hama, however, is remarkable since they have several joint projects including paving the roads between the two provinces and the Zayzoun water project in Hama.

The Council is on good terms with the interim government, but it does demonstrate few reservations on some decisions issued recently that were addressed by the council in several press statements. The council hopes to receive greater support from the interim government as allocated to Aleppo and Tartus. This is a concern, especially since numerous areas in Idlib including Khan Shaikhoun – Wadi Eldaif district has not received any support while Mork district receives the majority of the support; this remains true even though the geographical distance between them is less than 5 km.

Transparency

The council has a financial office and receipts. The work of the financial office is followed up by an internal audit committee (appointed by the council) which copies all receipts and invoices to be published on the Internet. Additionally, all receipts and invoices are archived.

The council acknowledges the existence of few cases of internal corruption and errors, but it turns a blind eye since they are under a critical stage. Additionally, such cases are typically minor and the council is able to reassure the donors by documenting all work.

Donors

The donors, who include European organizations, are contacted through the interim government especially after the formation of the Ministry of Local Administration. The

council admits receiving funds, but the needs of the province are much greater to be covered by the received amounts.

Relations with the militant groups

The Council presents itself as a civic governmental institution which gains its legitimacy at home. It has good relationships with the military which helps facilitating the provision of its services. Additionally, it has good relationships with the judicial authorities in the province.

Effectiveness of the council

The Council believes it has addressed half the needs of the citizens in the province.

Media

The Council lacks proper media accessibility and depends more on its Facebook page, mosques, and periodicals.

5.1.3. Provincial Local Council of Homs:

The core of the current council is the local council which was formed in October, 2012. It was selected by consensus since it was impossible to conduct elections at the time. For this end, the councils of Rastan, Hula, Al-Qusayr, Al-Qaryatayn and others were assembled. The council was initially composed of 7 local councils; it was later expanded to include 14 councils. The council was not dissolved after the regime regained control over several areas. Its members resumed, though at a slower pace, practicing their jobs at their current place of displacement.

Elections and democratic experience

The council adopted the electoral system of the Local Administrative Councils Unit making few amendments to suit its function on ground in coordination with the local councils unit. The current provincial local council, on the other hand, is formed by consensus.

The electoral process is conducted over several phases where each local council nominates its representatives at the general committee's assembly. This occurs provided that every 5,000 people are represented by one representative at the general committee, which in turn organizes the elections.

The council plans to conduct the elections of the provincial local council of Homs after 3 months.

Structure

The structure of the council consists of: presidential office including 5 members in addition to the head of the council, deputy, secretary, and the executive office. Thus, the provincial local council consists of 21 members. The council believes this structure is the result of the current circumstances and is suitable only under the current critical conditions.

Current capabilities and key projects

The projects of the council are limited as a result of restricted funding. The most prominent problem facing the council is linked to food security. Overcoming the food shortage has been a difficult task for the council. The council has the disadvantage of bordering Lebanon, which currently maintains Hezbollah presence, and the disadvantage of the remoteness of the Turkish border, which contributed to the imposed siege on the province. However, the council is trying to break this siege through providing food baskets and bread. Addressing the problem was done in a new and unplanned mechanism, but the council currently seeks to launch some developmental projects on top, which is providing wheat and victuals. Furthermore, the council adopted a plan based on encouraging the cultivation of wheat by focusing on highlighting the importance of cultivating this product, developing agricultural programs, and supplying pesticides for field mice and weeds. The council stressed that many people resorted to cultivating wheat, and now it tries to implement the same project for potatoes to ensure balance between supplying food products at a reasonable price to the consumer as well as the farmer.

The council also tends to support field hospitals through supplying medical devices to ensure the hospitals' ability to provide acceptable services for the citizens.

The council has also several educational programs in the areas outside the regime's control, including Hula, where students were not able to perform their examinations. Such problem was avoided by the council, recently, through organizing the exams.

The council also attempted to renovate several schools that have been bombarded. It initiated the 'Their Education is Our Responsibility' project by building schools and institutions, as well as compensating the multiple other shortfalls within the education sector. The council, hence, restored 7 schools so far and has been working on renovating 20 others. It has 200 schools in total that need repairs and rehabilitation including 118 ones with pressing needs. The council depends on university student volunteers to teach the children.

The areas targeted by the council's services include the northern countryside, namely Helwa, Al-Rastan, Talbiseh, Al Ghantoo, Al Dara al Kabeera, Zafaran and Terma'ale.

Required qualifications

The council has various qualifications. The heads of departments and council members are holders of university degrees. The education office contains one member who has a master's degree and one counterpart at the service department.

Communication and relationships

The internal relationships in the council are sturdy, as a result of open dialogue and consultation.

The relationships between the council and the other provincial local councils are limited as members only meet during conferences and training workshops. Continuous direct contact is rare because the provincial local councils are subject to the security conditions of the provinces in addition to the imposed siege on Homs. Their major channel of communication is Skype.

The relationship between the council and the interim government is yet to be determined – according to the council – since the interim government is newly established.

The relationship between the council and the Local Administrative Councils Unit is formal. The council expressed its delight that the unit has joined the Ministry of Local Administration of the interim government and asked the unit for a much better performance.

The relationship between the council and the Coalition is almost nonexistent as it believes the coalition has no achievements on ground. Although, the Local Administrative Councils Unit was represented in the coalition, despite receiving funds from the Support Coordination Unit for several projects including the wheat project and the water of Al Ghantoo and Al-Rastan project.

Transparency

Under the current circumstances, the council is announcing its services and activities on its Facebook page. The council's financial office publishes some of its expenditure lists and tables, but the level of transparency varies from one region to another. Nevertheless, all councils are obliged to submit their expenditure reports as well as spending mechanisms.

The council does not deny the presence of isolated and minor cases of corruption. As for the fair distribution of services, the adopted standards are based on population and the scope of siege imposed on the province in addition to the number of displaced people. Consequently, ratios of distribution are determined in consultation with the provincial local councils.

Donors

The council is mainly funded by the Syrian Business Forum with little support from European organizations.

The council complains that the allocated funds have not been received directly, and it hopes that future funds would be delivered through the Ministry of Local Administration and the interim government.

Relationship with the militant groups

These relationships are described as good. There is an agreement between the councils and the militant groups that civic sector must be assigned to a civilian character while the

military sector is managed by a military figure, but there is not enough coordination between the two.

Effectiveness of the council

The council believes that the citizens are beginning to have increased, but limited, feelings of popularity towards the council, primarily as a result of the implementation of the new water projects.

Media

The council has a media office, but lacks a specific media plan. It has a Facebook page and an under construction website.

5.1.4. Provincial local council of Latakia

The council was established by consensus, due to the security conditions of the province, and a committee was formed to undertake the work of the council which consists of 6 members (head and members).

The council was not able to conduct elections, but in any future electoral process, it will depend on the elections list of the Local Administrative Councils Unit. The work of the council currently covers the countryside of Latakia.

The council plans to conduct its elections in the future by forming a preparatory committee approved by the elected heads of municipalities and local councils. The preparatory committee will nominate 100 candidates representing the people of Latakia and select 40 delegates to elect 11 members for the executive office.

Current capabilities and key projects

The council has repaired several roads which have been targeted by bombing and have become unfit for use. Hence, rehabilitating roads or building alternatives is an essential concern for the council. The council is also working on supplying water through wells and generators.

Future projects

The council is trying to provide water in order to meet the needs of the people due to the scarcity of rains this year. It is also planning to initiate electricity projects to supply the residential communities with power generators. The council, moreover, has several developmental projects including poultry farming and agriculture in addition to other small enterprises.

