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ECO-Syria Workshop Report Green Transitional Justice in Post-Assad Syria

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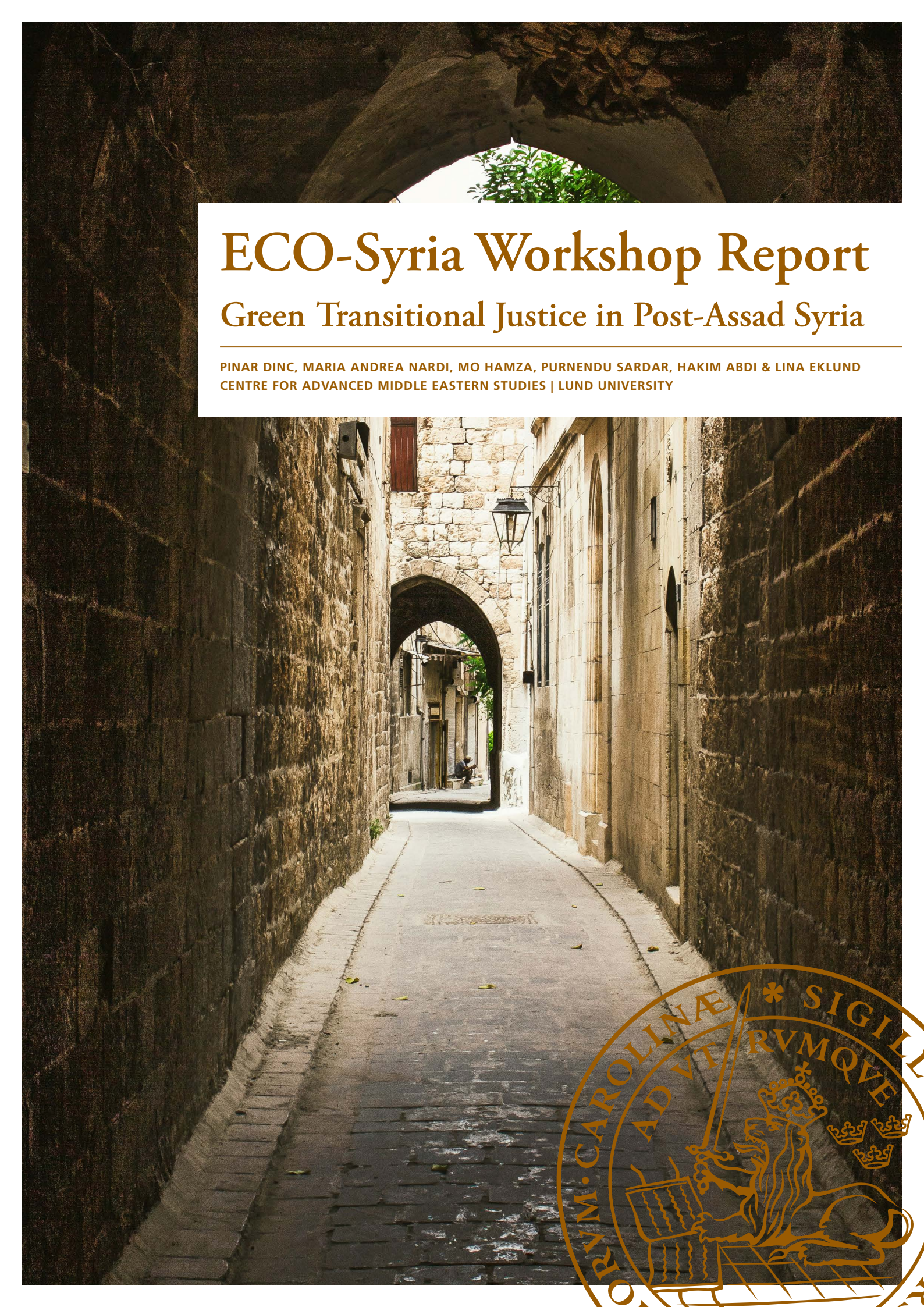
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ECO-Syria Workshop Report

Green Transitional Justice in Post-Assad Syria

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ECO-Syria: Exploring Conflict-Environment Interactions for Sustainable Development and Conservation

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, has profoundly transformed the country's political, social, and economic landscape. Years of violence, displacement, and repression have left deep scars on both people and the environment. The collapse of central authority in Syria, combined with the rise of new actors such as the AANES, has created both opportunities and challenges for inclusive, sustainable recovery addressing the environmental destruction brought by decades of internal colonialism.¹ In the north and east of Syria—an area often referred to as Rojava (meaning “the West” in Kurdish)—the emergence of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) has introduced a new model of self-governance, emphasizing local democracy, gender equality, social ecology, and pluralism.² Closely linked to the AANES is the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a multi-ethnic armed coalition that provides security and defense for the region. While the AANES serves as the civilian administrative authority, the SDF acts as its primary military force, and together they have shaped the region's unique experiment in autonomy amid ongoing conflict.

