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Syria: Military service

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Executive summary

Under Bashar al-Assad, Syrian men aged 18 to 42 had to serve 18 to 21 months in the military. Conscription continued until Assad's fall. In June 2024, a phased discharge of reservists began, and in September 2024, Assad granted amnesty to deserters. After Assad's removal, Ahmad al-Sharaa announced the abolition of mandatory conscription, confirmed by military officials in early 2025. Recruitment became strictly voluntary, with thousands joining the new Syrian Army.

In general, people who evade, or desert from, military service do not fall within one of the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, including particular social group (PSG).

Compulsory national service is a prerogative of sovereign states. A requirement to do compulsory military service – or punishment for failing to complete this duty – does not, in itself, give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution. It will only do so where, on account of a Convention reason:

- (a) military service would involve acts, with which the person may be associated, which are contrary to the basic rules of human conduct, or
- (b) the conditions of military service would be so harsh as to amount to persecution, or
- (c) the punishment for draft evasion or desertion is disproportionately harsh or severe.

In general, (a) does not apply in respect of Syrian nationals. This is because Syria's armed forces are not engaged in fighting and therefore would not be required to commit such acts.

In general, (b) does not apply in respect of Syrian nationals. This is because the (albeit limited) evidence available does not suggest that any conditions encountered would be so harsh as to amount to persecution.

In general, (c) does not apply in respect of Syrian nationals who fought for the Assad regime. This is because the new government have announced a general amnesty in respect of such persons.

It also does not apply in respect of persons who may desert military service under the new government. Whilst based on limited evidence at the time of writing, it does not suggest either (i) any punishments or penalties are being applied for draft evasion, (ii) any that may be applied are disproportionately harsh or severe, or (iii) they are being applied for a Convention reason. Moreover, compulsory military service has been replaced by a voluntary system. This also means evasion is not relevant. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise in any of these scenarios.

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

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

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

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Assessment

Section updated: 13 May 2025

About the assessment

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

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state either because they would have to undertake military service, or because of the consequences of not undertaking (deserting or evading) military service.
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm.
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

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

Sources cited in the [country information](#) may refer interchangeably to Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), or the interim or de facto government or authorities. Within this assessment, we use the (new) Syrian government and, since 8 December 2024 they are considered the controlling party of the state or a substantial part of the territory of the State (for the purposes of Article 1(A)(2) of the Refugee Convention).

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when such a check has not already been done (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Under the Assad regime, human rights violations were systematic and widespread. Civilians also suffered human rights abuses at the hands of other parties to the conflict (see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Syria: Security situation](#)).
- 1.2.2 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.3 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.4 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 In general, people who evade, or desert from, military service do not fall within one of the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, including particular social group (PSG). This is because they:
 - do not share an innate characteristic, or a common background that cannot be changed, or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it – and
 - do not have a distinct identity which is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.
- 2.1.2 Some people may claim that refusing to do military service, including as a conscientious objector, will be perceived by the state as an act of political opposition. The [Asylum Instruction on Military Service and Conscientious Objection](#) and paragraph 22 of the House of Lords judgement in the case of [Sepet & Another v. SSHD \[2003\] UKHL 15](#) explain that it is necessary to carefully examine the reason for the persecution in the mind of the

persecutor rather than the reason which the victim believes is why they are being persecuted.

- 2.1.3 The (albeit limited) evidence does not suggest that the new Syrian government views those who fought under the Assad regime as ‘political’; they have recognised that many were required to fight out of necessity. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 2.1.4 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.5 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.6 For guidance on Humanitarian Protection see the [Asylum Instruction, Humanitarian Protection](#).

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3. Risk

3.1 General approach to claims based on (compulsory) military service

- 3.1.1 Compulsory national service is a prerogative of sovereign states. A requirement to do compulsory military service – or punishment for failing to complete this duty – does not, in itself, give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution. It will only do so where, on account of a Convention reason:
 - (a) military service would involve acts, with which the person may be associated, which are contrary to the basic rules of human conduct, or
 - (b) the conditions of military service would be so harsh as to amount to persecution, or
 - (c) the punishment for draft evasion or desertion is disproportionately harsh or severe.

