

EXAMINING THE SSG'S PUBLIC MORALITY DRAFT LAW



MARCH 2024

CA – SYR
CRISIS ANALYSIS – SYRIA

Contents

- Executive Summary** **3**
 - Key Takeaways 3

- Introduction** **5**

- Analyzing the Public Morality Draft Law** **6**
 - Prohibitions and offenses 6
 - The Public Morality Police (PMP) 6

- An attempt to appease hardliners or a genuine policy shift** **15**
 - The case for appeasement 9
 - The case for a policy shift 13

- Potential impacts** **14**

Cover image: Protests in Idlib. (Source: [Facebook](#))

Executive Summary

In early January, media outlets published an unverified draft copy of a public morality law that the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) intends to approve. The draft law sets out a number of religious and moral practices to be prohibited in public spaces and in public and private workplaces, with mingling between males and females as the principal focus. This new legislation does not signal a radical departure from the context in SSG-governed areas, but rather formalizes a range of prohibitions that Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) has previously attempted to introduce and regulate.

The draft law can be seen as an attempt by HTS to appease dissatisfied hardliners within and outside its ranks, and to find a middle ground between their expectations and the relatively more moderate image it has sought to export in recent years. This has become a particular priority in the light of protests currently sweeping HTS areas, primarily for detainees' torture accusations, against the group's leadership and the General Security Service, to which a number of these hardliners have joined. The degree of stringency with which the SSG and HTS intend to implement the law is also considered an essential factor in determining their motives for passing it, with doubts cast in this report on the SSG's intent and capacity to strictly implement the law. Irrespective of that, the law will constitute a new obstacle in the lives of civilians and a new tool by which the SSG and HTS could restrict their civil liberties. It also introduces several restrictions that may impede the operations and programs of humanitarian organizations working in the region.

Key Takeaways

- The SSG's intention to establish a new Public Morality Police (PMP) appears firm, as evidenced by the recruitment process currently underway.
- The draft law outlines the structure of the PMP, which, in contrast to comparable previous HTS-affiliated agencies, is to be placed under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Interior.
- The SSG and, by extension, HTS seek to ensure that the work of PMP members is regulated by statute, and to limit the scope for personal interpretation of its interdictions. A lack of specificity in the wording of the draft law, however, is likely to hinder the achievement of those goals.

- The draft law does not expand on existing penalties within SSG-held areas, setting a 48-hour limit on detention of offenders and giving judges the power to penalize or shut down the site or entity (e.g. the business) where the offense occurred.
- Judges' powers are limited to a list of 'light' penalties, in a provision presumably intended to prevent alarm among residents and the international community.
- The draft law aims to find a middle ground between HTS's core radical ideology and the more moderate image and approach it presents to the rest of the world.
- Operational aspects of the draft law render its full implementation unlikely, particularly with regards to the SSG's resources.
- Strict enforcement of the draft law could significantly disadvantage women by limiting their access to public spaces and employment opportunities.
- Given that SSG-held areas rely on aid flows to deliver services, humanitarian and development organizations are almost certain to be impacted by the law. **A matrix of these potential impacts can be found at the end of this report, or by clicking [here](#).**



Image 1. The Syrian Salvation Government Ministry of the Interior crest. (Source: [Facebook](#))

Introduction

In an unexpected development on 2 January 2024, media outlets leaked a copy of an unapproved [draft law on public morality](#) issued by the Ministry of Interior of the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG), the administrative body responsible for governing territories held by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which HTS allegedly influences. This draft law defines public morality as “a set of rules” pertaining to societal morals. It aims to “prevent offenses and any act deemed reprehensible by law and tradition unless already regulated by other laws.” This legislation could have significant implications for the living conditions and civil liberties of residents in SSG-controlled areas. It also potentially signals the strengthening of the Salafi cohort within the SSG and HTS, after a years-long strategy of self-identification as a moderate group image and a strategic approach by HTS to ensure that locally influential (and perhaps threatening) constituents are satisfied.

