

**AL-MARSAD
Arab Human Rights Centre in Golan Heights**

**General Plan
2013-2015**

**Presented
November 2012**

Introduction

This general plan outlines Al-marsad's (Arab Human Rights Centre in Golan - hereinafter the Occupied Golan) vision for the coming three years (2013-2015). This plan is a result of in depth discussions in the organisation, which were professionally facilitated by an international organisational consultant, who is familiar with the development of Al-marsad.

The current document has been updated and includes the present situation and the perceived opportunities for the coming years and provides guidance for our work and will be adjusted for changing circumstances. This plan keeps the institutional development of our organisation up to date and on track and to inform friends and partners, donors and volunteers about our future plans and the status of our activities.

This plan gives both an overview of Al-marsad as well as anticipates the political and organisational developments, which the organisation might face. The paper starts off with a brief description of the political situation in the Golan, elaborates on Al-Marsad's mission and vision for the future, updates and adjusts its strengths, weaknesses, potential opportunities and possible threats and states what factors make Al-Marsad unique. The paper then concludes with an overview of the main areas of focus Al-Marsad plans to address during the coming period. A basic logical framework allows a quick overview of what Al-Marsad wants to achieve in the coming three years under its already established overall (and unchanged) goals.

Political and social background

Before the occupation of 1,250 km² of the Golan in June 1967, over 139,000 individuals were living in 312 residential areas. Two of these areas were large towns: Al-Qunaitera, located in the north east of the Golan and Fayq in the south central region. In addition, there were 164 villages and 146 farms. Within a week, the Israeli Army carried out an extensive ethnic cleansing operation, forcing the majority of the Golan's inhabitants (some 132,000) to flee from the Golan to safety further into the Syrian interior and destroying their villages in their absence. All efforts were made to eradicate remaining traces of these villages. After this, there was nothing left of a geo-demographical scene, which had existed for many centuries, except for five villages in the valley of Mount Hermon in the Northern Golan: Majdal Shams, Mas'ada, Bqa'atha, Ein Qinyeh and Al-Ghajar. The population of these villages numbered approximately 7,000 people and reaches 20,000 today. The descendents of those expelled in 1967 now number approximately half a million.

Since the beginning of the occupation, Israel has oppressed the remaining civilian population of the Golan; and sought to erase all evidence of the existence of the evicted Syrian population. They have oppressed the Arab identity of those who remained by promoting a separate religious-ethnic identity. Further, they carry out actions that violate basic human rights - civil, political, social, economic, and cultural - and the provisions of international humanitarian law. These violations continue to this day, hidden from the eyes of the international community and world public opinion, as a result of the absence of a civil society voice (or forum) in the Occupied Golan. This includes also the absence of human rights organisations. Residents of the Golan are both unaware of their rights and freedoms as enshrined in international human rights standards as well as unaware of how to employ international human rights mechanisms in order to bring those violations to justice.

As a result of the obliteration of the Occupied Syrian Golan and its people, as well as their isolation from the larger Syrian national space, the Golan population has been subjected to prolonged and ongoing violations of their fundamental human rights. As part of its colonisation policies in the Golan, Israel has suppressed free political expression and modern civil and political forms of association among the Syrian inhabitants. The occupying authorities intimidated the local population and attempted to reinvigorate tribal loyalties. These policies met growing resistance. In the early 1990s, many activists, professionals and interested community members began to articulate the need for a civil and professional association that would be able to express some of the communities needs in new and more effective ways. The present initiative of Al-Marsad falls within this vision.

The focus of Al-marsad

Sine the beginning of the occupation, political decisions are being taken every day by Israel (the occupying power) in order to change the realities on the ground in the Occupied Golan. Different tools are being used for this purpose: hundreds of military orders were issued during the period prior to the annexation of the Golan on December 14, 1981. Such orders served to uproot the native inhabitants and prevent them from returning to their cities and villages, which were eradicated. Israeli authorities built settlements on the remains of those towns and villages, and Jewish settlers were transferred there, later controlling the land and water, marginalising the Syrian Arabs who remained in the Golan and making life unbearable for them at all levels. In the aftermath of the annexation of the Golan, Israeli authorities continued to practise these same policies, but they instead claimed to be implementing domestic Israeli law that was now deemed applicable. 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.

