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Legal and Civil Documentation Assessment

Northwest Syria
May 2025



This report was drafted during the fall of the prior Syrian government on 8 December 2024. Despite the evolving dynamics in context since, the contents regarding legal needs in northwest Syria remain relevant as they provide insight into legal needs, barriers, and challenges that may appear across Syria under the transitional government.

The Northwest Syria AoR would like to thank all its partners for their support during the data collection phase and the analysis of the findings.

Upper side: NRC

Lower left: Khaled Al Helwani, IHSAN RD

Lower right: Moaz Akkad, Shafak Organization

Contact details:

Lorena Nieto

NWS HLP AOR Chair
nieto@unhcr.org

Skylar Kogelschatz

NWS HLP AOR Co-Chair
skylar.kogelschatz@nrc.no

Executive Summary

This research was conducted prior to the collapse of the former Government of Syria (GoS) on 8 December 2024 and the emergence of the transitional government and thus, some security-related barriers to civil documents, such as security risks tied to the former government (including fears of mandatory service or arrest if found with civil documents issued by the former Syrian Salvation Government-SSG) no longer remain. **However, financial, logistical, and bureaucratic challenges persist, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations.**

Status of Civil Documents

- *Prevalence of Missing Documents:* 71.5% of respondents lack at least one essential document, with family booklets being the most frequently missing, followed by ID cards, birth certificates, and marriage certificates.
- *Low Application Rates:* Between 61% and 84% of respondents have never obtained or applied for missing documents. This is largely due to financial constraints, lack of awareness, and perceptions of bureaucratic complexity. Thus, applications are often delayed until documents are urgently needed.

Barriers to Documentation:

- *Financial Constraints:* Between 34% and 40% of respondents lacking civil documentation identified financial barriers as a primary obstacle. High transportation costs and issuance fees, combined with high unemployment and competing financial priorities, create significant challenges in securing missing documents.
- *Access:* Between 22% and 32% of respondents lacking civil documentation cited access-related difficulties as a major obstacle. Key barriers include long distances to registration centers, lack of transportation, high travel costs, and the need for multiple visits to complete the process.
- *Lack of Awareness:* Between 20% and 26% of respondents lacking civil documentation reported this as a key obstacle. Many do not know where, how, or why to apply, further delaying the acquisition of necessary documentation.

Impact of Missing Documents:

- *Absence of civil documentation:* The absence of civil documentation in northwest Syria has profound and wide-ranging consequences, affecting nearly every aspect of individuals' lives. Their absence deprives or hinders individuals' access to humanitarian aid and basic services, restricts freedom of movement, ability to establish legal identity or assert family and marital rights, and limits participation in social, economic, and political life. *Lack of documents also increase individuals' exposure to risks of trafficking, smuggling, recruitment by armed actors, or forced labour.*

Assistance Needed:

- *Financial Support:* Subsidize document fees, transportation costs, and related expenses to reduce economic barriers.
- *Transportation Aid:* Improve access to registration centers, especially for groups that are at greater risk of facing protection concerns, including women, persons with disabilities or those with limited mobility, elderly; those living in remote areas.
- *Legal Aid and Awareness:* Provide free legal assistance and implement awareness campaigns to educate individuals about the importance of documentation and the steps involved in obtaining it.
- *Improved Registration Access:* Expand the number of registration centers, introduce mobile units, and streamline administrative processes to minimize delays and complexity.

- *Targeted Support for Groups who are at Greater Risk of Facing Protection Impacts:* Develop tailored programs to address the unique challenges faced by persons with disabilities, elderly, orphans, widows, child or female-headed households, and those with language barriers including legal, financial, and educational assistance.

