

Journalists' Perspectives on the Reality of Support and Protection Mechanisms Amidst the Future of Syrian Media



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The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit civil society organization founded in 2004. It works to achieve justice, defend human rights, promote media freedom, support civil society, and encourage active citizenship. The center has gained expertise in combating impunity and promoting the rule of law. The center has held special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2011. Its work focuses on documenting human rights violations and presenting legal cases to hold perpetrators accountable, strengthening the role of victims and their families, and supporting journalists, human rights defenders, and independent media to build democracy and support civil peace. The center has established a developed database to serve as a reference for transitional justice processes.

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Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression





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Introduction

Since the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) was established in 2004, its core team, across its various units, has focused its primary efforts on defending individuals persecuted for their beliefs and opinions, promoting human rights, and supporting and developing professional, independent, and critical media. As part of its mission to build a society that guarantees freedom of expression and belief, human rights, and justice, the Media and Freedoms Department team is actively working to ensure the defence of journalists through the Press House program.

The Press House project has been working since 2017 to support, protect, and ensure the safety of media workers (both male and female) and media institutions by documenting violations against journalists, and facilitating access to various support mechanisms that guarantee a response to life-threatening situations due to their work, violations of media rights and freedoms, and obstacles to media work. To achieve this, SCM collaborates with various international organizations concerned with media work and human rights partners to advocate for coordination aimed at improving global measures for the protection of journalists and building their capacities towards more professional working conditions.

Based on these facts, the Media and Freedoms Department team, in collaboration with a lead researcher¹, designed a research methodology and conducted a study to document, assess, and review the support tools and mechanisms directed at journalists for the purpose of development and providing up-to-date information to understand the nature of the changes from the perspective of beneficiaries (both male and female) as well as stakeholders from international non-governmental organizations providing support, with a focus on the level of satisfaction, suggestions for performance improvement, and providing future recommendations that ensure better service for journalists amidst global, national, and local political and economic changes.

1 This study was completed in collaboration with Dr. Mona Magdy Farag Abdel Maksoud, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo University.

The importance of conducting such in-depth studies today stems from the need to understand how the changes in Syrian media reflect upon the reality and needs of male and female journalists, especially concerning mechanisms for professional, psychological, and legal protection and support. The rapid changes in the media environment at both the international and national levels necessitate the search for new strategies that can reinforce freedom of expression, ensure the safety of journalists, and empower them to fulfil their role in conveying the truth and keeping pace with societal transformations.

This research report is primarily directed at local and international media organizations, human rights organizations, and civil society institutions concerned with freedom of expression and the protection of journalists. It also targets research centers and academic bodies involved in monitoring transformations in media environments, in addition to policymakers and donors who can contribute to supporting initiatives that seek to develop a safer and more independent environment for journalistic work in Syria.

The report's significance lies in providing a modern knowledge base that helps in understanding the trends and reality of Syrian media considering current digital, political, and social transformations from the perspective of male and female journalists. By analysing challenges and opportunities, international stakeholders can reformulate their strategies in alignment with field needs and help develop new services and means of support that enable journalists to conduct their role more effectively and with an appropriate level of safety.

As for the practical impact, the report's findings contribute to formulating more effective strategic policies for protecting journalists and ensuring their professional and legal safety. These findings also allow organizations and donors to direct their funding efforts toward realistic priorities based on accurate indicators. This strengthens the building of a freer and more transparent media environment, capable of performing its role in enhancing societal accountability and conveying the truth.

Summary

This research study is part of the effort to support and develop professional Syrian media. Its aim is to assess the satisfaction level of male and female journalists with the support and protection mechanisms provided by SCM, and to analyse the most pressing current needs of media workers amidst the political and social transformations following December 2024. The study seeks to explore journalists' future expectations regarding support priorities and the development required during the transitional phase.

To achieve these objectives, the study adopted a descriptive methodology, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This involved:

- * Online digital surveys for a sample of journalists who submitted requests for support and protection services between 2021 and 2024.
- * Organizing focused discussion groups to explore the interpretations and perceptions of the views presented and to gain a deeper understanding of the results.
- * Conducting in-depth individual interviews with a number of international partners from non-governmental organizations that support the protection of journalists. This allowed for a balanced understanding, combining the measurement of numerical indicators with the interpretation of qualitative contexts.

The main findings of the study indicate a high level of satisfaction with the support and protection services among most participants, especially in the areas of financial and legal support. However, the most significant gap emerged in the speed of response to requests and the coverage of living and logistical needs, which many considered insufficient for the actual reality.

The most urgent needs identified were:

- * Livelihood support and securing housing.
- * Safe exit and protection from threats.
- * Specialized professional training, particularly in the fields of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Digital Security, Data Journalism, and Investigative Journalism.

Furthermore, no statistically significant differences in satisfaction levels appeared among different categories of journalists (in terms of experience, gender, or educational background). The expectations of most participants were that the future of media freedom in Syria would remain within the framework of conditional, relative freedom, accompanied by wide caution against adopting optimistic scenarios.

The study's recommendations concluded with a set of proposals directed at:

- * The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM): Developing the communication system with journalists, enhancing specialized training, opening diverse secure channels, and expanding the use of technology and AI.
- * Decision-Making Circles in Syria: Enacting laws guaranteeing media freedom, strengthening the legal environment for the protection of journalists, and involving stakeholders (including the community of journalists and civil society organizations) in drafting laws.
- * International and Regional Supporting Organizations: Emphasizing the importance of increasing financial allocations, providing accessible grants and financial support services for journalistic projects, supporting digital security programs, and being gender sensitive.

The conclusion highlights that continued investment in the Syrian media infrastructure is an essential condition for establishing a more transparent and accountable environment during the transitional phase. Therefore,

providing multi-dimensional support to Syrian journalists is an urgent necessity that cannot be delayed. The importance of strengthening international and regional advocacy campaigns to ensure the flow of financial resources and expand the scope of funding dedicated to protecting independent media and safeguarding freedom of expression is also emphasized.

The commitment of all concerned parties, especially international partners and policymakers, to implement these recommendations will contribute to building a media environment capable of performing its oversight and developmental role efficiently, thereby advancing the path of democratic transition and establishing a more stable and just phase in Syria.

Overview of Syrian Media Developments

Before 2011, official Syrian media was entirely subordinate to the state and its security apparatus. For decades, it remained an instrument of political propaganda, relaying the government's official discourse and justifying its policies, while freedom of expression was severely restricted. Media in Syria at that time—whether print, visual, or audio—was not a space for free debate, but merely a platform that repeated the regime's slogans and worked to create a monolithic image of political and social reality. Consequently, any genuine role for investigative or critical journalism was absent from the national scene, and media work was limited to promoting the authority's narrative and denying or distorting any dissenting voices.

During that era—according to several specialized human rights and media organizations, Syrian security services played a central role in monitoring and directing the media. This control was exerted directly through censoring news and banning coverage of any events that did not align with state policies, or indirectly by instilling fear among journalists, who resorted to “self-censorship” to avoid prosecution or arrest, making the media field suffocating and constrained. The result was a silent, unadventurous press, disconnected from the real concerns of the citizens.

Partisan journalism in its common sense, as well as independent media, had no scope within that system. Opposition newspapers had been banned for decades, and no channels or websites were allowed to operate freely from inside Syria. Furthermore, any independent media initiative was met with closure, confiscation, and sometimes legal and security prosecution. Even private media, which emerged on a limited scale since the beginning of the millennium, remained confined to narrow margins and under strict surveillance. Its ownership was often linked to businesspeople close to the authority. Thus, the Syrian media scene remained impoverished, relying on a unified discourse, and failing to reflect the intellectual pluralism present in society.

With the outbreak of the popular protests in 2011 and the subsequent conflicts, Syrian media turned into a propaganda battlefield. The official media adopted the “external conspiracy” narrative and accused the protesters of terrorism, while ignoring the crimes and violations committed by the authority. Syrian Television and the “SANA” agency presented singular narratives that denied any government violations and exaggerated military achievements and victories. Consequently, the official media lost any remaining credibility, especially with the spread of social media, which allowed people to circulate photos and videos documenting events away from state censorship.

As years passed, the official Syrian media became untrustworthy. While Syrian cities suffered from siege, shelling, and economic crises, the official media spoke of “victories” and “normal life.” This disconnection between reality and media discourse deepened the gap, pushing many to rely on alternative media, whether opposition or foreign, to obtain news. Nevertheless, the official media continued to dominate the internal scene due to the limited capabilities available to independent media inside the country.

Despite the spread of the internet and social media in Syria after 2011, the regime did not hesitate to impose electronic censorship, whether by issuing laws that restrict freedoms, blocking websites, or monitoring user activity. Many media activists who tried to publish alternative content or document violations were subjected to arrest and elimination.

Despite this, alternative digital media formed a new window to break the monopoly of the official discourse, though at a heavy price for the journalists who risked their lives for professionalism and responsibility.

Before the fall of the regime, official media inside Syria continued to repeat a propaganda narrative that had lost its effect on the public, while independent journalists (men and women) were subjected to oppression or exile. The media environment lacked any guarantees of freedom or protection, making it unable to perform its natural role in monitoring authority, exposing corruption, or conveying the truth.

In addition, areas under the control of the Autonomous Administration in Northern and Eastern Syria witnessed a less hostile media environment, with various outlets, some directly or indirectly belonging to political parties, alongside independent media primarily focusing on social and cultural issues from a local perspective based on the principle of gender equality and highlighting Kurdish culture. As for the areas under opposition control, practices of pursuing and arresting journalists, banning newspaper distribution, and confiscating equipment continued, leading to the emigration of media personnel amid dwindling support and a lack of transparency. Thus, the media entered the phase after December 2024 burdened with a long legacy of official propaganda, a popular crisis of confidence, and structural and professional weakness.

These factors negatively affected the conditions of journalists in terms of protection, risks, and censorship. The tight security control and the monopoly of the official narrative produced a working environment that exposed journalists to a set of overlapping risks: summonses, arbitrary detention during or after coverage, prevention from accessing sites and events, repeated confiscation of equipment and footage, extortion through loose legal or security files, and hacking of accounts and devices.

As a result of the weakness of the legal frameworks for protection and the surrounding volatile field and military conditions that directly impacted the work environment, journalists were forced to perform their role with limited resources, dilapidated equipment, and fragile

salaries due to inflation and crises, alongside a production pressure that favoured quantity over quality and viewed training as an unaffordable luxury. Consequently, real gaps emerged in field safety, risk management, and digital security, as well as in professional skills such as open-source verification, documentation of evidence, and data protection.

This reality compelled a large number of male and female journalists to seek asylum and protection, but new challenges emerged on the horizon related to legal status regularization, searching for job opportunities, and the scarcity of rehabilitation programs that could enable them to deal with international newsrooms and provide them with the ability to adapt to an evolving, demanding, and professional work environment.

Despite all these circumstances, a number of media professionals who left the country succeeded in establishing independent journalistic platforms that contributed to providing alternative media that challenged the official narrative, offered diverse professional content that reflected superior production quality, and entered new media arenas in the Syrian arena, such as investigative journalism, data journalism, and podcasts.

With the fall of the Syrian regime at the end of 2024, the media landscape changed on the level of government platforms. Broadcasting was halted for a period, and media platforms remained in a state of uncertainty and anticipation, awaiting directives from the new authorities. This continued until May 2025, when the Syrian News Channel resumed broadcasting, a move seen as an indication of the beginning of the rebuilding of official media institutions and the beginning of a new transitional era.

Since day one, government leaders—on numerous international and national occasions—have pledged to build a free media, promote freedom of the press and expression, invite journalists abroad to return and practice their work in a safe environment, reduce bureaucratic procedures, facilitate the work of foreign press delegations, develop infrastructure, train media personnel, and rely on standards of expertise, competence, and excellence.

In response, many independent Syrian media institutions and journalists have sought to return home to settle down and begin their media activities within Syria. They have also sought to issue licenses to practice their profession within a legal framework, open offices, and form internal working teams to begin professional coverage. Some institutions have also issued joint statements² affirming their basic demands, including the release of detained journalists, the achievement of justice and accountability, the abolition of the Ministry of Information and all forms of censorship, and the provision of the necessary legal protection to support freedom of expression and the press, ensuring freedom and safety.

