



Syria

*Documents and freedom of
movement in North and East
Syria (NES)*



This report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

© 2024 The Danish Immigration Service

The Danish Immigration Service
Farimagvej 51A
4700 Næstved
Denmark

Phone: +45 35 36 66 00
us.dk

August 2024

All rights reserved to the Danish Immigration Service.
The publication can be downloaded for free at us.dk.
The Danish Immigration Service's publications can be quoted with clear source reference.

Executive summary

The Syrian government (GoS) maintains a limited presence in North and East Syria (NES), primarily in enclaves in the cities of Hasakah and Qamishli, where it issues national civil, travel, and ID documents to residents of NES. Additional civil registration offices operate in smaller towns like Amuda and Darbasiyah. Passport issuance is conducted in Hasakah, while ID cards and other civil documents are also produced in Qamishli in accordance with Syrian national law. These documents are generally issued via an online application process.

The Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) issues a military booklet related to the Mandatory Self-Defence Duty, as well as documents pertaining to education, home and car ownership, and import/export permits. The Komeen, the smallest administrative unit in the DAANES administration, also issues a certificate used to confirm the holder's identity.

Despite the GoS' retention of a degree of control over the issuance of key documents, forged and counterfeit Syrian documents are prevalent in the areas under the control of the DAANES, as well as in other regions of Syria. It is also possible to manipulate personal information on genuine documents through bribery. Documents issued by the DAANES are of little value or demand, as they are not recognised nationally or internationally.

It is possible to travel between Qamishli and Damascus by air, and bus routes continue to operate between DAANES areas and GoS-controlled areas. However, individuals from NES who are wanted by the GoS for outstanding issues, such as military service or political activities, risk being arrested at Qamishli airport or at GoS checkpoints when entering GoS-controlled areas by land.

It has become increasingly difficult for Syrian citizens to exit NES and enter the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), as travel restrictions between the KRI and NES were introduced in April 2024.

Table of contents

Executive summary	1
Introduction	4
Abbreviations	6
Glossary	7
2. GoS presence in the NES	8
2.1 Security squares in Hasakah and Qamishli	8
2.1.1 Civil affairs offices	9
3. Documents issued by the GoS in Hasakah and Qamishli	10
3.1 The Civil Affairs Directorate	10
3.2 Civil Status Law	10
3.3 Application process.....	11
3.3.1 National ID cards.....	12
3.3.2 Family booklets.....	15
3.3.3 Birth certificates.....	16
3.3.4 Marriage certificates.....	17
3.4 Passports and travel documents	18
3.4.1 Syrian E-passport	19
3.4.2 Application and issuance	20
4. Documents issued by the DAANES	23
4.1 Identity certificates.....	23
4.2 Civil and administrative documents	23
4.2 Military documents.....	24
5. Forged and false documents	25
5.1 Prevalence of forged and false documents	25
6. Freedom of movement	27
6.1 Cross-border movement.....	27
6.1.1. Access to the KRI.....	27
6.1.2. Access to Turkey	30

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA
(NES)

6.2 Internal movement 30

Bibliography 32

Annex 1: Meeting minutes 36

Annex 3: Terms of Reference..... 55

Introduction

This report examines the issuance of documents and freedom of movement in North and East Syria (NES). It provides an overview of the processes for obtaining various documents issued to residents of NES by the Government of Syria (GoS) and the Democratic Autonomous Administration in North and East Syria (DAANES). These include national passports and ID cards, family booklets, birth and marriage certificates issued by the GoS, as well as identity certificates and other civil, administrative, and military documents issued by the DAANES.

Furthermore, it addresses the general prevalence of counterfeit and forged documents in the areas controlled by the DAANES. Furthermore, this report also addresses issues related to freedom of movement within the region, such as access to and from NES from other parts of Syria, as well as the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

The report is written in accordance with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) Country of Origin (COI) Report Methodology and has undergone an external peer review by the Swedish Migration Agency's COI unit.¹ The data and information presented in this report are based on written sources as well as data collected through on-site meetings in the KRI and online meetings with sources in Syria and Europe.

The majority of these meetings were held during a visit to the KRI from 27 April to 4 May 2024. During the visit, information was gathered on document issuance, freedom of movement, and access to NES, as well as information regarding military recruitment in NES. This information was subsequently published in the report, [Syria, Military recruitment in North and East Syria](#), by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) in July 2024.

This report has been compiled to provide the latest information relevant to the processing of asylum cases. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the report were developed by DIS in consultation with the Secretariat of the Danish Refugee Appeals Board, and the ToR is included at the end of the report (Annex III).

The report is a synthesis of the information obtained from oral and written sources and does not include all details and nuances provided by the sources. In the report, care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The individual sources should not be held accountable for the content of the report.

Prior to, during, and following the visit to the KRI, meetings were held with 12 sources, who provided information relevant to this report. The purpose of the meetings was explained to the sources, and they were informed that their statements would be included in a public report. Some requested varying degrees of anonymity.

¹ European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), *Country of Origin (COI) Report Methodology*, February 2022, [url](#)

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

The Syrian Civil Affairs Directorate² and the Department of Immigration and Passports would typically be the primary authorities for queries related to the issuance of documents in Syria. However, due to external circumstances, the DIS was unable to consult these authorities for information regarding document issuance during this visit. To mitigate the impact of this, the DIS consulted three lawyers residing in Syria with knowledge regarding the issuance of documents, a Syrian lawyer with residence outside of Syria, as well as several comprehensive written sources on the subject.

Draft meeting minutes were forwarded to sources for approval, providing the source an opportunity to amend, comment, or correct statements so that the minutes reflect the information shared most accurately. One source inside Syria did not find it necessary to approve the minutes from the meeting with him. All other sources approved their statements. The meeting minutes are attached as an annex to this report.

For transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the meeting minutes have been numbered consecutively and referenced in the report's footnotes. In instances where sources have provided information beyond the ToR, yet relevant to asylum cases, this information has been incorporated in the minutes, but not addressed in the report.

The report recognises the evolving and uncertain situation in Syria, including NES, which has the potential to render the information out of date. As a result, it is important to monitor and update the issues addressed on a regular basis.

The research and editing of this report were completed on 14 August 2024. The report is available on the DIS website, www.us.dk, and can be accessed by all stakeholders involved in refugee status determination, as well as the general public.

² The official Syrian name of this department is *shu'un al-madaniyya* or alternatively *idarat al-ahwal al-madaniyya*, which in other written sources is translated as Civil Affairs Directorate or Civil Status Department. In this document, the term Civil Affairs Directorate is used.

Abbreviations

COI	Country of Origin Information
DAANES	Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
EUAA	European Union Asylum Agency
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
GAPAR	General Administration for Palestine Arab Refugees
GoS	Government of Syria
HXP	Self-Defence Duty Forces
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
NES	North and East Syria
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SNA	Syrian National Army
ToR	Terms of Reference

Glossary

Asayish	Kurdish internal security and police force
DAANES	Political entity that administers areas in North and East Syria
Counterfeit document	Unauthorised reproduction of a genuine document.
Forged document	A forged document is a genuine document that has been altered in some way. This could be by replacing the image or changing the information in the document.
Komeen	Smallest administrative unit in DAANES-controlled areas.
North and East Syria	Areas that are administered by DAANES.
Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)	A Kurdish-led military force comprised of several armed groups.

2. GoS presence in the NES

The Government of Syria (GoS) maintains a limited presence in the Kurdish-controlled areas of NES.³ The relationship between the GoS and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the areas has been characterised by limited coordination related to security and governance and sporadic episodes of tension.⁴ For further information regarding the presence of the GoS in the NES, please consult the report published in July 2024 by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS): [Syria - Military Recruitment in North and East Syria](#).

2.1 Security squares in Hasakah and Qamishli

The GoS controls specific enclaves known as ‘security squares’ (*Al-Morab’at Al-Amniya* in Arabic) in the cities of Hasakah and Qamishli, where they maintain several public offices, including those for civil affairs, immigration and passports, recruitment to the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), and schools.⁵

These areas, also known as security enclaves, are small areas enclosed by streets where the GoS has a limited capacity to operate.⁶ Although NES has been under the control of the DAANES/SDF since 2012, the GoS has retained a limited presence in the security squares in Hasakah and Qamishli, where it has operated offices for civil affairs throughout virtually the entire conflict.⁷ The Syrian Directorate for Immigration and Passports (*Idarat al-hijra wa al-jawazat* in Arabic) also operates an office in Hasakah, which is the capital of the province.⁸

³ Denmark, DIS, *Syria Military recruitment in Hasakah Governorate*, 2 July 2024, [url](#), p. 29; EUAA, *Syria – Security Situation*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 105; Ciwan Issa (lawyer): 3; Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 1, 3, 23; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 1; DAANES DFR: 1; Denmark, DIS, *Syria – Military Recruitment in North and East Syria*, 2 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 10-11

⁴ EUAA, *Syria – Security Situation*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 105; EUAA, *Syria: Security Situation*, September 2022, [url](#), p. 150; EASO, *Syria Actors*, December 2019, [url](#), p.40; Enab Baladi, *SDF seizes six state buildings in Qamishli*, 14 April 2022, [url](#); Denmark, DIS, *Syria – Military Recruitment in North and East Syria*, 2 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 10-11

⁵ Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 1, 3, 5; Mahmoud Omer (Lawyer):1, 4; Ciwan Issa (lawyer): 3, 4; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (Lawyer): 1, 7; DAANES DFR: 1-3; Denmark, DIS, *Syria – Military Recruitment in Hasakah Governorate*, June 2022, [url](#), p. 29; Enab Baladi, *Northern Syria: “Security Squares” manage SDF and regime interests*, 9 October 2023, [url](#); Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 11; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

⁶ DAANES KRI: 3; DAANES DFR: 1

⁷ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), pp. 22-23; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17; EASO, *Syria Actors*, December 2019, [url](#), p.40

⁸ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), pp 22-23; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17; Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 5, 7; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 4; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 3

2.1.1 Civil affairs offices

The GoS also operates civil affairs offices in other smaller towns in NES, despite these cities being under SDF control.⁹ These include Darbasiyah, Amuda and Al-Malikiyah (Derik),¹⁰ which are managed by civil servants employed by the GoS.¹¹ Mahmoud Omar also noted that there were offices operated by the GoS in Qahtaniyah.¹² Hossein Naasoo explained that the GoS does not maintain a civil, administrative or military presence in Manbij, Raqqa, Kobani, and parts of Deir Ezzour.¹³

⁹ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#): 11; Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 4; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 8; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 2; Ciwan Issa: 8

¹⁰ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#): 11; Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 4; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 8; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 2; Ciwan Issa: 8

¹¹ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (Lawyer): 8

¹² Mahmoud Omar (Lawyer): 2

¹³ Hossein Naaso (Lawyer): 4

3. Documents issued by the GoS in Hasakah and Qamishli

Central Syrian identity documents issued by the GoS in Hasakah and Qamishli are issued in accordance with the same laws that apply throughout the Syrian Arab Republic, and the procedures for issuance are similar to those employed in other parts of the country under the control of the GoS.¹⁴

Syrian residents of NES can apply for three central documents issued by the GoS in areas of Syria under the control of the DAANES. These documents are the ID card, national passport and family booklet.¹⁵ The GoS also issues a range of other documents in the region, including military booklets and family documents such as birth and marriage certificates, as well as extracts from civil registries.¹⁶

3.1 The Civil Affairs Directorate

The Civil Affairs Directorate is responsible for the continuous registration and updating of births, deaths and changes in marital status, in addition to registering acquisitions of citizenship and rectifying errors within the registers.¹⁷ The directorate is headquartered in Damascus, with regional offices (*mudiriya* in Arabic) in each of the 14 provincial capitals and local offices (*amana* in Arabic) at the sub-provincial level.¹⁸

