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Inside and Outside: Government and Governance Experience of Syrian Refugees

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Introduction

After four decades of Assad and Ba'th party rule in Syria, peaceful protests demanding a more democratic governance turned into a civil war in 2011 as the Arab Spring influenced resistance on the ground. Eleven years into the starting point of taking up arms, 5.4 million Syrians have become refugees with 3.2 million located in Turkey, 63 % of the Syrian refugee population (UNHCR, 2023). Internally Displaced People (IDP) who face challenges to meet their basic needs are estimated to be 6.9 million people (OCHA, 2022). "From the total estimate of 306,887 civilians killed between March 1, 2011 and March 31, 2021 in Syria due to the conflict, more than half of those deaths, or 163,537, were never documented by any group," according to the U.N. Human Rights (UN Human Rights: Officer of the Commissioner, 2023). The total death toll is estimated to be between 350,000 (UN News, 2021) and 606,000 (SOHR, 2021). The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) documented that the 606,0000 list of causalities includes 495,000 individuals who lost their lives (SOHR, 2021). External powers also became embroiled in the conflict, playing defining roles in the continuation of the war and

shifting power among the actors in the conflict. Hinnebusch refers to this phenomenon as the 'fragmenting impact of competitive external interference' which became more intensive after 2016 when the external powers – Russia, Turkey, and the U.S. - used their proxies which took 'the form of a *de facto* carving up of Syria into overlapping spheres of influence' (Hinnebusch, 2018, p. 404).[3]

Spatially, two distinct opposition groups formed after 2011 were located inside Syria, that is, the Local Councils (LCs) and outside the country, namely the Syrian Interim Government.[4] This paper is generated from fieldwork between the end of 2015 and mid-2016 and discusses how 'inside' and 'outside' opposition is perceived by Syrian refugees located in Gaziantep, Turkey, which borders Aleppo. The Syrian population is 22% of Gaziantep's population (Özgür Keysan and Şentürk, 2021). During the generation of field data, the SIG was in Gaziantep and had not yet shifted to Northern Syria. As a result, this article reflects findings for the time that coincides with the early formation of the SIG outside of the Syrian border and away from its constituency. Study participants were in the same city as the SIG (outside of Syria) which drew their attention in comparing it with the Local Councils (LCs) (inside Syria). The competitive interference of the external powers was demonstrated in how they sought to influence both entities.[5] Yet, from the research participants' perceptions, these two entities were positioned differently in terms of legitimacy. The analysis of the refugees' narratives overlaps with the literature, indicating that spatial positioning and the degree of engagement with the grassroots are essential factors in determining whether an opposition group will be perceived as a legitimate alternative to Bashar al-Assad's government.

Refugees who were forced to flee their country by the civil war are also located 'outside' Syria like the 'out-

side' opposition. In what ways are their experiences and perceptions from the outside shaped regarding both 'insider' and 'outsider' Syrian oppositional entities? While people expected an alternative government to emerge, what were the consequences of building an 'outsider' oppositional group specifically referred to as a 'government' in the perceptions of the Syrian refugee diaspora? 'Government' is a concept that presents a specific meaning in the minds of people, policymakers, and international actors such that when it is misused, it possibly results in consequences contrary to what is being intended. In other words, the naming of an oppositional entity as 'government' when it lacks the latter's characteristics of power and legitimacy may lead to strengthening the existing Syrian government's position. In other words, what one entity is not confirms what the other is. This point is further developed below when the concept of "governmentality' is discussed in the theory section. This article contends that misrepresenting key concepts like government may shape the progression of ongoing conflicts.

The article begins with a discussion of a theoretical overview of the concepts of government and governmentality relevant to framing our understanding of the roles and legitimacy of the LCs and SIG. Following the theoretical framework, a detailed explanation of the qualitative methodology is provided. This is followed by an overview of the operations of the LCs and SIG based on the current literature. The main body of the article section includes a discussion of the qualitative field data and presents the research findings on the LCs and SIG. The conclusion relates the findings to the theoretical discussion.

Theoretical Framework: Conceptualizing Syria's Opposition Governance

Before examining the evidence on the role, operations and Syrians' perception of the LCs and SIG, as forms of governance we need to consider theoretical thinking on how they might best be conceptualized.

The Oxford Dictionary's definition of the word "government" is "a group of people having authority to govern a state." According to Max Weber, the state is a "human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory" (1958, p.78 emphasis original). Another widely used reference, the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, states that government is one of the main criteria for statehood alongside a permanent population, defined territory, and capacity to enter relations with other states. These commonly accepted definitions indicate that what the term 'Syrian Interim Government' referred to in its initiation poses a conceptual problem, for it did not have the [sovereign] 'authority' to govern the Syrian state, neither did it have a defined territory, nor a permanent population, or the 'capacity' to enter relations with other states. What, then, did the emergence of SIG signify?

Unlike some other historical examples like 'Free France' and the 'Free French', it was neither a 'government in exile' that practiced de jure authority over an occupied territory even though it was de facto located elsewhere nor was it a 'provisional government' that manages the transition period from the collapse of a former state to the establishment of a new state. Hence, Rangwala categorizes the SIG under the 'governments-in-waiting' category and argues that there are differences between interim governments and governments-in-waiting (Rangwala, 2015, p. 216). External powers usually promote the legitimacy of interim governments by arguing that they represent the people, and such governments protect human rights and exercise democratic constitutionalism. In contrast, govern-

ments-in-waiting face external legitimacy problems (Rangwala, 2015, p. 216). Furthermore, despite power politics and interstate rivalries during the formation of interim governments, international actors are portrayed as facilitators of transitional rule with the promise of ensuring regional security and providing humanitarian relief. In comparison, governments-in-waiting come from the external powers' contest for power (Rangwala, 2015, p. 217). This assessment connects with the qualitative data provided in this paper that shows the interviewees didn't view the SIG as their political representative, raising the enduring question of 'whose government?'

While the uprising and the LCs were the manifestation of the grassroots challenge to the legitimacy of monopolized violence used by the Assad Regime in Syria, at the time of this study's interviews, the SIG couldn't establish a united force to forge an alternative legitimacy, nor did it achieve a monopoly of violence in the territories where the Ba'th Party couldn't enforce its authority. Different study participants, such as people who worked in the LCs in Syria, refugees who worked in humanitarian aid agencies and traveled to Syria, and a soldier with the Free Syrian Army noted that the SIG was disconnected from local communities and out of touch with realities.