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3.2 Risk based on conditions of (compulsory) military service

- 3.2.1 In general, (a) does not apply in respect of Syrian nationals. This is because Syria’s armed forces are not engaged in fighting and therefore would not be required to commit such acts.
- 3.2.2 In general, (b) does not apply in respect of Syrian nationals. This is because the (albeit limited) evidence available does not suggest that any conditions encountered would be so harsh as to amount to persecution.
- 3.2.3 Therefore, a person is unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.2.4 Under Bashar al-Assad, Syrian men aged 18 to 42 had to serve 18 to 21 months in the military. Conscription continued until Assad’s fall. In June 2024, a phased discharge of reservists began, and in September 2024, Assad granted amnesty to deserters. After Assad’s removal, Ahmad al-Sharaa announced the abolition of mandatory conscription, confirmed by military officials in early 2025. Recruitment became strictly voluntary, with thousands joining the new Syrian Army. The UNHCR noted that the end of conscription was a key reason for Syrian returnees from Iraq (see [Military conscription](#)).

3.3 Risk based on desertion or evasion

- 3.3.1 In general, (c) does not apply in respect of Syrian nationals who fought for the Assad regime. This is because the new government have announced a general amnesty in respect of such persons.
- 3.3.2 It also does not apply in respect of persons who may desert military service under the new government. Whilst based on limited evidence at the time of writing, it does not suggest either (i) any punishments or penalties are being applied for draft evasion, (ii) any that may be applied are disproportionately harsh or severe, or (iii) they are being applied for a Convention reason. Moreover, compulsory military service has been replaced by a voluntary system. This also means evasion is not relevant. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise in any of these scenarios.
- 3.3.3 The reconciliation process for former Assad regime soldiers began with a December 2024 amnesty for those who were recruited under compulsory military service and not involved in 'crimes against humanity'. Former soldiers reported to reconciliation centres across Syria, where they were questioned, registered, and issued temporary ID cards which restored civilian status, allowing movement and employment. Soldiers surrendered weapons and military equipment, with some potentially joining the new army. High-ranking officers and those accused of crimes faced further investigation. Tens of thousands attended centres, with at least 1,500 daily at Al Qardahah. The process expanded in February 2025 with new centres in Damascus and Palmyra (see [Reconciliation process](#)).
- 3.3.4 Most former soldiers attending reconciliation centres were low-ranking and released after surrendering weapons. However, high-ranking officers, particularly from the Republican Guard, fled. Arrests targeted pro-Assad fighters, intelligence officials, and informants, with nearly 300 detained by late December 2024. Reports surfaced of detainee executions, though verification was unclear. Security operations in early 2025 focused on ex-regime personnel, with arbitrary arrests documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights. Some detainees, later found innocent, were released, but instances of fatal torture were reported in a few cases. In February 2025, arrests included suspects from the 2013 Tadamon massacre. President Al-Sharaa vowed to prosecute Assad-era criminals (see [Arrests of former security force personnel](#)).
- 3.3.5 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

4. Protection

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm

from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.

- 5.1.2 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

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

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

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

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **13 May 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

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

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7. Fall of Assad regime

- 7.1.1 On 8 December 2024, Syrian Islamist rebels, led by Ahmad al-Sharaa of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), captured the capital city of Damascus and overthrew President Bashar al-Assad^{1 2}. The Syrian army collapsed as the regime fell^{3 4}.
- 7.1.2 For further background on the fall of the Assad regime and formation of an interim government, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Syria: Returnees after fall of Al-Assad regime](#).

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8. Military conscription

8.1 Military service under Assad regime

- 8.1.1 Under the regime of Bashar al-Assad, men aged between 18 and 42 were required to perform military service in the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) for between 18 and 21 months^{5 6}. For more information on conscription during the Assad-era, see the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) April 2021 COI report on [Syria: Military service](#), and the more recent Danish Immigration Service (DIS) COI Report on [Syria: Military service](#), dated January 2024.
- 8.1.2 In June 2024, the Government of Syria under Assad announced a phased plan to discharge tens of thousands of reservists though, until the fall of the Assad regime, conscription continued⁷. In September 2024, Assad issued a

¹ Al Jazeera, [What happened in Syria? How did al-Assad fall?](#), 8 December 2024

² Sky News, [How the rebel assault unfolded in Syria - from Idlib to Damascus](#), 8 December 2024

³ Carnegie Endowment, [Anatomy of a Military Fall](#), 10 December 2024

⁴ New Lines Magazine, [The Disintegration of Assad's Army](#), 6 March 2025

⁵ EUAA, [Syria: Military service](#) (page 13), April 2021

⁶ DIS, [COI Report, Syria: Military service](#) (page 1), January 2024

⁷ EUAA, [Syria: Country focus](#) (pages 37 to 38), October 2024

decree granting a general amnesty to deserters^{8 9}.