Future Outlook:

- The issue of civil documentation is now more critical than ever, as lessons from other contexts highlight the crucial role of civil documentation in advancing transitional justice and securing housing, land, and property (HLP) rights. Transitional justice focuses on a response to systematic violation of human rights during a conflict period and the processes needed to ensure accountability, justice, and achieve reconciliation.¹ Individuals seeking redress for human rights violations in more formal administrative or judicial mechanisms will need to have proper documents to prove their identity. Witnesses to human rights violations and incidents will most likely need valid civil documents to prove their identity in formal court proceedings. Additionally, transitional justice includes property restitution and restoring homes that might have been confiscated, unlawfully expropriated, or otherwise taken via illegal means.² To prove ownership claims or familial links to property (particularly with inheritance claims), individuals must have valid forms of civil documents.
- As Syrian undergoes this period of transition, sustained efforts by humanitarian actors, donors, and the transitional government via funding, inclusive legislation including linkages to transitional justice, and accessible legal services are needed to support legal identity, allow Syrians to access justice, and foster stability as well as long-term social and legal accountability in the region.

¹ Definitions adapted from *What is Transitional Justice?* INT'L CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE (2009), <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Transitional-Justice-2009-English.pdf>; "About transitional justice and human rights," OHCHR (last accessed 5 March 2025), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/transitional-justice/about-transitional-justice-and-human-rights> (citing to UN Security Council Res. S/2004/616).

² See Rhodri C. Williams, *The Contemporary Right to Property Restitution in the Context of Transitional Justice* INT'L CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE (MAY 2007), <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Right-Restitution-2007-English.pdf> at pg 5; Ingunn Sofie Aursnes and Conor Foley, *Property restitution in practice: The Norwegian Refugee Councils' experience*, NRC (April 2005), [https://globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Property Restitution in Practice 2005 EN.pdf](https://globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Property%20Restitution%20in%20Practice%202005%20EN.pdf).

Introduction

Since 2011, the civil documentation system in northwest Syria (NWS) has been profoundly disrupted by ongoing instability and frequent shifts in territorial control. Whereas prior to the war civil registries were under the single mandate of the former government, the rise of *de facto* authorities led to the emergence of new procedures and *de facto*-issued documents. These disruptions resulted in fragmented and disconnected civil registry systems, with various actors issuing documents of varying legitimacy and acceptance. Combined with other significant barriers that many individuals faced and continue to face—such as financial constraints, limited access to services, and a lack of information—this breakdown has left many residents without official documentation or legal protections, placing them at greater risk of persecution, stigma, and discrimination.

The absence of vital documents—such as ID cards, family booklets, birth certificates, and marriage certificates—create significant barriers for individuals in NWS. Without these documents, residents struggle to establish their identity, access critical services, and secure their legal rights, further compounding their exposure to additional protection risks.

This report examines the challenges related to civil documentation in northwest Syria areas that were governed by the former SSG and the SIG as of November 2024. As such, the report identifies the most common missing documents, barriers households face in obtaining them, and the far-reaching consequences of these gaps in civil documentation for individuals and families. The report also considers how the collapse of the former government and the establishment of the new Syrian transitional government may affect these barriers. Furthermore, it highlights the challenges expected to persist and outlines the types of assistance required to overcome them, offering actionable recommendations to enhance access to civil documentation.

Civil documentation has become increasingly critical considering the rapidly shifting dynamics since December 8th, including the collapse of the GoS and the establishment of the Syrian transitional government. This urgency stems from the emergence of new priorities, such as advancing transitional justice, securing HLP rights in areas of origin or return, facilitating civic engagement through representation and participation in potential elections.

