

The Local Administration in Deir Ezzor Governorate

A Proposed Model

The picture of a neighborhood Deir ez-Zor shows destruction in infrastructure

سوريون من أجل الديمقراطية
Syrians for Democracy



منظمة العدالة من أجل الحياة
Justice for Life Organization



JFL.ngo

 @JFLngo

January 2017

The Local Administration in Deir Ezzor Governorate A Proposed Model

Introduction:

The local administration councils experience in Deir Ezzor constitutes the most mature form of the escalating civilian movement and the most prominent challenge for the revolutionary forces for administrating the areas that became out of the Syrian government control in the governorate. Despite all hardships and slips, along with the immaturity in the way that qualifies them to be the competent alternative for managing the affairs of the local communities. This is basically related to the modern experience and lack of administrative experience and resources. Additionally, it is related to the ability of independency of their authority from the government one. However, those emerging local councils, as organizational frame and service-based administrations, provided a good pattern that was upgrading until the control of Islamic State group on the governorate as it ended the possibility of continuity of those administrative structures and formed its governance system on their ruins.

In the light of political and military variables of Syria, regional and international, along with the international understanding on combating terrorism and capturing the Islamic State group held territories, the importance of rebuilding and activating those local structures for managing these areas and controlling their resources, especially that the de facto forces that are liberating these areas from Islamic State group' control are working on establishing figurehead local councils by neglecting the choices of the locals.

The Objective of the Research Paper:

This paper aims at providing a proposed model of the local administration in Deir Ezzor governorate under the current circumstances and the future possibilities.

Despite the lack of clarity concerning the form of the future state of Syria, probably it will not remain a very central state as it was under the rule of Al Baath regime due to the changes of the local, regional, and international political conditions since the beginning of the revolution along with the accompanied structural changes that affected social, economic, and political situation.

In addition to the multiple-layers conflict and interrelated wars in the country, the characteristic of Deir Ezzor as it is controlled by the Islamic State group. It will not be deviated from the context of international and regional understandings in war against terrorism. And therefore, the populations have post-liberation concerns as the province may suffer from the same of those cities that were liberated before by different forces. The de facto forces kept the areas that they controlled and managed them by affiliated civil councils, while these areas should be managed by an elected, local and civil administration, and the role of the liberating forces should be limited to protecting these areas and providing them with security.

The Conclusion of the Previous Researches

Two researches were conducted for evaluating the experience of the local councils in Deir Ezzor and came up with a number of results that determine the glitches of this experience in Deir Ezzor. In the research of “Evaluating the Experience of the Local Councils in Deir

Ezzor Governorate”¹, the most important conclusions were as follow:

- 1- The differences between the organizational structures of the local administrative councils were formed by the efforts of activists and revolutionists along with the local administration councils that were formed under supervision of opposition institutions.
- 2- The unavailability of bylaw that regulates the work of the local administration councils, methods of administration, and form of interrelations which led to failure in organizing a large number of related service-based councils and commissions.
- 3- The lack of professional and administrative experience in many members of the local administration councils, particularly the youth as they never had previous administrative experiences.
- 4- The dependency of the local administration councils on institutions and personnel of Assad regime. No independency was achieved due to the weak planning and lack of abilities.
- 5- The negative impact of the opposition institutions methods that supported these local administration councils as there was a type of conflict of interest and political competition, which influenced on the manner of forming these councils and their work.
- 6- Non-participation of the administrative, professional, academic expertise in the work of the local administration councils due to the lack of financial support of those councils, inability to pay salaries, and the reluctance of the experienced to participate as they do not believe in the continuity of these organizational entities since their members competed for power.

¹ Al Mashhour, Faisal, Evaluating the Experience of the Local Councils in Deir Ezzor Governorate, Local Administration’s Supreme Council Studies Unit, April 2015.

- 7- The absence of administrative transparency and oversight on the works of the local administration councils, which opened the door widely to administrative and financial corruption inside the local councils.
- 8- The unavailability of executive power, that run by the local administration councils, participated in the status that many decisions were not active, the area resources were not managed, and their disability to provide security to the area.

