3. Returns from abroad

3.1. Administrative requirements for returnees

Generally, Syrians returning to the country must present valid identification, such as a national passport or ID card, to enter. Passports and ID cards issued by the former government are deemed valid. Those without documents but registered in Syria's civil registries may still be allowed entry after their identity is verified through the Civil Affairs database at border checkpoints, at which point they are issued a civil record extract for entry. Children under 18 returning to Syria must be accompanied by a parent, relative, or legal guardian, or present a travel authorisation issued by a parent abroad.[921]

Some sources noted that return procedures at borders are not standardised and often depend on individual officers, leading to ad hoc practices across crossings and varying documentation being requested in similar cases.[922] Despite these inconsistences, returns are generally facilitated,[923] and authorities are reportedly working to establish a centralised system to standardise procedures.[924]

Authorities have allowed Syrians to re-enter using a wide range of identity proofs, including expired passports or ID cards, and in some cases even alternative evidence such as photos of documents or papers issued by local *mukhtars*.[925] Additionally, Syrian diplomatic missions abroad are authorised to issue temporary travel documents and passports to facilitate the return of nationals who had lost them. Replacement of lost ID cards can only be done in person inside Syria. UNHCR provides free legal assistance through its partners to IDPs and returnees on issues related to civil documentations including IDs.[926]

Approximately 8 million Syrians were previously on wanted lists of the former government's security agencies. According to returnee testimonies and sources, individuals returning from abroad after the fall of the Assad government have generally not faced repercussions from current authorities.[927] Some were even able to verify their former 'wanted' status under the previous regime.[928] The arrest warrants issued by any of the four intelligence agencies of the former regime or by the military police for the military service are not being enforced.[929]

While the transitional government has annulled all arrest warrants issued by Assad-era security agencies for political reasons it retained those related to criminal cases.[930] During the release of detainees from Assad-era prisons, individuals accused of serious crimes such as murder and robbery were also released. Arrest warrants for these individuals remain in place, reportedly in the hope that they can be apprehended if they attempt to flee the country through border crossings. However, SJAC noted that the Assad government had often used criminal charges,

such as possessing a forged passport, commonly used by those fleeing the country, to target activists.931 According to sources, returnees with unresolved criminal charges may be prevented from leaving the country again until their case are reviewed,932 potentially leaving them in prolonged legal limbo due to the limited capacity of the judiciary.933

By November 2025, the authorities claimed to have lifted over 5 (out of 8) million travel restrictions related notably to draft evasion or security reasons imposed by the Assad government.934 Authorities reported that remaining cases included about 1.15 million state employees whose status was under review, contractors linked to security and military bodies under investigation for possible abuses, individuals subject to police records for violations or criminal cases, and persons banned from travel by the Ministry of Finance.935

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