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## Salary Increases, A Syrian Regime Policy Driving the Militarization of Society

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Analysis paper

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## Executive Summary

- There is a prevailing pattern in salary increase process in Syria along two main trends: Prices of subsidized basic goods are increased by the regime's government and soon after the head of the regime increases salaries, or vice versa, so that when salaries are increased by the head of the regime, then the government increases the prices of goods. In both cases the price of basic goods or salary increases happen within a very short time frame.
- Salaries reached their peak against the dollar in April 2011, before shrinking against it despite the successive increases in salaries. Today, salaries have reached lowest levels against the dollar since 2000.
- Salary increases were decided in equal proportion between the civil and military sectors until 2018 when Bashar al-Assad exclusively increased the salaries of army soldiers several times, while civilian salaries were not increased.
- Salaries are shrinking compared to the cost of living, as the minimum salary of 92,970 Syrian Pound is barely enough to cover expenses three days a month due to the deteriorating economic conditions in the country.
- Salary values denominated in dollars indicate a clear impact of the Lebanese banking crisis that began in 2019. This crisis was reflected in the depreciation of the value of the Syrian Pound against the dollar, and thus the value of salaries.
- The salary increase policy is one of the leading factors in the further militarization of society, by pushing young people to join the military or join militias and become mercenaries operating both inside and outside the borders of the country. This became an additional factor driving migration.
- The salary increase policy was adopted by the regime because it needed to motivate large groups of people to join official military institutions or militias. That is done by ensuring that the salary of the lowest ranking soldier in the military sector is greater than the salary of the highest income earners in the public sector.

## Introduction

The problem of Syria's public sector salaries, both civilian and military, is one of the chronic problems with historical roots extending back half a century. During the era of Hafez al-Assad, public sector employees experienced long consecutive years of deterioration of the value of their salaries as a result of the government's economic policies, which continued into the era of Bashar al-Assad. This was despite his "attempts" to improve the living conditions of public sector employees at the expense of supporting other sectors such as agriculture and industry.

The difference between the salaries of civilians and the military personnel was of little importance, as the overall goal was to pay attention to the salaries of the public sector as a whole, including the military. However, developments since 2011, have shed light on the various aspects of the state, including how it disperses salaries. However, until now the information has not yet been properly detailed nor has a proper comparison that accurately assesses the differences in civilian and military salary increases in Syria been attempted.

Civilian public sector salaries are determined based on the state's basic labor system<sup>(1)</sup>, while military salaries are determined based on the Military Service Law for army soldiers<sup>(2)</sup>, and the Internal Security Forces Service Law for members of the Internal Security Forces. Their executive instructions are issued by the Commander-in-Chief for the army and armed forces<sup>(3)</sup>.

Historically, salary increases were issued by legislative decrees from the head of the regime during both the eras of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad. Salary increases have never been issued by the relevant state institutions; nor have there ever been any successful calls or pressures to increase salaries; neither the parliament nor trade unions have any role since they were under direct command of Hafez al-Assad in the 80's.

Salary increases have always been associated with an increase in the prices of basic goods; the prices of which are set by the government. These increases also included an increase in equal proportions in both the civilian and military sectors. As for the increases that took place after 2011, they came as a result of the increase in inflation and the decrease in the exchange rate of the Syrian Pound. The latter were accompanied by steady increases in the prices of basic goods in light of the deteriorating living conditions.

By 2018, military salaries were raised exclusively without any relation to increases to civilians in the public sector. In some cases, only certain groups of military personnel received raises while others were excluded. In addition, a pay gap started to appear in favor of military personnel over the Internal Security Forces even though by law they had an equal salary scale. The Internal Security Forces' suspicions were not in vain since a legislative decree contained in Article 87 of the Military Service Law annulled the current salary scale and replaced it with a new scale that includes higher salaries without being determined by a specific percentage.

<sup>(1)</sup> "Law 50 of 2004, the basic system for workers in the state", Syrian parliament, date of publication: 06 December 2004, date of access: 20/10/2022, link: <https://bit.ly/3hqpbF>.

<sup>(2)</sup> "Legislative Decree No. 18 of 2003, Military Service Law", Syrian parliament, published: April 21, 2003, Accessed: 14/01/2022, Link: <https://bit.ly/3GyL0Cq>.

<sup>(3)</sup> "Legislative Decree 1 of 2012, Internal Security Forces Service Law", Syrian parliament, date of publication: January 2, 2012, date of access 16/05/2022, link: <https://bit.ly/3lbG5hA>.

This paper assesses all public sector salaries in Syria starting in 1994, the last year in which salaries were increased by Hafez al-Assad, until 2022. The paper analyzes the trends of increases in general to detect patterns in the policy approaches of the regime regarding salary increases between the civilian and military sectors; to provide a comparison of civilian and the military salaries, find their values and what they are equivalent to in dollars according to the central bank and the black-market rates, as well as the value of income taxes imposed on them. The paper provides an interactive tool that helps make comparisons between different salary categories in the Syrian Pound and the US dollar, through the use of quantitative analysis tool, relying on official sources and mathematical equations to reach the value of salaries and ensure their validity<sup>(4)</sup>.

## Salary Increases Since 1994

It is customary in Syria for public salaries to be raised biennially, at a rate of 25%, while the inflation rate exceeded 30% annually - before 2011. Thus, workers and employees lose 17% of the value of their salaries annually as a result of the decline in the purchasing power of the Syrian Pound.<sup>(5)</sup> The last increase in salaries during the era of Hafez al-Assad was executed through Legislative Decree No. 3 of 1994<sup>(6)</sup>. There were no more increases for six years until after the succession of power by Bashar al-Assad in 2000. By that time salaries steadily eroded, and their proportion in the national GDP decreased. The state sought to stabilize salaries and wages through a clear policy to reduce the volume of aggregate demand on the one hand; and to reduce costs through a policy of cheap wages on the other hand.

Less than two months after the succession of power, Bashar al-Assad issued the first salary increase since 1994, in an attempt to send a clear message that "economic recovery is near and that the state of economic stagnation from 1995-2000 has ended". However, the salary increase policy remained the same as before, salaries were increased approximately every two years, except for the period between 1994-2000. During the period between 2000 and 2010, 7 legislative decrees related to salaries were issued. Some of the increases included the entire sector of public civilian employees; while other increases were specific to the military - as explicit increases - such as amending their salary scale, or highlighting special cases such as re-defining at the ranks of Candidate and 1<sup>st</sup> Candidate. (Murashah)

On the other hand, there were a greater number of legislative decrees related to salaries during the period between 2011-2022. 14 legislative decrees have been issued since March 2011, some of which included exclusive increases for the military. The period after 2011 witnessed double the number of legislative decrees related to salaries compared to the previous period; in an attempt by the regime to bridge and repair the gap between the price of the Syrian Pound and the US Dollar. The following table shows the referenced legislative decrees and percentages of salary increases from 2000 to 2022<sup>(7)</sup>:

<sup>(4)</sup> One of the mathematical equations used to calculate salaries after Legislative Decree 44 of 2011: where (J7) refers to the salary value in 2008: =CEILING(IF((J7+1500)>10000;(((J7+1500)-10000) \* 20%)+(10000\*30%))+J7+1500);(J7+1500)\* 30% +(J7+1500));5)

<sup>(5)</sup> Ali Kanaan, "Stagnation in Syria", Mafhum website, link: <https://bit.ly/3Cocmdu>.

