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## **Justice Voices: Syrian Diaspora Activism and Digital Memory in Post-Conflict Discourse**

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*Justice Voices: Syrian Diaspora Activism and Digital Memory in Post-Conflict Discourse*

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## Introduction

The Syrian conflict and its long-lasting repression have reconfigured the Middle East and pushed the Syrian diaspora toward helping their homeland. Transitional justice has traditionally been seen as a tool to address historical human rights violations once a conflict ends (Backer, 2003). This notion has, in recent times, however, been widened. In places where political change seems unlikely, non-financial remittances - like ideas and values – can play an important role in changing a society. This paper explores how these non-financial remittances, specifically the ideas about transitional justice, can help transform Syrian society post-conflict.

Remittances are often understood as money that migrants send to their countries of origin, but the concept can be understood more broadly than this. Remittances can also include aspects of social, cultural, and political exchanges (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). In Syria, the diaspora has been striving to spread transitional justice concepts. Their goal is not only to document and respond to past abuses; rather, they also try to promote a vision of a future society based on human rights (Stokke & Wiebelhaus-Brahm, 2022). This study argues that these non-financial remittances are very important for driving change in Syrian society, especially in a post-conflict context that is as complicated as Syria's. The majority of transitional justice studies tend to focus on official mechanisms, such as truth commissions, criminal trials, or reparations. Yet, in Syria, these traditional mechanisms are not constantly possible due to the difficult political context the country is in after the fall of Assad. Reports about ongoing massacres of Alawites and Christians vary widely, but confirming these incidents is challenging due to the overwhelming spread of false information surrounding the attacks (Cook, 2025). However, after Assad's regime left the country in December 2024, new opportunities for justice and accountability efforts must be exploited to prevent Syria from falling for another tyranny (Human Rights Foundation, 2025). Writers like Dancy and Wiebelhaus-Brahm (2018) suggest that we should also study "during-conflict justice" and methods to hold those in power accountable even before a full transition occurs. In the current case of Syria, these non-financial remittances can thus be seen as a form of prospective transitional justice, with Syrian diaspora groups using their networks and cultural expertise to promote ideas and plans for a fair society, going beyond the usual method (Stokke & Wiebelhaus-Brahm, 2022).

Syrian diasporic networks' promotion of transitional justice ideas are analysed within this research. To do this, it uses the following research question as guidance: How do Syrian diaspora organizations in Europe use social media to construct and communicate discourses of justice and memory? The question reflects how the social and cultural outputs of the diaspora support the reconstruction of Syrian society in post-conflict settings. The study will use critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how language and narratives influence social movements and policy-making (Benford & Snow, 2000).

For this research, a qualitative method is used, focusing on secondary data. The goal of the research is to analyse X (formerly Twitter) posts by diasporic organizations. Using a qualitative method helps to identify how these ideas are spread and contribute to transformations. Furthermore, a case study is conducted to find out whether similar strategies have been applied

among different organizations. The research is valuable because it challenges traditional views of transitional justice that solely emphasize the formal. Stet-led processes. Instead, it shows that the ideas spread through the Syrian diaspora can force change even when there is no clear political transition. By studying the way these non-financial remittances work, this paper adds to the growing discussion on the role of diasporas in enhancing future developments in origin countries (Koinova, 2017; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007)

This paper shows that Syrian diaspora organizations in Europe communicate justice and memory through different strategies. The three most prominent themes are highlighted and explained. To initiate, they use memory as a resistance form to counter silencing and denial (e.g. by naming victims or sharing personal stories). Second, justice narratives are created through the mix of legal language and emotional and moral appeal. The organizations show through their narratives that justice is not only a goal for the future, but urgently needs attention now. Third, the study found that women play a key role in these messages. They are often portrayed as powerful symbols and vices for justice and remembrance. Combined, the findings show how digital platforms such as X increasingly become tools beyond information-sharing. Over time, they became spaces where political meaning is shaped and influenced, and justice is actively envisioned.

The paper will commence with a literature review, which is followed by the Research design and methods section. After, the analysis section will provide the results and findings substantiated with existing literature. Lastly, the paper ends with a conclusion and reference list.

## **Literature Review**

The concept of transitional justice describes the set of processes designed to help societies recover after a period of violence or authoritarian rule. In a traditional sense, these processes emphasize actions like truth commissions, reforms in government, or criminal trials, and in many countries, these methods are used after conflicts end (Backer, 2003; Laplante & Theison, 2006). However, more recent studies suggest that other methods, apart from traditional transitional justice efforts, are needed in areas in which conflict has not ended yet.

Traditional transitional justice efforts assume that a country can only address past human rights abuses once a conflict has come to an end, with the majority of scholars focusing on state-led efforts that commence when violence in the country ends (Backer, 2003; Laplante & Theison, 2006). However, often, these formal processes are not yet possible because countries keep experiencing forms of conflict or repression. In these cases, nonfinancial remittances start playing an important role. According to Ojo (2023), the concept of remittances rather emphasizes the transferal aspect of the concept instead of the financial aspect of the concept. Therefore, remittances, in this case, can also be understood as value or skill transfer approaching the concept in a broader sense. In Syria, the diaspora had been transferring ideas about transitional justice long before a political change seemed likely, emphasizing the aspect of human rights and justice in their communications. These efforts challenge the current political landscape in Syria, which is chaotic due to the ongoing conflict and repression. However, these efforts could create an alternative view of how justice could work in the future

(Stokke & Wiebelhaus-Brahm, 2022). Furthermore, by attempting to create this alternative view, the diaspora not only makes a moral appeal but also aligns itself with international human rights norms. This is an important aspect as well because this makes their claims more accepted by the international community, creating legitimacy (Koinova & Karabegović, 2019).