In this regard, reexamining the conceptual nuance among 'government', 'governance', and 'governmentality' in comparing LCs and the SIG could be helpful. By noting that 'governance is not synonymous with government', James Rosenau points out that:

> Both refer to purposive behavior, to goal-oriented activities, to systems of rule; but government suggests activities that are backed by formal authority, by police powers to ensure the implementation of duly constituted policies, whereas governance refers to activities backed by shared goals that may or may not derive from legal and formally prescribed responsibilities and that do not necessarily rely on police powers to overcome defiance and attain compliance. Governance, in other words, is a

> more encompassing phenomenon than government. (Rosenau 1992, p. 4)

Rosenau further argues that "governance is not synonymous with government" (1992, p. 4). The key here is to "conceive of governance without government - of regulatory mechanisms in a sphere of activity which function effectively even though they are not endowed with formal authority" (Rosenau, 1992, p. 4). Using Rosenau's (1992) distinction, while the LCs were part of the governance structures, the SIG wasn't a government in the conventional sense of the term. The SIG was positioned as a body of governance primarily responsible for the allocation of resources locally (Poggi, 1978). As the interviewees in this study point out, the SIG was created as a hierarchical structure that played a particular role in regional and global actors' power struggles over and through Syria.

Here, another concept becomes important in our discussion: governmentality. Foucauldian governmentality is "the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument" (Foucault 2007, pp. 108-109). The word 'governmentality' comes from 'government' (gouvernement) and 'mentality' (mentalite´) in Foucault (Foucault, 1991). Is it possible that even though the SIG was a government only in name, it was expected to fulfill the function of a government yet only as a distributor of the foreign donors' mentality and agenda?

Departing from this understanding, the external actors' government mentality is embedded in naming the SIG as a 'government'. Yet, the interviewees' experiences and perceptions of the SIG point out that only nominally calling the SIG a 'government' did not create such an acceptance among Syrian refugees. On the contrary, governmentality

stayed with the Assad regime. Syrians living in war conditions within Syria, or Syrians who are IDPs, and Syrians who became refugees experienced the conflict on a different scale than external actors who become part of this conflict. When external actors backed the SIG, many people approached it with suspicion, which might have undermined the opposition's efforts rather than strengthened their mission to dismantle the Assad government as a legitimate government. The lack of international recognition of the SIG's representatives and SIG issued documents to residents and refugees served to belittle and undermine the opposition while highlighting Assad government's sphere of power. For example, the extension and validity of passports stayed within the Assad government's power (The Syrian Observer, 2015), while property deeds weren't recognized if they did not come from the Assad government (Sosnowski and Hamadeh, 2021).

LCs could be better understood by an enriching theoretical expansion offered by Hamdan (2021), who uses assemblage theory inspired by the rhizomatic theory of Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005). 'Rhizomatic' social theory captures the 'interconnected, collective nature of social processes' (Hamdan, 2021, p. 2).[6] Deleuze and Guattari suggest that "a rhizome as [a] subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005, p. 7). Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome idea envisages the possibility of creating a non-hierarchical multiplicity. Like bulbs and tubers metaphorically, Syrian LCs are being developed, and they, in turn, create a non-hierarchic or decentralized governance system in an ongoing volatile conflict zone. "The formation of local councils was the first democratic experiment after more than 50 years of political paralysis" (Sottimano, 2022, p. 143). Data analysis illustrates that even though the LCs weren't connected to a cen-

tral body, they functioned to deliver some of the most necessary public goods to the conflict-torn people in Syria's violently contested spaces because they focused on ensuring people's livelihood. In turn, people responded to governing structures that provided their everyday needs. The research findings indicate that people felt connected and committed to non-military, civil entities that are genuinely involved with people's daily needs. Our exploration of the study participants' experiences and perceptions regarding LCs and the SIG shows a vast difference in favor of the LCs, affirming the detachment of international actors from the local perspective when they call the SIG 'the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people'. This is because the international donors' geopolitical goals are locked in tension with local populations' political claims as they fail to relate to the local populations' political need for human security (Mac Ginty, Pogodda, and Richmond, 2021, p. 6).

Methodology of the Study

The first author conducted semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews with 79 male and female refugees as part of a larger study between November 2015 and June 2016 in Gaziantep, Turkey, that explored how urban Syrian refugees experienced the war and refugee positionality. Participant selection included purposive sampling based on gender, ethnicity and religion/belief/ideology, class, occupation, and age (the youngest respondent was 18 and the oldest was 78 years of age). The majority of study participants identified as Sunni Muslim Arabs, and the remaining as Turkmen, Kurdish, and one Palestinian who grew up in Syria. Ten people did not identify with any religion. Most participants were from Aleppo, and the remaining 30 were from various places such as Damascus, Idlib, Raqqa, Baniyas, Hama, Homs, Deir Ez Zor, and Latakia. While there are some Alawite, Êzîdî, and Christian Syrians residing in

Turkey, their minority positioning makes them vulnerable as Turkey's socio-political context creates tensions between the dominant and minority populations. Therefore, they were not accessible for interviews during the fieldwork process. The study reflects the majority representation of Syrians in Gaziantep and not all segments of social groups emanating from Syria that reside in Turkey. Around 30 respondents were war widows, homemakers, urban lower-class refugees, or professionals who could not actively find a job that led them to struggle financially, albeit at different levels. The remaining interviewees were NGO workers focusing on humanitarian aid to Syria and/or college students and some professionals who were also working in Turkey, such as teachers, translators, and businesspeople. There were secular as well as religious affiliated participants. Given their refugee positionality, many of the participants were against the Assad regime. Still, two participants were openly supportive of the regime. One was not as opposed to the regime as the remaining participants in this study, and few of the interviewees implicitly stated that they favored the regime. The majority actively participated in demonstrations before the armed struggle started in Syria. While some were against armed struggle, others supported the armed groups. The interviews were held in English, others in Turkish, and some in Arabic. The participants determined their preference for which language they would use during the interview. If they preferred to talk in Arabic, an interpreter was present for the English translation.

