

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	2154
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (Østrig)
Titel:	COI-CMS. Staatendokumentation Country Report – Syria
Udgivet:	8. maj 2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	30. juni 2025

Staatendokumentation Country Report



Syria

from the COI-CMS

[Country of Origin Information – Content Management System](#)

Quality assurance of the machine translation by DeepL was carried out by: Katherine
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Version 12

Publication date: 2025-05-08

(See date of actualization at each section heading)



This project was co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

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1 Comparative country analysis within the meaning of section 3 para 4a Asylum Act

Last modification 2025-05-08 22:36

Explanation

When compiling this country information, the task of the Staatendokumentation set out in Section 3 para 4a Asylum Act to analyse 'significant, lasting changes in the specific, in particular political circumstances that are relevant to the fear of persecution' was taken into account. The information used in this country information was compared with that in the previous version and analysed for relevant improvements as defined in the above-mentioned law.

Improvements that were deemed to meet the specifications defined above were subjected to a quality assurance-based method for determining the actual existence of a significant improvement (see methodology of the Staatendokumentation). If an actual improvement within the meaning of the law was subsequently determined, a corresponding analysis of the Staatendokumentation (see methodology of the Staatendokumentation) was also prepared on the topic in question.

A significant change within the meaning of Section 3 para 4a Asylum Act has occurred in Syria. It is currently being monitored whether these changes are permanent changes within the meaning of Section 3 para 4a Asylum Act.

Possible changes with regard to asylum-relevant issues in accordance with the Refugee Convention

1. Race

1.1 Ethnic minorities

Existing information	Tendency

Representatives of Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) have promised to protect the rights and freedoms of religious and ethnic minorities in Syria (BBC 24/12/2024). Ash-Shara' distinguishes between the Kurdish community and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), to which he also counts the SDF, because they also include groups with links to the military arm of the PKK. He sees the Kurds as part of the homeland and promises peaceful coexistence without oppression of the Kurds (MEMRI 16/12/2024). Ash-Shara' declared that the Kurds must not work towards autonomy under the pretext of fear of Syria's Islamic majority. He demands that they integrate themselves into the new order and lay down their weapons. They should not maintain any individual or independent relations with foreign actors (Akhbar 31/12/2024). After the conquest of Manbij, the groups supported by Turkey looted the property of Kurdish citizens and carried out identity-related killings. They carried out revenge operations, burnt houses and humiliated Kurds (SOHR 9/12/2024).	Remaining the same <i>There are currently no signs of change for people based on their ethnic minority.</i> <i>In the north-west, Kurdish Syrians continue to be subjected to abuses by Turkish-backed groups.</i>

2 Religion

2.1 Religious minorities

Available information	Tendency

From the outset, the new authorities deliberately signalled their intention to move away from the divisive practices of their predecessors. In Aleppo, the HTS liaised with prominent Christian leaders and clerics of different denominations to improve strained relations and foster a sense of security (AC 20/12/2024). Ash-Shara' constantly repeats that he will respect minorities and the rights of all Syrians. Even at the beginning of the offensive on Aleppo, he issued 'recommendations to his soldiers' (Rosa Lux 17/12/2024). Since seizing power, Syria's new leadership has repeatedly tried to reassure minorities that they will not be harmed, although some individual cases have triggered protests. On 25 December 2024, thousands protested in several areas of Syria after a video circulated showing an attack on an Alawite shrine in the north of the country. A day earlier, hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets in Christian areas of Damascus to protest against the burning of a Christmas tree near Hama in central Syria (AJ 31/12/2024a).

Staying the same - deteriorating

There is not yet sufficient information available. Individual incidents indicate a possible worsening of the situation for members of certain minorities, such as Alawites or Christians, due to revenge actions/violence by armed individuals/groups. The new government is responding with arrests and concessions, but it remains to be seen how successful it will be in protecting minorities.

3 Members to particular social groups

3.1 Women

Available information	Tendency

While women are visible in mid-level administrative positions in the transitional government, no efforts have yet been made to appoint them to leadership positions or ministries ([AC 20/12/2024](#)). There are three women who hold an official position in the new government ([TNA 1/1/2025](#)). HTS reportedly issued a ban on interfering with women's dress or making demands regarding their dress or appearance, including demands for modesty ([Nahar 14/12/2024](#); cf. [SyrNews 9/12/2024](#)), but this was denied by a spokesperson for the Syrian Salvation Government ([Nahar 14/12/2024](#)). The spokesperson of the new government in particular attracted attention with controversial statements. He said that the appointment of women to ministerial and parliamentary positions was premature because the 'biological and psychological nature' of women prevents them from fulfilling certain roles ([BBC 26/12/2024](#)) and he is said to have questioned whether women should assume judicial powers ([TNA 2/1/2025a](#)).

In North and East Syria, women's fundamental rights are recognised and specifically guaranteed by law ([ANF 9/1/2025](#)).

Remaining the same - deteriorating

The new government is making public concessions to women and elevating women to public office, but there are also contradictory statements from official and unofficial sources that suggest a backward-looking image of women.

It remains to be seen what rights will actually be granted to women in the new government.

3.2 Homosexuality

Available information	Tendency
Homosexual acts were criminalised under the al-Assad regime. The country's new rulers have fundamentalist religious roots and were involved in violence and persecution against homosexual people (BBC 23/12/2024). According to activists, however, there has been a change in behaviour by the HTS with regard to homosexual people (QNews 23/12/2024).	There is a lack of sufficient information to be able to make a statement.

4 Political conviction

4.1 Compulsory military service

Available information	Tendency
Following the uprising in Syria, the Islamist-led rebel alliance announced a general amnesty for all conscripts. They are guaranteed safety and any attacks on them are prohibited, the alliance announced on Telegram (Presse 9/12/2024). HTS leader Ahmed ash-Shara' declared on 15 December 2024 that he would end conscription in Syria (ISW 16/12/2024). The reorganisation of the Syrian military has only just begun. The new de facto leader has promised to transform the new army into a professional, volunteer-based force to promote professionalism in the ranks and move away from the conscription policy that characterised the collapsed Assad regime (TR-Today 8/1/2025).	Improvement <i>Official statements suggest that the situation regarding compulsory conscription will improve. There are currently no known cases of (forced) recruitment.</i>

4.2 Opposition sentiment

Available information	Tendency
Fighters freed prisoners from prisons in the cities they captured during their offensive, including the notorious Sednaya prison in Damascus (AJ 8/12/2024). Over the past 13 years, following the failed rebel uprising and subsequent civil war, al-Assad has utilised the long arms of the security forces apparatus as never before to stamp out any hint of dissent (NYT 17/12/2024).	Improvement <i>Persecution for criticising the al-Assad regime no longer exists. People arrested under the former regime because of their opposition to the government, the al-Assad family or similar were released from prison.</i>

A five-day raid in Homs against war criminals and fugitive criminals ended on 6 January 2025. They are said to be mainly remnants of the regime and its supporters who refused to hand in their weapons in one of the 'settlement centres' in Homs. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 150 people are said to have been arrested in the city of Homs and around 500 in the surrounding area ([Arabiya 6/1/2025a](#)). Some of the detainees are said to have been released on 12 January 2025 ([AAA 12/1/2025a](#)). They are said to have been 360 former officers and members of the regime's army. A correspondent from Al Arabiya News explained that they were released after they were investigated and it was found that they were not involved in crimes against Syrians ([Arabiya 12/1/2025a](#)). Security campaigns by the new Syrian authorities also took place in other areas, arresting several people they accuse of having links to the ousted regime ([AlHurra 10/1/2025a](#)). A Syria watcher said that fighters linked to the transitional government publicly executed a local official on 10 January 2025, accusing him of being an informant of ousted President Bashar al-Assad ([Arabiya 10/1/2025](#)).

Staying the same - deterioration

Those who supported the al-Assad regime are prosecuted and held accountable, reportedly even to the point of execution. The information available is not sufficient to determine whether those arrested or punished are exclusively war criminals or not.

There are also likely to be revenge attacks by individuals/armed groups, which the security forces are currently unable to prevent.

Since the rebel groups took control of the Hama governorate on 5 December 2024, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has documented a number of violations, including extrajudicial killings, destruction of homes and attacks on public and private property (SNHR 19 December 2024). After the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime on 8 December 2024, there were repeated arbitrary killings and field executions in Syria, particularly in the provinces of Hama, Homs, Latakia and Tartus. By 3 January 2025, 112 people had been killed in 60 killings, including women and children (SOHR 3 January 2025).

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2 Country-specific notes

Last modification 2025-05-08 16:02

Topical note:

The situation in Syria is currently volatile in all areas, opaque, partly unclear and constantly affected by changes. Due to the short period of time since the uprising, there are currently few to no reports available from standard sources. In addition, the available information varies depending on the topic or issue. This means that there is little or no (reliable) information available on some topics, while in other areas the sources are somewhat broader. Incorrect information can find its way into the general reporting situation, particularly via social media channels. In accordance with its methodology and the standards laid down therein [to be found at: <https://coi-cms.staatendokumentation.at/> or <https://www.staatendokumentation.at/de/>], the Staatendokumentation endeavours to comprehensively research and verify the information presented here. Nevertheless, consideration must be given to the disclaimer of this product.

Due to the security and especially the political situation, the source situation is changing rapidly. These changes will be gradually incorporated into this product over the coming weeks and months in the course of partial updates. Brief information will be sent out promptly, particularly in the event of significant changes relevant to asylum. If there is a need for further information, enquiries can be sent to the Staatendokumentation at any time.

This document focuses on the general situation since the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far. In this country information, the most important recent developments from the point of view of the Staatendokumentation have been included. For older, but not necessarily outdated information, please refer to version 11 of the country information [available at <https://www.ecoi.net/> or via the *BFA Coordination Board*]. A comprehensive revision of this chapter, taking into account current sources and information, will be carried out promptly by means of a (partial) update.

This country information was peer-reviewed and quality-assured by country experts from other COI units within the DACH Association. The provision of the available country information was agreed and coordinated at European level.

Structure

The current state of information can be found in the respective sub-chapter. Some sub-chapters contain information from the period shortly before the fall of al-Assad on 8 December 2024, which has been retained where it was considered useful. This is particularly the case where this information provides an overview of the situation in the Idlib region controlled by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and thus allows for conclusions to be drawn about the basic ideas of HTS regarding state structure and understanding of society, even if the current behaviour of those responsible for the HTS government in Syria differs from that in Idlib. Should older information also be required for other chapters, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Editorial deadline and date of publication

The final editorial deadline for this Country Information (CI) was set for 28 April 2025, although individual chapters and sub-chapters had a much earlier editorial deadline. Reports received after the respective editorial deadline will be incorporated in the course of the following (partial) update.

Translations

See disclaimer. It should also be noted that transliterations of proper names may vary depending on the source.

3 Political situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 22:36

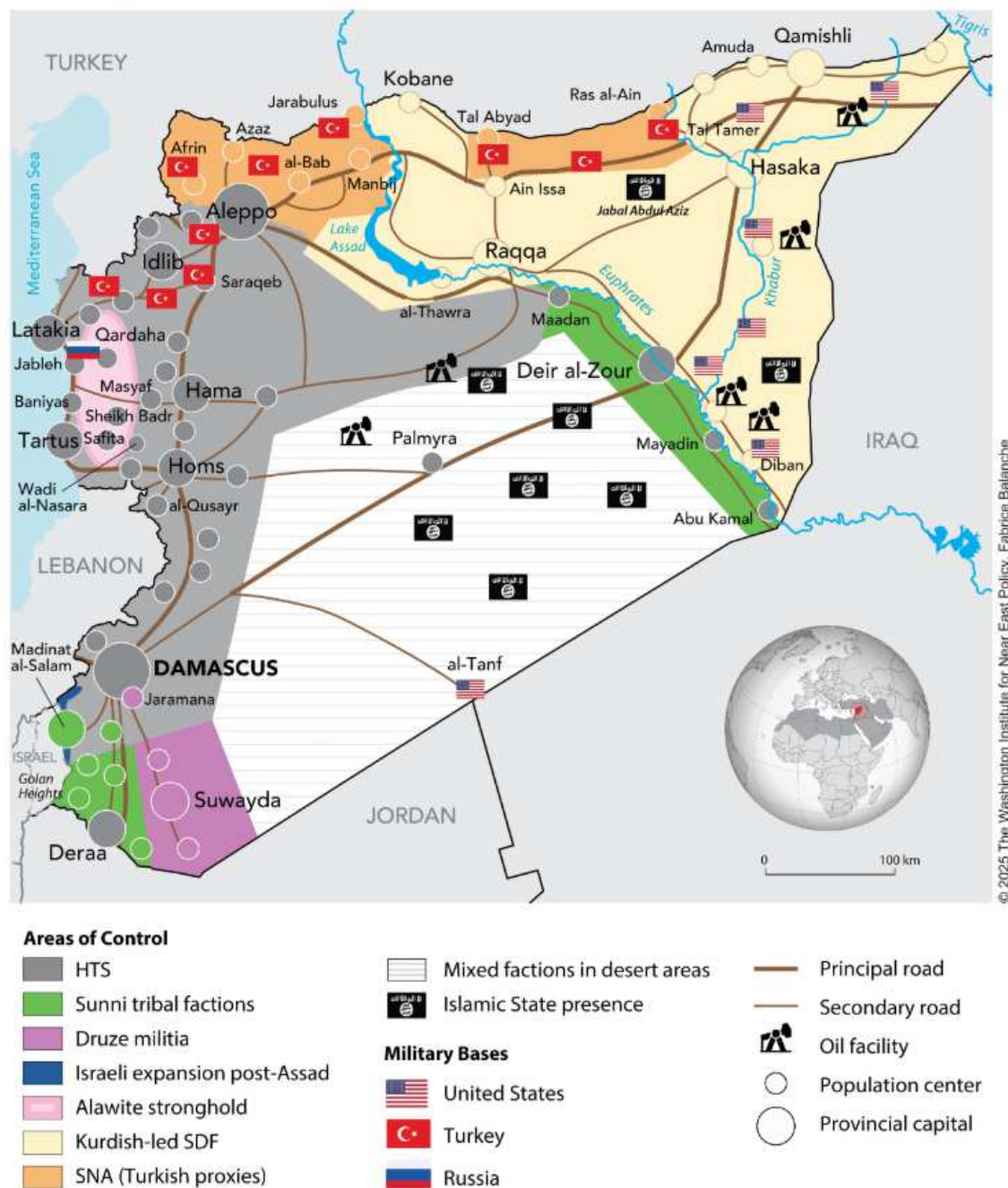
[The transformation of Syrian politics is not yet complete and changes have already been announced for March 2025. In the following, the current status is presented as it results from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

On 8 December 2024, the opposition forces in Syria declared the 24-year rule of President Bashar al-Assad over. Fighters had previously entered the capital after opposition groups launched an offensive against the regime on 27 November 2024 and captured the cities of Aleppo, Hama and large parts of the south within a few days. Al-Assad had fled Damascus ([AJ 8/12/2024](#)). He and his family were granted asylum in Russia ([VB Moskau 10/12/2024](#)). He had ruled the country since 2000, after taking over from his father Hafez al-Assad, who had previously ruled for 29 years ([BBC 8/12/2024a](#)). He came to power with the Baath Party, which had been the ruling party in Syria since the 1960s ([NTV 9/12/2024](#)). Bashar al-Assad had violently suppressed peaceful protests against his regime in 2011, which led to a civil war. More than half a million people were killed and six million others became refugees ([BBC 8/12/2024a](#)). The offensive against al-Assad was led by Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) ([BBC 9/12/2024](#)). *[Details on the offensive and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham can be found in the chapter [Security authorities - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(8 December 2024\)](#) Note]*. The HTS was originally founded in 2012 under the name Jabhat an-Nusra (an-Nusra Front), but changed its name to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham in 2016 after severing its ties to al-Qaeda. It consolidated its power in the provinces of Idlib and Aleppo, where it crushed its rivals, including cells of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS). It established the so-called Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) to administer the area according to Islamic law ([BBC 9/12/2024](#)). The HTS was supported by the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA), local fighters in the south and other groups ([Al-Monitor 8/12/2024](#)). Other rebel groups also rose up ([BBC 8/12/2024b](#)),

such as those in the north, Kurdish militias in the north-east and cells of the terrorist militia IS ([Tagesschau 8/12/2024](#)). In the south, various armed groups helped to drive the government troops out of the area. Local militias captured most of Dara'a province and the predominantly Druze province of Suweida ([Al-Monitor 8/12/2024](#)). The Department for Military Operations (DMO), to which the HTS also belongs, controlled 70% of Syrian territory as at 11 December 2024 ([Arabiya 11/12/2024](#)).

The map shows the distribution of Syria among the armed groups at the end of February 2025:

The Syrian Mosaic Post-Assad



Sources 1: [TWI 28/2/2025](#)

In the first week after al-Assad fled the country, Syria managed to avert complete chaos, civil violence and the collapse of the state ([MEI 19/12/2024](#)). Former regime officials reportedly burned down many government buildings to hide evidence of their crimes after fleeing the Interior Ministry following the fall of President Bashar al-Assad's regime ([Araby 16/12/2024](#)). Syria's new de facto leaders sought security, stability and continuity. Although there were reports of looting at the central bank and people ransacking al-Assad's personal residence and the embassy of

Iran, his main supporter, rebel fighters stood guard outside government buildings across the capital on 9 December 2024. The new authorities also circulated images of security personnel patrolling the streets of Damascus on social media ([NYT 12/12/2024](#)).

The HTS leader Mohammed al-Joulani, who now uses his civil name Ahmad ash-Shara' instead of his fighting name ([Nashra 8/12/2024](#)), met with the former Prime Minister and Vice President of al-Assad on 9 December 2024 to discuss the modalities for a handover of power ([DW 10/12/2024](#)). Until their handover, Syria's state institutions remained under his supervision ([REU 8/12/2024](#)). The power of the Assad regime was transferred to a transitional body headed by the Prime Minister of the SSG, Mohammed al-Bashir ([MEI 9/12/2024](#)). Al-Bashir announced on the first day of his appointment that the priorities of his government were the following: Ensuring security, providing services and maintaining state institutions. ([AJ 27/1/2025a](#)). On 29 January 2025, de facto ruler Ahmed ash-Shara' was appointed interim president ([Standard 29/1/2025](#)).

According to media reports, the transitional government left the administrative officials in their posts ([LTO 9/12/2024](#)). However, a diplomatic source from a European country reports that all civil servants have been suspended: The suspension of all civil servants means that there are now (interim) ministers in Syria, but hardly any civil servants, i.e. no functioning administration. With very few exceptions, the ministries are empty. The only forces of law and order are the groups that came along from Idlib and who - overstretched in terms of personnel - are endeavouring to maintain a minimum of order in the cities. Municipal services are non-existent or currently reduced to private initiatives ([SYRDiplQ1 5/2/2025](#)). There have been frequent outbreaks of violence in Damascus and other places because the police and army do not have enough personnel to maintain order. The streets are often littered with rubbish and teenagers are directing traffic instead of the police ([FT 25/3/2025](#)). Syria expert Daniel Gerlach said that there is a lack of senior civil servants in the country who stand between political decision-makers and the administration - which has resumed its work. There is a lack of those who are in contact with the administration and implement policy. Those who make political decisions in Syria are around 15 to 16 people, Gerlach estimates ([AC 23/1/2025](#)). All ministers in the transitional government were from the 7th cabinet of the SSG, which was appointed in February 2024 ([AlMon 11/12/2024](#)). Ash-Shara' and the interim prime minister have appointed loyalists as governors in several provinces and as ministers in the transitional government ([ISW 19/12/2024](#)). Al-Bashir told Al Jazeera that SSG ministers will take over national ministerial positions for the time being ([AJ 15/12/2024a](#)). Ash-Shara', said that no internal and external parties will be considered in the first 100 days. He has made it very clear to all his comrades belonging to HTS or other factions that he will entrust this phase only to people who have his personal trust. He has asked his partners and friends to stand by him in this phase and prepare to discuss the shape of a new government ([Akhbar 31/12/2024](#)). The HTS, which has considerable influence in the new government, does not have sufficient technocratic expertise to manage a nation as complex as Syria, according to a report by the Atlantic Council ([AC 23/1/2025](#)).

The government has not set a timetable for holding elections. Ash-Shara' stated on 16/12/2024 that Syria was not ready for elections. The term of office of the transitional government was set until March 2025 ([ISW 16/12/2024](#)). On 29 March 2025, the president appointed the new Syrian

government. It consists of technocrats, ethnic minorities and several close confidants of ash-Shara. Almost half of the appointees have no connection to the HTS. Among the appointees are a woman, a member of the Druze minority, a Kurd and an Alawite (FT 30/3/2025). The only female cabinet member is a Catholic Christian (VN 1/4/2025). None of them received an important portfolio. Syria expert Fabrice Balanche explained that important portfolios were given to 'former comrades-in-arms who were already part of the Syrian Salvation Government in the province of Idlib' in north-west Syria (AlMon 30/3/2025). The defence minister and the foreign minister of the transitional government retained their posts. Interior Minister Khattab was previously head of the intelligence service (Independent 29/3/2025). Foreign Minister ash-Shaibani also retained his post (AlMon 30/3/2025). Several of the new ministers worked under the Assad regime. Former Assad officials include Yarab Badr, the new Minister of Transport, and Nidal ash-Sha'r, who was appointed Minister of Economy (NYT 30/3/2025). The members are appointed for five years (FT 30/3/2025). The cabinet does not have a prime minister, as according to the provisional constitution, the government will have a secretary general (Independent 29/3/2025). A new body announced by decree in late March, the General Secretariat for Political Affairs, granted ash-Shara's deputy, Foreign Minister ash-Shaibani, wide-ranging powers over the running of ministries and government agencies - similar to the role of a prime minister (FT 30/3/2025).

The Kurds in north-east Syria oppose the newly presented Syrian government. The cabinet does not reflect the diversity of the country, the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) announced. It therefore does not consider itself bound by the decisions of the new government (Zeit Online 30/3/2025; cf. Standard 30/3/2025; K24 30/3/2025). Although the new government includes Education Minister Mohammad Turko, a Kurd, no DAANES representatives have been appointed to the new cabinet (MEE 30/3/2025). Some critics point to the discrepancy between ash-Shara's rhetoric in meetings with international representatives and the supposed lack of an inclusive discourse with domestic actors (Etana 10/1/2025). In the first fifty days of the new government, a number of appointments were made in government institutions, including most of the governors and directors of key government agencies and departments that have a sovereign dimension, such as the Intelligence Service, the Central Bank and the Court of Cassation, in addition to ministers (AJ 27/1/2025a). The problem is that the circle of decision-makers - at least at present - is a particularly small one, consisting exclusively of close confidants from Idlib, i.e. a self-contained circle. In addition, there are already internal disagreements: The moderate approach of the transitional authorities is already going too far for many a military group and many a companion from Idlib. In the first euphoric weeks after the takeover, people were still confident and optimistic, or rather convinced that the experiences from the Idlib model could be transferred to the whole country (the argument was that Idlib was a successful microcosm of Syria as a whole, as armed groups from all over the country had been transferred to Idlib), but 50 days after the fall of the Assad regime, reality has caught up with the new rulers. The disastrous administrative legacy, the poor economic situation, the sheer size and diversity of the country, as well as the lack of everything, including expertise and experience. The administration of a city-state (Idlib) has a completely different dimension to that of a complex, destroyed country (SYRDiplQ1 5/2/2025).

The transitional government announced that a comprehensive national dialogue conference will issue a preliminary constitutional declaration, form a committee to draft a new constitution and confirm an transitional government to take over from al-Bashir's government ([AJ 27/1/2025a](#)). On 12.2.2025, sources confirmed to Al Jazeera that the Syrian presidency had formed the preparatory committee for the national conference consisting of five men and two women ([AJ 12/2/2025](#); cf. [Sky News 12/2/2025](#)). In preparation for the conference, the seven-member preparatory committee organised hearings in the governorates, sometimes holding several two-hour sessions per day to cover Syria's 14 provinces in one week. Five members of the committee belonged to the HTS or are close to it. Representatives of the Druze or Alawites, two of the largest minorities in Syria, were not present ([BBC 25/2/2025](#)). On 12 February 2025, this committee began its work to prepare the national conference and send out invitations to participants ([AJ 12/2/2025](#)). The seven members of the preparatory committee consulted around 4.000 people across Syria to gather opinions to help draft a constitutional declaration, a new economic framework and a plan for institutional reforms, the committee told reporters on 23.2.2025 ([REU 23/2/2025](#); cf. [AlHurra 23/2/2025](#)). On 25.2.2025, the National Dialogue Conference took place in Damascus. Hundreds of representatives of various social groups were present, but many other personalities and groups were not present ([AlHurra 25/2/2025](#)). Around 400 representatives of civil society, religious communities, the opposition and artists took part ([AlHurra 25/2/2025](#)). According to the BBC, there were as many as 600 participants ([BBC 25/2/2025](#)). The Kurdish Autonomous Administration (Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria - DAANES) and its military arm, the SDF, did not receive an invitation to take part in the conference. The organisers had previously announced that no military units or formations that still retain their weapons were invited ([AlHurra 25/2/2025](#)). After the opening of the conference, the participants were divided into six workshops dealing with key topics, including 'personal freedoms', 'constitution building' and 'transitional justice'. The final declaration of the conference called for the swift formation of the Provisional Legislative Council to take over the functions of the legislature according to 'criteria of competence and equitable representation' ([BBC 25/2/2025](#)). The committee of the dialogue conference issues recommendations and does not make decisions ([AJ 21/2/2025](#)). These recommendations are to be incorporated into the constitutional declaration and the plan for institutional reform, the committee's spokesperson assures ([AlHurra 23/2/2025](#); cf. [BBC 23/2/2025](#)). Several declarations were made at the conference, including the formation of a Legislative Council, a commitment to transitional justice, human rights and the guarantee of freedom of expression. A declaration published at the end of the one-day conference - which was announced only a few days earlier and left many potential participants with little time to prepare - paved the way for the formation of a seven-member committee tasked with drafting a transitional constitutional declaration ([TNA 3/3/2025](#)). On 2 March 2025, the new government announced the formation of this seven-member committee. The committee consists of a committee of experts, including two women, whose task is to draft the constitutional declaration governing the transitional phase in Syria. The committee would 'submit its proposals to the president', it said in a statement, without specifying a timeframe ([FR24 2/3/2025](#); cf. [BBC 3/3/2025](#)). Less than two hours after this decision, the texts of the articles to be included in this statement became public, causing both consternation and ridicule among Syrians, especially

since the information came from Arab satellite channels and not from local broadcasters ([Nahar 4/3/2025](#)). The committee noted that the constitutional declaration will lay down the general foundations of the system of government to ensure flexibility and efficiency in the administration of the state during this sensitive period in order to preserve the political and social unity and territorial integrity of the country. The ideas from the national dialogues and discussions that took place in the constitution-making workshops during the National Dialogue Conference will be taken into account by the Committee ([SANA 3/3/2025](#)).

On 13 March 2025, ash-Shara' signed the announced constitutional declaration ([NYT 14/3/2025](#)). The preliminary document consists of four chapters and 53 articles ([AlHurra 14/3/2025](#)). It provides for a five-year transitional phase ([BBC 14/3/2025](#)). After this transitional phase, a permanent constitution is to be adopted and presidential elections held ([NYT 14/3/2025](#)). The declaration stipulates that the Syrian president must be Muslim, as was already written in the previous constitution. Unlike the 2012 constitution, this constitutional declaration establishes Islamic jurisprudence as the main source of legislation. In addition, the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary are enshrined and women's rights are guaranteed ([BBC 14/3/2025](#)). However, the president is solely responsible for appointing the judges of Syria's new constitutional court. The judges must be impartial ([NYT 14/3/2025](#)). There is no provision in the constitution for the president to be held accountable. According to the declaration, ash-Shara' will hold the following offices in addition to the President of the Republic: Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces and Chairman of the National Security Council. In Article 41, the constitutional declaration grants the President the power to declare a state of emergency with the approval of the National Security Council, whose members he chooses himself ([AlHurra 14/3/2025](#)). The newly formed National Security Council is made up of Shara' loyalists, including Defence Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra, Interior Minister Ali Keddah, Foreign Minister As'ad ash-Shaibani and Intelligence Chief Anas Khattab ([ISW 13/3/2025](#)). According to Syria expert Fabrice Balanche, the National Security Council is 'the real government' ([AlMon 30/3/2025](#)). The declaration guarantees freedom of opinion, expression, information, publication and the press. However, all rights, including freedom of religion, can be restricted if they are deemed to be a violation of national security or public order, among other things. The obligation to guarantee freedom of opinion, expression, information, publication and the press is subject to some exceptions, including the glorification of the Assad regime ([NYT 14/3/2025](#)). The symbols of the Assad regime are also criminalised, as is denying, praising, justifying or trivialising its crimes ([AlHurra 14/3/2025](#)). The constitutional declaration guarantees women the right to education and work and adds that they will have full social, economic and political rights ([NYT 14/3/2025](#)). According to a member of the Constitutional Declaration Committee, a new People's Assembly will have full responsibility for legislation. Two-thirds of its members would be appointed by a committee selected by the president and one-third by the president himself. A committee would also be formed to draft a new permanent constitution ([BBC 14/3/2025](#)). This temporary constitution concentrates a great deal of power in the hands of the president. The president is granted executive power and the authority to declare a state of emergency ([NYT 14/3/2025](#)). Parliament is not authorised to impeach the president, appoint or dismiss ministers or control the executive ([HRW 25/3/2025](#)). Nevertheless, the constitutional declaration denies the

president the power to issue general amnesty laws, which al-Assad had previously monopolised for himself ([AlHurra 14/3/2025](#)). The constitution defines Syria as an 'Arab' republic with Arabic as the only official language ([LSE 28/3/2025](#)). It triggered much debate within Syria. The passages that grant the president a monopoly on power are particularly controversial ([AlHurra 14/3/2025](#)). The Syrian Democratic Council, the political arm of the Kurdish-led forces that control north-eastern Syria, declared that the new document was 'a new form of authoritarianism' and criticised what it saw as uncontrolled executive powers ([NYT 14/3/2025](#)). The International Centre for Dialogue Initiatives writes that these reforms were unilaterally drafted by a constitutional committee, also appointed by the president, which then claimed that their legitimacy came from a dialogue process. The so-called National Dialogue Conference thus became a political cover for pre-determined constitutional amendments that consolidated authoritarian rule under the guise of reform ([ICDI 4/4/2025](#)). Despite widespread criticism of the current constitution, no short-term revision is planned. The current version is the result of an accelerated process that was set in motion immediately after the National Dialogue Conference in February 2025. A seven-member committee drafted the constitution in a very short space of time and, in its current form, it does not yet fulfil its aspirations for a pluralistic, free and just state ([AdRev 3/4/2025](#)).

In response to the new constitution, 34 different Syrian parties and organisations founded an alliance on 22 March 2025, the Syrian Equal Citizenship Alliance (Tamasuk). The organisations in the alliance include the Syrian Democratic Council ([ISW 24/3/2025](#)), the People's Will Party, the Ba'ath Democratic Party and the Communist Workers' Party ([TNA 23/3/2025](#)) as well as other Kurdish, Christian and Druze groups ([ISW 24/3/2025](#)). The alliance does not describe itself as an opposition and demands a decentralised distribution of power ([TNA 23/3/2025](#)).

The constitution and parliament were suspended during the three-month transition period, according to the interim authorities ([Almodon 8/1/2025](#)). According to leaks, the interim president will appoint the People's Assembly within 60 days of the publication of the constitutional declaration. The People's Assembly will comprise 100 members, taking into account an equitable representation of components and competences, and will be appointed by the President of the Republic by a republican decree for a term of two years ([AlHurra 3/3/2025](#)). On 29 December 2024, ash-Shara' said in an interview that the holding of legitimate elections requires a comprehensive census ([Arabiya 29/12/2024](#)). In an interview, he stated that in order for free, fair and honest elections to be held in Syria, a census, the return of people living abroad, the opening of embassies and the restoration of legal contact with the population are required. In addition, many of the people displaced within the country or living in camps in neighbouring countries are not registered with the refugee commissions, etc. ([Economist 3.2.2025](#)). Apart from the repeated statement that committees would be formed and experts would be consulted, al-Shara did not provide much information on what the election process would look like ([NYT 30/12/2024](#)). Ash-Shara' had noted that the establishment of these committees was unlikely in the near future. He told the BBC on 18 December 2024 that a Syrian committee of legal experts would convene to draft a constitution and decide on a number of unspecified legal issues, including the consumption of alcohol. It is unclear which legal experts ash-Shara' is referring to and whether

these experts are representative of Syria's multi-ethnic, sectarian and religious population or whether they are Sunni scholars close to HTS (ISW 19/12/2024).

On 29 January 2025, the leaders of the military factions involved in the military campaign to overthrow Assad gathered for a ceremony at the presidential palace to declare victory. In the victory declaration, they announced nine steps divided into three main topics, such as: 1. filling the power vacuum by cancelling the 2012 constitution, suspending all exceptional laws, dissolving the People's Assembly formed during the time of the previous regime and all committees that emerged from it, and appointing the commander of the military operations command, Ahmed ash-Shara', as president of the country during the transitional period. The ceremony announced the dissolution of four institutions that constituted the pillars of rule and control of the former regime and hinder the establishment of a new regime, namely: the army, the security services with their various branches and all militias affiliated with them, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, the National Progressive Front parties and their affiliated organisations, institutions and committees, and the prohibition of their re-establishment even under a different name and the return of their assets to the Syrian state (AJ 31/1/2025a). The Ba'ath Party of ousted Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad ceased all activities on 12 December 2024, according to its own statements. This applies until further notice, according to a statement published on the party newspaper's website. The party's assets and funds will be placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance, while vehicles and weapons will be handed over to the Ministry of the Interior, according to the party. The Ba'ath Party had been in power in Syria since 1963 (Tagesschau 12/12/2024). Many members of the party leadership have gone into hiding and some have fled the country. In a symbolic act, Syria's new rulers have transformed the party's former headquarters in Damascus into a centre where former members of the army and security forces queue up to register and hand in their weapons (AP 30/12/2024). On 11 February 2025, the presidential office announced that the main opposition bodies in Syria that had been operating in exile had handed over the files they had been working on to Damascus as part of efforts to 'dissolve' the institutions formed during the conflict. This move is tantamount to the abolition of Syria's main unarmed opposition groups and is reminiscent of ash-Shara's attempt to disband all armed groups and integrate them into the army (FR24 12/2/2025). The opposition active from abroad during the war years is held in contempt (SYRDiplQ1 5/2/2025).

While ash-Shara' has shown a certain degree of pragmatism, especially in dealing with local communities, the structures of the transitional government remain centralised and hierarchical, with power concentrated in a small leadership circle. This limits the opportunities for inclusive decision-making and reinforces the perception of marginalisation of minorities and women (AC 20/12/2024). On the one hand, HTS has made remarkable concessions to the local population in Idlib. For example, it has allowed Christians to hold religious services and women to attend universities and drive cars - measures that are remarkable given the group's radical jihadist past. In addition, HTS has integrated civilians into its government administration and introduced a technocratic style of governance, even in sensitive ideological areas such as education and religion, where the group originally wanted to appoint only its own personnel. On the other hand, the unwillingness to allow political opposition remains a cause for concern. In Idlib, HTS has

gradually monopolised power and practically acted as a one-party state. Political opposition and civil society activism were suppressed ([DIIS 16/12/2024](#)). Among the first decisions of the transitional government under al-Bashir were the deployment of police forces in major cities and the ban on smoking and alcohol consumption ([MAITIC 17/12/2024](#)). The HTS was repeatedly accused of serious human rights violations against members of the opposition, women and religious minorities by Human Rights Watch, among others. There have also been large-scale protests against the HTS and its leader, ash-Shara' ([Rosa Lux 17/12/2024](#)). According to terrorism expert Peter Neumann, the HTS fighters were fighting for an Islamist regime. He believes it is possible that there could be opposition within their own movement ([Spiegel 11/12/2024](#)). Terrorism expert Hans-Jakob Schindler also speaks of videos of people from the HTS environment who want to establish a caliphate ([WiWo 9/12/2024](#)). Alberto M. Fernandez, Vice President of the Middle East Media Research Institute, sees the danger not so much that Syria will now be an Islamic state, but that it will be a failed state. The danger is more that anarchy will gain the upper hand and not Sharia law. Nevertheless, they too, see al-Shara', his organisation the HTS and many of their allies as hardcore Islamists. The best comparison is not the Islamic State (ISIS) and al-Qaeda, but the Taliban and Hamas, political projects that are both Islamist and nationalist ([MEMRI 9/12/2024](#)). Around 70% of the Syrian population are Sunni Muslims, including Kurds, who make up around 10% of the population. However, the Arab Sunnis are not united in their goals and many do not want an Islamic state for the future of Syria ([SWI 13/2/2025](#)). *[Information on ethnic and religious minorities can be found in the chapter [Ethnic and religious minorities - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)]*

Despite the criticism, a survey conducted in March 2025 on behalf of 'The Economist', in which 1,500 Syrians from all provinces and confessional groups in the country took part, found that 81% are in favour of the rule of ash-Shara'. Only 22% are of the opinion that his past as an al-Qaeda leader disqualifies him for a leadership role. A large number of respondents say that they perceive his new order as safer, freer and less sectarian than al-Assad's regime. Around 70 per cent are optimistic about the general direction of the country. The most satisfied province is Idlib, ash-Shara's former area of power, where 99 of the 100 respondents expressed optimism. Tartus, where several massacres of the Alawite minority took place in early March 2025, is the most pessimistic province. Even there, 49% said they were optimistic, while 23% were pessimistic. ([Economist 2/4/2025](#)).

Initially, the United Nations (UN) pushed for a return to the long-stagnant political transition based on Resolution 2254 ([National 9/12/2024](#)). Security Council Resolution 2254, adopted in 2015, which called for a political transition in Syria through negotiations between the government of the ousted regime and the opposition, has now become irrelevant, as the regime with which negotiations were to take place has fallen ([AJ 28/12/2024a](#)). Ash-Shara' no longer sees a need for the United Nations working mechanism in Syria and makes no secret of his lack of admiration for UN envoy Geir Pedersen. The new government is no longer interested in Resolution 2254 and its provisions. Ash-Shara' said that the past few years had shown the ineffectiveness of the

UN, which is why he considers the resolution to have lapsed with the fall of the regime (Akhbar 31/12/2024).

Syria is on the US list of countries that support terrorism and HTS is classified as a foreign terrorist organisation by the European Union, Turkey and the USA (AJ 15/12/2024a). HTS was added to the UN terror list in May 2014 when the Security Committee concluded that it was a terrorist organisation with links to al-Qaeda. They are subject to three sanctions: Asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo. This means that all member states are internationally expected to comply with these measures. In order to de-list HTS as a terrorist organisation, a member state would have to propose de-listing and this proposal would then be forwarded to the relevant Security Council committee. The committee, which is made up of representatives from all 15 countries that make up the Security Council, would then have to decide unanimously to approve the proposal (UN News 12/12/2024). The international community accepted in bilateral and multilateral formats that HTS, despite being categorised as a terrorist organisation, needs a seat at the negotiating table (MEI 9/12/2024).

The Presidency of the Syrian transitional government has taken a decision to establish a General Authority for Land and Sea Ports, which is administratively and financially independent and directly linked to the Prime Minister. The Land and Sea Ports Authority will include the General Company of Tartous Port, the General Company of Latakia Port, the General Directorate of Ports and others, the presidency said in a separate decision, appointing Qutaiba Ahmad Badawi as head of the authority. The new authority will supervise and organise the entry and exit of passengers and cargo and everything that facilitates this task, it said. The authority will also oversee maritime shipping, commercial maritime affairs, ports and sea transport, and own and lease the commercial vessels and real estate necessary for its work (LBCI 1/1/2025).

Ash-Shara's government controls limited parts of Syria, including most western cities and parts of the countryside (TWI 28/2/2025). North-east Syria is ruled by a combination of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Arab tribal forces (MEI 19/12/2024). The SDF are in talks with ash-Shara', but remain cautious about his intentions (TWI 28/2/2025). Northern Aleppo is controlled by the Turkish-backed Syrian Interim Government (MEI 19/12/2024). Turkish-backed rebel factions within the SNA control parts of northern Syria near the Turkish border, including 'Afrin, Suluk and Ra's al-'Ain. These areas were captured by the SNA from the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in 2018 and 2019 (Al-Monitor 8/12/2024). On 29 January 2025, Turkey forced the leader of this group, Sayf Abu Bakr, to travel to Damascus and personally congratulate the new president, but this is the only concession he has made to ash-Shara' so far. The two leaders have a long history of mutual animosity, especially as many Syrian National Army fighters are veterans of the bloody war waged by HTS in 2017-2020 for control of Idlib province (TWI 28/2/2025). Southern Syria is controlled by a semi-independent structure in Suweida together with former opposition groups in Dara'a (MEI 19/12/2024). In the Euphrates Valley, the loyalty of Sunni tribes to HTS is less certain, while in Dara'a, forces controlled by former rebel Ahmad al-'Awda and other southern factions resist integration into the new Syrian army (TWI 28/2/2025). In early January 2025, local factions operating in Suweida province prevented a DMO military convoy from entering the southern Syrian province. Sources told Al Jazeera

that the decision was made on the instructions of the spiritual leader of the Druze monotheist community, Hikmat al-Hijri, who emphasised that no military presence from outside the province would be allowed. The sources explained that the military convoy arrived in the Druze-majority province of Suweida without prior consultation with the local factions in the province ([AJ 1/1/2025a](#)). According to Etana, the HTS is said to have increasingly sought to exploit its power and military reach throughout Dara'a province and the wider south of Syria, which led to tensions with Ahmad al-'Awda. Intensive negotiations in the Dara'a governorate building have sought the disbandment of both the 5th Corps and Ahmad al-'Awda's groups (which once formed the 8th Brigade of the 5th Corps), as well as other former opposition groups from Dara'a city and at-Tafa. While HTS aims to integrate all former opposition groups under a new Ministry of Defence after al-Assad, pressure grew on al-'Awda, who had resisted dissolution under the previous conditions ([Etana 17/1/2025](#)). On 13 April 2025, the group finally gave in to the political and military pressure and announced its dissolution. The weapons being handed over to the government ([National 14/4/2025](#)), heavy weapons were confiscated by the government's security forces ([Etana 16/4/2025](#)). *[Further information on the groups in southern Syria and their disarmament can be found in the chapters [Security authorities - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [Defence and reserve forces - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].* Ash-Shara's political project of a centralised Syria is at odds with the current reality on the ground. He believes that federalism could divide the 'nation' - a view that is partly based on anti-Israeli sentiment among the Syrian population ([TWI 28/2/2025](#)).

Ahmed ash-Shara' was born Ahmed Hussein ash-Shara' in Saudi Arabia in 1982 ([Rosa Lux 17/12/2024](#)) as the child of Syrian expatriates. His family moved back to Syria at the end of the 1980s ([NYT 12/12/2024](#)). As a young man, he became radicalised during the bloody second Intifada, when the Israeli government responded to Palestinian suicide attacks with brutal violence. He was also influenced by 9/11 ([Rosa Lux 17/12/2024](#)). He went to Iraq in 2003 to join al-Qaeda and fight against the US occupation. According to Arab media reports and US officials, he spent several years in an American prison in Iraq. At the beginning of the civil war, he emerged in Syria and founded Jabhat an-Nusra, which eventually became Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham ([NYT 12/12/2024](#)). In 2003, he adopted the war name Abu Mohammad al-Jolani ([Rosa Lux 17/12/2024](#)). In an interview with the US broadcaster PBS a few years ago, ash-Shara' admitted that he received financial support from the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) when he returned to Syria, which was occupying large parts of Iraq and Syria at the time ([Rosa Lux 17/12/2024](#)[DW 18/12/2024](#)). In January 2017, he founded HTS, a new alliance of various Islamist militias that decidedly renounced the jihadist al-Qaeda and its goal of a global jihad against the West ([Rosa Lux 17/12/2024](#)). Since breaking with al-Qaeda, he and his group have sought to gain international legitimacy by rejecting global jihadist ambitions and focusing on organised governance in Syria ([NYT 12/12/2024](#)). In 2013, the USA placed him on its terror list and later even offered a bounty of ten million for information leading to his capture. In 2018, the HTS was also categorised as a terrorist organisation by the United States, and the United Nations followed suit ([Rosa Lux 17/12/2024](#)).

As part of the transition from revolution to state-building, the new Syrian government is working to strengthen and consolidate this construction by building a national army that includes all military formations and factions that were formed due to certain circumstances and facts during the Syrian revolution (AJ 29/1/2025). [Details on the development of this army can be found in the chapters [Security Authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8/12/2024\)](#) and [Defence and Reserve Service - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8/12/2024\)](#)].

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3.1 Political situation in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 22:36

The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), often referred to by the Kurds as Rojava or "Western Kurdistan", was founded at the third conference of the Syrian

Democratic Council (SDC) on 16 July 2018 in 'Ain 'Issa. Before AANES, the local system was called the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS), whose name was adopted in 2016. The General Council of the Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria (AANES) adopted a social contract on 13 December 2023, in which the AANES was renamed the Democratic Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria (DAANES). The social contract is considered a de facto constitution. As part of this treaty, the administrative areas were merged into a single region under the name of North and East Syria ([K24 13/12/2023](#)). DAANES is a Kurdish-led but multi-ethnic coalition that has maintained relative autonomy from the Assad regime over the past ten years. Its powerful military wing, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), served as an important bulwark against the Islamic State (ISIS) at its peak and continues to benefit from ongoing American support in the region ([MEPC 2025](#)). The SDF is the military force for the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. The People's Defence Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG) are the dominant force within the SDF, although there are also fighters from Arab, Christian and other communities. The SDF control large parts of north and north-east Syria, including the cities of ar-Raqqa, al-Hasakah, the administrative capital of Qamishli and parts of Deir ez-Zour province. Turkey considers the SDF to be the Syrian branch of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê - PKK), which the SDF deny ([Al-Monitor 8/12/2024](#)[AJ 29/1/2025](#)). The SDF control an area of more than 35,000 square kilometres, which means that they control around 18.92% of Syrian territory ([AJ 29/1/2025](#)). Although DAANES is not internationally recognised, it maintains a close working relationship with the US, which has supported the SDF since the beginning of the war against IS ([K24 13/12/2023](#); cf. [AJ 29/1/2025](#)).

The political wing of the SDF, the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), congratulated the Syrian people on 8 December 2024 on the end of the Assad regime and promised to work together with various groups in the country. It said in a statement: We will cooperate with all Syrian national, cultural and social forces by participating in the national dialogue and assuming our responsibility to create a new Syria that includes all its citizens ([Al-Monitor 8/12/2024](#)). After the fall of al-Assad, the SDF hoisted the rebel groups' revolutionary and independence flags on their facilities as a gesture to the new government in Damascus, which was welcomed by Washington ([AJ 9/1/2025a](#)). On 29 December 2024, ash-Shara' told Al Arabiya TV that the SDF should be integrated into the new national army. Weapons must only be in the hands of the state. Whoever is armed and qualified to join the Ministry of Defence is welcome to join us, he said ([AJ 31/12/2024a](#)). According to the vice president of the Middle East Media Research Institute, the Kurds are pragmatic and will try to reach an agreement with the rulers that preserves a certain degree of local autonomy. Too much autonomy will anger Ankara, too little autonomy will keep the country divided ([MEMRI 9/12/2024](#)). Since December 2024, the SDF has been negotiating with the interim government in Damascus about a possible agreement that would see them integrated into a united Syria ([FP 20/2/2025](#)). Ahmad ash-Shara' met with a delegation from the SDF on 30.12.2024 to create a basis for future dialogue. The atmosphere was positive ([Sky News 31/12/2024a](#)). A Syrian politician said that the negotiations with the YPG [*presumably referring to the SDF; the source is Turkish, note*] remain complex because the group insists on autonomy and more control over resource-rich areas ([TR-Today 8/1/2025](#)). Conversely,

according to a journalist from the Turkish daily newspaper Hürriyet, SDF commander Mazloum 'Abdi offered to create a Kurdish faction in the Syrian army and share Syrian oil equally during his meeting with ash-Shara', but ash-Shara's government rejected this and emphasised that there was no solution other than handing over weapons (Akhbar 9/1/2025). 'Abdi offered to hand over the oil resources in the areas under his control to the central administration, provided that the wealth is distributed fairly among all Syrian provinces (Sharq 14/1/2025). The Syrian defence minister said that they [*presumably referring to the Syrian authorities, note*] don't want oil, they want the institutions and the borders (Barrons 22/1/2025). On 9 January 2025, Al Jazeera reported that 'Abdi had reached an agreement with the new Syrian government to reject any partition projects that threaten the unity of the country. (AJ 9/1/2025a; cf. Arabiya 9/1/2025). 'Abdi said on 14.1.2025 that his demands for a decentralised administration for the areas under his control in north-eastern Syria did not contradict the unity of the country and that he considered this to be the best option for the Syrian reality, pointing out that he had presented these demands to the new Syrian government in previous consultations. The demand for a decentralised administration of North and East Syria is the main demand of the SDF. 'Abdi pointed out that the decentralisation he is calling for is a 'geographical decentralisation and not a decentralisation at the national level' and explained that they are not calling for their own parliament and government (Sharq 14/1/2025). On 27.1.2025, sources close to the new government said that it had made an offer to the SDF that included the recognition of Kurdish cultural rights and their inclusion in the next constitution, as well as opening the way for Kurds to be included in the security and military institutions. The sources confirmed that the offer also includes a decentralised administrative system that gives local councils wide powers to manage the affairs of the provinces. However, according to the same sources, the SDF rejected the offer and insisted on their own conditions, which include: Joining the Syrian army as an integrated unit, retaining their current military areas of operation, receiving a share of the revenues from the oil fields and wells. The SDF justify their position with the fear of a possible Turkish attack on their territories and the lack of integration of the Syrian National Army (SNA) groups into the Syrian Ministry of Defence. For its part, the Syrian government rejects the SDF's proposals and emphasises that it rejects the existence of blocs within the army and is not prepared to use the oil dossier as a political bargaining card (AJ 27/1/2025b). In a fundamental change from the al-Assad era, the transitional government in Damascus has promised Syria's Kurds equal rights and announced that Kurdish will become the second national language. Representatives of the SDF and the autonomous administration would also be guaranteed seats and membership in all of Syria's transitional authorities, including a temporary parliament and a constitutional committee. Revenues from Syria's oil, gas and agricultural sectors would be invested proportionally in the north-east. After weeks of talks, the SDF has accepted much of the agreement in principle, as a meeting between the SDF and its political wing and government bodies reconfirmed on 17 February 2025. But while the organisation has secretly accepted for weeks that its forces will one day be disbanded and integrated into Syria's new armed forces, the main stumbling block in the talks is how this will happen. While SDF leader 'Abdi has agreed with all other armed factions in Syria on a possible disbandment, he demands that SDF personnel remain a separate bloc within the new Armed Forces of Syria and remain stationed only in their current locations

in the north-east ([FP 20/2/2025](#)). According to a member of the SDF's political wing, the Syrian Democratic Council (Meclîsa Sûriya Demokratîk - MSD), the autonomous administration in the north-east of the country has taken a positive step by preparing to hand over border crossings and official posts to the Syrian state. The Syrian transitional government does not yet have an idea of how to start managing these facilities in eastern Syria, so committees at the educational, administrative and economic levels must be formed in dialogue between the Syrian government and the autonomous administration ([AJ 22/2/2025](#)).

On 10 March 2025, the leader of the Kurdish-dominated SDF Mazloun 'Abdi and interim President Ahmad ash-Shara signed an agreement on the integration of the SDF into Syria's state institutions. The agreement provides for the guarantee of the rights of all Syrians to representation and participation, a ceasefire in all Syrian areas and the integration of all civilian and military institutions in north-east Syria. The agreement also stipulates that the SDF will support the Syrian state in fighting Assad's remnants and threats and reject calls for division, hate speech and attempts to sow discord ([Arabiya 11/3/2025](#)). The agreement consists of eight clauses. Joint committees are to work on finalising the implementation of the agreement by the end of the year ([AJ 11/3/2025](#)). The agreement provides for the DAANES area to be brought under the full control of the Syrian central government ([AJ 10/3/2025b](#)). It includes the integration of the civilian and military facilities in north-east Syria into the Syrian state administration, including the border posts, the airport [in Qamishli, note] and the oil and gas fields controlled by the SDF in north-east Syria ([FR24 10/3/2025](#)). Shortly after the announcement of the agreement, sources told Al Jazeera that a Syrian Ministry of Defence convoy will go to al-Hasakah in coordination with the SDF and that Ministry of Defence forces will take over the prisons from the SDF ([AJ 11/3/2025](#)). The Wall Street Journal quoted US officials as saying that US military personnel had mediated between the SDF and the so-called rebel groups. The officials said the mediation also included groups supported by Turkey since the fall of ousted President Bashar al-Assad ([AJ 11/3/2025](#)). The agreement could defuse the SDF's conflict with neighbouring Turkey and Turkish-backed former Syrian rebel groups allied with the government that are trying to drive the SDF out of areas near the border ([BBC 11/3/2025](#)). The agreement does not specify how the SDF military units will be integrated into the Syrian Ministry of Defence, which has been a major sticking point in the talks so far. The agreement does not refer to the handover of weapons or the disbanding of the YPG-dominated military formation ([AJ 11/3/2025](#)). The agreement includes the confirmation that the Kurdish people are an integral part of Syria and have a right to citizenship and guaranteed constitutional rights ([AJ 10/3/2025b](#)), including the use and teaching of their language, which were banned for decades under Assad ([Sky News 10/3/2025](#)). The agreement includes guaranteeing the rights of all Syrians to representation and participation in the political process and in all state institutions, regardless of their religious and ethnic affiliation ([Arabiya 10/3/2025](#); cf. [AJ 10/3/2025a](#)).

The agreement had not led to a calming of the fronts by the end of March, although a ceasefire was planned. The state institutions in north-east Syria also remained under the auspices of DAANES, including with regard to the payment of employees' salaries ([SYD 31/3/2025](#)). On 1 April 2025, the SDF declared its withdrawal from two historically Kurdish neighbourhoods in

Aleppo. Local sources subsequently reported that on 2 April 2025, the SDF withdrew from Tishrin Dam and Qara-Qozak Bridge, where they had been fighting against SNA since December 2024. A 'special administration', possibly consisting of dam employees, will take control of the area around Tishrin Dam. Dam employees have been allowed to remain in the area so that the power plant can continue its regular operations. An anti-SDF source also claimed that after leaving the Tishrin Dam and Qara-Qozak Bridge, the SDF would also withdraw from other localities south of the dam along Highway 4. Syrian sources, including those close to the transitional government, claimed that the SDF withdrawal was the result of a 'preliminary agreement' to create a demilitarised zone around frequently contested areas ([ISW 2/4/2025](#)). According to the director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), fighting around the Tishrin Dam ceased in mid-April 2025 ([SOHR 15/4/2025](#)). The Syrian government and the SDF have reached an agreement on the handover of the strategically important Tishrin Dam from SDF control to Damascus. Local Kurdish media and state media in Damascus reported on the agreement, which came after four months of fighting over the dam between the Turkish-backed SNA and the SDF. The dam is located on the Euphrates River and is an important strategic and infrastructural location in central Syria. It also connects areas controlled by the SDF with those of the SNA and the new Syrian government forces ([LWJ 15/4/2025](#)). The director of SOHR states that there will be a joint administration between the Syrian government and the majority Kurdish self-administration ([SOHR 15/4/2025](#)). In Aleppo, government forces began conducting joint patrols with SDF units. Parts of the SDF began to withdraw from the city's most important Kurdish neighbourhood ([National 13/4/2025](#)). A source from northern Syria reported that the Tishrin Dam was already under the control of the Syrian government on 15 April 2025. The SDF had already withdrawn from Aleppo, but had not yet begun negotiations with the transitional government on the territorial redistribution of the predominantly Arab provinces of ar-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zour ([ISW 16/4/2025](#)).

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan stated that Turkey is extending an olive branch both domestically and internationally, but warned that military options remain on the table if this offer is not accepted ([TR-Today 8/1/2025](#)). In late January 2025, Turkey reiterated the threat of a military operation against Kurdish forces in Syria if the SDF does not fulfil Turkish demands, which include the elimination of the PKK's presence in the region ([AJ 27/1/2025b](#)). The Syrian defence minister said on 22.1.2025 that Damascus was open to talks with the Kurdish-led forces about their integration into the national army, but was prepared to use force if negotiations failed ([Barrons 22/1/2025](#); cf. [BBC 22/1/2025](#)).

Kurdish-led forces have used the collapse of the Syrian army to take complete control of the most important city, Deirez-Zour ([BBC 8/12/2024b](#)). This was taken from them again shortly afterwards by the rebel groups ([Al-Monitor 8/12/2024](#)). SNA forces, in turn, used the situation to conquer territory in Manbij from the SDF ([TWI 9/12/2024](#)). The SDF now control 20% of Syrian territory ([Arabiya 11/12/2024](#)). On 6 February 2025, forces from the Syrian Ministry of General Security invaded the north-western Syrian city of 'Afrin. 'Afrin has been occupied by various armed groups of the Turkish-backed SNA since 2018. With the invasion of 'Afrin, the new Syrian

government is asserting its control over parts of the country. 'Afrin is a historically Kurdish area in Syria and the transfer of power was closely followed by the Kurdish media ([LWJ 6/2/2025](#)).

On 19 December 2024, Mazloum 'Abdi, commander-in-chief of the SDF, confirmed for the first time the presence of foreign fighters from across the Middle East in SDF-controlled areas. 'Abdi told Reuters that while PKK fighters had entered Syria, there were no organisational links between the PKK and his forces. 'Abdi praised non-Syrian fighters who have helped the US-backed SDF fight Islamic State over the past decade. He said some had returned home over the years, others had stayed to help in the fight against IS, and that it was time for them to return when a ceasefire was reached ([AJ 19/12/2024](#)).

At the beginning of February 2025, the US Department of Defence announced plans to withdraw all US troops in Syria. The withdrawal is to take place in either 30, 60 or 90 days ([TNA 5/2/2025](#); cf. [REU 5/2/2025b](#)). In mid-April 2025, the US announced that it would withdraw more than half of its troops stationed in Syria. The US military presence is to be reduced to fewer than 1,000 soldiers in the following months. The US Central Command CENTCOM, which is responsible for the Middle East, will continue to be ready to carry out attacks on the remnants of ISIS in Syria ([FR 22/4/2025](#)). Three of eight bases in Syria are to be closed ([AJ 21/4/2025](#)). The withdrawal of US troops from northern and eastern Syria would allow Turkey to move more freely to confront what it sees as a threat to its national security, including the SDF, which Ankara sees as an extension of the PKK, which is classified as a terrorist organisation ([AlHurra 6/2/2025a](#)). Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Yilmaz announced that Turkey would form a four-party coalition together with Jordan, Iraq and the Syrian transitional government to ensure that ISIS does not threaten Syria and Iraq again ([AlMon 12/2/2025](#)). On 12 February 2025, Turkey called on the new Syrian government to take control of the camps housing displaced persons and imprisoned IS terrorists. The end of IS and the PKK and YPG were the prerequisite for a peaceful, independent and politically united Syria ([DS 13/2/2025](#)).

At the beginning of March 2025, demonstrations against the SDF took place at the same time as the massacres on the coast in western Syria, particularly in Deir ez-Zour. On the one hand, there were calls for those responsible for the attacks in the coastal areas to be held accountable, but on the other hand there were also chants against the SDF ([AJ 8/3/2025](#)). At least 25 Arab tribes have condemned the SDF since 14.4.2025, probably in response to the SDF's continued calls for the decentralisation of Damascus' control in north-eastern Syria. The tribes rejected what they described as a 'separatist project' being imposed on the Arab-majority areas. 'Separatist project' is a term often used to describe the SDF's efforts to achieve decentralisation and federalisation in north-eastern Syria under the transitional government. Unidentified Arab tribal leaders recently met with the SDF in ar-Raqqa province to answer their call for support. Other Arab tribal leaders condemned these meetings and made it clear that the individuals involved do not represent the official position of their tribes. Instead, the tribal leaders expressed their support for the transitional government in Damascus. On 15 April 2025, some Arab political groups announced the formation of a new council to oppose SDF control in north-eastern Syria and form a united front for negotiations with Damascus ([ISW 16/4/2025](#)).

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3.2 Foreign policy situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-06 17:32

[This chapter provides information on political developments in relation to foreign countries. Information on the military involvement of other states in Syria can be found in the chapter Security authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024) / Foreign support and interference (developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024))].

The Assad regime had lost support from abroad: The Lebanese Hizbullah was severely decimated in the war with Israel. Iran also suffered heavy blows from Israel against its military leadership in Syria. And Russia is tied up with troops and equipment in the war against Ukraine (NZZ 8/12/2024). After the turnaround in Syria following the fall of Assad, Syrian foreign policy has changed fundamentally. Foreign policy is fragmented and strategically unpredictable. While some factions continue to maintain ties with Iran, others have begun to forge closer ties with Turkey or Sunni states. Israel is intensifying its airstrikes on Iranian positions, while Turkey and the Gulf states are trying to increase their influence. The region remains geopolitically unstable and the future development of Syrian foreign policy depends largely on the internal power struggles within the new Islamist government (VB Amman 9/2/2025). The elimination of Iran and Russia means that three major powers are still militarily involved in Syrian affairs - Turkey, Israel and the USA (Soufan 16/12/2024). In the early days of the new government, the UK, France, Germany, the US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan sent high-level delegations to Damascus, followed by foreign minister-level delegations from a number of European and

Arab countries. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey are at the forefront of Arab and international efforts to open up to the new rulers in Damascus, in conjunction with an easing of sanctions sought by Europe and the US [*for details on easing sanctions, see the chapter on [basic services and the economy](#)*]. ([AJ 27/1/2025a](#)). A former jihadist, ash-Shara' is striving for international legitimacy and distancing himself from his al-Qaeda past. His style has gradually changed from jihadist camouflage to statesmanlike suits as he engages in international diplomacy ([CNN 30/12/2024](#)).

Arab states

The Gulf states are closely monitoring the situation and trying to expand their influence within the new Syrian government ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). On 1 January 2025, the Saudi authorities announced an airlift to Syria to transport humanitarian aid, while a delegation from the new Syrian government, led by the newly appointed foreign minister, is in Riyadh for its first official visit abroad ([AlHurra 2/1/2025](#)). Ash-Shara' is reaching out to regional powerhouse Saudi Arabia, telling Al Arabiya that the Kingdom will play an important role in Syria's future. The kingdom has great investment opportunities in Syria ([Arabiya 29/12/2024](#)).

During the years of the Syrian crisis, there were hundreds of cases of infiltration and smuggling of weapons and drugs, especially Captagon pills, in Jordan due to the deteriorating security situation. Even after the fall of al-Assad, smuggling attempts were thwarted by the Jordanian armed forces using force ([AJ 12/1/2025](#)). In view of the chaos in large parts of southern Syria, the Jordanian authorities are sceptical as to whether they can prevent the smuggling of drugs and weapons from inside Syria into Jordan, meaning that the state of emergency under which the border protection brigades of the armed forces (Arab Army) are operating must continue. Specifically, smuggling gangs have large quantities of drugs that are still being stored in locations in southern Syria. Although the smugglers' sponsors and supporters have disappeared from the regular Syrian forces (the Fourth Battalion, which is affiliated with Maher al-Assad, the brother of former President Bashar al-Assad) and the militias affiliated with Tehran, they are still looking for markets to sell their goods. Given the chaotic scenes in southern Syria, Jordanian politicians are questioning the extent of the interim military administration's control over the area of Syrian territory ([AAA 12/1/2025b](#)).

Iran

Thanks to the extensive cooperation with the Assad regime, which was maintained by the Iranian intervention in 2013, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps - Quds Force (IRGC-QF) had established a significant military production and transshipment infrastructure in the country, which primarily served to arm and strengthen Lebanese Hezbollah ([Soufan 16/12/2024](#)). While the former regime maintained a close alliance with Iran, the relationship between the new rulers and Tehran is much more complex and fragmented. Some Islamist groups continue to have links with Iran, while others are trying to distance themselves from Shiite influence and instead establish close relations with Turkey or Sunni Gulf states. This is leading to internal tensions within the new Syrian leadership and makes a clear foreign policy direction difficult. Iran has lost influence as many Islamist groups see Tehran as too dominant and oppose its continued presence in Syria.

This has led to conflicts between pro-Iranian militias such as Hezbollah and the new rulers, particularly in areas such as Deir ez-Zour and southern Syria. Israel continues its airstrikes on Iranian positions in Syria as Tehran continues to attempt to hold strategic positions and weapons caches ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). Since the fall of al-Assad, Iran has largely evacuated its assets in Syria, essentially eliminating the Islamic Republic as a major player in Syria's domestic politics ([Soufan 16/12/2024](#)). Tehran is now willing to sabotage the establishment of a new, unified Syrian state. In a speech at the beginning of January, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei personally called on the 'Syrian youth' to resist the 'foreign occupiers'. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards even called for a counter-revolution against the 'infidel terrorists' on their official channels and announced that the 'liberation' of Syria was imminent. According to observers, the Iranian regime has launched a large-scale disinformation campaign in recent weeks, primarily aimed at fuelling religious conflicts in Syria and thus destabilising the fragile situation in the country. In the process, masses of false or misleading reports of acts of violence against Shiites, Alawites and Christians, allegedly committed by fighters from the Islamist militia Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), are being spread on social networks. In very few cases can it be proven that it is actually Iranian actors who are spreading these reports. However, the sheer number of postings suggests that this is an organised campaign ([NZZ 8/1/2025](#)). Ash-Shara', his team and even his associates see Iran as their main enemy, as it was before the fall of the regime and still is now. They believe that Iran (along with Hezbollah) is the only actor capable of fomenting unrest in Syria and mobilising Syrians in large numbers and supporting them to destabilise the new government ([Akhbar 31/12/2024](#)). Ash-Shara' called on Tehran to reconsider its regional policies and interventions, emphasising that opposition forces had defended Iranian positions in Syria during the offensive that led to the overthrow of al-Assad. He pointed out that the opposition fighters followed this approach despite Iran being one of al-Assad's main supporters. Ash-Shara' added that he had expected positive gestures from Tehran in response to these actions, but these had failed to materialise ([Arabiya 29/12/2024](#)).

Israel

Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria in the final phase of the Six-Day War in 1967 and annexed it unilaterally in 1981. This step was not recognised internationally, although the USA did so unilaterally in 2019 ([BBC 10/12/2024](#)). The attitude of the new Islamist rulers towards Israel is hostile but not uniform - while some factions are in favour of direct confrontation, others are more pragmatic and try to focus on internal power struggles ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). Israeli leaders ordered the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) to take over positions abandoned by the Syrian army in a UN-monitored buffer zone that has been in place since a 1974 agreement following the Yom Kippur War and presented airstrikes against Syrian military targets as a defensive measure to prevent strategic weapons from falling into the hands of potentially hostile forces in Syria ([Soufan 16/12/2024](#)). Israel stated that the 1974 agreement on withdrawal from Syria had 'collapsed' with the rebel takeover. Furthermore, Israel admitted that its troops were operating at 'some additional points' beyond the buffer zone further inland in Syria, but stressed that they were 'not advancing on Damascus' ([BBC 10/12/2024](#)). Netanyahu said that the area south of Damascus would be demilitarised. Israel will not allow the New Syrian Army to be stationed

in the area, nor will it accept any threat to the Druze community in southern Syria. The Israeli Foreign Minister called for the country to be transformed into a 'federal state' ([TRT Arabi 27/2/2025](#)). Syrian President Ahmad ash-Shara' condemned the Israeli invasion and at the same time emphasised that the current situation in the country 'does not allow for new conflicts' ([AJ 3/2/2025](#)).

Russia

Russia intervened in 2015 at the request of the Syrian government and had since provided air support, special forces, military advisors, private military companies, training, weapons and equipment. Iran and Russia also assisted in fighting the Islamic State terrorist group in Iraq and the Levant ([CIA 31/7/2024](#)). Russia was one of al-Assad's most important allies in the Syrian civil war. After his overthrow, the Syrian ruler fled to Russia with his family ([Presse 28/1/2025](#)). Russia, which had long been a key player in Syria, has largely withdrawn as it no longer sees a clear geopolitical advantage following the fall of al-Assad ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). In early January 2025, Syria's foreign minister told the Financial Times that the Assad regime had burdened the country with around USD 8 billion in debt to Russia ([FT 29/1/2025](#)). Russian officials, led by the deputy foreign minister, travelled to Damascus for talks with the new Syrian authorities, where a meeting with ash-Shara'a also took place. Russia said it was ready to help Syria rebuild after the war, but admitted that no progress had been made in talks over the future of its strategically important airbase and naval harbour in the country ([FT 29/1/2025](#)). The interim government in Syria has cancelled the contract with a Russian company for the operation of the Mediterranean port of Tartus. The Ministry of Information in Damascus confirmed that all income from the harbour will flow to the Syrian state with immediate effect. The contract with the company Stroytransgaz was originally due to run until 2068. The reason given by the customs director of Tartus for the termination was that the Russian company had not fulfilled its obligations to modernise the port ([Tagesschau 23/1/2025](#)). Only the Russian licence for the operation and expansion of the commercial port in Tartus - not the military port - has been withdrawn for the time being. The naval base is still being negotiated, Syrian Defence Minister Abu Qasra clarified in an interview with Al Araby ([Standard 23/1/2025](#)). While Russia is expected to withdraw from Syria after years of supporting the Assad regime, ash-Shara' emphasised the 'strategic interests' with the 'second most powerful country in the world', saying he did not want Russia to leave Syria in a way that would undermine its relationship with the country ([Arabiya 29/12/2024](#)). Russia began withdrawing a large amount of military equipment and troops from Syria after the fall of former Syrian President al-Assad, according to two U.S. officials and a Western official familiar with the intelligence. The officials described the Russian withdrawal as large-scale ([CNN 16/12/2024](#)). Russia, has withdrawn its forces from eastern and central Syria and consolidated its contingent in air and naval bases along the Mediterranean coast. Russia is negotiating with the emerging leadership of post-al-Assad Syria to retain these bases, but even if the talks are successful, Russia will no longer play a major role in Syria's internal politics ([Soufan 16/12/2024](#)).

Turkey

Turkey has trained and armed militias such as the Syrian National Army (SNA) ([CIA 31/7/2024](#)). The SNA is officially part of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) and is subordinate to the Ministry of Defence ([GCSP 10/2020](#)). The SNA is de facto under the authority of Turkey, as is the SIG, although the latter is less powerful than the SNA and is regularly ignored and bypassed by the latter. Although Turkey's presence brings a certain degree of stability to the region, its zone of control in northern Syria is considered the most insecure and most brutally governed. This is due to its reliance on undisciplined local proxies, its inability to overcome infighting among the numerous armed factions and its tolerance of abuse and exploitation of the civilian population ([BI 27/1/2023](#)). According to The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, Ankara has moulded Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) through support, guidance and other means of influence (including crucial assistance to HTS in improving its image) and has sought to exert some control over it ([AGSIW 9/12/2024](#)). After his victory in Damascus, ash-Shara' announced his intention to establish strategic relations with Ankara ([MEE 2/1/2025](#)). Turkey has expanded its influence in Syria and supports Islamist groups that oppose Iranian influence ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). The Turkish Ministry of Defence has declared that Ankara will establish military cooperation with the new Syrian government ([MEE 2/1/2025](#)). Ankara has reopened its embassy in Damascus and has already established high-level contacts with the leader of the new government, Ahmed ash-Shara' ([AJ 31/12/2024b](#)). In December 2024, the Turkish president instructed his ministers to analyse shortcomings and challenges within the Syrian infrastructure and propose solutions to help the new Syrian government. As part of these efforts, representatives of Turkey's energy sector visited the Syrian capital last week to prepare a report on the country's electricity system, which is plagued by frequent power outages ([MEE 2/1/2025](#)). Turkish Energy Minister Bayraktar said his country was ready to supply Syria and Lebanon with electricity. A team of government officials is already in Syria to discuss how to solve the country's energy problems ([AJ 31/12/2024b](#)).

Ash-Shara' has explicitly said that he has neither the ability nor the desire to interfere in the ongoing battle with the Kurds today, but he has no objection to Turkey taking on this task alone, although he believes that dealing with this dossier requires consultation with the US ([Akhbar 31/12/2024](#)).

USA and international coalition

The US has not maintained diplomatic relations with Syria since 2012, when the Syrian civil war began. The bases it has established in the south and east of the country over the last ten years are not subject to Syrian jurisdiction. They are under the control of the US-led anti-IS coalition operating in Iraq and Syria, but this coalition will soon be disbanded ([NPR 31/12/2024](#)). Trump and officials close to him expressed interest in withdrawing all US troops from Syria, prompting the Pentagon to draw up plans for a full withdrawal in 30, 60 or 90 days ([NBC 5/2/2025](#)). The US-led anti-IS coalition will be dissolved at the insistence of the Iraqi government and replaced by bilateral agreements. According to the agreement between Iraq and the United States, US troops will be stationed in the federally controlled part of Iraq by the end of this year and in the

Kurdish-controlled part of Iraq by the end of 2026 (NPR 31/12/2024). According to a senior Syrian Kurdish representative, talks are underway to see if US and French troops could secure a border area in northern Syria to defuse the conflict between Turkey and the Western-backed Syrian Kurds. French President Emmanuel Macron said a few days ago that Paris would not abandon the SDF, which was one of many armed opposition groups during Syria's 13-year civil war (LBCI 8/1/2025; cf. REU 8/1/2025).