3.2 Civil Status Law

In 2021, the GoS introduced a new civil status law, Law No. 13/2021, which, similar to its 2007 predecessor, includes regulations and procedures for the registration of significant life events, such as births, marriages, divorces and deaths, as well as the issuance of ID cards and family booklets.¹⁹ The introduction of Law 13/2021 extended the timeframe for Syrian citizens to

¹⁴ Ciwan Isso (lawyer): 1; Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 7; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 9-11; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 6; DAANES DFR: 6

¹⁵ Ciwan Isso (Lawyer): 2

¹⁶ Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 6; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (Lawyer): 4; Hossein Naasoo (Lawyer): 6

¹⁷ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#): 8; USDoS, Bureau of Consular Affairs, *U.S. Visa: Reciprocity and Civil documents by Country, Syria, General Documents*, n.d., [url](#); Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p.8

¹⁸ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#): 8; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p.8

¹⁹ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#): 8; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 8; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *The 2021 Syrian Status Law: Implications for Syrians Living abroad*, 2 December 2022, [url](#), p. 6;

register significant life events, such as births, from one to three months if the registration is carried out inside Syria, and from three to nine months if the Syrian citizen in question is resident outside Syria.²⁰

Individuals who fail to meet the deadlines may be subject to fines.²¹ These fines have been increased with the introduction of the new Civil Status Law in 2021.²² In addition, a police report is required if registration takes place more than one year after birth.²³ At the same time, several amnesties have been announced, allowing late registrants to complete their registrations without paying fines.²⁴ According to Hossein Naasoo, the Syrian civil status law is also applied in the areas of Syria controlled by the DAANES.²⁵

3.3 Application process

In accordance with Law No. 13/2021 and the launch of a digitised registry, known as the “One Syria Registry” or “Single Syrian Registry”, Syrian nationals are now able to submit applications for and obtain official documents at any of the newly established civil registration centres (*markaz al-sijil al-madani* in Arabic) situated throughout the country.²⁶ These documents encompass birth certificates, death certificates, marriage and divorce certificates, ID cards, family booklets, and extracts from the civil status register.²⁷

As part of this initiative, a series of new electronic services were introduced via an online citizen service portal.²⁸ This portal was subsequently developed into a more user-friendly

²⁰ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 8; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), pp. 13-14; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *The 2021 Syrian Status Law: Implications for Syrians Living abroad*, 2 December 2022, [url](#), p.12

²¹ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 15

²² Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 15

²³ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 15

²⁴ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 15

²⁵ Hossein Naasoo (Lawyer): 12

²⁶ Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *The 2021 Syrian Status Law: Implications for Syrians Living abroad*, 2 December 2022, [url](#), p. 7; Sweden, Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p: 10; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#) p. 8

²⁷ Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *The 2021 Syrian Status Law: Implications for Syrians Living abroad*, 2 December 2022, [url](#), p. 15; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p: 10; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#),p. 9

²⁸ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 9

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

mobile application named *Mu'āmalāti* (“My Cases” in Arabic).²⁹ These online platforms enable Syrian citizens to apply for passports and a range of other documents, including extracts from the Civil Registry, the Criminal Registry, and the Ministry of Education.³⁰ However, this does not apply to family booklets and ID cards.³¹ In line with the rest of Syria, the majority of documents issued by the GoS in NES are applied for electronically.³²

There have been reports that the digitised registry was initially not functioning uniformly across the country.³³ While it was operational in Damascus, it had not been successfully implemented in some peripheral regions outside of government control, such as Hasakah.³⁴ Initially, the Civil Affairs Directorate lacked the technical infrastructure, knowledge and training to effectively implement the reorganisation nationwide, but the online solutions are now reported to be available to residents of all provinces under GoS control.³⁵

3.3.1 National ID cards

Three lawyers stated that residents of NES are able to apply for ID cards in Qamishli.³⁶ Mahmoud Omar and Zaki Mohammad Hajji indicated that it was also possible to apply for ID cards in Hasakah, whereas Ciwan Isso stated that residents of NES were only able to apply for ID cards in Qamishli.³⁷ According to Ciwan Isso, the central server used for the issuance of ID cards remains operational despite the ongoing conflict.³⁸

The national Identity Card (*bitaqa shakhsiyah or hawiya* in Arabic) is a crucial document for Syrian residents, required for a range of activities including education, work, marriage registration, property acquisition, and more.³⁹ It legally verifies the bearer's identity, including

²⁹ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 9

³⁰ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 9

³¹ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), pp.

9-10

³² Zaki Mohammad Hajji (Lawyer): 9

³³ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url:13](#); *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p: 9

³⁴ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#): 13

³⁵ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#): 13; *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p: 9

³⁶ Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 1; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 4; Ciwan Isso (lawyer): 4

³⁷ Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 1; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 4; Ciwan Isso (lawyer): 4

³⁸ Ciwan Isso (Lawyer): 9

³⁹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019, [url](#), p. 16; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *The 2021 Syrian Status Law: Implications for Syrians Living abroad*, 2 December 2022, [url](#), p. 32; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och*

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

biodata and nationality.⁴⁰ It is a legal requirement for all Syrian citizens and Palestinian refugees registered in Syria to obtain a national identity card before their 15th birthday.⁴¹ The responsibility for ensuring that the card is obtained rests with the individual's legal guardian, and fines may be imposed if this requirement is not met before the age of 15.⁴²

The expiry date is not specified on the card itself, however ID cards are valid for a period of 10 years from the date of issuance.⁴³ According to Norwegian Landinfo, the majority of individuals do not renew their identity cards upon expiration after 10 years.⁴⁴

Applicants are required to attend in person to apply for an ID card, and must provide fingerprints of all ten fingers as part of the application process.⁴⁵ The fingerprints are not stored on the ID card itself, but are stored for verification purposes in the databases of the Civil Affairs Directorate.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the applicant must be present in Syria at the time of application.

dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p 10-11

⁴⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *The 2021 Syrian Status Law: Implications for Syrians Living abroad*, 2 December 2022, [url](#), p. 32; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 10-11

⁴¹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019, [url](#), p. 14; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *The 2021 Syrian Status Law: Implications for Syrians Living abroad*, 2 December 2022, [url](#), p. 32; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9, September 2022, [url](#), pp. 20, 26-27; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), pp. 4-5

⁴² Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9, September 2022, [url](#), p. 20; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 4

⁴³ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019, [url](#), p. 16; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 20; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁴⁴ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 20

⁴⁵ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019, [url](#), p. 14; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 20; Ciwan Issa (Lawyer): 7

⁴⁶ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 20

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

Therefore, it is not possible to apply for an ID card through a Syrian diplomatic mission or representative in Syria.⁴⁷

The issuance of an official identity card to a minor first-time applicant requires their physical presence and the collection of their fingerprints.⁴⁸ In addition, the applicant's legal guardian, typically the father, must present their own identity card and the family book.⁴⁹ Furthermore, they must provide the processing fee, and four passport photos of the applicant. If neither the father nor the mother can be present, a close relative may stand proxy for them. It is only the applicant, or one of their legal guardians (if the applicant is also present), who can collect a minor's ID card.⁵⁰

First-time applicants over the age of 15 without official documents, or whose identity has not been confirmed by anyone other than their legal guardian, are required to provide a certificate confirming their identity from a recognised local leader, such as a *mukhtar* (local mayor or village elder).⁵¹ In addition to the standard application requirements, male applicants in the military age range (18-42) must submit a military booklet or status report from the relevant military authority.⁵²

⁴⁷ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019, [url](#), p. 14; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *The 2021 Syrian Status Law: Implications for Syrians Living abroad*, 2 December 2022, [url](#), p. 32

⁴⁸ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019, [url](#), p. 14; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11; Norway Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 20; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), pp. 4-5

⁴⁹ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 20; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), pp. 4-5

⁵⁰ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 5

⁵¹ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 4

⁵² Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 4; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 20

The ID cards issued to Syrian nationals and Palestinian refugees are almost identical.⁵³ The ID cards issued to Palestinian refugees registered with the General Administration for Palestine Arab Refugees (GAPAR) have a pink background and contain a personal number (*raqm shakhsi* in Arabic). In contrast, the background of ID cards issued to Syrian citizens is green around the edges and contains a national number (*raqm watani* in Arabic).⁵⁴ Cards issued to Palestinians also contain the text “temporary residence permit card for Palestinians” (*tadhkarat iqama mu’aqqata lil-filastiniin* in Arabic).⁵⁵

3.3.2 Family booklets

The family booklet (*al-bitaaqa al-usriya*, known more commonly as *daftar ‘ā’ili* in Arabic) is a document that contains information about the family members and serves as proof of marriage and the parentage of children.⁵⁶ This document is required to access basic public services such as education and health care, as well as the issuance of birth registration and identity documents for children.⁵⁷

All Syrian citizens are entitled to a family booklet.⁵⁸ Single men and women are generally not issued a personal family booklet, regardless of age, and they remain registered in their fathers' family booklets.⁵⁹ However, Law 13/2021 contains provisions that permit a slightly broader

⁵³ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), pp. 26-27; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁵⁴ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), pp. 26-27; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁵⁵ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019, [url](#), p. 26; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 18; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 8

⁵⁶ Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 8; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 18; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁵⁷ Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 8; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 18; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁵⁸ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁵⁹ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 18

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

range of individuals to apply for a family booklet. This includes an adult "only" child in the event that the parents are deceased, imprisoned or divorced.⁶⁰

The family booklet contains the husband's personal details, including name, place of birth, religion, address, national identity number, military booklet number, special features, as well as the place and date of issue.⁶¹ Furthermore, the document contains the wife's name, national number, parents' names, date and place of birth, religion, date and place of marriage, as well as the date of marriage registration. Additionally, it includes the names and personal details of children.⁶²

The family booklet must be updated in connection with changes to family relationships.⁶³ For example, a woman who marries remains in her father's family booklet, with a note indicating that she has married, but she is also added to her husband's family booklet. In case of divorce, the woman remains in her previous husband's family booklet with a note indicating that they are divorced.⁶⁴

The issuance of the family booklet requires the presence of the applicant and the presentation of a valid ID. It can be issued to both spouses or a legal guardian appointed by the family court (Sharia court) in cases where the spouse has been imprisoned or died.⁶⁵ Residents of NES can submit their applications for family booklets and provide their fingerprints at the GoS-run offices in Qamishli.⁶⁶

3.3.3 Birth certificates

The new civil status law requires parents in Syria to register their new-born children within 90 days of birth, and is an extension from the previous 30-day deadline for registration.

