



**Back to the roots... justice
from the heart of the field**

The Annual Newsletter for 2025

Back to the roots... justice from the heart of the field

Since its launch in 2012 as a civic platform seeking to empower civil society and contribute to the path of democratic transformation, **DAWLATY** has made transitional justice, human rights, and the consolidation of citizenship concepts the guiding framework for its institutional work. Over more than a decade, the organization has accumulated specialized expertise in capacity building, documenting collective memory, and promoting the values of nonviolence helping to solidify its presence as an influential actor in the Syrian human rights landscape.

In 2025, this journey reached a pivotal milestone with the official licensing of Dawlaty inside Syrian territory and the opening of its office in the capital, Damascus. This development marked a genuine return to the roots and created a strategic opportunity to connect the organization's accumulated theoretical and knowledge-based capital with direct fieldwork and engagement with local communities across different regions, towns, and villages.

The year 2025 also saw a clear focus on integrating the perspectives of victims and survivors at the core of public work. Dawlaty implemented a series of national dialogues and specialized workshops that helped shift the voices of families of the missing and detainees from the sphere of individual suffering to the level of working papers and recommendations submitted to national and international actors and decision-makers. The organization also placed special emphasis on direct work with victims' families, supporting their advocacy efforts for their rights to truth, justice, and redress.

In parallel, Dawlaty placed women's issues at the heart of its priorities particularly their protection from violence and the strengthening of their participation in public and political life based on a firm conviction that transitional justice and democratic transformation cannot be complete without guaranteeing women's rights and their active role in the public sphere.

During this year, Dawlaty expanded its alliances and partnerships with new local civil society organizations, and its network of relationships grew to include communities, villages, and towns that had not previously been within its scope of work. This enabled direct engagement with residents in their local environments, listening to their experiences, fears, and aspirations, and opening frank discussions on transitional justice and its legal, humanitarian, and social dimensions.

In the same context, Dawlaty continued to support its local partner organizations and succeeded in broadening this support to include new teams, initiatives, and organizations driven by its belief in the importance of collaborative work and strengthening local capacities as a key entry point for any sustainable path of change.

Dawlaty was also active across multiple spaces of support, networking, and advocacy with its civil society partners. These efforts focused on core issues including transitional justice, accountability and answerability, supporting the cause of abducted women and survivors of detention and kidnapping, protecting civic space, and advancing human rights.

Throughout this year, Dawlaty gave particular attention to transitional justice whether through the training programs it implemented or through specialized dialogue sessions and contributed to the preparation and publication of a set of research papers that addressed this field from multiple angles.

This report presents an overview of a year of continuous work and the strategic partnerships forged by Dawlaty as part of its ongoing endeavor to contribute to building a Syria that does not repeat its tragedies a Syria grounded in citizenship, justice, and the rule of law.

Dawlaty - December 2025

First: The Transitional Justice Program

1.1 ‘Issues of justice, truth and redress’ First Syrian Dialogue, Damascus—January 2025

Through a coalition that brought together several Syrian civil society organizations, survivors’ associations, and victims’ families, the first Syrian dialogue on issues of “justice, truth, and redress” was held in Damascus over two days, on 24–25 January.

Dawlaty was among the organizing entities and took part in facilitating the event.



The meeting brought together more than 50 representatives of civil actors and victims’ associations, with the participation of Judge Khatam Haddad, Assistant Minister of Justice for Legal Affairs

and Legal Studies. Discussions focused on assessing current paths of justice and accountability and analyzing the opportunities and challenges surrounding them. The working groups concluded with a set of strategic recommendations, organized into two tracks:

- (1) **Urgent and immediate objectives:** These included the need to recognize victims of war crimes, protect mass graves and documentation, and strengthen security under the rule of law while emphasizing the independence and transparency of the legal accountability process.
- (2) **Medium-term objectives:** These focused on building an institutional state grounded in citizenship and human rights; uncovering the fate of the forcibly disappeared; ending the displacement and camp file; and ensuring the inclusion of victims and civil society expertise in designing comprehensive justice.

The dialogue did not end with the closing of the meeting; it continued through an intensive, participatory effort involving 61 civil society organizations, culminating in the drafting of the document “[General Principles for Implementing Justice, Truth, and Redress in Syria](#).” This document serves as a reference reflecting the vision of civil society and survivors’ groups, and participants unanimously agreed on the need to adopt it as a foundational pillar for any future national dialogues on the future of justice.

