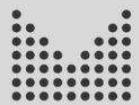


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DEPARTMENT FOR ASYLUM
AND MIGRATION POLICY

European and International Affairs Unit

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Introduction

This report describes the security situation in Syrian provinces and the circumstances surrounding the return of citizens to Syria after extended stays abroad. The introductory section provides a comprehensive overview of the current security environment, with particular focus on the main security actors, key incidents, and their impact on the stability of individual regions. It also captures the complex dynamics at the provincial level, including territories administered by the DAANES, highlighting the specific characteristics and differences among these areas.

The second part addresses the process of citizens returning to their homeland, emphasizing its key aspects. These include conditions for entry into the territory, documentation requirements at border crossings, issues related to freedom of movement within the country, and returnees' access to basic public services, infrastructure, and essential administrative documentation. The report further examines potential obstacles and challenges that returnees may face. The research topics and areas were formulated based on internal consultations to align as closely as possible with current needs.

This report was prepared in accordance with the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA) Report on Country of Origin Information (COI) Methodology (2023)¹ and represents a synthesis of information obtained from both oral and written sources. Information and data were collected between May and July 2025, notably during a fact-finding mission to Syria (Damascus) and Lebanon (Beirut) from May 26 to May 30, 2025. The report is supplemented by additional sources that meet the methodological requirements for COI.

Between May and July 2025, 10 semi-structured research interviews, 2 written interviews, and 1 focus group discussion with Syrian employees of a non-profit organization who are returning or have already returned to Syria were conducted. Minutes were made of the individual interviews, which were subsequently approved by the respondents. The report presents information and data from these minutes with an emphasis on maintaining accuracy. The individual respondents are not responsible for the content of this report. For security reasons, OAMP has anonymized the identities of the respondents.

Sources of information are cited in the text through footnotes, accompanied by a complete list of sources including relevant internet links. This document provides a general overview of the situation or issue and is not exhaustive regarding any specific application for international protection. It does not represent the position of the Czech Republic on the country or issue concerned.

This document was translated with the help of machine translating tools (DeepL).

¹European Union EU Agency for asylum (EUAA), *EUAA Report on methodology of country of origin information (COI)*, February 2023

Abbreviations

DAANES	Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
EU	European Union
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
GSS	General Security Service
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISPI	Institute for International Political Studies
IS	Islamic State
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
OAMP	Department for Asylum and Migration Policy
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SNA	Syrian National Army
SNHR	Syrian Network for Human Rights
SOHR	Syrian Observatory for Human Rights
SYP	Syrian pound
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
US	United States of America
USD	United States dollar
WFP	World Food Programme
YPG	People's Protection Units

1. Description of the Current Situation

1.1 Political Developments

On December 8, 2024, the regime of President Bashar al-Assad was overthrown. The fall of the al-Assad regime followed an unexpected offensive by a coalition of armed militant organizations led by the HTS group, which originated from the former Sunni terrorist organization—Jabhat al-Nusra. Within just 12 days, the coalition of militant groups led by HTS managed to capture Aleppo, Hama, and Homs.² Meanwhile, Damascus was taken almost without resistance by another ad hoc coalition of armed groups formed in the southern provinces of Daraa and Suweida. Rebels from the southern provinces left Damascus following the arrival of HTS and its allies.³ Bashar al-Assad fled to the Russian Federation.⁴

Immediately after the overthrow, a provisional government was formed in Damascus, headed by Muhammad Bashir, the former prime minister of the so-called Salvation Government in Idlib. He was entrusted with leadership until March 1, 2025. On January 29, 2025, HTS leader Ahmad al-Sharaa, formerly known by his nom de guerre Abu Muhammad al-Julani, was appointed interim president. The new leadership annulled the Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, valid since 2012, and dissolved the existing parliament. The Baath Party, Bashar al-Assad's political entity, was banned. The security forces and army of the former regime were also disbanded, but the new authorities declared a general amnesty for those who pledged to hold accountable the security and military officers involved in crimes of the former regime. Additionally, the new leadership agreed to unify all armed groups under a single command. Although most armed groups are affiliated with HTS and its leadership, many armed factions operating under their own rules remain active in the country.⁵

At the beginning of March, al-Sharaa announced the creation of a transitional constitution, intended to serve for a five-year transitional period at the end of which a new permanent constitution should be adopted. On March 29, a new transitional government took the oath of office, expected to govern Syria for the next five years. Most key positions were held by HTS members or persons close to the interim president. The government also includes several minority representatives, such as the Christian Minister of Social Affairs Hind Kabawat and the Alawite Minister of Transport Yaarub Bader. At the end of July 2025, new parliamentary elections were announced to take place from September 15 to 20 of the same year.⁶

The transitional government, led by President al-Sharaa, declared it would be an inclusive government aiming to unify Syria regardless of ethnic or religious dividing lines. However, the state administration is currently largely controlled by Sunni Arabs with a radical Islamist background, and minorities have only minimal representation.⁷ In recent months, under al-

²UNHRC, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic**A/HRC/58/66*, March 14, 2025

³DIS, *Syria: Security Situation*, July 2025

⁴Reuters, *Syrian rebels overthrow al-Assad, who flees to Russia amid conflict in the Middle East*, December 9, 2024

⁵UNHRC, *Rep. cit.*, March 14, 2025

⁶Al Jazeera, *Syria to hold first parliamentary elections since the fall of al-Assad*, July 27, 2025

⁷UNHRC, *Rep. cit.*, March 14, 2025

Sharaa's government, several incidents of ethnic and religious violence with numerous casualties have also occurred.⁸

1.2 Security Situation and Armed Actors

Syria remains a fragmented country where control over security and territory is essentially divided among individual armed actors.⁹ The most influential group continues to be HTS, which, together with allied factions, took control in December 2024 of several regions stretching from Idlib to Damascus, forming the basis for a new transitional administration (see *Chapter 1.1. Political Developments*).¹⁰ According to an expert source, more than 38 armed groups operate in Syria. These groups differ in ideology, sources of funding, and alliances. Some are supported by Turkey (e.g., the SNA), others by Russia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, or Israel. Given the often-conflicting objectives of these actors, instability and the risk of future clashes are on the rise.¹¹

The level of assistance and protection provided by state authorities in cases of violent attacks or other crimes varies greatly depending on the local context. Although there are efforts to enforce accountability for violent acts, for example in coastal areas, according to an interviewed organization, the progress is slow. There is no unified approach across regions, and the degree of trust in the authorities varies case by case.¹²

The security situation in different Syrian regions and provinces varies significantly depending on geographic location and on which actor actually controls the territory—regardless of its nominal affiliation with the Ministry of Defence of the transitional government. According to the same source, individual decision-making in practice prevails, most clearly visible in the treatment of people associated with the former regime, its officials, or religious communities linked to the regime. The highest number of violent acts against people connected to the regime of Bashar al-Assad was recorded in Homs province. The perpetrators mostly came from local factions tied to the Syrian Ministry of Defence. A similar situation exists in the provinces of Hama and Aleppo, and more generally in the rural areas of Latakia. In contrast, such cases are less frequent in the Idlib region.¹³

The same source stated that security incidents and acts of violence were not directed against a particular religious community, nor were they committed exclusively for religious reasons. In central, northern, and western Syria, these incidents were predominantly retaliatory in nature. A discriminatory or religious undertone appeared only in a smaller number of cases. The targets of attacks were often individuals previously connected to the former regime. These people came from various religious groups, most frequently from the Alawite community. However, cases of attacks against members of the al-Murshidiyya¹⁴ community and against Sunnis were also recorded. The common feature of these attacks was that they targeted individuals involved in

⁸Reuters, *Syrian forces killed 1, 500 Alawites. The chain of command led to Damascus*, June 30, 2025; Reuters, *Israel launches heavy air strikes in Damascus, promises protection to Druze*, July 17, 2025

⁹Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025; Research interview with journalist, online, May 22, 2025

¹⁰Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025; Waters, Gregory, *Local Governance in Post-Assad Syria: A Hybrid State Model for the Future?*, July 15, 2025

¹¹Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

¹²Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

¹³Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁴A movement with roots in Alawism, e.g. Moos, Oliver, *The Murshidiyya in Syria: a modern religious movement; Interview with Dmitry Sevruk*, October 28, 2022

human rights violations during al-Assad's rule. By contrast, in southern Syria, up until mid-July—when violence between Bedouin tribes and Druze sharply escalated (*see Chapter 1.2.6.2. Suweida Province*)—attacks were not aimed at a particular group but rather reflected the general deterioration of the security situation affecting different layers of society.¹⁵

It is therefore, according to the consulted source, not possible to speak in all cases of an increase in sectarian violence. Incidents are not primarily motivated by religious affiliation, but target individuals and factions linked to the former regime. While these actors often belong to the Alawite community, they also come from other groups mentioned above. The consulted source attributes a more sectarian character mainly to incidents involving the Druze community.¹⁶

Sources also mentioned attacks on the Christian population, most of which were carried out by the IS.¹⁷ However, these attacks were not very frequent. A security expert noted that Christians are usually not the direct target of violence, but they face religious and social pressure. This can manifest itself, for example, through the display of IS flags or the imposition of conservative rules in Christian neighborhoods, such as restrictions on clothing or bans on alcohol consumption. Christian communities are generally considered non-confrontational.¹⁸

According to one organization, the new Syrian regime maintains control over most of its territory primarily during daytime hours (8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.). At night, however, insecurity increases. Again, the situation differs across regions.¹⁹

1.2.1 Northwestern Syria

The northwestern region of Syria, namely Aleppo province and particularly Idlib, is largely under the control of the transitional government.²⁰ A consulted source described the city of Idlib as one of the most stable areas, characterizing the local security situation as solid.²¹

In the northern and northwestern parts of Aleppo province, especially along the Turkish border, the Turkey-backed coalition of armed groups known as the SNA continues to maintain significant influence. The SNA also remains present in the Afrin district. Although the transitional government, following the appointment of Ahmad al-Shara as president on 29 January 2025, announced the dissolution of all rebel groups and their incorporation into the newly emerging state institutions, this process has not yet been fully completed. Some SNA factions have integrated into the structures of the transitional administration only formally—mainly out of fear of losing political influence and concerns about potential prosecution for human rights violations.²²

Areas in the northeast of Aleppo province, west of the Euphrates River, continue to witness ongoing clashes between the SNA and Kurdish SDF forces.²³ These battles are primarily driven

¹⁵Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Research interview with security expert 2, online, June 23, 2025, Research interview with representatives of an international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

¹⁸Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

¹⁹Research interview with non-profit organization coordinator 5, online, June 26, 2025

²⁰Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

²¹Research interview with security expert 2, online, June 23, 2025

²²Ibid.; Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025; EUAA, *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, p. 4546; EUAA *Syria: Country Focus*, July 2025, p. 24 and 103; Al Jazeera, *Syria's Ahmed al-Sharaa named president for transitional period*, January 29, 2025

²³Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 103

by Turkey's stance toward the Kurdish YPG militias, the main component of the SDF, which Turkey regards as a direct offshoot of the PKK.²⁴ Turkish military support, in the form of artillery and air strikes, has strengthened the SNA's advances, particularly in the towns of Tell Rifaat and Manbij in Aleppo province, from which SDF units have been gradually expelled since December 2024. Nevertheless, the SDF still maintains control over some rural areas of the province, although their influence in the region is steadily weakening.²⁵

Areas of Aleppo province near the Turkish border, previously controlled by the SDF, have reportedly been the scene of kidnappings and robberies. Security forces of the transitional government have had to intervene due to violations of civilian rights, particularly in the towns of Manbij, Afrin, and Jarabulus.²⁶ The districts of Manbij and Ayn al-Arab /Kobani (this district lies in the part of the province east of the Euphrates under the DAANES control) were identified as the sites of half of all security incidents across the entire Aleppo province.²⁷

