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<b>Reference period</b>	1 June to 30 September 2025
<b>Topics</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <a href="#"><u>Territorial control</u></a></li><li>2. <a href="#"><u>Political developments</u></a></li><li>3. <a href="#"><u>Governance</u></a></li><li>4. <a href="#"><u>Security Situation</u></a></li><li>5. <a href="#"><u>Human rights development related to certain profiles and groups of the population</u></a></li><li>6. <a href="#"><u>Socio-economic situation</u></a></li><li>7. <a href="#"><u>Returns from abroad</u></a></li></ol>
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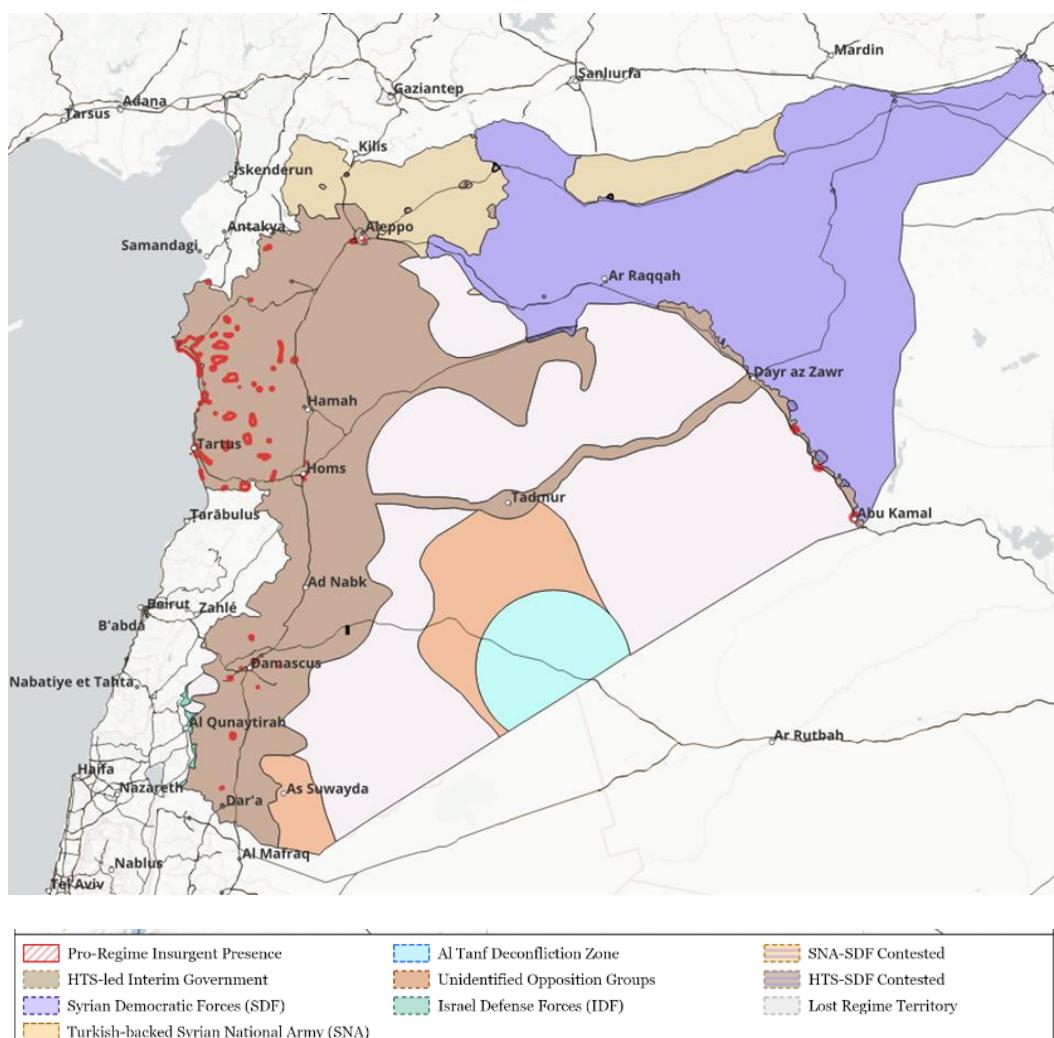
[https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2025\\_10\\_EUAA\\_COI\\_Query\\_Response\\_Q33\\_Syria\\_Major\\_Human\\_rights.pdf](https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2025_10_EUAA_COI_Query_Response_Q33_Syria_Major_Human_rights.pdf)



## COI QUERY RESPONSE – Syria

# Major human rights, security, and socio-economic developments

### 1. Territorial control



**Map 1. Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria, © Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project, 29 September 2025<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria, Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project, 29 September 2025. The visualisation has been generated using QGIS 3.44 on the basis of shapefiles provided by ISW.

The transitional government nominally controlled most Syrian territory outside of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-governed areas in northeast Syria<sup>2</sup> and the mostly Druze-controlled Sweida governorate.<sup>3</sup>

The SDF and government forces operated in close proximity in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor governorates, with minimal coordination between them, just enough to prevent direct conflict, according to military sources of the US-led coalition against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).<sup>4</sup> While the SDF currently controlled most Iraqi border crossing points in eastern Syria, Syrian government forces maintained a presence at the Albu Kamal-Al Qa'im border crossing point.<sup>5</sup>

Despite formally integrating into the structure of the Ministry of Defence (MoD)<sup>6</sup>, elements of the Syrian National Army (SNA) factions ‘still function autonomously’ in parts of northwest Syria.<sup>7</sup> While some reports indicated reduced SNA presence in areas such as Afrin<sup>8</sup>, Ras al-Ayn and Tall Abyad, SNA factions remain active in the region.<sup>9</sup> Most maps depicting areas of territorial influence continued to show the areas between Afrin, Azaz and Jarabulus (Aleppo governorate) and areas between Tall Abyad (Raqqa governorate) and Ras al-Ayn (Hasaka governorate) under the influence of the SNA.<sup>10</sup>

As of mid-September 2025, most of Sweida governorate including its capital were under the control of Druze local factions.<sup>11</sup> The transitional government had control over villages in in Sweida’s eastern and northern countryside.<sup>12</sup>

For a detailed description of territorial control in Syria see sections 5.3 and 5.8 of the [EUAA, COI Report – Syria: Country Focus \(July 2025\)](#)

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<sup>2</sup> USDOD, Lead IG Report to the US Congress April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025, 29 July 2025, [url](#), p. 15

<sup>3</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 1 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> USDOD, Lead IG Report to the US Congress April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025, 29 July 2025, [url](#), p. 17

<sup>5</sup> USDOD, Lead IG Report to the US Congress April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025, 29 July 2025, [url](#), p. 20

<sup>6</sup> See section 1.3.2 of EUAA, COI Report – Syria: Country Focus, July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> Haid, H., Syria’s Unruly Guns: Building a Unified Army in a Fractured State, Middle East Council on Global Affairs, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> Syria Direct, ‘Afrin belongs to its people’: More Kurds return to Afrin, while others wait for guarantees, 30 April 2025, [url](#); NPA, Afrin crisis remains central in talks with Syrian government – SDC official, 18 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> STJ, Northern Syria: Communication to UN Special Procedures Regarding Ongoing Violations of Property Rights in the Operation Peace Spring Area, 5 August 2025, [url](#); STJ, Syria/Afrin: Promises by Transitional Authorities to Restore Rights and End Violations Against Kurds, 11 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> ISW and CT, Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria as of September 17, 2025, [url](#); US CRS, Syria: Transition and U.S. Policy, 5 September 2025, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>11</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 1 August 2025, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Suwayda security chief in southern Syria urges residents’ cooperation on kidnappings, 17 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> Enab Baladi, Suwayda security chief in southern Syria urges residents’ cooperation on kidnappings, 17 September 2025, [url](#)

## 2. Political developments

On 8 August 2025, Druze, Kurdish, and Alawite leaders held a conference in Hasaka, calling for decentralised governance and signalling growing coordination among minority groups concerned about the new authorities.<sup>13</sup> The conference drew condemnation from the transitional government.<sup>14</sup>

The Syrian transitional government was set to conduct its first national parliamentary elections via provincial subcommittees from 15 to 20 September 2025, with the exceptions of the governorates of Sweida, Raqqa, and Hasaka where voting would be postponed due to a lack of government control in these areas.<sup>15</sup> The parliamentary elections were subsequently postponed until 5 October 2025 when they are scheduled to take place ‘across all electoral districts’.<sup>16</sup> Critics argue that the current system does not provide sufficient participation for minority groups<sup>17</sup> and does not favour women’s inclusion despite the adoption of a 20 % quota for women in the total of all the electoral committees.<sup>18</sup> The process of selecting the People’s Assembly (Parliament) relies on a hybrid system rather than a general election: pre-selected electoral colleges vote for two-thirds of assembly members<sup>19</sup>, while the president directly appoints a third of the Assembly’s total 210 seats.<sup>20</sup>

On 16 September, the United States, Jordan, and Syria agreed on a road map to address intercommunal violence in Sweida governorate and to ultimately facilitate the integration of Sweida governorate into the state.<sup>21</sup> The roadmap was rejected by the Sweida Autonomous Government who controls most of the governorate.<sup>22</sup> For more information see section 4. [Southern Syria](#).

At the time of writing, the implementation of the 10 March agreement to integrate SDF into state institutions was not achieved. For more information see section on the security situation in [North-east Syria](#).

At the time of writing, negotiations between the Syria and Israel to reach a security agreement were reportedly ongoing.<sup>23</sup> For more information see section on [Israel](#).

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<sup>13</sup> International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch August 2025, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> New Arab (The), Federalism or fragmentation? The future of Syria’s minorities, 14 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>15</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 25 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> Reuters, Syria to hold parliamentary elections on October 5, 21 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> Reuters, Syria to hold parliamentary elections on October 5, 21 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> Forestier, M., In landmark Syria elections, women still face electoral hurdles, 17 September 2025, Atlantic Council, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> Haid, H., Syria’s parliamentary elections: A turning point or another top-down exercise?, Chatham House, 9 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> Al Jazeera, Syria sets October date for first election since al-Assad’s fall, 21 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 16 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> Enab Baladi, “Legal Committee” rejects roadmap for solution in Suwayda, 17 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>23</sup> Reuters, Exclusive: Israel-Syria talks hit snag over humanitarian corridor, sources say, 26 September 2025, [url](#)

## 3. Governance

### Judiciary

By February 2025, the transitional government reinstated the previous regime's legal code with minor changes, allowing courts and security forces to function within an established framework. Yet resource shortages have led to few hearings and the release of many low-level offenders for lack of evidence. Courts have focused mainly on local crimes rather than Assad-era abuses, while many regime-era judges were dismissed, some replaced by sharia officials, but most positions left vacant. This situation has further eroded public trust in the judiciary, according to researcher Gregory Waters. Vandalised court buildings and a shortage of judges have deepened gaps in legal services. In western and eastern Hama for instance, no courts were operating, forcing residents of Masyaf and Salamiyah to travel to Hama city for legal matters. In response, communities have created alternative justice systems to ease the burden on courts. These vary by context with some led by religious figures, others tied to local councils or civil society. Like local administrations, they are highly decentralised but still nominally acknowledge central government authority.<sup>24</sup>

According to the human rights organisation Syria Justice and Accountability Centre (SJAC) writing in September, the transitional government has reactivated the criminal court system after months of suspension.<sup>25</sup> Trials have resumed, including for felony cases under the Syrian code of criminal procedure. The implementation of constitutional guarantees of legal representation for defendants unable to afford counsel remains uncertain. Pre-trial detention often exceeds legal limits due to overcrowded facilities and rising detainee numbers.<sup>26</sup>

As reported in September, military courts are still suspended, and the Assad-era terrorism courts have been abolished.<sup>27</sup> On 8 July, the Ministry of Justice announced the completion of judicial reforms and confirmed that the national prosecutor is pursuing war crimes charges against four former Assad-era officials.<sup>28</sup>

### Implementation of Islamic rules

In June 2025, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reporters noted that they did not observe gender segregation on buses at a major station in Damascus. However, a traveller heading from Damascus to northern Syria said a driver had asked her to sit away from her male friend in case the bus was stopped at a security checkpoint. In addition, vehicles broadcasting Islamic

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<sup>24</sup> Waters, G., Local Governance in Post-Assad Syria: A Hybrid State Model for the Future?, Carnegie Middle East Center, 15 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> SJAC, A Roadmap for Transitional Justice in Syria – September 2025, 24 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> Phillips. R., Syria Embarks on a Transitional Justice Project, ICCT, 1 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> Phillips. R., Syria Embarks on a Transitional Justice Project, ICCT, 1 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> SJAC, A Roadmap for Transitional Justice in Syria – September 2025, 24 September 2025, [url](#); Syrian Observer (The), Syrian Justice Minister Initiates Accountability Process Amid Concerns Over Jurisdiction, 1 August 2025, [url](#)

messages have been seen driving slowly through the streets of Damascus.<sup>29</sup> A journalist interviewed by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) in May 2025 stated that occasional gender segregation on buses has been observed but the practice is ad-hoc rather than formalised. On rare occasions checkpoint personnel instructed passengers how they should be seated.<sup>30</sup>

The new authorities have not enacted any laws restricting alcohol, music, or gender mixing, nor have they required women to wear headscarves or curtailed their rights. However, many residents report that an atmosphere of religious conservatism has swept over Damascus. Some secular and non-Muslim women report feeling pressure to dress more modestly. They say that at security checkpoints, they have faced intrusive questions when travelling with men to whom they are not related.<sup>31</sup>

Since mid-January 2025, proselytising has intensified in Damascus, especially in Christian-majority areas like al-Qassaa, al-Qishla, Bab Touma, and Dwel'a. Preaching cars and street preachers have urged conversions to Islam and called on women to wear the hijab, fuelling sectarian tension. An imam in Bab Touma confirmed these incidents, noting that many preachers are foreign nationals such as Chechen, Turkmen, and Egyptian, who claim affiliation with the government's official proselytising office and hold official licenses.<sup>32</sup>

Conversion from Islam to other faiths was prohibited.<sup>33</sup> Confidential sources interviewed by the Dutch MFA between February and April 2025 note that atheism and apostasy in Syria remain taboo, with most never openly declaring it due to societal rejection and risk of ostracism. In Idlib and northern Aleppo, open apostasy could lead to murder, while in Damascus it might be tolerated within closed circles. No specific cases of problems for atheists or apostates have been reported since the takeover by the transitional government.<sup>34</sup>

## 4. Security situation

In a July 2025 report, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) assessed that since December 2024, urban areas have seen rising criminality, including more kidnappings and property-related disputes in return areas, while overall security across much of the country remains fragile.<sup>35</sup> In the assessment of researcher Gregory

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<sup>29</sup> France24, Between freedom and restrictions, Syrians navigate new reality, 4 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> Denmark, DIS, Syria - Security situation, June 2025, [url](#), p. 52

