

4.12.6. Lack of documentation

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 added: April 2024

COI summary

The lack of identity documentation equates to a lack of legal status of the child and impedes access to all services, including healthcare, education humanitarian assistance, property rights, work opportunities and reportedly also possibly citizenship [[Damascus 2022](#), 2.6, p. 32; [Targeting 2020](#), 12.4, p. 96]. . It further exposes affected children to 'exploitation, abuse and trafficking' [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, p. 39].

The lack of identity documentation was reportedly particularly critical in the areas out of the control of the GoS, where 25 % of adolescents did not have identity cards and a quarter of new-borns had not been registered since the beginning of the conflict. [[Targeting 2020](#), 12.4, p. 96]

The lack of documentation varies drastically across governorates. Whereas more than 80 % of Idlib's residents lack some official document, almost the entire population in the governorates of Sweida and Homs was able to obtain the desired documentation (about 99 %). In Damascus governorate, the percentage of persons lacking official GoS-issued documentation was said to be around 5 % of the host community. Lack of access to civil documentation was grave for the populations of Latakia, Tartous, and Raqqa (about 75 % for all three governorates). [[Damascus 2020](#), 2.5, p. 23]

The GoS reportedly does not accept non-state issued documentation [[Damascus 2022](#), 2.6, p. 32]. In recaptured areas, the GoS has not given priority to re-establishing the civil registration system. It was also reported that GoS has not devoted any special resources to recording births in opposition-held areas or transferring registrations from opposition governance bodies. The government's policy was generally to reject opposition education records and civil registration records [[Targeting 2020](#), 12.4, p. 96]. Children born outside the government-controlled areas may then be considered as undocumented [[Damascus 2022](#), 2.6, p. 32].

Syrians living in opposition-held areas might obtain birth documents at the central civil registry office in Damascus, but they would be confronted with various obstacles such as having to cross the front line, with the associated risks involved like being arrested by pro-government forces. Men of conscription age would run the risk of being arrested for evading military service and women would risk sexual assaults at checkpoints [[Targeting 2020](#), 12.4, pp. 96-97]. According to another source, Syrians in opposition-held areas may choose to give a third person in GoS-controlled area authorisation to apply and obtain a birth certificate, or use 'intermediaries' to obtain a birth certificate illegally 'by means of bribery and a smuggling network' [

[Targeting 2020](#), 12.4, p. 97].

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) noted that ‘although women have the same rights as men to register the births of their children, nationality is only transferred from the father and therefore mothers must struggle to register the births of their infants’ [[Targeting 2020](#), 12.4, p. 97]. Another source noted that ‘if a father dies before he and his wife formally registered their marriage, the mother is unable to register her children, due to the inability to register the marriage after the father’s death’ [[Damascus 2022](#), 2.6, p. 32]. More frequently, in female-headed households, women are unable to transmit the nationality to their children, exposing them to risk of statelessness, mostly in areas outside GoS control and among IDPs in GoS-controlled areas. [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, p. 39].

Difficulties are often encountered in relation to the registration of the birth of children who were born out of wedlock, as a result of sexual violence, to parents in inter-faith marriages and parents who do not have proof of their marriage [[Targeting 2020](#), 12.4, p. 97]. Moreover, an increasing number of children born out of wedlock were abandoned by their mothers for fear of stigmatisation by the society [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, p. 39].

Conclusions and guidance

Do the acts qualify as persecution under Article 9 QD?

The lack of documentation as consequence of the ongoing conflict cannot as such be considered persecution, as it is not the result of an actor’s deliberate actions. However, deliberate restrictions on access to documentation may amount to persecution.



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: deceased or missing fathers, being born out of wedlock or as a result of sexual violence, area of origin and residence, gender, socio-economic situation of the child and the family, IDP situation, member of a female-headed household, etc.



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

Where well-founded fear of persecution can be substantiated, the individual circumstances of the child should be taken into account to determine whether a nexus to a reason for persecution can be substantiated. For example, in the case of children born as a result of sexual violence, persecution may be for reasons of membership of a particular social group due to their common background that cannot be changed and the distinct identity of such children, implying being seen as illegitimate, in Syria.

See other topics concerning children:

- [4.12.1. Violence against children: overview](#)
- [4.12.2. Child recruitment](#)
- [4.12.3. Child labour and child trafficking](#)
- [4.12.4. Child marriage](#)
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