

## 6.2.4. Criminal activity

COMMON ANALYSIS  
Last update: September 2020

Criminal activity in Syria is widely reported. Some of the crimes could trigger the consideration of exclusion, as they would qualify as serious (non-political) crimes and/or, depending on additional elements, as war crimes, crimes against humanity, or acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the UN.

Criminality is reported 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 stealing, looting, corruption, gun smuggling, drug smuggling and committing violations against civilians. In GoS-held areas in Deir Ez-Zor governorate, which have been recaptured from ISIL, militias were reported to be in control and engaging in criminality and extortion of civilians. [[Security 2020](#), 1.5.1]

In several governorates, a state of lawlessness was reported where people were victim of extortions, kidnappings, assassinations, looting, robberies, and human trafficking [[Security 2020](#), 1.5.1, 2.3.3, 2.6.3, 2.9.3.5, 2.11.3, 2.12.3.1, 2.14.3].

The rise of militias, warlords and war profiteers, coupled with heavy influence and dependence on foreign involvement, are factors that experts assessed could potentially pose significant threats to maintaining centralised control by the State. Competing economic interests of militias linked to smuggling, looting, and criminality have reportedly led to occasional clashes between army branches and militias. [[Actors](#), 2.3.1]

Looting, theft and expropriation of Kurdish properties by SNA factions in the aftermath of the capture of Afrin was also reported. [[Actors](#), 5.2]

Violence against women and children (for example sexual violence, domestic violence, early/forced marriage) has been prevalent in Syria in both public and

private spheres and could also potentially amount to a serious (non-political) crime. See also the profile [2.12. Women](#)].

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