

Schnellrecherche der SFH-Länderanalyse vom 3. Juni 2015 zu Syrien: Reisepässe

Frage an die SFH-Länderanalyse:

- Stellen die syrischen Botschaften Pässe aus?

Die Informationen beruhen auf einer zeitlich begrenzten Recherche (Schnellrecherche) in öffentlich zugänglichen Dokumenten, die uns derzeit zur Verfügung stehen sowie auf den Informationen von sachkundigen Kontaktpersonen.

1 Stellen die syrischen Botschaften Pässe aus?

Ein Syrien-Experte machte am 2. Juni 2015 darauf aufmerksam, dass die syrische Regierung vor etwa zwei Monaten kraft einer neuen Weisung die Ausstellung von Pässen in den syrischen Botschaften im Ausland erleichtert hat (Telefonische Information eines Syrien-Experten an die SFH, 2. Juni 2015).

Gemäss der betreffenden Weisung sollen vor der Ausstellung eines Passes keine wie bis anhin langwierigen Sicherheitsüberprüfungen durch die verschiedenen Geheimdienste mehr durchgeführt werden. Zudem müssen Personen, die ihren Pass verlängern oder erneuern wollen, nicht mehr nach Syrien zurückkehren. Auch Personen, die illegal ausgereist sind oder den obligatorischen Militärdienst nicht geleistet haben, sollen ihren Pass verlängern oder erneuern können.

Die *Los Angeles Times* berichtete bereits am 27. Februar 2015 über die betreffende Weisung der syrischen Regierung. *Al Jazeera* und *ARA News* berichteten erst im April 2015 darüber. Kurz vor Inkrafttreten der neuen Weisung wurden gemäss *Al Jazeera* (27. April 2015) die Kosten für einen Pass von 200 auf 400 US-Dollar verdoppelt.

Als Gründe für die Weisung werden genannt, dass die Regierung höhere Einkünfte erzielen aber auch gegen Passfälschungen vorgehen will. Der Syrien-Experte geht davon aus, dass die Weisung die Reaktion auf die Ausstellung von Pässen durch die syrische Opposition in Qatar ist (Vgl. dazu *Middle East Eye*, 13. Februar 2015). *ARA News* (28. April 2015) meint, dass das Regime damit eine bessere Ausgangslage bei den im Mai 2015 geplanten Gesprächen über künftige Friedensverhandlungen schaffen wollte.

Gemäss einem von *Al Jazeera* interviewten Journalisten, wurden in der syrischen Botschaft in Beirut Pässe innerhalb weniger Stunden verlängert. Anti-Regimeaktivisten sind jedoch skeptisch und befürchten, dass sich syrische Personen selbst gefährden, wenn sie einen Pass beantragen. Denn sie müssen gegenüber den Behörden ihre Daten und ihren Aufenthaltsort offenlegen. Auch ein in der Schweiz wohnhafter Syrien-Experte, weiss nicht, ob die syrischen Botschaften die Weisung tatsächlich in die Praxis umsetzen.

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Los Angeles Times, 27. Februar 2013:

«BEIRUT — The Syrian government appeared to make a significant concession to the opposition Wednesday, agreeing to renew the passports of millions of Syrians living abroad. A leading dissident figure had publicly pressed for the change. The state-run news service announced that the Interior Ministry had directed that expired passports be renewed for two years “regardless of the reasons that had earlier prevented their renewal, and without obtaining the necessary authorizations.” The pro-government daily Al Watan reported that the decision had been communicated to Syrian embassies abroad. The newspaper said more than 10 million Syrian nationals live outside Syria. Syrian expatriates have complained that embassies and consulates have refused to renew their passports, insisting that holders of expired documents return to Syria to sort out their paperwork. But many have resisted going back to their homeland, fearing they may face arrest or be caught up in the nation’s violence. Consequently, many Syrian expatriates have been left without valid documents needed for international travel, visa applications or identification purposes. The passport extension was a key demand from Moaz Khatib, who heads the principal opposition umbrella group, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. Late last month, Khatib offered to meet with representatives of President Bashar Assad for peace talks if the government met two conditions: releasing tens of thousands of prisoners and agreeing to renew the passports of expatriate Syrians, a category that includes many exiled regime opponents.» Quelle: Los Angeles Times, Syria agrees to renew passports of overseas citizens, 27. Februar 2013:

<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/feb/27/world/la-fg-wn-syria-renew-passports-overseas-citizens-20130227>.

Middle East Eye, 13. Februar 2015:

«Syria's opposition "embassy" in Qatar began Thursday to renew expired passports for some of the estimated 60,000 Syrians living in the tiny Gulf country, its chief said. Nizar Haraki, the opposition envoy, said this would help thousands of Syrians who fled the country to escape the conflict, which has killed at least 200,000 people since it erupted in 2011. It was not immediately clear whether the service would extend to Syrians living elsewhere. About half the country's people have fled their homes since the war broke out, with the United Nations saying 3.8 million of them are refugees, mostly in neighbouring countries. Haraki told AFP the service "removes a huge burden from the shoulders of Syrian expatriate citizens who are deprived of having a passport or being able to renew or extend it." Haraki said 52 countries had been contacted to ask if the passports would be accepted and that all but one, Canada, had said yes. Syrians in Qatar have two months from Thursday to apply for new paperwork to renew their passports. Last year it was estimated that some 40,000 Syrians had Qatari residency, while another 20,000 were on temporary visitors' visas. Haraki said he did not know how many people would apply, but dozens of Syrians went to the office Thursday. "There is no specific number of beneficiaries of the extension of the passport service, as it is provided for the first time," he said. "This project is to break the siege of injustice and loss imposed by the regime on the Syrian people, and allows every citizen to move freely and to provide a decent living for himself and his family," added Haraki.