<sup>31</sup> New York Times (The), Clashing Visions of Syria's Future Play Out in Ancient Alleys of Damascus, 11 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> STJ, A Critical Examination of Syria's Religious Landscape After the Regime's Fall: Exclusion, Extremism, and Coercion, 24 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>33</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Syria, 2025, [url](#)

<sup>34</sup> Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *Algemeen ambtsbericht Syrië* [General Country Report Syria], May 2025, [url](#), p. 101

<sup>35</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 20



Waters<sup>36</sup>, current security challenges primarily stem from two issues. First, poor-performing local security officials are failing to enforce discipline within their ranks. Discussions Waters had with Ministry of Interior (MoI) officials and activists across regions indicated that these officials hold considerable sway over their forces' conduct. While some have developed effective internal and civilian-engagement policies, consistent enforcement across all districts remains lacking. The second major driver of insecurity is inter-communal conflict, which has become the leading trigger of sectarian violence in Syria. Recent security incidents have often stemmed from unresolved local disputes, including housing and property claims or cycles of revenge, which civil peace mechanisms have failed to contain.<sup>37</sup>

## Central Syria

In June 2025, insecurity persisted in central and coastal Syria, fuelling sectarian tensions as the transitional government struggled to establish stability amid violence targeting minority communities. On 4 June, government forces killed six Alawite civilians at a checkpoint in Hama governorate, while on the same day unidentified assailants executed a man in Homs province. The following day, government forces reportedly killed three civilians, burned houses, and displaced residents from villages near Jableh city, Latakia governorate.<sup>38</sup>

Sporadic violent incidents, such as killings, kidnappings, and infringements on individual liberties, persisted in Homs, Hama, the coastal areas, and other regions. According to the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, some Syrians whom the Special Envoy met in Damascus expressed concern about ongoing attacks targeting specific communities and societal groups, including Alawites, Druze, and women. Although many interlocutors stressed that these incidents did not seem systematic or part of official policy, they highlighted the ongoing challenges the transitional authorities face in controlling certain groups, whether affiliated with them or operating independently.<sup>39</sup>

In mid-August, Assadist remnants have reportedly intensified their attacks against Syrian transitional government forces on the Syrian coast. The MoD announced on 15 August that attacks on their forces in Latakia and Tartous governorates have increased over the past three days. An MoD vehicle was attacked on the al Burjan Bridge in Latakia on 14 August. In response, the MoD deployed significant reinforcements, including armoured units, to the coast

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<sup>36</sup> Gregory Waters is an expert on the Syrian regime's security services and the Islamic State's insurgency in Syria. Waters previously worked as a consultant at the International Crisis Group where he conducted field research in northwest and northeast Syria and co-authored three reports on non-state armed group activity across the country. He conducts independent field work in Syria on a variety of topics. See [url](#)

<sup>37</sup> Waters, G., A New Syria Starts to Take Shape, Syria Revisited, 29 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>38</sup> International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch June, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>39</sup> OSSE, United Nations Deputy Special Envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi - Briefing to the Security Council, 17 June 2025, [url](#), p. 3

on 15 August. Previously, on 6 August, transitional government forces arrested Assadist remnants who likely attempted a false flag attack on a church in Tartous governorate.<sup>40</sup>

## North-east Syria

Since the end of March 2025, Türkiye and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) have refrained from engaging in hostilities. This pause in fighting extended from Kobane along the Euphrates River to Raqqa.<sup>41</sup> The SDF and government forces were reported to operate in close proximity in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor governorates, with minimal coordination between them, just enough to prevent direct conflict, according to military sources of the US-led coalition against ISIL.<sup>42</sup>

On 9 August, Syria's state news agency reported that the transitional government withdrew from scheduled talks in Paris with the SDF after an SDF-backed conference called for decentralisation, highlighting ongoing difficulties in implementing the 10 March agreement on integrating the SDF into state institutions. Tensions escalated further when a transitional government soldier was reportedly killed by SDF forces in Aleppo governorate on 12 August, followed by clashes in Deir Ez-Zor on 14 August.<sup>43</sup> The fighting was concentrated in the areas of al-Buhayliyah and al-Jeneina, in western countryside of Deir Ez-Zor. Tensions and clashes between the SDF and the transitional government were also reported in eastern rural Aleppo governorate.<sup>44</sup> On 17 August, interim president Ahmed al-Sharaa expressed hope for a peaceful resolution within 'a few months', with support from the US and Türkiye.<sup>45</sup>

In the context of mounting political tensions between the transitional government and SDF in August, leaders from several tribes, including Al-Nasser, Al-Saab, Al-Boubna, and Al-Boujaber, have announced active mobilisation and openly called for armed confrontation with the SDF.<sup>46</sup> The tribes are spread across the governorates of Deir Ez-Zor, Hasaka and Raqqa. Deir Ez-Zor governorate, home to an entirely Arab population, has long been a focal point of tensions between the SDF and local tribes.<sup>47</sup> Although recent mobilisations have highlighted tribal opposition to the SDF, Arab tribes in northeast Syria are far from unified. Years of conflict have fractured traditional structures, creating divisions both between and within tribes. Elements of major tribes such as the Shammar, Ogeidat, and Jabour have cooperated with the SDF, contributing to local governance and military formations, and have so far preserved this alliance. Other factions within these same tribes, however, voice persistent grievances, citing

<sup>40</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 15 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>41</sup> USDOD, Lead IG Report to the US Congress April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025, 29 July 2025, [url](#), pp. 25-26

<sup>42</sup> USDOD, Lead IG Report to the US Congress April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025, 29 July 2025, [url](#), p. 17

<sup>43</sup> Security Council Report, Syria: Briefing and Consultations, 20 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>44</sup> Enab Baladi, Clashes Between Syrian Ministry of Defense Forces and the SDF in Deir Ezzor, Eastern Syria, 14 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>45</sup> Security Council Report, Syria: Briefing and Consultations, 20 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>46</sup> Haid, H., Tribal Mobilization Threatens Northeast Syria: Sweida as a Cautionary Tale, Arab Reform Initiative, 27 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>47</sup> FDD Long War Journal, Sunni Arab tribes mobilize against the Syrian Democratic Forces, 15 August 2025, [url](#)

marginalisation, forced conscription, and limited political representation. These divisions often stem from local power struggles, historical loyalties, and shifting interests.<sup>48</sup>

In August, sporadic clashes between local tribal fighters and SDF were reported in Gharanij (Deir Ez-Zor governorate) which left several people being injured.<sup>49</sup> These came after the SDF closed the al-Nashwa road in Hasaka and launched a wave of arrests after one of its patrols came under fire, with eight members reportedly captured by suspected al-Baqara tribe.<sup>50</sup>

According to Enab Baladi, since early September, clashes between the SDF and transitional government's forces have intensified, marked by exchanges of fire and reported infiltration attempts by both sides in Raqqa and Aleppo countrysides.<sup>51</sup> On 10 September, SDF and MoD forces exchanged artillery fire north of Jirah Military Airport in Aleppo governorate.<sup>52</sup> SDF shelling hit MoD-held villages Kayariya, Rasm al Ahmar, and Habubba Kabir, killing two civilians and wounding seven, while MoD countered with fire on SDF positions. The SDF later claimed to have repelled an MoD infiltration attempt but omitted reference to its own strikes.<sup>53</sup> In late September, clashes involving artillery and drones between MoD and SDF forces were reported in the frontline area of Deir Hafer (Aleppo governorate), resulting in casualties<sup>54</sup> including civilians.<sup>55</sup>

According to a senior Syrian official interviewed by Reuters, Türkiye has been growing impatient with the pace of the integration of SDF into the Syrian state and would support a military intervention against SDF if the integration is not achieved by the end of 2025.<sup>56</sup> At the time of finalising this query, the implementation of the 10 March agreement to integrate SDF into state institutions had not been achieved.

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<sup>48</sup> Haid, H., Tribal Mobilization Threatens Northeast Syria: Sweida as a Cautionary Tale, Arab Reform Initiative, 27 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>49</sup> New Arab (The), Clashes break out in Deir az-Zour between Syria government troops, Kurdish-led SDF, 14 August 2025, [url](#); Haid, H., Tribal Mobilization Threatens Northeast Syria: Sweida as a Cautionary Tale, Arab Reform Initiative, 27 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>50</sup> Haid, H., Tribal Mobilization Threatens Northeast Syria: Sweida as a Cautionary Tale, Arab Reform Initiative, 27 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>51</sup> Enab Baladi, Syrian Defense Ministry: Dead and injured in SDF shelling east of Aleppo, 11 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>52</sup> Enab Baladi, Syrian Defense Ministry: Dead and injured in SDF shelling east of Aleppo, 11 September 2025, [url](#); ISW and CT, Iran Update, 11 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>53</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 11 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 25 September 2025, [url](#); National (The), Military pressure on Syrian Kurdish militia in Aleppo increases as Al Shara warns of war, 24 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> New Arab (The), Syria monitor says 7 civilians killed in govt bombardment in north, 20 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> Reuters, Sectarian violence risks dividing Syria despite Sharaa's diplomacy, 15 September 2025, [url](#)

## Southern Syria

In July, violence sharply escalated in Sweida governorate, following intense clashes between Druze militias and Bedouin<sup>57</sup> tribal fighters.<sup>58</sup> According to an analysis by a researcher specialised in security affairs and drug trafficking in Syria, militias and tribal networks in Sweida and Dar'a governorates have a long history of engaging in large-scale smuggling of goods ranging from food and medicine to drugs, fuel, wildlife, and antiquities. After the fall of Assad, three main actors were identified of being involved in illicit activities: Druze and community-aligned militias, Bedouin tribal groups, and former regime-linked networks with ties to Iran and Hezbollah.<sup>59</sup> Other sources<sup>60</sup>, including Jordanian authorities assessed that Sweida has become a key hub for drug smuggling operations out of Syria.<sup>61</sup>

Tensions between Druze militias and Bedouin-linked smuggling groups have occasionally erupted into open conflict, particularly when traffickers used violence or targeted civilians. Sweida has experienced rising kidnappings, road ambushes, and retaliatory raids, reflecting a deepening security vacuum and communal fragmentation.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, there have been long standing tensions between Bedouin and Druze in Sweida over land and money disputes.<sup>63</sup> On 11 July 2025, a robbery on the Damascus-Sweida highway allegedly driven by competition over smuggling routes, lead to retaliatory kidnappings and clashes that escalated into the widely reported July violence.<sup>64</sup>

In July, violence escalated sharply after intense clashes erupted on 13 July between Druze militias and Bedouin tribal fighters in Sweida. The conflict intensified between 14-16 July amid the deployment of Syrian transitional government forces in Sweida and Israeli airstrikes targeting Syrian security sites, including in Damascus. On 15 July, Israel launched airstrikes on transitional government armoured columns, citing commitments to protect Druze civilians amid reports of summary executions by government forces. The next day, Israel escalated by striking the Syrian army headquarters and areas near the presidential palace in Damascus, deterring a full-scale assault on Druze factions in Sweida.<sup>65</sup> On 16 July, government forces withdrew from Sweida governorate.<sup>66</sup> The same day, Druze militias attacked Bedouins in the

<sup>57</sup> In Sweida, the term 'Bedouin' is often used broadly to describe rural or tribal communities, commonly referred to as *ashayer* (tribes), which have historically been concentrated in two neighbourhoods within the city and in about eight villages in the surrounding area. For instance, Maqwas neighbourhood in Sweida is inhabited by a Bedouin majority. BBC News, Dozens killed in clashes between Druze and Bedouin in southern Syria, 14 July 2025, [url](#); Hassan, H., How Foreign Agendas Hijacked a Local Crisis in Syria, New Lines Magazine, 24 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>58</sup> Security Council Report, Syria August 2025 Monthly Forecast, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>59</sup> Rose, C., Illicit economies play big role in Syria's post-Assad flashpoints, Al Majalla, 2 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>60</sup> Sharawi, A., Syria Is No Longer a Narco-State, But the Captagon Trade Rolls On, FDD, 3 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>61</sup> Hassan, H., How Foreign Agendas Hijacked a Local Crisis in Syria, New Lines Magazine, 24 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>62</sup> Rose, C., Illicit economies play big role in Syria's post-Assad flashpoints, Al Majalla, 2 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>63</sup> Montag, S., Despite Calls for Calm, the Violence in Sweida Shows No Sign of Ending, New Lines Magazine, 18 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>64</sup> Rose, C., Illicit economies play big role in Syria's post-Assad flashpoints, Al Majalla, 2 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>65</sup> International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch July 2025, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>66</sup> Al, Syria: New investigation reveals evidence government and affiliated forces extrajudicially executed dozens of Druze people in Suwayda, 2 September 2025, [url](#)

Sweida countryside, resulting in ‘mass killings, looting, and forced displacement’, prompting Bedouin leaders to call in reinforcements from across Syria.<sup>67</sup> Bedouin tribes from across Syria began mobilising in large numbers to aid their brothers, with up to 50 000 individuals from some 40 clans reportedly called up and converging on Sweida, according to local monitors. Around 200 tribal fighters were massing at the entrance of the Sweida city on 17-18 July. Dozens of armed clans, including groups from Hama and Aleppo governorates, either sent fighters or declared their intent to join the battle.<sup>68</sup>

On 17 July, Interim President al-Sharaa accused Druze fighters of breaching the truce that had led to the government’s withdrawal and accused Israel of seeking to destabilise Syria.<sup>69</sup> On 18 July, U.S. Envoy Tom Barrack announced a ceasefire between Israel and Syria, supported by Türkiye, Jordan, and other regional actors. Despite sporadic violence, a renewed truce in Sweida was declared on 19 July, with further troop deployments to stabilise the area. Talks between Israel and Syria took place in Paris on 26 July, facilitated by the U.S. Although minor skirmishes continued between 20-22 July, major fighting subsided. Hundreds of casualties were reported among security forces, Druze fighters, and civilians. There were reports of extrajudicial killings, mass displacement and damage to critical infrastructure including water, electricity, and telecommunications networks.<sup>70</sup> Sources assessed that over 1 000 people<sup>71</sup> were killed in the violence including Druze<sup>72</sup> and Bedouin civilians, members of the transitional government’s security forces, local and tribal armed groups.<sup>73</sup>

Since mid-July, the violence in Sweida has displaced about 187 200 people, two-thirds of whom remain in the governorate, while others moved to Dar'a and Rural Damascus. In late August, 8 500 IDPs returned, nearly half to Salkhad and 42 % to As-Sweida District.<sup>74</sup> The IDPs include Druze internally displaced within Sweida, as well as Bedouins who fled or were evacuated from the governorate.<sup>75</sup> According to Etana Syria, no IDPs have returned to Sweida’s western countryside, where the General Security Service (GSS) and other pro-government groups maintain control and returns remain prohibited. This has fuelled concerns

