

## 2.4.6. Dom

Dom (singular Domari), the Middle East Roma,[450](#) is a diverse and unrecognised ethnic group in Syria.[451](#) While the community identifies itself by the names Dom, Dummi, or Deman,[452](#) other communities in Syria refer to them by various other terms, such as Nawar[453](#) – the most commonly used[454](#) – as well as Qurbat, Zatt, and Ghajar, all of which are considered derogatory.[455](#) The Dom speak the Domari language within their communities[456](#) but are also multilingual,[457](#) speaking Arabic, Kurdish, or a dialect of Turkish, depending on the region where they live.[458](#) The exact size of the Dom population in Syria is unknown, as many Dom used to conceal their identity due to discrimination, and official statistics did not record ethnic data.[459](#) Pre-2011 estimates of the Dom population ranged widely, from 100 000 to 500 000,[460](#) while a report published in a Syrian newspaper in 2012 gave a much smaller figure of over 60 000.[461](#)

The Dom in Syria have historically lived in rural areas, outskirts of villages,[462](#) and impoverished urban neighbourhoods.[463](#) According to a 2004 source cited by researcher Ye?im Yaprak Y?ld?z in 2016, Dom communities were mainly located in Aleppo and Damascus, with additional settlements found in Saraqib, Latakia, Hama and Homs.[464](#) Within Aleppo, the Dom communities have been residing particularly in Hadradiye and Sheikh Maqsoud districts. Some Dom groups have reportedly owned land around Damascus and the Jazira region and lived in villages.[465](#) Although most Dom in Syria pursue a settled lifestyle, their economic activities often involve short-term special mobility,[466](#) leading to their description as a semi-nomadic population.[467](#) Since the outbreak of the war in 2011, many Dom in Syria had to cease nomadic way of life.[468](#)

In Syria, the Dom have been engaged in various professions, including playing musical instruments, fortune telling,[469](#) iron and tin smithing,[470](#) informal dentistry, and waste collection and sorting.[471](#) However, the largest number of Dom have been employed as seasonal agricultural labourers or daily workers in construction and transport.[472](#) Some Domari tribes in Syria have reportedly worked in manufacturing of food equipment and household utensils. Other communities in Syria frequently associate Dom with socially marginalised jobs, such as working in nightclubs and festivals, palm reading, and begging.[473](#)

The sources noted that the Dom in Syria have faced social and economic marginalisation[474](#) and discrimination.[475](#) As reported in 2021, to avoid discriminatory treatment, they often identified themselves as Turkmen, Kurdish, or Arabs.[476](#)

As reported by the NGO K?rkayak Kültür, based in Gaziantep in Türkiye,[477](#) many Dom in Syria, particularly those leading settled lives, were ‘documented as Syrian citizens’ and generally did not face obstacles in obtaining citizenship certificates, with their children having access to primary education. However, Dom leading an ‘informal life’ often had no documentation, such as identity cards, passports, and

birth certificates. According to the same source, some Dom avoided population registers and official documentation either to evade compulsory military service or due to a traditional worldview without the modern concept of borders between countries.<sup>478</sup> Similarly, a 2016 study noted that the Dom with migratory and nomadic lifestyles had no Syrian citizenship.<sup>479</sup> A study from 2021 also noted that 'although no official statistics exist, many have never been able to acquire Syrian nationality'.<sup>480</sup>

Following the outbreak of the Syrian war in 2011, the Dom 'were among the first to be displaced due to their informal housing, lack of documentation, and precarious livelihoods.' Those who fled to Lebanon 'settled in makeshift camps along the northern border and in the Beqaa Valley, often among other Syrian refugees.' However, because of their unclear legal status and absence of registration, they remained excluded from both national support programs and international protection mechanisms.<sup>481</sup> Furthermore, Syrian Dom women refugees in Lebanon reportedly faced particularly severe challenges due to traditional gender roles that marginalise them within their own communities.<sup>482</sup>

No additional information was found regarding the treatment of Dom by state and non-state actors within the time constraints of this report.

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