If this is the case, the shift has occurred at an alarming rate, particularly given HTS's recent efforts to purge its ranks. In mid-June 2023, HTS arrested swathes of senior officials on the pretext that these individuals had collaborated with external parties, and were charged with espionage. While CA-SYR could not corroborate these claims, such arrests are likely to have a secondary objective, namely an attempt by HTS leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani to consolidate power amid indicators of changing local, regional, and international dynamics. In a similar vein, the arrests could also be viewed as part of HTS's comprehensive rebranding and localization strategy. Over the years, HTS has endeavored to replace non-Syrian leaders with Syrian counterparts, and to purge its ranks of more ideological members, in an effort to shed its classification as a terrorist organization.

In this report, CA-SYR will examine factors influencing the possible adoption of the draft law, and the likely scope of its implementation. While the eventual impacts of this draft law, with or without approval, may not rapidly be evident, CA-SYR will infer some possible impacts, either direct or indirect, on residents, communities and humanitarian and development organizations.

Analyzing the Public Morality Draft Law

The draft law includes 128 articles structured into five main sections: general provisions, prohibitions and offenses, the Public Morality Police (PMP), the public morality judiciary, and final provisions. Each of these sections is then divided into multiple chapters. Several aspects of the law are controversial: it risks infringing many civil rights, particularly those of women and girls, while also being liable to subjective implementation due to a lack of specificity in its wording. In the following section, CA-SYR attempts to unpack specific details of the draft law through an analysis of its clauses and articles.

Prohibitions and offenses

The first chapter of the prohibitions and offenses section included 15 articles on religious restrictions, with a particular focus on prohibiting girls aged 12 and above from appearing in public without a hijab and/or 'modest attire.' Beyond this, the law prohibits private interactions between unmarried men and women, or between men or women who are not first-degree relatives.

Specific violations of public morality are outlined in 16 articles, with a key emphasis on workplace interactions between males and females (regardless of whether in public or private), and a clause noting the necessity of maintaining a gender balance such as to prevent a man from being alone with a woman in the workplace. Additionally, the draft law prohibits the photographing of individuals in public spaces without their consent or the authorization of relevant authorities. The legislation then outlines various infractions related to animal welfare, as well as behaviors to be adopted in wedding venues, markets, restaurants, cafes, gardens, parks, and the street, all primarily aimed at curbing interactions between males and females.

The Public Morality Police (PMP)

In arguably the most consequential provision, the draft law mandates the creation of a "Public Morality Police" (PMP), tasked with enforcing morality regulations. Pre-empting approval of the draft law, the Ministry of Interior commenced recruitment for individuals interested in joining the PMP the same day that the draft law was leaked. Applicants

are required to be between 30 and 40 years old, hold degrees from Sharia colleges and institutes¹, exhibit 'good conduct and behavior,' and complete a designated training course. The ministry [reopened recruitment on 19 February](#), amending previously issued applicant requirements. It removed the necessity of a Sharia degree, instead accepting a degree from any university, or a diploma from an intermediate institute, with no major specified. A stipulation that the candidate be married was also added in this iteration.



Images 2 and 3: First and second recruitment announcements. (Source: [Ministry of Interior Facebook Page](#))

Two key inferences emerge from the reopening of recruitment and accompanying modifications. First, too few applications were received in the first round. This could be due to confusion or to a lack of visibility concerning the PMP and/or the draft law, exacerbated by the ministry's preemptive opening of recruitment. Second, as indicated by the broadening of the degree requirements, it is feasible that the SSG (or perhaps HTS leadership) does not want the PMP to be exclusively composed of officers with a religious background. This may give law enforcers on the ground a civil rather than religious image.

Article 7 of the draft law delineates the jurisdiction of the PMP. It confines the force to addressing visible infractions in the public sphere deemed either forbidden by religion, contrary to the (draft) law, or at 'odds with prevailing customs'. The vagueness of this latter wording is particularly problematic, since it could open the door to subjective implementation. In a further 12 articles, the draft law outlines operational procedures to be adopted by the PMP. As per one significant provision, the PMP is prohibited from

1 Students who graduate from Sharia colleges and institutes are thought to have acquired advanced knowledge of Islamic religious principles.

addressing cases outside of its jurisdiction, and obligated to redirect such reports to the appropriate “authority”, of which there are several. Which case is to be referred to which authority (judicial or otherwise) is not specified. Additionally, the PMP is mandated to wear a distinctive uniform and to carry identification while on duty. While it is authorized to intervene in preventing offenses, its powers are restricted by the draft law to actions ranging from verbal warnings to ‘forceful preventative measures,’ with no further definition or explanation.

