Syrian Humanitarians from the Ground
Challenges and Lessons of Local Leadership

Date: May 24
Time: 9:00–10:30 am
Venue: Dolmabahce C, in the Lüfti Kirdar Convention and Exhibition Center, Istanbul
Lead Organizers: Syria Relief Network (SRN) and Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)
Co-Organizers: Syria Relief & Development (SRD), Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations (UOSSM), and Sawa for Development and Aid (SAWA)

Expected Audience: 150 people, including UN agencies, UN Member States, international and national NGOs, local civil society organizations, members of conflict-affected and diaspora communities, representatives of faith-based organizations, media

Summary: Throughout the protracted emergency crisis in Syria, local civil society and national NGOs have played a key role in leading and implementing humanitarian programs. These organizations have widespread networks inside of Syria and the ability to work in places inaccessible to international organizations. Their diaspora connections and bases also provide support that translates into funding and meaningful grassroots and high-level advocacy internationally. Syrian NGOs have the most complete understanding of the situation on the ground, the needs of the local population, cultural and political challenges, and methods and programs that are most effective and locally salient. Despite their leadership in implementing the vast majority of programs, local Syrian organizations receive only a small percentage of the global funding for the Syria humanitarian response and play a limited role in decision-making.

Join us for the local NGO perspective on challenges, best practices, and coordination in the world’s largest humanitarian crisis.

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At the “Syrian Humanitarians from the Ground: Challenges and Lessons of Local Leadership” event, Syrian organizations will share their combined experiences, challenges, learned best practices, and needs in order to educate humanitarian stakeholders about the reality of being a local/national humanitarian organization and how to most efficiently and effectively support local communities. The event will include two panels—firstly highlighting perspectives and best practices of local Syrian NGOs, and secondly exploring how to best utilize diaspora communities and a remote management structure in a protracted emergency crisis—and a discussion on how to turn local feedback and lessons learned into tangible next steps to better the humanitarian response for Syria and lay the groundwork for future crises. This event seeks to:

- Present the perspective—challenges, learned best practices, needs—of local/national NGOs in the world’s largest humanitarian crisis.
- Explore how to best support local NGOs, improve their coordination with INGOs and UN agencies, and increase their leadership in humanitarian planning.
- Discuss the humanitarian tenant of partnership and rethink the structure of partnerships between INGOs, UN agencies, national organizations, and local civil society groups.
- Examine how to utilize diaspora communities to assist humanitarian actions and support their development.
- Consider the challenges faced by all levels of program management, with a focus on remote management.

Speakers

**Moderator:** Dr. Ahmad Tarakji, President of Syrian American Medical Society

**Kevin Kennedy,** Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, UN OCHA

**Dr. Zedoun Al Zoubi,** CEO of Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations

**Dr. Rouba Mhaissen,** Founder and Executive Director of Sawa for Development and Aid

**Lana Wreikat,** Senior Emergency Coordinator, UNICEF

**Dr. Samah Bassas,** CEO of Syria Relief Network

**Dr. Hazem Rihawi,** Co-Lead of the Turkey Health Cluster

**Dr. Abdelsalam Daif,** Turkey Country Director, Syria Relief and Development

**Dr. Manal Fahham,** Founder of Alseeraj for Development and Healthcare