



4.8.3. Requirements for settling in Damascus

Prior to the fall of the Assad regime, obtaining a security clearance was a prerequisite for establishing residence in any part of Damascus city. Following the fall of the Assad regime, there are no longer legal requirements such as obtaining a security clearance for individuals wishing to settle in Damascus by renting or purchasing property.[1070](#)

According to a study commissioned by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, family is the primary source of support for Syrians returning from abroad. Returnees often depend on relatives for immediate accommodation, local orientation, and connections needed to navigate bureaucracy and recover identity documents or property. Economic reintegration is likewise heavily mediated by kinship ties, as employment is typically accessed through personal networks rather than formal recruitment.[1071](#) Strong family and community support is crucial for women returnees, particularly those without a male head of household, who often depend on extended relatives for accommodation and assistance.[1072](#)

In practice, people will settle in places where they have family connections, tribal kinship or similar sectarian background.[1073](#) Most returnees from abroad surveyed by UNHCR reported returning accompanied by their immediate family (88 %) and to the same location they had lived before fleeing Syria (76 %).[1074](#)

Many returnees cannot rely on kinship networks due to loss of relatives, estrangement, or displacement of family members. In these cases, alternative support mechanisms such as religious institutions, NGOs, and community associations may play a role in assisting reintegration. However, this support is often less comprehensive and less durable than that provided by family networks.[1075](#)

There is a degree of social discrimination against individuals relocating to Damascus from other parts of the country. While not driven by state policy, this bias stems from a long-standing distinction between Damascenes and non-locals. Locals are often reluctant to rent to newcomers or charge them higher prices, based on the perception that they may not properly maintain the property.[1076](#)

Women returning to Damascus face major barriers to housing and employment amid stalled reconstruction and scarce job opportunities. High rental costs have forced many former camp residents in Idlib who attempted to resettle in the capital to return to displacement camps. Female public-sector employees have been unable to regain their former positions, as staff from the previous administration remain in post despite the formation of the new government.[1077](#)

- [1070](#)

Syria Justice and Accountability Centre, online interview with EUAA, 11 June 2025

- [1071](#)

Möller, Lena-Maria, BFA Staatendokumentation (Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, COI unit) (ed.): Staatendokumentation Research Paper; Syria: The Role of Family and Social Networks for Returning Syrian Refugees; from the COI-CMS, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

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