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Syria

*Security Situation, Return
and Documents*



Centre for Documentation
and Counter Extremism

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Syria – Security Situation, Return and Documents

This thematic COI report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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Introduction

This thematic report examines the latest developments in the security situation in Syria, patterns of return among Syrian refugees, and the challenges faced by returnees since the fall of Assad's government in December 2024. The report also reviews recent amendments to Syrian official documentation and the administrative procedures introduced following the change of government.

The purpose of this report is to provide up-to-date information relevant to the processing of asylum cases. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the report were developed by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) in consultation with the Secretariat of the Danish Refugee Appeals Board. The ToR are included in [Annex 2](#).

The report is written in accordance with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) Country of Origin (COI) Report Methodology.¹

The reporting period covers 8 December 2024 to 31 October 2025. However, relevant information that has emerged after 31 October 2025 is also included.

The information presented in this report is based on written sources, as well as data collected through online and in-person meetings with interlocutors in Europe, Damascus (Syria), and Beirut (Lebanon). Meetings with sources in Damascus and Beirut were conducted during a visit to Lebanon and Syria from 21 to 26 September 2025. The information gathered from these meetings is used in two reports, which have been drafted simultaneously: the present report and another report – *Syria: Situation of Certain Groups* – which is published together with this report.

Prior to and during the visit to Beirut and Damascus, meetings were held with a number of different types of sources, including international organisations, human rights organisations, security organisations, religious organisations, NGOs, legal sources, activists, journalists, and authorities. The purpose of the meetings was explained to all interlocutors, and they were informed that their statements would be included in a publicly available report. Most sources requested varying degrees of anonymity. In this context, it should be noted that in the event that two or more sources have requested to be referred to by the same anonymous title, for instance 'an international organisation', a number is used to distinguish between sources with the same title, e.g. 'an international organisation (1)', 'an international organisation (2)', etc.

Draft meeting minutes were forwarded to the sources for approval, giving them the opportunity to amend, comment on, or correct their statements to ensure that the minutes accurately reflected the information they had provided. Most sources approved their statements. Those who did not reply to DIS' follow-ups were informed that, unless they submitted their feedback or approval within the specified deadline, their statements would be

¹ EUAA, *Country of Origin (COI) Report Methodology*, February 2022, [url](#)

considered approved and included in the report. The meeting minutes can be found in [Annex 1](#).

The report is a synthesis of information obtained from oral and written sources and does not include all details and nuances provided by the sources. In the report, care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The individual sources should not be held accountable for the content of the report.

For transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the meeting minutes have been numbered consecutively and referenced in the report's footnotes. In instances where sources have provided information beyond the ToR, yet relevant to asylum cases, this information has been incorporated in the minutes, but not addressed in the report.

Additionally, it should be noted that as some consulted sources provided information relevant for both reports mentioned above, some meeting minutes contain information pertinent to both reports. To preserve the context of the information and to avoid fragmenting the minutes, these have been included in full, even when parts of them are not directly relevant to the present report or quoted extensively in the report at hand.

During the visit, and due to external circumstances, the DIS was unable to consult key authorities such as the Syrian Civil Affairs Directorate and the Department of Immigration and Passports, which would typically serve as the primary interlocutors on matters related to the issuance of documents in Syria. To mitigate this limitation, the DIS consulted a lawyer residing in Syria with relevant expertise. Nevertheless, the delegation was unable to cover several topics as initially planned.

The information presented in this report is not exhaustive and should be read in conjunction with other publicly available and relevant COI on Syria. This includes, among other sources, reports published by the EUAA and other national and international institutions involved in collecting country of origin information.

Attention should be paid to the evolving situation in Syria which may render some information outdated. It is therefore important to update information related to issues addressed in this report regularly. The DIS will continue to monitor developments and conduct in-depth research to ensure that reliable and up-to-date information is made available as appropriate.

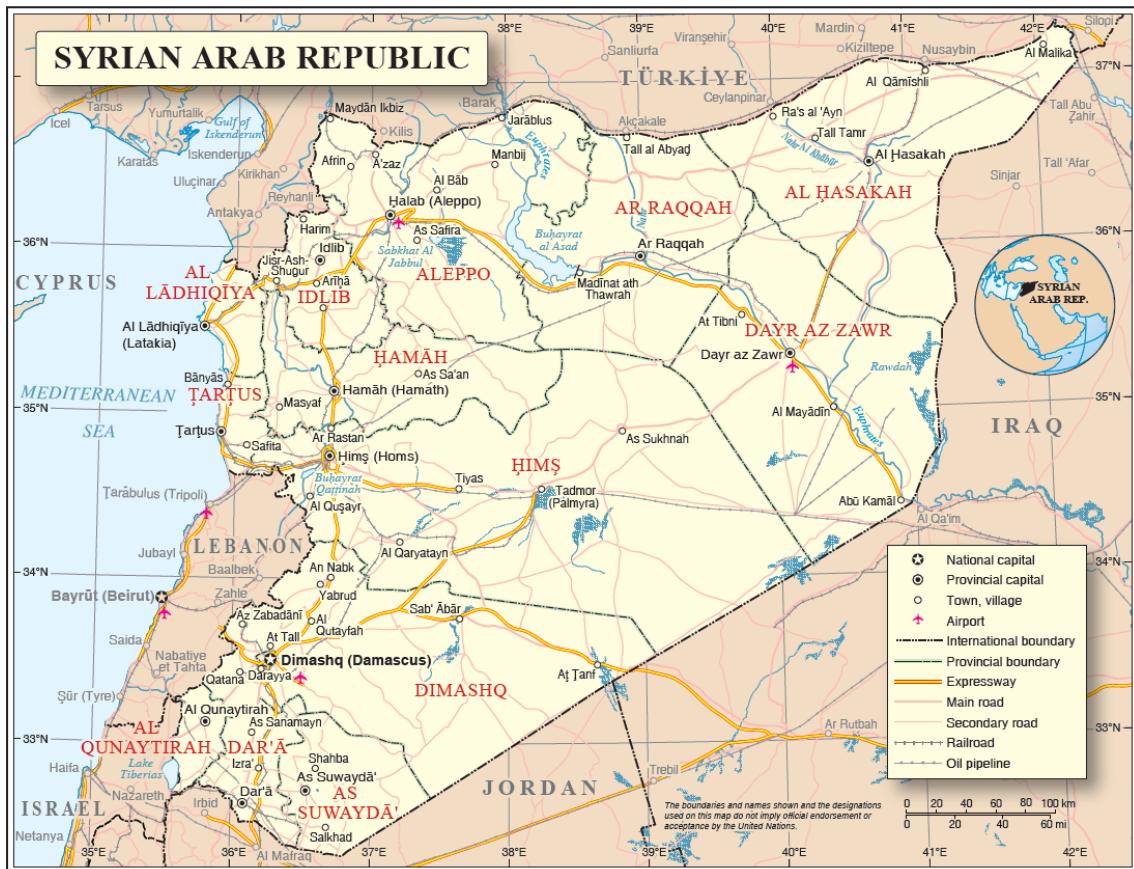
Finally, the DIS wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Embassy of Denmark in Beirut for facilitating the delegation's visit to Lebanon and Syria.

Research and editing were finalised on 30 November 2025. The report is publicly available on the website of the Danish Immigration Service, www.us.dk, and may be consulted by all stakeholders involved in refugee status determination, as well as by the general public.

Abbreviations

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
COI	Country of Origin Information
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
GAPAR	General Authority for Palestine Arab Refugees
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IS	Islamic State
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoD	Ministry of Defence
Mol	Ministry of Interior
NES	Northeast Syria
OCHA	The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PRS	Palestinian Refugees from Syria
SAA	Syrian Arab Army
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SNA	Syrian National Army
SNHR	Syrian Network for Human Rights
SSG	Syrian Salvation Government
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance

Maps



Map 1: Syrian Arab Republic, © United Nations²

² UN Geospatial, *Syrian Arab Republic*, Map No. 4204 Rev. 4, August 2022, [url](#)

1. Background

After the fall of President Bashar al-Assad's government in December 2024, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) leader Ahmed Al-Sharaa assumed the position of Syria's interim president. He issued a constitutional declaration outlining a five-year transitional phase leading up to the adoption of a permanent constitution and national elections. The declaration established a powerful presidential system and identified Islamic jurisprudence as the principal foundation for legislation. In March 2025, a transitional government was established, comprising ministers from various ethnic and religious groups, although individuals affiliated with HTS held most key positions.³

In terms of security, the Ministries of Defence (MoD) and Interior (MoI) have concentrated on reorganising domestic forces and strengthening central authority. The MoD has been engaged in integrating various armed groups and developing a new military framework, while the MoI has maintained responsibilities for civil registration and immigration, lowered passport fees, and continued efforts to combat drug trafficking.⁴

Mandatory conscription has been abolished, and recruitment to the new Syrian army is voluntary. There are no reports of forced recruitment or social pressure to enlist.⁵ Many individuals reportedly join primarily for financial reasons, as the salary in the army is relatively high.⁶ In addition, a large proportion of those joining the new army are Sunni Arabs with a religiously conservative profile⁷ who regard the new government as a preferable alternative to the previous one. Consequently, there is no need to force or pressure people to join.⁸

Economic conditions continue to be severe, with minimal improvement in living standards despite wage increases and government initiatives within different sectors. The Ministries of Economy and Finance have sought to encourage investment and reform of the financial sector by renewing international economic relations and preparing new legislation. Nonetheless, deep-rooted structural problems, low confidence in financial institutions, and limited liquidity have constrained progress. Although the Syrian pound has experienced a degree of stabilisation, this has not resulted in tangible benefits for the population. Unemployment remains widespread, and more than 90 percent of Syrians live below the poverty line.⁹

In the service sectors, initiatives to restore infrastructure, enhance healthcare, and develop digital communications have been slow to materialise or have had limited effect. The

³ EUAA, *EUAA COI report highlights challenging transition in post-Assad Syria*, 8 July 2025, [url](#)

⁴ DIS, *Syria: Security, military service and the situation of certain profiles*, September 2025, [url](#), p. 6

⁵ SNHR: 14; Syrian human rights organisation (1): 29; international organisation (1): 29–30

⁶ Syrian human rights organisation (1): 29

⁷ Syrian human rights organisation (1): 30; international organisation (1): 29

⁸ International organisation (1): 29

⁹ DIS, *Syria: Security, military service and the situation of certain profiles*, September 2025, [url](#), p. 6

healthcare system continues to rely heavily on international NGOs, and the education sector has undergone little reform despite stated plans to update curricula and facilities. Crucial challenges, including access to education for returning refugees and the modernisation of higher education, remain largely unaddressed.¹⁰

¹⁰ DIS, *Syria: Security, military service and the situation of certain profiles*, September 2025, [url](#), p. 7

2. Security situation in government-controlled areas

2.1. General security situation in government-controlled areas

Since late 2024, general security in Syria has remained fragile.¹¹ The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported in September 2025 that between 8 December 2024 and 6 September 2025, 10,672 people were killed in Syria due to violence and human rights abuses, including 8,180 civilians—with 438 children and 620 women among them. Perpetrators reportedly include, among others, forces of the interim government or factions linked to it, Islamic State (IS), the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and unidentified gunmen. In addition, some deaths have resulted from criminal activity and explosions of old ordnance.¹²

The United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria has documented human rights violations attributed both to elements loyal to the former government and to forces aligned with the interim authority.¹³

According to a consulted international security organisation, the country witnessed a sharp rise in targeted killings and sectarian retaliations after the political change in December 2024, particularly in the coastal and central regions. The targets of these attacks were individuals affiliated with the former government, perceived as complicit in abuses against the local population in these areas during the Assad rule. The violence was thus driven by deep-seated local grievances and a desire for retribution. However, the trend has since declined, possibly due to the interim government's increased effectiveness in apprehending and prosecuting the former government's perpetrators in the legal system.¹⁴

At the same time, an overall increase in crime incidents was reported during the reporting period,¹⁵ particularly economically motivated crimes such as highway robberies and kidnappings, high-profile robberies as well as financially-related homicides in urban areas such as Damascus.¹⁶ A wealthy district of Damascus experienced fatal robberies in the autumn of 2025, prompting the government to pledge stronger measures to combat crime.¹⁷ According to an international security organisation, the governorates of Aleppo and Homs continued to experience significant levels of criminal activity, weapons proliferation, and other hazard-

¹¹ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025)*, 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 2

¹² SOHR, *Including 3,020 people extrajudicially executed | 10,672 people killed in Syria since fall of Al-Assad regime*, 7 September 2025, [url](#)

¹³ UN, *'Repeated bouts of violence' put Syria rebuilding at risk: Independent rights investigator*, 30 October 2025, [url](#)

¹⁴ International security organisation: 2

¹⁵ International security organisation: 1; The National, *Rising crime poses challenge for Syrian authorities as stability remains elusive*, 7 August 2025, [url](#); UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025)*, 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁶ International security organisation: 3; The National, *Rising crime poses challenge for Syrian authorities as stability remains elusive*, 7 August 2025, [url](#)

¹⁷ The National, *Rising crime poses challenge for Syrian authorities as stability remains elusive*, 7 August 2025, [url](#)

related incidents¹⁸ with Aleppo recording a higher number of such cases. Additionally, traffic accidents have increased markedly, possibly linked to the sharp rise in vehicle imports following the fall of the government.¹⁹

According to Syria researcher Gregory Waters, two main drivers shape current insecurity: (1) weak local security leadership and inconsistent enforcement of discipline, and (2) escalating inter-communal conflicts, particularly over unresolved property claims and cycles of revenge, currently the leading trigger of sectarian violence.²⁰

2.1.1. Security situation in certain governorates

The security situation in Damascus remains relatively stable compared to conditions in other governorates.²¹ However, there has been an observed pattern of criminals impersonating security personnel in order to carry out armed robberies.²² In addition, the city experienced isolated attacks in mid-2025. A suicide bombing on 22 June at Mar St. Elias Church killed at least 27 people. Israeli airstrikes in July and August targeted the Ministry of Defence and military sites near the capital, causing civilian and military casualties. Additional incidents included car bombings and IED attacks in al-Mezzeh. Authorities also reported dismantling a Hezbollah cell in the suburbs in September.²³

Since August–September 2025, tensions between the SDF and the transitional government's forces have increased in the eastern and northern countryside of Aleppo.²⁴ Aleppo city was as of September 2025 relatively calm and generally stable, though sporadic retaliatory attacks against individuals affiliated with the former government (known as former *Shabiha*) continue. Limited tensions and some clashes between government forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) persist in the Sheikh Maqsoud neighbourhood, where the SDF remains in control.²⁵

Sources consulted by the Czech Department for Asylum and Migration Policy in May and June 2025 assessed the security situation in Homs city as relatively stable, whereas rural areas of the

¹⁸ By “hazards,” the international security organisation refers to incidents caused by natural phenomena, such as earthquakes or floods, as well as other relevant incidents like car accidents or explosions caused by remnants of war, such as IEDs. In this specific context, the source meant that there has been an increase in the car accidents and explosion caused by war remnants.

¹⁹ International security organisation: 3, 5

²⁰ Waters, G., *A New Syria Starts to Take Shape, Syria Revisited*, 29 September 2025, [url](#)

²¹ Brookings, *Seizing the opening in Syria and Lebanon*, 7 November 2025, [url](#)

²² Enab Baladi, *Where It Succeeded and Where It Failed Syria's Interior Ministry Caught Between Security Setbacks and Abuses Undermining Public Trust*, 13 August 2025, [url](#)

²³ EUAA, *COI Query, Syrian Arab Republic, Major human rights, security, and socio-economic developments*, 1 October 2025, [url](#), pp. 9

²⁴ EUAA, *COI Query, Syrian Arab Republic, Major human rights, security, and socio-economic developments*, 1 October 2025, [url](#), pp. 9-10

²⁵ International security organisation: 9; The New Arab, *Cautious calm in Aleppo after clashes between Syrian forces and Kurdish fighters*, 7 October 2025, [url](#)

Homs governorate were described as experiencing more frequent security incidents.²⁶ Although initial surges in sectarian violence following the political transition have subsided, financially motivated crimes and sporadic reprisals against minority communities persist. The central region, which includes Homs, continues to be sensitive due to its geographical proximity to Lebanon and sustained illicit cross-border activity. Despite government-led security operations resulting in the seizure of weapons and narcotics, smuggling networks remain active, maintaining the area's volatility.²⁷

In the province of Idlib, Syrian government forces clashed with an internationally wanted extremist foreign fighter group led by the French-Senegalese militant Omar Diaby over alleged abuses and weapons stockpiles in October 2025. The incident highlights the challenges facing Syria's new authorities in managing foreign fighters and maintaining security.²⁸ There is a growing mistrust among Syrians, especially minorities, towards foreign fighters whose ideological backgrounds and behaviour may conflict with social cohesion and the new state's legitimacy.²⁹

Long-standing tensions between Druze and Sunni Bedouin tribes in Suweida escalated into deadly sectarian violence on 13–25 July 2025, following the abduction of a Druze merchant on the Damascus–Suweida highway. The incident prompted intervention by forces from the MoD and the Mol.³⁰ Alongside reports of extrajudicial executions and large-scale displacement, the clashes resulted in hundreds of deaths — including among Druze civilians, government personnel, and Bedouin fighters — with responsibility attributed to government forces, Bedouin tribes, and Druze armed group.³¹

Despite a ceasefire reached on 15 July 2025 between Druze leaders and the Syrian government,³² the situation remains volatile, with renewed clashes in late October 2025 between government forces and Druze armed groups following statements by Druze leader Sheikh Hekmat al-Hijri calling for self-determination and international recognition of alleged

²⁶ The Czech Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, European and International Affairs Unit, *Fact-Finding Mission – Syria*, August 2025, [url](#), p. 13

²⁷ International security organisation: 10

²⁸ AP, *What to know about the French militants who clashed with Syrian forces in Idlib*, 23 October 2025, [url](#); The New Arab, *Will foreign fighters test the stability of post-Assad Syria?*, 29 October 2025, [url](#)

²⁹ The New Arab, *Will foreign fighters test the stability of post-Assad Syria?*, 29 October 2025, [url](#)

³⁰ Enab Baladi, Local Witnesses: *Violations Target Civilians from Suwayda's Bedouin Community*, 17 July 2025, [url](#); BBC, *Bedouins tell BBC they could return to fighting Druze in Syria*, 20 July 2025, [url](#)

³¹ BBC, *Almost 600 killed in south Syria violence, monitoring group says*, 17 July 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Escalation in Al-Suwaida reaches an end | Military and security forces withdraw after having committed blatant violations and massacres*, 17 July 2025, [url](#); The Guardian, *'Shot in the head, as if executed': four days of violence end with hundreds dead in southern Syria*, 18 July 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Execution by throwing from apartments and beheading | Grave violations and war crimes committed during clashes in Al-Suwaida*, 19 July 2025, [url](#)

³² SOHR, *Ceasefire violation | Clashes continue in Al-Suwaida and armed groups advance towards residential neighbourhoods*, 21 July 2025, [url](#); AlJazeera, *Syria announces ceasefire in Druze city of Suwayda after deadly clashes*, 15 July 2025, [url](#)

abuses.³³ Violence escalated again on 14 November 2025, when the government's Internal Security Forces and the National Guard exchanged fire in western Suweida. At least seven Internal Security personnel were wounded, and both sides accused each other of violating the 19 July ceasefire and de-confliction agreement.³⁴ Judge Hatem Naasan, who heads the committee investigating the July 2025 violence against civilians in Suweida, stated on 16 November that security and military personnel shown in online videos and identified in the committee's findings as having committed violations had been detained.³⁵

2.1.2. *Explosive remnants of war (ERW)*

Fourteen years after the Syrian conflict began, large parts of Syria remain heavily contaminated with explosive remnants of war (ERW), including Unexploded Ordnance (UXO),³⁶ particularly in Homs, Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor, and Daraa governorates. Between August and October 2025, 108 incidents caused 158 civilian casualties, mostly men and boys.³⁷ Rural and semi-urban areas, e.g. Rural Damascus, are among the most heavily contaminated zones.³⁸

Landmines and UXO continue to endanger civilian lives, hinder recovery efforts, and pose particular risks to children due to their distinctive, brightly colored appearance and the children's lack of awareness of risk as well as their natural curiosity.³⁹

In September 2025, the government appealed for international assistance to accelerate clearance efforts.⁴⁰ According to estimates by a demining organisation, the clearance of contaminated areas may take several decades.⁴¹

2.1.3. *Islamic State (IS)*

Following the fall of the Assad government, the Islamic State (IS) initially exhibited a period of relative inactivity. However, since May 2025, IS has been observed reconfiguring its

³³ SOHR, *Dramatic developments follow Sheikh Hekmat Al-Hijri's statements / Many killed and wounded in separate attacks in Al-Suwaydaa*, 29 October 2025, [url](#); Aljazeera, *Syrian security forces deploy in Suwayda; US brokers Israel-Syria ceasefire*, 19 July 2025, [url](#)

³⁴ Enab Baladi, *Renewed clashes in Suwayda amid mutual accusations of violating the ceasefire agreement*, 14 November 2025, [url](#)

³⁵ Al-Jazeera, *Syria detains members of security forces over Suwayda violence*, 16 November 2025, [url](#)

³⁶ ICRC, *ICRC voices: Contending with Syria's deadly legacy of war*, 28 August 2025, [url](#); HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, [url](#)

³⁷ Mine Action Area of Responsibility, *Syria Mine Action AoR Situation Update No. 5*, 15 October 2025, [url](#)

³⁸ International security organisation: 12

³⁹ International security organisation: 13; ICRC, *ICRC voices: Contending with Syria's deadly legacy of war*, 28 August 2025, [url](#)

⁴⁰ International security organisation: 13

⁴¹ Swissinfo, *Swiss NGOs face huge challenge of demining Syria*, 4 July 2025, [url](#); The Guardian, *Landmines in Syria kill hundreds of civilians returning home after fall of Assad*, 17 March 2025, [url](#); ICRC, *ICRC voices: Contending with Syria's deadly legacy of war*, 28 August 2025, [url](#)

organisational structure, with sleeper cells emerging in the South, particularly during September 2025.⁴²

IS in southern Syria primarily targets General Security forces and individuals associated with the interim government. Notable incidents include an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in May 2025 causing multiple casualties among General Security personnel.⁴³

In the eastern desert region of Homs governorate (Badiya), IS maintains a limited presence, mainly targeting the SDF. Its operational activity in this area has declined in both scope and effectiveness compared to previous years. No attacks on civilians engaged in truffle collection, which occurred in previous years, have been reported in 2025.⁴⁴