The SNA's dependence on Turkish military and financial support makes it, among other things, an intermediary within Turkey's broader strategy aimed against Kurdish autonomy. While the SNA continues to maintain control over many areas in the northwest of the country, it still faces internal challenges in preserving cohesion among its various factions.²⁸

1.2.2 Northeastern Syria

The Kurdish-led SDF coalition, supported by the United States, maintains majority control over the provinces of Raqqa and Hasakah and roughly half of Deir ez-Zor province. The SDF also administers the autonomous entity DAANES, located within these three provinces, covering about one-third of Syrian territory, which includes key oil and natural gas resources. In addition to these three provinces, the DAANES controls a smaller part of Aleppo province east of the Euphrates River.²⁹

Certain parts of northeastern Syria—the northeast of Hasakah province along the Turkish border and the north of Raqqa province—were with Turkish military presence under the control of the SNA, which, as noted, has been formally integrated into the structures of the transitional government.³⁰ The southern part of Raqqa province and the central area of Deir ez-Zor province west of the Euphrates river were under the control of the transitional government.³¹

According to a consulted source, the majority-Arab communities in the provinces of Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and the southern part of Hasakah quietly opposed SDF rule and leaned toward reintegration with the Syrian central government.³² Despite the signing of an agreement on 10 March 2025 to gradually integrate Kurdish militias into Syrian state institutions, deep-rooted political and regional tensions persist. The SDF's pursuit of autonomy remains a point of contention with the transitional government, while Turkey's hostile stance toward the

²⁴The Arab News, *Why Turkiye is so influential in post-Assad Syria*, January 20,2025; Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

²⁵Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p.103

²⁶DIS, *Rep. cit.* June 2025, p. 1213

²⁷EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, March25, 2025, p. 70, 72, 73. The EUAA refers to data from ACLED.

²⁸Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p.24

²⁹Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

³⁰EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July2025, pp. 145-146, 152 and 159

³¹Ibid, p.152

³²Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

Kurdish-led coalition threatens the prospects for long-term regional stability.³³ Nevertheless, Kurdish authorities continue to retain military and political autonomy, while the influence of the transitional government in these areas remains limited. From an administrative perspective, however, the procedures of local authorities differ little from those of the Syrian central government, except for minor exceptions.³⁴

Reports indicate that the risk of active conflict in northeastern Syria, particularly in Raqqa and Hasakah provinces, is higher than in other parts of the country due to ongoing clashes between the SDF and the SNA or HTS, despite the above-mentioned 10 March 2025 agreement.³⁵

Security incidents in contested border areas with Turkey were most frequently recorded near the towns of Tell Abyad in Raqqa province and Ras al-Ain in Hasakah province.³⁶

The consulted source particularly emphasized rural areas of Deir ez-Zor province under SDF control in relation to security incidents. These areas were described as unstable, primarily due to the proliferation of weapons, numerous assassinations, and the escalation of tribal tensions.³⁷

In the Syrian Desert regions of Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and occasionally Hasakah, IS maintains a presence through so-called sleeper cells. Although international forces, including the US and France, carried out airstrikes against IS targets following the fall of the al-Assad regime, the organization remains capable of conducting attacks, especially in areas controlled by the SDF.³⁸ One consulted organization reported that in June 2025 IS carried out 13 attacks in SDF-controlled areas of Raqqa and Hasakah provinces, causing six deaths.³⁹

IS sleeper cells also operate in refugee camps administered by the SDF and designated for IS fighters and their families, such as the al-Hawl camp in Hasakah province. This situation represents a long-term security risk, with up to 45,000 individuals reportedly held in the camps awaiting repatriation, according to the consulted organization.⁴⁰ The ability to effectively counter IS activities is limited, as the transitional government focuses primarily on consolidating its power, while the SDF prioritizes threats posed by Turkey-backed factions.⁴¹

In April 2025, the United States announced the start of a gradual withdrawal of approximately 600 troops from Syria. After their departure, fewer than 1,000 US soldiers will remain in the country, continuing to cooperate with the SDF in suppressing IS activities.⁴² In June 2025, the withdrawal of US forces was confirmed from two bases in Deir ez-Zor province and another two in Hasakah province, which were subsequently handed over to the SDF.⁴³

According to SNHR, the SDF has been conducting raids on civilian homes in Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and Hasakah provinces under various pretexts, including alleged affiliation with IS as well

³³Ibid. BBC News, *Kurdish-led SDF agrees to integrate with Syrian government forces*, March 11,2025

³⁴Research interview with non-profit organization representative 4, online, June 23, 2025

³⁵EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p.147 and153

³⁶EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, March25,2025, pp. 70,72,73. The EUAA refers to data from ACLED.

³⁷Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

³⁸Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; Le Monde, *Syria: France claims strikes on IS positions*, December31,2024

³⁹Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

⁴⁰Ibid; BBC News, *Inside an Islamic State camp shaken by US aid cuts*, January 30,2025

⁴¹Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

⁴²AP News, *US to withdraw 600 troops from Syria, leaving fewer than 1, 000 to help counter IS militants*, April 18, 2025

⁴³The Arab Weekly, *As US accelerates troop withdrawal, Syrias Kurds face painful reckoning*, June 18,2025

as support for the Syrian transitional government. In May 2025, the organization recorded a rise in cases of arbitrary arrests and detentions of civilians by armed groups affiliated with the SDF, often accompanied by violence.⁴⁴

1.2.3 Coastal Areas

In the Mediterranean coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartous, the transitional government maintains control.⁴⁵ However, groups loyal to the former regime, such as the Military Council for the Liberation of Syria, the Syrian Popular Resistance, and others, also retain a notable presence.⁴⁶

According to a consulted source, the coastal areas—home to a significant number of Alawites—are considered among the least stable parts of the country.⁴⁷ The transitional government faces serious difficulties in consolidating its authority here. Compared to other regions of Syria, these provinces have also been disproportionately affected by security incidents.⁴⁸

In March 2025, Latakia, Tartous, and partly Hama and Homs provinces witnessed an escalation of violence with a sectarian undertone. Pro-Assad insurgents, including the above-mentioned Syrian Popular Resistance, launched coordinated attacks on transitional government units in Latakia on 6 March 2025, which subsequently triggered retaliatory violence.⁴⁹ Heavy clashes between government forces and fighters loyal to the deposed regime between 6 and 9 March claimed more than 1,000 lives, mostly Alawites. According to a human rights organization, at least 1,311 people were killed, including 830 civilians, 230 members of armed forces, and 250 anti-government fighters.⁵⁰

The tense situation in the coastal areas is partly a result of the socioeconomic impact of mass dismissals of former regime military and security personnel. Many of those dismissed came from Alawite communities in Latakia and Tartous or fled there after the regime's fall. According to the consulted source, marginalized groups such as Alawites and supporters of the former regime seek refuge in the coastal provinces.⁵¹

Local authorities report that the security situation in the city of Latakia has improved since the March unrest. According to the governor, security forces are continuing to arrest remaining supporters of the former regime. Despite such statements, parts of Latakia, particularly rural areas, continue to suffer from violence and instability.⁵² One source added that while the coastal parts of Latakia province can be described as stable, smaller armed groups and smugglers remain active in the mountainous and rural regions.⁵³

⁴⁴Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025; SHNR, *Condemning the Syrian Democratic Forces Detention of Dozens of Civilians in the Governorates of Deir Ez-Zour and Raqqa Since the Middle of May 2025*, May 27, 2025

⁴⁵Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

⁴⁶EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 124

⁴⁷Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

⁴⁸Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 139

⁴⁹Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

⁵⁰Ibid; Al Jazeera, *Syria clashes what happened?*, March 10, 2025

⁵¹Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

⁵²The New Arab, *Latakia governor says security improved as authorities pursue Assad loyalists*, May 27, 2025

⁵³Research interview with non-profit organization coordinator 5, online, June 26, 2025

1.2.4 Central Syria

The provinces of Hama and Homs in the central part of the country are also under the control of the transitional government.⁵⁴ In Hama province, and to a lesser extent in Homs, various pro-Assad armed groups have been active. According to available reports, the eastern areas of Homs province near the Iraqi border were under the control of unidentified armed groups.⁵⁵ By contrast, along the western border with Lebanon, the Lebanese movement Hezbollah maintains influence.⁵⁶

An interviewed organization described the western part of Homs province as a high-risk area, mainly due to the presence of Lebanese structures—specifically Hezbollah and affiliated smuggling networks—as well as long-standing tensions between different factions. The city of Ar-Rastan was identified as an area of instability.⁵⁷

According to consulted sources, the city of Homs itself is relatively stable in terms of security.⁵⁸ In contrast, rural areas of Homs province were described as the scene of frequent security incidents.⁵⁹ One consulted organization reported that significant tension prevails in Homs province in general, with local residents expressing fear of leaving their homes, especially after 6 p.m. Kidnapping are common, particularly targeting families of higher social standing and their children. The main motives cited were financial gain, intimidation, and revenge. By contrast, the situation in Hama province was described as more stable, without major security incidents.⁶⁰

The central provinces are generally described as areas with elevated levels of criminal activity, whether of a sectarian nature or purely criminal.⁶¹ According to consulted sources, the main causes of heightened criminality in both Homs and Hama are linked to the diversity of local communities. A key factor influencing the occurrence of violent acts is religious affiliation and prior support for the former regime.⁶² The ability of transitional authorities to ensure security remains limited and inconsistent. Revenge attacks and the absence of transitional justice were also cited as aggravating factors. These conditions allow individuals or groups to take the law into their own hands. The kidnappings mentioned above are part of this broader trend.⁶³

In the Syrian Desert region near the Syrian-Iraqi border in Homs province, the presence of IS sleeper cells has been reported.⁶⁴

⁵⁴Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

⁵⁵EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 118 and 139

⁵⁶Research interview with security expert 2, online, June 23, 2025; Research interview with non-profit organization coordinator 5, online, June 26, 2025

⁵⁷Research interview with non-profit organization coordinator 5, online, June 26, 2025

⁵⁸Research interview with security expert 2, online, June 23, 2025; Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

⁵⁹Research interview with security expert 2, online, June 23, 2025

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

⁶²Ibid; Research interview with security expert 2, online, June 23, 2025

⁶³Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

⁶⁴Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

1.2.5 Damascus

The capital city is under the control of the transitional government.⁶⁵ In the province of Rural Damascus, the transitional government maintains control over most of the territory. However, the eastern and southeastern areas remain under the influence of unidentified armed groups. Armed fighters loyal to the former regime are still active in the vicinity of the capital and its suburbs, as are numerous Druze militias.⁶⁶

According to one consulted organization, since February 2025 tensions in Damascus itself have slightly eased, and the overall atmosphere feels calmer. Security in public spaces, such as restaurants, has also improved. Nevertheless, due to the absence of centralized police units, mechanisms for an adequate response to emergencies are still lacking.⁶⁷ An expert source described Damascus as generally safe⁶⁸, while suburban areas (e.g., Jaramana, Sahnaya, or Douma) continue to pose higher security risks, particularly because of militia activity.⁶⁹

Despite relative stability, the capital remains exposed to serious security incidents, including terrorist attacks. In the densely populated suburbs of Damascus, violence with a religious-sectarian undertone has also increased.⁷⁰ Sectarian tensions particularly affect members of the Alawite, Druze, and Christian communities. Many individuals from these groups are reportedly considering leaving Syria due to growing insecurity and a sense of threat.⁷¹