The time frame of the study is limited to when the SIG was in Gaziantep and does not reflect views after the SIG moved to Northern Syria. Similarly, the only group of people that are analyzed in this study are Syrians who left Syria and were living in Gaziantep-Turkey. Hence, the study has clear borders in terms of time, space, and people, meaning that the analysis is intended to capture experiences,

perceptions and understandings of Syrian people who were positioned as refugees at a time when the SIG was located in Gaziantep. Interviewing people from this period sheds light on how the early development of the SIG was received by Syrian refugee community who had ties to the community within Syria. While it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate how people perceive the SIG today, it is helpful for other researchers to find connections between the SIG's past and today from the experiences of Syrian refugees that were in the same geographic space that the SIG operated in. In other words, Syrian refugees and the SIG were outside of Syria, and their perceptions of the SIG in its initiation would bring about an alternative analysis for researchers to contextualize contemporary developments.

As this is a qualitative study, the aim is not to generalize and reduce refugee views to a singular representation. Rather it is to offer an understanding of multiple perceptions of Syrian refugees about potential alternatives to the existing Assad regime in Syria. While each refugee brings an individual viewpoint, they are also members of different groups and interact with others in their social context. This means while their views are unique, they are also reflections of the views formed in their interaction with different social groups. The methodological lens we highlight is to give importance to people's standpoint, experiences, and perceptions (Harding, 2004; Malkki, 1995). We aim to show the realities of people when they position themselves vis-à-vis the LCs and the SIG.

As researchers, our position, rather than agreeing or disagreeing with the participants' views, is to compare their views, capture their perceptions about LCs and the SIG, and analyze why and how the legitimacy of these entities is accepted or rejected. After a brief overview of LCs and the SIG the following section presents the voices and stories of some of our interviewees with this departure point in mind.

Unless otherwise stated, the participants' narratives below were all against the Assad regime as they had participated in or supported demonstrations before the war. We aspired to bring as many voices as possible into the research. To that end, we aimed to include different identities based on class, age, gender, occupation, religion, ethnic identity, and political views. We also aspired to bring similarities and differences in the interviewee's experiences and perceptions in order to be able to compare and contrast their stories. If the views and backgrounds were similar, then we selected the viewpoint with the most comprehensive explanation within the analysis categories below, namely views about naming the SIG as government, perceptions about outside positionality and issues of representation. Pseudonyms are used to protect their identities.

The Origins, Development, Structure and Functions of Opposition Governance: LCs and the SIG

Local Councils (LCs)

In 2011, Syrian protestors organized and mobilized by forming Local Coordination Committees (Lijan al-Tansiq al-Mahalliyya) (LCCs) (Abboud, 2016, 12). These LCCs were formed by young activists in neighborhoods; some were small, local, and community level, and others assumed overall coordinating roles at the national level (Brønd, 2016). They were involved in media work (Khoury, 2013). Still, their role was broader than that as they worked in areas of human rights advocacy and intellectual production prior to the revolution (Brønd, 2016). By 2012, 400 LCCs were on the ground (Khoury, 2013, p. 3). These LCCs started as nonhierarchical and decentralized organizations that eventually formed a more extensive cooperative network to connect the broader national movement, yet their work mostly continued to focus on specific villages, towns, or city

neighborhoods (Abboud, 2016, p. 12; Khoury, 2013; Sottimano, 2022). The LCCs' role shifted as the state became absent in these venues. They became Local Councils (LCs) local governing bodies coordinating civilian and armed groups (Abboud, 2016, p. 12; Khalaf, 2015, p. 46). Local civilians that had little experience in LCC work formed many LCs. Amongst the initial leaders, some individuals had more entrepreneurial capabilities in terms of leadership capacity. When the regime targeted them for detention and assassination, or they ended up fleeing the country, it resulted in the weakening of the LCs (Khalaf, 2015, p. 46). Due to the ongoing civil war situation, the LCs had no choice but to cooperate with the armed opposition, which resulted in their being overpowered by these political-military groups (Khoury, 2013) which mostly catered to the interests and politics of external international interveners (Khalaf, 2015, p. 47). When international donors funded LC projects, the projects reflected the donors' interests and preferences more than the community's needs and often prioritized project completion rather than outreach and impact (Khalaf, 2015, p. 53; Mac Ginty, 2011).[7] Lived experiences and realities in Syria are developing differently than the liberal international mandates expected (Abboud, 2021a).

Moreover, LCs' roles overlapped with some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), resulting in situations where the relationship was sometimes cooperative and at other times competitive. International aid regimes assisting local communities through elite-to-elite interaction limited local ownership of the process (Byrne and Thiessen, 2020; Creary and Byrne, 2014). Additionally, LCs did not have much of a role in influencing judicial institutions or security services (Hajjar et al., 2017, p. 13) and lacked budgetary resources which hindered their capacity for local governance (Hajjar et al., 2017, p. 14). Such circumstances hin-

dered the creation of transparent and accountable institutional structures for LCs. Still, 'their local nature and revolutionary history during the uprising ensured [that] they are widely embraced by local communities and enjoyed high legitimacy' (Khalaf, 2015, p. 46). LCs reflected Syrians' desire to create an alternative governance to Assad's rigid top-down government (Brownlee, 2015).

The Syrian Interim Government (SIG)

The Syrian National Council (the Majlis) was established in 2011 by several political groups presenting it as 'the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people.' Later in November 2012, they agreed to form the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (Syrian National Coalition-SNC, the *I'tilaf*) (Rangwala, 2015). LCs from 14 Syrian provinces joined together to organize humanitarian aid and state services such as reopening schools, overcoming food shortages, and providing medical care (Khoury, 2013). The coalition was backed by Western[8] and Arab states like the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Qatar which were engaged in power struggles that were reflected in further fractioning within the opposition (Oweis, 2014).[9] While the Coalition's best-organized faction, the Muslim Brotherhood, held the balance between Qatari and Saudi influence, political struggles among the various factions became more important than providing basic services to people who lived outside Assad's governmental control (Oweis, 2014). The Coalition derived its power from international funds and was accountable to its funders (Khalaf, 2015, p. 51). This resulted in limited local legitimacy for the Coalition as it was perceived to be a tool of outside powers' determination to dominate the opposition (Khalaf, 2015, p. 51).