In the northeast, IS has intensified attacks and regrouped, despite ongoing SDF counter-terrorism operations and mass detentions of suspected fighters.⁴⁵

According to Syria Weekly, IS attacks accounted for 13 of 59 violent deaths in Syria during the second half of October 2025 (22 percent), making them the second leading cause of fatalities during this period.⁴⁶

2.1.4. *Israeli attacks*

Since the political transition in December 2024, Israeli airstrikes have targeted military installations in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, and Daraa. In Quneitra, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) have conducted operations to gather intelligence, seize weapons, and question individuals suspected of past collaboration with Hezbollah or Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. According to the online news media the National, these actions align with Israel's strategic objectives of preventing weapons transfers to proxy groups such as Hezbollah and strengthening control over the Golan Heights. Most operations have taken place in sparsely populated areas, minimising risks to civilians. However, an exception occurred in March 2025 in the village of Koya, western Daraa, where clashes between local residents and the IDF led to civilian casualties and the displacement of several families.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, negotiations between Israel and Syria regarding a possible security arrangement are ongoing, although Syria has ruled out full normalisation of relations.⁴⁸

⁴² International security organisation: 14

⁴³ International security organisation: 15

⁴⁴ International security organisation: 16

⁴⁵ BBC, *Inside Syria's jail for IS suspects as officials say attacks by group are rising*, 26 October 2025, [url](#); ICCT, *The Islamic State in 2025: an Evolving Threat Facing a Waning Global Response*, 11 July 2025, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Syria Weekly, *Data Update (October 14-28, 2025)*, 30 October 2025, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Aljazeera, *Maps: Israel has attacked six countries in the past 72 hours*, 10 September 2025, [url](#); BBC, *Syria accuses Israel of carrying out air strikes*, 9 September 2025, [url](#); Aljazeera, *Israeli army carries out its latest ground incursion in southern Syria*, 14 September 2025, [url](#); BBC, *Syria accuses Israel of carrying out air strikes*, 9 September 2025, [url](#); The Guardian, *Israeli forces raid former air defence base near Syrian capital*, 28 August 2025, [url](#)

⁴⁸ Aljazeera, *Israeli army carries out its latest ground incursion in southern Syria*, 14 September 2025, [url](#)

2.2. Territorial control

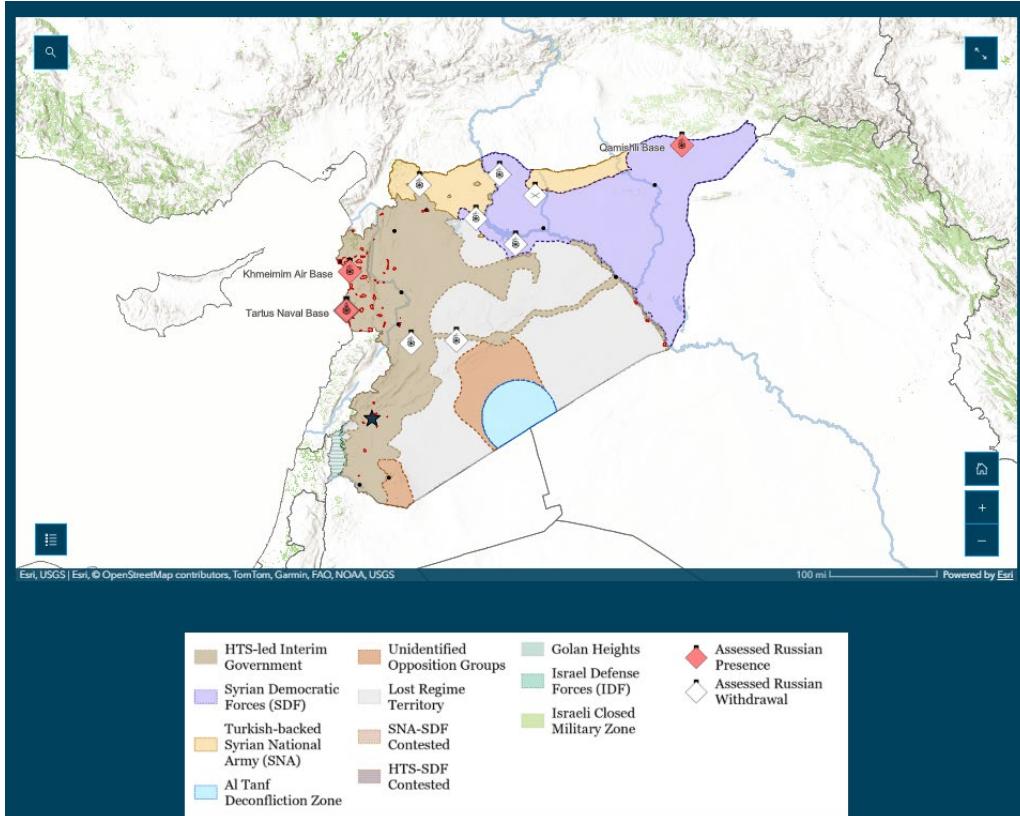


Figure 1: ISW, Assessed Control Terrain in Syria October 31, 2025 at 2:00 pm EST, [url](#)

According to an assessment published on 31 October 2025 by the Institute for the Study of War and the Critical Threats Project, territorial control in Syria remains divided among several actors. The Damascus-based government retains control over western Syria and parts of the south, including major cities such as Damascus, Homs, Hama, and parts of Aleppo. The government's General Security forces are present across the province, while control of Suweida city remains with Druze factions.⁴⁹

Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) forces control territory in the north, primarily along the Turkish border in northern Aleppo as well as parts of Raqqa and Hasakah, while the SDF maintains control over large parts of northeastern Syria, including the majority of Hasakah and Raqqa, as well as parts of Deir ez-Zor.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ ISW, Assessed Control Terrain in Syria as of October 31 2025 at 2:00 pm EST, October 31 2025, [url](#); Rudaw, *Cautious calm prevails in Suwayda after ceasefire breaches kill two, injure seven*, 26 November 2025, [url](#)

⁵⁰ ISW, Assessed Control Terrain in Syria as of October 31 2025 at 2:00 pm EST, October 31 2025, [url](#)

2.3. Security incidents in Syria December 2024 – October 2025

According to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), the number of security incidents recorded throughout Syria between December 2024 and October 2025 is declining.⁵¹ The incidents⁵² included battles, explosions/remote violence, and violence against civilians inflicted by organised armed groups.⁵³

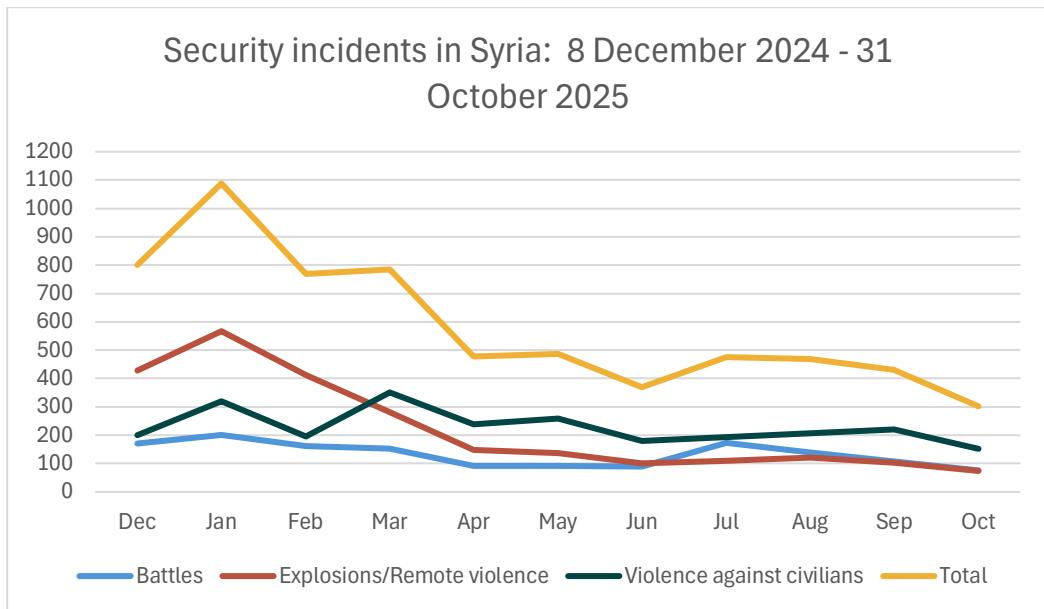


Figure 2: ACLED security events coded as 'Battles', 'Explosions/Remote violence', and 'Violence against civilians' between 8 December 2024 and 31 October 2025. The figure has been produced by DIS based on ACLED security-event data.

The chart in Figure 2 illustrates monthly trends in conflict-related events across Syria, disaggregated by type of incident. The data reveals a marked overall decline in the frequency of security incidents during the reporting period, reflecting a general reduction in active hostilities.⁵⁴

⁵¹ ACLED describes itself as 'a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping initiative. ACLED collects information on the dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events around the world.' ACLED, About ACLED, n.d., [url](#)

⁵² ACLED uses the term 'security event' when registering these security incidents. In accordance with EUAA's use of ACLED data), the term 'security incident' is used here and solely includes these three event categories: battles; explosions/remote violence; and violence against civilians.

⁵³ 'Explosions/Remote violence' includes attacks using explosive devices, e.g. bombs, grenades, IEDs, artillery fire or shelling, missile attacks, air or drone strikes, and other widely destructive heavy weapons or chemical weapons regardless of whether the target is civilian or military. 'Battles' involves armed clashes between two organised parties; and 'Violence against civilians' refers to deliberate attacks on non-combatant individuals inflicted by organised armed groups. ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Codebook, [url](#)

⁵⁴ DIS analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Syria (31 October 2025)

Total incidents reached their highest point in January 2025, exceeding 1 000 reported events. This peak was driven largely by a surge in explosions and remote violence, which accounted for more than half of all incidents during that month. Following this escalation, the overall number of incidents decreased through April 2025 and then stabilised between 400 and 500 per month during the mid-year period.⁵⁵

Throughout the period, explosions and remote violence represented the predominant form of insecurity in early 2025 but showed a consistent downward trend thereafter. Violence against civilians consistently fluctuated between 200 and 350 incidents per month, suggesting ongoing localised instability even as large-scale confrontations subsided. Battles were comparatively less frequent, generally remaining below 200 per month, with only a rise observed around July 2025, possibly due to the clashes in Suweida.⁵⁶

By October 2025, total reported incidents had fallen to approximately 300, marking a reduction of more than 60 percent compared to December 2024.⁵⁷

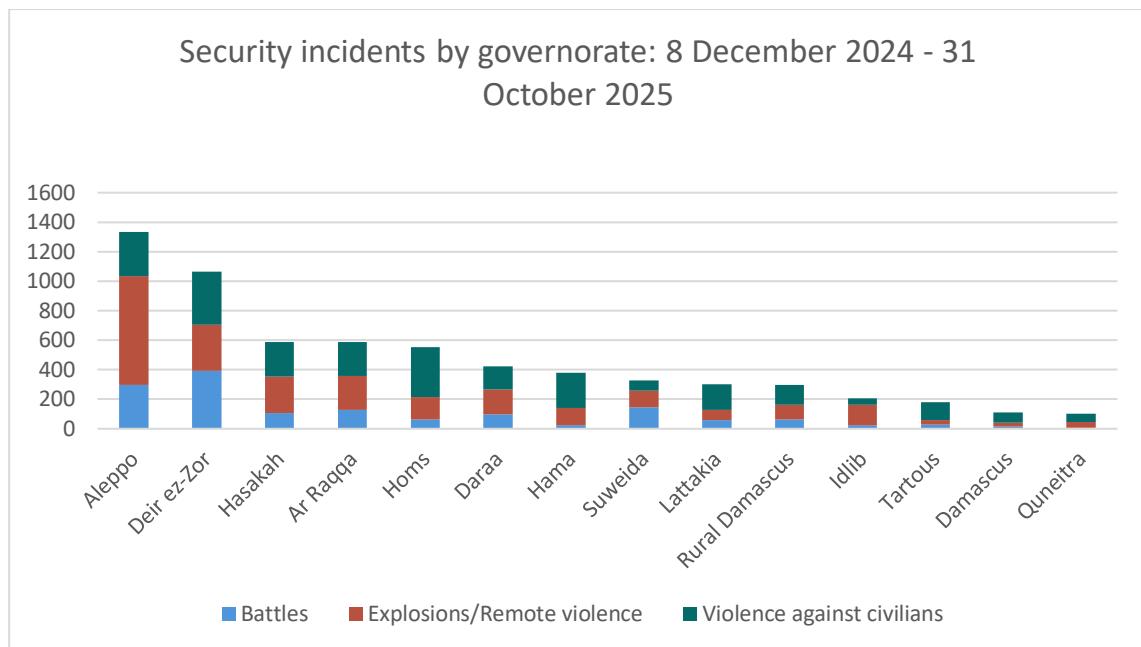


Figure 3: Security incidents by governorate: 8 December 2024 – 31 October 2025⁵⁸ The figure has been produced by DIS based on ACLED security-event data.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the highest number of incidents was recorded in the governorate of Aleppo, followed by Deir ez-Zor and Hasakah. Aleppo accounted for around 1,300 incidents,

⁵⁵ DIS analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Syria (31 October 2025)

⁵⁶ DIS analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Syria (31 October 2025)

⁵⁷ DIS analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Syria (31 October 2025)

⁵⁸ DIS analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Syria (31 October 2025)

with a significant proportion involving explosions/remote violence. Deir ez-Zor and Hasakah followed with over 1,000 and 589 incidents, respectively. Homs, Dara and Hama each recorded 554, 423 and 379 incidents, respectively. In contrast, the number of incidents was lowest in Idlib, Tartous, Damascus and Quneitra.⁵⁹

Syria Weekly reported on 26 November 2025 that between 18 and 25 November 2025, violence levels in Syria dropped to a historic low, with only 16 confirmed deaths, three of which were caused by unexploded ordnance (UXO). The remaining 13 non-UXO deaths make this the second-least deadly week on record, following the week of 4–11 November. The average weekly death toll in November stands at around 12.6, compared to about 30.6 per week from July to October (excluding the Suweida violence in July). According to Syria expert Charles Lister from Syria Weekly, this sustained decline may indicate emerging stability. However, he notes that the security situation in SDF-held areas in the northeast and in the Druze-dominated Suweida governorate remains affected by significant risks.⁶⁰

2.4. Freedom of movement

Movement within Syria has become easier than under the former government, and travel between major cities such as Damascus, Aleppo, Raqqa, and Hasakah is generally possible.⁶¹

Major roads, including the M5 and M6 highways connecting Damascus with Homs and the coastal region, are open, and daytime travel on these routes is assessed by a consulted international security organisation as safe. Several national travel agencies now offer trips from Damascus to other parts of the country, including the coast. Returnees arriving in Damascus can usually travel to other government-controlled areas by private car or bus without difficulty.⁶² A consulted international organisation (3) was not aware of any major restrictions on freedom of movement for returnees. Reportedly, most returnees did not experience significant safety or security concerns when travelling within the country.⁶³

However, isolated unforeseen incidents have occurred on certain roads. One such example was the attack on civilian vehicles by armed Bedouin groups along the Damascus-al-Suweida road amid broader sectarian and tribal tensions in summer 2025.⁶⁴ Parts of the route remain influenced by non-state armed groups with a record of roadside attacks.⁶⁵ As of September 2025, however, humanitarian and international organisations continued to access Suweida and Daraa without restriction, and local authorities remained cooperative towards aid efforts.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ DIS analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Syria (31 October 2025)

⁶⁰ Syria Weekly, *Data Update (November 18-25)*, 26 November 2025, [url](#)

⁶¹ TDA: 16

⁶² International security organisation: 20

⁶³ International organisation (3): 13

⁶⁴ International security organisation: 20

⁶⁵ Levnt24, *Separatist Obstruction in Suwayda Deepens Crisis for Civilians*, 8 September 2025, [url](#)

⁶⁶ International security organisation: 21

Movement along routes connecting Damascus with Daraa, Suweida, and Homs remains unsafe after dark, and night travel within the capital itself is generally discouraged due to remaining criminal and security risks.⁶⁷

The number of checkpoints on the major roads has decreased significantly since the fall of the former government. Unlike under Assad's rule, the General Security Forces no longer routinely check ID documents, vehicles, or conduct searches. Lack of manpower, as well as command gaps within the government structure, may, however, cause occasional incidents at checkpoints.⁶⁸

According to Enab Baladi, the Ministry of Interior has dismantled most fixed checkpoints across the coastal region, including in key towns and villages in Latakia and Tartus governorates. Only a limited number of checkpoints reportedly remain on the outskirts of Baniyas and Jableh, mainly on the outskirts of those cities.⁶⁹ However, ad hoc inspections may occur in response to emerging security concerns.⁷⁰

In the northeast, travel between Kurdish-administered areas and government-controlled territory is feasible, and civilians can typically cross inter-area checkpoints without major impediment, except when there is road closure due to security incidents.⁷¹

One source described movement in the country as being affected by informal restrictions and arbitrary decisions from local security actors,⁷² however, the source did not specify what these restrictions or decisions entailed.

Damascus International Airport remains fully operational and is assessed by a consulted international security organisation as secure. It currently serves as a key entry and exit point for United Nations and international personnel.⁷³ As of October 2025, the Syrian Civil Aviation Authority reported scheduled services by fifteen airlines, including carriers from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Qatar, Jordan, Kuwait, and Romania.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ EUAA, *COI Report - Syria: Country Focus*, 7 July 2025, [url](#), p. 76

⁶⁸ International security organisation: 17-19

⁶⁹ Enab Baladi, "Syrian Interior Ministry" removes checkpoints from areas in Syria's coast, 16 August 2025, [url](#)

⁷⁰ SOHR, *Security chaos / Coastal region on high alert over fears of new attacks*, 23 September 2025, [url](#)

⁷¹ Humanitarian organisation (1): 20

⁷² Representatives of an international organisation: 21

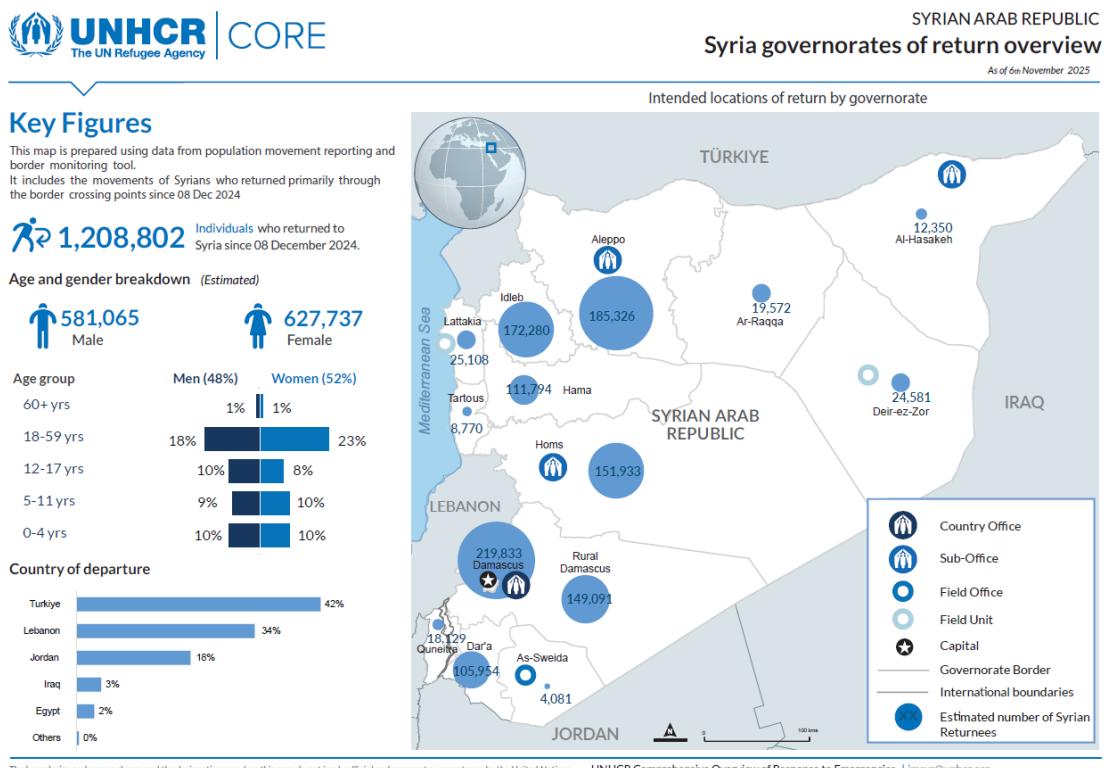
⁷³ International security organisation: 22

⁷⁴ Arab News, *15 airlines resume flights at Syria's Damascus Airport*, 15 October 2025, [url](#)

3. Return to Syria

3.1. Return to Syria since the fall of Assad's government

According to UNHCR, as of 6 November 2025, a total of 1,208 802 Syrian individuals had returned to Syria from other countries since 8 December 2024, while 1.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) had returned to their areas of origin or other chosen locations within the country. UNHCR supports the return of Syrian refugees to their areas of origin. Since the beginning of 2025, some 24,500 returnees have been assisted by UNHCR at key border points with Türkiye and Lebanon.⁷⁵



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. UNHCR Comprehensive Overview of Response to Emergencies | imsyr.unhcr.org
Sources: UNHCR border monitoring and population movement reporting tool | *Figures are subject to future adjustment, should not be considered Final.