The USA classifies Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham as a terrorist organisation (AGSIW 9/12/2024). In December 2024, the US cancelled a USD 10 million reward for the arrest of the interim president, Ahmed ash-Shara', after high-ranking diplomats met with representatives of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) (BBC 20/12/2024).

Ash-Shara' criticised the United Nations, which he said had failed to secure the release of a single prisoner or facilitate the return of a single refugee (Arabiya 29/12/2024).

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4 Security situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 22:36

[The following presents the current situation as it appears from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatedokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Despite the fall of the 54-year dictatorship of the al-Assad family, the civil war is far from over ([Leb24 13/2/2025](#)). Despite the efforts of the new Syrian government, the security situation remains fragile and the future of Syria is characterised by numerous uncertainties ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Grandi, describes the situation on the ground as 'fluid'. As things stand, it could develop in any direction ([ÖB Amman 6/2/2025](#)). The new Syrian transitional government is not in a position to control the entire Syrian territory ([AlHurra 6/2/2025a](#)). Since the beginning of 2025, the security situation in Syria has remained unstable following the fall of Bashar al-Assad. The new rulers, dominated by Islamist groups, are endeavouring to establish order and security, but are facing considerable challenges ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). Foreign Minister ash-Shaybani admits to security problems in parts of Syria, but described them as isolated incidents: Apparently the Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS), which has been officially disbanded, is having difficulties getting a grip on its sometimes very radical Islamist subgroups. It is not always easy to distinguish between the persecution of regime offenders and acts of revenge, particularly against the Alawite ethnic group, from which al-Assad originates ([Standard 23/1/2025](#)). The transitional government's security forces are facing increasing threats in their attempt to stabilise the country, including violent remnants of the regime, sectarian violence and kidnappings. In the north-east, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are facing targeted attacks by Islamic State (ISIS) cells and ongoing hostilities with the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) ([Etana 22/2/2025](#)). The fragile tsecurity situation continues to threaten political progress, he United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, warned, pointing to the ongoing hostilities in the north-east, including daily clashes, artillery shelling and airstrikes striking civilians and infrastructure ([UN News 12/2/2025](#)).

There has been a continued increase in kidnappings in the governorates of Syria. The Civil Peace Group has documented 64 kidnapping cases since the fall of the regime - 19 victims were later found executed, only three led to ransom demands. Incidents of sectarian violence, mainly targeting Shiite and Alawite communities, are also widespread ([Etana 22/2/2025](#)). The Middle East Institute also reports clearly sectarian violations, such as the destruction of a shrine in rural Hama by two Sunni civilians and cases of harassment at checkpoints, but notes that most of the violations committed by security forces across Syria appear to target specific supporters of the former regime. One of the most pressing problems is not sectarian-motivated attacks, but rather

the opaque process of targeting men who have served in the regime's armed forces (most of whom are Alawites due to the nature of the regime) ([MEI 21/1/2025](#)). *[Further information on violence against religious minorities can be found in the chapters [General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [Ethnic and religious minorities - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].* Crime has risen dramatically, not least due to the release of more than just political prisoners from prisons ([SYRDiplQ1 5/2/2025](#)). Criminal gangs and individuals continue to look for gaps in security and authority that they can exploit in this new era. The more serious crimes tend to occur in the countryside, where the security presence is lower and there is a higher concentration of ex-Shabiha [*Shabiha are the irregular, armed pro-Assad groups*] ([MEI 21/1/2025](#)).

Since Islamist rebels toppled longtime repressive ruler Bashar al-Assad in December, clashes and shootings have erupted in several areas, with security officials blaming armed supporters of the previous government ([FR24 1/3/2025](#)). Incidents of stray bullets continue to occur in several areas in Syria. In February, 18 people, including three women and four children, were killed and four others, including two children, were wounded in such incidents. The victims are spread across the areas controlled by the government in Damascus, the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) and the Syrian National Army (SNA). These incidents are exacerbated by the proliferation of weapons among the civilian population ([SOHR 24/2/2025b](#)). Security forces are still digging up regime remnants across the country, who often target members of the General Security and checkpoints. ETANA recorded attacks by pro-regime groups on General Security members in Rif Dimashq, East Dara'a and West Homs. Clashes also took place in Hama and Jableh, near the Hmeimim base. Security forces have carried out several operations in former regime areas of Deir ez-Zour ([Etana 22/2/2025](#)). While tens of thousands responded to the initiative of the reconciliation processes, armed factions of regime remnants rejected them, especially on the Syrian coast where senior officers of the Assad regime were stationed. Over time, these factions fled to the mountainous regions and began to stir up tensions, destabilise the situation and carry out sporadic attacks on government forces ([AJ 10/3/2025c](#)). Until early March 2025, such attacks were limited to small outbreaks of indiscriminate vigilante justice and were not part of large-scale, organised violence. On 6 March 2025, however, Assad regime insurgents ambushed the transitional government's security forces in the western coastal town of Jableh in Latakia governorate, killing 30 of them (many were later burned or found in shallow mass graves) ([TWI 10/3/2025](#)). Supporters of the ousted Assad regime called for an uprising. Around the time of the first attacks, a group calling itself the 'Military Council for the Liberation of Syria' issued a statement vowing to overthrow the government ([FT 10/3/2025](#)). Immediately after the ambush, Syrian security forces called for a general mobilisation beyond the units already deployed in the coastal region and for the eradication of former regime opponents ([TWI 10/3/2025](#)). Security forces, backed by reinforcements, began fighting against Assad regime loyalists and pushing them back from villages on the coast of Syria. The loyalists retreated to the countryside, burning state property and committing murders. As Syrian government forces and armed civilians began to enter Alawite villages in north-west Syria, videos of abuses emerged. Civilians reported mass killings by security forces, which was confirmed by human rights groups ([Guardian 10/3/2025](#)). According to the head of the Syrian

Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), it was a mistake for the government in Damascus to call for mobilisation in the mosques. This led to an influx of fighters from outside the region to massacre Alawites ([Sky News 9/3/2025aC4 9/3/2025](#)). According to a volunteer from the non-governmental organisation White Helmets, people came from all cities in Syria to take revenge ([C4 9/3/2025](#)). According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), the vast majority of unlawful killings of civilians and prisoners by Syrian security forces were committed by two specific factions and by individuals who had joined military convoys. Specifically, the two factions responsible for most of the killings of civilians were the Suleiman Shah Division [*also: Abu Amsha Division or Amsha Division*] and the Hamza Division. Both factions and their leaders are under US sanctions for alleged serious human rights violations, including rape and torture ([Guardian 10/3/2025](#)). According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the mobilisation included three US-sanctioned militias of the Turkish-backed SNA: Jaysh ash-Sharqiya, the Sultan Suleiman Shah Division and the Hamza Division. They had previously been accused of human rights violations against Kurds in north-west Syria. Foreign jihadi fighters from the US-listed Ansar at-Tawhid group and local Syrian civilians who wanted to avenge the regime's war crimes were also involved in the fighting ([TWI 10/3/2025](#)). The groups are nominally under the patronage of the new state, with Abu Amsha appointed head of the military brigade in Hama province. In reality, however, the state exercises only limited control over them. [*Further information on rebel groups can be found in the chapter [Security Authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#), Note*]. The gunmen who carried out the massacres were not residents of the Syrian coast, but came from other governorates and were partly of foreign origin, such as Uzbeks, Chechens and Central Asian fighters ([Sky News 9/3/2025a](#)). On 9 March 2025, a Syrian security source stated that the fighting had calmed down somewhat around the cities of Latakia, Jabla and Baniyas, while the armed forces were searching the surrounding mountainous areas where an estimated 5,000 pro-Assad insurgents were hiding ([Sky News 9/3/2025b](#)). The spokesperson of the Ministry of Defence announced the end of the military operation against the remnants of the regime in the coastal areas on 10 March 2025. He emphasised that public institutions can resume their work to prepare for the return to normal life and that the security forces will continue to work to ensure the stability and security of the population ([SANA 10/3/2025a](#)). The governor of Tartus emphasised on 9 March 2025 that the province is experiencing a gradual return to public life after the victory over the remnants of the defunct regime ([SANA 9/3/2025a](#)). Normal life resumed in most neighbourhoods of Latakia city on 10 March 2025 after the attacks by the remnants of the former regime were thwarted and security was restored in the city ([SANA 10/3/2025b](#)). Following the Damascus government's announcement of the completion of the security campaign on the Syrian coast, groups of armed men affiliated with the Ministry of Defence stormed the town of Harison in the Baniyas area, where they looted and set fire to civilians' homes and property ([SOHR 10/3/2025c](#)). The situation in the cities may be more stable, but in more rural areas blatant rights violations are taking place away from the media. Forced displacements continue ([Sky News 9/3/2025a](#)).

The death toll from the fighting has varied widely ([Guardian 9/3/2025](#)). According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), which applies comprehensive documentation standards and is considered independent, supporters of the Assad regime killed 383 people, including 211

civilians and 172 Syrian security forces, while Syrian security forces killed 396 people, including civilians and disarmed fighters ([Guardian 10/3/2025](#)). Syrian security sources stated that more than 300 of their members were killed in clashes with members of the former Syrian Arab Army, in coordinated attacks and ambushes on their forces ([Sky News 9/3/2025b](#)). Mass graves with dozens of dead members have been found ([AJ 9/3/2025](#)). Syrian security forces killed 700 former soldiers and armed men loyal to former President Bashar al-Assad, or so-called regime remnants ([Arabiya 9/3/2025](#)). According to the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 745 Alawite civilians were killed on sectarian grounds, emphasising that they were not involved in the fighting or associated with the regime ([Sky News 9/3/2025a](#)). In addition, 125 members of the security forces and 150 Alawite fighters were killed ([Sky News 9/3/2025a](#)). Most of the civilians killed by government forces were Alawites, but some Christians were also confirmed dead. Sunnis, Alawites and Christians were among the former regime insurgents killed ([TWI 10/3/2025](#)). According to the United Nations, entire families were killed ([UN News 9/3/2025](#)). The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) took stock on 11 March 2025 and recorded a total of 1,093 fatalities from the arrival of armed men to support the security forces until 11 March 2025. 44 massacres were committed in total ([SOHR 11/3/2025](#)). According to the BBC, an unnamed monitoring group recorded more than 1,500 deaths, including 1,068 civilians ([BBC 10/3/2025](#)). According to the head of SOHR, tens of thousands of houses were looted and burnt down ([Sky News 9/3/2025a](#)). A volunteer from the Syrian NGO White Helmets reported that his organisation had to respond to more than 40 fires in the coastal area on 5 March 2025 before the shooting started the following night. One of the White Helmets' ambulances was also attacked, as were the hospital and checkpoints ([C4 9/3/2025](#))*[Further information on the incidents can be found in the chapter [General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#). Information on the groups of perpetrators can be found in the chapter [Security authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

This escalation was not limited to Latakia in western Syria, as armed clashes also took place in other areas on the outskirts of the capital Damascus and in Dara'a ([AlHurra 8/3/2025](#)). Unidentified armed men in a car threw grenades and opened fire with machine guns at the headquarters of the general security forces in the al-Mezzeh district of Damascus on 10 March 2025. Clashes broke out between the attackers and the security forces ([SOHR 10/3/2025d](#)).

Interim President ash-Shara' established a thirty-day committee of enquiry to investigate the actual events. Unlike the transitional government's previous appointments to committees, ministries and provincial offices, the seven members of this new committee have not been linked to HTS or its allies ([TWI 10/3/2025](#)). The committee is to submit its report to the head of the Syrian transitional government, Ahmad ash-Shara', no later than 30 days after the decision to form the committee ([BBC 9/3/2025a](#)). It is tasked with uncovering the causes, circumstances and conditions that led to these events, investigating the violations to which the civilian population was exposed, identifying those responsible, investigating the attacks on public facilities and security forces and army personnel, identifying those responsible and referring those who are proven to have been involved in the crimes and violations to the courts ([SANA 9/3/2025b](#)). On

9 March 2025, the authorities began to take action against those who had committed acts of violence against civilians. The Syrian transitional government arrested so-called undisciplined groups who had committed acts of sabotage in recent days during the purges. They are to be prosecuted for disobeying the command's instructions ([Arabiya 9/3/2025](#)).

Many observers agree that despite the strong presence of internal factors, the external regional factor also played an important role in the unrest in the Syrian coastal region. Syrian security sources point out that Iran was involved in the events in the region and that it financed and armed the remnants of Bashar al-Assad's regime, who were travelling between the coast and Homs province and were able to penetrate eastern Syria due to the unstable security situation ([BBC 9/3/2025b](#)). Israel invaded border villages in Syria after the fall of the Assad regime, describing this as a temporary measure to protect its own security. While Israeli politicians have made it clear for months that they intend to keep their troops in the border regions, which should be a buffer zone monitored by international peacekeepers, their declarations about a demilitarised southern Syria represent an escalation that has exacerbated tensions within Syria ([NYT 25/2/2025](#)). Israel had bypassed the buffer zone on the Syrian Golan and violated the 1974 disengagement agreement by invading Quneitra and Dara'a and occupying further Syrian territory until it reached Mount Hermon ([BBC 9/3/2025b](#)). Israeli forces continue to carry out attacks in and beyond the 1974 demilitarised border strip between the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and Quneitra. Attempts by Israel to win the hearts and minds of the people of Quneitra have been repeatedly rebuffed and have taken place simultaneously with raids, shootings and other violations ([Etana 22/2/2025](#)). Israel has carried out hundreds of airstrikes across Syria since the fall of al-Assad, targeting airbases, ammunition depots, military equipment and positions of forces loyal to the new government ([SCR 30/1/2025](#)). On 1 March 2025, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defence Minister Katz threatened the Syrian transitional government to intervene in Syria to protect the Druze ([Enab 1/3/2025](#); cf. [TIS 1/3/2025](#)). According to reports from Syria, there had previously been clashes between the authorities of the new Syrian government and local Druze fighters as part of a security campaign in Jaramana, a suburb of Damascus ([TIS 1/3/2025](#)). *[Further information on Israel's political intervention can be found in the chapter [Political situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / Foreign policy situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024) and on military intervention in the chapter [Security authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#).12.2024) / Foreign support and interference - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8.12.2024)]* External forces that lost power together with Assad - Iran and its vassals such as the Lebanese Hezbollah - have an interest in the failure of the new Syria ([Standard 9/3/2025](#)).

Following the fall of the Assad regime, Russia has begun to withdraw its armed forces from the strategically important Tartus naval base. This withdrawal could influence the balance of power in the region and have an impact on the security situation in Syria ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). *[Further information on political relations between Syria and Russia can be found in the chapter [Political situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / Foreign policy situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024).*

Information on Russia's military presence can be found in the chapter [Security authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [Foreign support and interference - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].

In late December, according to a Syrian security source from Al Jazeera, a nationwide security operation was launched by the Department of Military Operations to hunt down remnants of the fallen regime and establish military checkpoints on the road to the Russian military base at Hmeimim in Tartus (AJ 28/12/2024b). *[Further information on security operations can be found in the chapters [Legal Protection / Judiciary - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#), [Security Authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [General Human Rights Situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

The International Coalition has conducted twelve security operations against Islamic State (ISIS) cells, some involving the SDF in various areas of Syria, where these operations resulted in the killing of 14 IS members, including two leaders, and the arrest of nine individuals accused of belonging to and cooperating with IS, including an oil investor (SOHR 23/2/2025). The US-led international coalition forces, in cooperation with the SDF, have been conducting intensive military training with heavy weapons at the base of the al-'Omar oil field in the east of Deirez-Zour province in eastern Syria. The exercises are part of a series of military manoeuvres that the coalition forces are conducting at their military bases in the provinces of Deirez-Zour and al-Hasakah in the north-east of the country in order to improve combat readiness and operational coordination with local partners (TNA 27/2/2025). *[For further information on the intervention of the International Coalition and the USA, please refer to the chapters [Political situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [Foreign policy situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [Security authorities - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [Foreign support and interference - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

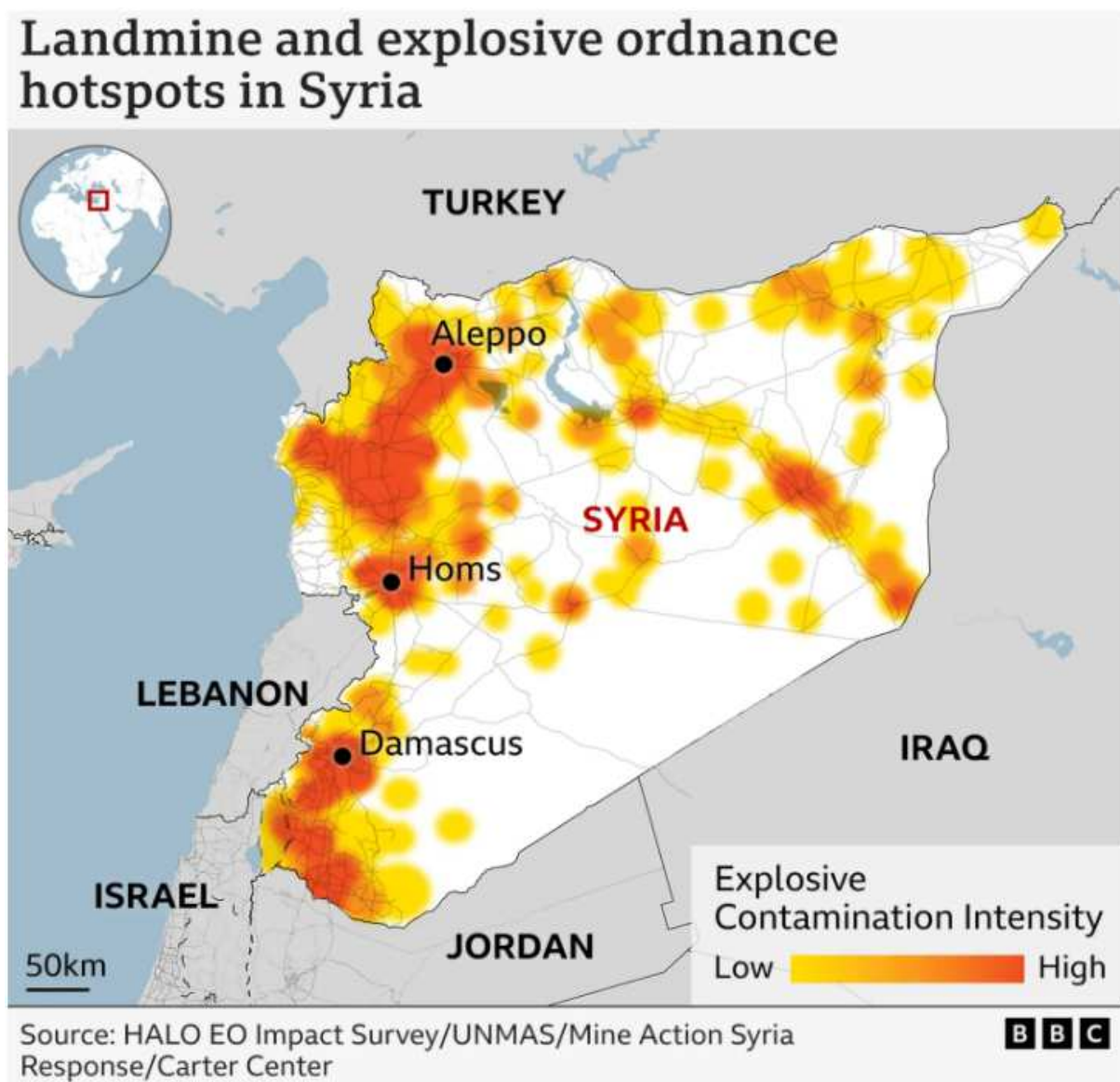
The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Grandi, sees electricity as the key to creating the conditions for adequate living conditions and a stable security situation. Without this, there would not only be extreme insecurity. Living conditions such as cooking, heating, transport etc. are linked to electricity. The operation of hospitals and schools also requires a functioning energy supply. If the situation persists, with entire neighbourhoods in complete darkness at night, a 'collapse of law and order' is practically inevitable. Radical militant groups are just waiting to fill the vacuum (ÖB Amman 6/2/2025). *[Further information on the humanitarian situation, power supply, etc. can be found in the chapter on [basic services and the economy](#)].*

Remnants of war and unexploded ordnance

In more than 13 years of war, it is estimated that more than ten million explosive devices have been used throughout the country. As a rule, up to 30% of the munition used does not explode, which leads to a high level of contamination with unexploded ordnance (FR 20/1/2025b). Unexploded ordnance residues pose a major threat to life in Syria. They are mainly divided into

two categories. The first is unexploded ordnance such as cluster bombs, mortar shells and grenades. These are usually above ground and therefore visible. The greater challenge lies in the second category of munitions: landmines. Former government forces have buried hundreds of thousands of these in various areas in Syria - mainly on farmland ([BBC 23/1/2025](#)). The threat posed by unexploded ordnance has intensified since the fall of the Assad regime on 8 December 2024 because many weapons, including explosive weapons, have been left behind in Homs and Damascus ([UN News 14/1/2025](#)). There has been a sharp increase in incidents involving unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war, with civilian casualties reported almost daily ([UNOCHA 12/2/2025](#)). The removal of landmines and other military debris is more urgent than ever. As millions of refugees prepare to return, many of their homes or what is left of them are littered with unexploded mortar and artillery shells, rockets, mines and booby traps ([Leb24 13/2/2025](#)). For the displaced and those trying to return home, the danger from unexploded ordnance is constant and unavoidable ([UN News 14/1/2025](#)). For years, Syria has been among the three countries with the highest density of unexploded ordnance ([FR 20/1/2025b](#)). In all areas where military operations have taken place in recent years, unexploded ordnance is widespread, making it risky to return home and resume normal life. Despite the urgent need to remove them, efforts remain inadequate because local authorities and humanitarian organisations are failing to take serious steps to protect civilians. The most affected areas are those under the control of the new Syrian government, followed by the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) and the areas of the Turkish-backed SNA ([SOHR 13/2/2025](#)). The incidents occur in various areas of the country. They include explosions in agricultural areas where civilians work to collect crops or search for truffles, explosions in houses or while travelling on the roads ([SOHR 21/2/2025](#)). According to the Halo Trust, an international organisation that specialises in clearing landmines and other explosive devices, at least 400 civilians have been killed and injured by landmines and other explosive remnants of war since the fall of al-Assad alone, although the actual number is likely to be much higher ([Halo 3/2/2025](#)). In the last nine years, at least 422,000 incidents of unexploded ordnance have been reported in 14 governorates across Syria, with an estimated half of them resulting in tragic child casualties. The danger affects around five million children living in areas contaminated with the deadly explosive devices. For children, the effects of such incidents are devastating. If they survive the blast, they suffer life-changing injuries and disabilities, which often mean that they can no longer go to school or that it is more difficult for them to access adequate health care ([UN News 14/1/2025](#)). *[Further information on the impact of unexploded ordnance on children can be found in the chapter [Relevant population groups / Children - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].* According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 169 people were killed by unexploded ordnance between the beginning of 2025 and 13 February 2025, including 31 children and six women. 205 people were injured. Including 88 children and women ([SOHR 13/2/2025](#)). UNOCHA counted 141 fatalities, including 24 children and one woman, and 265 injuries, including 114 children and 16 women, in 198 incidents from December 2024 to 12 February 2025. Of the 136 incidents in January and February, 90 occurred while farmers were tilling their land or grazing animals, resulting in the deaths of 61 farmers and herders and 93 others injured. Since December, a total of 138 minefields and mine presence

points have been identified in Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, Deir ez-Zour and Latakia ([UNOCHA 12/2/2025](#)). According to the Syrian 'White Helmets', many of those killed are farmers and landowners who were trying to return to their land ([BBC 23/1/2025](#)). Major cities such as Idlib, ar-Raqqa, Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, have been devastated by bombing and are therefore littered with unexploded ordnance. These are the most populated areas. Hundreds of thousands of people lived there. The minefields and unexploded ordnance such as bomb remnants are spread all over the country ([FR 20/1/2025b](#)). According to Al Jazeera, provinces such as Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Homs, ar-Raqqa, Deir ez-Zour and al-Hasakah and, to a lesser extent, Damascus, Dara'a and Suweida are contaminated with cluster munitions and mines ([AJ 1/1/2025c](#)). The following map shows the contamination of the Syrian governorates by unexploded ordnance in colour:



Sources 2: [BBC 23/1/2025](#)

The Islamic State (ISIS)

The instability is affecting camps, detention centres and other facilities in the north-east of the country. 42,500 people, some of whom have suspected links to ISIS, remain in detention. This includes 17,700 Iraqi nationals and 16,200 Syrian nationals, as well as 8,600 nationals from other countries ([UN News 10/2/2025](#)). *[Further information on refugee camps in North and East Syria can be found in the chapter [General human rights situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [General human rights situation in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria \(DAANES\)](#) / [IDPs and refugees](#)].* ISIS is spread in Syria in two separate areas. The first is in the Syrian Jazira (north-east Syria), which is controlled by the SDF supported by the International Coalition. There, ISIS is operating in the southern desert of al-Hasakah province, which is also connected to the north-eastern side of the border town of al-Bu Kamal, more precisely to the town of al-Baghouz, the last urban stronghold of ISIS. This area is geographically connected to the Hatra desert in Iraq's Nineveh province, despite the concrete blocks separating the two countries, ISIS is still moving across the border, a resident of the rural al-Hasakah province confirmed to Al Jazeera. The second area, known as al-Badiya ash-Shamiya (Syrian Desert), is located near the city of Palmyra, east of Homs province. It is characterised by its vastness and ends at the edge of most Syrian provinces and is also connected to the Iraqi desert of al-Anbar, which is an important stronghold for ISIS. ISIS used to benefit from the division of influence along the border strip between the US forces stationed in the al-Tanf military base and the Iranian militias that controlled al-Bu Kamal. In addition to its relatively long experience of fighting and adapting to the desert, ISIS was able to maintain its movement in this area between the two countries ([AJ 2/3/2025](#)). A report by Der Spiegel, in which a journalist travelled to al-Badiya and spoke to various people on the ground, suggests that ISIS no longer has such a strong presence there, but that many raids and attacks have been blamed on the Islamic State by the ousted Syrian government ([Spiegel 9/2/2025](#)). The multiplicity of parties fighting against ISIS and the state of hostility or rivalry between them created a state of confusion that became evident in the recent period (between 2024 and 2023). This contributed to the fact that the information about the numbers and movements of the organisation is imprecise and highly variable, as there is still no exact figure for the number of ISIS fighters in Syria. Some sources on the ground suggest that the number of active ISIS fighters in Syria is between 900 and 1100, with the majority of them located in the Levantine al-Badiya, while the smaller part is spread across the Syrian Jazira (north-east Syria) ([AJ 2/3/2025](#)). ISIS has exploited the security gap created by the collapse of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime last December, according to SDF leader 'Abdi. Since then, ISIS has become more visible and active. The terrorist group is using weapons caches that it confiscated after they were abandoned by forces loyal to Assad. ISIS is also becoming increasingly bold and is sending terrorists from their hideouts in the Badiya to the surrounding towns ([VOA 27/2/2025](#)). On 10 February 2025, a UN official stated that the volatile situation in Syria is very worrying. There is a risk that stocks of modern weapons could fall into the hands of terrorists. The Badiya region of Syria continues to be used as a centre for ISIS's external operations planning and is an important area for its activities ([UN News 10/2/2025](#)). The US withdrawal would strengthen ISIS because the group will exploit the weakness of the new Syrian transitional government, which is unable to control the entire Syrian territory. Officials

warn that the withdrawal of US forces will leave the SDF alone and threaten the security of more than 20 prisons and refugee camps housing more than 50,000 people, including some 9,000 ISIS fighters. Without US forces, the SDF could abandon the prisons and camps and allow thousands of ISIS fighters to escape. Turkish Foreign Minister Fidan said in early January that Turkey was ready to take control of the prisons housing ISIS prisoners (AlHurra 6/2/2025a). In recent years, after ISIS lost its last urban strongholds, ISIS groups carried out hundreds of military and security operations in Syria, mostly in the form of quick-strike attacks on positions held by Iranian militias and members of the former Syrian regime army, in addition to successive attacks on oil tankers transporting oil shipments from Syria's Jazira fields to refineries in Homs and Baniyas. Since the announcement of the fall of the Assad regime, ISIS attacks have decreased, apart from the usual attacks in the Syrian Jazira region and two attacks in the Levantine Badiya, one of which targeted the Sha'er gas field and resulted in one fatality. This relative disappearance is not necessarily permanent, but more likely temporary and due to several reasons, the most important of which are: 1. lack of military targets due to the withdrawal of Iranian militias and the disbanding of the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), 2. the deployment of military factions that were part of the Syrian Free Army (SFA) and are now under the Syrian Ministry of Defence to fill the power vacuum in the region and take over key strategic positions especially on the only road connecting Deirez-Zour and Damascus (AJ 2/3/2025).

The security situation in the various regions of Syria varies (VB Amman 9/2/2025). The security situation in each region is described below:

Central Syria

Following the fall of the Assad regime and the takeover of power by Islamist groups, the security situation in the coastal and central regions of Syria remains fragile and highly fragmented. While some areas are largely under the control of the new Islamist rulers, there is still resistance from local militias, groups formerly loyal to Assad and foreign actors (VB Amman 9/2/2025). The Syrian Ministry of the Interior has intensified its security operations in various provinces, targeting elements of the ousted Assad regime that have stepped up their movements in some areas. Large-scale security operations have taken place in several areas, particularly in the rural areas of Damascus, Homs and Tartous, arresting a number of armed militants and neutralising others in direct clashes. Security reports confirm that these groups targeted the Syrian army and security forces in order to weaken security and create chaos. They are taking advantage of the difficult geographical location of some areas to hide and regroup their ranks (AAA 1/3/2025). Damascus is under the control of Islamist groups. While there is a degree of stability in some neighbourhoods, attacks, assassinations and targeted attacks by rival groups remain commonplace. Israeli airstrikes on suspected weapons caches or positions of pro-Iranian militias have increased, while individual resistance cells are operating against the new rulers in the outer neighbourhoods. IS cells and local resistance groups regularly attack checkpoints, leading to a tense situation (VB Amman 9/2/2025). One person was killed and nine others injured in clashes between the armed forces of Syria's new rulers and armed men from the Druze minority near Damascus on 1 March 2025, as reported by a Syrian human rights observer (FR24 1/3/2025).

Internal security forces, accompanied by local armed groups, have carried out a security campaign against the homes of officers in the city of Qatana in the Damascus hinterland, arresting dozens of residents in the area and imposing a curfew. There were repeated house searches, accompanied by vandalism, looting and arrests of a number of residents, including men and women ([SOHR 28/2/2025a](#)). There were clashes between Syrian security forces and armed men in the Damascus countryside on 27 February 2025, resulting in injuries ([Shafaq 27/2/2025](#)). The increase in violence and crime in Syria's minority areas remains the biggest challenge for the new authorities since the fall of the old regime in December 2024. The country has seen an increase in attacks, both by remnants of the regime whose interests are suffering after the fall of al-Assad and who seek to destabilise the country, and by general criminals ([AAA 1/3/2025](#)). The coastal regions of Latakia and Tartus, formerly held by the Assad government and considered strongholds of the Alawite community, have now fallen under the control of Islamist groups. However, the transition was not without resistance, as local Alawite militias, remnants of units loyal to the government and isolated Russian forces fought for their zones of influence. While the coast was previously considered safe, new conflicts between Islamist groups, units loyal to Assad and possibly remaining Russian forces could emerge in the coming months ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). In the coastal region, the security situation is unstable and characterised by repeated attacks at checkpoints and criminal activities such as looting, robberies and kidnappings, especially in rural areas ([UNOCHA 12/2/2025](#)). The Latakia region is strategically important and harbours important military facilities that were used by the Assad government. Russia still has interests here, particularly with regard to the former Hmeimim military airport. Sporadic fighting has been reported between Islamist groups and pro-Assad militias that have remained ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). In the past two months, former regime groups have carried out four operations in the north-west of the country, in which members of the military operations department were killed and injured ([AAA 1/3/2025](#)). In Tartus, the former Russian naval base has reportedly been partially evacuated by Russian troops, although it is unclear whether it has been completely abandoned. Islamist groups have taken control of the city, but the presence of underground cells of former Assad supporters could lead to further tensions ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). Calls for violence among former Assad supporters have prompted many Alawites to take up arms against HTS-led forces in the Syrian coastal governorates of Tartus and Latakia, as well as in Homs ([LWJ 29/1/2025](#)). Armed men on two motorbikes attacked a police station in the city of Savita in Tartus province and threw hand grenades, leading to an armed clash between the attackers and the station's staff, in which one of the station's employees was injured. Meanwhile, a young civilian from the hinterland of Tartous was killed by stray bullets while travelling in a car, reports the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights ([SOHR 28/2/2025b](#)[UNOCHA 12/2/2025](#)). Meanwhile, relative stability prevails in Homs, Hama and north-west Syria, apart from some unrest in rural Homs ([UNOCHA 12/2/2025](#)). The central region of Syria, consisting of Homs and Hama, remains a zone with an unclear balance of power after the fall of the regime. The city of Homs, once a key battleground in the Syrian civil war, is now an area of sporadic fighting between Islamist groups and resistance movements, including former pro-government militias and local tribes. While the Islamist rulers claim control of the city, there are reports of sporadic skirmishes and attacks ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). Fighters from the Islamic State (ISIS) killed at

least 54 people in the Syrian region of Homs on 10 December 2024, all of whom are said to have been former members of Bashar al-Assad's government and are believed to have tried to flee after its collapse (MEE 10/12/2024). Like Homs, Hama is also characterised by social tensions and economic insecurity. Some rural areas outside the city are still under the influence of local groups or individual resistance cells that are resisting the new order. The humanitarian situation in both cities remains critical, as the infrastructure is severely damaged and many of the former state supply structures are no longer functioning. Ar-Raqqa, the former capital of ISIS, remains a hotspot of insecurity. Parts of the region are still controlled by local Kurdish units of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which further increases tensions. Following the takeover of Islamist groups in other parts of the country, the situation in ar-Raqqa remains tense as different groups fight for control. IS sleeper cells are still active and have carried out targeted attacks on Islamist security forces and administrative structures in recent months. Ultimately, the security situation in Deirez-Zour also remains highly unstable. The region was previously a key battleground against ISIS, and although the power dynamics have changed, guerrilla tactics, attacks and armed conflicts remain commonplace. Control over Deirez-Zour is highly fragmented as various Islamist groups, the SDF and local tribal militias fight for influence. Syria's new Islamist rulers do not have unified control over the region, as various groups are vying for territory. HTS and other factions are trying to strengthen their positions, leading to clashes with local tribes and former pro-government militias. The SDF continues to hold some areas, particularly in the northern and eastern parts of the province, which further exacerbates tensions with Islamist groups and Turkish-backed militias. ISIS is still active and is using the power vacuum to reactivate sleeper cells. In rural areas, ISIS regularly carries out attacks on security forces, checkpoints and local tribal leaders who are cooperating with the new rulers. The deteriorating security situation enables ISIS to recruit again, especially among the economically disadvantaged tribes. Deirez-Zour was already a centre for smuggling and the illegal oil trade before the fall of al-Assad, a situation that has now worsened. Criminal networks, armed tribes and former pro-government groups control parts of the oil fields and routes for smuggled goods, leading to armed conflicts over economic resources. The economic situation is catastrophic, as supply lines have been disrupted and many people have to make do without income or humanitarian aid (VB Amman 9/2/2025).

Southern Syria

Following the fall of the Assad government and the takeover of power by Islamist groups, the security situation in southern Syria remains fragile and unpredictable. The new rulers are trying to consolidate control over the country, but are facing internal power struggles, resistance from local militias and ongoing foreign interventions (VB Amman 9/2/2025). Israel attacked Syria even before the fall of al-Assad, claiming it wanted to stem the flow of weapons and money from Iran to the militant Hezbollah group in Lebanon. Since 8 December 2024, Israel has occupied areas near the common border and attacked military facilities (NYT 25/2/2025). Since 8 December 2024, Israel has intensified its military operations in Syria, occupying the buffer zone and completing its control of Mount Hermon, as well as expanding its operations in Quneitra and Rif Dimashq (AJ 8/2/2025). The Israeli army announced that gunmen opened fire on its forces in the Quneitra area on the Syrian side of the occupied Golan on 31 January 2025, for

the first time since its invasion of Syria and its occupation of the buffer zone after the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime ([AJ 1/2/2025](#)). Since 25.2.2025, Israel has been flying airstrikes in southern Syria, which according to Israeli Defence Minister Katz are part of a 'new policy' aimed at ensuring a 'demilitarised southern Syria'. He added that any attempt by Syrian armed forces or militant groups to gain a foothold in what Israel describes as a 'security zone' in the region would be 'met with fire'. This policy was announced on 23 February 2025 by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in a speech in which he called for the 'complete demilitarisation' of southern Syria. Israel would not tolerate Syrian forces in Quneitra, Dara'a and Suweida ([NYT 25/2/2025](#)) [*Further information on Israel's actions in Syria can be found in the chapters [Political situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 Dec.2024\)](#) / [Foreign policy situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [Security authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [Foreign support and interference - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)*]. Quneitra, which borders the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, has become a particularly sensitive security area. The Islamist rulers are trying to consolidate their position along the border with Israel, which has repeatedly led to Israeli air and missile attacks on their positions. At the same time, pro-Iranian groups and Shiite militias are active, fighting against the new Islamist power bloc. The presence of international actors makes Quneitra a conflict area with ongoing skirmishes between different factions ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). On 2.2.2025, the authorities confirmed that the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) had withdrawn from the provincial administration and court buildings in the Peace City, Quneitra province, leaving behind massive destruction of infrastructure and civilian documents ([UNOCHA 12/2/2025](#)). Dara'a, the former cradle of the Syrian uprising, remains one of the most unstable regions in the south. Despite the takeover by Islamist groups, there is ongoing resistance from local militias and former pro-government forces that are not cooperating with the new leadership. Assassinations, kidnappings and targeted attacks on officials of the new rulers are frequent. In addition, there are regular Israeli airstrikes on suspected pro-Iranian militias recruited from groups formerly loyal to Assad ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). On 5 January 2025, there were violent clashes between several parties in the town of as-Sanamayn in rural Dara'a, which led to a state of emergency. The armed forces of the transitional government were mobilised. Following the intervention of the armed forces, it was agreed to immediately end the clashes between all parties, to take over all government buildings and protect public facilities and to withdraw the heavy and medium weapons of the local groups ([Sky News 5/1/2025](#)). The Druze-majority province of Suweida continues to play a special role. During the civil war, the region retained a certain degree of autonomy and largely stayed out of the fighting. Following the takeover by Islamist groups, the region remains suspicious of the new regime and is only loosely integrated into the new order. In recent months, there have been clashes between Druze militias and Islamist units seeking to assert their authority. Kidnappings and local power struggles also continue to be a problem in Suweida ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). Israeli air strikes were carried out in the southern Syrian provinces of Dara'a and Quneitra at the beginning of February. The Israeli army spokesman announced that warplanes had carried out an attack on a weapons depot in the area of Deir' Ali in southern Syria, claiming that the depot belonged to the Islamic Resistance Movement

(Hamas). The attack comes amid escalating tensions on the border between Syria and Israel as Israeli forces continue to expand their incursion into Quneitra province ([AJ 8/2/2025](#)).

The ceasefire between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah militia was extended until 18 February 2025. This development has a particular impact on the security situation in southern Syria, especially in border areas with Lebanon ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). Since the fall of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on 8 December 2024, the situation on the Lebanese-Syrian border has been characterised by sporadic clashes and bureaucratic hurdles. In the first weeks after al-Assad's fall, armed Syrian fighters fought with the Lebanese army at several points along the porous border between the two countries ([MEE 10/2/2025](#)). On 21 February 2025, the Israeli military announced that it had bombed border crossings between Syria and Lebanon that were allegedly being used by Hezbollah. The Israeli shelling targeted the illegal border crossings between Syria and Lebanon in Wadi Khaled and the western outskirts of Homs, resulting in a number of casualties. Ten days earlier, the Israeli military said it had carried out an airstrike on a tunnel on the Syrian-Lebanese border that was allegedly being used by Iran-backed Hezbollah to smuggle weapons ([Sky News 21/2/2025](#)). A Lebanese military expert says that the border areas are practically in the hands of Hezbollah. In the past, there was a kind of synergy between Hezbollah and the tribes in building a parallel economy based on the smuggling of Captagon. This synergy still exists today ([AlHurra 7/2/2025](#)). The Syrian transitional government launched an extensive campaign on the Syrian-Lebanese border in early February 2025, in which it claims to be taking action against arms and drug smuggling. Shiite clans fought heavy battles with the Syrian armed forces and eventually announced their withdrawal from Syria to Lebanon ([MEE 10/2/2025](#)). The Lebanese army announced that it had ordered the deployment of military units on the northern and eastern borders to respond to the sources of fire emanating from Syrian territory ([MEE 10/2/2025](#)). Statements by the new government in Damascus indicate that it will continue security campaigns along the border to crack down on smuggling gangs ([AlHurra 7/2/2025](#)). *[Further information on the Lebanon-Syria border area can be found in the chapter [Freedom of movement - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

Northern Syria

The security situation in northern Syria remains unstable as various factions compete for control and influence ([SCR 30/1/2025](#)). Following the fall of al-Assad and the takeover of power by Islamist groups, north-west Syria remains one of the most troubled and complex regions in the country. The new rulers consist of an alliance of various Islamist factions, with Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) in particular playing a leading role in Idlib and parts of Aleppo. Despite the formal takeover of power, there are still power struggles in the region between rival Islamist groups, resistance cells loyal to Assad and external threats from airstrikes and border conflicts ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). Parts of north-eastern Syria, particularly eastern Aleppo, ar-Raqqa and al-Hasakah, are affected by hostilities, clashes and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks ([UNOCHA 12/2/2025](#)). Idlib is now the centre of Islamist administration in Syria, but remains a highly unstable region. While HTS claims control as the dominant force, there is still conflict with other factions and resistance from smaller groups that have not been fully integrated into the

new order. Despite the fall of al-Assad, Syrian airspace remains vulnerable to Israeli attacks on Iranian or Iranian-linked groups, while Russia occasionally carries out targeted attacks on jihadist groups in the region. Tensions between HTS, other Islamist groups and local militias create a fragile security situation with regular attacks and armed clashes. The ongoing instability, lack of basic supplies and economic hardship have further exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Idlib. Aleppo remains one of the most strategically important cities in Syria, but continues to be fought over by various actors. While Islamist groups control parts of the city, there is still a presence of former pro-government militias or autonomous Kurdish units in other districts. In northern parts of Aleppo, tensions continue between Turkish-backed militias and Kurdish units of the SDF. Targeted assassinations, kidnappings and explosive attacks against Islamist leaders continue to occur in parts of Aleppo, indicating an active resistance movement. The city remains heavily damaged and reconstruction is slow as the new Islamist rulers focus on military control rather than infrastructural recovery (VB Amman 9/2/2025). The Syrian Ministry of Defence announced that it had repelled an attack by the SDF on the Ashrafiya front in Aleppo city in early March 2025. The Syrian Ministry of Defence has sent military reinforcements from several areas to the battlefronts against the SDF in Aleppo (AJ 10/3/2025c). According to the Syrian army, it arrested members of the Kurdish-led SDF when they entered Aleppo from the al-Ashrafiya neighbourhood (BBC 9/3/2025a).

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4.1 Security situation in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-07 07:46

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are considered by Turkey to be ‘terrorists’ and an existential threat to its national security. The Syrian National Army (SNA), which is made up of former rebel groups, is engaged in a fierce battle with the SDF along the Euphrates. Despite Turkish air and artillery support, the SNA appears to be suffering the heaviest losses. It is worth noting that many of the Kurdish fighters of the SDF were trained and armed by the US ([Leb24 13/2/2025](#)). Following the fall of the Assad government and the takeover of power by Islamist groups, north-east Syria also remains a contested and highly unstable region ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). The risk of active conflicts is greater in the north-east (al-Hasakah, ar-Raqqa, Deir ez-Zour) than elsewhere ([GPC 3/4/2025](#)). While Islamist groups have consolidated their control in other parts of Syria, al-Hasakah remains a contested zone where the SDF, Turkish forces and Islamist militias are fighting for influence. The SDF, dominated by the Kurdish People’s Defence Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG), continues to hold large parts of the region, particularly towns such as al-Hasakah and Qamishli. Islamist groups, which came to power in other parts of the country after the fall of al-Assad, are trying to expand their influence in the north-east and are fighting battles with the Kurdish units of the SDF. The Turkish armed forces and their Syrian militia allies are using the collapse of the Assad government to intensify their attacks on SDF-controlled areas. Turkish air strikes, artillery fire and ground battles along the border are taking place regularly. Islamic State (ISIS) cells are still active and are taking advantage of the chaotic situation to intensify their attacks ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). The areas of al-Hasakah, ar-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zour are subject to ISIS attacks ([GPC 3/4/2025](#)). There are repeated attacks on Kurdish security forces, prison riots and acts of sabotage. The weakness of the new Islamist rulers against ISIS

in the region is leading to local tribes arming themselves, in some cases independently, which is contributing to a further fragmentation process. The ongoing fighting and Turkish offensives have forced thousands of internally displaced people to flee. Many refugee camps that were formerly administered under al-Assad have fallen into an uncertain situation, as humanitarian organisations now only have limited access. Water supplies have been affected by Turkish attacks on infrastructure, and food and medical shortages are exacerbating the humanitarian crisis ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)). *[Further information on the humanitarian situation can be found in the chapter on [basic services and the economy](#). Information on internally displaced persons in the chapter [Freedom of movement - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024) and information on the refugee camps in the Kurdish region in the chapters [General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [General human rights situation in the Kurdish region \(since 8 December 2024\)](#).2024) / [General human rights situation in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria \(DAANES\)](#) / [IDPs and refugees and Freedom of movement - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [Freedom of movement in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria \(DAANES\)](#)].* In the areas controlled by the SDF, there were attacks by ISIS cells in February, which ambushed SDF elements and security positions and attacked them with machine guns. Several people were killed and wounded, including two ISIS fighters ([SOHR 24/2/2025a](#)), in ten operations spread across Deirez-Zour, ar-Raqqa and al-Hasakah.

The Turkish-backed Syrian factions launched an offensive against the SDF in November and drove them out of several areas in the north despite US efforts to broker a ceasefire ([Arabiya 26/2/2025](#)). They captured strategic locations around Manbij and Tall Rif'at. Fighting intensified near the Tishrin Dam on the Euphrates River in the Manbij region of eastern Aleppo, which remains an important source of water and electricity for the areas controlled by the SDF. Turkey has reportedly carried out airstrikes in the region, raising concerns about possible damage to the dam. In addition, several locations in the Kobane region and eastern Aleppo have also been attacked ([SCR 30/1/2025](#)). Washington brokered an initial ceasefire in early December after fighting broke out. Nevertheless, fighting between the two parties continued ([Sky News 31/12/2024b](#)). On several axes in eastern Aleppo and north-east Syria, there were a series of mutual attacks between the SDF on the one hand and the Turkish armed forces and pro-Turkish groups on the other. Near the Tishrin Dam, Turkish forces intensively shelled SDF positions with artillery, while at the same time a drone attack on SDF positions took place, leading to clashes between the two sides ([SOHR 26/2/2025](#)). The Tishrin Dam on the Euphrates River in Syria has become a central point of conflict in the period following Assad. Since the fall of the regime of dictator Bashar al-Assad on 8 December 2024, the dam has been fought over by the SDF and the SNA ([LWJ 26/1/2025](#)). Despite fierce fighting over several weeks, the local conflict map around the Tishrin Dam had not changed. On the frontlines between the Turkish-backed SNA and the SDF, heavy fighting continued on both sides of the Euphrates near the Tishrin Dam and the Qara-Qozak Bridge ([Etana 22/2/2025](#)). According to the director of the Syrian

Observatory for Human Rights, these are said to have ceased in mid-April 2025 ([SOHR 15/4/2025](#)) after the SDF withdrew from the area. The Syrian government is to take control of the dam ([ISW 16/4/2025](#)). *[For details, see chapter [Political situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [Political situation in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria \(DAANES\)](#)]*. In early February, there were several deadly car bomb attacks in areas controlled by Turkish-affiliated militias ([Tagesspiegel 3/2/2025](#)). The Turkish armed forces continue their operations in Syria under the pretext of securing the Turkish border with Syria, countering the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê - PKK) and guaranteeing agreements ([SOHR 9/1/2025](#)). On 27 February 2025, Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK imprisoned in Turkey, called for the PKK to lay down its arms and disband ([ANF 27/2/2025](#)). In a highly anticipated statement that many hope will pave the way for an end to more than four decades of conflict between Turkey and the Kurds, imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan called on his followers to lay down their arms and disband the rebel organisation. Mazloum 'Abdi, leader of the SDF, made it clear that this call only applied to the PKK and had nothing to do with Syria ([AlMon 27/2/2025](#); cf. [AlHurra 27/2/2025](#)). He said that his fighters would not lay down their arms ([VOA 27/2/2025](#)). The disagreement over Syria was a major obstacle in the peace talks between Ankara and Ocalan because Turkey insisted that they include north-east Syria, where Turkish forces and allied Sunni factions have been waging a fierce campaign for nine years to destroy the self-proclaimed Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) because of its links to the PKK. But Ankara appears to have softened its stance somewhat as several Arab nations are countering Turkey's growing influence in Syria ([AlMon 27/2/2025](#)). The hope in Washington is that Ocalan's decision could ease tensions with Ankara and facilitate efforts to combat the remnants of the Islamic State (ISIS) terror group. The SDF echoed Washington's optimism ([VOA 27/2/2025](#)). 'Abdi noted that with peace between the PKK and Turkey, there would no longer be any reason or excuse for Turkey to attack northern Syria under the pretext of the PKK ([VOA 27/2/2025](#); cf. [AlHurra 27/2/2025](#)). According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), developments in 2024 are irrefutable proof that Turkish intervention in Syria is a major cause of bloodshed. Since the beginning of 2024, SOHR has documented the deaths of 88 Syrian civilians: 17 children, six women and 65 young and adult men killed by gunfire from Turkish border guards (Jandarma) and air and ground attacks by Turkish forces, including airstrikes by warplanes and drones ([SOHR 9/1/2025](#)). Clashes between the SNA and the SDF are nothing new, nor is fighting between Turkey and the SDF. Ankara has launched several operations in Syria over the past decade, including Operations Euphrates Shield (2016), Olive Branch (2018) and Peace Spring (2019), all aimed at fighting the SDF or the People's Defence Units (YPG), the largest faction within the SDF. Before the fall of the Assad regime, which began in late November with an offensive by the HTS near Aleppo, the fronts in Syria between the SDF and SNA had remained unchanged for several years. However, the collapse of the regime led to rapid changes ([LWJ 26/1/2025](#)).

In the areas of northern and eastern Syria, old disputes and acts of revenge led to an escalation of family and tribal clashes in February, in which five people were killed and seven others injured,

including a woman. These clashes centred on the governorates of ar-Raqqa, Deiez-Zour and al-Hasakah, where light and medium weapons were used (SOHR 15/2/2025). Amid this insecurity, reports of arbitrary arrests in north-east Syria have exacerbated tensions between different population groups (UNOCHA 12/2/2025).

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5 Legal protection / Judiciary - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-07 07:55

Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

[There is currently insufficient information available on the judicial system of the current government and the judicial system in Syria is currently in a state of flux. In the following, the current status is presented as it results from publicly accessible sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)]

The current constitution from 2012 has been suspended. Ahmad ash-Shara' set three years for the drafting of a new constitution. The new Syrian government announced that a constitutional committee would be formed from the best jurists and legal scholars to work on reviewing the previous constitution and making amendments (AJ 13/1/2025). On 29 January 2025, it was also decided to revoke all exceptional laws that were issued during the era of the deposed President al-Assad (Sky News 31/1/2025). In an interview on 3 February 2025, ash-Shara' stated that the High Judicial Council still exists and that not all previous laws have been repealed at once. There are over 150,000 open cases in court that cannot be dealt with until a new law is passed. Experts and specialised committees for judicial laws are proposing new laws and replacing old laws that are not in line with the situation in Syria. Every law that is to be enacted is submitted to a provisional parliamentary assembly, which votes on whether it should be passed or not. In addition, there is the High Judicial Council and the Supreme Constitutional Court, so there is a legal procedure for passing any law in the country. According to ash-Shara', the procedure is subject to the general laws based on the framework guidelines set out in the Constitutional Declaration. Furthermore, there will be a constitutional declaration. According to ash-Shara',

experts will decide whether there will be Sharia laws or not ([Economist 3/2/2025](#)). According to a report in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, the country is currently not governed by laws, but by decrees. The ruling militias can order whatever they want ([NZZ 24/1/2025](#)). As a transitional government, the current government is limited by law to maintaining public services and operations. While it can suspend laws or legislation involving offences, it has no power to enact or amend laws, which would require a legislative body ([HLP Syria 14/1/2025b](#)). All decisions of the current government are made on the basis of the revolutionary legitimacy that brought it to the head of the country, as it is a caretaker government. Therefore, the decisions taken are temporary until the constitutional principles or the constitutional declaration are agreed upon, according to a researcher at the Syrian Dialogue Centre ([Almodon 8/1/2025](#)). On 2 March 2025, the Syrian authorities announced the formation of a committee to draft a constitutional declaration for the country's transition after the fall of long-time ruler Bashar al-Assad ([FR24 2/3/2025](#)).

Ash-Shara' has appointed preachers as judges ([National 19/12/2024](#)). Officially, the Syrian interim cabinet has not issued formal instructions to dismiss female judges, but sources from the Palace of Justice in Homs governorate report that they have received verbal instructions to remove women from judicial positions ([TNA 2/1/2025a](#)).

After the fall of al-Assad's regime and the presence of many armed parties, chaos and lawlessness prevail in various regions of Syria, which has led to crimes that may be motivated by personal goals. Clear instructions to security personnel are needed, stating that it is forbidden to enter houses without a court order from the public prosecutor's office, which must be presented to the owners of the houses to be searched ([SOHR 2/2/2025](#)). In the north in particular, there are increasing signs of an escalation of lawlessness and violence in a geographical area that stretches between Homs, Latakia on the coast and Aleppo further east ([Etana 3/2/2025](#)). In early March 2023, sectarian and regional liquidation operations took place in the Syrian coastal region, killing hundreds of citizens, including women and children. The security forces, members of the Ministry of Defence and the forces supporting them have committed war crimes and human rights violations without fear of legal consequences ([SOHR 11/3/2025](#)). The Syrian Islamist interim president wants those responsible for the massacre of civilians to be held accountable and emphasised that Syria is a state governed by the rule of law ([ORF 10/3/2025](#)). Ash-Shara' announced the establishment of an independent committee to investigate the murders ([BBC 10/3/2025](#)). *[Details on crimes and human rights violations can be found in the chapters [General human rights situation](#) and [Security authorities - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime](#) (8 December 2024). Further information on violence against civilians can be found in the chapter [Security situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#). Note]*

In mid-December, there was a meeting between a delegation from the Department of Military Operations, judges and lawyers in the Palace of Justice in Homs. An attempt is said to have been made there to project the government concepts in Idlib onto the entire Syrian society and its state institutions, contrary to what is communicated in official statements by ash-Shara. The head of the delegation is said to have spoken in a strange logic and used Sharia and Islamic (legal) terms that do not exist in the reality of Syrian courts, such as the term 'Sharia court in

Homs', by which he did not mean the court for marriages and divorces, but the entire Palace of Justice, and he used the term 'Sunnah' instead of law [*in Arabic Qanoun* - قانون, *ote*] ([Nahar 14/12/2024](#)). The transitional government's Minister of Justice stated in an interview on 1 January 2025 that 90% of the Syrian population is Muslim and that a new government would take the will of the people into account, which means that the implementation of Sharia law will play a major role if this is the will of the people ([MEMRI 1/1/2025](#)). According to the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Sharia law has long been the most important source of law in Syria - just as it is in many other states in the region. The central question, however, is how it is interpreted and to what extent Islamists such as ash-Shara' and his fellow campaigners are prepared to compromise ([Rosa Lux 17/12/2024](#)).

The HTS's designated justice minister in the transitional government, al-Waysi, is said to be seen in a video circulating on various social media channels executing a woman in 2015 when he was acting as a judge for Jabhat an-Nusra ([MEMRI 5/1/2025](#); cf. [AW 9/1/2025](#)). The authenticity of the videos was verified by France 24 ([FR24 8/1/2025](#)).

The new rulers in Syria are using Islamic teachings to train a young police force. According to police officials, this is to create moral awareness while trying to fill the security vacuum created by the dismantling of ousted President Bashar al-Assad's notoriously corrupt and brutal security forces. Police officers who were brought to Damascus from their former rebel stronghold in the northwestern region of Idlib question applicants about their faith and focus on Islamic Sharia law in the brief training they offer recruits, according to five high-ranking officials and application forms ([REU 23/1/2025](#)). [*Details on the training of a new police cadre can be found in the chapter [Security authorities - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(8 December 2024\)](#)*].

When the insurgents put an end to the 50-year rule of the al-Assad family, they broke into prisons and security facilities to free political prisoners and many of the tens of thousands of people who had disappeared since the conflict began in 2011 ([AP 10/12/2024](#)). The new justice minister al-Waysi decided in early January to return those convicted of criminal offences to prison. In a circular, al-Waysi called on all courts, investigation and referral departments and the public prosecution to count the names of prisoners or those convicted of ordinary offences who were arrested on original judicial warrants and escaped from their prisons during the liberation operation. The Minister ordered to issue police orders against them based on the judicial records to prepare for their arrest and return to the detention centres, to follow their trial in the pending court cases and implement the final court judgments against the convicts to ensure the application of the legal provisions against them, achieve justice and stability, and safeguard their personal rights ([Almodon 9/1/2025](#)). Crime has risen dramatically, not least due to the release of more than just political prisoners from prisons ([SYRDiplQ1 5/2/2025](#)).

While the official legal system theoretically offers a uniform structure, the reality on the ground is far more complex, as different legal systems assert influence and authority, e.g. in family matters ([LSE 15/1/2025](#)). According to Just Security, the Syrian justice system is a mess. For decades, it served the al-Assad family as an instrument of oppression ([JS 14/1/2025](#)). Since 2012, some courts in opposition areas were established and labelled 'Sharia courts' because

their judgments were based on Islamic law and jurisprudence. Others retained their civil law character by adopting the Arab Unified Law drafted by the Arab League in 1996 to standardise the laws in the Arab states. This law contains principles of Islamic law to a large extent. In 2017, courts under the opposition Syrian Interim Government (SIG) in northern Syria adopted Syrian Arab law with reference to the 1950 constitution, with amendments made to meet current needs. In the areas controlled by HTS, Sharia law is applied alongside some laws issued by the group's Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) ([HLP Syria 14/1/2025b](#)).

Addressing war crimes etc. under the ousted Assad regime

Interim President ash-Shara' announced just a few days after the fall of the regime that he would disband the security forces of the former regime and that people involved in the torture or killing of prisoners would be hunted down and pardons would be out of the question. He announced that he would call on other countries to extradite the fugitives ([REU 11/12/2024a](#)). The transitional government wants to come to terms with the crimes of the Assad regime. They announced on the messenger service Telegram in Arabic that they would bring the criminals, murderers, security officials and soldiers who were involved in the torture of the Syrian people to justice. They will also prosecute war criminals and demand their extradition if they have fled to other countries ([DW 19/1/2025](#)). Since the end of December 2024, the security forces of the new Syrian government have been carrying out combing operations in various provinces of the country, including clashes with remnants and militias of the deposed regime. A source in the Syrian Interior Ministry told Al Jazeera that the Public Security Department had arrested a large number of former regime members and rioters in Tartous, Latakia, Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Damascus ([AJ 2/1/2025](#)).*[Details on security operations, arrests and human rights violations can be found in the chapters [Security authorities - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(8 December 2024\)](#) and [General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)]*

The construction of the new Syria is inevitably linked to coming to terms with the past, i.e. with more than fifty years of a regime dominated by the al-Assad family. The opening of 'reconciliation centres' in the main cities in areas under the control of the Syrian transitional government is one of the tools for this purpose. They are part of a broader process of disarmament and reconciliation to reintegrate Syrians who have worked with and for the regime, mainly former military officers, back into Syrian society. The reconciliation centres invite former soldiers, officers and members of militias loyal to the regime to hand in their weapons and register their personal details. In return, these individuals receive temporary ID cards, often valid for three months, which grant them safe passage and protection from immediate prosecution. The process also aims to encourage former supporters of the regime to distance themselves from their former allegiances and integrate into the new social framework. Despite their intended purpose, the criteria for admission to these centres are neither publicly available nor systematically applied, leading to concerns about arbitrary decision-making. Sources on the ground in Syria report that individuals seeking reconciliation often face complex bureaucratic hurdles, with decisions influenced by security agencies rather than an independent and impartial judicial process. In addition, the process disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, many of whom fear retaliation despite

the promise of legal absolution ([ISPI 7/2/2025](#)). *[Further information on these 'reconciliation centres' can also be found in the chapters [Security authorities - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(8.12.2024\)](#) and [Military and reserve service - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8.12.2024\)](#)].*

There are no official lists of war criminals and persons who have committed violations against the civilian population. The UN Commission of Inquiry, which has been investigating war crimes and other violations of international human rights law since 2011, has put 4,000 people on a list who are suspected of having committed serious crimes. Years before the fall of the regime, the organisation 'For Justice', which was founded by Syrian Americans in Washington in 2019, published a blacklist with the names of 100 high-ranking former regime representatives accused of having committed war crimes in Syria since 2011. In addition, dozens of unofficial lists with the names and photos of dozens of wanted persons have been circulating since the fall of the regime, in particular a list with around 161 names of high-ranking officers and commanders of the former regime. Arbitrary lists are also circulating on social media. Since 8 December 2024, a number of people have been arrested who are accused of crimes but are not on the lists ([AAA 12/1/2025c](#)).

The process of targeting men who have served in the regime's armed forces is opaque and the HTS refuses to follow a transparent legal process that clearly identifies victims and brings perpetrators to justice ([MEI 21/1/2025](#)). The new regime's operational command and security forces arrested former members of the Assad regime, including those who had not legalised their status and those suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The arrests took place in Homs, the Damascus countryside, Tartus and Latakia, mainly in neighbourhoods with Shiite and Alawite populations ([MAITIC 9/1/2025](#)). The number of detainees as of 3 January 2025 was 110 military personnel of the former regime, including people who had reconciled with the Department of Military Operations. In addition, 18 civilians were arrested for clashes with the security forces, with the latter promising to release them in the coming hours after they were handed over to justice ([SOHR 4/1/2025](#)). On 10 January 2025, a public execution is said to have taken place in which the new security forces shot dead a supporter of al-Assad ([Arabiya 10/1/2025](#); cf. [AlHurra 10/1/2025a](#)). After the arrest campaign, some prisoners in Homs were released again after they had handed in their weapons and promised not to take any action against the new Syrian government ([AAA 12/1/2025a](#)). It had been established that they had not been involved in crimes against Syrians after all ([Arabiya 12/1/2025a](#)). In general, the attacks by the security forces are directed against men who are believed to have committed crimes (regardless of whether this is proven or not) ([MEI 21/1/2025](#)). The transitional government of Syria - led by the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS), which brought about the overthrow of Assad - has remained neutral on the allegations against various armed groups in connection with the disappearance of activists. HTS has also joined forces with activists to seek truth and justice ([VOA 2/1/2025](#)). *[Details on the arrest campaigns can be found in the chapters [Security authorities - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(8 December 2024\)](#), [General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [Ethnic and religious minorities - developments since the fall of the al-Assad](#)*

regime (since 8 December 2024). Information on detention conditions in the chapter [Torture and inhuman treatment, detention conditions, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, etc. - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8/12/2024\)](#)

Since the fall of the Assad government in December, there have been protests across the country demanding the release of information about the thousands who were forcibly disappeared under al-Assad's rule ([VOA 2/1/2025](#)).

In early December, around 2,000 Syrian army soldiers fled to Iraq via the al-Qa'im border crossing. Among them were wounded soldiers who were taken to Iraqi hospitals ([Arabiya 7/12/2024](#)). The Iraqi government spokesman confirmed that 2,000 Syrian army soldiers had entered Iraqi territory with government authorisation ([Rudaw 15/12/2024](#)). Lebanese authorities have repatriated Syrian officers and soldiers who had served in the army of the ousted regime after they entered Lebanon illegally ([NYT 28/12/2024](#)). 70 Syrians, including former army officers, were handed over by a Lebanese security delegation to the security forces of the new Syrian government, which is led by the former rebel group HTS. Three Lebanese judicial officials confirmed the report on condition of anonymity ([AP 28/12/2024](#)).

The Ministry of Justice issued a decision on 12 February 2025 to refer 87 judges who, according to SANA, were still working in various capacities in this court since the establishment of the terrorism courts until 12 February 2025, to the Judicial Inspectorate to investigate their behaviour during their work in the above-mentioned court. The Judicial Inspectorate will submit a final report to the High Judicial Council on the proven disciplinary and legal violations of the above-mentioned judges, as stated in the decision published by the Ministry on its Telegram channel ([SANA 13/2/2025](#)). The decision states that all judges who held positions in the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Investigation Department, the Criminal Court or the Court of Cassation will be reviewed for possible misconduct or violations in their judgements. According to the North Press Agency, the 87 judges include both retired and sitting judges. Established in 2012, the Syrian Terrorism Court has been widely criticised by human rights organisations for conducting unfair trials and imposing harsh sentences on political dissidents, activists and opposition figures. Over the years, reports by organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have documented allegations of coerced confessions, lack of due process and politically motivated sentences ([NPA 12/2/2025](#)).

Possession, property

From the 2011 uprising until the fall of Bashar al-Assad on 8 December 2024, the Assad regime severely restricted property and housing rights through numerous laws aimed at confiscating the assets of political opponents. Among the most notable laws was the Anti-Terror Law No. 19 of 2012, which did not provide a clear definition or criteria for terrorism. This allowed political opponents to be accused of terrorism, face maximum penalties and have their movable and immovable property confiscated. The path to restitution of confiscated properties includes legislative amendments, constitutional complaints or the establishment of a restitution programme. Each approach has its complexities, but all aim to restore justice, uphold property rights and compensate those affected for years of systematic confiscation under unjust laws ([HLP Syria 7/](#)

1/2025). Since 8 December 2024, some owners have reclaimed properties that were subject to a forced lease extension. This is contrary to the applicable legal provisions, which state that courts cannot issue an eviction order without the landlord paying the 40% compensation required by law. The law is clear on this matter: any eviction order that does not fulfil this condition is against the law. According to the legal principle that 'an interpretation is not permissible if the text is clear', such evictions are illegal. New legislation is needed to solve the problem of forced renewal, abolishing or amending the relevant provisions and creating a fair framework that protects the rights of both parties. If an eviction is carried out by non-judicial bodies, it is illegal. Tenants who are evicted in this way can sue on the basis of their rights to eviction to reclaim lawful possession unless the landlord agrees to pay 40% of the property value. Such evictions are also punishable by law, as they constitute vigilante justice in violation of the Syrian Criminal Code (HLP Syria 14/1/2025b).

The Syrian Central Bank has decided to freeze all bank accounts of companies and individuals that belonged to or were associated with the former regime. Banking institutions in the country have been instructed to provide it with a list of frozen accounts and their details within three working days, according to a circular issued by the bank (Sharq Bu 23/1/2025). Two prominent businessmen and a government official said that many wealthy Syrians did not have time to divest or relocate their local assets due to the rapid overthrow of al-Assad and his flight to Russia on 8 December 2024, which gave the new Syrian government the opportunity to deal with them aggressively. Their assets have been frozen ever since. But the HTS authorities' lack of transparency towards the tycoons and their companies risks a backlash. After taking power in December, the HTS pledged to rebuild the country after 13 years of brutal civil war and abandon a highly centralised and corrupt economic system in which al-Assad's cronies called the shots. To this end, the executive branch headed by new President ash-Shara' has set up a committee to break down the far-reaching corporate interests of high-ranking tycoons linked to al-Assad such as Samer Foz and Mohammad Hamsho, three sources told Reuters. The establishment of the committee, whose members are not public, and the talks between the new Syrian government and two of the Assad government's closest business tycoons, who control large parts of the Syrian economy, have not yet been reported. Ordinary businessmen who were forced to pay bribes or collaborate with the regime are not being targeted by the new government, but a few who collaborated with al-Assad and have made fortunes at the expense of the state and are involved in illegal activities are, said the head of the Syrian Investment Commission (REU 13/2/2025).

The General Directorate of Cadastral Affairs in Syria has issued a directive suspending the documentation of all transactions that lead to the transfer or modification of property rights to real estate. This suspension was imposed without a set timeframe for the resumption of these procedures. In this delicate transitional phase, the decision raises questions about the motives and legal implications of the measure, especially given the restrictions also imposed on the courts. On 21 January 2025, the Directorate General of Cadastral Affairs issued Circular No.1, in which it instructed its directorates at governorate level not to document contracts that lead to the creation, transfer or modification of real estate rights in the Land Registry. In practice, this

directive has effectively halted all transactions relating to property ownership until further notice. Ministry of Justice Circular No.1, issued by the transitional government on 9 January 2025, limited the duties of the courts to handling ongoing cases and urgent matters. The circular from the Land Registry states that the suspension will remain in force until coordination with the 'competent authorities' on new procedures has been finalised. One possible aim is to prevent individuals who fraudulently acquired property under the previous regime from selling or transferring the property, which would further complicate the process of returning these properties to their rightful owners, many of whom have been displaced outside Syria. The measure could also serve to prevent those who were involved in crimes under the previous regime from selling their assets to avoid possible confiscation (HLP Syria 3/2/2025b) [Further information on home ownership etc. can also be found in the chapter on [basic services and the economy / housing and infrastructure](#)].

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5.1 Legal protection and judicial system in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 13:20

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in the Kurdish-dominated areas and the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)]

Although the Syrian government has lost control over the majority of areas in north-east Syria, Damascus maintained an administrative presence there throughout the conflict and continued to run schools, courts and registry offices. At the same time, however, the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) established its own network of public administration from 2013, issued laws and decrees and opened its own courts. These overlaps in the legal system quickly got out of hand, as the population either submitted their cases to one court or the other, or to both at the same time, in order to decide in favour of the better verdict. This sometimes led to contradictory court judgements ([SYD 30/1/2023](#)).

The judicial system of DAANES is regulated in Section 8 (Articles 114-117) of the articles of association of 2023. This stipulates the right to be heard in court (Article 115/2) and that a separate judicial council will be set up for women (Article 115/7). The judicial system consists of a mediation committee, a women's shelter, the judicial offices and the judicial council (Article 116). Article 56 stipulates that everyone has the right to a fair trial ([RIC 14/12/2023](#)). DAANES issues its legal regulations based on this social contract. The social contract has been described in reports as a mixture of Syrian criminal and civil law, with laws on divorce, marriage, weapons possession and tax evasion corresponding to EU law, but without including certain fair trial standards such as the prohibition of arbitrary detention, the right to judicial review and the right to appoint a lawyer ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)).

The highest judicial authority is the Social Judicial Council of North and East Syria ([OSS 4/3/2022](#)). It is responsible for controlling and monitoring compliance with the legal system, providing reports and draft laws to the People's Democratic Council and coordinating between the regional judicial councils ([RIC 14/12/2023](#)). It is elected by the social justice institutions in the autonomous and civil administrations of the regions and consists of 13 members and a co-chairman, who heads it. The term of office of the members is two years. Around half of the council members

are Kurdish. However, according to a study by the Omran Centre for Strategic Studies, PKK cadres intervene directly in the appointment process on the basis of nepotism and party loyalty and oversee the work, committees and policies of the Social Judicial Council, including its power to appoint, transfer or dismiss judges in the regional judicial councils (OSS 4/3/2022).

Article 117 of the Articles of Association of 2023 regulates the Women's Social Justice Council (RIC 14/12/2023). It exists alongside the Social Justice Council. This body supervises all women who work in judicial institutions in the autonomous and civil administration institutions, is in charge of coordinating between the sub-councils for social justice for women and can comment on laws that affect women. The Women's Social Justice Council consists of 21 members. The study by the Omran Centre for Strategic Studies shows that women from the PKK cadres directly supervise the work of this body and intervene in the guidelines and appointments based on party political considerations (OSS 4/3/2022).

Women's shelters (Mala Jin) are social institutions that aim to create awareness of social justice and solve problems related to women and families, in co-operation with the relevant women's institutions (RIC 14/12/2023). Women's shelters are located in every locality, town and village in all regions. According to a study by the Omran Centre for Strategic Studies, the women's shelters are also controlled by female PKK cadres (OSS 4/3/2022).