⁶⁰ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13

⁶¹ Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 8; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 18

⁶² Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 8; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 18

⁶³ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁶⁴ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 19

⁶⁵ Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 8; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 12-13

⁶⁶ Ciwan Issa (Lawyer): 4, 5, 7

Registration can now occur at any civil affairs office, unlike the previous civil status law, which restricted registration to the office where the father was registered or where the birth took place.⁶⁷ In NES, birth registration is generally conducted by the head of the household or a proxy, such as a family member or lawyer, at the local registry office, where the family resides.⁶⁸

A child can only be registered if the parents' marriage is recorded. If this is not the case, the marriage must first be registered and approved by a Sharia court or another recognised religious body.⁶⁹ Upon registration, the child receives a nationality number, is added to the family register, and a birth certificate is issued.⁷⁰ This registration is crucial for the child, to be recognised as a Syrian citizen, obtain an ID card, and confirm their ancestry.⁷¹ For Syrian citizens residing abroad, the registration period has been extended to nine months.⁷²

According to Ciwan Issa, birth certificates are applied for and issued at the local registry offices in NES.⁷³ Zaki Mohammad Hajji explained that birth registration takes place at local registry offices, and that birth certificates can be applied for electronically and issued by offices in Hasakah or Qamishli.⁷⁴

3.3.4 Marriage certificates

In order for a marriage to be registered in Syria's civil registry, it must first be authorised by the family court of the relevant religious community.⁷⁵ This process requires the submission of special medical certificates, the consent of the wife's guardian (regardless of her age for a first

⁶⁷ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 14; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), pp. 13 -14

⁶⁸ Ciwan Issa (lawyer): 11; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 14

⁶⁹ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 14; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁷⁰ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 14; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁷¹ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 14

⁷² Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 14; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁷³ Ciwan Issa (lawyer): 10

⁷⁴ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (Lawyer): 14

⁷⁵ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 17; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 16

marriage), identity documents of both spouses, civil register extracts, and, for men of military age, a marriage licence from military recruitment authorities.⁷⁶

The family court approves the marriage before judges, witnesses, and guardians, and issues a marriage contract.⁷⁷ The original of this contract is sent to the Civil Registry to update the marital status of the spouses and merge their registration details. A marriage certificate is then issued.⁷⁸ According to Zaki Mohammad Hajji, the processing time related to marriage contracts may be longer in NES than in areas under GoS control.⁷⁹ This may be due to the fact that in areas under the control of the GoS, there is more supervision and control over the issuance of documents, and the work of the staff responsible for issuing documents is more regularly checked and supervised by the administration. As a result, the staff is more competent compared to the NES.⁸⁰

3.4 Passports and travel documents

The Syrian national passport (*jawaz al-safar* in Arabic) is issued to all Syrians upon application, regardless of age.⁸¹ It confirms citizenship and identity.⁸² Travel documents for Palestinians are issued in accordance with the same regulations and according to the same procedures as Syrian national passports.⁸³

⁷⁶ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 17; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 16

⁷⁷ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 17; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), pp. 16-17

⁷⁸ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 17; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 17

⁷⁹ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 13

⁸⁰ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 13

⁸¹ Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 12; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *The 2021 Syrian Status Law: Implications for Syrians Living abroad*, 2 December 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁸² Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁸³ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 22; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 27

The Directorate of Immigration and Passports, under the Ministry of the Interior, is responsible for the issuance of Syrian national passports and travel documents (*wathiqat al-safar*: in Arabic) for Palestinians registered as refugees in Syria.⁸⁴ The Directorate is headquartered in Damascus, where the central passport register is located.⁸⁵ Prior to the conflict, the Directorate had functioning regional offices in the 14 provincial capitals across Syria, and with the exception of the offices in Idlib and Raqqa, all regional offices remain operational despite the conflict.⁸⁶ Passports issued to residents of NES are issued by the regional office in Hasakah; however, all decisions related to issuance and validity of Syrian passports are made by the directorate's headquarters in Damascus.⁸⁷ Passport applications submitted in Hasakah are forwarded to Damascus for printing and personalisation.⁸⁸

3.4.1 Syrian E-passport

As of 20 August 2023, Syria commenced the issuance of new biometric e-passports as well as biometric travel documents for Palestinians.⁸⁹ In line with the introduction of e-passports, the issuance of N-series passports was to be phased out over a six-month period, with the last passports from the N-series being issued until 20 February 2024.⁹⁰ The new e-passports are

⁸⁴ Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, [url](#), p. 12; Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019, [url](#), p. 7; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 27; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 17, 22; US Department of State (USDoS), Bureau of Consular Affairs, *U.S. Visa: Reciprocity and Civil documents by Country, Syria, General Documents*, n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁵ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019, [url](#), p. 7; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 22; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁸⁶ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 23

⁸⁷ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 22; Ciwan Issa (lawyer): 4; Hossein Naasoo (Lawyer): 7; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 1-3

⁸⁸ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 23; Ciwan Issa (Lawyer): 4; Hossein Naasoo: 7

⁸⁹ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁹⁰ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18

machine-readable and contain an electronic chip that stores metadata and information about the holder, including a fingerprint and facial image.⁹¹ In January 2024, the Syrian e-passport was still not compliant with ICAO standards due to a missing signature field.⁹² However, there are reports that from January 2024, passports generally have signature fields at the time of issue.⁹³

3.4.2 Application and issuance

Previously, passport applications were submitted to a regional office of the Directorate of Migration and Passports or a Syrian diplomatic mission.⁹⁴ Following the introduction of the biometric e-passport in August 2023, the Directorate of Migration and Passports in Damascus issued a directive to provincial department heads that passport applications should henceforth only be submitted through the new citizen services portal or the *Mu'āmalāti* app.⁹⁵

Passport applications can now only be made via electronic services. However, there are privately run specialised offices that assist people with online applications for a fee.⁹⁶ The use of such services is the result of significant technical issues with the online portals and the mobile app,⁹⁷ as well as lengthy delays and waiting times in the passport issuance process.⁹⁸ Consequently, a significant number of Syrians have sought the assistance of intermediaries such as the mentioned specialised offices, who can facilitate the application process through their

⁹¹ Arabian Business, إيقاف إصدار جوازات سفر السوريين وتجديدها في الإمارات [Temporary suspension of the issuance and renewal of passports for Syrians in the United Arab Emirates], 25 August 2023, [url](#); Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁹² Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18; Enab Baladi, *Syrian electronic passport impedes holders' mobility*, [url](#)

⁹³ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁹⁴ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9, September 2022, [url](#), p. 23

⁹⁵ Arabian Business, إيقاف إصدار جوازات سفر السوريين وتجديدها في الإمارات [Temporary suspension of the issuance and renewal of passports for Syrians in the United Arab Emirates], 25 August 2023, [url](#); Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 19; Enab Baladi, *Syrian Electronic Passports impedes holders' mobility*, 22 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 20; Syria Direct, *Delays and exploitation: Passport crisis prevents Syrians from leaving the country*, 22 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 20; Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), عودة عمل منظومة خدمة المواطن الإلكترونية للخدمة بعد توقفها للتحديث [The electronic citizen service system returns to service after stopping it for updating], 6 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁸ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 20; Syria Direct, *Delays and exploitation: Passport crisis prevents Syrians from leaving the country*, 22 August 2023, [url](#); Arabian Business, إيقاف إصدار جوازات سفر السوريين وتجديدها في الإمارات [Temporary suspension of the issuance and renewal of passports for Syrians in the United Arab Emirates], 25 August 2023, [url](#),

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

connections with the issuing authority.⁹⁹ However, this alternative is costly, insecure and exploitative.¹⁰⁰ The use of intermediaries in this manner, however, also occurred prior to the introduction of the online application platforms.¹⁰¹

The application and issuance of Syrian passports to residents of NES is subject to the same procedures as in GoS-controlled areas of Syria, with slight variations.¹⁰² These variations include the time taken to process a passport application and the printing and personalisation of the passport, which is performed in Damascus.¹⁰³ Passports issued in relation to applications from within Syria are typically delivered in person at the offices of the Directorate of Migration and Passports.¹⁰⁴ The applicant in question is required to sign a release form and provide a fingerprint.¹⁰⁵ Residents of NES submit a passport application electronically and the passport is issued by the office in Hasakah.¹⁰⁶

Syrians residing abroad can obtain passports through Syrian diplomatic representations, regardless of their legal status or outstanding legal issues in Syria.¹⁰⁷ Passport applications via Syrian diplomatic missions are submitted using the electronic consular platform, which provides services for passport issuance or renewal.¹⁰⁸ This platform facilitates data submission, video verification, and the submission of signatures and fingerprints.¹⁰⁹ However, as of December 2023, the majority of Syrian expatriates relied on sending their passports to Syria for renewal or issuance.¹¹⁰ This was either done through a relative to complete the application or by

⁹⁹ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 20; Enab Baladi, *Syrian passports: Electronic portal closed, brokers' pockets open*, 3 March 2022, [url](#); Syria Direct, *Delays and exploitation: Passport crisis prevents Syrians from leaving the country*, 22 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 20; Enab Baladi, *Syrian passports: Electronic portal closed, brokers' pockets open*, 3 March 2022, [url](#); Syria Direct, *Delays and exploitation: Passport crisis prevents Syrians from leaving the country*, 22 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 24

¹⁰² Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 7; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 4, 11; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 6

¹⁰³ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 23; Ciwan Issa (Lawyer): 4; Hossein Naasoo: 7

¹⁰⁴ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁰⁵ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁰⁶ Mahmoud Omar (Lawyer): 3

¹⁰⁷ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 7

¹⁰⁸ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 19-20; Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, *Electronic Consular Center*, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 10

¹¹⁰ Enab Baladi, *Syrian electronic passport impedes holders' mobility*, 22 December 2023, [url](#)

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

submitting the application to the electronic consular platform, after which the documents were sent to the Syrian Embassy in Oman to finalise the process.¹¹¹

Syrian males of military age (18-42) who have not completed their military service are eligible to receive passports valid for a period of two years within Syria.¹¹² Passports issued to employees of the GoS or by a Syrian diplomatic mission are typically valid for a period of two and a half years.¹¹³ This also applies to passports issued to Syrians abroad who are subject to legal proceedings.¹¹⁴ Those below the age of 18 and those who have completed their military service without outstanding legal issues are eligible for passports valid for six years.¹¹⁵ Individuals with outstanding legal issues in Syria are ineligible to obtain a Syrian passport within the country.¹¹⁶

Passports issued to Syrians abroad through a relative/proxy include a stamp inscribed with *Kharaaj al-Qotor* (is out of Syria in Arabic) on the final page to indicate that the holder is outside of Syria, and that the passport is issued to a proxy. If the passport is issued to a close relative or legal representative, this information is also recorded on the final page.¹¹⁷

The fee for a passport with a standard waiting period of up to eight months is 70,000 Syrian pounds (approximately 30 USD), while an expedited passport issued within two days costs two million Syrian pounds (approximately 400 USD). For applications submitted outside Syria, the fee is 300 USD for a standard waiting period and 800 USD for an expedited passport.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 10; Enab Baladi, Syrian electronic passport impedes holders' mobility, 22 December 2023, [url](#); Arabian Business, إيقاف إصدار جوازات سفر السوريين وتجديدها في الإمارات [Temporary suspension of the issuance and renewal of passports for Syrians in the United Arab Emirates], 25 August 2023, [url](#),

¹¹² Owner of a travel agency in Erbil 8; Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 21; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 23

¹¹³ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 21; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 23

¹¹⁴ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 21; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 23;

¹¹⁵ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 21; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass* [Syria: Identity documents and passports], 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 23

¹¹⁶ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 6

¹¹⁷ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 11-12; Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019, [url](#), p. 8

¹¹⁸ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande* [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance], 24 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 20-21

4. Documents issued by the DAANES

Although the GoS is responsible for issuing central identity documents to NES residents, the DAANES also issues various administrative documents to its residents.¹¹⁹ The legal framework for the issuance of documents by the DAANES authorities is the Social Contract, which was updated in late 2023.¹²⁰ Documents issued by the DAANES are generally only valid in areas controlled by the DAANES, but can also be used in connection with crossing the border into the KRI.¹²¹

4.1 Identity certificates

The smallest administrative unit of the DAANES is the *Komeen*, which is present in every neighbourhood, and operates in parallel to the mukhtar system in areas under GoS-control.¹²² It is responsible for issuing identity certificates (*Shahadat al-Ta'rif* in Arabic and *Nesnameh* in Kurdish).¹²³ These certificates are essential for administrative tasks such as applying for driving licences, employment, DAANES residence permits, and rental contracts in the areas controlled by the DAANES.¹²⁴ Although not an official ID document, this certificate confirms a person's identity and residence, parental information and the reason for issuance, such as recruitment into the SDF or employment.¹²⁵ These documents are equivalent to the GoS civil registration certificates.¹²⁶ However, this certificate is not issued according to a standardised layout.¹²⁷ The primary reason for the issuance of this document is the prevailing security situation in the NES making it necessary to have the identity of the person confirmed by the local *Komeen*.¹²⁸

4.2 Civil and administrative documents

DAANES authorities issue a wide range of documents, including court documents related to marriage and divorce, driving licences, educational certificates from primary to university level, vehicle registration certificates, and residential real estate rental contracts.¹²⁹ Visitor cards (*bitaqa al-vafedin*: In Arabic) are issued by the Asayish, the Kurdish internal security and police force, to individuals from other areas of Syria seeking entry and residence in NES.¹³⁰

¹¹⁹ Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 10; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 15-20

