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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology.¹ The report is based on approved minutes from phone interviews and email correspondence with carefully selected sources. Statements from sources are used in the report and all statements are referenced.

This report is not, and does not purport to be a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed in the report and should be weighed against other available country of origin information on consequences of illegal exit, consequences of leaving a civil servant position without notice and the situation of Kurds in Damascus.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations or analysis. The information in the report 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.

¹ European Union: European Asylum Support Office (EASO), EASO Country of Origin Information report methodology, June 2019. https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2019_EASO_COI_Report_Methodology.pdf [accessed 15 June 2019]

Introduction and methodology

The brief report at hand focuses on three specific issues; consequences of Illegal exit, leaving a civil servant position without notice, and the situation of Kurds in Damascus city.

The report is based on skype meetings, telephone interviews and written email correspondences with well-informed sources in the UK, France, Beirut and Damascus.

The sources were asked how reference might be made to them in the report. All sources are referenced in the report according to their own request. The sources consulted were informed about the purpose of the research and that their statements would be included in a public report. The minutes from the phone and Skype interviews with the sources were forwarded to them for approval, giving them a chance to amend, comment or correct their statements. All sources approved their statements.

The report is a synthesis of the sources' statements and does thus not include all details and nuances of each statement. In the report, care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The statements of all sources are found in their full extent in Appendix 1 of this report.

For the sake of reader-friendliness, transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the meeting minutes in Appendix 1 have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes. The intention hereby is to make it easier to find the exact place of a statement in the meeting minutes.

As of 30 April 2019 UNHCR estimated that 166.813 Syrians had returned to Syria in the period between 2016 and 30. April 2019 in self-organized refugee returns.² However, information on returnees that have returned to Syria is scarce³ as returns to Syria are not monitored by the UNHCR.⁴

This report merely focuses on the three aforementioned issues i.e. consequences of illegal exit, leaving a civil servant position without notice, and the situation of Kurds in Damascus city. It is therefore outside the scope of this current report to cover all possible outcomes of return to Syria regarding treatment of returnees by the Syrian authorities.⁵

² UNHCR Operational Portal https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria_durable_solutions

³ European Institute of Peace (EIP); *Refugee Return in Syria: Dangers, Security risks and information scarcity*, May 2019 <https://www.fln.dk/~media/FLN/Materiale/Baggrundsmateriale/2019/06/19/07/16/syri1040.ashx> pp. 24

⁴ UNHCR: Global Focus Operations worldwide, Syrian Arab Republic; The Danish Immigration Service and Danish Refugee Council, *Syria: Security Situation in Damascus Province and Issues Regarding Return to Syria*, February 2019 <https://www.altinget.dk/misc/Syrien%20-%20rapport.pdf> pp. 4, 21

⁵ For further information regarding return to Syria, see the Danish Immigrations Service's fact finding report; *Syria, Security situation in Damascus Province and issues regarding return to Syria*, February 2019 https://www.google.dk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewj_kO6UrvXiAhUIUcAKHbqaAccQFjAAegQIABAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.altinget.dk%2Fmisc%2FSyrien%2520-%2520rapport.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0fafiubtmy0mPj678tC1KN. For concerns regarding return to Syria, see the report by the European

Finally, attention should be called to the changeable and unstable situation in Syria and the fact that the information provided may quickly become outdated. Therefore, the issues addressed in this report should be monitored periodically and be brought up to date accordingly.

The research and editing of this note was finalised on 20 June 2019.

Abbreviations

COI	Country of Origin Information
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
PYD	The Democratic Union Party or PYD (Kurdish: <i>Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat</i>)
SOHR	The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. Consequences of illegal exit from Syria

In August 2018 the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates announced in a circular that people who had left Syria illegally during the Syrian war would not face any issue with the Syrian authorities as a consequence of their illegal exit.⁶ Previously, illegal exit from Syria, i.e. without a valid passport/ID card or without the required travel authorization or through an unauthorized departure point, was in principle subject to imprisonment and/or fines based on the applicable law (Law No. 18 of 2014).⁷