Figure 3: UNHCR's Syria Governorates of Return Overview (As of 6 Nov 2025)⁷⁶

Referring to UNOCHA, EUAA stated in a COI query covering the period from 1 June to 30 September 2025 that return dynamics to Syria remain complex and are shaped by individual circumstances, socio-economic pressures in host countries, and perceptions of improved security or property access in areas of origin. However, the sustainability of these returns is

⁷⁵ UNHCR, *Regional Flash Update #52 Syria Situation*, 8 November 2025, [url](https://www.unhcr.org/52.html)

⁷⁶ UNHCR, *Syria Governorates of Return Overview (As of 6 Nov 2025)*, [url](https://imsyr.unhcr.org)

highly constrained, as many returnees face significant challenges in accessing basic services, legal documentation, and livelihood opportunities. Most returns have been observed in Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, Raqqa, and Daraa governorates, with notable numbers also returning to Hama and Hasakah.⁷⁷ Urban areas are attracting the largest number of returnees, and most returnees are heading to urban areas such as Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus, which as of September 2025 experience relatively few security incidents and offer more services and livelihood opportunities.⁷⁸

The number of people returning increased significantly after 8 December 2024,⁷⁹ but has since decreased and stabilised.⁸⁰ An international organisation (2) noted that overall, the rates of return have been trending upwards throughout the year; however, return rates fluctuate from week to week and appear to respond to certain triggers such as security events in the country, the school calendar, weather conditions, conditions in host countries, and the removal of administrative barriers such as fees or overstaying fines in countries of residence. The rate has reduced approaching the end of the year as expected, although people are still returning.⁸¹

The majority of returns originate from neighbouring host countries, particularly Lebanon and Türkiye,⁸² driven in large part by deteriorating living conditions in those nations.⁸³ According to Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), returnees tend to be individuals with financial resources, primarily originating from countries with limited service provision, such as Lebanon. By contrast, relatively few returns occur from Europe, where refugees generally have access to better support systems and are less inclined to give them up.⁸⁴

In addition to the push factors mentioned above, the desire to reunite with one's family and for one's children to receive a Syrian education are among the main motivations for return.⁸⁵

While all Syrians are technically able to return, most of those currently returning are observed to be Sunni Arabs. Recent security incidents affecting minorities and their experience of lack of representation in the interim government have, according to an international organisation (2), fostered mistrust among some minority groups towards the interim authorities. Some Alawites

⁷⁷ EUAA, *COI Query, Syrian Arab Republic, Major human rights, security, and socio-economic developments*, 1 October 2025, [url](#), p. 43; International organisation (3): 2; International organisation (2): 13

⁷⁸ International organisation (2): 13

⁷⁹ International organisation (3): 1; International organisation (2): 10

⁸⁰ International organisation (3): 1

⁸¹ International organisation (2): 10

⁸² International organisation (3): 3; International organisation (1): 1

⁸³ International organisation (3): 3

⁸⁴ SNHR: 1

⁸⁵ International organisation (2): 13

and Christians have left or are considering leaving Syria since the fall of the former government, though not in significant numbers.⁸⁶

As of September 2025, 11 official border crossings were open for returning refugees, all controlled by the government of Syria: Joussieh, Nassib, Jdeidet Yabous, Ar Ra'ee, Al Aridah, Kassabrabulus, Bab al Hawa, Al Salama, Albokamal, Al-Hamam, and Masna. Additional border crossings are expected to open soon.⁸⁷

An international organisation (2), which engages with returnees and host communities and supports voluntary return and reintegration efforts, had not received reports of extortion by border guards, which occurred under the former government. The source noted that a complaint mechanism had been established to address corruption. In addition, since the change of government, there have been no reports of detention, interrogation, or harassment of returnees, although the source did not rule out the possibility that isolated cases may occur. Some returnees nevertheless opt to cross through unofficial routes due to lower costs or convenience (i.e. no fees to pay, shorter travel distances and thus lower cost of transportation), despite the risks associated with such routes, including landmines.⁸⁸

A humanitarian organisation (1) had not observed or received any reports of individuals experiencing discriminatory treatment at the border based on their political, ethnic, or religious background.⁸⁹

Based on testimonies from returnees, the New York Times reported in March 2025 that Syrians returning from abroad after the fall of the Assad government have generally not faced repercussions from the current authorities. However, individuals with prior civil court judgments or pending civil and criminal charges remained subject to assessment.⁹⁰

Testimonies from Syrians living abroad who returned to the country from Lebanon and Jordan after the fall of Assad indicated that interactions with security authorities at the borders were brief and welcoming.⁹¹

According to information from the Syria Justice and Accountability Centre (SJAC), the Syrian interim government does not scrutinise returnees' previous activities abroad. SJAC also indicates that many returnees possess European passports or residency permits of their host

⁸⁶ International organisation (2): 14; For more details on situation of Alawites and Christians, see DIS, Syria – Situation of Certain Groups.

⁸⁷ International organisation (2): 7

⁸⁸ International organisation (2): 8-9

⁸⁹ Humanitarian organisation (1): 8

⁹⁰ New York Times (The), *In Syria, Being Wanted Went From Something to Fear to a Badge of Honor*, 20 March 2025, [url](#)

⁹¹ EUAA, Syria: Country Focus, July 2025, [url](#), p. 80

countries, and that some individuals have reportedly travelled to Syria and back without being questioned about their activities while abroad⁹²

Contrary to other sources, an international organisation (3) had heard stories about returnees being arrested or killed by the Syrian authorities, but the source underlined that it had no information on the motives behind these incidents, and any explanation would be purely speculative.⁹³

3.2. Procedures for return

There is a lack of standardised and unified procedures for returns at the borders. Border practices can at times be ad hoc and depend on individual police officers, resulting in varying instructions and inconsistent entry procedures across different border points, or even from day to day at the same location. A humanitarian organisation (1) has observed that border officers sometimes require different documents in similar cases. Despite this lack of unified procedures, returns are generally facilitated.⁹⁴ The interim government is reportedly working on establishing a centralised system to standardise procedures at all border crossings.⁹⁵

3.2.1. Required documents

Syrian authorities generally facilitate entry for returning Syrians. As of September 2025, they did not require returnees to present specific documents such as valid IDs or passports to enter the country, and they allowed Syrians to re-enter the country upon presentation of any document proving Syrian identity, including expired passports or ID cards.⁹⁶ In the absence of formal documents, officials have also accepted alternative proofs of identity, such as photos of documents or papers issued by a local *mukhtar* (local district mayor).⁹⁷

Syrian representations abroad may also issue a return paper or travel paper (in Arabic: *waraqat 'ubur / tazkaret 'awda*) enabling travel and entry; in some cases, a new passport may be issued for a fee.⁹⁸ Syrian embassies require a person without any documents, who wishes to obtain a return paper, to present some form of proof of identity or registration in the host country, such as a statement confirming a parent–child relationship. The embassy seeks, as far as possible, to verify whether the person is of Syrian nationality.⁹⁹

⁹² EUAA, *Syria: Country Focus*, July 2025, [url](#) p. 82

⁹³ International organisation (3): 12

⁹⁴ Humanitarian organisation (1): 4

⁹⁵ International organisation (2): 7

⁹⁶ Humanitarian organisation (1): 1-3; The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 1; International organisation (2): 1-2; Syrian human rights organisation (2): 1; International organisation (3): 10; SNHR: 8

⁹⁷ International organisation (2): 2

⁹⁸ SNHR: 8; The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 2; The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 3; The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 8

⁹⁹ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 8

Non-Syrian citizens with a Syrian parent or spouse are permitted to enter the country.¹⁰⁰

Former military officers who have lost both their military and civil ID cards may face difficulties proving their identity. Upon enlistment, they were required to surrender their civil ID cards in exchange for military identification, and many have since lost the latter. As no formal measures have yet been introduced to regularise their status, the circumstances surrounding their potential return remain uncertain.¹⁰¹

3.2.2. Entry of unregistered children

The Syrian authorities at the borders are particularly facilitative in cases involving children who have not been registered with the Syrian authorities.¹⁰² Such children are allowed to enter Syria if they can provide documentation proving their familial link to at least one parent with Syrian citizenship.¹⁰³ For example, a birth notification from the hospital abroad where the child was born is considered sufficient documentation for entry into Syria, provided that the child is accompanied by his or her Syrian parent.¹⁰⁴ Accepted foreign birth notifications include uncertified documents (i.e. without official stamps) issued by hospitals, midwives, or doctors. In some cases, a child may be allowed to enter the country without a birth notification, simply by presenting documents proving that the parents are married (e.g. a family booklet) or the parents' Syrian citizenship (e.g. a copy of a passport).¹⁰⁵

Contrary to the above-mentioned information, SNHR stated that children without Syrian documents are permitted entry if they are accompanied by a father with valid Syrian documents; in such cases, foreign-issued documents confirming the parent-child relationship are accepted as sufficient proof for entry.¹⁰⁶

3.2.3. Entry procedures for Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS)

Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) are generally permitted to re-enter Syria,¹⁰⁷ and there are no reports of PRS being denied entry. Both GAPAR¹⁰⁸-registered and unregistered PRS are usually allowed to enter, including those with expired or missing documents,¹⁰⁹ as long as they were born and previously de facto resided in Syria as a habitual residential place.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁰ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 7

¹⁰¹ Humanitarian organisation (1): 11

¹⁰² Humanitarian organisation (1): 2

¹⁰³ International organisation (2): 6

¹⁰⁴ Humanitarian organisation (1): 2; International organisation (2): 1; International organisation (1): 7

¹⁰⁵ Humanitarian organisation (1): 2

¹⁰⁶ SNHR: 8

¹⁰⁷ Humanitarian organisation (1): 10; International organisation (2): 3; Humanitarian organisation (2): 21

¹⁰⁸ The General Administration for Palestine Arab Refugees (GAPAR), which is a department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, is a Damascus-based Syrian government body responsible for administering the affairs of Palestine Arab refugees in Syria. UNRWA, *Where we work*, updated as of December 2023, [.url](#)

¹⁰⁹ International organisation (2): 3

¹¹⁰ Humanitarian organisation (2): 21

According to an international organisation (2), GAPAR-registered PRS are officially required to present a document proving their residency in order to enter Syria. Unregistered PRS rely on the Palestinian embassy to issue documentation confirming their status as Palestine refugees but such documents are not fully recognised by the new Syrian government, and different state bodies apply varying approaches to documents issued by the Palestinian authorities.¹¹¹

However, based on observations, accounts, and secondary reporting from refugees and other non-official sources, the same source noted that, in practice, the authorities generally apply these entry requirements leniently and allow both categories to enter Syria by various means. For example, a PRS family returning from Lebanon was allowed to enter even though three of their children born abroad were not registered, illustrating the lenient approach often taken by the authorities.¹¹²

3.2.4. *Maktoumeen*

Unregistered stateless Kurds, the so-called *maktoumeen*, may enter Syria if they can provide documentation proving that they are from Syria. This can, for instance, be done by presenting a statement from the *mukhtar* (local strict mayor) of their area of origin confirming that the person in question has resided there before leaving Syria. This requirement applies at all embassies.¹¹³

3.2.5. *Persons on the previous government's wanted lists*

The previous requirement for pre-return status settlement or security clearance is reportedly abolished. Syrians whose names were on the former government's wanted lists are, as of September 2025, permitted to return to the country without facing obstacles at the border.¹¹⁴

These individuals reportedly remain registered in the authorities' central database as persons with outstanding issues.¹¹⁵ Border control officers have access to this database, where such individuals are flagged to indicate pending or past cases with the authorities.¹¹⁶ Upon arrival in Syria, flagged persons are informed by border officers of their status and instructed to report to the relevant authority to resolve their case and remove the flag. Failure to do so will prevent these individuals from obtaining official documents, such as passports or criminal records, or from leaving the country again.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Humanitarian organisation (2): 22

¹¹² Humanitarian organisation (2): 22

¹¹³ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 9

¹¹⁴ Humanitarian organisation (1): 9; The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 1; International organisation (2): 4; International organisation (1): 3; Humanitarian organisation (1): 9; The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 2; International organization (2): 4; Syrian human rights organisation (2): 2

¹¹⁵ Syrian human rights organisation (2): 2

¹¹⁶ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 1

¹¹⁷ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 2; SNHR: 9; Syrian human rights organisation (2): 2; International organization (2): 4; Syrian human rights organisation (1): 1; Syrian human rights organisation (2): 2

According to the Syrian embassy in Beirut, there are five categories of individuals with flagged names:

- 1) Persons who left Syria illegally;
- 2) Former draft evaders and deserters from military service;
- 3) Persons flagged for security reasons;
- 4) Public employees who left their position without notice;
- 5) Persons with a past or pending criminal record.¹¹⁸

Individuals falling under one or more of these five categories are allowed to enter Syria without facing problems.¹¹⁹ An international organisation (2) had not monitored any cases where a person was not allowed to enter Syria due to issues flagged at the border.¹²⁰

However, the settlement of cases after entry is different depending on the category.¹²¹ Cases falling under the first three categories are considered settled in advance. However, individuals in these categories are still required to report to the authorities in order to have the flag next to their names removed formally.¹²² The situation, as described later, is different for the last two categories.

Persons who left Syria illegally

In contrast to the Syrian embassy in Beirut, SNHR stated that individuals who left Syria illegally before the change of government are generally not even required to report to the authorities upon return. At the border, they are only asked to prove their Syrian identity and present documents confirming their residence abroad, after which they are issued a transit document. This document is sealed and may be used as an official document inside Syria if needed. While there may be isolated cases in which individuals are instructed to report to specific government departments or security branches, there is, according to the source, no general policy or law issued by the new Syrian authorities requiring such procedures.¹²³

Persons flagged for security reasons

Persons flagged for security [or sometimes interchangeably political] reasons comprised a wide range of categories of individuals perceived to be a security threat to Assad's government, including for instance real or perceived members of opposition political parties or anti-government armed groups, protesters, activists, critics of the government, individuals accused

¹¹⁸ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 1

¹¹⁹ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 2

¹²⁰ International organisation (2): 4

¹²¹ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 3-4

¹²² The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 3

¹²³ SNHR: 10

of undermining the prestige of the state, communicating with foreign parties or financing and supporting what the previous government labelled terrorism".¹²⁴

According to the human rights organisation, the SJAC, all arrest warrants issued by Assad-era security agencies for political reasons were annulled by the interim government.¹²⁵

Former draft evaders and deserters from military service

As mentioned above, and confirmed by other sources,¹²⁶ this group is only required to report to the relevant authority – in this case, MoD¹²⁷ – to have the flag by their names removed.¹²⁸ Based on a personal experience reported by a member of their team, SNHR explained that a conscripted soldier who deserted from military service under the former government only needs to visit the civil registry in his home governorate or the district mayor's office to retrieve the national identity card that he submitted to the authorities when he enlisted under the previous government.¹²⁹

According to SNHR, the authorities have not announced any official policy regarding former draft evaders and deserters. Such individuals are generally free to move within the country as long as they can present documents proving that they left Syria or deserted before the fall of the former government.¹³⁰

SNHR further noted that the military courts were suspended in the period prior to the fall of the former government, and there is no available information on whether their functions have been transferred to the Ministry of Justice.¹³¹

A Syrian human rights organisation (1) had not received any reports of particular difficulties faced by former draft evaders or deserters when seeking to have their names unflagged.¹³²

Another Syrian human rights organisation (2), however, stated that the treatment of returning draft evaders and deserters at border crossings may vary depending on the local officer in charge and the individual's sectarian affiliation. Alawites may face a certain degree of suspicion and risk of interrogation or arrest, whereas Sunnis reportedly do not generally encounter such

¹²⁴ The National, *Eight million Syrians were wanted by Assad regime for 'political reasons', new authorities say*, 25 May 2025, [url](#); EUAA, *Syria: Targeting of Individuals*, September 2022, [url](#), p. 21

¹²⁵ EUAA, *COI Report - Syria: Country Focus*, 7 July 2025, [url](#), pp. 80-81

¹²⁶ Syrian human rights organisation (1): 1; SNHR: 12–13; A lawyer: 1; Syrian human rights organisation (1): 1

¹²⁷ The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 4

¹²⁸ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 3

¹²⁹ SNHR: 13

¹³⁰ SNHR: 12

¹³¹ SNHR: 15

¹³² Syrian human rights organisation (1): 2

issues. However, the source underlined that the number of draft evaders and deserters among Alawites is reportedly limited.¹³³

Public employees who left their position without notice

As mentioned above, public employees who left their positions without notice are allowed to return to Syria without facing problems at the border.¹³⁴ However, while cases involving individuals who left Syria illegally, former draft evaders and deserters, and persons flagged for security reasons are settled administratively in advance,¹³⁵ public employees must first contact their former employer to resolve their employment status — for example by submitting a formal resignation — before approaching the authorities to have their names unflagged.¹³⁶ This is because leaving a public-sector job without permission remains, legally, considered a violation.¹³⁷

A Syrian human rights organisation (1) had not received reports of difficulties for public employees who left their posts without notice in having their names unflagged. Nor had the organisation received information on in absentia sentences from the Assad period being enforced by the current authorities against such individuals.¹³⁸ Another human rights organisation, however, noted that for former lower-ranking public employees, removal of the flag is generally a bureaucratic formality, though practical difficulties may arise, particularly if the individual resides in a different area than the relevant authority. By contrast, former high-level officials, including those affiliated with the former government's security services, may face challenges in having their names removed and are typically required to attend a meeting with the authorities.¹³⁹

A representative of a consulted international organisation (1) reported having previously been listed for illegal exit, avoiding military service, and leaving his public-sector job in the oil industry — a sensitive sector. Upon return, he was informed that all issues had been cleared except his employment case, which had to be settled before he could leave the country again. The process reportedly took four months due to bureaucratic inefficiency and limited administrative capacity within the new authorities.¹⁴⁰

A distinction should also be made between senior officials or security personnel who left Syria before and after the change of government. Those who left after the fall of the Assad

¹³³ Syrian human rights organisation (2): 5

¹³⁴ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 2

¹³⁵ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 3

¹³⁶ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 3; Syrian human rights organisation (1): 3; A lawyer: 2

¹³⁷ A lawyer: 2

¹³⁸ Syrian human rights organisation (1): 4-5

¹³⁹ Syrian human rights organisation (2): 3

¹⁴⁰ International organisation (1): 3

government may be subject to interrogation or investigation upon return regarding potential offences.¹⁴¹

Flagged former public employees may apply for a passport abroad, but issuance is at the discretion of the immigration department. Such individuals must obtain approval from their former employer by submitting their resignation, after which the employer issues a document to be presented at a Syrian embassy to process the passport application.¹⁴²

Persons with a criminal record

Criminal cases constitute the only group that cannot be settled administratively and must be brought before a court,¹⁴³ or handled by the Criminal Investigation Department under the MoI, which is responsible for investigating various types of crimes. SNHR reported that individuals with unresolved civil issues, such as unpaid fines, outstanding bills, or other non-political and non-military matters, are required to address these through the Criminal Investigation Department.¹⁴⁴

According to the Syrian embassy in Beirut, individuals with criminal cases will not be arrested at the border, as border authorities are not mandated to carry out arrests.¹⁴⁵ However, a consulted lawyer stated that persons with criminal charges, financial claims, or civil court verdicts remain subject to arrest upon entry and are referred to the competent courts for processing.¹⁴⁶

Fabricated criminal charges (e.g. claims of forged passport possession) were used under the former government to target activists. As the judicial system remains non-functional, a number of returnees continue to face unresolved charges, leaving them in a state of legal uncertainty and in some cases unable to depart the country again. The authorities are developing a mechanism to cancel warrants that were issued on unfounded grounds by the former criminal police.¹⁴⁷

3.3. Challenges upon return

3.3.1. Major challenges and trends

Thousands of Syrians have returned from abroad (particularly Lebanon and Türkiye), but many do not remain in Syria; numerous returnees re-enter to check homes or recover property and

¹⁴¹ Syrian human rights organisation (2): 4

¹⁴² The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 6

¹⁴³ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 4

¹⁴⁴ SNHR: 11: SNHR called the institution “the Criminal Security”. However, the name was changed to “the Criminal Investigation Department” in May 2025, see Al-Watan, [الداخلية: تغيير اسم الأمن الجنائي إلى “إدارة المباحث الجنائية,Interior Ministry: Criminal Security Department to be renamed “Criminal Investigation Department], 24 May 2025, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 5

¹⁴⁶ Lawyer: 1

¹⁴⁷ EUAA, Syria: Country Focus, July 2025, [url](#) p. 81

then leave again, discouraged by economic decline, lack of services and jobs, insecurity, and political instability.¹⁴⁸

According to the Syrian embassy in Beirut, approximately 100,000 people have returned from Lebanon to Syria since December 2024. However, many later went back to Lebanon for work due to higher salaries there.¹⁴⁹

Experience from Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan indicates a decreasing willingness to return as awareness of conditions grows; some initial returnees have gone back to the camps or the host countries where they lived¹⁵⁰ in search of more stable access to schooling, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities for their children and household, as these were lacking in the areas of Syria to which they returned.¹⁵¹

An international NGO had received reports from returnees regretting early return decisions, citing reliance on incomplete information from relatives about destruction and service gaps; these returnees now advise others outside the country that conditions are not yet conducive.¹⁵²

However, return experiences vary widely by area, community, and individual circumstances.¹⁵³ Some returnees face harsh conditions, whereas others return to more homogenous communities with available shelters and basic services.¹⁵⁴

The extent of challenges varies depending on whether returnees settle in major urban centres or in rural areas, which are generally characterised by limited service provision; higher levels of destruction and mine contamination (particularly in Idlib and Aleppo governorates); weaker infrastructure and fewer livelihood opportunities.¹⁵⁵ An example of limited access to services is schools in Rural Damascus, where classrooms designed for 30 pupils host around 50 after influxes of returnees, overwhelming the school system.¹⁵⁶

Return to rural and semi-rural areas often involves entire communities returning together. Returns tend to be more successful where basic needs can be met. However, some are returning to areas with very poor educational services and entirely destroyed houses without

¹⁴⁸ International organisation (1): 1

¹⁴⁹ The Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 10

¹⁵⁰ International NGO: 2

¹⁵¹ Humanitarian organisation (1): 12

¹⁵² International NGO: 4

¹⁵³ Humanitarian organisation (1): 13; International NGO: 3

¹⁵⁴ International NGO: 3

¹⁵⁵ International organisation (2): 11; International NGO: 3; International organisation (3): 6

¹⁵⁶ International NGO: 5

any services (e.g. water supply), which makes it difficult for people to remain in their area of return.¹⁵⁷

Despite better livelihood opportunities and services in the major cities, urban returns are characterised by higher communal tension and greater competition for limited resources. Access to services, such as water trucking, is often significantly more expensive in major cities than in rural areas. In addition, access to housing is limited in urban areas relative to the number of people returning; a situation further exacerbated by the fact that families who fled years ago have often grown substantially (e.g. a family of five becoming a family of fifteen), leading to overcrowding and limited rental capacity in many neighbourhoods.¹⁵⁸

Principal barriers to return mentioned by the consulted sources include lack of shelter following widespread destruction, fragile security, limited access to basic public services and scarce livelihoods.¹⁵⁹

According to a report published in June by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) based on data collected in June 2025, the main challenges to sustainable return reported by returnees included unemployment (77 percent), high cost of living (74 percent), poor infrastructure and living conditions (57 percent), and lack of humanitarian or development support (52 percent). Freedom of movement was generally reported as unrestricted, with 86 percent of communities indicating no major limitations.¹⁶⁰