¹²⁰ Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 11; Kurdistan24, *New administration name adopted for local administration in northeast Syria*, 13 December 2023, [url](#); RIC, *Upcoming Elections, the new Social Contract and political system changes – interview with Kobane Autonomous Administration officials*, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹ Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 14; Mahmoud Omar (Lawyer): 8; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 21-22

¹²² DAANES DFR: 7-8; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 15

¹²³ DAANES DFR: 7; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 10; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 15

¹²⁴ DAANES DFR: 7; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 15; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 10;

¹²⁵ DAANES DFR: 7; DAANES KRI: 2; Mahmoud Omar (Lawyer): 10; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 15

¹²⁶ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 15

¹²⁷ DAANES DFR: 7

¹²⁸ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 15

¹²⁹ Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 10; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 16; DAANES DFR: 5

¹³⁰ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 16

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

Driving licenses are issued by DAANES authorities throughout NES.¹³¹ In each city within NES, there is an office where individuals can complete the theoretical and practical driving tests and obtain driving licences.¹³²

The DAANES issues educational certificates to students from its own institutions,¹³³ which use Arabic, Syriac,¹³⁴ and Kurdish curriculum. In contrast, students from GoS-run institutions, which use an Arabic-only curriculum, receive their certificates from the GoS authorities.¹³⁵ The GoS does not recognise the Kurdish or Syriac curriculum and thus does not recognise the graduates from the institutions which use these curricula, whilst the DAANES recognises graduates from universities following the GoS curriculum.¹³⁶

Documents issued by the DAANES for marriage or divorce differ from those issued by the GoS. In areas controlled by the DAANES, it is possible to register a civil marriage with the municipality, whereas a marriage is regulated by religious courts in the GoS-controlled areas of Syria.¹³⁷ Marriage documents issued by GoS authorities have international recognition, whilst DAANES documents are only valid within NES. DAANES also issues family registration documents, which are valid in DAANES-controlled areas and for crossing into the KRI.¹³⁸

4.2 Military documents

Military booklets related to the Self-Defence Duty with Self-Defence forces (HXP) are issued at the DAANES armed forces recruitment offices. The Self-Defence Duty booklet, issued by the DAANES Ministry of Defence and stamped by the DAANES Ministry of Interior, records the completion, discharge and exemption status of the individual in question. Upon completing the Self-Defence Duty, individuals receive a temporary discharge document (*Bera ez zimma*: in Arabic) until their updated military booklet is returned.¹³⁹ This document signifies that the holder has been discharged from the mandatory Self-Defence Duty, and has returned his weapon and uniform. It can be used for travel and be presented at checkpoints controlled by the SDF.¹⁴⁰

¹³¹ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 18; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 9

¹³² Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 18

¹³³ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 20; Hossein Naasoo (lawyer); DAANES DFR: 5; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 9

¹³⁴ The Syriac language is a dialect of Aramaic that is spoken in Syria and Iraq.

¹³⁵ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 20

¹³⁶ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 20-21

¹³⁷ Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 10; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 7; Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 17; US Department of State (USDoS), Bureau of Consular Affairs, *U.S. Visa: Reciprocity and Civil documents by Country, Syria, General Documents*, n.d., [url](#); Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande*, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13

¹³⁸ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 22; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 8

¹³⁹ DAANES DD: 1; Former Mandatory Self-Defence Duty conscript: 1; DAANES KRI: 1

¹⁴⁰ DAANES DD: 1; Former Mandatory Self-Defence Duty conscript: 1

5. Forged and false documents

Forgery of documents is a prevalent issue across all regions of Syria, largely attributable to the Syrian government's loss of control in numerous areas during the conflict, and pervasive corruption.¹⁴¹ Local civil registry offices have in practice been operating independently of the GoS, and there has been an increase in the number of documents being issued incorrectly.¹⁴² The number of manipulated and forged documents has also risen.¹⁴³ Although possible, the forgery of documents issued by the DAANES is rare, which is partly due to their limited use outside of NES.¹⁴⁴

In contrast, the forging of documents issued by the GoS is more complex due to the electronic application processes involved.¹⁴⁵ However, corruption is prevalent in the Syrian public sector.¹⁴⁶ Transparency International ranked Syria 177th out of 180 countries in its Corruption Perceptions Index for 2023.¹⁴⁷ Since the outbreak of the civil war, it has also become possible and far more widespread to obtain documents containing incorrect personal information in Syria.¹⁴⁸ Bribery is common in the GoS-controlled parts of Syria, and it remains possible to manipulate personal information on genuine documents issued by the GoS through bribery.¹⁴⁹

5.1 Prevalence of forged and false documents

Despite the ongoing conflict, the GoS authorities have retained a degree of control over the issuance of central documents.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, forged and counterfeit documents are common across both DAANES-controlled and other areas of Syria.¹⁵¹ The GoS' loss of territorial control and widespread corruption has made it easier for citizens to obtain various types of documents, such as passports, birth and death certificates, marriage contracts, ID cards, and educational certificates, by paying bribes.¹⁵²

Authentication challenges persist, particularly with ID cards, which are easier to forge than passports due to less sophisticated security features.¹⁵³ Even when individuals manage to

¹⁴¹ Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 8; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 11

¹⁴² Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), pp. 28-29

¹⁴³ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 28

¹⁴⁴ Norway, Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 24; Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 14

¹⁴⁵ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 23

¹⁴⁶ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 28

¹⁴⁷ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index Syria, 2023*, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ Norway, Landinfo, *Syria: Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, [url](#), p. 28

¹⁴⁹ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 23, 32

¹⁵⁰ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 41

¹⁵¹ Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 11; Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 8

¹⁵² Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 8

¹⁵³ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 42

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

obtain forged Syrian documents, these are not properly registered within the national registry, limiting their usability within Syria.¹⁵⁴ Syrian embassies abroad enforce authentication protocols requiring the submission of a comprehensive array of authenticated documents and employing barcode inspection to verify authenticity.¹⁵⁵

The ease of obtaining forged documents varies regionally, with GoS-controlled areas of Syria experiencing higher levels of bribery and corruption compared to NES.¹⁵⁶ Forged and genuine documents containing incorrect information are available, and young men use forged university documents to defer their Self-Defence Duty.¹⁵⁷ It is also possible to obtain forged military booklets issued by the GoS, as well as the DAANES.¹⁵⁸

Legal complexities also arise from the use of legitimate procedures to issue documents based on forged foundations, such as obtaining marriage contracts through forged powers of attorney. For example, Syrians residing in Europe can obtain marriage contracts issued in Syria by using a forged power of attorney.¹⁵⁹ In fact, a marriage contract issued in this way is not forged, as it is issued by a Sharia court and has the right seal. However, the signature of one or both parties on the power of attorney is forged, meaning that the power of attorney is signed by people and lawyers in Syria instead of the spouses residing in Europe. There is a legal principle in Syrian law stating that what is based on falsehood is false, meaning that documents which are issued on a forged basis are to be considered false.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 43

¹⁵⁵ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 44

¹⁵⁶ Syrian Kurdish expert in Europe: 1

¹⁵⁷ Syrian Kurdish expert in Europe: 2

¹⁵⁸ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 25

¹⁵⁹ Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 9

¹⁶⁰ Hossein Naasoo (lawyer): 9

6. Freedom of movement

The destruction of infrastructure in NES by Turkey has had a severe impact on the region's economy, resulting in very low employment rates, and has negatively affected civilian life in the region.¹⁶¹ Kobane is particularly economically isolated due to Turkey's control of the Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ayn (*Serikaniye*: in Kurdish) border crossing, which makes travel difficult and lengthy. Many people are leaving NES due to the deteriorating economic situation, which has been exacerbated by the inflation of the Syrian Pound and lack of employment opportunities.¹⁶²

6.1 Cross-border movement

Due to a lack of access to Syria and sources with relevant knowledge about topics addressed in this section, the section is mainly based on information obtained from an interview with the owner of a travel agency in KRI, which offers comprehensive assistance to Syrian nationals in relation to obtaining visas, sponsorships, work permits, family reunification and travelling to and from Syria.

6.1.1. Access to the KRI

In April 2024, visa restrictions on Syrian nationals were introduced by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) authorities. The KRG's decision to suspend visa issuance, reportedly at the request of the Iraqi federal government, is part of a wider initiative to regulate foreign labour in Iraq.¹⁶³ The specific regulations for travelling to the KRI vary depending on the point of departure and mode of transport.¹⁶⁴

6.1.1.1. Travelling from Syria to the KRI via international airports

All individuals from Syria, regardless of ethnicity, are required to possess a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months in order to engage in international travel. Passports are stamped upon departure from Syria and upon arrival in the KRI.¹⁶⁵

Young men, who have not yet completed their mandatory military service, are obliged to present documentation that substantiates their ongoing education in order to obtain a visa for the KRI. It is more likely that visas will be granted to families rather than to individuals.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, minors are unable to apply for visas without the presence of a parent and must obtain consent from the non-travelling parent.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ Wladimir van Wilgenburg: 1-2; Enab Baladi, *Turkish targeting focuses on infrastructure in northeast Syria*, 16 January 2024, [url](#); North Press Agency, *Turkey's aggression impacts civilian infrastructure in NE Syria*, 10 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶² Wladimir van Wilgenburg: 1-2

¹⁶³ Syria Direct, *Erbil allows some visas, sets 'prohibitive' requirements for Syrians' residency renewals*, 3 June 2024, [url](#); The New Arab, *Humanitarian concerns arise as Iraqi Kurdistan suspends entry visas for Syrians*, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, *Syrians in Kurdistan decry visa halt*, 16 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 1-6,13- 23

¹⁶⁵ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 1, 2

¹⁶⁶ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 3, 4

¹⁶⁷ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 5

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

Prior to the suspension of visa issuance for Syrians in April 2024, there were two daily flights between Erbil and Damascus, operated by FlyErbil, Fly Baghdad, and Cham Wings. Additionally, Aleppo Airport was operational.¹⁶⁸

Although the majority of travellers purchased round-trip tickets, the return flights to Syria were frequently empty. In 2020, Cham Wings introduced a policy requiring round-trip ticket purchases, resulting in an average ticket price of approximately USD 500. However, the introduction of flights by FlyBaghdad and FlyErbil led to a decrease in one-way ticket prices to USD 200-250.¹⁶⁹ Following the suspension of visas, flight operations have been significantly reduced. Currently, only two weekly flights operate between Damascus and Erbil, reflecting the decreased travel demand and regulatory changes.¹⁷⁰

6.1.1.2. *The Semalka border crossing*

The Semalka border crossing, also known as *Faysh Khabur*, is an unofficial border crossing between the KRI and the DAANES.¹⁷¹ It was established in 2012 by the KRG with the construction of a pontoon bridge between the two territories.¹⁷² This border is operational for crossings three to four days a week.¹⁷³

Although Lebanon is still the primary country of transit for Syrian citizens, a considerable number of individuals crossed the Semalka border during the period between 2012 and 2019, due to the active conflict in the NES region. Those crossing into the KRI were received by the KRG authorities and accommodated in camps. Since then, as the conflict has diminished, stringent control measures have been introduced, and the prices for irregular crossings have also increased.¹⁷⁴

Given the unofficial status of this specific border crossing, traversing it in either direction is, in practice, de facto an illicit border crossing. However, this is not typically prosecuted, as both sides of the crossing are under Kurdish control,¹⁷⁵ and established procedures have enabled residents of NES to enter the KRI by obtaining permits to do so from the KRG and the DAANES.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁸ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 31

¹⁶⁹ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 32, 33

¹⁷⁰ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 34

¹⁷¹ Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, *Syria: The border situation between Turkey, Syria and Iraq*, 10 October 2024, [url](#), p. 12; Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 13; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 15

¹⁷² Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, *Syria: The border situation between Turkey, Syria and Iraq*, 10 October 2024, [url](#), p. 12;

¹⁷³ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 27

¹⁷⁴ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 26, 29

¹⁷⁵ Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, *Syria: The border situation between Turkey, Syria and Iraq*, 10 October 2024, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁷⁶ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 14-15; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 15, 16

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

This crossing point is unofficial and therefore no passport is required unless the person in question has come from a third country, e.g. from Europe, to visit NES or is on his or her way back to KRI from NES.¹⁷⁷

