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- Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

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- Denmark, Danish Immigration Service
- Germany, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), Country Analysis
- Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Country of Origin Information, Section for Information Analysis

All parts of this report have been reviewed by at least one reviewer.

The review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report, but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of the EUAA.





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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#). The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

‘Refugee’, ‘risk’ and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither the EUAA, nor any person acting on its behalf, may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 17 September 2024. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the [Introduction](#).



Glossary and abbreviations

Term	Definition
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
AOAV	Action on Armed Violence
DAANES	Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
GoS	Government of Syria
HAD	Hurras al-Din
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant; also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State (IS), or Daesh
NDF	National Defence Forces
NPA	North Press Agency
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party



Term	Definition
PYD	Democratic Union Party (Kurdish)
SAA	Syrian Arab Army
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SNA	Syrian National Army
SNHR	Syrian Network for Human Rights
SOHR	Syrian Observatory of Human Rights
STJ	Syrians for Truth & Justice
TWI	Washington Institute for Near East Policy
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UNCOI	Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USDOD	United States Department of Defense
YPG	Kurdish People's Protection Units



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant information for the assessment of applications for international protection, including refugee status and subsidiary protection, and in particular for use in updating EUAA's country guidance document on Syria.

In order to support the assessment of the application of Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive on a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict, the security situation report examines the nature of armed conflicts taking place in the territory, the nature of the violence and presence of armed actors in different areas, and the impact on civilians, for example in terms of casualties/fatalities and conflict-linked displacement.

The report covers the period of September 2023 – August 2024, and provides an update of previous EUAA COI reports documenting the security situation in Syria, particularly: [Syria - Security situation \(October 2023\)](#).

Methodology

This report was jointly drafted by EUAA and ACCORD and reviewed by EUAA and national COI departments in EU+ countries, as mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section.

This report is produced in line with the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2023)¹ and the EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide (2023).²

Defining the terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) of this report were defined by EUAA based on discussions held and input received from COI experts in the EUAA COI specialist network on Syria and from policy experts in EU+ countries appointed to EUAA Country Guidance network. The ToR also builds on previous EUAA COI reports on Syria covering the same topics. The Terms of Reference for this report can be found in [Annex 2](#) of this report.

Collecting information

The information gathered is a result of research using public, specialised paper-based and electronic sources until 30 August 2024. Some limited additional information was added during the finalisation of this report in response to feedback received during the quality control process, until 17 September 2024.

¹ EUAA, EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)

² EUAA, Writing and Referencing Guide for EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports, February 2023, [url](#)



Quality control

To ensure that the authors respected the EUAA COI Report Methodology and that the Terms of Reference were comprehensively addressed, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries and organisations listed as reviewers in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report, which was finalised on 17 September 2024. EUAA also performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

Sources

In accordance with EUAA COI methodology, a range of different published documentary sources have been consulted on relevant topics for this report. These include COI reports by governments; information from civil society, advocacy groups, humanitarian organisations, and NGOs; international and NGO human rights reports; reports produced by various bodies of the United Nations; Syrian and regionally-based media and social media; academic publications and think tank reports and specialised sources covering Syria. All information from these sources was consulted within time constraints and within the research constraints posed by Syria's challenging information-gathering environment.

For additional detail see [Annex 1: Bibliography](#).

Sources on security incidents

For data on violent incidents, publicly available curated datasets from the organisation [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#) have been used. ACLED is a project collecting, analysing and mapping information on crisis and conflict in Africa, south and south-east Asia and Middle East and provides datasets on conflict incidents. It collects data on violent incidents in Syria, coding each incident with the time and place, type of violent incident, the parties involved and the number of fatalities. The information is collected in a database that is openly accessible, searchable and kept continuously up to date. The data primarily come from secondary sources such as traditional media reports, but also from reports by international institutions and non-governmental organisations, targeted new media platforms, and data provided by local partners of ACLED.³ On Syria, ACLED incorporates data from a number of partners, including the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), Airwars, the Carter Center, Liveuamap, Syria Direct, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the London School of Economics' Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit, the International Security and Development Center and Clingendael Institute.⁴

ACLED codes security incidents as follows:

- **Battles:** violent clashes between at least two armed groups. Battles can occur between armed and organised state, non-state, and external groups, and in any

³ ACLED, Methodology, April 2019, [url](#); ACLED, FAQs: ACLED Sourcing Methodology, March 2023, [url](#)

⁴ ACLED, Syria Partner Network, April 2019, [url](#); ACLED, ACLED Integrates New Partner Data on the War in Syria, 5 April 2019, [url](#)



- combination therein. Sub-events of battles are armed clashes, government regaining territory and non-state actor overtaking territory.
- **Violence against civilians:** violent events where an organised armed group deliberately inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants. It includes violent attacks on unarmed civilians such as sexual violence, attacks, abduction/forced disappearance.
 - **Explosions/remote violence:** events where an explosion, bomb or other explosive device was used to engage in conflict. They include one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the targets to engage or defend themselves and their location. They include air/drone strikes, suicide bombs, shelling/artillery/missile attacks, remote explosives/landmines/IEDs, grenades, chemical weapons.
 - **Riots:** are a violent demonstration, often involving a spontaneous action by unorganised, unaffiliated members of society. They include violent demonstration, mob violence.
 - **Protests:** public demonstration in which the participants do not engage in violence, though violence may be used against them. It includes peaceful protests, protests with intervention, excessive force against protesters.
 - **Strategic developments:** information regarding the activities of violent groups that is not itself recorded as political violence, yet may trigger future events or contribute to political dynamics within and across states. It includes agreements, changes to group/activity, non-violent transfers of territory, arrests.⁵

For the purpose of providing information for the assessment of serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict (Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive), only the following type of events have been included in the analysis: battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians.

Additionally, ACLED codes actors involved in security incidents as follows: Actor1 is the 'named actor involved in the event' and Actor2 is the 'named actor involved in the event, while "[i]n most cases, an event requires two actors, noted in columns 'ACTOR1' and 'ACTOR2'". However, event types 'Explosions/Remote violence', 'Riots', 'Protests', and 'Strategic developments' can include 'one-sided events'.⁶ The ACLED coding of Actor1 and Actor2 does not necessarily indicate that one is the aggressor (e.g Actor1) and the other one (e.g. Actor2) the target or victim.⁷ When focusing on the involvement of specific actors within certain regions, the drafters based their analysis on all those incidents, where ACLED coded the relevant actor either as 'Actor1' or as 'Actor2'. This approach aims to illustrate the general level of involvement of the respective actors in the conflict without distinguishing between Actor1 and Actor2, as these categories, according to ACLED's methodology, do not indicate any differentiation in terms of content/semantics.

Characteristics and potential limits for COI use of ACLED data are:

⁵ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2023, [url](#), pp. 10-20

⁶ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2023, [url](#), p. 22

⁷ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2023, [url](#), p. 4



- Data primarily come from secondary sources such as media reports. Lack of or underreporting might critically affect the depiction and the assessment of the situation on the ground.
- Geographical precision is variable: the provincial capital will represent the region if no further precisions are available and may be over-represented.

Security incidents numbers and associated graphs/maps at country and governorate level are based on a publicly available ACLED dataset for Middle East.⁸ Whenever other sources on security incidents were available over the reference period, ACLED's data have been corroborated/contrasted with other data.

Sources on civilian casualties

The main source on civilian fatalities in Syria used in this report is the Syrian Network of Human Rights (SNHR). The [Syrian Network of Human Rights \(SNHR\)](#) is a non-profit human rights organisation founded in 2011 which works on documenting human rights violations in Syria. SNHR relies on a network of volunteers in each governorate to compile lists of civilian fatalities and verify victims' identities by photo or video and by speaking with family members, witnesses, and hospitals. SNHR reports fatalities by gender, age, perpetrator, governorate, and other classifications. It only records civilian fatalities – with the exception of the death toll among victims who died due to torture, which includes armed combatants and civilians.⁹ Where available, information from other sources documenting civilian casualties in the Syrian conflict (Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, the Syrian Human Rights Committee, Action on Armed Violence, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Uppsala Conflict Data Program) has been included.

Additionally, data on civilian deaths collected by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) has been also included. UCDP is a 'data collection project for civil war'.¹⁰ UCDP provided EUAA with a Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) covering the reference period of the report. UCDP's methodology is explained on its website as well as its GED Codebook.¹¹ The unit of analysis of UCDP is the 'event'¹² which is defined as '[a]n incident where armed force was used by an organised actor against another organized actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date.'¹³ This leads, among other things, to 'seemingly low estimates' because 'a number of factors can preclude a potential conflict event from inclusion in the UCDP GED', for example, unclear actors or uncertainty about whether fatalities occurred.¹⁴ UCDP provides three estimates for fatalities for each event – a low estimate, a best estimate, and a high estimate. In addition, UCDP provides an estimate of the

⁸ ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (12 August 2022), [url](#)

⁹ For detailed information on SNHR's methodology see [url](#); SNHR, Extrajudicial Killing Claims the Lives of 1,734 Civilians in Syria in 2020, Including 99 in December, 1 January 2021, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰ UCDP, About UCDP, n.d., [url](#)

¹¹ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#); UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4

¹² UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

¹³ UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁴ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)



number of civilian deaths.¹⁵ According to UCDP, ‘it is quite likely that there are more fatalities than given in the best estimate, but it is very unlikely that there are fewer’.¹⁶

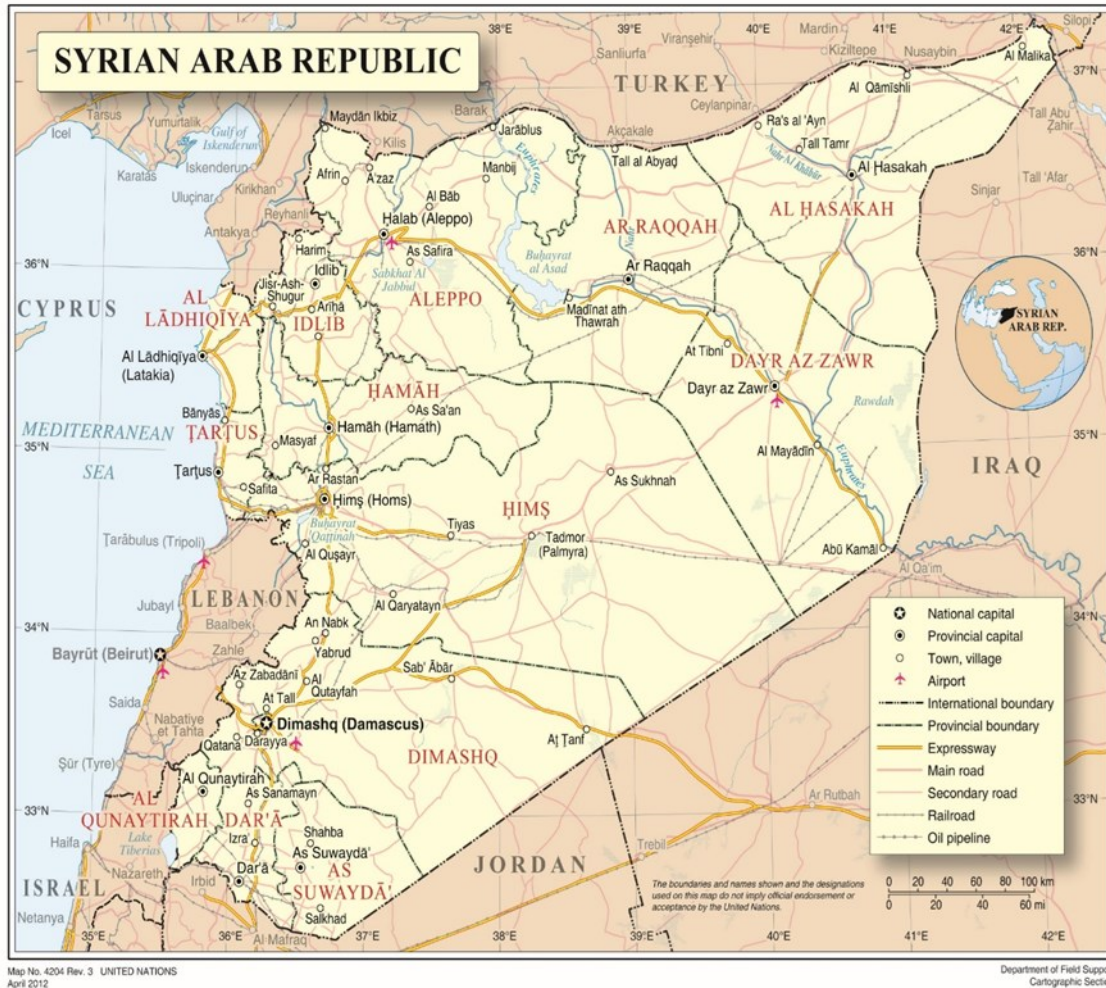
The stricter definition of an event of UCDP excludes violent incidents that are recorded by ACLED. This includes ACLED’s option to assign violent events to ‘unidentified armed groups’. The difference in definitions is one explanatory factor to why the number of events recorded by ACLED can be significantly higher than events recorded by UCDP.¹⁷ In this report, UCDP data have been used to contrast ACLED data and to provide figures on civilian deaths. To reflect the security dynamic in Syria, where the actor behind many security incidents is unknown, EUAA not only includes events that meet all UCDP’s set criteria (codified as ‘clear’ events in the UCDP dataset), but also include events codified as ‘unclear’ and ‘not applicable’.

¹⁵ UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), pp. 5, 11, 24

¹⁶ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁷ ACLED, Comparing Conflict Data, Similarities and Differences Across Conflict Datasets, August 2019, [url](#), pp. 5–7

Maps

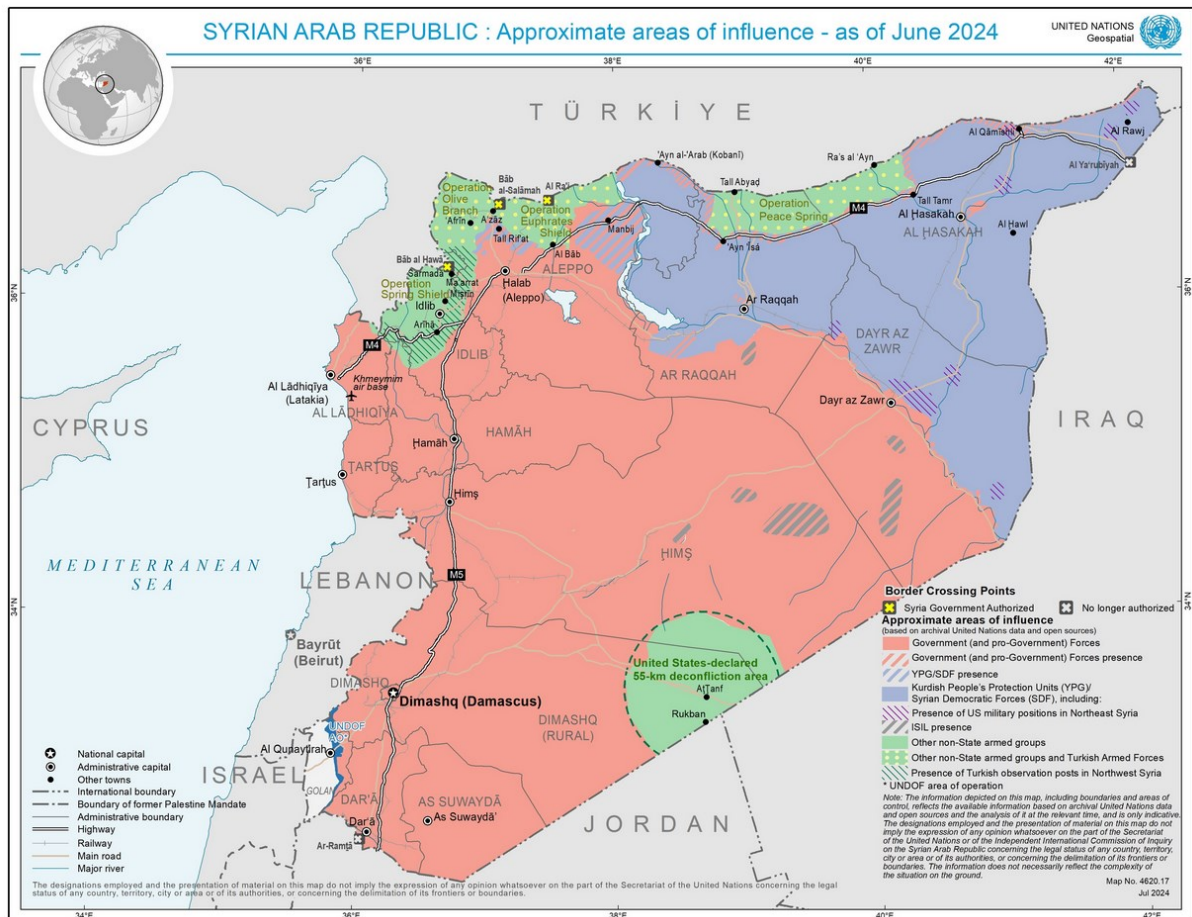


Map 1: Syrian Arab Republic, © United Nations¹⁸

¹⁸ Syria, Map No. 4204 Rev. 3, April 2012, United Nations, [url](#)

1. General description of the security situation

1.1. Overview of conflicts



Map 2: Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of June 2024, ©UN Geospatial¹⁹

The country has de facto been partitioned into four main areas controlled by different parties to the conflict:

- The Government of Syria (GoS), supported by Iran and pro-Iranian militia as well as Russian troops, controls around two thirds of the country including Damascus and its surrounding governorate, the country's south, the central governorate Homs, the coastal governorates as well as parts of Aleppo, Raqqah, Deir Ez-Zor, Idlib and Hama governorates²⁰ (areas represented in orange red in Map 2).

¹⁹ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of June 2024 [Map], July 2024, [url](#)

²⁰ AFP, Who Controls What Territory In Syria?, 6 October 2023; OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 34



- The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), backed by the US, control about a quarter of Syrian territory comprising most of Hasaka governorate in the northeast as well as parts of Deir Ez-Zor, Raqqa and Aleppo governorates²¹ (areas represented in light blue in Map 2).
- Pro-Turkish forces control two stretches along the Turkish border, from Jarabulus to Afrin in Aleppo governorate (the result of the Turkish military operations Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch²²) and between Tall Abyad and Ras Al-Ayn in Raqqa and Hasaka governorates (Operation Peace Spring area)²³ (areas in northern Syria represented in green and yellow in Map 2).
- In the country's northwest, Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) and other allied opposition groups control parts of Idlib governorate and small strips of Aleppo, Hama and Latakia governorates²⁴ (areas in northern Syria represented in green in Map 2).

According to Jusoor for Studies, a Türkiye-based research organisation focusing on developments in Syria,²⁵ the frontlines between the zones of control were essentially frozen, without any side being able to bring about a decisive development in the conflict.²⁶ The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (UNCOI) noted, for the period from July to the end of December 2023, 'increased confrontation and infighting among the various authorities and forces controlling areas in the country'.²⁷ For the months from January to June 2024, the UNCOI reported a decrease in civilian casualties along the Idlib frontline, while Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) attacks reportedly almost doubled across Syria and Iraq.²⁸ Sources further reported an increase of attacks carried out by Israel and Iran-backed groups in Syria since the 7 October attack in Israel and the subsequent outbreak of war in Gaza.²⁹ Kristin Helberg, political scientist and journalist with a focus on the Middle East, in a March 2024 publication identifies several types of conflict in Syria, of which several are internal and others motivated by external powers.³⁰ Among the internal conflicts are Russian and GoS air strikes on Idlib since October 2023 causing hundreds of civilian casualties,³¹ ISIL attacks on military and civilian targets in the centre of the country as well as in

²¹ AFP, Who Controls What Territory In Syria?, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

²² Gurcan, M., Assessing the Post-July 15 Turkish Military: Operations Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch, TWI, 26 March 2019, [url](#)

²³ AFP, Who Controls What Territory In Syria?, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁴ AFP, Who Controls What Territory In Syria?, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁵ Jusoor for Studies, About Us, n.d., [url](#)

²⁶ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

²⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 4

²⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 8

²⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 5; RFE/RL, Key Iranian Commanders Are Being Assassinated Abroad. How Will That Affect Tehran's Proxy Network?, 12 April 2024, [url](#)

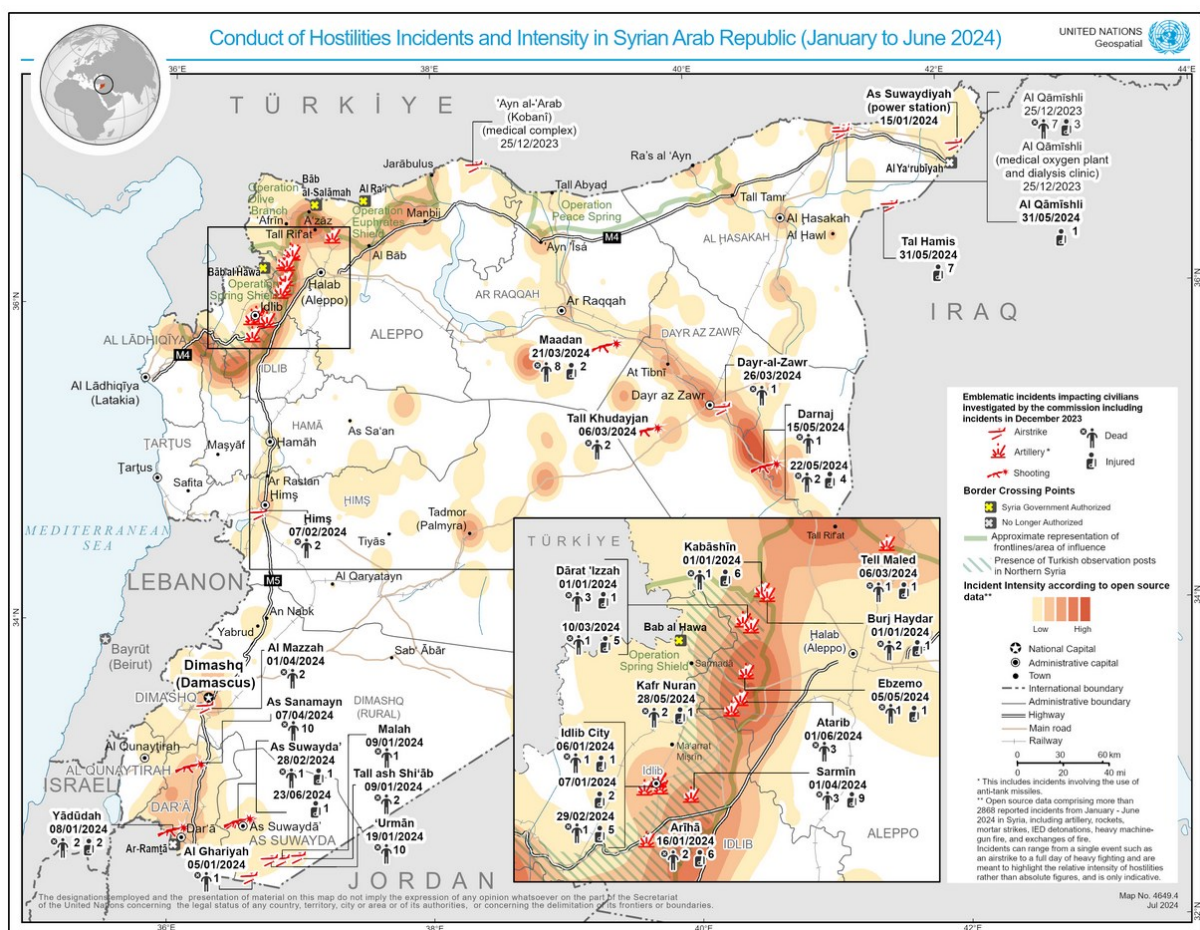
³⁰ Helberg, Kristin, Syrien und der Gaza-Krieg – Eskalation unter dem Radar [Syria and the Gaza war – escalation under the radar], Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

³¹ Helberg, Kristin, Syrien und der Gaza-Krieg – Eskalation unter dem Radar [Syria and the Gaza war – escalation under the radar], Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 26 March 2024, [url](#)



Deir Ez-Zor and Hasaka governorates,³² clashes between SDF and Arab tribes in Deir Ez-Zor³³ and internal power struggles and human rights violations in SNA-controlled areas in the north and northwest of the country.³⁴ As for the conflicts motivated by external powers, the author lists Turkish drone strikes on SDF positions and infrastructure in the northeast, Israeli airstrikes on Iranian and Syrian military positions, rockets fired by pro-Iranian militia on US military bases in the northeast with retaliatory strikes carried out by the US on pro-Iranian militia, and lastly, Jordan's military campaign against drug smuggling networks in the south.³⁵ For more information on these conflicts motivated by external powers, please refer to [section 1.3](#).

The heat map below shows the level of intensity of the conflict in the country from January to June 2024, with the highest incident intensity recorded in Idlib governorate, in the northern



³² International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#); Helberg, Kristin, Syrien und der Gaza-Krieg – Eskalation unter dem Radar [Syria and the Gaza war – escalation under the radar], Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

³³ Helberg, Kristin, Syrien und der Gaza-Krieg – Eskalation unter dem Radar [Syria and the Gaza war – escalation under the radar], Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 26 March 2024, [url](#); Van Wilgenburg, W., Syria: SDF fights rival Arab tribes for control of Deir Ezzor, MEE, 5 September 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Pro-regime fighters resume attacks against SDF in Deir ez-Zor, 25 September 2023, [url](#)

³⁴ Helberg, Kristin, Syrien und der Gaza-Krieg – Eskalation unter dem Radar [Syria and the Gaza war – escalation under the radar], Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 26 March 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – September 2023, 9 October 2023, [url](#); NPA, Clashes between 2 SNA factions lead to tension in Syria's Azaz, 9 November 2023, [url](#); NPA, Clashes between SNA factions in Syria's Aleppo result in casualties, 11 March 2024, [url](#)

³⁵ Helberg, Kristin, Syrien und der Gaza-Krieg – Eskalation unter dem Radar [Syria and the Gaza war – escalation under the radar], Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 26 March 2024, [url](#)



Aleppo countryside, around the Operation Peace Spring area in the north and along the Euphrates in Deir Ez-Zor governorate:

Map 3: UN Geospatial, Conduct of Hostilities Incidents and Intensity in Syrian Arab Republic (January to June 2024), ©UN Geospatial³⁶

1.2. Political developments

From October 2023 onwards, the country witnessed the largest escalation of violence since 2020, prompting Paulo Pinheiro, Chair of the UN Syria Commission of Inquiry, to urge a ceasefire. In a March 2024 press release, Pinheiro stated that in Syria '[m]ore than 90% now live in poverty, the economy is in freefall amid tightening sanctions, and increased lawlessness is fuelling predatory practices and extortion by armed forces and militia'.³⁷

Multilateral attempts for a political solution to the Syrian conflict yielded no results: in January 2024, the 21st round of the Astana talks, a forum bringing together the Syrian government and opposition delegations,³⁸ as well as Russia, Iran and Türkiye,³⁹ did not bring about significant advancements regarding important issues.⁴⁰ In the wake of the political standstill of the Geneva talks following Russia's objection to the talks being held in Switzerland in 2022, UN special envoy for Syria Geir Peterson in March 2024 urged the Syrian government to rejoin the Geneva talks to rewrite or amend the Syrian constitution.⁴¹ The normalisation process with the Syrian government envisaged by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) similarly showed no developments, as the GoS failed to implement demands made by the GCC, such as an amnesty decree for Syrian refugees and combating the production of narcotics.⁴² However, developments in bilateral relations, such as the resumption of regular flights between Saudi Arabia and Syria after a more than ten-year hiatus⁴³ and the state visit by Bashar Al-Assad to China, pointed towards an ease of diplomatic isolation.⁴⁴ Turkish president Erdogan in a June 2024 statement signalled openness to reestablish ties with the Syrian government,⁴⁵ affirming the change of his government's previous objective of overthrowing Bashar Al-Assad which had already been renounced in 2022.⁴⁶ In this vein, an official crossing between SNA-controlled and GoS-controlled areas in Aleppo governorate was opened.⁴⁷

³⁶ UN Geospatial, Conduct of Hostilities and Incidents and Intensity in Syrian Arab Republic (January to June 2024) [Map], July 2024, [url](#)

³⁷ OHCHR, UN Commission of Inquiry: "Syria, too, desperately needs a ceasefire", 11 March 2024, [url](#)

³⁸ Enab Baladi, "Astana 21:" Regime remains obstinate, Opposition satisfied with outcomes, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁹ Al-Monitor, As Assad 'welcomes' mending ties with Turkey, can Russia or Iraq mediate?, 27 June 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#); NPA, 21st round of Astana on Syria fails to yield solutions, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹ AFP, UN envoy urges Syria to rejoin Geneva constitution talks, 17 March 2024

⁴² Jusoor for Studies, Can Arab Normalization Succeed Where Geneva and Astana Failed?, 30 June 2024, [url](#)

⁴³ Al-Monitor, Saudi Arabia and Syria resume regular flights as thaw with Assad advances, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴ DW, China-Syria: Bashar Assad seeks Xi's help to end isolation, 23 September 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵ Enab Baladi, As Ankara-Damascus relations warm, Russia escalates militarily in Idlib, 14 July 2024, [url](#); Al-Monitor, As Erdogan woos Assad, is Turkey-Syria reconciliation rhetoric or reality?, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Al-Monitor, As Assad 'welcomes' mending ties with Turkey, can Russia or Iraq mediate?, 27 June 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Enab Baladi, Starting with Abu al-Zandeen crossing, Syrian regime and Turkey move towards economic normalization, 8 July 2024, [url](#)



In December 2023, the General Council of AANES adopted a new social contract⁴⁸ that included changing its name to DAANES (Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria) and renaming the ‘General Council’ to ‘Peoples’ Council of North and East Syria’.⁴⁹ After the ratification of the social contract, municipal elections were planned by DAANES for May 2024. They were later postponed to June and then to August 2024, following local criticism, including by the opposition-aligned Syrian Kurdish National Council (KNC),⁵⁰ as well as international pressure,⁵¹ before being finally cancelled.⁵² The DAANES region continued to be confronted with external destabilisation efforts, by neighbouring Türkiye,⁵³ Iran together with its affiliated militia on its southern flank as well as internal disputes between Kurdish parties.⁵⁴

1.3. International involvement

Further information on involvement of international actors is available in section 1.3 of the previous [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(October 2023\)](#).

⁴⁸ The full text of the social contract has been published by the Rojava Information Center (RIC): RIC, DAANES’ Social Contract, 2023 Edition, 14 December 2023, [url](#).

⁴⁹ Kurdistan 24, New administration name adopted for local administration in northeast Syria, 13 December 2023, [url](#).

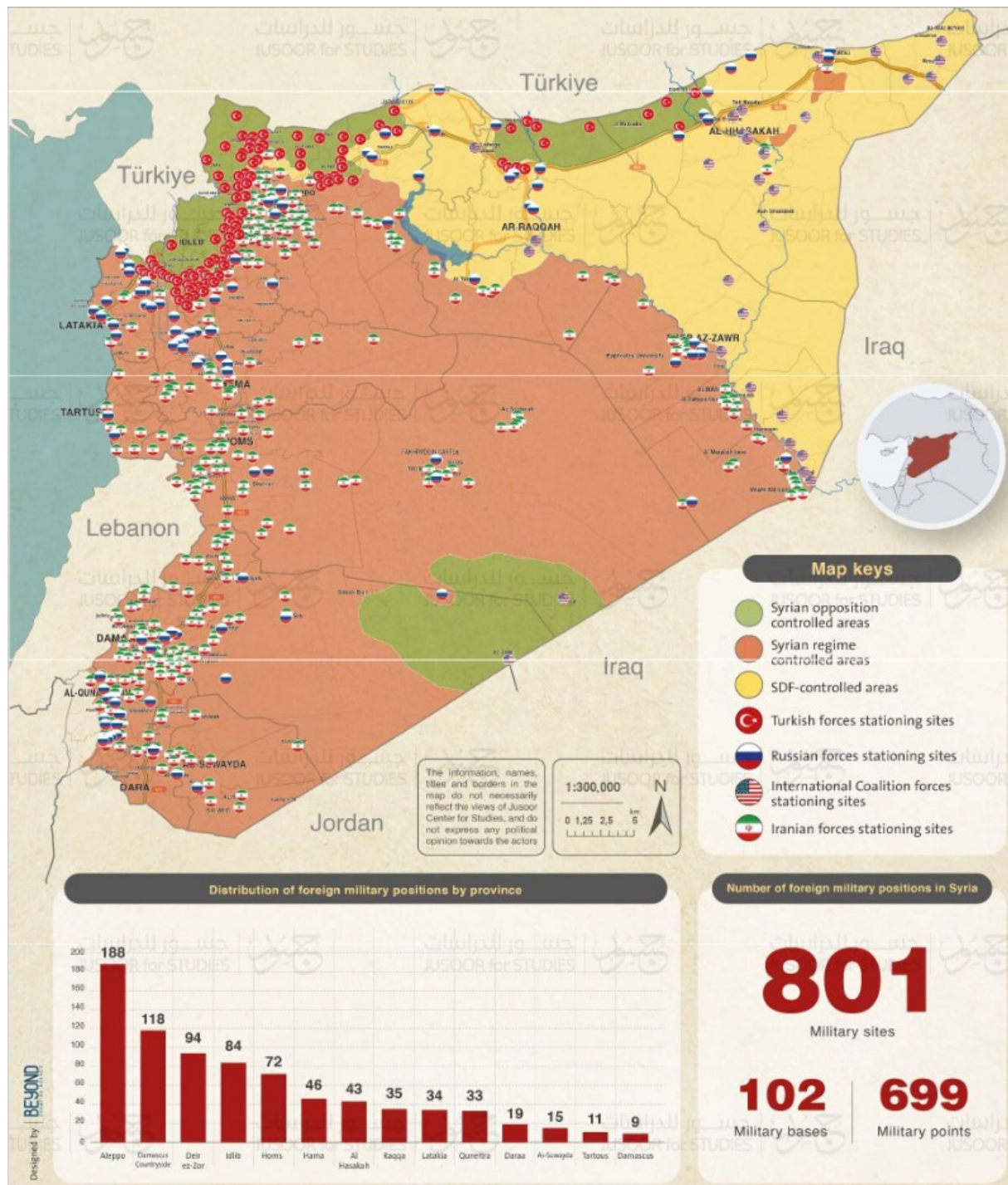
⁵⁰ Syria Direct, The war over AANES municipal elections in northeastern Syria, 11 June 2024, [url](#).

⁵¹ Cradle (The), US proxies in northeast Syria postpone elections after Turkish invasion threat, 6 June 2024, [url](#).

⁵² Syria TV, تلغي نهائياً إجراء الانتخابات المحلية بشمال شرقي سوريا "الإدارة الذاتية" [The Autonomous Administration permanently cancels the holding of local elections in northeastern Syria], 25 July 2024, [url](#).

⁵³ Cradle (The), US proxies in northeast Syria postpone elections after Turkish invasion threat, 6 June 2024, [url](#).

⁵⁴ New Arab (The), Domestic and foreign threats on the rise for Syria's Kurds, 2 April 2024, [url](#).



Map 4: Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, mid-2024, ©Jusoor for Studies⁵⁵

Jusoor for Studies noted a slight decrease of foreign military presence in Syria compared to mid-2023, from 830 to 801 locations.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

1.3.1. Iran and pro-Iranian militias

A June 2024 policy brief by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) describes Iran's strategy in Syria, stating that its goal is to ensure the survival of the Al-Assad government and to use Syria as a partner in its axis of resistance against Israel. Moreover, it indicates how Iran has sought influence not just via the Syrian government, but also on a local level by supporting Shia communities and other minorities and promoting the values of the Islamic Revolution, especially west of the Euphrates River in Deir Ez-Zor, described as its 'core zone of influence'.⁵⁷ It has further managed to make inroads into SDF-controlled territory by supporting local Arab tribes frustrated with the Kurdish-led SDF, in preparation of a potential withdrawal of US forces from the region.⁵⁸ Iran reportedly maintained an 'operational hub south of Damascus' near the airport which was extensively targeted by Israeli airstrikes.⁵⁹

The Iranian government, mainly through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC), reportedly directly supported the GoS and continued to recruit Shia fighters of Afghan, Pakistani and Iraqi origin to fight in Syria.⁶⁰ There were believed to be hundreds of IRGC officers in the role of military advisers in the country.⁶¹ Jusoor for Studies in mid-2024 noted a decrease in positions held by Iranian and Iran-backed groups in Syria from 570 in mid-2023 to 529, comprising 52 military bases and 477 outposts. All Syrian governorates reportedly had such Iranian or Iran-backed positions, with the highest concentration in Aleppo and Rural Damascus governorates with over 100 each.⁶² The reduction of Iranian presence was attributed to Iran withdrawing troops from southern Syria near the Golan heights following purported Israeli airstrikes on its positions.⁶³ Jusoor for Studies analysed that the partial withdrawal was likely the result of a request made by Israel to Russia due to fear of Iranian presence on its borders and that Russian and GoS forces took up the vacated positions.⁶⁴ However, two experts interviewed by Al-Monitor argued that this did not represent a substantial shift in Iran's overall strategy, but rather meant a temporary withdrawal of several high-ranking IRGC officers.⁶⁵

For more information on Iranian-backed militias, please refer to [section 1.4.1](#)

1.3.2. Türkiye

The Turkish government in an official statement made its presence in Syria dependent on two conditions: the elimination of terrorist organisations and an agreement between the Syrian government and the opposition to draft a new constitution and hold elections.⁶⁶ Türkiye

⁵⁷ ECFR, Beyond proxies: Iran's deeper strategy in Syria and Lebanon, 5 June 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸ Özkizilcik, Ö., Op-Ed: How the US is losing Syria's tribes to Iran, Syria Direct, 23 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹ Tokmajyan, A. and Khaddour, K., Why Iranian Entrenchment in Southern Syria Worries Neighboring Countries, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 5

⁶⁰ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Syria, 30 June 2024, [url](#), p. 19

⁶¹ RFE/RL, Iran's 'Axis Of Resistance': Different Groups, Same Goals, 19 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶² Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶³ Asharq Al-Awsat, Iran Trims Military Presence in Syria, 25 April 2024, [url](#); AFP, Iran cuts Syria presence after strikes blamed on Israel: monitor, 24 April 2024

⁶⁴ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵ Al-Monitor, Iran's hold on Syria strong despite 'withdrawals' after Israeli attacks, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene December 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2



classifies the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as a terrorist entity⁶⁷ and considers the SDF controlling northern Syria as an extension of the PKK.⁶⁸

As of mid-2024, Turkish military forces had 12 military bases and 114 military outposts in Syria, 58 of them located in Aleppo governorate and 51 in Idlib governorate in the country's north-west as well as 10 military installations in Raqqqa governorate.⁶⁹ From these bases, Turkish forces carried out ground and aerial reconnaissance using drones, allowing them to target government as well as SDF positions.⁷⁰ During the reference period, Türkiye in several instances launched airstrikes on SDF positions, claiming they were carried out in retaliation for attacks by the PKK on Turkish military positions in Iraq,⁷¹ with escalations registered in October⁷² and December 2023⁷³ as well as in January 2024.⁷⁴ The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) further reported Turkish forces shelling villages in Hasaka governorate from inside Operation Peace Spring area.⁷⁵ Airwars⁷⁶ continued to monitor Turkish airstrikes in Syria, which, between September 2023 and January 2024, were documented in northern Aleppo and Hasaka governorates and reportedly lead to 45 civilian deaths during that period. The organisation did not record any airstrikes between February and July 2024.⁷⁷ The air and drone strikes targeted SDF military positions but also vital infrastructure such as oil fields and electricity generation facilities.⁷⁸ One such attack in October 2023 on a power plant reportedly

⁶⁷ The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is listed as a terrorist organisation by the European Union. Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/332 of 16 January 2024 updating the list of persons, groups and entities covered by Common Position 2001/931/CFSP on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism, and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2023/1514, [url](#)

⁶⁸ Enab Baladi, Turkey announces "neutralization" of PKK leader in northeast Syria, 27 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 41; Al-Monitor, Turkey launches retaliatory strikes in Syria & Iraq, Erdogan convenes security meeting, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷² Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights: Syria 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 359; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 8; Enab Baladi, Turkey escalates against SDF in eastern Syria; Ground and air bombardment, 10 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷³ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 100; SOHR, Military escalation | Turkish forces shell villages in Tel Tamer and Tel Tamer Military Council forces target Turkish bases with three missiles, 27 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴ Al-Monitor, Turkey launches retaliatory strikes in Syria & Iraq, Erdogan convenes security meeting, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵ SOHR, From within "Peace Spring" area | Turkish forces shell two villages in Tel Tamer countryside north of Al-Hasakah, 6 May 2024, [url](#); SOHR, From inside Turkish territory and its positions in "Peace Spring" | Turkish artillery target security posts and shell villages in Al-Hasakah, 5 November 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶ Airwars is a non-profit watchdog organisation that monitors and investigates claims of civilian harm primarily due to the use of explosive weapons in conflict-affected countries, including Syria. For more information see Airwars, Who we are, [url](#)

⁷⁷ Airwars, Turkish Military in Iraq & Syria, n.d., [url](#)

⁷⁸ Kurdistan 24, Russian military conducts patrol in northern Syria amid increasing Turkish drone strikes, 27 December 2023, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Turkey escalates against SDF in eastern Syria; Ground and air bombardment, 10 October 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Turkey renews attacks on energy, power stations in Rojava, 6 October 2023, [url](#)



led to 1 million people in Amuda and Qamishli having no access to water for weeks.⁷⁹ According to DAANES authorities, the airstrikes also led to civilian casualties.⁸⁰

1.3.3. Russia

As of mid-2024, Russia had increased its military presence compared to a year prior, establishing nine new positions and putting the total at 21 bases and 93 outposts, scattered across GoS-held territory as well as the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) region.⁸¹ Russia's main military assets are located in the coastal provinces, namely the navy base in the port of Tartous and the Hmeimim airbase in Latakia governorate.⁸² There were widely diverging estimations regarding the size of the Russian troops, from 4 000⁸³ to 60 000.⁸⁴ AFP reported that, according to the Russian government, 63 000 troops had served in Syria, but that the actual number of soldiers stationed in the country as of October 2023 was unclear.⁸⁵

Having first reduced its presence in the country in 2022 due to forces being needed for the invasion of Ukraine, Russian positions in the first half of 2024 reportedly increased due to Russian forces being deployed in southern Syria.⁸⁶ Several sources reported that Russia established new military positions in Quneitra governorate along the buffer zone bordering the Israel-occupied Golan Heights.⁸⁷ These new military positions were manned by Russian military police and reportedly aimed to prevent an escalation between Syria and Israel and monitor the ceasefire line between the two countries.⁸⁸ In a July 2024 article, Enab Baladi, a Syrian oppositional media organisation registered as a nonprofit in the US,⁸⁹ describes how Russia's tactic in Syria relied on drones for surveillance and reconnaissance, followed by airstrikes and use of suicide drones which also affected residential areas.⁹⁰ Sources reported a rise in bombardments carried out by GoS forces with Russian support between October and December 2023 focusing on northwest Syria.⁹¹ These airstrikes reportedly also targeted

⁷⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 99; Al-Monitor, Syria's Kurds face ISIS threat, US indifference as Turkey destroys critical infrastructure, 18 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰ Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights; Syria 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 359; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 101; Rudaw, Turkey renews attacks on energy, power stations in Rojava, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸² Al Jazeera, Israel attacks Syria's west coast, killing two soldiers: Syrian state media, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

⁸³ IISS, The Military Balance 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#), p. 387

⁸⁴ Enab Baladi, Putin: Our presence in Syria is temporary as long as it benefits Russia, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵ AFP, Who Controls What Territory In Syria?, 6 October 2023

⁸⁶ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Enab Baladi, Russia establishes third military post on borders of occupied Golan Heights, 2 April 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸ Jerusalem Post (The), A message to Israel? Russia deploys more forces in Syria's Golan Heights, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Why Russia deployed military posts on borders of occupied Golan Heights, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹ Enab Baladi, About us, n.d., [url](#)

⁹⁰ Enab Baladi, As Ankara-Damascus relations warm, Russia escalates militarily in Idlib, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹ Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights; Syria 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 358; Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene October 2023, 13 November 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Al Jazeera, Russia, al-Assad step up Syria bombing amid world focus on Israel-Gaza war, 14 November 2023, [url](#)



civilian facilities and caused civilian casualties.⁹² Further Russian airstrikes in the northwest were reported for the first half of 2024 as well.⁹³ Airstrikes in April 2024 which according to the Russian Defence ministry targeted ‘militants and extremists’ reportedly struck close to US bases.⁹⁴

1.3.4. US-led Coalition against ISIL

The US forces comprise about 900 personnel deployed in the northeast of the country.⁹⁵ The US leads a joint task force from 25 countries with the aim of fighting ISIL in Iraq and Syria and advising and assisting local partner forces in maintaining the territorial defeat of ISIL.⁹⁶ As of mid-2024, the US-led Global Coalition had 17 military bases and 15 outposts in Syria, most of them in the territory under Kurdish administration,⁹⁷ including bases in the country’s largest oil field Al-Omar as well as Conoco gas field.⁹⁸ Outside the SDF-controlled areas, the US army maintained a garrison at Al-Tanf near the borders of Iraq and Jordan,⁹⁹ which also housed about 500 fighters from local revolutionary factions.¹⁰⁰ While, according to Jusoor for Studies, the official goal of the Global Coalition was to prevent an ISIL resurgence, in practice it was also there to prevent the Syrian government and its ally Iran from taking over SDF-controlled areas and seizing oil and gas resources there.¹⁰¹ US forces stationed in Syria have come under attack from Iran-backed forces and have launched counterattacks,¹⁰² with several such retaliatory attacks being reported during the reference period.¹⁰³

1.3.5. Israel

Israel’s main strategy in Syria was reportedly to contain Iranian influence and stop the Iranian military support to Hezbollah¹⁰⁴ also by targeting Syrian government infrastructure such as airports and military facilities.¹⁰⁵ Haid Haid of Chatham House assessed that, from the end of 2023, Israel, prompted by the 7 October attacks by Hamas, reportedly employed a tactic of

⁹² Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights; Syria 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 358; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 41-47; Enab Baladi, Syria Civil Defense: 1232 Attacks by regime and Russia on northern Syria this year, 27 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹³ SOHR, “Putin-Erdogan” area | HTS member killed due to Russian airstrike west of Idlib, 11 July 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene March 2024, 10 April 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁹⁴ Enab Baladi, Russian raids around al-Tanf accompanied by accusations against Americans, 25 April 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁵ Reuters, Why U.S. troops are in the Middle East, 3 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁹⁷ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸ AFP, Who Controls What Territory In Syria?, 6 October 2023

⁹⁹ International Crisis Group, Al-Tanf, Syria, last updated 13 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ Enab Baladi, What is al-Tanf garrison, where a drone strike killed three US soldiers?, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰² Reuters, Why U.S. troops are in the Middle East, 3 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰³ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 12-13; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 9-11

¹⁰⁴ Al-Monitor, Iran's hold on Syria strong despite 'withdrawals' after Israeli attacks, 30 April 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene December 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰⁵ Al-Monitor, Iran's hold on Syria strong despite 'withdrawals' after Israeli attacks, 30 April 2024, [url](#)



escalation by directly targeting Iranian leadership in Syria, first marked by the killing of a high-ranking Iranian general in Damascus in December 2023.¹⁰⁶ The UN documented at least 22 Israeli airstrikes in Syria between 10 October and 31 December, including at Aleppo and Damascus airports which were temporarily put out of service.¹⁰⁷ Jusoor for Studies documented 20 Israeli airstrikes between September and December 2023, mostly in Rural Damascus but also in six other governorates across the country.¹⁰⁸ Further airstrikes were reported in 2024,¹⁰⁹ among which targeted strikes killing leading IRGC officials.¹¹⁰ According to RFE/RL, suspected Israeli air strikes killed at least 18 IRGC members in Syria between December 2023 and April 2024.¹¹¹

1.3.6. Jordan

Since March 2023, Jordan has used its air force to target drug traffickers in southern Syria, especially in Sweida governorate.¹¹² Airstrikes undertaken in December 2023 and January 2024 reportedly caused civilian casualties.¹¹³

1.4. Armed actors

1.4.1. Syrian Arab Army and affiliated armed groups

The Syrian armed forces consist of the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) (which includes the Republican Guard), the Naval Forces, Air Forces, Air Defence Forces, as well as pro-government militia¹¹⁴ like the National Defence Forces (NDF) and Local Defence Forces (LDF).¹¹⁵ The Local Defence Forces (LDF), an auxiliary force established by Iran, was deployed throughout Syrian cities and governorates with a focus on Aleppo countryside; the Palestinian militia Liwa Al-Quds, affiliated with the Military Intelligence Directorate and Russia, was present in Aleppo city and the Syrian desert.¹¹⁶ The Syrian military was further supported by the Russian military, the

¹⁰⁶ Haid, H., The strike on Iran's consulate in Syria could be the spark that ignites the Middle East, Chatham House, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 5

¹⁰⁸ Jusoor for Studies, Israeli Strikes in Syria in 2023 [Map], 10 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ Enab Baladi, Israel targets site in rural Daraa in response to rocket launches, 12 July 2024, [url](#); Al-Monitor, Israel strikes Syria, hits deeper in Lebanon as Hezbollah tensions grow, 27 June 2024, [url](#); BBC News, Israeli missile strike on Damascus flat kills two, Syria says, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ RFE/RL, Suspected Israeli Air Strike 'Flattens' Iranian Consulate In Damascus, Kills Top Quds Commander, 1 April 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Iran's IRGC says 5 members killed in Israeli attack on Syria's Damascus, 20 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹ RFE/RL, Key Iranian Commanders Are Being Assassinated Abroad. How Will That Affect Tehran's Proxy Network?, 12 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹² Hassan, M., Growing unrest in Syria's Suwayda as Jordanian airstrikes and civilian deaths increase, MEI, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³ Al Jazeera, At least 10 civilians dead in suspected Jordanian air raids in Syria, 18 January 2024, [url](#); Hassan, M., Growing unrest in Syria's Suwayda as Jordanian airstrikes and civilian deaths increase, MEI, 1 February 2024, [url](#); HRW, Jordan: Ensure Accountability, Compensation for Syria Strikes, 17 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ A November 2023 research paper by Gregory Waters and Kayla Koontz presents a typology of pro-GoS militia, sorting them into Baath party militia, intelligence founded militia, SAA-founded militia, private militia and more. The report is available here: Waters, G. and Koontz, K., "Shabiha Forever" Assad's Creation, Control, and Use of Militias Since 2011, Harpoon Center for Contemporary Studies, 22 November 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ US, CIA, World Factbook, Syria, last updated: 17 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ NPA, Role of auxiliary armed groups in keeping Syrian government in power, 28 October 2023, [url](#)



Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).¹¹⁷ According to estimated figures provided by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Military Balance of 2024, the Syrian armed forces comprised 169 000 active military personnel, 130 000 of whom formed the SAA, with its main and best trained fighting groups being the Fourth Division, the Republican Guard, the Special Forces (including the former Tiger Forces¹¹⁸) and the Fifth Assault Corps. A further estimated 100 000 persons belonged to state-allied paramilitary militia, such as the NDF (50 000¹¹⁹), sectarian militias as well as foreign militias of Afghan, Pakistani and Iraqi origin.¹²⁰

The Iranian influence in Syria was described by Jusoor for Studies as falling into two categories: firstly Iranian-backed militias directly commanded by the IRGC Quds Force and made up of Syrian, Iranian, Iraqi, Afghan, and Pakistani fighters and secondly Lebanese Hezbollah and its local affiliates operating with the support or supervision of the IRGC.¹²¹ Afghans and Pakistanis were reportedly making up the main contingent of the first category, with the Afghan Fatemiyoun Brigade estimated to have several thousand fighters in Syria and the Pakistani Zainabiyoun Brigade believed to have less than 1 000 fighters.¹²² As for the second category, the Lebanese Hezbollah was estimated to have between 7 000 and 8 000 fighters in the country.¹²³ According to Jusoor for Studies, the Iran-backed militias, while present in almost all governorates, were unable to launch major military operations on their own due to lack of air force and other necessary military infrastructure, sometimes using the government's military facilities to compensate for this lack.¹²⁴ Following Israel's military offensive in the Gaza strip, attacks by Iran-backed militia on US-led Coalition Forces in Syria and Iraq resumed in October 2023.¹²⁵ The policy research institute, Washington Institute for Near East Policy (TWI), in a continuously updated overview, keeps track of attacks carried out by the Islamic Resistance, an umbrella term for various Iran-backed militia. From mid-October 2023 until the mid-August 2024, TWI documented over 100 attacks by the Islamic Resistance on targets in Syria, mostly drone and missile attacks on US bases or allied SDF positions.¹²⁶

GoS troops, as well as pro-government fighters, continued to be deployed in the central Badia desert to fight ISIL cells,¹²⁷ leading to soldiers killed in ISIL attacks,¹²⁸ with a high death toll of

¹¹⁷ US, CIA, World Factbook, Syria, last updated: 17 July 2024, [url](#); OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 33

¹¹⁸ The Tiger Forces were renamed to 25th Special Tasks Division in 2019, Denmark, DIS, Syria – The Special Forces and the elite units, April 2023, [url](#), p. 14

¹¹⁹ Another source estimates the NDF to comprise 40,000 fighters, see Haid, H., How Syria's vast militia network is eroding state sovereignty, Al Majalla, 6 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰ IISS, The Military Balance 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 386-387

¹²¹ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²² RFE/RL, Iran's 'Axis Of Resistance': Different Groups, Same Goals, 19 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²³ IISS, The Military Balance 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#), p. 387

¹²⁴ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#), p. 37; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), p. 12

¹²⁶ Knights, M. et al., Tracking Anti-U.S. Strikes in Iraq and Syria During the Gaza Crisis [Table], TWI, last updated 19 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸ New Arab (The), Suspected Islamic State group attack kills at least 13 members of pro-regime force in east Syria, 3 May 2024, [url](#); AP, Attack blamed on IS militants kills 22 pro-government fighters in central Syria, 19 April 2024, [url](#)



government troops noted in November 2023.¹²⁹ They were further repeatedly engaged in hostilities with HTS and its allied groups along the frontlines in northwest Syria.¹³⁰

Civilian areas and infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and IDP settlements were affected by GoS and pro-GoS aerial bombardment and shelling.¹³¹ The UNCOI report documented several rocket attacks and artillery shelling carried out by GoS forces in northwest Syria between September and December 2023, wounding and killing civilians.¹³² In one incident in October 2023, the use of cluster munition was documented.¹³³ SNHR documented 62 civilian deaths (about 14 percent of the overall number of civilian deaths)¹³⁴ attributed to government forces and Iranian militias in the first half of 2024, among which 26 deaths due to torture.¹³⁵ GoS forces reportedly increased their use of suicide drones, carrying explosives and steered by remote control, to shell civilians in Idlib.¹³⁶ In a February 2024 article, researcher Haid Haid argued that local militias operated outside of government control and due to economic decline turned to illicit activities to generate income, such as smuggling, looting and kidnappings for ransom.¹³⁷ The Fourth Division for example was reportedly involved in systematic looting, imposing tolls at checkpoints and running protection rackets.¹³⁸

1.4.2. The Syrian National Army

The Syrian National Army (SNA) is an umbrella of non-state armed groups operating in the north of the country in areas that were established as a result of Turkish-backed military operations between 2016 and 2019.¹³⁹ The SNA controls two areas adjoining the Turkish border: the first covers the northern countryside of Aleppo from Afrin to Jarablus,¹⁴⁰ and the second one spans from Tall Abyad to Ras Al-Ayn, in the north of Raqqqa and Hasaka

¹²⁹ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹³⁰ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#); Syria TV, قتل وجرحى من قواى النظام بهجوم لفصائل المعارضة شمالي اللاذقية [Government forces killed and wounded in attack by opposition factions in northern Latakia], 29 July 2024, [url](#); Syria TV, هجومان لفصائل العسكرية على مواقع للنظام بادل وحلب [15 fighters killed and wounded – two attacks of military factions on government positions in Idlib and Aleppo], 10 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 37

¹³² UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), Annex, pp. 27-31

¹³³ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), Annex, p. 27; HRW, Northwest Syria: Government Uses Cluster Munitions, 5 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁴ The largest share of civilian deaths (68 percent) is attributed to ‘other parties’, most of them unidentified, for example 115 cases of gunfire by unidentified source, 68 cases of landmines by unidentified source and 43 cases of killings by unidentified parties, see SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹³⁵ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 5, 11

¹³⁶ Enab Baladi, Regime forces continue to shell Idlib as messages to Turkey and locals, 4 January 2024, [url](#); Syria TV, قواى النظام السوري تستهدف ريف اءلب الجنوبي بالمسيرات الانتحارية [Syrian government forces target southern Idlib countryside with suicide drones], 15 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷ Haid, H., How Syria's vast militia network is eroding state sovereignty, Al Majalla, 6 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸ Noon Post, شبكات دولة داخل دولة.. الفرقة الرابعة [The Fourth Division: Networks of a state within a state], 30 September 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁹ OHCHR, “We did not fear death but the life there” – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), Annex, p. 34. More information on the evolution and structure of the SNA can be found in this 2022 report: Denmark, DIS, Syria – Recruitment to Opposition Groups, December 2022, [url](#), pp. 5-7