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8.2 Abolition of military service under HTS

- 8.2.1 On 15 December 2024, HTS leader, Ahmad al-Sharaa, said that mandatory conscription to Syria's armed forces would be abolished, adding that it would only be reinstated '... in extreme cases, such as national emergencies relating to war.'¹⁰ The end of military conscription appeared to be confirmed by Samir Saleh, cited as a member of military command in Damascus, who told Al-Hiwar TV (a UK-based Arab broadcaster¹¹) on 11 January 2025 that forced conscription no longer existed and the Syrian army would be made up of volunteers¹².
- 8.2.2 In an interview with Alastair Campbell, former spokesman for Tony Blair, and former MP Rory Stewart¹³, which took place in Damascus, broadcast on 10 February 2025, Ahmad al-Sharaa stressed that mandatory conscription had not been imposed, recruitment was 'strictly voluntary', and that 'thousands of volunteers' had joined the new Syrian Army^{14 15}.
- 8.2.3 In a regional update, dated 17 January 2025, UNHCR noted, when referring to returnees from Iraq, that one of the frequently mentioned reasons for return was the abolition of compulsory military service¹⁶. A UNHCR regional survey of 3,368 Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, conducted in January 2025, found that of the 52% of respondents who expressed an intention to return to Syria, one of the reasons cited included 'exemptions from military service.'¹⁷

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9. Amnesty to former soldiers

9.1 Reconciliation process

- 9.1.1 On 9 December 2024, the HTS issued a decree granting amnesty to former soldiers and conscripts^{18 19 20}, who had not 'engaged in crimes against humanity.'²¹ Sources did not specifically indicate whether people who had evaded conscription or deserted the military whilst under the Assad regime were included in the amnesty. However, a March 2025 report on Syria by the EUAA, based on various sources, noted that 'From the outset, the new authorities announced that soldiers who had been recruited under compulsory service were safe, and it was forbidden to assault them.'²² Furthermore, the EUAA report indicated that some defectors from the Syrian

⁸ New Arab, [Syrians wary as Assad issues amnesty decree for deserters](#), 23 September 2024

⁹ MEMO, [Assad issues general amnesty for military deserters, minor offences](#), 24 September 2024

¹⁰ New Arab, [Why Al-Sharaa's scrapping of conscription for Syrians matters](#), 16 December 2024

¹¹ Al-Hiwar TV, [About Us](#), no date

¹² MEMRI, [New Syrian Army Official: No More Conscription, Volunteers Only](#), 11 January 2025

¹³ Campbell A, [Life so far](#), no date

¹⁴ Campbell A, [120. The New President of Syria: Trump ...](#) (48.03 minutes), 10 February 2025

¹⁵ Shafaq News, [Syria's Al-Sharaa: Thousands join new army](#), 10 February 2025

¹⁶ UNHCR, [Regional Flash Update](#) (page 4), 17 January 2025

¹⁷ UNHCR, [Flash Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions ...](#) (page 3), 6 February 2025

¹⁸ New Arab, [HTS-led coalition announces general amnesty for Assad soldiers](#), 9 December 2024

¹⁹ The Telegraph, [Syrian regime soldiers granted amnesty](#), 10 December 2024

²⁰ BBC News, [Syria's rebel leaders say they've broken with their jihadist past ...](#), 20 December 2024

²¹ Rudaw, ['We all make mistakes:' Former Syrian regime soldiers surrender ...](#), 24 December 2024

²² EUAA, [Syria: Country Focus](#) (page 26), March 2025

Armed Forces were recruited as military commanders in the Ministry of Defence²³.