<sup>(6)</sup> Legislative Decree 3 of 1994 issued on 30/4/2000, which includes granting an increase of 30% from the monthly lump sum salary or wage to the lump sum monthly salaries and wages for both civil and military workers in the state.

<sup>(7)</sup> Legislative decrees do not include increases in pensions.

Before 2011				
#	Legislative Decree	Date	Text	Note
1	Legislative Decree No. 36 of 2000	26/8/2000	Granting an increase of 25% of the lump sum monthly salaries and wages to all workers in the state.	
2	Legislative Decree No. 28 of 2002	13/5/2002	Granting an increase of 20% of the lump sum monthly salaries and wages to all workers in the state.	
3	Legislative Decree No. 30 of 2004	11/5/2004	Granting a 20% increase in salaries and lump sum wages.	
4	Legislative Decree No. 14 of 2006	1/2/2006	Granting an increase of 5% and adding 800 SP to lump sum salaries and wages.	
5	Legislative Decree No. 24 of 2006	18/4/2006	Amending Article 87 of the Military Service Law and adopting new salaries for officers and non-commissioned officers in the army.	Hidden increase for the military
6	Legislative Decree No. 24 of 2008	1/5/2008	Granting a 25% increase in salaries and lump sum wages.	
7	Legislative Decree No. 63 of 2010	8/8/2010	The ranks of candidate and first candidate for the army have been added and thus the value of their salaries has been added to the lump-sum salary schedule contained in Article 87 of the Military Service Law.	

Table (1): Legislative decrees regarding salary increases before 2011

After 2011				
#	Legislative Decree	Date	Text	Note
1	Legislative Decree No. 40 of 2011	24/03/2011	Granting a salary increase in two tranches: A: An increase of 1,500 SP over the lump sum salaries; B: An increase of 30% for the first 10 thousand SP of the salary, then 20% for the rest of the salary.	It was completely amended by Legislative Decree 44 of 2011
2	Legislative Decree No. 44 of 2011	30/3/2011	Amending the previous decree and considering 1,500 SP as compensation for heating and adjusting prices, then an increase of 30% for the first 10,000 SP of the salary, then 20% for the rest of the salary.	
3	Legislative Decree No. 38 of 2013	22/6/2013	Granting salary increases through several tranches as follows: A- 40% on the first 10,000 SP; B- 20% on the second 10,000 SP; C- 10% on the third 10,000 SP; D- 5% on more than the last 10 thousand SP.	
4	Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2015	18/1/ 2015	Granting a living allowance of 4,000 thousand SP per month	This is the first time that this allowance has been granted and it is not considered part of the lump sum salary.
5	Legislative Decree No. 41 of 2015	23\9\2015	Granting an increase of 2,500 SP over the lump sum salary.	

6	Legislative Decree No. 51 of 2015	21/12/2015	Amending Paragraph /5/ of Article 87 of the Military Service Law, as this article is specific to the "aviation salary" of pilot officers.	Increase of the "aviation salary" for pilot officers <sup>8</sup> .
7	Legislative Decree No. 13 of 2016	18/6/2016	Granting a living allowance of 7,500 SP per month, in addition to the previous living allowance of 4,000 SP issued by Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2015.	The (compulsory) military personnel were granted this allowance in addition to their salaries, while they were not included in the first living allowance.
8	Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2018	23/5/2018	The military salary scale contained in Article 87 of the Military Service Law has been annulled and replaced with a new schedule that includes an increase in their salaries, ranging according to rank from 3% to 37% for officers, and between 3% to 18% for non-commissioned officers.	Hidden increase for the military
9	Legislative Decree No. 8 of 2018	4/6/2018	Granting an increase in the salaries of military personnel only, as follows: (A)- Adding the living allowance amounts /4,000 + 7,500/ previously mentioned in Legislative Decrees No. 7 of 2015 and 13 of 2016 to the lump sum salaries, then calculating a 30% increase in the lump sum salary.	This is the first time that the salaries of army have been exclusively and explicitly increased, and that did not include members of the Internal Security Forces.
10	Legislative Decree No. 20 of 2018	23/12/2018	Increasing the "aviation salary" for pilot officers to three times the "aviation salary" contained in Legislative Decree No. 51 of 2015, in addition to settling the issue of the differences between the graduate officer's salary and the salary it was receiving as an officer cadet. The decree also stipulates an increase in allowances, bonuses, and rewards granted to all military personnel in general, to 8% of the basic monthly salary.	The 8% is not calculated as an increase in the lump sum salary <sup>9</sup> .
11	Legislative Decree No. 23 of 2019	21/11/2019	Granting an increase in the salaries of the military and civilians by adding an amount of 20,000 SP to the monthly salaries and wages lump sum for both civilian and military workers after adding the living allowance of /4,000 + 7,500/ previously mentioned in Legislative Decrees No. 7 of 2015 and 13 of 2016, to the lump sum salaries and is considered part of it, considering Legislative Decree No. 8 of 2018.	
12	Legislative Decree No. 19 of 2021	11/7/2021	Granting a salary increase of 50% of the monthly lump sum salaries and wages for both civil and military workers.	
13	Legislative Decree No. 29 of 2021	15/12/2021	Granting an increase in the salaries of the military and civilians by 30% of the value of the monthly salaries and wages for both civilian and military workers.	

<sup>(8)</sup> "Aviation salary" is an additional salary allocated to pilot officers, added to the lump sum salary and not considered part of it. It was mentioned in Article 87 of the Military Service Law, Ibid.

<sup>(9)</sup> The amount of 8% granted to the military is not an increase on the basic salary, but rather a determination of the number of allowances, bonuses and rewards on the basis of the monthly salary, and it constituted a mistake in this regard when it was published.



14	At the beginning of 2022, a legislative decree was issued	1/1/2022	It requires adjusting the salaries of military personnel in the army so that the military hierarchy corresponds to the financial hierarchy of officers and non-commissioned officers, and there have been increases exclusively in the wages and salaries of officers and non-commissioned officers in the army in varying proportions, as the salaries of officers increased by more than 35% and the salaries of non-commissioned officers increased from 15 to 20%, each according to their rank.
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Table (2): Legislative decrees for salary increases after 2011

## A Reading of Salary Increase Methods and its Effects

The regime used a method of indirect taxation to finance the increase in salaries and wages. Taxes on petroleum products, cement, fertilizers, and mineral oils are increased under a pretext of “price differences”. As a result, the price of basic goods and services increases and become less competitive in domestic and regional markets<sup>(10)</sup>. This general pattern in the increase of salaries and wages closely coincides with a rise in the price of basic goods, an economic pattern prevailing for decades. However, the rising price of basic goods and services is not always accompanied by an increase in salaries and wages, as the regime’s government may raise the price of basic materials several times before salaries and wages are increased. This indicates a deep economic flaw in the state management of the industrial and manufacturing sector. These unrealistic increases attempt to control prices, and encourage inflation as well. The following are salary increases that coincided with a rise in the price of basic goods:

Before 2011					
#	Legislative decree	Date	Decision	Date	Note
1	Legislative Decree No. 28 of 2002, providing for an increase of 20% of lump sum salaries and wages	13/5/2002	The Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade raised the prices of diesel fuel to 8.4 SP, gasoline to 24 SP, gas to 142, and kerosene and bread <sup>(11)</sup>	14/5/2002	
			The Ministry of Electricity raised the price per kilowatt-hour of electricity	14/5/2002	
2	Legislative Decree No. 14 of 2006 stipulating an increase of 5% and the addition of 800 SP to lump sum salaries	1/2/2006	The Ministry of Economy and Trade raised the price of petrol to 30 SP	24/6/2006	
3	Legislative Decree No. 24 of 2008, providing for an increase of 25% of lump sum salaries and wages	1/5/2008	The Ministry of Economy and Trade raised the price of diesel fuel to 25 SP, an increase of 350%, and raised the price of gas cylinders to 250 SP, an increase of 172% from 142 SP.	30/4/2008	Previously, in March 2008, the price of petrol was raised to 40 SP

Table (3): Legislative decrees related to salary increases and in connection with raising the prices of basic materials before 2011

<sup>(10)</sup> Ali Kanaan, Ibid.<sup>(11)</sup> The name of the ministry changed several times after 2000.