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<sup>67</sup> International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch July 2025, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>68</sup> Hassan, H., How Foreign Agendas Hijacked a Local Crisis in Syria, New Lines Magazine, 24 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch July 2025, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>70</sup> Security Council Report, Syria August 2025 Monthly Forecast, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>71</sup> OHCHR, Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls, 21 August 2025, [url](#); SNHR, The Death of 89 Civilians Including 13 Children and 10 Women, and One Death due to Torture Recorded July 2025 in Syria, 1 August 2025, [url](#), p. 3; SOHR, Including 1,490 people from Al-Suwaiddaa | The number of fatalities since beginning of latest escalation in Al-Suwaiddaa approximates 2,000, 28 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>72</sup> OHCHR, Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls, 21 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> SNHR, The Death of 89 Civilians Including 13 Children and 10 Women, and One Death due to Torture Recorded July 2025 in Syria, 1 August 2025, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>74</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 9 - Escalation of Hostilities in As-Sweida Governorate, 29 August 2025, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>75</sup> AP, Displaced Bedouin families in limbo as Syrian government and Druze authorities remain at odds, 6 September 2025, [url](#)

that the transitional government may prioritise settling Bedouin IDPs from Sweida, currently in eastern Dar'a, while blocking the return of displaced Druze residents.<sup>76</sup>

As of end of August, the humanitarian situation in Sweida was assessed by UNOCHA to remain critical. Damage to infrastructure and disruption of services have left displaced families in urgent need of shelter, food, water, healthcare, and protection, with aid access hampered by insecurity, blocked roads, and explosive hazards.<sup>77</sup>

Despite a fragile ceasefire, tensions in Sweida continued, with 33 clashes and shelling incidents recorded by Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) in August involving Druze factions, government forces, and Bedouin militias.<sup>78</sup> As of end of August, the ceasefire agreed on 19 July in Sweida has largely continued to hold despite instances of sporadic clashes in the area.<sup>79</sup> In September, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assessed that although hostilities have largely subsided, the situation in Sweida and its surrounding areas remains volatile.<sup>80</sup> Druze militias maintained control of central, southern, and eastern Sweida, while transitional government forces maintain control in Sweida's northern and western countrysides.<sup>81</sup> According to Enab Baladi, as of mid-September 2025 the government controlled more than 30 villages in Sweida's eastern and northern countryside, while local Druze factions controlled most of the governorate, including the capital.<sup>82</sup>

The roads linking Dar'a and Sweida governorates have seen a sharp increase in armed attacks, kidnappings, and robberies. Civilians and merchants are frequently targeted, heightening security concerns and disrupting transportation and trade between the two governorates.<sup>83</sup> Since mid-August, the eastern countryside of Dar'a, near the Sweida border, has witnessed multiple killings and kidnappings of civilians from Sweida, including humanitarian workers. The attacks were attributed to unidentified perpetrators and to Bedouin tribes from Sweida who are demanding the release of their people detained by Druze armed groups in Sweida.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Etana Syria, Brief: Suwayda ceasefire holds, political talks stall amid mutual distrust, 11 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 9 - Escalation of Hostilities in As-Sweida Governorate, 29 August 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>78</sup> ACLED, Middle East Overview: September 2025, 5 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>79</sup> Security Council Report, Syria: Briefing and Consultations, 20 August 2025, [url](#); OSES, United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen Briefing to the Security Council, 21 August 2025, [url](#); UNHCR, Flash Update #7 on the situation in As-Sweida, 9 September 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>80</sup> UNHCR, Flash Update #7 on the situation in As-Sweida, 9 September 2025, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>81</sup> Al-Tamini, A., The Druze 'National Guard' in Southern Syria, 17 September 2025, [url](#); ISW and CT, Iran Update, 17 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>82</sup> Enab Baladi, Suwayda security chief in southern Syria urges residents' cooperation on kidnappings, 17 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>83</sup> Syria 24 correspondent: Armed men assassinate a driver, and several security incidents occur on the Daraa-Suwayda road], [url](#), 17 August 2025

<sup>84</sup> Syria Direct, Daraa caught between Suwayda crisis and Israeli threats, 9 September 2025, [url](#)



## Political developments related to the situation in Sweida governorate

On 6 August, a committee led by Druze Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri declared the formation of a ‘temporary’ autonomous government in Sweida governorate. Its Supreme Legal Committee appointed an executive body, security officials, and ministerial heads to administer the province independently from the transitional government.<sup>85</sup> On 23 August, about 30 factions in Sweida unified under the National Guard Forces (NGF), pledging allegiance to Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Hikmat al-Hajri who is recognised as the legitimate representative of the community. The NGF stated its priorities as maintaining internal security, preserving stability, and combating lawlessness and crime across the governorate.<sup>86</sup>

The newly formed NGF comprises several Druze militias, including the Unification Shield with its 23 battalions, Men of Dignity, Liwa al Jibal, Unified Popular Resistance, Southern Shield Forces, Mountain Shield Forces, Sheikh al Karama Forces, and the 164<sup>th</sup> Brigade. The Men of Dignity militia, which had previously been open to cooperating with the Syrian transitional government, rejected government control over Sweida following atrocities committed against Druze civilians in July. Hijri praised the formation of the ‘National Guard’ and the ‘Supreme Legal Committee’, claiming these bodies now serve as the security, military, political, and legal structures of Sweida governorate.<sup>87</sup>

Both the ‘National Guard’ and ‘Supreme Legal Committee’ in Sweida include several former officers from the Assad era. Brigadier General Jihad Ghoutani, who served as an artillery commander for Assad since his promotion in 2019 and participated in battles across Syria, is part of the Sweida ‘National Guard’. The ‘Supreme Legal Committee’ initially appointed former Assad intelligence officer Brigadier General Shakib Ajoud Nasr, who was responsible for political security in Tartous, as head of internal security on 6 August. However, Nasr was replaced by a Suwaydawi judge on 12 August.<sup>88</sup>

According to two senior Druze figures interviewed by Reuters, since the escalation in July 2025 Israel has supported efforts to unify divided Druze factions and delivered military supplies. Furthermore, Israel has been providing salaries for an estimated 3 000 Druze militia fighters, according to senior Druze figures and a Western intelligence source. These claims could not be verified independently by the source, and Israel authorities had not provided any comment.<sup>89</sup>

On 16 September, the United States, Jordan, and Syria agreed on a roadmap to address intercommunal violence in Sweida governorate. It seeks to set up short and medium-term security and administrative arrangements to facilitate the eventual integration of the

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<sup>85</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 7 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>86</sup> UNHCR, Flash Update #7 on the situation in As-Sweida, 9 September 2025, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>87</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 25 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>88</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 25 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>89</sup> Reuters, Under US pressure, Syria and Israel inch toward security deal, 16 September 2025, [url](#)

governorate into the Syrian state. Under the roadmap, the Syrian government pledged to conduct an independent investigation into crimes committed in Sweida and prosecute perpetrators under Syrian law. The MoI will deploy forces along Damascus-Sweida road and along the borders of Sweida governorate, while all tribal fighters who entered Sweida during the July 2025 violence from other parts of the country, many of whom aligned with the government, are to be withdrawn from the governorate.<sup>90</sup> The Sweida Autonomous Government rejected the roadmap proposed criticising its reliance on the Syrian government as a 'neutral party' and expressing distrust in the Syrian judiciary to provide accountability.<sup>91</sup>

## Damascus

On 22 June, a suicide bomber attacked the Greek Orthodox Mar St. Elias Church in Damascus<sup>92</sup>, killing at least 27 people and injuring more than 60. This was the deadliest attack on Christians in years and the first mass casualty suicide attack since the fall of Assad.<sup>93</sup> While authorities initially blamed ISIL, the lesser-known group Saraya Ansar al-Sunna (SAS), ideologically aligned with ISIL and notorious since February for targeting religious minorities, claimed responsibility the following day.<sup>94</sup> (for more information see section on [Christians](#)).

On 16 July 2025, Israeli forces carried out airstrikes on the MoD headquarters in Damascus's Umayyad Square, a densely populated area in the city centre, leading to 3 civilians killed and 36 injured.<sup>95</sup> In late August, Syrian officials reported that Israeli drone strikes near Damascus killed six soldiers, part of a surge in attacks. The deadliest strike came on 26 August, when warplanes hit a former base in al-Kisweh, south of Damascus, killing at least five soldiers dismantling Israeli surveillance devices.<sup>96</sup> Further strikes were reported on 27 August about 10 km from where interim President al-Sharaa attended the Damascus International Fair.<sup>97</sup>

On 3 September, a car bomb targeted a GSS commander in Damascus's al-Mezze neighbourhood, followed the next day by reports of an improvised explosive device (IED) detonating on a parked vehicle with no casualties. A similar device had exploded in al-Mezze on 16 August. ISIL or Assadist insurgents are suspected, as both have conducted IED attacks in the area.<sup>98</sup> In September, Syrian authorities announced the arrest of Hezbollah cell and seizure of its weapons in Damascus suburbs.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 16 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>91</sup> Enab Baladi, "Legal Committee" rejects roadmap for solution in Suwayda, 17 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>92</sup> Zelin, A., The Damascus Church Attack: Who Is Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah?, TWI, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>93</sup> International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch June 2025, n.d, [url](#)

<sup>94</sup> International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch June 2025, n.d, [url](#)

<sup>95</sup> SNHR, Three Civilians Killed and 34 Others Wounded in Israeli Bombing Targeting the Ministry of Defense Headquarters in Damascus on July 16, 2025, 19 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>96</sup> ACLED, Middle East Overview: September 2025, 5 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>97</sup> BBC News, Israeli strikes kill six Syrian troops, Syria says, 28 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>98</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 4 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>99</sup> L'Orient Today, Syrian forces dismantle 'Hezbollah-affiliated cell' in Damascus suburb, 11 September 2025, [url](#); Al-Monitor, Syria claims Hezbollah cell plotting attacks arrested in Damascus: What we know, 11 September 2025, [url](#)



## Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant insurgency

A UN Security Council report based on information received until 22 June 2025 stated that ISIL maintains an estimated 3 000 fighters across Syria and Iraq. While the Badia desert remained its main stronghold, ISIL also covertly expanded into populated areas around Damascus, the Aleppo countryside, Homs, and southern regions such as Tulul al-Safa, Sweida, and Dar'a, using small mobile cells and strengthening smuggling routes to support its operations. ISIL launched over 90 attacks nationwide, primarily aimed at the SDF in north-eastern Syria, where an estimated 400 ISIL fighters were still operating.<sup>100</sup> The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) documented 114 ISIL attacks in Deir Ez-Zor governorate since the beginning of 2025, mostly targeting security forces but also civilians.<sup>101</sup>

ISIL also continued planning attacks on detention facilities managed by the SDF and other vital infrastructure. The transitional government thwarted over eight ISIL plots, including planned attacks on religious sites near Damascus and prisons housing ISIL members.<sup>102</sup>

US-led coalition airstrikes and raids targeted suspected ISIL leaders and operatives in Idlib<sup>103</sup> and Aleppo governorates<sup>104</sup> including near Aleppo International Airport.<sup>105</sup> In September, a GSS member was executed by an ISIL suspect in Dar'a governorate, a province where ISIL has not claimed any attacks since the fall of Assad.<sup>106</sup> Further ISIL attacks against SDF were reported in late September in Deir Ez-Zor governorate, leading to casualties.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> UN Security Council, Thirty-sixth 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/2025/482], 24 July 2025, [url](#), paras 60-62

<sup>101</sup> SOHR, 114 attacks since early 2025 | IS\*IS cells noticeably escalate their operations in SDF-controlled areas in Deir Ezzor, 27 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>102</sup> UN Security Council, Thirty-sixth 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/2025/482], 24 July 2025, [url](#), paras 60-62

<sup>103</sup> International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch June 2025, n.d. [url](#)

<sup>104</sup> New York Times (The), U.S. Kills Islamic State Operative in Rare Raid in Syria, 21 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>105</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 4 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>106</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 16 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>107</sup> NPA, ISIS attack kills 4 SDF fighters in Deir ez-Zor, 27 September 2025, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Armed attack targets SDF in Deir Ezzor, eastern Syria, 20 September 2025, [url](#)

## International involvement

### Israel

Since December 2024, Israel advanced deep into the UN-monitored demilitarised zone separating the occupied Golan Heights and the Syrian-held territory in Quneitra, establishing nine military posts from Mount Hermon through Quneitra city and to parts of western Dar'a.<sup>108</sup>

SOHR recorded 95 Israeli operations in 2025, 85 airstrikes and 10 ground raids.<sup>109</sup> In August, Israel carried out 10 airstrikes in Syria, down from 33 in July according to ACLED. While July's strikes were framed as protecting Druze in Sweida, August's operations focused on degrading Syrian military capacity. The deadliest strike came on 26 August, when warplanes hit a former base in al-Kisweh, south of Damascus, killing at least five soldiers dismantling Israeli surveillance devices. Further strikes and a ground landing followed the next day. Since Assad's fall, ACLED has recorded 277 Israeli strikes in Syria against arms depots, missile sites, and air defences. Israel has also set up nine outposts in the UN buffer zone and expanded into Dar'a and Quneitra, carrying out over 80 incursions in August 2025 alone. These included detentions of dozens of civilians and the deployment of 60 soldiers near Mount Hermon, a key surveillance point over the Syrian and Lebanese borders.<sup>110</sup>

Human Rights Watch reported that since December 2024, Israeli forces occupying parts of southern Syria have committed abuses including forced displacement, home demolitions, property seizures, and arbitrary detentions with transfers to Israel.<sup>111</sup> Between June and September 2025, Human Rights Watch interviewed eight people, including displaced residents of al-Hamidiya village (Quneitra governorate) whose homes were demolished, a briefly detained activist-lawyer by Israeli forces, a community leader, and a resident of Jubata al-Khashab (Quneitra governorate) barred by Israeli forces from accessing farmland. It also gathered testimonies from relatives and witnesses about seven Syrians detained since December 2024, all of whom were transferred to Israel and are reportedly held incommunicado without charge. In response to HRW's inquiry on the detainees, the Israeli military said its operations in southern Syria are conducted 'to protect the citizens of the State of Israel'.

According to testimonies, Israeli forces reportedly justified expulsions, home demolitions, and land clearances in al-Hamidiya and Jubata al-Khashab villages by citing the construction of new military installations nearby.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> HRW, Syria: Israel Forcibly Displaces Villagers in Occupied South, 17 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>109</sup> BBC News, Israeli strikes kill six Syrian troops, Syria says, 28 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>110</sup> ACLED, Middle East Overview: September 2025, 5 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>111</sup> HRW, Syria: Israel Forcibly Displaces Villagers in Occupied South, 17 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>112</sup> HRW, Syria: Israel Forcibly Displaces Villagers in Occupied South, 17 September 2025, [url](#)



In September, Israel has reportedly proposed a new security agreement to Syria that would replace the 1974 disengagement accord. The plan envisions three demilitarised zones in southern Syria with restrictions increasing closer to Israel, alongside a no-fly zone for Syrian aircraft extending from Damascus to the Israeli border. The proposed agreement reportedly outlines three zones: Zone 1: The existing buffer zone in Quneitra governorate would be extended two kilometres further into Syrian territory; Zone 2: An unspecified adjacent area closest to Israel where Syrian military forces and heavy weapons would be barred, though GSS and police could operate. The exact size of this zone is not defined. Zone 3: Stretching from the boundary of Zone 2 to Damascus, this area would be designated a no-fly zone. It remains unclear whether Syrian military units or heavy weaponry would be permitted there.<sup>113</sup> At the time of finalising this query, no security agreement between Syria and Israel had been formally announced.

