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Delayed Justice: How Is Syria's Transitional Administration Managing HLP?

Research paper

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Summary of contents

Executive summary	04
Introduction	06
Displaced returnees and the challenges of restoring their rights	08
Restoring ownership, without a comprehensive remedy	13
Property extortion and administrative committees with undefined powers	19
Emerging patterns of HLP rights violations	23
Conclusion: Towards a clear path for HLP justice, from fragmented measures to a comprehensive vision	29

Delayed Justice: How Is Syria's Transitional Administration Managing HLP?

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Executive Summary

This paper analyses how the transitional administration has dealt with the housing, land and property (HLP) file in Syria following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. It points to the continued rights violations despite some initial positive steps taken by the transitional government. While acknowledging the difficulty of the current phase and the short span of time since the new administration assumed power, the current approach remains circumstantial and transitional, lacking a unified vision or a clear rights-based path.

The paper begins by monitoring the challenges related to the return of displaced persons, which remains piecemeal, with a lack of legal and institutional planning, as well as any national plan to address this complex file. Policies are devoid of any rights-based dimension or guarantees to ensure real stability for returnees. Key obstacles include the complexities of renovation permits and the lack of a rubble removal policy. Residents are burdened with renovation efforts on an individual basis, without institutional support or formal planning. The paper highlights the need to establish field offices — such as legal and engineering clinics — to assist with structural safety assessments and rights documentation.

We also discuss the continued application of the legal arsenal used by the former regime to strip ownership, including precautionary seizure, security approvals, and rulings by the Antiterrorism Court, without any attempt to dismantle or redress their effects. Although a decree was issued to lift some seizure decisions, these measures were not accompanied by fundamental steps to dismantle the legal framework itself or to formulate fair alternatives. This indicates a clear lack of political will to restore confiscated rights. The paper also examines the sometimes-contradictory decisions issued by the Ministries of Finance and Justice concerning the annulment of certain judicial rulings previously issued by special courts, which included property confiscations. It also analyses the presidential decree that reestablished a judicial committee to consider objections filed by those affected by emergency-era confiscation orders. The paper highlights how the restitution of property remains bound to selective and biased lists in the absence of a comprehensive legislative framework, thereby limiting its impact on the path to justice.

The paper also addresses the issue of seized properties. Local committees were established in Homs, Aleppo, and Hama to address complaints, but they lack judicial powers and do not operate under unified standards, which limits their effectiveness. The disputes between returning owners and current occupants reveal the fragility of the legal situation, especially in cases of good-faith purchases of previously seized or document-forged properties.

New patterns of violations have emerged after the fall of the Assad regime, targeting properties belonging to Alawites, Druze, and residents of social housing programmes — on sectarian, political, or administrative grounds — without any accountability process or mechanisms to protect vulnerable groups. These violations reflect a continued state of chaos, weak oversight, and absence of legal standards, even when carried out in the name of restoring rights.

The paper concludes that ensuring HLP justice cannot be achieved through isolated administrative actions. Rather, it requires an integrated institutional path that includes: suspending security approvals, nullifying the impact of the Antiterrorism Court on property rights, establishing an independent property justice commission, adopting a fair transitional housing policy, and freezing transactions involving conflict-affected properties until a transparent process is organised. Property justice is a cornerstone of social trust and political stability in the transitional phase.

Introduction

Since the Assad regime fell in December 2024, Syria has entered a transitional phase fraught with major legal and political challenges, chief among them the issue of property justice. This issue, which saw systematic violations accumulate under the former regime over decades, has yet to be addressed within a clear institutional framework, despite the complexity of the legacy left behind and the range of violations involved: from property seizures and illegal expropriation, to precautionary confiscation of opposition-owned assets and the seizure of some properties through rulings issued by the Antiterrorism Court, to the destruction of residential areas and the forced displacement of their inhabitants.

In the first months after the fall of the regime, the transitional government took several notable steps in this area, such as lifting some precautionary seizure orders, addressing certain cases of property extortion, and opening administrative pathways to facilitate returns. However, these initiatives — important as they are — remained limited and insufficient, marked by fragmented procedural approaches rather than being part of a coherent political vision or unified legal strategy. It is also important to acknowledge that the transitional government has only been in power for a few months, and many of these issues cannot be fully addressed without an effective legislative authority capable of enacting the necessary legal frameworks.

In this context, the problem lies not only in the continued effects of past violations, but also in the emergence of new forms of violations during the transitional phase itself — some carried out by security and military bodies affiliated with the current administration. Between incomplete measures on seizure orders, the ongoing requirement for security approvals, and the emergence of local committees operating without clear authority, the process of reclaiming rights has been managed through disjointed and inconsistent mechanisms. It has often been left to individual or circumstantial efforts, with no legislative horizon or unified national vision.

This paper is based on the premise that, during the transitional phase, property justice is still being treated as an emergency administrative issue rather than as a core political matter integral to the transition process. From this standpoint, it seeks to answer the following question: How has the transitional government managed the HLP justice file in the months following Assad's ouster, and what does this management reveal about the place of this file in its political priorities ?

To answer this question, the paper's analysis is structured around four interlinked themes: (1) the return of the displaced and the challenges of reclaiming housing; (2) the restoration of properties seized during the former regime; (3) the issue of property extortion in the absence of centralised redress; and finally, (4) the new patterns of violations emerging since the regime's fall.
A field-based review of these issues — drawing on dozens of analytical articles

and news reports published in the Housing, Land and Property Rights section of The Syria Report between December 2024 and July 2025 — reveals that the core problem lies not only in limited resources or slow responses, but in the absence of a decisive political approach to restore property rights and prevent repeated violations. The overall assessment shows that hesitancy to address the legacy of violations within a transparent institutional framework, and the failure to dismantle the exceptional structures used by the former regime to strip ownership, risk turning the transitional period into a continuation of injustice, rather than a chance to establish justice.

This study, therefore, aims to fill a gap in understanding the relationship between transitional authority and property rights in Syria, by analysing the policies implemented on the ground, documenting new patterns of violations, and proposing an alternative institutional path that treats property justice as a cornerstone of a fair transition. This paper closely examines Decisions No. 682, 100, 121, 975, and 963 issued by the Ministries of Justice and Finance between May and July 2025, treating them as case studies that illustrate the limitations of these measures.

