



## COI QUERY

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>SYRIA</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Passport for Syrian returnees</b>
<b>Reference period</b>	January 2021 to 5 April 2022
<b>Topic(s)</b>	Procedure of passport issuance and its validity period for Syrian returnees who have not performed military service and have not been exempted
<b>Date of completion</b>	22 April 2022
<b>Query Code</b>	Q29-2022
<b>Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)</b>	N/A

---

### Disclaimer

This response to a COI query has been elaborated according to the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#) and [EASO Writing and Referencing Guide](#).

Query responses are produced in response to COI information requests received from asylum authorities within EU+ countries or initiated by EUAA based on COI information needs. Query responses are produced within a limited time period, typically within 5 to 10 days. Within these time constraints, the information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care.

All sources used are referenced and cited in the bibliography section. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned COI methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive or conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The information in the response does not necessarily reflect the opinion of EUAA and makes no political statement whatsoever. The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision-making authorities. Any event taking place after the reference period is not included in this query response.



## COI QUERY RESPONSE – SYRIA

### Passport for Syrian returnees

#### Procedure of passport issuance and its validity period for Syrian returnees who have not performed military service and have not been exempted

A passport application may be made within Syria by the applicant in person, by a relative, or by someone else holding a power of attorney for the purpose.<sup>1</sup> With regards to passport applications from abroad, a Dutch COI report published on December 2019 noted that:

‘Not all Syrian embassies and consulates are able to issue passports. If a Syrian lives in a country where a Syrian passport cannot be applied for, the following family members of the person concerned may apply for the passport in Syria: father, mother, grandfather, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, son, daughter, husband or wife. The family relationship must be proved by means of a family extract.’<sup>2</sup>

According to sources cited in the aforementioned report:

‘An authorised representative or wakil may also apply for the passport on behalf of the person concerned who is abroad. This representative must then present an authorisation which is issued by the Syrian embassy in the country where the person concerned is staying and legalised by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Civil Affairs Directorate. A passport that has been applied for through a third party in Syria for a Syrian abroad is known as a ‘proxy passport’ and does not contain the holder’s fingerprint and signature’.<sup>3</sup>

When an application is made at a consulate or embassy, the individual civil registry extract must be legalised by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to the Norwegian ID Centre, as cited in the aforementioned Dutch COI report, an applicant outside Syria must also submit a residence permit for the country where he or she is staying.<sup>4</sup>

Personal information, passport photos, biometric data and fingerprints are stored in a central database maintained by the civil registry office and the passport and immigration service, accessed also by the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence and other government

---

<sup>1</sup> Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Country of origin information report Syria, June 2021, [url](#), p. 47; Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thematic country of origin information report for Syria, Documents, December 2019, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>2</sup> Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thematic country of origin information report for Syria, Documents, December 2019, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>3</sup> Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thematic country of origin information report for Syria, Documents, December 2019, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>4</sup> Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thematic country of origin information report for Syria, Documents, December 2019, [url](#), p. 9



agencies.<sup>5</sup> The Syrian Interior Ministry launched a new electronic service on its official website on November 2021, where citizens could book an online appointment to apply for passports. However, there were complaints about its effectivity and the fact that it has eased the way to bribe demands by employees in the Passports Department.<sup>6</sup> Sources noted that the Syrian passport is one of the most expensive passports in the world, with prices ranging from 800\$ to 2 000\$.<sup>7</sup> Some of the sources noted that the reason behind these prices, is the regime's need for foreign currency.<sup>8</sup>

