Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	**2200**
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	UK Home Office
Titel:	Country Policy and Information Note – Syria; Women
Udgivet:	31. december 2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	21. januar 2026

Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note
Syria: Women

Version 1.0

December 2025

Executive summary

Women in Syria form a Particular Social Group (PSG) within the meaning of the Refugee Convention because they share an innate characteristic that cannot be changed and have a distinct identity which is perceived as different by the surrounding society.

In general, women in Syria are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from state or non-state actors.

Gender-based violence (GBV), though widespread in Syria, includes a wide spectrum of behaviour, some of which is not likely to be sufficiently serious by its nature or repetition to reach the high threshold of persecution or serious harm. Some women may be at greater risk of persecution or serious harm, such as those perceived to have transgressed social, cultural or religious norms. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.

The general humanitarian situation in Syria is not so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment as defined in paragraphs 339C and 339CA (iii) of the Immigration Rules/Article 3 ECHR. However, a grant of humanitarian protection may be appropriate for lone women who would be unable to support themselves and would not have a support network (e.g. friends, family, community or tribal connections) in Syria or a support network that could provide financial assistance from another location (e.g. remittances) to enable them to meet their basic needs.

Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection. Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a non-state actor, they are unlikely to obtain protection from the state. In some areas controlled by the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), women's organisations may be able to provide a degree of protection, support and shelter. However, this is not akin to effective protection provided by a state or de facto state entity.

Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk. Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a non-state or rogue state actors, they may be able to internally relocate to escape that risk, depending on their ability to support themselves or access support from others (including via remittances) in the proposed area of relocation.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

Back to Contents

Contents

Assessment

Section updated: 19 November 2025

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the country information, refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether**, **in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by state or non-state actors because they are a woman
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- women would encounter treatment breaching Article 3 ECHR because of the humanitarian situation and living conditions
- a claim, if refused, is likely to be certified as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Back to Contents

1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants).

1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when one has not already been undertaken (see Biometric data-sharing process (Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process)).

1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis).

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

Back to Contents

1.2 Exclusion

1.2.1 Under the Al-Assad regime, human rights violations were systematic and widespread. Civilians also suffered human rights abuses at the hands of other parties to the conflict.

1.2.2 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.

1.2.3 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).

1.2.4 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33(2) of the Refugee Convention, Humanitarian Protection and the instruction on Restricted Leave.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

Back to Contents

2. Convention reason(s)

2.1.1 Women in Syria form a particular social group (PSG) in the meaning of the Refugee Convention because they share an innate characteristic or a common background that cannot be changed and have a distinct identity which is perceived as different by the surrounding society.

2.1.2 Although women in Syria form a PSG, establishing such membership is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.

2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

Back to Contents

3. Risk

3.1 Risk from the state

3.1.1 In general, women in Syria are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.

3.1.2 Available information does not indicate widespread mistreatment and harassment of women by police and security forces. There are reports of government-affiliated personnel subjecting Alawite women to verbal threats, and one source indicates that government-affiliated personnel may have been involved in kidnapping incidents targeting Alawite women and girls (see also the CPIN Syria: Alawites and actual or perceived Assadists). In July 2025, armed groups affiliated with the government abducted at least 105 Druze women and girls. The UN's human rights office reported that 80 of them were still missing as of 21 August 2025. Sources indicate that, during the violence against Alawites in March (see the CPIN Syria: Alawites and actual or perceived Assadists) and against the Druze in July, women and girls were subjected to sexual violence. However, these cases of S/GBV were part of broader sectarian violence, and CPIT did not find information indicating that they reflect the experience of women in general (see Treatment by police and security forces, Kidnappings of Alawite and Druze women and girls).

3.1.3 The new Syrian government's interim constitution stipulates that all citizens, regardless of gender, are equal before the law and commits to protecting women. However, it also includes a vague provision to preserve the role of women 'within the family and society'. The Penal Code does not criminalise spousal rape and reduces punishment if a rapist marries their victim. It does not specifically prohibit domestic violence and states that 'men may discipline their female relatives in a form permitted by general custom'. Other laws also discriminate against women, such as a nationality law which only allows Syrian citizenship to be passed to a child via their father, unless their father is unidentified. Personal status laws discriminate against women in various ways (see Constitution, Penal code, Nationality and citizenship laws, Other relevant laws).

3.1.4 A significant part of the country is under the control of the Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), which has its own laws and institutions (for further information, including maps, see the CPIN Syria: Kurds and Kurdish areas). Gender equality is a fundamental part of the DAANES's ideology. This is reflected in its constitution and laws, which are progressive regarding women's rights and generally do not contain the discriminatory elements of the laws applied in the rest of the country. However, the laws are not evenly applied across DAANES territory and some laws, such as the Women's Law, have not been ratified in certain areas. Sources indicate that the DAANES has faced difficulties in implementing its gender equality agenda in conservative Arab-majority regions under its control (see DAANES's attitude towards women's rights, Laws in DAANES-controlled areas).

3.1.5 Syrian and international activists and observers have been monitoring the new government's approach to women's rights amid fears that the government's Islamist background would lead to a reduction in women's freedom. The President and Foreign Minister have publicly committed to supporting women's rights, but statements by other senior government figures have caused concern. A government spokesperson said women are inherently not suited to certain government roles and failed to confirm that women would be able to continue working as judges (see Statements by officials and ministers).

3.1.6 The government has been criticised for an overall lack of female representation. Only one out of 23 government ministers is a woman. At the time of writing, only six women (out of a total of 140 members of parliament) have been appointed to Syria's parliament following indirect elections in October 2025 (the remaining 70 members of parliament are yet to be appointed) (see Women in positions of power).

3.1.7 Meanwhile, DAANES authorities and public bodies have very high levels of women's representation. Most institutions operate with a 'co-chair' system, meaning leadership positions must be shared by a man and a woman, and many follow a 40% quota for female representation set out in the constitution. There are also a significant number of women's-only institutions focused on developing female perspectives on social and political issues (and Women in positions of power in the DAANES).

3.1.8 The central government has not imposed dress codes or gender segregation policies, but there are reports of individual public institutions and authorities doing so. For example, sources highlight posters on public buses in Homs and Damascus telling women and men to sit in different areas. Quoting a female judge, one source indicates that court officials enforced gender segregation among the judges and demoted women holding senior positions. In some cases, institutions reversed segregation policies following public outcry, such as a hospital in Damascus that introduced a policy requiring male and female staff to work in separate areas of the hospital. One source indicates that female staff at a court in Homs and at the Ministry of Education in Damascus are required to wear head coverings (see Dress codes and gender segregation).

3.1.9 In April 2025, the governor of Idlib and the public prosecutor filed charges against the head of a women's rights organisation for allegedly spreading false information about female slaves and insulting the veil. Although she said her comments had been taken out of context, the police shut down her organisation's office without explanation and demanded that she travel to Idlib from Turkey, where she lives, to face the charges (see Treatment by police and security forces).

3.1.10 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

Back to Contents

3.2 Risk from non-state actors

3.2.1 In general, women in Syria are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from non-state actors. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.

3.2.2 Gender-based violence (GBV), although widespread in Syria (particularly in a domestic context), includes a wide spectrum of behaviour, some of which is not likely to be sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition to reach the high threshold of persecution or serious harm.

3.2.3 Some women may be at greater risk of persecution or serious harm, such as those perceived to have transgressed social, cultural or religious norms. Women who fit this description may be seen to have brought dishonour to their families and may therefore be at risk of honour-based violence. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.

3.2.4 Syrian society is very patriarchal, and women are generally expected to fulfil traditional roles as wives and mothers. The economic pressures of the conflict resulted in some changes to traditional gender roles, with more women taking up paid work, but social and cultural norms continue to marginalise women. Sources indicate that male family members often exercise control over women and girls, who are generally seen as less important than the men and boys in the family. In some communities, this includes restricting women's freedom of movement. However, these restrictions do not apply uniformly to all women, with sources indicating significant differences depending on various factors, such as socio-economic status, level of education, religion, and location. For example, women in rural areas are reportedly more restricted than those in urban areas. Sources also indicate that Syrian Kurdish communities tend to have more liberal cultural norms than Syrian Arab communities, but even then, a woman's experience depends on the attitude of her family and community (see Women's roles and societal expectations, Impact of conflict on women's roles, Differences by area, community and socio-economic status and Freedom of movement).

3.2.5 Available information does not give a reliable indication of the scale of verbal harassment of women. One source refers to anecdotal evidence that street harassment has decreased significantly in Damascus due to widely shared videos of HTS fighters publicly shaming sexual harassers. Two other sources mention individual reports of strangers telling women in Idlib and Aleppo to cover their hair and follow Islamic dress codes. In April 2025, the head of a women's rights organisation was subject to an online defamation campaign and death threats after her comments about issues affecting women were taken out of context. In October 2025, armed gunmen, possibly affiliated with ISIS, conducted an arson attack on the headquarters of a women's organisation in a DAANES-controlled town in Deir Ezzor governorate (see Harassment of women by non-state actors).

3.2.6 There are no reliable statistics on the general prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV). Limitations, such as the social stigma around the topic, make it difficult to gather data. Women rarely report GBV, for reasons including social stigma and fear of further violence from perpetrators. Sources indicate that GBV is common and widespread across the country, that it is often culturally accepted and normalised, and that it has increased as a result of the conflict. Types of GBV include forced marriage, intimate partner violence, domestic family violence, honour killings, and sexual exploitation, including via social media platforms. According to sources, the perpetrators of GBV are often male family members of the victim, such as husbands and fathers. There are reports indicating that men in positions of authority, including employers, landlords and service providers, subject women to sexual exploitation. The overcrowded living conditions and insecurity of IDP camps and collective shelters increase the risk of GBV. Several sources note that widows and divorced women are particularly at risk of certain forms of GBV, such as forced marriage and denial of inheritance (see Note on limitations, Prevalence and types of GBV, Risk of GBV in IDP camps and Forced marriage and child marriage).

3.2.7 Honour crimes, including honour killings, take place in Syria, but there are no reliable statistics indicating the scale and extent of the problem. In Syria's patriarchal culture, a family's honour is closely linked to the honour of its

female members. Victims of sexual assault, women who have pre-marital or extramarital sex, and women who are perceived to have transgressed in other ways, may be seen to have brought shame to their family. As a result, male family members may subject them to honour-based violence (see Honour crimes and violence committed by family members).

3.2.8 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

Back to Contents

3.3 Risk: Humanitarian situation and living conditions

3.3.1 The general humanitarian situation in Syria is **not** so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment as defined in paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules/Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

3.3.2 However, a grant of humanitarian protection may be appropriate for lone women who would be unable to support themselves and would not have a support network (e.g. friends, family, community or tribal connections) upon return to Syria or a support network that could provide financial assistance from another location (e.g., remittances) to enable them to meet their basic needs. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and the very high threshold for granting humanitarian protection, outlined in OA (Somalia) (CG) [2022] UKUT 33 (IAC) (2 February 2022), must be taken into account (see the CPIN Syria: Humanitarian situation).

3.3.3 Sources indicate that the conflict in Syria has had a disproportionate impact on women, who generally face more difficult conditions than men. For example, in families struggling with food insecurity, women are more likely to eat less to ensure others have more. They also face obstacles accessing humanitarian aid delivery points due to safety concerns and restrictions on their movement imposed by family members. Healthcare infrastructure has suffered greatly during the conflict, with particularly inadequate provision for women's health issues such as maternity care (see Impact of conflict on women since 2011, Comparison to men, Food and essential items, Humanitarian support, Healthcare).

3.3.4 Women face significant barriers to accessing housing, land and property rights. Although women's property rights are enshrined in law, other discriminatory laws (relating to inheritance and nationality) and entrenched social norms often prevent women from owning or inheriting property. The conflict has further increased risks of eviction and dispossession. Problems reclaiming or asserting ownership particularly impact female-headed households, widows and divorced women, especially those lacking documentation (see Housing, Female heads of household, Widowed and divorced women).

3.3.5 According to International Labour Organisation statistics from 2024, labour force participation among women (the percentage of women either working or looking for work) is under 15%. Sources indicate that women who do work face challenging conditions, often working in informal sectors which lack regulations and protections, and receiving lower wages than men. Societal gender norms restrict a woman's options in finding employment, and sources

highlight the risk of employers exploiting vulnerable women, particularly those without husbands or the support of male family members (see Employment and income).

3.3.6 Sources highlight the particularly challenging conditions faced by the following groups: internally displaced women (particularly those living in camps and shelters); female heads of household; widows; divorced women. The conflict led to a significant increase in female-headed households, with the World Health Organization estimating that almost one in three families is headed by a woman. According to one source, female-headed households are significantly less likely to be able to meet their basic needs compared to male-headed households. Women without male support also face increased risks of certain types of GBV as well as labour exploitation (see Groups with heightened vulnerability).

Back to Contents

4. Protection from gender-based violence

4.1 Protection from GBV in Government-controlled areas

4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection.

4.1.2 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a rogue state actor and/or a non-state actor, they are unlikely to obtain protection from the state.

4.1.3 There are significant obstacles for women seeking protection from GBV, resulting in most GBV incidents going unreported. Reasons for this include stigma, shame, fear of further violence, and a lack of trust in the authorities' response to GBV (see Obstacles to reporting GBV).

4.1.4 Available (albeit limited) information indicates that the authorities generally fail to hold the perpetrators of GBV to account. CPIT found no examples of perpetrators being prosecuted but several examples of the authorities failing to respond appropriately. Amnesty International and the UN's human rights office highlighted the ineffective response to the kidnappings of dozens of Alawite women and girls that took place between February and June 2025. In November, the government announced the results of an inquiry into the kidnappings, claiming that there was only one 'genuine kidnapping case' and that the other disappearances took place for reasons such as women and girls voluntarily leaving home or escaping domestic violence. Several sources criticised the inquiry and disputed its findings (see Police response to GBV incidents).

4.1.5 In general, women fearing GBV in areas under government control are unlikely to be able to access protection, support or shelter from NGOs and civil society organisations. While these organisations exist, support is limited and uneven. Sources mention women's and girls' safe spaces (WGSS), which provide GBV prevention and support services, but there is limited information indicating how many there are, how effective they are, and how accessible they are. Sources note that WGSS do not function as residential shelters for women fleeing violence. It should be noted that, even in cases where NGOs are able to provide significant support, this is not akin to effective protection provided by a state or de facto state entity (see Shelters, safe spaces and support).

4.1.6 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

Back to Contents

4.2 Protection from GBV in DAANES-controlled areas

4.2.1 There is insufficient information to assess the availability and effectiveness of protection from GBV provided by police, security forces and courts in DAANES-controlled areas. However, women's organisations may be able provide a degree of protection, support and shelter in some DAANES-controlled areas. While noting that the support available is not akin to effective protection provided by a state or de facto state entity, women's organisations in areas such as Qamishlo can provide residential shelter, legal support, and help women find long-term solutions to escape domestic violence. However, a woman's access to this support depends on various factors, including the social and cultural norms of her community (see paragraph 3.1.4).

4.2.2 The DAANES has different institutions to the rest of Syria, including separate police and security forces. Several branches of its security forces are staffed exclusively by women, such as the Asayisha Jin. One source indicates that this makes women more comfortable reporting domestic violence, since they can go directly to a female officer. CPIT found only one recent example of the authorities pursuing perpetrators of GBV, but it should be noted that reporting on the topic is very limited. Around February 2024, a viral video of three male family members beating two women in an IDP camp in Raqqa governorate led to at least two of the men being imprisoned (see DAANES authorities' response to GBV incidents).

4.2.3 Mala Jin (Women's Houses) operate in DAANES-controlled areas. Their main purpose is to provide mediation and reconciliation for women's and family issues, including domestic violence. If these efforts fail, cases can go to court, with NGOs like SARA offering legal counselling and representation for women. Mala Jin also provide shelter for women in crisis, and one source indicates that a woman can stay until a long-term solution to her problem is found, and that alternative housing can be arranged if it is unsafe for her to return home. Sources differ on the number and locations of Mala Jin branches but indicate that they are most effective in Kurdish-majority areas like Qamishlo. In Arab-majority conservative areas such as Raqqa and Deir Ezzor, local opposition to the DAANES and its gender equality agenda makes it difficult for Mala Jin to function (see Support and dispute resolution mechanisms in DAANES-controlled areas).

Back to Contents

5. Internal relocation

5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.

5.1.2 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a non-state or rogue state actor, they may be able to internally relocate to escape that risk. Internal relocation is likely to be reasonable for women who are in good health **and** can either support themselves **and/or** have a support network (e.g. friends, family, community or tribal connections) in the

area they relocate to **or** a support network that can provide financial assistance from another location that would enable them to meet their basic needs.

5.1.3 Decision makers must identify any and all relevant factors before considering them cumulatively to determine whether internal relocation would be reasonable. As part of this assessment, decision makers must take into account the particular circumstances of the person, including but not limited to their: age, health, marital status, ethnicity, education level, work experience/skills and any financial savings or possible remittances from inside or outside of Syria. In cases where a person lacks the means to support themselves and cannot access assistance through a support network, internal relocation is unlikely to be reasonable. Each case must be considered on its facts.

5.1.4 For further information see the CPIN Syria: Internal relocation.

5.1.5 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

Back to Contents

6. Certification

6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (clearly unfounded claims).

Back to Contents

Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the research methodology. It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the About the assessment, is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a terms of reference which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **7 November 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

Back to Contents

7. Legal context

7.1 Constitution

7.1.1 The new Syrian government suspended the previous constitution in January 2025[1] and published a document entitled the 'Constitutional Declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic' (referred to as the 'Interim Constitution' in some sources), on 13 March 2025. Relevant articles included:

'**Article 3 – Islam, freedom of belief, personal status**

'1. The religion of the President of the Republic is Islam, and Islamic jurisprudence is the main source of legislation.

'… **Article 10 – Equality.**

'Citizens are equal before the law in rights and duties, without discrimination based on race, religion, gender or lineage.

'… **Article 12 – The State's obligations, International treaties**

'1. The State shall protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and guarantee the rights and freedoms of citizens.

'2. All rights and freedoms stipulated in international human rights treaties, charters and agreements ratified by the Syrian Arab Republic are considered an integral part of this Constitutional Declaration.

'… **Article 21 – Status of women.**

'1. The State shall preserve the social status of women, protect their dignity and their role within the family and society, and guarantee their right to education and work.

'2. The State shall guarantee the social, economic and political rights of women, and protect them from all forms of oppression, injustice and

[1] Al Jazeera, Syria's Baath party dissolved: What happens next?, 30 January 2025

violence.'[2]

7.1.2 Regarding Article 12 (2), it should be noted that, although Syria ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), it did so with exceptions due to elements of the Convention that it deemed to be in conflict with Sharia law[3].

7.1.3 In July 2025, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) published a report, citing various sources, entitled 'Syria: Country Focus' ('the July 2025 EUAA report') which stated: 'The constitutional declaration stipulates that Islam is the religion of the president and Islamic jurisprudence the primary source of legislation. This marks a notable shift from the previous constitution, which considered Islamic law as 'a main source' of legislation.'[4]

Back to Contents

7.2 Penal code

7.2.1 In the sources consulted (see Bibliography), CPIT was unable to find information indicating that the new Syrian government has made changes to the Penal Code.

7.2.2 In November 2017, EuroMed Feminist Initiative, a 'policy platform that…seeks to improve and promote women's rights'[5], published a report entitled 'Syria: Situation report on Violence against Women' which stated:

'Despite the issuance of Decree (1) of 2011 amending several articles of the Criminal Code, including the punishment of the rapist who marries the victim, such amendments only abolished the exculpating excuse and retained the mitigating excuse. In fact, the amended article provided for a two-year sentence if the rapist marries the victim and 5-year sentence if he divorces her.

'… Articles on adultery still discriminate between women and men. Women's sentence is twice the sentence of men. Adultery committed by the husband is permissible if committed outside the marital home and is only sentenced if committed inside the house, whereas women are punished regardless of the place where adultery is committed. Discrimination in the means of proof between men and women also remains in favor of men.'[6]

7.2.3 In September 2022, the EUAA published a report, citing various sources, entitled 'Syria: Targeting of Individuals' ('the September 2022 EUAA report'). While the report covered the situation under the Al-Assad regime, CPIT did not find information indicating that the new government has changed any of the laws mentioned in the extract below. The report stated:

'Rape and sexual assault are criminalised but the law is not effectively enforced. Spousal rape is specifically excluded. If the rapist marries the victim, punishment is reduced or suspended.

'… Domestic violence is not specifically prohibited by law and "men may discipline their female relatives in a form permitted by general custom."

[2] ConstitutionNet, Constitutional… (pages 4 – 8), 13 March 2025 (unofficial automated translation)
[3] EuroMed Feminist Initiative, Situation report on…, 2023 (no specific date provided)
[4] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (page 28), 7 July 2025
[5] Euromed Feminist Initiative, Who we are, undated
[6] Euromed Feminist Initiative, Syria: Situation report on Violence… (Pages 1 – 2), November 2017

'… In March 2020, Legislative Decree No 2 for the year 2020 was issued, cancelling Article 548 of the Penal Code. The article was known as the "mitigating circumstances excuse". The law had previously been amended in 2011, however, Article 548 treated "honour killings" as a provoked crime or non-premeditated murder until March 2020. This led to perpetrators facing lower sentences in relation to other murder cases. However, not all courts under GoS [Government of Syria] control dealt with "honour killing" cases in this way by passing lower sentences.

'Following the repeal of Article 584 [548], "in many areas, practice has not caught up to the change." Investigating honour killings is often not a priority, as it is regarded as a family matter. Other articles of the Penal Code allow judges to reduce sentences if mitigating circumstances apply, such as including the events that can lead to an honour killing. In some cases, families brought children forward as the perpetrator. Because of their age, they are usually immediately released.'[7]

Back to Contents

7.3 Nationality and citizenship laws

7.3.1 In May 2025, Maat, an Egyptian human rights organisation[8], submitted a report about Syria to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The report noted:

'…Syrian legislation still clearly discriminates between men and women regarding the granting of nationality … Despite the Constitutional Declaration issued by the new Syrian administration, which stipulates the principle of equality and non-discrimination, Syrian women married to foreigners are still unable to grant their Syrian nationality to their children, under paragraphs (a) and (b) of the Syrian Nationality Law, which limits this right to children born to Syrian fathers, whether inside or outside the country.

'… Maat notes that this legal discrimination not only results in the deprivation of nationality for children but nalso has extremely serious social and economic consequences. Children are deprived of their basic rights to free education and healthcare, and face legal and administrative obstacles to employment opportunities, ownership, and inheritance, thus entrenching discrimination against women and limiting their ability to fully enjoy their rights as citizens.'[9]

7.3.2 A joint report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) and the International Human Rights Centre at the Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in May 2025, stated:

'This patrilineal system has severe consequences for children of Syrian women and foreign, stateless, or unidentified fathers. If the father is absent, deceased, unwilling to acknowledge the child, or legally unknown, the child may be unable to acquire Syrian nationality, even if they were born and raised in Syria. In cases where Syrian women have children outside of wedlock, or as a result of sexual violence, the lack of legal paternity leaves children vulnerable to statelessness. Furthermore, a child born to unwed

[7] EUAA, Syria: Targeting of Individuals (pages 109 – 111), 28 September 2022
[8] Maat, About us, undated
[9] Maat, Maat for Peace's report submitted… (pages 4 – 5), May 2025

parents may not be legally registered until the parents marry or through a court order.

'… While children born to Syrian women are generally not able to acquire Syrian nationality through their mother, the law provides that Syrian women may pass their nationality if the child is born in Syria and if the father's status is stateless, or unknown.

'However, these provisions are not followed in practice and are nonetheless inadequate. For example, stateless Kurds in Syria were historically foreclosed from using this provision for purposes of gaining access to Syrian citizenship for themselves or their children.