In 2017, the DAANES immigration authority announced that it was developing new application forms and local passports for travel to the KRI.¹⁷⁸ Individuals crossing the border present their travel permit, which is a two-page booklet that contains the traveller's personal information and a photo.¹⁷⁹

The KRG has implemented an online platform for the approval of entry into the KRI through the Semalka-crossing. Individuals seeking entry into the KRI must obtain the KRG's approval through this platform.¹⁸⁰ The likelihood of receiving approval to travel from the KRG is increased if the applicant in question submits multiple documents confirming their identity and reasons for travel.¹⁸¹ In addition, NES residents must apply for an exit permit from the DAANES authorities, which is submitted at the immigration office in Qamishli.¹⁸² Obtaining the permit to exit NES is generally easier for families than young men.¹⁸³

Although the number of applications for exit permits has increased, actual departures have remained static due to the suspension of visa issuance for Syrians and DAANES authorities are also reluctant to grant exit permits.¹⁸⁴ The same documents must be presented in connection with departure from and return to NES from the KRI.¹⁸⁵

Syrian nationals who are either dual citizens or in possession of foreign residence permits and who intend to enter the NES via the Semalka border are required to present documentation that demonstrates familial ties or other connections to NES at the border checkpoint.¹⁸⁶

Young single males have very limited chances of being granted passage. Exceptions are cases of medical emergency or urgent family reunification. For example, an applicant from NES could be granted entry to Europe via KRI if they have a family member there. Applications must be submitted in person at the DAANES immigration office in Qamishli. Travellers must also have a sponsor within NES, who is financially liable if they do not return.¹⁸⁷

Individuals who fail to return to NES, or their sponsors, may be subject to a fine of approximately USD 2,000 imposed by DAANES authorities. Furthermore, such individuals may

¹⁷⁷ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 13; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 14, 15; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (Lawyer): 26

¹⁷⁸ Kurdistan24, *Syrian Kurdish administration to issue new travel documents*, 31 august 2017, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 22

¹⁸⁰ Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 16

¹⁸¹ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 15

¹⁸² Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 18

¹⁸³ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 14

¹⁸⁴ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 27

¹⁸⁵ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 23

¹⁸⁶ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 29

¹⁸⁷ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 16, 19

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

also be subject to a daily fine of approximately USD 15 imposed by KRG authorities for each day their stay in the KRI has exceeded the permitted duration of their legal stay.¹⁸⁸

Upon crossing into the KRI, travellers are required to undergo security screening and are informed of the maximum permissible stay of one month, which can be extended to two months upon payment of a fee. Those wishing to stay longer are required to apply for a residence permit.¹⁸⁹

The traveller's luggage is registered on the border, and the authorities scan the person's documents and take their photo. This is followed by transportation via bus to the opposite side. The transfer by bus costs around 10 USD.¹⁹⁰

According to Zaki Mohammad Hajji, the procedure at the Iraqi border is uniform for all Syrian citizens, and DAANES authorities do not distinguish between Kurdish residents of NES and other Syrian citizens.¹⁹¹

6.1.2. Access to Turkey

Previously, the principal migration route was through the KRI to Turkey via the Semalka border crossing. However, due to the increased travel restrictions between NES and the KRI, it is now a common occurrence for individuals to be smuggled through Turkish-controlled areas into Turkey and subsequently to Europe. By taking this route, persons risk detention by Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) militias.¹⁹²

6.2 Internal movement

Qamishli Airport operates a limited number of flights to Damascus, with the majority of flights being conducted by military aircraft. There are currently no scheduled flights to Aleppo.¹⁹³

Individuals from NES can travel to GoS-controlled areas via Qamishli Airport. However, individuals with outstanding issues, e.g. evasion of military service or oppositional activities, avoid using the airport due to the significant risk of arrest. Arrests may occur when the person in question reaches Damascus, but it can also occur at the airport in Qamishli.¹⁹⁴ DAANES representatives have stated that the security square in Qamishli is generally avoided by the public, as it is surrounded by SDF checkpoints.¹⁹⁵

The use of bus transportation represents a more cost-effective, though time-consuming, alternative that is preferred by individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁸ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 25

¹⁸⁹ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 21

¹⁹⁰ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 20

¹⁹¹ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 27

¹⁹² Wladimir van Wilgenburg: 3

¹⁹³ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 38-39

¹⁹⁴ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 38-40; Zaki Mohammad Hajji: 30

¹⁹⁵ DAANES DFR: 4

¹⁹⁶ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 40

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

The Latakia-Damascus highway remains open with frequent bus services transporting civilians.¹⁹⁷ However, individuals who are sought by the GoS risk detention if they attempt to travel through GoS checkpoints.¹⁹⁸ In addition, those travelling through checkpoints risk being subjected to discrimination at checkpoints based on ethnicity, language, and place of residence.¹⁹⁹

Smuggling routes exist between different areas of control in Syria, often involving bribery.²⁰⁰ Status settlements and security clearances can be obtained before entering areas controlled by the GoS, albeit with difficulty for individuals with significant outstanding security issues.²⁰¹

Former residents of Afrin have been relocated to camps for internally displaced persons in areas under the control of the DAANES. Those remaining, primarily Kurds, are under the governance of the Turkish military and the SNA.²⁰² Afrin residents face categorical exclusion from GoS-controlled territories solely based on their place of origin and are only able to depart from the NES via Qamishli airport.²⁰³ In order to travel into NES, people from areas under GoS control need to be vouched for by two residents of NES, who stand as guarantors for the traveller.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 37

¹⁹⁸ Mahmoud Omar (Lawyer): 12

¹⁹⁹ Zaki Mohammad Hajji: 27

²⁰⁰ Syrian human rights organisation:1- 2; Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 32

²⁰¹ Zaki Mohammad Hajji: 32-33

²⁰² Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 35

²⁰³ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 28; Mahmoud Omar (lawyer): 18; Owner of a travel agency in Erbil: 36

²⁰⁴ Zaki Mohammad Hajji (lawyer): 29

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

Denmark, (DIS) Danish Immigration Service , *Syria – Ajanib and Maktoumeen: Citizenship and Military Service*, 15 April 2024, <https://us.dk/publikationer/2024/april/syria-ajanib-and-maktoumeen-citizenship-and-military-service/>, accessed 2 July 2024

Denmark, (DIS) Danish Immigration Service , *Syria – Military Recruitment in North and East Syria*, 2 July 2024, <https://us.dk/media/10704/ffm-report-military-recruitment-in-nes-final.pdf>, accessed 2 July 2024

Enab Baladi, *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 27 May 2024

Enab Baladi, *Northern Syria: "Security Squares" Manage SDF and regime interests*, 9 October 2023, <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2023/10/northern-syria-security-squares-manage-sdf-and-regime-interests/>, accessed 27 May 2024

Enab Baladi, *Syrian electronic passport impedes holder's mobility*, 22 December 2023, <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2023/12/syrian-electronic-passport-impedes-holders-mobility/?so=related>, accessed 28 May 2024

Enab Baladi, *Three ways for Syrians abroad to obtain a passport*, 25 January 2024, <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2024/01/three-ways-for-syrians-abroad-to-obtain-a-passport/>, accessed 2 July 2024

Enab Baladi, *Turkish targeting focuses on infrastructure in northeast Syria*, 16 January 2024, <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2024/01/turkish-targeting-focuses-on-infrastructure-in-northeast-syria/>, accessed 2 July 2024

Etana Syria, *Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – April 2024*, 8 May 2024, <https://etanasyria.org/syria-military-brief-north-east-syria-april-2024/>, accessed 1 July 2024

European Union Asylum Support Office (EASO), *Syria Actors*, December 2019, https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2019_12_EASO_COI_Report_Syria_Actors.pdf, accessed 4 June 2024

European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), *Country of Origin (COI) Report Methodology*, February 2022, https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2023-02/2023_02_EUAA_COI_Report_Methodology_Rebranded.pdf, accessed 28 May 2024

Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Syrians in Passport Limbo During Assad's Victory Lap*, 27 June 2023, [Syrians in Passport Limbo During Assad's Victory Lap | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/27/syrians-in-passport-limbo-during-assad-victory-lap), accessed 28 May 2023

Kurdistan24, *Syrian Kurdish administration to issue new travel documents*, 31 August 2017, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/12546-Syrian-Kurdish-administration-to-issue-new-travel-documents>, accessed 9 August 2024

Kurdistan24, *New administration name adopted for local administration in northeast Syria*, 13 December 2023, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/33441-New-administration-name-adopted-for-local-administration-in-northeast-syria>, accessed 2 July 2024

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria Documents*, December 2019,

<https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2019/12/31/country-of-origin-information-report-syria-december-2019>, accessed 27 May 2024

Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria*, May 2022, <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2022/05/31/country-of-origin-information-report-syria-of-may-2022>, accessed 27 May 2024

Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), *Country of Origin Information Report Syria*, August 2023, <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2023/08/07/general-country-of-origin-information-report-syria-august-2023>, accessed 27 May 2024

North Press Agency, *Turkey's aggression impacts civilian infrastructure in NE Syria*, 10 January 2024, <https://npasyria.com/en/109855/>, accessed 28 May 2024

Norway, Landinfo, *Syria Identitetsdokumenter og pass [Syria: Identity documents and passports]*, 9 September 2022, <https://landinfo.no/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Syria-temanotat-Identitetsdokumenter-og-pass-09092022-Oppdatert-versjon.pdf>, accessed 27 May 2024

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *The 2021 Syrian Status Law: Implications for Syrians Living abroad*, 2. December 2022, <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/csl-syrians-living-abroad/nrc-csl-for-syrians-regional-report-en.pdf>, accessed 28 May 2024

Rojava Information Centre (RIC), *Upcoming elections, the new Social Contract and political system changes – interview with Kobane Autonomous Administration officials*, 2 April 2024, <https://rojavainformationcenter.org/2024/04/upcoming-elections-the-new-social-contract-and-political-system-changes-interview-with-kobane-autonomous-administration-officials/>, accessed 24 July 2024

Rudaw, *Syrians in the Kurdistan Region decry visa halt*, 16 April 2024, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/160420242>, accessed 16 July 2024

Sweden, Migrationsverket, Landinformation, *Officiella syriska handlingar och dokument: Procedurer vid registrering, ansökan och utfärdande [Official Syrian documents: Procedures for registration, application and issuance]*, 24 January 2024, <https://lifos.migrationsverket.se/dokument?documentSummaryId=48047>, accessed 27 May 2024

Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), *Through the Citizen Service Center portal...Interior Ministry launches an electronic service for obtaining a passport*, 11 July 2022, <https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=277618>, accessed 27 May 2024

Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), *عودة عمل منظومة خدمة المواطن الالكترونية للخدمة بعد توقفها للتحديث [The electronic citizen service system returns to service after stopping it for updating]*, 6 October 2023, <https://sana.sy/?p=1912370>, accessed 27 May 2024

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Interior, Civil Affairs Directorate & UNHCR, *Civil Documentation and Registration in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 25 April 2019, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/69169>, accessed 27 May 2024

Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, *Electronic Consular Center*, n.d., <https://ecsc-expat.sy/>, accessed 28 May 2024

Syria Direct, *Delays and exploitation: Passport crisis prevents Syrians from leaving the country*, 22 August 2023, [Delays and exploitation: Passport crisis prevents Syrians from leaving the country \(syriadirect.org\)](https://syriadirect.org/delays-and-exploitation-passport-crisis-prevents-syrians-from-leaving-the-country), accessed 27 May 2024

Syria Direct, *Erbil allows some visas, sets 'prohibitive' requirements for Syrians' residency renewals*, 3. June 2024, <https://syriadirect.org/erbil-allows-some-visas-sets-prohibitive-requirements-for-syrians-residency-renewals/>, accessed 28 June 2024

