

Side event to the Brussels VII conference on Syria

Syrian Refugees and IDPs: Caught in the Web of ‘Normalisation’ and the Risks of ‘Return’

European Endowment for Democracy

Logistics:

Contact Person	For public communication: communications@democracyendowment.eu
Proposed date	June 13 12.30- 14.00 Brussels time
Venue	Format: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person in EED’s office (located on Rue de la Loi 34) . • Online for external audience
Hospitality at the event	Lunch break
Audience	Participants and targets of the Brussels VII Conference on Syria
Interpretation	Arabic – English

Introduction:

In this event hosted by the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), speakers representing Syrian civil society groups, independent media and experts will tackle the ‘return’ question, one that is gaining momentum as the normalisation process unfolds across the region. Speakers will discuss the increasingly challenging situations faced by Syrian refugees living in countries across the region and the real risks and hindrances to ‘return’, due to the lack of accountability inside Syria.

The Syrian regime’s re-admission to the Arab League in May has prompted worries that a rapprochement with the regime may further prompt neighbouring countries, the main hosts of Syrian refugees, to force refugees to return despite real threats to their lives and multiple other challenges. Rampant impunity, continuous human rights violations and a lack of accountability mechanisms are major obstacles to the voluntary, safe and dignified return of Syrian refugees and IDPs.

The panel’s speakers, experts and representatives of leading civil society and media organisations, will discuss the current situation for Syrian refugees and IDPs, and will analyse the key barriers to a safe and dignified return for potential returnees. They will propose measures and mechanisms that could mitigate or alleviate these risks. Panellists will also give an overview of their role in monitoring, documenting, and raising awareness, and defending the rights of Syrian refugees and IDPs and of those who will forcibly or voluntarily return.

Panelists:

- **Access Center for Human Rights** works actively on documenting and raising awareness of human rights violations occurring against Syrian refugees in Lebanon and elsewhere.

- **Senay Ozden** is an expert from Turkey on issues related to Syrian refugees in Turkey.
- **Syrian Investigative Reporting for Accountability Journalists (SIRAJ)** is the first network of Syrian investigative journalists that publishes in collaboration with other media outlets. They recently published an investigation in partnership with the Guardian about increased violations of House, Land and Properties' rights inside Syria.
- **The Laboratory for the Study of Violence in Syria** is a new investigative research platform streaming the work of four research groups, and the knowledge of a wide network of Syrian individuals and grassroots. The platform uses big data, networks' analysis, and local and academic knowledge to create a cutting-edge tool for the studying, analysis and archiving of mass violence in Syria.

Views, thoughts and opinions expressed during these events reflect solely those of the speakers and do not constitute endorsement by the European Union.