'… Article 3(b) states that where the "legal family relationship" to a child's father has "not been established" and the child is born inside Syria to a Syrian mother, that child is considered a Syrian citizen. This provision only applies to children born inside Syria and to those whose fathers are unknown, not those whose fathers are stateless.

'In practice, Article 3(B) is not implemented due to the significant social barriers and stigma faced by women when admitting to having a child outside marriage. This includes possible negative legal consequences, and even honor crimes if pursued. Additionally, women face numerous barriers when attempting to use these safeguards as the father is required to assist. This presents problems when fathers are unwilling or unable to cooperate in the civil registration process to establish paternity. This also includes children whose fathers are missing, imprisoned, dead, or feared being affiliated with an armed group.'[10]

Back to Contents

7.4 Other relevant laws

7.4.1 The September 2022 EUAA report stated: 'The Personal Status Law stipulates that a Muslim man may marry a Christian woman, but a Muslim woman may not marry a Christian man. A Christian woman marrying a Muslim is not entitled to inherit property or wealth from her husband, even if she converts … The Personal Status Law of 2019 puts the legal age for marriage at 18 for women and 15 for marriages consented by the male guardian of the girl and authorized by a judge.'[11]

7.4.2 In February 2025, Freedom House, a US-based non-governmental organisation that monitors freedom and democracy around the world[12], published a report entitled 'Freedom in the World 2025 – Syria' which stated: 'Prior to December 2024, personal status laws based on Sharia (Islamic law) discriminated against women on inheritance matters. Societal practices further discourage land ownership by women. At year's end, it remained unclear whether the [Hayat Tahrir al-Sham] HTS-led government would maintain or seek to alter these laws and practices.'[13]

7.4.3 CPIT was unable to find information indicating that the new Syrian government has made changes to personal status laws in the sources

[10] SNHR and Loyola Law School, NGO Joint Parallel… (page 2), May 2025
[11] EUAA, Syria: Targeting of Individuals (pages 95, 112), 28 September 2022
[12] Freedom House, About Us, undated
[13] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025: Syria (section G2), 26 February 2025

consulted (see Bibliography).

Back to Contents

7.5 Laws in DAANES-controlled areas

7.5.1 The laws in the sections above do not apply to areas under the control of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES). For further information on these areas, see the CPIN Syria: Kurds and Kurdish areas.

7.5.2 The Social Contract of the DAANES, which is effectively the region's constitution, contains many references to gender equality, women's rights, and women's participation in political decision-making[14]. These include the explicit prohibition of all types of violence and discrimination against women. See the full Social Contract and DAANES's attitude towards women's rights for further details.

7.5.3 In November 2019, the Rojava Information Center (RIC), an 'independent media organization based in North and East Syria'[15] published a report entitled 'Beyond the Frontlines: The building of the democratic system in North and East Syria' ('the November 2019 RIC report'). It stated:

'The Women's Law was published on the 22nd October 2014 by the Women's Office of the Autonomous Administration of Jazeera region to establish the rights of women in the new political system. The Law contains thirty points that enshrine certain rights and ban practices that are deemed oppressive. The Law has been adopted by Afrin, Kobane and Jazeera regions, but has not yet been passed in Manbij, Tabqa, Raqqa or Deir-ez-Zor regions. However, the Women's committees of these regions have been drafting principles and laws for their regions, as well as conducting extensive educational work on women's issues.

'Key rights and freedoms enshrined in the Law include:

'Equality in all areas of life, including access to political power, employment and wages, rights before the law and judiciary, inheritance and citizenship.

'Implementation of the co-chair system in each institution, guaranteeing that one co-chair is a woman.

'Prohibition of forced marriage, the dowry system, polygamy, honor killings and underage marriage (under 18 years old).

'Divorce must be a joint decision, a man cannot unilaterally cast off a wife. However, in cases of violence or mistreatment, a woman can secure a divorce without the consent of the husband.

'In cases of divorce, the mother receives custody of a child until the child is 15 years old, at which point the child can decide which parent has custody. (Traditionally, the man's family would get custody of children). Prohibition of violence against women and sexism.

'Any form of trafficking and trade of women and children is forbidden, including prostitution. Adultery is also prohibited.

'Women have the right to be represented by women's institutions in a

[14] RIC, DAANES' Social Contract, 2023 Edition, 14 December 2023
[15] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (Page 7), 19 December 2019

tribunal, and the right for their opinion and voice to be heard and even prioritized. Protection of the rights of children.

'The establishment of institutions to support pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, and the right of all widows and widowers to access basic health and social needs.

'These rights are not simply abstract principles: the Women's Law sets out guidelines for fines and prison sentences for those found in contravention of the Law.'[16]

7.5.4 In January 2024, Davide Grasso, a professor at a university in Turin, Italy[17], stated:

'To date, the application of the GPW [General Provisions for Women, also known as the Women's Law] and…the CC-A [Criminal Code Amendments – see pages 179 – 180 for further details], is only envisaged in three of the seven Regions into which ADANES [alternative acronym for DAANES] is organized: Cizire (partly occupied by the [Syrian National Army] SNA and Turkey since 2019), Euphrates (including the pre-existing Kobane Canton, partly occupied by SNA and Turkey since 2019) and Afrin (mostly occupied by SNA and Turkey since 2018). These are the three Kurdish-majority areas of Syria, called Rojava in Kurmancî. In the Turkish occupied territories of Rojava, autonomous institutions have been dismantled and there is therefore no chance to implement the GPW and the CC-A. In the remaining regions (Manbij, Al-Tabqa, Ar-Raqqa, Deir el-Zor) the GPW and the CC-A are not in force.

'… The acceptance of the GPW has been greater in the Cizire [spelled 'Jazira' or 'Jazeera' in other sources] and Euphrates Regions, where it is in force. A very few families are voluntarily complying with it in Manbij, Ar-Raqqa or Deir el-Zor, where its application is only recommended by the ADANES and Kongra Star ['the umbrella body for all women's organisations linked to the Autonomous Administration'[18]]. In these areas, Kongra Star carries out house-to-house awareness-raising work to make the existence of this legal instrument known to women who would like to advocate for its use. Given the non-compulsory nature of compliance with the GPW, the intention is there to motivate women to bring their fathers and husbands, in the event of controversy, before the reconciliation commissions of the Women's Houses, which in any case attempt to produce a mutually favorable mediation inspired at the GPW. This model is also applied in Rojava, where the Communes and Women's Houses favor consensual family paths, mostly avoiding coercion… '[19]

For further information on Women's Houses, also known as Mala Jin, see Support and dispute resolution mechanisms in DAANES-controlled areas.

Back to Contents

8. Societal and cultural norms and attitudes

8.1 Women's roles and societal expectations

[16] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (Page 42), 19 December 2019
[17] International University College of Turin, Davide Grasso, undated
[18] Gender Campus, Women's Rights in Northeast Syria: Enforcing…, 9 December 2022
[19] Grasso, D., Gender Relationships… (Pages 181, 183), Chapter of book 'Women…', January 2024

8.1.1 In August 2019, Sharq, a 'pan-Arab non-profit organisation that works to promote and strengthen pluralism and independent thought in the Arabic speaking region'[20], published a research paper entitled 'Syrian Women and Society' ('the August 2019 Sharq paper'). It is about life in Syria before 2011 and aims to add insight into the difficulties Syrians faced in the decades leading up to the 2011 revolution. The sections cited below focus on established social and cultural norms. While some sources indicate that the conflict has resulted in changes to gender norms (see paragraphs below), this Sharq research paper still provides valuable insight into the cultural background surrounding women's roles in Syria in general. It stated:

'As wives and mothers, women in Arab societies, including Syria, are required to perform domestic and household duties. In some communities, the role of women is limited exclusively to family matters and raising and caring for children.

'… In some communities, traditional culture pressures women and discriminates against them, and the severity and scale of this discrimination varies from one community to another. Customs and traditions, especially in the countryside, can override the law and even religion, as in the case of women who are deprived of their share of inheritance, or forced to submit to marriage without their consent.

'Discrimination may encompass all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life. The practice of this discrimination may begin early in life within the family. The family treats boys and girls in very different and discriminatory ways.

'… Different aspects of discrimination may vary from one community to another, and sometimes from one family to another. This is due to the diversity of cultures, customs and traditions. The phenomenon of discrimination continues to extend beyond the family to society as a whole.

'… The dominant social culture, especially among the lower classes, weighs heavily on both men and women. Men take the role of guardians of women and exercise authority over them. The historical division of gender roles defines the role of women in the family to include her reproductive role, and responsibility for family care. In contrast, male domains include politics, transformation and productivity, leaving the full burden of domestic and family care on women.

'… Women are often prevented by parents or husbands from engaging in social activities, or even enjoying any cultural, social or recreational activity. Achieving genuine participation in these areas remains difficult as society does not readily accept the involvement of women. There are a variety of reasons for this relating to social, cultural and political constraints.

'… It is true that our society maintains patriarchal norms, both in Syria and in the Arab region. However, this male-dominant order and practice varies from region to region, and perhaps between families in the same area, according to differences in inherited culture as well as educational achievement, customs, religion and so on. It is also true that some women seem to be made to achieve their ambitions and actively participate, even in societies that do not accept this.

[20] Tarikhi, What is Sharq.Org?, undated

'… Masculine attitudes still dominate Syrian society as a whole and vary from one region to another according to population and the level of parochialism and education in different contexts.

'… Women's work is stereotyped and relegated to specific areas, even in the most liberal societies that ostensibly have no explicit problem with educated, working women.

'As documented in the interviews of the oral history archive used in this study, most women's achievements are motivated by willpower and perseverance to free themselves from the constraints of local communities and social stereotypes. In many cases, the support of the family is important in this resistance to dominant social gender structures.'[21]

8.1.2 In February 2020, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), now called the EUAA, published a report, citing various sources, entitled 'Syria: Situation of women' which stated:

'Many consulted sources highlighted the role of patriarchal values, prevalent in Syrian society and affecting the situation of women and girls in many negative ways. A Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights (LDHR) report of October 2018 discussed gender norms, stigma, and sexual and gender-based violence being "intimately inter-related" phenomena, and violence and stigma as rooted in "harmful gender and societal norms". According to the UNFPA [United Nations Population Fund] report of March 2019, women are relegated to the status of second-class citizens within Syrian families and communities which makes them vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence ... Researcher Marie Forestier noted that in Syria's patriarchal culture, the honour of a family is closely connected to the honour of women and girls in the family, which puts those victims of sexual and gender-based violence willing to disclose the violations at risk of stigmatisation and violence.'[22]

For further information see Honour crimes and violence committed by family members.

8.1.3 In February 2023, the EUAA published a report entitled 'Country Guidance: Syria' ('the February 2023 EUAA report') which stated: '… [T]he authoritarian political system and the prevailing patriarchal values in Syrian society relegated women to a secondary position in society, including in their families, with the notion that "the most appropriate sphere for women" was the sphere of home and family … The traditional gender norms in Syria confined the roles and responsibilities of Syrian women predominantly to their homes.'[23]

8.1.4 In October 2025, the UNFPA published a report on gender-based violence (GBV) entitled 'Voices from Syria 2025' ('the October 2025 UNFPA report'). It was based on 53 focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in January 2025 with a total of 424 'women and girls, wider community experts, and GBV experts'[24] across the country. The report notes that the FGDs are a type of qualitative data and 'are not designed to be statistically

[21] Sharq, Syrian Women and Society (pages 5 – 19), August 2019
[22] EASO, Syria: Situation of women (page 31), 2 February 2020
[23] EUAA, Country Guidance: Syria (pages 106, 112), 7 February 2023
[24] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 14), 14 October 2025

representative, but rather to surface lived experiences, signal emerging issues and contextualize broader trends.'[25]

8.1.5 It should also be noted that, of the 424 focus group participants, 335 were internally displaced persons (IDPs), meaning that the information in the report is likely to skew towards reflecting the experiences of IDPs. Various sources indicate that IDPs generally face worse living conditions and greater risks of GBV compared to non-displaced individuals (see Internally displaced women for further details). The report stated:

'For many girls and women, rights to movement, healthcare or community engagement were curtailed by fathers or husbands, who denied them access to clinics, centres or even basic personal needs … These denials took many forms – from being prevented from earning wages or making decisions, to being excluded from humanitarian registration and aid, to gender-based restrictions on personal development and self-expression. Girls reported being forbidden from engaging in creative activities like music and art, and some felt forced to stay indoors while their male siblings moved freely and enjoyed more support. Some participants framed this as intentional deprivation, while others described it as a result of social norms or neglect. Girls and women who speak out, seek work or pursue autonomy were also described as being scolded, punished or socially ostracized.'[26]

8.1.6 The same source also stated:

'…FGD participants overwhelmingly reported that women and girls do not have a meaningful role in decision-making processes at a family or community level in Syria …

'… They are not able to make decisions within their families and may face violence when making decisions that are seen to be the purview of males within the household.

'… This lack of decision-making power is even more evident at community level, where "man holds decision and power … due to inherited customs and traditions" (Woman from Harasta, Rural Damascus Governorate).

'… Girls and women who speak out, seek work or pursue autonomy are scolded, punished or socially ostracized.

'… Girls are frequently prevented from attending school due to family restrictions, early marriage, prioritization of boys' education, high costs, unsafe or inadequate school environments and prevailing beliefs that a girl's role is confined to the home.

'… Many women and girls reported that their income is taken by brothers or husbands, and they have no control over how it is used.'[27]

8.1.7 The same source also stated:

'Women and girls in Syria face extremely limited freedom of movement, which is linked directly to oppressive and discriminatory social norms, as well as ongoing and escalating insecurity … Many are prevented by husbands and fathers from leaving their homes, visiting with family and friends, going to a health clinic or going to school – while others do not leave their home,

[25] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 74), 14 October 2025
[26] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 24), 14 October 2025
[27] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (pages 25 – 26), 14 October 2025

especially in the evening, out of fear for their safety … Restrictions on the movement and expression of women and girls are closely connected with gendered social norms related to shame, control and perceived "protection" … Restrictions were exerted and enforced through social and familial pressures, threats, physical violence and restraint, blame, judgement and social rejection …'[28]

8.1.8 This source is based on qualitative data and is not intended to be an indicator of the general situation for women across Syria. For further information on the source's limitations, see paragraphs 8.1.4, 8.1.5 and 12.2.15.

Back to Contents

8.2 Differences by area, community and socio-economic status

8.2.1 The August 2019 Sharq paper stated:

'Women's participation in civil work depends on:

'Their educational level: there is a positive correlation between the level of women's participation in civil society organizations and academic achievement. The higher the level of education, the greater their chances of participation.

'Social and geographical factors: there is a positive relationship between the level of women's participation in civil society organizations and their geographical position. The results of the field survey indicate a low level of participation of women from rural areas compared to urban contexts because of social conditions, customs and traditions that weigh heavily on women in rural environments.

'… Syrian women cannot be treated monolithically as equally suffering from marginalization and exclusion. Each region has specific characteristics according to conditions of development, social and religious traditions and cultural diversity.

'The suffering of rural women is more evident than that of urban women, and in marginalized areas compared to urban areas, especially in large cities.'[29]

8.2.2 The February 2023 EUAA report stated: 'Kurdish women are considered to have often experienced more liberal cultural norms generally held by Kurdish communities and promoted by political parties, but their situation was reportedly largely dependent on family and individual beliefs and customs, and adherence to traditional social norms was more common in more heavily religious or traditional communities.'[30]

8.2.3 In January 2025, the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) and the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) published a report about the security situation in north and east Syria, covering the period January – November 2024 ('the January 2025 DIS report'). Citing an interview with University of Lyon professor Fabrice Balanche, the report stated: 'The area [Deir ez-Zor governorate] is very conservative, so women who refuse to wear a hijab are also targeted by their own families. The patriarchal power is ruling the area

[28] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 24), 14 October 2025
[29] Sharq, Syrian Women and Society (pages 13, 19), August 2019
[30] EUAA, Country Guidance: Syria (page 106), 7 February 2023

and maintain the social conservatism by force if needed.'[31]

8.2.4 Citing an interview with STJ, the same source stated '[S]ome women may face social restrictions enforces [sic] by their families and local communities in relation to travelling freely. Women from the more socially conservative communities, such as in Deir Ezzour, are required to have a male chaperone to travel, and women from this area generally face greater difficulties when travelling due to social restrictions and the amount of checkpoints.'[32]

8.2.5 Citing an interview with a Syrian Kurdish journalist in North and East Syria, the same source stated: 'Women and children can travel freely between Hasakah and Raqqa. The situation for women in Deir Ezzour is different due to cultural factors in terms of women only being able to travel with a male guardian.'[33]

Back to Contents

8.3 Impact of conflict on women's roles

8.3.1 The February 2023 EUAA report stated:

'The increasing number of female-headed households has led to women adopting new roles in addition to their customary roles as mothers and caregivers. This subjected them to stressful and complex living conditions that are difficult to cope with. Additional challenges include the need to provide for their families, for example by taking up work in the public sphere. In addition, women might face difficulties finding livelihood options deemed suitable for them according to the prevailing cultural and social norms.'[34]

8.3.2 In December 2024, CARE, an NGO that 'works around the globe to save lives and defeat poverty'[35], published a report entitled 'Northeast Syria: Rapid Gender Analysis Brief – Ar-Raqqa, Deir Ez Zor and Al-Hasakah Governorates' ('the December 2024 CARE report') which stated:

'Over the years, women's leadership and participation in public and private spheres have shifted as war and conflict have impacted gender roles in NES [northeast Syria]. Before 2011, women in regions characterized by tribal and agricultural communities such as Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor were primarily responsible for reproduction and unpaid care work within the family, and those with access to education were limited to fields such as teaching and nursing. Once the war began, however, women became responsible not only for taking care of the household but also bringing in income since men were often involved in combat or faced economic hardship.'[36]

8.3.3 In September 2025, international affairs think tank[37] New Lines Institute published an article entitled 'Gender, Power and Peacebuilding in Postwar Syria' which stated: 'As the civil war raged, hundreds of thousands of men were conscripted, killed, or detained, creating a power vacuum for women to assume unconventional gender roles.'[38]

[31] DIS and SMA, Security situation in North and… (page 88), January 2025
[32] DIS and SMA, Security situation in North and… (page 161), January 2025
[33] DIS and SMA, Security situation in North and… (page 150), January 2025
[34] EUAA, Country Guidance: Syria (page 112), 7 February 2023
[35] CARE, Who We Are, undated
[36] CARE, Northeast Syria: Rapid Gender… (page 2), 23 December 2024
[37] New Lines Institute, About, undated
[38] New Lines Institute, Gender, Power, and Peacebuilding…, 16 September 2025

Back to Contents

9. Impact of conflict on women since 2011

9.1.1 In June 2023, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) published a report entitled 'Gendered impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic on women and girls' which stated:

'The gendered impact of the conflict partly results from longstanding legal and customary discrimination against women and girls – the effects of which have been dramatically amplified owing to the protracted armed conflict and its consequences. Pre-existing discriminatory practices and laws, often reinforced by societal and patriarchal cultural norms, placed women and girls at a disadvantage already prior to the conflict, regarding for example, equality before the law; protection against violence; equitable distribution of inheritance; access to housing and property; the right to family and custody of children; conferral of nationality to children; and sometimes even freedom of movement.'[39]

9.1.2 In July 2024, the UNFPA published a report entitled 'Whole of Syria: Gender-Based Violence Strategy 2024–2025' which stated: 'Gender inequality exacerbated by thirteen years of conflict, poverty, displacements, restrictive social roles, and weak rule of law has undermined individuals', families', and communities' abilities to cope. Families increasingly resort to dangerous coping mechanisms, and women and girls are increasingly exposed to sexual exploitation due to the increasing needs and the lack of safe job opportunities.'[40]

9.1.3 In January 2025, international NGOs[41] the Danish Refugee Council [DRC], Oxfam and INTERSOS published a report entitled 'The Missing Link: The Centrality of Protection in Early Recovery in Syria' ('the January 2025 report produced by DRC, Oxfam and INTERSOS'), which was 'primarily based on the findings and analysis of a study commissioned…in March 2024 and completed in June 2024…in former government-controlled areas of Syria.'[42] The report stated: 'The economic crisis has added additional pressures, leaving many families needing to share housing with extended family and/or community members (with IDP's [sic] being at a higher risk), which compromises privacy and places additional stressors upon the household, resulting, in some instances, in cases of child sexual abuse and exacerbating risks of GBV.'[43]

9.1.4 In January 2025, Human Rights Watch published a report covering events in Syria in 2024 which stated: 'The conflict in Syria has exacerbated gender inequalities, exposing women and girls to increased violence, displacement, and discriminatory laws limiting their rights. Many women heads of households struggle to register their children's births, heightening the risk of statelessness and restricting access to education and health care.'[44]

9.1.5 The March 2025 EUAA report stated: 'The crisis in Syria has had a disproportionate impact on women leading to risks of violence, negative

[39] OHCHR, Gendered impact of the conflict in… (page 2), 12 June 2023
[40] UNFPA, Whole of Syria: Gender-Based Violence… (page 4), 22 July 2024
[41] DRC, Oxfam and Intersos, The Missing Link: The Centrality… (page 1), 29 January 2025
[42] DRC, Oxfam and Intersos, The Missing Link: The Centrality… (page 6), 29 January 2025
[43] DRC, Oxfam and Intersos, The Missing Link: The Centrality… (page 8), 29 January 2025
[44] Human Rights Watch, World Report 2025: Syria, 16 January 2025

coping mechanisms, limited access to services, an increased vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), discrimination, and limited access to medical care and legal redress. Women and girls were disadvantaged when accessing humanitarian aid and disproportionally affected by food insecurity.'[45]

9.1.6 The same source also stated: 'OHCHR reported a rise in "all types of sexual violence and other gender-based violence" in Syria during the conflict. Abuses against women were underreported, including because of societal stigma and fear.'[46]

9.1.7 In April 2025, the UNHCR and the Global Protection Cluster (GPC – a network of NGOs and UN agencies focused on protection work in humanitarian crises[47]) published a report entitled 'Protection Landscape in Syria – A Snapshot (March 2025)' ('the April 2025 GPC report') which stated:

'… Despite a decline in some conflict-related sexual violence, recent developments have disproportionately impacted women and girls and have increased their risk of being exposed to violence, especially in areas where the security situation has deteriorated.

'… [Since the fall of Al-Assad], [s]ome areas have also seen a shift in socio-cultural attitudes toward women and girls, limiting their independence, freedom of movement and access to opportunities. Domestic violence, child marriage, child trafficking, child labour, and sexual exploitation are rising, particularly in IDP camps and shelters, where women and girls face heightened risks of survival sex and forced marriage.

'… Discrimination and stigmatization are also on the increase for certain groups, with risks of denial of resources, opportunities and services, especially for women and girls who continue to be disproportionally affected by the changing but continuing crises.'[48]

The source did not provide any data to support its claim that these problems increased since the fall of Al-Assad and the change in government.