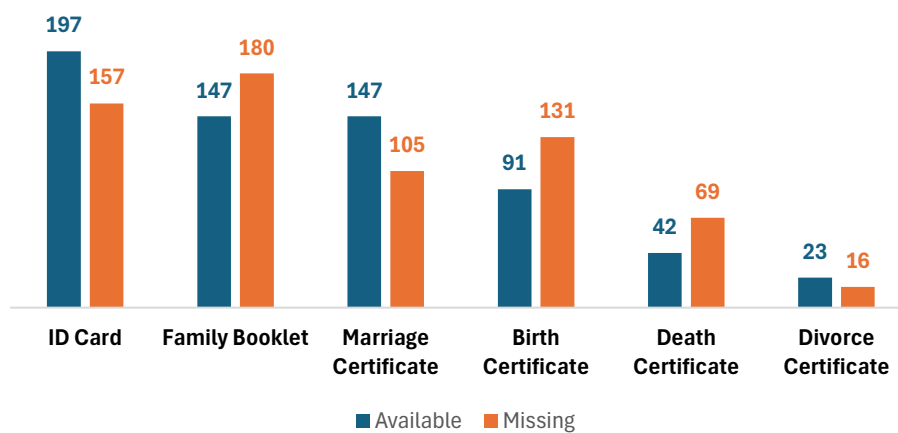
Closing the civil documentation gap is not just a legal obligation but also a critical prerequisite toward Syrian's ability to rebuilding their lives while at the same time fostering long-term stability in NWS and beyond. Though the political context has changed and some security and movement barriers that many faced have been lifted (*i.e.* evading former government military service or checkpoints), critical barriers to accessing civil documents including financial ones remain. By addressing these gaps, individuals can reclaim their rights, access essential services, and actively contribute to the social and economic recovery of their communities.

Key Findings

1- Status of Civil Documents

Survey findings underscore the pervasiveness of missing civil documents among respondents in northwest Syria. Of those surveyed, 72% reported lacking at least one essential document, while only 29% confirmed having all required documentation. The family booklet was most reported missing, with 39% indicating its absence. This was followed by ID cards, birth certificates, and marriage certificates, with 34%, 28 % and 23% of respondents missing these documents, respectively. These records are vital for establishing identity, registering family members, documenting legal familial relationships, and accessing essential services, including humanitarian aid. Without them, individuals and families face significant challenges, especially in situations requiring proof of identity or family structure such as claiming HLP rights through inheritance.

Status of Civil Documents



A notable proportion of respondents revealed that they had never obtained the documents reported as missing. Among those lacking family booklets, 67% reported never having acquired one, while 17% cited loss, 11% mentioned damage, and 3% indicated the document was inaccessible because it was held by a spouse or family member. Similarly, 80% of respondents stated they had never had an ID card, with 14 % attributing its absence to loss and 4% to damage. Birth certificates were also often unissued, with 84% reporting they had never obtained one, while a few cited loss or damage. Likewise, marriage certificates were frequently unissued, with 84% respondents stating they had never acquired one. Others attributed their absence to loss (25%) or damage (12%).

Despite the critical importance of these documents, application rates among those missing them remained strikingly low. Among respondents missing a family booklet, only 18% had attempted to apply for one, while 49% had not. For ID cards, just 8% reported applying, compared to 72% who had not initiated the process. Similarly, only 6% of respondents missing birth certificates attempted to apply, while 78% had not. As for marriage certificates, only 12% of respondents applied, while 50% refrained from doing so.

Respondents who had not applied for these documents cited various reasons for their inaction. These included limited resources, insufficient knowledge about the application process, and perceptions of

overly complex or bureaucratic procedures. Many individuals delayed obtaining documents such as family booklets or birth certificates until there was an immediate need such as accessing medical care or assistance, often believing that informal arrangements would suffice in the interim. For instance, a marriage may not be registered until a child is born, prompting the parents to register the marriage so that the child can access services such as health care, humanitarian aid, and/or education. Additionally, the availability of other forms of documentation reduced the perceived urgency to pursue missing documents. For example, a family booklet can sometimes be used as proof of identity, delaying the reissuance of a lost ID card. Regarding marriage registration, KIIs also reported that social and personal factors contributed to the low rate of registration. As some individuals reportedly avoid registering marriages to keep them confidential or to circumvent granting marital rights to the wife, such as custody, alimony, or housing after divorce.³

2- Challenges to Obtaining Civil Documents

When asked which document was the most difficult to obtain, respondents identified the family booklet as the most challenging, followed by ID cards and birth certificates. Obstacles to obtaining these documents were often compounded by the absence of other required documents, such as marriage certificates or IDs. The lack of one document frequently created a cascading effect, where the absence of one made it increasingly difficult to acquire others. For instance, the inability to prove a marriage or the absence of an ID often delayed or entirely blocked efforts to obtain a family booklet.

