

Al-marsad's Narrative Report for 2013

Presented January 2014

- INTRODUCTION

During 2013 Al- marsad continued to strive to acquire adequate funding to support the organization and achieve a level of stability. On this regard, it is certain that the generous support of Misereor as the main partner of the organization with a core funding for the period 2012-2015 had a crucial impact on strengthening it, making it more sustainable and its work more credible. This support paved the way for professional advocacy activities, assisted the research projects, developed the human rights field tour program, strength the internship program of internationals as well as developed the training of local staff in order to improve their overall legal knowledge.

This report aims to provide a comprehensive review of the significant impact of Al-marsad's activities for 2013 as well as an in-depth assessment of the organization's shortcomings.

- Organization Background

Al-Marsad - Arab Human Rights Centre in Golan Heights is an independent non-profit legal human rights organization, located in Majdal Shams in the occupied Syrian Golan. The center was established by a group of lawyers and professionals in the fields of health, education, journalism and engineering - mostly town-planners - as well as human rights defenders and other interested community members and registered in June 2004 with the Israeli ministry of Justice by virtue of the illegal Israeli annexation of the Golan and the application of Israeli civil laws on this region and the remained small part of its indigenous Syrian population.

We keep moving forward in strengthening ties with a number of local human rights organizations in Palestine/Israel and with international human rights organization. We believe these relationships are indispensable to our work, especially given the rich experience these organisations have in many fields of expertise, as well as their established international connections.

- The focus of Al-Marsad

In the aftermath of the annexation of the Golan in December 14 1981, Israeli authorities continued to practice these same policies under the guise of implementing the Israeli law that was now applicable therein. Israel continued its settlement policies and exploited all the natural resources of the area for the benefit of the settlements and the Israeli economy. Authorities also continue to restrict the rights of the Syrian inhabitants in contravention of the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law.

This situation, in the view of Al-marsad necessitates the constant monitoring and documentation of human rights and humanitarian law violations. Al-marsad attempts

to consider the possible implications of Israeli policies on the legal status of the occupied Golan and the fundamental rights of its indigenous Syrian population and as such has designed an ambitious but viable action plan.

In contrast to other societies, there is an absence of civil society institutions, in particular those addressing human rights concerns in the Golan. Al-marsad seeks to address this absence, monitoring and documenting the serious violations taking place in our community, and filling this gap so that the international community will have a greater awareness of the human rights situation in the Golan.

There's no indicator of any substantial changes in the life situation of the target group excluding the ongoing armed conflict in Syria proper that has direct and indirect ramifications on the indigenous Syrian population. The continuation of this conflict requires Al-marsad to conduct legal research and dealing with various aspects relating to it, such as, its effects on family separation, tense situation along the cease fire line, Syrian injuries treated in Israeli hospitals and medical centers, the erection of Israeli forces a huge wall along the cease fire line.

The armed conflict in Syria has direct negative impacts on civilian population of the occupied Golan in general and on separated families in specific. The movement from the Golan to Syria proper is restricted, where few students managed to travel for continuing their studies in Damascus University. On this context, there's no claim that this will require significant positive or negative changes in the wider political, economic or social sitting of the project, rather than the emergence of new challenges that Al-marsad needs to deal with.

The ongoing clashes between the Syrian army and the military groups along the cease fire line constitute daily threat for the indigenous Syrian population living under Israeli occupation in the remained five Syrian villages. Moreover, the situation on the Golan is likely to be deteriorated. Accordingly, the organization has to be ready to deal with this reality and to expand its activities to deal with elaborated legal aspects of the ongoing armed conflict in Syria considering its direct and indirect impacts on the native Syrians of the occupied Golan.

The Israeli policies of settlement expansion in light of the ongoing civil war in Syria, demonstrates the Israeli well to retain its occupation of the Golan for the coming decades as evidenced by statements of Israeli officials and the settlement activities on the ground.

The demining of a mine field located between two schools inside the village of Majdal Shams is a result of long struggle against Israeli authorities. Our work on land mine has become wider where continue corresponding the Israeli Army to dismantle all military compounds situated inside the Arab villages in the Golan in violation of international humanitarian law. The military basis located inside the civilian residential areas and around it constituting and eminent danger for its residents. It might be targeted at any time in the light of the state of war and ongoing military clashes along the cease fire line and accordingly cause suffering to the civilians.