Displaced returnees and the challenges of restoring their rights

Despite the return of tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from abroad to their original areas since the fall of the Assad regime on December 8, the return process remains marred by setbacks and chaos, subject to field and administrative conditions that fall short of the required rights-based standards. To date, neither the transitional government nor the local councils it established have initiated a clear national plan to organise this return process or to prepare the legal and procedural conditions necessary for safe and stable housing. In this context, the lack of legal and institutional planning, the complexity of obtaining renovation permits, and the absence of a structured debris removal policy stand out as major obstacles facing returnees. This section addresses these three issues as interconnected components of a single crisis: the failure to manage return as a right, and its transformation into a paralysed bureaucratic process that fails to meet urgent housing needs or guarantee the basic rights of returnees.

Lack of legal and institutional planning for the return of displaced persons

Between Assad's ouster in December 2024 and the end of May 2025, more than one million internally displaced persons returned to their original areas within Syria, according to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Around 513,190 refugees also returned from abroad, mainly from neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan.
However, the core issue lies in the fact that returns often take place without a review of the original causes of displacement or guarantees against their recurrence, and without a legal framework that restores the rights of residents to their homes, particularly in areas affected by destruction or forced displacement on political or sectarian grounds. Additionally, the absence of public reconstruction policies, the lack of formal mechanisms to verify property rights, and the overlapping mandates of institutions mean that return becomes a privilege available only to those who possess documents, have the financial means to rebuild, or enjoy political or security approval. This deepens inequality and risks turning return into a new tool for reproducing marginalisation and discrimination, rather than a pathway to justice.

To this day, the transitional government has not announced any official plan for receiving returnees, nor even principles or ideas that could serve as a basis for organising their return according to unified legal and administrative standards. The absence of a comprehensive assessment of the extent of destruction and classification of housing by habitability also means that return procedures are not based on accurate data, making it more difficult to allocate resources or organise reconstruction efforts.

Amid this confusion and lack of clarity, the return of displaced persons must be based on well-considered plans that combine immediate emergency res-

ponse with long-term policies. This should involve a comprehensive survey to identify areas suitable for habitation or renovation, classify damage, and establish clear mechanisms for receiving returnees. It is essential to avoid informal construction and to designate appropriate sites for temporary housing in formal units or shelter centres. Public buildings and vacant facilities owned by the state could also be utilised after evaluating their legal and structural status and preparing them for returnees under documented, short-term rental contracts. It would also be advisable to use existing regional resources, such as unused prefabricated dwellings in Turkey, and to encourage diaspora investment in fair and organised housing projects. To ensure justice, rapid mechanisms must be established to verify returnees' property rights, document ownership contracts, and empower local bodies to manage reconstruction efforts. All new housing projects should be linked to regional master plans, environmental standards, and legislation regulating informal settlements and protecting agricultural land from encroachment, to ensure the sustainability and stability of returns.

Restoration permits

In Zabadani, in the Damascus countryside, the city council temporarily halted prosecuting violations related to construction and restoration to help returnees repair and rehabilitate their damaged homes. Instead of facilitating the issuance of restoration permits for the homes, the council merely documented restoration works as violations that could be temporarily overlooked. Other local councils took similar measures in areas where displaced people had returned.

In the city of Darayya, also in the Damascus countryside, the return of displaced persons remains complicated and arduous. The most heavily affected neighbourhoods are still deserted and suffer from near-total destruction, while the areas that have seen some returns lack essential services such as electricity and water. In the Engineers' Association neighbourhood, residents are still unable to return home due to the failure of engineering committees to complete structural safety assessments, amid municipal strictness in issuing restoration permits. In other neighbourhoods, residents are carrying out restoration work without permits, albeit fearing the municipality may later intervene to demolish these buildings on the grounds of non-compliance.

Field testimonies from various regions show that restoration is, in many cases, being managed as isolated individual initiatives, with no institutional support or clear organisational plan. In Kafr Owaid in the southern Idlib countryside, residents began restoring their homes themselves, using what materials they could salvage from displacement tents or recycle from abandoned houses, without any official or NGO support. In the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp in Damascus, returnees bear the majority of restoration costs, with only partial support from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), and no governmental reconstruction plan in sight.

In Yarmouk, engineering teams were formed in partnership between the municipality and the local community to reorganise the most severely damaged areas by assessing the structural condition of buildings and identifying those at risk of collapse. The idea evolved into a proposal to create plans for these residential blocks to rezone them without referring to the camp's original master plan. This experience highlights the absence of central planning and the necessity for residents to rely on alternative, locally managed organisational tools through self-initiated efforts, in the absence of any comprehensive official reconstruction vision.

The cases of Kafr Owaid and Yarmouk reflect similar situations across other Syrian regions, where residents are left to restore their homes through individual efforts and limited resources, without official support or a clear organisational vision. As such, restoration becomes a personal burden rather than a collective entitlement.

The issue here is that a restoration permit is essential for addressing structural damage in buildings, such as reinforcing columns or repairing cracks caused by excessive loads or natural elements. The importance of restoration permits is even greater in areas that witnessed heavy combat, due to the potential residual effects from shelling that could pose a real threat of structural collapse. Restoration permits are granted following a thorough engineering assessment and are considered a fundamental requirement for ensuring the structural safety of a building after it has been restored. However, obtaining the permit is complex and requires technical documentation and collective approvals from all property owners, including non-residents.

Therefore, while it may be necessary to allow returnees to restore their homes informally, in light of their financial constraints and urgent need for housing, this should not come at the expense of structural safety. It would have been more appropriate for those local and governorate councils to issue clear decisions to eliminate all financial costs associated with restoration permits and to simplify the administrative procedures, while preserving their core purpose: to assess the structural safety of damaged homes before restoration.

In this context, establishing field offices within the various local councils — offices that include lawyers and engineers and provide free advisory services to returnees — could help create a local mechanism for documenting both past and ongoing violations and assessing structural conditions.

Rubble removal

In several areas where displaced people and refugees returned after December 8, returnees found accumulated debris inside residential buildings or in their immediate surroundings, hindering resettlement or habitation. In contrast, neither the local councils nor the Ministry of Local Administration offered any comprehensive programmes for debris removal; instead, the responsibility was left to residents, despite the need for heavy machinery and the high financial

cost involved. In some cases, residents had no choice but to store the debris in corners of their homes or on rooftops due to the lack of alternative disposal sites. With no official intervention to organise debris removal, no structural inspections are being carried out on the damaged buildings.

In some neighbourhoods of eastern Aleppo, such as Karam Al-Tarrab and Sheikh Saeed, debris removal began in early 2025 through cooperation between the Civil Defence and the city council. However, the transitional government's Ministry of Local Administrataion did not issue any regulatory or legal decisions to define clear conditions or guidelines for these operations. These efforts are taking place in areas that are destroyed and involve removing debris from adjacent buildings, some of which are still partially standing. This raises concerns about causing further damage to neighbouring private properties. No formal procedures are in place to document what is being removed or to determine whether any rights are at risk of being lost, particularly given the absence of mechanisms to accompany removal with property surveys or legal verification.

