

8.1.4. Criminality

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

Criminal activity in Syria is widely reported. Some of the crimes could trigger the consideration of exclusion, as they would qualify as serious (non-political) crimes and/or, depending on additional elements, as war crimes, crimes against humanity, or acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the UN.

Criminality is reported to be a main driver behind the activities of pro-government militias which are largely autonomous and free to exploit the population in the areas they control. Many have reportedly turned into a mafia known for stealing, looting, corruption, gun smuggling, drug smuggling and committing violations against civilians.

In several governorates, a state of lawlessness was reported where people were victim of extortions, kidnappings, assassinations, looting, robberies, and human trafficking [see for example: [Security 2022](#), 2.14.3., p. 238; [Security 2020](#), 1.5.1. p. 26, 2.3.3. p. 93-94, 2.6.3. p. 124, 2.9.3.5. p. 171, 2.11.3., 2.12.3.1. pp. 208-209, 2.14.3. p. 234].

In GoS-held areas in Deir Ez-Zor governorate, which have been recaptured from ISIL, militias were reported to be in control and engaging in criminality and extortion of civilians. [[Security 2020](#), 1.5.1, p. 26]

The rise of militias, warlords and war profiteers, coupled with heavy influence and dependence on foreign involvement, are factors that experts assessed could potentially pose significant threats to maintaining centralised control by the State. Competing economic interests of militias linked to smuggling, looting, and criminality have reportedly led to occasional clashes between army branches and militias. [[Actors](#), 2.3.1, p. 28]

Looting, theft and expropriation of Kurdish properties by SNA factions in the aftermath of the capture of Afrin was also reported. [[Actors](#), 5.2, p. 58]

See other relevant circumstances (Exclusion):

- [8.1.1. The Syrian intervention in the Lebanese civil war and presence in Lebanon \(1976-2005\)](#)
- [8.1.2. The Muslim Brotherhood Uprising in Syria \(1979-1982\) which comprised the Hama Massacre \(February 1982\)](#)
- [8.1.3. Current conflicts \(2011-ongoing\)](#)
- [8.1.4. Criminality](#)
- [8.1.5. Violence against women and children](#)

