Training on “A holistic approach to Transitional Justice and constitutional reform”
Gaziantep 14-15 July 2018

Transitional Justice is a set of policies and strategies aimed at offering a wide-range of tools to countries and societies undergoing political unrest, widespread violence and conflict, with the aim to bridge the gaps between local communities, provide accountability for past crimes and, foremost, recognise the rights of all victims as citizens and human beings. Transitional justice mechanisms can set the path for developing a renewed social compact to address past human rights abuses, mass atrocities in order to facilitate a transition into a more democratic or peaceful future.

The importance of transitional justice stems from the fact that it is the bridge through which societies that experience crises, conflicts and political turmoil permeated by serious violations of human rights and international criminal law, can move from a state of instability and chaos to a process of reconstruction of a shared social and political fabric of the country. Transitional justice has neither a single definition, a single purpose, nor a single mechanism or set of mechanisms. This is a natural consequence of the diversity of its application among the countries that have applied it. Each country has a different motive to initiate a transitional justice process, which leads to different methodologies, developments and, ultimately, outcomes, depending on the specific goals it wishes to achieve. Transitional justice is a continuous and dynamic process that needs the involvement of all parts of society to be effective; it also needs to address in a holistic approach appropriate social, political and legislative reforms that can set up proper mechanisms and procedures to protect victims’ rights, provide redress for victims, including non-repetition of the crimes, ensure accountability and a shared understanding of what has happened and develop a renewed social compact to bring together local communities.

Therefore, there is an intimate and very strong relationship between transitional justice and constitutional reform. Constitutional reform has at its core the need to foster justice and the rule of law; constitutions are also the tool to achieve those goals.

Although many Syrian civil society groups have worked, during the last eight years, both on issues related to Transitional Justice and constitutional reform, they have done so mostly in a disjoined way; additional support is still useful to facilitate their developing and engaging in sustained work on the elaboration and the support of a comprehensive and holistic transitional justice process, that includes and is informed by the constitution and constitutional principles.

Against this backdrop and in the framework of its Syria Program, No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ) is organising a workshop on “A holistic approach to Transitional Justice and constitutional reform”, which will take place in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 14 and 15 July 2018. The purpose of the training is to engage Syrian organisations and civil society activists on a holistic approach to Transitional Justice and the constitution; increase the technical and political awareness of Syrians on issues related to Transitional Justice processes and constitutional reform; and foster a discussion among Syrian civil society actors to foster coordinate initiatives and activities to promote Transitional Justice and constitutional reform, thereby developing a renewed social compact to bring together local communities.