Notably, the draft law prohibits the PMP from conducting searches of individuals, stores, vehicles, phones, or documents, or from entering private residences. The PMP is therefore confined to addressing offenses occurring in public view. The draft law also proscribes physical harm to detainees, and requires a public morality judge to promptly hear the case of any person arrested, with release mandated within 48 hours if no judicial decision is reached.

Cases outside the public morality judge’s jurisdiction are referred to the Public Prosecution within the SSG Ministry of Interior, or to the “relevant authority.” The law then sets out a list of penalties issuable by the judiciary. In addition to the aforementioned 48-hour detention window, judges can request the temporary or permanent closure of the site where the offense occurred, and the disposal of confiscated items. It is not authorized to issue additional fines. Finally, the draft law directs judges to keep arrests of women to a strict minimum, with priority to be given to reuniting them with their families.

As indicated above, one of the primary concerns regarding the draft law is its lack of specificity, which could lead to broad and varying interpretations. This ambiguity, particularly in provisions related to the PMP, is potentially problematic. For example, Article 58 outlines actions the PMP may take in response to infractions, on a scale ranging from “warnings” to “forceful prevention,” but fails to define what constitutes excessive force or when forceful prevention should be employed. This imprecision could result in physical harm to offenders.

In a further example of such ambiguity, Article 127 requires the Minister of Interior to issue executive instructions for the law, subsequent to its approval by the Supreme Council for Fatwa. It is unclear, however, how these instructions are to be conveyed to the PMP, raising the risk of varying interpretation among the force’s officers. This could lead to inconsistent application of the law, with some officers favoring a more stringent interpretation. More broadly, such inconsistency could create a permissive environment within the PMP, in which opportunistic members are able to use their authority for extortion, or to elicit impartial, arbitrary, or otherwise unjust judicial rulings.

An attempt to appease hardliners or a genuine policy shift?

The contents of the draft law are only one point for discussion in relation to the leaked draft law. The impetus behind it is also significant, shedding light on broader contextual factors that warrant further examination. From a purely pragmatic perspective, the leaked draft law could be understood as means of appeasing core constituents, rather than a genuine shift in policy. This would make flexibility and compromise the objective of the legislation, in terms of engaging with the broader population and indirect stakeholders, including humanitarian and development actors, while enhancing public sentiment. It would also explain the seemingly deliberate vagueness of the draft law, insofar as ambiguity permits varying interpretation and therefore perception.

Nevertheless, the very prospect of the law would conceivably set in motion a greater pendulum swing. In the following section, CA-SYR will attempt to assess the underlying motives driving the draft law, its various implications and their gravity.

The case for appeasement

HTS's strategy throughout the years has largely revolved around two key aims. The first is an attempt to rebrand by moving away from the group's Salafi origins and towards a more moderate image; the second involves appointing more Syrian individuals to its leadership in the place of foreign individuals, as part of a broader effort to rid itself of its classification as a terrorist organization². These efforts are evident in HTS's nuanced approach of to implementing strict Islamic law in its territories, and new model of its role as a governance structure responsible for upholding Sharia. HTS leader, Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani, [communicated this new model explicitly in April 2023](#) when he described the work of the religious police as "a cultural inheritance with some errors," further emphasizing that adherence to religion should not be enforced through coercion.

These goals have, however, been rejected by HTS-affiliated ideologues, particularly non-Syrian nationals. Though many of these ideologues have since defected or [been dismissed from HTS](#), and therefore might have a personal grudge against the leadership,

² The shift was indicated publicly in a statement by HTS (formerly Al-Nusra) in July 2016, formally announcing the severing of its ties with Al-Qaeda.

they continue to criticize the group and accuse the leadership of abandoning its principles to please the West. In the face of their critiques, HTS appears wary of [losing its religious connections](#), which align with the preferences of many core supporters, and perhaps also with communities in SSG-held areas. HTS may see the adoption of a conservative interpretation of Sharia rule as a means of bolstering its reputation in these areas. Deftly [navigating these challenging circumstances](#), the group has sought to win back the approval of more hardline constituents by assuring them of its unwavering commitment to the group's historical identity. It has further demonstrated this commitment in several ways, including by [institutionalizing religion in its areas of control](#). In sum, introducing a policy to respond to critics and forestall dissent is an approach HTS's leadership has taken periodically in the past.