The New Arab, *Humanitarian concerns arise as Iraqi Kurdistan suspends entry visas for Syrians*, 3 April 2024, <https://www.newarab.com/news/iraqi-kurdistan-region-suspends-entry-visas-syrians>, accessed 16 July 2024

Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index 2023*, 2023, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023>, accessed 9 August 2024

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDES), *Technical Report on the Status of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in the ECSWA Region*, 30 March 2009, https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/crvs/documents/Technical_report_ESCWA_Final.pdf, accessed 27 May 2024

USDoS (US Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs), *U.S. Visa: Reciprocity and Civil documents by Country, Syria, General Documents*, n.d., <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/Syria.html>, accessed 27 May 2024

Annex 1: Meeting minutes

WhatsApp meeting with Ciwan Issa, lawyer based in Syria, 2 May 2024

Issuance of Syrian documents in NES

1. NES is part of Syria, and therefore still falls under the sovereignty of the Syrian state, as well as the Syrian constitution and secondary laws that were issued in support of this. This includes regulation regarding the issuance of Syrian documents for the whole country.
2. Every person in NES can apply for three main types of Syrian documents, which are ID-cards, family booklets and a national passport.
3. GoS maintains service offices in the security squares in Hasakah and Qamishli.
4. ID-cards and family books are only issued in Qamishli. For passports, it is necessary to go to Hasakah, as the passport and Immigration Office is located there. The office in Hasakah is electronically linked to the office in Damascus. All legal procedures related to the passport are carried out by the applicant in Al-Hasakah, but the passport is printed in Damascus and sent to the Immigration Department in Al-Hasakah which is the issuing authority. The first official in the Immigration Department in Al-Hasakah signs the passport.
5. Signature and fingerprints are required for all three types of documents issued in Hasakah and Qamishli.
6. For passports, it is necessary to have the fingerprint scanned in Hasakah, as this is where the Immigration office is.
7. Fingerprints collected in Qamishli are only for ID-cards and family booklets. The registry office in Qamishli is one of the main registration centres, and covers the city of Qamishli and the smaller towns around Qamishli.
8. Hasakah and Amuda also have registry offices.
9. There is a central server in Syria for issuance of ID-cards, which is still working and remains in place despite the conflict. It is therefore also possible for people to have their documents checked in regions outside their home region.
10. Birth certificates are applied for and issued at the registry offices, who also issue other minor documents. Smaller registry offices supply updated registry information to the office in Qamishli that then can update the family book.

11. Birth registration done by head of household/proxy at the local registry office in the town where the family is from. Issuing a birth certificate and all legal procedures, including the family booklet, are carried out by the local office in the area. However, later, the single window system was implemented, where any citizen can extract documents related to personal matters and data from any governorate, provided that the citizen is legally registered.

Written interview with Hossein Naasoo, lawyer based in Germany, 17. April 2024

The source has provided the information in consultation with a number of lawyers inside Syria, including lawyers within NES to ensure the accuracy of the information.

Government of Syria (GoS) presence in NES

1. The areas in NES, which are under the military and administrative control of the Democratic Autonomous Administration (DAANES) comprise:
 - Tal Rifaat and the Al-Shahba areas in the Aleppo countryside
 - the neighborhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah in Aleppo
 - Manbij, Kobani, Raqqa, parts of Deir ez-Zor
 - Al-Hasakah and Qamishli, with the exception of the security squares controlled by the GoS.
2. There is difference between different regions of NES, which are under the DAANES control, with regard to the presence of GoS civil administration. For example, there is no civil, administrative or security presence of the GoS institutions in Manbij, Raqqa, Kobani, and parts of Deir ez-Zor, neither GoS civil registry offices, real estate registration departments nor educational institutions.
3. As for the Aleppo countryside and Aleppo neighborhoods, GoS administration, is present, for instance GoS-run schools in cities with an Arab majority as well as civil registry departments.
4. Also in the cities and regions of the Jazira, such as Al-Hasakah, Qamishli, Amuda, Derik, Tarbasbiyah, Darbasiyah, and others, there are civil courts and civil registry departments.
5. In Al-Hasakah and Qamishli, all GoS departments, including the courts, the Immigration Department, the Land Registry, the Civil Registry, the security services and the police are located in the security squares.

Documents issued by the GoS

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

6. All documents issued by the GoS, such as passport, ID's, real estate ownership data, marriage certificates, birth certificates, death certificates, power of attorney, ownership confirmation rulings, educational certificates, military service booklets and academic postponement of military service are valid in NES. The only exception is driving license, where it is driving licenses issued by the DAANES which are valid in NES.
7. The procedures for issuing GoS documents are the same in NES as in other areas of Syria. The only exception is the procedures for issuing passports. In Hasakah, when the passport application form is filled and submitted together with the required identification papers and the required fees are paid, the application will be sent to Damascus to be processed. The passport will then be issued in Damascus and sent back to Hasakah, where the applicant can collect it. This procedure was imposed by the Immigration Department after the ISIS earlier in the conflict took control of some areas in Hasakah and the Syrian opposition groups affiliated with Syrian National Coalition subsequently started forging passports. The purpose of the procedure is thus to ensure that passports are not forged.
8. Document forgery has spread widely in all Syrian regions without exception. This is due to the GoS' loss of territorial and administrative control in many places in Syria during the conflict as well as the wide-spread corruption. The citizens can now obtain any type of document or certificate in exchange for paying money, for instance passports, birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, power of attorney, marriage contracts, personal ID's, driving licence, educational certificates, etc.
9. For example, people residing in Europe can obtain marriage contracts issued in Syria by using a forged power attorney. In fact, a marriage contract issued in this way is not forged, as it is issued by a Sharia court and has the right seal. However, the signature of one or both parties on the power of attorney is forged, meaning that the power of attorney is signed by people and lawyers in Syria instead of the spouses residing in Europe. There is a legal principle in the Syrian law stating that what is based on falsehood is false, meaning that documents which are issued on a forged basis are to be considered false.

Documents issued by the Autonomous Administration

10. Following documents are issued by the DAANES:
 - Mandatory Self-Defence Duty booklets
 - Driving license
 - Marriage contract. In DAANES-controlled areas, marriages is registered with the municipality and is thus a civil marriages, whilst in GoS-controlled areas, it is a religious marriage registered with the Sharia court.
 - Ownership confirmation rulings
 - Building and well drilling licenses
 - Educational certificates, including university certificates
 - Car plates

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

11. The legal framework for these documents is the social contract of the DAANES, which is equivalent to the constitution, as well as the Legislative Council and the people's courts.
12. The Civil Code and the Syrian Penal Code are applied in the DAANES-controlled areas, with the exception of abolishing and amending some articles, including those related to inheritance, polygamy and the honor-related crimes, as the DAANES' legislation is based on the principle of equality of rights between men and women, and polygamy is prohibited in DAANES-controlled areas. Likewise, defending honor is not taken into account as a mitigating factor in murder crimes. Some articles are also added to the law regarding terrorism.
13. The procedures for obtaining DAANES documents begin with submitting the application for the approval of the local Komeen, which is found in each district and issuance of a certificate of good conduct by the Komeen. These are then used at the relevant department to complete the procedures and obtain the documents applied for.
14. It is very rarely that one comes across a forged document issued by the DAANES. This is partly due to the limited use of these documents as they are not valid in other areas of Syria, and partly because of the strict administrative procedures and monitoring by the DAANES authorities.

WhatsApp-meeting with Zaki Mohammad Hajji, Human rights lawyer based in Qamishli, Northeast Syria (NES), 9 April 2024

Government of Syria (GoS) presence in NES

1. The GoS' presence in NES is limited to the so-called security squares (*Al-Morabat Al-Amniya*) in the cities of Hasakah and Qamishli, where they operate government offices, including among others civil status offices, recruitment offices and some schools etc., to serve the residents of NES. The Syrian authorities' exercise of power and authority in the security squares is limited to running these offices. The DAANES authorities control the rest of the territory in NES.
2. When it comes to criminal matters, the Syrian authorities are not in a position to exercise their authority (i.e. arresting and prosecuting wanted persons) in NES. Criminal matters are handled by the DAANES, as the Syrian authorities present in the security squares neither have the capacity nor are allowed by the DAANES authorities to do it.

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

3. Unless the person concerned approaches the GoS authorities in the security squares, the Syrian authorities are unable to arrest persons wanted for military service. The GoS is able to check a person's security file at the passport and immigration office in Hasakah, which enables them to arrest people with outstanding issues who approach them to make enquiries. The GoS is unable to arrest persons outside this specific setting in the security squares.

GoS documents issued in NES

4. In Hasakah and Qamishli, the GoS issues the following documents: family book, ID documents, personal registration certificate, family registration certificate, birth certificate, marriage certificate and court decisions in relation to marriage and divorce. Passports are issued in Hasakah, as this is the centre of the governorate.
5. It is also possible to obtain certified copies of previously issued documents. For example, if a person has a document issued in Ras al Ain, which is currently under Turkish jurisdiction, he or she can contact the Hasakah office to obtain a certified copy of the document - for example, a marriage certificate.
6. Furthermore, it is possible to obtain court certificates pertaining to decisions validating e.g. car or home ownership, as well as educational certificates from primary school, middle school, high school and university.
7. The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) recruitment offices, which are also present in the security squares, also issue military booklets related to military service in the SAA as well as study postponement paper which is issued to students.
8. In the two cities of Amuda and Darbasiyah, which are under the DAANES authority, there are local offices of the civil status department managed by civil servants of the Syrian government. These local offices of the civil status department cannot issue electronic documents, identity cards or a printed copy of the family book because they do not have access to the online databases necessary to provide these services, and these electronic services exist only in the security squares in Al-Hasakah and Qamishli.

The procedures

9. Most GoS documents are applied for electronically in NES as in the rest of Syria, including the following documents: family registration certificate, personal registration certificate, birth certificate, marriage certificate, and all types of family related documents.
10. Only a few documents are not applied for electronically. An example of such documents are court decisions related to marriage/divorce, which are registered electronically after the marriage/divorce has taken place. Other examples are documents related to initial enquiries with the court and documents issued in connection with buying and selling of property.

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

11. The procedures for issuing documents, including requirements for photos and supporting documentation, are the same whether a person applies for the document in Damascus or in NES. The only difference may be in how long it takes to issue a document. In some places, such as Damascus, it can take 24 hours to issue a passport, while in others, such as NES, it can take 10 or 15 days.
12. However, the processing time for documents applied for electronically, such as birth certificates and marriage documents, is the same whether the applicant is in Damascus, NES or Aleppo.
13. Regarding the few documents, which are not applied for electronically, for instance marriage contracts, the processing time may depend on local conditions. For example, in Damascus, it can take 20 days to obtain such documents, while in NES it can take two months. This may be related to the fact that in the areas under the GoS' control, there is more oversight and control over issuance of documents, the work of employees responsible for issuing documents is more regularly checked and supervised by the administration, and the employees are thus more competent compared to NES.
14. Documents applied for electronically by residents of Amuda and Al Malikiye are issued in Hasakah and Qamishli. However, the residents of these cities can register their newborn child at the registry in Al-Malikiyeh and Amuda, and thereafter apply for the birth certificate electronically, which would be issued in Hasakah or Qamishli. Parents from these areas can also choose to go to Hasakah and Qamishli to register their newborn child, but it would not be necessary to travel 100 km to go to Hasakah to do the registration if they could do it in the local offices in Malikiyeh and Amuda. Registration can also be done by proxy. For example by a family member or a lawyer.

Documents issued by the DAANES in NES

15. The smallest administrative unit of the DAANES is called *Komin*. *Komin* issues an identity certificate (*Shahadat al-ta'rif* شهادة التعريف), which is used for all kinds of administrative and paperwork in the DAANES, such as applying for a driving license, applying for employment or service with DAANES armed forces, obtaining a residence permit or authentication of a house or shop rental contract etc. This document explains who the person is, and who his father and his mother is, what the purpose of obtaining the document is etc. This document is issued due to the current security situation in NES. Since there is a *Komin* in every neighbourhood, they know everything about their area. The identity certificate issued by *Komin* corresponds to the civil registration certificate issued by the GoS, and should not be confused with a security clearance.
16. The DAANES authorities also issue court documents related to marriage and divorce, driver's licenses, education certificates from primary school to university level, registration certificates for vehicles and residential real estate rental contracts, as well

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

as visitor cards (*Bitāqa al-Vafedin* بطاقة الوافدين) issued by the Assayish which allow entry and residence in NES for people from other regions.