The project in eastern Aleppo was divided into phases, starting with the demolition of damaged buildings based on reports from the Public Safety Committee, followed by sorting the debris based on its potential for recycling. Reusable debris is transported to a recycling facility in the Ramouseh area, where it is repurposed into construction materials such as blocks and tiles. Unusable debris is taken to landfills. Although these steps are technically sound, the lack of any accompanying policy for documenting property ownership or involving rights holders remains a fundamental gap. No lists are published of buildings that are demolished or cleared, and there is no mechanism for compensating property owners or addressing their objections, particularly when some demolished buildings may have only been partially damaged. Additionally, there is a clear disconnect between the teams implementing the removal work on the ground and the absence of an official plan or transparent administrative oversight regarding the future of the cleared neighbourhoods.

Though technically organised, these efforts were not implemented per Law No. 3 of 2018 on debris removal, but rather carried out as standalone technical operations without a clear legal framework. Despite its shortcomings, Law No. 3 of 2018 recognises the right of property owners to claim the value of their debris, and allows them to object, provide evidence, and benefit from the proceeds of the debris after deducting removal costs — unlike current practices.

Therefore, debris removal must be conducted within a clear central plan, not left to piecemeal individual efforts by affected residents at their own expense, or implemented without coordination between service bodies. These operations should be tied to processes for confirming ownership and documenting the legal status of damaged properties, to ensure rights are not lost, especially in buildings whose ownership was never fully registered or those located in informal settlements. Demolition and removal must not proceed without

consulting the affected property owners; they should be involved in both the planning and implementation stages, with clear measures to prevent the erasure of ownership evidence or any physical alterations that could hinder future claims to their rights.

Debris removal should also serve as a preparatory step in a comprehensive reconstruction process, not as an isolated action. Carrying out demolition without an urban vision or zoning plan, or without identifying who will be responsible for rebuilding, risks permanent loss of place and rights. Clear standards must also be established to define what qualifies as "rubble," who has the authority to decide on removal, how what is removed is documented, when it occurs, under whose supervision, and with what legal guarantees.

Return as a right, not an administrative procedure

Despite the importance of the initiatives launched by local councils and the Ministry of Local Administration in licensing renovation and removing debris, their limited, scattered nature without a comprehensive national vision hinders their impact. Leaving residents to handle the debris of their homes alone, or to store them without legal protection or adequate technical support, reflects the absence of a rights-based framework that treats return as a right rather than a mere administrative process. This interim approach, despite its reformist intentions, still falls short of elevating return to the level of a collective entitlement warranted by current circumstances.

Moreover, the absence of rights documentation tools during debris removal and the complexity of renovation procedures may weaken the ability of local institutions to play an effective role in reconstruction, and could — albeit unintentionally—turn them into an additional obstacle to sustainable return. Hence, there is a pressing need to reframe housing and debris removal policies within a fair and transparent approach that balances technical requirements with rights-based guarantees, ensuring that return becomes a true pathway to reclaiming rights, not just a fragile adaptation to a difficult reality.

Restoring ownership, without a comprehensive remedy

During its years in power, the Assad regime used a range of legal and security tools to dispossess political dissidents or those suspected of disloyalty. These included mechanisms such as administrative precautionary seizure, the Anti-terrorism Court, and security clearances — tools that allowed state agencies to seize property without fair trial procedures or legitimate legal processes. Since the regime's fall in December 2024, the transitional administration has yet to take comprehensive steps to dismantle this structure or declare a clear institutional break with it. Actions so far have been limited to lifting certain precautionary seizure decisions, without addressing the broader legal framework that enabled violations of property rights. At the same time, the requirement for a security clearance remains in place for registering property transactions, despite having no publicly declared legal basis, and the effects of the Anti-terrorism Court's rulings persist without any clear legislative or judicial plan to remedy their impact on property rights.

Lifting precautionary seizures: A partial measure that maintains the old legal structure

On May 11, 2025, the head of the transitional administration issued Decree No. 16, which cancels precautionary seizure orders issued by security agencies between 2012 and 2024, based on the Judicial Police Powers Law No. 63 of 2012. However, the decree addressed only a narrow portion of the precautionary seizure decisions, without reviewing the full legal structure that had enabled security agencies to impose such seizures without effective judicial oversight.

On July 2, 2025, the Ministry of Finance issued Decision No. 963, lifting the precautionary seizure of assets for fourteen individuals, including prominent businessmen such as Moataz Al-Khayyat and his brothers. On the same day, the Ministry also lifted a separate seizure order concerning businessman Khaled Al-Mahamid. Both decisions were based on Legislative Decree No. 16 of 2025. The selection of names with significant economic and political weight, without announcing any comprehensive criteria, reinforces the perception that such measures continue to serve specific circles and respond to influence and pressure rather than to general legal safeguards.

In practice, between 2012 and 2024, thousands of precautionary seizure orders were carried out on the property of Syrian citizens, via decisions issued by the Ministry of Finance and based on instructions from security agencies without judicial rulings or independent judicial review. Seizures were imposed on both movable and immovable properties of those detained by security services, or even in absentia, in cases related to terrorism or internal and external state security. These seizure orders were implemented as direct administrative actions and were often used as a means of collective punishment against political dissidents or those merely suspected of opposing the regime.

Legislative Decree No. 63 of 2012 exceptionally expanded the definition of "judicial police powers" to include, alongside the investigating judge and the public prosecutor in the Antiterrorism Court, the security agencies themselves. The decree granted these bodies the authority to issue precautionary seizure orders — contrary to the Code of Criminal Procedure, which does not authorise an investigating judge to issue such orders. Nor is there any legal basis that permits security agencies to order the seizure of property belonging to those in their custody or even to those tried in absentia. This decree gave the security apparatus broad powers to directly interfere in property rights without judicial supervision, effectively turning precautionary seizure into a tool of repression against political opponents and activists.

Overall, it can be said that Decree No. 16 of 2025 addressed an important part of a very large problem. However, the decree remains limited in its effect, as it did not address the powers of other judicial police authorities — such as the investigating judge — despite their role in expanding arbitrary property seizures. Moreover, the decree did not annul the Judicial Police Powers Law itself, nor did it put an end to the intervention of security agencies in precautionary seizure cases. As such, its impact remains temporary, covering a large segment of those affected between 2012 and 2024, without preventing future violations.