At the end of April and beginning of May 2025, repeated clashes broke out in the Damascus suburbs between armed groups linked to the Syrian government and Druze fighters.⁷² Unrest erupted on 28 April 2025 in Jaramana after the circulation of an allegedly blasphemous audio recording criticizing the Prophet Muhammad, attributed to a Druze cleric. The violence subsequently spread to the town of Sahnaya and further to the southern province of Suweida, inhabited by a large Druze community (see *Chapter 2.6.2. Suweida Province*).⁷³ The incidents resulted in more than 101 casualties.⁷⁴ In response to the attacks against the Druze minority, Israel carried out a series of airstrikes at the turn of April and May 2025 not only in Damascus but also in the provinces of Latakia, Hama, and Daraa. Targets included sites near the presidential palace in Damascus. Through this action, Israel declared its intention to protect the Druze community and announced the deployment of its forces in southern Syria.⁷⁵

On 22 June 2025, a suicide bombing targeted the Mar Elias Church in Dweil'a, also located in the suburbs of Damascus. At least 25 people were killed and another 63 injured in the attack. The perpetrator was reportedly affiliated with IS. This was the first attack of its kind on a Christian church since the fall of the al-Assad regime.⁷⁶ The incident once again highlighted

⁶⁵Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

⁶⁶EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 171; Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

⁶⁷Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025

⁶⁸Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

⁶⁹Ibid; Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

⁷⁰Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

⁷¹Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025

⁷²Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

⁷³Al Jazeera, *Syria's Druze divided as sectarian tensions linger after violence*, May 9, 2025

⁷⁴Al Jazeera, *Syrian Druze leader condemns government over sectarian violence*, May 1, 2025

⁷⁵France24, *Israel launches new strikes on Syria amid Druze tensions*, May 3, 2025

⁷⁶Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; BBC News, *Suicide bombing at Damascus church kills 25, Syrian authorities say*, June 22, 2025

the persistent threat posed by sleeper cells and extremist groups, which remain capable of carrying out attacks even in seemingly secure areas of the capital.⁷⁷

1.2.6 Southern Syria

According to the source, the southern region of Syria continues to face serious security threats. In the provinces of Daraa and Suweida, local armed factions remain active. These groups are neither affiliated with the transitional government nor linked to HTS, thus operating “within a security vacuum.” The transitional government in southern Syria has so far taken an ambiguous stance toward recurring security incidents. In Daraa and Suweida, there has been no effective suppression of armed groups nor punishment of individuals involved in violent incidents. In the province of Quneitra, the transitional government has long been unable to prevent Israeli cross-border operations or effectively protect the local population.⁷⁸

1.2.6.1 Daraa Province

The province of Daraa is almost entirely under the control of the transitional government.⁷⁹ The eastern outskirts of the province were controlled by unidentified opposition groups, while the IDF maintained control over parts of the territory in the southwest, near the border with the occupied Golan Heights. There are also isolated groups in Daraa loyal to the former regime.⁸⁰

The security situation in Daraa was by a consulted source described as distinctly fragile. Assassinations and kidnappings occur almost daily, particularly in the western and eastern rural areas. According to the source, local authorities are unable to effectively control the activities of armed groups or monitor the spread of illegally held weapons.⁸¹

1.2.6.2 Suweida Province

Although parts of Suweida Province, particularly in the northwest, are under the control of the transitional government, large areas in its western part are controlled by various opposition and Druze groups. The eastern areas of the province are held by unidentified groups. The security situation in Suweida is therefore highly complex and fragile. Another problematic factor is that most local armed groups have not been integrated into the structures of the Syrian transitional administration.⁸² In March 2025, the transitional Ministry of Interior reached an agreement with certain Druze factions to establish locally led security forces under government control. In May 2025, Druze representatives agreed to resume the activities of the Ministry of Interior in Suweida, and GSS units were reportedly deployed in the province.⁸³

The security situation in Suweida remains complicated by the activities of local armed groups operating outside state structures, combined with the declining effectiveness of official security

⁷⁷Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025; Research interview with non-profit organization coordinator 5, online, June 26, 2025

⁷⁸Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

⁷⁹Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

⁸⁰EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 179

⁸¹Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

⁸²EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, pp. 187-188

⁸³Ibid, p. 187-188; Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

institutions. Armed clashes and assassinations occur occasionally in the province⁸⁴, and sectarian violence is also widespread.⁸⁵

At the end of April 2025, the violence that broke out in the Damascus suburbs of Jaramana and Sahnaya (*see Chapter 2.5 Damascus*) spread into Suweida Province.⁸⁶ According to SOHR, these clashes claimed the lives of 40 Druze fighters.⁸⁷ In mid-July 2025, new clashes erupted in the province between local Sunni Bedouins and Druze. The violence began after a series of kidnappings on 11 July 2025. For the first time, sectarian violence reached the provincial capital, the city of Suweida.⁸⁸ After Bedouin fighters were joined by units of the transitional government, Israel—having previously declared itself the protector of the Druze minority—launched strikes on the city of Suweida as well as on Damascus. Although a ceasefire was declared on 15 July 2025, fighting continued. According to official figures from the Syrian Ministry of Health, the violence claimed up to 260 lives, while other sources reported as many as 900 deaths.⁸⁹ As of 21 July 2025, Syrian authorities began evacuating Bedouin families from the city of Suweida. Approximately 1,500 people were relocated to the neighboring province of Daraa and to Damascus.⁹⁰ The violence also forced up to 145,000 people to flee their homes.⁹¹

On 22 May 2025, an IS attack targeted a transitional government vehicle in the desert area of Tulul as-Safa. Reportedly, seven government personnel were killed or injured in the assault. This was the first recorded IS attack against transitional government forces since the fall of al-Assad's regime.⁹²

1.2.6.3 Quneitra Province

Due to the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights, roughly two-thirds of Quneitra Province are controlled by the IDF, while most of the remaining territory in the eastern part of the province is under the control of the transitional government.⁹³

According to one source, the security situation in Quneitra is characterized by a high level of uncertainty and constant tension. Although there have been no large-scale military operations, in recent months repeated Israeli incursions into Syrian territory have occurred without prior warning. During these incursions, the organization documented the establishment of temporary checkpoints, ploughing of farmland, demolition of civilian homes, and short-term detentions of local residents. Among the population, there is growing concern that these interventions could become a permanent reality aimed at consolidating a certain degree of security and political influence.⁹⁴

⁸⁴Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

⁸⁵Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

⁸⁶Ibid; Deutsche Welle, *Latest deadly violence in Syria: What you need to know*, April 5, 2025

⁸⁷Al Jazeera, *Rep. cit.*, May 1, 2025

⁸⁸Reuters, *More than 30 killed in sectarian clashes in Syria's Sweida, interior ministry says*, May 14, 2025

⁸⁹Al Jazeera, *Syria announces ceasefire in Druze city of Suwayda after deadly clashes*, July 15, 2025; Al Jazeera, *Syria clears Bedouin fighters from Suwayda city, declares halt to clashes*, July 20, 2025; Reuters, *Rep. cit.*, July 17, 2025

⁹⁰Al Jazeera, *Syria evacuates Bedouins from clashes-hit Suwayda as shaky ceasefire holds*, July 21, 2025

⁹¹Reuters, *Hospitals in Syria's Sweida struggling after sectarian clashes, WHO says*, July 26, 2025

⁹²Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; Al Jazeera, *ISIL (ISIS) launches first attacks against new Syrian government*, May 30, 2025

⁹³Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p.194

⁹⁴Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

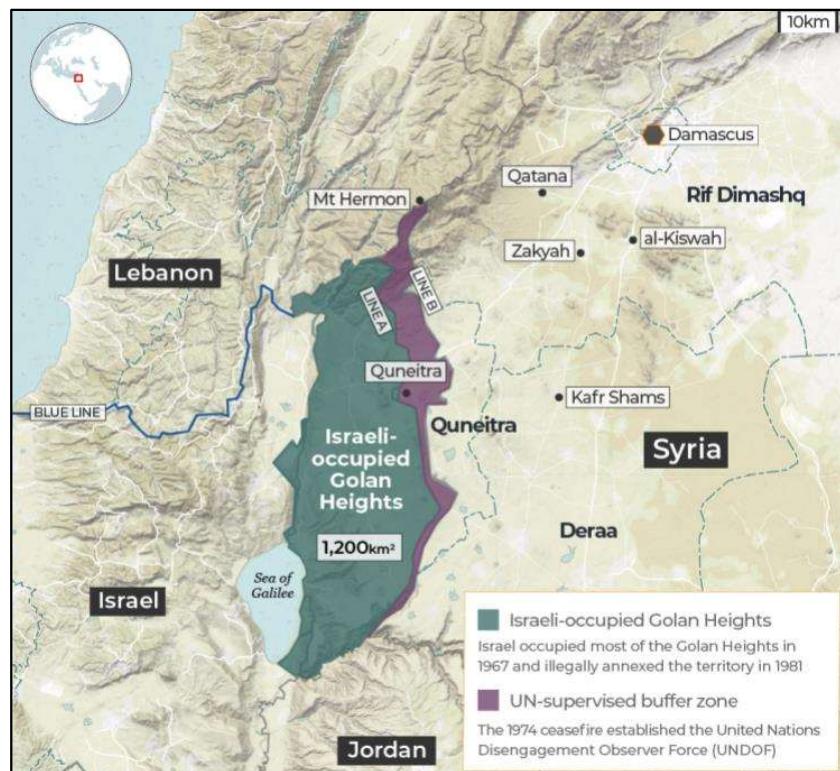


Figure 1: Map showing the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights, specifically Quneitra Province. Source: Al Jazeera

2. Returns

2.1 Return trends and figures

According to UNHCR estimates, approximately 300,000 Syrians returned to Syria from abroad between December 8, 2024 (the date of the coup), and the end of February 2025. By May, this number had risen to nearly 500,000 returnees.⁹⁵ A source from an international organization contacted by OAMP on May 29, 2025, confirmed that the number of returnees was around 500,000.⁹⁶ According to a UNHCR overview from early July, the number of returnees increased to over 641,000.⁹⁷ It is estimated that the number of returnees will continue to grow over time, particularly in connection with the expected increase in returns after the end of the school year.⁹⁸ Currently, an upward trend can be observed.⁹⁹

The vast majority of returnees are coming to Syria from neighboring countries. According to the UNHCR overview from July 2025, about 93% of all returnees came from the region. Specifically, 43% arrived from Lebanon, 36% from Turkey, 14% from Jordan, and 5% from Iraq. Thus, less than 3% of returns originated from the rest of the world.¹⁰⁰ According to information from a contacted organization, fewer than 65,000 Syrians returned from EU+ countries (out of approximately 1.3 million). Between 30–50% of these returns are reportedly short-term, while long-term returns account for only about 10–20%. However, it is difficult to say with certainty whether these estimates are accurate as official figures are not available.¹⁰¹

According to one of the sources, the most common destinations for returnees from abroad are primarily the provinces of Aleppo and Raqqa, followed by the provinces of Daraa, Homs, Damascus and its surroundings, and Idlib.¹⁰² An expert from a non-governmental organization contacted by OAMP reported that returnees are primarily returning to Aleppo and Idlib, also mentioning the province of Deir ez-Zor.¹⁰³ According to the UNHCR overview from July 2025, Aleppo leads with 214,000 returnees, followed by Damascus (120,000 returnees), Rural Damascus (113,000 returnees), Idlib (106,000 returnees), and Homs (103,000 returnees).¹⁰⁴ Returnees to provinces under DAANES control mostly went to Raqqa (93,000), and to a lesser extent to Deir ez-Zor (44,000) and Hasakah (10,000).¹⁰⁵

According to a contacted source, over 50% of refugees across Syria are returning to their original homes, while 30% are settling in a new home in one of the major cities, primarily in Damascus. Individuals originally from southern Syrian provinces (Daraa and Suweida) usually return to their place of origin due to social and tribal ties and the existence of local support