Required qualifications

Although it lacks certain required expertise and specialized staff, the council includes members holding bachelor and master's degrees.

Future requirements

The council needs to create Obstetrics and a Pediatrician Hospital in addition to supporting education in the province.

Communication and relationships

The council has 7 local councils in the province, but their communication and relationships with the other councils are limited.

Transparency

The council enjoys a level of transparency. Corruption among its staff is very limited since they perform their work openly and have an accounting system, an audit unit, and documented financial reports.

Donors

Syria Care Organization and the Turkish relief organization IHHA are the primary funders of the council thus far.

Relations with the militant groups

The relationship between the council and the militant groups is solid, especially after mobilizing the coast front recently. The council provides civil service and, hence, needs the militant groups to protect their activities and movements. Additionally, there are no hard-line militant groups that would hinder their performance.

Effectiveness of the council

The council has limited influence due to the exceptional circumstances of Latakia province.

5.1.5. Provincial Local Council of al-Hasakah

Elections and democratic experience

The provincial local council of al-Hasakah province has not conducted any elections and it does not depend on the list of the Local Administrative Councils Unit; it believes this unit to be futile. The council submitted its electoral plan to the unit, but the disagreement between them – according to the council – is that the Local Administrative Councils Unit wants the elections of any province to be conducted by the provincial local council while the council believes the elections should start from the smaller councils.

The council believes it is important to adhere to the list of the Local Administrative Councils Unit as a general principle, but it also believes that the existing reality of al-Hasakah province is different from that of the other provinces in Syria in terms of ethnic and sectarian diversity. Therefore, it adopted a quota system. Since this system does more harm than good, the council believes it is necessary to adopt a system of representation by taking into account regional distribution and population ratio, but the council currently is run by consensus.

The provincial local council of al-Hasakah includes 19 municipal and city councils out of 154 others which constitute the number of cities and districts in the province.

The council attempts to combine every 10 municipalities in a joint local council that takes into account the geographic space and the nature of the military control. Thus, the proportion of representation may slightly differ according to the military control criterion. The council requests each municipality to nominate 6 members. Each smaller council will include 60 members in charge of nominating one or two characters to the provincial local council, besides nominating the members of the municipal councils and committees.

The candidates nominated to the provincial local council undertake the formation of the preparatory committee for the elections in accordance with the standards defined by the Local Administrative Councils Unit. The standards state that no member of the preparatory committee can be nominated in the elections.

The council drew the attention to the fact that the internal regulations of the Local Administrative Councils Unit have only mentioned the governor once and have not determined his duties. This, in the opinion of the council, is an indication that the internal regulations of the Local Administrative Councils Unit do not match the reality of the current situation.

The council further explained that the electoral list of the councils has assigned the supervision of the elections to the Ministry of Local Administration of the interim government. The council further demands this process to be put under the supervision of an independent authority.

The council stressed that they are under conditions consistent with a legal British rule that 'power is not for the written text, but for the norms'. Thus, it is required to determine the norms of democracy rather than establishing variable texts. Additionally, there is the need to identify indicators of legitimacy (individuals, representation, performance, and achievement) rather than conducting mere formal elections.

Moreover, the council called for the need to establish trade unions and civil society organizations which monitor the work and performance of the local councils. It also called the institutions interested in civil peace to promote their ideology throughout Syria and more specifically in the province in which the institution is located. The most important obstacles facing the work of the local councils are linked to the sectarian and ethnic composition of the province. Therefore, the council recommends linking the work of the local councils to that of the civil peace councils.

Current capabilities and key projects

Top priorities of the council include solving the problems of water and electricity, initiating the projects of bakeries, and providing other necessary services. In this context, the council

referred to the need of establishing a technical and administrative unit at each council focused on project planning and implementation.

Required qualifications

The local councils embrace several specializations including medicine, engineering (architectural, mechanical, technical, and electrical engineers), and legal activists, some of whom hold a master's degree.

Relationships and communication

The relationship between the council and the smaller councils is well built. The council monitors the work of the smaller but does not interfere with it; it only receives their reports and documentations.

The council described its relationship with the Local Administrative Councils Unit and the Support Coordination Unit as 'not good'. It currently has relationships with the interim government, but they are at their early stages. The council is interested in enhancing communication with the interim government to which it has submitted several projects related to rebuilding the infrastructure; this includes a project to rehabilitate more than 900 schools in the province. The council hopes to receive adequate funds to implement its projects and will provide the credibility of the interim government to this end.

The council seems to be unsatisfied with the coalition. It described the coalition as a political entity operating in accordance with its own interests. The coalition is dominated by partisan mentality which paralyzed the council's projects by halting a financial support estimated at \$337,000.

The council confirmed that al-Hasakah province has representatives at the Syrian National Coalition, but they are working according to their own interests and have no contact with the council.

Transparency

The council indicated that it documents its expenditures. Even though these documents are not yet published, they are willing to submit them to any interested body. The council receives expenditure documents from 70% of its smaller councils. The remaining does not cooperate with the provincial local council either because of their poor efficiency and organization or their inability to communicate with the council due to the militant presence in their work areas.

The council expressed its readiness to welcome any committee seeking to verify its credibility. It also confirmed its seriousness to eliminating internal corruption by citing a case of corruption reported in Amuda. The financial office in Amuda of the provincial local council revealed spending funds on materials that were not distributed. A committee was formed to investigate the issue and upon delivering its findings, the political entities

prosecuted the involved offenders and restored the funds as well as the compensations. The committee's report is documented at the provincial local council in hard and softcopy. In this regards, the council said it is forming audit committees when needed. It does not deny the presence of mistakes, but attributes them to the lack of experience.

Structure

The provincial local council of al-Hasakah province is composed of 16 members including representatives of the sectarian components of the province: 4 Christians, 4 Arabs, and 4 Kurds. It also includes 400 municipal council's members representing 135 municipalities.

The council believes this structure to be most efficient and in coherence with the reality of the province.

Donors

The council receives support and funding from the Syrian Business Forum, Chemonics Organization, the International Trust Fund, and the Support Coordination Committee, in addition to cooperating with 'Watan' and 'Nabni' organizations.

Relations with the militant groups

The relationship between the council and the FSA is good and distinctive, but it has become more complex and fluctuant due to the continuous change of the militant control. The council is now forced to deal with numerous militant entities. For example, its relationship with the People's Protection Unit is unstable since they have arrested a number of the council's members, including Mohammed Khudair, for two months. However, the council has no alternative but to communicate with these entities. Furthermore, Robert Bahou was arrested and the house of another member was raided and looted by militant groups in the region.

Nevertheless, the toughest challenge before the council revolves around the presence of ISIS in the areas where the council needs to provide services. In order to reach these occupied areas, the council was obligated to provide these services under fake titles.

Effectiveness of the council

The council believes its influence in the areas outside the regime's control is acceptable, but cannot declare its activities in the areas that are still under the regime's control. Therefore, in these regions the council's performance and services go unnoticed.

Media

The council depends on its official Facebook page, but even this page is not used regularly and continuously since many services provided by the council cannot be declared, due to the security risks against its members and staff.

5.1.6. Provincial Local Council of Quneitra

Since the wars of 1967 and 1973, only 10% of registered people reside in Quneitra city while the remaining population resides in several Syrian cities including Damascus and its countryside; most prominently gathering in Rif Dimashq, Az Ziyabeyeh, Husayniyah, Hajjarah and Jdiedet El Fadel.

The first provincial local council was established under the presidency of Mohammed Al-Zamil in Jordan where he was staying with the majority of the council's members. Several members were residing in Daraa, Syria. The terms of service of the first council expired in February 2014. Thereafter, a new council was elected under the presidency of Ahmed Sabrait, becoming the first council to be accredited by the interim government.