According to General Naji Numeir, Chief of Immigration and Passports Department, whom the Danish Immigration Service interviewed in November 2018, the procedure for return of refugees to Syria is as follows: Syrians who wish to return back to Syria will have to apply for reconciliation in at the nearest Syrian representation, i.e. embassy or consulate, in the foreign country in which they are residing.⁸ At the embassy, the applicant is, among others, asked to inform the authorities about the reason why and how he or she left Syria, what the person has done during his stay in the host country and what his or her source of income has been. The embassy will then send the information about the applicant to the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The ministry will conduct security checks of the applicants and also verify their identities as Syrian nationals.⁹

On 26 March 2019 the Syrian Ministry of Interior issued circular No. 342 stipulating that unit leaders and heads of border posts are requested to abide by good reception of those citizens, who exited Syria illegally and now wish to return to Syria. The circular No. 342 also stipulates that the administrative procedure previously declared on this issue has been annulled.¹⁰

In an article in Sinmar News dated 7 May 2019, General Naji Numeir explained circular No.342, He said that returnees who enter Syria from the land borders will have to apply for reconciliation by filling in an application form at the border; however, they are not required to review a security branch upon return

⁶ Syrian Arab Republic, تسوية وضع, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates

<http://www.mofa.gov.sy/ar/pages897/%D8%AA%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%B9>. Al Alam TV, سفارة سوريا بيرلين تدعو السوريين في ألمانيا لمر احبتها <https://www.alalamtv.net/news/3712101/%D8%B3%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%88-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B9%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7>

⁷ The Danish Immigration Service and Danish Refugee Council, SYRIA: *Recruitment Practices in Government-controlled Areas and in Areas under Opposition Control, Involvement of Public Servants and Civilians in the Armed Conflict and Issues Related to Exiting Syria*, July 2017 <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/almde/UUU/bilag/230/1780523.pdf>

⁸ At the official website of the Syrian embassy in Sweden, that provides consular services for Syrians in the Scandinavian countries, it is announced, in Arabic, that Syrian citizens, who have exited illegally and want to return to Syria, have to book an appointment through the website and must hand in an application for reconciliation. The service fee for this application is 458 Swedish Kroner; Syrian Embassy in Sweden, <http://www.syrianembassy.se/>

⁹ The Danish Immigration Service and Danish Refugee Council, *Syria: Security Situation in Damascus Province and Issues Regarding Return to Syria*, February 2019, http://evida.inkit.local/EvidaDocuments/Syrien_FFM_rapport_2019_Final_31012019.pdf pp.20

¹⁰ Al-Akhabar, 26 March 2019 <https://alkhabar-sy.com/%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B5-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B0/> [accessed 19 June 2019];

Rai Al-Youm 20 March 2019

<https://www.raialyoum.com/index.php/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%A3%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7/> [accessed 19 June 2019]

anymore as this administrative procedure has been cancelled. General Numeir further stated that the land border authorities have lists of names of returnees, who have made reconciliation deals prior to their arrival. The border authorities will issue civil registration documents and family certifications for those returnees who have lost any of their identity documents upon fleeing Syria. The border authorities will identify Syrian nationals without documents by using a database that is connected to the database of the civil registry.¹¹

1.1. *Implementation of the circulars regarding illegal exit*

The circulars waiving the punishment for illegal exit are being practically implemented, and the consulted sources did not know of cases where people have been punished or faced problems with the Syrian government upon return solely because of illegal exit.¹² People, who have faced problems with the authorities upon return, are people who have other security related issues with the government.¹³ By legalizing, their status at a Syrian representation abroad prior to return to Syria, persons who have left Syria illegally can return without facing any problem.^{14 15}

2. Consequences of leaving a civil servant position without notice

According to the Syrian Civil Servant Labour Law No. 50 of 2004, a civil servant who leaves his or her work without justifiable permission and does not resume the work within 15 days, is deemed to be resigned and accused of committing the crime of leaving work. The penalty for leaving work is a fine, equivalent to a monthly salary with a full year salary (as compensation), and three to five years imprisonment. If a civil servant puts him-/herself at the disposal of the respective ministry within three month from the date of the court verdict, the prison sentence against him or her will be dropped and he/she will be allowed to resume the work if the respective ministry of work agrees.¹⁶