¹⁴⁰ ACAPS, Syria: Assessing increased protection risks and vulnerabilities after the earthquakes, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 2

governorates.¹⁴¹ SNA factions, while officially operating under the command of the Ministry of Defence of the Syrian Interim Government, 'receive financial, logistical, operational support, and in some instances instructions, from Türkiye and often operate in coordination with Turkish armed forces while engaged in military operations mainly against pro-government forces and the SDF'.¹⁴² According to estimated figures provided by the IISS Military Balance of 2024, the SNA comprises 70 000 fighters.¹⁴³ It contained more than 35 factions from various governorates and affiliations and lacked a unitary structure of command. Human Rights Watch noted that SNA factions under Turkish oversight 'haphazardly' exercised their rule, with control of individual towns, villages and even certain neighbourhoods divided up between factions. The different factions 'often merge into legions, blocs, and divisions only to split or defect and merge into different structures'.¹⁴⁴ According to Enab Baladi, the Sultan Murad Division was considered one of the most prominent SNA factions.¹⁴⁵ The military police, a force reportedly answering directly to Turkish intelligence and military officials, had subbranches in SNA-controlled cities and operated prisons and detention facilities across the Turkish-occupied zone, including in Afrin and Al-Bab.¹⁴⁶

During the reference period, mutual shelling was reported between SNA and SDF positions around the Operation Peace Spring area,¹⁴⁷ as well as shelling and clashes in northern Aleppo governorate.¹⁴⁸ Several sources reported further clashes between different factions within the SNA.¹⁴⁹ In the first half of 2024, SNHR documented 12 civilian deaths (about 2.8 percent of the overall number of civilian deaths recorded by SNHR)¹⁵⁰ attributed to the SNA, among which 5 deaths due to torture.¹⁵¹ In February 2024, Human Rights Watch published a report based on interviews with survivors and witnesses of abuses committed by SNA factions. The report documents 'abductions, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, including of children, sexual

¹⁴¹ Syria Report (The), Property Rights Violations Continue in Ras Al-Ayn and Tal Abyad, 12 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴² OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), Annex, p. 34

¹⁴³ IISS, The Military Balance 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#), p. 388

¹⁴⁴ HRW, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁴⁵ Enab Baladi, Turkey recruits Syrians to fight in Africa under supervision of Sultan Murad Division, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ HRW, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), pp. 21-23

¹⁴⁷ SOHR, From within "Peace Spring" area | Turkish forces shell two villages in Tel Tamer countryside north of Al-Hasakah, 6 May 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 8

¹⁴⁸ Syria TV, قتلى وجرحى من عناصر "قسد" خلال مواجهات مع الجيش الوطني الشمالي حلب, 28 July 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, Kurdish, Turkish-backed forces clash in Manbij: Monitor, 5 March 2024, [url](#); Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, قتلى في اشتباكات بين "قسد" و"الجيش الوطني" شمالي سورية, 10 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ NPA, Clashes between SNA factions in Syria's Afrin leave casualties, 28 July 2024, [url](#); Syria TV, حرب شوارع وسيطرة على حواجز.. مواجهات بين "الحمزا" و"الشرقية" في عفرين [Street war and control over checkpoints – clashes between Hamza and Sharqiya factions in Afrin], 4 June 2024, [url](#); NPA, 2 SNA factions clash in north Syria on smuggling route, 12 May 2024, [url](#); International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ The largest share of civilian deaths (68 percent) is attributed to 'other parties', most of them unidentified, for example 115 cases of gunfire by unidentified source, 68 cases of landmines by unidentified source and 43 cases of killings by unidentified parties, see SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁵¹ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 5, 11

violence, and torture' perpetrated by various factions of the SNA, as well as looting, property seizures and extortion.¹⁵² During the reference period, various sources reported such cases of abuse, including civilians killed in shootings,¹⁵³ arbitrary arrests,¹⁵⁴ kidnappings¹⁵⁵ and property seizures.¹⁵⁶ The UN Secretary-General report on children in armed conflict noted cases of child recruitment by the SNA.¹⁵⁷

1.4.3. Syrian Democratic Forces

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are a 'Kurdish-led coalition of non-state armed groups' which control Hasaka, eastern Deir Ez-Zor as well as parts of Raqqa and Aleppo governorates,¹⁵⁸ the region governed by the civilian Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES).¹⁵⁹ They are comprised of the Kurdish People's Defense Units (YPG) as well as other groups of Kurdish, Arab, Assyrian/Syriac and Armenian origin.¹⁶⁰ According to estimated figures provided by the IISS Military Balance of 2024, the SDF consists approximately 50 000 fighters.¹⁶¹ The Internal Security Forces (ISF), also referred to as Asayish, are the police force of the DAANES.¹⁶² Both SDF and ISF have received funding from the US military to train, equip and pay their members.¹⁶³

The United States Department of Defense (USDOD) noted that Turkish airstrikes, attacks by Iran-backed groups as well as tensions with Arab tribes in Deir Ez-Zor caused multiple SDF personnel losses and stretched the force's capacities which also impacted the anti-ISIL operations.¹⁶⁴ The Rojava Information Center (RIC), an independent media organisation based in northeastern Syria and founded in 2018 by international journalists and researchers¹⁶⁵ similarly described these challenges for the SDF in its annual report on ISIL sleeper cells throughout 2023. RIC stated that between September and December 2023, SDF and Asayish carried out 32 counter-ISIL raids and arrested 78 suspects while being confronted with Turkish

¹⁵² HRW, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁵³ SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁵⁴ SNHR, At least 228 Cases of Arbitrary Detention Cases Recorded in May 2024, Including of 13 Children and Four Women, 3 June 2024, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁵⁵ Kurd Online, عفرين: استمرار الانتهاكات وعمليات الخطف والنهب والاستيلاء على الممتلكات من قبل ميليشيا الجيش الوطني المدعومة من تركيا [Afrin: Continued violations, kidnappings, looting and property seizure by Turkish-backed SNA], 8 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶ NPA, SNA infighting erupts over seizure of IDPs' property in Syria's Afrin, 30 June 2024, [url](#); Kurd Online, عفرين: استمرار الانتهاكات وعمليات الخطف والنهب والاستيلاء على الممتلكات من قبل ميليشيا الجيش الوطني المدعومة من تركيا [Afrin: Continued violations, kidnappings, looting and property seizure by Turkish-backed SNA], 8 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ UNSG, Children and armed conflict, A/78/842-S/2024/384, 3 June 2024, [url](#), para. 202

¹⁵⁸ OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 34

¹⁵⁹ Forbes, U.S.-Allied Kurdish Security Forces Face Unprecedented Drone Attacks, 6 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 34

¹⁶¹ IISS, The Military Balance 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#), p. 388

¹⁶² Van Wilgenburg, W., Three security police injured in Turkish drone strikes in Syria: ISF, Kurdistan 24, 27 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶³ USDOD, Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 - Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Train and Equip Fund (CTEF), March 2024, [url](#), pp. 17-18

¹⁶⁴ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

¹⁶⁵ Al-Monitor, Rojava Information Center, a media bridge to the world outside, 19 December 2019, [url](#)

airstrikes on regional infrastructure, attacks by Iranian militia on US targets, ISIL sleeper cell attacks as well as the fallout of tribal unrest in Deir Ez-Zor.¹⁶⁶ Even though US as well as Russian troops were deployed in DAANES according to military agreements to prevent further Turkish military aggression, in January 2024 a Kurdish official denounced the silence of both countries regarding Turkish military strikes on civilian infrastructure in the region.¹⁶⁷ During the reference period, mutual shelling was reported between SNA and SDF positions around the Operation Peace Spring area,¹⁶⁸ as well as shelling and clashes in northern Aleppo governorate.¹⁶⁹ In July 2024, an increase of attacks and infiltration by SDF in SNA-controlled areas was reported in northern Aleppo governorate.¹⁷⁰ The SDF were further confronted with tribal unrest in Deir Ez-Zor governorate, where local Arab tribes loyal to the government attacked the SDF several times during the reference period.¹⁷¹

In the first half of 2024, SNHR documented 35 civilian deaths (about 8 percent of the overall number of civilian deaths documented in that period)¹⁷² attributed to the SDF, among which 7 deaths due to torture.¹⁷³ The organisation documented individual cases of civilians being shot by SDF patrolmen¹⁷⁴ as well as further cases of arbitrary arrest.¹⁷⁵ The UN Secretary-General report on children in armed conflict and DIS noted cases of child recruitment by the SDF¹⁷⁶ as well as children being detained by the SDF on suspicion of ties to ISIL.¹⁷⁷ Several sources

¹⁶⁶ RIC, Annual Sleeper Cell Report (2023) For North and East Syria, February 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-17. For more information on tribal unrest in Deir Ez-Zor, see Van Wilgenburg, W., The SDF's Insurgency Challenge in Deir ez-Zor, TWI, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷ Asharq Al-Awsat, Kurdish Autonomous Administration Criticizes US, Russia Silence Over Turkish Raids, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ SOHR, From within "Peace Spring" area | Turkish forces shell two villages in Tel Tamer countryside north of Al-Hasakah, 6 May 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 8

¹⁶⁹ Syria TV, قتلى وجرحى من عناصر "قسد" خلال مواجهات مع الجيش الوطني شمالي حلب [SDF members killed and wounded in clashes with SNA in northern Aleppo], 28 July 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, Kurdish, Turkish-backed forces clash in Manbij: Monitor, 5 March 2024, [url](#); Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, شمالي سورية "الجيش الوطني" و"القسد" في اشتباكات بين [Several killed in clashes between SDF and SNA in northern Syria], 10 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰ Syria TV, رسائل مدادها النار.. ما دوافع "قسد" من التصعيد العسكري بريف حلب؟ [Messages written in fire – what are the motives for the military escalation by SDF in Aleppo countryside?], 23 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ Al-Monitor, Clashes between Arab tribes, SDF forces in Syria pose challenge to US, 8 August 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, Pro-regime fighters resume attacks against SDF in Deir ez-Zor, 25 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷² The largest share of civilian deaths (68 percent) is attributed to 'other parties', most of them unidentified, for example 115 cases of gunfire by unidentified source, 68 cases of landmines by unidentified source and 43 cases of killings by unidentified parties, see SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁷³ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 5, 11

¹⁷⁴ SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 4; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 5; SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁷⁵ SNHR, At least 228 Cases of Arbitrary Detention Cases Recorded in May 2024, Including of 13 Children and Four Women, 3 June 2024, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁷⁶ UNSG, Children and armed conflict, A/78/842-S/2024/384, 3 June 2024, [url](#), para. 202. For a more detailed overview of the recruitment processes of minors into the SDF in northeast Syria, see Denmark, DIS, Syria – Military recruitment in North and East Syria, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 26-28

¹⁷⁷ UNSG, Children and armed conflict, A/78/842-S/2024/384, 3 June 2024, [url](#), para. 203

reported child recruitment practices of SDF affiliated organisations such as the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RY).¹⁷⁸

1.4.4. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham and other anti-government armed groups in the northwest

As of early 2024, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) was the largest insurgent group in northwest Syria¹⁷⁹ and the dominant group in Idlib governorate,¹⁸⁰ reportedly controlling around 75 percent of its territory as well as parts of Hama, Aleppo and Latakia governorates.¹⁸¹ Based on an estimate published by the UN Security Council in January 2024, HTS comprised around 15 000 fighters and administrative operatives¹⁸² while the IISS Military Balance of 2024 estimated the size of HTS to be about 10 000 fighters.¹⁸³ The UN Secretary-General report on children in armed conflict noted cases of child recruitment by HTS.¹⁸⁴

While beset with internal divisions,¹⁸⁵ HTS was leading a variety of armed groups such as Ahrar al-Sham and Ansar al-Tawhid,¹⁸⁶ Jaysh al-Izza, the National Front for Liberation (these last three groups are part of the HTS-led Fateh al-Mubin operations room),¹⁸⁷ while other groups, like the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM/TIP), were allied to HTS.¹⁸⁸ A report

¹⁷⁸ Denmark, DIS, Syria – Military recruitment in North and East Syria, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 29-32; Netjes, R., Child Abductions in PYD Areas, Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies, May 2024, [url](#), p. 21-22; SJAC, “She is Still a Child” - Investigating Child Recruitment Practices by the Revolutionary Youth in NE Syria, April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 54

¹⁸⁰ BBC News, Iran demonstrates missile capabilities with regional strikes, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ NPA, HTS dominates all factions in northwest Syria, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸² UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 54

¹⁸³ IISS, The Military Balance 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#), p. 388

¹⁸⁴ UNSG, Children and armed conflict, A/78/842-S/2024/384, 3 June 2024, [url](#), para. 202

¹⁸⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – December 2023, 16 January 2024, [url](#); UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 55

¹⁸⁶ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 54

¹⁸⁷ NPA, HTS dominates all factions in northwest Syria, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-

published by the UN Security Council noted that there was a high degree of mobility of individuals between armed factions.¹⁸⁹ The HTS factions' conduct was reportedly overseen by Türkiye's military and intelligence agencies,¹⁹⁰ although some factions refused dialogue with Turkish forces.¹⁹¹ Hurras al Din (HAD), an HTS breakaway group and rival,¹⁹² was seeking to reclaim its legitimacy by exploiting popular dissent against the HTS leadership.¹⁹³ It had an estimated 2 500 fighters.¹⁹⁴ According to information provided by the UN Security Council, the group was reportedly mainly active in southeastern Idlib and northern Latakia, where it was 'quietly reactivating itself'.¹⁹⁵

During the reference period, HTS as well as HTS-allied groups, such as the National Front for Liberation and Ahrar Al-Sham,¹⁹⁶ engaged in military operations against pro-GoS forces¹⁹⁷ along the frontlines in northern Latakia, southern Idlib and Aleppo countryside, leading to deadly clashes.¹⁹⁸ The opposition groups in their engagements with GoS forces reportedly employed artillery, snipers, guided missiles as well as suspected suicide drones.¹⁹⁹ SNHR

Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 56

¹⁸⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 54

¹⁹⁰ HRW, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 17

¹⁹¹ NPA, HTS dominates all factions in northwest Syria, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹² US, CRS, Al Qaeda: Background, Current Status, and U.S. Policy, 6 May 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁹³ Jusoor for Studies, Hurras Al-Din Resurfaces on the Scene: Decoding the Messages Sent, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ IISS, The Military Balance 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#), p. 388

¹⁹⁵ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 56

¹⁹⁶ Syria TV, قتل وجرحى من قوات النظام بهجوم لفصائل المعارضة شمالي اللاذقية [Government forces killed and wounded in attack by opposition factions in northern Latakia], 29 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 34

¹⁹⁸ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#); Syria TV, مقتل وجرح 15 هجوماً للفصائل العسكرية على مواقع للنظام بـإدلب وحلب [15 fighters killed and wounded – two attacks of military factions on government positions in Idlib and Aleppo], 10 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁹ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#); NPA, HTS manufactures drones in local factories in northwest Syria, 12 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

documented 18 civilian deaths (about 4 percent of the overall number of civilian deaths)²⁰⁰ attributed to HTS in the first half of 2024, among which 15 deaths due to torture.²⁰¹

HTS reportedly followed a strategy of expansion into SNA-controlled areas by backing allied SNA factions.²⁰² Tensions between HTS and neighbouring SNA-controlled areas were reported during the referencing period, resulting in clashes in September 2023,²⁰³ with a ceasefire brokered by Türkiye later that same month.²⁰⁴ Internal divisions within HTS ranks reportedly increased,²⁰⁵ while HTS was also reportedly losing support among allies within the SNA²⁰⁶ leading SNA factions to reinforce their presence along the crossing points between the two areas of control in order to prevent future HTS incursions.²⁰⁷

A popular anti-HTS protest movement erupted in February 2024,²⁰⁸ triggered by a number of arrests over alleged collusion within the HTS ranks²⁰⁹ and revelations of torture and extrajudicial killing by members of the HTS security forces. By late May, the protests had spread across most of HTS-controlled northwestern Syria, with demonstrators expressing increasingly direct demands for the removal of HTS leader Abu Muhammad al-Jolani and the dissolution of the HTS General Security branch.²¹⁰ These demands merged with growing discontent over HTS's administrative and economic policies.²¹¹ Etana Syria²¹² assessed in June 2024 that these protests had evolved into a 'major threat' to al-Jolani and his inner circle.²¹³

As the protests expanded, HTS responded in an increasingly heavy-handed manner.²¹⁴ An escalation occurred in April 2024 when Abu Maria al-Qahtani, a former HTS leader who had fallen out with al-Jolani, was killed in a suicide bombing outside Sarmada. This incident has been widely viewed as a warning to individuals considering to join the growing protest movement, according to Etana Syria.²¹⁵ The following month, HTS violently²¹⁶ dispersed protesters at the Idlib military court and suppressed protests in Jisr al-Shughur and on the

²⁰⁰ The largest share of civilian deaths (68 percent) is attributed to 'other parties', most of them unidentified, for example 115 cases of gunfire by unidentified source, 68 cases of landmines by unidentified source and 43 cases of killings by unidentified parties, see SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

²⁰¹ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024 [url](#), pp. 5, 11

²⁰² EPC, HTS Strategy Beyond Idlib: Patterns, Ambitions, and Limitations, 6 November 2023, [url](#); Enab Baladi, New military merger increases factionalism and puts a foothold for HTS in Aleppo, 20 November 2023, [url](#)

²⁰³ NPA, HTS-SNA clashes renew in northern Aleppo, 27 September 2023, [url](#)

²⁰⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

²⁰⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – December 2023, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – December 2023, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – May 2024, 5 June 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – February 2024, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁸ New Arab (The), Protests against powerful group persist in Syria's last major rebel stronghold, 17 May 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁹ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene March 2024, 10 April 2024 [url](#), p. 2

²¹⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

²¹¹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

²¹² Etana Syria is a Syrian civil society organisation that informs about ground developments and human rights violations in Syria. Etana Syria, About us, n.d., [url](#)

²¹³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

²¹⁴ Jusoor for Studies, Idlib Protestors Struggle to Keep Momentum Against HTS, 14 June 2024, [url](#)

²¹⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

²¹⁶ AP, Syria's main insurgent group blasts the US Embassy over its criticism of crackdown on protesters, 30 May 2024, [url](#)

road connecting Idlib city and Binnish.²¹⁷ During this crackdown, security forces beat protesters, hit some with armoured vehicles, and used live ammunition to disperse crowds.²¹⁸ This was followed by an arrest campaign²¹⁹ targeting active figures in the protest movement in various localities across the governorate.²²⁰

1.4.5. Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

The USDOD noted that, during the reference period, ISIL did not control any territory and did not manage to launch large, complex attacks within the country.²²¹ US intelligence reportedly estimated ISIL to comprise about 1 500 fighters in Syria²²² while UN figures for the combined strength of ISIL in Syria and Iraq were between 3 000 and 5 000 fighters.²²³ For the months from January to June 2024, the UNCOI reported that ISIL attacks had almost doubled across Syria and Iraq.²²⁴

ISIL reportedly ‘operated in small, clandestine cells in deserts and mountains’²²⁵ and mostly made use of small arms and IEDs for its attacks.²²⁶ As of December 2023, the group’s activities were reportedly centred in the Syrian desert in areas outside of DAANES.²²⁷ The UN Security Council described the forms of attack in the first half of 2024 as ‘mostly unsophisticated’, focusing on GoS military positions around Sukhna and Palmyra in Homs governorate as well as targeting civilians.²²⁸ Accordingly, recurring attacks on pro-government

²¹⁷ Jusoor for Studies, Idlib Protestors Struggle to Keep Momentum Against HTS, 14 June 2024, [url](#)

²¹⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

²¹⁹ Jusoor for Studies, Idlib Protestors Struggle to Keep Momentum Against HTS, 14 June 2024, [url](#); Syria TV, استمرار الاحتجاجات المناهضة لزعيم "تحرير الشام" في إدلب [Protests against HTS leader continue in Idlib], 19 July 2024, [url](#)

²²⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

²²¹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 11; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), p. 10; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 16

²²² Al-Monitor, ISIS kills 11 truffle hunters in Syria amid signs of resurgence, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

²²³ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 45

²²⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 8

²²⁵ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), p. 10

²²⁶ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 11; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), p. 10

²²⁷ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 16

²²⁸ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted

fighters were reported between September 2023 and July 2024, some of them exacting a high death toll among pro-government forces.²²⁹ Gregory Waters, research analyst at the Counter Extremism Project (CEP), publishes monthly overviews on the state of the ISIL insurgency in central Syria. Between September 2023 and June 2024, he recorded 292 ISIL attacks in Homs, Hama, Raqqqa and Deir Ez-Zor governorates and, to a lesser extent, in Aleppo governorate, leading to at least 391 pro-government fighters and about 94 civilians being killed.²³⁰ Tactics of engagement included ambushes on government positions and patrols using small and medium arms,²³¹ captures and assassinations²³² as well as deaths resulting from mines or IEDs.²³³ In several instances, tank trucks belonging to the SDF as well as to government forces were targeted.²³⁴ A surge of ISIL activity was noted in March 2024,²³⁵ featuring two attacks on people collecting truffles in the desert, leading to at least 29 civilians killed.²³⁶ This surge in violent deaths was also noted in 2023 during truffle season which lasts from February to April.²³⁷ In June 2024, SOHR reported fatalities resulting from military operations against ISIL cells in the Syrian desert to have reached 437 since the beginning of the year, including 365 government-backed forces, 29 ISIL members and 43 civilians.²³⁸

According to the UN Security Council report covering the first half of 2024, in the country's east in Deir Ez-Zor and Hasaka governorates ISIL employed hit-and-run attacks in attempts to

pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 51

²²⁹ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

²³⁰ Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in May 2024, CEP, 11 June 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in April 2024, CEP, 3 May 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in December 2023, CEP, 12 January 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in September 2023, CEP, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

²³¹ Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

²³² Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

²³³ Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in April 2024, CEP, 3 May 2024, [url](#); Al-Monitor, ISIL kills 11 truffle hunters in Syria amid signs of resurgence, 25 March 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

²³⁴ Syria TV, داعش يكثف هجماته في شمالي وشرقي سوريا: استهدافات متزايدة لصهاريج النفط [ISIL intensifies attacks in northern and eastern Syria – increase in targeting of tank trucks], 24 July 2024, [url](#); RIC, June Sleeper Cell Report – Successful raids and ongoing attacks in Deir ez-Zor, 8 July 2024, [url](#)

²³⁵ Waters, G., ISIL Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Kurdistan 24, Report highlights resurgence of ISIS, al-Qaeda amid Middle East turmoil, 20 July 2024, [url](#); UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 51

²³⁶ Al-Monitor, ISIL kills 11 truffle hunters in Syria amid signs of resurgence, 25 March 2024, [url](#); AFP, 11 Killed in Suspected IS Attack on Syria Truffle Hunters: Monitor, 24 March 2024

²³⁷ BBC News, IS truffle picker attacks: At least 26 killed in Syrian desert ambush, 17 April 2023, [url](#)

²³⁸ SOHR, Despite its continuation for about 20 days with complete absence of Iranian militias | Combing campaign in Syrian desert fails to kill any "ISIS" member, 23 June 2024, [url](#)

free imprisoned group members.²³⁹ The RIC, which publishes monthly sleeper cell reports focusing on ISIL activities in the DAANES region, between September 2023 and June 2024 recorded 181 ISIL sleeper cell attacks in DAANES, mostly in SDF-controlled parts of Deir-Ez-Zor governorate, leading to 74 military personnel killed as well as 33 civilians.²⁴⁰ RIC in several monthly overviews noted targeted assassinations of civilians working for the DAANES administration or being associated with it.²⁴¹ In the country's south, ISIL reportedly maintained around 20 cells with 250 to 300 fighters²⁴² and several sources reported on the group's activity in Dar'a governorate.²⁴³

1.5. Impact of violence on the civilian population

1.5.1. Tactics and weapons used

Between September 2023 and August 2024, sources reported ongoing hostilities and military operations that included air and ground attacks, clashes, killings, and attacks with various types of IEDs, resulting in civilians being killed and injured.²⁴⁴ Especially areas of mixed or contested control along the frontlines witnessed artillery shelling and airstrikes.²⁴⁵ During the reference period, the UNCOI reported all main parties to the conflict as having carried out actions that may amount to war crimes, such as GoS and allied Russian forces carrying out aerial and rocket attacks targeting civilian infrastructure or civilian targets such as medical

²³⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 52

²⁴⁰ RIC, June Sleeper Cell Report – Successful raids and ongoing attacks in Deir ez-Zor, 8 July 2024, [url](#); RIC, May Sleeper Cell Report – ISIS Ramps Up Attacks on Oil Targets, 9 June 2024, [url](#); RIC, April Sleeper Cell Report – SDF Commander in Chief Criticizes Coalition's "Diminished Focus", 10 May 2024, [url](#); RIC, March Sleeper Cell Report – Moscow attack puts international spotlight on ISIS' enduring threat, 4 April 2024, [url](#); RIC, Annual Sleeper Cell Report (2023) For North and East Syria, February 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-17

²⁴¹ RIC, June Sleeper Cell Report – Successful raids and ongoing attacks in Deir ez-Zor, 8 July 2024, [url](#); RIC, April Sleeper Cell Report – SDF Commander in Chief Criticizes Coalition's "Diminished Focus", 10 May 2024, [url](#); RIC, Annual Sleeper Cell Report (2023) For North and East Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 17

²⁴² UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 53

²⁴³ SOHR, His body tied to pole | Eighth Brigade executes "ISIS" leader in Daraa, 26 June 2024, [url](#); Syria Direct, How does IS resurrect itself in southern Syria, defeat after defeat?, 13 February 2024, [url](#); NPA, ISIS seeks to establish foothold in southern Syria, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para.29,34-35,46,49,57; International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 6-11

²⁴⁵ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7

facilities,²⁴⁶ factions of the SNA committing torture, cruel treatment and pillaging,²⁴⁷ SDF shelling residential areas and potentially committing or not preventing child recruitment,²⁴⁸ Turkish forces carrying out drone attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure,²⁴⁹ HTS committing acts of enforced disappearance and torture²⁵⁰ and ISIL employing vehicle-borne IEDs against civilians.²⁵¹ According to Action on Armed Violence (AOAV),²⁵² in 2023 ground-launched weapons caused 47 percent of civilian casualties (210 killed, 627 injured), air-launched weapons killed 175 and injured 399 civilians, and IEDs caused 90 civilian deaths and 195 wounded civilians in Syria. Both the use of air-launched explosive weapons and the use of IEDs reportedly increased compared to 2022, the first by 53 percent, the latter by 29 percent. According to the same source, civilian casualties caused by air-launched explosive weapons increased by 93 percent compared to 2022, while civilian casualties resulting from IEDs increased by 88 percent.²⁵³

October 2023 saw a notable increase in hostilities, after an unclaimed drone attack on a GoS military academy in Homs that killed at least 120 persons led to retaliatory air strikes by GoS and Russian forces in the in areas controlled by HTS in Idlib area,²⁵⁴ subjecting the region to the most intensive bombardment since the March 2020 ceasefire.²⁵⁵ Sources documented the use of cluster munition and incendiary weapons by the GoS in these airstrikes.²⁵⁶ The use of incendiary weapons against civilians is prohibited under international humanitarian law.²⁵⁷ From November 2023 onwards, tactics reportedly shifted from aerial bombardment to the use of guided missiles²⁵⁸ as well as suicide drones.²⁵⁹ The random nature of such attacks reportedly caused rising fear and uncertainty among civilians in southern Idlib, western Hama, northern Latakia and western Aleppo governorates.²⁶⁰ Sources noted the use of suicide

²⁴⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 37-40, 47

²⁴⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 88

²⁴⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 95, 97, 117-118

²⁴⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 101-102

²⁵⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 68

²⁵¹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 50

²⁵² AOAV is a research and advocacy organisation that records incidents and resulting casualties caused by explosive weapons at a global level. For more information about AOAV see AOAV, What do we do to address the impact of weapons?, n.d., [url](#)

²⁵³ AOAV, Explosive Violence Monitor 2023, 19 April 2024, [url](#), p. 27

²⁵⁴ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 37-38; New Arab (The), Syrian regime used incendiary weapons on civilians in Idlib: White Helmets, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁵⁵ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#); Carter Center (The), In the Shadows of Gaza: The Unseen Escalation in Syria and its Repercussions, 8 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3

²⁵⁶ HRW, Northwest Syria: Government Uses Cluster Munitions, 5 November 2023, [url](#); Syria Civil Defence, White Helmets Statement on Escalation of Systematic Attacks on Civilians and Civilian Infrastructure in Northwestern Syria by the Syrian Regime and Russia, 10 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ New Arab (The), Syrian regime used incendiary weapons on civilians in Idlib: White Helmets, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁵⁸ Al Jazeera, Russia, al-Assad step up Syria bombing amid world focus on Israel-Gaza war, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

²⁶⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

drones by several conflict parties, such as GoS forces,²⁶¹ HTS²⁶² and Turkish forces.²⁶³ Such attacks affected civilians, among whom farmers tending to their land in the northwest of the country.²⁶⁴ According to Syria Civil Defence (White Helmets), from the beginning of 2024 to mid-April, 11 people were killed and 32 injured in more than 60 suicide drone attacks in northwestern Syria.²⁶⁵ Enab Baladi quoted a military analyst saying that this new tactic of using suicide drones allowed the government to target areas where fighter aircrafts and drones were banned from flying due to proximity to Turkish bases.²⁶⁶ Carrying up to two kilos of explosives and relatively cheap to manufacture,²⁶⁷ suicide drones could be guided towards specific targets via a remote control system.²⁶⁸

There were recurring reports of landmine blasts killing and injuring fighters as well as civilians, especially in the Badia desert, Deir Ez-Zor and Raqqa governorates.²⁶⁹ SNHR recorded the killing of 68 civilians, including 10 children and 14 women by landmines in the first half of 2024²⁷⁰ and 111 civilians killed in landmine explosions in 2023.²⁷¹

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) recorded 25 attacks on health care facilities during 2023, describing it a 'significant increase' compared to 2022.²⁷² Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC), a US-based group of more than 40 organisations which monitors attacks on health care, noted an increase of violent incidents affecting health care, with 57 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care during 2023 compared to 45 in 2022.²⁷³ The rise was reportedly due to the increased use of explosive weapons in October in Idlib and Aleppo governorates. During 2023, at least three health facilities were destroyed and 19 damaged, and several health workers were killed.²⁷⁴

²⁶¹ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene March 2024, 10 April 2024, [url](#), p. 4; New Arab (The), Syria Insight: HTS's litany of errors piles pressure on Idlib, 12 March 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Regime forces continue to shell Idlib as messages to Turkey and locals, 4 January 2024, [url](#); DW, Syria: Suicide drones increasingly targeting civilians, 14 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁶² DW, Syria: Suicide drones increasingly targeting civilians, 14 March 2024, [url](#); NPA, HTS manufactures drones in local factories in northwest Syria, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

²⁶³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

²⁶⁴ Syria Direct, 'Suicide drones' threaten Syrian farmers' lives and livelihoods, 23 May 2024, [url](#); New Arab (The), Syria Insight: HTS's litany of errors piles pressure on Idlib, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁶⁵ Syria Civil Defence, *المسيرات الانتحارية "سلاح الموت" ... تصعيد خطير بالهجمات يستهدف البيئات المدنية* [Suicide drones are a deadly weapon – a dangerous escalation in attacks targeting civilian areas], 16 April 2024, [url](#)

²⁶⁶ Enab Baladi, Regime forces continue to shell Idlib as messages to Turkey and locals, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁶⁷ DW, Syria: Suicide drones increasingly targeting civilians, 14 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁶⁸ Enab Baladi, Regime forces continue to shell Idlib as messages to Turkey and locals, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁶⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – April 2024, 8 May 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#); NPA, Landmine blast injures 4 civilians in Syria's Deir ez-Zor, 25 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – February 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#); New Arab (The), Syria landmine blast kills 16 truffle hunters: monitor, 16 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁷⁰ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 3

²⁷¹ SNHR, 13th Annual Report: Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2023, 23 January 2024, [url](#), p. 26

²⁷² UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 13

²⁷³ Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, Syria: Violence against health care in conflict 2023, May 2024, [url](#), p. 3

²⁷⁴ Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, Syria: Violence against health care in conflict 2023, May 2024, [url](#), pp. 4-5

1.5.2. Security incidents

According to ACLED data,²⁷⁵ between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024 there were 11 932 security incidents recorded in Syria: 2 966 were coded as battles, 7 001 as explosions/remote violence, and 1 965 as violence against civilians. By comparison, for the same period one year prior (1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 9 588 security incidents (2 317 battles, 5 396 explosions/remote violence and 1 875 events coded violence against civilians). Most security incidents recorded by ACLED between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024 took place in Aleppo (3 121), Idlib (2 299) and Deir Ez-Zor (2 140) governorates, which were also the top three governorates in terms of total security incidents between September 2022 – August 2023. The lowest security incidents figures were recorded in Sweida (112), Damascus (28) and Tartous (10) governorates.

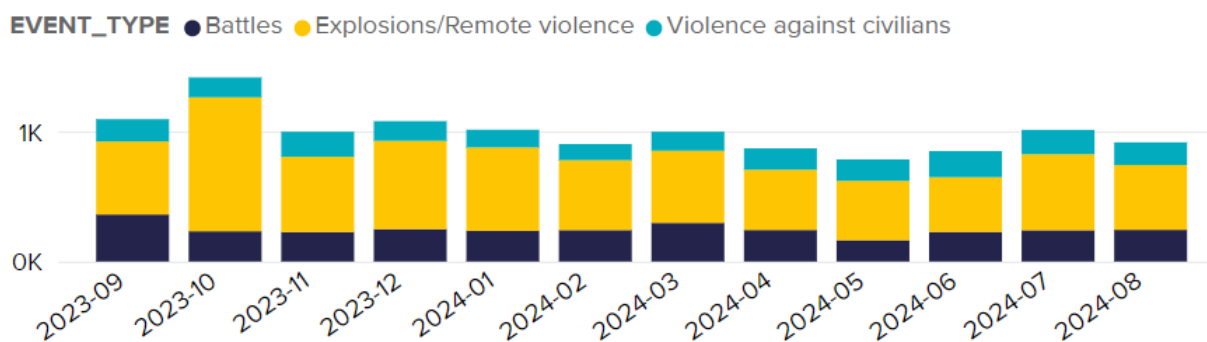


Figure 1. Evolution of ACLED security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024.²⁷⁶

By contrast, for the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)²⁷⁷ recorded 1 305 security events leading to fatalities in Syria. The largest number of events were recorded in Deir Ez-Zor (260), Aleppo (236), Dar’a (197) and Idlib (157) governorates. The lowest numbers of security events were recorded in Tartous (4), Damascus (6) and Sweida (11) governorates. For 21 of the events recorded by UCDP the exact location within a governorate was not specified.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

²⁷⁶ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

²⁷⁷ The methodologies of UCDP and ACLED differ in how each codes security incidents, which explains the discrepancy between the number of security incidents reported by each source. For more information see [Sources](#)

²⁷⁸ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September 2024.

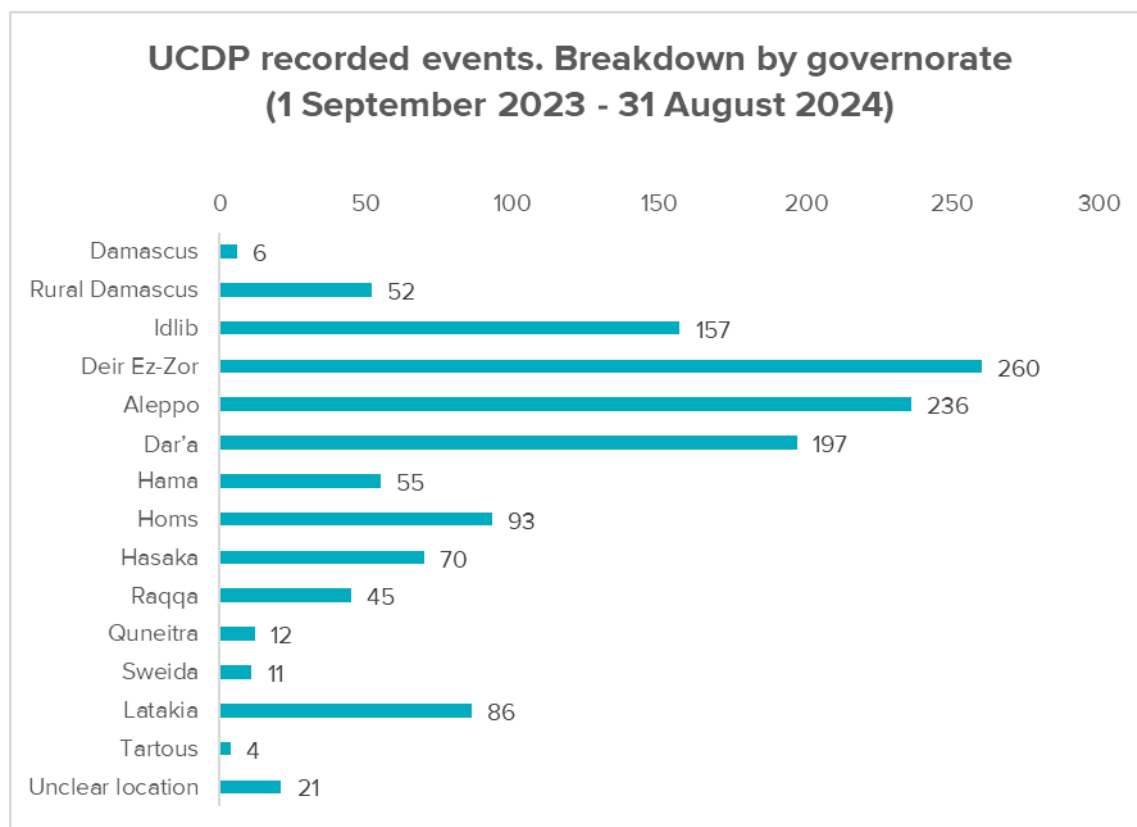


Figure 2. Number of security events recorded by UCDP between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by governorate.

1.5.3. Civilian fatalities

For 2023, the UN Secretary General reported that at least 556 civilians were killed in Syria as a result of conflict violence.²⁷⁹ According to UNOCHA, fatalities and injuries in the year 2023 were particularly caused by airstrikes, ground-based shelling, explosive ordnance, IEDs, as well as Explosive Remnants of War (EWR), especially in Dar'a, Homs, Aleppo, Idlib, Raqqa, Hasaka and Deir Ez-Zor governorates.²⁸⁰

In 2023, SNHR recorded 1 032 civilian fatalities,²⁸¹ a drop by 2 % compared to 2022.²⁸² Other sources recorded comparable figures despite using different methodologies for recording

²⁷⁹ UN Security Council, Protection of civilians in armed conflict; Report of the Secretary-General [S/2024/385], 14 May 2024, [url](#), para 7

²⁸⁰ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 27

²⁸¹ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 8

²⁸² SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 7

civilian casualties.²⁸³ In the first eight months of 2024, SNHR documented 539 civilian fatalities.²⁸⁴

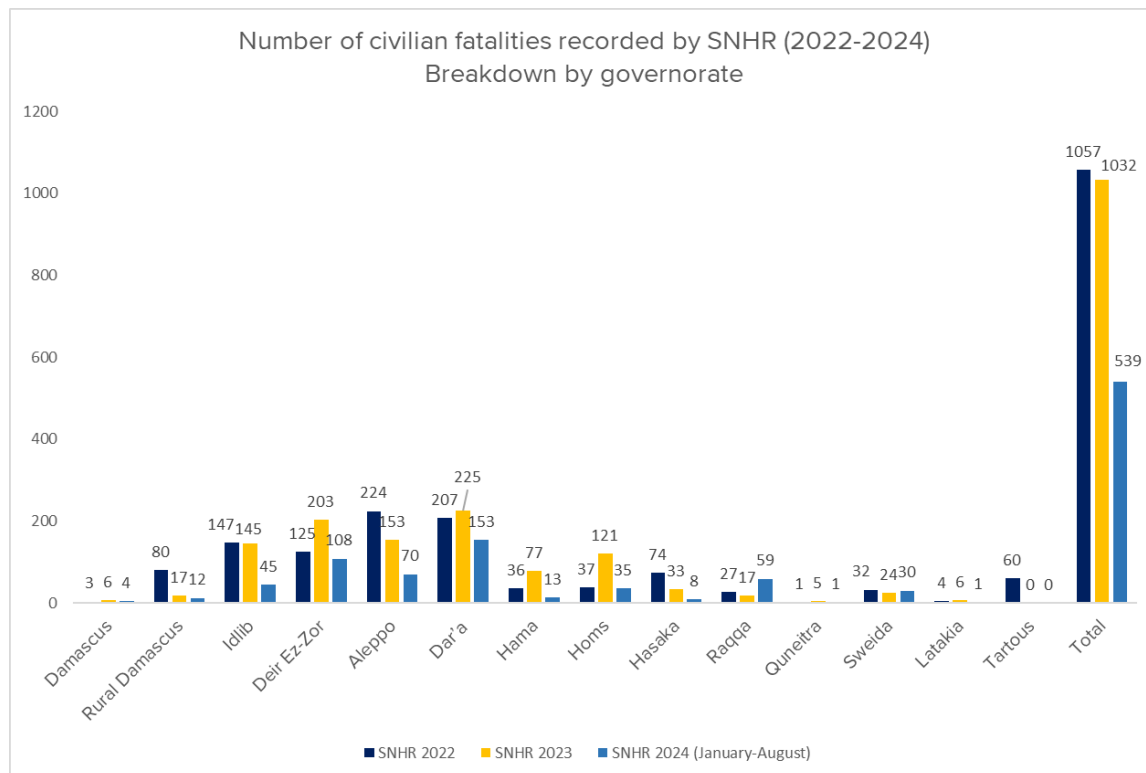


Figure 3. Number of civilian fatalities recorded by SNHR (2022-2024). Breakdown by governorate.

During the reporting period (September 2023 – August 2024), the SNHR documented 930²⁸⁵ civilian fatalities in Syria. Most fatalities were documented during this period in the governorates of Dar'a (214), Deir Ez-Zor (173) and Idlib (136). The lowest number of civilian

²⁸³ For instance, the Syrian Human Rights Committee (SHRC), a London-based human rights organisation, documented 1 107 civilian fatalities in 2023, a slight decrease compared to 1 133 in 2022. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) counted 1 889 killed civilians for the year 2023 and noted an increase in overall fatalities (combatants and civilians) compared to 2022, where the lowest overall number of fatalities had been registered since the start of the conflict. SHRC, Human Rights Situation in Syria for the Year 2023 – First: Victims of Human Rights Violations in 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Highest annual death toll in three years | 4,361 people killed across Syria in 2023, 31 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁸⁴ SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

²⁸⁵ The figure includes 12 civilian fatalities documented in July 2024 in the Occupied Golan Heights. SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 7-8



fatalities recorded were in Tartous (no civilian fatalities), Quneitra (1) and Latakia (3) governorates.²⁸⁶ For the same period, UCDP recorded 1 305 security events leading to 2 926 fatalities in Syria, out of which 568 were civilian fatalities. The largest number of civilian fatalities were recorded in Deir Ez-Zor (90), Dar'a (90), Homs (87), Aleppo (82), and Idlib governorates (76). The lowest numbers of security events were recorded in Tartous (1), Quneitra (1) and Latakia (2) governorates.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – August 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

²⁸⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 July 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 21 August 2024



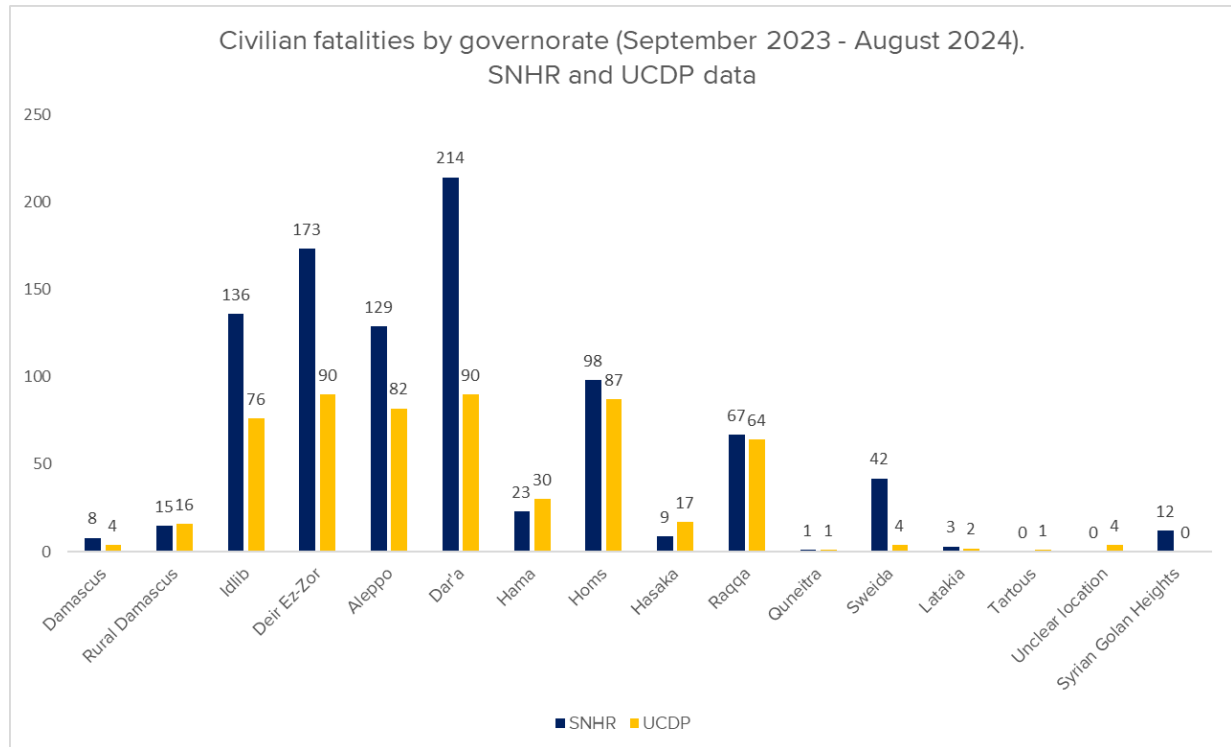


Figure 4. Number of civilian fatalities by governorate (September 2023 – August 2024) based on SNHR and UCDP data.

1.5.4. Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Hostilities during 2023 reportedly resulted in ‘significant damage and destruction of vital civilian infrastructure’²⁸⁸ and affected residential areas in villages and cities.²⁸⁹ For 2023, the US Department of State (USDOS) reported ‘attacks impacting and destroying schools, hospitals, places of worship, water and electrical stations, bakeries, markets, civil defence force centres, densely populated residential areas, and houses were common throughout the country’.²⁹⁰ UNOCHA noted 25 attacks on health care facilities as well as shelling on 27 schools and 20 water systems in 2023.²⁹¹

Northeast Syria was repeatedly hit by a series of Turkish airstrikes in October and December 2023 as well as mid-January 2024²⁹² which, according to several sources, targeted civilian infrastructure.²⁹³ According to the Northeast Syria (NES) NGO Forum, a coordination body for NGOs operating in SDF controlled areas,²⁹⁴ more than one million people were reportedly cut

²⁸⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

²⁸⁹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 13

²⁹⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 35

²⁹¹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 8

²⁹² STJ, “As If an Earthquake Had Struck”: Turkish Airstrikes Are Killing Life in Northeast Syria, 25 June 2024, [url](#)

²⁹³ NES NGO Forum, Situation Report #3 - Continued Impact of Damaged and Destroyed Critical Infrastructures in Northeast Syria, 26 January 2024, [url](#), p. 1; Reuters, Turkish strikes hit water, power infrastructure in Syria’s Kurdish-held northeast, 15 January 2024, [url](#); HRW, Northeast Syria: Turkish Strikes Disrupt Water, Electricity, 26 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁹⁴ NES NGO Forum, نبذة عنا [About Us], n.d., [url](#)

off from electricity, while the outage also disabled Alouk water station and threatened access to water for more than 610 000 people, with a further over 1.4 million people having limited access to safe water. Furthermore, the services of 38 health facilities were disrupted.²⁹⁵ The airstrikes in northeast Syria reportedly affected the electricity infrastructure in Hasaka governorate, as well as Kobane (Aleppo) and Ain Issa (Raqqa).²⁹⁶ Suwaidiya Gas Station, the only producer of cooking gas in northeast Syria, was hit in the round of airstrikes in October 2023, greatly reducing the availability of cooking gas and hiking up its price.²⁹⁷

Northwest Syria witnessed a series of airstrikes and artillery attacks in October 2023, reportedly targeting civilian infrastructure, including ten schools and educational facilities, five mosques, five medical facilities, three displacement camps and four markets.²⁹⁸ The bombardments carried out by Syrian and Russian forces on HTS controlled territory reportedly also affected power and water plants.²⁹⁹

As of November 2023, UNOCHA estimated 11.5 million people, about 50 percent of the country's population, to be living in areas contaminated with explosive ordnance (EO), with a daily average of 17 EO-related incidents across the country.³⁰⁰ North Press Agency (NPA) reported 252 civilians killed and an additional 272 civilians injured by ERW in 2023, with governorates Deir Ez-Zor, Hama and Homs most affected as ISIL had planted mines there while it still controlled the area.³⁰¹ According to figures released in August 2024 by the Syria Response Coordinators, an organisation describing itself as a humanitarian civil society organisation active in northern Syria,³⁰² 129 civilians were killed by ERW explosions since the beginning of 2024 across the country, while the country's northwest was reportedly particularly affected by remnants of war caused by bombardment carried out by GoS and Russian forces.³⁰³ Syrian media sources frequently reported on civilian casualties as a result of ERW explosions, especially across the country's north.³⁰⁴

In May 2024, several organisations active in the field of mine clearance release a joint report based on a survey of 1 139 communities visited between June 2023 and January 2024 in

²⁹⁵ NES NGO Forum, Situation Report #3 - Continued Impact of Damaged and Destroyed Critical Infrastructures in Northeast Syria, 26 January 2024, [url](#), p. 3

²⁹⁶ NES NGO Forum, Situation Report #3 - Continued Impact of Damaged and Destroyed Critical Infrastructures in Northeast Syria, 26 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4

²⁹⁷ TNH, Turkish airstrikes in northeast Syria leave millions short of power, fuel, and water, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ Syria Civil Defence, White Helmets Statement on Escalation of Systematic Attacks on Civilians and Civilian Infrastructure in Northwestern Syria by the Syrian Regime and Russia, 10 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁹⁹ STJ, Northwest Syria: Syrian-Russian Attacks Killing Civilians and Hammering Critical Infrastructure, 26 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁰⁰ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Update Syrian Arab Republic – Issue 18/November 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

³⁰¹ NPA, War remnants claim lives of 252 civilians in Syria in 2023, 28 December 2023, [url](#)

³⁰² Sham Network, [Syria Response Coordinators: we are an independent civil organisation and there are parties who claim our humanitarian reports as their own], 27 February 2019, [url](#)

³⁰³ Syria TV, 129 killed since the start of the year... remnants of war in northwestern Syria are the biggest concern for Syrians], 3 August 2024, [url](#)

³⁰⁴ Syria TV, [ERW cluster bomb kills civilian in western Idlib], 27 July 2024, [url](#); Syria TV, [Four children wounded by ERW explosion in Afrin countryside], 25 July 2024, [url](#); Syria TV, [Two children killed and another wounded in ERW explosion in Hama countryside], 23 May 2024, [url](#); NPA, War remnants blast claim lives of 2 civilians in Syria's Hama, 23 February 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, War remnants take a toll on civilians in Deir Ezzor's eastern countryside, 4 February 2024, [url](#)

northeast Syria, according to which 127 communities reported being affected by ERW.³⁰⁵ As for Aleppo governorate, Kobane community was reported to be ‘highly impacted’ by explosive ordnances and Ras Al-Ain and Markada communities in Hasaka governorate was described as ‘severely impacted’. Raqqa governorate was reported as being overall ‘extremely affected’, while more than half (55 percent) of all surveyed communities in Deir Ez-Zor district was reported as being affected by explosive ordnances.³⁰⁶

1.5.5. Displacement and return

According to UNHCR, at the end of 2023 there were about 6.5 million Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers,³⁰⁷ about 5 million of which hosted by neighbouring countries Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.³⁰⁸ As of the end of 2023, there were 7.2 million IDPs in the country³⁰⁹ according to UNOCHA figures of July 2023, about 2 million of which living in camps, with the largest IDP population recorded in Idlib governorate (2.1 million), followed by Aleppo governorate (1.6 million) and Rural Damascus (986 000).³¹⁰ In 2023, there were reportedly about 174 000 displacement movements due to conflict and violence which represented a slight increase compared to 2022.³¹¹ From September to December 2023, UNOCHA recorded 119 758 IDP movements across the country.³¹² The UN organisation did not release any monthly figures for IDP movements in 2024.

In early September 2023, an increase in shelling in the country’s northwest led to the displacement of 3 000 families, many of whom from the southern countryside of Jarabulus (Aleppo governorate).³¹³ Most of IDP movements in September 2023 were, however, registered in Deir Ez-Zor governorate with over 20 000³¹⁴ as fighting broke out between Arab tribesmen and the SDF in the governorate.³¹⁵ In October, GoS forces launched retaliatory airstrikes for an unclaimed attack on a military academy in Homs that targeted more than 2 300 locations.³¹⁶ These airstrikes and shelling in Idlib and western Aleppo governorates according to UNOCHA resulted in the displacement of more than 120 000 people, 60 000 of whom had reportedly returned to their former homes by 18 October 2023.³¹⁷ The Internal

³⁰⁵ 3iSolution et al., Explosive Ordnance Contamination and Impact Survey in Northeast Syria, May 2024, [url](#), pp. 13, 16

³⁰⁶ 3iSolution et al., Explosive Ordnance Contamination and Impact Survey in Northeast Syria, May 2024, [url](#), p. 20

³⁰⁷ UNHCR, Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2023, June 2024, [url](#), p. 9

³⁰⁸ UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response, last updated 31 July 2024, [url](#)

³⁰⁹ IDMC, Syrian Arab Republic Overview 2023, 14 May 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

³¹⁰ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

³¹¹ IDMC, Syrian Arab Republic Overview 2023, 14 May 2024, [url](#)

³¹² UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

³¹³ UNOCHA, North West Syria, Increasing hostilities in north-west Syria, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

³¹⁴ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

³¹⁵ Cradle (The), Thousands displaced by clashes between SDF, Arab tribes in US-occupied Syria, 3 October 2023, [url](#)

³¹⁶ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 37-38

³¹⁷ UNOCHA, North-west Syria: Escalation of Hostilities - Flash Update No.4, 27 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 3



Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) registered about 79 000 displacement resulting from the airstrikes carried out in retaliation for the Homs military academy attack.³¹⁸

In August 2024, renewed clashes broke out in villages along the Euphrates between SDF and Arab tribal forces backed by GoS and Iranian militias, reportedly forcing hundreds of civilians in both areas of control to flee.³¹⁹ The UN estimated around 3 500 families to have been temporarily displaced by the fighting.³²⁰

As of July 2023, UNOCHA recorded 155 325 returnees for that year, the most returns being recorded in Aleppo governorate (54 769) and Idlib governorate (33 244).³²¹ In the last four months of 2023, UNOCHA recorded 32 849 spontaneous IDP return movements across the country,³²² 25 500 of which within Idlib governorate in October 2023.³²³ The UN organisation did not release any monthly figures for IDP return movements in 2024. According to UNOCHA, several factors were responsible for IDP return movements in 2023, among which ‘challenges related to livelihoods, limited work opportunities, high rental costs in their former areas of residence, and the impact of the earthquakes’.³²⁴

For information on returns from abroad please refer to section 1.2.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria –Country Focus \(October 2024\)](#).

³¹⁸ IDMC, Syrian Arab Republic Overview 2023, 14 May 2024, [url](#)

³¹⁹ SNHR, Seventeen Civilians Killed and Hundreds Displaced as Hostilities Escalate in Eastern Deir Ez-Zour Governorate, 13 August 2024, [url](#)

³²⁰ UN, Tensions in Syria, Region ‘Have Reached Dangerous New Levels’, Special Envoy Warns Security Council, Calling for Inclusive Political Process, 28 August 2024, [url](#)

³²¹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

³²² UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

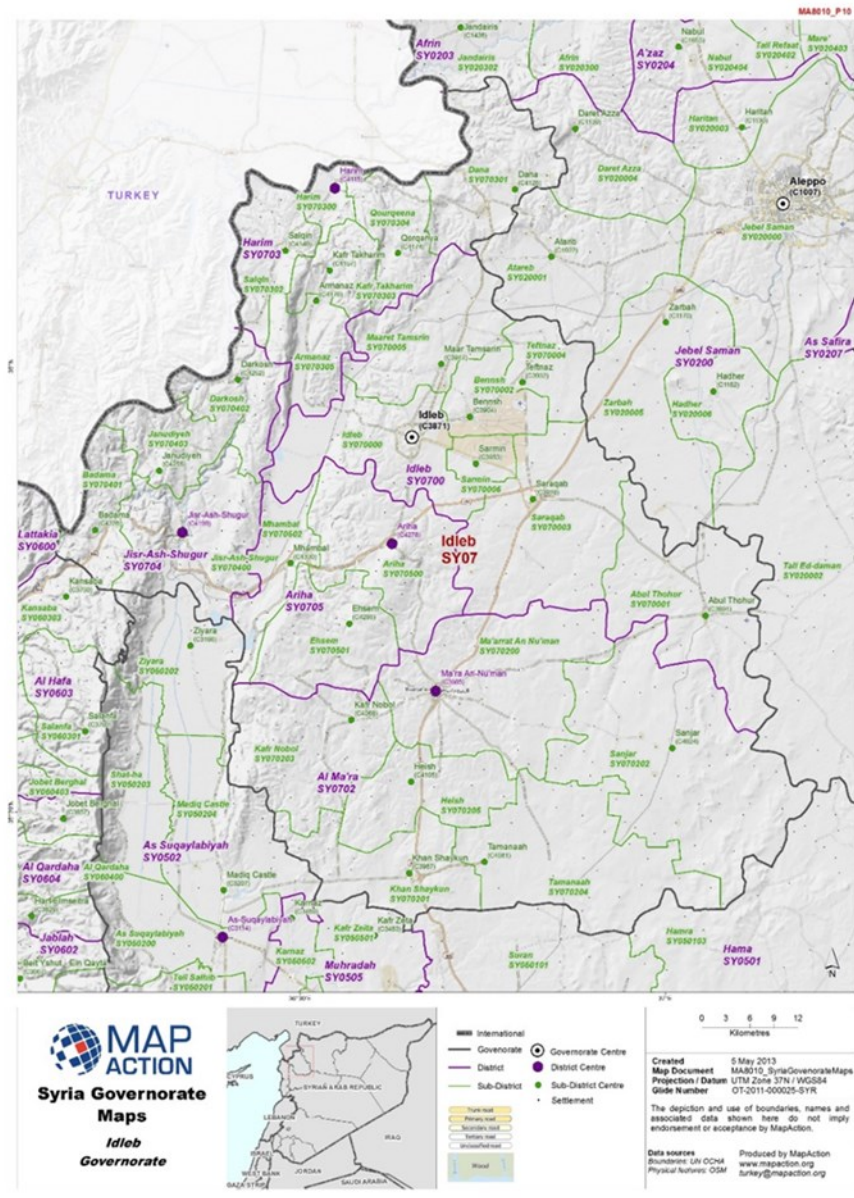
³²³ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#)

³²⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 29



2. Governorate-level description of the security situation

2.1. Idlib governorate



Map 5: © MapAction, Idlib governorate³²⁵

³²⁵ MapAction, Idlib governorate, 29 July 2016, url



2.1.1. General description of the governorate

Idlib governorate is located in northwestern Syria, bordering Türkiye to the north and the governorates of Hama to the south, Aleppo to the east, and Latakia to the west.³²⁶ The governorate is divided into five districts: Al Ma'ra, Ariha, Harim, Idlib, and Jisr-Ash-Shughur.³²⁷ The governorate's capital is Idlib city.³²⁸ Both the M5 (Damascus-Aleppo) and M4 (Latakia-Aleppo) highways run through the governorate, converging in the strategic town of Saraqib.³²⁹ Most of the humanitarian aid into northwestern Syria travels through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing between Türkiye and Syria. Following a closure declared in July 2023, deliveries later resumed after an agreement was reached between the UN and the Syrian government.³³⁰

According to UNOCHA, the population of Idlib governorate was estimated to be 3 104 168 as of July 2023, including 2 106 929 IDPs.³³¹ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Idlib governorate had 1 208 154 inhabitants.³³² For information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition, see section 2.1.1 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#).