The first council was established by consensus, but the current one was elected in accordance with the regulations of the Local Administrative Councils Unit affiliated with the interim government.

Current capabilities and key projects

The provincial local council of Quneitra has implemented few educational projects within areas targeted by conflict in Damascus and its countryside. In addition, it has executed several medical and relief projects, primarily in the case when Jdiedet El Fadel was bombed with chemical weapons.

In regarding any future projects initiated by the council, they have stated that the projects were submitted to the interim government and will be implemented upon its approval.

Required qualifications

The council attends to choose its members wisely; it is noted that all current members are either holders of bachelor degrees or licensed specialists.

Relationships and communication

The council described its relationship with its offices and smaller councils as "good" and expects its communication with the smaller councils to become much better since the majority of them were formed by means of fair elections. As for the relationship between the provincial local council and the interim government, it is on good terms due to the fact that the council discusses the details of every submitted project with the government.

Transparency

The council currently includes an audit office but it does not elaborate much on transparency.

Structure

The former council has formed the most needed offices to perform its duties. The current council was formed by full structure including head of the council, deputy, secretary, and executive office.

Donors

The council is obliged to commit to the regulations which provide for the necessity of receiving all allocated funds through the interim government.

Relations with the militant groups

The council's relationship with the FSA, which controls the countryside of Quneitra, is good and cooperative in addition to its communication with the military council. This relationship reaches its peak upon the liberation of any region since the council addresses the relief needs of the liberated zones, sends maintenance workshops, and initiates service projects.

Effectiveness of the council

The current provincial local council seeks to practice more professionalism, effectiveness, and transparency. It admits that its current influence goes unnoticed since its work has not been organized or professional.

Media

The provincial local council of Quneitra has a media office, but it suffers numerous difficulties in communicating with the media offices of the smaller councils. This is a result of the disconnection of the internet service available at the councils in the sieged areas of the southern parts of Damascus.

The media plan of the council is confined to creating an internal media cadre and establishing several braches for the media office in Quneitra, Damascus, and Daraa.

The media work of the council is focused on receiving video clips and news about the military movements in the province in order to be broadcasted over satellite channels. Additionally, the media staff is tasked with preparing reports related to the urgent aspects including education, health, displacement, agriculture, animal husbandry, and other essential requirements in the province.

The media office of the provincial local council has a modest digital camera and a laptop. They use the communication network of either Jordan or Syria, as available, to access the Internet.

Future of the local council

The council seems optimistic about increasing its effectiveness in the future for the best delivery of services which respond to the relief, educational, and health needs in the province.

5.1.7. Provincial Local Council of Swaida

The first provincial local council of Swaida was formed by consensus in April, 2013 in the Lebanese capital of Beirut. Swaida province is under the regime's control, thus a founding committee was secretly formed. The council was tasked mostly with revolutionary and coordination activities, relating to coordination committees. The current council's term of service is about to expire and is, therefore, forming a new council which will be affiliated to the Ministry of local Administration. A preparatory committee was formed for this end and it will submit the list of candidates, of whom the general committee of the council will be constituted, to the Ministry. Afterwards, the members of the provincial local council will be selected by consensus within a month with the participation of a number of committees and organizations.

Four smaller councils report to the provincial local council of Swaida including Shahba council, West Swaida council, the village council, and Swaida city council.

The council will depend of the electoral list of the Local Administrative Councils Unit.

Current capabilities and key projects

The work of the provincial local council and its smaller councils is focused on providing relief services to large numbers of received displaced people at Swaida province from Damascus and its countryside. The council also supports the activities of the Red Crescent in the province.

Among the future projects of the council is to establish refugees camps for the displaced people, despite the associated difficulties, in order to provide a safe area for them.

Required qualifications

All members of the council hold bachelor degrees. However, this is not the case with its smaller councils since people's enrollment represents a real threat to their lives.

Communication and relationships

The council has no actual communication with its smaller councils. The communication is rather irregular and unorganized due to their circumstances and conditions. Perhaps the multiple affiliations of the smaller councils play a key role in disturbing the communication among the councils. Additionally, the communication is affected by the nature of the region and its various political affiliations.

The council has no relationships with the other provincial local councils except for modest communication with the interim government.

Transparency

The council attributes its inability to elaborate on transparency to the fact that it lacks the institutional factor due to the difficulties which interrupt its internal communication.

Nonetheless, the council has partial documentations of the received funds and expenditures, but there is neither a functioning financial office nor an audit office.

Structure

The council does not have a complete or clear structure as it is constituted by a group of activists and is closer in form to a relief network rather than an institution. However, the council, which is under formation, will adopt the prescribed structure of the Local Administrative Councils Unit.

Donors

The council received limited funds from the interim government and Support Coordination Unit. Donors are not interested in the council since Swaida province does not need any support based on its situation and also for fear that any funds would be seized by the regime.

Relations with the militant groups

Swaida province is still under the regime's control and has no active militant forces on ground except for few battalions on the outskirts of the province and popular brigades. The province is under tight control of the regime's security apparatus which hampers any real activity by the council.

Effectiveness of the council

The presence of the council is unnoticed in the province. The citizens are not aware that council is the one providing the few services and they do not know the members of the council. These issues result in the lack of knowledge about its activities, since the council works undercover.

Media

The council does not have a media office or any functioning informative activities for fear that the identity of the members could be disclosed.

5.1.8. Provincial Local Council of Daraa

The first council was formed in the Egyptian capital Cairo by consensus on July 4, 2013; its term of service expired on January 4, 2014. The members of the executive office were selected in the Jordanian capital Amman as the majority of the council members reside in the city of Irbid, Jordan which eases communication with the Syrians inside. The province contains the deputy and 3 educational and relief offices. The head of the council went back to the province when he was removed by the Jordanian authorities, and he still runs the council despite the end of its term of service.

Elections

The council has recently formed a preparatory committee and a commission for elections appeals including several members at home. The elections are scheduled to be conducted at home due to the controversy over this issue.

The current council is in the process of forming a new council depending on the electoral regulations adopted by the Ministry of Local Administration of the interim government. This in turn depends on an amended version of the regulations of the Local Administrative Councils Unit.

Regarding the steps and phases of the electoral process, the council said after forming the preparatory committee, it will form the general committee in charge of conducting the elections, even though the current disputes among the candidates for the general committee interfere with the process.

Current capabilities and key projects

The council executes several service projects including sanitation, water and electricity. It also focuses on medical services and rehabilitation of select hospitals in the province, particularly those located in the areas outside the regime's control. In fact, two hospitals have been rehabilitated in Daraa province. The council also supplies flour and food to the province. The council also has a full-time staff member to coordinate with the Jordanian authorities and solve any obstacles that may arise. The council also has projects for civil defense.

Future projects planned by the council include developing the structure of the civil defense, supplying it with the proper equipment, allocating salaries for the workers of the civil defense, and later expanding the project to include the entire geographical area of the province.

Required qualifications

The majority of the council members have bachelor degrees since membership is conditioned by obtaining a university degree.

Relationships and communication

The council believes that the current communication with its smaller councils is insufficient due to poor commitment of the smaller councils, the instability of the council, the conditions of Daraa province, and the size of the pressure posed by the massive exodus to Jordan.

The council has no communication with the other provincial local councils and its communication is excluded to the Local Administrative Councils Unit. It currently communicates with the interim government to implement its claimed planned elections.

Transparency

The council has an audit committee tasked with monitoring its financial activity and is comprised of 5 members including lawyers and judges. However, the current head of the council is also the head of the preparatory committee in charge of conducting the upcoming elections, which will elect the new provincial local council. This contradicts the elections regulations and jeopardizes the integrity of the council.

