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4.8. Individuals perceived to have transgressed religious/moral laws, norms or codes

COMMON ANALYSIS | Last update: December 2025

A wide range of individuals and/or behaviours can be considered by this or that actor of persecution to be transgressive of religious/moral laws, norms or codes.

In the context of Syria, behaviours that may be perceived to transgress moral or religious codes include conversion from Islam, atheism and apostasy, as well as non-respect of Islamic obligations such as selling and consuming alcohol, breaking the fast in public during Ramadan, mixed-gender entertainment, and violation of a specific dress-code in public.

Practices perceived as a transgression of these norms depend on several factors, such as local context, actors involved and their interpretation of these norms. Some behaviours adopted by women and girls and by persons with diverse SOGIESC can be considered, by the family, the community, and/or the society at large, as transgressing these norms. Refer to 4.10. Women and girls and 4.12. Persons with diverse SOGIESC.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports and query: COI Update, 3.; Country Focus July 2025, 1.5.; 2.4.5.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Acts reported to be committed against individuals under this profile generally do not amount to persecution.

More precisely, the Transitional Government has not enacted any laws restricting alcohol, music, or gender mixing, nor has it required women to wear headscarves or curtailed their rights. However, many residents report that an atmosphere of religious conservatism has swept over Damascus and there have been singular incidents of gender segregation on buses and Islamic proselytization in public. Conversion from Islam was prohibited, however, no information indicates that this law is actively enforced by the Transitional Government. Additionally, no specific cases of problems for atheists or apostates have been reported in Syria since the

takeover by the Transitional Government.

However, isolated incidents of violence that could amount to persecution have been reported. For example, reports describe violent attacks by armed men or Islamist groups on night clubs in and around Damascus during which one woman was killed and patrons were assaulted. Also, unidentified men attacked an alcohol shop in Homs, assaulting a young man and looting the shop. Arrests of individuals accused of publicly breaking the fast during Ramadan have also been reported.

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

Given that the abovementioned acts generally do not amount to persecution, well-founded fear of persecution would only be substantiated in exceptional cases. Therefore, each case must be assessed individually and taking into consideration the most recent information available.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated, the individual circumstances of the applicant should be taken into account to determine whether a nexus to a reason for persecution can be substantiated.

In the exceptional cases where a well-founded fear of persecution would be substantiated, this may be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group**. Such individuals may be perceived as being different by the surrounding society because of their common background which cannot be changed (perceived past behaviour) and/or a shared characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that they should not be forced to renounce it (opposition to cultural, social or religious norms and the unwillingness to comply with them). This may also be for reasons of **religion** in the case of the transgression is seen as non-compliant to Islamic norms.

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