However, the current situation is still fraught with numerous structural challenges. Improving media performance requires the issuance of a new media law that guarantees basic freedoms, stable and sustainable funding mechanisms free from political influence, and the provision of genuine legal protection for journalists. They also require the development of their professional skills through specialized training programs in news verification, digital documentation, and safety in conflict zones. Perhaps the near future will provide academic studies and reports that will evaluate media performance during the period after December 2024 and provide comprehensive results capable of determining the level of professionalism and pluralism of the Syrian media, especially during periods of crisis, such as the events on the coast and in As-Sweida.

In conclusion, we can say that the recent changes in Syria are likely to pose numerous obstacles to building a free media system. Journalists, both male and female, operate in an unstable environment where security challenges intertwine with political pressures, in the absence of legal protection and the lack of laws guaranteeing the right to access information.

2 ["Statement on Press Freedom in Post-Assad Syria", aljumhuriya.net.](https://aljumhuriya.net)

The Press House Program and the Services Provided

Since its inception, the Press House project - as part of the Media and Freedoms Department - has worked to provide a modern reference and continuous working space for the protection and development of Syrian media outlets and media workers. To achieve this, the Press House offers several activities and various forms of support, as follows:

- * Documenting violations against media professionals, media workers, and media outlets.
- * Facilitating access to various support mechanisms, such as obtaining medical assistance in emergency situations or assistance to reach a safe place in cases where life is at risk due to the nature of their work.
- * Preparing in-depth research, reports, and studies to provide knowledge frameworks and enable media development efforts.
- * Developing the capacities of Syrian journalists and media institutions in the field of digital protection and capacity building.

Within this framework, SCM cooperates with numerous international partners from friendly media and human rights organizations, aiming to further international protection measures for journalists and develop a safe working environment.

Umbrella for Support

The support umbrella includes several forms and mechanisms to provide protection and support for journalists, including:

Types of protection and support services at SCM

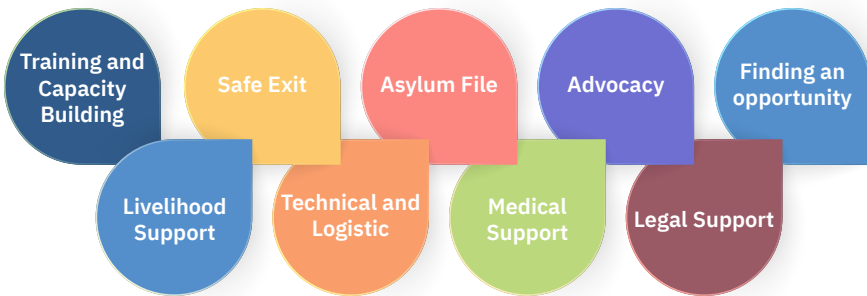


Figure (1)

The Press House team is continuously developing the institutional framework and basic support services by launching and implementing a set of projects aimed at enhancing the professional capabilities of journalists. These projects focus on developing technical, technological, and digital skills in response to the rapid transformations and growing needs in the Syrian media environment. In this context, numerous in-person and virtual training courses have been designed and implemented, covering various fields, including combating media disinformation, investigative journalism, and mechanisms for combating impunity for crimes committed against journalists, in addition to digital verification, the use of open sources, and psychological support sessions. The total number of beneficiaries of these training programs reached approximately 111 male and female journalists by the end of 2024.

Steps for Processing Support and Protection Requests

Stages of Processing Support and Protection Requests at SCM



Figure (2)

Stage one – Receiving Requests:

SCM's website provides [a link](#) for individuals or media organizations to upload and submit [a support request form](#). The link includes detailed information about the criteria, submission mechanism, and the requests being processed. Additional information is available through the support application, such as frequently asked questions related to support and a guide for submitting a support request. This application is currently being revised to include the launch of a more modern application that ensures greater interaction between users. SCM's work team also communicates with the applicant to confirm receipt and follow up within a maximum of ten working days. Communication is conducted within the framework of confidentiality protection. Submitting the request requires creating a personal account through which the required information can be filled out and supporting documents uploaded. It is also worth noting that these links are permanently available to everyone, so anyone can access them from anywhere and submit a support request 24/7.

Stage Two – Application Review:

This stage involves collecting data, information, and documents related to the support request by examining and verifying journalistic work according to established standards, as well as evaluating work and professional development data. SCM's team makes comments on the application, specifically assessing the content submitted by the individual or organization, based on the following elements:

- * Does the content incite violence, hatred, terrorism, or sectarianism?
- * Does it present discriminatory discourse based on race, religion, gender, sect, or nationality?
- * Does the content respect the right to privacy and the handling of images?
- * Does the content respect intellectual property rights?
- * Is the content balanced and compliant with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
- * What is the level of professionalism in the formulation of the submitted news?

Criteria for Processing Applications: ³

1. The applicant must have media content published in the media.
2. They must have published media content continuously for at least one year.
3. Their media work must be a source of income.

³ More details about the criteria and screening methods can be found by visiting SCM's page [here](#).

4. If they are a media activist or citizen journalist working on social media, the content they publish must be a source of information for the media.
5. The reason for requesting support must be related to their journalistic work.

Important Notes:

1. Applicants who have been absent from media work for more than one year from the date of submitting their application to the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression are not included in the target group.
2. Applicants who have worked in the media for institutions or organizations whose primary work is not media are not included in the target group.
3. Applicants affiliated with any political or military entity, or who have worked for political or military entities, are not included in the target group.
4. They must not have received support for the same application from another organization within six months of the application submission date.

During this stage, SCM's team focuses its efforts on verifying and gathering information and obtaining at least two referrals. Additional verification may also be conducted regarding specific violations or risks to which the applicant has been exposed. During this stage, the applicant may also be contacted if incomplete information is found.

Once the application is submitted, the applicant is responsible for the accuracy of the information provided in the form and is obligated to inform SCM if they submit a request for support to any other organizations during the processing period of their application, or if any important information changes in the assessment of the file.

Final Stage – Responding to Requests:

After ensuring that all necessary steps for examination and verification have been completed, the results are presented, and the response is determined:

Type of Response to Support and Protection Requests Submitted to SCM

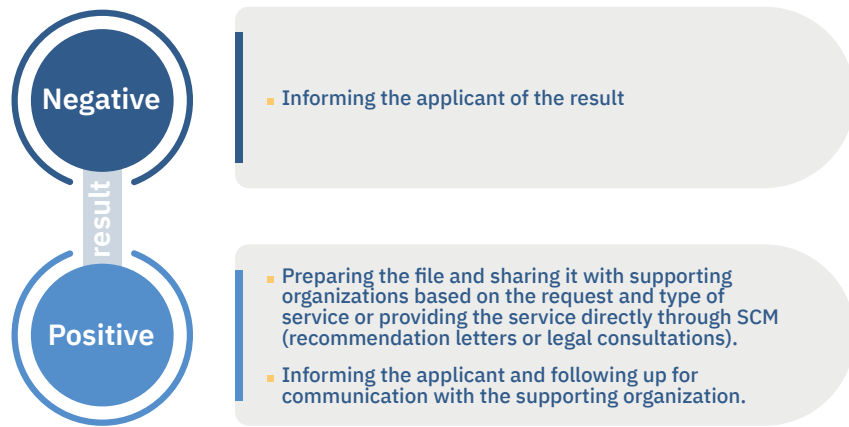


Figure (3)

SCM works to respond to requests that meet the conditions according to available capabilities, and according to the priority of threat to life and humanitarian need, most notably urgent medical assistance. It is important to note that the provision of support is linked to the capabilities available to SCM and its international partner organizations.

Objectives of the Research Study

1. To determine the current level of satisfaction of journalists with the support and protection mechanisms provided through SCM for the purpose of evaluation and development.
2. To analyse the views and perceptions of journalists regarding the extent to which changes in the Syrian media landscape are reflected in the types of future support requests.
3. To explore journalists' expectations regarding future needs and the priorities for support required.

These objectives will provide SCM's team with practical suggestions for improving current support and protection mechanisms to ensure the highest possible quality of outcomes. They will also enable NGOs providing support to develop future strategies that are aligned with actual needs and in line with emerging changes in the media sector.

Study Methodology

The scientific study relied on a descriptive approach, both quantitative and qualitative, in designing the methodology and selecting data collection tools to provide a comprehensive approach to the study topic. The quantitative approach helps measure the magnitude and prevalence of the phenomenon and monitor its patterns through numerical and statistical indicators, providing an accurate database that can be generalized and compared across time and space. In contrast, the qualitative approach focuses on exploring the interpretive aspects and deeper implications associated with the phenomenon, including analysing trends, behaviours, and cultural and social backgrounds that may not be reducible to numbers alone. By integrating these two approaches, the

study provides a more balanced and reliable understanding, combining scientific rigor with analytical richness. This enhances the validity of the findings and contributes to formulating practical recommendations applicable in real-life contexts.

Target Population

The study target population includes journalists, media professionals, and activists who previously submitted a request for support and protection services to SCM between 2021 and 2024, whether the response to the support request was positive or negative. In addition, the qualitative study population included international partners from media and human rights organizations advocating for greater international protection measures for journalists and improving their working environment.

Study Sample

A review of SCM's databases revealed that a total of approximately 520 forms requesting support and protection were received over the four-year period from 2021 to 2024. Approximately 260 forms were accepted for support. The study then relied on contacting 150 male and female journalists (a third of the study population) to voluntarily complete field study forms or focus group discussion sessions between May and July 2024. SCM received eighty-two participants in the field study (17 female journalists compared to sixty-five male journalists), as well as eight participants in the qualitative study in two separate sessions (3 female journalists compared to five journalists), with one session including support recipients and a second session including non-support recipients.

Regarding international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), four organizations were contacted (Rory Peck Trust for the Protection of Independent Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Defenders, and Free Press Without Borders), and SCM received two participants.

Data Collection Tools

The current study relied on three basic data collection tools:

1- A digital questionnaire: [The questionnaire](#) was designed using Google Forms in Arabic, and included closed and open-ended questions for journalists. It comprised four main sections: interactions with SCM, general evaluation of support and protection services for journalists, future development and the extent to which current needs are met, demographic data, and information about participants.

2- A focus group discussion guide: A guide was designed to facilitate dialogue in focus group discussions for journalists, focusing primarily on questions such as: What? How? Why? to ensure further explanations and information about the answers provided are provided within a safe, respectful space for exchanging views without evaluation or interruption.

3- In-depth Interview Guide: A semi-structured interview guide was developed targeting international supporting institutions to cover the main areas of the study's objectives and collect data related to the mechanism of cooperation with SCM, roles and responsibilities, the type of services and support provided to journalists across Syria, the extent of current challenges, and guarantees for the continued provision of more international protection services for journalists in the future. This tool provides external insights into expectations and how to better develop cooperation processes, accelerating the steps taken and adhering to the desired quality standards supported by transparency and professionalism.

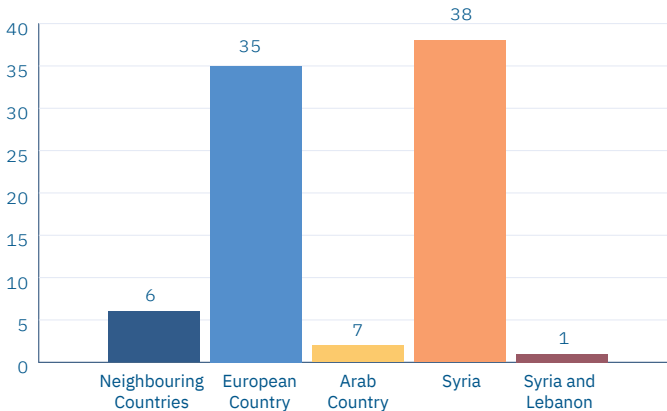
General Results of the Study

I - Field Study Sample Specifications

The characteristics of the sample participating in the field study can be identified through a number of variables that reflect the diversity of participants, whether in terms of gender, permanent residence, educational level, field of study, continued work in the media field, number of years of experience, nature of contracts with current institutions, type of media organization, or job position. This explains the findings obtained, as follows:

Distribution of the study sample according to gender and place of residence

Permanent Residence



Sex

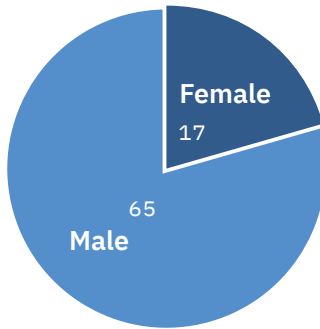
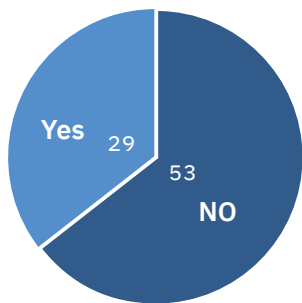


Figure (4)

Male journalists accounted for the largest share, comprising approximately three-quarters of the study sample, representing 79.3%, compared to a quarter of the sample, representing 20.7%, for females. The largest percentage was concentrated in Syria (46.3%) as a permanent place of residence, followed in second place by European countries (42.7%), then Syria's neighbouring countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, in third place (7.3%), or Arab countries (2.4%), or movement between Syria and Lebanon (1.2%), which reflects the diversity of geographical areas and the continued distribution of journalists inside and outside Syria, depending on decisions to return to the homeland or continue to remain outside its borders.

