



لعدالة تحويلية بقيادة نسائية
For women-led transformative
justice

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2025 marked a pivotal year for Huquqyat, as it became the organisation's first full year operating in a post-Assad context and amid an unfolding transitional justice process in Syria. While this shift opened new opportunities for accountability and legal reform, it also required adaptive, survivor-centered approaches capable of responding to rapidly evolving political and legal dynamics.

The year began with operational challenges, including a temporary U.S. foreign assistance funding freeze that disrupted programming. In response, Huquqyat undertook an internal restructuring to preserve core functions and essential services, while refining its focus on thematic expertise in transitional justice.

Following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, Huquqyat expanded its engagement both inside Syria and internationally. Members played a central role in field-based documentation, advocacy, and capacity-building, including training over 150 Syrian lawyers and judges. The organisation also engaged with emerging national transitional justice mechanisms and international bodies, advocating for inclusive, gender-sensitive approaches and meaningful civil society participation.

Programmatically, Huquqyat strengthened its work through the establishment of dedicated Investigations and Research committees and continued to advance gender-transformative and survivor-centered accountability. Its research and advocacy contributed to growing recognition of feminist approaches to transitional justice in Syria.

Despite regulatory constraints, including limitations on delivering legal aid inside Syria, Huquqyat adapted its programming, pausing direct legal aid activities while exploring alternative, research- and advocacy-based approaches.

Throughout the year, Huquqyat remained committed to its community-driven model. The 2025 Annual Convening and ongoing member engagement strengthened collaboration, capacity, and collective strategy among Syrian women legal practitioners across contexts. Overall, 2025 was a year of transition, resilience, and renewal. Huquqyat adapted to a rapidly changing landscape while reinforcing its role as a women-led collective advancing inclusive, gender-responsive justice in Syria.

HUQUQYAT'S STATEMENT

2025 was not simply another year in Syria's long pursuit of justice. It was a year that tested what justice could mean in practice—after rupture, after hope, and amid uncertainty.

For the first time in decades, Syrians entered a new political phase following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. This transition opened long-denied possibilities: to search for disappeared and to imagine accountability not as an abstraction, but as a lived and collective process. Yet, as Syrians, we know that moments of transition are never linear. They are fragile, incomplete, and often marked by new forms of injustice.

The human rights violations in the coast in March, and those that unfolded in As-Sweida in July 2025, were painful reminders that the end of authoritarian rule does not automatically end cycles of violence. Civilians were once again exposed to insecurity and to human rights violations, some of which have been attributed to the Syrian Interim government. For many Syrians, these violations reopened wounds that have never had the chance to heal. They also reinforced a truth we carry deeply: accountability cannot be postponed, and justice cannot be selective.

What we are witnessing in Syria is not isolated. It is part of a broader global reordering, where new configurations of power are emerging and respect for the rule of law is increasingly challenged. Across contexts, we see the rise of authoritarian and misogynist practices, shrinking civic space, and the erosion of accountability. In this moment, the role of legal practitioners is essential.

In this context, Huquqyat's work, under its Syrian Leadership, remained grounded in the realities of our communities. Our members—inside Syria and across the diaspora—engaged directly in supporting groups on the ground to document violations, in supporting victims and families of the disappeared, and in advocating for responses that center dignity, not politics. We worked to ensure that emerging national and international processes do not reproduce exclusion, but instead reflect the voices of those most affected.

As Syrian women legal practitioners, we continue to navigate a space historically shaped by exclusion.

Yet 2025 also affirmed our role as a part of a long road towards justice and a country with a rule of law.

Across courtrooms, communities, and advocacy spaces, our members contributed to investigations, provided legal expertise, trained a new generation of lawyers and judges, and shaped conversations

on transitional justice at both national and international levels.

2025 reminded us that justice in Syria is not a single moment, but a long and collective process—one that requires patience, courage, and unwavering commitment. It is shaped in courtrooms, but also in communities; in documentation, but also in memory; in legal reform, but also in the everyday resistance of those who refuse to accept silence.

As we move forward, Huquqyat remains committed to a vision of justice that is Syrian-led, feminist, and grounded in human rights. A justice that does not erase complexity, but confronts it. A justice that does not wait for perfect conditions, but insists on accountability even in imperfect ones. And a justice where Syrian women are not on the margins of rebuilding the rule of law—but at its center.

