Assessing Attitudes of Syrian-Armenian Refugees toward Redress and Justice in Post-Conflict Syria

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Abstract

For centuries, Syria has been home to Armenians in cities such as Kessab, Damascus, and Aleppo. Armenians have contributed significantly to the military, economic, industrial and cultural development of Syria, yet as a result of the current conflict in Syria, more than half of the Armenian population has been dispersed. Like millions of other Syrians, their communities have been severely damaged by crossfire and direct attacks from armed opposition groups. Yet efforts to assess attitudes towards redress and reconciliation of Syria’s minority community, including the Armenians, have not been abundant. As there are efforts currently being undertaken to prepare potential transitional justice interventions in post-conflict Syria, the Armenian perspective on redress is a critical piece of the narrative.

Herein I examine the attitudes of Syrian-Armenians towards justice and redress in post-conflict Syria. Through two human rights theoretical lenses, that of minority rights and transitional justice, I aim to provide the foundational backdrop against which an analysis of the opinions and attitudes expressed by the informants in this study can take place. I use interviews and survey responses with Syrian nationals (of Armenian ethnicity) currently resettled in Armenia from a March 2019 research trip, in addition to archival material, reports, and other publically available secondary sources, to assess what Syrian-Armenians might feel justice and repair should entail in a post-conflict Syria.

I conclude that three general themes appear across the majority of collected responses that can help indicate what this community might prioritize for redress. The three themes are: (1) Ensuring safety and stability, (2) Protecting the rights and liberties of all citizens, and (3) (Re)creating a unified Syria. In presenting these themes, I argue that they must be assessed against the backdrop of the past century’s history and its repercussions on the minorities in Syria. I attempt to demonstrate that the multiple oppressive acts against this people: the legacy of the genocide, the suppression of their diverse identities in the 1950s and 60s, and now the destruction of their homes and cultural/religious/ethnic centers, all influence their notions of what redress and justice can and should look like in post-conflict Syria.
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I. Introduction:¹

“It’s tough answering this question, ‘what does justice mean to you?’ being an Armenian and a Syrian on top, because you’ve never really had justice. You’ve never really had justice in any way or form before...” - Syrian-Armenian Interviewee, 23 years old, March 2019²

In September of 2013, Angel Ajemian’s husband and father-in-law were kidnapped by ISIS. For four months she awaited the news that they were alive. Instead, she received a phone call that they were killed. Justice for her was to have the bodies returned for a proper burial. That wasn’t possible so, instead, she settled for the bodies being buried in a separate grave, as opposed to alongside the other 50 killed. Back in Aleppo, she carried out a church funeral service with photos instead of bodies.

In 2015, Hagop and Linda Atikian’s kids were kidnapped by Islamic extremists who stopped the bus they were on as they traveled home from Beirut to Aleppo. After 12 days they were reunited only to barely escape death when a missile fell on their house while they were all inside. Although they are now living safely in Armenia, their son often sleepwalks in the middle of the night, “running around like crazy, all while asleep. He would hold a pen and pretend it was a gun, a napkin, a spoon, anything. He wanted to learn to use a weapon and protect us from danger.”³ For Hagop and Linda, justice is to return to a normalcy of human interaction. In an interview with me in Armenia, Hagop shared, “My spirit is already totally different. I meet people, for example, I am so happy to sit down with you, imagine just sitting and talking to you. I have almost forgotten how to have conversations. It’s enough that people listen to you; it’s enough that people share your pain. We didn’t have those things there, we had lost it all.”⁴

In 2016 Mikael Mikaelian (pseudonym) escaped from his mandatory Syrian military service after being held and tortured in Syrian prison by his own government for four months due

¹ These are all testimonies from the Rerooted Archive, an archive of 100+ Syrian-Armenian refugee testimonies. They are excerpts from interviews that I have conducted.
² Survey Respondent, Interview, March 2019.
⁴ “Rerooted.”
to an accidental documentation mix-up. Justice for him is memorialization, establishing ways to publicly remember the best friends he lost who fought with him in this war but who were not as lucky as he feels he was to survive. After remembering, justice is to forget, to put it all in the past and live a new life in Armenia, what he calls, his homeland.

These are just a few horrors that members of what was once Syria’s strong 100,000+-person Armenian community have faced. While these experiences were not the norm, (as many Syrian-Armenians fled the conflict early, or benefitted from government support in its shielding of Aleppo, or suffered property damage/loss as opposed to kidnappings, torture, and death as expressed above), stories of these experiences influenced perceptions and this contributed to less optimistic views for justice in Syria. As they are beginning new lives in Armenia, many Syrian-Armenians have largely given up on any notion of justice for Syria’s now 8-year long conflict. However, whether or not they are hopeful for it does not prevent them from forming expectations about what justice might look like in a post-conflict Syria. The majority of my survey respondents (41/52) still have family that lives in Syria and for whom they referenced they hope there will be justice. Thus, it is important for studies like these to acknowledge what different communities might anticipate an eventual justice to be. Transitional Justice (TJ) efforts in Syria are unlikely and difficult and we are currently unable to answer the question of what eventual TJ will look like in Syria. However, we can assess attitudes towards justice from different Syrian community members by asking questions like, “What does a post-conflict Syria look like for you? What do you hope for the people who stayed in Syria or for your own children who might want to return one day? What would it take for you to return?” These are questions we can get answers to, and that was largely the aim, and results, of the research at hand.

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II. Objective & Significance

Q: “Do you think there will ever be adequate justice for what happened in Syria?”

A: “Look at this scar on my hand. Feel it. Do you feel how it is still raised? The damage done in Syria is like a scar. It can never go away. No matter what repair you do, it will always be there.”

Objective

Since March 2011 Syria has been afflicted by war. By May of 2018, more than half of the total Syrian population had been displaced, and about 13 million people were estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance. As of September 2018, the actors in the conflict included: the Syrian government, Syrian rebel/jihadist forces, Islamic State group, Syrian-Kurdish forces, the Iraqi government, and less directly, the governments of Turkey, Russia, and the United States. With their diverse interests, these actors prolong the conflict and make it less likely the war will come to an end any time soon. Nevertheless, although bombs are still falling, efforts to assess Syrian attitudes towards redress and justice in Syria are ongoing.

This study aims to assess the attitudes of Syrian-Armenian refugees in Armenia toward redress, reconstruction, and justice in post-conflict Syria. It is situated within existing efforts to interview different segments of Syrian society to ultimately create a representative view of satisfactory justice and redress mechanisms in a post-conflict Syria. Thus, the main objective of this study is to elicit information from this community of Syrian-Armenians regarding preferred redress mechanisms for the conflict in Syria to help inform reconciliatory and reparatory efforts when the war ends.

This goal is inspired by the many scholarly criticisms that the field of transitional justice lacks voices from the ground regarding satisfactory redress mechanisms. This study seeks to

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6 Survey Respondent, Interview.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
begin to fill that gap with at least one population. More specifically than filling a gap in general TJ literature, this study seeks to inform TJ efforts for the Syrian context. Most of the current scholarly research, writing, and policy on post-conflict Syria has not explicitly addressed the views of minority populations, neglecting to fully take into account their potentially differing opinions regarding what redress might look like in Syria. Although 80% of Syria is Muslim, it is “home to one of the largest Christian populations in the Middle East.” The Syrian-Armenians are a part of that Christian population and many of the anxieties they face within this conflict come from their minority status. While many of the Christian minorities have left their homes and have been directly affected by the conflict, many of the efforts to document the history, views, and conditions that would facilitate refugee return to Syria do not include minority populations and one resulting danger is that their presence could be further marginalized.

Significance

This study is important for two central reasons. First, while there is presently no transitional justice in the foreseeable future in Syria (as it is likely President Assad will remain in power), it is important for the effort of collecting opinions on the ground to take place now, as they will help inform other efforts that will be undertaken in a post-conflict Syria, such as reconstruction, reversing what one expert refers to as, demographic engineering, and imposing other structural changes. Each of these efforts would benefit from communication with all members of society. Additionally, documentation efforts are important at all times to capture a snapshot of the current moment in history. The further removed we become from the time of the damage of the conflict,

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15 This is a term used by experts in the field, who express the idea that Syria is undergoing a type of “demographic engineering,” in that the war is negatively affecting the demographics in Syria and this is something for which they believe there should be reparations, or at least more attention paid it in the reconstruction process.
16 Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies representative, Phone Conversation, December 2, 2018.
the less accurate narratives and accounts may be that would inform future transitional justice efforts.\textsuperscript{17}

Second, the Armenians are an ethnic and religious minority group in Syria that largely has not joined the factions of the opposition in Syria. As justice should be inclusive and comprehensive, their opinions will be important additions to the narratives of abuses committed by those other than the Syrian government.\textsuperscript{18} Many experts emphasize that the Syrian-Armenian community is one they have little information about, or contact with.\textsuperscript{19} Given that “since each transitional context is unique, it is not possible to make valid generalizations about the effectiveness of specific institutional devices,” this study is important because it looks at a specific context in order to help those within that community.\textsuperscript{20}

While the goals above contribute to more local and immediate results, this study can also contribute to an understanding of justice on a more general level. This is because of this community’s unique ability to provide perspectives for justice in the context of two different mass atrocities where justice has not yet been served: the Armenian genocide and the conflict in Syria. Hence it has a potential to help fill a gap in our understanding of satisfactory redress mechanisms in post-conflict contexts, and how that may change as more time elapses from the time of violence.\textsuperscript{21} This study has documented attitudes toward different justice mechanisms for both the current Syrian conflict and the Armenian genocide, which may help to influence policy initiatives in the future. James Ron writes that, since the transitional justice literature “does not provide policymakers with the empirical foundations necessary for making informed decisions

\textsuperscript{17} IIIM contributor, Phone conversation, April 9, 2019.
\textsuperscript{19} Phone and email conversations with representatives from these organizations: The International Center for Transitional Justice, Syrian Justice and Accountability Center, and the Arab Reform Institute
about when, where, and how to promote TJ in countries emerging from war on authoritarianism, surveys and focus groups will give us a better sense of how pro-TJ and anti-TJ constituencies emerge in countries of interest.”

It is my hope that the surveys and interviews I conducted will help contribute to this understanding of TJ in post-war countries and contexts, by learning from the experiences of the past (Armenian genocide) to help influence policy in the future (post-conflict Syria). However, it is important to acknowledge that one cannot fully understand the perspectives and positions of this minority group, or any for that matter, without greater context regarding their position within Syrian society and their history there. One of the most important aspects of understanding the opinions of the Armenian community in Syria is understanding their arrival in Syria, how the genocide and its repercussions affected Armenian identity in Syria, and Syrian policy and attitudes towards Armenians over time. So, before discussing TJ in Syria and analyzing what the Armenian community there might prefer, a large section will be dedicated to understanding the history of Armenians in Syria through the lens of minority “rights,” and the birth of the concept of the “minority” in the Middle East.

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III. Theoretical Framework 1: Armenians as Minorities

It is important to explore the responses of the Syrian-Armenian community through two lenses: 1. The fact that they have not yet gotten justice for the Armenian Genocide. 2. The fact that they are a minority in Syria, especially one that has been persecuted before, and had their rights limited in Syria, and how this influences their desires to remain as protected as possible in Syria. Both the literature on transitional justice and the history of the Armenians in Syria as minorities are important foundations for understanding the presently expressed opinions. It is only possible to make sense of this survey taking into account not just the future but also the past, and that is the historical context of the refugee experience.

Historical Background

“There were lots of difficulties for my parents. They left their homes and everything and... they got to Aleppo, with nothing there for them. There was nothing. They even had to live in places next to animals. They lived in a tiny room like this with two or three families. After that they started building houses out of wood. Then they started building houses out of stone. My father built his house in 1935 or 1936 with his own hands. They had one room built and he saw how it was done and then after work he would come and build the other rooms with my mother.”

a. Armenians in Syria before 1915

The Armenian people have geographically and historically been tied to the region between Eastern Anatolia and the Southern side of the Caucuses. However, invasions by large empires that repeatedly swept across historic Armenia led migration and displacement to be a “distinctive feature of Armenian history from old to modern times.” Substantial emigration waves in the 14th, 16th, and 17th centuries brought Armenians to the Levant and enabled them to establish communities for themselves where they became important traders and craftsmen. Aleppo was the most important Armenian settlement in the region as it was the major Armenian commerce center. Other notable Armenian communities existed in Latakia and the Sanjiak of

23 “Rerooted.” (Interview with Hagop Kereshian)
Alexandretta. The next big wave of Armenian migration to Syria was a result of the genocide against the Armenians committed by the Ottoman Empire. The chart below (table 1) demonstrates the shift in population size after the genocide.

### Armenian Refugees in Syria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Natives</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alepppo and surrounding villages</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>37,435</td>
<td>50,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanjiak of Alexandretta</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>6,800</td>
<td>17,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lattakia and surroundings</td>
<td>1,370</td>
<td>2,750</td>
<td>4,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-eastern Syria</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,750</td>
<td>4,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>14,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hama and Homsi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian orphans (Aleppo)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26,170</td>
<td>69,735</td>
<td>95,905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

b. The Armenian Genocide and the mass influx of Armenians to Syria

"Armenians are builders. They have done it before and they will do it again."

As is clear from the table above, the number of Armenians in Syria dramatically increased as a result of the genocide. It also demonstrates that, with the exception of Aleppo and Latakia, most of the Armenian communities in Syria formed as direct consequences of the genocide. Thus, it is important to address this historical event to understand how the memory of the genocide impacted Syrian-Armenian activity and sense of identity within Syria across the span of the last 100 years.

The first way in which the memory of the genocide had a direct impact on Syrian-Armenian life was in promoting reconstruction and rejecting assimilation. As refugees, the

“Armenians worked hard to reconstruct and keep alive an Armenian world in exile… Armenian

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25 Ibid., 24.
26 “Rerooted.” (Interview with Adelina Keheian)
politics focused mostly on the interests and problems of the Armenian people, both at the level of
the Syrian-Armenian community and at the wider, international level.”27 Armenians built
churches, opened new schools, managed their own political parties amongst themselves and
within the greater diaspora, and even began to disseminate information by creating printing
presses, publishing periodicals, and preserving culture through theatre. The Armenian refugees
displaced to Syria after the genocide “had initially no title and no ambition to get involved in
public affairs in the post-Ottoman Levant. They remained a foreign, temporarily hosted
community at the margin of society,”28 and this did not pose any problems for them. As seen in
the table below, schools were one of the institutions, among others, they instilled relatively easily
and expansively.

Table 2:29 Armenian schools and students in Armenian schools in Syria, 1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the school</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Male Students</th>
<th>Female Students</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Haigazian school for boys and girls</td>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Mesrop school for boys and girls (refugee camp)</td>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahagian National school (Midan)</td>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grtsirats school</td>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulligian refugee school</td>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsermanjak</td>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preservation of Armenian identity was very strong in Syria. One of Rerooted’s narrators
who wished to be called, Artsakh, a 56-year-old woman from Aleppo, says:

28 Migliorino, (Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria, 71.
29 There are 36 more schools on this list, which you can find on page 72 of Migliorino’s book cited above.
“Sultan Abdul Hamid said there will only be enough Armenians to put in museums.... We proved that wrong by prospering...and preserving our Armenian letters and creating schools. Wherever Armenians went they started schools, and those schools are the reasons Armenians preserved and protected their language, culture, nation, and beliefs.”

As can be inferred from the above quote and tables, “among the traits of Armenian politics that had appeared from the early days of the diaspora was a strong predominance of Armenian, communal and national concerns over Syrian concerns.” This predominance of Armenian concerns over Syrian concerns could potentially stem from the ongoing repression of denial being the “unacknowledged victims of the Turkish nationalist venture” and the desire to change that. Memories of the genocide generate “politically conformist discourse among the Syrian-Armenian establishment and community at large,” and ultimately, it has been argued that in the Syrian-Armenian memory, “1915 is seen as a decisive event, a violent ending, but also as a new beginning, and a new period of struggle in a hostile and foreign setting.” It is common that in a dramatically different environment, where locals speak a different language, refugees tend to rely on each other to “look for, or try to reproduce, the traditional communal procedures in dealing with crisis. As part of this, the refugees regard dispersion as a threat to their security and prefer to remain concentrated.” So while the genocide and denial play a large role in these sentiments, it is important to note that they are also common effects of being a refugee. This strong non-assimilatory, communal solidarity is encapsulated in one narrator’s reflection on his childhood:

“In my childhood years, we never interacted with Arabs. Why? Because all the Armenians were living at the same place. Everything was Armenian, the shopkeeper, the baker, the cobbler, the tailor. We did not need anything else. Armenians were living collectively, with each other...At the school, when the Arab teacher used to come and say,

30 “Rerooted.” (interview with Artsakh)
31 Migliorino, (Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria, 96.
33 Migliorino, (Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria, 46.
"This is an Arabic Country." We didn't understand, what does it mean? What is that 'Arabic country?'”

As is demonstrated by Dr. Toronian’s quote, Armenian religious and communal institutions continued to rule autonomously in Syria, and this was largely thanks to the leniency of the French Mandate in Syria. The mandate allowed for the preservation of Armenian religion and culture, and ultimately gave the Armenians space to rebuild their communities in the wake of dramatic loss. Although the French mandate did not reduce religious institutions to entities completely separated from the state, it did secularize the state by not adopting an official national religion. In introducing the modern, secular, nation-state to Syria, the French essentially facilitated the creation of the notion of “minorities,” and with that, came protections, but not for the sake of preserving diversity, but rather, as a manipulation of political interests. This setting will be the focus of the next section to help foster a better understanding of conditions for Armenians in Syria throughout the last century, as well as a foundation for comprehending how and why protecting the rights of minorities in Syria is such a critical necessity in achieving “justice” for Armenians in Syria today.

c. The Birth of the Concept of the “Minority” in the Levant

It is commonly believed that the emergence of minorities in the Levant came with the creation of the modern nation-state. As White suggests, “the nation state form creates the objective conditions in which people begin to consider themselves as majorities and minorities; however, these remain subjective categories.”

Interesting though is that the common conception of what it means to be a minority still did not exist as late as 1914. In its modern sense, minorities are “a group distinguished by common ties of descent, physical appearance, language, culture or religion, in virtue of which they feel or are regarded as different from the

34 "Rerooted." (Interview with Dr. Toros Toronian, a 93-year-old from Aleppo)
majority of the population in a society – a distinction usually understood to have political significance.”\textsuperscript{36} This political significance is critical to understanding the impact that being a minority had on Armenians in Syria throughout the last century.

The mass influx of Armenians escaping Ottoman Turkey happened concurrently with, (and greatly contributed to), the birth of the concept of minority in the Levant. As minorities became a political tool, the Armenians vacillated between being an important group and an unimportant one. Starting in the French mandatory period, the Armenians were used for religious, economic, and strategic reasons to further French goals of controlling Syria through the mandate.\textsuperscript{37} Then, once the French left, new Syrian leaders recognized that if they wanted a successful development of Arab nationalism, they could not solely rely on one group for their support, rather, they had to cut across cleavages of religion, language, and ethnicity that comprised both majority and minority communities in Syria. As White explains, “a numerical majority of the inhabitants of the new state were Sunni Muslims, but that majority was divided by language; a numerical majority were Arabic-speakers, but that majority was divided by religion. Sunni Muslim Arabic-speakers – sharing both language and religion – were a numerical majority, but a much smaller one.”\textsuperscript{38} Thus, it became clear that nationalism would need to appeal beyond this group to achieve a solid base in Syrian society. As the state claimed to represent the population, they also created the objective conditions within which Syrians could see the demarcations of majorities and minorities in their communities. However, how these groups were defined, and what political implications were drawn from their definition, remained subjective, and this, arguably, was (and is) the greatest danger for the Armenians. The fact that their status was malleable, and their worth to the larger society subjective, meant that they had no

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. 21
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid. 1
guarantees, and thus were subject to the consequences of sudden policy and regime changes. This has direct implications for their perspectives on post-conflict Syria today and will be discussed in greater depth in section six.

d. Armenians in Syria and Attitudes towards them: Changing policies

While the predominance of Armenian concerns over Syrian ones was tolerated during the French mandate period, as nationalist Syrian elite took control of the government in the mid 1940s, the narrative shifted and the perceived predominance of Armenian concerns gave rise to recurrent accusations of “non-commitment insincerity, if not disloyalty, from sectors of the Syrian political spectrum.”39 The first two decades of Syrian independence after the French departure were the hardest for the Armenians, as ethno-cultural diversity, language, religion, class, and ideology all served as barriers to political integration and thus to participation in policy making. The emerging discourse was largely Pan-Arabist, while the experiences lived, and memories of, the genocide were still intricately tied to Syrian-Armenian action and discourse. This is an essential lens for understanding Armenian life in Syria over the last century, because their resistance to decades of national ethno-cultural policy and success in avoiding attempts at assimilation or the erasure of cultural diversity through policies of Pan-Arabism, was due in large part to their need for preserving whatever elements they could of their cultural, ethnic, and religious identities, all of which were almost eradicated by the Ottomans just some years before these policies. In this section I will outline the repressive policies towards the Armenians and other minority groups throughout the different governmental regimes in Syria and explain how this history contributed to the current political situation in which Armenians are generally regarded as a marginal, trusted, Christian minority of the Assad regime.

39 Ibid. 93
During the French mandate period, religious minorities felt very protected. In Aleppo, the Syrian city with the largest immigrant population, Christians made up 35% of the population. It became increasingly clear that the French were using the minority groups to their advantage to remain in power. For example, many Muslims felt that in the 1926 elections the French used Armenians to “counter the nationalist vote and gave them two representatives in elections even though their population was not sufficient for one.”40 For many, it seemed that minority communities, like the Armenians, were willingly collaborating with the French, and this caused anti-Armenian sentiments to grow. These sentiments intensified when many Muslims began to accuse the government of purposefully forcing more Christians into the vote by giving the Armenians citizenship in 1924/5. Then, in an anti-French uprising Armenian-French soldiers fought against the Syrian anti-French rebels, and this demonstrated to many the Armenians’ “proven unfaithfulness [by] fighting against those in whose lands they are camping.”41 This furthered the notion that Armenians were not a true part of the society, and that this was not their home, which ultimately would harm the efforts of pan-Arabism and contribute to the willingness of the Armenians to accept whichever government did welcome and include them. The implications of this can be seen today in the Armenians’ general allegiance to the Assad regime.

Among Syrian Arab nationalists the ‘refugee problem’ was a hotly debated issue since its rise in Syria. It was as much a political issue as it was a social and economic problem. In Syria, the flow of refugees into the region spanned the 1920s, yet since it lacked consent from local Syrians, “it evoked a lack of agency because of a sovereignty deficit in the Syrian national self.”42 This explanation of why refugee groups might have been seen as problematic is in line with Agamben’s notions that “the refugee unhinges the old trinity of state-nation-

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41 Ibid.
42 Ibid. 3
territory...[and] that...brings a radical crisis to the principles of the nation-state.”\textsuperscript{43} That this happened in Syria is demonstrated by accounts indicating that a new influx of refugees “caused extreme alarm and anxiety among the Arab nationalists, [and this was] expressed in a new framework of: harmful strangers vs. outraged Syrians.”\textsuperscript{44} The Armenians attempted to reassure the Syrian Arab nationalists that they would not attempt to found an Armenian state in Syria, claiming “we only have one homeland; that is Armenia.”\textsuperscript{45} However, despite these efforts, their minority status still conjured images of political dissidents among Arab Syrian nationalists who denied the diversity of other cultures and ethnicities in stating that “the ex-refugees of the 1920’s have integrated and become like us, thus they should not be asking for special treatment.”\textsuperscript{46} This persistent negative perception of refugees led to further discriminatory and oppressive policies towards minorities and thus to “a retreat of Armenian society to themselves and out of the public realm of Syria.”\textsuperscript{47} This uninvolved/uninterested sentiment was echoed by many Syrian-Armenian respondents who explained in interviews that they do not follow Syrian politics too much, they do not speak Arabic too well, and that the majority of their extracurricular activities, friends, and focuses in Syria were Armenian.\textsuperscript{48} This can stem from their identity as refugees who were not truly in their proper homes, but it was also surely exacerbated by the restriction of communal autonomy of the Armenians in the 1950s and 60s under the authoritarian regimes, which damaged the Armenian ability to preserve their culture.

\textsuperscript{44} Altug, “Syrian-Armenian Memory and the Refugee Issue in Syria under the French Mandate (1921–46): 4”
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. 5
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 5.
\textsuperscript{47} Migliorino, “Kulna Suriyyin’?,” 6
\textsuperscript{48} Rerooted.
Table 3: Names of five Armenian schools in Aleppo before and after 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original school name</th>
<th>New school name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sahagian</td>
<td>Dar As-Salam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haigazian</td>
<td>Al-Amjad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zarvazian</td>
<td>Dijleh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulbenkian</td>
<td>As-Sharq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesropian</td>
<td>Bethlehem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Weekly periods in Armenian elementary schools in Syria 1960-61: Armenian restricted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects taught</th>
<th>1st class</th>
<th>2nd class</th>
<th>3rd class</th>
<th>4th class</th>
<th>5th class</th>
<th>6th class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic language</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic (Arabic)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences (Arabic)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (Arabic)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing and handicrafts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical training</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian language</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic (Armenian)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (Armenian)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian religion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total periods per week</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From 1946 until 1967 the appearance of Arabism as one of the components of Syrian identity affected much of the way the Armenian community functioned. As seen above in tables

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49 Migliorino, (Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria.
50 Migliorino.
3 and 4, during this time frame, Armenians had to change the names of many of their cultural and religious institutions to Arabic titles, they suffered the shutdown of their media and news sources, they were unable, or severely limited, to teach Armenian language and history in schools and instead were mandated to teach the official history distributed by the Syrian government, many of their cultural icons fled to Lebanon, and they were stripped of their representation in the political sphere. As a result of the problematic relations between the state and minorities, the neutral ideology of “we are all Syrians” was adopted. Armenians were made to de-emphasize their cultural distinctiveness, yet they found ways to maintain and continue what elements they could privately. However, this suppression of diversity undeniably diminished their ability to preserve Armenian identity. As one Armenian teacher from Syria puts it, “the old generation used to think in Armenian; the new generations think in Arabic and write in Armenian.”

