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ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES



MIGRATION POLICY CENTRE



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Migration Facts Syria

On the web: www.migrationpolicycentre.eu

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Introduction At the end of the 1950s, a first wave of emigration was observed among the Syrian elite aimed at avoiding the rigid regulations implemented by the socialist regime, and benefiting from job market opportunities in certain Arab countries and in the US. In the mid-1970s, the expanding economic opportunities in the Gulf and the labour shortages created in Lebanon as a result of the civil war (1975-1989) resulted in a second big wave of emigration, this time of low skilled Syrians. While outward flows to the Gulf slowed in the 1980s, Syrian unskilled emigration to Lebanon continued in large numbers until 2005. In that year, the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri and the withdrawal of the Syrian Army from Lebanon undermined the already precarious living conditions of Syrian workers in Lebanon so that large numbers returned home. A third wave began after the Syrian revolution in March 2011 which caused massive population displacements. By February 2013, over 700,000 Syrians have sought refuge outside their homeland, mainly in neighbouring countries. Before the crisis, immigrants in Syria could be grouped into three main categories: refugees (mainly Palestinian and Iraqi); labour migrants (mainly domestic workers from South East Asia); and transit migrants (mainly from Asia).

Demographic-Economic

Outward Migration

Inward Migration

STOCK

Syrian emigration stocks - year 2011 (a)

Immigration stocks in Syria - year 2004 (b)

Total emigrants: 418,565

Total immigrants: 102,396
(0.6% of the total resident population)

Five top countries of residence:

Saudi Arabia: 109,048 Germany: 33,036
Unites States: 71,394 Sweden: 20,758
Jordan: 38,130

Five top regions of nationality (c):

Arab countries: 88,566
Non-Arab Asian countries: 9,638
Europe: 3,080
Non-Arab African countries: 556
America: 50

Sex:

Males: 55.6%
Females: 44.4%

Age group:

Less than 15: 9.3%
15-64: 76.9%
65+: 13.8%

Sex: Males: 51.1% Females: 48.9%

Level of education (year 2006): primary or below (30.1%); secondary (33.7%); tertiary (36.1%)

Notes: (b) Immigrants are defined according to the country of nationality criterion; (c) Palestinian and Iraqi refugees are not included.
Source: Syrian population census (2004).

Total number of refugees (year 2011): 1,223,401

Occupation (year 2006): professionals (22.9%); service workers and shop and market sales workers (19.2%); legislators, senior officials and managers (13.0%).

Top countries of nationality:

Iraq: 755,445 Palestine: 467,956 (d)

Notes: (a) Syrian emigrants are defined according to the country of birth (best option) or country of nationality criterion according to countries of residence **Source:** destination countries' sources (population census/population register/household survey). Data on the distribution of Syrian migrants by level of education and occupation had been taken from the DIOC-OECD Database.

Notes: (d) the vast majority of Palestinian refugees are not migrants but second and third generation Palestinian refugees – refugees in relation to 1948. **Source:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); Palestinian Bureau of Statistics and Natural Resources in Damascus – 2009 (for Palestinian refugees).

FLOWS

Syrian refugee crisis (March 2011 – February 7th 2013): total number of registered Syrian refugees

Net migration rate, 1970-2010 (values in ‰)

Country/area of application	Official estimates	Other estimates
Jordan	193,258 (UNHCR)	250,000 (Jordanian government)
Lebanon	172,361 (UNHCR)	300,000 (local NGOs)
Turkey	170,700 (UNHCR)	
Iraq	83,958 (UNHCR)	
Egypt	15,057 (UNHCR)	
EU (asylum app.)	28,760 (Eurostat)	
US and Canada	6,738 (national governments)	

Period	Net migration rate (‰)
1970-1975	-2.34
1975-1980	-3.93
1980-1985	-1.79
1985-1990	-2.56
1990-1995	-1.06
1995-2000	-1.72
2000-2005	+6.36
2005-2010	-0.58

Source: <http://syrianrefugees.eu/>; UNHCR; Eurostat; US Department of Justice; Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Source: United Nations, Department of Social Affairs, World Population Prospects, the 2010 Revision.