⁹⁵EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 79

⁹⁶Research interview with members of an international organization, Damascus, May 29 2025

⁹⁷UNHCR, *Syria governorates of return overview*, July 3, 2025

⁹⁸Research interview with members of an international organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰UNHCR, *Rep. cit.*, 3. July 2025

¹⁰¹Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

¹⁰²EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 79

¹⁰³Research interview with the coordinator of an NGO 3, online, July 16, 2025

¹⁰⁴EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 79

¹⁰⁵UNHCR, *Syria governorates of return overview*, July 17, 2025. For example, one of the sources contacted by DIS stated that the improved situation in ar-Raqqa and the more stable security situation compared to Deir ez-Zor are responsible for the growth of the local population, as people from other parts of Syria are relocating there. DIS, Swedish Migration Agency, *Security situation in North and East Syria before the downfall of the Assad government*, January 2025, p. 98.

networks. Only 25% of returnees from the southern regions change their residence upon return, mostly relocating to one of the large cities.¹⁰⁶ According to information provided to OAMP by a journalist, returnees from Jordan are primarily flowing into the province of Daraa, those who fled to Iraq are returning to Damascus and its surroundings, and returnees from Turkey are mainly going back to Aleppo.¹⁰⁷

Since November 2024, more than 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned, while around 7.5 million people remain displaced within the country. The highest number of IDPs have returned to the provinces of Aleppo (37%), Homs (17%), Idlib (14%), Hama (14%), and the area surrounding Damascus (7%).¹⁰⁸

2.2 Documents and Other Requirements

The only requirement for a successful return to areas of Syria controlled by the transitional government is for the returnee to prove Syrian citizenship. Currently, citizenship can be verified in several ways, and the authorities accept any Syrian document. It is not strictly required for the returnee to possess a valid passport or national ID—an expired travel document may be sufficient to prove citizenship. Documents issued by the previous regime are also recognized by state authorities.¹⁰⁹ If a returnee does not possess any of the aforementioned documents, it is also possible to prove citizenship through a birth certificate, marriage certificate, a so-called *family booklet*¹¹⁰, or simply through a search in the civil registry, which security forces at border crossings have access to.¹¹¹ A person from an international organization informed OAMP that there have been recorded cases where returnees were allowed entry based solely on a photograph of their documents on a mobile device, specifically via WhatsApp.¹¹² If a returnee possesses no identification documents but has a record in the civil registry, they are issued an extract from the registry upon entry, which they can use for identification purposes within Syria.¹¹³ Overall, entry to Syrian territory controlled by the transitional government is granted based on relatively accommodating requirements.¹¹⁴

In addition, Syrian diplomatic missions abroad are authorized to issue temporary travel documents to facilitate the return of citizens who do not have valid documents. In case of passport expiration, it is possible to apply for an extension at Syrian embassies for up to one year. Syrians living abroad may also request a new passport through the embassy or via relatives who contact authorities in Syria on their behalf.¹¹⁵ Since December 2024, authorities have

¹⁰⁶Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁰⁷Research interview with a journalist, online, May 22, 2025

¹⁰⁸UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview*, July 3, 2025

¹⁰⁹Research interview with members of an international organization 4, online, July 23, 2025; Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

¹¹⁰A family booklet is a document containing records about the mother, father and all their children. After marriage, the newlyweds are issued their own new family booklet. NRC and coll. *Nationality, Documentation and statelessness in Syria*, n.d.

¹¹¹Research interview with members of an international organization 1, Damascus, May 27, 2025

¹¹²Research interview with members of an international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

¹¹³EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 79

¹¹⁴Research interview with members of an international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

¹¹⁵MFA CZ, Information MFA CZ, no. 300748-3/2025-MZV/VO March 5, 2025, for no. MV-1157-5/OAM-2025

reduced the expedited issuance fee for Syrian citizens abroad from \$800 to \$400, and the standard issuance fee from \$300 to \$200.¹¹⁶

Regarding minors, the interim authorities in Syria require that all children entering the country present a birth certificate and be accompanied by a parent or other legal guardian. For children born abroad who were not registered in the Syrian civil registry through diplomatic missions or national authorities, a birth certificate issued by the country of birth is required. In exceptional cases, birth notifications issued by the hospital where the child was born may be accepted at the border for unregistered children.¹¹⁷

According to a contacted expert, Syrians with dual citizenship can enter the country on a tourist visa.¹¹⁸ However, information on the UK government's portal states that persons holding Israeli or Iranian citizenship are prohibited from entering Syria, and individuals with Lebanese citizenship may also face restrictions. There can also be problems if a returnee presents a passport containing entry stamps from Israel, in which case entry into Syria may also be denied.¹¹⁹ According to a contacted organization, however, there have been no recorded cases of different treatment at the border for people who have spent a long time abroad or who had stamps from other countries in their passport.¹²⁰

2.3 Administration of Border Crossings

The administration of all land and sea border crossings falls under the authority of the Directorate of Land and Maritime Crossings, which coordinates operations with the relevant security forces. The transitional government currently controls border crossings with Turkey (with the exception of the crossing near the city of Qamishli, located in DAANES-controlled territory governed by the Kurdish SDF), Lebanon, Jordan (at the Nasib crossing), and also the crossing with Iraq (at the city of Al- Bukamal).¹²¹

All border crossing procedures are standardized according to applicable legislative measures.¹²² Individuals must present the relevant documents (see the previous section 2.2. Documents and Other Requirements), and their entry is recorded in a database.¹²³ According to their official statements, Syrian authorities apply simplified administrative and security checks for returnees and have provided free services at border crossings, such as assistance with transfers to checkpoints or help with luggage. Returning Syrian citizens have also been exempted from certain customs fees, for example, on furniture.¹²⁴ There are no documented reports of differential treatment at the borders based on ethnic or social identity, nor of violent incidents.¹²⁵

¹¹⁶Enab Baladi,*100 Days of Government: Experts Highlight Individual Performance, Weak Governance*, July 9, 2025

¹¹⁷EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 79

¹¹⁸Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

¹¹⁹Gov UK, *Foreign Travel Advice - Syria*, n.d.

¹²⁰Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹²²*Ibid.*; Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

¹²³Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

¹²⁴Mazen Alloush, speaker of the Directorate of Land and Maritime Crossings, Social Network X, June 28, 2026

¹²⁵Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; Research interview with members of an international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

Upon entry or return, there are no legal barriers imposed on Syrian citizens from the Syrian side. Possible restrictions may be applied for Syrian refugees with residence permit in neighboring states, for example in Lebanon or Turkey.¹²⁶

2.3.1 Border Crossings with Turkey and Areas under SNA Influence

In January 2025, Turkish authorities handed over control of all border crossings north of the rural areas of Aleppo to the Syrian central authorities. Specifically, this included the border crossings of Jarabulus, al-Rai, al-Salama, and al-Hamam. After more than a decade, Turkey returned control of these crossings—including border checks and related security measures—to Syrian authorities.¹²⁷ Crossing the Syrian border from Turkey into Syrian territory, for example via the Bab al-Hawa crossing, is prohibited for citizens of countries other than Syria, unless they are members of humanitarian missions or other official representatives.¹²⁸

Returns to areas near the Turkish border under the influence of the Syrian National Army (SNA) are possible and, in general, relatively unproblematic. In the past, the behavior of local security forces was sometimes unpredictable, and there were reports of arbitrary decisions and harassment. However, at the time of writing this report, these units are required to follow a certain “code of conduct” established by central authorities and supervised by them.¹²⁹ In areas under SNA influence, clashes between the SNA and SDF continue due to antagonism between the Turkish government and Kurdish forces. In the provinces of Aleppo and Raqqa, where these confrontations occur, more than 2,000 security incidents have been recorded since the end of 2024.¹³⁰

2.3.2 Border Crossings Controlled by the SDF

The SDF control the border crossing with Turkey in the city of Al-Qamishli. According to an agreement reached between the central authorities and the SDF in March 2025, all state structures, including border crossings, are to be gradually integrated under the administration of the central authorities.¹³¹

Although no special permits or documents are required for entry into SDF-controlled areas, returns to these territories are difficult from a security perspective. According to information provided to OAMP, returns to these areas are particularly challenging for individuals who are not of Kurdish ethnicity. The contacted organization recorded cases where the SDF prevented returnees from entering Syria at the Qamishli crossing.¹³² As in areas under SNA control, there are ongoing risks in northeastern Syria due to fighting between the SNA and SDF, as well as between the SDF and other actors (e.g. ISIS).¹³³

¹²⁶Research interview with a journalist, online, May 22, 2025; Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025; Focus group with representatives of non-profit organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

¹²⁷The New Arab, *Syrian government takes control of border crossings with Turkey*, January 5, 2025, Middle East Monitor, *New Syria government takes control of border crossings with Turkey in latest security handover*, January 6, 2025

¹²⁸Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025

¹²⁹Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025; Research interview with the coordinator of an NGO 5, online, June 26, 2025

¹³⁰Written response from non-profit organization 6, July 2, 2025; EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 106, 154

¹³¹Enab Baladi, *Daraa: Citizens and merchants demand reopening of Ramtha crossing*, June 13, 2025

¹³²Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹³³Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

2.3.3 Border Crossings with Jordan

The border crossing at the city of Nasib in the Daraa province is managed by the transitional government. Discussions are ongoing between Syrian and Jordanian authorities regarding the revitalization and reopening of the Daraa–Ar-Ramtha crossing, which was closed during the civil war for security reasons.¹³⁴

Due to issues related to the integration of armed groups in southern Syria into the Ministry of Defense's security forces, many of these groups have remained independent.¹³⁵ The province of Suweida, largely controlled by Druze militias, is accessible to Syrians without major obstacles, and the security situation there was reportedly slowly improving as of July 2025. Nevertheless, the area is not considered safe. The presence of IDF in Suweida also poses a security risk (*see chapter 1.2.6.2. Province of Suweida for the situation in July 2025*).¹³⁶

In Daraa, numerous Sunni tribal and armed groups are active.¹³⁷ According to EUAA information from July 2025, a large portion of these groups has already been integrated into the Ministry of Defense's security forces of the interim government.¹³⁸ The presence of IDF has also been reported near the Golan Heights in Daraa.¹³⁹

¹³⁴Enab Baladi, *Rep. cit.*, July 9, 2025

¹³⁵EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 68

¹³⁶Research interview with members of an international organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

¹³⁷EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, March 2025, pp. 47-48

¹³⁸EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 179; Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹³⁹Ibid, p. 179

3. Return to the territory

3.1 Security aspects: access of state and non-state security actors to returnees

Sources do not indicate that people returning from abroad face security threats, for example, from current authorities or actors associated with them.¹⁴⁰ In case of any threats, it is possible to contact the local GSS department, which operates nationwide but has limited capacity.¹⁴¹

Cases of violence, including killings, against persons returning to the country have been documented; however, these incidents were not ethnically or religiously motivated. In the recorded cases, the victims were perpetrators of previous crimes or acts of violence. For instance, in rural Hama, several returnees were killed by their relatives, with the motive attributed to revenge stemming from prior family disputes. Conversely, in southern Syria, no similar cases have been reported.¹⁴²

At the community level, tensions were documented between those who remained and those who left or returned. Similar tensions can arise from various causes, depending on complex local dynamics. Among the reasons frequently cited was the perception of those who stayed as pro-regime/pro-Assad, contrasted with returnees, who were often presumed to be part of the opposition.¹⁴³ This perception is linked to fears of reprisals that both perceived and actual supporters of the previous regime may face.¹⁴⁴ Tensions within communities also reflected the perception of religious and ethnic minorities—especially Christians, Alawites, and Shiites—as supporters of the previous regime. This was observed, for example, in Douma¹⁴⁵ and the mixed city of Homs, where Sunni fighters guarded Alawite neighborhoods.¹⁴⁶