We are grateful to all those who have accompanied us on this journey—organisations, partners, legal advisors, and supporters—those who believed in us and saw in us part of a more just and humane future.

WHO WE ARE

“Huquqyat” is an Arabic word indicating the feminine plural form of lawyers and legal practitioners. Rooted in this concept, Huquqyat as an organisation gathers and builds a community of self-identifying women lawyers and legal practitioners who believe

in the transformative power of justice and aim to see forward inclusive and just accountability processes in and related to Syria.

Huquqyat was established in 2020 after its founders met at several legal training sessions across the world. They were brought together by the mutual agreement that, although vital, these training—and the legal field more generally—consistently lacked a nuanced gender perspective on how accountability processes related to Syria impacted and included women. Historically dominated by men, the legal profession in Syria reflects broader structural inequalities, with women facing significant political, professional, and social barriers, further intensified during the Assad regime and the conflict. While Syrian participation in legal proceedings has been essential, male-dominated structures have often overlooked crimes affecting women and marginalized groups beyond sexual and gender-based violence. Huquqyat was created to address this gap by supporting Syrian women legal practitioners to lead and shape inclusive accountability efforts.

Grounded in principles of equal representation and collective participation, Huquqyat operates through a membership-based, quasi-horizontal structure that enables members to shape its work. Today, it brings together 20 members across Syria, Palestine, Europe, the UK, and the United States, including lawyers, judges, students, scholars, and activists. The organisation fosters a collaborative culture rooted in transparency, accountability, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Today, Huquqyat is a women-led collective advancing gender-transformative, survivor-centered accountability for atrocity crimes committed in Syria. As it enters a new phase in 2025–2026, the organisation continues to adapt its approach to evolving political, legal, and transitional justice contexts.

Following the fall of Assad and the beginning of the transitional process, it is essential that women legal professionals are meaningfully included in accountability efforts, as well as in drafting new laws and a future constitution. Women Participation is not only a matter of formality, their participation is critical to preventing the recurrence of authoritarian rule, addressing systemic discrimination, and ensuring that Syria is rebuilt on the principles of equality and non-discrimination for all.

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

How We Work

Huquqyat's work advancing accountability in Syria is grounded in feminist and intersectional analysis, guided by survivor-centered and non-extractive practices, and supported by adaptive and interdisciplinary structures, prioritising the safety, agency, and voices of those most affected.

Survivor-centered & Community-Engaged Work:

Huquqyat adopts a survivor-centered approach that challenges extractive justice practices and prioritises the dignity, agency, and needs of survivors. Its investigations, research, and advocacy are conducted with sensitivity and respect, ensuring survivors' voices are central to decisions on justice, remedies, and redress. Huquqyat also engages affected communities from the outset, fostering inclusive and locally grounded accountability processes.

Huquqyat's work is interdisciplinary, involving collaboration with legal experts, psychologists, social workers, and community actors. A core component of its approach is training and supporting Syrian women legal practitioners to actively contribute to and lead accountability efforts and investigations.

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

Intersectional and Gender-Transformative approach

Huquqyat advances transformative justice strategies for Syria through agenderandintersectionallens,recognisingand addressing the structural inequalities underpinning violence. Its work focuseson developing cases,research, andadvocacythat encourage accountability actors—including investigators and courts—to consider how women and marginalized groups experience harm, and how they are included in or excluded from justice processes.

By examining the intersection of gender with other aspects of identity, Huquqyat aims to highlight broader patterns of violations and support more comprehensive and effective accountability efforts. This approach also informs its legal consultancies and pro bono legal aid, including through the Syria Legal Aid Project and related initiatives.

What defines Huquqyat is not only what we do, but how we do it. Huquqyat rejects extractive approaches to justice that treat survivors as sources of information rather than agents of change. Huquqyat believes in accountability processes that are inclusive, gender- transformative, and rooted in the lived realities of Syrians, and that justice efforts must address not only violations, but also the structural inequalities that enabled them.

OUR MEMBERSHIP MODEL

Huquqyat operates as a membership-based collective grounded in shared leadership and collective participation. Between 2024 and 2025, Huquqyat undertook an ongoing process to assess the needs of its members, ensuring that its programming, training, and convenings remained responsive to a rapidly evolving justice landscape.