Security environment, criminality and conflict dynamics

Many displaced Syrians returning encounter dangers. A large number returns to areas still contaminated by landmines and unexploded ordnance, which caused a sharp increase in child deaths and injuries in early 2025. Demining work remains slow and incomplete, and people often return before clearance is done.¹⁶¹

Localised conflicts persist despite the end of the large-scale conflict, including incidents in coastal areas in March 2025 and clashes in Jaramana, Sahnaya, Suweida and Daraa involving violence against civilians. Limited state capacity and incomplete control over armed factions contribute to insecurity, and targeted attacks occur against persons perceived as affiliated with former or current authorities.¹⁶² Levels of criminality (kidnapping, theft, armed robbery) have increased in some areas, and arms are widely available where state control is limited.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ Humanitarian organisation (1): 14

¹⁵⁸ Humanitarian organisation (1): 15

¹⁵⁹ International NGO: 1; International organisation (3): 5; International organisation (2): 11

¹⁶⁰ IOM, *Syrian Arab Republic, Communities of Return Index*, June 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁶¹ Representatives of international organisation: 1

¹⁶² International NGO: 6

¹⁶³ International organisation (2): 12

Housing, land and property (HLP)

Much of the housing stock has reportedly been destroyed, reconstruction is moving slowly, and many families cannot afford to rebuild.¹⁶⁴ HLP conflicts are widespread across the country, notably in Idlib, Homs and Damascus, driven by past state confiscations, unimplemented court rulings and competing ownership claims. Many land registry offices remain closed, preventing verification or reclamation of rights.¹⁶⁵

Civil documentation and administrative hurdles

Bureaucratic barriers are another challenge faced by Syrian returnees.¹⁶⁶ The process to obtain legal documents is described as dysfunctional and slow, particularly impacting families whose children were born in displacement and remain unregistered. Furthermore, lack of documentation impedes access to services and resolution of HLP issues.¹⁶⁷

After return, families with unregistered children must complete registration inside Syria, where fees (e.g., USD 50 per document), translation and certification requirements pose a significant burden. Limited knowledge of legal procedures creates additional challenges in this regard. Humanitarian organisations sometimes assist by covering fees and providing procedural guidance, including liaising with authorities where foreign birth notifications were lost. Assistance is prioritised for school enrolment.¹⁶⁸

Lack of valid documents makes reintegration even harder. Birth, marriage and education certificates issued in areas once controlled by the SDF, the Turkish-backed SNA or other groups are not recognised by the authorities. An agreement from March 2025 between the SDF and the government was meant to solve this issue and standardise school curricula, but progress has stopped.¹⁶⁹

Economic situation

According to an international organisation (1), the economic situation is dire. Although many contracts and memoranda of understanding have been signed with foreign companies, no actual investments or funds have entered the country, as investors are waiting for greater security, and for political and economic stability. The Syrian pound has lost much of its value, liquidity is scarce, and state institutions are suffering from a lack of resources and expertise.¹⁷⁰

Rents have increased significantly since the fall of the former government. As of September 2025, prices for essential goods (e.g., transport, rice, sugar, fruit) had reportedly fallen by about 30 percent, while the prices of other items - particularly imported or non-essential goods - had

¹⁶⁴ Representatives of international organisation: 2

¹⁶⁵ Representatives of international organisation: 3

¹⁶⁶ Representatives of international organisation: 1

¹⁶⁷ International NGO: 9

¹⁶⁸ Humanitarian organisation (1): 7

¹⁶⁹ Representatives of international organisation: 4

¹⁷⁰ International organisation (1): 2

risen sharply, resulting in mixed impacts on households. Public sector wages have increased but vary by region; for example, employees in Idlib reportedly earn more than in other areas under the Syrian interim government. Contrary to the international organisation (1), SNHR noted that economic activity has picked up in construction, with expected rising demand for foreign labour due to war time emigration and shortages of skilled workers and young professionals.¹⁷¹

Education

The education sector is in critical condition, with shortages of schools and poor teaching quality, contributing to hesitancy among families considering return.¹⁷² Children accustomed to education systems in Türkiye or Lebanon face reintegration challenges, including differences in culture and curricula, as well as separation from communities formed in displacement; many lack ties to their families' original homes.¹⁷³

Dynamics related to gender and vulnerability

Having strong community and family support is particularly important for women returnees.¹⁷⁴ Many women returning to Syria without a husband or a male head of household rely heavily on their extended families and often move in with them, especially when they do not have access to their immediate families (e.g. due to displacement abroad).¹⁷⁵

An international NGO found it difficult to generalise about the situation of single women returning, as it depends on a number of factors, including conditions in the area of return and the individual woman's economic situation. Nevertheless, the source noted certain trends: single women and female-headed households may face heightened vulnerability upon return and often rely on family members due to limited economic independence. In cases where a single mother returns, it is commonly expected that her family will host her, which can involve living restrictions, including reduced freedom of movement, imposed by the family. In addition, the security situation in the area may also affect women's freedom of movement.¹⁷⁶ Some female-headed households return while husbands remain abroad (e.g., in Lebanon or Türkiye) to secure income, illustrating cross border family dependence.¹⁷⁷

Women whose husbands are missing face complex reintegration, including reconnecting with relatives to clarify inheritance while coping with decisions about declaring the husband dead or continuing the search for him.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷¹ SNHR: 3-6

¹⁷² SNHR: 7

¹⁷³ International NGO: 10

¹⁷⁴ International organisation (3): 8

¹⁷⁵ Humanitarian organisation (1): 18

¹⁷⁶ International NGO: 7

¹⁷⁷ Humanitarian organisation (1): 18-19

¹⁷⁸ Humanitarian organisation (1): 17

4. Documents

In December 2024, after the fall of the previous government, Syria's national civil-registry authority, the Directorate of Civil Affairs (*al-Nufus*), suspended the registration of vital events — including births, deaths, and marriages — as well as the issuance of new identity cards.¹⁷⁹

In March 2025, authorities announced that the Syrian civil status office had resumed the registration of births, marriages, divorces, and deaths.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the civil-registry system remained largely non-functional for new registrations.¹⁸¹ The suspension was attributed to damage to data networks and the electronic registration system, which disrupted civil-status services beyond routine technical delays. Consequently, many Syrians, both inside and outside the country, were unable to obtain official documentation necessary for travel, inheritance procedures, residency, or family and marital registration. Newborns remained unregistered, former detainees who lost identification were unable to secure new ID cards, and families of missing persons could not access documents for inheritance or marital records. The disruption has also given rise to a parallel market of brokers claiming to expedite registrations, many of whom are fraudulent, exacerbating the vulnerability of affected individuals.¹⁸²

Thus, despite official claims of modernisation and improvements,¹⁸³ government offices continue to experience significant overcrowding and procedural delays. Individuals often have to wait in long queues for several hours to obtain official documents, and the administrative process is widely perceived as inefficient and cumbersome.¹⁸⁴

Documents issued by the Syrian Salvation Government in Idlib (SSG)¹⁸⁵, including national identification cards, are not accepted for the purpose of obtaining a Syrian passport. Individuals

¹⁷⁹ Syrian Observer, "Wide Legal Void": Ongoing Suspension of Civil Registry Services Deprives Syrians of Rights and Turns Them into Victims, 15 September 2025, [url](#); The Syria Report, Civil Registry Suspensions Lead to Administrative Paralysis and Legal Ambiguity, 20 May 2025, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ SANA (Civil registry services have resumed at citizen service centres in Damascus), 25 March 2025, [url](#); Alquds, و تسجيل كثير للولادات... و تسجيل كثيف في سوريا... و تسجيل كثيف في سوريا... و تسجيل كثيف في سوريا... and a large number of births registered), 14 July 2025, [url](#); Shaam, مراكز خدمة المواطن تستأنف خدمة المواليد... و تسجيل كثيف في سوريا... and a large number of births registered), 14 July 2025, [url](#); SANA, Civil registry services reactivate at Central Hijaz Hall in Damascus, 23 March 2025, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ Syrian Observer, "Wide Legal Void": Ongoing Suspension of Civil Registry Services Deprives Syrians of Rights and Turns Them into Victims, 15 September 2025, [url](#)

¹⁸² Syrian Observer, "Wide Legal Void": Ongoing Suspension of Civil Registry Services Deprives Syrians of Rights and Turns Them into Victims, 15 September 2025, [url](#); The Syria Report, Civil Registry Suspensions Lead to Administrative Paralysis and Legal Ambiguity, 20 May 2025, [url](#)

¹⁸³ Lawyer: 3; Alquds, و تسجيل كثيف في سوريا... و تسجيل كثيف في سوريا... and a large number of births registered), 14 July 2025, [url](#); SANA, Civil Registry Services reactivate at Central Hijaz Hall in Damascus, 11 September 2025, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ Lawyer: 3; International NGO: 9; Alquds, و تسجيل كثيف في سوريا... و تسجيل كثيف في سوريا... and a large number of births registered), 14 July 2025, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ The SSG is a governance body, which was established during the Syrian conflict in Idlib in northwest Syria under the auspices of HTS. It functions as a state-like administration, having developed technocratic structures, taken over public services and budgets in the Idlib region, and sought to extend its authority beyond its original territory. Middle East Institute, Governing the day after in Syria, 19 December 2024, [url](#)

in possession of such documents must instead submit a formal statement at the Civil Registry, based on the temporary document issued in Idlib. The interim authorities are currently undertaking efforts to integrate the Idlib system into the Civil Registry, by adopting documents issued by the SSG and formally registering them within the Syrian civil registry.¹⁸⁶

Digital services remain limited.¹⁸⁷ There is no comprehensive online system that allows citizens to request or receive official civil-status documents entirely electronically. Nonetheless, scanned or printed copies of certain civil-status extracts (in Arabic, *ikhraj qayd*) can typically be obtained within approximately 24 hours, including by individuals residing abroad, usually for a nominal fee.¹⁸⁸

4.1. Services from abroad

According to the Syrian MFA, embassies and consulates abroad continue to provide the same range of services as prior to the fall of the former government.¹⁸⁹ However, Syrians living abroad face several obstacles when attempting to obtain civil documentation, including the limited number of operational embassies and consulates, and the fact that services are often restricted and inconsistent across different missions. Syrian returnees who present documents obtained abroad that have not been certified by the Syrian embassy in their previous country of residence are now required to pay a consular fee of 50 USD per document upon return to Syria. For example, a person who married in Lebanon and has four children would need to pay 50 USD for the marriage certificate and an additional 50 USD for each child's registration. This fee, which is considered high for Syrians in neighbouring countries, represents a significant barrier to accessing essential civil documentation.¹⁹⁰

In order for returning students to continue their studies in Syria, the authorities require authentication of the student's academic documents from the university in the host country where they previously studied.¹⁹¹

4.2. Powers of attorney

Powers of attorney issued abroad must still be legalised. Normally, this means the powers of attorney must be signed at a Syrian consulate and then certified by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If the power of attorney concerns property transactions, it often also needs a separate security clearance of the person given power of attorney. Powers of attorney that

¹⁸⁶ Syrian MFA: 8

¹⁸⁷ Lawyer: 10; Syrian MFA: 6; Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 11

¹⁸⁸ Lawyer: 10

¹⁸⁹ Syrian MFA: 5

¹⁹⁰ International organisation (2): 5

¹⁹¹ Syrian MFA: 10

relate only to personal-status matters such as marriage registration do not require this additional clearance.¹⁹² Powers of attorney are valid for one year.¹⁹³

In the past, close relatives — such as parents, siblings, uncles, or cousins — could sometimes complete procedures on behalf of others without a formal power of attorney, and brokers (known locally as *samasira*) often acted as intermediaries. The interim authorities now emphasise that all such work must be carried out strictly in accordance with the law and requires an official power of attorney. However, brokers are still active in some cases, even though their role is said to have decreased.¹⁹⁴

4.3. Civil status extracts and ID cards

The design of civil status extracts has been modified. The document now adopts a long, rectangular format, in contrast to the previous compact version, which some observers regard as more professional in appearance. However, national ID cards have not been reissued since the change of government - reportedly for about nine or ten months - because the authorities are developing a new format. Until that is completed, replacement IDs are not being issued, and people continue to use their old cards.¹⁹⁵

4.4. Birth and marriage certificates

Previously, families were required to navigate a multi-step bureaucratic process: the foreign birth certificate had to be translated into Arabic and submitted to the Civil Registry (In Arabic, *al-Nufus*), which would then refer the case to the local *mukhtar* (local district mayor). The *mukhtar* would issue a Syrian birth certificate in Arabic, typically in the presence of witnesses and following a police report [formally attesting the occurrence of the event, e.g. the birth]. This procedure has been revised since the government change, where these intermediary steps have been eliminated. Translated foreign birth certificates may now be submitted directly to the Civil Registry, which registers the birth without involving the *mukhtar* or the police.¹⁹⁶ However, an international organisation pointed out – without providing details – that in practice, the registration of Syrian children born outside Syria remains a challenge.¹⁹⁷

Late birth registration continues to be subject to age-specific requirements. For children under two years of age, registration can proceed immediately at the Civil Registry. In cases where the child is older than two, the matter must first be referred to a court, which issues a judgment

¹⁹² Lawyer: 15

¹⁹³ Syrian MFA: 7

¹⁹⁴ Lawyer: 13-16

¹⁹⁵ Lawyer: 9

¹⁹⁶ Lawyer: 4

¹⁹⁷ International organisation (3): 11

confirming the child's parentage. Only upon issuance of this judgment can the Civil Registry complete registrations for children over two years of age.¹⁹⁸

Parental marital status also affects the registration process. If the parents are not yet recorded as married in Syria, or if their marriage took place abroad in a form that Syrian law does not recognise, the marriage must first be registered or regularised in Syria. If the marriage is not formally registered, the authorities will not register the child's parentage in the official records.¹⁹⁹

The recognition of foreign marriages depends on the country in which the marriage took place and the type of marriage. Marriages conducted and certified in Muslim-majority countries, such as the United Arab Emirates or Qatar, are generally accepted once properly legalised and translated. Civil marriages conducted in non-Muslim-majority countries, including Germany, Denmark, and the United States, are not automatically recognised under Syrian law, as they are considered civil rather than religious. In such instances, couples are required to formalise the marriage in Syria through a Sharia court before it can be recorded in the Civil Registry.²⁰⁰

Whereas the process for marriages between Syrian citizens²⁰¹ and foreign nationals was previously managed by Political or State Security under the former government, it is now overseen by the Public Security Directorate within the MoI, from which an approval must be obtained. Officials assess the backgrounds and circumstances of both individuals prior to granting approval. While the MoI retains the theoretical authority to reject a marriage, in practice, rejections are rare.²⁰²

4.5. Passports

Under the interim authorities, the primary change to Syrian passports is their period of validity. Passports are now issued with a six-year validity for all applicants. Previously, men who had not completed compulsory military service were typically issued passports valid for only two years. With the official abolition of compulsory military service, this restriction has been removed, and all applicants now receive passports with uniform validity, regardless of prior conscription status.²⁰³

The number of foreign missions authorised to issue passports has increased during 2025. In Europe, new consular offices are being established, and additional personnel are being deployed to meet the growing demand for consular services.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Lawyer: 5

¹⁹⁹ Lawyer: 6

²⁰⁰ Lawyer: 7

²⁰¹ The source did not provide information on marriages involving stateless Kurds

²⁰² Lawyer: 8

²⁰³ Lawyer: 11

²⁰⁴ Syrian MFA: 5

For Syrians living outside the country, passport applications (including renewal) must generally be submitted in person at a Syrian embassy or consulate. The embassy collects the required documents and forwards them to Damascus. The new passport is then printed in Syria and sent back to the embassy for collection. If this is not possible, the person can grant a power of attorney to a representative in Syria, for instance a relative (e.g. parent, uncle) or a lawyer, to handle the application.²⁰⁵ This is also a faster way to obtain the passport.²⁰⁶

Fees for passports have also been revised. For applicants residing abroad, the cost of an urgent passport has decreased from approximately 800 USD under the former government to around 400 USD, while regular passports have been reduced from about 300 USD to 200 USD.

Processing times remain consistent: urgent passports are issued the following day, while regular passports take approximately one month to issue.²⁰⁷

Within Syria, the issuance fees have similarly been reduced. Previously, a passport cost around 2.1 million Syrian pounds (approximately 162 USD); the current fee is approximately 1.6 million Syrian pounds (around 123 USD). Processing times remain unchanged, with urgent applications completed in one day and regular applications taking roughly one month to process.²⁰⁸

4.6. Documents issued for residents in SDF-controlled areas

Following the political transition, several regional offices that previously provided civil status services have been closed. For example, the civil status offices formerly operating in the “security square” in Hasakah are no longer in operation.²⁰⁹ Consequently, residents of Hasakah, Qamishli, and Raqqa must now travel to major urban centres, such as Damascus, Aleppo or Homs to complete civil registration procedures.²¹⁰ The country continues to operate a centralised computer system, known as “Syria One Window” (in Arabic: *al-shubbāk al-wāhid*), which allows any connected Civil Registry office to in principle issue civil status documents for any Syrian citizen, regardless of their place of residence.²¹¹

It should be noted that official documents—including passports, national identification cards, and property registration certificates—are considered fully valid only if issued by the Syrian government.²¹²

²⁰⁵ Lawyer: 14; Syrian MFA: 7; Syrian Embassy in Beirut: 13

²⁰⁶ Lawyer: 13

²⁰⁷ Lawyer: 12

²⁰⁸ Lawyer: 13

²⁰⁹ Lawyer: 17; Nextory, (The paralysis of civil registry offices exacerbates legal and social crises in northeastern Syria), 25 September 2025, [url](#)

²¹⁰ Humanitarian organisation (1): 20-21; Lawyer: 17; Nextory, (The paralysis of civil registry offices exacerbates legal and social crises in northeastern Syria), 25 September 2025, [url](#)

²¹¹ Lawyer: 17; Nextory, (The paralysis of civil registry offices exacerbates legal and social crises in northeastern Syria), 25 September 2025, [url](#)

²¹² Lawyer: 18

4.7. Prevalence of corruption and forged documents

Corruption in post-Assad Syria remains pervasive, deeply entrenched, and intertwined with the country's institutional and administrative structures. According to a local lawyer, bribery and corrupt practices remain widespread within the judiciary system, often driven by extremely low salaries that fail to meet basic living costs.²¹³

According to media reports, corrupt networks have adapted to the new political and economic context after the fall of the previous government. Lawyers and intermediaries near the courts routinely facilitate expedited services for bribes, while university professors reportedly sell exam materials at significant cost. Even routine administrative procedures, such as registering births or handling paperwork, are vulnerable to illicit payments.²¹⁴

Media interviews with Syrian businesspeople and officials further reveal that bribes are often necessary to reclaim confiscated property or secure the release of detained workers, sometimes amounting to a large amount of money. Such practices indicate that corruption continues to affect daily life in Syria.²¹⁵

Analysts note that low public-sector wages and high living costs perpetuate the cycle of corruption, while social media has emerged as a critical tool for exposing malfeasance. Overall, dismantling these entrenched networks remains a long-term challenge, as old patterns of abuse are reproduced in new forms under the post-Assad government.²¹⁶

Forged documents were reportedly widespread during the years of conflict, particularly in the final period of the former government. Fake passports, court verdicts, and property ownership documents were issued, often with the involvement of officials inside and outside Syria. The headquarters of the General Passport Directorate were burned on the night the former government fell, destroying computer databases and obscuring past irregularities.²¹⁷

Since then, the authorities have tightened administrative and technical controls on the issuance of official documents. Measures include the introduction of electronic registration systems, verification databases, and stricter oversight within civil registry and passport offices. As a result, the new electronic systems have made it more difficult for individuals to falsify documents—such as passports, birth certificates, or court papers—and have limited the ability

²¹³ Lawyer: 19

²¹⁴ Syria TV, (شبکات الفساد في سوريا.. تفكك بطيء أم إعادة إنتاج بمستويات جديدة؟) (*Corruption networks in Syria: Slow dismantling or reproduction at new levels?*), 26 August, 2025, [url](#)

²¹⁵ Alarabi, (سوريا ما بعد الأسد... الشّرع بمواجة تحديات عودة الفساد) (*Post-Assad Syria: al-Sharia law faces the challenge of a resurgence of corruption*), 31 October 2025, [url](#)

²¹⁶ Alarabi, (سوريا ما بعد الأسد... الشّرع بمواجة تحديات عودة الفساد) (*Post-Assad Syria: al-Sharia law faces the challenge of a resurgence of corruption*), 31 October 2025, [url](#); Syria TV, (شبکات الفساد في سوريا.. تفكك بطيء أم إعادة إنتاج بمستويات جديدة؟) (*Corruption networks in Syria: Slow dismantling or reproduction at new levels?*), 26 August, 2025, [url](#)

²¹⁷ Lawyer: 21

of informal intermediaries or brokers to manipulate procedures or obtain documents illegally on behalf of others.²¹⁸

Forged court verdicts do occur, but they can be identified because the issuing court has a record of the ruling. To verify the authenticity of a court decision, lawyers consult the court's registry by checking the case number, date, and corresponding file.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Lawyer: 21

²¹⁹ Lawyer: 20

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Annex 1: Meeting Minutes

Meeting with an international security organisation in Damascus, 23 September 2025

About the source

The organisation provides security support for international staff and operations. Its work includes assessing threats, monitoring security conditions, and issuing advisories to ensure the safety of personnel and facilities. It develops risk management strategies, coordinates crisis response, and offers training on safety and security procedures. In addition, it works closely with other international actors to facilitate safe access in challenging environments and to maintain operational continuity during emergencies.

The general security situation

1. An overall increase in crime incidents is observed. Crime is categorised broadly, including targeted killings, sectarian retaliation, and economically motivated crime.
2. After the political change in December 2024, the country witnessed a sharp rise in targeted killings and sectarian retaliations, particularly in the coastal and central regions. The targets of these attacks were individuals affiliated with the former government perceived as complicit in abuses against the local population in these areas during the Assad rule. The violence was thus driven by deep-seated local grievances and a desire for retribution. However, the trend has since declined, possibly due to the interim government's increased effectiveness in apprehending and prosecuting the former government's perpetrators in the legal system.
3. Since the fall of the former government, the country has witnessed an increase in the number of economically related crimes, even in Damascus. Examples of such crimes in Damascus are the killing of a jeweller in the middle of the day and a lady killed by her assistant who stole her gold in a well-known, high-profile neighbourhood.
4. The governorates of Aleppo and Homs experience crime, weapons proliferation, and hazard incidents. However, the number of hazard incidents is higher in Aleppo. By "hazards," the source refers to incidents caused by natural phenomena, such as earthquakes or floods, as well as other relevant incidents like car accidents or explosions caused by remnants of war, such as IEDs. In this specific context, the source meant that there has been an increase in the car accidents and explosion caused

by war remnants.