9.1.8 In July 2025, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) published a report entitled 'Humanitarian Response Priorities: Syrian Arab Republic – January to December 2025' ('the July 2025 UNOCHA report') which stated: 'Effects of the economic crisis impact female headed households and other vulnerable groups, such as women, adolescent girls, and persons with disabilities (PWD) more systematically, increasing the risks of various forms of gender-based violence (GBV) and the use of negative coping mechanisms, such as child marriage, child labour and sexual exploitation, among others.'[49]

9.1.9 Commenting on GBV committed by humanitarian aid workers, the same source stated:

'The risk of SEA [sexual abuse and exploitation] remains high for women and girls in Syria and is likely to increase as the humanitarian response scales up with a surge of humanitarian aid workers. Continued and emerging

[45] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (page 34), 25 March 2025
[46] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (page 37), 25 March 2025 p37
[47] GPC, Who We Are, undated
[48] GPC, Protection Landscape in Syria – A… (pages 2, 5, 15), 3 April 2025
[49] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian… (page 8), 24 July 2025

hostilities will also exacerbate the already existing needs for humanitarian assistance and limit access to formal and informal reporting mechanisms and survivor assistance. Similarly, the risk of SEA is high in the context of returns from outside or within Syria when individuals are trying to re-establish their lives in areas where they may no longer have any support networks or resources.'[50]

9.1.10 In August 2025, the World Health Organisation (WHO) published a 'Public Health Situation Analysis' on Syria ('the August 2025 WHO report') which stated: 'Gender inequality exacerbated by years of conflict, poverty, displacements, restrictive social roles, and weak rule of law has undermined individuals', families', and communities' abilities to cope. Families increasingly resort to dangerous coping mechanisms, and women and girls are increasingly exposed to sexual exploitation due to the increasing needs and the lack of safe job opportunities.'[51]

9.1.11 The October 2025 UNFPA report stated:

'Women and girls in Syria are, as has long been the case, facing the worst consequences of these intersecting political, social and economic crises, including multiple and increasing forms of GBV. They are experiencing a wide range of violence on a daily basis – including physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic violence – and are denied access to rights, opportunities and services. Nowhere is safe, with violence occurring in homes, public places, and digital and online platforms. Their freedom of movement is severely curtailed and they are prevented from accessing services and support. Restrictive and discriminatory social and gender norms underpin this violence, which is exacerbated by displacement, economic hardship and insecurity.

'While the change in government of 8 December 2024 has led to some optimism and the consequent return of many displaced families to their homes – more than 1 million displaced people have returned from other areas inside Syria, while some 400,000 have returned from neighbouring countries – women and girls have linked these political changes to deteriorating safety and increased levels of GBV.'[52]

9.1.12 The source is based on qualitative data and is not intended as an indicator of the general situation for women in Syria. For example, whilst it states that women and girls 'are experiencing a wide range of violence on a daily basis', it does not indicate how many women this applies to. Similarly, the phrase '[n]owhere is safe' should not be seen as evidence that the average woman is at risk of GBV. For further information on the source's methodology and limitations, see paragraphs (see paragraphs 8.1.4, 8.1.5 and 12.2.15).

9.1.13 For further information on groups particularly impacted by the conflict, see Groups with heightened vulnerability.

Back to Contents

10. New government's attitude towards women's rights

10.1 Statements by officials and ministers

[50] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian… (page 15), 24 July 2025
[51] WHO, Public Health Situation Analysis – Syrian Arab… (page 15), 15 August 2025
[52] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 10), 14 October 2025

10.1.1 In March 2025, the EUAA published a report entitled 'Syria: Country Focus' ('the March 2025 EUAA report') which stated:

'Sources indicate that there is no clarity yet on the situation of women in Syria under the HTS [Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, a former rebel group whose leader Ahmed al-Sharaa is now the President of Syria[53]] authorities at the time of drafting of this report. New foreign minister Assaad al-Shibani claimed that the authorities would "fully support" women's rights and Ahmed al-Sharaa's promised to continue women's education.

'… At the national level, the governance approach of the transitional administration remains unclear, particularly regarding women's rights and representation. Obaida Arnout, a government spokesperson, suggested that women's inherent characteristics make them unsuitable for certain roles in governance, while Aisha al-Dibs, the newly appointed Minister for Women, voiced opposition to working with civil society organisations that disagree with her views. Al-Dibs further attributed rising divorce rates to a previous government program and pledged to avoid similar initiatives.

'… Concerning the work of female judges, Obaida Arnout stated that this needs to be studied "by experts", leaving the situation of female judges unclear. In January 2025, it was reported that Shadi al-Waisi, the Minister of Justice in the current administration, was seen in two videos overseeing the execution of two women sentenced for "corruption and prostitution" in the Idlib area in 2015 … According to Al-Dibs…the government will not impose any dress code on Syrian women. In an interview from 25 December 2024, Ahmed al-Sharaa stated that "Christian women would not be forced to observe the veil" while not mentioning the Muslim women.'[54]

Back to Contents

10.2 Women in positions of power

10.2.1 The March 2025 EUAA report stated:

'As of 1 January 2025, three women have been appointed to official positions under the new government in Syria. The first woman to be appointed was Aisha al-Dibs as the head of the Women's Affairs Office. On 30 December 2024, the new authorities appointed the first female governor of the Syrian central bank, Maysaa Sabrine, previously working as the bank's deputy governor. On 31 December 2024, Muhsina al-Mahithawi, from the Druze minority, was appointed as the first female governor for the province of Sweida.'[55]

10.2.2 In June 2025, Human Rights First (HRF), an organisation that 'works in the United States and abroad to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law'[56], published a report entitled 'We plant the trees, they cut them down: Challenges and Promise in Post-Assad Syria' ('the June 2025 HRF report'). It stated:

'A female judge from Homs anonymously reported that, after courts reopened in Homs following the Assad government's departure, a person known as Sheikh Abu Abdullah was appointed to lead the courts. At a

[53] House of Commons Library, Syria: What is the situation five months after Assad's fall?, 9 May 2025
[54] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (pages 34 – 36), 25 March 2025
[55] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (pages 34 – 35), 25 March 2025
[56] Human Rights First, About us, undated

meeting of judges, Sheikh Abu Abdullah announced there would be efforts to "conform" the court's work to Islamic law. A judge of Christian descent asked if that meant all judges had to be Muslim. Sheikh Abu Abdullah replied: "We will rule according to Islamic Sharia in the end." Sheikh Abu Abdullah was asked about the future role of female judges, and replied, "This decision is left to time…We have to wait and see how the Supreme Judicial Council will vote in the future." These remarks brought about significant protest, and subsequently Sheikh Hassan al-Aqraa replaced Sheikh Abu Abdullah. Al-Aqraa holds a degree in Islamic Sharia, and it is not clear whether his orientation differs from that of Sheikh Abu Abdullah. At Al-Aqraa's first meeting with judges, women were made to wear head coverings and sit separately from their male colleagues.

'… A woman employed at the Homs Justice Palace reported at the end of December 2024 that senior HTS officials had ordered the termination of female judges. It is not clear if this step was taken. However, as addressed, Sheikh Abu Abdullah, who was at least briefly in charge of courts in Homs, did not commit to allowing women (or Christians) to work as judges. The Homs Justice Palace employee reported also on a meeting held after Sheikh Hassan Al-Aqraa replaced Sheikh Abu Abdullah (due to Sheikh Abu Abdullah's remarks about women and Christian judges) … As noted above, a female judge who attended the meeting recounted questions that were put to al-Aqraa about the roles of women as judges. He replied that these questions would be left to the future, even though women in Homs had previously occupied all judicial positions, including as judges at all levels and public prosecutors.'[57]

10.2.3 In July 2025, The Conversation, an 'independent source of news analysis and informed comment written by academic experts'[58], published an article entitled 'Women played key roles in Syria's revolution. Now they've been pushed to the margins'. It stated:

'[W]omen – who were marginalised politically and economically under Assad – continue to be systematically excluded from decision-making in the new government … [O]nly one woman was appointed to Syria's immediate post-Assad caretaker government. She didn't get a ministerial title.

'… A key moment came when the new Syrian government held a "national dialogue conference" earlier this year. This conference was to establish a forward-looking "political identity" for Syria.

'Of the seven-member conference preparatory committee, only two were women

'… Most members had strong ties with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham or other Islamist factions.

'About 200 of the 1,000 delegates at the conference were women. However, their input in legislative and security committees was minimal.

'Only one of 18 conference recommendations referred (in a limited way) to women.

'… [O]nly one of Syria's 23 ministers is a woman: Hind Kabawat, appointed

[57] HRF, We plant the trees, they cut them down: Challenges… (pages 12, 20), 30 June 2025
[58] The Conversation, Who we are, undated

as minister of social affairs and labour. This "soft" portfolio is commonly associated with gendered expectations around care and welfare.

'Key ministries were allocated to al-Sharaa's all-male long-time comrades from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham's base in Idlib.'[59]

10.2.4 In October 2025, The Conversation, published an article on Syria's parliamentary election which stated:

'[I]n Syria's recent parliamentary elections, women only won six seats in the 210-member body [only 140 members were elected, with the President to appoint the remaining 70[60]]. Exclusion was not merely reflected in the outcome, it was engineered into the very structure of the process.

'The recent parliamentary elections in early October did not factor in the people's will, nor were they permitted to vote. They weren't involved in the process at all.

'Instead, the elections were overseen by a government body called the Supreme Judicial Committee for Elections, appointed by al-Sharaa. Its composition was revealing: nine men and only two women.

'The process was complicated and deliberately exclusionary. The Supreme Judicial Committee was tasked with forming electoral subcommittees around the country, which then reviewed applicants for individuals to be appointed to electoral colleges. Only those selected were allowed to participate in the voting process or nominate candidates.

'Ordinary citizens had no direct role in the election.

'Under this framework, the electoral colleges selected representatives for two-thirds of the parliament seats. Al-Sharaa will appoint the remaining third.

'Unsurprisingly, women's representation in the subcommittees was minimal. Drawing on raw figures published on the official Syrian election website, women only constituted about 11% of all subcommittee members (18 out of roughly 180 nationwide).

'Even where women did have decent representation, no female parliamentarians were elected. In Damascus, for example, women comprised nearly a third of the registered applicants (44 out of 145) for the electoral college and a third of the local subcommittee members. Yet, not a single woman from the capital was elected.'[61]

Back to Contents

10.3 Dress codes and gender segregation

10.3.1 In January 2025, ETANA, an 'independent organisation' which 'serves as a civil and diplomatic service for Syrians who want to live with freedom, dignity and justice'[62] published an update on the situation in Syria which stated: '[I]n central Syria, public transport vehicles in Homs now display stickers enforcing gender-segregated seating – with men seated at the front and women at the rear of buses – drawing sharp criticism in a country with no

[59] The Conversation, Women played key roles…, 14 July 2025
[60] Al Jazeera, Everything you need to know about Syria's first…, 5 October 2025
[61] The Conversation, Syria's new leader promised democracy. Then he…, 22 October 2025
[62] ETANA, About us, undated

modern history of mandated gender separation.'[63]

10.3.2 In February 2025, London-based 'non-partisan' news outlet[64] The New Arab published an article entitled 'Why Syrian women's political participation is crucial in building the new Syria' which stated:

'Emerging from the chaos of Syria's long civil war, HTS, originally the Nusra Front and once affiliated with al-Qaeda, has rebranded itself as the architect of a transitional government promising civil order and economic revival.

'Its leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, now presenting a more moderate, state-building image, vows to protect Syria's diverse communities.

'But the group's Islamist roots and past enforcement of strict social codes, including a Sharia-compliant dress code, continue to stir unease among women and minority groups.

'Despite al-Sharaa's promise, eyewitnesses report that public spaces in Damascus are covered with posters of a fully veiled woman, titled "The Hijab of the Muslim Woman," outlining the "conditions of the Shariah-compliant hijab", pressuring women to conform to cultural expectations, a norm all too familiar to Syrian women.'[65] Using the sources consulted (see Bibliography), CPIT was unable to find information indicating who put up these posters, how long they stayed up, or how people reacted to them.

10.3.3 The March 2025 EUAA report stated: 'Policies targeting women's public engagement have extended to plans for gender segregation on public and private buses in Damascus. In January, the General Company for Internal Transport, 'Zajal Transport,' announced that gender-segregated transportation would be implemented in the capital [Damascus] within days, following earlier trials in Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, and Homs.'[66]

10.3.4 In March 2025, France 24 aired a TV news report looking at the situation of women in Syria after the fall of Al-Assad. During a section filmed in a market in Aleppo city, the footage showed several women in niqabs. The reporter stated that this was a 'rare site in Syria before the fall of Bashar Al-Assad' and that 'women with a stricter interpretation of Islam … have become more visible since the arrival of an Islamist interim government'.

10.3.5 The France 24 report also showed a religious poster in Homs featuring a woman in a full veil and noted that posters like this 'have appeared all over the city', including at the entrance of a university. The report additionally included an interview with an anonymous female judge who said: 'The new court officials have forbidden us from speaking with our male colleagues or being in the same room with them. Now there are separate rooms. They've reorganised the system. The women who held senior positions have not been dismissed, but they have been demoted.'[67]

10.3.6 In April 2025, Medya News, an outlet which 'covers the news…of Kurds and other oppressed peoples and presents this news to the international public based on a democratic, ecological, and women-based societal paradigm'[68],

[63] ETANA, Syria Update #14: 17 January, 16 January 2025
[64] The New Arab, About Us, undated
[65] The New Arab, Why Syrian women's political…, 11 February 2025
[66] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (page 35), 25 March 2025
[67] France 24, Women in Syria: Could the future be female?, 21 March 2025
[68] Medya News, About us, undated

reported on a new policy of gender segregation for doctors at a hospital in Damascus. The article stated:

'The transitional government in Syria, led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), has introduced a policy separating the workspaces of male and female doctors at Al-Muwasat Hospital in Damascus, according to a report by JINHA. The decision, implemented in April, has sparked widespread criticism for undermining professional standards in healthcare and restricting women's rights.

'The segregation policy at Al-Muwasat Hospital, a major public healthcare facility in the capital, requires male and female doctors to work in separate areas … JINHA reported that the decision has been widely condemned as a "regressive step" that further erodes gender equality in Syria's post-Assad era.

'The policy follows other controversial measures attributed to HTS. On 16 April, Al-Muwasat Hospital briefly ordered gender segregation on employee buses, requiring women to sit at the back. Following public outcry, the rule was rescinded within days, with officials claiming it was a "misunderstood internal regulation". The hospital's latest workspace segregation, however, has not been reversed, raising concerns about HTS's long-term vision for gender roles.'[69]

Although the source attributed these gender segregation policies to the government, CPIT was unable to find any other sources that support this claim. Given the level of scrutiny and the number of reports covering gender segregation, it is unlikely that these measures were imposed by the government.

10.3.7 In May 2025, the International Crisis Group (ICG) published an article entitled 'A Helping Hand for Post-Assad Syria' ('the May 2025 ICG report') which stated: 'Some local officials have also acted autonomously to introduce measures that restrict women in certain public and work spaces or separate men from women in buses, hospitals and courts. On most occasions, the authorities reversed such measures in the wake of a public outcry.'[70]

10.3.8 In June 2025, France 24 published an article entitled 'Between freedom and restrictions, Syrians navigate new reality' which stated:

'Since longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad was overthrown on December 8 [2024], Syria's new Islamist authorities have not officially imposed restrictions on public behaviour, but some incidents – mostly described as acts by "individual" perpetrators – have sparked worry about personal freedoms.

'… Videos showing female university students wearing a face-covering niqab and rumours claiming the prohibition of gender-mixing in buses have caused heavy controversy.

'AFP reporters did not observe gender segregation on buses at a major station in Damascus.

'However, a traveller from Damascus to the north of the country said that a

[69] Medya News, Gender…, April 2025 (link expired – Medya News shut down in June 2025)
[70] ICG, A Helping Hand for Post-Assad Syria (page 3), 22 May 2025

driver had asked her to sit far from her male friend in case the bus was stopped at a security checkpoint.'[71]

10.3.9 The June 2025 HRF report stated:

'At that meeting [see paragraph 10.2.2], which involved judges and all other staff, head coverings were required for women who also were made to sit separately from their male colleagues … There also have been unconfirmed reports from a woman who works at the Ministry of Education in Damascus that all women are being required to wear hijabs, while a female employee at the Homs Oil Refinery reported the creation of separate entrances for men and women.'[72]

10.3.10 The same source also stated: '[A] woman studying university-level physics in Homs…said that, following HTS's rise to power, her professors had stopped answering questions in class from her and other women students … In addition, it was reported that praying is now required at the university.'[73]

10.3.11 In July 2025, the House of Commons Library published a report entitled 'Syria after Assad: Consequences and interim authorities 2025' which stated, citing various news articles:

'… [O]fficials have been told not to interfere with women's dress or appearance. Al-Sharaa has faced criticism from some within HTS and other Islamist and Jihadist groups for allowing his wife to visit Turkey when he visited and for not wearing the niqab (full face cover). In June, guidance was issued by the Tourism ministry stating women must wear burkinis (a swimsuit that covers the body except for the face, hands and feet) or other "decent" clothes at public beaches and swimming pools. Men must also wear a shirt when they are not swimming (under Assad, the state did not enforce a dress code on beaches).'[74]

Back to Contents

10.4 Treatment by police and security forces

10.4.1 The June 2025 HRF report stated:

'The women interviewed by HRF who had recently arrived from Homs discussed other disturbing treatment. One had been studying university-level physics in Homs, but quit several months earlier because she was being harassed at checkpoints and on the city bus she took to school for being Alawite … Also, there were threats at the university gates from STG [Syrian Transitional Government] police who said they would take female Alawite students to Idlib, the former stronghold of HTS.'[75]

10.4.2 In June 2025, ETANA published a report entitled 'Refugee Returns and Migration Dynamics after Assad', based on 'surveys with over 200 returnees, refugees and IDPs and in situ residents in and around Syria between February and April 2025'[76]. It stated: '[An] Alawi participant, a 31-45-year-old teacher from rural Latakia…described checkpoints as sites of discrimination

[71] France 24, Between freedom and restrictions, Syrians…, 4 May 2025
[72] HRF, We plant the trees, they cut them down: Challenges… (page 20), 30 June 2025
[73] HRF, We plant the trees, they cut them down: Challenges… (page 18), 30 June 2025
[74] House of Commons Library, Syria after Assad: … (page 65), 23 July 2025
[75] HRF, We plant the trees, they cut them down: Challenges… (page 18), 30 June 2025
[76] ETANA, STUDY: Refugee Returns & Migration… (page 1), June 2025

and fear…she explained the many layers of discrimination at work: as an Alawi suspected of having pro-regime sympathies or affiliations and as a woman who, because of misogynistic, patriarchal and religious policies from interim authorities, felt she had "no value, except in the context of my own home".'[77]

10.4.3 In August 2025, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders (SRHRD) published a letter to the Syrian government expressing concern about the alleged mistreatment of a women's rights defender by the authorities in Idlib ('the August 2025 UN SRHRD letter'). The Special Rapporteur originally sent the letter on 26 May 2025, leaving a 60-day period for the Syrian government to reply before making the letter public. At the time of publishing this CPIN, no reply had been issued. Summarising the allegations against the Idlib authorities, the letter stated:

'On 23 April 2025, the governor of Idlib filed a complaint against Ms. Al-Hajji and asked the public prosecutor to file a lawsuit against her for insulting the Islamic veil and for spreading false information about the presence of a slave market in Idlib.

'On 24 April 2025, the Idlib police shut down Equity and Empowerment's [Ms. Al-Hajji's NGO] office in Kafr Yahmoul without official explanation, its only centre in the region. The office remained closed by the time of writing this communication, and the Idlib authorities have verbally informed the organisation that it was not allowed to operate any longer.

'On 13 May 2025, two police officers visited her family home in Idlib demanding her presence to face charges against her by the governor of Idlib. They were told that she was in Türkiye. The police did not present an official document. Ms. Al-Hajji is currently wanted on charges of spreading false information about the presence of female slaves and a slave market in Idlib, and of insulting the full-face covering worn by women. She risks arrest and detention should she return to attend her hearing in court, a date for which has not been set so far.'[78]

For information on the targeting of Ms. Al-Hajji by non-state actors, see Harassment of women by non-state actors.

10.4.4 CPIT was unable to find further information about the police and security forces' treatment of women in the sources consulted (see Bibliography).

Back to Contents

11. DAANES's attitude towards women's rights

11.1 Gender equality ideology and women's institutions

11.1.1 Despite its age, the November 2019 RIC report is cited here and in several other sections of this CPIN. The cited information gives an overview of DAANES ideology, institutions and governance systems relevant to women. It should not be assumed that the systems and institutions described in the report are fully in place at the time of publication of this CPIN (December 2025). The report stated:

'The Kurdish liberation movement which played a key role in the formation of

[77] ETANA, STUDY: Refugee Returns & Migration… (page 36), June 2025
[78] UN SRHRD, Syria: targeting and online defamation…, 19 August 2025

the current political system of North and East Syria has long sough [sic] to set itself apart from most other mass-scale left-wing projects by positioning gender equality not just as an "add on" to its political principles but at the core of its values and ideology. Even before the beginning of the revolution, organizing women and shifting the balance of power between genders has been a major priority. The women's movement in North and East Syria has drawn on the experience of decades of women's liberation organizing across Kurdistan. A guiding principle of the movement is that "no society can be free until the women are free." This belief appears to be accepted and implemented - to varying degrees - across the political structures of North and East Syria.

'One of the foundations of the women's movement in North and East Syria is the principle of autonomous women's structures. This means that every institution of the political and social system in North and East Syria – from communes and workplaces up to unions, regional assemblies and North and East Syria as a whole – has a women's structure parallel to the general structure. The idea behind this system is to create a space in which women's issues are developed and prioritized, so that they do not get marginalized, as has happened in many other social movements.

'… The amount of energy allocated to resolving the "woman question" is exhibited through the sheer number of institutions, assemblies and initiatives that comprise the women's movement in North and East Syria. The distinctions between many of these bodies is not easily discernible, and on the surface the system can seem complex and difficult to navigate. However, as most women engage with the women's movement initially through their local organizations, the organizational structures do not present a discernible barrier to participation. It is possible that as the system matures some of the overlapping functions will be smoothed over.

'… Within the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, women organize autonomously from the local to the highest level. There are women-only discussions and meetings which are seen as an embedded part of the wider political system. Within each commune, district, canton and region council there is a corresponding women's council, and each body has a male and a female co-chair. In addition to the system of administration, there are various institutions, organizations and initiatives which have been created to build women's quality of life, leadership in society and political and economic power. Women from different ethnic and religious groups also organize autonomously through those groups, such as Syriac-Assyrian women organizing through the Syriac Women's Council. The Autonomous Administration has a Women's Office which coordinates and supports this work.'[79]

Back to Contents

11.2 Women in positions of power in the DAANES

11.2.1 The November 2019 RIC report stated:

'The political system across all its branches and levels works on the basis of a "co-chair" system in which leadership positions in most institutions (outside of the autonomous women's structures) are shared by one man and one

[79] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (pages 40, 43, 48), 19 December 2019

woman. There is also a strong principle of "equal participation," enforced by a 40% quota set out in the Social Contract, which manifests in a strong women's presence in most – though not all – political and civil spheres. It is important to remember that women's participation in mixed gender institutions exists in addition to extensive women's participation in the all-women's structures which exist alongside the mixed structures. Therefore, even if women's participation in a mixed gender council or committee is at the minimum 40% quota, there is almost always a corresponding autonomous women's structure in which higher numbers of women are participating.

'The co-chair system, autonomous women's structures and the principle of equal participation represents a very tangible transfer of power to women, and indicates a commitment to ensuring that women's voices are placed at the center of political processes. Many interviewees ['people involved in political organizing' in the DAANES'[80]] – of both genders – refer to women as the natural leaders of a new political system, and see autonomous spaces as necessary in order for women to develop their own leadership, analysis and vision.'[81]

11.2.2 See pages 44 – 48 of the November 2019 RIC report for further information on women's governmental and civil society institutions in DAANES-controlled areas, including the Women's Congress (known as 'Kongra Star'), The Women's Office of the Syrian Democratic Council, the Syrian Women's Council, and the Women's Assembly of North and East Syria.

11.2.3 The same source included a section entitled 'Women in defense forces' which stated: 'The social transformation of North and East Syria in recent years has notably seen a high rate of participation of women in various military and defense forces.' [82] For further details see pages 50 – 51 of the report, as well as the CPIN Syria: Kurds and Kurdish areas.

