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3.9.1. Freedom of movement and road security

Sources interviewed by DIS reported that freedom of movement has improved since the fall of the Assad government and civilians can generally travel between major cities without facing restrictions. Most fixed checkpoints within urban areas have been removed, and those that remain, primarily on intercity highway, are fewer in number and conduct less stringent checks.[680] At checkpoints, security forces typically inspect individuals' IDs and check for the possession of weapons.[681] The risk of arbitrary arrest at these checkpoints has also significantly decreased.[682] In an interview with EUAA, SJAC noted that it has not recorded violations regarding the freedom of movement in the country in general, in Damascus city or its suburbs.[683]

The road leading from Damascus airport to the city is well secured, with the government actively trying to demonstrating its presence and control.[684] Security was reportedly enhanced at the Sayida Zaynab suburb in Damascus which hosts an important Shia shrine.[685] Security incidents including clashes and kidnappings in April disrupted key transport routes in Rural Damascus and Sweida governorates, notably affecting access to Damascus airport and the Sweida-Damascus road.[686]

In a May 2025 report, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) noted that across all governorates, personal security concerns persist, with reports of theft, harassment, kidnapping, and revenge killings. Many residents limit movement after dark due to heightened security risks[687] and the lack of street lighting or electricity, which leaves areas exceptionally dark at night.[688] SJAC noted that kidnappings and criminality are reported in the Damascus suburbs and travel routes between Damascus to Dar'a, Sweida, Homs are not safe, especially at night. Going out at night is not recommended even in Damascus due to security risks.[689]

According to an IOM report, freedom of movement was largely unrestricted across locations of return in all governorates of Syria, with 83 % of key informants (KIs) reporting no significant limitations. However, despite this, most KIs noted incidents over the past 30 days, including petty crime (76 %), HLP disputes (50 %), and attacks involving non-firearm weapons (45 %). These incidents were most frequently reported in the districts of Aleppo, Idlib, and Hama within the respective governorates.[690]

Reports of extortion at checkpoints have become rare[691] and mostly attributed to armed groups nominally affiliated with the state, such as SNA factions in Afrin.[692] Extortion has reportedly been largely eliminated at most checkpoints between SDF and government-controlled

areas. However, some incidents have been reported, such as at an SDF checkpoint in the al-Tabqa area (Raqqa governorate), where passengers were allegedly charged an “exit fee” of 2,000 Syrian pounds.693

In Homs city, authorities have set up checkpoints across the city to clamp down on criminality, including separating the Alawite majority neighbourhoods of Al-Arman,694 Al-Zahra and Al-Nahda from the rest of Homs.695 Despite the presence of security forces in Homs city, including GSS checkpoints at the city’s entrances, the attacks on civilians, particularly Alawites continued according to SJAC reporting from May. Some civilians have accused the authorities of condoning or even facilitating the murders.696

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