

Violence Against Women in Northwest of Syria and Its Relation to the Limitedness of Their Political Participation

Focus Research Study

Date of writing the research
February 2022

Date of launching the research
March 2022

Prepared by Equity and
Empowerment Organization

Main researcher: Mr. Safwan Kassam

Field researchers:

- Falak Najjar
- Yassmen Al-hamoud
- Lina Mohammed
- Norhan Sarmani
- Ottaba Ezz Eldin
- Rama Salibi
- Hala Ezzideen

Research gender auditing: Walaa Aloush

Research design: Zaid Hadla



“All rights reserved”, the study can be used for scientific purposes or for quoting after obtaining the consent of the producing organization. This research is considered the first production of the participating researchers, and therefore it was revised without interfering with its knowledge core”.

Acknowledgment and Dedication

“It’s your turn, doctor”

From there we started, when we did not own the land, but we wrote the story and preserved the narration, because our struggle is linked to our memory and our ability to tell the story as it is, as a narrative of truth and rights, as a narrative of man and dignity. And our narrative, we women, who are unique in a lot of stories, resembles us alone. It tells future generations about our struggle and our success despite all the superimposed structures in our oppression, our scold, our stereotyping and stifling of our voices. And to become part of history, we had to archive our lives ourselves so that subjective experience would be part of the feminist inventory.

Here, I must highlight oral history, which was considered a different epistemological method in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century by socialist historians, who only recorded the lives of people from the working classes. Then, in the seventies, the journey of archiving oral narratives as a tool to correct historical knowledge about socially marginalized groups related to race, social class or gender began. In that process, the roles of feminist movements that tried to answer about the role and position of women historically started to emerge as their experiences and voices have always been neglected and were considered as daily lived things that don’t go up to the level of history. Thus, the feminists’ demands continued till our present time in order to consider the prospective of women and the gender framework of their experiences as a unit of history analysis.

In the Syrian context, a reduced concept about the experiences of women was presented as it revolved around the lack of basic requirements of life until all lives

appeared as revolving around the primitive concept of living that is already their basic right. It neglected any speech about the roles of women in political life and the professions they worked after the Syrian revolution as well as the effect of lack of knowledge about properties on them and the hidden crimes they get exposed to electronically. Through these researches we, in Equity and Empowerment Organization, try to humanize our lives as women from a different perspective in order to reevaluate the tilted societal balance to become on a similar scale and regain the right in all of our roles.

I repeatedly tried to hide my affection while reading the four researches which are the products of twenty-five researchers that underwent this experience for the first time. I felt proud, joy, pain and belonging to them. I had only one sentence repeated in my mind: “Today you write history to be the future for you and the day will come when we write the names of all Syrian women on the sun “that never sets”.

Hiba Ezzideen Alhaji

“CEO of Equity & Empowerment Organization”

Table of Contents

Acknowledgment and Dedication	1
Table of Contents	3
Background and Justifications:	4
Methodological framework	5
<u>1.</u> Problem and objectives:.....	5
<u>2.</u> Domains and Methodology:.....	6
Concepts:	7
<u>1.</u> General concepts:.....	7
<u>2.</u> Procedural concepts:.....	9
<u>3.</u> Previous studies.....	9
Theoretical framework.....	11
<u>1.</u> Violence against women in Syria:.....	11
<u>2.</u> Political participation of women in Syria:.....	12
<u>3.</u> Limitedness of women political participation in Syria:.....	14
Executive Framework	15
<u>1.</u> Designing tools, procedures of sampling and data collection:.....	15
<u>2.</u> Results:.....	16
<u>a.</u> Content of individual interviews:.....	16
<u>b.</u> Content of focus discussion session:.....	19
<u>c.</u> Content of questionnaires:.....	21
Recommendations:.....	23
Attachments of the research:	25
References	29

Background and Justifications:

Before the events of the Arab Spring, Syria occupied an above-average rank in the political participation of Arab women¹ which is a weak rank globally. The political participation of Syrian women in the areas controlled by the Syrian opposition was absent from the report written by ESCWA in 2013² and it seems that the reason was the type of report that targeted the relevant laws of the existing Arab regimes at that time. Also, the activities and political participation of Syrian women was absent in the edition number 70 from the series of Arab Unity Studies Center issued in 2014.³ And in a report published by the United Nations about women in 2015 under the title “Leadership and political participation” the name of Syrian women's participation was absent from its political development program.⁴ At the same time, a study made by Dr. Lama Qunoot in 2016⁵ showed that there was an intentional movement against the political participation of Syrian women during the Syrian movement as well as currents that work on preventing them from taking their seats in the political and civil movements and stereotyping them within patriarchal frameworks. This was followed by a study by IMPACT Organization in 2019⁶ that talked about what is behind the gender balance in Syrian civil society organizations, and it was found that there are internal factors related to the social environment and civil organizations, and external factors related to funding, donors and discourses that are inappropriate for the Syrian context, all of which hinder the participation of Syrian women in political work. As for the study of Alia Ahmed, which she carried out in northwest Syria in 2021,⁷ it was found that there are many obstacles that limit the political participation of Syrian women, the most important of which are customs and traditions.

After this overview of the development of the political participation of Syrian women and after highlighting the factors that hinder this participation, we arrive at the importance of the research that emerges within this development of political participation by studying the relationship of violence to the limitations of this participation, which may lead to the formation of an image among decision-makers and actors to draw attention to the existence of a potentially dialectical relationship between violence and political participation, as the women who have political participation will often be exposed to violence as a result of this participation. This will prevent them from participating later as well, and violence practiced from the beginning against women may be a factor that prevents participation in the first place. And perhaps the violence was a

¹Dr. Iman Baybars, and others, Women's Political Participation in the Arab World, Association for the Advancement and Development of Women, <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/>, Cairo, Egypt.

²ESCWA, Arab Women's Participation in Political Action: Challenges and Suggestions, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), E/ESCWA/ECW/2013/1, United Nations, New York, January 22, 2013.

³Center for Arab Unity Studies, Arab Women: From Violence and Discrimination to Political Participation, Arab Future Books Series, No. 70, Al Hamra, Beirut, January, 2014.

⁴UN Women, Leadership and Political Participation, <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/>

⁵Dr.Lama Qunoot, The Syrian Women's Political Participation between the core and the Margin, The Syrian Feminist Lobby, December, 2016.

⁶Dr. Nour Abu Assab and her colleague, Gender Dynamics in Syrian Civil Society, IMPACT, Berlin, March, 2019.

⁷Alia Ahmed, Obstacles facing Syrian women in political participation in the northern and eastern Aleppo countryside, CCSD, 2021.

motivator and a reason for women to start political participation, calling for their rights to remove this injustice from them.

Methodological framework

1. Problem and objectives:

We usually read in researches that talk about women's affairs about how women get exposed to violence and deprived from their rights as well as putting them in a social rank lower than men. In addition to that, we read about practicing all types of oppression and abuse on women and among these rights that women get deprived from or "voluntarily" ⁸leave them is their right in political participation. This generally happens either for the absence of fair laws and policies that guarantee the rights of women in political participation or resulted from the public and cultural conditions that limit this participation, and these conditions might include the violence practiced on women.

Here, a pivotal point appears in the form of an inquiry that needs clarification, will women's political participation generate violence against them as a result of this participation? And at the same time, the violence practiced against her in general may be what prevents her from political participation. Additionally, the violence practiced against her might be a trigger for her to participate politically in order to be able to face this violence! Or an incentive to increase the political participation she initiated and here we come to the main problematic question of the research:

Is there a relationship between violence against Syrian women and their limited political participation in northwest of Syria?

