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5.3.4. Serious and individual threat

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For general information on the individual circumstances which may be relevant to consider in the assessment of a serious and individual threat in territories where the 'mere presence' threshold is not reached, see 'EUAA, 'Serious and individual threat' in *Country Guidance: Explained*, February 2025'.

As mentioned above, even if refugee status is not granted, established personal circumstances are yet to be taken into account in the examination of Article 15(c) QD/QR.

In the context of the ‘sliding scale’, each case should be assessed individually, taking into account the applicant’s personal circumstances together with the nature and intensity of the violence in their home area (see also Assessment of indiscriminate violence per governorate). It is not feasible to provide exhaustive guidance as to what the relevant personal circumstances could be and how those should be assessed. Individual elements can exist in combination. Other factors may also be relevant.

Below are some examples of personal circumstances to be taken into account, where the ‘mere presence’ threshold is not reached, in the context of Syria.

- **Age:** this personal circumstance would be of particular importance in relation to the ability of the person to assess the risks. For example, children may not be able to assess the risk associated with contamination by unexploded remnants of war. Children may also not be in a position to quickly assess a changing situation and avoid the risks it entails. In some cases, elderly age may also impact the person’s ability to assess and avoid risks associated with an armed conflict.

- **Gender:** it is difficult to ascertain whether and in what circumstances men or women would be at a higher risk in general. It would also depend on other factors, such as the nature of the violence in the area. For example, men may be at higher risk of violence targeting local markets, banks, governmental institutions, as men are the ones more frequently being outside the home and visiting such locations. On the other hand, general gender norms in Syria suggest that women may have less information regarding the current security situation and the associated risks. Moreover, if the violence moves closer

to the residence of people, e.g. in the case of airstrikes or ground engagements in populated areas, women may have a more limited ability to avoid it.

- **Health condition and disabilities, including mental health issues:** serious illnesses and disabilities may result in restricted mobility for a person, making it difficult for them to avoid immediate risks and, in the case of mental illnesses, it can make them less capable of assessing risks. In other cases, such conditions may require frequent visits to a healthcare facility. For example, the road security and/or the contamination of key access routes with explosive remnants of war may increase the risk of indiscriminate violence as the person would be required to travel. Moreover, if healthcare facilities are damaged and closed as a result of the years of conflict, such an applicant may be at a higher risk due to the indirect effects of the indiscriminate violence as they would not be able to access the health care they need.

- **Economic situation:** applicants in a particularly dire economic situation may also be less able to avoid the risks associated with indiscriminate violence. They may be forced to expose themselves to risks such as working in areas which are affected by violence and/or explosive remnants of war in order to meet their basic needs. They may also have less resources to avoid an imminent threat by relocating to a different area.

- **Occupation and/or place of residence:** the occupation the person is likely to have when they return to their home area may also be relevant. It may, for example, be linked to the need for traders who have to travel through conflict areas or areas contaminated with explosive remnants of war for their livelihoods. It may also be linked to the need to frequent locations known to be particularly targeted in the conflict, such as when journalists must cover a specific event in the vicinity of a conflict, or physicians working in the vicinity of a conflict.

- **Knowledge of the area:** the relevant knowledge of the area concerns the patterns of violence that affect it, the existence of areas contaminated by landmines, etc. Different elements may contribute to a person’s knowledge of the area. It can relate to their own experience in the specific area or in areas similarly affected by indiscriminate violence, or to their connection to a support network which would ensure they are informed of the relevant risks.

- **Family members or support network:** the family or support network can be a source of information, that is necessary to evaluate dangerous situations. Therefore, a person with no or limited support network may be more susceptible to indiscriminate violence. On the contrary, a person with a substantial family or support network may be more able to assess the risks linked to indiscriminate violence.

In some cases, these personal circumstances may be cumulative, leading to enhanced exposure to indiscriminate violence.

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