



Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta  
an Duine agus Comhionannas  
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Helen McEntee TD,  
Minister for Justice,  
51 St Stephen's Green,  
Dublin 02 HK52.

12 December 2024

By email to: [minister@justice.ie](mailto:minister@justice.ie)

By registered post

Dear Minister,

On 10 December 2024, it was reported on RTÉ that you had announced that the International Protection Office would '*temporarily pause*' the issuing of final determinations for International Protection ('IP') applicants from Syria. No clarity on the intended length of this '*pause*' was reported, other than that it would continue '*while the situation in Syria is kept under review*'.<sup>1</sup> This morning you are reported as indicating that it would "*likely not be a long term pause*". It is further reported that you stated that "*we need to see how things transpire in the weeks ahead and obviously we'll be coming back to it, to hopefully be able to move past this*".<sup>2</sup>

While the Assad regime has collapsed, the situation in Syria is far from stable. Significant concerns have been raised in relation to the record of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham ('HTS')<sup>3</sup>, and HTS is but one of a number of militias who control different parts of Syria.

IP applicants from Syria remain entitled to a decision on their status with due expedition. Furthermore, the Commission would be most concerned if general, or blanket, decisions are taken in relation to IP applications from Syrian nationals, who have a legal entitlement to an individual decision on their application.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rte.ie/news/2024/1210/1485625-syrian-asylum-applications/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2024/1212/1486095-ireland-syria/>.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce313jn453zo>; and <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cz7qenxy8r2o>.



We would be grateful if you would please:

1. Indicate the legal basis for the introduction of this 'pause';
2. Provide more clarity on its expected duration;
3. Beyond the delay in receiving a final determination, clarify the practical implications (if any) for Syrian IP applicants already in the system, and also those who present seeking asylum after 10 December 2024 (e.g. access to reception conditions, or work permissions etc.); and
4. Describe the likely possible outcomes of such a 'pause' from your perspective.

Many thanks for your cooperation and we look forward to hearing from you.

In line with our publications policy, this letter will be published on our website. This policy only pertains to IHREC-issued communications, and not to correspondence received by us.

Yours sincerely,

Liam Herrick  
Chief Commissioner