The tasks of the arbitration committees are to resolve disputes and conflicts with the aim of creating peace and harmony (RIC 14/12/2023). Their responsibilities include civil and criminal disputes. Before civil cases are heard in the judicial offices, they are examined by the conciliation committees (OSS 4/3/2022). Conciliation committees are established in municipalities and regions wherever necessary and are determined by direct election or consensus. The members are volunteers (RIC 14/12/2023). However, according to the study conducted by the Omran Centre for Strategic Studies, PKK cadres are also involved in the election of members to the conciliation committees (OSS 4/3/2022).

According to Article 116/2 of the Social Contract of 2023, judicial offices are judicial bodies consisting of the public prosecutor's office, judicial authority, appeals authority and executive authority, which organise themselves in the regions. Their members are proposed by the Judicial Council and elected after approval by the People's Councils in the regions. In the cities, these judicial offices are set up as required (RIC 14/12/2023). They are responsible for all civil, commercial, administrative and criminal disputes, regardless of the parties involved. Responsibilities are divided among the four committees. According to the Omran Centre for Strategic Studies, the judicial offices are also controlled by a PKK cadre who also intervenes in the appointment processes (OSS 4/3/2022).

Several Social Justice Councils and Women's Social Justice Councils (sub-councils) emerged from the aforementioned main councils. They represent the highest judicial authority in the respective region. Each sub-council consists of a Judicial Inspection Committee, Prosecution Committee, Implementation Committee, Administration and Finance Committee and Mediation Committee (OSS 4/3/2022). The regional judicial councils organise and control the judicial institutions in the regions. Their members and co-chairs are elected by the judicial institutions in

the regions. The appointment of the co- chairpersons must be approved by the People's Council. Fair and democratic representation of the population, groups and social sectors is enshrined in law ([RIC 14/12/2023](#)). The term of membership is two years. In order to be nominated, members must have worked in a judicial institution for at least three years, with the exception of the members of the Mediation Committee ([OSS 4/3/2022](#)). According to the study by the Omran Centre for Strategic Studies, the regional judicial councils are also subject to the authority of PKK cadres, who are referred to as "judicial cadres'. These are mostly non-Syrian Kurds (from Turkey or Iran) and local cadres. Known to judges, lawyers and even plaintiffs under pseudonyms, they oversee the guidelines and committees and intervene in the appointment process ([OSS 4/3/2022](#)).

The Social Judicial Council established two anti-terrorism courts under the name 'People's Defence Courts'. One is located in Qamishli, the other in Kobane ([NPA 13/6/2023](#)). According to Amnesty International, such a court was also established in Afrin, but it is no longer in operation following the occupation by Turkey and its affiliated groups in 2018 ([AI 2024](#)). The Anti-Terror Law of 2014 serves as the basis for the establishment of these People's Defence Courts ([OSS 4/3/2022](#)). These courts primarily prosecute members of the Islamic State (ISIS), but also members of the pro-Turkish militias, the Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham [formerly An-Nusra Front, note] and spies for Turkey, the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq or the Syrian government ([NPA 13/6/2023](#)). The courts have been criticised for denying the accused the right to a defence ([OSS 4/3/2022](#)). The Kurdish news website North Press Agency also writes that although ISIS members have the right to a lawyer, they rarely have access to one in practice ([NPA 13/6/2023](#)). In connection with the anti-terror legislation, Amnesty International also accuses the DAANES of relying on evidence obtained through torture or inhumane treatment, failing to provide legal aid and that the right to appeal is ineffective ([AI 2024](#)).

Dissatisfaction with the courts, corruption and influence led Kurdish, Yazidi, Arab and Assyrian tribes to reintroduce their own courts in al-Hasakah province in 2021. Disputes between clans and cases of robbery, revenge and looting can be heard there ([BS 19/3/2024](#)).

When the civil war in Syria led to the geographical and political fragmentation of the country, family law became even more fragmented, particularly in the Kurdish provinces in the north. As these Kurdish regions are de facto autonomous, their civil administration quickly enacted comprehensive reforms to the family law system that previously prevailed under the central government. In an effort to reduce the influence of religion on family matters, the Kurdish authorities began recognising civil marriages as early as 2013. What began as a local practice in the north-eastern city of Qamishli has now spread to the majority Kurdish provinces of Syria. This development represents a significant change, as it bypasses the traditional religious family law systems and offers a secular alternative that meets the Kurds' desire for greater autonomy ([LSE 15/1/2025](#)).

On 17.7.2024, the DAANES issued an amnesty for terrorism-related offences. The amnesty law specifically applies to Syrians who have committed 'terrorist' crimes against the security of DAANES and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), as stipulated by the Criminal Law and

the Anti-Terror Law, a DAANES official stated. Excluded from the amnesty are emirs, leaders of terrorist groups and those involved in bombings and hostilities against the SDF, as well as crimes that lead to the death of a human being (NPA 17/7/2024).

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5.2 Areas under the control of the Syrian regime (as of August 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 14:03

The Syrian Constitution of 2012 stipulated that the Syrian Arab Republic is a democracy (Article 1) characterised by elections (Article 8). The constitution also enshrined fundamental rights, such as the right to freedom, equality before the law (Article 33), the right to exercise the right to vote (Article 34), the right to work and fair wages (Article 40), the right to freedom of belief and expression (Article 42), freedom of the press (Article 43) and the right to freedom of assembly (Articles 44 and 45). The rule of law was enshrined in Articles 50-53 and the principle of the separation of powers was regulated in Title III under Chapters 1-3 (SeG 24/2/2012). However, this was undermined by the dominant power of the executive, above all the president, together with the almost complete power and immunity of the security services (STJ 2/2/2024). Thus, Article 133 of the Syrian constitution placed the Supreme Judicial Council under the authority of the president (SeG 24/2/2012), placing the president at the head of both the executive and legislative branches (STJ 2/2/2024). Judges were appointed, transferred and dismissed by this Supreme Judicial Council (BS 19/3/2024), and the members of the Supreme Constitutional Court were also appointed by the president by decree (Article 141) (SeG 24/2/2012). Judges and public prosecutors had to belong to the Ba'ath Party and were practically beholden to

the political leadership (FH 2023). Although the Syrian constitution devoted an entire chapter to the rule of law, laws were in line with international requirements and Syria was a party to a number of international conventions, the judicial system in Syria as a whole could not be considered independent and transparent and was under the control of the executive power and its branches. The rule of law was weak, if not completely undermined by a situation of impunity in which members of the security services could sometimes operate arbitrarily and without criminal consequences and without any civilian oversight (ÖB Damaskus 2023).

In its report on the Syrian justice system, the Bertelsmann Stiftung wrote of a highly corrupt system that receives instructions from the government and the security services (BS 19/3/2024). The Global Organised Crime Index agreed, stating that judicial officials did not have adequate training and had to be members of the ruling Ba'ath Party (GITOC 2023). The German Federal Foreign Office also reported that the independence of Syrian criminal, civil and administrative courts was still not guaranteed; on the contrary, they were misused by the regime for political purposes. In criminal courts in particular, an effective defence in cases with a political background was practically impossible. Time and again, false confessions were extorted through torture and threats by the prosecution and accepted by the courts largely without reservation (AA 2/2/2024). Judges in Syria could be threatened by the president and the executive authorities. The Minister of Justice could instruct the public prosecutor to take legal action against a judge. Because the prosecutor was appointed by and reported to the Minister of Justice, there was no legal protection or immunity for judges. Trials against accused judges were held in secret (STJ 2/2/2024).

Human rights organisations reported that the legal system was notorious for summary judgments, corruption and lack of due process. Defendants were sentenced in their absence without being heard. Some prisoners and their families reported that they knew nothing about the charges against them (USDOS 22/4/2024). Confidential sources interviewed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs also stated that the higher the bribe a person paid and the better connected that person was, the more likely they were to be proven right (MBZ 8/2023).

Special and exceptional courts

After the state of emergency was declared in 1963, several special courts were set up in recent decades. These were neither subordinate to the Supreme Judicial Council nor independent. These included the exceptional military courts, military field courts, the Supreme State Security Court and the Anti-Terror Court (STJ 2/2/2024). Special courts were courts that existed for a longer period of time, such as military courts, and exceptional courts were temporary courts, such as terror courts (STJ 5/1/2022). Since their inception, exceptional courts have been used to intimidate and oppress Syrian society, a violation of the judiciary's purpose of protecting rights, freedoms and democracy. These courts were either composed of army officers, as in the case of Military Field Courts, who had not necessarily received legal training, or judges selected by the president, as in the case of the Anti-Terror Court (STJ 2/2/2024). According to the non-governmental organisation Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), anti-terror courts were controlled by the security services (SNHR 31/1/2022). Anti-terrorist courts were therefore rather

part of the executive branch or were subordinate to it (STJ 2/2/2024). According to the law, exceptional courts, such as the Anti-Terror Court, the Military Court and the Military Field Courts, did not have to follow the rules and procedures of legislation during indictment and trial as courts normally did (STJ/AHR/WCDP 3/6/2024; cf. USDOS 22/4/2024). Accordingly, a defendant no longer had the right to appoint counsel or the right to a public trial (STJ/AHR/WCDP 3/6/2024). Offences against the government were excluded from the jurisdiction of ordinary civilian courts and subjected to special anti-terrorist courts that operated outside the constitutional framework (ÖB Damaskus 2023).

Military judicature

The military judiciary in Syria was exceptional because the judges were subordinate to the Minister of Defence and followed military regulations. The military courts passed judgements not only on military personnel but also on civilians, with the courts themselves deciding what fell within their jurisdiction (STJ 2/2/2024).

On 3.9.2023, Decree Law No. 32 repealed Legislative Decree 109 of 17.8.1968 and thus the military field courts (SNHR 3/6/2024). Omran Strategic Studies assumed that the situation would nevertheless not improve significantly because, on the one hand, the security authorities still have the upper hand in determining and classifying criminal offences and, on the other hand, the problem of judging civilians in military courts still persists (OSS 10/10/2023).

Anti-terror judicature

The judicial system in the areas under government control has undergone some changes in recent years. Although institutionally demarcated, it has never been independent, and the worst change, according to the Bertelsmann Stiftung, was the introduction of Counter Terrorism Courts (CTC) (BS 19/3/2024). Syria's terrorism legislation defined terrorism very broadly and allowed the government to declare almost any act a terrorist attack (HRW 18/7/2024). According to the Bertelsmann Stiftung, this was politically motivated and was used as a means of exerting pressure on dissenters and opposition figures, whom the regime often labelled as 'terrorists'. Any kind of civilian action in relation to 'terrorists', such as the provision of medical treatment, shelter or support for opposition fighters, was criminalised by the government (BS 19/3/2024). Judges of the CTC were appointed by presidential decree (STJ/AHR/WCDP 3/6/2024).

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5.3 Areas under the control of opposition groups (as of August 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 14:12

In the areas outside the control of the Syrian regime, the judicial and administrative situation varied from region to region and depending on the local power relations (AA 2/2/2024).

In some of the opposition-held areas, Sharia courts were established to replace state jurisdiction. The practice and character of these courts vary just as much as the type of law applied, depending on which armed Islamist group holds the terrain. The severity of the Islamic law applied also varied, so that no general statements could be made (ÖB Damaskus 2023). Extremist groups had set up religious courts in their areas, which imposed harsh punishments for alleged religious offences committed by civilians. The general collapse of state authority and the proliferation of militias in large parts of the country led to arbitrary arrests, summary justice and extrajudicial punishments on all sides of the civil war (FH 2024). Non-state actors often did not respect the guarantees of fair trials. In opposition-controlled areas, legal accountability procedures varied depending on the location and the non-state armed group exercising control when local government structures assumed this responsibility. Non-governmental organisations

reported that civilians conducted these trials, in some cases following customary Sharia law and in others following national laws. Some convictions by opposition Sharia courts ended in public executions without appeal ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)).

Areas under the control of Ha'yat Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS)

In Idlib, quasi-governmental structures of the so-called Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) of the terrorist organisation Ha'yat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) took over administrative tasks ([AA 2/2/2024](#)). The SSG had established a Ministry of Justice consisting of six main departments. The civil or general judiciary, the administrative judiciary and the military judiciary were affiliated to the Ministry of Justice. Security justice, justice for organisations and associations and internal justice were not attached to the Ministry of Justice. In this judicial system, there were many authorities that were almost completely separate from each other. The civil or general judiciary dealt with cases of personal and civil status law and criminal offences committed by civilians. There were five courts of general justice. Judges were usually clerics or sheikhs. Proceedings in these courts were not free of charge ([SNHR 31/1/2022](#)). There were many local courts spread throughout the territory, and these were the most common point of contact between the civilian population and the judicial system. Officially, these courts were under the authority of the Ministry of Justice, which could intervene in certain cases. However, according to local sources, these courts appeared to regularly outsource their work to tribal networks ([OFPRA 27/4/2023](#)). Administrative justice specialised in disputes between the ministries of the SSG or in disputes with an administrative authority. There was only one court in Idlib for this purpose. Military justice focussed on military matters, such as battles and fighting, and overlapped with security justice in the prosecution of members of opposition factions. The non-governmental organisation Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documented two military courts. The security judiciary was considered the most influential and authoritarian of the HTS judicial authorities and was subordinate to the security apparatus. The security judiciary did not include recognisable courts, but security centres with both secret and non-secret detention centres. The work of the security centres was divided into categories specialising, for example, in the prosecution of agents of the Syrian regime, organised crime, individuals associated with the US-led coalition or members of the Islamic State. The total number of security centres was estimated at 112. The Judicial Authority for Organisations and Associations specialised in the prosecution of members of civil society organisations and was located near the Bab al-Hawa border crossing. The Internal Judiciary was a specialised body that dealt with the resolution of internal HTS conflicts. It was headed directly by HTS leader Abu Mohammad al-Joulani. This institution had secret prisons ([SNHR 31/1/2022](#)). The security tribunals, which were not under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, appeared to be the real judicial power of HTS. These tribunals were located in about a hundred 'security centres' that served as detention centres and were subordinate to the 'General Security Apparatus', the police unit controlled by HTS. The various departments of this institution were responsible for handling cases of organised crime and cases in which individuals were accused of supporting the regime or rival opposition groups, the Islamic State or the United States ([OFPRA 27/4/2023](#)).

According to Kurdish media reports, there were 25 prisons in Idlib and surrounding areas belonging to the HTS. 20 of them were run by its security apparatus. As a result of protests, the SSG of the HTS established a 'Second Security Court' in Idlib for the adjudication of security offences ([SOHR 30/6/2024](#); cf. [Enab 30/3/2024](#)) once the Supreme Judicial Council issued regulations for the work of this court ([SOHR 30/6/2024](#)).

Decisions of the judicial authorities were not made on the basis of specific and known court judgements and regulations, but were mainly based on ministerial circulars, which were instructions considered as a legal code for the courts. As there was no formal law regulating the procedures for the work of the courts, the procedural code came closest to such legislation, while the courts operated in two instances, with a few operating in three instances. For the General Judiciary, Islamic law, some Syrian laws and circulars from the Ministry of Justice were the legal basis ([SNHR 31/1/2022](#)). A Kurdish media organisation also reported that, according to activists, the judiciary of the HTS was not based on laws ([NPA 20/4/2023](#)).

SNHR reported that there were too few judges and lawyers for the large amount of work to be done. In many areas, the HTS therefore relied on loyalist students of religion or law, which meant that the independence and efficiency of the judiciary was not guaranteed ([SNHR 31/1/2022](#)). Human rights groups and media organisations reported that HTS denied those it arrested the opportunity to challenge the legal basis or unjust nature of their detention in the Sharia justice system. HTS admitted confessions obtained under torture and executed or disappeared those perceived as opposition figures and their families ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)).

Areas under the control of Turkish-affiliated groups - Syrian National Army (SNA)

The Syrian National Army (SNA) comprised several groups, each of which exercised control over a specific area, where they also administered the civilian structure. These groups were therefore often also responsible for the justice system ([MBZ 8/2023](#)). A court system, prisons and detention centres were run by the Syrian Interim Government (SIG), also with significant Turkish involvement ([UNHRC 12/7/2023](#)). A confidential source from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that there was a high degree of impunity there because the local leaders also determined the judiciary ([MBZ 8/2023](#)). According to the non-governmental organisation Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), the Turkish government also determined legal matters where the groups it supported operated ([STJ 1/11/2023](#)).

In February 2018, the Ministry of Defence of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) established a military justice system to punish violations within the SNA groups, in particular the mistreatment of civilians and possible war crimes by the SNA and its allies. This initiative, launched during Operation Euphrates Shield, established military courts and military police in areas occupied by Turkey and later extended jurisdiction to Afrin and Tell Abyad as Turkey's territorial control increased ([HSC 6/5/2024](#)). The military police were considered the executive branch of the military courts, which were deployed to try both members of the SNA factions and alleged insurgents. The Military Police Department consisted of a headquarters, branches in the regions and subdivisions in the various cities under the control of the SNA. It operated prisons, including

in the cities of al-Bab, Afrin and Ra's al-'Ayn, and dozens of detention centres in the Turkish-occupied areas. Many SNA factions also operated their own unofficial detention centres in smaller towns and villages under their control, despite attempts by the Syrian Interim Government to stop this practice ([HRW 29/2/2024](#)).

Many judges in the military courts were former SNA officials or had SNA connections to current officials. They were often appointed in coordination with Turkish intelligence services ([HSC 6/5/2024](#); cf. [HRW 29/2/2024](#)), which revealed their major conflict of interest and deliberately compromised the trustworthiness of the new system ([HSC 6/5/2024](#)). Although civilian courts were also established, it was often the military courts that tried detainees who were arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned by various factions together with the military police on charges of belonging to or having links to Kurdish armed groups, the Syrian government or the Islamic State. These military courts lacked independence and impartiality. They often did not follow due process, with judges subject to military commands and orders from above ([HRW 29/2/2024](#)). Moreover, detainees subjected to this system were routinely denied legal counsel throughout their detention, with coerced confessions often forming the cornerstone of prosecutions ([HSC 6/5/2024](#); cf. [HRW 29/2/2024](#)).

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6 Security authorities - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 22:36

[The situation regarding security authorities is currently in a state of flux. In some cases, insufficient information is available on certain aspects (e.g. structure, organisation, equipment, etc.). In the following, the current status is presented as it appears from publicly accessible sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information complies with the standards set out in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Since the peaceful uprising against the Assad regime turned into an armed conflict at the end of 2011, armed groups have formed across almost the entire map of Syria, ranging from officers and soldiers who defected from the regime to groups made up of local and religious factions. They competed with each other on

the one hand and fought against the regime forces on the other, inflicting heavy losses on them until 2018. Many groups were then disbanded. Others relocated to northern Syria under Russian patronage as part of agreements or continued to exist on the basis of 'reconciliation agreements' under Russian patronage and guarantees or direct agreements with the Assad regime. In the course of the fighting in late autumn 2024, the opposition fighters appeared to be well organised and worked together in an alliance under the name Department of Military Operations (DMO) (Asharq 9/12/2024). The rebels had been preparing for months for the major offensive 'Deterrence of Aggression', which was launched on 17 November 2024 and led to the overthrow of President al-Assad (NYT 1/12/2024). Over the course of the past year, the fighters developed a new method that relied on the use of drones (Guardian 8/12/2024). From the first days of the offensive, the rebel-led DMO released several videos of attacks on military vehicles and gatherings of Syrian regime soldiers using so-called Shaheen drones, which showed great effectiveness and accuracy in hitting targets. The Shaheen battalions were created specifically for these drones (AJ 10/12/2024). These battalions are known for their high level of expertise and precision. They are said to have been trained by officers from Eastern Europe (IndepAr 5/12/2024). The Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) is even said to have run its own drone academy

for training purposes ([LF 13/12/2024](#)). For the first time in the history of the Syrian conflict, the armed opposition was now in a position to control the airspace ([IndepAr 5/12/2024](#)). The different types of drones helped to achieve a kind of balance in the airspace, together with the fact that the Russians had withdrawn most of their air arsenal from Syria because they were busy with the war in Ukraine ([AJ 10/12/2024](#)). The drones, which fly at low altitude, attack vehicles and armoured vehicles, fire missiles at soldiers, or are suicide drones that quickly swoop down on vehicles and tanks and immediately blow themselves up with any object that collides with them. According to a warning from Russia, the HTS is said to have more than 250 advanced drones. According to rumours, HTS maintained a factory in north-western Syria for the production of drones with jet engines and explosive bombs together with foreign support ([IndepAr 5/12/2024](#)), such as Uyghur engineers from the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP, which consists of jihadists originating from China and based in rural Latakia and Idlib). They supervise the production of the drones for a monthly salary of up to 4,000dollars ([Nahar 29/11/2024](#)). The development of these weapons is said to have taken place in small workshops housed in garages, houses, former school buildings, warehouses and other places that are difficult to detect ([LF 13/12/2024](#)). HTS has built a complex infrastructure to enable the use of drones. This includes the use of 3D printing technology to produce parts that cannot be readily obtained from commercial sources ([LF 13/12/2024](#)).

The transitional government under the leadership of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) lacks sufficient personnel to administer the entire country and man the posts. Either other groups will have to be brought on board, or possibly former soldiers ([PBS 16/12/2024SYRDiplQ1 5/2/2025](#)). The only forces of order are those groups that have come with them from Idlib and which - overstretched in terms of personnel - are endeavouring to maintain a minimum of order in the cities ([SYRDiplQ1 5/2/2025](#)). The Associated Press reported on 16 December 2024 that police forces of the Assad regime had disappeared and were replaced by police forces of the Syrian Salvation Governments (SSG) - the HTS-led government that ruled Idlib until the fall of al-Assad. They handle cases of minor thefts and street riots ([AP 15/12/2024b](#)). The SSG police force is said to be 4,000 strong, with half of them continuing to operate in Idlib, while the other half maintain order in Damascus and other parts of Syria. Although some of them wear religious symbols, they have largely left minorities of other faiths in peace ([AP 15/12/2024b](#)). *[Further information on the treatment of minorities can be found in the chapter [Ethnic and religious minorities - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].* The forces available to Syria's new ruler are inadequate. The 30,000-strong HTS is now spread across the country ([Economist 5/3/2025](#)), and in Damascus only HTS military personnel can be seen in key areas, providing a sense of security and attempting to regulate traffic - albeit with limited success. This is not only a consequence of the limited capacities of the HTS, which are now reaching their limits as they have to administer an entire country and not just part of a province. It is also a symptom of the abrupt collapse of traditional security structures. In most cities, police stations and courts were closed in the first days after the collapse of the Assad regime, and thefts - both of cars and houses - increased due to the lack of newly trained police officers ([AGSIW 4/3/2025](#)). During the overthrow on 8 December 2024, most police stations in Damascus were vandalised

by looters, with equipment and documents looted or destroyed. The police stated that half of the 20 or so police stations have now been reopened, but they are each staffed by only ten officers, most of whom come from Idlib. Previously there were 100 to 150 men ([REU 23/1/2025](#)). There have been frequent outbreaks of violence in Damascus and other places because the police and army do not have enough personnel to maintain order. The streets are often littered with rubbish and teenagers regulate traffic instead of the police ([FT 25/3/2025](#)). HTS has relied on its own units and those of its close allies to secure the four minority-dominated governorates. These primarily include the General Security units of the former Syrian Salvation Government's (SSG) Ministry of Interior. These forces are essentially heavily armed police officers who have stepped in to provide support while new local police forces are still being established. The Department of Military Operations has also deployed units across the country to support the overstretched General Security and fill other security gaps. DMO units are carrying out targeted raids against armed cells, initially helping to monitor cities and at times manning checkpoints. At the end of December 2024, many units were withdrawn from coastal towns and confined to checkpoints and bases, where they were replaced by growing local police forces. Most problematic were the foreign fighter groups within the elite Red Brigades unit [*see below for more on this*] of DMO and HTS, which leads many of the new government's crackdowns ([MEI 21/1/2025](#)). The old regime's security forces have been disbanded. Earlier promises to recall the police to their posts were not honoured. People have been invited to reapply for their posts, but the process is opaque and is designed to discourage Alawites. Ash-Shara' has largely turned to his administration's security forces in Idlib to make up for staff shortages. Experienced officers from the old regime are now taxi drivers. In this vacuum, local communities are putting together their own vigilante groups ([Economist 5/3/2025](#)).

Ash-Shara' promised that the armed groups and militias would be disarmed ([HB 16/12/2024](#)), and announced that the armed groups would be disbanded and the fighters trained to join the ranks of the Ministry of Defence. They will be subject to the law ([DW 17/12/2024](#)). Since January 2025, the interim Ministries of Defence and Interior have been working swiftly to unite all armed groups under a single army and police force affiliated with the state. For this process, the Supreme Committee for the Regulation of the Armed Forces was established to oversee weapons, technology, military bases and personnel. A committee of officers is currently drafting the structure of the new Syrian army. The government has made it clear that all military factions will be dissolved and integrated into state institutions ([TNA 3/2/2025](#)). The process of forming a new army for Syria will be based on the unification of several armed factions spread across the country. Some of these groups have been active in northern and western Syria, while others have concentrated their influence in southern Syria, such as the Eighth Brigade led by former opposition commander Ahmad al-'Awda or other formations deployed in the Druze-majority province of Suweida. However, these formations, which are supposed to unite into a single army in the next phase, are divided over their visions and goals, as well as where they receive support from ([AlHurra 12/2/2025](#)). The HTS negotiated with units of the disbanded Syrian Arab Army (SAA) about merging and integrating into a new Syrian army ([ISW 16/12/2024](#)). The new Syrian Defence Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra announced on 6.1.2025 the start of meetings with military factions to develop steps for their integration into the Ministry of Defence. The two

largest Druze factions from the southern Syrian province of Suweida subsequently declared their willingness to join the new Syrian army ([AlHadath 7/1/2025](#)). The landmark decision to unite the armed factions under a single national army was formalised during a high-level meeting in Damascus. The newly unified force will be subordinate to the Ministry of Defence and will aim to centralise military command and restore order. The agreement does not include all factions. Groups operating in southern regions such as Dar'aa, Quneitra and Suweida, as well as US-trained troops stationed in at-Tanf, remain outside the scope. The Kurdish-dominated SDF are also not covered by the agreement. Plans for a more comprehensive integration are to be implemented after the end of the transitional government's term of office in March ([TR- Today 8/1/2025](#)). According to the Syrian defence minister, the armed groups were ready to join the new military structure. The Syrian Ministry of Defence reported that the new Syrian government had met with representatives of more than 60 armed groups who had agreed to integrate into the new Ministry of Defence. A committee has been set up to create a unified database of the armed forces, which will include information on human resources (officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers and academic staff) and military assets (headquarters, technology and weapons). The information would be presented to the leadership of the Ministry of Defence, followed by meetings with the armed organisations to determine the structure of the security forces and appoint commanders ([MAITIC 23/1/2025](#)). The movement of Syrian opposition factions against Assad has always been fragmented, and there is a long history of failed unification projects, both in the north and south of the country. After the fall of al-Assad, the situation has changed, but the problems have not completely disappeared ([AlHurra 12/2/2025](#)). The transitional government has succeeded in obtaining cautious concessions from armed groups throughout the country (with the exception of Suweida). The formation of a Southern Division indicates that it is interested in a temporary solution vis-à-vis the caretaker Ministry of Defence: so far, non-HTS armed groups seem to be willing to cooperate with the Ministry, but without giving up their organisational structures and geographical zones of influence or allowing themselves to be disarmed. Indeed, the Southern Division brigades will perpetuate the divisions that have characterised the south for years - between eastern and western Dara'a, between Dara'a and Suweida, and between competing factions ([Etana 22/2/2025](#)). Although ash-Shara' has signalled progress in forming a post-al-Assad Ministry of Defence under the control of the HTS-led authorities in Damascus, there is little sign of practical progress beyond statements to the media and diplomatic visits. In the absence of a transparent plan for the formation of a new defence ministry, former opposition factions have not surrendered their weapons ([Etana 10/1/2025](#)). Interim President ash-Shara' and Defence Minister Abu Qasra have not yet addressed the details of what this army will look like internally and whether the new Syrian Ministry of Defence will be able to achieve complete harmony between factions and fighters ([AlHurra 12/2/2025](#)). *[Information on the new Syrian army can also be found in the chapter [Military and reserve service - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#). Information on the integration of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) can be found in the subchapter [Security authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [Security authorities in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria \(DAANES\)](#) Note].*

On 29 January 2025, the dissolution of armed groups in Syria was announced, including the HTS ([Sky News 31/1/2025](#)). According to a Sky News journalist, many groups that supported HTS have already become part of the General Security Force and are all wearing uniform black uniforms and combat fatigues ([Sky News 13/2/2025](#)). The General Security was the main police force of the HTS in north-west Syria and has now become the transitional government's police force throughout Syria to fill the security vacuum after the fall of the regime ([ISW 16/4/2025](#)). It was already reported on 28 January 2025 that the al-Qaeda-affiliated group Hurras ad-Din had disbanded. In 2018, the group came into conflict with HTS after the latter broke away from al-Qaeda and changed its name ([Araby 28/1/2025](#)). The various factions in southern Syria, including the Russian-backed 8th Brigade in Dara'a and Druze militias in Suweida, have set certain conditions for joining a national army. These include the establishment of a truly representative government, a new constitution and a non-sectarian military. These demands underline the deep-seated mistrust of centralised authority and the desire for local autonomy, which further complicates the task of army unification ([DNewsEgy 3/2/2025](#)). So far, the Turkish-backed factions in the northern parts of Syria have been successfully disbanded ([NLM 25/2/2025](#)). Military officials, including senior officers, said some opposition factions continue to operate in the formations they used before the fall of former president Bashar al-Assad in December, while a gradual handover to Damascus-led brigades is taking place to build a new army ([National 21/2/2025](#)).

A cadre is being prepared for the Ministry of Interior to receive specialised training to assume its duties as part of a plan to ensure a secure society ([Araby 16/12/2024](#)). On 10 January 2025, the Ministry of the Interior announced that entry into the Police and General Security was possible by enrolling in the Police College. The courses covered almost all Syrian governorates, led by Damascus and its environs, Homs, Tartous, Idlib, Suweida and Deir ez-Zour. The announcement stated that applicants must be at least 20 and no more than 30 years old, have at least a high school diploma or equivalent. They must pass the prescribed courses, not have been convicted of a crime or offence, be in good health and physical fitness and be at least 168cm tall ([Syria TV 21/2/2025](#)). More than 200,000 people have signed up for a new police service that is currently being set up, the course director at the police academy in Damascus said. Police officers who defected to the rebels before Assad's fall can apply to join the new force. Those who have not done so have been asked to go through a 'reconciliation process', including signing a document accepting the regime change and handing in their weapon. It is not yet clear whether they will be allowed to join the new force ([REU 23/1/2025](#)). *[Further information on the reconciliation process can be found in the chapters [Legal Protection / Judiciary - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [Military and Reserve Service - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].* The Ministry of the Interior changed the conditions for the admission of members of the security and police service. These include an age limit of 30 years instead of the previous 26 years and a relaxation of the physical health and fitness requirements. The training lasts 21 days. Under the Assad regime, the training period was nine months ([Tayyar 31/1/2025](#)). Reuters, on the other hand, reports ten days of instruction in weapons handling and Islamic law. If the security situation improves, the training is to be extended to nine months, using a system introduced by the rebels in Idlib ([REU 23/1/](#)

2025). The general landscape of the new security apparatus shows clear changes, especially in terms of the Islamist colouring that comes with some details, such as the loud takbir [*'Allahu Akbar', note*] shouts at graduation ceremonies after volunteers complete Sharia and military training courses, and the event's closing speeches focusing on Islamic teachings and the need to act 'in accordance with God's law' (Tayyar 31/1/2025). Reuters quotes sources as saying that the Islamic teachings are intended to instil morality in the new Syrian police force. Members of the HTS police unit in Idlib have travelled to Damascus to recruit police officers. The HTS police have asked the applicants a series of questions about their faith and the training of the new recruits focuses on Sharia law (REU 23/1/2025).

On 16.4.2025, the Ministry of Interior announced that it would appoint an official to oversee both the General Security forces and the police commands in each province in order to centralise control over both forces (ISW 16/4/2025).

In the long term, Syria's efforts to reform its military will face enormous challenges in rebuilding its arsenal and infrastructure, especially after the widespread destruction caused by Israeli airstrikes in December 2024, which targeted over 100 air defence batteries, radar systems and intelligence bases, rendering much of Syria's arsenal unusable. Israel reportedly carried out over 600 strikes in eight days, destroying around 80% of Syria's strategic weapons. The Syrian Air Force, which reportedly had 184 operational aircraft at the beginning of 2024, now has only a handful of remaining - albeit operational - aircraft. The same is true of the hundreds of vehicles and equipment - including battle tanks, armoured personnel carriers, long-range multiple rocket launchers and SAM systems - captured by the rebels from the retreating Syrian Arab Army (SAA), whose fate is unknown. An estimated 15 naval vessels were destroyed in attacks on Minaa el-Beida and Latakia, but Tartus was spared to avoid hitting Russian forces. Rebuilding the Syrian military - especially the air force and air defence networks, including interceptor supplies, spare parts and crew training - will take years and cost billions of dollars at a time when government coffers are almost empty (TNA 3/2/2025). Ash-Shara' announced a plan to import modern military vehicles suitable for the security services in all provinces (Araby 16/12/2024).

Syria's former military intelligence services were notorious for their repression. In the new structure, efforts are being made to build an intelligence system from scratch that is free from the legacy of the previous regime (TR-Today 8/1/2025). The Syrian General Command has announced the appointment of Anas Hassan Khattab as Head of General Intelligence. Khattab assumed the position of administrative emir of Jabhat an-Nusra in early 2014, after having been one of the group's leaders and general administrative emir in late 2013. According to the Security Council, Khattab was placed on the sanctions list on 23 September 2014 pursuant to paragraphs 2 and 4 of resolution 2161 (2014) for being associated with al-Qa'ida, for 'financing, planning, facilitating, preparing, committing, participating in or supporting the acts and activities of Jabhat an-Nusra' and for 'supporting the acts and activities of Jabhat an-Nusra in any other way' (BBC 26/12/2024). Sources confirmed to Al Jazeera the appointment of Major General 'Ali Nour ad-Din an-Na'san as the new Syrian Chief of General Staff. According to local Syrian platforms, an-Na'san was a military commander of Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) (AJ 9/1/2025b). At the

end of December 2024, fighters were appointed to leadership positions by the new government. Among the 50 new military appointments were six foreign fighters with the rank of brigadier general and colonel, including two Arabs. The appointments are part of a broader campaign by ash-Shara' to restructure the New Syrian Army, which includes figures from different backgrounds and nationalities ([Sky News 30/12/2024](#)).

The Kremlin announced in mid-December 2024 that the fate of Russian military bases in Syria was still under discussion and that contacts with Syrian officials were continuing ([AJ 28/12/2024b](#)). *[Further information on Russian involvement can be found in the chapter [Security authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / Foreign support and interference (developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime (since 8 December 2024))]*.

Syria's armed landscape consists of a complex web of over 60 factions, each with its own history, loyalties and agenda. More than half are affiliated with the Syrian National Army (SNA). Other factions operate independently or within smaller alliances, with ideologies ranging from secular to Islamist, and funding sources that include various regional and international actors. This patchwork of power represents a significant obstacle to the creation of a unified national army ([DNewsEgy 3/2/2025](#)). Although the fighters are nominally under the auspices of the new Syrian government, militias still exist, some of which have been implicated in human rights abuses and are relatively undisciplined ([Guardian 9/3/2025](#)). The core forces of the grouping leading the new government, HTS, are known to be far more disciplined than other actors, based on years of monitoring their activities in Idlib province and during the fall of al-Assad. Nevertheless, some HTS forces were also involved in the massacres in the Syrian coastal region in March 2025. Moreover, the new government continues to bear responsibility for all killings committed by groups under its formal command, including the SNA. Its inability to prevent these crimes illustrates that it still has limited command and control over areas and factions outside its traditional base. After reports of massacres emerged, the Ministry of Interior issued a dual statement calling on civilians not to interfere and to leave the response to the government, and ordering all pro-government forces to adhere to the procedures used during the offensive to overthrow the Assad regime, namely not to target civilians. By this time, however, numerous killings had already taken place and the statement made no reference to the necessary accountability process that must follow such incidents to prevent further retaliation and atrocities ([TWI 10/3/2025](#)). *[Details on the incidents in March 2025 can be found in the chapter [Security Situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)]*. The ranks of the new Syrian army also include Islamist fighters from other Arab states, Central Asia and the Caucasus ([Standard 9/3/2025](#)). There are major problems with the integration of the groups that have already been merged under the Ministry of Defence. One of these is the top-down approach, which prioritises loyalty over performance. There is difficulty mitigating the ideological and class-based differences between - and within - the factions now under ash-Shara's command ([NLM 25/2/2025](#)).

Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS)

Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) [*Committee for the Liberation of the Levant*] is the strongest group in Syria ([Asharq 9/12/2024](#)). Its manpower is estimated at 43,000. Half of these groups remained in their original areas after the recapture, particularly in the areas in the north of Hama, the south of Idlib and the west and south of Aleppo ([Quds 11/1/2025](#)). It emerged from the merger of five factions, including Jabhat Fatah ash-Sham, Liwa' al-Haqq, Jabhat Ansar ad-Din and Jaysh as-Sunna, and was later supported by several battalions, brigades and individuals ([AJ 3/12/2024](#)). The HTS tried to strengthen its military wing by establishing a joint operations room called 'Shahba Community' in cooperation with armed groups, including Ahrar ash-Sham, the Nour ad-Din-Zenki movement and the '50th Division' ([UNSC 22/7/2024](#)). The Fatah al-Mubin operations room was founded in 2019. This was responsible for the coordination and department for military operations in northern Syria in Idlib and the rural areas of Aleppo, Latakia and Hama. In mid-2020, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham restricted all military operations to the Fatah al-Mubin operations room and prohibited the formation of any other military groupings or operations rooms in the areas under its control. In 2023, the HTS announced a new structure for the military forces in its territories ([AJ 3/12/2024](#)). Members of the HTS are not only Syrians, but include several nations ([Asharq 8/12/2024](#)). It is divided into six brigades, special units and elite forces known as the Red Brigades ([Quds 11/1/2025](#)) or Red Ribbons, which have reportedly been able to win several battles against Assad's forces thanks to their capabilities in terms of training, weaponry and ability to penetrate the frontlines ([Asharq 9/12/2024](#)). The number of members of this elite unit is not known, but it is reportedly composed of hundreds of HTS members ([Asharq 8/12/2024](#)), called Inghamasiyin ([AJ 5/12/2024](#)), some of whom are among the most ideologically extreme and battle-hardened elements of the rebel coalition ([Guardian 8/12/2024](#)). They wear red ribbons on their heads. The unit, which was founded in 2018, has a high level of training ([AJ 5/12/2024](#)) and possesses specialised weapons ([AlMayadeen 5/12/2024](#)). Groups of snipers also belong to this elite unit ([Asharq 8/12/2024](#)). HTS leader Ahmed ash-Shara' also appeared in a 2020 video with a red band on his head ([AlMayadeen 5/12/2024](#)). It was the HTS that led the 'Deterrence of Aggression' operation in November and December 2024 ([Asharq 9/12/2024](#)).

Ash-Shara' announced to al-'Arabiya and al-Hadath that his group would soon disband ([Arabiya 6/1/2025b](#)). The dissolution of the HTS was announced on 29 January 2025 ([Sky News 31/1/2025](#)).

Other groupings

Other groups, some of which are affiliated with the former Free Syrian Army (FSA), also took part in Operation 'Deterrence of Aggression'. Some of these groups belonged to the National Liberation Front (NLF), such as Jabhat Tahrir as-Souriya and Jaysh Idlib al-Hurr ([AJ 3/12/2024](#)). Some groups are trained and supported by Turkey. These include the Sultan Murad Division, the Sultan Suleiman Shah Division, the Hamza Division, Jaysh al-Islam and Jabhat ash-Shamiya ([Asharq 9/12/2024](#)). The NLF is largely responsible for control in Idlib, while a large part of the military presence has been withdrawn to the key areas of Aleppo, Homs, Damascus, Latakia and Tartus. The NLF coordinates with the local security forces. Due to its manpower, it is heavily

dependent on allied groups ([Etana 17/1/2025](#)). There are also many armed groups in Dara'a, in the south of Syria, in particular groups under the banner of the former FSA ([Asharq 9/12/2024](#)).

Syrian National Army (SNA)

More than half of the over 60 armed groups in Syria belong to the Syrian National Army, which is supported by Turkey. Its strength is at least 80,000 men and its main task is to fight the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) ([DNewsEgy 3/2/2025](#)). Jabhat ash-Shamiya, the Nour ad-Din-Zenki movement, the Islamic movement Ahrar ash-Sham in the northern outskirts of Aleppo and the ash-Shahba group took part in the preparations for Operation 'Deterrence of Aggression' in the summer of 2024, while the other factions waited for direct instructions from Ankara, such as the National Liberation Front in Idlib, which provided thousands of fighters from all sub-groups of the Department of Military Operations ([Quds 11/1/2025](#)). It could comprise around 50,000 fighters. The SNA is basically in competition with the HTS. Its leaders have stated that it would give up heavy weapons in return for senior positions in the new Syrian army. They will keep their small arms. Some leaders do not want to give up the income they receive from smuggling across the Turkish-Syrian border ([Economist 14/1/2025](#)). In contrast, the HTS is supported by the Ankara-backed National Liberation Front (NLF), which is led by Colonel Fadlallah al-Hajji, the military commander of Faylaq ash-Sham and deputy defence minister in the transitional government ([Quds 11/1/2025](#)). The NLF joined the SNA in October 2019 ([MEE 7/12/2024](#)).

The Suleiman Shah Division (also known as al-Amshat) is led by Mohammad Hussein al-Jassim, known as Abu Amsha, a controversial figure who faces serious allegations of human rights violations. His forces are based in Sheikh al-Hadid in 'Afrin and cover parts of the northern part of Aleppo. The Hamza Division (also: Hamzat) controls al-Bab, Jarablus and 'Afrin and is under the command of Saif Bolad (Abu Bakr), a prominent leader of the Turkish-backed SNA. In 2023, the US Treasury Department imposed direct sanctions against the two factions, accusing them of committing 'war crimes and widespread human rights abuses' in the areas under their control. According to human rights reports, these Turkish-backed factions were involved in 'systematic ethnic cleansing operations' and large-scale 'massacres' against civilians in Baniyas, Tartus and Latakia, killing hundreds of people, including women and children ([LebDeb 10/3/2025](#)).

The Syrian security forces requested a general mobilisation beyond the units already deployed in the coastal region in early March 2025 following clashes with supporters of the Assad regime. Three US-sanctioned militias of the Turkish-backed SNA responded to this call: Jaish ash-Sharqiya, Sultan Suleiman Shah and the Hamza Division. They had previously been accused of human rights violations against Kurds in north-west Syria. The fighting also involved foreign jihadi fighters from the US-designated Ansar al-Tawhid group and local Syrian civilians seeking to avenge the regime's war crimes. Most local reports indicate that the overwhelming majority of civilian deaths caused by government forces in the coastal region in early March 2025 were committed by a mix of SNA factions, foreign fighters and random civilians ([TWI 10/3/2025](#)). *[Details of the incidents in the coastal region in early March 2025 can be found in the chapter [Security situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

All factions of the Syrian National Army are involved in Operation Dawn of Freedom against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) ([Quds 11/1/2025](#)).

Fahim 'Issa, one of the most prominent military commanders in northern Syria, said that the factions of the SNA are currently unwilling to unite because they are engaged in fighting against the SDF with Turkish support, which is contrary to ash-Shara's approach of settling the matter with the Kurdish fighters ([Quds 11/1/2025](#)).

The motivations of the fighters in the SNA are anything but uniform. In interviews, three main motivations were emphasised across the SNA corps: First, fighters are driven by loyalty and tribal affinity and rely on kinship ties and trust in the local leadership. Secondly, they tend to be motivated by economic factors, with many of them involved in smuggling and controlling the local market. Thirdly, some fighters, particularly on the Levant front, are ideologically motivated and espouse revolutionary ideals and broader visions of social change ([NLM 25/2/2025](#)).

Syrian Free Army (SFA)

The Syrian Free Army (SFA) [*not to be confused with the now disbanded Free Syrian Army (FSA)*, *Note*] is a US-backed and trained unit of several hundred men operating in southern Syria in a place called at-Tanf. For many years, the unit was cut off from most of Syria as it could only patrol a small area around the garrison where US soldiers were present. Its leader is Colonel Salem Turki al-'Antri. The Syrian Free Army emerged from the growing role of the USA in Syria, whose presence dates back to 2015. The US provided significant support to the mainly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in eastern Syria. However, in at-Tanf, where the US established a base near an old agricultural school, the US joined forces with the Maghawir ath-Thawra (MAT), which was made up of Syrian Arabs opposed to the Assad regime. The MAT, from which the Syrian Free Army later emerged, had around 300 men in 2018. The group's role was to fight the Islamic State as part of the wider US anti-ISIS mission in Syria. Over time, the US trained the Syrian Free Army in marksmanship, small unit tactics and the use of light vehicles for patrols. SFA troops continue to focus on local tasks, such as the mobile medical clinic and assisting the remaining displaced people in Rukban. They have also carried out mine clearance operations. Some members of the Syrian Free Army come from areas near Palmyra, about 120 kilometres north of at-Tanf. After the fall of the Assad regime, some members of the unit, including al-'Antri, travelled to Palmyra to meet with locals and operate in the security vacuum created by al-Assad's rapidly disappearing army ([LWJ 10/2/2025](#)). The SFA consists of Syrian rebels who opposed the Syrian regime. They are Arab opposition forces and the men come mainly from the Syrian province of Homs and other areas near Damascus and Palmyra ([JPOST 2/1/2025](#)). In mid-April 2025, the training of the SFA was continued by the USA ([LWJ 16/4/2025](#)).

The Syrian Free Army has joined the new Ministry of Defence ([TWI 12/2/2025](#)).

Foreign fighters

Ash-Shara' has turned to a group of foreign fighters who have come from the north. Their number could be between 400 and 2,500 ([Economist 14/1/2025](#)).

Jihadist groups

Of the Salafist jihadist groups, a not insignificant force, some are integrated into the HTS or work under its command. These include Ansar at-Tawhid, fighters from the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), Jaysh al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar, Sham al-Islam, Ansar al-Islam and the remnants of Hurras ad-Din ([Quds 11/1/2025](#)).

Ahrar ash-Sham

Ahrar ash-Sham [*Free Men of the Levant*] is a religiously orientated group that was one of the first armed groups to form after the outbreak of the war in Syria ([Asharq 9/12/2024](#)). It describes itself as 'a comprehensive Islamic reform and renewal movement and one of the factions within the Islamic Front', sees its activities as 'militariy, political, social and comprehensively Islamic' and defines 'the establishment of an Islamic state' as its goal ([AJ 3/12/2024](#)). In 2013, the group took control of the city of ar-Raqqa, which it later lost to the Islamic State (ISIS). In 2014, one of their underground headquarters was hit in an airstrike and 40 of their leaders were killed ([Asharq 9/12/2024](#)).

Jaysh al-'Izza

Jaysh al-'Izza [*Army of Honour*] is a group that was particularly active in the Hama region. It is led by Major Jamil as-Salah ([Asharq 9/12/2024](#)). It belongs to the Free Syrian Army (FSA) ([Arabiya 30/1/2025](#)).

Jaysh al-Islam

Jayshal-Islam [*Army of Islam*] used to be one of the most powerful groups in Syria and operated from Eastern Ghouta, Damascus. They were pushed into northern Syria. Their leader was Zahran 'Aloush, who was killed in an airstrike in 2015. His successor is 'Isam al-Buwaydani. This group is supported by Turkey ([Asharq 9/12/2024](#)).

Jabhat Tahrir as-Souriya

Jabhat Tahrir as-Souriya (JTS) [*Syrian Liberation Front*] was founded in early 2018 and comprises several movements, including Jaysh al-Ahrar, which was active in the Idlib region, Suqour ash-Sham Brigades, the Damascus Group and the Nour ad-Din-Zenki Brigades ([AJ 3/12/2024](#)).

Nour ad-Din-Zenki Brigades

This is an armed Islamist group that was founded shortly after the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011. Its main area was Aleppo, where it combined military and civilian activities until 2019 ([AJ 3/12/2024](#)).

Ansar at-Tawhid (Supporters of Monotheism)

This is a jihadist group that was active in the Syrian conflict. It is an offshoot of Jund al-Aqsa (Soldiers of the Aqsa Mosque), which was crushed by the armed opposition and Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS). Ansar at-Tawhid was founded in 2017 by the remaining members of the disbanded group Jund al-Aqsa. Its members espouse a Salafist-jihadist ideology under the

leadership of Khaled Khattab. Since the fall of al-Assad, this group is said to be responsible for human rights violations such as extrajudicial killings, the destruction of homes and attacks on private and public property ([SNHR 19/12/2024](#)).

Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) and Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM)

This group is mainly active in the provinces of Idlib, north-east Latakia, north Hama and west Aleppo. It is led by the regional commander Kaiwusair, who is supported by Zahid Qari and Sheikh Touba, both of whom were appointed in March by the Afghanistan-based commander-in-chief Abdul Haq. ETIM/TIP co-operates with HTS and attacked Syrian military positions in Idlib and Aleppo together with this group in March. The group receives financial support from HTS, operates companies in countries in the region, including Turkey, to generate funds, and trains foreign terrorists using increasingly sophisticated methods ([UNSC 22/7/2024](#)).

Hurras ad-Din (HAD)

The Hurras ad-Din (HAD) [*Guardians of Religion*] operated mainly in the south-east of Idlib and in the north of Latakia and has a strength of several thousand fighters. It is reactivating quietly and secretly, with the leadership instructing fighters to take extraordinary security measures to avoid detection. The group continues to focus on a local agenda, as it was unable to achieve its goal of carrying out external attacks at the beginning of the conflict between the Gaza Strip and Israel due to operational and logistical challenges. Regardless of their differences, opportunistic ad hoc cooperation between HAD and HTS was observed in 2024, with HAD receiving logistical support from HTS to fight against Syrian government forces ([UNSC 22/7/2024](#)).

Operations of the southern regions

The group 'Operations of the Southern Regions' was under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Yasser al-'Aboud until 2013 ([Asharq 9/12/2024](#)) and is now led by Ahmad al-'Awda. It controls the province of Dara'a. This group was the first to march into Damascus on 8 December 2024 ([AAA 7/1/2025](#)). It comprises around 15,000 fighters who apparently receive their salaries from their leader al-'Awda with the help of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ([Economist 14/1/2025](#)).

It wanted to continue to exist as an armed group and did not want to give up its weapons, even if it was prepared to submit to the new Ministry of Defence. According to its own information, the group had weapons, heavy equipment and a full range of military equipment ([AAA 7/1/2025](#)). After intensive meetings and consultations, the southern factions have announced under the name Southern Operations Room that they will hold on to their weapons but are willing to join the Ministry of Defence ([Quds 11/1/2025](#)). HTS has increasingly sought to exploit its power and military reach throughout Dara'a province and the wider south of Syria, leading to tensions with Ahmad al-'Awda ([Etana 17/1/2025](#)). In mid-February, the leaders of the southern factions and the Ministry of Defence agreed on the formation of a so-called Southern Division within the new Syrian army. In order to 'integrate' into the new Ministry of Defence, the representatives of the transitional government asked the factions to provide information on the number of their fighters, the weapons in their possession and the military bases. Since the meeting, several developments indicate that the formation of the division is underway, and the headquarters of

the 5th Division in Izra'a in eastern Dara'a has been chosen as the command centre for the new division ([Etana 22/2/2025](#)). After months of tension between militia commander Ahmad al-'Awda from Dara'a and the new Syrian president Ahmad ash-Shara' - fuelled by frustration over the lack of power-sharing and inclusivity in the country's ongoing transition process and governance structures - al-'Awda was forced to resign and disband the armed group he had led since 2014. Its collapse followed intense military pressure from General Security after last week's violence with rival Damascus-backed factions ([Etana 16/4/2025](#)).

The various factions in southern Syria, including the Russian-backed 8th Brigade in Dara'a and the Druze militias in Suweida, have set specific conditions for joining a national army. These include the establishment of a truly representative government, a new constitution and a non-sectarian military ([DNewsEgy 3/2/2025](#)).

In the province of Suweida, the formation of a military council was announced and all arms owners were invited to a meeting on 24 February 2025. However, the main factions in the province have not yet announced any connection to the council and the factions behind it are unknown. The Joint Operations Room in Suweida responded to the announcement with a statement saying, 'This council is illegitimate and the statement only represents its owners and holds them responsible for any complications that may arise from this meeting.' ([TNA 23/2/2025](#)) A group of militant Druze in Suweida announced the formation of the Suweida Military Council, a coalition of local armed groups dedicated to protecting the region and maintaining security. The council stated that its mission is to protect civilians and public property from violence and destruction while strengthening co-operation with other security factions. It also announced plans for regular meetings to assess threats and respond accordingly ([LWJ 24/2/2025](#)).

Rijal al-Karama and Liwa' al-Jabal

The two largest military factions in Suweida declared their willingness to unite into a military unit that will form the core of a new national army, rejecting any factional or confessional army ([Quds 11/1/2025](#)).

The Alawite army

More than 400,000 members of the Alawite community have been dismissed and are affected by the fall of al-Assad, including members of the army, security departments, officials in institutions affiliated to the Ministry of Defence, as well as employees of private security companies and militias. This means that around 85% of Alawite households will be left without a breadwinner and within a few months an entire community could fall from the poverty line to the hunger line ([Quds 11/1/2025](#)). *[Details on the dismissal of former regime soldiers and the formation of a new army can also be found in the chapter on [military and reserve service](#). Details on the Alawite minority can be found in the chapter [Ethnic and religious minorities - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and on dealing with the minority or with (alleged) supporters of al-Assad can be found in the chapters [Legal protection / judiciary - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

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6.1 Foreign support and interference - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

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[This chapter deals with military intervention from abroad. Information on Syria's political relationship with other states can be found in the chapter [Political situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [Foreign policy situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].

International coalition (France, USA, etc.)

The US-led International Coalition has brought military and logistical reinforcements to the south of al-Hasakah in northern and eastern Syria. These reinforcements reflect the International Coalition's continued efforts to protect its strategic and economic interests, particularly oil, in the region, in addition to the fight against the Islamic State (ISIS) whose recent movements have fuelled fears of its return ([Leb24 29/1/2025](#)). France is an active member of the US-led coalition against the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist group and maintains a military presence in north-east Syria. President Macron assured in January 2025 that France would not abandon the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) ([DS 5/2/2025](#); cf. [Rudaw 6/1/2025](#), [ANHA 6/1/2025](#)). According to a high-ranking Syrian Kurdish representative, talks are currently being held on whether US and French troops could secure a border area in northern Syria in order to defuse the conflict between Turkey and the Western-backed Syrian Kurds ([LBCI 8/1/2025](#)). French President Macron called

on the new Syrian government to fully integrate the Kurdish-led SDF into its security apparatus, adding that their 'strong' fighters will serve Damascus' security objectives and reiterating his comments in February that he would not abandon the SDF ([Rudaw 13/2/2025](#)).

Iran

Since the beginning of the war, al-Assad's government has relied on Lebanese Hezbollah, Iran and Iranian-backed irregular forces for combat operations and territorial defence. Since 2011, Iran has provided military advisers and combat troops from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as well as intelligence, logistical, material, technical and financial support. It had financed, trained, equipped and led Shia militias or paramilitary units consisting of both Syrian and non-Syrian personnel, mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan ([CIA 31/7/2024](#)). Iran is said to have spent billions of dollars to support al-Assad. The Shiite fighters sent by Iran mainly included Hezbollah (along with other movements from Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen). Since the conflict with Israel in Lebanon, Hezbollah has been severely weakened ([BBC 10/12/2024](#)). Israel continues its airstrikes on Iranian positions in Syria as Tehran continues to try to hold strategic positions and weapons caches ([VB Amman 9/2/2025](#)).

Israel

Israel has carried out hundreds of airstrikes against Iranian-linked targets in Syria during the war, although it has rarely acknowledged such attacks. Since rebels toppled al-Assad, Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes across Syria. Targets have included Syria's military infrastructure, naval fleet and weapons production sites. Israeli forces have also captured the demilitarised buffer zone in the Golan Heights. Israel stated that the 1974 agreement to withdraw from Syria had 'collapsed' with the rebel takeover. Furthermore, Israel admitted that its troops were operating at 'some additional points' beyond the buffer zone further inland in Syria, but emphasised that they were 'not advancing on Damascus' ([BBC 10/12/2024](#)). Although Israel described the invasion of Syrian territory as temporary and justified it with the confiscation of weapons, a comparison of satellite images taken on 20 December 2024 and 21 January 2025 shows the construction of a new Israeli base near Hamidiyah within just one month. Several vehicles also indicate a permanent presence ([Arabiya 4/2/2025](#)). On 29.1.2025, Israel's defence minister had already announced that the Israeli positions in Syria would remain in the country indefinitely ([FT 28/1/2025](#)). This was confirmed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the end of February 2025, who said that his forces would remain on Syria's Mount Hermon and in the buffer zone on the Golan Heights 'indefinitely'. Furthermore, Israel would not allow Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham or the New Syrian Army to advance into the areas south of Damascus ([Leb24 23/2/2025](#)). He also emphasised Israel's obligation to protect the Druze community from threats ([TNA 23/2/2025](#)). On 3 February 2025, an AlJazeera correspondent reported that Israeli forces had withdrawn from their positions in Quneitra, southern Syria, after being stationed in the area for weeks ([AJ 3/2/2025](#)). Syrian President Ahmad ash-Shara' condemned the Israeli incursion while emphasising that the current situation in the country 'does not allow for new conflicts' ([AJ 3/2/2025](#)).

Russia

Russia intervened in 2015 at the request of the Syrian government and had since provided air support, special forces, military advisors, private military companies, training, weapons and equipment. Iran and Russia also assisted in fighting the Islamic State terrorist group in Iraq and the Levant ([CIA 31/7/2024](#)). The Russian military intervention had led to a significant change in the balance of power at the military, political and psychological levels in Syria. The Russian military power, especially the air force, had caused a major difference in the balance of fighting between the armed opposition, the regime and the Iranian militias ([MEI 20/7/2021](#)). There were tensions and sporadic clashes between the Russian forces and Iranian militias and some Syrian units ([MEI 20/7/2021](#)). Since Russia began waging war in Ukraine in 2022, its armed forces were occupied elsewhere and it was no longer able to provide the necessary support to its Syrian ally. After fleeing Damascus, al-Assad and his family were granted asylum in Moscow ([BBC 10/12/2024](#)). Following the takeover by the Islamist militia Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Moscow is now primarily interested in maintaining its military bases in Syria ([Presse 28/1/2025](#)). Russia has accelerated its military withdrawal from Syria, removing vehicles and containers from its key port of Tartus on the country's Mediterranean coast. This came as Russian officials held 'open talks' with the new government in Damascus. The Kremlin had originally signalled its desire to retain control of the base, stating in December that it was talking to the new authorities about maintaining a presence there, but there are indications that Moscow has now decided to remove valuable equipment from the port. Satellite images also show that Russian equipment has been removed from the nearby Hmeimim airbase for several weeks ([BBC 30/1/2025](#)).

Turkey

Turkey has intervened militarily in Syria several times since 2016 to fight Kurdish fighters and the Islamic State. It supports selected opposition groups and has established buffer zones in parts of the Syrian-Turkish border area. Turkey continues to maintain a significant military presence in northern Syria and has trained and armed militias such as the Syrian National Army (SNA) ([CIA 31/7/2024](#)). The SNA is de facto under Turkey's authority, as is the Syrian Interim Government (SIG). Although Turkey's presence brings a degree of stability to the region, its zone of control in northern Syria is considered the most insecure and brutally governed ([BI 27/1/2023](#)). The SNA is divided into legions and further divided into factions. The faction commanders follow the command of the legions. The number of factions varies in the individual legions ([GCSP 10/2020](#)). Turkey supports the rebels primarily to contain the militias of the Kurdish People's Defence Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG), which it accuses of being an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê - PKK), *[which Turkey and the EU have listed as a terrorist organisation]* ([BBC 10/12/2024](#)). The Turkish army is present in large parts of northern Syria and, according to Jusoor for Studies, has 125 military positions, including 12 bases and 113 positions. Most of these positions were established following Turkish military operations, presumably based on undeclared agreements under the Astana process ([SyrInd 13/3/2024](#)). The Turkish Foreign Minister said on 15 February 2025 that his country would reconsider its military presence in north-eastern Syria if the country's new leadership eliminated the PKK ([AP 15/2/2025](#)). Some experts believe that the large-scale offensive that led to the

fall of al-Assad could not have taken place without Turkey's approval; Turkey denies having supported the leading opposition group Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) (BBC 10/12/2024).

USA

After the pro-democracy protests in Syria were violently suppressed in 2011, then US President Barack Obama supported the opposition to al-Assad's rule. The US provided military support to what it considered to be moderate rebel groups and intervened militarily to fight the Islamic State (ISIS) group in 2014. A US-led global coalition carried out airstrikes and deployed special forces to help the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance capture territory once held by ISIS in the north-east (BBC 10/12/2024). After the fall of the Assad government, the US maintained a military presence in the north-east (AGSIW 9/12/2024). The US government claimed to have carried out dozens of airstrikes against ISIS camps and militants in central Syria to ensure that ISIS could not take advantage of the volatile situation (BBC 10/12/2024). The US ceased its links with opposition groups years ago (AGSIW 9/12/2024). As of December 2024, the US was represented by 2,000 soldiers; originally there was talk of 900 US soldiers (Spiegel 19/12/2024), who are mainly stationed in the north-east (BBC 10/12/2024). At the beginning of February, plans by the US Department of Defence to withdraw all US troops in Syria became known. The withdrawal is to take place in either 30, 60 or 90 days (TNA 5/2/2025; cf. REU 5/2/2025b).

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6.2 Security authorities in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 22:36

[For the topicality of this country information, see chapter [Country-specific notes](#). Note]

Areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

The Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES) is dominated by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a coalition of Kurdish, Sunni Arab and Syrian Christian groups under the leadership of Kurdish militias, in particular the People's Defence Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG). They are divided into internal security units, counter-terrorism units and commando units ([CIA 31/7/2024](#)). According to the Pentagon, Kurds made up 40% of the SDF in March 2017, while Arabs made up 60%, although other sources indicate that the percentage of Arab fighters was lower. In any case, there is a consensus that the leadership in the SDF belongs to the Kurds. In addition to Syrian Arabs and Kurds, there are also foreign commanders and elements in the SDF. According to statements by commander 'Abdi, the latter will leave Syria once a ceasefire has been reached with Turkey and the Syrian National Army (SNA) ([AJ 29/1/2025](#)). The YPG are the largest militia in the SDF ([BBC 10/12/2024](#)). Experts estimate the number of fighters within the SDF at 20,000 to a maximum of 30,000. SDF leader 'Abdi puts the number at 100,000 fighters ([AJ 29/1/2025](#)). In contrast to the self-defence groups, which consist of conscripts, the SDF are deployed on the front line ([DIS 6/2024](#)). *[More information on self-defence duty can be found in the chapter [Military and reserve service - Developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8.12.2024\)](#) / [Area under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria \(DAANES\)](#)]*

The SDF uses international financial support primarily to pay the salaries and wages of its fighters and administrative staff, which range between 100 and 800 US dollars. These salaries are the highest compared to other local armed groups in Syria, including former regime forces, which has greatly helped the SDF to ensure continuous recruitment into their ranks ([AJ 29/1/2025](#)). When the SDF called on other Kurds for support in the fight against the Islamic State (ISIS) in 2014, Iraqi Peshmerga and the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê - PKK) sent them support. Some of these foreign Kurdish fighters have left the country again. A group with hundreds of fighters has remained with the aim of helping the Kurds in their self-defence ([FAZ 28/1/2025](#)).

The Revolutionary Youth Movement of Syria (Tevgera Ciwanên Şoreşger) identifies itself as a socialist movement inspired by the ideas of Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, and is ideologically linked to the PKK and the Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat - PYD). The youth group has a strong presence across north-eastern Syria with offices and centres and a variety of youth-focused cultural, political and military training activities, some of which are attended and supported by senior SDF and Autonomous Administration officials. Members of the Revolutionary Youth Movement have reportedly committed hostile acts against protesters, journalists and political opposition parties in recent years ([HRW 2/10/2024](#)).

Although several written sources from the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) have reported on conscription in the SDF, the recruitment of personnel to the SDF remains voluntary and is based on a contract between the SDF and the person concerned. The standard duration of the contract is two years of service with the SDF, but can be extended at the discretion of the volunteer. There are a number of factors that continue to motivate individuals to volunteer to join the SDF. These include economic incentives, such as the relatively high salaries compared to other armed groups, which are effective in areas with limited opportunities for alternative

employment, such as ar-Raqqa and Deirez-Zour . In addition, the SDF's ability to provide protection from other actors and threats is an important factor in its ability to recruit personnel in Arab-majority areas, and ethnic Kurds are joining the SDF to defend their region. A Syrian journalist based in Erbil asserted that the SDF refrain from forced recruitment in order to maintain their reputation as a professional force. In connection with recruitment, the SDF carry out identity and background checks through the so-called 'Komeen', the smallest administrative unit in the DAANES-controlled area. Individuals applying for the SDF must present their national identity card, family documents and a local identification document known as 'Shahadet at-Tarif' [Arabic, note] or 'Nasnameh' [Kurdish, note] issued by the local Komeen (DIS 6/2024).

The transitional government is pursuing a two-pronged strategy to force the SDF to disarm: It is actively negotiating with the SDF while coordinating with Turkey and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA). Both Turkey and the SNA are actively fighting the SDF in northern Syria (ISW 23/1/2025). According to 'Abdi, a meeting in January 2025 between the Syrian interim president Ahmad ash-Shara' and the commander of the SDF Mazloun 'Abdi was positive. They had agreed on the broad lines in terms of territorial integrity, maintaining security and stability and maintaining the cohesion of institutions in general. There were contradictions in the details. To clarify these, a military-administrative committee will be formed to reach an agreement that satisfies both sides (Sharq 14/1/2025). On 10 March 2025, 'Abdi and interim President ash-Shara' signed an agreement on the integration of the SDF into Syria's state institutions. The agreement stipulates that the SDF will support the Syrian state in fighting the remnants of the Assad regime and other threats (Arabiya 11/3/2025). The agreement stipulates a ceasefire on all Syrian territories and the integration of all civilian and military facilities in north-east Syria into the administration of the Syrian state, including the border crossings, the airport and the oil and gas fields. The agreement is to be implemented by the end of 2025 (AJ 10/3/2025a).

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6.3 Armed and security forces of the ousted Assad government (as of August 2024)

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Armed forces

The Syrian armed forces consisted of the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), which also included the Republican Guard, the Naval Forces, the Air Force, the Air Defence Forces, the National Defence Forces (NDF) and the Local Defence Forces (LDF). The NDF and LDF were pro-government militias and auxiliary forces. Some of them were supported by Iran. In addition, the Syrian armed forces were also supported by the Russian armed forces, the Iranian-affiliated group Hezbollah and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran (CIA 31/7/2024). According to the New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, elite units such as the Fourth Division and the Republican Guard were at the same hierarchical level alongside the branches of the armed forces, some of which had a direct line of communication to the president, foreign forces and the intelligence services (NLI 3/2023). The task of the Republican Guard was the defence of Damascus and the protection of the presidential palaces in Latakia, Qardaha, Salanfah and Aleppo, among others (ZAW 29/5/2021). The Fourth Division was also established to protect the capital and the regime from threats, particularly from within. During the civil war, however, this division was expanded into an army of its own, with units operating throughout the country. The Fourth Division is held responsible for many attacks against civilians and therefore has a bad reputation among the Syrian population (MEI 24/9/2021). The Fourth Division was led by the president's brother, Maher al-Assad. He was considered the second most powerful man in the Syrian regime, who also had a huge financial empire at his disposal (NLI 3/2023). The Fourth Division, and Maher al-Assad in particular, played a central role in the established parallel economy, ranging from the large-scale production of illegal drugs such as Captagon to smuggling, extortion and informal taxation of cross-border trade (BI 27/1/2023). The non-governmental organisation Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) said in an interview with the Danish Immigration Service that the Fourth Division were more loyal to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards than to the Syrian state. Those who join the Republican Guard or the Fourth Division can expect high salaries and impunity for committing criminal offences. Both units are accused of attacks on civilians, such as firing on civilians' homes with machine guns, grenades and tanks. In addition, according to SNHR, the Fourth Division had financed its existence by smuggling narcotics, extorting ransoms from civilians to ransom family members, stealing cars and extorting money at checkpoints (DIS 4/2023).

President al-Assad reportedly chaired a meeting with the commanders of the security apparatus to draw up a roadmap for restructuring the security sector. The aim was to strengthen coordination between different security agencies (AAA 5/8/2024; cf. Almodon 28/1/2024). In

an interview published on the internet, an employee of the Ministry of Defence announced that the plan envisaged a professional army. The basic requirements for this had already been met through laws, decisions and measures, such as incentives and concessions (Harmoon 29/5/2024). One such incentive was the monthly salary including allowances, which, according to the Ministry of Defence employee, was to be significantly higher than that of conscripts (USD 100 vs. USD 16-18.5) (AlSouria 6/12/2023). The reorganisation also included personnel changes at management level (Jusoor 6/5/2024).

The SAA also included the special forces as a regular unit. Members of this unit were recruited from other parts of the regular armed forces. This meant that conscripts and reservists could also be deployed for service in the special forces. The number of special forces has decreased in recent years, which has also reduced the number of violations against civilians documented by human rights organisations. Incidents such as the killing of civilians by these special forces were reported in 2021 and 2022 (DIS 4/2023).

In addition to conscripts, there was also the possibility for volunteers to enlist in the Syrian Arab Army (MoDSyr 7/8/2024). One volunteer unit was the 25th Special Tasks Division (former Tiger Forces), whose tasks included protecting the areas in which Russian military bases were located. Units of this division were also stationed on the front lines in the Idlib governorate. Although there were fewer allegations against the 25th Special Tasks Division than against the Tiger Forces, its units were accused of serious abuses, such as indiscriminate artillery shelling of medical and educational facilities and markets, mass executions of civilians and armed opposition fighters. They have also been accused of extortion, ransom demands and looting of civilian property (DIS 4/2023).

Pro-government militias

With the start of the armed conflict, al-Assad's government needed more manpower to control local communities and suppress demonstrations. To this end, parts of the population were armed to establish local militias. The National Defence Forces (NDF) were formed in mid-2011, mainly from Alawites, to crush the demonstrations in Homs, where they effectively controlled the residential areas of the Sunni majority. This success prompted the regime to pursue this strategy in other areas, such as Latakia, Aleppo and Rif Dimashq. As the war progressed, the NDF were deployed in military operations in various parts of the country, where they were implicated in war crimes and crimes against humanity. Later, the NDF were supported and deployed by Iran and Russia (ISPI 15/9/2023).

At the end of 2011, the al-Quds Brigade (Liwa' al-Quds) was formed as a coalition of several Palestinian militias loyal to the regime, which later also maintained relations with Iran and Russia and took part in the fight against the Islamic State. The al-Quds Brigade later developed into a political and military movement that dominated the Palestinian camps in Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and Homs (ISPI 15/9/2023). This militia is accused of attacks on civilians, such as kidnapping for ransom, theft and intimidation (ActionPal 12/3/2022).

Security forces

The Ministry of the Interior generally consisted of two authorities: the so-called 'Internal Security Forces', the police and the Civil Affairs Authority. In addition to maintaining security and public order, the Internal Security Forces were also responsible for immigration, passports, citizenship, residence permits, traffic regulation and prisons. The Civil Affairs Authority consisted of civilian employees and dealt with matters related to personal status laws, elections, referendums, pilgrimages and borders (OSS 22/1/2019). According to the official website of the Syrian Ministry of Defence, the Internal Security Forces were part of the regular armed forces in Syria. Their duties included maintaining internal security and participating in the guarding of vital targets in accordance with the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces in coordination with the Minister of Interior and the Regional Defence Command (MoD-Syr n.d; cf. SYD 17/7/2024). Police commands were subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior at provincial level and represented it at governorate level. Police stations were subordinate to them. These represented the internal security forces in their area of responsibility and played a role in maintaining security and public order, preventing and controlling crime and protecting public and personal freedoms. They received complaints from citizens and delivered official communications, such as call-up letters (SYD 17/7/2024).