The Syrian National Coalition established the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) in November 2013 based in Ga-

ziantep-Turkey (today it operates within Syria). As early as 2013 the discussions circled around building an interim government that was within Syria that provided authority to local structures where thousands of paid civil servant positions were to be created within the rebel-held areas. However, the SIG only moved to Syria after 2017 (Baczko, Dorronsoro and Quesnay, 2013). The SIG was 'intended to serve as a central authority with legal and regulatory authority over [LCs]' yet its regulations and provisions couldn't be applied by local leaderships consistently; on the contrary, they had little awareness of these provisions (Hajjar et al., 2017, p. 12). As the data also highlights, the refugees perceived LCs and the SIG as two separate and disconnected entities. It is reported that the externally based Syrian Coalition, had almost non-existent relations and cooperation with the LCs and the SIG was disconnected from local people and local events (Hajjar et al., 2017, p. 22), 'including having little influence on the rebels [FSA-Free Syrian Army] on the ground' (Oweis, 2014, p. 4). Even in the areas under the SIG's control, marriage, birth, property, and inheritance documentation weren't recognized internationally, in contrast with the documents issued by Assad's government (Sosnowski and Hamadeh, 2021, p. 3).

Thus, the SIG's legitimacy was questionable not only by the Syrians both inside and outside of Syria, but it also was not recognized even by external actors that supposedly backed it. For example, a United States (U.S.) State Department official in a briefing stated that the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) was the 'legitimate representative of the Syrian people', yet in the same briefing she affirmed that the U.S. doesn't 'recognize it as the Syrian Government' (U.S. State Department, 2013 in Rangwala 2015, p. 216). In another briefing, an appointee of the SNC was referred to as an 'interim' leader (U.S. State Department, 2013 in Rangwala, 2015, p. 216). In addition, the United Kingdom (U.K.) and

France 'referred to the SNC as 'the sole legitimate representative of Syrian people' and invited it to appoint diplomats… Embassies however were not handed over to SNC representatives other than in Qatar, diplomats representing the Assad government in international organizations were not replaced other than at the Arab League, and state funds were not transferred to the opposition coalition' (Rangwala, 2015, p. 219). What is important to note is that while "representation" and "government" were used by Western international actors at the birth of the SIG, there was no actual change in practice to provide any official recognition that would endow the SIG with any tangible state powers.

Data Analysis

We will first present the overall findings and then bring detailed voices from the field to show how people approached the SIG and LCs in the sub-sections below. Three men worked in the SIG who argued for the usefulness and importance of the SIG and the projects they ran inside Syria. They argued that at the time of the interviews, there was no money left to pay the people who worked in the SIG, and they were doing all the work voluntarily. One woman had experiences of working in the SIG previously, bringing a gender perspective to the administrative structure. She argued that gender rather than competence was prioritized in terms of the selection of people for jobs in the SIG. Several people, including three men who worked in LCs before they were forced to leave Syria for security reasons, compared the LCs to the SIG and pointed out the usefulness of the former. Approximately 30 people had strong negative views about the SIG. These negative views presented below varied. One Assad supporter refused the existence of the SIG and argued that even the SIG members did not recognize this entity as a government. The remaining participants de-

clined to talk about it, with statements like "I don't know", "I don't want to know", and "I don't care".

Many of the 79 study participants contended that the voices that mattered most were those who chose to stay 'inside' Syria despite the challenges and risks to their security. Hence, one of the first issues to emerge from the field research was a common view that the SIG was 'talking from outside'. Many didn't like a group of people taking money from external actors and speaking for insiders while residing outside Syria. They were also critical that while calling itself "government", the SIG had no direct relations with Syrian people in Gaziantep. The other key point was that the SIG was perceived to be very similar to the Assad regime in terms of corruption and favoritism, indicating that they saw no real difference in their approach to the people. They considered this as being against the spirit of the revolutionary uprising. Another key point to emerge from the data was that the SIG didn't represent all Syrians as they weren't elected nor supported by Syrians. In effect, they only represented the donors that funded them.

Harm of naming SIG a 'government'

Majed (male, 30-year-old, NGO employee from Idlib, with a strong Sunni Arab identity) was blunt about the SIG as he noted that 'It is a government without a land'.[10] Similarly, Haya, (female, 23-year-old from Damascus, student, with a strong Sunni Arab identity)[11] learned that the SIG only provided 'diploma equivalence' and had no other recognized official documentation in other areas of life. She stated, 'Here in Gaziantep, we have ministries for everything: education, culture, finance. It is like a country but without people and land and no jobs because they do not do anything'. In contrast, Ziad (male, 28-year-old, Turkmen, NGO em-

ployee from Aleppo, strongly opposed to Western influence in the region) argued that:

> This Interim Government was not strong with its people, some few people, but mostly it was like Assad's people. And no other governments wanted it to work. There was no support, and they just made a few projects to distribute to their members, and now the money is dried [up], and it is over.[12]

Nawar (male, 29-year-old from Damascus, NGO employee, a liberal Arab-Sunni, identified as a deist and against any type of dictatorship) argued that people joined the uprising to create a socially just Syria. However, the SIG, according to him, sent a message that such a change wasn't going to materialize:

> We know that Assad's regime is a dictatorship, and this is the main problem in the Syrian war. To make it worse, the opposition, the Interim Government, hosted here in Gaziantep by the Turkish government, is not better than the regime. They follow the same old concept of the regime; we even call them the new Ba'th Party because they have the same ideology, and they just changed the brand, and they came up with a new name and a new flag, and new characters and apply the same thing.[13]

When Nawar talked about the regime and the SIG having the same ideology, he mostly focused on the authoritarian

outlook and restrictive practices towards different identities and political views. Socially located quite differently was Amez (22-year-old NGO employee, originally from Afrin, grew up in Aleppo, identifies with no religion, and is a non-believer), who is a politically conscious Kurdish man. Nevertheless, in addition to being firmly against the regime, what connected Nawar and Amez was that they were both aware that there are many different ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural segments in Syria, and they both felt that they should all be represented in the efforts to create an alternative government. In its current form, Amez didn't see any 'government' potential in the SIG's efforts to offer a viable alternative to Assad's regime. Amez was vehemently opposed to the usage of 'government' in terms of the question of representation. He explained it in the following way:

> They are politically driven by [the] Muslim Brotherhood. When they call it government, it is like, [the] majority of them is [the] Muslim Brotherhood representatives, money is flowing around everywhere, corruption is everywhere, whenever a person from a certain state takes control, all the family and all the close circle gets the high, senior positions. That is [a] very similar model, it is worse than the current regime… Islamist movements such as [the] Muslim Brotherhood which is the main actor support this coalition. I would not like to see that Syria is run just by these people.[14]

From the formation of the SNC, the Muslim Brotherhood had considerable weight in the organization, which continued on into the SIG but not without competition from other

Islamic factions and liberal groups that wanted to influence its development (Sottimano, 2022, p.156). Still, many considered the SIG in Gaziantep to be under the heavy influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. Amez and Nawar's views that positioned the SIG as 'worse than' the regime was common to many research participants and should be carefully analyzed. Like many, Amez and Nawar believed in the necessity of having a strong alternative emerge from the opposition. They thought that the alternative created to the regime needed to be different, yet in many ways, the SIG followed a similar approach. When an alternative 'government' is identified as worse than the existing regime, it contributes to the endurance of the current government.

