

5.2.3. Criminal violence

Following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, this document has been reviewed and updated. Please consult '[Interim Country Guidance: Syria \(2025\)](#)'

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: February 2023

*Minor updates: April 2024

Criminality in Syria is widely reported and is said to be a main driver behind the activities of pro-government militias. Pro-government militias are largely autonomous and free to exploit the population in the areas they control. Many have reportedly turned into a mafia known for extortion of civilians, stealing, looting, corruption, gun smuggling, drug smuggling and committing other violations against civilians. [[Security 2020](#), 1.5.1, p. 25]

In several governorates, a state of lawlessness was reported where persons were victims of theft, extortions, kidnappings, assassinations, looting, robberies, and human trafficking. Drug production and cross-border drug trafficking increased in the south of Syria, including in Dar'a governorate. [[Security 2022](#), 2.12, p. 203-221, 2.14, pp. 233-247; [Actors](#), 5.2, pp. 58-59]

In Dar'a governorate, violent incidents including killings and assassination attempts were also reported in the context of drug trade and other criminal activities [[Security 2022](#), 1.5.1, p. 42]. GoS-forces, especially the 4th Division assisted by Hezbollah and the Military Intelligence were reported to be important actors in the production and transport of drugs as well. Increasing criminal activities like '[t]heft, homicide, robbery, mugging, and profit kidnapping (especially of children)' were also reported in Dar'a governorate at the beginning of 2022 [[Security 2022](#), 2.12.3, p. 215].

In Sweida governorate, where 'lawlessness, chaos and rampant criminal and political violence' were reported, new armed groups involved in criminal activities such as kidnappings, had emerged [[Security 2022](#), 2.14.2, pp. 238-242]. Recent reports indicated an increase in kidnappings by pro-GoS militias and gangs as well as armed attacks and assassinations in the governorate. Unidentified gunmen targeted civilians as part of robberies or for unknown reasons. Several persons were also killed in armed disputes between individuals or rural families and altercations with a drug dealer or Bedouin tribesmen [[Security 2023](#), 2.14.3, pp. 163-164].

The security situation in Al-Hol camp, which houses suspected ISIL family members was described by UNOCHA as 'volatile' and was characterized by 'high levels of violence and criminality, with reports of killings by unidentified perpetrators. [[Security 2023](#), 2.7.3, p. 108]

A real risk of violent crime, such as kidnappings, robberies, murder, human trafficking would meet the requirements under Article 15(b) QD.

Where there is no nexus to a reason for persecution under the refugee definition, the risk of violent crime such as the above may qualify under Article 15(b) QD.

[The implications of leaving Syria](#) should also be given due consideration.

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