2.1. *Implementation of penalties for leaving low/middle level civil position*

According to, Rami Abdul Rahman (SOHR) the articles of the Civil Labour Law that criminalise leaving one's public position without notice or justifiable reason have been implemented in many cases within the last year, even in cases of low/middle level civil servants. More precisely, the law is being enforced in cases where the person in charge in the respective ministry/administration has wanted the employee, who has left his work without permission, be punished. In the past year, the number of returned Syrians, who have

¹¹ Sinmar News "خاص حوار" في الاخباري سورية سنمار لموقع يتحدث والجوازات الهجرة إدارة مدير النمير تركي ناجي اللواء 7 May 2019, <https://sinmarnews.com/article/start/?p=56104> [assessed 19 June 2019]

¹² A Damascus-based lawyer: 1; Rami Abdurrahman (SOHR): 5

¹³ Rami Abdurrahman (SOHR): 5

¹⁴ A Damascus-based lawyer: 1; Rami Abdurrahman (SOHR): 5

¹⁵ For more information on legalizing one's status at a Syrian representation, see The Danish Immigration Service and Danish Refugee Council, *Syria: Security Situation in Damascus Province and Issues Regarding Return to Syria*, February 2019, http://evida.inkit.local/EvidaDocuments/Syrien_FFM_rapport_2019_Final_31012019.pdf pp. 19.

¹⁶ Civil Servant Labor Law No. 50 of 2004 (in Arabic), نظام العاملين الأساسي في الدولة 2004 لعام رقم 50 القانون <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/laws/Law/2004/50.htm> [assessed 19 June 2019];

Elan, السوري القانون في العمل ترك جرم, 2017, <http://www.elan.gov.sy/2017/site/arabic/index.php?node=559&cat=929&> [Assessed 19 June 2019]

been sued by the authority of their work because of leaving work without notice, has increased. In some of the cases, the prison sentenced has been issued.¹⁷

According to a Damascus-based lawyer, the implementation of punishment for having left one's position depends on the reason for leaving the work. In practice, a civil servant who has left his work place without notice due to the war will not face punishment. The source did not know of any case within the last year of low/middle level public employees, who have been given sentences of imprisonment upon return to Syria solely because of leaving their work without notice. The employee will, however, lose his or her job for having left without notice.¹⁸

The Damascus-based lawyer added that there had been cases of civil servants being punished by imprisonment because of violating other Syrian laws. A person, who has left his or her work without notice and is employed in other places inside Syria, will also be fired and punished.¹⁹

The newspaper Al Watan reported on 7 February 2018, that the number of cases of civil servants who had left their work without notice was increasing in the appeals court. In Damascus, there were about 500 cases in the appeal court where sentences for having left one's work without notice had been issued. The reason behind the increase in appeal cases was mentioned to be the fact that many civil servants, who were released from besieged areas, were able to appeal the court sentences. The head of the Sixth Offense Appeal in Damascus said that the extent of punishment in cases where civil servants had left work without permission, depended on the reasons for this. Civil servants who had not attended their work because they were besieged in their area, would be able to have their sentences reverted.²⁰

3. The situation of Kurds in Damascus City

3.1. *The Kurdish population in Damascus*

Kurds living in Damascus City can be divided into two groups:

The first group are Kurds residing in Rukn al-Din (ركن الدين) and Barza (برزة) neighbourhoods of Damascus. They have lived in Damascus for a long time (at least three generations), and they are well-integrated into the city. Most of these Kurds are Syrian nationals.²¹

The second group are Kurds, who are mostly concentrated in poor informal settlements in for instance Wadi al-Mashari (وادي المشاري) neighbourhood.²² They have emigrated to Damascus City due to the last drought (2005-2010) and lack of job opportunity in Al-Hassakah or because of the tense relationship between the Kurdish population and the authorities in the Kurdish areas during the 2000s.²³ Most of these Kurds are stateless and do not have ID or other documents to which Syrian nationals are entitled.²⁴ Kurds

¹⁷ Rami Abdurrahman (SOHR): 4

¹⁸ A Damascus-based lawyer: 2

¹⁹ A Damascus-based lawyer: 3

²⁰ Al Watan, 7 February 2018 <http://alwatan.sy/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/28318.pdf> [assessed 19 June 2019]