Back to Contents

12. Gender-based violence (GBV) and harassment

12.1 Note on limitations

12.1.1 There are significant limitations for sources reporting on GBV in Syria. There are various reasons for this, including the fact that social stigma around GBV prevents open discussion and reporting (see Obstacles to reporting GBV). A UNFPA report from 2019 noted that, globally, GBV is underreported and not openly discussed, even in liberal societies during peacetime[83]. Syria is a conservative society severely impacted by conflict, making this limitation even more relevant. This and other limitations should be taken into account when using the information in this section.

Back to Contents

12.2 Prevalence and types of GBV

12.2.1 CPIT was unable to find statistics showing the frequency and scale of GBV incidents in the sources consulted (see Bibliography). The sources cited

[80] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (page 8), 19 December 2019
[81] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (page 40), 19 December 2019
[82] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (Page 51), 19 December 2019
[83] UNFPA, Whole of Syria Gender-Based Violence Area… (page 14), 5 May 2019

below generally state that GBV is common and widespread, with some also saying that the prevalence of GBV has increased. However, none of the sources provided statistics or other numerical data indicating the scale and extent of the problem. It should also be noted that GBV encompasses a wide range of actions harming women and girls, including physical, sexual, and psychological harm[84].

12.2.2 In January 2024, the UNFPA published a report on GBV in Syria ('the January 2024 UNFPA report') which stated:

'The consequences of GBV in Syria continue to be severe and life-threatening, profoundly impacting the health, psychological well-being, and socio-economic status of women and girls. Alarmingly high rates of suicide among women and girls are reported, often linked to child and forced marriage (CFM), intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic family violence (DFV), and the shame associated with sexual violence or reputational defamation. Additionally, some women and girls encounter further violence as retribution for seeking support, post-divorce actions, rejecting marriage proposals, or allegedly bringing "shame" to their families.

'This has led to an increase in so-called "honour" killings and femicides. Survivors of sexual violence face significant social stigma and isolation, particularly women who have been detained and are suspected of experiencing sexual violence. Health consequences of sexual violence include unintended pregnancies from marital or non-marital rape. Women and girls seeking divorce from abusive relationships often face barriers, such as being prevented by their ex-husband's families from seeing their children or obtaining custody. Furthermore, the social repercussions of speaking out and asserting rights, like claiming inheritance, can lead to isolation, denigration, or even femicide.'[85]

12.2.3 In July 2024, the UNFPA published another report on GBV in Syria ('the July 2024 UNFPA report') which stated:

'Most women and girls in Syria experience compounded forms of violence and discrimination, while they face high barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance and specialised GBV services.

'GBV is systematically normalised and accepted through patriarchal gender norms, traditions, and institutions that maintain gender inequality, increasing barriers for women and girls to disclose violence and seek support. Risks of GBV are multiplied for women and girls living with intersecting vulnerabilities such as age, marital status, disability, and displacement status - and especially for them - disclosing GBV and seeking support may represent a risk and a further reason to be isolated and stigmatised.

'… [S]ome groups of women and girls experience heightened risks of injustice and abuse due to intersectional vulnerabilities. Some of the most affected groups are adolescent girls; women and girls with disabilities; IDP women and girls; divorced, widowed, single women and girls; older women; LGBTIQ+.'[86]

The report did not explain the basis for its statement that 'most women and

[84] USA for UNFPA, What does GBV (gender-based violence) mean?..., undated
[85] UNFPA, An Overview of Gender-Based Violence in Syria (2024) (page 7), 24 January 2024
[86] UNFPA, Whole of Syria: Gender-Based Violence… (page 4), 22 July 2024

girls in Syria experience compounded forms of violence and discrimination'. It did not provide statistical data on the prevalence of GBV, and the above statement should not be interpreted as indicating that a majority (over 50%) of women and girls in Syria are directly subjected to GBV.

12.2.4 In January 2025, the UNFPA published another report on Syria, covering the period October – December 2024, which stated:

'[G]ender-based violence (GBV) is pervasive, compounded by the scarcity of support systems like psychosocial services, safe shelters, and legal protection. Evidence from assessments and focus group discussions reveals that violence and gender inequality permeate daily life, disproportionately impacting women and girls. Discriminatory attitudes rooted in age, displacement, disability, and marital status amplify these risks, fostering an environment where women and girls are devalued, controlled, and exploited. This systemic violence leaves survivors vulnerable and often subject to blame for the harm they endure.'[87]

12.2.5 The January 2025 report produced by DRC, Oxfam and INTERSOS stated:

'GBV and gender inequality are widely prevalent, with harmful social norms and inadequate laws perpetuating each other.

'… [O]vercrowded, shared housing and energy blackouts within homes and in public spaces have increased risk of sexual harassment and assault. During dark hours, due to insufficient street lighting, the risk of sexual harassment increases for boys, girls, and women commuting between their homes and critical facilities like bakeries, schools, healthcare centres and pharmacies. In some communities where the water infrastructure is decimated, women are compelled to undertake arduous journeys to fetch water, increasing their exposure to sexual harassment.' [88]

12.2.6 The March 2025 EUAA report stated:

'Gender-based violence (GBV) continued to pose a threat to women and girls in Syria. The risk of exposure to violence for women had increased, particularly in areas experiencing a deterioration in the security situation.

'Intimate partner violence, domestic violence, economic and emotional violence as well as sexual violence, including rape and sexual harassment, remained widespread concerns. The analysis [in the July 2025 UNOCHA report] further noted risks of sexual exploitation, including via online platforms, linked to Syria's deteriorating economic conditions and the use of social media. Social stigma and a lack of accessible protections services were identified as key barriers contributing to the persistent underreporting by the June 2025 UN Security Council monthly forecast.'[89]

12.2.7 The April 2025 GPC report stated: 'Gender-based violence (GBV) remains pervasive, with domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and shifting socio-cultural norms increasingly restricting women's safety, independence and opportunities. This is particularly the case for female-headed households such as widows or those who are divorced.'[90]

[87] UNFPA, Regional Quarterly Report on the Syria Crisis / Q4 2024 (page 3), 26 January 2025
[88] DRC, Oxfam and Intersos, The Missing Link: The Centrality… (pages 11 – 12), 29 January 2025
[89] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (pages 61 – 62), 7 July 2025
[90] GPC, Protection Landscape in Syria – A… (page 2), 3 April 2025

For further information on those groups, see Female heads of household, widows, divorced women, and lone women.

12.2.8 In May 2025, the UNHCR and the North-West Syria Protection Cluster (part of the Global Protection Cluster – see paragraph 9.1.7) published a report entitled 'Minorities Protection Barriers Assessment' ('the May 2025 UNHCR report'), which was based on interviews with 355 households in Aleppo and Idlib governorates[91]. The interviewees all identified as belonging to minority groups, whether that be for cultural, intellectual, ethnic, linguistic, or religious reasons, or a combination of those reasons[92]. 51% of interviewees were female and the remaining 49% were male[93]. The report stated:

'… 82% of the respondents indicated that women and girls from minority groups face various forms of gender-based violence, including sexual abuse, harassment, and domestic violence.

'… 52% of respondents believe that women and children from minority groups do not feel safe, particularly in relation to violence, abuse, and gender-based violence, while 48% believe they do feel safe.

'35% of respondents reported having personally encountered cases of minority women being subjected to violence and abuse, including gender-based and sexual exploitation.

'Among those who witnessed such cases, only 41% said that the victims received help, whereas a concerning 59% stated they did not.

'… 61% of respondents stated that minorities do not know how to report incidents of violence and abuse, including gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), while only 39% said they do.'[94]

12.2.9 The May 2025 ICG report stated: 'The security situation creates particular challenges for women, whose mobility is often restricted, and who are subject to rising incidents of arbitrary detention and harassment. In the absence of an effective government response, families often resort to social media to plead for the return of missing daughters. Yet these public appeals can expose both the women and their relatives to further harassment.'[95]

12.2.10 The July 2025 EUAA report stated:

'According to a report by ACAPS drawing on data collected between November 2024 and March 2025, technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) was a widespread and rapidly escalating concern across Northwest Syria (NWS). TFGBV includes behaviours such as stalking, sexual harassment and exploitation which are carried out using computer and mobile technology. Motivations behind TFGBV included financial and sexual exploitation, revenge, coercion, defamation or reputational harm, or simply to threaten, cause harm to, or harass the targeted individual. TFGBV frequently escalated from digital threats to offline consequences, including physical and sexual violence, so called "honour killings", and forced

[91] UNHCR and NWS Protection Cluster, Minorities Protection… (Page 3), 22 May 2025
[92] UNHCR and NWS Protection Cluster, Minorities Protection… (Page 18), 22 May 2025
[93] UNHCR and NWS Protection Cluster, Minorities Protection… (Page 18), 22 May 2025
[94] UNHCR and NWS Protection Cluster, Minorities Protection… (Pages 15, 8, 9), 22 May 2025
[95] ICG, A Helping Hand for Post-Assad Syria (page 3), 22 May 2025

marriage.'[96]

12.2.11 Commenting on the ACAPS report, the October 2025 UNFPA report noted that 'the different kinds of TFGBV identified in a study in former North-West Syria areas…align with the primary data collected for this report, indicating that these forms of violence are common for women and girls across Syria'[97]. For further information on TFGBV, see pages 29, 30, 31 and 35 of the October 2025 UNFPA report.

12.2.12 The July 2025 UNOCHA report estimated that, in 2025, 7.9 million women and girls are in need of GBV prevention and response services[98]. The report did not explain the methodology used to calculate this figure.

12.2.13 The same source stated:

'• Approximately 93 per cent of the approximately 8.5 million people requiring GBV assistance are women and girls. Intimate partner violence, domestic violence, economic and emotional violence as well as sexual violence, including rape and sexual harassment, continue to be of concern. Women and girls also report that sexual exploitation remains a worrying trend, including online, because of the poor economic situation and the use of social media.

'• The changes in the political environment and the continuous security instability in certain areas of the country have disproportionately impacted women and girls and have increased their risk of being exposed to GBV. This is compounded by the economic crisis, forced and voluntary returns, limited access to essential goods, basic services, and opportunities, multiple displacements, overcrowding and poor living conditions in camps and temporary shelters, including displacement and return settings.'[99]

12.2.14 In September 2025, the UNFPA published a report entitled 'Women and Girls Safe Spaces: Sustainability and Effectiveness Assessment Report' ('the September 2025 UNFPA report'), based on interviews and focus group discussions[100]. It indicated that '[w]omen and girls acknowledge the high prevalence of GBV within the community'[101].

12.2.15 The October 2025 UNFPA report mentioned various types of GBV. It should be noted that the report was based primarily on the perceptions of individuals involved in focus group discussions, roughly 80% of whom were IDPs (see paragraph 8.1.5). While it can be used as a general indicator of the types of GBV and the factors enabling and increasing GBV risks, it should not be considered a reliable indicator of the prevalence of GBV. For example, where focus group participants stated that GBV has increased, this reflects the perception of those individuals and is not grounded in statistical evidence. Similarly, where the report states that GBV is extremely common, it does not define 'extremely' or 'common'. The report stated:

''[Syrian women and girls] … share that GBV continues to increase across the country, even in the context of increased hope and optimism among

[96] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (page 61), 7 July 2025
[97] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 29), 14 October 2025
[98] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian… (page 24), 24 July 2025
[99] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian… (page 24), 24 July 2025
[100] UNFPA, Women and Girls Safe Spaces: Sustainability… (page 15) , 28 September 2025
[101] UNFPA, Women and Girls Safe Spaces: Sustainability… (page 19) , 28 September 2025

many since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024.

'… Participants reported a noticeable increase in multiple forms of GBV across this period, including physical, emotional, psychological and economic violence …

'… Physical violence, particularly IPV [intimate partner violence] and abuse by male family members, was described by many as becoming more severe. Psychological violence – such as threats, intimidation and verbal abuse – was also reported to be on the rise, especially within the household … Domestic, family and IPV are deeply entrenched and normalized in Syria. This violence is not new, but is reported by women and girls to have intensified in recent years due to economic hardship, displacement and the breakdown of traditional family support systems.

'… IPV is extremely common and persistent, affecting many married women and girls on a daily basis … Reports included physical violence, emotional and verbal abuse, reproductive coercion, and restrictions on movement and access to services.

'… TFGBV [technology-facilitated gender-based violence] is emphasized as an increasingly pervasive and harmful form of violence, especially as access to technology and digital spaces and platforms continues to rise.

'… Changes in risks of violence – especially sexual exploitation and IPV – were particularly linked by respondents to deteriorating economic conditions, insecurity and displacement.

'… Several participants linked increases in GBV to the recent political changes in Syria, and described deteriorating safety and increased violence following the fall of the Assad government … These changes were associated with greater instability, weakened protection systems and shifting power dynamics within communities, which have contributed to heightened risks for women and girls. Participants described a rise in fear, uncertainty and exposure to violence during this period. Some linked these concerns to the influx of new or returning populations …

'… On a positive note, some women and girls noted improvements in their lives due to the impact of GBV awareness-raising efforts in their communities …'[102]

12.2.16 The same source indicated that GBV committed by male family members – most commonly husbands and fathers – is widespread and culturally normalised. This includes physical violence such as beating, sexual violence such as marital rape (which is often not acknowledged), emotional and verbal abuse, and economic violence (restricting access to resources and financial decisions). Women with disabilities may face increased risks of both physical and psychological GBV[103].

12.2.17 According to the source, GBV is often part of a broader social and cultural environment where women depend on male family members and other men in positions of authority for their survival. Men exploit this power to perpetrate GBV and exercise control over women. As well as male family members, perpetrators of psychological and emotional GBV include men in positions of

[102] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (pages 21 – 27), 14 October 2025
[103] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (pages 21 – 27), 14 October 2025

authority at schools, workplaces and community spaces[104].

For further information on male authority and its impact on women see Societal and cultural norms and attitudes and Employment and income.

Back to Contents

12.3 Kidnappings of Alawite and Druze women and girls

12.3.1 In July 2025, Amnesty International (AI) published an article entitled 'Syria: Authorities must investigate abductions of Alawite women and girls' ('the July 2025 AI article') which stated:

'Since February 2025, Amnesty International has received credible reports of at least 36 Alawite women and girls, aged between three and 40, abducted and kidnapped across Latakia, Tartous, Homs, and Hama governorates by unidentified individuals. From these cases, Amnesty International documented the abduction and kidnapping in broad daylight of five Alawite women and three Alawite girls below the age of 18.

'… In one case, the abductor sent a family a picture of their relative, who appeared physically beaten. In two cases, the abductor or an intermediary demanded ransom from the families ranging from $10,000 to $14,000 (USD) [7,593 to 10,630 GBP105]. Only one of these families was able to pay, but the woman was not released by the captor. In at least three cases, the abducted person, including in one case, a minor, was likely subjected to forced marriage by the captor.

'Many interviewees said that women and girls, primarily from the Alawite community, but also others living in the affected governorates, are now afraid or extremely cautious when leaving their homes to attend school, university, or work.

'An activist who recently visited Syria's coastal region said: "All women are on full alert. We can't take a taxi alone, walk alone, or do anything without feeling afraid. Even though I'm not Alawite, and my family was initially skeptical about the abductions, they still asked me not to go anywhere alone and to be extra cautious."

'… The organization also received reports of 28 additional abductions and kidnappings from two activists, two journalists, and the Syrian Feminist Lobby, an independent human rights organization. Of these, 14 women and girls have been released. The fate and whereabouts of the rest remain unknown.

'The organization cross-checked these cases with other sources, including phone conversations, voice messages and screenshots of text conversations between abductors or women and girls and families; video testimonies posted online by family members, which included direct pleas from families to the public for assistance or for the authorities to act, and demands or threats sent by abductors to families.

'… While some families still do not know what happened to their missing loved ones, two abducted women, who were married when abducted, contacted their family to request a divorce from their husbands, informing

[104] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (pages 21 – 27), 14 October 2025
[105] Xe, 1 USD to GBP – Convert US Dollars to British Pounds, accessed 17 November 2025

them that they would be or already had been newly married to their abductor, indicating that they had been subjected to forced marriage or coerced to ask for divorce.'[106]

12.3.2 In July 2025, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a press release entitled 'Syria: UN experts alarmed by targeted abductions and disappearances of Alawite women and girls' ('the July 2025 OHCHR press release') which stated:

'UN experts today expressed grave concern over alarming reports of targeted abductions, disappearances, and gender-based violence against women and girls, particularly from the Alawite community in the different regions of the Syrian Arab Republic since February 2025.

'They expressed serious concern at the reported abduction of 38 Alawite women and girls belonging to the Alawite minority across various governorates, including Latakia, Tartous, Hama, Homs, Damascus, and Aleppo from March 2025 until present. The victims, aged between 3 and 40 years old, were reportedly abducted in broad daylight while travelling to school, visiting relatives, or in their homes. In several cases, families received threats and were discouraged from pursuing investigations or speaking out publicly.

'"The pattern of violations described – involving gender-based violence, threats, forced marriage of minors, and a glaring lack of effective response by Syrian interim Government – suggests a targeted campaign against Alawite women and girls based on intersecting grounds," the experts said.

'The experts stressed the disturbing accounts of some victims being drugeed and physically assaulted during captivity. Although the lack of survivor-sensitive and safe reporting mechanisms makes it difficult to verify incidents of sexual violence, the experts stressed that such abuse could not be ruled out. Reports of forced child marriage were particularly alarming.

'… "These cases reflect a broader pattern of violence against different groups of women and girls in Syria, exacerbated by insecurity, social fragmentation, and the erosion of rule-of-law institutions," the experts said.

'Several cases reportedly involved security actors or individuals affiliated with the institutions of the interim Government of Syria.'[107]

12.3.3 For information on how the authorities responded, see Police response to GBV incidents, and for information on the treatment of Alawites since the fall of the Al-Assad regime, see the CPIN Syria: Alawites and Actual or Perceived Assadists.

12.3.4 In August 2025, the UN OHCHR published a press release entitled 'Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls' which stated:

'UN experts* today sounded the alarm over a wave of armed attacks on Syrian Druze communities in and around Sweida Governorate since 13 July 2025, with reports of killings, enforced disappearances, abductions, looting, destruction of property, and sexual and gender-based violence against

[106] Amnesty International, Syria: Authorities must investigate abductions of…, 28 July 2025
[107] OHCHR, Syria: UN experts alarmed by targeted abductions…, 23 July 2025

women and girls.

'"We are gravely concerned by reported attacks targeting the Druze minority for their faith and other grounds, including the forced shaving of religious men's moustaches and hateful rhetoric on social media portraying Druze as traitors and infidels to be killed, and calling for the abduction and enslavement of Druze women," the experts said.

'The experts noted that intense sectarian clashes triggered by looting and retaliations between Bedouin and Druze communities escalated into widespread violence involving local militias, Syrian interim authorities' forces and affiliated armed groups. Attacks on the Ta'ara, Al Doura and Al Douweira villages reportedly involved heavy artillery, machine guns, and looting, killing 1,000 people, including at least 539 identified Druze civilians – among them 39 women and 21 children. At least 196 people, including eight children and 30 women, were reportedly extrajudicially executed and over 33 villages burned.

'… The experts pointed to the reported abduction of at least 105 Druze women and girls by armed groups affiliated with the Syrian interim authorities, with 80 still missing. Some women who were released cannot return home due to safety fears. In at least three cases, Druze women were allegedly raped before being executed. Seven hundred and sixty-three persons, including women, remain missing.

'"These reported violations expose an apparent systemic failure to protect minorities and address gender-based violence, with no thorough, independent and impartial investigations into extrajudicial killings, torture or abductions," the experts said. "Reports that the interim authorities' forces aided attacks have entrenched impunity and fear, silencing victims' families and obstructing efforts to locate the disappeared."'[108]

12.3.5 These cases of GBV were part of a wider episode of violence against the Druze in July 2025. For further information on this, see pages 34 – 36 of the EUAA's October 2025 report on Syria.

Back to Contents

12.4 Risk of GBV in IDP camps

12.4.1 The January 2024 UNFPA report stated:

'[T]he risks of IPV and DFV increase when extended families share living space, such as in collective shelters and camps.

'… The risks [of sexual violence] are particularly acute in collective shelters and camps, where inadequate lighting, lack of preventive measures, and overcrowding exacerbate the situation.

'… Elevated incidents of sexual violence have been linked to WASH [water, sanitation and hygiene] facilities, including toilets, bathing sites, and water points. Women and girls, particularly in collective shelters, camps, and schools, have faced sexual harassment, assault, and rape en route to and within these facilities. The fear of sexual violence restricts their access to latrines at night, often necessitating accompaniment during the day. Factors like distance from these facilities, absence of lighting, and lack of locks have

[108] OHCHR, Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze…, 21 August 2025

been cited as contributors to the increased GBV risks. Additionally, women and girls are at risk of sexual violence while traveling to and at water points, including during the distribution of water and hygiene materials.

'… Women and girls, particularly those residing in camps, described the lack of appropriate shelter as increasing their sense of insecurity. Tents contributed to the lack of privacy and security of women and girls and increased their risks of sexual violence. Living in camp settings heightened risks of sexual violence due to the lack of proximity to WASH facilities and other service points, overcrowded conditions, and lack of adequate lighting and infrastructure.'[109]

Back to Contents

12.5 'Honour' crimes and violence committed by family members

12.5.1 The February 2023 EUAA report stated:

'In Syria's patriarchal culture, the honour of a family is closely connected to the honour of women and girls in the family. This concept of honour is based on notions of female virginity before marriage and sexual fidelity while in wedlock. Rape and/or other forms of sexual abuse targeting women and girls is seen as bringing shame to the family and to the wider community. Therefore, survivors of sexual violence may face repercussions as described [in another section of the EUAA report]. In addition, girls may be forced to marry the perpetrator or another man in an arrangement to cover up the "dishonour".

'… There is also a widespread assumption that women detainees have experienced sexual violence, which can be perceived by the family and the community as a stain on the victim's dignity and honour. This stigma can reportedly lead to social isolation, rejection from employment, divorce, disownment by the family and even "honour" killing.

'Generally speaking, most cases of "honour" killings are connected to sexual violence (but not necessarily rape) and are committed by family members of the victim. "Honour" killings can be a reaction to street harassment or assault, to assumed sexual violence during abduction and even to an autonomous decision made by a girl concerning whom and when to marry. So-called "honour" killings are also shared through social media to demonstrate the cleansing of the family's "shame" … According to sources, there were indications that "honour" killings increased after the outbreak of the crisis in 2011. However, the actual extent is not known, as there are no official statistics on "honour" being used as a justification in cases of murder and assault. Furthermore, the investigation of "honour" killings is often not a priority as it is considered a family matter and is reportedly rarely prosecuted.'[110]

12.5.2 In August 2023 the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a report on Syria ('the August 2023 Netherlands MFA report') which stated:

'Honour killings and other kinds of GBV were not recorded as such in Syria. Where men or women died in honour killings, this was not mentioned as the cause of death on the death certificate. Femicide was another label not used

[109] UNFPA, An Overview of Gender-Based Violence in Syria (2024) (pages 5, 10), 24 January 2024
[110] EUAA, Country Guidance: Syria (page 110), 7 February 2023

by the Syrian authorities to record killings of that kind. A study by Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) et al. revealed 185 gender-based killings in the period from the beginning of 2019 to November 2022, and that figure probably merely represented the tip of the iceberg. Many women or their relatives would not report GBV and/or honour killings for fear of reprisals, to avoid stigmatisation, or to protect the male perpetrators.