After the authoritarian regimes, the Assad regime, like the French who had used the Armenians for political gain (often with their willing participation), used them again, capitalizing on their restricted situation and offering them a relaxation of such restrictions in return for their implicit promise to be a politically trustworthy community that supported his regime. This tacit agreement lifted the previous oppressive policies against minorities and allowed for “the recovery of Armenian communal autonomy and a restoral of Armenian institutions to their full, flourishing, capacities.” This sentiment is echoed by Ani Avakian, a 51-year-old Armenian teacher from Aleppo who explains the importance of Armenian education in Syria and being

51 Migliorino, 6.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid, 12.
54 Ibid.
allowed the freedom to discuss Armenian cultural topics, something that wasn’t as possible
during her childhood in Syria.

“Armenian education in the Diaspora has a big responsibility. You should not only teach
Armenian reading and writing or grammar and literature. You have to familiarize them
[students] with the nation’s values and the nation’s individuals who display them, so that
they can feel proud and grounded...If the teacher can dive into cultural topics, especially
because our culture is so beautiful, then you can make the classes more interesting and
make the students more connected to the subject. I tried to do that as an Armenian
teacher for 10 years.”

Ms. Avakian’s ability to infuse Armenian culture into the curriculum was largely a result of the
tacit agreement with the Assad regime. Unfortunately however, the tacit agreement that has
protected Armenian values has also created a dangerous situation in the conflict today. Aleppo is
known as “Haleb Al-Assad,” or, “Assad’s Aleppo,” and the protection the Armenians received
for being a minority group has now indirectly led the regions in which they live to be targets of
opposition violence in Syria. This background will help guide an understanding of what has
shaped the attitudes of Syrian-Armenians toward TJ in Syria, as one cannot understand the
present without looking at the past.

e. Syrian-Armenians and the Syrian conflict today:
   While it is difficult to conceptually divide the Syrian-Armenian experience in the conflict
today from the Syrian experience in general, as they are so intertwined, it is possible to expand
upon the physical destruction done to particular Armenian communities, thereby damaging their
institutions and ultimately, the strength of their communities. Due to the fact that documentation
efforts are still ongoing for all aspects of the Syrian conflict, what follows is by no means a
comprehensive account of all that the community has experienced. However, what it aims to
show is how “the devastation of the war in Syria has shattered the fabric of community life,” and how this has particularly been true for the Armenians.56

Until the beginning of the conflict in Syria, the number of Syrian-Armenians in Syria was estimated to be between 70,000 - 100,000 Armenians.57 As of 2018, according to Armenia’s Ministry of Diaspora, approximately 25,000 Syrian-Armenians have moved to Armenia, with about 3,000 leaving for other destinations, or returning to Syria.58 Other estimates, for example from the UNHCR office in Armenia, maintain there are approximately 15,000 Syrian-Armenians left in Armenia, also as of 2018.59 Estimates for Syrian-Armenians seeking refuge in countries besides Armenia are less comprehensive than those within Armenia, however, as of 2015 it was estimated that about 25,000 Syrian-Armenians had left for Jordan, Lebanon, and other western states.60 In the past four years that number has risen, and although the estimates of the number of Syrian-Armenians currently remaining in Syria vary greatly, they are somewhere between 15,000-30,000. The most conservative estimate using the figures above would amount to 40,000 Syrian-Armenians at the very least who have left their homes and communities behind to start new lives in new countries with new languages, cultures, and many other obstacles, (though most estimates surpass this, claiming that between 50-70,000 Syrian-Armenians have fled Syria).61 Effectively, more than half of the population has been dispersed which many perceive as a threat to their history and traditions.62 This can be tangibly seen in the physical destruction endured.
The Armenian community, throughout Syria, was undoubtedly harmed in the conflict. Armenians were targeted by extremist groups like the Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra, who kidnapped and murdered Armenian community members. One NGO in Armenia, the Aleppo Compatriotic Charitable Organization (Aleppo NGO), has kept a record of the Syrian-Armenians who have been in direct contact with their office, typically for aid in resettling in Armenia. While not at all comprehensive, their records document that between 2011 and 2016, 148 Syrian-Armenians were killed, and 38 Syrian-Armenians were kidnapped or detained.

The Islamic State also destroyed important Armenian sites across Syria, perhaps most notably the Chapel and Monument to the Victims of the Armenian Genocide at Der Zor. In 2014 it was destroyed, in 2016 the area was liberated by the Syrian armed forces, and most recently in 2019, President Assad promised to rebuild the church. However, besides the Armenian Catholic Church of the 40 Martyrs which was destroyed in 2015, but which was recently restored and held its first mass in April 2019, the majority of Armenian churches have not yet seen such support, and remains destroyed. Of Aleppo’s 17 Armenian churches, only seven survived the war – the others were destroyed or burnt down. More specifically, it is known that the St. Rita Tilel Armenian Church in Aleppo was bombed by ISIS, and the Armenian Church of the Holy Cross in Tal Abyad was torched by ISIS as well.

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64 Ibid.
65 Courtesy of Sarkis Balkhian at Aleppo NGO
Evangelical church in Kessab, “fire destroyed the library, floor tiles were smashed, and the pews and cushions all incinerated.” It should be noted though that this is a non-exhaustive list of the churches affected.

Armenian communities in cities like Aleppo were also decimated by shelling that turned tight communities of homes, churches, and schools, to rubble. (See image A below of one Rerooted narrator’s apartment in Aleppo). Armenian residential areas, cemeteries, shops and factories were damaged and looted. Armenian education has also been affected across the country, “11 Armenian schools were destroyed, among them the Karen Jeppe secondary school in Aleppo...which before the war had 1,300 students; now there are only 300.”

Image A:

As this section was meant to demonstrate, the Armenians in Syria have seen many of the institutions that have held them together over the past century deteriorate and grow weaker. As preservation of Armenian identity in Syria was, and is, a necessary component of Armenian longevity in Syria, it is clear that the devastation suffered by Armenian institutions and the community in Syria will play a major role in the individual’s calculations of whether or not to

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73 Ibid.
74 Rerooted
75 “70,000 Syrian Armenians Have Fled during the War, and Few Will Return.”
76 Ibid.
return to a post-conflict Syria. Another factor that will weigh heavily in such calculations is the notion of Armenia being the “homeland.” As the population of Syrians in this study are currently residing in Armenia, their views on what would be necessary to facilitate their return to Syria may be very different from what other Syrian-Armenians feel who fled to countries other than Armenia. The reasons for this will be explored in the following section, however, it likely has to do with the notion of Armenia feeling like a second (or for some, first) home, while other countries do not have that significance for Armenian refugees from Syria. Another potential reason that perspectives might differ is because “the Armenian government grants citizenship and employment rights to Syrian refugees who can prove their Armenian lineage,”77 whereas in other destination host countries they are granted refugee or temporary residency status.

It seems that Armenia has made the greatest effort to welcome Syrian-Armenians (likely due to their shard ethnicity) and this often allows a greater connection to the land and a desire to stay. Armenia has welcomed a greater number of Syrian-Armenians than any other country, and they have established programs that help Syrian-Armenian refugees integrate.78 In response to the influx of Syrian-Armenian refugees to Armenia, the Armenian diaspora alongside the Armenian government “set up various non-profits to provide everything from food to vocational training. Next, Syrian children were allowed to join Armenia’s public schools and the ministry of diaspora set up a fast-track system so refugees could apply for nationality.”79 The Armenian government grants Syrian-Armenians citizenship, there is a handbook for frequently asked legal questions for Syrian-Armenians produced by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,80 and the Syrian-Armenians are seen as “an opportunity to reduce migratory deficit and generate jobs,” which is

78 “This Country Doesn’t Want Its Syrian Refugees to Leave.”
79 Ibid.
contrary to how Lebanon and Jordan have often referred to their refugees, which is as “economic burdens.” While a comparative analysis is not presently possible as I did not interview Syrian-Armenians in countries other than Armenia for this study, the notion of the dual-homeland offers yet another factor to consider in the assessment of Syrian-Armenian attitudes towards redress and justice in post-conflict Syria.

f. Two Homes

“Armenia is like your father, who gave you your name. And Syria is like your mother who took care of you for years.” - Sevan Torosian, 40, Aleppo

The existence of Armenians in Syria depended at all times on their ability to preserve their Armenian identity—to be allowed to freely be both Syrian and Armenian. At least from the last great influx of Armenians during the genocide to the present day, creating and maintaining institutions that would preserve Armenian identity was a priority and a constant concern for Syrian-Armenian communities. Syria was a temporary home where they could be Armenian, but nevertheless, still a home. Interestingly, some scholars maintain that the notion of a temporary home came with the confident belief that the Armenians would soon return to their historic homelands. Sanjian writes, “The élite saw the condition of exile as temporary and expressed confidence that it would ultimately end with a return en masse to the liberated homeland in Eastern Turkey under future, more favourable, political conditions.”

As the Armenian institutions in Syria were the ones preserving the Armenian communities (either forever or just until it was “their time” to go back) it is understandable then that the main source of indignation for many Armenians were the oppressive restrictions on these institutions. Migliorino posits that this focus is due to the fact that institutions like Armenian political parties “connect the community internally and with the external, transnational Armenian world, providing for some

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81 “This Country Doesn’t Want Its Syrian Refugees to Leave.”
of its needs. By the continuing sense of affiliation, it refers to the feeling of belonging to an Armenian cultural sub-world."\textsuperscript{83} Armenians were allowed to live in both worlds when there was not a repressive government, and this can help explain their favorable dispositions toward the Al-Assad regime, beginning in the 1970s.

Starting with Hafez Al-Assad and continuing with current President Bashar Al-Assad, the regime maintained a policy of communal solidarity instituting a liberal interpretation of the restrictive rules. Liberties were granted, such as blurring the distinction between weekly periods dedicated to religion and Armenian language, unrestricted exposure to Armenian music and culture, and non-intrusive, tolerant, principals who oversaw the schools. This involvement of the Armenians in wider diaspora activities in addition to their freedoms within their own communities was arguably the most the regime could allow “without undermining [its] main, formal, legitimizing political discourse.”\textsuperscript{84} Required to follow nationalist curriculums, while also allowed to maintain elements of Armenian culture, the Syrian-Armenian community created many ways to survive, and thrive, at this intersection. Some tangible representations of this dual identity could be seen in Armenian schools. For example, while Syrian symbols like flags are necessary, Armenian symbols are tolerated as well. In one Armenian classroom, a portrait of Assad hung next to Tigran the Great (a first century Armenian king).\textsuperscript{85} Another example is that at school performances, students sing both the Syrian and Armenian national anthems.\textsuperscript{86} Impressionistic and anecdotal material collected through my interviews suggests that striking this balance was essential for the Syrian-Armenians while they were in Syria, but also as a condition for return today. Different people seemed satisfied with varying levels of striking this balance,

\textsuperscript{83} Migliorino, (Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria, 193
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 181
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid. 209
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 209
and this affected whether or not they felt that Syria was a true home for them, which in turn affected their level of desire to return.

For those who did feel a satisfactory balance was struck, Syria tended to feel more like home. Many of these people stated that they were happy to live a publicly Syrian life but a privately Armenian one because of the gratitude they felt towards Syria. As Migliorino explains, for many years, “the approach of the Armenian nationalist parties towards Syria was generally one of sincere loyalty, combining a sense of gratitude towards the countries and peoples which had in some way provided a new home to the Armenians and an interest of maintaining a system of institutions that offered a number of advantages for Armenian communal life.” As the quote above demonstrates, people felt that Syria was a home for them, while still maintaining allegiance and loyalty to Armenia. The quote at the beginning of this section, in which Sevan calls Syria a “mother” who cared for and raised her, as well as the quote below, seem to suggest that the loyalty and love for Syria that many Armenians hold stem from Syria’s past care and protection of the Armenians. These people seemed to be more interested in justice in post-conflict Syria, mentioning that it was still a home for them, a home that took care of them 100 years ago that they now need to preserve a century later. For many, like Vicky, whose quote is below, considering Armenia a homeland did not detract from the allegiance they felt to Aleppo.

“For me I feel like I have come back to our homeland, although I miss Aleppo a lot. Not Syria because Syria is just a country to me. Aleppo is my birthplace and I miss it a lot...At the beginning I didn’t feel like Yerevan was home. But when I went out of Yerevan and came back, I knew that this is home too. Now I have two homes, Aleppo and Yerevan.”
Vicky Masrie, 25, Aleppo

However, not everyone felt this way and for many other interviewees in this study, the idea that they were “home” in Armenia had a visible effect on many of their responses for what a

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87 Ibid, 193
88 “Rerooted.”
post-conflict Syria could or should look like. For many, this lead to detached suggestions for rebuilding Syrian society because they either, a) never felt that Syria was fully their homeland to begin with, or felt that they didn’t fully belong, or b) they do not anticipate returning because they feel there is nothing left for them there and are living fulfilled, communal lives in Armenia. These results will be expanded upon in section six, however, here it is important to briefly discuss the concept of “exilic nationalism” and how it affected Syrian-Armenian identity. While the Armenians have participated in the nationalist agenda of Syria, “these experiences have not eroded the strong communal solidarity that binds them.” In fact, there were at least two times in the past century which encouraged a “phase of resurgence of Armenian nationalism” and “contributed to the reshaping of their contemporary Syrian-Armenian identities.”

The first event was in 1965 when Soviet Armenia, on the 50th anniversary of the start of the Armenian genocide, allowed the first authorized public commemoration of the genocide. They also subsequently allowed the construction of the Tsitsernakaberd genocide memorial, and a monument commemorating the significant 1918 battle of Sardarabad that stopped Ottoman advances into Eastern Armenia. This signaled to Armenians in the diaspora that Armenia had not been entirely consumed by Soviet nationalism and it allowed for new levels of engagement between Armenia and the diaspora. It marked a strong turning point for many in the Armenian diaspora community in Syria in that they “began to be regarded as parts of a permanent diasporic Armenian transnation, rather than splinters of a nation in exile.” This prospect of a permanent diaspora community in Syria was undoubtedly strengthened by the fact that the Assad regime that came to power five years later allowed for Armenian engagement in transnational

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89 Migliorino, (Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria, 190
90 Ibid., 149
91 Ibid., 181
92 Ibid., 149
93 Ibid., 149
diasporan networks. The favorable policies towards the Armenians from the Assad regime that began on the heels of decades of repression helped the Armenians in Syria feel that they truly could live at this intersection of being Syrian and Armenian. Assad’s policy of “Kulna Suriyyin,”94 (we are all Syrian) strengthened their allegiance to their Syrian identity (by removing it from the more restrictive pan-Arab ideology) and also allowed them to engage in these new spheres where transnational Armenian activity was newly occurring. However, the next event gave Armenians in Syria a chance to see what life would be like from within Armenia, and this contributed to the shift toward feelings of exilic nationalism.

This second event was the collapse of the Soviet Union, which led to the independence of the Republic of Armenia, and also raised the question of Karabakh and its independence.95 These events led to the availability of TV broadcast from Armenia, created more inviting circumstances for diasporans to visit, and increased the level of diasporan engagement with, and a desire for, being involved in the development of the country. There was a renewed connection with the Armenian world outside Syria and it seemed that for the first time, Armenians felt they had a home they could “go back to.”96 This notion that Syrian-Armenians were members of a nation in exile has surfaced in a number of Rerooted interviews, as well as surveys for this research, and I think it is perhaps one of the strongest reasons for why many of those who believe they are “back home” in Armenia did not fully engage with the questions regarding repair or justice for a post-conflict Syria. One of the responses that captures this sentiment is the following:

“If it was Armenia instead of Syria, I maybe wouldn’t have left. But Syria does not belong to Armenians and harm will be inflicted on them [if they stay].” - March 2019

94 Migliorino, “Kulna Suriyyin?”
95 Migliorino, (Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria.,181
96 This is a common phrase from narrators who expressed feeling like they were “back” home, even though they had never been to Armenia, and disregarding the divide between Western & Eastern Armenia
While many chose not to fully engage with these questions because they did not anticipate returning to Syria since they were now “home,” others chose not to engage deeply for another reason. These people did not feel their responses were worthy of being counted as ‘Syrian’ or representative of what ‘Syrians’ might want. One respondent says:

“There cannot be justice, at least not for us—it is not our country, we were refugees there and we are refugees here, we’ve just gone from being one refugee to another, this is not our justice to attain.” - March 2019 interviewee, 24 years old

This was one of the most interesting type of responses because most of the people expressing this sentiment were born in Syria, as were their parents, and they lived their whole lives in Syrian communities. Yet, the fact that they still feel removed from this society and thus undeserving of something like justice for abuses of war crimes that have affected them and their families, is striking. What does that say about ideas of rootedness and identity and how those perceptions impact the rights we believe one deserves? Aside from notions of rootedness, this kind of response toward justice might also be explained by the belief that Armenians were not truly victimized in this conflict. From table three of annex C, it is evident that the majority of informants believed that themselves, their family, and/or, the Armenians of Syria had been victimized during the conflict in Syria. However, upon elaboration, the common understanding of being “victimized” within the Syrian conflict largely had to do with having to relocate. Many expressed they felt they, and the Armenians at large, did not really suffer (“at least not to the same extent as others did or as their ancestors did in the genocide”97) in this conflict, and thus that influenced their perceptions of adequate redress and justice in post-conflict Syria. This can be seen in the quote below:

“The Armenians suffered the least. Justice should not be different for them than for other groups in Syria just because they are minorities. We can add that Syria was not our pure home as much as it was for the Syrian people, so I think it was easier for us to just

97 Rerooted
abandon our homes, but it wasn’t as easy for the Syrians, the Arabs, the Kurds…” - March 2019 Interviewee, 23 years old

While the idea of Syria being home could provoke nostalgia and a sense of gratitude and desire for justice in Syria, it is evident that the notion of Syria being “home” was rejected by many and this had a visible effect on their views and responses for justice in post-conflict Syria.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{98} While I cannot determine whether or not this was a constant trend since I can think of an equal number of examples for both sides, an interesting thought for further analysis might be to examine if the younger generations felt like Armenia was more their home than Syria. Perhaps because they were born in a time when relations were open with Armenia (as it was already independent from the USSR), they might feel a deeper connection to it than the older generations. However conversely, perhaps the older generations were less tolerant of the diversity in Syria and on the heels of the genocide preferred to be in Armenia than in Syria, whereas the younger generations have learned to adapt to, and appreciate, the diversity in Syria and potentially even miss it while living in Armenia, which is largely a homogenous country.
IV. Theoretical Framework 2: Transitional Justice

Foundational Literature on Transitional Justice:

In order to understand what kind of transitional justice mechanisms could be feasible in Syria, or desired by the Syrian-Armenian community, it is important to comprehend what the goals of transitional justice are, what mechanisms currently exist for attaining it, and its weaknesses and areas for improvement. This is also critical for understanding the efforts studied or carried out thus far for transitional justice regarding the Armenian Genocide.

There are different definitions of Transitional Justice (TJ) however scholars mostly agree that transitional justice refers to “measures that are implemented in order to redress the legacies of massive serious crimes under international law.” Neil Kritz argues that the four basic objectives of any TJ program are: “(1) Determining the truth by establishing a record of human rights abuses, (2) Obtaining justice, (3) Ensuring meaningful democratic reform, entrenchment of the rule of law within society, and building a society with institutions that ensure that the kinds of abuses being dealt with will not recur, and lastly, (4) Achieving durable peace with assurance that a return to violence is fairly unlikely.” He argues that these are the standards by which all TJ policies should be evaluated. This study has used these goals as a baseline and has attempted to determine whether or not they are reflected on the ground when members of the Syrian-Armenian community are asked what they feel the goals or end-outcomes of justice and redress should be in Syria. It has also attempted to distinguish which mechanisms are preferred.

There is a multiplicity of theories and proposals for transitional justice mechanisms, however the literature mostly agrees on certain central categories. Typically, TJ mechanisms seek to

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99 It is important to note that although I am referencing the transitional justice literature in this section, it is difficult to know if this will be the outcome for Syria post-conflict because it is possible there is no governmental or official transition. For that reason throughout this piece I have been using the term “justice” instead of “transitional justice.”
promote reconciliation, which can be done using methods such as public education, community
level initiatives, use of rituals, development of new symbols and images, and recommendations
for future activities, typically influenced by the attitudes of perpetrators and beneficiaries. The
two main debates in this sphere regard the difference between peace and justice, and similarly,
between restorative and retributive justice. Mechanisms such as national criminal procedures and
the creation of international tribunals feed a more retributive sense of justice; however, the
search for truth and for peaceful co-habitation of previously conflicting groups prescribes a need
for mechanisms like truth commissions (see section seven for the Syrian-Armenian context). The
give and take between goals of peace and justice is reflected in the decision of which TJ
mechanisms to use. The debate is by no means settled nor will it be settled by this study. While
some scholars point to the importance of restorative justice, which concentrates on the “healing
of the victims and the rehabilitation of the perpetrators, [where] the aim is not to punish but to
repair crimes and ultimately to reconcile victims and perpetrators,” those same scholars admit
that, “contrary to the idea that trials are centered on perpetrators only, experience shows that
most of the time, victims of war crimes strive for justice in its retributive sense: this speaks in
favor of the symbolic importance of trials.” The survey in this study included options for both
types of justice using different mechanisms; while there was no conclusive evidence that one was
preferred over the other, in sections six and seven I elaborate upon the mechanisms the
participants chose most often, and their anecdotal explanations for not choosing the others. In the
case of the Syrian-Armenians, many of these categories are relevant and, as will be discussed in
section six, a vast range of mechanisms were selected as desired for achieving justice in both the
Genocide and Syrian conflict cases.

In addition to the different goals and mechanisms of TJ, there are also different types of justice that result from achieving those goals. Gibson writes that the four different types of justice are: distributive, procedural, retributive, and restorative. He draws an interesting conclusion, suggesting that whether a person tolerated amnesty in South Africa depended in part on whether other forms of justice were present. This is important for the present study because certain types of justice, like retributive, are no longer feasible for the Armenian Genocide and this lack of accountability for those responsible for the crimes committed against their ancestors seem to have impacted the study participants’ attitudes towards justice in Syria, especially with the accountability climate that is so prevalent today. How the lack of justice for the genocide impacted responses in the present study will be discussed in section 6, however, back to Gibson’s point, this historical context is important to analyze because different types of justice can interact with one another to define what is desired in a post-conflict transitional justice situation. Since retributive justice is highly unlikely for the genocide, Armenians may only be able to achieve a form of “rough justice” in which they settle for whatever justice can be done, albeit imperfect, as opposed to allowing injustice to remain unaddressed. This is the case in many transitional justice efforts in post-atrocity societies because the repair can never be proportional to the harm done. As Barkan notes, “redress is always symbolic relative to the level of destruction and to the resources available to the country.” In most cases it can only ever be symbolic because the harm is too great to ever afford any type of satisfactory repair, thus leaving victims in a position to accept a ‘rough justice.’ Furthermore, any type of delayed justice is likely to be more symbolic than reparative because the longer justice is denied, the less likely it is to be

105 Ibid., 547.
This is due in part to some of the very real limitations like the inability to try perpetrators in court because they have died, or the inability to elicit first-hand testimony because there are no more witnesses or victims. Including questions that could reflect upon this scholarly literature regarding mechanisms that facilitate justice, albeit delayed, was important for me. Within my population it seemed for many that being denied certain types of justice 100 years ago led them to assess justice differently in the present context, as will be described in section six. This finding is supported by other TJ work with populations that have gone through multiple conflicts without justice and where the lack of justice for the first conflict made the participants less demanding for justice in the second context.

While for some of my participants justice for the genocide was more pressing than justice for the conflict in Syria, others felt the opposite was true. This could be explained by Williams’ argument that, “the moral weight of claims for redress may fade over time, because the class of people harmed by an injustice eventually recovers or because more pressing claims of justice have since emerged.” Section six will present more in depth findings on this matter, analyzing the truth of these trends for this population. However, the answers are inconclusive. For some, the damage done to Syrian-Armenians during the conflict in Syria constituted more pressing claims for justice. The urgency of the current conflict contributed to some focusing their attention on the present day and not thinking as much about the genocide. For others, it reminded them of that past injustice, further fueling indignation.

One last important piece of literature upon which to situate this study is that on the factors that affect attitudes toward transitional justice. In general, this literature suggests that there are three types of determinants of attitudes towards TJ: 1) individual factors, 2) socialization, and 3) 

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108 Ibid., 8
110 Williams, Nagy, and Elster, Transitional Justice, 11.
contextual factors.\textsuperscript{111} In this study, it is across these factors that comparisons will be made and analyses drawn. Individual factors refer to elements such as, education level, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, and an ideological connection to the past regime. Elements of socialization refer to victimization, early politicization, and family ideology. A survey conducted by the Center for Sociological Investigations in Spain (CIS) included many of these factors such as victimization of the respondent during the Franco regime and preferences toward different forms of TJ. One question for example reads: “The authorities that violated human rights under the Franco regime should be brought to justice.”\textsuperscript{112} The respondent is then asked to select if they are in agreement, neutral, or in disagreement with the statement. Other questions touch on different aspects of transitional justice, such as memorialization, which asks, “There should be a monument dedicated to all the victims of the Civil War,”\textsuperscript{113} with the same answers as choices.

The CIS survey is exemplary in that it addresses different attitudes towards transitional justice while also taking into account all the features of the determinants 1-3 listed above through background questions at the beginning of the survey. This study aims to replicate something similar to gauge the differences between Syrian-Armenians in their responses towards transitional justice in Syria and what redress might look like for them. Much of the present study, including the survey tool, was inspired by the CIS survey and study. The third determinant will be of critical importance in the context of the Armenians in that it addresses contextual factors such as whether a person lives in a conflict zone or not, or whether they belong to previously repressed identities or not. Importantly, the author notes, “whether citizens belong to previously repressed ethnic identities seem to play a fundamental role in predicting one’s attitudes toward


\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.}
TJ mechanisms.” There is further support that overall, victimization leads to support for reparation policies. This was critical for the Armenians and their attitudes towards TJ as they have been victims of past repression due to their ethnicity, in both Syria and the Ottoman Empire, and this is something that must be incorporated into any type of questioning conducted for this study. Ultimately, as the focus of transitional justice is the “repair of prior wrongs” which can be achieved through both retributive and restorative justice, section six will delve into an analysis of the mechanisms selected by participants in an attempt to understand how support for certain types of justice are influenced by demographic, contextual, and social factors.

**Transitional Justice in Syria:**

In the early years of the conflict in Syria, many organizations, both international and national, focused on drafting transitional justice proposals and creating roadmaps to help lay the groundwork for a new Syria. However, this was pursued under the expectation that there would be a government transition in Syria after the conflict. These approaches assumed that the future political arrangement would not include President Assad. Now that such a governmental shift is an unlikely outcome of the war, scholars and activists are reorienting their efforts toward new goals, which makes it even more important to work with local communities so their views can inform the new efforts. The remainder of this section will outline some of the more prominent recommendations for justice in a post-conflict Syria. I will then return to these suggestions within my own analysis of whether the Armenian community thinks similarly.