1.2 The ‘Nafas’ Event: Art and Memory in the Face of Forgetting — Daraya | April 2025

With a deep belief that memory is the cornerstone of rebuilding societies and shaping a new social contract, Dawlaty in partnership with the International Center for Transitional Justice and the Josour Al-Haqqa (Bridges of Truth) group organized the [“Nafas”](#) event in the city of Daraya, a symbol of the peaceful movement. The event saw a powerful presence of survivors, human rights activists, and included:

- An exhibition of Kafranbel’s famous banners, which came to embody the conscience of the



Syrian revolution. Through them, attendees commemorated the sacrifices of Raed Fares, Hammoud Al-Junaid, and Khaled Al-Issa, affirming that the hopeful visions carried by those banners were realized through Syrians’ steadfastness.

- A screening of the film **“Tomorrow We Continue”** (produced by the International

Center for Transitional Justice), which explored the suffering of families of the forcibly disappeared through the story of a refugee mother struggling for her two children and to learn the fate of her husband.

- A screening of [“Nafas”](#), directed and illustrated by artist **Dima Nachawi**, based on testimonies collected by **Dawlaty** and **Women Now for Development**. The film shed light on detention as a systematic violation and opened space for collective reflection on pathways for change.
- A presentation of the [SOHA](#) digital platform and how it can be used to document experiences of siege and displacement/refugee..



- book signing for the novel **“Three Generations Under the President’s Bridge,”** a collective literary work inspired by real-life stories published on the platform, aiming to place Syrians back at the heart of their own narrative.

The event concluded with open discussions that underscored Daraya’s historical symbolism in civic struggle, the role of art in documenting violations as a safeguard against their recurrence, and the importance of activating pathways for victims’ redress as a fundamental condition for building sustainable peace in Syria’s future.

It is worth noting that the “Nafas” event crowned a long trajectory of work on the Syrian oral archive and its transformation into tools for cultural resistance and transitional justice process. Dawlaty began in 2015. Between 2016 and 2018, 400 live testimonies were documented, and the [Syrian Oral History platform \(SOHA\)](#) was launched as a publicly accessible digital reference that challenges official narratives and preserves collective memory. This was followed by the launch of an artistic project that transforms testimonies into creative works, with the aim of bringing victims’ voices to a wider audience.

We are pleased that Dawlaty’s oral history program was featured in [the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ 2025 report](#). This inclusion recognizes the program as an example of best practices that help elevate victims’ voices and strengthen human rights-based approaches within transitional justice processes.

1.3 “Bridges of Truth” Project: Syrians Shaping the Features of Transitional Justice — Damascus, Daraa, Al-Nabk, Homs, Salamiyah, Afrin, Al-Atareb | April 2025.

As a strategic step to strengthen community participation in shaping Syria’s future, the “Bridges of Truth” coalition which includes **Dawlaty** and a group of leading civil society organizations, in collaboration with the **International Center for Transitional Justice** implemented a series of intensive dialogue sessions across various Syrian regions.



Scope of work and participants: During the second half of April 2025, seven extended dialogue sessions were held across seven key cities and areas, bringing together 133 participants from diverse backgrounds, including:

- Internally displaced persons and those who were forcibly displaced.

- Survivors of detention (women and men).
- Families of the missing and the forcibly disappeared.

- Civil society leaders and activists.

Methodology – Safety First: The project ensured a safe dialogue environment that was sensitive to participants' psychological well-being. As a result:

- Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services were integrated into the sessions.
- Trauma-informed specialists were present to accompany participants as they revisited their experiences.

Objectives of the dialogue and its outcomes: The discussions centered on unpacking the concepts of transitional justice and linking them to the Syrian context, with a focus on identifying the core pillars needed to achieve sustainable and inclusive peace in the post-authoritarian phase.

These field-based dialogues culminated in the drafting of a strategic report titled “Our Pain Becomes Policy”, which was officially launched in October, serving as a political and rights-based voice that reflects Syrians’ immediate aspirations drawn directly from the heart of their suffering.