5. There is a huge increase in traffic incidents, potentially related to the large number of vehicles that entered the country after the former government's fall.
6. Ongoing confrontations between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Ministry of Defense (MoD) continue in the North, which indicate that the March 10th agreement remains fragile.

Security situation in major cities

7. The security situation in Damascus is generally more stable than in Aleppo and Homs.
8. Yarmouk Camp is now accessible and UNRWA has many activities there. Despite extensive damage to the area, many people are planning to return to their homes, primarily motivated by the high rental costs in the capital, where they had fled during the conflict.
9. The city of Aleppo itself is calm and considered stable for the time being, although minor retaliations against individuals affiliated with the former government (known as former *Shabiha*) still occur. Ongoing tension between government forces and the SDF also remains in the Sheikh Maqsoud neighbourhood, which is still under SDF control.
10. The city of Homs initially saw a sharp increase in sectarian crime but is now calmer, though reports of financially motivated crime and retaliation against minority neighbourhoods continue. It should be noted that the central region of Syria, including Homs, remains a sensitive area due to its proximity to Lebanon and ongoing illegal cross-border activities. Historically, these routes were used by the former government for drug and weapons trafficking linked to Hezbollah. Although the current government regularly carries out search operations that have led to multiple seizures of weapons and drugs, the area continues to be a hotspot for smuggling.

Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)

11. There are reports of a high increase in hazard incidents caused by Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), including Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). The entire country is contaminated, particularly the Central, Coastal, and Eastern regions.
12. Landmines and UXOs were reportedly planted in the coastal area during the rebellion against the transitional government in March 2025. The former Syrian army also planted them in November 2024 confronted with operation 'Deterrence of Aggression',

the large-scale military offensive launched by Syrian opposition forces on 27 November 2024, which led to the fall of Assad's government in December 2024. Rural and semi-urban areas (such as Rural Damascus) are highly affected by ERW.

13. Returnees are often surprised by the number of remnants left behind, particularly in rural areas and semi-urban areas such as Rural Damascus, e.g. in Harasta. The war remnants are often colourful, not in standard shape, and attract children; the majority of casualties are among children. On 15 September 2025, the Syrian Minister of Emergency and Disaster Management called for international cooperation on clearance of ERW.

Islamic State activities

14. Islamic State (IS) was calm initially after the fall of Assad's rule, but has recently been observed adapting its structure, and sleeper cells have been observed in the South since May 2025, particularly within the last month (September 2025).
15. IS' targets in the South are the General Security forces and individuals affiliated with the interim government. An IED incident in May 2025 caused multiple casualties among General Security forces. In Daraa, the body of a member of General Security forces was found. An unverified, viral IS video circulated, warning that this would be the fate for anyone who fights against them.
16. IS maintains a limited presence in the eastern desert area (i.e. Badiya) of Homs governorate, primarily targeting the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). However, its operations have declined in both scope and effectiveness compared to previous years. No attacks on civilians engaged in truffle collection have been reported this year.

Freedom of movement

17. The number of checkpoints on the major roads has decreased significantly since the fall of the former government.
18. Unlike under Assad's rule, the General Security Forces no longer routinely check IDs, vehicles, or conduct searches.
19. There may still be a lack of manpower, as well as command gaps within the government structure, which cause the occasional incidents reported at checkpoints.

20. Major roads, including the M5 and M6 highways (connecting Damascus with Homs and the coastal areas), are open and there are generally no security issues or threats on these roads when travelling during daytime. A returnee arriving in Damascus from abroad can travel to other government-controlled areas by private car or bus without difficulty, unless unforeseen incidents occur. An example of such incidents are attacks on civilian vehicles along the road between Damascus and Suweida by armed Bedouin groups operating in the area amid broader sectarian and tribal conflict in summer 2025. A number of national travel agencies now offer trips from Damascus to other areas in Syria, for instance to the coastal area.
21. Currently, international aid and humanitarian organisations have access to Suweida and Daraa and the General Security forces are generally cooperative and accommodating regarding these organisations' movements into and out of these areas.
22. Damascus International Airport is accessible and the road from Damascus to the airport is generally regarded as secure. UN has started using the airport for its personnel.
23. Many border crossing points have been damaged by IDF attacks. The government is currently working on rebuilding these border crossings.

Meeting with the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Damascus, 24 September 2025

Return

Procedures for return

1. Syrians intending to return to Syria are not required to go through status settlement or security clearance prior to their return and the interim authorities do not require any specific documents from Syrians wanting to return; they will just have to prove that they are Syrians at the border.
2. Syrians arriving without Syrian documents will be handed a return paper and will then be allowed to enter if they can prove that they are Syrian nationals.
3. If a Syrian family does not have travel documents from their country of residence but only have an expired Syrian passport, the authorities will either issue a new passport, for which the family will have to pay a fee, or the family will be given a return paper (that will be regarded as a travel document by some airlines), issued by Syrian embassies abroad.

4. Returnees whose names were on the former government's wanted lists will not face any issue in regards to return, as they upon return only need to go to the relevant authorities to have their case clarified and their names removed from the wanted lists, especially if they are wanted for political reasons. For example, former deserters from the Syrian Arab Army must go to the Ministry of Defence to have their names removed from wanted lists.

Documents

Issuance of documents

5. Syrian embassies and consulates abroad offer the same services as before the fall of the former government but the number of embassies issuing passports abroad have increased. In Europe, Syria is opening new consular missions and employing more personnel, as the need for services has increased.
6. Except for a few cases, it is not possible to have documents issued online, for instance when a Syrian is unable to travel within Europe to access consular services. Syrians residing in Denmark must go to the Syrian Embassy in Stockholm to have documents issued.
7. As a general rule, a person residing in Europe must apply for a passport in person at a Syrian representation. If this is not possible, the person can grant a power of attorney to a representative in Syria, such as a parent, an uncle or a lawyer. A power of attorney issued abroad must be authenticated by the Syrian authorities who are strict in verifying the applicant's identity. The power of attorney is valid for one year.
8. Documents issued by the Salvation Government in Idlib, such as ID cards, cannot be used to obtain a Syrian passport. Individuals must instead go to the civil registry and make a formal statement based on the temporary document issued in Idlib. The interim authorities are currently working on merging the system of Idlib with the national civil registry by adopting the documents issued by the Salvation Government and registering them in the Syrian civil registry.
9. If Syrians want to register their children in the Syrian civil registry upon return, the authorities will ask for a document from the hospital the child was born in.
10. If the returning person is a student who wishes to continue his or her studies in Syria, the authorities will seek to authenticate the student's documents from the university where he or she studied in the host country.

Meeting with the Syrian Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September 2025

Return

Procedures for return

1. The authorities at all border crossings have access to the Syrian authorities' central database. In the database, the names of certain categories of individuals are flagged, indicating that the individual has or has had a pending case with the authorities in Syria. When such an individual approaches a border crossing from abroad in order to enter Syria, the officer at the border can see that the person's name is flagged. There are five categories of individuals with flagged names: 1) people who left illegally; 2) males who evaded or deserted from military service; 3) people flagged for security reasons; 4) public employees who left their position without notice 5) people with a criminal record
2. Individuals falling under all five categories in the database are allowed to enter Syria without facing problems. However, they are required to contact the relevant authorities and offices inside Syria to have the flag registered by their names in the database removed. Otherwise, they cannot leave Syria again, apply for Syrian documents, or obtain a clean penal record, which is required for certain types of employment.
3. For the first three categories, the cases are already settled, and these individuals only need to report to the authorities to have the flag by their names formally lifted. Public employees, on the other hand, must first contact their former employer in order to resolve their cases — for example, by submitting a formal resignation — before approaching the authorities to have their names unflagged.
4. Criminal cases (category 5) constitute the only group that cannot be settled administratively and must be brought before a court.
5. Individuals with criminal cases will not be arrested at the border, as the authorities at the border are not mandated to carry out arrests there. However, the source considers it unlikely that persons with serious criminal charges against them would knowingly attempt to enter Syria when they are aware that a serious criminal case is pending upon their return.

6. A former public employee flagged in the database is allowed to apply for a passport abroad; the immigration department decides, however, whether this person can get a passport or not. This person will need to ask his/her former employer for permission by presenting his/her resignation; the employer can then send him/her a paper which he/she can present at the Syrian embassy, e.g. in Beirut, who can then process the application and issue the passport.
7. Children born abroad to Syrian mothers and non-Syrian fathers are not considered Syrian citizens but are allowed to enter Syria. Persons with a Syrian parent or a Syrian spouse are likewise permitted to enter the country.
8. Persons in Lebanon without any documents, who wish to return to Syria, are required to present some form of proof of identity or registration in Lebanon, such as a statement confirming a parent-child relationship. The embassy will then issue a *laissez-passer* (*tazkaret 'awda ilā Sūriyā*). The embassy seeks, as far as possible, to verify whether the person is of Syrian nationality.
9. Unregistered stateless Kurds, the so-called maktoumeen, may enter Syria if they can provide documentation proving that they are from Syria. This can, for instance, be done by presenting a statement from the mukhtar of their area of origin confirming that the person in question has resided there. This requirement applies at all embassies.

Trends and challenges in return

10. Since December 2024, around 100,000 Syrians have returned from Lebanon to Syria; however, most of them have subsequently gone back to Lebanon. Many Syrians move back and forth across the border to work in Lebanon, where salaries are higher than in Syria.

Documents

Issuance of documents

11. There are no online services at the Syrian Embassy in Beirut, except for booking appointments. Consular services, such as the issuance of marriage and birth certificates, are provided in person and are subject to a fee.
12. Not all Syrian embassies issue passports. In Beirut, it is possible to apply for a passport but it will be printed in Damascus and then sent to Beirut. In this case, Damascus will be indicated as the place of issuance; however, it is possible to identify the place of application from the number of the passport, which in the case of Beirut is 113.

13. Passport applications must be submitted in person at the embassy. Alternatively, an applicant can authorise a proxy — such as a lawyer or a family member — to apply for the passport in Syria on his or her behalf. For instance, a person residing in Denmark can authorise a lawyer in Damascus to apply for a passport. Applications can be submitted in any governorate in Syria, not only in the applicant's governorate of origin or former residence.

Meeting with an international organisation (3) in Damascus, 21 September 2025

About the source

The organisation supports governments and migrants by promoting safe and orderly movement, providing humanitarian aid to displaced and vulnerable groups, and running projects on migration management and counter-trafficking. It also conducts research and shares data to inform policy and protect migrants' rights and dignity.

Return

1. The source estimates that approximately 582,000 Syrians have returned from abroad and 1,4 million Internally displaced persons have returned to their home area since December 2024. The numbers of returnees were higher following the fall of the Assad government but have since decreased and stabilised.
2. Aleppo, Idlib and Homs have seen the highest numbers of returnees.
3. The majority of those returning from abroad, return from neighbouring countries due to deteriorating conditions there.
4. The source has heard of some internally displaced families who have returned from camps in SDF-controlled areas such as al-Hol and al-Roj to areas controlled by the Syrian government, which could indicate some collaboration between SDF and the Syrian government.
5. The three main concerns among returnees to Syria are securing livelihoods for themselves and their families, obtaining adequate shelter following widespread housing destruction, and accessing essential public services.

6. The extent of these challenges varies depending on whether returnees settle in major urban centres or in rural areas, which tend to have weaker infrastructure and fewer livelihood opportunities.
7. The conditions for return in Damascus, some parts of Quneitra and some coastal areas are generally better than in the rest of Syria.
8. Having strong community or family support is particularly crucial for women returnees.
9. The Syrian government has the willingness to improve conditions for returnees but lacks the capacity to do so. The scale of destruction across the country is overwhelming, making it difficult to determine where to begin rebuilding.

Procedures for return

10. The Syrian authorities have indicated an interest in facilitating the return of Syrians living abroad by allowing most returnees to re-enter the country on the condition that they can verify their Syrian citizenship.
11. Children born outside Syria are also allowed to enter Syria, as long as the parents can prove that they are Syrian. However, the issuance of documentation for these children remains a significant challenge.
12. The source has heard stories about returnees being arrested or killed by the Syrian authorities, but the reasons for these incidents would be pure speculation.

Freedom of movement

13. The source is not aware of any major problems regarding the freedom of movement for returnees. Most returnees have reported that they have not faced major safety or security concerns regarding their freedom of movement.

Online meeting with a Syrian human rights organisation (1), 17 September 2025

Return

Former draft evaders and deserters

1. Former draft evaders and deserters can reportedly enter Syria without formal settlement procedures, though they may later need to regularise their status. At the

border, officials inform individuals if they are still listed as wanted; some are asked to report later to the relevant offices to have their names removed from the lists.

2. The source has not heard of any particular difficulties faced by former draft evaders or deserters while seeking to have their names removed from wanted lists.

Public employees who left their positions without notice

3. Public employees from all sectarian backgrounds, including Alawites, who return from abroad must reportedly complete an administrative procedure to clear their name. However, they are not prevented from entering at border crossings or airports.
4. The source had not heard of any problems for public employees who left their job without notice in getting their name cleared from wanted lists.
5. There are no known cases of sentences issued in absentia during the Assad period being implemented by the new authorities.

Situation of certain groups

Persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the interim authorities

6. Although there is still some room for constructive criticism of the government, there is less and less space for criticism and less freedom of speech compared to the first months after the fall of the Assad government. However, it is not as restricted as it was under the former government.
7. Constructive criticism of government performance is tolerated to some extent, but the boundaries of acceptable speech remain uncertain. People are discovering day by day what are the red lines of criticism. Criticism of key ministries—Defence, Interior, and Foreign Affairs—are controlled by HTS figures and are considered 'red lines.' Ministers from outside HTS can be criticised more openly.
8. Individuals who address sensitive issues risk arrest, abduction, torture, or even killing. Criticism related to abuses against Alawites or Druze is especially risky. For example, it has become too sensitive to describe what happened on the coast as massacres and that the new government has committed abuses against Alawites or Druze. One should rather frame such incidents as crimes committed by 'unidentified actors' and praise the government's efforts to hold the perpetrators accountable for their actions.
9. The source does not know of individuals living abroad who have publicly criticised the new authorities and later returned to Syria. For that reason, it is unclear what consequences such criticism might have for those who decide to go back. People

wanting to return to Syria probably know that they should not criticise the government. The source himself - who has posted extensively online about the what he described as coastal 'massacres' - doubts he could return without facing consequences and plans to remain abroad or move to northeastern Syria.

10. Whether the authorities monitor or react to criticism from individuals living abroad depends on the person's background, the content of their statements, and the level of public attention they receive. The authorities would not necessarily be aware of, nor would it necessarily have consequences, if an ordinary person abroad criticised the government.

Persons with real or perceived affiliation with the former government

11. Thousands of individuals have reportedly been targeted due to their real or perceived links with the former government, particularly those who served in the army or the intelligence services. In Aleppo, executions were reported, while in other regions people were arrested or disappeared under unclear circumstances.
12. The criteria used to determine who is considered affiliated with the former government remain unclear. In some cases, the authorities appear to rely on lists of wanted people, while in other cases, individuals are detained after being reported by neighbours or local community members. Some former officials have been detained, others released, while a number of individuals linked to the former government have reportedly been integrated into the new administration.
13. In many cases, it is difficult to separate whether individuals were targeted for political reasons - due to association with the former government - or for sectarian reasons, particularly because they were Alawite.
14. Protection by the new authorities appears inconsistent. For instance, during the incidents in the coastal areas, some individuals received protection, while others were left unprotected for reasons that remain unclear.

Alawites

15. The government's ideological outlook is described as primarily Sunni Arab, which has created fear and distrust among minority groups. Along the coast, there have been reports of Alawites being identified and killed solely on the basis of their sectarian identity, even when they had previously opposed Bashar al-Assad and his government.

Druze

16. During times of tension, extremist Sunni students reportedly tried to provoke and harass Druze students, for example by creating WhatsApp groups to spread hate

messages and coordinate attacks at universities. There is no indication that the authorities encouraged these actions; however, they failed to stop them.

17. In Suweida, extremist Sunni groups and Arab tribal fighters reportedly carried out attacks on Druze communities, reciting Quranic verses that refer to non-Muslims. These incidents created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity among Druze residents.

Kurds

18. There are fewer reported abuses against Kurds than against Alawites. At times, however, cases have been reported. For example, Kurds travelling from northeastern Syria towards Damascus have been stopped at several checkpoints, had their phones searched, and been questioned about possible links to the Kurdish self-administration. Some were detained. Their treatment appears to depend on the political tensions between Damascus and the self-administration at a given time.
19. No changes or abuses have been reported since 2025 for Kurds originally from Damascus, such as those in Rukn al-Din or Wadi al-Mashari. They are difficult to identify ethnically, as they largely resemble other residents of Damascus.

Christians

20. The source has not heard of any discrimination against Christians by the authorities, e.g. in terms of access to public services or employment.
21. Groups of men, reportedly including individuals who had fought in Afghanistan, entered Christian neighbourhoods in Damascus carrying Qurans and calling on residents to convert to Islam and for women to wear the hijab. These incidents were unprecedented in the city and reminded many of the period of the Islamic State.
22. There is no indication that the campaigns were organised by the authorities. However, they appear to have taken place because the perpetrators felt confident that they would not face punishment. The incidents created tension between Christians and the authorities who later intervened to prevent similar actions, particularly in cases where organisers had announced their plans online beforehand.

Women

23. The situation of women after the fall of the Assad government is a matter of concern, as the new authorities hold conservative views regarding women's role in society. Women face various challenges depending on the area, their ethno-religious background and civil status. Non-Sunni women appear more vulnerable than Sunni women, especially when their identity is visible through appearance or behaviour. Most

cases of discrimination, harassment and abuse of women are reported from minority areas, while such cases are rarely reported from Hama, Aleppo, or Daraa. Single women also face social restrictions as illustrated in one reported case where a woman in Damascus was not allowed to live alone.

24. In the coast, in Suweida, as well as in parts of Homs and Damascus, local actors - of which some are connected to the authorities - have reportedly imposed the hijab and carried out campaigns promoting stricter religious dress codes on women. In these same areas, abductions of women - mainly as an act of criminality - have also occurred because the government does not provide sufficient security.
25. The government's response to such incidents differs from one area to another. Authorities rarely intervene in Alawite-majority areas but have occasionally acted in Christian neighbourhoods to stop extremist groups from promoting Islam or enforcing the hijab. Christians are reportedly viewed as a less problematic minority than Alawites, Druze, or Kurds in Northeast Syria, partly because they were less associated with the former government.
26. As regards whether the daily life of a normal woman in Syria has changed after the change of government (including questions of freedom of movement, job opportunities, education etc.), life has changed for some women, including Alawite women along the coast, as they no longer feel safe moving around freely or working outside their communities.
27. It is the general observation of the source that Sunni women, especially if they are wearing the hijab, such as the women from Idlib, Aleppo, and Homs, face less challenges than Alawite, Christian and Druze women.
28. As regards the availability of government protection, the source assumes that women do not report to the police because they do not trust the authorities. The source is only familiar with one case; it involved a woman in the coastal area who filed a rape complaint.

Recruitment to the new army

29. Recruitment to the new army is voluntary and there is no forced recruitment or pressure to join. Many join primarily for financial reasons, as the salary in the army is relatively high.

30. The new armed forces reportedly have a Sunni Arab and religiously conservative profile. According to the source, al-Sharaa stated that Alawites will not be accepted into the army.

Online meeting with a Syrian human rights organisation (2), 15 September 2025

Return

1. All Syrians are allowed to return to and enter Syria by presenting any document proving that they are Syrians.

Public employees who left their positions without notice

2. People whose names appeared on wanted lists under the former government - including former public employees who left their post or the country without notice - remain registered in the authorities' database as individuals with outstanding issues. However, they are allowed to re-enter Syria without problem and will not be arrested upon return. In order to have their names removed from the list, they must report to the relevant authority inside Syria. Until their status is cleared and their names removed, they cannot obtain official documents such as passports, nor will they be allowed to leave Syria again.
3. For former lower-ranking public employees, the removal of their names from the lists is generally a bureaucratic formality. It may, however, entail practical difficulties, particularly if the individual resides in a different part of Syria than the authority in question. By contrast, former high-profile officials, including those affiliated with the Assad government's security services, often face challenges in having their names removed. Former high-ranking officials are typically required to attend a meeting with the authorities regarding their case.
4. A further distinction should be made between senior officials or security personnel who left Syria before, and those who left after the change of government. Individuals who departed after the fall of the Assad government may, upon return, be subjected to interrogation or investigation regarding potential criminal offences.

Former draft evaders and deserters

5. Like other returnees whose names appear on wanted lists, former draft evaders and deserters must report to the authorities and have their names removed upon return. The treatment of returning draft evaders and deserters may vary depending on the local officer in charge and the individual's sectarian affiliation. Alawites face some level

of suspicion and risk of interrogation or arrest, whereas Sunnis generally do not encounter such problems. However, the number of draft evaders and deserters among Alawites remains limited.

Situation of certain groups

Women

6. Alawite women have been subjected to kidnapping and sexual violence. Recently, three armed Sunni men raped an Alawite woman in Sarhad in Hama countryside. Although the identities of the perpetrators are widely known, they have not been arrested. Both Alawite and Druze women live in fear, as Druze women have also been targeted; during the clashes in Suweida, 18 Druze girls were reportedly raped. The authorities fail to protect these women and only respond superficially when cases become widely publicized.
7. Officials have denied reports of kidnapping and rape of Alawite women during the coastal clashes in March 2025, despite documentation provided by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the international investigation committee, and Reuters.
8. There is no official directive regulating women's attire. However, in areas controlled by the interim government, women have at times been informally warned by individual local authorities, religious leaders, or security actors with extremist ideological views for not wearing the Islamic veil. In some locations, women have adopted the headscarf out of fear of harassment, such as reported among Alawite women in Homs.
9. Single women (unmarried or widowed) have not experienced any change in their situation since the fall of the previous government.

Kurds

10. Syrian Kurds living in government-controlled areas do usually not face any issue with the authorities. There have been cases where Kurds coming from the Northeast Syria were arrested in Damascus. They were, however, released after a deal. The reason for these arrests was not clear.

Persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the interim authorities

11. People inside Syria usually refrain from expressing views in opposition to the new authorities for fear of possible consequences.