## US-led coalition

Media reported that, through a phased process, the U.S. planned to ultimately reduce its military presence by decreasing the number of bases and cutting the number of troops stationed in Syria to fewer than 1 000. In May, U.S. and Coalition forces withdrew from three bases in the Middle Euphrates River Valley (MERV)—Mission Support Site Euphrates, Mission Support Site Green Village, and H2—either dismantling and removing infrastructure or handing it over to the SDF. The departing personnel were either relocated to other US-led coalition bases in Syria or Iraq, or returned to the United States upon completion of their deployment.<sup>114</sup> During the reporting period, the US-led coalition carried out airstrikes against ISIL targets.<sup>115</sup>

## Türkiye

Türkiye has indicated that it is considering the establishment of a training base in Syria to support the training of Syrian government forces and has assessed several potential sites in central Syria.<sup>116</sup> Türkiye announced it will supply weapons, equipment, and logistical support to Syria under a new defence cooperation deal. The agreement, signed by Defence Ministers of the two countries, also covers military training and consultancy, strengthening Türkiye's

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<sup>113</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 17 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>114</sup> USDOD, Lead IG Report to the US Congress April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025, 29 July 2025, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>115</sup> New York Times (The), U.S. Kills Islamic State Operative in Rare Raid in Syria, 21 August 2025, [url](#); ISW and CT, Iran Update, 4 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>116</sup> USDOD, Lead IG Report to the US Congress April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025, 29 July 2025, [url](#), pp. 25-26

backing of Syria's interim government.<sup>117</sup> Around 10 000 Turkish troops are reportedly stationed in northern Syria<sup>118</sup>, including Afrin, Ras al-Ayn, and Tell Abyad.<sup>119</sup>

## Russia

Russia continued to maintain forces at the Hmeimim Air Base, the Tartus Naval Facility<sup>120</sup> and at Qamishli airport.<sup>121</sup> A July 2025 analysis stated that Russia has ramped up the deployment of aerial military reinforcements to Qamishli airport, signalling an effort to expand its regional military presence.<sup>122</sup>

## Security incidents

Between 1 June and 26 September 2025, ACLED documented 1 665 security incidents Syria: 491 of these were coded as battles, 416 as explosions/remote violence, and 758 as violence against civilians. The highest number of security incidents documented by ACLED occurred in the months of July and August (see Table 1).<sup>123</sup> Between 1 June and 26 September 2025, ACLED recorded the highest number of security incidents in the governorates of Deir Ez-Zor (332), Sweida (206) and Aleppo (187). The lowest number of security incidents were recorded in the governorates of Tartous (24), Latakia (41) and Damascus (41).

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<sup>117</sup> AP, Turkey to provide weapons and support to Syria under new defense agreement, 14 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>118</sup> STJ, Northern Syria: Communication to UN Special Procedures Regarding Ongoing Violations of Property Rights in the Operation Peace Spring Area, 5 August 2025, [url](#); Al-Monitor, Syria state media's Kurdish-language launch: tactical move or real shift?, 19 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>119</sup> STJ, Northern Syria: Communication to UN Special Procedures Regarding Ongoing Violations of Property Rights in the Operation Peace Spring Area, 5 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>120</sup> USDOD, Lead IG Report to the US Congress April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025, 29 July 2025, [url](#), pp. 25-26

<sup>121</sup> Al-Ahmed, S., Russia's military presence in post-Assad Syria: A growing security liability undermining stability, MEI, 2 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>122</sup> Al-Ahmed, S., Russia's military presence in post-Assad Syria: A growing security liability undermining stability, MEI, 2 July 2025, [url](#)

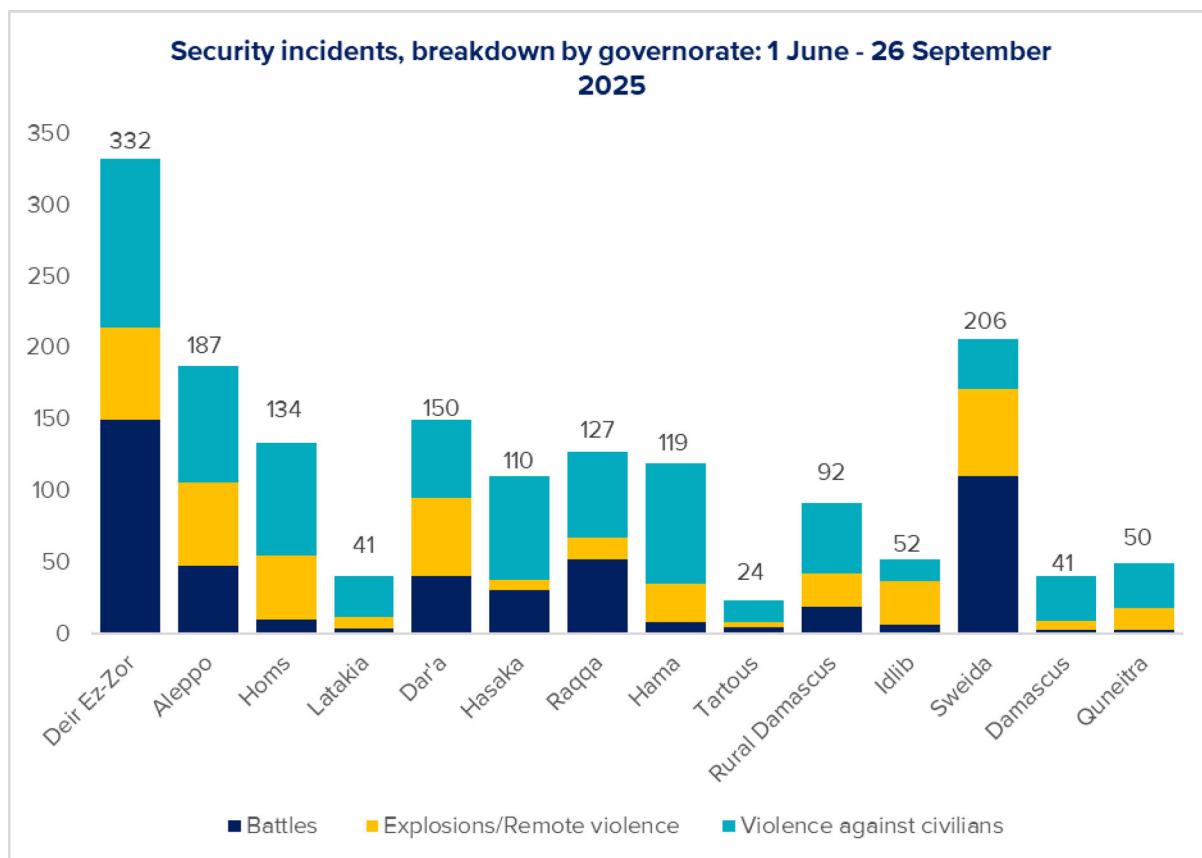
<sup>123</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 1 October 2025, [url](#)



Governorate	June 2025	July 2025	August 2025	September 2025	Total
<b>Hasaka</b>	20	17	38	35	<b>110</b>
<b>Aleppo</b>	38	33	56	60	<b>187</b>
<b>Raqqa</b>	21	33	32	41	<b>127</b>
<b>Sweida</b>	19	122	47	18	<b>206</b>
<b>Damascus</b>	9	16	11	5	<b>41</b>
<b>Dar'a</b>	46	33	39	32	<b>150</b>
<b>Deir Ez-Zor</b>	75	89	96	72	<b>332</b>
<b>Hama</b>	21	30	38	30	<b>119</b>
<b>Homs</b>	44	33	33	24	<b>134</b>
<b>Idlib</b>	20	14	13	5	<b>52</b>
<b>Latakia</b>	12	12	11	6	<b>41</b>
<b>Quneitra</b>	13	9	13	15	<b>50</b>
<b>Rural Damascus</b>	24	27	27	14	<b>90</b>
<b>Tartous</b>	7	6	7	4	<b>24</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>1665</b>

**Table 1. Number of ACLED security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ recorded between 1 June and 26 September 2025.**  
**Breakdown by governorate<sup>124</sup>**

<sup>124</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 1 October 2025, [url](#)



**Figure 1. ACLED security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ on governorate level recorded between 1 June and 26 September 2025**

According to ACLED data, most battles recorded in Deir Ez-Zor governorate between 1 June – 26 September 2025 involved clashes between SDF and ISIL, SDF and unidentified armed groups, and SDF and tribal militias. Most incidents coded ‘violence against civilians’ involved SDF and civilians, usually suspected of being ISIL affiliates, and between unidentified armed groups and civilians. Incidents coded ‘explosions/remote violence’ involved mainly landmines and UXOs as well as IED attacks attributed to unidentified armed groups.<sup>125</sup>

In Sweida governorate, most security incidents were recorded by ACLED in July 2025 and attributed to clashes between government forces and Druze militias, as well as between Bedouin and Druze militias. Incidents coded ‘violence against civilians’ mainly involved unidentified armed groups and civilians, and Druze militias and civilians.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>125</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 1 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>126</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 1 October 2025, [url](#)

In Aleppo governorate, most incidents coded ‘battles’ and ‘explosions/remote violence’ by ACLED between 1 June – 26 September 2025 involved clashes between government forces and SDF, most of them recorded in September 2025 around frontlines. Incidents involving landmines and UXOs also constituted a significant part of the events coded ‘explosions/remote violence’. Incidents coded ‘violence against civilians’ were mainly attributed to unidentified actors who were involved killings of persons perceived to be associated with the Assad regime.<sup>127</sup>

In Raqqa and Haska governorates, most incidents coded ‘battles’ by ACLED during 1 June – 26 September 2025 involved clashes between SDF and ISIL and between SDF and unidentified armed groups, whereas most incidents coded ‘violence against civilians’ involved SDF and civilians, usually suspected of being ISIL affiliates. In Idlib governorate, most security incidents recorded by ACLED during 1 June – 26 September 2025 were attributed to landmines and UXOs, as well to strikes on ISIL targets by the US-led Coalition against ISIL.<sup>128</sup>

In the governorates of Homs and Hama, most security incidents recorded by ACLED during 1 June – 26 September 2025 were coded ‘violence against civilians’ and were mainly attributed to unidentified actors who were involved killings and abductions of Alawites and of persons perceived to be associated with the Assad regime. Landmines and UXOs constituted the majority of events coded ‘explosions/remote violence’. In the governorates of Latakia and Tartous, most security incidents recorded by ACLED during 1 June – 26 September 2025 were coded ‘violence against civilians’ and involved unidentified armed groups and civilians, and government forces and civilians, the latter particularly in the context of security operations against Assad remnants.<sup>129</sup>

In Damascus governorate, most security incidents recorded by ACLED during 1 June – 26 September 2025 were coded ‘violence against civilians’ and were mainly attributed to unidentified actors who were involved killings of civilians, usually for unknown reasons. In Rural Damascus, most security incidents recorded by ACLED during 1 June – 26 September 2025 were coded ‘violence against civilians’ and were mainly attributed to unidentified actors involved in killings of civilians for unknown reasons. Most incidents coded ‘explosions/remote violence’ were attributed to Israeli airstrikes.<sup>130</sup>

In Dar'a governorate most security incidents coded ‘battles’ and ‘violence against civilians’ involved clashes between unidentified armed groups and assassinations, whereas incidents coded ‘explosions/remote violence’ were mainly attributed to Israeli airstrikes. In Quneitra

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<sup>127</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 1 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>128</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 1 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>129</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 1 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>130</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 1 October 2025, [url](#)

governorate, most security incidents recorded by ACLED during 1 June – 26 September 2025 and coded ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ were mainly attributed to Israeli forces, including airstrikes and artillery strikes, and arrest and detentions of civilians.<sup>131</sup>

## Civilian fatalities

During the reference period of this query (June – September 2025), SNHR documented 1 402 fatalities across Syria. Most of them were recorded in the governorate of Sweida (1 013) and occurred in the context of the violence which involved between Druze, Bedouin and government forces in July 2025. It remains unclear how many of the 1 013 were civilians, with the source noting that this figure includes civilians, government security forces, and members of local armed groups. SNHR also documented at least 984 individuals including civilians being injured in Sweida in the context of the violence in July.<sup>132</sup> By comparison, SOHR documented 1 990 individuals killed in the July 2025 violence in Sweida, including 765 Druze civilians executed by the transitional government’s security forces and 725 mostly Druze residents (including 167 civilians) who were killed in clashes.<sup>133</sup>

After Sweida governorate, the highest number of civilian fatalities documented by SNHR over the reference period was recorded in Hama (87) and Homs (75) governorates. No civilian fatalities were recorded by SNHR in the governorate of Quneitra between June and September 2025.<sup>134</sup> (see Table 2)

Apart from the fatalities recorded in Sweida in July 2025, the vast majority of civilian fatalities documented by SNHR over the reference period were attributed to gunfire and bombings by unidentified perpetrators, followed by landmines explosions, and to a significant lesser extent by transitional government forces and the SDF.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 1 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>132</sup> SNHR, The Death of 89 Civilians Including 13 Children and 10 Women, and One Death due to Torture Recorded July 2025 in Syria, 1 August 2025, [url](#), pp. 3-4

<sup>133</sup> Arab Weekly (The), Toll of sectarian violence in Syria’s Sweida climbs to nearly 2,000, mostly Druze, 20 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>134</sup> SNHR, The Death of 2818 Civilians Including 201 Children and 194 Women, and 17 Deaths due to Torture Recorded in the First Half of 2025, 3 July 2025, [url](#), p. 6; SNHR, The Death of 89 Civilians Including 13 Children and 10 Women, and One Death due to Torture Recorded July 2025 in Syria, 1 August 2025, [url](#), pp. 3-4; SNHR, The Death of 91 Civilians Including 18 Children and Five Women, and Four Deaths due to Torture Recorded August 2025 in Syria, 1 September 2025, [url](#), p. 3; SNHR, The Death of 70 Civilians Including Seven Children and Three Women, and Three Deaths due to Torture Recorded in September 2025, 1 October 2025, [url](#), p. 3