1.4 Launch of the paper “Mainstreaming a Victims’ Rights Perspective in Syria” — Damascus | July 2025

Because justice cannot be complete without placing victims at the center, Dawlaty Foundation has made mainstreaming a victims’ rights perspective a top priority. This approach aims to

move beyond symbolic acknowledgment of suffering toward the genuine integration of victims’ demands into public policies, negotiations, and transitional justice agendas to help build a state founded on accountability and equality and to prevent the recurrence of violations. The



organization held a series of field workshops and discussion sessions in Rural Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, Tartous, and Idlib, in addition to individual interviews and remote sessions, reaching 146 survivors, victims, and their families. A closing meeting was convened in the capital, Damascus, and saw broad participation from victims’ families and their associations, as well as civil society organizations. The meeting also featured notable participation from the National Commission for the Missing, represented by Dr. Ammar Issa, Director of the Office

of the Commission's President, and advisory members Ms. Zeina Shahla and Ms. Mayasa Al-Sheikh Ahmad. The meeting aimed to:

- **Present the recommendations paper:** Share the findings and results produced through a participatory process across the previous workshops, reflecting the perspectives of victims and their families.
- **Institutionalization and coordination:** Discuss practical mechanisms for engagement with government entities to ensure victims' rights are included in national recovery and reconstruction plans.
- **Representation and decision-making:** Emphasize the need for victims to be at the heart of policy and decision-making circles.
- **Building bridges of communication:** Strengthen sustainable dialogue channels between families, civil society, and relevant official institutions.

1.5 Launch of the report “Our Pain Becomes Policy”: Toward Comprehensive, Victim-Centered Justice — Damascus | October 2025.

At a well-attended event in the capital, Damascus, the International Center for Transitional Justice, together with the Bridges of Truth partners including Dawlaty launched its landmark report titled “Our Pain Becomes Policy.” The report draws its strength from being the outcome of seven intensive community dialogues held in April 2025 across diverse Syrian regions. This effort aimed to transform Syrians' lived experiences and personal pain into clear political and legal recommendations



for the post-regime phase, ensuring that victims' voices are not excluded from decision-making spaces.

The launch event was attended by the Head of the Transitional Justice Authority, the Deputy Head of the Justice Authority, and other members, alongside more than 120 activists and representatives of victims' associations and civil society organizations. Discussions focused on:

- **Confronting challenges:** Analyzing the lack of accountability, fragmented social trust, and the deep impacts of economic injustice.

- **The justice sought:** Affirming the need to adopt a comprehensive, impartial, and participatory model of justice—one that goes beyond traditional frameworks to address the root causes of the conflict.
- **Local solutions:** Emphasizing that repairing the social fabric begins with supporting local initiatives led by the affected communities themselves.

“Our Pain Becomes Policy” stands as a reference document that helps lay the groundwork for a new era in which the aspirations of those most affected become the primary driver of justice and recovery policies in Syria.

1.6 Meeting with the Ministry of Social Affairs: Overcoming Barriers to Civil Society Work — Damascus | October 2025.



Social Affairs and Labour, and the Ministry’s team at its headquarters in Damascus on **9 October 2025**. Key discussion points included:

- **Identifying challenges:** Reviewing the procedural and field-level obstacles facing civil society organizations working on justice and recovery pathways.
- **Exploring solutions:** Discussing available options and alternatives to facilitate the civil society operating environment, ensuring a more flexible response to local communities’ needs.
- **Institutional coordination:** Strengthening cooperation between the Ministry and organizations to align civic efforts with national legal and institutional frameworks.

This meeting reflects Dawlaty Foundation’s commitment to its critical, advisory, and technical role, and its dedication to opening effective dialogue pathways that help protect and safeguard civic space in Syria.

As part of efforts to strengthen communication channels between the civic sector and official institutions, **Dawlaty**, as a member of the **Bridges of Truth** coalition and in collaboration with the **International Center for Transitional Justice**, participated in a specialized working session with **Ms. Hind Kabawat**, Minister of

1.7 Roundtable on Criminal Justice Pathways in Syria — Damascus | September 2025.

Dawlaty, alongside **25 representatives** from civil society organizations and victims' associations, participated in a specialized roundtable on “**Criminal Justice Pathways in Syria**,” held in **Damascus** on **14–15 September 2025**. This technical convening was organized through a joint collaboration between the **Syrian Legal Development Programme (SLDP)**, **Dar Adala**, and the **Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)**.



