

4.10.2. Kurds

This country guidance is currently under review. In view of the recent significant changes in Syria, notably the fall of the Assad regime, some conclusions within this document may no longer be valid. When examining the international protection needs of applicants from Syria, please consider the most up-to-date country of origin information available.

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: February 2023

COI summary

[Main COI reference: [Targeting 2022](#), 10, pp. 89-94]

According to estimates from 2010, in terms of ethnic groups, around 15 % of the population of Syria were Kurdish. [[Targeting 2020](#), 10.4, p. 80]

The census in October 1962 in Hasaka governorate resulted in a large part of the Kurdish population becoming stateless, and there were two categories of stateless Kurds, the ajnabis and the maktoumeen. In April 2011, Decree 49/2011, which granted citizenship to individuals registered as ajnabi, was issued. However, nearly 20 000 ajnabis remained stateless in 2021 and some refrained from submitting an application. Decree 49/2011 did not include maktoumeen who consequently were not able to apply for citizenship under this law. The only apparent way for maktoumeen to obtain citizenship is to register as ajnabi and then apply for naturalisation under Decree 49/2011. Due to their lack of citizenship and official identity documents, stateless persons faced numerous problems. In GoS-controlled areas, stateless Kurds were for example denied the right to work, form and join trade unions, and the right to social security, health care and education. The Kurdish-led AANES reportedly did not differentiate between stateless Kurds and those holding citizenship, and stateless individuals had equal access to services, institutions, and education. [[Targeting 2022](#), 10.1, pp. 89-91]

In the areas it controlled, GoS continued to restrict the use and teaching of the Kurdish language, the publication of books and other materials in Kurdish, as well as other forms of Kurdish cultural expressions. Kurds were frequently detained for teaching Kurdish or sentenced on different charges. [[Targeting 2022](#), 10.3, p. 94]

In March 2022, a siege was put in place by GoS around the Kurdish-majority neighbourhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyeh in Aleppo city. The siege lasted for three weeks and prevented the entry of necessities such as flour, fuel, and medical aid. The actors responsible for maintaining the siege reportedly 'clamped down' on the neighbourhoods' residents. [[Security 2022](#), 2.2.3, p. 93]

Kurds also inhabit areas which came under the control of Turkish-backed SNA. Since 2018, thousands of internally displaced Syrian Arabs, fighters' families and Turkmen were relocated to Afrin in Aleppo governorate, with Türkiye's support, while more than half of the Kurdish population had left. The Kurdish

population in Afrin drastically dropped from over 90% to about 25%, as of May 2021. Shelter continued to be particularly problematic for Kurdish residents as their property was often looted or occupied by IDPs from GoS-controlled areas or families of SNA fighters. Others were forced to leave their homes through threats, extortion, detention and abduction by SNA-affiliated local militia groups. Similar incidents were reported in Raqqa and Hasaka governorates. Further, the authorities in Afrin ceased to issue official documents in the Kurdish language, traffic signs and other institutional signs were changed into Arabic and Turkish, and the Kurdish school curriculum was replaced. Kurdish neighbourhoods were reportedly discriminated when it came to the provision of services such as electricity supplies and road network maintenance. [[Targeting 2022](#), 10.2, pp. 91-93]

Sources reported that the SNA continued to commit abuses such as arbitrary detention, abduction, as well as torture and ill treatment against civilians, predominantly of Kurdish origin in Afrin and Ras al Ain (Kobane). One source reported that some detained people in Afrin ‘were arrested for the simple fact that they were Kurds’. There was also information about Kurdish women in Afrin and Ras al Ain (Kobane) facing intimidation by SNA faction members that made them unable to leave home. Detained women were also reportedly subject to rape and sexual violence and some abducted or forced into marriage. [[Targeting 2022](#), 10.2, pp. 93-94]

Conclusions and guidance

Do the acts qualify as persecution under Article 9 QD?

Acts reported to be committed against individuals under this profile are of such severe nature that they amount to persecution (e.g. militia violence, illegal detention, kidnapping, killing, enforced disappearance). When the acts in question are (solely) discriminatory measures, the individual assessment of whether discrimination could amount to persecution should take into account the severity and/or repetitiveness of the acts or whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures.



What is the level of risk of persecution (well-founded fear)?

For Kurds from areas under the control of the SNA, well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated.

In the case of other Kurds, the individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for the applicant to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances such as: statelessness, identity document, area of origin and/or residency, etc.

See also the profile [4.4. Members of and persons perceived to be collaborating with the SDF and YPG](#).



Are the reasons for persecution falling within Article 10 QD (nexus)?

Available information indicates that persecution of this profile may be for reasons of race, nationality (statelessness) and/or (imputed) political opinion.

See other topics concerning ethno-religious groups:

- [4.10.1. Sunni Arabs](#)
- [4.10.2. Kurds](#)
- [4.10.3. Druze](#)
- [4.10.4. Alawites](#)
- [4.10.5. Christians](#)
- [4.10.6. Yazidis](#)
- [4.10.7. Palestinians](#)