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4.1.1. (Former) members of Assad's armed forces and pro-Assad armed groups

COMMON ANALYSIS | Last update: December 2025

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports and query: COI Update, 5; Country Focus July 2025, 1.3.1., 2.1.1., 2.1.2.; Country Focus March 2025, 1.1., 1.2., 1.3.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

In the aftermath of regime change, the Transitional Government announced a general amnesty for military personnel conscripted under compulsory service during the Assad era. Individuals who surrendered themselves and their weapons were issued a 'security settlement certificate' and were reportedly protected from prosecution provided they were not suspected to have been involved in war crimes. Reports indicate that thousands of individuals including high level members of the armed forces of the Assad regime have gone through this process successfully. While the procedure appears to be systematically applied, there is no indication that returnees from abroad are required to undergo it. Former soldiers and security officials were permitted to reintegrate into civilian life, 'provided they had not participated in massacres or war crimes during the civil war'. Defected officers from the Syrian military under the Assad regime have been included into the structure of the new Syrian army including in senior positions. Nonetheless, reports suggest that thousands of soldiers, including senior officers, remain imprisoned despite the amnesty.

Against this background, individuals under this profile have been targeted by different actors.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

In itself, the prosecution of persons responsible for serious human rights violations and criminal acts committed under the rule of the former Assad government does not amount to persecution.

When conducted in accordance with applicable international legal standards, security operations by the new Syrian military against armed individuals or groups associated with the Assad regime taking up arms against the Transitional Government do not constitute persecution.

However, some acts outside the conduct of those operations to which persons falling under this profile could be exposed are of such a severe nature that they would amount to persecution, such as execution, extrajudicial killing, revenge killing, arbitrary

arrest and detention, torture, and physical assault. More precisely, by mid-January 2025, over 9 000 combatants and officers were reportedly detained by the Transitional Government, amid allegations of torture and restricted communication with families. Hundreds of those detainees were released because it was determined they were not involved in any crimes. Between March 2025 and May 2025, Ministry of Interior-affiliated forces conducted raids targeting individuals accused of violations under the Assad regime, including those allegedly involved in attacks against the Transitional Government forces. These arrests, concentrated in Latakia, Homs, Hama, and Damascus, were not followed by formal charges or trials due to the judiciary's inactivity. Reports of torture, abuse, and deaths in custody continue. High-ranking individuals linked to atrocities were publicly named and detained, while lower-level officials and informants often remained at large. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) also arrested suspected Assad loyalists, including militiamen.

The Transitional Government reportedly discouraged reprisals against Assad affiliates. However, a climate of lawlessness prevailed, with armed groups, including some that are affiliated with or have been technically incorporated into State security forces, committing violations including extrajudicial killings. Since December 2024, targeted revenge killings of men allegedly linked to Assad's military or intelligence services were documented. These attacks, carried out by unidentified gunmen and Salafi-jihadi factions such as *Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah*, targeted individuals from Sunni, Alawite, and Shia communities based on their alleged roles in past violations. In June 2025, the Transitional Government issued a fatwa prohibiting revenge killings and urging legal resolution of disputes. The impact of this measure remains unverified.

Additionally, the Special Accountability Force, a newly emerged group in northern Aleppo, claimed responsibility for eliminating former regime collaborators, contributing to a rise in vigilante attacks across several governorates.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The mere fact of having been a (former) member of Assad's armed forces and pro-Assad armed groups, would not in itself lead to the level of risk to establish well-founded fear of persecution.

Therefore, **the individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for (former) members of Assad's armed forces and pro-Assad armed groups to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as:**

- **Whether the applicant went through the settlement process:** members of Assad's armed forces (e.g. former members of the police, military, intelligence services) and pro-Assad armed groups who evaded the settlement process have been targeted by the Transitional Government by way of security operations, leading to arrests and detentions. Consequently, those who evaded the settlement process would be at higher risk.
- **Whether the applicant is alleged to have committed crimes under the Assad regime:** hundreds of individuals who have been alleged to have committed crimes while affiliated with the Assad regime, including pro-Iranian fighters, were arrested and detained by the Transitional Government. Also, revenge acts including killings by non-state actors

were reported.

- **Home area:** the demographic composition of an area may also impact the risk. For example, individuals under this profile living in areas where Alawites make up a large part of the population may be at higher risk. Refer to 4.9.4. Alawites.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for **reasons of (imputed) political opinion**, as being a (former) member of Assad's armed forces and pro-Assad armed groups is seen as a political opinion.



Exclusion considerations are particularly relevant to this profile, as (former) members of Assad's armed forces and pro-Assad armed groups may have been involved in excludable acts. See 8. Exclusion.

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