Furthermore, the study of diaspora mobilization has increasingly become important in the field of international relations and transitional justice studies. Researchers started recognizing that diasporas have strong ties to their home countries, while not living there anymore. Ties as such include both the financial aspect of remittances, as well as the non-financial aspects (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). A study by Adamson and Demetriou (2007) argues that diasporas are so-called special groups, operating differently from traditional nation-states. This is an idea that is useful when trying to understand in what ways diasporas attempt to bring change into their home countries. Besides, the concept of framing is important in the existing literature. Framing is a concept describing how groups or individuals present ideas and issues to shape public opinion or policy. Benford and Snow (2000) explain in their study that social movements use framing to build collective identities and, through these identities, try to influence political discussions. Syrians use the framing of transitional justice as a strategy to ‘thicken’ their arguments and create stronger justice calls (Quinn, 2021)

Quinn (2019), in another study, mentions the concept of “thin sympathy”, describing the situation where the international community has a basic understanding of the suffering experienced by others, just enough to see the need for action. In the field of transitional justice, thin sympathy is relevant because it helps build support for measures like truth commissions and accountability processes. Quinn’s later work (2021) further explains that thin sympathy can potentially be the first step toward broader support for justice initiatives. The concept is important to keep in mind when trying to understand how the Syrian diaspora can encourage both international actors, as well as domestic actors, to support justice attempts. For example, by sharing stories of the suffering of Syrian civilians, the diaspora can influence policy decisions affecting their home countries. International media and social networks play a significant role in this process because they allow ideas to spread quickly (Quinn, 2021; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007)

Adding to this, Koinova and Karabegović (2019) in their research provide a framework that explains how diaspora mobilizations contribute to changes in transitional justice efforts. Mechanisms such as framing and cooperation are identified in the study; these mechanisms help explain how the ideas from the diaspora shape the way justice is understood and implemented in conflict zones. In the case of Syria, these mechanisms are used as a strategy to use international human rights to pressure the Syrian authorities and change their policies. Shain (2002) argues that diasporas function as a so-called “third-level” in conflicts. There is no direct participation in domestic conflicts, but international and local arenas are influenced through them. Similarly, Baser and Swain (2008) argue that diasporas can operate as a mediator in conflict. They promote peace efforts and act as external agents.

Civil society is another crucial actor in transitional justice efforts. Backer (2003) shows that the contribution of NGOs and other non-state actors is essential to achieve successful justice processes. In Syria, the diaspora’s push to achieve transitional justice is part of a broader

movement in civil society that aims to not only document past abuses, but also envisions an increased just future (Gready & Robins, 2017) Although many of the studies that focus on non-financial remittances come from cases in Africa or Latin America (Ojo, 2023; Laplante & Theison, 2006), these ideas and visions can be applied to the case of Syria. As an example, active diaspora engagement in Colombia, combined with transitional justice mechanisms, helped create an enhanced post-conflict environment (Laplante & Theison, 2006). To support the idea of effective diaspora involvement, Dancy (2018) shows that traditional justice efforts that are state-led are sometimes insufficient. This study, therefore, suggests that diaspora involvement is important to achieve successful efforts. Moreover, conflicts limit the effectiveness of judicial processes because of the ongoing violence and instability that negatively impact the operations of judicial institutions. Such environments make it difficult to collect reliable evidence as well as ensure fair trials (Dancy & Wiebelhaus-Brahm, 2018). This idea emphasizes the need for strategies beyond traditional judicial methods.

### **Research Design and Methods**

The purpose of this research was to explore the way Syrian diaspora organizations in Europe communicate ideas of justice and memory in their public discursive outputs. In specific, this study aimed to understand the strategies through which these diaspora organizations contribute to the way in which transitional justice narratives develop in a setting where there is an absence of formal mechanisms. Despite the extensive literature on the actual mechanisms of transitional justice, such as truth commissions and international tribunals, rather less attention had been paid to how diaspora actors engage in justice-related communications that come before political transitions. Stokke and Wiebelhaus-Brahm (2022) therefore introduce the concept of ‘prospective transitional justice’, which accounts for activism regarding justice that occurs in anticipation of political change. This study builds further on that concept by applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to textual outputs from Syrian diaspora organizations, identifying how language functions to construct and legitimize justice claims in post-Assad context.

### **Design**

This research used a qualitative research approach, which is ideal for examining how meaning is constructed through language, specifically in context-specific environments. Through qualitative methods an interpretive analysis of language can be facilitated, which allows researchers to uncover the social and ideological implications that are present in written texts (Fairclough, 1995). Contrary to quantitative methods, which mainly focuses in variables that are measurable and statistical generalizability. Qualitative research gives the priority to depth and complexity, but also to nuances, which makes it suitable for the aims of this study.

Furthermore, the study used a comparative case study design, focusing on three different Syrian diaspora organizations, respectively; The Syria Campaign (TSC), Families for Freedom (FFF), and Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). The three accounts were selected based on purposive sampling, a method used in qualitative research. The texts and organizations are not chosen for statistical generalizability, but rather for their theoretical and discursive relevance (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 1995). These particular organizations were first of all selected because of their active roles in justice-related advocacy, but also their visibility in

European civil society. Another important factor is that they all align with the conceptual framework of non-financial remittances and prospective justice (Stokke & Wiebelhaus-Brahm, 2022).