Many Syrians have lived in Qatar for decades, but their numbers have increased because of the conflict. Qatar has relaxed its immigration rules to allow Syrians to stay in the country long term. Qatar has been one of the main supporters of the rebellion against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and has allowed demonstrations against him to be held in its capital, Doha. In February 2013, the emirate handed the Syrian embassy building in Doha to the Syrian National Coalition, the main opposition group, which was formed in Qatar in 2012.» Quelle: Middle East Eye, Syria opposition mission to renew passports in Qatar, 13. Februar 2015:

www.middleeasteye.net/news/syria-opposition-mission-renew-passports-qatar-297562137#sthash.iqZiVBAs.dpuf.

Al Jazeera, 27. April 2015:

«Syria's government has introduced new rules to allow Syrian refugees and citizens trapped in neighboring countries due to expired or lost passports to apply for renewals abroad — even if they fled the country illegally or failed to complete mandatory military service. Al-Watan, a pro-government daily newspaper, first reported over the weekend that the regime of President Bashar al-Assad would relax its onerous intelligence review process for passport applicants — who until this week had to apply in person at a security branch in the capital, Damascus — as a concession to the Syrian opposition ahead of rumored talks in Geneva next month aimed at reviving the stalled peace process. The regime's intelligence review process had long made it difficult for anyone who escaped the country's roiling war by sneaking across its porous borders or via rebel-held checkpoints — many out of fear of arrest or military conscription — to apply for travel documents. Refugees who flee Syria in a hurry often make the journey by foot in the middle of the night, and leave their passports behind out of fear they may be apprehended and identified. Over the past four years of Syria's war, many others have seen their passports expire, effectively thwarting any opportunity to escape the often-bleak circumstances in their countries of refuge. Starting this week, according to an official document seen by Al-Watan, passports will be issued to Syrians "even if they left in an illegal manner," so as to "facilitate their return to the country." Even though Damascus has not confirmed the policy shift through official channels, Syrians who caught word of the reports promptly queued up outside their country's consulates in places including Lebanon, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, local media said. Adel, a Syrian journalist for Lebanon-based ARA News who spoke under a pseudonym, said refugees who applied for new passports at the Syrian consulate in Beirut on Monday were being asked to present identification, a Lebanese entrance card and, for men, a military status card — even if it indicated they had not served in the army. For renewals, Syrians simply presented their passports and were granted extensions "in just a few hours," Adel said. "This is a major breakthrough for the people," he said. "There are nearly a million people trapped here in Lebanon and now there's a chance they can leave." Al-Watan noted that the relaxed policy comes just days after Damascus announced passport fees would double to \$400 for a new passport, and \$200 for a renewal. For the cash-strapped Syrian government, steeper fees and a wider pool of applicants could be "an important source of foreign exchange," the paper reported. Others interpreted the shift as a move to undermine the growing Syrian passport forgery business. Increasingly, Syrian expatriates and journalists say, desperate refugees — who are banned from working

in countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey and face acute discrimination by overstrained host societies — are pursuing any possible means to leave the region. Armed with fake travel documents, refugees are better able to board flights or vessels and claim asylum in places including Europe.

The new rules will apparently not distinguish between regime supporters and opponents, Al-Watan reported, though many anti-regime activists were skeptical about the apparent concession. They cited fears that applying for a new passport would alert Syrian authorities to their whereabouts, thereby jeopardizing their security. Al Jazeera was not able to reach Syria's consulates in Lebanon, Turkey or the United Arab Emirates for comment in time for publication.» Quelle: Al Jazeera, Syria relaxes passport rules, letting refugees and draft dodgers apply, 27. April 2015:
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/4/27/syria-relaxes-passport-rules-lets-refugees-apply.html>.

ARA News, 28. April 2015:

*«The Syrian authorities issued a decision to allow citizens who fled the war to obtain passports without an intelligence service review. It is the first time that the Syrian regime has taken such a step after four years of war. According to observers, this move by the Assad regime will facilitate the upcoming consultations in Geneva next month on the possibility of renewed peace talks between the regime and the opposition, to reach a political solution to the ongoing crisis. The Syrian Al-Watan newspaper reported that the new measures were detailed in a document sent on Thursday to Syrian embassies around the world. **“This authorised embassies to issue or renew passports for Syrians abroad without having to go through the department of emigration and passports in Damascus,”** Al-Watan reported. The new decision by the regime means that applications would no longer be subject to an intelligence services review as was often the case in the past. **“Passports will be issued to Syrians even if they left in an illegal manner or they hold non-official passports or travel documents,”** the document read. Many of the nearly four million Syrians who have fled their country's conflict left illegally, fearing arrest or conscription if they passed through an official crossing. Some have lost their passports or left them behind, and others have had their documents expire while they are away. Al-Watan added that this measure has long been called for by the opposition, and will allay many of the concerns of those who left Syria illegally and will facilitate their return.”* **It said the fees associated with obtaining a new passport or a renewal would also be “an important source of foreign exchange” for foreign currency-strapped Syria.**»
Quelle: ARA News, Syrian regime to issue passports for citizens abroad, including refugees, 28. April 2015:
<http://aranews.net/2015/04/syrian-regime-to-issue-passports-for-citizens-abroad-including-refugees/>.