Legal and political framework governing migration and mobility

General legal references

- Constitution of 26 February 2012
- Presidential decree n°29 of 1970 related to aliens' entry and stay in Syria and their exit; Decision n°1350 of 15 August 1984; ministerial decree n°30 of 2007 related to Arab nationals' entry and stay in Syria and their exit;
- Presidential decree n°1623 of 1970 regulating Syrians' exit and entry.
- Law n°50 of 2004 related to civil service and emigration;
- Decree of the Labour ministry n°2137/2009 of 21/07/2009 modifying article 20 of ministerial decree n°2040/2005;
- Decree of the Interior Ministry n°29 (12/03/2007) entry of female migrant workers and their stay as domestics, and Arab and foreign nannies;
- Decree n°62 of 2007 related to sanctions for contract violation;
- Presidential decree n°3 of 2010 against trafficking in persons

Outward Migration and Mobility	Inward Migration and Mobility
Visa	Visa
Exit visa required for aliens. The emigration of civil servants is subject to authorisation and an exit visa. A wife should generally follow her husband in emigration (family code, 1953) and can be prevented from emigrating alone by her husband (decision n°876 of 1979).	Entry without visa for nationals from all Arab states, from the Gulf, from the Emirates and from the Sultanates. Entry visa requirement re-established for Iraqis in 2007.
Rights	Labour
The 2012 Constitution states that: no citizen may be deported from the country, or prevented from returning to it; be extradited to any foreign entity; and that every citizen shall have the right to leave the territory of the state, unless prevented by a decision from the competent court or the public prosecution office or in accordance with the laws of public health and safety (Article 38).	Ministerial authorisation is needed, based on the list of professions open to aliens and if there is reciprocity with the origin country. Work permit required. Arab nationals have facilitated access to most professions. Domestic workers are not covered by the labour law, but by various decrees. Must have working contract. Civil service open to Palestinians. Jobs also open to Arab nationals if Prime minister considers necessity.
Labour	Rights
Governmental strategy has been to facilitate temporary low-skilled labour migration, in particular toward Lebanon. Agreements on Syrian workers with Lebanon (various, 1990s), Qatar (2003 and 2008) and the United Arab Emirates (2008). Manpower agreements with Jordan (2007) and Kuwait (2008), among others.	There is legal silence on family reunification. Access to food aid and public hospitals is not given to aliens. Palestinians enjoy varying levels of rights depending upon year of arrival. Stateless Kurds lack access to land, services, and political rights. For domestic workers, regulations stipulate certain rights and benefits (e.g. insurance, days off, living conditions, salary). Every citizen shall have the right to move in to the territory of the State (Article 38, 2012 Constitution).
Irregular Migration	Irregular Migration
Irregular exit is penalized with 3 months in prison and/or 100 to 500 Syrian pounds.	Prison sentences and or fines imposed for irregular entry, falsification of documents at entry, irregular stay, work without a permit, and for trafficking in persons. Marriage between Syrian male and foreign domestic worker prohibited to limit trafficking.
Diaspora	International Protection
The Syrian Government created the Ministry of Expatriates in 2002 in order to consolidate the links between the Diaspora and the homeland. In an attempt to ease obstacles towards return - temporary or more long-lasting –of Syrians abroad, the Government eased conditions for exemption from military service. In 2009, a new law harmonised the situation of all emigrants who can now buy their freedom from military service after five years abroad and with the payment of US 6,500 dollars. These measures were aimed at facilitating tourist visits on the part of Syrian expatriates and their descendants, as well as to improve public funding.	There is no national law on asylum or refugee status determination procedure. UNHCR deals with refugee-status determination procedure and their protection, while UNRWA is in charge of Palestinian refugees. Due to Syria's Pro-Palestinian stance, and unlike other refugees in Syria, Palestinians enjoy social and economic rights. Political refugees have the right not to be extradited because of their political beliefs or for their defense of freedom (Article 39, 2012 Constitution).
Multiple Citizenship	Citizenship
Penal sanctions exist in the case of the acquisition of another nationality without authorisation from the Syrian authorities. Authorisation is given only if the military service obligations have been fulfilled. Dual nationality is tolerated.	<i>Jus sanguinis</i> through paternal descent. A Syrian mother does not transmit her nationality, unless her child is born in the country without recognised paternity. There is no <i>jus soli</i> . Naturalisation is possible after 5- year residency. Foreign women can obtain the nationality of her Syrian spouse after a two-year marriage and residence in the country or she will become a citizen immediately if she is an Arab. The Syrian women cannot transmit nationality to a foreign husband. In April 2011, the Syrian Government granted citizenship to thousands of stateless Kurds.