Aykut hailed from a different background, age, and experience (40-year-old Turkmen, works in an NGO, from Aleppo, Sunni Muslim), and he also questioned the naming of 'government' just like Amez did. His view of the Interim Government was, 'Unsuccessful. Zero. Completely zero. I think states are using it as a political card.' He also believed that many groups calling themselves government, such as ISIS, made this naming meaningless. He opined that: 'The setting of the SIG from the outset was unfitting for the image of government'.[15] Rashid (male, 33-year-old from Latakia, Sunni Muslim, Arab, NGO employee) summarized why such a naming of a government entity is more harmful than good:

> Any government should have its own resources. It is not getting enough support. Any government should have the basic and most important thing, which is authority. The SIG has no authority, so we cannot consider it a government.[16]

Nawar's explanation below also confirms Rashid's point of view and indicates that the existence of the Interim Government provided legitimacy for the existence of the Assad government rather than weakening it:

> [The SIG's] agriculture section is registered as an NGO to be able to work but not as a government. All the international effort to build [an] Interim Government and all the money is wasted. Even if they were to support some people, they should not call them government. There is no name anymore, no legitimacy. Even after five years, they are not even allowed to issue a passport; this is one of the simplest things.
>
> What should be on the table is a strategy for defeating the dictatorship to rebuild Syria, but they don't have such a thing…. This is not a government; this is a joke, and we are seeing the result of it. At least [the] Assad regime has a strategy. Yes, they still act as a gang but under the brand of government.

Nawar's words bring an important departure point forward in analyzing the implication of giving a name like government to an entity like SIG, the SIG that doesn't have a suitable institutional structure and powers that are intrinsic to governments. The respondents articulated that the SIG didn't represent the interests of either internal or external Syrians as it lacked legitimacy in their eyes to be able to speak on their behalf. For example, Nawar's words signal that if the opposition needed to bring about change by naming itself as a 'government' when forming such an entity

they had to have a clear strategy to develop a political vision that included and represented all Syrians. Many respondents shared the view that there was an insufficient common political vision to create an alternative to the existing regime. Instead, many stressed that rather than a fundamental political change, the opposition aimed to replace the groups in power. Studies also point out that the mission given to the SIG from its beginning was not to merge with the revolutionary forces to build a common voice and political strategy but to supervise them, making them peripheral bodies that were subordinated to the SIG ministries (Sottimano, 2022, pp. 147-149).

Talking from outside

'Insiders' and 'outsiders' were important criteria for many refugees that evaluated the SIG. For example, Nour (female, 32-year-old from Aleppo, Sunni Muslim, Arab,) averred that people living inside Syria were 'real' in claiming the struggle. Nour mentioned that her father was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood but did not specify whether she was affiliated with it or not. Her focus was on inside/outside positionality. She compared people who lived there and people who were outside and active through social media, calling the latter 'Pokémon'. Nour reported on this issue as follows:

> The people who started the revolution are mixed with the people who entered the revolution to harm the revolution. The people who are the real opposition are those inside Syria, not outside Syria.[17]

Lina (female, 38-year-old from Aleppo, Turkmen, Sunni Muslim, teacher) also discussed the proximity of people, highlighting that only those living inside Syria have the le-

gitimacy to speak for the revolution. Lina, while identifying as a Turkmen, was an Arabic speaker only and learned a bit of Turkish only after arriving in Turkey. Her family was strongly connected to the regime, and she was very critical of the opposition. She was distant from the SIG and argued that it wasn't to be trusted:

> If they [Interim Government] were inside Syria, I would change my words, but because they are here, working from here, telling the people stories from outside about the home, I do not trust them….We sometimes see on TV that school representatives inside Syria come together in meetings, and you can see that they are sitting in a house with nothing, just putting some blankets on windows to cover everything; you can believe those people. I really do not see any difference between the regime and the Interim Government.[18]

Naser was a 20-year-old college student from Damascus, identified as a Sunni Muslim, first as a 'Syrian' and then as an Arab. He had a close relative working within the SIG's ranks who also talked about 'insider-outsider' positionality:

> I do not see anything good they do. They did nothing, they take money…. If they enter Syria and work as a government, maybe it would work, but now it is not working.[19]

At the time of the interview, Nazem (male, 28-year-old, Sunni Muslim, Arab from Aleppo), who traveled to Syria as

a humanitarian aid worker, believed that the Interim Government was close to collapse as its funding became scarce and provided two reasons for the collapse, 'It is far away from what people need, and [the] international community did not recognize it'. [20] In contrast, Nawar calls the Interim Government a 'loser'. He explains his viewpoint as follows:

> They present an image totally out of reality on the ground. They try to control everything as provided by international donors. There is a huge gap between the Interim Government in Turkey and [people on] the ground in Syria.[21]

Bilal (male, 26-year-old, refused the word "Turkmen" and called himself a Turk, a Sunni Muslim from Aleppo) also had a few choice words for the SIG. He argued that it had no connection to either people in Syria or Syrians living in Gaziantep claiming that many Syrians in Gaziantep didn't even know the location of their building. He reported on this issue in the following manner:

> It would be better if it did not exist. They have no use, no importance. Supposedly they represent the opposition, but they have no relation[ship] to the opposition inside Syria. They have no connections. They are irrelevant, discounted. They have just a few of the opposition groups that they communicate [with]. They are both disconnected from people and the opposition groups. It does not matter whether they exist or not.[22]

The perception that merit-based selection was not followed,

and relationships rather than qualifications counted more was an issue that resonated a lot as similar to the Syrian regime's conduct. Money allocated to the SIG was perceived to benefit a certain number of people, which greatly bothered the study participants such as Noury. Naser stressed that monetary support for the SIG came from Qatar. Qatar opened the SIG's first embassy in Doha (Anadolu Ajansi, 2013) and provided relief money to Syrians living in Turkey. It was influential in the elections of the SIG prime minister in its initial phase (Khalaf and Fielding-Smith, 2013; Reliefweb, 2021). Naser argued that the aid didn't do anything useful for the refugees or people living inside Syria.

