



## Political Context of the Campaign

*“With the unity of women, we build a free, democratic, decentralized Syria.”*

With this document, we want to briefly explain the context from which the campaign *“With the unity of women, we build a free, democratic, decentralized Syria.”* emerges, as well as its demands. It is divided into two parts: first, we will outline the current situation in Syria (the impact of the Damascus Transitional Government, the importance of the Women’s Revolution in Rojava, and the effect of foreign interventions throughout history); afterward, we will clarify our demands (a decentralized, democratic Syria, led by women and not shaped by foreign plans).

### **Context:**

#### **Damascus Transitional Government**

Ahmad al-Sharaa (nom de guerre Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani) came to power in Damascus in December 2024. He was the founder and leader of Jabhat al-Nusra (the local branch of Al-Qaeda), which later evolved into HTS. Al-Sharaa never abandoned this ideology, and the Damascus Transitional Government was built on that legacy: eight key ministers were drawn directly from Al-Nusra or other fundamentalist groups, including figures tied to secret prisons, drone warfare, and coordination with Turkish intelligence. The constitution they impose enshrines Sharia law, bars non-Muslims from the presidency, and takes power away from women.

Beyond political exclusion, abductions and disappearances of women became systematic. Women are seized from their homes or abducted on the road. Dozens remain missing. These crimes echo the darkest practices of ISIS, when Yazidi women were enslaved and sold. Under al-Sharaa, this violence against women is not incidental—it is central to his rule, a weapon to break communities and instill terror.

Syria is a country where many religions, cultures, languages and identities are present, but not all are accepted by the Damascus Transitional Government. In March 2025, HTS and allied factions massacred more than 1,600 Alawite civilians on the coast, burning villages, desecrating cemeteries, and driving tens of thousands into exile. A month later, the Druze of As-Suwayda faced the same fate: villages destroyed, homes looted, shrines torched, and civilians executed with sectarian slogans. More than 1,400 people were killed and over 100,000 displaced. These assaults reveal the sectarian core of al-Sharaa’s regime—rule through terror, exclusion, and the annihilation of Syria’s plural identity.

These lands have historically been rich and fertile—the heart of the Fertile Crescent. Yet even here, the Damascus Transitional Government has spared nothing: waves of arson swept through the coastal regions, deliberately targeting the Alawite population living there, with the added consequence of causing severe environmental devastation.

#### **The Women’s Revolution in Rojava**

The Rojava Revolution rests on the paradigm of Abdullah Öcalan, who proposed the model of the democratic nation. This vision rejects the state as an instrument of domination and instead promotes a society that is democratic, ecological, and rooted in women’s liberation. Democracy here means direct self-organization: people discuss their needs in communes, make collective decisions, and put them

into practice. Ethics is seen as the living memory of those decisions. Ecology is a way of recognizing society's unity with nature and acting accordingly. Against the patriarchal state system, which historically enslaved women, the democratic nation seeks to rebuild freedom on the foundation of women's emancipation.

At the heart of this system stands the autonomous organization of women. From the communes up to the regional assemblies, women organize themselves autonomously. Examples of women's organizations include Kongra Star, organized from the grassroots in communes and councils, with committees addressing economy, education, justice, ecology, culture, and more. Arab women, deeply scarred by ISIS occupation, have built their own organization, the Zenobia Association, to strengthen this revolution across communities. Other women associations, NGOs and women's assemblies are present. Parallel to these structures, the Women's Defense Units (YPJ) embody self-defense: a women's army with its own command, central in the fight against ISIS and in the ongoing defense of North and East Syria.

Society is organized through communes and councils, extending from neighborhoods to cities, cantons, and regions. Each body functions with a co-chair system—one man and one woman—ensuring women's voices carry equal weight. Within every mixed-gender commission—health, reconciliation, culture, economy and so on—women are organized autonomously, shaping in this way the mixed-gender structures. This system allows every community—Kurdish, Arab, Assyrian, Armenian, Circassian, Yazidi—to live freely according to its culture, language, and traditions. Together, these structures embody a living alternative: a society where the real administration is in the hands of the people, where women stand at the center, and where diversity is seen as enrichment rather than an obstacle.