The research of “The Local Councils in Deir Ezzor, Transformations and Future Prospects²” concluded significant indicators in terms of failure of local councils in Deir Ezzor in fulfilling the mandated role in a good manner, according to a questionnaire that was conducted by Justice for Life Observatory in Deir Ezzor, such as: “the poor communication with the community, the stability of regular technicians' team with required competence”. As for the reasons of poor performance of local councils, according to the same questionnaire, “The local councils cannot perform their work effectively unless they are backed by an armed wing that provides them with the reasons of power” and the fact that the members of these councils were not selected in a democratic way, which caused poor devotion of culture of local administration in the social environments.

Despite these significant indicators, the results indicated that 80.3% of the sample supported the revival of local councils. This desire is based on the ability of the local councils to provide the locals with many service in the fields of “healthcare, electricity, water, and mainly relief”, as indicated by the same questionnaire. This shows the positive role of the local councils in providing their areas with services, in addition to the citizens’ desire to manage their areas. Hence, the role and importance of the local councils are emerged as local administrative entities that framing the work of wide social categories in the public domain.

² Al Hamad, Manaf, The Local Councils in Deir Ezzor, Transformations and Future Prospects, Justice for Life Observatory in Deir Ezzor. August 2016.

1st Local Administration and Decentralization

When we talk about the local administration, we have to stop be the concept of “Decentralization” as a style of administration which is based on distributing authorities and approaches between the central authorities and the legally independent local commissions. It is the opposite of centralization where the powers and administrative functions is owned by the central authority. In any state, there are two different styles of centralization;

Political decentralization: which means to distribute the governmental functions, legislative, executive, and judiciary ones, between the central government and the elected local governments. This is called the local rule, and this will not be covered by this research.

Administrative Decentralization: where administrative functions are distributed between the authorities of the central administration and elected local commissions and councils in terms of planning and resources management. The role of the central administration is limited to supervision and monitoring the implementation of the tasks that are assigned to those local commissions and councils.

The style of administrative decentralization is applied throughout the system of local administration, which known as the distribution of the administrative function between the central government and elected, or local, commissions that carry out their tasks under the supervision and monitoring of the governments³. This participated in the emergence and development of democratic ideas in supporting this trend by paving the way to the citizens for managing their own affairs and local interests throughout elected administrative commissions and councils. The administrative centralization has many characteristics such as;

It promotes the awareness of the locals as they recognize the importance of participating in managing their areas and making decisions. They also have the responsibility of suggesting solutions for their local problems.

³ Al Attar, Fouad, Principles in the Administrative Law, p176, Cairo 1955.

It reduces the load that the central authorities have, and increases the rapidness of achieving tasks, along with increasing the administrative competence.

It increases the level of monitoring and accountability which promote confidence between the government and the citizens.

2nd Governance

The importance of applying governance styles emerges on the local level as they enable the local administrations to accomplish their tasks at high competence, and represent values that promote and expand the effective participation of wide social categories for managing their affairs and participating in decisions making. This requires an organized financial administration and clear financial records for applying the principle of political, administrative, financial, and legal accountability throughout internal, external, administrative and financial censorship apparatuses. Additionally, it requires to adopt the methodology of transparency and provision of information about plans, budgets, projects, and decisions throughout a media office that sets forth a meaningful media plan, and strengthening the community participation throughout holding meetings, symposiums, and training workshops on periodic basis with locals and responding to their demands, along with justice in providing services in accordance with the required needs and the principle of equal opportunities.

3rd Legal and Organization Frame

Despite the importance of the local administrative councils for effective participation of social sectors and categories, but it had a lack of legal framework, during the previous experience, that organize its works and the mechanisms of formation. It was more effected by the changeable social reality and the capabilities of the councils' members.

The administrative organization of the local administrative councils, entities, and commissions has the importance of escalating the level of the function of the local administration, which is represented by meeting the public needs of individuals and public interest of the work environments of these administrative entities. This what the local administrative councils lack during their experience before the control of Islamic State group on Deir Ezzor governorate. The discrepancy emerged apparently in the organizational structures of the councils, in addition to the absence of legal framework that regulates the work and the mechanisms of formation.

Recently, the ministry of local administration' public administration of local councils in the Syrian interim government prepared an implementation regulation for local administration that regulates the mechanism of local councils' formation and unifies their organizational structures⁴, depending on the administrative divisions of the Syrian Arab Republic and the official population censuses of the Central Office for Census in 2011 in accordance with the Syrian civil registry.