Despite the procedural significance of Decree No. 16 of 2025, it reflects a cautious approach that avoids fully acknowledging the problem caused by the use of precautionary seizure as a political tool of repression. The partial remedy, which focused only on cancelling decisions issued by security agencies, preserved the legal structure that legitimised these violations and avoided dismantling the judicial police powers system that was a core component of the previous repressive regime. Furthermore, the decree did not establish any legal mechanism for appeal or compensation, nor was it accompanied by political messaging recognising that the seizures were a form of collective punishment based on political affiliation, not actual criminal activity.

Thus, this step remains incomplete and reveals that the transitional administration still lacks a clear vision for transforming transitional justice from a mere administrative correction into a political process aimed at restoring rights and holding accountable the legal system that institutionalised repression.

A limited path for the restitution of confiscated property: Between Justice and Finance Ministry Decisions and Decree No. 121

On May 12, 2025, the Ministry of Justice issued Decision No. 682, cancelling the effects of rulings by certain exceptional courts and restoring ownership of movable and immovable properties to a select group of convicted individuals. The decision did not explain why these individuals were chosen over others. The inclusion of the Al-Anzrawti family, owners of the Katakit company, despite the fact that their conviction came from an ordinary criminal court,

revealed flaws in legal scrutiny and raised renewed concerns over transparency in case selection. Moreover, the decision was not published on any official platform, leaving access to it restricted to unofficial channels, thereby undermining public trust in the process.

In late June 2025, seven weeks after the Justice Ministry's decision, the Ministry of Finance issued Decision No. 100, dated June 29, clarifying that the Al-Anzrawti family's conviction had been issued by the First Criminal Court (Case No. 25505 of 2022). The ministry confirmed it would proceed with restoring their assets in accordance with Law No. 26 of 2023, concerning the management of confiscated assets. While this decision reinforced the executive character of the process, it retained a limited scope, as it relied on a pre-selected list of names and did not open the door for others whose verdicts remain in force.

Notably, the Constitutional Declaration issued on March 13, 2025, had already annulled all rulings issued by the Antiterrorism Court and called for the restitution of confiscated properties. This constitutional basis grants the transitional authorities an opportunity to pass a comprehensive law that ensures equality. However, this mandate has so far only been translated into scattered administrative decisions, leaving the restitution process at the mercy of discretionary implementation. On June 23, 2025, Decree No. 121 was issued, tasking the Ministry of Justice with reconstituting a judicial committee to review complaints from individuals affected by emergency-era confiscation orders and decrees. The decree is significant in that it acknowledges the legitimacy of such complaints and offers a legal mechanism to process them. However, the committee's structure remains centralised in Damascus, and no timeline was set for addressing the thousands of expected cases.

The Ministry of Justice followed that decree with Decision No. 975 on June 30, 2025, appointing the Deputy President of the Court of Cassation as head of the committee, alongside advisors from the Cassation Court and the Council of State. While the decision allowed all affected individuals to submit claims without restriction and marked a necessary procedural step, it did not specify criteria for prioritisation or how the committee's findings would be published. This raises concerns that the process may be slow and risk reproducing discriminatory and exceptional pathways through judicial committees.

This sequence illustrates that the transitional authority is acting under the pressure of the constitutional declaration, yet continues to rely on a fragmented and selective approach. The absence of a comprehensive law to govern the work of judicial committees and establish transparent standards for property restitution directly affects public trust in the emerging judicial system. If the restitution process is to contribute to transitional justice and economic recovery, a comprehensive piece of legislation must be enacted — one that is drafted with the participation of affected individuals and civil society, and that guarantees the public disclosure of decisions and their legal justifications. Only then can delayed justice shift from limited initiatives to an institutional

framework that upholds the principle of equality and closes the door to favouritism.

Continued security clearance requirement: An unofficial suspension of property registration

While the transitional administration has annulled some precautionary seizure orders issued by security agencies, security restrictions on property transactions remain in effect in practice, through the continued requirement of prior security clearance for ownership transfers. This measure, which for years served as a tool for controlling the real estate market and punishing dissidents, has neither been repealed nor reviewed since the fall of the regime. It continues in its former form, now overseen by new and unidentified institutions responsible for issuing the approvals. As a result, while some seizures on property are lifted, owners remain unable to register or transfer their properties, effectively maintaining the security-based structure of property control — albeit with different tools.

Despite the absence of a formally declared central security body under the transitional administration, security clearance remains a prerequisite for recording property transfers in the Land Registry, such as sales and donations. This clearance is supposedly issued by a security body conducting a so-called "security study" into the criminal and political background of the property owner. Yet, to this day, no clearly designated authority is responsible for this process, nor are there official guidelines outlining the criteria for approval or rejection. This legal vacuum obstructs the completion of property transactions. Although the transitional government issued Circular No. 80/3 in April 2025 to clarify the cases requiring security clearance, the circular largely reproduced the wording of previous Assad-era directives, without substantive changes or an effective repeal of the clearance mechanism.

Circular No. 80/3 specified that non-transfer property arrangements — such as leases, investments, loans for use, and construction partnerships — do not require security clearance. It also stated that paying the real estate sales tax does not require prior clearance, so long as the transaction has not been recorded in the Land Registry. A similar rule applies to cases of public auction or inheritance, where prior security clearance is required before final entry in the Land Registry. In other words, legal claims can be confirmed in court and taxes paid without enabling the rightful owner to formally transfer title, thus stripping these rights of their actual substance. In reality, the new circular did not establish an alternative system to security clearance but instead reaffirmed its continued existence in its previous form.

The persistence of the security clearance requirement after the fall of the Assad regime reflects an administrative failure to define the authorised body for its issuance and indicates the continued logic of using property control as an extension of political loyalty. The lack of any review of the principle of the "security study" as a prerequisite for transferring property rights reveals a

reluctance to break from the old authoritarian system, positioning the transitional administration as a manager of the inherited security apparatus rather than a force for its dismantlement. The issue is not only that the conditions are unclear or pending, but that they are treated as a routine, unquestionable procedure despite the absence of any legal basis to justify their continuation. This effectively makes property rights contingent upon "security approval." Thus, the failure to explicitly abolish this requirement or replace it with a clear civil procedure continues to restrict real estate activity, enshrining an unlawful mechanism for controlling property rights.

Antiterrorism Court: Dissolved, but its HLP consequences remain

Although the Antiterrorism Court ceased to exist with the fall of the Assad regime, its legal impact on property rights remains unaddressed, with the transitional administration yet to propose a clear mechanism for remedying or nullifying the rulings it issued. Established in 2012 by a special law, the court served as an exceptional judicial tool used to strip political opponents of their property under the guise of terrorism charges, issuing rapid in absentia rulings that led to the freezing, then confiscation, of assets and their transfer to the state. To date, no legislative action has been taken to nullify these rulings, restore ownership to affected individuals, or dismantle the legal processes that legitimised expropriation.