The new developments is making Al-marsad overloaded with monitoring and documenting violations, advocating the situation in the occupied Golan to the local

and international community, respond to growing requests for legal aid on family separation, land mine issues, removing of military camps located inside the Arab villages and around it, restrictions on land use for the purpose of construction and improve the organization's capacity building accordingly. These developments will require the expansion of a work team in order to be able to respond to the emerging challenges. Accordingly, this will require an increase in budget for fulfilling the organization's mission that aims to influence policies at the local and international levels in order to improve the human rights situation in the occupied Golan.

- **Al-marsad's Mission**

Al-marsad's mission remains as clear as ever working to protect and promote human rights and respect for the rule of law in the occupied Golan with a commitment to the overall application of international law; international humanitarian and human rights law.

Since its establishment, Al-marsad has been attempting to document human rights violations perpetrated by Israel (the occupying power) against civilians and their private properties. Special focus is given to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as humanitarian law principles: expulsion of native Syrian population (ethnic cleansing), the control of land and water by Israel, separated families, settlement expansion, annexation, landmine problems, housing rights and planning restrictions. Through its work Al-Marsad tries to monitor and document human rights and humanitarian law violations and urge the international community to pressure Israel to respect international law, stop its violations and end its occupation of the Syrian Golan.

- **Al-marsad's Vision**

Al-marsad seeks to establish a consolidate and efficient modern institution that advocate for the protection of human rights standards, struggle against war, colonialism and occupation and helps to develop a culture of respect for human rights and humanitarian law principles. We seek to achieve this by observing and documenting human rights and humanitarian law violations, working to influence policies and pushing to hold accountable those responsible for committing or condoning human rights violations and international crimes.

Al-marsad also aims at developing itself so as to become a basic reference source for those seeking information on human rights violations in the occupied Golan.

Al-marsad will furthermore attempt to fortify both its presence and build awareness of human rights and humanitarian law on local, regional and international levels.

- **Al-marsad's overall goals**

In the course of its strategic planning work Al-marsad has discussed and now adheres to three overall goals. These goals have guided all the organisations strategies and activities in the past years and will also in the coming periods. Al-marsad concentrates on

- 1) Building a solid non-governmental, civilian and independent institution, whose members, contributors and staff have a clear picture of their role within, and can develop their and their volunteer's capacity and abide to a shared internal governance structure.
- 2) Becoming the No. 1 resource for research and legal advice on human rights violations (since 1967) in the occupied Golan.
- 3) Working and thriving within a regional and international network, which disseminates knowledge and expertise, raises awareness about basic human rights (locally) and the humanitarian situation (internationally) as well as markets its research and ideas according to an internally and commonly developed advocacy strategy.

- **Opportunities and Threats of the current organisational status**

Al-marsad is a small organization, which has several opportunities but still faces threats that need to be addressed in the course of a strategic planning exercise. In the latest planning the following SWOTS were identified and updated:

Strengths and Opportunities

- The commitment and passion of the volunteers in the organisation, both local and international, remains one of the biggest strengths of Al-Marsad.
- The endurance of staff and volunteers over the last few years despite the difficult funding situation.
- The credibility within the local population grows as activities became more visible.
- The rich networks with other international human rights organisations.
- The assistance and support of other Palestinian and international organisations who express their constant willingness to help.
- Al-Marsad is the only human rights organisation in the occupied Golan, which is of special importance as we are the only resort for people to deal with violations committed against them or their private properties.
- As the only human rights organisation in the occupied Golan funding opportunities may be more accessible.
- Huge opportunity for building legal credibility through the initial research that has been conducted since its inception.
- Positive development within local staff in terms of received training and legal knowledge.
- An increasing number of international volunteers have conducted professional legal reports and greatly enhanced the opportunity for funding resources because of commitment, professional legal knowledge and English language skills. This internship programme has gone from strength to strength, with 7 interns conducting research on a variety of important topics in the last 12 months. Al-Marsad aspires to continue to develop and strengthen the programme on an ongoing basis.

Threats and Weaknesses

- There is a danger that certain donors may attempt to impose their own agenda in return for funding.
- There may be double-standard policy used by the international community to deal with violations of the international law.
- There may be an absence of guarantees for future funding.
- There may be the failure of the international community to speak out and to act against ongoing human rights abuses.
- Most of the work is done on voluntary basis (due to visa and financial restrictions volunteers cannot stay all the time to do this job) therefore the personnel of the organisation are always at risk
- There is a risk of losing credibility locally because funding will not allow for employing a qualified lawyer to give pro bono legal services to the people (as promised)
- Frustration of staff, when funding will not suffice.