²¹ Fabrice Balanche: 6-8; An international regionally-based humanitarian organisation operating in Syria: 14-16

²² Fabrice Balanche: 6-8; An international regionally-based humanitarian organisation operating in Syria: 14-16

²³ Fabrice Balanche: 8

²⁴ An international regionally-based humanitarian organisation operating in Syria: 16

living in Wadi al-Mashari are monitored by the Syrian authorities as they are suspected of being affiliated to the PYD.²⁵

3.2. *Prevalence of violence particularly targeting Kurds living in Damascus City*

There have been no security incidents in Damascus City in recent years particularly targeting the Kurdish population.²⁶

3.3. *Access to services, housing and labour market*

The Kurds living in Damascus are not denied access to services (water, electricity, sanitation, school, health care) provided by the authorities due to their Kurdish background²⁷ as access to services and housing in Damascus City depends on where in the city people live, rather than on their ethnic background.²⁸ The quality of services in informal settlements such as those in Wadi al-Mashari is generally poor, which affects people living in these areas, including Kurds.²⁹

Kurds living in Damascus are employed within different sectors. However, there are public positions which are restricted for Kurds, for instance positions within Air Force. Stateless Kurds cannot occupy public jobs and because of their generally poor educational background, they are often employed as unskilled labour (e.g. driver, waiter, manual worker etc.).³⁰ Fabrice Balanche mentioned that the number of Kurds employed in public positions is generally lower than other groups.³¹

According to Fabrice Balanche, many Kurds living in the informal settlements are employed in the construction sector, while others work as mechanics or have jobs related to cars. Among middle-class Kurds in Damascus City, one finds shopkeepers selling different types of goods, e.g. grocers.³²

Balanche added that in general, if you are Alawite and use good connections (Arabic: *Wasta*), your chance of being employed in public positions is much higher than other groups such as Christians, Sunni Arabs or Kurds. In addition, persons from these groups who want to be employed in the public sector may be approached by the security services asking them to work as informants in their communities in order to be able to occupy public positions.³³

3.4. *Prevalence of discrimination, including social discrimination, against Kurds in Damascus City*

There is no discrimination, including social discrimination, in Damascus City particularly targeting the Kurdish population in the city:

According to Fabrice Balanche, in Damascus City, there is a general discriminatory attitude towards people from the rural areas in Syria. The Kurds from the rural areas, who have a poor educational background and do not speak Arabic well, may, thus, encounter such attitude in their daily life among the urban

²⁵ Fabrice Balanche: 8

²⁶ Fabrice Balanche: 9; An international regionally-based humanitarian organisation operating in Syria: 17

²⁷ Fabrice Balanche: 10; An international regionally-based humanitarian organisation operating in Syria: 18

²⁸ Fabrice Balanche: 10

²⁹ Fabrice Balanche: 10; An international regionally-based humanitarian organisation operating in Syria: 18

³⁰ An international regionally-based humanitarian organisation operating in Syria: 19

³¹ Fabrice Balanche: 11

³² Fabrice Balanche: 11

³³ Fabrice Balanche: 12

Damascenes as well as the authorities. This may for instance manifest itself in an unfriendly attitude or in an authority delaying the provision of a service (e.g. issuing a document). However, the source underlined that this problem does not exist to such an extent that the daily life is unbearable for Kurds in Damascus City, and that many Kurds live and support their families in Damascus City.³⁴

An international regionally-based humanitarian organisation operating in Syria advised that there is no social discrimination from the Arab population against the Kurds living in Damascus City, and the Kurds usually do not encounter discriminator attitude in their daily life in the city. However, the source underlined that as the Syrian Kurds are denied the right to practice their culture and some of them do not have Syrian citizenship, there is always a feeling of being a second-class citizen and not being welcomed.³⁵

³⁴ Fabrice Balanche: 13

³⁵ An international regionally-based humanitarian organisation operating in Syria: 20

Consulted sources

Oral sources

- A Damascus-based lawyer
- An international regionally-based humanitarian organisation
- Rami Abdurrahman (Ossama Suleiman), Founder & Director of Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR)
- Fabrice Balanche, University of Lyon 2