Decree No. 16, which annulled precautionary seizure orders issued by security agencies, did not explicitly cancel those issued by the Antiterrorism Court. Nor did it include a review of the powers granted by Decree No. 63 of 2012 to judicial police authorities — particularly the public prosecutor in the Antiterrorism Court — to issue property seizure orders without fair trial procedures or effective judicial oversight. Many seizure decisions initially issued by security agencies were later formalised into executive seizures through court rulings from the Antiterrorism Court, which transferred property to the state via the Ministry of Finance and the Directorate of Cadastral Affairs. Some of these properties were even auctioned off and sold to third parties. Despite the exceptional nature of this court, its rulings have yet to be subjected to any cancellation or legal review, meaning they remain in force, with no mechanism currently in place to restore affected property rights.

At the same time, fundamental questions are now being raised about how to reclaim property confiscated under rulings issued by the Antiterrorism Court, particularly in the absence of legislative or procedural action by the transitional government. The proposed paths forward generally fall into three main legal avenues :

1. Repealing the founding laws of the court — such as Law No. 22 of 2012 and Antiterrorism Law No. 19 of 2012 — through new legislation issued by Parliament. However, such an action would not have a retroactive effect and thus would not address past grievances.
2. Challenging the constitutionality of these laws before the Supreme

Constitutional Court. This could allow previous rulings to be invalidated retroactively and enable the restoration of confiscated property.

3. Establishing a dedicated national programme for the recovery of confiscated property, supported by international partners, including specialised committees to review cases and compensate those affected. Yet this option would require a clear political and legislative will, which has yet to materialise in the transitional government's performance.

The lingering legal effects of the Antiterrorism Court, despite its functional collapse, reflect the transitional administration's difficulty in dismantling the legal frameworks that the Assad regime used to legitimise collective punishment through property confiscation. The problem is no longer just the existence of past court rulings but the inability to formulate a political and legal pathway to nullify the court's effects. The ongoing authority of judicial police powers and the failure to challenge the terrorism laws themselves reveal a structural hesitation to approach transitional justice as a political priority rather than merely a legal process.

There is reason to fear that inheriting a repressive system without declaring a break from it may lead to reproducing its consequences, coexisting with them rather than correcting them. This risks perpetuating injustices and entrenching a culture of impunity, even in cases where the political nature of the violations is starkly evident.

Political and legislative obstacles to the restoration of rights

An examination of the measures taken so far by the transitional administration reveals the absence of a comprehensive political and legislative approach to dismantling the legal framework used by the Assad regime to confiscate property. The limited handling of precautionary seizure orders through Decree No. 16, the continued enforcement of the security clearance system, and the failure to annul the effects of the Antiterrorism Court's rulings all point to the fact that the restitution of rights remains confined to fragmented administrative steps, not yet accompanied by a clear rights-based vision. The continued authority of the judicial police and the absence of legal challenges to exceptional laws raise serious questions about the extent of actual political will to restore property as a protected right.

As of now, no public initiatives have been announced to establish judicial review mechanisms for confiscation decisions, to compensate those affected, or to hold accountable the parties that carried out these seizures over the years. While this delay may sometimes be understood in the context of the transitional phase's complexities, if it continues, it risks transforming transitional justice from a means of dismantling the legacy of violations into a limited bureaucratic process that leaves intact the deeper structures that legitimised the expropriation of rights.

Property extortion and administrative committees with undefined powers

Since the fall of the Assad regime, the issue of extorted properties has resurfaced amid varying attempts to recover them, ranging from peaceful restoration to cases of forced eviction of occupants. With no unified national mechanism to address this issue, some governorate councils — most notably in Homs, Aleppo, and Hama — have launched administrative initiatives, forming local committees to review complaints of unlawful seizure. However, these committees operate without clearly defined judicial powers, lack central coordination, and rely on no unified legal definitions, raising concerns about their effectiveness and their ability to guarantee rights.

The following sections explore the nature of these initiatives, the legal complexities surrounding extortion, and the main types of disputes between returning property owners and current occupants, including cases of real estate fraud.

Unlike expropriation and confiscation, which the constitution permits for the seizure of private property, the Syrian Penal Code defines any other form of seizure of private real estate as extortion. Property extortion refers to taking another's property without their consent, or the occupation of property without a legal title or legitimate cause. Despite this legal clarity, property extortion remains one of the most complex issues, due to a wide array of problems: lack of delimitation and census (especially in unzoned areas and informal settlements), incomplete land registration and surveying in many areas, final court rulings on sales that cannot be recorded in the official Land Registry, and the loss of property ownership documents.

As a result, many cases of property seizure devolve into disputes over the origin of ownership, requiring judicial intervention when one party files a claim to recover possession. In many instances, it turns out that the party claiming that their property has been seized is, in fact, attempting to seize someone else's property.

Dilemmas facing administrative committees

In the governorates of Homs and Aleppo, the governorate councils issued decisions to form administrative committees to address cases of unlawful property seizure. In Homs, the governor established a special committee by Decision No. 1 on January 13, 2025 to handle clear cases of extortion. The committee's powers are based on Article 45 of Local Administration Law No. 107 of 2011, which allows the governor to order the removal of extortion and the restoration of property to its original state. The administrative decision remains valid unless it is revoked, amended, or overturned by a court ruling on the substantive right. The process requires affected individuals to submit requests supported by ownership documents, such as an updated land registry record or a judicial ruling confirming a sale. Upon verifying the claim, the committee

is authorised to issue an eviction order against the unlawful occupant without resorting to the judiciary.

In Aleppo, the governor issued Decision No. 9 on March 4, 2025 to form a committee to examine what he termed "cases of unlawful seizure" of properties during the former regime and to take administrative steps to restore rights to their owners. In both cases, the committees lack the legal authority to assess ownership rights when the current occupant holds property documents.

In Hama, the process took a different turn with Circular No. 917/1 issued on 19 May 2025, inviting citizens to submit complaints concerning property seizures. The circular distinguished between two types of cases: the first involving "customary seizures," whether or not the property was officially registered in the name of the state; and the second involving properties confiscated through rulings by the Antiterrorism Court or similar courts, provided they are registered in the state's name. The circular made no mention of a designated committee to review the complaints or the authority responsible for making decisions, rendering the administrative process opaque and lacking in traceability or oversight.