The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) has recently produced a report outlining how, in the absence of any foreseeable TJ, documentation efforts can help potential

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117 Ibid., 581.
future TJ processes. The examples they provide are representative of what might be important indicators of “justice” in a post-conflict setting. Many of the questions in the ICTJ’s qualitative surveys aim to elicit opinions, which are centered on conditions for return, resettlement, and rebuilding of communities. This was the result of the ICTJ adapting to the reality that most displaced Syrians are concerned with restoring security before attaining criminal justice (which is similar to what my respondents felt as we will see in section six). In attempting to determine what security might entail, the ICTJ has focused its efforts on asking those Syrian refugees on the ground what a post-conflict Syria should look like, while simultaneously working to strengthen the roles of different accountability mechanisms at the international level. As one example, property issues typically came up as a critical concern for feeling safe in a post-conflict Syria and wanting to return. The report states, “recent studies have shown that [resolving] housing, land, and property issues are seen as a key condition for return among [Syrian] refugees in Lebanon, while civil documentation, like birth registration, could help to ensure that repatriation processes are easier to implement.”119 It is important for groups like the ICTJ to advance on initiatives like these, acting on the seeming priorities of victims. In addition to their own teams, they also have a range of tools at their disposal through international mechanisms to achieve justice and security.

These international mechanisms include the International Criminal Court (ICC), the principle of universal jurisdiction, the UN’s 2011 Commission of Inquiry (COI- created to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law since March 2011 in the Syrian Arab Republic) and the General Assembly’s 2016 International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to assist in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for serious crimes in Syria. Their simultaneous focus on strengthening such mechanisms while broadening

the concept of justice for victims of human rights violations beyond criminal justice is what I hoped to replicate in my own study—determining what types of justice are desired and how the international community can work alongside civil society to deliver them.

Other groups like Human Rights Watch (HRW) are also contributing to transitional justice efforts in, and for, Syria in different ways, with a large emphasis on criminal justice for Syria. The International Justice (IJ) division of HRW works with the regional researchers for Syria and takes their research to lobby government officials or diplomats to project those research findings into the media and highlight the recommendations that they, and others, are making to provide some kind of redress. This may be in the form of criminal justice, sanctions of some type, travel bans, arms embargoes, or something as simple as asking for a condemnation from the UN.\textsuperscript{120} HRW pushes for particular justice solutions to address the needs and desires that are being documented by researchers in Syria, organizations like the ICTJ, reports from the aforementioned UN mechanisms, and efforts like this study. The IJ division is mostly focused on criminal accountability for atrocity crimes: crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes, where the international community has agreed there must be accountability for them.\textsuperscript{121}

In an informal conversation, a member of the IJ department shared that

“For a long time we were pressing the Security Council to give the ICC a mandate in Syria, but that wasn't possible because of the dynamics in the council. Russia has really blocked many efforts to allow scrutiny of the situation and because of that we turned our sights to the UN General Assembly (GA) where we pressed for the GA to establish a team of investigators so that at the very least there could be something in place that would be investigating these crimes at a criminal standard to avoid a lot of the evidence of the abuses being lost, memories fading, etc., and to analyze them so they could act as a foundation for prosecutors who may be looking into these crimes now, or for some future date when the political picture allows for a court to be set up.”\textsuperscript{122}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{120} International Justice Employee at Human Rights Watch, Phone Conversation, March 27, 2019.} \footnote{\textsuperscript{121} "Defining the Four Mass Atrocity Crimes: Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect," accessed May 7, 2019, http://www.globalr2p.org/publications/688.} \footnote{\textsuperscript{122} In conversation with HRW IJ employee March 2019}
The same researcher I spoke with from the IJ department expressed that criminal accountability in Syria is important because it can yield many benefits such as restoring the dignity of victims, providing a channel for condemnation, and possibly deterring future violations. Such documentation and advocacy efforts for criminal accountability can also contribute to the historical record that can protect against revisionism for those who want to deny that certain atrocities have been committed. This effort can also include institutional reform, reparations, and more, all working in combination to hopefully move the society forward.

In another informal conversation, a Syria researcher at HRW described the essential elements for a workable post-war Syria as follows: (1) Ensure refugees and all other displaced have a home to return to, (2) Reveal what happened to the disappeared, and (3) Progress on justice. In terms of the last point, the researcher says that many institutions are still intact that allowed crimes in Syria to happen, so structural changes to the institutions will help ensure these violations are not repeated. The three generalized recommendations above were created from consultations with Syrian society members regarding whether or not the Syrian respondents they interviewed wanted to return to Syria, and if so, what was stopping them. They also looked at what kinds of accountability efforts interviewees wanted to see, particularly for detentions and disappearances. This documentation also included asking if respondents have experienced some of the major human rights violations that have characterized the conflict, such as torture inside prisons, loss of a loved one, being displaced because of the violence, airstrikes, shelling, and the use of prohibited violence, just to name a few. This study has taken a similar approach, especially in trying to understand, for example, Syrian-Armenian attitudes towards criminal accountability (see table 10 in annex C).

123 Phone Conversation with Human Rights Watch Syria Researcher, April 5, 2019.
Another in depth piece written by Radwan Ziadeh, founder of the Damascus Center for Human Rights, outlines many efforts towards transitional justice and recommendations for the new Syrian regime and the international community in the process of reparation.\textsuperscript{124} Ziadeh proposes general courses of action and then details five key avenues of transitional justice to ultimately create a comprehensive national reconciliation program that can help Syria navigate the post-conflict arena. The author notes that Syrians, not foreigners, should be making the key decisions, and this is in line with suggestions in other literature that a legitimate policy will be one that is “adopted with full cognizance of past human rights violations and through a body of democratically elected representatives, or by other means reflecting the sovereign will of the nation.”\textsuperscript{125} In addition to prescribing certain actions, the author describes two branches of efforts carried out by the Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies that are dedicated to achieving justice and redress in post-conflict Syria.\textsuperscript{126} One is the Association for the Defense of Victims of the Syrian Revolution, “which will serve as the voice of justice of the conflict,” and the other is the National Preparatory Committee for Transitional Justice, “which will develop programs, perceptions, and policies necessary for the future transitional justice phase.”\textsuperscript{127} Each of these initiatives run by different organizations is important because they bring the voices of different communities into the discussion for justice and help create a more comprehensive post-conflict plan for redress.

The latter branch is of particular importance in this study because by delineating the mechanisms of transitional justice proposed by policy makers and other officials, it allowed me the opportunity to present these same options to my participants on the ground to assess if their

\textsuperscript{126} Ziadeh, 98.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{i}bid, 98
preferences are in line with what is being recommended. In their broadest senses, the five general realms are: 1) Fact Finding and Commissions of Inquiry; 2) Filing Lawsuits; 3) Compensation; 4) Institution Building for the Future; and 5) Memorialization.\textsuperscript{128} Since this seems to be the way the justice efforts for Syria have been delineated thus far in the past few years, my work uses these categories to add the Armenian perspective, so that their attitudes can be more readily incorporated into larger national and international efforts.

Lastly, the policy suggestions and TJ efforts for Syria that explicitly distinguish between desired and effective redress for minority populations and for majority population are very important for my research. In his, \textit{Post-Assad Syria}, Serwer emphasizes the attention that should be paid to minorities.\textsuperscript{129} Importantly, Serwer includes concern for the minorities in saying that the groups that provide the forces required for international aid and peacekeeping must not be the Arab League or Turkish troops because “they will be overwhelmingly Sunni which will not reassure Alewites and other Syrian minorities.”\textsuperscript{130} This is an important point that I have incorporated in my interviews and surveys by asking which countries (if any at all) they felt were responsible for contributing to the severity and duration of the conflict in Syria. I followed up with questions about reconstruction in Syria, asking which countries (if any) should be a part of the effort to help rebuild Syria after the conflict, and which countries (if any) should provide compensation to the victims and/or financial aid to the reconstruction process. An analysis of these responses can be found in section six, under theme three. Responses varied but it was important to gauge whether members of the Syrian-Armenian community felt similar to the Alawites who Serwer hypothesized might not feel reassured with the presence of certain international actors. Commenting on the tensions expressed, my study can add empirical weight

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\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 99
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 10.
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to Serwer’s call for caution, and hopefully help ensure that the mechanisms put in place for post-conflict Syria seem fair to all.
V. Methodology

a. Research Approach and Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative survey instrument, supplemented with semi-structured interviews, and in five cases, in-depth oral history interviews. The survey (included in appendices A and B) captured demographic information as well as attitudes toward redress, justice, and securing stability in Syria. Much of the literature that looks at questions regarding determining attitudes towards transitional justice utilize a mixed methodology which include survey research supplemented by in-depth oral history interviews. Some of my survey questions were inspired by examples such as Lara Nettelfield’s book regarding attitudes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the CIS survey regarding attitudes in Spain, towards transitional justice in their post-conflict contexts. Other survey questions, particularly related to desired justice for the Armenian genocide, were inspired by the 2015 Reparations Report. The target size of this study was 60 Syrian-Armenian survey participants from a population of the approximately 17,000 Syrian-Armenians currently living in Armenia. The questionnaire includes questions about factors that can affect attitudes towards redress such as, contextualization factors, socialization factors, and individual factors. The semi-structured interview and oral history supplemental section included open-ended questions expanding upon the questions in the survey in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the attitudes expressed by the participants. Both of these methods (the semi-structured interview and the oral history life interview) are very useful for the type of research in this study because they allow a person more flexibility in the interview, and make it more likely that the narrator can speak about what is

131 “CIS-Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas Ficha Del Estudio”.
important to them, empowering them more than other forms of storytelling. Furthermore, the type of responses that this study seeks to elicit are not easily captured in a multiple choice selection, or a one sentence elaboration beneath their answers. Thus, the explanation provided in many of these supplemental interviews were critical to analysis.

The study was carried out between March 14th and March 25th, 2019, in Yerevan, Armenia. The study includes survey data from 52 Syrian-Armenian participants: 23 female and 29 male. The average age of the participants is 37 years old, but ages ranged from 19 years old to 92 years old. 41 participants come from Aleppo and the others are from Damascus, Kessab, and Latakia. On average, participants had been living in Armenia for about five years, leaving Syria around 2012. In terms of citizenship, 25 participants had Armenian citizenship, 48 had Syrian citizenship, 9 had temporary residency status, and 5 had refugee status.

A timeline of my progress is as follows: I first reviewed primary sources published in the Rerooted Archive and other testimony I was able to gather through NGOs in Armenia (such as Aleppo NGO) that have collected some Syrian-Armenian interviews as well. Then, once I began my interviews, I used the snowball sampling method which entails contacting new participants through word of mouth, or reference, from current participants, to find new participants for answering my questionnaires. For the semi-structured interviews, and oral history interviews, I determined who would participate in those based on who had time for a longer interview process (lasting most likely from 1-2 hours). I interviewed 15 people in the semi-structured interview format (lasting about one hour in addition to the hour it took to

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137 One reason this number could be lower than expected is because there was a large group of males between the ages of 18 and 30 who chose to forgo Armenian citizenship to avoid Armenia’s mandatory military service
138 “Rerooted”
conduct the survey), and five people for the oral history interviews in addition to the surveys, lasting about 4-5 hours each in total.

**b. Researcher Reflection: My Positionality**

As the researcher is the “primary instrument for data collection and analysis,” it is important to reflect upon how my prior fieldwork, ties to the community, education, and background might have influenced my assumptions, reaction to answers, and potential leading of participants to certain responses. For two summers prior to this research, I had been involved with the Syrian-Armenian community in Armenia collecting individual testimonies for the Rerooted Archive, a project I co-founded along with Ani Schug. Many of the survey participants were previous narrators for the Rerooted archive. Similarly, some of those who were not narrators in the past, were nonetheless Syrian-Armenians I had met in the previous two summers. Those who were not known contacts typically had some connection to someone I had known in the past. Additionally, I was able to recruit participants through phone lists provided by Aleppo NGO. The fact that I had already had in depth contact with this community helped me access research sites, find participants, and build trust within our interactions. Additionally, my background as a young woman, a student, my concentration in human rights, and the fact that this study was solely conducted for my own research and not in affiliation with any other organization or company, greatly helped participants to view me as non-threatening and increased their willingness to participate, I believe. Overall, I believe the power dynamic between the researcher and the participants was constantly balanced, even with the presence of a translator, often making it two people interviewing one, which has the potential to be intimidating. This is largely because I knew most of the participants, but also because I

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conscientiously tried to balance the power dynamic by ensuring the participants that the entire survey is anonymous and that it is within their discretion which questions they’d like to answer and how they’d like to answer. I made sure they knew they could stop at any time and ask me to discard their results at any time. I also described the research topic and questions in depth, allowed the participants to choose the location sites and time for their interviews, and affirmed that the main intention of the research was to incorporate their voices into a greater analysis of different Syrian communities regarding what post-conflict Syria should look like. With this understanding, almost everyone I approached had no problem participating.

I also believe that our shared cultural background as Armenians was advantageous to the study because the participants viewed me as an insider. However, I cannot deny that my background as an American (having been born in the US and having lived there 23 years, even though my parents and ancestors are all Armenian) might have hindered some honesty in the responses, even though the surveys were anonymous. I felt that each time someone wanted to place blame on the US for the current conflict in Syria, knowing that I was from the US influenced the answer. Some participants would directly tell me that “your country just needs to leave our people alone,” and from there the conversation would sometimes spiral into a complaint of the many times the US has intervened in other countries’ affairs. Other participants would tip-toe around the idea that the US had any responsibility in the conflict, worrying that they might offend or insult me by saying something. This is something I had not anticipated because it was not something that had ever happened before in my interviews, however, that might be because the interviews for the Rerooted archive do not delve into political questions as this survey did.
Another problem I encountered a few times was not being Syrian or Middle Eastern. Sometimes people would question my interest in this community, wondering why I was so curious about the experience of Syrian-Armenians. This set a bit of an uncomfortable tone in the midst of interviews, but in all such instances, when I explained the relevance of documenting Armenian experiences of the Syrian conflict for larger documentation efforts for Syria, and the relevance of such documentation for a community (the Armenians) who lack such official documentation of their past (i.e. the genocide), such tensions dissipated. The more common response from participants though, was that they were proud that an American-Armenian cared about this issue and were glad someone was including the Armenian perspective, amongst the larger narrative, ultimately because they were proud to be Syrian and didn’t want the Armenian history or perspective to be erased from that region, a place they call home. All of this being said, I must acknowledge though that it is true—I am not an expert on Syria or the Middle East, nor am I an expert on justice or the law. Thus, I could not approach this study with the critical eye that someone deeply immersed in these fields could. However, as a graduate student with an academic background in atrocity crimes and two years of experience with oral history interviews regarding the conflict in Syria, I was able to approach this study, including data collection and analysis, with a strong background knowledge of the conflict from the Armenian perspective, and through the lens of human rights. Perhaps if an anthropologist or Middle Eastern Studies historian had conducted this study, the results and emphasis would have been different—there was surely enough rich information available for a different analysis and outcome emphasizing many different aspects of the Armenian experience in Syria. However, this study was approached through a more practical lens looking at tangible recommendations and expressed
perceptions of what a post-conflict Syria should look like and that is the priority of the analysis described in the subsequent sections.

c. Challenges and Limitations:

The challenges and limitations I encountered during my research period can be categorized in two ways - technical/preparatory, and contextual. The technical limitations are ones I perhaps could and should have anticipated. For example, my sample size was limited because I did not anticipate that administering the survey would take over an hour in almost every instance. Additionally, I did not anticipate having to verbally administer the survey to many of the participants as well. This increased the amount of time spent with each participant, and limited the number of people I could reach. Another technical limitation was that some of my surveys were inconsistent. For example, the Armenian surveys asked people to rank their answers to some questions, whereas the English surveys asked others just to circle all the answers they felt were appropriate, without ranking. Because I was not administering the English surveys verbally (as those were often given to university age students who did not request my assistance), I did not notice this inconsistency until I returned and began inputting the data into my spreadsheet. Another limitation was that, for the surveys I did not conduct verbally, I did not read participants’ answers until after the interview was over, and it was apparent that some people had not understood the scope of the question. For example, when I asked what it would look like for Syria to be repaired, many people wrote, “I cannot picture it,” or when I asked what it would take for them to return, many people wrote, “I won’t return.” While these are important answers that give insight into the mindset of many community members, I wonder if I had been more closely following them while answering the questions, if I could have asked them to elaborate on these questions more, getting a more in-depth view into what is necessary for repair
even for those people who most doubt it will occur. Lastly, question #47 on the Armenian survey version was translated to ask if people would “support a Syria-wide repatriation program regardless of ethnicity,” instead of what the English version asked which was, “a Syria-wide reparations program, regardless of ethnicity.” I only found this out in the middle of my interviews, by which time half of the participants in the overall study had answered the question with the understanding that I was asking about repatriation.

In terms of context, I think one of the greatest limitations I faced was the great variety in the understanding and perceptions of the cause of the conflict, why the war is still ongoing, and what the government and different stakeholders in the conflict want/believe. It was difficult to find a common understanding or answer to these questions, and so I faced limitations in my analysis when trying to assess general attitudes toward, and desires for, a post-conflict Syria. Through a type of ethnographic field notes method of coding for themes, I was able to find commonalities, however, these differences in perception are perhaps data points in themselves demonstrating the lack of consensus in this conflict, and thus, the difficulties that lie ahead in reconstructing a unified Syria. There are also other conceptual concerns that I am not sure I can get the answer to at this point. For example, when I asked participants to circle the choices that would make them feel like there has been justice with regard to the Armenian Genocide, and then again with the Syrian conflict, how much of what they circled is what they actually wanted and believed would be helpful, and how many did they select just because it was there and it seemed like a fine idea? Alternatively, some people only chose one option from those long lists of justice mechanisms, and I wonder if those people truly only believed that one mechanism would make them feel there was justice, or if they misunderstood and thought they were only

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allowed to select one (even though the instructions say, please circle all which you think would contribute to this). Lastly, when administering the surveys verbally, and while conducting the semi-structured interviews, questions arose that I would have liked to ask all participants. For example, when I asked question 49 (4), regarding whether they felt there should be a tribunal created for anyone guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria, I only was able to ask those who did the supplemental interviews if they felt the tribunal should be created as a hybrid court, a solely international court, or a solely domestic court. The answers were enlightening and very practical, which could have been useful particularly in the recommendations section of a report like this. Another example is when I asked those who selected that they felt the world should know the truth about the conflict in Syria to elaborate on why they think knowing the truth is important. Answers to this question were enlightening as well and could be useful in understanding whether mechanisms such as truth commissions might be necessary. These are just a few examples of questions, which I did not anticipate when creating the survey tool and interview questions, and thus in asking them, I only attained incomplete data from a subsection of the already small sample group.
VI. Data Results and Analysis

This section presents three broad themes and sub-themes that encapsulate the attitudes of the 52 Syrian-Armenian participants in my study toward redress, reconstruction, and justice in a post-conflict Syria. These themes have been crafted through an assessment of responses to questions such as, “which of the following do you believe should currently have the Syrian government’s attention?” and “what types of conditions do you feel would be necessary for you to be able to return/integrate/resettle and begin to rebuild your life and community in Syria?” In line with the findings from the ICTJ that “most displaced Syrians are concerned with restoring security”¹⁴² before attaining any other type of justice (be it criminal or other), the priority for the Syrian-Armenian community members who participated in my study was just that: ending the war and ensuring safety and stability. The sub-themes included in ensuring that safety and stability include actions that provide returnees (and those who remained in Syria for the duration of the conflict) with the essentials for an adequate life, including housing, electricity, and water. It also includes rebuilding infrastructure, reopening community centers and above all, ending the war.

The second theme is protecting the rights and liberties of all citizens. This was a commonly stated objective, but at the same time, participants’ elaborations of what this would look like differed greatly. Thus, the sub-themes in this section will include a necessary discussion of the rights denied to certain groups, the protections granted to other groups (with an exploration of the treatment of minorities), and the importance of a secular Syria. The third theme and most commonly stated desire was for Syria to be unified, where everyone respects one another’s ethnicity and religion with equality. The sub-themes contained within this section will include a discussion of how some believe the society has been divided, where perceptions of this

division come from, who the actors are that are responsible for this division, and the differing opinions regarding which actors should and shouldn’t be involved in post-conflict reconstruction. After elaborating upon these three themes, in section seven I will explain what I believe the implications of the study to be, and discuss how these findings can be incorporated in the larger picture of justice and post-conflict reconstruction for Syria.

**a. TJ Efforts for the Armenian Genocide: What is Desired and Why is it Important?**

“The present is given meaning in terms of that anticipated present we call the future, and the former present which we call the past.”

“For many Armenians, remembering the genocide comes to be acknowledged as one of the markers of Armenian identity.”

To understand the present Armenian sentiments toward the conflict in Syria we must understand how their past affects their present. Before delving into the three outlined themes regarding justice in Syria, an analysis of responses regarding justice for the Armenian Genocide is an important contextual precursor for understanding the opinions for justice in Syria.

In the survey responses regarding the Armenian Genocide (see table 7 in annex C), the most desired reparation above all was official recognition of the genocide by Turkey. This is critical, as are its implications, because it powerfully demonstrates that, “acknowledgement and recognition of the harm and pain that victims have endured is, for many, a critical form of redress.” Before delving into the results, let us look at why transitional justice efforts, or the lack thereof rather, are an important part of understanding attitudes toward redress for the current conflict. I argue that Syrian-Armenian notions of redress are largely dictated by more than a century of systematic denial and feelings of *ethical loneliness*.

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144 Ibid, 328

145 Stromseth, "Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice, 573."
In her book, *Ethical Loneliness*, Jill Stauffer coins the term in the title and defines it to mean “the experience of being abandoned by humanity, compounded by the cruelty of wrongs not being acknowledged.”\(^{146}\) Expanded upon, her theory of ethical loneliness is applicable to groups that have been abandoned by humanity in one sense by having grave crimes committed against them and their peoples without the world stepping in to stop the harm soon enough, and then they undergo a further abandonment through the injustice of not being heard—their plight unrecognized by the world, and their pain and loss unacknowledged by the perpetrators. This theory of ethical loneliness can help one understand why the desire for this kind of reparative justice has been a fundamental element, and even end-goal, of so many TJ efforts of the past, including truth commissions and national trials.\(^{147}\)

For the Armenians, the desire for the truth has amplified as denial of the pain suffered by them and wrongdoings inflicted by the Ottomans has intensified over the past one hundred years. Cooper and Akçam explain how rampant Turkish nationalism has led to a stricter denial of the Genocide, including disseminating denialist propaganda and criminalizing any admission of guilt on the part of the Ottomans.\(^{148}\) Barkan adds further support to this in saying, “where the violence has stopped but its memory is not addressed, the animosity most likely will continue to fester.”\(^{149}\) Adding further emphasis to this point, Suny, Naimark, and Göçek claim that, “Denial is a continual source of injury to the Armenian community as a whole and ….one could argue that it also undermines the Turks’ ability to deal openly and frankly with their own historical past and present.”\(^{150}\) This sentiment is echoed, (and stressed here for emphasis of how important

\(^{149}\) Barkan, 11.
recognition and reconciliation is, not just to the victims but to the perpetrators as well), by Teitel in her claim that “unresolved problems of transitional justice often have lasting implications over a state’s lifetime.”  

While these unresolved problems could have lasting implications for the perpetrating state, they could also affect the previously victimized state through perpetuated animosity that could hinder potentially positive economic and social relations, among other possible benefits. For these reasons, as well as the emotional-moral ethical loneliness reasons, official recognition by Turkey is the very first, and for some, the only, reparation they seek.

For the Armenian Genocide, there are many different kinds of reparations that could comprise efforts of TJ. A report on reparations drafted by prominent scholars comprising a group called the Armenian Genocide Reparations Study Group lists four general areas of reparation that they believe should be mandated of Turkey. They are: 1) Recognition, Apology, Education, and Commemoration, 2) Support for Armenians and Armenia, 3) Rehabilitation of Turkey (meaning the promotion of respect for Armenians and non-Turkish groups, as well as removing any practices that are linked to genocidal ideology, e.g. article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code), and 4) The return of property and compensation for property, death, and suffering. Professors Taner Akçam and Belinda Cooper put forth some others that are worthy of consideration should Armenians ever receive justice and redress for the crimes committed against their ancestors over one hundred years ago. They include, a) historical dialogue, b) Turkey stopping the production of its anti-genocide propaganda, c) the decriminalization of the discussion of the Genocide, d) the restoration and preservation of the Armenian cultural heritage in Anatolia, and e) symbolic citizenship or special residency rights in Turkey for descendants of deported Armenians.

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It is clear that the Armenian global community has put a great deal of thought, effort, and time into notions of repair and justice, one might even go so far as to say that it has been a damaging all-consuming thought/effort at times, taking attention and mental energy away from focusing on more modern issues of injustice facing Armenian societies today. However, this course of action is understandable, as Montville explains that, “the refusal of aggressors to acknowledge the pain of the hurts inflicted on victims, and therefore the absence of remorse by the aggressors, creates an overwhelming sense of injustice in the victims.”\textsuperscript{154} The need to escape from the torture of ethical loneliness is a motivating factor for generations to continue fighting for what they believe they deserve. This has been very apparent in responses in the study at hand regarding how a lack of justice for the genocide impacts expectations for justice in Syria. Hayner explains that in the recent years of TJ’s rise it has become “widely believed that the legacy of these massive crimes cannot simply be buried, and must somehow be addressed.”\textsuperscript{155} The Armenian people over the past century have tried to address these crimes in various ways, as demonstrated through their efforts for accountability in trials in 1919, as well as their efforts of taking justice into their own hands, through the killing of the Ottoman minister of interior Talaat Pasha, the principal architect of the Armenian Genocide.\textsuperscript{156} However, none of these have truly produced the satisfactory redress that leaves many Armenian people feeling indignant and thus, living in the past seeking justice for a crime that was committed 100 years ago instead of the one they are living through today in Syria. While “time can attenuate people’s demands for justice, it can also exacerbate them,”\textsuperscript{157} and for many Armenians, the tendencies expressed in this study’s surveys seem to make clear that it has done the latter.