Written sources

The Danish Immigration Service and Danish Refugee Council, SYRIA: *Recruitment Practices in Government-controlled Areas and in Areas under Opposition Control, Involvement of Public Servants and Civilians in the Armed Conflict and Issues Related to Exiting Syria*, July 2017

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Rai Al-Youm 20 March 2019

<https://www.raialyoum.com/index.php/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%A3%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7/> [accessed 19 June 2019]

Sinmar Nnew.com "خاص حوار" في الاخباري سورية سنمار لموقع يتحدث والجوازات الهجرة إدارة مدير النمير تركي ناجي اللواء , 7 May 2019, <https://sinmarnews.com/article/start?p=56104> [assessed 19 June 2019]

SYRIA, CONSEQUENCES OF ILLEGAL EXIT, CONSEQUENCES OF LEAVING A CIVIL SERVANT POSITION WITHOUT NOTICE AND THE SITUATION OF KURDS IN DAMASCUS

Civil Servant Labor Law No. 50 of 2004 (in Arabic), القانون رقم 50 لعام 2004 نظام العاملين الأساسي في الدولة, <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/laws/Law/2004/50.htm> [assessed 19 June 2019]; Elan, القانون في العمل ترك جرم, السوري, 2017, <http://www.elan.gov.sy/2017/site/arabic/index.php?node=559&cat=929&> [Assessed 19 June 2019]

Al Watan, 7 February 2018 <http://alwatan.sy/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/28318.pdf> [assessed 19 June 2019]

Appendix 1: Minutes

Email correspondence with a Damascus-based lawyer, 14 - 19 June 2019

Consequences of illegal exit from Syria

1. Circulars about waiving of punishment for illegal exit are being practically implemented. The lawyer has not received information of cases where persons have been punished upon return solely because of their illegal exit. Syrian citizens, who have left Syria illegally during the war and now wants to return to Syria from abroad, should prior to their return visit the nearest Syrian representation abroad where they can provide proof of their residency and inform the authorities about their status. The source underlined that if a returnee is wanted for crimes other than illegal exit, he will be prosecuted according to the law.

Consequences of leaving civil positions without notice

2. The extent to which the law regarding punishment for leaving one's civil position is implemented depends on the reason for having left one's position. In practice, a civil servant who has left work due to the war will not face punishment, and the source does not know of cases within the last year of low/middle level public employees, who have been given sentences of imprisonment upon returning to Syria solely because of leaving work without notice. The person will, however, lose his or her job for leaving it without notice. There have been cases of civil servants being punished by imprisonment because of violating other Syrian laws.
3. A person, who has left his or her work without notice and is employed in other places inside Syria, will be fired and punished.

Phone interview with Rami Abdurrahman (Ossama Suleiman), Founder & Director of Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 14 June 2019

Consequences of leaving civil positions without notice

4. In many cases, the laws regarding consequences for leaving a low/middle level public work without notice or justifiable reason are being implemented. More precisely, the law is being enforced in cases where the person in charge in the concerned authority decides to sue the public employee who left work without permission. So it depends on whether the person in charge in the concerned authority/administration wishes that the public employee get punished. In the past year, the number of returned Syrians, who have been sued by the authority of their work because of leaving work without notice, has increased. In some of the cases where the employees have been accused of the crime of leaving work, sentences of imprisonment have also been given.

Consequences of illegal exit from Syria

5. The circulars that stipulate that illegal exit from Syria during the war is no longer considered a crime, are practically being implemented. People who exited Syria illegally during the war do not face any punishment or problem upon return solely because of their illegal exit. Many of the people who have returned back to the country had exited illegally during the war. After they apply to legalise their status at any Syrian embassy, they can return without facing any problem. People, who have faced problems with the authorities upon return, have been people who have other security related issues with the government. The source emphasized, that he does not know of cases where people have been punished or faced problems with the Syrian government upon return solely because of illegal exit.