In this study, each organization contributed to the diversity of the data. The organizations reflect a set of diaspora functions, such as advocacy and media (TSC), grassroots familial activism (FFF), and legal documentation (SNHR). This approach allows for using a comprehensive data sheet without exceeding the time limits that the study faces.

The study engaged with three concepts that are essential in this research; justice, memory, and remittances. Justice, in this case, is interpreted in a broad way so that both formal mechanisms (e.g. criminal accountability) and informal processes (e.g. moral discourse) are included. The concept of memory refers to the construction and circulation of narratives about the past, which often involves victims and past events. Lastly, remittances are not only viewed as the traditional financial transfers, but emphasizes the more on the transferal aspect. In this study, remittances can also include movements of other values, like ideas and discourses across borders (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

## **CDA**

In this research, the focus was on the discourse produced by the Syrian diaspora organizations, with a more specific emphasis on social media posts. The selected texts were of importance for this research, because they not only shared information; also, they had a role in shaping how the public understands justice in the post-Assad Syrian context. All texts were retrieved from the social media platform 'X' (formerly Twitter) and will serve as artifacts of organizational intention and representation.

The research is based on van Dijk's (1985) Critical Discourse Analysis framework. His approach connects different elements, such as language, thought, and society. The framework provides insights into how discourses are influenced through the writer's beliefs and knowledge on the topic, and how their words, in turn, influence others. The research breaks the analysis into three levels, respectively, text-level (micro), thought-level (meso), and society level (macro). At micro-level, the emphasis of the study is on the words and language that is used in the discourses – such as the way sentences are structured and what words are chosen. This helps identifying patterns of emphasis, mitigation, or in certain cases evasion of topics in the language used. The second level, which is the cognition level (meso), is the level that focuses on how messages are designed to connect with certain audiences. And lastly, the third level is the society level (macro). This level of analysis looks at the bigger picture. It considers how these texts fit into wider political or social discussions (van Dijk, 1993).

Van Dijk's method is particularly useful in this study since it provides a systematic method to connect language to social structures and mental representations. By looking at all three analysis levels, this study can show both the details of justice discourse and the wider effects it might have on how the public perceives it.

## Data collection methods

All data is derived from primary non-human sources, specifically focusing on social media posts published on X (formerly Twitter). Within X, three Syrian diaspora organizations were chosen; respectively, The Syria Campaign, Families for Freedom, and Syrian Network for Human Rights. These organizations were selected because they are geographically located in Europe, and thematically align with the focus of the research; justice and memory. Another important reason for selecting these organizations is that their posts are in English and are discursively rich. All three actively engage in public communications that focus on issues such as war crimes, enforced disappearances, advocacy, and trauma remembrance. This gives access to ideologically charged texts relevant to the research question.

The decision to analyze discourses published on X is based on the important role that the platform has as a strategic communication tool for activist organizations. The social media platform allows for rapid dissemination of advocacy messages which are often intended to shape international attention or mobilize support (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015). As mentioned, in this study the focus will be on these type of messages. And according to Molek-Kozakowska (2013), these messages are full of meaning and framing techniques, making them well-suited for this study.

The data set includes 82 posts, spread across the three organizations. The number was not set beforehand. To ensure that the data is both thematically relevant and analytically rich, a purposive strategy is used in the study. First of all, posts are only included if they clearly reference or imply themes like justice, memory, or accountability. Second, all posts must contain a sufficient amount of textual content so that a detailed discourse analysis is possible. No minimum for a wordcount is set, but for this study reposts and posts that consist solely of images, emojis, or links that lead to external pages are excluded. During the selection process, all posts within the timeframe were evaluated, but only the posts that thematically aligned with the research topic were selected. This led to a total of 82 posts. The amount of posts aligns with the idea of Fairclough (1995), who prioritizes a detailed textual analysis over quantity. Besides, with a sample size of 82, thematic saturation can be reached, which should be the aim with small information-rich samples such as X posts (Guest et al., 2006).

The timeframe in which these posts are released is between December 8, 2024 (fall of Assad), and May 1, 2025. This timeframe was selected to capture the period following the collapse of the Assad regime. This period is particularly relevant, because narratives surrounding (transitional) justice and memory are heavily politically charged. The length of the timeframe is based on the period in which the study is conducted, which is May 2025. To capture the most comprehensive results, the researcher chose to use the longest possible timeframe.

Lastly, all selected posts are directly sourced from official and verified accounts and cross-checked to make sure they are authentic. Next, they are imported into the qualitative analysis software ATLAS.ti and manually coded while using categories derived from both theoretical literature and from patterns in data that emerged after proofreading. This approach will make sure that the discourse analysis is performed with thoroughness and transparency (Page, 2012; van Dijk, 1993).

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations in this study align with the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) Guidelines 3.0 (Frankze et al., 2020). Since the study solely deals with content that is publicly available, informed consent is not applicable. However, ethical sensitivity maintained by anonymizing all the individual-level data and making sure to avoid misrepresentation through decontextualization.

## **Data Analysis Methods**

As mentioned, the study performed a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) following the model that is developed by van Dijk. This model provides a multi-layered framework that can be used to examine how language functions in the reproduction of ideology and social inequality. Van Dijk's (1993) research mentions that discourse does not solely describe or reflect something, it can also assist in constructing social knowledge or beliefs. This, in turn, can shape group identities and political narratives (van Dijk, 1993). The analysis takes a look at three different but interconnected elements: first, the words and structure of the text, second, the ideas and beliefs behind those words, and lastly, the larger social and political setting in which the text is shared. The study initiates by examining how factors like word choice, sentence style, and writing techniques are used to emphasize certain aspects or hide other. Next, the study takes a look at what the discourses say about shared beliefs – e.g. common ideas about justice or who counts as a victim. Lastly, the analysis considered how these messages could relate to broader power structures. It does so by questioning how the texts support authority, follow international values, or challenge powerful groups and common ways of thinking (Van Dijk & Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2007).

