

# LIVING DIVERSITY: LESSONS LEARNED FOR SYRIA

## A STATEMENT BY **GABRAIL KOURIE**

Honestly, there are two things that surprised me. They are the constant readiness of the representatives of the minorities and the minority communities for long negotiations, even behind closed doors, in order to reach settlements that achieve the interests of everyone without exception. As for the second point, it is related to the first one, which is that these fruits that resulted from negotiations and settlements and meeting the interests of everyone made everyone feel belonging to this region, belonging, taking pride in their own identity, and belonging to their homeland, and the clearest indication of this is the return of the Ladin community to their places in a long period of time. Contrary to us Syrians, today Syria has turned into an expelling environment, and for some, Syria is no longer a homeland.

I believe that if we, as Syrians, have the will to negotiate, concede, and acknowledge diversity on the basis of true partnership among Syrians, I believe that we can turn Syria into a homeland for all of us under the umbrella of a unifying Syrian national identity.

The most important lesson that I learned from is that tyranny is not a destiny. Fascism came, then Nazism, but these components did not surrender and continued their democratic struggle as the rest of the European peoples. This gives us a lesson on the need to continue our struggle against tyranny, and to be more determined than ever to build a democratic state that is neutral towards religions and guarantees the rights of all ethnic groups without exception on the basis of partnership, and a state that respects human rights and respects the rights of Syrians.

In my conviction, we should put our fears aside, some may be talking about the financial cost of managing diversity. Yes, there is a financial cost, but we have seen how this financial cost was invested in the tourism, agricultural and other sectors. Thus, the financial return and return will be greater through the respect and protection of diversity through constitutional provisions.

Thank you, and thanks to the European Center for Kurdish Studies.