\textsuperscript{156} Eric Bogosian, Operation Nemesis: The Assassination Plot That Avenged the Armenian Genocide (Hachette UK, 2015).
The Armenian Genocide still influences notions of identity for Armenians in Syria as can be seen in some responses to questions about Syria during Rerooted interviews. Take this anecdote for example from Dzovinar Yeretsian, a 59-year-old woman from Qamishli, Syria who is responding to a question about why memorialization is important in the Syrian conflict.

“In my grandfather’s life he never laughed. He never had a smile. We would say, “Dede, why don’t you laugh?” He said, “How could I laugh? When I was seven years old, I lost my seven siblings and saw my mother leave my baby brother behind in the desert. I will never be able to not see that.” He never laughed.... It is very good to tell these stories so that we as Armenians do not forget or lose them. Our generation and our kids’ and their kids’ generations should know that Armenians still exist. Yes, we are few, but we are Armenian, and we will not forget it. It is the same for Syria.”

The preoccupation of the diaspora with recognition for the genocide has surely had an effect on the formation of Syrian-Armenian identity, as discussed in the historical background section, and it is this fact that leads me to raise the question of how a past denied justice for the Armenians as a whole might affect the notions of justice and avenues for redress that Syrian-Armenians see today for the violence and destruction in Syria. Along with the importance of TJ for the Armenian Genocide comes the implication of the importance of an absence of TJ for the harms committed. How does this absence of redress for a crime so far in the past affect notions of redress for a crime in the present? While this study did not produce any significant causal relationships, nor concrete trends as there was a great deal of nuance, correlations were explicitly addressed in responses to the question: “if you believe Armenians have not gotten justice for the Armenian Genocide, how does that impact your expectations for justice for the Syrian conflict?” (Annex A, 48). This section has demonstrated that the genocide affected views toward justice in Syria today and set the stage for a subsequent analysis of what constitutes justice and redress for

158 Rerooted
159 ibid.
the Armenian Genocide in the eyes of most Armenians in this study so that we can understand how that might translate to the Syrian case.

b. JUSTICE FOR THE GENOCIDE:

“It is important that the divisions created between Syrians during the conflict are melded because otherwise it will become like Turkey-Armenia relations.”

This section will be divided into three sections. The first is an analysis of the responses to the question: What would make you feel like the Armenian people have received justice with regard to the Armenian genocide? Table 7 of Annex C shows the number of respondents who preferred each option presented to them (in question 39 of Annex A) for genocide reparations. The first section will assess those responses with reference to the aforementioned reparations report to determine which mechanisms for justice are most preferred on the ground by the study’s population.

After exploring what the community desired for justice for the genocide, the second section will delve into the expressed differences between the Syrian conflict and the genocide. The third section will then focus on using the understanding from the previous two sections to better understand how, in this case, the past affects the present.

Preferred Reparations:

“It is a continuous genocide, the Armenian one, because our children do not preserve their identities.”

One of the most commonly cited reasons amongst my respondents for wanting reparations was identity. In different types of explanations, whether because it was a loss of a sense of identity that the Ottoman Turks inflicted upon the Armenian people by taking away their lands and homes and what they knew as normal, etc., or whether it was because of the

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160 Survey Respondent, Interview.
161 Ibid.
repercussions of that displacement which led to a perceived weakening of Armenian identity in terms of language retention and increased assimilation for the younger generations as expressed in the quote above, the Armenian persecution (and subsequently, the struggle for reparations) became intricately tied to Armenian identity. One scholar, Seda Altug, who writes about (post) memories of 1915 and the ways in which they affect Armenians today explains that these memories have become intricately tied to Armenian identity. She writes, “1915 functions as a symbol through which Armenians have knowledge about themselves and see themselves.”162 She goes on to explain that “violence studies and trauma theory have demonstrated the relationship between memory, violence and structures of power. They have pointed to the centrality of the past trauma in the meaning-production and shaping of the present and future lives of the survivor, and acknowledge the extremely interruptive effect of the traumatic events in people’s lives, including the ways in which people make sense of and find meaning in their new lives. They emphasize the present-ness of the past traumas, and their role in shaping the present.”163 In many of my respondents’ answers, this mentality was evident, especially in the constant emphasis that this community expressed in not being able to forget the genocide, or forget their ancestors. One 93 year-old man says, “we can’t forget, we’ll never forget”164 when I asked if divisions between Armenia and Turkey were currently forgotten. The theme of forgetting raises an important point for memorialization and this tended to be an often-selected reparation mechanism. As explained above, the reparations study group listed four general areas of reparation that should be mandated of Turkey. They are: 1) Recognition, apology, education, and commemoration, 2) Support for Armenians and Armenia, 3) Rehabilitation of Turkey (meaning the promotion of respect for Armenians and non-Turkish groups, as well as removing

162 Altug, "Sectarianism in the Syrian Jazira. 111”
163 Ibid., 83
164 Survey Respondent, Interview.
any practices that are linked to genocidal ideology, e.g. article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code),
and 4) The return of property and compensation for property, death, and suffering.\textsuperscript{165} It seemed
evident to me that almost all of the elaborations and answers selected fell within the first
category.

We have already discussed the importance of recognition and apology in the section
above, and another very important demand for justice for the genocide is memorialization. In a
sense, it’s one of the most realistic and attainable forms of justice for the genocide today,
alluding back to Barkan’s discussion of a more attainable “rough justice” for the Armenians that
is more symbolic than anything else.\textsuperscript{166} Aside from explicit mentions of the necessity for
memorialization, one very powerful quote demonstrates the importance of memorialization by
lamenting its absence. Harout Ghalbornian, 36 from Aleppo shares:

\begin{quote}
“Every year we would commemorate the Genocide in our clubs. I was a member of
Homenetmen. To commemorate, every year we go to Der Zor...We’d go, explain to them
the history, show them the bones, take them to the churches, tell them the stories at a
special place...We’d always remind them of what had happened. Many would be very
touched. Some would look and cry after they'd heard the story. They would listen very
carefully.... But we no longer do so, because the country is at war. The memorial at Der
Zor is destroyed. They took out all that was possible to save, but the rest has been
destroyed.”\textsuperscript{167}
\end{quote}

Harout explains here the importance of genocide commemoration and the devastation that he,
and the community, feels when the symbol that represented this in Syria was destroyed. This
might help explain why the rebuilding of Armenian infrastructure in Syria, like churches, is such
an important priority for Armenians in Syria, as will be discussed in section six.

Another reparation mechanism that respondents often selected was land reparation—they
explained that they wanted the lands in what is currently Eastern Armenia to become a part of
Armenia, or to at least allow for Armenians who had historical ties to the land to go back,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{165} Henry Theriault et al., “Complete Report of the Armenian Genocide Reparations Study Group,” \textit{Armenian Genocide Reparations Study Group} (blog), March 24, 2015, x.
\textsuperscript{167} Rerooted
\end{flushright}
reclaim their homes, and be allowed to rebuild and live there. When I asked respondents to
follow-up on why they wanted the land back, especially since many of them said they themselves
would not go back to live there, they referenced the symbolic meaning the land has, once again
tying it into category one above from the reparations report as a form of memorialization and
recognition that Armenians were once there. We see this in Sosi Ohan’s quote demonstrating the
longing for some type of physical connection to the past—whether actual or symbolic:

“My grandparents who survived the genocide would say, “If only we had some
Armenian soil, we would want to put it on our graves.” That stays in my head until now.
If I buy a vegetable or something here in Armenia and there is some soil in the bag, I
cannot throw it in the trash. I throw it outside and let the soil go out. I cannot put it in the
trash.”168 -Sosi Ohan, 57 from Qamishli, Syria

The symbolic importance of Armenia for many of these respondents stems from the inability to
connect with their homeland for over 100 years. While their “true” homeland are the lands of
Eastern Turkey, in the absence of official recognition and memorialization in Eastern Turkey,
Armenia has come to symbolize and represent all that they had hoped Eastern Turkey could
represent. The same woman from above shares,

“When I was sitting on the plane, of course we were upset because we were leaving our house
and everything, but I did not plan to remain that long in Armenia. Then I saw Mount Ararat and
I thought, everything about being Armenian was here. I started crying. I finished all my tissues
and the person sitting next to me gave me theirs. I was really impacted. I don't know. I saw
Mount Ararat and I looked at it [and saw] all my ancestors. I still feel that happiness
and patriotism for Armenia today.”169 -Sosi Ohan, 57 from Qamishli, Syria

From these responses, it seems that Altug’s previous explanation of trauma being present in the
current day is ever-present for the Armenians. As another scholar puts it, Flora Keshggegian, “the
trauma, even though it is not fully articulated or even recognized as trauma may become the
guiding force of identity and meaning formation.”170 As the genocide has become a part of the

168 Rerouted
169 Rerouted
identity of many Syrian-Armenians, and it’s lack of justice a source of indignation and sadness, it is important to explore how this has affected their perceptions of the current conflict in Syria as either similar or dissimilar to the genocide.

**Expressed Differences between the Conflicts**

“Our memories of our ancestors’ experience through the genocide impacted our decisions for leaving Syria because we were afraid it would be the same as the genocide.”

Upon elaborating on their explanations for choosing certain reparation mechanisms for the genocide, many respondents referenced the conflict in Syria, alluding to the idea that many felt this was a second genocide. However, there are important differences between the two contexts that must be acknowledged, namely the difference in reason for persecution (one based on religion and the other on political beliefs), the difference in the significance of the land they are leaving (in the genocide victims were living in their historic homelands and were pushed out by the governmental regime, versus the current situation in which the Armenians fled from what they felt was a mostly temporary home), and the difference between being on the side of, versus against, the government.

**Annex C, Table 6: Genocide and Syrian Conflict Connection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Do you feel that what you have experienced in Syria is similar to what your ancestors experienced in the genocide?</th>
<th>Did your memories of your ancestors’ experience through the genocide impact your decisions for leaving Syria?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a lot</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As evidenced by the chart above, there aren’t any clear patterns in these answers, besides perhaps the highest number of respondents selecting the “somewhat” option. The factors that comprised the greatest differences people felt between the conflicts were typically grounds for maintaining that the Armenians had not suffered as much in the Syrian conflict as they had in the genocide. Alluding to the fact that the first was a targeted persecution against the Armenians, whereas in the Syrian conflict they were not the targeted victims (see table 3 of annex C for a results of perceived victimization), many respondents felt that justice in Syria was not theirs to obtain, making them less demanding of what they’d like to see as reparation mechanisms in the Syrian context. Others felt that Armenians were victimized, and the main difference between the two conflicts was the differing technology. One respondent said, “Syria is the same as the genocide but we have guns now,” and another said, “it was a second genocide but this time we left on planes instead of by foot.”\textsuperscript{172} In general however, many believed that the conflicts were similar.

One 19-year old respondent shares,

\textit{“We were taught in school that the genocide was both our strength and weakness. The Syrian conflict is the same. In both conflicts you can see both strengths and weaknesses.”}\textsuperscript{173}

While this is a positive outlook on the events, emphasizing the Armenian resilience in new destinations, finding strength from a situation that is ultimately negative, many others emphasized the similarities in the types of loss experienced, as evidenced by the quote below.

\textit{“Yes, the conflict in Syria is mostly similar to the Armenian Genocide, considering the case of leaving everything we had there, as we did back in the 20th century when our ancestors hoped that they would eventually go back to their abandoned lands, home, farms, shops, stores, factories, etc. But they never had the chance. I think the same happened now as well.”}\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{172} Survey Respondent.
\textsuperscript{173} Survey Respondent.
\textsuperscript{174} Survey Respondent.
So how do these distinctions impact respondents’ desire for justice in Syria? I discuss that next.

**What is the Lack of Justice for the genocide’s Impact on Syria?**

“We need justice for Armenians first if we are going to have justice in Syria.” -86 year old interviewee, March 2019, who was part of the first generation born in Syria after the genocide.

While the quote above is not representative of the entire population of Syrian-Armenians interviewed (no quote can do that really) it does represent one of two categories of responses that this section can be generalized down to. The first is that justice for Syria is more important than justice for the genocide (typically concurrently influenced by the current/urgent nature of the Syrian conflict and a loss of hope for justice for the genocide). The second is in line with what the respondent has expressed above, maintaining that justice is more important for the genocide (typically influenced by ideas that they are Armenians first before Syrians, and that their families were harmed more/lost more during the genocide than during the conflict in Syria, thereby making it a more pressing claim for justice).

The first opinion: Those who believed that justice in Syria was more important than justice for the genocide often referenced the fact that “Armenia is already back on its feet, so we should be focusing our efforts on Syria.” These people tended to choose nothing besides “official recognition” for the genocide, while choosing a range of options for the justice for Syria question (#45 on annex A), including Syrian government support for repatriation, financial compensation for rebuilding from the external actors who contributed to the war, and more. The fact that the conflict in Syria was still ongoing seemed to make these people more hopeful for justice in Syria than for the genocide. Conversely, there were many respondents who felt more hopeful that justice for the genocide would be granted, or at least desired it more than justice for the Syrian conflict and this largely came down to the idea that: “This war is not an Armenian’s

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175 Survey Respondent.
war. The Armenians were just unfortunately caught in it. This is not an Armenian’s justice to obtain.\textsuperscript{176} In line with this, some Armenians did not feel the need to worry about their place or rights in post-conflict Syria because the government supported them. In stark contrast to the genocidal policies implemented by their own government back when they were living in the regions under the control of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenians in Syria generally feel “the government has us in their arms. When they get the opposition out of the places that were destroyed by the enemy, they will rebuild.”\textsuperscript{177} As is evidenced by the quote, some people feel greatly comforted by the government and it appears that this allows for a less demanding stance on post-conflict redress.

Another reason for increased emphasis on the Armenian genocide was often due to the difference in recognition and knowledge of the conflicts. One respondent says, “It is important for the world to know the truth about the genocide because it was a huge thing, 1.5 million Armenians killed in the midst of WWI and the world doesn’t know about it. Justice for the Armenian Genocide is more important than justice for Syria because the truth should be known internationally. The world already knows the truth about Syria.”\textsuperscript{178} The last difference that seemed to make justice for the genocide more pressing than justice for the Syrian conflict for many respondents was the subjective difference regarding what was lost in each conflict. Many participants expressed the feeling that justice for the genocide was more important for them because they felt they had lost more. Many say that in leaving historic Armenia the Armenian community lost “everything.” It lost lives, homes, land, its identity, sanity, and ability to live and be connected to the homeland. In Syria, while the loss of many of these material resources are

\textsuperscript{176} Survey Respondent.
\textsuperscript{177} Survey Respondent.
\textsuperscript{178} Survey Respondent.
mentioned as well, including properties, economic losses and workplaces/factories, respondents didn’t tend to emphasize the notion of losing “everything” as much as they did for the post-genocide period.\textsuperscript{179}

However, one caveat here is that the most commonly expressed sentiment among almost all participants was the feeling that the strength of the Armenian community in Syria had diminished greatly as a result of the war, and this seemed to greatly affect their answers regarding justice, but more importantly, their hopefulness for it. While some did express a hopefulness that the Armenian community would be able to rebuild itself because their ancestors were able to do so in the wake of a more damaging atrocity for the Armenian people, many others placed a huge emphasis on the fact that Armenian community and identity lost during genocide was never fully recovered and that made many worry that it would be lost once more.

In light of this preoccupation with the weakening of the Armenian community in Syria, regardless of whether they felt justice for the genocide or for Syria should be a greater priority, the majority of respondents expressed a tendency to feel less hopeful about justice for the current Syrian conflict given the fact that there has not yet been justice for the Armenian genocide (question 48 of Annex A). These respondents shared that they were less demanding with what they chose for reparations in Syria because they felt it was unlikely they would receive any of what they felt was necessary for redress. Thus, they said they “went easier” on justice for Syria because of this.

c. Themes for Syria

Table 11: Priorities for Syria

\textsuperscript{179}It would be interesting to try to determine if the fact that these Armenians settled in Armenia where they already shared a language and culture impacted their ability to integrate, thereby making them feel like they did not have to “start from scratch,” a sentiment that is often invoked when discussing the creation of Armenian diaspora communities after the genocide.
Which of the following do you believe should currently have the Syrian government’s attention? (circle all that apply and rank) The column with the lowest sum is the highest priority*

*It should be noted that there were problems with this system though and it is not comprehensive data. This flaw has been elaborated upon in the challenges and limitations section of this document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Securing order and peace among opposing factions</th>
<th>Ending the war</th>
<th>Rebuilding infrastructure</th>
<th>Protecting human rights and liberties of all citizens</th>
<th>Improving economic prosperity</th>
<th>Protecting minority communities</th>
<th>Stopping armed opposition/disarming factions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the current Syrian conflict, here are the themes. As expanded upon at the introduction of this section, the three themes for desired reparations in Syria are expressed individually in the chart above, and once categorized together, they include: 1) Rebuilding infrastructure and improving economic prosperity, 2) Protecting the human rights and liberties of all citizens, including protecting minority communities, and 3) Unifying Syria (which includes ending the war; stopping armed opposition/disarming factions; and securing order and peace among opposing factions).

**Theme 1: Ensuring Safety and Stability**

“It’s hard to believe that everything will recover even if there is justice. Man fought against man, so even if there’s justice, it won’t help. We need to improve the conditions of living. The justice in courts doesn’t reach the people on the ground.” - 23 year old female, March 2019 interview

Q: How do you envision members of your community dealing with the suffering caused by the war and displacement upon return?

A: “Many people wouldn’t need much help because all they need is peace; the rest they can manage. For others, I’d suggest that NGOs help restore the infrastructure in communities.”

One of the simplest ways to understand what displaced communities need or want to see in any post-conflict setting is to ask if they would like to return, and if so, what is stopping

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180 Survey Respondent, Interview.
As similar consultations carried out by groups like the ICTJ\textsuperscript{182} and the Syria Justice and Accountability Centre (SJAC)\textsuperscript{183} have shown, ensuring safety and stability in the region is a necessary prerequisite for the return of many displaced Syrians. However, what safety and stability entail is different for each community and thus should be understood within the context of each group’s history in Syria. As for the Syrian-Armenians, safety and stability is intricately linked to the presence of a strong Armenian community, and that is evidenced by many of the suggestions of Syrian-Armenian respondents in questions 41-44 of the survey tool (found in Annex A) for rebuilding Syria and reintegrating in Syria. Many of these suggestions come from what the Armenian community of Syria feels they lost.

\textbf{a. Rebuilding the Community}

“We had already built a motherland in Aleppo. We have our churches, theatres, schools, everything. I’d like to go back to Aleppo, I’ve missed Aleppo very much—the environment, my friends, I really miss it. If Aleppo were the Aleppo it used to be, I wouldn’t stay in Armenia for a minute. I’d take my children and leave.”\textsuperscript{184} -Jirair Halvajian, 66

Perhaps the most commonly stated opinion amongst my informants was that the Armenian community in Syria has been negatively affected and the Armenian community would need to “come back,” (both physically with people returning, and institutions being restored), if they were to feel like they could return, integrate, resettle, and begin to rebuild their lives in Syria.\textsuperscript{185} Rebuilding cultural heritage sites, including churches and other Armenian sites, as well as rebuilding destroyed infrastructure, were amongst the top five most commonly selected desired reparations (see table 9 in annex C). Some sites that were referenced by survey respondents that should be rebuilt include Syrian history, like in Palmyra, as well as Armenian

\textsuperscript{181} Phone Conversation with Human Rights Watch Syria Researcher.
\textsuperscript{182} “ICTJ-Briefing-Syria_Documentation-2018.pdf.”
\textsuperscript{183} Shamnam Mojtahedi, Skype interview with SJAC employee, December 4, 2018.
\textsuperscript{184} Rerouted archive
\textsuperscript{185} Additionally, as you can see in table 9 of the results charts in annex c, 31 and 32 respondents said rebuilding cultural heritage sites and destroyed infrastructure respectively, would be indications of justice in post-conflict Syria
centers, like churches, Aleppo’s antique center, and the genocide memorial in Der Zor. In light of the historical context provided thus far for this community, this concern is almost predictable being that “community,” comprised of Armenian institutions, people, and language, is what allowed them to live at the intersection of their Armenian and Syrian identities for the past century. As discussed earlier in section three, both nationalities and allegiances are part of the Syrian-Armenian identity and a Syria without (or with weakened) avenues to preserve and cultivate Armenian ethnicity, culture, religion, and overall identity, seemed unacceptable to almost all informants.

Another element that adds a worrisome amount of validity to this fear of a weakened Armenian community is the reality of Armenians in neighboring Lebanon, and the memory of the fate of their Armenian communities in the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war. In Lebanon, reconstruction necessitated the re-engagement with the question of how to organize relations between the state and ethno-cultural groups within the country. In this process, one of the key questions for Armenians was whether or not they could restore the guaranteed spaces for the community’s public participation. This proved to be challenging for many reasons. First, the decrease in the number of Armenians in Lebanon negatively impacted their political presence in the country and, as Migliorino observes, the community appeared “hardly able to formulate a long term sustainable strategy for the preservation of Armenian diversity in Lebanon.”

Additionally, because Armenian institutions, like schools, were negatively impacted, in the aftermath of the war and in the reconstruction period, “the educational opportunities that offer[ed] more chances of success tend[ed] to involve deeper integration with the non-Armenian environment or some sacrifice of certain aspects of Armenian socialization.” Unfortunately,

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186 Migliorino, 184
187 Ibid., 199
this is the reality that many informants in the present study saw for Syrian-Armenian life as well in a post-conflict Syria. While deeper integration in the non-Armenian community was not in itself a problem for the informants, they expressed that the implications of such a phenomenon (less contact with the Armenian community and thus potentially negative effects on language learning and cultural preservation, etc.) were. However, I must acknowledge that while they are similar, the Armenian communities of Syria and Lebanon have many differences and while it might be wise for the Armenians of Syria to look to the Armenian community of Lebanon for cues of what to do and not to do in a post-conflict Syria, ultimately, their ability to rebuild their communities is largely dependent on the government and its political contexts, things which can never be identical in any situation. Thus, while we cannot predict the Armenian community’s ability to rebuild itself and grow stronger in Syria by solely looking at Lebanon, we can further delve into this topic of community rebuilding by looking at the strength and importance of Armenian institutions in Syria.

Armenian institutions are critical entities in Syrian-Armenian life because in many instances they have acted as a “safety net” for the community in times of the country’s poor economic conditions. Just as an example, in such times these institutions have provided medical services, housing, and support to the disabled, elderly, and poor.\textsuperscript{188} They directly and indirectly contributed to the preservation of Armenian ethno-cultural diversity and provided “spaces for Armenian socialization and offered structural, constant connections with the resources of the Armenian Diaspora outside of Syria.”\textsuperscript{189} Today in Syria, informants from this study who are in touch daily with community members back in Aleppo say that,

“The main thing holding the community together is the Tashnagsutiun (the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, or ARF). The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 200
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 200
is mainly helping with schools but the ARF is keeping the churches safe and when there was more fighting during wartime, they were holding the areas safe with Armenians sitting around the areas at night keeping them safe.”

This touches on a greater point I’d like to make later in a subsection under theme three of this section regarding trust in the international Armenian community to rebuild Syrian-Armenian institutions. However, the main take-away from the quote above at this point is that the Armenian institutions are still existent in Aleppo, however, many informants see them as weak and limited. Educational institutions are seen as having suffered a great deal. There are many examples of schools that have experienced debilitating consequences as a result of this urban warfare. One example can be seen in the Karen Jeppe school where enrollment has decreased from around 1200 to around 400 students. Mortars landed on the school and for three years students were relocated to another school in a safer part of the city where they were taught in shifts. In another example, the Armenian national elementary schools were united a few years ago. The four primary schools: Haygazian, Sahagian, Zavarian, and Gulbenkian, became one as: Azkayin Miatsial Varjaran, (or the United National Academy). There were too few students and too much damage to the schools for them to continue running independently. In addition to the tangible effects this has on community members who perhaps greatly valued the diversity in the missions or approach to education of the schools, it creates far-reaching ripples in the common perception of the strength of the Armenian community of Aleppo. As discussed above in section three and throughout this study, preserving a strong Armenian education has been a main priority for the Armenians of Syria and to see its strength deteriorate is not a strong sign that the community will be repaired; it produces a great amount of hopelessness. One informant

190 Survey Respondent, Interview.
192 Ibid.
193 (For a comparison with what it used to be, look back to table 2 in section 3 for the chart referencing the 40+ schools in Syria in 1929).
shares, “In losing properties, material things, friends, family, our shop, our home, and so much more in Kessab, the worst thing I lost was hope. We lost hope for a better future, staying there, rebuilding our life there. I cannot go back there anymore. I cannot.”

It seems clear then that institutions must regain their strength before people come back. This section will culminate with a description of how the community has already begun to rebuild, but before doing so, it is important to discuss the critical role of one specific institution amongst all Armenian institutions in Syria and that is the Armenian Church.

### a1. The importance of churches

“Anywhere an Armenian goes they build a church. With the destruction of churches, Armenian people were already left in terrible conditions.”

Within the efforts of rebuilding a community, churches have played a critical role in the last 100 years for Armenians in Syria. While it would be beyond the scope of this study to delve into an analysis of the importance of religious institutions in re-establishing communities, there are many studies that do demonstrate that when you rebuild or restore the functioning of religious institutions, or places of worship, people tend to return. While Armenians have a unique tie to Christianity (in 301 AD Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as its official religion), for the Armenian community in Syria, the churches played, and continue to play, a much larger role than solely promoting and preserving religion. Among the first institutions the Armenians built after the genocide were Armenian churches. By 2003, the Armenian community of Syria had 45 different functioning churches: 11 Armenian Evangelical churches, 13 Armenian Catholic churches, and 21 Armenian Apostolic churches. Throughout the changing regimes and policies the churches undoubtedly played the main role in preserving

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194 Survey Respondent, Interview.
195 Survey Respondent.
197 Migliorino, *(Re)* Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria, 47.
198 Ibid, 196
the Armenian community. For example in the mid 1960s when the political evolution of Syria affected Armenia education, Armenian schools had to abandon their names and adopt Arab names (refer to table 3 of section 3 to see this change), and there were further restrictive policies that would have forced the Armenian community to relinquish all control over its schools and subsequently eliminate the teaching of Armenian language and culture. However, the Armenian religious leadership was able to reach a compromise with the government and thus, acting as the “main agents of the process of expansion and consolidation of the Armenian educational system,” the Armenian religious leaders helped the Armenian community survive.199

Furthermore, when the government policies severely limited the freedom of association, imposing restrictions on many Armenian associations like the Hamazkayin cultural association and the Tashnagsutiun, the churches played a key role in shielding these associations because they could “offer some degree of protection to the community’s cultural needs.” 200 Overall, in this tumultuous time when education was becoming nationalized, and parties and associations were being severely restricted, the churches protected Armenian diversity and became the “custodians of communal property.”201 Under President Hafez Al-Assad, the Armenian church expanded its role as liaison between the state and the Armenian community. This continued with current Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. While the Assad regime was largely concerned with ethnic homogeneity (stressing the importance of ‘Kulna Suriyyin:’ all being Syrian), it was more tolerant of religious diversity.

