



Institute for the Documentation of Human Rights Violations against Religious Minorities in the Levant

WHERE SILENCE ENDS AND JUSTICE BEGINS

Protecting Religious Minorities in Syria and Safeguarding Their Economic Survival Against Expropriation – Policy Recommendations for the BMZ

From: IDHRV-ARMIL

To: BMZ Management / MENA Department / Syria Desk

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1. Summary of the economic and political situation of religious minorities

- Persisting threats and discrimination against religious minorities (Alawites, Christians, Druze, Ismailis, Yazidis, as well as Aramean and Kurdish groups).
- **Economic risks:**
 - Expropriations and confiscations by militias, security forces, and regime-affiliated networks
 - Destruction, loss, and manipulation of property documents and legal relationships
 - Exclusion from reconstruction and aid programs
 - Gender-based disenfranchisement of women through discriminatory inheritance and property rights
 - Unlawful appropriation or damage to religious sites
- Relevance for development cooperation: protection of property rights, economic sustainability, inclusion of minorities, strengthening of local self-governance.

2. Strategic relevance for the BMZ

- Securing economic livelihoods as a factor in social and political stability.
- Verification of property rights as a prerequisite for reconstruction and prospects for return.
- Prevention of unintended discrimination in development cooperation programs.
- Strengthening local self-governance structures with minority participation.
- Need for close coordination with the European Union and the United Nations.

3. Recommendations for Action

A. Documentation on property protection

- Establishment of digital and independent registries to secure proof of ownership.
- Support for secure archiving and documentation systems as well as satellite monitoring.
- Funding for legal advice, for example on document retrieval, securing inheritance rights, and defending against unlawful seizures.
- Involvement of German expertise on restitution and transitional justice.

B. Economic Sustainability

- Targeted support for small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in agriculture and vocational training in minority communities.
- Programs to empower women and widows economically.
- Protection and restoration of religious sites as economic and cultural resources.

C. Policy levers and oversight mechanisms

- Conditionality of development cooperation funds on:
 - Non-discrimination in access to services
 - Transparent local administrative structures
 - Exclusion of extremist actors
- Support for local self-governance models that demonstrably take religious and ethnic minorities into account.
- Establishment of an early warning mechanism regarding expropriations and population displacements.

D. International Coordination

- Coordination with independent documentation centers of the European Union and the United Nations to ensure property protection.
- Promotion of secure remittance channels within the diaspora to stabilize family support.

4. Urgent Recommendations and Need for Action by the BMZ

1. Promote programs for property protection through digital registries, legal counseling, and document preservation.
2. Expand economic sustainability programs for minorities, with a particular focus on women and widows.
3. Systematically embed conditionality in development cooperation programs through financial reports and control mechanisms at the local level.
4. Targeted promotion of local self-governance structures with minority participation.
5. Establish monitoring mechanisms for cases of expropriation.
6. Protect religious and cultural sites as social and economic resources.
7. Stabilize and utilize financial channels and networks within the diaspora.

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