Other sources of tension included disputes over the ownership of property confiscated by the previous regime. Currently, there is no official framework or mechanism in Syria for resolving these complex property disputes (for more details, see Chapter 3.4.5 Housing).¹⁴⁷ Tensions also arose from the real or perceived claims of returnees to scarce resources and assets, such as employment, particularly in former frontline areas.¹⁴⁸ In the months following the collapse of the al-Assad regime, these factors contributed to conflicts involving returnees.¹⁴⁹ The social dynamics within communities were further influenced by the return of individuals exposed to different cultural influences, notably internally displaced persons from Idlib, who were

¹⁴⁰Research interview with a journalist, online, May 22, 2025; Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁴¹Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 5, online, June 26, 2025; Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025; The Century Foundation, *Damascus Dispatch: Fear and Hope in a Divided Syria*, March 17, 2025

¹⁴²Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁴³Research interview with a journalist, online, May 22, 2025; Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

¹⁴⁴Research interview with the representative of non-governmental organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

¹⁴⁵The Century Foundation, *Rep. cit.*, March 17, 2025

¹⁴⁶Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, *Ambtsbericht Syri*, May 2025, p. 81. Cit. Channel4 News, *Official profile on social network X*, March 6, 2025

¹⁴⁷Research interview with the representative of non-governmental organization 4, online, June 23, 2025; Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

¹⁴⁸Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 3, online, June 16, 2025; Research interview with a journalist, online, May 22, 2025

¹⁴⁹Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, *Rep. cit.*, May 2025, p. 81

described by sources as more conservative compared to the more secular population that had not been displaced during the war.¹⁵⁰

3.2 Freedom of Movement within Syria

Freedom of movement has improved compared to the al-Assad regime, evidenced by shorter travel times, smoother traffic, and the cessation of certain abuses, such as the enforcement of arbitrary fees.¹⁵¹ For instance, no violations of freedom of movement were reported when traveling within Damascus or its suburbs.¹⁵² All Syrian citizens are able to move freely without hindrance throughout the country.¹⁵³ According to an IOM survey, 83% of key respondents reported no significant restrictions on their freedom of movement.¹⁵⁴

Return and relocation within government-controlled areas are possible, with residents generally able to travel without restrictions. For example, relocation to areas under SNA influence is permitted, and movement is generally unrestricted.¹⁵⁵ However, restrictions on freedom of movement and relocation have been documented in the case of the DAANES (see section 3.2.5 below).

3.2.1 Checkpoints

The Syrian authorities officially emphasize the removal of checkpoints, and any security incidents occurring at them are not representative of the country's official policy.¹⁵⁶ Checkpoints fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior, specifically overseen by a new institution responsible for internal security—the Directorate of Public Security.¹⁵⁷ Security personnel stationed at checkpoints are among the lowest paid.¹⁵⁸ However, depending on local dynamics, some checkpoints are operated by local militias or armed groups with no clear affiliation to central security forces.¹⁵⁹ Foreign fighters from the anti-Assad coalition, who initially appeared at checkpoints in certain areas such as Hama and Damascus, largely ceased operating at checkpoints in central and southern Syria since March.¹⁶⁰

The number of checkpoints has generally decreased and is now primarily maintained at key transport hubs¹⁶¹ and near important government buildings. However, this reduction did not apply to certain areas or cities experiencing social unrest and elevated levels of violence, particularly in Latakia and along the roads leading to Latakia (from Homs to Latakia and from Aleppo to Latakia).¹⁶² In areas with a complex security situation, such as those with high crime

¹⁵⁰Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

¹⁵¹E.g. Enab Baladi, *End of horror journey on al-Hasakah-Damascus road*, February 24, 2025

¹⁵²EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 75. Information provided by a source contacted by the EUAA.

¹⁵³Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025, Research interview with a journalist, online, May 22, 2025

¹⁵⁴IOM, *Syrian Arab Republic: Communities of Return Index Round 1 (15 March – 05 April 2025)*, n.d., p. 9. IOM uses the English term *key informant interviews*

¹⁵⁵Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

¹⁵⁶Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 5, online, 26 June 2025

¹⁵⁷Zwirahn, Faris, *Rep. cit.*, 1. April 2025; NY Times, *Armed Syrians Take Defense of Besieged Druse City Into Their Own Hands*, May 2, 2025

¹⁵⁸Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

¹⁵⁹Ibid.; Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

¹⁶⁰Washington Post, *In Syria, a balancing act over militants*, June 5, 2025

¹⁶¹Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁶²Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025; Research interview with representatives of non-governmental organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025. For example, the increase in the number of checkpoints concerned Homs. After the rise of tensions in Druze areas of Suweida and in rural Damascus

rates and violence, the number of checkpoints has in fact increased. Examples include the Alawite district of al-Mazza in Damascus and the Alawite and Christian districts of Homs. Although the official justification for these checkpoints is to enhance security and reduce the risk of attacks by external actors, residents of these neighborhoods report that their sense of security has not improved.¹⁶³

Checks at checkpoints vary in frequency and consistency depending on the location;¹⁶⁴ however, compared to the past, they tend to be less thorough and less frequent.¹⁶⁵ In some cases, identity documents may be checked,¹⁶⁶ while in others, thorough vehicle inspections are conducted—for example, when traveling to Latakia.¹⁶⁷ Authorities operating at checkpoints are unable to verify whether an individual was or was not a member of the Baath Party; any identification is based solely on the person's public profile.¹⁶⁸ In most instances, vehicles pass through checkpoints without stopping, such as at the only checkpoint between Beirut and Damascus at the city's entrance.¹⁶⁹ According to eyewitness account from a trip between Damascus and Deir ez-Zor, authorities maintained approximately nine to ten checkpoints along the main road, most of which were passed without inspection and sometimes without even slowing down.¹⁷⁰

Compared to the past, there has been a noticeable decrease in cases of informal fees and corrupt practices at checkpoints, such as when traveling between areas controlled by the SDF and the central government.¹⁷¹ These incidents were either anecdotal,¹⁷² or the practice has completely disappeared.¹⁷³ In most cases, such practices were attributed to groups now nominally affiliated with the central government, such as the SNA faction in Afrin.¹⁷⁴ The practice of collecting fees persisted for approximately two to three months after the collapse of the al-Assad regime, during which travelers were also questioned about their religion, particularly whether they belonged to the Alawite sect.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, according to sources, cases of stopping and questioning about religious identity at checkpoints have continued to occur inconsistently and unpredictably, especially in areas with persistent social tensions.¹⁷⁶

(Daramin; Sahnaya), checkpoints were also established in these areas. Al Ghadban, Omar, *An Unwelcome Homecoming*, May 6, 2025; The New Arab, *Lawlessness festers in Homs as Syria struggles to rebuild*, April 28, 2025

¹⁶³Research interview with a journalist, online, May 22, 2025. In Homs, checkpoints were established under the supervision of official security forces, for example around critical intersections and roundabouts, The New Arab, *Rep. cit.*, April 28, 2025

¹⁶⁴E.g. Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025; Zwirahn, Faris, *Rep. cit.*, April 1, 2025

¹⁶⁵EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 75

¹⁶⁶Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁶⁷Sky News, *Sky News obtains first accounts of what happened inside Syrian cities shaken by bloody violence*, March 17, 2025; Zwirahn, Faris, *Rep. cit.*, April 1, 2025

¹⁶⁸Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

¹⁶⁹E.g. Crisis Group, *The New Syria: Halting a Dangerous Drift*, March 28, 2025

¹⁷⁰Zwirahn, Faris, *Rep. cit.*, April 1, 2025

¹⁷¹Enab Baladi, *Rep. cit.*, February 24, 2025

¹⁷²Ashraq Al-Awsat, *Violence in Southern Syria Fueled by Tribal, Sectarian Tensions*, July 3, 2025

¹⁷³Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁷⁴EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 77

¹⁷⁵DIS, *Rep. cit.*, June 2025, p. 31; New York Times, *They Allied With Syria's Rebels. Should They Be Part of the New Army?* June 9, 2025

¹⁷⁶Research interview with representatives of non-governmental organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025; Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025. The incidents mentioned may subsequently

Other excesses, such as physical assault or the aforementioned questioning about religion, may occur; however, they are not systematic in nature. Security forces are required to adhere to a "code of conduct" that mandates a minimum standard of acceptable behaviour. The situation in areas formerly controlled by the SNA—previously known for numerous excesses at checkpoints and unpredictable conduct—was identified as problematic. This contributed to tensions during inspections at checkpoints manned by the SNA. However, since March/April 2025, when central authorities, particularly HTS, assumed supervision of the units and areas, the situation has improved.¹⁷⁷

3.2.2 Security incidents on the roads

Travel in most areas and along most roads is generally safe.¹⁷⁸ Major road sections are under the control of the authorities.¹⁷⁹ However, night travel is considered riskier due to an increased likelihood of security incidents, particularly kidnappings and other criminal activities, even when traveling between major cities.¹⁸⁰ Kidnappings predominantly occur at night and especially at informal checkpoints.¹⁸¹ The groups responsible for these kidnappings typically target individuals perceived as loyal to the former regime. Such incidents have been reported in several provinces, notably in rural areas of Homs and Latakia.¹⁸²

The road connecting Damascus, Palmyra, and Deir ez-Zor in the eastern part of the country is generally not recommended due to the presence of IS cells in the surrounding desert areas.¹⁸³ Night travel on this route and in adjacent desert regions is considered highly dangerous.¹⁸⁴ However, another source noted that the road between Damascus and Deir ez-Zor is relatively safe, with incidents—specifically theft and robbery—occurring infrequently and irregularly.¹⁸⁵ Additionally, the poor technical condition of the road and the inadequate or non-existent mobile network coverage in this area were also mentioned.¹⁸⁶

Travel between major cities in southern Syria is generally possible and relatively safe. Most roads operate normally without serious security incidents. The only route in southern Syria where frequent security incidents—such as kidnappings, shootings, and unofficial checkpoints—have been reported is the road between Damascus and Suweida, which is considered riskier compared to other routes in the province.¹⁸⁷

include the payment of ransom or cases of beatings, although according to the source these are relatively rare occurrences.

¹⁷⁷Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

¹⁷⁸Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁷⁹Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

¹⁸⁰Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025; Crisis Group, *Rep. cit.*, March 28, 2025. Crisis Group Crisis Group added that non-essential travel is dangerous outside Damascus.