2.1.2. Conflict background and armed actors

Idlib is the last remaining stronghold of the Syrian rebel groups opposed to the GoS.³³³ Türkiye's military presence in the governorate has so far prevented a successful military intervention by the GoS and Russian forces.³³⁴ For further information on the governorate's conflict background, see section 2.1.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#) and section 2.1.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(October 2023\)](#).

Anti-GoS armed groups controlled the northern and western parts of the governorate, which covered virtually all of its territory north and immediately south of the M4 highway,³³⁵ while the southern and southeastern portions of the governorate were mapped as being controlled by the GoS.³³⁶

³²⁶ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic, Governorates profile (June 2014), 6 August 2014, [url](#), p. 22; UNCS and UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Reference Map, 17 January 2013, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 11

³²⁷ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 108-109

³²⁸ International Crisis Group, The Eleventh Hour for Idlib, Syria's Last Rebel Bastion, 6 February 2020, [url](#), p. 1

³²⁹ Clingendael, Turkey's interventions in its CRU Policy Brief near abroad: The case of Idlib, September 2021, [url](#), p. 4

³³⁰ UN News, Syria: UN chief welcomes reopening of life-saving aid corridor, 19 September 2023, [url](#); Asharq Al-Awsat, Syria Extends Humanitarian Aid Delivery Via Bab al-Hawa Crossing, 13 January 2024, [url](#)

³³¹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

³³² Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 الإحصائي [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

³³³ BBC News, Iran demonstrates missile capabilities with regional strikes, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

³³⁴ HRW, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 17

³³⁵ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#); Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Idlib and August 2024

³³⁶ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)



As of early 2024, HTS was the largest insurgent group in northwest Syria³³⁷ and the dominant group in Idlib governorate,³³⁸ reportedly controlling around 75 % of its territory.³³⁹ Its political wing, the so-called Salvation Government, was exercising de facto control and administrative functions in this area.³⁴⁰ The HTS central command was located in Idlib.³⁴¹ While beset with internal divisions,³⁴² HTS was leading a variety of armed groups such as Ahrar al-Sham and Ansar al-Tawhid,³⁴³ Jaysh al-Izza, the National Front for Liberation (these last three groups are part of the HTS-led Fateh al-Mubin operations room),³⁴⁴ while other groups like the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM/TIP) were allied to HTS.³⁴⁵ Since 2022, HTS's allies in Idlib have reportedly also included the Hamza Division and Sultan Murad Division, two factions affiliated with the SNA³⁴⁶ (HTS's rival to the east)³⁴⁷ that signed security agreements with HTS.³⁴⁸ Further factions present in the governorate included Khatiba al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (KTJ), another HTS ally mainly active across southern Idlib, Latakia and Hama, and the group Ansar al-Islam (comprising 250 to 300 fighters).³⁴⁹

³³⁷ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 54

³³⁸ BBC News, Iran demonstrates missile capabilities with regional strikes, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

³³⁹ NPA, HTS dominates all factions in northwest Syria, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁰ OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 34; Enab Baladi, Salvation Govt establishes security court in Idlib, 30 March 2024, [url](#)

³⁴¹ Syria Direct, 'Resurrection': HTS returns to southern Syria, 27 May 2024, [url](#)

³⁴² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – December 2023, 16 January 2024, [url](#); UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 55

³⁴³ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 54

³⁴⁴ NPA, HTS dominates all factions in northwest Syria, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 56

³⁴⁶ NPA, HTS dominates all factions in northwest Syria, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

³⁴⁸ STJ, HTS Scales Up Its Presence in Afrin After the Türkiye/Syria Quake, 3 April 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 57



Hurras al Din (HAD), an HTS breakaway group deemed closer to al-Qaeda but weaker than HTS³⁵⁰ and whose presence has been suppressed by HTS, was seeking to reclaim its legitimacy by exploiting popular dissent against the HTS leadership.³⁵¹ Ansar al-Islam shared resources and training facilities with HAD.³⁵²

Turkish forces maintained more than 100 military sites, including bases and observation posts, across Idlib and northern Syria.³⁵³ As Enab Baladi indicated, 54 Turkish military sites were distributed across areas controlled by HTS.³⁵⁴ As of July 2024, Turkish forces had 51 military positions in Idlib governorate, most of them located in areas of the rebel-controlled zone that lies adjacent to GoS-held territory in southern Idlib and Latakia, according to Jusoor for Studies.³⁵⁵ Their presence in eastern Idlib was reinforced during the reference period amid military escalation in the governorate.³⁵⁶ The SNA also continued to have a presence in the governorate.³⁵⁷ Moreover, there was a reported presence of al-Qaeda and ISIL.³⁵⁸ In the second half of 2023, ISIL transferred some of its leaders and operatives from the northwest to the central desert (Badia) to avoid attacks from HTS.³⁵⁹

The SAA forces present in Idlib governorate included the 14th Special Forces Division, tasked with combat missions and rapid interventions.³⁶⁰ There was also a presence of Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) who in October 2023 were transferred from Kafriya and al-Fu'ah towns to al-Mayadin in Deir Ez-Zor governorate as part of LH's measures to redistribute fighters to more sensitive fronts.³⁶¹ The Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) maintained infantry battalions and an artillery battalion at the Idlib frontline.³⁶² As of July 2024, there were 27 Iranian and 6 Russian

³⁵⁰ US, CRS, Al Qaeda: Background, Current Status, and U.S. Policy, 6 May 2024, [url](#), p. 2

³⁵¹ Jusoor for Studies, Hurras Al-Din Resurfaces on the Scene: Decoding the Messages Sent, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

³⁵² UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 57

³⁵³ HRW, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 17

³⁵⁴ Enab Baladi, Tahrir al-Sham tests Turkey over a strategic crossing; Ankara halts HTS greed, 19 September 2023, [url](#)

³⁵⁵ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

³⁵⁶ Asharq Al-Awsat, Türkiye Brings in New Reinforcements to Syria's Idlib, 9 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁵⁷ NPA, Government forces appoint new commander to fight in Syria's Idlib, 10 April 2024, [url](#)

³⁵⁸ BBC News, Iran demonstrates missile capabilities with regional strikes, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁵⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 54

³⁶⁰ NPA, Government forces appoint new commander to fight in Syria's Idlib, 10 April 2024, [url](#)

³⁶¹ Eye of Euphrates, "ما السبب؟" مليشيا "حزب الله" تنقلات لعناصرها في الميادين... What is the reason?, 20 October 2023, [url](#)

³⁶² Denmark, DIS, Syria – Military service, January 2024 [source: Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ)], 25 January 2024, [url](#), p. 50



military positions in the governorate, located in the GoS-held southern and southeastern parts, according to Jusoor for Studies.³⁶³

2.1.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

For information on security-related developments regarding the 2024 popular protests against HTS, see [section 1.4.4](#) of this report.

Missile and artillery attacks by GoS forces on villages and towns in eastern and southern rural Idlib intensified in September 2023³⁶⁴ and significantly³⁶⁵ escalated further in October³⁶⁶ following an unclaimed drone attack on Homs Military Academy, on 5 October 2023, that resulted in dozens of deaths.³⁶⁷ October saw a significant rise in the number of ground attacks by GoS³⁶⁸ targeting population centres.³⁶⁹ According to the UNCOI, GoS and allied Russian forces struck some 2 300 sites in Idlib and western Aleppo.³⁷⁰

As the SNHR reported, some of these attacks deliberately targeted specific installations while others were of an indiscriminate nature.³⁷¹ The campaign eventually expanded to most opposition-held areas,³⁷² with concentrations of attacks recorded in Idlib city and several areas of northern, western, southern and eastern rural Idlib. The attacks affected both areas in the vicinity of the front lines³⁷³ and areas located far from the front lines³⁷⁴ (including Idlib city).³⁷⁵ October 2023 also saw an increase in Russian airstrikes which were mainly concentrated in civilian areas in southern and western Idlib.³⁷⁶ Amongst others, suspected Russian warplanes attacked Al-Masbah (Ahl Saraqib) Camp for IDPs³⁷⁷ in rural Jisr-Ash-Shughur district (western Idlib), killing several civilians.³⁷⁸ The UNCOI assessed that this escalation in hostilities in

³⁶³ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

³⁶⁴ SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 5

³⁶⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³⁶⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 7

³⁶⁸ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³⁶⁹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 40

³⁷⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 26

³⁷¹ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³⁷² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

³⁷³ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³⁷⁴ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), p. 2; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 26

³⁷⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 26

³⁷⁶ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), p. 4

³⁷⁷ SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 7

³⁷⁸ SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 7

apparent retaliation for the Homs Military Academy attack was the most significant escalation witnessed in the northwest since 2019/20.³⁷⁹ Dozens of civilians, including children, were killed in the governorate as a result of these attacks.³⁸⁰

While attacks by GoS and allied forces decreased after October 2023,³⁸¹ regular attacks on opposition-held areas with machine-gun fire and missile and artillery strikes persisted.³⁸² These regular attacks, which continued throughout the reference period, targeted a variety of civilian sites³⁸³ such as schools,³⁸⁴ medical facilities,³⁸⁵ marketplaces³⁸⁶ and facilities sheltering IDPs,³⁸⁷ as well as civilians harvesting crops and tending to livestock.³⁸⁸ The attacks caused multiple civilian casualties,³⁸⁹ although civilian deaths from fighting between pro-GoS and armed opposition groups were on a lesser scale than during the escalation seen in the second half of 2023.³⁹⁰ As reported by the UNCOI, artillery and rocket attacks by GoS forces were presumably based in Saraqib and killed or injured civilians in Idlib city, Ariha and Sarmin in early 2024, while further civilian casualties were caused in April 2024 by Russian airstrikes targeting a factory site in western rural Idlib.³⁹¹

Moreover, the last quarter of 2023 and January 2024 saw several instances of GoS forces using cluster munitions in Termanin (rural northern Idlib)³⁹² and around Idlib city, including

³⁷⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 21, 26

³⁸⁰ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 2, 4

³⁸¹ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in November 2023, 5 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 2-3

³⁸² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

³⁸³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁴ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 19; Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Woman, girl killed in a ground regime attack in E. Idlib, April 1, 2024, 2 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 32

³⁸⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Woman, girl killed in a ground regime attack in E. Idlib, April 1, 2024, 2 April 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 35

³⁸⁷ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 18; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 35

³⁸⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 33

³⁸⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#); SHRC, Horrific Massacre: 10 Civilians Including 7 children Killed by Assad Forces, 25 November 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 9

³⁹¹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 51, 52, 54, 57

³⁹² UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 30; HRW, Northwest Syria: Government Uses Cluster Munitions, 5 November 2023, [url](#)

cluster munitions with incendiary materials.³⁹³ These attacks resulted in a number of civilian casualties.³⁹⁴ The use of suicide drones against military and civilian targets escalated in early 2024, as noted by the Omran Center for Strategic Studies,³⁹⁵ and has become a key component of the GoS's military strategy in northwestern Syria.³⁹⁶

In one instance, in January 2024, Iranian military-affiliated media cited by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and the Critical Threats Project (CTP) stated that several IRGC missiles had been fired from Iranian territory targeting ISIL, HTS and ETIM in Idlib.³⁹⁷ One of them targeted a medical facility in Talteta village³⁹⁸ (northwest Idlib) that was reportedly no longer in use.³⁹⁹ Regarding attacks by GoS forces recorded between September and December 2023, the UNCOI noted that it 'did not find any evidence of military objectives located in the immediate vicinity of the targets.'⁴⁰⁰

HTS-affiliated units carried out counter-attacks against GoS positions in response to GoS attacks in October 2023, albeit at a significantly smaller scale.⁴⁰¹ Their ground operations against GoS forces saw an escalation in March 2024⁴⁰² when they conducted multiple infiltration attempts and raids against GoS sites in rural Idlib and other parts of the northwest.⁴⁰³ HTS's Fateh al-Mubin operations room also carried out regular artillery⁴⁰⁴ and missile strikes⁴⁰⁵ as well as sniper attacks against GoS troops.⁴⁰⁶

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 2 299 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Idlib governorate, of which 262 were coded as battles, 1 949 explosions/remote violence and 88 incidents of violence against civilians.⁴⁰⁷ By comparison,

³⁹³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – December 2023, 16 January 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 51

³⁹⁴ HRW, Northwest Syria: Government Uses Cluster Munitions, 5 November 2023, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 51

³⁹⁵ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene March 2024, 10 April 2024 [url](#), p. 1

³⁹⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

³⁹⁷ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 19, 2024, 19 January 2024, [url](#), p. 3

³⁹⁸ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#); AP, Iraq recalls ambassador, summons Iran's chargé d'affaires over strikes in Irbil, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁹⁹ AP, Iraq recalls ambassador, summons Iran's chargé d'affaires over strikes in Irbil, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 36

⁴⁰¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 52

⁴⁰² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene March 2024, 10 April 2024 [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁰³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – February 2024, 10 March 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – February 2024, 10 March 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁷ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)



for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 1 796 security incidents (198 battles, 1 495 explosions/remote violence and 103 events coded violence against civilians) in Idlib governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Ariha and al Ma'ra districts. According to ACLED, GoS forces and affiliated armed groups were the main actors involved in security incidents (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2') during the reference period, accounting for majority of security incidents coded as explosions/remote violence (around 70 %). Opposition armed groups, including HTS and affiliated armed groups were involved particularly in incidents coded battles and violence against civilians.



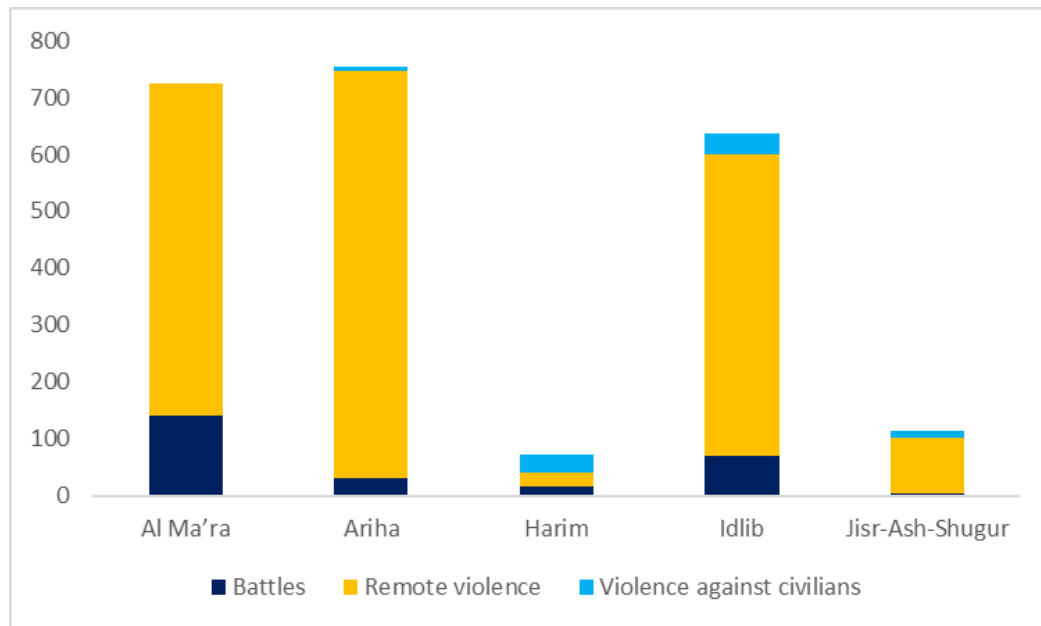


Figure 5. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Idlib governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁴⁰⁸

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented 136 civilian fatalities in Idlib governorate.⁴⁰⁹ For the same period, UCDP recorded 76 civilian fatalities.⁴¹⁰ The highest number of civilian fatalities were recorded in October 2023 (50 civilian deaths documented by

⁴⁰⁸ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

⁴⁰⁹ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – August 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁴¹⁰ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

SNHR⁴¹¹ and 35 by UCDP, respectively).⁴¹² In Idlib governorate, SNHR documented 246 civilian fatalities in 2021,⁴¹³ 147 in 2022⁴¹⁴ and 145 in 2023.⁴¹⁵

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

During the reference period, there were multiple reports of bombardments by GoS and Russian forces causing destruction or damage to educational facilities,⁴¹⁶ residential buildings,⁴¹⁷ market facilities,⁴¹⁸ mosques,⁴¹⁹ hospitals,⁴²⁰ facilities sheltering IDPs,⁴²¹ and industries.⁴²² According to UNCOI, the attacks by pro-GoS forces in October 2023 on sites in Idlib and western Aleppo ‘critically affected’ 43 medical facilities, seven schools and more than 20 water systems.⁴²³ Some destruction of infrastructure was reportedly also caused by HTS attacks on GoS positions.⁴²⁴

Idlib remained one of the governorates with the highest levels of unexploded ordnance contamination.⁴²⁵ During the reference period, several civilians, including children, were

⁴¹¹ SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11

⁴¹² EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

⁴¹³ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

⁴¹⁴ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁴¹⁵ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁴¹⁶ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 19; SNHR, Syrian regime forces bomb a school in E. Idlib, March 19, 2024, 20 March 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 54

⁴¹⁷ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 18; SNHR, On World Children’s Day: SNHR’s 12th Annual Report on Violations Against Children in Syria, 20 November 2023, [url](#), p. 27; SNHR, Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Have Committed Violations that Constitute Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Through Unlawful Attacks Against Northwestern Syria, 13 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 8-9

⁴¹⁸ SNHR, Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Have Committed Violations that Constitute Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Through Unlawful Attacks Against Northwestern Syria, 13 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 5, 9; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 54

⁴¹⁹ SNHR, Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Have Committed Violations that Constitute Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Through Unlawful Attacks Against Northwestern Syria, 13 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 5, 9

⁴²⁰ SNHR, Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Have Committed Violations that Constitute Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Through Unlawful Attacks Against Northwestern Syria, 13 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 5, 9; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 52

⁴²¹ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 18; SNHR, Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces Have Committed Violations that Constitute Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Through Unlawful Attacks Against Northwestern Syria, 13 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9

⁴²² TNH, One year after quake disaster, Syrians battle through a brutal winter, 1 February 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 57

⁴²³ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 26

⁴²⁴ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 52

⁴²⁵ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

reported to have been killed or injured in landmine detonations,⁴²⁶ including in southern Idlib⁴²⁷ and the Jisr-Ash-Shugur area.⁴²⁸

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023 there were 2 106 929 IDPs in Idlib governorate.⁴²⁹ As of February 2024, the same source indicated that some 2 020 000 IDPs were living in the rebel-controlled part of the governorate.⁴³⁰ Data published by the Syrian NGO Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU) indicated that there were 1 696 256 IDPs in the governorate as of June 2024.⁴³¹ During the surge in hostilities in Idlib and western Aleppo in October 2023, some 120 000 individuals were displaced from these two areas within a two-week period. Around 12 000 remained displaced at the end of 2023, according to the UNCOI.⁴³² Between September and December 2023, UNOCHA recorded some 86 900 IDP movements in Idlib governorate, by far the highest number among all governorates. Most of these movements (around 74 900, or 86 %) took place in the month of October.⁴³³ Around 76 500 of the IDP movements recorded in the last four months of 2023 occurred within the governorate, while 10 400 IDP movements took place from other governorates into Idlib.⁴³⁴ No comparable data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

Meanwhile, UNOCHA recorded around 27 000 IDP return movements between September and December 2023, the overwhelming majority of which (some 25 500, or 94 %) were likewise recorded in October.⁴³⁵ No comparable data could be found on numbers of IDP return movements in 2024. Almost all IDP return movements during the last four months of 2023 (around 26 900) occurred within Idlib governorate.⁴³⁶ The GoS has encouraged IDP returns from opposition-held areas to areas under GoS control in the Idlib countryside, including eastern Idlib. Many of those returning were motivated by the desire to return to their farmlands and

⁴²⁶ NPA, Landmine blast in Idlib kills, injures 4 children, 9 May 2024, [url](#); USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), p. 60; SNHR, Man named Bashar al-Hmoud killed by a landmine of unidentified source in southern rural Idlib governorate, November 5, 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

⁴²⁷ SNHR, Man named Bashar al-Hmoud killed by a landmine of unidentified source in southern rural Idlib governorate, November 5, 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

⁴²⁸ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), p. 60; NPA, Landmine blast in Idlib kills, injures 4 children, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴²⁹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁴³⁰ UNOCHA, Northwest Syria - Factsheet (As of 01 February 2024), 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁴³¹ ACU, Northern Syria Population Tracking - June 2024, last updated 18 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴³² UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 26

⁴³³ UNOCHA, IDP movements and IDP spontaneous return movements Data December 2023, updated 8 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴³⁴ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

⁴³⁵ UNOCHA, IDP movements and IDP spontaneous return movements Data December 2023, updated 8 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴³⁶ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)



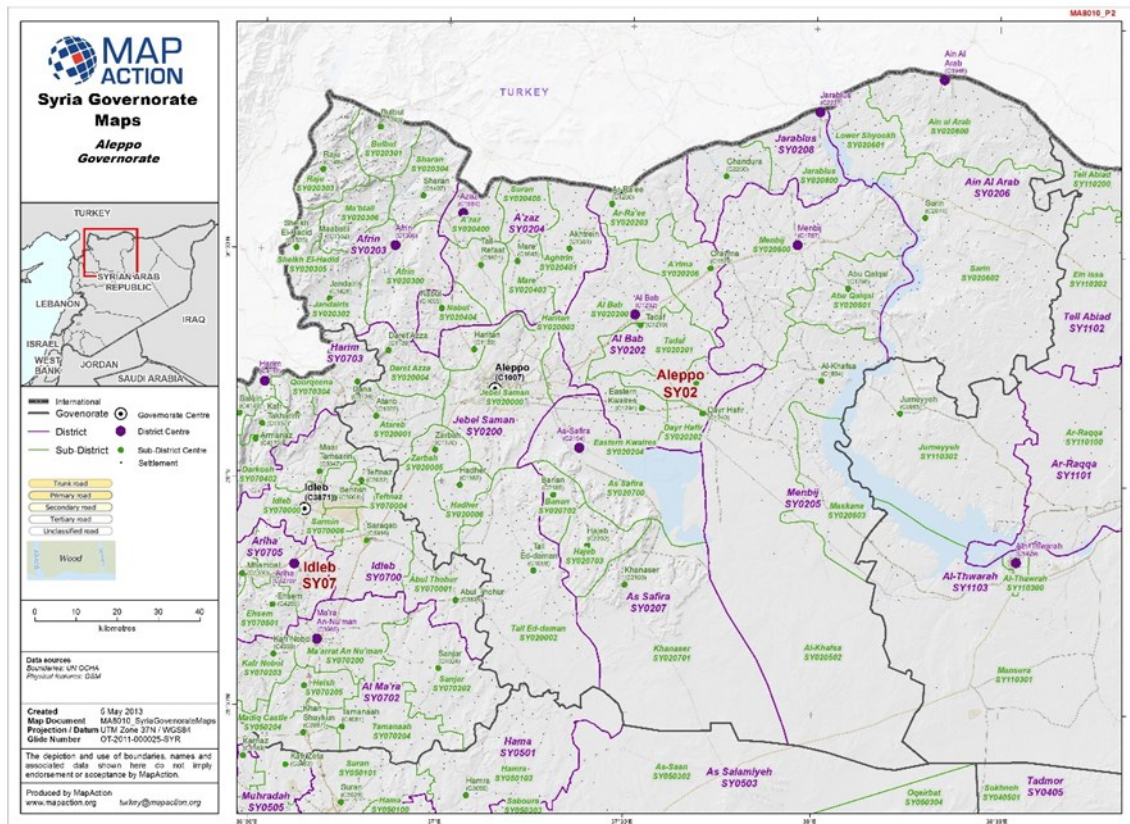
benefit from their produce, rather than staying in IDP camps, where conditions were harsh.⁴³⁷ But many individuals returning to areas in Idlib found their houses destroyed, damaged beyond repair, looted or confiscated.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁷ HLP Syria, IDPs Return to Regime-Controlled Areas in Idlib and Hama, 18 June 2024, [url](#)

⁴³⁸ OHCHR, “We did not fear death but the life there” – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 18



2.2. Aleppo governorate



Map 6: © MapAction, Aleppo governorate⁴³⁹

2.2.1. General description of the governorate

Aleppo governorate is located in northern Syria, bordering Türkiye to the north and the governorates of Idlib to the west, Hama to the south, and Raqqah to the east.⁴⁴⁰ The governorate is divided into eight districts: Jebel Saman, Afrin (or Efrin), A'zaz (or Azaz), Al-Bab, Manbij (or Menbij), Jarablus, Ain Al Arab (or Kobane), and As-Safira.⁴⁴¹ The governorate's capital is the city of Aleppo.⁴⁴² The M5 and M4 highways connect Aleppo city with Damascus and western Syria.⁴⁴³

According to UNOCHA, the population of Aleppo governorate was estimated to be 4 749 350 as of July 2023, including 1 641 306 IDPs.⁴⁴⁴ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the

⁴³⁹ MapAction, Aleppo governorate, 29 July 2016, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁰ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic, Governorates profile (June 2014), 6 August 2014, [url](#), p. 5; UNCS and UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Reference Map, 17 January 2013, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 6

⁴⁴¹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 106

⁴⁴² UN News, UN envoy sees 'glimmer of hope' as Syria indicates willingness to 'freeze' Aleppo fighting, February 2015, [url](#)

⁴⁴³ Clingendael, Turkey's interventions in its CRU Policy Brief near abroad: The case of Idlib, September 2021, [url](#), p. 4

⁴⁴⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Aleppo governorate had 4 244 684 inhabitants.⁴⁴⁵ Aleppo city's population was estimated by the CIA at 2 203 000 as of 2023.⁴⁴⁶

For information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition, see section 2.2.1 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#).

2.2.2. Conflict background and armed actors

For information on the Aleppo governorate's conflict background, see section 2.2.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#) and section 2.2.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(October 2023\)](#). The governorate is divided into areas controlled by anti-GoS armed groups, the GoS, and the SDF.⁴⁴⁷ Moreover, Iranian, Russian and Turkish forces operate multiple military sites.⁴⁴⁸

The SNA controlled northern and eastern rural Aleppo.⁴⁴⁹ This area adjoining the Turkish border comprises Afrin and its countryside (Operation Olive Branch area) and the area between A'zaz, Al-Bab and Jarablus (Euphrates Shield area).⁴⁵⁰ The SNA reportedly operated 57 military sites in the region.⁴⁵¹ According to Enab Baladi, the SNA's relationship with HTS has been marked by rivalry and hostility.⁴⁵² During the first half of 2024, the SNA reinforced crossing points linking its territories with those held by HTS,⁴⁵³ with the likely aim of diminishing HTS's ability to deploy its forces against the SNA.⁴⁵⁴ As of mid-2024, there was an increased presence of military police in SNA-held territory along roads connecting HTS- and SNA-controlled areas.⁴⁵⁵

According to a map published by Hevdesti-Synergy Association for Victims, a Syrian NGO aiming to document human rights abuses in northern Syria, in 2022 and still claimed to be current as of early 2024, a multitude of armed factions were present in the Operation Olive Branch (Afrin) area, including the Al-Hamza division, Ahrar Al-Sham, Ahrar Al-Sharqiya, the Sultan Murad Division, Jaysh Al-Islam, the Sultan Muhammad Al-Fateh Brigade, the Suleiman Shah Brigade, the 13th Division, the Northern Hawks Brigade, and Jaysh Al-Nukhba.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁴⁵ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 الكتاب الإحصائي [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

⁴⁴⁶ US, CIA, World Factbook, Syria, last updated: 17 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁷ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#); Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Aleppo and August 2024

⁴⁴⁸ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁹ Enab Baladi, Military barriers restrict Aleppo countryside residents, 29 April 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, New military merger increases factionalism and puts a foothold for HTS in Aleppo, 20 November 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁰ Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Aleppo and August 2024

⁴⁵¹ Enab Baladi, Tahrir al-Sham tests Turkey over a strategic crossing; Ankara halts HTS greed, 19 September 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵² Enab Baladi, Tahrir al-Sham tests Turkey over a strategic crossing; Ankara halts HTS greed, 19 September 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – February 2024, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – February 2024, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁶ HRW, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 30

HTS controlled western rural Aleppo.⁴⁵⁷ During the reference period, HTS continued to bolster its ties with the Eastern Division of Ahrar al-Sham, which managed the strategic Al-Hamran crossing⁴⁵⁸ in the city of Jarablus linking SNA-held areas with those controlled by the Kurdish SDF.⁴⁵⁹ The Eastern Division defected in September 2023 from its former SNA allies to join the HTS-affiliated Ahrar al-Sham proper, thus becoming a key HTS ally in the area.⁴⁶⁰ Another HTS-aligned faction with a presence in the governorate was the ETIM/TIP.⁴⁶¹

Türkiye maintained more than 100 military sites, including bases and observation posts, across northern Syria.⁴⁶² According to Jusoor for Studies, Turkish forces had 58 military positions in Aleppo governorate as of July 2024, with particularly high densities found in Afrin district and along the Turkish-occupied zone's borders with GoS- and SDF-held territories.⁴⁶³

The GoS, on the other hand, controlled the governorate's southern and central parts including the city of Aleppo.⁴⁶⁴ This zone also comprised 117 Iranian and 12 Russian sites which were concentrated around Aleppo city, with Iranian sites also clustered in areas bordering Idlib governorate and Afrin district and some Russian sites scattered around eastern Aleppo.⁴⁶⁵ GoS forces were also present around Tall Rifaat along with Iran-backed forces⁴⁶⁶ and Russian troops.⁴⁶⁷ Pro-GoS and Iran-backed forces⁴⁶⁸ and Russian forces were also present in SDF-controlled Manbij.⁴⁶⁹ The Russian-supported Fifth Corps of the SAA maintained a presence around Aleppo city and its countryside.⁴⁷⁰ The SAA's Fourth Division controlled crossings linking GoS-held territories with SDF-, SNA- and HTS-held areas,⁴⁷¹ although several checkpoints belonging to the Fourth Division were removed around Aleppo city during the reference period.⁴⁷²

⁴⁵⁷ Enab Baladi, New military merger increases factionalism and puts a foothold for HTS in Aleppo, 20 November 2023, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Tahrir al-Sham tests Turkey over a strategic crossing; Ankara halts HTS greed, 19 September 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁹ NPA, SNA's Second Legion forms operations room against HTS in northern Aleppo, 26 September 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – September 2023, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶¹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 56

⁴⁶² HRW, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁴⁶³ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁴ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#); Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Aleppo and August 2024

⁴⁶⁵ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁶ ACAPS, Northern Syria: key crises to watch, 4 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Kurdistan 24, Turkey aims to 'secure' Tal Rifaat: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁷ ACAPS, Northern Syria: key crises to watch, 4 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁴⁶⁸ Kurdistan 24, Turkey aims to 'secure' Tal Rifaat: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁹ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁰ Enab Baladi, Reduction of Fifth Corps: Pressure on Moscow reflected in Syria, 16 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷¹ NPA, Fourth Division devises new formula to collect taxes in Syria, 27 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷² NPA, Fourth division devises new ways to collect taxes in Syria's Aleppo, 27 February 2024, [url](#)



The SDF controlled Tall Rifaat,⁴⁷³ an area with a significant presence of Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and Women's Protection Units (YPJ),⁴⁷⁴ the Manbij and Ain Al Arab (Kobane) areas further east,⁴⁷⁵ and Aleppo city's Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh neighbourhoods as well as towns and villages in the al-Shahbaa region. All these areas were administered by civilian entities affiliated with the Kurdish DAANES.⁴⁷⁶ The PYD/YPG forces in the region, especially those in Tall Rifaat, were known to collaborate with the GoS and its allies.⁴⁷⁷

2.2.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

Conflict between GoS forces and anti-GoS armed groups

Following an unclaimed drone attack on Homs Military Academy on 5 October 2023 that resulted in dozens of deaths,⁴⁷⁸ ground attacks by GoS forces in the northwest significantly⁴⁷⁹ escalated in October 2023, with western rural Aleppo among the areas witnessing a concentration of attacks.⁴⁸⁰ Simultaneously, Russian forces carried out aerial attacks.⁴⁸¹ As the SNHR reported, the attacks both targeted areas located close to the front lines and densely populated residential areas located far from them.⁴⁸² Incendiary weapons were used in attacks on schools and residential areas east of the city of Atarib,⁴⁸³ while another bombardment targeted the Urum Al Soghra IDP camp (Jebel Saman district).⁴⁸⁴ According to the UNCOI, GoS and allied Russian forces struck some 2 300 sites in western Aleppo and Idlib during that month.⁴⁸⁵ These attacks resulted in a number of civilian deaths and injuries in Aleppo governorate, including in Darat Izza city (western rural Aleppo), which repeatedly came under attack in early October.⁴⁸⁶

In the months following, GoS forces and their affiliated militias continued their regular attacks targeting various civilian sites in western Aleppo's armed opposition-held areas with machine gun fire and artillery and missile strikes,⁴⁸⁷ albeit with significantly lower frequency than in

⁴⁷³ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁴ ACAPS, Northern Syria: key crises to watch, 4 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁴⁷⁵ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁶ STJ, Aleppo: Syrian Government Forces Block Essential Supplies to Kurdish Neighbourhoods, 5 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁷ Netjes, R. and Al-Ahmad, S., Iran is Attempting to Push the United States out of Syria via Hasaka Province, TWI, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 7

⁴⁷⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁰ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁸¹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸² SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁸³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁴ GPC, North-West Syria (NWS) Protection Cluster; Flash Report #3; (26-Oct-2023), 26 October 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁸⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 26

⁴⁸⁶ SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁴⁸⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)



October.⁴⁸⁸ The targets again included Darat Izza city,⁴⁸⁹ the eastern outskirts of Atarib city,⁴⁹⁰ and further areas of western rural Aleppo.⁴⁹¹ Moreover, the use of suicide drones against opposition-held areas became a key component of the GoS's military strategy in northwestern Syria.⁴⁹² These attacks by GoS and allied forces caused a number of civilian casualties.⁴⁹³ Regarding attacks by GoS forces investigated by the UNCOI between September and December 2023, the UNCOI noted that it 'did not find any evidence of military objectives located in the immediate vicinity of the targets.'⁴⁹⁴

HTS's continuing ground operations against GoS forces escalated in March 2024⁴⁹⁵ when it conducted multiple infiltration attempts and raids against GoS sites in western Aleppo and other parts of the northwest.⁴⁹⁶ HTS's Fateh al-Mubin operations room carried out mortar attacks against pro-GoS forces in northern rural Aleppo⁴⁹⁷ and sniper attacks targeting GoS troops in western Aleppo.⁴⁹⁸ At least one HTS attack, on the towns of Al-Zahra' and Nebbel (western Aleppo), was reported to have resulted in civilian deaths and injuries.⁴⁹⁹

Infighting between anti-GoS armed groups

In late September 2023, repeated clashes erupted in northeastern Aleppo between HTS and the SNA⁵⁰⁰ (Second Corps) over control of the strategic Al-Hamran crossing⁵⁰¹ (located in Jarablus, eastern Aleppo),⁵⁰² after Ahrar al-Sham's Eastern Section, responsible for securing the crossing defected from the SNA to join Ahrar al-Sham proper, a HTS affiliate.⁵⁰³ Several

⁴⁸⁸ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in November 2023, 5 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁸⁹ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in December 2023, 4 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 50

⁴⁹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 56; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁴⁹¹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 50, 53, 55, 56; Al Jazeera, Relentless bombing and 'constant death': A bleak start to 2024 for Syria, 7 January 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in November 2023, 5 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁹² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹³ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#); SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 4; Al Jazeera, Relentless bombing and 'constant death': A bleak start to 2024 for Syria, 7 January 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in November 2023, 5 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁹⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 36

⁴⁹⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene March 2024, 10 April 2024 [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁹⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – February 2024, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 67

⁵⁰⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – September 2023, 9 October 2023, [url](#); NPA, SNA, HTS clash after dispute over crossing revenue in Aleppo, 25 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰¹ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene September 2023, 11 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 2-3

⁵⁰² NPA, Turkey allows HTS to control al-Hamran crossing in Aleppo, 23 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – September 2023, 9 October 2023, [url](#)



HTS and SNA fighters were killed or injured in the clashes.⁵⁰⁴ HTS made some territorial advances in Afrin, Manbij,⁵⁰⁵ and Jarablus during an eastwards campaign, but the SNA ultimately regained control over almost all of the territory it had lost. The fighting came to an end after Türkiye brokered a ceasefire agreement in early October 2023.⁵⁰⁶ In January 2024, Military Police forces and Turkish military units unsuccessfully led a special mission targeting sites of the Ahrar al-Sham Eastern Section around the crossing.⁵⁰⁷

Conflict between Türkiye/SNA and SDF

The continuing conflict between Türkiye/SNA and the SDF recurrently⁵⁰⁸ erupted into exchanges of attacks.⁵⁰⁹ In September 2023, the SNA assassinated the head of the Manbij Military Council in an IED attack.⁵¹⁰ A further escalation was observed in October 2023 when Turkish planes launched airstrikes against Tall Rifaat and the Menagh Military Airbase, whilst attacking numerous other sites in Hasaka and Raqqa.⁵¹¹ Meanwhile, SDF attacks on an IDP camp in eastern rural Aleppo and a village in the Manbij countryside the same month resulted in several civilians being killed or injured.⁵¹² During the reference period of this report, Turkish and affiliated forces repeatedly launched drone strikes against sites with an SDF presence, including in northern Aleppo,⁵¹³ Ain Al Arab (Kobane),⁵¹⁴ and the Manbij countryside,⁵¹⁵ and carried out artillery strikes on SDF sites south of Afrin and in northeastern Aleppo,⁵¹⁶ where they also shelled villages in rural Manbij.⁵¹⁷ Meanwhile, the SDF carried out artillery strikes on the SNA-held towns of Al-Bab, A'zaz and Marea.⁵¹⁸ Attempts by the SDF and the SNA to infiltrate into each other's zones of control resulted in intense clashes.⁵¹⁹

⁵⁰⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – September 2023, 9 October 2023, [url](#); NPA, SNA, HTS clash after dispute over crossing revenue in Aleppo, 25 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁵ STJ, Syria: HTS Expands in Manbij under the Cover of Arab Tribes, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – September 2023, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁸ Al Mayadeen, Intense clashes break out between SNA, SDF militias in Aleppo, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁰ ISW and CTP, The Syrian Democratic Forces' Arab Coalition is Crumbling, Creating Opportunities for ISIS, Iran, and Turkey, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹¹ Al-Ahmed, S. and Hassan, M., Turkish escalation in northeastern Syria amid changes in military strategy, MEI, 11 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – September 2023, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – February 2024, 10 March 2024, [url](#); SOHR, New attack | Turkish drone attacks position within areas where Kurdish and regime forces deployed in northern Aleppo countryside, 14 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Artillery fire and drone attacks | Turkish forces attack military site of SDF to the east of Ain Al-Arab city (Kobani), 18 January 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in December 2023, 4 January 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁵¹⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – January 2024, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – February 2024, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁷ SOHR, Artillery shells | "Manbij Military Council" and Turkish-backed factions exchange shelling in Aleppo, 19 July 2024, [url](#); NPA, Turkish forces shell villages, burn farmlands in Syria's Manbij – SDF, 11 May 2024, [url](#); NPA, 500 families displaced due to SNA attacks on Syria's Manbij – AANES, 11 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁹ Enab Baladi, Targeting and infiltration, Skirmishes between SDF and National Army, 20 July 2024, [url](#); Al Mayadeen, Intense clashes break out between SNA, SDF militias in Aleppo, 30 January 2024, [url](#)



ISIL insurgency and attacks by unidentified actors

Sources noted that ISIL carried out several attacks targeting SDF and GoS forces in Aleppo governorate during the reference period.⁵²⁰ According to Gregory Waters,⁵²¹ the group conducted one confirmed attack per month during the last three months of 2023⁵²² and in January,⁵²³ March⁵²⁴ and June 2024.⁵²⁵

Moreover, there were reports of detonations of bombs of unidentified source in public places which resulted in a number of casualties, including in the city of Al-Bab⁵²⁶ and a busy marketplace in a A'zaz city.⁵²⁷

Israeli airstrikes

As Israel escalated its airstrikes in Syria from October 2023,⁵²⁸ the reference period witnessed several Israeli attacks on military and logistical sites in the governorate, including on Aleppo airport (attacked four times in October⁵²⁹ and again in November 2023⁵³⁰) and Iranian-linked sites around Aleppo city (March 2024). The March attack left dozens of GoS troops and Hezbollah members dead.⁵³¹

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 3 121 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Aleppo governorate, of which 517 were coded as battles, 2 104 explosions/remote violence and 500 incidents of violence against civilians.⁵³² By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 2 623 security incidents (551 battles, 1 585 explosions/remote violence and 487 events coded violence against civilians) in Aleppo governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts,

⁵²⁰ SOHR, ISIS resurgence | Members of ISIS attack car belonging to SDF, injuring commander and his escort in Aleppo countryside, 3 July 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene November 2023, 18 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵²¹ Gregory Waters is a research analyst at the Counter Extremism Project (CEP), a non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, and a consultant for the International Crisis Group. MEI, Gregory Waters, n.d., [url](#)

⁵²² Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in December 2023, CEP, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵²³ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵²⁴ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵²⁵ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵²⁶ SHRC, Horrific Massacre :10 Civilians Including 7 children Killed by Assad Forces, 25 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵²⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁵²⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, More than 40 people killed in Israeli strikes on Syria's Aleppo: Reports, 29 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵²⁹ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene October 2023, 13 November 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁵³⁰ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene November 2023, 18 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁵³¹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵³² EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

with the highest number being documented in Jebel Saman, A'zaz and Afrin. By comparison, very few incidents were recorded in the district of As-Safira. According to ACLED, GoS forces and affiliated armed groups and military forces of Türkiye were (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2') were involved in the majority of incidents coded as explosions/remote violence against opposition groups (HTS and affiliated armed groups, SNA) and SDF, respectively. The majority of incidents coded violence against civilians involved National Police forces, Turkish police forces and SNA factions, and unidentified armed groups.

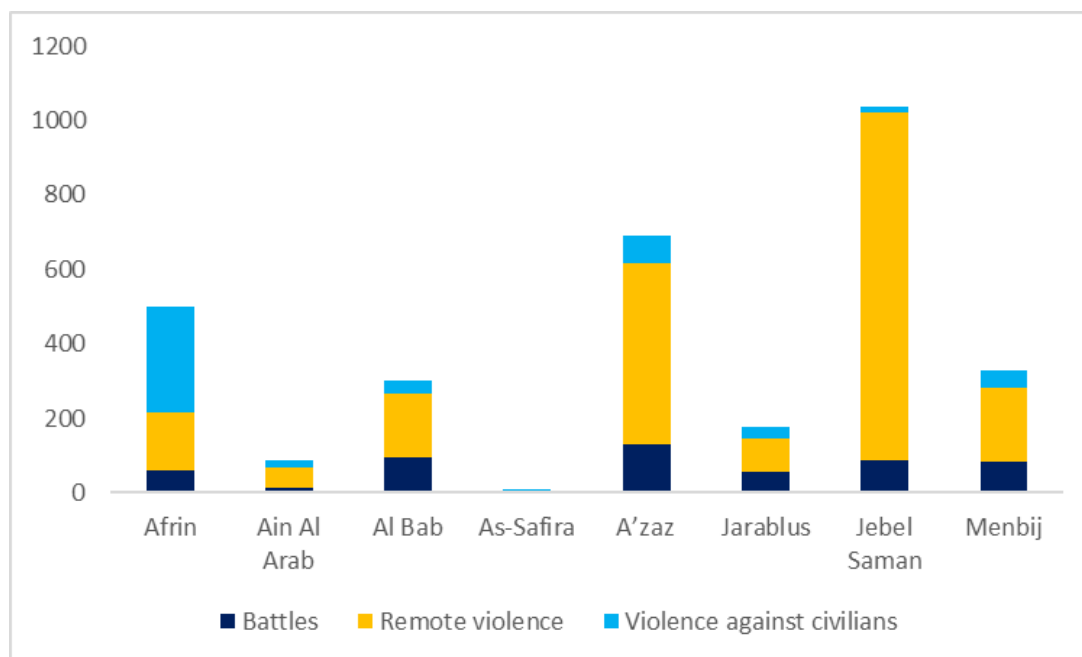


Figure 6. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Aleppo governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁵³³

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented 129 civilian fatalities in Aleppo governorate.⁵³⁴ For the same period, UCDP recorded 82 civilian fatalities in Aleppo

⁵³³ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

⁵³⁴ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024,

governorate.⁵³⁵ SNHR documented 231 civilian fatalities in 2021⁵³⁶, 224 in 2022⁵³⁷ and 153 in 2023⁵³⁸ in Aleppo governorate.

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

During the reference period, there were several reports of bombardments by GoS and Russian forces causing destruction or damage to residential buildings,⁵³⁹ religious, educational⁵⁴⁰ and medical facilities,⁵⁴¹ and market infrastructure.⁵⁴² According to UNCOI, the attacks by pro-GoS forces in October 2023 on sites in Idlib and western Aleppo ‘critically affected’ 43 medical facilities, seven schools and more than 20 water systems.⁵⁴³

Aleppo remained one of the governorates with the highest levels of unexploded ordnance contamination.⁵⁴⁴ During the reference period, several civilians were killed or injured in landmine explosions,⁵⁴⁵ including in rural Afrin,⁵⁴⁶ in the countryside of Souran city⁵⁴⁷ (northern rural Aleppo),⁵⁴⁸ and in the Manbij area.⁵⁴⁹

1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁵³⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

⁵³⁶ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

⁵³⁷ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁵³⁸ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁵³⁹ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in December 2023, 4 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁵⁴⁰ SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁵⁴¹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 107

⁵⁴² SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 18; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁵⁴³ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 26

⁵⁴⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁵⁴⁵ SOHR, War remnants | Elderly man killed in explosion of landmine in northern countryside of Aleppo, 4 July 2024, [url](#); SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 3; SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in November 2023, 5 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁴⁶ SOHR, War remnants | Elderly man killed in explosion of landmine in northern countryside of Aleppo, 4 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁷ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁴⁸ SNHR, Rainfall causes material damage in an irregular IDPs camp in N. Aleppo, February 19, 2024, 20 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁹ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in November 2023, 5 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3



(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023 there were 1 641 306 IDPs in Aleppo governorate.⁵⁵⁰ As of February 2024, the same source indicated that some 850 000 IDPs were living in the rebel-controlled part of the governorate.⁵⁵¹ Data published by the Syrian NGO Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU) indicated that there were 1 255 234 IDPs in the governorate as of June 2024.⁵⁵² During the surge in hostilities in Idlib and western Aleppo in October 2023, some 120 000 individuals were displaced from these two areas within a two-week period. Around 12 000 remained displaced at the end of 2023, according to the UNCOI.⁵⁵³ Around 11 500 of the IDP movements recorded in Aleppo over the last four months of 2023 occurred within the governorate, while 10 400 IDP movements occurred from Aleppo to other governorates.⁵⁵⁴ No comparable data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

During the last four months of 2023, around 2 300 IDP return movements occurred within Aleppo governorate, while about 150 return movements occurred from Aleppo to other governorates.⁵⁵⁵ No comparable data could be found on numbers of IDP return movements in 2024. Information on reasons for return could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

⁵⁵⁰ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁵⁵¹ UNOCHA, Northwest Syria - Factsheet (As of 01 February 2024), 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁵² ACU, Northern Syria Population Tracking - June 2024, last updated 18 July 2024, [url](#)

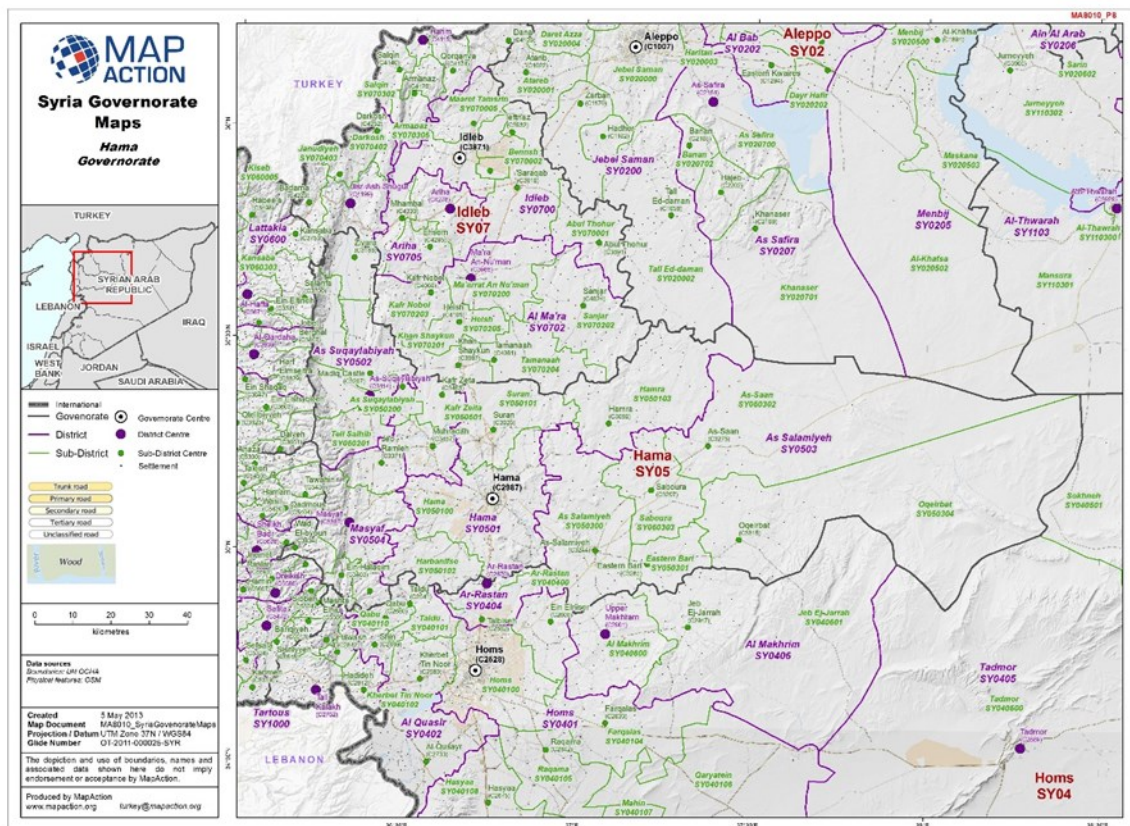
⁵⁵³ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 26

⁵⁵⁴ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁵ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)



2.3. Hama governorate



Map 7: © MapAction, Hama governorate⁵⁵⁶

2.3.1. General description of the governorate

Hama governorate is located in western-central Syria⁵⁵⁷ and shares internal borders with Latakia and Tartous to the west, Idlib and Aleppo to the north, Raqqqa to the northeast and Homs to the east, south and southeast.⁵⁵⁸ The governorate comprises five administrative districts: Hama, Misyaf (Masyaf), Muhardah (Muhradah), Suqailabiyya (As-Suqaylabiyah), and Salamiyah (As-Salamiyeh).⁵⁵⁹

According to UNOCHA, the population of Hama governorate was estimated to be 1 522 898 as of July 2023, including 212 582 IDPs.⁵⁶⁰ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the

⁵⁵⁶ MapAction, Hama governorate, 29 July 2016, [url](http://www.mapaction.org)

⁵⁵⁷ UNDP, Participatory Community Recovery Plan 2022-2025, 17 December 2023, [url](http://www.undp.org), p. 15

⁵⁵⁸ UNCS and UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Reference Map, 17 January 2013, [url](http://www.unocha.org); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](http://www.unocha.org), p. 9

⁵⁵⁹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](http://www.unocha.org), p. 108

⁵⁶⁰ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](http://www.unocha.org), p. 9

Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Hama governorate had 2 212 880 inhabitants.⁵⁶¹ Hama city's population was estimated by the CIA in 2023 at 996 000.⁵⁶²

For information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition, see section 2.3.1 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#).

2.3.2. Conflict background and armed actors

For information on the governorate's conflict background, see section 2.3.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#) and section 2.3.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(October 2023\)](#). During the reference period, almost all of the governorate's territory was under the control of the GoS, except for a strip of land on the governorate's northwesternmost edge bordering Idlib, which was controlled by anti-GoS armed groups.⁵⁶³

The Russian-backed⁵⁶⁴ 25th Special Tasks Division (previously Tiger Forces)⁵⁶⁵ maintained its presence in the governorate,⁵⁶⁶ including in Hama's northwestern⁵⁶⁷ and eastern countryside,⁵⁶⁸ and have been involved in patrolling and securing the Khanasir-Ithriya axis against ISIL cells.⁵⁶⁹ Hama city's Air Force Intelligence Directorate branch was headed by a former colonel of the 25th Special Tasks Division, appointed in May 2024.⁵⁷⁰ National Defence Forces (NDF) militia were also present in eastern rural Hama.⁵⁷¹ Meanwhile, 2024 saw a relaxation of security measures, with increased reported efforts to remove non-essential checkpoints, including those previously linked to the Fourth Division.⁵⁷²

As of July 2024, there were 28 Iranian and 17 Russian military sites in the governorate, many of which were clustered around Hama city. Russian sites extended to areas north and northwest of the city towards the opposition-held areas bordering Idlib. Sites of Iranian/Iran-

⁵⁶¹ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 [الكتاب الإحصائي](#) [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

⁵⁶² US, CIA, World Factbook, Syria, last updated: 17 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶³ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#); Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Hama and August 2024

⁵⁶⁴ SOHR, With participation and under supervision of Russian forces | 25th Division conducts military drills in Hama countryside, 16 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁵ Denmark, DIS, Syria – The Special Forces and the elite units [source: SNHR], April 2023, [url](#), p. 22

⁵⁶⁶ SNHR, Since the ICJ Order Was Issued Six Months Ago, the Syrian Regime Has Killed No Fewer than 29 Individuals Due to Torture, and Arrested At Least 534 Civilians, Including Eight Children and 21 Women, 23 May 2024, [url](#), p. 6; NPA, Russian, Syrian forces conduct joint exercises in Syria's Hama, 18 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, With participation and under supervision of Russian forces | 25th Division conducts military drills in Hama countryside, 16 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁷ SOHR, To fight with Russians | 25th Division of Special Operations conduct military exercises in Hama, 27 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁸ NPA, Russian, Syrian forces conduct joint exercises in Syria's Hama, 18 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, With participation and under supervision of Russian forces | 25th Division conducts military drills in Hama countryside, 16 December 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁹ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁰ SNHR, Since the ICJ Order Was Issued Six Months Ago, the Syrian Regime Has Killed No Fewer than 29 Individuals Due to Torture, and Arrested At Least 534 Civilians, Including Eight Children and 21 Women, 23 May 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁵⁷¹ Rudaw, ISIS IED kills two pro-regime fighters in central Syria: Monitor, 12 June 2024, [url](#); NPA, 9 truffle hunters including NDF militants killed in central Syria, 13 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷² Haid, H., Surge in bomb attacks show fragile security in regime-held areas of Syria, Al Majalla, 21 April 2024, [url](#)

backed forces were also found in southern and eastern Hama as well as in the governorate's west,⁵⁷³ including at Masyaf,⁵⁷⁴ where scientific research centres⁵⁷⁵ and defence production facilities were located.⁵⁷⁶ In early February 2024, it was noted that pro-Iranian militias had installed a system for suicide drones at Hama airport and started testing drones and training operators.⁵⁷⁷ For further information regarding the presence of the SAA and affiliated armed groups and forces in the governorate, see section 2.3.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(October 2023\)](#).