Through collective reflection, including discussions at the 2025 Annual Convening, Huquqyat began exploring adjustments to its structure and modes of engagement to better support Syrian women legal practitioners across different contexts.

This process emphasized greater flexibility, broader collaboration, and continued commitment to shared leadership and horizontal governance. At the same time, Huquqyat maintained its focus on community-building and capacity-strengthening through training, peer exchange, and regular member engagement, laying the groundwork for a more adaptive and connected model moving forward.

WHAT WE DO

Our work continued across its core pillars, with the addition of two new committees — Investigations and Research — established in 2025. These join the existing Membership and Advocacy committees, strengthening more structured and collaborative spaces for members engagement and contribution.

Within Huquqyat's evolving model, committees function as collaborative, participant-driven spaces where members come together to exchange knowledge, shape ideas, and contribute to thematic areas of work. In contrast, Programmes (Investigations, Research, Legal Support and Advocacy) represent the Organization's operational and strategic interventions, translating these collective inputs into structured initiatives, outputs, and externally facing work.

The introduction of the Investigations and Research committees reflects a growing need to formalise and deepen knowledge production processes within the network. It also responds to participants' demand for more consistent and purposeful engagement beyond ad hoc collaboration.

This expansion signals a shift toward more structured yet flexible participation—where collective knowledge-building within committees feeds directly into the design and delivery of programmes—while Huquqyat maintains its commitment to collaborative, participant-informed approaches.

WHAT WE DO

Syria Legal Aid Project (SLAP)

In early 2024, Huquqyat launched a feminist legal aid project, supported by Christian Aid, aimed at strengthening Syrian women lawyers' capacity and providing pro bono legal services to women across Syria. The project generated a substantial body of documented casework and community-based insights reflecting women's experiences navigating personal status law, civil documentation, inheritance, marriage and divorce procedures, and related legal processes in North-West Syria, particularly in areas previously under Turkish control.

During the second phase of the project, the operating context shifted significantly following the fall of the Assad regime and the expansion of Syrian Interim Government authority. These political changes were accompanied by new regulatory measures, including a Directive issued in October 2025 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour requiring organisations to formally register in order to operate or transfer funds within Syria.

Under these conditions, Huquqyat can no longer legally provide direct legal aid inside Syria without formal registration. Rather than suspending the initiative entirely, Huquqyat chose to transition the project into a policy- and advocacy-focused intervention. This approach preserves the value of the existing casework archive while generating new research on the evolving legal landscape in post-regime North-West Syria. The project will inform future legal aid engagement once conditions allow for safe, ethical, and lawful collaboration with partners on the ground.

Investigations & Accountability

Huquqyat advanced gender-sensitive, survivor-centered investigations into core international crimes, with continued focus on the use of starvation as a method of warfare and other siege-related crimes. Following the fall of the Assad regime on December 8, 2024, Huquqyat gained access to previously inaccessible sites, which was crucial in formal and ongoing investigations.

Huquqyat strengthened its engagement with international accountability mechanisms, including the preparation of its fourth legal submission to European judicial authorities and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), in collaboration with Global Rights Compliance (GRC). It also established formal channels of communication with Syria's national committees on Enforced Disappearance and Transitional Justice, strengthening coordination on accountability efforts.

Throughout 2025, four Huquqyat members delivered specialised capacity-building training for Syrian lawyers and judges inside the country, reaching over 150 trainees on case building in relation to core international crimes, documentation and chain of custody, and open-source investigations. Members also provided legal support and advice to media outlets, including The New York Times, on investigations related to Syrian perpetrators. Advocacy efforts continued across regional and international platforms, amplifying gendered justice perspectives.

Research

Huquyat is uniquely positioned to provide in-depth analysis on transitional justice in Syria, drawing on historical case studies and comparative analysis, supported by close links with local communities and members' extensive legal expertise. In 2025, Huquyat established a formal Research Committee, reflecting a more structured approach to gender-sensitive socio-legal research. An internal research handbook was drafted aligning data-handling practices with UK and international legal research standards, with plans for institutionalisation in 2026. Huquyat also initiated collaborations with legal clinics at universities like Harvard, SOAS, and Sussex.