Husam, a 31-year-old Palestinian-Syrian who grew up in Aleppo, didn't even want to consider the SIG as 'legal.' This is what he had to say on the issue:

> I could not differentiate them from the regime because they were thinking of themselves…. If they were doing good things, they would create change, but they did not. All they did was collect money.[23]

The impression that the SIG members worked for themselves and not for Syrians was prominent among the refugees, and the SIG's outsider position fueled this viewpoint. How people perceive an entity, and the use of aid are important to understand the way they evaluate its legitimacy as a viable alternative. This shared perception creates a community of people who do not support what was to be an alternative even though they wanted a strong alternative to the Assad regime. These interviews from people who come from different backgrounds show that there was an effective discourse in terms of questioning the SIG.

The interviewees also noted the weaknesses of LCs in their stories; however, they viewed them in a more positive light because they were working from inside Syria directly with people. For example, Mayar, who is a 40-year-old man from Damascus who worked as head of an LC from 2013 to 2015, stated that depending on the area, some LCs had more positive results compared to others. However, LCs remained weak due to financial limitations and the lack of training and experience of the staff. However, he added that 'after the Ba'th and Assad dictatorship, [the] Councils were a positive change as they were connected to the Syrian [grassroots]'.[24] Similarly, Fahed, who is a 35-year-old man from Aleppo and currently works at an NGO in Gaziantep, had a firsthand experience of LCs in 2013, as he created an LC and served two years in a leadership position until he was not re-elected. At the time of the interview, Fahed worked in an education NGO for Syrians in Gaziantep and still carried the trauma of working under barrel bombs in Syria. He continuously referred to the challenges of working in such conditions. He also argued that the LCs couldn't involve all people who lived in the free areas so that the Council elections were only partially democratic. Due to security reasons, he claimed that elections couldn't take place in the open. Still, over time, more and more people became involved and expressed their opinions freely. Aside from living in an active war zone where bombing was a constant threat, Fahed argued that the key challenge for the LCs was accessing financial resources. He perceived the LC he worked for to be an administrative unit (rather than a political party) that provided services such as water and electricity to refugees. Yet, he noted that a future political body was unthinkable without LC administrative bodies.[25] The SIG aimed to be the authority that controlled the LCs. However, at the time of this fieldwork, as it was not within Syria,

the SIG was considerably disconnected from the LCs. From people who had first-hand experience in LCs to soldiers and humanitarian workers who traveled to Syria, participants' accounts show that they did not consider the SIG as an overarching governance body. The following section on issues of representation continues to illustrate this point.

Not representing Syrians

Syrian refugees residing in Gaziantep wanted a strong opposition. Many believed that the opposition's strength should come from representation, which they didn't believe was occurring. For example, Farah (a 27-year-old woman from Damascus, who comes from a conservative family, removed her hijab in Turkey, and identifies as an atheist) was an NGO worker. She reported on the issue as follows:

> We need a strong alternative to Assad, which we do not have. I mean, we have this shitty government here, and they don't represent anyone; they represent their shoes. I don't know who they represent. They are not elected. They are doing nothing. They are depending on donors just like any small group. And now they are in a shitty situation in that they don't have any money anymore, and they are in no position to represent the real values of the revolution. And each one of them has their interests and their agendas, which is the agenda of the donors. The supporters, the Gulf [states], the French. For me, they are not a gov-

> ernment.[26]

Similarly, scholarly studies also assessed that the SIG's lack of credibility and its inability to create an effective governing system was caused by the international actors' power struggle over the SIG, which resulted in its marginalization as an exiled opposition from the Syrian revolution on the ground (Sottimano 2022, p.147).

An important point here is not just the fact that the legitimacy issue is important, especially when an entity is named a 'government', but there is a need for it to represent 'the values of the revolution'. While the SIG claimed that it was working with Internally Displaced People (IDPs), Fatima (female, 29-year-old from Aleppo, identifies as Arab and a leftist, and didn't believe in any religion even though she grew up in a conservative family) articulated that she hadn't seen the SIG reaching out to IDPs on the ground.[27] She was employed by a humanitarian NGO that worked with IDPs, and she sometimes went to Syria via her work.

In comparison, an FSA commander, Tawfik (male, 50-year-old from Aleppo, identified as a Sunni Muslim and stressed his Syrian identity), who was engaged in many battles during the uprising and went in and out of Syria continuously, connected his views about the SIG to his evaluations of many problems the Free Syrian Army (FSA) faced. Aside from financial and weapons limitations, he identified the problem as:

> The government here has no institution or political ruling. It has no existence, which has a lot of negative effects on FSA…. I have personal relations with them [the Interim Government]. However, they are in one valley, and the revolu-

> tion is in another valley. They [the SIG] are separated from the reality.[28]

Tawfik was careful not to tarnish his view of the SIG, yet he pointed out that the FSA was directly facing realities on the ground, which was different than how he positioned the SIG as an outside entity. Overall, he was concerned about the lack of a strong institutional structure to build a government.