Structure

Daraa province includes numerous councils, some of which are active and effective while others are fallacious and do not actually exist. The former council experienced several structural changes due to the circumstances surrounding its work. But, there is hope that the council, which will be elected soon, will have full structure according the regulations adopted by the Local Administrative Councils Unit.

Donors

The Association of Ahl Horan and Horan Islamic Committee are the most prominent funders of the council. Other funders include a number of investors and expatriates in the Gulf States, as well as international organizations. The subsidies of the interim government are limited and conditioned by a number of criteria linked to population, proportion of damage, and number of martyrs in the province.

Relations with the militant groups

The relationship between the council and all militant groups in the areas outside the regime's control are positive. Some battalions in the province help the council in coordinating and communicating with the Jordanian government and army.

Effectiveness of the council

The council did not have the opportunity to demonstrate its work well. Despite the large burdens of the council, it has numerous administrative and on ground problems. One of the most important problems, perhaps, is Daraa's geographical location on the border with Jordan as it constitutes a transit point for the displaced people to the Kingdom of Jordan.

Media

The council lacks a media office to actively communicate its work. It often uses Facebook pages, but they are used in an untimely manner and have a marginal role.

5.1.9. Provincial Local Council of Damascus

There is no provincial local council in Damascus to date. Several attempts have taken place to form a council in the province, but the security conditions in the capital prevented that. Therefore, it was replaced by the formation of underground networks which provide relief services.

However, several smaller councils were formed in Jobar, Masaken Barzeh, Barzeh, Yarmouk camp, Alasali, Qadam, and Al-Hajar al-Aswad. There are also other active groups in the old city of Damascus, but they work undercover and provide relief services in the areas outside the regime's control. The current orientation is to connect all activists to each other and form a provincial local council in Damascus in areas outside the regime's control. This will be done through a consensus due to the difficulty of conducting elections under the current circumstances.

Damascus activists are currently concerned with forming a council characterized by internal democracy taking into account the special situation of Damascus. They have the intention to invite a group of activists, scientists, and religious leaders to form the foundation of the provincial local council.

Current capabilities and key projects

The smaller councils in Damascus are implementing some projects to support the displaced people in the province and support the areas outside the regime's control, in terms of relief and other services. The smaller councils also plan to establish field hospitals.

The councils in Damascus are planning for future projects including the provision of services and rehabilitation of schools which were bombed by the regime in Al-Hajar al-Aswad and Alasali. They will also supply the field hospitals with equipment, as is the case with Dar al Istishfa; this is currently under establishment. Additionally, the councils in the province seek to allocate salaries for the workers in the education sector and implement the project of 'Knowledge is Light'. The councils also plan to supply the needs and requirements of the areas that have gone outside the regime's control.

Required qualifications

In reference to the absence of a provincial local council, the subject of membership qualifications is out of the picture. The current activists of the undercover networks have varied experiences and qualifications.

Relationships and communication

Communication among the councils or between the councils and the interim government face great difficulties, primarily in regards to the security conditions of the capital.

Transparency

It is unlikely to address transparency in this context since the ongoing activity is volunteer-based and the support provided for Damascus is mostly in the form of donations from individuals or entities residing in the city.

Structure

The available councils at some areas of the capital Damascus have incomplete structures. It is difficult to determine a specific structure since the majority of relief bodies are coordination committees and relief networks.

Relations with the militant groups

The undercover activists, who could possibly create the basis of any future provincial local council, have good relations with the opposing armed battalions in the areas outside the regime's control. It is important to note that they are also prosecuted by the regime's forces.

5.1.10. Provincial Local Council of Rif Dimashq

There has never been a provincial local council in Rif Dimashq before March, 2013. On this date, what was known as the general office for coordinating the smaller councils was formed in the province to constitute the link between all smaller councils. It has delegates tasked with coordinating and signing memorandums of understanding between these entities. The general coordination office was represented in the Syrian National Coalition by Professor Jawad Abu Hatab. The office also included a secretary and members who used to hold meetings in Jordan almost on a monthly basis to discuss the details of their work.

In August, a preparatory committee was formed to elect the provincial local council of Rif Dimashq. With the beginning of 2014, the elections of the smaller councils were held and the general committee was formed by 25 members representing all active councils over 22 constituencies. The elections were conducted on 18 and 19 April, 2014 during an election conference held in the city of Gaziantep, Turkey.

70% of the smaller councils were elected due to the siege imposed on the areas of the province, which hindered conducting the elections. Some of these smaller councils, despite being elected, are not able to perform their duties since their members were displaced. This trend is represented by the case with Sbeineh's council who exercise a very limited activity.

The councils of the besieged areas in eastern and western Gota are highly effective and conduct periodic elections every 6 months. Darya and Douma are two cases which continue this trend having conducted more than 5 electoral processes during the revolution.

The council depended on the electoral lists and regulations of the Ministry of Local Administration. The elections of the council were conducted by adopting the electoral lists of the Local Administrative Councils Unit and under the supervision of the Ministry of Local Administration. The head of the interim government approved the appointment of the head of the provincial local council of Rif Dimashq in addition to appointing a secretary (in accordance with the regulations of the government).

Current capabilities and key projects

The general coordination office initiated several projects and has had a remarkable role in coordinating between the smaller councils to submit, follow up, and deliver the projects to the Local Administrative Councils Unit. The general coordination office has also played an important role in the support coordination committee. These projects included service projects (maintenance of electricity and water networks), infrastructure rehabilitation, health facilities, field hospitals, agricultural equipment (in East Gouta especially the cultivation of wheat and corn), education, and civil defense, the need for which emerged as a result of bombarding the areas of the province and the consequent fires.

Future projects

Future projects of the provincial local council of Rif Dimashq include reconsidering the current councils and establishing the principles of democracy. These steps will help create the foundation of the state which is based on separating the elected and administrative institutions. Therefore, the trend is towards the formation of directorates that would execute the plans of the smaller councils and the provincial local council.

Besides, the council has several developmental projects and a project to allocate salaries for the workers at the national defense and education sectors.

Required qualifications

Members of the smaller council are holders of bachelor degrees in engineering, medicine and law, and they have good experience. Other members, nevertheless, hold high school diplomas.

Essential requirements

The council needs training courses in the areas of leadership, management, civil defense, laws and regulations, conflict resolution and negotiation techniques in addition to medical training and nursing.

Relationships and communication

Communication among the smaller councils in Rif Dimashq is generally good since these councils are tight to each other and their communication is done through the general coordination office. Communication with the Syrian National Coalition is on good terms due to the importance of province.

Transparency

The level of transparency varies. The general coordination office used to have numerous documents and audit mechanisms. However, these mechanisms did not prevent corruption and abuse of funds, such in the case of the local council of Babila, which occurred due to reasons related to security breaches in addition to the lack of experience. During the recent months, the performance of the council has noticeably improved and periodical documented financial statements have been issued since September, 2013 to date on its

Facebook page; the most remarkable means adopted to achieve transparency is the publication of the council's documents.

Structure

Osama Natouf, architect and former detainee who currently resides in Jordan, was elected as head of the provincial local council of Rif Dimashq. The deputy and the executive office were also elected, and all (head of the council, deputy and secretary) constituted the council's office which is in charge of endorsing decisions, agendas, setting plans.

The secretary runs the executive office of the council, which is composed of 10 offices that hold weekly meetings. Each competent ministry in the interim government appoints the members of the competent office in the council. The council's executive office then supervises their work. For example, the Ministry of Health in the interim government appoints the members of the health directorate who are supervised by the executive office of the council. The technical services directorate is the exception as a centralized department appointed by the Local Administration that supervises its work.