- **Al-marsad carried out the following major activities in 2013:**

Professional research and analysis of the situation in the Golan in terms of international human rights and humanitarian law. Well-documented and reliable information material on the situation is available to achieve efficient awareness building at local and international level.

During 2013, Al-marsad has continued to work on researching and analyzing the human rights situation in the occupied Golan, focusing on issues, such as, family separation, Illegal settlements, Syrian armed conflict, and landmines. In this context, we used to focus more on landmines by calling the Israeli authorities to remove military camps situated inside the occupied Syrian villages and around it. These camps constitute a serious risk to the life's of the Syrian population of these villages because it might be targeted by either the Syrian regular forces or the military groups in case of any potential clashes with the Israeli Occupying Forces. This scenario might be happened at any moment.

An official letter was sent a letter to ICRC mission in Israel/Palestine requesting to put pressure on Israeli authorities to dismantle the military basis situated inside the residential areas and around it. A high level ICRC delegation headed by deputy head of delegation in Palestine/Israel Mrs. Biljana Milosovic joined by other five delegates visited our offices in Majdal shams where we discussed a lot of humanitarian issues related to the armed conflict in Syria proper, the issue of Syrian injuries being transferred to Israeli hospitals and how to put efforts for following their treatment, expansion of illegal settlements, Family separation and land mine and military compounds issues.

We also discussed the land mine fields situated into the agriculture fields and what ICRC can do for pressuring the Israeli authorities to clean the land mines from these areas in order to save life's and allow the owners to use their lands which was appropriated by the Israeli occupying forces after 1967 Arab Israeli war, where Israel took control over these lands.

On this regard, Al-marsad lawyer, Mr. abu alkheir Abu Jabal is in a midst of extensive correspondence with the Israeli Ministry of Defense demanding to dismantle the military camp which located inside the village of majdal Shams immediately. Moreover, we proceeding with identification of land mine fields situated into the agriculture fields in order to demand the Israeli authorities to clean the land mines from these areas. This will allow the owners to use their lands which was appropriated by the Israeli occupying forces after 1967 Arab Israeli war, where Israel took control over these lands.

With respect to settlements, Al-marsad staff initiated intensive discussions to determine a strategy for following and documenting the Israeli policy of settlement expansion and settlers economic activities. This approach aims to develop a previous study published by Al-marsad in 2011 under the title "From settlement to shelf, the economic occupation of the Syrian Golan" and will be used for advocacy on international, regional and local levels for exposing the policy of colonial settlements and its impacts on the status of the occupied Golan and its civilians. Al-marsad in a view that it is important to launch a wide campaign on the illegality of Israeli settlement on the occupied Golan that constitutes a war crime.

Al-marsad in a view that it is important to launch a wide campaign on the illegality of Israeli settlement on the occupied Golan that constitutes a war crime. Our staff has initiated intensive discussions to determine a strategy for documenting the Israeli policy of settlement expansion and settlers economic activities. Accordingly, we conducting advocacy within UN and EU for exposing the policy of colonial settlements and its impacts on the status of the occupied Golan and its civilians. Recently, we published a position paper under the title: **"EU's guidelines on labelling of settlements products Situation in the EU and in some States Parties"**, calling the EU for the fulfillment of its obligation on respecting and promoting humanitarian and human rights concerning illegal settlements.

In December 2013, another position papers related to illegal exploitation of natural resources of the Golan was published under the title: **"Oil and natural gas in the occupied Syrian Golan Illegal exploitation by Israel"**. Another position paper related to the New EU guidelines on banning the dissemination of grants/loans to personalities that situated in the illegal settlements in oPt's and the occupied Syrian Golan was finalized and we still waiting for feedback from experts.

As a human rights organization that deals with legal research and advocacy, Al-marsad found itself engaged on researching of core aspects of the Syrian case, such as, the humanitarian intervention and the referral of the Syrian case to the ICC. With regards to first topic, we achieved a legal report under the title "From peaceful demonstration to civil war, considering humanitarian intervention in the case of Syria". It was published in April 2013 and was disseminated to various universities and human rights organizations over the world.

In December we published a position paper on the prohibition of impunity for criminals by demanding the referral of the Syrian case to the ICC to guarantee the prosecution of perpetrators of persons suspected in committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. The paper published under the title: **"Syrian Situation and the International Criminal Court Responsibility to referral and to investigate"**.

