



# e-Newsletter

HONORARY CONSULATE GENERAL OF SYRIA  
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"Syria, the cradle of civilization and the gateway to history."

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## What is new at the expatriate's ministry in Syria?



I left to Syria for a week on the first day in November with a mild feeling of guilt for not being present in the US at such a historic time. But it turned out to be equally exciting to observe the US presidential elections from Syria. The two days prior to the election my Syrian friends looked at me with amazement and disbelief when I predicted with confidence that Obama will win. However the skepticism of my well-educated Syrian friends quickly changed into admiration of America as soon as the outcome of the elections was announced. Their over-excitement risks, in my opinion, to put unrealistic expectations on the new US president!

While in Damascus I had the privilege of meeting the new minister of expatriates, H.E. Joseph Sweid, twice. Once in his office and the second time over a lunch with mutual friends. The new minister is a very affable person with high energy and big vision for his new job. His ministry is a vibrant place these days with staff close to a hundred all courteous and eager to please their expatriate guests. High on the agenda of the new minister is the creation of summer camps for the college-age expatriate youths. He is charging ahead and working hard to make the camps happen this summer. I raised the idea of expanding the program to cover high school students. He seemed to like the idea and promised to put it on the agenda. Also among the issues I discussed with him was the important need to improve the line of communications with the Syrian expatriates in order to keep them up-to-date about what is happening in Syria, to inform them about the new laws and regulations affecting them, and also to receive feedback from them and to address their concerns and questions. To my pleasant surprise it turned out that he is fully aware of this need and had already started the framework to build the database needed to reach out to all Syrian expatriates. Beside he had already given his instructions to renovate and modernize the website of the ministry to encourage its use in more efficient ways. I invited His Excellency to visit us in Michigan as the best way to communicate directly with the expatriates. He was very responsive to the idea, and promised to act on it when the right opportunity arises.

Damascus was a very busy place when I was there. Several Arab and international conferences and workshops were taking place at the same time, covering issues related to banking, cinema, and investment... And best of all temperature never went below 70!

**Dr. Naji Arwashan**  
**Honorary Consul General**

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