- 9.1.2 Citing the Associated Press, Al Arabiya and Voice of America (VoA) noted on 21 December 2024 that, 'Lt. Col. Walid Abd Rabbo, who works with the new interior ministry, said ... the interim government has not decided yet on whether those [soldiers] "whose hands are not tainted in blood" can apply to join the military again.'^{24 25}
- 9.1.3 On 21 December 2024, as noted in Al Arabiya and VoA, the Associated Press described that 'hundreds' of former soldiers reported to HTS in Damascus where they were questioned, given a registration number, then 'They were free to leave.'^{26 27} The reports added 'Several locations for the interrogation and registration of former soldiers were opened in other parts of Syria in recent days.'^{28 29} According to independent media network, Rudaw, reporting on 24 December 2024, 10 reconciliation centers had been opened across Syria where former soldiers would '... be given a temporary card while their cases are reviewed at local courts for possible crimes committed during the Baathist regime's reign.'³⁰
- 9.1.4 A New Arab article, updated 7 February 2025, suggested then 'dozens of reconciliation centres have opened (estimated at over 52) across various provinces.'³¹ The same article relayed how 'It is explained to us that those applying for settlement receive a card within four days that facilitates their movement, and then an extensive investigation is conducted, which can last up to three months, to ensure that the former soldier or officer didn't commit crimes against the Syrian people.'³²
- 9.1.5 BBC News reported on 29 December 2024 that, at reconciliation centres, '... former military, police and intelligence officers, as well as anyone who was part of pro-Assad militia groups, can register for a temporary civilian identity card and deposit their weapons ...
- 'Under Assad, conscription into the army was mandatory for adult males. Conscripts had to hand in their civilian IDs and were given military IDs instead.
- 'Without a civilian ID it would be hard to get a job or move around freely in the country, which partly explains why tens of thousands have showed up at centres in various cities.'³³
- 9.1.6 Al Jazeera reported on 8 January 2025 from a 'settlement centre' in Al Qardahah where former military officers reported to the new authorities to hand in their weapons and other equipment supplied by the former regime. They were then provided with temporary ID cards, giving the ex-officers amnesty and freedom of movement. A spokesman for the Ministry of Interior

²³ EUAA, [Syria: Country Focus](#) (page 23), March 2025

²⁴ Al Arabiya, [Syrian soldiers distance themselves from al-Assad in return for ...](#), 21 December 2024

²⁵ VoA, [Former Syrian soldiers seek amnesty, return to civilian life](#), 21 December 2024

²⁶ Al Arabiya, [Syrian soldiers distance themselves from al-Assad in return for ...](#), 21 December 2024

²⁷ VoA, [Former Syrian soldiers seek amnesty, return to civilian life](#), 21 December 2024

²⁸ Al Arabiya, [Syrian soldiers distance themselves from al-Assad in return for ...](#), 21 December 2024

²⁹ VoA, [Former Syrian soldiers seek amnesty, return to civilian life](#), 21 December 2024

³⁰ Rudaw, ['We all make mistakes:' Former Syrian regime soldiers surrender ...](#), 24 December 2024

³¹ New Arab, [No going back as post-Assad Syria shakes off decades of terror](#), updated 7 Feb 2025

³² New Arab, [No going back as post-Assad Syria shakes off decades of terror](#), updated 7 Feb 2025

³³ BBC News, [Post-Assad Syria: Former soldiers give up their weapons for ...](#), 29 December 2024

said at least 1,500 people a day attended the centre³⁴.

- 9.1.7 In another report from a reconciliation centre, on the outskirts of Damascus, Turkish public broadcaster, TRT World, reported on 3 February 2025 that most men coming to the centres were 'low-ranking soldiers and officers conscripted into Assad's army.'³⁵ The same report noted that new civilian ID cards, which were shown being handed out to former soldiers waiting at the centre, would allow them to find work or join the new army³⁶. TRT World quoted the head of the centre who said they would forgive anyone not involved in the killing of Syrian civilians, and that those who were involved would be 'interrogated and taken to court.'³⁷
- 9.1.8 The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) 'an independent and impartial UK-based human rights organisation'³⁸, reported on 17 February 2025 that a new reconciliation centre had opened in Palmyra city, Homs province, '... where applicants have to bring required documents and their service equipment, materiel and weapons.'³⁹ The report added that 'SOHR sources reported that the Ministry of Interior has called on all military combatants, including officers and non-commissioned officers who were on duty before the fall of Al-Assad's regime, to settle their status. This settlement will include military combatants of all ranks...'⁴⁰
- 9.1.9 See also section 1.3.1 of the EUAA March 2025 [COI Report - Syria: Country Focus](#). However, refer to the relevant footnote(s) as that report and this note have used the same or similar sources and reports in places.

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9.2 Arrests of former security force personnel

- 9.2.1 Most soldiers and officers attending reconciliation centres were reportedly low-ranking⁴¹. After surrendering weapons and other military equipment, they received a civilian ID card and were free to leave^{42 43 44}. According to an 18 January 2025 report by France 24, former high-ranking officers from the Republican Guard [an elite unit in the Syrian Arab Army⁴⁵] fled when the regime collapsed. Their abandoned housing was being seized by HTS⁴⁶. It was not clear from the report where the elite officers had fled to.
- 9.2.2 On 29 December 2024, Arab News, citing Agence France Presse (AFP), noted that according to the SOHR nearly 300 people had been arrested by the new authorities, including informants, pro-regime fighters and former soldiers, in Damascus and its suburbs, as well as in Homs, Hama, Tartus, Latakia and Deir Ezzor⁴⁷. The SOHR referred to social media videos showing the execution of some of those arrested although AFP stated it