HTS was in control of parts of northern Hama⁵⁷⁸ that bordered Idlib governorate,⁵⁷⁹ with anti-GoS armed opposition factions controlling Ziyara sub-district of Suqailabiyya district⁵⁸⁰/ the northern parts of the Sahl Al-Ghab (Al-Ghab Plain).⁵⁸¹ Armed factions with reported activity in the governorate included Ansar Al-Tawhid,⁵⁸² Jaysh Al-Nasr,⁵⁸³ and the Zaid bin Haritha brigade⁵⁸⁴ (all three affiliated with the HTS-led Fateh al-Mubin operations room),⁵⁸⁵ as well as Ansar Al-Islam (comprising 250 to 300 fighters across northwest Syria) and Khatiba Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (KTJ), another group allied to HTS.⁵⁸⁶

ISIL remained active in Hama's desert areas.⁵⁸⁷ Gregory Waters noted, at the beginning of April 2024, that the group appeared to have strengthened its network in the Badia desert since it resumed significant activity in January 2024. In March 2024, it expanded its area of

⁵⁷³ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁴ Aoun, A., Damas : une influence iranienne qui ne fait pas consensus, JDD, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁵ SOHR, Major mobilization of Iranian militias | Forces transport weapons to secret warehouses, 4 August 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁶ Al-Estiklal, What Is Behind Iran's Announcement of Its Intention to Build Military Factories in Syria?, 8 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁷ Al Jazeera, The Syrian regime is stepping up its use of suicide drones, 27 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁸ OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 34

⁵⁷⁹ AFP, Syrie: cinq membres d'une même famille tués dans un bombardement du régime [Syria: Five members of a family killed in bombardment by the regime], 5 October 2023

⁵⁸⁰ REACH, Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS) Northwest Syria - March 2024, 29 April 2024, [url](#), p. 1, footnote 1; SNHR, Investigation Confirms the Syrian Regime's Responsibility for the Massacre in Qarqour Village, Rural Hama, in Which Six Children Were Killed, 26 October 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁵⁸¹ HLP Syria, Government Plans to Convert Ghab Plain into a Private Agricultural Zone, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸² SOHR, Exchanged attacks | Regime soldier killed by "Ansar Al-Tawhid" Faction in Hama, 7 June 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene November 2023, 18 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁸³ SOHR, "Putin-Erdogan" area | Two members of "Jaish Al-Nasr" faction injured in bombing by regime forces and latter's positions targeted in Hama and Idlib, 16 July 2024, [url](#); SOHR, "De-escalation zone" | Regime soldier shot dead by sniper of "Jaysh Al-Nasr" on Sahl Al-Ghab frontline, 19 June 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁴ Enab Baladi, HTS carries out inghimasi attack against regime forces in Hama countryside, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁵ NPA, HTS dominates all factions in northwest Syria, 14 November 2023, [url](#); SOHR, "Putin-Erdogan" area | Two members of "Jaish Al-Nasr" faction injured in bombing by regime forces and latter's positions targeted in Hama and Idlib, 16 July 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, HTS carries out inghimasi attack against regime forces in Hama countryside, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁶ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 57

⁵⁸⁷ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#); OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 34; Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene(November 2023), 18 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3

operations within eastern Hama, especially on the Hama side of the Bala'as mountains and Jubb Al-Jarah.⁵⁸⁸

2.3.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

Conflict between GoS forces and anti-GoS armed groups

Ground attacks by GoS forces in the northwest significantly escalated in October 2023,⁵⁸⁹ with western Hama's Sahl Al-Ghab area among the areas witnessing a concentration of attacks⁵⁹⁰ targeting civilian areas. The majority of these attacks were conducted using artillery and rocket launchers.⁵⁹¹ On 22 October 2023, GoS forces in the town of Jourien (western Hama) fired an artillery shell at the outskirts of Qarqour village (Ziyara sub-district), killing at least five children.⁵⁹² Meanwhile, Russian forces conducted aerial strikes⁵⁹³ that repeatedly hit targets in the governorate during the reference period,⁵⁹⁴ including HTS positions in the Hama countryside.⁵⁹⁵

While ground attacks by GoS forces significantly decreased across northwestern Syria after October 2023, they continued to strike areas of Sahl al-Ghab near the frontlines in the months following,⁵⁹⁶ with a number of attacks on civilian areas in western Hama reported during the remainder of the reference period.⁵⁹⁷

According to Etana Syria, GoS attacks on opposition-held areas using machine-gun fire and missile and artillery strikes intensified in spring 2024.⁵⁹⁸ Over the first half of 2024, GoS and pro-Iranian militias increased their use of drones in northwestern Syria,⁵⁹⁹ striking civilian

⁵⁸⁸ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁰ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁹¹ SNHR, No Fewer than 73 Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities by Syrian-Russian Alliance Forces in Northwestern Syria Since October 5, 2023, 14 November 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁹² SNHR, Investigation Confirms the Syrian Regime's Responsibility for the Massacre in Qarqour Village, Rural Hama, in Which Six Children Were Killed, 26 October 2023, [url](#), p. 5; SHRC, Another Massacre by the Regime and Its Allies in 48 Hours in Idlib Countryside, 24 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹³ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 41

⁵⁹⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – November 2023, 6 December 2023, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – September 2023, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁵ NPA, Government forces repel HTS attack in NW Syria, 11 July 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 41

⁵⁹⁶ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in December 2023, 4 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2; SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in November 2023, 5 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁹⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 2; SOHR, Amid flights by reconnaissance drones | Regime forces fire artillery shells on towns and villages in Hama and Idlib countryside, 26 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – February 2024, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

areas⁶⁰⁰ and HTS positions the Sahl al-Ghab area.⁶⁰¹ These drone attacks left several civilians wounded,⁶⁰² including along roads between Al-Zqoum and Al-Dqmaq and in the vicinity of Ziyara village,⁶⁰³ as well as near Al-Hamidiya village⁶⁰⁴ (all located in the Sahl Al-Ghab).⁶⁰⁵

Factions of the HTS-led⁶⁰⁶ Fateh Al-Mubin operations room shelled pro-GoS sites in the governorate,⁶⁰⁷ assassinated GoS soldiers⁶⁰⁸ and, in April⁶⁰⁹ and July 2024,⁶¹⁰ crossed frontlines and launched attacks on GoS forces stationed in the Sahel Al-Ghab area, killing and injuring several GoS troops.⁶¹¹

ISIL insurgency and attacks by unidentified actors

During the reference period, multiple attacks in eastern Hama were attributed to ISIL cells, notably in the Salamiyah countryside, including in the Ithriyah,⁶¹² Tel Salamah⁶¹³ and Uqayribat areas⁶¹⁴ and in the vicinity of Duwaizan,⁶¹⁵ killing or wounding members of the SAA⁶¹⁶ (including

⁶⁰⁰ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁶⁰¹ SOHR, Two separate incidents | Two members of HTS killed one of which killed by kamikaze drone, 13 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Military escalation | Members of HTS injured in attacks by regime's kamikaze drones and regime soldier shot dead by faction, 10 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – February 2024, 10 March 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁶⁰³ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁶⁰⁴ Syria Direct, 'Suicide drones' threaten Syrian farmers' lives and livelihoods, 23 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁵ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3; Syria Direct, 'Suicide drones' threaten Syrian farmers' lives and livelihoods, 23 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁶ NPA, HTS dominates all factions in northwest Syria, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁷ SOHR, Military escalation | "Al-Fath Al-Mubin" kills a member of regime forces in Hama countryside, 20 March 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – November 2023, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁸ SOHR, "De-escalation zone" | Regime soldier shot dead by sniper of "Jaysh Al-Nasr" on Sahl Al-Ghab frontline, 19 June 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Exchanged attacks | Regime soldier killed by "Ansar Al-Tawhid" Faction in Hama, 7 June 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹⁰ Enab Baladi, HTS carries out inghimasi attack against regime forces in Hama countryside, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹¹ Enab Baladi, HTS carries out inghimasi attack against regime forces in Hama countryside, 19 July 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹² Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹³ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in April 2024, CEP, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹⁴ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹⁶ SOHR, ISIS resurgence | Two regime soldiers killed in IED explosion in Hama Desert, 4 May 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

its 25th Special Tasks Division),⁶¹⁷ NDF militia,⁶¹⁸ Syrian Hezbollah,⁶¹⁹ and civilians.⁶²⁰ A number of skirmishes were reported to have taken place between security forces and ISIL fighters.⁶²¹

According to Gregory Waters, while the last four months of 2023 only saw six confirmed ISIL attacks in the governorate,⁶²² a total of 35 such attacks were recorded during the first six months of 2024,⁶²³ with March accounting for more than one-third of these attacks (12 incidents).⁶²⁴ On the other hand, Russian warplanes⁶²⁵ and GoS ground forces⁶²⁶ carried out raids against ISIL cells in the Hama desert.

Meanwhile, an IED attack of unidentified source killed the director of the Military Construction Institution in Hama city's al-Qosour neighbourhood in April 2024,⁶²⁷ with sources including opposition websites suggesting that the incident may have been linked to internal conflicts within GoS structures.⁶²⁸ Other attacks of unidentified origin led to the killing of an NDF member⁶²⁹ and at least one sheep trader⁶³⁰ in the Salamiyah area, while several civilian casualties were caused by other civilians opening fire on them.⁶³¹

⁶¹⁷ Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023*, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹⁸ SOHR, *IED explosion | ISIS cells assassinate two members of the "National Defence" in Hama*, 11 June 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in April 2024*, CEP, 3 May 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, *Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024*, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹⁹ Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024*, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁰ SOHR, *Increasing ISIS attacks in the Syrian desert | ISIS members carry out 14 operations in April, leaving nearly 40 members of regime forces dead and injured*, 15 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024*, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024*, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in December 2023*, CEP, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶²¹ Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in May 2024*, CEP, 11 June 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024*, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶²² Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in December 2023*, CEP, 12 January 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023*, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023*, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in September 2023*, CEP, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶²³ Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024*, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in May 2024*, CEP, 11 June 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in April 2024*, CEP, 3 May 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024*, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024*, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024*, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁴ Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024*, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁵ SOHR, *Preparations for launching large-scale campaign against ISIS | Regime forces send military reinforcement to Syrian desert*, 16 May 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, *Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene November 2023*, 18 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁶²⁶ Waters, G., *ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023*, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶²⁷ SNHR, *68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024*, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 4; Syria TV, *Does Killing of Director of Military Construction in Hama Reveal Internal Conflicts?*, 5 April 2024, [url](#); Nedaa Post, *Syrian Regime Official Killed in Hama Explosion*, The Syrian Observer, 4 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁸ Haid, H., *Surge in bomb attacks show fragile security in regime-held areas of Syria*, Al Majalla, 21 April 2024, [url](#); Syria TV, *Does Killing of Director of Military Construction in Hama Reveal Internal Conflicts?*, 5 April 2024, [url](#); Nedaa Post, *Syrian Regime Official Killed in Hama Explosion*, The Syrian Observer, 4 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁹ SOHR, *Shot by unknown gunmen | NDF member killed in city east of Hama*, 16 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶³⁰ SOHR, *Due to proliferation of weapons in regime-held areas | Sheep trader killed in Al-Salamiyah countryside in Hama*, 8 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶³¹ SOHR, *Proliferation of arms | Civilians open fire on family in Hama countryside, injuring three people*, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 500 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Hama governorate, of which 66 were coded as battles, 424 explosions/remote violence and 10 incidents of violence against civilians.⁶³² By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 564 security incidents (54 battles, 489 explosions/remote violence and 21 events coded violence against civilians) in Hama governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in the district of As-Suqaylabiyah. By comparison, very few incidents were recorded in the districts of Muhradah, Hama and Masyaf. According to ACLED data, GoS forces and affiliated armed groups were the main actor involved in around 65 % of all recorded security incidents (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2') during the reference period, particularly in incidents coded as explosions/remote violence. Opposition armed groups (HTS and affiliated armed groups) were involved in around 20 % of all security incidents, particularly in incidents where GoS and affiliated armed groups were also an actor. Unidentified armed groups and ISIL were involved in around 11 % and 7 % of all security incidents, respectively.

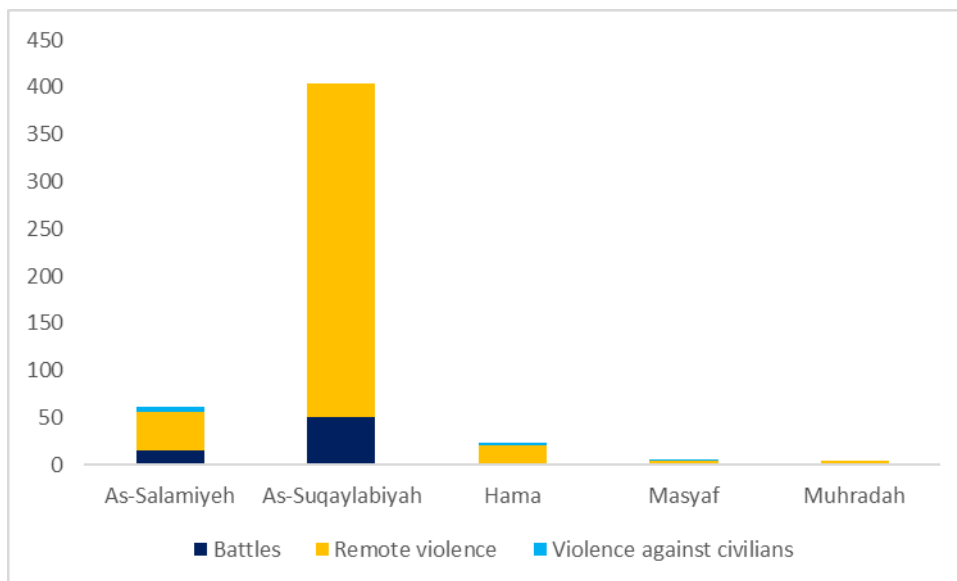


Figure 7. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Hama governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁶³³

⁶³² EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

⁶³³ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)



(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented 23 civilian fatalities in Hama governorate.⁶³⁴ For the same period, UCDP recorded 30 civilian fatalities in Hama governorate.⁶³⁵ In Hama governorate, SNHR documented 88 civilian fatalities in 2021,⁶³⁶ 36 in 2022⁶³⁷ and 77 in 2023.⁶³⁸

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Attacks by GoS and allied forces resulted in the damage or destruction of at least one school (western rural Hama)⁶³⁹ and civilian homes (northwestern Hama),⁶⁴⁰ while artillery shells caused fire on agricultural crops.⁶⁴¹ Hama remains one of the governorates with the highest levels of unexploded ordnance contamination.⁶⁴² Multiple civilians were killed or injured by

⁶³⁴ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁶³⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

⁶³⁶ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

⁶³⁷ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁶³⁸ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁶³⁹ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#), p. 21

⁶⁴⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – September 2023, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁴¹ SOHR, Military escalation | Two members of HTS killed in exchange of attacks on three frontlines within “Putin-Erdogan” area, 7 June 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴² UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16



remnants of war/landmines in eastern rural Hama,⁶⁴³ including in the Salamiyah area⁶⁴⁴ and in the northern⁶⁴⁵ northeastern⁶⁴⁶ and southern⁶⁴⁷ rural parts of the governorate.

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023, there were 212 582 IDPs in Hama governorate.⁶⁴⁸ Between September and December 2023, UNOCHA recorded 194 IDP movements in the governorate. 128 of these IDP movements occurred from Hama to other governorates, while 66 IDP movements took place from other governorates into Hama.⁶⁴⁹ No data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

Meanwhile, UNOCHA recorded around 83 IDP return movements between September and December 2023. 15 of these movements occurred within the governorate, while 53 occurred from other governorates into Hama and 15 occurred from Hama to other governorates.⁶⁵⁰ The GoS has encouraged IDP returns from opposition-held areas to areas under GoS control in Hama. Many of those returning were 'motivated by the desire to return to their farmlands' and 'benefit from their produce', rather than staying in IDP camps, where conditions were harsh.⁶⁵¹ At the same time, GoS restrictions often prevented IDPs from returning to their areas of origin, while other IDPs feared arrest in reconquered or previously besieged areas, including Hama.⁶⁵²

⁶⁴³ SOHR, Old ordnance | Landmine explosion leaves three people dead and injured in eastern Hama countryside, 8 July 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Four civilians killed and injured due to explosion of old landmines in regime-held areas, 15 March 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁶⁴⁴ SOHR, Old ordnance | Four civilians killed and injured due to explosion of old landmines in regime-held areas, 15 March 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁶⁴⁵ SOHR, Forming 3 metre-deep hole | Object of war remnants explodes leaving four children killed in Hama, 18 June 2024, [url](#); SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁶⁴⁶ SOHR, Old ordnance | Landmine explosions leave five civilians dead and injured in two regions in regime-held areas, 12 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁷ SOHR, Old ordnance | Explosion of unknown object of war remnants leaves civilian injured in southern Hama countryside, 20 June 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

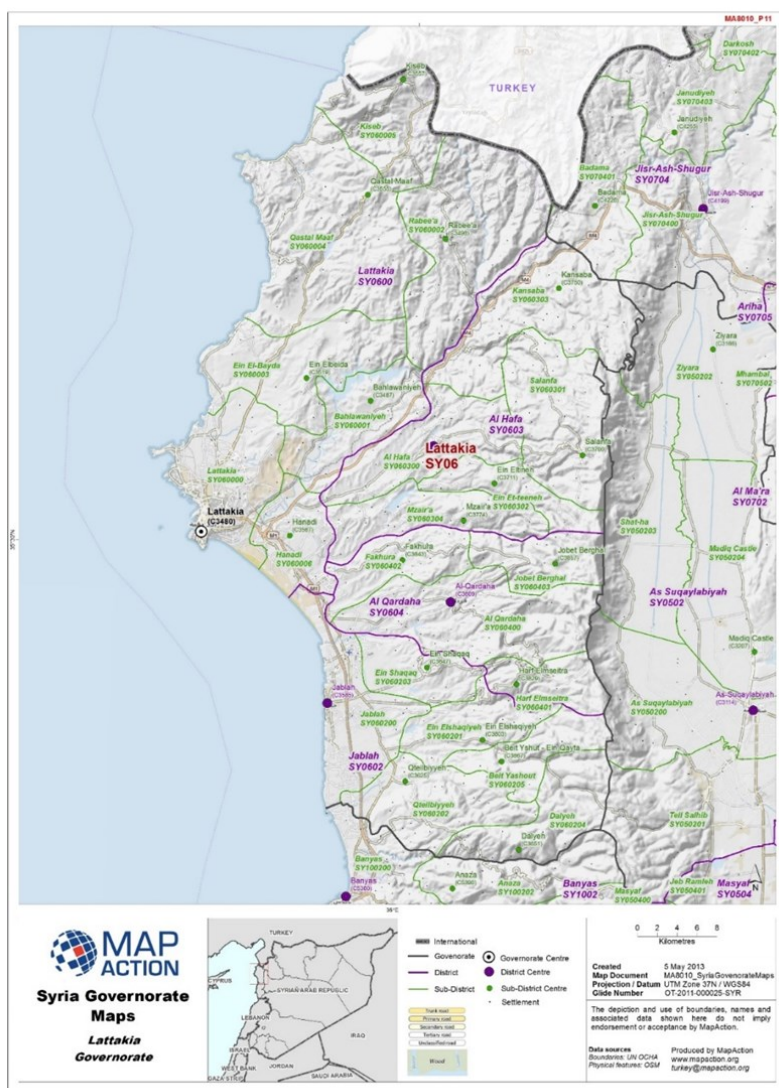
⁶⁴⁹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁰ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵¹ HLP Syria, IDPs Return to Regime-Controlled Areas in Idlib and Hama, 18 June 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵² USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 75

2.4. Latakia governorate



Map 8: © MapAction, Latakia governorate⁶⁵³

2.4.1. General description of the governorate

Latakia governorate is situated in northwestern Syria and shares borders with Türkiye to the north, Idlib governorate to the northeast, Hama governorate to the east and Tartous governorate to the south. In the west, Latakia governorate borders with the Mediterranean Sea.⁶⁵⁴ The governorate is divided into four administrative districts: Latakia (city), Al-Haffa, Al-Qardaha, and Jablah, which are further divided into altogether 22 sub-districts.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵³ MapAction, Syria 2013-2015, Latakia Governorate [map], last updated: 29 July 2016, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁴ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Latakia Governorate Reference Map (as of February 2016), 29 February 2016, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 10

⁶⁵⁵ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 109

According to UNOCHA, the population of Latakia governorate was estimated to be 1 296 899 as of July 2023, including residents, returnees and IDPs.⁶⁵⁶ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Latakia governorate had 1 347 854 inhabitants.⁶⁵⁷

Most of Syria's Alawites live in the governorate's mountainous areas, but also in Latakia city, according to a report by USDOS published in June 2024.⁶⁵⁸ The weekly magazine *The Week* referred to Latakia governorate as one of the 'strongholds of Assad's own Alawi sect'.⁶⁵⁹

For more information on the ethnic and religious composition of Latakia's population, see section 2.4.1 of the [EUAA COI Report: Syria - Security situation \(July 2021\)](#).

2.4.2. Conflict background and armed actors

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) stated in a report of February 2024 that Latakia governorate is controlled by pro-government forces, except for some parts of eastern Latakia, which are under 'de-facto control and authority' of the so-called 'Syrian Salvation Government', the political wing of HTS.⁶⁶⁰ In November 2023, NPA quoted a former opposition leader Muhammad Jamil as saying that while various 'key jihadist groups' had a strong presence in Idlib and surrounding areas like Latakia, they all were 'ultimately subject to the orders' of HTS.⁶⁶¹

A January 2024 UN Security Council report indicated that the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, also known under the name Turkistan Islamic Party (ETIM/TIP), aligned with and supported by HTS, was operating in Latakia. The same report stated that Ansar Al-Islam brigade of HTS, a group cooperating with Hurras Al-Din (HAD), and Khatiba Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (KTJ), an ally of HTS, were among the most active groups in Latakia.⁶⁶²

As of July 2024, several foreign forces had military positions in Latakia governorate, according to Jusoor for Studies: Iran (17 military positions), Türkiye (2 military positions) and Russia (15 military positions).⁶⁶³ AFP noted that Russian forces were stationed in several GoS-controlled areas, including the Hmeimim airbase near Latakia city.⁶⁶⁴ The Hmeimim airbase was

⁶⁵⁶ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁶⁵⁷ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 [الكتاب الإحصائي](#) [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab 4-2

⁶⁵⁸ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Syria, 30 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁶⁵⁹ *Week (The)*, Protests in Syria: could they bring down the Assad regime?, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁰ OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 34

⁶⁶¹ NPA, HTS dominates all factions in northwest Syria, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶² UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council, [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 56, 57

⁶⁶³ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁴ AFP, Who controls what territory in Syria?, 6 October 2023

reportedly involved in assigning tasks to, planning operations for and supervising military units established and trained by Russia, such as the 25th Division, the 4th Corps and the 5th Corps.⁶⁶⁵

2.4.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

SOHR recorded shells and rockets fired by GoS forces in rural Latakia at the Al-Tuffahiyah frontline, the hills of Kabanah, Deir Al-Akrad and the Jabal Al-Turkman frontline in several reports between September 2023 and July 2024.⁶⁶⁶ In October 2023, Syria Direct reported on daily bombardments of HTS-controlled parts in Latakia by GoS forces and Russian warplanes. The source noted that this increase in attacks followed an unclaimed drone attack on the Homs Military Academy on 5 October 2023, where at least 89 people were killed and 277 injured.⁶⁶⁷ The intensity of the bombardments - targeting, among others, schools and residential neighbourhoods - made October 2023 'the most violent month seen in the north-west in years', according to Etana Syria.⁶⁶⁸

Strikes by Russian forces in coordination with the GoS against civilian and military targets were also recorded across Latakia in the first half of November 2023.⁶⁶⁹ Strikes by GoS and Russian forces continued in January,⁶⁷⁰ and in March 2024. GoS forces and Iranian-backed militias reportedly increased their use of suicide drones against sites in northern Latakia.⁶⁷¹ 'Regular barrages of machine-gun fire' as well as 'guided missiles and artillery strikes against opposition-held areas' in northern Latakia by GoS forces and allied militia reportedly continued in April⁶⁷² and May 2024.⁶⁷³ SOHR similarly pointed to airstrikes by Russian forces targeting positions in the northern countryside of Latakia in May 2024.⁶⁷⁴

Attacks by HTS and allied groups on GoS forces continued throughout the reporting period: HTS forces killed at least 16 GoS forces in a raid on 1 September 2023, according to the International Crisis Group.⁶⁷⁵ AP quoted other sources who put the number of soldiers killed in the same attack at 9 and 18, respectively.⁶⁷⁶ Five GoS soldiers were killed in an attack by HTS

⁶⁶⁵ Jusoor for Studies, The State of Russian Influence in Syria: 8 Years Post-Military Intervention, 11 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁶ SOHR, "Putin-Erdogan" area in September 2023 | 87 persons killed in scores of acts of violence and HTS arrests spies working for International Coalition, 1 October 2023, [url](#); SOHR, "Putin-Erdogan" area in March 2024 | Escalating protests against "Al-Julani"...81 persons killed in acts of violence...50 attacks by regime kamikaze drones, 1 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 16; SOHR, "Putin-Erdogan" area in July 2024 | Nearly 25 fatalities in acts of violence and ongoing protests against HTS, 1 August 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁷ Syria Direct, 'We pay the price for their conflict': Civilians across northern Syria under Damascus and Ankara's bombs, 13 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – October 2023, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – November 2023, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – December 2023, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷¹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – April 2024, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁴ SOHR, In Russian airstrike | Chinese fighter killed in frontline of Al-Kabinah in northern countryside of Latakia, 23 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁵ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁷⁶ AP, Insurgents in Syria's northwest kill at least 9 soldiers as fighting surges in other areas, 1 September 2023, [url](#)

on 15 September 2023.⁶⁷⁷ HTS reportedly also collaborated with ETIM/TIP in launching attacks on GoS forces in Latakia in October 2023.⁶⁷⁸ Several sources mentioned an attack on GoS forces in Latakia province on 17 December 2023, including the International Crisis Group,⁶⁷⁹ and the UNCOI.⁶⁸⁰ SOHR – seemingly referring to the same event – reported that five GoS forces were killed in the context of an ‘infiltration operation’ by the Ansar Al-Islam brigade of HTS on the frontline of Tallat Shir Sahab in the Jabal Al-Akrad area in the northern Latakia countryside.⁶⁸¹ The same number of GoS forces was reportedly killed in another infiltration operation by the HTS-affiliated Othman Bin Affan brigade along the Al-Kabinah frontline in the northern countryside of Latakia in March 2024.⁶⁸² Etana Syria pointed to an increase in infiltration attempts by HTS and in raids by HTS and allied groups against GoS military points in northern Latakia in March 2024.⁶⁸³ According to the Fateh Al-Mubin operations room quoted by Syria TV, they conducted 12 sniper attacks targeting GoS forces in Western Latakia governorate in April 2024.⁶⁸⁴ Members of a Fateh Al-Mubin faction reportedly carried out an ‘operation’ on GoS-sites in the northern Latakia countryside in June 2024.⁶⁸⁵

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 387 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Latakia governorate, of which 135 were coded as battles, 251 explosions/remote violence and 1 incidents of violence against civilians.⁶⁸⁶ By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 277 security incidents (83 battles, 189 explosions/remote violence and 5 events coded violence against civilians) in Latakia governorate. During the reference period for this report, the highest number of security incidents were documented by ACLED in the districts of Al-Hafa and Latakia. By comparison, very few/no security incidents were recorded in the districts of Al-Qardaha and Jableh. According to ACLED, GoS and Russian forces (coded as either ‘Actor1’ or ‘Actor2’) on the one hand and anti-GoS armed groups on the other hand were involved in the vast majority of all recorded security incidents during the reference period, particularly in incidents coded battles and explosions/remote violence.

⁶⁷⁷ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁷⁸ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council, [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 56

⁶⁷⁹ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁸⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), Annex IV, para. 20

⁶⁸¹ SOHR, In response to targeting of civilians | Officer among five regime soldiers killed in infiltration operation by “H-T-S” on in northern countryside of Latakia, 17 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸² SOHR, In infiltration operation | Eight regime soldiers killed and injured by HTS in Latakia countryside, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁸³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-West Syria – March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁴ Syria TV, 400 عملية.. الفتح المبين "تعلن نتائج هجماتها على مواقع النظام في نيسان"

[400 ‘Al-Fatah Al-Mubin’ announces the results of its attacks on regime positions in April], 7 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁵ Enab Baladi, HTS carries out inghimasi attack against regime forces in Hama countryside, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁶ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (2 August 2024), [url](#)

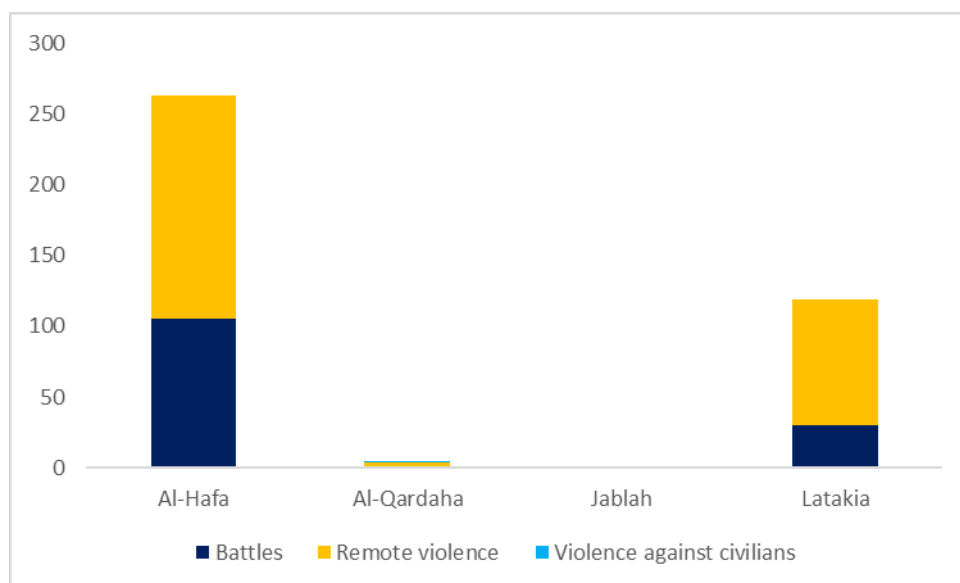


Figure 8. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Latakia governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁶⁸⁷

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented three civilian fatalities in Latakia governorate.⁶⁸⁸ For the same period, UCDP recorded two civilian fatalities in Latakia

⁶⁸⁷ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

⁶⁸⁸ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

governorate.⁶⁸⁹ In Latakia governorate, SNHR documented two civilian fatalities in 2021,⁶⁹⁰ four civilian fatalities in 2022⁶⁹¹ and six in 2023.⁶⁹²

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

As of September 2023, the Port of Latakia was 'inefficient' because of the ongoing conflict, according to Crisis24.⁶⁹³ The port's operations reportedly decreased by 40 % and its exports by 60 %. The railroad linking Latakia to Aleppo had also been damaged.⁶⁹⁴

In November 2023, a man was reportedly killed by the explosion of a grenade he found in his olive grove in Daliyah village in southern Latakia governorate. The death was – despite allegations of suicide – reportedly recorded as 'unintentional mistake', according to NPA.⁶⁹⁵ A man and his son were killed near Al-Kabbina in northern rural Latakia governorate when a shell from a previous bombardment, which the man reportedly tried to disarm, exploded.⁶⁹⁶

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, there were 447 336 IDPs in Latakia governorate as of July 2023. Moreover, 1 437 persons returned to the governorate in 2023.⁶⁹⁷ In October 2023, UNOCHA recorded 13 IDP movements from Latakia governorate.⁶⁹⁸ In November 2023, UNOCHA recorded 11 IDP movements from and 20 IDP arrivals to the governorate.⁶⁹⁹ One IDP arrival was recorded in December 2023.⁷⁰⁰ No IDP movements were recorded in September 2023.⁷⁰¹ No data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

No further information on displacement and return could be found within the constraints of the research.

⁶⁸⁹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

⁶⁹⁰ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

⁶⁹¹ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁶⁹² SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁶⁹³ Crisis24, Syria Country Report – Infrastructure, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁴ UNDP and UN-Habitat, Sustainable Reconstruction. A Framework for Inclusive Planning and Financing to Support Green Transition in the Arab States Region, 15 September 2023, [url](#), p. 57

⁶⁹⁵ NPA, People, authorities hide suicides in government-held areas in Syria, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁶ SNHR, Man named Mahmoud Kreidi and his son Ja'far killed by the explosion of a war remnant of unidentified source in northern rural Latakia governorate, November 7, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁷ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

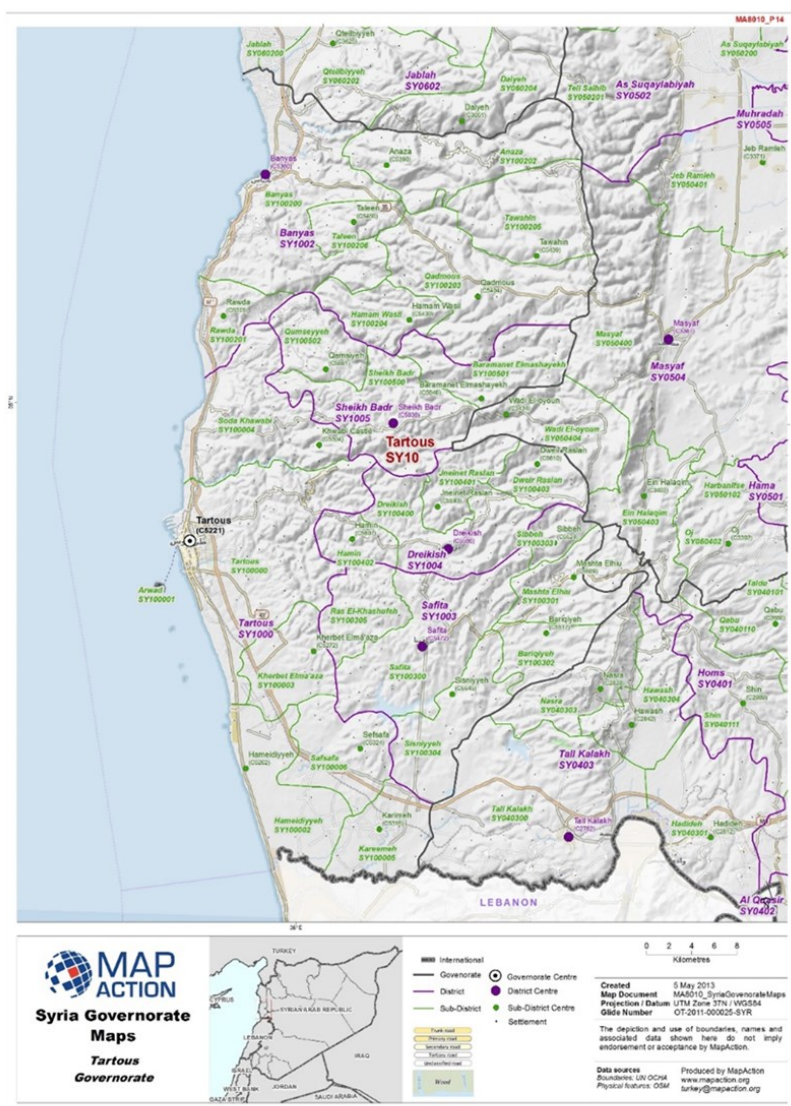
⁶⁹⁸ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic IDP Movements October 2023, 22 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁰ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰¹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

2.5. Tartous governorate



Map 9: © MapAction, Tartous governorate map⁷⁰²

2.5.1. General description of the governorate

Tartous governorate shares borders with Latakia governorate to the north, the governorates of Hama and Homs to the east and with Lebanon to the south. To the west, Tartous governorate borders the Mediterranean Sea.⁷⁰³ The governorate is divided into six

⁷⁰² MapAction, Syria Governorate Maps – Tartous Governorate, last updated on 29 July 2019, [url](#)

⁷⁰³ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Tartous Governorate Reference Map (as of 9 May 2016), 9 May 2016, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 14

administrative districts, namely Banyas (Baniyas), Dreikish, Qadmous, Safita, Sheikh Badr and Tartous (city), which are further divided into 27 sub-districts.⁷⁰⁴

According to UNOCHA, the population of Tartous governorate was estimated at 939 889 as of July 2023, including residents, returnees and IDPs.⁷⁰⁵ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Tartous governorate had 1 220 252 inhabitants.⁷⁰⁶

For more information on Tartus governorate, see section 2.5.1 of the [EUAA COI Report: Syria - Security Situation \(October 2023\)](#).

2.5.2. Conflict background and armed actors

Tartous governorate is under control of pro-government forces.⁷⁰⁷ The Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies described Tartous governorate as a key Syrian government stronghold.⁷⁰⁸

As of mid-2024, two foreign forces had military positions in Tartous governorate, namely Iran with nine and Russia with two military positions.⁷⁰⁹ Russia continued to operate a naval base at the port of Tartous,⁷¹⁰ which it reportedly had expanded since 2020.⁷¹¹

2.5.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

Israeli airstrikes reportedly targeted air defence units in Tartous governorate in mid-September 2023, killing two soldiers and injuring six.⁷¹² According to SOHR, the strikes were targeting two warehouses near Al-Jamasah and Deir Hajar villages used by Hezbollah for storing arms, as well as a base of GoS air-defence forces in Kartu village.⁷¹³

Since the beginning of 2024, SOHR recorded three attacks by Israeli forces in Tartous governorate.⁷¹⁴ In March 2024, Colonel Reza Zarei, a member of the IRGC, was killed in a suspected Israeli airstrike in the coastal city of Baniyas.⁷¹⁵ In May 2024, Baniyas city was hit

⁷⁰⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 110

⁷⁰⁵ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁷⁰⁶ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 الكتاب الإحصائي [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab 4-2

⁷⁰⁷ AFP, Who controls what territory in Syria?, 6 October 2023

⁷⁰⁸ Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, Has A National Consensus on Political Transition Begun to Emerge in Syria?, 5 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁹ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁰ Borshchevskaya, A., How the Middle East Became an Arena for Putin's Power Struggle with the US, TWI, 9 March 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Russia, al-Assad step up Syria bombing amid world focus on Israel-Gaza war, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹¹ Insecurity Insight, Syria: Humanitarian Operations and Conflict-related Sensitivity, October 2023, ReliefWeb, October 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁷¹² Al Jazeera, Israel attacks Syria's west coast, killing two soldiers: Syrian state media, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹³ SOHR, Second attack in hours | Israeli strikes target military positions in Hama countryside, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹⁴ SOHR, 53rd Israeli attack | Two members of Syrian Air Force Defence killed in Syrian territory, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁵ Al Jazeera, Iran Revolutionary Guard member and two others killed in attack in Syria, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

again by Israeli airstrikes,⁷¹⁶ reportedly targeting a residential building.⁷¹⁷ In July 2024, Israeli airstrikes targeted at least two buildings in Baniyas city, including one that reportedly belonged to an air defence battalion on Arab Al-Malik Beach in the Al-Qaloua area. According to SOHR, it was unclear whether the strikes targeted shipments of arms or Iran-affiliated militia members,⁷¹⁸ while NPA quoted reports by a Saudi TV channel claiming that the strike was targeting an air-defence system owned by Iranian-backed militia.⁷¹⁹

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 10 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Tartous governorate, of which one was coded as battles, five were coded as explosions/remote violence and four as incidents of violence against civilians. By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 7 security incidents (1 battle, 3 explosions/remote violence and 3 events coded violence against civilians) in Tartous governorate. During the reference period for this report, unidentified armed groups were involved (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2') in the incidents coded as violence against civilians, while Israeli forces were involved in the incidents coded as explosions/remote violence.⁷²⁰

(c) Civilian fatalities

There were no civilian fatalities documented by SNHR in Tartous governorate between September 2023 and August 2024.⁷²¹ For the same period, UCDP recorded one civilian fatality

⁷¹⁶ DW, Suspected Israeli strikes kill several in Syria: reports, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁷ Asharq Al-Awsat, Israel Attacks Syria's Central Region and Baniyas City, 30 May 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁸ SOHR, Third targeting since beginning of year | Israeli airstrikes target two buildings near Baniyas city, 9 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁹ NPA, Israel targets Syria's coast, Israel targets Syria's coast, 9 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷²⁰ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

⁷²¹ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

in Tartous governorate.⁷²² SNHR did not document any civilian fatalities in Tartous governorate in 2021, 2022 or 2023.⁷²³

A suspected Israeli airstrike in May 2024 in Baniyas city reportedly killed one child and injured 10 civilians.⁷²⁴

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on explosive remnants of war in Tartous for the reporting period could be found.

Because of the population's general pro-government attitude, Tartous remained 'relatively untouched' by the conflict, according to Insecurity Insight.⁷²⁵

SOHR reported in July 2024 on the deteriorating security situation and 'proliferation' of weapons in Tartous governorate due to the lack of laws controlling the possession of arms by civilians.⁷²⁶

According to the UN Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment of 2023, 9 % of shelters in Tartous governorate were damaged buildings (compared to 1 % the year before).⁷²⁷

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA estimates, there were 171 149 IDPs and 998 returnees in Tartous governorate as of July 2023.⁷²⁸

In October 2023 UNOCHA recorded two IDP movements from Tartous governorate.⁷²⁹ No IDP movements were recorded in September,⁷³⁰ November⁷³¹ and December 2023.⁷³² No data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

According to UNOCHA data from February 2024, no IDP return movements were recorded in Tartous governorate in 2023.⁷³³ No further information on displacement or returns could be found within the constraints of the research.

⁷²² EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

⁷²³ EUAA, COI Report: Syria – Security situation, October 2023, [url](#), p. 92; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁷²⁴ DW, Suspected Israeli strikes kill several in Syria: reports, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷²⁵ Insecurity Insight, Sentiments towards the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, April 2024, [url](#), p. 2

⁷²⁶ SOHR, Proliferation of arms | Civilian killed in indiscriminate gunfire in Tartus, 4 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷²⁷ Global Shelter Cluster, Syrian Arab Republic: Whole of Syria Shelter and NFI Sectors – Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment 2023 | Humanitarian Needs Overview, 27 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

⁷²⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁷²⁹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic IDP Movements October 2023, 22 December 2023, [url](#)

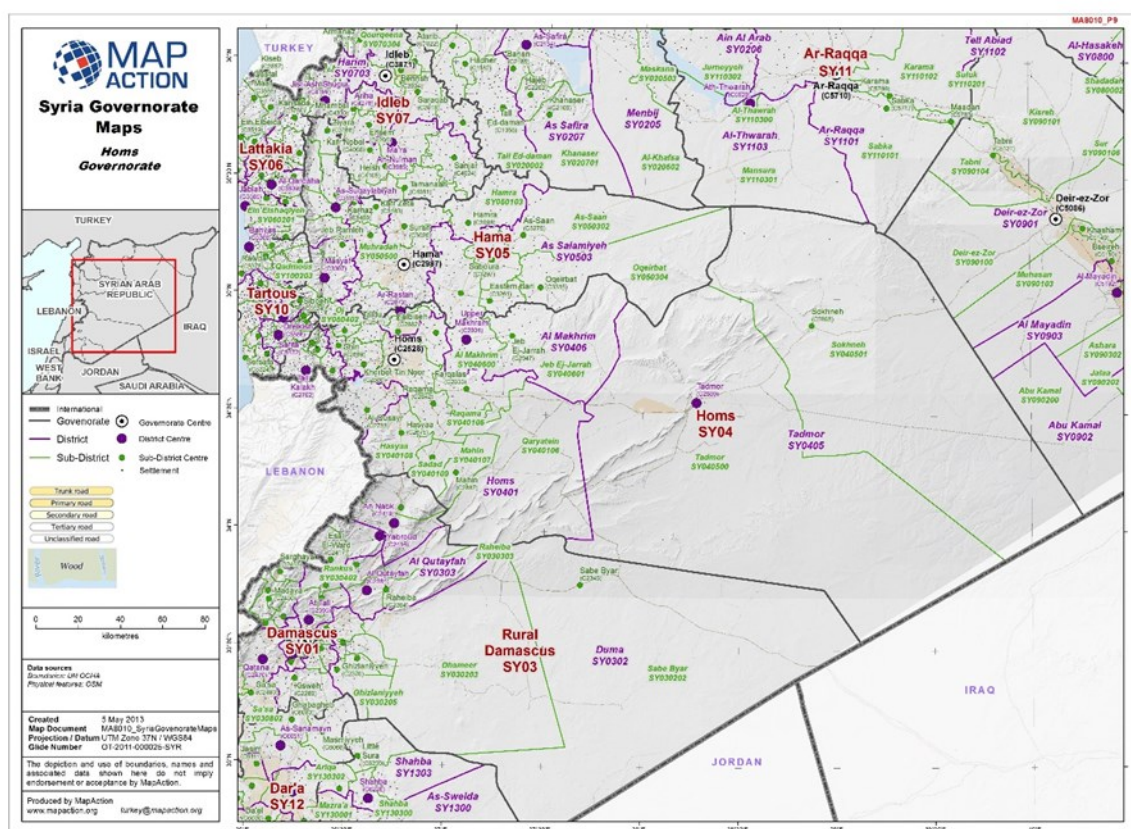
⁷³⁰ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

⁷³¹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷³² UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷³³ UNOCHA, IDP movements and IDP spontaneous return movements Data December 2023, updated 8 February 2024, [url](#)

2.6. Homs governorate



Map 10: © MapAction, Homs governorate map⁷³⁴

2.6.1. General description of the governorate

Homs governorate is located in central Syria and has borders with Iraq to the east and Lebanon to the west. It has internal borders with Deir Ez-Zor, Raqqqa, Hama, Tartous, and Rural Damascus governorates.⁷³⁵ UNOCHA mentioned in a March 2024 report that Homs governorate comprises six administrative districts: Homs, Al Makhrim, Al-Qusayr, Ar-Rastan, Tadmor (Palmyra) and Tall Kalakh.⁷³⁶ Homs was the largest governorate in Syria in terms of surface, and the third in terms of population, as of May 2014. The capital of the governorate is Homs city which is also the central city of Homs district.⁷³⁷ According to UNOCHA, the population of Homs governorate was estimated at 1 500 351, including 290 269 IDPs, as of July 2023.⁷³⁸ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Homs governorate had 1 998 604 inhabitants.⁷³⁹ For information on

⁷³⁴ MapAction, Homs Governorate, 29 July 2016, [url](#)

⁷³⁵ UNCS and UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Reference Map, 17 January 2013, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 8

⁷³⁶ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 108

⁷³⁷ UN-Habitat, City Profile – Homs: Multi Sector Assessment, May 2014, [url](#), p. 5

⁷³⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁷³⁹ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 الإحصائي [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

the governorate's ethno-religious composition, see section 2.6.1 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#).

2.6.2. Conflict background and armed actors

Different maps produced by various sources show that most of Homs governorate is under GoS control.⁷⁴⁰ A map produced by the UN further shows some ISIL presence in the central and eastern parts of the governorate and a so-called US-declared 55-km deconfliction area⁷⁴¹ stretching between the southeast of the governorate and neighbouring Rural Damascus governorate around the village⁷⁴² of Al-Tanf,⁷⁴³ where a military base is located.⁷⁴⁴ US forces⁷⁴⁵ and local US-supported forces, such as Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces,⁷⁴⁶ formerly known as Mughawir al-Thawra⁷⁴⁷ (MaT),⁷⁴⁸ and remnants of the former local factions Martyr Ahmad al-Abdo Forces and Lions of the East Army, were reportedly located around the base.⁷⁴⁹

According to Jusoor for Studies, as of mid-2024, Iran maintained 67 military sites in Homs governorate.⁷⁵⁰ Sources reported a presence of the IRGC⁷⁵¹ and of Iranian-affiliated militia groups in Homs, such as the Quwwat al-Rida,⁷⁵² the Afghan Fatemiyoun Brigade (Liwa al-Fatemiyyun), the Lebanese Hezbollah, Syrian militia forces trained by the Hezbollah,⁷⁵³ the Iraqi Al-Nujaba movement and the Zainebiyoun Brigade.⁷⁵⁴ In April 2024, the International Crisis Group reported that Iranian-affiliated forces are deployed 'in close proximity' to the Al-Tanf base and, like GoS-affiliated forces, had set up checkpoints in the area beyond the US-controlled deconfliction zone.⁷⁵⁵ The SOHR in January 2024 reported that Iranian-affiliated militias and Lebanese Hezbollah forces were present 'in large spaces' of south-eastern rural Homs, where apart from a limited number of military checkpoints, GoS forces were not present. According to SOHR, Iranian-affiliated militias furthermore have been expanding in

⁷⁴⁰ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#); Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Homs and August 2024

⁷⁴¹ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴² Enab Baladi, What is al-Tanf garrison, where a drone strike killed three US soldiers?, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴³ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁴ Enab Baladi, What is al-Tanf garrison, where a drone strike killed three US soldiers?, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁵ AA, US strategic positioning, Tower 22, hit by Iran-backed militant groups, 30 January 2024, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Iran Update, April 2, 2024, 2 April 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁷⁴⁶ Enab Baladi, What is al-Tanf garrison, where a drone strike killed three US soldiers?, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁷ New Arab (The), US-backed Syrian opposition militia changes name amid reforms, 25 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁸ A rebel group consisting of former Syrian military officers. Edwards, M. and Al-Homsi, O., Jordan returns refugees to desolate Syrian border camp, rights groups cry foul, TNH, 16 September 2020, [url](#); TWI, The Future of al-Tanf Garrison in Syria, 6 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁹ Enab Baladi, What is al-Tanf garrison, where a drone strike killed three US soldiers?, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁰ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵¹ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 18 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in 2023, 10 January 2024, [url](#), p. 198

⁷⁵² Haid, H., How Syria's vast militia network is eroding state sovereignty, Al Majalla, 6 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵³ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 18 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in 2023, 10 January 2024, [url](#), p. 198

⁷⁵⁴ Damas Post, "إثر خلافات بين الفرقة الرابعة التابعة لنظام الأسد و"لواء فاطميون الأفغاني" الأخيرة تمنع دخول الرابعة لمدينة السخنة" [After disagreements between Assad's Fourth Division and the Afghan Fatemiyoun Brigade, the latter prevents entry of Fourth Division into Al-Sukhnah], 4 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁵ International Crisis Group, Al-Tanf, Syria, last updated 13 August 2024, [url](#)



2023 in broad areas throughout GoS-controlled areas in Tadmor (Palmyra) in eastern rural Homs. They have reportedly been positioned in areas east of the Tadmor fortress, previously dominated by GoS's intelligence branch, and in large parts of the Homs desert.⁷⁵⁶ In a July 2024 article, the non-governmental, non-profit Syrian media agency Damas Post reported with reference to a local source that Iranian 'hegemony' was particularly imposed on the areas of Al-Bayarat, Mahin and Hawarin in the eastern countryside of Homs. Furthermore, Damas Post assessed in its reporting that the city of Al-Sukhnah and large parts of the western surroundings of Palmyra city were fully controlled by Iran. Al-Sukhnah, which according to Damas Post is the main and largest stronghold of the Afghan Fatemiyoun Brigade,⁷⁵⁷ was held by Wagner forces up until September 2023, when these forces withdrew from Syria.⁷⁵⁸ The CTP and ISW noted in February 2024 that Iranian-affiliated militias are present at the Shayrat Air Base, which reportedly is the second largest Iranian air base in Homs governorate after the Tiyas T-4 Air Base.⁷⁵⁹ The T-4 Air Base, which lies between Tadmor and Al-Qaryatain, according to SOHR, was almost completely controlled by IRGC. SOHR further noted that GoS and Russian forces were also present at T-4.⁷⁶⁰

SOHR noted in January 2024 that Al-Qusayr city was dominated by the Lebanese Hezbollah, who also dominated surrounding villages at the Syrian-Lebanese border strip. According to the report, the Hezbollah was trying to 'secure a popular base in these villages' by housing Shia families in the region and systematically displacing villagers.⁷⁶¹ However, SOHR reported that as of June 2024, due to repeated Israeli attacks on Hezbollah positions in the region and heavy losses of members during attacks in 2024, the Hezbollah reportedly repositioned and removed 'any indications of its presence' in the areas close to the border to Lebanon, including in Al-Qusayr.⁷⁶² According to SOHR, the Hezbollah maintained a military field in the Homs desert close to the village Marhatan,⁷⁶³ which lies about 40 kilometres from Palmyra city.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁵⁶ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 18 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in 2023, 10 January 2024, [url](#), p. 198

⁷⁵⁷ Damas Post, *إثر خلافات بين الفرقة الرابعة التابعة لنظام الأسد و"لواء فاطميون الأفغاني" الأخيرة تمنع دخول الرابعة لمدينة السخنة* [After disagreements between Assad's Fourth Division and the Afghan Fatemiyoun Brigade, the latter prevents entry of Fourth Division into Al-Sukhnah], 4 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁸ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, October 4, 2023, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁹ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, February 12, 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁶⁰ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 18 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in 2023, 10 January 2024, [url](#), p. 199

⁷⁶¹ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 18 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in 2023, 10 January 2024, [url](#), p. 198

⁷⁶² SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 63

⁷⁶³ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#), p. 55

⁷⁶⁴ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in February 2024, 8 March 2024, [url](#), p. 59



Sources reported a presence of GoS's Fourth Division⁷⁶⁵ in Homs governorate in the reference period,⁷⁶⁶ with concentration points in the eastern countryside of Homs.⁷⁶⁷ In September 2023, it was reported that Fourth Division checkpoints were removed from western Homs countryside amid a series of removals of the division's checkpoints at roads connecting several Syrian governorates.⁷⁶⁸ Reportedly, the numbers of checkpoints were reduced, while some were relocated towards border areas.⁷⁶⁹ The GoS's 26th Division reportedly also had a presence in Homs governorate, near Al-Bayarat area.⁷⁷⁰

In October 2023, after a series of attacks, ISIL reportedly seized and temporarily held GoS positions south of Al-Sukhnah and the Wadi Doubayat gas field.⁷⁷¹ In early December 2023, GoS forces recaptured Wadi Doubayat, with ISIL cells quickly redeploying to the south and the west, according to research analyst Gregory Waters.⁷⁷² ISW and CTP, in October 2023, designated the Wadi Doubayat as one of the major ISIL support zones.⁷⁷³

According to Jusoor for Studies, as of mid-2024, Russia maintained four military sites in Homs governorate.⁷⁷⁴ In a February 2024 report, ISW and CTP noted that Russian forces controlled the Tadmor Military Airport and were also present at the Shayrat Air Base.⁷⁷⁵

2.6.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

ISIL insurgency

⁷⁶⁵ For detailed information on GoS's Fourth division, please see: Denmark, DIS, Syria – The Special Forces and the elite units, April 2023, [url](#).

⁷⁶⁶ SOHR, "الأسد يعمم بمنع توقيف أو محاسبة عناصر الفرقة الرابعة على طريق تدمر – السخنة", 30 March 2024, [url](#); Al-Modon, "ماهر الأسد يصدر بياناً يحظر اعتقال أو محاسبة أعضاء الفرقة الرابعة", 23 May 2024, [url](#); Halab Today TV, "احتجاجات في قرية المختارية الموالية على الفرقة الرابعة شمال حمص.. ماذا يجري؟ [Exclusive: Protests in loyalist Al-Mukhtariya village against Fourth Division north of Homs – what is happening?]", 15 March 2024, [url](#).

⁷⁶⁷ Damas Post, "إثر خلافات بين الفرقة الرابعة التابعة لنظام الأسد و"لواء فاطميون الأفغاني" الأخيرة تمنع دخول الفرقة الرابعة لمدينة السخنة", 4 July 2024, [url](#).

⁷⁶⁸ Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, "إزالة حواجز للفرقة الرابعة بشكل مفاجئ في مناطق سورية", 5 September 2023, [url](#); Raseef 22, "كيف تحولت 'الرابعة' من فرقة قتالية إلى فرقة بنكية؟", 21 September 2023, [url](#); Noon Post, "The Fourth Division: Networks of a state within a state", 30 September 2023, [url](#).

⁷⁶⁹ Raseef 22, "كيف تحولت 'الرابعة' من فرقة قتالية إلى فرقة بنكية؟", 21 September 2023, [url](#).

⁷⁷⁰ NPA, ISIS militants kidnap 8 government soldiers in Syrian Desert, 14 July 2024, [url](#).

⁷⁷¹ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch 2023 – October Trends and November Alerts: Middle East and North Africa, 3 November 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Waters, G., The Central Syria ISIS Insurgency in 2023, CEP, March 2024, [url](#), p. 4.

⁷⁷² Waters, G., The Central Syria ISIS Insurgency in 2023, CEP, March 2024, [url](#), p. 4.

⁷⁷³ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi movement weekly update, October 13, 2023, 13 October 2023, [url](#).

⁷⁷⁴ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#).

⁷⁷⁵ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, February 12, 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1.