Article 35 of Syria’s 1973 Constitution maintained that the State would guarantee freedom of belief and continue to grant religious communities a set of autonomies on questions

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199 Ibid., 115, 121
200 Ibid., 133
201 Ibid., 160
of personal status.\textsuperscript{202} This allowed for substantial freedoms granted to the Armenian churches which aided its role in preserving Armenian diversity and serving as important spaces of communal interaction. Within the context of the “tacit agreement” referenced earlier in section three, selective concessions were made to the Armenian community under the guise of being within the concern of the religious sphere, rather than acknowledging that these concessions largely had to do with preserving Armenian ethnic and cultural identity. Some of these concessions were, establishing a summer camp for the Armenian boy scouts, authorizing a publication, and constructing community centers.\textsuperscript{203} It should be clear then that the Armenian church played an incredibly enriching and important role in Syrian community and it can help us understand why the destruction of churches is a sign for many Armenians that the Armenian community will not regain its strength, or even be a place they will consider returning to until the churches are rebuilt.

When I asked one informant why she feels rebuilding churches is important to Armenians of Syria, her response was as follows:

\textquotedblleft It is important because people used to hang out there, the youth, which was the heart of Syrian-Armenian society, would treat it as their agum.\textsuperscript{204} It was part of our society, so it’s important, and now that the youth has left, and the churches have been destroyed, we lost hope, hope for a better future. There’s no reason to go back.\textsuperscript{205}\textquotedblright

Another woman, Zarouhi, explains how, upon arriving in Armenia, she tried to rebuild her old community by simulating a Syrian-Armenian church community from back home. Upon arriving in Armenia as refugees, she and a few friends went to the priest of Zoravor Asdvadzazin Church in Yerevan and managed to create a separate service on Friday mornings for anyone who wanted to worship, and it was mostly women from Aleppo attended the services. The church is small and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{202} Ibid., 193
  \item \textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 161
  \item \textsuperscript{204} community center
  \item \textsuperscript{205} Survey Respondent, Interview.
\end{itemize}

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the typical Sunday services were overcrowded, she explained, so she worked with the priest to find a way to have a service for the Syrian-Armenians. There was a strong urge to recreate a small Aleppo Armenian community within Armenia, and the church was the first place she thought to do that. When they started, there were 14 or 15 people in attendance. Now, three years later, 100 women attend each Friday. Zarouhi explains, “We pray and then we join in the church hall to drink coffee together. It is a huge happiness for me to see how many people I have brought together. Thank God.”

The current situation of the Armenian churches in Syria is varied. Many churches remain intact and continue with their services. However, many others were destroyed like: the Der Zor Armenian Genocide Memorial Church, the St.Rita Tilel Armenian Church in Aleppo, the Forty Martyrs Church in Aleppo, the Armenian Church of the Holy Cross in Tal Abyad, and the Armenian Evangelical church in Kessab, just to name a few. With the churches still serving their function as “pivotal identity-markers and identity-custodians, able to offer accessible ways of reconnecting with the communities’ spiritual and historical origins,” it is understandable that many people feel the community is lacking something essential without the full strength of the church. In addition to their emotional and symbolic significance, the churches regulated a great deal in Syrian-Armenian life; they remain the “quasi-exclusive authority in charge of issues regarding family law, they are important centers of organization of social life, they manage schools, charities, promote Armenian cultural activities,” and so on.

206 Rerooted. Zarouhi Hamalian, 54
207 Staff, “Photos.”
211 “Syria Video Dispatch.”
212 Migliorino, (Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria, 194.
213 Ibid., 194
Thus, it is clear that these institutions will need a great deal of attention and resources as these religious institutions tend to act as the glue holding the community together.

Although I cannot presently draw any direct links between statements and future action, there is an interesting trend I observed that could provide some insight into what kind of impact the rebuilding of the churches in Aleppo (and Kessab) has on the population’s desire to return. Almost every informant who told me that they felt the Armenian community would be able to rebuild and would regain its strength, also referenced both the rebuilding (through Syrian government funding) of the Forty Martyrs Church,214 (which had its first service this past Easter) and the president’s promise to the rebuild Der Zor Church, as signs that the community will flourish once more.215 The general impression gained in these interviews was that the rebuilding of these churches has had a profound effect on the hopefulness and willingness for Syrian-Armenians in Armenia to return. As I’ve explained the importance of the church to the community, it seems fair to assert that their satisfaction with the restoration of the churches is really a satisfaction regarding the belief in a positive future for the Armenian people in Syria.

As for Armenian institutions other than churches, their growth and strength is critical to return as well. While earlier in this section I wrote of the damaging consequences Armenian schools in Syria have faced, Armenian schools in Syria do still function, including the Cilician school of the Hntchakian party, the Grtasirats school, the AGBU school, and the Karen Jeppe Armenian national college. There are also schools in Latakia and Damascus that are functioning. With regard to political organizations, the main Armenian political institutions throughout Syria that have preserved their strength are the same ones as before the conflict: AGBU, ARF,

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Hunchakians, Armenian Relief Society, and the three church heads/seats. As institutions, they are alive, as is the Kantsasar Armenian newspaper of Aleppo. This provides great hope that the Armenian community is regaining its strength, and Armenian political leaders in Aleppo are emphasizing this fact more frequently in their speeches that reach the diaspora, because they (along with the government, but this is a separate point that will be made under theme 2b) know that this is a priority for the Armenian community thereby making it one of their greatest avenues for encouraging repatriation.

Armenian officials like Syrian parliament member, Jirair Reisian, anticipate positive action for restoring national structures in 2019, building off the momentum of 2018. According to Reisian, “we expect 2019 to be a peaceful year for the world. A restoration process has commenced after the liberation of Aleppo and we can say that life has returned to a peaceful process.” He then goes on to explain that “the Syrian government has commenced these works,” referring to the restoration process that is happening within the Armenian community, and outside of it. He shares that the Armenian National Sanctuary of Aleppo, the buildings of the Karen Jeppe College, as well as two Armenian churches and the Cilician College of Aleppo have already been restored last year. The general impression gained through my interviews and the collected surveys was that this news was greatly inspiring for many people and particularly impacted those who had previously been doubtful of their ability to return, but now, in light of these new reconstructions, have reconsidered their decisions to reject the possibility of moving back to Syria. Reisian also provides hopeful news for those Syrian-Armenians displaced throughout the diaspora in sharing that “business operators in Aleppo are actively resuming their

216 Anecdotal information from interviews
217 Hani, “SYRIA – Assad Promises to Rebuild the Memorial Church of the Armenian Genocide in Deir Ez-Zor.”
218 Ibid.
activities, with stores being reopened, and this includes Armenian stores too.” Ultimately, he seems to suggest that the industrial sector and economy of Aleppo are gradually being restored, and as per many of my interviews, this was a critical element of justice for the Armenian community and their ability/willingness to return (which I will explore in the subsection below).

In addition to infrastructure being rebuilt and Armenian institutions regaining their strength as an impetus for return, Reisian emphasizes the fact that Armenians who left the city earlier are returning and that life has returned to its normal course. This notion of restoring normalcy is an incredibly important part of post-conflict restoration, and also in this particular context, another very common answer regarding what people hoped post-conflict Syria would look like. One woman shared, “We were very happy and we were living good lives in Syria. For me justice is the life before the war.” Before I prompted informants to elaborate, I would estimate that close to ⅔ of survey participants said that a “repaired Syria” would be “one that made things go back to the way they were before the conflict.” This was also a very common answer to my surveys for what justice in Syria would look like. This kind of answer is cited in the TJ literature as a typical notion of justice for grave crimes. People often imagine things returning to the way they were, a status quo ante, as a measure of the attainment of justice, however, it is unattainable. This popular notion of retrospective justice seeks to approximate a reversal of the wrong, “a restoration as far as possible of the status quo ex ante,” and thus it makes sense that Armenian officials in the Syrian government, like Reisian, would stress the return to normalcy in Aleppo when addressing Syrian-Armenians in the diaspora who could return to Syria, if the right conditions were there. Perhaps the most important, or interesting, part

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221 Survey Respondent, Interview.
222 Survey Respondent.
223 Barkan, 11.
224 Williams, Nagy, and Elster, Transitional Justice, 8.
of his statement is that it was made on April 14th, 2018, as a response to the missile strikes delivered on Syria overnight by the US, UK, and France. Reisian explains, “Of course, the situation is concerning, and everyone wants full peace, but this missile strike caused no change in our activities. We continue living normally and residents are engaged in their daily activities.” This type of statement tends to be common for Reisian as he has previously, in 2017, expressed his confidence that the number of Syrians returning will increase with time, as will the number of restorations to what has been lost and destroyed, clearly appealing to his public, understanding what is important to them. All of this cannot be analyzed though, without the context of the Syrian government’s support for this restoration and repatriation of the Armenian community. As per Reisian, “the Syrian government is making every effort so that the country’s population returns to normal life within a short period of time.” Without reading too much into these statements, it is important to note the delicate balance that has been struck here (possibly unintentionally and just as a result of years of living at the intersection of both the Armenian and Syrian realities) between appealing to the Armenian community’s needs. On one hand, there is this idea of preserving the Armenian elements of the community and, as explained in depth; that is done through rebuilding and strengthening Armenian institutions. On the other hand, the statement references the Syrian government’s support and care for this community, something that has been denied to the Armenian community in more hostile governments, thereby negatively affecting the preservation of their communal identity. This will be very heavily expanded upon in theme 2 below, however, it is important to note here before moving on.

that the government support for the Syrian-Armenian community is, and has been for at least the past century, a subject of great concern for these people. Thus, by including both of these elements in his statements, (strengthening of the institutions/return to normalcy, and the government support) Reisian does the best he can in encouraging the Armenian community to come back to Syria. However, certain challenges still exist and one of the greatest obstacles to return is a lack of essential commodities in Syrian life.

b. Reinstating Adequate Standards of Living

“The country is yet to be safe. It is in a crisis. Everything is expensive. Gas, electricity, and water resources are limited. The Syrian government is making efforts to fix these. The UN helps a lot. There are local NGOs and Unions helping too. But still more needs to be done.”

In one of the above-cited reports from MP Reisian, he says, “Infrastructure, including water and power supply, are also restored in the city, and all public services are operating normally.”229 While that may have been true for the most part last year in 2018, accounts from the ground suggest differently. One informant currently living in Yerevan says that “the situation in general this year for people in Aleppo is not as good as it was last year, because everything was good with electricity and water last year but this year not as much. They’re cutting electricity more and that’s why people aren’t as comfortable.”230 For almost every one of my respondents, they felt the quality of life is still below normal in their hometowns and this is the first obstacle that needs to be removed should they return, or for many of them, even consider returning. One informant told me that in order to consider returning, the conditions on the ground would have to be improved. I asked him what that would look like, would it include giving people new houses? He responded, “No, the basics. Electricity is a luxury there now. Gas and

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229 “Armenian Community of Syria to Continue Full-Swing Restoration Works in 2019 | ARMENPRESS Armenian News Agency.”
230 Survey Respondent, Interview.
petrol are *luxuries*, not basic things. We need to make those basic again.”231 This is a low standard to meet however in a war-ravaged country it is understandable that such things are lacking. Other informants expressed similar concerns. For example, one 63-year-old woman from Der Zor says, “My husband’s doctors had all fled from Syria, and he has heart problems. What else could we do at our age? At that point, we could be satisfied with just a piece of bread.”232 Perhaps we can take a moment to reflect upon what the situation must have been like to make expectations so low.

In addition to restoring these basic elements to society, many participants expressed that justice for the Armenians in Syria would be served when they are able to return and continue working in Syria. While, once again, this may seem like a simplistic request for something as conceptually large as justice, the truth is that many of these Armenians from Syria were successful business people, selling jewelry to other Middle Eastern countries, or Turkey, and running factories, also dependent on trade and exporting.233 However, upon arrival in Armenia, one of the greatest hardships expressed by the 100+ interviewees I have spoken with is finding work in Armenia.234 Perhaps ¼ of the interviewees in the Rerooted archive mention that they, or a family member, still travel back and forth from Armenia to Syria to be able to run their businesses, make money, and support their families in Armenia. They put their lives at risk just to be able to live a very simple life, typically in worse conditions than they were living in Syria before the war, and so it is understandable that justice for many of them is the ability to work and make money once again, enabling them to support themselves, their families, and live a life of at least normal quality.

231 Survey Respondent.
232 Rerooted
233 This is a trend I’ve gathered from the Rerooted interviews, however, Migliorino (p. 133 of his book) also discusses this trend and explains that the Armenians became known and respected as hard-working, reliable businessmen in the 1950-60s. Thus, it seems this transition from success to unemployment hit them hard.
234 Rerooted
Lastly, shelter is another basic element that about half of my informants mentioned as a condition which they felt would be necessary for them to be able to return to, and rebuild, their lives in Syria. This, again, can be linked to the fact that in Armenia (where all my informants had resettled), paying for housing is perhaps the primary problem Rerooted interviewees mention when describing the greatest challenge faced when resettling in Armenia.\textsuperscript{235} Largely tied to the previous paragraph’s problem of lack of jobs, which then produces little to no income, the problem of housing is one that severely affects the quality of life in Armenia for many Syrian-Armenians who have resettled in Armenia. Most often, the problem is that the rent is too high, and it is exacerbated by the fact that, as explained, finding a job, especially for those who are middle-aged or older, is extremely difficult. However, the prospects for housing in Syria are often no better, and this is because many of their houses were destroyed in the crossfire of shellings, and many others are being occupied by Syrians who have left their homes in other towns seeking refuge and safety as well. One of the basic hopes for a post-conflict Syria then, is housing; as one informant puts it: "a repaired Syria would be if everyone who wants to return to sell their properties are able to."\textsuperscript{236} Providing adequate housing and returning previously owned property to Syrians who wish to return will need to be a part of the Syrian government’s plan for reconstruction. Some Syrian government policy has already attempted to address property concerns, however, these policies have been largely criticized by organizations like Human Rights Watch.\textsuperscript{237} In law No. 10 of 2018, what was established as an urban planning law which supposedly did not affect property rights, in effect did affect property rights by allowing

\textsuperscript{235} Rerooted.
\textsuperscript{236} Survey Respondent, Interview.
authorities to seize property without due process or adequate compensation.\textsuperscript{238} The most relevant part of this law for this study is that it would create a significant obstacle to return.\textsuperscript{239} Not only does the Armenian community hesitate to return without homes or property to return to, but a significant segment of a surveyed refugee population said they were unlikely to return, according to a study done by the Carnegie Endowment of Peace.\textsuperscript{240}

If it is important to provide a legal argument for the re-installment of these basic elements of an adequate standard of living, we can look to Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).\textsuperscript{241} Syria acceded to this Covenant in 1969 thus providing some potential legal ground to ensure Syrian citizens attain an adequate standard of living for “himself, and his family, including food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”\textsuperscript{242} Perhaps this can be an avenue through which returnees work with lawyers and policy makers to re-establish basic elements for an adequate standard of living in Syria.

\textsuperscript{239} Something that is important to note is the possibility that these laws would not directly negatively affect Armenians. Perhaps authorities would not apply these laws to the populations they favor, and thus the Armenians of Syria would not face these challenges. However, an important consideration is: might it affect them indirectly? If it is negatively affecting other groups then maybe indirectly it will affect the Armenians because of the tensions and animosities that will begin to fester in the community. I think this is actually a critical point to consider when talking about how the Armenians want to be treated like everyone else in the justice process, and that they should not be seen as different, because they know what kinds of animosities and tensions preferential treatment has brought them in the past (like with the mandate) and perhaps they’d like to avoid that this time. Being publicly seen as a preferred population can be dangerous.
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid.
Theme 2: Protecting the rights and liberties of all citizens

“I can't know what justice is or will be. We can only hope for fair treatment for Syrians all over the world without discrimination.”243

The second theme that captures the general trends of Syrian-Armenian desires for post-conflict reconstruction in Syria is protecting the rights and liberties of all citizens. When asked “what would justice for the Armenians in Syria look like to you,” a significant number of participants responded with both, “the same as others living in Syria,” and “for the Armenians to get back their rights.”244 This duality emphasizing both a special need for the Armenian community and a desire for non-distinction between the Armenian and non-Armenian Syrian community is what has largely defined so much of Armenian life in Syria for the last century. One informant responded to the abovementioned question regarding justice for Armenians by saying, “justice for Armenians would be imposing the same regulations on them as the other citizens. It would make no exceptions to any group.” That same day, a different informant answered this question saying,

“Justice for Syria would be going back to having different religious communities peacefully living together. Justice for the Armenians would be the same as that, plus continuing to have Armenian churches and schools. If conditions became like they were before 2011, Armenians would have their rights back and this would be justice.”245

Now, getting “back” one’s rights implies that such rights were taken away from the community, or that they do not presently maintain such rights. Thus, I will attempt to first explain what rights they are likely referring to, and while tying that into the incredibly important historical context of being minorities in Syria, I will expand upon why having their rights and liberties protected is an especially important part of their conceptions of justice and repair in a post-conflict Syria.

243 Survey Respondent, Interview.
244 Survey Respondent.
245 Survey Respondent.
a. Analysis of which rights have been violated

“Justice for the Armenians would be more access and freedom to express the Armenian life. We want Armenians to have the same rights, just like other native Syrians, we are all equal, we should be treated fairly by the government and the whole world. Give Armenians rights, like the ability to take loans from the government, so they can rebuild their homes and communities.”

While the anecdotal pieces demonstrate a very broad understanding of what “rights” are, their vagueness serves the understanding that asking for “rights” typically amounted to seeking equal treatment—to not be discriminated against as minorities. The numbers I have included in the annex charts with the results from my surveys are not concretely demonstrative of any data generalizable to the entire Syrian-Armenian population, however table 5 of Annex C partially demonstrates an understanding of the conflict. The questions from the table I would like to highlight are the ones regarding the Syrian government and whether or not the informant believed the government had violated basic human rights in Syria before and during the conflict. The majority of the participants with regard to both questions disagreed; they did not believe that the Syrian government had violated basic human rights in Syria neither before the conflict nor since its start. Section B below will help parse out why members of the Armenian community might have felt this way, however, what is important to mention here is that upon further questioning regarding what constitutes a violation, many participants (still not the majority though) did acknowledge that violations of basic human rights likely took place, but that they did not personally know of them (again, this will be elaborated upon in the next section). The human rights abuses they acknowledged were two-fold, most were abuses they recognized were committed by the present government, but others were abuses felt by the Armenian community committed by the Syrian government before the Assad regime came to power. I will now delve into an explanation of the former and the latter will be part of the discussion in section b.

246 Survey Respondent.
Within the past eight years of the conflict in Syria there have been numerous human rights abuses and countless violations of international humanitarian law.\textsuperscript{247} Arrests, forced disappearances, indiscriminate attacks, torture, the use of outlawed weapons, and attacks on civilian objects all constitute just a fraction of the violations and human rights abuses committed in Syria.\textsuperscript{248} Even before the conflict though, it is important to point out the types of restrictions the Syrian government placed on its people, severely limiting their human rights. One of the most notable features of the Assad regime before the conflict was the lack of freedom of expression and the absence of political opposition. There were many crackdowns on political Islamic groups in the 80s and that continued through the rest of the century. The number of political prisoners and the authoritarian policies help add weight to the validity of what this one young Armenian had to say: “There was no freedom. You were not allowed to express yourself in any way. You couldn’t say anything bad about the regime, about the figures of the regime. They were controlling everything within the country, everything.”\textsuperscript{249} Upon elaboration of the question, “What would justice in Syria look like,” one informant said: “freedom of speech, having different political parties, democracy,” while another maintained, “a democratic government where people can exercise their basic human rights.”\textsuperscript{250} Thus, while Armenians may not have felt as though they experienced a lack of basic rights with the Assad regime, at the very least many recognized that such violations were being carried out against others.

Notable in this section also is the fact that at least one fifth of Armenian informants in this study expressed disdain for, or at least an acknowledgement of, the fact that the Kurdish population in Syria has been restricted. Perhaps the Armenians had a relatively great deal to say.

\textsuperscript{247} “After 8 Years and 500,000 Dead, No ‘Normalization’ in Syria without Justice: Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect,” accessed May 8, 2019, http://www.globalr2p.org/publications/742.
\textsuperscript{249} SurveyRespondent, Interview.
\textsuperscript{250} Survey Respondent.
about the Kurds because they are another minority community and thus they were more attentive to their treatment as a point of comparison to their own, or perhaps they are just a notable community because of the distinct treatment they receive. Whatever the reason, the points made are important indicators that many members of the Armenian community of Syria did acknowledge the mistreatment of other communities throughout the Assad regime and, as will be shown in theme three of this section regarding unity, they include the Kurdish population as an important part of a unified Syria. As for the content of these descriptions of discrimination, one informant notes that President Hafez Al-Assad stripped many Kurds of their citizenship, and another explains that, “after 1973, Armenians started to enjoy more freedom, but for example, Kurds still didn’t have a right to their language or any classes in school.”

In attempting to explain why the treatment might have been worse for the Kurds, one student explains, “the Kurds always complained. They wanted to separate from Syria. Armenians live peacefully. We don’t want anything. We didn’t demand anything else. We complied with the laws.” While there is a lot to unpack in this statement, the important takeaway here is the understanding that other groups did suffer abuses by the government, and the perception that compliance with the law brings protection. This is a perception that, I would argue, has been created by many years of fear that governmental policies would be abusive and the best way to avoid that, was to comply. This will largely be the content of section b below.

While the Armenians consider themselves a part of the larger Syrian community and do believe in rights being restored for the whole country, their emphasis on protecting the rights and liberties of all citizens seems to me not to be because they feel they have currently lost something, but rather, a fear that they could lose certain rights in a post-conflict Syria. This fear

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251 Rerooted, Vahe Derderian, 51 from Aleppo
252 Survey Respondent, Interview.
is inspired by the very recent history many of them lived through as the regimes changed in Syria and their rights were constantly tied to the policies of the government. Thus, a new Syria is another change for them and along with that, comes the uncertainty of the fate of their rights. Being ethnic and religious minorities in Syria has been a source of discrimination and hostility for the Armenians at times, and thus their visions for a post-conflict Syria must be understood in the context that the uncertainty of change impacts their views greatly.

b. The Syrian Government’s “Protection” of Minorities

“\textit{All the world thinks that the regime is helping the minorities, actually, the minorities protected the regime. That’s the truth.}”\textsuperscript{253}

Perhaps the most important part of this entire analysis is this section. I struggle in finding a way to include everything I feel is relevant to this discussion, and in no way do I wish to do disservice to this community by overgeneralizing or leaving something out. Thus, please, in your reading of this section, understand that it is difficult to capture trends in perceptions and that one study of 50 informants cannot accurately assess an entire community of 100,000+ people. That being said, let us delve into how perceptions of protection have become an integral part of the Armenian community’s understanding of their place in Syria, and how it informs their desires for justice and visions of repair for a post-conflict Syria.

\textbf{Decades without protection}

Throughout the last century, the Armenians in Syria, in one way or another, have been the subjects of restrictive government policies. At different points in their history they were either facing repressive policies by Islam being tied in some way to the government, or they were facing restrictions on their institutions and freedoms to associate and ability to preserve their

\textsuperscript{253} Survey Respondent.
diverse identity by authoritarian regimes with Arab nationalist policies.\textsuperscript{254} During the earlier authoritarian regimes, the development of Armenian associations “suffered a number of halts, backlashes, and restrictions...as a part of a strategy to undermine any form of potential organized opposition.”\textsuperscript{255} This affected their ability to preserve their Armenian-ness and also subjected them to a climate of hostility towards foreign and non-Arab cultures that had pervaded the State. As has been described many times above, there were restrictions placed on associations, schools, publishing, and many outlets of expression that were cut off and still haven’t recovered in the modern day.\textsuperscript{256} The support for the Armenian schools from the international diaspora was subject to governmental control at one point, they lost their parliamentary representatives, their political parties were banned, their Armenian education was restricted, and due to all of this, they “virtually disappeared from public life.”\textsuperscript{257} Overall, the restrictive policies that suspended civil freedoms and tangibly impacted the ethno-cultural diversity of different minority communities in Syria had a significant influence on the way the Armenian communities have evolved and thereby, on their perceptions of a safe and secure Syria.\textsuperscript{258}

**Protections under the Al-Assad regime: the strategic importance of minorities**

“*I never felt injustice in Syria towards Armenians.*”\textsuperscript{259}

Albeit just one person’s perspective, the view expressed in the quote above seemed to be a shared sentiment amongst the majority of the informants in this study. Table 5 of Annex C demonstrates that more than 4/5ths of my survey respondents felt that one of the successes of the Syrian government was the protection of minorities. (This same fraction believed that one of the successes of the Syrian government was the maintenance of a unified Syria, but that will be

\textsuperscript{254} Migliorino, *(Re)* Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria, 110.
\textsuperscript{255} Ibid., 131
\textsuperscript{256} Ibid., 210
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid., 109
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.,221
\textsuperscript{259} Survey Respondent, Interview.
discussed in theme three of this section below). This is likely a result of the fact that the Al-Assad regime helped to redefine the spaces and conditions of co-existence of ethno-cultural groups in Syria and offered minority communities opportunities to persevere their unique identities.

