

4.11.3. Forced and child marriage

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

*Minor updates: April 2024

COI summary

Forced and child marriages are harmful traditional practices intertwined in culture and tradition and associated with the belief that women need protection by men. For women and girls, it is not generally possible to make an autonomous decision whom and when to marry, and 'honour' violence can be a consequence of such decisions (see [4.11.4. Women perceived to have violated family honour](#)). [[Situation of women](#), 1.1.3, pp. 23-24]

Child marriage is reportedly increasing due to the conflict, and it is widespread across the country. Around 84 % of children live in locations where child marriage is an issue for girls aged from 15 to 17 years. Unregistered customary marriage is also reportedly increasing, in some cases involving girls younger than 15 years old. Early marriage continued to increase while the age of marriage decreased for girls. Child marriage is used to face economic hardship and as a tool to mitigate reputational risks for family honour. It was also stated that child marriage was sometimes even regarded as a way out of family violence and became itself a coping mechanism [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, pp. 39-40; [Targeting 2022](#), 13.2.4, pp. 112-113].

There is information that ISIL has practised forced marriage extensively. Forced marriages have also reportedly been found in areas under the control of HTS and GoS. [[Targeting 2022](#), 13.2.4, p. 113]

Widows and divorced women are considered to be particularly at risk of gender-based violence including the risk of forced marriage. Many of these women were reportedly re-married, for example to family members, such as the brother of a deceased husband, in order to increase their protection and to safeguard their honour. [[Targeting 2022](#), 13.2.4, pp. 113-114]

In 2022, sources reported an increase in the number of customary marriages to avoid young men obtaining marriage licences from military recruitment centres. The increase was also attributed to the economic situation, taking advantage of women's need for financial support. [[Targeting 2022](#), 13.2.4, p. 114]

The Personal Status Law of 2019 put the legal age for marriage at 18 for women and 15 for marriages consented by the male guardian of the girl and authorized by a judge. However, different religious minorities such as Druze and various Christian sects follow their own laws of personal status, which, for example, permit child marriage. [[Situation of women](#), 1.2.3, p. 33]

Conclusions and guidance

Do the acts qualify as persecution under Article 9 QD?

Forced and child marriage amount to persecution. They could, furthermore, be linked to other forms of violence, such as abductions, domestic violence, sexual abuse/exploitation. Refusing to enter into a forced or child marriage can lead to honour-based violence.



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: young age, personal status, area of origin and residence, ethnicity, religion, perception of traditional gender roles in the family, socio-economic situation of the family, lack of documentation, living in an IDP situation, etc.



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

Available information indicates that persecution of this profile may be for reasons of membership of a particular social group. For example, refusal to enter into forced or child marriage may result in honour-based violence for reasons of membership of a particular social group in relation to a common background which cannot be changed (refusal to marry) and/or a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it (the right to choose whom to marry) and the distinct identity of such women and girls in Syria (as they would be considered as violating the honour of the family).

See other topics concerning women and girls:

- [4.11.1. The situation of women in the Syrian society](#)
- [4.11.2. Violence against women and girls: overview](#)

- *4.11.3. Forced and child marriage*
- [4.11.4. Women perceived to have violated family honour](#)
- [4.11.5. Single women and female-headed households](#)

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