Which leads us to ask a number of related questions to answer this question:

- 1- What is the reality of the political participation of Syrian women in northwest of Syria?
- 2- What is the reality of violence against Syrian women in northwest of Syria?
- 3- Does previous violence play a role in limiting the political participation of Syrian women? Or was violence inflicted on them as a result of their political participation?
- 4- Was this violence an incentive or a motive for women to increase their desire for political participation? Or did it not affect them?
- 5- What are the limits of the political participation of Syrian women in northwest of Syria? And what are the obstacles in front of their participation?

Answering these questions is controlled by the procedural definitions of each of the concepts of: **Violence against women- political participation- limitedness of political participation.** Thus, we only raised these questions. As the concept of violence against women might take vast

⁸Voluntary refraining from political participation may be the result of social conditions and a lack of awareness of this right and its consequences, and therefore the voluntary reluctance is a symptom of a problem related to society, culture and awareness itself, which takes the form of moving away from public affairs, including political participation.

forms starting from negligence or psychological violence and ending by murder or physical violence. Likewise, the concept of political participation takes wide forms, starting with the desire to participate and ending with running for the position of President of the Republic. Also, the concept of limitedness of political participation takes many forms, starting with social and psychological restrictions and ending with laws, security conditions, and policies that define the ceiling of this participation. Therefore, it was important to note that keeping the procedural definition open and limiting it to receiving answers from the respondents in an open manner is necessary because closing and defining these concepts may harm the research and fail to convey the picture clearly.

Hence, the research aims to attempt to reveal the existence of a relationship between violence against women and their limited political participation in northwest of Syria. It will attempt to highlight the reality of violence inflicted on them, the reality of their political participation and reveal any possibility of the existence of a relationship between these two parties and the limits of their political participation.

2. Domains and Methodology:

The research targets the area under the control of the armed Syrian opposition in northwestern Syria, specifically “Idlib and its countryside”. It targets a group of political activists and feminists working in these areas and participating politically “previously, currently, or have the desire, but circumstances prevent them from doing so” as this research was carried out in February of 2022, while the research will address the stage of the Syrian movement in Idlib and its countryside only since the beginning of 2011.

Furthermore, the research relied on the descriptive analytical method, which is an appropriate approach for this type of descriptive studies. The method will be the method of the social survey of female activists who have political activity in the Idlib region and its countryside, and female activists who were/who intended to reside in Idlib and its countryside but were settled in the regions of Turkey, through an electronic preliminary survey link to be published through social media to reach the appropriate cases that express a willingness to participate with us while ensuring confidentiality and privacy for them. The tool will be in-depth interview with the activists, focus groups with activists in the inside, and a written questionnaire for a number of activists in Turkey. The sample will be compound: **Standard- available**. Due to time constraints and some considerations related to the research and its sensitivity. In addition to that, 14 interviews and focus discussion sessions will be carried out in the inside as well as and a number of questionnaires for experts/opinions and accordingly the results will be extracted and analyzed.

Concepts:

1. General concepts:

- ❖ **Violence against women:** Violence against woman is defined, according to the United Nations General Assembly, as: “Any violent act that is motivated by gender bias and that results in, or is likely to result in, harm or suffering to women, whether from a physical, sexual or psychological point of view, including threatening of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether this occurs in public or private life”. The General Assembly interprets violence against women as including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Physical, sexual, and psychological violence that occur within the family, including beating and sexual assault of female children of the family, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.
 - b. Physical, sexual, and psychological violence that occurs within the general community, including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and intimidation in the workplace, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.
 - c. Physical, sexual, and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs.⁹
- ❖ **Women's political participation:** There is no agreement on a single definition of political participation, for reasons related to the relativity of the term depending on the environment and political, organizational, cultural, social and psychological variables. Professor Mohamed Goulferni treats this term as a set of administrative activities that allow citizens to influence the political system, through elections and influence political decision, and even respect some of the constraints resulting from power, through the institutionalization of political participation, in a democratic atmosphere, while ensuring citizenship without discrimination. And it varies between sympathetic citizen, opposing citizen and professional citizen. Moreover, it ranges from registering in the electoral lists, debating and voting, to engaging in structures concerned with public affairs, such as unions, parties, and associations, and participating in demonstrations, protests, and strikes.¹⁰ According to the World Health Organization, political participation includes a wide range of activities through which people express their opinions about the world and how it is governed, and try to participate in and shape the decisions that affect and shape their lives. These activities range from developing thinking about disability or other social issues at the individual or family level, joining organizations of persons with disabilities or groups and other organizations, and campaigning at the local, regional or national level, to the formal policy process, such as

⁹United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Resolution 48/104, <https://www.ohchr.org/>, December 20, 1993.

¹⁰ Professor Goulferni Mohamed, Women's Political Participation in Morocco: Convention and Protest Significance, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Arab Women: From Violence and Discrimination to Political Participation, Arab Future Books Series, No. 70, Al Hamra, Beirut, January, - 118 -120.

voting or joining a political party or running for elections.¹¹ In an Egyptian study, the following definition was adopted: "Participation in political and administrative decision-making and control of resources at all levels, and it is a direct or indirect behavior whereby the individual plays a role in the political life of his society with the aim of influencing the decision-making process, and it is one of the mechanisms of democracy in society that allows restructuring the society structure and the system of power in it. Additionally, it is the basis of democracy and an expression of the sovereignty of the people. Moreover, political participation is linked to concern for public affairs and the participation of male and female citizens in its achievement. It is an expression of citizenship and must be based on equal rights for groups, women and men, and the possibility of enjoying and exercising these rights"¹². According to a thesis prepared for a master's degree at Selcuk University, Turkey, political participation was explained as: A form of influencing the decisions issued, and whoever tries to influence the decisions issued has shown political behavior. Any action that people take to make their voices heard by decision makers and influence decisions taken can be considered political participation because the purpose of political actions is to influence political decision-makers and every step taken in this direction is regarded a political participation".¹³ In her study, Alia Ahmed derives her own definition saying: "It is the involvement of the masses of men and women in the exercise of political rights, starting from voting to elections, expressing an opinion, affiliation to parties, lobbies, pressure groups, or any organized and recognized political action for direct or indirect participation in choosing rulers and formulating the general policy of the state".¹⁴ But there is a psychological aspect and another aspect related to deviating from the system and laws, such as demonstrations, which are considered, according to some opinions, political participation, as some definitions refer to considering the concept of political participation as a kind of individual behavior, actions and activities to influence those who will reach political decision positions or those who occupy these positions. Another group considers it not only behavior but even psychological tendencies and unspoken thoughts that range from simple curiosity to intense work¹⁵.

After reviewing many definitions, the research tends to adopt the definition of "Samuel Huntington": "Political participation is the activity carried out by ordinary male and female citizens with the intention of influencing the governmental decision-making process, whether this activity is individual or collective, organized or spontaneous, continuous or intermittent, peaceful or violent, legal or illegal, effective or ineffective ". Myron Weiner adds: "Any successful or unsuccessful voluntary action, organized or unorganized, accidental or continuous, using

¹¹ Khasnabis C, Heinicke Motsch K, Achu K, et al., editors, Community-Based Rehabilitation: CBR Guidelines, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>, Geneva: World Health Organization; 2010.

¹² Hajar Gamal and others, The impact of the cultural dimension on women's political participation: a comparative study between Egypt and the United States of America, the Arab Center for Research and Studies, <http://www.acrseg.org/>, 2014 - 2019.

¹³ Büyüktosunoğlu, T. "Selçuk ve Dicle Üniversitesi Öğrencilerinin Siyasal Katılma Davranışları Üzerine Uygulamalı Bir Çalışma". Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Selçuk Üniversitesi, Konya, 2013, p 21.

¹⁴ Alia Ahmed, 2021, previous reference, p. 10-11.