Recent intra-HTS dynamics could provide insight into the motivations behind the latest draft morality law. In mid-June 2023, HTS launched a wide-scale arrest campaign spreading over several months. Multiple high-ranking HTS officials were targeted, including influential figures such as [Abu Maria al-Qahtani](#),³ although the latter was eventually released. The official reasoning for these arrests was that the individuals were found to have collaborated with external parties, and charged with espionage. There is likely, however, to have been a secondary objective, namely an attempt by HTS leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani to consolidate power amid indicators of [changing local, regional, and international dynamics](#). In a similar vein, the arrests could also be viewed as part of HTS's comprehensive rebranding and localization strategy, with its aim of ridding the group of its classification as a terrorist organization. Broadly speaking, the campaign has fed into [schisms within HTS](#), and led other [key individuals](#) to resign from the group.⁴

In a new development as of March 2024, these criticisms and the broader societal tension surrounding HTS have erupted into [protests](#) expanding daily in areas within



Image 4: Protest in Jisr Ash-Shughor on 8 March, calling for an end to HTS's torture of detainees. (Source: [Telegram](#))

3 For more, see CA-SYR [July 2023](#) and [August 2023](#) monthly reports.

4 Over the years, HTS has endeavored to replace non-Syrian leaders with Syrian counterparts, and to purge its ranks of ideological members.

the group's control. The protests were sparked by the [revelation](#) that those detained by HTS during the latest purge were subjected to torture. Although the leaking of the draft law preceded these protests, it has since served to strengthen relations with extremist constituents participating in the protests. The latter call for the removal of Al-Jolani and the dissolution of the General Security Service, the HTS-affiliated body accused of carrying out the torture. The draft law now provides an indication to these stakeholders that HTS's intended restructuring is grounded in a genuine systematic approach, rather than a mere reaction to the protests.



Image 5: Sawa'id al-Khair logo. (Source: [Shaam Network](#))

In this context, whether or not it is approved, the legislation is likely to have a greater effect in appeasing core audiences than in introducing a policy shift. By potentially influencing the SSG to issue such a draft law, HTS may be striving to find a middle ground between its core radical ideology and a more moderate image and approach that it can present to the rest of the world. Similarly, the establishment of a new PMP also appears to be a means

for HTS to combat heightened criticism of mixed gender mingling in public places and markets, leveled by both the public and radical figures. These are sufficient grounds to believe that the draft law is not intended to be implemented, but rather as a tool to defuse ideological tensions.

There are also other indicators supplementing the argument that the draft law does not represent a pendulum swing. First, neither the terms of the legislation nor the police force it introduces should be considered novel or unexpected: the PMP is not the first agency of its kind to be established by HTS. In August 2017, the group set up what was known as '[Sawa'id al-Khair](#)' (The Forearms of Good), referred to in Idlib as the 'Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice'. Sawa'id al-Khair was under the direct supervision of extremist HTS first-rank leaders, such as Abu al-Yaqzan and Abu al-Fath al-Farghali (both Egyptian nationals). In mid-2019, in response to civilian protests against measures such as [a ban on smoking](#), HTS suspended the agency and removed the Sharia officials overseeing it.

Only a year later, in May 2020, HTS reactivated the religious police, this time in an attempt to address ongoing criticism from its religious supporters. It renamed the agency 'Al-Falah,' appointing a Syrian leadership considered to be less extremist, but with limited powers. This could be seen as part of HTS's localization strategy. Finally, in September 2021, HTS again terminated the Al-Falah, providing no official justification but affirming that a new force would be [established](#) in its place.

Like the new PMP, both Sawa'id al-Khair and the Al-Falah were responsible for regulating public spaces in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence. In contrast to the new PMP, however, both agencies were governed by directives from HTS's Sharia scholars, rather

than any statute, written law or legal document. What distinguishes the new PMP, therefore, is its affiliation with the SSG's Ministry of Interior and regulation by a codified law, an approach that could render the agency more restricted than its predecessors. One of the stated goals of the draft law is to clarify the PMP's jurisdiction, and limit its interference in public life, a project that may meet with less public and international criticism.