At the meantime, we finalizing a new study with regard to prohibition of impunity for criminals by referring the Syrian case to the ICC to guarantee the prosecution of perpetrators of persons suspected in committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

To that end, Al-marsad team has finalized an illustrated guide/brochure for the human rights field tour. This guide is being designed and will be posted on our homepage and printed in 3000 copies for distribution to people who attending our field tour.

- **Indicator:**

1. The media and NGO' request Al-marsad to provide them with reliable information:

Al-marsad was intensively engaged in preparation for the annual visit of the ILO delegation to the Golan, where we arranged meetings with local population in Al-marsad offices in addition to field visit to work places.

Al-marsad's staff requested to give a testimony before the UN Committee for the investigation of human rights situation in occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories (Via phone) with regard to the human rights situation in the Golan. In addition to that, Al-marsad hosted a delegation from the embassy of Germany in Tel-Aviv and gave a detailed presentation on Israeli practices affecting human rights in the Golan, and policies affecting the legal status of this occupied area. An official meeting with ICRC delegates was hold in Al-marsad offices, where we discussed humanitarian consequences of the civil war in Syrian on family separation and the need to deal with cases of family unification when necessary.

During the reporting period, we held dozens of interviews with International and local media such as, Lomonde, Russia today, Alhurra (freedom USA), Spanish T.V, Israeli newspapers, Palestinian newspapers. The showed interest for the case of Syrian and the future of Israeli control over the Golan in light of the ongoing civil war in Syria and potential war between Syrian and Israel, in addition to Israeli policies targeting the status of the Golan, such as, settlement expansion, oil exploration.

2. National and international networking and communication have improved

An active and efficiently working program is available for local and international volunteers and trainees. Al-marsad receives international delegations several times a year.

The internship program has become one of most stable activities. It is of great benefit to both the organisation and the individual interns themselves. The link between Al-marsad and international interns from many countries of the world, such as, UK, Germany, USA, France, Spain, Newzeland, Ireland, and Italy has strengthened the organization and contributed to the process of the creation of professional, credible and efficient legal analysis of a human rights situation in the Golan. This programme has vital importance as it fills the lack of information regarding the conditions of the

people of the Syrian Golan under occupation. The internship programme make Al-marsad well-known amongst law students and human rights defenders and creates an interest among many of them to apply for the internship programme where they come to the area to live and work within the context of human rights. To date all of the interns' that have worked with the organisation state that they have found the experience beneficial on a multitude of levels.

We were supposed to host 4 international interns for the year 2013 that belong to nationalities from USA, Spain, Australia and Ireland. In the beginning of this year the American intern, Mr. Yousuf Khan, were refused entry visa to Israel and returned back to the USA from Ben Gorion airport. Yousuf Khan is working from his homeland on a report regarding the referral of the Syrian case to the ICC. He conducts this report in cooperation with Dr. nizar Ayoub. Two interns (from Spain and Argentina) were managed to reach Al-marsad offices in 2013 for conducting the internship, meanwhile the Irish intern denied entry visa to Israel in August and returned back to Ireland and the Australian intern apologized for personal reasons.

Al-marsad received dozens of local and international delegations in the frame work of human rights field tour which is a sustainable program conducted by the organization. During the reported period, Al-marsad received delegations from Barzil, Israel, Palestine, Belgium, Canada, US, Germany. A field tour was conducted for every delegation where they informed of the human rights situation under prolonged military occupation and Al-marsad's work on defending human rights.

Al-marsad hosted a delegation from ICRC mission in Israel/Paestine, delegations of French solidarity with Palestine (AFPC) Mr. Didier Fagart and John Mark. Mr. Bernhard Shaefer from MISEREOR visited Al-marsad and met with the staff. After long discussion, Mr. Bernhard joined us on a field visit. The secretary general of International Federation of social workers Dr. Roy Truell visited Al-marsad also to learn about the human rights situation in the area. Also Mr. Lorenzo Leurini and Mr.s Asia Chabelska visited us in order to know more about the Golan under occupation. Dr. Gul Davis, who is a writer from London, visited al-marsad in order to learn about the situation under occupation and write about his experience.

Within our work on land mine issues, Al-marsad arranged two field trips for representatives of Israeli authority for land mine cleaning. During these trips, they have been taken to land mine fields that located in the agriculture areas.