¹⁵ Dr. Selçuk AKINCI, SİYASAL KATILIM DÜZEYLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME, Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi, SOSYAL BİLİMLER DERGİSİ , SAYI 7, selcuk.akinci@ktu.edu.tr, TRABZON , BAHAR, 2014, S - s 36 - 39.

legitimate or illegitimate means, intended to influence the selection of public policies, the management of public affairs and the selection of political leaders at any level of government whether local or national”.¹⁶ Bearing in mind that this definition came not gendered.

From this, the research arrives at defining a concept **specific to women’s political participation**, which is:

“A voluntary activity carried out by women in general, with the intention of influencing the governmental decision-making process, enacting policies, managing public affairs, selecting political, administrative or governmental leaders, whether they are women or men, or running for their positions or actually occupying them, whether locally or nationally in an individual or collective way whether organized or spontaneous, intermittent or continuous, peaceful or violent, legal or illegal, effective or ineffective, successful or unsuccessful”.

2. Procedural concepts:

- ❖ **Violence against women:** It is any form of violence that women in northwest of Syria may or will be subjected to as a result of their participation or because they participate or will participate in politics.
- ❖ **Women's political participation:** It is any form of political participation that Syrian women in northwestern of Syria can, have, or will undertake.
- ❖ **Limitedness of political participation:** It is any form of obstacles, restrictions, or limits that prevent or prevented or will prevent women from participating in politics in northwest of Syria.

3. Previous studies

- A. Study by Wadhah Al-Othman, “Women’s Political Role in the Arab Spring (Syria and Tunisia as a Model)”, dated December 28, 2018:¹⁷

The topic covered by the study is generally considered broad and was not specific to violence against women during the political movement but it sheds light on the political participation of women in the Arab Spring in general, while the current study attempts to show the relationship between violence and political participation of women in northwestern Syria. It aimed at showing the role of both Syrian and Tunisian women in the Arab Spring revolutions and at answering the following question:

To what extent did Arab women influence the course of the Arab Spring and its uprisings? Among the most important findings that she reached is that women in Syria in particular were not at a good level in political participation because of the ruling regime before the

¹⁶- Professor Hussein Alwan Al-Beij, Political Participation: Importance - Styles - Dimensions, Arab Democratic Center, Germany, Berlin, 2020, p. 5.

¹⁷Wadha Al-Othman, Women’s Political Role in the Arab Spring (Syria and Tunisia as an example), Syrian Women’s Gathering for Democracy, <https://cswdsy.org/>, taken from the Mena Center for Studies and Research, <https://mena-studies.org/>, January 28 first 2018.

Syrian movement, but they were not marginalized during the Syrian movement and were subjected to violence just like men.

B. Study by Dr. Lama Qunoot; **"Syrian Women's Political Participation between Content and Margin"**, December, 2016:¹⁸

The study aimed to shed light on the behind-the-scenes of political elites that shape policies and exclude women from closed decision-making circles as well as unveiling the depth of the discriminatory mentality towards women and the direction of their political participation among some of the political elites who came to the fore in the political scene. Moreover, it aimed to access to results and recommendations to correct the imbalance resulting from the weak political participation of women. Among the findings of the study are showing the sectarian, partisan, factional and regional quotas that take place before the elections and behind the scenes, the competition for power and the loss of national decision through the removal of competencies in general and women in particular, and how the political elites that came to the fore confined their vision to a general misconception that states that dismantling political tyranny only as a general impediment to the energies of society will necessarily lead to women obtaining all their rights automatically. In addition to that the alliance of some of the political forces that came to the fore, with political-religious tyranny, led to a devastating effect that undermined the role of women at this critical stage in the history of Syria, as happened in the absence of women from local councils, the matter that did not draw the attention of the opposition and was completely ignored by the donor countries that support these councils.

This study is one of the main sources from which the current study drew some of its information and it is even one of the sources that closely documented the reality of the revolution and its developments by showing the role of Syrian women and what they were exposed to in each stage of the revolution, and how they were affected by the external and ideological factor that changed the course of the revolution. One of the courses it changed negatively was the role of women. It has shed light on the issue of violence in general in the northwest region of Syria and its relationship to the revolution and political action. The difference is that the current study attempts to work on this issue exclusively by communicating with female activists and examining actual political participation on the ground.

C. Alia Ahmed's study "Obstacles facing Syrian women in political participation in the northern and eastern Aleppo" countryside"2021 ¹⁹

This research aimed to identify the most important economic and legal obstacles that limit the political participation of Syrian women in the northern and eastern countryside of Aleppo. It concluded that customs and traditions, poverty, displacement and war, poor coverage of the costs of women's political participation, lack of financial independence for women, lack of investment laws that encourage women to engage in economic activities, lack of job

¹⁸ Dr. Lama Qunoot, December 2016, previous reference.

¹⁹Alia Ahmed, 2021, previous reference.

opportunities, weak knowledge of the laws related to political participation, the lack of a quota system, the weakness and dispersion of parties calling for the gendered constitution due to the lack of women when drafting it, is one of the most important obstacles to women's political participation in the northern and eastern countryside of Aleppo.

It is noticeable in this study that it targeted the countryside of Aleppo, unlike the current study, but the negative side in it is that the questions were not asked in a way that fit the sample because the questions of the questionnaire need experts while the sample was random and relatively small and its results can't be relied on, except for the sources that the study relied on which are weak in reliance and lack accurate documentation and it was also taken literally without editing many parts of it.

Theoretical framework.

1. Violence against women in Syria:

Women generally suffer from sexual, economic, psychological, physical, legal, social and political violence and this violence is closely linked to patriarchal societal cultures. These include, for example, cases of crimes and violence related to marriage, honor killing defense, domestic violence, child and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced sterilization, forced abortion, sexual harassment and rape including marital rape.²⁰

In addition to this social / patriarchal violence, we find that the violence that Syrian women are exposed to begins with the law as in the Personal Status Law, penalties, granting citizenship to her husband and children, the Syrian government's reservations to "CEDAW" agreement and some articles and paragraphs of the 2012 constitution as well as preventing the people from politics or its practice and demanding change and the use of sexual violence as a means of control and domination²¹. From March 2011 until November 25, 2021, the documentation issued regarding violations against females in Syria showed that no less than 28,618 females were killed: 93 of them due to torture at the hands of the Syrian regime, ISIS, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and the rest of the parties, while there are about 10,628 females still under arrest/detention, in addition to 11,523 incidents of sexual violence targeting females in all these parties. In their detention, these parties do not take into account the considerations of nature and needs of women, and subject them to the same conditions of detention and methods of torture of men in addition to cases of rape and harassment, or arresting their children if they are with them, or arresting them while they are pregnant.²² Sexual violence against women is used as a tool of torture or as a form of punishment and to spread fear and humiliation among the female detainees. Moreover, many of the cases were on sectarian, revenge, ethnic background or sexual blackmail in exchange for basic services. Women in detention are not charged with a

²⁰Human Rights Organization, Violence against Women, WHO: Informational Series on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, WWW.OHCHR.ORG.

²¹Dr. Lama Qunoot, December, 2016, previous reference, p. 122-136.