After 2011					
#	Legislative decree	Date	Decision	Date	Note
1	Legislative Decree 44 of 2011	30/3/2011	This decree was not accompanied by an increase in basic materials, but it was followed in the month of May by reducing the price of diesel fuel to 15 SP and setting the price of a kilo of bread at 20 SP in an attempt to alleviate popular tension, and in order to win over the people revolting against the regime, but this did not last long before the price of basic materials was raised later.		
2	Legislative Decree No. 38 of 2013, to increase salaries across several tranches	22/6/2013	The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of petrol to 80 SP	15/5/2013	Previously, in March 2013, the price of petrol was raised to 65 SP
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of a gas cylinder to 1,000 SP	22/5/2013	
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of diesel fuel to 60 SP	20/6/2013	
3	Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2015 granting a living allowance of 4,000 thousand SP per month	18/1/2015	The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of bread to 35 SP	17/1/2015	
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of diesel fuel to 125 SP	17/1/2015	
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of a gas cylinder to 1,500 SP	17/1/2015	
4	Legislative Decree No. 41 of 2015, providing for an increase of 2,500 SP	23/9/2015	The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of diesel fuel to 135 SP	8/10/2015	Previously, in August 2015, the price of diesel fuel was raised to 130 SP
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of a gas cylinder to 1,800 SP		
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of bread to 50 SP		
5	Legislative Decree No. 13 of 2016 granting a living allowance of 7,500 SP per month	18/6/2016	The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of diesel fuel to 180 SP	16/6/2016	
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of a gas cylinder to 2,500 SP		

			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of gasoline (90) to 225 SP		
6	Legislative Decree No. 19 of 2021, stipulating a 50% salary raise	11/7/2021	The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of gasoline (95) to 3,000 SP, an increase of 20%.		6/7/2021
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of diesel fuel to 500 SP, an increase of 277%.		10/7/2021
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of bread to 200 SP, by 100%.		
			In fact, purchasing power has been severely eroded as a result of raising the price of the two most basic materials, diesel and bread. The salary equivalent to 50 thousand SP, bought, before the increase, 500 bundles of bread or 277 liters of fuel oil, but after the increase in salaries and raising the prices, the salary became 75 thousand SP, but only buys 375 bundles of bread or 150 liters of fuel oil.		The price of bread was 100 SP
7	Legislative Decree No. 29 of 2021, providing for a 30% salary increase	15/12/2021	The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of gas cylinders to 9,700 SP, an increase of 152%.		2/11/2021
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of unsubsidized (90) gasoline to 2,500 SP, by 25%.		11/11/2021
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of industrial diesel to 1,700 SP, by 161%.		
			The Ministry of Internal Trade raised the price of subsidized gasoline (90) to 1,100 SP, by about 47%.		11/12/2021
8	Exclusion from support "Buy at free price"	1/2/2022	Bread	1,300	The government issued a decision to exclude 596,628 families who hold a "smart card" from subsidies, and therefore these families must purchase basic materials at the free price.
			Benzene	2,500	
			Diesel	1,700	
			Gas	30,000	

Table (4): Legislative decrees related to increasing salaries and in connection with raising the prices of basic materials after 2011<sup>(12)</sup>.

## Comparing Civilian and Military Salary Scales

2018 was the first time a major change in the balance of salary increases appeared between civilian and military public employees. For the first time a legislative decree was issued including an explicit increase in the salaries of army soldiers that excluded other public sector

<sup>(12)</sup> The prices of basic materials that coincided with the increase in salaries were monitored, without tracking all the increases in the prices of those materials that were constantly rising without there being an increase in salaries.

employees, including the Internal Security Forces (police). Those increases came as a reward for the military's efforts in preventing the fall of the regime in the face of the revolution. It was also an attempt to equate the salaries of the military to the salaries granted by militias to its members. Making a comparison between salaries and privileges of different armed factions in the state pushed society further towards militarization and encouraged civilians to join militias or the military institution<sup>(13)</sup>. People preferred salaries granted by militias because they are greater than those officially granted in the state military institution. The salaries of the latter are greater than those of the civil sector, noting that there are official and unofficial privileges granted to members of the army, armed forces, and militia members that increase their total monthly income. It is a common misconception that the exclusive salary increases for military personnel in 2018 was a result of a Russian request, but instead stems from the regime's need to militarize society. **(See the appendix for the salaries of employees in the state including public and military sectors; and the internal security forces in the period between 1994 - 2022)**

The comparison is between civilian and military personnel at entry-level pay scale and between the highest category among a civilian employee that hold a Ph.D degree and the starting scale of military personnel (soldier).<sup>(14)</sup> The reasons for this comparison are: The aforementioned salaries are the entry-level salaries, i.e., the salary of a Ph.D degree holder cannot be compared with the salary of a Captain ranking in the army, because a Captain has 10 years of experience in public service. The differences between the salaries of these two categories are limited, however, there is a preponderance of military salaries over civilians of the same entry level scale<sup>(15)</sup>.

### A) Based on the Syrian Pound

It is noted that the gap in Syrian Pound between entry-level salaries of a soldier (rank: Private) and a civilian holding a Ph.D. degree has declined even further after 2011 until it became very small following Legislative Decree No. 8 of 2018. The percentage of the difference between the salaries in both categories in 2000 was 236% in favor of a civilian with a Ph.D. degree. This percentage fell to 178.9% in 2011, and reached 1.9% in 2022. This assumes counting gross salaries before income tax is calculated.

<sup>(13)</sup> Muhsen AlMustafa: "The Comparison between Militias and the Army: Indicators of an Increase in Mercenaries," Omran Center for Strategic Studies, publication date: October 06, 2022, access date: 20/10/2022, link: <https://bit.ly/3DiG3gy>.

<sup>(14)</sup> The rank of soldier in the army is granted to those who volunteered based on a basic education certificate.

<sup>(15)</sup> The interactive tool included on the website enables the user (reader) to carry out the comparisons he wants for all military classes and ranks in the appropriate manner.

