



2.6.1. Behaviour that may be perceived as transgressing moral codes

Alcohol consumption

The transitional government did not impose a nation-wide legal alcohol ban.⁴⁶² As of early 2026, alcohol was reportedly available in Damascus' Bab Touma and Jaramana neighbourhoods.⁴⁶³ However, many establishments selling alcohol reportedly face challenges due to expired licenses and the suspension of their renewal by the authorities.⁴⁶⁴ Unlicensed restaurants and alcohol shops in Damascus and Latakia faced closures and threats on the grounds of lacking a licence to serve spirits, and, in some cases, armed attacks.⁴⁶⁵

Although most alcohol shops remain open, licensing has become a major challenge for Syria's wine industry since the fall of the former regime.⁴⁶⁶ According to one of the few wine producers in Syria, the absence of a clear law regulating alcohol sales in Syria has made it impossible to sell alcohol after the fall of Assad. While there are no official restrictions on alcohol imports, Syrian border guards routinely inspect personal luggage and confiscate any alcohol found.⁴⁶⁷

According to an international organisation interviewed by DIS in September 2025, the government restricted alcohol sales in Muslim-majority areas, while Christians can sell it in licensed shops,⁴⁶⁸ though no new licenses have been issued by the current authorities despite numerous applications from previously closed businesses.⁴⁶⁹

In August 2025, security forces arrested a Christian man at a checkpoint in Damascus after discovering that he was carrying two bottles of alcohol. He was allegedly physically assaulted and taken to the Khatib detention centre and pressed to convert to Islam. He was released after his family paid a ransom of USD 10 000.⁴⁷⁰

In March 2026, authorities in Damascus announced a city-wide ban on the sale of alcohol in restaurants and nightclubs, citing numerous complaints from residents and the aim of eliminating practices considered contrary to public morals. Limited exceptions were introduced for certain Christian neighbourhoods, including Bab Touma, Qassaa, and Bab Sharqi, where alcohol sales remain permitted only through specifically licensed establishments and exclusively as sealed takeaway purchases. Businesses authorised to sell alcohol must also comply with distance requirements from religious sites, schools, cemeteries, police stations, and administrative buildings. Establishments were given three months to comply with the new regulations.⁴⁷¹ Protest demonstrations against the decision to ban alcohol and restrict personal freedoms took place in Damascus without incidents.⁴⁷² Following the protests, authorities

partially reversed the ban on alcohol sales in Damascus, indicating exceptions on alcohol sales for tourism purposes in certain establishments, as well as a policy review.[473](#)

Dress code

The new Syrian government has not broadly enforced a dress code, aside from a June 2025 requirement for full-body swimwear on public beaches. However, unofficial signs in some cities have encouraged modest and conservative dress,[474](#) such as flyers being distributed on buses and in Umayyad Mosque in Damascus calling on women to wear full-face veils.[475](#) Women have faced informal pressure from local authorities, religious figures, and security actors to wear the Islamic veil, leading some to adopt it out of fear of harassment. In coastal areas, Sweida, and parts of Homs and Damascus, stricter dress codes, including the hijab, have been imposed by local actors, some reportedly linked to authorities.[476](#)

On 26 January 2026, the governor of Latakia issued a decision to ban female public sector employees from wearing makeup[477](#) in state and local administrations, public institutions, and schools.[478](#) The decision has triggered significant public anger and widespread concern over a crackdown on personal freedoms. Authorities claim the measure is intended to 'regulate professional appearance' and curb 'excess' rather than restrict personal freedom.[479](#) Another decision by local authorities in al-Tal, Rural Damascus was issued to forbid men from working in women's clothing stores,[480](#) while the municipality of Wadi Barada issued a circular prohibiting restaurants from hosting mixed groups for dancing or socialising, citing religious ethics.[481](#)

According to Haid Haid, although such practices lack a clear legal basis or formal policy mandate, the absence of accountability or official condemnation has allowed them to continue, contributing to an environment where personal freedoms are influenced by discretionary authority rather than established law.[482](#)

Non-Islamic behaviour

In Syria, many Muslims reportedly practice their faith only to a limited extent, for example by attending Friday prayers without regularly observing other religious practices. According to one source, non-practicing Muslims are more common in Damascus than in more conservative areas [483](#) such as Idlib.[484](#)

Over 2025 there were reports of personnel informally enforcing gender segregation on public buses and in public spaces in certain areas,[485](#) although these practices were ad-hoc rather than formalised.[486](#) According to a Christian church leader interviewed by DIS, there have been repeated incidents at certain checkpoints in Damascus, including in Zabadani and on Baghdad Street, where individuals have been stopped for behaviour perceived as violating social or religious norms, such as gender mixing (woman being alone with a man with whom she has no formal relationship). She was reportedly returned to her family, while the man was beaten by checkpoint personnel. Enforcement and punishment vary depending on who controls the checkpoint, with different groups applying differing standards of acceptable conduct.[487](#) In 2026, there have been sporadic reports of individuals who were being briefly detained or dismissed from their employment for publicly breaking the Ramadan fast.[488](#)

According to several sources interviewed by the Netherlands MFA in September 2025, not practicing Islam usually did not lead to problems with the transitional authorities [489](#)

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