²²152 incidents of arrests of children who were accompanied by their mothers and 89 incidents of childbirth inside detention centers were documented, all of whom suffered from a lack of health care and provision of their needs, which caused the death of 7 of them.

specific crime and are not brought to trial until long after their detention, which can last for months or even years. This is in addition to the compulsory recruitment of females, as the Syrian Democratic Forces did²³, and the assault on female activists and workers in civil society.²⁴

2. Political participation of women in Syria:

Political participation determines the pattern of political relations in the state, and the extent to which it is close to democracy and citizenship²⁵. It can be in the form of the citizen exercising his right to vote or obtaining public jobs, participating in the decision-making process, running for an important political or administrative position, joining interest groups or civil society organizations, running for public office, holding political positions and participating in public political meetings.²⁶ It begins on the personal level with interest in public or political affairs then develops into political engagement, turns into political activity, and matures when awareness emerges of the need to assume political responsibilities and engage in political activity and all forms of political action and struggle^{27 28 29}. Two types of it can be distinguished: Formal political participation which takes place through the organs of power, political decision-making centers and institutions of governance, and informal political participation, which is participation in the political process through party organizations and pressure and interests groups.³⁰

The political participation of women can be ranked from lowest to highest, as follows: Interest, voting, participation in public political debates, advocacy of a quasi-political organization, advocacy of a political organization, participation in public meetings and demonstrations, active membership of quasi-political organizations, active membership of political organizations, attempting to obtain a political or administrative position or holding a political or administrative position³¹.

Returning to the situation in Syria, since the emergence of the General Women's Union in 1967 and it has been transformed into an authoritarian tool affiliated with the regime. The participation of women in Syrian political positions during the era of Assad father and son was generally shy and in 1976, the first woman in government was appointed as Minister of Culture.³² And in 2006, the first woman was appointed as Vice President, and in the government of 2011, that was consisted of 33 members, 3 women were appointed as Vice President, Minister of State for Environment Affairs and Minister of Tourism with no legal minimum for the representation

²³136 cases of forced recruitment of females were documented, 56 of whom were cases of underage recruitment.

²⁴Editorial Team, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. "The Syrian Network" issues the tenth annual report on violations against females in Syria, Sham Network, <http://www.shaam.org/>, October 25, 2021.

²⁵Iman Baybars, previous reference, p. 4.

²⁶Muhammad Adel Othman, Rooting the Concept of Political Participation, Arab Democratic Center, <https://democraticac.de/>, August 21, 2016.

²⁷Wadha Othman, December 28, 2018, previous reference.

²⁸Iman Baybars, previous reference, p. 5.

²⁹Alia Ahmed, 2021, previous reference, p. 16.

³⁰Iman Baybars, previous reference, p. 10.

³¹Sahar Hawija, The Importance of Women's Political Participation, Syrian Women's Network, <https://swnsyria.org/>, August 4, 2015.

³²Wadha Othman, December 28, 2018, previous reference, taken from: Rostom Mahmoud, Women's Rights in Syria Before and During the Revolution: Speech and Reality, The Hague, Humanitarian Cooperation Foundation, 2014, p. 13.

of women in the People's Assembly. Additionally, the percentage of women's representation in Parliament can reach up to 12.4% in general.³³

Woman's role in the Syrian movement was similar to the role of men in different ways, she went out in demonstrations by herself or with participation of man, she composed demonstrations from women only and also participated in coordination of the protests and was able to reach the decision making positions in them. She was able to implement a lot of activities, including dangerous ones. But this didn't last for long as she was scaled down and got limited in doing stereotyped roles. Woman also played an important role in coordination committees since the beginning and participated in taking decisions, drafting course and phrasing the political speech as well as founding the work and providing a clear revolutionary type³⁴. However, the percentage of women in local councils only reached 2%³⁵ and the representation of women of women in many councils was completely absent. And with the increase of conflict, they started to disappear gradually³⁶ and the role and effort of the political powers weren't able to attract activists who changed their activities to different fields which they found more feasible. ³⁷ Moreover, these political forces neglected the representation of women within a comprehensive national framework away from partisanship³⁸, and even the political elites that took the lead saw that dismantling political tyranny would necessarily lead to women obtaining all their rights automatically. Some of the political forces that took the lead on the scene allied themselves with the religious tyranny imposed by the Salafist forces that take control militarily and politically in the areas outside the regime's control and this led to a devastating effect that undermined the role of women in this pivotal stage in Syria's history.³⁹

If we look at Idlib and its countryside, we will find it similar to the rest regions of Syria as the women was gradually absent from local councils. In October 2012, for example, the percentage of women in the Idlib council reached 25% (5 women out of 20 members), and she was absent from the local council. Gradually, as shown in the following table:⁴⁰

Form of the local council of Idlib city that reflects gradual absence of women's participation

Date	Number of all members	Number of women	Percentage
October 2012	20	5	25%
2 February 2013	29	3	10.34%
21 July 2014	25	0	-

³³Wadha Othman, December 28, 2018, previous reference, taken from: The International Federation for Human Rights reviews the role of women after the Arab Spring in a report that discusses their activism in the Arab revolutions and their governmental and parliamentary representation (1 out of 2) Paris - FIDH, Al-Wasat Magazine, Issue 3486 - March 23, 2012.

³⁴Dr. Lama Qunoot, December, 2016, previous reference, p. 32-38.

³⁵Dr. Lama Qunoot, December 2016, previous reference . p 41.

³⁶Dr. Lama Qunoot, December 2016, previous reference . p 43.

³⁷Dr. Lama Qunoot, December 2016, previous reference . p 52.

³⁸Dr. Lama Qunoot, December 2016, previous reference . p 53.

³⁹Dr. Lama Qunoot, December 2016, previous reference . p 96.

⁴⁰Dr. Lama Qunoot, December 2016, previous reference . p 45.

3. Limitedness of women political participation in Syria:

Many factors contribute to the type, limits and effectiveness of political participation like for example political relationships and institutions, economic factors related to income and wealth, social factors, such as individual's status and his social status, gender, age, profession, education level and rate of urbanization, and psychological factors such as trust in the political system, alienation and belief in ability, efficiency and effectiveness.⁴¹ Additionally, during the time of recording the lowest participation of woman in political life globally in the Arab region, the efforts of some Arab countries appear to guarantee equality between the two genders in their constitutions, politics and quotas but this is considered an exception and not a rule. ⁴²

The factors that limited the political participation of women in Syrian can be generally outlined in the bloody and intimidating violence that the regime practiced on civilians, whether during or before the revolution, and the ideological Islamic military forces' quest to control the revolution, and the marginalization and liquidation of the military factions formed by the defected soldiers. This is in addition to excluding and marginalizing women and strengthening the traditional culture that perpetuates discrimination and inequality based on gender. After that comes the control of extremist forces and imposing restrictions on women's freedom to work, education, movement, and clothing. As well as controlling the structure of political authorities that were formed recently, looking at the political participation as a type of luxury by women because this would make her bear the burden of armed conflict and systematized violence against women with all its forms which made their bodies a means of revenge. Also accepting the shadow role by women made it easier to enslave them and neglecting them by donor countries who support the absence of women. ⁴³ This is in addition to the failure of the international community to satisfy the aspirations of the Syrian people as well as the state of treason and defamation that the opposition is exposed to, the miserable performance of political forces and their undemocratic practices, their dispersion, and the lack of experience.⁴⁴ Moreover, the customs and traditions, poverty, displacement, and war played a role in that. Also the lack of financial coverage for women's political participation, the lack of financial independence for women, the absence of investment laws that encourage women to engage in economic activities, the lack of job opportunities, the lack of familiarity with the laws on political participation, the failure to implement the quota system and the weakness of the parties calling for the gendering of the constitution and the law because there are no women when drafting it⁴⁵, all that played a role in excluding and limiting the political participation of women. Also, the secularists ceded to the Islamists during the past years, when political alliances or conferences were held that contained

⁴¹Alia Ahmed, 2020, previous reference, p. 45-46.

⁴²UN Women, previous reference.

⁴³Dr. Lama Qunoot, December, 2016, previous reference, p. 45-48.

⁴⁴Dr. Lama Qunoot, December, 2016, previous reference, p. 140-141.