¹⁸¹Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

¹⁸²Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025. One of the sources pointed out that incidents at checkpoints, such as the collection of fees, may also affect Alawites, and that related external manifestations, such as beatings, are a rare phenomenon. Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

¹⁸³SOHR, *Military escalation | SDF kills member of ISIS cells and upset attempt to plant landmine in Deir Ezzor*, 27. May 2025; Hawar News Agency, *Two ISIS leaders eliminated in Deir ez-Zor countryside*, June 11, 2025

¹⁸⁴Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

¹⁸⁵Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁸⁶Enab Baladi, *Deir Ezzor-Palmyra: Death road in the heart of the desert*, February 24, 2025

¹⁸⁷Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

3.2.3 Public transport

Public transport is available between most Syrian provinces¹⁸⁸ and major cities, such as between Damascus and Aleppo.¹⁸⁹ In Damascus, for example, both state-owned and private carriers operate public transport services between Damascus and Eastern al-Ghouta, a suburb of the city.¹⁹⁰ Compared to urban transport, intercity buses generally offer greater comfort.¹⁹¹

According to one source, the reduction in the number of checkpoints has contributed to faster and more affordable bus travel between major cities. Bus drivers and passengers no longer have to pay security forces to pass through checkpoints.¹⁹²

3.2.4 Air Connections

International commercial flights by foreign carriers to Syria, specifically to Damascus International Airport, resumed in January 2025. Qatar Airways, Royal Jordanian Airlines, and Turkish Airlines were the first to restart flights to the country.¹⁹³ Other airlines gradually resumed flights to Damascus, including Saudi Flynas from Riyadh and Emirates from Dubai.¹⁹⁴ International and domestic commercial air connections also resumed in spring 2025 from Aleppo, whose airport had been closed for repairs due to damage sustained during the November fighting.¹⁹⁵

In June 2025, Romanian airline Dan Air launched a route between Bucharest and Damascus. This represents the first commercial air link between Syria and EU countries since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011. Dan Air plans to expand its services to include flights to Damascus from other European destinations, such as Frankfurt, Berlin, and Stockholm.¹⁹⁶

3.2.5 Freedom of Movement Between Territory Controlled by the Central Government and the DAANES

Entry and exit to DAANES areas were more strictly controlled by the SDF. Conversely, security forces of the central government approached controls at entry/exit points to/from the DAANES very laxly.¹⁹⁷ At checkpoints on the DAANES border, SDF personnel were generally more suspicious and vigilant, for example, more frequently screening individuals, checking phones, and inquiring about the reason for travel to the DAANES from other parts of Syria. According to sources, the SDF primarily focused on potential links to opposition units against the SDF, especially the SNA, and in connection to territories they controlled, e.g., Manbij.¹⁹⁸

¹⁸⁸Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

¹⁸⁹Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025; E.g. Syria Direct, *University students latest pressure point in Damascus-Suwayda tensions*, May 20, 2025

¹⁹⁰Enab Baladi, *Transfer stations to alleviate traffic congestion in Damascus*, May 15, 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian road trip uncovers life amid living hardships*, April 24, 2025; Enab Baladi, *Chaos in transportation fares in Damascus*, December 16, 2024

¹⁹¹Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

¹⁹²Enab Baladi, *Rep. cit.*, February 24, 2025

¹⁹³Al Jazeera, *Syria to resume international flights from Damascus airport next week*, January 5, 2025

¹⁹⁴AeroTime, *Emirates returns to Syria with new flights to Damascus in July 2025*, June 2, 2025; Middle East Monitor, *1st direct Saudi flight lands in Syria after 12-year hiatus*, June 5, 2025

¹⁹⁵Arab News, *Syria's Aleppo International Airport reopens for domestic, international flights*, March 18, 2025

¹⁹⁶The New Arab, *First EU flight to Syria in 14 years lands in Damascus*, June 16, 2025

¹⁹⁷Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 5, online, June 26, 2025; Zwirahn, Faris, *Rep. cit.*, April 1, 2025

¹⁹⁸Research interview with the representative of non-governmental organization 4, online, June 23, 2025. Regarding security incidents at checkpoints, The New Arab, Syria, *Outrage after the execution of a 14-year-old*

Generally, ethnic Kurds were allowed entry into the DAANES, whom the SDF personnel could identify during checks based on their names. In most cases, ethnic Arabs could also enter the DAANES if they had a connection to the area, such as proof of residence, property ownership, Syrian ID card, etc. Alternatively, a reason for travel to DAANES had to be stated, for example, for persons originally from Damascus who did not have a verifiable link to the DAANES. Returning persons were not required to present any special documents.¹⁹⁹

According to NRC, many DAANES residents had Syrian ID cards and documents issued by the former regime. Based on these documents, Syrians could travel from the DAANES for family visits, document renewal, access to services in other parts of Syria, etc. An example cited was traveling for specialized medical care, as the DAANES had a limited number of healthcare facilities. Documents issued by the former regime allowed travel to areas controlled by the central government and access to healthcare.²⁰⁰ Specifically, in the Aleppo area, according to one source, by agreement between the central authorities and the SDF, all checkpoints were removed, allowing free travel between regions.²⁰¹

Freedom of movement and relocation within the DAANES was influenced by several factors (especially checkpoints, security situation, mandatory military service, etc.) but was not entirely prevented.²⁰² DAANES residents could travel between the controlled provinces (Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, Hasakah). Public transport by minibuses was available, but private transportation was the preferred option. The SDF operated checkpoints at city entrances and major intersections, as well as on main roads connecting the cities of Amuda, Qamishli, Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and Hasakah. Unlike at night, persons passing through checkpoints during daytime typically did not face inspections.²⁰³

3.3 Documents

3.3.1 Documents Required When Returning to the Community

According to sources, there are no legal barriers on the Syrian side for returning to a particular community, except in areas controlled by Kurdish authorities (see above), where additional documents or justification may be required.²⁰⁴ Generally, returnees face only minimal difficulties upon return.²⁰⁵ For returnees wishing to rent or buy property in their return location, a previously required security clearance is no longer necessary. Rental contracts must be

boy by an SDF fighter in ar-Raqqa, July 3, 2025; Enab Baladi, *SDF checkpoints rob passers-by in Abu Hamam in eastern Deir ez-Zor*, June 30, 2025

¹⁹⁹Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025; Research interview with Security Expert 2, online, June 23, 2025; Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

²⁰⁰NRC, *Unlocking Rights in Northeast Syria: The Importance of Civil and Legal Documents*, June 2025, p. 8

²⁰¹Research interview with the representative of non-governmental organization 4, online, June 23, 2025.

²⁰²DIS, Swedish Migration Agency, *Rep. cit.*, January 2025, p. 51. According to one of the sources cited in the report (p. 133), people from areas under Kurdish control in Deir ez-Zor and from areas outside the control of the Autonomous Administration cannot permanently relocate to Hasakah or other areas controlled by the Autonomous Administration unless they obtain a security clearance issued by the Internal Security Forces (Asayish). To obtain this clearance, the individual concerned must have a guarantor from the given area.

²⁰³*Ibid.*, p. 51

²⁰⁴Research interview with a journalist, online, May 22, 2025; Research interview with representatives of an international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

²⁰⁵Research interview with representatives of an international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

registered through a simple process with the local administration, but many prefer short-term verbal agreements between tenant and landlord.²⁰⁶

3.3.2 Access to Basic Documents

Since December 8, 2024, the issuance of documents by Syrian authorities has been suspended nationwide. As a result, changes to personal data, registration of new life events, and issuance of related documents (birth certificates, death certificates, etc.) cannot be processed.²⁰⁷ However, documents issued by the previous regime remain valid.²⁰⁸ One source noted that issuing documents before December 8, 2024, was also difficult and unreliable.²⁰⁹

The interruption of document issuance/registration has not been publicly explained²¹⁰ beyond general statements that the state administration is transitioning to a new system,²¹¹ the so-called "Idlib model,"²¹² or that digitalization of the process is expected.²¹³ According to sources, the problem is logical as authorities attempt to unify diverse existing systems applied by local actors and must address a broad range of situations.²¹⁴

Besides legislative barriers, key respondents in an IOM survey mentioned other obstacles to accessing documents such as insufficient state administration/infrastructure (31%), long distances (23%), and complicated administrative procedures (22%). For 31% of respondents, documents were easily obtainable.²¹⁵

There are three main types of personal identity documents in the country:²¹⁶

- ID card issued by the Directorate of Civil Affairs at the Ministry of Interior;
- Travel document issued by the Directorate of Travel Documents and Immigration at the Ministry of Interior;
- Documents recording life events (family book, birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, etc.) issued by the Directorate of Civil Affairs.

Instead of documents and registration/update of life events, authorities now issue certificates or extracts from the population register proving facts/life events registered before December 8, 2024. Extracts from the population register have temporary validity and the holder may use

²⁰⁶EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 77. According to *Syria Report*, the practice applies only to tenants of rental contracts, whereas in the case of a change of ownership, it is necessary to obtain a security clearance. *Syria Report, After al-Assad, security approvals remain an obstacle for housing, land and property (HLP) transactions*, May 13, 2025

²⁰⁷Research interview with a journalist, online, May 22, 2025

²⁰⁸Research interview with the representative of non-governmental organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

²⁰⁹Research interview with representatives of an international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

²¹⁰Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

²¹¹Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

²¹²Research interview with representatives of an international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

²¹³Research interview with representatives of non-governmental organization 1, Damascus, May 27, 2025

²¹⁴Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025; Research interview with the representative of non-governmental organization 4, online, 23 June 2025; Enab Baladi, *Rep. cit.*, July 9, 2025

²¹⁵IOM, *Rep. cit.*, 13. May 2025, p. 14

²¹⁶Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025; DIS, *Syria: Documents and Freedom of Movement in North and East Syria (NES)*, August 2024, p. 10 and 18; NRC, *Rep. cit.*, June 2025 p. 6 and 11

them for identification if necessary.²¹⁷ Issuance follows the old system and databases valid before December 8, 2024, assuming they were not destroyed.²¹⁸

In some regions and communities, authorities already issue basic documents or register life events, but any restoration of document issuance and registration/update of personal data often depends on local specifics and lacks nationwide validity.²¹⁹ Enab Baladi mentions restoration of basic services in major provinces such as Damascus or Aleppo, but in other regions, they remain unavailable.²²⁰ Currently, no unified approach or coordination exists, resulting in prolonged times for obtaining documents.²²¹

Nationwide restoration of issuing new documents and registering life events from June 2025 concerns specific population groups, especially children born outside Syria or children born in Syria with one parent residing outside Syria.²²²

The Directorate of Civil Affairs, based in Damascus with branches across all 14 provincial centers and other local offices, is responsible for issuing life event documents. Through local branches (Arabic: markaz as-sidjil al-madani), it is possible to apply for ID cards and other documents.²²³

Since June 1, 2025, issuance of criminal records has resumed by the central Directorate of Criminal Security at the Ministry of Interior in Damascus, which processes all requests for the entire country. Issuance is complicated by overload at the central institution and loss of documentation in some parts of the country during the civil war.²²⁴

Issuance of travel documents was not interrupted (see also chapter 2 Returns: 2.2 Documents and other requirements). The fee for issuing a travel document for Syrian citizens in Syria was reduced from 160 USD to 128 USD. Between December 2024 and April 2025, authorities issued approximately 160,000 travel documents.²²⁵

3.3.3 Access to Documents in the DAANES

Kurdish authorities issue their own documents, and no changes have occurred so far. The administrative apparatus continued to operate. At the same time, DAANES residents can obtain documents valid nationwide—similar to the Iraqi practice—such as birth certificates following templates accepted across Syria. Local authorities maintained political and military autonomy but administratively followed central procedures with minor deviations, e.g., inclusion of the Kurdish language.²²⁶

There are no official central state institutions issuing documents in DAANES-controlled areas. To obtain required documents, residents must travel to territory controlled by the central

²¹⁷Syria is Home, *Frequently Asked Questions*, n.d.; Syria Direct, *Heritage Divided: Years of Delayed Recognition of Documents by the Syrian Interim Government*, April 9, 2025

²¹⁸Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025; Research interview with representatives of an international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

²¹⁹Research interview with the coordinator of non-governmental organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

²²⁰Enab Baladi, *Rep. cit.*, July 9, 2025

²²¹Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

²²²Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

²²³DIS, *Rep. cit.*, August 2024, pp. 10–11; NRC, *Syrian Civil Status Law of 2021: Implications for Syrians Living Abroad*, 2 December 2022, pp. 7 and 12; Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

²²⁴Research interview with Security Expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

²²⁵Enab Baladi, *Rep. cit.*, July 9, 2025

²²⁶Research interview with the representative of non-governmental organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

government in Damascus. In parts of Deir ez-Zor province controlled by the central government, central offices operate, and residents can obtain documents or travel documents directly through them.²²⁷