Administrative Divisions in Deir Ezzor Governorate:

Deir Ezzor governorate has a population of 1,692,000, according to the Central Office for Census in 2011, 1,237,413 are residents of the governorate. The governorate is divided into three administrative districts; "Deir Ezzor, Al Mayadin, and Al Boukmal".

1 – Deir Ezzor:

It is populated by 605,654 people. It is administratively divided into 6 sub-districts: " Al-Busayrah, Al-Kasrah, Al-Tabni, Khasham, Al-Muhasan, Al-Sur, and Deir Ezzor, which is the center. The district has 8 towns, 21 municipalities and 48 villages.

The district has Deir Ezzor military/ civil airport, which is controlled by regime forces, and many vital locations; Conico Gas Plant, Al Taym Station

⁴ An implementation regulation of local administration which is based on the law 107, that was issued in 2011, by the Syrian interim government.

for Generating Electricity, Salt Mine, Grain Silos, and Sugar Mill. It also has natural resources such as ; oil fields of Al Jafra and Al Taym, ancient sites such as Qarqesia, Halabia and Zalabia, Dor Katlimo, and Roman Cemeteries, which are controlled by Islamic State group.

2– Al Mayadin

It is populated by 304,800 people. It has two sub-districts :” Al Ishara and Theeban” in addition to the city of Al Mayadin. It has 7 towns, 14 municipalities and 10 villages.

The district of Al Mayadin has importance ancient sites such as Al Rahba Citadel, Tareqa, Bouqras, Ain Ali, Al Shaikh Sreej Shrine, Al Shaikh Shibli Shrine, Al Shaikh Anas Shrine, and all of them are controlled by Islamic State group.

3– Al Boukmal

It is populated by 326,959 people. It has three sub-districts; “ Hajeen, Al Soussa, and Al Jalaa” in addition to the city of Al Boukmal and Hajeen, 10 towns, 5 municipalities, and 18 villages.

There is Al Hamdan military airport, Al Qaem crossing point, nearby Iraqi border. It has natural resources; oil fields of Al Ward, Al Tanak, and Al Omar, along with T2 Pumping Station, Samlan, Al Barghouth, Maqat, Al Rouda, and Al Bawara salt mine. It also has important ancient sites such as Mari and Doura Europos, which are controlled by Islamic State group.

According to the article 7 of the first chapter of the administrative units in the implementation regulation of the local administration, the third section states “ All villages and farms that are no affiliated to any city, town, or municipality in a distance of 15km to the certified organizing scheme, are to be included in cities, towns, and municipalities, with due consideration to the administrative borders of provinces, areas, and districts, providing that there is a road or geographical linkage. There villages and farms are to be represented in the council of the city, town, or the municipality in accordance with the local administration’ regulation of implementation”.

According to the article 12 and 13 of the third chapter, the second section, the number of local councils shall be determined as one representative for each 40,000 citizens, not less than 30 members and not more than 50. The number of local councils of cities shall be determined as one representative for each 3500 citizens, not less than 20 members and not more than 25. The number of members of the local councils of towns and municipalities shall be determined as 10 and 15 respectively.

As for the local councils' executive offices, they shall consist of: 6-8 in the cities, 4 members in the towns and municipalities, and the 10 members of the governorate, except for the head and deputy head, according to the article 13 of the regulation implementation.

Consequently, the local councils of Deir Ezzor governorate are 68 in addition to the local council of the governorate, which has 31-42 members, according to the adopted rate of representation in the implementation regulation.

The implementation regulation determines the duties of the local councils' executive offices. The Syrian interim government' ministry of local administration, relief and refugees affairs is considered as the legal baseline and official monitoring party that observes the structures of the local administration until a political solution is reached, as the local administration units affiliate to the Syrian government during the transitional phase.

4th The Status Quo of Deir Ezzor

Islamic State group has been controlling vast territories of Deir Ezzor governorate since mid-July 2014, except for some neighborhoods of Deir Ezzor city such as " Al Joura, Al Qusour, and Harabish" along with the military airport. These areas have been besieged by Islamic State group for more than two years.