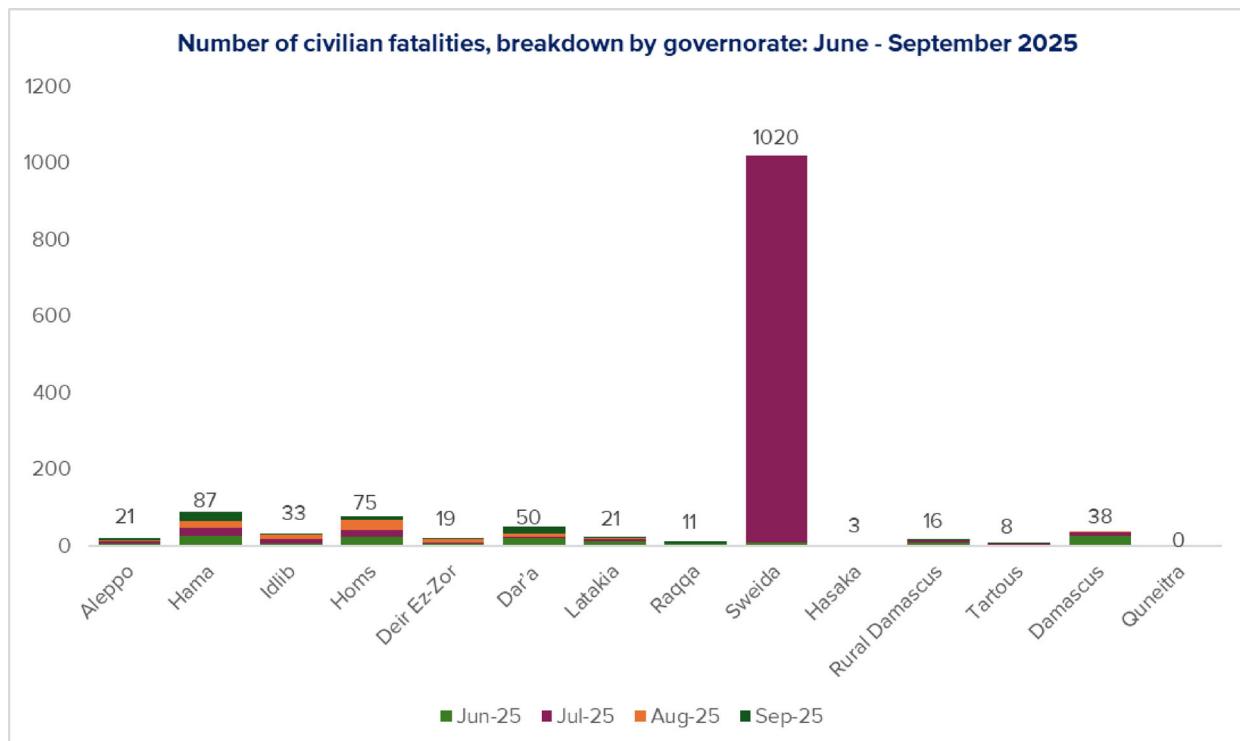
<sup>135</sup> Analysis by EUAA based on SNHR, The Death of 2818 Civilians Including 201 Children and 194 Women, and 17 Deaths due to Torture Recorded in the First Half of 2025, 3 July 2025, [url](#), pp. 5-7; SNHR, The Death of 89 Civilians Including 13 Children and 10 Women, and One Death due to Torture Recorded July 2025 in Syria, 1 August 2025, [url](#), pp. 2-4; SNHR, The Death of 91 Civilians Including 18 Children and Five Women, and Four Deaths due to Torture Recorded August 2025 in Syria, 1 September 2025, [url](#), pp. 2-3; SNHR, The Death of 70 Civilians Including Seven Children and Three Women, and Three Deaths due to Torture Recorded in September 2025, 1 October 2025, [url](#), pp. 2-4



Governorate	June 2025	July 2025	August 2025	September 2025	Total
<b>Hasaka</b>	-	-	3	-	<b>3</b>
<b>Aleppo</b>	6	5	3	7	<b>21</b>
<b>Raqqa</b>	4	1	1	5	<b>11</b>
<b>Sweida</b>	7	1013 <sup>136</sup>	-	-	<b>1020</b>
<b>Damascus</b>	25	10	3	-	<b>38</b>
<b>Dar'a</b>	21	3	8	18	<b>50</b>
<b>Deir Ez-Zor</b>	4	5	9	1	<b>19</b>
<b>Hama</b>	25	21	19	22	<b>87</b>
<b>Homs</b>	22	18	27	8	<b>75</b>
<b>Idlib</b>	4	13	11	5	<b>33</b>
<b>Latakia</b>	11	5	4	1	<b>21</b>
<b>Quneitra</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Rural Damascus</b>	9	5	1	1	<b>16</b>
<b>Tartous</b>	2	2	2	2	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>1101</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>1402</b>

**Table 2. Number of civilian fatalities recorded by SNHR (June – September 2025). Breakdown by governorate.**

<sup>136</sup> It remains unclear how many of the 1 013 documented fatalities were civilians, with the source noting that this figure includes civilians, government security forces, and members of local armed groups. SNHR, The Death of 89 Civilians Including 13 Children and 10 Women, and One Death due to Torture Recorded July 2025 in Syria, 1 August 2025, [url](#), pp. 3-4



**Figure 2. Number of civilian fatalities recorded by SNHR (June – September 2025). Breakdown by governorate.**

Between 8 December 2024 and 1 June 2025, the Mine Action Area of Responsibility recorded 532 incidents involving explosive ordnance which resulted in 1 052 casualties (428 killed and 624 injured) out of which 360 were children. The areas with the highest contamination of EO were Aleppo, Raqqa, Deir Ez-Zor, Idlib and Hama. Deir Ez-Zor accounted for at least one quarter of all EO incidents recorded.<sup>137</sup> Throughout the early months of 2025, casualties have steadily increased, especially in regions with intense conflict and limited access for humanitarian partners. Notable areas affected include Manbij, Ein al Arab/Kobani, Ras al-Ayn, Tall Abyad, and the Deir Ez-Zor governorate.<sup>138</sup>

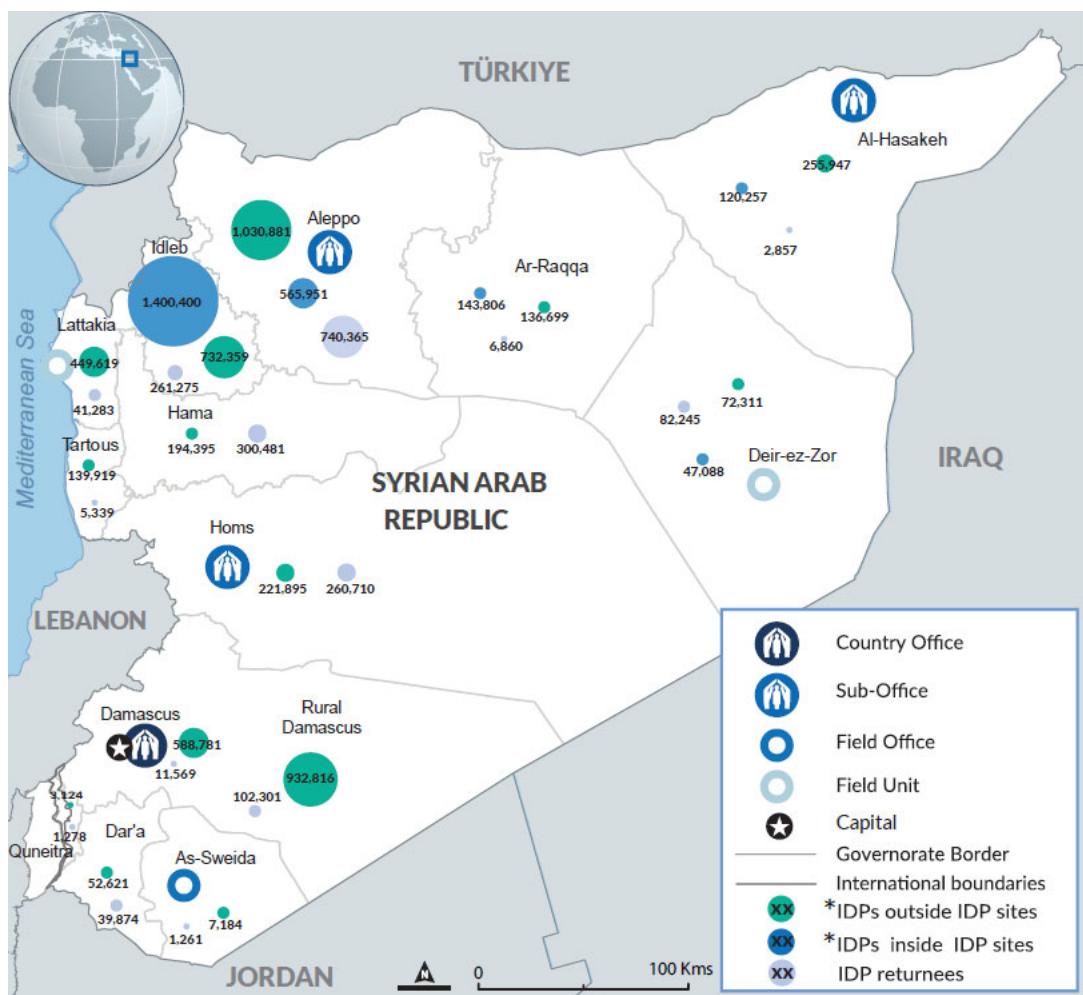
## Displacement and return

As of mid-September 2025, there were around 7 million IDPs in Syria, residing in host communities (around 4.8 million) and IDP sites. Most IDPs were located in Idlib (30.06 %), Aleppo (22.5 %), Rural Damascus (13.15 %) and Damascus (8.3 %) governorates. The offensive which started in November 2024 and led to the fall of the Assad regime and the July violence in Sweida have triggered further displacement (see section 4. Security situation), with more

<sup>137</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>138</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 26

than 892 000 new IDPs reported as of 18 September 2025. In terms of IDP returns, UNHCR reported that 1 855 698 individuals returned to their homes since 27 November 2024 (972 085 since 8 December 2024). Most IDP returns were recorded in Aleppo (39.9 %), Hama (16.2 %), Idlib (14.1 %) and Homs (14 %) governorates.<sup>139</sup>



<sup>139</sup> UNHCR, Syria Governorates IDPs and IDP Returnees Overview, 18 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>140</sup> UNHCR, Syria Governorates IDPs and IDP Returnees Overview, 18 September 2025, [url](#)

## 5. Human rights developments related to certain profiles and groups of the population

### Individuals perceived to have supported the former government

In the first half of 2025, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documented detention campaigns by the transitional government's forces targeting at least 587 individuals accused of human rights violations during the Assad regime. Most arrests occurred in Homs, Hama and Damascus governorates.<sup>141</sup> The transitional government forces continued raids and detention campaigns targeting former military personnel, suspected members of pro-Assad armed groups involved in the March 2025 violence, government employees, and doctors affiliated with military hospitals of the former security services. These operations were concentrated in Latakia, Tartous, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Damascus, and Idlib governorates. Some detainees were transferred to prisons in Homs, Hama and Adra. It is not clear whether the arrests were carried on the basis of legal arrest warrants issued by the Public Prosecutor or other relevant judicial authorities.<sup>142</sup>

In early July, authorities arrested former social affairs ministers Kinda Al-Shammat and Rima Al-Qadri, along with several reception centre employees, as part of an investigation into children who were detained or disappeared in Assad regime prisons and later transferred to orphanages without their families' knowledge.<sup>143</sup> In August, Syrian security forces arrested a former regime air force general in Latakia governorate, accusing him of involvement in crimes against humanity.<sup>144</sup>

NGOs and civil society groups reported growing concern over the rising number of arrests and lack of information on detainees' fates. Mohammad al-Abdallah of the Syria Justice and Accountability Centre (SJAC) warned that incommunicado detention invites abuse, as families and lawyers are denied access. Questioned about this secrecy, Attorney General Hossam Khatab defended the detentions as part of 'ongoing investigations', insisting that judicial action must await the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms.<sup>145</sup>

After the fall of the Assad regime, the independent human rights organisation Syrians for Truth & Justice (STJ) documented numerous cases of military forces and armed groups storming

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<sup>141</sup> SNHR, At least 658 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention Recorded in Syria in the First Half of 2025 including 72 Cases in June, 5 July 2025, [url](#), pp. 16-17

<sup>142</sup> SNHR, At least 109 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention Recorded in July 2025, 2 August 2025, [url](#), p. 9; SNHR, At least 124 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention Recorded in August 2025, 2 September 2025, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>143</sup> Le Monde, En Syrie, sept mois après la chute de Bachar Al-Assad, l'opacité de la justice transitionnelle inquiète la population [In Syria, seven months after the fall of Bashar al-Assad, the opacity of transitional justice worries the population], 12 July 2025, [url](#); Syrian Observer (The), Syrian Interior Ministry Confirms Arrest of Two Former Ministers over Disappeared Children Case, 8 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>144</sup> New Arab (The), Syrian security forces arrest former regime air force general in Latakia, 29 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>145</sup> Le Monde, [In Syria, seven months after the fall of Bashar al-Assad, the opacity of transitional justice worries the population], 12 July 2025, [url](#)

homes, detaining individuals without judicial warrants or legal orders, and later denying knowledge of their detention. Enforced disappearances during home raids were documented in Jableh, Latakia and Banyias in the context of the March violence, in Homs city and in Ashrafiyat Sahnaya (Rural Damascus governorate). Enforced disappearances reportedly also took place at security checkpoints on roads such as cases in Latakia governorate in March 2025 attributed to the Hamza Division. According to testimonies of relatives, some of those arrested and forcibly disappeared were accused of being affiliated with the Assad regime.<sup>146</sup>

## Individuals opposing or perceived to be opposing the transitional government

An Etana Syria<sup>147</sup> analysis of the first six months of post-Assad governance noted fewer reports of politically motivated arrests under the transitional government following the restructuring of the Mol, particularly in areas under centralised transitional control.<sup>148</sup>

According to a report by the Economist, journalists exposing state security crimes face online harassment from pro-government trolls, and some have been arbitrarily arrested and released only after public pressure.<sup>149</sup> No further information on the treatment of journalists critical of the transitional government was found under the constraints of this query.

In July 2025, during the violence in Sweida, activists launched the Syrian Centenary Initiative, seen as an emerging opposition to Sharaa's government. It called for a ceasefire and revisions to the March Constitutional Declaration to allow political parties and strengthen civil society protections. The founders include former prisoners of the Assad era. The government has dismissed the Syrian Centenary Initiative's demands, reportedly launching smear campaigns against its members instead. Activist Hazem Dakhil noted they are falsely accused of plotting to replace al-Sharaa with a military council or minority rule. Civil-society groups say the transitional government equates criticism with treason, refusing dialogue, while documented cases of Alawite women disappearing from coastal areas have been met with outright denials.<sup>150</sup> No further information regarding the treatment of members or supporters of the Syrian Centenary Initiative was found during the constraints of this query.