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6.4 Civilian and military security and intelligence services of the ousted Assad government (as of August 2024)

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The National Security Office (Arabic: الأمن الوطني مكتب) was the hub for liaising, monitoring, coordinating and directing security work. It played an important advisory role to the President on all matters relating to national security (OSS 9/11/2021). According to sources, the National Security Office was directly subordinate to the President of the Republic (UNHRC 12/7/2023; cf. TNA 5/1/2024). It had four sub-departments: the Military Intelligence Directorate (arab. مديرية المخابرات العسكرية), the Air Force Intelligence Department (arab. إدارة إدارة المخابرات الجوية), the General Intelligence Directorate (arab. إدارة المخابرات العامة) and the Political Security Division (arab. الأمن السياسي إدارة). The Directorate of Military Intelligence was [note: until February 2024] directly subordinate to the General Staff, while the Directorate of Air Force Intelligence was part of the Air Force and Air Defence Command. These two agencies were the largest and most powerful intelligence services officially subordinate to the Ministry of Defence. In addition, the General Intelligence Directorate, also known as 'State Security', was led directly by the President of the Republic and coordinated directly with the National Security Office (OSS 9/11/2021). Since 2011, the National Security Office coordinated counter-demonstrations and intelligence operations across the country and translated policy directives into joint strategic plans underlying security operations. Based on the office's instructions, the directors of the various security agencies forwarded their instructions to their branches in the governorates (UNHRC 12/7/2023). A Syrian military expert stated that each intelligence department had 18 branches (Noon Post 3/4/2024). The Political Security Directorate was administratively part of the Ministry of Interior. Nevertheless, the Minister of Interior had no actual power over the work of the Political Security Directorate and only coordinates its administrative and logistical aspects. Instead, the Political Security Directorate is the one that supervised the entire Ministry of Interior, starting from the Minister of Interior to the lowest levels of the Ministry (OSS 9/11/2021). All four directorates had their headquarters and central branches in Damascus and controlled regional and local branches in the governorates across the country (UNHRC 12/7/2023).

In February 2024, President al-Assad adapted the security apparatus by secret decree ([Jusoor 6/5/2024](#)). As part of al-Assad's efforts to restructure and make new appointments at the security level, it was decided to transform the National Security Office into a higher-level coordination centre affiliated with the presidential palace. This was to oversee the most important security departments and branches ([Harmoon 29/5/2024](#)). Thus, all sub-departments under the Military Intelligence Directorate, Political Security Directorate, General Intelligence Directorate, Air Force Intelligence Directorate were centralised under the National Security Office, which now directly supervises and coordinates between them ([Jusoor 6/5/2024](#); cf. [Almodon 28/1/2024](#)). In March 2024, according to a pro-government news site, the new head of the National Security Bureau announced that the Military Intelligence Department and the Air Force Intelligence Department would be merged into a single department ([Sawt al-Assima 20/3/2024](#); cf. [Sputnik Africa 23/3/2024](#)) under the name Army and Armed Forces Intelligence ([Sputnik Africa 23/3/2024](#)).

The National Security Bureau collected data from all security agencies and ministries and organised it in lists by region. It had a huge collection of data at its disposal. At its discretion, the office could pass these lists on to the General Intelligence Directorate in the form of decisions. A source from government circles interviewed by the media organisation Syria TV reported that from the first day of the crisis, the National Security Bureau received hundreds of letters and reports daily from security directorates, departments, institutions, individuals and collaborating citizens, which it archived, stored and arranged until the appropriate time came. Thus, at least until October 2023, the National Security Bureau had lists, starting in 1980, of more than one million Syrian citizens against whom preventive detention orders had been issued. According to the source cited, a quarter of these had nothing to do with the opposition. The majority were unaware of these detention orders because they either lived abroad or had not yet undergone security checks ([Syria TV 1/6/2024](#)).

According to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (CoI) established by the United Nations, all four intelligence directorates were involved in cases of torture ([UNHRC 12/7/2023](#)). The Air Force Intelligence Directorate was described in media reports as the most lethal intelligence agency ([Noon Post 3/4/2024](#)).

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7 Torture and inhumane treatment, detention conditions, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, etc. - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

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Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (8/12/2024)

[There is currently insufficient information available on the issue of torture or inhumane treatment by the current Syrian government. In the following, the current status is presented as it results from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#).]

Before the fall of the Assad regime on 8 December 2024, the UN reported on torture and executions of prisoners held by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in the north-west. They and some factions of the Syrian National Army (SNA) in the north use the same brutal torture methods in their detention centres as the government ([OHCHR 3/2/2025](#)).

In January 2025, the transitional government carried out security campaigns such as raids and arrests. The focus was on the governorates of Latakia, Homs and Damascus. These campaigns were directed against people accused of human rights violations and crimes committed under the Assad regime, in particular former military personnel and government employees. It is unclear whether these campaigns were based on court orders. In January 2025, the Syrian Network for Human Rights documented 229 cases of arbitrary arrests, including three children and eight women. The transitional government was responsible for 129 arrests, of which 36 were released ([SNHR 4/2/2025a](#)). In general, the security forces' attacks target men who are believed to have

committed crimes (whether proven or not), rather than Alawites encountered by soldiers. The HTS refuses to follow a transparent legal process in which these victims are clearly identified and brought to justice (MEI 21/1/2025). According to Hawar News, a Kurdish newspaper, four people in a detention centre in Damascus lost their lives due to torture after being arrested during raids in Homs (ANHA 9/2/2025). At the end of January, a man who had been arrested for supporting the Assad regime died in custody. The Syrian authorities announced that they would launch an investigation into ill-treatment by security forces. Those responsible were arrested and handed over to the military justice system (AAA 2/2/2025).

All armed opposition groups and SNA factions carried out arbitrary arrests. The victims included people from the areas controlled by the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), including women. The arrests took place without a court order or police involvement. The detainees were not given clear information about the charges against them. The SNA or other armed groups were responsible for 41 arbitrary arrests, including six women. Twelve people were released (SNHR 4/2/2025a).

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7.1 Torture and inhumane treatment, detention conditions, arbitrary arrests, etc. in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES)

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[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Since 2020, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) has documented war crimes committed by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) against detainees in custody in several facilities, including the as-Sina'a prison in the city of al-Hasakah, prisons and temporary facilities run by the SDF or the Kurdish internal security forces (Assayish), as well as in al-Hol and ar-Roj camps. Torturers also included the SDF's military intelligence service ([UNHRC 12/7/2023](#)). Amnesty International has also documented serious cases of torture of women, men and children in prisons in northern and eastern Syria run by the SDF and its associated security forces. In particular, in Sini prison (one of two main prisons holding detainees accused of belonging to the Islamic State (ISIS), located in al-Hasakah province), detainees are subjected to relentless brutality, including routine physical abuse, humiliation, deprivation of food, water, medical care and other basic needs ([AI 2024](#)). According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), the SDF tortured seven people to death between January and June 2024, including one child ([SNHR 1/7/2024](#)). According to the SNHR, ten people were tortured to death by the SDF in 2023, including one child ([SNHR 1/1/2024](#)). According to the COI, the victims of torture included people who had spoken out against the government, such as activists, employees of non-governmental organisations or opposition members ([UNHRC 12/7/2023](#)).

The Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) stated in its 2023 social contract in Articles 56-58 that every person has the right to a fair trial, that arrests, entry or searches of private places or homes may only be carried out with a court order or if the offence is committed in flagrante delicto, and that a person's freedom may not be restricted without a valid legal document ([RIC 14/12/2023](#)).

In the final stages of the fight against the Islamic State (ISIS) in north-east Syria in early 2019, thousands of Syrian, Iraqi and other foreign men and boys fell under the control of the SDF and were taken to detention centres run by the security forces. Unable to hold these individuals in pre-existing facilities, the SDF and their affiliated security forces, with the support and co-operation of the US-led coalition, detained many older boys and men in a series of makeshift, temporary detention facilities scattered across north-eastern Syria. Over time, the majority of these individuals were consolidated into two detention centres. The first is the Sini detention centre, which is located near the city of ash-Shaddadi. In August 2023, around 800 detainees were held there. The second is the Panorama detention centre, which was specially built by the US-led coalition in the city of al-Hasakah to replace a temporary prison in the same location. The overwhelming majority of those detained in Sini and Panorama were not charged and had no opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention. In the security forces' other detention centres, there are around 900 men, women and children who were arrested before the territorial defeat of ISIS, for example when they left areas controlled by ISIS, and afterwards during ongoing military operations. They are being held by security forces for interrogation before being transferred for trial ([AI 2024](#)).

According to Amnesty International, allegations of ISIS membership in north-eastern Syria are instrumentalised for two main purposes. Firstly, the autonomous authorities use allegations of ISIS membership to silence and intimidate people they believe to be against them. Secondly, both the general public and the autonomous authorities use such allegations to take revenge in the context of personal feuds or clan disputes (AI 2024). The SDF carried out large-scale raids and arrest campaigns targeting civilians accused of having links to ISIS, Arab tribes in conflict with the SDF or the Syrian National Army (SNA). In addition, civilians who took part in celebrations to mark the fall of President al-Assad and people who had criticised the actions of the SDF in areas under its control were also arrested. The SDF documented 59 arbitrary arrests, including three children and two women. 12 people were released (SNHR 4/2/2025a). As there are no guarantees for fair trials, such as the provision of defence lawyers, and there is a systematic use of torture to force confessions, the mere accusation of being associated with ISIS can lead to years of arbitrary detention (AI 2024).

According to Amnesty International, men, women and children are arbitrarily and indefinitely detained and forcibly disappeared in detention centres run by the SDF and affiliated security forces. Many of these detainees are held in inhumane conditions and are subjected to torture or other ill-treatment (AI 2024).

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7.2 Torture and inhumane treatment (as of August 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-06 17:15

Areas under the control of the opposition (HTS, SNA, etc.)

According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), 16 people were tortured to death by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in the first half of 2024. That is 15% of all deaths by torture in Syria (SNHR 1/7/2024). In 2023, the HTS killed eight people through torture according to the SNHR, including one woman (SNHR 1/1/2024). In April 2024, parts of the population in Idlib province

protested against the HTS, particularly against its security apparatus, the General Security Service (GSS), which they accused of torture in detention centres ([AJ 2/4/2024](#)). The United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) documented cases of torture, enforced disappearances, incommunicado detention, ill-treatment, sexual violence and death in HTS detention centres. The facilities where such violations have been documented since 2020 include the Sarmada and Harem detention centres, branches 107, 177 and 33 in Idlib and a detention centre attached to a court building in Sarmada. Torture and ill-treatment are mainly used to force confessions or for punishment ([UNHRC 12/7/2023](#)). Furthermore, it writes that it has reason to believe that members of the HTS have continued to commit acts that could be considered war crimes, such as torture, inhumane treatment and deprivation of liberty ([UNGA 9/2/2024](#)).

The COI found that the Syrian National Army (SNA) committed war crimes in connection with detention, such as torture and cruel treatment, hostage-taking, rape and sexual violence, and acts amounting to enforced disappearance ([UNHRC 12/7/2023](#)). The non-governmental organisations Ceasefire and Yasa have also documented cases of detention, torture, killing and enforced disappearance of civilians, including women and the elderly ([CCR/YASA 5/2024](#)). Turkish military and intelligence forces, splinter groups of the SNA and the military police are implicated in detention-related abuses. Numerous reports documented by HRW and the COI paint an appalling picture of these conditions. Turkish officials are currently suspected of involvement in these abuses, with most abuses reported to have taken place in SNA faction detention centres or temporary military police facilities ([HSC 6/5/2024](#)). Facilities where such acts of torture have been documented since 2020 include prisons and temporary facilities run by individual SNA factions, as well as facilities run by the SNA civil and military police ([UNHRC 12/7/2023](#)). The COI documented the presence of Turkish officials in SNA detention centres and, in some cases, during torture and ill-treatment ([UNHRC 12/7/2023](#); cf. [STJ 26/6/2024](#)). The non-governmental organisation Synergy Associations for Victims documented war crimes in the form of torture and ill-treatment in Afrin, Ra's al-'Ayn, Serê Kaniyê and Tell Abyad ([SAV 25/2/2024](#)). The COI identified cases of torture and ill-treatment in several SNA prisons in 'Afrin, A'zaz, Ma'arratah, Raju and Hawar Kilis ([UNGA 9/2/2024](#)). Former detainees report nightmarish torture during interrogations in order to extract false confessions, some of which led to deaths ([HSC 6/5/2024](#)). The victims of the SNA's torture measures include, in particular, people suspected of having links to the Kurdish People's Defence Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The detainees were mainly Kurds ([UNHRC 12/7/2023](#)). Furthermore, there were repeated cases of sexual and gender-based violence by members of the SNA against female detainees ([UNGA 9/2/2024](#)). Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) also documented cases of sexual violence, torture and other sexual abuse against women in SNA detention centres ([STJ 26/6/2024](#)). The SNA killed a total of five people through torture in the first half of 2024 ([SNHR 1/7/2024](#)), and three people in the whole of 2023 ([SNHR 1/1/2024](#)). STJ and Synergy Associations for Victims considered the reasons for detention and torture in SNA-controlled areas to be extortion for ransom or intimidation to make people leave the area ([STJ 26/6/2024](#); cf. [SAV 25/2/2024](#)).

Areas under the control of the Assad government

Article 53 (2) of the Syrian constitution stipulates that no one may be tortured or treated in a humiliating manner. The law should provide for punishment for those who nevertheless torture or treat inhumanely (SeG 24/2/2012). In March 2022, President Bashar al-Assad issued Law No. 16 , which criminalises torture and inhumane treatment. Article 1 of this law defines torture as any act or omission by which severe physical or mental pain or suffering is inflicted on a person in order to intimidate them or to compel them to do something, or when such pain or suffering is inflicted on a person for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, or when such pain or suffering is inflicted by a public official or person acting in an official capacity on any person for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, or when it is expressly or implicitly authorised or condoned by a public official or person acting in an official capacity. It also includes acts committed by a person or a group for personal, material or political gain or in revenge or retaliation. Article 2 regulates the penalty, which ranges from a minimum of three years' imprisonment to life imprisonment. The death penalty is imposed if the torture results in the death of a person or if a person is raped or indecently assaulted during or for the purpose of torture. Article 3 prohibits the admission of evidence obtained under torture, except in proceedings against torture. Victims of torture are awarded compensation in accordance with Article 5 . According to Article 7, measures must be taken to guarantee the right to bring charges (PoS 30/3/2022).

According to Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), the law disregards an important aspect of the 1984 Convention against Torture, which Syria signed in 2004. Law No. 16 of 2022 does not contain any clauses that legalise, permit or facilitate the activities (such as monitoring prisons and security centres, monitoring compliance with the Convention, regular reporting, monitoring the application of anti-torture legislation) of human rights committees of independent or international organisations. Not even the United Nations Committee against Torture (CAT). STJ lists other failures of Law No. 16 of 2022, such as inadequate complaint and protection measures, lack of internal, transparent government oversight, local ordinances granting legal protection to torturers, and the absence of other forms of degrading, inhuman or cruel treatment. STJ write that torture is one of the most serious and well-documented human rights violations committed by the Syrian government (STJ 12/7/2022). The NGO Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) also criticises the law as pointless because the number of deaths from torture has continued to rise since its promulgation (SNHR 10/10/2023).

According to SNHR, torture is particularly linked to arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances, but is not limited to these (SNHR 10/10/2023). SNHR nevertheless documented 53 deaths from torture in Syria in the first half of 2024, including one child. The majority of these (26 people or approx. 40 %) were tortured to death by the Syrian regime (SNHR 1/7/2024). According to the SNHR, 57 people were tortured to death in 2023, 32 of them by the Syrian government. One of them was a woman (SNHR 1/1/2024). Torture took place in various detention centres, such as in intelligence directorates (called security agencies) or civilian and military police stations (UNHRC 12/7/2023).

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) announced in April 2024 that it had reason to believe that the government continued to carry out arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment at that time. (UNGA 9/2/2024). The German Federal Foreign Office also reported that police, law enforcement agencies and especially security and intelligence services systematically used torture practices (AA 2/2/2024).

On 10 October 2023, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in Canada held the first day of proceedings in a case brought by Canada and the Netherlands accusing Syria of violating the UN Convention against Torture (AI 24/4/2024; cf. FR24 10/10/2023). Canada and the Netherlands requested an emergency order from the court calling on Syria to immediately stop a long list of abuses, including arbitrary arrests, torture and coercing confessions for fabricated crimes, especially those punishable by death (NYTM 11/10/2023). On 16 October 2023, the court ordered the Syrian authorities to take measures to prevent torture and other ill-treatment in connection with detentions (AI 24/4/2024). Human Rights Watch reported that one year after the judgement, the Syrian government had not complied with it and Syrians continued to be at risk of disappearance, torture to death and appalling detention conditions (HRW 20/11/2024).

Women make up a smaller proportion in state detention centres. Some of them experience sexual violence, such as rape, threats of rape, sexual torture, abuse and humiliation. But not all imprisoned women and girls are sexually abused. However, other types of abuse are widespread (UNHRC 12/7/2023). According to the German Foreign Office, family members, often women and children, or neighbours are imprisoned and tortured as alleged accomplices or for alleged crimes committed by others (AA 2/2/2024).

According to the German Foreign Office, there is no realistic possibility of prosecution for torture or other criminal offences committed by security forces. At present, individual citizens cannot defend themselves in any way against arbitrary acts by the state. Even before March 2011, there were credible indications that people who complained about treatment by security forces were at risk of being prosecuted or repeatedly becoming victims of such practices themselves (AA 2/2/2024). A confidential source from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs also states that torture by government officials remains largely unpunished (MBZ 8/2023).

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8 Corruption - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

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Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8/12/2024)

[There is currently insufficient information on corruption in the new Syrian government. In the following, the current status is presented as it results from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Corruption in the public sector under the Assad regime was characterised by an increasing level of clientelism and looting of resources. Institutions were managed to serve the interests of political elites linked to the regime and its circles, at the expense of efficiency and effectiveness. The caretaker government has announced its intention to implement a package of reforms ([OSS 20/1/2025](#)). The Assad regime has left the institutions practically hollow - full of corruption, without regulations, without qualified professionals, without equipment ([NZZ 24/1/2025](#)). Syria's caretaker government faces the dilemma of administrative negligence and corruption inherited from the previous regime ([AAA 27/1/2025](#)).

Immediately after taking office, the new government granted thousands of employees three months of paid leave until their status was reviewed. This was interpreted as an arbitrary dismissal, as it coincided with a delay in the payment of salaries because the necessary budget was not available ([AAA 27/1/2025](#)).

The new rulers in Syria have begun dismantling the Captagon trade, dismantling former factories in locations such as the Mezzeh airbase in Damascus, a car dealership in Latakia and a factory that used to produce snack chips in the Damascus suburb of Douma ([AJ 7/1/2025](#)). The interim Syrian Prime Minister promised that drug smuggling and Captagon in Syria would no longer be a threat to Jordan ([REU 7/1/2025](#)). Under al-Assad's rule, Jordan was a major hub for the smuggling of highly addictive Captagon amphetamines produced in Syria to the Gulf states, which had led to tensions between the two countries ([AJ 7/1/2025](#)).

Finance Minister Abazid said that the former rebels had encountered massive corruption and waste since taking power. Some state-owned companies appeared to be there only to embezzle resources under al-Assad and would be shut down. A preliminary review of the new government showed that only 900,000 out of 1.3 million people on the government payroll were actually coming to work. Mohammad Alskaf, Minister of Administrative Development, who oversees public sector staffing levels, told Reuters that the state would need between 550,000 and 600,000 employees - less than half the current number ([REU 31/1/2025](#)).

[Information on measures against corruption, human rights violations etc. in the toppled Assad regime can be found in the chapter [Legal Protection / Judiciary - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) Note].

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8.1 Corruption in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 14:40

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#).]

In August 2023, violent clashes broke out in the Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES) between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and tribal fighters in Deir ez-Zour. According to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (Col), in addition to the arrest of an SDF commander, the unrest was also triggered by abuses in self-administration, restrictions on freedom of movement, forced recruitment, inadequate curricula and corruption (UNGA 9/2/2024). USAID also stated that the perception of corruption in the DAANES and the interference of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê - PKK) further fuelled tensions through the protests and undermined public acceptance of the SDF (USAID 13/8/2023).

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8.2 Corruption (as of August 2024)

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Corruption, bribery and favouritism were widespread in Syria (GITOC 2023). In both areas controlled by the Syrian government and by the opposition, authoritarian ruling coalitions dominated by armed actors had created or captured formal institutions that regulated an interconnected and interdependent economic system. This was based on robbery, extortion, smuggling, bribery and violence (BI 27/1/2023). The daily lives of the civilian population had deteriorated in the months from February to April 2024 due to the worsening economic crisis and galloping inflation, and there were increasing reports of predatory activities by the armed actors. The parties to the conflict were directly involved to varying degrees in criminal activities such as human trafficking, corruption and violent extortion, or tolerated these or were unable to prevent them (UNGA 9/2/2024).

The non-governmental organisation Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) stated in an interview with the Danish Immigration Service that corruption at checkpoints is widespread in all parts of Syria (DIS 6/2024). The Global Organised Crime Index also wrote that almost all long-distance trade and transport in the country was regularly affected by extortion (GITOC 2023). According to an interview with the Danish Immigration Service, according to SNHR, it was possible for a person living in the Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES) to pass through all checkpoints between the DAANES and Damascus without any problems, even if the person was wanted by the Syrian authorities, if they bribed the staff at the checkpoints. Usually, the drivers accompanying the wanted person on the journey knew the staff at the checkpoints and bribed them in advance (DIS 6/2024). Smuggling activities related to illicit trade in consumer goods, such as tobacco, were reportedly facilitated by foreign forces present in the country and by actors involved in the state. They provided a significant source of revenue through bribes to government officials and armed groups that controlled borders and checkpoints (GITOC 2023).

Areas under the control of the opposition (HTS, SNA, etc.)

Corruption was widespread in opposition-controlled areas (FH 2024; cf. OpD 2024). Extortion and demands for protection money were generally linked to geopolitical developments in Syria. Opposition militias carried out extortion in the course of territorial disputes by collecting taxes from civilians and businesses in the areas under their control in exchange for 'services' or 'protection'. The most well-known form of protection racket was the collection of zakat, usually a charitable donation considered a religious duty in Islam. Foreign actors were also heavily involved in the country's criminal landscape, as most of Syria's borders were controlled by a variety of foreign actors, such as Sunni Islamist militant groups, the Syrian National Army (SNA), Russian forces, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Turkish militias (GITOC 2023).

In the areas controlled by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), institutions lacked transparency and integrity, personnel lacked efficiency and qualifications, and corruption and favouritism were systematically practised. This often led to discrimination and privileges in military, economic and social areas being granted to people associated with the HTS ([SCPR/UniVie 8/2023](#)). HTS institutions were mechanisms that empowered and enriched high-ranking figures within the ruling coalitions ([BI 27/1/2023](#)). At the beginning of 2024, demonstrations against the HTS took place in the city of Idlib and elsewhere. For several days, hundreds of protesters took to the streets to demonstrate against a security campaign, but at the same time there was growing frustration over corruption and mismanagement in these areas, which many blamed for the rising cost of living ([Etana 2/2024](#)). The HTS monopolised trade in fuel and essential services in its territory, regularly confiscating or destroying goods and confiscating the property of absentee owners, often to distribute it to its own commanders ([FH 2024](#)). According to a report by the NGO Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), an HTS authority allegedly imposed a zakat on farmers in Idlib for the harvest and demanded duties and taxes. Checkpoints were set up for this purpose in July 2023 ([STJ 24/10/2023](#)).

The Turkish-backed militias were accused of corruption, tyranny and human rights violations ([SOHR 2/7/2023](#)), as well as looting, extortion and theft. Local administrators and activists criticised the fact that only a small portion of the international aid that allegedly went to opposition representatives abroad reached them, raising suspicions of corruption ([FH 2024](#)). Human Rights Watch (HRW) also wrote of bribes being accepted by the local military police in order to free family members from prison and to be able to live in their own houses, which had been occupied by factions of the SNA in the meantime. In addition to bribes, some families even paid 'rents', 'taxes' or other fees to members of the local military police in order to be allowed to live in their homes, run their shops or cultivate their land ([HRW 29/2/2024](#)). Syria Direct also wrote that an extensive pattern of corruption was prevalent in the Turkish-backed opposition areas, with military police and SNA commanders, among others, releasing detainees or covering up for relatives accused of crimes in exchange for bribes ([SYD 20/5/2022](#)).

In 2023 and 2024, there were repeated protests by the local population in areas controlled by Turkish-affiliated groups, not least as a result of allegations of corruption against local administrative authorities and electricity providers ([HRW 29/2/2024](#)). In December 2023, human rights activists, lawyers and journalists protested against judicial corruption in the SNA-controlled city of al-Ra'i in North Aleppo ([NPA 18/12/2023](#)). There were also protests by the local population in Tell Abyad, who protested for better living conditions and services as well as against corruption in military and civilian institutions ([SOHR 2/7/2023](#)). Residents in 'Azaz also protested against the corruption of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) and criticised the nepotism and its supremacy in administrative institutions ([SOHR 20/2/2024](#)).

Areas under the control of the Syrian government (as of August 2024)

Corruption has always been a problem in Syria, but has increased further during the conflict due to increasing poverty, the devaluation of the Syrian pound and diversification opportunities

(BS 19/3/2024). Syria, along with Somalia, Venezuela and South Sudan, ranked at the bottom of Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2023 (TI 1/2024). The Syrian regime and its allies controlled a large part of the Syrian economy. The civil war created new opportunities for corruption for the government, pro-government armed forces and the private sector. Foreign allies were also able to benefit from the opaque government contracts and trade agreements (FH 2024). According to the Bertelsmann Foundation, the government lacked the political will to tackle corruption. Syria was one of the few countries that had not signed the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) (BS 19/3/2024). According to USDOS, there were no reports that the regime had attempted to fight corruption (USDOS 22/4/2024). Occasional high-profile anti-corruption initiatives targeted those who had broken with the regime or whose resources the regime wanted to control (BS 19/3/2024). The opposition-affiliated news portal Enab Baladi described it similarly. An expert quoted there stated that arrests in December 2023 were made under the pretext of fighting corruption and were due to Syria's poor economic situation and the regime's search for financial savings. The expert added that the Syrian regime tacitly accepted that public sector employees were surviving through corruption due to low salaries (Enab 29/12/2023). Global Organised Crime Index acknowledged that the Syrian state did not leave much room for mafia groups, but that those groups with family or kinship ties remained active in the country. At the same time, he wrote that the Syrian regime had not made sufficient efforts to combat organised crime, but rather had created a favourable environment for criminal organisations to thrive and take advantage of the country's fragile post-war situation (GITOC 2023). People who attempted to expose or criticise corruption in government-controlled areas faced reprisals such as dismissal from employment and imprisonment (FH 2024).

Corruption remained a widespread problem in the police, security services, immigration authorities and throughout the regime. Relatives of detainees reported that government officials in courts and detention centres demanded bribes in exchange for the provision of basic services and favourable decisions. Family members of arbitrarily detained or disappeared persons were asked to pay bribes to learn the whereabouts or fate of the person concerned (USDOS 22/4/2024). Corruption in the justice system was widespread, as public salaries were completely devalued by inflation and currency depreciation and usually did not exceed the equivalent of 20 to 30 US dollars, while the cost of living was more than ten times higher per month (ÖB Damaskus 2023). Families reported that due to a lack of channels, they had to hire expensive government-linked intermediaries who demanded large sums of money for information on the whereabouts of their detained relatives or visitation rights (UNGA 9/2/2024). In some cases, employees in immigration and passport offices, embassies and consulates obstructed the processing of people's documents in order to obtain bribes or force them to use intermediaries (SNHR 15/3/2024). Low wages and high inflation rates forced workers to look for alternative sources of income to supplement their monthly budget. In the public sector, workers took on additional jobs, while the cost of bribes also increased (FES 7/2023). Low wages drove conscripts into corruption, such as extorting civilians at checkpoints, drug trafficking, theft and robbery (DIS 1/2024).

Bribery was increasingly replaced by centralised and decentralised forms of extortion, including the introduction of new taxes, increasing the price of essential services (e.g. issuing passports) and demanding families to pay for information about missing family members. Armed gangs took over and invented new lines of business ([BS 19/3/2024](#)). State-embedded actors provided criminal groups with weapons and security, protected them from legal consequences and facilitated their passage through checkpoints ([GITOC 2023](#)). Government officials were directly involved in the trafficking of illicit narcotics. Units with known or suspected links to those in power and the terrorist organisation Hezbollah are alleged to have produced and trafficked illegal narcotics in the country, in particular the stimulant widely known as Captagon ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)). Media and non-governmental organisations reported that the Syrian Army's Fourth Division, led by Maher Assad, President Assad's brother, oversaw much of the production and distribution of Captagon ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#); cf. [GITOC 2023](#); [Syria TV 24/6/2024](#)). Al Jazeera reported in May that the production and smuggling of Captagon had reportedly earned President Assad and his allies billions of dollars ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)). In March 2023, the US and the UK imposed sanctions on several individuals in the Syrian regime for producing Captagon and using the proceeds to support Assad's government ([FH 2024](#)). In March 2024, the US government imposed further sanctions on eleven individuals and entities that supported the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad through illicit financial transfers, trafficking in illicit drugs and the extraction and export of Syrian commodities ([USDOT-OIG 26/3/2024](#)). The illicit arms market was also led by domestic and foreign actors allied with the Syrian regime, according to the Global Organised Crime Index ([GITOC 2023](#)).

Basic government services and humanitarian aid were reportedly provided or denied depending on the recipients' political allegiance to the Assad regime ([FH 2024](#)). While corruption was present in all conflict situations, the extent and systematic way in which the regime benefited from humanitarian aid was unique ([BS 19/3/2024](#)).

Private businesses were particularly vulnerable to arbitrary closure or expropriation, and the government continued to replenish state coffers through arbitrary taxes and fines on private businesses. In addition, armed actors working for the regime regularly stole and confiscated the property of small businesses or extorted bribes or 'protection money' ([BS 19/3/2024](#)).

Corruption and a lack of rule of law played a major role in the non-enforcement of laws that would have granted women certain rights, so that customs and traditions prevailed ([FSLA 2024](#)). Women were exposed to particular risks when they came into contact with local authorities and security forces. There were reports of harassment, pressure or even coercion to perform sexual acts if they were unable to pay the fees or bribes demanded for the issue of identity documents. Women travelling alone in particular reported being financially extorted at military checkpoints and public administration offices, and in cases where they did not have the means to pay a bribe, the extortion was often replaced by sexual exploitation ([OHCHR 1/2/2024](#)).

With regard to conscription, the Arabic term *tafayish* (تفيش), which was common in Syria even before 2011, referred to the bribing of officers by conscripts who could go home by paying bribes instead of doing their military service and still appear to serve in the army in the system

(DIS 1/2024; cf. Syria TV 7/7/2023, ISPI 5/6/2023). In addition, better treatment or better conditions could be obtained by paying bribes to superiors. However, according to Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) in an interview with the Danish Migration Agency, men from areas that were previously run by the opposition were not able to make use of the possibility of bribes to improve their situation. Bribery and extortion were also used to obtain a medical exemption, to obtain an exemption from reserve service when not residing abroad, for students who would have been entitled to an exemption or for family members of draft evaders and deserters to avoid consequences (DIS 1/2024). Corruption was used in two ways with regard to exemptions from and deferment of conscription. On the one hand, exemptions could be obtained in corrupt ways, for example when people who had not left Syria could buy their way out of compulsory military service, which was otherwise only possible for people living abroad. On the other hand, it could happen that people who were demonstrably exempt from compulsory military service or had been granted a deferment were detained at checkpoints as if they were conscientious objectors and were only released upon payment of bribes. It was all about extracting bribes. There were no reports of people who had been unlawfully conscripted in this way (CPTI 5/2024). Conscripts often earned extra money to supplement their low salaries through corruption, for example by extorting civilians at checkpoints, drug trafficking or theft and robbery (DIS 1/2024; cf. ISPI 5/6/2023).

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9 Military and reserve service - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8/12/2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 15:46

[There is currently insufficient information on military service, recruitment and the armed forces of the current Syrian government. In the following, the current status is presented as it results from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

The Syrian Arab Army was disbanded by order of al-Assad before he fled after midnight on 8 December 2024. The soldiers were to exchange their military uniforms for civilian clothes and leave the military units and barracks ([AAA 10/12/2024](#)). Activists from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) in Damascus reported that hundreds of regime soldiers took their military uniforms after being informed that they had been dismissed because the Assad regime had fallen ([SOHR 8/12/2024](#)). Approximately 2,000 Syrian soldiers have fled to Iraq. According to an official from Iraq, 2,150 Syrian military personnel, including high-ranking officers such as brigadier generals and customs officers, are said to be housed in a camp in al-Anbar province. The majority are said to want to return to Syria ([AlMada 15/12/2024](#)). According to Syrian media, the Syrian transitional government negotiated with the Iraqi government about the repatriation of these soldiers ([ISW 16/12/2024](#)). On 19 December 2024, the Iraqi authorities began extraditing the Syrian soldiers to Syria ([TNA 19/12/2024](#)). The majority of the Assad regime's leading soldiers and security forces are said to still be on Syrian territory, but outside Damascus (as of 13 Dec. 2024) ([AAA 10/12/2024](#)). Following the dissolution of the former security and military institutions, hundreds of thousands lost their jobs and income - especially in the coastal regions. Tens of thousands were also dismissed from government and civilian institutions without alternative income or employment opportunities. In addition, members of the disbanded army, police and security services were forced to relocate, leading to growing discontent and anger among the ranks of these men ([Harmoon 17/3/2025](#)).

Following the uprising in Syria, the Islamist-led rebel alliance announced a general amnesty for all conscripts. They are guaranteed safety and any attacks on them are prohibited, the alliance announced on Telegram ([Presse 9/12/2024](#)). HTS leader ash-Shara' announced in a Facebook post that conscription in the army would be abolished, except for some special units and 'for short periods of time'. He also announced that all groups would be disbanded and that only the state would have weapons at its disposal ([CNBC Ara 15/12/2024a](#); cf. [MEMRI 16/12/2024](#)). It is unclear how a volunteer army is to be financed ([ISW 16/12/2024](#)). Ash-Shara' also announced the dissolution of the security forces ([REU 11/12/2024a](#)). In an interview on 10 February 2025, ash-Shara' reiterated that he had decided in favour of voluntary recruitment and against conscription. Thousands of volunteers had already joined the new army ([Arabiya 10/2/2025a](#); cf. [AJ 10/2/2025a](#)). Conscripts of the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) were granted amnesty

([REU 11/12/2024b](#)). Ahmed ash-Shara' has promised that the new leadership will prosecute the highest ranks of the former military and security forces for war crimes. However, it remains unclear what this could mean for the foot soldiers of the former regime or where the boundaries in this regard will be drawn ([Guardian 13/1/2025](#)). Syria's new transitional government has set up so-called 'reconciliation centres', said Abu Qasra, Syria's new defence minister. These have already been well utilised, including by high-ranking individuals, and users have been given temporary settlement cards. A considerable number have also handed in their weapons ([Al Majalla 24/1/2025](#)). The intelligence headquarters in Damascus is now a 'reconciliation centre' where the new Syrian authorities are asking those who served there to turn themselves in and hand in their weapons at the intelligence building. In the courtyard, queues of people wait to receive slips of paper stating that they have officially surrendered and reconciled with the new government, while former insurgents in new military-style uniforms examine the surrendered pistols, rifles and ammunition. Former officers who could prove useful to Syria's new government, for example because they have information about people who are wanted internationally, have little to fear as long as they co-operate ([Guardian 13/1/2025](#)). In these 'reconciliation centres', the soldiers were given an ID card marked 'deserted'. They were told that they would be contacted about their reintegration ([Chatham 10/3/2025](#)). [Further information on 'reconciliation centres' can also be found in the chapters [Legal protection / judiciary - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8.12.2024\)](#) and [Security authorities - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8.12.2024\)](#)]. The role of the defected Syrian army officers in the new military structure is unclear. While their expertise could be invaluable in building a professional army, concerns remain about their marginalisation within the new power structure ([DNewsEgy 3/2/2025](#)). Under al-Assad, conscription into the army was compulsory for adult men. Conscripts had to hand in their civilian ID cards and received a military ID instead. Without a civilian ID, it is difficult to find a job or move freely around the country, which partly explains why tens of thousands have turned up at 'reconciliation centres' in various cities ([BBC 29/12/2024](#)). Former soldiers and intelligence officers of the Assad regime, around 4,000 to 5,000 men in Latakia and Tartus, have evaded these 'reconciliation processes'. Some of them have been caught as part of a nationwide campaign of daily searches and targeted raids, but others have decided to engage in armed resistance against the transitional government ([MEI 13/3/2025](#)).

Interim President Ahmed ash-Shara' has expressed a vision of a new 'National Army' that includes all former opposition groups. This vision includes a process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, in which Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) is supposed to take the lead ([DNewsEgy 3/2/2025](#)). The Syrian Defence Minister Abu Qasra announced on 6.1.2025 the start of meetings with military factions to develop steps to integrate them into the Ministry of Defence ([Arabiya 6/1/2025b](#)). Senior officials of the new regime held talks on the integration of militias into the Ministry of Defence and the restructuring of the Syrian army with representatives of different armed groups, such as factions of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) ([MAITIC 9/1/2025](#)). The authorities announced agreements with armed rebel groups to disband them and integrate them into the unified army ([UNSC 7/1/2025](#)). According to Abu Qasra, the only way to build a coherent military institution is to fully integrate the groups into the Ministry of Defence under a unified structure. The basis for this institution must be the rule of law ([Al](#)

Majalla 24/1/2025). It remains to be seen what Syria's new army will look like and whether it will be based on a different structure than the Assad regime's army. This includes questions related to brigades, divisions and small formations, as well as questions related to the type of armament, its form and the nature of the mission. (AlHurra 12/2/2025). [*Details on the new Syrian army and the disarmament of armed groups can be found in the chapter [Security Authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) Note*].

The restructuring of the Syrian military has only just begun. The new de facto leader has promised to transform the new army into a professional, volunteer-based force to promote professionalism in the ranks and move away from the conscription policy that characterised the collapsed Assad regime (TR-Today 8/1/2025). According to media reports, several foreign Islamist fighters have been appointed to senior military positions. Ash-Shara' had also reportedly proposed granting citizenship to foreign fighters and their families for their role in the fight against al-Assad (UNSC 7/1/2025).

Syrian media report that the new government is actively recruiting people for the army and police. This is to cover the urgent need for manpower. New soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers are reportedly being recruited through intensive programmes that deviate from traditional academic and training standards. The process of preparing military and security cadres will be accelerated to meet the needs of the new state (SCI n.d). On 10 February 2025, interim President ash-Shara' stated that thousands of volunteers had joined the new army (Arabiya 10/2/2025a). According to a report by the Syrian television channel Syria TV, many young men were recruited for the new army. Young men in Idlib are particularly committed in this regard. The recruitment department of the new Syrian administration in Deir ez-Zour province announced that around 1,200 new recruits had joined its ranks just a few weeks after the state took control of the province. In the rural areas of Damascus, young men are mainly joining the criminal police (Syria TV 21/2/2025). The Aleppo recruitment department announced on 12.2.2025 that recruitment into the ranks of the Ministry of Defence will continue until 15.2.2025. There, the admission requirement for young men is that they must be between 18 and 22 years old, single and free of chronic illnesses and injuries (Enab 12/2/2025). The Syrian Ministry of Defence opened several recruitment centres in the Dara'a governorate in southern Syria on 17.3.2025 (NPA 17/3/2025). The Ministry of Interior has since opened recruitment centres in all government-controlled areas (ISW 16/4/2025). The new government reportedly requires new recruits to undergo 21 days of Sharia training (FDD 28/1/2025).

In late February 2025, Facebook pages circulated claims that General Security had set up checkpoints in Jableh, Banyas and Qardaha to arrest anyone with a settlement card. The pages claim that General Security is transferring those arrested to southern Syria, where there is an escalation by the Israeli occupation. The Syrian government denied carrying out recruitment campaigns in the provinces of Latakia and Tartus. Recruitment continues to be based on voluntary participation (Syria TV 26/2/2025).

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9.1 Defence and reserve service in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 15:58

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial

resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Military service

Section 5 of the Social Contract of 2023 regulates the duty of self-defence in the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES). Article 111 states that self-defence is a guarantee and continuation of life, and is based on the right and duty to defend existence. It requires the establishment of a self-defence system based on the awareness of legitimate self-defence and organised democratic society in North and East Syria. On the one hand, there are the Community Protection Forces, which are responsible for protecting North and East Syria and ensuring the protection of citizens' lives and property from all attacks and occupations. The Community Protection Forces are organised with the participation of all citizens. Self-defence is a right and a duty for every citizen. It is the duty of organised ethnic and religious groups to participate effectively in the self-defence system, starting from neighbourhoods, villages, towns and all residential units. On the other hand, Article 111 also mentions the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). They are the legitimate defence forces in the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. They accept the voluntary accession of the sons and daughters of the people and the duty of self-defence. Their activities are supervised by the People's Democratic Council and the Defence Commission. They organise themselves autonomously within the Democratic Confederal System of North and East Syria and are tasked with defending the DAANES and all Syrian territories and protecting them from any potential external attacks or threats ([RIC 14/12/2023](#)). According to Law No. 1 on self-defence, men are considered liable for military service from the age of 18 and must have completed their self-defence service by the age of forty (Article 13). Any male resident of the North and East Syria region who has reached the legal age for self-defence service or anyone who has been a permanent resident of North and East Syria for more than three years and has Syrian citizenship is liable for military service (Article 1) ([AANES-GC 22/2/2024](#)[DIS 6/2024](#)). However, two sources interviewed by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) expressed doubts about the consistent conscription of persons from outside the DAANES in all regions ([DIS 6/2024](#)). Women in the areas controlled by the Autonomous Administration can volunteer for military service ([Enab 22/2/2024](#)). Vladimir van Wilgenburg, journalist and author, and an expert on Syrian Kurds has not heard of any cases of women being forcibly conscripted for self-defence ([DIS 6/2024](#)).

The so-called Defence Office of the Executive Council of the 'Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria' has determined the birth cohorts required for conscription, while the arrest campaigns against young people in order to join the ranks of the SDF continue. The statement was distributed by the Autonomous Administration's Defence Office to all defence offices in the region. It states that anyone born between 1.1.1998 and 31.12.2005 is liable for military service in self-defence ([Shaam 10/1/2024](#)). Just four days after the guidelines were issued, in which the birth cohorts for compulsory self-defence were announced, the SDF resumed

a recruitment campaign in al-Hasakah in June 2024, after having stopped the recruitment processes the month before, on 8 May 2024 ([Enab 27/6/2024a](#)). At the beginning of July 2024, for example, 240 people were captured in the provinces of Deir ez-Zour, al-Hasakah and ar-Raqqa in order to recruit them for military service ([SO 2/7/2024](#)). According to Article 2 of Law No. 1 on Compulsory Self-Defence, the period of service in self-defence is twelve full months starting from the date of enrolment of the conscript ([AANES-GC 22/2/2024](#)).

In 2014, forced recruitment was introduced by the People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG), a military pillar of the SDF, following the Dohuk Agreement, in which the Kurdish parties met in the Iraqi city of Dohuk to reach an agreement on the administration of the region ([Enab 22/2/2024](#)).

According to experts interviewed by ACCORD, Arabs and Kurds are treated equally before the law. However, Fabrice Balanche explains that more flexibility would be shown towards Arabs in order to avoid an uprising. Arab tribal leaders have local power and obtain exemptions and deferrals for certain young Arabs. According to a Syria expert, the specific consequences for Arabs vary from region to region. Not all areas controlled by the SDF are under the same kind of control. In the predominantly Arab-populated tribal regions of Deir ez-Zour, for example, the SDF do not have the capacity to enforce direct recruitment as they do in al-Hasakah province. Unlike Balanche, Muhsen Al-Mustafa, a researcher at the Omran Centre for Strategic Studies, believes that Arab conscientious objectors are treated differently when arrested and may be subjected to insults and violence ([ACCORD 6/9/2023](#)). According to sources from the Danish Immigration Service (DIS), DAANES is cautious in implementing the law on self-defence in areas with a predominantly Arab population. Similarly, Christians are in practice not subjected to the same enforcement of the Self-Defence Act as Kurds, according to another source. As a result, Christian youths do not usually take part in compulsory self-defence, but instead join the Christian police force Sutoro for three years. This service exempts them from the self-defence obligation ([DIS 6/2024](#)).

Several DIS sources, including a former recruit who completed his compulsory military service two years ago, reported that the self-defence service begins with a basic theoretical and practical military training programme. During the theoretical part, conscripts are taught the general history of the National Defence Forces, as well as culture and ethics. They also receive a theoretical introduction to military topics, including military terminology and weapons. In the practical part of the training programme, conscripts undergo physical training and weapons training. During the first phase of basic training, conscripts do not have a single day off. After completing their training, they have eight to ten days off before they are deployed to their respective units and areas of responsibility. After that, conscripts have one day off every ten days for the rest of their service. After the training period, which lasts up to two months, the conscripts are assigned to various tasks in different centres or units, where they work for the rest of their service. The conscripts' education or qualifications are often taken into account when assigning their tasks. For example, those with a better educational background and skills are assigned to tasks in offices or facilities that could benefit from their skills. Conscripts with low or no educational background are often assigned to tasks related to guarding or protecting public buildings. In

general, conscripts are not deployed in combat situations. However, there have been cases where conscripts have been involved in combat situations, e. g . during the battle for Afrin in 2018, heavy fighting in Deir ez-Zour in the summer of 2023, fighting in Tell Abyad and Islamic State (ISIS) attacks on al-Hasakah prison (2022), which was mainly guarded by conscripts (DIS 6/2024).

Deferment and exemption

Legislation allows individuals who are required to serve in self-defence to defer or be exempted from service, depending on their individual circumstances. These rules, which include exemptions for medical reasons and deferrals for students or those living abroad, are upheld and enforced by DAANES. A person who has been granted an exemption or release from the self-defence requirement will have this noted in their self-defence booklet (DIS 6/2024). Article 16 of Law No. 1 on the Duty of Self-Defence allows students to defer their enlistment for one academic year, starting on 15 March of each year, if they submit the required documents (AANES-GC 22/2/2024). In September 2023, the local government in north-eastern Syria made amendments to the Self-Defence Law. The amendments set a specific age limit for the deferral of studies, for each level of education. Thus, a master's student can defer service until the age of 32 and has no right to defer after this age, even if he has not yet completed his studies or another branch of study. A new article no. 30 has been added to the law, which stipulates that doctors and pharmacists who have completed their studies and sign up to serve in the country can defer their military service for a full year, provided the applicant has not passed the age of 30. The law was already amended in 2018, for example, deferment for university students, the only child in the family, as well as families of the fallen and those who have brothers in the Internal Security Forces (Assayish) and the YPG (Enab 22/2/2024). According to Article 17 , students who have been granted a deferment and have not yet reached the age to begin their studies, such as students who have been granted a deferment while they were still 17 years old, this year is not counted as one of the deferment years. (AANES-GC 22/2/2024). In addition, a DAANES Department of Defence source clarified that students do not have to be enrolled at educational institutions within DAANES to be eligible for a deferment of their self-defence obligation. They can also be enrolled in institutions in Syrian government-controlled areas or in Syria's neighbouring countries, including Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan (DIS 6/2024).

According to Article 25 of Law No. 1 on Self-Defence Duty, brothers of conscripts from the same mother within the self-defence duty who have completed the training course are granted a deferment. This deferment is granted twice for six months at a time. Article 26 regulates administrative deferments. For example, anyone who has recently returned from outside Syria can be granted a deferment for a maximum of six months. The only brother of a missing person can be granted a deferral for two years. Siblings who have not yet reached the age of 18 and whose parents are deceased or disabled can defer for one year. The above deferments are granted after a review by the Self-Defence Assignment Centre and approval by the Self-Defence Assignment Department (AANES-GC 22/2/2024). Individuals who have served in an installation or troop under the DAANES for at least three years may be exempt from the self-defence requirement. This applies to paid, contract-based service in any DAANES-recognised

establishment, such as the traffic police. Former members of the Internal Security Forces (Assayish) or the SDF are exempt from self-defence service if they have already served with the Assayish or the SDF for at least two years between 2012 and 2015. Individuals currently serving with the Assayish or SDF for three to five years can also apply for exemption. Young men who do not wish to serve can consider alternative ways to fulfil the provisions of the Duty of Self-Defence Act. One option is to serve with the traffic police for three years, which would qualify them for an exemption from their duty of self-defence (DIS 6/2024).

According to Article 29 of Law No. 1 on the Duty of Self-defence, the following are exempt from the duty of self-defence: Children and siblings of martyrs who are officially registered in the registers of the Martyrs' Family Commission and have a certificate of martyrdom, persons with special needs and patients with diseases that prevent them from performing their duty, according to the medical reports of the Military Medical Centre and the approval of the Defence in the Autonomous and Civil Administrations, the only son of parents or a parent, whether both are alive or dead, a foundling whose parentage is unknown. All male siblings with special needs are treated as the only sibling according to the reports of the military medical centre (AANES-GC 22/2/2024). Depending on the nature of the condition, an individual may be either exempt or deferred from duty. Medical exemptions are granted for physical and mental illnesses that prevent the person concerned from fulfilling the duty of self-defence. In such cases, a medical examination is carried out to determine the person's fitness for service. According to Article 29 of the Law on the Duty of Self-Defence, persons with special needs and patients with diseases that prevent them from fulfilling the duty of self-defence may be exempted from the duty if they have an approved medical report from the Military Medical Centre and the approval of the defence offices in administrative and civilian departments. A Syrian university professor told the Danish Immigration Service that the rules for medical exemptions continue to be implemented and followed by the DAANES authorities (DIS 6/2024).

According to Article 27 of Law No. 1 on Self-Defence Duty, residents and residence permit holders from all countries except those countries that have a land border with Syria must pay an annual deferral fee of 400 US dollars for each year from the entry into force of the law (AANES-GC 22/2/2024). Deferral by payment of this fee may be utilised twice in total. Individuals can move freely within the DAANES without being confiscated for self-defence after paying the fee. Individuals from the DAANES living in Syria's neighbouring countries may receive a deferral for educational reasons, e.g. if they are enrolled in an educational institution in Turkey (DIS 6/2024). According to Article 36 of Law No. 1 on Compulsory Self-Defence Service, persons are not obliged to perform self-defence service if they obtain non-Syrian citizenship (AANES-GC 22/2/2024). Men in the relevant age group who have left Syria but return after exceeding the maximum age for service are usually granted amnesty. However, a fine of up to 300 US dollars may be imposed (DIS 6/2024).

Conscientious objectors and deserters

According to Article 15 of Law No. 1 on the Duty of Self-Defence, any defaulting soldier who is drafted is punished by having one month added to the end of his or her term of service (AANES-GC 22/2/2024). Sources interviewed by the Danish Immigration Service confirmed that the punishment of an additional month is also applied in practice. The names of conscientious objectors are published and passed on at checkpoints. They are searched for there, but not in their homes (DIS 6/2024). Those caught in the act of illegally crossing the border are taken directly to the training centre to fulfil their duty of self-defence, according to Article 28 of Law No. 1 on Duty of Self-Defence (AANES-GC 22/2/2024). According to sources from the Danish Immigration Service (DIS), conscientious objectors are temporarily detained when they are apprehended at checkpoints and sent to fulfil their duty. The family of the person concerned is informed of their arrest and call-up. DIS sources were not aware of any cases of violence or ill-treatment of conscientious objectors or deserters apprehended at checkpoints. Life is challenging for those who evade compulsory self-defence in the national security forces, as many young men avoid checkpoints and wait for opportunities to escape. Sources have reported of escapees who have been in hiding for years. In Arab-dominated areas, the escape can last longer as authorities tread carefully to avoid provoking tensions by searching for and arresting those who have failed to fulfil their duty (DIS 6/2024). Al-Mustafa, a researcher at the Omran Center for Strategic Studies, writes in an email to ACCORD in September 2023 that all conscientious objectors fall under the provisions of the Duty of Self-Defence Law and are treated according to the law. The Assyrian search the residence of persons wanted for service, check recruitment lists at checkpoints and arrest those wanted. According to the law, any person absent from service is be arrested and penalised with a one-month extension of service. A Syria expert contacted by ACCORD stated in an email from August 2023 that the consequences of refusing to serve in the self-defence forces depend on the profile of the conscript and the region they came from. The stricter the Kurdish control, the higher the likelihood that recruits would not take the risk of openly objecting to self-defence service. In al-Hasakah, for example, people of serviceable age can be arrested and forced to serve (ACCORD 6/9/2023).

The SDF define a deserter in the Self-Defence Law as a fighter who has missed 15 consecutive days of service after joining, while the full term of service is twelve months (Enab 22/2/2024). According to two sources interviewed by the DIS, deserters are not additionally penalised, but investigations are conducted into their motives for desertion. Deserters often choose to leave the region for fear of possible consequences, although the details of these consequences remain unclear. Amnesties are regularly announced for both draft evaders and deserters, provided they enlist and complete their military service. The most recent amnesty was issued at the beginning of May 2024. Young people usually fulfil their self-defence obligations immediately if there is a stable security situation in the DAANES, while they can actively seek a conscientious objection if external security threats persist (DIS 6/2024).

Family members of conscientious objectors and deserters are not penalised. DIS sources were not aware of any cases in which family members of conscientious objectors and deserters were subjected to harassment or other offences due to their relatives' refusal to perform military service

or desertion, even in cases where the conscientious objector was arrested at a checkpoint (DIS 6/2024).

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9.2 The Syrian Armed Forces - military and reserve service (as of 3/12/2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 15:58

Article 46 of the Syrian constitution of 2012 stipulates compulsory military service. It stated that conscription is a sacred duty regulated by law. The second paragraph stated that the defence of the territorial integrity of the homeland and the protection of state secrets are the duty of every citizen (SeG 24/2/2012). Male Syrian citizens were generally subject to compulsory military service from the age of 18 for a period of seven years. Those under the age of 18 were not conscripted by the Syrian army (ÖB Damaskus 2023). Military service was regulated by law in Decree-Law No. 30, which was issued in 2007. The duration of military service was 24 months. Compulsory military service began on the first day of January of the year in which the citizen reached the age of eighteen and ended in the year in which the conscript reached the age of forty-two or was exempted from compulsory military service (PoS 12/5/2007). According to the council of trust at the Austrian embassy in Damascus, the official period of military service was 2.5 years. After that you had to do reserve service. Since the outbreak of the crisis in 2011, this often lasted up to seven or eight years, meaning that many had to perform military service

for a total of ten to twelve years (VA der ÖB Damaskus 22/9/2024). Until the fall of the regime, military service had often shortened to 6 or 6.5 years (OrthoPatSYR 22/9/2024).

The regime's armed forces were made up of three categories of personnel: 1. officers, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men who volunteered, 2. men who were drafted into military service as officers, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men, and 3. those who were called up for military service, i.e. Syrian citizens who had reached the age of 18 and had received a military service record but had postponed their service for educational or social reasons, or those who had completed their compulsory service and were later called up for reserve service. In light of this, the Syrian government relied heavily on reservists to fill the ranks of the armed forces (Jusoor 1/10/2024). The Turkish-Russian ceasefire agreement in March 2020 and the subsequent cessation of major military operations provided the Assad regime with the opportunity to introduce reforms in the military and security sector, including significant changes to the reserve service system. The Assad regime recognised the limitations of a conscript-based army, especially after years of conflict, and therefore sought to build a more professional army based on volunteer services. Several administrative orders were issued between mid-2023 and mid-2024. This marked the beginning of a broader plan aimed at transforming the Syrian military into a 'professional, advanced, qualitative army', as the Director General of the Army and Armed Forces put it. One of the first steps in this transformation was to shorten the duration of reserve service, with the ultimate goal of redefining conscription altogether. The regime introduced five- and ten-year recruitment contracts that offered competitive salaries and other incentives, including exemption from compulsory service after five years. A structured discharge plan was also introduced, divided into three phases with a maximum duration of 24 months (SO 12/8/2024). In conjunction with these changes, the Assad regime had also made numerous legal amendments to the Military Service Law, which was originally introduced by Decree Law No. 30 of 2007. These amendments were crucial to close unforeseen legal loopholes and expand the regime's interests. For example, Decree Law No. 31 was introduced in 2020, which allowed Syrian expatriates to pay a cash allowance of USD 5,000 for exemption from reserve duty, generating much-needed foreign currency for the Ministry of Defence. Further amendments in 2022 refined the criteria for exemption from compulsory military service in case of disability and clarified the conditions for only children or similar cases. In 2023, the regime introduced age-based exemptions, allowing individuals aged 40 - and later reduced to 38 - to pay a cash allowance of US\$4,800 to avoid reserve service. By 2024, additional provisions were introduced for persons with partial disabilities that allowed them to pay a reduced cash allowance for the exemption, consistent with broader legislative efforts to support persons with disabilities (SO 12/8/2024). In September 2024, Decree Law No. 20 was issued, amending the military law to reduce the age of service for reserve duty from 40 to 38 years (SANA 1/8/2024). At the end of 2023, the Syrian government began a campaign for the non-compulsory recruitment of soldiers (Jusoor 1/10/2024). The volunteer contract, which was issued on 21 November 2023, offers two periods of service: five and ten years (Enab 2/8/2024). Incentives for recruiting volunteers are financial, such as a salary of up to 1,300,000 Syrian pounds (SYP) for both periods, in addition to bonus payments, such as an annual bonus, a marriage grant worth 2 million SYP. Conditions for volunteering included that the volunteer has been a Syrian citizen for five years, was between

18 and 32 years old at the time of application, was in good standing, had not been convicted of a felony or heinous crime, and had not served more than three months in prison (Enab 28/11/2023).

Deferment and release

According to Decree-Law No. 30 of 2007, compulsory military service could be postponed in the following cases:

1. Pupils and students who were studying at recognised public or private schools, institutes and universities inside or outside the country, if they were in continuous education and did not exceed a certain age (the age varied depending on the type of university enrolled). In times of war, the deferment of studies for all Syrians could be cancelled by a decision of the commander-in-chief.
2. A son of parents or a parent of two or more sons liable for military service, provided that the number of those who performed military service did not exceed two and the number of those in active military service did not exceed three. The parents or parent (in the event of the death of the other parent) could choose which son should be exempt from military service, as long as this did not result in him exceeding the age of 37 (PoS 12/5/2007; cf. VA der ÖB Damaskus 22/9/2024).
3. A person who was demonstrably temporarily unfit for service.
4. A convicted person for the duration of their sentence or a prisoner on remand for the duration of their imprisonment.
5. A breadwinner who could prove that he was looking after one or more of his family members who had no other breadwinner (PoS 12/5/2007).

Persons could be exempted from military service in the following cases:

1. A soldier who had completed at least five years of active service.
2. Anyone who had completed ten years of active service in the internal security forces.
3. Persons who were not fit for service for medical reasons (PoS 12/5/2007), for example due to disabilities or certain serious illnesses above a certain degree of illness (VA der ÖB Damaskus 22/9/2024).
4. The son of parents who had already lost a child through martyrdom (PoS 12/5/2007).
5. The only son of a family with no other children (PoS 12/5/2007; cf. VA der ÖB Damaskus 22/9/2024).
6. A son whose siblings were prevented from caring for themselves due to illness or disability.
7. Dual nationals who had performed military service in the country where they hold a second citizenship in addition to Syrian citizenship (PoS 12/5/2007; cf. VA der ÖB Damaskus 22/9/2024).

8. Anyone who had paid the compensation payment (PoS 12/5/2007).

A compensation payment of 3,000 US dollars could be paid by those conscripts who were designated for fixed service (SeG 8/11/2020). A financial compensation payment was also accepted from all Syrian citizens and equals who were subject to compulsory military service and lived outside the Syrian Arab Republic (PoS 12/5/2007). The payment varied depending on the length of time spent abroad: 7,000 US dollars for conscripts if the conscript had lived abroad for at least four years before or after reaching conscription age, 8,000 US dollars if the conscript had lived abroad for at least three years but less than four years before or after reaching conscription age, 9,000 US dollars if the conscript had lived abroad for at least two years but less than three years before or after reaching conscription age, 10,000 US dollars if the conscript had lived abroad for at least one year but less than two years before or after reaching the conscription age, 3,000 US dollars if the conscript was born abroad and had lived there or in another country permanently and without interruption until reaching the conscription age, 6,500 US dollars if the conscript was born abroad and had lived there for at least ten years before reaching the conscription age. USD 500 was deducted from the latter for each additional year spent abroad up to a maximum of 17 years (SeG 8/11/2020). This equalisation payment had to be paid once. The money collected through these compensation payments went to the account of the Ministry of Defence at the Syrian Central Bank and was included in the annual budget (VA der ÖB Damaskus 22/9/2024). In some cases of illness, the persons concerned were basically fit for duty, but were only deployed in the office (VA der ÖB Damaskus 22/9/2024). Christian and Muslim clergy could still be exempted from military service on grounds of conscience [note: under Assad]. Muslim clerics had to pay a tax for this (USDOS 30/6/2024).

Reserve service

Reserve service was regulated in Decree Law No. 30 of 2007. Reserve forces were additional forces in the armed forces consisting of officers, non-commissioned officers and members of the reserve. Those who had completed military service and had not yet exceeded the age limit for assignment, had completed military service in the armed forces of another country, had completed active service and had not yet exceeded the age limit for reserve service (PoS 12/5/2007) were assigned to reserve service.

In 2007, Decree-Law No. 30 of the Military Service Act was issued, which regulates exemptions from reserve service. An exemption could be granted if there was a permanent health incapacity, for the remaining children of one or both parents who had lost a child through martyrdom, for the only son of parents who could not support themselves and for the father of a child who had suffered martyrdom (PoS 12/5/2007). In 2020, there was an adjustment to this decree, adding to the exemption those who had resided permanently outside Syria for at least one year and paid a cash compensation of USD 5,000 (SeG 8/11/2020). Between mid-2023 and mid-2024, the regime's army issued several administrative orders to end the retention of various categories of reserve soldiers. By 2025, the regime expected to release approximately 152,000 soldiers from reserve service. This plan included provisions for volunteer soldiers, such as a five-year exemption from reserve service after discharge, the option to serve one year of continuous or

intermittent reserve service, and a full exemption from reserve service for those who signed ten-year contracts (SO 12/8/2024). In September 2024, Decree Law No. 20 was issued, which amended the military law to reduce the age of service for reserve service from 40 to 38 years and to exempt individuals from reserve service after payment of a compensation fee if a minimum disability or partial disability (with which one is still fit for military service) is determined after a medical examination (SANA 1/8/2024). The Syrian government restricted reserve service so that it was no longer open-ended, but was to expire in three phases from 1 July 2024 until the beginning of 2026. However, the regime reserved the right to change the duration of the reserve service depending on the recruitment quota (Jusoor 1/10/2024).

According to the amendment to Art 74 and 97 of the law, anyone who reached the age of 43 without completing military service and without a statutory exemption had to pay a penalty or their assets could be seized. A presidential decree was required to remit a penalty or confiscate assets under this law. From time to time, such a decree was issued and enforced. The decree was always only valid for a short period of time. It usually concerned a specific person (VA der ÖB Damaskus 22/9/2024).

According to the council of trust at the Austrian embassy in Damascus, no property has yet been confiscated from conscientious objectors or their families under the Conscription Act (Article 97). This legal regulation only applied to regular soldiers, not to conscripts. If regular soldiers deserted, they were arrested and their property confiscated if they were apprehended (VA der ÖB Damaskus 22/9/2024).

Special units and pro-government militias

The special units were regular units of the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) and were recruited from other regular units of the SAA. Conscripts and reservists could also be assigned to serve in a special unit. Most Syrian soldiers preferred not to join the special units, as the training in these units was intensive and hard (DIS 4/2023).

In recruiting volunteers, the SAA competed with its allies, Russia and Iran, who wanted to recruit members for their militias in exchange for better financial and security privileges. The 47th Brigade in Hama, for example, was an important recruitment centre for Iranian militias, where those who enlisted there were offered a full exemption from compulsory service in the regime's armed forces if they served for just one and a half years. After that, they were allowed to leave the service. Similarly, Special Missions for Protection and Security Guards, a Syrian company that worked for Russia, regularly offered jobs as guards for oil installations. In return, the applicants received comfortable working hours, a security card and a normalisation of the legal status of those who had not completed their compulsory service (Jusoor 1/10/2024). The council of trust at the Austrian embassy in Syria stated that service in a pro-government militia was not recognised as a period of military service. Almost 50% of the pro-government militias consisted of reservists. In the Russian-led 5th Brigade, for example, the soldiers received 800 US dollars as a salary (VA der ÖB Damaskus 22/9/2024).

Amnesties

On 22 September 2024, Presidential Decree No. 27 was issued, which allowed an amnesty for crimes committed before this date, including desertion internally and externally, as defined in Articles 100 and 101 of the Military Criminal Code. However, as with previous decrees, persons in hiding or on the run were excluded from this decree unless they turned themselves in within three months (for internal desertion) or four months (for external desertion). However, the decree excluded Articles 102 and 103 of the Military Criminal Code, which dealt with 'defection to the enemy' and 'conspiracy to defect', both of which were punishable by death. The regime categorised military personnel who had defected to join the opposition forces under these articles. In addition, articles such as 137 to 150, which provided for long prison sentences or the death penalty, did not fall within the scope of this amnesty. In practice, persons wanted by security agencies were excluded from the amnesties, as these agencies operated outside of legal and constitutional oversight. Prosecutors did not visit security departments to determine whether detainees were eligible for amnesty and limited their oversight to official prisons and detention centres (OSS 5/11/2024).

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10 General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 22:36

[Information on the human rights situation in Syria is currently difficult to obtain and in some cases very contradictory. In the following, the current situation is presented as it appears from publicly accessible sources. In some cases, false information is being disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The human rights situation is particularly affected by misinformation. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Human Rights Watch states that non-state armed groups in Syria, including Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and groups of the Syrian National Army (SNA), which launched the offensive on 27 November 2024 that toppled the Syrian government after twelve days, were responsible for human rights violations and war crimes in 2024 ([HRW 16/1/2025](#)). The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) fears a return to a 'dark era' because arrests and executions are increasing in light of the deteriorating security situation ([SOHR 2/2/2025](#)). The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documented 129 cases of arbitrary arrests by the transitional government in January 2025 ([SNHR 4/2/2025b](#)) and 21 cases in February 2025 ([SNHR 3/3/2025](#)).

The transition from the regime under Bashar al-Assad to the transitional government under the leadership of Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) is said to have gone relatively smoothly. Reports of reprisals, revenge killings and religiously motivated violence were minimal. Looting and destruction were quickly brought under control and insurgent fighters were disciplined ([AP 15/12/2024b](#)). There were no major massacres or revenge campaigns ([DW 12/12/2024](#)).

Since the rebel groups took control of Hama governorate on 5 December 2024, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has documented a number of violations, including extrajudicial killings, destruction of homes and attacks on public and private property ([SNHR 19/12/2024](#)). In mid-January 2025, the wave of vigilante attacks on former employees of the regime increased. People became victims of assassinations and mob violence. While some of those affected are individuals whose involvement in the regime's abuses of civilians after 2011 is well documented, other incidents have involved recently reconciled former members of the regime, low-ranking conscripts and seemingly random young men from the Alawite community ([Etana 17/1/2025](#)). Revenge killings are carried out by armed groups, some of which claim to be linked to the military operations department *[information on the military operations department can be found in the*

chapter [Security authorities - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)]. They target civilians for political or sectarian reasons ([SOHR 26/1/2025](#)). The provinces of Hama and Homs were most affected by these developments, as they became the scene of frequent confrontations. In coastal areas such as Latakia and Tartus, there was a deterioration in the security situation and an increase in killings and executions [*These provinces were the heartland of the Assad regime and were largely spared from fighting during the years of civil war, Note*]. On 11 January 2025, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) counted 80 cases of killings since 8 December 2024, including executions on the ground, in which 157 people were killed, among those killed were women and children ([SOHR 11/1/2025](#)). Arbitrary killings and on-the-spot executions took place in the regions of Hama and Homs in particular, as well as in the coastal areas of Latakia and Tartus ([SOHR 3/1/2025](#)). According to reports by local activists and eyewitnesses, the Ansar at-Tawhid group [*information on this group can be found in the chapter [Security authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#). Note*] were involved in a large proportion of these offences, in addition to other groups that could not be precisely identified ([SNHR 19/12/2024](#)). At least 124 people were killed in a series of violent incidents between 8 December 2024 and 8 January 2025, including revenge attacks, vandalism, killings and executions in the provinces of Homs and Hama and in Syrian coastal towns. A significant part of the violence was reportedly triggered by the dissemination of fake news videos on social media aimed at fuelling sectarian tensions ([MAITIC 9/1/2025](#)). An unconfirmed attack on an Alawite shrine sparked a wave of protests among the Alawite community in Homs, Latakia, Tartus and parts of Damascus in December 2024. The protests led to military operations by the new Syrian security apparatus to drive out former regime fighters ([AIMon 11/1/2025](#)). According to the Middle East Institute, one of the most pressing problems is not sectarian attacks [*for information on attacks on minorities, see the chapter [Ethnic and religious minorities - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)*], but rather the opaque process of targeting men who have served in the regime's armed forces. In general, the security forces' attacks target men who are believed to have committed crimes (whether proven or not), rather than any Alawites the soldiers happen to encounter. The cases that have fuelled the most fear are the kidnappings and executions of former members of the regime ([MEI 21/1/2025](#)). According to France 24, reports and videos on social media in Syria show that reprisal killings have begun ([FR24 13/12/2024](#)). Images have circulated of former regime government officials being dragged through the streets by force ([PBS 16/12/2024](#)). Since the new government took power, the security authorities have carried out a series of security campaigns aimed at pursuing the 'remnants of the former regime'. Hundreds of people who have not regularised their status with the new authorities have been arrested. Residents and organisations have reported abuses, including the confiscation of homes and executions on the spot ([AAA 2/2/2025](#)). A security campaign in Homs against regime supporters in January 2025 resulted in the arrest of a number of men, including civilians, who were found to have committed offences related to the unofficial seizure of vehicles. Most elements of the Military Operations Department were disciplined, with the exception of some incidents described by officials as isolated cases, such as the breaking of musical instruments and water pipes, as well as bottles of alcoholic beverages and damage to the contents of some houses. Some

detainees were forced to perform humiliating acts, such as imitating animal noises, and were insulted and abused with sectarian phrases ([Enab 6/1/2025](#)). There were also raids by the new security authorities in Damascus on 8 January 2025. They followed a three-week campaign in the Alawite heartland on the coast ([National 8/1/2025](#)). The Civil Peace Group, a civil society group, recorded the deaths of ten people arrested during security campaigns and raids in the prisons of the Military Operations Department between 28 January and 1 February 2025 in different parts of Homs ([AAA 2/2/2025](#)). Local armed groups operating under the command of the Military Operations Department carried out revenge operations, serious assaults and arbitrary arrests, targeting dozens of people, humiliating and degrading them, and attacking religious symbols ([SOHR 28/1/2025](#)). The new government responded to the accusations of human rights activists by arresting dozens of members of local armed groups under the control of the new rulers for their involvement in the 'security operations' in the Homs region ([Spiegel 27/1/2025](#)). Previously, the new rulers had accused members of a 'criminal group' of posing as 'members of the security services' during a security operation ([Zeit Online 27/1/2025](#)). An attack on a Syrian security patrol by militant supporters of ousted head of state Bashar al-Assad escalated into clashes on 6 March 2025 in which more than 1,000 people were killed within four days ([SOHR 10/3/2025a](#)). Armed men loyal to the Syrian government carried out executions on the ground and spoke of a cleansing of the country, as eyewitnesses and videos prove. They provided a gruesome picture of a crackdown on the remnants of the former Assad regime that degenerated into communal killings ([CNN 9/3/2025](#)). According to human rights reports, Turkish-backed groups were involved in 'systematic ethnic cleansing' and large-scale 'massacres' against civilians in Baniyas, Tartus and Latakia, killing hundreds of people, including women and children ([LebDeb 10/3/2025](#)). Members of the Ministry of Defence and the forces supporting them have committed war crimes and human rights violations without fear of legal repercussions. A total of 1,093 deaths were recorded ([SOHR 11/3/2025](#)). 745 Alawite civilians were killed for sectarian reasons, according to the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, emphasising that they were not involved in the fighting or associated with the regime ([Sky News 9/3/2025a](#)). He further states that civilians were slaughtered in some areas, while others were executed by firing squads ([AlHurra 9/3/2025](#)), such as in the neighbourhoods of Baniyas and al-Qusour in Tartous governorate, where 92 citizens were executed by a firing squad of the Ministry of Defence and Internal Security ([SOHR 10/3/2025e](#)). Most of the civilians killed by government forces were Alawites, but some Christians were also confirmed dead. Among the former regime insurgents killed were Sunnis, Alawites and Christians ([TWI 10/3/2025](#)). Mass killings took place in the towns between Baniyas and Qadmous, including of children and elderly people ([AlHurra 9/3/2025](#)). According to the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), tens of thousands of houses were looted and burnt down ([Sky News 9/3/2025a](#)). *[Details on the incidents can be found in the chapter [Security situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#). Background information on the perpetrator groups can be found in the chapter [Security authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)]* UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen spoke about reports of people being killed in crossfire and severe ill-treatment in detention. Pedersen denounced abductions, looting, confiscation of property and forced evictions of families from government housing. He called

on all armed actors to stop these kinds of actions, to back up their assurances with concrete measures, and to work on a comprehensive framework for transitional justice ([AJ 13/2/2025b](#)).