Distribution of the study sample according to field of study and educational qualifications

Studying Media as a Specialization



Educational Qualification

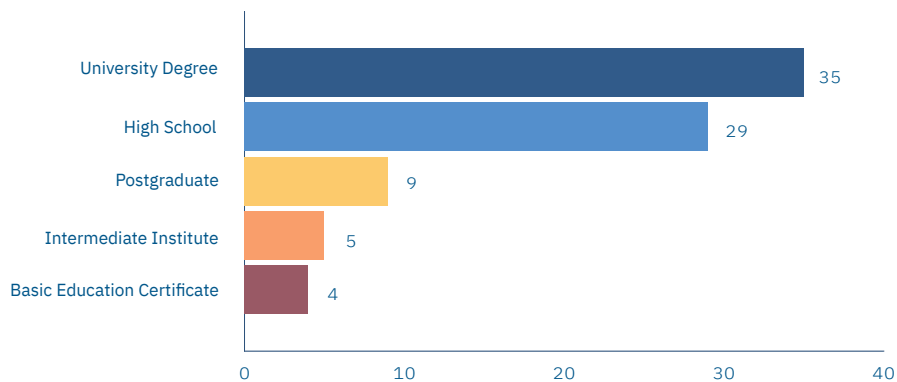


Figure (5)

In terms of educational qualifications, the study sample included the highest percentage of university degree holders (42.7%), followed by high school diploma holders (35.4%). Postgraduate education holders ranked third at 11%, followed by intermediate education holders (6.1%), with basic education coming in last (4.9%). The highest percentage was for those who specialized in media studies (64.6%), while a third of the

sample did not study this major (35.4%). This percentage somewhat reflects that work in the media field is not limited to graduates of this specialization.

Distribution of the study sample according to years of experience and nature of contract

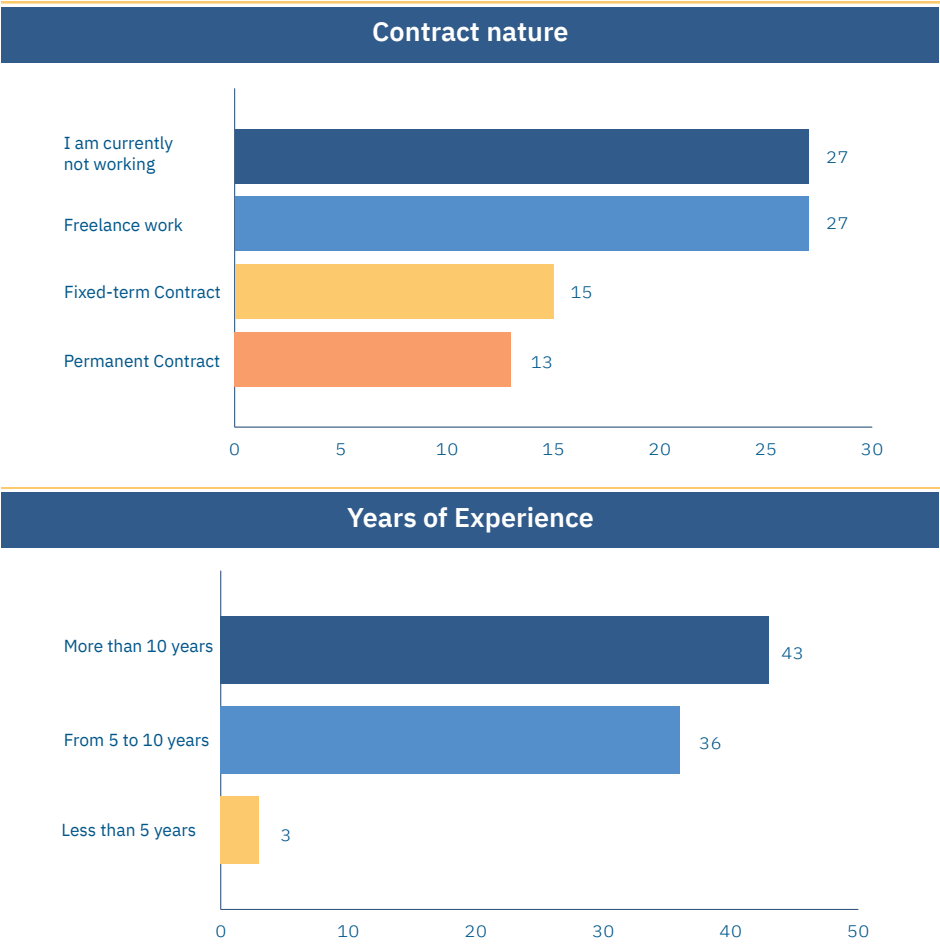


Figure (6)

In terms of contract nature, the percentage of freelance workers was equal to the percentage of unemployed⁴ (32.9%), with fixed-term contracts ranking second (18.3%), followed by permanent contracts (15.9%), reflecting the prevalence of instability. In terms of the number of years of experience, about half of the sample had more than 10 years in the field, representing 52.4%, followed by those with medium experience, ranging from 5 to 10 years (43.9%), and in last place were those with less than 5 years of experience (3.7%), which demonstrates the availability of cumulative practical experience in general and involvement in media work for a long time.

Despite the high percentage of participants whose university major was media and the fact that more than half of the sample had over ten years of experience, when asked about their continued employment at a media institution currently, opinions were split: Yes (59.8%) and No (40.2%).

This can be interpreted considering the current ambiguity of the media scene and the inability of a considerable number of journalists to maintain stable, permanent employment at a specific institution. This is compounded by the contraction of the Syrian media landscape and the drop in the number of institutions still capable of operating amid the political, economic, and social turmoil the country is experiencing, which directly or indirectly affects institutional work stability and the ability of media outlets to retain their staff sustainably.

When participants were asked about the type of media institution they currently work for—or at least the last one they were affiliated with—the largest share went to Media Platforms with accounts or pages on social networking sites and electronic websites, followed by Audiovisual Media (Visual and Audio). Print Journalism occupied the last position, a logical result that reflects the decline of traditional media channels in favour of New Media, which primarily relies on the internet and digital content.

4 In the Syrian context, the term “unemployed media workers” refers to journalists, both male and female, who are currently not employed due to various circumstances, such as their institutions ceasing production, the institution laying off employees, structural changes in the staff, or dismissal as a result of a political stance, personal interest, or other circumstances, despite their ability to continue working and their desire to do so.

The media institutions employing the participants were diverse, including: Regional networks (e.g., Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed), Specialized Arab platforms (e.g., Noon Post), Channels (e.g., Syria TV, Syrian News Channel), News platforms (e.g., Syria Untold), Local organizations (e.g., Houran Free Gathering, Idlib Media Center), Networks (e.g., Sharqiya Post, Ain al-Furat), Local and national radio stations (e.g., Radio Fresh, Radio Rozana), Electronic newspapers (e.g., Zaman Al-Wasl, Enab Baladi, Al Modon), News agencies (e.g., Smart News).

As for Job Specialization, Correspondents ranked first, accounting for 35.4% of all participants, followed by Editors at 24.4%. The percentage for Department Manager/Head was equal to that of Photographer (12.2% each). The study also included other roles such as Producer, Camera Operator, Presenter/Announcer, Sound/Editing Technician, Researcher, Trainer, and All-Around Journalist, which highlights the significant variation in job specializations and the diversity of work fields.

II: Engagement with SCM

Sources of Information about SCM

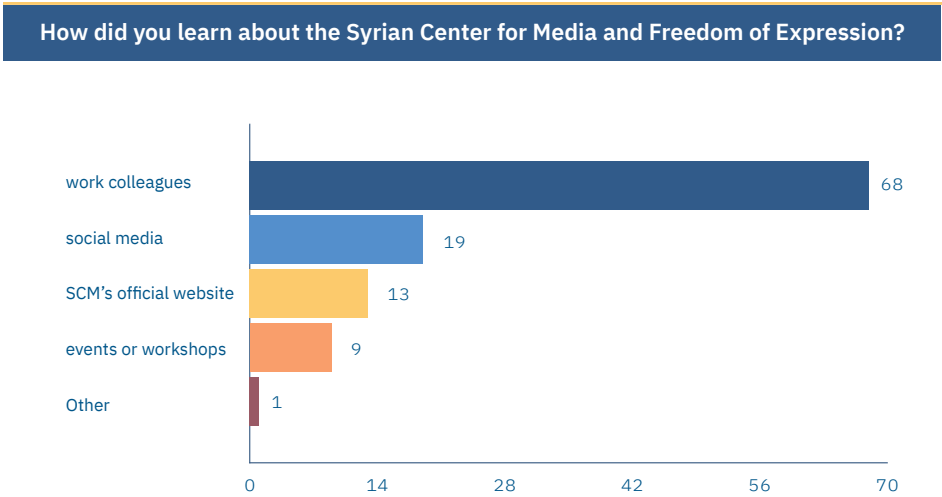


Figure (7)

Word-of-mouth (personal contact) was the primary channel for most participants to learn about SCM and its services, reflecting the continued unique influence of personal communication and information transfer, especially in Arab societies.

The role of Social Media Platforms also appeared significantly, ranking second as a source of information about SCM (at 23.2%), followed by the Electronic Website (15.9%). This underscores the importance of SCM's digital presence and the content it provides across its online spaces. Events and Workshops also play a role in introducing SCM's activities and programs and in building relationships and developing work networks (at 11%).

Reasons for Contacting SCM

When asked an open question about the reasons that led them to contact SCM, some participants cited a desire to receive support due to the deterioration of the security situation, which resulted in injuries, harassment, death threats, shelling, or displacement. Others mentioned the deterioration of the economic situation and the desire to obtain financial assistance or secure equipment, or the desire to leave the country and receive assistance with their journalistic file for travel with letters of recommendation for asylum purposes.

A number of others expressed their trust in SCM, its distinguished standing among journalists and in European countries, and its role in providing support and protection for journalists. They also praised its activities in advocacy, development, and legal action against perpetrators of violations, which increases its credibility. Two participants stated that SCM initiated contact after they were subjected to various violations, in order to verify the facts and assess available intervention opportunities based on needs.

The results of the field study on this matter matched the findings of the focus groups, where most participants indicated that friends, acquaintances, and colleagues were the main source for learning about SCM and encouraging contact with it:

I worked in media for four years and had never heard of SCM at all. It was only when SCM was conducting an inventory of journalists in southern Idlib, during the launch, that a colleague from SCM contacted me to get information about me and to check if I needed any support or anything. It was a coincidence.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

I was imprisoned for a period, and when I got out, someone told me that since I had been subjected to violence, I could apply to SCM. I wanted to emigrate out of the country, so I applied to SCM.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

I found out about SCM through a work colleague who used to work in the Violations Documentation Center. I was subjected to a violation in 2021—I was beaten—and the colleague from SCM contacted me to document the violation.

— Female Journalist, Support Recipient Group

Through relationships and friends in the area and my surrounding environment. Subhan Allah (Glory be to God), the friends I know at SCM benefited from it, but I have not been able to benefit from anything at all since 2011 until this moment. That is because I had to delete everything from my work on my personal social media because my family was endangered.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

I remember one of my female colleagues; we were at university, and they were talking about SCM, and there might have been training, followed by getting logistics and equipment to support female journalists and such. My colleagues registered, but I did not, and I have not benefited from any service or assistance from SCM, but they kept my email. They started sending me emails, for example, whenever there was a meeting or a session, they would just send me an invitation to attend.