The fall of the Assad regime in late 2024 marked a historic turning point for Syria. The country now enters a new phase of transition, after more than a decade of conflict and civil war. While Syria continues to face immense challenges—including rebuilding devastated infrastructure, addressing deep social divisions, and restoring degraded ecosystems—this period also presents opportunities for inclusive governance, social healing, and sustainable development. Alongside the newly established interim government led by Ahmed Hussein al-Sharaa (previously known as Abu Mohammed al-Jolani), the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and its commander-in-chief, Mazloum Abdi, have emerged as one of the most important actors shaping Syria's future. The SDF, closely linked to the AANES, is now a key stakeholder in negotiations over Syria's reconstruction, reconciliation, and recovery. The evolving relationship between the interim government and

the AANES/SDF will be crucial for ensuring stability, fostering pluralism, and addressing the urgent needs of communities across the country.

Considering this background, the aim of this workshop report is to move beyond existing academic discussions on environmental politics in North and East Syria³, and to respond directly to the region's urgent environmental needs and challenges, and to explore possible pathways for ecological recovery and justice. We seek to critically examine the political, social, and ecological dimensions of environmental governance in post-conflict Syria, and to propose context-sensitive recommendations that prioritize local agency, equity, and long-term ecological well-being.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Traditional post-conflict recovery efforts—often driven by external actors—have historically prioritized rapid reconstruction and economic growth, frequently at the expense of environmental restoration and social justice.^{4–6} There is a real risk that Syria's transition could repeat these mistakes, entrenching extractive economic models, marginalizing ethnic and religious minorities, and neglecting the needs of both people and nature.

At this critical juncture, there is an urgent need for a new approach: one that recognizes the interconnectedness of ecological health, social justice, and democratic governance. Without integrating environmental repair and inclusive participation into transitional justice processes, Syria risks perpetuating cycles of harm and missing the opportunity to build a resilient, equitable, and peaceful future.

Green Transitional Justice expands the traditional focus of transitional justice—truth, accountability, reparations, and institutional reform—to include environmental harm and the rights of more-than-human life. According to Killean and Dempster, GTJ is guided by six core principles:⁷



Green Transitional Justice, image created by Co-Pilot

1. **Questioning colonial and imperial powers:** Addressing the legacies of external domination and resource extraction.
2. **Looking beyond the state:** Promoting local, participatory, and decentralized governance.
3. **Expanding victimhood to more-than-human life:** Recognizing that ecosystems, animals, and future generations are also victims of conflict.
4. **Ensuring inclusive and participatory processes:** Engaging all stakeholders, including marginalized groups, in decision-making.
5. **Prioritizing sustainability and equity in recovery:** Rejecting extractive economic models in favor of ecological restoration and social justice.
6. **Pursuing holistic justice:** Integrating ecological, social, cultural, and political justice, even if imperfectly.

Given the ideological ties between the SDF/AANES and the PKK—and Turkey's perception of these actors as extensions of the PKK—the renewed dialogue between Turkey and the PKK creates new opportunities for peace and cross-border cooperation in the region.⁸ While these developments have implications within Syria, within Turkey, and for relations between the two countries, this paper focuses specifically on their significance for North and East Syria.

ECO-SYRIA WORKSHOP AND CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE

This policy brief draws on insights from the [ECO-Syria project](#) at Lund University¹, which investigates how in-

ternal conflict and cross-border hostilities have shaped the political and environmental landscape of North and East Syria (Rojava). The project also explores the potential roles that regional, national, and international actors might play in contributing to democratization and ecological recovery in the region after conflict.

To ground our recommendations in local understandings and perceptions, the ECO-Syria research team convened a two-day workshop in September 2025, bringing together representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs), local experts, and researchers based in North and East Syria and Europe. The workshop was designed to be inclusive and accessible, held in a hybrid format and conducted in English, Arabic, and Kurdish, enabling broad participation from both within Syria and elsewhere².