While officially denying their relevance, the Al-Assad regime has continued to use ethnic and sub-ethnic allegiances as a strategic political resource. This context has created for the Armenians (as for other social groups) some protected spaces where the community could continue to preserve its diversity. Hafez al-Assad had a strategy to broaden the regime’s bases of support through the creation of a strong, centralized state, promoting a distinct Syrian national identity within the wider pan-Arab nation.\textsuperscript{260} In simpler terms, his priority was the consolidation of the regime and the Armenian community was an important source of support for that plan. Thus, what Migliorino calls the tacit agreement between Assad and the Armenian community of Syria was born. At the official level, the state disregarded confessional and communal identities, however, Assad was aware that “the communal solidarity characterizing minorities like the Armenians represented an important asset and could play an important role in providing the new leadership with support.”\textsuperscript{261} The tacit pact allowed state control over the communal activities of the Armenians to be relaxed as long as the government received the Armenian community’s support and acquiescence.\textsuperscript{262}

This brought certain rights and protections to the Armenians, many of which had been restricted through the previous governments. Under Assad, the Syrian government has consistently minimized interference in Armenian schools, and allowed for a liberal interpretation of the restrictive rules. This aforementioned tacit pact and “the sense of trust the regime has

\textsuperscript{260} Migliorino, \textit{(Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria}, 156.
\textsuperscript{261} Ibid., 156
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid., 156
developed for the Armenians has contributed remarkably to expand the area of cultural freedom enjoyed by the community, particularly when the consumption of Armenian culture takes place within Armenian spaces: the family, cultural association, club, etc.” However, the protections they were granted, though so done on the basis of genuinely established networks of trust, were ultimately dictated “primarily by the needs of legitimacy and stability of the state itself, the political system, or of the political leadership, rather than by a recognition of the value of cultural diversity per se.” This is a great indication of why the Armenian community of Syria might be so worried about a new government, and why they preserve their allegiance to the entity that is protecting them, especially in Syria, because since the ideas and respect for cultural diversity are not actually ingrained within the governmental system, change can bring about severe violations and abuses for them. Many Syrians recognize that. For example, one young student from Aleppo says, “Bashar gave us this illusion that we would lose our rights if we disconnected from him.” Another participant said, “The world thinks the regime is protecting minorities, but they used us as an image. They said to the world, ‘see, there are Armenians here, Turkmen here, Kurds here, we are protecting them from the others,” but it was not like that. We were hard working people, that’s why we survived there, not because of the regime protecting us, no.”

This is an important perspective because it demonstrates the fact that many people do see the political undertones of the situation, (also keep in mind that these were both young men under the age of 30 speaking, so perhaps they don’t fully know the same oppressive reality of the past that their parents and grandparents might remember and thus be influenced by). At the same time, it is also important to understand why the Armenian community members would want to

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263 Ibid., 209
264 Ibid., 222
265 Survey Respondent, Interview.
266 Survey Respondent.
further the belief that the government is generally helping all of its citizens under the belief that all Syrians are united (a concept we will delve into further in the section on unity below in theme three). This is demonstrated by the following interaction. When I asked one informant if he felt that there should be a different kind of repair or justice for the Armenian community of Syria as compared to other Syrian communities he immediately rejected such an idea. He said:

“*No no no this is not a good idea to suggest. No. Forget about thinking about Armenians as a minority. We are a member of the Syrian nation. We have to be, we must be treated, just like any Muslim, Kurdish, Alawite, any of us must be treated equally. This was the policy of the government, and it is the policy of the government even up until now.*”

This comment is critical because it demonstrates the relative success of previous government agendas in Syria to promote nationalism by inducing an element of fear in the Armenian community to admit their unique ethno-religious identities. However, the Armenian community is not devoid of agency as it is clear the Armenians comply with, and take on, this notion of seeming united. However, in order to preserve this, they must be seen as an indistinct part of the whole. They have mastered that well, but an important point to note is that it is not solely up to the Armenian community whether they will have rights or not (in other words, it is not solely determined by their compliance or non-compliance); it is largely dependent on the government. Thus, perhaps the most important point to take away from this entire subsection is that there is a widely shared perception amongst the Syrian-Armenian community interviewed that they would be threatened should there be any type of change in the government, especially any change towards removing its secular nature.

c. The Importance of a Secular Syria

“For Armenians, freedom is what we understand it is, like democracy. *But for the opposition, it's to turn Syria into a Muslim state and get rid of the secular government.*”

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267 Survey Respondent. (Also, a side note: this person spoke in English so I kept the grammar as was)
268 Survey Respondent.
As I hope has been made clear above, the prospect of a governmental change brings with it potentially damaging consequences. The current approach of the Syrian state towards ethno-cultural diversity is ambiguous and the tacit agreements in place with Armenians (along with other minority communities) “appear both volatile and uncertain.” As Migliorino so perfectly explains, “as relations between the regime and a community like the Armenians are maintained at a merely informal level, they tend to offer no guarantees and they are potentially subject to sudden policy changes and to the consequences of a change of the regime.” This is such a critical point for understanding why so many Armenians in this study had no strong preference for a regime change, or at least did not emphasize it as much as is often emphasized as recommendations for a post-conflict Syria in reports published based on interviews with majority communities in Syria. A new government would necessitate a renewed discussion on ethno-cultural diversity and it is possible that the Armenians in Syria would not be allowed to maintain their strong connections with Armenia and the Armenian diaspora through unrestricted access to Armenian culture, language, religion, and more. Ultimately, it is possible that spaces would not be preserved for Armenian identity, nor would the creation or preservation of such spaces receive encouragement or protection from the Syrian government. So, a key to understanding this desire for the government to remain secular is in recognizing the dangers and concerns that come with being a minority group that’s been oppressed in the past because of the very qualities that make them diverse. For most of my survey participants, these questions of preserving ethno-cultural diversity comprise some of their greatest concerns about return and life in a post-conflict Syria, and ultimately inform their desire for there to be no large change in the post-conflict government. It is important to note that perhaps half of the survey participants do suggest

269 Migliorino, (Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria, 156.
270 Ibid., 223
271 el-Hariri, “Unheard Voices.”
important structural changes to certain governmental policies and an elimination of corruption, but it is not necessarily with the belief that the president should change. Some of the reforms they suggest are as follows: abandoning the draft, not bribing people, not misusing documents, promoting greater freedom of speech, and including a representative from each faction in the government. While these were suggestions compiled from different interviews, one respondent sums it up well: “the repaired country will be for the people, not government, to correct all the mistakes which were economic and political.” This being said, a significant portion believed President Assad should stay in power “not just for the protection of minorities, but for civilization.” However, whether they wanted President Assad himself to stay in power, or whether they solely wanted to preserve the policies he enacted for their protection, is an important distinction to draw.

In addition to the fact that, as explained above, the Assad regime provided reassurance that minority rights would be protected (whether true or just part of his political discourse is insignificant here), President Assad also constructed the perception that if he were not in power, religious extremists would control the government. This became particularly prevalent in the context of the current conflict and only fortified the perception that Assad was a protector of the minorities. The government disseminated information that suggested that if the country doesn’t unite, then Islamic extremists are going to take over. It was a type of widespread manipulation where the popular perception was that the government was the stronger and better option for protecting its population from extremists. However, I call it a manipulation because the Syrian government had themselves “helped incubate the extremism that led to the rise of the Islamic

272 Survey Respondent, Interview.
273 Survey Respondent.
State and the further spread of jihadism in Syria.”[276] In 2011 “the majority of the current ISIS leadership was released from jail by President Assad.”[277] Although no one in the regime has admitted or explained why that might be so, Robert Ford, (the last US ambassador to Syria), maintains that Assad’s own regime released thousands of jihadists from the prisons after the uprisings against him began to destabilize the country in order to create an enemy so that President Assad could convince the West that he was a better choice than the rebels to help battle ISIS and jihadism.[278] In other words, to garner national and international support, the government released jihadists from Syrian prisons knowing they would form the nucleus of Daesh and Al Nusra and that helped paint a mirage of the revolution and conflict having a sectarian nature, positioning Assad as the savior.

These perceptions of division and Assad’s ability to protect its people reached far and deep into many communities’ understandings of the conflict. A greater in depth discussion regarding how these perceptions were crafted and how to untangle them will be a large focus of theme three below, however they serve as important contextual factors for understanding the opinions in this section and why there exists such a belief that if Assad leaves, a religious extremist will likely control the country. Secularism afforded Armenians equal treatment that doesn’t exist in neighboring countries and losing Assad became linked to losing secularism.

Upon asking one informant “When the conflict ends, do you think the president will stay in power?,” he responded:

“No, no, it’s not will, we want him to. All the Syrian people want him to stay, because he’s a good solution. The whole picture of the country will change [if he leaves]. Syria will turn into Afghanistan. Christians won’t be able to live there. It’s not that I’m defending the Christians and the Armenians are part of it, I’m thinking about Syrian

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[278] Ibid.
civilization. And we know, wherever the Muslim extremism comes, civilization is gone.”

While this perspective was not explicitly expressed by other participants as transparently, it was a commonly held attitude (to varying extremes) that was referenced in elaborations and shaped responses in different ways. In one way, it was tied to security and feeling safe in Syria. The best summary of these shared sentiments is in one woman’s very simple statement: “if a radical Muslim took over the country as leader, Armenians wouldn’t feel as safe.”

In the context of all the protections described above granted to ethno-diverse groups within the secular governments in Syria, it becomes clear how statements like this, (based on the perception that extremism is a threat to a safe and secure life in Syria), form these communities’ realities. Furthermore, the fear that such a change would impact safety and security is also demonstrated by comments that suggest the involvement of external actors, particularly non-secular states, who aim to impose Islam as an official religion of the country, should the government collapse. If you look at table 6 in annex C, you can see that perceptions of responsibility for the conflict include many international actors, and upon elaboration, those who indicated responsibility for other Middle Eastern countries (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Iraq, Turkey, and the Gulf States in general) many informants expressed a fear that these countries want to convert Syria from a secular regime to a religious one, as it is an outlier amongst many of its neighbors in this regard. One participant expressed this in saying, “We need to teach people to have broader perspectives, but unfortunately, Arab countries prefer to be homogenous.” Once again, this is merely a perception, however, that is what this analysis is largely about- assessing how these perceptions inform participants’ beliefs that what is protecting Syria and its secularism is President Assad.

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279 Survey Respondent, Interview.  
280 Survey Respondent.
In line with the comment above that mentions the need to teach people to have broader perspectives, many respondents suggested Syrian education reform. These respondents expressed that their belief that rampant extremism existed in the country was a key factor in their decision not to return, unless perhaps there was education reform. One informant said, “the mentality of the people in the country has changed a lot and this is problematic to return. We need more education activities/initiatives to change that mentality back.”

This view that many of the people left in Syria have been “brainwashed” was fairly common and it was often noted as an obstacle to return and tied to the need to implement and reform education initiatives. Perhaps ⅚ of my participants expressed a concern that it was almost hopeless to return to Syria without education programs in place for tolerance and nonviolence. These participants shared the view that “the truth of the Syrian conflict is that other countries provoked it and the people became victims of uneducated radicals.” They worried that a large portion of society that remained in Syria and are now living in the cities were “from villages and weren’t educated enough, so you say something, and they believe it. That’s the main issue.”

Often linking Islamic extremism with those from the villages as well, these same participants feared that, as a result of a multitude of factors (a. that villages are less diverse than cities and thus those from there were not often exposed to different viewpoints or religions/ethnicities, b. that many extremist movements started and grew in the villages, and c. that the quality of education is worse, or less comprehensive, in villages), the new generation of Syrians living in the cities would be intolerant of Armenians. Thus, unless there were education reforms for the children of those they felt were promoting intolerance in Syria, they would not feel safe to return. This point necessitates a deeper conversation of the very varied perceptions on all sides within the conflict, and that will

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281 Survey Respondent.
282 Survey Respondent.
283 Survey Respondent.
284 Survey Respondent.
be the point of discussion in the next section, particularly with regard to truth commission-like efforts.

Overall, the attitudes that informed the analysis in this section were largely tied to the notion that peace, stability, and a unified Syria could not come if there were a non-secular government. Within the last decade or so, largely as a result of the regime’s discourse, the commonly held perception has been that Islamic extremism was rampant in Syria. It might be important to note here that Armenians especially started fearing radical Islam around this time because the groups they were victimized by included Daesh and other extremist groups. Before moving on, it is important to make absolutely clear that none of this context that I have provided is meant to justify the Armenian suggestions, or argue that President Assad should stay in power. He has committed many violations and while justice for one group might mean keeping him in power, for another it means removing him, and both of those perspectives should be taken into consideration when negotiations and mediations ensue for a post-conflict Syria. However, the helpful part of surveys like the one used in this study is that they go deeper than the surface comment that "Assad should stay in power." In understanding the context behind, "why" he should stay in power, we've understood that it is because Armenians of Syria tend to associate him with a secular government. Thus, perhaps the recommendation from this section and this part of the study is that, for the Armenians, and minority groups at large in Syria, it will be very important for them to have a secular government, should there be a regime change, and that is something I believe much of the Syrian society can support.
Theme 3: (Re)Creating a Unified Syria

Q: “What would justice in Syria look like to you?”
A: “A unified Syria respecting the ethnicity, religion, and equality of others. Everyone living peacefully together again.”

This idea that Syria is not currently unified arguably began as a creation of the State, however, over the past eight years of the Syrian conflict, it has largely become a reality. Whether this was felt within certain communities though, seems to vary, and within the Armenian community particularly, there was a wide range in beliefs, as gathered from my interviews and survey responses. There were at least three questions on the survey form that aimed to gauge notions of unity within Syria. One question, (found in table 5 of annex C) asked participants to agree or disagree with the following statement: “One of the successes of the Syrian government was the maintenance of a unified Syria.” 41 people agreed and only 4 disagreed. Another question (found in table 8 of annex C) asked people to agree or disagree with the statement: “Divisions created amongst Syrians during the conflict in Syria are now forgotten.” 34 participants disagreed, while 8 agreed, and 9 said they didn’t know. The next question of interest (table 9 of annex C) asked participants to select all the options that would make them feel like there had been justice with regard to the Syrian conflict. 26 people selected, “unifying Syria so there are no more factions, and no divides amongst people for religion, ethnicity, etc.” Another option that 30 people selected was, “Syrian government support for those who wish to return to Syria,” and a follow up question to each of these people determined that they all believed this should apply to any Syrian who wishes to return, regardless of ethnicity. Lastly, in response to this same question regarding justice in Syria, 24 people selected that “the symbols that indicate loyalty to the opposition should be removed from public places.”

Numbers like 26, 30, and 24 indicate a relatively high level of support as the support each choice received ranges from between 5 and 37
interpreted as a preference for the regime over the opposition, the more relevant point here is that, as the term “opposition” includes all groups that are not the government, this response can also be interpreted as a desire for unity, and that is certainly how participants who selected it had elaborated upon it.

More indirectly, open-ended “fill in” questions like, “what would justice or repair look like to you in post-conflict Syria,”286 had the potential to gauge opinions of unity as well. Without any prompting, unity very often came up as an element that people mentioned they needed in a post-conflict Syria, whether they anticipated returning or not. The majority of the answers of this type could be represented by these responses: “repair will be unity and bringing people together,” or “justice should be the same for all—not different based on religion or ethnicity.”287 These comments were so prevalent because at least half of the Syrian-Armenians I interviewed held the view that Syria was now divided and hoped for reunification processes. As I will explain shortly with reference to the principal of Kulna Suriyyn, many Syrian-Armenians truly did view Syria as united and it was a very important part to their successful dual existence in Syria as Armenians and Syrians. One Armenian man demonstrates this in saying:

“The Armenian community in Syria is proud of the Arab people. We feel proud that the Arab people took us in. When we ran away from the Turks, Arabs looked after us. And for 90, 95 years we lived peacefully with Arab people. We were proud to live together.”288 - Krikor Sahagian, 64 from Aleppo

Getting along with Arabs and Alawites and Sunnis and Shia, etc., was partly a result of the gratitude they felt toward Syrians while also a critical component of the safety, stability, and preservation of their communities. Living in unity meant no divisive distinctions that would facilitate their discrimination, and with the tumultuous history of discriminatory policies towards

286 These were separate questions within the survey. The responses above come from questions 41-44
287 Survey Respondent, Interview.
288 Rerooted
those who were different, a “united” Syria (where diversity was still privately respected and allowed), was a safe Syria. Exemplifying this, one woman says, “Justice for Syria starts with peace and ends with respecting one another’s ethnicity and religion.” Another informant says, “People should be more humane and there should be peace and tolerance.”

One last quote that echoes these is, “repair would be to bring Syria back to how it was when people didn’t discriminate and everyone gets their rights back. The Government should treat all the same so that they can unify the country.”

This idea of a unified country is something that many Syrian-Armenian informants expressed they felt was the status quo in Syria. Some informants did not believe Syria was ever divided. They said, “We were never divided, we all just lived in different neighborhoods,” or, “Syria has always been unified. It was international actors who brought the war into Syria.” Another way this was expressed was in saying, “Christians and Muslims don’t have issues. intervening countries have problems with each other and with Syria.”

Religious tolerance seemed to be a very commonly held component of unity. One respondent suggests that, “we should go back to having different religious communities peacefully living together.” So where did these ideas of unity originate and why does unification seem so important to them? Kulna Suriyyyn can help answer that. As explained above in section three, the formula “Kulna Suriyyyn” meaning, “we are all Syrians” helps provide an understanding of the importance of unity.

Still today (and definitely around 2008 when Migliorino’s book was published), the question of ethnicity “remains one of the most persistent taboos in Syrian official discourse.”

While the regime may privately grant an ethnically diverse community certain freedoms in

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289 Survey Respondent, Interview. This was translated as “unbiasedness” but I think proper substitutes would be tolerance, or non-discriminatory policies.
290 Survey Respondent.
291 Survey Respondent.
292 Migliorino, (Re) Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria, 110.
exchange for support, publicly, it downplays the existence of such allegiances. Nevertheless, it is no secret; “Syrians are generally well aware of the diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious makeup of their towns and villages, and of the role that ethnicity plays in Syrian politics, but so are they about the regime-imposed red lines concerning discussion on the issue in public spaces.”

So, as seen in the quotes above that some people maintained there were no distinctions among the people and communities in Syrian society, those comments were likely a preferred way of viewing the reality, than actually believing that to be the reality. As Migliorino explains, “both the regime and the society at large appear to be aware of the gap, and often find it convenient to resort to a neutral and still not untrue formula: Kulna Suriyyyn: ‘we are all Syrians.’”

While it is hard to generalize from my results what the tendencies were amongst different generations since the sample size was so small, this formula of Kulna Suriyyyn can potentially help explain why the younger generation was more likely to openly tell me in interviews that there were divisions amongst different communities, whereas the older generations who lived through the creation of this kind of tacit agreement and understanding of Kulna Suriyyyn were less likely to point out those differences. For those members of the older generations who were more likely to feel that Syria was more divided now, than before, it is possible they didn't see, (or chose not to see), those differences in the past, due to this principle. An important point to highlight here is that when Syrian-Armenians say they felt Syria was united, it makes sense that it probably comes from the Syrian government’s strategic formula, however, I would argue that it was also a strategy the Armenians adopted at times so that their freedoms would not be infringed upon when other political groups or ethnic institutions were being shut down due to the belief they were a threat to society if they were opposed to the government. While the

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293 ibid.
294 ibid., 190
government needed to propagate this narrative for their own ends of promoting a nationalistic Syria, the Armenians needed to take it on at times too to demonstrate they were not a threat, and ultimately, many really came to believe it.

Given the explanation that Kulna Suriyyn helps provide an understanding for why unification held so much weight in Syria for the Armenians, it is important to explore how these perceptions of unification have begun to disappear. While many felt that the country was unified, others believe ties amongst different communities have been severed and, for some, they are revealing their belief that such ties never existed in the first place. One respondent says, “justice would be to go back to a normal, peaceful life. For me, my childhood in Syria was peaceful. I couldn’t say I was different as an Armenian than any local Syrian person.”

This study represented some of the different perceptions and attitudes people in the Syrian-Armenian community hold about the unity of the community. Some were ignorant of the divisions, either because they left Syria early, did not keep up with the unfolding of the conflict, or only paid attention to matters within strictly Armenian circles. Others believed that President Assad had already mended the divisions (a perception that is likely as a result of government-produced media in Syria), while a smaller group understood the political realities of this false narrative. This latter group, undoubtedly the minority of those in this survey, expressed with confidence their belief that “There were no divisions in the first place. This division was framed for the conflict.”

The variation in perceptions of unity was further elaborated upon by two informants who explained their understanding of the evolution of the situation in greater detail: One student explained that in a post-conflict Syria:

“First of all, they should stop fighting. There is a lot of hate among people. You cannot forget that now. That’s a huge part of the situation. Alawites and Sunnis hate each other.”

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295 Survey Respondent, Interview.
296 Survey Respondent.
They hated each other since the Mohammed days. But it’s obvious now. There’s a lot of
blood involved now, they killed/massacred each other and it’s not easy to forget all that.
Peace can’t come until these divisions are melded.”²⁹⁷

In another participant’s response about the Syrian conflict and what repair should look
like in a post-conflict Syria, unity is also referenced heavily in an enlightening way:

“What is democracy? It’s not this democracy and civilization that America and Europe
are pretending to give us. It’s not just judging the people; it’s living in harmony with
multi-cultures. This is democracy. We used to live in democracy. Syrian people used to
live in democracy, breathe democracy, they have democracy in their blood. We lived in a
multi-culture as one. In Syria we used to live with each other. Muslim, Christian, Alawite.
Ten years ago, I used to think of Muslims as brothers. We didn’t have any conflict with
them. We used to even celebrate Ramadan with them. I remember myself I stayed one
month fasting with my friends. We used to like each other. But the Muslim religion in
Syria used to be moderate.

Anybody who knows about the ABC’s of the conflict knows that it is the Christian-Muslim
relations that need to be repaired first. Then the Alawite-Sunni relations. It wasn’t that
perfect before, but it was somehow going well. Those are the main relations which were
destroyed and we have to think about rebuilding that because if we are thinking about
rebuilding the country with multi-culture, Orthodox, Muslim, Christian, Alawite,
Catholic, Druze, whatever it is, we have to think about the religious relations between
them. Another perspective on what relationships have been broken and need to be fixed
are Sunni and Shia. Also, Kurds need to be reintegrated into a united Syria.”²⁹⁸

This perspective so perfectly lays out the views held by the majority of my respondents
regarding the perceptions of a previously unified Syria, how the conflict has altered that, and the
renewed need for unification and bond-strengthening across many different communities. One
question still remains unanswered though—where did these perceptions of non-unification come
from? When did the shift occur from believing there was a unified Syria to feeling division? This
is the subject the next section will explore.

a. Sectarian Syria: from Government Creation to Reality

²⁹⁷ Survey Respondent.
²⁹⁸ Survey Respondent.
An analysis of primary sources from the government and other news outlets in Syria, as well as external reports from transnational media networks will demonstrate how the government created sectarian divides that eventually became the lived reality on the ground. An important implication of the fact that society is divided is the notion that this would necessitate transitional justice processes for a change in government because “a divided society does not typically go away unless the structure is changed. Thus, the reality of such divisions adds weight to the claim that transitional justice is the healthier, long-term approach for change in this conflict.  

For at least the past century in Syria, the government has created sectarian divisions in order to gain the most support possible from different communities in Syria. This is perhaps one of the nuclei of the problem in Syria—the heart of the conflict—as privately capitalizing on diversity while publicly limiting it has been a core element of successful Syrian governments and presently, both approaches are largely non-existent. However, trying to regain that allegiance with the communities it had lost has been a primary aim of the Syrian government for the past eight years and the techniques undertaken to do this demonstrate the all too familiar need for the government to control all segments of society if it is to remain in power. The Assad regime knows this well and so, while backwards seeming, it is widely believed that they crafted a plan to create division to ultimately spur and re-instill unity.

**Assad’s Creation:**

As explained above in theme two, to garner national and international support, the government released jihadists from Syrian prisons knowing they would form the nucleus of Daesh and Al Nusra and that helped create an illusion of the revolution and conflict having a sectarian nature, positioning Assad as the savior. How this perception was crafted, and then actualized, is the topic of this subsection. One Syrian woman with whom I spoke who is

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299 phone conversation with HRW IJ researcher
currently working with the IIIM shared her belief that "the regime has vilified anyone who is not on their side. They use sectarian language, and publish propaganda in magazines and newspapers created by the Syrian government. There is no free media." In line with these comments, it seems that the regime has perpetuated the conflict by inciting sectarian differences and violence. It is widely believed by many experts that Assad “concocted a legitimizing narrative [which] portrayed the oppositionists as violent, foreign, sectarian Islamists...in the hope that only jihadists and his regime would be left for Syrians and the world to choose from.” President Assad wanted to garner support in creating such division and an example of the success of his efforts can be seen in comments like that from the quote above where the interviewee says “the Muslims in Syria used to be moderate.” This perception of intolerant Islam was arguably created by Assad himself, as suggested earlier in theme two.

When people (like the Armenians cited above) say that they feel Syria is not united, perceptions aside, they are factually correct. Since the beginning of the conflict, Syria has experienced massive fragmentation. Even just two years into the conflict, by 2013, the Red Cross identified that the rebels had split into hundreds of groups. By 2018, the Carter Center indicated that there were more than one thousand groups. This is unprecedented. Up until that point the Lebanese civil war was the conflict with the most factions with a paltry 35 groups. The division in Syria resulted from the government’s creation of a market place within the opposition where they fought for international aid. Groups had to compete with each other to get access to resources. Preference over time was given to those with more Islamist ideologies and this created a shift away from the focus on the Free Syrian Army (FSA) toward other groups, alongside the

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300 IIIM contributor, Phone conversation.
301 Griffing, “How Assad Helped Create ISIS to Win in Syria and Got Away With the Crime of the Century.”
simultaneous massive fragmentation of the armed opposition.\textsuperscript{304} This division was critical for President Assad’s success, especially because it helped create a Syria where a settlement without him remaining in power was out of the picture.\textsuperscript{305} The regime’s success had always been based on very personal sets of relationships that Hafez Al-Assad set up with the Sunni middle class, Alawites, and other groups, which Bashar then took over. President Assad put himself at the center of these relationships and within this massive fragmentation of Syrian society, a Syria without Assad seems likely to only bring more chaos and disruption to the unity of the nation. Thus, for those who valued unity, which arguably much of the society did through the formula of Kulna Suriyyn, President Assad remaining in power seemed a reasonable and desirable option.

b. Divided Perceptions and Implications for Domestic Responsibility

“Imagine a cake. Syria is a cake. It is a very rich country; it has everything. It’s a big cake and all the big countries want to share from this big cake.” -26 year old male, Kessab, March 2019

“The FSA and Daesh are silhouettes. They are puppets of the international actors.” -March 2019

One of the most notable features of my survey responses and interviews is the divided perceptions in the understanding of the conflict, including why it started, who is responsible, and why it is still ongoing. As is evidenced by table 6 in annex C, perceptions of responsibility vary fairly evenly between FSA, terrorist groups, and international actors, with the USA and Turkey being the two most highly mentioned contributing/responsible external actors. The Syrian government also was commonly selected as a responsible actor, however not as often as the others. Questions gauging what the “truth” of the conflict was demonstrated that the truth is incredibly complicated and even within the Armenian community, there is no consensus.