'STJ was only able to collect statistics in AANES [Autonomous Administration of North East Syria – see the CPIN Syria: Kurds and Kurdish areas for further details] territory; the numbers of gender-based killings in other areas emerged mainly from interviews. Of the killings counted, 129 had taken place in AANES territory, whereas 14, 21 and 21 cases had been counted in government, SSG [Syrian Salvation Government] and SIG [Syrian Interim Government] territory respectively. As the sources for the various areas were different, it was not possible to provide a picture of the ratios between the various areas of control as regards numbers of gender-based killings. It is not possible to interpret the degree of increase or decrease in GBV in Syria, given the lack of precise figures.

'… Honour disputes usually took place within a family and were resolved within the family. Before resorting to honour killing, a husband would sometimes divorce his wife and cast her out. If she returned to her family, they might still kill her so as not to lose face. Some women who had been detained were cast out by their family, as they might have been the victim of rape during detention. Some of these women, according to the OHCHR, might then commit suicide because they had "harmed the family's honour".

'It is not possible to provide a clear picture of when honour killing was practised and when some other way of defending a family's honour was found within the family.'[111]

12.5.3 In June 2025, human rights organisation[112] Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) published a report entitled 'Syria's Transitional Phase: "Honor" Killings Persist Amid Failing Protection and Legal Response' ('the June 2025 STJ report'). The report documented 'several crimes in which women were killed by their male relatives in various regions of Syria in recent months, following the fall of the Assad regime'[113]. For details of the crimes, see the full report.

12.5.4 The same source also mentioned honour crimes that took place in 2024 before the fall of Al-Assad: 'In As Suwayda, the women's rights organization, Baladi, has documented the killing of five women in 2024 by their relatives under the pretext of "honor" killing. These crimes were carried out using brutal methods, including strangulation, throat slitting, and shooting. According to a Baladi organization worker, W.A., none of these crimes faced serious accountability, and their perpetrators remained at large, even after the fall of the regime.'[114] According to the report, the authorities did not respond to any of the crimes. For further information on this topic, see Police response to GBV incidents.

12.5.5 In relation to an incident that took place in Suwayda in September 2024, the same source described a campaign of stigmatisation by the local community

[111] Netherlands MFA, General Country of Origin Information… (pages 48 – 49), 7 August 2023
[112] STJ, About STJ, undated
[113] STJ, Syria's Transitional Phase: "Honor" Killings Persist Amid… (page 3), 19 June 2025
[114] STJ, Syria's Transitional Phase: "Honor" Killings Persist Amid… (page 6), 19 June 2025

against a girl perceived to have transgressed 'honour' codes. The source quoted an employee of women's rights organisation Baladi as saying:

"Jalnar lived in a cruel family, where she was subjected to constant violence by her father. After connecting with a young man online, she went out to meet him in a public park. On her way back, she unexpectedly saw her father on the street and fled in fear of his wrath. She called the young man and sought refuge at his family's home, where she stayed for five days without her family's knowledge.

'… During that time, Jalnar became the target of a public incitement campaign from various segments of the local community. She was publicly stigmatized, and explicit calls were made to kill her and the young man. Despite this, the young man attempted to resolve the situation by going to her family's home to propose to her. However, her father shot and killed him under the pretense [sic] of 'cleansing the family's honor'.

"Several days later, Jalnar left the young man's family home, accompanied by his father, who handed her over to several religious figures and local dignitaries. After mediation, her father was asked to sign a written pledge promising not to harass her. However, once they returned home, he violated that pledge and killed her.'[115]

12.5.6 Using the sources consulted (see Bibliography), CPIT was unable to find further information on the prevalence of honour crimes, the areas of Syria where they are more/less common, and the tribal or ethnic groups that are most associated with them.

Back to Contents

12.6 Forced marriage and child marriage

12.6.1 The January 2024 UNFPA report stated: 'Widowed and divorced women and girls often have limited say in decision-making and are commonly married off to relatives or older men. They could face serious repercussions for refusing such marriages.'[116]

12.6.2 The March 2025 EUAA report stated: 'Conflict in Syria has led to increased cases of early and forced marriages, including as a coping mechanism.'[117]

12.6.3 The August 2025 WHO report stated:

'Even before the conflict in Syria, child marriage was common, with more than one in ten women aged 20 to 24 reporting they had married before age 18. But studies show the harmful practice has escalated among Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries as well as among those displaced in Syria.

'Forced marriages mainly affect divorced and widowed women and girls. Women and girls forced into second marriages are less likely to be able to leave violent relationships. They also suffer denial of basic rights such as custody of children and rights to inheritance.'[118]

12.6.4 The October 2025 UNFPA report stated:

[115] STJ, Syria's Transitional Phase: "Honor" Killings Persist Amid… (pages 6 – 7), 19 June 2025
[116] UNFPA, An Overview of Gender-Based Violence in Syria (2024) (page 5), 24 January 2024
[117] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (page 37), 25 March 2025
[118] WHO, Public Health Situation Analysis – Syrian Arab… (page 16), 15 August 2025

‘Many girls are forced to marry at an early age, have no say in choosing a husband and face great difficulty in adapting to married life, often suffering from isolation and deprivation as well as IPV in many forms…

‘… This common practice leads to increased risk of IPV, as well as lifelong physical and mental health consequences for girls.

‘Death or detainment of the father, or the perceived need to “protect” a girl’s honour, may drive child marriage.

‘… [T]here were mentions [by focus group participants] of increased early and forced marriage driven by financial hardship, …

‘… In other situations, economic hardship, combined with social norms that devalue girls, is the primary factor for “families who marry their daughters at a young age to get rid of living burdens”. In many such cases, the young girl “cannot bear responsibility for the house, family and children and returns to her parents’ home divorced. The girl feels helpless as if she is a burden on her family and goes out to work under harsh conditions” (Woman from Jisr-Ash-Shugur, Idleb Governorate).’[119]

The source did not define ‘many’ or ‘common’ and should not be used as a an indicator of the general prevalence of forced marriage. For further information on the source's methodology and limitations, see paragraphs 8.1.4, 8.1.5 and 12.2.15)

12.6.5 For further information on widowed and divorced women, see Female heads of household, widows, divorced women, and lone women.

Back to Contents

12.7 Harassment of women by non-state actors

12.7.1 Two sources, one from January and the other from March 2025, described examples of strangers telling women in Idlib and Aleppo to cover their hair and follow Sharia dress codes, sometimes aggressively[120][121].

12.7.2 In March 2025, American global affairs publication New Lines Magazine featured an article by a UK-based Syrian journalist documenting her first visit to her hometown in over a decade. She wrote:

‘[O]ne thing on the streets [of Damascus] has changed dramatically: the absence of sexual harassment. This change felt alien to me. Throughout my life in Syria, sexual harassment, both verbal and physical, had been ever-present: Whenever and wherever women and girls were in public, harassment was there alongside them. Women shared plenty of darkly hilarious stories during their gatherings, while drinking tea and eating sunflower seeds.

‘Now it is markedly different. I asked all the women I met, and they confirmed that street harassment has been dramatically reduced since the fall of the regime. They attributed this to videos of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) fighters pulling the mustache of a sexual harasser publicly and forcing another to walk around humiliated, chanting “I have sexually harassed a girl” – videos which were shared widely back in December [2024]. “I am against the

[119] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (pages 21, 28), 14 October 2025
[120] New Lines Magazine, Islamism Is Still Thriving in Idlib, 12 March 2025
[121] Syria Direct, Protection or Intervention? Focus on…, 29 January 2025

violations committed against the men, but frankly, it worked!" Nada, a recently graduated journalist, told me.'[122]

12.7.3 The August 2025 UN SRHRD letter stated:

'Ms. Hiba Ezzideen Al-Hajji is a human rights defender and the chief executive officer of Equity and Empowerment, a Türkiye-based non-governmental organization that supports women's rights and democracy in Syria, including in the north-western Syrian governorate of Idlib. Together with Syria-based colleagues, Ms. Al-Hajji promotes gender equality, political empowerment and digital security.

'… On 19 April 2025, a recording by an unknown source was circulated on social media with Ms. Al-Hajji's voice in which she appears to criticise the full face covering that some women in Idlib wore. Her alleged comments triggered a wave of defamatory statements against her, her family and the organisation she runs, Equity and Empowerment. At around the same time, Ms. Al-Hajji urged the Syrian government and the Ministry of Interior to investigate alleged cases of abduction of young women.

'On 20 April 2025, Ms. Al-Hajji posted an explanatory video on her Facebook page in which she described the recording as being taken out of context, that these were indeed her statements but that they dated to four years prior. Ms. Al-Hajji said that at the time she had asked fully veiled women to uncover their face during all-women training courses for security reasons.

'On 22 April 2025, the defamatory campaign against her intensified, some accusing her of being an agent of the previous regime and of spreading false information about a slave market in Idlib – in apparent relation to her statements regarding the abduction of women. She has since received death threats on her Facebook page and on that of Equity and Empowerment and in direct messages to her. Members of her family in Idlib also were threatened physically and online. Sent by unknown users, these messages urged followers to post defamatory content against her and to take violent action and burn down the office of Equity and Empowerment in Idlib.'[123]

12.7.4 The October 2025 UNFPA report stated: 'Participants [in focus group discussions] highlighted that girls are increasingly experiencing harassment in public spaces, such as streets and schools, including verbal harassment and threats.' [124] The source did not say how many of the 424 focus group participants shared this perception, nor did it give a time period for this increase in harassment. The source is a qualitative study and is not intended to provide numerical data. For further information on the methodology and limitations of this source, see paragraphs 8.1.4, 8.1.5 and 12.2.15.

Back to Contents

13. Protection from gender-based violence

13.1 Laws protecting women from GBV

13.1.1 For information on laws relevant to GBV, see Penal code.

Back to Contents

[122] New Lines Magazine, Islamism Is Still Thriving in Idlib, 12 March 2025
[123] UN SRHRD, Syria: targeting and online defamation…, 19 August 2025
[124] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 21), 14 October 2025

13.2 Obstacles to reporting GBV

13.2.1 The January 2024 UNFPA report stated:

'In Syria, most women and girls choose to remain silent about experiences of GBV due to the stigma attached to disclosure. The barriers to revealing instances of GBV are substantial, particularly due to fears of escalated violence from perpetrators and adverse reactions from families and communities, sometimes leading to so-called "honour" killings. These barriers are acutely pronounced in cases of IPV, DFV, and sexual violence. Key obstacles include fear of shame and further violence, survivor-blaming, normalisation of violence, lack of awareness, potential loss of child custody, and financial dependence. Moreover, significant hurdles exist for GBV survivors seeking legal recourse, with many women and girls citing the fear of losing their children as a reason for tolerating GBV.

'… Women and girls pursuing legal services face barriers such as social unacceptability, retaliation from perpetrators, mistrust of the legal system, mistreatment and dismissal by authorities, prolonged process times, and perpetrator impunity. In certain regions of Syria, women and girls are unable to access courts without a male escort, further hindering their pursuit of justice.'[125]

13.2.2 In December 2024, the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU), a Syrian NGO that 'aims to maximise the impact of the support provided to the Syrian people'[126], published a report entitled 'Post-Conflict Multisectoral Rapid Needs Assessment in Syria' ('the December 2024 ACU report'), based on interviews with 2,015 Key Informants (KIs) conducted between 19 and 24 December 2024 across all governorates. KIs included local councils, civil society groups, mukhtars (local governors), NGO staff, community leaders, health workers, school principals and others[127]. The report indicated that major barriers to accessing GBV services included fear of being identified (reported by 32% of KIs), lack of confidential treatment (reported by 24% of KIs), and insufficiently trained staff (reported by 22% of KIs)[128].

13.2.3 The June 2025 STJ report stated:

'… [Honour] crimes often occur in an environment of silence and complicity, highlighting significant weaknesses in prevention and accountability systems. They demonstrate how societal concepts such as "shame" and "reputation" can be manipulated to justify acts of violence and even murder, all without facing proper accountability.

'… As of the time of writing this report, the murder of women by their husbands or relatives continues to occur and spread across various regions of Syria. Unfortunately, there are no effective institutional responses in place to stop this pattern of violence.

'… In many instances, "honor" crimes do not begin with the violent act itself but rather with a series of prior violations that are kept secret. Victims often feel compelled to stay silent due to fear of stigma, societal pressure, and complicity from their families. Many women and girls endure sexual violence

[125] UNFPA, An Overview of Gender-Based Violence in Syria (2024) (pages 6, 8), 24 January 2024
[126] ACU, About us, no date
[127] ACU, Post-Conflict Multisectoral Rapid Needs… (page 8), 27 January 2025
[128] ACU, Post-Conflict Multisectoral Rapid Needs… (page 14), 27 January 2025

or threats but hesitate to report these incidents, fearing that doing so could lead to their own murder.

'In a testimony documented by STJ, Mrs. A.A. from al-Hasakah recounted her experience of an attempted rape by one of her husband's relatives. However, she did not feel safe filing an official complaint.

'… This testimony, among others, reveals how the pursuit of safety can devolve into a closed circle of fear; one where victims are compelled to remain silent not only to protect themselves but also to avoid an even harsher punishment: so-called "honor" killing. In such contexts, sexual assault is not viewed as a crime to be confronted, but rather as a source of shame directed at the victim, who is then left to face its consequences without protection or justice.'[129]

For further information on honour killings, see Honour crimes and violence committed by family members.

13.2.4 The August 2025 WHO report stated: 'As of June 2025, GBV incidents remain significantly underreported due to social stigma, fear of retaliation, and an indication of lack of trust in available services.'[130]

13.2.5 The October 2025 UNFPA report stated:

'Some women attempt to report violence to authorities…

'… However, many fear backlash, lack of action or further harm, and the lack of trust in legal mechanisms remains a barrier …

'… These accounts suggest that while some women seek justice, legal and procedural barriers, as well as community stigma, make it difficult to report violence effectively. GBV experts noted some signs of improved access to justice or protection, but these remain isolated and highly dependent on individual context. This reflects a highly localized and inconsistent environment for institutional support, with personal networks and context determining access …'[131]

Back to Contents

13.3 Police response to GBV incidents

13.3.1 The January 2025 report by DRC, Oxfam and INTERSOS stated:

'[D]isclosing GBV incidents can endanger women and girls, which discourages reporting ... Insufficient training of law enforcement officers creates additional barriers to effectively and safely responding to GBV cases, leading to inadequate support and hindering access to justice.

'… GBV survivors with limited financial resources are trapped in abusive relationships as they are unable to afford living expenses nor rent fees, and do not have access to safe houses, due to the limited resources within the national social protection system and the protection sector within the humanitarian response.'[132]

13.3.2 The July 2025 AI article stated:

[129] STJ, Syria's Transitional Phase: "Honor" Killings Persist Amid… (pages 3, 5), 19 June 2025
[130] WHO, Public Health Situation Analysis – Syrian Arab… (page 15), 15 August 2025
[131] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 41), 14 October 2025
[132] DRC, Oxfam and Intersos, The Missing Link: The Centrality… (page 12), 29 January 2025

‘In all but one of the [eight] documented cases, police and security officials failed to effectively investigate the women and girls’ fates and whereabouts [according to Amnesty International’s interviews with close relatives of the victims]. On 22 July [2025], the fact-finding committee established by President al-Sharaa to investigate killings on Syria’s coast stated that it had not received any reports of girls or women being abducted.

‘… In all eight cases documented by Amnesty International, families reported to police or security services that their female relatives had been abducted and kidnapped. In four cases, new evidence provided by families was dismissed or never acknowledged. Families consistently received no updates on the progress of the investigations. In two cases, police and security officers blamed the family of the woman or girl for the abduction.

‘… Only two of the eight victims have been able to return to their families. Amnesty International is unaware of any arrests being made, charges being brought or proceedings begun against people responsible for any of the eight abductions and kidnappings.

‘… In May, Amnesty International raised the abductions and kidnappings of Alawite women and girls during a meeting with the Minister of Interior in Damascus. The Minister said that he had ordered the relevant authorities to investigate. On 13 July, Amnesty International wrote to the Minister, sharing its preliminary findings and requesting information on measures the authorities had adopted to ensure the protection of women and girls, the status of investigations, and the steps taken so far to hold perpetrators to account. No response had been received at the time of publication.

‘… In a separate case, a minor was abducted for ransom. The family was later informed by General Security, Syria’s security forces, that the girl had been “married off”. Amnesty International independently verified the details of the case, confirming that the marriage took place without the consent of the girl’s parents and likely without judicial approval, making it illegal under Syrian law.

‘… In all eight cases, families formally reported the disappearance of their loved ones to the authorities, including local police and General Security, either in the area where the abduction and kidnapping occurred or in their place of residence. However, in all but one case, authorities failed to provide any updates to the family or information on the progress of the investigations.

‘For example, the relative of a woman abducted in February 2025 followed up with the security forces multiple times and even shared the phone number of the alleged abductor who had contacted them. Despite this, by July 2025, the family had received no information or update from the authorities.

‘In three cases, relatives told Amnesty International that police and security forces either blamed them for the abduction, such as by accusing them of negligence for allowing their relatives to run errands during the day, mocked them for failing to protect the woman or girl, or dismissed concrete leads and evidence that could help locate their relative, claiming it was unimportant or fake, despite its clear credibility.

‘A relative of a woman taken from her home recounted the family’s

desperate efforts to locate her: “The family went to General Security and filed an official report, but the treatment was awful… They blamed the family for not being able to stop the abduction… The family regretted going. For weeks the family returned [to General Security], but nothing changed. They just told them nothing had happened, and we have no idea who took her.”

‘Relatives who received ransom demands, including relatives of a minor, told Amnesty International that General Security was made aware of every phone call, number, and communication related to ransom demands. They even provided the names of the individuals to whom the payments were to be transferred, yet no action appeared to be taken by law enforcement.

‘In cases where the women and girls were released, family members often stopped communicating about their cases. They explained this was largely out of fear of retaliation from the perpetrators, who had not been arrested, and from the authorities, who had told families to keep quiet and ordered the survivors to deny the abductions had occurred.’[133]

13.3.3 Commenting on the government’s response to the kidnappings of Alawite women and girls, the July 2025 OHCHR press release stated: ‘“Syrian interim Government reportedly failed to conduct timely and impartial investigations in most cases, and in some instances, refused to register complaints or dismissed families’ concerns,” the [UN] experts said. “Such inaction not only deepens the trauma experienced by victims and their relatives but also fosters a climate of impunity,” they said.’[134]

13.3.4 An article on BBC-Monitoring, published in November 2025, stated:

‘- The Syrian interior ministry revealed on 2 November the findings of a probe into reported cases of kidnapping of young girls and women in Syria’s coastal region in recent months

‘- Syrian media highlighted that an investigation team had recorded 42 cases of disappearance, of which “only once case of kidnapping” had been found

‘- The Enab Baladi website recalled that UN experts had received reports of the “abduction of 38 Alawite women and girls” in various provinces between March and July

‘- The government’s fact-finding committee denied in July reports of kidnapping and disappearance of women and girls in the coastal region – which saw deadly sectarian violence in March

‘… According to the [Enab Baladi] report, the [government’s special investigation] team found the following:

‘- 12 incidents of young women “voluntarily running away from home with romantic partners”;

‘- Nine cases of “temporary or short absence” from home where the missing women were found to have stayed with relatives or friends for “no more than 48 hours”;

‘- Six cases of escape from domestic violence;

‘- Six cases of false claims of kidnapping cases on social media;

[133] Amnesty International, Syria: Authorities must investigate abductions of…, 28 July 2025
[134] OHCHR, Syria: UN experts alarmed by targeted abductions…, 23 July 2025

'- Four case of "involvement in prostitution or extortion";

'- Four cases of criminal cases that saw detentions by the relevant authorities – one of which was a "genuine kidnapping case" which involved the abducted girl being freed by security bodies while the perpetrators had yet to be identified.'[135]

13.3.5 Several sources criticised the government investigation for a variety of reasons[136] [137]. For example, they highlighted the discrepancy between the government's finding that there was only one 'genuine kidnapping case' and the dozens of cases reported by the UN and Amnesty International. One source accused the investigating committee of a lack of independence, pointing out that it was formed entirely of Ministry of Interior employees[138]. This source also commented that the government's investigation 'not only denies women's suffering but also turns them and their families into suspects'[139].

13.3.6 CPIT was unable to find further information about the government's response to reported incidents of GBV in the sources consulted (see Bibliography).

Back to Contents

13.4 DAANES authorities' response to GBV incidents

13.4.1 The November 2019 RIC report stated:

'The internal security forces of North and East Syria are organized into several branches, the most visible of which is the Asayish. "Asayisha Jin" is the women's division of the general Asayish Internal Security Forces, who are responsible for checkpoints between and within cities, search and arrest operations, and joining in military operations, particularly within cities. Women can approach the Asayisha Jin directly in cases such as domestic violence, which is particularly important because within the local culture, it is virtually inconceivable for women to report more intimate forms of violence and abuse to male security personnel.

'… HPC [Hêzên Parastina Civakî – Civil Defense Forces[140]] Jin, the women's division of HPC, is mostly made up of older mothers and grandmothers, but also some young women. They participate in all of the general HPC duties, and an effort is made that HPC Jin guard the buildings and meetings of women's councils and institutions. HPC Jin are considered to be better suited for intervention in domestic disputes in which a woman might be in a sensitive or vulnerable position.'[141]

13.4.2 An article published by RIC in August 2024 described an example of men being imprisoned for carrying out honour-based violence:

'Combating violence against women and all kinds of abuse is another essential part of the work of Zenobia ['the main organization advocating for women's rights in the Arab-majority regions of North and East Syria']. For

[135] BBC Monitoring, Briefing: Syria reveals findings… (available upon request), 2 November 2025
[136] Christian Solidarity International, Syrian government's denial of…, 12 November 2025
[137] Syrian Feminist Lobby, Joint Statement on the Report Issued by…, 3 November 2025
[138] Syrian Feminist Lobby, Joint Statement on the Report Issued by…, 3 November 2025
[139] Syrian Feminist Lobby, Joint Statement on the Report Issued by…, 3 November 2025
[140] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (Page 51), 19 December 2019
[141] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (Page 52), 19 December 2019

instance, they took on the case of honor-based violence in Tel Samen IDP camp (in the Raqqa region), a video of which went viral in February 2024. At least two sisters were accused of having extra-marital relations and were heavily beaten by their uncle and cousins. Buthina Abod [Zenobia spokesperson] states that: "Zenobia filed a complaint against the perpetrators of the attack, and they are now in prison. We also helped, treated and protected the women victims in a women's house [also known as Mala Jin]."'[142]

13.4.3 Commenting on the same incident, a separate source stated: 'Following the dissemination of the video, the Internal Security Forces of the Autonomous Administration, also known as the Asayish, apprehended two of the perpetrators, while the third remains at large, as stated in a released statement by the Asayish. It was further revealed that one of the perpetrators is the girl's uncle, and the others are her cousins. Fortunately, both girls survived, and they are currently under the protection of the Women's House of the Autonomous Administration.'[143]

Back to Contents

13.5 Shelters, safe spaces and support

13.5.1 CPIT was unable to find information about residential shelters, safe houses or refuges in government-controlled areas for women fleeing or fearing GBV in the sources consulted (see Bibliography). Several sources referred to women and girls' safe spaces (WGSS), but these generally do not provide overnight accommodation and are distinguished from residential shelters[144]. The GPC's 'Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies' defines WGSS as follows:

'A women's and girls' safe space (WGSS) is an intervention that GBV programme actors in humanitarian programming have employed for decades as an entry point for women and girls to report protection concerns, express their needs, receive services, engage in empowerment activities and connect with the community.

