

5.3.3. Qualification of a person as a ‘civilian’

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

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Being a civilian is a prerequisite in order to be able to benefit from protection under Article 15(c) QD. The purpose of the provision is to protect only those who are not taking part in the conflict. This includes the potential application of Article 15(c) QD to former combatants who have genuinely and permanently renounced armed activity.

In the context of Syria, applications by persons falling under the following profiles should be examined carefully. Based on an individual assessment, such applicants may be found not to qualify as civilians under Article 15(c) QD. For example:

- **GoS military and security forces:** including the SAA, the navy, the air force, the police force, the intelligence services, and the NDF.
- **Pro-government militias:** local and foreign militias that are operating alongside the regular Syrian armed forces, e.g. the Tiger Forces, militias of wealthy and powerful Alawite businessmen. Foreign militias, mainly backed by Iran, include, among others, the Lebanese Hezbollah.
- **SDF and Asayish:** Kurdish-led multi-ethnic force that supported the US-led coalition in the war against ISIL.
- **SNA:** a collection of Turkish-backed armed opposition groups, being hostile towards the GoS and the SDF.
- **Other anti-government armed groups, particularly those based in the Idlib area:** HTS is described as the most important and powerful actor in the area.
- **ISIL and its predecessor groups**

[[Security 2023](#), 1.4, pp. 24-24; [Actors](#), 2.3, pp. 24-37, 3.2, pp. 45-47, 4, pp. 49-56, 5.1, pp. 57-58, 6., pp. 59-63]

See also the chapter [3. Actors of persecution or serious harm](#).

It should be noted that actively taking part in hostilities is not limited to openly carrying arms but could also include substantial logistical and/or administrative support to combatants.



Exclusion considerations may also apply (see the chapter [8. Exclusion](#)).