Obtaining ID cards reportedly posed significant challenges due to the lack of supporting documents, limited access to civil registry data outside the control of local authorities, and the need to navigate complex alternative mechanisms for identity verification. These mechanisms often involved multiple steps and were perceived as time-consuming and resource-intensive, leaving individuals without a clear pathway to acquire an ID.

Barriers	ID	Family Booklet	Birth Certificate	Marriage Certificate	Death Certificate	Divorce Certificate
Financial barriers	131	124	112	76	64	12
Access/movement difficulties	104	80	72	43	34	8
Lack of information/awareness	84	86	66	54	39	10
Lack of required supporting documents	32	38	32	30	17	5
Security concerns	8	7	3	2	2	0
Administrative difficulties	13	21	8	10	8	3
Spouse absent or uncooperative	15	15	13	6	7	7
Fear of losing aid allocation	7	5	0	3	11	0
Family or spouse's family uncooperative	5	6	2	7	7	3
Total	399	382	308	231	189	48

³ For more information on Women's HLP Rights in NW Syria, please see NRC report "From Margins to Mainstream: Women's HLP Rights in Northwest Syria" Dec. 2024

The survey highlighted significant obstacles faced by individuals attempting to obtain critical civil documents, such as family booklets, ID cards, and birth certificates. These challenges vary but primarily fall into three key categories: financial constraints, access and movement difficulties, and a lack of information or awareness.

Financial Barriers: Financial constraints emerged as the most significant challenge in obtaining civil documents. Between 34% and 40% of respondents who lack civil documentation identified financial barriers as the primary obstacle to securing missing documents such as family booklets, ID cards, and birth certificates. Several interconnected financial challenges were highlighted by respondents:

- **Transportation Costs:** Travel expenses were the most cited financial barrier, with 27% to 33% of respondents indicating that the cost of travel prevented them from obtaining the required documents.
- **Issuing Fees:** Official fees for document issuance posed a significant challenge for 27% to 31% of respondents.
- **Unemployment:** A lack of income due to unemployment was cited by 14% to 21% of respondents as the reason they could not afford the associated legal costs.
- **Competing Financial Priorities:** Limited financial resources forced 18% to 25% of respondents to prioritize other pressing needs over obtaining their missing civil documents.

These findings underscore the intersectionality of economic hardship and access to civil documentation, with financial constraints making even the initial steps of the process impossible for many families.

Access and Movement Challenges: Physical access to registration centers emerged as a significant obstacle to obtaining civil documents, with between 22% and 31% of respondents who lack documentation citing this as a major challenge. Specific access barriers included:

- **Distance to Registration Centers:** Between 13% and 17% of respondents reported that registration centers were too far from their homes, making access difficult.
- **Lack of Transportation:** Between 14% and 17% of respondents indicated that the absence of personal vehicles made travel to registration centers challenging.
- **Cost of Transportation:** Transportation costs, which often overlapped with broader financial barriers, were highlighted by 16% to 22% of respondents.
- **Multiple Visits Required:** Bureaucratic processes frequently necessitate repeat trips to registration offices, further compounding existing challenges. This was reported by 11% to 26% of respondents.

These access-related barriers highlight the logistical difficulties of navigating a fragmented and often inefficient civil registration system, particularly in conflict-affected areas with limited infrastructure.

Lack of Information and Awareness: Another critical barrier was the lack of information or awareness about the process of obtaining civil documents. This issue was reported by 20% to 26% of respondents. Specific knowledge gaps included:

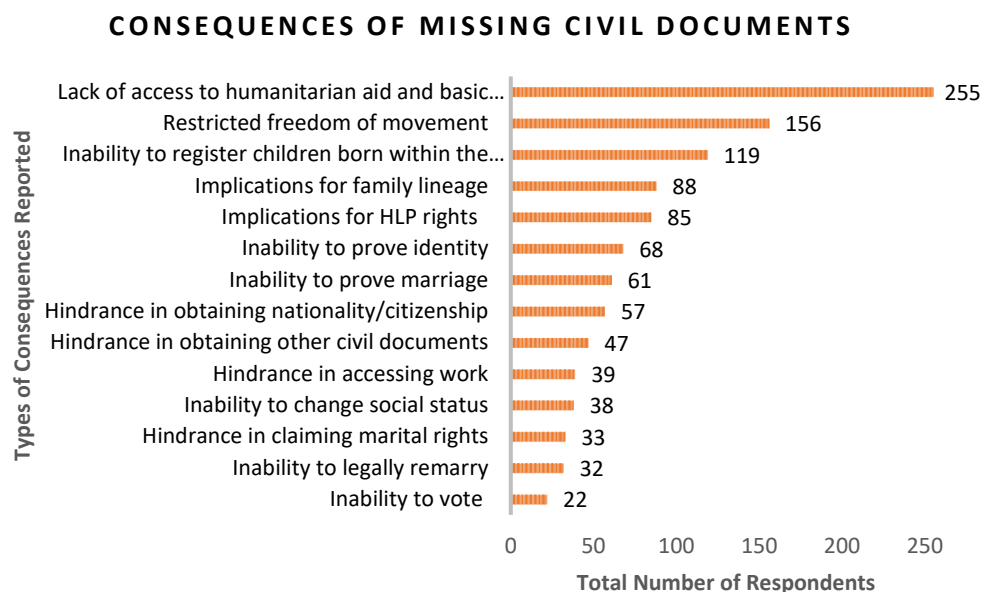
- **How to Obtain the Document:** Between 17% and 25% of respondents reported uncertainty about the steps required to acquire civil documents, making it the most common issue.

- **Where to Obtain the Document:** Between 12% and 18% of respondents were unaware of the locations of registration centres.
- **Understanding the Importance of the Document:** A lack of awareness about the necessity of civil documents led to inaction, as reported by 13% to 18% of respondents.
- **Costs Involved:** Uncertainty about the associated costs discouraged 10% to 16% of respondents from initiating the application process.

This lack of awareness not only delays application efforts but also leaves many unprepared to meet the requirements, further complicating their ability to navigate the registration system and reinforcing perceptions of bureaucratic complexity.

3- Protection Impacts and Consequences of Missing Civil Documents

The absence of civil documentation in NWS has profound and wide-ranging consequences, affecting nearly every aspect of individuals' lives and ability to exercise their rights. These documents are critical for accessing humanitarian aid, establishing legal identity, asserting family and marital rights, participating in social, economic, and political life as well as mitigating the exposure to additional protection risks. Their absence deprives individuals of the legal recognition necessary for stability and dignity.



Access to Humanitarian Aid and Basic Services: The most immediate and widely reported consequence of missing documentation is the barrier it creates to accessing humanitarian aid and basic services. This issue was highlighted by 77% of respondents who are missing civil documents. Proper documentation is crucial for obtaining healthcare, education, food assistance, and financial aid, all of which are vital for survival in conflict-affected areas. Without these documents, individuals risk being excluded from essential services and thus being unable to meet their basic needs and increase their exposure to protection risks.

In conflict settings such as NWS, humanitarian organizations often serve as the primary providers of these services, with some respondents noting a reliance on the former SSG and, to a lesser extent, the SIG. The absence of formal documentation exacerbates cycles of poverty, hunger, and exposure to additional protection impacts and rights violations, compounding long-term challenges for affected families and hindering efforts to achieve stability and recovery.

Restricted Freedom of Movement: The absence of documentation can also severely restrict freedom of movement, an issue noted by 47% of respondents who are missing civil documents. Travel within the region or across checkpoints often requires valid identification from the relevant authority. Individuals without proper documents may either chose to severely limit their areas of movement or risk facing security threats including detention. The effect of this restriction on freedom of movement is particularly pronounced for displaced populations and those in rural or remote regions, where mobility is essential for accessing services, employment opportunities, and/or reuniting with family members. Limited freedom of movement also increases exposure to protection risks including via limited access to service or heightened exposure to exploitation in remote areas without safety or accountability mechanisms.