The Rojava Revolution today faces grave threats on multiple fronts. ISIS has not disappeared—its sleeper cells, uprisings in prisons where the jihadists are detained, and fundamentalists networks in camps like al-Hol keep the danger alive. The presence (in detention) of thousands of ISIS fighters and their families, without any international body assuming responsibility, leaves the region in constant peril. Turkey until short time ago continued to practice systematic drone strikes, infrastructure bombings, aiming to destabilize the democratic self-administration and terrorize civilians. It still occupies the areas of Afrin, Serekaniye and Gire Spi. The Damascus transitional government has still not fully recognized the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), and there is a constant risk that the small-scale attacks now taking place could escalate into a much larger offensive.

### **External Interests and the Third Way**

We identify the current war in the Middle East as the Third World War: its epicenter lies in this region, it is driven by global hegemonic powers, and it has global consequences. Nation-states were imposed here as a legacy of colonialism. In this context, Israel acts as the representative of Western powers. Today, Iran's weakening position, alongside Turkey's internal and external crises, is destabilizing the previously already insecure balance. Syria has become the arena where external powers—including Turkey and Israel—fight for hegemony.

On one side, Turkey seeks expansion, driven both by neo-Ottoman ambitions and its determination to target organized Kurds. On the other, Israel plans the "David Corridor" in Syrian territory for its own interests. Areas like Afrin, Serêkaniyê, and Girê Spî remain under Turkish control, where demographic change continues and women and local communities face ongoing repression. The

Damascus Transitional Government today serves Turkey's interests, and—as noted above—its roots go back to Al-Qaeda, part of the “Green Belt” strategy built by the United States against the Soviet Union.

Throughout history, the people of the Middle East and Syria have suffered because external powers fought for their own interests in these lands. Yet, taking as example the Neolithic revolution, the decimal way of counting (so-called "arab numbers"), Mesopotamia has been one of humanity's greatest sources of culture. We believe in the strength of the peoples and women of the Middle East and Syria. They can and must determine their own future: we reject foreign plans in our territory.

Only us, the people of Syria, can build peace in our land—not the fundamentalist government, nor state structures, nor foreign hegemonic powers. We believe in us, in the power of the Syrian people and women to organize democratically. We call this the “Third Way.” At its root is the democratic self-organization of the people, with women at the forefront. That is why the Third Way is, in a sense, the women's path to peace.

## **Our Demands**

### **A Decentralized Syria**

We do not seek to divide Syria; we want it to remain united. However, for Syria to be strong, it cannot remain under a rigid, centralized structure. The country's cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity cannot be reduced to a single definition, a single language, identity, or religion. Syria's pluralism is its strength. Trying to homogenize it—erasing its colors and differences—only weakens and destabilizes Syria. A centralized government that represents only one identity cannot be accepted by all communities, and such governments do not endure. We call for a decentralized system of governance, one that grants territorial and community-level autonomy to Syria's many components.

### **A Democratic Syria**

We want every region, every ethnic, religious, or cultural group to have the right to organize its own society. The Women's Revolution in Rojava has shown that society is capable of engaging politically—of making decisions at the neighborhood level, putting them into practice, and coordinating them on a wider scale. The system built from local communes, connected through assemblies and councils to wider levels, has already proven this in practice. It is essential that the state system allows such democratic structures to develop freely, without obstruction. Autonomous democratic administrations and institutions must be recognized as legitimate counterparts by state institutions.

### **A Syria Led by Women**

The patriarchal state system has always relied on breaking women's unity and suppressing their will. Yet women have historically been the ones who gathered communities around them, laying the foundation of society itself. The answer to state oppression still lies today in women's organization and liberation—because it is women who can strengthen society again. The degree of freedom in any society is measured by the freedom of its women.

The Women's Revolution in Rojava proves this clearly: once women's strength comes into play, no state system can resist it. And yet, the Damascus Transitional Government refuses to acknowledge women's will or their achievements. Their voices are silenced, their presence erased. We want to overturn this attitude. With women's strength, we will build a free Syria together. We know that

organized and active women are the most effective response to the fundamentalist centralism of the Damascus Transitional Government.

### **A Syria not Shaped by Foreign Plans**

In Syria, as across the Middle East, foreign interventions have been among the main sources of destruction and suffering. We place our trust instead in the strength of Syria's women and its peoples. We believe in the power of the "Third Way"—with the society, not with local states and not with external hegemonic powers. The right of peoples to self-determination is the true alternative to these two approaches.

The Third Way—free from foreign interference and not subordinate to local state powers—is the most effective path to lasting peace. The needs of the Syrian people do not align with the interests of foreign powers.

*This campaign has been initiated by Kongra Star women's movement and Zenobiya association.*