DAANES residents historically possess documents issued by the former regime (valid or invalid), often obtained by traveling to government-controlled areas. The Syrian ID card is the standard form of identity, and DAANES authorities actively encouraged the population to acquire it.²²⁸

According to NRC, documents issued by the DAANES are not recognized outside its territory. However, they serve as proof of identity for holders and facilitate movement within the DAANES territory. With documents issued by the DAANES, a person may access subsidized services, including bread, gas, and heating.²²⁹ The BTI report notes that slightly better service provision in the DAANES increases acceptance of the ruling party and institutions, although the predominantly Arab population in Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa struggles to identify with DAANES's goals (support of Kurdish language and culture).²³⁰

3.4 Social and economic aspects: access to basic services (e.g., housing, education, healthcare, employment)

Access to basic services and the country's economic situation reflect the state of affairs following years of armed conflict, e.g., the complicated situation in former frontline areas such as parts of the provinces of Aleppo or rural Damascus, Homs, etc.²³¹ The stabilizing effects associated with the arrival of the new government are still limited given its short tenure. There is still no unified plan for the provision of basic services throughout the country,²³² but access to free services is generally maintained despite complications caused by damage to infrastructure and staff shortages. A national identification number is sufficient to access services, and there is no need to provide additional documents such as a travel document or other proof of identity. The main obstacle to accessing services is primarily the availability and quality of the services offered.²³³ The possible absence of documents is not an obstacle to accessing services, e.g., in the case of education and healthcare.²³⁴

Functional infrastructure is mainly found in larger cities, such as Damascus, Aleppo, etc. For people outside these communities, using these services means additional costs in the form of transportation.²³⁵ There are fee-based private alternatives to public institutions in the country that can supplement the overburdened public service system, such as healthcare facilities in Damascus or the developing private school sector in Aleppo.²³⁶ Other key services are

²²⁷ Written response of a human rights organization, July 9, 2025

²²⁸NRC, *Rep. cit.*, June 2025 p. 8

²²⁹*Ibid.*

²³⁰Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2024 Country Report Syria*, March 19, 2024, p. 8

²³¹Research interview with a representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

²³²Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

²³³NRC, *Beyond Return: Ensuring Sustainable Recovery and (Re)Integration in Syria*, May 2025, p. 5

²³⁴Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

²³⁵Research interview with representatives of international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

²³⁶Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 5, online, June 26, 2025; Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

supported by non-profit organizations and UN agencies, but in the first half of 2025, services in this area were reduced in response to an overall decrease in humanitarian aid funding.²³⁷

3.4.1 Economic situation

The country is recovering from years of war and sanctions imposed on the al-Assad regime, which is reflected in the standard of living and economic situation in the country. Economic instability persists, and there is a noticeable shortage of physical currency.²³⁸ The country continues to struggle with a high number of people living in poverty. A quarter of the country's population lives in extreme poverty, while two-thirds are below the lower middle-income threshold.²³⁹ According to UNOCHA, at the end of March 2025, approximately three-quarters of the population did not have enough food, water, shelter, and medicine. At least half of the population did not have access to an energy-adequate diet or could not afford it (on average only 1 to 2 meals a day).²⁴⁰

There is significant social inequality in society, with approximately 90% of the population living in poverty, while the remaining 10% can live a relatively comfortable life by local standards, e.g., in the center of Damascus.²⁴¹ The poverty rate also varies depending on location. Aleppo, Hama, and Deir ez-Zawr account for only 30% of the country's total population but include more than 50% of the population living in extreme poverty.²⁴² The average cost of living (basic needs and rent), estimated at an average of \$100 per month, often exceeds the average monthly income, which is around \$75.²⁴³ According to estimates by the Syrian newspaper Kassioun at the end of March 2025, the minimum cost of living for a five-member Syrian family living in Damascus was \$666 per month.²⁴⁴ Three to four incomes are often needed to cover a family's living expenses.²⁴⁵ Other sources indicate that the minimum cost of living for a family is approximately \$400 per month, but the specific situation and location must be taken into account.²⁴⁶

Despite the current difficult economic situation, there have been some positive developments in recent months. The World Bank expects GDP to grow slightly by 1% in 2025, compared to a decline of 1.5% in 2024.²⁴⁷ In May, the US announced the end of economic sanctions imposed on Syria.²⁴⁸ The EU also took the same step in May. The sanctions were lifted in order to support the country's transformation and recovery after the overthrow of the al-Assad regime.²⁴⁹ Only

²³⁷Research interview with the coordinator of a non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

²³⁸Research interview with representatives of an international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

²³⁹World Bank Group, *New World Bank report highlights Syria's economic challenges and recovery opportunities in 2025*, July 7, 2025

²⁴⁰Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, *Rep. cit.*, May 2025, p. 84 cited UNOCHA, *At Security Council meeting, UN humanitarian chief calls for "decisive action" to support Syrian people*, March 25, 2025; Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 1, Damascus, May 27, 2025

²⁴¹Enab Baladi, *Economic pressures on society: Scenarios for Syria's future*, March 26, 2025; Research interview with representatives of international organization, Damascus, May 29, 2025

²⁴²World Bank Group, *Poverty and Inequality Overview*, April 2025

²⁴³Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

²⁴⁴Cited in ISPI, *Challenges for Syria's Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Process*, April 18, 2025. It is a Syrian newspaper published by the Syrian Communist Party People's Will Party, based on Marxist-Leninist ideology.

²⁴⁵Research interview with a representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025.

²⁴⁶Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025.

²⁴⁷Reuters, *World Bank expects 1% GDP growth in Syria in 2025*, June 7, 2025.

²⁴⁸Reuters, *US issues order easing sanctions on Syria after Trump's pledge*, May 24, 2025

²⁴⁹Reuters, *EU lifts economic sanctions on Syria*, May 28, 2025

sanctions against former President Bashar al-Assad remain in force. These changes will end the country's isolation from international trade and financial systems, which has prevailed since sanctions were imposed in 2011.²⁵⁰ In June 2025, the World Bank approved a \$146 million grant to help Syria restore reliable and affordable electricity and support the country's economic recovery.²⁵¹

3.4.2 Water and electricity

More than 70% of power plants and transmission lines suffered significant damage. In most areas, state electricity was available for a few hours a day. For example, in some parts of the provinces of Homs and Hama, electricity was only available for 45 to 60 minutes every seven or eight hours.²⁵² In contrast, the situation is significantly better in some areas in the northwest of the country thanks to the energy network from Turkey.²⁵³ In March 2025, electricity supplies from Qatar were introduced to Damascus, Suweida, Daraa, Quneitra, Homs, Hama, Tartous, Latakia, Aleppo, and Deir ez-Zor.²⁵⁴ In May, a consortium of Qatari, Turkish, and American companies signed a \$7 billion agreement to rebuild the power grid.²⁵⁵

Power outages are partially addressed by the widespread use of solar panels. For example, in the provinces of Hasakah, Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and some parts of Aleppo, households using solar panel energy have achieved an average of 13.6 hours of electricity per day, compared to the usual 7.3 hours of electricity from public sources.²⁵⁶

According to the UNICEF, since 2011, at least two-thirds of water treatment plants, half of pumping stations, and one-third of water towers have been damaged.²⁵⁷ Low rainfall and inadequate irrigation infrastructure are affecting both urban and rural areas, such as in Daraa province and northern Syria.²⁵⁸

3.4.3 Healthcare

Historically, the country has had health insurance and healthcare coverage equivalent to that of the Czech Republic. In terms of the scope of care provided, the situation has not changed (since the collapse of the al-Assad regime), but the country is facing a debate on maintaining the scope of care.²⁵⁹ Healthcare is provided free of charge in state-run facilities, although various fees may be informally charged. In private facilities, care is paid for and financially costly.²⁶⁰

The main institution providing and regulating healthcare in the country is the Ministry of Health. Healthcare is provided by the public sector, non-profit organizations, and private

²⁵⁰ODI Global, *Lifting Sanctions on Syria: A Rocky Road Ahead*, May 20, 2025

²⁵¹Enab Baladi, *World Bank Forecasts Modest GDP Growth for Syria*, July 8, 2025

²⁵²Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, *Rep. cit.*, May 2025, p. 85

²⁵³NRC, *Rep. cit.*, May 2025, p. 6.

²⁵⁴Al Jazeera, *Qatar begins supplying natural gas to Syria via Jordan*, March 13, 2025.

²⁵⁵The National, *Syria signs \$7 billion Qatar-led deal to double electricity supply*, May 29, 2025; AP News, *After sanctions lifted, Syria looks to solar energy as more than a stopgap for its power grid*, July 7, 2025

²⁵⁶UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Priorities January to June 2025*, March 27, 2025, p. 31

²⁵⁷Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, *Rep. cit.*, May 2025, p. 84

²⁵⁸Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025; Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025

²⁵⁹Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

²⁶⁰Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025; Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025; Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

organizations.²⁶¹ Individuals have free access to basic healthcare, the level of which, however, reflects the overall state of the country after years of war. According to official information, clinics administered by the Ministry of Health offer a basic package of services focused on health promotion, prevention, and rehabilitation. In addition to diagnostics and the provision of routine medical services, basic healthcare also focuses on maternal and child care, psychological assistance, dental and nutritional care, together with the provision of medical examinations and care. Secondary healthcare includes specialist medical and surgical procedures, which may be subject to a fee.²⁶²

The healthcare that is actually available often does not reflect the services officially offered.²⁶³ In practice, basic care is provided free of charge in state-run facilities, e.g., treatment of fractures. Access to specialized care is generally more complicated. Specialized medical procedures related to, for example, cardiological or oncological diseases are not covered and are inadequately staffed.²⁶⁴ The private hospital sector is developing, offering relatively high-quality care (e.g., in Damascus) for a fee.²⁶⁵ One of the main limitations in access to healthcare remains the high cost of medicines and transportation, as patients are often forced to travel long distances to hospitals and healthcare facilities.²⁶⁶

The country faces a shortage of doctors, and a large number of facilities have been destroyed as a result of the war. SARC reports that approximately 50% of facilities in the country are only partially functional or not functional at all.²⁶⁷ The quality and type of care provided varies from region to region. In the northwest of the country (Idlib), an area formerly under HTS control, care is provided by non-profit organizations such as MSF and IRC, which operate clinics and hospitals that also provide specialized care.²⁶⁸ In the context of the country, healthcare here is of high quality and there is sufficient capacity. However, the future of support from non-profit organizations is under discussion.²⁶⁹ In other parts of Syria (under government control), the level of care provided is significantly lower, but public hospitals provide relatively good quality care in the context of Syria.

3.4.4 Education

As a result of the December coup, schools were closed for a short period between December 8 and 15, 2024.²⁷⁰ The Ministry of Education continues to provide free education for all children and young people. To register, a national identification number and the last report card from the previous school are required – the report card must state that the student has passed.²⁷¹

²⁶¹Syria is home, *Rep. cit.*, n.d.

²⁶²*Ibid.*

²⁶³Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025

²⁶⁴Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

²⁶⁵Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

²⁶⁶Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025; Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

²⁶⁷SARC and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Report on Needs During the Complex Emergency in Syria*, March 10, 2025, p. 5

²⁶⁸Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

²⁶⁹Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

²⁷⁰Al Jazeera, *Syrian schools to reopen a week after al-Assad's overthrow*, December 15, 2024

²⁷¹Syria is home, *Rep. cit.*, n.d.

