Testimonial on the latest humanitarian mission led by our director in Syria July 2025.

Crossing the border between Lebanon and Syria is quite different from our previous trips. Photos of Bashar have been replaced by signs saying “Welcome to your homeland”; “Don't hesitate to call on our services if you need anything, we are here for you”; “You will be very happy in your country,” etc. A few vehicles overloaded with refugees' luggage are returning to the country from Lebanon. The UNHCR reports that 191,000 Syrian refugees have left Lebanon (out of a total of 628,000 Syrians, mainly from neighboring countries such as Jordan and Turkey). It should be noted that in the Syria/Lebanon direction, more than 100,000 people have fled Syria to Lebanon since the fall of the Syrian regime (mainly Christians and Alawites, especially since the massacres of March 2025).

Friendly customs officers with clean-shaven faces handed us our visas with broad smiles.

This was followed by 20 km of no man's land in the desert, with no checkpoints. There was no more racketeering on the road (in 2024, every 5 km, our driver would hand out packs of Marlboro cigarettes and baksheesh to the soldiers on duty).

Upon arrival in Damascus, there were two small checkpoints manned by young men dressed in black with beards, their eyes shining with joy at being assigned to this post and pride at carrying a weapon. One of them greeted me with a “Salam Hajjiya!” " (no doubt thinking that a woman in a car could only be returning from the pilgrimage to Mecca). In general, these young men, aged around 15, are illiterate and come from Idlib, the stronghold of former fighter Mohamed al Jolani.

In old Damascus, nothing seems to have changed. People go about their business, trade, and women wear the same veils with their faces uncovered. Some also wear black niqabs. We also saw Syrian singers in ultra-sexy dresses in a traditional restaurant (something we had never seen before). Alcohol is still served under the table in some restaurants. Sometimes young jihadists (like the young man at the checkpoint) raid restaurants and destroy their alcohol stocks.

In Syria, Alawites, Christians and now Druze are all fearing for their communities. The Kurds, faced with violence against their co-religionists, are reluctant to surrender their weapons to the new Syrian government, whose promises of inclusion and centralisation of power they strongly doubt. On the other hand, they are still allies of the US and control a third of the territory (and 60% of Syria's oil...). For them, the situation will be more complicated, given their rather ‘unfriendly’ relationship with neighbouring Turkey. As for the new Christian, Alawite and Druze ministers, they have virtually no power, but are part of the window dressing for the West.

Last March, more than 1,500 Alawites were massacred on the Syrian coast by troops which videos prove were made up of foreign troops (Chechens, Uighurs, etc.) as well as fighters from the new regime.

Last June, St. Elias Church in the Douella slum district of Damascus, where one of our schools is located, was attacked during Sunday service, leaving 50 dead and more than 100 wounded. A terrorist opened fire on the congregation and then blew himself up inside the church, while his accomplice fled the scene. One of our 16-year-old students was killed in the attack. We went to offer our condolences to her parents. We also visited and supported (with a month's worth of food donations) many Christian families whose members were injured or killed in the attack. They are all poor people, unemployed, sick, unable to flee the country due to lack of means. Even those who were most resistant to leaving a year ago are now seeking to escape. ‘We are dominated by fear. Anything can happen to our community. This government does not protect us and lets its jihadists do the dirty work of encouraging us to leave or making us disappear. Ahmad al-Charaa should stop making pious declarations of unity among the Syrian people in front of the West; he is incapable of uniting us!’

A community that now accounts for only 3% of the population (11% before the 2011 war), the Christian minority has always been protected by the Al Assad family, itself from the Alawite minority. The land of the first Christians in the East, the remains of Saint Paul in Damascus, the numerous 5th-century churches and the considerable heritage left by the Crusaders bear witness to their historical presence. We distributed LS 1,000,000 (approximately €120) to 50 families for a month's worth of food in the slums around Damascus.

When we were in Damascus, 150,000 Druze and Christians were arriving in the suburbs of the capital, fleeing the massacres in the Soueida region in southern Syria, on the Israeli and Golan border (152,000 Druze live in Israel). There are reports of 1,600 civilian deaths and hundreds of wounded during the attacks between Druze, Arab Bedouins, foreign fighters and regime forces (who blocked the exits from the city during the atrocities, preventing victims from fleeing and humanitarian aid from entering). More than 100 women were kidnapped, raped, executed or simply disappeared. Israeli bombing of the presidential palace and Syrian army headquarters in Damascus calmed the situation, but violations of the ceasefire in Suwayda are ongoing. For its part, Israel, not wanting a unified Syria on its border, is working to fragment its communities.

The Druze, a thousand-year-old branch of Shia Islam practised in secret, are considered heretics by the new regime in Damascus. Today, the Druze speak of ‘a voluntary and non-compulsory faith’ that is not part of any other religion, including Islam. Closed to new converts, the Druze population now numbers only one million worldwide, two-thirds of whom live in Syria. Discriminated at the time of the Hafez Al Assad regime, they have always had an ambivalent relationship with the authorities. Fierce fighters, the Druze responded in July to an attack by Bedouins on one of their own (the conflict had been simmering since the spring, when 100 Druze fighters were killed). In July, the city of Soueida was the scene of violence. Forty villages populated by Christians and Druze were looted and burned in this region by Arab Bedouins, supported by foreign forces and those of the Damascus government.

Reconciliation will be difficult, as these communities currently have no respect or trust for the transitional president, who, if he fails to understand that more than 20% of his country's population (out of 24 million inhabitants) come from communities with strong identities who demand their rights and religions, will lead Syria to implode, despite the billions promised by the Arab states in the region, Turkey and the West.

On the other hand, he will find it difficult to actually enforce Sharia law, despite pressure from radicals, not only from these communities but also from Syrian Sunni society, which, although very conservative, is far removed from Islamist radicalism. Finally, if he does not send away or dilute his foreign jihadist troops, the massacres are likely to continue for a long time... Syrians talk about the incompetence of the new Syrian administration. Laws change every day. What was true yesterday is no longer true the next day. In all areas. ‘If the transitional president wants to revive our ruined and destroyed Syria, he must work on building a state and its institutions,’ say the Syrians.

In this context, we met with displaced Druze people in their shanty towns (18 people living in a single 20 m² room, including injured people and children, with no ventilation and temperatures reaching 42°C in the shade). We distributed LS 1,000,000 (approximately €120) to 50 families for a month's worth of food. After receiving this aid following numerous refusals, they all emphasised that their most precious asset was preserving their families, their dignity, their honour and their loyalty.