Image 6: Al-Falah patrol. (Source: [BBC Arabic](#))

The inclusion of the PMP under the Ministry of Interior is also consistent with the SSG's recent efforts to achieve greater centralization. Recent policies to this end have included [the replacement of local councils with municipalities](#) governed in closer alignment with the SSG's central authorities. This form of centralization, especially in religious matters, is [argued to have given HTS the power to control religious discourse](#), without a need to enforce stringent religious regulations. As such, the draft law and the PMP could offer another step toward centralizing control, especially within religious matters, in such a way as to increase their monopoly over religious discourse. Whether it is formally approved or not, the draft law enables HTS to fill the space that would potentially otherwise have been filled by other actors. This monopoly also allows them to control the degree to which religious ideals, such as those presented in the draft law, are implemented.

There are also operational aspects that render full implementation of this draft law doubtful. The Ministry of the Interior needs substantial resources to finance a new PMP across all SSG-held areas. According to the draft law, in addition to police officers,



Image 7: Sawa'id al-Khair member addressing an individual in the street. (Source: [SOHR](#))

each new PMP department will include several Sharia judges and preachers,⁵ separate detention centers for males and females, offices, and patrol cars. It is therefore unlikely that the Ministry will be able to establish a PMP presence in all of its regions – not least in smaller villages, rural areas, and IDP camps – without comprehensive reform of the SSG apparatus and significant funding. As such, irrespective of the SSG's intention to implement or otherwise, the law's application may well be concentrated in large and densely populated cities.

The case for a policy shift

Despite potential obstacles to the strict enforcement of the draft law and the possibility that the power of the PMP will be limited, its potential codification underscores the enduring influence of hard-line constituents in areas controlled by the SSG. While efforts to mollify have been previously to mollify hardliners, a move to enshrine their demands in law could mark a departure from past approaches and a notable advancement in their favor, particularly as the SSG continues to refine its structure and bring in [technocrats](#).

The potential enactment of the new draft law and establishment of the PMP could suggest an effort by HTS to improve relations with its critics and achieve greater unity, especially after recent structural disruptions due to the aforementioned arrests. Past developments aligning with this hypothesis include actions such as the Ministry of Education's Sharia-related directives introduced in [August 2023](#), enforcing gender segregation and Sharia-related compliance in educational settings. If this interpretation holds, the new draft law could constitute a significant setback for public life in SSG-controlled areas.

⁵ The preachers will supposedly provide sermons and discussions with offenders, and spread awareness about the new law to strengthen compliance.

Potential impacts

At present, the SSG has yet to adopt or implement the draft law. An indicator that it intends to do so might be seen in the recruitment drive underway for the PMP. The implications of this still hypothetical law, and the extent of the PMP's involvement in public affairs, will hinge on the SSG's motives and on the stringency of its implementation; both of which may take time to become evident. With those caveats in mind, the analysis below outlines several key, though not exhaustive, areas of potential interference.

It is first worth mentioning that the Morality Law will be implemented in a conservative society, which is already familiar with and adheres to most of the law's stated restrictions. The SSG areas have also previously experienced the presence of authority monitoring practices in public spaces above and beyond the SSG's regulations (including the agencies mentioned above), and this has arguably reinforced conservative practices within the community. The law will not therefore be a radical social engineering project aimed at modifying an entire set of behaviors and practices, and, consequently, its areas of implementation will be very limited.

Nevertheless, strict enforcement of the draft law could pose a significant disadvantage to women, specifically by restricting their access to public spaces and employment opportunities. One of the primary offenses outlined in the new draft law pertains to the mingling of males and females in markets and parks. Should the draft law be approved and rigorously enforced, it would curtail women's access to public spaces and infringe their freedom of movement. It would also place additional pressure on business owners, requiring them to modify their premises in order to allow for gender segregation in establishments such as shops, restaurants, recreational areas, and malls. Alternatively, business owners may decide simply to dismiss women from the workforce, replacing them with men in order to avoid being reprimanded by authorities.