Civil Society Organisations and Research at the Crossroads of Ecology and Democracy in Syria workshop, held in Lund, September 2025.

The workshop served as a platform for the project team to share their research findings and to open dialogues on the evolving environmental and political dynamics in North and East Syria. Participants discussed practical challenges facing farmers—such as access to seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural extension services—as well as other pressing environmental issues, including water scarcity and management, pollution, soil quality, and air quality. Thematic sessions explored how environmental agendas are shaped and enacted on the ground, and how CSOs navigate obstacles in

1. The ECO-Syria Research Project is funded by the Strategic Research Area: The Middle East in the Contemporary World (MECW) at the Centre for Advanced Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University, Sweden.

2. This workshop report will also be made available in Arabic and Kurdish translations, which are currently in preparation.

advancing ecological protection and conservation. A central focus was the relationship between AANES authorities and local communities, particularly farmers, and the role of CSOs as intermediaries and advocates for environmental justice. By bringing together diverse perspectives, the workshop enabled a comprehensive examination of the region's most urgent environmental challenges and the strategies that could be developed to address them.

Through collaborative mapping, knowledge exchange, and problem-solving, the workshop identified both barriers and opportunities for advancing environmental protection, ecological recovery, and democratic governance. The insights and priorities that emerged from these discussions directly informed the policy recommendations in this report, ensuring they reflect the experiences and aspirations of those most affected by conflict and environmental change in North and East Syria.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We propose the following policy recommendations to guide environmental transitional justice efforts with a focus on North and East Syria, while recognizing their potential relevance for the wider Syrian context. These recommendations are grounded in broad principles that emphasize Syrian-led, locally owned processes; negotiated and transparent frameworks; and meaningful engagement by both international and local CSOs. In this context, transitional justice serves as a critical tool to foster accountability, redress, and reconciliation among key actors, including the Syrian Interim Government, SDF, AANES, and other communities affected by conflict and environmental degradation. We also highlight the importance of external actors providing support rather than direction, and of CSOs facilitating dialogue, offering technical expertise, and ensuring accountability and inclusivity throughout the process. Securing adequate and flexible funding is essential to empower local actors and enable adaptive responses to evolving needs. Furthermore, fostering environmental awareness at every stage is critical to ensure that interventions are ecologically responsible and contribute to long-term well-being.

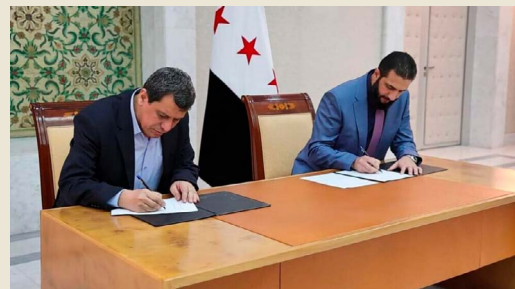
To provide structure and clarity, we organize our analysis and recommendations according to the six key principles of the Green Transitional Justice (GTJ) framework, with actionable steps tailored for the administrations in Syria (the interim government and AANES), the ongoing negotiation process between the two administrations, and CSOs in Syria.

THE ONGOING NEGOTIATION PROCESS BETWEEN THE SYRIAN INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND SYRIAN DEMOCRATIC FORCES

On March 10th, 2025, an agreement outlining Damascus-AANES administrative, military and security integration to be implemented by the end of the year was signed between Ahmed al-Sharaa and Mazloum Abdi. The deal contains eight points:

1. Guarantees the rights of all Syrians to representation and participation in the political process and all state institutions based on competence, regardless of their religious and ethnic backgrounds.
2. The Kurdish community is native to Syria; the Syrian state guarantees its right to citizenship and all its constitutional rights.
3. Ceasefire on all Syrian territories.
4. Integrating all NES civil and military institutions into the Syrian state administration, including border crossings, the airport, and oil and gas fields.
5. Ensuring the return of all displaced Syrians to their towns and villages and ensuring their protection by the Syrian state.
6. Supporting the Syrian state in its fight against remnants of Assad and all threats to its security.
7. Rejecting calls for division, hate speech, and attempts to spread discord within all parts of Syrian society.
8. Executive Committees are working and striving to implement the agreement no later than the end of this year.