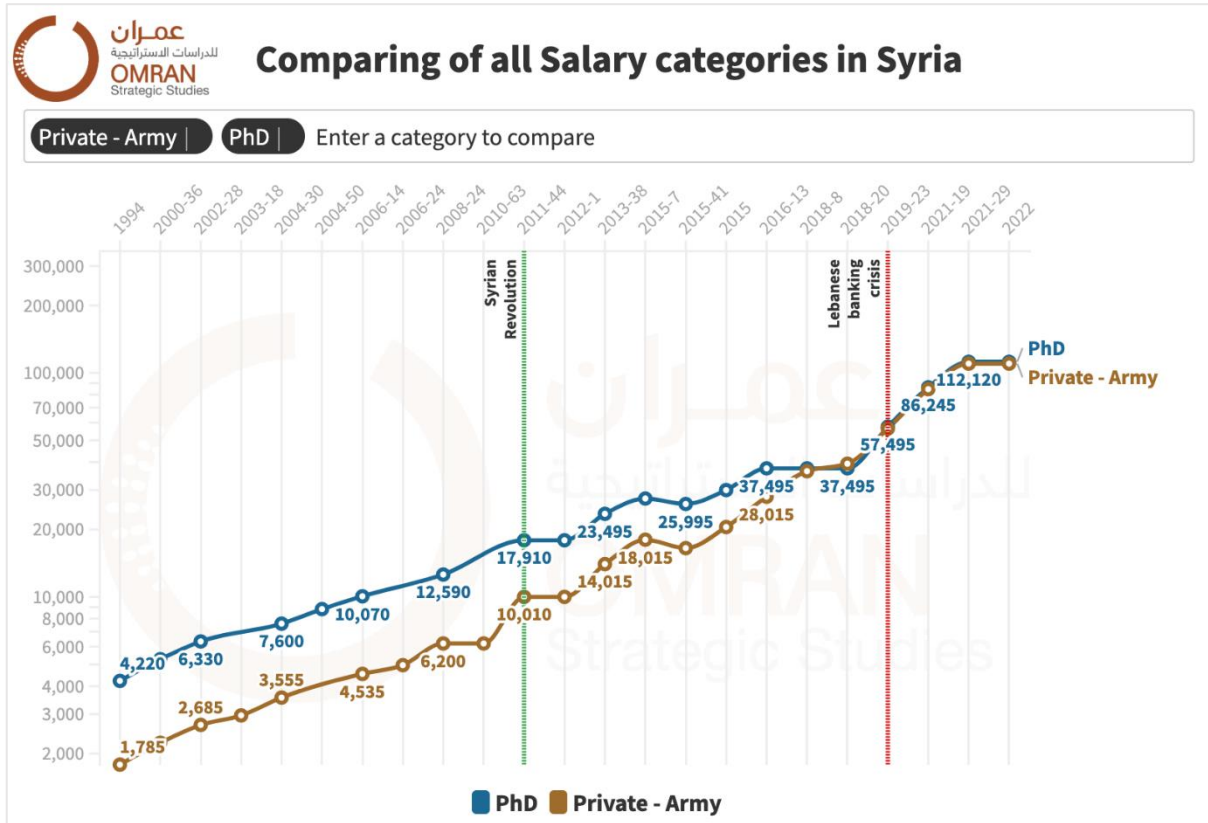


Figure (1): Comparison of salaries according to the Syrian Pound for both doctoral and soldier ranks

## B) Based on the US Dollar

Prices of goods and services are often indexed on the US dollar and converted to Syrian Pound at the time of contracting. Salaries reached their peak value in US dollars by the end of March 2011, after the issuance of Legislative Decree No. 44 of 2011, coinciding with the beginning of the Syrian revolution. In the meantime, the price of the dollar was equal to 47 SP according to the official exchange rate and 52 SP according to the black-market price<sup>(16)</sup>. Later, with the declining value of the Syrian Pound, the salary value against the dollar gradually declined, as the successive increases in salaries from March 2011 to 2022 could not prevent this decline or even flatten its loss in value against the US dollar at the very least. It is also noted that the Lebanese financial crisis in 2019 affected the SP, which led to a further decline in the value of salaries on the basis of the dollar. Starting salaries for Ph.D. holders, when measured in dollars between 2000 and 2022, shrank by a very large percentage, approximately 360.8%. While the salary of a soldier witnessed only a 156.3% decline in starting salaries during the same period due to the consecutive increases of exclusively military salaries.

<sup>(16)</sup> The exchange rate according to the central bank is indicated by \$F, while the exchange rate according to the black-market is indicated by \$B.

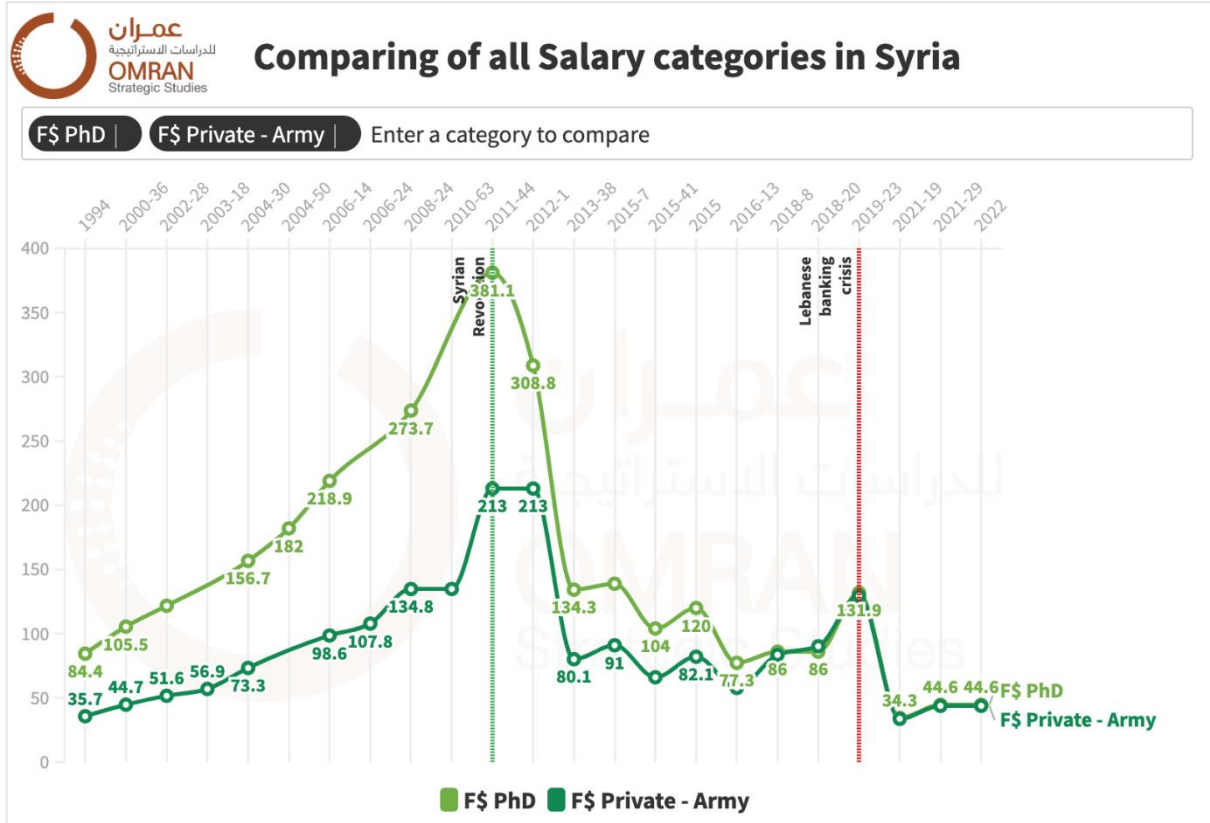


Figure (2): Salaries are denominated in dollars, according to the official rate from the Central Bank