'A WGSS is "a structured place where women and girls' physical and emotional safety is respected and where women and girls are supported through processes of empowerment to seek, share, and obtain information, access services, express themselves, enhance psychosocial wellbeing, and more fully realize their rights".'[145]

13.5.2 The December 2024 CARE report on northeast Syria stated: 'Women and girls, particularly adolescent girls, are at heightened risk of GBV but have limited access to women's and girls' safe spaces and other GBV services.'[146]

13.5.3 A UNFPA report from June 2025 indicated that, between February and April 2025, the UNFPA provided support to 65 WGSS in Syria, but added that '[t]he termination of US funding will result in a gradual withdrawal of UNFPA's support for…24 women and girls' safe spaces'[147]. For a map

[142] RIC, Interview – Zenobia Women's Gathering, 28 August 2024
[143] Synergy Association for Victims, Northern Syria: Women as… (Page 3), 17 March 2024
[144] UNFPA, The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for… (page 64), 25 November 2019
[145] UNFPA, The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for… (page 60), 25 November 2019
[146] CARE, Northeast Syria: Rapid Gender… (page 5), 23 December 2024p5
[147] UNFPA, Syria Situation Report #2 (pages 2 – 3), 10 June 2025

showing the distribution of these 65 WGSS across the country, see the full report. CPIT was unable to find further information on the number of WGSS in Syria in the sources consulted (see Bibliography).

13.5.4 The July 2025 UNOCHA report stated:

'The reduction of GBV life-saving services has a direct negative impact on the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of women and girls and is eroding women and girls' resilience. This leads to increased reliance on negative coping mechanisms and a rise in reported cases of severe self-harm, including suicide attempts.

'The cuts in humanitarian aid since the beginning of 2025 have particularly impacted access to GBV services for women and girls, hindering partners' capacity to deliver lifesaving services and the overcrowding service delivery points that remain operational.'[148]

13.5.5 The July 2025 EUAA report stated:

'It was noted that funding constraints have led to the closure of 20 safe spaces for women and girls since January 2025, severely reducing access to support services for GBV survivors.

'A UNOCHA report from March 2025 emphasised that the suspension or closure of Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) and of other service delivery points has further restricted the availability of and accessibility to lifesaving GBV services, leaving survivors with reduced opportunities to disclose violence and seek support.'[149]

13.5.6 The September 2025 UNFPA report stated: 'Access to the space [women and girls safe spaces] is often contingent on the approval of male family members. The female-only aspect of the space is a crucial asset for women and girls when requesting male authorization. This characteristic also significantly contributes to the perception of the space as accessible and safe among participants, increasing the number of women and girls who use it.'[150]

13.5.7 The October 2025 UNFPA report stated:

'Survivors' access to GBV services is limited by logistical and structural barriers – including distance to service points, the cost of transport and a lack of available resources – as well as social and cultural norms. The WoS RNA [Whole of Syria Rapid Needs Assessment] described the major barriers stopping GBV survivors reporting to services as: fear of being identified as a survivor (30 per cent), lack of confidential services (20 per cent), distance from health facility (16 per cent), lack of trained staff (15 per cent) and lack of female staff (12 per cent).'[151]

Back to Contents

13.6 Support and dispute resolution mechanisms in DAANES-controlled areas

13.6.1 Most sources cited in this section – such as RIC, Women Defend Rojava, and Co-operation in Mesopotamia – are ideologically aligned with the

[148] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian… (page 24), 24 July 2025
[149] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (page 62), 7 July 2025
[150] UNFPA, Women and Girls Safe Spaces: Sustainability… (page 19) , 28 September 2025
[151] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 45), 14 October 2025

DAANES. They generally portray the DAANES, its institutions and affiliated civil society organisations (such as the Mala Jin) in a positive light. Much of the information below originates from founders and representatives of women's organisations and describes how systems are intended to function rather than how they operate in practice. In addition, the sources do not provide examples of failures, poor outcomes, or criticisms of Mala Jin or other women's institutions in northeast Syria. CPIT was unable to find more objective information in the sources consulted (see Bibliography).

13.6.2 The November 2019 RIC report stated:

'North and East Syria contains a network of "Women's Houses" in all cities and many smaller towns. The Women's Houses exist to solve women's issues, particularly domestic problems such as violence, marriage and divorce, and oppressive behaviors in the household.

'… There are…those who are strongly opposed to the institution of Women's Houses. The House in Deir ez-Zor was fired on by automatic weapons, and locals who are critical of the system call them 'houses of destruction" or "divorce houses". However, attitudes are slowly changing, and they are becoming an integral and accepted part of society.'[152]

13.6.3 According to various sources, Mala Jin operate a community-based, women-led restorative justice system that facilitates dispute resolution for domestic and family issues. The aim is to resolve disputes without involving courts or police, but cases can be escalated to formal courts after the various levels of mediation fail[153][154][155]. One source – an article published in October 2023 by Truthout, a 'nonprofit news organization dedicated to providing independent reporting and commentary on a diverse range of social justice issues'[156], stated: 'If they come to an agreement, the Mala Jin has a social solidarity committee that follows up with the agreements, mostly through WhatsApp, although sometimes they do home visits, just to make sure that everything is being adhered to. And then for a case, which included abuse or something like that, it would be the Asayish that would follow up, which is like the police. And there's a women's Asayish that does a lot of that work.'[157]

13.6.4 The November 2019 RIC report suggested that women can join the Women's Defense Units, or YPJ, as a way of escaping domestic violence. It stated:

'Most of the women in YPJ are young and unmarried, but women who are married or have children can join some of the divisions. Joining the armed forces is also a way for young women to escape forced marriage or oppressive family situations. Although women must be over 18 years old to join YPJ military units, there are regularly younger women who try to join the YPJ in order to escape dangerous domestic situations. As a response to this situation, academies have been set up which accept women aged 16 to 18 years old in which they can live and receive education and support, but do

[152] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (pages 45 – 6), 19 December 2019
[153] Truthout, Rojava's Women-Led Restorative Justice…, 20 October 2023
[154] Women Defend Rojava, Mala Jin: Empowering …, January 2021 (updated 3 February 2022)
[155] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (Pages 45-6), 19 December 2019
[156] Truthout, About, undated
[157] Truthout, Rojava's Women-Led Restorative Justice System.., 20 October 2023

not fulfil any military role.'[158]

Using the sources consulted (see Bibliography), CPIT was unable to confirm this information, nor was it able to find any examples of women and girls escaping domestic violence by joining the armed forces.

13.6.5 In April 2020, the RIC published an interview with 'Ilham Omer and Bahiya Murad, founders and co-chairs of the original Mala Jin (Women's House) in Qamishlo'[159], which stated:

'… [W]e don't always accept the courts' decisions. In Heseke, a man killed his wife and was sentenced to only four years in jail. We brought hundreds of women to the streets to protest and they changed the sentence to fifteen years.

'… Up until now, most of the cases we have seen are related to female teenagers who come to us seeking a divorce. In our society, divorce has many consequences and is seen as very grave. For example, in an Arab area, a girl might be expected to marry at the age of 14. We speak to her and ensure that her right to make her own decision is respected.

'… Our work started in Qamishlo. The first Women's House opened here. The second opened in the city of Afrin, which has now been occupied by Turkish forces. After that we opened another one in Kobane and continued expanding into other regions. When new territories were liberated from ISIS, we opened a Women's House there – in Til Hemis, Til Kocher, Til Berak. One year after Raqqa was liberated, we travelled there and set up a Women's House. We give a lot of importance to our projects in Raqqa and other Arab regions such as Tabqa, Manbij and Deir-ez-Zor. There are twenty Women's Houses now. More recently, two new houses have been set up by the Syriac Christian community. Our Christian sisters also struggle with a lack of rights in areas such as divorce.

'… At the Qamishlo Women's House, we used to deal with 70 to 80 cases a month. Now, we're down to 30 to 45, but this is because we've been successful in our educational programmes and in transferring responsibility to the local communes. Women can now discuss their problems there instead.

'… [In our work, w]e have particularly encountered difficulties with our Arab brothers and sisters because of the tradition of polygamy, and the fact that they often took children as wives. Now, this is officially forbidden and so, many people have come to support us. But we still face dangers. Several years ago, men attacked me as I was walking to the Women's House in Qamishlo. They grabbed me and tried to throw me into a van. I believe they were linked to the [Assad] Syrian regime. Last year [2019], the Women's House in Deir ez-Zor was attacked by men on motorbikes with machine guns.

'… In the past, people called Mala Jin the Mala Berdanî ("House of Divorce") or the Mala Xirabî ("House of Destruction"). They accused us of promoting divorce among the people and spreading discontent. Now, people have come to understand that we are not a place of divorce, but rather an institution that endeavours to solve problems and to reconcile society – both

[158] RIC, Beyond the Frontlines: The building of… (pages 51 – 2), 19 December 2019
[159] RIC, Building Peace: North and East Syria's Women's House (page 1), April 2020

men and women.'[160]

13.6.6 Other sources also highlighted difficulties for women's organisations in Arab-majority, conservative areas. Another report published by the RIC in June 2021, for example, described in detail the challenges faced by DAANES institutions and civil society organisations attempting to confront conservative gender norms in Arab-majority areas[161].

13.6.7 In July 2022, Co-operation in Mesopotamia, which describes itself as a project providing comprehensive information on co-operatives in southeast Turkey and Rojava[162], published an article about Mala Jin which stated: '[Mala Jin] has 62 branches across northeastern Syria … It has 11 branches in Qamishlo Canton, 10 in Hasakah Canton, four in Afrin Canton, eight in Kobanê, two in Raqqa, five in Manbij, six in Deir ez-Zor, 11 in Tabqa and a branches in the Zorava neighborhood of Damascus, the capital of Syria. Mala Jin also has two branches to solve the problems faced by Syriac women.'[163]

13.6.8 In November 2024, Medya News published an article on Mala Jin which stated:

'Today, there are 47 Mala Jin across North and East Syria, providing counsel to women and families. They address social issues such as domestic violence, child marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Their primary activities include mediation, reconciliation, and education. Additionally, they offer safe shelters for women in crisis.

'… Most cases brought to the Mala Jin are resolved internally through mediation by their members. When needed, the Mala Jin collaborates with other women's structures within the administration, ranging from Social Reconciliation Committees at the commune level (the smallest local decision-making body) to the Women's Justice Committee, which operates at the sub-district and regional levels, and the Social Justice Committee of Kongra Star.

'Conflicts between husbands and wives are the most frequently reported cases. Separate meetings are first held with each party – starting with the wife – to ensure a safe environment for open discussion. Once both are prepared, joint sessions are organized to facilitate dialogue and help them reach a mutual understanding. The Mala Jin monitors these cases through home visits and remains available for follow-up.

'If mediation fails, the case is escalated to the courts. Representatives of the Mala Jin assist by offering advice and opinions to judges while providing support to the women involved. The court operates on a three-person panel comprising both men and women.

'… In cases of domestic violence or threats, women can seek protection at the Mala Jin. Outside of operating hours, they can turn to the Women's Internal Security Forces (Asayîşa Jin), who coordinate with the Mala Jin. Visible injuries are documented in hospital reports, which are directly forwarded to the appropriate court. The Women's Internal Security Forces

[160] RIC, Building Peace: North and East Syria's Women's House (pages 3 – 5), April 2020
[161] RIC, Beyond Rojava: North and East Syria's Arab Regions, 2 June 2021
[162] Co-operation in Mesopotamia, Homepage, undated
[163] Co-operation in Mesopotamia, Mala Jin becomes symbol of women's revolution, July 2022

arrest perpetrators, and investigations are conducted by the Women's Justice Council.

'For women unable to leave their homes, relatives or neighbors can report the abuse to the Mala Jin or the local commune. Members of the Mala Jin and the Women's Internal Security Forces respond promptly, removing the women from harm, documenting evidence, and filing criminal cases against the perpetrators.

'The Mala Jin also conducts routine house visits to observe women for signs of abuse or distress. If domestic violence is suspected, immediate action is taken to ensure the woman's safety.

'Women in need of protection can stay at temporary Women's Protection Houses until a long-term solution is found. For those who cannot return home safely, alternative housing and employment opportunities are arranged.'[164]

13.6.9 In December 2024, Women Defend Rojava, a 'campaign to co-ordinate international resistance in solidarity with the women of Northern and Eastern Syria and the Rojava revolution against the occupation war of the Turkish state'[165], published an article about a women's NGO called SARA. It stated:

'SARA was founded in 2013 as a non-governmental organisation to combat violence and all forms of discrimination against women. Its aim is to educate and empower women, so women can identify their problems and will have the strength to organise and find solutions.

'The organisation works in all areas of North and East Syria with offices in Qamishlo, Al-Hasakah, Kobani, Sirin, Ain Issa, Aleppo, Shehba, the Newroz, Wasokani and Serekaniye camp – and soon also in Raqqa. In this context SARA strives to work for women of all ethnicities, nationalities and religions. Violence against women has many different faces and SARA is using different methods and ways to combat gendered violence. It aims to raise the level of women in terms of social, cultural, health and legal aspects and opposes all forms of violence and discrimination against women. It works to strengthen assaulted women in their role inside family and society by providing psychological, economical, and social support. And it aims to change the societal mindset concerning women and violence against women.

'To do so, SARA organises educations about the rights of women and all the topics linked to this – also "culture and society" is a topic which helps to get into contact. SARA also provides legal counselling and it is the only institution allowed to represent women in front of the court and support their legal cases in case of (attempted) femicide or heavy violence. In this context SARA also seeks to advocate in the development of women's laws, and works on monitoring and documenting cases of violence (statistics on femicide, suicide of women, rape, domestic violence, underage marriage, polygamy).'[166]

13.6.10 An article published by the RIC also explained SARA's role in helping women access justice. The article, based on an interview with Arzo Tammo

[164] Medya News, "Mala Jin": The Unique Women's…, 20 November 2024
[165] Women Defend Rojava, About Us, undated
[166] Women Defend Rojava, SARA organisation: Being on our feet…, 18 December 2024

(the coordinator of Sara's centre in Qamishlo), stated:

'Sara accompanies women in court to ensure that their case will be heard in adherence to the Family Law. They sometimes act as defense attorneys for women who cannot afford one. "We assert that our objective is to advocate for the victim and uphold the principles of justice," says Tammo. Even if a woman already has an attorney, Sara representatives can still be present at the court case to make sure justice will be doled out properly. Tammo explains that in many instances, the two families involved in a dispute will reach a reconciliation after making a financial payment to the family of the victim. In return, the aggrieved family will drop their lawsuit and accept the justification of the killing as a matter of honor. "However, in such cases, we refuse to accept this justification," Tammo says, "maintaining that it is imperative to reject the notion of 'honor' as a defense for murdering women."'[167]

13.6.11 In February 2025, The Guardian published an article on feminists in northeast Syria which described the work of the Mala Jin in Qamishlo. It stated: 'They [volunteers at the Mala Jin] tell me that 10 years ago they helped one or two women a month; now that is up to 100. For instance, there are now laws against underage marriage, and if they hear about a girl who is going to be married, they go to persuade the family to think again. They also work with families where boys and girls have fallen in love and want to marry against their parents' wishes. "And often we end up dancing at their weddings."'[168]

13.6.12 In March 2025, Un Ponte Per, an Italian NGO operating in war-torn countries[169], published an article entitled 'Women's home in Syria: A history of feminist struggle' which stated:

'The "Mala Jin", as "Women's Houses" are called in the Kurdish language, were established in Syria in 2011. The first was opened in Qamishlo, in the north-east, and immediately became a beacon of hope and resistance during some of the most difficult pages in the country's history. Created with the aim of combating gender-based violence and promoting women's self-determination, the Houses have had to overcome many challenges and obstacles over time.

'… From Aleppo to Shehba, from Afrin to areas liberated from the presence of Daesh, activists have continued their work to protect, support and accompany women survivors of gender-based violence on their path to freedom and self-determination.

'… Women's Houses are social spaces dedicated to handling marital and family disputes and defending women's rights, but also safe places where survivors or those still at risk of violence can find support, support [sic] and shelter - material and economic - together with their children.

'Through capillary and grassroots work, with awareness-raising campaigns, denunciation through the media and presence in the community, the Mala Jin activists, in collaboration with the North East Autonomous Administration, and in particular with the institutions dealing with gender issues, today play a

[167] RIC, Interview – Sara Organization, 25 November 2024
[168] The Guardian, 'Woman, life, freedom: the Syrian feminists…, 9 February 2025
[169] Un Ponte Per, What we do, undated

crucial role in protecting women from violence and feminicide. Managed on a voluntary basis, the Women's Houses now number 22, distributed between the cantons of Hassakeh and Qamishlo, where they address all the communities present: Kurdish, Arab, Christian.

'In addition to providing spaces for protection, the activists also provide psychological and legal support to the women who turn to them. Considering that there are only two institutionally supported anti-violence centres in the entire area of north-east Syria, it is clear that the role of the Mala Jin is indispensable in a context where the network of social services and support for the population is still under construction.

'To this end, Mala Jin activists also work as community mediators, attempting to resolve family conflicts and ensuring that women survivors of violence can access free legal protection, while carrying out valuable awareness-raising work with educational programmes aimed at adolescents, both in schools and in community spaces.

'… We at Un Ponte Per, who have been present in North East Syria since 2015, have been actively supporting the Mala Jin since 2021, when we first met them. Over the years, we have devised various projects to support their work, and to respond to the demands that the activists have made of us. Among them, that of providing ongoing training to women workers on combating gender-based violence, to make their already valuable work in the communities even more effective. But also to help with material support, by providing the Women's Houses with basic things such as computers, awareness-raising campaign materials, furniture.

'Together, we collaborated in organising public events on important occasions to raise attention to the status of women, such as the 8 March mobilisations and the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. And again, we tried to understand the needs of the population by conducting surveys and awareness-raising sessions together.' [170]

13.6.13 In June 2025, Jinha, a news outlet that reports on issues affecting women in the Middle East[171], published an article which stated: 'Mala Jin (Women's House) was founded on March 8, 2012 following the revolution in North and East Syria to develop solutions to the problems faced by women such as violence, child marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody. Since then, Mala Jin has opened 62 branches across northeastern Syria.'[172]

13.6.14 In October 2025, several sources reported on an arson attack targeting the headquarters of Zenobia Women's Gathering in the town of Abu Hammam, which is located in the DAANES-controlled part of Deir Ezzor governorate. Jinha indicated that the perpetrators were affiliated with ISIS[173], while UK-based human rights organisation[174] the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) referred to them as 'unidentified gunmen'[175]. Jinha stated that the attack caused material damage.

13.6.15 The sources cited above provide conflicting information about the number of

[170] Un Ponte Per, Women's home in Syria: A history of feminist struggle, 5 March 2025
[171] Jinha, About, undated
[172] Jinha, Mala Jin provides information to women…, 16 June 2025
[173] Jinha, Zenobia Women's Gathering: Targeting…, 17 October 2025
[174] SOHR, About Us, undated
[175] SOHR, Security chaos: Women's headquarters burned in Abo…, 15 October 2025

Mala Jin branches. CPIT was unable to confirm the number and locations of Mala Jin branches using the sources consulted (see Bibliography).

13.6.16 For further information on specific Mala Jin branches and their work, see the articles listed under the tag 'Mala Jin' on the Co-operation in Mesopotamia website.

13.6.17 For a detailed explanation of how Mala Jin are intended to function, see this report published by Kongra Star in January 2021.

Back to Contents

14. Groups with heightened vulnerability

14.1 Internally displaced women

14.1.1 The April 2025 GPC report stated: 'Domestic violence, child marriage, child trafficking, child labour, and sexual exploitation are rising, particularly in IDP camps and shelters, where women and girls face heightened risks of survival sex and forced marriage.'[176] The source did provide further information to support its claim that these issues are 'rising', nor did it give a time period for this rise.

14.1.2 In May 2025, NGO the Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR) published a report on women and women human rights defenders in Syria which stated: 'Displaced women, especially those without family support, are increasingly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. In camps, reports of forced marriages, trafficking, and sexual assault have been always documented and continue to emerge, often going unreported and consequently under-supported due to fear and stigma among other fears, ...'[177]

14.1.3 The July 2025 UNOCHA report stated:

'At the start of the year, over two million IDPs, mostly women and children and comprising 31 per cent of the total IDPs in Syria, remained in camps designed to act as a last resort for the short term. Most last resort sites such as informal settlements/camps, planned camps and collective centres are characterized by a lack of camp management systems, poor shelter conditions, overcrowding and varying degrees of access to basic services, increasing the exposure to GBV of women, boys and girls and leaving IDPs in camps vulnerable and in need of humanitarian aid.'[178]

14.1.4 The October 2025 UNFPA report stated:

'Displacement and life in camps or temporary shelters further expose women and girls to physical and sexual violence and exploitation, particularly in overcrowded or unprotected environments ...

'… Many women and girls made the connection between displacement, insecurity and increases in early marriage…

'… Various types of violence were described as being exacerbated by displacement and living conditions, including IPV…

'… Poor living conditions – including shared or makeshift housing, lack of toilets and lighting or inadequate sanitation in camps – were also identified

[176] GPC, Protection Landscape in Syria: A… (page 5), 3 April 2025
[177] GCHR, Syria, End of an EraL From the Fall… (section 2), 21 May 2025
[178] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian… (page 12), 24 July 2025

as increasing exposure to GBV.'[179]

Back to Contents

14.2 Female heads of household

14.2.1 The August 2023 Netherlands MFA report included a section on 'Single women with resident young male relatives'. Although the report was published over two years before the fall of Al-Assad, the information in this section relates to social and cultural norms that are unlikely to have changed significantly. The report stated:

'Sources agreed that a household headed by a single woman was more vulnerable than one headed by a man. A single woman with children living in a camp for displaced persons with no relatives or other social ties was vulnerable by definition. It is not possible to provide a clear picture of the vulnerability of households headed by a single woman. How vulnerable a household of this kind was would depend on the protection afforded by other people in the vicinity. A household headed by a single woman might be better protected, according to the sources, if it had male relatives (e.g. a brother or brother-in-law) living nearby. Under-age sons living with the family did not generally provide more protection.'[180]

14.2.2 In October 2024, the WHO published a report on Syria which stated: 'Almost every third family is headed by a woman, assuming the role of a caretaker and breadwinner, …'[181]

14.2.3 The December 2024 CARE report on northeast Syria stated: 'Female-headed households and widows face increased hurdles compared to their male counterparts as they are twice as likely to be unable to meet basic needs due to various factors such as less access to legal identity documentation, more constrained mobility and limiting social and cultural norms.'[182]

14.2.4 In January 2025, four international NGOs published a multi-sectoral needs assessment (MSNA) report focused specifically on several areas of Rural Damascus governorate and Aleppo city ('the January 2025 MSNA report'), based on data collected between April and May 2024[183]. The report noted that, despite the changes following the overthrow of the government in December 2024, the findings remained relevant because they addressed long-term systemic issues. It should be noted that the report focused on specific areas and is not necessarily representative of the general situation in Syria.

14.2.5 In a section about 'Coping Strategies' in three neighbourhoods of Aleppo city, the above report stated:

'Households led by women, people with disabilities, and families with children are especially vulnerable to negative coping mechanisms, such as "sleeping without food." Women highlighted the challenges faced by single-parent families, noting that "young people stop studying to work for food." Concerns about nutrition were raised, as school-aged children often lack a

[179] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (pages 34 – 35), 14 October 2025
[180] Netherlands MFA, General Country of Origin Information… (page 49), 7 August 2023
[181] WHO, Whole of Syrian Arab Republic: Public Health… (page 5), 14 October 2024
[182] CARE, Northeast Syria: Rapid Gender… (page 2), 23 December 2024
[183] DRC, IMC, NRC and Oxfam, Syria Community Consortium… (page 9), 8 January 2025

diverse diet. Food insecurity is widespread in the community, with all households reducing food quality and quantity, impacting women-headed households the hardest.'[184]

14.2.6 The April 2025 GPC report stated: 'Women-headed households – often widows, wives of the missing or those who returned without their husbands – struggle to meet basic needs, facing economic exclusion, stigma, increased GBV risks, legal and HLP [housing, land and property] constraints, exploitation and abuse. Many lack documentation and are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, while humanitarian aid remains difficult to access.'[185]

14.2.7 In March 2025, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) published a needs assessment report on Syria, based on surveys and interviews with over 2,000 key informants[186]. The report identified female-headed households as one of the three groups most affected by the humanitarian crisis. It stated:

'[Female-headed households] struggle with limited social support networks and restricted access to essential resources. Additionally, women face challenges in accessing employment, healthcare, and education, increasing their families' exposure to economic and social risks.