The problems with Hama's circular stem mainly from the use of new, non-legal terminology to describe such cases — terms like "customary" seizure — which were not clearly distinguished from overt extortion. The confusion extended to properties confiscated by Antiterrorism Court rulings, namely, those where precautionary seizure was later converted into full expropriation. Assuming that properties seized "customarily" are equivalent to those under clear extortion, the Hama governorate still overstepped its competence by admitting cases involving properties confiscated through court rulings—matters that require, at minimum, legislation from Parliament or a national-level Property Justice Committee, as previously noted.

Disputes with current occupants: Between restoring rights and HLP justice

Original owners who were forcibly displaced under the Assad regime to Idlib, and have since returned to their agricultural lands in rural areas of Idlib and Hama, now face recurring disputes with individuals who had been leasing or investing in their lands in recent years through public auctions organised by the governorates. Many of these lands were declared "vacant" due to the forced absence of their owners and were offered as unplanted or planted land for investment via public tenders. Some of the returnees are now seeking to reclaim their properties, sometimes through direct negotiation with the investors, and at other times by threatening legal action.

In certain cases, investors agreed to withdraw, either out of concern over rising tensions or as implicit recognition of the returnees' ownership rights. In other cases, however, investors insisted on maintaining control, citing the fact that

they had paid investment fees to the governorates, opening the door to potential legal disputes.

One case documented by The Syria Report in Mhardeh, in the western Hama countryside, involved a displaced landowner returning to find his farmland planted with anise by a neighbour who had leased it through a public auction during his absence. The landowner demanded the return of his property and compensation for the years of unauthorised use. Although the occupant had formally invested in the land, he did not contest the owner's claim. He returned the land immediately and compensated the owner by granting him the right to use one hectare of his adjacent land free of charge for ten years.

In another example from Khan Sheikhun, in the southern Idlib governorate, several farmers returning from displacement camps in northern Syria encountered escalating tensions with prior investors who had been cultivating their pistachio orchards for years under public auctions organised by the governorates of Idlib and Hama during the Assad regime. Upon return, some farmers began reclaiming their lands but were met with resistance when they requested a share of previous harvest profits. The investors refused, arguing that they had paid investment fees to the authorities. As a result, the returnees initiated legal proceedings to reclaim their rights. This situation underscores the urgent need for the transitional administration to play a central role in securing the rights of original and current landholders and in regulating these overlapping legal and social relationships.

A completely different dynamic emerges in cases involving housing in informal settlements, unlicensed and unregistered buildings, and properties held in common ownership without proper subdivision among co-owners. The challenges here go beyond missing documentation; they include the presence of current occupants who claim ownership based on seemingly legal documents that are, in fact, the result of sophisticated forgery. This can range from identity theft and false testimonies to fraudulent court rulings.

The complication lies in the fact that these new occupants are not property extorters, but good-faith buyers unaware of the prior fraud. For example, in the Hanano Housing District of Aleppo, a fraudulent scheme was carried out to transfer ownership of an old, commonly owned house among several heirs. An estate agent exploited his knowledge of the heirs' names, impersonated one of them, and signed a sale contract with an unsuspecting buyer, aided by two complicit witnesses. A subsequent lawsuit was filed to confirm the sale, backed by a power of attorney issued to the buyer. The court notified the remaining heirs using false addresses provided by the impersonator acting as one of the heirs, which prevented the other heirs from attending the hearings. The court then issued a ruling to confirm the sale and transfer ownership.

One final example highlights how such fraudulent acts can severely impact current residents, casting them as property extorters when, in fact, they purchased the properties in good faith and hold documents — albeit forged —

proving ownership. In the Seventh Project area of Lattakia, shortly after the fall of the regime and the entry of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) forces, residents of one building were ordered to evacuate on the grounds that their purchase contracts were invalid. It turned out that the property originally belonged to a military commander in the group and had previously been extorted by a senior figure in the National Defence Militia. The apartments had passed through multiple resale transactions using forged contracts and intermediaries until they reached the current residents, who had paid for them in full.

Restoring rights requires a comprehensive vision for HLP justice

Cases of reclaiming seized properties highlight one of the most complex dilemmas facing the transitional phase, given the intersection between the requirements of legal justice and social and humanitarian considerations. Although some administrative steps have been taken at the governorate level, the absence of a unified legal framework and the inconsistency of mechanisms to address the issue threaten to turn these procedures into a further source of tension, rather than a means to restore respect for HLP rights.

The challenge does not lie solely in the limited powers of local committees or the weakness of enforcement tools, but in the need for an integrated policy that accounts for the reality of current occupants, including those who acquired the property or land in good faith, unaware of past violations.

Hence, the importance of developing a comprehensive reform vision emerges — one that goes beyond the mere technical act of returning rights, and instead lays the foundation for a balanced model of property justice, which both acknowledges the rights of original owners and ensures legal and social protection for vulnerable groups.

Such a vision requires the establishment of an independent specialised body, the development of legal mechanisms for appeal and objection, the support of local reconciliation efforts, and the provision of alternative housing or compensation where needed. Only through this can the restitution of rights be transformed from a contested issue into a first step towards social stability and secure ownership.

Emerging patterns of HLP rights violations

New patterns for violations of HLP rights have emerged over the past six months of the transitional phase. These have affected marginalised or vulnerable groups and have been carried out by administrative or military-security entities, some of which are directly linked to the transitional government, while others operate in the absence of legal and administrative oversight.
This section addresses these emerging types of violations through three main issues :

1. Violations targeting the properties of Alawites in the coastal region and Hama countryside within a military-security context that followed the collapse of the former regime.
2. Organised targeting of Druze areas in the Damascus and Suweida countryside based on sectarian motives and political incitement.
3. Forced evictions, seizures, or restrictions affecting residents of social housing, carried out in administrative and security contexts devoid of justice guarantees and lacking any vision for alternative housing.

Alawite properties under threat

In March 2025, Syria's coastal region — particularly the predominantly Alawite villages in the Lattakia countryside, the Al-Ghab Plain, and eastern Hama countryside — became the scene of systematic violations against residents and their property. These occurred within the context of a large-scale military-security campaign led by transitional government forces to confront pockets of rebellion linked to the former regime.

The operations were accompanied by sectarian rhetoric from mosque preachers aligned with Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, adding a jihadist dimension to the attacks witnessed in dozens of villages. The campaign resulted in violent raids, field executions, looting, deliberate burning of homes, shops, and farms (especially around Jableh and Qardaha), alongside cases of forced displacement and mass flight. Entire families were forced to flee either under direct threat or due to intensified fighting. Widespread bulldozing of farmland and the looting and burning of homes were also documented.

