

Women and girls

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: June 2025

The CJEU has ruled that

'1. Article 9(1)(b) of Directive 2011/95/EU (...) must be interpreted as meaning that **an accumulation of discriminatory measures in respect of women**- consisting, inter alia, in depriving them of any legal protection against gender-based and domestic violence and forced marriage, requiring them to cover their entire body and face, restricting their access to healthcare and freedom of movement, prohibiting them from engaging in gainful employment or limiting the extent to which they can do so, prohibiting their access to education, prohibiting them from taking part in sports and excluding them from political life – **adopted or tolerated by an 'actor of persecution'** within the meaning of Article 6 of that directive **comes within the concept of 'act of persecution'**, since those measures, by their cumulative effect, undermine human dignity as guaranteed by Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union'.[\(13\)](#)

The CJEU has also ruled on the assessment of the well-founded fear of persecution of women, including minors, who identify with the value of **gender equality by reason of their stay in a Member State**, notably[\(14\)](#)

'1. Article 10(1)(d) and (2) of Directive 2011/95/EU (...) must be interpreted as meaning that depending on the circumstances in the country of origin, women who are nationals of that country, including minors, who share as a common characteristic the fact that they genuinely come to identify with the fundamental value of equality between women and men during their stay in a Member State may be regarded as belonging to a 'particular social group', constituting a 'reason for persecution' capable of leading to the recognition of refugee status.

2. Article 24(2) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union must be interpreted as precluding the competent national authority from deciding upon an application for international protection submitted by a minor without having concretely determined the best interests of that minor in the context of an individual assessment.'

For assessing international protection needs of women and girls related to Membership of a Particular Social Group, please refer to 'EUAA, [Practical Guide on Membership of a Particular Social Group](#), Second edition, May 2025'.

The analysis below is primarily based on the following EUAA COI reports: [Country Focus 2025, 1.3.5, Targeting 2022](#), 13.4. Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI. The section below should be read in conjunction with most recent COI available at the time of the examination.

Gender-based violence (GBV) existed in Syria before 2011, but the civil war has reportedly increased its frequency, changing its nature, increasing its scope and multiplying the perpetrators involved. Women and

girls have been subjected to different forms of violence amounting to persecution such as physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, and domestic violence, sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, as well as forced or early marriage, denial of economic resources or education, restrictions on movement and exploitation, arbitrary arrests, torture, enforced disappearances and displacements as well as extrajudicial killings and executions.

Even though the risk associated with the Assad regime has vanished, other actors of persecution such as the [Syrian National Army \(SNA\)](#), the [Syrian Democratic Forces \(SDF\)](#), the [Islamic State of Iraq and Levant \(ISIL\)](#) and [Other non-State actors](#) are still present and operating and there is no information available indicating that their approach towards women and girls has changed. Furthermore, perpetrators of violence against women and girls are also their family members, community and the society at large.

HTS had subjected women and girls to arbitrary arrests and detentions for violations of the strict dress code and restrictions on freedom of movement. Punishments ranged from corporal punishments, such as lashing, to execution. Killings and enforced disappearance were also reported.

While the approach of [the Transitional Administration](#) regarding women's rights and representation is still unclear, there have been continued reports of killings and other human rights violations including sexual and gender-based violence by various non-state actors both in public and private spheres. With almost every third Syrian family being headed by a woman, divorced and widowed women are at risk of forced marriages and face societal restrictions and discrimination. Reports also indicate that forced and child marriage increased during the conflict as a negative coping mechanism.

Therefore, **it can be concluded that:**

Acts reported to be committed against women and girls are of such severe nature that they amount to persecution (e.g. sexual assault, abduction, enforced disappearance, killing).

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:

- **Socio-economic situation:** For example, women in need of financial support have been subjected to customary marriages. Also, child marriage has been used to face economic hardship. See also 'EUAA, [4.11.3. Forced and child marriage](#)' in *Country Guidance: Syria, April 2024*'.
- **Family status:** For example, widows and divorced women are considered to be particularly at risk of gender-based violence including the risk of forced marriage. See also 'EUAA, [4.11.3. Forced and child marriage](#)' in *Country Guidance: Syria, April 2024*'; 'EUAA, [4.11.5. Single women and female-headed households](#)' in *Country Guidance: Syria, April 2024*'.
- **Lack of documentation:** For example, the lack of civil registration with regard to divorce, custody, property rights and criminal matters. See also 'EUAA, [4.11.5. Single women and female-headed households](#)' in *Country Guidance: Syria, April 2024*'.
- **Perception of traditional gender roles in the family and environment:** The risk of honour-based violence as well as of domestic violence is dependent on how the (extended) family, including the husband, perceive the traditional gender norms. Also, the behaviour women and girls are expected to adopt in specific situations could be imposed by the family and/or the community and society at large. See also 'EUAA, [4.11.2. Violence against women and girls: overview](#)' in *Country Guidance: Syria, April 2024*'.

- **Home area:** ‘Honour’ crimes can occur throughout the country, including in displaced communities, as individuals from more conservative or tribal areas may now reside in other regions. For example, ‘honour’ killings occur mainly in areas where tribes play an important role, such as in Sweida or north-eastern Syria, but are not limited to a specific ethnic group. See also ‘EUAA, [‘4.11.4. Women perceived to have violated family honour’](#) in *Country Guidance: Syria*, April 2024’.
- **Living in an IDP situation:** Individuals in IDP camps, in particular women and children, have suffered discrimination, (sexual) harassment, denial of healthcare, restricted movement due to security considerations. See also ‘EUAA, [‘4.11.2. Violence against women and girls: overview’](#) in *Country Guidance: Syria*, April 2024’

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this may be for reasons of **religion**, and/or **membership of a particular social group**. For example, women who have previously been subjected to sexual violence may be at risk of ‘honour’ crimes for reasons of membership of a particular social group, based on their common background which cannot be changed and their distinct identity, because they are perceived as being different by the surrounding society, due to the stigmatisation related to being a survivor of sexual violence.

It should be noted that the different forms of violence against women in Syria are often significantly interlinked. Therefore, the subsections under ‘EUAA, ‘4.11. Women and girls’ in *Country Guidance: Syria*, April 2024’, still valid, should be read in conjunction with this interim guidance.

See other topics concerning 'Profiles at risk of persecution from multiple actors (including previously the Assad regime):

- [Profiles at risk of persecution from multiple actors \(including previously the Assad regime\)](#)
 - [Journalists, other media professionals and human rights activist](#)
 - [Doctors, other medical personnel and civil defence volunteers](#)
 - [Persons with perceived links to ISIL](#)
 - [Sunni Arabs](#)
 - [Kurds](#)
 - [Women and girls](#)
 - [Children](#)
 - [Persons with diverse SOGIESC \(also referred to as LGBTIQ persons\)](#)

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CJEU, *AH and FN v Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl*, C-608/22, Third Chamber, judgment of 4 October 2024, operative part (Court’s ruling),

<https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=290687&mode=req&pageIndex=1&dir=&occ=first&part=1>

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CJEU, *K and L v Staatssecretaris van Veiligheid en Justitie*, C-646/21, Grand Chamber, judgment of 11 June 2024, operative part (Court’s ruling),

<https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=286987&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=lst&part=1>