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4.9.6. Palestinians

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, 2.4.7.; Country Focus March 2025, 4.1.1.; Targeting 2022, 12., 12.2.; Targeting 2020, 11; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Most of the Palestinian refugees in Syria are those who arrived between 1948 and 1956 and their descendants. They are registered as ‘Palestinian refugees’ by the governmental General Administration for Palestinian Arab Refugees (GAPAR) and they have the same rights as Syrian citizens in terms of residence, freedom of movement, work, trade and access to civil service positions and public services. Palestinians who fled to Syria after 1956 and their descendants were registered with United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in other countries or the occupied Palestinian Territories and are treated as Arab foreigners. They have a 10-year renewable residence permit and have to apply for a work permit. They have access to UNRWA-services but have restricted access to employment. There is no information that this has changed since the fall of the Assad regime.

In 2024, the UNRWA estimated the number of Palestinian refugees in Syria at 438 000. They live across 12 refugee camps and ‘various other gatherings’ throughout the country. Palestinian refugee camps have been affected by hostilities and conflict-related displacement, albeit to varying degrees. The Palestinian refugee camps of Yarmouk, Ein al Tal and Dera’a remain largely destroyed.

Twenty-five percents of households of Palestinian refugees are female-headed. Children and women are increasingly affected by child labour and early marriage. For the situation of women and children, please refer to 4.10. Women and girls and 4.11. Children.

Almost 96 % of Palestinian refugees in Syria rely on UNRWA assistance to cover basic needs. Returnees rely on UNRWA for emergency cash support and there is a ‘critical need for non-food items and shelter repair, with efforts being constrained by ongoing funding shortages’. Since the fall of the Assad regime, no cash assistance has been distributed. The vulnerability of Palestine refugees has worsened due to a significant UNRWA funding shortfall. Food insecurity has increased sharply leading to malnutrition, especially among children, pregnant women, and the elderly.

At the time of writing, there is no further information about the treatment of Palestinians by state and non-state actors.

○ (a) Conclusion and guidance with regard to Article 12(1)(a) QD/QR [Article 1D Geneva Convention]

UNRWA protection or assistance is not available to Palestinian refugees in Syria at a level which would guarantee that the 'living conditions in that area will be commensurate with the mission entrusted to that agency'.

It is found that the protection or assistance from UNRWA in all of Syria can be considered to have ceased in the meaning of Article 12(1)(a) QD/QR(1).

Therefore, Palestinians who had previously availed themselves of the protection or assistance of UNRWA in Syria are to be granted *ipso facto* refugee status, provided Article 12(2) and 12(3) QD/QR do not apply.

For Palestinians who have not availed themselves of UNRWA protection or assistance in Syria, the assessment should proceed with risk analysis and analysis of nexus to a reason for persecution.

○ (b) Conclusions and guidance (for those outside the scope of Article 1D of the Geneva Convention)

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Palestinians who arrived between 1948 and 1956 and their descendants are registered as 'Palestinian refugees' by the governmental General Administration for Palestinian Arab Refugees (GAPAR). They have the same rights as Syrian citizens in terms of residence, freedom of movement, work, trade and access to civil service positions and public services. They are not allowed to apply for Syrian citizenship except for Palestinian women married to a Syrian national. They do not have the right to vote, hold public office, own agricultural land or more than one house per person. There is no information that this would have changed since the fall of the Assad regime.

The aforementioned restrictions do not, in themselves, amount to persecution.

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

The mere fact for an individual to be a Palestinian refugee in Syria, or a descendant of such a person, does not in itself lead to the level of risk required to establish well-founded fear of persecution.

Should a Palestinian be targeted, it would be related to other circumstances. For example, if they were member of a faction that was supporting the former Assad government. See 4.1. Persons associated with the former Government of Syria.

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Please note that the CJEU has interpreted the second sentence of Article 12(1)(a) QD/QR and determined the assessment to follow to determine whether or not UNRWA's protection or assistance has ceased. See

CJEU, *SN and LN* v *Zamestnik-predsedatel na Darzhavna agentsia za bezhantsite*, Case C-563/22, Fourth Chamber, judgment of 13 June 2024, operative part (Court's ruling),

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The CJEU has also ruled on the direct effect of the Article 12(1)(a) QD/QR. See, CJEU, *Serin Alheto* v *Zamestnik-predsedatel na Darzhavna agentsia za bezhantsite*, Case C-585/16, Grand Chamber, judgment of 25 July 2018, operative part (Court's ruling),

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