Al-marsad continuous monitoring and documentation of human rights and humanitarian law violations for legal research, advocacy needs and attempts to consider the possible implications of Israeli policies on the occupied Golan and the fundamental rights of its indigenous Syrian population.

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.

The Centre was founded in October 2003 by a group of lawyers and professionals in the fields of health, education, journalism and engineering - mostly town-planners - as well as human rights activists and other community members.

As a nascent human rights organisation, whose work is based mainly on voluntary efforts by locals and internationals, Al-marsad has been establishing close linkages and relations with a number of Palestinian human rights organisations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and international human rights organisations. We believe that relationships with such experienced organisations is important to our work and help us improve the quality of our work.

Al-Marsad's Mission

Al-marsad works 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 trying to document human rights violations perpetrated by Israel (the occupying power) against civilians and their private property. Special focus is given to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as humanitarian law principles. Some of the most important topics addressed by the

organisation have been; expulsion of the 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 modern and efficient institution that struggles against war, colonialism, occupation and helps to develop a culture of respect for human rights and humanitarian law principles by observing and documenting human right 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 to develop itself so as to become a premier reference source for those seeking information on human rights violations in the Occupied Golan.

Al-Marsad will furthermore attempt to fortify its presence by building awareness of human rights and humanitarian law on local, regional and international levels.

Al-Marsad's Values

Al-marsad has adopted specified enumerated core values to facilitate the development of strong organisational objectives.

Independence

Al-Marsad strives to remain independent of any partisanship, whether it comes from governments, political parties, other non-governmental organisations, funding agencies, or individuals. Therefore, the organisation tries to keep its decisions as independent as possible and take them in a way that is consistent with its vision and mission.

Objectivity

Within the process of its documentation of human rights violations and its legal analysis Al-Marsad endeavours to be objective and base its work on international humanitarian and human rights law.

Professionalism

Al-marsad aims to acquire knowledge and experience in the human rights field to be accumulated over time. Al-marsad also will strive to be consistent and transparent in its decisions and actions and to fulfil the organisation's commitments to its various stakeholders and constituencies. To do so, Al-Marsad aims to put in place sound decision support systems and mechanisms (administrative, financial, and programmatic) to ensure a result-oriented and quality-focused approach to its work.

Transparency

Al-marsad strives to ensure the accessibility and availability of information related to its financial, administrative and decision-making process to enhance the quality of decision making at all levels. This will foster responsiveness and accountability, both internally within the organisation and externally to its main constituencies and stakeholders.

Teamwork

Al-Marsad fosters a spirit of cooperation and coordination of individually assigned tasks and responsibilities among its staff, so that they can collectively achieve the shared goals of the organisation and strengthen the sense of staff's identification with and contribution to Al-Marsad's vision and mission.

Respect For and Promotion of Human Rights

Al-Marsad strongly believes in the fundamental right of every individual to enjoy basic civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights to which he or she is entitled to as a human being in order to preserve his or her dignity and humanity. Restriction of the freedoms and rights of the individual by any state or non-state actor can only take place in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law, or domestic legislation that adheres to the former, and only when this is deemed necessary within the framework of a democratic society. Individuals must be guaranteed access to effective mechanisms at the local and international levels to ensure the recognition and enforcement of their rights and to challenge acts of state and non-state actors that constitute violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Equality and non-discrimination

Al-MARSAD aims to guarantee that there is no discrimination among its staff members and volunteers. Any type of discrimination based on nationality, religious beliefs, gender, class or political opinions is refused. The only difference between staff members is rooted in their different professional responsibilities, skills, and performance.

Similarly, in terms of Al-Marsad's work and its target groups and individuals, the organisation endeavours to address the human rights violations of Syrians in the Occupied Golan in a manner that does not draw distinctions on the aforementioned grounds, and is solely guided by international human rights and humanitarian law.