The current local council includes 52 members and the smaller local councils have complete structures including smaller medical, educational, service, media, civil defense, and agricultural offices. Current efforts are focused on restoring the smaller councils with the service term that has been expired in addition to rehabilitating and activating the inactive ones. Moreover, the province was divided into geographical districts to facilitate the establishment of smaller councils and follow up on their work.

Relations with the militant groups

Rif Dimashq province contains several militant organizations including the Islamic Front, Al-Nusra Front, the FSA and other battalions and brigades (Ahrar ash-Sham, Lewaa Alshabt, Lewaa Eleslam...). The ISIS has no presence in Rif Dimashq and accordingly more than 60% of the local councils cooperate with the militant battalions; the leaders of which are members of some of these councils. The councils are of a civic nature, but they can be represented by a military character. Military representation helps them implement decisions and facilitate the work of the council. In this case, the military character has one vote out of 11 in the council.

Media

The revolution produced numerous media activists who are available in every district of Rif Dimashq. These activists currently work as correspondents in charge of delivering the message of the council, which refuses to have a politicized media.

5.1.11. Provincial Local Council of Raqqa

The foundation of the provincial local council of Raqqa was established on March 4, 2013 in the Turkish city of Sanliurfa by a group of activists from Raqqa months before the

withdrawal of the regime. The council members returned to Raqqa after the withdrawal of the regime's authorities. The legitimacy of the council was questioned by a group of activists who expressed their objection against appointing lawyer Abdullah Khalil as head of the council. The activists also stated that the provincial local council should exercise its activities at home not abroad. 30 representatives have met at the beginning of February 2013 in Tell Abyad and declared the formation of a provincial local council of Raqqa. The council is to be headed by lawyer Saad Shuweish, along with a rival council headed by lawyer Abdullah Khalil.

Disputes over the council since its establishment have not stopped after the return of the council home. The secretariat of the provincial local council of Raqqa, which included 50-51 members in mid-2013 forming the city council of Raqqa, did not acknowledge the provincial local council headed by Abdullah Khalil. Remarkably, the provincial local council of Raqqa was performing its duties as a provincial local council. The provincial local council had covered the city until the kidnapping of Abdullah Khalil by Daash. This event weakened the council under deputy Khudr Sheikh until the end of its first term of service.

The second term of service of the provincial local council of Raqqa began on October 24, 2013 where this time the council was formed by consensus and was headed by Khudr Sheikh. The council worked for two months until Daash took control over the city and countryside of Raqqa and the council's members, including the head of council, left to Turkey.

After Daash took control over the city of Raqqa, affiliated individuals formed another provincial local council which was not recognized by the coalition or the Local Administrative Councils Unit. This new council has not acquired any legitimacy by any entity. Only one leader in the coalition recognized the council and sent an amount of half a million dollars, despite the nature of the council and its affiliation to Daash.

Daash currently has a directorate in Raqqa called 'Muslims Services Authority' in charge of providing services to the citizens of the city; it is currently the only operating entity.

Democratic experience and elections

The council has not witnessed in either of its terms of service any real electoral process. During its first term, the council was formed in Turkey by several activists abroad and at home while. During the second term, the council was planning to conduct the elections but the security conditions and constraints prevented them from proceeding. Thus, the council members were selected by consensus. The province was accordingly classified into three districts that would nominate their candidates: the northern district (Tell Abyad and Solouk) who nominated 2 candidates, the western district (Thawra and its smaller councils) who nominated 3 candidates and the eastern district (Karamah and Ma'daan and its councils) who nominated 2 candidates. The elections take into consideration the components of the

province where one seat was allocated for Christians and one seat for Kurds in addition to adding 4 members from the former council as well as 5 members from the city council of Raqqa as representatives of the secretariat.

The new council, second term of service, included 19 members. During a conference, the council elected the head of the council, two deputies, heads of offices, and an audit committee.

The council tried establishing its own internal regulations, but the Local Administrative Councils Unit objected this attempt and asked the council to adhere to its internal regulations. These regulations are based on the Syrian Local Administration Law in force since 2011.

Current capabilities and key projects

During the first term of service of the council, it focused on services, electricity and water, rehabilitating and maintaining the water purification station in the city of Raqqa, and hygiene. It also supported the education sector through organizing high school exams in the province.

Several projects have yet to be implemented including: supplying oil refineries, mill equipment and an established bakery project in Ma'daan. The provincial local council submitted a bundle of projects to the Local Administrative Councils Unit, the Support Coordination Unit, and the Syrian Business Forum. The projects were accepted and their funds were allocated, but the control of Daash over the city aborted all projects.

The council lacks the required capabilities since it is financially weak and has no presence on ground in its province. Furthermore, the council's members at home are unable to work or even formally declare themselves. Additionally, the donors abroad are not intending to allocate any funds for the council since Raqqa is under the control of Daash.

Current qualifications

Membership at the provincial local council of Raqqa must obtain a university degree. It includes several specializations according to the available offices (human resources, agriculture, education, services... etc.). However, the individuals, especially the employees who wanted to work with the council, feared the regime and the armed groups and were anxious that the regime would dismiss them or cut their salaries.

Relationships with other councils

The head of the council Khudr Sheikh described these relationships as personally and administratively excellent. The relationships between the various councils in Syria are mainly based on personal relations established through attending training workshops or conferences.

Relations with the militant groups

Following the withdrawal of the regime, 60 – 70 armed factions were available in Raqqa. The council did not have any normal or good relations with these groups. At the time, head of the council, Abdullah Khalil, was on good terms with Amnaa Alraqqa brigade. After a while, only Al-Nusra front and Ahrar ash-Sham movement have remained in the province. Hence, the council was forced to cooperate and coordinate with them to perform its duties. The council is used to brief them on its relationships, projects, and sources of funding. The two factions did not obstruct the work of the council except for confiscating flour for its profitable use. The factions did not interfere with the work of the council, but rather were eager to ensure its endurance to avoid any resulting administrative and service void in the province.

Donors

The Syrian Business Forum is the biggest supporter of the provincial local council of Raqqa. However, it does not deliver its subsidies to the provincial local council; rather it determines the more beneficial smaller councils. Additionally, the council received funds from the Support Coordination Unit, Creative Organization, and the German Organization (GIZ) which provided quality aids (hygiene cars, ambulances and other ambulatory and heavy equipment) in addition to the Democratic Council.

Transparency

Current head of the council Khudr Sheikh said the council's work is characterized by transparency and all expenditures are well documented.

5.1.12. Provincial Local Council of Hama

The foundation of the current provincial local councils has been present on ground for two years now. The council was officially formed on October 3, 2013 when each geographical district in the province sent its delegates to the preliminary conference. Initially, local councils were formed in the province's districts and countryside. Later on, the province was divided into geographical districts where one delegate represented a population of 50,000 people. An example is the Gahb district that sent 4 delegates to the preliminary conference since its population is estimated by 200,000 inhabitants and contains 30 local councils. In the end, 40 delegates representing all districts of the province have met and elected an executive office, head of the council, deputy, and secretary. The provincial local council adopts the internal regulations of the Local Administrative Councils Unit, and the electoral term of service for each council is 6 months.

It is worth mentioning that the provincial local council is composed of 110 local councils.

Structure

The council is composed of: head of the council, deputy, secretary, secretary general of the executive office, and 10 additional offices.

Current capabilities and key projects

The provincial local council of Hama has an ambitious project plan which includes: relief services, civil defense, education, bakeries, electricity, roads, and water wells. The council is currently implementing projects focusing on providing bakeries and building shelters. It also has future projects planned by its project office which oversees the planning and implementation of projects.