Considerations for response actors

Humanitarian and development organizations working in SSG-held areas may also be impacted by the adoption and strict implementation of the draft law. Its potential impacts in their regard are difficult to foresee, particularly given the SSG's [reliance on aid flows](#) to deliver services. This reliance renders it unlikely that the SSG or HTS will actively seek to impede organizations through the PMP. To do so would risk disrupting their operations at a time when many residents in their territories are in urgent need of

humanitarian assistance. This is a scenario more pragmatic stakeholders within the SSG and HTS are likely to wish to avoid.

Nonetheless, should the draft law be approved and rigorously enforced, organizations may need to adapt to remain compliant and navigate broader ramifications. Though the law is still pending approval, at the time of writing, response actors have already begun to be impacted, particularly by non-governance actors such as commercial and community stakeholders.

Pre-emptive, opportunistic or otherwise preferential adherence to the underlying project of the draft law could impact response actors, even without approval or implementation. The ramifications for response actors could even create greater ambiguity, confusion and uncertainty in disparate communities and regions, and on an individual, household, neighborhood or community level. In other words, vigilantism and broader 'chilling effects' are strong possibilities, though they will vary over time, and across different scales and regions.

Among the potential impacts for response actors, three broad categories emerge: direct, indirect, and tertiary challenges. Direct challenges could arise if members of the SSG (including the PMP) or HTS intervene in response actor activities to ensure compliance with the morality law. Indirect challenges concern risks stemming from communal shifts in support of the law or in a bid to achieve compliance. This includes shifts in behaviors, perceptions or reputations. The last category, tertiary challenges, encompasses events without a clear or direct impact on response actors. These include potential contextual issues faced by the participants and communities that response actors seek to serve, and the law's wider impact on local partners, vendors and other stakeholders involved in response activities.

These challenges could have an impact, not only on NGO operations, but across the entire program cycle, from participant selection and community engagement to post-distribution monitoring. The table below offers a matrix of potential (though not exhaustive) challenges within these three categories.

Table 1: Matrix of potential challenges posed by the draft law	
Direct challenges	Authorities (SSG, PMP, HTS) demand access to offices and premises to investigate compliance with the Public Morality Law.
	Authorities demand access to program plans and conduct site visits, to monitor the implementation of projects.
	Staff are subjected to varying interpretations of the Public Morality Law, particularly due to vague definitions of 'norms' and 'punishment,' thereby increasing safety and security risks.
	Monitoring and evaluation activities (including post distribution monitoring and third party monitoring) are restricted from collecting photographic and/or video evidence.
	Focus group discussions and key informant interviews are heavily monitored, censored and/or restricted.
	NGOs face potential closure due to (perceived or actual) non-compliance to the morality law.

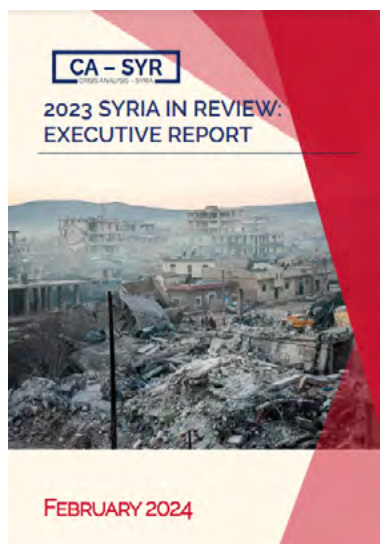
Indirect challenges	The reputation of response actors – whether organizations or affiliated individuals – is negatively impacted by perceptions of their approach to gender mixing.
	Potential program participants may become hesitant to be involved in certain projects, activities, etc, due to the fear of non-compliance.
	Local partners and vendors may become hesitant or refuse to be involved in certain projects, activities, etc, due to fear of non-compliance.
	Program design specifically to address women’s needs and empowerment, or that seek gender parity, become increasingly difficult to plan, resource, and implement.
	Programs intended to support livelihoods could be affected, particularly decreasing opportunities for female income generation and job creation.
	Inconsistent interpretation and enforcement of law create varied and uncertain operating environments for organizations with multiple offices, locations, and implementation sites.
Tertiary challenges	Protests – whether ad hoc, organic or organized/orchestrated – flare up in communities that reject the public morality law – whether due to its implementation or underlying intent.
	Stakeholders with priorities outside of ensuring adherence to strict/conservative norms may seek ways to avoid compliance, potentially creating tensions with authorities (e.g. economic and/or commercial stakeholders).
	Conservative communities and stakeholders take it upon themselves to enforce their interpretation, even if the draft law remains unratified, partially enforced, or is significantly amended.
	Women’s participation in the public sphere (including employment) may be curtailed and self-censorship heightened, either directly by authorities or preemptively to ensure compliance.
	Economic activity decreases due to operational requirements and constraints imposed on commercial actors, impacting household income, particularly for female-headed households.
	Domestic issues arise, particularly related to the interpretations of male roles within households, potentially increasing GBV and fomenting social tensions.
	Movement, in terms of transportation and access, could be constrained should authorities decide to mobilize checkpoints to ensure passengers in vehicles are in compliance.
	Local partners and vendors are heavily penalized or shut down due to non-compliance.