Skype meeting with Fabrice Balanche, University of Lyon 2 18 June 2019

Different Kurdish populations in Damascus City and prevalence of violence targeting Kurds

6. Syrian Kurds living in Damascus City can be divided into two groups:
7. The first group are Kurds who live in Rukn al-Din (ركن الدين) and Barza (برزة) neighbourhoods of Damascus. This group of Kurds have lived in Damascus for at least three generations, are well-integrated in Damascus City and do not face any particular security issue with the authorities.
8. The second group of Kurds living in Damascus are those who reside in poor informal settlements in Wadi al-Mashari (وادي المشاري). They have come to the city from Afrin and Al-Hassakah within the last 30 years due to the last drought (2005-2010) and lack of job opportunity in Al-Hassakah or because of the tense relationship between the Kurdish population and the authorities in the Kurdish areas during the 2000s. Kurds living in Wadi al-Mashari are monitored by the Syrian authorities as they are suspected of being affiliated to the PYD.
9. There have been no security incidents in Damascus City in recent years particularly targeting the Kurdish population.

Access to services, housing and labour market

10. Access to services (water, electricity, sanitation, school, health care) and housing in Damascus City depends on where in the city people live, rather than on their ethnic background. The quality of services in informal settlements such as those in Wadi al-Mashari is generally poorer than other areas. The better and closer relationship the head of a neighbourhood has to the authorities, the more and better services are provided in the area.

11. Many Kurds living in the informal settlements are employed in the construction sector, while others work as mechanics or have jobs related to cars. Among middle-class Kurds in Damascus City, one finds shopkeepers selling different types of goods, e.g. grocers.
12. There are also Kurds employed in public positions, although their percentage is lower than other groups. In general, if you are Alawite and use good connections (Arabic: *Wasta*), your chance of being employed in public positions is much higher than other groups such as Christians, Sunni Arabs or Kurds. In addition, persons from these groups who want to be employed in the public sector may be approached by the security services asking them to work as informants in their communities in order to be able to occupy public positions.

Prevalence of discrimination, including social discrimination, against Kurds in Damascus City

13. In Damascus City, there is a general discriminatory attitude towards people from the rural areas in Syria. The Kurds from the rural areas, who have a poor educational background and do not speak Arabic well, may, thus, encounter such attitude in their daily life among the urban Damascenes as well as the authorities. This may for instance manifest itself in an unfriendly attitude or in an authority delaying the provision of a service (e.g. issuing a document). However, the source underlined that this problem does not exist to such an extent that the daily life is unbearable for Kurds in Damascus City, and that many Kurds live and support their families in Damascus City.

Skype meeting with an international regionally-based humanitarian organisation operating in Syria, 19 June 2019

14. There are two categories of Kurds living in Damascus City:
15. The first group are Kurds who have lived in the city for a long time. Most of these Kurds have Syrian citizenship and a large number of them live in Rukn al-Din (ركن الدين) neighbourhood in Damascus.
16. The second group consists of Kurds who have emigrated to the city in recent years from Al-Hassakah and Qamishli. They are mostly poor stateless Kurds who reside in poor informal settlements in areas such as Wadi al-Mashari (وادي المشاري). Due to their undocumented status, many of Kurds from this group do not have national ID cards or other documents to which Syrian nationals are entitled.
17. There have been no security incidents in Damascus City in recent years particularly targeting the Kurdish population in the city.

Access to services, housing and labour market

18. There is no difference between Kurds and other groups living in Damascus with regard to access to services (water, electricity, sanitation, school, health care) provide by the government, and Kurds are not denied access to the services due to their Kurdish background. However, the quality of services in informal settlements is poor and people living in these areas suffer from shortages and poor conditions.
19. Kurds living in Damascus are employed within different sectors, and there were even high ranking Kurds within the police. However, there are public positions the access to which is restricted for Kurds, for instance positions within Air Force. Stateless Kurds cannot occupy public jobs and because of their generally poor educational background, they are often employed as unskilled labour (e.g. driver, waiter, manual worker etc.).

Prevalence of discrimination, including social discrimination, against Kurds in Damascus City

20. There is no social discrimination from the Arab population against the Kurds living in Damascus City, and the Kurds usually do not encounter discriminator attitude in their daily life in the city. However, the source underlined that as the Syrian Kurds are denied the right to practice their culture and some of them do not have Syrian citizenship, there is always a feeling of being a second-class citizen and not being welcomed.