Challenges in Registering Children and Establishing Family Lineage: Lack of documentation poses significant barriers for registering children born into unregistered marriages. This was reported by 36% of respondents who lack civil documentation and is further compounded by Syria's nationality laws, which rely on patrilineal descent. Without formal registration, children risk statelessness and are often denied access to legal rights and critical services, such as the right to education and healthcare. Respondents also highlighted broader implications for family lineage, with 27% identifying challenges in proving familial relationships, which can complicate inheritance claims, child custody arrangements, and other legal matters. These gaps in documentation have the potential to undermine family stability, security, and HLP rights.

Proving Identity and Citizenship: This issue was highlighted by 21% of respondents who lack civil documentation. Additionally, 17% of respondents pointed to challenges in securing nationality or citizenship, particularly for children, which leaves individuals vulnerable to legal invisibility and systemic discrimination. Statelessness can also lead to the denial of basic rights and protections under the law, further isolating those without proper documents.

Implications for HLP Rights: Challenges related to HLP rights were identified by 26% of respondents who lack civil documentation. Without documentation, individuals face difficulties asserting ownership or inheritance claims, leaving them vulnerable to disputes or loss of assets. Women and widows often face cultural and legal barriers when attempting to assert their property rights, further compounding their risk of HLP rights violations in these situations.

Marriage and Marital Rights: Issues related to marriage documentation were raised by 18% of respondents who lack civil documentation, with individuals noting difficulties in asserting marital rights such as alimony or inheritance. Without formal marriage registration, individuals are excluded from legal protections, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Additionally, 10% of respondents identified challenges in asserting marital rights, and 10% pointed to difficulties in legally remarrying after divorce or death of a spouse.

Hindrance in Obtaining Other Civil Documents: The absence of one civil document often creates a cascading effect, making it difficult to obtain others. For 14% of respondents, the lack of a marriage

certificate or other key document prevented them from securing birth certificates or related records. This interconnected issue perpetuates cycles of exclusion, further complicating the ability to access rights and services.

Accessing Work and Changing Social Status: Lack of documentation was also reported as a barrier to accessing employment, as noted by 12% of respondents who lack civil documentation. Without proper identification, individuals may be excluded from formal work opportunities, pushing them into precarious or exploitative labor conditions. Additionally, 12% of respondents highlighted how the absence of documents prevents individuals from changing their social status, affecting processes such as divorce or claiming widowhood.

Political Participation and Voting Rights: Finally, 7% of respondents who lack civil documentation indicated that this absence excludes individuals from political participation, including the right to vote. In regions where governance and representation remain contested, this exclusion marginalizes undocumented individuals, depriving them of a voice in decisions that directly affect their communities.

4- Assistance Needed to Obtain Missing Civil Documents

In addition to revealing the multifaceted barriers individuals face in obtaining missing civil documents in northwest Syria, survey findings highlight the diverse types of assistance needed to address these challenges. These include financial support, transportation aid, legal assistance, and increased access to registration centers, as well as awareness sessions to better inform individuals of their rights and the necessary procedures.

Financial Assistance: 86% of respondents who lack civil documentation indicated the need for financial assistance to cover the costs associated with obtaining documentation. These costs include registration fees, transportation to centers, and other administrative expenses. For many families, the economic strain of prolonged displacement, unemployment, and/or reliance on humanitarian aid has left them unable to allocate the necessary funds for critical documentation. Without financial support, even the most basic steps in the documentation process remain inaccessible.

Transportation Support: 67% of respondents who lack civil documentation highlighted the need for transportation assistance. Registration centers are often located far from rural or camp settings, making travel difficult and expensive, especially for women, individuals with disabilities, and those living in hard-to-reach areas. Transportation costs add to the financial burden of those most in need, compounding the difficulties of accessing these essential documents.

