

Please cite as: EUAA, ' 1.4. Reforms affecting public sector employees' in *COI Report - Syria: Country Focus*, July 2025.

1.4. Reforms affecting public sector employees

Starting in December 2024, the interim government issued decisions to dismiss thousands of public sector employees and announced its intention to lay off more than 300 000 individuals in total.125 The mass layoffs in the public sector resulted in the dismissal of between tens126 and hundreds of thousands127 of employees, with some sources estimating the number as high as 400 000.128 International Crisis Group stated that around 500 000 employees were dismissed from the security sector.129

The government laid off security personnel and civil servants, either to assess their involvement in the former regime's abuses or because they were identified as 'ghost employees'.130 In the security sector, while the police force was disbanded, select officers from the former regime were retained.131 The government has also dismissed public sector employees, including technical experts, medical and police staff, citing overstaffing as the reason. The criteria for dismissal have reportedly been unclear.132 According to a Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies report, the interim government issued a general directive dismissing all employees appointed by the Ba'ath Party and granting them a three-month paid severance.133

According to an STJ investigation, hundreds of cases of dismissals were recorded in sectors of industry, agriculture, health, justice, and local administration. These measures primarily targeted three categories of public sector employees created by measures taken by the former regime: family members of 'martyrs', individuals demobilised from military service who had been appointed to public sector jobs following special recruitment competitions, and employees dismissed due to prior membership in the Ba'ath Party or affiliation with professional organisations, particularly the Women's Union.134

According to STJ, in 2024 there were around 2 800 contracts for spouses and children of 'martyrs'. By the end of 2021, around 18 000 demobilised members of the army and security forces were appointed to public sector jobs following special recruitment competitions.135 After the fall of Assad, hundreds of family members of 'martyrs' and hundreds of demobilised soldiers and military personnel of various ranks who had been appointed to public sector jobs following special recruitment competitions were dismissed from their positions.136 Members of the Ba'ath

Party and its regional and national leadership, as well as individuals who had been transferred to public sector positions from the Women's Union were also dismissed, with 77 employees dismissed from the Ministry of Agriculture and 50 from the Ministry of Telecommunications.137

In some cases, employees were reinstated following reversal decisions such as the reinstatement of 421 employees by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, and 144 employees by the Ministry of Economy and Trade in April 2025.138 In April, the interim government announced the reinstatement of around 14 000 public employees, particularly teachers who were dismissed by the Assad government for participating in anti-government protests.139 At the same time, thousands of civil servants who were either dismissed or placed on unpaid leave by the current government were also in the process of being reinstated.140

According to STJ, the dismissals of public employees were not carried out in accordance with the applicable legal framework, particularly the Basic Law for Public Sector Employees (Law No. 50/2004).141

While widespread public-sector layoffs have impacted the broader population, they have disproportionately affected the Alawite community.142 For more information see section 2.4.2.

A 400 % pay raise for public sector workers was promised by the interim government, to be aided by financial assistance from Qatar. Despite the announcement of a Qatari aid package of nearly USD 90 million, with funds amounting to USD 29 million per month over three months starting in June, this assistance would cover only about 20 % of the required budget, according to official figures. Reuters also reported that the Qatari grant excludes the Interior and Defence ministries, reflecting Western concerns over the Islamist affiliations of Syria's new leadership. 143 According to the authorities, the grant would be allocated to workers in the health, education, and social affairs sectors, as well as to non-military retirees.144

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