A confidential source cited in a Dutch COI report on Syria published on June 2021, stated that men who have not yet performed their military service may apply, after having obtained permission from their military recruitment office<sup>9</sup>, for a passport valid for two years up to three months before they are expected to start military service following call-up'.<sup>10</sup> Those subject to military service residing outside Syria, may also obtain a passport valid for two years, even though they have not yet performed their military service.<sup>11</sup> According to sources cited in the 2019 Dutch COI report, the Syrian authorities provide conflicting information about the age at which men require permission from the military authorities.<sup>12</sup> The website of the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a report published jointly by the Syrian Ministry of the Interior with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) state that men between the ages of 18 and 42 must obtain permission from the Ministry of Defence.<sup>13</sup> However, according to the Ministry of the Interior website, as cited in 2017 report published by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, a man between the ages of 17 and 50 must obtain permission from his recruitment office in order to apply for passport.<sup>14</sup>

In its April 2022 report, the United States Department of State (USDOS) noted that citizens are allowed to travel internationally, but the government denied access to passports and civil documentation based on political views, association with the opposition, or geographical location associated with the opposition. The same source reported that the government 'comprehensively banned international travel of opposition members, often targeting any such individual who attempted to travel' and cited human rights groups which reported that activists and their families feared being attacked at airports and border crossings upon attempting to

---

<sup>5</sup> Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Country of origin information report Syria, June 2021, [url](#), p. 42

<sup>6</sup> Enabbaladi.net, Syrian passports: Electronic portal closed, brokers' pockets open, 3 March 2022, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> Guardian (The), Syrian exiles forced to prop up regime with fees for avoiding conscription, 28 September 2021, [url](#); SHRC, The 20th Annual Report of the Human Rights Situation in Syria, 9 January 2022, [url](#), p. 4; USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> Guardian (The), Syrian exiles forced to prop up regime with fees for avoiding conscription, 28 September 2021, [url](#); SHRC, The 20th Annual Report of the Human Rights Situation in Syria, 9 January 2022, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>9</sup> Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thematic country of origin information report for Syria, Documents, December 2019, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>10</sup> Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Country of origin information report Syria, June 2021, [url](#), p. 42 footnote 251

<sup>11</sup> Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Country of origin information report Syria, June 2021, [url](#), p. 42 footnote 253

<sup>12</sup> Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thematic country of origin information report for Syria, Documents, December 2019, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>13</sup> UNHCR, Civil documentation and registration, April 2019, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>14</sup> Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Syria: Requirements and procedures to obtain, renew, and replace passports and national identity cards, including in Canada and in neighbouring countries; information and details contained in each document, including physical characteristics (2015-July 2017), 11 September 2017, [url](#)



leave. USDOS further noted that the Government of Syria (GoS) allowed Syrians living outside of the country whose passports had expired to renew their passports at consulates.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, although not specifically related with the procedure for obtaining a passport, it might be worth mentioning that Syrians who live abroad and want to return to Syria are required to apply for a 'status settlement', a procedure whereby all antigovernment activities carried out by Syrian citizens living in Syria are 'forgiven' by the GoS. This procedure is required for a 'number of issues, including illegal exit, security issues and payment of the exemption fee by military draft evaders'.<sup>16</sup>

For the exemption fee, a male of military service born outside Syria and residing continuously there until he reaches 18 years can pay USD 3 000, while one who was born abroad and lived there for at least 10 years before reaching the military age can pay USD 6 500.<sup>17</sup> Those exceeding 25 years will have to pay USD 8 000.<sup>18</sup>

Several sources interviewed by DIS between January and February 2020 assessed that the exemption fee system was being implemented in practice by the GoS authorities.<sup>19</sup> In previous years, the exemption fee has been linked with corruption<sup>20</sup>, bribery<sup>21</sup>, and discretionary application.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> Denmark, DIS, Syria: Security clearance and status settlement for returnees, December 2020, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>17</sup> Legislative Decree 31, President Bashar Al-Assad issues the LD # 31/2020, amending some articles of the LD# 30 date 03/05/2007, as amended, which contains the Military Service Law, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>18</sup> Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, [النقدي البدل] Exemption Fee] n.d., [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> Denmark, DIS, Syria Military Service, May 2020, [url](#), p. 28

<sup>20</sup> Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Transformations of the Syrian Military: The Challenge of Change and Restructuring, 31 December 2018, [url](#), pp. 174-175