Legal Aid and Technical Support: 57% of respondents who lack civil documentation expressed the need for legal aid to navigate the complex and often opaque procedures for obtaining civil documentation. Legal assistance is crucial for individuals facing specific challenges, such as registering orphaned children or addressing disputes over documentation. Furthermore, awareness sessions on the importance of civil documents and step-by-step guidance for the application process were requested by 59% of respondents. Many of whom emphasized the need for ongoing legal education for both women and men.

Improved Access to Registration Centres: 16% of respondents suggested increasing the number of registration centers or expanding staff capacity to reduce overcrowding, long wait times, and the

number of required trips. Additionally, improving access to existing centers, such as ensuring transportation availability or establishing mobile offices in remote areas, was recommended to make these services more accessible to all segments of the population.

Targeted Support for Groups who are at Greater Risk of Facing Protection Impacts: Persons with disabilities; child, elderly, or women headed households; orphans; widows; and the homeless face unique challenges in obtaining civil documentation. Of female respondents, 13% emphasized the importance of having female legal professionals available to create a comfortable and culturally appropriate environment for women seeking legal help.

Conclusion and Recommendations

With the collapse of the former government and establishment of the Syrian transitional government, several barriers to obtaining civil documentation in northwest Syria are expected to ease. Specifically, there are diminished security risks as individuals no longer face detention or accusations for holding documents issued by the former SSG. Additionally, access and mobility have improved, with fewer fears crossing checkpoints and fears of being arrested or detained.

Despite these positive developments, significant challenges remain, disproportionately affecting groups of people at higher risks of facing protection concerns. These include:

1. **Economic barriers and financial constraints** in covering legal and non-legal fees and costs;
2. **Logistical and Mobility Issues** such as transportation or access to civil registries for those living in remote areas/camps or with limited mobility
3. **Lack of legal awareness** in understanding the importance of civil documents and long-term risks of remaining undocumented

Civil documentation is expected to play an even more pivotal role given the rapidly shifting dynamics and the emergence of new priorities. These include advancing transitional justice and securing HLP rights in areas of origin or return. Proper documentation is necessary for individuals seeking redress for human rights violations, serving as witnesses in court proceedings, and proving ownership or inheritance claims. Without valid civil documents, individuals may struggle to access justice, reclaim confiscated property, or establish their legal identity in post-conflict settings. For example, families may increasingly seek death certificates to address inheritance issues and recover assets, particularly in cases involving missing relatives.

Closing the civil documentation gap is not merely a bureaucratic task—it is essential for safeguarding the rights and futures of Syrians, in the northwest and beyond. By addressing persistent barriers, preparing for emerging needs, and implementing inclusive solutions—such as financial assistance, legal assistance, and public legal awareness campaigns—stakeholders can lay the foundation for a more equitable and secure future for the next generation of Syrians. Below are key recommendations for stakeholders:

To Humanitarian and Development Actors

1. **Address Financial Barriers**
 - Provide financial assistance to cover legal related costs.

- Offer transportation subsidies or organized transport services for individuals traveling to registration centers.
- 2. Expand Legal Aid Services**
 - Provide free or low-cost legal counselling and assistance to support individuals navigate complex documentation procedures.
 - Recruit both male and female legal professionals to create inclusive, culturally sensitive support systems.
- 3. Raise Public Awareness**
 - Launch legal awareness campaigns emphasizing the importance of civil documentation, its role in accessing rights and services, and its importance in seeking any redress or property restitution.
 - Share step-by-step guides in easily understandable language on application processes via community sessions/workshops, printed materials, and local media.
 - Conduct legal awareness sessions on the importance of safeguarding and preserving existing documents, and its role in transitional justice mechanisms such as restitution or compensation for a home or piece of land.
 - Provide tailored legal sessions specifically for women.
- 4. Ensure Protection and Risk Mitigation**
 - Ensure access to humanitarian assistance is not contingent upon possessing civil documentation.
 - Allow alternative forms of identity verification for accessing humanitarian assistance.