Refugees evaluated the SIG's connectedness to IDPs in Syria and to themselves due to their proximity to the Interim Government. When people hear the word 'government', particularly from SIG, the SIG that claims to be replacing the Assad regime, they imagine an entity that would be concerned for their needs. Gaziantep's refugees' perspective illustrates how the SIG was created, which made it hard for the people to recognize it as a 'government'. Many of the study participants didn't like the SIG because they didn't see that it helped Gaziantep's refugees who were in need. Ayman (24-year-old male college student, Arab Sunni Muslim from Idlib), for example, talked about many people he observed who had unmet basic needs, such as urban lower-class refugees, that the SIG showed no interest in meeting.[29]

A SIG representative, Bassam (age 50, from Damascus, Sunni Muslim, Arab), on the one hand, provided a different account regarding IDPs, arguing that the SIG played an important role for IDPs. On the other hand, he confirmed the views of Ayman and many others' critical view of the SIG's relations with refugees outside Syria. He confirmed that the SIG was also disconnected from them because Syrian refugees fell outside of its jurisdiction as the sovereign party was the host government:

> The Syrian Interim Government caters to IDPs, not refugees. We are tracking and

> trying to help estimate the ever-changing dynamics on the ground and their effect on IDPs. Refugees are living in other countries, and we do not have [a] political or legal right to help them. But we always keep trying to advocate the situation of refugees…
>
> Our strategy is to convince the international community that if we help IDPs to remain in Syria, we will reduce the number of refugees that are crossing the borders. Our role is really to try to help those in Syria. Outside of Syria, we have less [role to play]. We cannot do much except in Lebanon, where the state of Lebanon is not doing anything for Syrian refugees, and we try to help with their education and other things we can provide.[30]

While on the one hand, Bassam claims that the SIG's 'legal and political' rights prevent it from being involved in providing for refugee needs, he claimed that Lebanon is an exception to this limitation. Thus, the SIG was creating a doubtful picture about its jurisdiction. It was positioning itself as the government of the people living inside Syria, albeit an outside government, and it was detached from the needs of refugees that were spatially close to it in Turkey while involved with refugee issues that were outside of its reach in Lebanon.[31]

As the aforementioned stories demonstrate, a political entity that claims to represent everyone is central to whether it will be accepted as legitimate by the people. In contrast to the SIG, therefore, LCs, despite their shortcomings, were

perceived by many respondents to be more legitimate. For example, Nazem argued that LCs were a good first step in the creation of democratic governance and a beginning in developing an understanding about citizenship rights and in building a cooperative social system. Farah also saw LCs' potential if they could be run as civilian actors without affiliation to armed groups or any Islamic group. 'Unlike the detached, outside [the] Interim Government', she believed that 'unifying the LCs could create an alternative governing body'. Yet she was not optimistic about LCs finding a fertile ground to grow. She had this to say on the issue:

> We have these Local Councils, which represent a good percentage of people, and they are not Islamists. Until now, they hold the values of the revolution. I think they are an alternative, but I don't think the government here [the SIG] or the U.S. or any other actor would allow this body to grow. It is unrealistic. This is the alternative to Assad, but until now, they have no capacity. They don't have [a] methodology; they don't have a clear vision. If they need protection, they have to adopt armed groups' values, which are mostly Islamists.[32]

The civilian uprising and desire for civilian local authority resulted in the creation of about 800 local structures by 2016, and later, as the fighting continued, these structures declined to less than 400, and the local bodies gradually became more militarized (Berti, 2020, p. 6). Mayar also touched upon the tension between civilian Councils and armed groups, claiming that while in some areas they worked in harmony, in others, there were conflicts:

> There was a conflict between the military groups and NGOs, LCs, and the government. On the ground, whoever had the biggest financial base held hegemony. In my opinion, they are just achieving or giving 30% of the [resources to meet the] needs of the people, and it is a very optimistic percentage, and I hope in the new round, it will be better.[33]

Studies show that the level of harmony between armed groups and civilians depended on whether they were from the same locality (Sottimato, 2022). For example, in Idlib, FSA units joined civilian representatives in forming administrative bodies, whereas in Aleppo, armed factions from outside the region replaced the LCs with a Sharia committee (Sottimato, 2022, p.143).

Camil (35-year-old male, Sunni Muslim, Arab, worked in the humanitarian sector) before coming to Turkey, moved from Aleppo city to rural areas to work with IDPs. Once these areas were freed from the regime, he formed an LC with his friends. He was conscious of how the challenging context of war shaped people's views of LCs. He observed that while there was a small number of people who strongly supported their work (he estimated 15 percent of people he encountered), there was a similar number of people who opposed it. Camil believed that most people held a 'wait and see' attitude.

> As they have been living under 40 years of oppression and they believed that [the] regime would eventually overtake and regain power, they did not want to be perceived as opposition. Still, once

> they were provided with their basic needs, they were more open to the services of LCs.[34]

The fear of retribution's impact on people's relations with the SIG has been confirmed as the Assad government perceives any documentation issued by the SIG as evidence of treachery, which results in retribution (Lund, 2020 in Sosnowski and Hamadeh, 2021). Also, in later years, local reconciliation agreements referred as "surrender agreements" worked for the benefit of the Syrian government due to asymmetric negotiations between the dominant army and the local defense force (Bell and Wise, 2022). Also, Syrian government used the "land and property rights system… [to] permanently prevailing over insurgency and its civilian constituencies (Unruh, 2016, p. 453).

Camil was sad as he explained why he couldn't continue the work, and his story confirms other respondents' views about the dominance of armed groups in the civil war. He reported on the issue in the following way:

> We had a vision for that region; we had development projects. We administered all parts of that region, but eventually, unfortunately, ISIS took over the place where we were working, and they wanted us dead. They wanted our heads, so I was forced to leave and come to Turkey.

Nawar shared Mayar and Camil's experiences and observations about LCs. He noted that the LCs had a strained relationship with the various armed groups that sought to delegitimize and control LCs. While some areas had a practice where armed groups had agreements with local coun-

cils to spare villages from fighting (Bell and Wise, 2022), in many places, armed groups had dominance:

> The LCs are the elected body in the country. Each area also has [a] military group, and military groups always have power [to] influence the LC in the area. So simply, the LC is controlled by an armed group while it should be the other way [around]. Armed groups can delete or re-elect or do whatever they want [to] in the LC in their region.
>
> [The] military always wins in such conflict… They try to reduce the legitimacy of the LC in the eyes of citizens. I would say this is a warlord issue…. Local Councils could have been a model for democratic governance, but they are not well implemented or effective on the ground. There is something wrong in the relationship between LCs and the armed groups, and it should be solved. Solving this issue would open [a] democratic way, but there is no sign of this [happening].

Consequently, people's views of the SIG and LCs diverged. Regarding the SIG, they questioned its power, resources, and representation from outside while the LCs were viewed as having war conditions challenges and intricate relations with armed forces.