12. Public discussion of the violent events in the coastal area and in Sweida, particularly when described as 'massacres' of Alawites and Druze, is generally considered a sensitive topic that may be viewed as crossing political red lines. There have been individual cases of Syrians living abroad who have faced intimidation or threats for speaking out on these issues. There are indications that the authorities monitor social media.

Christians

13. The current authorities are keen on protecting the Christian community in Syria, providing them with protection when they need it. For example, churches are being protected on Sundays by members of the security forces.

Meeting with an international organisation (1) in Damascus, 21 September 2025

About the source

The source works for an international organisation dealing with conflict resolution, dialogue facilitation, and peacebuilding. The organisation has been active in Syria since 2012, initially in opposition-held areas and, since 8 December 2024, in Damascus, from where it is working on expanding its activities to other areas of Syria. The source has around 15 years of experience in the humanitarian field and stabilisation programming. Since December 2024, shortly after the political transition, the source has travelled across the country, visiting multiple governorates, helping to establish operational teams in several Syrian regions.

Return

1. Thousands of Syrians have returned from abroad, particularly from Lebanon and Türkiye, but many do not stay permanently; many return to check on their home or recover property and then leave again. The deteriorating economy, lack of services and job opportunities, insecurity and political instability discourage people from permanent return. There are still many families trying to reach Beirut or Europe, especially Alawites and Druze, through irregular paths.
2. The economic situation is dire. Although many contracts and memoranda of understanding have been signed with foreign companies, no actual investments or funds have entered the country, as investors are waiting for greater security, political and economic stability. The Syrian pound has lost much of its value, liquidity is scarce, and state institutions are suffering from a lack of resources and expertise.

3. Previous 'wanted lists' from the Assad era have been largely annulled and political-, military- and security-related wanted cases have mostly been cleared after the government change. Bureaucratic hurdles remain for some former state employees in sensitive sectors. The source was previously on wanted lists for illegal exit, military service, and for leaving the country while employed in the oil sector, which is considered sensitive and where employees must formally resign or settle their employment records before departure — something he had not done before leaving Syria. Upon his return, he was informed that all his issues had been cleared except the employment matter in the oil sector, which had to be settled in order for him to be able to leave the country again. Resolving this took him four months due to ineffective, chaotic bureaucracy and the new authorities' lack of capacity and know-how.

Situation of certain groups

Persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the interim authorities

4. During the first three months after the transition, freedom of speech appeared to improve, with people openly criticizing the new government. However, this openness has gradually declined. Although there are no known cases of imprisonment for online criticism, fear of possible repercussions persists.
5. Public criticism is discouraged by religious interpretations. Under the Salafist-influenced ideology of the new authorities, public criticism of leaders is seen as divisive ('fitna'). Advice can be given to the authorities but not in public. This logic shapes the atmosphere and discourages public dissent.
6. Sunni Arabs have more space to criticise the government. A Sunni Arab might openly write something on Facebook against the government and often get away with it. Minorities (Druze, Kurds, Alawites, Christians etc.) face harsher risks if they criticise because they can be accused of disloyalty or being 'agents' of outside forces or "separatists". For instance, a Druze criticizing the government risks being labelled as an Israeli collaborator.
7. Some radical Islamist elements even criticise the government for not implementing Sharia fast enough. For example, when the education minister recently reduced Islamic classes from four to two lessons per week and added music and art lessons throughout Syria, strong protests erupted in Idlib, forcing the authorities to reverse the decision in Idlib.

8. The constitutional declaration issued by the new authorities criminalises expressing positive views about the former Assad government. To date, however, the source has not observed anyone expressing such views in public or heard of anyone being targeted by the authorities for this reason.

Persons with real or perceived affiliation with the former government

9. The risk of a person being targeted because of having served in the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) under Assad's rule depends on the area, the person's ethno-religious background, their rank in the army, and their actions during service.
10. Ordinary SAA soldiers are usually not singled out for persecution unless there are clear accusations that they have committed crimes. However, vigilante attacks against them are increasing, mostly in the Sunni-majority Hama, Homs, and Aleppo provinces, accusing them of being *Folul* (Arabic word for "former regime remnants").
11. About 60 % of SAA were Sunni Arabs; they are usually not being targeted today because of their service in the SAA, particularly in tribal communities (e.g. Deir ez-Zor) where targeting these individuals would provoke violent retaliation from the person's family and tribe.
12. Members of minority communities (e.g. Alawites) who served in the SAA are more at risk of being targeted, especially if they held higher ranks or were involved in abuses.

Alawites

13. The Alawite community is heavily associated with the Assad government and faces mistrust and resentment from both the authorities and other communities, particularly Sunni Muslims. Since the change of government in December 2024, many Alawites have been targeted in vigilante killings, particularly in Homs and Latakia. This is often framed as revenge for crimes committed by the Assad government against Sunni communities, as the new authorities never initiated an official transitional justice process in Syria, holding perpetrators of crimes committed under the Assad government accountable for their acts.
14. Many Alawites have fled abroad (e.g. to Lebanon or Cyprus) through illegal routes or relocated within Syria (e.g. Northeast Syria) to escape threats and economic collapse. Following the change of power, large-scale dismissals of public employees left tens of thousands of Alawites, particularly in the military and security sector, without jobs and their families without income. The Assad government had historically tied the Alawite

community closely to the state apparatus, leaving them dependent on government jobs. As a result, many Alawites live in poverty today.

Druze

15. The clashes in Suweida and Israel's involvement and support to the Druze have largely impacted on the situation of Druze in Syria in a negative way; these events have created deep mistrust between the Druze and the Syrian government and to some extent also between Druze and conservative Sunni communities. Since the clashes in Suweida, there has been some suspicion towards the Druze who are being portrayed as supporters or collaborators of Israel against Syria's national interests.
16. The situation in Suweida is extremely fragile. Although the government officially denies imposing a siege on Suweida, the governorate is currently practically encircled by government forces and allied tribal groups, resulting in shortages of food, medicine, and essential goods. The Druze leadership, led by Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri, has refused dialogue with Damascus since the outbreak of recent clashes, maintaining direct contacts with Israeli intermediaries. By putting pressure on the Druze leadership in Suweida, the government aims to persuade them to enter into dialogue with Damascus. Many people have fled Suweida to other areas or even to Lebanon due to fear of renewed conflict.
17. Druze in other areas, such as Damascus, also fear what the future may bring. In May 2025, security forces clashed with Druze armed groups in Jaramana and Sahnaya—two areas in Damascus with large Druze communities that were controlled by the Druze authorities in Suweida. The clashes led to deaths and arrests, causing widespread fear within the Druze community. The government has tried to ease tensions by appointing Druze representatives to local councils but many still feel politically marginalised and distrustful of Damascus. Hundreds of Druze students at universities in Damascus and Aleppo faced harassment from Sunni peers after the 18 July 2025 incidents, forcing them to drop out and return to their communities.²²⁰
18. The government's pressure on the Druze community in Suweida, Jaramana, and Sahnaya should not be seen as stemming from a sectarian policy; rather, they are driven by the authorities' broader political objective of reasserting control over areas outside government authority, which some communities, including the Druze, continue to resist. However, such clashes have contributed to sectarian tensions within society.

²²⁰ [بسبب التحبيش الطائفي.. عشرات الطلاب الدرزيين يغادرون السكن الجامعي Syria, Ultra Druze students have left the university dormitory], 8 May 2025, [url](#)

19. The source is not aware of any cases of Druze losing their jobs or access to public services such as health care or education because of their ethnic background, although it cannot be ruled out that an individual public official with a negative attitude towards the Druze may display sectarian bias and cause difficulties for a member of the Druze community seeking services from him.
20. There are radical elements among the authorities and within HTS who consider only Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, whose followers are called 'the People of the Book' in the Qur'an, as legitimate religions, while Druze and Alawites, Ismailies, and Murshidiz are not recognized as having legitimate beliefs. This "legitimizes" attacks against them from radical groups linked to HTS.
21. A Druze can, in principle, seek protection from the authorities against violence, like any other Syrian citizen. However, the source assumes that, considering the current situation, a Druze would likely not receive the same treatment when seeking protection from the authorities as, for example, a Sunni Muslim. Nevertheless, it should be noted that people in general do not trust the authorities due to the lack of accountability and they do not expect them to be able to provide protection either; this applies to all Syrians, not just the Druze.

Kurds

22. Ordinary Kurds living in government-controlled areas continue their daily life without major changes and they do not face targeting or discrimination because of their Kurdish background as long as they are not politically active. In Damascus, 30 % of the population are Kurds, many of whom have lived there for centuries, even since the time of Salah al-Din Ayubi in the 12th century.
23. Persons who are involved in political activity, for instance political parties, are facing restrictions, as the government has suspended all political activities. Political parties are disbanded or their activities frozen until a new political party law has been issued. The government is restricting movements sometimes within Kurdish-majority neighbourhoods due to fear of SDF's SDF-linked activities in the capital.

Christians

24. Christian communities live with anxiety after the political changes in December 2024. Many fear the influence of extremist Islamic ideology. Occasional incidents such as attacks on churches and bars, restrictions on alcohol sales in non-Christian areas, and public calling for Islam by radical religious elements (who do not always act under

government control) in Christian neighbourhoods all contribute to this climate of fear. In addition, many people – both Christians and non-Christians – know little about the new authorities, which makes them anxious about the future. For instance, when HTS took control of Damascus in December 2024, many initially thought that they were the Islamic State (IS). Posters by HTS linked radical groups, in public places, which are calling for a decent niqab as the only legitimate dress code for women, are also increasing fear among minorities, but also the moderate Sunni Muslims.

25. The feeling of fear and uncertainty about the new authorities' policy on personal freedom has caused some people – particularly among ethno-religious minorities such as Druze, Kurds, Alawites, and Christians – to be more cautious about their appearance and behaviour in public, for instance with women wearing veils, men growing beards, or avoiding wearing shorts. This is despite the fact that there is no official government policy or practice imposing a certain appearance in public for either men or women. Once in a while, it happens that a member of the security forces asks a man wearing shorts or a woman without a veil to be more attentive to their clothing and appearance in public but nothing further happens from the authorities' side. Nevertheless, people remain cautious and pay more attention to what they wear.
26. Apart from the occasional incidents of attacks on churches, there are no reports of Christians being subjected to targeting because of being Christians. Neither has the source heard of cases of Christians losing their jobs or access to public services such as education and health care due to their religious background. While the government has restricted the sale of alcohol in Muslim-majority areas, Christians still enjoy the right to sell alcohol in their areas, however, limited to only licensed shops by the former government. No new licenses have been granted by the new government despite many having applied for after their shops were closed by authorities.
27. The source has not heard of any cases of Muslims converting to Christianity in government-controlled areas. He assumes that if such cases exist, they would remain unknown, as it is improbable that a convert would reveal his conversion to anyone in his community due to the sensitive nature of conversion and the potential consequences for the individual. In addition, the source considers it unlikely that a Christian would attempt to convert others, as the authorities cannot control radical elements with extremist religious views within their ranks and in society, putting anyone engaged in proselytising at risk of attack.

28. On the other hand, the source has heard of several cases of conversion to Christianity in the Kurdish-controlled areas in the northeast of Syria, without such conversions leading to any consequences for the converts.

Recruitment to the new army

29. Mandatory conscription has been abolished and the new authorities have instead created a voluntary army. There are no reports of forced recruitment or social pressure to join the new army. Hundreds have joined voluntarily, primarily Sunni Arabs who regard the new government as a preferable alternative to the previous one. There is thus no need to force or pressure people to join.
30. Minorities such as Alawites are generally not recruited, despite there being no official policy or written rules about this. This is because the government fears internal distrust within the predominantly Sunni army, particularly towards Alawites, who are not trusted.
31. Many also fear the Islamist ideology of the new government and its core HTS group, which is a Salafist Islamist one, which is considered extremists and alien to the Sufi moderate Sunni Islam that the majority of Syrian Sunni Arab Muslims are. Thus, they remain reluctant to join.

Meeting with representatives of an international organisation in Damascus, 21 September 2025

Return

1. Many displaced Syrians who try to return face serious dangers and bureaucratic barriers. A large number of displaced people go back to areas still contaminated by landmines and unexploded ordnance, which caused a sharp increase in child deaths and injuries in early 2025. Demining work remains slow and incomplete, and people often return before clearance is done.
2. Housing is another major problem for returnees. Much of the housing stock has been destroyed, reconstruction is moving slowly, and many families cannot afford to rebuild.
3. Housing, land, and property conflicts are widespread across Syria — especially in Idlib, Homs and Damascus — and stem from years of state confiscations, unimplemented court rulings, and competing ownership claims after displacement. In many places,

land-registry offices are still closed, making it impossible for people to verify or reclaim property rights.

4. Lack of valid documents makes reintegration even harder. Birth, marriage and education certificates issued in areas once controlled by the SDF, SNA or other groups are not recognised by the authorities. An agreement from March 2025 between the SDF and the government was meant to solve this issue and standardise school curricula, but progress has stopped.

Judicial system

5. Following various waves of violence, the authorities announced arrests or created investigation committees, but reports or progress in investigations have not been made public and recommendations remain to be implemented.
6. The justice system remains weak and inconsistent. Judges have been dismissed and reinstated in confusing ways, and courts lack staff and resources, despite recent efforts by the Ministry of Justice to address current issues.
7. The March 2025 Constitutional Declaration made several important changes: the status of Islamic Jurisprudence was elevated from 'a primary source' of legislation as per the 2012 Constitution to 'the primary source' of legislation, and various past legislation contrary to human rights are supposed to be abolished, including housing, land and property laws, but it is unclear which laws are still in force, creating uncertainty for judges and the people affected.

Situation of certain groups

8. Arbitrary arrests, summary executions, acts of torture, and deaths in custody continue to be reported in areas controlled by the government, such as in Damascus and Homs, including allegedly by interim authorities' security forces and factions affiliated with them. These also highlight the lack of a proper integration process of various armed groups into a unified security apparatus under a central command. Many of these arrests take place at checkpoints or during house raids that are part of ongoing security operations by the security forces. Many of those who have been detained or killed come from minority groups such as the Alawite and Druze communities, or are people thought to have links to the former government. In most cases, families are not officially informed, have no access to lawyers, and receive no information about why their relatives were arrested or where they are being held, leaving them with no way to file a complaint or ask for help.

Persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the interim authorities

9. Authorities are closely watching social-media activity. Several people have been arrested after criticising government actions online, including journalists and activists who commented on the security operation in the coastal region earlier in the year.
10. There are no clear legal rules defining what kind of speech can lead to punishment. Enforcement seems uneven and at times targets both well-known public figures and ordinary citizens who post critical opinions. This uncertainty encourages fear and self-censorship.

Alawites

11. At the end of August 2025, residents, a majority of whom are Alawites, in the Al-Soumariyyeh area of Damascus have suffered a wave of forced evictions, carried out by a faction that is allegedly linked to the Ministry of Defence forces. These were reportedly accompanied by scores of other abuses such as beatings, looting, and arbitrary arrests. It is an emblematic case of housing, land and property related disputes in Syria.
12. Hundreds of men were detained during these operations and later released only after signing documents promising to leave their homes. Many houses were looted or vandalised, and several women said they were beaten. Evicted families have been refused entry into other Alawite-majority neighbourhoods in Damascus such as al-Mazzeh 86 and Al-Wurud, and were told to “go back” to their places of origin in Homs or Latakia — even when they had lived in Damascus for years.

Druze

13. Demonstrations continue in Suweida, where Druze community leaders and activists call for greater self-rule and justice for those killed in earlier clashes. An internationally mediated roadmap was drafted to calm tensions. It included inviting the UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate reported abuses, deploying regular police and army units, ensuring aid access, and exchanging prisoners under ICRC supervision.
14. The Druze religious leadership rejected the Roadmap on 17 September 2025 through its legal committee, saying they did not trust the authorities’ intentions. Even so, humanitarian convoys have continued entering the city, suggesting that parts of the Roadmap are being implemented by the authorities, though not by local armed actors.

Christians

15. Among Christian communities, only a few isolated crimes have been recorded, such as a robbery in which a woman was killed; the perpetrators were reportedly arrested. Broader risks come mainly from extremist groups that continue to spread hate speech and threats against Christians both online and offline.

Kurds

16. Kurds from Damascus have not faced a systematic pattern of discrimination or abuse in government-controlled areas.

Women

17. Women — whether married, divorced or widowed — can currently move freely and are allowed to rent or buy homes in areas under government control. No new formal restrictions have been introduced since the change of government. However, reports issued earlier this year describe cases of sexual violence and harassment, especially at checkpoints and during return journeys through unsafe areas. These incidents occurred across different parts of the country, including zones previously controlled by the SDF, SNA and former government. While laws grant women basic freedoms, social attitudes, particularly in rural areas, and lack of protection remain major barriers to full equality.

Government protection

18. There is still no functioning system to protect people who face immediate threats. The post-2024 security situation remains highly fragmented and fragile. Appointments to key command positions reportedly made as political rewards to influential militia leaders rather than through a structured reform process, leaving the security apparatus fragmented and poorly coordinated, with limited oversight or accountability.
19. Many personnel at checkpoints do not wear uniforms or other visible identification, which makes it extremely difficult for civilians to identify which authority they represent or to hold them accountable for abuses.
20. Tensions persist between units under the Ministry of Defence, and the lack of centralized and unified command chain have created confusion over responsibility for arrests, detentions, and local law enforcement.

Freedom of movement

21. Movement within the country remains affected by informal restrictions and arbitrary decisions from local security actors.

22. In Suweida, Bedouin families displaced during the July violence remain unable to return to their villages and continue to protest for that right.

Meeting with a lawyer in Damascus, 22 September 2025

Return

Former draft evaders and deserters

1. Individuals who were wanted for political reasons, or who had evaded compulsory military service or reserve duty under the former government can enter Syria without any restrictions or requirements. After entering the country, they can undergo a “status settlement”, and have their names removed from wanted lists. Those with criminal charges, financial claims, or civil court verdicts, however, remain subject to arrest when entering the country and are referred to the competent courts for processing.

Public employees who left their positions without notice

2. Under the former government, public employees who left their positions without notice were detained upon arrival, taken to court, and usually released after signing a pledge to resign or complete the necessary administrative settlement. Under the current government, those employees will not be arrested upon return but are allowed to re-enter the country. However, legally, leaving a public job without permission remains considered a violation, and returning employees must go through formal settlement procedures with their previous institutions after they re-enter Syria. They will have to resign and afterwards their names will be removed from wanted lists.

Documents

3. Despite official statements about modernisation, government offices remain overcrowded and slow. People must still queue in person for hours to obtain documents. The administrative process is widely regarded as inefficient.

Birth and marriage certificates

4. After the political change in 2024, there have been a number of adjustments in the way Syrian authorities issue and handle civil documents. Previously, registering a birth that took place outside Syria involved several bureaucratic steps. Families had to take the foreign birth certificate, translate it into Arabic, present it to the Civil Registry (al-Nufus), which would then refer it to the local mukhtar. The mukhtar would issue a new

Syrian birth certificate in Arabic, based on the foreign document, usually in the presence of witnesses and after a police report was made. Under the new system, these extra steps have been removed. The translated foreign birth certificate can now be presented directly to the Civil Registry, which registers the birth without involving the mukhtar or the police.

5. In case of late birth registration, the following applies: If the child is younger than two years old, the Civil Registry can register the birth immediately. When the child is older than two years, however, the case must first go through a court. The court issues a judgment confirming who the child's parents are. Only after this court judgment can a child above two years be registered in the Civil Registry.
6. If the parents are not yet recorded as married in Syria, or if their marriage took place abroad in a form that Syrian law does not recognise, the marriage must first be registered or regularised in Syria. If the marriage is not formally registered, the authorities will not register the child's parentage in the official records.
7. Marriages concluded and certified in Muslim-majority countries such as the United Arab Emirates or Qatar are usually accepted once they have been properly legalised and translated. Civil marriages from non-Muslim-majority countries such as Germany, Denmark, or the United States, however, are not automatically recognised under Syrian law because they are civil rather than religious. In these cases, couples must formally regularise the marriage inside Syria through a Sharia court before it can be entered into the Civil Registry.
8. When a Syrian citizen marries a foreign national, the marriage must be approved by the Ministry of Interior. Under the former government, such approval was handled by Political or State Security. Now it is under the authority of Public Security within the Ministry of Interior. Officials examine both spouses' backgrounds and circumstances before granting approval. While in theory the ministry can reject the marriage, in practice the source had not encountered cases of rejection.

Civil-status extracts and ID cards

9. As for civil-status extracts (*ikhraj qayd*) and ID cards, there have been some superficial and procedural changes. The design of the civil status extract has been altered; it now appears as a long, rectangular document rather than the previous compact version, which some consider less professional in appearance. National ID cards have not been reissued since the change of government — reportedly for about nine or ten months —

because the authorities are developing a new format. Until that is completed, replacement IDs are not being issued, and people continue to use their old cards.

10. Digital services remain very limited. There is no system allowing citizens to request or receive official documents entirely online. However, individuals can obtain scanned or printed copies of some civil-status extracts within about 24 hours, even when they are abroad, usually for a small fee. Passports, however, still require in-person submission through embassies or by a power of attorney representative in Syria.

Passports

11. The main change with regard to the new passports is that they are now valid for six years. Under the former government, men who had not completed their military service were usually issued passports valid for only two years. Now that compulsory military service has officially been abolished, all applicants receive passports with a six-year validity regardless of their previous conscription status.
12. Passport fees have also changed. Under the former government, applicants abroad paid around 800 US dollars for an urgent passport and around 300 dollars for a regular one, which took about one month to issue. Today, the urgent service reportedly costs about 400 dollars and the regular one about 200 dollars. The processing times remain roughly the same: urgent passports are issued the next day, while regular ones take about a month.
13. Inside Syria, the fees for issuing passports have also been reduced. Previously, a new passport costed around 2.1 million Syrian pounds (about 162 US dollars); now it costs about 1.6 million [about 123 US dollars]. The processing time remain the same — one day for urgent issuance and about a month for regular. A person who lives abroad can have a passport issued in Syria by using a local lawyer or a relative with a power of attorney in Syria as the processing time will be faster than applying through an embassy abroad.
14. For Syrians living abroad, passports are renewed through the nearest Syrian embassy, as there is still no online application system. The embassy collects the required documents and forwards them to Damascus. The new passport is then printed in Syria and sent back to the embassy for collection. If the applicant gives a power of attorney to a lawyer or relative in Syria, that representative can handle the renewal directly inside the country, which is often quicker.