Required qualifications

Membership in the council is conditioned by academic qualifications in a variety of disciplines; this also applies to staff.

Urgent needs

The main concern of the council is the provision of services. It also considers initiating profitability projects that would support the local councils in the province and help maintain their functionality.

Challenges and obstacles

The council is not facing actual internal organizational challenges. The disputes between the council, on one hand, and the revolutionary entities and coordination committees in the province, on the other, are minor and do not affect the work of the council. The only obstacle before the work of the council is the regime's bombardment of several areas of the province.

Relationships with other councils

The council has conducted several meetings with members of the other Syrian local councils during training courses and conferences. Generally, these relationships are personal rather than formal.

Transparency

The projects of the council are submitted by its affiliated local councils rather than imposed. The executive office studies and provides audits of these projects to be later submitted to the Support Coordination Unit and donors. Deputy of the council said all financial operations and implemented projects are documented.

Donors

Donors who provided support for the council include the Support Coordination Unit, the Democratic Council, and Creative Organization.

Relations with the militant groups

The militant groups in Hama do not interfere with or affect the work of the council. Deputy of the council said Hama is different from the other provinces in this regard.

Effectiveness of the council

The council's effectiveness among its targeted communities is fluctuant and the people may lose their confidence in the council if it does not perform its duties well and in a timely manner. However, during the past four months, the people's confidence in the council has increased after implementing several projects. A constantly changing trust factor hinders the work of the council since the local community in the province perceives the council as a prominent source of support while in fact the council's work depends on the funds of the donors.

Media

The Council has a Facebook page, which is its main source of media.

5.1.13. Provincial Local Council of Tartus

The provincial local council of Tartus was established two months ago in the Turkish city of Antakya. The Local Administrative Councils Unit supervised the elections which were conducted during the preliminary conference.

The council was established by consensus among the 33 active characters selected by the people of the province. The members were contemplated for a long time. The gathered population elected the executive office, head of the council, secretary general of the executive office, and other office heads.

The council depends on the internal regulations of the Local Administrative Councils Unit, and the offices of the council adhere to the framework determined by the Local Administrative Councils Unit, but this does not prevent the council from sending its amendments to the unit through coordinating with the legal office of the council and the legal office of the Local Administrative Councils Unit.

It is worth mentioning that the residents of the province cannot participate in any council's elections. Therefore, the process was confined to the people of the province who reside at the displaced camps or the neighboring countries in Turkey and Lebanon.

The council provides its services to the residents at home on a limited scale, but provides better services for the residents outside the province. The head of the council preferably characterized his council as one 'outside the geographic scale'.

Current capabilities and key projects

The council distributes food baskets and bread to selected areas on a daily basis. The donors provide them with flour while the council undertakes the cost of producing bread. The head of the council believes it is necessary for the Local Administrative Councils Unit to adopt its strategies in delivering bread to the people.

Furthermore, the council has other projects including the establishment of a cow farm and poultry farming, which have already been submitted to the donors. The head of the council

attributed the activeness and efficiency of the council despite its young experience to the young team performing the council's duties.

Challenges

The major challenges facing the work of the council are represented in the poor support of the Syrian National Coalition, the Local Administrative Councils Unit, and the donors. The council currently considers a means to increase its activity funding through its financial office. They believe that the alternative to this dilemma is to focus on productive projects to cover the multiple services.

Required qualifications

Membership of the council is conditioned by previous experience. The head of the council believes that numerous councils depend on academic degrees rather than experience. Therefore, it calls to combine the educational degree with experience when selecting the members of the council. The council also calls to harmonize between the young and senior members of the staff to ensure more efficiency. In other words, they attempt to merge experience with vitality.

Urgent requirements

The council is in great need for increasing the level of funding and support as it receives lesser support than that allocated to the other councils.

The head of the council noted, based on the documents of the coalition and donors, that Swaida province has received greater support than that allocated to this council. This remains true even though Swaida province has not experienced conditions as experienced in Tartus.

The head of the council also criticized how the interim government and the donors deal with his council as they condition their support to projects on ground while Tartus and its districts are besieged and cannot be accessed.

Relationships with other councils

The relationships between the provincial local council of Tartus and the other local councils are relatively good despite the young age of the council. The council has established some communication with the provincial local councils of Latakia, Aleppo, Al Hasakah, Rif Dimashq and others. These relationships, however, are of a purely personal nature. The Local Administrative Councils Unit is invited to promote good relationships among the councils. The head of the council clarified that the estrangement that has existed before the revolution between the social components and the provinces of the country was in depth and needs time to overcome its obstacles.

Transparency

The council adopts transparency, according to the head of the council, even on the level of distributing food baskets and simple relief services. The head of the relief office in the council communicates with all inquirers on the internet and responds to all questions raised. The council also declares all received amounts of funds, as well as reports all expenditures. The council has an office to follow up its work in addition to accountability mechanisms provided by the legal office.

Donors

The council receives its financial support and funding for its projects from the Syrian Business Forum, the Syrian National Coalition, and the Ministry of Local Administration in the interim government.

Relations with the militant groups:

There are currently no formal relations with militant groups, but rather limited means of communication.

Effectiveness of the council

The council has a great influence within the province and among the citizens at home and abroad. The citizens interact with the council, which is attributed, according to the head of the council, to the people's selection of influential members within their community.

5.2. City Local Councils

5.2.1. City Local Council of Aleppo

The revolutionary city council of Aleppo was formed at an early stage of the Syrian revolution.

The foundation of the city council of Aleppo is the neighborhood council where a group of the neighborhood's residents held meetings to discuss the problems resulting from the militant operations in the city and their consequent destruction. They also discussed problems including electricity, water, bread, and others. Working with the council was voluntary and unorganized. It provided a platform for the assembled members to trade opinions. The most efficient, recognized neighborhood council is the Youth Housing neighborhood in Al Ma'asranyah. This is because it has remarkable development strategies and its work is facilitated in a neighborhood that is urbanely organized, has buildings with numbers, and the majority of the residents are educated young people. However, this does not eliminate the existence of several problems attributed to factors leading to a lack of success.

The neighborhood councils have later contributed significant establishments to the city council of Aleppo, as the elections at the time required the formation of a preparatory committee where each neighborhood council nominates one candidate in addition to a representative of the existing revolutionary organizations. The role of this committee is to

form the general electoral committee which calls for the elections. The elections of the city council of Aleppo were conducted in March, 2013 and the second elections took place in December, 2013.

It is worth mentioning that the second elections were conducted in accordance with the regulations of the Local Administrative Councils Unit, but the regulations were amended to match the reality of Aleppo city.

Current capabilities and key projects

The council acknowledges that it does not have 'projects' in the full sense of the word. This is primarily because its work is limited to responding to the needs of the people at home in terms of hygiene, sanitation, civil defense, and education. The council has initiated the 'Steadfast' campaign to remove the debris resulting from shelling certain neighborhoods in the city. It also launched another campaign titled 'My School' through which the council distributed school bags to students, as well as initiated the project of spraying insecticides in the city's neighborhoods.

Future projects of the council include removing the accumulated debris, spraying pesticides, rehabilitating parking lots, and rehabilitating the broken cars and tankers to be used in the provision of services.

Required qualifications

Head of the city council of Aleppo holds a graduate degree in economy while the members of the executive office hold university degrees.

Relationships and communication

Communication between the city council and the neighborhood councils in the city is good where the council supervises their work and elections. The council also has the authority to dissolve all or several neighborhood councils when necessary. Additionally, the council provides financial support to these neighborhood councils, according to its available capabilities. It also suggests projects for the neighborhood councils and they can submit their needed projects to the council.

