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WILPF's Statement on the Fall of the Assad Regime

On the fall of the Assad regime on 8 December 2024 and after more than 50 years of a tyrannical dictatorship and years of devastating armed conflict following the revolution, Syrians have endured unimaginable suffering, including widespread atrocities and systemic violence. This is a victory for all Syrians who have resisted tyranny, fought for justice and who never gave up on the dream of a free and just Syria. While the road ahead remains difficult, this marks the beginning of a new chapter shaped by Syrians themselves.

As Syria remains deeply fractured, a transitional justice process that prioritises accountability, reconciliation and reconstruction is essential for a sustainable peace. Efforts for justice must be led by the Syrian people, ensuring that the future – is shaped by their demands, not by political expediency.

The voices and perspectives of Syrian women must guide the path forward, as their inclusion is crucial in shaping the future of Syria. Women-led and feminist civil society organisations, that have worked tirelessly over the last fourteen years, are best-placed to design the scope and mechanisms needed to deliver justice and redress for the harms of war and repression. These efforts must be at the heart of Syria's transition.

The fall of the regime does not mean Syria is safe for return, nor does it absolve the international community of its responsibilities. We call on the international community now more than ever to:

- **Protect Syrian refugees and uphold their rights** by halting any plans for forced deportations or coerced returns. Given the widespread destruction, economic collapse, and risks of violence, Syria remains unsafe for return.
- **Support an inclusive transitional justice process** that prioritises accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Accountability must encompass all those responsible for war crimes, regardless of their affiliations, ensuring that justice is not selective. There should be no impunity for any party, whether state or non-state actors, as impunity fuels cycles of violence. Conflicts do not occur in a vacuum - any framework for justice must address its root causes and connect pre- and post- conflict processes. With the risk of a resurgence of armed conflict, measures must focus on addressing root causes to ensure lasting peace.
- **Provide sustained humanitarian and reconstruction support** that prioritises both physical and social infrastructure that address the practical needs of Syrians while also investing in education, healthcare, and cultural facilities to improve overall quality of life. These efforts must be Syrian-led, ensuring aid is delivered transparently,, without empowering new militarised and authoritarian structures. Civil society must

also be meaningfully included in all processes, with the effective participation of women extending to all reconstruction and recovery efforts.

- **Amplify and resource Syrian feminist and civil society organisations** that have been at the forefront of justice and peace-building efforts. Their leadership is critical in shaping a democratic, rights-based future.
- **Prevent further geopolitical exploitation of Syria** by opposing foreign interventions that fuel instability, militarisation, and division, rather than supporting a just and peaceful transition. This includes opposing economic investments tied to neoliberal policies that further impoverish an already-drained population.

Syria's future must be built on justice, dignity and peace – not fear and militarisation. While the struggle continues, today, we stand with Syrians in acknowledging this moment as a crucial step towards the future they have long fought for.