— Female Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

I got to know them during the last campaign of shelling on Eastern Ghouta. We were subjected to very heavy shelling in Ghouta before the forced displacement. That is when colleagues from SCM reached out to me. We got acquainted, and they even ran training courses for us at the time. After we were displaced to Northern Syria, they provided us with support after the displacement.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

Year of Submitting Support Requests

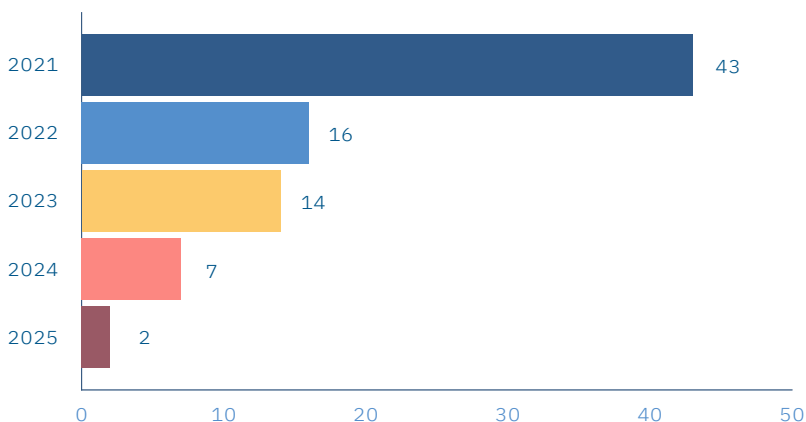


Figure (8)

The period during which participants submitted a request to SCM to benefit from its services spans from 2021 to 2025, indicating the variety of years participants contacted SCM. 2021 represented the highest percentage at 52.4%. This was followed by 2022 at 19.5%. Then 2023 at 17.1%. Finally, both 2024 and 2025 were in the last stages (8.5% and 2.4%, respectively).

This variation in the years of application shows that the study participants have been engaging intensively with SCM over an extended period, which increases confidence in their impressions and answers and affirms the validity of the results for evaluating an extended period.

Level of Awareness Regarding SCM’s Services

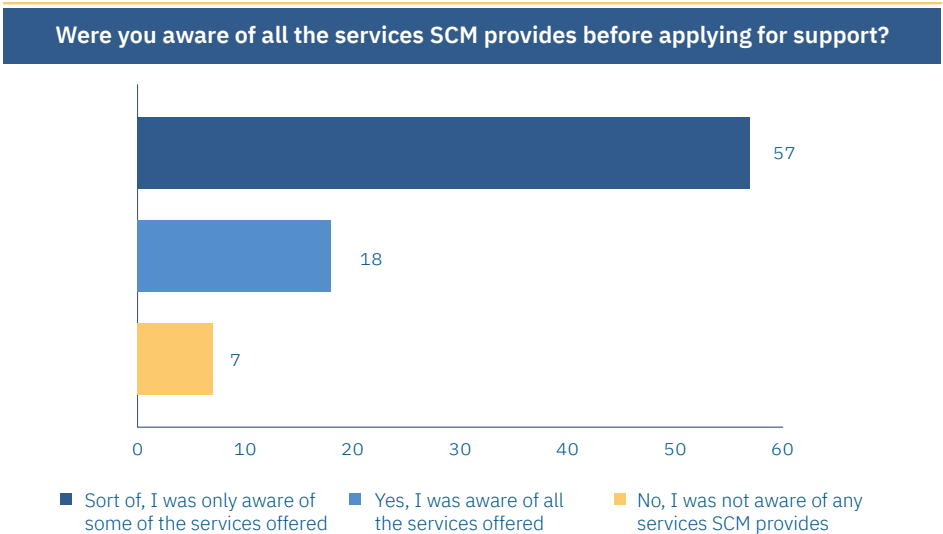


Figure (9)

When participants were asked about their level of knowledge of all the services provided by SCM before applying for support, more than half of the sample (69.5%) expressed that they were not fully aware of all the activities and services offered. This can likely be explained by the heavy reliance on direct personal contact (word-of-mouth) as the primary way of learning about SCM, which may not be a sufficient source for providing comprehensive information.

In the second rank, participants expressed their awareness of all services. This group's knowledge is likely linked to their use of social media platforms and SCM's website as comprehensive informational sources.

The smallest percentage (8.5%) admitted they were not aware of any services offered. This highlights SCM's need to exert greater efforts in the field of public relations to introduce all its services and work on providing journalists with media materials and digital content that clarify the areas they can benefit from, thus raising access rates to the targeted segments of media workers.

This same result was confirmed when focus groups were asked about their level of knowledge of all services provided by SCM, and the answer was definitively No.

I know there is financial, logistical, legal, and psychological support, but we were never asked to apply for it, or there was no opportunity for someone to offer it to us before. There might also be training opportunities, but they have not held any training sessions that we were invited to or anything like that. We were only invited to single-day dialogue sessions.”

— Female Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

The support or the links that are published, we only learn about them from our friends. There is no access or anything to indicate this [publicly], so there could be specific pages or a way to deliver this to the public pages, so we know about it in the first place.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Type of Services Requested

What type of service(s) did you apply for from SCM?

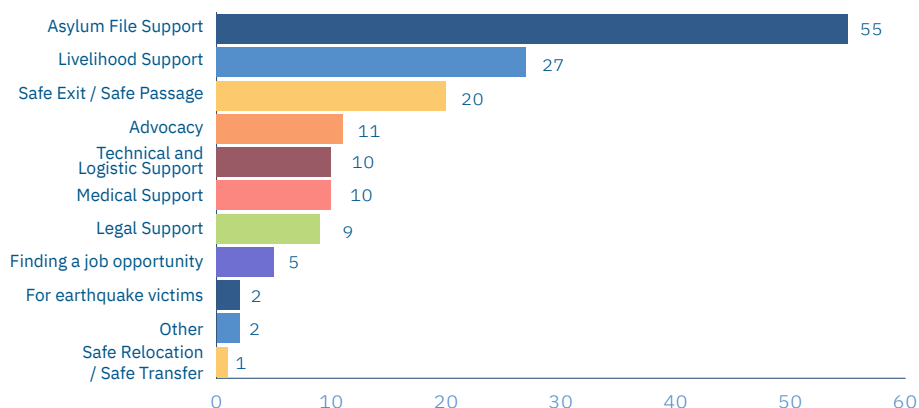


Figure (10)

Asylum file support ranked first among the types of services participants requested from SCM, at 67.1%. This result aligns with the data recorded by SCM regarding the type of support requests received between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2025 (237 asylum file support requests). This generally indicates the extent of the harassment and threats journalists have faced, forcing a substantial number to leave their homeland or neighbouring countries in search of safety.

Following this, and with a significant difference of nearly double the rate, livelihood support appeared in the second rank (32.9%). This is also related to displacement to a new area and the lack of a permanent financial source to provide basic living needs.

In the same context, the need for safe exit/passage was cited by nearly a quarter of the participating sample (24.4%), which reinforces the hypothesis of receiving threats and facing danger to life.

Advocacy and the need for medical, technical/logistical, and legal support also appeared at similar percentages, around 11% of the total participants. Meanwhile, some expressed a continuing need for support in finding suitable and stable employment to secure their livelihood.

The main support services requested by participants in the focused discussion groups varied between asylum file support, safe exit, financial support, medical support, logistical support, support for obtaining equipment, and support during the earthquake period.

For Syria, we receive many requests from journalists who are in danger due to the context of the war or the humanitarian context. We only rely on supporting the person who was directly threatened because of their work, which means we need to conduct a very thorough vetting process—to check the content of their publications to ensure they are truly independent, that they were not combatants, that they are threatened because of their work, that they were arrested, when, and by whom, and all the details. In this context, we do not have perfect knowledge, and it is especially important to contact and rely heavily on trusted local institutions like SCM to ultimately decide whether the journalist fits the established criteria. SCM’s primary role is to help us with verification when journalists in Syria contact us for support.

— A woman, Partner International Institution

Evaluation of the Application Submission Stage:

General Satisfaction of the Sample in the Application Submission Stage

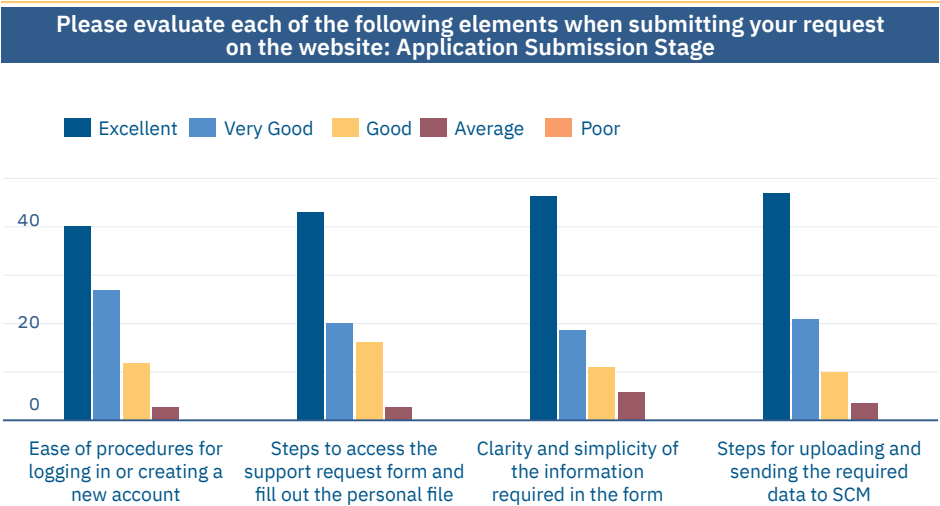


Figure (11)

The results of the participants' general evaluation of the first stage of interaction with SCM—submitting the support request—were rated as Excellent by nearly half of the sample (ranging from 40 to 47), indicating high overall satisfaction with this stage. This was followed by a rating of Very Good (19 to 27), then Good (10 to 16), and finally Average (3 to 6).

Figure 11 shows that the evaluation rates were largely similar across all detailed elements. However, the lowest satisfaction ratings were given to the clarity and simplicity of the information required in the form and the steps for accessing the support form and filling out the personal file. This suggests potential areas for improvement in these specific procedures.

Extent of Difficulties When Submitting the Support Request

Did you face any difficulty in filling out and submitting the request?

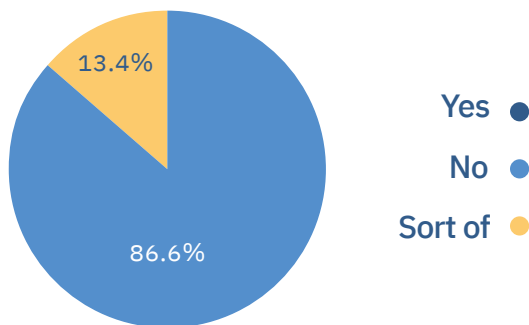


Figure (12)

Most participants reported no difficulties encountered while filling out, submitting, or raising the support request (71 out of 82 participants). This substantial number indicates the ease of the steps and procedures for most individuals and aligns with the previous finding that the application submission stage received an overall rating of excellent and particularly good in most assessments.

At the level of the focused discussion groups, most responses pointed to some difficulties journalists faced during the process of documenting their need with supporting documents for intervention assessment or proving their journalistic work by providing links confirming their published materials and attributing them to the applicant.

Examples include:

The only challenge for me was the documents or the verifications. When the earthquake destroyed our homes, we left with nothing, not even papers. SCM has the right to ask for verifications, but unfortunately, the request for documentation was immediate, and I had to send it right away. In this situation, a person might be unstable, they already have a lot of problems and are preoccupied with issues. So, confirming the documentation and the necessity of attaching it quickly with the support request was difficult, and the request is managed urgently.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

For me, I found many obstacles, for example, they asked for a certificate of experience or an intermediate one, in a specific section. They asked for things that I struggled with, or things that I lost due to a circumstance. For example, they asked for my previous work, and unfortunately, I worked with a news agency whose page was shut down, so all my previous work that was on it was gone.