'… Female-headed households in Syria experience varying levels of vulnerability due to several factors, including geographical location, displacement status, family composition, and economic opportunities. While some of these households can meet their basic needs, others – particularly those in displacement settings – suffer from severe food insecurity, lack of income, and heightened protection risks.'[187]

14.2.8 The same source also identified the three most at-risk categories of female-headed households and highlighted the reasons they are considered particularly vulnerable. It stated:

'1. Widowed and Newly Displaced Women in Informal Settlements:

- Lack of social support networks: Widowed or newly displaced women are often isolated from community support, exacerbating their hardships.
- Complete dependence on humanitarian aid: These households rely entirely on external assistance to meet their basic needs.
- High risk of gender-based violence (GBV): Widowed and displaced women face a greater risk of violence and exploitation, especially in informal settlements.
- Lack of official documentation: The absence of legal documents worsens their situation, limiting access to essential services.

'… 2. Female-Headed Households in Rural Areas:

- Limited access to humanitarian aid: Rural households receive less support, leading to increased poverty and food insecurity.
- Collapse of the agricultural sector: Due to conflict and insecurity,

[184] DRC, IMC, NRC and Oxfam, Syria Community Consortium… (page 45), 8 January 2025
[185] GPC, Protection Landscape in Syria: A… (page 5), 3 April 2025
[186] SARC, Syria Complex Emergency – Need (page 1), 10 March 2025
[187] SARC, Syria Complex Emergency – Need… (pages 23, 26), 10 March 2025

subsistence farming has become unviable, making it difficult for these households to secure a sustainable income.

'… 3. Female-Headed Households with Young Daughters:

- Early marriage and child labor: Many female-headed households resort to negative coping mechanisms such as early marriage and child labor, increasing social risks for children.
- Barriers to education: Economic and social constraints limit children's access to education, hindering their long-term economic stability ...'[188]

14.2.9 The July 2025 UNOCHA report stated: 'Female-headed households also often face greater economic vulnerability, which leads to a higher percentage of female-headed households being unable to afford costs of education, health services, nutrition and non-food items.'[189]

Back to Contents

14.3 Widowed and divorced women

14.3.1 The February 2023 EUAA report stated:

'Widows and divorced women and girls can be distinguished as a subcategory of female-headed households, which is highly stigmatised by the Syrian society. It is reported that widows and divorced women and girls were particularly at risk of sexual violence, emotional and verbal abuse, forced marriage, polygamy and serial temporary marriages, movement restrictions, financial exploitation, and deprivation of inheritance, among others ... Female heads of households are in particular at increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence as well as higher risks of homelessness and eviction due to a lack of a male protector and face these heightened risks irrespective of the geographical area.'[190]

14.3.2 The July 2024 UNFPA report stated:

'Widows and divorced women and girls are often considered a burden for the family and are prevented from working, mainly by male family members, not to fuel rumours and social stigma against the family.

'… Widows and divorced women and girls are exposed to multiple and cruel types of social isolation, shame and stigma with great repercussions in the fulfilment of their basic rights and their capacity to live in safety and dignity. Widows and divorced women and girls in the country are exposed to a variety of restrictions and abuses including violation of rights such as denial of the custody of the children after the divorce, or the denial of inheritance for widowed women and girls. Often they are considered a burden by families. Despite this, traditional gender roles applied by families prevent them from freely moving and accessing income-generating opportunities but rather push them to remarry as soon as possible and accept any proposition to find a rapid solution to the shame the family is exposed to due to their marital status.'[191]

[188] SARC, Syria Complex Emergency – Need Assessment Report (page 26), 10 March 2025
[189] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian… (page 15), 24 July 2025
[190] EUAA, Country Guidance: Syria (page 112), 7 February 2023
[191] UNFPA, Whole of Syria: Gender-Based Violence… (pages 1, 9), 22 July 2024

14.3.3 The March 2025 EUAA report stated: 'Difficulties when reclaiming properties were reported concerning widows, returning women from Lebanon (more than half of such households were female-headed), and displaced women in north-eastern Syria. Divorced women in north-western Syria faced societal stigma, social exclusion, and lack of support.'[192]

14.3.4 In May 2025, the Netherlands MFA published a report on Syria in Dutch ('the May 2025 Netherlands MFA report'), which CPIT translated using automated translation tools. It stated:

'Widow camps were located in several places, including Idlib. Widows there were in a vulnerable position and at risk of economic exclusion, stigmatisation, gender-based violence, exploitation, and abuse. Widows or women whose husbands had gone missing could experience difficulties reclaiming property due to a lack of documentation. Often, the house remained registered in their husband's name, preventing them from claiming it. It also happened that they were thrown out of their homes by their in-laws as soon as they no longer had a husband.'[193]

14.3.5 The April 2025 GPC report stated: 'Women, particularly widows and divorced women, are particularly exposed to HLP vulnerabilities, which can, in turn, exacerbate their psycho-social distress and risks of GBV.'[194]

14.3.6 The May 2025 UNHCR report on northwest Syria stated:

'Without documentation, individuals face difficulties asserting ownership or inheritance claims, leaving them vulnerable to disputes or loss of assets. Women and widows often face cultural and legal barriers when attempting to assert their property rights, further compounding their risk of HLP rights violations in these situations.

'… Persons with disabilities; child, elderly, or women headed households; orphans; widows; and the homeless face unique challenges in obtaining civil documentation.'[195]

14.3.7 The October 2025 UNFPA report stated: 'Widows and divorced and elderly women were also reported to be particularly vulnerable to psychological violence … Widows, divorced women and those without male guardians were reported to face barriers to housing, aid and movement, often being excluded from registration processes or targeted for exploitation.'[196] When using this source, the limitations described paragraphs 8.1.4, 8.1.5 and 12.2.15 should be taken into account.

Back to Contents

14.4 Lone women

14.4.1 The May 2025 Netherlands MFA report stated:

'According to one source, the takeover of power had no influence on the position of women living alone. According to another source, the situation of women living alone varied by area, for example, when it came to finding work and housing. According to yet another source, all services were

[192] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (page 36), 25 March 2025
[193] Netherlands MFA, Official report Syria (pages 108 – 109), 31 May 2025 (automated translation)
[194] GPC, Protection Landscape in Syria: A… (page 7), 3 April 2025
[195] UNHCR and NWS Protection Cluster, Minorities Protection… (pages 10, 12), 22 May 2025
[196] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 23), 14 October 2025

concentrated in the big cities.

'According to another source, women living alone could face stigmatisation, exclusion and a lack of support. This could vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Also, (single) women in certain regions were not accepted in some professions. From their social environment, women living alone could be pressured to (re)marry. Women living alone could become victims of gender-based violence or sexual violence.'[197]

14.4.2 CPIT was unable to find further information specifically addressing the situation of lone women in the sources consulted (see Bibliography). However, some of the information in the previous two sub-sections (Female heads of household, Widowed and divorced women) is also relevant to lone women.

Back to Contents

15. Access to food and essential items, employment, housing, and medical services

15.1 Comparison to men

15.1.1 The information in this section is specific to women and girls. For general information on access to food and essential items, employment, housing and healthcare, see the CPIN Syria: Humanitarian situation.

15.1.2 In general, sources indicated that the situation for women is more difficult than for men. This is particularly the case for certain categories of women (see Groups with heightened vulnerability).

Back to Contents

15.2 Food and essential items

15.2.1 In a section entitled 'Food Insecurity and Nutrition', the December 2024 CARE report on northeast Syria stated: 'Women, across all diversity categories, are more likely to adopt negative coping mechanisms such as skipping meals or eating less to ensure the rest of the household is first fed, leading to reduced overall intake and nutritional diversity.'[198]

15.2.2 The March 2025 UNOCHA report stated: 'Vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, bear the brunt of food insecurity, with intra-household food allocation practices often prioritizing men, leaving women and children with limited access to nutritious food.'[199]

Back to Contents

15.3 Housing

15.3.1 CPIT was unable to find information about the availability and accessibility of housing specifically for women in the sources consulted (see Bibliography). Instead, the sources cited below focus on discrimination against women regarding housing, land and property rights. For general information about housing and accommodation, see the CPIN Syria: Humanitarian situation.

15.3.2 In March 2024, GIZ, an international development organisation run by the

[197] Netherlands MFA, Official report Syria (page 108), 31 May 2025 (automated translation)
[198] CARE, Northeast Syria: Rapid Gender… (page 2), 23 December 2024
[199] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response… (page 36), 27 March 2025

German government[200], published a report on HLP which stated:

'Even before the conflict in Syria, women faced disadvantages in securing Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights. Less than 5 % of women have their names as owners of lands on land registry records. Their access to HLP, primarily through inheritance or marriage, was constrained by societal norms, especially in cases of marriages to foreigners, polygamous unions, or informal arrangements. Legal discrepancies and flaws added further obstacles, particularly for displaced women. The conflict-induced displacement exacerbates these challenges, leaving women as heads of households without secure tenure, increasing vulnerability to forced evictions and property dispossession. The breakdown of legal structures during the conflict heightens the risk of exploitation, displacement, and violence against women.

'Urban policies and HLP laws across all areas of Syria directly contribute to women's unequal access to HLP rights. This is particularly true when looking at inheritance regulations but is also the result of other discriminatory laws that affect women's ability to access compensation or alternative housing, such as problems accessing documentation and nationality for their children that many women face. There has been no effort across the different regions to ensure gender mainstreaming in the development of urban policies and initiatives.

'Across all regions in Syria, discriminatory customs and traditions have long been used to deny women their inheritance rights. Examples are challenges that begin at the start of the process - where few women will even have housing or land registered under their name to various restrictions on women in accessing courts, such as reprisals from family members.

'The protection needs of women who try to take measures to access their HLP rights often place vulnerabilities on them. This is especially true when they are displaced, or when they are part of female headed households.'[201]

15.3.3 In August 2024, NGO the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) published a report entitled 'Facing an impossible choice: Refugee women's housing, land and property rights in Syria' which stated:

'Women's property rights are enshrined in Syrian law. Despite this, family members draw on "customs" or "traditions" to pressure women into giving up their property rights to men. These strong sociocultural norms have been powerful enough to prevent many women from even trying to claim their property rights. Women who do try to claim rights risk exclusion from family support, social ostracism, violence and even death. The experience of war and displacement however, has meant men and women have had to adapt gender norms. Many women have taken up financial responsibilities for their families in displacement, while being excluded from property they are entitled to in Syria.'[202]

15.3.4 In a section on housing, land and property issues in three neighbourhoods of Aleppo city, the January 2025 MSNA report stated: 'Women are particularly at risk due to limited access to housing, land and property rights, facing

[200] GIZ, About us, undated
[201] GIZ, Safeguarding Housing, Land and… (page 2), 8 March 2024
[202] NRC, Facing an impossible choice: Refugee… (page 2), 27 August 2024

increased vulnerability to eviction and insecurity, exacerbating their already precarious situation. Their vulnerability is worsened by the social cultural norms that hinders and prevents women from inheriting, owning and controlling their family resources rendering them vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation.'[203]

15.3.5 See Groups with heightened vulnerability for further information about HLP issues.

Back to Contents

15.4 Employment and income

15.4.1 In a section about women's economic inclusion in three neighbourhoods of Aleppo city, the January 2025 MSNA report stated:

'FGDs highlighted the precarious working conditions faced by women in As-Sukkari, Bustan Al-Qaser, and Kallaseh [neighbourhoods], including low and poor wages and renumeration [sic], long working hours, and a lack of social protection within their working environment. The findings indicate that women often find themselves employed in informal sectors such as domestic work, agriculture, or garment factories, which exposes them to various forms of exploitation and abuse based on its nature and lack of or total absence of regulations.

'One of the key concerns is the issue of low wages. Women in the community are reported to receive inadequate compensation for their work, which not only hampers their economic well-being but also perpetuates gender-based income disparities and wage discrimination. Women working in the same cadre as men, earn way low [much lower] wages compared to their male counterparts. The long working hours further exacerbate the situation, potentially leading to physical and mental exhaustion, as well as a reduced quality of life. The situation is further exacerbated when women return home to attend to domestic chores which are unpaid failure to which [sic] may result in different forms of domestic violence.

'Moreover, the lack of adequate national social protection system adds to the vulnerability of women in these precarious working conditions. Without effective institutional mechanisms enforcing the existing protective laws and regulations, women are left without essential benefits such as healthcare, retirement plans, or maternity leave. This further reinforces their susceptibility to exploitation and abuse by unscrupulous employers.

'The informal sectors in which women are predominantly employed, such as domestic work, agriculture, and garment factories, pose additional risks. These sectors in Syria are often characterized by a lack of regulation, inadequate oversight, and limited access to labor rights. Consequently, women working in these sectors face a higher likelihood of experiencing exploitation, including wage theft, unsafe working conditions, and verbal or physical abuse bordering GBV.'[204]

15.4.2 In a section about women's economic inclusion in Duma and Nashabiyeh sub-districts of Rural Damascus governorate, the same source stated:

'The crisis has significantly impacted women's roles in the workforce, with

[203] DRC, IMC, NRC and Oxfam, Syria Community Consortium… (page 57), 8 January 2025
[204] DRC, IMC, NRC and Oxfam, Syria Community Consortium… (page 49), 8 January 2025

participation rates doubling since pre-crisis levels. However, this increased involvement has not led to equitable conditions. Women often work in unregulated sectors under exploitative conditions, receiving lower wages than men and working for longer hours in jobs with limited legal protection. Traditional gender norms restrict job options, placing women in roles with high vulnerability to exploitation. Single mothers and widows especially report heightened risks of harassment and insufficient support in balancing the dual demands of work and family responsibilities. Addressing these challenges requires greater support for civil society initiatives that advocate for safe, fair, and gender-sensitive employment practices. Low-paying jobs, insufficient to cover basic needs, was stated by 25% of respondents as one of the factors impacting income generation for households. There is uneven access to livelihoods particularly for women-headed households.'[205]

15.4.3 The March 2025 EUAA report stated: 'Female unemployment rate in Syria reached 62.2% in 2024, according to the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics.'[206]

15.4.4 In May 2025, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) published a report on Syria which stated:

'The Syrian labour market is marked by widespread informality – over 83% of employment lacks protection or regulation. MSMEs [micro, small and medium-sized enterprises], which account for 92% of enterprises, are severely constrained by restricted credit, inflation, and policy uncertainty. Labour force participation ['the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work'[207]] among women is below 15%, hampered by discriminatory norms, care burdens, and insecurity. Gaps in labour law enforcement, outdated social security systems, and weak institutional coordination exacerbate vulnerabilities, particularly for women, youth, persons with disabilities, and returnees.

'… As public subsidies and state jobs have eroded, large segments of the population – especially returnees, informal workers, women, and persons with disabilities – lack adequate safety nets.'[208]

15.4.5 In June 2025, four international NGOs published a report entitled 'Syria Returnee Rapid Assessment', which was based on '24 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) [in northeast and northwest Syria] aimed at understanding the key challenges and urgent needs of returnee populations in post-conflict Syria'[209]. The report did not specify whether the focus group participants were people returning from abroad, people returning from internal displacement, or a mixture of the two. It stated:

'Male and female participants highlighted mostly the same reasons which prevented people from returning, with female participants highlighting that the male heads of households did not return as they are working in the location of displacement and may visit on weekends. Female participants often focused on economic constraints, emphasizing the lack of job

[205] DRC, IMC, NRC and Oxfam, Syria Community Consortium… (page 21), 8 January 2025
[206] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (page 36), 25 March 2025
[207] World Bank, Metadata Glossary: Labor force participation rate, undated
[208] ILO, Syria: Promoting decent work in time of transition (pages 2, 7), 15 October 2025
[209] GOAL, IRC, Mercy Corps, Solidarités International, Syria Returnee… (page 3)

opportunities and the risks of returning to unsafe areas, including fear of UXO [unexploded ordnance] and ongoing insecurity.'[210]

15.4.6 In a section entitled 'Livelihood Challenges', the same source stated:

'**Exploitative and insufficient pay:** Several participants said they are underpaid, particularly in informal or casual labour settings, that their income does not match their expenses. This issue was especially highlighted by female participants, who felt more vulnerable to wage exploitation.

'**Limited access for women:** Women across both regions [northeast and northwest Syria] indicated fewer opportunities to engage in income-generating activities.

'"Women here are at risk of exploitation. I personally cannot work outside the home." – Female participant, Karama sub-district [in Raqqa governorate].'[211]

15.4.7 The same source also stated:

'Female participants reported that women face more safety issues due to dark or damaged roads and reported greater difficulty in managing household and children needs and repairs without male support.

"I cannot work because I have small children, and I cannot leave them alone as I do not feel safe for them to be left alone. I live on assistance from others when available, when it is not, I am forced to beg for help" – Female participant, Karama sub-district [in Raqqa].'[212]

15.4.8 The October 2025 UNFPA report stated:

'A striking theme is the sexual exploitation and harassment that girls face in the workplace, particularly on agricultural lands or in informal labour arrangements … [V]ulnerability is heightened by poverty, displacement, lack of protection and gendered power dynamics.

'… Girls are frequently harassed by supervisors and judged on their appearance – with those perceived as more beautiful seen to be more employable but also more targeted. Some participants described rape and coercion in exchange for housing, services or work opportunities, often under the guise of help…'[213]

Back to Contents

15.5 Humanitarian support

15.5.1 The July 2025 UNOCHA report estimated that 4,125,000 women are in need of humanitarian assistance in the year 2025[214]. The report noted: 'Women and girls are less likely to safely access humanitarian assistance compared to men and boys, and this is further exacerbated for those living with interlinked vulnerabilities (e.g., age, ability, marital and displacement status).'[215]

15.5.2 The October 2025 UNFPA report stated:

[210] GOAL, IRC, Mercy Corps, Solidarités International, Syria Returnee… (page 3)
[211] GOAL, IRC, Mercy Corps, Solidarités International, Syria Returnee… (page 8)
[212] GOAL, IRC, Mercy Corps, Solidarités International, Syria Returnee… (page 7)
[213] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (page 23), 14 October 2025
[214] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian… (page 6), 24 July 2025
[215] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian… (page 15), 24 July 2025

‘Women and girls face significant challenges in accessing basic humanitarian aid, including food aid, health services, water and sanitation, and education. Services are becoming increasingly limited in many areas, and many humanitarian services fail to address the specific needs of women and girls, particularly in terms of reproductive health, security and mobility …

‘… Women and girls face limited access to services due to distance, insecurity and cultural barriers that restrict mobility, as well as a lack of information about service access. Patriarchal control over women’s direct access to aid in crowded or mixed-gender settings due to fears of harassment or social judgement is a central barrier. Decision-making around whether women can access services is often left to male relatives, undermining women’s autonomy and deterring them from going out alone to collect aid…

‘… In some cases, vulnerability is stratified by marital and social status. Unmarried women and girls face the most extreme restrictions, often being completely barred from leaving the home, regardless of age. Widows and divorced women are particularly vulnerable …

‘… Moreover, women and girls face significant risks when trying to access aid, including exposure to violence, harassment and exploitation where aid workers or community leaders use their positions to demand sexual favours in exchange for assistance …

‘… Many report risks on the way to and from humanitarian services, such as theft and fear of kidnappings.

‘In Aleppo and Idleb, GBV experts agreed that both access to the humanitarian assistance and the movement of women and girls inside the various sectors have witnessed a relative improvement in 2024 due to the increased society awareness and training of the humanitarian service providers, especially in relation to protecting women and girls from GBV. One FGD mentioned improvements in security that enabled them better access to distributions …

‘… However, there are still challenges and violations that take place in some sectors and sites and these vary based on the conditions and practices in each of them. GBV experts report little change in the safety of women and girls in accessing humanitarian services, agreeing that essential services such as shelter, healthcare, distributions and training venues are not safe environments.

‘… Though some FGD participants reported a reduction in incidences of sexual exploitation and abuse in relation to humanitarian assistance, it is clear that sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) continues.’[216]

When using this source, the limitations outlined in paragraphs 8.1.4, 8.1.5 and 12.2.15 should be taken into account.

Back to Contents

15.6 Healthcare

15.6.1 The July 2024 UNFPA report stated: The availability of medical care for survivors [of GBV] is limited, and access is often further challenged by the

[216] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (pages 46, 24), 14 October 2025

absence of female staff and the traditional custom of having women and girls escorted by male family members.'[217]

15.6.2 The December 2024 ACU report indicated that, according to 34% of Key Informants (KIs) interviewed, no nutrition services were available for children under 5 and pregnant/lactating women[218]. This statistic was based on interviews with over 2,000 KIs across all 13 Syrian governorates, but the report did not say how many KIs were based in each governorate.

15.6.3 The January 2025 MSNA report stated:

'Access to healthcare is an additional significant challenge, especially for women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Financial constraints, long distances to facilities, and inadequate infrastructure further impede access to healthcare services. Household surveys indicate that 40% of the population has limited access to healthcare, with maternal and child health services being particularly inadequate.

'The prolonged conflict in Syria has profoundly impacted the mental health and psychosocial well-being of communities, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and IDPs. Data indicate alarmingly high rates of emotional distress, including feelings of hopelessness and anxiety, yet access to professional mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services remains critically limited. The availability of specialized MHPSS services is particularly scarce in underserved regions, where health facilities often lack the resources and capacity to identify and treat a wide range of mental health disorders effectively. A significant barrier to accessing care is the widespread lack of awareness about existing services, with many individuals unaware of where or how to seek support. Additional obstacles include the unavailability of services, insufficient knowledge about service locations, financial constraints, transportation challenges, and persistent stigma surrounding mental health care.'[219]

15.6.4 In a section about water, sanitation and hygiene in the Duma and Nashabiyeh sub-districts of Rural Damascus governorate, the same source stated: 'Menstrual Hygiene materials have been generally reported as accessible for 70.8% of respondents... 29.2% of respondents reported having no access to these items.'[220]

15.6.5 In a section about water, sanitation and hygiene in three neighbourhoods of Aleppo city, the same source stated:

'Menstrual hygiene materials are another area of concern, as only 16.0% of respondents reported having access to the necessary items for maintaining good menstrual hygiene, leaving 84.0% without access**.** Women focus group discussions revealed that "Hygiene supplies are available in the market and stores, but we do not have the purchasing power. We save this money for food.", with other youth respondents noting "we use cloth" and "some girls rely on leftover fabric".[221]

15.6.6 The same source commented on the impact of healthcare issues on

[217] UNFPA, Whole of Syria: Gender-Based Violence… (page 4), 22 July 2024
[218] ACU, Post-Conflict Multisectoral Rapid Needs… (page 21), 27 January 2025
[219] DRC, IMC, NRC and Oxfam, Syria Community Consortium… (page 6), 8 January 2025
[220] DRC, IMC, NRC and Oxfam, Syria Community Consortium… (page 30), 8 January 2025
[221] DRC, IMC, NRC and Oxfam, Syria Community Consortium… (page 60), 8 January 2025

vulnerable groups in the Duma and Nashabiyeh sub-districts of Rural Damascus governorate:

‘Health facilities are struggling to provide consistent care, and residents are increasingly depending on bi-weekly healthcare services from NGOs, such as those offered by the Ghras Association, which are insufficient to meet continuous healthcare demands. As families strive to seek life-saving assistance for their at-risk members, including women, the elderly people, and children, they are forced to transport them without proper emergency equipment. This dangerous predicament has tragically resulted in fatalities due to the absence of timely medical interventions. The situation is particularly dire for pregnant women, who require urgent medical attention during childbirth, as well as for older persons who often go without necessary medical attention.’[222]

15.6.7 In February 2025, NGO the International Medical Corps (IMC) published a situation report on Syria which stated:

‘Access to essential maternal and child healthcare services in Syria remains critically limited. Many women lack access to prenatal care, access to safe childbirth services or postnatal support, posing significant risks to the well-being of women and children. Mental health services are also severely lacking, leaving many without support for stress-related disorders, anxiety, depression and violence against women and girls. These combined challenges continue to deepen the humanitarian crisis, making access to healthcare increasingly difficult.’[223]

15.6.8 A UNFPA report published in February 2025 stated:

‘The termination of US funding will result in a gradual withdrawal of UNFPA’s support for 15 hospitals, 24 women and girls’ safe spaces (WGSSs), 54 static health facilities, and 26 integrated mobile teams (IMTs). This withdrawal of support will affect services across the 14 governorates of Syria. Around 265,000 people will lose access to life-saving reproductive health services, including maternal health care and GBV response services.