On the other hand, communication between the city council and the provincial local council is weak due to the presence of political blocs which dominate over the work of the provincial local council. The city council objects to the mode of operation adopted by the provincial local council, which is characterized – in its opinion – by superiority and domination. The city council's attempts to get close to the provincial local council have been unsuccessful.

The city council has reservations towards its relationship with the interim Syrian government. It does not doubt the government, but it feels the government's administration is merely propagandist and does not focus on the basic needs of the city. The

council expressed its frustration against the interim government for not responding to its requirements. A meeting was held between the two entities; however, during this time the council received promises of support from the interim government and is still waiting for their fulfillment.

The council said it is not familiar with the function of the Local Administrative Councils Unit and admits to receiving limited funds from the Support Coordination Unit.

Transparency

The council has a financial office tasked with auditing its accounts and expenditures; the cases of corruption are limited.

Structure

The council includes a group of directorates which report to the executive office of the council. Each directorate includes a group of workers and specialists.

Donors

The council received limited funds by the Support Coordination Unit as well as several other entities, but the problem – in the opinion of the council – is that the provincial local council of Aleppo monopolizes all the allocated funds and determines their distribution by loyalties.

Relations with the militant groups

The council does not mind the orientations and affiliations of the militant groups. It has a relationship with the majority of militant groups in the city since its primary concern is to succeed in performing its duties.

Effectiveness of the council

The council says the neighborhood council is the key measure to estimate the influence and effectiveness of the city council depending upon the performance of each council.

Media

The council said it does not have a specific media plan. It has a Facebook page on which it publishes its updates. Furthermore, the council fears to declare its staff members for reasons of safety, especially those residing in areas under the regime's control.

5.2.2. City Council of Saraqeb

Elections

Saraqeb city (Idlib province) is one of the precedent cities in Syria in the field of elections beginning in the days of coordination committees. The first elections of the city council were conducted by the coordination committees in 2011 and the electoral term was determined in 2 months. The coordination committees conducted 8 elections. Afterwards, the city council concept was introduced in Saraqeb out of the need for an entity to provide

services to the city. Since the council is concerned with providing services, the elections produced the most popular figures in the city. The council currently focuses on the need to provide services rather than leading demonstrations.

The council was initially formed in Saraqeb on August 1, 2012 by consensus and its term of service lasted till December 1, 2013. The council held a conference again to expand the consensus on April 1, 2013 and organized the elections. Nevertheless, the elections failed since, in the opinion of the council, they produced a popular singer rather than a specialized representative. Therefore, the elections were aborted after 4 months in order to form the council, by means of consensus, on April 1, 2014. A preparatory committee was formed. But, the consensus failed due to the disagreement over the mechanisms and phases of the elections were believed to be holding the elections on the basis of the open list, while others wanted them on the basis of the closed, cohesive team and others on the individual basis.

The council does not depend on the electoral list of the Local Administrative Councils Unit and does not apply its mechanisms; but rather has its own interim regulations.

Current capabilities and key projects

The council has implemented several projects including a hygiene project, a medical center project supported by Chemonics Organization, and a project to rehabilitate grain silos funded by the Support Coordination Unit.

Future projects of the city council include rehabilitation of water and electricity networks intended to be funded by the International Trust Fund. Other projects include rehabilitation of Qaddour mill, removing debris, sanitation project funded by the Democratic Council, and a project to initiate small enterprises including sewing and hairdress training.

Required qualifications

All members of the council hold a university degree except for two members holding high school certificates.

Relationships and communication

The relationship between the city council and its 9 smaller council is timely and distinct; having 3 representatives in charge of following up the smaller councils' performance. The council's relationship, on the other hand, with the provincial local council of Idlib is not strong due to accusations of the provincial local council of regionalism and the distribution of funds according to loyalties.

Moreover, the relationship between the city council, the interim government, and the Ministry of Local Administration is unstable. However, the council's relationship with the Local Administrative Councils Unit and the Support Coordination Unit is better since they

have executed several joint projects. A level of coordination between the city council and the coalition was available, but their communication has been cut off for 6 months now.

Transparency

The council believes it is characterized by transparency where every citizen in the city is entitled to question the council and object its performance. Hence, the financial office of the council adopts an accurate accounting system to allocate expenses after the approval of the executive office. The money orders are then documented both electronically and on paper. The council also publishes its monthly budget report on the internet. Furthermore, the council plans to put a billboard in Saraqeb market to publish its financial reports.

During the council's term of service, several corruption cases were recorded including those committed by the secretary of the council where a follow up committee was assigned to investigate the issue. It was revealed that the secretary adopted a wrong mechanism in distributing allocated funds.

Structure

The city council includes 86 members, whereas the executive office includes 13 members each of whom heads an office. It also has 10 offices, head of the council, deputy, and secretary.

The council's offices include: bakery office, fuel office, medical office, relief office, finance office, legal office, education office, municipal office, and electricity office.

The relief office includes 18 members while the medical office includes 10. The council also has independent offices which are police office, supply office, and media office.

The council believes this structure is effective and has proven to be successful in terms of administrative decentralization. Here, the council's decisions are issued by committees within the limits of their competence whereas the strategic decisions are consulted with the executive office.

Donors

The council received funds and support from the Support Coordination Unit, Chemonics Organization, the Democratic Council, and Pax Dutch Organization. Usually, the council submits its projects to these organizations after being approved by the executive office.

Relations with the militant groups

The council has equal attitudes towards all militant groups since it is only concerned in maintaining the execution of its duties. This is true, although a number of its members were detained by some militant groups either for the previous objection against the attempts of some military groups to impose their control over the council and its function or the attempts of the militant groups to appoint their members to the council. However, these groups have provided, in many cases, protection enabled the council to perform its duties.

Effectiveness of the council

The city council of Saraqeb believes it has an effective role on ground, and the people of the city are aware of its services; although not everyone is satisfied. However, the citizens know that the bundle of bread they receive at 25 Syrian Pounds is a result of the council's work. Whereas, the supply of electricity and water are the outcomes of an intensive effort exerted by the council.

Media

The council gives the utmost priority to performing its duties which will determine its status. Hence, ensuring the provision of its services is the best means of media. However, the council does not undermine the role of the media, but rather lacks the proper funding to focus on this aspect.

5.2.3. City Council of Ras al-Ain

The city council of Ras al-Ain, which is affiliated to the National Kurdish Council (the Kurdish National Council is affiliated to the Syrian National Coalition), was formed on April 13, 2012 before the extensive meeting held by the National Kurdish Council in Qamishli city on April 21, 2012.

Elections

The followed norm in the council is that the presidential body of the council, the head of the council and his two deputies, should rotate every two months due to the multiplicity of parties affiliated to the council. The purpose of rotation also provides that the elections are held at the local council every 6 months. The council has an electoral list which is part of the internal regulations of the council. The council does not adhere to the regulations of the Local Administrative Councils Unit.

Representatives of political parties, members of the National Kurdish Congress, and the revolutionary youth entities have a permanent membership in the council. They are replaced following the National Kurdish Congress. The selection mechanism of representatives of the other social sectors is as follows:

Forming a preparatory committee composed of 3 members, permanent members of the council will supervise the mechanism of the elections.

Each committee in the council is selected according to the form defined by the preparatory committee. For example, the teachers committee is elected in the council by inviting all teachers to the chamber of the council where an office is elected. This includes 5 members and the office elects its representative at the local council. This method is adopted for all specialized committees (engineers, doctors, lawyers, etc).

However, the selection mechanism differs in regards to women. Ras al-Ain city is divided into four major districts, each of which elects two women to represent it. Thus, two women

are elected to represent the 8 women of the city council and constitute the women affairs office in the city.