Powers of attorney

15. Powers of attorney that are issued abroad must still be legalised. Normally, this means the powers of attorney must be signed at a Syrian consulate and then certified by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If the power of attorney concerns property transactions, it often also needs a separate security clearance of the person with the power of attorney. Powers of attorney that relate only to personal-status matters such as marriage registration do not require this additional clearance.
16. In the past, close relatives — such as parents, siblings, uncles, or cousins — could sometimes complete procedures on behalf of others without a formal power of attorney, and brokers (known locally as “*samasira*”) often acted as intermediaries. The new authorities now emphasise that all such work must be carried out strictly under the law and require an official power of attorney. However, brokers are still active in some cases, even though their role is said to have decreased.

Documents in SDF-controlled areas

17. Some regional offices that existed under the former government have been closed. For example, the civil-status offices in the “security square” that used to operate in al-Hasakah no longer exist. Residents of al-Hasakah, Qamishli, or Raqqa must now travel to major cities such as Damascus or Aleppo to complete their paperwork. The country continues to use a single centralised computer system, known as “*Syria One Window*” (*al-shubbāk al-wāhid*), so any Civil Registry office connected to the national system can theoretically issue civil registry document for any Syrian citizen.
18. Documents such as passports, IDs, or property registration, are only fully valid if issued by the Syrian government.

Judicial system

19. The judiciary itself has not been replaced; most judges from the former government remain in their posts. Their behaviour is described as more polite and service-oriented than before, possibly to improve the image of the new authorities. Nonetheless, corruption and bribery remain widespread. Officials reportedly accept bribes because their salaries are extremely low and insufficient to cover living costs.
20. Official legal publications still exist. The Bar Association continues to issue the *Majallat al-Muhāmīn* (Lawyers’ Journal), and the Ministry of Justice publishes the *Majallat al-Qānūn* (Law Journal). Both are distributed in printed form to judges and lawyers. Legal professionals also use informal Facebook groups, sometimes called “legal clinics,” to discuss cases and share questions, but without naming individuals. To verify whether a

court decision is genuine, lawyers must consult the issuing court's registry by checking the case number, the date, and the relevant file. Forged court verdicts do appear, but they can be detected because the original court has a record of the rulings.

21. Forged documents were reportedly widespread during the years of conflict, especially in the final period of the former government. Fake passports, court verdicts, and even property ownership documents were issued, often with the complicity of officials both inside and outside Syria. The headquarters of the General Passport Directorate were burned on the night the former government fell, destroying computer databases and covering up past irregularities. Since then, the authorities have tightened administrative and technical controls on document issuance — for example by introducing electronic registration systems, verification databases, and stricter oversight within civil registry and passport offices. Due to these new electronic systems, it has become harder for individuals to falsify documents (like passports, birth certificates, or court papers) and more difficult for informal intermediaries or brokers to manipulate the process or obtain documents illegally on behalf of others.
22. Property issues remain a major problem – especially usurpation (in Arabic *ghasb al-'aqar* and refers to the illegal seizure or occupation of someone else's property, often during the war when the rightful owners had fled or were displaced). During the Syrian war, many people who fled their homes had their property taken over by others. Some of these cases involved forged powers of attorney or cooperation with corrupt employees in the land registry. Others were simple cases of occupation by neighbours or opportunists. The current government allows two possible methods to recover property: first, through a criminal complaint if the act is recent enough to prosecute, or second, through a civil lawsuit such as a claim for recovery of possession or confirmation of ownership. However, if the usurpation happened ten or more years ago, criminal courts usually refuse to pursue the case, citing the statute of limitations, and refer it to the civil courts.
23. In areas such as the Ghouta region near Damascus, where civil registries and land records were burned, citizens can apply for restoration by presenting any surviving documents or photos proving ownership. Once the authorities verify these materials, they issue a new official record, which then becomes the valid original. This process, called 'record restoration,' is said to be fairly efficient when sufficient evidence is available.
24. The new authorities have also reviewed certain property cases linked to individuals who were granted Syrian nationality during the war for political or military reasons —

for example, members of Hezbollah or Iranian nationals. Some of these people have been stripped of the Syrian nationality they obtained, and their property has been returned to its original owners.

Situation of certain groups

Persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the interim authorities

25. The monitoring of social media continues as the case was under the former government. Security bodies reportedly track online activity both inside and outside the country. They also rely on informal networks of informants, including shopkeepers or local residents who are pressured to report on others. This monitoring covers all groups in society, although the level of scrutiny may vary depending on an individual's background, location, or influence.
26. Security-force behaviour on the ground appears largely unchanged. Checkpoints, street patrols, and sudden security actions still occur, and in some cases have become more aggressive than before. Arbitrary treatment by security persists.

Kurds

27. In Afrin, after the entry of the new government, abuses by Turkish-aligned armed factions reportedly decreased only slightly. Some detainees were released and certain properties were returned to their original owners, but these actions are viewed as symbolic gestures meant to improve the government's image rather than genuine human-rights reforms. Factions such as the Hamzat and Amshat groups remain powerful and active in the area.
28. Freedom of movement across the country has not been formally restricted, but Kurdish citizens in particular continue to experience harassment at checkpoints. Travellers from the Jazira or Qamishli regions are often stopped for questioning or delayed for long periods, though they are ultimately allowed to continue their journey.
29. In Damascus, Kurds who do not engage in political activity are generally treated like other Syrians, but those perceived as political or outspoken face the same kinds of reprisals that government critics of any background might experience.

Meeting with the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), 22 September 2025, including written information provided by SNHR

About the source

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) is an organisation focused on monitoring, documenting, and reporting human rights violations in Syria, especially since the outbreak of conflict in 2011.

Return

1. Returnees tend to be individuals with financial resources, but they primarily originate from countries with weak service provision, such as Lebanon. By contrast, there are relatively few returns from Europe, where refugees typically enjoy access to more comprehensive services and are less inclined to give them up.
2. Public services in Syria remain very limited, leaving many citizens without adequate support. Returnees from Western countries find this especially difficult, as the quality of services is far below what they are used to.
3. Finding housing is a major challenge. Demand far exceeds supply, and rents have increased dramatically—from around USD 200–300 before the fall of the former government to between USD 800–1500 today—making accommodation unaffordable for many.
4. At present prices for essential goods like transport, rice, sugar, and fruit have fallen by about 30%, but the prices of other items, especially imported or non-essential goods, have risen sharply. As a result, households face both relief and strain depending on what they need to buy.
5. Public sector wages have increased, but salaries vary widely between regions. In example, employees in Idlib earn more than the other areas controlled by the Syrian interim government, creating unequal living conditions across the country.
6. Economic activity has picked up, particularly in the field of construction. Demand for foreign labour is expected to rise, as years of war and large-scale emigration have left the country without enough skilled workers or young professionals.
7. The education sector is in critical condition. There are too few schools, and teaching quality is poor. This is one of the main reasons families hesitate to return to Syria, as many parents fear their children will not receive an adequate level of education.

8. Syrians can re-enter the country using a valid passport. In cases where no passport is available, individuals can present any document proving Syrian nationality to a Syrian embassy or consulate abroad, which may issue a travel paper (*waraqat 'ubur*). Children without Syrian documents are permitted entry if accompanied by a father with valid Syrian documents; in such cases, foreign-issued documents confirming the parent-child relationship are accepted as sufficient proof for entry.
9. Upon arrival in Syria, individuals who appear on wanted lists or have unresolved issues with the authorities are informed of their status. If they fail to resolve these issues, they will face restrictions by the authorities, including difficulties in issuing new documents or leaving the country again.
10. Individuals who left Syria illegally before the fall of the former government are generally not required to report to the Immigration and Passport Center or other government departments. At the border, they were only requested to prove their Syrian identity and present documents confirming their residence abroad, after which they were issued a transit document. This document is sealed and can be used as an official document inside Syria if needed. While there may be isolated cases where individuals were instructed to report to specific government departments or security centers, the source stated that there is no general policy or law issued by the new Syrian authorities requiring such procedures.
11. Individuals with unresolved civilian issues, such as unpaid fines, outstanding bills, or other non-political and non-military matters, are required to address these through the *Amn Jina'i* (Criminal Security). Authorities direct such individuals to this channel in order to settle their cases.

Former draft evaders and deserters

12. The authorities have not announced an official policy regarding former draft evaders and deserters. Such individuals are generally free to move as long as they can present documents proving that they left Syria or defected before the fall of the former government.
13. Military deserters returning to Syria after the fall of the former government are not required to undergo a status settlement process. Drawing on a personal experience reported by a member of the SNHR team, the source explained that a conscripted soldier who defected from military service under the former government only needs to visit the civil registry in his home governorate or the district mayor's office to retrieve

the national identity card that was issued to him when he joined the army under the previous government.

14. The government has formally abolished compulsory military service, and joining the armed forces is now voluntary. There have been no reports of forced recruitment into the new army.

Judicial system

15. According to the source, military courts were suspended in the period prior to the fall of the former government, and there is no available information on whether they have been transferred to the Ministry of Justice. The judicial system is described as relatively stable, although some cases have reportedly been delayed due to the replacement of corrupt judges found to have engaged in violations under the former government.

Situation of certain groups

Persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the interim authorities

16. Not all citizens who are perceived as supporters of the new authorities engage in attacks against individuals criticizing the government. Reportedly, such reactions are mainly directed at those who express particularly harsh criticism of the new Syrian authorities or are perceived as linked to remnants of the former government. One example was a campaign against SNHR after it criticized the government's handling of incidents in the coastal areas and in Suweida. SNHR was verbally attacked both online and by people in public. SNHR has, however, also faced criticism and verbal attacks from various sides, including both supporters and opponents of the new authorities, as well as from supporters of the Syrian Democratic Forces and other factions still present in Syria.
17. Generally, criticising the interim government is possible, and many complaints or concerns can be expressed without direct repercussions. Nevertheless, the tolerance for criticism varies by region. In some provinces, authorities or local forces react more harshly and have detained individuals who expressed criticism.
18. SNHR has not found evidence of a systematic policy by the new authorities to target their critics. There have, however, been arrests of individuals who expressed opposition, particularly through social media posts or public criticism of government decisions. The profiles of those targeted include civilians, activists, and in some cases loyalists of the former government. These individuals were later released, and no consistent pattern of reprisals has been established

19. In other cases, the reasons for arresting individuals remain unclear—whether due to perceived political affiliations or criticism of the government. Local officials across regions act inconsistently, often driven by differing motives behind arrests.
20. Relatives of opponents have not been systematically targeted, and SNHR has not recorded cases of non-state groups engaging in reprisals against individuals for their opposition to the new government.
21. The government has reportedly annulled emergency laws, including anti-terrorism legislation. While this is formally a significant development, the practical impact of such legal changes remains to be fully assessed.
22. Authorities reportedly lack the capacity to systematically monitor individual social media accounts. Instead, they track broader trends and react to high-profile cases. For example, when reports of torture committed by members of the newly formed security forces began to circulate widely online and attract public attention, the authorities responded by holding those responsible accountable.

Persons with real or perceived affiliation with the former government

23. SNHR has documented a number of individuals have been arrested since the fall of the former government on the basis of alleged ties to the former state security agencies or allied militias. In some cases, these accusations were supported by solid evidence, such as official military records or corroborated witness testimonies.
24. In other cases, however, arrests of individuals allegedly linked to the former government were based on rumours, local rivalries, or unverified claims circulated on social media. For example, some individuals were accused of collaborating with the former government based only on anonymous posts on social media or community gossip, without any evidence or independent verification. In certain cases, such accusations arose from ongoing disputes over land, property, or business, where rivals labelled each other as former government collaborators to legitimise violence or seize assets. In other situations, acts of personal or tribal revenge were framed in political terms, with claims of affiliation serving as a pretext for targeting.
25. Motives behind such reprisals are complex and cannot be reduced to sectarian identity alone. While some incidents were clearly rooted in local or tribal disputes, others targeted individuals with documented records of involvement in abuses under former government. In response, the interim authorities launched a temporary settlement

campaign aimed at disarming former government affiliates and placing them under surveillance until their cases could be reviewed. According to SNHR's monitoring, only three individuals holding temporary settlement papers were later attacked, leaving it uncertain whether this mechanism offers lasting protection.

26. High-profile figures previously implicated in abuses have been arrested and prosecuted by the Syrian authorities, while others—particularly informants or local collaborators with documented involvement in killings or arrests under the former government—have faced direct targeting by communities seeking revenge.
27. The number of arrests by the authorities has decreased recently, particularly among individuals from coastal regions and Suweida. However, the reasons for arrest are often unclear, and the places of detention are rarely disclosed. The lack of transparency from the security forces makes it difficult to establish patterns or legal grounds for detention.
28. The new government has issued directives requiring employees who left between March 2011 and the date of the fall of the former government to report to government-designated centres in order to apply for reinstatement. It remains unclear whether such persons can resume their previous positions directly or whether individual review and settlement is necessary. To date, SNHR has not documented reprisals against this group.

Alawites

29. Among Alawites detained since the fall of the former government, most have been accused of committing abuses under the former government. In certain cases, Alawites were killed by citizens seeking revenge for crimes committed against them or their relatives.
30. A considerable number of Alawites accused of abuses have been released due to lack of evidence. This has generated anger among the victims and their communities, fuelling incidents of extrajudicial retaliation, including against other Alawites uninvolved in abuses. As a result, the authorities have moved to protect Alawites under threat. Some members of the community express fear for their safety, perceiving themselves as targets solely on the basis of their identity.
31. Despite official pledges of equality and protection for all communities since March 2025, the government continues to face significant challenges in controlling undisciplined elements within the security apparatus, especially in the south and in

coastal regions. This has resulted in isolated incidents of violence and harassment against Alawite and Druze communities in particular.

Christians and Kurds

32. By contrast to Alawites and Druze, Christians and Kurds have not faced systematic patterns of discrimination, although isolated revenge attacks and kidnappings by unidentified groups have been recorded. According to government statements, efforts are underway to restore security and prosecute perpetrators, but the widespread availability of weapons and the persistence of independent armed groups continue to undermine these efforts.

Women

33. According to monitoring by SNHR, there has been no change in the situation of women since the change of government in December 2024. Their daily lives remain largely the same, with no significant improvement or deterioration in their rights or protection.
34. SNHR has not documented cases of government-perpetrated abuses specifically targeting women. However, there have been reports of kidnappings by unidentified armed groups, particularly in Homs, where the bodies of several abducted women were later found. The perpetrators and motives remain unknown.
35. SNHR has not documented discriminatory treatment of women by the Syrian authorities, and access to public services, including education, appears unchanged. The situation of single, widowed, or divorced women has also not undergone any substantial improvement under the new government, and they continue to face the same difficulties regarding employment, transport, housing, protection, and access to official documents.

Meeting with an international organisation (2) in Damascus, 22 September 2025

About the source

The source regularly and directly engages with Syrians who have returned and with members of the communities that have received them. The organisation is involved in supporting the voluntary return of Syrians from abroad and providing services to help their reintegration in areas of return.

Return

Procedures for return

1. In terms of procedural and documental requirements, the situation is very different now compared to under the previous government; there are some documental requirements but the authorities are generally very lenient and accept even expired documents or missing documents for children etc. For example, a birth notification from the hospital abroad where a child was born is sufficient documentation for entry when the child is accompanied by his or her Syrian parent. The authorities accept any kind of document that links a person to Syria, e.g. expired ID cards or passports. In addition, Syrians abroad can progressively acquire and renew their documents through Syrian representations (consulates/embassies/consular delegations) abroad.
2. Currently, if someone shows up at the border without documents, the authorities will do everything within their powers to facilitate the person's entry into Syria, including accepting alternative proofs of identity such as photos of documents or papers issued by a mukhtar. Previously, at the border, access to the civil registry database was possible if extracts were needed through the Ministry of Interior. Under the new authorities, this has not been reinstated as yet, and a lenient approach is instead applied for the time being.
3. A Palestinian Refugee from Syria (PRS) would be allowed to enter Syria on an expired travel document for PRS.
4. In case a person has unsettled issues with the authorities, he/she will generally be informed at the border about this and will be requested to settle them after returning to Syria. The source has not monitored any cases where a person was not allowed to enter Syria due to issues flagged at the border.
5. The main obstacles that Syrians abroad face when trying to obtain civil documentation include the limited number of functioning embassies and consulates, as well as the fact that services are restricted and vary between different missions. Syrian returnees holding documents from abroad that were not certified by the embassy in their previous country of asylum are now required to pay consular fee of 50 USD per document. This means, for instance, that a person who got married in Lebanon and had four children would have to pay 50 USD for the marriage and 50 USD per child to register these in Syria. This fee, which is high for Syrians living in neighbouring countries, constitutes one of the main barriers for obtaining civil documentation.

6. In the case of Syrian children born abroad who are not registered in Syria, these children will be allowed to enter if they have documentation showing their link to their Syrian parents or even just one of their parents is Syrian.

Entry routes and border crossings

7. Currently, 11 official border crossings are open for returning refugees and additional border crossings will open soon for returnees: previously some border crossings were designated for commercial traffic but have now been open for returnees as well. All official border crossings are controlled by the Government of Syria (GoS). The GoS is working on creating a centralized system to standardise procedures at all border crossings. The current active border crossings available for return are as follows:
 1. Joussieh
 2. Nassib
 3. Jdeidet Yabous
 4. Ar Ra'ee
 5. Al Aridah
 6. Kassabrabulus
 7. Bab al Hawa
 8. Al Salama
 9. Albokamal
 10. Al-Hamam
8. The source has not heard of cases of extortion of returnees by border guards as happened under the former government and the new authorities have established a complaint and feedback mechanism at the borders to address corruption.
9. Since the change of government, the source has not received reports of detention, interrogation or harassment of returnees, although isolated cases may occur. Some returnees, however, choose to cross the border through unofficial routes for a range of reasons, including cost and convenience (i.e. no fees to pay, shorter travel distances and thus lower cost of transportation). Returnees may not always be aware of the risks associated with such routes, including the presence of landmines, or it does not deter them.

Trends and challenges in return

10. More than one million Syrians have now returned to Syria since 8 December 2024. The number of people returning increased significantly after 8 December 2024. Overall, the rates of return have been trending upwards throughout the year; however, return rates fluctuate from week to week and appear to respond to certain triggers such as security

events in the country, the school calendar, weather conditions, conditions in host countries, and the removal of administrative barriers such as fees or overstay fines in countries of asylum. The rate has reduced approaching the end of the year as expected, although people are still returning. According to a recent survey conducted in the region, the intention to return has slightly decreased compared to the previous survey conducted at the beginning of the year. Nevertheless, a considerable number of respondents still intend to return within the next 12 months, and the majority of refugees continue to harbour hopes of returning to Syria one day. Many of those who have already returned did so out of hope or for personal reasons, while others appear to be adopting a more planned or wait-and-see approach to observe how the situation in Syria develops.

11. The main challenges faced by returnees are access to housing as well as the low level of services available in areas of return.
12. The level of criminality – e.g. kidnappings, theft, armed robbery – has increased in some areas of the country and arms are widely available in some communities. The criminal perpetrators appear to consist of armed elements operating in areas where state forces do not exercise full control over security.
13. One of the main motivations for return is for people to be able to unite with their families. In addition, people want their children to receive a Syrian education. The majority of returnees are heading to the cities of Aleppo, Homs and Damascus, which currently experience relatively few security incidents and there are more services and livelihood opportunities available. Urban areas in Syria are attracting the highest number of returnees.
14. While all Syrians are technically able to return, the majority of those currently returning are observed to be Sunni Arabs, which may add strain to the social fabric in some communities. Recent security incidents affecting minorities, along with the perceived lack of representation in the interim government, have fostered a sense of mistrust among some minority groups towards the interim authorities. Some Syrians, including Alawites and Christians, have left or are considering leaving the country since the fall of the former government, although not in significant numbers.
15. As regards the situation of female returnees, many experience restrictions on their freedom of movement inside Syria, depending on where they reside. For example, in the coastal areas, there are reports of women dropping out of university and of girls not being sent to school due to fears of being kidnapped by armed groups. In Aleppo,

women have reportedly started covering their hair to avoid harassment. A single woman returning to Syria would generally be highly reliant on family support to re-establish herself; however, access to such support largely depends on the individual woman and the presence of such support in the area of return.

Meeting with a humanitarian organisation (1) working in Syria, Damascus, 23 September 2025

About the source

The source operates across all regions of Syria, providing humanitarian assistance to people affected by the conflict, displacement, and natural disasters. Its programs include among others legal and civil documentation support to displaced persons and returnees.

Return

Procedures for return

1. At present, the Syrian authorities generally do not require specific documents such as IDs or passports for returnees to enter the country; any paper proving Syrian identity is accepted at all borders. Although border procedures have continued to change in recent months, it remains relatively easy for most returnees to enter Syria.
2. The Syrian authorities generally facilitate Syrians' entry into the country as much as they can, especially in cases involving children who are not registered. Children born during the conflict who are not registered with the Syrian authorities and thus lack documents can enter Syria with a birth notification. The birth notification does not need to be Syrian; it can be Lebanese or European, for example. A birth notification can be from a midwife, a nurse, a hospital or a doctor without being officially stamped and certified by the authorities. In some cases, the child is allowed to enter the country without a birth notification just by presenting documents proving that the parents are married (e.g. presenting a family booklet) or the parents' Syrian identity (e.g. copy of a passport).
3. The Syrian authorities have been accepting expired Syrian passports to enter the country, particularly for families wishing to return.
4. It should, however, be noted that there is a lack of standardised, unified procedures for return at the borders. Border practices can sometimes be ad hoc and depend on the individual police officer, leading to different instructions and inconsistent entry procedures across different border points, or even from day to day at the same

location. The source has experienced that officers at the border sometimes require different documents in similar cases. Despite this lack of unified procedures, returns remain largely facilitated.

5. Whether Syrians without passports can enter Lebanon (via the Beirut Rafiq Hariri International Airport) from e.g. Europe in order to return to Syria depends on a number of factors, including the country of departure, proof of residency permit in the country of departure etc. Such cases are investigated and processed on a case-by-case basis by the Lebanese General Security. The source has not heard of cases of such returnees facing problems with regard to entering Lebanon.
6. The main challenges for families with unregistered children who have not completed the process of registering their children at a Syrian embassy abroad prior to their return occur after their return when they are in Syria, as they must complete the registration process and obtain the formal documents for their children. This process involves paying a fee of USD 50, which represents a significant financial burden for most returning families. In addition, required documents must have an official translation and they must be certified.
7. A lack of knowledge among returnees about legal procedures poses an additional challenge for registration. In some cases, humanitarian organisations assist vulnerable families in this regard — both financially, by covering the required fees, and practically, by providing guidance on the procedures or even contacting the authorities in the country of departure if the returnees have lost a document issued there (e.g. a birth notification). Such assistance is particularly provided to families with children who need to be enrolled in school.
8. The source has not observed or received any reports of individuals experiencing discriminatory treatments at the border based on their political, ethnic, or religious background.
9. The previous requirement of security clearance and status settlement prior to return was reportedly removed in the spring of 2025. As a result, anyone can now return. This change has led to a significant increase in returns, including individuals previously on wanted lists, such as those who left the country illegally or were wanted for political reasons, e.g. terrorism-related charges. The source has not received any report of returnees being detained or asked to remain at the border due to being wanted.

10. Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) typically possess documents from the Syrian authorities (i.e. the General Authority for Palestine Arab Refugees (GAPAR)) by which they can enter Syria.
11. A specific problem exists for former military officers who have lost both their military and civil ID cards and therefore have no documents to prove their identity. These individuals were required to hand in their civil ID cards in exchange for their military IDs when they were enlisted, and many of them have since lost their military ID cards and can no longer prove their Syrian identity. The government has not yet addressed this problem yet and issued any formal decision to regularize the status of this group, leaving their return situation uncertain.

Trends and challenges in return

12. Return trends are highly localised and community-driven. A clear trend has been observed where people who had returned either move back to their previous host country or the IDP camp they came from once the school year begins. This movement is mainly driven by the lack of basic services, such as education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities, in their area of return. Consequently, many families choose to leave again in search of more stable access to schooling and essential services for their children and household in the places they had previously lived. As a result, a decrease in the intention to return is observed in Lebanon, Jordan and even in the IDP camps in Syria.
13. Return experiences of returnees vary greatly, depending on the area of return, the community, the individual returnee's conditions etc.
14. Return to rural and semi-rural areas often involve entire communities returning together. Returns tend to be more successful where basic needs can be met. However, some are returning to entirely destroyed houses without any services (water, education), which makes it difficult for people to remain in their area of origin (to which they had recently returned).
15. Despite better livelihood opportunities and services in the major cities, urban returns are characterised by higher communal tension and greater competition for limited resources. Access to services, such as water trucking, is often significantly more expensive in major cities than in rural areas. In addition, access to housing is limited in urban areas relative to the number of people returning; a situation further exacerbated by the fact that families who fled years ago have often grown substantially (e.g. a family

of five becoming a family of fifteen), leading to overcrowding and limited rental capacity in many neighborhoods.

16. The return and reintegration of single women and elderly people are highly dependent on the presence of a strong family network. Returnees from neighbouring countries, particularly those who have lived in camps, often need to re-establish contact with family members who stayed behind in Syria upon arrival.
17. Women whose husbands are missing (e.g. due to forced disappearance) face particularly complex situations, as they must rebuild their lives from scratch. This includes reconnecting with relatives to clarify potential inheritance rights while coping with the emotional challenge of deciding whether to declare their husband deceased or continue searching for him.
18. Many single women and female-headed households who return rely heavily on their extended families and often move in with them, especially when they do not have access to their immediate families (e.g. due to displacement abroad). Limited women's rights and livelihood opportunities remains a critical concern, as women are frequently not economically independent.
19. There are also cases of female-headed households returning to Syria while the husband remains abroad, for instance in Lebanon or Türkiye, to secure an income for the family. These cases illustrate a distinct return experience where economic survival depends on family support across borders.

Freedom of movement

20. Travel between the Kurdish-controlled Northeast Syria (NES) and government-controlled areas is generally possible and people do usually not encounter any problem crossing the checkpoints between these areas. Except when there is road closure due to security incidents.
21. Individuals residing in NES must travel to cities like Aleppo or Homs to complete civil registration of life events (e.g. personal documentation) and obtain civil documents because government offices were shut down in NES after the fall of the previous government.

Meeting with The Day After in Damascus, 23 September 2025

About the source

The Day After (TDA) is a Syrian non-governmental group founded in 2013 in Brussels. It operated for several years out of Türkiye and, earlier this year, established an office in Damascus, where most staff are now based.

The NGO's purpose is to encourage gradual democratic change in Syria and to help ordinary citizens participate in public life. Its activities focus especially on human rights education, civic engagement, and giving people safe ways to contribute to local decision-making.

Situation of certain groups

Persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the interim authorities

1. Civil freedom, as for instance forming associations, expressing opinions, and organising events, in Syria remains limited. Civil society organisations are formally permitted to operate, but their work takes place under strict supervision. Local authorities act as gatekeepers, deciding which topics can be discussed, which events can be held, and who may participate. Almost every public activity, as for instance meetings, cultural events and workshops, requires prior approval. Subjects related to justice, accountability, or human rights are considered politically sensitive and can only be addressed if the authorities approve. TDA has itself experienced this kind of restrictions and interference in the organisations work.
2. Public criticism of the government is possible to some extent, but the limits of what can be said remain unclear. Well-known critics and commentators who live abroad, such as Syrian YouTubers and journalists, continue to speak openly against the authorities without facing consequences, largely because they are outside the authorities' reach. Inside Syria, however, people cannot easily predict which statements might be tolerated and which could provoke retaliation. As a result, many choose to avoid political topics altogether to protect themselves and their families.
3. Arrests and disappearances continue to take place across Syria, although they are less frequent than during the former government. Other accounts describe people dying under torture while in detention, without any investigation or accountability. Prisons continue to hold detainees whose relatives have no knowledge of their condition or location. This situation has created a general atmosphere of fear and caution. People who have seen others being punished or threatened for expressing opinions prefer to stay silent and avoid sensitive topics. Many people are still afraid that the authorities might monitor what they say or take action against them later.

4. The level of freedom of speech differs a lot between regions. In Damascus, civil society can operate as long as people are careful and avoid political issues. In Idlib, the situation is more limited, since the Salvation Government, which is linked to HTS, requires its own permits and keeps close control over local organisations. In areas where people from different religious or sectarian groups live together — for example, Sunnis, Alawites, Christians, or Druze — people must be more careful about what they say in public, since some topics are seen as too sensitive or could lead to sectarian tensions.
5. Critics of the authorities are often attacked on social media, called traitors, or accused of working for foreign governments. In other cases, criticism of the government and its performance simply ignored. The reaction depends largely on who is being criticised and which political or security figure feels personally threatened.
6. Powerful people in the media or politics can use their connections to have others punished. In one case, a journalist who had close ties to the authorities filed a complaint against a woman who questioned his political role. As a result, the police summoned her for questioning. After public pressure, the case was dropped, but she became target of an online defamation campaign.

Persons with real or perceived affiliation with the former government

7. Power structures from the former government continue to dominate despite the formal appearance of reform. Although many institutions have been renamed and new councils established, the same networks and influential figures from the previous system still control access to decision-making in politics, business, and the media.
8. Wealthy businessmen and public figures who were active under the former government have largely retained or regained their influence—some reportedly by exploiting the chaos of war to seize property, which they later legalised through the new authorities. By contrast, lower-ranking officials or civilians accused of loyalty to the former government have faced arrest or harassment. There is no clear or consistent pattern determining who is prosecuted and who is protected, suggesting that such decisions are often driven by personal interests and political calculations rather than by clear legal standards.

Christians

9. Religious minorities, including Christian communities, continue to live with a mix of formal freedom and social pressure. The authorities publicly affirm freedom of religion,

and large church gatherings are still permitted. At the same time, Christian priests in some areas have quietly been advised to reduce public celebrations and to avoid drawing attention. This reflects a general atmosphere of fear and caution rather than an official policy of repression.

Women

10. Women's safety and freedom of movement vary significantly between regions. In Damascus, many women go out alone and participate in daily life, but they take precautions—avoiding late hours, taxis driven by unknown men, and unfamiliar areas. In smaller towns and rural communities, cultural norms are stricter, and women often depend on family networks for protection. Their main concerns are harassment at checkpoints or by armed men, rather than actions by regular police.
11. Single women with or without children will not be able to support themselves in Syria if there is no other person who provides for the expenses – this is due to the deteriorated economic situation. As an example, the cost of housing has risen noticeably and the renting prices have doubled or tripled since the change of government.

Government protection

12. Protection and accountability remain absent. For instance, in Suweida, armed men attacked peaceful demonstrators while police officers and the governor's office officials stood by without intervening. Even when victims presented evidence identifying the attackers — including names and social media accounts — no action was taken. At times, authorities even stopped bystanders who tried to help. Some detainees were briefly taken to closed hearings and then released. The attackers filmed themselves and posted the footage on Instagram, yet even after victims provided names and account links to the police, no action was taken.
13. Across Syria, it is often difficult to identify who is part of the security forces. Men carrying weapons appear in different types of clothing—some in plain civilian clothes, others in partial or mixed uniforms—making it unclear whether they belong to the Ministry of Interior, Defence, Intelligence, or to armed groups affiliated with the authorities. The only clearly recognisable officers are the uniformed traffic police. This confusion contributes to a general sense of insecurity, since people do not know who has real authority or who can be trusted.
14. An anti-torture law has been passed, but so far there are no signs that it is being implemented in practice. No officials have been prosecuted or punished under this law,

and there are no known cases where complaints have led to any action by the authorities. The legislation exists mostly on paper and has not yet translated into actual protection for detainees.

15. Crime and extortion are also part of daily life in many areas in Syria. One case from Salamiyah illustrates this: two armed men on a motorcycle stopped a man who was driving with his wife and children, interrogated him about his background, and demanded 800 US dollars to let him continue. He paid the money because he feared for his family's safety. There was no safe way to report the incident, and no expectation that the police would intervene.

Freedom of movement

16. Movement within Syria is now somewhat easier than during the former government. People can generally travel between cities such as Damascus, Aleppo, Raqqa, and Hasakah without needing the old security clearances.

Meeting with an international NGO, Damascus, 24 September 2025

About the source

The source is among others working with Syrians who are voluntarily returning to Syria across seven governorates: Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Homs, Rural Damascus, and Daraa.

Return

Trends and challenges in returns

1. The main barriers preventing people from returning are the lack of shelter, fragile security situation, lack of access to basic services and lack of livelihood opportunities.
2. The source's experience from working with Syrian refugees in Türkiye, Lebanon and Jordan indicates a decreasing willingness to return among Syrians in these countries as people become aware of the reality on the ground. Moreover, some of those who do return decide to go back to the IDP camps or the country where they lived before. Some Syrians who returned to Syria from Lebanon subsequently went back to Lebanon using smugglers because they did not find the conditions in Syria conducive for return.
3. The experience of return is diverse: some return to more ethno-religiously homogenous communities with less communal tensions where there are shelters and

basic services, whilst others face harsh conditions upon return. The experience of return varies by region. Rural areas are often underserved, characterised by higher levels of destruction, and are sometimes heavily contaminated with land mines, especially in Idlib and Aleppo governorates.

4. Many returnees regret their decision to return, considering their early return to be premature. Many of these lacked accurate information about the situation in their home area before returning; they relied on relatives who did not share the full reality of the destruction and lack of services. These persons have been shocked by the contrast between the reality and what they had heard. These returnees are now acting as messengers, warning families outside that it is too early to return.
5. Access to basic services is severely limited. For instance, in Rural Damascus, classrooms designed for 30 students now hold around 50 due to the influx of returnees, and the school system cannot cope with these high numbers. In some areas, the situation is so critical that people have returned to the IDP camps they previously left, just to enrol their children in schools, as the camps—despite poor living conditions—offer at least a minimum level of services, such as access to education. The limited livelihood opportunities are another challenge for return.
6. While the large-scale conflict is largely over, localised conflicts persist in some areas. Examples of these are the March incidents in coastal areas, and recent clashes in Jaramana, Sahnaya and Suweida as well as in Daraa where violence was committed against civilians. Such local incidents and tensions remain a factor discouraging return. The government is still new and has a limited capacity to ensure safety everywhere, particularly since the government does not have full control over all military factions who have joined the General Security Forces as well as other factions who did not join. Targeted attacks persist based on perceived affiliation of the targeted individuals with the former government in addition to attacks against individuals with perceived affiliation with the present government.
7. It is very difficult to generalise about the situation of single women returning, as it depends on a number of factors, including conditions in the area of return, the individual woman's economic situation etc. However, single women and female-headed households constitute a particularly vulnerable group upon return. They are generally highly dependent on family members, as they are rarely economically independent. If a single mother returns, it is usually expected that her family will host her, which often entails living restrictions, including limited freedom of movement, imposed by the

family. In addition, the security situation in the area may also affect women's freedom of movement.

8. Recent localised conflicts, such as those that caused displacement from Suweida, have led people to seek refuge in collective shelters in Daraa. Displaced people, particularly children, express fear due to the violence they witnessed. These people arrived with nothing—no clothes or shoes—in urgent need of shelter, hygiene kits, and protection services. They fear this will be a long-term situation and worry about being displaced again when schools start, especially since the areas in which they are displaced already suffer from poor access to basic services.
9. The process to obtain legal documents remains dysfunctional and slow. This is a crucial problem for returnees, especially those whose children were born in displacement and lack registration. Without documentation, families struggle to access basic services and to address housing, land, and property issues which is also a driver of conflict.
10. Children who adapted to life and education outside Syria (e.g. in Türkiye or Lebanon) face integration challenges upon return. They may have adapted to a different culture and curriculum and often do not know their families' original home but rather the place where they were born in displacement. They suffer from the loss of their community and friends and they may struggle to integrate with extended family members who stayed behind in Syria.

Meeting with a humanitarian organisation (2) in Damascus, 24 September 2025

Situation of certain groups

Palestinians

1. There has been no observed change in the Syrian authorities' perception of PRS. The previous government held a supportive stance toward Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS), and this position has been maintained by the current government.
2. The civil registry was closed for nine months, from December 2024 until September 2025, during which documents could only be issued on an emergency basis. During this period, the new authorities worked to merge the Idlib registration system with the national system. At that time, an error was reported in the registration status of PRS, who were being listed as 'foreign nationals' instead of their correct category,

‘Palestinian/Syrian’, which applies to PRS registered with GAPAR. The issue was officially acknowledged as a mistake and subsequently resolved, although it initially caused significant concern. In addition, there were some initial apprehensions after the interim government came to power, as PRS had previously been required to perform military service. However, this concern was alleviated when compulsory military service was abolished.

3. Two trends have been observed by the source regarding PRS’ access to services provided by actors other than UNRWA. Firstly, when PRS seek access to public services - primarily healthcare and, in some cases, education - they are increasingly being referred by the authorities to UNRWA. The current government, like the previous one, expects UNRWA to assume its share of the burden; if UNRWA does not fulfil its mandate, the responsibility falls back on the Syrian authorities. Secondly, the same pattern is seen when PRS approach NGOs for assistance, as these organisations are also increasingly directing PRS to UNRWA due to limited resources.

Freedom of movement

4. PRS can move freely and reside anywhere in Syria, and no restrictions on their freedom of movement based on their background or status have been observed so far. However, certain areas remain sensitive for all residents, including both Syrians and PRS, such as locations near military camps and airports.
5. PRS - like Syrians - are not required to show any documents to access UNRWA camps. There is also free access to areas such as Yarmouk, which had been restricted during the conflict.
6. There have been no reports of PRS being treated differently from Syrians at checkpoints. In some of the camps, there are government checkpoints, but no problems have been reported there either.
7. The Syrian authorities are in charge of security inside the camps, as this has never been part of UNRWA’s mandate. In some camps, such as Neirab and Yarmouk, there are police stations and police force now called ‘General Security Forces’. However, police services and protection in the camps are not at the same level as in well-off areas such as Mezzeh in Damascus. In principle, PRS in the camps may report crimes to the police and request protection; however, the capacity of these services remains limited. This situation is not related to whether a person is PRS or to the fact that it is a Palestinian camp; police services in poorer areas are generally the same throughout the country.

Access to UNRWA services in the camps

8. In Syria, UNRWA is currently providing services to approximately 438 000 PRS who are estimated to remain in the country. These services include a primary healthcare programme operating nationwide; a basic education programme covering grades 1 to 9; a camp improvement programme (sanitation, hygiene and solid waste management); and a protection programme addressing multiple areas, including gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, international protection and risks related to explosive remnants of war (ERW), which remain a major challenge in the country.
9. A lack of funding currently poses a significant challenge to UNRWA's ability to deliver services, with staff salaries and operational costs sometimes covered only on a month-to-month basis. The emergency response programme is particularly affected, resulting in emergency interventions - such as cash assistance, food or non-food items - being only partially implemented or, in some cases, not implemented at all.
10. The funding shortfall has had a wide impact on UNRWA's services. In general, reduced funding has resulted in cuts to some core services, including hospitalisation. While UNRWA is still able to provide primary healthcare - such as maternal and child health services and basic obstetric care - this now requires strict prioritisation. However, UNRWA is no longer able to support secondary healthcare, including cancer treatment, which it previously subsidised by up to 75 %. In addition, the programme through which vulnerable cases were referred to hospitals and received partial cost coverage has now been reduced by half or more.
11. Another example is that this year UNRWA has only been able to procure around 60 % of the required textbooks and workbooks. The remaining 40 % are being reused, although workbooks in particular are difficult to reuse. Furthermore, UNRWA's free legal assistance programme - covering issues such as civil documentation and GBV cases - was suspended for several months over the past year and a half, as the agency lacked funding to pay volunteer lawyers against transportation cost and cover related court fees, *inter alia*.
12. In addition to its impact on service delivery, the funding shortfall also affects approximately 2 500 local UNRWA staff, many of whom experience stress and uncertainty about their future employment and financial security. These employees are expected to remain on the frontline, engaging with communities and providing services, yet they do not know whether they will receive their salaries or if their contracts will be renewed.

13. Furthermore, UNRWA is widely criticised by PRS at community meetings and on social media for not fulfilling its mandate, including the provision of cash assistance and food.
14. There are 12 PRS camps in the country. Over the years, however, some PRS have moved out of the camps to large informal settlements in rural areas, including in Sasa, Dummar, Mezze, Husseiniyeh, Alliance, Ruhkn Eddin, Al Zahira, Mashrou Dummar, Ramadan, Jdeidat Artouz, Sahnaya, Shahba, Khirbet al-Shayyab, Qudsaya town, Qudsaya suburb, Massakin Barzeh, Adra. UNRWA services are provided in the camps but in informal settlements UNRWA provides a limited range of services tailored to each specific gathering. As a result, PRS living outside the camps or in informal settlements where UNRWA does not deliver its full range of services must either travel to the camps to access these services or rely on public services provided by the authorities.
15. The camps are not run by UNRWA but by the Syrian government. UNRWA only provides services such as health, education, sanitation, whereas infrastructure, electricity, sewage and other public services are the responsibility of the Syrian government. Those basic services are generally poor, not only in the camps but across Syria.
16. In UNRWA's last assessment from 2019, more than 91 % of PRS were living below the poverty line and were in need of UNRWA emergency assistance without which they would actually be in abject poverty. The source assumes that the number today is higher than 91 %. However, the situation is similar for Syrians, where around 90 % are living below the poverty line.
17. It is thus not only PRS who are suffering in Syria, as the overall situation in the country has been worsening for all the population but there is a difference between PRS and Syrians with regard to access to land. PRS can only own a residential place but not agricultural, industrial or commercial real estate; they have to do some arrangement with a trusted Syrian and put everything in that person's name.
18. PRS have begun returning to camps that remain contaminated by explosive remnants of war and affected by rubble and widespread destruction of housing. These returns are driven by necessity rather than choice, as many PRS can no longer afford to live outside the camps.
19. Of the 12 UNRWA camps, three have been severely destroyed: Yarmouk in Damascus, Deraa in the south and Ein el-Tal in the north. Living conditions in these camps are

harsh. Many families reside in housing without doors or windows, with only plastic coverings providing minimal protection from the elements. Sanitary facilities often lack doors, resulting in a complete absence of privacy. These conditions persist because the affected families are unable to afford rented accommodation elsewhere.

20. People have begun returning to Yarmouk where schools, health facilities and other infrastructure were previously destroyed. Over the past two to three years, UNRWA has rehabilitated one school operating on a shift system, as well as one health centre and one community centre. At the end of last academic year, UNRWA schools in the camp had 1 600 students enrolled; by the start of the current school year, 2 700 students had registered, indicating an increase in returns. Approximately 9,000 people are now residing in the camp. To manage the growing number of students, UNRWA plans to expand classroom capacity - which currently stands at 51 students per class - by relocating prefabricated units from other schools, cooperating with other schools, and converting a science laboratory and other activity rooms into several additional classrooms. However, this will also require the recruitment of additional teachers.

Entry conditions for PRS

21. In general, it is possible for PRS who fled Syria during the conflict to return to Syria and there are no reports of PRS being denied access to Syria. Both GAPAR-registered PRS and unregistered PRS (who were born and de facto residing in Syria as a habitual residential place before leaving the country) are permitted entry. Even those who do not have required official documents can enter, provided that they were born in Syria and have previously lived there.
22. Officially, GAPAR-registered PRS are required to present a document proving their residency in order to enter Syria. Unregistered PRS rely on the Palestinian embassy to issue documentation confirming their status as Palestine refugees but such documents are not fully recognised by the new Syrian government, and different state bodies apply varying approaches to documents issued by the Palestinian authorities. In practice, however, the authorities generally apply these entry requirements leniently and allow both categories to enter Syria in one way or another. There are no formal legal provisions or official regulations governing this matter. The information presented by the source in this section is therefore based primarily on observations, accounts, and secondary reporting from refugees and other non-official sources.
23. The source gave an example of the lenient approach of the Syrian authorities regarding PRS entry. A PRS man and his Syrian spouse, who initially had two children registered in their family booklet, fled to Lebanon, where three additional children were born but

not registered. Following the change of government, the family returned to Syria. At the border, the authorities accepted the parents' account and allowed all five children to enter, despite the lack of registration for the three youngest children, aged 8, 10 and 13, none of whom had attended school.

Annex 2: Terms of Reference

1. Background

- 1.1. Development since the fall of Assad's government
- 1.2. Security situation
- 1.3. Freedom of movement

2. Return to Syria

- 2.1. Return to Syria since the fall of Assad's government
- 2.2. Procedures for return, including required documents
 - 2.2.1. Status of former draft evaders and deserters
 - 2.2.1.1. Recruitment to the new army
 - 2.2.2. Status of public employees who left their position without notice
- 2.3. Entry routes and border crossings
- 2.4. Challenges in returns

3. Documents

- 3.1. Issuance of passports, birth certificates and ID cards
- 3.2. Prevalence of forged documents