\textsuperscript{304} International Peace Institute, Post-presentation conversation, April 22, 2019. 
\textsuperscript{305} ibid.
However, there were many trends, especially having to do with placing culpability on external actors instead of those within Syria.

When asked what they felt was the cause of the war in Syria, many of this study’s respondents referenced external, international actors as the cause for blame. Some of the different explanations include, “greediness of powerful countries”; “other people provoked it and the people became victims of uneducated radicals”\(^\text{306}\); “Syria was too strong of a country in the Middle East and presented a threat”; and the most common explanation is exemplified in this powerful metaphor: “Syria is a cake and everyone wants a piece.” Whether that was in reference to its oil, land, strategic location, lack of debt, or something else, many Syrian-Armenian participants felt that the conflict was brought in externally by those who wished to “destroy the resources, unity, and people of a rich country that had no debt.”\(^\text{307}\) In line with this, one researcher at the International Peace Institute says, “looking at it geopolitically, Syria is at the heart of the Middle East, everything is running through it,” which helps validate the claims that there was indeed something of interest in the country for the intervening nations. Although there was variation in the perceptions of the cause of the conflict, one thing was commonly believed, that if those international actors left Syria alone, it would be able to repair itself and progress just as it had been doing before the conflict. This perception affected notions for reparations by creating internationally focused demands, like demanding financial compensation from external actors responsible for the damage.

However, as one Syria researcher at HRW makes clear, this is a common pattern in conflicts like the Syrian one. She explains,

\("Usually what happens is that both parties to the conflict and communities that are under them will say, ‘oh if ISIS is gone everything will be better, or all of these people are terrorists funded\)

\(^\text{306}\) Survey Respondent, Interview.
\(^\text{307}\) Survey Respondent.
by Qatar, Turkey, and US and once they leave and pay the price, our country will be better.’ Generally, states use this as a way to deflect from themselves. Communities use this because it’s much easier than looking at the community structure. In transitional justice efforts, I would strongly push back against those kinds of arguments. Even if Russia, and the US have had a role that’s less than constructive in the conflict, the people you’re talking to can do very little about it, so the conversation should be redirected to what they can do.”

These are critical points and one important reason for looking to the communities themselves to change is because if they don’t, then how can one ensure these communities will avoid getting involved in more human rights violations in a post-conflict setting? How does one avoid future cycles of violence if the survivors aren’t paid much attention and the community structures that produced such violence aren’t restructured or at least reconsidered/re-thought-out? This is a compelling argument for the need to recognize internal responsibility and act upon it in a post-conflict setting. In terms of Syrian-Armenians, many of their responses regarding who should be responsible and involved in aiding Syria in its reconstruction phase were nuanced and diverse, and thus merit discussion.

In light of these considerations of external blame and international culpability, it is important to expand upon one divided opinion amongst the Syrian-Armenian respondents. The opinion was divided evenly with half of the participants who felt the international community should help, and the other half who felt that only Armenian institutions should be involved in helping rebuild the Armenian community; as one man put it, “Each community should help its own community. Do you look after your own kids or your neighbor’s kids?” Other reasoning for the Armenian community helping other Armenians was because some felt that “international organizations should not be involved in rebuilding communities and infrastructure because they would ruin more.” The aid should come from the countries that were with Syria, not against

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308 Phone Conversation with Human Rights Watch Syria Researcher.
309 Survey Respondent, Interview.
it.” It’s possible that many Armenians in Syria look to other Armenians today to help rebuild their communities because that has been the general pattern in Syria for the last century. When Armenian churches and schools were becoming part of the urban landscapes of the new Armenian quarters in Aleppo and other important Syrian cities, the international Armenian community was supporting these efforts. Organizations like the Calouste Gulbenkian foundation and AGBU helped the communities grow and develop. The US branch of the AGBU, for example, organized a fund-raising campaign to support Armenian schools and within two years the AGBU was allocating funds from a collected amount of about $250,000 for the replacement of old school buildings.

Conversely, the argument in favor of international aid for Syria maintains that Syria is not strong enough to rebuild the country on its own. One respondent says, “Syria can’t spend $6 billion worth to rebuild. If the international community leaves, who is going to rebuild the country?” Another respondent says, “the country is not as stable as it was before the conflict so I don’t think it would be good for all the international actors to leave the conflict.” As for direct aid, many interviewees echoed the following sentiment regarding the type of aid that should be given:

“All the international figures involved in the war should give reparations to the Syrian government in order to rebuild the infrastructure of the country, that’s the most important thing. Rebuild all the homes that were lost during the conflict so that people can go back and live their ordinary lives like before the conflict. I’m not talking about just the Armenians, I’m talking about all the Syrians, all the 50 million people who fled the country. The international actors have to help them.” - March 2019 interview

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310 Survey Respondent.
311 Something else that is important to note that unfortunately did not receive space in this analysis is the idea that many expressed which was “Armenians should not seek outside help. We can’t rely on anyone else but ourselves because that has only hurt us in the past.” This was an often expressed sentiment and if there were more room or time I would have liked to explore it some more.
312 Migliorino, 114
313 Survey Respondent, Interview.
314 Survey Respondent.
The difference in desire for international aid or non-international involvement stems from many different arguments and lines of reasoning, however, one of the most important types of aid that can be brought in and can be implemented by both international and national actors are justice mechanisms like truth commissions that can help advance the unification process, while not centering the focus (either for assigning or escaping from culpability) on external actors, but rather allowing the Syrians to be the center.

c. A Proposed Unification Process

“*My house is destroyed and if I return to Syria I will be emotionally destroyed. For redress, anyone guilty should be punished first, and society should come back together because if they rebuild without justice, it will all be destroyed again.*”

The quote above is critical because it foreshadows a worrisome reality in which when divisions are ignored and impunity defines a nation, the pillars of society are arguably weakened, and thus, without a strong foundation the fabric of communities can easily tear once more. One of the most promising ways to strengthen this fabric is through leveling the perceptions and ensuring everyone is living in the same reality. As of now, with the thousand factions in Syria, the “truth” is non-existent. As we’ve seen, the narratives that exist are the ones that different groups would like one to believe, but a deeper exploration of the truths beyond propaganda is necessary if Syria is to be unified once again. One way to achieve this is through truth commissions.

A Syrian researcher at Human Rights Watch agreed with the need for bridging perceptions, however she disagreed that a truth commission would be the most effective option for this. She explains:

“For if you move in Syrian post-conflict circles everyone will tell you that a truth commission would not be efficient because of the amount of independent documentation there has been,”

Survey Respondent.
and the subsequent impact it has had on peoples’ perceptions. There’s a perceived bias in the way that each party to the conflict and each side controls the narrative and each entity does not take any other seriously.

In a situation like this, an official truth commission wouldn’t be very effective. More effective, and what we’ve seen happen, in much smaller examples where there has been more success in creating social cohesion in the community, are these kinds of exercises where you bring together people from different narratives and get them to go through their experiences together (maybe some grassroots organization, exposing groups to one another without necessarily going through what they went through in the conflict. In these settings narratives come out in a more organic exchange and they are far more effective than a top down commission or any top down initiative at this point because authorities are formal entities and have very little interest in closing the gap. These smaller initiatives allow for social coherence and that is what we need now.”

The points made in the researcher’s extensive response are critical for implementing a successful type of unification effort in post-conflict Syria. In fact, in a sense many Armenians expressed similar doubt and hesitation about such processes. For example, one respondent said: “a truth commission wouldn’t work because people will lie. Historical dialogue is a good idea but it would end in a fight. So, none of these are good for finding the truth in Syria.” Another respondent shared his similar belief that “a truth commission is pointless because no one will tell the truth. Both the opposition and government sides would lie.” It seems clear that taking into account both the lack of trust in a truth commission process, and the greatly expressed desire for unification, some type of unification process through civil society that fosters social cohesion, as the researcher above explained, is critical for a post-conflict Syria.

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316 International Justice Employee at Human Rights Watch, Phone Conversation.
317 Survey Respondent, Interview.
318 Survey Respondent.
VII. Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion

“Justice is very important to us because we can’t create a democratic structure for the country to go forward without justice. Yes, there are still violations on the ground, but that doesn’t mean we cannot start looking into justice mechanisms now. Having a few trials could let all the violators on the ground know they can’t get away with murder. Unless we show them some signs, we can’t stop what they’re doing. Restoring order and peace to the country is just as important to me as punishing the people responsible, but the main reason why everyone has to be punished for their crimes is so that it does not happen again within Syria.”

The quote from one respondent above helps put into perspective much of what has been discussed and assessed in this study. While much of the first section of this study was about the history of the Armenians in Syria along with a discussion of general transitional justice mechanisms, the latter half aimed to tie those frameworks together for an analysis of the Armenian perspective on justice in Syria, situated within a larger notion of justice across different Syrian communities. As was discussed at length in section six, the three overarching objectives for justice for Syrian-Armenians in a post-conflict Syria were: ensuring safety and stability, protecting the rights and liberties of all citizens, and (re)unifying Syria. In my analysis, I proposed these goals could be achieved in a variety of ways. For safety and stability, I suggested that rebuilding important community structures that entice dispersed Syrian-Armenians to return to Syria would undeniably increase the strength of the Armenian community and restore hope that a safe and stable future for the Armenians in Syria is possible. As for protecting the rights and liberties of all citizens, I suggested that government policies in a post-conflict Syria do not discriminate against certain groups by limiting their rights based on their ethnic or religious background. This was a foundational requirement of Armenian prosperity in Syria and repatriation/strong social cohesion can only be attained if everyone is equal. Lastly, on this point of unity, I suggested that in light of the divisive propaganda that is disseminated today throughout Syria, there will be a need for some type of mechanism to mend the society and bring

319 Ibid.
it together once more. As the HRW researchers cited earlier have suggested, a ground-up process for strengthening social cohesion by increasing exposure to other groups (instead of necessarily speaking of what happened in the conflict or different perceptions of responsibility) can help unify the country and its people once more.

In assessing various Syrian communities, other research has found similar suggestions to what I have proposed. For example, the Carnegie Middle East Center has produced reports that put forward suggestions for conducive policy measures to create the conditions Syrians expressed they’d “need” in order to “return home.” The measures they suggest are in line with the themes explained above and thus help support the idea that it is not possible to separate the Syrian-Armenian experience from the Syrian experience at large. Armenians were, and still are, an integral part of Syrian life and thus, their hopes and aspirations for a reconstructed Syria should, and often do, take into consideration the views and necessities of other Syrian communities. Additionally, they are in line with what is best for the society as a whole in the most generalized prescription in order to attain peace and security (as far as the specifics go, of course their perspectives do differ). The first suggestion of the report is that safety and security be created through inclusive governance mechanisms, which facilitate reintegration, demilitarization, and access to justice.\footnote{ibid.} This is almost exactly the same as my first suggestion. Another recommendation is that efforts to prepare refugees for a return should begin now, including preparing Syrian lawyers and paralegals to inform refugees of their rights and help resolve the anticipated local disputes.\footnote{ibid.} Something that I’d like to highlight about this suggestion is that it is in line with the idea that many Syrian-Armenians shared with me that justice should be dealt out by either Syrians alone, or Syrians in conjunction with the
international community, but it should not be the sole undertaking of the international community. Although I did not get a chance to explore the responses regarding Syrian-Armenian perspectives for retributive justice for Syria, table 10 of Annex C shows the numerical results. However, anecdotally, I can briefly explain that many who rejected the idea of a purely international justice system for Syria felt that this would lead to more problems that have already been caused by the international community’s “meddling” in Syrian affairs. However, an interesting counter-point is that in speaking with the IJ researcher at HRW, she shared that hybrid-courts, or courts including solely Syria would likely not be feasible since many of those Syrians who would be responsible for running the courts are implicated in the crimes they would be trying. This makes it very unlikely that they would provide credible justice that is not solely one-sided. These two factors combined make it difficult for there to be retributive justice in Syria if these conditions are respected.

The last analysis that merits a brief mention here is the similarity between the HRW researcher’s described elements for a workable post-war Syria, and that which the generalized trends and data from my surveys demonstrated the Syrian-Armenians might prefer. The three HRW themes for a workable post-conflict Syria were: (1) Ensure refugees and all other displaced have a home to return to, (2) Reveal what happened to the disappeared, and (3) Progress on justice. While neither of us put forth tangible recommendations for how these goals can be achieved, I believe that might have been out of scope of the present study. The purpose of this study was to assess the attitudes of Syrian-Armenians toward redress in Syria and their perspectives of what satisfactory justice might be. A promising observation is that it seems the Armenian perspectives are in line with those of the Syrian community at large. In line with point (1) above from HRW, the Armenians in Syria feel that having a home to return to is an essential
part of feeling that justice has been done and that Syria is safe for them to live in once again. A whole discussion was given to this in section six under theme 1b. Additionally, while the Armenian community did not suffer as many disappearances as other communities may have, their constant desire for seeking the truth and for equal rights for all in Syria would suggest to me that their aims are in line with goal 2 of HRW. Lastly, although my respondents defined justice in many different ways, it is undeniable that the Syrian-Armenians seek progress on justice. Whether it was through their proposed governmental reforms such as loosening restrictions on freedom of speech, or financial compensation from the government to rebuild infrastructure, or memorialization and a reunification of Syria with its lands and people, it is clear that justice is the ultimate goal for many who wish to return, and it is the lack of justice for many of them that hinders their return.

Overall, this study highlighted the perspectives of a community not often included in the current effort of planning for justice in a post-conflict Syria. While this study provided valuable insight into this community, it is important to emphasize that any consultation like this with a small sample of community members on the ground with diverse and nuanced perspectives, is a very imperfect exercise, because it will never provide a generalizable answer for an entire community. However, one might see some trends emerge and this is valuable to at least guide the initiatives in a direction that is at least preferred by some. This kind of data helps to define the contours even if it doesn’t provide one with a blueprint for how the community can move forward. At the very least though, one can draw some conclusions from this kind of exercise and that is what I did in this study. In collecting opinions and perspectives for redress from the Armenian community of Syria today, I sought to analyze how their notions of justice could be understood. Through which lenses can we better understand what this community sees for justice
in post-conflict Syria, and why is that the case? I drew conclusions about how the lack of justice for an atrocity over a century ago impacted the expectations of justice in the conflict today. I also explored how the dynamics of minorities in the Syrian state impacted the Armenian experience and continues to influence their perspectives on justice for modern-day Syria. I discussed notions of the duality of a homeland, the importance of community, and presented in depth the possible justice mechanisms that could be used in Syria today. Through an assessment of which mechanisms this community would prefer to use, and overall, what elements are essential to them to create a “repaired Syria,” I hope I have contributed at least one piece to the greater puzzle of justice for the Syrian conflict, helping the image come into greater focus as we hopefully get closer to a post-conflict Syria day by day.
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A. English Survey

Survey # _______   Date: ______________

Important Note: This survey will be kept confidential and your name will not be linked to it in any way. Even so, please know that you are free to skip any question you do not feel like answering, and if at any point you decide you would like to stop completing the survey and turn it in incomplete, you may do so. Furthermore, if at any point you decide you would not like your answers to be recorded, I can remove and delete them from the dataset.

I. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Which of the following do you hold? (Please circle all that apply)
   e. Other: (please write in) ________________________

2. Which city are you from in Syria? Please write in: ___________________________________________

3. Gender:
   a. Male           b. Female

4. Age: _______________

5. With which ethnicities do you identify? (Please circle all that apply)
   a. Armenian
      b. How proud do you feel to be Armenian?
         a. Very proud   b. Proud   c. A Little Proud   d. Not Proud At All   e. I prefer not to answer
      c. Syrian
         d. How proud do you feel to be Syrian?
            a. Very proud   b. Proud   c. A Little Proud   d. Not Proud At All   e. I prefer not to answer
e. Other: (please write in) _____________________

f. How proud do you feel to be this ethnicity?
   a. Very proud  b. Proud  c. A Little Proud  d. Not Proud At All  e. I prefer not to answer

6. When did your ancestors arrive in Syria? __________________________________________________________

7. What was your occupation in Syria? ______________________________________________________________

8. When did you leave Syria? __________________________________________________________

9. Do you plan to go back to Syria?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. I don’t know yet but I’d like to d. I don’t know yet but I would not like to e. Prefer not to answer

10. When did you arrive in Armenia? ________________________________________________________________

11. What is your occupation in Armenia? ____________________________________________________________

12. What is your highest level of education:
   a. Primary/middle school  b. High school  c. University degree  d. Graduate school

13. Did you serve in the Syrian armed forces?
   a. No  b. Yes: If Yes, when? ________________________________________________________________

If you answered No, please skip question 14.

14. Why did you join the armed forces?
   a. Mobilization/draft  b. Voluntarily  c. Other ________________________________

II. FAMILY HISTORY/GENOCIDE

15. Did you lose any family members during the Armenian Genocide?
16. How often does your family speak about the Armenian Genocide?
   a. Very frequently  b. Frequently  c. Not so frequently  d. Never  e. I prefer not to answer

17. How much attention would you say was given to the Armenian Genocide in your school?
   a. A lot  b. Somewhere in the middle, neither a lot nor a little  c. A little  d. None  e. I prefer not to answer

18. Do you feel like your family was victimized during the Armenian Genocide?
   a. Yes  b. No opinion  c. No  d. I prefer not to answer

19. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following phrases:

   1. The memory of the Armenian Genocide is very much alive in the memories of Armenians
      a. Agree  b. Neither agree nor disagree  c. Disagree  d. I don’t know  e. Prefer not to answer

   2. The memory of the Armenian Genocide is very much alive in your memory
      a. Agree  b. Neither agree nor disagree  c. Disagree  d. Prefer not to answer

   3. The divisions created between Armenians and Turks are now forgotten
      a. Agree  b. Neither agree nor disagree  c. Disagree  d. I don’t know  e. Prefer not to answer

   4. Armenians have gotten justice for the genocide
      a. Agree  b. Neither agree nor disagree  c. Disagree  d. I don’t know  e. Prefer not to answer

   5. It is important for the world to know the truth about the Armenians Genocide
      a. Agree  b. Neither agree nor disagree  c. Disagree  d. Prefer not to answer

20. Do you feel that what you have experienced in Syria is similar to what your ancestors experienced during the Armenian Genocide?
   a. Yes, a lot  b. Somewhat  c. A little  d. Not at all  e. Prefer not to answer
21. Did your memories of your ancestors’ experience through the genocide impact your decisions for leaving Syria?
   a. Yes, a lot   b. Somewhat   c. A little   d. Not at all   e. Prefer not to answer

22. What do you feel your ancestors lost, if anything, when they left Historic Armenia?

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

III. SYRIA
23. Why did you leave Syria? ________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

24. What do you feel your family lost, if anything, when they left Syria? ______________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

25. What do you feel the Armenian community in Syria lost, if anything, as a result of this conflict? ______

_______________________________________________________________________________________

26. Do any of your family members still live in Syria?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. I prefer not to answer   d. I don’t know

27. Did you lose an immediate member of your family as a result of the war?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. I prefer not to answer   d. I don’t know

28. Was a member of your family seriously affected by the conflict?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. I prefer not to answer   d. I don’t know

29. Do you feel like you and/or your family has been victimized during the conflict in Syria?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. I prefer not to answer   d. I don’t know
30. Do you feel that Armenians have been victimized during the conflict in Syria?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. I prefer not to answer   d. I don’t know

IV. ATTITUDES TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN SYRIA
31. From what you know or can remember, has your family typically been supportive of the Syrian government?
   a. I don’t know   b. I prefer not to answer   c. Yes   d. No; if No, who did they support? ____________

32. When the Syrian conflict started, with whom did you sympathize most?
   a. The Government   b. The Opposition   c. I didn’t sympathize with anyone or any side.   d. I don’t know
   d. I prefer not to answer   e. Other ________________

33. Do you now sympathize with someone different than when the conflict in Syria started?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. I don’t know   d. I prefer not to answer   e. Other ________________

34. Could you please tell me if you are in agreement or disagreement with the following statements?
   1. One of the successes of the Syrian government was the maintenance of a unified Syria.
      a. Agree   b. Disagree   c. I don’t know   d. Prefer not to answer

      2. One of the successes of the Syrian government was the protection of the minorities
      a. Agree   b. Disagree   c. I don’t know   d. Prefer not to answer

      3. Before 2011, the Syrian government had violated basic human rights in Syria
      a. Agree   b. Disagree   c. I don’t know   d. Prefer not to answer

      4. Since 2011, the Syrian government has violated basic human rights in Syria
      a. Agree   b. Disagree   c. I don’t know   d. Prefer not to answer

35. How often does your family speak about the conflict in Syria?
V. UNDERSTANDING THE WAR:
36. What do you think was the cause of the war in Syria? ____________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

37. Why is the war still going on? ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

38. Which group(s) do you believe was responsible for starting the conflict in Syria? (Please circle all that apply)
   a. I don’t know   b. I prefer not to answer   c. The Free Syrian Army   d. The Syrian Government
   e. Terrorist groups   g. International actors; if so, which particularly? ______________________________
   f. They all have responsibility

VI. JUSTICE AND REDRESS FOR THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE
   a. Restorative:
39. What would make you feel like the Armenian people have received justice with regard to the Armenian Genocide? Please circle all which you think would contribute to this:
   a. An apology for the Genocide by Turkey
   b. Official recognition of the Genocide by Turkey
   c. Official recognition from the countries that currently don’t recognize the Genocide
   d. Memorialization: Establishing museums and plaques in the places of destruction in Western Armenia
   e. Infrastructure: Rebuilding destroyed churches in Western Armenia
   f. Inclusion of the genocide in school textbooks around the world
   g. Making education about the genocide mandatory in school textbooks in Turkey
   h. Removal of the symbols that indicate loyalty to Ataturk and his regime from public places
   i. Financial compensation
   j. Return of land
k. The establishment of a truth commission: A forum where people tell their stories (victims and perpetrators both tell their stories in order for the entire community to get a broader sense of what actually happened and how it all happened).
l. Historical Dialogue effort: Turks, descendants of Armenian survivors, and historians coming together to discuss the events
m. Support from the Turkish government for Armenians in Turkey
n. Support from the Turkish government for Armenians around the world whose ancestors were displaced due to the genocide
o. Proper burial sites/graveyards, even if it is merely symbolic, for those whose bones are scattered throughout the deportation routes.
p. Judicial proceedings: taking this to a court or tribunal of any kind for formal justice
q. Other ________________________________________________________________

VII. JUSTICE AND REDRESS FOR THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR
40. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following phrases:
1. The memory of the experiences from the conflict in Syria is very much alive in the memories of Syrians
   a. Agree    b. Disagree    c. I don’t know    d. Prefer not to answer

2. The memory of the experiences from the conflict in Syria is very much alive in your memory
   a. Agree    b. Disagree    c. I don’t know    d. Prefer not to answer

3. The divisions created amongst Syrians during the conflict in Syria are now forgotten
   a. Agree    b. Disagree    c. I don’t know    d. Prefer not to answer

4. Syrians will get justice for what is happening to them
   a. Agree    b. Disagree    c. I don’t know    d. Prefer not to answer

5. The world knows the truth about the Syrian conflict
   a. Agree    b. Disagree    c. I don’t know    d. Prefer not to answer

6. It is important for the world to know the truth about the Syrian Conflict
   a. Agree    b. Disagree    c. I don’t know    d. Prefer not to answer
41. What types of conditions do you feel would be necessary for you to be able to return/integrate/resettle and begin to rebuild your life and community in Syria? ________________________________________________________________

42. What would it look like to you for Syria to be repaired? ________________________________________________________________

43. What would justice in Syria look like to you? ________________________________________________________________

44. What would justice for the Armenians in Syria look like to you? ________________________________________________________________

   a. **Restorative:**

45. In a post-conflict Syria, what would make you feel like there has been justice with regard to the Syrian Conflict? Please circle all which you think would contribute to this:

   a. An apology; if so, from whom
   ________________________________________________________________

   b. Official recognition of harms endured; if so, from whom
   ________________________________________________________________

   c. Memorialization: Establishing museums about the conflict throughout Syria and placing plaques in places of destruction
   ________________________________________________________________

   d. An apology, official recognition, and aid, from the countries that contributed to the violence
   ________________________________________________________________

   e. Rebuilding cultural heritage sites, including churches and other Armenian sites. If so, what in particular?
   ________________________________________________________________

   f. Rebuilding destroyed infrastructure
   ________________________________________________________________

   g. Awareness about the conflict: Educating those in Syria and the world about the conflict
   ________________________________________________________________

   h. Financial Compensation. If so, from whom and for what?
   ________________________________________________________________

   i. Return of land. If so, from whom and for what land?
   ________________________________________________________________

   j. Amnesty for all involved in any part of the conflict: A policy of forgive and forget. The country would essentially not deal with this conflict in any way, disregarding culpability for a chance to move forward.
k. Truth commission: A forum where people tell their stories (victims and perpetrators both tell their stories in order for the entire community to get a broader sense of what actually happened and how it all happened).
l. Historical Dialogue effort including all parties to the conflict: Free Syrian Army, Government officials, all minority groups, any other group involved, and historians, coming together to discuss the events
m. The symbols that indicate loyalty to the government should be removed from public places
n. The symbols that indicate loyalty to the Opposition should be removed from public places
o. Syrian government support for Syrians in Armenia
p. Syrian government support for those who wish to return to Syria
q. Syrian government support for Syrians around the world who were displaced due to the war
r. Unifying Syria so there are no more factions, and no divides amongst people for religion, ethnicity, etc.
s. Proper burial sites (even if it is merely symbolic) for innocent civilians caught in crossfires and bombings
t. Other

46. Which of the following do you believe should currently have the Syrian government’s attention? (circle all that apply)
a. Securing order and peace among opposing factions
b. Ending the war
c. Rebuilding infrastructure
d. Protecting human rights and liberties of all citizens
e. Improving economic prosperity
f. Protecting minority communities
g. Stopping armed opposition/disarming factions
h. Other

47. Would you support a Syria-wide program to provide reparations to victims in Syria regardless of their ethnicity?
a. Yes  b. No  c. I don’t know  d. I prefer not to answer
48. If you believe Armenians have not gotten justice for the Armenian Genocide, how does that impact your expectations for justice for the Syrian Conflict?

b. Retributive:

49. Could you please tell me if you are more in agreement or disagreement with the following phrases?

1. The armed opposition members who violated human rights during the conflict should be brought to court
   a. Agree   b. Neither agree nor disagree   c. Disagree   d. Prefer not to answer

2. The government authorities who violated human rights during the conflict should be brought to court
   a. Agree   b. Neither agree nor disagree   c. Disagree   d. Prefer not to answer