After operations ceased, the security situation remained fragile, preventing residents from returning and allowing armed Salafi groups and Bedouin tribes to seize vacant properties, either through direct occupation of homes and conversion of land into grazing fields or by offering «investment» deals on absentee-owned lands.

In the southern Lattakia countryside, armed Bedouin groups exploited the mass displacement caused by clashes with Salafi factions stationed in the area to seize empty homes and farmland. These incoming Bedouin groups occupied vacant houses and released their livestock into olive and citrus groves. Despite repeated complaints from farmers, security forces did not intervene to curb the

violations, encouraging the groups to continue infringing on property.

Some villages experienced direct violence, such as in Mashqita, where an entire farming family was killed for objecting to overgrazing. In other cases, residents dismantled irrigation networks or avoided harvesting their crops to prevent confrontations with the armed newcomers. These violations were not limited to the affected villages but became a recurring pattern across entire towns.

In the villages of the Al-Ghab Plain and northeast Hama countryside, the displacement of residents from 12 predominantly Alawite towns due to military operations created a vacuum exploited by local armed and Bedouin tribal groups to seize vacant properties and lands. Simultaneously, a private agricultural company offered the displaced Alawites contracts to lease or purchase their vacant lands. «Iktifa Agricultural Investment Company» used social media platforms to distribute standardised contract templates to absentee landowners, stamped with the company's name.

These offers were not isolated or personal initiatives but took place within a broader context. In April, a meeting was held to discuss «investment in Alawite lands» at the office of a senior figure in Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, who currently serves as the «Director of Northern Hama Countryside Area.»

In the coastal villages and towns — especially Sanoubar Jableh, Ain Al-Arous, and Aal-Shalafatiyah — the government's military campaign was accompanied by organised looting, the deliberate burning of homes and shops, and systematic use of force to steal and then torch property, making near-term return virtually impossible.

In some locations, hand grenades and torches were used to burn homes and agricultural machinery, a pattern repeated in several villages. Once the fighting ceased, no entity initiated repair or compensation procedures, leaving villages completely abandoned.

Organised HLP violations against Druze in Rural Damascus and Suweida

Between late April and early May, areas with a Druze majority in Sahnaya and its surroundings in Rural Damascus, as well as in towns in the northern and western countryside of Suweida, saw serious violations of HLP rights. In late April 2025, the city of Sahnaya and the town of Ashrafiyat Sahnaya in Rural Damascus — both with a Druze majority — were subjected to a large-scale attack by forces from the Ministries of Defence and Interior of the transitional government, backed by Salafi and tribal groups. The attack followed an incitement campaign sparked by a fabricated audio recording attributed to a Druze cleric that included insults against the Prophet Muhammad, and was used as a pretext for a systematic assault on Druze areas. The military operations led to the destruction of 145 homes — 85 in Ashrafiyat and 60 in Sahnaya — and the mass displacement of Ashrafiyat residents. After the shelling and clashes, the

attacking forces stormed homes under the pretext of «searching for weapons» and committed direct violations against residents, including arbitrary gunfire inside homes, restraining family members during the search, and looting their belongings, including jewellery, electronics, and vehicles. Some homes were set on fire after being looted, using hand grenades, rendering them uninhabitable. Attackers targeted Druze homes exclusively, according to testimonies from Christian and Sunni residents in the area, who confirmed that the assailants specifically asked about the ownership of homes before raiding them. Although a ceasefire agreement was later reached, violations continued, including repeated raids without judicial warrants, which hindered the return of displaced residents.

In early May 2025, forces from the Ministries of Defence and Interior of the interim government, backed by tribal militias from Daraa and the Badiya region, launched attacks on the town of Al-Surah Al-Kabira in Suweida countryside. The town was subjected to artillery shelling, followed by a siege from three sides and then a ground assault, leading to the mass displacement of residents towards the city of Suweida. The attacks resulted in the burning of numerous homes, looting of agricultural produce and commercial shops, and theft of farming equipment and private vehicles. Religious property was also targeted, as in the case of the Al-Khidr shrine, which was burned and defaced with sectarian slogans. These violations were not limited to Al-Surah but were accompanied by shelling of villages in western Suweida such as Aara, Rassas, and Kanaker, which caused significant damage to at least 18 homes — most of them of old, traditional design — making restoration nearly impossible.

In July 2025, Suweida governorate was subjected to a systematic military campaign by the Ministries of Defence and Interior under the Transitional Administration, backed by Salafist and tribal militias. The campaign targeted the Druze minority through widespread destruction of towns and villages, forced displacement of more than 176,000 people, and the killing of approximately 2,000 individuals, the vast majority of them civilians. The violence was accompanied by indiscriminate shelling, summary executions, and arbitrary arrests, alongside systematic looting of homes and shops, the deliberate destruction of farms and water wells, and the sabotage of vital infrastructure including power stations, hospitals, and mills. After looting residential homes, the invading forces either burned or demolished them using explosives and flammable materials. Grain silos and storage facilities were torched, livestock and poultry farms looted and vandalised, and critical drinking water wells detonated, in a governorate already suffering from severe drought conditions. Following the withdrawal of government forces, tribal fighters continued the violence and looting. This was not merely a security operation marked by war crimes. It was the deliberate dismantling of urban life and livelihoods — a campaign that turned inhabited areas into targets of systematic devastation. A total of 35 villages across the western and northern countryside, including Dour, Najran, Doueira, Taara, Mazraa, Lagha, Thaala, Umm Al-Zeitoun, Al-Soura Al-Saghira, Al-Soura Al-Kabira, Kanaker, and Al-Majaymer, were affected by this cycle of killings, looting, and arson. What happened in Suweida in July 2025

was not merely a military-security operation in which crimes against humanity were committed. It was a deliberate destruction of livelihoods and essential life systems in a stable urban area.

Violations against social housing residents: Forced evictions, discrimination, legal ambiguity

Immediately after the fall of the Assad regime, numerous violations were committed against residents of social and cooperative housing programmes, particularly in Damascus and its suburbs, as well as Lattakia and Hama. Social and cooperative housing includes a range of state-supported housing programmes intended to provide low- or mid-cost homes. These include youth housing, worker housing, service housing, cooperative housing, and others.

Instead of serving as a refuge for the most vulnerable groups, as originally intended, these housing units often became direct targets for forced eviction, seizure, or harassment by military or security entities claiming affiliation with the transitional administration or with Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham. Violations affected occupants of service, worker, military, and youth housing, and the justifications varied from sectarian motives to political retaliation or lack of legal documentation.

In all cases, there was a clear absence of any alternative housing policy, which exacerbated the vulnerability of affected groups and pushed some toward secondary displacement or life in unstable accommodations.