Key outputs and components of the workshop included:

- **Review of the initial draft:** Discussions focused on analyzing the *“Initial Draft on Criminal Justice Pathways in Syria”*, assessing key challenges and the legal options best suited to Syria’s current context.

- **High-level institutional dialogue:** The workshop included a direct meeting with members of the **National Transitional Justice Authority** and the **National Commission for the Missing**, aimed at building dialogue around proposed criminal justice policies and sharing rights-based recommendations with them.
- **Developing the national document:** The workshop concluded by updating the initial draft and incorporating the full set of discussions and field-based recommendations, resulting in a reference document reflecting the vision of Syrian civil society and experts.

This participation reflects Dawlaty Foundation’s commitment to contributing to the development of a national legal framework that ensures effective accountability and lays the foundations for justice in Syria’s future.

1.8 Empowering Victims’ Associations: Strengthening Presence and Advocacy

Dawlaty places the support of survivors’ groups and associations of victims of detention and enforced disappearance at the forefront of its commitments, through an integrated strategy that goes beyond traditional assistance toward active, sustainable partnership.

Throughout this year, the Dawlaty continued to provide its partner associations with a package of regular technical and logistical support in order to:



- **Sustain activities** and enable these groups to continue their work despite the current political and institutional complexities.
- **Strengthen effective advocacy** and support the outreach and campaigning efforts led by these associations at local and international levels, ensuring that the cause of detainees remains present in both global and national consciousness.

Dawlaty worked to systematically integrate victims' aspirations across all its programs, guided by the following approaches:

- **Comprehensive pathways:** Linking victims' rights to broader political and constitutional tracks, rather than limiting them to a purely rights-based framework, so that their demands are transformed into national obligations.
- **Setting priorities:** Designing activities based on what victims' families identify as urgent, high-priority issues.

Dawlaty also adopts a strict policy to ensure victims' meaningful presence in public work, and commits to:

- **Minimum representation:** Allocating no less than **30% participation** for victims and their families in all Dawlaty's activities.
- **Partnership—not mere inclusion:** Strengthening victims' role as key actors and partners in designing and implementing different intervention pathways, not merely as beneficiaries.

1.9 Capacity-Building and Training Activities

Dawlaty implemented several training programs totaling **93 training days**, reaching **608 participants**. The trainings covered a range of specialized topics, including **dialogue facilitation, negotiation and mediation, community mobilization and advocacy, transitional justice, and preventing gender-based violence**.



Women represented **50%** of participants, with strong participation from **victims' families** and **youth** as well. The training activities were delivered across multiple locations, including **Afrin, Aleppo, Daraya, Homs, Tartous, Salamiyah, Suwayda, Damascus, Azaz, and Dreikish**.

1.10 Dialogue Sessions



Dawlaty held **30 dialogue sessions** across multiple areas, including **Tartous, Salamiyah, Suwayda, Damascus, Azaz, Dreikish, Daraa, Al-Nabk, Homs, Afrin, Al-Atareb, Aleppo, and Daraya**.



A total of **433 people** participated in these sessions, with **women accounting for more than 40%** of participants, alongside active participation from **victims' families** and **youth**. Discussions focused on **transitional justice, peacebuilding, and women's rights**, while also highlighting the central role of victims' families in justice pathways, constitution-making, and community recovery.

1.11 Partnerships and Institutional Support

Dawlaty strengthened its local partnerships, expanding the network of local organizations and initiatives it supports to **50 organizations and initiatives**, geographically distributed across several areas: **Damascus and its countryside, Suwayda, Idlib, Tartous, Dreikish, Aleppo countryside, Salamiyah, Homs, Hama, Qamishli, and Azaz**.

Second: The Women's Rights Support Program

1.1 “Women Reclaiming the Future” Event: Feminist Leadership in Peacebuilding — Beirut | May 2025.

Within the Syrian transition trajectory, **Dawlaty** participated in the “Women Reclaiming the Future” event in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, in collaboration with **Women Now for Development**, and the organizations **Gharsa**, **Mubaderoon**, and **Kvinna till Kvinna**. The event aimed to highlight the pivotal role of Syrian women as leaders and agents of change in justice and peacebuilding pathways. Dialogues during the event focused on three key dimensions:



- **Justice and social cohesion:** Presenting the pillars of transitional justice

through a gender lens, and highlighting women's role in repairing the social fabric and strengthening values of civil peace.

