

Foreword

This report is the second product of the collaboration between the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Centre for Syrian Studies (CSS) at the University of St Andrews, which began with a letter of understanding on joint scholarly activity, signed in January 2016. It is the result of extensive research by scholars and experts associated with the National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) Programme, as well as NAFS-sponsored dialogue with a broad spectrum of Syrian stakeholders, including actors in civil society, the private sector and national and international academic institutions, aimed at moving towards consensus beyond the polarizations of the conflict period. It benefited from analysis by CSS resident experts and an extensive network of scholars.

The report provides data on the socioeconomic impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. It documents the consequences for the economy and social fabric that pose daunting future challenges: whether it is production, investment or human development, the conflict has cost the country its hard-won socioeconomic gains, even though the flaws in the pre-conflict order contained the seeds of the uprising.

This socioeconomic portrait is located within the political and social context of the conflict that identifies additional challenges, from territorial division of the country, internationalization of conflict, partial State failure and the problems of a war economy. The documentation provides the foundation for a series of recommendations on ways forward as the conflict potentially winds down and the challenge of reconstruction and reconciliation looms, though with an ongoing risk of further violence as rival parties – Syrian and outside actors – maneuver to best position themselves for the post-conflict era. The recommendations stress the need to move beyond the zero-sum mentality that has wrought such destruction on the country and towards an inclusive approach to peacebuilding that takes account of the vital interests of all parties, not least the weak and the victims of the conflict.

The report provides policymakers at international and national levels, and civil society activists, with an understanding and the information base to address the Syrian conflict in a positive way and hopefully avoid mistakes of the past.



Rola Dashti
Under-Secretary-General
Executive Secretary of ESCWA



Raymond Hinnebusch
Director of the Center for Syrian Studies
University of St. Andrews