On April 6, 2025, the Hama Governorate Police Command, in coordination with the General Housing Establishment (GHE), carried out a mass eviction of 170 «illegal occupants» from the youth housing project in the Al-Hader district in the north of the city, without providing any housing alternatives. Most of those evicted were internally displaced persons from Idlib or people who had returned to Syria after Assad's ouster, with no alternative shelter. Although they were warned in advance, no transitional housing or emergency aid was offered.

Strikingly, the Ministry of Housing treated the cases not as a humanitarian crisis but as an administrative matter, justifying the lack of solutions by citing "limited capabilities." The eviction, on the other hand, was carried out in response to demands by the original subscribers to the apartments, who had been awaiting their homes since 2002, more than two decades ago.

Most of the violations following the fall of the regime targeted residents of worker and employee housing, mostly employees from distant areas working near the housing complexes. Ownership of these properties is legally ambiguous due to overlapping laws and the executing government entity. For example, employee housing is meant for temporary use, with ownership retained by the state. In contrast, workers have the right to own their housing, according to Legislative Decree No. 46 of 2002, by paying in instalments.

In Damascus and its suburbs, worker and employee housing complexes witnessed arbitrary evictions following the fall of the regime, particularly affecting families from the Alawite sect or employees affiliated with security or scientific institutions.

In the police housing complex in Harasta, Alawite families were forced to leave their homes after receiving direct threats from local armed groups, which took over the apartments and refused any settlement. In another case, the apartment of a military engineer in the Military Academy housing in the Harasta district was raided, even though he had received an official grace period after reaching a «settlement,» and his family was forcibly expelled. Another family was expelled from military housing in the March 8 suburb in Rural Damascus and faced sectarian threats.

These violations were not limited to Alawites; Christian families were also affected, as happened with one family residing in the Scientific Research housing in Barzeh.

Elsewhere, military housing in Damascus was subject to violations involving the seizure of apartments and their redistribution without a legal basis. In Mezzeh 86, some previously defected officers forcibly reclaimed their apartments, which had been occupied by officers loyal to the regime, sparking tensions between former and current occupants.

In the Republican Guard housing located between Dummar and Qudsaya, members of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham and other factions moved into abandoned or uninhabited apartments. Later, the governorates of Damascus and Rural Damascus allocated hundreds of housing units in the Al-Areen project in Qudsaya to accommodate around 45,000 returnees from the Jobar district of Damascus who had fled to northern Syria after the regime's fall. These Al-Areen housing units were originally designated for regime officers, many of whom had fled after the regime's collapse or had been forced to leave.

Establishing the foundations of property justice in the transitional phase

The cases presented in this section reveal a recurring pattern of violations against housing, land, and property rights. These cannot be reduced to individual actions or temporary disorder but rather highlight deep challenges in the way some institutions and new administrations have dealt with property issues after the fall of the regime. Whether these violations came from local administrative bodies, security units, or armed factions loyal to the transitional government, the absence of a clear legislative framework and regulatory legal standards has led to unchecked practices, often without oversight or accountability.

In some instances, eviction measures were carried out under the pretext of restoring rights to their owners, but without considering the circumstances of occupants or providing housing alternatives, stripping these measures of their legal and rights-based substance. In other cases, events with sectarian or political dimensions created fertile ground for systematic violations, without being met with official investigations or effective compensation mechanisms.

These practices underscore the urgent need to develop a clear path for property justice, one that reaffirms principles of fairness and establishes mechanisms to guarantee rights and protect the most vulnerable groups, within an integrated approach that considers both legal and social dimensions.

Conclusion: Towards a clear path for HLP justice, from fragmented measures to a comprehensive vision

This paper shows that the transitional administration's handling of HLP issues — despite some positive initiatives — remains governed by a fragmented procedural approach lacking a cohesive rights-based vision. Measures taken up to mid-2025, such as lifting certain precautionary seizures, forming administrative committees to address land seizure cases, or organising return files, have not been accompanied by alternative legislation or integrated policies to protect rights or dismantle the legal structures previously used by the Assad regime for property dispossession and legal exclusion. Limiting the file of housing, land, and property justice to scattered executive measures shifts bias from judicial to administrative channels and undermines the trust of affected individuals in the reform process.

The paper also demonstrates that some entities associated with the transitional government — whether administrative or military — have engaged in practices that resulted in new patterns of violations targeting marginalised groups or specific areas. Although these actions may not necessarily stem from centralised decisions, they reflect weak oversight and the absence of appeal and accountability mechanisms, which could undermine public confidence in a phase that is expected to entrench justice and restore rights.

In light of this, there is a need to move from circumstantial responses to a clear institutional path for property justice, based on a comprehensive vision that balances the restoration of rights with the fragile social and economic realities. Key recommendations include :

1. Temporarily suspending all conditions related to security approval for property transactions, and reviewing their legal basis in preparation for their full cancellation, as they have historically served as tools for political and social exclusion under the former regime.

2. Cancelling the effects of the Antiterrorism Court on property ownership through a special law that nullifies its confiscation rulings and restores rights to owners within a clear judicial framework.
3. Establishing an independent property justice authority with the mandate to rule on expropriation cases, document violations, oversee restitution committees, and propose comprehensive compensation schemes.

4. Adopting a fair transitional housing policy to address forced evictions of social housing occupants, and to provide alternative housing or direct support to the most vulnerable groups.

5. Freezing all investment or disposal operations involving public or private properties affected by the conflict until national mechanisms for transparency and accountability are established and the legal status of properties is verified.

6. Launching an independent investigation into recent violations that occurred during the transitional phase, including cases of forced seizure, raids, evictions, and sectarian discrimination, with clear proposals for holding those responsible accountable and preventing recurrence.

7. Developing alternative mechanisms for resolving property dis putes, identifying the types of conflict that can be addressed through these mechanisms, and setting safeguards to ensure access for the most vulnerable groups and prevent all forms of discrimination based on gender, region, sect, or political affiliation.

8. Establishing institutional tools for housing and property restitution as part of transitional justice, under the supervision of an independent body and with the support of specialised international expertise, in a way that reinforces public trust in restitution processes.

9. Preparing a comprehensive legislative plan to address legal gaps in property issues within informal settlements by amending or enacting laws that align with the specific nature of these areas and restore recognition of property rights that have been obscured or marginalised.

Ensuring property justice in Syria cannot be achieved by managing the legacy of violations with temporary or hesitant tools, but rather by establishing comprehensive rights-based policies that reaffirm ownership as a constitutional right and transform it into a pillar of social trust and political stability.