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4.11. Children

COMMON ANALYSIS | Last update: December 2025

This profile refers to individuals from Syria under the age of 18. The focus is on certain child specific circumstances of increased vulnerability and risks that children in Syria may be exposed to.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: COI Update, 5.; Country Focus July 2025, 2.6.; Country Focus March 2025, 1.3.5., 1.3.6.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Children 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.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts reported to be committed against children are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution, such as killings, abductions, some forms of child labour, child recruitment, child marriage, sexual exploitation, trafficking in human beings, sexual violence and certain forms of psychological violence.

Not all forms of **child labour** would amount to persecution. An assessment should be made in light of the nature and conditions of the work and the age of the child. Work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children could be considered to reach the severity of persecution(10). The impact of child labour on access to education should also be taken into account. Other risks, such as involvement in criminal activities should also be considered. Due to the poor economic situation, child labour and **child marriage** remained prevalent coping mechanisms. For further information, see 4.10. Women and girls.

Instances of **recruitment of children**, including girls, by the SDF and by the Revolutionary Youth Movement have been reported mostly occurring in Aleppo governorate, Hasaka and Raqqa. Between March and May 2025, at least 11 girls and young women were reportedly abducted in multiple incidents across northeastern and northern Syria, primarily for conscription. Child recruitment reportedly continued in August 2025. For further information, see 4.4. Persons fearing forced or child recruitment by Kurdish-led forces.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts to which children could be subjected and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered.

Children were also particularly affected by **a lack of civil documentation**. However, the lack of documentation as a consequence of the conflict cannot be considered persecution, as it is not the result of an actor's deliberate actions. On the contrary, deliberate restrictions on access to documentation may amount to persecution. Children of women heads of households were at an increased risk of statelessness due to the inability to register their births.

The **general deficiencies in the educational system** as a consequence of the conflict cannot as such be considered persecution, as they are not the result of an actor's deliberate actions. However, in the case of deliberate restrictions on access to education, it should be assessed whether it amounts to persecution. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicated that between 40 % and 50 % of children aged 6 to 15 did not attend school.

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

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

- **Family status:** children without a male relative who is willing and able to provide support, would particularly be at risk. Children of women heads of households are at an increased risk of statelessness due to the inability to register their births.
- **Lack of civil documentation:** the lack of civil documentation and nationality/(citizenship) hinders the access of children to education and health services, further exposing them to exploitation, abuse and trafficking.
- **Age and gender:** Gender Based Violence (GBV) particularly affects vulnerable persons including adolescent girls.
- **Socio-economic situation:** children IDPs and children in street situations(11) are particularly at risk of exploitation, and child marriage can be used to face economic hardship. Out of school children are at increased risk of child labour and child marriage, as well as trafficking in human being and recruitment.
- **Home area:** children living in Kurdish controlled areas are at particular risk of recruitment by armed groups.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

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

For example, refusal to enter into child marriage may result in honour-based violence for reasons of **membership of a particular social group** in relation to a common background which cannot be changed (refusal to marry) and/or a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it (the right to choose whom to marry) and the distinct identity of such girls in Syria (as they would be considered as violating the honour of the family).

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  International Labour Organization (ILO), Minimum Age Convention, C138, 26 June 1973, available at http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C138 ; Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, C182, 17 June 1999, available at http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C182

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  'Children in street situations (CiSS) are defined as children whose world and livelihood depends upon what they can obtain in the streets. CISS include those who accompany their peers, siblings, or family members in the streets.', https://www.unicef.org/iran/en/children-street-situations#:~:text=Children%20in%20street%20situations%20(CiSS,family%20members%20in%2 .

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