Sources reported ISIL activity in Homs governorate in the reference period⁷⁷⁶ in the Syrian desert, including in the desert of Al-Sukhnah.⁷⁷⁷ The attacks included ambushes, armed attacks and explosions in areas under control of GoS and GoS-affiliated forces,⁷⁷⁸ resulting in civilian casualties.⁷⁷⁹ According to a July 2024 UN Security Council report, ISIL attacks in the governorate mostly aimed at GoS military positions around Al-Sukhnah and Palmyra.⁷⁸⁰ After a series of attacks in central Homs governorate from early to mid-October 2023, ISIL seized and held a number of GoS positions south of Al-Sukhnah and the Wadi Doubayat gas field,⁷⁸¹ before they were recaptured by GoS forces in December 2023.⁷⁸² While ISIL operations in eastern Homs decreased the same month, the group's focus remained on Wadi Doubayat, as was the case in January 2024, when the group also expanded its activity south of Tadmor and Arak, eventually shifting its focus and concentrating on the Al-Sukhnah-Taybeh-Kawm axis up until May. ISIL's repositioning happened in the light of GoS operations in the area.⁷⁸³ According to research analyst Gregory Waters, most of the ISIL attacks in June 2024 took place against the backdrop of GoS operations in eastern Homs governorate, which remained ISIL's hub of activity in the Badia desert. According to Waters, GoS forces seemed 'to have successfully established new defensive positions around several critical areas in Homs, particularly the Doubayat and Kawm axes', reducing ISIL activity along these lines as of June 2024.⁷⁸⁴ Russian airstrikes on ISIL targets in the Homs governorate desert were also reported throughout the reference period.⁷⁸⁵ According to UNOCHA, 'insecurity emanating from ISIL's

⁷⁷⁶ Waters, G., The Central Syria ISIS Insurgency in 2023, March 2024, CEP, [url](#), p. 4; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in November 2023, 7 December 2023, [url](#), p. 70; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in February 2024, 8 March 2024, [url](#), p. 80; Zaman Al-Wasl, [المزيد من قوات النظام](#) [Homs Badia swallows further GoS forces], 13 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#), p. 74; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 79; NPA, ISIS militants kidnap 8 government soldiers in Syrian Desert, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁷ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#), p. 74; Etana Syria Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁸ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#), p. 74; Etana Syria Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁹ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 79-80; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 79-80; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in February 2024, 8 March 2024, [url](#), p. 81; Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁰ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 51

⁷⁸¹ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch 2023 – October Trends and November Alerts: Middle East and North Africa, 3 November 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁷⁸² Waters, G., The Central Syria ISIS Insurgency in 2023, CEP, March 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸³ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in May 2024, CEP, 11 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁴ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁵ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 54; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#), p. 49; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#), p. 51; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in February 2024,

unpredictability remained a threat for civilians' in Homs and several other governorates as of March 2024.⁷⁸⁶

Infighting between pro-GoS armed groups, criminality, attacks by unidentified actors

Sources further reported several infightings among GoS-affiliated forces⁷⁸⁷ and GoS forces in Homs governorate in the reference period.⁷⁸⁸ An infighting between two GoS-affiliated groups in February 2024 in Al-Rastan in northern rural Homs reportedly resulted in two civilian casualties.⁷⁸⁹

Attacks by unidentified armed men or groups on GoS forces⁷⁹⁰ or police officers⁷⁹¹ and on civilians, including shepherds, were also reported,⁷⁹² for example in Jub Al-Jarrah in eastern Homs countryside,⁷⁹³ in the Wadi Ubeid area⁷⁹⁴ and in southern Palmyra city.⁷⁹⁵ Furthermore, recurring abductions were reported in the governorate.⁷⁹⁶ Al-Araby Al-Jadeed in February 2024 reported recurring abductions in northern Homs countryside coupled with extortion by gangs. According to an interviewed journalist, the abductions happened in coordination with the military security.⁷⁹⁷ In a June 2024 report, SOHR indicated that abductions in Homs and rural Homs governorate were operated by gangs affiliated with the Lebanese Hezbollah, such as the gangs Shujaa al-Ali, Jaafar Jaafar and Saleem Al-Najjar. An SOHR activist indicated that most abductions in northern and western Homs countryside were carried out by these gangs,

8 March 2024, [url](#), p. 48; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 39

⁷⁸⁶ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁷⁸⁷ Al-Modon, [ماهر الأسد يعمم بمنع توقيف أو محاسبة عناصر الفرقة الرابعة](#) [Maher Al-Assad issues a circular that prohibits arresting or making accountable members of the Fourth Division], 23 May 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁸ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 48; Al-Modon, [ماهر الأسد يعمم بمنع توقيف أو محاسبة عناصر الفرقة الرابعة](#) [Maher Al-Assad issues a circular that prohibits arresting or making accountable members of the Fourth Division], 23 May 2024, [url](#); SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#), p. 43; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in February 2024, 8 March 2024, [url](#), p. 40

⁷⁸⁹ SNHR, Two civilians killed amid a crossfire between regime personnel in N. Homs, February 17, 2024, 18 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁰ Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, [إزالة حواجز للفرقة الرابعة بشكل مفاجئ في مناطق سورية](#) [Sudden removal of Fourth Division checkpoints in Syrian regions], 5 September 2023, [url](#); NPA, Unknown gunmen attack government forces in Syria's Homs, 9 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹¹ SOHR, Homs | Two members of the police killed in attack by unidentified gunmen, 19 May 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹² SNHR, Civilian shot dead by unidentified gunmen in E. Homs, January 6, 2024, 8 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Likely to belong to "ISIS" cells | Six shepherds killed in attack by gunmen on village in eastern countryside of Homs, 6 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹³ SANA, Five citizens killed in a terrorist attack in Homs eastern countryside, 24 February 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Unidentified gunmen commit a massacre against civilians in E. Homs, February 23, 2024, 26 February 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Civilian killed, another injured, by unidentified gunmen in E. Homs, February 29, 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁴ NPA, Unknown gunmen attack fuel tankers, kill 2 men in Syrian Desert, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁵ SNHR, Civilian shot dead by unidentified gunmen in E. Homs, January 6, 2024, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁶ SOHR, Under public pressure | Kidnapping gang releases young man and hands him over to dignitaries of Talbisah city, 25 June 2024, [url](#); Baladi News, [عصابات للخطف والسرقة تنشط في حمص فمن يقف وراءها؟](#) [Abduction and robbery gangs in Homs. Who stands behind them?], 2 April 2024, [url](#); Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, [حوادث الخطف تثير المخاوف](#) [Kidnapping incidents raise concerns in Homs countryside in central Syria], 2 February 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Civilian shot dead by unidentified gunmen in E. Homs, January 6, 2024, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁷ Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, [حوادث الخطف تثير المخاوف في ريف حمص وسط سورية](#) [Kidnapping incidents raise concerns in Homs countryside in central Syria], 2 February 2024, [url](#)

while the GoS did not take any measures to fight them.⁷⁹⁸ SOHR further reported that the youth of Talbiseh city, north of Homs city, had self-organised to fight the abductions, for example by organising patrols to protect the Homs-Hama highway.⁷⁹⁹ In April 2024, SOHR further reported that the deterioration of the security situation in Talbiseh city led to a fortification of the city by GoS forces.⁸⁰⁰ In July 2024, Baladi News reported that a meeting was held in city of Talbiseh between representatives of the security forces and the city, during which the establishment of a settlement centre was announced, which reportedly led to demonstrations in the city.⁸⁰¹

Israeli airstrikes

Israeli airstrikes in Homs governorate were reported in the reference period, for example in February,⁸⁰² May⁸⁰³ and June 2024,⁸⁰⁴ including on Al-Qusayr,⁸⁰⁵ the area around the town Al-Furqlus⁸⁰⁶ and Homs city.⁸⁰⁷ Attacks on 7th February 2024 reportedly struck the Shayrat air base and other Iranian-affiliated militia positions in Homs governorate⁸⁰⁸ and resulted in civilian casualties,⁸⁰⁹ which according to SNHR and UNCOI occurred in the Al-Hamra neighbourhood of Homs city.⁸¹⁰ The UNCOI in August 2024 noted that no party had claimed itself responsible for the attack and that the GoS had attributed it to Israel.⁸¹¹

Al-Tanf base

In light of rising tensions in the region due to the Israel-Gaza conflict, the Al-Tanf base in the US-controlled deconfliction zone was reportedly targeted by drones in the reference period.⁸¹²

⁷⁹⁸ SOHR, عصابة مرتبطة بـ “حزب الله” اللبناني تختطف شاباً في ريف حمص الشمالي, 21 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁹ SOHR, Under public pressure | Kidnapping gang releases young man and hands him over to dignitaries of Talbiseh city, 25 June 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁰ SOHR, تحصينات عسكرية تثير رعب أهالي تلبيسة.. قوات النظام تطوق المدينة الخاضعة لاتفاقية بضمانة روسيا, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰¹ Baladi News, ريف حمص.. الكشف عن مخرجات الاجتماع الأمني في تلبيسة, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰² SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in February 2024, 8 March 2024, [url](#), p. 43; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, February 12, 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁸⁰³ Crisis 24, Syria: Suspected Israeli airstrikes reported in Homs Governorate as of late May 29, 29 May 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, At least four killed, others wounded in Israeli bombing targeting Homs, 20 May 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁴ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 49

⁸⁰⁵ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on The Events of The Syrian Scene, 6 June 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁶ Crisis 24, Syria: Suspected Israeli airstrikes reported in Homs Governorate as of late May 29, 29 May 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁷ SNHR, Unidentified warplanes bomb Homs city, cause a massacre, February 7, 2024, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁸ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, February 12, 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁸⁰⁹ SANA, A number of civilians martyred, others injured in Israeli aggression on Homs and its countryside, 7 February 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Unidentified warplanes bomb Homs city, cause a massacre, February 7, 2024, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸¹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), p. 45; SNHR, Unidentified warplanes bomb Homs city, cause a massacre, February 7, 2024, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸¹¹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), p. 45

⁸¹² Crisis 24, Syria: Projectile fire reported against Al-Tanf base in Homs Governorate as of late June 22, 22 June 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, What is al-Tanf garrison, where a drone strike killed three US soldiers?, 30 January 2024, [url](#); Mehr News Agency, Iraqi Islamic Resistance targets US Al-Tanf base with drone, 19 November 2023, [url](#); Reuters, US troops in Syria targeted by drones- officials, 19 October 2023, [url](#)

Between October 2023 and January 2024, SOHR had documented nine attacks on Al-Tanf carried out by Iranian-affiliated groups, mainly the Islamic Resistance in Iraq,⁸¹³ who were corroborated as perpetrators of attacks on Al-Tanf by other sources.⁸¹⁴ In September 2023, the GoS reportedly sent military reinforcements to the area 70 km northeast the Al-Tanf base.⁸¹⁵

Attack on Homs military academy

On 5 October 2023, the military academy in Homs was reportedly attacked⁸¹⁶ by drones during a graduation event.⁸¹⁷ Reported civilian casualty numbers ranged between around 60⁸¹⁸ and 100 fatalities, including civilians, and 125⁸¹⁹ to 350 injured.⁸²⁰ According to the International Crisis Group, the drones were suspected to have been operated by Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), which ‘may signal [a] new phase of HTS campaign’ against the GoS.⁸²¹ The UNCOI reported in February 2024 that the GoS had attributed the attack to the Idlib-based Turkistan Liberation Party/Turkistan Islamic Party,⁸²² which is affiliated with HTS.⁸²³ Similarly, the UN Security Council reported in January 2024 that several member states attributed the attack to ‘HTS or its allied factions’.⁸²⁴ However, as of March 2024, no opposition group had claimed responsibility for the attack according to a New Arab article.⁸²⁵

⁸¹³ SOHR, Kamikaze plane | Iran-backed groups attack “Al-Tanf Base” at Syrian-Iraqi-Jordanian borders, 3 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸¹⁴ Mehr News Agency, Iraqi Islamic Resistance targets US Al-Tanf base with drone, 19 November 2023, [url](#); Enab Baladi, What is al-Tanf garrison, where a drone strike killed three US soldiers?, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸¹⁵ NPA, Syrian government sends military reinforcements near al-Tanf base, 7 September 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹⁶ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 40 – 41

⁸¹⁷ Al Jazeera, At least 100 killed as Syrian military college hit in drone attack, 6 October 2023, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 22

⁸¹⁸ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 40 – 41; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 23

⁸¹⁹ Al Jazeera, At least 100 killed as Syrian military college hit in drone attack, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸²⁰ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 40 – 41

⁸²¹ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch 2023 – October Trends and November Alerts: Middle East and North Africa, 3 November 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁸²² UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 23

⁸²³ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 56; NPA, HTS dominates all factions in northwest Syria, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

⁸²⁴ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 55

⁸²⁵ New Arab (The), Syria Insight: HTS's litany of errors piles pressure on Idlib, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 372 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Homs governorate, of which 184 were coded as battles, 129 explosions/remote violence and 59 incidents of violence against civilians.⁸²⁶ By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 221 security incidents (89 battles, 79 explosions/remote violence and 53 events coded violence against civilians) in Homs governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in the district of Tadmor. By comparison, very few incidents were recorded in the district of Tall Kalakh. According to ACLED, GoS forces and affiliated armed groups were involved in more than half of all security incidents recorded (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2'). ISIL was involved in almost half of all security incidents, particularly in incidents coded as battles. Unidentified armed groups participated in around 11 % of all recorded security incidents during the reference period; in more than half, civilians were also involved as an actor.

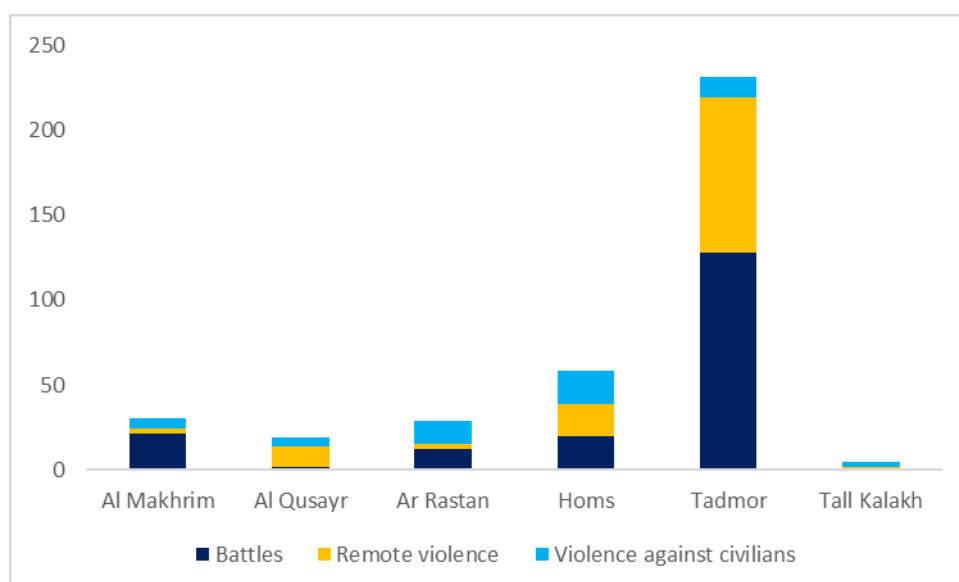


Figure 9. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Homs governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented 98 civilian fatalities in Homs governorate.⁸²⁷ For the same period, UCDP recorded 87 civilian fatalities in Homs

⁸²⁶ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

⁸²⁷ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11;

governorate.⁸²⁸ The highest number of civilian fatalities was recorded in October 2023 (56 civilian deaths documented by SNHR⁸²⁹ and UCDP, respectively).⁸³⁰ In Homs governorate, SNHR documented 28 civilian fatalities in 2021,⁸³¹ 37 in 2022⁸³² and 121 in 2023.⁸³³

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Within the time constraints of this report, no information on attacks on health facilities or civilian infrastructure and objects in Homs governorate in the reference period was found.

Homs remained one of the governorates with the highest levels of unexploded ordnance contamination.⁸³⁴ During the reference period, several civilians, including children, were

SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁸²⁸ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

⁸²⁹ SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11

⁸³⁰ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

⁸³¹ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

⁸³² SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁸³³ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁸³⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

reported to have been killed or injured in landmine detonations,⁸³⁵ in eastern rural Homs,⁸³⁶ in Al-Qusayr in western rural Homs⁸³⁷ and in southern rural Homs.⁸³⁸

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023 there were 290 269 IDPs in Homs governorate.⁸³⁹ 18 of the 46 IDP movements recorded in the last four months of 2023 took place from Homs to other governorates, while 28 IDP arrivals to Homs from other governorates were recorded.⁸⁴⁰ UNOCHA further noted that, between January and May 2024, 25 IDPs arrived at the Mahmoud Othman Shelter in Homs city from the Rukban IDP camp.⁸⁴¹ No further data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

During the last four months of 2023, around 905 IDP return movements occurred within Homs governorate, while about 27 return movements took place from other governorates into Homs.⁸⁴² UNOCHA further noted that 13 families returned from Lebanon to Homs governorate in May 2024.⁸⁴³ Information on reasons for return could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

⁸³⁵ SOHR, Old ordnance | Six workers injured due to the explosion of unexploded object in southern Homs countryside, 5 July 2024, [url](#); SOHR, War remnants | Minor killed and his brother injured in Palmyra in Homs countryside, 26 June 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Shepherd severely injured in landmine explosion in Homs, 12 June 2024, [url](#); SOHR, War remnants | Landmine explosion kills young man in eastern countryside of Homs, 24 March 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Following explosion of landmine planted by ISIS | Three children injured in Palmyra city east of Homs, 24 February 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Explosion of unexploded object kills child in Homs countryside, 16 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸³⁶ SOHR, War remnants | Minor killed and his brother injured in Palmyra in Homs countryside, 26 June 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Shepherd severely injured in landmine explosion in Homs, 12 June 2024, [url](#); SOHR, War remnants | Landmine explosion kills young man in eastern countryside of Homs, 24 March 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Following explosion of landmine planted by ISIS | Three children injured in Palmyra city east of Homs, 24 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸³⁷ SOHR, Old ordnance | Explosion of unexploded object kills child in Homs countryside, 16 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸³⁸ SOHR, Old ordnance | Six workers injured due to the explosion of unexploded object in southern Homs countryside, 5 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸³⁹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

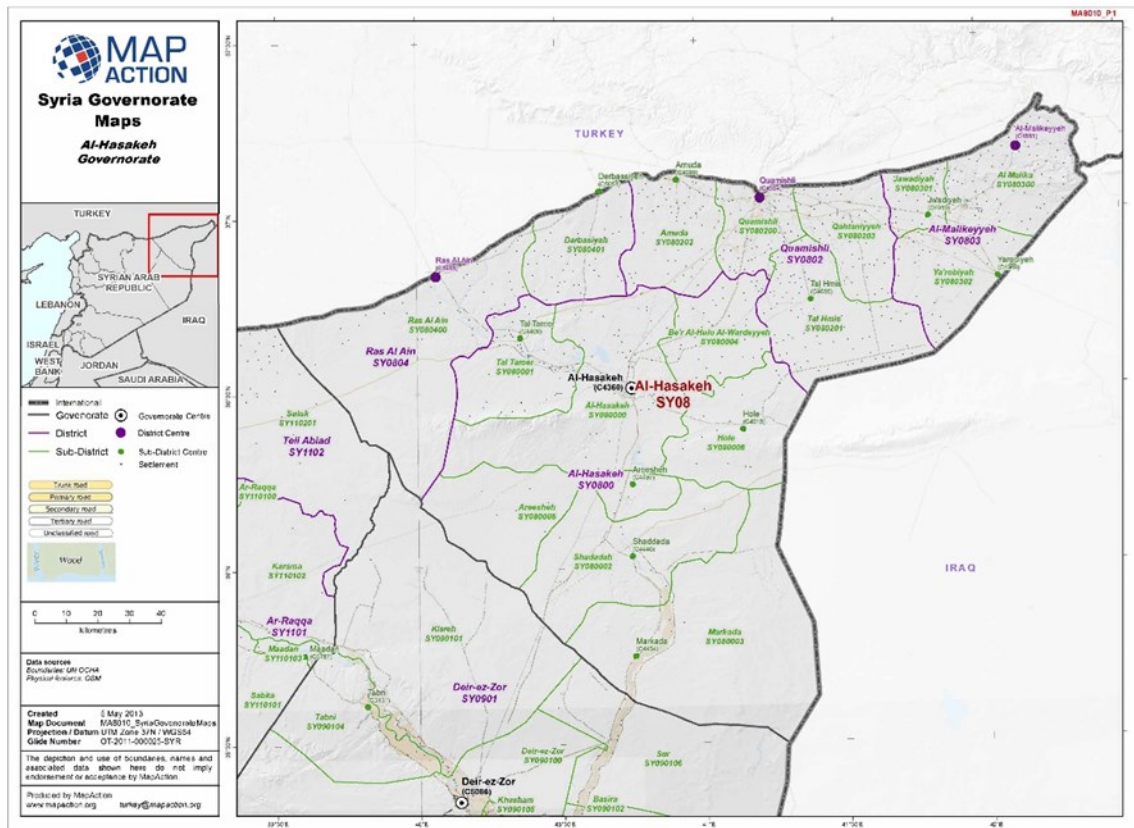
⁸⁴⁰ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁴¹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Update Syrian Arab Republic – Issue 20/January 2024, 12 March 2024, [url](#), p. 4; UNOCHA, Humanitarian Update Syrian Arab Republic – Issue 21/February 2024, 10 April 2024, [url](#), p. 6; UNOCHA, Humanitarian Update Syrian Arab Republic – Issue 22/March 2024, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7; UNOCHA, Humanitarian Update Syrian Arab Republic – Issue 23/April 2024, 11 June 2024, [url](#), p. 8; UNOCHA, Humanitarian Update Syrian Arab Republic – Issue 24/May 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁸⁴² UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁴³ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Update Syrian Arab Republic – Issue 24/May 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 8

2.7. Hasaka governorate



Map 11: © MapAction, Hasaka governorate⁸⁴⁴

2.7.1. General description of the governorate

Hasaka Governorate (also known as Al-Hasakah, Al-Hasakeh) is situated in the northeast of Syria. It borders Raqqa governorate to the west and Deir Ez-Zor governorate to the southwest. The governorate also shares two international borders, with Türkiye to the north and with Iraq to the south.⁸⁴⁵ Hasaka is divided into four districts: Hasaka, Qamishli, Ras Al Ain and Malikiya (Al-Malikeyyeh), which are further divided into 16 sub-districts.⁸⁴⁶

According to UNOCHA, the population of Hasaka governorate was estimated at 1 431 461 as of July 2023, including 1 078 796 residents and 342 701 IDPs.⁸⁴⁷ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Hasaka governorate had 1 922 561 inhabitants.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁴ MapAction, Al-Hasakeh governorate, 29 July 2016, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁵ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Al-Hasakeh Governorate Reference Map (07 September 2016), 7 July 2016, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 12

⁸⁴⁶ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 106-107

⁸⁴⁷ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁸⁴⁸ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 الإحصائي [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab 4-2



For more information on the ethnic and religious composition of Hasaka's population, see section 2.7.1 of the [EUAA COI Report: Syria - Security Situation \(October 2023\)](#).

2.7.2. Conflict background and armed actors

As of October 2023, most of Hasaka governorate was controlled by the Kurdish-led SDF, a US-backed coalition of Kurdish, Syriac Christian and Arab Muslim armed groups,⁸⁴⁹ and the de facto armed forces of DAANES, the Kurdish-led civil administrative body that had been established in north-eastern Syria in 2012.⁸⁵⁰ In some areas of the governorate, however, including the cities of Hasaka and Qamishli, GoS forces were also present. A small strip of land (about 120km long and 32km deep⁸⁵¹) along the border with Türkiye between Ras Al Ain in Hasaka governorate and Tal Abyad in Raqqqa governorate (also referred to as Operation Peace Spring area⁸⁵²) was under the control of Turkish forces and Syrian allied groups.⁸⁵³ These groups included Al-Jabha Al-Shamiya, the Sultan Murad Division, the Mutasim Division, Jaysh Al-Islam, and the Al-Hamza Division.⁸⁵⁴

The GoS had 'a limited presence' in some parts of Hasaka city and Qamishli – so-called security squares or security enclaves – where they maintained some public offices, recruitment to the GoS forces and schools, according to a June 2024 report by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) with reference to several sources, including DAANES representatives.⁸⁵⁵ Online news site The New Arab reported that GoS forces occupied an area in the Hasaka city centre known as 'security box'.⁸⁵⁶ Control over a kilometre-long street leading to the security square was reportedly split between the GoS and DAANES, with each entity controlling one side of the street.⁸⁵⁷

According to a DAANES representative quoted by the DIS, the security square in Qamishli was somewhat smaller than the one in Hasaka and was surrounded by SDF checkpoints. Persons entering the area had to submit to identity checks by GoS forces at their own checkpoints.⁸⁵⁸ According to a DAANES member quoted by the DIS, in the context of criminal matters, the SDF would not intervene in these areas unless the person in question was related to the DAANES,⁸⁵⁹ while according to a human rights lawyer quoted in the same report such matters were dealt with by the DAANES as GoS forces had neither sufficient authority nor capacity to

⁸⁴⁹ AFP, Who controls what territory in Syria?, 6 October 2023

⁸⁵⁰ Denmark, DIS, Syria. Military recruitment in North and East Syria, June 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁸⁵¹ HRW, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 14

⁸⁵² UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), Annex II, p. 23

⁸⁵³ AFP, Who controls what territory in Syria?, 6 October 2023

⁸⁵⁴ HRW, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 30

⁸⁵⁵ Denmark, DIS, Syria. Military recruitment in North and East Syria, June 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁸⁵⁶ New Arab (The), Syrian regime besieges commander of allied militia in Hasakah, 14 September 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁷ VOA, Reporter's Notebook: Walking along a Syrian street ruled by two governments, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁸ Denmark, DIS, Syria. Military recruitment in North and East Syria [source: WhatsApp meeting with Fanar Al-Kait and Khaled Ibrahim, Department of Foreign Relations of the DAANES on 28 April 2024], June 2024, [url](#), pp. 75-76

⁸⁵⁹ Denmark, DIS, Syria. Military recruitment in North and East Syria [source: Meeting with the representation of the DAANES in Suleimaniyah on 29 April 2024], June 2024, [url](#), p. 49



do so.⁸⁶⁰ Enabi Baladi, on the other hand, noted in an article of October 2023 that the security squares included several GoS security detachments, including one for criminal security.⁸⁶¹

Researcher Ömer Özkizilcik from the Omran Center for Strategic Studies, which is a Türkiye-based research institution focused on Syrian affairs, noted that in Qamishli city, Kurds were predominantly living in the eastern and western parts of the city, while the city centre was shared between Kurds and Arabs, the latter mostly members of the Tayy tribe, a traditional ally of the ruling Baath Party,⁸⁶² and also supported by Iran.⁸⁶³ GoS forces were present in the Tayy tribe neighbourhoods and at the city's airport.⁸⁶⁴ Qamishli airport was also hosting a Russian army base,⁸⁶⁵ which reportedly was also used by Iranian-backed militia.⁸⁶⁶

According to Jusoor for Studies, there were 43 foreign military positions in Hasaka government as of mid-July 2024, including the US-led Global Coalition (17 positions), Russia (14 positions), Iran (8 positions) and Türkiye (4 positions), with the latter's positions all located in the Syrian-Turkish border region.⁸⁶⁷ Russia's military positions included Qamishli airport and a base east of Tal Tamr.⁸⁶⁸ US/Global Coalition positions included a military post near Hasaka city centre,⁸⁶⁹ bases at Tal Baydar, Shadadi, Malikiya, and the Kharab Al-Jir/Rmelan airbase.⁸⁷⁰ According to NPA, Iran's positions included military posts and training centres in the area between Zouri Roundabout (located at the entrance of Qamishli city⁸⁷¹) and the villages of Hamo and Qusair (located in the southern countryside of Qamishli city⁸⁷²), as well as in Tartab, south of Qamishli.⁸⁷³ The same source reported that Hezbollah had established a recruitment office in the GoS-controlled part of Hasaka city in 2022.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁶⁰ Denmark, DIS, Syria. Military recruitment in North and East Syria [source: Whatsapp-meeting with Zaki Mohammad Hajji, Human rights lawyer based in Qamishli, Northeast Syria (NES), on 9 April 2024], June 2024, [url](#), p. 63

⁸⁶¹ Enab Baladi, Northern Syria: "Security Squares" manage SDF and regime interests, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶² Özkizilcik, Ö., Op-Ed: How the US is losing Syria's tribes to Iran, Syria Direct, 23 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶³ Özkizilcik, Ö., Op-Ed: How the US is losing Syria's tribes to Iran, Syria Direct, 23 July 2024, [url](#); NPA, Iran, Russia rush to create military groups in NE Syria, 1 June 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁴ Özkizilcik, Ö., Op-Ed: How the US is losing Syria's tribes to Iran, Syria Direct, 23 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁵ Enab Baladi, Russian-Turkish joint patrol accompanies UN mission in al-Hasakah, 23 May 2024, [url](#); Netjes, R. and Al-Ahmad, S., Iran is Attempting to Push the United States out of Syria via Hasaka Province, TWI, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁶ NPA, Iran operates in northeast Syria in disguise, 9 July 2024, [url](#); Netjes, R. and Al-Ahmad, S., Iran is Attempting to Push the United States out of Syria via Hasaka Province, TWI, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁷ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁸ Enab Baladi, Russian-Turkish joint patrol accompanies UN mission in al-Hasakah, 23 May 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁹ VOA, Reporter's Notebook: Walking along a Syrian street ruled by two governments, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁰ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Analyzing Iranian-Orchestrated Attacks on U.S. Bases in Syria and Iraq Post Gaza War, 7 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 11-12

⁸⁷¹ SOHR, Al-Qamishli | Regime checkpoints prevent hundreds of Al-Qatirji tanks from heading to SDF-held areas to fill up with oil, 18 February 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁷² SOHR, Al-Qamishli | Regime loyalists and NDF block US patrol, 17 April 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁷³ NPA, Iran operates in northeast Syria in disguise, 9 July 2024, [url](#); NPA, Iran, Russia rush to create military groups in NE Syria, 1 June 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁴ NPA, Iran, Russia rush to create military groups in NE Syria, 1 June 2024, [url](#)



ISIL continued to operate in the area south of Qamishli and launched several attacks in Hasaka governorate in 2023,⁸⁷⁵ including attempts to free imprisoned group members.⁸⁷⁶ ISIL reportedly also managed to increase its presence in several locations along the border to Iraq.⁸⁷⁷

2.7.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

Attacks by Turkish forces/Turkish-backed armed groups on SDF-controlled areas

Airstrikes and drone attacks by Turkish forces on SDF-controlled areas reportedly continued during the second half of 2023, targeting infrastructure and killing civilians. Referring to several incidents mentioned in its report of February 2024, UNCOI noted that they might constitute direct attacks on civilians, which might ‘amount to war crimes’.⁸⁷⁸ For more information on conflict-related infrastructure damage, see below, section 2.7.3(d).

Drone strikes and shelling by Turkish forces and the SNA against SDF targets – mostly in the region along the northern border – were recorded in September⁸⁷⁹ and intensified in October 2023 following an attack on the Turkish Interior Ministry in Ankara.⁸⁸⁰ Attacks were also recorded in November 2023.⁸⁸¹ In the second half of December and January, Turkish forces and the SNA continued their bombardment of SDF forces on a ‘nearly daily basis’, according to Etana Syria.⁸⁸² In May 2024, Turkish artillery attacks on several villages in the vicinity of Tal Tamr town in Hasaka countryside were recorded by the Omran Center for Strategic Studies,

⁸⁷⁵ Netjes, R. and Al-Ahmad, S., Iran is Attempting to Push the United States out of Syria via Hasaka Province, TWI, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁶ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 52

⁸⁷⁷ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing the thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 52

⁸⁷⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 99-101

⁸⁷⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – September 2023, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – October 2023, 5 November 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸¹ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene November 2023, 18 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁸⁸² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#)



as well as by NPA, and the Kurdish news agency ANHA.⁸⁸³ The area was reportedly also shelled in June⁸⁸⁴ and July 2024.⁸⁸⁵

Operation Peace Spring Area

Mutual shelling along the frontlines between Turkish-backed forces and the SDF, especially around the Operation Peace Spring area, continued throughout the second half of 2023,⁸⁸⁶ and in 2024.⁸⁸⁷ Persons entering the Peace Spring area with the aim of getting to Türkiye were arbitrarily detained by Turkish-backed factions,⁸⁸⁸ or Turkish border guards (Gendarmerie), and in some cases also tortured and accused of collaborating with the SDF.⁸⁸⁹

Hasaka and Qamishli cities

An escalation in violence between the SDF and tribal groups in Deir Ez-Zor in August 2024 had repercussions in Hasaka governorate as well,⁸⁹⁰ with bans on access to the GoS-controlled parts of Hasaka and Qamishli cities. Access for water trucks was restricted, affecting at least 80 000 people. The supply of flour and other critical items was equally limited.⁸⁹¹

In January 2024, the SDF reported a missile attack by unidentified perpetrators on the Al-Sina prison in Hasaka city targeting the so-called ‘Cubs of the Caliphate’ section of the prison,⁸⁹² where children trained by ISIL fighters were being held.⁸⁹³ An attempt by several detainees to escape following the attack reportedly failed.⁸⁹⁴ According to NPA, about 3 500 ISIL detainees, and 700 minors were held in Al-Sina prison. Previously, DAANES officials had reportedly warned that an increase of attacks on the region by Turkish forces would create chaos in prisons holding ISIL members.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁸³ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on The Events of The Syrian Scene, May 2024, [url](#), p. 3; NPA, Turkish forces bomb villages in Syria’s Hasakah, 6 May 2024, [url](#); ANHA, Turkish occupation army targets Tal Tamr villages, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁴ ANHA, Turkish occupation bombing in rural Tal Tamr, 30 June 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁵ SOHR, Turkish bombardment | SDF fighter killed in Al-Hasakah countryside, 4 July 2024, [url](#); Syriac Press, Turkish forces bombard North and East Syria, causing damage and displacement, 5 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 75

⁸⁸⁷ SOHR, From within “Peace Spring” area | Turkish forces shell two villages in Tel Tamer countryside north of Al-Hasakah, 6 May 2024, [url](#); NPA, SDF launches retaliatory attacks against Turkish forces in Syria, 21 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁸ SOHR, Having entered “Peace Spring” area | Fate of tens of civilians seeking a safe haven remains unknown, 22 June 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁹ Hevdesti-Synergy Association for Victims, Northern Syria: Horrific Violations Against Syrian Refugees at the Turkish Border, 30 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5; Hevdesti-Synergy Association for Victims, Northern Syria: Arbitrary Detention and Torture as Systematic Policy in SNA-Held Areas, 25 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 5, 11-12

⁸⁹⁰ UN, Tensions in Syria, Region ‘Have Reached Dangerous New Levels’, Special Envoy Warns Security Council, Calling for Inclusive Political Process, Meetings Coverage Security Council, SC/15802, 28 August 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹¹ UNOCHA, Syria: North-East Syria Flash Update. Flash Update 1: Hostilities in Deir Ez-Zor as of 11 August 2024, 12 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁸⁹² SDF Press, A Missile Attack on al-Sina’a Prison and Foiled An Attempted Escape, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹³ Kurdistan 24, Missile attack targets Syrian prison holding ISIS prisoners: SDF, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁴ SDF Press, A Missile Attack on al-Sina’a Prison and Foiled An Attempted Escape, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁵ NPA, Hasakah residents fear ISIS resurgence after Turkish attacks, 23 January 2024, [url](#)



SDF raids in Hasaka governorate were recorded throughout the first half of 2024,⁸⁹⁶ including for the arrest of suspected ISIL members.⁸⁹⁷ The SDF reported to have arrested 233 ISIL ‘terrorists, suspects, and collaborators’ in the first six months of 2024, including 85 in Al-Hol camp (see below) in January 2024. 40 ISIL members were arrested in the suburbs of Hasaka city in April 2024,⁸⁹⁸ reportedly in the context of a counter-terrorism operation near Al-Sina prison.⁸⁹⁹

ISIL Insurgency

According to a report by the UN Secretary-General of January 2024, ISIL – taking advantage of tensions between SDF and local tribes that emerged in August 2023 – managed to intensify recruitment and increase its presence of small mobile cells along the border to Iraq, including in Markadah in Hasaka governorate.⁹⁰⁰ Throughout the first half of 2024, the group reportedly continued with ‘hit-and-run-attacks’ across the governorate.⁹⁰¹ ISIL attacks on SDF forces were recorded by Etana Syria and Kurdish media in September,⁹⁰² November⁹⁰³ 2023, January⁹⁰⁴ 2024, February⁹⁰⁵ 2024, March⁹⁰⁶ 2024, April⁹⁰⁷ 2024, and June⁹⁰⁸ 2024. The Omran Center for Strategic Studies recorded three attacks by ISIL in Hasaka governorate in January 2024.⁹⁰⁹

Al-Hol Camp / Roj camp

⁸⁹⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – February 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – June 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – April 2024, 8 May 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁸ SDF Press, Outcome of Security Operations Against ISIS During the First Half of 2024, 4 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 556

⁹⁰⁰ UNSG, Eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2024/117, 31 January 2024, [url](#), para. 38

⁹⁰¹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 52

⁹⁰² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – September 2023, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – February 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – April 2024, 8 May 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, ISIS kills Asayish member in Hasaka: Monitor, 4 April 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – June 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁹ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#)



The security situation in Al-Hol camp remained ‘volatile’ and ISIL supporters inside the camp continued to instil fear in the residents, according to a February 2024 report by the UNCOI.⁹¹⁰ The Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), part of the US-led Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, described the situation as ‘a challenge for local security and humanitarian partners’,⁹¹¹ and noted that security forces lacked the resources to reduce ISIL smuggling in and out of the camp, including the smuggling of children for being sent to training camps.⁹¹² Organisations operating in Al-Hol camp reportedly complained about being threatened and robbed by armed men,⁹¹³ and ‘IS ideology persists in the camp’, targeting particularly younger residents.⁹¹⁴

The SDF conducted several raids in the Al-Hol Camp throughout the reporting period, conducting arrests of ISIL members,⁹¹⁵ but also of minors.⁹¹⁶ In September 2023, the SDF arrested several women and children involved in an ISIL-organised escape attempt.⁹¹⁷ A security campaign in January 2024 reportedly led to the suspension of almost all humanitarian activities, and in some parts of the camp to attacks on humanitarian teams,⁹¹⁸ who were perceived by the residents as linked to the security operation.⁹¹⁹ As of May 2024, these attacks reportedly continued.⁹²⁰

Iranian-backed militia

Iranian-linked militias launched multiple attacks⁹²¹ on US positions in Syria, including in Hasaka governorate, in the period from October 2023 to February 2024. Most of these attacks were claimed by the group Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI), while two were claimed by Hezbollah Al-Nujaba and one attack was not claimed by a specific group.⁹²² Attacks on Global Coalition

⁹¹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 106

⁹¹¹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 34

⁹¹² USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 12

⁹¹³ Asharq Al-Awsat, ISIS Women in Syria’s Al-Hol, Roj Camps: Uncertain Fates Ahead, 18 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹⁴ TWI, Five Years After the Caliphate, Too Much Remains the Same in Northeast Syria, 19 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹⁵ Rudaw, SDF captures 31 ISIS members in al-Hol camp, 30 January 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, SDF intensifies security campaign against Islamic State organization, 25 April 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – October 2023, 5 November 2023, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – September 2023, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁸ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic. North East Syria: Al Hol camp, 4 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁹¹⁹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic. North East Syria: Al Hol camp, 4 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 35

⁹²⁰ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Update Syrian Arab Republic – Issue 24/May 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 7

⁹²¹ For reports on specific attacks, see for example ARK News, US air defenses intercept a drone directed to the Kharab al-Jir base in Hasaka, 9 January 2024, [url](#); AA, US military base in northeastern Syria comes under missile attack, 27 December 2023, [url](#); ARK News, America: Our base in Rmelan was targeted by 15 missiles, 6 December 2023, [url](#); SOHR, Second time in less than three hours I “Islamic Resistance” attacks a US base in Al-Hasakah countryside, 21 November 2023, [url](#); Kurdistan 24, UPDATED: Drone shot down by US forces near Tal Baydar: SOHR, 5 November 2023, [url](#); NPA, Iranian-backed group claims attack on US base in Syria’s Shaddadi, 29 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹²² Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Analyzing Iranian-Orchestrated Attacks on U.S. Bases in Syria and Iraq Post Gaza War, 7 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 11-17



bases within the period covered by this report were also recorded by other sources.⁹²³ No civilian casualties were reported following these attacks.

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 991 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Hasaka governorate, of which 176 were coded as battles, 527 explosions/remote violence and 288 incidents of violence against civilians.⁹²⁴ By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 1 048 security incidents (150 battles, 637 explosions/remote violence and 261 events coded violence against civilians) in Hasaka governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in the districts of Hasaka and Ras Al Ain. By comparison, very few incidents were recorded in the district of Malikeyyeh. According to ACLED, Turkish forces and affiliated armed groups (SNA) were involved (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2') in more than half of security incidents coded as explosions/remote violence and where SDF and affiliated armed groups were also an actor. SDF and affiliated armed groups were involved in the vast majority being coded violence against civilians. Unidentified armed groups and ISIL were involved in around 14 % and 6 % of all security incidents, respectively.

⁹²³ Knights, M. et al., Iraqi Militias Hit Two U.S. Sites in Iraq and Syria, TWI, 22 April 2024, [url](#); NPA, Five rockets launched from Iraq towards U.S. base in NE Syria, 22 April 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Missile attack targets US base in Syria, 22 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹²⁴ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)



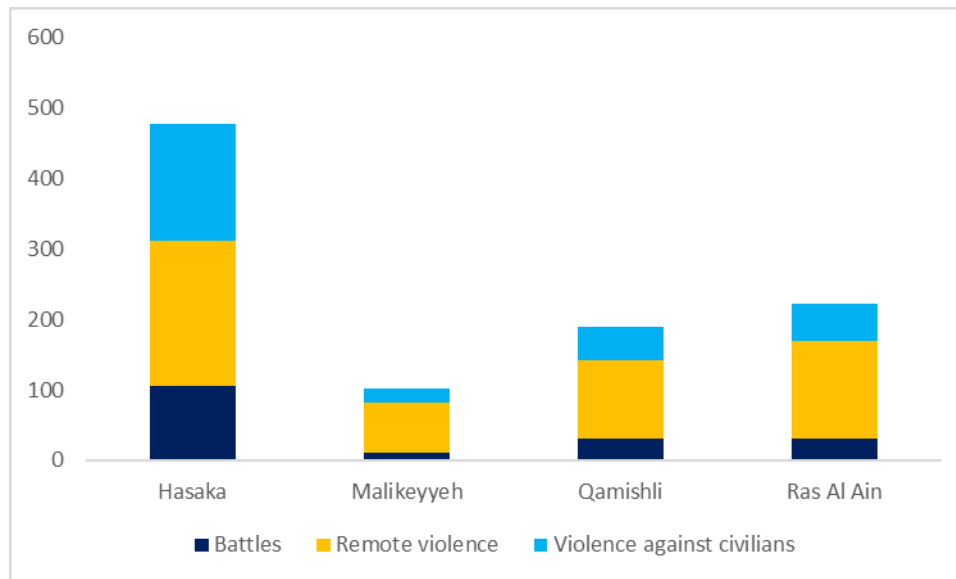


Figure 10. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Hasaka governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented 9 civilian fatalities in Hasaka governorate.⁹²⁵ For the same period, UCDP recorded 17 civilian fatalities in Hasaka

⁹²⁵ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

governorate.⁹²⁶ In Hasaka governorate, SNHR documented 154 civilian fatalities in 2021,⁹²⁷ 74 in 2022⁹²⁸ and 33 in 2023.⁹²⁹

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Turkish and SNA forces attacked not only SDF positions, but also infrastructure, including power stations,⁹³⁰ oil wells,⁹³¹ oil facilities,⁹³² and gas infrastructure.⁹³³ The attacks reportedly caused electricity shortages (due to a lack of fuel for generators) in several locations, including in the cities of Amuda and Qamishli.⁹³⁴ Turkish air strikes on oil infrastructure near Rmelan in January 2024 reportedly led to oil spills into local rivers,⁹³⁵ thereby polluting the water and making it unusable for irrigating fields or feeding animals.⁹³⁶ Attacks on power stations, interrupting the electricity supply to water power stations, led to water outages in the cities of Hasaka and Qamishli,⁹³⁷ and in ‘hundreds of villages’ in the Gerki Lege and Malikiya.⁹³⁸ As of May 2024, the governorate’s main water station Alouk, which has been inoperative since October 2023, remained out of function.⁹³⁹ Alouk is the main water source for more than 610 000 people living in Hasaka city and surroundings.⁹⁴⁰

Insecurity Insight mentioned three incidents involving the use of explosive weapons in Hasaka governorate in October 2023. The attacks, which were the first ones recorded by the source in Hasaka governorate in 2023, destroyed a Covid-19 hospital and a pharmacy in Qamishli district and killed a doctor in an unspecified location within the governorate.⁹⁴¹

⁹²⁶ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by

courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

⁹²⁷ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

⁹²⁸ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁹²⁹ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁹³⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – October 2023, 5 November 2023, [url](#); Reuters, Turkish strikes hit water, power infrastructure in Syria’s Kurdish-held northeast, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹³¹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – October 2023, 5 November 2023, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene December 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 5

⁹³² AFP, Turkey destroying NE Syria oil, power facilities: Kurds, 11 October 2023; Reuters, Turkish strikes hit water, power infrastructure in Syria’s Kurdish-held northeast, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹³³ Reuters, Turkish strikes hit water, power infrastructure in Syria’s Kurdish-held northeast, 15 January 2024, [url](#); NPA, Oil leakage into rivers threatens NE Syria, 13 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹³⁴ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene December 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 5

⁹³⁵ NPA, Oil leakage into rivers threatens NE Syria, 13 February 2024, [url](#); Al-Monitor, Syria’s Kurds face ISIS threat, US indifference as Turkey destroys critical infrastructure, 18 April 2024, [url](#)

⁹³⁶ NPA, Oil leakage into rivers threatens NE Syria, 13 February 2024, [url](#); Al-Monitor, Syria’s Kurds face ISIS threat, US indifference as Turkey destroys critical infrastructure, 18 April 2024, [url](#); AFP, Oil slicks blamed on Turkish strikes blight northeast Syria river, 7 February 2024

⁹³⁷ NPA, Turkish attacks cut off power to Alouk station in Syria’s Hasakah, 7 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹³⁸ NPA, Turkish airstrikes cause severe water crisis in NE Syria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹³⁹ UNOCHA, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Martin Griffiths - Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria, 30 May 2024, [url](#), p. 2

⁹⁴⁰ UNOCHA, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Martin Griffiths - Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria, 30 May 2024, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Humanitarian Update Syrian Arab Republic - Issue 26/ July 2024, 4 September 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁹⁴¹ Insecurity Insight, Attacks on Health Care in Syria, 01 January-09 October 2023, [url](#), p. 2



Several sources reported on children being killed⁹⁴² or injured⁹⁴³ by explosions of land mines in Hasaka governorate.

(e) Displacement and return

As of July 2023, there were 342 701 IDPs living in Hasaka governorate. 76 176 IDPs were living in settlements or camps.⁹⁴⁴

UNOCHA recorded no IDP movements from nor arrivals to Hasaka governorate in the period September to December 2023.⁹⁴⁵ No information regarding IDP movements from or arrivals to Hasaka governorate in 2024 could be found.

As of June 2024, there were 41 000 displaced persons living in Al-Hol camp, with 61 % of the residents being children. At the same time, Roj camp hosted 2 600 displaced persons. 63 % of the camp's residents were children.⁹⁴⁶ As of February 2024, other IDP camps in Hasaka governorate included Areesha camp (13 306 individuals), Tala'aa/Serikanieh camp (15 805 individuals), Tweineh/Washokani camp (16 669 individuals) and Newroz camp (Qamishli) (2 661 individuals).⁹⁴⁷ NPA pointed to about 2 000 IDPs living in 10 former school buildings and shelters in and around the city of Tal Tamr.⁹⁴⁸

By the end of 2023, about 10 500 Syrian nationals - mostly children and women - are estimated to have been released from Al-Hol camp, according to the UNCOI.⁹⁴⁹ In March 2019, Syrian nationals had constituted 43 % of then camp population of 73 041 persons.⁹⁵⁰

⁹⁴² SNHR, Child killed, another injured, by a landmine of unidentified source in E. Hasaka, March 18, 2024, 19 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁴³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – September 2023, 6 October 2023, [url](#); ANHA, Child injured by mine explosion left by mercenaries, 22 May 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁹⁴⁵ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic IDP Movements October 2023, 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁶ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 34

⁹⁴⁷ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa & Deir-ez-Zor Humanitarian Overview - March 2024, 26 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3-4

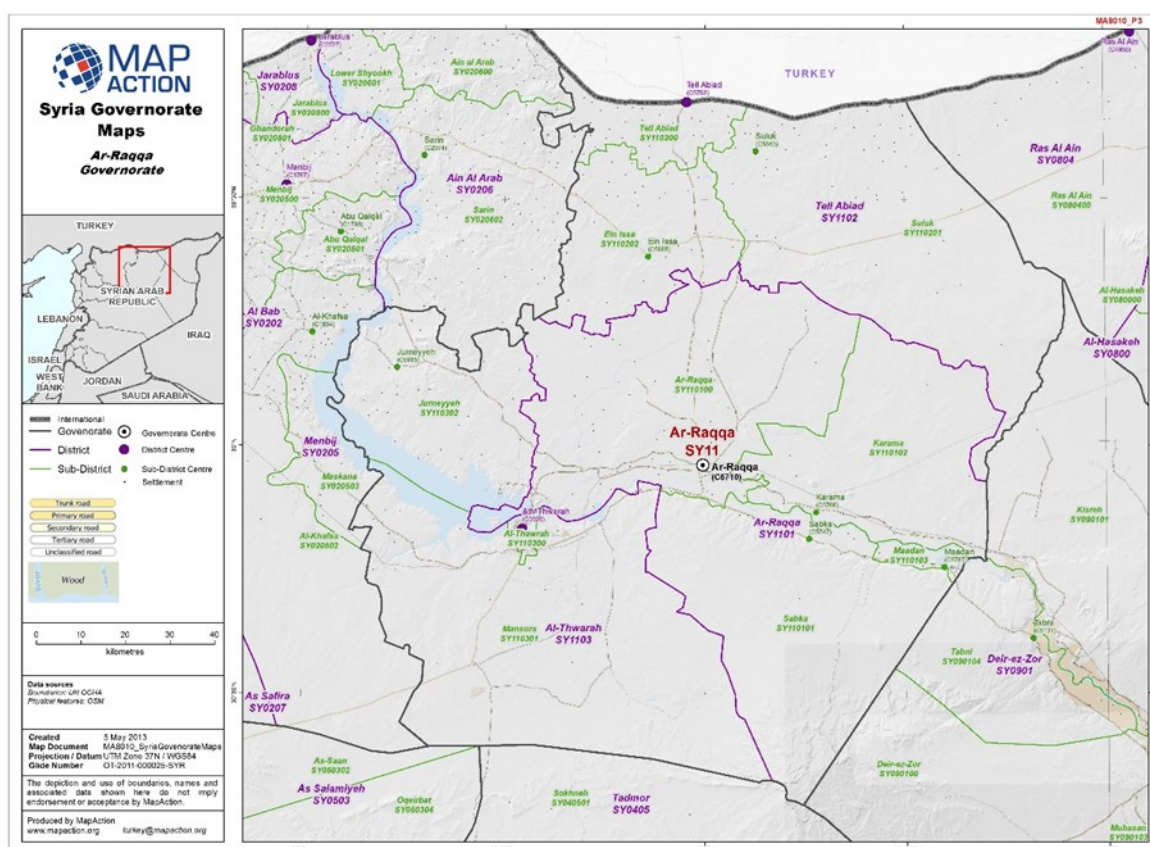
⁹⁴⁸ NPA, IDPs taking shelter in schools in Syria's Hasakah suffer in summer heat, 7 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁹ UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic: Punishing the innocent. Ending violations against children in Northeast Syria, 19 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 4, 13

⁹⁵⁰ UNOCHA, Syria: Humanitarian Response in Al Hol camp, Situation Report No. 1, 2 April 2019, [url](#), p. 1



2.8. Raqqa governorate



Map 12: © MapAction, Raqqa governorate⁹⁵¹

2.8.1. General description of the governorate

Raqqa (Ar-Raqqa) governorate is located in north-central Syria. The governorate borders Aleppo governorate to the west, Hasaka and Deir Ez-Zor governorates to the east, and Hama and Homs governorates to the south. It also shares an international border with Türkiye to the north.⁹⁵² The governorate comprises three administrative districts: Raqqa, al Thawra (Ath-Thawrah) and Tall Abyad (Tell Abiad).⁹⁵³ The governorate's capital is Raqqa city.⁹⁵⁴

According to UNOCHA, the population of Raqqa governorate was estimated to be 847 132 as of July 2023, including 152 955 IDPs.⁹⁵⁵ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the

⁹⁵¹ MapAction, Ar Raqqa Governorate [map], 29 July 2016, [url](#)

⁹⁵² UNCS and UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Reference Map, 17 January 2013, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 15

⁹⁵³ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 107

⁹⁵⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 15

⁹⁵⁵ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Raqqa governorate had 964 666 inhabitants.⁹⁵⁶

For information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition, see section 2.8.1 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(September 2022\)](#).

2.8.2. Conflict background and armed actors

For information on the governorate's conflict background, see section 2.8.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#) and section 2.8.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(September 2022\)](#). During the reference period, the Kurdish-led⁹⁵⁷ SDF, the GoS, and anti-GoS armed groups maintained their respective territories of control within the governorate.⁹⁵⁸

The SDF controlled approximately half of the governorate's territory, including Raqqa city.⁹⁵⁹ SDF operations in Raqqa were supported by US-led Global Coalition to Defeat ISIL.⁹⁶⁰ The SDF's Anti-Terror Units (YAT) carried out security operations against ISIL cells in cooperation with the coalition forces.⁹⁶¹

The GoS controlled the governorate's southern portion.⁹⁶² Moreover, along with Russian forces,⁹⁶³ GoS forces maintained presences along the frontline between the SDF-controlled territory and the Operation Peace Spring area.⁹⁶⁴ In March 2024, the GoS newly deployed several thousands of its troops across the Badia desert to curb ISIL attacks and deter the militants from attacking GoS forces.⁹⁶⁵ SAA units with a reported presence in the governorate included the 4th Division⁹⁶⁶ and the 17th and 25th Divisions.⁹⁶⁷ According to Jusoor for Studies, as of mid-2024, Russian forces operated eight military sites in the governorate, located in Ayn Issa and along the stretch of the river basin between the M4 motorway and Raqqa city. Further south, in the GoS-held part of the governorate, Iranian forces maintained 14 military sites, mostly located near the line of contact with the SDF-held territories.⁹⁶⁸

⁹⁵⁶ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 [الكتاب الإحصائي](#) [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

⁹⁵⁷ Rudaw, SDF kills one in ISIS cell raid in Raqqa, 28 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁸ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#); Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Raqqa and August 2024

⁹⁵⁹ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁰ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 25

⁹⁶¹ Rudaw, SDF kills one in ISIS cell raid in Raqqa, 28 July 2024, [url](#); Kurdistan 24, SDF carries out new operation against ISIS in Raqqa, 29 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶² Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶³ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria [Map], Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁴ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁶ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in May 2024, CEP, 11 June 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁷ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁸ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)



Most of the northern section of the governorate was controlled by Turkish armed forces⁹⁶⁹ and anti-GoS armed opposition groups⁹⁷⁰ backed by Türkiye⁹⁷¹ as part of the so-called Operation Peace Spring area.⁹⁷² This approximately 120km long and 32km deep⁹⁷³ Turkish zone of influence⁹⁷⁴ was roughly delimited by Tall Abyad in the west and Ras al-Ayn (Hasaka) in the east, the Turkish border in the north and the M4 highway in the south.⁹⁷⁵ The Turkish armed forces operated 10 military sites in the governorate, clustered around Ayn Issa and scattered inside the Operation Peace Spring area.⁹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, Türkiye-affiliated armed groups under the umbrella of the SNA were exercising de facto control in this area,⁹⁷⁷ including in the town of Tall Abyad.⁹⁷⁸ SNA factions operating in the Operation Peace Spring area included the 20th Division, Faylaq Al-Majd, Ahrar Al-Sharqiya, and the Al-Hamza division.⁹⁷⁹ The Türkiye-affiliated military police had sub-branches in the SNA-controlled cities and operated prisons and detention facilities, including in Tall Abyad.⁹⁸⁰

ISIL cells were present in pockets in southern Raqqa.⁹⁸¹ The group operated fake checkpoints it used to extort money from traders and shepherds in the Mansoura⁹⁸² and Resafa areas.⁹⁸³ They also attacked GoS forces stationed around Resafa.⁹⁸⁴ From January to April 2024, the group was temporarily in control of Zamleh Sharqi hamlet it had captured from the GoS and their tribal allies.⁹⁸⁵

⁹⁶⁹ AFP, Who Controls What Territory In Syria?, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁰ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁷¹ AFP, Who controls what territory in Syria? 6 October 2023

⁹⁷² Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Raqqa and August 2024

⁹⁷³ HRW, “Everything is by the Power of the Weapon” – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 14

⁹⁷⁴ ACAPS, Northern Syria: key crises to watch, 4 August 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁹⁷⁵ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁶ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁷ OHCHR, “We did not fear death but the life there” – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 34

⁹⁷⁸ Enab Baladi, New military merger increases factionalism and puts a foothold for HTS in Aleppo, 20 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁹ HRW, “Everything is by the Power of the Weapon” – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 30

⁹⁸⁰ HRW, “Everything is by the Power of the Weapon” – Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria, February 2024, [url](#), pp. 21, 23, 32

⁹⁸¹ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸² Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in September 2023, CEP, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁸³ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in September 2023, CEP, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁴ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 51

⁹⁸⁵ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#)



2.8.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

Turkish forces/Turkish-backed armed groups on SDF-controlled areas

During the reference period, Turkish forces and the SNA continued to conduct drone and artillery strikes targeting SDF sites in the governorate,⁹⁸⁶ with an escalation in Turkish attacks on northern Raqqa seen between early October 2023 and mid-January 2024.⁹⁸⁷ Shelling by Turkish forces on villages near Tall Abyad caused several civilian casualties.⁹⁸⁸ Meanwhile, there were cases of deaths and injuries caused by SDF patrols opening fire on civilians,⁹⁸⁹ including in Raqqa city.⁹⁹⁰

ISIL insurgency and attacks by unidentified actors

Raqqa governorate remained a core area of ISIL's regular operations.⁹⁹¹ The reference period saw multiple attacks in southern Raqqa that were attributed to ISIL cells, including attacks against GoS forces in the Bir Rahum,⁹⁹² Tabqa⁹⁹³ and Zamleh areas⁹⁹⁴ and particularly in the Resafa area,⁹⁹⁵ as well as attacks targeting NDF militia.⁹⁹⁶ Moreover, ISIL regularly carried out

⁹⁸⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#); ISW and CTP, The Syrian Democratic Forces' Arab Coalition is Crumbling, Creating Opportunities for ISIS, Iran, and Turkey, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁷ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), p. 59

⁹⁸⁸ SOHR, Military escalation | Turkish soldier and seven member of "National Army" injured under shelling on Turkish base in Al-Raqqa, 31 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁹ SNHR, Man named Abdul Muhsin al-Asman killed, his brother injured, by SDF gunfire in Raqqa city, May 27, 2024, 28 May 2024, [url](#); SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 5

⁹⁹⁰ SNHR, Man named Abdul Muhsin al-Asman killed, his brother injured, by SDF gunfire in Raqqa city, May 27, 2024, 28 May 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁹¹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁹⁹² Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in September 2023, CEP, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹³ Rudaw, ISIS kills four Syrian army soldiers in Raqqa: Monitor, 29 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁴ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁵ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 51; UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 51; Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in September 2023, CEP, 2 October 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁶ SOHR, Death toll update | Eight people including six members of NDF killed in ISIS attack on shepherds in Al-Raqqa desert, 4 July 2024, [url](#); SOHR, ISIS resurgence | Three members of NDF killed in attack in eastern Al-Raqqa desert, 20 January 2024, [url](#)



assassinations of SDF members⁹⁹⁷ and targeted a number of civilians, including shepherds⁹⁹⁸ and truffle hunters.⁹⁹⁹ As ISIL intensified its operations across central, eastern and northeastern Syria in January 2024,¹⁰⁰⁰ it launched a series of attacks on two main roads running south and west of Resafa in February 2024.¹⁰⁰¹ According to Gregory Waters, while the last four months of 2023 only witnessed 11 confirmed ISIL attacks in the governorate,¹⁰⁰² a total of 44 such attacks were recorded during the first six months of 2024,¹⁰⁰³ with peaks registered in March (14 incidents) and April (12 incidents).¹⁰⁰⁴ Since May 2024, when the number of attacks dropped down to four incidents,¹⁰⁰⁵ ISIL sustained ‘a low-level but robust insurgency focused in the desert between Resafa and Jabal Bishri’.¹⁰⁰⁶

After suffering losses in ISIL attacks on its troops, the GoS in June 2024 launched large-scale campaigns against ISIL in the Al-Tiani and Al-Tibni desert areas of Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor in June 2024.¹⁰⁰⁷ Russian forces resumed their aerial campaign against ISIL in the Raqqa part of the Badia desert in late 2023,¹⁰⁰⁸ carrying out multiple strikes against ISIL targets¹⁰⁰⁹ in western¹⁰¹⁰ and southern Raqqa.¹⁰¹¹ However, Etana Syria noted that this campaign had limited

⁹⁹⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – April 2024, 8 May 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – September 2023, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁸ SOHR, In attack by “ISIS” cells | Shepherd killed and unknown fate pursues another in Al-Raqqah desert, 4 July 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁹ Rudaw, ISIS kills four pro-regime soldiers in Raqqa: Monitor, 28 March 2024, [url](#); New Arab (The), 11 killed in suspected IS attack on Syria truffle hunters, 25 March 2024, [url](#); NPA, ISIS kills 5 truffle hunters, injures others in Syria’s Raqqa, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁰ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰¹ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰² Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in December 2023, CEP, 12 January 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in September 2023, CEP, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰³ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in May 2024, CEP, 11 June 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in April 2024, CEP, 3 May 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁴ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in April 2024, CEP, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁵ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in May 2024, CEP, 11 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁶ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – June 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – June 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene November 2023, 18 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹¹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – June 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – February 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#)



effect in terms of curbing ISIL activity.¹⁰¹² Meanwhile, SDF troops conducted several operations against ISIL cells in their areas of control that led to arrests¹⁰¹³ and killings¹⁰¹⁴ of ISIL members.

