

Guide for buyers abroad

Buying in Damascus from abroad

Seven steps, in order. What to check before you pay, and what to get in writing.

You can buy in Damascus without travelling, provided the deal rests on a specific power of attorney, a title check before any payment, and actual registration at the land registry. The documented risk in this market is a property sold on a forged deed or a forged power of attorney to a buyer who cannot attend the viewing. The steps below are ordered so that no money moves before the checks are done.

1

Ask about the ownership type before the price

The land registry (the tabu) is the only official proof of ownership in Syria. Price follows title: the cheaper property with identical specifications usually has weaker title, not a better deal.

Type	What it means for you	Scrutiny
Green tabu, partitioned	Registered ownership, your share defined	Standard
Green tabu, undivided	Shared holding; a sale needs the co-owners' consent	Moderate
Cooperative assignment	A right against the housing cooperative, not a title deed	High
Court ruling	Sound only if final and executed at the registry	High
Power of attorney	Permission to act: lapses on death, can be revoked	Highest, best avoided

2

Get a recent land registry extract

Ask the registry for it. Do not accept an old copy held by the seller. One document answers four questions:

- ◆ Who is the registered owner, and is it the person negotiating with you?
- ◆ What are the ownership type, property number and cadastral zone?
- ◆ Are there annotations on the record: mortgage, attachment, litigation, usufruct?
- ◆ What is the registered area?

If the seller stalls or keeps making excuses, stop. The extract is routine to obtain, and avoiding it usually means something is being kept out of view.

3

Match the property on the ground to the register

Do not assume that what you see is what you will own. Check these before you negotiate the price:

- ◆ **Area, boundaries, floor and unit number.** Unlicensed extensions are not registered and can be removed.
- ◆ **What the sale includes:** garage, roof and basement, each stated in the contract.
- ◆ **Zoning:** is it inside a development scheme or an expropriation area? Know this before buying, not after.
- ◆ **Clearance** of fees and utilities: water, electricity, municipality and cooperative dues.
- ◆ **Who lives there now?** A registered lease or an ordinary one? Any occupancy dispute?
- ◆ **A structural survey** by an independent engineer. A day of their time costs less than any surprise after completion.

4

Set up the power of attorney

The power of attorney carries the whole transaction when you buy from a distance. It is drawn at the Syrian embassy or consulate in your country of residence, then authenticated inside Syria to become effective.

- ◆ **Specific, not general:** name the property and define the authority precisely.
- ◆ **List the powers in writing:** purchase, registration at the land registry, taking possession, paying fees.
- ◆ **Put a time limit on it.** An open-ended power is a risk you do not need to carry.
- ◆ **The attorney** is a trusted relative or a lawyer, because they sign on your behalf.

Documents to prepare

A valid passport and/or Syrian ID, a recent civil registry extract, the authenticated power of attorney, and evidence of the source of your funds. Around a quarter of returning refugees lack basic civil papers, so if yours are incomplete, replace them before you start looking at properties.

If the seller is acting under a power of attorney: confirm that it is valid and unrevoked, that it gives express authority to sell (authority to manage is not enough), and that the principal is alive. Revocation is checked with the office that executed the document, not from the paper copy the agent holds.

5

Write the payments into the contract

- ◆ **Never pay in full up front.** Tie each instalment to a procedural stage: one on signing the contract, one after the security approval or the financial directorate stage, and the last at registration and handover. Any hold-up then stops the money automatically.
- ◆ **Write the currency and the exchange rate** for each payment. The new lira began on 1 January 2026, and 100 old lira equal one new lira.
- ◆ **Record every payment and amendment** on both copies of the contract, signed by both parties. A verbal understanding carries no weight in a dispute.
- ◆ **A cheque is not enough on its own**, even a certified one. Verify the funds, the issuer and the signature.
- ◆ Law 15 of 2021 requires 15% of the property value to be paid through banks.

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Move the money after the checks, not before

The repeal of the Caesar Act's secondary sanctions in December 2025 reopened banking channels that had been closed. But Syria is still designated a State Sponsor of Terrorism, and intermediary banks look hard at any transfer linked to it.

- ◆ Ask your bank before moving a large sum, and keep its answer in writing.
- ◆ Keep source-of-funds documents. They are asked for more often than before.
- ◆ Avoid informal channels: thin documentation obstructs registration later.
- ◆ A European transfer may pass through an intermediary bank that asks for more documents. Start days before the instalment date.

7

Register it in your name, and do not postpone

The deal does not end when you pay. It ends when your name is in the land registry. The most common mistake among buyers abroad is to transfer the money, collect the sale papers, and leave registration until "the next visit". Throughout that gap the property is still legally the seller's, exposed to their debts, heirs and disputes.

Make registration a term of the contract with a defined deadline, and tie the final payment to it.

Checklist before any payment

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|--|---|
| ☐ Recent land registry extract
Land registry | ☐ No annotations or attachments
Land registry |
| ☐ Area and boundaries match
Inspection and plan | ☐ Zoning status of the area
Municipality |
| ☐ Seller's capacity and power of attorney
Documents and notary | ☐ Clearance of fees and utilities
Service providers |
| ☐ Structural survey
Independent engineer | ☐ Contract review
Property lawyer |

Stop signs

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✗ Asks for the full price before verification and registration | ✗ Avoids the land registry extract or keeps making excuses |
| ✗ No clear title, however low the price | ✗ Pressures you to hurry |
| ✗ Wants a transfer to a personal account with no contract naming them, their capacity, the amount and the schedule | ✗ A power of attorney that does not authorise a sale, or cannot be verified |

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General information, not legal advice. Rules change and cases differ, so consult a property lawyer before you sign or transfer. Sources: repeal of the Caesar Act secondary sanctions within the FY2026 NDAA (December 2025); Law 15 of 2021; Central Bank of Syria on the new lira; Enab Baladi reporting on forged titles and powers of attorney; Daraj and Syria Report on returnees' documents. Issued October 2026.