



ASSOCIATION OF
CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS

**INFORMATION
AND ADVICE
ABOUT TRAVELLING
TO SYRIA**



The Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against all travel to Syria

You are at risk if you travel to Syria. The whole of Syria is unsafe, and many ordinary Syrians say that foreigners are not welcome.

We want to ensure that you are fully informed about the situation in Syria. The aim of this leaflet is to help you make safe decisions. Please share this advice with others.

The Syrian regime has been undertaking an indiscriminate campaign of aerial bombardment since December 2013.

A number of UK nationals have been killed or injured whilst in Syria, and there is a high risk of terrorism and kidnap. The availability of medical support is very limited throughout the country, and there are regular disruptions to phone, internet, electricity and road networks. Travellers risk being stranded without the necessary support and are unlikely to reach their intended destination.

In addition, people face difficulties accessing cash. Contact with family and friends can become difficult or impossible.



TRAVEL WARNING FOR SYRIA

What are the risks from terrorism in Syria?

There are many terrorist and extremist groups fighting in Syria. The creation of a so-called Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria, and the Islamist extremism and export of terror on which it is based, is a direct threat to UK security.

Terrorist groups attack opposition members as often as they attack the Assad regime.

Terrorist groups target UK nationals, including for kidnap. Your family may face ransom demands to secure your freedom. The long standing policy of the British Government is not to make substantive concessions to hostage takers. The British Government considers that paying ransoms and releasing prisoners increases the risk of further hostage-taking.

The situation on the ground is changing all the time as groups change their structure and allegiance.

People seeking to travel to engage in terrorist activity in Syria should be in no doubt that we will take the strongest possible action to protect national security, including prosecuting those who break the law. We also have a wide range of powers at our disposal to disrupt travel and manage the risk posed by returnees.

TRAVEL WARNING FOR SYRIA

What could going to Syria mean?

The Assad regime now has a law stating that the punishment for illegally entering its territories is a prison sentence of 5 to 10 years.

As well as endangering your own life by travelling to Syria, you might put ordinary Syrians at risk by being a drain on their limited medical resources, food and shelter.

President Assad uses the presence of UK nationals in Syria to support the claim that his regime is fighting foreign terrorists. This means that travelling to Syria may unintentionally help Assad.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against all travel to Syria. Anyone who does travel, for whatever reason, is putting themselves in considerable danger. Both the regime and terrorist groups have attacked humanitarian aid workers and the moderate opposition. You are very likely to come into contact with terrorist groups and you may get drawn into their activities.

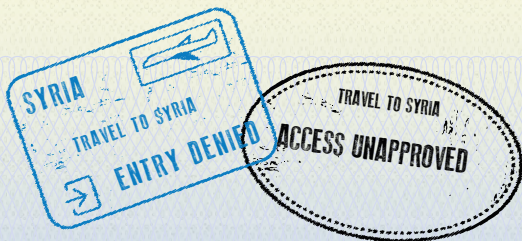


TRAVEL WARNING FOR SYRIA

What is the UK Government doing to help?

The UK has been at the forefront of the humanitarian response in Syria and the region. Funding for Syria and the region is now £600m, three times the size of our response to any other humanitarian crisis.

Non-government organisations and agencies in the region are using the money to provide food, water, shelter and medicine to hundreds of thousands of people across all areas of Syria (including opposition-held locations and contested areas).



TRAVEL WARNING FOR SYRIA

Helping the Syrian people

You can take action in your local area to fundraise or take part in practical action, for example, helping to pack supplies for Syria.

A number of well-established national and local charities are running campaigns to alleviate the crisis in Syria. They are experienced providers of humanitarian assistance in high risk, insecure, and dangerous environments.

The Charity Commission strongly advises against individuals taking money into Syria in person. The quickest, safest, and most effective way to help the Syrian people is by contributing to a registered charity in the UK.

Check the Charity Commission website (www.charitycommission.gov.uk) to ensure your chosen charity is registered. If a charity isn't registered, you can't be sure your donations will be used as intended.

TRAVEL WARNING FOR SYRIA

What about aid convoys?

- Charity law and laws against terrorism, bribery and corruption apply to those who deliver humanitarian aid directly. Cash above a certain limit that has not been declared may be seized at the airport by the Border Force.
- People who have travelled to deliver aid within Syria have been denied access to cross the border, or significantly delayed. There is also a risk of being denied exit. Charities unknown to the Free Syrian Army could be considered as hostile.
- Direct delivery of aid involves very high logistical costs. Your time, money and personal commitment can deliver greater support to the Syrian people by sending supplies through established charities and international relief organisations.
- People who have travelled to Syria have witnessed traumatic events, and may experience post traumatic stress disorder (including symptoms of stress and anxiety, anger, and disturbed sleep). Anyone who experiences these symptoms should consult their GP.

If you have any concerns about someone who's planning to travel to Syria, you should contact your local police or dial **101** (non-emergency). They'll talk with you in confidence.

To contact the confidential Anti-Terrorist Hotline dial **0800 789 321**.