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<sup>146</sup> STJ, "Living Between Hope and Fear": Testimonies Documenting the Persistence of Enforced Disappearance in Post-Assad Syria, 29 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>147</sup> Etana Syria is an independent organisation that provides analysis, data, and mapping of developments in Syria. See, Etana Syria, About us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>148</sup> Etana Syria, Study: Between Symbolism and Substance: Syria's Transition at 6 Months, 9 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>149</sup> Economist (The), A new twist in Syria: a political opposition, 21 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>150</sup> Economist (The), A new twist in Syria: a political opposition, 21 August 2025, [url](#)

According to an analysis by Etana Syria, 'as of mid-2025, no enabling law for political parties has been issued, leaving Syria's political space devoid of legal pluralism or structured opposition'.<sup>151</sup>

Few protests have been reported in areas under the control of the transitional government. In March 2025, in Damascus, pro-government demonstrators clashed with activists mourning civilians killed in the coastal violence, prompting security forces to intervene and disperse the gathering.<sup>152</sup> In mid-July 2025, civil activists protesting in Damascus to demand an end to the violence in Sweida were reportedly attacked by other civilians, while security forces failed to intervene to protect them.<sup>153</sup>

## Individuals opposing or perceived to be opposing the Syrian National Army

Since April 2025, STJ noted that fighters and commanders from SNA factions withdrew from Ras al-Ayn and Tell Abyad to their home areas in Syria via Türkiye. However, the source noted that most original residents of Ras al-Ayn and Tell Abyad remain forcibly displaced, many for over five years, living in harsh camp conditions without the right to return. Their homes have been destroyed or seized, and lawlessness and dominance by armed groups block efforts to reclaim property. Despite the change in authority in Damascus, no measures have been taken to enable returns or address property violations, and as of April 2025 the transitional government has issued no plan or statement on the issue.<sup>154</sup>

According to a STJ report, after Assad's fall, abuses against Kurdish returnees persisted in Afrin despite transitional authorities' pledges to restore their rights. Returnees faced extortion, looting, and destruction of property and farmland, while local security and administrative bodies failed to protect them. Testimonies described systematic looting and vandalism, with homes stripped and possessions sold, while fruit trees were uprooted, depriving owners of livelihoods. These acts occurred amid intimidation and threats targeting the Kurdish population, often justified by alleged links to Kurdish parties. The response of the GSS forces and local councils was reportedly ineffective. According to testimonies, displaced Arab families were often sheltered freely and protected by local factions, while Kurdish residents faced steep fees and degrading conditions to return.<sup>155</sup> Armed groups in Afrin have reportedly continued extorting residents despite the transitional's government pledges to replace them

<sup>151</sup> Etana Syria, Study: Between Symbolism and Substance: Syria's Transition at 6 Months, 9 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>152</sup> Al Monitor, Syria security forces disperse rival protests in Damascus, 9 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>153</sup> SNHR, Call on the Syrian Government to Prosecute Those who Attacked Civil Activists During a Peaceful Protest in front of the People's Assembly in Damascus, 20 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>154</sup> STJ, Northern Syria: Communication to UN Special Procedures Regarding Ongoing Violations of Property Rights in the Operation Peace Spring Area, 5 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>155</sup> STJ, Looted Homes and Risky Return: Extortions and Violations Against Returnees to Afrin After the Regime's Fall, 22 July 2025, [url](#)

with Damascus-affiliated security forces. Locals accuse these groups of imposing forced taxes on olives, seizing property, and denying rightful ownership of land.<sup>156</sup>

In a September article, the North-Press Agency (NPA) stated that while many displaced Afrin residents express a desire to return, others remain reluctant, citing ongoing violations in villages controlled by Turkish-backed factions.<sup>157</sup>

During the reference period, SOHR reported that the SNA arrested a Kurdish man in Afrin for unknown reasons<sup>158</sup>, and also reported the arrest, assault and torture of a Kurdish man by Turkish intelligence and Al-Amshat faction in Afrin for alleged ties with the SDF.<sup>159</sup>

## Individuals opposing or perceived to be opposing the Syrian Democratic Forces

During the reference period, SNHR reported on SDF arresting individuals under the pretext of affiliation to ISIL<sup>160</sup>, on charges of collaborating with SNA and Arab tribal forces, for participating in Operation Deterrence of Aggression which led to the fall of the Assad regime<sup>161</sup> and for expressing critical opinions on its policies.<sup>162</sup> The source did not provide additional details.

In September 2025, SDF reportedly launched a large-scale arrest campaign against members of Arab tribes in Hasaka governorate following their recent visit to Damascus. The move underscores SDF concerns over a potential Arab tribal uprising in areas under its control. Local sources reported that dozens of Arab tribesmen loyal to the transitional government were arrested in Hasaka governorate, particularly in the Al Aziziyah, Ghuwayran and Al Nashwa of Hasaka city. Most of those arrested reportedly had travelled recently to Damascus. SDF claimed that the operation was in response to rising ISIL activity in the area.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Rudaw, Militants accused of extorting money from residents in Syria's Kurdish town of Afrin, 4 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>157</sup> NPA, Syria's Afrin Kurds see return of IDPs as key to reviving city, 30 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>158</sup> SOHR, Without official explanation | Syrian authorities arrest nine Kurdish people in Damascus and National Army arrests civilian in Afrin, 1 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>159</sup> SOHR, Ongoing violations in Afrin | Al-Sham Legion member beats elderly man over seized shop, 25 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>160</sup> SNHR, At least 658 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention Recorded in Syria in the First Half of 2025 including 72 Cases in June, 4 July 2025, [url](#), p. 12; SNHR, At least 109 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention Recorded in July 2025, 2 August 2025, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>161</sup> SNHR, At least 658 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention Recorded in Syria in the First Half of 2025 including 72 Cases in June, 4 July 2025, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>162</sup> SNHR, At least 658 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention Recorded in Syria in the First Half of 2025 including 72 Cases in June, 4 July 2025, [url](#), p. 12; SNHR, At least 109 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention Recorded in July 2025, 2 August 2025, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>163</sup> Arab Weekly (The), Fear of Arab tribal revolt drives SDF crackdown in Syria's Hasakah, 2 September 2025, [url](#)

## Child recruitment

The report of the UN Secretary-General on children in armed conflict covering 2024 found that 527 children (489 boys and 38 girls) were recruited and used by SNA factions (151), HTS (148), SDF (143), the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (40) and former Syrian government forces and affiliated armed groups (42). The abduction of 14 children (five boys and nine girls) was verified, attributed to the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (nine cases), Syrian government forces (four cases), and the YPG/YPJ (one case), often for purposes of recruitment and use.<sup>164</sup> According to SNHR reporting in August 2025, children were reportedly detained by SDF and the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement for recruitment.<sup>165</sup> The source did not provide additional details.

## Ethno-religious minorities

### Alawites

Since February 2025, Amnesty International has documented credible reports of at least 36 Alawite women and girls, aged 3 to 40, abducted across Latakia, Tartous, Homs, and Hama by unidentified individuals. Five women and three girls under 18 were reportedly kidnapped in broad daylight. In all but one case, police and security officials failed to investigate their fate or whereabouts effectively.<sup>166</sup> In a separate statement in July 2025, UN experts expressed serious concern over the reported abduction of 38 Alawite women and girls, aged between 3 and 40, across multiple governorates, including Latakia, Tartous, Hama, Homs, Damascus, and Aleppo, since March 2025. The victims were reportedly abducted in broad daylight while on their way to school, visiting relatives, or in their homes. In several cases, families received threats and were discouraged from pursuing investigations or speaking out publicly. The experts indicated that the reported violations, including gender-based violence, threats, forced marriages of minors, and the lack of an effective response by the transitional government, suggest a targeted campaign against Alawite women and girls based on intersecting factors. The transitional government reportedly neglected timely and impartial investigations in most cases, occasionally refusing to register complaints or dismissing families' concerns. In several cases of abductions security forces or individuals affiliated with the government were reportedly involved.<sup>167</sup>

According to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (UNCOI), sectarian tensions have been exacerbated by widespread hate speech and

<sup>164</sup> UN General Assembly, UN Security Council: Children and armed conflict; Report of the Secretary-General [A/79/878-S/2025/247], 17 June 2025, [url](#), paras 199, 203

<sup>165</sup> SNHR, At least 109 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention Recorded in July 2025, 2 August 2025, [url](#), p. 8; SNHR, The Syrian Democratic Forces kidnapped the child Noujan Ahmed Al-Khalil for forced conscription in the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood of Aleppo on August 16, 2025, 18 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>166</sup> AI, Syria: Authorities must investigate abductions of Alawite women and girls, 28 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>167</sup> OHCHR, Syria: UN experts alarmed by targeted abductions and disappearances of Alawite women and girls, 23 July 2025, [url](#)

incitement against Alawites, both offline and online. This includes posts containing false information, which reportedly often originate from abroad. Reports persist of ongoing killings and arbitrary arrests within the Alawite community, along with the confiscation of property belonging to those who fled the violence in March.<sup>168</sup>

Since June 2025, killings of Alawites attributed to government forces and unidentified perpetrators were reported in Damascus<sup>169</sup>, Latakia, Hama<sup>170</sup> and Homs governorates.<sup>171</sup> Land and property seizure by government forces was also reported.<sup>172</sup> In late August, in the Alawite-inhabited district of al-Somaria, Damascus suburbs, there were reports of raids by security forces and evictions of families of thousands of former soldiers in Assad's army. Before the eviction raids, the predominantly Alawite district of al-Somaria housed around 22 000 people, nearly half of them families of former Assad soldiers. A week later, only about 3 000 residents remained, according to local committee members, whose estimation could not be independently verified. Residents were reportedly demanded proof of ownership, with those who couldn't immediately provide it being evicted. The authorities' justification for the forced eviction was that the residents' homes were built on land illegally seized by the Assad regime in the 1970s, according to the Damascus governor.<sup>173</sup> Syrian human rights experts told Enab Baladi that the evictions in al-Somaria amounted to selective forced evictions, noting that authorities failed to provide adequate notice or alternative housing.<sup>174</sup> Authorities did not respond to inquiries made by Reuters into the reported evictions.<sup>175</sup>

On 22 July, the transitional government's fact-finding committee released its report on the mass killings in Latakia and Tartous in early March. The investigation found that over 1 426 people, mostly civilians, were killed in clashes between Alawite fighters loyal to former President Assad and the transitional government forces. The committee identified 265 individuals involved in attacks on government security forces and 298 suspected of committing crimes against Alawites. An additional 31 people accused of violations against civilians have been arrested. Further investigations by the Syrian court system are expected, though no names have been publicly released.<sup>176</sup> In August, the GSS arrested a MoD member accused by the Syrian National Inquiry Commission of involvement in the March 2025 coastal

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<sup>168</sup> OHCHR, Oral Update by Mr. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic at the 59th Session of the Human Rights Council, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>169</sup> France24, Five Alawites found dead after being detained by Syrian security forces, war monitor says, 4 June 2025, [url](#); SOHR, After having been kidnapped | Two Alawite siblings executed in the capital Damascus, 14 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>170</sup> L'Orient Today, Three Alawites Killed by Security Forces in the West, Says NGO, 5 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>171</sup> International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch Syria June 2025, n.d., [url](#); SOHR, Execution | Alawite civilian kil\*led just after arrest in Homs, 26 August 2025, [url](#); SOHR, Following assassination of two Alawite civilians | Tension grows in western Homs and angry protestors condemn increasing security chaos, 24 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>172</sup> SOHR, Ongoing violations | Members of security forces seize homes and properties belonging to four Alawite families in western Homs countryside, 2 September 2025, [url](#); Reuters, How Syrian forces emptied Alawite suburb: X means stay, O means go, 12 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>173</sup> Reuters, How Syrian forces emptied Alawite suburb: X means stay, O means go, 12 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>174</sup> Enab Baladi, Al-Sumariyah: A battle over land and identity on the walls of Damascus, 10 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>175</sup> Reuters, How Syrian forces emptied Alawite suburb: X means stay, O means go, 12 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>176</sup> Security Council Report, Syria August 2025 Monthly Forecast, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

massacres. This represents the transitional government's first publicised arrest of an MoD member in connection with the atrocities on the Syrian coast. On 22 July, the Syrian National Inquiry Commission referred 298 individuals to the judiciary for their role in attacks against Alawite civilians in March.<sup>177</sup>

A UNCOI report documenting the violations committed in March in the coastal areas<sup>178</sup> assessed that around 1 400 individuals, predominantly civilians, including approximately 100 women, were killed between 6-10 March over a large geographic area. It further found reasonable grounds to believe that members of interim government security forces, including the General Security Forces, 62<sup>nd</sup> Division (ex-SNA Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade/Amshat), 76th Division (ex-SNA Al-Hamza/Hamzat), Ahrar al-Sham, and the 400<sup>th</sup> Division (former HTS brigades), alongside private individuals, committed violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, some of which may constitute war crimes. Members of the aforementioned factions of the government security forces 'engaged in extrajudicial killings and torture and ill-treatment of primarily the civilian population of Alawi majority villages and neighbourhoods in a manner that was both widespread and systematic'.<sup>179</sup> However, the UNCOI noted that many elements of the transitional government forces neither participated in nor supported the abuses committed by certain groups. On the contrary, some actively worked to evacuate or protect civilians. Furthermore, the UNCOI stated that no evidence was found of an official government policy or plan to conduct such attacks.<sup>180</sup> Members of the pro-Assad militias involved in the violence engaged in murders which may amount to war crimes, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment of civilians, according to the UNCOI.<sup>181</sup>

Other sources documented the casualties resulted from the March 2025 violence. The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression documented 1 060 Alawite civilians executed by pro-government forces across 61 sites in Latakia, Tartous, and Hama, including 71 women and 61 children, along with 218 named security personnel. The report clarifies that its figures do not separate civilians from Alawite men who took up arms, but stresses that executing surrendered or unarmed combatants, widespread in this case, constitutes a crime. A Reuters investigation later reported 1 479 Alawites killed, mapping massacres in 40 communities but excluding security personnel.<sup>182</sup> Reuters reported that forces involved included the government's GSS alongside ex-HTS units such as the elite Unit 400 and Othman Brigade.

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<sup>177</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 18 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>178</sup> For the report, the UNCOI documented over 42 incidents and conducted in-depth investigations into 15 emblematic cases that occurred between 6 and 10 March 2025 in Hama, Latakia, and Tartous governorates. It also conducted a mission to the coastal areas in June 2025. UNCOI, Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January - March 2025, 11 August 2025, [url](#), paras 3, 4

<sup>179</sup> UNCOI, Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January - March 2025, 11 August 2025, [url](#), Summary, paras 83, 88

<sup>180</sup> UNCOI, Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January - March 2025, 11 August 2025, [url](#), para 89

<sup>181</sup> UNCOI, Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January - March 2025, 11 August 2025, [url](#), para 91

<sup>182</sup> Waters, G., Examining Coastal Massacre Investigations, Syria Revisited, 27 July 2025, [url](#)

Newly integrated Sunni militias, including the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade and the Hamza Division, also participated.<sup>183</sup>

## Druze

A STJ investigation into human rights violations committed in Sahnaya, Ashrafiyat Sahnaya, and Jaramana (Rural Damascus), as well as the village of al-Sawara al-Kubra in northern Sweida, during April and May 2025, documented several cases in which Druze civilians were arbitrarily arrested or forcibly disappeared by security forces, often without warrants or notification to families. According to testimonies, the authorities in some cases denied detainees' existence, with later reports revealing deaths under torture.<sup>184</sup> For background on the events affecting Druze between April and May 2025 in the areas aforementioned see section 2.4.4 of the EUAA COI report: [Syria – Country Focus \(July 2025\)](#).