Source: <https://rojavainformationcenter.org/2025/03/explainer-the-sdf-damascus-agreement/>



Interim Syrian president Ahmed al-Sharaa and Mazloum Abdi of the Syrian Democratic Forces in Damascus following the signing of an integration agreement. Photo: AP

1. QUESTIONING COLONIAL AND IMPERIAL POWERS

A. Interim Government & AANES:

Establish Independent Truth and Justice Commissions:

- Establish commissions to document land dispossession, forced displacement, environmental destruction—including water and soil pollution—and resource extraction during the Assad family's rule from 1970 to 2024, collecting testimonies from affected communities.
- Ensure commission reports are made public and communicated in a way that is useful to inform policy decisions.

Develop Legal Mechanisms for Land and Property Restitution and Ecosystems Restoration:

- Set up transparent and fair systems for claims and restitution of land and property seized during colonial periods, particularly between 1970 and 2024.
- Provide compensation or alternative land/property to those who cannot recover their original assets.
- Create an Environmental Commission responsible for assessing environmental destruction and proposing strategies for ecosystem restoration.
- Give access to CSOs and victims' associations to get a consultative status in the environmental commissions.

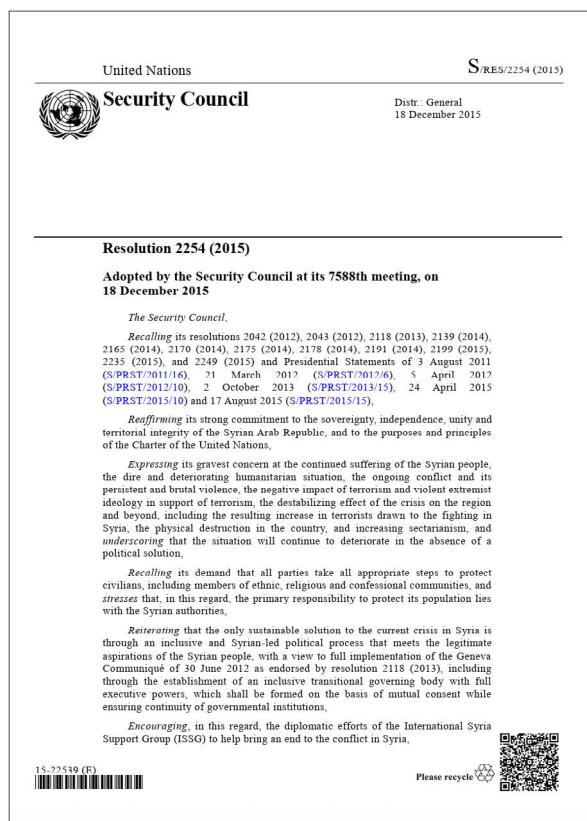
Address the impact of embargoes imposed by regional and international actors:

- Document how embargoes affect humanitarian access, reconstruction, and environmental recovery.
- Advocate for exemptions or lifting of embargoes that hinder the well-being of civilians and ecological restoration.
- Establish mechanisms for ceasefire monitoring, humanitarian access, and civilian protection.
- Reopen previous border crossings (e.g., Qamishli-Nusaybin crossing).

Prepare an Implementation Plan for UN Security Council Resolution 2254:

- Draft a roadmap for an inclusive, rights-based transition as outlined in Resolution 2254, ensuring participation from all affected groups.

- Emphasize the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned nature of the political process, as mandated by the resolution, while recognizing the facilitative role of the United Nations.
- Integrate the efforts of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), which includes a broad coalition of states and organizations—some of which are EU member states and allies of France and Turkey—whose diplomatic and logistical support is essential for the success of the transition.



UN Security Resolution. Source: <https://specialenvoysyria.unmissions.org/mandate>

B. Negotiation Table:

Create a Joint Truth and Reconciliation Mechanism:

- Establish a multi-party mechanism to address historical (and environmental) injustices related to nature, land, and property rights.
- Ensure direct participation of victims and affected communities in the reconciliation process.

Official Recognition of Past Violations:

- Formally acknowledge and apologize for rights violations resulting from colonial and imperial practices.

C. CSOs:**Support Documentation and Truth-Telling Initiatives:**

- Provide technical and financial support to locally led projects documenting the impacts of colonial legacies both on communities and the environment, including other-than-humans.
- Create platforms for victims to share their stories and experiences, making sure that someone speaks for the natural environment

Facilitate Reparations and Redress Processes:

- Monitor and facilitate fair, transparent, and victim-centered reparations processes, including the natural environment as a victim.
- Implement capacity-building programs to strengthen local ownership and leadership in these processes.

