

Please cite as: EUAA, '4.10. Women and girls' in *Country Guidance: Syria*, December 2025.

4.10. Women and girls

COMMON ANALYSIS | Last update: December 2025

Please note that the CJEU has ruled on the assessment of the **accumulation of discriminatory measures in respect of women(**7)as well as on the assessment of the well-founded fear of persecution of women, including minors, who identify with the value of **gender equality by reason of their stay in a Member State(**8).

For assessing international protection needs of women and girls related to Membership of a Particular Social Group, please refer to 'EUAA*, Practical Guide on Membership of a Particular Social Group*, Second edition, May 2025'

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports and query: COI Update, 6.; Country Focus July 2025, 2.7.; Country Focus March 2025, 1.3.5.; Country Focus 2023, 1.3.; Targeting 2022, 13.3.1.; Situation of women, 2.1.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Women and girls in Syria have been subjected to different forms of violence by various actors, including security forces associated with the Transitional Government, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), armed groups and other actors including family members, the community and the society at large. At the end of 2024, 93 % of the approximately 8.5 million people in need of Gender Based Violence (GBV) assistance are women and girls. At the same time, support services for GBV survivors are increasingly limited due to a lack of funding.

The International Crisis Group noted a growing number of incidents involving the harassment of women. In some instances, restrictive measures, such as the enforcement of gender segregation in public and professional settings, were introduced on the initiative of local authorities. It was noted that in most cases, these measures were subsequently reversed following public backlash.

For further information on child recruitment by Kurdish-led forces, refer to 4.4. Persons fearing forced or child recruitment by Kurdish-led forces and 4.11. Children.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which women and girls in Syria could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution, such as extrajudicial and honour killings,

and executions, sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, forced and early marriage, arbitrary arrests, torture, enforced disappearances and displacements as well as certain forms of violence, including of domestic violence and sexual violence.

Reports also indicate that forced and child marriage increased during the conflict as a negative coping mechanism.

There have also been reports of kidnapping of, mostly Alawite, Christian or Druze women and girls in several provinces, including Homs, Tartous, Latakia and Hama. Kidnappings of young women and girls also reportedly happened for conscription to Kurdish-led forces (see also section on Children).

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts to which women and girls could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be also considered. Women frequently lack civil registration in matters related to divorce, child custody, property rights, and criminal proceedings. Female-headed households including divorced and widowed women face societal restrictions and discrimination and were particularly vulnerable to housing, land and property issues. In certain cases, local authorities have imposed restrictions on women's presence in public spaces, although these measures were often later rescinded. Reports of harassment targeting women have been increasingly frequent. Additionally, women have reportedly encountered discrimination and harassment in the workplace, have encountered denial of economic resources or education, restrictions on movement, and exploitation.

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

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for women and girls to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as:

- **Personal status:** women without a husband or male relatives are particularly vulnerable to being targeted. With almost every third Syrian family being headed by a woman, divorced and widowed women are at risk of forced marriages. Female-headed households face substantial challenges in meeting basic needs, often experiencing economic exclusion and social stigma. Many lack essential documentation, which increases their susceptibility to sexual exploitation and limits their access to humanitarian aid.

- **Socio-economic situation:** women in need of financial support have, in some cases, been coerced into customary marriages. The deteriorating economic situation in Syria has also been linked to increased risks of sexual exploitation, including through online platforms. Additionally, economic hardship heightened the risk of existing negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage. Elements such as education, or lack thereof, job experience, and social standing also have an impact on the risk.

- **Age:** young adult women and underage girls are among the most vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV). They are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation, harassment, and early or forced marriage.

- **Perception of traditional gender roles in the family and environment:** the risk of honour-based and domestic violence is influenced by how traditional gender norms are perceived within the (extended) family, including by the husband. Expectations regarding the behaviour of women and girls in specific situations are often imposed by the family, the community, and society at large. For example, 'honour' killings occur mainly in areas where tribes play an important role, such as in Sweida or north-eastern Syria. However, 'honour' crimes can occur throughout the country and are not limited to a specific ethnic group.

- **Home area:** incidents such as kidnappings of girls and women seem to occur mostly in areas populated by religious and ethnic minorities and in volatile security situations. Also, while domestic violence and sexual exploitation is on the rise in the whole of Syria, the risk of gender-based violence is higher in areas experiencing a deterioration in the security situation and IDP camps and shelters.

- **Displacement:** women and girls residing in IDP camps have been subjected to exploitation, and abuse, including sexual harassment, denial of healthcare, discrimination, and restrictions on movement due to security concerns. Within these camps and shelters, women and girls have faced heightened risks of survival sex and forced marriage. Furthermore, the incidence of gender-based violence was reportedly higher among women in these settings.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where a well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this may be for reason of **membership of a particular social group(**9). For example, women who have previously been subjected to sexual violence may be at risk of 'honour' crimes for reasons of membership of a particular social group, based on their common background which cannot be changed (past sexual abuse) and their distinct identity, because they are perceived as being different by the surrounding society, due to the stigmatisation related to being a survivor of sexual violence. Persecution of this profile may also be for reason of **religion** (e.g. targeting by extremist groups in relation to religious gender norms).

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  CJEU, AH and FN v Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl, Joined Cases C-608/22 and C-609/22, Third Chamber, judgment of 4 October 2024, operative part (Court's ruling), https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=290687&mode=req&pageIndex=1&d

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CJEU, K and L v Staatssecretaris van Veiligheid en Justitie, C-646/21, Grand Chamber, judgment of 11 June 2024, operative part (Court’s ruling), https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=286987&pageIndex=0&doclan

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  CJEU, WS v Intervyuirasht organ na Darzhavna agentsia za bezhantsite pri Ministerskia savet, case

  C-621/21, Judgment of 16 January 2024, https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=281302&pageIndex=0&doclan

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