To Donors

- 1. Fund Financial and Logistical Assistance Programs**
 - Allocate funding to legal assistance programming, including cash for legal related costs such as document issuance and stamp fees as well as transportation.
 - Prioritize sustainable, long-term projects that enhance local capacity and civil registration infrastructure.
- 2. Support Legal Awareness Campaigns**
 - Invest in public legal awareness campaigns/initiatives to inform affected populations of their rights and the processes for obtaining civil documentation, and how it connects to their long-term reintegration/integration in Syria.
- 3. Strengthen Legal Support Services**
 - Expand legal aid networks by supporting the authorities to establish and staff new legal aid centers or mobile legal aid centers in underserved regions.
- 4. Promote Inclusive Documentation Systems**
 - Support initiatives that ensure equitable access to legal documentation for women, individuals with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.
- 5. Address Operational Constraints for Humanitarian Organizations**
 - Review and adjust restrictions on humanitarian actors' ability to provide legal assistance in northwest Syria including capacity building for local authorities, ensuring alignment with humanitarian principles and the right to legal identity.

To the Transitional Government

1. **Expand Access to Registration Centers and Reduce Overcrowding**
 - Increase the number of registration centers, especially in underserved rural areas and displacement camps.
 - Hire additional staff at registration centers to minimize wait times and ensure efficient service delivery.
 - Establish and deploy mobile registration units to reach remote or hard-to-access areas.
2. **Simplify and Streamline Procedures**
 - Simplify bureaucratic processes for obtaining civil documentation, reducing the number of required supporting documents.
 - Establish a unified application process to minimize the number of in-person visits required.
3. **Ensure Legal Identity for All Syrians**
 - Allow widows and women with absent husbands broader flexibility in providing evidence of marriage.
 - Ensure access to Syrian nationality for the children of widows and women with absent husbands, preventing statelessness.
4. **Improve Public Legal Awareness Campaigns**
 - Disseminate clear and accessible information on the importance of civil documentation and the steps required to obtain it.
 - Partner with community leaders, local media, and grassroots organizations to maximize awareness efforts on and how valid and up-to-date civil documents connects to their long-term reintegration/integration in Syria, as well as access to government institutions and services.
5. **Waive Fees and Fines**
 - Eliminate fees and penalties for Syrians unable to complete the documentation processes within the statutory period.
 - Simplify evidentiary requirements to facilitate access to documentation.

Annex 1.

Methodology

This report is based on research conducted between December 2024 and January 2025 to analyze the legal needs of residents in Aleppo and Idlib. The study includes survey data from 371 households in former SSG-controlled areas and 84 households in SIG-controlled areas of northwest Syria. Respondents were geographically distributed across Idlib (57% of the sample), including locations such as Harim, Dana, Idlib City, Teftnaz, Sarmin, Bennesh, Salqin, Kafr Takharim, Jisr al-Shughur, Badama, Darkoush, Jebel Saman, Ma'arrat Tamasrin, and Ariha. The remaining 43 % of respondents were from Aleppo, with participants from Azaz, Afrin, Atareb, and Daret Azza.

The survey sampled a diverse range of participants, reflecting various age groups, marital statuses, and displacement backgrounds to ensure a representative dataset. Among respondents, 20% were aged 18–29, 64% were aged 30–59, and 8% were aged 60 or older. 36% the respondents were female, while 63% were male. Marital status data showed that 80% were married, 14% widowed, and the remaining were single, divorced, or separated. Respondents also came from different living environments, with 49% residing in urban areas, 30% in rural areas, and 22% in camps.

Displacement Status	
Displaced	269
Displaced Returnee	3
Host Community	187
Other	1
Refugee	1
Refugee Returnee	2
Total	463

Data collection involved in person interviews using structured questionnaires administered by trained enumerators. Additionally, the research incorporated 16 key informant interviews with legal experts and community leaders, alongside a desk review, to provide deeper qualitative insights.

While the survey achieved a strong response rate, it is important to note some limitations. The initial target of 500 respondents was not fully met, with a 93% completion rate. Furthermore, the analysis is limited to regions under the administrative control of the former SSG and SIG, prior to the 08 December shift in context. While rapidly evolving dynamics, including the collapse of the previous GoS and the establishment of the Syrian transitional government, posed limitations to capturing the full legal and political context.