17. The DAANES authorities also issue military booklets related to the Self-Defence Duty with HXP in NES. The booklets are issued at the recruitment offices of the DAANES armed forces.
18. Driving licenses are issued by DAANES authorities throughout all of NES. In every city in NES, there is an office, where people can take the theoretical and practical driving tests and obtain driving licenses.
19. The DAANES do not issue passports and personal ID's, and its courts do not issue decisions related to real estate ownership.
20. The DAANES authorities issue educational certificates to students from schools and universities run by the DAANES whilst the students from the GoS-run educational institutions receive their certificates from the GoS authorities. This is because the curriculum used by the GoS educational institutions is only in Arabic, whereas the curriculum used by DAANES run educational institutions in NES is in Arabic, Syriac and Kurdish. The GoS does not recognise the Kurdish or Syriac curriculum.
21. The DAANES recognises university graduates from universities that follow the curriculum of the GoS, but the GoS does not reciprocate this for graduates from universities that follow the DAANES curriculum.
22. The main difference between court documents related to marriage and divorce issued by the GoS and the DAANES is that documents of this type issued by the GoS are recognised abroad, whereas this is not the case for documents issued by the DAANES. These are only valid in NES.

Prevalence of counterfeit and forged documents in NES

23. Forging documents issued by the GoS is difficult as many documents are applied for electronically, but it is possible to pay an employee to change/manipulate personal information on a genuine document, such as a person's date of birth, or for giving the document to someone else than its owner etc. A number of factors have led to prevalence of forgery of some documents in some GoS institutions by paying bribe. These factors include the conflict that has been ongoing in the country for more than 13 years, where corruption and poverty have spread, the rampant inflation, the exponential decline in the value of the Syrian pound, and the weakening of the state's authority.
24. Forgery can also occur in documents issued by the DAANES, such as import and export licenses, driving licenses etc. This type of forged documents can only be used inside

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

NES because the documents issued by the DAANES are not recognized by the GoS and other countries.

25. It is also possible to obtain forged military booklets issued by the DAANES as well as by the GoS authorities by paying a bribe. However, the ease of doing so varies, as there are departments and employees from whom forging documents is more challenging.

Access to NES from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and freedom of movement

26. To enter NES from Iraq, Syrian citizens (Kurds as well as Arabs from NES or other areas in Syria) must present their passport or ID-card to the DAANES authorities, who conduct the identity and document verification at the border.
27. The procedure at the Iraqi border is the same for all Syrian citizens, and the DAANES authorities do not differentiate between Kurdish residents of NES and other Syrian citizens. Whilst there is no discriminatory treatment of people crossing the Iraqi border into NES, persons who enter the GoS-controlled areas from NES may be subject to discrimination at checkpoints by the GoS authorities based on their ethnicity, language and place of residence. People may be harassed at checkpoints with questions related to who they are and where they come from.
28. For example, there are a number of people in NES from Afrin who are unable to travel into other areas of Syria from NES by land. Because of this, a person from Afrin who wants to go to Aleppo has to travel by air from Qamishli to Damascus and from there travel to Aleppo. The only reason for this is that they are from Afrin.
29. In order to travel in to NES, people from areas under GoS control need to be vouched for by two residents of NES, who stand as guarantors for the person travelling in to NES.
30. Wanted draft evaders from military service with the SAA will be arrested if they attempt to fly to Damascus from Qamishli. This can happen when the person in question reaches Damascus, but also at Qamishli airport, which is controlled by the GoS authorities.
31. People from NES, who have outstanding issues with the Syrian government, will be arrested if they attempt to enter areas of Syria that are controlled by the GoS, for instance the Immigration and Pass Department in the security square in Hasakah.
32. Bribery is common in GoS-controlled areas of Syria. Syrian government employees are paid very low salaries, e.g. USD 30 per month, which is an incentive for them to accept bribes. It is also possible to obtain a security clearance and status settlement through bribery prior to travelling to Damascus or other GoS-controlled areas of Syria. However, this is not common.

33. A status settlement and a security clearance can be obtained prior to travelling into GoS-controlled areas, but can also be obtained upon detention at checkpoints. People can obtain status settlements for a number of issues, for instance if they have participated in a demonstration against the GoS, and they are covered by amnesties. However, it is difficult to obtain a status settlement or security clearance if a person has a security issue with the GoS.

WhatsApp-meeting with Mahmoud Omar, lawyer based in Qamishli, Northeast Syria (NES), 16. April 2024

GoS documents issued in NES

1. GoS authorities in NES continues to issue documents such as passports, ID cards, and legal documents. These documents are issued by GoS offices in the security squares in the cities of Qamishli and Hasakah (the provincial capital).
2. There are also GoS civil registration offices and courts issuing documents in other cities such as Al-Malikiyah (Derik), Qahtaniyah, Amuda and Al-Darbasiyah. However, Ras al-Ayn is an exception, as it is under Turkish control.
3. Passports are applied for electronically and are issued in Hasakah. According to Syrian law, Syrian passports must be issued in the respective province's main city, which is why passports are only issued in Hasakah.
4. The military recruitment units in the security squares in Qamishli and Hasakah, issues military booklets in connection with military service in the SAA.
5. All documents from the civil registration offices are applied for electronically.

The procedures

6. The procedure for issuing documents (passports, ID cards, and military books) is the same in NES and the rest of Syria. Passport issuance is regulated under the same law and the issuance procedure is uniform and applies to everyone anywhere in Syria. However, there may be differences in processing time, as the processing time may be shorter in Damascus, where they have more resources compared to, for example, Hasakah.

Documents issued by the DAANES in NES

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

7. The DAANES issues the following documents: family registration, Self-Defence Duty military booklet. The DAANES issues documents based on Sharia courts unless one enters a civil marriage, in which case the local municipality will issue the marriage document.
8. Family documents issued by the DAANES are valid only in the DAANES controlled areas. However, these documents can be used for, crossing the border into the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI).
9. The DAANES also issues driving licenses and educational certificates from the educational institutions under the DAANES, from the primary school level up to University.
10. In the DAANES, the smallest administrative unit, known as the Komeen, issues a type of ID certificate referred to as 'shahadat altareef' in Arabic or 'Nasname' in Kurdish. Although not an official ID document, this certificate serves to confirm an individual's identity and grant permission for activities such as property purchases.

Prevalence of counterfeit and forged documents in NES

11. Forged and counterfeit documents are prevalent in both the areas controlled by DAANES and elsewhere in Syria.

Access to NES from Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and freedom of movement

12. Individuals wanted by the GoS, including those wanted for missing military service, cannot leave NES and travel to other parts of Syria without risking detention or arrest at GoS checkpoints. If a person wanted for military service is apprehended by the GoS authorities, they will send him directly to military service.
13. In the security squares in Hasakah and Qamishli, arrest of wanted persons only happens if the individual actively approaches GoS offices present in the area with access to databases of those with outstanding issues.
14. Wanted individuals in the DAANES-controlled area who wish to leave Syria often seek to travel through the Semalka border crossing (معبر سيمالكا) to the Kurdish areas in Iraq (KRI). The Semalka border is controlled by the DAANES. At this border, it is sufficient to present an ID card unless you are from Europe, in which case a passport will be required.
15. The Semalka border crossing, acting as an internal border between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and NES, is not internationally recognized. Consequently, it operates without the same regulations for controlling individuals and their documents. For Syrian citizens traveling from the KRI to NES, Semalka is the sole route allowing entry to Syria without requirement of presenting a passport

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

16. The KRI has implemented an online platform for entry approval. Individuals seeking entry must receive approval through this platform, with information shared with the DAANES authorities for their approval as well.
17. The number of checkpoints operated by the DAANES in NES has decreased as the threat from ISIS has diminished. Usually, these checkpoints are positioned at the entry and exit points of cities.
18. People from Afrin are only able to leave NES via the airport in Qamishli.

Meeting with owner of a travel agency in Erbil, 28.04.2024

The source is the owner of a travel agency, which offers comprehensive assistance to Syrian nationals in relation to obtaining visas, sponsorships, work permits, family reunification and travelling to and from Syria.

Traveling from Syria to Iraq (KRI) via international airports

1. Any Syrian - Kurd or Arab - intending to undertake international air travel from Syria must possess a passport, which is valid for a period of at least six months.
2. Passports used to travel between Syria and KRI are stamped on both sides of the border.
3. Young men seeking to leave Syria prior to completing their military service in the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) must provide documented justification for the deferment of military service, such as ongoing educational pursuits. Students should submit a passport and documentation for the deferment of service in order to obtain a visa to KRI.
4. Families travelling together are more likely to get a visa compared to those who travel alone.
5. Minors (i.e. persons below the age of 18) are ineligible to apply for visas without their parents' presence and consent. A minor must be accompanied by at least one parent, with the additional requirement of consent from the parent who is not travelling with the minor.
6. Individuals with outstanding legal issues in Syria are disqualified from obtaining a Syrian passport inside Syria.

Obtaining passport as a Syrian living outside Syria

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

7. Syrians residing abroad can obtain passports through Syrian diplomatic representations irrespective of their legal status within Syria. Even Syrian citizens wanted for serious crimes are able to obtain passports from Syrian diplomatic representations.
8. Individuals yet to fulfill their military service obligations may obtain passports valid for two years within Syria, while those residing outside Syria who have outstanding legal issues are able to obtain passports with a validity period of two and half years.
9. Minors (under military service age) and individuals having completed their military service are eligible for passports that are valid for six years.
10. Syrians abroad can use an online platform pertaining to the Syrian Embassy in the Kingdom of Oman to apply for renewal of their passport. The platform is used for data submission and video verification, as well as submission of the applicants' signature and fingerprint.
11. Passports issued to Syrians abroad will include an stamp (*Kharij I-qotor*) on the final page to signify that the applicant is outside of Syria, and that the passport has been issued to a proxy. Syrians in Syria do not get this stamp in their passport.
12. If a passport is issued to a close relative or legal representative, this will be recorded on the final page of the passport.

Unofficial border crossing between KRI and NES

13. The Semalka (also known as Faysh Khabur) border crossing between the KRI and NES is an unofficial border, and it is therefore not necessary to have a passport when crossing.
14. NES residents, who want to travel to the KRI, are mandated to obtain an exit permit issued by DAANES before leaving NES. This is easier for families than young men for whom it can be difficult to exit NES.
15. Additionally, a travel permit issued by the KRG authorities is required for this border crossing and can be applied for through an online portal. The likelihood of receiving a KRG travel permit is increased if the applicant submits multiple documents confirming their identity and reason for travel to KRI.
16. Passage across the border is seldom sanctioned for young men. Exceptions are typically granted to families, who need urgent medical treatment or in cases of family reunification.