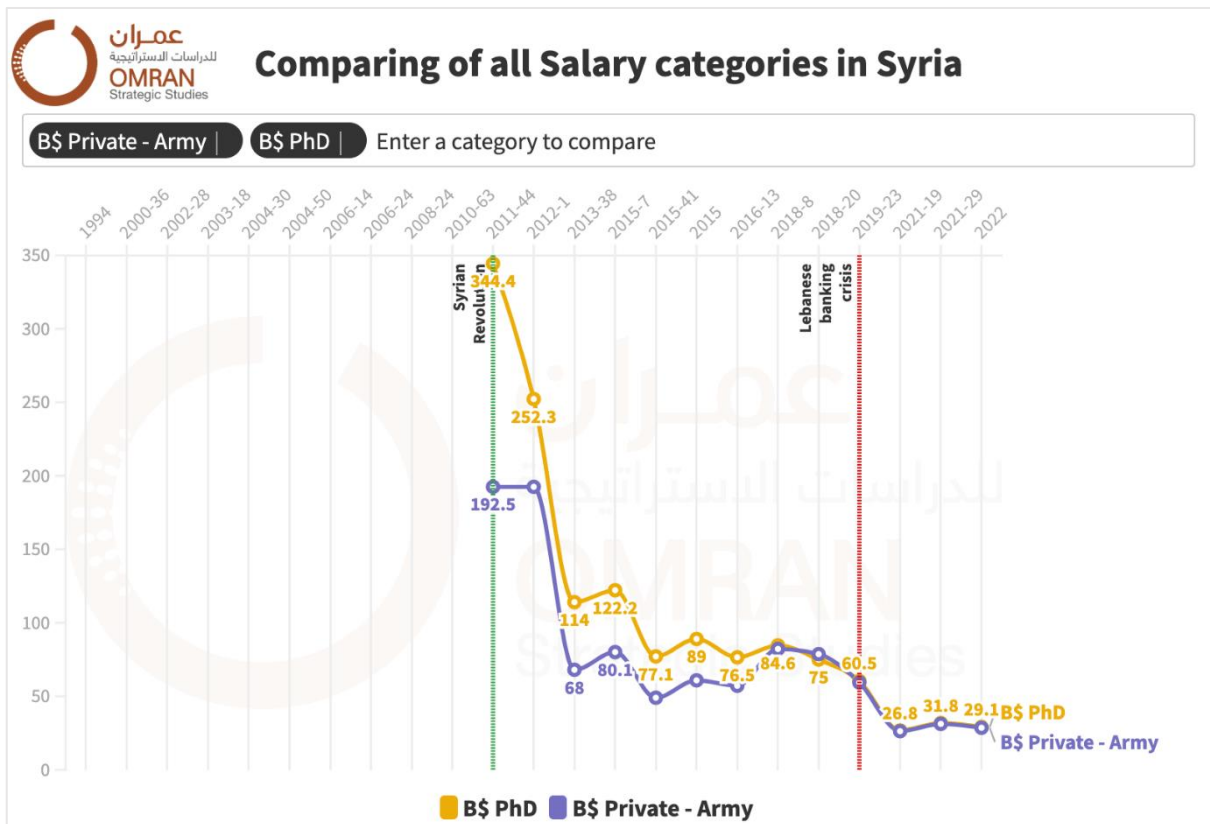


Figure (3): Salaries are denominated in dollars according to the black market

## Income Tax Collection and Military Exemption

The income tax law has undergone several amendments since Bashar al-Assad came to power. In 2001, he issued Legislative Decree No. 8 exempting the first 1,000 SP of the monthly salary from income tax. Later, the first 5,000 SP of the salary was exempt from income tax under the new income tax law No. 24 of 2003. The income tax law was amended several times, the most recent of which was Legislative Decree 24 of 2020<sup>(17)</sup>, which included an exemption of the first 50,000 SP of the salary from income tax by amending Articles 68 and 69 and abolishing Legislative Decree 46 and 48 of 2015.

**The main point here** is that the income tax law exempted, in Article 67, “military personnel of the armed forces, members of the internal security forces and firefighting personnel,” in addition to other categories, from income tax. This was not applied to public and private sector employees. Legislative Decree No. 18 of 2003, which includes the Article 81 of the Military Service Law, confirmed that military personnel benefit from a set of exemptions, including exemption from income taxes and various compensations and allowances. Legislative Decree No. 1 of 2012, which includes Article 155 of the Internal Security Forces Service Law, gave the Internal Security Forces the same exemptions granted to army soldiers. Thus, if the starting gross salaries of both a Ph.D. holder and the lowest ranking soldier in the army are compared before and after-tax deductions, we find that the net salary of the soldier is greater than the net salary of a Ph.D. holder<sup>(18)</sup>:

Category	Starting Salary	4% Deduction	6% Deduction	8% Deduction	Total Deductions	Net Salary
PhD	112,120	1,200	1,800	169.6	3,169.6	108,950
Private	110,020	Exempt from income tax			0	110,020

Table (5): Comparison between the income tax applied to the salary of a Private and a Ph.D. holder

## Salary Increases and the Cost of Living

According to cost of living figures in Syria provided by the “Kassioun Index” consistently for many years, current salaries do not cover the expenses for three days of living<sup>(19)</sup>. The cost of living index in September 2022 for a Syrian family consisting of five members reached 3.6 million SP. This is an unprecedented rise during a record period that threatened millions of Syrians who live in a catastrophic widening gap between the cost of living and the minimum

<sup>(17)</sup> Article 68:

A: The tax rate, including national defense additions, school fees, the municipality’s share, and the cash contribution to support sustainable development, is determined as follows:

4 % of the part of the monthly net income that falls between the exempted minimum and 80,000 SYP.	12 % of the part of the monthly net income between 170,001 and 200,000 SYP.
6 % of the part of the monthly net income between 80,001 and 110,000 SYP.	14 % of the part of the monthly net income between 200,001 and 230,000 SYP.
8 % of the part of the monthly net income between 110,001 and 140,000 SYP.	16 % of the part of the monthly net income between 230,001 and 260,000 SYP.
10 % of the part of the monthly net income between 140,001 and 170,000 SYP.	18 % of the part of the monthly net income that exceeds 260,000 SYP.

B: The tax rate is set at 10% for each gross payment.

Article 69: A tax-exempt minimum of 50,000 SP per month shall be deducted from the net income.

<sup>(18)</sup> Compensations and bonuses were not calculated for both categories, given that the focus is on gross salaries and income tax.