Through the Research Committee, two members developed and published a paper examining Syrian women's roles in transitional justice processes. The research paper addresses a critical gap by applying an intersectional feminist perspective to the Syrian context, exploring how Syrian women perceive transitional justice, how their roles have evolved during the conflict, and what structural barriers continue to limit their participation in justice processes.

In addition, three Huquyat members established a working group on corporate accountability as part of which they initiated an academic collaboration with the Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths, University of London. With guidance from Huquyat members, the students published a website on Architectures of Unjust Enrichment in Syria, which presents the mechanisms of unfair accumulation of wealth in Syria through three case studies, illustrating how unjust enrichment plays out in practice.

This increased focus on knowledge production is strengthening Huquyat's advocacy and policy-making strategy, supporting the safe dissemination of its work and members' engagement on expert topics.

ADCOVACY & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

A year full of strategic advocacy targeting international actors and emerging Syrian authorities, with continued focus on accountability, enforced disappearance, and gendered harms.

Throughout 2025, Huquqyat's members engaged in a range of advocacy efforts, including participating in a podcast examining starvation as a weapon of war, participation in a Brussels conference on women's rights in Syria following the March 2025 coastal events, and a cross-regional conversation on the Crimes Against Humanity treaty. Huquqyat also delivered public remarks at a high-level conference calling on Syrian leadership and the European Union to prioritize detainees, transitional justice, and women's leadership.

Huquqyat engaged with Syrian transitional justice and enforced disappearance committees through workshops and consultations, advocating for inclusive mechanisms, crime mapping, and meaningful civil society participation—though concrete collaboration remains to be realized. In Washington D.C., Huquqyat launched its U.S. presence with a public panel on transitional justice and U.S. policy, organized in partnership with the New Lines Institute.

Coalition work with Syrian, regional, and international civil society actors continued to underpin Huquqyat's advocacy, ensuring that women's rights and accountability remained central to transitional justice discussions.

ADCOVACY & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Key engagements included, amongst others:

Damascus Criminal Accountability Workshop - Pathways to Criminal Accountability in Syria:

One Huquqyat member participated in a two-day Damascus workshop on pathways to criminal accountability in Syria, contributing to civil society discussions on transitional justice law reform and engaging in dialogue with the Transitional Justice Committee on its plans, emphasizing the need to map crimes and perpetrators while ensuring that, even where prosecutions are not possible, victims' rights are upheld through meaningful legal reform.

Arab Conference at Harvard:

One member presented on transitional justice gaps in Syria following the regime's collapse, addressing the dangers of institutional continuity of violence, the need for survivor-centered documentation, the risk of mass graves and detention records being tampered with or mishandled, and the importance of stronger local cooperation with international accountability mechanisms.

Brussels Conference on Syria:

A Huquqyat member delivered remarks on transitional justice priorities following the fall of the Assad regime, calling on Syrian leadership to prioritise detainees and the disappeared, advance investigations into enforced disappearances, and ensure women's leadership in justice efforts. She also urged the European Union to support Syrian-led processes, strengthen civil society, and sustain accountability efforts, emphasising that justice is essential for lasting peace.

The Day After, Building Resilient Post-Conflict Societies:

A Huquqyat member participated in a discussion with transitional justice experts in Syria on designing a Syrian-led model grounded in participation, non-discrimination, and victim representation. The session focused on key pillars including accountability, truth-seeking, reparations, and institutional reform, with proposals such as appointing vetted national judges, involving international expertise, and adopting a comprehensive transitional justice law.

Key engagements included, amongst others:

Gendered Justice/ Crimes Against Humanity Treaty at the Hague:

One member participated in a cross-regional conversation on the Crimes Against Humanity treaty, focused on coalition-building and feminist approaches to collaboration. Discussions addressed starvation as a crime against humanity, lessons from the "Green Wave" movement in Colombia, and the treaty negotiation timeline extending through 2028–2029. The gathering strengthened cross-regional advocacy and identified shared priorities for advancing accountability and prevention.

Euro Med Rights, Syria Working Group Meeting

A Huquqyat member participated in a discussion on the challenges of Syria's transitional phase, marked by limited civic openings alongside ongoing legal constraints and political interference. She contributed a legal and policy- focused intervention on translating gender equality into enforceable reforms, addressing how to ensure accountability for women's rights in a fragmented and unstable legal environment.