- Outputs

During 2013 we've identified the target groups as the Syrian indigenous population of the occupied Golan, the Israeli audience and authorities, the international community (UN) and EU. Since the project was launched before six months, it is too early to determine its outputs on the target group. However, we can indicate few primary outputs as follows:

- The impressions of the groups that visited Al-marsad regarding human rights situation in the Golan and the discriminatory policies of the occupying authorities;
- Networking with the Israeli authorities of land mine cleaning and the demand to clean mine fields that located inside the agriculture areas in order to avoid danger for the population's life and allow people to retain their land for cultivating it;

- The interest of international diplomatic missions in Israel to attend a field tour that is conducting by Al-marsad and the opportunity to call them to inform their governments about the situation for pressuring Israel to respect the human rights of the indigenous population;
- warning of the policy of discrimination against women;
- Conducting a small project on children rights regarding free expression by painting and sculpture arts (Supported by the French General Consulate in Jerusalem in Cooperation with Fateh Almudrres Centre for Arts which is a local grass root NGO based in the Golan).

- **INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN AL-MARSAD**

Al-marsad general committee has been engaging intensively in a debate regarding the organization's activities and structure. Eventually, the committee has decided to hire a new director where the position was assigned to Dr. Nizar Ayoub who became the acting director beginning of 2014. Nizar was requested to submit a plan for carrying out the organization's activities considering the current situation resulting from the ongoing armed conflict in Syria proper and the intensive Israeli policies of settlements expansion. To that end, Nizar was requested also to explore possibilities of new resource mobilization for covering the urgent need of the organization. Two new project proposals were approved the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) and French General Consulate in East Jerusalem; meanwhile we still wait for a response from the Arab Human Rights Fund.

Al-marsad general committee had convened on December 27, 2013, conducted new elections and decided the following:

- Confirmed the appointment of Dr. Nizar Ayoub as acting director,
- To engage new members with the organization considering
- To make a balance between females and males within the organization's structure.
- The need for developing a plan for dealing with emergencies, such the Syrian armed conflict.

The General Committee elected new board that composed of the persons listed below:

A. Committee

1. Atef Safadi, press photographer EPA.
2. Naif Fakhreldeen, LLM Veterinary.
3. Madad Kalani, LLM Communications.

B. Audit Control Committee

4. Madad Ewidat, farmer.
5. Dr. Munir Fakher Eldin, Assistant Professor of Arab Studies at Birzeit University

- **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of Al-Marsad remain the same with each passing year; to develop, grow stronger and raise awareness for the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan. This section will assess their outcomes.

Objective one: Al-Marsad attempts to become a reference point regarding international human rights and humanitarian law in the occupied Golan for concerned organisations and individuals at the local and international levels

One of the main objects of Al-Marsad's work for 2013² was to keep striving in order to make the organisation a unique source of information by monitoring and documenting certain types of violations. Fieldworker's document violations in specific cases take surveys and affidavits and are archived in a way that allows for the preparation of legal studies, reports, position papers, submissions, open letters and press releases.

Al-Marsad has gathered a considerable number of affidavits from victims and eye-witnesses of human rights violations in the occupied Golan. These affidavits pertained to violations associated with the issues of separation of families, land mines issues, exploitation of the natural resources and forcible eviction and population transfer.

Important documents have been compiled and disseminated to officials, academics, human rights and civil society organisations, human rights activists, and other concerned parties. This makes Al-Marsad a main resource for information-sharing through meetings and contacts with UN Special committee for the investigation of Israeli practices in Palestinian and Occupied Arab Territories, and representatives of different UN human rights mechanisms like (Committee for Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), UN-OHCHR and other UN officials, International Labor Organization (ILO).

Al-Marsad still striving to achieve consultative status with ECOSOC so that the organisation can increase its access to international human rights bodies and thereby further highlight the violations of human rights and humanitarian law occurring in the occupied Syrian Golan. Unfortunately, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations at its 2013 regular session, held from 21-30 January 2013, decided to defer consideration of Al-marsad's application where it will continue its review of the application during its 2013 resumed session, tentatively scheduled from 21-30 May 2013. The defer of our application happens for the third time in row.

Al-Marsad's internship program from its office in Majdal Shams became stable and sustainable in 2012 and. This program has provided a great opportunity for recently graduated students to learn both about the situation of the Golan in general and also about the international humanitarian law and human rights law violations occurring in the Golan under Israel's illegal occupation in three-month blocks.