This method is especially well-suited for studying how diaspora organizations communicate, because their discourses often combine different aspects, such as political beliefs, strategic goals, and international advocacy. Compared to other approaches – such as Reflexive Thematic Analysis, in which the emphasis is on personal experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006) or Qualitative Content Analysis, which mainly sorts information into categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) – van Dijk's CDA is better for examining the way language connects to power and knowledge.

The analysis commences by identifying themes that are already discussed in the literature, such as justice, legitimacy, and resistance. As the research progresses, new themes that appear in the data will be added, resulting in a step-by-step process that helps to ensure that the analysis' thoroughness and clearness remains sufficient.

## **Results & Discussions**

This chapter presents the results of a critical discourse analysis of 82 X posts by Syrian diaspora organizations. The aim of this chapter is to explore how these groups use X to speak about topics as justice and memory, especially in a post-conflict setting.

The analysis revealed three themes that were interrelated. To initiate, Syrian diaspora organizations use memory as a form of resistance through different methods such as leveraging personal testimonies, victim naming, and anniversaries. Second, the organizations construct

justice narratives that uses legal language interconnectedly with moral appeals, framing it not only as a future legal goal, but also as a present political and humanitarian necessity. Lastly, appear as central agents in the justice narratives of these organizations. They are portrayed as activists, witnesses, and moral authorities to fight against impunity.

The findings show the way diaspora actors challenge state-sponsored narratives and claim a space for justice-making. Their posts not only serve as information-sharing tools, but also as strategic acts of memory activism and identity politics. The remainder of the chapter discusses each of these themes in turn, analyzing how the Syrian diaspora organizations have a share in shaping transnational narratives on justice and remembrance.

### **Memory as Resistance: Countering Erasure through Digital Testimony**

One of the most prominent theses that emerged from the analysis is the use of memory as a form of resistance. In examples coming forward throughout the dataset, Syrian diaspora organizations use forms of remembrance, such as names, photos, anniversaries, and personal stories, to counter the silencing mechanisms that the Assad regime and its aftermath were responsible for. The tweets that were marked with *Collective Memory Construction*, *Victim Naming*, and *Silencing and Forgetting* clearly show attempts of the diaspora organizations to keep the dignity of those who disappeared or died, but also to take control over the narrative that shapes Syria's past.

These are not solely acts of remembrance. Rather, they are also a way to speak out and fight against the individuals that are not being held responsible. Furthermore, they serve as a way to speak out and resisting the lack of accountability. By showing these memories publicly and persistently, the diaspora actors position themselves not only as witnesses, but also as protectors of truth, even when there are forms of denial, displacement, and bureaucratic violence. These findings build further on the work of Clark (2023), who argues that memory work in transitional justice is essential, especially for those that are excluded from official truth processes.

In a post by Families for Freedom, dated on 12 March 2025, the organization writes:

*“Do not forget the family of Rania Abbasi. Today marks 10 years since her arrest along with her husband and 6 children! The Syrian government must immediately reveal the fate of Rania's family and the fate of all detainees and forcibly disappeared persons under its custody.”*  
(Families for Freedom, 2025)

This post was coded with the codes *Victim Naming*, *Silencing and Forgetting*, and *Collective Memory Construction*. By calling on a named family and by linking the family to a specific anniversary, the post makes memory not a passive form of remembrance, but rather a form of moral protest. It shows that the Abbasi family is still missing, influencing how the public thinks about the story. The absence of the family is used to question the regime's version of events, which tried to erase them. Hepworth (2023) calls these kind of practices “memory activism”, which are forms of public narratives that ask for recognition, also (as in this case) when no one is held responsible. In this specific case, memory is constructed through visibility and demand, and the post is an example showing that remembrance in itself is a form of justice-seeking.

Another post from Families for Freedom, which was posted on 20 February 2025, reads:

*“Following the arrest of three individuals involved in the massacre, families renew their demands for truth and justice. #JusticeForTheDisappeared #TruthAndAccountability #TadamonMassacre”* (Families for Freedom, 2025)

This message, which is coded with *Collective Memory Construction*, *Anti-Impunity Claims*, and *Silencing and Forgetting*, demonstrates how memory is brought back into emphasis as a response to key moment in transitional justice. By using phrases such as “renewing demands” and by the use of the selected hashtags, it becomes clear that memory in this case is not a closed chapter of mourning, but rather is a part of an ongoing struggle. The organization also refers to the Tadamon Massacre through a hashtag. This does not only identify the atrocity, but also ensures continued presence in digital space, asserting that justice has yet to be achieved. Hepworth (2023) argues that memory-driven advocacy as such is crucial, especially in situations where legal processes are limited or influenced by politics, because it keeps public pressure alive. The post links remembrance to legal accountability, turning memory into a form of active resistance.