There were several instances of unidentified attackers killing civilians,¹⁰¹⁵ including workers in the GoS-controlled eastern Badia desert area¹⁰¹⁶ and civilian security guards in SDF-controlled areas in the western and northwestern Raqqa countryside.¹⁰¹⁷ In March 2024, the GoS-controlled eastern Raqqa countryside witnessed an explosive device of unidentified origin killing 12 civilians who were travelling to harvest desert truffles¹⁰¹⁸ (some media suggested that the attack may have been carried out by ISIL)¹⁰¹⁹ and two other truffle hunters being found dead with gunshot wounds after having gone missing.¹⁰²⁰ Moreover, there were cases of killings occurring during armed disputes between tribal groups.¹⁰²¹

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 640 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Raqqa governorate, of which 145 were coded as battles, 360 explosions/remote violence and 135 incidents of violence against civilians.¹⁰²² By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 707 security incidents (124 battles, 414 explosions/remote violence and 169 events coded violence against civilians) in Raqqa governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in the district of Tall Abyad. According to ACLED, SDF and affiliated armed groups were involved in around 36 % of all security incidents (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2'), the majority being coded as violence against civilians and explosions/remote violence. Turkish forces and affiliated armed groups (SNA) were involved in the majority of incidents coded as explosions/remote violence and where SDF and affiliated

¹⁰¹² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – February 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰¹³ Rudaw, SDF kills one in ISIS cell raid in Raqqa, 28 July 2024, [url](#); NPA, SDF arrests ISIS leader in Syria's Raqqa, 18 July 2024, [url](#); USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 29; NPA, SDF, CTG arrest senior ISIS leader in Syria's Raqqa, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁴ Rudaw, SDF kills one in ISIS cell raid in Raqqa, 28 July 2024, [url](#); NPA, SDF announces killing ISIS financier in Syria's Raqqa, 24 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁵ SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 3; SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁰¹⁶ SNHR, 1,032 Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁰¹⁷ SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰¹⁸ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁰¹⁹ Rudaw, 16 truffle hunters killed by landmine in Raqqa: Monitor, 16 March 2024, [url](#); Al-Monitor, ISIS kills 11 truffle hunters in Syria amid signs of resurgence, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁰ SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰²¹ SOHR, Following death of young man | Clashes renew between two tribes in village in eastern Al-Raqqah countryside, 16 July 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Tribal clashes | Young man injured amid tribal crowding in Al-Raqqah, 18 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰²² EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

armed groups were also an actor. ISIL was involved in around 20 % of all security incidents, while GoS and affiliated armed groups and unidentified armed groups were each involved in around 20 % and 16 % of all security incidents, respectively.

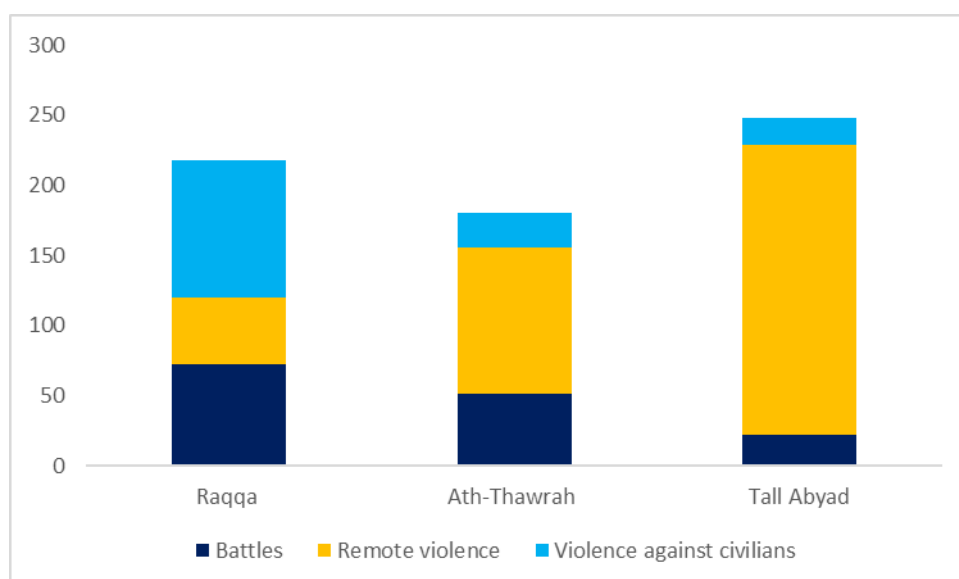


Figure 11. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Raqqqa governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented 67 civilian fatalities in Raqqqa governorate.¹⁰²³ For the same period, UCDP recorded 64 civilian fatalities in Raqqqa governorate.¹⁰²⁴ The highest number of civilian fatalities was recorded in March 2024 (32

¹⁰²³ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁰²⁴ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

civilian deaths documented by SNHR¹⁰²⁵ and 26 by UCDP¹⁰²⁶ most of them killed in an explosion of a landmine. In Raqqa governorate, SNHR documented 84 civilian fatalities in 2021,¹⁰²⁷ 27 in 2022¹⁰²⁸ and 17 in 2023.¹⁰²⁹

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Raqqa remained one of the governorates with the highest levels of unexploded ordnance contamination.¹⁰³⁰ Turkish bombardments in northern Raqqa resulted in a degradation of civilian infrastructure.¹⁰³¹ Explosions of landmines resulted in multiple civilians being killed or injured, including in western¹⁰³² and northern rural Raqqa¹⁰³³ and in the governorate's east, where several civilians were struck while harvesting desert truffles.¹⁰³⁴

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023 there were 152 955 IDPs in Raqqa governorate.¹⁰³⁵ Between September and December 2023, UNOCHA recorded 7 IDP movements, all of them occurring from other governorates into Raqqa.¹⁰³⁶ No data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

Meanwhile, UNOCHA recorded 42 IDP return movements between September and December 2023, all of them occurring from Raqqa to other governorates.¹⁰³⁷

¹⁰²⁵ SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁰²⁶ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

¹⁰²⁷ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁰²⁸ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁰²⁹ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁰³⁰ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁰³¹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁰³² SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁰³³ SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 3

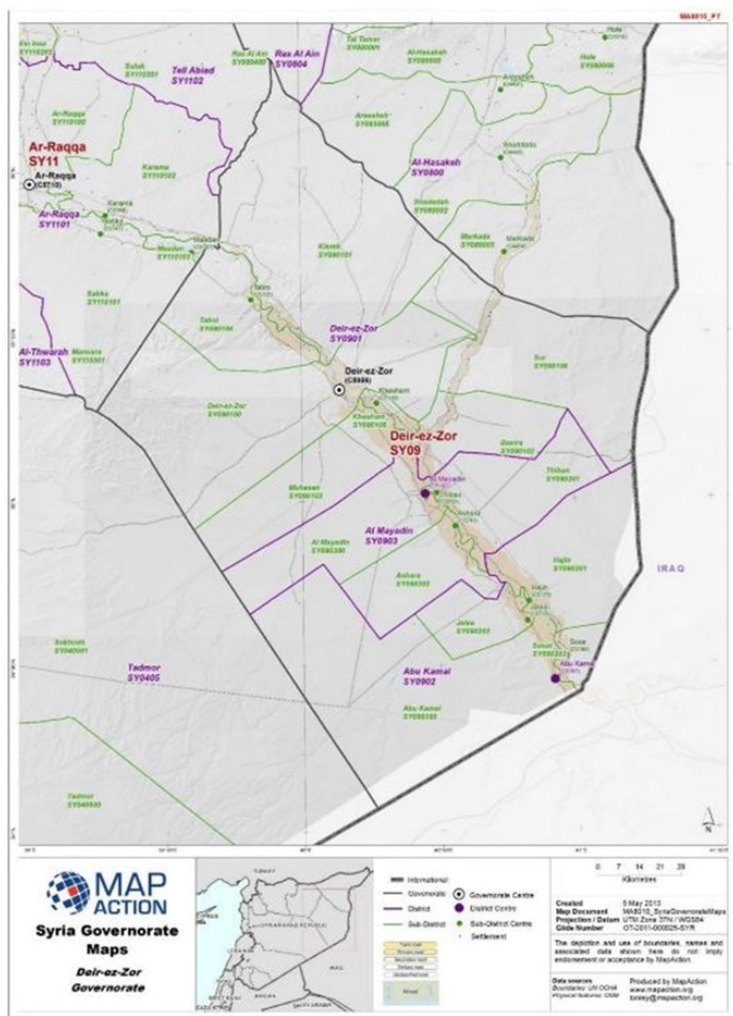
¹⁰³⁴ SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 3; SOHR, In search for truffle | 19 civilians including 12 women killed in landmine explosion in Al-Raqqa, 16 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁵ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁰³⁶ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁷ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

2.9. Deir Ez-Zor governorate



Map 13: © MapAction, Deir Ez-Zor governorate map¹⁰³⁸

2.9.1. General description of the governorate

Deir Ez-Zor governorate is located in eastern Syria. It shares internal borders with the governorates of Homs to the southwest, Raqqa to the northwest and Hasaka to the north as well as an international border with Iraq to the east.¹⁰³⁹ The Euphrates River divides the governorate into a western part (Al-Shamiya) and an eastern part (Al-Jazeera).¹⁰⁴⁰

¹⁰³⁸ MapAction, Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, 29 July 2016, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁹ UNCS and UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Reference Map, 17 January 2013, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁰⁴⁰ SACD, Deir ez-Zor sees few options as widely rejected 'reconciliation' starts, 11 January 2022, [url](#)

Administratively, Deir Ez-Zor comprises three districts: Deir Ez-Zor, Al-Mayadin, and Al-Bukamal (Abu Kamal).¹⁰⁴¹ The governorate's capital is Deir Ez-Zor city.¹⁰⁴²

According to UNOCHA's Humanitarian Needs Overview published in March 2024, the population of Deir Ez-Zor governorate was estimated to be 1 200 181 as of July 2023, including 166 041 IDPs.¹⁰⁴³ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Deir Ez-Zor governorate had 1 305 538 inhabitants.¹⁰⁴⁴

For information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition, see section 2.9.1 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#).

2.9.2. Conflict background and armed actors

Deir Ez-Zor governorate is roughly divided into a western part controlled by the GoS and an eastern part held by Kurdish forces (SDF) supported by the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIL,¹⁰⁴⁵ with the Euphrates River delimiting the two zones.¹⁰⁴⁶ These separate areas of control have been described as zones of Iranian¹⁰⁴⁷ and US influence, respectively. Amid escalating US-Iranian tensions across the region, the banks of the Euphrates River became the scene of armed confrontations between GoS-/Iran-supported tribal fighters and the SDF, making this area distinct from other regions of the country like Hasaka and parts of Aleppo where SDF and GoS forces shared military points along frontlines and GoS forces maintained presences deep inside SDF-controlled territory.¹⁰⁴⁸ For more information on the governorate's conflict background, see section 2.9.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#).

During the reference period, the GoS remained in control of the governorate's areas west of the Euphrates River,¹⁰⁴⁹ which included the cities of Deir Ez-Zor, Al-Mayadin and Al-Bukamal.¹⁰⁵⁰ It also controlled a small narrow strip of territory on the eastern Euphrates bank stretching south from the riverside opposite Deir Ez-Zor city towards the Euphrates/Khabour

¹⁰⁴¹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 107-108

¹⁰⁴² SADC, Deir ez-Zor sees few options as widely rejected 'reconciliation' starts, 11 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴³ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁰⁴⁴ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 [الكتاب الإحصائي](#) [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

¹⁰⁴⁵ Enab Baladi, How regional conflict controls rules of engagement on Euphrates banks, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁶ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁷ ECFR, Beyond proxies: Iran's deeper strategy in Syria and Lebanon, 5 June 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, How regional conflict controls rules of engagement on Euphrates banks, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁸ Enab Baladi, How regional conflict controls rules of engagement on Euphrates banks, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁹ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁰ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#)

confluence.¹⁰⁵¹ GoS military units with a reported presence included the Russian-backed 5th Corps and the 4th Division of the SAA.¹⁰⁵²

The GoS exercised its control alongside Iran-backed militias,¹⁰⁵³ who maintained sites in the cities of Deir Ez-Zor (including near the Euphrates University and in the central Villas neighbourhood)¹⁰⁵⁴ and Mayadin and in Bukamal city and its environs.¹⁰⁵⁵ According to Jusoor for Studies, Iran operated a total of 77 military sites in the governorate.¹⁰⁵⁶ Iranian IRGC forces were positioned west of the Euphrates¹⁰⁵⁷ while an Iranian presence was also seen in seven villages on the eastern riverside that have been under the control of the GoS and Iran-backed militias since 2017.¹⁰⁵⁸ Al-Bukamal city, which hosted the Iran-backed 17th Division¹⁰⁵⁹ and Regiment 47,¹⁰⁶⁰ was considered a stronghold of pro-Iranian militias due to its close distance to the Syrian-Iraqi border and its control over the Al-Qaim crossing, a corridor used by Iran to access Lebanon through Iraq and Syria.¹⁰⁶¹ Other pro-Iranian militias in the governorate included the Afghan Fatemiyoun Brigade, whose fighters in the town of Al-Sabikhan received military reinforcements in February 2024,¹⁰⁶² and Lebanese Hezbollah,¹⁰⁶³ whose presence was similarly reinforced to fight against the SDF.¹⁰⁶⁴ In the context of attacks by US forces, both Al-Sabikhan and Al-Bukamal saw extensive mobilization of pro-Iranian militias in February 2024, with commanders moved from Al-Bukamal to Deir Ez-Zor city and other members from positions near Syria-Iraq to Palmyra city¹⁰⁶⁵ in Homs governorate.¹⁰⁶⁶ Moreover, locations of the militias' weapons and ammunitions depots in Al-Mayadin and Al-Bukamal were shifted.¹⁰⁶⁷

Moreover, there were several anti-SDF tribal militias in the governorate, including the Akeidat Lions battalion¹⁰⁶⁸ and the newly-created Arab Tribal and Clan Forces (ATCF).¹⁰⁶⁹ According to the joint task force of the US-led global coalition, in late 2023, tribal militias emerged as a 'full-fledged resistance movement' supported by the GoS and Iran whose fighters resupplied and

¹⁰⁵¹ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵² Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵³ Kurdistan 24, SDF foils infiltration attempt by regime-back militants in Deir ez-Zor, 14 February 2024, [url](#); Van Wilgenburg, W., The SDF's Insurgency Challenge in Deir ez-Zor, TWI, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁴ Enab Baladi, Airstrikes target vital Iranian sites in Deir Ezzor, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁵ SOHR, Iran's presence in Syria in March 2024 | 56 fatalities in aerial and ground attacks...hectic movements to gain populist support in Deir Ezzor...military drills supervised by Hezbollah in Homs desert, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Airstrikes target vital Iranian sites in Deir Ezzor, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁶ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁷ Enab Baladi, How regional conflict controls rules of engagement on Euphrates banks, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁸ NPA, Iran's presence in Syria's Deir ez-Zor foundation for attacks on AANES, 4 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁹ Asharq Al-Awsat, Iranian Militias Regroup in Syria's Deir Ezzor, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁰ Hayek, A., and Robertson, K., Profile: Arab Tribal and Clan Forces, TWI, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶¹ Enab Baladi, Airstrikes target vital Iranian sites in Deir Ezzor, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶² Asharq Al-Awsat, Iranian Militias Regroup in Syria's Deir Ezzor, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶³ SOHR, Deir Ezzor | Lebanese Hezbollah rehabilitates network of tunnels used by ISIS in neighbourhoods, 23 February 2024, [url](#); NPA, Hezbollah fighters arrive to Syria's Deir ez-Zor to fight SDF– Sources, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁴ NPA, Hezbollah fighters arrive to Syria's Deir ez-Zor to fight SDF– Sources, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁵ Asharq Al-Awsat, Iranian Militias Regroup in Syria's Deir Ezzor, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁶ SOHR, Dreadful living conditions | Three families leave Al-Rukban camp for regime-held areas in Homs, 4 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁷ Asharq Al-Awsat, Iranian Militias Regroup in Syria's Deir Ezzor, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁸ Van Wilgenburg, W., The SDF's Insurgency Challenge in Deir ez-Zor, TWI, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁹ Hayek, A., and Robertson, K., Profile: Arab Tribal and Clan Forces, TWI, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

rearmed on the western Euphrates bank to launch attacks in SDF-held villages on the eastern bank.¹⁰⁷⁰

Meanwhile, the SDF controlled most of the eastern Euphrates bank,¹⁰⁷¹ while forces of the US-led Global Coalition to Defeat ISIL maintained nine military sites in the governorate,¹⁰⁷² located on the eastern Euphrates bank.¹⁰⁷³ Although the SDF briefly lost the southern areas of its territory in Deir Ez-Zor¹⁰⁷⁴ following armed anti-SDF uprisings in late August and early September 2023,¹⁰⁷⁵ it soon regained its lost territory.¹⁰⁷⁶ About a year later, in August 2024, a wide-scale attack by tribal forces on SDF sites in several towns and villages in eastern rural Deir Ez-Zor¹⁰⁷⁷ again forced the SDF to temporarily withdraw from these positions before thwarting the attack.¹⁰⁷⁸ At the same time, the reference period saw the SDF stepping up raids to recruit young men into their ranks¹⁰⁷⁹ and, following the August 2024 tribal attacks, reinforcing its presence in eastern rural Deir Ez-Zor by bringing in troops from areas it controlled in northern Deir Ez-Zor and Hasaka.¹⁰⁸⁰

ISIL remained active in the desert areas of Deir Ez-Zor,¹⁰⁸¹ with the Jabal Bishri area likely serving as a core operations base for its cells across western Deir Ez-Zor, according to Gregory Waters.¹⁰⁸² It has expanded the presence of mobile cells along the Syrian-Iraqi borders, including in Al-Mayadin. According to the UN, the group had 500 to 600 fighters across the central desert (Badia) in an area linking the governorates of Deir Ez-Zor, Homs and Sweida.¹⁰⁸³

¹⁰⁷⁰ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 28

¹⁰⁷¹ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷² Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷³ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁰⁷⁴ ISW and CTP, The Syrian Democratic Forces' Arab Coalition is Crumbling, Creating Opportunities for ISIS, Iran, and Turkey, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁵ Van Wilgenburg, W., The SDF's Insurgency Challenge in Deir ez-Zor, TWI, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁶ Van Wilgenburg, W., The SDF's Insurgency Challenge in Deir ez-Zor, TWI, 14 November 2023, [url](#); Asharq Al-Awsat, SDF Regains Control Over Major Towns in Deir Ezzor's Eastern Countryside, 5 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁷ Enab Baladi, Deir Ezzor: Regional messages with local tools, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁸ Enab Baladi, Deir Ezzor: Clashes force families to flee in search of safety, 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – June 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁰ Enab Baladi, Deir Ezzor: Clashes force families to flee in search of safety, 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸¹ OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 34

¹⁰⁸² Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸³ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 51-52

2.9.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

Conflict between SDF and local tribal forces

Amid rising tensions between the YPG, the SDF's main component, and the Deir Ez-Zor Military Council¹⁰⁸⁴ predominantly composed of local Arab tribes,¹⁰⁸⁵ Ahmed Al-Khabil (Abu Khawla), emir of the Bakir tribe and commander of the Deir Ez-Zor Military Council,¹⁰⁸⁶ was arrested by the SDF in late August 2023 on suspicion of plotting to drive the SDF out of Deir Ez-Zor with GoS and Iranian support. His arrest triggered an armed uprising by his clansmen.¹⁰⁸⁷ Reports of indiscriminate SDF attacks and increasing civilian casualties, notably in Izbeh and Daman towns, soon triggered a more wide-scale mobilization of tribal fighters.¹⁰⁸⁸ On 31 August 2023, local Akeidat tribal head Sheikh Ibrahim Hifl joined the uprising, leading the militant group 'Arab Tribal Forces' with his revolt centering in the town of Dhiban.¹⁰⁸⁹ The Baqqara and Uqaydat tribes initially made considerable territorial gains, taking control of Deir Ez-Zor's southern areas before they were reconquered in an SDF offensive and the Arab tribes forces surrendered.¹⁰⁹⁰ Altogether, this wave of 'multifaceted clashes' lasted from 27 August until 6 September, causing 91 deaths, according to journalist Wladimir van Wilgenburg.¹⁰⁹¹ Some further civilian casualties were reported as the SDF continued to shell and raid villages in September and October.¹⁰⁹²

Late September 2023 saw renewed escalation of the conflict as tribal forces launched a series of lethal attacks against the SDF,¹⁰⁹³ followed by sporadic fighting in the next months.¹⁰⁹⁴ GoS forces and Iran-backed factions provided fire cover for the cross-river attacks carried out by fighters allegedly linked to Ibrahim Hifl.¹⁰⁹⁵ These attacks again resulted in several civilian casualties,¹⁰⁹⁶ with the UNCOI reporting that as of the end of 2023, the conflict had thus far caused at least 96 deaths.¹⁰⁹⁷ The conflict significantly lost momentum by December 2023¹⁰⁹⁸ but continued at reduced intensity, with sporadic fighting and security raids by SDF reported

¹⁰⁸⁴ Özkizilcik, Ö., Op-Ed: How the US is losing Syria's tribes to Iran, Syria Direct, 23 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁵ Enab Baladi, Deir Ezzor: Regional messages with local tools, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁶ Waters, G., Deir ez-Zor's tribes reach a breaking point, MEI, 1 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁷ Van Wilgenburg, W., The SDF's Insurgency Challenge in Deir ez-Zor, TWI, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁸ Waters, G., Deir ez-Zor's tribes reach a breaking point, MEI, 1 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁹ Van Wilgenburg, W., The SDF's Insurgency Challenge in Deir ez-Zor, TWI, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁰ Özkizilcik, Ö., Op-Ed: How the US is losing Syria's tribes to Iran, Syria Direct, 23 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹¹ Van Wilgenburg, W., The SDF's Insurgency Challenge in Deir ez-Zor, TWI, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹² UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 95

¹⁰⁹³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – September 2023, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁵ Enab Baladi, How regional conflict controls rules of engagement on Euphrates banks, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 96; NPA, Government attack kills 2, injures 2 others in Syria's Deir ez-Zor, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 9

¹⁰⁹⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

in eastern Deir Ez-Zor during the first half of 2024,¹⁰⁹⁹ including in February.¹¹⁰⁰ Against this backdrop, several civilians were killed or injured in encounters with the SDF and Asayish fighters.¹¹⁰¹

In early August 2024, armed tribal forces launched another wide-scale attack on SDF sites in the towns and villages of Dhiban, Abu Hamam, Al-Khushkieh, Shuaitat, and Granij and other military positions in eastern rural Deir Ez-Zor,¹¹⁰² forcing SDF troops to withdraw temporarily.¹¹⁰³ In this new flare-up of hostilities, dozens of deaths and injuries were reported¹¹⁰⁴ on both banks of the Euphrates River¹¹⁰⁵ as the SDF fought to repel the attacks¹¹⁰⁶ and GoS forces shelled villages.¹¹⁰⁷ Mutual exchanges of artillery fire resulted in the displacement of villagers on both sides of the Euphrates River.¹¹⁰⁸

Conflict between Iranian-backed militias and US-led Coalition forces

Following the beginning of Israel's war with Hamas in October 2024, rural Deir Ez-Zor became one of several areas of Syria witnessing a concentration of attacks by Iran-backed militias targeting positions of the US-led global coalition.¹¹⁰⁹ Iran-backed militias, including groups operating on Iraqi territory, in late 2023 conducted multiple attacks on bases used by members of the US-led Global Coalition to Defeat ISIL, targeting them with missiles¹¹¹⁰ and suicide drones,¹¹¹¹ with several attacks targeting the Conoco and Al-Omar fields.¹¹¹² In response to these attacks, the global coalition in early 2024 carried out waves of retaliatory airstrikes¹¹¹³ targeting militia sites in and around Al-Bukamal,¹¹¹⁴ GoS weapons storages and Hezbollah command centres in Deir Ez-Zor city,¹¹¹⁵ and Iran-linked positions around Al-Mayadin.¹¹¹⁶ In late March 2024, unidentified aircraft bombed key positions of Iran-backed militia groups in Al-Mayadin, Al-Bukamal and Deir Ez-Zor city, including positions in Deir Ez-Zor's central Villas

¹⁰⁹⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 102

¹¹⁰⁰ Enab Baladi, How regional conflict controls rules of engagement on Euphrates banks, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰¹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 103

¹¹⁰² Enab Baladi, Deir Ezzor: Regional messages with local tools, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰³ Enab Baladi, Deir Ezzor: Clashes force families to flee in search of safety, 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁴ UN, Tensions in Syria, Region 'Have Reached Dangerous New Levels', Special Envoy Warns Security Council, Calling for Inclusive Political Process, 28 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁵ UNOCHA, North-East Syria Flash Update as of 11 August 2024, 12 August 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹¹⁰⁶ Al-Monitor, Clashes between Arab tribes, SDF forces in Syria pose challenge to US, 8 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁷ Enab Baladi, Deir Ezzor: Regional messages with local tools, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁸ Enab Baladi, Deir Ezzor: Clashes force families to flee in search of safety, 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁹ Al-Ahmad, S., Iranian-backed militia attacks on coalition forces threaten to ignite eastern Syria, MEI, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹¹¹¹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹² Al-Ahmad, S., Iranian-backed militia attacks on coalition forces threaten to ignite eastern Syria, MEI, 13 November 2023, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁴ NPA, U.S. retaliatory airstrikes kill 20 Iran-backed militants in Syria, 3 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Memo: Aftermath Of US Airstrikes Against Iranian-backed Militias In Syria, 12 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Memo: Aftermath Of US Airstrikes Against Iranian-backed Militias In Syria, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁶ RFE/RL, U.S. Launches Retaliatory Strikes On Iranian-Linked Sites In Syria, Iraq, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

neighbourhood,¹¹¹⁷ killing several Syrian members of pro-Iranian militias.¹¹¹⁸ Unidentified drones also attacked vehicles linked to Iran-backed militias, causing deaths among combatants.¹¹¹⁹

ISIL insurgency

Deir Ez-Zor governorate remained a core area of ISIL's regular operations¹¹²⁰ and the group intensified its activities in January 2024.¹¹²¹ The reference period saw multiple attacks attributed to ISIL cells in the governorate, including in the Shoula,¹¹²² Tabnī¹¹²³ and Masrib areas¹¹²⁴ as well as around Al-Mayadin.¹¹²⁵ The group regularly attacked members of GoS forces¹¹²⁶ (including at sites located near oil fields),¹¹²⁷ the NDF militia members¹¹²⁸ and the SDF.¹¹²⁹ It also targeted local shepherds, leaving several of them dead or injured.¹¹³⁰ Moreover, landmines planted by ISIL or other militia groups caused deaths among individuals hunting for truffles in the western Deir Ez-Zor desert.¹¹³¹ According to Gregory Waters, while the last four months of 2023 witnessed only 18 confirmed ISIL attacks in the governorate,¹¹³² a total of 53 such attacks were recorded during the first six months of 2024,¹¹³³ with peaks registered in March (17 incidents) and April (13 incidents).¹¹³⁴

¹¹¹⁷ Enab Baladi, Airstrikes target vital Iranian sites in Deir Ezzor, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁹ SOHR, Iran's presence in Syria in March 2024 | 56 fatalities in aerial and ground attacks...hectic movements to gain populist support in Deir Ezzor...military drills supervised by Hezbollah in Homs desert, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁰ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

¹¹²¹ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²² Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in September 2023, CEP, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹²³ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁴ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁵ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in December 2023, CEP, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – June 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – February 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

¹¹²⁷ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

¹¹²⁸ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in May 2024, CEP, 11 June 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in April 2024, CEP, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – June 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – May 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – February 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – September 2023, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹³⁰ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in September 2023, CEP, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹³¹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³² Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in December 2023, CEP, 12 January 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in November 2023, CEP, 7 December 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in October 2023, CEP, 13 November 2023, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in September 2023, CEP, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹³³ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in June 2024, CEP, 10 July 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in May 2024, CEP, 11 June 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in April 2024, CEP, 3 May 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in February 2024, CEP, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in January 2024, CEP, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³⁴ Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in March 2024, CEP, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Waters, G., ISIS Redux: The Central Syria Insurgency in April 2024, CEP, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

Russian forces resumed their aerial campaign against ISIL in the Badia desert in late 2023,¹¹³⁵ carrying out multiple strikes against ISIL targets¹¹³⁶ in western Deir Ez-Zor. However, Etana Syria noted that these airstrikes had limited effect in terms of curbing ISIL activity.¹¹³⁷ Meanwhile, several security operations against suspected ISIL members were conducted by the SDF in northern¹¹³⁸ and eastern Deir Ez-Zor¹¹³⁹ and by GoS forces in the Deir Ez-Zor desert.¹¹⁴⁰

Infighting between pro-GoS forces

Since September 2023, there have been recurring instances of mutual shelling between GoS forces and allied groups (NDF and Arab tribal militias) and pro-Iranian militias on the western Euphrates bank on the one hand, and the SDF on the eastern bank on the other.¹¹⁴¹

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 2 140 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Deir Ez-Zor governorate, of which 1 126 were coded as battles, 584 explosions/remote violence and 430 incidents of violence against civilians.¹¹⁴² By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 1 203 security incidents (694 battles, 247 explosions/remote violence and 262 events coded violence against civilians) in Deir Ez-Zor governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in the district of Deir Ez Zor. According to ACLED, SDF and affiliated armed groups were involved in more than half of all security incidents, mostly in incidents coded as battles and violence against civilians. ISIL was involved in around 20 % of all security incidents, the vast majority being coded as battles and violence against civilians. Tribal militias/actors were involved in around 20 % of all security incidents, mainly in incidents coded as battles. GoS forces and affiliated armed groups were involved (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2') in around 15 % of all security incidents. Unidentified armed groups were involved in around 11 % of all security incidents, mostly in incidents coded as explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians.

¹¹³⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹¹³⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#); Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene November 2023, 18 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹¹³⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – February 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹¹³⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³⁹ Rudaw, SDF announces capture of 2 ISIS members in east Syria, 14 June 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – March 2024, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: North-East Syria – June 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴¹ Enab Baladi, Deir Ezzor: Clashes force families to flee in search of safety, 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴² EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

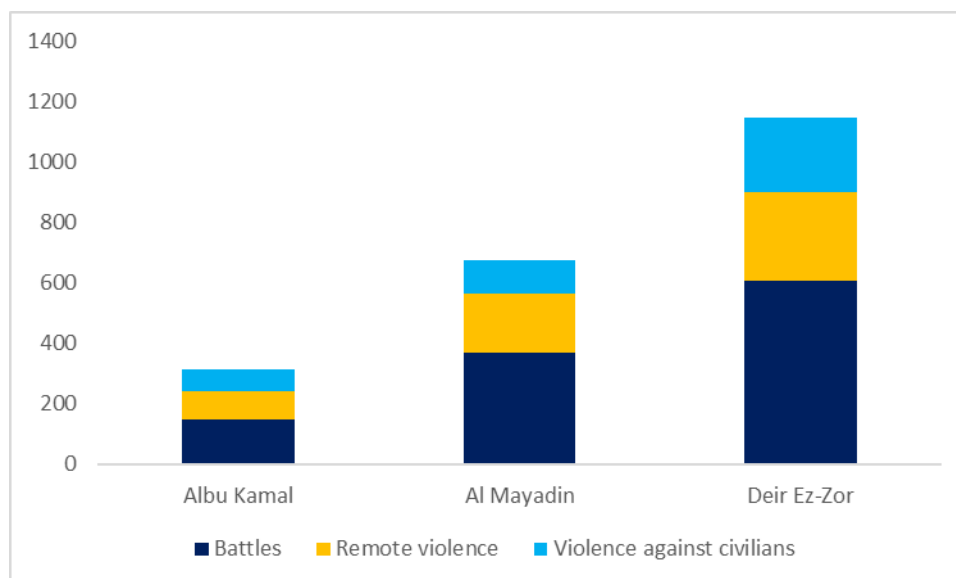


Figure 12. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Deir Ez-Zor governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented 173 civilian fatalities in Deir Ez-Zor governorate.¹¹⁴³ For the same period, UCDP recorded 90 civilian fatalities in Deir Ez-Zor

¹¹⁴³ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

governorate.¹¹⁴⁴ In Deir Ez-Zor governorate, SNHR documented 197 civilian fatalities in 2021,¹¹⁴⁵ 125 in 2022¹¹⁴⁶ and 203 in 2023.¹¹⁴⁷

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Deir Ez-Zor remained one of the governorates with the highest levels of unexploded ordnance contamination.¹¹⁴⁸ During the reference period, several civilians were killed or injured in explosions of landmines, including in the governorate's north¹¹⁴⁹ and east.¹¹⁵⁰ During the escalation of hostilities between the SDF and GoS forces/Arab tribes in August 2024, critical infrastructure was targeted on both banks of the Euphrates River,¹¹⁵¹ including nine health facilities, two schools and two water treatment plants.¹¹⁵²

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023 there were 166 041 IDPs in Deir Ez-Zor governorate.¹¹⁵³ As the UNCOI indicated, fighting between local tribes and the SDF resulted in 6 500 families being displaced to GoS-controlled areas over the second half of 2023.¹¹⁵⁴ Meanwhile, UNOCHA recorded around 20 800 IDP movements between September and December 2023, all of them occurring in the month of September and taking place within Deir Ez-Zor governorate itself.¹¹⁵⁵ Further displacement of civilians occurred in the SDF-controlled town of Dhiban and the GoS-controlled village of Tayba in August 2024 as a result of mutual shelling between GoS forces and the SDF.¹¹⁵⁶ According to the UN, these clashes resulted in the displacement of an estimated 3 500 families between 6 and 28 August 2024.¹¹⁵⁷ No further data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

¹¹⁴⁴ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

¹¹⁴⁵ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

¹¹⁴⁶ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

¹¹⁴⁷ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹¹⁴⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

¹¹⁴⁹ SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹¹⁵⁰ NPA, Landmine blast kills child, injures another in Syria's Deir ez-Zor, 28 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵¹ SNHR, 1,032 Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹¹⁵² UNOCHA, North-East Syria Flash Update as of 11 August 2024, 12 August 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹¹⁵³ EU, ERCC, ECHO Daily Flash, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹¹⁵⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 9

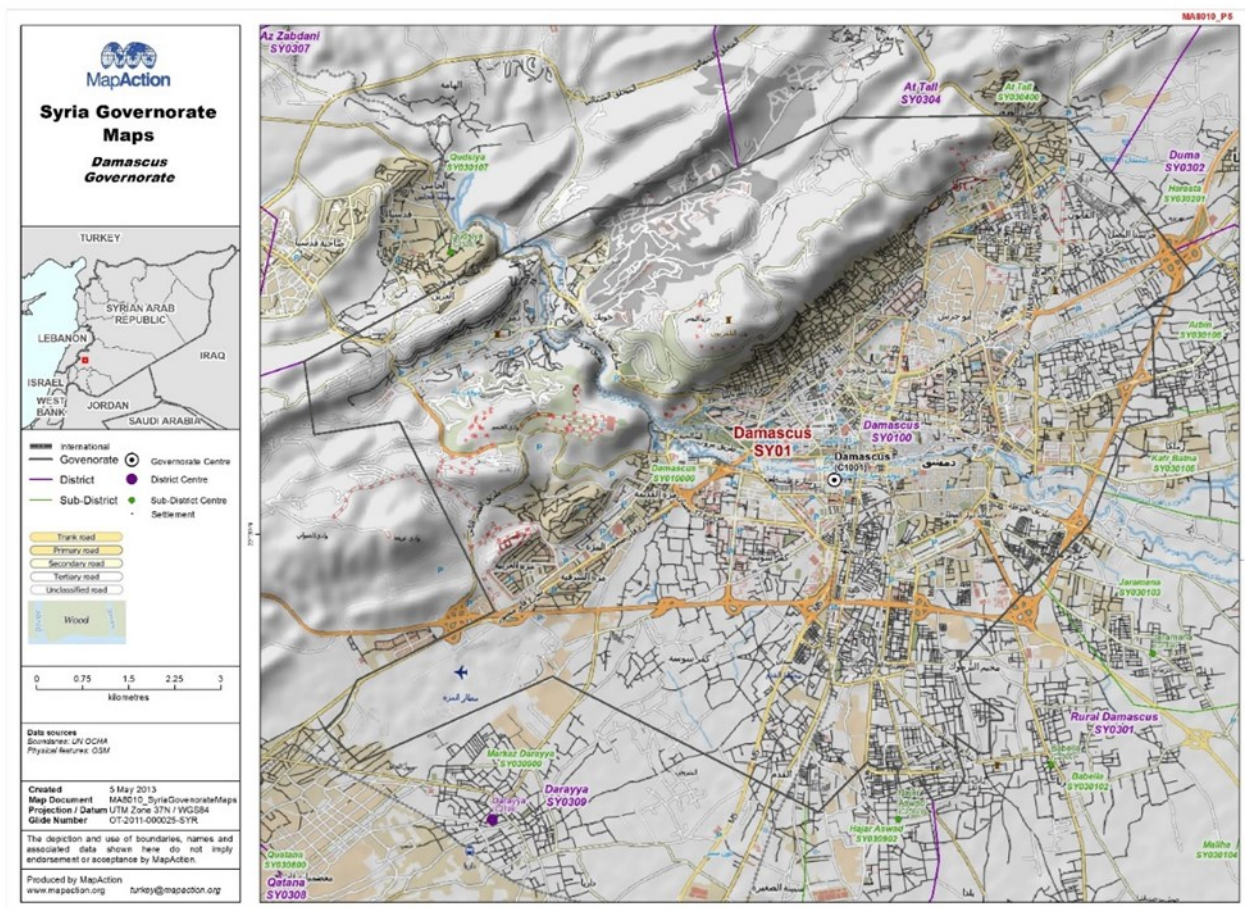
¹¹⁵⁶ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁷ Enab Baladi, Deir Ezzor: Clashes force families to flee in search of safety, 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁸ UN, Tensions in Syria, Region 'Have Reached Dangerous New Levels', Special Envoy Warns Security Council, Calling for Inclusive Political Process, 28 August 2024, [url](#)

Meanwhile, UNOCHA recorded 1 882 IDP return movements between September and December 2023. The overwhelming majority of these (1 816) occurred within the governorate, while 54 movements occurred from other governorates into Deir Ez-Zor and 12 occurred from Deir Ez-Zor to other governorates.¹¹⁵⁸ Information on reasons for return could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

2.10. Damascus governorate



Map 14: © MapAction, Damascus governorate¹¹⁵⁹

2.10.1. General description of the governorate

Damascus governorate, which includes Syria's capital, is located in the south-western part of the country and is completely surrounded by Rural Damascus (Rif Damashq) governorate.¹¹⁶⁰

¹¹⁵⁸ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁹ UNOCHA, Syria sub-districts maps [maps], n.d., [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁰ UNCS and UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Reference Map, 17 January 2013, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 5

The governorate is divided into two districts: Damascus city and Yarmouk. Damascus city itself comprises 15 sub-district-level areas: Midan, Dummar, Al-Qadam, Burza, Ash Shaghour, Rukn Eddine, Mezzeh (Mazzeh), Salhiyeh, Qaboun, Saroujah, Kafar Soussa (Kafr Sousa), Muhajerin, Al-Qanawat, Jowbar (Jobar),¹¹⁶¹ which is partly administered by Rural Damascus governorate,¹¹⁶² and Old Damascus.¹¹⁶³

According to UNOCHA, the population of Damascus governorate was estimated to be 1 812 911 as of July 2023, including 589 880 IDPs.¹¹⁶⁴ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Damascus governorate had 2 168 118 inhabitants.¹¹⁶⁵ Damascus city's population was estimated by the CIA at 2 585 000 as of 2023.¹¹⁶⁶

For more background information on the governorate, including information on its ethno-religious composition, see section 2.10.1 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#).

2.10.2. Conflict background and armed actors

For information on Damascus governorate's conflict background, see the respective sections 2.10.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#), the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(September 2022\)](#), and the [EUAA COI Report: Syria – Security situation \(October 2023\)](#). Sources concurred that Damascus governorate remained under the control of the GoS and affiliated groups during the reference period.¹¹⁶⁷ According to Jusoor for Studies, as of mid-2024, Iranian forces maintained seven military sites in Damascus city, while Russian forces had two military sites.¹¹⁶⁸

The district of Kafr Sousa, located in central Damascus¹¹⁶⁹ adjacent to the districts of Mezzeh, Midan, Al-Qanawat, and Al-Qadam,¹¹⁷⁰ comprised a security square¹¹⁷¹ and was subject to tight surveillance.¹¹⁷² It was home to GoS military and security headquarters¹¹⁷³ and was marked by a

¹¹⁶¹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic, Governorates profile (June 2014), 6 August 2014, [url](#), pp. 2-3

¹¹⁶² Enab Baladi, Damascus governorate: No return for Jobar residents due to zoning plan, 19 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶³ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic, Governorates profile (June 2014), 6 August 2014, [url](#), pp. 2-3

¹¹⁶⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹¹⁶⁵ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 الكتاب الإحصائي [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

¹¹⁶⁶ US, CIA, World Factbook, Syria, last updated: 17 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁷ Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve And Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq & Syria: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024, 30 April 2024, [url](#), p. 26; OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), pp. 33-34; UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Damascus and August 2024

¹¹⁶⁸ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁹ Enab Baladi, Northern Syria: "Security Squares" manage SDF and regime interests, 9 October 2023, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Kafr Sousa: Sensitive district in Damascus targeted by Israeli strikes, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁰ Enab Baladi, Kafr Sousa: Sensitive district in Damascus targeted by Israeli strikes, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷¹ Enab Baladi, Northern Syria: "Security Squares" manage SDF and regime interests, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷² Enab Baladi, Kafr Sousa: Sensitive district in Damascus targeted by Israeli strikes, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷³ VOA, Syria Says Israeli Airstrike Hit Damascus, 21 February 2024, [url](#)



convergence of branches¹¹⁷⁴ of GoS intelligence, including Branch 215 and Branch 227¹¹⁷⁵ of the Military Intelligence Directorate,¹¹⁷⁶ also known as Military Security.¹¹⁷⁷ Kafr Sousa also hosted Iranian security headquarters and a key Iranian ‘cultural centre’¹¹⁷⁸ and individual residential buildings were frequented by IRGC members and Iran-backed groups.¹¹⁷⁹ Military checkpoints and security detachments were also deployed around the building of the Syrian National Security Administration in the Rawda area, which formed a security square of its own.¹¹⁸⁰

Western Damascus’s Mezzeh district,¹¹⁸¹ home to the Iranian embassy and consulate,¹¹⁸² was another an area subjected to tight security controls.¹¹⁸³ At least one residential building was reportedly being used by the IRGC or Iran-backed groups during the reference period.¹¹⁸⁴ Damascus governorate also witnessed a presence of the SAA’s Fourth Division,¹¹⁸⁵ including around the Al-Hajar Al-Aswad area, where pro-GoS militias and paramilitary forces were also operating.¹¹⁸⁶ The Military Intelligence Directorate and the NDF militia forces exercised de facto control in the southern Al-Tadamun neighbourhood.¹¹⁸⁷

2.10.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

After the 7 October 2023 attack in Israel and the ensuing intensification of the Gaza conflict, Israeli attacks on targets in Syria increased,¹¹⁸⁸ with aerial strikes reported in Damascus city,¹¹⁸⁹

¹¹⁷⁴ Enab Baladi, Kafr Sousa: Sensitive district in Damascus targeted by Israeli strikes, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁵ Enab Baladi, Northern Syria: “Security Squares” manage SDF and regime interests, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁶ SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7; Pro-Justice, Branch 215. A Slaughterhouse in Syria., The Syrian Observer, 3 January 2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁷ SNHR, Syrian security branches and Persons in charge, n.d., [url](#), p. 5

¹¹⁷⁸ Enab Baladi, Kafr Sousa: Sensitive district in Damascus targeted by Israeli strikes, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁹ BBC News, Israeli missile strike on Damascus flat kills two, Syria says, 21 February 2024, [url](#); SOHR, In 53RD Israeli targeting | Seven regime soldiers and Iranina-backed gunmen killed and injured due to Israeli raids on Damascus, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁰ Enab Baladi, Northern Syria: “Security Squares” manage SDF and regime interests, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸¹ Etana Syria, BRIEF: Israel’s Attacks on Syria since 7th October, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸² Al Jazeera, Israel strikes Iran consulate in Syria’s capital Damascus: What we know, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸³ AP, An Israeli airstrike on the Syrian capital killed at least 5 Iranian advisers, officials say, 20 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁴ NPA, IRGC says 4 members killed in Israeli airstrike in Damascus, 20 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁵ D24, The Fourth Division deploys military reinforcements from Damascus to Deir Ezzor, 17 August 2024, [url](#); SNHR, At Least 2,317 Arbitrary Arrests/Detentions Documented in 2023, Including of 129 Children and 87 Women, With 232 Documented in December Alone, 2 January 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹¹⁸⁶ SNHR, At Least 2,317 Arbitrary Arrests/Detentions Documented in 2023, Including of 129 Children and 87 Women, With 232 Documented in December Alone, 2 January 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹¹⁸⁷ HLP Syria, Bribes, Security Services, Major Obstacle to Return in Al-Tadhamon, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 5; Reuters, Syria says Israeli attack on Damascus outskirts caused material damage – SANA, 2 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁹ Etana Syria, BRIEF: Israel’s Attacks on Syria since 7th October, 24 January 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 5



Damascus International Airport¹¹⁹⁰ (causing at least two civilian deaths)¹¹⁹¹ and on air defence systems at Mezzeh military airport.¹¹⁹² While the overall frequency of Israeli strikes in Syria decreased by January 2024, attacks by Israeli forces in response to attacks by Iran-backed militia increasingly focused on targets in Damascus city and southern Rural Damascus.¹¹⁹³ In these two governorates, SOHR documented 30 Israeli attacks in 2023¹¹⁹⁴ and 23 Israeli attacks between January and late August 2024.¹¹⁹⁵

In 2024, Israeli missile attacks destroyed a residential building that reportedly housed a IRGC intelligence unit in Mezzeh district in January,¹¹⁹⁶ killing at least five IRGC members.¹¹⁹⁷ In a further escalation,¹¹⁹⁸ an attack destroyed a building in the same district in early April 2024¹¹⁹⁹ that allegedly housed the Iranian consulate, reportedly killing over a dozen people.¹²⁰⁰ According to Iranian state media, seven IRGC members and six Syrians were killed in the April attack,¹²⁰¹ including senior Quds force commander Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and his deputy General Mohammad Hadi Haj Rahimi.¹²⁰² The attack allegedly targeted a secret meeting held between Iranian intelligence representatives and Palestinian militants over the war in Gaza. Accounts as to the function of the targeted building differed, with Iran claiming that it belonged to its diplomatic mission in Syria, while Israel's military declared that it was being used by the IRGC as 'a military building of Quds Forces disguised as a civilian building'.¹²⁰³

In Kafr Sousa district, Israeli aerial strikes hit residential buildings in February 2024, killing at least two individuals¹²⁰⁴ (including at least one civilian),¹²⁰⁵ and again in July 2024.¹²⁰⁶ In May

¹¹⁹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 5; Kurdistan 24, Israeli strikes put Damascus airport out of service again, 27 November 2023, [url](#); Kurdistan 24, Israeli strikes knock out Damascus, Aleppo airports: Syria state media, 22 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁹¹ SOHR, Israeli air strikes | Two civilians work at Damascus International Airport killed, 22 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁹² Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene November 2023, 18 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹¹⁹³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁴ SOHR, Highest annual toll since beginning of escalation in 2018 | Israel attacks Syria on 76 occasions in 2023, destroying 154 targets and killing and injuring nearly 310 combatants, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁵ SOHR, Air-defence attempting to block | Israeli forces conduct airstrikes on positions in Homs and Hama, 23 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁶ Al Jazeera, Iran's IRGC says 5 members killed in Israeli attack on Syria's Damascus, 20 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁷ Al Jazeera, Iran's IRGC says 5 members killed in Israeli attack on Syria's Damascus, 20 January 2024, [url](#); AP, An Israeli airstrike on the Syrian capital killed at least 5 Iranian advisers, officials say, 20 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁸ Reuters, Iran's Foreign Minister inaugurates new site for consular services in Damascus, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁹ Al Jazeera, Israel strikes Iran consulate in Syria's capital Damascus: What we know, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁰ Enab Baladi, Hidden aspects of Iranian consulate building targeted in Damascus, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰¹ Enab Baladi, Hidden aspects of Iranian consulate building targeted in Damascus, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰² Al Jazeera, Israel strikes Iran consulate in Syria's capital Damascus: What we know, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰³ New York Times (The), Airstrike in Damascus Kills Several Top Iranian Commanders, Iran Says, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁴ BBC News, Israeli missile strike on Damascus flat kills two, Syria says, 21 February 2024, [url](#); VOA, Syria Says Israeli Airstrike Hit Damascus, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁵ BBC News, Israeli missile strike on Damascus flat kills two, Syria says, 21 February 2024, [url](#); SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹²⁰⁶ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, July 15, 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 8; AFP, Syrian state media says soldier killed in Israeli strike on Damascus, 14 July 2024; Reuters, Syria says soldier killed, three wounded in Israeli strikes, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

2024, Israeli forces targeted a military position in the vicinity of Mezzeh military airport, injuring several soldiers.¹²⁰⁷

Apart from Israeli attacks, there were several explosions in Damascus city that were possibly perpetrated by individuals within the GoS forces. An explosion in the central Shaalan neighbourhood in April 2024 resulted in the death of an individual holding the explosive device. An unclaimed IED explosion in Mezzeh district the same month hit a car parked in an area frequented by GoS security and military personnel and pro-Iranian figures, with no reports of casualties.¹²⁰⁸ A similar attack in the same district caused the death of one person in May 2024.¹²⁰⁹

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 28 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Damascus governorate, of which 10 were coded as battles, 10 as explosions/remote violence and 8 as incidents of violence against civilians.¹²¹⁰ By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 38 security incidents (13 battles, 8 explosions/remote violence and 17 events coded violence against civilians) in Damascus governorate. During the reference period for this report, GoS forces and affiliated armed groups were involved in 69 % of all security incidents (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2'). Unidentified armed groups and Israeli forces were involved in most incidents coded as battles an explosions/remote violence. GoS forces and affiliated armed groups were involved in the majority of incidents coded violence against civilians.

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented eight civilian fatalities in Damascus governorate.¹²¹¹ For the same period, UCDP recorded four civilian fatalities in

¹²⁰⁷ AA, 8 soldiers injured as Israeli airstrike hits military position near Damascus airport, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁸ Haid, H., Surge in bomb attacks show fragile security in regime-held areas of Syria, Al Majalla, 21 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁹ SOHR, With increase of Iranian penetration 1 Person assassinated by IED in car in Al-Mazzah area in Damascus., 25 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹⁰ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

¹²¹¹ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including

Damascus governorate.¹²¹² SNHR documented one civilian fatality in 2021,¹²¹³ three in 2022¹²¹⁴ and six in 2023.¹²¹⁵

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

In July 2024, an Israeli aerial strike hit an eight-storey residential building in Kafr Sousa district, damaging its façade, creating a 30-metre-long and 10-metre-wide crater in the ground and leaving some 30 vehicles around the site charred or damaged.¹²¹⁶ Moreover, a war-damaged five-storey residential building in Al-Tadamun neighbourhood collapsed in November 2023, leaving 14 injured.¹²¹⁷ No information on incidents relating to explosive remnants of war could be found within the time constraints of this report.

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023, there were 589 880 IDPs in Damascus governorate.¹²¹⁸ UNOCHA recorded 65 IDP movements between September 2023 and December 2023. The majority of these (44) occurred from other governorates into Damascus, while 21 movements occurred from Damascus to other governorates.¹²¹⁹

Meanwhile, UNOCHA recorded 220 IDP return movements between September 2023 and December 2023. Of these movements, 105 occurred from other governorates into Damascus (all of them in October 2023) while 115 occurred from Damascus to other governorates.¹²²⁰ According to OHCHR, interviewees who had returned to Damascus city largely indicated that they found their homes intact, unlike those returning to other governorates such as Rural Damascus who ‘often found their houses destroyed or irreparably damaged, confiscated or

of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹²¹² EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by

courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

¹²¹³ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

¹²¹⁴ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

¹²¹⁵ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹²¹⁶ AFP, Syrian state media says soldier killed in Israeli strike on Damascus, 14 July 2024

¹²¹⁷ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in November 2023, 5 December 2023, [url](#), p. 5; HLP Syria, Bribes, Security Services, Major Obstacle to Return in Al-Tadhamon, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹²¹⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

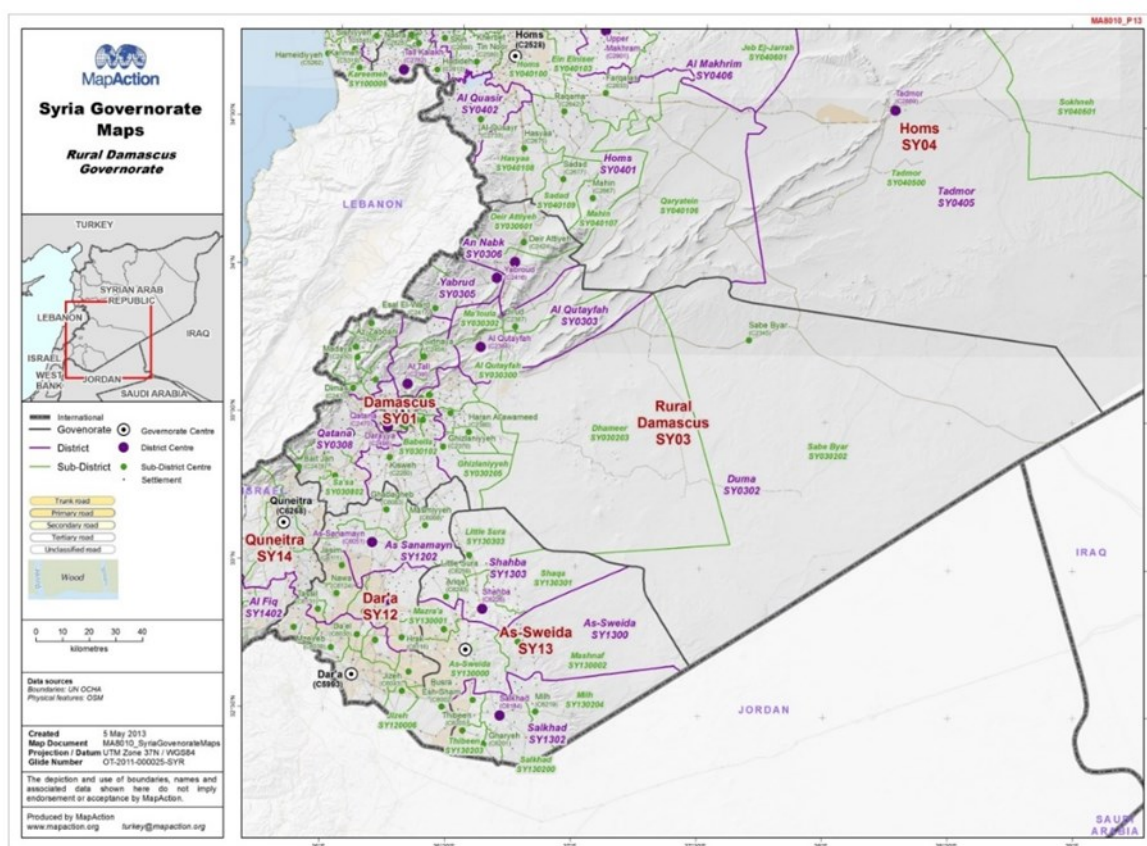
¹²¹⁹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

¹²²⁰ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

looted.”¹²²¹ Information on reasons for return to Damascus could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

The SAA’s Fourth Division and pro-GoS militias and paramilitary forces targeted IDPs attempting to enter the Al-Hajar Al-Aswad area to check on their homes they had once inhabited. GoS was requiring individuals wishing to check on or return to their former homes in this area to submit a request for security clearance to the Damascus Governorate council or the local branch of the Military Intelligence Directorate.¹²²²

2.11. Rural Damascus governorate



Map 15. MapAction, Rural Damascus governorate¹²²³

¹²²¹ OHCHR, “We did not fear death but the life there” – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), para. 61

¹²²² SNHR, At Least 2,317 Arbitrary Arrests/Detentions Documented in 2023, Including of 129 Children and 87 Women, With 232 Documented in December Alone, 2 January 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹²²³ Mapaction, Syria 2013-2015, Rural Damascus Governorate [map], last updated: 29 July 2016, [url](#)

2.11.1. General description of the governorate

Rural Damascus (Rif Dimashq in Arabic) is a largely agricultural governorate surrounding Damascus city.¹²²⁴ It is located in the southwestern part of Syria and shares internal borders with the governorates of Homs to the north and Quneitra, Dar'a and Sweida governorates to the south. It also has international borders with Jordan and Iraq to the south and east and Lebanon to the west.¹²²⁵ The governorate is divided into nine administrative districts: Rural Damascus, Douma (Duma), Al-Qutayfah, An-Nabk, Yabroud (Yabrud), At-Tall, Az-Zabadani, Darayya, and Qatana. The governorate's territory is further subdivided into a total of 36 subdistricts.¹²²⁶

According to UNOCHA, the population of Rural Damascus governorate was estimated to be 3 386 173 as of July 2023, including 985 957 IDPs.¹²²⁷ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Damascus governorate had 3 398 432 inhabitants.¹²²⁸

For more background information on the governorate, including information on its ethno-religious composition, see section 2.11.1 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#) and section 2.11.1 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(September 2022\)](#).