The power of the group controls the administrative institutions and resources. Those resources and infra-structures had considerable

damage due to military action, artillery shelling by regime forces, and aerial bombardment of regime forces, allies, and US-led coalition.

The populations who reside in regime held areas are estimated at 72,525 people. Whereas, no accurate census is available for the populations who reside in the Islamic State group held areas. Some estimations by media networks and commissions state that there are 600,000-700,000 people.

The rest of Deir Ezzor populations are located either in the displacement locations inside Syria, such as Damascus, Al Hasaka that are controlled by regime forces, and Idleb governorate and Aleppo northern countryside, that are controlled by armed opposition factions, or in refugee states, mainly in Turkey.

The populations of Deir Ezzor governorate suffer from dire conditions in the governorate of Idleb.

5th A Proposed Model of Local Administration for the Status Quo:

Based on the abovementioned reasons, the current situation of Islamic State group held governorate of Deir Ezzor, the complete absence of local administration structures, and the previous studies and conclusions of the factors that undermined the work of the local councils and decreased their effectiveness in their local environments, additionally in order to enable the local councils to undertake their roles as administrative structures within a system of decentralized administration, there is a need for providing the required work factors in order to stabilize them, which will be reflected positively on their organization, performance and achieving their tasks in their local environments. It is imperative for the administrative structures to have independency in their administrative and financial environments. This was absent in the previous experience of those councils. In an effort to unify the legal and organizational baseline of the local administration structures and applying the governance styles, we present a proposed model for local administration

in Deir Ezzor, where we align between the legal and organizational baseline of the local administration units and the exceptional conditions of the governorate, based on formation of three bodies that work in coordination with each other. Their tasks should be integrated in order to reach gradually the level of stability after liberating the governorate from Islamic State group;

- 1- Forming structures of local administration in the governorate of Deir Ezzor: Communicating with locals who are still residing in the Islamic State held areas in Deir Ezzor, or the IDPs in regime forces held areas, is considered difficult, if not impossible, due to security reasons in those areas. However, based on the implementation regulation of local administration as a legal and organizational baseline, and according to article 14 of the third chapter, section II of the local councils and executive offices in the implementation regulation for local administration, “ the electorates may be limited to representatives of revolutionary forces and actors within the administrative division of the local council”, according to the security condition of the governorate. Accordingly, the electorates, that elects the local administration council of Deir Ezzor governorate, could be formed from the revolutionary forces and actors who are located in Syria, Idleb and Aleppo governorates, Turkey, and former members of local administration councils who are located in these areas for electing or agreeing on provincial council and executive office. The implementation regulation of local administration prescribes the membership conditions in local administration councils and their executive offices as follows;
- 2- Head, Deputy Head, Members of Executive Offices of Local Administration Councils of governorates and cities that are resided by more than 100,000 people shall be university degree holders.
- 3- Head, Deputy Head, Half of Members of Executive Offices of Local Administration Councils of governorates and cities that are resided by less than 100,000 people shall be university degree holders, and the second half shall be high school degree holders as minimum.

- 4- Head, and one Member of Executive Office shall be university degree holders in the towns, and the rest of members of executive office shall be high school degree holders as minimum.
- 5- Head of Executive Office shall be university degree holder in the towns, and the rest of members of executive office shall be high school degree holders as minimum.

The local administration structures of Deir Ezzor are formed during two phases;

First Phase: where local administration councils are formed in Deir Ezzor areas.

A - Establishing Local Administration Councils for Deir Ezzor Governorate:

Where local administration council is formed by representatives of districts, sub-districts, and municipalities, as stated by the implementation regulation, of revolutionary forces and actors that are located in the Turkish governorates, Idleb and Aleppo in Syria. According to the regulation, the members of the council shall be 31-42, and the members of executive office shall be 10 in addition to the head and deputy head.

B - Establishing Local Administrations for Deir Ezzor Areas:

The suggestion of local administrations for the governorate areas depends on the possibilities of liberating Deir Ezzor governorate' areas in the coming phase and the time required by the military factions for liberation. The local administration is formed by representatives for each sub-district, municipalities, and villages, the governorate center that will be represented by three representatives, one representative for sub-district, one representative for two towns, one representative for two municipalities. Consequently, the number of local administration members will be as follow;

- Deir Ezzor : 23 members
- Al Mayadin: 15 members
- Al Boukmal: 13 members

The local administration council could be formed through consensus instead of election during the exceptional conditions, as stated by the implementation regulation of the local administration in the article 8 of the first chapter.

