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## 7. Internal protection alternative

### COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: June 2025

For general guidance on the country guidance approach to the assessment of internal protection alternative, see EUAA, '[Internal protection alternative](#)', in *Country Guidance Explained*, February 2025.

The analysis below is primarily based on the following EUAA COI reports: [Country Focus 2025, 1.1, 1.2.2, 3, 4.1, 4.4, 4.5.1, 4.5.3, 4.5.6](#); [Country Focus 2024](#), 2.1, 2.2. 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.

#### Part of the country

At the time of writing, the transitional period following the fall of the Assad regime is still ongoing. While the Transitional Administration reportedly has effective control in Damascus, it continued to face significant challenges in areas outside the capital. Therefore, **this analysis focuses on assessing whether Damascus city remains a potential location for an IPA**. This does not, however, exclude the potential application of the IPA to other places in Syria provided that all criteria are met.

#### Safety

As indicated under '[Indiscriminate violence](#)', 'at the time of writing, it is not considered feasible to assess the level of indiscriminate violence in Syria under the meaning of Article 15(c) QD/QR'. **Whether the safety criterion is met in relation to Damascus should be made on an individual basis taking into consideration**

**the most recent available COI.**

In case where the applicant fears persecution or serious harm by the Transitional Administration, including the factions that might have integrated the new Syrian military, internal protection in Damascus would in general not be considered safe (please refer to [Actors of persecution or serious harm](#) for further information about the potential integration of armed factions).

With regard to persecution by other actors, their [operational capacity](#) in Damascus should be assessed in accordance with the most recent COI.

Particular consideration should also be given to the individual circumstances of the applicants and whether they are perceived by the actor of persecution as a priority target, which would increase the likelihood that the actor would attempt to trace them in Damascus city.

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In some cases, where the applicant faces persecution or serious harm for reasons related to the prevalent social norms in Syria and the actor of persecution or serious harm is the Syrian society at large (e.g. for [Women and girls](#) and [Persons with diverse SOGIESC \(also referred to as LGBTIQ persons\)](#)) the safety requirement would in general not be met.

For certain particularly vulnerable individuals, such as women and children, if the actor of persecution or serious harm is the family or community (e.g. forced marriage, honour crime), taking into account the lack of [State protection](#) and their vulnerability to potential new forms of persecution or serious harm, the safety requirement would in general not be met.

For the other applicants, the requirement of safety may be satisfied in Damascus depending on the profile and the individual circumstances of the applicant. For this assessment the decision-maker should take into account that no actor is found to meet the requirements of Article 7 QD/QR (see [Actors of protection](#)) and should also consult the most recent COI.

## **Travel and admittance**

In case the criterion of 'safety' is satisfied, as a next step, it has to be established whether an applicant can safely and legally travel and gain admittance to Damascus City. **The general situation and the individual circumstances of the applicant should be taken into account in this assessment.**

Following the fall of the Assad regime, the control of the area of the Damascus international airport shifted to the Transitional Administration, which dissolved all military and security agencies of the former regime by the end of January 2025. Prior to the fall of the Assad regime, Israel reportedly carried out airstrikes on Damascus International Airport and surrounding areas. After Assad's ouster, Israeli airstrikes targeted former Assad's armed forces sites in Southern Syria, near Damascus city and on the coast.

At the time of drafting this interim guidance, no information was available on procedures for entering the territory, or on how returnees from abroad are treated by the Transitional Administration, which issued a general amnesty for all military personnel conscripted under compulsory service by the Assad regime. 'Reconciliation centres' were established, where former Assad regime affiliates register their personal information in exchange for limited legal protection and safe passage. However, the process lacks transparency, follows inconsistent criteria, and is influenced by security agencies, with many applicants facing complex bureaucratic hurdles.

It remains unclear how the transitional government deals with persons who lack of documentation, as not all civil registries and courts were operational as of the end of January 2025.

The conditions of travel to Damascus, to access it and to be admitted are too unclear for an assessment to be feasible at the time of writing.

## **Reasonableness to settle**

In case the criteria of safety and travel and admittance are met in individual cases, the assessment of the availability of IPA in Damascus City should proceed with an analysis of its reasonableness in light of the general situation in the city and the individual

circumstances of the applicant.

Under the Assad regime, the general circumstances prevailing in Damascus in terms of means of basic subsistence and employment, food security, housing and shelter, water and sanitation, basic healthcare, entailed significant hardship. The Transitional Administration has started to initiate economic reforms, such as the announcement of implementing a free-market system. They reopened the Nasib border crossing with Jordan, a key trade route, and restarted operations at the Syrian Petroleum Company. Türkiye has expressed interest in economic investment, while international actors have eased restrictions: the United States issued a six-month sanctions exemption for humanitarian aid, and the EU lifted several sanctions, enabling financial access and trade. Despite these steps, it remains too soon to assess any substantial improvement regarding Syria's socio-economic situation.

In addition to the general situation in the area of potential IPA, the assessment whether it is reasonable to settle in that part of the country should take into account the individual circumstances of the applicant, including any vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms.

For those applicants who meet the 'safety' and 'travel and admittance' requirements under Article 8(1) QD/QR, the availability of IPA in Damascus city will depend on the assessment of the reasonableness to settle there.

At the time of writing, the information available is of no such nature that it would require amending the conclusion on reasonableness to settle as stated in 'EUAA, [7.4.3. Conclusions on reasonableness](#)' in *Country Guidance: Syria*, April 2024'. As a consequence, such conclusion would largely remain valid:

'Based on the general situation in the capital city, and taking into account the applicable individual circumstances, internal protection in Damascus City may be a reasonable alternative only in exceptional cases. Such exceptional cases would in particular include some adult applicants with significant financial means or who have a support network that is willing and capable of assisting them in accessing basic subsistence if they settle in the city.'

#### **General conclusion on the applicability of IPA in Damascus city**

Taking into account the assessment with regard to the three criteria under Article 8 QD/QR, internal protection alternative may be applicable in Damascus city only in

exceptional cases (see [Reasonableness to settle](#)).