⁴⁵Alia Ahmed, 2021, previous reference, p. 37.

a wide spectrum of opposition, in order to please everyone and maintain balances, and therefore the victim in general was the rights of woman.⁴⁶

Executive Framework

1. Designing tools, procedures of sampling and data collection:

A preliminary survey was designed, with the aim of identifying female activists and political participants, who wish to share their political experience and the impact of violence on them, if any. The poll link was posted on February 7 on the organization's official website and through social media sites, individually and within groups, and 85 responses were recorded by February 12. The responses were filtered, and 20 respondents were drawn for interviews. At the same time, a number of women and men who were familiar with and experienced in political participation in Idlib and its countryside, whether they were inside Syria or Turkey, were counted in order to implement focused discussion sessions and send the questionnaire for them.

As part of field implementation, there was a set of training sessions for the data collectors' team and these sessions included telephone interview skills, active listening skills, communication skills, and psychological first aid over the phone. A backup and follow-up plan was developed by communicating with a number of organizations specialized in following up on survivors of violence in Idlib and its countryside to be prepared for any emergency situation that might be associated with data collectors, noting that, in cooperation with collectors, a plan was set to monitor the collecting process in a timed manner in order to communicate with female respondents and prepare a psychiatrist when necessary for immediate intervention. Also, there are procedures that have been agreed upon when encountering a situation of this kind, such as signs of vulnerability, how to calm the respondent, reassuring her, and make the psychiatrist intervene before withdrawing.

The interviews started from February 17 to February 22, 2022. 14 interviews were conducted with female activists, except for the interviews that were not included in the analysis due to the lack of appropriate criteria among the respondents which were 13 interviews.

Discussion sessions: A focus discussion session was held on February 18, 2022, with 9 participants, 4 males and 5 females.

Questionnaires: Several questionnaires were sent to a number of female activists from northwest Syria who resided in Turkey. Their number reached 7 participants, 4 females and 3 males.

⁴⁶Dr. Lama Qunoot, December 2016, previous reference . p 48.

2. Results:

a. Content of individual interviews:

Political participation didn't differ based on age or educational level or economic level or, as it is common, for being “a female”, as the Syrian woman was a big part of the Syrian revolution and was effectively active politically regardless any individual considerations. However, woman's participation returned to what is used to be before the revolution because of the control of the de facto authorities. This participation varied since the revolution of March 2011 till today in the northwest of Syria. The performed interviews asserted the diversity of the Syrian woman's roles and her political participation in the public affair. This diversity ranged from peacefully expressing the demands, participating in the protests and even organizing them within community, street and even schools, standing in protests to demand the release of all political detainees, even throwing stones on supporting demonstrations, removing pictures and political symbols from school walls and writing on them, participating in voluntary work, such as providing political and social awareness raising sessions, mental health awareness and providing psychological support, attending and presenting trainings on political, human rights and gender empowerment as well as initiatives to integrate women and activate their social participation. Some of the participations were different like for example issuing an awareness political magazine and communicating with former political detainees to publish their stories, distributing leaflets, or writing paintings as well as making manual works that bear the symbols of the revolution. Some mothers even pushed their sons and daughters to the demonstrations and worked on transporting and providing activists with security information and providing them with food and even sheltering them at home. Some of them also tried to establish bodies that represent women and they also represented women in political feminine movements and in public and political affairs. They also worked on coordinating consultative sessions about constitution, repopulation, transitional justice and social contract.

One of the interviewees organized a demonstration in “Big Hanano Square” when the Arab League delegation came to the area, and she and her companions faced fire shots. Some of them escaped the shots but she remained beside some women and chanted that they won't kneel, won't fear and won't stay silent. After that the rest of women returned to the demonstration, so the security elements attacked on them and arrested some youth and injured many others.

However, and after the control of de facto authorities on the ground, the political participation of woman returned to the same situation it used to be before the revolution of 2011.

The interviews indicated that the types of violence practiced on women as a result for this participation differed based on the source of violence and the party of punishment. As for the Regime's side, the violence ranged between annoyances in the checkpoints because of belonging to a specific region and asking about names and inspecting private things like bags and phones. They also used to threaten of detaining those persons or stopping them for many hours, firing them from work, summoning them to security branches and humiliating them and also attacking houses and burning them, shooting bullets and tear-gas grenades on the demonstrations even if

these demonstrations were formed by students of schools. Some women mentioned getting shot by fire bullets that led to amputating their limbs or left scars on their bodies or even killed many of them. And for the detention, it has another story that we hear from survivors that went through this experience or from those who got affected by detention. These survivors narrate how they get violated and detained in an unknown area.

“During my detention because of participating in revolutionary movement in Syria, I was tortured in many ways including getting beaten with four layers cable and Closet and other mean of violence and verbal unethical violence”

What was more violent than physical torture is the psychological torture and keeping the detainees in a state of fear and anxiety from what is going to happen to them as well as feeling that their lives ended. This is in addition to detaining children and killing them in detention. Also, the community helps the regime in its works as it practices its electronic violence using campaigns of ridicule, abuse and infringement through social networking sites to target a female work team. We also find the father who prevents his daughter from political participation by beating her and keeping her imprisoned in the home and preventing her from completing her education. We also find verbal violence from the husband and family like mocking the female and threatening her as well as economic deprivation and losing friends because of political situations. Meanwhile, the de facto authorities used practices that range between simple annoyances like scrutiny on work, verbal abuse, ridicule, and mockery because of demanding an activity, right, or establishing a group, to accountability and restricting women’s participation, even if they are members in the local council.

Everyone may agree that the regime and the de facto authorities are institutions and structures and there should be no feeling between them and individuals, but the situation has gone beyond feelings of grudge and hatred towards these institutions and moved to relatives such as the husband, father and parents and seeing the society as a place they don’t belong to and as a retarded society. If we excluded the violent practices of the regime against the political participation because these practices affect man and woman equally and because the regime faces the demands of freedom with violence as an oppression country and considering freedoms something strange for people not their right, we find that there are clear signs that what woman faces in the northwest of Syria because of her political participation is resulted from the stereotyped picture of women and her role in the society as a female as society treated the school students demonstrations negatively because they contained females and were organized by females. Also, this was because of preventing woman from participating in local councils **“because she is a woman that can’t do men’s works”** and doesn’t have the right to work in public affairs from the man’s point of view. Also, family support this social look as they give women a traditional look that limits her role and possibilities and they always repeat the same common phrases that degrade the role of woman.

“Woman will remain a woman, her work won’t benefit her, neither will politics. The girl is destined to stay in her husband’s house not to express her political opinion”

And perhaps some of them faced what is worse than just repeating a common culture, they might have faced **“The fear of woman's proving for herself and rebelling against the common norms”** and this will induce the society's criticism and stigmatize this family. In the same time, there were practices that are based on worrying on the girls just like worrying on the boys. This occurred by the principal who threatened the schoolgirls that he will beat them if they go out in protests as they will get arrested. It also occurred by the families whose girl was detained for years and then got released and then they were worried on her from getting arrested again and supported her as a type of awareness not as a type of parental control.

In a try to identify the violence mechanisms that get followed to limit the political participation of woman, it was apparent that the usage of violence started from the circles that surround the woman as the society, including the family, **“plants delusion in the heads of woman and telling them that men’s rights can’t be their rights and what men can do, women can't do”** or telling them that they are in a lower rank than men regarding performance. Also, inducement is used as a tool against woman like inducing father or husband or brother on the woman and it might reach depriving her from going out and continue her education or depriving her from personal budge and hitting her. And on the organizational level, women were prevented from political participation by signing papers that pledge them no to participate in politics or even firing them from work if they do so as well as partying to fight her or dealing with her in an indecent way to neutralize her through **“limiting her chances and places of participation”**. And going back to the society and how it deals with those who return from prisons as it is not supportive for female detainees in a good way- despite the existence of supportive cases- yet, the society played negative role in most of the cases through stigmatizing those women or neglecting them or even mocking what they have sacrificed. However, the regime's usage of systematized violence didn't prevent the continuation of women's political participation where in public or in secret, it even increased their insistence on participation and turned the woman into a steady demander that have a strong case to fight for, one of the survivors' states that:

“Every time I get exposed to death; I just get born again”

In a related context, the violence practiced by families and relatives towards the survivors of detention had a role in limiting their cultural, civic and social participation to some extent, and left its psychological and social effects on them, either on their personalities or their psychological conditions, such as depression and social isolation, or their economic circumstances that have deteriorated as a result of their dismissal from their jobs or deprivation of family income.