The Executive Director of the organisation Christians for Democracy, agrees with the new Syrian government's justification that what is happening does not reflect the policies of the transitional government. He has divided the violations into two categories: Crimes and violations committed by individuals with the intention of taking revenge on specific individuals or those who collaborated with the previous regime, and violations committed by some extremist groups that disagree with the policies adopted by the new government in Damascus. The transitional government is holding accountable those who have been proven to be involved in attacks against civilians ([SOHR 2/2/2025](#)).

The Syrian transitional government under ash-Shara' has promised that those responsible for acts of violence against Syrians by the ousted Assad regime will be held accountable. However, it is difficult to achieve this, as the exact number of victims is not known and the perpetrators have not yet been identified ([BBC 13/12/2024](#)). The HTS would like to list the ex-officers involved in state torture and hold them accountable as war criminals. It has even offered a reward for information on high-ranking army and security officers who were involved in war crimes ([FAZ 10/12/2024](#)). *[Details on the investigation of war crimes, human rights violations etc. under the Assad regime can be found in the chapter [Legal protection / Judiciary - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

After the conquest of Manbij, the groups supported by Turkey looted the property of Kurdish citizens and carried out identity-related killings. They carried out revenge attacks, burned houses and humiliated Kurds ([SOHR 9/12/2024](#); cf. [ISW 16/12/2024](#)). A Human Rights Watch staff member stated that the Syrian National Army (SNA) and Turkish forces have shown a clear and disturbing pattern of unlawful attacks on civilians and civilian objects and even appear to celebrate them. The Turkish Armed Forces and the SNA have a poor human rights record in the Turkish-occupied areas of northern Syria. Human Rights Watch has found that SNA groups and other factions, including members of the Turkish armed forces and intelligence services, have abducted, unlawfully arrested and detained people, including children, committed sexual violence and torture with little accountability, and engaged in looting, theft of land and housing, and extortion ([HRW 30/1/2025](#)). In recent years, SNA fighters are alleged to have committed serious human rights violations against Kurdish communities in 'Afrin and around Aleppo. They have been accused of arbitrary arrests, detentions without contact with the outside world, abductions and torture. During the 'Deterrence of Aggression' offensive, HTS arrested several fighters from SNA groups north of Aleppo in the Sheikh Maqsoud neighbourhood and accused them of robbing and injuring Kurdish civilians, an expert said ([MEE 7/12/2024](#)). The United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic continued to report arrests, violence and financial extortion by the military police of the Syrian National Army (SNA) and certain groups, in particular the Sultan Suleiman Shah Division and the Sultan Murad Division ([UNHRC 12/8/2024](#)) *[further information on the groups can be found in the chapter [Security Authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].* SNHR documented 41 cases of arbitrary arrests by SNA groups in January

2025 (SNHR 4/2/2025b) and 34 cases in February 2025, including one woman (SNHR 3/3/2025). According to human rights reports, two Turkish-backed groups were also involved in 'systematic ethnic cleansing operations' and large-scale 'massacres' against civilians in Banyas, Tartus and Latakia in early March 2025, in which hundreds of people, including women and children, were killed (LebDeb 10/3/2025). [Details on these incidents can be found in the chapter [Security situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].

According to a French-Syrian writer and Syrian artists, new forms of censorship have emerged since the fall of al-Assad on 8 December 2024. The expression of non-Islamic beliefs has become a serious challenge in Syria. The Syrian authorities have passed a new law that provides for a one-year prison sentence for anyone who commits the 'crime of blasphemy'. The fear of expressing opinions is still palpable in the public sphere. When discussing topics such as romantic relationships, secularism, freedom of expression and especially religion, speakers make sure there is no HTS member nearby (MC Dawliya 29/1/2025FR24 26/12/2024b). On 26/12/2024, the Ministry of Information issued a ban on the publication or dissemination of 'any content or information of a sectarian nature aimed at promoting division and discrimination' (FR24 26/12/2024b).

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10.1 General human rights situation in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 14:37

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Parts of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are alleged to have been involved in human rights violations, including attacks on residential areas, physical abuse, unjustified detention, recruitment or use of child soldiers, restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, and destruction and demolition of houses. The SDF investigated some allegations against its forces and imposed penalties on some members for human rights violations, but no statistics were available. The SDF and other opposition groups occasionally imposed restrictions on human rights organisations or harassed individual activists. In some cases, they were even imprisoned ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)). The Internal Security Forces (Assayish) and the Anti-Terrorist Units (Yekîneyên Antî Teror - YAT), both belonging to DAANES, have carried out arbitrary arrests in numerous places in the north-east ([FES 1/4/2024](#)).

In October 2023, Turkey began months of sustained airstrikes in north-east Syria in retaliation for a terrorist attack in Ankara allegedly committed by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê - PKK). Civilian infrastructure was destroyed and civilians killed. As a result, more than one million people were left without access to water ([NH 21/2/2024](#)).

Freedom of religion

The right to freedom of religion is enshrined in the social contract of the Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES). Article 40 stipulates that everyone has freedom of belief, conscience, thought and opinion. Article 49 states that no one may be discriminated against, insulted or excluded on the basis of differences in skin colour, gender, race, religion, faith or denomination. The Yazidi religion is declared as an independent religion in a separate article in the social contract ([RIC 14/12/2023](#)). Furthermore, the DAANES representation in Germany states on its homepage that the DAANES protects religious, cultural and ethnic pluralism through political and cultural rights, and cites as examples the special protection for Christian property so that Christians can return to the region after the victory over the Islamic State (ISIS) ([DAANES DEU n.d](#)).

The SDF carried out missions to locate and rescue Yazidi women and girls abducted from Iraq by ISIS as part of its 2014 genocide. Nearly 2,700 women and girls remained missing, with an

unknown number believed to be still held in Syrian detention centres and ISIS enclaves (USCIRF 1/5/2024).

The DAANES authorities have ordered Assyrian schools to use the curricula it has developed and threatened them with closure if they do not comply. The schools use the Syrian government's curricula because those of the DAANES are not recognised outside the zone under its control (STJ 3/2023; cf. Orient Net 8/11/2022).

Freedom of expression, press, assembly and organisation

Fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and assembly are enshrined in the social contract of the Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES). Article 44 stipulates that all people and communities have the right to organise and express themselves freely. Articles 64 and 65 stipulate the right to unionise and freedom of the press (RIC 14/12/2023).

The Bertelsmann Stiftung sees a restriction of freedom of the press and freedom of expression in the DAANES after all journalists had to join the Union of Free Media (Yekîtiya Ragihandina Azad - YRA) in March 2022 in order to be allowed to continue their work (BS 19/3/2024). According to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI), journalists and especially male journalists in the DAANES are subject to restrictions such as imprisonment (UNGA 9/2/2024). Local media reported that DAANES and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) arrested journalists, suspended them or refused to renew their journalistic assignments on the pretext of violating laws or supporting media outlets labelled as banned by the SDF. Activists alleged that although the DAANES media law stipulated penalties ranging from a warning to a fine and a one-week suspension, DAANES suspended journalists for up to two years and permanently revoked broadcasters' licences (USDOS 22/4/2024). In February 2022, the de facto authorities led by the Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat - PYD) in north-eastern Syria suspended the licence of the Rudaw media group, a media outlet based in Iraqi Kurdistan, accusing it of misinformation and incitement. In mid-March, the same authorities began requiring journalists to join the Union of Free Media, which is under the influence of the local administration (FH 2024).

According to Amnesty International, the autonomous DAANES authorities are instrumentalising allegations of membership of the Islamic State (ISIS) and using them to silence and intimidate people they consider opponents (AI 2024).

In DAANES-controlled north-east Syria, there were strikes and protests in some sectors in 2022 due to low wages, particularly in education (FES 1/4/2024). According to human rights activists and press reports, the SDF suppressed freedom of assembly in areas under their influence (USDOS 22/4/2024).

Most of the associations and trade unions in DAANES-controlled north-eastern Syria are affiliated with the Democratic Movement of Civil Society (Tevgera Civaka Demokratîk - TEV-DEM), which was officially founded in July 2011 and is made up of around 27 organisations, trade unions, feminist organisations, cooperatives and associations. The trade unions that are active in the

areas controlled by DAANES were generally founded after the Syrian regime withdrew from the areas in north-east Syria and was replaced by the People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG) and subsequently by DAANES. These include the Free Media Union (Yekîtiya Ragihandina Azad - YRA), the Labourers' Union, the Union of Free Syrian Doctors and the Pharmacists' Union. Large parts of these trade unions in the DAANES are officially independent and have elected executive boards. However, these leaderships are all members of the PYD or linked to its spheres of influence. The DAANES authorities imposed restrictions and repressive measures against civil society actors and trade unions that are not part of the PYD networks, although these were less severe than in other areas of Syria. The restrictions included freedom of expression and the ability to organise. For example, DAANES officials required journalists covering the north-east of the country to join the Free Media Union in order to obtain press cards (FES 1/4/2024).

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10.1.1 IDPs and refugees

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[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Refugee camps

From a distance, they resemble refugee camps, but on closer inspection, as observed during several visits to these camps, the visual signs of an open-air prison become apparent: militarised areas with high fences, barbed wire and watchtowers with armed soldiers. Children have no access to healthcare, education or security. The catastrophic conditions in the al-Hol and ar-Roj camps have been frequently highlighted by human rights organisations and independent human rights experts. The camps are reportedly characterised by daily insecurity, with regular incidents of violence such as murder, assault, intimidation and sexual abuse. These camps are also targets for Islamic State (ISIS) sleeper cells. It is reported that ISIS continues to carry out attacks and smuggle people out of the camps to replenish its ranks. There are no recognised investigations or preventative measures, leading to a persistent atmosphere of fear and intense anxiety, affecting women and children in particular ([ICCT 28/6/2024](#)). People in the two detention centres run by the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), al-Hol and ar-Roj, are arbitrarily and indefinitely detained in inhumane and life-threatening conditions. Women and their children are forcibly separated from each other. Foreign boys are removed from the camps when they reach adolescence and transferred to detention facilities, including 'rehabilitation centres' for juveniles, which they are barely able to leave. Women who are transferred from the camps to detention centres for alleged crimes or misconduct are often forced to leave their children behind without having time to make arrangements for them ([AI 2024](#)).

Al-Hol

Al-Hol, the largest camp in north-east Syria, is located near Syria's eastern border with Iraq. It was established in 1991 for Iraqi refugees during the Gulf War and reopened after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The camp was temporarily closed in 2013 but reopened in 2016 and subsequently expanded in 2018-2019 due to the ongoing conflict. The camp accommodates displaced persons from Syria and Iraq as well as third-country nationals. The part of the camp known as the Annex is mainly home to women and children. The camp is currently managed by a non-governmental organisation. There are a total of 42,051 people in al-Hol (as of April 2024). ([REACH 15/7/2024](#)). Most of them are of Syrian and Iraqi nationality, but a total of 8,500 women and children are third-country nationals from around 60 countries (as of June 2024). While not all adult camp inmates were ISIS sympathisers (some are actually victims of terrorism held in the same camps

as their perpetrators), these camps are seen as breeding grounds for a new generation of ISIS supporters (ICCT 28/6/2024).

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10.2 General human rights situation (as of August 2024)

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In addition to the threat posed by military developments, landmines and explosive remnants of war, which repeatedly caused civilian casualties, the general human rights situation in Syria remained extremely worrying. For all regions of Syria, it was not possible to make a generalised or conclusive assessment of the situation. Even within the various spheres of influence, the situation varied from region to region and from place to place (AA 2/2/2024). In 2023, human rights violations such as killings, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, ill-treatment and torture in custody, death in captivity, enforced disappearances and abductions as well as arbitrary arrests without giving reasons or without providing information on whereabouts to the relatives of those affected were witnessed in both government and opposition areas (UNOCHA 3/3/2024). The parties to the conflict were directly involved to varying degrees in criminal activities such as human trafficking, corruption and extortion, which were supported by violence, or tolerated them or were unable to prevent them (UNGA 9/2/2024). All parties to the conflict committed acts that could constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity (GCR2P 1/9/2023). This included the use of weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical weapons, used by the Syrian government and the Islamic State (ISIS) (SNHR 15/3/2024).

Security forces were accused of involvement in extrajudicial killings. There were major concerns that the assassinations and kidnappings were taking on an increasingly sectarian character or that the targets were simply being extended to anyone with any connection to the regime. Those assassinated included drug dealers, suspected Hezbollah collaborators, former low-ranking soldiers and seemingly random civilians (Etana 3/2/2025). In 2024, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) documented violent/arbitrary arrests of 3,121 people, including 56 women and 26 children, and the abduction of 442 people, including 14 women and 27 children. In the area controlled by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), 131 people were arbitrarily arrested and three people were kidnapped. In the areas controlled by the Syrian National Army (SNA), which is supported by Turkey, 863 people were arrested, including 39 women and 19 children. The most frequently cited reason for these arrests was 'communication with the Kurdish forces, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the Autonomous Administration or ISIS cells'. 88 people were kidnapped, including seven women and six children. In the Democratic Autonomous Region

of North and East Syria (DAANES), 705 people were arrested, including one child and four women, and 34 people were kidnapped, including one woman and eleven children (SOHR 7/1/2025). Amnesty International also documented the denial of humanitarian aid by both the Syrian government and the SNA in Aleppo governorate after the 2023 earthquake disaster (AI 24/4/2024).

According to non-governmental organisations, the Syrian government and its allies as well as armed opposition groups carried out numerous attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in blatant violation of international rights (GCR2P 1/9/2023; cf. AI 24/4/2024). Attacks on and the destruction of schools, hospitals, places of worship, water and electricity plants, bakeries, markets, civil defence centres, densely populated residential areas and houses were commonplace throughout the country (USDOS 22/4/2024). Airstrikes on civilians and civilian infrastructure were carried out by the Syrian government's armed forces with Russian support (AI 24/4/2024) as well as by Turkish forces (NH 21/2/2024). Attacks on civilian infrastructure also affected medical facilities. The NGO Physicians for Human Rights documented 604 attacks on healthcare facilities by all actors in Syria between March 2011 and February 2024 (PHR 2/5/2024). From March 2011 to March 2024, the Syria Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documented 897 attacks on medical facilities, 1,543 attacks on places of worship and 1,657 attacks on schools. According to SNHR, 86% of these attacks were carried out by Syrian government forces, Russian forces or Iranian militias (SNHR 15/3/2024).

Areas under the control of the Syrian government (as of August 2024)

People could be arrested by the Syrian regime under the slightest pretence (MBZ 8/2023). Although the authorities reportedly brought charges under the pretext of fighting violent militancy, the charges also included peaceful acts such as distributing humanitarian aid, participating in protests and documenting human rights violations (USDOS 22/4/2024). According to Amnesty International, the Syrian government disappeared people including journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers and political activists (AI 24/4/2024). The regime used direct and indirect repression to intimidate and retaliate against human rights defenders or civil society activists. Reported tactics included surveillance and monitoring, travel bans, harassment and threats against activists and their families, censorship, confiscation of property and assets, arbitrary arrest, detention, enforced disappearance, torture and death (USDOS 22/4/2024). Even past offences, such as participation in demonstrations, could be used by the Syrian authorities to arrest people and demand ransom, possibly a second time. According to confidential sources from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Syrian authorities did not keep a record of all past offences, but people could be reported to the authorities by their neighbours or relatives, for example for revenge or in the course of a dispute. Relatives who asked about the whereabouts or status of their arrested family members were sometimes themselves suspected of being opponents of the government and got into trouble, according to confidential sources from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The extent to which family members were affected by repression depended on the profile of the activist or opponent. Family members of well-known and active individuals were at a higher risk of getting into trouble with the authorities. One source assumed that they would be left alone as soon as they could prove that they had not been in contact with

the person they were looking for for some time or had distanced themselves from that person (MBZ 8/2023). Children were reportedly targeted and tortured by officials because of their real or perceived family ties to human rights defenders and activists (USDOS 22/4/2024).

There were numerous reports confirming that the regime punished a large number of family members for alleged offences committed by their relatives, for example by arbitrarily placing them on a list of suspected terrorists, freezing their assets, threatening, imprisoning, torturing and even killing them. The regime also threatened to arrest children or arrested them to punish their parents' dissent or for other political purposes (USDOS 22/4/2024). Relatives of human rights activists or opponents of the Syrian government could be targeted by the Syrian authorities, mainly to find out where the activists or opponents were located or to persuade them to stop their dissident activities. Syrian refugees who still had relatives in Syria were often reluctant to criticise the Assad government in order to avoid causing problems for their relatives in the country. Sometimes the fear of repression against their families even prevented them from going to diplomatic authorities abroad (MBZ 8/2023).

The regime systematically disregarded the safety and well-being of its people, used violence against civilians and civilian institutions, and refused to protect most people from state and non-state violence (USDOS 22/4/2024).

The Syrian government, together with Russian forces, carried out airstrikes on civilians and civilian infrastructure between October and December 2023. According to Amnesty International, 99 civilians were killed and 400 injured (AI 24/4/2024). Pro-regime paramilitary groups reportedly committed frequent human rights violations, including massacres, indiscriminate killings, abductions of civilians, physical abuse, sexual violence and unjustified detentions. Regime-affiliated militias reportedly carried out numerous attacks in which civilians were killed and injured. Russian and Iranian forces and allied paramilitary groups such as the Lebanese Hezbollah caused the deaths of civilians and destroyed civilian infrastructure and property (USDOS 22/4/2024).

Following the earthquake in February 2023, the Syrian government denied tens of thousands of civilians, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), mainly in the Kurdish areas in Aleppo governorate, which are linked to the Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES), essential supplies such as flour, medicine and fuel supplies and delayed aid deliveries to Kurdish villages in the north of Aleppo city. The government also blocked aid to people in Rukban camp in southern Syria who lacked medical care, clean water and hygiene (AI 24/4/2024).

The Syrian opposition also accused the government of deliberate demographic changes by granting citizenship to foreign fighters, although there were no reliable figures on the granting of Syrian citizenship. This could have particularly affected the Kurds, who were often denied the right to citizenship in the past (AC 10/7/2024).

Confidential sources from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that the Syrian authorities used every opportunity to obtain money. For example, people were arrested for financial reasons. Businessmen, regardless of their loyalty to the Syrian government, were detained by security

forces on charges such as false accounting and only released after paying ransoms or bribes (MBZ 8/2023). The Syrian government took no credible steps or measures to identify and punish officials who may have committed human rights violations. Rather, the regime restricted attempts to investigate alleged human rights violations, criminalised their publication and refused to cooperate with independent investigations. The regime did not grant permission for the establishment of domestic human rights organisations. Nevertheless, hundreds of such groups were active in the country without state registration (USDOS 22/4/2024).

Areas under the control of the opposition, terrorist groups, etc.

Armed groups not affiliated with the regime also reportedly retaliated against human rights lawyers and civil society activists. There continued to be reports of reprisals against human rights lawyers living outside the country (USDOS 22/4/2024).

Areas under the control of the Syrian National Army (SNA)

According to reports by Human Rights Watch, numerous human rights violations were committed in northern Syria by the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA), including abductions, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, sexual violence and torture. Children were also affected (HRW 29/2/2024). Amnesty International also reported the shooting of civilians celebrating the Kurdish New Year, Newroz, by members of the SNA (AI 24/4/2024). Attacks by armed Syrian opposition groups backed by Turkey in the northern region of the country were reportedly centred on Kurdish and Yazidi residents and other civilians and included: Killings; abductions and disappearances of civilians; physical abuse, including sexual violence; forced displacement from homes; looting and confiscation of private property; transfer of detained civilians across the border to Turkey; recruitment or use of child soldiers; looting and desecration of religious sites (USDOS 22/4/2024).

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) reported that SNA groups routinely confiscated part of the farmers' olive harvest, depriving them of their main source of income (UNGA 9/2/2024). After the takeover in Manbij, the Turkish-backed SNA allegedly confiscated private property, such as vehicles and buildings, as well as public infrastructure, such as parts of the electricity grid (ISW 16/12/2024).

According to Amnesty International, the SNA prevented aid deliveries from reaching people in Aleppo governorate affected by the 2023 earthquake, for example by firing into the air to disperse the crowd in front of the vans carrying aid packages and redirecting the aid deliveries to members of the armed groups (AI 24/4/2024).

Non-governmental organisations reported human rights violations in 'Afrin province, including continued violations of the right to physical integrity of civilians in the region through arbitrary detention and torture, abductions for ransom, forced marriages and gender-based violence, as well as the recruitment of children by the armed groups, discrimination in the distribution of aid, the Islamisation and Turkification of 'Afrin and the repeated attacks on cultural festivals such as Newroz. They also highlighted demographic shifts through forced migration, the destruction of tombs and historical sites, illegal archaeological excavations, the deliberate destruction of

olive trees, the burning of fields and violations of housing, land and property rights in the region (CCR/YASA 5/2024).

Opposition government agencies, including the 'Ministry of Defence' and the Syrian Interim Government's (SIG) Military Justice Department, investigated some allegations of abuses by the Turkish-backed Syrian armed opposition groups that made up the SNA and conducted some trials, but no information on their conclusions was available during the year (USDOS 22/4/2024). The SNA informed the COI that they investigated alleged violations and abuses and held those responsible accountable, and also investigated SNA members for sexual violence, yet the COI documented several cases of detentions by military police and SNA armed groups and isolated cases of sexual and gender-based violence by SNA members (UNGA 9/2/2024). The United States of America imposed sanctions on two groups belonging to the SNA due to serious human rights violations allegedly committed by them in northern Syria. The human rights violations include abductions, serious physical abuse and rape. The groups concerned are the Suleiman Shah Brigade and the Hamza Division (USDOS 17/8/2023).

Areas under the control of Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS)

Armed terrorist groups, such as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), committed a variety of abuses, including killings, kidnappings, physical abuse, and the recruitment or use of child soldiers. Terrorist groups, including HTS, violently attacked organisations and individuals seeking to investigate human rights abuses or advocate for improved practices (USDOS 22/4/2024).

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10.3 Religious freedom (as of August 2024)

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In 2023, the religious freedom situation in Syria remained poor, with many of the worst violations occurring in areas under the control of non-state entities (USCIRF 1/5/2024). Sectarian violence due to tensions between religious groups, cultural rivalries and provocative rhetoric was repeatedly reported throughout 2023. Christians reportedly continued to face discrimination and violence from violent extremist groups (USDOS 30/6/2024).

Stakeholders reported that social conventions and religious prohibitions continued to make conversions relatively rare, particularly conversions from Islam to Christianity, which are prohibited by law. Groups also reported that societal pressures continued to force converts from Islam to Christianity to relocate within the country or emigrate in order to openly practice their new religion (USDOS 30/6/2024).

Areas under the control of the Syrian government

Article 3 of the Syrian constitution regulates freedom of religion and the freedom to practise religious rites, provided they do not compromise public order. The status of religious communities should be protected and respected accordingly. At the same time, the religion of the president was defined as Islamic. Furthermore, Article 33 stipulated that no one could be discriminated against on the basis of their religion and Article 42 that freedom of belief should also be protected

in accordance with the law (SeG 24/2/2012USCIRF 1/5/2024) Despite this article, the government had considerable leeway to restrict religious rituals if they were 'detrimental to public order' (USCIRF 1/5/2024).

Religious communities were obliged to register with the state. If they were recognised by the state, they received tax benefits and free basic supplies of electricity and water for their properties. The religious affiliation of the religious communities recognised in Syria was recorded on the birth certificate. Accordingly, it was not possible in practice to belong to no religion (BMZ/AA 22/11/2023).

According to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), violations of freedom of religion or belief by the Syrian government in 2023 were generally of a political and administrative nature. Violations in Syrian government areas included continued favouritism towards members of the president's Alawite Muslim community and the exercise of bureaucratic control over Sunni Muslim religious authority (USCIRF 1/5/2024). The Yazidi religious community's request for state recognition with its own civil status jurisdiction in February 2021 was rejected by the Ministry of Justice. Other communities, such as some Protestant churches, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists and Hindus, also still had no secure legal status (BMZ/AA 22/11/2023). Jehovah's Witnesses were even banned according to the USCIRF. Other laws prohibited mixed marriages and the conversion of Muslims to other religions (USCIRF 1/5/2024).

According to experts, religion was a determining factor for careers in the government. The Alawite minority continued to hold a disproportionately high share of higher political positions, particularly in leading positions in the armed forces, security forces and intelligence services. However, senior officers from other religious minorities were also accepted in the military. Christians, Druze and Kurds had seats in parliament and, according to observers, Alawites had more political influence in the cabinet than other religious minorities and more authority than Sunnis (USDOS 30/6/2024).

The government continued to present itself as the protector of religious minorities, although some religious communities deviated from their long-standing tolerance of the Alawite-dominated government, such as the Druze, who protested against the government in southern Syria (USCIRF 1/5/2024). However, President al-Assad drew attention in December 2023 with a speech in which he denied the Holocaust. Anti-Semitic literature could be purchased throughout the country at low prices, and regime-controlled radio and television programmes regularly broadcast anti-Semitic content (USDOS 30/6/2024).

Christian and Muslim clergy could exempt themselves from military service on grounds of conscience, although Muslims had to pay a fee. The conscription law, which allowed the Syrian authorities to confiscate the assets of conscientious objectors and their families, discriminated against Sunnis and Christians, according to human rights activists, because they were disproportionately affected by this practice due to their flight abroad (USDOS 30/6/2024).

Iran used its influence in the country as well as the poor economic situation and financial incentives, to persuade Sunnis across the country to convert to Shia Islam or join Iranian militias (USDOS 30/6/2024; cf. FP 15/3/2021).

Due to social norms and religious prohibitions, conversions, especially from Islam to Christianity, were relatively rare (USDOS 30/6/2024).

Areas under the control of the opposition

Opposition groups, such as Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) and Turkish-backed armed groups, were the main perpetrators of violations of religious freedom in Syria in 2023 (USCIRF 1/5/2024). Throughout 2023, sectarian violence due to tensions between religious groups, cultural rivalries and provocative rhetoric was repeatedly reported. Christians reportedly continued to face discrimination and violence from violent extremist groups (USDOS 30/6/2024).

Areas under the control of Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS)

In 2022, Kurdish media reported that Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) confiscated Christians' property, closed churches and prevented Christians from practising their religious rites (NPA 5/3/2022). HTS later announced that it would tolerate the first Christian liturgy in Idlib in over a decade and promised to redistribute property confiscated from Christians and Druze. However, it continued to enforce its interpretation of Sunni Islam on both Muslim and non-Muslim residents of Idlib, for example by enforcing its interpretation of Sharia law in schools. Furthermore, people who are critical of its religious doctrine are arrested and imprisoned (USCIRF 1/5/2024).

Areas under the control of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA)

Human rights activists report that Turkish airstrikes, drone attacks and shelling have targeted communities with religious minorities. Groups of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) destroyed mosques, Yazidi shrines, religious monuments and cemeteries in Afrin and forced Yazidis to convert to Islam (USCIRF 1/5/2024). According to human rights organisations and media reports, Yazidis and Kurds in northern Syria were subjected to human rights violations by the SNA. Members of other religious minorities were also affected (USDOS 30/6/2024).

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10.4 Freedom of expression, press, assembly and organisation (as of August 2024)

Last modification 2025-04-24 16:49

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) wrote that thirteen years after the outbreak of the crisis in Syria, the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association were severely restricted throughout the country. Regular intimidation and violence by the various parties to the conflict and unknown perpetrators against journalists, human rights defenders, activists and people who simply peacefully expressed their dissent against the views or actions of the relevant authorities, whether online or on the streets, were documented. These included targeted killings, arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment, abductions and disappearances. People across Syria exercising their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association were threatened, harassed and silenced ([OHCHR 1/2/2024](#)). The UN also reported that people expressing dissatisfaction with the ruling parties or groups, journalists, humanitarian workers and health workers were intimidated and harassed. This also included deprivation of liberty and the use of excessive force to quell peaceful demonstrations against the poor economic situation, deteriorating security situation, kidnappings and abuses against authorities ([UNOCHA 3/3/2024](#)). The non-governmental organisation Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documented 717 cases of killings of media workers by the parties to the conflict since the outbreak of the war until March 2024, the majority of which were at the hands of the Syrian regime and its allies (Russia, Iran) ([SNHR 15/3/2024](#)).

SNHR documented various types of human rights violations by all parties to the conflict against freedom of the press and freedom of expression, including extrajudicial killings, arrests and disappearances, torture, attacks on facilities and the enactment of laws restricting freedom of the press and freedom of expression ([SNHR 3/5/2024](#)). Both the regime and violent extremist groups regularly detained, tortured and intimidated YouTubers and other citizen journalists ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)).

Areas under the control of the Syrian government

Article 42 of the Syrian constitution states that every citizen has the right to express their views in writing, orally and in all other forms of expression. Article 43 guarantees the freedom of the press, printing, publishing and the media, as well as their independence in accordance with the law ([SeG 24/2/2012](#)). However, according to SNHR, the regime maintained its ban on all independent media outlets, exercised complete and absolute control over the state media and suppressed the freedom of expression and opinion of media professionals and citizens through restrictive laws and decrees that clearly violated international human rights law and placed worrying restrictions on freedom of the press, expression and opinion ([SNHR 3/5/2024](#)). Freedom House also stated that the media in government-controlled areas were severely restricted. All media had to obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Interior and private media companies were mainly run by people linked to the government ([FH 2024](#)). The Syrian media was owned and controlled by state actors and investigative journalism was almost non-existent. Journalists practised self-censorship, especially in relation to matters concerning the ruling family ([GITOC 2023](#)). State radio, television and print media merely disseminated the government's propaganda, which

they received from the all-powerful SANA news agency. Other media used Facebook and social media as the main tool for disseminating content, as they were difficult to control even if they were monitored. A third of independent or opposition media outlets, such as Enab Baladi, were based abroad (RSF 2024). Journalists were also under constant threat of abduction and death and were often intimidated (GITOC 2023). Freedom House specified that journalists who reported critically on the state were subject to censorship, imprisonment, torture and death in captivity (FH 2024; cf. USDOS 22/4/2024). In the Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières - RSF) Press Freedom Index ranking, Syria had slipped to 179th out of 180, down from 175th in 2023 (RSF 2024).

The systematic persecution of opposition groups and other dissident/anti-regime actors was permanent. The regime regularly treated advocacy for the abolition of the Ba'ath regime led by President al-Assad and the reorganisation of Syria according to democratic, pluralistic and constitutional principles as 'terrorist activities', 'conspiracy against the state', 'treason' or similarly serious crimes and punished them accordingly. The risks of political opposition activities were not limited to possible criminal prosecution. The countless cases of arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, 'disappearances', physical attacks, sexualised violence, torture and killings in the custody of the security forces as well as assassinations documented since the beginning of the conflict have always been clearly linked to the dissident activities of those affected. Violent suppression of any dissent remained the regime's means of choice for maintaining power (AA 2/2/2024).

Law No.20 against cybercrime, enacted in 2022, regulated communication on the internet as well as criminal offences committed by online service providers and cybercriminal acts. For example, Article27 punished with a prison sentence of seven to fifteen years and a fine anyone who undertook actions online or published content aimed at changing the constitution, separating part of Syrian territory from the sovereignty of the state, provoking an armed uprising against the authorities established in accordance with the constitution or preventing them from exercising their functions derived from the constitution or overthrowing or changing the system of government in the state. Article28 criminalises undermining the reputation of the state. This means that anyone who used information technology to publish false news online that damaged the reputation of the state or national unity was liable to a prison sentence of three to five years and a fine. Article29 also criminalised undermining the financial capacity of the state through digital content on the internet (MoCT 18/4/2022). The non-governmental organisation Free Syrian Lawyers Association (FSLA) assumed that this law would serve as an instrument with which the Syrian government would restrict freedom of expression and suppress dissenting opinions in social media and virtual spaces, especially because it was vaguely formulated and did not clearly define, among other things, which actions undermine the reputation of the state, endanger national unity and which constitute an illegal amendment to the constitution, among other things. This left a lot of room for interpretation by law enforcement and security services (FSLA 2024). SNHR found that by May 2024, the Syrian regime had arrested 176 people, including 21 women, in connection with this law. 23 of them were journalists and media workers (SNHR 3/5/2024).

In order to suppress an uncontrolled public debate on corruption, the Ministry of the Interior had set up a department to combat cybercrime and criminalised social media accounts that discussed corruption (BS 19/3/2024). In April 2024, Law No.19 of 2024 was passed, which established a new Ministry of Media. According to SNHR, this law violated the Syrian constitution of 2012 on several occasions, including because it gave the new media ministry absolute supervisory power over all journalistic and media work in the country (SNHR 3/5/2024). The Syrian government controlled the dissemination of information very strictly. Prohibited topics included criticism of the regime, sectarian tensions and problems of religious and ethnic minorities (USDOS 30/6/2024).

The German Federal Foreign Office wrote that in the application practice of the regime-controlled Syrian judiciary, suspicion was sufficient to be arbitrarily prosecuted by military courts or separate courts under the 2012 anti-terror legislation, where there was basically no framework for a fair legal process. The anti-terror laws were also abused to impose the highest penalties on opponents of the regime living in Syria and abroad without access to legal representation and in absentia (AA 2/2/2024). In February 2024, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) reported violations of freedom of expression and assembly by the Syrian government and arbitrary arrests of people simply for expressing their opinions. People who had called for protests on the internet were also arrested. Journalists and online activists were also summoned and arrested, sometimes in solitary confinement. The critical social media posts of those arrested were removed (UNGA 9/2/2024). Many people interviewed by OHCHR stated that they were afraid to criticise the situation in the country by phone, WhatsApp, social media or similar means of communication. Even the economic crisis, which was previously considered a relatively safe topic of conversation, was avoided (OHCHR 1/2/2024). According to confidential sources from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Syrian government also tried to monitor mobile communications, although it was unclear to what extent it succeeded. In some cases, people's mobile phones were taken from them at checkpoints and checked to see if they contained any criticism of the government. SIM cards usually had to be registered when purchased, although there were ways to circumvent this, for example by presenting a fake ID when registering or by registering through another person (MBZ 8/2023). The regime opened mail addressed to citizens and foreign residents and routinely, arbitrarily and illegally monitored private internet communications, including emails. It also deployed surveillance technologies and practices, including internet and social media controls, blocking or filtering of websites and social media platforms, sensors, spyware, data analytics, recording devices, and non-consensual location tracking (USDOS 22/4/2024). In turn, the Bertelsmann Foundation reports that the Syrian government issued visas to selected bloggers and vloggers to report that the war was over (BS 19/3/2024).

According to the Global Organised Crime Index, notorious networks with direct links to the Syrian government and non-state armed groups have committed numerous cybercriminal offences such as malware, spamming and denial of service attacks to target media groups, non-governmental organisations, companies and state authorities. Cybercrime is primarily aimed at suppressing dissent rather than for economic gain (GITOC 2023).

According to Article 44 of the Syrian constitution, citizens have the right to assemble, demonstrate peacefully and strike within the framework of constitutional principles. The exercise of these rights has been regulated by law. Article 45 guarantees the freedom on a national basis to form associations and trade unions for lawful purposes and by peaceful means in accordance with the law. In addition, according to Article 10, these are public organisations, professional associations and federations, as well as bodies that bring citizens together to develop society and represent the interests of their members. The State guarantees the independence of these bodies and the right to exercise public control and participation in various sectors and councils established by law (SeG 24/2/2012). As regards workers' rights, the right to collective bargaining is recognised in Labour Law No. 17 . However, the government had reserved far-reaching powers to deny or challenge the registration of concluded collective agreements. Furthermore, although strikes were not illegal, the right to strike in the private sector was often undermined by the threat of punitive measures and fines. For example, strikes involving more than 20 workers in certain industries such as transport and telecommunications were punishable by fines and even imprisonment (FES 1/4/2024). According to the United States Department of State, although the law allows for the right to form and join unions, conduct legal labour strikes and bargain collectively, there were excessive restrictions on these rights. The law prohibited anti-union discrimination, but also allowed employers to fire workers at will. The law required all unions to join the regime's General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTUW) (USDOS 22/4/2024). It consisted of seven sectors: public services (administration, banking, health); food, agricultural development, tobacco and tourism; transport; oil and chemicals; electricity and metals; culture, printing and information; construction (FES 1/4/2024). The regime made no serious attempts during the year to effectively enforce the existing laws protecting workers' freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to strike (USDOS 22/4/2024).

Due to the worsening economic crisis in the country, there have been a large number of protests and criticism of the regime in Damascus. In recent years, for example, there have been demonstrations in Suweida and Dara'a to protest against the political situation and socio-economic deterioration. There have also been more modest forms of industrial action against the impact of the government's economic liberalisation policy on working conditions (FES 1/4/2024).

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry in Syria (COI) writes that the government continued to violate the right to freedom of expression and assembly and arbitrarily arrested people simply for expressing their opinions (UNGA 9/2/2024).

Freedom of assembly was severely restricted throughout Syria. Opposition protests in government-controlled areas were met with gunfire, mass arrests and torture of detainees (FH 2024). The Bertelsmann Foundation assumed that the regime's violent reactions to protests over the past ten years had intimidated people to such an extent that they no longer dared to risk their lives at organised gatherings (BS 19/3/2024). According to media reports, however, the protests in southern Syria, Suweida and Dara'a, which have been going on for months, have been largely peaceful (TWI 7/6/2024). In contrast, the Bertelsmann Stiftung reported that politically motivated gatherings in Suweida and Dara'a were quickly and violently dispersed by the Syrian regime (BS 19/3/2024). Non-political gatherings, such as public viewings of football matches in cafés,

were sometimes used by government security forces to forcibly recruit conscientious objectors (BS 19/3/2024).

Union membership was practically compulsory for public sector workers; membership fees were deducted directly from their salaries. In contrast, the influence and strength of membership of the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTUW) in the private sector was very limited. The rights of employees in the private sector were not protected in any way by the trade unions. At the same time, the majority of private employers prohibited the formation of trade union committees in their companies, exerted direct or indirect pressure on employees to refrain from union membership and often did not register them with the General Social Security Organisation. In 2022, only around eleven per cent of employees in the private sector were covered by social insurance. In addition, the structure of Syrian companies, which accounted for more than 99 per cent of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the country's private manufacturing sector, did not favour trade union activity. There was no room for opposition within the GFTUW. Any form of criticism or opposition to the regime or the Ba'ath Party was prohibited. Forms of dissent within the organisation were extremely isolated and restricted. In addition to this dynamic, the GFTUW had reinforced the regime's system of instrumentalising public service jobs as a means of gaining and consolidating obedience and rewarding loyal individuals and communities. Numerous regulations and laws issued by the state in recent years reflected this orientation. In December 2014, for example, the government announced a decision according to which 50 per cent of new jobs in the public sector would be allocated to the families of 'martyrs' of the Syrian army. In addition, in October 2018, a decision by the Council of Ministers excluded all employees who had not completed military or reserve service from applying for public jobs. The GFTUW had largely supported these laws. At the regional level, most trade unions equally adhered to the regime's policies, which were generally against the interests of workers (FES 1/4/2024).

The Syrian government usually prevented the registration of organisations that wanted to advocate for women's rights or set up protection centres. It also restricted all non-governmental organisations that wanted to raise awareness of women's rights or combat violence against them through lectures or workshops (Musawah 2024).

Areas under the control of the opposition

Media freedom varied in areas held by other groups, but local media organisations were usually under strong pressure to support the dominant militant faction in their area (FH 2024).

Jihadist factions and rebel groups used violence to suppress civilian resistance and demonstrations (FH 2024).

The establishment of trade unions in north-west Syria is a relatively new endeavour. In contrast to the Union of Free Syrian Doctors, which was founded shortly after the start of the uprising in 2013, the Central Union of Free Syrian Lawyers, representing lawyers from various opposition-controlled areas, was only founded in December 2019, shortly before the establishment of

the Union of Free Syrian Engineers in 2018, which in turn had branches in Aleppo and Idlib governorates (FES 1/4/2024).

Areas under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) arrested journalists, activists and anyone who criticised them without access to a lawyer or family members (AI 24/4/2024). According to media reports, these arrests of activists and civilians, including women, who had criticised the HTS were made on charges of spying for foreign parties (NPA 7/7/2023). The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) also reported arrests by HTS security forces of activists, journalists and private citizens who were critical of their rule or religious doctrine, including on social media (UNGA 14/8/2023). HTS reportedly invoked violations of its 'media law' - a text that was not publicly available - to silence critical reporting and intimidate journalists (USDOS 22/4/2024).

The HTS suppressed freedom of assembly in areas under its influence (USDOS 22/4/2024). Several people were arrested during protests in HTS areas, although the Betelsmann Foundation recorded an improvement in terms of restrictions on freedom of assembly compared to 2021 (BS 19/3/2024). In a study by the Danish Institute for International Studies, it becomes clear that HTS had generally become more flexible in dealing with civil resistance after its break with the transnational jihadist al-Qaeda in 2016. However, the willingness to respond to the demands of the protesters depended heavily on the nature of the demands in question. HTS was willing to fulfil demands as long as their own presence and authority were not called into question. When the protesters demanded far-reaching changes, such as the resignation of high-ranking HTS leaders or an end to HTS attacks on rival militias, these demands were usually ignored or violently suppressed. At the same time, the group's willingness to violently suppress protests was limited: If protests continued over a longer period of time despite repression, concessions were often made by the group (DIIS 16/12/2024).

HTS and other armed groups also restricted freedom of association, including civil society activities, in areas under their influence or control (USDOS 22/4/2024). In areas controlled by the HTS, some of the trade unions otherwise active in the north-west were banned from operating and replaced by other trade unions affiliated with the HTS. The Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) did not hesitate to dismiss or even arrest administrative staff who disobeyed its orders. In addition, the SSG had prevented lawyers belonging to the Central Union of Free Lawyers from becoming active in their regions, and furthermore, the HTS had established a new union called the 'Free Syrian Lawyers Association'. In addition, the headquarters of the Union of Free Syrian Engineers in Idlib was stormed after the entire council resigned in protest against the SSG's actions (FES 1/4/2024).

Areas under the control of the Syrian National Army (SNA)

A confidential source from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that people who criticised Turkey were arrested in areas under the control of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) (MBZ 8/2023).

The non-governmental organisation Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) reported that in SIG areas, citizens and journalists did not dare to express their opinions freely for fear of the armed groups. Journalists could not criticise the SIG, even though it violated human rights and disregarded democracy. The armed groups could arrest or disappear anyone in the areas under their control without accountability (STJ 1/11/2023). Some armed opposition groups did not hesitate to threaten to persecute journalists and media activists who criticised their actions (FES 1/4/2024). According to media reports, demonstrations against corruption in North Aleppo resulted in the arrest of journalists, the imprisonment of human rights activists, attacks on protesters and the destruction of equipment belonging to journalists who were on the ground to document the protests (NPA 18/12/2023).

In the Turkish-controlled north-west, protests and strikes over labour conditions also occurred on several occasions (FES 1/4/2024). According to human rights activists and press reports, SNA factions suppressed freedom of assembly in their areas of influence (USDOS 22/4/2024). Protests against Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) were tolerated (BS 19/3/2024).

There were numerous trade unions in the northwest, including the Free Teachers' Union, founded in January 2022, as well as several other professional organisations such as the Central Union of Free Lawyers, the Union of Free Syrian Engineers and the Union of Free Syrian Doctors. The main objectives of these organisations were limited to democratic demands, supporting local opposition institutions, condemning human rights violations by local armed groups and the interference of Turkish occupation forces in their work, and protesting against any form of normalisation processes between the Syrian regime and the Turkish state. However, the use of a class-based discourse in their programmes was limited. These unions operating in north-west Syria were usually registered with local councils or the SIG. In the areas outside the control of the Syrian government in the north-west, the work of the trade unions was difficult given the significantly deteriorating political and socio-economic conditions. Structurally, the Turkish authorities had strong control over the local administrations and intervened decisively in certain areas, particularly health and education. The Turkish education coordinator in Afrin, for example, prevented the establishment of a teachers' union in Afrin, labelling it a 'political act'. Teachers were also required to sign contracts for voluntary labour, which prohibited them from participating in demonstrations or other forms of protest against a party (FES 1/4/2024).

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11 Death penalty - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8/12/2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 16:01

[There is currently insufficient information on the death penalty in Syria. The case law on the death penalty is not known or has not yet been issued. There are also few sources on executed death sentences, which is not least due to the currently opaque situation. In the following, the current status is presented as it appears from publicly accessible sources. In some cases, false information is being disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

[Information on the current legal situation can be found in the chapter [Legal protection / Judiciary - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) has documented 60 murders since 8 December 2024, including executions on the ground in which 112 people, including women and children, were killed ([SOHR 3/1/2025](#)). According to reports and unconfirmed videos, the new security forces are said to have publicly shot an informant of the ousted president in the head ([Arabiya 10/1/2025](#)). *[Further information on the human rights situation can be found in the chapter [General human rights situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)]*

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Seit dem Sturz des Regimes von Bashar al-] شخصاً 112 مقتل عن تسفر حماة وحاص وحافظتي حمص وحماة تسفر عن مقتل 112 شخصاً
Assad Die Syrische Beobachtungsstelle dokumentiert 60 Morde an der syrischen Küste und in den Provinzen [Homs und Hama, bei denen 112 Menschen getötet wurden, <https://www.syriahr.com/-----/743774>, accessed 14/1/2025

11.1 Death penalty in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 14:41

Article 38 of the Social Contract of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) of 2023 stipulates the right to life and that the death penalty is prohibited ([RIC 14/12/2023](#)). In the 2019 Charter of the Social Justice System of the Autonomous Administration

of North and East Syria, the autonomous authorities already recognised the applicability of international law, committed to being bound by human rights law and abolished the death penalty (AI 2024).

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11.2 Death penalty (as of August 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 14:40

Areas under government control (as of August 2024)

In Syria, the death penalty was one of the normal punishments under General Criminal Code No. 148 of 1949 (amended by Legislative Decree No. 1 of 2011), along with forced labour for life, life imprisonment, temporary forced labour and temporary imprisonment (Article 37). A death sentence could only be carried out after hearing the opinion of the Pardons Committee and the approval of the President of the Republic. The person sentenced to death was hanged in the prison building or in another place specified in the decree executing the sentence (Article 43). The following offences, among others, were punishable by death: carrying a weapon in the ranks of the enemy against Syria (Article 263), conspiracy with the enemy, or contacting the enemy to support its armed forces (Article 265), damage to military property resulting in death or during a war or in anticipation of the outbreak of war (Article 266), attack by arming Syrians or by calling for killing or looting with the aim of inciting a civil or sectarian war (Article 298), terrorist attack resulting in death or sabotage of public buildings, means of transport and communication (Article 305), premeditated murder (Article 535), arson resulting in death (Article 577) (PoS 1/1/1949).

The death penalty was also enshrined in Law 19 of 2012, the Anti-Terror Law. According to Article 5, the death penalty was imposed for possessing, manufacturing, stealing, smuggling or concealing weapons or ammunition with the intention of using them for a terrorist act and if the offence resulted in the death or incapacitation of a person. Anyone who threatened the government with a terrorist act involving the hijacking of a public or private means of air, sea or land transport, the seizure of property of any kind or the confiscation of military items or the kidnapping of a person and the person was harmed in the process was also punishable by death (Article 6) (PoS 2/7/2012).

Furthermore, the death penalty was also enshrined in the Criminal Code and Military Procedure under Decree-Law 61 of 1950. It was imposed, for example, on soldiers who defected to the enemy (Article 102), for fleeing from the enemy through a conspiracy and for the flight abroad of the leader of the conspiracy (Article 103), on soldiers who refused to obey orders to attack the enemy or the rebels (Article 112), on soldiers who instigated or committed disobedience before the enemy, in the sense that at least two soldiers resorted to armed force and resisted the call

of their superiors to disband and return to the regime (Article 113), on any person (including non-military) who used violence against a wounded or sick soldier in an operational area of a military fighting force with the aim of disarming him (Article 132), for deliberately damaging, destroying or deliberately burning immovable military property or property used for national defence or buildings, structures, warehouses, water channels, railway lines, telegraph and telephone lines and stations, aviation centres, ships, boats (Article 137), on soldiers who abandoned their position in front of the enemy (Article 144), on any Syrian soldier or any soldier in the service of Syria who took up arms against Syria (Article 154), on any soldier who handed over to the enemy or in the interest of the enemy the soldiers under his command or in the position entrusted to him, or the arms, ammunition or supplies of the army, or maps of military sites, factories, harbours, and docks, or the password or secret of military actions, campaigns and negotiations, on any soldier who contacted the enemy to facilitate his operations (Article 155). Death sentences under this law were forwarded to the President of the Republic (Article 89) and ratified. Execution was carried out by firing squad (Article 90) at a place chosen by the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces (PoS 13/3/1950).

On 3.9.2023, Decree Law No. 23 of 2023 was issued, which repealed Decree Law 109 of 17 August 1968 and thus also dissolved the military field courts that had existed until then. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), a total of 14,843 death sentences were handed down by military field courts in Syria between March 2011 and August 2023, of which 6,971 were commuted to life imprisonment or life imprisonment with hard labour. 7,872 of these death sentences were carried out, including 114 children, 26 women and 2,021 military personnel (SNHR 12/9/2023).

Amnesties regularly announced by the regime (most recently Legislative Decree 7/2022) reduced some death sentences to life-long hard labour or held out the prospect of release. In legal practice, however, the amnesties were only applied in individual cases due to generously interpreted exceptions and procedural obstacles, often as a result of the payment of large bribes to officials in the judiciary and security sector (AA 2/2/2024).

According to the German Federal Foreign Office, a quantitative assessment of death sentences imposed or their execution was not possible, as no official figures on executed death sentences have been published since the beginning of the armed conflict. The recording of executed death sentences has been made more difficult by killings and executions of detainees without charge or judgement. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI), established by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UN), documented a high number of cases of such extrajudicial executions in areas under regime control in its special report on the detention situation in Syria and in subsequent reports (AA 2/2/2024; cf. ÖB Damaskus 2023). Amnesty International also stated that people were executed in Syria in 2023, but no exact figures are available (AI 5/2024).

Areas under the control of the opposition, terrorist groups, etc.

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)

According to the COI, Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) also carried out death sentences. Guilty verdicts with death sentences also concerned offences that were not punishable by death under the government's Syrian law, such as prostitution, rape and adultery (UNGA 14/8/2023). In one case, execution for witchcraft was also reported. According to credible reports, the HTS carries out summary and secret executions (UNGA 9/2/2024). The non-governmental organisation Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that HTS said it imposed the death penalty on those found guilty of working for a party it considered hostile, which was proven to be involved in killings and bombings in areas under its control. Trials, however, were held without the presence of the general public (SOHR 23/4/2024). According to the COI, executions by the HTS were also carried out without prior judgement by a regular court. Guilty verdicts were usually made on the basis of uncoded legal principles allegedly based on Sharia law (UNHRC 12/7/2023). According to media reports, the HTS also carried out extrajudicial executions. Prisoners were stoned to death, shot by firing squad or slaughtered, depending on what they were accused of. In recent times, executions have increasingly been carried out in secret in the wilderness, in prison yards or otherwise out of sight. Only in rare cases were the bodies handed over to the families (NPA 20/4/2023). Courts under the control of the HTS also sentenced women and children to death (UNHRC 12/7/2023).

Areas under the control of the Turkish-affiliated Syrian National Army (SNA)

Sources report the conviction of three people in January 2024 by a military court in the city of al-Ra'i, which was under the control of groups close to Turkey. The individuals are said to have killed Kurdish Newroz celebrants (SOHR 18/1/2024). According to another newspaper article, three people were sentenced to death by hanging by a court of the pro-Turkish opposition in May 2024. The three were accused of killing a human rights activist and his pregnant wife in Aleppo province two years ago. (NPA 23/5/2024).

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12 Ethnic and religious minorities - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

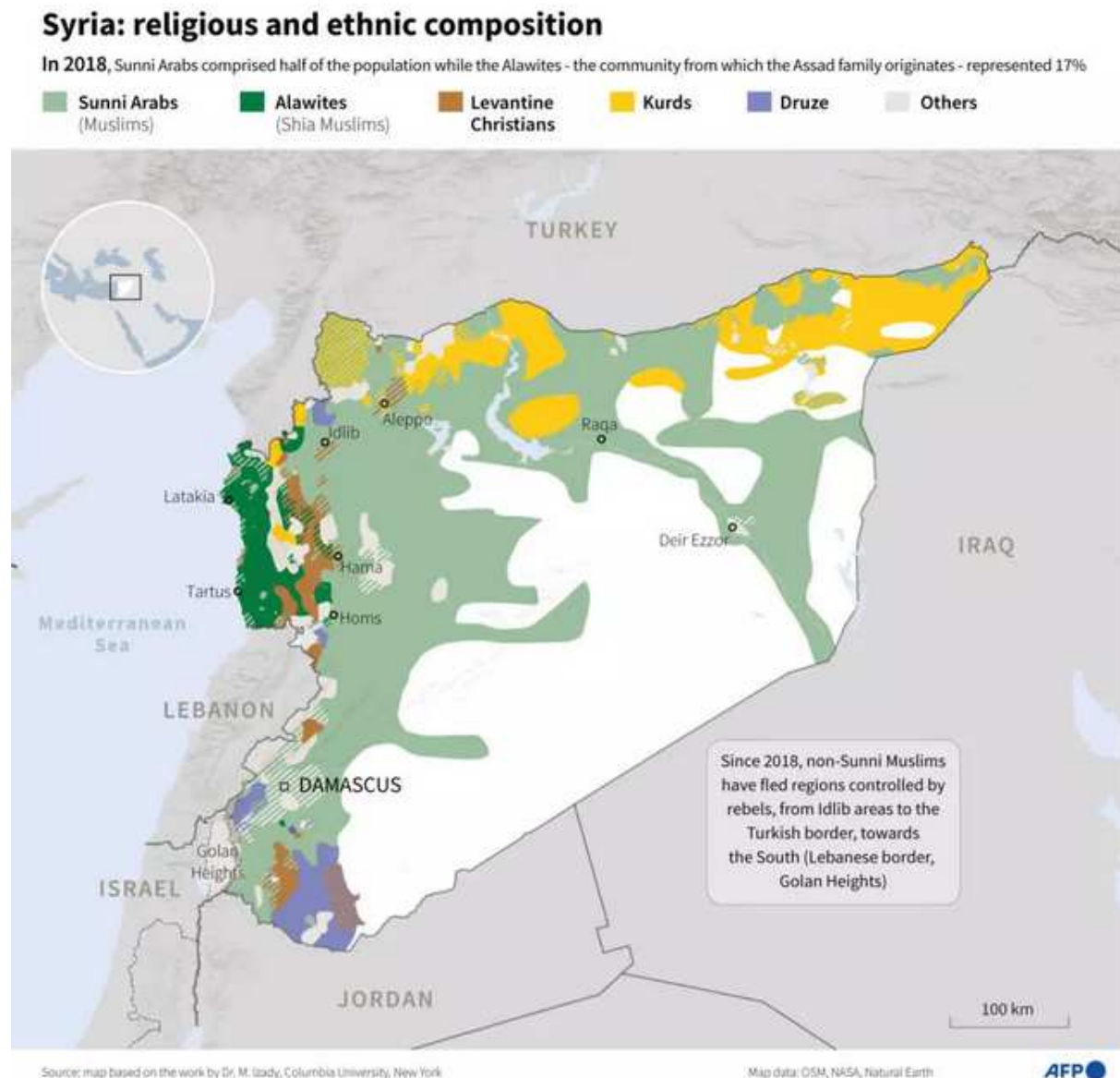
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[In the following, the current state of information is presented as it results from publicly accessible sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Sunni Muslims make up the majority of the country's population. Although official population statistics do not include information on religion or ethnicity, according to the US State Department's 2022 Religious Freedom Report, 74% of the population is Sunni, with a diverse ethnic mix of majority Arabs, Kurds, Circassians, Chechens and some Turkmen. Sunnis are present in most Syrian cities and villages, with notable concentrations in Damascus, Aleppo and Homs. In addition to the Sunnis, there are other Islamic groups, including Alawites, Ismailis and other Shia sects, which together make up 13% of the population, according to estimates by the US State Department. Syria's diversity is not limited to the confessional dimension, but extends to numerous ethnic groups such as Kurds, Armenians, Turkmen, Circassians and others. Arabs are the overwhelming majority in Syria, followed by Kurds ([BBC 12/12/2024](#)). According to its Foreign Minister ash-Shaybani, the transitional government in Syria wants to work towards the

inclusion of all population groups in the country. No one should be penalised because of their origin, social or religious background or membership of certain population groups, he said at the World Economic Forum in Davos ([Zeit Online 23/1/2025](#)). Demographic data for Syria is unreliable, and the current locations of minority communities are similarly difficult to determine due to the significant upheaval the country has experienced under the rule of Bashar al-Assad ([MRG 1/2025](#)).

The following map from France24 shows the ethnic and religious composition of Syria:



Sources 3: [FR24 26/12/2024a](#)

Although the numbers cannot be verified, it is estimated that well over 500,000 people have been killed and over twelve million displaced within Syria or abroad, including Alawites, Christians (including Armenians and Assyrians), Druze, Ismailis, Kurds, Turkmen, Twelver Shiites, Yazidis and others. Al-Assad's cynical mobilisation of fears within the community against the

backdrop of the growing influence of extremist elements within the Syrian opposition forces led to an increasingly sectarian landscape - accelerated by the displacement of minorities by militant groups in areas under their control. As a result, the country's demographics have been reorganised, with religious minorities concentrated in government-controlled areas in central and southern Syria, while the population in the north is now largely Sunni (MRG 1/2025).

In fact, there were reportedly no acts of revenge or violence during the rapid advance on Damascus. In his first speech in Damascus, ash-Shara' also spoke in moderation and called for a transition from fighting to institution-building (Rosa Lux 17/12/2024). Alawites and Christians in particular are concerned that the future of the new Syria may not be tolerant for their communities, many of whom rejected the 2011 revolution and the 13-year civil war that followed (Independent 12/12/2024). From the outset, the new authorities deliberately signalled their intention to move away from the divisive practices of their predecessors. In Aleppo, Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) liaised with prominent Christian leaders and clerics of different denominations to improve strained relations and promote a sense of security. These meetings were not superficial, but included discussions about specific grievances, such as the injustices faced by Christians in Jisr ash-Shughur a year earlier. Some of these grievances have since been addressed, mainly through accountability and the return of property to its rightful owners. This is an unprecedented step that emphasises the leadership's understanding of the need for inclusion, albeit carefully managed (AC 20/12/2024). According to other reports, there have been violent attacks, killings and other acts of revenge by HTS fighters against those of other faiths (National 6/1/2025). According to a Lebanese newspaper report, which quotes those affected, neighbours and acquaintances in particular are said to have carried out acts of revenge against people of other faiths. Many members of various religious minorities have fled to Lebanon (Nahar 1/1/2025).

Ash-Shara' has issued orders to leave crosses on churches and to protect Christmas decorations, to respect Shiite shrines and to leave bars and pubs alone where men and women danced together. This is different from Idlib, where those guilty of such perceived depravity would be killed, converted or expelled and their premises, including churches, closed (Economist 14/1/2025). HTS officials have launched extensive contact campaigns with representatives of all religious denominations, and the Christian and Druze communities across western Syria appear to be mostly living in peace. Only in the Alawite communities has the hunt for criminals led to repeated offences against civilians. These are declared as isolated cases (MEI 21/1/2025). When Christian leaders reported problems - such as the emergence of some Islamist preachers trying to convert Christians in the old city of Damascus - the new government acted quickly to restore calm (Arabi21 3/2/2025).

Ash-Shara' has declared that neither the Kurds nor the Druze should be allowed to work towards autonomy under the pretext of fear of Syria's Islamic majority. He demands that they integrate themselves into the new order and lay down their weapons. The Kurds should not maintain any independent or individual relations with foreign actors (Akhbar 31/12/2024).

According to observers, Iran launched a large-scale disinformation campaign after the fall of the regime, primarily aimed at fuelling religious conflicts in Syria and thus destabilising the fragile

situation in the country. In the process, masses of false or misleading reports of acts of violence against Shiites, Alawites and Christians, allegedly committed by fighters from the Islamist militia Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS), are being spread on social networks. In very few cases can it be proven that it is actually Iranian actors who are spreading these reports. However, the sheer number of postings suggests that it is an organised campaign ([NZZ 8/1/2025](#)). Enab Baladi also reports misleading videos being circulated on social media to sow discord and jeopardise the security situation ([Enab 10/1/2025](#)).

Although the rebel leader promised to represent the entire Syrian people, there is no Alawite, Shia, Druze or Christian in the interim government ([NZZ 24/1/2025](#)). In addition, there were repeated reports of attacks against these minorities in the weeks following the overthrow ([ORF 27/1/2025](#)). In an interview with the Economist, ash-Shara' promised that a broader and more diverse government would be established at the end of a three-month period in early March, in which all sections of society would participate. The selection process will be based on competence and not on ethnic or religious affiliation ([Economist 3/2/2025](#)).

One of the most pressing problems is not sectarian attacks, but rather the opaque process of targeting men who have served in the regime's armed forces (most of whom are Alawites due to the nature of the regime) ([MEI 21/1/2025](#)). *[Further information on attacks etc. on ethnic or religious minorities can be found in the chapters [General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [Legal protection / Judiciary - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

Religious minorities

Christians

Syria was an important cultural centre for Christianity, with dozens of churches and monasteries. Before 2011, 2.2 million Christians (approx. 10 % of the Syrian population) lived in Syria ([BBC 12/12/2024](#)). Many supported al-Assad or fled for fear of Islamist insurgents ([AP 15/12/2024a](#)). The American non-governmental organisation Open Doors estimates that only 3%, or around 638,000, remain ([BBC 12/12/2024](#)). The Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church estimates that around 500,000 Christians still live in the country ([OrthoPatSYR 22/9/2024](#)). Most Christians still live in the cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Latakia and the surrounding areas, as well as in the province of al-Hasakah in the north-east of the country. They are divided between several denominations, including Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant ([BBC 12/12/2024](#)). Christians in Syria are often accused of having supported the former regime. Indeed, many of them regarded al-Assad as the lesser evil after radical Islamist groups gained the upper hand in the armed revolt. But there were also many Christians who joined the uprising and were later killed or forced into exile ([Spectator 2/2/2025](#)). Christians were less able to stay out of the conflict due to their presence in urban centres where heavy fighting took place and in the regions overrun by the Islamic State (ISIS) in the north-east of the country. In opposition-controlled areas, Christians hid their religious identity and dressed as Muslims to avoid attracting attention. Fear of extremist groups was a key factor in the emigration of Christians from Syria ([MRG 1/2025](#)).

Ash-Shara' himself said that the transitional government would maintain good contacts with Christians and Druze who had fought with them against the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) ([MEMRI 16/12/2024](#)). Christian authorities said in an interview on 16 December 2024 that, apart from the media promises of the HTS, they had so far been able to observe little in the way of implementation. So far, they had only spoken to a military commander, otherwise not to any official representative of the interim government or the leading groups ([AAA 16/12/2024](#)). On 31 December 2024, ash-Shara' finally met with high-ranking Christian Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican clergy in Damascus ([AJ 31/12/2024a](#); cf. [Croix 2/1/2025](#)). He assured the Christians that they would remain unchallenged in the country and be able to practise their religion freely ([VN 2/1/2025](#)). Christians who had already lived under the HTS government stated that they were discriminated against at the beginning of the group's rule, for example by confiscating their property and banning them from practising their religious rituals. It was only in the last two years before al-Assad's fall that the HTS changed and gave the Christian community more freedom ([BBC 18/12/2024](#)).

Many Christians view the new government's assurance to respect religious freedom with scepticism, although there are major regional differences. Isolated restrictions on religious freedom for Christians by Islamists have been reported from some Syrian regions. In some places, for example, radical groups have been able to enforce separate seating for men and women on public transport or the obligation for women to wear veils. Observers attribute the success of these measures to the lack of a unified administration following the change of power ([ACN 3/2/2025](#)). After the fall of al-Assad, unknown gunmen shot at the Greek Orthodox archdiocese in Hama and attempted to destroy places of worship ([SOHR 19/12/2024](#); cf. [SNHR 19/12/2024](#)). Shortly before Christmas, a Christmas tree was set alight by masked men in a town in central Syria inhabited mainly by Christians. Protests broke out in several parts of the country. The HTS announced that foreign fighters had been arrested over the incident and assured that the tree would be restored ([BBC 24/12/2024](#)). HTS has tried to show a degree of tolerance towards certain minorities, particularly Christians, in the areas under its control, compared to the al-Qaeda-linked group from which it emerged. Since taking power in Damascus and large parts of Syria in December 2024, the group has generally shown restraint in its treatment of Christian and Shia/Alawite monuments and communities ([FR24 13/12/2024](#)). *[Further information on the treatment of minorities, such as Christians, can be found in the chapters [General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [Legal protection / judiciary - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

In Damascus, local Christian volunteers have armed themselves to protect Christian neighbourhoods and set up on street corners ([Spectator 2/2/2025](#)).

Shiite groups

Syria is the main centre of the Nizari Ismaili community in the Middle East, which considers itself the second largest Shiite group after the Twelver Shiites. The Ismailis number around 250,000 people and make up 1% of the total population of Syria. They live in the city of Salamiya, 30

kilometres east of Hama, and are also represented in a number of towns and villages around Hama, such as Masyaf, Qadmous and Nahr al-Khawabi ([BBC 12/12/2024](#)).

For the Ismailis of Salamiya, the transfer of power was remarkably smooth, as the city surrendered without violence. This co-operative handover reflects the long-standing tensions between the Ismaili community and the Assad regime, which had marginalised them over the years ([AC 20/12/2024](#)).

Syrian Defence Minister Abu Qasra said that Shiites can exercise their rights within the rules set by the state. They were 'part of the mission' of the 'new Syria' ([MEMRI 21/1/2025](#)). He also said that the Shia communities in Syria - whether in Nubul, Zahra, Sayyida Zainab or other areas - are part of the social fabric of Syria. It is Syria's responsibility - not Iran's - to guarantee their rights and protect them as Syrian citizens ([Al Majalla 24/1/2025](#)).

Alawites

Alawism is a Shiite sect of Islam. The word 'Alawi - علوي means 'followers of Ali', a cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. According to Reuters, the Alawites are the largest religious minority in Syria, accounting for 10% of the total population. The Alawites have been resident in Syria since the 12th century AD and live mainly on the Mediterranean coast, in the cities of Latakia and Tartus ([BBC 12/12/2024](#)). Approximately 2-3 million Syrians belong to Alawism ([AlMon 11/1/2025](#)). The Alawites were not officially recognised as Muslims until 1932 ([TWI 31/12/2024](#)).

The Alawite minority is assumed to have been supported by Assad's regime because he and his family are also Alawites ([PBS 16/12/2024](#)). Under al-Assad, more than 80 per cent of Alawites worked for the state, making up the majority of the army and intelligence officer corps, most senior government officials and most executives in public industry. During the civil war, the wives and children of killed Alawite soldiers were given public jobs to compensate for their losses, further increasing the number of those who owed their livelihoods to the state and the al-Assad family ([TWI 31/12/2024](#)). While the Alawite communities occupied a disproportionate number of key positions in the regime, they are also among the poorest in Syria ([Independent 12/12/2024](#)). Apart from al-Assad's family members and his supporters, the Alawite minority suffered from poverty ([PBS 16/12/2024](#)). The al-Assad family relied on the Alawites, who had held many leading positions in the regime since they came to power in 1970. Many reports have pointed out that they were disproportionately conscripted by the Assad regime during the earlier years of the war. Estimates vary, but all agree that at least tens of thousands of Alawites were killed in this conflict ([Independent 12/12/2024](#)). In the intelligence documents left behind after the fall of the regime, one is said to have been found that ordered the execution of 2,459 Alawite soldiers. The reason for the execution was non-compliance with military orders. The families are said to have been informed that the soldiers had died on the battlefield. The document, which is dated 1 March 2015, is also said to contain that 1,796 soldiers were detained at the time and their families were informed that they had been abducted ([AlHurra 15/12/2024b](#)). The new government has reportedly drawn up a list of 250 names - the majority of them Alawites - which the new government considers to be criminals who should be arrested and prosecuted.

In details of ongoing meetings with Alawite dignitaries in major cities or on the Syrian coast, the new government team says that Alawites must prove their loyalty to the new government and cut ties with al-Assad's supporters (Akhbar 31/12/2024). Although the new government is targeting former government officials and soldiers, Alawite neighbourhoods are filled with fear due to disturbing reports of killings and disappearances in these areas (AlMon 11/1/2025).

Syria expert Fabrice Balanche believes that ash-Shara' will almost certainly initiate a 'de-Alawiteisation' process under the pretext of carrying out a 'de-Ba'athification' within the army and the government. This means that the Alawite coastal region will have to rediscover its purpose as a place of refuge. Many Alawites living in Damascus, Homs and the surrounding inland areas are likely to find themselves forced to return to their homeland - to properties they have created not only as holiday homes but also as security for the future. If they remain in other parts of Syria, their lives could quickly become difficult and even dangerous in the face of the return of displaced, potentially vengeful Sunnis. Many members of the new Sunni leadership in Damascus and their supporters are likely to carry a legacy of religious and social hostility towards Alawites in general. The sect could face collective punishment, even those Alawites who opposed al-Assad instead of helping him (TWI 31/12/2024). This view is supported by reports in The National that a campaign to capture opponents of the regime was intensified on 6 January 2025, despite fears of sectarian retribution that would undermine state-building. In the weeks following the overthrow, members of the Alawite community have posted videos on social media allegedly showing HTS operatives beating and kicking young Alawite men in Homs and surrounding areas, as well as in the mountainous coastal region. HTS-led formations are said to have killed around 75 Alawites in the attacks, including several women (National 6/1/2025). Around Latakia and Tartus, HTS has conducted operations to capture remnants of the regime, occasionally clashing with army soldiers who had not laid down their weapons (Economist 8/1/2025). In Homs, a Sunni-majority city to which al-Assad resettled masses of Alawites, Sunnis returning from the north are violently reclaiming their homes (Economist 14/1/2025).

The new government refrained from giving specific assurances to the Alawites and instead anchored its messages of justice and reconciliation in broader statements. The new authorities emphasised that no one should expect retribution without due process and clear evidence of wrongdoing. The deployment of rebels in Latakia and the surrounding mountains was carried out without significant violence, with explicit instructions to protect public property and prevent retaliatory attacks. Such actions suggest an attempt to assuage fears of collective punishment among Alawites - a community burdened by its historical association with the Assad regime (AC 20/12/2024). The Economist writes that HTS - a group once seen by Alawites as an existential threat - is now often seen by them as the only force that can protect them from extremists. However, the group is busy ruling Damascus (Economist 8/1/2025). In early February, the Supreme Alawite Islamic Council in Syria and the Diaspora was established with the aim of ensuring that the Alawite community is an authentic part of the Syrian fabric. It is to exist until the end of the transitional phase and the establishment of a constitutional state. The council is to be headed by the Mufti of Latakia and consist of 130 sheikhs from different governorates (Akhbar 4/2/2025).

Alawites say they have been subjected to religiously motivated attacks since the fall of al-Assad on 8 December 2024, while the new authorities have said they are trying to allay fears, pledging to prosecute perpetrators of crimes and promising to restore security for minorities ([FR24 6/2/2025](#)). The Economist recognises little evidence of retaliation by HTS against the Alawites. After the fall of the Assad regime, there was a security vacuum in Alawite territory that was filled by rebel groups, some of them backed by Turkey, who have retaliated with looting and kidnappings. Dozens of men, including students with no links to the old regime, have been arrested by such groups, which are undisciplined and rarely identify themselves. Locals report that while HTS officials are sympathetic, they also say they have no idea who the perpetrators are ([Economist 8/1/2025](#)). Shortly after the fall of the Assad regime, there were incidents against religious shrines, such as shrines of the Alawite community in the province of Hama ([SOHR 19/12/2024](#)). This was followed by protests in Aleppo at the end of December 2024 ([DW 28/12/2024](#)). According to activists and observers, dozens of Syrians have been killed in revenge attacks since the fall of al-Assad, the vast majority of them from the Alawite minority ([AP 26/12/2024](#)). Telegram channels supporting Iran-backed Iraqi militias reported attacks on Alawite populations by jihadist groups. Alawite sheikhs condemn the murder of

community members, call on the military task force to execute murderers and form councils to protect Alawite areas. Jihadist social media channels, some of which are close to the HTS, incite hatred against Alawites, threaten them and condemn an amnesty for Alawites ([MEMRI 17/12/2024](#)). Sectarian violence has occurred repeatedly since al-Assad's fall, but not nearly to the extent that was feared after almost 14 years of civil war, in which an estimated half a million people were killed ([AP 26/12/2024](#)). Reports of insults, harassment, raids, abductions and killings have proliferated on social media. Videos allegedly showing HTS fighters humiliating, beating or inciting violence against Alawites are circulating without verification. Officials declare the incidents to be isolated cases and state that no distinctions are made between the communities and that good relations are maintained with all of them. The problem is those who have not regulated their status or have hidden weapons. Others have nothing to fear. The problem is that a climate of fear is being fuelled by the dissemination of fake videos ([FR24 13/1/2025](#)). The Middle East Institute writes that there are rumours of religiously motivated attacks on minorities by the new armed forces and that these rumours are fuelled on the one hand by fake campaigns for al-Assad and on the other by real attacks that have taken place in these communities. Many of these rumours cannot be verified, while others are quickly refuted by fact-checking organisations. It is argued that many of the confirmed offences appear to be due to a lack of professionalism in arresting wanted persons rather than explicitly sectarian motives. Many crimes are committed by gangs and civilians not affiliated with the new government, while some ordinary soldiers and local commanders have been involved in sectarian-motivated harassment and abduction of Alawite civilians. Criminal gangs and individuals are also looking for security and administrative loopholes to exploit in this new era, leading to many offences that are clearly not religiously motivated. Other, more sectarian-motivated crimes committed by both individuals and security forces appear to have other motivations, such as retaliation, which has been a particular problem in Homs and parts of Hama, where local Sunnis from towns that had suffered massacres at the hands of neighbouring Alawite militias carried out acts of revenge

(MEI 21/1/2025). In the face of ongoing reprisals, many Alawites living in mixed provinces such as Homs and Hama were forced to return to the relative safety of coastal villages ([FR24 6/2/2025](#)).