Both individually and as a whole, Al-Marsad's staff members will strive to be receptive and aware of the different situations and needs of women and men throughout the decision-making process. Al-Marsad endeavours to promote the achievement of gender equality and ensuring that the organisation better searches, considers, addresses, and accommodates the specific needs and status of women in the Occupied Golan society through the planning and implementation of its activities.

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 continue to do so in the future. Al-Marsad concentrates on

- As A human rights organization, Al-marsad is in constant evolution.
- Al-marsad is a resource for legal research and advise in the occupied Golan.
- Al-marsad is further thriving within a regional and international network.

- Al-marsad involves the local community directly with its work.

Opportunities and obstacles of the current organisational status

Al-marsad which is the only human rights institution in the occupied Golan has several opportunities and obstacles 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 of both local and international volunteers in the organisation remains the biggest strengths of Al-marsad.
- The endurance of staff and volunteers over the last years despite the funding difficulties.
- Strong relations with Palestinian human rights organisations (including Al-haq, PCHR, DCI-PS)
- A stable and strong international internship program
- Carrying out professional legal studies based on international law, human rights and humanitarian law
- The credibility within the local population grows as activities became more visible
- The rich networks with other international human rights organisations
- The willingness of other Palestinian and international organisations who are expressing their constant willingness to help
- AL-marsad is the only human rights organisation in the Occupied Golan, which gives us special importance as we are the only resort for people to deal with violations committed against them or their private property.
- As the only human rights organisation in the Occupied Golan funding opportunities may be more accessible.
- Huge opportunities for building legal credibility through the first bodies of research that have been conducted in 2007-2012.
- Huge positive development within local staff in terms of received training and legal knowledge.

Obstacles and Weaknesses

- There is a danger that certain donors may attempt to impose their own agenda in return for funding.
- The Golan is a forgotten area and doesn't exist on the donors agenda's.
- 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.
- Risk of losing credibility locally because funding will not allow us to employ a qualified lawyer to give pro-bono legal services to the people (as promised).
- Frustration of staff, when funding is insufficient.

Al-marsad's main strategies to achieve its overall objectives

Due to the absence of human rights organisations in the Occupied Golan since the beginning of the occupation in 1967, we believe that Al-marsad's work is already

beginning to address this huge void. The strategic planning helps us, on an ongoing basis, to establish and maintain a strong and modern human rights organisation that is carrying out actions based on the following main activities:

Monitoring and documenting human rights violations is a key part of Al-marsad's work. Special focus in 2013 - 2015 will be given to land mine issues, settlement expansion and productions (Economic Occupation), family separation, forcible transfer and property destruction that occurred in 1967-1970. Trained fieldworkers shall be hired to gather information in the form of testimonies and questionnaires. Collected data is to be classified and categorised according to the type of violation. Al-marsad will make use of collected data to produce professional legal reports and studies based on international human rights and humanitarian law. Further, it will develop a sound advocacy work strategy. Information shall later be used to bring cases of violations to available courts. Al-Marsad aims to be the first human rights organisation in the Golan that systematically collects information on human rights violations using standardised procedures and forms: in this way it will create a comprehensive database of systematically compiled information on human rights violations that have occurred and still occur in the Occupied Golan.

Such violations require Al-marsad to document and monitor them as grave breaches to the Fourth Geneva Convention and war crimes under other provisions of international law. For the long term, Al-Marsad intends to use this documentation before national and international courts to hold perpetrators to account for their acts.

Documentation is going to be used in interventions presented to UN bodies as part of Al-marsad's **advocacy work** regionally and internationally to influence international polices. Producing legal reports and analyses on human rights issues also entails collecting information for the Al-marsad Documentation Unit (in the future), which can then be utilised for further analysis and research.

Since its foundation in October 2003 Al-marsad has already produced a number of legal reports and analyses in order to raise awareness of the legal status of the Occupied Golan and the human rights situation. Such studies and reports are further to be used in order to shed light on violations perpetrated by Israel and what such violations mean under international law.