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

17. Eligibility to apply for a travel permit to cross the Semalka border is restricted to residents of Raqqa, Hasakah, and Deir ez Zour governorates.
18. The application for travel permits for travelling to KRI from NES is to be submitted in person at an immigration office situated in Qamishli. There is no online platform for this type of applications.
19. Individuals from NES, who want to leave NES, are required to designate a sponsor or guarantor within NES, who assumes financial liability in the event of non-return. The sponsor may face imprisonment if the individual in question fails to return. Sponsor registration is mandatory through the Qamishli immigration office, with the exception of young brides departing permanently for family reunification in Europe.
20. The traveler's luggage is registered on the border, and the authorities scan the person's document and take their photo. This is followed by transportation via bus to the opposite side. The transfer by bus costs around 10 USD
21. Upon crossing into the KRI, travelers undergo security screening and are informed of the maximum permissible stay of one month, which is extendable to two months upon payment of a fee. People wanting to stay longer are required to apply for a residence permit.
22. Presentation of a "cross permit" suffices for individuals utilizing this border crossing, rendering a passport unnecessary. This is a two-page booklet which contains the traveler's personal information and a photo of the individual as well as the authorized duration of stay in KRI.
23. Upon returning from NES via the same border crossing, individuals must present the same documentation that was presented upon departure. Additionally, nominal fees are levied by both border sides. Passport stamping is omitted for those presenting passports.
24. Previously, it was possible to apply for a residence permit in KRI after crossing this border. However, since the beginning of April 2024, this is no longer possible and there are substantial fines imposed on individuals who do not return to NES. The only exception to this is newlywed brides that are able to remain in KRI until they leave KRI for family unification in Europe.
25. Non-returning individuals or their sponsors from NES face a fine of almost USD 2000 imposed by the DAANES authorities. Such non-returning individuals are also imposed a daily fine of approximately USD 15 by the KRG authorities for each day their stay in KRI has exceeded the permitted duration of their legal stay in KRI. .

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

26. Many people crossed the Semalka border in the period 2012 – 2019 due to the active fighting in the NES region. People crossing into KRI were received by the KRG authorities and accommodated in camps. Since then, as the fighting has diminished, stringent control measures have been introduced and the prices for irregular crossings have also increased.
27. The border is operational for crossings three to four days weekly. Observations made prior to the recent decision to temporarily suspend visa issuance for Syrians indicated approximately 400-500 individuals crossing on each side. Despite increased applications for exit permits following the decision, actual departures have not seen a proportional rise. The authorities on the NES side are not giving people permission to travel.
28. The decision regarding visa limitation was passed in April 2024.
29. Syrian nationals holding foreign citizenships or residence permits intending to enter NES via the Semalka border must present documents that demonstrates familial ties or other connections to the region at the border checkpoint. Syrians coming from Europe can meet their families in KRI or Lebanon instead of entering Syria. Lebanon is technically still the primary country of transit used by Syrians, as there are more Syrian Arabs than Kurds.
30. The Semalka border is the safest way to travel to and from NES.

Flight routes to Syria

31. Prior to the decision to suspend visa issuance for Syrians earlier this year, daily flights operated between Erbil and Damascus. Two daily flights were scheduled for this route, serviced by three airlines: FlyErbil, FlyBaghdad and Cham Wings. The Aleppo airport was also active.
32. Despite most travelers purchasing round-trip tickets for these routes, the return flights to Syria were often empty.
33. Starting from 2020, Cham Wings enforced the requirement for travelers to buy round-trip tickets, leading to an average ticket price of approximately USD 500. Subsequently, with the introduction of FlyBaghdad and FlyErbil offering the same routes, the cost of one-way tickets decreased to the range of USD 200-250.
34. Presently, following the implementation of the visa suspension, only two weekly flights operate between Damascus and Erbil.

Access of persons from Afrin to GoS-controlled areas

35. Presently, individuals hailing from Afrin find themselves navigating a complex socio-political landscape. Former residents of Afrin now inhabit IDP camps, while those who remain in Afrin are primarily Kurdish individuals subject to Turkish influence and governance under the Free Syrian Army (FSA).
36. At the same time, individuals originating from Afrin face categorical exclusion from accessing GoS-controlled territories solely based on the fact that they are from Afrin.

Freedom of movement within Syria

37. The highway linking Latakia to Damascus remains open and lots of buses travel on this road transporting civilians on a daily basis.
38. Individuals from NES continue to journey to GoS –controlled areas via Qamishli airport. Notably, those with no outstanding issues opt for such travel to access essential services like medical treatment or education. Individuals with outstanding issues, e.g. failed military service or previous opposition activities, usually refrain from travelling to GoS-controlled areas fearing possible arrest and prosecution by GoS authorities.
39. Qamishli airport facilitates travel to Damascus with three airlines operating one weekly flight each. Notably, the aircraft utilized for these flights are primarily military planes. There are no flights to Aleppo, but there is weekly flight to Qamishli from Lebanon.
40. An alternative mode of travelling between NES and GoS-controlled areas is bus transportation. Albeit characterized by prolonged travel durations and uncertainty, busses are often preferred by poor people due to their low price. The bus journey, lasting approximately 15 hours includes passing numerous checkpoints along the route. Despite the challenges, daily bus services facilitate movement between different regions.

Forged and counterfeit documents

41. Despite many years of conflict in Syria, the authorities maintain control over the issuance of documents.
42. Instances of counterfeit and forged ID cards are more prevalent compared to passports, owing to the heightened difficulty associated with tampering with passport authentication features.

SYRIA – DOCUMENTS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (NES)

43. Even if an individual manages to obtain a forged Syrian document, such documents are not properly registered within the national registry, and they would therefore not be able to use them in Syria.
44. Syrian representations abroad enforce stringent authentication protocols, necessitating the presentation of a comprehensive array of authenticated documents, including but not limited to family books, ID cards and passports, for identity verification purposes.
45. Authentication of Syrian documents mandates endorsement from both the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Embassy personnel are adeptly trained in the technical scrutiny of documents and possess the capability to verify document authenticity through barcode inspection using their dedicated registry.
46. The issuance of a power of attorney empowers an individual to act on behalf of the applicant, thereby qualifying them to receive a passport in the applicant's stead.

Meeting with Wladimir van Wilgenburg, journalist, Erbil, 30. April 2024

Leaving NES

1. The destruction of infrastructure in NES by Turkey has had direct impact on the economy of NES, and the employment rate is very low. Kobane is economically isolated because of Turkey taking control of Tal Abyad/Serekaniye. It is difficult to reach there, the road is long from the border and people need to go from Hasakah to Raqqa and then to Kobane.
2. An increasing number of people are leaving NES due to deteriorating economic situation, which is also related to the inflation of the Syrian Pound and the lack of employment opportunities. The future of NES remains highly uncertain, and there is considerable dissatisfaction among residents with the region's poorly maintained educational system.
3. People leaving NES irregularly are usually smuggled through Turkish-controlled areas into Turkey, and subsequently to Europe. People using this route run the risk of being detained by the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army militias (SNA). Previously the main route was via the KRI to Turkey.

WhatsApp meeting with Fanar Al-Kait and Khaled Ibrahim, Department of Foreign Relations of the DAANES, Qamishli, April 28, 2024

Organization of Security Squares

1. Security squares are isolated pockets in Hasakah and Qamishli. In Qamishli, the security square covers about one square kilometer. The GoS cannot operate outside the security squares, and checkpoints of the SDF will stop GoS forces if they attempt to pass with forcibly recruited individuals.
2. The security square in Hasakah is slightly larger than the one in Qamishli, as Hasakah is the provincial capital and houses many GoS offices.
3. The security square is literally the meaning of these places, as they are the limited areas where GoS forces are present.
4. Generally, people do not visit the security square in Qamishli, which is surrounded by SDF checkpoints.

Documents issued in NES

5. The DAANES issues driving licenses, educational certificates and family books in areas under its control.
6. Property documents, residency permits, national passports and central identity documents, including identity cards, are issued by GoS departments in Hasakah.
7. The identification certificate (*Shadat al-Taarif* in Arabic or *Nasnameh* in Kurdish) is an identity document issued by the Komeen of the councils (districts, towns, and cities) in NES under the control of the DAANES. This certificate confirms the person's identity and residence (address). It is used, for example, when people apply for jobs and fuel requests. The identification certificate is not issued according to a standardized layout. This document is also issued to Ajanibs and Maktoumeen, who cannot obtain central identity documents issued by the Syrian government.
8. The Komeen system operates parallel to the mukhtar system in areas under GoS control.
9. Forgery exists in both NES and areas controlled by the GoS. However, the DAANES keeps records of issued documents, and procedures for verifying and authenticating documents are in place.

WhatsApp meeting with a Syrian human rights organisation, 22 April 2024

The source has been monitoring and documenting violations (e.g. killings, abductions, torture etc.) against civilians conducted by different parties of the Syrian conflict since 2011. It has a well-established network of sources throughout Syria.

Leaving and entering NES

1. There are smuggling routes between all areas controlled by different groups in Syria. People living in the DAANES-controlled areas or other areas in Syria who want to enter areas controlled by other groups can be smuggled through these routes and avoid checkpoints. They can even pass the checkpoints without being caught by bribing the personnel.
2. Bribery at checkpoints is widespread in all areas of Syria. A person, who lives in the DAANES-controlled areas and wants to go to Damascus, can pass all checkpoints even if he is wanted by the Syrian authorities, simply by bribing the personnel at all checkpoints. Usually, the drivers accompanying the wanted persons know the personnel at these checkpoints and bribe them in advance. SOHR is aware of cases of persons who have managed to travel from NES to Damascus several times despite being wanted by the Syrian authorities.

Meeting with the representation of the DAANES in Suleimaniyah, 29. April 2024

Documentation

1. Completion, discharge and exemption are registered in the Self-Defence Duty booklet, which documents the person's status regarding the Self-Defence Duty. The booklet is issued by the DAANES Ministry of Defence and stamped by the DAANES Ministry of Interior.
2. The SDF conducts an identity verification in connection with recruitment as well as a background check through Komeen. People who apply to join SDF have to present their national ID-card, family documents and a Shahadet al-Tariff/Nasnameh issued by the local Komeen.

Security squares

3. The security squares in Hasakah and Qamishli are called security squares because of the enclaves, which are shaped as squares by the streets surrounding them.

WhatsApp meeting with a Syrian Kurdish expert based in Europe, 30. April 2024

The source works with Syria's humanitarian and stabilization programming for years and visits NES frequently.

Prevalence of forged documents

1. Obtaining forged or counterfeit documents in NES is not easy, but not impossible. It is easier to obtain forged or counterfeit documents in areas under GoS control. Bribery and corruption is more prevalent in GoS-controlled areas.
2. Both forged documents and genuine documents issued using incorrect information are available. Young men use forged university education documents to delay their Self-Defence Duty.

WhatsApp meeting with a former Mandatory Self-Defence Duty conscript residing in Malikiyah (Derek), Syria, 1 May 2024

The source is a 22 years old previous Self-Defence Duty conscript, who was discharged from the service in October 2023. He is from the city of Malikiya (Derek) and still lives there. He conducted his duty in the city of Hasakah.

Documentation of the service

1. On the first day after completing his service, the source was issued a small ID card called *Bara'at al-zamma*, which contains the name of the source, his picture, dates of his service and the signature and stamp of the military authority. This card documents that the holder has completed his Self-Defence Duty, and he can use the card when passing checkpoints. Six months after completing his service, the source has not obtained his military booklet yet. This is, according to the source, due to the large number of conscripts, who are to be issued their Self-Defence Duty booklets.

WhatsApp meeting with Zydan Asî, Joint Chairman of the Defense Authority for North and East Syria, the Defence Department of the DAANES, 2 May 2024

Bera ez zimma

1. Upon completing the Self-Defence Duty and while individuals are waiting for their Self-Defence Duty booklets to be sent to them, they are issued a document called "*Bera ez zimma*". It is a temporary discharge document signifying that the holder of the

document has returned their weapons, uniform and other belongings. It can be presented at various checkpoints for inspection and used for travel. However, this document is temporary and must subsequently be replaced with a military booklet.

Annex 3: Terms of Reference

1. Issuance of Syrian and Kurdish documents in NES
 - 1.1. Issuance of Syrian documents, including IDs, passport, family booklet, marriage certificates
 - 1.2. Issuance of documents by the DAANES, including military booklet, civil documents etc.
2. Freedom of movement
 - 2.1. Extent of freedom of movement for wanted persons
3. Access to NES
 - 3.1. Access to NES from the KRI
 - 3.2. Possibility for NES residents to leave Syria via GoS-controlled areas