— Female Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

They asked us to write something between 150 to 200 words. I remember the form was long to fill out and had many details.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Honestly, the links were the hardest thing I struggled with. When they asked us for links, for example, I did not have my links. My archive of clips, for example, I kept on hard drives and laptops. I forgot the archive—of the bombing, the events, the demonstrations, and everything that conveyed the real picture of the Syrian revolution—and my father took the archive and completely destroyed it out of fear for me. Consequently, I no longer have access to them. I informed them by email and told them, if you want to ask about me, ask the revolutionary media activists.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Evaluation of the Application Review Stage

General Satisfaction of the Sample in the Application Review Stage

Please evaluate each of the following items when reviewing your application on the site at the application review stage

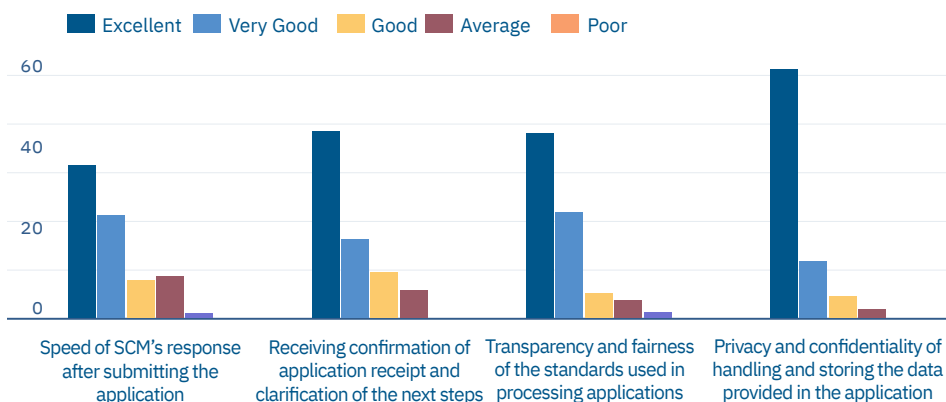


Figure (13)

The results of the participants' general evaluation of the second stage of interaction with SCM—reviewing the support request—were generally rated as Excellent (ranging from 37 to 61). This result once again demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with this stage, followed by a rating of Very Good (14 to 26), then Good (5 to 11), and finally Average (2 to 10) and Poor (1).

Figure 13 indicates that the evaluation rates were significantly high for the element of privacy and confidentiality in the handling and storage of the data provided in the application. This reflects the superiority of SCM's policies regarding privacy and handling data with the utmost secrecy and sensitivity, and the journalists' ability to appreciate this.

However, the lowest satisfaction ratings were for the speed of response after submitting the application and the transparency and fairness of the criteria used in processing the requests.

The previous result suggests a need for development, especially since the criteria SCM relies upon when considering submitted applications are already published on SCM's website. However, their location under an internal link on [the Protection and Support page](#) in the "Criteria used in processing requests" section may not adequately highlight them.

Alternatively, the issue may require more than just publication, perhaps by offering an open space like an introductory seminar or a discussion panel as an initiative-taking step. This would allow for discussing more details about the mechanisms, thereby enhancing transparency, and providing answers to some questions that might arise in the applicant's mind, even before raising the request. Furthermore, SCM could adopt organizational steps to increase the number of staff assigned to manage support requests to ensure a faster response in cases that require it.

When participants in the focused discussion groups were asked, opinions varied between fast and slow procedures depending on the case and the type of support requested, as follows:

When we were displaced from Ghouta ‘in 2018,’ we left with almost nothing but the clothes on our backs. We did not have time to take anything with us. We arrived in Northern Syria with nothing. SCM was contacted collectively with an association, and they conducted a census and submitted support requests. After calls and confirming the facts and that we had media materials, it took about a month and a half from the time we submitted the requests until we received the support.⁵

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group.

First, they told us that there was a link so that if you wanted support—whether financial, logistical, or safe exit—you could apply. At that time, as I told you, there was a threat that the regime would enter the southern regions, so I applied for a safe exit. The response was fast; they replied immediately, but the process took about six months until the European Union approved it. At that time, it was also the COVID-19 period, so they could not get us out; it was very difficult because airports were heavily restricted. And we had to do the interview at the embassy. The whole thing, from the time I applied to the time we left, took a year and a half. I also applied for a financial support grant for purchasing equipment, which took me approximately 4 to 6 months.

— Female Journalist, Support Recipient Group

5 Some cases received more support in previous periods according to the nature of the phase and the type of support requested.

I received support when we were in Lebanon. I contacted SCM, and their response was fast, ranging between ten and twenty-five days. Another, more critical support we received from SCM was during the Syria earthquake on February 8th. SCM's response was very fast; most of the colleagues I know, and myself included, received support from SCM in less than a week after the earthquake.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

When participants were asked to choose three words to describe their first impression of SCM after receiving the initial response to their support request, the vast majority expressed feelings of friendliness and gratitude towards SCM and the staff, and thanks for the assistance provided.

They also emphasized attributes of cooperation, highlighting feelings of care, encouragement, understanding, politeness, kindness, organization, clarity, respect, seriousness, transparency, confidentiality, excellence, smoothness, trust, sophistication, follow-up, integrity, humanity, dedication, flexibility, speed, professionalism, specialization, and reliability—qualities that inspire security and reassurance. A small number of participants, however, expressed that the impression was frustrating and that the evaluation process was bureaucratic and had unclear criteria.

Some of the most notable phrases used by participants to describe this impression were: “Saved me from the unknown”, “Friend in times of need”, “Promising media project”, “Did not disappoint me”, “Trustworthiness, honesty, and sincerity”, “Renewed hope in me”, “It is true that I did not receive the support, but their response was fast.”

The focus groups' impressions of SCM and the team after interaction were as follows:

For me, I liked the flexibility in communication. Frankly, the response and the method were not difficult. It was not exclusively that we had to write and send emails and so on. They were communicating with us on WhatsApp when we could not use email, meaning they were very flexible.

— Female Journalist, Support Recipient Group

The speed of communication and speed of response between me and the colleagues at SCM, because I was always in direct contact with them. They would reply to me immediately. For example, there are many other centers I contact that take days or weeks to get a response.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

The most prominent suggestions provided by participants in the field study for developing the application submission and review stages focused on mechanisms for increasing response speed, ensuring the highest degree of transparency, revisiting staff numbers, and streamlining decision-making procedures and mechanisms. They also suggested providing new digital tools and communication channels to enhance follow-up, especially during crises, and exchanging information in a simple and smooth manner to ensure the organization and storage of information with speed and accuracy:

- * Designate a special number or email for applicants to submit inquiries and activate a hotline.
- * Provide answers to inquiries or questions in a frank and clear manner.

- * Provide an approximate and simplified detailed timeline for each stage.
- * Add a clear, periodic status update that allows applicants to know the request status (Received - Under Review - Accepted/Rejected).
- * Add a smoothly organized list on SCM's website that clarifies the elements and stages of the request.
- * Add a post-rejection stage that allows for the possibility of reconsidering the request (based on the submission of new documents or facts) and the possibility of re-evaluating the case.
- * Share evaluation criteria to ensure transparency, fairness, and reduce bias.
- * Increase the number of staff to speed up the review of requests and ensure responsibilities are met if a support team colleague is absent.
- * In emergency cases where SCM must study a large number of requests, an external specialized team could be provided to expedite the decision, as time is an essential and crucial factor in dealing with crises.
- * Utilize automation and provide an automatic reply upon request receipt, confirming successful submission.
- * Open an office inside Syria and provide a person or team from inside the country to provide information from the field.
- * Expand and diversify the base of references to ensure the maximum amount of information and facts is available.
- * Coordination and partnership with Syrian organizations concerned with journalism to enhance data quality and speed up the review process.
- * Add a WhatsApp number, given that many colleagues lose their phones, which makes following up on email difficult.
- * Build a database of journalists with continuous periodic updates.

The main suggestions expressed by the focused discussion groups are as follows:

SCM needs to have a real physical presence on the ground—colleagues from SCM itself. Now that all of Syria has opened, and the situation might be a little easier, there should be a team and an office to allow for direct communication.

— Female Journalist, Support Recipient Group

I see a shortcoming on SCM's part that we only see these people who say, 'I applied to SCM and, for example, received a grant or something.' Well, we are the last to know about it. There is a deficiency from SCM, for example, in communicating and defining how we can apply for this grant that is being offered, and how they can help us and provide their services.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

I know of only one person who acts as the means of communication between SCM and the journalists, and that is not enough, meaning it makes assessment difficult. We could change the structure; surely, one person does not have the capacity to manage this effort. It could become two or three people.

— Female Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

As a journalist, I do not adequately know SCM’s vision, its classification, or how we can define its identity. You need meetings to tell us more about yourselves, and what type of journalists you work with and accept for grants. What classifies them as journalists or not? All these are matters that we see need more clarification. The information is scarce, and we want greater transparency to be provided.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Evaluation of the Response Stage

General Satisfaction of the Sample in the Support Provision Stage

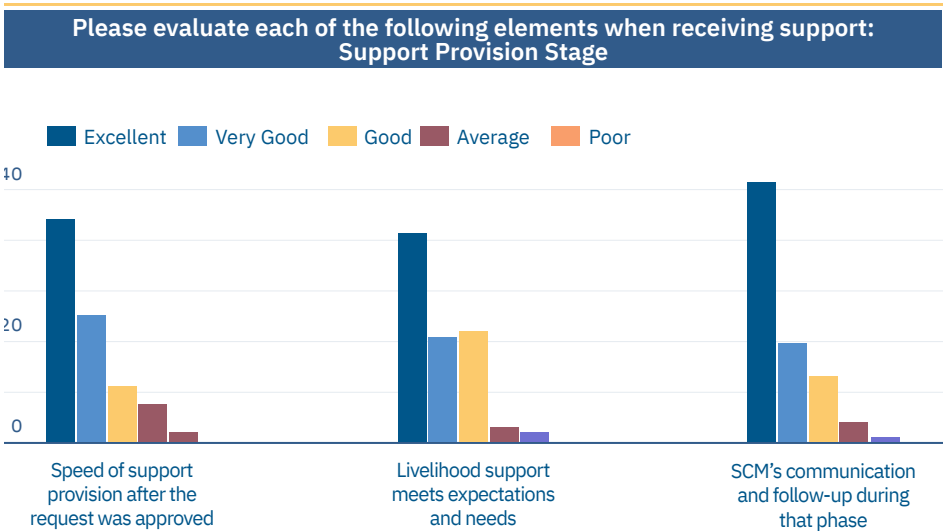


Figure (14)

The results of the participants' general evaluation of the third stage of interaction with SCM—support provision—were rated as Excellent by nearly half of the sample. This result confirms, for the third time, the high level of satisfaction with this stage, followed by ratings of Very Good, then Good, and finally Average and Poor.

The preceding chart (Figure 14 - not provided in text but inferred from the description) shows that the evaluation rates were particularly high for the element of communication and follow-up. However, the lowest satisfaction ratings were given to the speed of support provision after the request was approved and the extent to which that provision met expectations and needs.

On another note, some participants—in both the quantitative and qualitative studies—shared their experience receiving support. 13.4% of participants indicated a difficulty centered around the electronic signature, which may require special technical skills or capabilities that not everyone possesses. This problem could be overcome in the future by providing technical support to approved recipients to learn how to complete this process electronically.

The responses from the focused discussion groups were as follows:

I faced two problems. The first was the electronic signature, and the second was that the transfer was only to a bank account. At that time, there were no bank accounts in Syria, so transfers would arrive through offices, and the matter was a little difficult.

— Female Journalist, Support Recipient Group

The hardest difficulty for us is sending money to Syria. Even sending money to Türkiye or Lebanon has become a problem. We are supposed to provide financial assistance, and we either cannot send it, or it requires extended periods. Even though we send instant transfers, it can take more than months, at least 4 or 5 months—a headache—and after all that, the funds may even be returned to us. How can we get the money to the person? Sometimes it is easy, and sometimes it is not. I do not know if the situation has improved now.

— Woman, Partner International Institution

Regarding unsuccessful applications, the feelings of dissatisfaction, especially concerning rejected requests, could be minimized by sharing more information about the reasons for rejection or the criteria used to reach that decision. It may be beneficial to dedicate an individual interview to clarify the reasons for the decision and obtain further information that might validate the rejection or lead to a reconsideration of the request and a re-evaluation of the case. This step could contribute to increasing transparency and clarifying detailed points that may be overlooked, preventing an increased feeling of unfairness.