On the anniversary of the infamous Hama massacre, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights recorded the execution of ten members of the Alawite religious community in the province of Hama. A group called Ansar as-Sunna is said to be behind the executions ([SOHR 2/2/2025](#)). Since the fall of Assad, tensions have escalated against the backdrop of sectarian attacks on the Alawites, who ruled Syria for more than 50 years under the Assad family ([SOHR 10/3/2025a](#)). Sectarian and regional liquidation operations took place on the Syrian coast and in the Latakia Mountains in early March 2025, killing hundreds of citizens, including women and children. Security forces, members of the Ministry of Defence and their allied forces committed war crimes and human rights violations ([SOHR 10/3/2025b](#)). Most of those killed appear to belong to the Alawite community ([SOHR 10/3/2025a](#); cf. [TWI 10/3/2025](#)), which lives mainly in the coastal provinces, including the cities of Latakia and Tartus. Human rights organisations estimate that hundreds of civilians were killed in these clashes. Residents of the coastal region reported that many homes of Alawite families were looted and burned down([SOHR 10/3/2025a](#)). Among those killed by insurgents of the former regime were Sunnis, Christians, but also Alawites ([TWI 10/3/2025](#)) [*Further information on the treatment of Alawites, acts of revenge, attacks, etc. can be found in the chapters [General human rights situation - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and [Legal protection / judiciary - developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#). Information on the incidents in March 2025 can also be found in the chapter [Security situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

Druze

The Druze, who describe themselves as 'monotheists', meaning that they believe in only one God, make up 3% of the Syrian population, i.e. around 700,000 people. The Druze sect is believed to have split from Ismailism during the Fatimid period in the 10th century, but some scholars consider it a separate, independent faith. The history of the Druze in Syria goes back about a thousand years. They played an important role in the struggle against the French occupation of Syria, rejected the establishment of the Druze state and triggered the Great Syrian Revolution in 1925. The majority of the Druze live in the towns of Suweida, Salkhad, Shahba and Qarya in Jabal al-Arab, Jaramana near Damascus and Majdal Shams on the occupied Syrian Golan ([BBC 12/12/2024](#)). Syria's Druze community, most of whom live in the southern governorate of Suweida, tried to remain neutral in the conflict as they wanted to avoid a direct confrontation with the Assad government or their Sunni neighbours. However, the community's relationship with the former government remained tense due to disagreements over issues of conscription and self-protection. Druze were also regularly targeted during the occupation of northern Syria by the Islamic State (ISIS) ([MRG 1/2025](#)).

Gestures to redress grievances were made by the interim government towards the Druze community in the Jabal al-Summaq area of Idlib governorate, where HTS leadership worked with

representatives to restore trust and ensure their communities were not targeted. In addition, the leaders held talks with prominent figures of the Druze community in Suweida and Jabal al-Arab on 17 December 2024, assuring them of security and future inclusion ([AC 20/12/2024](#)). The leader of the Druze community in Suweida said that the Druze would cooperate with the new leadership in Syria, but that he would refuse to hand over the weapons of the local militias until there was a new constitution or government that represented all faiths and communities and a separation of powers was introduced ([MAITIC 9/1/2025](#)). In August 2023, protests for better public services erupted in Suweida, a predominantly Druze neighbourhood, which quickly escalated into demands for al-Assad's departure. Even before his fall, Suweida residents were demanding a secular state that would enshrine the rights of minorities. The protesters said their demands for improved public services and a secular state remained unchanged despite the new leadership in Damascus. Al-Assad's ouster has muted demands for a Druze state, but local religious figures, militia leaders and protesters say they are happy to be a thorn in the side of the new government ([Guardian 30/1/2025](#)).

Yazidis

There are a very small number of Yazidis who practice a 4,000-year-old religion. Yazidis speak the Kurdish dialect Kurmanji. Some identify ethnically as Kurds, while others consider themselves Yazidis with their own ethnic identity ([MRG 1/2025](#)). Yazidis live in the city and villages of al-Hasakah, Aleppo and the surrounding areas, as well as in 'Afrin. Although there are no current official figures on the number of Yazidis in Syria, the Yazidi Union in 'Afrin estimates that there are still around 2,000 Yazidis in 'Afrin, compared to around 50 to 60,000 before 2011 ([BBC 12/12/2024](#)). Their numbers in Syria have declined over the years, mainly due to assimilation into Islam. After the brutal attacks by the Islamic State (ISIS) on the Yazidi community in neighbouring Iraq from 2014 onwards, the majority of Syrian Yazidis fled their homes ([MRG 1/2025](#)).

Murshidiya

In rural Latakia and some villages to the west of Homs and Hama, there is the Murshidiya sect, which was founded in 1923 by Salman al-Murshid. It is popularly said that the Murshidiya emerged from the Alawite sect, but has chosen an independent religious path. The Murshidiya is a relatively closed sect that prefers not to publicise its religious beliefs. Its followers celebrate a single holiday, the 'Festival of Joy in God', which takes place annually in August and is considered an expression of spiritual unity. The founder of the sect, Salman al-Murshid, was executed in 1946 during the reign of Syrian President Shukri al-Qutli because he was accused of committing crimes and claimed to be divine ([BBC 12/12/2024](#)).

Jews

Almost the entire Jewish population, which numbered around 40,000 before the founding of Israel in 1948, emigrated, leaving an estimated 100 to 200 Jews in 2007, concentrated in Damascus and Aleppo. At the time of the fall of the Assad regime in 2024, only a few Jews are said to have remained in the country. While Jewish groups began settling on the land in the Golan Heights

as early as the 1880s, a more continuous Jewish presence began after Israel occupied the area following the 1967 Six-Day War. This presence grew when Israel annexed the Golan Heights in 1981, although the United Nations refused to recognise the area's new status and the Golan Heights remained under Syrian sovereignty under international law (MRG 1/2025).

Ethnic minorities

Armenians

Armenians from historical Armenia are also part of the Syrian national fabric. They emigrated in large numbers in 1915 to escape the massacres of the Ottoman army. Most Armenians profess Christianity and have their own language. Before 2011, their number in Syria was estimated at around 100,000, of which more than 60,000 lived in Aleppo, while the others were spread across the cities of Kasab, Qamishli, Yaqoubia, 'Ain al-'Arab, Deir ez-Zour and the capital Damascus. Armenians have been represented in the Syrian legislature since 1928, and Syria is the second Arab country after Lebanon to recognise the Armenian genocide. The war has had an impact on the Armenian presence in the country. In 2015, the number of Syrian-Armenian refugees in Armenia reached more than 15,000 (BBC 12/12/2024). Armenians are Christians of various denominations (MRG 1/2025).

Turkmen

Turkmen came to Syria, Iraq and Iran in the 11th century. In Syria, Turkmen who belong to the Turkic ethnic group live mainly in the north, in the Turkmen mountain region of Latakia near the Turkish border, as well as in Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, Tartus and the area around Damascus. There are no exact statistics on the number of Turkmen, but it is estimated to be between 1.5 and 3.5 million. Under al-Assad's rule, Turkmen were forbidden to write or speak their own Turkmen language and their ethnic identity was not recognised by the ousted Assad government (BBC 12/12/2024). They are mostly Sunni Muslims (MRG 1/2025).

Circassians

The Circassians, whose origins lie in the Caucasus, came to Syria in 1878 and settled mainly in three areas: in the governorate of Quneitra, where they lived in the majority before the Israeli occupation of the Golan, in Aleppo, in the city of Damascus and in some villages on the outskirts of the city. The Circassians are Sunni Muslims (BBC 12/12/2024).

[Information on the Kurds can be found in the chapter [Ethnic and religious minorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [Kurds - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].

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12.1 Kurds - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 16:22

[The following presents the current situation as it appears from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Kurds are the largest ethnic minority. There are no official statistics on the number of Kurds in Syria, but most estimates put the figure at between two and three million people living in the areas of al-Hasakah, Qamishli, 'Ain al-'Arab, 'Afrin and the neighbourhoods of Damascus and Aleppo, according to the Jusoor Centre for Studies. Successive governments have not recognised the Kurdish identity and the state has prevented them from using the Kurdish language in their schools or in newspapers and books. Some 300,000 Kurds have not been granted Syrian citizenship since the 1960s, and Kurdish land has been confiscated and distributed to Arabs in order to 'Arabise' the Kurdish areas. The majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims, with a small number of Christians and Yazidis ([BBC 12/12/2024](#)). In recent years, an autonomous Kurdish region has emerged in north-western Syria, but this is not recognised by the Syrian government ([MRG 1/2025](#)).

In the north, Syrian Kurds, supported by other minorities, defended their autonomous enclave, called Rojava in Kurdish, which was founded in 2012. The autonomous administration introduced positive practices that respected the rights of linguistic and religious minorities and used three official languages (Kurdish, Arabic and Aramaic). However, there were reports of Kurdish armed groups destroying Arab and Turkmen houses in the region and displacing their residents ([MRG 1/2025](#)).

Interim President ash-Shara' distinguishes between the Kurdish community and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê - PKK), to which he also counts the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) because they also include groups with links to the military arm of the PKK. He sees the Kurds as part of the homeland and promises peaceful coexistence without oppression of the Kurds ([MEMRI 16/12/2024](#)). At a meeting between ash-Shara' and a delegation from the Kurdish-dominated SDF, the Kurds only agreed to join the new Syrian security forces as an independent entity, demanded the largest share of oil revenues and requested self-rule in Kurdish-majority areas as part of a Syrian federation. Ash-Shara' agreed to some administrative decentralisation, proportional distribution of oil revenues to Kurdish-controlled areas and recognition of Kurdish cultural rights, including the teaching of Kurdish in schools. However, government representatives insisted that military integration would take place individually under the Ministry of Defence ([MAITIC 9/1/2025](#)). SDF commander 'Abdi is not satisfied with ash-Shara's assurance that the Kurds will be granted cultural rights in the new constitution. He demands political rights, such as the administration of cities by Kurds. In addition, Kurdish

commanders and leaders should be placed in leadership positions according to the same standards as HTS commanders when they are integrated into a new Syrian army (FAZ 28/1/2025). [Further information on the administration of the Kurds can be found in the chapter [Political situation \(developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)\) / Political situation in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria \(DAANES\)](#)].

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13 Relevant population groups

13.1 Women - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8/12/2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 16:24

[There is currently insufficient information on the situation of women in Syria and there are various, sometimes contradictory, statements and reports. In the following, the current status as it results from publicly accessible sources is presented. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

The ongoing conflict in Syria has led to significant demographic shifts: Countless men have been killed, displaced or forced into exile through military conscription, economic hardship or involvement in fighting. As a result, women now bear a major responsibility for providing for households, working in various sectors and managing daily economic activities (AC 20/12/2024). The conflict in Syria has exacerbated gender inequalities, exposing women and girls to increased violence, displacement and discriminatory laws that restrict their rights. Many female heads of households have difficulty registering the birth of their children, increasing the risk of statelessness and limiting access to education and healthcare (HRW 16/1/2025). Displaced women are constantly at risk of sexual assault and other forms of abuse, especially when passing

through checkpoints controlled by armed groups. Women trying to leave the country with the help of smugglers are also at risk of exploitation, in some cases even sexual trafficking. In Syria, there is also evidence that sexual violence was deliberately used in the former government's detention centres to intimidate and punish women who were directly or indirectly associated with the opposition. Women who were raped or suspected of being raped in detention run the risk of being disowned by their family members or even falling victim to honour killings after their release, as sexual and gender-based violence are culturally stigmatised (MRG 1/2025). A multi-purpose demographic survey conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), a government agency, in collaboration with international organisations, found that 518,000 women lost their husbands during the war. An international report by the UNHCR shows that more than 145,000 Syrian refugee families in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, as well as tens of thousands in Turkey, are led by women struggling to survive alone, representing about 22% of the total number of Syrian families. Families headed by widowed women often suffer from a lack of resources, high debts, lack of access to adequate food, a large proportion of their children are forced to work in the informal economy, and some of them are exposed to various forms of violence to varying degrees. The poverty rate of women has risen to unprecedented levels with the increasing number of widows in society (AJ 31/1/2025b).

Women disproportionately rarely have legal security. This is related to women's poverty, their vulnerability to violence, discriminatory practices of local communities often caused by traditions and a narrow interpretation of religion, and other factors that contribute to women's overall inequality. Some groups of women are also discriminated against on the basis of class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, income, marital status or other factors. The number of women who own their own home is estimated to be only 2-5%. Furthermore, women with disabilities are exposed to additional risks, making their right to adequate housing even more remote (UNHCHR 18/7/2024). An employee of the feminist organisation Syrian Women's Political Movement emphasises that significant legal reforms are needed to improve women's rights in Syria. It is essential to work on the constitution to ensure that women's rights in relation to religion, politics, land rights and property are protected (DW 7/1/2025).

By 2017, women made up 30% of the judicial corps. The increase in female representation was largely due to the loss of male judges through death, imprisonment or displacement during the civil war (TNA 2/1/2025a).

President ash-Shara' said in an interview with The Economist that the labour market is open to women and any woman who wants to work can work (Economist 3/2/2025).

Women reported problems with rebel fighters. For example, female judges stated that fighters had told them that they were no longer allowed to serve. These are likely to be individuals (PBS 16/12/2024). International media, which had reported that there would be no more female judges in the future, later corrected a corresponding report (Tagesschau 12/12/2024). A statement by Ali al-Maghraby, the first inspector of the Ministry of Justice in the HTS-led Syrian Salvation Government (SSG), appeared to address the meeting at the Palace of Justice in Homs, denying rumours that women could be removed from the judiciary and saying that the 'rule of female

judges intact', but other details were neither denied nor confirmed ([Nahar 14/12/2024](#)). The HTS spokesperson also attracted attention with statements about the future role of women in the Syrian judiciary. In an interview with a Lebanese television station, he is said to have questioned whether women should assume judicial powers. The current situation has become increasingly precarious for female judges across the country. Although Syria's transitional cabinet has not issued formal instructions to dismiss female judges, sources from the Homs governorate's Palace of Justice report that they have received verbal instructions to remove women from judicial positions ([TNA 2/1/2025a](#)). Further, the HTS reportedly issued a ban on interfering with women's dress or making demands regarding their dress or appearance, including demands for modesty ([Nahar 14/12/2024](#); cf. [SyrNews 9/12/2024](#)). However, Aleppo Today quoted Mohammad al-Asmar, the communications officer of the Ministry of Information of the SSG, who denied that these statements were made by an official body and pointed out that the source of these claims were media sites known to be pro-Assad ([Nahar 14/12/2024](#)). Notices were posted on lampposts ordering women to wear the veil. Children coming home from school ask their mothers why they are not veiled. Ash-Shara' has appointed a woman to head the central bank, but in some government offices women and men now have to go through separate entrances ([Economist 14/1/2025](#)). The German Foreign Minister wants to make aid for Syria conditional on respect for women's rights. There will be no EU funding for Islamist structures ([DW 7/1/2025](#)). Women are actively present in public spaces in urban centres and rural areas. There have been no widespread attempts to introduce restrictive dress codes or limit women's mobility, in stark contrast to the fears many harboured when HTS first gained prominence. Women participate freely in public celebrations in towns and villages, emphasising the relative ease with which they can move around in public spaces under the new leadership ([AC 20/12/2024](#)). HTS leader Ahmed ash-Shara', who currently heads Syria, promised that Syria would not become a 'second Afghanistan', pointing to the record of Idlib province under HTS rule, where nearly 60 per cent of university graduates are women ([TNA 2/1/2025a](#)).

While women are visible in mid-level administrative roles in the transitional government, no efforts have yet been made to appoint them to leadership positions or ministries. This reflects a broader trend in conservative government structures, where women's participation is often limited to symbolic roles. The new government's failure to include women in decision-making risks alienating a critical part of the population and undermining their claim to inclusivity ([AC 20/12/2024](#)). The only woman in the interim government is 'Aisha ad-Dabis, a human and women's rights activist who has worked on humanitarian projects in refugee camps in recent years, according to local media reports. Her appointment as director of the Women's Affairs Office came after the new government's spokesperson sparked controversy with his statement that the appointment of women to ministerial and parliamentary positions was premature because the 'biological and psychological nature' of women prevented them from fulfilling certain roles ([BBC 26/12/2024](#)). Ad-Dabis himself publicly stated that the transitional government had designed its own model for women and wanted to implement it. This model essentially restricts women to the private sphere and is based on Sharia law ([ANF 9/1/2025](#)). At the same time, she promised to include Syrian women in social, cultural and political institutions and announced a comprehensive initiative to address the needs of female prisoners who suffered under the

previous regime (TNA 2/1/2025a). In response to public outrage, the Foreign Minister expressed confidence in the active role of women in society, stating: 'We believe in the active role of women in society and trust in their abilities' (TNA 1/1/2025). The Islamist-dominated transitional government has elevated two women to positions previously reserved for men: Maysaa' Sabrin is the managing director of the Syrian Central Bank and Muhsina al-Mahithawi is the first female governor in Syria (DW 7/1/2025). She was appointed governor of Suweida. The Druze woman thus heads her home province (TNA 1/1/2025).

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13.1.1 Women in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 15:29

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

In the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), the Social Contract of 2023 stipulates that no one may be discriminated against, insulted or excluded on the basis of differences in skin colour, gender, race, religion, belief or sect (Article 49). According to Article 50 of the Social Contract of 2023, any kind of violence against women, their exploitation or discrimination is a crime punishable by law. According to Article 51, women have the right to equal participation in all areas of life and in decisions that affect their affairs (RIC 14/12/2023). Although the autonomous administration has passed laws that are in line with human and women's rights, these are not actually implemented and are often circumvented by the same authorities that passed them or by people who are not convinced of gender equality (IFE-EFI 2023). The Women's Law adopted in 2014 prohibits female genital mutilation, polygamy and child marriage (Alman 21/12/2023).

As part of the Democratic Union Party's (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat - PYD) agenda to establish democratic confederalism, reforms have been introduced that aim to include women in politics and achieve a more (gender) equitable society. In the theory of democratic confederalism, self-government begins with communes at neighbourhood and village level, which eventually merge into higher levels, while retaining autonomy and decision-making power at local level. The PYD has often used family visits to mobilise the public and raise awareness. It had already conducted such visits before the start of the war in 2011 under the Assad regime to promote its political agenda, which includes gender equality. Many of the newly introduced laws and reforms in north-east Syria aim to equalise the relationship between women and men, including granting women the right to divorce and inheritance. The local government has enshrined women's rights in the constitution by introducing a 50 per cent quota for women in all institutions and establishing special women's committees such as the 'Women's Houses' to deal with issues of domestic violence, marriage law and family disputes involving women. However, these legal reforms are not recognised either nationally or internationally. (Alman 21/12/2023). According to the PKK-affiliated Firat News Agency, women's fundamental rights are recognised and specifically guaranteed by law in North and East Syria. In addition to basic rights, such as the right to freedom of expression, women have gained active participation in political and public life. They not only participate in all areas of public life, but also take on leadership roles, including in the fields of business, education, culture and politics. In the area of family and family law,

women in North and East Syria have made significant progress: laws and regulations have been passed that protect women's rights and combat all forms of abuse such as domestic violence and sexualised assault. The position of women in Kurdish society, as well as in Syrian society in general, has been strengthened and the necessary support has been provided to expand the role of women in the educational, cultural, social and economic spheres ([ANF 9/1/2025](#)). Despite AANES' claims that progress was solely due to the establishment of self-governance, a change in gender relations was already underway before the outbreak of the war ([Alman 21/12/2023](#)). The takeover of power by the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) raised awareness of women's rights and protection and encouraged women to engage in political and leadership positions. In the midst of insecurity and a volatile environment, women-led organisations joined forces to advocate for women's rights, demand more political space and promote peacebuilding ([CARE 10/1/2025](#)). Through Kongreya Star, the umbrella organisation of the women's movement in Rojava, women took on coordinating roles in education, public health, the economy, community dispute resolution and civil defence. Laws have also been passed that impose strict penalties for polygamy and underage marriages. Many Kurdish women see women's empowerment as inseparable from the larger liberation struggle against the repressive Islamic State (ISIS), other extremist groups and the policies of the Assad regime ([MRG 1/2025](#)). The establishment of institutions such as the all-female committees and women's shelters creates new focal points for dealing with gender-based discrimination ([Alman 21/12/2023](#)). Women have the opportunity to establish educational and training institutions and women's centres aimed at empowering women and improving their technical and professional prospects and skills in society. Women's groups involved in humanitarian and development work and initiatives to promote women's health and maternal rights have also been established ([ANF 9/1/2025](#)). In the civilian government agency known as the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), every leadership position is held jointly by a woman and a man. In a survey of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Dr Amy Austin Holmes found that 'while the idea of gender equality was developed by female cadres within the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê - PKK), ... the commitment to gender equality is no longer found only in a small circle of cadres, but is shared by the entire grassroots.' Findings from the Wilson Centre point to similar trends in civilian governance: Women from different ethnic and political backgrounds have taken up the feminist theories of the Kurdish movement and embraced the system in practice. The co-chairs believe that the system is largely respected in practice, although there is still progress to be made. 35% of co-chairs indicated that their constituents treated them and their male co-chair completely equally, while a further 26% indicated that their constituents treated them and their male co-chair somewhat or mostly equally. 16% stated that they were not treated equally by their constituents. Some of the inequalities mentioned by female co-chairs were traditional sexist attitudes ([Wilson 25/11/2024](#)). While reforms such as the introduction of the co-presidency have undoubtedly increased women's political participation, other measures such as family visits have also led to new forms of control over the population, argues Julia Wartmann in the Almanac of the Swiss Society for the Middle East and Islamic Civilisations. Measures such as the co-presidency have led to greater political participation and decision-making by women ([Alman 21/12/2023](#)).

Julia Wartmann in the Almanac of the Swiss Society for the Middle East and Islamic Civilisations argues that imposing penalties on those who oppose the Women's Law may address the symptoms of gender inequalities, but the root causes, such as economic and physical insecurity, remain and are exacerbated by the ongoing conflict. The criminalisation of those who resist the new normative framework is a worrying development and not necessarily conducive to social change (Alman 21/12/2023).

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13.2 Children - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8/12/2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 16:32

[There is currently insufficient information on the situation of children in Syria. The following section presents the current situation as it appears from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is being disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

According to UNICEF, 7.5 million children are in need of humanitarian assistance and 6.4 million are in urgent need of protection because insecurity and economic hardship exacerbate the violation of children's rights, fear and distress. 3.7 million children need nutritional support. More than 2.4 million children are out of school and a million more are at risk of dropping out. This exposes them to a higher risk of child labour, child marriage, human trafficking and recruitment and use by conflict parties. (UNICEF 17/12/2024). More than 650,000 children show signs of stunted growth due to severe malnutrition (OHCHR 3/2/2025).

Following the fall of the Assad regime, the fate of hundreds of children who were arrested or taken to orphanages after their parents were arrested remains unclear. The media office of the Syrian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour announced that it had found several secret books sent by the security authorities during al-Assad's rule concerning the transfer of a number of children to orphanages. Some employees of orphanages have admitted that a number of children were brought to them and that the children were sometimes asked to change their parents' names or register them as deceased (Arabiya 12/1/2025b).

Children are particularly exposed to the danger of landmines and unexploded ordnance. UXO are often mistaken for toys or represent objects that arouse children's curiosity. Since 2020, more than 1,260 children have been killed by unexploded ordnance (UNICEF 17/12/2024). In the last nine years, 422,000 incidents involving unexploded ordnance have occurred, half of which involved children. In 2024, 116 children were killed or injured by unexploded ordnance or mines. Unexploded ordnance is the main cause of child casualties. It is estimated that five million children across the country are at risk (UN News 14/1/2025).

Education and schools

Over two million children are out of school and many schools have been destroyed or damaged (UNESCWA 26/1/2025). The education sector faces significant obstacles due to the destruction of infrastructure and economic pressures, leading to high dropout rates, especially among girls. Instead of sending their children to school, many families prefer to make them work to cope with the economic hardship. 35% of school-age children do not attend school, which is exacerbated by the destruction of infrastructure and economic pressures. This means that more than 2.4 million children have no educational opportunities, while more than one million children are at similar risk (IHH 10/1/2025).

Refugee children face major obstacles to attending school, including overcrowded camps, insufficient resources and limited access to schooling opportunities (UNESCWA 26/1/2025). The majority of camps in north-west Syria, Aleppo and Idlib governorates have no school. Mostly due to a low number of camp residents in some camps, there may be alternative education programmes or children may commute to school in nearby towns. Only 40% of schools have sufficient drinking water. On the other hand, only 35% have sufficient toilet water. The study revealed a diverse educational landscape in camp schools, with most offering the first and second cycle of basic education and very few reaching up to secondary level, resulting in many secondary-age students attending schools outside the camps (ACU 30/6/2024).

The Ministry of Education, under the leadership of the newly appointed Minister al-Qadri, announced comprehensive reforms to the national curriculum on 1 January 2025, which have sparked widespread debate. The proposed reforms, which affect all levels of education, include significant revisions, such as the deletion of content related to the toppled Assad regime, the rewording of passages about gods in history and philosophy books, the rewriting or deletion of the subject English, the replacement of the subject 'National Education' with the subject 'Islamic or Christian Religious Education' (TNA 2/1/2025b). The amended curricula are to remain in place

until subject committees are formed to revise the curricula (Sky News 2/1/2025). Subsequently, there were calls for protests in the Suweida governorate (Tayyar 1/1/2025).

In north-east Syria in Kurdish-controlled areas, over 50,000 children, including children with disabilities, still have no access to education as their schools are being used as emergency shelters (UNOCHA 30/1/2025).

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13.2.1 Children in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 16:34

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far

and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Article 55 of the 2023 Social Contract of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) stipulates that the rights of children are protected and that the use of violence against them, their employment, exploitation and recruitment are prohibited. Furthermore, Article 52 stipulates that young people have the right to organise themselves independently and to participate in an organised and voluntary manner in all areas of life ([RIC 14/12/2023](#)).

In north-east Syria in Kurdish-controlled areas, over 50,000 children, including children with disabilities, still have no access to education as their schools are being used as emergency shelters ([UNOCHA 30/1/2025](#)).

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13.2.2 Recruitment of minors for military service (as of October 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 15:29

[There is currently no information on the recruitment of minors. The information in this chapter dates back to the time before the coup on 8 December 2024. No statement can be made as to its up-to-dateness or current accuracy. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

The recruitment of children for armed forces or armed groups violates international humanitarian law, which prohibits the recruitment or use of children under the age of 15 in conflicts. Such recruitment or use of children in conflict is a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In addition, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict prohibits the recruitment of children under the age of 18 by non-state armed groups in all circumstances ([HRW 2/10/2024](#)). The recruitment of children in armed conflict causes significant harm to communities and families. When children are forced into armed groups, they not only expose themselves to danger and undermine peace-building efforts. Families suffer hardship when their children are exposed to violence, leading to fear and instability. The ongoing consequences of child recruitment contribute to a cycle of trauma that affects the overall development and well-being of the community ([CCR/YASA 5/2024](#)). During the years of conflict and civil war in Syria, armed groups have recruited children. The number of minors recruited increased steadily until 2023 ([AP 28/6/2023](#)). In some cases, children were forcibly recruited, in other cases minors sign up because they or their families need the salary.

Some joined for ideological reasons or because of family and tribal loyalties. In some cases, children were sent from Syria to fight as mercenaries in other conflicts ([AP 28/6/2023](#)). Among the 25 parties reportedly involved in the recruitment of children, including the Kurdish People's Defence Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG), the Women's Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin - YPJ), the Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar ash-Sham and other armed groups under the Syrian National Army (SNA), the Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) stood out for its extensive involvement in the recruitment and training of children ([CCR/YASA 5/2024](#)). The SNA and HTS recruited minors ([AP 28/6/2023](#)). The UN verified 231 cases of recruitment of minors by the SDF and its affiliated forces in 2023 ([HRW 2/10/2024](#)).

The opposition Syrian National Army (SNA), including Ahrar al-Sham and the Army of Islam, and their allied groups and factions signed an action plan with the United Nations on 3 June 2024 to end and prevent the recruitment, use, killing and maiming of children in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1539 (2004) and subsequent resolutions. The Action Plan also applies to all new groups that join or leave the opposition SNA and its affiliated groups after it had been signed ([UNSRCA 3/6/2024](#)).

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13.2.2.1 Recruitment of minors in the areas of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 16:37

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#).]

In 2019, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) signed an agreement with the UN in which they promised to end the recruitment of children under the age of 18 and to set up a number of child protection offices in their territory ([AP 28/6/2023](#)). In 2020, the SDF released 150 children from their ranks, showing a significant commitment to implementing the 2019 action plan. This number of demobilisations increased slightly to 182 in 2021, indicating further progress. In 2022, the number of SDF recruitments of children increased to 637 confirmed cases. That year, SDF demobilisations also fell sharply to just 33 children, according to the UN, reflecting a worrying decline in corrective action, although child recruitment rose sharply ([HRW 2/10/2024](#)). According to the Danish Immigration Service (DIS), persons under the age of 18 are not conscripted for compulsory self-defence service, and the provisions of Act No. 1 on compulsory self-defence regarding the age of conscription are generally observed and consistently enforced by the DAANES authorities. Nevertheless, there have been reports of recruitment of persons under the age of 18 into the SDF. The exact numbers and the extent to which this recruitment was carried out using physical force (e.g. abductions) are unclear ([DIS 6/2024](#)). According to the Syrian Human Rights Committee, the SDF increased abductions and forced recruitment of children in their areas again in August 2024 ([SHRC 3/9/2024](#)). One third of the minors recruited in 2022 were at the expense of the SDF ([AP 28/6/2023](#)). Supporters of the SDF and DAANES tend to downplay this problem by claiming that these recruitment practices are not taking place or that the situation has improved. Conversely, those who are critical of the SDF and DAANES tend to exaggerate the number of these cases ([DIS 6/2024](#)). Within the SDF, it is mainly the Revolutionary Youth Movement of Syria, Tevgera Ciwanên Şoreşger, that recruits girls and boys as young as 12, removes them from their schools and homes, denies their families contact with them, and rebuffs the desperate efforts of families to find them. Despite promises by the authorities to end this practice, the group appears to be openly indoctrinating children ideologically on behalf of armed groups with impunity. While not an armed group itself, this youth group appears to be deeply involved in the political and military structures of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration for North and East Syria and the US-backed, Kurdish-led SDF, its military wing. Investigations by independent Syrian human rights groups show that the Revolutionary Youth Movement has transferred children to the two main components of the SDF, the People's Defence Force (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG) and its women's wing, the (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin - YPJ), both armed groups that have themselves been directly involved in the recruitment of child soldiers ([HRW 2/10/2024](#)). Reports from organisations concerned with human rights in Syria point to the involvement of the Revolutionary Youth in the abduction and recruitment of children in areas in north-eastern Syria, as well as in parts of Aleppo city and the Manbij region, which are under the control of the Kurdish DAANES ([TNA 2/8/2023](#)). Although their numbers have decreased, there are currently six functioning child protection offices located in at-Tabqa, Kobane, Jazira, ar-Raqqa, Deir ez-Zour and Manbij. The Child Protection Office is responsible for cases concerning the recruitment of minors by the SDF. The recruitment of minors by other groups, including the Revolutionary Youth Movement, does not fall within the remit of the office. Parents of recruited minors can contact the child protection office in their area to lodge a complaint about the recruitment of their child. The complaints and the required documents submitted by the parents are then forwarded by the office concerned in physical and

electronic form to the relevant SDF office. The processing time for this type of complaint is 15 to 30 days (DIS 6/2024).

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13.3 Sexual minorities - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8/12/2024)

Last modification 2025-04-24 08:47

[There is currently insufficient information on the situation of sexual minorities in Syria. The following section presents the current situation as it appears from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Homosexual acts were criminalised under the Assad regime (BBC 23/12/2024). Homosexuality is punishable under the Criminal Code of 1949, which penalises 'unnatural sexual intercourse' with up to three years in prison (QNews 23/12/2024). The vaguely worded Article 520 has often been used to arrest LGBTQIA+ individuals (AlHurra 10/1/2025b). It is estimated that over a quarter of a million LGBTQIA+ Syrians fled the country during the Assad regime (QNews 23/12/2024). The country's new rulers have fundamentalist religious roots and have been involved in violence against and persecution of homosexual people (BBC 23/12/2024). According to activists, there has been a change in behaviour by the HTS with regard to homosexual people (QNews 23/12/2024). There is no official statement from the new government on the reality of the LGBTQIA+ community in Syria (as of 10 January 2025) (AlHurra 10/1/2025b). Seen for Sexual and Gender Justice, a local non-governmental organisation, expressed fears that the new government could impose harsh and severe punishments similar to those seen in Idlib and northern Aleppo between 2013 and 2015. At that time, punishments included public executions

justified by pseudo-religious interpretations (AlHurra 6/2/2025b). Transgender people are neither officially recognised nor protected (BBC 6/2/2025).

According to reports from 2018, the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) had carried out arrests and violations against the LGBTQIA+ community in Idlib. During its control over areas in Idlib, HTS enforced strict laws based on conservative religious interpretations and imposed harsh public punishments on those accused of violating these laws (AlHurra 10/1/2025b).

An anonymous security source in the Damascus government told the BBC that the new government's security services arrested three transgender people on 5 February 2025. The person emphasised that these arrests were not part of a systematic or comprehensive campaign. The patrols had encountered many transgender people during their travels, but the arrests had been limited to a few cases in order to send a 'message' to other transgender people to restrict their freedom of movement and limit the freedom they enjoyed before the fall of the former regime (BBC 6/2/2025). Videos have been circulated showing the arrest of gay and transgender people in Damascus, Aleppo and other cities. This is the first incident to be filmed and aired publicly, although French and Western media had already reported similar actions last December. The videos were accompanied by a widespread smear campaign against members of the LGBTQIA+ community on social media. The videos showed verbal and physical violence. The exact reasons for the raids were not known, apart from the protection of the community that Syrians talked about on social media. There was no strong reaction from human rights organisations or even revolutionary activists. The campaign as a whole was not picked up by the Syrian government or mentioned by the official media. On social media, all comments came from supporters of the campaign (Almodon 6/2/2025). Videos circulated on social media on 6 February 2025 showing security forces arresting and injuring several transgender women in Latakia province. The videos were verified by the Arabic-language newspaper AlHurra. Seen for Sexual and Gender Justice emphasised that violence against LGBTQIA+ people, whether by armed individuals or the current government, has escalated since the fall of the regime and that some armed opposition groups have committed abuses against LGBTQIA+ people since 2013. The abuses are widespread in several governorates. The organisation has received several reports of cases where people have been victims of attacks in public places. It also warned that the future of transgender people in Syria is clearly under threat given the increasing conservatism in society that supports these attacks via social media (AlHurra 6/2/2025b).

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14 Freedom of movement - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8/12/2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 22:36

[There are few sources and little information available on freedom of movement. In the following, the current situation is presented as it appears from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

The interim government is installing checkpoints where cars are searched. They check who is travelling, for example to arrest people who are responsible for crimes against the Syrian people during the regime (PBS 16/12/2024). Contamination from explosive ordnance remains a major threat to civilians travelling between former controlled areas (UNOCHA 23/12/2024). *[Further information on contamination with unexploded ordnance can be found in the chapter on [the security situation](#)].*

According to the Syrian Minister of Transport in an interview with the Kurdish newspaper Rudaw, from the first day of liberation, the new Syrian rulers have started to fulfil the needs of the people, especially by ensuring basic supplies, such as bread and fuel, in addition to securing the transport sector so that people can move between provinces. They have started securing fuel for vehicles so that they can be used in coordination with the Ministry of Oil, and organising trips between Damascus and the rest of the provinces, between Idlib and the rest of the provinces, and between Aleppo and the rest of the provinces, in addition to internal transport within each province. They have started implementing a plan to set specific prices that are reasonable for vehicle owners and for people with very limited income. About 70 to 80% of the pricing or transport fare structure has been finalised and implemented. In terms of supply to the public, about 50 to 60% of the routes, whether internal or external, have been secured (Rudaw 1/2/2025). *[Further information on infrastructure can be found in the chapter [Basic services and economy / Housing situation and infrastructure - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

In Idlib, many checkpoints have been dismantled and arrest warrants or other types of controls are hardly ever enforced (Etana 17/1/2025).

With regard to transport and trade with the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), there are security problems and risks to people's freedom of movement, according to the Syrian Minister of Transport in an interview with the Kurdish newspaper Rudaw. He hopes for a quick solution to the problem so that people in al-Hasakah and Deir ez-Zour can visit Damascus and their other relatives in the other provinces ([Rudaw 1/2/2025](#)).

Conscripts in al-Assad's regime had to hand in their civilian ID cards and were given military ID cards instead. Without a civilian ID card, it is difficult to move freely around the country ([BBC 29/12/2024](#)). Former soldiers therefore wanted to register their details with the new transitional government in order to obtain new ID cards that would allow them to live and move freely in Syria. Hundreds of them presented themselves at reconciliation centres ([FR24 2/1/2025](#)). *[Information on reconciliation processes and centres can be found in the chapters [Legal Protection / Judiciary - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8.12.2024\)](#), [Security Authorities - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8.12.2024\)](#) and [Military and Reserve Service - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8.12.2024\)](#)]*

There are five civilian airports in Syria, of which only Damascus and Aleppo are in operation. The two airports function well. The Hmeimim airport in Latakia could soon be put into operation, according to the Syrian Minister of Transport. The airport is functioning, but due to the presence of the Russian base, a plan is being developed to solve this problem regarding their presence. There is also the civilian airport of Deir ez-Zour, but it is badly damaged and requires maintenance costs ([Rudaw 1/2/2025](#)). On 8 January 2025, the first international commercial flight since the fall of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad landed at Damascus Airport ([AJ 7/1/2025](#)). Damascus International Airport was looted on the night of 7 to 8 December 2024 after the airport guards fled when opposition forces captured the capital. Most of the technical and engineering equipment and supplies were stolen. On 18/12/2024, the airport was partially reopened when a domestic flight took off for the northern city of Aleppo. Airport officials stated at the time that the reopening was only partial due to vandalism and theft. Syria's main airport in the capital Damascus resumed full operations on 8 January 2025 ([DS 7/1/2025](#)). There are very few Syrian aeroplanes. The state owns only two operational aircraft and there are some aircraft that require maintenance, which is perhaps as expensive as the value of the aircraft itself. In addition, there is an independent Syrian company that has maybe five or six operational aircraft, and there are contracts with many companies. The problem is not the availability of Syrian aircraft, but the regime's restrictions on contracts that the aviation sector could invest in. In the next phase, Damascus and Aleppo airports should receive a good number of aircraft ([Rudaw 1/2/2025](#)). Only a few airlines are flying to Syria again or have announced that they will resume flights to the country ([NTV 18/1/2025](#)). According to the Syrian Minister of Transport, the number of flights to Damascus is increasing every day. The airport in Qamishli was taken over by the SDF three days after the liberation of Syria from the Assad regime. They cut off communication with Damascus. After the liberation of the area from the SDF, Qamishli airport will be activated, according to the Minister of Transport ([Rudaw 1/2/2025](#)).

According to the Syrian Minister of Transport, 60 to 70% of the railway lines are out of service and 30 to 40% of the existing lines are in urgent need of maintenance. Trains and locomotives and all railway stations need maintenance and spare parts are needed. Train services have resumed for the transport of basic commodities such as fuel and other materials from the coast to Aleppo and Damascus, and the railway is working, but all the tracks are old and when transport increases, they will need new and costly maintenance. There are tracks that can no longer be maintained but need to be completely replaced. Some lines that connect Iraq and Syria and pass through al-Hasakah are out of service, others have lost some of their components and still others are functioning but for safety reasons these lines have been closed. The possibilities for an elevated railway or a metro in Damascus are being examined. Currently, the plan for a metro network is only for Damascus, as there are too many traffic jams in Damascus. If the plan by international companies is successful, the transitional government may start implementing it ([Rudaw 1/2/2025](#)).

Border crossings

On 16.12.2024, Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) announced that it would close all border crossings to neighbouring countries on the Syrian side until they had succeeded in setting up some kind of organisation to reoccupy the borders and to

have visa stamps again ([PBS 16/12/2024](#)). As of 1 February 2025, there are eleven active border crossings belonging to the General Authority for Land and Sea Borders ([Rudaw 1/2/2025](#)). The Director of Local and International Relations at the General Authority for Land and Sea Borders told Al Jazeera that since the liberation of Syria from the ousted regime, the border crossings have not only received Syrians who want to visit their country, whether as residents or visitors, but also Arab and foreign 'brothers and friends' who want to visit Syria after the liberation. The border crossings have been heavily congested, he said. The most used crossings are: Jdaydat Yabous/ Masna' to Lebanon, where more than 630,000 citizens have entered and left in the last two months, Nassib/ al-Jaber to Jordan, which has received more than 175,000 citizens, 110,000 of them entering and 65,000 on departure, Bab al-Hawa/ Reyhanlı to Turkey, which received more than 75,000 citizens, including 63,000 arrivals and 12,000 departures, al-Bu Kamal/ al-Qa'im to Iraq, which received about 5,500 citizens. In addition, there were tens of thousands of arrivals at the other border crossings with Turkey, such as Kassab/ Yayladağı, al-Hamam/ Hatay Hammami, Bab as-Salama/ Öncüpınar and Jarabulus/ Karkamış ([AJ 13/2/2025a](#)).

Iraq

The movement of Syrians across the Faysh Khabour border crossing between Syria and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) continued, with around 300 to 400 people reportedly entering Iraq daily. Sample interviews indicate that most Syrians entering Iraq through this border crossing are of Kurdish origin and either come to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq temporarily for family visits or use the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as a transit point for visits elsewhere and plan to return to Syria afterwards. The al-Qa'im/ al-Bu Kamal [*also Abu Kamal note*] border crossing remains closed for entry into Iraq ([UNHCR 2/1/2025](#)). In mid-December, an Iraqi MP declared that security

at the Iraqi-Syrian border had been tightened. This was due to attacks by the terrorist group Islamic State (ISIS) around 50 kilometres from the border with Iraq on the Syrian side ([BagTod 18/12/2024](#)). The al-Qa'im/ al-Bu Kamal border crossing on the Iraqi side was ready to resume operations on 7 January 2025 and was waiting for the crossing to be opened from the Syrian side ([Jeebal 7/1/2025](#)). The mayor of al-Qa'im expected the reopening in mid-February. Syrians would then be allowed to leave Iraq via the border crossing, but would no longer be able to return to Iraq from Syria. The only people allowed to travel back to Iraq are Iraqi citizens ([BagTod 3/2/2025](#)). The Arabic-language medium Waradana denied that the border had been opened. For unknown reasons, Baghdad has decided to postpone the opening of the border crossing until further notice. The Syrian side was informed of the postponement and expressed surprise at the decision. According to this media outlet, the mayor denied that there are exceptions to passing through the al-Qa'im/ al-Bu Kamal border crossing between Iraq and Syria, but confirmed that the resumption of transit between Iraq and Syria will begin in February. Iraq makes no exceptions for foreign or Arab nationals entering Iraq through the border crossing from Syria. The only exception is for Iraqis only ([Wara 1/2/2025](#)). Al Jazeera wrote on 11.2.2025 that although Syria has regained control of most of its border crossings with neighbouring countries, the al-Bu Kamal border crossing with Iraq remains closed ([AJ 11/2/2025](#)). The border crossing, which connects the city of al-Bu Kamal in the Syrian province of Deir ez-Zour with the Iraqi district of al-Qa'im in al-Anbar province, was closed at the beginning of December but was temporarily opened to allow thousands of soldiers to return to their country on 19 December 2024. The Syrian Minister of Transport states that work is underway to reopen it. According to him, other border crossings may also be opened when 'the problems in the areas around al-Hasakah are resolved' ([Rudaw 1/2/2025](#)).

Jordan

The Jordanian-Syrian border was generally closed to passenger traffic in both directions from the Jordanian side on 6 December 2024. Syrian citizens are permitted to leave Jordan for Syria after border clearance, but their residence status in Jordan expires and a new entry or residence permit must be applied for upon re-entry ([VB Amman 17/12/2024](#)). The al-Jaber/Nassib border crossing was reopened on 9 January 2025 and the movement of people resumed. Syrian citizens were allowed to enter again if they have a visa appointment for a third country in Amman and the return journey between Syria and Jordan is organised through a travel agency ([VB Amman 9/1/2025](#)). The General Authority for Land and Sea Borders has set the schedule for the movement of travellers through the al-Jaber/Nassib border crossing to Jordan on 19.2.2025. The authority announced in a post on its Telegram channel that transit traffic at the al-Jaber/Nassib border crossing will be possible from 20 February 2025, daily from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. ([SANA 19/2/2025](#)). This regulation was made in coordination with the Jordanian Ministry of the Interior ([JorZad 20/2/2025](#)). Travellers must register in advance via a special online platform. In addition, those Syrian minibuses that were previously allowed to enter Jordan may continue to operate until 1 April 2025, provided they comply with strict conditions. These only allow the transport of passengers and prohibit the transport of goods ([VB Amman 12/1/2025](#)). Syrian nationals with residence permits in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the USA, Canada,

Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and all European countries may enter Jordan without prior authorisation, according to the Jordanian Ministry of Interior. This applies to persons who have a valid residence permit of at least four months for the respective country (VB Amman 30/1/2025).

Lebanon

Lebanon and Syria share a 330-kilometre-long border, which is largely unfortified, especially in the north-east of the country, making it easy for smugglers, hunters and refugees to enter (Arabiya 10/2/2025b). In mid-February, fighting took place between the Syrian armed forces, which belong to the new government in Damascus, and Lebanese smuggler gangs on the border, particularly in the western outskirts of Homs in central Syria. The Syrian authorities announced that they have started laying landmines at illegal border crossings and roads to Lebanon after a security sweep of the areas led to clashes. The move is aimed at curbing smuggling into Syria and preventing further border-related tensions between the two countries, the authorities said (TNA 11/2/2025). Departure traffic through the official border crossings remains low but constant, especially through the Masna'/ Jdeydat Yabous crossing, including those who may only enter for a short time to assess the situation in Syria. In the last ten days (as of 2 January 2025), a maximum of 100 to 200 people were in the no-man's land at any one time, either to enter Lebanon or to return to Syria (UNHCR 2/1/2025). The official Masna'/ Jdeydat Yabous border crossing in Bekaa' is still the only border crossing open to vehicle traffic (UNHCR 23/1/2025). The Lebanese army announced in early February 2025 that it had taken exceptional security measures along the border by setting up observation posts and carrying out patrols after tensions escalated in the area (Arabiya 10/2/2025b).

Turkey

Turkey's Interior Minister announced that six active border crossings are now operating around the clock to ensure a smooth and efficient process. The daily processing capacity totals 19,000 people, a significant increase from the previous capacity of 3,020 people. The government also confirmed that from 1.1. to 1.7.2025, inspection visits will be organised at two border crossings (Zeytindalı/Jinderes in Hatay and Çobanbey/Al Ra'i in Kilis) (UNHCR 2/1/2025). The Director of Local and International Relations at the General Authority for Land and Sea Ports told the state media SANA that returnees are travelling to Syria via the border crossings Bab al-Hawa/ Reyhanlı, Bab as-Salama/ Öncüpınar, Kassab/ Yayladağı and Jarabulus/ Karkamış. The Syrian administration is ensuring that all services and facilities are available to them free of charge and that they are exempt from any fees for the luggage and furniture they carry with them during their return (AAA 11/2/2025).

Areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES)

After an internal border crossing to Manbij and 'Ain al-'Arab was closed, the movement of people and goods has been impeded since mid-December. Ongoing shelling and violent incidents near

the Qaraqozak bridge are also blocking access between Manbij and areas east of the Euphrates, including ar-Raqqa governorate (UNOCHA 30/1/2025).

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14.1 Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 16:50

[The following presents the current situation as it appears from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)]

In the last 13 years of conflict, 4.82 million people - more than a fifth of the country's population - have been displaced ([DW 10/12/2024](#)). Most of the nearly five million Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries said they hoped to return to Syria one day. A June 2024 survey by

the UN Refugee Agency found that 57% of refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt still want to return ([CSIS 11/12/2024](#)). Another seven million Syrians, more than 30% of the population, remain internally displaced, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in December ([DW 10/12/2024](#)).

The displacement crisis remains severe ([IHH 10/1/2025](#)). At the end of November, the offensive by rebel groups, which ultimately led to the fall of the Assad regime, resulted in massive waves of displacement in villages and towns in Idlib and other opposition-controlled areas in northern Syria due to ongoing attacks by Assad regime forces, Russia and Iranian-backed militias ([TNA 31/10/2024](#)). From 27 November to 9 December 2024, between 800,000 and one million people were displaced from many areas in Syria, including over 150,000 people who experienced secondary displacement. Almost 50% of the people forced to flee their homes were women and girls. At the same time, there were signs that some IDPs were returning to their areas of origin, including Aleppo ([UNHCR 9/12/2024](#)). After peaking at 1.1 million IDPs on 12/12/2024, almost 486,000 had returned to their areas of origin by 27/12/2024 ([UNOCHA 31/12/2024](#)), mainly to the governorates of Hama and Aleppo ([UN News 2/1/2025](#)). On 2 January 2025, the number of newly displaced people in Syria since 27 November 2024 was 627,000 - a decrease of 37,000 people in one week. 42 % of them live in Idlib. Since the number of newly displaced people peaked at 1.1 million on 12 December 2024, over 522,000 people have returned, with movements mainly concentrated in Aleppo and Hama ([UNOCHA 7/1/2025](#)). On 8 January 2025, 620,000 people were still displaced. In the north-west alone, two million people are still living in camps and informal shelters. In Idlib, most civilians in an IDP camp want to return home, but cite a lack of adequate services and damage to infrastructure as well as unexploded ordnance as reasons ([UNSC 8/1/2025](#)). While some have returned to their communities, the majority of IDPs continue to face significant obstacles to stability, including inadequate shelter and access to basic services. The minimal movement out of the camps highlights the ongoing challenges faced by these populations ([IHH 10/1/2025](#)). The north-west is one of the most densely populated regions in Syria and is home to approximately 3.4 million displaced people, most of whom are living in makeshift camps ([NRC 13/2/2025](#)).

The Lebanese Civil Protection Authority estimates that a total of 94,000 people have fled from Syria to Lebanon between the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 and 4 February 2025. These included Lebanese who had previously fled to Syria, but also Syrians. Around 36,500 Syrian refugees are now being accommodated in collective centres in Baalbek governorate and are being cared for by the UNHCR ([VB Amman 10/2/2025](#)).

According to the United Nations Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, more than 25,000 people have left the camps for displaced persons in north-west Syria as of 5 January 2025. While this is more than double the number of people reported to have left the camps last week, this figure is minimal compared to the camp populations in Idlib and northern Aleppo. As of December 2024, two million internally displaced people were still living in over 1,500 camps and informal settlements in north-west Syria. In north-east Syria, over 25,800 people are still living in 193 emergency shelters, most of which are closed schools ([UNOCHA 7/1/2025](#)).

In the north-east, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and allied forces control more than 26 camps and prisons in which around 50,000 people linked to the Islamic State (ISIS) are detained (41,000 in camps, 9,000 in prisons). For years, ISIS has encouraged its supporters to attack these facilities and free the prisoners, which the group sees as vital to spreading its ideology, improving its operational success and facilitating its resurgence ([TWI 9/12/2024](#)). Turkey, which has more than 20,000 troops stationed in Syria, says it can take on the task of destroying ISIS remnants and overseeing detention centres and internment camps where thousands of ISIS fighters and their families are held ([AlMon 12/2/2025](#)).

Due to the suspension of USAID funding for 90 days by US President Trump, all security and administrative operations around al-Hol and ar-Roj, the two main detention centres of Islamic State fighters, were suspended for several days ([Guardian 28/1/2025](#)). The Kurdish authorities cannot cover the services and needs on their own. There are fears of a security vacuum and chaos that could be exploited by the Islamic State (ISIS) ([FAZ 28/1/2025](#)).

al-Hol

The al-Hol camp was established in the 1990s by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in cooperation with the Syrian government on the outskirts of the city of al-Hol in Syria. More than 15,000 Iraqi and Palestinian refugees were brought to the camp, many of whom emigrated to different parts of the world with the help of the UN, especially after the events of 1991, when the former Iraqi regime invaded Kuwait and the United States waged a war against it with the help of an international coalition ([BagTod 11/1/2025](#)).

The al-Hol camp is full of families linked to ISIS after the extremist group was defeated in Syria in 2019. Around 40,000 people live in the camp. The camp is seen as a hotbed of extremism and a security problem for countries in the region, particularly neighbouring Iraq, where ISIS once controlled around a third of the country. According to the camp authorities, there are currently around 16,000 Syrians in the camp ([AAA 13/2/2025](#)).

A security source reported on 11 January 2025 that 191 families had arrived from the Syrian camp of al-Hol in the province of Nineveh in northern Iraq. The families were repatriated by the SDF under strict secrecy, without media coverage, and under tight security. Iraq is endeavouring to dismantle the al-Hol camp in Syria and close its file as quickly as possible. The reason given by the Iraqi authorities is that the camp is a dangerous hotbed of extremism, as it harbours thousands of Iraqi terrorists ([BagTod 11/1/2025](#)). By early 2025, over 7,556 people, including 1,924 families, had been repatriated to Iraq from the al-Hol camp. This figure includes 706 individuals from 181 families who returned in October 2024. The repatriation process is part of ongoing efforts by the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displaced Persons in cooperation with the SDF to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqi families from Syria ([Bas 26/1/2025](#)). Iraqi officials say their country has repatriated more than 10,000 people, but few Western countries have shown interest in following suit ([AAA 13/2/2025](#)).

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14.1.1 Palestinian refugees (developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8.12.2024))

Last modification 2025-05-08 16:50

[There are currently few sources and little information available. In the following, the current status is presented as it results from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Palestinians fled to Syria after the war in 1948. They live in nine official refugee camps in Dara'a, Homs, Hama, an-Nayrab, Sayyida Zaynab, Jaramana, Khan Ash-Shayh, Khan Dannoun and as-Sabina as well as in three unofficial refugee camps in ar-Raml in Latakia, 'Ayn at-Tall north-east of Aleppo and Yarmouk in Damascus. In 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) registered around 80,000 Palestinians who had fled to Syria; in 2020, the number of Palestinians in Syria was approx. 600,000. The Palestinian refugees were granted legal status in Syria, which allows them to work, own property, visit hospitals, complete an education and study without holding Syrian citizenship. A separate institution was created in Syria on 25 January 1949 to deal with the needs of Palestinian refugees, the General Authority for Palestine Arabian Refugees. This authority has been subordinate to the Syrian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour since 1958 and was regarded as a strategic link between UNRWA and the Syrian government. Thanks to Syrian laws, the Palestinians were able to participate in economic, cultural and social life in Syria and, unlike the Palestinians living in Lebanon, became part of society (Disor 19/1/2025). Before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, there were over 526,000 Palestinians living in Syria (MRG 1/2025). According to the human rights organisation Action Group for Palestinians of Syria, more than 4,000 Palestinians have been killed in the past thirteen years and more than 3,000 have been imprisoned in the regime's torture prisons. Their homes have been completely or partially destroyed and tens of thousands have been displaced inside and outside Syria. Since 2011 alone, around 150,000 Palestinian refugees have left Syria due to the security and economic situation, mainly dispersing to Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. A few thousand also live in Egypt and Europe. The new leadership in Syria appointed Palestinians to key positions such as the Ministry of Energy despite their lack of Syrian citizenship. So far, it looks like Palestinians are participating adequately in the reconstruction of Syria (Disor 19/1/2025). At the beginning of 2025, UNRWA estimated that 438,000 Palestinians were living in Syria, 60% of whom had been displaced at least once and 40% of whom were estimated to remain displaced (MRG 1/2025).

UNRWA is responsible for Palestinian refugees in Syria as well as in Lebanon, Jordan and the Gaza Strip and is mandated to provide health, education, relief and social services to Palestinian displaced persons in Syria (Disor 19/1/2025).

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14.2 Freedom of movement in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 16:51

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#).]

After an internal border crossing to Manbij and 'Ain al-'Arab was closed, the movement of people and goods has been hindered since mid-December 2024. Ongoing shelling and violent incidents near the Qaraqozak Bridge also block access between Manbij and areas east of the Euphrates, including ar-Raqqa governorate ([UNOCHA 30/1/2025](#)).

Source

- UNOCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (30/1/2025): Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 13 on the Recent Developments in Syria (as of 29 January 2025), <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-flash-update-no-13-recent-developments-syria-29-january-2025-enar>, accessed 31/1/2025

15 Basic services and the economy

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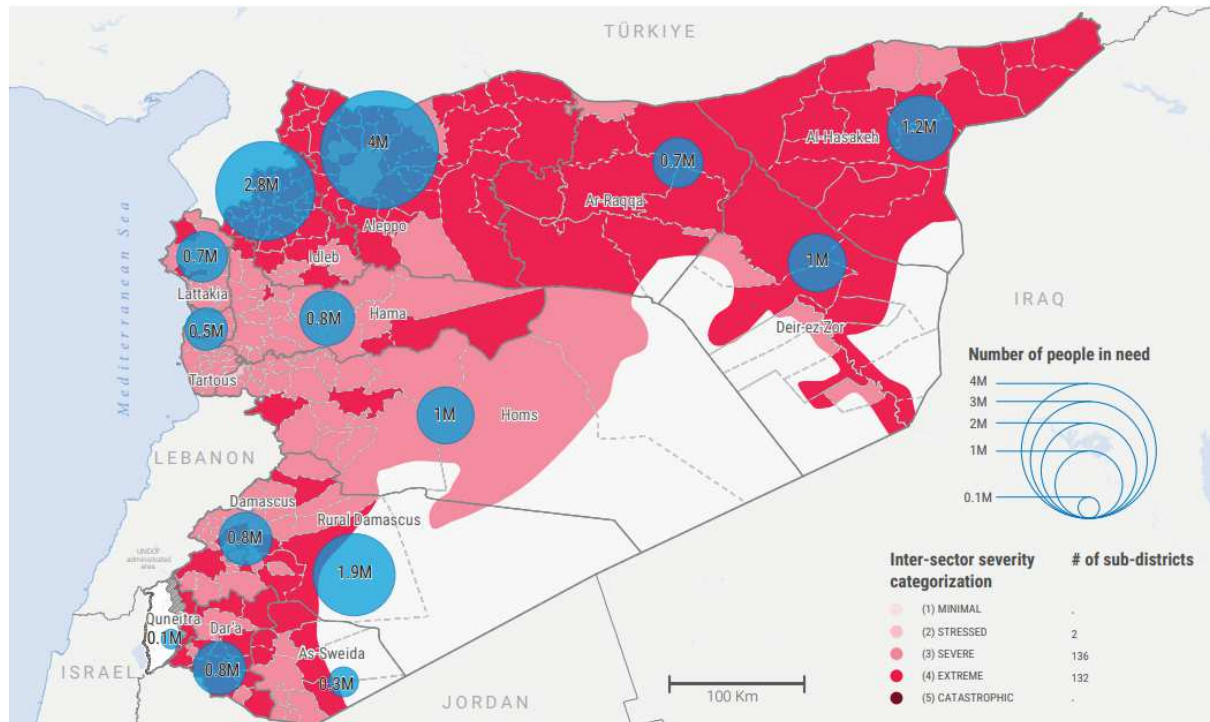
[Note: Most of the following information can still be considered current. Current information is provided at the end of the chapter, which confirms that the socio-economic situation has not changed significantly and shows the latest developments. For further information see: [Country-specific notes](#)]

Basic services

Year after year, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is increasing, while resources are becoming scarcer ([UNRCHCSYR 22/9/2024](#)). In 2024, 16.7 million people were in need of aid, the highest number since the beginning of the crisis in 2011 ([UNOCHA 3/3/2024](#); cf. [UNRCHCSYR 22/9/2024](#)). According to UNOCHA, 16.5 million people in Syria were still dependent on aid in February 2025 ([UNOCHA 12/2/2025](#)). In north-west Syria, 4.4 million people

were still completely dependent on humanitarian aid coordinated by the United Nations for their survival in 2024 (AI 24/4/2024; cf. TIMEP 23/5/2024). 13.6 million people needed services in the water and sanitation sectors in 2024 (UNICEF 17/12/2024)

The UNOCHA map shows the number of people in need of assistance by governorate

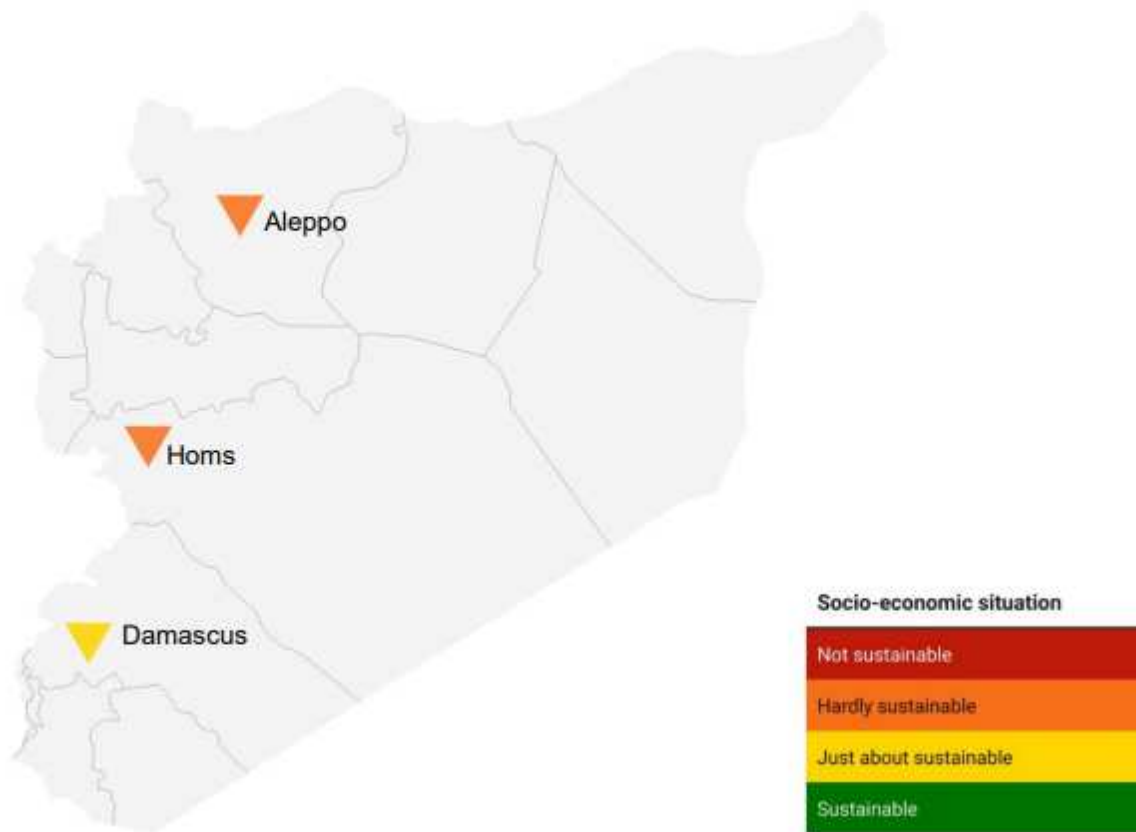


Sources 4: UNOCHA 28/1/2025

The Syrian Centre for Policy of Research estimates the poverty rate for the whole of Syria at over 90% in 2023, with 80% of the Syrian population living below the poverty line and thus unable to meet their basic needs, such as food, education and health (SCPR 6/2024; cf. WHO 16/3/2024). The Austrian embassy in Damascus also states that 90% of the Syrian population live in poverty (ÖB Damaskus 2023). According to a Syrian media website, 91.16 % of the population in north-west Syria live below the poverty line (Syria TV 31/5/2024). The governorates of ar-Raqqa, Deir ez-Zour, Idlib, Hama and Homs recorded the highest rates of extreme poverty. The rate of abject poverty was over 50% in 2023, meaning that half of the Syrian population is unable to meet their basic food needs (SCPR 6/2024). In the last three years (as of June 2024), 70% of Syrian households have experienced a deterioration in their living conditions and their ability to obtain basic necessities (INSS 6/2024). In north-west Syria, the majority of people are in need of life-saving assistance. Cross-border aid has become a lifeline there (SIDA 31/3/2024). In a survey conducted in 2022, the World Bank concluded that 14.5 million Syrians, or 69% of the population, are affected by poverty. Around 5.7 million people (27%) live in extreme poverty. 50% of people living in extreme poverty live in just three governorates (Aleppo, Hama, Deir ez-Zour). Compared to the national average of 27%, extreme poverty is dramatically higher in Deir ez-Zour (72%), Hama and ar-Raqqa (61%), al-Hasaka (49%), Dara'a (48%), Quneitra (43%) and Aleppo (34%). In all other governorates, the incidence of extreme poverty is well below the national average (WB 2024). Confidential sources from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

also show differences in the governorates, according to which restaurants and supermarkets had reopened in the centre of Damascus and the street scene was almost as it was before the conflict - especially after all checkpoints had been removed from the city centre. In the provinces of Latakia and Tartus, the average income is also said to be higher than in the rest of Syria. According to the sources, these were areas mainly inhabited by people loyal to the government and Syrian dignitaries (MBZ 8/2023). The report by the Austrian Embassy in Damascus reports a poor supply situation in Tartus and Latakia (ÖB Damaskus 2023). The economic impact of the 2023 earthquake was particularly felt in the governorates of Aleppo and Idlib, where there was a rise in food prices, an increase in the poverty rate and a widening of the poverty gap (SCPR/UniVie 8/2023). A confidential source from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that there were far more homeless men on the streets of the cities of Damascus and Aleppo than before (MBZ 8/2023).

An indicator developed by the Staatendokumentation following guidelines from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, based on a survey in the three largest cities, Damascus, Homs and Aleppo, in July 2024 using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) and consisting of the dimensions of housing, food and water, basic consumer goods, health services and the labour market, indicates that respondents in Damascus are better able to meet their basic needs than respondents in Aleppo and Homs (STDOK 2025). The following map illustrates this:

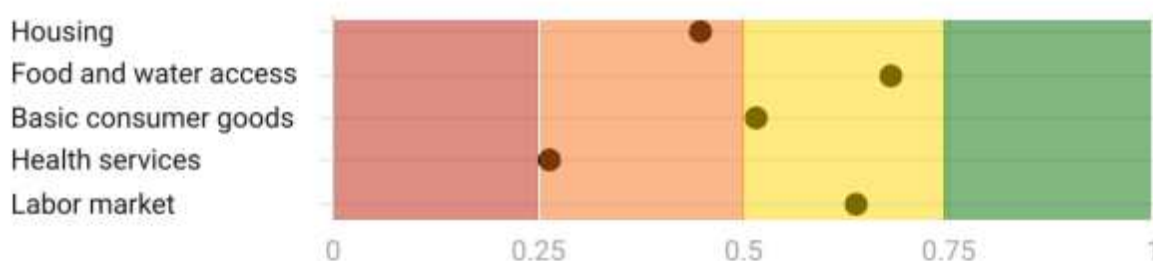


Sources 5: STDOK 2025

With regard to the housing market and medical care, the following graphic illustrates the socio-economic situation. A composite indicator was developed by Elisa Omodei (Central European University) for the socio-economic surveys in order to enable an overall quantification of the general economic situation of households in the areas analysed. The indicator is a practical tool that can be used to categorise the results of the survey. The guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for the compilation of composite indicators were used to develop the indicator. The index is made up of the following dimensions: Housing, Food and Water, Basic Consumer Goods, Health Services and Labour Market. The value of each of the indicators defined above (question, dimension and overall level) is between 0 and 1, with values close to zero indicating unsustainable socio-economic standards and values close to one indicating sustainable socio-economic standards. Each value range is associated with a specific socio-economic situation category and a colour code (STDOK 2025):

Indicator's values range	Socio-economic situation	Color
0 - 0.25	Not sustainable	Red
0.25 - 0.5	Hardly sustainable	Orange
0.5 - 0.75	Just about sustainable	Yellow
0.75 - 1	Sustainable	Green

Sources 6: STDOK 2025



Dimension	Value	City	Value
Housing	0.449	Damascus	0.524
Food and water access	0.681	Aleppo	0.457
Basic consumer goods	0.516	Homs	0.443
Health services	0.263		
Labor market	0.636		

Sources 7: STDOK 2025

According to a doctor from Damascus interviewed as part of the FFM 2024 by the Staatendokumentation, living in Syria costs between 300 and 500 US dollars per month (Arzt in Damaskus 23/9/2024). According to UN estimates, the minimum poverty line is USD 200 per month and the minimum hunger line is USD 60 per month (BBC 16/12/2024).

Rising prices and unemployment were the most commonly cited reasons limiting households' ability to meet their basic needs, with residents, returnees and IDPs reporting similar figures (WB 28/5/2024). Salaries in the public sector were insufficient to cover living costs (BS 19/3/2024). Many public sector employees relied on bribery to supplement their income. Many public and private sector workers took on additional manual labour or relied on the support of their extended families (USDOS 22/4/2024). Most salaries in the public sector have not been paid since ash-Shara took office (Economist 2/4/2025). In a study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation, in which 600 Syrians aged 16-35 in the three largest cities, Damascus, Homs and

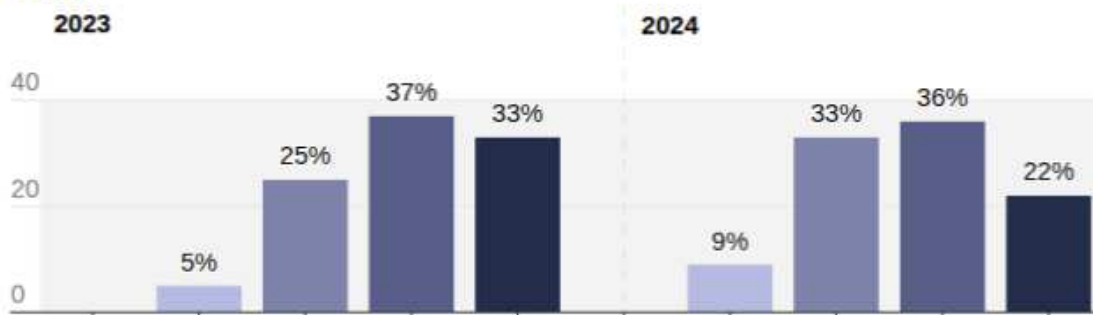
Aleppo, were interviewed in July 2024 using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), 6% of respondents stated that they managed to provide basic consumer goods such as clothing and shoes for their family. 39% only just managed to provide basic consumer goods for their family, 40% barely managed and 15% did not manage. This was a slight improvement on the previous year (STDOK/SL 2024). In 2023, in a study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation from mid-August to early September 2023, 33% of the population segment aged 16 to 35 stated that they only just managed to provide basic consumer goods for their families and 44% stated that they barely managed to do so (STDOK/SL 14/2/2024). The following charts produced by the Staatendokumentation show the results of these studies:

Zugang zu grundlegenden Konsumgütern

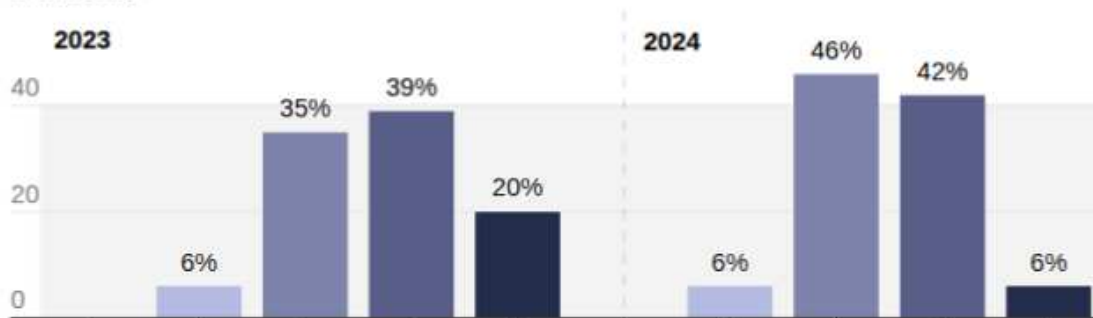
Der Zugang zu grundlegenden Konsumgütern und die Fähigkeit diese kaufen zu können.