In a last example, dated 12 December 2024, Families for Freedom posted:

*“Listen to the message of Lama Saud, sister of the detainee Abdullah Mazen Saud, who has been forcibly disappeared in the prisons of the Syrian #regime since February 2012. #un #icrc”* (Families for Freedom, 2024)

This post is coded with *Victim Naming*, *Diaspora as Witness*, and *Crisis of Representation*. It brings a personal story to the front, namely Lama’s, and links it to the disappearance of her brother. Naming, combined with the testimonial format, works in a resistant form against the state – that uses enforced disappearance as a method of silencing. Lama is positioned as both a spokesperson and as a moral witness in the posts. This reflects on what Clark (2023) describes as an essential element of resilience after conflict; turning trauma into advocacy, especially by using memories that are shaped by gender and collective experiences. Furthermore, the post illustrates the way digital platforms make it possible for testimonies to circulate transnationally, creating what Sriram and Ross (2007) call “zones of resistance” beyond the regime’s territorial control.

Taken together, these posts demonstrate that memory is used as a dynamic and activist practice. Diasporas actors are not only considered witnesses, but are also archivists that digitally curate and recirculate truths that have been denied or suppressed. Through their acts, victims’ memories remain present in the collective consciousness, and calls for justice stay visible; not only in Syria, but on the global stage.

The pattern that came through, which is digital memory activism, supports the idea of Hepworth (2023) that memory work can function as a form of transitional justice. In contexts such as Syria, where formal truth commissions are absent or lacking, it’s often civil society that takes on the responsibility of remembering. Clark (2023) highlights that excluded groups often use personal stories to seek justice, while Sriram and Ross (2007) emphasize that in countries with a fragmented government, transnational spaced often become essential in justice-seeking. These zones are called “contested zones of impunity”. The posts in this study reflect this trend: memory work that crosses borders, but is still connected deeply to national pain and trauma.

In sum, Syrian diaspora groups utilize X to transform memory in a form of resistance. Through different acts, like naming, testimony, and commemorating these actors tackle erasure and keep justice claims alive. This addresses the research question and the broader aim of the study, showing that memory (through digital platforms) is a key mode of justice-making in the absence of formal truth mechanisms. Besides, it affirms the broader role of diaspora in shaping transnational justice practices.

### **Justice Narratives: From Legal Demands to Moral Claims**

This section explores the way Syrian diaspora organizations express justice, through both legal and moral language. Posts coded with *Justice Language*, *Anti-Impunity Claims*, *Prospective Justice*, *Moral Imperatives*, and *International Audience Appeal* show that justice is not portrayed as an abstract or neutral process, but rather as an essential element in political accountability and global engagement. The posts that were analyzed blend references to war crimes, enforced disappearances, and legal frameworks with emotionally charged calls to action. Justice is framed in a forward-looking way, as something that should be achieved even before any formal political transition takes place. This idea reflects with what Wiebelhaus-Brahm (2019) call prospective (transitional) justice; a vision of justice that is formed before institutional change, often framed through discourse and testimony. It also emphasizes the dual strategy that is utilized by the diaspora, which is about demanding accountability while also claiming space in the legal and moral foundations of Syria's future.

In a post, dated 7 March 2025, The Syria Campaign said:

*“The interim government must take immediate action to end violations against civilians & isolate them from military operations, establish clear & transparent communication channels & commit to accountability & transitional justice. Keep Syria in your thoughts”* (The Syria Campaign, 2025)

This post shows a justice narrative that is both morally charged and forward-looking. Although it mentions the concept of transitional justice, the main focus lies on current reforms and the protecting of civilians. Using a phrase as “must take immediate action” (The Syria Campaign, 2025) highlights justice as something that is urgent and essential. This reflects with Hepworth's (2023) point, which mentions that memory and legal discourse often come together in advocacy-driven forms of justice, and especially in contexts where the formal institutions are lacking. As seen in the post, the diaspora sees elements as transparency and accountability as foundational in building a legitimate Syria.

Another post, this time by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, posted on 20 April 2025, stated:

*“Criminal Accountability is a corner stone of transitional justice Criminal accountability ensures that war criminals are brought to justice and helps prevent reprisals. Details: <https://snhr.org/?p=76663> #Transitional\_Justice\_Vision #SNHR”* (Syrian Network for Human Rights, 2025)

In this post, justice is framed in humanitarian and emotional terms. By addressing an organization such as the ICRC, the language in the post both critiques and calls for help at the

same time. This suggests that the international actors at play have fallen short in fulfilling their responsibilities. A phrase as “life and death” raises urgency, showing that justice is not solely legal processes, but also protection of lives. This example reflects Koinova and Karabegovic’s (2019) argument that diasporas often utilize vertical coordination; reaching out to global organizations while mobilizing locally. At the same time, the post serves as what Benford and Snow (2000) describe as prognostic framing: it offers a solution and moral pathway forward.

Through the posts became clear that the organizations understand justice through both institutional and affective lenses. They use language of legal systems, such as court, laws, and accountability, while also expressing their urgent moral and humanitarian concerns. By using a combination of these elements in their discourse allows them to reach a wide audience, including policymakers, victims, and witnesses. By repeating terms that are in line with justice and accountability, the organizations show that justice is not only a future goal, but is also a present demand. Besides, by constantly bringing these terms to the conversation, these actors challenge and reshape the question of who holds the authority to define what justice means.

This mix of messages reflects broader insights from both transitional justice and diaspora studies. Hepworth (2023) shows that memory activism often turns into forms of legal advocacy; this often happens in contexts where there is no truth commission or functioning prosecution system. Similarly, Dancy and Wiebelhaus-Brahm (2018) point out that justice narratives help maintain symbolic claims, also when legal processes are stalled or blocked. Koinova and Karabegovic (2019) also explain that diaspora groups use strategic framing and operate across borders to influence institutions and shape public opinion. These dynamics are clearly visible in this study as well, in the way Syrian diaspora organizations communicate their vision of justice. They frame justice as both a future obligation and a present moral imperative, and this is often done through public appeals on platforms such as X.