Through the interviews, it was possible to notice the obstacles that hinder women and limit their political participation, starting with the woman herself, some of the participants said: **“Women’s fear of society, confronting its culture and being bullied and abused. All these prevent them from participating in politics and even caring about it.”** And this takes us to the second point which is that women generally have a **“weakness in political and legal awareness,”** and she at the same time: **“Not independent in her decision”** from a male custodian. Also losing family and breadwinner or supporters of her decisions and **“absence of stable income source”**

as well as the negative look of the society that doesn't have mercy on those who participate in the politics, especially if the woman was independent and doesn't belong to a man "father, brother, husband, son" to protect her and spend on her. Moreover, the lack of social awareness about the ability of woman and the absence of support whether socially or organizationally, even the policies of organizations and institutions **"preserve the documents and are helpless in front of the authority of current situation"** and the retarded economic situation and appearance of crises traders, all this limited the political work and kept a materialistic absence of the woman who participate in the politics. At the same time, the environment of the political work wasn't healthy as a result of the lack of protection mechanisms for women at all levels, starting with the internal exclusion of them in the joints of political work and not ending with the systematic cyber campaigns against women politicians.

Perhaps the first steps to get out of the bottleneck is to educate women about political participation and the rights to nominate, vote and express, and not to wait for change from outside, but to make change, and advocate for official or unofficial media, supporting women's struggle to achieve their rights, and informing women on the experiences of other women to learn from them, **"open channels of communication between active women abroad and at home,"** launching platforms for women's political participation, and enacting and implementing equitable policies in form and content.

b. Content of focus discussion session:

Some of those who were in the focused discussion session considered that women have an active and important role in political work and a strong presence in political participation since the beginning of the revolution, then their role has declined in the shadow of militarism and some of them are currently dissidents, and their participation is limited to political gatherings. However, the withdrawal from the political field was accompanied by an increase in the presence of women in civil society organizations. While some of the participants saw that the absence of women's political participation is part of a whole and is linked to the absence of political participation in society in general. **"After 2015 and after Resolution 2254, there were guidance mechanisms to ensure the participation of women in the political process, we saw an increase in the proportion of women to 50% in the civil society."** But this does not prevent that some of them are invited to be "accessories", that is, as a non-essential cosmetic element, and when some of them continue to participate as main players, they face challenges from the social and institutional environment. This cosmetic representation also applies to some organizations and institutions that set policies and provisions within their laws to ensure the participation of women, which some participants objected to, because they believed that the fair participation of women, even in decision-making positions, is self-evident that does not require a decision.

"Women shall have the right to participate, not as a body isolated from the society, but as a part of this society and they have the right to participate in any political entity or body whatever it is"

It was pointed out that the Syrian regime and the de facto forces have targeted girls and women to pressure or humiliate society and opponents, sometimes with threats and attacks at other times.

"The motive of fear for the woman, seeing her as a minor rib, the fear of arrest, being harassed, and even death... prevents women and takes them away from political participation, and makes them turn to education and medical care. Also the Syrian regime represented by the Syrian government plays a major role in violating the participating women and at the same time the society which by getting released, starts to "stigmatize" the victim as being a former detainee and this leads to double violence and makes the victim detached from social activities. This basically limits the participation of women".

Others see that there is no violence made by the forces in the region, but: **"The violence is only coming from society and customs and traditions that are still rooted in the society till now"**. Others distinguished regional and cultural differences as:

"There are some areas in which there is a great emphasis on the lack of women's participation in social and political life. If we talk about the western part in the countryside of Damascus at the beginning of the revolution, there was a strong and effective participation of women, but because we moved from one environment to another (our displacement) from a somewhat open society to a society, there may be a tightening in it, as the political activism of women who were active in their areas and had a great influence was absent."

However, there is: **"A role for de facto authorities and their intervention in the civil society. It follows specific mechanisms that get implemented through groups that support the de facto authorities like how they deal with female."** They **"don't prevent all political works but there is specific topics that are rejected by them. Also, the religious aggravation among these authorities makes them preserved among some points. They must have an update about any work that should be done and who can do it"**.

Thus, one of the participants said:

"You can't work as you wish; you will do whatever we want you to do".

According to some participants, it seems that women carry many burdens in their "traditional" daily life, and therefore it is difficult for them to carry the burdens of work and political participation, because they are not fully free.

“Women are obliged to do housework in addition to doing political work,” and the prevailing culture considers it “you don’t understand politics” as well as “marginalization (marginalization of women) is a big and intended issue. There are also political bodies in which there was no female participation, and the prevailing mentality of many persons believes that women are not useful and ineffective in decision-making places, and it is a voluntary, unpaid work”.

At the same time, there is a general fear in the society of arresting women if they participate politically, for fear of what they will be exposed to in detention, and for fear of the stigma that will be inflicted on them and their families after their release from prison, **“Unfortunately, fear is not limited to women only, there are many activists who stay away from work as a result**

of fear, the political solution is not in the hands of the Syrians, but rather an international decision”. Even the society did not show the required solidarity with the survivors of detention the matter that caused an obstacle in front of further political participation. Some of the participants considered that the role of women in political participation today is “diminished” and they do not participate as required, and this is what others attributed to the hostility of the host society, unlike the society in which they were refugees in Idlib governorate, which explains most of the political participation is for "immigrant" women from outside the local community.

c. Content of questionnaires:

Women in northwest of Syria have participated politically since the beginning of the revolution, and after the militarization their participation declined, and they did not have a clear but shy participation. Examples of these participations are attending courses and workshops and participating in public discussions and on social media sites, in demonstrations, the Coordination Body, the Coalition, the local councils and the Women and Child Office, in a specific period without the ability to make decisions, and some other representations which were in general individual cases and do not amount to organized or systematic work.

Opinions about woman’s exposure to violence varied between denying its occurrence as a result of political participation and between living it or being subjected to it. Types of these opinions include criticism on electronic communication sites and the reason for criticism is only because woman can’t be in a decision-making position. Other reasons are the pressure of the society on the female that get nominated for a specific position and the lack of political participation may be attributed to the difficulty of appearing in Idlib and its countryside. And because of the lack of political participation there, it is not possible to monitor much of the violence practiced against it.

The women’s fears at the beginning revolved around getting arrested by the regime or getting exposed to the harassments or abusing her reputation by her society and not receiving support from family or friend and these fears were a reason to prevent women from political participation. The mechanism followed in practicing violence against woman to prevent her from political participation was: **“Defaming woman deliberately and practicing pressure on**

her by the family if she does not succumb to the threats of the dominant forces in the region in addition to the participation of religious authorities in discouraging women from political participation under the pretext that this field is only for men". This is addition to marginalization woman, accusing her of ignorance and neglecting her politically and even using political corruption and pressure to neutralize her. Other opinions consider the reason of absence of women's political participation is during to the masculine culture and not resulted from a systematized plan.