Al-marsad shall make more **use of the local, Arab and international media** to educate the public locally, regionally and internationally on human rights violations perpetrated in the Occupied Golan. Media will also be used **to raise the local people's awareness** of their social, political, cultural and civil rights. Al-marsad will produce periodic newsletters, press releases, human stories and other media materials with the goal of shedding light on certain violations and to educate the public on their rights.

Within the framework of its advocacy work, Al-marsad will aim to take full advantage of **the various UN mechanisms** that have been established for the purpose of protecting human rights and enforcing international law. These include the Human Rights Commission and Sub-Commission, the multilateral treaty mechanisms such as the Human Rights Committee, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Commission on Human Rights, Committee Against Torture, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Committee on

the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as well as the special thematic mechanisms such as the working groups and special rapporteurs established by the Commission and other bodies. These UN bodies provide a forum for Al-Marsad to speak directly to governments and international NGOs about the plight of Syrians living under occupation. Al-marsad will apply to be an organisation with special consultative status with ECOSOC to be in a position to take full advantage of the various UN forums.

Providing free legal services to the Syrian community: Al-marsad intends to receive complaints from people and where possible take their cases before competent bodies. It is intended that Al-marsad will file cases in relevant courts. Such services would foster linkages between the organisation and the public especially with those who would like to file cases before courts and cannot afford the expenses. Al-marsad will be developing the functioning legal unit to provide such services. Special attention may be given to land mines, workers rights and land appropriation cases.

Al-marsad will be ***providing training in both international human rights and humanitarian law*** for certain target groups to raise their awareness in these fields. Such training can be carried out by the Legal Unit and the Advocacy Unit.

Al-marsad will ***develop its own organisational capacity and evaluate its performance*** both with internal discussions and established quality measurements as well as with the help of an external facilitator. It will be developing and following a comprehensive human resource plan for the future.

Outlook for 2013-2015

Guided by the above Strategic Outline and the attached logical framework we hope to implement our developed mandate: that of the protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

In 2013-2015 Al-marsad will build on the work that has begun and develop the professionalism that has been in evidence since its establishment. It will concentrate thematically on the issues of land mine cleaning, workers rights, settlement expansion and production (Economic Occupation), family separation, land and water expropriation, and forcible transfer and property destruction that occurred between 1967 and 1970. It will secondly concentrate on one of its major strengths: the development of its own committed staff both in terms of human resource development and the upgrading of its legal and organisational skills. This includes the continued development of national and international volunteer programmes.

Al-marsad will abide by a clear fundraising strategy that has been developed in 2010-2012 and secure the resources to employ a full time team (director, Consultant, public-relations officer, lawyer, administrative officer and legal researcher). A secured core funding for 2013-2015 will enable the organization to hire a professional team on full time basis and continue its professional development.