Summing up, organizations not only use social media to advocate for topics such as justice, but platforms like X are also used to define justice, in a more legal, moral, and political way. The organizations refer to ideas from transitional justice and blend it with emotional and moral messages. Through this method, they show that justice is not only a concept that revolves around laws, but also takes in elements that deal with truth, memory, or fairness. This information is valuable to answer the research question because it shows how justice is shared online as both a demand for change in institutions, but also as a way to give voice support to victims.

### **Women as Agents of Justice in the Syrian Diaspora’s Transitional Justice Discourse**

The third main theme in the data revolves around the idea that women are shown as important leaders in the fight for justice and memory, but also accountability. Although women have often been excluded and overlooked during the conflict and its aftermath, those in the diaspora do not remain passive. On the contrary, they play an active role in preserving stories and demanding justice. This section explores the way women are presented as key actors in the campaigns that this study went over. Besides, it shows how these portrayals connect to the wider academic discussion revolving gender and justice, specifically in the Syrian diaspora.

A set of posts that recurred throughout the content published by *Families for Freedom* and *The Syria Campaign* emphasized the voices of women activists and survivors, but also family members of the disappeared. These posts not only named women like Wafa Mustafa and Lama Saud, but explicitly highlighted them as public figures who stand for broader justice struggles.

*“Feminist activist Hiba Brais tells us from Aleppo how her father survived over 13 years of detention in Assad’s prisons. How she dealt with his absence & how was it meeting him after all these years. Listen to the full episode & share”* (The Syria Campaign, 2025)

This post not only positions Hiba as a victims’ daughter, but also as a political agent who actively shares her personal testimony. This helps building a narrative of resistance and survival. Similarly, *Families for Freedom* commemorates the long disappearance of a female victim and calls her by name, using her story as a rallying point for justice:

*“Do not forget the family of Rania Abbasi. Today marks 10 years since her arrest along with her husband and 6 children! The Syrian government must immediately reveal the fate of Rania’s family and the fate of all detainees and forcibly disappeared persons under its custody.”* (Families for Freedom, 2025)

In this particular case, Rania became a symbol wider demands for justice. The focus on time – in this case: “10 Years” (Families for Freedom, 2025)– adds emotional impact to the story and it highlights the amount of unfairness of her continued disappearance.

A third post, also by *The Syria Campaign*, is written in a more collective voice:

*“A Syria without women at its center is a Syria without justice or dignity. It’s unacceptable to imagine a new Syria without real, equal participation of its women.”* (The Syria Campaign, 2025)

The post clearly presents women as vital to the justice and rebuilding the nation. It emphasizes their important moral role in envisioning Syria’s future after the conflict, and suggests that real justice can only be achieved when genders are included.

Clark (2023) says that participatory justice is needed, focusing on silenced voices, especially women, who in reality emerge as leaders that shape post-conflict settings. In the case of the Syrian diaspora, women are leading the conversation on justice through the sharing of their stories and speaking with moral and political strength. Furthermore, Dancy and Wiebelhaus-Brahm (2020) explain that justice does not solely rely on legal systems, but also needs to feel morally right and connect with the people. The posts in this section focus on this aspect. Sentences and words like “A Syria without Women...” (The Syria Campaign, 2025) emphasize the necessity of inclusion of gender, supporting this argument. Including women feels morally right, making them a key aspect of emotional and strategic work of Syrian diaspora justice efforts.

To conclude, women are not sidelined in the Syrian diaspora’s fight for justice - they are a key element in it. The hopes for an improved future are shown through their stories and voices and diaspora organizations use these stories to make powerful arguments for justice. The focus on

women shows why justice efforts should include feminist ideas and support from civil society, especially in a context where traditional legal systems are absent.

### **Wrapping up the findings**

This chapter delved into the way Syrian diaspora organizations in Europe used X to communicate discourses on justice and memory. The analysis showed that memory is not only a form of passive reflection, rather it is used as a form of active resistance and advocacy. Different methods, such as victim naming and personal stories are used to prevent the public from forgetting what happened and to give visibility to those who suffered.

Furthermore, justice comes forward in the discourses through both legal and moral language, combining both institutional demand and emotional appeals. The diaspora organizations call for transitional justice and appeal for international norms, while also using emotional and symbolic language to connect to the broader public. This form of dual framing aligns with the existing literature on prospective justice and advocacy that is memory driven, especially in a context where there is no legal institution or it is considered ineffective.

Lastly, women have shown to be key figures in both moral leadership and legal advocacy. The analysis substantiates this by showing how they play a prominent role as agents of justice, which in turn highlights the feminist dimensions within the narratives. By using their stories, political demands become more personalized, which adds depth to justice seeking.

Overall, the analysis showed that platforms such as X are used by diaspora organizations for different reasons. They not only share and document any developments, but they also use it to share messages on memory and justice, actively shaping how these concepts are understood.

### **Conclusion**

The study explored the way in which Syrian diaspora organizations in Europe use social media, specifically X. The goal was to find out how ideas of justice and memory were communicated and shaped after the fall of Assad's regime. Through the analysis of 82 X posts, from three different diaspora organizations (The Syria Campaign, Families for Freedom, and Syrian Network for Human Rights), the research shows that digital platforms are not solely advocacy and information-sharing tools, but became an inspiring space for envisioning and expressing transitional justice.

