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Local Coordination Committees

A loose umbrella network of local committees established during the Syrian uprising to coordinate nonviolent resistance countrywide and enhance the efficacy and visibility of on-the-ground activism. More than half of the local coordination committees (LCCs) that emerged in Syrian neighborhoods, cities, and villages since 2011 have joined the Local Coordination Committees of Syria (LCCSyria) network led by prominent Syrian lawyer Razan Zeitouneh.

Committed to nonviolent resistance, the LCCs assumed responsibility to coordinate protests, organize strikes, document war crimes and human rights violations, carry the voices of the protesters to Arab and international media, and coordinate relief and aid delivery. They vary in composition and ideological leaning. Some LCCs consist predominantly of young tech-savvy media and human rights activists; some are dominated by local elites, Islamic preachers, and tribesmen; some uphold secular and liberal-democratic viewpoints; and some take inspiration from Islamic notions of freedom, human dignity, and social solidarity.

The militarization of the Syrian uprising created a serious challenge for the LCCs. Despite their official statements discouraging opposition forces from taking up arms, activists associated with LCCs joined armed factions and engaged in military operations against regime forces and rival factions. Moreover, the humanitarian cost of the conflict, and the vacuum created by the withdrawal of government forces and services, required LCCs to assume new responsibilities. LCCs acted as centers of civic authority, managed humanitarian and relief aid, provided

medical and legal services, and administered social initiatives including food basket programs. LCCs activists played an important role in the formation of Local Administrative Councils in opposition-held territories.

Decentralized committees and executive, media, and relief offices supervised their activities. Modern communication technologies enabled activists to breach the regime's media blackout to coordinate their activities. Due to their apparent alignment with the views of Western governments, the LCCs received support from numerous governments, NGOs, and conflict-stabilization practitioners, including capacity building, training, funding, program incubation, and expensive technologies and equipment.

Recognizing their importance as key in-country actors, opposition groups in exile sought to include LCC representatives. The Syrian National Council and its successor, the National Coalition, included LCCSyria activists. Although they made up a third of the votes in the council, LCC activists accused the coalition of underrepresenting civilian, nonpartisan, and in-country opposition forces. Faced with rebel infighting, the expansion of violent Islamist groups, and military victories by regime forces, the LCC's role has gradually dwindled as many activists fled the country or hid.

Fouad Gehad Marei

See also: Free Syrian Army; Syrian Arab Republic

Further Reading

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