

# The Attitudes of Mardin University Students towards the Syrian Constitutional Committee

(A field study program on Arab students at the University of Mardin)



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Syrian Revolution broke out in March 2011 as a result of the repression exercised by the Syrian regime over the decades. The Syrian people rose up in most Syrian provinces demanding in demonstrations to topple the regime. The revolution was peaceful in its beginning but the many attempts of the Syrian regime to violently repress the demonstrations, resulted in militarizing the revolution in an attempt to deter the regime forces and protect the demonstrators.

Due to the escalated clashes between the rebels and the Regime, waves of displacement and migration started in the areas that were most severely affected. In conjunction with this escalation, opposition political structures were formed, starting with the “National Council for the forces of the revolution and the opposition” and then “the National Coalition for the forces of the revolution and the opposition” and “Interim Government” and the “Negotiating Body.” International and regional attempts to reduce this conflict through military interventions or peaceful started. There were many political tracks attempting to solve this crisis, such as the conferences in Geneva, Riyadh, and other efforts from the UN attempting to initiate negotiations between the opposition and the Regime. Security council resolution 2254 issued in 2015 was one of the most important attempts, as it included many solutions such as forming a Constitutional Committee that brings together representatives of the opposition, the Syrian Regime, and civil society organizations to negotiate and form a new constitution in Syria after revising the constitution of 2012. This committee was launched in 2019 and its extended assembly included 150 members divided equally among the three delegation.

It is noteworthy that the Constitutional Committee concluded its fourth round without reaching any agreement between the delegations so far. It has not disclosed what was discussed in these rounds, and its meetings are still ongoing.

Based on the above, this study began trying to figure out the attitudes of Syrian students in the University of Mardin towards the work of the Syrian Constitutional Committee and its outcomes. The main research question of this study is the following: **What are the attitudes of the Syrian students at the University of Mardin towards the work of the Constitutional Committee?** This question led to a set of questions:

1. To what extent are the students informed about and interested in the work of the Constitutional Committee?
2. What are the students’ attitudes towards the constitutional committee and its work?

3. What are the students' expectations of students about the work and outcomes of the Constitutional Committee?

## **METHODOLOGY AND STUDY INSTRUMENT**

This study followed the descriptive analytical approach, and the questionnaire is the main study instrument for research, as interviews were conducted by telephone during the period between October 2020 and December 2021.

### **POPULATION RESEARCH SAMPLE:**

The original research community is the Arab Program students at the University of Mardin in the first and fourth years in the four sections within the program, namely: The Faculty of Administrative Sciences and Economics (Business Administration and Political Science), the Faculty of Arts (Sociology, History).

The original size of the community amounted to (569) subjects, (396 males and 173 females). When aggregated according to their academic years, the total number of the first year students was 316 (225 male students and 91 female students). The total number of fourth year students was 253 (171 males and 82 females).

Accordingly, the researcher selected a random sample representing (10%) of the original research community, taking into account the representation by academic years and sex.

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS:**

The study concluded a number of results, including:

- 1- The following of the news related to Syria by sex was highest at the answer "Sometimes." The following among males was higher than it was among females.
- 2- Regarding following the news of the constitutional committee, the highest rate was "sometimes" and the following rate among males was higher than it was among females.
- 3- In regards to following the news of the constitutional Committee by age, the highest rate was "sometimes" the group that followed most was the age group of 28-34. According to the academic specialization, business administration

students came first followed by political science, and highest degree of following was within “sometimes.” As for study years, following among first year students was higher than in it was among fourth year students.

- 4- According to specialization, interest in the work of the constitutional committee was concentrated at the degree of “moderate amount of interest.”
- 5- When the degree of interest in the work of the constitutional committee was aggregated by sex, the ratio of males was higher. When the interest degree was aggregated by specialization, it was concentrated at the degree of moderate in the concentration of business management, followed by political sciences. The ratio of interest among first year students was concentrated majorly at moderate. It is worth mentioning that the rate of interest permanently was very low compared to the moderate degree.
- 6- When analyzed in accordance with knowledge about the delegations, the sample was concentrated on knowing some of them the sample was concentrated on knowing some of them, and distributed majorly on males. When analyzed by specialization, it was higher on business management.
- 7- As for the representation of the delegations of the political attitudes, the the percentage of those whose political attitudes were not represented by the committee was higher.
- 8- As for those among the sample who were represented by one of the delegations, their satisfaction degree was “somehow” in terms of the presence of specialists and qualified individuals in the committee. As for their evaluation in terms of negotiation and seriousness and persuasion, the highest percentage was concentrated at “unsatisfied.” Regarding attitudes towards the work of the institutional committee, the highest percentage was concentrated at attitudes relatively apposing the the work of the constitutional Committee.
- 9- The ratio of support for the work of the delegations was lower than “opposed”, whether opposed to its formation, opposed to its totality, or opposed to its principle of negotiation with the regime. It was noted that the age group 23-27 formed the biggest ratio in these attitudes. According to the academic specialization, the highest ratio among these positions was business

administration. According to the academic year year, the highest percentage was distributed among the first year.

- 10- As for some statements concerning the work of the Constitutional Committee and its causes of formation, the highest ratio of agreement was on the statements to the effect that the committee was formed due international will and it was intended to pass the time, and that its members do not represent the Syrian people, and it is not a solution for Syria. It was also noted that there was not a high ratio in the sample that expected constitutional committee to succeed. The main reasons for not expecting the committee to succeed were that there is no solution to the presence of the Regime, and that the problem was the persistence of the Regime, and that the committee serves external agendas and not the Syrian people.
- 11- As for the sample members who expected the committee to succeed, their moderate expectation was the highest ratio. When the opinion of the sample regarding the outcomes of the constitutional committee were taken, the answers were mainly concentrated on the lack of tangible outcomes, that it was futile, that it was an attempt to give the Regime legitimacy, that it was an international game. There were, however, some views that there was progress in Syria and that the outcomes were acceptable to some extent.