Upon electing the representatives of the committees, the members of the council hold a meeting to elect the members of the presidential committee (head of council and two deputies).

The elections are performed under the supervision of the assigned committee and the electoral process is documented. Additionally, a three-day-period for appealing the elections will be determined and all appeals will be processed by the legal committee of the council.

Current capabilities and key projects

The majority of the council's projects concentrate on the fields of health, education, relief, and most importantly displaced people. The shelling of the regime's air forces and the armed clashes between the People's Protection Units and several militant factions have affected the infrastructure of the city, which forced the council to focus on rehabilitation services. Future projects are related to supplying electricity, water, and mail system; but the poor capabilities of the council hinder their achievement.

The council faces numerous challenges and obstacles the most prominent of which is the absence of a political agreement between the two councils, the Kurdish National Council and West Kurdistan Parliament. Furthermore, the work mechanism between ASAISH institution and the People's Court, which is affiliated to the Ministry of Interior in Jazira district and is unilaterally declared by the West Kurdistan Parliament, constitutes a legal as well as security challenge before the work of the council. In addition, service institutions are under the management and supervision of the West Kurdistan Parliament which lacks jurisdiction. This negates the role of the council in running these institutions.

Required qualifications

The majority of council members hold university degrees (engineers, lawyers and teachers) in addition to two members holding master's degrees.

Relationships and communication

The council described its communication with the smaller councils as good, but its communication with Al-Darbasiyah council is almost nonexistent. The council has no relationship between the local council of Ras al-Ain, affiliated to the Kurdish National Council, and the provincial local council of al-Hasakah. This is due to the fact that the council of Ras al-Ain has conservations against the work of the provincial local council of al-Hasakah in regards to the distribution of subsidies. Moreover, there is no communication between Ras al-Ain council and the Local Administrative Councils Unit, as well as the interim government.

The relationship with between the council and the West Kurdistan parliament is excluded to limited communication through the relations committee of the council. It is also limited to discussing some violations committed by supporters of the West Kurdistan parliament and maintaining civil peace in the city. This circumstance takes into consideration that there is no coordination between the two entities since the West Kurdistan parliament monopolizes the management of the city's services. After declaring the autonomous administration by the Democratic Union Party and its allies, the city of Ras al-Ain became affiliated to the authorities of Jazira district.

As for the position of the council towards the Syrian National Coalition, it objects the attitude of its leaders who claim to represent the Syrian home while they reside abroad. The council hopes to solve this issue by a political formula which would represent all entities. The problem here is that the local council of Ras al-Ain affiliated to the Kurdish National Council cannot act in contrast to the position of the general secretariat of the Kurdish National Council. It is true that the latter has joined the Syrian National Coalition, but until now there is no coordination between its local councils and the Local Administrative Councils Unit or the interim government.

Transparency

The council said it publishes all its financial records on its official Facebook page. However, it does not publish its money orders for security reasons. However, these are available at the council's headquarters to be observed by any interested entity. The council also has a financial committee which issues expenditure reports, but it lacks an audit team to monitor transactions.

Structure

The council includes 25 members: head of the council, two deputies and representatives of committees including; medical, educational, engineers, lawyers, youth, women, and residential neighborhoods. In general, the council is composed of representatives of the Kurdish parties in the city, independent representatives of the city at the Kurdish National Congress, two representatives of the revolutionary youth movement in the city, and representatives of the committees mentioned above.

The council believes that this structure is inefficient and obstructs its work since decision-making needs unanimity which often cannot be achieved and is replaced with consensus.

Donors

The council receives financial support from the Kurdish community abroad as well as the Kurdish parties represented in the council, whom agreed to allocate specific monthly amounts. However, not all parties display commitment and the council is sometimes forced to collect donations from the citizens and some merchants in the city. Foreign organizations' support is restricted to inviting the council members to training workshops. Although the

city is deemed in distress, according to the United Nations, it has not received any humanitarian or relief subsidies from any entity.

Relations with the militant groups

There is no coordination between the council and the militant groups as each group operates in the areas under its control. The council coordinates with them when needed and according to the circumstances of each area. The majority of the militant groups are against the presence of the council, but not to the extent of eliminating its role. The council's relationship with Al-Nusra Front, while it was present in the city of Ras al-Ain, was on bad terms because the front was cruel towards the Kurds of the city.

One militant entity, People's Protection Unit, is currently present in the city after the departure of the militant battalions and the victory of the People's Protection Unit. There is also mutual respect and meetings between the council and the People's Protection Units.

Media

The council has media specialists to publish the council's activities and play spread awareness among the people by preparing lectures on the issues affecting the demographics of the city: the Arabs, Kurds and Christians.

6. Future of Local Administration

The local administration experiences are still new to Syria and are subject to political conflicts. However, these are important experiences that will determine the future of Syria as a unified state adopting decentralization in running its affairs.

In the future, numerous conflicts will take place between emerging central governments and these councils in regards to the distribution of powers and resources. However, these conflicts are healthy and would contribute – if resolved properly – to determine the extent of decentralization which should be applied in a way that would ensure respecting the individuality of each region without threatening the unity of Syria.

This emerging democratic experience, although limited, will produce the future leaders of Syria. Therefore, we will notice more focus on the local councils operations by several political entities and countries, some of which will support the experience while others will try to exploit it to serve their interests.

7. Recommendations and proposals

At the conclusion of this research, we put forth few recommendations that we deem important at this time to ensure the success of this remarkable experience.

- The local administration is the foundation of the democratic enterprise of Syria. This drives us to emphasize the importance of its support by all means and by various entities under pure nationalism far from any considerations of partisan, ethnic or ideological considerations. All debates about the possibility of the existence of stability and security in Syria and the ability of Syrians to find an alternative to the Assad regime will remain theoretical and without credibility in the absence of this practical example which proves, to the Syrian people and the world, the possibility of the existence of that alternative.
- There is high importance to support these administrations to develop their self-funding sources and reduce dependence on external financing.
- Such resources may be ensured by levying taxes and fees on some services, by establishing productive projects that would generate profits, or by investing underground resources in coordination with the interim government.
- Clarifying the relationship between the various entities of the local administration and the interim government is critical, especially in regards to distribution of powers, management of resources, and allocation of support.
- Developing clear laws which define the frameworks of this relationship in order to reduce the conflicts between the different entities will prove to be extremely beneficial to the local councils.
- There is a need to adopt unified electoral laws with respect to the individuality of each region on one hand and its military and social composition on the other.
- Eliminating the over representation criterion will drastically improve the local administration, since it affects the democratic transition process.
- Supporting the role of women in the local administration and adopting positive differentiation approaches to encourage the women to participate in the electoral process will provide diversity in the administration.
- Conducting electoral training, enabling all involved entities to launch electoral campaigns and conduct popular elections when appropriate will be greatly beneficial.
- It is necessary to support the work of civil society organizations in Syria to enable them to play a greater role in elections, spread the democratic concept, support and increase the involvement of women, monitor the elections, and monitor the operations of the local administrations in general.

- It is crucial to work towards finding solutions that are in line with the Syrian reality, which would create a decentralized framework and maintain a unified and powerful country at the same time.
- It is important to provide experienced and trained staff to support the efforts of the local councils in order to achieve greater functional transparency.
- Develop the media operation of the local councils.
- There needs to be support to civil peace organizations, especially in areas which enjoy ethnical and religious diversity in coordination with the local councils.
- It is crucial to unite the councils of the Kurdish National Council with those of the Ministry of Local Administration, especially since the Kurdish National Council has joined the Coalition.

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