

“The heavy price Syrians paid will unite them”: An interview with Dr. Radwan Ziadeh



Syria has entered an extremely complex political and economic phase after the fall of the Assad regime, where efforts to rebuild state institutions overlap with the files of transitional justice, social healing and economic recovery, at a time when the contours of the new political order remain far from fully clear.

Alongside the Arab and international openness Damascus has enjoyed since liberation, debates inside the country are expanding over the future of public freedoms, the nature of the political system now being established, and the limits of the Syrian economy’s ability to recover after long years of war, poverty and destruction, as well as the growing controversy over the future shape of relations between the state and society in a country where the effects of social and political divisions remain powerfully present in everyday life.

In this interview, the well-known Syrian researcher and thinker Dr. Radwan Ziadeh speaks to Noon Post, offering his reading of the current Syrian landscape, addressing the complexities of the transitional period, the course of transitional justice, and the nature of the political system taking shape today, alongside regional shifts, the Syrian economic crisis and fears surrounding the next phase.

We also discuss the relationship between political stability and building a genuine democratic system, the limits of the Syrian state’s ability to overcome the legacy of war and division, and rebuild trust within society, in one of the most sensitive periods in the country’s modern history.

To the interview..

How do you read the Syrian landscape today in light of the rapid political, economic and institutional transformations the country is undergoing?

Syria is still living through a transitional phase and, at the same time, a post-conflict phase, amid the massive destruction that has affected a wide number of Syrian cities and the reconstruction that this requires, alongside the process of rebuilding state institutions after the collapse of the Assad regime.

This phase effectively began with what became known as the National Dialogue Conference, followed by the constitutional declaration that shifted the political system from a parliamentary system to a presidential one, with a notable concentration of powers in the hands of the Syrian president.

So far, the legislative authority has not substantially begun its work, raising questions about the shape of the political system currently in place in Syria and whether it is moving toward a more centralized system rather than a pluralistic one based on respect for political pluralism and the democratic path.

In any case, this issue remains one of the central questions of the transitional period because it is tied to the shape of the political system now being established.

At the economic level, the transitional government has adopted an approach based on building a free-market economy founded on competition and rejecting the monopoly that prevailed during the Assad era. But the current economic vision relies heavily on investment, and I do not believe investment alone can be the decisive factor so much as it should complement the process of domestic production.

The main challenge today is achieving high growth rates capable of lifting more than 90 percent of Syrians who live below the poverty line.

Talk of transitional justice has returned forcefully in recent months, in parallel with the formation of bodies and the opening of some files related to violations. How do you view the path this issue is taking inside Syria today?

The path of transitional justice will remain present in Syria over the next 40 years because of the complexity of this file and the large number of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed on Syrian soil, especially by the Assad regime. Accordingly, this file will remain sprawling and unresolved within the

broader transitional justice files tied to truth-telling and all the other files related to accountability and prosecution.

The formation of the Syrian Transitional Justice Commission was unsuccessful. The figures included in it did not enjoy broad trust within Syrian society, nor did they present a clear vision for the course of transitional justice. Even now, after nearly a year, no real progress has been made on this file. On the contrary, a feeling has begun to take shape among many victims that their files related to justice and accountability have been marginalized or forgotten.

For that reason, this path still requires sustained pressure from victims' associations and civil society organizations to ensure that the transitional justice file remains among the priorities of the Syrian government and the Syrian political scene in the coming phase.

How do you read today the relationship between the idea of political stability and building a genuine democratic system in Syria?

For Syria, there is no longer the luxury of talking about the possibility of building a democratic or non-democratic system, because quite simply there is no other option before Syrians. Syrians experienced authoritarian systems for 60 years, and the result was the monopolization of their representation by the Assad dictatorship, followed later by the inheritance of the state by his son, which cost Syrians an enormously heavy price. So I do not believe there is any option today other than building a democratic system.

But building a democratic system is not an easy matter. It requires a strong middle class, political elites and economic resources, but above all it requires political will. What is clear so far is that there is no real political will to organize genuine elections and move from a centralized system to a democratic one. That is why we are seeing the return of some forms of administration that existed under Assad, whether at the level of local administration, in the way governors are appointed, or even in the formation of the legislative authority.

That is why it remains necessary today to form an independent high elections commission tasked with preparing for the upcoming elections, leading to the drafting of a permanent constitution for the country.

To what extent do the regional shifts and Arab and international openness toward Syria reflect a real change in the country's political position?

Certainly, Syria's regional map has changed through openness to Arab countries and the adoption of a policy based on building new relations even with countries whose ties with Syria had seen tension in recent years, such as Lebanon, because of Hezbollah's interference in Syrian affairs and its participation in killing Syrians.

The relationship has also changed with many neighboring regional states and Arab and European countries, in addition, most notably, to the United States.

Today, Syria is repositioning itself politically within a context entirely different from what prevailed during the Assad era, while trying to build better relations with the United States. This is evident in President Ahmed al-Sharaa’s meeting with US President Donald Trump three times in less than a year. At the same time, Iran is being held accountable for its role and involvement on Syrian territory and for its direct support of the Assad regime over the past years.

To what extent do the social and political divisions created by the war years still remain present within Syrian society today?

The legacy left by the Assad regime at the political, social and economic levels is an extremely heavy one, especially at the level of sectarian division, which the regime worked to entrench over decades.

Moving beyond this legacy requires building a political system based on democratic foundations, citizenship and justice among all Syrians. This is not an easy matter, but at the same time it is not impossible.

The heavy price Syrians have paid over the past decades will unite them, in one way or another, to work toward building a capable political system that is socially stable. True stability is not achieved by imposing a political system by force or through political and military pressure, but through building a political system that is accepted by Syrians themselves.

How do you see Syria in the coming years, and what do you fear most for the country’s future?

Talking about Syria’s future in the coming years is primarily linked to the economic situation and growth rates. According to a World Bank report, Syria achieved growth of less than half a percent last year, whereas any country living through a post-conflict phase is supposed to achieve much higher growth rates.

So far, there has been no real flow of money into Syria, and the Syrian government has refused to take out loans, while foreign investment has not materialized as expected. As a result, growth rates remained very low over the past year, and economic indicators this year do not appear to differ much from the previous one.

If the economic situation continues in this way, it could lead to increased political and social tensions, especially with the widening gap between the countryside and the city, given that rural areas were the most exposed to destruction during the years of the revolution.

Therefore, the ability to reconstitute the middle class remains a pivotal issue in



the coming years because it represents the true social foundation for any process of political transition and long-term stability. If Syria fails to achieve that, it could lead to prolonged political and social unrest.

رابط المقال: <https://www.noonpost.com/en/374957/>