Conclusion

This paper explored Gaziantep-based Syrian refugees' perspectives on the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) and Local Councils (LC). While the SIG was formed as an outside government-in-waiting, LCs were actively working inside Syria providing for people's needs. Findings indicate that the 'inside' and 'outside' position bears importance in terms of the

SIG and LCs' legitimacy. In addition, labeling an oppositional entity as a 'government' without having the necessary characteristics of a government resulted in people's lack of conviction of the SIG's representation power, which in the long run benefited the Assad government in solidifying its position. The Syrian opposition had LCs that were like rhizomes that came to life within the community to meet their needs, while, the SIG was named a government with a top-down approach and the support of international donors. The field results of this study indicate that the top-down formulation of an outside government did not bring acceptance to it, which resulted in the governing mentality staying with the existing regime as it continued to have the power to issue official documents.

What can be learned from Syria's two different governance experiences for the larger context of conflict and post-conflict societies? First, what people experience matters. Syrian people, both inside and outside of Syria, cannot simply be treated as receiving governance structures from outside as a top-down imposition. The uprising was a call for inclusivity, and refugees were concerned about representation. Even if external actors are involved, there is a demand for community-based governance that has a direct connection to the people, which is why they were more receptive to the LCs than a SIG that was positioned outside of Syria. Second, rhizome is an enriching concept that refers to the multiplicity of local governance, created and run by the people for the people. Regardless of the involvement of external support, local representation flourished in the form of LCs. Recognition and support of oppositional local governance bodies by external actors would strengthen the legitimacy of these bodies in the eyes of local communities. Hence, funds from Arab and Western states need to strengthen civilian governance bodies that provide daily needs rather than financing armed groups. Also, any entity

that was to be labeled as "government" needed to emerge from the inside, not as an entity that was formed as an outside-in actor.

The article discusses whether external actors can in fact create a government by calling an entity a government. Through the refugee respondents' perceptions, the article explains that without strong institutional structures that can issue recognized documentation (such as birth/death certificates, property ownership, issuing passports), simply calling it a government would not, in fact, make people perceive it to be a government.

The article also captures the refugee respondent's perceptions from the time that the SIG was formed outside of the Syrian border inside Turkey, where refugees themselves were located (Gaziantep). While the SIG moved into Syria in later years, the SIG's starting point as an "outside" entity is important, for it would give some clues about how it is perceived and approached by Syrians today. In addition, Turkey's role in Northern Syria today needs also to be assessed in the context of the SIG's beginning as an outside entity with the support of multiple international actors. How do differently located Syrians, within Syria or refugees outside of Syria, perceive the SIG today? It is important to integrate these perceptions to be better able to analyze people's contemporary understandings of the SIG. While this issue is beyond the scope of this article, it provides a call for new studies that will enrich our understanding about the SIG's positionality in Syria and its relations with external powers. Past events and previously formed opinions shape the lens through which people see the present moment. This research could provide us with a path to follow to better understand the development of Syrian refugees' views as well as including a comparative understanding of their perceptions in terms of evaluating an "outside" or "inside" entity in a protracted civil war con-

text.

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[3]Also see (Imady and Hinnebusch, 2018, p. 331). It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the interests of different external powers in Syrian conflict. For the multiple proxy wars and international rivalry see (Phillips and Valbjørn, 2018; Phillips, 2016). For the dynamics behind Iran-Syria alliance see (Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, 2002). For the geo-economic role of Iran and Russia on Syria, see (Itani, 2019); for the role of Iran, Syria and Turkey in the Astana Process see (Abboud, 2021b); for encouragement and support given to Syrian opposition see (Reilly, 2021); for regional and international factors analyzing development in other countries such as Iran, Russia and China along with the U.S. influence on regional politics see (Aboultaif, 2016); and for conceptual weaponization and reconstruction of Syria in connection to American security in the Middle East see (Imady, 2019).

[4] From a different reading Hamdan (2021) uses "on the Inside" analytical category in his exploration of Syrian refugee geopolitical agency.

[5] For example, unilateral external actors got involved in the negotiation and outcome of local agreements that served more on their interest than the local agenda (Turkmani, 2022). For a detailed analysis on local agreements see (Kaldor, Theros, and Turkmani, 2022).

[6] See Hamdan (2021) as he takes a different angle by connecting his discussion of rhizomatic to Michel Foucault's concept of apparatus (*dispositif*).

[7] Unruh (2022) brings a critical approach to Western policy from a different angle, in terms of sanctions on Syria's agricultural reconstruction which negatively impacts refugee returns, livelihood recovery and good security.
[8] "Friends of Syria Group" included countries such as the US, UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark (Hamdan, 2021, p. 3).
[9] For Turkey's role and view of the Interim Government, see (Al-Hilu, 2021) and for the benefits accrued by Western countries see (Bashur 2021).
[10] Interview with Majed, Gaziantep, February 2, 2016.
[11] Interview with Haya, Gaziantep, May 20, 2016
[12] Interview with Ziyad, Gaziantep, April 13, 2016
[13] Interview with Nawar, Gaziantep, May 18, 2016
[14] Interview with Amez, Gaziantep, December 9, 2015
[15] Interview with Aykut, Gaziantep, December 15, 2015
[16] Interview with Rashid, Gaziantep, February 2, 2016
[17] Interview with Nour, Gaziantep, November 15, 2015
[18] Interview with Lina, Gaziantep, December 17, 2015
[19] Interview, Naser, Gaziantep, December 15, 2015
[20] Interview with Nazem, Gaziantep, May 13, 2016
[21] Interview with Nawar, Gaziantep, May 18, 2016
[22] Interview with Bilal, Gaziantep, December 15, 2015
[23] Interview with Husam, Gaziantep, June 13, 2016
[24] Interview with Mayar, Gaziantep, May 29, 2016
[25] Interview with Fahed, Gaziantep, May 11, 2016
[26] Interview with Farah, Gaziantep, January 15, 2016
[27] Interview with Fatima, Gaziantep, January 16, 2015, and a follow-up on February 7, 2016
[28] Interview with Tawfik, Gaziantep, February 3, 2016
[29] Interview with Ayman, Gaziantep, February 1, 2016
[30] Interview with Bassam, Gaziantep, February 2, 2016
[31] For conditions of refugees in Lebanon see (Favier, 2016)
[32] Interview with Farah, Gaziantep, January 15, 2016
[33] Interview with Mayar, Gaziantep, May 29, 2016

[34] Interview with Cemil, Gaziantep, April 15, 2016

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