

4.10.5. Christians

Following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, this document has been reviewed and updated. Please consult '[Interim Country Guidance: Syria \(2025\)](#)'

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: February 2023

COI summary

[Main COI reference: [Targeting 2022](#), 11, pp. 95-97; [Targeting 2020](#), 10.7, pp. 84-85]

According to estimations, 10 % of the Syrian population are Christians. Christians live in and around the cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Latakia and in Hasaka governorate. Few Christians remain in areas that are or have been under the control of Islamist groups [[Targeting 2022](#), 11, p. 95]. Prior to the conflict, Christians in Syria numbered around two million people. The number dropped down to 450 000, with many of them migrating to Europe and to the United States [[Targeting 2020](#), 10.7, p. 84].

A Muslim man may marry a Christian woman, but a Muslim woman may not marry a Christian man. A Christian woman marrying a Muslim is not entitled to inherit property or wealth from her husband, even if she converts. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is prohibited by law. [[Targeting 2022](#), 11, p. 95]

Christians are targeted by various actors. More than 100 attacks by the GoS forces, opposition armed groups, ISIL, HTS and other parties on Christian churches were reported since the beginning of the conflict. In July 2019, ISIL claimed responsibility for suicide attacks in a church, killing 12 people in Qamishli and for the death of a pastor in Deir Ez-Zor governorate in November 2019 [[Targeting 2020](#), 10.7, p. 84]. Recent information on the targeting of Christians in GoS controlled areas could not be found. Individuals converted to Christianity reportedly faced threats in areas under control by Turkish forces and the SNA [[Targeting 2022](#), 11, pp. 95-97].

In Idlib HTS seized properties and churches of Christians and restrict their right to worship and prohibited Christians who fled their homes in Idlib from appointing someone to appeal against rulings handed by Sharia courts regarding their property. 'Islamist factions' operating in Idlib governorate imposed so-called 'jizya' taxes (a tax historically imposed on non-Muslims by Muslim rulers) on Christians, to pressure them to leave their homes. [[Targeting 2022](#), 11, p. 96]

Christians are allowed to operate some public schools. In Kurdish-controlled areas, ethno-religious minorities were generally able to openly express and exercise their religious beliefs, including converting to other religion. Closure of Christian schools after their refusal to teach courses according to the Kurdish curriculum was reported from 2020 [[Targeting 2022](#), 5.2.1, p. 62]. Concerns were expressed by Syriac Christians regarding the school curriculum. Students, teachers and members of the Syriac Christian Orthodox Creed Council were arrested by SDF in September 2021 after having criticised the Kurdish curriculum and refused

to adopt it [[Targeting 2022](#), 11, pp. 95-96]. For further information, see [4.5. Persons perceived to be opposing the SDF/YPG](#).

Christians also faced threats in areas under Turkish control. Detention and charges with apostasy were reported in Afrin. [[Targeting 2022](#), 11, p. 96]

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. killing, kidnapping). 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)?

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: regional specifics (e.g. Christians in areas where opposition armed groups or ISIL operate are at higher risk), being critical to the Kurdish curriculum, etc.



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

Available information indicates that persecution of this profile is highly likely to be for reasons of religion 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](#)