The Tasks of the Local Administration Council or Local Administrations:

The local administration council of Deir Ezzor governorate or the areas local administrations work on the following;

- 1- To alleviate the suffering of Deir Ezzor displaced people in the cities, villages, and camps of Idleb governorate and Aleppo countryside. Additionally, to provide all required humanitarian aid, education, and health throughout communicating with relevant commissions and organizations.
- 2- To conduct a comprehensive survey for the populations of Deir Ezzor who are located in Turkey in order to observe their sufferings and methods of supporting them throughout coordinating with the Syrian interim government and the Turkish government.
- 3- To regulate the relations between the local administrative council and the relevant civil society organizations, syndicates, commissions, and actors in Deir Ezzor governorate and Turkey.
- 4- To set forth a rapid response plan for post-liberation phase in order to provide the locals with basic services that cover the sectors of electricity, water, bakeries, health, and education, based on the reality of infra-structures of these sectors.
- 5- To prepare a vision for organizing the public institutions in Deir Ezzor governorate after liberating it. Additionally, to prepare the required competent staff for activating these institutions, especially the civil registry and courts.
- 6- To study the establishing police apparatus for managing the area that might be liberated from Islamic State group, which are potentially Al Mayadin and Al Boukmal cities.

The Second Phase:

Which starts after six months of managing the governorate by the local administration council or the local administrations throughout preparation and supervision on formation of elected local councils, as stated in the implementation regulation of local administration.

We could propose an initial style for organizing the relation between the local administration council of the governorate and affiliated local councils based on distributing this relation on two levels;

- 1- Subsidiary primary councils: which are councils of districts and sub-districts, 41 administrative councils.
- 2- Subsidiary secondary councils; which are councils of towns and municipalities, 54 administrative councils.

The administrative coordination is conducted with the governorate local administrative council and the subsidiary primary councils of the areas and districts, which coordinate with the subsidiary secondary councils, in order to facilitate and regulate the relation among them for distributing works and loads that cannot be conducted by the local administrative council at its first mandate. Additionally, this will enable us to avoid many conflicts and problems that emerged in the previous experience.

The legitimacy of administrative councils and structures

The local administrative council of Deir Ezzor or the subsidized local administrations is gained according the proposed phases;

During the first phase, and due to the specificity of Deir Ezzor situation, the legitimacy is related to two issues;

- 1- The participation of actors, organizations, commissions, and social categories in formation of the council and local administrations.
- 2- The effectiveness of the council and local administrations in fulfilling their tasks in this phase.

As for the second phase of post-liberation, the legitimacy of the local administration is dependent on the public elections in the administrative areas;

Stabilization Committee:

Is formed by the local administration council of Deir Ezzor governorate or the local administrations based on the expertise that have experience in law, engineering, health, education and economy. The representation of administrative districts, Deir Ezzor, Al Mayadin, and Al Boukmal will be considered.

This committee could be established in coordination with the syndicates that are established in Turkey such as; Deir Ezzor Free Teachers Association, Free Engineers Syndicate, Free Lawyers Syndicate, Laborers Syndicate, Physicians Syndicate, and Deir Ezzor Women Association, in addition to academic and professional expertise. The committee works in coordination with local administrative council or local administrations on the following;

- 1- To conduct comprehensive survey and initial assessment for the infrastructure in Deir Ezzor governorate for all sectors; roads and bridges, sanitation networks, and the pollution of Euphrates river, along with the directorate of social services “health, education, and housing”, in addition to the institutions of public utilities “potable water, electricity, and bakeries”.
- 2- To study the reality of economic resources in Deir Ezzor governorate: oil fields, Conico gas plant, the salt mine, farmlands, irrigation channels, and livestock, along with assessing the damage and preparing a plan for rehabilitation and operation.
- 3- To prepare demographic and census studies for the cities, towns, and villages of the governorate that includes teachers, employees, doctors, and laborers.
- 4- To prepare studies and budgets for renovating the infrastructures, directorates, services institutions and economic resources. Additionally, to prepare the required projects proposals for rapid response.
- 5- To coordinate with the local administration council and the local administrations in order to set forth plan for reactivating and re-launching the local councils after the end of the first phase.