The findings show three main strategies. Initially, memory is a tool for resistance. Organizations commemorate victims and share personal stories to push back silence and denial acts. Second, justice is framed as both a legal and moral necessity. It is important to urgently arrange justice, it is not solely a future topic. Third, women are not only portrayed as survivors or victims. Rather, they became central figures in justice efforts through their moral role. These patterns assist in answering the research question by showing how justice and memory are not just communicated, but also actively shaped through online discourse. This leads us to the answer to the research question: "how do Syrian diaspora organizations in Europe use social media to construct and communicate discourses of justice and memory?". The Syrian organizations do not solely inform or report, they actively shape counter-narratives and build moral and legal legitimacy. And additionally, Syrian diaspora organizations influence how justice and memory are understood globally. Through their online discourse, they continuously challenge state-

centred approaches to transitional justice and improve the field's understanding of what bottom-up and forward-looking justice can look like.

There are strengths and limits to this study. By using van Dijk's CDA framework the researcher could connect language to broader social structures. The study was limited to English-written posts solely, while most social media content emphasizing this topic is written in Arabic. Although the goal was to study the organizations in Europe, this can be considered a limitation to capturing a comprehensive understanding of the topic. In terms of activism, X only provides content of the ones having access to digital platforms. Many forms of activism take place in the country itself, which could not be studied. Lastly, though findings are not generalizable, they could offer valuable insights, or valuable insights may appear for similar cases.

Future research could include Arabic content and explore how messages are received in another cultural setting. Additionally, a comparison between different diaspora groups could be valuable for understanding different strategies and methods. And lastly, combining an analysis as such, with fieldwork such as interviews would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. This was not possible for this study due to time constraints.

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## Reference List X posts

The Syria Campaign. (2024, December 08). Despite the city's destruction, Homs remains a testament to the resilience of its people. Syrians continue to long for a... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2024, December 08). Among the international witnesses to Homs' suffering was Marie Colvin, an American journalist who documented the horrors of the siege... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2024, December 08). There is so much to be done. We are impatient for accountability & justice. So many people remain detained or... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2024, December 08). Now is the moment for Syria and the international community to restart Syria's stalled UN-led political process, with a clear... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2024, December 10). Since Assad's fall, has carried out more than 310 airstrikes on Damascus and other parts of Syria causing intense fear... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2024, December 11). Immediate action is needed by to help those who were newly released from prisons, speak with the families, preserve crucial... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2024, December 11). The failed to find the missing when they operated in Assad's areas in the past 13 years, and now Assad... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2024, December 11). Listen to this interview with saying what needs to be said on the agony and pain she and so many... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2024, December 12). "I will not rest until I take them to court." Mazen's body was carried over the shoulders of those who... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2024, December 13). The need for immediate response is urgent and time is running out. Listen to calling on the to fulfill its... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, January 22). Since 2012, Mayasa has been searching for her husband Mohammed, disappeared by the Assad regime. Like tens of thousands of... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, January 28). "Transitional justice is not a luxury, nor is it an option for us. Justice is our future and the pathway... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, February 01). Feminist activist Hiba Brais tells us from Aleppo how her father survived over 13 years of detention in Assad's prisons.... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, February 01). Torture and killing under torture have been systematically committed for decades by Assad's regime against tens and tens of thousands... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, February 01). Luay Tayyara, a young man from Homs has been killed under torture two days ago at the hands of the... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, February 06). In solidarity with the LGBTQA+ and all marginalized and oppressed communities in Syria. Horrific videos have been circulating on social... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, February 16). “But weeks have passed and we as families still have no answers or support. We must push back against attempts... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, February 26). Join Duaa Muhammad in demanding the full truth on her uncle and two other disappeared members of her family. The... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, February 27). Join Rabie Al-Tayeb in demanding the full truth about his father who has been forcibly disappeared by the Assad regime... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, March 07). 4/ The lack of transparency and clear communication by the new authorities is fueling misinformation, fears, and provocative actions. X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, March 07). 5/ The interim government must take immediate action to end violations against civilians & isolate them from military operations, establish... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, March 13). “We learned the hard way throughout the past years how denial and disinformation have had an unimaginable impact on survivors... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, March 11). Read & share this testimony from a survivor of the Syrian coast massacres, who mains unnamed for her safety. Families... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, March 14). We will be in Daraa on Sunday to demand accountability and justice for all. Join us if you can or... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, March 13). Read and share the testimony of Adam (a pseudonym), a survivor from Sanobar Jableh, Latakia, who lived through the horrors... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, March 17). Three volunteers were injured while saving lives from the Israeli attacks on Daraa tonight that killed 3 and injured 19,... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, March 18). Syrian activists are breaking the cycle of violence, supporting victims, and pushing for justice & reconciliation. Now more than ever,... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, March 28). Refugees must be protected. Seeking asylum is a basic human right, not a crime. People should never be punished for... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, March 31). 7.4M Syrians remain displaced, with little hope of reuniting with their families. Destroyed homes, lack of services, landmines & lost... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, April 25). Stand in solidarity with Syria’s women. Amplify their voices. Demand an immediate end to violence, marginalization, and silence. X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, April 25). A Syria without women at its center is a Syria without justice or dignity. It’s unacceptable to imagine a new... X.

The Syria Campaign. (2025, April 25). Women in Syria continue to face violence and marginalization, from sectarian killings and abductions to exclusion from justice, truth, and... X.

Families for Freedom. (2024, December 12). International organisations and the must immediately go to to support the families of detainees in their search for their loved... X.

Families for Freedom. (2024, December 12). Listen to the message of Lama Saud, sister of the detainee Abdullah Mazen Saud, who has been forcibly disappeared in... X.