- **Shaping the national narrative:** Emphasizing the need to build an inclusive historical narrative that embraces all Syrians, and documents women's struggle and leadership roles in Syria's past, present, and envisioned future.
- **International responsibility:** Discussing ways to urge the international community to adopt comprehensive policies that ensure gender mainstreaming in all peace tracks, and to guarantee that Syrian women's voices reach international decision-making forums.

The event affirmed that no just and sustainable future for Syria can be achieved without the active and direct participation of women, who represent the true guarantee of a democratic transition that respects rights and freedoms.

1.2 Roundtable: Economic Empowerment as a Gateway to Women's Political Participation — Damascus | August 2025

Dawlaty organized a specialized roundtable in Damascus on **27–28 August 2025**, bringing together **20 activists and public affairs actors** to discuss ways to strengthen women's presence in Syria's political landscape. The discussion focused on:



- **Activating political participation:** Reviewing the mechanisms and tools needed to move from symbolic participation to effective, influential participation within decision-making circles.
- **Economic empowerment as a core pillar:** Participants discussed the intrinsic link between women's financial independence and their ability to engage in political life, viewing economic empowerment as the “first building block” for breaking down barriers to public participation.
- **Outputs and impact:** The sessions concluded with the drafting of a strategic recommendations paper that included practical proposals to strengthen women-supportive policies. A comprehensive advocacy plan was also developed to present these recommendations to relevant stakeholders and institutions, ensuring the dialogue outcomes translate into tangible, actionable steps.

1.3 Webinar Series “From Politics to Economic Reconstruction”: Feminist Visions for Syria’s Future — Online Webinars | June 2025.

Dawlaty, in collaboration with **Kvinna till Kvinna**, organized a series of **four intensive online dialogue sessions** throughout **June 2025**. The series aimed to provide a critical, in-depth reading of the current and future realities of Syrian women's participation in both the political and economic spheres, with a focus on mechanisms for inclusion during transition and recovery phases.

The webinars hosted a group of Syrian politicians, activists, and experts, including (**Malak Toma, Dr. Roula Baghdadi, Aisha Ibrahim, Ghinwa Al-Shomari, Alice Mfarrej, Hasnaa Barakat, Thuraya Hijazi, Ghada Rifaai, and Natalie Khoury**). The experts' discussions covered several vital sectors, including:



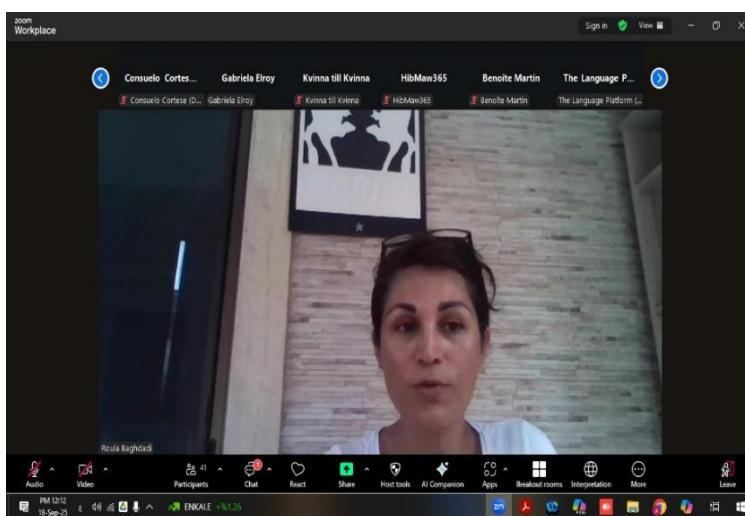
councils, as well as forms of informal political participation.

- **Economic recovery and reconstruction:** Economic empowerment, urban planning for reconstruction, and the circular economy.
- **Gender-responsive financial justice:** Exploring frameworks for gender-responsive budgeting to ensure fair distribution during the recovery phase.

These dialogues culminated in a documentation effort to consolidate the outcomes and recommendations of the four sessions into **one comprehensive policy document**, serving as a reference for decision-makers and international and local organizations on how to ensure effective and equitable women's participation across all pathways of rebuilding Syria.

1.4 Online Webinar: From Political Marginalization to Systematic Violence — The Case of Abducted Women in Syria | September 2025.