Adalaty Istanbul Workshop

Two of our members participated in a two-day workshop convening representatives from Syria's Transitional Justice Committee, the Committee on Enforced Disappearance, and civil society actors to discuss collaboration mechanisms and how to best utilize existing skills and knowledge. Sessions focused on implementation and coordination between official bodies and civil society.

Asfari, Feminist Memory

One of our members, participated in a panel on Feminist Memory and Disappearance Justice, Syria, Gender and organized at the invitation of Asfari Foundation. The event aimed to provide a platform for research on gender and transitional justice. The event featured official attendance, including ambassadors, and was widely covered by media.

Huquqyat and New Lines Magazine Public Event.

In partnership with the New Lines Institute, Huquqyat organised an in person panel discussion that marked Huquqyat's first public engagement in the U.S. capital. The event allowed two Huquqyat members to introduce the organisation's vision for transitional justice in Syria and opened broader discussion with Syrian and international actors on the unique challenges of pursuing justice in the absence of formal political accountability. The panel highlighted critical issues in Syria's transitional justice conversation and explored how U.S. policy can support accountability efforts during this pivotal phase.

2025 MEMBERSHIP SNAPSHOT

CORE MEMBERS:

18 HUQUQYAT MEMBERS CONTINUING
IN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION
ROLES

2025 Engagement Highlights

- Trainings delivered: Peer sessions and committee-based training
- Certificates awarded (PEACE model): 15 members
- Monthly meetings facilitated: 8+
- Total participating members: Approximately 18 (combined in-person and hybrid)

MEMBERS ARE

WOMEN LAWYERS, LEGAL
RESEARCHERS, INVESTIGATORS,
AND ADVOCATES ENGAGED ON A
ROLLING BASIS

Project-Based Engagement

As Syria enters a new political phase, Huquqyat remains committed to embedding gender equity and participatory justice in the country's rebuilding process—ensuring that women's voices and experiences shape the foundations of truth, accountability, and lasting peace. Throughout 2025, Huquqyat engaged members in project-based work aligned with individual interests:

- Research project: A completed study on transitional justice in Syria, funded by Christian Aid Ireland, applying a gender and feminist lens to transitional justice processes;
- Advocacy training: Two members enrolled in training focused on advocacy strategy and impact-driven engagement;
- Investigation pillar: Four members actively working on the program;
- Academic collaborations: Four members engaged in research and supervision.

GEOGRAPHIC REACH:

SYRIA, EUROPE, UNITED STATES,
PALESTINE, UK.

PRIMARY EXPERTISE:

INTERNATIONAL CRIMES, SYRIAN CONSTITUTION AND LAWS, GENDER JUSTICE,
TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE, LEGAL REFORM, DETENTION AND FORCED DISAPPEARANCE
OF PERSONS IN SYRIA, SIEGE AND STARVATION, LEGAL REFORM.

2025 ANNUAL CONVENING

The Annual Convening serves as Huquqyat's primary platform for collective reflection, strategy development, and peer learning. Through this forum and ongoing committee work—spanning investigations, advocacy, research, and membership—Huquqyat continues to build a cohesive network contributing to Syria's broader transitional justice movement.

The convening was initially planned to take place inside Syria as a symbolic moment of civic re-engagement but was relocated to Europe due to regional instability and security risks. Preparations were briefly suspended in June due to a donor funding freeze and resumed in the third quarter.

The convening was successfully held in Larnaca, Cyprus, gathering 15 of its members for three days of strategic dialogue, reflection, and planning. Facilitated by the Community Engagement Coordinator alongside committee chairs and the Board, sessions covered Syria's evolving political and legal landscape, Huquqyat's governance model, investigations, advocacy, funding sustainability, and the new Syrian Constitutional Declaration.

The convening itself served as a living reflection exercise, allowing Huquqyat to assess its relevance, effectiveness, and responsiveness in a rapidly changing post-regime context. Feedback revealed that Huquqyat has become more responsive to members' priorities and working conditions, with members valuing the differentiated engagement approach that accounts for diverse capacities, time zones, and professional realities.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2025, Huquqyat moved from consolidation to transformation. As Syria's justice landscape continues to evolve, Huquqyat aims to contribute meaningfully to accountability, legal reform, and survivor-centered justice — ensuring that women are not an afterthought in rebuilding the rule of law, but architects of it.

CONTACT US

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