2.11.2. Conflict background and armed actors

For Rural Damascus governorate's conflict background, see section 2.11.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#) and section 2.11.2 of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security situation \(September 2022\)](#). Sources concurred that most of Rural Damascus governorate remained under the control of the GoS and affiliated groups during the reference period,¹²²⁹ with the exception of a stretch of territory that was part of the US-declared 55-km deconfliction area reaching into Homs governorate.¹²³⁰

¹²²⁴ REACH, Rural Damascus Governorate, April 2018, Humanitarian Situation Overview in Syria (HSOS), April 2018, [url](#), p. 1

¹²²⁵ UNCS and UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Reference Map, 17 January 2013, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 7

¹²²⁶ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 109-110

¹²²⁷ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹²²⁸ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 الكتاب الإحصائي [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

¹²²⁹ Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), p. 33; UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Rural Damascus and August 2024

¹²³⁰ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#)



Sources reported that the SAA's Fourth Division was present in the town of Zakiya¹²³¹ and in the Jdeidat Yabous area¹²³² on the Damascus-Beirut road.¹²³³ The presence of GoS forces was reinforced in Zakiya in late August 2023.¹²³⁴ The presence of GoS troops was also strengthened at checkpoints near Kanaker in July 2024, a town which saw troops of the 112th Brigade¹²³⁵ and the 121st Brigade¹²³⁶ stationed in its vicinity.

According to Jusoor for Studies, as of mid-2024, Iranian forces maintained 109 military sites in Rural Damascus, while Russian forces had eight military sites in the governorate.¹²³⁷ Iranian forces reportedly maintained an operational centre around Al-Sayyida Zainab, located south of Damascus city and west of Damascus International Airport in a densely populated area that included Shia communities¹²³⁸ and has hosted thousands of Iran-backed pro-GoS militia fighters from Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan. Lebanese Hezbollah were reportedly heavily present in this neighbourhood, where they operated their main headquarters and a string of bases located underground.¹²³⁹ Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran-backed militias were also stationed at Damascus International Airport¹²⁴⁰ and ran sites near Yabroud in the Qalamoun Mountains (northeast of Damascus) and in the Al-Qutayfah area, which together formed part of a continuous stretch of territory marked by a deep entrenchment of Hezbollah forces.¹²⁴¹

Various pro-Iranian militias led by Lebanese Hezbollah dominated several suburbs around Damascus city,¹²⁴² occupying strategic military positions, warehouses, and checkpoints near scientific research centres.¹²⁴³ Between April and July 2024 there were reports of evacuation of positions held by Iran-backed militias and Hezbollah¹²⁴⁴, including towards secret facilities in the western Qalamoun Mountains, located 55km from Damascus city.¹²⁴⁵

¹²³¹ SOHR, Rif Dimashq | Fourth Division kills opponent of regime, 31 July 2024, [url](#); Asharq Al-Awsat, Syria: Five Killed in Clashes between Zakia Residents and 4th Brigade, 1 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²³² SOHR, In 53RD Israeli targeting | Seven regime soldiers and Iranina-backed gunmen killed and injured due to Israeli raids on Damascus, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²³³ SOHR, In 53RD Israeli targeting | Seven regime soldiers and Iranina-backed gunmen killed and injured due to Israeli raids on Damascus, 14 July 2024, [url](#); ANHA, Targeting a car in Damascus countryside, 9 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²³⁴ Asharq Al-Awsat, Syria: Five Killed in Clashes between Zakia Residents and 4th Brigade, 1 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²³⁵ SOHR, Amid concerns about storming Kanaker town | Regime forces send military reinforcement to checkpoints in Rif Dimashq, 4 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²³⁶ SNHR, Three civilians, including a child, killed in a ground regime attack in W. Rural Damascus, July 2, 2024, 3 July 2024, [url](#); NPA, Government shelling in Rif Dimashq leaves 5 killed, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²³⁷ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²³⁸ Tokmajan, A. and Khaddour, K., Why Iranian Entrenchment in Southern Syria Worries Neighboring Countries, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹²³⁹ Reuters, Syrian army says Israeli missiles hit near Damascus, 18 December 2023

¹²⁴⁰ SOHR, 62nd attack in 2023 | Israel targets Al-Sayeda Zainab and Damascus International Airport, 10 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁴¹ Reuters, Israeli strikes target Hezbollah inside Syria, sources say, 19 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴² Reuters, Syrian army says Israeli missiles hit near Damascus, 18 December 2023

¹²⁴³ SOHR, Major mobilization of Iranian militias | Forces transport weapons to secret warehouses, 4 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁴ SOHR, In fear of continued Israeli bombing | Iranian militias redeploy in vicinity of Damascus and occupied Syrian Golan., 11 April 2024, [url](#); AFP, Hezbollah evacuates positions ahead of expected Israel raids: source close to group, 28 July 2024

¹²⁴⁵ SOHR, Major mobilization of Iranian militias | Forces transport weapons to secret warehouses, 4 August 2024, [url](#)



The governorate also witnessed the presence of local militias opposed to the GoS, including the ‘Thuwar Kanaker’ group and the Al-Furqan brigades in Kanaker town.¹²⁴⁶ While no specific information on ISIL activity in the governorate could be found during the reference period, a report presented by the UN Security Council indicated that during the second half of 2023, ISIL cells in Dar’a and Sweida governorates aimed to ‘expand towards the outskirts of Damascus to establish a stronger foothold’.¹²⁴⁷

2.11.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

Israeli airstrikes

According to the Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Rural Damascus governorate, while ostensibly a secure region, faced some security challenges.¹²⁴⁸ Against the backdrop of an escalation in Israeli attacks in Syria following the 7 October 2023 attack in Israel and the subsequent intensification of the Gaza conflict,¹²⁴⁹ Israeli forces carried out 22 aerial strikes in the governorate in 2023¹²⁵⁰ according to data collected by scholars Armenak Tokmajyan and Kheder Khaddour,¹²⁵¹ while SOHR recorded 30 such attacks in Damascus and Rural Damascus governorates that year.¹²⁵² Israeli missile attacks targeted multiple sites in the governorate during November and December 2023, including Damascus International Airport.¹²⁵³ While the overall frequency of Israeli strikes in Syria decreased in early 2024, the attacks increasingly focused on targets in Rural Damascus and Damascus city.¹²⁵⁴ Between January 2024 and late August 2024, SOHR documented 23 Israeli attacks in these two governorates.¹²⁵⁵

¹²⁴⁶ SOHR, Amid concerns about storming Kanaker town | Regime forces send military reinforcement to checkpoints in Rif Dimashq, 4 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁷ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 53

¹²⁴⁸ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Syria's Landscape in 2023: Unrest and the False Sense of Stability, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹²⁴⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 5; Asharq Al-Awsat, Israeli Airstrikes Target Damascus Countryside, Syria Says, 19 March 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Syria says Israeli attack on Damascus outskirts caused material damage – SANA, 2 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁰ Tokmajyan, A. and Khaddour, K., Why Iranian Entrenchment in Southern Syria Worries Neighboring Countries, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, 21 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 5-6

¹²⁵¹ Armenak Tokmajyan and Kheder Khaddour are non-resident scholars at the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center whose research focuses on conflict-related issues in Syria. Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, Armenak Tokmajyan, n.d., [url](#); Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, Kheder Khaddour, n.d., [url](#)

¹²⁵² SOHR, Highest annual toll since beginning of escalation in 2018 | Israel attacks Syria on 76 occasions in 2023, destroying 154 targets and killing and injuring nearly 310 combatants, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵³ SOHR, Rif Dimashq | Eight injured including five combatants in Israeli shelling on several positions, 10 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁵ SOHR, Air-defence attempting to block | Israeli forces conduct airstrikes on positions in Homs and Hama, 23 August 2024, [url](#)

Several Israeli attacks during the reference period targeted the Sayyida Zainab area, including strikes in December 2023 targeting positions in the vicinity of residential areas (leaving three civilians injured)¹²⁵⁶ and killing senior Iranian general and IRGC adviser Sayyed Razi Mousavi,¹²⁵⁷ as well as strikes in 2024 hitting the headquarters of Lebanese Hezbollah¹²⁵⁸ and a building used by GoS forces.¹²⁵⁹ Further Israeli strikes in 2024 hit a residential building west of Damascus city,¹²⁶⁰ Hezbollah facilities north of the capital near Yabroud and Al-Qutayfah,¹²⁶¹ a scientific research centre in the Jamraya area,¹²⁶² a SAA military site in the vicinity of Mount Qasioun west of Damascus city,¹²⁶³ and a military headquarter at an unspecified location south of Damascus.¹²⁶⁴ Presumed Israeli airstrikes also targeted specific vehicles on the Damascus-Beirut road,¹²⁶⁵ killing individuals involved in weapons transports, including a Hezbollah official¹²⁶⁶ and a businessman with strong ties to the GoS.¹²⁶⁷

Clashes between local actors and pro-GoS forces

Apart from Israeli attacks, clashes at communal level erupted in early September 2023 in the town of Zakia between residents and militiamen linked to the SAA's Fourth Division.¹²⁶⁸ These clashes, reportedly triggered by the killing of a local resident by a member of a group affiliated to the Fourth Division, left at least five people dead,¹²⁶⁹ including two armed town residents.¹²⁷⁰ In later months, the same town witnessed clashes between residents and an armed group led by a man allegedly affiliated with Hezbollah,¹²⁷¹ and the killing by the Fourth Division of a civilian opposed to the GoS.¹²⁷²

In July 2024, GoS troops from the 121st Brigade shelled the town of Kanaker¹²⁷³ in response to attacks by locals on GoS positions following the arrest of a local resident, leaving five civilians

¹²⁵⁶ SOHR, Rif Dimashq | Eight injured including five combatants in Israeli shelling on several positions, 10 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁷ Guardian (The), Israeli airstrike in Damascus kills high-ranking Iranian general, says Iran, 25 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁸ SOHR, "معلومات عن قتلى 5.. جرحى سوريين من العاملين مع "حزب الله" اللبناني باستهداف مقر قرب السيدة زينب [Information about the dead... 5 Syrians working with the Lebanese "Hezbollah" were injured as headquarters near Sayyida Zeinab was targeted] 28 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁹ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, May 3, 2024, 3 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 10-11

¹²⁶⁰ AP, An Israeli drone strike in Lebanon kills 2 in one of the deepest hits inside the country in weeks, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶¹ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, March 19, 2024, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 10

¹²⁶² Enab Baladi, Israeli strike on scientific research center in Jamraya in Damascus countryside, 1 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶³ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, July 15, 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹²⁶⁴ AFP, Syrian state media says soldier killed in Israeli strike on Damascus, 14 July 2024

¹²⁶⁵ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, July 15, 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 8; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, July 9, 2024, 9 July 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹²⁶⁶ SOHR, In 53RD Israeli targeting | Seven regime soldiers and Iranina-backed gunmen killed and injured due to Israeli raids on Damascus, 14 July 2024, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Iran Update, July 9, 2024, 9 July 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹²⁶⁷ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, July 15, 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹²⁶⁸ Asharq Al-Awsat, Syria: Five Killed in Clashes between Zakia Residents and 4th Brigade, 1 September 2023, [url](#); Al-Monitor, Syria: clashes in Damascus countryside with Maher Assad brigade leave 5 dead, 1 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁹ Al-Monitor, Syria: clashes in Damascus countryside with Maher Assad brigade leave 5 dead, 1 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁰ Asharq Al-Awsat, Syria: Five Killed in Clashes between Zakia Residents and 4th Brigade, 1 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁷¹ SOHR, Rif Dimashq | Civilians injured in clashes between residents and Hezbollah-backed drug dealer, 19 June 2024, [url](#)

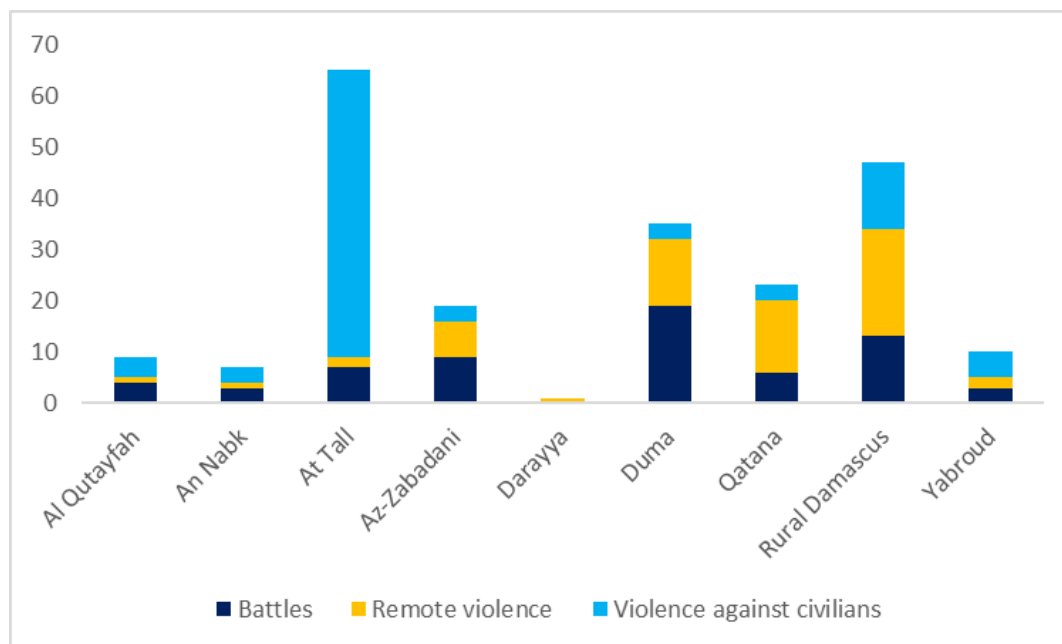
¹²⁷² SOHR, Rif Dimashq | Fourth Division kills opponent of regime, 31 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷³ SNHR, Three civilians, including a child, killed in a ground regime attack in W. Rural Damascus, July 2, 2024, 3 July 2024, [url](#); NPA, Government shelling in Rif Dimashq leaves 5 killed, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

dead and a number of others injured.¹²⁷⁴ In August 2024, several people were injured in attacks by unidentified gunmen targeting a GoS-affiliated militia group in the Qalamoun area of western Rural Damascus¹²⁷⁵ and a family with ties to the GoS during a wedding ceremony in the town of Ma'arba¹²⁷⁶ north of Damascus city¹²⁷⁷.

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 216 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Rural Damascus, of which 64 were coded as battles, 62 as explosions/remote violence and 90 as incidents of violence against civilians.¹²⁷⁸ By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 213 security incidents (78 battles, 46 explosions/remote violence and 89 events coded violence against civilians) in Rural Damascus governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in the districts of At Tall and Rural Damascus. According to ACLED, GoS forces and affiliated armed groups were involved (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2') in around 35 % of all security incidents, particularly in incidents coded as 'battles' and 'violence against civilians'. Unidentified armed groups were involved in around 25 % of all security incidents, particularly in incidents where GoS forces and affiliated armed groups were also an actor. Israeli forces were involved in around 25 % of all security incidents, mostly in incidents coded as battles and explosions/remote violence, where GoS forces and affiliated armed groups were also an actor.



¹²⁷⁴ NPA, Government shelling in Rif Dimashq leaves 5 killed, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁵ SOHR, Due to dispute over "drug" shipments | Leader in "National Defence" militia killed by militia commander in Rif Dimashq, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁶ SOHR, Rif Dimashq | Unknown individuals attack family members working in the presidential palace during wedding ceremony, 18 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁷ ISW, Syria Situation Report: August 3 - August 11, 2016, 11 August 2016, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁸ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

Figure 13. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Rural Damascus governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented 15 civilian fatalities in Rural Damascus governorate.¹²⁷⁹ For the same period, UCDP recorded 16 civilian fatalities in Rural Damascus governorate.¹²⁸⁰ SNHR documented 13 civilian fatalities in 2021,¹²⁸¹ 80 in 2022¹²⁸² and 17 in 2023.¹²⁸³

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Clashes between local residents and GoS-linked local militants in Zakia town in September 2023¹²⁸⁴ and June 2024¹²⁸⁵ caused destruction and damage to several houses,¹²⁸⁶ water tanks,

¹²⁷⁹ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹²⁸⁰ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

¹²⁸¹ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

¹²⁸² SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10. Out of the 80 civilian fatalities documented in 2022 in Rural Damascus, SNHR included the death of 54 persons for whom the GoS released death notifications in February 2022, although they were arrested in previous years and died in custody. Most of them were originally from Deir al-Asafir town. See SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 28 Children, Six Women and 66 Victims Due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in February 2022, 1 March 2022, [url](#), p. 5

¹²⁸³ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹²⁸⁴ Asharq Al-Awsat, Syria: Five Killed in Clashes between Zakia Residents and 4th Brigade, 1 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁵ SOHR, Rif Dimashq | Civilians injured in clashes between residents and Hezbollah-backed drug dealer, 19 June 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁶ SOHR, Rif Dimashq | Civilians injured in clashes between residents and Hezbollah-backed drug dealer, 19 June 2024, [url](#); Asharq Al-Awsat, Syria: Five Killed in Clashes between Zakia Residents and 4th Brigade, 1 September 2023, [url](#)



and solar panels.¹²⁸⁷ Meanwhile, several civilians were killed or injured in explosions of landmines in eastern¹²⁸⁸ and western¹²⁸⁹ Rural Damascus.

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023 there were 985 957 IDPs in Rural Damascus governorate.¹²⁹⁰ The same source recorded 97 IDP movements between September and December 2023, including 74 movements from Rural Damascus to other governorates, 18 movements from other governorates into Rural Damascus, and 5 movements occurring within Rural Damascus governorate itself.¹²⁹¹

Meanwhile, UNOCHA recorded 185 IDP return movements between September and December 2023, including 21 movements from other governorates into Rural Damascus, 141 movements from Rural Damascus to other governorates, and 23 movements occurring within Rural Damascus governorate itself.¹²⁹² Information on reasons for return could not be found within the time constraints of this report. Many individuals returning to areas in Rural Damascus found their houses destroyed, damaged beyond repair, looted or confiscated.¹²⁹³ GoS restrictions often prevented IDPs from returning to their areas of origin, while other IDPs feared arrest in reconquered or previously besieged areas, including Rural Damascus.¹²⁹⁴

¹²⁸⁷ SOHR, Rif Dimashq | Civilians injured in clashes between residents and Hezbollah-backed drug dealer, 19 June 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁸ SNHR, Man killed, two others injured by a landmine of unidentified source in E. Rural Damascus, August 11, 2024, 14 August 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Two children named Walid al-Sfouq and Mohammad al-Dleim killed by war remnants of unidentified source in E. Rural Damascus, January 25, 2024, 28 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁹ SOHR, In two separate incidents in less than 24 hours | Six children killed in explosion of war remnants in regime-held areas, 19 June 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁰ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹²⁹¹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

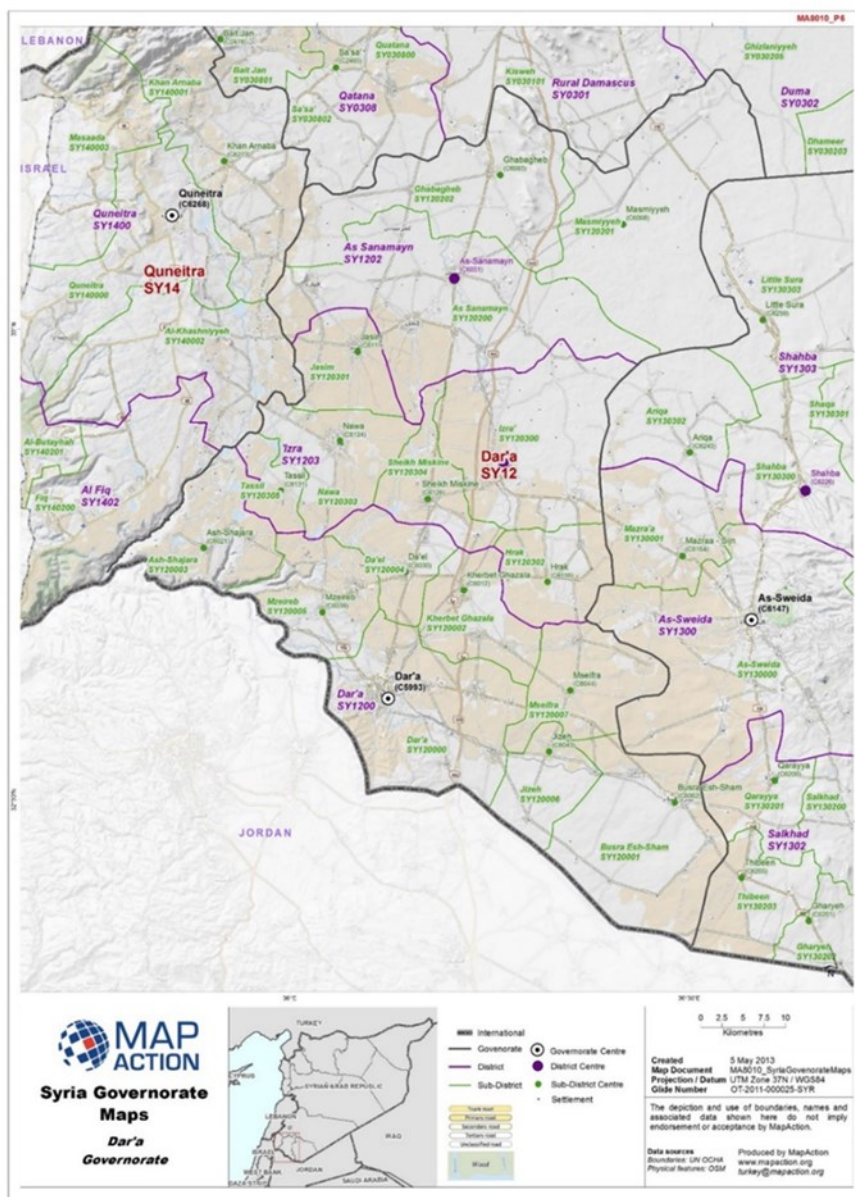
¹²⁹² UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁹³ OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there" – The Dire Human Rights Situation Facing Syrian Returnees, February 2024, [url](#), para. 61

¹²⁹⁴ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Syria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 75



2.12. Dar'a governorate



Map 16: © MapAction, Dar'a governorate¹²⁹⁵

2.12.1. General description of the governorate

Dar'a governorate is located in the southern part of Syria, below Damascus, sharing internal borders with the governorates of Quneitra to the west, Rural Damascus to the north, and Sweida to the east and an international border with Jordan to its south.¹²⁹⁶ Dar'a governorate

¹²⁹⁵ MapAction, Dar'a governorate, 29 July 2016, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁶ UNCS and UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Reference Map, 17 January 2013, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 16

is comprised of the three administrative districts of Dar'a, Izra' and As-Sanamayn.¹²⁹⁷ The city of Dar'a is the governorate's capital.¹²⁹⁸ According to UNOCHA, the population of Dar'a governorate was estimated as of July 2023 at 1 075 114, including 66 868 IDPs.¹²⁹⁹ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Dar'a governorate had 989 831 inhabitants.¹³⁰⁰

Information on the strategic importance of Dar'a and its role in cross-border drug trafficking is available in the [EUAA COI report: Syria - Security situation \(September 2022\)](#).

2.12.2. Conflict background and armed actors

Since 2018,¹³⁰¹ Dar'a governorate has been nominally under the control of the GoS,¹³⁰² while the GoS reportedly 'failed to fully reassert government authority'.¹³⁰³ Following Hamas' 7 October attack on Israel, the GoS transferred hundreds of troops from the north-west to Dar'a and Quneitra governorates, according to Etana Syria.¹³⁰⁴ According to a July 2024 SOHR report, Dar'a ranked highest among the Syrian governorates regarding the presence of illegal armed groups and drug traders and hosted a high number of local factions.¹³⁰⁵ They included factions of former pre-2018-settlement opposition forces,¹³⁰⁶ such as the Eighth Brigade¹³⁰⁷ led by Ahmed Al-Awda (also Ahmad Al-Awdeh),¹³⁰⁸ as well as armed groups such as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).¹³⁰⁹ Administratively belonging to the GoS's military security after Russian support for the local faction ended,¹³¹⁰ namely to the Fifth Corps, the Eighth Brigade acts semi-autonomously, leading to conflicts and clashes with GoS-affiliated forces.¹³¹¹ According to a January 2024 Enab Baladi article, it is the only faction that possesses medium weapons since the withdrawal of heavy weapons and armour from all factions in Dar'a under the 2018

¹²⁹⁷ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 107

¹²⁹⁸ STJ, The Impact of the Current Situation on the Archaeological Sites of Daraa/Syria, 30 January 2017, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹³⁰⁰ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 الكتاب الإحصائي [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

¹³⁰¹ ACLED, Annual Report on Violence targeting Local Officials 2023, May 2024, [url](#), p. 43; SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024 [Footnote 5], 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹³⁰² Syria Direct, 'Resurrection': HTS returns to southern Syria, 27 May 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰³ Tokmajyan, A. and Khaddour, K., Why Iranian Entrenchment in Southern Syria Worries Neighboring Countries, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹³⁰⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – October 2023, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁵ SOHR, Amid regime forces' failure to control security situation | 13 people killed in 14 incidents of security disorder in Daraa since early July, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁶ Syria Direct, 'Resurrection': HTS returns to southern Syria, 27 May 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁷ Daraa 24, أضرار كبيرة في مدينة جاسم بعد تسعة أيام من الاشتباكات [Extensive damages after nine days of clashes in Jassim city], 16 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁸ Haid, H., How Syria's vast militia network is eroding state sovereignty, Al Majalla, 6 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 53; Syria Direct, 'Resurrection': HTS returns to southern Syria, 27 May 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Two military streams complicate security situation in southern Syria, 16 January 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹⁰ Enab Baladi, Two military streams complicate security situation in southern Syria, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹¹ Haid, H., How Syria's vast militia network is eroding state sovereignty, Al Majalla, 6 February 2024, [url](#)

settlement agreement.¹³¹² A May 2024 Syria Direct article elaborated that HTS has returned to Dar'a province, six years after having left it, 'in the form of small groups made up of former fighters and new local recruits' present in cities and villages across the governorate. According to local sources interviewed by Syria Direct, the group was concentrated in the north, east and west and received some protection from the Eighth Brigade.¹³¹³ The so-called Central Committees, which emerged in 2018 after the GoS took control of Dar'a and incorporated 'the leadership of former factions, chiefs, and notables', are regarded as the largest military force among the non-GoS armed groups in the governorate.¹³¹⁴ According to a leader of the Eighth Brigade interviewed by Enab Baladi for an August 2024 article, the Eighth Brigade 'firmly manages' the eastern area of the governorate, whereas the Central Committees maintained a 'solid' control over the governorate's western rural area. In addition, the article noted that the Central Committees' control reached as far as the northern rural areas 'through connections between local groups for each village, town, and city', while they were 'are also connected with the Eighth Brigade east of Daraa'. A former opposition faction leader with a 'military position in the Eighth Brigade' reportedly further indicated that both the Eighth Brigade and the Central Committees were 'managed by the Military Security'.¹³¹⁵

According to Jusoor for Studies, as of mid-2024, Iran maintained 16 military sites in Dar'a governorate.¹³¹⁶ In December 2023, NPA, referring to a consulted researcher, reported that Iranian military posts in the Southern governorates of Dar'a, Quneitra and Sweida were operated by the IRGC, IRGC-affiliated militias and Hezbollah. They were reportedly concentrated in rural Dar'a.¹³¹⁷ Hezbollah reportedly maintained a shared headquarters with GoS's State Security in the city of Al-Sanamayn.¹³¹⁸

ISIL cells reportedly existed in Dar'a governorate in the reference period.¹³¹⁹ A July 2024 UN Security Council report noted that, while the group maintained 'an unassuming low-profile' in Dar'a governorate, it still posed 'a threat that could transcend borders'.¹³²⁰ ISIL activity was reported for example in Al-Sanamayn city,¹³²¹ which Etana Syria described as a 'hotbed' for the

¹³¹² Enab Baladi, Two military streams complicate security situation in southern Syria, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹³ Syria Direct, 'Resurrection': HTS returns to southern Syria, 27 May 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹⁴ Enab Baladi, Two military streams complicate security situation in southern Syria, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹⁵ Enab Baladi, Central Committees in the west and Eighth Brigade in the east, Who controls Daraa?, 4 August 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹⁶ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹⁷ NPA, Iran asserts influence in southern Syria, 13 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 53; Syria Direct, How does IS resurrect itself in southern Syria, defeat after defeat?, 13 February 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, The caliphate ended but the Islamic State is still present, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁰ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 52

¹³²¹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

group's local activities.¹³²² According to a February 2024 NPA article, ISIL sought to establish 'a foothold' in the governorate 'by taking advantage of the fragile security situation'. The article further noted that the ISIL leader for southwestern Syria, Osama Shahada al-Azzizi (also: Al-Shaib), was killed during a raid on a house in Nawa city by Central Committee and Eighth Brigade forces.¹³²³ The same month, SOHR reported 'a massive security deployment' by GoS-affiliated local groups in Jasem city during a search operation for ISIL cells.¹³²⁴ However, in its August 2024 report, the UNCOI reported an 'increased Da'esh [ISIL] presence' in the governorate.¹³²⁵

According to Jusoor for Studies, as of mid-2024, Russia maintained three military sites in Dar'a governorate.¹³²⁶ Etana Syria reported that Russian forces carried out regular¹³²⁷ and 'increasingly frequent' patrols in Dar'a governorate in the reference period,¹³²⁸ 'seeking to bring a sense of security to the region'.¹³²⁹ However, the source noted in March 2024 that the 'operations have been largely ineffectual'.¹³³⁰

Information on the conflict background and armed actors in Dar'a prior to September 2023 is available in the EUAA COI reports [Syria – Security situation \(October 2023\)](#), [Syria – Security situation \(September 2022\)](#) and [Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#).

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

In July 2024, Dar'a governorate, including Dar'a city,¹³³¹ was described to be in a security 'chaos'.¹³³² SOHR assessed that there was a security vacuum in the governorate and the GoS failed to control the security situation. The source further noted that the presence of high numbers of local factions in Dar'a governorate and frequent conflicts among them, add to a deterioration of the security situation.¹³³³ Dar'a city reportedly hosted a number of 'prominent figures' of combatting factions and in the area of drug trafficking.¹³³⁴

Sources reported that the security situation in Dar'a governorate was characterised by daily or almost daily security incidents, including attacks on civilians.¹³³⁵ In a July 2024 report,

¹³²² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – February 2024, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³²³ NPA, ISIS seeks to establish foothold in southern Syria, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁴ SOHR, In search of "ISIS" cells | Regime-backed local groups raid locations in northern countryside of Daraa, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 29

¹³²⁶ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – March 2024, 7 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – February 2024, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – March 2024, 7 April 2024, [url](#)

¹³³⁰ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – February 2024, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³³¹ SOHR, At rate of one attack per day | 16 people killed in acts of violence in Daraa, 13 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³³² Syria TV, اغتيال شخصين في درعا بالقرب من منطقة أمنية لقوات النظام [Two persons killed in Dar'a close to GoS security area], 29 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³³³ SOHR, Amid regime forces' failure to control security situation | 13 people killed in 14 incidents of security disorder in Daraa since early July, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³³⁴ SOHR, At rate of one attack per day | 16 people killed in acts of violence in Daraa, 13 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³³⁵ Al-Jabassini, A., Territorial Fragmentation, Violence, and Local Governance in Syria's Daraa Governorate, KAS, July 2024, [url](#), p. 14; SOHR, Amid regime forces' failure to control security situation | 13 people killed in 14 incidents of security disorder in Daraa since early July, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

researcher Abdullah Al-Jabassini identified five sets of causes and patterns of violence in Dar'a governorate. First, military escalation by the GoS against areas under the control of local armed groups; second, vigilante operations by local armed groups against ISIL elements and drug traffickers; third, rivalries between local armed groups that escalate into confrontations and assassinations; fourth, disputes between members of different clans and tribes; and fifth, criminality, including abductions, robberies, and murders. According to Al-Jabassini, violence in Dar'a governorate 'has become increasingly widespread' ever since GoS's return to the country's south in mid-2018.¹³³⁶ He indicated that the perpetrators of many violent incidents remained unknown, which made a distinction between private and public conflicts difficult. Al-Jabassini noted that an important number of violent incidents happened in central and western Dar'a governorate, whereas Busra Al-Sham and its surroundings in eastern Dar'a governorate enjoyed 'comparatively greater security'.¹³³⁷

Assassinations, kidnappings, attacks with explosive devices

SOHR reported recurrent security-related incidents in the reference period, primarily armed attacks, throughout the governorate, resulting in civilian fatalities, including of children.¹³³⁸ The UNCOI noted that assassinations and violence 'targeting Syrian security officials, pro-government public figures, "reconciled" opposition fighters and civilians' continued to be reported between July 2023 and December 2023.¹³³⁹ SOHR further noted that 'violence, attacks and assassinations have dramatically escalated' in the period leading up to July 2024.¹³⁴⁰ The month of June reportedly saw a significant increase in killings and abductions that affected civilians, often including persons opposing the GoS and critical of Iranian presence in the region, and security personnel alike. Syria TV noted that, while it was characteristic that no party claimed responsibility for the killings in the governorate, governorate residents and activists accused GoS- and Iranian-affiliated forces to stand behind the killings.¹³⁴¹ According to Al-Jabassini, there were no indications of a decrease of nearly daily 'assassinations, kidnappings, roadside explosive devices' and 'drive-by shootings'.¹³⁴² In its August 2024 report, the UNCOI noted that the 'situation in Dar'a remained marked by unrest and high levels of insecurity, with mutual attacks between pro-government forces and opposition armed groups in western Dar'a, assassinations, attacks with improvised explosive

¹³³⁶ Al-Jabassini, A., Territorial Fragmentation, Violence, and Local Governance in Syria's Daraa Governorate, KAS, July 2024, [url](#), p. 14

¹³³⁷ Al-Jabassini, A., Territorial Fragmentation, Violence, and Local Governance in Syria's Daraa Governorate, KAS, July 2024, [url](#), p. 15

¹³³⁸ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 48; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#), p. 43; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in February 2024, 8 March 2024, [url](#), p. 40; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in November 2023, 7 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 40-41; SOHR, Escalating security chaos in Daraa | Eight civilians among 16 persons killed in 20 attacks since early September, 16 September 2023, [url](#)

¹³³⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 48

¹³⁴⁰ SOHR, Amid regime forces' failure to control security situation | 13 people killed in 14 incidents of security disorder in Daraa since early July, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴¹ Syria TV, اغتيال شخصين في درعا بالقرب من منطقة أمنية لقوات النظام [Two persons killed in Dar'a close to GoS security area], 29 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴² Al-Jabassini, A., Territorial Fragmentation, Violence, and Local Governance in Syria's Daraa Governorate, KAS, July 2024, [url](#), p. 14

devices, drug trafficking, increased Da'esh [ISIL] presence, and ongoing security operations by pro-government forces.¹³⁴³

Cases of civilians killed by shooting by unidentified armed men were reported for example in eastern rural Dar'a,¹³⁴⁴ in Al-Yadouda city in western Dar'a,¹³⁴⁵ in Al-Sanamayn,¹³⁴⁶ in Jassem city¹³⁴⁷ as well as in the cities of Inkhil¹³⁴⁸ and the neighborhood Dar'a Al-Balad.¹³⁴⁹ Furthermore, cases of civilians injured by shooting from unidentified armed men, including of children,¹³⁵⁰ were reported, for example in the cities Al-Harak,¹³⁵¹ Dar'a¹³⁵² and Nawa.¹³⁵³ In addition, several cases of attacks on former opposition faction members, including their shooting, were reported in the reference period.¹³⁵⁴

Several attacks with explosive devices were reported in the reference period,¹³⁵⁵ including attacks with hand grenades on or near the houses of individuals in eastern rural Dar'a, such as the house of the head of the agricultural association in the town Nahta,¹³⁵⁶ and western rural Dar'a,¹³⁵⁷ such as an attack on the head of the water unit in the city of Nawa¹³⁵⁸ and on a shop

¹³⁴³ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 29

¹³⁴⁴ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹³⁴⁵ Daraa 24, مقتل شاب في بلدة الياودة [Young man killed in Al-Yadouda town], 24 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁶ Daraa 24, مقتل طبيب في مدينة الصنمين [Doctor killed in the city of Al-Sanamayn], 3 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, مقتل مواطن آخر في مدينة الصنمين [Another civilian killed in Al-Sanamayn city], 11 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁷ Daraa 24, مقتل قيادي محلي في مدينة جاسم في الريف الشمالي [Local leader killed in Jassem city in northern countryside], 7 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁸ Daraa 24, مقتل شاب في مدينة إنخل [Young man killed in Inkhil city], 22 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁹ SOHR, Security chaos | Civilian shot and injured in the "reconciliations" area in Daraa Al-Balad, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁰ Daraa 24, مقتل شاب وإصابة طفل بجروح شمالي درعا [Killing of young man and injury of child in northern Dar'a], 29 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵¹ Daraa 24, إصابة شاب شرقي درعا بإطلاق نار مباشر [Young man injured by direct gunfire in eastern Dar'a], 24 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵² Daraa 24, استهداف شاب ضمن أحياء درعا البلد [Young man targeted in neighbourhood of Dar'a Al-Balad], 18 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵³ Daraa 24, إطلاق نار استهدف صيدلية في مدينة نوى [Shooting targeted pharmacy in Nawa city], 10 May 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁴ Syria TV, اغتيال شخصين في درعا بالقرب من منطقة أمنية لقوات النظام [Two persons killed in Dar'a close to GoS security area], 29 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, استهداف قيادي محلي برفقة عائلته في مدينة نوى [Targeting of local leader and his family in Nawa city], 30 May 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Security vacuum | Two ex-members of opposition factions assassinated in Daraa, 27 March 2024, [url](#); SOHR, In targeting by vacuum | Former member of opposition factions killed in Daraa city and death toll increase to three including child, 23 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁵ SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 16; Daraa 24, انفجار غربي درعا [Explosion west of Dar'a], 28 June 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, إلقاء قنبلة على محل زراعي غربي درعا [Bomb thrown at agricultural store west of Dar'a], 15 May 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Planted earlier by unidentified individuals | Explosion of an IED in car belonging to police in Daraa countryside, 13 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Ongoing security chaos in Daraa | Child killed by IED explosion in Al-Sanamayn, 8 February 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Security vacuum | IED explodes in car in Daraa city, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁶ Daraa 24, إلقاء قنبلتين على منزل في بلدة ناخنة [House in the city of Nahta attacked with two bombs], 19 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁷ Daraa 24, إلقاء قنبلة يدوية على منزل في مدينة طفس، وسقوط جرحى، وإصابة عدد من المدنيين [Hand grenade thrown at house in Tafas city; individuals injured], 25 June 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, إلقاء قنبلة يدوية على منزل طبيب غربي درعا [Hand grenade thrown at doctor's house in western Dar'a], 7 May 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, إلقاء قنبلة يدوية على سيارة رئيس وحدة مياه مدينة نوى [Hand grenade thrown at the car of head of water unit in Nawa city], 18 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁸ Daraa 24, إلقاء قنبلة يدوية على سيارة رئيس وحدة مياه مدينة نوى [Hand grenade thrown at the car of head of water unit in Nawa city], 18 June 2024, [url](#)

for agricultural needs in Tafas city.¹³⁵⁹ Some of the attacks led to civilian casualties,¹³⁶⁰ including of children.¹³⁶¹ Furthermore, attacks on wedding halls with explosive devices were reported in mid-2024 in the cities Inkhil¹³⁶² and Jasem.¹³⁶³

The scholars Armenak Tokmajyan and Kheder Khaddour reported in a March 2024 article that abductions for ransom were a ‘common practice’ in Dar’a governorate, where over 126 abductions were recorded in 2023.¹³⁶⁴ Sources reported recurrent abductions of civilians,¹³⁶⁵ including of children,¹³⁶⁶ throughout the reference period,¹³⁶⁷ including cases where abductors demanded ransom in exchange for the release of abductees.¹³⁶⁸ Abductions of civilians by unidentified armed men were reported for example in Nawa city in western rural Dar’a,¹³⁶⁹ in Dar’a city,¹³⁷⁰ in the Lajat area¹³⁷¹ and Deir Al-Bakht in northern rural Dar’a¹³⁷² and in Al-Harak city in eastern rural Dar’a.¹³⁷³ In a March 2024 article, the NPA reported that the GoS was

¹³⁵⁹ Daraa 24, [إلقاء قنبلة على محل زراعي غربي درعا](#) [Bomb thrown at agricultural store west of Dar’a], 15 May 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁰ SOHR, Ongoing security chaos in Daraa | Explosion of IED causes one civilian injured, 1 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁶¹ Daraa 24, [إلقاء قنبلة يدوية على منزل في مدينة طفس، وسقوط جرحى](#) [Hand grenade thrown at house in Tafas city; individuals injured], 25 June 2024, [url](#); SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 16; Daraa 24, [استهداف قيادي محلي برفقة عائلته في مدينة نوى](#) [Targeting of local leader and his family in Nawa city], 30 May 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Ongoing security chaos in Daraa | IED explosion leaves nine children dead and injured, while local militias accused of planting it to assassinate a man, 6 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Daraa | Two civilians and a security member injured in IED explosion, 6 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶² Daraa 24, [إلقاء قنبلة على صالة أفراح في مدينة إنخل](#) [Bomb thrown at wedding hall in Inkhel city], 9 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [تفجير صالة أفراح في ريف درعا الشمالي](#) [Wedding hall bombed in northern rural Dar’a], 3 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶³ Daraa 24, [استهداف صالات الأفراح في مدينة جاسم](#) [Targeting of wedding halls in Jassim city], 19 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁴ Tokmajyan, A. and Khaddour, K., Why Iranian Entrenchment in Southern Syria Worries Neighboring Countries, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹³⁶⁵ Daraa 24, [حالات الخطف لا تتوقف في درعا، وست حالات خلال أقل من أسبوع](#) [Abductions do not stop in Dar’a; six cases in less than a week], 26 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁶ SOHR, Two separate incidents | Drug dealer killed and two children kidnapped in Daraa countryside, 10 July 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Security chaos | Unidentified people kidnap a child in Daraa countryside, 11 November 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Daraa | Two masked men kidnap child while going to school in northern countryside, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁷ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in February 2024, 8 March 2024, [url](#), p. 39; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in November 2023, 7 December 2023, [url](#), p. 39

¹³⁶⁸ Daraa 24, [حالات الخطف لا تتوقف في درعا، وست حالات خلال أقل من أسبوع](#) [Abductions do not stop in Dar’a; six cases in less than a week], 26 March 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [عصابة خطف تطالب بفدية 150 ألف دولار للإفراج عن شاب](#) [Kidnapping gang demands 150 000 US-Dollar in order to release young man], 27 February 2024, [url](#); SOHR, While heading to Damascus | Gangsters kidnap two young men from Daraa, asking for ransom of 80,000 USD for their release, 28 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, For huge ransom | Gang releases a civilian days after kidnapping him in Daraa countryside, 9 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁹ Daraa 24, [اختطاف شاب في مدينة نوى في الريف الغربي](#) [Abduction of young men in Nawa city in western countryside], 17 July 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Two separate incidents | Unidentified people kidnap a dentist and a civilian in Daraa, 9 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁰ SOHR, Escalating security chaos | Doctor kidnapped from his clinic in Daraa city, 11 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [استمرار اختطاف مواطن في مدينة درعا](#) [Abduction of citizen in Dar’a city continues], 4 July 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁷¹ Daraa 24, [خطف متبادل في ريف درعا الشمالي](#) [Mutual abductions in northern rural Dar’a], 28 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷² Daraa 24, [عصابة خطف تطالب بفدية 150 ألف دولار للإفراج عن شاب](#) [Kidnapping gang demands 150 000 US-Dollar in order to release young man], 27 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷³ Daraa 24, [اختطاف مواطن في ريف درعا الشرقي](#) [Abduction of citizen in eastern rural Daraa], 25 May 2024, [url](#)

accused of ‘turning a blind eye’ towards abduction incidents. In other cases, Iranian and GoS-affiliated forces were accused of carrying out abductions themselves.¹³⁷⁴

Clashes between local armed groups and GoS affiliated forces

A number of clashes between armed groups were reported, for example north of Dar’a city,¹³⁷⁵ in the Lajat area,¹³⁷⁶ and in Mahajjah city in northern rural Dar’a,¹³⁷⁷ some resulting in civilian fatalities.¹³⁷⁸ Clashes also occurred between two armed groups in Al-Sanamayn in early April 2024.¹³⁷⁹ According to the UNCOI, these clashes involved pro-GoS and armed opposition groups. The UNCOI reported that more than 100 pro-GoS fighters ‘targeted an armed opposition group leader during raids on at least three houses’ in the city, killing ten civilians, including children.¹³⁸⁰ Reportedly, the attack occurred in retaliation of a previous IED attack in the same town, which had killed a number of children.¹³⁸¹ Clashes were also reported between forces affiliated with the Eighth Brigade and the Central Committees and local groups, such as in Al-Yadouda city in western rural Dar’a¹³⁸² or in Al-Harak city in eastern rural Dar’a.¹³⁸³ Clashes between GoS and GoS-affiliated groups and local groups were reported,¹³⁸⁴ for example in Al-Sanamayn city¹³⁸⁵ and Inkhil in northern rural Dar’a.¹³⁸⁶ In the first half of 2024,

¹³⁷⁴ NPA, Chaos, kidnapping cases storm southern Syria before government eyes, 30 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁵ Daraa 24, مقتل مواطن جراء مشاجرة شمالي درعا [Citizen killed in fight in the north of Dar’a], 26 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁶ Daraa 24, اشتباكات في منطقة اللجاء [Clashes in Lajat area], 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁷ Daraa 24, اشتباكات في بلدة محجة شمالي درعا [Clashes in Mahajjah city, north of Dar’a], 10 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁸ Daraa 24, مقتل مواطن جراء مشاجرة شمالي درعا [Citizen killed in fight in the north of Dar’a], 26 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, وفاة شاب متأثراً بجراحه شمالي درعا [Young man dies of his wounds north of Dar’a], 22 July 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Including woman and two children | 17 people killed during armed clashes between two local groups in Al-Sanameiyyen city in Daraa countryside, 7 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Death toll update | Clashes between two local groups in Daraa’s Al-Sanamayn leave eight civilians and combatants dead, 9 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁹ SOHR, Including woman and two children | 17 people killed during armed clashes between two local groups in Al-Sanameiyyen city in Daraa countryside, 7 April 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 31

¹³⁸¹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/57/86, 12 August 2024, [url](#), para. 32; International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹³⁸² Daraa 24, انسحاب القوات المحلية التابعة للجان المركزية واللواء الثامن من بلدة الياودة [Withdrawal of local forces affiliated with the Central Committees and the Eighth Brigade from Al-Yadouda City], 8 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Toll of casualties mounts | 15 combatants and civilians killed and wounded in clashes between 8th Brigade and local group in rural Daraa, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸³ SOHR, Accused of belonging to “ISIS” | Five people killed and injured in clash with 8th Brigade in eastern countryside of Daraa, 26 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁴ Daraa 24, اشتباكات بين بلدي بصر الحرير وناحطة شرقي درعا [Clashes between the cities of Busra al-Harir and Nahta, east of Daraa], 4 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁵ Daraa 24, اشتباكات الصنمين تنتهي بمقتل خمسة، فهل تتوقف على ذلك؟ [Clashes in Al-Sanamayn end with killing of five persons; will it stop there?], 9 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁶ Daraa 24, اشتباكات بعد محاصرة مركز للأجهزة الأمنية في مدينة إنخل [Clashes after siege of security services’ center in Inkhil city], 10 July 2024, [url](#); NPA, Clashes erupt in Syria’s Daraa following arrest ex-opponent, 30 June 2024, [url](#)

clashes between local armed groups in the city of Jassem were reported,¹³⁸⁷ resulting in civilian casualties¹³⁸⁸ and the imposition of curfews on parts of the city.¹³⁸⁹

According to a June 2024 Syria Direct article, local factions in Dar'a, for several months, have resorted to a strategy that has been used in Sweida governorate for years. The strategy includes 'encircling military checkpoints and security headquarters in the province, or kidnapping regime personnel, to force the release of detainees.'¹³⁹⁰

Security incidents related to drug trafficking

During the reporting period, raids were carried out by groups affiliated to the Eighth Brigade on tents belonging to Bedouin tribes in eastern rural Dar'a,¹³⁹¹ on various accusations,¹³⁹² including drug trafficking¹³⁹³ and abductions.¹³⁹⁴ In the abovementioned July 2024 report, Al-Jabassini noted that local armed groups 'planned and executed' anti-drug-trafficking operations in Dar'a governorate. For example, in January 2024, raids were carried out in the vicinity of Tafas city, during which members of a group involved in drug trading were arrested and one of their leaders was killed. In another incidents the same month, raids were carried out in 'farms between the cities of Tafas, Da'el and 'Atman', leading to the arrest of the brother of a well-known drug trafficker in Dar'a governorate with ties to the Lebanese Hezbollah.¹³⁹⁵

¹³⁸⁷ SOHR, On the tenth day of clashes | Dignitaries of Daraa succeed in ending the fighting in Jassem City, 16 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, التوصل لاتفاق لوقف إطلاق النار في مدينة جاسم, [Ceasefire agreement reached in Jassem city], 6 June 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, استمرار الاشتباكات في مدينة جاسم شمالي درعا, [Continuing clashes in Jassem city, north of Dar'a], 19 April 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁸ Daraa 24, أضرار كبيرة في مدينة جاسم بعد تسعة أيام من الاشتباكات, [Extensive damages after nine days of clashes in Jassim city], 16 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, التوصل لاتفاق لوقف إطلاق النار في مدينة جاسم, [Ceasefire agreement reached in Jassim city], 6 June 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, مقتل شاب وسقوط جرحى نتيجة الاشتباكات في مدينة جاسم, [One young man killed and another injured during clashes in Jassim city], 8 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁹ Daraa 24, إعلان حظر تجوال في مدينة جاسم, [Announcement of curfew in Jassim city], 14 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, حظر تجول في الحي الغربي من مدينة جاسم, [Curfew in western district of Jassim city], 8 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, إعلان حظر تجوال في الحي الجنوبي من مدينة جاسم, [Announcement of curfew on Jassim city's southern district], 18 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁰ Syria Direct, Hostages and siege: Daraa frees detainees by any means necessary, 13 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹¹ SOHR, After storming houses and tents | Eighth Brigade arrests several civilians in eastern Daraa countryside, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁹² Daraa 24, اللواء الثامن يُنفذ حملة مدامات شرقي درعا, [Eighth brigade carries out raid campaign east of Dar'a], 29 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹³ Daraa 24, اللواء الثامن يدهم خيم البدو شرق درعا, [Eighth brigade raids tents of Bedouin tribes east of Dar'a], 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁴ Daraa 24, مدامات خيم البدو على أطراف بلدة أم الميادين, [Raids on Bedouin tents on the outskirts of the city Umm Al-Mayadeen], 3 May 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, اختطاف مواطن في ريف درعا الشرقي, [Abduction of citizen in eastern rural Daraa], 25 May 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁵ Al-Jabassini, A., Territorial Fragmentation, Violence, and Local Governance in Syria's Daraa Governorate, KAS, July 2024, [url](#), p. 16

Israeli airstrikes

In the light of the Israel-Hamas conflict, a number of Israeli attacks on Dar'a governorate were reported,¹³⁹⁶ for example on sites of GoS forces¹³⁹⁷ in Al-Sanamayn,¹³⁹⁸ Jbab¹³⁹⁹ and Jasem¹⁴⁰⁰ and on sites of Iranian forces.¹⁴⁰¹ In October 2023, Iranian-affiliated forces were suspected of having fired artillery shells at northern Israel, which reportedly prompted a number of Israeli retaliatory strikes.¹⁴⁰² Several other Israeli retaliatory strikes were reported in central¹⁴⁰³ and western Dar'a,¹⁴⁰⁴ including in the vicinity of Tel Al-Jabeya, Tel Al-Jomou' and Tel Ashtara.¹⁴⁰⁵

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 699 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Dar'a governorate, of which 231 were coded as battles, 166 as explosions/remote violence and 302 as incidents of violence against civilians.¹⁴⁰⁶ By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 743 security incidents (236 battles, 155 explosions/remote violence and 352 events coded violence against civilians) in Dar'a governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Dar'a and Izra districts. As-Sanamayn recorded significantly lower number of security incidents than the other two districts. According to ACLED, unidentified armed groups were the main actor involved in security incidents (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2') during the reference period, accounting for around 75 % of all documented security incidents. In most of security incidents featuring unidentified armed actors, the other parties involved were civilians (more than half of all documented security incidents) and GoS forces and affiliated armed groups. Israeli forces were involved in around 7 % of all reported security incidents.

¹³⁹⁶ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#), p. 46; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#), p. 47; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in February 2024, 8 March 2024, [url](#), p. 43; International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#); Daraa 24, إطلاق صاروخ من مواقع عسكرية [Rocket fired from military site west of Dar'a – Israel responds], 12 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁷ SOHR, Following ground bombardment | Israeli airstrikes target military site of regime forces in northern countryside of Daraa, 9 April 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁸ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, July 15, 2024, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹³⁹⁹ Daraa 24, قتل وثلاث إصابات جراء قصف إسرائيلي للعاصمة دمشق [One dead, three injured in Israeli shelling of Damascus], 14 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁰ Daraa 24, قصف إسرائيلي على محيط مدينة جاسم [Israeli bombing on the outskirts of Jassem city], 6 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰¹ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on The Events of The Syrian Scene, 6 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰² International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁰³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁴ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – March 2024, 7 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Responding to shelling on Al-Golan | Israeli forces shell positions in western Daraa countryside, 16 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁵ SOHR, Israeli strikes | Two regime soldiers killed in western Daraa, 10 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁶ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

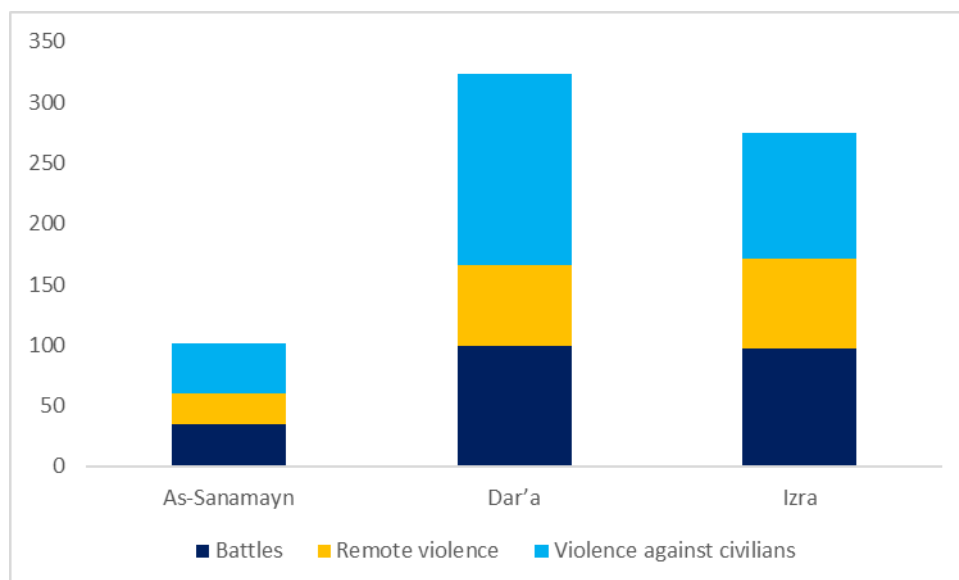


Figure 14. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Dar'a governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented 214 civilian fatalities in Dar'a governorate.¹⁴⁰⁷ For the same period, UCDP recorded 90 civilian fatalities in Dar'a

¹⁴⁰⁷ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

governorate.¹⁴⁰⁸ In Dar'a governorate, SNHR documented 204 civilian fatalities in 2021,¹⁴⁰⁹ 207 in 2022¹⁴¹⁰ and 225 in 2023.¹⁴¹¹

Daraa 24, a media network focused on southern Syria that describes itself as politically and militarily independent, documented 245 civilian fatalities and 213 civilian injuries between September 2023 and July 2024.¹⁴¹²

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Attacks on wedding halls with explosive devices were reported in mid-2024 in the cities Inkhil¹⁴¹³ and Jasem,¹⁴¹⁴ causing material damage.¹⁴¹⁵ Within the time constraints of this report, no further information on attacks on civilian infrastructure and objects in Dar'a governorate in the reference period was found.