- schaffen es, die Familie mit grundlegenden Konsumgütern zu versorgen
- können es gerade so schaffen, die Familie mit grundlegenden Konsumgütern zu versorgen
- schaffen es kaum, die Familie mit grundlegenden Konsumgütern zu versorgen
- können es nicht schaffen, die Familie mit grundlegenden Konsumgütern zu versorgen

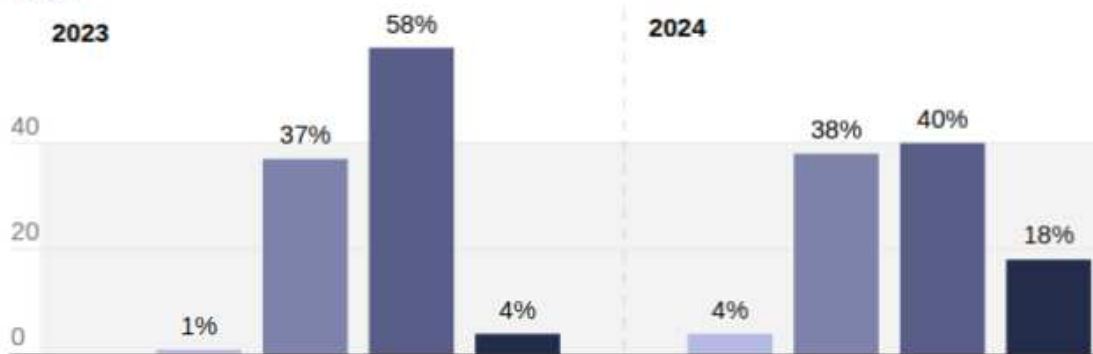
Aleppo



Damaskus



Homs



Sources 8: ^{asst.} STDOK/SL 2024

Approximately 70% (8.1 million) of people in need of assistance lived in areas controlled by the Assad government. Although the security situation had stabilised in recent years, there was still increased food insecurity, poverty, eroded coping capacities and deteriorating access to basic services, as well as the flare-up of conflict (SIDA 31/3/2024). In January 2024, 70% of households in the Autonomous Region of North-East Syria had difficulties meeting their basic

needs (such as shelter, food and medicine, etc.) for all family members. This was due to the high cost of essential goods and services and the lack of access to income (NES 20/11/2024).

Despite increased needs, humanitarian funding to Syria has decreased in recent years due to a combination of Western donor fatigue and the emergence of other global conflicts, particularly those in Ukraine and Gaza. The impact of the cut in food aid is causing affected families to use negative coping mechanisms, such as a drastic reduction in daily food intake, increased school dropouts and child labour (TIMEP 23/5/2024). Humanitarian funding has been cut to 39% of needs (USD 2.1 billion) since 2023 (as of June 2024). Only 8% of the required funds have been received. Many local organisations in north-western Syria have had to suspend numerous aid programmes, lay off dozens of staff and close offices in various rural towns in Aleppo and Idlib (OSS 25/6/2024). The US State Department announced the suspension of all foreign aid funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) for 90 days. US Secretary of State Rubio granted waivers that will allow the continued delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid. However, it remains unclear which specific programmes are exempt. Services exempted from the suspension include, for example, water supply, waste collection and sanitation. Sources working in the field of humanitarian aid told al-Modon that the number of humanitarian organisations whose programmes and services are affected by the suspension of aid is very large. In addition to the White Helmets, organisations that manage health facilities such as hospitals and temporary shelters are also affected (Almodon 4/2/2025). The United States' suspension order for humanitarian aid issued in January 2025 has had a severe impact on organisations and sectors in north-eastern Syria, particularly in informal settlements and camps for internally displaced persons (UNOCHA 27/3/2025).

In all regions, the destruction of infrastructure, including housing, and the lack of or limited access to basic services (healthcare, education, electricity, running water, social services) is a pervasive challenge. Communities that have been affected by sieges or heavy fighting, such as Eastern Ghouta near Damascus or parts of Aleppo, have few services, leaving the civilian population there at higher risk of health problems, exploitation, negative coping mechanisms and further displacement (GPC 3/4/2025). Even in the now stable regions of the country, public utilities and services - electricity, water, telecommunications, education - are barely functioning (Bourse & Bazaar 1/4/2025).

Food supply

5.7 million people are in need of food or livelihood assistance (UNICEF 17/12/2024). An estimated 15,447,379 million people (66% of the population) needed food or livelihood assistance, agricultural assistance or support from national safety nets in March 2024. These estimates were based on a nationwide assessment of over 42,000 households, which showed an increase in food insecurity compared to the previous year. At least 12.9 million people were in need of food assistance, including more than 2.1 million living in camps (assuming all were food insecure), and another 2.6 million were at risk of food insecurity (UNOCHA 3/3/2024). The cost of the standard reference food basket for a family of five increased by 87% in March 2024 compared to March 2023. The minimum wage was not enough to cover the cost of the reference food basket,

which is essential for a healthy diet. The cost of the basic food basket was even three times higher than the minimum wage ([WFP 9/3/2024](#)). In August 2024, the reference food basket for a family of five cost SYP 1,735,597, an increase of 43% compared to August 2023 ([UNOCHA 9/11/2024](#)). The need for food assistance is widespread across Syria, with the highest levels in Idlib governorate (73% estimated to be in need of food assistance), al-Hasakah (71 %), Quneitra (65%), Hama (59%), ar-Raqqa (59%), Aleppo (58%) and Deir ez-Zour (50%) ([UNOCHA 3/3/2024](#)). According to the World Food Programme, the cost of the reference food basket increased in the governorates of Tartous (95%), Rif Dimashq (94%), Damascus and Deir ez-Zour (91% each) ([WFP 9/3/2024](#)). Because of reduced humanitarian funding, the World Food Programme reduced the number of people receiving aid from 5.5 to 3.2 million in mid-2023. The programme announced it would end its general food assistance in Syria in January 2024 due to severe funding constraints, marking the seventh and largest reduction since the programme began working in Syria ([OSS 25/6/2024](#)). Households are resorting to negative coping strategies such as selling personal belongings and reducing food intake to deal with the economic pressure ([IHH 10/1/2025](#)).

Health workers anticipate that the number of children suffering from stunted growth as a result of malnutrition will increase significantly (possibly to 50-75%) once food aid is stopped ([TIMEP 23/5/2024](#)). There is malnutrition among pregnant women and women of childbearing age for the first time ([IntOrgSYR1 21/9/2024](#)).

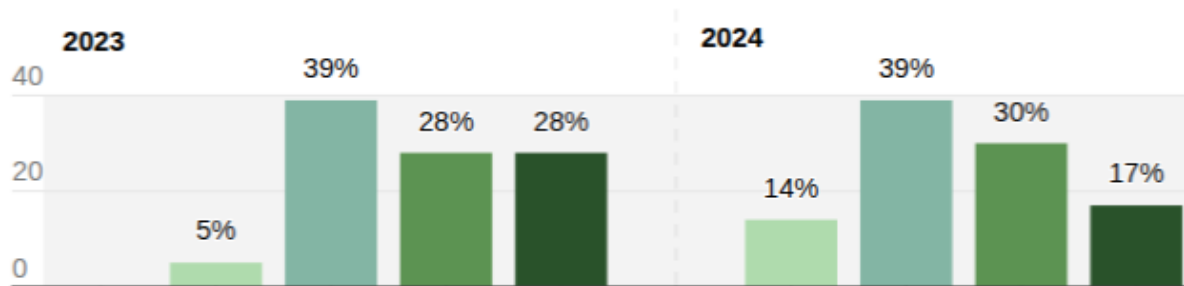
In July 2024, 600 Syrians aged 16-35 in the three largest cities, Damascus, Homs and Aleppo, were surveyed using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) in a socio-economic study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation. 16% of the participants stated that they were able to provide enough food for their families, 44% stated that they were only just able to provide enough food for their families. 28% were barely able to provide enough food for their families and 12% were unable to provide enough food. The majority of those who were able to provide enough food lived in Damascus with 21%, followed by Aleppo with 14% and Homs with 11%. 49% of respondents in Damascus were just about able to provide enough food for their families, compared to 39% in Aleppo and 44% in Homs. The percentage of those who were just able to provide enough food was 30 % in Aleppo, 29% in Homs and 25% in Damascus. The highest number of people who stated that they were unable to provide enough food for their families lived in Aleppo with 17% of participants, followed by Homs with 16% and Damascus with 5%. 14% of male and 17% of female respondents managed to provide enough food for their families, while 45% of male and 42% of female respondents just about managed to provide enough food for their families. In contrast, 26% of male respondents and 29% of female respondents barely managed to provide their family with enough food. 14% of the male and 11% of the female respondents who took part in this survey were unable to provide their family with sufficient food. Compared to the study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation, in which 16-35-year-olds were surveyed from August to September 2023, the July 2024 study shows only minor changes ([STDOK/SL 2024](#)). The following chart created by the Staatendokumentation illustrates the results of this study:

Zugang zu Lebensmitteln

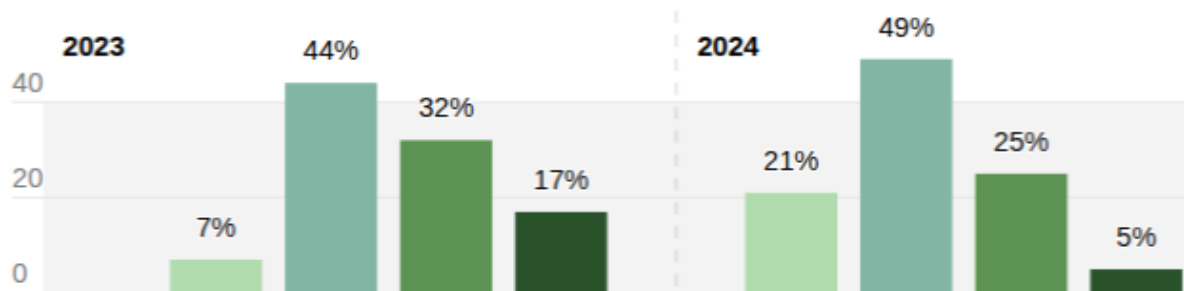
Der Zugang zu Lebensmitteln in den Städten **Aleppo, Damaskus, Homs**.

- kann sich ausreichend mit Nahrungsmitteln für die Familie versorgen
- kann sich gerade noch ausreichend mit Nahrungsmitteln für die Familie versorgen
- kann sich kaum noch ausreichend mit Nahrungsmitteln für die Familie versorgen
- kann sich nicht mehr ausreichend mit Nahrungsmitteln für die Familie versorgen

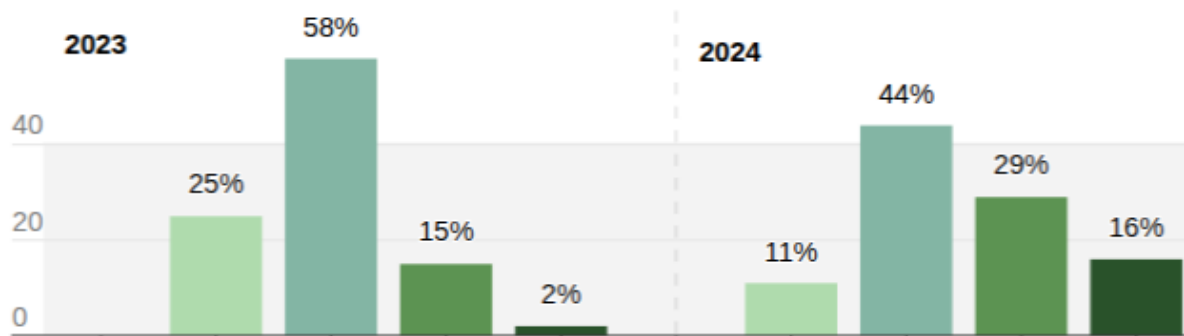
Aleppo



Damaskus



Homs



Sources 9: STDOK/SL 2024

Climate change is one of several exacerbating factors contributing to the food security crisis in Syria. While droughts reduce the amount of water available for agriculture, higher temperatures increase the water requirements of crops. This vicious cycle leads to a decline in agricultural productivity and food resources, increasing the cost of food and decreasing the availability of food - with the greatest impact on poor, vulnerable and marginalised communities (CEIP 4/4/ 2024). Syria continued to face a multi-year drought in 2023 due to rising temperatures caused by

climate change and exacerbated by other factors, including failures in water management. The damage, destruction and neglect of key water points and infrastructure by the warring parties during the conflict, as well as the continued obstruction of relief efforts, have further exacerbated the impact of the drought on the people of Syria ([AI 24/4/2024](#)).

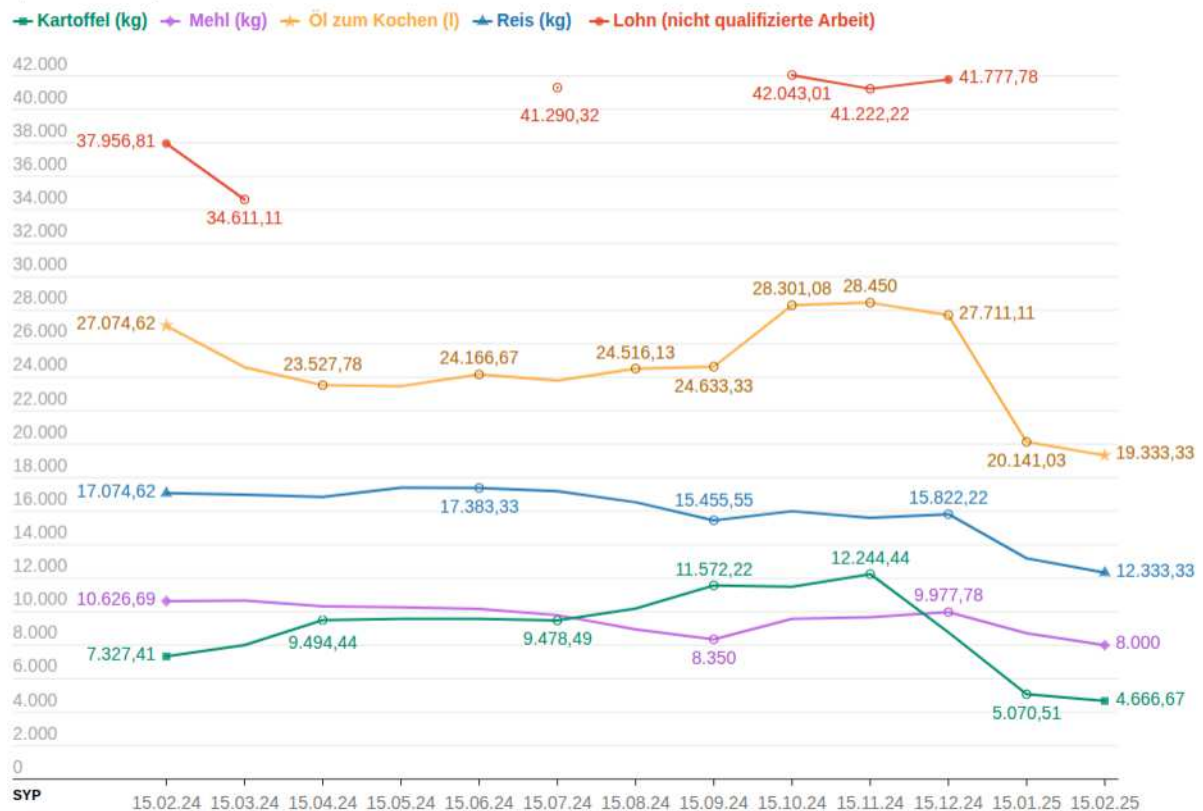
After reaching an almost historic low in 2022, agricultural production recovered in 2023 due to improved weather conditions. Official statistics show a doubling of the wheat harvest for 2023, with a yield of two million metric tonnes compared to one million metric tonnes in the previous year ([WB 28/5/2024](#)). The Austrian embassy in Damascus reports that the staple food bread has become increasingly expensive due to high wheat prices and constantly rising energy prices, including for the transport of food. While Syria was a wheat exporter until the war, the war situation and periods of drought in north-east Syria have meant that wheat now has to be imported ([ÖB Damaskus 2023](#)).

The availability and price of fuel are directly linked to the food sector because they have a direct impact on the cost of grain production, as farmers are heavily dependent on subsidised fuel ([NES 20/11/2024](#)). There were price increases in 2023 due to cuts in government subsidies for fuel and fertilisers. In addition, transport costs, irrigation water pumping fees and the cost of mechanised agricultural work have risen sharply, all of which have affected the means of agricultural production. This in turn led to a sharp rise in the prices of agricultural and food products, especially meat, dairy products and eggs, making them unaffordable for the majority of the population ([UNOCHA 3/3/2024](#)). Food and everyday items are actually exempt from the sanctions, but because the sanctions affect the transport sector, in practice these are also affected by the sanctions ([OrthoPatSYR 22/9/2024](#)).

The following charts, created by the Staatendokumentation, show the development of food prices and wages for unskilled labour. The data is based on surveys conducted by the World Food Programme on the 15th of each month from February 2024 to February 2025. The cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Idlib were selected. *[Charts for the cities of Qamishli and al-Hasakah can be found in the chapter [Basic services and economy / Basic services in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria \(DAANES\)](#)].* Data was not available for all months. Data in kilograms or litres and prices or wages in Syrian pounds (SYP):

Damaskus

Entwicklung der Preise für bestimmte Waren auf dem Markt **Shrebishat** nach dem Welternährungsprogramm (WFP) und im Gegensatz dazu Lohn (nicht qualifizierte Arbeit).

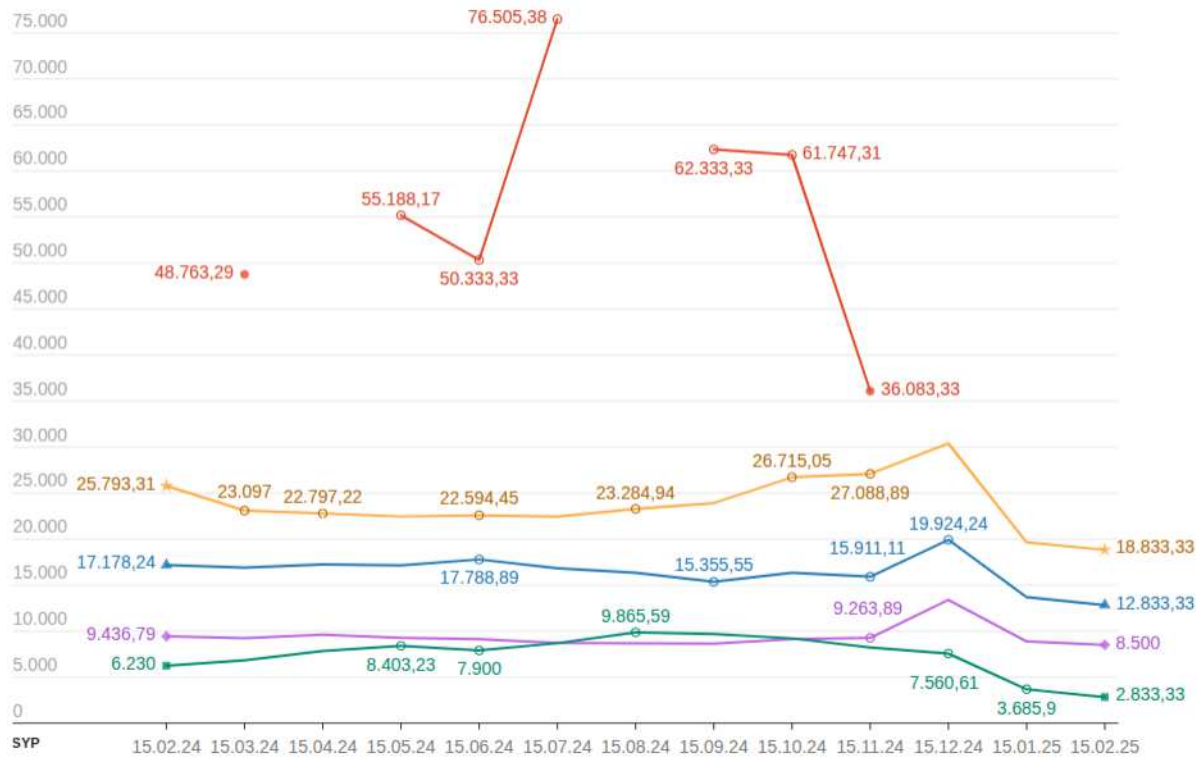


Sources 10: WFP 24/3/2025

Aleppo

Entwicklung der Preise für bestimmte Waren auf dem Markt **Al-Cha'ar** nach dem Welternährungsprogramm (WFP) und im Gegensatz dazu Lohn (nicht qualifizierte Arbeit).

— Kartoffel (kg) — Mehl (kg) — Öl zum Kochen (l) — Reis (kg) — Lohn (nicht qualifizierte Arbeit)



Sources 11: WFP 24/3/2025

Homs

Entwicklung der Preise für bestimmte Waren auf dem Markt **Inshaat** nach dem Welternährungsprogramm (WFP) und im Gegensatz dazu Lohn (nicht qualifizierte Arbeit).



Sources 12: WFP 24/3/2025

Idleb

Entwicklung der Preise für bestimmte Waren auf dem Markt **Idleb** nach dem Welternährungsprogramm (WFP) und im Gegensatz dazu Lohn (nicht qualifizierte Arbeit).



Sources 13: WFP 24/3/2025

Water supply

Syria is a water-scarce country. In 2019, the World Bank estimated the amount of renewable freshwater in Syria at 355 m³ per capita, one of the lowest levels in the world. Over time, mechanisms have been developed to alleviate the water shortage, including the construction of dams on rivers as well as reservoirs that collect flowing surface water and the drilling of wells to utilise groundwater for domestic and agricultural purposes. However, several factors have made access to freshwater more difficult, including the ongoing conflict and associated destruction of infrastructure and loss of access to resources across lines of control, over-extraction of groundwater and climate change (UNOCHA 3/3/2024). During the war, the drinking water situation was exacerbated by the large number of displaced people and increased urban migration, which not only led to reduced water supplies but also increased the risk of waterborne diseases for a larger population (BS 19/3/2024). Access to water has deteriorated in all northern regions, particularly in areas severely affected by the earthquakes, where it declined from 23% to 4% over the same period (WB 28/5/2024). The UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, who was interviewed by the Staatendokumentation as part of the FFM 2024, states that in the most affluent areas of Damascus, such as Mezzeh and al-Maliki, there is one hour of running water per day. The further you move away from the city, the fewer hours of running water you have per day. In some areas there has been no running water for years. Some areas, not far

outside Damascus, have no running water ([UNRCHCSYR 22/9/2024](#)). UNOCHA reported on 16 December 2024 that two million people in Aleppo are at risk of water shortages ([UNOCHA 16/12/2024](#)).

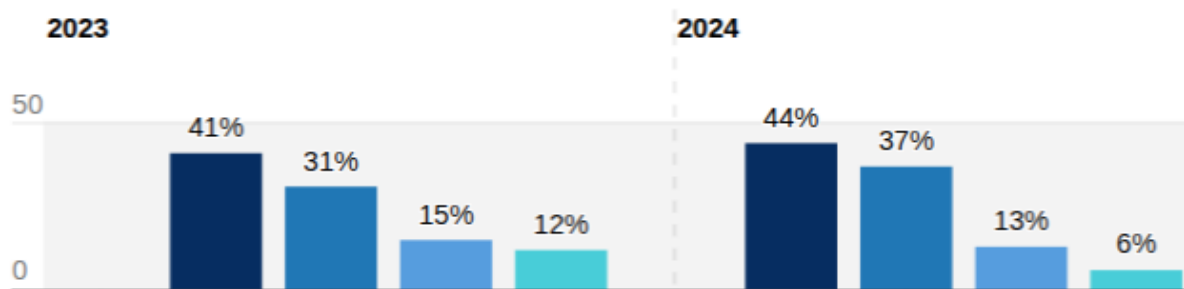
A socio-economic study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation, in which 600 Syrians aged 16-35 years in the three largest cities, Damascus, Homs and Aleppo, were interviewed in July 2024 using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), shows that 56% of participants always had access to clean drinking water, while 31% sometimes had access to clean drinking water. 8% of respondents rarely had access to safe drinking water, while 5% never had access to safe drinking water. 55% of male respondents and 56% of female respondents always had access to safe drinking water. The proportion of those who sometimes had access to clean drinking water is slightly higher among female respondents (33%) than among male respondents (31%). 8% of male and 7% of female respondents rarely had access to clean drinking water, while at least 6% of male and 4% of female respondents never had access to clean drinking water. Compared to the previous year, this represents an improvement ([STDOK/SL 2024](#)). In a study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation, which surveyed people aged 16-35 in the three largest cities, Damascus, Aleppo and Homs, in August and September 2023, 38% said they always had access to clean drinking water, while 40% sometimes had access to clean drinking water. In contrast, 17 % rarely had access to clean drinking water, while 5% never had access to clean drinking water ([STDOK/SL 14/2/2024](#)). The following chart shows the results of this survey broken down by the three cities:

Zugang zu sauberem Wasser

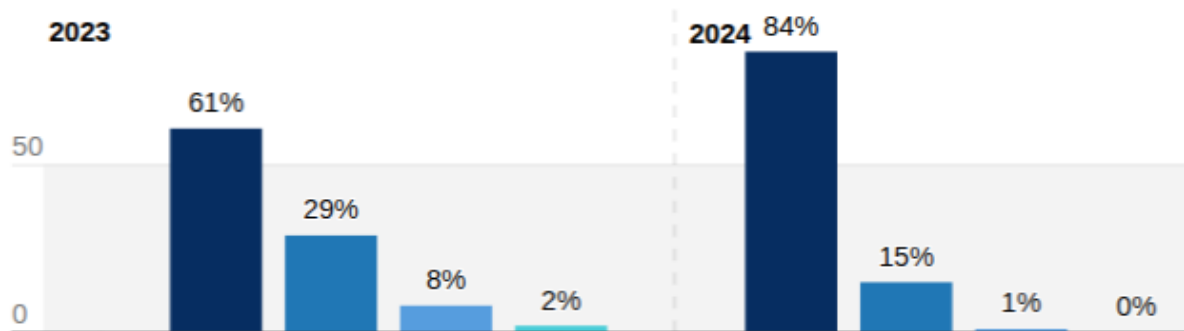
Zugang zu sauberem Trinkwasser in den Städten **Aleppo, Damaskus, Homs**.

- hat immer Zugang zu sauberem Trinkwasser
- hat manchmal Zugang zu sauberem Trinkwasser
- hat selten Zugang zu zu sauberem Trinkwasser
- haben nie Zugang zu sauberem Trinkwasser

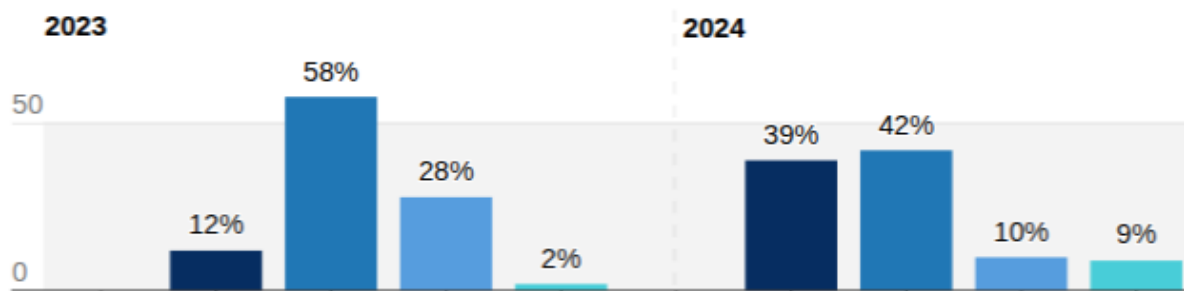
Aleppo



Damaskus



Homs



Sources 14: STDOK/SL 2024

Water quality throughout Syria has deteriorated considerably since the outbreak of the armed conflict in 2011, partly due to the direct destruction of water treatment plants and partly due to the collapse of the administration. An estimated one third of all water treatment and wastewater facilities are no longer functioning. The lack of wastewater treatment has serious implications for hygiene, physical and mental health, irrigation practices, food production and the livelihoods of thousands of farmers who depend on uncontaminated water (PAX 11/2024). The bombing

of buildings and incineration of waste during the war (after government-run waste disposal services were closed) released large amounts of toxins into the air, soil and groundwater ([BS 19/3/2024](#)). The damage to the sewage networks and the lack of maintenance have had serious consequences, including the infiltration of contaminated water into the groundwater and water networks ([SCPR/UniVie 8/2023](#)). The erosion of basic service capacity has continued, with water and sanitation systems and public health services under immense strain against a backdrop of scant development investment ([UNOCHA 12/2023](#)). The destruction of water resources and distribution systems, increasing migration, drought and power shortages are all factors contributing to severe disruption of access to safe drinking water. The resulting increase in uncoordinated private well drilling as a coping mechanism has exacerbated the decline in both the quantity and quality of groundwater. This has left many people dependent on often expensive and untreated water from tankers, private well owners or bottled water companies ([PAX 11/2024](#)). With 66% of households facing water quality problems and a significant number lacking adequate sanitation facilities, the public health risks in these communities are rampant ([IHH 10/1/2025](#)).

In many areas where infrastructure has been largely destroyed, electricity or water supplies have not been restored. Dutch foreign ministry sources added that the Syrian authorities had no money for reconstruction, but it was mainly former opposition areas that were discriminated against by the ousted Assad government when it came to restoring infrastructure ([MBZ 8/2023](#)).

Power supply

Most Syrian regions suffer from a severe lack of electricity, leading to long power cuts of several days in some areas and adversely affecting the economic and living conditions of most Syrians. The use of renewable energy sources, especially solar energy, remains limited in most areas of the country due to high installation and maintenance costs and difficulties in ensuring quality ([SCPR/UniVie 8/2023](#)). The power supply is irregular and some report days without electricity ([INSS 6/2024](#)). There are repeated shortages of petrol and diesel, which is used for heating and electricity production, because Syrian oil wells are mainly located in US-occupied Syria and fossil fuels therefore have to be imported to a great extent. The energy sector is hampered by unilateral sectoral restrictions in this area, particularly by the US, the EU and the UK. Rehabilitation or modernisation of power plants for electricity production is severely hampered by the unilateral restrictive measures. This leads to a completely inadequate public power supply throughout the country, which has a massive impact on all sectors of the economy, but also on the power supply to healthcare facilities, schools and private households ([ÖB Damaskus 2023](#)). Millions of Syrians cannot afford the high fees for private electricity generators or the installation of solar panels ([Independent 28/3/2025](#)). In the most affluent areas of Damascus, such as Mezzeh and al-Maliki, there are four hours of electricity a day. The further you get away from the city, the less electricity there is. Some areas have had no electricity for years ([UNRCHCSYR 22/9/2024](#)). This picture was confirmed in a socio-economic study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation using computer-assisted telephone interviews with 600 Syrians aged 16-35 in the three largest cities, Damascus, Homs and Aleppo, in July 2024. 2% of respondents said they always had electricity, followed by those who had electricity most of the time (14%). The largest proportion of respondents sometimes had electricity available (68%). A share of 16% never had electricity

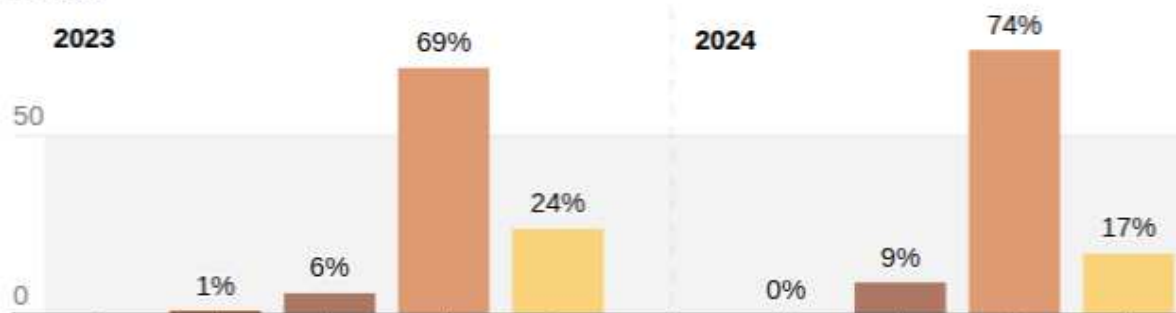
available. A comparison of the genders showed that 2% of male and 1% of female respondents always had access to electricity, while 14% of male and 16% of female respondents had access to electricity most of the time. 67% of male and 69% of female respondents sometimes had access to electricity, while 17% of male respondents never had access to electricity. This also applies to 14% of female participants. Compared to the previous year, the availability of electricity in the respondents' homes had deteriorated (STDOK/SL 2024). Only 1% of those surveyed by telephone in August and September 2023 stated that they always had electricity available, followed by those who had electricity available most of the time (25%). The largest proportion of respondents were those who sometimes had electricity (63%). 11% never had electricity available (STDOK/SL 14/2/2024). The following chart created by the Staatendokumentation shows the results of these studies in a comparison of cities:

Zugang zu Elektrizität

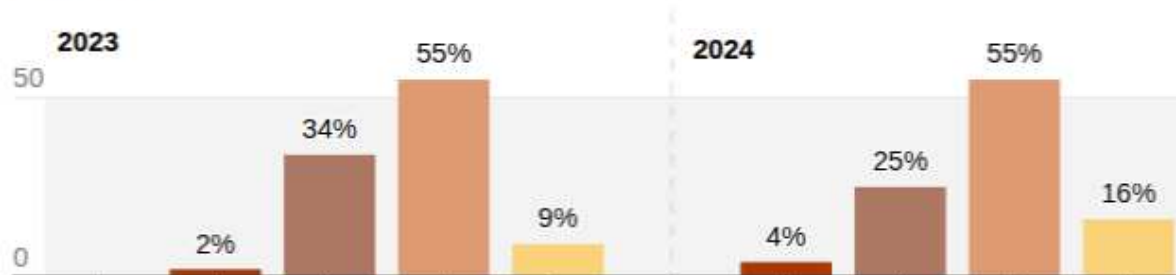
Zugang zu Elektrizität in **Aleppo, Damaskus and Homs**.

- haben immer Zugang zu Strom
- haben meistens Strom
- haben manchmal Strom
- haben nie Zugang zu Strom

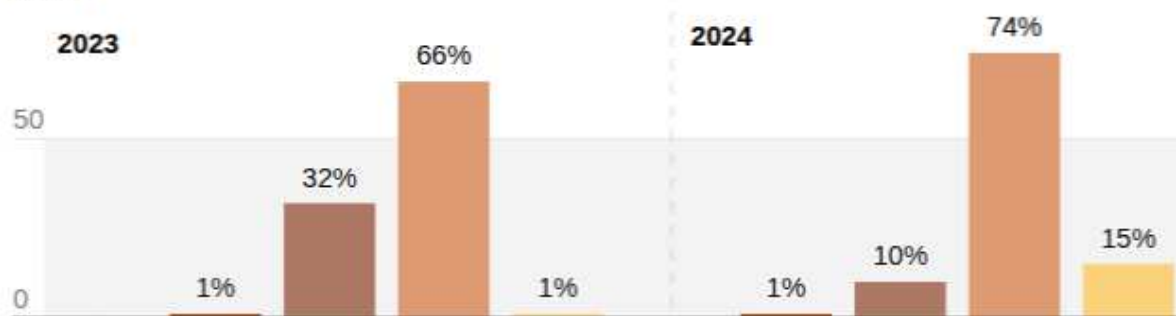
Aleppo



Damaskus



Homs



Sources 15: STDOK/SL 2024

In Aleppo, dependence on the purchase of expensive electricity from private generators (known locally as Ampere) has increased. In Idlib and around Aleppo, despite the expansion of the Turkish electricity grid, which has reached most of these areas in the last two years, household electricity consumption has remained at a minimum, as the continuous price increases have exceeded the financial means of most families (SCPR/UniVie 8/2023).

Economic situation

The challenges are enormous. Syria's economy was worth 67.5 billion US dollars (63.9 billion euros) in 2011. The country was ranked 68th out of 196 countries in the global GDP rankings, comparable to Paraguay and Slovenia. In 2023, the economy had fallen to 129th place in the rankings after shrinking by 85% to just nine billion US dollars, according to World Bank estimates. This put the country on a par with countries such as Chad and the Palestinian territories. The conflict has devastated the country's infrastructure and caused lasting damage to the electricity, transport and healthcare systems. Several cities, including Aleppo, ar-Raqqa and Homs, have been largely destroyed ([DW 10/12/2024](#)). The sanctions had the strongest impact on the economic situation, especially on the energy sector ([GovHoms 17/9/2024](#)). The United States and Western countries imposed a number of sanctions against al-Assad personally, members of his family, senior regime figures and companies associated with him. Among the best known were: the Caesar Act and the Captagon Acts 1 and 2. After a former military photographer of the Syrian military police published photos of bodies of people who had been tortured in detention centres in Syria under the pseudonym 'Caesar' in 2014, and an international investigation team confirmed the authenticity of the images, the Caesar Act 2020 was enacted by the USA. This imposed economic sanctions against Syria. The Caesar Act sanctions targeted those who facilitated the Assad regime's acquisition of goods, services or technologies that support the regime's military activities and its industries in the aviation, oil and gas extraction, construction and engineering sectors. The Act sets conditions for the lifting of sanctions, including the cessation of Syrian (and Russian) airstrikes on civilians, the lifting of restrictions on the distribution of humanitarian aid in regime-controlled areas, the release of all political prisoners, compliance with international treaties on weapons of mass destruction, the facilitation of refugee returns, and the initiation of a process of genuine accountability and national reconciliation in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 . The Captagon Act² targets all persons, regardless of nationality, involved in the production or smuggling of drugs or benefiting from the proceeds of drug trafficking ([AlHurra 15/12/2024a](#)).

The two main pillars of the Syrian economy - oil and agriculture - have been severely affected by the war. Syria's oil exports accounted for around a quarter of government revenues in 2010. Food production contributed a similar amount to GDP. The Assad regime lost control of most of its oil fields to rebel groups, including the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) and later Kurdish-led forces. International sanctions severely restricted the government's ability to export oil. As oil production in the areas controlled by the regime fell to less than 9,000 barrels per day last year, the country was heavily reliant on imports from Iran ([DW 10/12/2024](#)).

Despite a significant decrease in military operations, Syria has seen a drastic deterioration in the economic situation since 2020, an increase in the unemployment rate, a decline in public services, a rise in the cost of living and prices, and a worsening of poverty, deprivation and food insecurity. This deterioration has been driven by the parties to the conflict diverting material and human resources in their respective areas of control in favour of the conflict elites through monopolies, seizure, corruption, smuggling, drug trafficking, looting, unjust exploitation of natural resources, etc. ([SCPR 6/2024](#)). Over time, both state actors and non-state armed groups have

created parallel, interconnected and interdependent political economies in which the boundaries between formal and informal, legal and illegal, regulation and coercion have largely disappeared (BI 27/1/2023).

In many areas of opposition, years of hardship and deprivation (in many cases due to sieges) led to the spread of conflict economies, bringing the inhabitants under the rule of local warlords. The disastrous economic conditions caused by the war, including the loss of male breadwinners to fighting, injury and death, led to an extensive informal economy, particularly among women (BS 19/3/2024). Even before the outbreak of war in 2011, the informal economy is estimated to have accounted for around 30% of employment (1.5 million people) and between 30 and 40% of gross domestic product (GDP). It is likely to have grown considerably since then, mainly due to the increase in smuggling and criminal activities (FES 1/4/2024).

Since 2022, the areas under the regime's control have suffered an economic crisis unprecedented in Syria's history. The effects ranged from rampant inflation, the devaluation of the Syrian pound and severe shortages of fuel and electricity to increasing food insecurity and widespread poverty. Despite the government's attempts to mitigate the country's economic decline, the crisis was exacerbated by a variety of factors, including the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic collapse of neighbouring Lebanon, which followed a 12-year war, as well as corruption and sanctions (GITOC 2023). The governor of Homs, who was interviewed by the Staatendokumentation as part of the FFM 2024, sees the war and the sanctions as the factors with the greatest impact on the economic situation, especially on the energy sector, which is crucial for other sectors. Electricity is the biggest factor at all levels. The sanctions were imposed on the president, but they have an impact on the Syrian people (GovHoms 17/9/2024). The Syrian conflict has had a major impact on industrial facilities such as fertiliser factories, oil refineries, cement and steel plants, electricity plants, sugar factories, olive oil presses and chemical and pharmaceutical plants and has resulted in severe environmental damage due to the forced closure of industrial facilities, failure to comply with and enforce environmental protection standards, obstruction of industrial regeneration and uncontrolled increase in mineral extraction. Acute and chronic exposure to toxic remnants of war, e.g. in unexploded ordnance, rocket and missile propellants and the chemical components of explosives, pose a worrying risk to public health and the environment (PAX 11/2024).

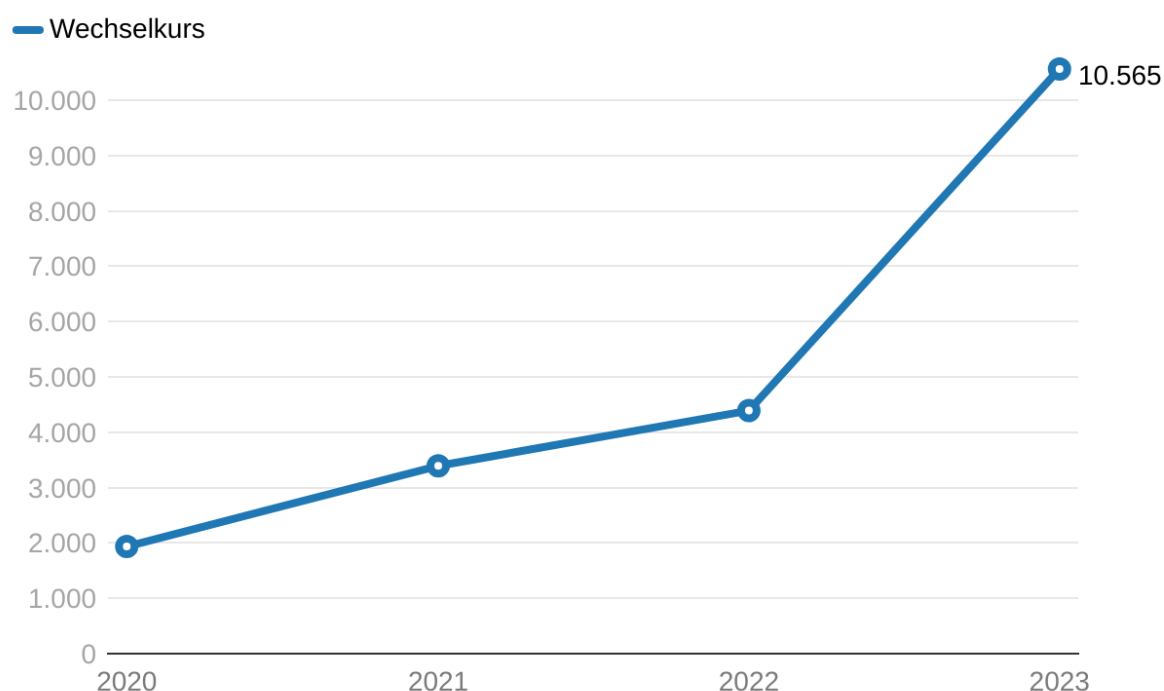
The agricultural sector is an important source of income for thousands of families, with around 20 per cent of the population working in agriculture according to the Syrian Indicator (Syrlnd 13/3/2024). UNOCHA states that as much as 45 % of the population is dependent on agriculture as their main source of income (UNOCHA 3/3/2024). Arable land and forests account for 32.8 % of Syria's total area (Syrlnd 13/3/2024). Since the beginning of the conflict, irrigated cropland in Syria has decreased by 25% compared to 2010, with the share of irrigated cropland in total cropland decreasing from 24 % to 17%, although the total area of cropland has not changed significantly (WB 28/5/2024). Agricultural production, especially of wheat, still does not cover the entire national demand (more than 35% below demand) and is far below the long-term production average and below that before the crisis (UNOCHA 3/3/2024). In addition, the economy is now

heavily dependent on external aid, which accounts for around 30% of gross domestic product (SCPR/UniVie 8/2023).

GDP in 2023 was 38% below that of 2010, plus the losses from the earthquake in February 2023, which accounted for around 33 % of GDP for 2023. The trade deficit reached around 70% of GDP in 2023, as dependence on imports, which were more than six times higher than exports, continued. The general government budget deficit exceeded 50% of GDP. The accumulating and persistent government budget deficits, which are covered by internal loans from the Central Bank of Syria, accelerated the depreciation of the national currency, causing the average exchange rate of the Syrian pound against the US dollar to rise sharply (SCPR 6/2024).

Increase in the exchange rate between 2020 and 2023 of the Syrian pound (SYP) against the US dollar (USD) based on data from the Syrian Centre for Policy Research (presentation by the Staatendokumentation)

Wechselkurs (SYP pro 1 USD)



Sources 16: SCPR 6/2024

Syria experienced hyperinflation of prices in 2023, as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) doubled compared to 2022, reaching a value of 400 (base year 2021), compared to 185 in 2022. This inflation led to a significant increase in poverty lines across Syria. The value of the Turkish lira (TL), which is used as a trading currency in opposition areas, also fell by 28.6% against the US dollar in 2023 compared to 2022. The exchange rate was 24.2TL per US dollar in 2023, compared to 18.8TL per US dollar in 2022 (SCPR 6/2024). According to a Syrian state-affiliated medium, prices on the market in north-west Syria rose by between 12 and 38% in 2024 (Syria TV 31/5/2024).

The Assad government had not taken any measures to protect the private sector. On the contrary, the private sector was increasingly exploited. Private companies were particularly at risk of being shut down or having their assets arbitrarily confiscated. The government replenished the state coffers by imposing arbitrary taxes and fines on private companies. In addition, armed actors working for the regime regularly stole and confiscated the property of small businesses or extorted bribes or 'protection money'. The government had also extracted revenue from the private sector by increasing the number or cost of bureaucratic steps required to start a business. In January 2023, the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Protection had begun requiring all vendors to obtain a 'commercial register' - a bureaucratic step that cost a small business owner between 800,000 and 1 million Syrian pounds ([BS 19/3/2024](#)). The governor of Homs, interviewed by the Staatendokumentation as part of the FFM 2024, said that people cannot buy anything, so production is pointless ([GovHoms 17/9/2024](#)).

With increasing isolation and the absence of political and economic reforms, Syria became more and more dependent on Iran. An informal economy fuelled by smuggling and drug trafficking, particularly of the amphetamine-like narcotic Captagon, expanded and generated an estimated USD 10 billion annually, largely controlled by security services, the military and Assad's allies ([MECGA 7/1/2025](#)).

Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8.12.2024)

Although Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was toppled in a lightning uprising in December 2024, nothing has changed in the catastrophic economic conditions of the country denounced by the protesters ([AP 24/1/2025](#)). A survey conducted by The Economist in March 2025 showed that more than half of respondents believe that the economic situation has either worsened or stagnated under ash-Shara's leadership. His decisions to re-evaluate import tariffs and allow free trade in dollars are supported ([Economist 2/4/2025](#)). The Syrian economy is described as accelerating collapse, with deteriorating public services, rising unemployment and households struggling without purchasing power. The destruction of infrastructure, the ongoing currency devaluation and the withdrawal of economic support from Russia and Iran have exacerbated the crisis. The streets of Damascus are flooded with cheap Turkish imports that Syrians cannot afford ([Bourse & Bazaar 1/4/2025](#)).

There is no foreign money in the Syrian treasury. Raw materials such as oil, gas and phosphates are controlled from outside ([AlHurra 12/12/2024](#)). Ash-Shara' announced that a new currency will be issued ([CNBC Ara 15/12/2024a](#)). Restoring basic services, such as water and electricity, remains a challenge in all governorates due to insecurity and damage ([UNOCHA 7/1/2025](#)). The cost of rebuilding and rehabilitating Syria is estimated at USD 400 to 600 billion. International reconstruction and rehabilitation aid, grants and financial packages are needed ([MECGA 7/1/2025](#)). The caretaker government has announced plans to implement a package of reforms, including plans to privatise some state-owned companies that are suffering from constant losses. These statements reflect a trend towards economic restructuring, away from the centralised planning and socialist model that the country has followed in recent decades, towards a more

open and flexible economic model based on free market and public-private partnership principles ([OSS 20/1/2025](#)). Gross domestic product (GDP) fell from USD 60 billion in 2010 to less than USD 6 billion in 2024 ([Sharq Bu 5/1/2025](#)). The exchange rate of the dollar in Syria has experienced a remarkable decline since the fall of the regime on 8 December 2024. It fell rapidly to around 8,000 Syrian pounds in early February, after reaching 17,000 Syrian pounds in the last days of the previous regime ([Akhbar 5/2/2025](#)). At the end of January, it was between 11,500 and 13,000 Syrian pounds per US dollar and is still far from the pre-war level when the US dollar was trading at around 47 Syrian pounds ([Sharq Bu 29/1/2025](#)). An economist explained that this decline is fictitious and economically unjustified, so the exchange rate will soon rise again ([Akhbar 5/2/2025](#)). The inflation rate in Syria has dropped to 57% in 2024, compared to the rate of 117.3% in 2023, according to a report by the Central Bank of Syria. Given the current situation in Syria, where prices of basic food items are rising, the current nature of inflation is considered an extreme case of stagflation, which is one of the worst economic conditions a country can reach ([Enab 13/2/2025](#)). While prices have largely stabilised, lower purchasing power, banking and liquidity challenges continue to weigh on living conditions. In addition, fuel, electricity and water shortages continue to be reported in all governorates ([UNOCHA 7/1/2025](#)). Following developments in December 2024, the currency started to show initial signs of recovery, mainly due to two factors: an influx of Syrians from abroad bringing hard currency and limited liquidity at banks, which restricted cash withdrawals ([UNDP 20/2/2025](#)).

Nine out of ten Syrians live in poverty and one in four is unemployed ([Arabiya 22/2/2025](#)). Almost half of the population lived below the poverty line of USD 2.15 per day in 2024 ([UNESCWA 26/1/2025](#)). For years, Syrian families have relied on humanitarian aid and remittances from family members abroad to survive ([AP 24/1/2025](#)). Nearly 13 million people remain acutely food insecure, while the World Food Programme (WFP) has been forced to cut food aid by 80% over the past two years ([UNSC 8/1/2025](#)). Since the fall of the former regime, the price of bread has multiplied. The price of a loaf of bread was 400 Syrian pounds (SYP) in the period before the fall of the regime, a local source told Al-Hurra, and has now risen tenfold to 4,000 SYP (about 0.3 US dollars). Bread is a basic necessity. People sometimes queue for hours outside bakeries to buy a loaf of bread. The bread crisis in Syria has worsened following the outbreak of the revolution and the deterioration in living, economic and security conditions, particularly due to the increase in power cuts. The new government has submitted several applications for the establishment of new bakeries, which are currently under review, which is expected to have a positive impact on meeting the needs of citizens and improving the quality of bread ([AlHurra 13/2/2025](#)). At the end of 2024, it was estimated that almost 90% of Syrians were vulnerable, either food insecure or at risk of food insecurity, although previous government reports indicated a lower figure of under 60% ([UNDP 20/2/2025](#)).

There is a cash shortage ([Economist 2/4/2025](#)). Syria suffers from a severe shortage of banknotes. However, Syria's economy functions predominantly with cash. Companies cannot pay wages. Families cannot buy basic goods. Both companies and private individuals have money in their bank accounts, but the banks do not have enough banknotes to pay it out. Instead, the central bank has instructed them to limit withdrawals. The cash shortage is so severe that the

value of the Syrian pound is rising against the dollar despite all the country's economic problems. The prices of everyday goods are falling, partly because they are now easier to import, but possibly also because there is less and less cash available to buy them (Economist 6/3/2025).

Across Syria, the lack of public services and ongoing economic challenges continue to put a strain on communities and humanitarian aid. Many households are unable to put food on the table due to reduced purchasing power, limited employment opportunities - particularly in rural areas - and cash constraints. Cash restrictions continue to impact NGOs, contractors and service providers and directly affect efforts to recover quickly. Severe shortages of construction materials are reported in the local market, while economic pressures caused by inflation and devaluation are making it difficult to meet the increasing demand for aid (UNOCHA 30/1/2025). Since 15/12/2024, a severe liquidity crisis across the country has affected humanitarian programmes, leading to disruptions in relief efforts and significant delays. In addition, financial institutions, retailers, suppliers and service providers are struggling to meet their obligations due to the shortage of Syrian pounds. The worsening liquidity crisis is exacerbating humanitarian challenges, especially for households that are already struggling to meet their basic needs. With 90% of Syrians living below the poverty line, many families are being forced to cut back on essentials such as food, water, healthcare and education (UNOCHA 27/3/2025).

UNHCR High Commissioner Grandi said that the fundamental issue is security and, linked to this, living conditions. Everything must be done to create and strengthen the conditions for this - and the key to this is '...electricity, electricity and more electricity' (ÖB Amman 6/2/2025). Syria suffers from an electricity deficit of up to 80% of its actual needs (Sharq Bu 2/3/2025). The vast majority of people meet their electricity needs through generators, so there is a very urgent need for electricity (AJ 31/12/2024b). The electricity rationing crisis has been exacerbated by the suspension of gas and oil supplies from areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), as well as the suspension of contracts with Iran to supply Syria with crude oil after the fall of the Assad regime (OSS 21/1/2025). In many governorates, there is still less than six hours of electricity a day. In Homs and Hama, electricity is available for 45 to 60 minutes every eight hours (UNOCHA 30/1/2025). In Deirez-Zour, there are frequent power cuts without any significant improvement in the situation. This leads to water shortages in some neighbourhoods and hinders the provision of basic services and economic recovery (UNOCHA 12/2/2025). The transitional government says it wants to provide eight hours of electricity per day within two months (as of January 2025) (Sky News 7/1/2025). By the beginning of March 2025, the power supply had begun to improve. The supply times in the capital Damascus and in the countryside had increased to around six hours per day. The improved supply could be due to the fact that Syria announced at the end of February that production from the Tias 5 gas well in rural Homs, with a capacity of 130,000 cubic metres per day, had begun. Production from the new well has been connected to the gas grid (Sharq Bu 2/3/2025). The Ministry of Electricity requires about 23 million cubic metres of gas per day, of which only 6.5 million cubic metres are available. In addition, the Ministry requires 10,000 tonnes of fuel per day, of which only 4,500 tonnes are currently available, which significantly hampers power generation. The direct damage to the electricity grid is estimated at 40 billion US dollars, while the indirect damage exceeds 80 billion

US dollars, which illustrates the scale of the challenges facing the electricity sector ([OSS 21/1/2025](#)). As part of the assistance provided by Syria's neighbours after the fall of the regime, the Jordanian government agreed to supply Syria with electricity through the interconnected grid and announced the provision of Jordanian lines for this purpose. This cooperation is expected to form the core of regional integration and alleviate the crisis in the short term ([OSS 21/1/2025](#)). In fact, Jordan declared its willingness to supply electricity immediately after 8 December 2024 - but this has so far failed due to the lack or completely desolate condition of the relevant structures on the Syrian side. It must therefore be a priority to restore the power grid in Syria ([ÖB Amman 6/2/2025](#)). Turkish companies such as KarpowerShip have also offered to supply Syria with electricity via floating power station ships. Two ships would dock in the harbours of Banias and Tartus and generate 800 megawatts, which corresponds to 33% of current electricity production. The Syrian government is currently working with regional and international partners to repair damaged facilities, including the repair of high-voltage power lines and the re-commissioning of key facilities. With the partial lifting of US sanctions by July 2025, the government will be able to import equipment and spare parts needed to repair power plants and transmission grids ([OSS 21/1/2025](#)). Syria's new authorities have tried to alleviate the country's electricity crisis, but have been unable to stop the outages with stopgap solutions, and even with a recent gas deal with Qatar and an agreement with the Kurdish-led authorities giving them access to Syria's oil fields, the country spends most days virtually without electricity ([Independent 28/3/2025](#)).

The Syrian economy is based on the agriculture, industry, services and banking sectors. Arable land accounts for around 32% of Syria's land area. The agricultural sector accounts for 28 % of GDP ([Sharq Bu 5/1/2025](#)). Farmers in the country are also suffering from the lack of rainfall in recent months, which has led to an almost complete failure of rain-fed crops. Some farmers have resorted to using wastewater to irrigate their crops, creating the risk of spreading diseases ([UNOCHA 30/1/2025](#)). Russian and Syrian sources said that Syria imported food from Russia under al-Assad, but Russian wheat shipments have stopped due to uncertainty over the new government and problems with late payments. Ukrainian President Zelenskyi pledged food aid to the Syrian transitional government in the form of wheat, flour and oil. Syria is dependent on imports to maintain the vital bread subsidy for the population ([AJ 15/12/2024b](#)). The UK will provide almost four million US dollars for the supply of grain and other foodstuffs from Ukraine to Syria after sanctions on the country were eased in January 2025 ([MEMO 5/2/2025](#)). The insecurity and displacement in November and December, which coincided with the end of the agricultural growing season, also affected agricultural livelihoods. According to the caretaker authorities, only 40 per cent of the usual amount of wheat was grown in parts of Syria this season. Farming households are in urgent need of agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers and animal feed, while rainfall has been below average and erratic in recent weeks. Without additional support, wheat and barley production will be severely affected in 2025 in a country where 15 million people are already affected by food insecurity ([UNOCHA 7/1/2025](#)). Local farmers estimate that Idlib has received no more than 40% of the annual average rainfall this year, causing widespread damage to rain-fed crops, particularly wheat and barley. The high cost of cultivation and fertiliser and the lack of support have placed a heavy burden on farmers around the city of Idlib. The price of a tonne of organic fertiliser rose to over 450 US dollars and

the price of a tonne of wheat seed to 500 US dollars, leaving many unable to complete their sowing or irrigate their crops ([SOHR 22/4/2025](#)).

The Syrian Central Bank has lifted the ban on foreign currency. Importers are allowed to finance the import of their goods with foreign currency as long as this does not violate international and local laws and regulations on money laundering. In addition, the export of goods has also been exempted from the 'export deposit' ([CNBC Ara 15/12/2024b](#)). Syria's new Minister of Economy announced a major shift towards a competitive free market economy. The government will work on the privatisation of state-owned industrial companies, of which there are 107 and most of which are loss-making. Strategic energy and transport facilities are to remain in public hands ([REU 31/1/2025](#)). The economy will be open in the future. The new authorities will focus on five sectors, the Foreign Minister announced: Energy, telecommunications, roads and airports, education and health ([Zeit Online 23/1/2025](#)). He also explained that the new Syrian government plans to privatise state ports and factories and is trying to attract foreign investment to the country and boost foreign trade. Experts warn that privatisation must begin with the establishment of state institutions and the rule of law, especially a competent and fair judiciary and a competent and non-corrupt administration ([AlHurra 24/1/2025](#)). The transitional government has noted that 70% of state-owned companies of an economic nature are making losses, even though they provide exclusive services to the state, such as the electricity company and defence industry companies ([Sharq Bu 5/1/2025](#)). According to Syrian Finance Minister Abazid, the reconstruction of the economy will focus on several sectors, including the industrial sector, which was damaged by the war and is said to have lost around 70% of its capacity. According to Finance Minister Abazid, the oil sector is one of the most important pillars for the revitalisation of the Syrian economy. However, the country's oil reserves are located in the east and north-east under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). According to statistics from the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), the reserves amount to 2.5 billion barrels ([Sharq Bu 5/1/2025](#)). The Syrian authorities have started to rebuild the infrastructure of oil refineries, oil pipelines, power plants and grids to increase fuel and electricity production. As a result of the war, Damascus is dependent on imports for 95% of its oil needs. According to official estimates, the country imports around five million barrels per month, or more than 160,000 barrels per day, having exported 150,000 barrels of crude oil per day before 2011 ([Sharq Bu 29/1/2025](#)). Before the fall of al-Assad, Syria was heavily dependent on Iran for its oil supplies. However, Tehran has stopped supplying crude oil to Syria since HTS took control, so the new transitional government is under pressure to find alternative suppliers. Intergovernmental agreements are a possible option ([Argus 22/1/2025](#)).

The checkpoints and tariffs that used to hinder the movement of goods have disappeared, reducing costs. Syrian markets have seen a significant influx of Turkish goods, which has boosted competition and contributed to lower prices ([Sharq Bu 2/3/2025](#)). Foreign goods, which were restricted for years, were allowed into the country in January 2025. Under al-Assad's rule, most goods were produced domestically or smuggled in through a system of exorbitant taxes, tariffs and fines, driving up costs. Businesses in parts of Syria formerly controlled by the Assad regime are struggling to sell their goods as a flood of cheap imports undercut local

producers. The return of imports to areas formerly controlled by al-Assad was initially greeted with enthusiasm as residents were now able to buy items long absent from shops, such as Coca-Cola and French cheese. However, the enthusiasm was short-lived as a nationwide cash shortage and a slowdown in local business restricted people's purchasing power. The rapid easing of import restrictions by HTS has caused resentment in areas formerly controlled by the regime, including the capital Damascus in the south ([FT 2/3/2025](#)).

The strict international sanctions against Syria remain in place for the time being, as HTS is also subject to international sanctions due to its classification as a terrorist organisation by the United Nations (UN) and the US. Without an easing of these restrictions, investors will continue to avoid the war-ravaged country and aid organisations may be reluctant to intervene to provide vital humanitarian aid to the Syrian population ([DW 10/12/2024](#)). HTS has been on the UN Security Council's al-Qaeda and ISIS sanctions list for more than a decade and is subject to a global asset freeze and arms embargo, although there is a humanitarian exception ([Sky News 7/1/2025](#)). Despite some calls in the US Congress to ease sanctions on Syria, particularly after the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, the prevailing sentiment is against it ([AlHurra 15/12/2024a](#)). On 6 January 2025, the US announced exemptions from the Syria sanctions. This exemption allows certain energy transactions and personal transfers to Syria, among other things, until 7 July ([Sky News 7/1/2025](#)). The US Treasury Department has announced the issuance of a general Syria-related licence that allows transactions with Syrian government institutions and certain energy transactions. The licences permit, among other things, the transfer of personal funds to Syria, including through the Central Bank of Syria. This is intended to facilitate financial transactions with individuals and institutions ([AJ 6/1/2025](#)). Transactions with Syria's government institutions are permitted, except for transactions involving the military or intelligence services and sanctioned persons. According to the US Treasury Department, Washington's sanctions against al-Assad and his allies, the Syrian government, the Central Bank of Syria and HTS remain in effect ([Sky News 7/1/2025](#)). This measure is part of the US commitment to ensure that US sanctions do not impact activities that meet basic humanitarian needs, including the provision of public services or humanitarian assistance ([Almodon 6/1/2025](#)). On 24 February 2025, the EU lifted a number of sanctions against Syria with immediate effect, including restrictions on energy, banking, transport and reconstruction. At their meeting in Brussels, the EU foreign ministers agreed to suspend the restrictions on oil, gas and electricity as well as the sanctions on the transport sector. They also lifted the asset freeze for five banks, eased restrictions on the Central Bank of Syria and extended an exemption indefinitely to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid ([REU 24/2/2025](#)). The head of the Syrian Investment Agency considers the measures taken so far regarding sanctions to be insufficient. He said that Western sanctions against the Syrian banking sector continue to prevent critical investments in the war-ravaged economy, even though Syrian and foreign investors have shown great interest in it since the fall of Bashar al-Assad ([REU 10/2/2025](#)). The effect of the EU's easing of sanctions is limited by the extraterritorial effect of the US sanctions. The US provides exemptions for essential services, but does not allow new investments or broader engagement ([Bourse & Bazaar 1/4/2025](#)). There are still sanctions related to the banking system, which hinder Syrian trade with countries around the world as well as access to capital markets for borrowing ([Arabiya 27/1/2025](#)). United Nations

sanctions against key members of the Syrian transitional government remain in place (ICG 28/2/2025), and the HTS remains on the sanctions list. As a result, international financial and diplomatic relations are restricted. While the legal frameworks differ, the overall impact is similar: financial institutions, aid organisations and the private sector are reluctant to engage in Syria for fear of compliance risks and political repercussions (Bourse & Bazaar 1/4/2025).

Simulations of economic growth show that Syria's GDP will not return to 2010 levels until 2080, almost 55 years from now, if the country continues to grow at the modest rate observed in recent years - around 1.3% annually between 2018 and 2024 (UNDP 20/2/2025).

The Jordanian-Syria Free Trade Zone is a joint economic area established by Jordan and Syria to stimulate bilateral trade. It is located on the border between Jordan and Syria, near the al-Jaber/Nassib border crossing. After a seven-year interruption, it was reopened in December 2021, but closed again in December 2024 due to the uncertain situation in Syria and fighting in the border area. The activities of the Jordanian-Syrian free trade zone have returned to normal. The goods that were brought to Syria included food, solar cells and sterilisers from Jordan and the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Although the reactivation of the free trade zone offers opportunities to increase bilateral trade and encourage investment, challenges remain, particularly in relation to the security situation and infrastructure of this facility (VB Amman 29/1/2025).

HTS is fighting Captagon production in Syria, but lacks interest and capabilities to prevent the spread of drug production and trafficking to countries such as Iraq, Syria, Kuwait and Lebanon (FR 20/1/2025a). Although the industrial-scale drug trade of the Assad era is over, cross-border smuggling from Syria has not completely ceased. ETANA Syria believes that smuggling networks will take advantage of lax border controls, continued demand and drug stocks left over from before the collapse of the regime. In fact, there has already been a slight increase in cross-border smuggling activity to Jordan in southern Syria since the beginning of the year - albeit only a fraction of the total number of smuggling activities observed in the 2023-2024 season. So far, 25 attempts have been recorded between 8 December 2024 and mid-January 2025, compared to 65 attempts in the same period 2023-2024. Transporting or handling contraband will be an attractive source of income for young men, especially as long as the Syrian economy does not recover. As the new transitional authorities raid Syria's former Captagon production sites, supply on the market is dwindling rapidly - but demand is not. The smuggling networks in Syria may have lost their most important patron and protector in al-Assad, but they are not without resources. As the regime's military and intelligence units rapidly retreated to Damascus before the fall of al-Assad, smugglers infiltrated abandoned bases and arms depots to capture weapons and military equipment. Although many of the south's prominent smuggling bosses have fled the region or gone into hiding, others have managed to remain on the ground and resume their work (Etana 29/1/2025). The limited capacity of the new Syrian authorities has further enabled smugglers to exploit security gaps. There is much to suggest that while the fall of al-Assad has disrupted the drug trade in Syria, it has not changed the country's role in the regional drug trade (Chatham 31/3/2025).

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15.1 Labour market

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[Although most of the information in this chapter comes from sources older than December 2024, there have been no major changes in the labour market situation within this short period of time. Some information on the current situation has been incorporated into this text. Further information from more recent sources on the economic situation in Syria can be found in the chapter on [basic services and the economy](#)].

Article 40 of the Syrian Constitution of 2012 stipulated that work is the right and duty of every citizen, that the state endeavours to create work for all citizens and that the law regulates work, working conditions and the rights of workers (SeG 24/2/2012). The law provided for a national minimum wage for all sectors of the economy. It divided the monthly minimum wage in the public sector into five levels based on the type of job or level of education, almost all of which were below the World Bank's poverty indicator. Benefits included compensation for meals, uniforms and transport. The law stipulated that the minimum wage should gradually increase to match the cost of living, but the regime did nothing in this regard (USDOS 22/4/2024).

Since 2012, according to the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics, there has been a 9% decrease in the labour force by 2022. Overall, the labour force is estimated at 26% of the total population (Syria TV 31/8/2024). The economic deterioration was reflected in the persistently high unemployment rates, which reached 52% in 2023 and prevented half of those able to work from participating in economic activity due to the lack of adequate working conditions given the shortage of employment opportunities and the urgent need for labour (SCPR 6/2024). Before the earthquake in 2023, the Syrian economy suffered from high unemployment, which reached 42.9% in 2022. The earthquake led to significant losses in employment opportunities, resulting in an increase in the unemployment rate by about 1.8 percentage points across the country (equivalent to 90,000 jobs) (SCPR/UniVie 8/2023). The Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics recorded an unemployment rate of 23.7% in 2022 (Syria TV 31/8/2024; cf. NPA 29/8/2024). The World Bank estimates an unemployment rate of 13.5% for 2023 (WB n.d; cf. WKO 8/2024). The Austrian Embassy in Damascus cites an unemployment rate of 50% (ÖB Damaskus 2023). In 2022, the unemployment rate for women was 24%, 15 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate for men (WB 2024). According to the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate for men is 47% and 53% for women. A major problem is that 83% of the unemployed have never worked before (Syria TV 31/8/2024). Child labour has spread in an unstable and insecure environment (SCPR 6/2024). According to the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, the youth unemployment rate was 33.5 % (WKO 8/2024). Although the unemployment rate was high, there was a shortage of qualified personnel in certain sectors and areas, partly due to displacement, flight and emigration (ÖB Damaskus 2023). Unemployment

among women more than doubled by 2023, exacerbating the already low female labour force participation rate, which was only a third of that of men in 2010 ([UNDP 20/2/2025](#)).

According to a study conducted by the Syrian government, the majority of Syrians (68%) worked in the private sector in 2022. 31.8% worked in the public sector. The percentage of people working in other sectors was less than 0.3% ([NPA 29/8/2024](#)). The public sector in Syria has been the backbone of the Syrian economy for almost five decades and comprised a variety of ministries, institutions and companies covering important sectors. The public sector labour force could be divided into two main categories: Civil service employees and employees of public organisations. Civil service employees were those working for the state in administrative and service positions (such as health, education, local government, etc.) and they represented the backbone of the state, making up around 56% of the public sector labour force according to 2018 data. The employees of public enterprises work in the productive sectors (e.g. mining and manufacturing) and their number totalled around 700,000 employees in 2018. The total number of public sector employees in state ministries in 2022

was 911,955 ([OSS 20/1/2025](#)). All sectors are affected by a massive brain drain, an exodus of qualified or trained personnel. According to one estimate, there are now more than 25,000 highly qualified workers living in Germany, for example, especially medical workers and engineers. However, due to the long tradition of good education in Syria, many are still in the country ([UNRCHCSYR 22/9/2024](#)). The economic situation is leading to emigration. For example, qualified doctors have migrated to Europe ([GovHoms 17/9/2024](#)). The governor of Latakia, in turn, stated that there was no lack of qualified personnel, such as in the medical or engineering sectors, but that the state did not have the financial capacity to pay them. In particular without the income from the oil sector, the state could only pay wages to a limited extent. The labour capacity of the port of Latakia, for example, had fallen to 10% of its pre-crisis level. While one million containers were processed per month before the crisis, in 2024 the figure was only between 100,000 and 120,000 per month. There were no jobs that could be filled. Unemployment was on the rise. The director of the port of Latakia, in turn, stated that he could not find enough qualified staff to fill vacancies caused by retirements or emigration ([GovLat/DirLatPort 15/9/2024](#)). Low wages and the lack of suitable incentives in public sector companies led to redundancies and the migration of employees to the private sector or abroad. Public sector companies and institutions pursued a recruitment policy that led to a concentration of employees not providing actual services and the hiring of people without adequate qualifications, especially those demobilised from the army, resulting in poor work performance, low productivity, increased corruption and hidden unemployment ([OSS 20/1/2025](#)).

The majority of the unemployed (24%) were in Rif Dimashq in 2022, followed by Latakia (14%) and Tartous (11%). The unemployment rate was 10% in the city of Damascus, 9% in Homs governorate, 7% in Hama governorate, 6% in Aleppo governorate and 5% in both Dara'a and Suweida. In al-Hasakah, 3% of the population was unemployed, in ar-Raqqa 2% and in Deir ez-Zour 1%. Data was not collected in all parts of the governorates of Aleppo, al-Hasakah and ar-Raqqa ([Syria TV 31/8/2024](#); cf. [NPA 29/8/2024](#)). In the areas affected by the 2023 earthquake, Idlib, Aleppo, Latakia and Hama, the unemployment rate rose briefly to varying degrees.

The impact was particularly severe in the Idlib governorate, where the unemployment rate rose by around 14% to 59%. Despite the extent of the damage, however, economic activity in the affected cities gradually picked up again as workers returned to their jobs due to the high level of poverty. Residents' interest in repairing their homes led to an increase in employment opportunities in construction, cladding and related industries. The demand for occupations related to the provision of shelter, such as tents, also increased ([SCPR/UniVie 8/2023](#)). In north-west Syria, the unemployment rate reached 88% . Among internally displaced persons, the rate is even higher ([TNA 17/2/2024](#)). In May, a Syrian state-affiliated media outlet reported that 88.97% of the population in north-west Syria is affected by unemployment ([Syria TV 31/5/2024](#)). In north-east Syria, particularly in the city of al-Hasakah, there was a lack of employment opportunities for labourers and craftsmen, especially in the construction sector, due to deteriorating infrastructure, lack of basic services and constant attacks by Turkey ([SOHR 13/7/2024](#)). A study by the Reach Initiative for communities in North Aleppo and Idlib states that finding employment for the unemployed is made difficult by the low demand for labour and the lack of job opportunities that match the skills of job seekers ([REACH 30/5/2024](#)).

