Danish Immigration Service publishes updated thematic COI report on Syria

The report provides updated information on developments in Syria during the period January–May 2026. It focuses in particular on the security situation and freedom of movement in the governorates of Aleppo, Homs and Hasakah. In addition, the report examines developments in northeastern Syria, the judiciary and internal security structures, opposition to the transitional government, the significance of an individual's date of departure from Syria for the authorities' treatment upon return, the possibility of relocation to other parts of the country, potential consequences of previous involvement in conflicts with the Islamic State, the situation of Yazidis and issues related to westernisation.

The report is based on publicly available written sources as well as information gathered by the Danish Immigration Service through online interviews with sources both inside and outside Syria. A wide range of sources were consulted, including journalists, lawyers, human rights organizations, NGOs and regional analysts.

According to the key findings of the report, following clashes in January 2026, Syrian government forces regained full control of Aleppo city after the withdrawal of the SDF from Kurdish neighborhoods. Security in Aleppo Governorate has generally improved, with urban areas considered relatively stable, although rural areas continue to experience occasional tribal and family-related violence. Freedom of movement is largely unrestricted.

Homs Governorate remains one of Syria's less stable regions. Sectarian violence, particularly against Alawites, Christians, and Shia communities, continues, while Islamic State (IS) cells remain active in the Badia desert and around Palmyra. Minorities may face harassment at checkpoints, and night travel is commonly avoided.

Returns to Aleppo have been significant, including both refugees and internally displaced persons, while returns to Homs have been slower due to widespread destruction and housing shortages. High rents relative to low wages constitute a major obstacle to return in both governorates.

The January 2026 ceasefire between the SDF and the Syrian government led to the transfer of most SDF-controlled territory to government authority. Hasakah

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Governorate has remained relatively stable, although tensions persist. SDF conscription has effectively been suspended, while integration of SDF forces into state structures is still in its early stages.

Security and judicial institutions are undergoing gradual reform, with efforts to professionalise internal security forces. However, progress is uneven, and corruption and informal influence networks remain present. The formal judicial framework remains largely unchanged, with most judges retained from the previous system and implementation of institutional reforms is limited. Civilian disputes continue to be handled through formal judicial and police mechanisms, although effectiveness varies across regions.

Freedom of expression has improved compared to the Assad era, although criticism of the authorities, particularly on sectarian and minority issues, may still result in harassment or intimidation. Minority groups generally face greater risks than Sunni Arabs when expressing dissent.

There is no evidence that the timing of departure from Syria affects treatment upon return. Internal relocation is generally possible throughout the country, although access to housing often depends on local social networks and community acceptance.

IS no longer controls territory and operates through small underground cells, mainly in eastern desert regions. Sources reported no documented cases of returnees being targeted by IS because of previous conflicts with the group.

Yazidis generally do not face systematic discrimination by the authorities and can practise their religion, although it lacks official recognition. Reported incidents are limited and mainly concentrated in areas such as Afrin.

Finally, according sources reported to report, returnees are generally not subjected to harassment, abuse, or discrimination because of perceived “Western” behaviour, appearance, dress, or lifestyle.

Source(s)

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