<sup>(19)</sup> Kassioun Index: A cost-of-living index issued periodically by Kassioun magazine affiliated with the Popular Will Party headquartered in Damascus, <https://kassioun.org/>

salary for an entry-level public employee. The beginning monthly salary scale remains at the threshold of 92,970 SP (less than half of the cost of the minimum monthly nutrition needs per worker alone)<sup>(20)</sup>. This economic reality has left 90% of Syria's population living below the poverty line; many of them forced to make very difficult choices to cover their expenses<sup>(21)</sup>. The cost of living over the years compared with the minimum salary is illustrated in the following figure:

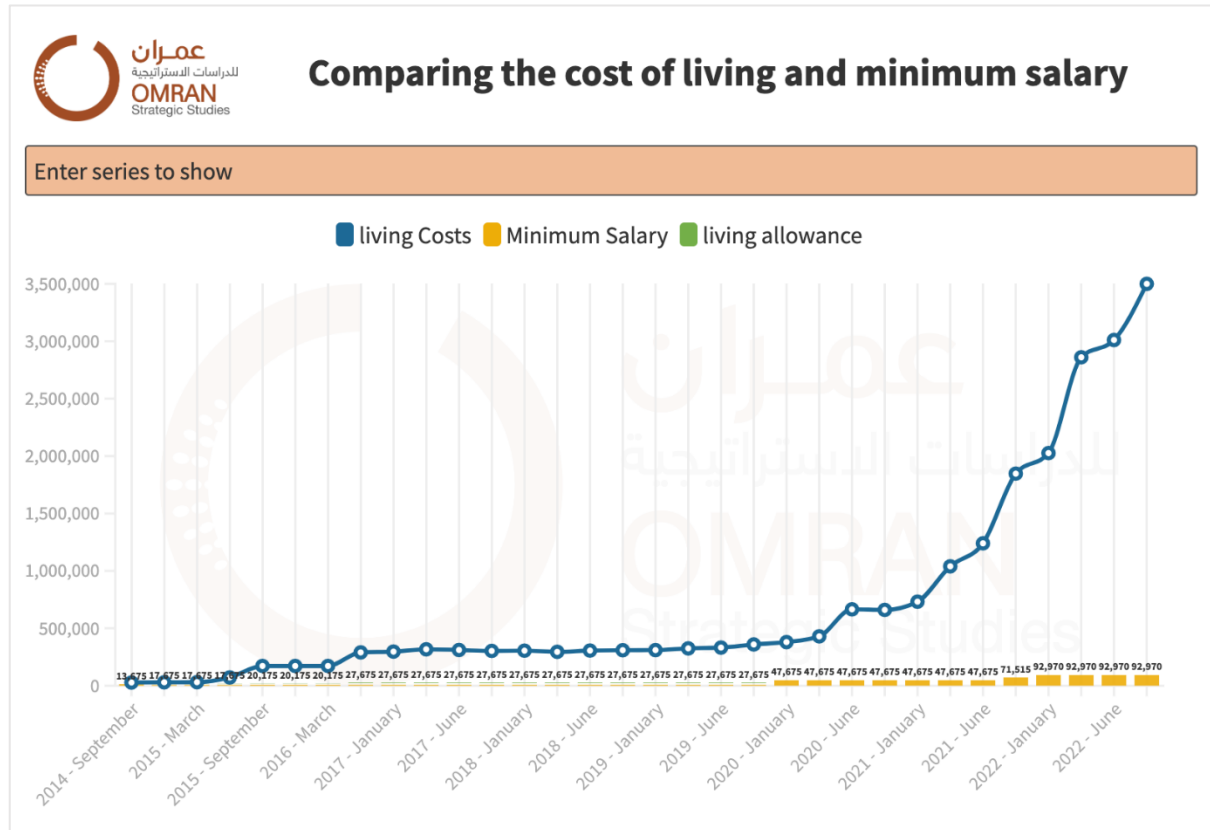


Figure (4) The difference between the cost of living and the minimum salary

## Conclusion

Public sector employees do not depend solely on their salaries, which are barely sufficient to cover the cost of living for several days. Instead, they depend on various sources of income, such as financial transfers coming from abroad, or having a second job in the private sector. In addition, their supplemental income may be sourced in illegal forms of income as a result of financial corruption and bribery in government offices and institutions. As for the military, despite their salary increases, they have alternative sources of income, all of which are illegal; through looting, extortion, racketeering, and checkpoint taxes. Additionally, financial corruption related to purchases, contracts, and tenders of the Ministry of Defense that are supervised by procurement committees in military units are carried out in an exclusive manner only benefiting specific groups of officers and non-commissioned officers.

<sup>(20)</sup> “3.5 million, the average cost of living for the Syrian family at the gates of winter,” Kassiou Magazine, date of publication: September 26, 2022, access date: 1/10/2022, link: <https://bit.ly/3fN2SB1>.

<sup>(21)</sup> “Griffiths to the Security Council: 90% of Syrians live below the poverty line,” Al-Jazeera Net, date of publication: October 28, 2021, date of access: 25/03/2022, link: <https://bit.ly/3RUnLaK>.



The foregoing is nothing but a natural product of a dictatorial state that puts all its resources at the service of its own military machine. It does not work to create a well-developed civilian state. It is a product of a country torn by war waged by the regime against the Syrian people. The regime's salary increase policy can be summarized as follows:

- A policy that incentivize the militarization of society and the transformation of military duty into a profession like any other profession. This was done through contracting with civilians or military personnel as mercenaries within the militias or sending mercenaries to areas of armed conflict under Russian supervision.
- Creating a repellent unstable environment:
  1. The policy led to increased migration waves, especially by educated classes, because even those who have higher degrees in the public sector are unable to make more money than the starting salary of the lowest grade military personnel that has an elementary school education. The regime's message to young people is, "Don't learn, go and work in the army."
  2. The regime's policy also aimed to send young people abroad in order for them to send remittances to their families later. Thus, the regime benefits from the foreign exchange transferred to areas under their control in addition to these young people paying huge sums of money in order to be exempt from compulsory or reserve military service, which costs each person 5-10 thousand dollars as a fee according to the type of military service and the duration of their stay outside the country.

**This policy is a warning to countries hosting refugees, given that returning them to regions controlled by the regime, while taking their safety into account, will force the majority of them into the predetermined fate of "engaging" in the military institution or joining an armed militia. The reality is that working in such jobs in the military sector is the only promising career option for young Syrians in regime-controlled areas.**

## Appendix: Salary Scale in Syria

The following is the salary scale for civilians, military personnel, and internal security forces, starting from the last increase during era of Hafez al-Assad in 1994 until 2022:

### First: Public Sector Salaries

Category Year	PhD	Master	Medicine-High studies	Diploma - 5 years	College degree	institute	Industrial, commercial high school	High School	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade	Note
1994 -2000	4,220	3,935	3,935	3,935	3,655	3,155	2,990	2,660	2,200	2,115	Before the succession of power to Bashar al-Assad
2000-36	5,275	4,920	4,920	4,920	4,570	3,945	3,740	3,325	2,750	2,645	The first salary increases in the era of Bashar al-Assad
2002-28	6,330	5,905	5,905	5,905	5,485	4,735	4,490	3,990	3,300	3,175	
2004-30	7,600	7,090	7,090	7,086	6,582	5,682	5,388	4,788	3,960	3,810	
2004-50	8,825	7,625	7,090	6,825	6,585	5,685	5,390	5,140	3,960	3,810	Basic Workers Law
2006-14	10,070	8,810	8,245	7,970	7,715	6,770	6,460	6,200	4,960	4,805	
2008-24	12,590	11,015	10,310	9,965	9,645	8,465	8,075	7,750	6,200	6,010	
2011-44	17,910	16,020	15,175	14,760	14,375	12,955	12,450	12,025	10,010	9,765	
2013-38	23,495	21,225	20,210	19,715	19,250	17,550	16,940	16,430	14,015	13,675	
2015-7	27,495	25,225	24,210	23,715	23,250	21,550	20,940	20,430	18,015	17,675	The Salary with living allowance 4,000
2015-41	25,995	23,725	22,710	22,215	21,750	20,050	19,440	18,930	16,515	16,175	The lump salary after an increase of 2,500 without living allowance
2015	29,995	27,725	26,710	26,215	25,750	24,050	23,440	22,930	20,515	20,175	The lump salary with living allowance
2016-13	37,495	35,225	34,210	33,715	33,250	31,550	30,940	30,430	28,015	27,675	The lump salary with living allowance (7,500 + 4,000)