In the absence of a report card, the student must take a knowledge test, on the basis of which they will be assigned to the appropriate grade.²⁷²

The school infrastructure is overburdened due to damage caused during the war, a shortage of teachers, and an increased number of students associated with their return to the country. Approximately 7,000 schools (about 50% of the total number) were destroyed during the war. The provinces of Aleppo, Idlib, and Daraa are among the areas with the most damaged schools.²⁷³ Teachers' work is insufficiently remunerated. Teachers often cope with this situation by taking on secondary employment, which is usually tolerated but reduces their motivation and availability.²⁷⁴ The average salary for teachers ranges from \$30 to \$40, while the average salary in the country was approximately \$75.²⁷⁵

Access to education can be complicated by the high cost of transportation to functioning facilities from more remote areas.²⁷⁶ According to NRC, classes typically have 40 to 50 children and are taught in shifts.²⁷⁷ However, the daily newspaper Enab Baladi reported that the number of children in a single class can exceed sixty, which is not a consequence of recent political changes, but rather a problem that dates back to the previous regime due to the overburdened Syrian school system.²⁷⁸ A barrier for returnees, specifically from Turkey and other non-Arab countries, may be instruction in the Arabic language.²⁷⁹ The source reported that the Ministry of Education is trying to remove this barrier by intensifying Arabic language courses and integrating children into schools.²⁸⁰ The ministry will implement these measures starting in the summer holidays of 2025. An alternative to public schools are private schools, which provide a higher level of education, but tuition fees apply. Annual tuition fees are around USD 1,000.²⁸¹ These institutions are mainly located in larger cities such as Aleppo.²⁸²

3.4.5 Housing

Access to housing generally depends primarily on the returnee's financial situation and whether the returnee owns habitable property in Syria and is able to prove ownership, particularly due to the previous confiscation of property under the former regime.²⁸³ To rent a property, it is sufficient to present an identity card. In contrast, when purchasing a property, in addition to an identity card, it is also necessary to present proof of ownership rights, a criminal record extract, and court approval. Requirements may vary depending on the specific property.²⁸⁴ In the past, real estate rental agreements were often made informally on the basis of a verbal agreement,

²⁷²UNHCR Syria, *Where to find help education*, n.d.

²⁷³WENR, *Rebuilding Syria's Education System: Addressing Challenges and Seizing Opportunities*, March 14, 2025

²⁷⁴Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

²⁷⁵EUAA, *Rep. cit.*, July 2025, p. 66; Enab Baladi, *Damascus schools: High costs and favoritism*, March 3, 2025

²⁷⁶Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

²⁷⁷NRC, *Rep. cit.*, May 2025 p. 7

²⁷⁸Enab Baladi, *Op. cit.*, March 3, 2025

²⁷⁹Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025; Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025; Focus group with representatives of non-profit organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

²⁸⁰Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

²⁸¹Enab Baladi, *Rep. cit.*, March 3, 2025

²⁸²Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

²⁸³Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 1, Damascus, May 27, 2025; Research interview with security expert 1, Damascus, May 28, 2025

²⁸⁴Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

whereby the right to use the property under certain conditions was passed down from generation to generation.²⁸⁵

A survey by the non-profit organization NRC found that 40% of returnees surveyed did not have access to adequate shelter. In practice, there have also been cases where returnees have camped on the land of their destroyed or occupied property.²⁸⁶

Access to housing is significantly affected by the condition of buildings as a result of the war and, in some areas, as a result of earthquakes (specifically Aleppo and Latakia). The UNDP reports that 1.3 million housing units were partially or completely damaged during the conflict.²⁸⁷ Cities near the front line, especially Hama, Homs, Aleppo (rural areas), and the suburbs of Damascus (e.g., the Eastern Ghouta area), were largely destroyed.²⁸⁸ A survey by the non-profit organization NRC found that 43% of returnees surveyed had completely destroyed or uninhabitable property. Among respondents from rural Damascus, 70% reported this information.²⁸⁹

In some cases, proving ownership of property due to previous confiscation may constitute a barrier to access to housing. As mentioned above, the issuance of documents and updates of life events has been suspended since December 8, 2024. The entry of changes in the land registry has also been suspended.²⁹⁰ In May 2025, President Ahmed al-Shara issued a decree revoking all property confiscations imposed on Syrians between 2012 and 2024. These property interventions by Bashar al-Assad's regime were not based on court decisions but were ordered by security agencies against citizens for their support of the Syrian revolution.²⁹¹

To date, no official system or institution has been established in the country to resolve property disputes. In some areas, there are informal local committees that can help resolve ownership disputes. Informal committees rely on local knowledge, such as the history of ownership. Their success in resolving disputes is limited, as official documents, such as title deeds, are still decisive.²⁹² Non-profit organizations play an important role in property disputes. For example, one of the organizations contacted helped a refugee in Jordan prove ownership of a property.²⁹³

In recent months, demand for rentals has increased in the country due to the growing number of returns to Syria and the current inability to purchase one's own property, which leads Syrians to prefer renting despite the high price.²⁹⁴ The main reason for the stagnation in property purchases is the suspension of property transfers in the land registry. Rental prices vary according to the specific neighborhood, geographical location, and availability of basic services.²⁹⁵ The most sought-after areas include central Damascus and northern Aleppo, which are among the safer and more attractive residential locations, which is also reflected in rental prices. In contrast, the real estate market is not very active in other areas, such as rural Damascus

²⁸⁵Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

²⁸⁶NRC, *Rep. cit.*, May 2025, p. 9.

²⁸⁷UNDP, *Impact of the Conflict in Syria*, January 2025, p. 38.

²⁸⁸Research interview with a representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025.

²⁸⁹NRC, *Rep. cit.*, May 2025, p. 10.

²⁹⁰Enab Baladi, *House Rentals in Syria: Inflation Without Intervention*, February 16, 2025; Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025.

²⁹¹Enab Baladi, *Presidential Decree Lifts Preventive Freeze on Syrian Citizens' Assets*, May 12, 2025.

²⁹²Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025.

²⁹³Ibid.

²⁹⁴Enab Baladi, *Rep. cit.*, February 16, 2025.

²⁹⁵Ibid.

or southern Aleppo, where the population is awaiting reconstruction.²⁹⁶ In February 2025, monthly rents in central Damascus ranged from USD 700 to USD 1,000. In areas outside central Damascus, rents were available for between \$100 and \$500. In rural Damascus, rents started at \$80. In Aleppo province, rents ranged from \$150 to \$300 per month.²⁹⁷

3.4.6 Employment

In 2024, unemployment in Syria reached 24%.²⁹⁸ There is an informal labor market in the country, which accounts for a large proportion of job offers.²⁹⁹

There is no state policy to support the unemployed or returnees.³⁰⁰ Job opportunities vary by region and sector. The highest demand is for employees in healthcare, education, construction, and other skilled fields.³⁰¹ The requirements for entering into an employment relationship vary by sector. To sign an employment contract in the legal labor market, you need to provide your ID card and a criminal record check. Working in the informal sector may be more flexible in terms of formal requirements, but this sector is completely unregulated and offers no legal guarantees for workers.³⁰²

The minimum wage is set at USD 22.2.³⁰³ In February, a planned 400% increase in the minimum wage was announced, which would bring it to USD 93.6, but this announcement has not yet been implemented.³⁰⁴ The average wage in the country is around USD 75 per month.³⁰⁵ Salaries for civil servants, or in services such as waiters or receptionists, are around \$100 per month.³⁰⁶

²⁹⁶Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025.

²⁹⁷Enab Baladi, *Rep. cit.*, February 16, 2025.

²⁹⁸UNOCHA, *Rep. cit.*, March 27, 2025, p. 8.

²⁹⁹Research interview with the coordinator of non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025.

³⁰⁰Research interview with the coordinator of non-profit organization 5, online, June 26, 2025.

³⁰¹Syriaishome, *Rep. cit.*, n.d.. In the context of the DAANES, the highest ratings were achieved by employees of the local security forces (SDF, Asay), whose remuneration is higher than that of other DAANES residents. According to the source, financial remuneration is a clear incentive for applicants. DIS, Swedish Migration Agency, *Rep. cit.*, January 2025, p. 111

³⁰²Research interview with a representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

³⁰³WFP, *Monthly Market Price Bulletin*, April 2025, pp. 1 - 2

³⁰⁴ISPI, *Rep. cit.*, April 18, 2025

³⁰⁵Research interview with representative of non-profit organization 4, online, June 23, 2025

³⁰⁶Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 5, online, June 26, 2025

4. Supporting State and Non-State Mechanisms

At the central level, no state institution directly coordinates the agenda for returnees or support operations in the field.³⁰⁷ National policy on returnees and return migration remains fluid, and the authorities have yet to adopt the necessary legislative measures. At the local level, there is a lack of consistency both in approach and resources.³⁰⁸

As of June 2025, the Ministry of Emergency Situations and Disaster Management holds some responsibility for the agenda concerning internally displaced persons and returnees from abroad. This role arises from the institution's operational nature, but it does not have a clearly defined mandate in this area. Another institution that, according to the source, may hold partial responsibility for this agenda is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³⁰⁹

According to sources, there is no official state support provided to returnees from the Syrian authorities, including financial assistance, material aid, or accommodation.³¹⁰ As of mid-2025, there are no known reintegration programs for returnees.³¹¹ Coordination between state and non-state institutions at the local level occurs when the arrival or movement of persons to or within a specific area is known.³¹²

4.1 Support for non-state actors

Support for returnees, including in areas administered by the DAANES, is primarily provided by non-profit and international organizations. For example, NRC offers assistance with documentation, particularly in cases involving disputed property rights.³¹³ Within the non-profit sector, organizations coordinate with each other and conduct general needs assessments of the population.³¹⁴ Access to assistance from the non-profit sector is generally flexible, and any documents proving identity are accepted.³¹⁵

Non-profit organizations provide support not only directly within Syria but also assist returnees in their countries of temporary refuge or stay, especially in neighboring countries such as Jordan, including help with documentation.³¹⁶

SARC collaborates directly with UNHCR at the border. These organizations operate special centers at border crossings that provide support to returnees, including legal assistance, transportation, and related services.³¹⁷

UNHCR is present at land borders and key border crossings, where it can arrange transportation directly from the border to local communities.³¹⁸ Currently, its primary focus is on providing

³⁰⁷Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 1, Damascus, May 27, 2025; Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

³⁰⁸Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025

³⁰⁹Ibid.

³¹⁰Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025; Research interview with non-profit organization representative 4, online, June 23, 2025

³¹¹Written response from human rights organization, July 9, 2025

³¹²Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

³¹³Research interview with non-profit organization representative 4, online, June 23, 2025

³¹⁴Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 1, Damascus, May 27, 2025

³¹⁵Research interview with non-profit organization representative 4, online, June 23, 2025

³¹⁶Ibid.

³¹⁷Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 1, Damascus, May 27, 2025

³¹⁸UNHCR, *Regional Flash Update #33: Syria Situation Crisis*, June 26, 2025

assistance with documentation, accommodation, and material support to the most vulnerable individuals.³¹⁹

UNHCR also operates community centers within the territory, including areas administered by the DAANES.³²⁰ In 2024, there were 113 community centers and an additional 113 mobile units active across all Syrian provinces.³²¹ However, by July 2025, due to budget cuts, the number of supported community centers decreased to 73, though coverage still extended to all provinces. These community centers offer a range of services, including legal assistance, education, job skills training, start-up grants, health services, and psychological support. They also provide child protection programs, gender-based violence prevention, and victim support services, among others.³²²

³¹⁹Research interview with representatives of non-profit organization 2, Damascus, May 29, 2025

³²⁰Ibid.

³²¹UNHCR, *Community Centres in Syria (January – December 2024)*, June 25, 2025

³²²UNHCR, *Important Update: Closure of Some UNHCR- Supported Community Centers*, July 6, 2025

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Research interview with security expert 2, online, June 23, 2025

Research interview with coordinator of non-profit organization 3, online, June 16, 2025

Research interview with non-profit organization coordinator 5, online, June 26, 2025

Research interview with journalist, online, May 22, 2025

Research interview with non-profit organization representative 4, online, June 23, 2025

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