Dar'a remained one of the governorates with the highest levels of unexploded ordnance contamination.¹⁴¹⁶ During the reference period, civilians, including children, were reported to

¹⁴⁰⁸ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

¹⁴⁰⁹ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁰ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴¹¹ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁴¹² Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of September 2023 in Dar'a governorate], 1 October 2023, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of October 2023 in Dar'a governorate], 1 November 2023, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of November 2023 in Dar'a governorate], 1 December 2023, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of December 2023 in Dar'a governorate], 1 January 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of January 2024 in Dar'a governorate], 1 February 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of February 2024 in Dar'a governorate], 1 March 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of March 2024 in Dar'a governorate], 1 April 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of April 2024 in Dar'a governorate], 1 May 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of May 2024 in Dar'a governorate], 1 June 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of June 2024 in Dar'a governorate], 1 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Documentation of violations and security incidents in the month of July 2024 in Dar'a governorate], 1 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹³ Daraa 24, [url](#) [Bomb thrown at wedding hall in Inkhel city], 9 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Wedding hall bombed in northern rural Dar'a], 3 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁴ Daraa 24, [url](#) [Targeting of wedding halls in Jassim city], 19 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁵ Daraa 24, [url](#) [Bomb thrown at wedding hall in Inkhel city], 9 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Wedding hall bombed in northern rural Dar'a], 3 July 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, [url](#) [Targeting of wedding halls in Jassim city], 19 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁶ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

have been killed or injured in ERW detonations.¹⁴¹⁷ Such incidents occurred throughout the governorate, including north of the city Dar'a,¹⁴¹⁸ northern rural Dar'a,¹⁴¹⁹ eastern rural Dar'a,¹⁴²⁰ including in the Lajat area,¹⁴²¹ and western rural Dar'a.¹⁴²²

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023, there were 66 868 IDPs in Dar'a governorate.¹⁴²³ 28 of the 185 IDP movements recorded in the last four months of 2023 took place from Dar'a to other governorates, while 30 IDP arrivals to Dar'a from other governorates were recorded.¹⁴²⁴ In July 2024, sources reported displacements within and from the city of Jassem towards safer areas due to clashes.¹⁴²⁵ No data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

During the last four months of 2023, around 144 IDP return movements occurred within Dar'a governorate, while about 62 return movements took place from other governorates into Dar'a.¹⁴²⁶ Information on reasons for return could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

¹⁴¹⁷ Daraa 24, انفجار لغم في قرية الصورة شرقي درعا [Mine explosion in the village of Al-Soura, east of Dar'a], 9 June 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, مقتل شاب جراء انفجار مخلف حربي شمالي درعا [Young man killed in ERW explosion north of Dar'a], 17 May 2024, [url](#); SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 4; Daraa 24, انفجار لغم من مخلفات الحرب بجرار زراعي [Explosion of remnant of war landmine in agricultural tractor], 3 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Explosion of unexploded object leaves child injured in eastern Daraa countryside, 11 February 2024, [url](#); SOHR, War remnants | Child killed and two others injured in landmine explosion in Daraa countryside, 28 December 2023, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Landmine explosion leaves civilian dead in Daraa countryside, 30 November 2023, [url](#).

¹⁴¹⁸ Daraa 24, مقتل طفل جراء انفجار مادة من مخلفات الحرب شمالي درعا [Child killed by ERW detonation north of Dar'a], 25 July 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Landmine explosion leaves child dead in Daraa countryside, 27 May 2024, [url](#).

¹⁴¹⁹ SOHR, Old ordnance | Two children injured in landmine explosion in Inkhil City in Daraa, 27 September 2023, [url](#).

¹⁴²⁰ Daraa 24, انفجار لغم في قرية الصورة شرقي درعا [Mine explosion in the village of Al-Soura, east of Dar'a], 9 June 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Civilian killed in explosion of landmine in eastern Daraa countryside, 3 April 2024, [url](#).

¹⁴²¹ Daraa 24, إصابات في اللجة جراء مخلفات الحرب [Injuries in Lajat as a result of ERW], 12 February 2024, [url](#).

¹⁴²² SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 4; SOHR, War remnants | Woman killed and two of her children injured by explosion of metal object in western countryside of Daraa, 9 December 2023, [url](#).

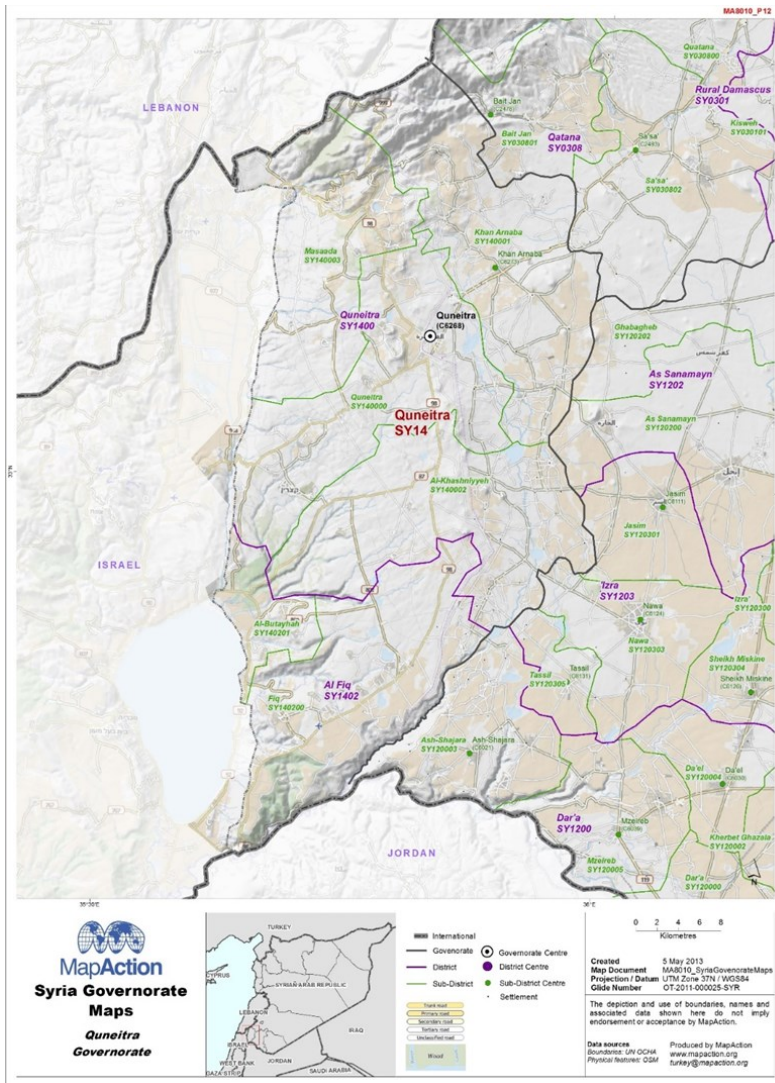
¹⁴²³ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9.

¹⁴²⁴ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#).

¹⁴²⁵ NPA, Clashes in Syria's Daraa leave casualties, 8 July 2024, [url](#); Syrian Observer (The), Daraa: Confrontations in Jassem Continue Despite Attempts to Calm Down Tensions, 10 July 2024, [url](#).

¹⁴²⁶ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#).

2.13. Quneitra governorate



Map 17: © MapAction, Quneitra governorate¹⁴²⁷

2.13.1. General description of the governorate

The governorate of Quneitra is situated in southern Syria and it borders Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. To the east, Quneitra governorate borders Dar'a and Rural Damascus governorates.¹⁴²⁸ The governorate is divided into two districts: the district of Quneitra, which comprises the sub-districts of Quneitra, Masaada, Khan Arnaba and Al-Khashniyyeh. The second district, Al-Fiq, is divided into the sub-districts of Fiq and Al-Butayyah.¹⁴²⁹ Parts of the governorate are under

¹⁴²⁷ MapAction, Syria Governorate Maps – Quneitra Governorate, last updated 29 July 2016, [url](https://www.mapaction.org/syria-governorate-maps-quneitra-governorate/)

¹⁴²⁸ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2024, [url](https://www.un.org/geo/syria/)

¹⁴²⁹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](https://atlas.unocha.org/), p. 18; UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Quneitra Governorate Reference Map, February 2016, [url](https://www.unocha.org/syria/files/quneitra-governorate-reference-map-february-2016.pdf)

Israeli control or administered by UNDOF (UN Disengagement Observer Forces).¹⁴³⁰ Especially Masaada is almost entirely under Israeli or UNDOF administration. Al-Butayhah is reportedly completely under Israeli control, while only a small part of Fiql is still under Syrian control.¹⁴³¹

The city of Quneitra remained abandoned after it was destroyed by Israel in 1974 and is part of the demilitarised buffer zone between Syria and Israel under the supervision of UNDOF.¹⁴³² The new provincial administrative centre is Baath city (Madinat Al-Baath).¹⁴³³

According to UNOCHA, the population of Quneitra governorate was estimated as of July 2023 at 149 326, including 3 373 IDPs.¹⁴³⁴ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Quneitra governorate had 127 600 inhabitants.¹⁴³⁵

For information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition, see section 2.13.1 of the [EUAA COI Report: Syria – Security Situation \(July 2021\)](#).

2.13.2. Conflict background and armed actors

During the reporting period, Quneitra governorate east of the UNDOF-administered buffer zone was under the control of the GoS.¹⁴³⁶ According to a March 2024 report by the scholars Armenak Tokmajyan and Kheder Khaddour, the GoS 'failed to fully reassert government authority'.¹⁴³⁷ Much of the Golan Heights is occupied by Israel, while part of it belongs to Syrian-controlled Quneitra governorate.¹⁴³⁸ UNDOF is present in a demilitarized area separating parts of the Golan Heights and Syrian-controlled Quneitra governorate.¹⁴³⁹ GoS's 90th Brigade was reportedly present in the governorate near the border with the occupied Golan.¹⁴⁴⁰

According to Jusoor for Studies, as of mid-2024, Iran maintained 20 military sites in Quneitra governorate. The source further reported that the IRGC withdrew from around 14 positions in Quneitra governorate to be replaced by Russian and GoS forces.¹⁴⁴¹

¹⁴³⁰ UNDOF, UNDOF Peacekeeping Moments – The 35th anniversary 1974-2009, June 2009, [url](#), pp. 6, 10; UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 18

¹⁴³¹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 18; UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Quneitra Governorate Reference Map, February 2016, [url](#)

¹⁴³² Encyclopedia Britannica, Al-Qunaytirah, 20 January 2015, [url](#)

¹⁴³³ Reuters, Syrian insurgents attack government-held town near Israel, 20 November 2014, [url](#)

¹⁴³⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁴³⁵ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 الإحصائي [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

¹⁴³⁶ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#); Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Quneitra and August 2024

¹⁴³⁷ Tokmajyan, A. and Khaddour, K., Why Iranian Entrenchment in Southern Syria Worries Neighboring Countries, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁴³⁸ Al-Arabiya News, Syria holds ceremony for youths killed in annexed Golan, 30 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴³⁹ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁰ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in November 2023, 7 December 2023, [url](#), p. 47

¹⁴⁴¹ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

During the reference period there were reports of Iranian and Hezbollah forces reportedly withdrawing from the governorate¹⁴⁴² or redeploying to other positions in the governorate¹⁴⁴³ as a result of alleged Israeli attacks. According to the International Crisis Group, ‘Iranian forces reportedly repositioned around 300 Syrian and Lebanese fighters to Quneitra’ following the conflict’s outbreak in October.¹⁴⁴⁴ SOHR also reported reinforcements and mobilization of Iranian-backed elite forces in November 2023 near the border to the Golan.¹⁴⁴⁵ In December 2023, NPA, referring to a consulted researcher, noted that Iranian military posts in the Southern governorates Dar’a, Quneitra and Sweida were held by the IRGC, IRGC-affiliated militias and Hezbollah. According to the researcher, there were ‘27 military sites in Quneitra, including 10 for the Hezbollah, five for the IRGC, and 12 shared sites between them’.¹⁴⁴⁶ Etana Syria further reported that ‘some minor Hezbollah deployments’ were observed in rural Quneitra in January 2024.¹⁴⁴⁷

According to Jusoor for Studies, as of mid-2024, Russia maintained 13 military sites in Quneitra governorate. The source further reported that Russia in early 2024, for the first time redeployed forces to Quneitra governorate after Iranian militias had withdrawn from there.¹⁴⁴⁸ Sources reported that Russia had established a number of new military posts in the reference period in Quneitra governorate’s border region with Israeli-occupied Golan,¹⁴⁴⁹ including in the villages of Muallaqa and Ghadir Al-Bustan.¹⁴⁵⁰ Etana Syria reported that Russian forces carried out regular¹⁴⁵¹ and ‘increasingly frequent’ patrols in the governorate in the reference period.¹⁴⁵² However, the source noted, in March 2024, that the ‘operations have been largely ineffectual’.¹⁴⁵³ In a January 2024 report, the UN Security Council noted that ISIL, HTS and HAD had ‘established a footprint’ around Quneitra governorate.¹⁴⁵⁴

¹⁴⁴² France 24, Iran cuts Syria presence after strikes blamed on Israel: monitor, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – October 2023, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁴ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁵ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in November 2023, 7 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 53, 55

¹⁴⁴⁶ NPA, Iran asserts influence in southern Syria, 13 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁷ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – January 2024, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁸ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁹ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#), p. 49; Enab Baladi, Russia establishes third military post on borders of occupied Golan Heights, 2 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Near occupied Al-Golan I Russian forces establish military checkpoints in Daraa and Al-Qonaitara countryside, 28 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁰ Enab Baladi, Why Russia deployed military posts on borders of occupied Golan Heights, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵¹ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – March 2024, 7 April 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – February 2024, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – February 2024, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁴ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 53



2.13.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

Conflict between Israel and Iranian-backed militias

In light of the escalating violence in the Israel-Gaza conflict, Etana Syria reported that in October 2023, ‘cross-border hostilities have continued to intensify in southern Syria, with the border strip between Quneitra and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights experiencing regular instances of ‘tit-for-tat violence’ between Israeli forces and Iranian-backed militias’, while Israeli reconnaissance aircraft were flying over parts of Quneitra governorate daily. Etana Syria further reported that the GoS ‘transferred hundreds of troops’ from the north-western governorates to Quneitra and Dar’a governorates in October 2023 and ‘tightened security measures around Quneitra’ governorate to prevent people from outside entering the governorate.¹⁴⁵⁵ In September 2023, SOHR reported that Israeli tanks repeatedly crossed into Syrian territory in Quneitra governorate, while the GoS and UNDOF did not intervene.¹⁴⁵⁶ Israeli attacks, including alleged drone attacks,¹⁴⁵⁷ shelling¹⁴⁵⁸ and airstrikes,¹⁴⁵⁹ were reported throughout the reference period¹⁴⁶⁰ against Iranian-affiliated groups¹⁴⁶¹ and GoS positions.¹⁴⁶²

In several cases, Israeli attacks on Quneitra were reportedly carried out in retaliation of previous attacks by Hezbollah and other Iranian-affiliated forces,¹⁴⁶³ as well as attacks claimed by the so-called Islamic Resistance in Iraq group into the Israeli-occupied Golan.¹⁴⁶⁴ According to the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), an airstrike conducted in April 2024 was due to the presence of the SAA in the demilitarized puffer zone.¹⁴⁶⁵ Etana Syria reported that Israeli forces continued to cross into northern Quneitra in May 2024, ‘occasionally firing on civilians

¹⁴⁵⁵ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – October 2023, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁶ SOHR, Second violation in a few days | Israeli tanks advance into Syrian territory and stationed in town in Al-Quneitra countryside, 29 September 2023, [url](#); SOHR, Amid ongoing inaction by regime authorities | Israeli tanks advance into Syrian territory in Al-Quneitra countryside, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁷ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁸ SOHR, Military escalation | Factions of Hezbollah target occupied Al-Golan while Israel shells two positions in Al-Qonaitara and Daraa, 18 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁹ Crisis 24, Syria: Suspected Israeli airstrikes reported in Madinat al-Baath June 24, 24 June 2024, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Iran Update, April 25, 2024, 25 April 2024, [url](#), p. 9; Enab Baladi, Israel strikes regime site in Quneitra, 13 March 2024, [url](#); NPA, Israeli airstrike targets Syria’s Quneitra, 29 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁰ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 49; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#), p. 46; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#), p. 47; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in February 2024, 8 March 2024, [url](#), p. 43; International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#); SOHR, Regime forces blocking drones | Israel shells three military positions in Al-Qonaitara and Daraa, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶¹ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁶² ISW and CTP, Iran Update, April 25, 2024, 25 April 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SOHR, Military escalation | Factions of Hezbollah target occupied Al-Golan while Israel shells two positions in Al-Qonaitara and Daraa, 18 December 2023, [url](#); International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁶³ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – December 2023, 14 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Regime forces blocking drones | Israel shells three military positions in Al-Qonaitara and Daraa, 12 December 2023, [url](#); International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Syria: September 2023 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁴ National (The), Israel strikes Iranian-linked targets in Syria as Golan Heights come under attack, 18 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁵ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, April 25, 2024, 25 April 2024, [url](#), p. 9



in the border area’¹⁴⁶⁶ SOHR reported several cases of civilian injuries and fatalities, including of sheep herders,¹⁴⁶⁷ in the reference period as a result of Israeli attacks.¹⁴⁶⁸ In July 2024, SOHR reported that Israeli forces crossed into the village Al-Zatariyah in southern rural Quneitra via the Golan border and arrested a civilian for unknown reasons, before they returned to the occupied Syrian Golan.¹⁴⁶⁹

In January 2024, Enab Baladi reported that the Russian military had announced to start military air patrols along the so-called ‘Bravo-Line’ dividing the Golan Heights between Syria and Israel to monitor the situation in the demilitarized area.¹⁴⁷⁰

Several incidents of IED blasts across Quneitra governorate targeting GoS forces were reported in the reference period.¹⁴⁷¹ In a March 2024 report, the scholars Armenak Tokmajyan and Kheder Khaddour reported that abductions, assassinations and attacks against GoS representatives occurred in Quneitra governorate.¹⁴⁷²

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 417 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Quneitra governorate, of which 13 were coded as battles, 394 as explosions/remote violence and 10 as incidents of violence against civilians.¹⁴⁷³ By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 49 security incidents (16 battles, 24 explosions/remote violence and 9 events coded violence against civilians) in Quneitra governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in the district of Quneitra. According to ACLED, Hezbollah was involved in around 86 % of all recorded incidents (coded as either ‘Actor1’ or ‘Actor2’) and in almost all incidents coded explosions/remote violence. Israeli forces were involved in almost all security incidents where Hezbollah was the other actor, the vast majority being coded as explosions/remote violence.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – May 2024, 5 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁷ SOHR, Second time in ten days | Israeli forces target a civilian near borders with occupied Al-Golan, 3 August 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Israeli forces kill Syrian civilian for “approaching borders with occupied Al-Golan”, 6 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Military escalation | Israeli forces shoot a civilian near occupied Syrian Al-Golan in Al-Qonaitara, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁸ SOHR, While working on his farmland | Israeli forces shoot Syrian farmer dead near border with occupied Syrian Golan, 28 June 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Affected by his wounds | Young man dies after being shot by Israeli forces near occupied Syrian Golan, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁹ SOHR, Al-Quneitra | Israeli forces cross border with occupied Syrian Golan and arrest civilian in southern countryside, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁰ Enab Baladi, Russia announces air patrols over Golan borders, 19 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷¹ NPA, Government officer killed, another injured in IED blast in Syria’s Quneitra, 27 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – November 2023, 4 December 2023, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – September 2023, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷² Tokmajyan, A. and Khaddour, K., Why Iranian Entrenchment in Southern Syria Worries Neighboring Countries, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁴⁷³ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)

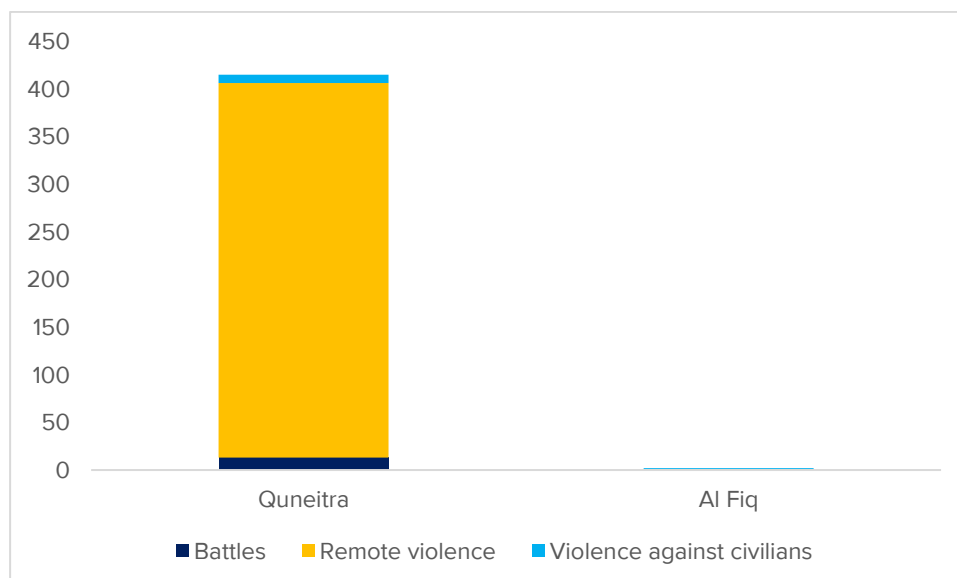


Figure 15. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Quneitra governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented one civilian fatality in Quneitra governorate.¹⁴⁷⁴ For the same period, UCDP recorded one civilian fatality in Quneitra

¹⁴⁷⁴ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

governorate.¹⁴⁷⁵ In Quneitra governorate, SNHR documented 10 civilian fatalities in 2021¹⁴⁷⁶, one in 2022¹⁴⁷⁷ and five in 2023.¹⁴⁷⁸

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Within the time constraints of this report, no information on attacks on civilian infrastructure and objects in Quneitra governorate in the reference period was found.

During the reference period, civilians, including children, were reportedly killed or injured in ERW detonations in the village of Jaba.¹⁴⁷⁹

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023, there were 3 373 IDPs in Quneitra governorate.¹⁴⁸⁰ 35 of the IDP movements recorded in the last four months of 2023 took place within Quneitra governorate, while 30 IDP arrivals to Quneitra from other governorates were recorded in October 2023.¹⁴⁸¹ No further data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

During the last four months of 2023, around 10 IDP return movements occurred within Quneitra governorate, while about 81 return movements took place from other governorates into Quneitra.¹⁴⁸² Information on reasons for return could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

¹⁴⁷⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by

courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

¹⁴⁷⁶ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁴⁷⁷ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁴⁷⁸ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

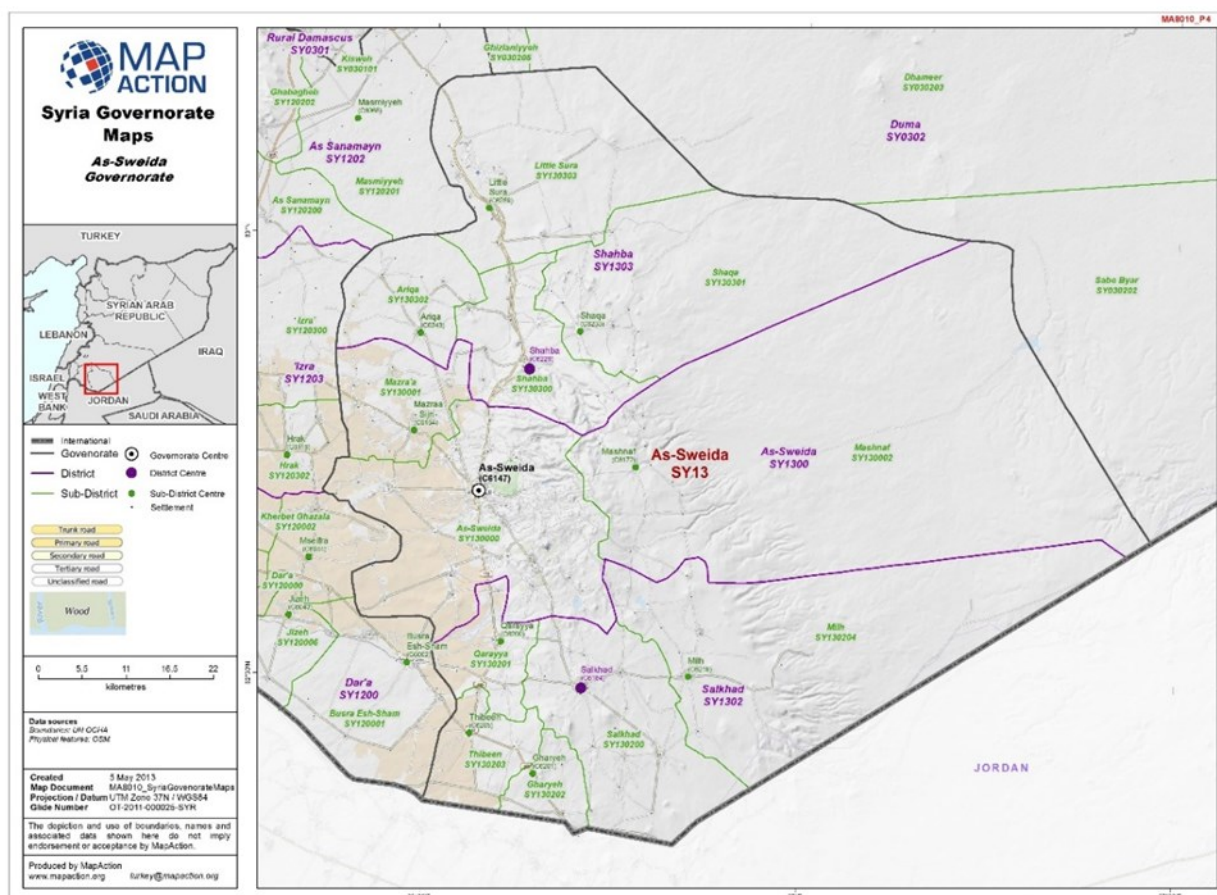
¹⁴⁷⁹ SOHR, War remnants | Landmine explosion leaves civilian dead in village near occupied Syrian Golan, 17 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Child killed and four civilians injured in explosion of landmine of war remnants near occupied Al-Golan, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸⁰ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁴⁸¹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸² UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

2.14. Sweida governorate



Map 18: © MapAction, Sweida governorate¹⁴⁸³

2.14.1. General description of the governorate

Sweida (also Suwayda) governorate is the southernmost governorate of Syria.¹⁴⁸⁴ It shares internal borders with the governorates of Rural Damascus to the north and north-east and Dar'a to the west as well as an international border with Jordan to its south.¹⁴⁸⁵ The governorate comprises three administrative districts: As-Sweida, Shahba, and Salkhad.¹⁴⁸⁶ The city of Sweida is the governorate's capital.¹⁴⁸⁷

¹⁴⁸³ MapAction, Sweida Governorate, 29 July 2016, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸⁴ Al Shami, I., Insight into As-Suwayda's Position in the Syrian Situation, TWI, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸⁵ UNCS and UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Reference Map, 17 January 2013, [url](#); UNOCHA, Humanitarian Atlas, Syrian Arab Republic, January 2017, [url](#), p. 17

¹⁴⁸⁶ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 107

¹⁴⁸⁷ Al Jazeera, Antigovernment protesters tear down picture of al-Assad in Syria's Sweida, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

According to UNOCHA the population of Sweida governorate was estimated as of July 2023 at 446 493, including 70 842 IDPs.¹⁴⁸⁸ Population estimates for mid-2023 issued by the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that Sweida governorate had 540 657 inhabitants.¹⁴⁸⁹

The residents of Sweida governorate are predominantly Druze.¹⁴⁹⁰ Further information on the governorate's religious composition as well as information on its societal structure and the prevalence of armed gangs and crime, including drug trafficking, are available in the EUAA COI report: [Syria – Security situation \(September 2022\)](#).

2.14.2. Conflict background and armed actors

Since 2011, Sweida remained formally under GoS control,¹⁴⁹¹ but 'experienced periods of relatively lax governance', according to a December 2023 report by Syrian journalist and author Mazen Ezzi.¹⁴⁹² Ezzi also noted that in 2022-2023, 'widespread armament, and the presence of armed civil groups' were prevailing. Druze militiamen known as 'Men of Dignity' (Rijal al-Karama) reportedly were 'the primary and most significant organized vigilante force in the region' controlling 'smaller gangs under a civil guise'.¹⁴⁹³ In a February 2024 article, London Chatham House researcher Haid Haid noted that local militias, such as the Rijal al-Karama, the Sheikh Al-Karama and the Fahad Forces, 'protect their communities from security threats' in Sweida governorate. According to Haid, some of them aligned with GoS security 'for influence', while a few engaged 'in illicit activities'.¹⁴⁹⁴

Sources reported that the GoS sent reinforcements between late-April¹⁴⁹⁵ and early May 2024 to Sweida governorate.¹⁴⁹⁶ According to SOHR, reinforcements deployed in early May 2024 included 'soldiers, tanks, military armoured vehicles and dozens of heavy vehicles'.¹⁴⁹⁷ Etana Syria assessed in late-April 2024 that some 1 200 GoS forces were sent to Sweida governorate, including Republican Guard forces, Air Force Intelligence and Military

¹⁴⁸⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁴⁸⁹ Syria, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 [الكتاب الإحصائي](#) [Statistical Yearbook 2023], n.d., [url](#), chapter 2 population and demographic indicators, tab4-2

¹⁴⁹⁰ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Syria, 30 June 2024, [url](#), p. 13; Al Jazeera, 'Won't back down': Druze Syrian town gathers after regime kills protester, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹¹ UN Geospatial, Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence as of December 2023 [Map], January 2024, [url](#); Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024 [Map], 2 July 2024, [url](#); Liveuamap, Syria [Map], as of 7 August 2024, [url](#); Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria [Map], n.d., [url](#). Set filters to Sweida and August 2024

¹⁴⁹² Ezzi, M., The regime's reach – exploring Damascus' approach to Suwayda after 2011, FES, December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁴⁹³ Ezzi, M., The regime's reach – exploring Damascus' approach to Suwayda after 2011, FES, December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁴⁹⁴ Haid, H., How Syria's vast militia network is eroding state sovereignty, Al Majalla, 6 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹⁵ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, April 29, 2024, 29 April 2024, [url](#), p. 11; SOHR, After detention of officers | Regime forces bring military reinforcements to Al-Suwaydaa, 25 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹⁶ Al Shami, I., Suwayda Protests Continue Despite Growing Pressure, TWI, 7 June 2024, [url](#); MEMRI, Reports: Assad Regime, Iranian Militias Have Sent Reinforcements To Al-Suwayda In Southern Syria In Order To Besiege Jordan, 10 May 2024, [url](#); SOHR, With ongoing protests | Regime claims to kill an ISIS member and arrest another in Al-Suwaydaa, 10 May 2024, [url](#); Al-Quds Al-Arabi, [النظام السوري يدفع بتعزيزات عسكرية إلى السويداء](#) [In order to change the dynamics of arrest versus abduction, the GoS sends military reinforcements to Sweida], 4 May 2024, [url](#); New Arab (The), Syrian regime sends military reinforcements to Suweida, sparking fears of crackdown, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹⁷ SOHR, With ongoing protests | Regime claims to kill an ISIS member and arrest another in Al-Suwaydaa, 10 May 2024, [url](#)

Intelligence forces. The source further noted that the April reinforcements were ‘unusual’ and could have been an attempt to contain ongoing protests and intimidate the protesters.¹⁴⁹⁸ For further information on the correlation between GoS reinforcements and protests in the governorate during the reference period, please see section [2.14.3\(a\)](#). Based on information obtained from local sources, an article by Al-Quds Al-Arabi, a London-based daily newspaper, noted that the reinforcements also included Iranian and Iranian-affiliated forces, such as from the Fatemiyoun brigade, the Zainabiyoun brigade and the IRGC.¹⁴⁹⁹ An April 2024 article in The New Arab noted that the Republican Guard brigade carried tanks in the Khalkhala airport in the northern part of Sweida governorate.¹⁵⁰⁰ In May 2024, it was reported that members of the GoS’s 15th Special Forces Division were present west of Sweida.¹⁵⁰¹

According to Jusoor for Studies, as of mid-2024, Iran maintained 13 military sites in Sweida governorate,¹⁵⁰² including Lebanese Hezbollah points¹⁵⁰³ and Russia maintained two military sites in the governorate.¹⁵⁰⁴

According to a January 2024 UN Security Council report, ISIL cells existed in Sweida governorate.¹⁵⁰⁵ A July 2024 UN Security Council report furthermore noted that, while the group maintained ‘an unassuming low-profile’ in Sweida governorate, it still posed ‘a threat that could transcend borders’.¹⁵⁰⁶

Information on the conflict background and armed actors in Sweida prior to September 2023 is available in the EUAA COI reports [Syria – Security situation \(October 2023\)](#), [Syria – Security situation \(September 2022\)](#) and [Syria – Security situation \(July 2021\)](#).

¹⁴⁹⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹⁹ Al-Quds Al-Arabi, النظام السوري يدفع بتعزيزات عسكرية إلى السويداء [In order to change the dynamics of arrest versus abduction, the GoS sends military reinforcements to Sweida], 4 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰⁰ New Arab (The), Syrian regime sends military reinforcements to Suweida, sparking fears of crackdown, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰¹ Al-Quds Al-Arabi, النظام السوري يدفع بتعزيزات عسكرية إلى السويداء [In order to change the dynamics of arrest versus abduction, the GoS sends military reinforcements to Sweida], 4 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰² Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰³ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria [Map], Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰⁴ Jusoor for Studies, Map of Foreign Forces in Syria, Mid-2024, 2 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰⁵ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 53

¹⁵⁰⁶ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 52

2.14.3. Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

(a) Security trends during the reporting period

The security situation in Sweida governorate was described as chaotic in the reference period.¹⁵⁰⁷ In a May 2024 report, Etana Syria elaborated that the road connecting western Sweida governorate and eastern Dar'a governorate was 'becoming a notable hotspot for ambushes and clashes with militant groups', while observing an increase of armed attacks against GoS forces.¹⁵⁰⁸ In June 2024, sources reported clashes between local factions and GoS forces in Sweida governorate due to the establishment of a new army checkpoint.¹⁵⁰⁹ According to SOHR, local armed groups, in that context, attacked GoS-security centres in Sweida city leading to clashes on the street.¹⁵¹⁰ Syria Direct reported that an agreement was 'negotiated by civil and religious leadership in communication with local armed factions' to convert the checkpoint positioned at the northern entrance of the city Sweida 'to an ordinary military position, with no involvement in civilian movement'.¹⁵¹¹ In mid-August 2024, tensions were reportedly sparked by another attempt to establish a checkpoint at the northern entrance to the city.¹⁵¹²

Kidnappings and assassinations

Several cases of civilians being injured¹⁵¹³ or killed,¹⁵¹⁴ including by shooting by unidentified armed men, were reported,¹⁵¹⁵ for example in Sweida city.¹⁵¹⁶

The scholars Armenak Tokmajyan and Kheder Khaddour noted in a March 2024 article that abductions for ransom were a 'common practice' in Sweida governorate, where some 50 abductions were recorded in 2023 by non-GoS actors.¹⁵¹⁷ Abductions, including of a child¹⁵¹⁸

¹⁵⁰⁷ SOHR, Security chaos | Woman in her 60s killed in village southern of Al-Suwaydaa, 8 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰⁸ Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰⁹ Syria Direct, Suwayda sidesteps a 'spiral of violence' following clashes, 26 June 2024, [url](#); SOHR, After attacks on security headquarters | Regime forces bring military reinforcements to Al-Suwaydaa, 25 June 2024, [url](#); Daraa 24, استمرار التوتر في محافظة السويداء [Continued tensions in Suwayda governorate], 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁰ SOHR, After attacks on security headquarters | Regime forces bring military reinforcements to Al-Suwaydaa, 25 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵¹¹ Syria Direct, Suwayda sidesteps a 'spiral of violence' following clashes, 26 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵¹² Al-Quds Al-Arabi, سنحافظ على سلميتنا وعند الهجوم سنستخدم السلاح من أوسع الأبواب [Leader threatens GoS with escalation: We will stay peaceful and when attacked, we will broadly use weapons], 18 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵¹³ SOHR, Security chaos | armed gang shoot three people and local faction arrests thieves in Al-Suwaydaa, 31 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Security chaos | Armed group opens fire on a civilian and robs him in Al-Suwaydaa, 12 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Security chaos | Civilian killed and his father injured in regime areas in Al-Suwaydaa, 11 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁴ SOHR, Security chaos | Woman in her 60s killed in village southern of Al-Suwaydaa, 8 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁵ SOHR, Grenade explosion | Young man and his fiancée die by mistake in Al-Suwaydaa City, 25 November 2023, [url](#); SOHR, Security chaos | Civilian killed and his father injured in regime areas in Al-Suwaydaa, 11 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁶ SOHR, Grenade explosion | Young man and his fiancée die by mistake in Al-Suwaydaa City, 25 November 2023, [url](#); SOHR, Security chaos | Civilian killed in regime-held areas in centre of Al-Suwaydaa City, 22 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁷ Tokmajyan, A. and Khaddour, K., Why Iranian Entrenchment in Southern Syria Worries Neighboring Countries, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, 21 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 2-3

¹⁵¹⁸ SOHR, Al-Suwaydaa | Armed gang kidnaps child and another gang attempts to kidnap another child, 10 June 2024, [url](#)



and to demand ransom,¹⁵¹⁹ were also reported in the first half of 2024,¹⁵²⁰ for example in eastern rural Sweida,¹⁵²¹ in northern Sweida¹⁵²² and in Sweida city.¹⁵²³

Protest movement against the GoS

Beginning in August 2023,¹⁵²⁴ protests in Sweida governorate continued throughout the reference period.¹⁵²⁵ The GoS reportedly refrained from cracking down on the demonstrations.¹⁵²⁶ However, in mid-September 2023, GoS forces reportedly opened fire on demonstrators at the Baath Party headquarters in Sweida city, injuring three people.¹⁵²⁷ The UNCOI reported one lightly injured person as a result of armed men shooting at protesters that same day.¹⁵²⁸ One demonstrator was killed in February 2024,¹⁵²⁹ when GoS forces again fired on protesters attacking a government building.¹⁵³⁰ Another man was injured¹⁵³¹ and the incident led to clashes between local armed groups and GoS forces the same day.¹⁵³² GoS reinforcements were reportedly sent to Sweida governorate after the arrest of a number of Syrian officers by armed groups as a means to pressure the release of a student from Sweida governorate, arrested by the GoS for his protest support. The reinforcements were reportedly sent to the governorate although the student and the Syrian officers were released at the end of April.¹⁵³³ According to SOHR, reinforcements deployed in early May 2024 ‘followed massive

¹⁵¹⁹ SOHR, After luring him | Gang kidnaps a veterinarian in Al-Suwaydaa and releases him for huge ransom, 5 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁰ SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in March 2024, 8 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁵²¹ SOHR, After luring him | Gang kidnaps a veterinarian in Al-Suwaydaa and releases him for huge ransom, 5 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵²² SOHR, Security chaos | Gang kidnaps a young man in regime-held areas in Al-Suwaydaa City, 17 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵²³ SOHR, Security chaos | Gunmen kidnap a lawyer in Al-Suwaydaa City, 26 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁴ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Syria, 30 June 2024, [url](#), p. 13; Atlantic Council, The uprising in Sweida will continue until the regime changes in Syria, 5 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁵ SOHR, Demanding freedom and dignity | Residents of Al-Suwaydaa stage a sit-in in Al-Karama Square, 20 August 2024, [url](#); Enab Baladi, “Your assassinations will not kill our peaceful means”.. As-Suwayda’s protest movement enters its 12th month, 19 July 2024, [url](#); SOHR, SOHR booklet, comprising 13 reports with infographics, summarises all key developments in Syria in June 2024, 7 July 2024, [url](#), p. 48; Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – April 2024, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁶ New Arab (The), Syrian regime sends military reinforcements to Suweida, sparking fears of crackdown, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁷ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Syria, 30 June 2024, [url](#), p. 2; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, September 13, 2023, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 53

¹⁵²⁹ SOHR, Public discontent after death of protestor | Unidentified gunmen attack two governmental headquarters in Al-Suwaydaa, 28 February 2024, [url](#); Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – February 2024, 3 March 2024, [url](#); SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁵³⁰ New Arab (The), Syrian regime sends military reinforcements to Suweida, sparking fears of crackdown, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵³¹ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in February 2024, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7; Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – February 2024, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵³² Etana Syria, Syria Military Brief: South Syria – February 2024, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵³³ MEMRI, Reports: Assad Regime, Iranian Militias Have Sent Reinforcements To Al-Suwayda In Southern Syria In Order To Besiege Jordan, 10 May 2024, [url](#)



demonstrations' in Sweida city against GoS military build-ups in the governorate one week after the capture of the Syrian officers.¹⁵³⁴

In July 2024, sources reported the killing of Marhaj Jarmani (also: Merhej Al-Jarmani), the leader of the armed group 'Liwa Al-Jabal' and a 'key figure' in the anti-GoS protests. His faction reportedly played an important role in the protection of the protesters. Al-Jarmani was reportedly killed by unknown gunmen.¹⁵³⁵ However, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat in July 2024 noted that protesters suspected the involvement of the GoS in his killing.¹⁵³⁶ Early August 2024, sources reported the killing of Jarmani's wife by unknown perpetrators.¹⁵³⁷ According to a report by the Alma Research and Education Center, a non-profit, bipartisan organisation with a focus on research and analysis of developments in conflicts along Israel's border, the protests in Sweida city intensified in July 2024.¹⁵³⁸ The arrest of individuals, including of protestors or protest leaders, by security forces prompted armed group members to detain members of GoS forces in at least four instances in the reference period.¹⁵³⁹ According to a June 2024 Syria Direct article, this strategy has been used in Sweida governorate for years.¹⁵⁴⁰ The protests were ongoing at the time of finalising this report.

Security incidents related to drug trafficking

In the reference period, clashes between Jordanian forces and drug traffickers were reported at the Syrian-Jordanian border in Sweida governorate.¹⁵⁴¹ Several sources reported an affiliation of drug traffickers in the governorate with Iranian-linked groups,¹⁵⁴² including the Lebanese Hezbollah.¹⁵⁴³ The UNCOI noted an increase in clashes between Jordanian forces and drug traffickers between July and December 2023.¹⁵⁴⁴ Jordan reportedly stepped up its

¹⁵³⁴ SOHR, With ongoing protests | Regime claims to kill an ISIS member and arrest another in Al-Suwaydaa, 10 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵³⁵ Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, Syria: Sweida Tensions Rise After Assassination of Armed Faction Leader, 18 July 2024, [url](#); NPA, Gunmen assassinate top leader of armed group in Syria's Suwayda, 17 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵³⁶ Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, Syria: Sweida Tensions Rise After Assassination of Armed Faction Leader, 18 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵³⁷ Enab Baladi, "مقتل زوجة الهرجاني قائد" لواء الجبل [Wife of Al-Harjani [sic], leader of the Liwa Al-Jabal, killed], 5 August 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Days after assassination of her husband | Marhaj Al-Jarmani's wife shot dead in front of her house in Al-Suwaydaa city, 5 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵³⁸ Alma Research and Education Center, Syria – Sweida – Increased Demonstrations Against the Regime, 8 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵³⁹ Syria TV, السويداء.. فصائل محلي يحتجز مدير بنك الدم في السويداء [In order to force the GoS to release a detainee: local faction detains director of Sweida blood bank], 1 September 2024, [url](#); Al-Quds Al-Arabi, من السويداء إلى غزة: في البحث عن توازن رادع [From Sweida to Gaza: In search of a deterrent balance], 26 June 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Figure of peaceful protests kidnapped | Protesters of Al-Suwaydaa raise banners reading "You will not kill the hope in us", 22 June 2024, [url](#); New Arab (The), Syrian regime sends military reinforcements to Suweida, sparking fears of crackdown, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴⁰ Syria Direct, Hostages and siege: Daraa frees detainees by any means necessary, 13 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴¹ SOHR, After being targeted by airstrike | Two prominent drug dealers assassinated in Al-Suwaydaa, 6 March 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Ten hours after clashes | Jordanian forces kill and arrest 20 smugglers in Al-Suwaydaa Desert, 7 January 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Al-Suwaydaa | Jordanian forces clash with smugglers at borders, 24 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴² HRW, Jordan: Ensure Accountability, Compensation for Syria Strikes, 17 March 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Suspected Jordan strikes on southern Syria kill 10 - monitors, local media, 18 January 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Jordan strikes Iran-linked drug dealers in Syria -intelligence sources, 5 January 2024, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 5, 2024, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁵⁴³ SOHR, After being targeted by airstrike | Two prominent drug dealers assassinated in Al-Suwaydaa, 6 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 51



campaign against drug traffickers in January 2024,¹⁵⁴⁵ following clashes with suspected Iranian-linked smugglers of drugs, weapons and explosives in December 2023.¹⁵⁴⁶ Jordanian¹⁵⁴⁷ or alleged Jordanian airstrikes on areas in Sweida governorate, where drug traffickers were reportedly active, were reported in the reference period,¹⁵⁴⁸ including in December 2023¹⁵⁴⁹ and January 2024.¹⁵⁵⁰ Some airstrikes resulted in civilian fatalities,¹⁵⁵¹ including of children.¹⁵⁵²

Israeli airstrikes on military positions in Sweida governorate were reported in November¹⁵⁵³ and December 2023.¹⁵⁵⁴

(b) Security incidents

For the period between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, there were 112 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Sweida governorate, of which 36 were coded as battles, 36 as explosions/remote violence and 40 as incidents of violence against civilians.¹⁵⁵⁵ By comparison, for the same period one year prior (from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023), ACLED recorded 99 security incidents (30 battles, 25 explosions/remote violence and 44 events coded violence against civilians) in Sweida governorate. During the reference period for this report, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in the district of Sweida. According to ACLED, unidentified armed groups were involved (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2') in around 54 % of all security incidents, mostly in incidents coded as violence against civilians. Local armed groups were involved in around 30 % of all security incidents, mainly in security incidents coded 'battles'. Military forces of Jordan were involved in around 19 % of all security incidents (mainly against smugglers), the vast majority being coded as explosions/remote violence.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Suspected Jordan strikes on southern Syria kill 10 - monitors, local media, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴⁶ Reuters, Suspected Jordan strikes on southern Syria kill 10 - monitors, local media, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴⁷ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Jordan strikes Iran-linked drug dealers in Syria -intelligence sources, 5 January 2024, [url](#); Hassan, M., Growing unrest in Syria's Suwayda as Jordanian airstrikes and civilian deaths increase, MEI, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴⁸ Reuters, Suspected Jordan strikes on southern Syria kill 10 - monitors, local media, 18 January 2024, [url](#); BBC News, Suspected Jordanian air strikes in southern Syria kill 10 - activists, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴⁹ SNHR, Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in December 2023, 4 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁵⁵⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 51; Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 5, 2024, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁵⁵¹ Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Monthly Briefing on the Events of the Syrian Scene January 2024, 13 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵² UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 9 February 2024, [url](#), para. 51; Hassan, M., Growing unrest in Syria's Suwayda as Jordanian airstrikes and civilian deaths increase, MEI, 1 February 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Suspected Jordan strikes on southern Syria kill 10 - monitors, local media, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵³ SOHR, 16th attack since Gaza events | Israel targets military positions and farms in vicinity of Damascus and Al-Suwaydaa leaving six casualties, 8 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵⁴ SOHR, 72nd attack | Israel shells Damascus International Airport area and battalion of Air Defence in Al-Suwaydaa, 28 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵⁵ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East (11 September 2024), [url](#)



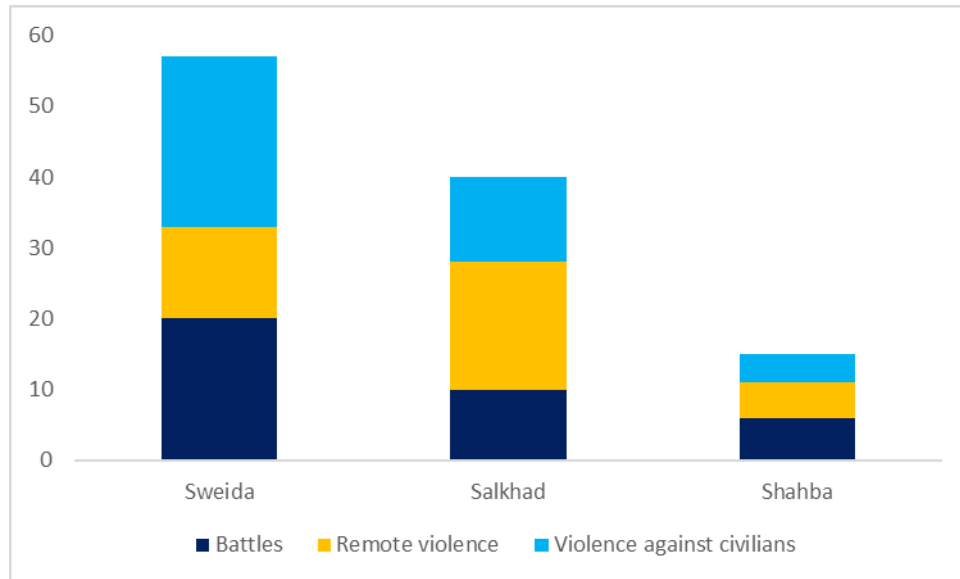


Figure 16. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Sweida governorate between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

(c) Civilian fatalities

Between September 2023 and August 2024, SNHR documented 42 civilian fatalities in Sweida governorate.¹⁵⁵⁶ For the same period, UCDP recorded four civilian fatalities in Sweida governorate.¹⁵⁵⁷ Most civilian fatalities were recorded by SNHR in January 2024 (13) following

¹⁵⁵⁶ Monthly civilian fatalities figures for September 2023 – July 2024 based on SNHR data. SNHR, 55 Civilians, Including 12 Children, 10 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in September 2023, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture, Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023, 1 November 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SNHR, 72 Civilians, Including 14 Children and Seven Women, Killed in Syria in November 2023: Nine of Them, Including One Woman, Died Due to Torture, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, 78 Civilian Deaths, Including Seven Children and Four Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in February 2024, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, 102 Civilian Deaths, Including 11 Children and 14 Women as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in March 2024, 1 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 68 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Three Women as well as Nine Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in April 2024, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, 47 Civilian Deaths, Including Eight Children and Three Women as well as 15 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in May 2024, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 429 Civilian Deaths, Including 65 Children and 38 Women, as well as 53 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in the First Half of 2024, 1 July 2024, [url](#), p. 10; SNHR, 65 Civilian Deaths, Including of 23 Children and Three Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in July 2024, 1 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7; SNHR, 57 Civilian Deaths, Including 13 Children and Six Women, as well as Six Deaths due to Torture, Documented in Syria in August 2024, 1 September 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁵⁵⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 17 September.

airstrikes attributed to Jordan.¹⁵⁵⁸ In Sweida governorate, SNHR documented 13 civilian fatalities in 2021¹⁵⁵⁹, 32 in 2022¹⁵⁶⁰ and 24 in 2023.¹⁵⁶¹

Suwayda 24, an online media platform with focus on Sweida governorate run by Syrian activists, documented 101 civilian fatalities and 62 civilian injuries between September 2023 and July 2024.¹⁵⁶²

(d) Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

In the alleged Jordanian airstrikes in January 2024, several homes in the city of Arman were reportedly destroyed.¹⁵⁶³ Within the time constraints of this report, no further information on attacks on civilian infrastructure and objects in Sweida governorate was found.

Sweida remained one of the governorates with the highest levels of explosive contamination.¹⁵⁶⁴ During the reference period, civilians, including a child, were reported to have been killed or injured in ERW detonations,¹⁵⁶⁵ including in southern rural Sweida¹⁵⁶⁶ and north of Sweida city.¹⁵⁶⁷

(e) Displacement and return

According to UNOCHA, as of July 2023, there were 70 842 IDPs in Sweida governorate.¹⁵⁶⁸ No IDP movements were recorded in the last four months of 2023 within Sweida governorate,

¹⁵⁵⁸ SNHR, 72 Civilian Deaths, Including 18 Children and 10 Women, as well as Five Deaths due to Torture, Documented in January 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 5, 9

¹⁵⁵⁹ SNHR, 1,271 Civilians, Including 299 Children, 134 Women, and 104 Victims of Torture, Killed in Syria in 2021, 1 January 2022, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁵⁶⁰ SNHR, 1,057 Civilians, Including 251 Children, 94 Women, and 133 Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in 2022, 1 January 2023, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁵⁶¹ SNHR, 1,032 Civilian Deaths, Including 181 Children and 150 Women as well as 57 Deaths due to Torture, Documented in 2023, 1 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁵⁶² Suwayda 24, 2024 مقتل 8 أشخاص في السويداء في تموز [Eight fatalities in Sweida in July 2024], 8 August 2024, [url](#); Suwayda 24, 2024 25 بين قتيل وجريح في السويداء خلال حزيران الماضي [25 casualties in Sweida in June], 6 July 2024, [url](#); Suwayda 24, 2024 9 قتلى في السويداء خلال أيار [Nine fatalities in Sweida in May 2024], 6 June 2024, [url](#); Suwayda 24, 2024 أربعة قتلى في السويداء خلال نيسان [Four fatalities in April 2024 in Sweida], 7 May 2024, [url](#); Suwayda 24, 2024 5 اشخاص في السويداء في آذار [Five fatalities documented in Sweida in March 2024], 6 April 2024, [url](#); Suwayda 24, 2024 مقتل وإصابة 8 مدنيين في السويداء خلال شباط [Eight civilian fatalities in February in Sweida], 4 March 2024, [url](#); Suwayda 24, 2024 23 قتيلاً في السويداء في أول شهر من [23 fatalities in Sweida in the first month of 2024], 3 February 2024, [url](#); Suwayda 24, 2023 18 توثيق مقتل شخصاً في السويداء في الشهر الأخير لعام [18 documented fatalities in Sweida in last month of 2023], 6 January 2024, [url](#); Suwayda 24, 2023 عشرة قتلى وأربعة مصابين حصيلة العنف في شهر تشرين الثاني [Ten fatalities and four injuries as a result of violence in the month of November], 20 December 2023, [url](#); Suwayda 24, 2023 9 مقتل أشخاص في الشهر تشرين الأول بالسويداء [9 fatalities in October in Sweida], 11 November 2023, [url](#); Suwayda 24, 2023 قتيلاً وثلاثة جرحى حصيلة العنف في سبتمبر [One fatality and three injuries as a result of violence in September 2023], 6 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶³ BBC News, Suspected Jordanian air strikes in southern Syria kill 10 - activists, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 66

¹⁵⁶⁵ SOHR, Old ordnance | Young man killed in landmine explosion in Al-Suwaydaa countryside, 8 April 2024, [url](#); SOHR, Al-Suwaydaa | Young man killed and two others injured in grenade explosion, 17 November 2023, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Child injured in explosion of an object in Al-Suwaydaa countryside, 8 November 2023, [url](#); SOHR, Old ordnance | Young man injured in explosion of landmine in Al-Suwaydaa countryside, 7 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁶ SOHR, Old ordnance | Young man killed in landmine explosion in Al-Suwaydaa countryside, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁷ SOHR, Al-Suwaydaa | Young man killed and two others injured in grenade explosion, 17 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024: Syrian Arab Republic, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

while 30 IDP arrivals to Sweida from other governorates were recorded.¹⁵⁶⁹ No further data could be found on numbers of IDP movements in 2024.

During the last four months of 2023, around 39 IDP return movements occurred within Sweida governorate, while about 50 return movements took place from other governorates into Sweida.¹⁵⁷⁰ Information on reasons for return could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

¹⁵⁶⁹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Movements (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷⁰ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (December 2023), 4 February 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (November 2023), 29 January 2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (October 2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: IDP Spontaneous Returns (September 2023), 9 November 2023, [url](#)



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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

The research should focus on the period between September 2023 and August 2024. Background information and older trends should be kept very brief and crosslinked as much as possible with previous EUAA COI reports documenting the security situation in Syria, particularly [Syria - Security situation \(October 2023\)](#).

Research should cover the following:

☐ **General description of the security situation**

☐ **Overview of the conflict**

- Political developments
- International involvement
- Recent security trends and armed confrontations during the reference period

☐ **Actors in conflict**

- Brief description and capacity
- Presence and areas of control/influence of the different actors
- Type of weapons and tactics used

☐ **Impact of violence on the civilian population**

- Tactics and weapons used
- Security incidents
- Civilian casualties
- Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war
- Conflict-induced displacement and return

☐ **Security situation and conflict impact on civilians by governorates**

The below structure is to be replicated for each governorate.

- General description of the governorate
- Actors involved in the conflict during the reference period
- Recent security trends





- Impact of the security situation on the civilian population
 - Security incidents
 - Civilian casualties
 - Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war
 - Conflict-induced displacement and return





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