2. LOOKING BEYOND THE (NATION-)STATE**A. Interim Government & AANES:****Institutionalize Community-Based Environmental Justice Mechanisms:**

- Integrate locally driven collaborations—such as community initiatives, cooperatives, and customary practices—into broader environmental governance frameworks, enabling them to manage resources and resolve environmental disputes effectively.
- Ensure legal and institutional support for diverse community-based environmental efforts, promoting transparency, inclusivity, and long-term sustainability, regardless of their formal structure or affiliation.

Promote Participatory and Direct Democratic Environmental Decision-Making:

- Establish, support, and strengthen neighborhood and village assemblies with real decision-making power over local environmental issues, such as land use, water management, pollution control, and ecological protection and restoration.
- Clearly define who the minorities are in different areas in Syria.

- Set clear quotas or mechanisms to secure their involvement in policymaking.
- Provide resources and support for their active participation, not just symbolic presence.
- Regularly monitor and publicly report on the inclusivity and diversity of these bodies.

B. Negotiation Table:**Include Community Environmental Representatives in Environmental Governance Processes:**

- Ensure that negotiations and environmental policy processes include delegates from grassroots environmental organizations, local eco-councils, and traditional ecological knowledge holders (e.g., farmers, agricultural workers, pastoralists, waste collectors, fisheries)—not just state actors.
- Develop frameworks that allow for the recognition of community-led environmental justice outcomes in national and regional agreements.

C. CSOs:**Support Capacity-Building for Community Environmental Justice:**

- Provide training, resources, and legal support to strengthen local environmental initiatives, activities, and structures.
- Facilitate exchanges between communities to share best practices in participatory environmental governance and conflict resolution.

Monitor and Advocate for Inclusive Environmental Justice:

- Monitor the effectiveness and fairness of both state and community-based environmental justice mechanisms, advocating for legal and administrative reforms where needed.
- Promote awareness campaigns about the legitimacy and benefits of community-led environmental justice through participatory decision-making.

3. EXPANDING VICTIMHOOD TO MORE-THAN-HUMAN LIFE

SUPPORTING ANIMAL WELFARE

Lawir for Animal, the first NGO dedicated to animal protection in Northeast Syria, has successfully halted the mass killing of stray animals and is constructing a shelter in Qamishli with municipal approval. The shelter will include a free operating room and provide veterinary services in underserved rural areas. The organization promotes animal welfare through education and advocacy, aiming to establish legal protections for animals. Support is needed for shelter construction, medical supplies, and food for rescued strays.

Source: <https://www.oipa.org/international/syria-lawirforanimal-shelter/>



Global Biodiversity Framework Target 22, Source: <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/22>



ECO-Syria fieldwork, Syria.
Photo by PÊL- Civil Waves

A. Interim Government & AANES:

Enact a Right of Nature Law and Environmental Regulations:

- Recognize the Human Right to a Healthy, Clean, and Sustainable Environment from the International Human Rights Law.
- Grant legal standing and protection to rivers, drylands, forests, and key ecosystems, enabling them to be represented in legal and policy processes.
- Recognize the rights of nature to exist, regenerate, and be restored after harm.
- Introduce deterrent penalties for environmental damage and overexploitation, such as fines and accountability measures.
- Empower CSOs to monitor, report, and initiate legal action against violations.

Establish a Biodiversity Reparations Fund:

- Create a dedicated fund for the restoration of habitats and ecosystems destroyed or degraded by conflict and unsustainable practices (e.g., Abdulaziz Mountain Reserve).
- Prioritize projects that restore ecological integrity and support the return of native species in line with international agreements signed by Syria, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Integrate More-than-Human Perspectives in Environmental Governance:

- Ensure that environmental decision-making bodies include expertise in ecology, traditional ecological knowledge, and animal welfare, in line with target 22 of the CDB.

B. All Parties

Integrate International Environmental Law and Accountability Mechanisms:

- Embed principles from both international human rights law and international environmental law into peace agreements and transitional justice frameworks.
- Establish joint mechanisms for monitoring and addressing environmental harm, including harm to non-human life.

Recognize Ecological Harm as a Form of Conflict Damage:

- Ensure that negotiations and reparations processes explicitly address damage to ecosystems, biodiversity, and non-human species—not just human losses.

C. CSOs:

Support Legal Innovation and Ecological Restoration:

- Advocate for and assist in drafting the right of nature laws and policies.
- Support community-led ecological restoration projects, focusing on areas most affected by conflict and environmental degradation.