- The responses also differed among respondents about whether this violence practiced on woman was because she is a female or not, some of the respondents stated that: **"Yes, the woman gets exposed to political violence because she is a woman in the first place"** because her reputation and keeping her honor is of a high priority for her in the environment, she lives in. So, it is a violence that is based on being a female and women that get released from detention always get stigmatized and face discrimination from the society unlike men who get treated as heroes. Also: **"Politicians insisted on limiting the role of woman in case she participated"** because **"the unstable situation"** is based on social inheritance and thus it gets put under the leadership of men.

Others didn't see any direct relationship with that, they rather see that **"women don't wish"** or **"aren't interested"** in politics as most of women don't have any motives and don't regard participation in their priorities. Also, the freedom spaces are too tight and particularly for women's participation because the freedom and rights culture among the majority of the inhabitants of the region is based on customs and traditions during the current legal absence in the region and lack of laws through which it will be possible to provide protection, in addition to lack of legislative sources and clear parties to issue laws in a clear way.

All the responses agreed that the area recently witnessed **"notable development in the woman's wish in political participation through her attendance for training workshops related to politics and her try to show her opinion in political cases, in addition to her try to reach areas of decision making or participate in decision making despite the annoyances she faces"**. But in general, this is among the priorities of women, and we only find it among specific female activists.

It is also known now that the most important barriers in front of woman's participation are: **"The control of armed factions on the region and ineffectualness of political work during the military work and the dominance of religious speech and its effect on society. In addition to the work of de facto authorities on preventing women's participation or the masculine hostility against women that work in the political affair or the intentional abuse for the reputation of those who work in the political affairs from women or even defaming their families"**. Moreover, the corruption inside the political formula and the deteriorated economic condition as well as the lack of job opportunities and income for women, especially they all have kids, the weak experience among women in political and communication technology, all that limited the choices and made participation and information exchange in the political context more difficult.

Recommendations:

- Based on the difference in situations about the political participation of Syrian woman in the northwest of Syria as some considered it a shy and individual participation and others considered it a type of organized work, we find it necessary to implement documentary researches about these participations.
- The research study indicated that the women's political participation in the northwest of Syria returned, after the control of the de facto authorities, to what it used to be before the revolution during the era of the Syrian regime. This must be addressed and there is a need to put a mechanism to change circumstances and increase the participation through removing the barriers or easing them whether they were intellectual or social barriers. Men of religion and other community leaders can be communicated about this issue as they are one of the most important mechanisms because they represent a pressure element on the de facto authorities if they get convinced about doing so.
- It was apparent that there is a fear from the woman's political awareness and many society members even fight this awareness through planting delusions in their minds saying that the right of participating in public affair is only related to men and woman can bear these burdens. But, the fear is only from the women who might demand their rights and change the principles of relationship with man which is the relationship of master and slave into the relationship of opponents and consequently getting the same rights as men. This is what must be worked on by spreading a culture of equal rights and a healthy competitive relationship between women and men, as they are citizens, and they must work together to build a conscious and just society.
- Society in Syria practice a mechanism in an automatic way and this mechanism gets used by the regime regularly. Society negatively stigmatizes women who participate politically, and the regime exploits this stigma, by carrying out practices that perpetuate it, which increases the social pressure exerted on women to limit their participation. This alliance may seem innocent on the part of the society, which opposes the Syrian regime, but it is not like that for the regime. The society must be made aware of its indirect contribution to implementing the agendas of the regime that they originally oppose.
- There can't be only a change in women's political participation through external support and advocacy, but rather it is necessary to establish social networks that include social leaders, decision-makers and status holders of women and men to exercise the role of pressure and thus access to the achievement of rights through increasing the participation of feminine and feminist in society.
- Financial obstacles delay women's political participation because carrying the burdens of the house, in addition to their political participation without any return, constitutes a heavy burden on them, especially with the absence of a source of income. Therefore, it was necessary to evaluate the status of the participants and allocate a financial compensation for these participants.
- Political awareness is also a foregone conclusion because ignorance of political participation is one of the obstacles that must be removed. In the end, it should not be considered that

political work is obligatory for all women, as political work has always been an interest in the first place.

- During the Covid-19 period and allowing Syrians to participate in political meetings through electronic platforms, this was an important opportunity for women and overcoming obstacles, even if it was unintended, as many women participated in conferences and discussion sessions across geography borders, but the challenge was the lack of technical knowledge, which must be taken into account and worked to avoid by increasing the digital literacy of women in northwest Syria.

Attachments of the research:

A. Sampling tool:

Equity and Empowerment Organization is conducting a survey with the aim of identifying and communicating with women activists in public affairs in northwest of Syria. If you are from Idlib or its countryside, or from those who resided there in any capacity whatsoever and had a participation of any kind and your age is over 18 years old, we kindly ask you to help us by filling out this survey. Your identity will be kept confidential, and no information related to you will be revealed.

- 1. Did you participate in any of the following:** Demonstration - a civil society gathering - a political grouping - a political party or organization - charitable civil associations or gatherings - trade unions - nomination for an administrative or political position - a vote on an administrative or political position - an expression of political opinion in meetings concerned with public affairs - expression of political opinion through social media- Interest and follow up on political news and decisions- Interest in a political current or specific political ideas- any other participations related to public affairs.

Yes- To some extent- No- I refuse to answer.

If yes or to some extent, move to the next question.

- 2. Have you experienced any form of violence because of this participation?**

No- Yes- Yes, to some extent- I refuse to answer.

If no or I refuse to answer, move to the next question.

- 2. Did your fear from getting exposed to any type of violence or did being exposed to any type of danger prevent you from participating?**

No- Yes- Yes, to some extent- I wasn't interested- I refuse to answer.

- 3. Do you wish to share your story with us? And we guarantee that your story will be kept confidential, and none will know about any information you give to us?**

Yes- No- I need more assurance first.

- 4. If yes, please share your WhatsApp number with us so that one of our researchers will communicate with you.**

- 5. Residence:**

Idlib city- Idlib countryside- I'm not from Idlib and I live in the city- I'm not from Idlib and I live in its countryside.

- 6. Education:**

I can read and write- primary school- prep. School - high school - institute - university - postgraduate.

- 7. Age:**

From 18 to 22 -From 23 to 27- From 28 to 32 -From 33 to 37- From 38 to 42- From 43 to 47 -From 48 to 52- Over 53.

- 8. Work:**

Housewife - Own work - Employee in an organization - Seasonal work - I do not work - Temporary work - Others mention...

- 9. Other information you wish to add?**

Receipt confirmation message: Thank you for your trust. Your reply has been received and we assure you that the information will remain confidential.

B. Interview tool:

Individual information:

Residence: Idlib city- Idlib countryside- I'm not from Idlib and I live in the city- I'm not from Idlib and I live in its countryside.

Education: I can read and write- primary school- prep. School - high school - institute - university - postgraduate.

Age: From 18 to 22 -From 23 to 27- From 28 to 32 -From 33 to 37- From 38 to 42- From 43 to 47 - From 48 to 52- Over 53.

Work: Housewife - Own work - Employee in an organization - Seasonal work - I do not work - Temporary work - Others mention...