3. Members of terrorist groups who violated human rights during the conflict should be brought to court
   a. Agree   b. Neither agree nor disagree   c. Disagree   d. Prefer not to answer

4. A tribunal should be created to trial anyone guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria.
   a. Agree   b. Neither agree nor disagree   c. Disagree   d. Prefer not to answer

5. If a tribunal is created, you would want to be present at the proceedings
   a. Agree   b. Neither agree nor disagree   c. Disagree   d. Prefer not to answer

6. If a tribunal is created, you would want to testify at the proceedings
   a. Agree   b. Neither agree nor disagree   c. Disagree   d. Prefer not to answer

50. How do you envision members of your community dealing with the suffering caused by the war and displacement upon return/integration/resettlement? What types of networks, organizations, or institutions could they call upon for help?
If there is anything else that I did not ask but you would like to say about your expectations/ideas for repair and justice in Syria, specifically for the Armenian community, please feel free to use the space below to express any additional thoughts. Thank you for your participation in this survey! I look forward to sharing the results with you after May 2019.
B. Armenian Survey:
Հետազոտություն թիվ՝ ___________, Հունիս ________________

Ազատեցքի սրահները այս հետազոտության գաղտնիությունը կարեւոր փոխադասվեն և դեռ անջատեն դառնալ կիսանկյուն այլ հետազոտություն հետ։ Այսպիսով, որպես պահպանական հարցերի՝ որոշույթ ունենալու են խնդիր, որ այսպիսով կարեր։

Այսպիսով մեզ է, որ պահպանելու են ձեր անունը որեվէ իր մասնակից են։ Այսպիսով, որեվէ անունը չպատասխանելու որեվէ հարցում ի, որ անյարմար կը գտնեք ։ 

Այսպիսով, որեվէ պահու, եթէ որոշէք չշարունակել հարցազրոյցը եւ անաւարտ յանձնել այն, ապա դուք կրնաք վարուիլ այդպէս։

Այսպիսով, որեվէ պահու, եթէ որոշէք, որ անյարմար է ձեր պատասխաններուն ձայնագրումը՝ կրնամ ջնջել զանոնք տուեալներու հավաքածոյէս:

Ա. ԺՈՂՈՎՐԴԱԳՐԱԿԱՆ
1. Հետեւեալէն ո՞ր մէկը ունիք ։ (Հաճեցք շրջանակի մեջ առնել բոլոր համապատասխան տարբերակները)
   ա. Հայաստանի քաղաքացիություն
   բ. Սուրիոյ քաղաքացիություն
   գ. փախստականի կարգավիճակ
   դ. ժամանակավոր կացութեան կարգավիճակ
   ե. այլ (հաճեցք են)

2. Սուրիոյ ե՞րբ բնակավորել եք: Հաճեցք նշել ։

3. Ձեր սեռը՝ ա. արական բ. իգական

4. Ձեր տարիքը՝ __________________________________

5. Ո՞ր ինքնություններու ն հետ կը նոյնացնէք դուք ձեզի։ (Հաճեցք շրջանակի մեջ առնել բոլոր համապատասխան տարբերակները):
   ա. Հայկական
   բ. Որքա՞ն հպարտ կը զգաք ձեր հայ ըլլալով:
      ա. Շատ հպարտ
      բ. հպարտ
      գ. քիչ մը հպարտ
      դ. բնավ ոչ հպար
   ե. Սուրիական
   ը. Որքա՞ն հպարտ կը զգաք ձեր սուրիացի ըլլալով:
      ա. Շատ հպարտ
      բ. հպարտ
      գ. քիչ մը հպար
      դ. բնավ ոչ հպար
   ե. Այլ (հաճեցք են)

6. Ե՞րբ ձեր նախնիները Սուրիա հասած են:

7. Ի՞նչ էր ձեր զբաղմունքը Սուրիոյ մեջ:

8. Ե՞րբ քիչը Սուրիայում:

1
9. Մտադի՞ր էք Սուրիա վերադառնալ:
   ու. Այո
   բ. ոչ
   գ. ռազմական սահման, բաց էր կայուն
   դ. ռազմական սահման, նա չէր կայուն
   ե. կրտական առերական ընդունություն

10. Ե՞րբ զատեմ Հայաստան:

11. Ի՞նչ է ձեր զբաղմունքը Հայաստանի մեջ:

12. Ի՞նչ է ձեր բարձրագոյն կրթության մակարդակը:
   ու. Նախակրթարան/միջնակարգ դպրոց
   բ. երկրորդական վարժարան
   գ. համալսարանական (մագիստրոս և ավելի բարձր)

13. Ծառայ՞թ էք Սուրիոյ բանակին մեջ:
   ա. Ոչ
   բ. այո:
   գ. Եթէ՝ այո, ապա ե՞րբ:

14. Ինչո՞ւ գացիք բանակ:
   ա. Զինուորագրուեցայ
   բ. կամաւոր
   գ. այլ՝

15. Հայոց ցեղասպանութեան ատեն ձեր նախնեաց ընտանիքի անդամներէն որեւէ մէկուն կորսնցուց ՞
   ա. Ոչ
   բ. այո:

16. Որքա՞ն յաճախ ձեր ընտանիքը կը խօսի Հայոց ցեղասպանութեան մասին:
   ա. Շատ
   բ. յաճախ
   գ. ոչ
   դ. բնավ

17. Որքա՞ն ուշադրութիւն դարձուած է Հայոց ցեղասպանութեան, ձեր կարծիքով, ձեր դպրոցէն ներս:
   ա. Շատ
   բ. միջին
   գ. ոչ շատ
   դ. քիչ

18. Կը կարծէ՞ք, որ ձեր ընտանիքն տուժած է Հայոց ցեղասպանութեան:
   ա. Այո
   բ. գաղափար չունիմ
   գ. ոչ
19. Հաճեցք նշեք ձեր համաձայնագիր գրությունների հետևացումը նախատեսված էջերին:

1. Հայոց ցեղասպանության խնդիրը փոխ է հայրենից խթեսային մեջ:
   ա. Համաձայնեք եք բ. ձեռնպահ եք գ. համաձայն եք դ. չեք շրջանները համաձայնագրություն

2. Հայոց ցեղասպանության խնդիրը փոխ է ձեր խթեսային մեջ:
   ա. Համաձայնեք եք բ. ձեռնպահ եք գ. համաձայն եք դ. չեք շրջանները համաձայնագրություն

3. Հայերի թուրքերու միջև ցեղասպանության խնդիրը փոխ է ձեր խթեսային մեջ:
   ա. Համաձայնեք եք բ. ձեռնպահ եք գ. համաձայն չեք դ. չեք շրջանները համաձայնագրություն

4. Հայոց ցեղասպանության պաշտոնի համար վերաբերեք մասնակից հայերի:
   ա. Համաձայնեք եք բ. ձեռնպահ եք գ. համաձայն չեք դ. չեք շրջանները համաձայնագրություն

5. Պարզան է, որ աշխարհի գրավող զարգարձակների Հայոց ցեղասպանության մասը:
   ա. Համաձայնեք եք բ. ձեռնպահ եք գ. համաձայն չեք դ. չեք շրջանները համաձայնագրություն

20. Այս գաղափարը, որ Մեծության հայոցազրկույթներին վնասներ են կատարած տեղի գերատեսությանները, որոնք հայկական տարածքում էգերից հետևացած են Հայոց ցեղասպանության համար:
   ա. Այս, շատ բ. որոշ չափով գ. պատասխան դ. դեպք

21. Հայոցազրկույթների ընդունման միջոցով եգերից հետևացող Հայաստանի ազգային նշանակությունն է դատարանի համար:
   ա. Այս, շատ բ. որոշ չափով գ. պատասխան դ. դեպք

22. Ինչո՞ւ լքեցիք Սուրիան: __________________________________________

23. Ինչ է կարծում Արմենը:

24. Ինչ է կարծում Արմենը Սուրիան լքելու գրավողությունից հետո հայոցազրկույթների ազդեցության վրա հայոց ընտանիքի միջև: __________________________________________
25. Ի՞նչ կէք կարծիք, որ Սուրիան հայ համայնքին կուրօղում, որով էվատոմ, հայաստանի իրավական հետազոտություն: ..........................................

26. Ձեր ընտանիքի անդամները երբ մեկը տակավին Սուրիա կարգեն:  
   1. Այո  
   2. Ոչ

27. Քանի այս եղանակով մեր անձանց փակում անդամները երբ մեկը կորսնցի:  
   1. Այո  
   2. Ոչ

28. Հասկանալության պատճառով մեր ընտանիքի անդամները երբ մեկը եղանակով:  
   1. Այո  
   2. Ոչ

29. Ձեր ընտանիքի անդամը երբ մեկը չունի:  
   1. Այո  
   2. Ոչ

30. Ձեր ընտանիքը երբ Սուրիա կառավարության և քաղաքականության եզրակացության:  
   1. Այո  
   2. Ոչ

31. Սուրիայի կառավարության և հակամարտության հետևանքով հարցեր:  
   1. Այո  
   2. Ոչ

32. Սուրիայի հայաստանի իրավական հետազոտությունների վերաբերյալ:  
   1. Այո 
   2. Ոչ

33. Սուրիայի հայաստանի իրավական հետազոտությունների վերաբերյալ:  
   1. Այո 
   2. Ոչ

34. Սուրիայի համակարգչային իշխանությունների հետազոտություններ:  
   1. Այո 
   2. Ոչ
3. Մթնում 2011 թվականին, սուրիական կառավարությունը խախտած է մարդկային իրավունքներին Սուրիայում:
   a. համաձայն է b. համաձայն չէ c. չի գրել d. չեմ գիտեր
   e. չեմ գրել

4. 2011 թվականին սկսած, սուրիական կառավարությունը խախտած է մարդկային իրավունքներին Սուրիայում:
   a. համաձայն է b. համաձայն չէ c. չի գրել d. չեմ գիտեր
   e. չեմ գրել

35. Որքան հաճախ դեր են տանելու ինքն սուրիական հակամարտությունների մասին:
   a. համաձայն է b. համաձայն չէ c. չեմ գրել d. չեմ գիտեր
   e. չեմ գրել

6. ՏՐԱՆՍՊОРՏ

36. Ո՞ր էք, որ կարծեք, Սուրիական պատերազմի պատասխանն է: ________________________________

37. Միայն պատասխանում տանքնի կը շարունակուի:
   ________________________________

38. Ո՞ր հավանական, որ կարծեք, որ պատասխանում ինքն Սուրիական պատերազմի պատասխանում է?
   (Հաճեցիր ցուցանակների մեջ առնել բոլոր համապատասխանական տարբերակները):
   a. քիչ գրել
   b. համաձայն չէ
   c. իրավունքների պաշտպանություն
   d. սուրիական կառավարություն
   e. չեմ գրել
   f. չեմ գիտեր
   _______________________________________
   g. կրեք այս պատասխանումը բացի երեք լուծում

2. ՀԱՅՈՑ ՑԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹԵԱՆ ԱՐԴԱՐ ՀԱՏՈՒՑՈՒՄԸ

39. Ո՞ր էք, որ կարծեք, որ հետ ժողովրդիկը պաշտպանված է հայնական կարծիքը Սուրիական պատերազմի մեջ?
   (Հաճեցիր ցուցանակների մեջ առնել բոլոր համապատասխանական տարբերակները):
   a. Սուրիական պատերազմի համար գրել
   b. սուրիական պատերազմի պաշտպանություն
   c. սուրիական պատերազմի պաշտպանություն
   d. սուրիական պատերազմի պաշտպանություն
   e. չեմ գրել
   f. չեմ գիտեր
   _______________________________________
   g. իրավունքների պաշտպանությունը ներկայացնել տեղադրել կարծիքը
   h. կարծիքներն ու երկիրի պաշտպանություն պահպանել Սուրիական կառավարության մեջ
6

Ա. Սուրիական հակամարտության փորձությունների վերաբերյալ

1. Սուրիական հակամարտության փորձությունների վերաբերյալ պատմել են տարածաշրջանում ջերմային միջնակարգի ձգտումները դատական սահմանափակում: 
   ռ. Համաձայն եմ՝ բ. Համաձայն չեմ՝ դ. Համաձայն չեմ» գիտեր դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել

2. Սուրիական հակամարտության փորձությունների վերաբերյալ պատմել են տարածաշրջանում ջերմային միջնակարգի ձգտումները դատական սահմանափակում: 
   ռ. Համաձայն եմ՝ բ. Համաձայն չեմ՝ դ. Համաձայն չեմ» գիտեր դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել

3. Սուրիական հակամարտության փորձությունների վերաբերյալ պատմել են տարածաշրջանում այսօր մոռցուած բաժանումները: 
   ռ. Համաձայն եմ՝ բ. Համաձայն չեմ՝ դ. Համաձայն չեմ» գիտեր դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել

4. Սուրիական հակամարտության փորձությունների վերաբերյալ պատմել են տարածաշրջանում նոր սահմանափակումների ձևով: 
   ռ. Համաձայն եմ՝ բ. Համաձայն չեմ՝ դ. Համաձայն չեմ» գիտեր դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել

5. Սուրիական հակամարտության փորձությունների վերաբերյալ պատմել են տարածաշրջանում այսօր մոռցուած բաժանումները: 
   ռ. Համաձայն եմ՝ բ. Համաձայն չեմ՝ դ. Համաձայն չեմ» գիտեր դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել
6. Կարեւոր է, որ աշխարհը գիտակցություններով Սուրիոյի հետաքրքրմանը մտածի:

adora, հանկարծ է, գիտետ է, հետազոտեք

41. Հայերին պարունակվող նոր կոչում, որ աշխատողներին նուտ էին, որպեսզի էլ էսայի մի մասամբ գրված, հենարարվեն, վերակառուցվեն և վերականգրվեն ձեր կեանքն ու համայնքը Սուրիայում:

42. Դնեք էս պատասխանատվություն վերակառուցման Սուրիայի:

43. Դնեք էս պատասխանատվություն ստանվող Սուրիայի:

44. Դնեք էս պատասխանատվություն հայկական միավորման Սուրիայի:

w. Կարծեսանություն

45. Շատ Սուրիայի հետաքրքրությունն էլ կոչում, որ աշխատողներին կան Սուրիայի հետաքրքրություններ:

adora, հանկարծ, գիտետ, հետազոտեք

4. Հայերին պարունակվող նոր կոչում, որ աշխատակցության համար Սուրիայի հետաքրքրություն:

adora, հանկարծ, գիտետ, հետազոտեք

4. Հայերին պարունակվող նոր կոչում, որ աշխատակցության համար Սուրիայի հետաքրքրություն:

adora, հանկարծ, գիտետ, հետազոտեք

4. Հայերին պարունակվող նոր կոչում, որ աշխատակցության համար Սուրիայի հետաքրքրություն:

adora, հանկարծ, գիտետ, հետազոտեք

4. Հայերին պարունակվող նոր կոչում, որ աշխատակցության համար Սուրիայի հետաքրքրություն:

adora, հանկարծ, գիտետ, հետազոտեք

4. Հայերին պարունակվող նոր կոչում, որ աշխատակցության համար Սուրիայի հետաքրքրություն:

adora, հանկարծ, գիտետ, հետազոտեք

4. Հայերին պարունակվող նոր կոչում, որ աշխատակցության համար Սուրիայի հետաքրքրություն:

adora, հանկարծ, գիտետ, հետազոտեք

4. Հայերին պարունակվող նոր կոչում, որ աշխատակցության համար Սուրիայի հետաքրքրություն:

adora, հանկարծ, գիտետ, հետազոտեք
ժ. Համատեղության կազմակերպության ձևակերպություն, հանրային մեջ, որ մարդիկ կազմակերպվեն տարբերակներով (ինչպես նաև սոցիալական և մասնագիտական թմբուկներ կազմեն տարբերակներով), որպեսզի նրանց մահուց կա սահմանիչ, որպեսզի ինչպես նաև պապը մշտապես կարողանա։

1. Բարելավող կողմերի համար, նրանց պետք է Կառլերի համամասնությունների շրջանցումը, նրանց առևանդագրական ու մշտականապես զինվորական իրավունքներ, ջրածինների համար քաջարկվածություն, իրենց հետ համատեղելու պայմաններով, որպեսզի իրենց պախտունքների կամ իրենց հայտնաբերական դիրքերի մեջ։

6. Հայաստանի կառավարման կողմը, սուրիական կառավարության համար պաշտոնական իրավունքների կարգավորումը պետք է համարվի։ (Համաձայն ցիրկային նախաձեռնություններ բարձրակարգությաններ)

u. Կարող են համարվել, որ համատեղության կազմակերպության համար պետք է պաշտոնական իրավունքների կարգավորումը կատարվի։

p. կարող են ենթադրվում դեմ հարցեր կարգավորումը

q. կարող են ենթադրվում դեմ հարցեր կարգավորումը

η. կարող են ենթադրվում դեմ հարցեր կարգավորումը

δ. կարող են ենթադրվում դեմ հարցեր կարգավորումը

6. Կարող են իրագործվել դեմ հարցեր կարգավորումը, ներկայացնելով սուրիական կառավարության իրավունքների կամ այլ գաղափարներ

υ. Կարող են իրագործվել դեմ հարցեր կարգավորումը

π. այլ...

47. Կարող են իրագործվել դեմ հարցեր կարգավորումը, որպեսզի իրագործվեն սուրիական կառավարության համատեղության կարգավորումը նախաձեռնության վարկարությունը

υ. Կարող են իրագործվել դեմ հարցեր կարգավորումը

π. այլ...

8
Եթե կը հավատաք, որ հայերը արդար հատուցում չեն ստացած Հայոց ցեղասպանութեան, ուստի ատիկա ինչպէ՞ս կազմել ձեր ակնկալիքներին՝ Սուրիական հակամարտութեան արդար հատուցում ստանալուն վերաբերեալ:

1. Զինեալ ընդդիմութեան անդամները, որոնք խախտեցին մարդկայիր իրավունքների՝ պէտք է դատարան կանչուին:
   ա. Համաձայն եմ
   բ. Համաձայն եմ
   գ. Համաձայն չեմ
   դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել

2. Կառավարական իշխանութիւնները, որոնք խախտեցին մարդկայիր իրավունքների՝ պէտք է դատարան կանչուին:
   ա. Համաձայն եմ
   բ. Համաձայն եմ
   գ. Համաձայն չեմ
   դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել

3. Ահաբեկչական խմբաւորումներու անդամները, որոնք խախտեցին մարդկայիր իրավունքների՝ պէտք է դատարան կանչուին:
   ա. Համաձայն եմ
   բ. Համաձայն եմ
   գ. Համաձայն չեմ
   դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել

4. Դատական ատեան պէտք է ստեղծել, որ կը դատապարտէ բոլոր անոնց, որոնք մեղաւոր են պատերազմի և մարդկութեան դէմ յանցագործութիւններու՝ Սուրիական մէջ: Սուրիական մէջ:
   ա. Համաձայն եմ
   բ. Համաձայն եմ
   գ. Համաձայն չեմ
   դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել

5. Եթե առողջից ուռանալի առաջանում, ոկ կը գաղտնի ենթարկվել դատավարութիւնների՝:
   ա. Համաձայն եմ
   բ. Համաձայն եմ
   գ. Համաձայն չեմ
   դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել

6. Եթե սաներից ուռանալի առաջանում, ոկ կը գաղտնի ենթարկվել դատավարութիւնների՝:
   ա. Համաձայն եմ
   բ. Համաձայն եմ
   գ. Համաձայն չեմ
   դ. կը նախընտրեմ չպատասխանել

50. Եթե կը պատկերացնել ձեր համաձայնութեան անդամներին (որոնք կը հավատակված պատերազմի հանդեպ պարիսարման նախապատյանին), դիմակայել, համարկացնել և վերաբնակել: Հիմնադրվում գաղափար, կազմակերպիչակերպութիւն կամ հիմնադրիչակերպութիւն կրկն անում այնուհետ դիմել այնուհետ. Համաձայն: ________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________
焉ին որ ես այս հարցին ուսումնասիրեմ, որ չէ տաք պարտադիր քննարկել այս հարցին, բայց դուք կը ցանկացնեք պատասխանել ձեր ակնկալիքներում, գաղափարներում և Սուրիոյի վերակառուցման և արդարության հատուկությունների մասին, որպեսզի խնդրում եմ կուսակցության ակնկալիքների համար զգացվեն այս արարողությունը: Հիմնականում ես զուգահանում եմ հետազոտությունը հասնել և եւ իրար ծանոթանալ երկու արդյունավետ ազումներ Օսիա հետ 2019 թվականի աշունից հետո:
C. Charts with survey data:

Table 1: Demographics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Average year leaving Syria</th>
<th>Average year arriving in Armenia</th>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male: 29</td>
<td>37.83</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Primary/Middle: 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female: 23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High School: 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University: 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Connection to Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Armenian</th>
<th>Syrian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Proud</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little proud</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not proud at all</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Syrian Conflict

*the common expressed understanding of “victimized” largely referred to having to relocate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Do any of your family members still live in Syria?</th>
<th>Did you lose an immediate member of your family as a result of the war?</th>
<th>Was a member of your family affected by the conflict?</th>
<th>Do you feel like you and/or your family has been victimized* during the conflict in Syria?</th>
<th>Do you feel that Armenians have been victimized during the conflict in Syria?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Genocide and Syrian Conflict Connection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Do you feel that what you have experienced in Syria is similar to what your ancestors experienced in the genocide?</th>
<th>Did your memories of your ancestors’ experience through the genocide impact your decisions for leaving Syria?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a lot</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Understanding of the Syrian Conflict:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One of the successes of the Syrian government was the maintenance of a unified Syria</th>
<th>One of the successes of the Syrian government was the protection of minorities</th>
<th>Before 2011 the Syrian government had violated basic human rights in Syria</th>
<th>Since 2011 the Syrian government has violated basic human rights in Syria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6: Perceptions of Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free Syrian Army</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian Government</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorist Groups</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Actors</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes to international actors, which?  

### Table 7: Genocide Reparations: What would make you feel like the Armenian people have received justice with regard to the Armenian Genocide?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reparation Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An apology for the Genocide by Turkey</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official recognition of the Genocide by Turkey</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official recognition from the countries that currently don’t recognize the Genocide</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorialization: Establishing museums and plaques in the places of destruction in Western Armenia (Modern day Turkey)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Infrastructure: Rebuilding destroyed churches in Western Armenia | 24 |
| Inclusion of the genocide in school textbooks around the world | 25 |
| Making education about the genocide mandatory in school textbooks in Turkey | 22 |
| Removal of the symbols that indicate loyalty to Ataturk and his regime from public places | 16 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial compensation</th>
<th>Return of land</th>
<th>The establishment of a truth commission: A forum where people tell their stories (victims and perpetrators both tell their stories in order for the entire community to get a broader sense of what actually happened and how it all happened)</th>
<th>Historical Dialogue effort: Turks, descendants of Armenian survivors, and historians coming together to discuss the events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support from the Turkish government for Armenians in Turkey

Support from the Turkish government for Armenians around the world whose ancestors were displaced due to the genocide

Proper burial sites/graveyards, even if it is merely symbolic, for those whose bones are scattered throughout the deportation routes.

Judicial proceedings: taking this to a court or tribunal of any kind for formal justice

Table 8: the Syrian conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The memory of the experiences from the conflict in Syria is very much alive in the memories of Syrians</th>
<th>The memory of the experiences from the conflict in Syria is very much alive in your memory</th>
<th>The divisions created amongst Syrians during the conflict in Syria are now forgotten</th>
<th>Syrians will get justice for what is happening to them</th>
<th>The world knows the truth about the Syrian conflict</th>
<th>It is important for the world to know the truth about the Syrian Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Reparations for the Syrian Conflict:

Question: In a post-conflict Syria, what would make you feel like there has been justice with regard to the Syrian conflict?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>An apology; if so, from whom?</th>
<th>Official recognition of harms endured; if so, from whom?</th>
<th>Memorialization: Establishing museums about the conflict throughout Syria and placing plaques in places of destruction</th>
<th>An apology, official recognition, and aid, from the countries that contributed to the violence</th>
<th>Rebuilding cultural heritage sites, including churches and other Armenian sites; If so, what in particular?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuilding destroyed infrastructure</td>
<td>Awareness about the conflict: Educating those in Syria and the world about the conflict</td>
<td>Financial Compensation. If so, from whom and for what?</td>
<td>Return of land. If so, from whom and for what land?</td>
<td>Amnesty for all involved in any part of the conflict: A policy of “forgive and forget.” The country would essentially not deal with this conflict in any way, disregarding culpability for a chance to move forward.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Truth commission: A forum where people tell their stories (victims and perpetrators both tell their stories in order for the entire community to get a broader sense of what actually happened and how it all happened).</th>
<th>Historical Dialogue effort including all parties to the conflict: Free Syrian Army, Government officials, all minority groups, any other group involved, and historians, coming together to discuss the events</th>
<th>The symbols that indicate loyalty to the government should be removed from public places</th>
<th>The symbols that indicate loyalty to the Opposition should be removed from public places</th>
<th>Syrian government support for Syrians in Armenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syrian government support for those who wish to return to Syria</th>
<th>Syrian government support for Syrians around the world who were displaced due to the war</th>
<th>Unifying Syria so there are no more factions, and no divides amongst people for religion, ethnicity, etc.</th>
<th>Proper burial sites (even if it is merely symbolic) for innocent civilians caught in crossfires and bombings</th>
<th>Other:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10: Retributive justice for the Syrian Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The armed opposition members who violated human rights during the conflict should be brought to court</th>
<th>The government authorities who violated human rights during the conflict should be brought to court</th>
<th>Members of terrorist groups who violated human rights during the conflict should be brought to court</th>
<th>A tribunal should be created to trial anyone guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria</th>
<th>If a tribunal were created, you would want to be present at the proceedings</th>
<th>If a tribunal were created, you would want to testify at the proceedings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Priorities for Syria

Which of the following do you believe should currently have the Syrian government’s attention? (circle all that apply and rank) The column with the lowest sum is the highest priority* *It should be noted that there were problems with this system though and it is not comprehensive data. This flaw has been elaborated upon in the challenges and limitations section of this document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Securing order and peace among opposing factions</th>
<th>Ending the war</th>
<th>Rebuilding infrastructure</th>
<th>Protecting human rights and liberties of all citizens</th>
<th>Improving economic prosperity</th>
<th>Protecting minority communities</th>
<th>Stopping armed opposition/disarming factions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>