

## Press Release - 21.12.2021

***Friends of the Syrian People e.V.***  
***and***  
***Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research***  
***hold***  
***Round Table on Role of Civil Society in Accountability for Syria.***

The case of Syria exhibits an excess of evidence for core crimes, but still very limited international resources and coordination to pursue it. As legal jurisdiction and procedure varies in each EU-state, CSOs have stepped up to push forward highly-visible cases. Today, CSOs support both structural and person-focused litigation efforts in several EU-countries. On 30 November 2021, the above-mentioned NGOs completed a workshop to empower 28 Syrian legal professionals to play an active role in accountability efforts. The workshop finished with a Round Table that brought together the following stakeholders and international experts:

Stephen Rapp	Former US-Ambassador for War Crimes Issues (USA)
Aida Samani	Legal Expert, Civil Rights Defenders (SWE)
Nidal Shikhan	Director General, Chemical Violations Documentation Center in Syria (CVDCS)
Lennie Philips	Former Team Leader of OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in SYR; CVDCS-Legal Expert
Mohamed Rashed	Data Manager, Syrian Civil Defense (White Helmets)
Patrick Kroker	European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR)
Anwar Albuni	Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research (SCLSR)

The discussion focused on challenges and opportunities currently facing litigation efforts. The attendees noted that prosecutors, investigation units and CSOs alike are overloaded by criminal cases - they remain understaffed and underfunded, especially given the ongoing influx of new victims, witnesses and suspects from Syria and other countries. The attendees made the following recommendations for policy makers:

- Develop the EU-framework for judicial cooperation in order to accelerate the alignment of national regulations concerning core crimes
- Strengthen the inter-agency coordination between individual European countries, including joint mechanisms for structural and person-focused litigation
- Establish a joint data base for European countries with universal jurisdiction
- Allocate adequate resources for accountability efforts, particularly Syrian organizations that enjoy the trust of many Syrian victims and witnesses
- Provide for an access system for female victims outside the EU, particularly in Turkey
- Provide for Arabic interpretation at highly-visible court cases
- Enhance witness-protection and include psychosocial support
- Establish a special international tribunal by pooling the jurisdiction of several states

*This round table was held within a project named “Human Rights Training for Syrian Legal Professionals” made possible by the kind support of:*