<sup>21</sup> Syria Direct, Damascus student to pay 8 months of salary in bribe to avoid military service, 20 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> TIMEP, TIMEP Brief: Conscription Law, 22 August 2019, [url](#)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Syria: Requirements and procedures to obtain, renew, and replace passports and national identity cards, including in Canada and in neighboring countries; information and details contained in each document, including physical characteristics (2015-July 2017), 11 September 2017, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59d384c14.html>, accessed 22 April 2022

Denmark, DIS (Danish Immigration Service), Syria, Military Service, Report Based on a Fact-finding Mission to Istanbul and Beirut (17-25 February 2020), May 2020, available at [https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2031493/Report\\_Syria\\_Military\\_Service\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2031493/Report_Syria_Military_Service_may_2020.pdf), accessed 30 April 2021

Denmark, DIS (Danish Immigration Service), Syria, Security Clearance and Status Settlement for Returnees, December 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1347351/download>, accessed 20 April 2022

Enabbaladi.net, Syrian passports: Electronic portal closed, brokers' pockets open, 3 March 2022, <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2022/03/syrian-passports-electronic-portal-closed-brokers-pockets-open/>, accessed 20 April 2022

Guardian (The), Syrian exiles forced to prop up regime with fees for avoiding conscription, 28 September 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/28/why-syrian-exiles-are-having-to-pay-up-to-skip-military-service>, accessed 20 April 2022

Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thematic country of origin information report for Syria, Documents, December 2019, <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2019/12/31/country-of-origin-information-report-syria-december-2019>, accessed 20 April 2020

Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Country of origin information report Syria, June 2021, <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2021/06/14/country-of-origin-information-report-syria-june-2021>, accessed 20 April 2022

Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Transformations of the Syrian Military: The Challenge of Change and Restructuring, 31 December 2018, [https://pro-justice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Transformations\\_of\\_the\\_Syrian\\_MilitaryThe\\_Challenge\\_of\\_Change\\_and\\_Restructuring\\_V3\\_Web\\_V1-2.pdf](https://pro-justice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Transformations_of_the_Syrian_MilitaryThe_Challenge_of_Change_and_Restructuring_V3_Web_V1-2.pdf), accessed 20 April 2022

SHRC (Syrian Human Rights Committee), The 20th Annual Report of the Human Rights Situation in Syria, 9 January 2022, [https://www.shrc.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/20220106-English-Report\\_web.pdf](https://www.shrc.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/20220106-English-Report_web.pdf), accessed 20 April 2022

Syria Direct, Damascus student to pay 8 months of salary in bribe to avoid military service, 20 April 2017, <https://syriadirect.org/damascus-student-to-pay-8-months-of-salary-in-bribe-to-avoid-military-service/>, accessed 21 April 2022



Syria, Legislative Decree 31, President Bashar Al-Assad issues the LD # 31/2020, amending some articles of the LD# 30 date 03/05/2007, as amended, which contains the Military Service Law, available at <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5ff34b124.pdf>, accessed 21 April 2022

Syria, Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, [النقدي البديل] Exemption Fee] n.d., <http://mofaex.gov.sy/ar/pages155/%D8%AF%D9%84%04%13%D8%A7-%D9%80%D8%AF%D9%8A%04%20%1D%D8%A7%20>, accessed 21 April 2022

TIMEP, TIMEP Brief: Conscription Law, 22 August 2019, <https://timep.org/reports-briefings/timep-brief-conscription-law/>, accessed 20 April 2022

UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency), Civil documentation and registration, April 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/69169>, accessed 22 April 2022

USDOS (United States Department of State), 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 12 April 2022, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/syria>, accessed 20 April 2022

## **ADDITIONAL SOURCES CONSULTED**

All News Channel; Deutsche Welle; ECOLI.net; Syria: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Trade; Egyptian TV News; EuroNews; European Union – EUAA COI Portal; Factiva; Freedom House; United Nations – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Refworld