³⁴ Al Jazeera, [Former Assad military officers reconcile with Syria's new authorities](#), 8 January 2025

³⁵ TRT World, [Former Syrian regime soldiers hand in weapons for amnesty](#), 3 February 2025

³⁶ TRT World, [Former Syrian regime soldiers hand in weapons for amnesty](#), 3 February 2025

³⁷ TRT World, [Former Syrian regime soldiers hand in weapons for amnesty](#), 3 February 2025

³⁸ SOHR, [About us](#), no date

³⁹ SOHR, [Targeting former regime soldiers and collaborators ...](#), 17 February 2025

⁴⁰ SOHR, [Targeting former regime soldiers and collaborators ...](#), 17 February 2025

⁴¹ TRT World, [Former Syrian regime soldiers hand in weapons for amnesty](#), 3 February 2025

⁴² Al Arabiya, [Syrian soldiers distance themselves from al-Assad in return for ...](#), 21 December 2024

⁴³ VoA, [Former Syrian soldiers seek amnesty, return to civilian life](#), 21 December 2024

⁴⁴ TRT World, [Former Syrian regime soldiers hand in weapons for amnesty](#), 3 February 2025

⁴⁵ EUAA, [Syria: Country focus](#) (page 42), October 2024

⁴⁶ France 24, [Syria's new leaders reckon with reintegrating vestiges of Assad ...](#), 18 January 2025

⁴⁷ Arab News, [Nearly 300 arrested in Syria crackdown on Assad loyalists ...](#), 29 December 2024

could not verify the authenticity the images⁴⁸.

9.2.3 According to the Associated Press, cited by Africanews on 4 January 2025, HTS officials stated they were continuing their search for ‘militants affiliated with ousted President Bashar Assad in the city of Homs’, and that ‘forces over the past few weeks have raided and arrested security officials who they said worked under Assad’s notorious web of intelligence and security branches.’⁴⁹

9.2.4 The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), an NGO that monitors and documents human rights violations in Syria⁵⁰, reported monthly on arbitrary arrests and detentions in Syria, based on its own field researchers in Syria, interviews with victims and families, eyewitness accounts and reports from state officials⁵¹. In its report covering January 2025, the SNHR documented a total of 229 arbitrary arrests and detentions, noting that 129 of those were by the interim government, 36 of whom were later released⁵². The report added that during that month:

‘... the transitional government’s General Security Directorate carried out campaigns involving raids and detentions in various areas under the government’s control, with a particular focus on the governorates of Latakia, Homs, Hama, and Damascus, as part of a crackdown on individuals accused of committing violations during Bashar Assad’s rule. These operations targeted former military combatants and former regime employees, with large quantities of weapons and ammunition being confiscated. Those arrested were taken to Homs Central Prison, Hama Central Prison, and Adra Prison in Rural Damascus governorate.

‘While these arrests were part of security campaigns, we [SNHR] could not verify whether they were made based on legal judicial warrants. Furthermore, videos have been circulated online of detainees arrested in the course of these campaigns being subjected to physical and verbal abuse, including beatings and degrading treatment.’⁵³

9.2.5 On 3 February 2025, the SNHR reported on the deaths of 3 detainees held by the interim government’s General Security Directorate. The SNHR cited separate incidents where former members of Assad’s security forces were arrested and detained during security operations in January 2025. Their bodies were later returned to their families, reportedly with signs of torture. The SNHR condemned the ‘fatal torture’ and urged an investigation be launched⁵⁴.

9.2.6 In its monthly report on arbitrary arrests and detentions in February 2025, the SNHR noted that 21 people were arbitrarily arrested by the interim government, 19 of whom were released⁵⁵. The report then noted that 93 people were detained ‘... over accusations of being involved in human rights violations under the Assad regime’s rule.’⁵⁶ Furthermore 53 people, who had

⁴⁸ Arab News, [Nearly 300 arrested in Syria crackdown on Assad loyalists ...](#), 29 December 2024

⁴⁹ Africanews, [Syria militias go after former regime soldiers, spies](#), 4 January 2025

⁵⁰ SNHR, [About Us](#), no date

⁵¹ SNHR, [Monthly Report on Arrests/Detentions in Syria January 2025](#) (page 2), 4 February 2025