This direction was confirmed through the focused discussion group with individuals who did not receive support:

I know that there are colleagues—some traveled, and some received project support, which was a program they supported on social media. Some even received equipment.

— Female Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

I received a rejection, and they gave a comment saying that they considered my field of work to be relief/aid and not media. I told them I am a revolutionary activist in all aspects; I work in every field, and I can list everything—all the tasks I have worked on since 2011.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

They told me, ‘Unfortunately, the organization we shared your request with declined to provide support.’ But they did not mention the reason? Why did they decline? They did not mention it or share the reason for the rejection with me, even though I clarified all the details in the form.

— Female Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Why doesn’t SCM have a preliminary database or a list of names today—people who genuinely need support—so they are on a list, making them a priority at the top of the list when new support becomes available? This saves them time from having to collect information from scratch every time. This way, there is no injustice. Frankly, some people are receiving grants once, twice, and three times, and this is taking the opportunity away from others.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Unfortunately, one of the problems we face, and I am really frustrated about it, is that we are a very small team at the organization, and we work to provide support to journalists all over the world. So, it is impossible for us to be on the emergency side and, at the same time, follow up with journalists in the long term. We cannot play all the roles; we cannot be both the surgeon and the physiotherapist. So, we have recently been working on this, developing projects to help exiled journalists in France, for example, to integrate into the French media scene, but these projects are not with the Syrian Center but with other centres. We really work together harmoniously, and they are also able to understand when I say no and when I reject cases, even if those cases were important to them. They really respect our boundaries, mandate, and criteria, which I really like. Perhaps sometimes, because we are both working under intense pressure, we occasionally mutually fail to respond in time or with sufficient speed in verification. Even I, when they ask me to perform some services, might be slow to respond because we are being pushed in opposing directions due to our own priorities.

— A woman, Partner International Institution

When participants were asked about their suggestions for development and next steps, the answers were as follows:

- ✱ Introduce Mechanisms for Post-Service Follow-up with the journalist for a minimum of 6 months.
- ✱ Dedicate Short, Individual Online Counselling Sessions to identify needs and customize support.
- ✱ Rely on AI Tools to automate responses or use a chatbot to answer inquiries.

- * Ensure Diversification of Communication Channels (phone, email, WhatsApp, instant messaging).
- * Provide More Email Newsletters and Information for raising awareness of journalists' rights and the services offered by SCM.
- * Offer Workshops to equip journalists with the skills to support their colleagues to broaden the scope of service.
- * Present Detailed Guidelines or an Introductory Session (online or recorded) that explains how to use the grant or support optimally, including required financial and administrative matters.
- * Establish a Dedicated Contact Point to respond to inquiries during the project implementation period to facilitate work and overcome obstacles smoothly and assign a dedicated person from SCM ("Individual Mentor") to accompany the beneficiary during the support period and provide guidance when needed.
- * Ensure the Integrity and Objectivity of Support Distribution by involving an independent evaluation committee with journalistic expertise.
- * Introduce New Support Services during Follow-up, such as assistance in securing job opportunities for individuals who have obtained asylum and have previous files with SCM.

I think it could be useful for them to have more than one person in the verification process, because if I understand correctly, now, only one person is primarily working on the screening process. I feel that can sometimes be too much, especially knowing that she is in France. So, it might be beneficial to have a person to support her—someone who has a background in the internal situation. I believe the priority now is supporting the media, to help journalists and their institutions grow.

— A woman, Partner International Institution

III - General Evaluation of Support and Protection Services for Male and Female Journalists

Most Important Support and Protection Services from the Perspective of the Sample

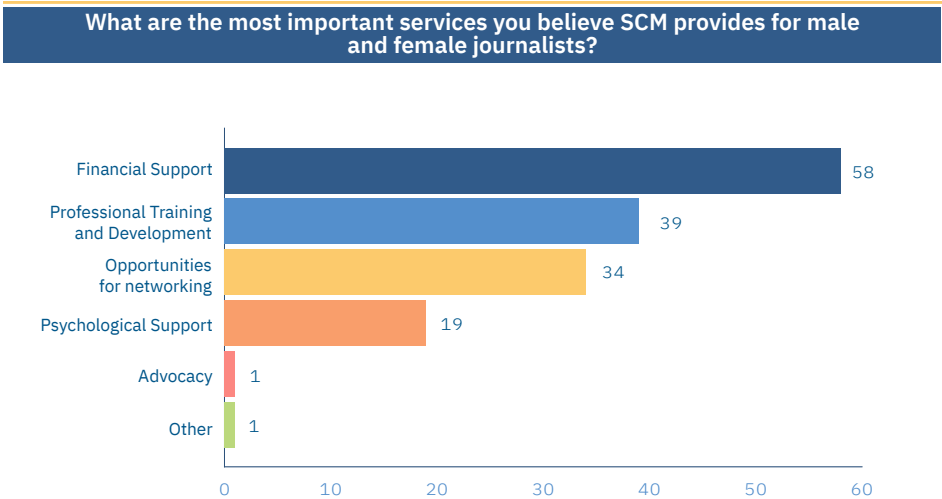


Figure (15)

When participants were asked for their personal evaluation of the most important services SCM provides to them, Financial and Legal Support came at the forefront of the answers (70.7% and 58.5%, respectively). This heavily reflects the primary difficulties faced by media workers due to the lack of stable financial income to cover daily living expenses, coupled with inflation, rising costs amid the economic crisis, low wages, and the shrinking opportunities for permanent contracts with media institutions. It also points to exposure to continuous security harassment, danger, and threat due to the contraction of freedom of expression and the lack of adequate legal legislation to provide a safe working environment.

On the other hand, Training and Professional Development appeared in the third rank (47.6%). This indicates journalists' awareness of the rapid developments that necessitate the growth of their skills and knowledge to manage the tools and applications imposed by recent digital advancement and Artificial Intelligence (AI). This is also linked to the need to provide opportunities for networking and benefiting from the development of personal knowledge and relationships (41.5%).

Despite Psychological Support ranking fifth (23.2%), this does not negate its importance among the services provided. Its lower ranking can be interpreted considering the more urgent priorities listed above, which are directly related to work and the necessity of meeting basic needs to secure a suitable standard of living.

The results of the focused discussion groups were largely consistent with the field study findings, as follows:

Financial support is very essential. As a station correspondent, I need a car first, strong internet second, and professional, portable equipment third. If I want to work from home, I need solar power before anything else because there is no electricity, and there is no internet.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

In my opinion, currently, we need financial, psychological, and medical support for most journalists and activists, specifically regarding housing. Once he is secured and settled in his home and knows those four walls are for him and his children, then if you give him a training course, he can develop his situation properly.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

There are other types of support. Initially, financial support was key, so we provide grants to journalists who have recently moved to host countries, and to journalists who were physically assaulted. We also provide grants to cover relocation fees, medical fees, and legal fees. Then we also worked on what we call administrative support, which was more useful for Syria, which essentially involves helping journalists get visas and asylum once they arrive in a new country. So, we basically help them find a safe place so they can continue working as journalists. We are lucky enough that France is one of the few countries that grants humanitarian visas from the embassy. So, we really worked on this mechanism, especially with the French consulate in Türkiye. We provided them with many cases for humanitarian visas for Syrian journalists. We also developed other exceptional projects, such as advocacy projects for journalists, where we contacted several European governments to request visa issuance and negotiated with Türkiye, which agreed to open its borders to these journalists. We did this twice, once for Deir ez-Zor and once for Idlib. We spent more than a year and evacuated thirty families the first time and twelve the second time. We also created a partnership a few years ago where we can provide online psychological support. It is not ideal because it is online, meaning you need a good connection. But it is great because it is available in forty different languages, and you can schedule your own appointment whenever you want.

— A woman, partner international institution

Overall Satisfaction Level with Services Provided

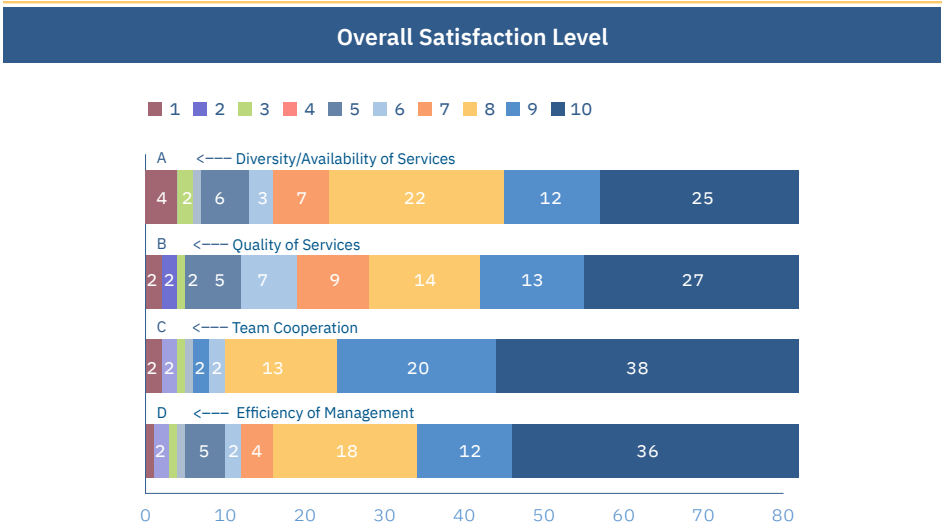


Figure (16)

To determine the overall satisfaction level of the sample, a composite scale was designed comprising four key factors (Diversity of support services provided by SCM, Quality level of services provided, Cooperation and professionalism of support providers, Efficiency of service management) using a 10-point Likert scale, where a low number indicates low overall satisfaction.

The respondents' answers indicated high levels of satisfaction across various elements. However, satisfaction appeared highest in cooperation and professionalism of the support team and efficiency of service management. The level of satisfaction was comparatively lower when evaluating the diversity of services and their quality level. This suggests that while the human element in management is efficient, there is room for developing the level and type of services offered.

Upon conducting correlation analyses to explore the relationship between the number of years journalists have worked and their level of satisfaction, the results showed a weak or negligible relationship between years of experience and all statements on the overall satisfaction

scale. This indicates that the journalist's tenure in the media field did not significantly influence their evaluation of SCM's support services. Satisfaction levels appear similar among participants with different experience levels, ranging from those with less than 5 years to those with more than 10 years in the media field.

In exploring whether demographic factors might influence satisfaction levels, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests⁶ were conducted by examining the mean satisfaction scores across different groups (such as gender, place of residence, educational qualification, background in media as a major, and job specialization).

The results repeatedly showed no significant differences in satisfaction levels across these diverse groups, indicating that the evaluation of support and protection services was relatively uniform across a wide range of Syrian journalists, regardless of their demographic characteristics or professional experience. This suggests that the high level of satisfaction meets likely expectations.

SCM role was vital in the exceptional initiatives for asylum files because they were the ones who identified the journalists who could be evacuated. So, they had this very difficult task of staying in contact with the journalists throughout the year. Because of this, the journalists had high expectations. They had to periodically collect information to inform the journalists of developments and try to reassure them. Yes, they did an amazing job.

— A woman, partner international institution

⁶ ANOVA stands for Analysis of Variance and is used to compare differences between the means of two or more groups to determine statistical significance. In this case, the coefficient was applied to the preceding variables, and the results showed an F-value higher than the probability value ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$), indicating a general lack of significant differences between the means.

The results from the focused discussion groups largely confirmed the field study findings: The Support Recipient Group agreed on high satisfaction levels, often rating them between 8 and 9 out of ten in most cases, which aligns with the quantitative data.

Even participants in the Non-Support Recipient Group expressed satisfaction with the services provided, based on their knowledge of colleagues who had received support, which was deemed highly satisfactory.

What my journalist colleagues received was, frankly, very excellent. Some people received full equipment... I am not saying people are 100% secure, but it is very suitable—about 70 to 80 percent satisfactory regarding the equipment.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

I like the team very much, and I find them very easy to work with because they are very open to new ideas. Working with someone who is looking for alternative solutions makes me feel satisfied. When we are stuck, they do not just give up. We sit around the table and meet. Clearly, their network in Syria is amazing. I work with many partners, and I see them as exceptional. Sometimes it is difficult to verify some profiles because the applicants are in an area they do not know or they do not have a connection, but that has never happened with SCM; they are always able to give me some kind of feedback. It was sometimes difficult for our priorities to align. But other than that, the working relationship was absolutely great.”