Through a joint collaboration between **Dawlaty, Kvinna till Kvinna**, and the **Syrian Feminist Lobby**, a specialized online webinar was held to shed light on the issue of abducted women, revealing the close link between women's political exclusion and the escalation of gender-based violence in Syria. Key issues addressed included:



- **Shifting patterns of violence:** The session traced the alarming evolution of abductions. After initially emerging as acts connected to political tensions, they have increasingly become a systematic tool of intimidation aimed at shrinking women's roles and pushing them out of

public life—depriving thousands of girls and women of their rights to education and work in the absence of effective oversight and accountability.

- **Politics as a protection mechanism:** Speakers emphasized that excluding women from political decision-making not only weakens representation, but also undermines legal and community-based protection mechanisms, widening the space for a policy of impunity.
- **Dynamics of change:** The webinar reviewed how patterns of violence have evolved in Syria's current context, stressing the need to understand these shifts in order to design effective, rights-based responses.

The event concluded with a call to mobilize national and international efforts toward:

- Developing **coordinated protection strategies** rooted in women's leadership and field expertise.
- Turning **community resilience into sustained political pressure** to end abduction cases and ensure the safety of Syrian women.
- Activating **advocacy tools** to break the silence surrounding systematic violations against women.

1.5 Online Webinar: “Reintegration with Dignity: Refugee Women, Education, and the Path Toward Justice and Empowerment” — Remote | December 2025.

Dawlaty, in collaboration with the **Civil Society Empowerment Unit** and **Kvinna till Kvinna**, organized an advocacy webinar focused on the reintegration of Syrian refugee women and their children. The webinar explored the complex realities and concerns surrounding pathways of return and reintegration, highlighting the right to education for Syrian students in Lebanon and Syria as an urgent necessity. The session also discussed how education forms the essential foundation for women's economic and political empowerment, and its role in strengthening social cohesion as an entry point toward achieving comprehensive justice.

1.6 Syrian Civil Society Conference on Women's Rights: “Implementing the Joint Agenda to Combat Violence Against Women and Girls and Strengthening Inclusive Peacebuilding in Syria” — Brussels | June 2025.

Through a strategic partnership with **Zoom In**, **Musawa**, and the **Euro-Mediterranean Feminist Initiative**, a large conference on Syrian women's rights and peacebuilding was held in the Belgian capital, Brussels. The conference featured meaningful participation from **60 civil society organizations** (both in person and online), with the presence of representatives from the **Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria**, the **European Union**, and the **European Parliament**.



The conference also provided a collaborative platform to exchange international and regional expertise and to develop unified recommendations to combat violence against women and girls in the context of reconstruction.

1.7 “Syrian Women for Peace” Podcast Series — Media Production | November 2025.

Dawlaty in collaboration with the **Euro-Mediterranean Feminist Initiative EFI**, launched an awareness podcast series of **three episodes** aimed at raising awareness about **gender-based violence**. The series was hosted and moderated by activist **Baraa Salibi**. The episodes featured a group of expert guests and explored:



1. The dynamics of gender-based violence in times of conflict.
2. The role of women in leading negotiations and both formal and informal peacebuilding processes.
3. Media responsibility: how to improve journalistic coverage to highlight gender-based violence issues and advocate for them professionally.

Dawlaty is a non-profit organization that believes in nonviolence and peaceful resistance and works to achieve a democratic and peaceful transition toward a state that respects human rights, equality, tolerance, and diversity. Dawlaty seeks to support and empower civil society to participate effectively in Syria's transition to a just, democratic state. It also aims to strengthen young people's knowledge of civic values and life skills so they can contribute to the advancement of their communities and country. In addition, Dawlaty works to build an archive that includes stories and artistic works to commemorate the Syrian uprising and highlight the experiences and voices of marginalized groups in the Syrian conflict. The organization operates both on the ground and online in the areas of documentation, advocacy, and capacity building for youth and civil society, and it partners with many other Syrian organizations and solidarity groups to amplify the voice of Syrian society.

Vision and Mission

Dawlaty's vision is to build a just, democratic, and safe Syria characterized by accountability, respect for human rights, gender equality, tolerance, and diversity.

Dawlaty's mission is rooted in empowering civil society actors—especially youth—to participate effectively in achieving democratic transformation in Syria.