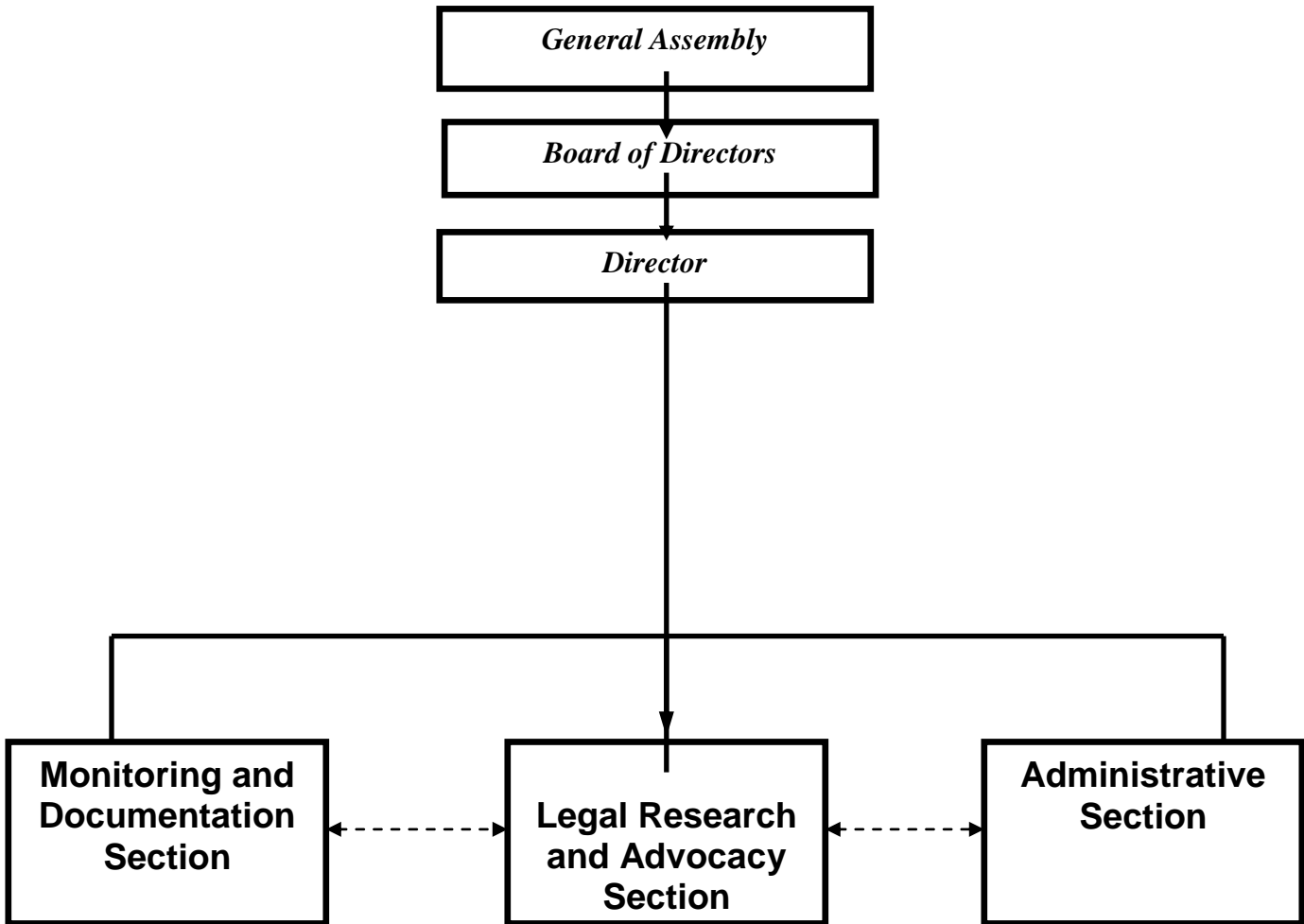
Al-marsad is convinced that respect for contemporary international law, international human rights and humanitarian law, and the fostering and development of a democratic

civil society are the only guarantees of a stable future, and of a long, lasting and just peace in our region. This is the fundamental basis of our work.

Al-Marsad
November 2012

Proposed Structure of AI-MARSAD (Vision)

1.4 Structure of Al-Marsad



Composition of Al-Marsad's Board of Directors

1. Jamel Abu Jabal, PhD Jurist Prudence
2. Atef Safadi, Press Photographer EPA
3. Naif Fakhreldeen, MSc Veterinary
4. Madad Kalani, MA Communications
5. Madad Ewidat, Farmer
6. Muneer Fakher Eldeen, PhD Middle East History, New York University. Researcher and officer of international relations.

Composition of Al-Marsad's team

1. Dr. Nizar Ayoub, Consultant & Legal Researcher, PhD, International Law, Moscow Institute of State and Law; Lawyer-Member of Israel Bar.
2. Abualkeir Abu Jabal, MA Jurisprudence, Canktbeterburg University; Lawyer-Member of Israel Bar.
3. Majdouleen Safady, IT and Administration degree, Administrative Officer.
4. Salman Fakherldeen, Public Relation Officer.