— A woman, partner international institution

Conversely, the satisfaction level was significantly low among the group that did not receive support, with the group agreeing on an average rating of 2 to 3 out of ten in most cases.

We give it a rating of 2 or 3 out of ten because they contacted us. But if we were to evaluate based on our colleagues who received support, we might say the rating is eight, for example. The issue is they did not communicate, meaning there was no back-and-forth. I did not even get the application link from them, but through my colleague.

— Female Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

IV - Future Development and Meeting Current Needs

Participants were asked about their vision for developing SCM's support and protection services by posing a hypothetical question: What are the most important changes they would make if appointed as the direct official in charge of development? The answers clearly showed a tendency for about half of the sample to prioritize, providing more specialized training opportunities (58.5%), increasing the speed of response to requests (52.4%)

This confirms the urgent need for high-quality, advanced training opportunities alongside the adoption of technological tools or increasing the team size to accelerate digital solutions for handling requests.

The second set of suggestions focused on, increasing the financial allocations provided (46.3%), expanding support services to include a new range of services (42.7%), building institutional international

partnerships and relationships on a larger scale (41.5%). This reflects the need to develop and increase the service base by expanding the network of partnerships and support.

The third set of suggestions, representing about a quarter of the sample, highlighted, revisiting the eligibility criteria for support and protection (28%), Enhancing psychological support (25.6%), and improving the quality of legal support (24.4%). This package of suggestions emphasizes the development of operating rules, decision-making standards, and attention to a number of qualitative services. It is also worth noting that two specific proposals suggested adding a fourth step in the support service chain: post-support follow-up and monitoring the progression of cases, particularly for asylum and safe haven requests, to ensure continuous communication.

Were the services we provided to Syrian journalists sufficient or not to meet their needs? That is a difficult question. I would say 4 or 5 out of 7—meaning average. I want to be positive in the assessment, I think what we have done and what we are still doing is important, but of course, it is not enough. Also, there are not many organizations working on visa support and asylum files. Most institutions gave up because it requires so much time, is very complicated, and the results are not good enough. So, I think the assistance we provide is very small. Even at the level of financial grants, the maximum is 2,000 Euros, which is certainly not enough. So, it helps, but it is not enough to cover the entire need, and I think for us as an emergency team, the impact is very short-term.

— A woman, partner international institution

The participation from the focused discussion groups provided detailed input on what journalists require, as follows:

Today, I need SCM to send an invitation to most of the media professionals it knows. Through this invitation, I can get to know them—each one's years of experience, region, whether displaced or not, whether they are working or not. SCM should have a preliminary database and information about these individuals, and then, of course, see and understand their needs and what grants and training opportunities can be offered to them fairly. And, of course, it is very necessary to know if any of them have previously received a grant from SCM or not.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

To gather more detail on proposed improvements and innovative ideas from the participants, an open-ended question was posed, yielding the following answers:

- * Establish a communication channel on Telegram and add all affiliates.
- * Hold in-person and online introductory seminars explaining SCM's services and answering inquiries.
- * Utilize the lifting of sanctions by expanding the base of funding programs and opening partnerships with new countries and donors.
- * Expand the service base by opening fields for professional and digital mentoring to enhance comprehensive protection and sustainable remote work.
- * Provide long-term psychological support services.

- * Explore the possibility of providing assistance to the families of detained journalists and family protection programs.
- * Establish an investigation and documentation unit to protect journalists and convert the violation monitoring file into a secure, user-friendly digital platform.
- * Coordinate with specialized human rights organizations to provide urgent investigation procedures in cases of threats or arbitrary detention.
- * Review financial auditing procedures after receiving support to ensure the integrity of selection and narrow the scope for potential fraud and deception.
- * Create training tracks in journalism and Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- * Coordinate with supportive media organizations such as unions, professional associations, or charters of honour to ensure the provision of diverse training services.
- * Provide transitional professional support for those who need reintegration into the job market after assault or dismissal.
- * Consider adopting mechanisms to support journalists for one another and benefit from experience sharing.
- * Provide modern technical equipment to a larger base of journalists to help them perform their tasks efficiently and effectively.
- * Explore innovative alternatives for providing supporting evidence of eligibility for support, as cases of arbitrary exposure to danger or arrest are common without material evidence or documents, which reduces the chances of requests being approved.
- * Invest in automated systems and think outside the box regarding current procedures and policies.
- * Expand the scope of financial support to include coverage of judicial and legal expenses when needed.
- * Provide temporary financial support for journalists who have been dismissed or are under threat.

- * Increase the financial coverage provided for independent journalistic project grants and specialized grants for training and production.
- * Provide direct legal representation in journalism-related cases.
- * Provide an electronic threat reporting service with guaranteed immediate response.

Sample Expectations for the Most Needed Services over the Next 3 Years

What types of support do you expect Syrian male and female journalists will need most during the next three years?

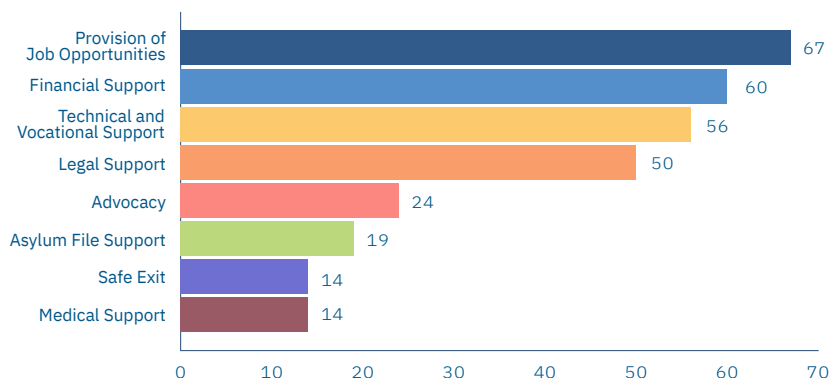


Figure (17)

As for the participants' expectations for the types of support likely to be increasingly requested over the next three years, the majority expressed that providing job opportunities, financial support for the emergency fund, and technical/vocational support and capacity building, alongside legal support for protection, represent urgent priorities. These reflect the challenges facing male and female journalists in the media field

today, which are dominated by limited job opportunities, unfair wages, reduced space for professional self-development, and a lack of adequate legal coverage for support and protection.

Furthermore, advocacy for media freedom and freedom of expression issues, asylum file support, safe exit/safe passage, and medical support were also on the list of needs, although they ranked lower than the first group. These results indicate that most participants adopt a pessimistic scenario regarding media stability and believe that the need to raise support requests will not cease. This new political phase may impose diverse and different consequences on the media, requiring the channel of continuous support and protection to flow and persist. This means it is necessary to foresee the future and work on re-evaluating current plans, mechanisms, and resources to ensure the ability to meet the increasing needs in the near future.

What do we need to be more capable of meeting the needs of male and female journalists in Syria? Well, it is a sad answer, but it is money. Money is needed to hire more people so we can take on more cases, and to provide material support. We need more people to offer another kind of support, which is humanitarian support; interaction, spending more time with journalists on the phone to reassure them, to be a kind of psychological support for them. We cannot do that currently. The key is also political support. I think it is a shame that no one is putting enough pressure on European governments so they can continue to offer these humanitarian visas, which are among the most valuable tools when it comes to supporting journalists in exile.

— A woman, partner international institution

Upon reviewing the results of the focused discussion groups, everyone agreed on the importance of increasing financial allocations for support and providing job opportunities, as follows:

In a work environment like the one Syrian journalist have lived through—an environment of displacement and moving from place to place, and the relocation of work—the requirements are much higher than the provisions. The SCM grant usually ranged from one thousand to two thousand, and sometimes three in some cases, but that is in a normal situation. We ask for material and logistical support for equipment, and we find it insufficient because no journalist can acquire equipment for one or two thousand dollars. Add the internet and a computer, the journalistic requirements are many. Similarly, medical support also cannot fully cover medical operations, and this is not SCM's fault; it is due to the donor and partner institutions.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

I propose that they also add job opportunities to these technologies, because most of the old guard are currently marginalized. I also suggest that there be a WhatsApp group for training because it is the most suitable medium. I mean, I lost my phone and lost my email, and I could not communicate at all; I lost everything. Job opportunities are the most important thing so we can continue and build ourselves up until the situation improves.

— Female Journalist, Support Recipient Group

I think that is what Syria needs: training journalists in newsrooms abroad so they can be employed and get job opportunities. Yes, I think so. I do not know why we missed that opportunity.

— A woman, partner international institution

I suggest courses regarding cybersecurity. Colleagues faced many problems and stories of blackmail, and this type of course is rare. In addition to Artificial Intelligence (AI) courses so we can keep pace with the current stage of new media.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

In an open question about the type of future services that journalists need, the results indicated the provision of support services when communicating with and dealing with the authorities, the journalist's right to access decision-making and information centres, and pressure to provide job opportunities for qualified journalists and benefit from their expertise in various fields, obtain work permits and press cards, and not marginalize journalists who participated in the revolution, while ensuring the provision of advanced qualitative training that guarantees sensitive coverage and prepares them for the labour market. Some even feared increased restrictions on journalists, the escalation of digital censorship, cross-border prosecutions, and the imposition of restrictions on movement, the difficulty of providing safe independent media platforms, and a decline in investigative reporting.

Also, some voices called on SCM to provide support to Syrian media institutions during the upcoming period by, offering consultation on building independent organizational structures that guarantee freedom of expression and deliver reliable professional content, contributing to the establishment of new media institutions that follow this path, supporting syndical efforts, and participating in the development of the legal and legislative aspects regulating Syrian media.

Syria has not been on the international agenda for many years now, so it is difficult to obtain greater support from donors, as well as governmental support, and unfortunately, as international institutions, we cannot move forward without them. I believe the scene generally focused on helping journalists in distress and during the peak of the crisis, as well as on individual support. There was not much support for media outlets in exile. When I see what has been done now for Russia and Afghanistan, where there are many organizations focused on supporting newsrooms in exile, I think that is more efficient and important. And I do not feel that was really done for Syria. I know that at the beginning of the war in 2013, there were many training initiatives to train newsrooms in Syria on safety, on digital safety.

— A woman, partner international institution

As for the nature of future services according to the focused discussion groups, the results were as follows:

There should be legal support for journalists inside Syria, so that any journalist who is exposed to a violation or anything else can have direct contact or communication with SCM inside Syria, and SCM would have real authority regarding journalists' rights and take over their defence.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

Legal services are necessary, and today Syria is liberated, so today I am exposed to being prosecuted and held accountable for every word, unlike before when there were not these regulating laws. Today there is a ministry, there are unions, so I need to have periodic legal awareness sessions to know my rights because the field of journalism is very broad and open, and updates and developments come into it every day, and we need to keep pace.

—Female Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Honestly, the psychological aspect is very important for us, especially for journalists who have suffered 14 years of pressure—meaning they were exposed to trauma. It was not visible, and then it really appears. For example, I am one of the people who felt all the trauma surface suddenly after the liberation. I do not know how I am right, I do not know. Maybe there could be recreational activities or trips for groups of journalists inside Syria, to change their mood a little, and so on. Especially since the psychological factor might remain suppressed and its effects could suddenly appear in a very short time.

— Female Journalist, Support Recipient Group

In my opinion, 90% of the displaced media professionals who returned are without housing and without... The issue of house rentals is very expensive, and renovation is also costly. Perhaps the most important need in the coming period is securing housing, or a subsidy for the maintenance of old housing, or a rent allowance for homes.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

When the focused discussion groups were asked about their expectations for SCM five years from now, they expressed the following opinions:

There is always development for SCM, and God willing, we will see it in the field of cooperation with all institutions—associations, unions, Syrian journalistic charters of honour, and training and research centres. All of them should be in one place and under agreements so they can unify support.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

It should be in Syria, in all the governorates and regions, and many people will be encouraged to visit it because it has encouraged and helped many journalists, especially during the time of the earthquake, the time of danger, the time of security prosecutions, and the time of aid. I see that all of us will approach it with all love and affection.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

Sample Expectations for the Future Level of Freedom of Expression in Syria

Based on your experience in media work, how do you expect the level of freedom of expression in Syria to be in the coming period?