Families for Freedom. (2024, December 13). After nearly 14 years of anguish, families of the forcibly disappeared in deserve answers. It's time for the to fulfill... X.

Families for Freedom. (2024, December 13). The must act urgently in to support families abandoned in the aftermath of the Assad regime's fall. They're desperately searching... X.

Families for Freedom. (2024, December 13). The need for immediate response is urgent and time is running out, the should act NOW to fulfil its mandate... X.

Families for Freedom. (2024, December 13). The must act urgently to rescue detainees potentially trapped in prisons, abandoned without food or water by fleeing regime personnel... X.

Families for Freedom. (2024, December 13). The must be on the ground in to provide urgent care for released detainees, document their names, and ensure their... X.

Families for Freedom. (2025, February 10). Families' urgent demands: Protect crime scenes— A video shows an individual handling what appears to be human remains. Respect the sanctity... X.

Families for Freedom. (2025, February 20). Following the arrest of three individuals involved in the massacre, families renew their demands for truth and justice. X.

Families for Freedom. (2025, April 12). "I watched as my father, my brother, and my uncle disappeared before my eyes—taken by merciless hands devoid of compassion..." X.

Families for Freedom. (2025, March 12). Do not forget the family of Rania Abbasi. Today marks 10 years since her arrest along with her husband and... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, April 20). Criminal Accountability is a corner stone of transitional justice Criminal accountability ensures that war criminals are brought to justice and... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, April 21). A legal framework -set by special legal committees formed in cooperation between the judicial system and the transitional justice body-... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 14). as stated in the upcoming report, 'The Death Sentence in Syrian Laws and Its Use by the Assad Regime to... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 14). The relied on exceptional courts to suppress opposition and continued to implement executions relentlessly, making arbitrary executions in a crime... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 14). The Law on Managing and Investing Transferrable and Non-Transferrable Assets That Were Seized Pursuant to an Unappealable Judicial Ruling, which... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 14). perpetuates the policy of collective punishment adopted by the against the people of Syria, plunging them further into impoverishment and... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 14). Statement: The Current Syrian Government Must Investigate 'Sawaed al-Khair ' Volunteer Group Following Tampering With Crime Scenes Calls on the... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 18). Syrian citizens are forced to grapple with numerous difficulties simply to protect and maintain ownership of their properties, in light... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 18). It is essential to include a process of returning properties to their rightful owners as part of a broader reparation... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 21). The 's hegemony over the legislative process through its control of the three branches of power (legislative, judicial, and executive)... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 21). have been created simply and completely to serve the regime's vision and enable it to take over Syrian citizens' real... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 21). and those killed whose deaths have not been registered in the civil registry. See the full report: X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 21). The daily death toll of civilian victims in : documented the extrajudicial killings of 7 civilians, including 2 children, by... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 23). Statement: Calls for Investigating Organizations that Received Children from the Security Agencies SNHR Has Verified Lists of 3,700 Children Forcibly... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 25). "We need to ensure that the issue of mass graves is handled in a way that respects the dignity of... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 27). Most of the laws and legislative articles promulgated by the since March 2011 all originated from the same malign motivation,... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 27). the properties of Syrian dissidents, especially these three groups: forcibly displaced persons, forcibly disappeared persons, and those killed whose deaths... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 31). Statement: Urges the Transitional Government to Bolster Measures for Protecting Civilians During Security Operations Violations, Incl. Torture and Violating Human... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 09). Syria's Military Field Courts issued thousands of arbitrary death sentences with no fair trial guarantees. The death penalty has been... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 09). This penalty applies to specific crimes considered extremely serious, including premeditated murder, espionage, terrorism, and crimes related to national treason... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 09). as revealed in the report, 'The Death Sentence in Syrian Laws and Its Use by the to Eliminate Dissidents'. X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 08). The carried out mass executions of thousands of detainees without fair trials, using execution as a tool to intimidate the... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 08). as revealed in the upcoming report, 'The Death Sentence in Syrian Laws and Its Use by the Assad Regime to... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 08). Since 2011, the death penalty has become a means to suppress popular movements and a part of the Assad regime's... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 08). according to the same report, 'The Death Sentence in Syrian Laws and Its Use by the to Eliminate Dissidents'. X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 13). Executions were carried out in line with a deliberate process with decisions implemented through a chain of command starting from... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 13). military and security committees, and the Military Police. Hundreds of leadership figures in the security apparatuses, the military, and other... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 13). as stated in the upcoming report, 'The Death Sentence in Syrian Laws and Its Use by the to Eliminate Dissidents'. X.

Syrian Network. (2025, March 13). Statement: On the Syrian Uprising 14th Anniversary, the Syrian People's Struggle to Achieve Their Aspirations Marches on 234,145 Civilians Killed,... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 25). The 's control over the legislative process through its hegemony of the three branches of power (legislative, judicial, and executive)... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 25). both before and after March 2011, have been created simply and completely to serve the Assad regime's vision and enable... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 16). The has denied hundreds of thousands of dissidents their most basic rights afforded by domestic and international laws, including acquiring... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 16). demand that individuals who have been internally displaced or sought refuge abroad, who justifiably fear that they may be arrested... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 09). Death sentences issued by Military Field Courts and Counterterrorism are fundamentally unlawful and unconstitutional, as these courts lack constitutional legitimacy... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 09). particularly regarding the right to defense and appellate levels, as well as preventing presence of defense lawyers to represent defendants.... X.

Syrian Network. (2025, January 09). and do not return victims' bodies to their families, according to the upcoming report, 'The Death Sentence in Syrian Laws... X.