

Explained: Digitising Syria's Land Registry

12-05-2021

Digitising Syria's Land Registry would require transferring records from their paper format into a digital format, as well as linking them electronically between different governorates. In theory, this would protect information and simplify record-keeping as well as speed up real estate transactions and ease citizens' access to certain services.

According to figures released by the [General Directorate of Cadastral Affairs](#), more than 540,000 land records have been digitised since 2016, out of a total 4.3 million land records across all of Syria. Records have so far been digitised in Damascus, Damascus Countryside, Lattakia, Suweida, Tartous, Hama, Homs, and Daraa.

This process is taking place under Decree No. 16 of 2012, which calls for the creation of digital copies of paper real estate records maintained by the [General Directorate of Cadastral Affairs](#). The digital copy of a given document receives approval after being created and is then given official status. A paper version of the document is then displayed in the local administrative departments for four months, during which it is open to public objections.

In other words, Decree No. 16 of 2012 adopted a new framework for recording real estate instances: documenting the information in a digital copy first, before opening for potential objections. This is a fundamental change from the previous process of recording such information, which began with the delimitation and census stage, followed by announcing the ownership tables. After that, objections could be raised before the Real Estate Judiciary, after which it would all be recorded in the Land Registry.

The biggest issue with the digitisation process in its current form is that the paper copy that is publicly announced based on the newly digitised version is difficult to access--many Syrians are now in diaspora, forcibly disappeared or have lost certain documents that would have supported their objections. The four-month objection period is also prohibitively short for many people.

The digitisation process began in 2017 and is spearheaded by the [Syrian Company for Information Technology \(SCIT\)](#), which was established by Council of Ministers Decree No. 5416 of 2011 and is affiliated with the Organization of Technological Industries (OTI)--itself established by Legislative Decree No. 10 of 2011. The Syrian Company for Information Technology is a public company enjoying a legal status and financial and administrative independence. In 2017, the SCIT was put under sanctions by the U.S. Treasury because of its affiliation with OTI--itself a subsidiary of the Syrian [Ministry of Defence](#).