Promote Holistic Reparations:

- Develop and implement programs that go beyond human-centered compensation, including habitat restoration, species reintroduction, and long-term ecosystem monitoring.
- Raise awareness about the interconnectedness of human and ecological well-being.
- Develop new avenues to incentivize the environmental interventions that highlight the aspect of direct benefits transfers for the local community.

4. ENSURING INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

A. Interim Government & AANES:

Organize Citizen Assemblies in Each Commune:

- Convene regular citizen assemblies to collaboratively draft and update local climate and environmental justice priorities, ensuring broad community input.
- Enable municipalities and communes to design and implement community projects to address environmental issues
- Ensure inclusive planning and give provinces more say in decisions affecting the environmental situation in their territories.
- Representatives of provinces/ municipalities should have access and meaningful participation in the decision-making process.

Develop Multilingual, Publicly Accessible Environmental Data Platforms:

- Create online and offline platforms where environmental data (e.g., air and water quality, land use, restoration progress) is available in all relevant languages.
- Enable communities to monitor progress, submit grievances, and propose new initiatives directly through these platforms.

Train Local Experts in Environmental Monitoring and Participatory Governance:

- Invest in capacity-building programs for local researchers, activists, and community leaders to monitor environmental changes and facilitate participatory decision-making.

B. Negotiation Table:

Commit to Systematic, Open Data Sharing and Joint Monitoring:

- Establish agreements for transparent, regular sharing of environmental data across all parties.
- Develop joint monitoring teams—including community representatives—to track environmental impacts and progress on restoration.

C. CSOs:

Provide Training and Support for Participatory Environmental Processes:

- Invest in capacity-building programs for local researchers and environmental activists to develop nature-based solutions to local environmental problems.
- Set up projects and programs in collaboration with local authorities to strengthen public officials', policy makers', and communities' skills in environmental monitoring, advocacy, and participatory governance (e.g., citizen science).
- Adopt a clear environmental protection policy/ code of conduct for CSOs to avoid environmentally harmful practices, such as the increased use of plastic and non-separation of waste.
- Facilitate open and inclusive political spaces (e.g., forums) where diverse voices—including marginalized and affected groups—can shape environmental priorities and solutions.

WHAT IS CITIZEN SCIENCE?

Citizen science is the practice of involving the public—volunteers, community members, students—in scientific research and data collection. It empowers people to contribute meaningfully to environmental monitoring, biodiversity tracking, and public health studies, often in collaboration with professional scientists. Citizen science enhances transparency, democratizes knowledge production, and strengthens community engagement in decision-making.

It is especially valuable in post-conflict or underserved regions, where local knowledge and participation can fill gaps in data and foster environmental justice.

Source: <https://vetenskapallmanhet.se/eng/our-areas-of-interest/citizen-science/>



Citizen Science, image created by Co-Pilot

5. PRIORITIZING SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY IN RECOVERY

A. Interim Government & AANES:

Craft a National Strategic Policy:

- Develop a strategic policy framework to align efforts, avoid duplication, and guarantee that projects are locally relevant and responsive to community needs.
- Establish benchmarks for monitoring progress and evaluating impact to build trust and ensure responsible implementation.

- Use environmental initiatives as a safe entry point for engagement in politically sensitive areas.

Reject Extractive Reconstruction Models:

- Be cautious about adopting post-conflict recovery models that prioritize extractive industries (e.g., large-scale mining, fossil fuels exploration and exploitation) at the expense of ecological integrity, local traditional knowledge, and socioecological relations and social well-being.

Support Community-Led Ecological Restoration and Renewable Energy:

- Promote and fund community-driven reforestation, wildlife corridor restoration, and the creation of renewable energy microgrids (such as solar replacing diesel generators).
- Adopt sustainable green energy practices by providing necessary facilitation—including customs and tax exemptions for supply chains—and fostering a culture of quality, productivity, and sustainability within society.
- Encourage local ownership and management of these projects to ensure long-term sustainability and equitable benefits.
- Support civil society organizations to provide capacity building and awareness programs aimed at preserving green energy resources and promoting knowledge about the benefits of clean energy.

Require Full-Cost Ecological Accounting:

- Mandate that all reconstruction tenders and projects include comprehensive ecological accounting—factoring in the costs of soil and water depletion, biodiversity loss, and long-term environmental impacts.

B. Negotiation Table:

Set Joint Sustainability and Equity Benchmarks:

- Agree on clear, measurable sustainability and equity standards for all recovery and reconstruction projects.
- Establish mechanisms for joint monitoring and enforcement to ensure compliance with these benchmarks.