<b>2019-23</b>	57,495	55,225	54,210	53,715	53,250	51,550	50,940	50,430	48,015	47,675	
<b>2021-19</b>	86,245	82,840	81,315	80,575	79,875	77,325	76,410	75,645	72,025	71,515	
<b>2021-29 Until now</b>	112,120	107,695	105,710	104,750	103,840	100,525	99,335	98,340	93,635	92,970	

Table (6): Civilian salaries for the period 1994-2022

## Second: Military Salaries<sup>(22)</sup>

### 1- Officer salaries

Ranks Year	Lieutenant	1 <sup>st</sup> Lieutenant	Captain	Major	Lieutenant colonel	Colonel	Brigadier General	Major General	Lieutenant General	Field Marshal	Note
<b>1994 -2000</b>	3,655	3,985	4,550	5,215	5,970	6,825	7,815	8,940	11,375	13,815	Before the succession of power to Bashar al-Assad
<b>2000-36</b>	4,570	4,985	5,690	6,520	7,465	8,535	9,770	11,175	14,220	17,270	The first salary increases in the era of Bashar al-Assad
<b>2002-28</b>	5,485	5,985	6,830	7,825	8,960	10,245	11,725	13,410	17,065	20,725	
<b>2003-18</b>	5,485	5,985	6,830	7,825	8,960	10,245	11,725	13,410	17,065	20,725	Military Service Law
<b>2003-18</b>	1,520	1,680	1,840	2,000	2,160		2,000	1,760			Aviation salary
<b>2004-30</b>	6,585	7,185	8,200	9,390	10,755	12,295	14,070	16,095	20,480	24,870	
<b>2006-14</b>	7,715	8,345	9,410	10,660	12,095	13,710	15,575	17,700	22,305	26,915	
<b>2006-24</b>	7,715	8,410	9,720	11,240	12,990	15,015	17,355	20,055	26,160	31,085	Amending Article 87 of the Military Service Law <sup>(23)</sup>
<b>2008-24</b>	9,645	10,515	12,150	14,050	16,240	18,770	21,695	25,070	32,700	38,860	
<b>2011-44</b>	14,375	15,420	17,380	19,660	22,290	25,325	28,835	32,885	42,040	49,435	

<sup>(22)</sup> The salaries of the army include the salaries of the first grades only, as each rank has a salary grade to which the military personal is promoted while he remains in the rank for a certain period.

<sup>(23)</sup> Hidden increase for the military.

<b>2013-38</b>	19,250	20,505	22,860	25,595	28,520	31,860	35,720	40,030	49,645	57,410	
<b>2015-7</b>	23,250	24,505	26,860	29,595	32,520	35,860	39,720	44,030	53,645	61,410	The Salary with living allowance 4,000
<b>2015-41</b>	21,750	23,005	25,360	28,095	31,020	34,360	38,220	42,530	52,145	59,910	The lump salary after an increase of 2,500 without living allowance
<b>2015-51</b>	3,040	3,360	3,680	4,000	4,320		4,000	3,520			Aviation salary
<b>2015</b>	25,750	27,005	29,360	32,095	35,020	38,360	42,220	46,530	56,145	63,910	The lump salary with living allowance
<b>2016-13</b>	33,250	34,505	36,860	39,595	42,520	45,860	49,720	54,030	63,645	71,410	The lump salary with living allowance (7,500 + 4,000)
<b>2018-7</b>	21,750	23,710	27,145	31,075	35,570	40,720	46,620	53,370	69,285	82,325	Amending Article 87 of the Military Service Law <sup>(24)</sup>
<b>2018-8</b>	43,225	45,775	50,240	55,350	61,195	67,890	75,560	84,335	105,025	121,975	Increase the salaries of military personnel exclusively
<b>2018-20</b>	9,120	10,080	11,040	12,000	12,960		12,000	10,560			Aviation salary <sup>(25)</sup>
<b>2019-23</b>	63,225	65,775	70,240	75,350	81,195	87,890	95,560	104,335	125,025	141,975	
<b>2021-19</b>	94,840	98,665	105,360	113,025	121,795	131,835	143,340	156,505	187,540	212,965	
<b>2021-29</b>	123,295	128,265	136,970	146,935	158,335	171,390	186,345	203,460	243,805	276,855	
<b>2022</b>	163,295	171,550	185,640	200,885	217,380	235,630	254,550	275,455	298,075	310,110	Amending salaries to match the military hierarchy with the financial hierarchy

Table (7): Salaries of officers in the Syrian Arab Army from 1994 to 2022

<sup>(24)</sup> Hidden increase for the military.<sup>(25)</sup> The "Aviation salary" has been modified to suit the arduous and dangerous tasks of the pilot officer.

## 2- Salaries of Non-commissioned Officers and Individuals

Ranks Year	Individuals			Non-commissioned officers						Note
	Private	1 <sup>st</sup> Private	Corporal	Sergeant	1 <sup>st</sup> Sergeant	Warrant officer	1 <sup>st</sup> Warrant officer	Candidate	1 <sup>st</sup> Candidate	
1994 - 2000	1,785	1,985	2,210	2,500	2,780	3,090	3,440	2,630	-	Before the succession of power to Bashar al-Assad
2000-36	2,235	2,485	2,765	3,125	3,475	3,865	4,300	3,290	-	The first salary increases in the Bashar al-Assad era
2002-28	2,685	2,985	3,320	3,750	4,170	4,640	5,160	3,950	-	
2003-18	2,960	3,290	3,655	4,130	4,590	5,265	6,020	-	-	Remove candidate ranks
2004-30	3,555	3,950	4,390	4,960	5,510	6,320	7,225	-	-	
2006-14	4,535	4,950	5,410	6,010	6,590	7,440	8,390	-	-	
2006-24	4,960	5,500	6,090	6,685	7,515	8,445	9,490	-	-	
2008-24	6,200	6,875	7,615	8,360	9,395	10,560	11,865	-	-	
2010-63								9,035	10,540	Add candidate ranks
2011-44	10,010	10,890	11,850	12,820	14,075	15,475	17,040	13,645	15,450	
2013-38	14,015	15,070	16,220	17,385	18,890	20,570	22,450	18,375	20,540	
2015-7	18,015	19,070	20,220	21,385	22,890	24,570	26,450	22,375	24,540	Salary with living allowance 4,000
2015-41	16,515	17,570	18,720	19,885	21,390	23,070	24,950	20,875	23,040	The lump salary after an increase of 2,500 without living allowance
2015	20,515	21,570	22,720	23,885	25,390	27,070	28,950	4,875	27,040	The lump salary with living allowance
2016-13	28,015	29,070	30,220	31,385	32,890	34,570	36,450	32,375	34,540	The lump salary with living allowance (7,500 + 4,000)

<b>2018-7</b>	16,515	18,210	20,075	22,130	24,395	26,890	29,645	20,875	23,680	Amending Article 87 of the Military Service Law
<b>2018-8</b>	36,420	38,625	41,050	43,720	46,665	49,910	53,490	42,090	45,735	Increase the salaries of military personnel exclusively
<b>2018-20</b>	Determining the percentages of compensation, bonuses, and bonuses granted to other military personnel in general, to become 8% of the monthly salary basis.									Amending Article 107 /A of the Military Service Law
<b>2019-23</b>	56,420	58,625	61,050	63,720	66,665	69,910	73,490	62,090	65,735	
<b>2021-19</b>	84,630	87,940	91,575	95,580	100,000	104,865	110,235	93,135	98,605	
<b>2021-29</b>	110,020	114,325	119,050	124,255	130,000	136,325	143,310	121,080	128,190	
<b>2022 - Until now</b>	110,020	115,585	121,435	127,580	134,030	140,820	152,380	55,430	164,085	