Retaliatory kidnappings between Druze and Bedouin groups in Sweida in July 2025 sparked heavy clashes and the intervention of transitional government forces under the MoI and MoD.<sup>185</sup> Sources reported that government forces, as well as Druze and Bedouin groups, committed abuses.<sup>186</sup>

According to UN experts, sectarian clashes, initially sparked by looting and retaliatory attacks between Bedouin and Druze communities, escalated into widespread violence involving local militias, Syrian transitional authorities' forces, and allied armed groups. Attacks on the villages of Ta'ara, Al Doura, and Al Douweira reportedly involved heavy artillery, machine guns, and looting, leaving around 1 000 dead, including at least 539 identified Druze civilians (39 women and 21 children). Reports indicate that 196 people, among them eight children and 30 women, were extrajudicially executed, while more than 33 villages were burned.<sup>187</sup>

Amnesty International documented evidence that government and allied forces carried out extrajudicial executions of Druze civilians on 15-16 July in Sweida, supported by verified videos showing armed men in uniform executing unarmed people in homes, a square, a school, and a hospital. Amnesty International documented that government and allied forces executed 46 Druze people (44 men and 2 women) and staged mock executions of two elderly individuals on 15-16 July in Sweida, in locations including homes, a school, a hospital, a ceremonial hall, and a public square. On 15-16 July Druze civilians were subjected to sectarian slogans, and religious men were humiliated, including by the forcible shaving of their culturally significant

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<sup>183</sup> Reuters, Syrian forces massacred 1,500 Alawites. The chain of command led to Damascus, 1 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>184</sup> STJ, 'You're a Druze... We Will Burn You and Your Motorcycle': Gross Violations against the Druze (April–May 2025), 20 August 2025, [url](#), pp. 13-14

<sup>185</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 1 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>186</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 1 August 2025, [url](#); HRW, Syria: Abuses, Humanitarian Emergency Amid Sweida Clashes, 22 July 2025, [url](#); Hassan, H., How Foreign Agendas Hijacked a Local Crisis in Syria, New Lines Magazine, 24 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>187</sup> OHCHR, Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls, 21 August 2025, [url](#)

moustaches. The source verified evidence showing executioners wearing varied attire, including camouflage, plain clothes with military vests, black uniforms linked to security forces, and some with 'General Security' insignia. Most lacked identifiable insignia, though videos showed them riding Mol-marked trucks and operating together before executions at the national hospital. At least four wore black patches with the Islamic declaration of faith, a symbol associated with ISIL, although ISIL did not claim responsibility for any attacks.<sup>188</sup>

UN experts pointed to the reported abduction of at least 105 Druze women and girls by armed groups linked to the Syrian transitional government, with 80 still missing. Some released women cannot return home due to security concerns. In at least three documented cases, Druze women were reportedly raped before being executed. A total of 763 people, including women, remain unaccounted for.<sup>189</sup> Amnesty International received credible reports of abductions by Druze armed groups and Bedouin fighters between 17-19 July and was investigating the incidents.<sup>190</sup>

According to UN experts, the scale of violence, including massacres, widespread looting, and extortion indicates a targeted campaign against the Druze minority, fuelled by hate speech portraying them as Israeli allies.<sup>191</sup> Human Rights Watch assessed that the clashes between the Druze-led and the Bedouin armed groups fuelled sectarian hate speech and heightened the risk of reprisals against Druze communities nationwide.<sup>192</sup> According to UN experts, Druze survivors, including students in Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, and Latakia, continue to face harassment and live in fear for their safety.<sup>193</sup> According to a Syrian Christian activist, some Druze students have been expelled from the universities and one was killed.<sup>194</sup>

On 22 July, the transitional government pledged accountability for MoD and Mol abuses, though investigations remain uncertain as Druze militias still control much of the province.<sup>195</sup> On 31 July, the Ministry of Justice formed a committee to investigate the abuses committed in Sweida and pursue accountability.<sup>196</sup> In September, Syrian authorities announced that they

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<sup>188</sup> AI, Syria: New investigation reveals evidence government and affiliated forces extrajudicially executed dozens of Druze people in Suwayda, 2 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>189</sup> OHCHR, Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls, 21 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>190</sup> AI, Syria: New investigation reveals evidence government and affiliated forces extrajudicially executed dozens of Druze people in Suwayda, 2 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>191</sup> OHCHR, Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls, 21 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>192</sup> HRW, Syria: Abuses, Humanitarian Emergency Amid Sweida Clashes, 22 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>193</sup> OHCHR, Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls, 21 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>194</sup> New Arab (The), Druze demands for self-determination: Is Syria's political map being redrawn?, 26 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>195</sup> ISW and CT, Iran Update, 1 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>196</sup> AI, Syria: New investigation reveals evidence government and affiliated forces extrajudicially executed dozens of Druze people in Suwayda, 2 September 2025, [url](#)

have interrogated and detained MoD and Mol personnel suspected of abuses against civilians during the July violence.<sup>197</sup>

In August, hundreds protested in Sweida and other areas demanding self-determination for the Druze minority, marking the largest demonstrations since July's deadly clashes. Some waved Israeli flags in gratitude for Israel's support during the mid-July fighting between Druze militias, tribal groups, and government forces.<sup>198</sup>

## Christians

Conditions for Christian communities in Syria vary, with religious and community leaders holding sharply divided views.<sup>199</sup> According to field work carried out by researcher Gregory Waters, Christians' views of the transitional government often hinge on their familiarity with Sunnis. In Latakia, centuries of coexistence have fostered close ties between the two communities, even with conservative Sunni fighters. Christian communities more isolated from Sunnis show greater distrust of the new government. In towns surrounded by Alawite villages like Mashta Hilou and Wadi Ayoun, east of Safita (Tartous governorate), Christian priests and activists are wary, fearing growing Sunni religious influence. Distrust of the local authorities is fuelled by unclear laws, petty crime and sidelining of Christian civil society groups by the local authorities. In contrast, in Suqaylabiyah (Hama governorate) and Latakia local officials engage often with the Christian communities.<sup>200</sup>

In Idlib governorate, the small number of Christian families remaining in six western villages continue to face unresolved property disputes. Most residents had fled from the villages during the conflict, with foreign and Syrian fighters seizing homes and land. By July 2025, nearly all properties in five villages were restored, but many homes in Yacoubiyah remain occupied. In three Christian villages on the Hama plains' edge, farmland is still controlled by the Uyghur-led Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP).<sup>201</sup>

The UNCOI investigated gross human rights violations carried out in March 2025 in 16 locations across Latakia, Tartus, Homs, and Hama governorates, focusing on areas primarily populated by the Alawite minority. It 'did not find any evidence of Christian communities having been targeted during the attacks in March' documented in the report.<sup>202</sup> Other sources

<sup>197</sup> Reuters, Syria detains defence, interior ministry members suspected of Sweida violence, 3 September 2025, [url](#); Asharq Al-Awsat, Syria Detains Interior, Defense Ministry Members Suspected of Sweida Violence, 4 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>198</sup> AP, Druze demand self determination in largest protest held since deadly clashes in Syria, 17 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>199</sup> Waters, G., Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum, Atlantic Council, 25 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>200</sup> Waters, G., Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum, Atlantic Council, 25 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>201</sup> Waters, G., Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum, Atlantic Council, 25 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>202</sup> UNCOI, Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January - March 2025, 11 August 2025, [url](#), para 69 footnote 45



noted that the several Christians killed in the March violence in the coastal areas were not targeted because of their religious identity.<sup>203</sup>

Several Christians living in coastal areas reported harassment by government soldiers for wearing crosses or fighters rejecting treatment from female nurses. Declining violence and the reopening of roads to Tartous and Homs since March 2025 have since eased tensions.<sup>204</sup> Occasional minor incidents across the country highlight the threat from armed extremist Sunni groups operating beyond government control, according to Gregory Waters. Between April and June these incidents include an attempted arson of a church in Damascus (6 April), the burning of a Christian family's car in Hama along with threatening leaflets (17 May), and gunfire directed at a church in Homs (8 June).<sup>205</sup> In June, a suicide bomber attacked the Greek Orthodox Mar St. Elias Church in Damascus<sup>206</sup>, killing at least 27 people and injuring more than 60. While authorities initially blamed ISIL, the lesser-known group Saraya Ansar al-Sunna (SAS), ideologically aligned with ISIL and notorious since February for targeting religious minorities, claimed responsibility the following day.<sup>207</sup> The attack was described by SAS as a response to the government's ban on unapproved proselytization attempts in the neighbourhood.<sup>208</sup> In the aftermath of the attack, Christian leaders and community members were calling for stronger protection and accountability, citing that threats and incidents recorded in the months prior such as vandalism of cemeteries and religious symbols were largely ignored by authorities.<sup>209</sup>

## Kurds

According to a confidential source interviewed by the Dutch MFA in April 2025, there were no problems between the Kurds in Damascus and the transitional government.<sup>210</sup> In August 2025, young Kurdish men, including religious minorities, have started joining the government's GSS forces in Afrin, an area from which Kurds were previously displaced. The recruitment drive targeting minorities came as the transitional government faces criticism following sectarian violence involving government-affiliated fighters against Alawite and Druze civilians. A

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<sup>203</sup> Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *Algemeen ambtsbericht Syrië* [General Country Report Syria], May 2025, [url](#), p. 98; Open Doors, Misleading reports about 'slaughter of Christians' could endanger Syrians, says Open Doors expert, 13 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>204</sup> Waters, G., Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum, Atlantic Council, 25 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>205</sup> Waters, G., Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum, Atlantic Council, 25 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>206</sup> Zelin, A., The Damascus Church Attack: Who Is Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah?, TWI, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>207</sup> International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch June 2025, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>208</sup> Zelin, A., The Damascus Church Attack: Who Is Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah?, TWI, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>209</sup> Makki, D., Al-Sahwi, A., Syria's Christians Are Facing New Fears, New Lines Magazine, 26 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>210</sup> Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *Algemeen ambtsbericht Syrië* [General Country Report Syria], [url](#), p. 100

government political official in Afrin reported that around 1 000 young men from diverse sects and backgrounds recently enlisted in GSS, though he gave no demographic breakdown.<sup>211</sup>

SOHR reported in July 2025 that the transitional government's security services arrested nine Kurdish men who were visiting Damascus for unknown reasons.<sup>212</sup> No further information on the situation and treatment of Kurds was found within the constraints of this query.

## Palestinians

Since 1948, Palestine refugees in Syria have lacked political rights despite Law No. 260 of 1956, which granted limited civil rights such as access to jobs, property ownership with restrictions, and public services, while excluding them from political participation.<sup>213</sup> Palestine refugees could not vote in elections or stand for election<sup>214</sup>, and there is a restriction on the amount of property and arable land they can buy.<sup>215</sup> In September, the Syrian government called on undocumented Palestinians in Syria to register with the authorities to address statelessness among Palestinian refugees. Palestinians who arrived in Syria after 1956 remain unregistered with the government and continue to be treated as foreigners. The General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees announced that unregistered Palestinians could now obtain official Syrian-Palestinian documents for the first time. However, according to a Palestinian lawyer cited by the New Arab, the conditions for registration, such as the need for a valid residency card issued by the MoI, would likely exclude most applicants.<sup>216</sup>

Among the 438 000 Palestine refugees remaining in Syria, 40 % live in protracted displacement, facing worsening socio-economic condition and growing hardship. With only 33 % of adults employed and most households spending the bulk of their income on food, dependence on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has reached unprecedented levels, according to UNOCHA.<sup>217</sup> Field reports indicate that a significant proportion of Palestinian families in Syria lack a stable income, with many unemployed individuals having no financial resources at all. As a result, they are almost entirely dependent on UNRWA's financial or food assistance.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> AP, Push to recruit Kurds and religious minorities to Syrian security forces brings hope and skepticism, 24 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>212</sup> SOHR, Without official explanation | Syrian authorities arrest nine Kurdish people in Damascus and National Army arrests civilian in Afrin, 1 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>213</sup> Rahhal, N., Syria has the power to change, from one of the biggest statelessness exporters to a role model for the Global North, ENS, 22 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>214</sup> Syria Nationality, Nationality, Documentation, and Statelessness in Syria, [url](#), p. 5; Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *Algemeen ambtsbericht Syrië* [General Country Report Syria], May 2025, [url](#), p. 103

<sup>215</sup> Syria Nationality, Nationality, Documentation, and Statelessness in Syria, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>216</sup> New Arab (The), Syria invites undocumented Palestinian refugees to legalise for first time in decades, 29 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>217</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>218</sup> AGPS, Palestinians from Syria Renew Their Demands for Continued UNRWA Assistance, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

The vulnerability of Palestine refugees has worsened due to a significant UNRWA funding shortfall, with only 1.5 % of the 2025 Emergency Appeal budget secured as of May 2025. Food insecurity has increased sharply from 46 % in September 2022 to 62 % in March 2024, leading to malnutrition, especially among children, pregnant women, and the elderly. Around 25 % of Palestine refugee households in Syria are female-headed, and 30 % of all refugees are considered extremely vulnerable. Around 89 % of Palestine refugees in Syria live on USD 2.15 or less per day.<sup>219</sup>

According to UNRWA, Palestine refugees from Syria returning from internal displacement or from abroad can access the following UNRWA provided services: primary healthcare services, disease prevention and control, maternal and childcare, medical prosthetic devices, oral and dental health, school health, mental health and standard vaccinations. They are required to have the UNRWA registration cards and identification documents in order to access services. Palestine refugees from Syria are also eligible to apply to public/government schools. They can access free basic education (grades 1-9), education for children from grade 10 under the public education system, and psychosocial support. Palestine refugees are required to report to the nearest UNRWA office with their UNRWA registration card to register their return and ensure their inclusion in UNRWA service provision. New civil events, such as births, marriages, and deaths, can be updated directly with UNRWA through the e-UNRWA registration app.<sup>220</sup>

A report by Enab Baladi highlighted that Palestinians in Syria face poor living conditions due to what they describe as ongoing neglect by UNRWA, which previously helped cover part of their basic needs. Each Palestinian individual used to receive quarterly cash assistance of 300 000 - 500 000 Syrian pounds (about USD 40-50). Since the fall of the Assad regime, however, no cash assistance has been distributed, apart from a single food basket in late December 2024. While UNRWA has repeatedly cited a severe financial deficit, activists and human rights organisations have accused its offices in Syria of corruption and mismanagement, according to the spokesperson of the Action Group for Palestinians of Syria, a UK based human rights watchdog that monitors the situation of Palestinian refugees in war-torn Syria.<sup>221</sup>

The damage in Yarmouk, Ein el Tal and Dar'a camps remains extensive, with 71 % of homes in Yarmouk affected.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>220</sup> UNRWA, Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine Refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis – July 2025, 7 August 2025, [url](#), pp. 1-3

<sup>221</sup> Enab Baladi, “UNRWA” Announces Its Services for Palestinians Returning to Syria, 9 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>222</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 13

According to one source interviewed by the Dutch MFA in March 2025, there was no evidence that Palestinian refugees in Syria generally experienced serious discrimination in daily life.<sup>223</sup> No further information on the treatment of Palestine refugees in Syria was found.