Al-Marsad has also more engaged in providing advocacy and free legal service to the Arab local community of the Syrian Golan who have been subjected to both violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law by Israel the occupying power; this is an area which the organisation would like to build on for the future.

Objective two: To raise awareness about human rights situation in the occupied Golan at the national and international levels

During 2012 Al-Marsad was engaged in an advocacy work, which raises awareness in the international community, media and international organisations regarding the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan and its legal status.

Al-marsad was more active at the international level during 2012. Al-marsad,s staff attended a number of local conferences which increased opportunities to network with other human rights groups in the region and highlight the human rights and humanitarian law violations occurring in the occupied Golan. Also Al-Marsads hosting of various different delegations throughout 2012 serves to imprint in the minds of individuals the effects of the violations on the people in their day to day lives

Al-marsad in a position to say that its work has caused the organization to become a reference point for human rights organizations and other NGO's regarding human rights situation in occupied Golan.

Objective three: Develop the institutional capacity of Al-marsad

During 2012 Al-marsad continued to build itself as a professional, credible and sustainable organisation by ensuring the timely submission of fundraising proposals, reports, and work plans to its donors. It held regular meetings and contacts with representatives of the donor community, and its Acing Director worked continuously to seek long-term core-funding opportunities for the organization. Thanks to the generous support of Misereor core funding, the result is that Al-marsad is becoming more comfortable in its funding for the near future. A three-years strategic plans also help attract the attention of potential donor organization as it demonstrates that Al-marsad has a sound plan and is thus a good local partner for international organizations.

Also during 2012, Al-marsad proceeded with efforts to develop and acquire a meeting hall and library space in its offices to serve its employees and volunteers dealing with legal research and to provide a place for public activities related to human rights issues that concern the population.

Objective four: Al-marsad aims to actively engage with the local community to educate and raise awareness amongst the various sectors about their human rights.

Al-marsad recognises how important it is to involve all areas of the community in the promotion and expansion of human rights advocacy. Therefore we hope to create a number of different workshops aimed at various members of the Syrian Golan population.

During 2012 Al-marsad's team has provided crucial legal advice to the Arab population of the Golan. He has continued to work extensively on the problem of family separation for the local indigenous communities which became more complicated and caused serious humanitarian impacts on the separated families due to the civil war in Syria. In addition, the team has been intense his work on the land

mine project where he conducting daily discussions and evaluation with the local community in addition to intensive correspondence with the Israel authorities and the ministry of defense claiming them to remove the land mine fields which located inside the Arab villages of the Golan and these adjacent to it.

1.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

During 2013, we learned that there's a need invite the public to the office for launching our legal publications. This will make the population more aware about what we do, more familiar with their rights, better understanding of the legal aspects of the conflict and legal basis of its solution for reaching peace. We also learn that there's a need to work more on raising awareness about human rights in general and human rights situation in the occupied Golan in specific. The best way to do that is to invite the population for more workshops and engage the local population in the field tour. In addition to that, we are in a position that the population should be informed about the military conflict in Syria, its legal aspects, responsibility of perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity, the ways to solve this crisis considering the importance of a transitional justice process.

We also learned the importance of targeting the Israeli authorities on human rights violations of indigenous Syrian population and on-going systematic discrimination against them. Accordingly, the continuous communication with these authorities is crucial for our work on defending individual and collective rights of the population of the Golan.

Lessons constantly learned with respect to the target groups. Actually, the UN and its agencies was defined by al-marsad as a basic target group, where we struggling since 2011 to get a consultative status with ECOSOC. We strongly believe that obtaining this status will pave the way for us to advocate the human rights situation in the Golan directly before the UN Human Rights Council and other Human rights bodies in order to improve the human rights situation in the Golan. Unfortunately, the deferral our Al-marsad's application for the fourth time, and seemingly for political reasons, creates real obstacles on defending the human rights the indigenous Syrian population of the Golan by utilizing the UN system. Al-marsad will not give up, and is proceeding with its struggle to gain this position. Hopefully, we will get it during the next session in December 2013.

With regard to gender balance in the organization, we fail to reach a situation of making women more represented in our General assembly and board of directors, while working with women in order to defend their rights. During the past few years, we contacted dozens of women in order to convince them to join the organization but must of them apologized of taking direct responsibility meanwhile showing huge interest to support our activities, basically, that related to family separation and cultural rights. Recently, we drafted a list of women to be contacted for joining Al-marsad. The notion is to include five women in the organization's structure.

END