Table (8): Salaries of non-commissioned officers and individuals in the Syrian Arab Army from 1994 to 2022

### Third: Salaries of the Internal Security Forces

#### 1- Officer salaries

Ranks Year	Lieutenant	1 <sup>st</sup> Lieutenant	Captain	Major	Lieutenant colonel	Colonel	Brigadier General	Major General	Note
<b>1994 - 2000</b>	3,655	3,985	4,550	5,215	5,970	6,825	7,815	8,940	Before the succession of power to Bashar al-Assad
<b>2000-36</b>	4,570	4,985	5,690	6,520	7,465	8,535	9,770	11,175	The first salary increases in the era of Bashar al-Assad
<b>2002-28</b>	5,485	5,985	6,830	7,825	8,960	10,245	11,725	13,410	
<b>2004-30</b>	6,585	7,185	8,200	9,390	10,755	12,295	14,070	16,095	
<b>2006-14</b>	7,715	8,345	9,410	10,660	12,095	13,710	15,575	17,700	
<b>2006-24</b>	7,715	8,410	9,720	11,240	12,990	15,015	17,355	20,055	
<b>2008-24</b>	9,645	10,515	12,150	14,050	16,240	18,770	21,695	25,070	
<b>2011-44</b>	14,375	15,420	17,380	19,660	22,290	25,325	28,835	32,885	
<b>2012-1</b>	14,375	15,420	17,380	19,660	22,290	25,325	28,835	32,885	Internal Security Forces Service Law

<b>2013-38</b>	19,250	20,505	22,860	25,595	28,520	31,860	35,720	40,030	
<b>2015-7</b>	23,250	24,505	26,860	29,595	32,520	35,860	39,720	44,030	Salary with living allowance 4,000
<b>2015-41</b>	21,750	23,005	25,360	28,095	31,020	34,360	38,220	42,530	Net salary after an increase of 2,500 without living allowance
<b>2015</b>	25,750	27,005	29,360	32,095	35,020	38,360	42,220	46,530	Net salary with living allowance
<b>2016-13</b>	33,250	34,505	36,860	39,595	42,520	45,860	49,720	54,030	Net salary with living allowance (7,500 + 4,000)
<b>2019-23</b>	53,250	54,505	56,860	59,595	62,520	65,860	69,720	74,030	
<b>2021-19</b>	79,875	81,760	85,290	89,395	93,780	98,790	104,580	111,045	
<b>2021-29</b>	103,840	106,290	110,880	116,215	121,915	128,430	135,955	144,360	
<b>2022-25</b>	116,000	122,250	139,970	160,255	183,480	210,070	240,510	270,050	

Table (9): Salaries of officers in the Internal Security Forces from 1994 to 2022

## 2- Salaries of Non-commissioned Officers and Individuals

Category	Individuals			Non-commissioned officers				Note
	Policeman	1 <sup>st</sup> Policeman	Corporal	Sergeant	1 <sup>st</sup> Sergeant	Warrant officer	1 <sup>st</sup> Warrant officer	
<b>Before 2006</b>	Matched salaries of non-commissioned officers and personnel in the army							
<b>2006-24</b>	5,405	6,075	6,825	7,665	6,685	7,155	7,655	
<b>2008-24</b>	6,760	7,595	8,535	9,585	8,360	8,945	9,570	
<b>2011-44</b>	10,740	11,825	13,045	14,305	12,820	14,075	15,475	
<b>2012-1</b>	10,740	11,825	13,045	14,305	12,820	14,075	15,475	Internal Security Forces Service Law
<b>2013-38</b>	14,890	16,190	17,655	19,170	17,385	18,890	20,570	

<b>2015-7</b>	18,890	20,190	21,655	23,170	21,385	22,890	24,570	The Salary with living allowance 4,000
<b>2015-41</b>	17,390	18,690	20,155	21,670	19,885	21,390	23,070	The lump salary after an increase of 2,500 without living allowance
<b>2015</b>	21,390	22,690	24,155	25,670	23,885	25,390	27,070	The lump salary with living allowance
<b>2016-13</b>	28,890	30,190	31,655	33,170	31,385	32,890	34,570	The lump salary with living allowance (7,500 + 4,000)
<b>2019-23</b>	48,890	50,190	51,655	53,170	51,385	52,890	54,570	
<b>2021-19</b>	73,335	75,285	77,485	79,755	77,080	79,335	81,855	
<b>2021-29</b>	95,340	97,875	100,735	103,685	100,205	103,140	106,415	
<b>2022-25</b>	105,000	109,200	113,570	107,000	111,280	115,735	125,180	

Table (10): Salaries of non-commissioned officers and individuals in the Internal Security Forces from 1994 to 2022

**Note:**

- During the translation of this paper into English and after the publication of the Arabic version of this paper in mid-November, Bashar al Assad issued Legislative Decree 25 of 2022 on December 27, 2022, that includes an increase in the salaries of the Internal Security Forces (police). This modification is included in the English version only.
- From mid-November to the end of December, the ex-change rate of the Syrian Pound was dropped from 5,200 to 7,300 SP against the US dollar.



## Exchange Rates Between Official and Black Market

The exchange rates against the dollar were almost constant before 2011. Later, they began to vary with the passage of time, and a real difference began to appear between the exchange rate of Pound, according to the central bank, and the black-market rate. The Syrian Pound has lost its value against the dollar exponentially since 2011, and this has negatively affected the purchasing power, in addition to the increase in inflation rates. It is noted that the gap between the exchange rate of the Pound according to the central bank and the black market is relatively increasing steadily <sup>(26)</sup>. The following are the exchange rates of the Pound against the dollar on the date of the issuance of the legislative decree to increase salaries.

Year	Central Bank ex-rate \$F	Black-market ex-rate \$B	Ex-rate difference	Year	Central Bank ex-rate \$F	Black-market ex-rate \$B	Ex-rate difference
1994 -2000	50	≈ 50		2015-7	198	225	27
2000-36	50	≈ 50		2015-41	250	337	87
2002-28	52	≈ 52		2016-13	485	490	5
2003-18	52	≈ 52		2018-7	436	443	7
2004-30	48.5	≈ 48.5		2018-8	436	443	7
2006-14	46	≈ 48.5		2018-20	436	500	64
2006-24	46	≈ 46		2019-23	436	950	514
2008-24	46	≈ 46		2021-19	2,512	3,220	708
2011-44	47	52	5	2021-29	2,512	3,225	713
2012-1	58	71	13	April 2022	2,512	3,850	1,338
2013-38	175	206	31	Nov 2022	2,525	5,200	2,675

Table (11): The exchange rate of the Syrian pound against the US dollar in the period 1994-2022

<sup>(26)</sup> Regarding the official exchange rate, data from the Central Bank of Syria (Remittance Bulletin was used). As for the black-market exchange rate data, the data relies on an interactive tool provided by Karam Al-Shaar (the tool has its own methodology for determining the black-market exchange rate), link: <https://bit.ly/3Bjzs5v>.