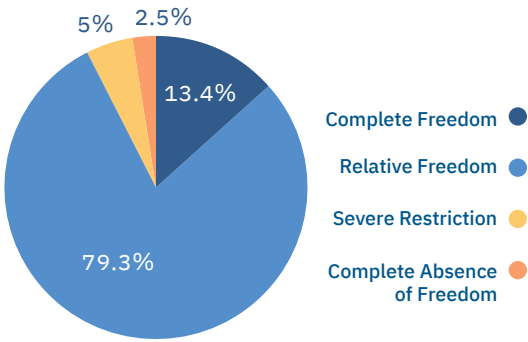


Figure (18)

The preceding results align with the participants' expectations for the level of freedom of expression in Syria during the coming period. The rate of the optimistic scenario did not exceed 13.4% (those who anticipate complete freedom). Instead, caution generally dominated the initial expectations, with the vast majority agreeing that the country might witness relative freedom (79.3%). The remaining percentage expressed significant pessimism (5%) or the complete absence of freedoms (2.5%).

These expectations can be explained by the results of the focused discussion groups when they were asked for a single word to describe the Syrian media landscape now. Most of them described it as: "unclear," "foggy," "jumbled/chaotic," "non-committal," "absent," and "restricted." When asked in more detail,

The answers were:

For me, we were, honestly, fought from all sides. Back then, we did not have absolute media freedom. I, for instance, used to write under a pseudonym. After that, of course, we were displaced and left our areas, and the situation was not much better. So, I find that the situation is still unstable and unclear. There is no freedom now, and we cannot express anything. Everything should be now, but fundamentally, I believe our road is still very long until we reach journalistic and political freedom.

— Female Journalist, Support Recipient Group

I wait for official statements. Where do I get them? Unfortunately, from individuals, I do not get them from an official site, and this affects us greatly. I cannot get an official statement. There are a lack of balance and a lack of keeping pace with the media needs in the region. There is no empowerment for the journalist to reach official sources to get information. There is no specific program for organization and reform to follow. It is foggy now, there is chaos.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Honestly, before, under the former regime, we knew what the media reality was; it was not called media, but rather a mouthpiece for the former regime. Now, we do not know what it is. In the Syrian North, we had a space for freedom of expression, to publish, to write, despite being in a narrow geographical area. But today, with the new government taking over, we have started to feel that the media has not really become media. It is also becoming directed, even though there are still local and Arab channels speaking and expressing themselves, but you honestly feel there are restrictions.

— Female Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Previously, I knew the situation here, how the security elements worked, and the media work; I knew every aspect, I knew my job. But currently, unfortunately, I do not know. The situation is ambiguous. There are places I know are allowed for filming, but unfortunately, some security personnel, who are accustomed to the previous regime's mentality, come and prevent me. Well, I am filming something that benefits the country. He tells me 'forbidden.' What is forbidden? You need to bring me approval. Approval for what? I do not know how I am supposed to deal with this.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

For example, we started seeing social media influencers taking the lead. We see them in UN sessions, invitations, and meetings in the presidential palace, and so on, just to increase their likes and followers. In contrast, we are being marginalized. Today, for example, when a big event happens, we do not see those people who take photos in the palace. We see our youth, our journalists, our media professionals who were in the Syrian North, whose hearts are truly for this country and who care about this country. They are the ones talking, they are the ones covering, they are the ones risking their lives and themselves to convey the true image and voice to the media.

— Female Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Not all journalists have the right to access coverage or official sources. There is discrimination between people who can reach everything and people who are forbidden from reaching, for example, a municipal council. Let us say it is about connections. Sometimes there is selectivity or moodiness—'What are this person's background, what did they say about us, and what didn't they say?'—or sometimes it depends on the media institution the journalist belongs to and their public reach. It does not matter if they know how to convey the idea or if they want to deliver something appropriate or speak in a suitable way; the most important thing is that they have reach or strong connections within the state.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

In contrast, a limited number of voices represented the optimistic current in the media field, seeing greater areas of freedom now:

We feel more that there is free media. Now, the field belongs entirely to media professionals, especially with the internet available in the region, which has made it easy to transmit the event or convey the image in full. We no longer have harassment like what existed previously, for example, back in 2011 when we were filming with phones, we were exposed to beatings and danger. It was not easy at all, but today I can film and cover with complete ease. If any event happens in front of you, or any reality occurs, you can transmit it.

— Journalist, Non-Support Recipient Group

Things have really changed a lot. I was expecting many things, and nothing happened as I always thought. To be honest, I was expecting many male and female journalists to return to Syria, and this did happen, but on a very small scale. I think we all need time to assess the situation and decide whether the new situation is safe for them or not. I also expected many journalists to leave Syria, but I have not received many requests. Even now, all the requests I have received are from journalists who fear being attacked because they belong to a minority, but this has nothing to do with their work.

— A woman, partner international institution

Most Prominent Future Obstacles Expected by the Sample

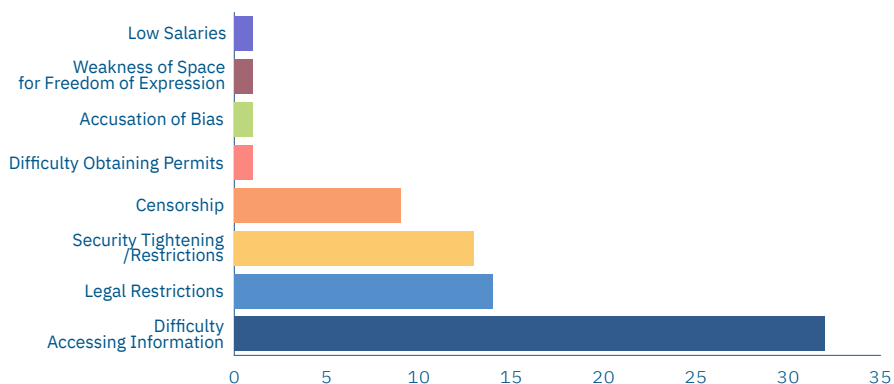


Figure (19)

The most prominent obstacles that participants expect to face while performing work during the coming period are:

- * Difficulty obtaining information (39%): This is expected given the absence of a law guaranteeing the journalist's right to access information, the frequent refusal of official sources to make any statements to the media, the absence of official spokespersons, and allowing some media outlets to cover events and be present at press conferences while excluding others.
- * Legal restrictions (17.1%)
- * Security tightening/restrictions (15.9%)
- * Censorship (11%).

This can be explained by the existence of a temporary constitutional declaration and the absence of a unified media law that guarantees legal protection for practitioners of the profession.

Journalists also shared a number of new obstacles that emerged with the transitional phase, whether through difficulties in obtaining work permits or difficulty with mobility due to the high cost of living and rising prices. This contributes to a decrease in media coverage of some remote areas and the concentration of most activities in the capital and major cities.

Additional obstacles mentioned include: accusations of treason/betrayal, bias, incitement, contempt, security chaos, fear of individual violations and unofficial violence, low salaries, and difficulty keeping up with international journalistic standards due to the long-term blockade, lack of interaction with international institutions, and weak awareness/self-censorship.

There are many plans, and we have many responsibilities. We see amazing but also dangerous signs. We are monitoring and following up, and we are not changing. We will continue to help marginalized communities and advocate for journalists' rights to help change. Perhaps we will offer additional aid to the coast and the south.

— A woman, partner international institution

The situation was confirmed by the support recipient group in the focused discussion, as follows:

I see a lot of marginalization of our role as journalists. What has affected us recently, I have faced personally, as well as the issues of the internet, electricity, and cost of living. For example, in the Syrian North, the internet was almost free. We came down to Damascus, and the prices are very, very expensive. Any work you want to do requires internet and electricity, and this is either unavailable or available at a very high, unacceptable cost, which adds significant burdens to media work.

— Female Journalist, Support Recipient Group

Regarding work, most institutions, and ministries—even the media here—are basically demanding official certifications. We have not been able to complete our studies for ten years, nor move as we want, nor work under our real names because our families are mostly the ones being pursued. So, we did not finish our studies. We came out with only our school certificates. Our experience and our studies were acquired online, and now they are not recognized. So, I see the marginalization of our experience, the field we worked in, the things we were exposed to, the displacement, and the marginalization—none of this is counted.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

Media relations—if I want to film any report anywhere now, I need to secure two or three approvals, and public relations sometimes stop you. They argue with you that ‘we can’t film this topic; there are many difficulties like this.’

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

The financial conditions and prices, in addition to the fact that the available equipment is not professional equipment for major work. And the environment is still dangerous, not from the state, but dangerous in some public areas. We have seen assaults on colleagues in more than one place.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

However, amidst these pessimistic voices, there were a few who adopted an optimistic or cautious scenario, as follows:

Yes, there are freedoms now, but we aspire to a higher freedom than this. This current freedom still needs time, and it is not because they [the authorities] might be criminals or against us, no. It is because of some flatterers of the state who are trying to attack the journalist. They don't know what a journalist means; they do not know the journalist's privacy.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

There is a better space for speech now, exactly. I mean, there is space for criticism, back-and-forth, and review. This is a very big space if we compare it to the previous regime.

— Journalist, Support Recipient Group

It is our duty as NGOs to advocate for the continued flow of aid to Syrian media, and to highlight the fact that all these European countries that pretend to fight for democracy and freedom of information, if they want to be useful, must support Syrian media, and this is clear. But I do not know, a lot of violent changes happened this year. And all the organizations that were supporting media have all suffered from funding cuts from the United States. I truly believe that we need financial support and capacity building to help them build their own economic model to be sustainable and independent. We do not want to be in that position again where the donor collapsed and the entire independent media scene collapsed.

— A woman, partner international institution

Recommendations and conclusion

First: Recommendations to the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression

- * Develop an Integrated Communication System with journalists via introductory seminars, diverse secure communication channels, and in-person and online meetings, along with establishing a comprehensive strategy for information dissemination and organization.
- * Enhance Continuous Professional Training through intermediate and advanced workshops and courses in fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Digital Security, Data Journalism, Investigative Journalism, and News Verification.
- * Establish a 24/7 Emergency Hotline to provide immediate support to journalists in cases of emergencies and threats.
- * Utilize Technology and AI applications in workflow management, development of protection tools, and analysis of media data to enhance content quality and information accuracy.

Second: Recommendations to Legislative Bodies and Decision-Makers in Syria

- * Activate the Legal Aspect by supporting awareness courses for journalists on rights and duties, alongside advocacy for enacting legislation that guarantees freedom of journalistic work.
- * Approve and Develop Laws Regulating the Media, including the Access to Information Law, in line with international standards for freedom of expression.

- * Involve the journalistic community and relevant civil society organizations in drafting and amending legal regulations governing the media sector, ensuring that legislation is more responsive to needs on the ground.

Third: Recommendations to International and Regional Supporting Bodies

- * Support the Implementation of a Quantitative and Qualitative Study of the actual current needs of male and female journalists and contribute to funding the development of an up-to-date database that facilitates future decision-making.
- * Contribute to Providing Financial Grants or Concessional Loans to support independent journalistic projects, and coordinate with international institutions to open employment opportunities for Syrian journalists.
- * Support the Organization of Regular Forums and Conferences that provide safe spaces for exchanging expertise and building professional networks among journalists.
- * Encourage and Fund Specialized Programs to Support Female Journalists, particularly in the fields of digital security, gender sensitivity, and leadership empowerment.

The findings extracted from this study confirm that the Syrian media is undergoing a pivotal phase that requires a systematic, long-term response from all concerned parties.

The resulting recommendations underscore the necessity of continuing investment in the media sector as a fundamental pillar for consolidating transparency and accountability in post-conflict Syria. There is a critical need to ensure the continuity of protection programs and legal, psychological, financial, livelihood, and logistical support services for journalists, as they are the main actors in conveying truth and monitoring the trajectory of the transitional phase.

Furthermore, advocacy campaigns must continue and expand with the aim of mobilizing more international and regional funding to ensure media independence and protect its practitioners. Sustainable support means protecting freedom of expression and enhancing the pivotal role of journalism in shaping Syria's future on foundations of greater justice and transparency.