The work of the committee ends after one year of its establishment, with a possibility to extend this period, or establishing other committees, by a decision of the local administration council as needed.

The Community Peace Committee

The importance of this committee is based on the specificity of Deir Ezzor governorate that has a tribal social structure which had severe damage and caused horizontal and vertical fractures and eventually led to individual and community tribal revenges. This is a considerable danger in absence of social baselines that have the ability to coordinate and solve these cases in the area. In case this absence continues, the way will be paved for attracting the tribes' sons by Jihadist and Salafist groups and benefitting from revenge. This will increase the chances of conflict and expanding the circle of violence and counter revenge. Consequently, the committee will play the role of social baseline that fills the gap among the tribes.

The Community peace committee consists of notables, community leaders, and social figures who are selected by the populations of the governorate. The role and responsibilities of the committee in Deir Ezzor as follows;

- 1- Working on solving social conflicts and resolving the outstanding issue among the adverse parties throughout legal methods and tribal customs without resorting to violence.
- 2- Documenting and archiving all revenge related cases and community conflicts in Deir Ezzor governorate in coordination with the Local Administration Council or the local administrations and judiciary bodies.
- 3- Establishing populations' committees of the tribes' people who are concerned in conflict cases and community revenge in order to support the committee in direct communication with relevant stakeholders.
- 4- Working on involving the tribes' sons in the committee in order to expand the circle of participation in order to solve the conflicts and

individual revenge in the governorate in order to stabilize the community peace.

6th The Relationship with the Military Force

There is no doubt that the military force that will liberate the governorate of Deir Ezzor will be related to the international and regional political understandings and agreements that regulate the trend of their actors. Therefore, those regional and international forces should determine and regulate the relationship between the military force and the local councils and local administrations in Deir Ezzor in order to avoid repeating the mistakes that took place in similar areas such as Manbij and Jarabulus, where the military force established local councils that do not represent the choices of the locals, and eventually forms a danger on the stability of Deir Ezzor governorate, which differs from other areas. Thus, the liberated areas of Deir Ezzor should be handed to the local council or the local administrations that are established by the international and regional sponsorship. Additionally, the role of the military force should be limited to providing security to the public resources and utilities along with implementing the decisions of the local councils.

Seventh: Resources and Methods of Management

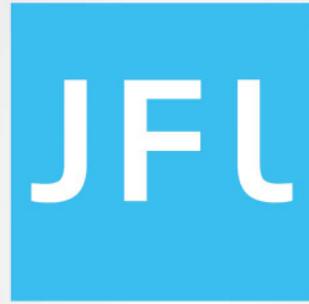
One of the ingredients of the local administration are the resources in order to achieve administrative independence and accomplish their tasks, especially in the light of absence of allocated budgets for the local councils. The donors of the projects of local councils often have the choice of type of support.

The local councils need much funds during the first and second phases, either from the Syrian interim government or from the donors, in order to accomplish their tasks over the coming period, especially after the large-scale destruction of the infrastructure of the governorate. Thus, the local councils are enabled to implement their projects and maintenance for the public utilities such as oil fields, Al Qaem crossing point, archaeological sites, and Conico gas plant in order to reach self-funding phase.

Conclusion

The local administration councils and commissions are considered as the practical procedure of the administrative decentralization, which are one of the most important structures and institutions that support the democratic quest as they provide the opportunities of participation of the local community and enabling it to run their services. This paves the way for a real and actual determination of their needs, demands, and priorities.

Therefore, we propose this model of local administration in Deir Ezzor governorate, which we do not claim it perfection and comprehensiveness, based on the inputs and requirements of reality, along with the specificity of the governorate in order to open a discussion for more mature model as more visions, opinions, plans are required for formulating a comprehensive and clear vision for managing the governorate in the desired pattern.



JFL.ngo

منظمة العدالة من أجل الحياة
Justice for Life Organization



JFL.ngo

 @JFLngo