⁵² SNHR, [Monthly Report on Arrests/Detentions in Syria January 2025](#) (page 4), 4 February 2025

⁵³ SNHR, [Monthly Report on Arrests/Detentions in Syria January 2025](#) (page 6), 4 February 2025

⁵⁴ SNHR, [SNHR Condemns Torture, Death of Three Detainees at the Hands ...](#), 3 February 2025

⁵⁵ SNHR, [Monthly Report on Arrests/Detentions in Syria February 2025](#) (page 5), 3 March 2025

⁵⁶ SNHR, [Monthly Report on Arrests/Detentions in Syria February 2025](#) (page 7), 3 March 2025

previously been detained under accountability measures, were released after it was found they were not involved in crimes⁵⁷. The SNHR noted that the interim government's security operations targeted former military personnel, government employees, and media professionals who had worked for the former regimes state-run institutions⁵⁸, though did not record how many from each of those profiles were arrested or detained.

- 9.2.7 The New Arab reported on 17 February 2025 that 3 former security officers of Assad's regime had been arrested for the suspected involvement in the April 2013 'massacre' in the Damascus suburb of Tadamon, where an estimated 288 people were 'summarily executed' by the pro-Assad militia, National Defence Forces (NDF)⁵⁹.
- 9.2.8 On 7 March 2025, Syria's state-owned news agency SANA (Syrian Arab News Agency), cited President Al-Sharaa who said, when commenting on recent events in Syria's coastal areas that saw pro-Assad 'gangs' attack security forces, 'We will hunt remnants of the deposed regime ... We will bring the ciminlas [sic] into a fair court...' ⁶⁰ For further information on the attacks on Syria's coast, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Syria: Alawites and actual or perceived Assadists](#).
- 9.2.9 See also section 1.3.1 of the EUAA March 2025 [COI Report - Syria: Country Focus](#). However, refer to the relevant footnote(s) as that report and this note have used the same or similar sources and reports in places.

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10. Revocation of travel bans

- 10.1.1 The New Arab, citing state news agency SANA, reported on 9 March 2025 on the repealing by the Interior Ministry of all travel bans issued under the Assad regime, which affected over 5 million people and included those who had failed to perform compulsory and reserve military service⁶¹.
- 10.1.2 On 10 March 2025, L'Orient Today – a Lebanese-based English-language news service from Groupe L'Orient-Le Jour⁶² – reported that 'The Syrian Interior Ministry has canceled travel bans issued under the regime of ousted President Bashar Assad, lifting restrictions on more than 5 million people'⁶³, and that this 'covers travel bans linked to arrest warrants, legal case reviews, official notifications, and failures to appear for mandatory and reserve military service.'⁶⁴
- 10.1.3 The same article added 'According to Arab media, the travel ban lists were stored in an electronic system connected to the immigration and passport department, which allowed authorities to detain wanted individuals and transfer them to security agencies, the armed forces command, the national security office, or the regional command of Assad's ruling Baath Party.'⁶⁵

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⁵⁷ SNHR, [Monthly Report on Arrests/Detentions in Syria February 2025](#) (page 10), 3 March 2025

⁵⁸ SNHR, [Monthly Report on Arrests/Detentions in Syria February 2025](#) (page 10), 3 March 2025

⁵⁹ New Arab, [Syria arrests three officers suspected of Tadamon massacre](#), 17 February 2025

⁶⁰ SANA, [President Al-Sharaa: Syria will not go backwards and we will pursue ...](#), 7 March 2025

⁶¹ New Arab, [Syria lifts Assad-era travel bans affecting five million people](#), 9 March 2025

⁶² L'Orient Today, [Who we are - L'Orient Today](#), no date

⁶³ L'Orient Today, [Damascus cancels travel bans ... for over 5 million Syrians](#), 10 March 2025

⁶⁴ L'Orient Today, [Damascus cancels travel bans ... for over 5 million Syrians](#), 10 March 2025

⁶⁵ L'Orient Today, [Damascus cancels travel bans ... for over 5 million Syrians](#), 10 March 2025

Research methodology

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

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

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

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

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

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

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

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

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

- Military service rules
 - under Assad
 - post-Assad
- Amnesty for military conscripts
- arrests of former soldiers – how the Govt. is dealing with those who fought for the Assad regime, distinguishing between ‘ordinary’ soldiers and those who committed crimes
- how the Govt. may deal with those who evaded/deserted

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **14 July 2025**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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Changes from last version of this note

First version, reflecting the fall of the Al-Assad regime and respective changes to military service.

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Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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