General questions

<p>5. Did you have any political participation before 2011? Yes- No- to some extent- I refuse to answer. - If no or I refuse to answer: Move to que. 6 in second column.</p> <p>6. What is this participation?</p> <p>7. Have you experienced any form of violence because of this participation? Yes- No- to some extent- I refuse to answer. - If no or I refuse to answer: Move to que. 8 in second column.</p> <p>8. If yes or to some extent: What is the type of violence?</p> <p>9. What is the reason or motive behind your exposure to violence?</p> <p>10. Is it related to being a female?</p> <p>11. Please explain more?</p> <p>12. What is the side that practiced violence on you?</p> <p>13. Have do you see the source that practiced violence on you?</p> <p>14. Was getting exposed to violence a reason in: Reluctance from political participation - a motive for more political participation - did not affect my decision - I refuse to answer - other, mention</p> <p>15. Please explain more?</p> <p>16. What are the barriers that prevented you or prevent you from political participation?</p> <p>17. What are the barriers that prevented or prevent women around you from political participation?</p> <p>18. Do you have anything else to add?</p>	<p>6. Do you have a wish in political participation? Yes- No- To some extent- I refuse to answer- I don't have any political interest. - If yes or I refuse to answer or don't have any political interest: Terminate</p> <p>7. If yes or to some extent: Can you explain your answer more? What did you wish for?</p> <p>8. Have you witnessed any form of violence because of political participation? Yes- No- to some extent- I refuse to answer. - If no or I refuse to answer: Terminate</p> <p>9. If yes or to some extent: Did witnessing this violence affect your wish in political participation? Yes- No- to some extent- I refuse to answer. - If no or I refuse to answer: Terminate</p> <p>10. If yes, what is the side that practiced violence? Please explain more?</p> <p>11. How do you see the source that practiced violence?</p> <p>12. Was witnessing violence a reason in: Reluctance from political participation - a motive for more political participation - did not affect my decision - I refuse to answer - other, mention</p> <p>13. Please explain more?</p> <p>14. What are the barriers that prevented you or prevent you from political participation?</p> <p>15. What are the barriers that prevented or prevent women around you from political participation?</p> <p>16. Do you have anything else to add?</p>
--	--

C. Tool and questions of focus discussion sessions:

Tool of recording focus discussion session.

	Moderator:		Moderator assistant:	
	Date of session:		Number of participants:	
	Number of females:		Number of males:	
	Place of session:		Surrounding circumstances:	
Topics and questions	Speaker	Body language-voice tone.	Summary of speech.	Important quotes.
1. What is the shape of women's political participation that you witnessed in northwest of Syria since 2011?				
2 - Have you experienced any form of violence against women in northwest of Syria as a result of their political participation?				
3 - Could the violence you witness or already witnessed or expect that women will get exposed to in the northwest of Syria have a role in reluctance from women's political participation?				
4 - Have you seen a systematic plan to practice violence against women who participate in politics or to prevent women from participating in politics? What are the followed mechanisms?				
5 - Is there a relationship between being a woman and being subjected to violence if she participated in politics? How? Please specify the mechanism, if any?				
6 - Do you currently feel that women in northwest of Syria have any interest in political participation in general? Please clarify:				

7 - What are the factors that you touched and hindered women's political participation in northwest of Syria?				
---	--	--	--	--

D. Questionnaire tool:

Equity and Empowerment Organization is conducting field research on violence against women in northwestern Syria, and its relationship to their limited political participation. And in order to get data from experts in this field, we send these questions to get some information about the topic of the study. So, we want you, as activists in political participation in Idlib and its countryside, to answer these questions:

1. What is the shape of women's political participation that you witnessed in northwest of Syria since 2011?	
2. Have you experienced any form of violence against women in northwest of Syria as a result of their political participation?	
3. Could the violence you witness or already witnessed or expect that women will get exposed to in the northwest of Syria have a role in reluctance from women's political participation? Please explain your answers. What are the sides and what is the position of society from women's participation?	
4. Have you seen a systematic plan to practice violence against women who participate in politics or to prevent women from participating in politics? What are the followed mechanisms?	
5. Is there a relationship between being a woman and being subjected to violence if she participated in politics? How? Please specify the mechanism, if any?	
6. Do you currently feel that women in northwest of Syria have any interest in political participation in general? Please clarify!	
7. What are the factors that you touched and hindered women's political participation in northwest of Syria?	

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

References

1. ESCWA, Arab Women's Participation in Political Action: Challenges and Suggestions, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), E/ESCWA/ECW/2013/1, United Nations, New York, January 22, 2013.
2. United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Resolution 48/104, <https://www.ohchr.org/>, December 20, 1993.
3. The International Federation for Human Rights reviews the role of women after the Arab Spring in a report that discusses their activism in the Arab revolutions and their governmental and parliamentary representation (1 out of 2) Paris - FIDH, Al-Wasat Magazine, Issue 3486 - March 23, 2012.
4. Dr. Iman Baybars, and others, Women's Political Participation in the Arab World, Association for the Advancement and Development of Women, <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/>, Cairo, Egypt.
5. - Professor Hussein Alwan Al-Beij, Political Participation: Importance - Styles - Dimensions, Arab Democratic Center, Germany, Berlin, 2020.
6. Rostom Mahmoud, Women's Rights in Syria Before and During the Revolution: Speech and Reality, The Hague, Humanitarian Cooperation Foundation, 2014,.
7. Rayan Muhammad, abused Syrian women in the north, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed magazine, edition 1959, London, Britain, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/>, January 12, 2020.
8. Sahar Hawija, The Importance of Women's Political Participation, Syrian Women's Network, <https://swnsyria.org/>, August 4, 2015.
9. Syrians for Truth: How violence against women is perpetuated in Syria legally and socially, <https://stj-sy.org/>, November 2021.
10. Editorial Team, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. "The Syrian Network" issues the tenth annual report on violations against females in Syria, Sham Network, <http://www.shaam.org/>, October 25, 2021.
11. - Professor Colverni Mohamed, Women's Political Participation in Morocco: Convention and Protest Significance, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Arab Women: From Violence and Discrimination to Political Participation, Arab Future Books Series, No. 70, Al Hamra, Beirut, January, 2014.
12. Dr. Lama Qunoot, The Syrian Women's Political Participation between the content and the Margin, The Syrian Feminist Lobby, December, 2016.

13. Alia Ahmed, Obstacles facing Syrian women in political participation in the northern and eastern Aleppo countryside, CCSD, 2021.
14. Muhammad Adel Othman, Rooting the Concept of Political Participation, Arab Democratic Center, <https://democraticac.de/>, August 21, 2016.
15. Center for Arab Unity Studies, Arab Women: From Violence and Discrimination to Political Participation, Arab Future Books Series, No. 70, Al Hamra, Beirut, January, 2014.
16. Human Rights Organization, Violence against Women, WHO: Informational Series on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, <WWW.OHCHR.ORG>.
17. Dr. Nour Abu Assab and her colleague, Gender Dynamics in Syrian Civil Society, IMPACT, Berlin, March, 2019.
18. Hajar Jamal and others, the impact of the cultural dimension on women's political participation: A comparative study between Egypt and the United States of America, the Arab Center for Research and Studies, <http://www.acrseg.org/>, 2014 - 2019.
19. UN Women, Leadership and Political Participation, <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/>
20. Wadha Al-Othman, Women's Political Role in the Arab Spring (Syria and Tunisia as an example), Syrian Women's Gathering for Democracy, <https://cswdsy.org/>, taken from the Mena Center for Studies and Research, <https://mena-studies.org/>, January 28 first 2018.
21. Büyüktosunoğlu, T. "Selçuk ve Dicle Üniversitesi Öğrencilerinin Siyasal Katılma Davranışları Üzerine Uygulamalı Bir Çalışma". Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Selçuk Üniversitesi, Konya, 2013.
22. Dr. Selçuk AKINCI, SİYASAL KATILIM DÜZEYLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME, Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi, SOSYAL BİLİMLER DERGİSİ, SAYI 7, selcuk.akinci@ktu.edu.tr , TRABZON , BAHAR, 2014,
23. Khasnabis C, Heinicke Motsch K, Achu K, et al., editors, Community-Based Rehabilitation: CBR Guidelines, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/> ,Geneva: World Health Organization; 2010.

أَنْتِ وَأَنَا، فَعَا نَسْتَطِيعُ حِينَمَا نَرِيدُ