C. CSOs:**Pilot and Scale Up Community-Owned Sustainable Initiatives:**

- Support the development and expansion of community-owned renewable energy projects and sustainable agriculture initiatives.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity-building to empower local communities in managing and benefiting from these projects.

SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA

Launched in 2013 by Germany, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, the Syria Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF) supports essential services in conflict-affected areas. In February 2023, the SRTF approved a project to install solar panels and provide clean water to 14 healthcare facilities in Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor in North and East Syria, addressing needs for reliable electricity and sanitation. With a budget of approx. EUR 430 million, the initiative is expected to benefit over 58,000 residents for 12 months, promoting sustainable recovery and eco-friendly infrastructure.

Source: <https://borgenproject.org/renewable-energy-in-syria/>

One initiative, led by Make Rojava Green Again, the Berlin-Kreuzberg & Dêrik City Partnership, and the municipality of Dêrik, completed the installation of solar panels to power a drinking water well by July 2024. This project addresses growing water needs due to population increases and reduces reliance on costly and polluting diesel generators. Dêrik's relatively resilient water resources make it a strategic site for eco-friendly infrastructure.



Source: <https://makerojavagreenagain.org/building-a-solarwell-in-derik/>

6. PURSUING HOLISTIC JUSTICE

A. *Interim Government & AANES:*

Promote Integrated Justice Projects:

- Support initiatives that combine ecological, cultural, and social justice—such as traditional seed banks managed by women’s cooperatives, or projects that restore both biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Allocate at least 20% of Reconstruction Spending to Holistic Priorities:

- Follow the recommendations of the Green Climate Fund and UNDRR and dedicate a minimum of 20% of all reconstruction budgets to

climate-resilient infrastructure, reforestation, and protection of cultural heritage, with annual public reviews to ensure transparency and accountability.

Train and Support the Urban and Rural population and Farmers in Sustainable Practices:

- Continue making awareness campaigns with children, youth, and local leaders about the importance of waste management and environmental restoration.
- Make ecologically sustainable agriculture a core focus in education and through agricultural extension programs, providing ongoing training and support for farmers on agroecology.

WHY ALLOCATE 20% TO CLIMATE-RESILIENT RECOVERY?

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) recommend dedicating at least 20% of reconstruction budgets to climate-resilient infrastructure, reforestation, and cultural heritage protection. This ensures long-term sustainability, reduces vulnerability to future disasters, and promotes inclusive recovery.

Sources: <https://www.greenclimate.fund/> & <https://www.undrr.org/>



Source: www.freepik.com

B. Negotiation Table:**Agree on Holistic Justice Indicators and Annual Review Mechanisms:**

- Expand courts and other justice institutions, facilitating access by different groups of the population.
- Put in place a review mechanism to monitor access to justice. Develop and adopt indicators that measure progress in ecological, cultural, and social justice, and commit to annual joint reviews to assess and adjust strategies as needed.

C. CSOs:**Support Integrated, Cross-Sectoral Projects and Transparent Budgeting:**

- Fund and facilitate projects that bridge ecological restoration, cultural preservation, and social empowerment.
- Advocate for and monitor transparent budgeting and spending on holistic justice initiatives.

STRENGTHENING GREEN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN THE AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION OF NORTH AND EAST SYRIA

This section complements the ECO-Syria Workshop Report by highlighting additional recommendations from Civil Society in Rojava. These recommendations aim to deepen ecological recovery, strengthen local agency, and ensure practical pathways for Green Transitional Justice (GTJ).

1. GROUNDING GTJ IN LOCAL COUNCILS:

GTJ should be rooted in the everyday decisions of communities. Councils established in selected communes (e.g., Qamishli, Hasakah) should bring together farmers, women's cooperatives, youth representatives, CSOs, and local authorities to:

- Exercise real decision-making power over environmental priorities (not merely advisory roles).
- Design and approve local projects on re-forestation, water management, and land restitution.
- Act as local accountability bodies, ensuring that ecological reparations are distributed fairly and transparently.
- Serve as spaces where women and youth take leadership roles in shaping ecological recovery.

This would support developing community-driven models of ecological governance in North and East Syria, which can later be scaled up across the region.

2. COMMUNITY SCIENCE AND TRANSPARENCY:

Residents, farmers, and students should be equipped with simple, low-cost tools for measuring soil fertility, water quality, and pollution levels, through:

- Training programs led by local engineers, agronomists, and activists to ensure data quality.
- Multilingual dissemination of results (Kurdish, Arabic, Syriac) to ensure accessibility across all communities.
- Public reporting platforms (online and offline notice boards) to share findings and build trust between authorities and citizens.
- Citizen science as reparation: recognizing community knowledge and giving people agency in ecological monitoring.