## 6. Socio-economic situation

A July 2025 report by UNOCHA assessed the economic situation in Syria to be dire, compounded by deteriorating public services. While prices have stabilised, living conditions are strained by reduced purchasing power and difficulties with banking and liquidity. Fuel, electricity, and water shortages persist across governorates.<sup>224</sup>

Syria is expected to face an unprecedented water crisis in summer 2025, especially in Damascus, as extreme drought and record-low rainfall hit the Ayn al-Fijeh and Damascus basins.<sup>225</sup> For the first time in 50 years, Damascus faces a severe water shortage, prompting the strictest rationing since the 1950s. Residents now receive water once every three days, while many rely on costly private tankers charging USD 35–70 per 1 000 litres. In surrounding rural areas such as Qudsia, Jabal al-Ward, and al-Arein, households endure water cuts of over 90 hours, leaving families torn between thirst and financial strain.<sup>226</sup> Syria is experiencing severe drought-like conditions, the worst in over 36 years<sup>227</sup>, further compounding an already fragile humanitarian situation. The drought has had devastating impacts on staple crops, livestock, water access, and public health. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the 2024 wheat harvest dropped to 2 million tons, nearly 50 % below pre-crisis levels. In 2025, only 40 % of farmlands were cultivated, much of which was devastated by drought. Key agricultural regions, including Aleppo, Hasaka, Dar'a, Hama, Homs, and Idlib, recorded catastrophic losses in wheat and barley production, with yields declining by more than 95 % in rainfed areas.<sup>228</sup> According to an assessment by the World Food Programme (WFP), the drought is threatening up to 75 % of Syria's wheat crop.<sup>229</sup>

The projected wheat deficit of 2.73 million metric tons in 2025 risks leaving more than 16 million people without sufficient food to meet their dietary needs. This comes as Syria is already facing a severe food insecurity crisis, with 14.6 million people assessed to be food insecure, of whom 9.1 million are classified as acutely food insecure and 1.4 million as severely food insecure. Nutrition indicators have also continued to deteriorate: more than 600 000

<sup>223</sup> Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *Algemeen ambtsbericht Syrië* [General Country Report Syria], May 2025, [url](#), p. 103

<sup>224</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: *Humanitarian Response Priorities* (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>225</sup> World Bank, *Syria Macro-fiscal Assessment*, June 2025, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>226</sup> New Arab (The), *Damascus is running out of water. The culprit? Climate change, conflict...and Israeli land grabs*, 26 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>227</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: *Humanitarian Response Priorities* (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 7; WFP, *Syria External Situation Report*, 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>228</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: *Humanitarian Response Priorities* (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>229</sup> WFP, *Syria External Situation Report*, 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 2

children under the age of five are acutely malnourished and require treatment to survive, including over 177 000 who are severely wasted.<sup>230</sup>

The cost of living, as measured by the minimum expenditure basket (MEB), rose by 21 % in one year and more than tripled over two years. The minimum wage now covers only 16 % of the food component of the MEB, underscoring the severe strain on households. Female-headed households and other vulnerable groups, including women, adolescent girls, and persons with disabilities, are disproportionately affected, facing heightened risks of gender-based violence and reliance on negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage, child labour, and sexual exploitation. Hostilities in southern Syria have worsened food security in Sweida, Dar'a, and Rural Damascus, which in June 2025 recorded the country's highest MEB costs, highlighting severe strain on household purchasing power.<sup>231</sup>

One in four Syrians lives in extreme poverty on less than USD 2.15 a day, while 67 % fall below the lower middle-income poverty line of USD 3.65. Since Assad's fall, Syria has faced a severe liquidity crisis from cash shortages and disrupted currency circulation. Economic activity has further declined amid insecurity, oil supply disruptions, and tight liquidity. Inflation has eased somewhat due to fewer checkpoints and cheaper Turkish imports.<sup>232</sup> The World Bank projected that Syria's GDP will contract by 1 % in 2025, with extreme poverty expected to rise from 33.1 % in 2024 to 37.4 % in 2025.<sup>233</sup>

More women are seeking work, but barriers keep female unemployment high at 24 %, compared to 5 % for men. Gender norms, legal restrictions, and lack of civil documentation, especially for widows and divorced women, further limit women's economic participation and property rights.<sup>234</sup>

As of May 2025, data available to UNOCHA indicates that only 57 % of hospitals and 37 % of primary healthcare centres in Syria are fully operational, while over 452 health facilities that previously received formal support are now threatened by funding cuts, risking closure and potentially leaving over 5 million people without access to critical medical care. Syria also faces a critical shortage of health workers, exacerbated by low salaries, which significantly hinders access to health services. It is estimated that 50-70 % of the health workforce has left the country. Consequently, eight out of Syria's 14 governorates fall below the international minimum threshold for the availability of health workers per 10 000 population. There is a persistent shortage of specialists in areas such as trauma and emergency care, intensive care, orthopaedics, psychiatry, anaesthesia, oncology, and prosthetics. In Deir Ez-Zor, Hasaka and

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<sup>230</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>231</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 9 - Escalation of Hostilities in As-Sweida Governorate, 29 August 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>232</sup> World Bank, Syria Macro-fiscal Assessment, June 2025, [url](#), Executive Summary vii

<sup>233</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>234</sup> World Bank, Syria Macro-fiscal Assessment, June 2025, [url](#), p. 8



Raqqa only one out of 16 hospitals are fully functional because of full reliance on humanitarian partners who are lacking funds.<sup>235</sup>

Many areas, especially Dar'a, Latakia, and Damascus, receive only two to six hours of electricity daily, affecting up to 75 % of communities. The situation is even worse in other governorates, with most communities reporting less than two hours of electricity per day. This includes Deir Ez-Zor (74 %), Hama (77 %), Homs (62 %), and Rural Damascus (69 %).<sup>236</sup>

Since early July, wildfires in rural Latakia have spread into Hama and Idlib, destroying over 15 000 hectares of farmland, displacing thousands, and impacting more than 14 000 people in 72 communities. The loss of crops has severely threatened livelihoods and food security.<sup>237</sup>

## 7. Returns from abroad

As of 18 September 2025, UNHCR estimated that 988 134 Syrians returned from abroad since 8 December 2024. The top counties of departure for returnees were Türkiye (41 %), Lebanon (32 %) and Jordan (20 %). The top intended governorates of return were Damascus (170 624), Aleppo (159 450), Idlib (134 436) and Homs (128 531).<sup>238</sup>

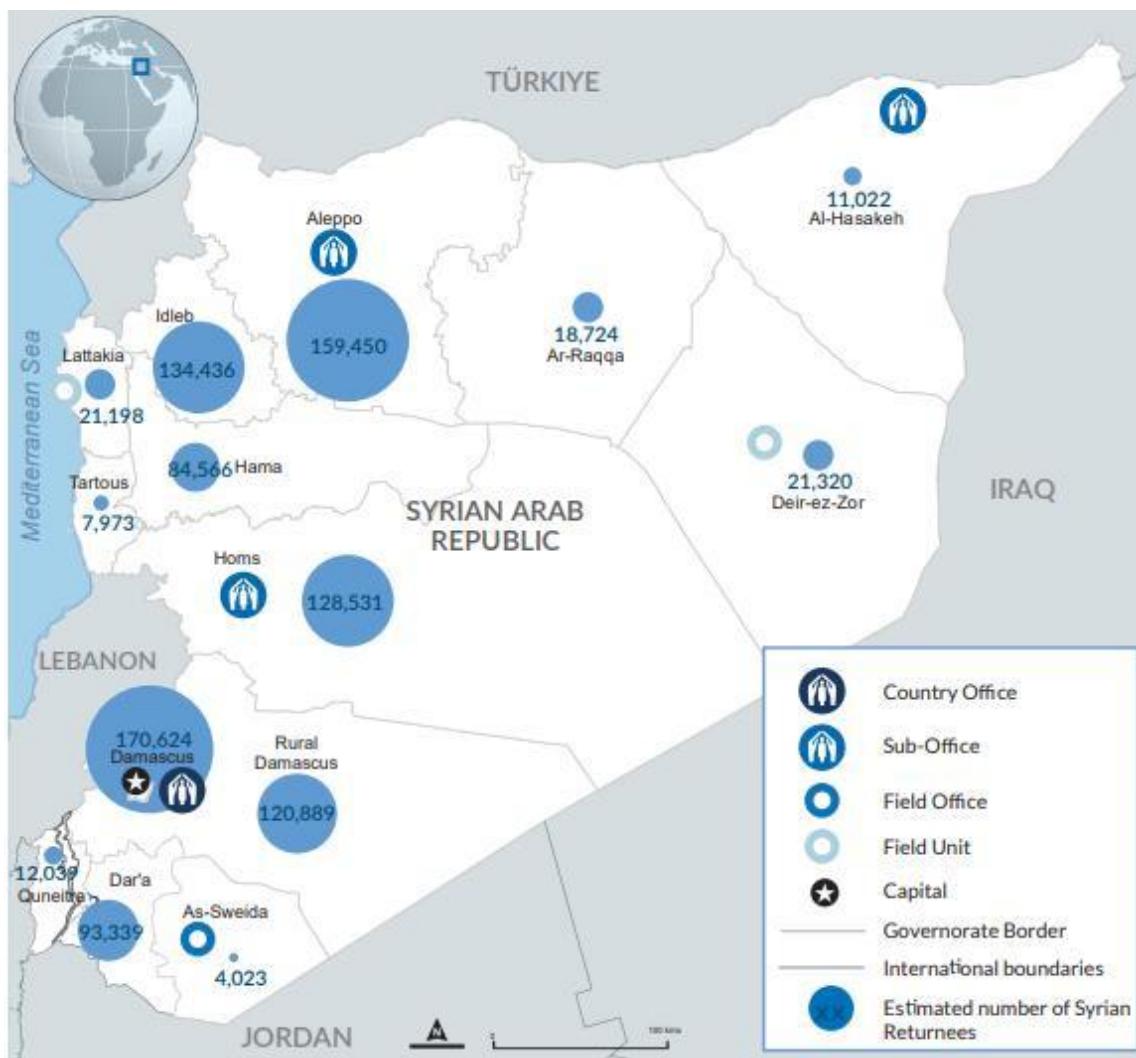
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<sup>235</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 39

<sup>236</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 30

<sup>237</sup> WFP, Syria External Situation Report, 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>238</sup> UNCHR, Syria Governorates of Return Overview, 18 September 2025, [url](#)



**Map 3. UNHCR, Intended locations of return by governorate<sup>239</sup>**

According to UNOCHA, return patterns to Syria remain complex, influenced by individual circumstances, socio-economic pressures in host countries, and perceived improvements in security or property access in home areas. However, the sustainability of these returns is severely limited. Many returnees encounter major obstacles in accessing basic services, legal documentation, and livelihood opportunities. Returns are mainly observed in Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, Raqqa, and Dar'a, with significant numbers also returning to Hama and Hasaka.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>239</sup> UNCHR, Syria Governorates of Return Overview, 18 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>240</sup> UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Priorities (January to December 2025), 24 July 2025, [url](#), p. 55

According to an International Organization for Migration (IOM) report based on data collected in June<sup>241</sup> the main challenges to sustainable return cited by returnees were unemployment (77 %), high cost of living (74 %), poor infrastructure and living conditions (57 %) and lack of humanitarian or development support (52 %).<sup>242</sup> Freedom of movement was generally unrestricted, with 86 % of communities reporting no major limitations. However, most key informants in Hasaka (96 %) and Raqqa (92 %) cited restrictions linked to lack of IDs, security checkpoints, and fears of conscription.<sup>243</sup>

At the governorate level, Aleppo, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Quneitra, Tartous, Deir Ez-Zor, Idlib, and Sweida were assessed as being ‘partially conducive’<sup>244</sup> for the return and reintegration of IDPs and returnees. In contrast, Raqqa (2.5) and Hasaka (2.6) had the least conducive conditions. No governorate reached an overall index scoring to be labelled ‘mostly conducive’ or ‘fully conducive’ for return and reintegration.<sup>245</sup> Damascus governorate was assessed as being ‘partially conducive’ for return scoring higher (‘mostly conducive’) on the safety and security, restoration of HLP indicators and adequate standards of living, while the conditions related to access to livelihoods and access to documentation were scored the lowest.<sup>246</sup>

On 1 July, Lebanon’s General Security announced a three-month waiver program, valid until 30 September, to facilitate the return of Syrians and Palestinian residents of Syria who entered Lebanon illegally or overstayed their legal residency. This program allows them to return to Syria through official border crossings without fees, fines, or future entry bans to Lebanon. Concurrently, UNHCR launched a communications campaign to inform Syrian refugees about the return procedures and available support. Under the government’s returns program, Syrians interested in returning first contact UNHCR, which interviews them to confirm the voluntariness of their return. Once confirmed, they are registered as returnees, issued repatriation forms, and their refugee status is revoked. UNHCR in Lebanon updates the country’s General Security and UNHCR in Syria to ensure follow-up and support for returnees. If returnees lack necessary documents, UNHCR refers them to partners for legal assistance. Lebanese officials warn that returnees whose cases have been closed and who re-enter Lebanon illegally will be treated as irregular migrants, not refugees. Participants in Lebanon’s returns program receive cash grants of USD 100 per person from UNHCR in Lebanon and may

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<sup>241</sup> Data was collected using ‘a network of 302 field enumerators and 11,256 key informants (KIs) across 3,683 locations in all 14 governorates in Syria’. IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Communities of Return Index — Round 2 (2 - 28 June 2025), 6 August 2025, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>242</sup> IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Communities of Return Index — Round 2 (2 - 28 June 2025), 6 August 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>243</sup> IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Communities of Return Index — Round 2 (2 - 28 June 2025), 6 August 2025, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>244</sup> A score between 2.6 – 3.5 indicates that the conditions are ‘partially conducive’ – some conditions support return, but notable barriers remain. IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Communities of Return Index — Round 2 (2 - 28 June 2025), 6 August 2025, [url](#), p. 19

<sup>245</sup> IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Communities of Return Index — Round 2 (2 - 28 June 2025), 6 August 2025, [url](#), p. 17

<sup>246</sup> IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Communities of Return Index — Round 2 (2 - 28 June 2025), 6 August 2025, [url](#), p. 17



be eligible to receive reintegration grants of USD 400 per family from UNHCR in Syria. On 5 August, UNHCR reported that nearly 72 000 people had expressed interest in returning to Syria under the government's program.<sup>247</sup>

Sources reported on the case of a Syrian man who was a repeated criminal offender and was deported from Austria to Syria in early July. He has reportedly disappeared upon his return to Syria and his whereabouts remain unknown. The UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances launched an inquiry into the fate of the Syrian man.<sup>248</sup>

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