‘… Nationwide, protection services are being scaled down due to significant funding shortfalls, notably after the suspension of US support, with 42 of 82 protection centres closed in northwest Syria. Rising health needs in areas with increased returnees, damaged infrastructure, and limited basic services are adversely impacting access to immunization services, reproductive and child health care, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), disproportionately affecting women and children.’[224]

15.6.9 In February 2025, Syrian NGO[225] International Humanitarian Relief (IHR) published a report entitled ‘Syria Multi-Sector Needs Assessment’, based on a survey of 385 individuals across 11 Syrian governorates, with 72% being male and 28% female[226]. The report stated:

‘Women in the community face multiple challenges when trying to access healthcare services, with financial barriers being the most significant. Nearly

[222] DRC, IMC, NRC and Oxfam, Syria Community Consortium… (pages 32 – 33), 8 January 2025
[223] IMC, Syria Emergency Response Situation Report #7, February 12, … (page 1), 28 February 2025
[224] UNFPA, Syria Situation Report #2 (pages 2 – 3), 10 June 2025
[225] IHR, About us, undated
[226] IHR, Syria Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (page 6), 28 February 2025

38% of respondents stated that women do not have money available to pay for medical services, making affordability the biggest obstacle. Additionally, 19% of respondents reported that women lack access to reproductive health services, limiting their ability to receive essential care related to maternal health, contraception, and family planning. Structural and social challenges also play a role, as 13% indicated that there is insufficient or no separate waiting space for women, which can deter them from seeking care. However, another 13% of respondents stated that women in their community do not face any problems accessing healthcare.

'A shortage of female healthcare staff was cited by 6% of respondents, which can be a major deterrent for women who prefer or require treatment from female medical professionals due to cultural or personal reasons. Similarly, 6% of respondents highlighted that women often lack a companion to accompany them to healthcare facilities, which can pose a barrier, especially in settings where social or cultural norms discourage women from traveling alone.

'Finally, 6% of respondents mentioned that women feel uncomfortable seeking healthcare, possibly due to social stigma, lack of privacy, or past negative experiences. These findings highlight the urgent need for financial assistance, better reproductive health services, gender-sensitive healthcare infrastructure, and increased female medical staff to ensure that women can access the care they need without barriers.'[227]

15.6.10 The July 2025 UNOCHA report stated:

'The health sector continues to face profound challenges due to the protracted conflict, economic deterioration, and recent funding cuts. The disruption in the supply of medicines and medical equipment remains critical, with essential drugs for chronic diseases, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), communicable diseases, mental health, and maternal and child care in short supply.

'… Limited access to antenatal and postnatal care is evident, as only 1,327 (78 per cent) of 1,702 health facilities have functional basic emergency obstetric and new-born care services. In the most recent RNA by OCHA, 54 per cent of female IDPs interviewed reported unavailability of essential SRH [sexual and reproductive health] services in their locations.'[228]

15.6.11 The July 2025 EUAA report stated:

'The conflict [in Syria's coastal areas in March 2025] severely disrupted access to essential services for women in areas such as Latakia and Tartous, where all health facilities providing sexual and reproductive health had to be suspended due to the instability. UNOCHA indicated that most women in the newly displaced and temporary shelters were facing significant breastfeeding and child feeding difficulties, including lack of shelter, poor hygiene and sanitation. Domestic violence and sexual exploitation were reportedly on the rise according to the GPC, particularly in IDP camps and shelters where women and girls faced increased risks of survival sex and forced marriage.'[229]

[227] IHR, Syria Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (pages 34 – 35), 28 February 2025
[228] UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian… (pages 38 – 39), 24 July 2025
[229] EUAA, Syria: Country Focus (page 60), 7 July 2025

15.6.12 The July 2025 WHO report stated:

> 'In 2024, it was reported that widespread instability and severe underfunding mean that more than one in three health facilities in Syria cannot operate at full capacity. The rest are often undersupplied, overwhelmed and in many cases unable to support patients facing dire health emergencies. In northwest Syria, this has led to a tragic number of pregnant women confronting obstetric emergencies and losing their lives, many while being transferred between hospitals lacking crucial supplies such as medicine and blood. UNFPA data show that these challenges have left more than 2 million people with barely any access to critical support, and some 500,000 women and girls with only limited access to vital sexual and reproductive health services.
>
> 'The fertility rate in Syria was registered as 2.7% per woman in 2021, which is a reduction from 2010 (3.4%). Significant reproductive health needs remain in a county [sic] with limited health capacity for the provision of adequate services and a severely depleted health care workforce.'[230]

15.6.13 The October 2025 UNFPA report stated:

> 'Denial of healthcare was also raised for women with disabilities or elderly women, who struggle to access clinics due to mobility, cost or lack of support.
>
> '… Access to hygiene materials remains limited, which has an important impact on women's and adolescent girls' health as well as limiting their economic and education participation …
>
> '… The particular hygiene needs of pregnant and lactating women, older populations experiencing incontinence and people living with disabilities are not being met.
>
> '… Health facilities are insufficient to meet the needs of women and girls, especially in camp settings …
>
> '… Those [health facilities] that are available are reported to often be unsafe for women and girls, including due to lack of privacy and insufficiently trained staff.
>
> '… Women and girls report that healthcare services lack the necessary medications and services, including those specific to women and girls …
>
> '… GBV experts report that women suffer ill treatment by medical staff, pushing women to resort to private clinics despite higher costs. They also report a lack of female staff and insufficient training for many health workers on GBV services and referrals.'[231]

15.6.14 When using this source, the limitations outlined in paragraphs 8.1.4, 8.1.5 and 12.2.15 should be taken into account.

Back to Contents

16. Freedom of movement

16.1.1 For information on women's freedom of movement, see Societal and cultural norms and attitudes and the CPIN Syria: Internal relocation.

[230] WHO, Public Health Situation Analysis – Syrian Arab… (page 12), 15 August 2025
[231] UNFPA, Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of… (pages 47, 48, 24), 14 October 2025

Back to Contents

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the Common EU [European Union] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information (COI), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the bibliography.

Back to Contents

Terms of Reference

The ‘Terms of Reference’ (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the country information.

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal context, considering laws that protect and/or discriminate – constitution, criminal, penal and civil codes, Sharia and caselaw – applicable to
    - general anti-discrimination provisions
    - specific to women and girls in political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field
- Social, economic and political status
    - socio-economic and political indicators (as compared to men) in the following areas:
        - roles and expectations
        - employment and income
        - government, political parties and public roles
    - cultural and family status and attitudes, including attitudes of religious groups, and representation and discourse in media
    - public sphere – government and politics
    - availability of and access to
        - employment and work
        - education
        - healthcare, including pregnancy
        - finance
    - nationality and citizenship
    - family rights including
        - marriage (including child and forced)
        - divorce
        - ownership and management of property
        - inheritance
        - custody of children
        - guardianship and adoption
        - reproductive rights, such as choice of how many children, contraception and abortion
    - situation of single women
        - geographic or other variations
- Domestic and public violence against women from state and non-state actors

    - nature of violence and perpetrators
    - prevalence, including variations amongst particular groups
- State attitude and assistance to eliminate discrimination
    - government statements
    - government departments, policies and programmes
- State protection
    - security services and judiciary, size, composition, capability and effectiveness, including specific units or groups with the remit to assist women or particularly vulnerable groups such as victims of trafficking
    - attitudes of security forces and judiciary to women
    - accessibility to protection and justice
    - enforcement - arrest and detentions, prosecutions and convictions
    - assistance and support - witness protection, shelters and other support, and compensation
- Civil society assistance
    - number, size and aims of civil society groups assisting women by providing:
        - legal advice and support
        - financial support
        - medical, physical and mental healthcare
        - accommodation and shelters
        - helplines
        - awareness training
- Freedom of movement
    - legal freedoms/restrictions, including documentation
    - safety of movement
    - vulnerabilities of different groups, such as single women, single mothers

Back to Contents

Bibliography

Sources cited

Al Jazeera,

Everything you need to know about Syria's first post-Assad elections, 5 October 2025. Accessed: 29 December 2025

Syria's Baath party dissolved: What happens next?, 30 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Amnesty International, Syria: Authorities must investigate abductions of Alawite women and girls, 28 July 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU),

About us, no date. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Post-Conflict Multisectoral Rapid Needs Assessment in Syria (December 2024), 27 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

BBC Monitoring, Briefing: Syria reveals findings of probe into missing women on coast, 2 November 2025. Accessed: 9 December 2025

CARE,

Northeast Syria: Rapid Gender Analysis Brief: Ar-Raqqa, Deir Ez Zor and Al-Hasakah Governorates, 23 December 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Who We Are, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Christian Solidarity International, Syrian government's denial of Alawite women abductions contradicts mounting international evidence, 12 November 2025. Accessed: 9 December 2025

ConstitutionNet, Constitutional Declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic, 13 March 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

The Conversation,

Syria's new leader promised democracy. Then he exclude women from parliamentary elections, 22 October 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Who we are, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Women played key roles in Syria's revolution. Now they've been pushed to the margins, 14 July 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Co-operation in Mesopotamia,

Homepage, undated. Accessed: 13 November 2025

Mala Jin becomes symbol of women's revolution, July 2022. Accessed: 14 November 2025

Danish Immigration Service (DIS) and Swedish Migration Agency (SMA), Security situation in North and East Syria before the downfall of the Assad government, January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Danish Refugee Council (DRC), International Medical Corps (IMC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Oxfam, Syria Community Consortium Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment, 8 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Oxfam and Intersos, The Missing Link: The Centrality of Protection in Early Recovery Programming in Syra, 29 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

ETANA,

About us, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

STUDY: Refugee Returns & Migrationn Dynamics after Assad, June 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

SURVEY: Public Opinion on Syria's Transition, 17 June 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syria Update #14: 17 January, 16 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

EuroMed Feminist Initiative,

Situation report on discriminations against women in Syria, 2023 (no specific date provided). Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syria: Situation report on Violence against Women, November 2017. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Who we are, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Syria: Situation of women, 2 February 2020. Accessed: 17 November 2025

European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA),

Country Guidance: Syria, 7 February 2023

Syria: Country Focus, 25 March 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syria: Country Focus, 7 July 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syria: Major human rights, security, and socio-economic developments, 1 October 2025. Accessed: 29 December 2025

Syria: Targeting of Individuals, 28 September 2022. Accessed: 17 November 2025

France 24,

Between freedom and restrictions, Syrians navigate new reality, 4 May 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Women in Syria: Could the future be female?, 21 March 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Freedom House,

About Us, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Freedom in the World 2025: Syria, 26 February 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Gender Campus, Women's Rights in Northeast Syria: Enforcing Gender Equality, 9 December 2022. Accessed: 14 November 2025

GIZ,

About us, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Safeguarding Housing, Land and Property Rights of Syria Refugees and Internally Displaced People – HLP II, 8 March 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Global Protection Cluster (GPC),

Protection Landscape in Syria: A Snapshot (March 2025), 3 April 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Who We Are, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

GOAL, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Mercy Corps, Solidarités International, Syria Returnee Rapid Assessment (May 2025), 19 June 2025

Grasso, D., Gender Relationships and Legal Change in Syria. The Family Law Reforms of the Rojava Revolution, Chapter of book 'Women and Peace: The Role of Women and Women's Civil Society Organizations in Peace Processes', January 2024. Accessed: 14 November 2025

The Guardian, 'Woman, life, freedom: the Syrian feminists who forged a new world in a land of war, 9 February 2025. Accessed: 13 November 2025

Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR), Syria, End of an Era: From the Fall of Brutality to the Rise of Uncertainty, 21 May 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

House of Commons Library,

Syria after Assad: Consequences and interim authorities 2025, 23 July 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syria: What is the situation five months after Assad's fall?, 9 May 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Human Rights First (HRF),

About us, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

We plant the trees, they cut them down: Challenges and promise in post-Assad Syria, 30 June 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Human Rights Watch, World Report 2025: Syria, 16 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

International Crisis Group (ICG), A Helping Hand for Post-Assad Syria (page 3), 22 May 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

International Humanitarian Relief (IHR),

About us, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syria Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, 28 February 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

International Labour Organization (ILO), Syria: Promoting decent work in time of transition, 15 October 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

International Medical Corps (IMC), Syria Emergency Response Situation Report #7, February 12, 2025, 28 February 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

International University College of Turin, Davide Grasso, undated. Accessed: 14 November 2025

Jinha,

About, undated. Accessed: 11 November 2025

"Family Law of North and East Syria protects women from violence", 21 November 2024. Accessed: 13 November 2025

Mala Jin provides information to women about their legal rights, 16 June 2025. Accessed: 11 November 2025.

Zenobia Women's Gathering: Targeting Our Headquarters Is An Attempt to undermine the Will of Free Women, 17 October 2025. Accessed: 29 December 2025

Maat,

About us, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Maat for Peace's report submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women regarding Syrian Arab Republic under the List of Issues, May 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Medya News,

About us, undated (link expired because Medya News shut down in June 2025). Accessed: 17 November 2025

Gender segregation imposed at Damascus hospital, April 2025 (link expired because Medya News shut down in June 2025). Accessed: 17 November 2025

"Mala Jin": The Unique Women's Houses Transforming Middle Eastern Society, 20 November 2024. Accessed: 9 December 2025

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA),

General Country of Origin Information Report Syria (August 2023), 7 August 2023. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Official report Syria, 31 May 2025 (automated translation). Accessed: 17 November 2025

The New Arab,

About Us, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Why Syrian women's political participation is crucial in building the new Syria, 11 February 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

New Lines Institute,

About, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Gender, Power, and Peacebuilding in Postwar Syria, 16 September 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

New Lines Magazine, Islamism Is Still Thriving in Idlib, 12 March 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

North-West Syria Protection Cluster and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Minorities Protection Barriers Assessment in North-West Syria (May 2025), 22 May 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Facing an impossible choice: Refugee women's housing, land and property rights in Syria, 27 August 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Rojava Information Center,

Beyond the Frontlines: The building of the democratic system in North and East Syria, 19 December 2019. Accessed: 13 November 2025

Beyond Rojava: North and East Syria's Arab Regions, 2 June 2021

Building Peace: North and East Syria's Women's House, April 2020. Accessed: 14 November 2025

DAANES' Social Contract, 2023 Edition, 14 December 2023. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Interview – Sara Organization, 25 November 2024. Accessed: 13 November 2025

Interview – Zenobia Women's Gathering, 28 August 2024. Accessed: 13 November 2025

Syria Direct, Protection or Intervention? Focus on Syria's minorities sparks controversy, fuels hate speech, 29 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), Syria Complex Emergency – Need Assessment Report, 10 March 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syrian Feminist Lobby, Joint Statement on the Report Issued by the Ministry of Interior's Committee Regarding the Crimes of Abduction, 3 November 2025. Accessed: 9 December 2025

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR),

About Us, undated. Accessed: 29 December 2025

Security chaos: Women's headquarters burned in Abo Hamam Town in Deir Ezzor, 15 October 2025. Accessed: 29 December 2025

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ),

About STJ, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syria's Transitional Phase: "Honor" Killings Persist Amid Failing Protection and Legal Response, 19 June 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syrian Network for Human Rights and Loyola Law School, NGO Joint Parallel Report on the Government of Syria's Combined Third and Fourth Reports on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, May 2025

Synergy Association for Victims, Northern Syria: Women as Victims in Various Forms, from Domestic Violence to Violations and Conflict-Related Crimes, 17 March 2024

Truthout, About, undated. Accessed: 13 November 2025

Truthout, Rojava's Women-Led Restorative Justice System Centers Mediation, Not Retribution, 20 October 2023. Accessed: 13 November 2025

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),

Jordan: Mid-year analysis on returns to Syria from Jordan (January-June 2025), 24 July 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA),

Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025

Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities – January to June 2025, 27 March 2025. Accessed: 12 November 2025

United Nations Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR),

Gendered impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic on women and girls, 12 June 2023. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls, 21 August 2025. Accessed: 29 December 2025

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA),

An Overview of Gender-Based Violence in Syria (2024), 24 January 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming, 25 November 2019. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Regional Quarterly Report on the Syria Crisis / Q4 2024, 26 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syria Situation Report #2,10 June 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Whole of Syria Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility: Voices from Syria 2019 - Assessment Findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview, 5 May 2019. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Women and Girls Safe Spaces: Sustainability and Effectivenesss Assessment Report, 28 September 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Whole of Syria: Gender-Based Violence Strategy 2024 – 2025, 22 July 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Voices from Syria 2025: Assessment Findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview, 14 October 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders (SRHRD), Syria: targeting and online defamation of WHRD Hiba Ezzideen Al-Hajji since April 2025 (joint communication), 19 August 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Un Ponte Per,

What we do, undated. Accessed: 11 November 2025

Women's home in Syria: A history of feminist struggle, 5 March 2025. Accessed: 11 November 2025

USA for UNFPA, What does GBV (gender-based violence) mean? Breaking down UN terminology, undated. Accessed: 8 December 2025

Women Defend Rojava,

About Us, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Mala Jin: Empowering women and strengthening society, January 2021 (updated 3 February 2022), Accessed: 14 November 2025

SARA organisation: Being on our feet all day to end patriarchal violence, 18 December 2024. Accessed: 13 November 2025

World Bank, Metadata Glossary: Labor force participation rate, undated. Accessed:

17 November 2025

World Health Organisation (WHO),

Public Health Situation Analysis – Syrian Arab Republic, 15 August 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Whole of Syrian Arab Republic: Public Health Situation Analysis, 14 October 2024. Accessed: 11 November 2025

Back to Contents

Sources consulted but not cited

ACAPS,

Syria: Risk analysis: escalating sectarian tensions and humanitarian implications, July–December 2025, 22 July 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syria: Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Northwest Syria, 3 June 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Adalaty Centre, Syrian Women: Negotiating Freedoms and Social Heritage, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights 2024, 30 May 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, Anfragebeantwortung zu Syrien: Idlib: Situation von Frauen in den von der Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) kontrollierten Gebieten, vor allem alleinstehende Frauen, 12 December 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum Country of Origin Information Unit,

DOSSIER: Syria Socio-Economic Survey 2024, 28 October 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Staatendokumentation Research Paper; Syria: The Role of Family and Social Networks for Returning Syrian Refugees, 21 October 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

BBC News,

Life in Idlib hints at what Syria can expect from rebel rule, 18 December 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syrians have more freedom after Assad, but could they soon lose it?, 18 April 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

The Borgen Project, The Gender Wage Gap in Syria and the Fight for Empowerment, 15 July 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

CARE, Meet the women leading Syria's fights for survival and recovery, 14 February 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

The Conversation,

Syria: doubts increase over new regime's commitment to women's rights and inclusivity, 20 February 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Women are at risk under Syria's new government, and the international

community must push for women's rights, 21 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Co-operation in Mesopotamia,

Support center for young women opens in Raqqa, 18 June 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

'Zenobia's legacy challenges and encourages women to actively participate in building Syria's future' – Interview, 11 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

DOZ and Un Ponte Per, Women's Employment in Raqqa: A participatory assessment of women's work situation, interests, and perceptions, 23 May 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Enab Baladi, Syrian women's clothing: A debate reflecting societal transformations, 14 February 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Feminist Eye, Discriminatory Provisions against Women and Girls in Syria's Penal Code and Personal Status Laws, undated. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Global Protection Cluster, Syria Protection Sector Mid-Year Report (January – June 2025), 21 August 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Hawar News Agency, 13 Years Since the July 19 Revolution: Coexistence through 4,138 Communes, Councils, 21 July 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

IMPACT, In Private and in Public: Gender roles and forms of violence against women in Northeast Syria, May 2023. Accessed: 17 November 2025

International Crisis Group, What Lies in Store for Syria as a New Government Takes Power?, 25 April 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

International Feminist Journal of Politics, Negotiating what it means to be "free": gender equality and governance in North and East Syria, 17 November 2023. Accessed: 17 November 2025

International Medical Corps, Syria Emergency Response Situation Report #9, 16 April 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Jinha,

Mala Jin aims to support women, 23 November 2022. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Targeting of Zenobia Women's Gathering in Deir ez-Zor: An Attempt to Deter Women, 22 October 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

openDemocracy, A murder in Syria reignites the debate about so-called 'honour killings',13 July 2021. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Piccardi, Eleonora Gea, At the crossroads between theory and praxis. How Kurdish Democratic Confederalism is articulating feminism, democracy, and ecology (Doctoral Thesis – University of Coimbra, Portugal), November 2023. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Provost, René, Kurdish Non-State Justice in North-Eastern Syria (Chapter of book Le Rojava démocratique et le droit), 1 January 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

REACH, Syria: Dana City Labour Market Assessment: Microenterprises (January 2025), 21 March 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Refugees International, Beyond the Fall: Rebuilding Syria After Assad, 2 May 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

SyriacPress, Syrian Democratic Council and Zenobia Women's Gathering form new committee to empower women in Syria's reconstruction efforts, 14 April 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syrian Future Movement, Discrimination Against Syrian Women, Northern Syria as a Case Study, 22 September 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Syrian Network for Human Rights, The Death of 2818 Civilians Including 201 Children and 194 Women, and 17 Deaths due to Torture Recorded in the First Half of 2025, 3 July 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

Regional Flash Update #31 Syria situation crisis, 13 June 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Regional Flash Update #33 Syria situation crisis, 26 June 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Regional Flash Update #39 Syria situation crisis, 8 August 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Regional Flash Update #40 Syria situation crisis, 15 August 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Syria Situation Report #1, 17 January 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

United States Department of State, 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 12 August 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Un Ponte Per, Siria: La silenziosa rivoluzione delle Mala Jin, 8 March 2022. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Wilson Center, Syrian Women's Leadership in a Fractured State, 1 April 2020. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Women Defend Rojava, About Zenobiya: The Arabic Women's Union of North and East Syria, 1 September 2024. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Women Now for Development, Surviving Freedom: An analysis of the experiences of female survivors of detention after their release, based on the testimonies of the 'Survivors or not Yet' Campaign, 2 December 2020. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Worldcrunch, Regimes May Change in Syria – The Scourge of Honor Killings Persists, 17 April 2025. Accessed: 17 November 2025

Back to Contents

Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from 30 December 2025

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

Back to Contents

Changes from last version of this note

First version

Back to Contents

Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the Country Policy and Information Team.

Back to Contents

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information
Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration
3rd Floor
28 Kirby Street
London
EC1N 8TE
Email: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the gov.uk website.

Back to Contents