This approach would ensure environmental data is not monopolized by institutions or external actors but becomes a shared public resource, fostering both transparency and accountability.

3. ECOLOGICAL REPARATION WITH IMMEDIATE IMPACT:

Miyawaki Forests & Symbolic Reforestation

Visible, community-driven projects that restore ecological integrity, while also symbolizing renewal, should be carried out. The Miyawaki method, planting dense native forests that grow rapidly, offers both practical biodiversity restoration and a cultural marker of post-conflict repair through:

- Pilot projects in urban neighborhoods, schools, and war-affected landscapes.
- Memorial forests dedicated to communities displaced or harmed by war, combining ecology with remembrance.
- Education hubs where young people learn ecological stewardship through hands-on participation.

Direct Benefit Transfers for Ecological Participation

Environmental goals should not be pursued at the expense of livelihoods without the delivery of tangible returns. The linking of ecological participation to immediate household benefits should be prioritized through:

- Solar microgrids that lower family energy costs.
- Composting programs that generate free or low-cost organic fertilizer.
- Waste recycling initiatives that provide small income streams.

4. ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION COORDINATION GROUPS (EPCGs)

The Environment Protection Coordination Groups (EPCGs) should be understood not as a central authority, but as a supporting backbone through which bottom-up initiatives are amplified and coordinated. Strengthening EPCGs should be approached as a means of equipping local communes, cooperatives, and CSOs with tools, expertise, and networks—while ensuring that decision-making remains rooted in communities.

- **Capacity-Building for Member Organizations**
Training in ecological restoration, sustainable agriculture, water management, and renewable energy should be given. Capacity building should prioritize horizontal exchanges among local organizations, with EPCGs acting as a facilitator and convener rather than a trainer from above.
- **Community-Centered Standard Operating Procedures**
EPCGs should co-develop practical guidelines with communes and CSOs. Standards should be flexible, culturally rooted, and designed to strengthen local initiatives, not replace them.
- **Technical Advisory Network**
A network of regional and international experts who serve as mentors and allies to local projects should be established. EPCGs should connect grassroots actors with expertise when requested, rather than dictate technical solutions.
- **Participatory Monitoring and Reporting**
EPCGs should build a shared data commons where communities, farmers, and youth generate and own the information they collect. EPCGs' role should be to curate, verify, and make this data accessible in Kurdish, Arabic, and Syriac. CSOs should institutionalize their networking through EPCGs and create more spaces for monitoring environmental issues.
- **Policy Role as Translator, Not Director**
EPCGs should act as a bridge: translating community priorities into policy language so that AANES, CSOs, and international partners understand them. It should amplify and advocate for grassroots ecological visions, rather than replacing local decision-making. CSOs should use EPCGs to do more advocacy and mobilization on environmental policies and practices at both the governmental and municipal levels.

CONCLUSION

This workshop report represents a first step toward envisioning a just, sustainable, and inclusive recovery for North and East Syria. As highlighted throughout the workshop, there is an urgent need for a Strategic Environmental Policy to serve as a cross-sectoral framework—guiding efforts from urban planning to ecosystem restoration and biodiversity conservation—ensuring coherence, sustainability, and resilience in Syria’s recovery and development pathways.

Green Transitional Justice offers a promising framework for addressing the intertwined legacies of conflict, environmental harm, and social fragmentation. By centering local voices, expanding the definition of victimhood, and integrating ecological, social, and cultural justice, these recommendations aim to repair not only the wounds of war but also the environment and the social fabric of the region.

However, this workshop report is only a starting point. The current political opening—marked by the fall of Assad, the emergence of the AANES, and renewed regional dialogue—creates a unique opportunity but also demands ongoing commitment. To truly meet the needs of communities and ecosystems, further dialogue, participatory action plans, and sustained collaboration among Syrian actors, civil society, and the international community are essential.

We call for continued engagement, deeper consultation, and concrete steps to translate these principles into practice. Meaningful and sustained dialogue among authorities, civil society, local communities, and experts is essential—not only for building trust and ensuring diverse perspectives are included, but also for maintaining momentum and securing the necessary funding to support local initiatives. Only through collective and inclusive effort can Syria build a future grounded in justice, resilience, and social and ecological stability.

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