

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Titel:	Syria: Exit controls and procedures at Damascus International Airport, including whether a foreigner's passport is stamped upon departure; whether airport authorities verify upon departure if a foreigner entered the country legally, including consequences of illegal entry (2017 – august 2019)
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Responses to Information Requests - Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Syria: Exit controls and procedures at Damascus International Airport, including whether a foreigner's passport is stamped upon departure; whether airport authorities verify upon departure if a foreigner entered the country legally, including consequences of illegal entry (2017–August 2019)

1. Exit Controls and Procedures at Damascus International Airport

Information on exit controls and procedures at Damascus International Airport was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to a report on the *Security Situation in Damascus City and Yarmouk* based on a joint mission to Amman, Beirut and Damascus conducted by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) [1] and the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) in March 2018, Damascus International Airport is open and people are travelling through the airport; however, representatives of Human Rights Watch and Mercy Corps [2], interviewed by the DRC and DIS joint mission, state that most returning Syrians enter the country using land borders (DRC and Denmark Aug. 2018, 23). A report on the *Security Situation in Damascus Province and Issues Regarding Return to Syria*, based on a joint mission to Beirut and Damascus conducted by the DRC and DIS in November 2018, citing information provided by a Damascus-based lawyer, indicates that the number of people travelling through the Damascus International Airport is increasing, and the airport is "particularly used" for travelling to other countries in the region, including Iran, Russia and countries in North Africa (DRC and Denmark Feb. 2019, 26-27). An international humanitarian organization working in Syria, interviewed by the DRC and DIS during the November 2018 joint mission, describes that airport operations were running "very slowly" as it has not been used by many during the conflict [since 2011] (DRC and Denmark Feb. 2019, 27). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Honorary Consul for Syria in British Colombia stated that the only document required when exiting Syria is a passport or a "document in lieu of a passport" (Syria 3 Sept. 2019). According to Syria Direct, an Amman-based non-profit journalism organization which produces news on Syria (DRC and Denmark Aug. 2018, 79), interviewed by the DRC and DIS during their March 2018 joint mission,

[t]he procedures at Damascus International Airport are still regular airport procedures, and it is still relatively easy to travel through the airport. People travelling through the airport go through security and will be searched as in other airports. (DRC and Denmark Aug. 2018, 83)

Sources indicate that travellers departing Syria by air are required to pay a fee of 5,000 Syrian pounds (SYP) [approximately C\$13] (Enab Baladi 24 July 2019; Damascus International

Airport n.d.). According to sources, passports are stamped upon entry into Syria (Syria 3 Sept. 2019; Soviet Tours 21 Aug. 2019) and exit from Syria (Syria 3 Sept. 2019). According to the DRC and DIS March 2018 joint mission report, citing a Damascus-based lawyer, border officials can learn whether an individual left Syria illegally by checking passengers' names against "a database available at the border" or by looking for an exit stamp on a traveller's travel documents (DRC and Denmark Aug. 2018, 24). Without providing further details, the same report, citing Syria Direct, indicates that a travel document will show how an individual left Syria (DRC and Denmark Aug. 2018, 24). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.1 Visas

Sources indicate that a visa and passport are required for entry into Syria (India n.d; Australia 8 Aug. 2019; UK 29 July 2019). The website of Syria's Ministry of Tourism states that in order to enter Syria, "Arab and foreign expatriates" cannot be on a list of those banned from entering Syria and are required to have a passport that does not expire within one month of the date of entry and does not have an Israeli visa (Syria n.d). The same source adds that, except for Arab nationals who do not require an entry or transit visa, the entry or transit visa must be issued by the Syrian embassy or consulate in the country of origin or residence of the traveller; foreigners whose country does not have Syrian diplomatic representation and foreigners with Syrian residency cards can obtain the visa from officials at the Syrian border (Syria n.d). There is a single-entry three month visa and a single-entry or a multiple-entry six month visa - which can, "exceptionally," be granted for a one year period (Syria n.d). Foreigners staying in Syria for more than fifteen days must "inform the immigration office or its branches in the provinces to apply for a residence permit or to extend his visa" (Syria n.d). Similarly, other sources also indicate that foreigners staying in Syria for fifteen days or more must register with Syrian immigration authorities (Canada 22 Aug. 2019; US 24 June 2019).

According to Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), individuals who have overstayed their visa will require an exit visa prior to leaving (Australia 8 Aug. 2019). The Government of Canada's travel guidance on Syria states that local government and authorities controlling the border "may change exit requirements without notice" and may require an exit permit and restrict travellers from leaving Syria (Canada 22 Aug. 2019). The website of the Australian embassy in Jordan indicates that individuals residing in Syria require an exit permit or a visa label in their passport (Australia n.d). Australia's DFAT adds that individuals with a Syrian residence permit require an "exit and return" stamp prior to leaving the country (Australia 8 Aug. 2019). According to an article by Hanan Elbadawi, an independent writer and analyst who works on humanitarian issues and Arab affairs and was the founding manager of the Program on Refugees, Forced Displacement and Humanitarian Responses at Yale University, Lebanese authorities subjected Palestinian refugees in Syria to "special procedures" not required of Syrian refugees, which included obtaining an exit permit from Syrian authorities (Elbadawi 3 Apr. 2018). Further and corroborating information, including further information on exit visa, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Border Security and Consequences of Illegal Entrance to Syria

The DRC and DIS March 2018 joint mission report states that an individual who is on a wanted list of a Syrian security agency will be apprehended by the authorities if they enter Syria through Damascus International Airport (DRC and Denmark Aug. 2018, 29) or

"revealed upon arrival" (DRC and Denmark Aug. 2018, 45). A Damascus-based lawyer, cited in the same report, indicates that Syrians who are not on a wanted list will generally not be questioned about their activities outside of Syria (DRC and Denmark Aug. 2018, 23). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to sources, a law issued in June 2013 states that individuals who enter Syria illegally will face a fine of five to ten million SYP [approximately C\$12,900 to C\$25,800] (AFP 25 June 2013; UK 29 July 2019) and a prison sentence of one to five years (AFP 25 June 2013) or five to ten years (UK 29 July 2019). Further information, including enforcement of the law, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is an international humanitarian organization that assists refugees and internally displaced persons (DRC n.d.).

[2] Mercy Corps is an international team of humanitarians working to "alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities" (Mercy Corps n.d.).

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Oral sources: Cham Wings Airlines; Damascus International Airport; Danish Refugee Council; Lupine Travel; Nahas Travel and Tourism; Petra Nights Tours; Syria – embassies in Brussels and Prague.

Internet sites, including: Al Arabiya; Al Jazeera; Asia Times; Cham Wings Airlines; Human Rights Watch; International Air Transport Association; Middle East Monitor; Reuters; Syria – Civil Aviation Authority; Syrian Arab Airlines; Syrian Arab News Agency; The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights; UN – International Civil Aviation Organization, International Organization for Migration, Refworld, UNHCR, World Food Programme.