CA-Syria Monthly Report, February 2024

The US House of Representatives passed the anti-normalization act on 14 February, making the bill ready for the Senate's vote next. In south and central Syria, the Syrian government increased the price of subsidized goods and basic services. Former opposition groups in Dar'a have seemingly united and fought together against both the Syrian government and alleged ISIS-affiliates in several locations, most notably Yadudeh and Mhajej. In northeast Syria, the Autonomous Administration in North and East Syria's Internal Security Forces seized hundreds of thousands of Captagon pills and other illicit materials in Al-Thawrah (Tabqa) and Ar-Raqqa. Alleged ISIS attacks in Al-Hasakeh and Quamishli cities signal the potential ability of the group to inspire lone-wolf attacks in areas previously thought secure. In northwest Syria, tensions heightened between the Mawali tribe and the Syrian National Army (SNA) after a tribal member detained by an unidentified SNA faction was killed under torture.

[Go to report](#)



2023 Syria in Review: Executive Report, February 2024

CA-SYR is proud to present our annual year-in-review publication. In the 2023 edition, CA-SYR elected to split the overview up based on trend-focused reports: Economic, Political, Conflict, and Humanitarian. In acknowledgment of the overall length of this analytical overview, CA-SYR has also provided an executive report, aggregating the executive summaries and key takeaways from each thematically specific report. While much of this reporting constitutes a retrospective summary of the previous year, each product includes novel quantitative visual analysis, expanded, up-to-date qualitative narrative analysis on the critical dynamics of 2023, and forward-looking perspectives for 2024 and beyond.

[Go to report](#)



Cash Flow Conundrum: Policy Shifts and Volatile Hawala Fees, January 2024

The conflict between Israel and Palestinian militant factions threatens to spill over into Syria, but as it stands, all sides have expressed their intent to avoid regional escalation. The Syrian government proposed a draft budget for 2024 of SYP 35.5 trn, 115% higher than for 2023, but 25% lower in dollar value. In the northeast, delays in the distribution of subsidized diesel and fuel for heating could prove disastrous with the onset of winter. In Deir-ez-Zor, the Autonomous Administration pledged reforms to appease unhappy tribes and locals following clashes with the SDF, but provided no plans for action. Government forces continued to bomb vital infrastructure, markets, hospitals and schools in northwest Syria, killing at least 70 people. Humanitarian actors are working hard to help residents amid funding and resource shortages.

[Go to report](#)

CONTACT

Eric Economy

Director, Crisis Analysis – Syria

eeconomy@mercycorps.org

Crisis Analysis – Syria (CA-SYR) was established in Beirut in March 2015 in response to the collective challenges facing the remote humanitarian response in Syria. CA-SYR's most important function is to collect and analyze data and information. Since 2015, our analysis has provided a forward-looking template for international interventions in Syria, and facilitated an increasingly adaptive, integrated, and ultimately impactful international response to the conflict. CA-SYR is a team within Mercy Corps, and is part of the Mercy Corps response to the Syrian crisis.



This report is for humanitarian/development purposes only. CA-SYR strives to ensure products are impartial. The content of this document does not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of Mercy Corps as an organization.