

## **Key Findings of The Syrian Legal Development Programme's Report: Business Activity Linked to Human Rights in Syria**

### **Background:**

The Human Rights and Business Unit within the Syrian Legal Development Programme has since its establishment been monitoring and documenting business-related activity in Syria that may contribute to human rights abuses and international crimes in Syria. We have chosen to publish our findings from a select time period to demonstrate the patterns in the types of human rights violations and international crimes businesses and business-related actors are involved in in Syria as well as the patterns in the types of actors that are committing these violations. We chose to publish findings from this period in particular (1 April - 30 September 2018) as opposed to a more recent period is to avoid jeopardizing current investigations into more recent business-related activities and their human rights impacts. The full 53-page report with names and dates can be found here <https://www.hrбу.syrianldp.com/ba-report>

For more recent specific data please get in touch directly with our team.

### **Key Factual Findings:**

- Reconstruction conferences, delegations and events are on the rise with the participation of multinational businesses. Events took place in Syria, Benghazi, Baghdad, Moscow, China, Sochi. Events are mostly covered by the Syrian state television, which indicates links to the Syrian government.
- Several European companies have already started engaging in Syria. British, Belgian, French, Greek, Spanish and other companies are among those that started engaging inside Syria, partnering with Syrian investors. Activities documented from other countries include, North and South Korea, Malaysia, Abkhazia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.
- States and businesses in the Middle East, North Africa, and from outside the region have expressed an interest in participating in reconstruction in Syria. A number of businesses and government delegations from different countries had official meetings with Syrian government and economic officials. This includes delegations from Brazil, Egypt, Jordan, and India. Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and other Arab Countries have expressed interest in participating in Syria's reconstruction as well as reopening borders. Lebanese, Jordanian and Iraqi private sector companies agreed to establish new economic and trade relations.
- Many Syrian business elites are brokering deals between the government and armed groups.
- UN agencies have provided over \$160 million USD in contracts to Syrian companies, some of which are subject to western sanctions or have ties to the Syrian government.

- UN agencies have also directly funded several ministries, NGOs, and businesses affiliated with the Syrian government and accused of financing pro-government militias.
- It is believed that Russian and Iranian companies are winning profitable deals in return for the relentless military support their governments have provided to the Syrian government.

### **Key Legal Analysis Based on Findings:**

- Syrian businessmen who have worked closely with the government may also be complicit in a number of international crimes, including intentional attacks against civilians, torture, and forced displacement.
- Many Syrian business elites might have violated international law, either as principal perpetrators or accomplices in the commission of international crimes and human rights violations throughout the Syrian conflict.
- Businesses and other entities working with sanctioned Syrian businessmen may be complicit in the international war crimes committed by them.
- Without extreme diligence, by investing and operating in Syria, businesses are likely to incur criminal responsibility for committing and/or aiding and abetting international crimes and human rights violations.
- Business activities contributing to projects in accordance with Decree 66 and Law no.10 may amount to complicity in the war crime of pillaging the original residents' properties. They may also be liable for violating the original residents' right to ownership of property, right not to be deprived of one's property, right to adequate housing, and the right to return.