The study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation, which surveyed Syrians aged 16-35 in July 2024, shows that 28% work continuously, while 15% have casual jobs. 30% of survey participants are in education. 14% are housewives, while 13% are unemployed/not currently working. A comparison of the cities shows that 28% in Damascus work continuously, while this applies to 29% in Aleppo and 25% in Homs. The proportion of those who work occasionally is highest in Homs (19%), followed by Aleppo with 17% and Damascus with 9%. The proportion of those who are unemployed/not currently working is highest in Homs and Aleppo at 16% each, followed by Damascus at 9%. It should also be noted that the proportion of students in this sample is relatively high, with the highest proportion in Damascus (33%), followed by Aleppo (30%) and Homs (29%). 21% of respondents in Damascus are housewives, while this applies to 11% in Homs and 8% in Aleppo. A comparison of the genders shows that 42% of male respondents work continuously, while this only applies to 14% of female respondents. 15% of male respondents and 14% of female respondents work occasionally. 8% of male respondents are unemployed, while this applies to 19% of female respondents. The proportion of students is higher among men (35%) than among women (26%). 27% of female respondents are housewives ([STDOK/SL 2024](#)). Compared to the previous year, the proportion of unemployed people has increased. In the study, which surveyed 600 16-35-year-olds in August and September 2023, 30% said they worked continuously, while 19% had casual jobs. 29% of survey participants were pursuing their education. 14% were housewives, while 9% were unemployed/not working ([STDOK/SL 14/2/2024](#)).

According to the Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church, the average salary is USD 25-30 per month ([OrthoPatSYR 22/9/2024](#)). Similarly, Reuters reports that the average salary in the public sector is 300,000 Syrian pounds ([REU 14/12/2024](#)). According to an economic expert, the income of a Syrian citizen is at best 15 US dollars per month ([BBC 16/12/2024](#)). People usually have more than one job ([OrthoPatSYR 22/9/2024](#)). In 2023, the average monthly salary of an employee with a university degree in the public sector was around 370,000 Syrian pounds (SYP)

at the start of their employment ([SCPR 6/2024](#)). The highest salary in the healthcare sector is that of a university professor, who earns 100 US dollars a month. According to a doctor from Damascus, first-year interns earn 15 US dollars a month. A nurse with 20 years of experience earns 20 US dollars a month ([Arzt in Damaskus 23/9/2024](#)). Wages in the private sector reached around SYP 524,000 in 2023, compared to SYP 1.5 million in the public sector. A comparison of wage levels between the controlled areas in Syria showed that wages were highest in the areas of the self-governing institutions and the special administrative institutions, followed by wages in the autonomous regions and lastly wages in the government areas. Real wages continued to fall in 2023 due to rising inflation rates and were no longer sufficient to cover the minimum cost of living. A comparison of salaries in 2023 with those in 2022 shows a decline in the purchasing power of wages in the private sector by 17%, in the public sector by 15% and in the civil sector by 13% ([SCPR 6/2024](#)). Private sector companies generally paid much higher wages, with wages at the lower end set semi-officially by the regime and employers' organisations ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)). In August 2023, the president issued two legislative decrees increasing salaries and lump-sum allowances for civilian and military employees as well as pensions by 100% ([PoCMSyr 16/8/2023](#)). The Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES) also issued a decree law in August 2023 increasing the salaries of its employees by 100% ([Ronahi TV 27/8/2023](#)). In the areas controlled by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) increased the salaries of its employees by 25% in January 2023 and increased the number of working days per week. The Syrian Interim Government (SIG) did not respond to the decline in purchasing power and did not take any measures to improve the wage situation in the areas under its control. According to the Syrian Centre for Policy Research, the wage increases were unable to keep pace with the rise in prices ([SCPR 6/2024](#)). Salaries hovered around SYP 185,000 after these salary increases in the summer of 2023, which corresponds to around USD 15 to 20 (as of spring 2024) ([ÖB Damaskus 2023](#)). Although average salaries rose in 2023, the cost of living also increased and in some cases exceeded the salary increases ([UNOCHA 3/3/2024](#)). In many communities in Idlib and North Aleppo, borrowing money was an important source of income ([REACH 30/5/2024](#)).

According to a diplomatic source from a European state, all civil servants were furloughed ([SYRDiplQ1 5/2/2025](#)). In the first months of 2025, the new authorities in Damascus dismissed hundreds of former Ba'ath Party civil servants. A government minister suggested that there had been widespread corruption and that up to 400,000 'ghost employees' were on the government payroll ([Chatham 10/3/2025](#)). Mass layoffs of public sector workers have left hundreds of thousands without an income ([REU 26/3/2025](#)). In recent weeks, a small number of technical specialists from the former regime's military have been allowed to return to work, but many still face an uncertain future ([Chatham 10/3/2025](#)). The Syrian oil company in Banyas sacked 280 employees and granted paid leave to 900 others, without giving a reason. Some claimed that the dismissals were for sectarian reasons and not due to a desire to reform public service institutions. In the coastal provinces, there were several protests by public sector workers against the dismissals: In Latakia, dozens protested in front of the labour union building, another protest rally gathered in front of the Latakia port and customs company, and dozens of Syrian Oil Company

employees protested in Banyas. In Damascus, male and female activists and trade unionists protested against layoffs and privatisation plans ([SANA 18/4/2025](#)).

The Syrian Minister of Finance announced on 5 January 2025 that Damascus would increase the salaries of many public sector workers by 400% next month after the restructuring of ministries to increase efficiency and accountability was completed. The increase, estimated to cost 1.65 trillion Syrian pounds, or about \$127 million at the current exchange rate, is to be funded by existing government resources as well as a combination of regional aid, new investments and efforts to unlock Syrian assets held abroad. The increase was to come after a comprehensive assessment of up to 1.3 million registered public sector workers to remove fictitious employees from the payroll. It would affect those with sufficient expertise, academic qualifications and the skills needed for reconstruction ([TNA 5/1/2025](#)). As of early March 2025, the raise had not yet been approved, not only because of a lack of budget but also because there is a wait for payment from public sector employees, according to Sharq Business, an Arabic-language online newspaper specialising in economics. There are even delays in the payment of salaries ([Sharq Bu 2/3/2025](#)). According to statements from ash-Shara' quoted by Al Jazeera, public sector employees' salaries will continue to be paid on time ([AJ 15/12/2024c](#)). However, according to The Economist, most public sector salaries have not been paid since ash-Shara took office ([Economist 2/4/2025](#)). On 5 March 2025, a Syrian economist criticised the transitional government for not implementing the promised 400% salary increase for civil servants. Many are still unpaid almost four months after the decision was announced ([Rudaw 5/3/2025](#)). Some public administration employees were sent on paid leave for three months due to administrative inefficiency and hidden unemployment. Some employees reported that the number of employees who had fought as former soldiers on al-Assad's side in the civil war would be reduced. In some cases, this approach already led to protests in January 2025 ([REU 31/1/2025](#)). According to one economist, Syria has 1.3 million civil servants, 900,000 of whom do not receive salaries, while a further 400,000 have been removed from their jobs under various pretexts ([Rudaw 5/3/2025](#)). The 400% increase announced does not cover the needs of families. Not all state employees were granted this increase ([Enab 3/2/2025](#)).

According to Almodon, an Arabic-language online newspaper, the Syrian Red Crescent is said to have distributed aid packages received from Arab countries to support the Syrian population to fighters of the new Syrian Ministry of Defence in order to pay them instead of regular salaries. Some of the aid was apparently being used as rations for the soldiers on duty. An employee of a local Syrian organisation told Almodon that it is not the Syrian Red Crescent that is responsible for the fact that the fighters receive food baskets, but the Syrian government ([Almodon 22/2/2025](#)).

Before the crisis, the Assad government was the largest employer with 2.3 million employees. The second largest employer was the private sector ([UNRCHCSYR 22/9/2024](#)). Compared to the pre-conflict period, the employment profile of Syrians has changed dramatically, with a growing number of workers employed informally and in the service sector. The destruction of Syria's socio-economic infrastructure by more than ten years of conflict has led to a dramatic change in the occupational profile of Syrian workers ([WB 2024](#)). Many companies and production

lines are no longer in operation due to a lack of resources and raw materials. This in turn leads to problems in providing jobs (GovLat/DirLatPort 15/9/2024). Although salaries in the private sector are higher than in the public sector, relatively speaking, they cannot keep up with recent price increases because employers cannot afford to pay their employees four times the wages. Most of them, according to one economist, are at risk of insolvency and have problems withdrawing funds from their accounts (Enab 3/2/2025). One randomly interviewed company stated that it employed 200 people before the crisis, but now only ten. The reasons given were the lack of electricity, the exodus of qualified staff and a lack of sales markets. The products cannot be exported (UNRCHCSYR 22/9/2024). There was little information on the size of the informal sector in the country, but many refugees found work in the informal sector as security guards, construction workers or street vendors and in other manual jobs (USDOS 22/4/2024). The conflict in Syria had also led to a significant change in the structure of family income sources, with an increased reliance on aid as well as remittances from relatives and friends abroad and the sale of assets after the depletion of savings and loss of income sources (SCPR/UniVie 8/2023). Currently, the government does not have reliable records of government employees. It is building a database of public sector employees and asking employees to fill out an online form (REU 31/1/2025).

The lack of employment opportunities and low wages have led to more and more Syrians engaging in illegal activities, which are a safer and more lucrative source of income. In this context, drug trafficking has become extremely lucrative (OHCHR 1/2/2024). Although the industrial-scale drug trade of the al-Assad era is over, cross-border smuggling from Syria has not completely ceased. In the short to medium term, a decline in cross-border smuggling attempts can be expected. At the same time, it will take a long time for the Syrian economy to recover after al-Assad, and during this transitional period, the transport or haulage of contraband will be an attractive source of income for young men, Etana Syria (Etana 29/1/2025) estimates.

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15.2 Housing situation and infrastructure

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[Although most of the information in this chapter comes from sources older than December 2024, there have been no major changes to the housing situation in this short period of time. Some information on the current situation has been incorporated into this text. Further information

from more recent sources on the economic situation in Syria can be found in the chapter on [basic services and the economy](#). In addition, further information on property and ownership can be found in the chapter [Legal Protection / Judiciary - Developments since the fall of the Assadregime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) and on the challenges faced by returnees in the chapter [Return - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#). In the following, the current status is presented as it results from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is being disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Mass displacement in Syria, shifting frontlines and an inconsistent and detrimental legal framework have led to a complex housing, land and property crisis ([GPC 3/4/2025](#)). The conflict caused significant damage to physical infrastructure. One third of the housing stock was destroyed in whole or in part ([ÖB Damaskus 2023](#)). Military operations targeting civilian areas and facilities, including health and education facilities, looting, sieges and forced displacement have had a direct impact on the quality and safety of housing conditions in many areas of Syria, resulting in wide disparities in housing conditions across governorates ([SCPR/UniVie 8/2023](#)). According to the UN's Syria 2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview, the provision of shelter remains an urgent need, particularly for internally displaced persons in camps and returnees. It is estimated that almost 6.8 million people required shelter assistance in 2024. More than a third of the total population lives in substandard, damaged and inadequate shelters. Although the emergency shelters are only intended as a short-term stopgap solution, over two million people (roughly equal numbers of women and men) are still living in precarious accommodation, especially in the face of climatic and health shocks. Most emergency shelters, including informal settlements/camps, planned camps and assembly centres, are characterised by a lack of camp management systems, poor housing conditions, overcrowding and unreliable access to basic services. The destruction of land and registry offices has affected real estate, land administration and the registration/updating of Housing Land and Property (HLP) transactions ([UNHCHR 18/7/2024](#)). Millions of people in Syria live in damaged or destroyed houses. Financial constraints prevent families from rebuilding their homes and many have resorted to self-financed reconstruction efforts ([IHH 10/1/2025](#)). Early recovery and resilience-building programmes - which would technically be permissible under many sanctions regimes - remain underfunded and politically delayed ([Bourse & Bazaar 1/4/2025](#)).

According to World Bank and United Nations (UN) reports, the cost of reconstruction is between 250 and 300 billion US dollars. The Finance Minister pointed out that the focus in the coming period will be on restoring the infrastructure that was destroyed during the war, including energy, transport, water and sewage networks and telecommunications. Work in these areas will require international funding and assistance, according to Syrian Finance Minister Abazid. According to the Minister of Economy Hannan, Arab and other regional countries have already offered

investment projects (Sharq Bu 5/1/2025). Other estimates range from 250 to 400 billion US dollars for reconstruction in Syria. At the donor conference in Brussels in March 2025, pledges totalling 6.5 billion US dollars were made (Bourse & Bazaar 1/4/2025). The pledges at the meeting in Brussels were lower than in the previous year, when 7.5 billion euros in grants and loans were approved. EU representatives pointed to the cuts in US aid as one of the main reasons for this (REU 18/3/2025). The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) pointed out that tens of billions of US dollars are needed to rebuild almost two million homes that have been completely or partially destroyed (Akhbar 19/4/2025).

The housing, water, gas, electricity and other fuel oil group was the second largest contributor to the overall inflation rate in Syria in 2023. The contribution to the inflation rate was very high in the areas of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) and the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) of Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) (46%), then in the areas under the control of the Syrian government (25%) and finally in the areas of the Democratic Autonomous Region of North and East Syria (DAANES) (20.6%) (SCPR 6/2024).

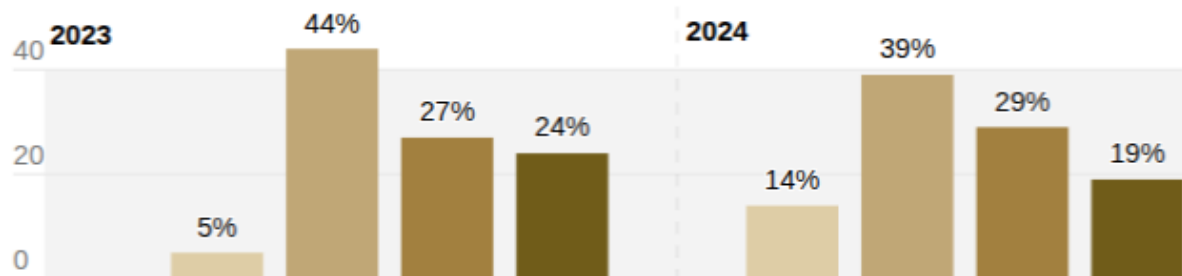
As a result of the deterioration of the Syrian economy, housing costs have become increasingly unaffordable in most cities, especially in major urban centres such as Damascus and Aleppo, where houses are being sold for high sums that are unaffordable for the vast majority of residents. Under such conditions, tenants find themselves on a constant search for housing that fits their shrinking incomes (UNHCHR 18/7/2024). In a study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation on the socio-economic situation, in which 600 Syrians aged 16-35 were interviewed in the cities of Damascus, Homs, Aleppo in July 2024, when asked about the impact of current housing costs, including rent, heating, electricity and water, 16% said they could afford housing costs. 43% could just about afford housing costs, 27% could barely afford them, and 14% said they could not afford housing costs. 17% of male respondents and 15% of female respondents were able to cover their housing costs. More than half of male respondents (51%) were just able to cover their housing costs, compared to 39% of female respondents. In contrast, 29% of female respondents were barely able to cover their housing costs, compared to 26% of male respondents. The proportion of those who were unable to meet their housing costs was significantly higher among female respondents (19%) than among male respondents (2%). Compared to the 2023 study, it can be seen that affordability had improved for the respondents (STDOK/SL 2024). In the study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation, which surveyed 600 people aged 16-35 in the same three cities from August to September 2023, only 6% stated that they could afford their housing costs (including rent, heating, electricity and water) and 46% could just about afford their housing costs. 34% of respondents could barely afford housing costs, while 14% could not afford housing costs (STDOK/SL 14/2/2024). The following chart created by the Staatendokumentation shows the results of the two studies in a comparison of cities:

Leistbares Wohnen in Syrien

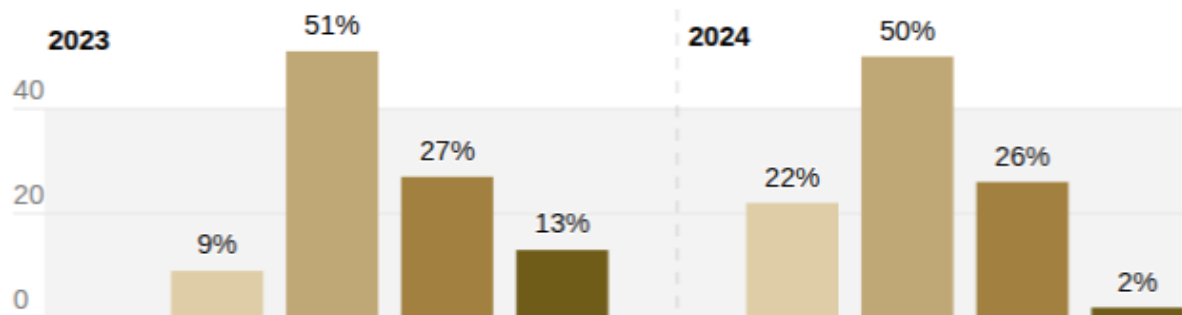
Die Auswirkungen der Teuerung auf die aktuellen Wohnkosten in **Aleppo, Damaskus, Homs**.

- kann sich die Wohnkosten leisten
- kann sich die Wohnkosten gerade so leisten
- kann sich die Wohnkosten kaum leisten
- kann sich die Wohnkosten nicht leisten

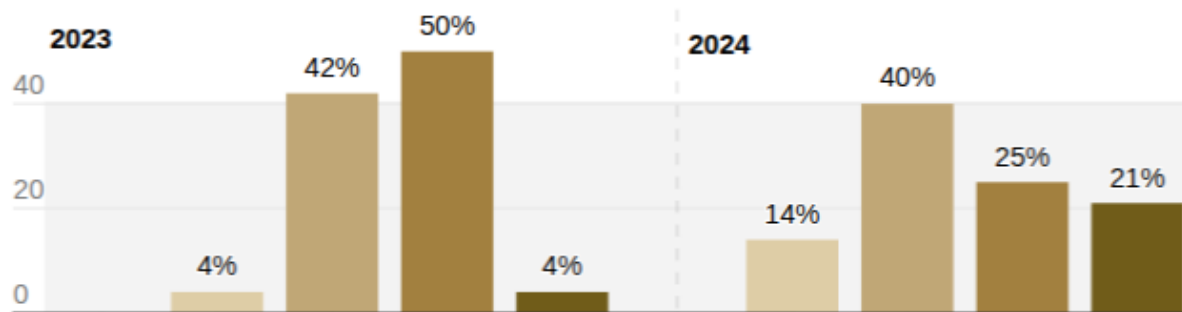
Aleppo



Damaskus



Homs



Sources 17: STDOK/SL 2024

The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber puts the percentage of the total Syrian population with access to sanitary facilities at 95% for the year 2022 (WKO 8/2024).

The reconstruction of Syria requires stability, security and international support - all of which are currently lacking (NH 14/1/2025). NGOs also demand that bomb clearance must be part of the reconstruction (FR 20/1/2025b).

Property agency owners in various Syrian provinces agree that property prices have neither fallen nor risen since the fall of deposed President Bashar al-Assad's regime in December last year, but there is a notional rise linked to the fall in the value of the US dollar against the Syrian pound ([AJ 9/2/2025](#)). Currently, there is stagnation in buying and selling in the real estate market against the backdrop of the fluctuating exchange rate of the Syrian pound against foreign currencies and the suspension of the registration of properties by the government authorities - which carry out transactions involving 'real estate vacuums' and property transfers - since 8/12/2024 ([AJ 9/2/2025](#)).

Israeli forces reportedly destroyed roads, electricity and water pipes in Quneitra through airstrikes after people there failed to comply with their request to evacuate the area ([AJ 15/12/2024d](#)).

Unclear legal status - rental flats, property, ownership

Returning IDPs and refugees often find their homes occupied, expropriated or destroyed, which makes their return considerably more difficult and harbours risks for future tensions if competing claims remain unresolved. There is a lack of necessary legal frameworks that address the impact of war on property, as well as restitution procedures that regulate secondary occupation while safeguarding the rights of both households. The Assad government previously used legal mechanisms such as Law No. 10 (2018) to confiscate property, while opposition groups and militias also occupied abandoned houses. Since the fall of the regime, tensions over property rights have increased. Some returning families have faced disputes with current residents, while others have reported forced evictions and retaliatory property confiscations, particularly in 'Afrin, 'Azaz, Jandiris, Saraqeb, Hama, the Damascus neighbourhood and Latakia, where revenge evictions based on religious affiliation have reportedly occurred ([GPC 3/4/2025](#)). In some areas in Damascus, there have been violations of housing and property rights after the fall of the Assad regime, particularly in relation to military housing, i.e. housing units assigned to officers of the Syrian army. These violations indicate a shift in the distribution of housing related to the military establishment, although there are clearly no official decisions on the fate of these flats. However, these appear to be isolated cases rather than a widespread trend of displacement on confessional grounds ([HLP Syria 5/2/2025](#)). After the fall of the Assad regime, some residents of social housing complexes intended for white- and blue-collar workers, especially in Damascus and its surroundings, were either temporarily forced to leave or permanently evicted. This is due to the widespread belief among the population that a significant proportion of the residents of these complexes were supporters of the former regime and belonged to its social base, especially in flats allocated to doctors, police officers, military personnel or employees in scientific research centres affiliated with the Ministry of Defence. The residents of these housing complexes are often employees from distant areas who work in the vicinity of these complexes. These properties are usually referred to as either employee or worker housing and are part of Syria's social housing programmes. Ownership is unclear due to overlapping laws and the government authority responsible for the flats. For example, employee housing is intended for temporary use, with ownership remaining with the state. Residents of employee housing are treated as tenants who rent the property from the state during their employment until they resign or retire. At this point, the tenancy agreement ends and the property must be vacated. In social housing, on the other

hand, tenants must pay 10% of their income as rent, together with service charges and the cost of maintaining, improving and repairing the property. Residents of social housing are entitled to ownership under Decree-Law No. 46 of 2002, provided they pay for the property in instalments ([HLP Syria 14/1/2025a](#)). According to residents, no official eviction orders have been issued for some evicted military housing. However, some families are considering moving away for fear of the future. There are reports from local sources suggesting that HTS and other factions have recently vacated these properties, although there is no official confirmation of this ([HLP Syria 5/2/2025](#)).

After the fall of the Assad regime on 8 December 2024, the owners of some properties that had been rented out under the forced renewal system attempted to reclaim their properties and evict the tenants. In some cases, the landlords instructed the Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) forces to evict the flats without taking legal action. Since 8 December 2024, some property owners have forcibly reclaimed properties that were subject to a forced extension ([HLP Syria 14/1/2025b](#)) [*Further information on the current legal situation can be found in the chapter [Legal protection / Judiciary \(developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)\)](#)*].

Many refugees and displaced persons are shocked upon returning to their areas, towns and villages after the fall of the regime when they realise that others are living in their homes. In some cases, these current residents have documents proving that they bought the properties, but research shows that these documents are often forged, including fake proof of ownership and court judgements, which are extremely difficult to trace. The properties in question are often located in informal settlements, in unlicensed buildings in zones or in collective ownership with unresolved inheritance disputes. Many of these properties are not registered in the official land registry and only appear as undeveloped land, which means that the buildings constructed on them are unregistered, undivided and not registered in the names of their rightful owners. The absence of the rightful owners, often due to displacement or persecution for security reasons, has made it easier for others to appropriate these lands by taking them illegally and later selling them, deceiving buyers into believing that they are the rightful owners. In addition, the widespread transfer of property without following proper legal procedures in regime-controlled areas in recent years, coupled with weak accountability and prosecution for fraud and forgery, has exacerbated the problem. This was exacerbated by corruption in courts and land registries, as well as the influence of Assad's security forces on the judiciary, which protected corrupt officials and those who had confiscated property, many of whom were part of the security and military apparatus ([HLP Syria 20/1/2025](#)). After the fall of the Assad regime on 8 December 2024, most of the forcibly displaced people returned from camps in northern Syria to their hometowns and farmlands in the rural areas of Hama and Idlib governorates. Farmers are reclaiming their land one by one, sometimes relying on local forces to claim their property and remove those who had taken over their land. Much of this agricultural land had been given to investors through public auctions in recent years. So far, 'The Syria Report' has not documented any cases of resistance from these investors, possibly out of fear of reprisals, acceptance of the new reality or even implicit recognition of the rights of returnees. The administrations of Idlib and Hama governorates, previously under the Assad regime's Ministry of Local Administration and Services,

had categorised these lands as uninhabited because their original owners had been forcibly displaced to opposition-controlled areas in north-western Syria. In a systematic and organised process that developed gradually from 2020 until the fall of the regime at the end of 2024, all these fallow lands, including undeveloped ('saleekh') and fruit tree-planted lands, were offered for sale in public auctions. In contrast to the pistachio crop, which had already been harvested before the fall of the regime, farmers returning to the towns in western rural Hama - such as Kafr Nabuda, Hayalin al-Ghab and al-Jalma - found their fields planted with crops still waiting to be harvested, such as potatoes. These lands had been leased through public auctions for vacant saleekh lands organised by the provincial authorities of Hama for the 2024-2025 agricultural season. The returning landowners harvested the potatoes without any objections from the investors and sold them for their own benefit. Some of them also demanded compensation from the previous investors for the past years (HLP Syria 3/2/2025a). *[For more information on the challenges faced by returnees in relation to housing, see the chapter [Return - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].*

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15.2.1 Housing situation and infrastructure in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 20:42

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#).]

Article 70 of the Social Contract of 2023 stipulates that private property is protected and may only be expropriated in the public interest. Appropriate compensation must be paid, which is regulated by law. According to Article 71, the possession and donation of property for the purpose of demographic change is prohibited (RIC 14/12/2023).

Returnees to the areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) face the challenge of reclaiming their property, especially when proving the authenticity of their documents issued before 2011 (OHCHR 1/2/2024). In January 2021, the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) issued a decision prohibiting its courts from adjudicating land ownership disputes until a new registry could be established. Two years later, Decision 6 continues to hinder northeast Syrians' access to property rights and their ability to secure legal documents, with no alternative cadastre in sight. Cadastral registration is the most effective legal instrument for recording property transactions and clearly takes precedence over other types of legal documents, including judicial decisions by DAANES judges. However, as the official cadastre is administered in Damascus, only the regime can make changes (SYD 30/1/2023).

Returnees denounced numerous cases of confiscation and appropriation of property by SDF-backed authorities, especially in areas where the majority of residents are Arabs (OHCHR 1/2/2024).

The ceasefire agreement between the transitional government and the SDF stipulates that the SDF must relinquish control of all border crossings, airports and oil and gas fields in their areas. *[Details on this agreement can be found in the chapter [Political situation - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#) / [Political situation in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria \(DAANES\)](#)].* The Syrian transitional government will reportedly establish committees to take control of the oil fields in the SDF-controlled areas in north-east Syria. These committees will study the fields and assess their production capacities (ISW 24/3/2025). These important oil fields in Syria fell into the hands of the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist group, which established a so-called caliphate in large parts of Syria and Iraq from 2014 to 2017. At that time, much of the damage was caused in the oil sector. After the fall of ISIS, the SDF took control of important oil fields. The fields now only produce a fraction of their former output. The Rumeilan field supplies only 15,000 of the approximately 100,000 barrels it produces to other parts of Syria in order to relieve some of the pressure on the state (Independent 28/3/2025).

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15.2.2 Housing situation and infrastructure (as of October 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 20:49

Areas under the control of the Syrian government

Private property was protected in the Syrian constitution of 2012 in Article 15 and could only be confiscated in the public interest in return for appropriate compensation, not without a final court judgement, in the event of war and disaster in return for appropriate compensation ([SeG 24/2/2012](#)). Syrians generally resorted to four types of property documentation. The most common option was to register the property in the civil register. Another option was to document ownership by means of a court order, which was then entered in the civil register. Ownership could also be established by a notary. This resulted in an official document, but its validity was only entered in the land register once the transfer of ownership documents had been finalised. For this reason, this method was less reliable than the previous two. The last of the four options was to draw up a simple contract between seller and buyer, which became legally effective with fingerprints and witness signatures. This was considered the legally weakest method ([SNHR 25/5/2023](#)). Law No. 10 of 2018 allowed the state to dedicate areas for reconstruction and redevelopment by decree. People who could not fulfil certain criteria to prove their ownership risked losing it ([FH 2023](#)).

In the middle of the 20th century, the phenomenon of informal settlements emerged in Syria, which spread in the 1980s. Residential areas were formed and reached large numbers. The percentage of informal settlements is estimated at 60 per cent of residential areas throughout Syria. The crisis has further increased this figure. In addition to informal settlements in areas controlled by the government until early December 2024, the number of informal settlements in areas outside the control of the Syrian regime was estimated at around 200,000 informal shelters ([TDA-SY 1/11/2024](#)). UNHCR describes informal settlements as generally characterised by high levels of tenure insecurity, lack of adequate infrastructure and services, precarious security and protection, including exposure to environmental and health risks, and socio-economic marginalisation. As a rule, they are located on land that is not intended for housing. Informal settlements are often located on state, private or communal land, with or without negotiations with the local population and/or landowners ([UNHCR 5/11/2024](#)). The link between informal settlements and the lack of basic facilities is not always accurate. In Syria, some informal settlements were provided with basic services and facilities due to a political decision and remained known as informal settlements. 'The Day After' defines informal settlements as clusters of houses that do not comply with the real estate legal system in their construction, planning or specification and are built on land owned by the state or individuals, which may be agricultural land or land not intended for residential purposes, and are mostly located outside the development plan or within a development plan but in violation of building regulations, according to unauthorised subdivisions and without licences. Under the stable circumstances of the past, proving ownership of informal settlements was already a complex matter that the legal system could not resolve, as the property is not registered in the land register as buildings and housing units. The majority is registered as agricultural communal property as it is built on state-owned land that is not subdivided into dwellings and cannot be subdivided or transferred, or the land is owned

by individuals and not registered in the land register and cannot be licensed in the municipality. Therefore, ownership is confirmed either by a court judgement, the ultimate aim of which is to register a charge in the Land Registry, or by a judgement confirming the sale and indicating the need to sort and correct the descriptions, which is not done. The sale can be made through a notary who issues an irrevocable power of attorney for the contents of the property. The owner can also pay taxes to the tax authorities or sign a utility contract (electricity, water) and obtain a receipt for the payment of utility bills on their behalf. The owner of a flat in informal settlements cannot take more steps than those mentioned above. Failure to create a land register has negative consequences, including the repeated sale of the property, leading to overlapping between the original owners, especially if it is a communal property. Under the current circumstances and given the destruction since 2011 and the security challenge of obtaining the above documents, proving ownership is made even more difficult (TDA-SY 1/11/2024).

There were no public efforts to rebuild private homes under the Assad government. Most of the reconstruction was carried out by the homeowners themselves. NGOs and UNHCR provided assistance with land and property rights. Many people had lost their land deeds. The UN focussed on rebuilding schools and health facilities, as long as they were not used for military purposes (UNRCHCSYR 22/9/2024). The governor of Latakia, who was interviewed by the Staatendokumentation as part of the FFM 2024, stated that there was no reconstruction in the country due to the sanctions (GovLat/DirLatPort 15/9/2024). The UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria was also unaware of any large-scale government projects by the Assad government. The reason he gave was that the regime was struggling with the basics (UNRCHCSYR 22/9/2024). According to the governor of Homs during an interview by the Staatendokumentation as part of the FFM 2024, many procedures were initiated and plans were drawn up for the city. However, the problem for the implementation was the lack of money (GovHoms 17/9/2024). Eight residential towers were built in Latakia with 320 flats for those whose homes were destroyed by the earthquake. The earthquake in Latakia completely destroyed 105 buildings, 36,000 are in danger of collapsing and 1,200 have to be demolished and rebuilt (GovLat/DirLatPort 15/9/2024).

One of the consequences of the conflict and the resulting territorial, political and administrative fragmentation is the lack of effective, functioning and independent institutions that monitor compliance with rules and procedures and guarantee accountability. Thus, during the years of conflict, those who held positions of power within the military or political structures of pro-government forces or non-state armed groups were increasingly able to arbitrarily appropriate or confiscate property. In such a context, returnees and other Syrians who have been victims of violations of their housing, land and property rights have been either unable or too fearful to seek redress for fear of retaliation by local authorities and armed groups, or because they are aware of the experiences of others and simply lack confidence in the administrative and judicial system (OHCHR 1/2/2024). Violations of the right to housing, land and property had greatly increased in areas that the Syrian government regained control of through agreements with opposition forces across the country in 2018, as well as in areas captured through military operations in southern Idlib in 2019 and 2020. In addition to looting and destruction, land

belonging to displaced residents was offered in public auctions and crops were extorted. According to media reports, the systematic looting of the property of displaced Syrians by groups close to the regime or with their knowledge and consent continued throughout the country ([SYD 26/5/2023](#)). According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Syrian regime resorted to various property laws to target three main groups in particular: forcibly displaced persons, disappeared persons, and victims who were deliberately killed ([SNHR 25/5/2023](#); cf. [SYD 30/1/2023](#)). In addition to laws, the Syrian government also resorted to other tools, such as targeted, widespread destruction, incomplete civil registries and requiring security clearance ([SNHR 15/3/2024](#)). According to a media report, there were networks close to the regime that took away property from displaced people. A lawyer counted 125 cases in Damascus in the first half of 2022. Up to 20 networks were also operating in Hama and Aleppo, where the population had fled the fighting. The networks had up to 50 members, such as lawyers, judges and army officers. They found empty flats and houses, forged purchase documents and took them to court without the rightful owner realising it. These forgery networks flourished during the war, favoured by the loss of documents by homeowners, while official buildings, court records and property deeds were destroyed ([Guardian 25/4/2023](#)).

While structural problems related to land tenure and property existed in Syria before 2011, these had been exacerbated by conflict-related factors such as large-scale destruction of property, mass displacement, the proliferation of informal settlements, the loss of civil documents related to housing, land and property, the passing of additional laws such as Law 10/2018 and Law 6/2023, and the earthquakes of 6 February 2023. The Syrian conflict has been characterised by a series of violations of the rights to adequate housing, land and property throughout the country. These violations had often particularly affected refugees and internally displaced persons, as they were often unable to manage and protect their property due to the fact that they had fled their places of origin, while suffering the effects of the demographic control policies that were gradually introduced by the parties to the conflict to consolidate control over their respective parts of Syrian territory ([OHCHR 1/2/2024](#)). Regime security forces evicted individuals from their homes and routinely confiscated, auctioned or destroyed the property and personal belongings of detainees without due process or proper restitution ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)). According to media reports, destruction and looting of homes of Syrians displaced from regime-controlled areas by groups affiliated with the Syrian government occurred in areas retaken from the Syrian government. Syria Direct's sources stated that the destruction increased in villages and small towns, especially those close to the frontlines with opposition forces. These areas are practically depopulated as the regime did not allow their inhabitants to return. In addition, the roofs of local buildings are reinforced with large amounts of iron, making them favourite targets for destruction and looting. One source speaks of contracts awarded to traders to loot electrical appliances, household furniture, ceramics and tiles, electrical wiring and iron from roofs, staircases, etc., for example. There were even adverts on social media for people to join the security and military services promising a boost to their monthly salary through demolition work ([SYD 26/5/2023](#)). The regime confiscated land, houses and capital from alleged opposition members living abroad and distributed it to its supporters ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)).

Amnesty International reported that an engineering committee formed by the Syrian authorities after the 2023 earthquake carried out assessments on the safety of buildings and released buildings classified as a threat to public safety for demolition. These assessments may not have been conducted thoroughly and the demolitions may have been carried out without following procedural requirements and without safeguards against forced evictions in accordance with international human rights standards. Residents told Amnesty International that in many cases, people whose homes were demolished because they were deemed uninhabitable were not offered alternative housing or compensation. Residents whose homes were damaged by the 2023 earthquakes told Amnesty International that the authorities had not informed them how to contact the committees to enquire about the safety of their homes. They did not receive any financial support from the authorities to repair their damaged homes and the authorities also required permits, which were difficult for residents to obtain, to repair residential buildings. These permits are particularly difficult to obtain when it comes to repairing informal buildings, which make up the majority of buildings in the areas affected by the earthquakes (AI 5/9/2023). Residents could not appeal the committees' decisions and often did not have enough time to remove their belongings before the demolitions (AI 24/4/2024). An informal system of public auctions was set up in the governorates of Aleppo, Hama, Idlib and Deir ez-Zour. These auctions were supposedly set up to give people the opportunity to cultivate the land in the absence of the owners. In all likelihood, however, this was just a pretence to appropriate the land. In March 2022, the land auctions became more systematic, suggesting that the government deliberately designed the policy to legitimise land appropriation. The owners of these plots generally lived outside government-controlled areas or outside Syria. The winners of the auctions were often high-ranking members of pro-government militias or people with close ties to government authorities. In many cases, the auction winners were already illegally occupying the appropriated land, using the auction system as a method to legitimise the appropriation (BS 19/3/2024). Specific plans for the establishment of development zones pointed to areas formerly held by the opposition, as these were often illegal housing areas built without planning permission. Pro-government circles are likely to have benefited from the large-scale property transfers. Under pressure from Russia, neighbouring countries and the UN, some changes were made, such as the extension of the deadline from 30 days to one year. However, the basic thrust did not change too much (ÖB Damaskus 2023).

Syrian media reported in June 2024 that the Syrian government was increasingly publishing lists of names of Syrians against whom the Minister of Finance had ordered the 'preventive seizure' of movable and immovable assets. According to the decisions, the reason for the confiscation was involvement in 'current events in the country'. The decisions were based on decrees, laws and books issued by the General Directorate of the Secret Service. The majority of the people on the leaked lists are activists of the anti-regime movement, defectors from the regime forces, conscientious objectors to military service and reserve duty, prominent opposition figures. The decisions on preventive detention were so comprehensive that they even retroactively included the children and wives of those concerned, often affected people who had died in various circumstances in the early years of the uprising, and included some 'arbitrarily' listed people,

including people who had not participated in anti-regime activities but had close ties to other people who had become emblems of the rebellion ([Syria TV 1/6/2024](#)).

Women were discriminated against in terms of property due to personal status laws based on Sharia law, which penalised them in inheritance, but also due to social customs ([FH 2024](#)).

Areas under the control of the opposition

In opposition areas, the Syrian National Army (SNA) and the Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) confiscated and occupied the private property of displaced civilians ([BS 19/3/2024](#)).

Areas under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)

In the areas under the control of the HTS, the infrastructure was slightly better than in the areas that were under the control of the Syrian government until the beginning of December 2024. Street lighting and traffic lights worked there. The administration known as the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) was responsible for the water and electricity supply, waste collection and road surfaces. Public services and military operations were financed by taxes levied on businesses, farmers and border crossings with Turkey ([BBC 18/12/2024](#)).

Areas under the control of the Syrian National Army (SNA)

The UN has received reports that in areas under the control of Turkish-allied armed groups in north-west Syria, local authorities have confiscated and sold property from individuals who had left the country or moved to areas under the control of other parties to the conflict. Such policies and measures were particularly enforced in areas originally inhabited by a majority Kurdish population. The returnees interviewed stated that in most cases no physical deeds of sale were presented as a result of these procedures. There were also cases where returnees who tried to reclaim their property after their return were forced to pay rent to re-enter their property, either to the new owner or to a faction of the armed groups affiliated with Turkey ([OHCHR 1/2/2024](#)). In the areas controlled by the Turkish-backed rebel factions, looting, pillaging and confiscation of property occurs on a daily basis and residents and returnees who dare to resist the factions remain at risk of arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and ill-treatment, abduction and enforced disappearance. Turkish troops are also said to have been involved in the looting. In particular, Turkish military operations in 2018 and 2019 are said to have resulted in the looting of private homes, businesses and land, as well as public property such as power cables and electricity pylons. The establishment of military and civilian police forces to which civilians can report abuses and violations, as well as local grievance committees established by various factions, have resulted in little progress in the restitution of houses, land and property looted, stolen or damaged by various elements of the SNA, not least because the aforementioned factions are composed of current or former members of the same group whose abusive actions they are supposed to redress ([HRW 29/2/2024](#)). Although some individuals reported cases of property restitution, the vast majority were unable to recover their homes and land. Due to threats of detention throughout the year and possible reprisals from SNA factions involved in both the complaints and restitution process, many refrained from filing or withdrew complaints to informal local complaints committees about extortion, appropriation of property and the collection of

levies ([USDOS 22/4/2024](#)). In North Aleppo, Ra's al-'Ayn and Tall Abyad, the SNA continues to confiscate land and property under the pretext of 'taxes'. Landowners who try to reclaim their property by filing complaints risk verbal threats, beatings, kidnapping and, in at least one case, death at the hands of the SNA ([BS 19/3/2024](#)). The UN cites the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade in particular, which confiscates property from owners and retaliates with imprisonment and violence against those who resist ([UNGA 10/9/2024](#); cf. [UNGA 9/2/2024](#)).

According to non-governmental organisations, there are construction projects in north-western Syria to house Syrians from other governorates, that did not address the needs of the displaced Kurdish residents who were forced to leave their land due to Operation Olive Branch and its aftermath, contributing to their further marginalisation. The displacement of Kurdish residents has intensified as the ongoing hostilities in northern Syria have forced more displaced Syrians from Idlib, Ghouta, northern Hama and rural Damascus into the 'Afrin region. In some cases, SNA groups have taken over the construction of entire villages, often under the pretence that they benefit the civilian population, when in reality the projects primarily serve the housing needs of the fighters and their families. In fact, many Kurdish residents have been forcibly evicted from their homes to make way for the construction of new settlements. The construction of these settlements often leads to the forced displacement of local Kurdish residents, causing the majority of the Kurdish population in the region to leave their homes ([CCR/YASA 5/2024](#)).

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15.3 Basic services and economy in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 22:36

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial

resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

The country's largest oil reserves are located in Kurdish-controlled north-east Syria ([WiWo 9/12/2024](#)). The governorate of Deir ez-Zour contains 40% of these reserves as well as several gas fields ([DW 10/12/2024](#)). According to the British company Gulsands, the Kurds produce around 80,000 barrels of oil per day. At current prices, this corresponds to a daily value of around 5.6 million US dollars. This means that the Kurds control a large part of Syria's sources of income ([WiWo 9/12/2024](#)). In addition, the international coalition has endeavoured to support them financially on an annual basis, and some countries have allocated a budget of hundreds of millions of dollars to pay fighters' salaries and secure other financial expenses. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) use this financial support mainly to pay the salaries and wages of their fighters and administrative staff, which range from 100 to 800 US dollars. These salaries are the highest compared to other local armed groups in Syria, including the former regime forces ([AJ 29/1/2025](#)). An official from the Syrian oil ministry announced on 22 February 2025 that the Kurdish-led administration in the north-east of the country (DAANES) had resumed oil deliveries to government-controlled areas for the first time since the fall of Bashar al-Assad. Hundreds of tankers transported mainly crude oil by land to the refinery in Homs in central Syria. The agreement between the Kurdish Autonomous Administration and the Syrian Oil Ministry provides for the transfer of 15,000 barrels of oil per day, in addition to the transfer of one million cubic metres of gas by tanker. The pipelines for the transport of oil and gas are out of operation. The new contracts are initially valid for three months ([Arabiya 23/2/2025](#); cf. [Nashra 22/2/2025](#)).

In mid-2022, the United States exempted the SDF areas from sanctions against foreign investment, which the SDF interpreted as support for their efforts to rebuild infrastructure in their controlled areas, as an earlier study by Jusoor for Studies shows ([AJ 29/1/2025](#)).

The humanitarian situation in north-eastern Syria is characterised by limited humanitarian access, persistent insecurity and dwindling support. Over 413,000 people have been without water and electricity for weeks after the Tishrin Dam was damaged on 10 December 2024. In addition, markets and small businesses damaged by hostilities last week urgently need to be repaired and livelihoods restored ([UNOCHA 30/1/2025](#)).

Food, water and electricity supply

Initial economic well-being results from March 2024 showed high levels of need across northern Syria. Food security was a major concern, with 59% of respondents stating that food or money to pay for food was the biggest unmet need. 60% of households reportedly bought their food on credit/debt. Debt levels remain high. The biggest challenge for households accessing food was reported to be high food prices (41%) and lack of money to buy food (36%) ([IRC 14/3/2024](#)). Confidential sources from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that the area bordering Iraq in particular was receiving regular (humanitarian) aid deliveries from that country, making the situation there slightly better than in the rest of Syria. In this area, where oil was

extracted and a lot of food was produced, prices were also lower than in the government area (MBZ 8/2023). The escalation of the security situation in October 2024 restricted the movement of humanitarian organisations, limiting access to health facilities for both staff and children and caregivers in need of assistance. The impact of damage to key infrastructure and utilities such as electricity, fuel, silos and mills as well as factories continues to affect the population's ability to meet their nutritional needs. As of January 2024, 70% of households in North-East Syria were struggling to meet the basic needs (i.e. shelter, food and medicine) of all family members, mainly due to the high cost of essential goods and services and lack of access to income. For most people, food is the largest item of monthly household expenditure (NES 20/11/2024).

The following charts, produced by the Staatendokumentation, show trends in food prices and wages for unskilled labour. The data is based on surveys conducted by the World Food Programme on the 15th of each month from February 2024 to February 2025. The cities of Qamishli and al-Hasaka were selected. [Further charts for cities such as Damascus, Aleppo, Idlib and Homs can be found in the chapter on [basic services and the economy](#)]. Data was not available for all months. Data in kilograms or litres and prices or wages in Syrian pounds (SYP):

Al-Hasakeh

Entwicklung der Preise für bestimmte Waren auf dem Markt Tell Tamer nach dem Welternährungsprogramm (WFP) und im Gegensatz dazu Lohn (nicht qualifizierte Arbeit).



Sources 18: WFP 24/3/2025

Quamishli

Entwicklung der Preise für bestimmte Waren auf dem Markt **Quamishli** nach dem Welternährungsprogramm (WFP) und im Gegensatz dazu Lohn (nicht qualifizierte Arbeit).



Sources 19: WFP 24/3/2025

Limited financial resources and the exodus of qualified personnel are limiting the quality and availability of water and sanitation systems and health services (UNOCHA 3/3/2024). In October 2023, Turkish drones began months-long attacks against civilian infrastructure in north-east Syria. Several people were killed and over a million people were left without electricity and more than twice as many without reliable access to water. The destruction of infrastructure affected almost all areas of life, from houses, restaurants, petrol stations, buses and bakeries to health facilities, roads and power stations. Since then, many people have had to rely on private generators, but for some this is financially unaffordable (NH 21/2/2024). Repeated airstrikes by Turkish forces in the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), which have damaged critical oil infrastructure such as storage tanks, gas production facilities where crude oil is stored and transport pipelines, have exacerbated the oil saturation of agricultural fields and water sources, according to the NES NGO Forum. Even before that, the inefficient disposal of oil waste has led to repeated oil leaks since 2014, contaminating the region's water sources. The pollution of surface and groundwater by oil also threatens access to clean drinking water for the population in the DAANES (USAID 9/4/2024). Since January 2024, the power connection to the supply lines in al-Hasaka has been partially restored, which slightly improves the otherwise catastrophic situation. The latest round of escalation in October 2024 led to power outages in the sub-districts of Kobane, Qahtaniya, 'Amouda and Darbasiya. The communities are facing major

challenges to meet their water needs. As groundwater is potable in most of the affected areas, many villages in rural areas are not equipped with water systems and rely on private boreholes. Some families had the ability to provide solar panels or had private generators, while the majority relied on electricity from the grid, which is no longer available. The airstrikes from October 2023 to October 2024 resulted in 87,306 people in the sub-districts of 'Amouda and Darbasiya having difficulty accessing sufficient drinking water. Damage to power plants in Kobane and 'Ain Issa in October 2024 led to a critical interruption in the water supply. The affected infrastructure includes 13 water plants that are now disconnected from their main power source, affecting access to clean water for 55,740 people. The authorities have been able to implement solutions to bridge the supply gap to partially restore power in these areas. The critical Alouk water station has not been operational since the escalation of hostilities in October 2023. This has seriously jeopardised the water supply for over 610,000 people in al-Hasakah governorate. Access to electricity for 1.05 million inhabitants in 1,322 communities, 1,937 schools and twelve medical facilities is severely jeopardised. The 'Amuda, Qahtaniya and Kobane substations have all been targeted and damaged in airstrikes. Overall, access to electricity is currently severely restricted for 1.05 million inhabitants in 1,322 communities in north-east Syria ([NES 20/11/2024](#)). As a result of the damage to the Tishrin Dam, more than 413,000 residents in Manbij and Kobane have been without electricity and running water since December 2024 ([IMC 16/4/2025](#)). In some residential areas in the DAANES, there is no water supply, so residents have to rely on water from wells, which can lead to intestinal and kidney health problems ([Enab 21/2/2024](#); cf. [Enab 11/9/2024](#)). In addition, water from drilled wells is expensive due to the cost of drilling and the lack of suitable machines for groundwater extraction, which means that the water is not available to all residents. In some communities, the operating times of the water pump generators are also not sufficient to reach the more remote houses ([Enab 21/2/2024](#)). Humanitarian aid remains vital for communities affected by water shortages. The aid organisations ensure the continuous maintenance of water networks and stations, the supply of electricity, as the region is dependent on hydropower plants, and water transport. The lack of wastewater management in NES has also increased the risk of contracting water-borne diseases such as cholera ([USAID 10/1/2024](#)).

In areas under autonomous administration in the east of Deir ez-Zour, there are repeated crises in the service sector, which manifest themselves in recurring interruptions to the drinking water and electricity supply. Several drinking water stations in the eastern outskirts of Deir ez-Zour stopped supplying water to residents in September, leading to a drinking water crisis in the areas supplied by these stations. Local sources told Enab Baladi that the water stations were shut down due to a shortage of the fuel needed to operate them and a lack of electricity. About a week after most stations stopped pumping water, the price of water transported by tankers doubled due to increased demand, rising temperatures and lack of electricity and alternative sources of drinking water. Selling drinking water through tankers in the countryside of Deir ez-Zour has become a popular business fuelled by the recurring crisis due to power outages, prompting many people to take up the profession of selling and distributing water in villages and towns. ([Enab 11/9/2024](#)).

Non-governmental organisations working in north-eastern Syria have not had access to Manbij and 'Ain al-'Arab since mid-December, as an internal border crossing has been closed, hindering the movement of people and goods (UNOCHA 30/1/2025).

Labour market

Areas under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

The average unemployment rate among the civilian population in north-west Syria is 88.82%. Economic researcher Hayan Hababa said that the main reasons for the high unemployment rate are overpopulation compared to the small geographical area in the region and the lack of investment projects, in addition to other reasons including the reluctance of many investors to invest in north-west Syria, with low levels of education also playing a role. Other reasons for the rise in unemployment include lack of employment opportunities, lack of sufficient experience, lack of education and national skills, lack of practical experience for most graduates, and lack of supervision and support locally where they graduated (Syria TV 27/8/2024).

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16 Medical care - developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

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[Although the information in this chapter comes mainly from sources older than December 2024, there have been no major changes in medical care within this short period of time. Some information on the current situation has been incorporated into this text].

The catastrophic consequences of the conflict continued to take their toll on the public health of the Syrian population. Hundreds of thousands have been killed and millions injured, including soldiers and civilians, men and women, with blatant disregard for the right to life and the right to health. This led to increased mortality rates and reduced life expectancy at birth, as well as a doubling of disease rates, including infectious diseases such as cholera, measles, leishmaniasis and COVID-19, as well as non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, cancer, disability and malnutrition (SCPR/UniVie 8/2023). Recurrent disease outbreaks, water-borne diseases, a prolonged drought and water crisis, vaccine-preventable diseases and food insecurity are contributing to rising mortality and morbidity, including an increase in malnutrition and an increased need for humanitarian assistance (UNOCHA 12/2023). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 15 million people - 65% of the population - are in need of medical assistance (WHO 16/3/2024). Almost six million Syrians (28% of the population), including many children, are permanently disabled due to the impact of the conflict on healthcare and often do

not have access to adequate care. This means that around one in six citizens face some form of impairment that limits their ability to earn a living and participate fully in reconstruction efforts. At the same time, the demand for psychological, medical and financial support has risen sharply, putting additional strain on already scarce state resources ([UNDP 20/2/2025](#)).

The conflict has systematically destroyed the social determinants of public health and led to fragmentation and regression of the health system, such as through direct military attacks on the population, medical facilities and medical staff and by undermining governance in the health sector ([SCPR/UniVie 8/2023](#)). Public hospitals even asked patients to bring their own medicines, syringes, bandages and medical tape ([FT 25/3/2025](#)). The work of the private health sector has spread to all regions of Syria during the conflict. The private sector consists of formal and informal healthcare providers, including pharmacies and specialised hospitals, which include for-profit facilities, both local and foreign. Results of socio-economic surveys conducted by the Syrian Center for Policy Research in 2020 and 2021 show a significant decline in public health services and an increase in the provision of private health services. There are many challenges associated with the role of the private health sector, such as lack of accountability and quality monitoring as well as rising costs of services. Civil society is also an important player in the provision of healthcare services. This is reflected in various forms of non-governmental and community-based organisations, be they civil society, religious, community-based or professional organisations or initiatives. The differences at the level of organised work between communities, within and between control areas, are very large. This is due to varying degrees of self-organisation depending on the very different social structures, leadership, local community resources, professional experience and international support, whether from diaspora communities or other donors. In areas of Syria, the reliance on such community organisations to compensate for the decline in government health services varies greatly depending on the activity of the international health organisations filling the gap. International medical non-governmental organisations, which are much more advanced in operational and financial terms, are important providers in the north-east and north-west of Syria, but not in the areas controlled by the Assad government, where non-profit civil society organisations play a greater role in filling this gap in public health services ([SCPR 2023](#)). Civil society organisations have also taken a leading role in Aleppo and Idlib, the most affected governorates, and have been instrumental in improving the management of the health sector in the rural areas of the two provinces and increasing people's access to health services ([SCPR/UniVie 8/2023](#)). Funding for humanitarian health interventions has decreased by more than 27% from 2022 to 2023 and is expected to decrease further by at least 30% in 2024 ([WHO 16/3/2024](#)).

In contrast to the overall decrease in reported violence in Syria, incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care increased in 2023. This was mainly due to the increased use of explosive weapons in October. The number of cases in which healthcare facilities were damaged or destroyed almost doubled in 2023 compared to the previous year, and explosive weapons were used in all but one case. In 2023, a similar number of healthcare workers were killed, abducted and arrested as in 2022. As in previous years, the majority of incidents in 2023 involved healthcare providers working in national healthcare structures. Most incidents

of violence against or obstruction of healthcare were attributed to Syrian forces and Turkish forces using explosive weapons in Aleppo, Idlib and al-Hasakah. At least 11 healthcare workers, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, hospital staff and security personnel, were arrested or detained in eight incidents in 2023, compared to 20 in nine incidents in 2022 ([II 22/5/2024](#)).

The impact on mental health is huge, with depression and stress-related disorders estimated to have increased by 200% and 600% respectively ([WHO 16/3/2024](#)). The prevalence of recorded mental illness in Syria rose sharply between 2022 and 2023, with an increase of almost 570% in stress-related illnesses, including acute stress disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a report published in February by the United Nations Health Cluster. Rates of depression and suicide rose by more than 80 per cent in the same reporting period ([USAID 9/4/2024](#)).

The growth retardation rate has steadily increased across Syria, from 12.6% in 2019 to 16.1% in 2023. Alarming, five out of 14 governorates report unacceptably high growth retardation rates of over 20% , including the governorates of Aleppo, Idlib, Deirez-Zour, al-Hasakah and ar-Raqqa. In certain areas of Deirez-Zour, al-Hasakah and ar-Raqqa, catastrophic growth retardation rates of over 30% are reported ([UNOCHA 3/3/2024](#)).

Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8.12.2024)

Conditions in hospitals in various Syrian provinces have deteriorated since the fall of the toppled regime. Some hospitals are operating without adequate medical supplies or electricity ([AJ 1/1/2025b](#)). The health sector in Syria is in a catastrophic state. Public hospitals in Damascus are suffering from an accelerated collapse of medical care amid a severe shortage of medicines and equipment. Only 35% of the country's healthcare facilities and capacity are still functional. Despite ongoing efforts, official reports indicate that the health burden will not ease in the foreseeable future and that the health situation in Syria is becoming more complex by the day ([Sky News 3/2/2025](#)). As a result of the war, 38% of hospitals and 47% of primary healthcare centres in the Syrian Arab Republic are either partially functional or no longer functional ([UNESCWA 26/1/2025](#)). Only 57% of hospitals and 37% of primary healthcare centres are fully functional ([IMC 16/4/2025](#)). However, even these suffer from severe shortages, leaving millions of people without access to basic health services ([AN 6/3/2025](#)). The underfunding of aid measures is leading to serious humanitarian consequences. In north-west Syria, 102 health facilities had already run out of funds by early 2025 ([UNOCHA 30/1/2025](#)). Displacement, death and injuries have led to a severe shortage of medical staff ([UNESCWA 26/1/2025](#)). In addition to the destroyed infrastructure, funding gaps and supply bottlenecks, the exodus of medical professionals has hit Syria's healthcare system hard. The loss of medical staff in Syria amounts to more than 70%. Syrian doctors receive an average salary of around 25 US dollars per month - barely enough to pay for three days' food and transport. Hospitals are outdated, primary health centres lack basic services, technology is outdated, and there is no health insurance, funding or digitalisation, the head of US-based medical aid organisation MedGlobal tells Arab News ([AN 6/3/2025](#)).

The interim government's health minister described the state of the Syrian health sector as not good. He said that the health sector suffers from two main problems: 1. corruption and

2. administrative bloat. The Ministry of Health has more than 82,000 employees. There are a large number of fictitious employees, drivers and ghost employees who are registered but do not exist. While there is a lack of qualified staff, there are many people without appropriate medical training who, according to the minister, were employed by the Assad government to satisfy its supporters. The Ministry of Health has more than 1,700 health centres and outpatient clinics in Syria, but only 15 to 20% of them are functional (as of 19.12.2024). The damage includes complete to partial destruction, cessation of work and lack of suitable staff. The ministry has drawn up a phased action plan for the health sector, which includes targets for three, six, nine months, one year, two years and four years (Sharq 19/12/2024). The country is suffering from a critical shortage of essential medical supplies, fuel and even food for patients and staff, according to the Director of Planning and International Cooperation at the Syrian Ministry of Health (AN 6/3/2025).

In north-east Syria, some three million people are at risk of a collapse in healthcare services as local authorities are unable to fill the gaps left by funding cuts. Half of the 200 health facilities there are expected to face shortages in medical care and key facilities may have to close (IMC 16/4/2025).

In north-west Syria, the health crisis is characterised by significant challenges (WHO 27/12/2024). Health partners are raising the alarm over severe fuel shortages at Manbij National Hospital, which serves around 100,000 people. The hospital has been completely dependent on generators for several days to power dialysis machines, neonatal incubators and other life-saving equipment in the intensive care unit and operating theatres. The hospital's renal department had to stop its services completely due to a combined lack of electricity and fuel. In north-east Syria, mobile medical units are facing staff shortages, while mental health concerns are increasing for children showing signs of psychological stress in collective shelters (UNOCHA 7/1/2025). Blood banks are at critical risk as five out of eleven blood supply centres have run out of funds. Tuberculosis centres are similarly affected as one in four have ceased operations. In addition, four out of 16 dialysis centres are not operational, impacting patients with chronic kidney disease (WHO 27/12/2024). The highest prevalence of people with disabilities is in North Aleppo district, where 63% of the total population (aged two years and above) have difficulty performing daily tasks or have some kind of disability. In addition, 59% of people in North Aleppo have difficulties performing daily tasks or have disabilities, followed by 58% in Idlib. According to the study conducted by the Assistance Coordination Unit in Northern Syria, the prevalence of disability is higher among women than men in all regions covered by this study. The rate of disability is likely to be higher among older people, regardless of gender. The findings are worrying as people, particularly those with disabilities, are less likely to have access to sufficient employment and more likely to be dependent on family members. Similarly, households with a disabled member are only half as likely to report having sufficient income to meet their needs. The ability to survive a humanitarian crisis is linked to both health, including mental health, and financial security, both of which become less likely with age. The chronically high rate of children with disabilities is also concerning. 18% of people in northern Syria have problems walking or climbing. 17% of people in northern Syria have vision problems, even if they use corrective vision aids. 8% of people in

Northern Syria have hearing problems, even if they use hearing aids. 11% of people in northern Syria have difficulty lifting a container of two litres of water from their waist to eye level. 12% of people in Northern Syria have difficulties with self-care, including bathing or dressing. 8% of people in Northern Syria have difficulties with communication, e.g. understanding or being understood in everyday language (slang). 17% of people in northern Syria have difficulties with memory or concentration. 23% of people in northern Syria have cognitive difficulties. 15% of people in northern Syria have difficulties controlling their behaviour. 16% of people in northern Syria have difficulties establishing a new relationship. 26% of people in northern Syria suffer from constant anxiety. 28% of people in northern Syria suffer from persistent sadness. 13% of the difficulties or disabilities were due to war or terrorist activities. 3% were caused by abuse (physical and psychological). 1% were caused by natural disasters, with earthquakes being the most common (ACU 27/11/2023).

The US State Department announced that it was suspending foreign aid funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) for 90 days. US aid has been critical to civil defence efforts to save lives through emergency response, search and rescue, ambulance and medical services, and war debris removal, according to an activist. The exemptions that followed the US decision, which include essential life-saving medicines, medical services, food, shelter and livelihood assistance, are unclear because it was not specified to which programmes the exemptions apply. In addition, there are medical services for Syrians that are not covered by the exemptions because they are not life-saving, he said. These include vaccinations, psychological support, protection for vulnerable groups, psychological support and patient transport (Almodon 4/2/2025). After almost 14 years of civil war in Syria, a German-Syrian hospital partnership is now set to help get hospitals and doctors' surgeries back on their feet by providing training, medical equipment and a stable power supply. At the end of January, the Budget Committee of the German Bundestag found a majority in favour of the project, which is to be financed with 15 million euros (SZ 12/2/2025).

A crisis is emerging in the area of mental health. This is exacerbated by victims of torture, family members of disappeared persons, victims of violence and displacement, returning refugees and drug addiction in connection with the production of the amphetamine-like stimulant Captagon. Syria also faces an epidemic of non-communicable diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, chronic kidney disease, cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (AN 6/3/2025).

Medical care (as of November 2024)

Areas under the control of the Syrian government

The foundations of medical care were laid down in the Syrian constitution. According to Article 22, the state protected the health of citizens and provided them with the means of prevention, treatment and medication and was to be liable for each citizen in the event of emergencies, illness, disability, orphanhood or old age. According to Article 25, the development of health services should be balanced in the respective territories (SeG 24/2/2012).

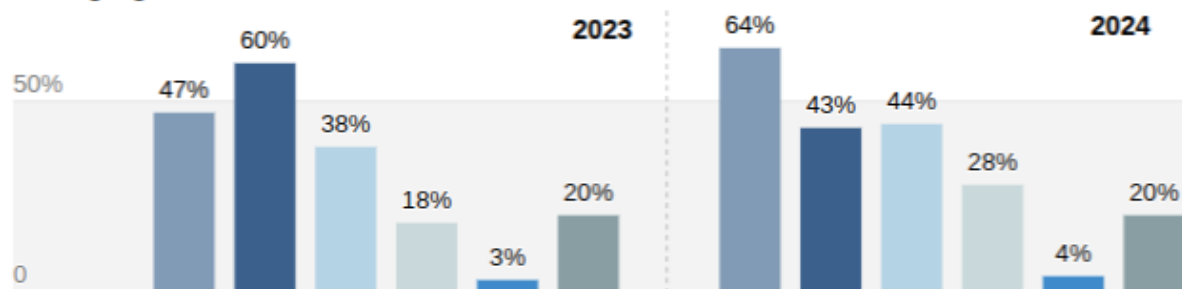
The conflict has led to the systematic destruction of the social foundations of public health and the fragmentation of the health system. Individuals face many obstacles in accessing health services due to a lack of specialised services, shortages of medicines and the destruction of infrastructure and equipment ([SCPR 6/2024](#)). More than 80% of the indicators that affect health are outside the health sector, such as education, sanitation, water, nutrition, electricity, etc. Water plays a major role in disease ([IntOrgSYR1 21/9/2024](#)). In the area controlled by the Assad government, the Ministry of Health was in charge of the sector. However, its role had shrunk, while the role of humanitarian international and local actors, civil society and the private sector had increased dramatically. The health system was characterised by discrimination, corruption and inefficiency. Moreover, the health system became part of the war as a means to fuel the conflict, violate rights and oppress people. The attacks on health facilities and personnel led to a significant impairment of the operational readiness, efficiency and fairness of the health system ([SCPR 2023](#)). Access to and the functioning of basic health services remained a major challenge. Almost 40% of primary and secondary healthcare facilities, which provide life-saving healthcare services to over 4.8 million people, were either partially functional or not functional at all ([UNOCHA 3/3/2024](#)). In general, access to health services such as vaccinations, medicines, visits to the family doctor or to specialists such as dentists, ophthalmologists, gynaecologists, urologists and paediatricians was limited among all respondents who participated in a survey in the three cities of Damascus, Homs, Aleppo in July 2024 among 16-35-year-olds commissioned by the Staatendokumentation ([STDOK/SL 2024](#)). The following chart created by the Staatendokumentation shows the results of this study and the study from the previous year:

Zugang zu Medizin in Syrien | 2023 -2024

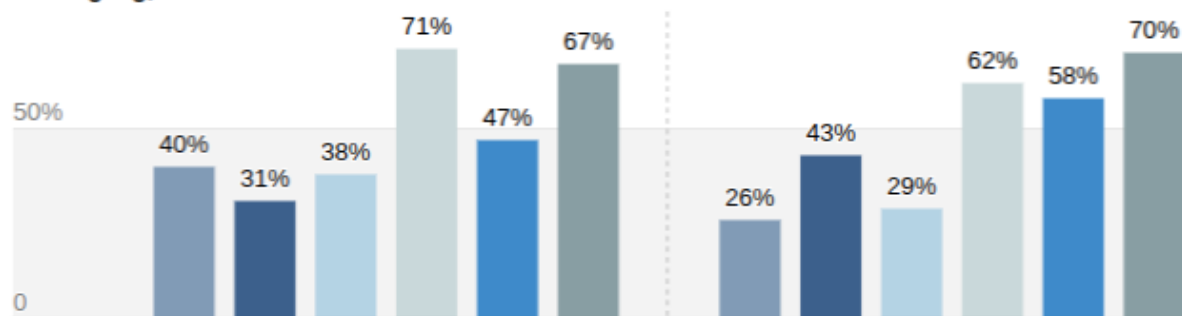
Zugang zu Medizin in den Städten **Aleppo, Damaskus, Homs.**

- Impfungen
- Medikamente & Drogen
- Medizinische Grundversorgung (Hausarzt)
- Facharzt (Zahnarzt, Augenarzt, Gynäkologe, Urologe, Kinderarzt)
- Operative Behandlungen (Chirurgie, Krebsbehandlung)
- Medizinische Diagnostik (Radiologie, Laboratorien)

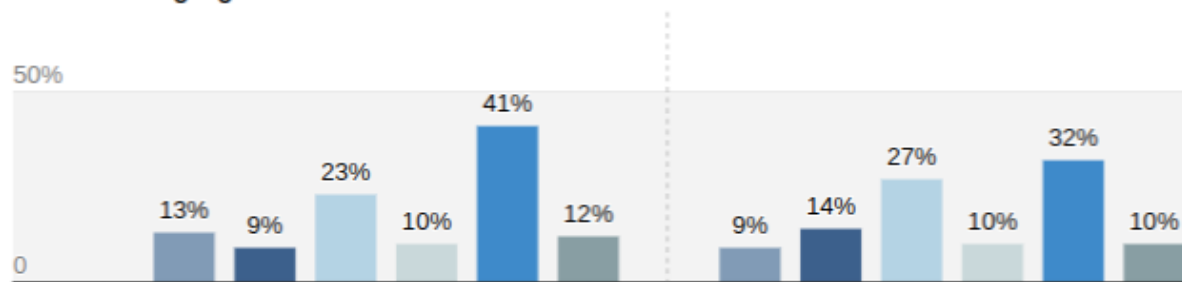
hat Zugang und kann es sich leisten



hat Zugang, kann es sich aber nicht leisten



hat keinen Zugang



Sources 20: STDOK/SL 2024

Much of the medical equipment in the hospitals is old or broken and there are no spare parts to repair it, e.g. computer tomographs. Although there are exceptions to the sanctions for medicines, this is not enough (GovLat/DirLatPort 15/9/2024). There is a severe shortage of medicines, medical consumables and supplies, CT scans, equipment and MRIs. Medicines are particularly lacking in public hospitals, which are generally not well equipped. There is also a shortage of medicines in university hospitals. The problems here are artificial shortages

and overcompliance with sanctions (Arzt in Damaskus 23/9/2024). Before the war, 80% of the medicines needed were produced in the country. They had to be paid for privately, but the medicines were affordable. During the war, the quantity, quality and number of medicines produced deteriorated. People had to rely on NGOs (UNICEF, WHO, UNDPFA, etc.). The pharmaceutical companies could not import the material, again due to liquidity problems and the sanctions. Health and humanitarian aid were not sanctioned, but nobody wanted to do business with Syria - that was the deterrent effect of the sanctions (IntOrgSYR1 21/9/2024). The UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator stated that before the crisis, as much as 97% of the medicines needed were produced in Syria and Syria exported medicines to 50 other countries. The 3% that Syria did not produce itself were highly developed medicines, for example against cancer. The pharmaceutical sector was one of the industries most affected by the conflict. Restoring factories required the import of spare parts, which were not easy to obtain due to suppliers' excessive compliance with the sanctions regime. The lack of electricity was another problem. Some of the materials needed for the production of medicines could not be easily imported. Most medicines were of low quality or unaffordable if smuggled from Lebanon (UNRCHCSYR 22/9/2024). In July 2024, as part of a study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation, 16-35-year-olds were surveyed in the three cities of Damascus, Homs and Aleppo using computer-assisted telephone interviews. In the survey, 43% of respondents stated that they always had access to medicines and drugs and could afford them, while 43% had access but could not afford them. 14% had no access to medicines or drugs at all. Compared to the previous year, access to medicines has worsened (STDOK/SL 2024). In the 2023 study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation, which also surveyed 16,35-year-olds in the three cities of Damascus, Homs and Aleppo, 60% of participants always had access to medicines and drugs and could afford them, while 31% had access but could not afford them. 9% did not have access to medicines or drugs (STDOK/SL 14/2/2024). Another aspect was the integration of some services into primary health care (such as nutrition, psychological support, etc.). People received treatment recommendations, but the medicines were not available, the ministry could not provide them. The Assad government tried to limit its recommendations to things that people could actually afford (IntOrgSYR1 21/9/2024). According to the governor of Latakia, there was a lack of ambulances. During the earthquake, there were only 20 ambulances. People had to be transported in pick-ups (GovLat/DirLatPort 15/9/2024).

The vaccination rate has fallen. The Assad government used to buy vaccines themselves, but now they can no longer afford to do so due to the flow of money and the sanctions. They are dependent on international actors (IntOrgSYR1 21/9/2024). 64% of respondents interviewed by computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) in the three cities of Damascus, Homs and Aleppo in July 2024 as part of a study commissioned by the Staatendokumentation always had access to vaccinations and could afford them, while 26% had access but could not afford them. 9% did not have access to immunisation. 1% did not respond. Compared to the previous year, the situation had improved for respondents (STDOK/SL 2024). In terms of primary healthcare from a GP, 44% of respondents in 2024 always had access and could afford a visit, while 29% had access but could not afford a GP visit (primary healthcare). 27% had no access to primary healthcare. 28% of participants always had access to a specialist (dentist, ophthalmologist, gynaecologist, urologist

and paediatrician) and could afford it, while 62% had access to a specialist but could not afford the visit. 10% had no access to a specialist at all. Only 4% of participants always had access to and could afford advanced treatments such as surgery or cancer treatment. 58% had access to advanced treatments but could not afford them, while 32% had no access at all. It should also be noted that 6% of respondents did not answer this question. 20% of participants always had access to medical diagnostics (radiologists, laboratories) and could afford them, while 70% had access but could not afford them. 10% had no access to medical diagnostics at all ([STDOK/SL 2024](#)). Access to services for non-communicable diseases and limited access to specialised services such as cancer treatment, kidney dialysis and burns treatment were also identified as major gaps ([WHO 27/5/2024](#)). The ratio of public doctors per 10,000 inhabitants reached 24, 22 and 20 in Damascus, Latakia and Tartous respectively, compared to only 6, 5 and 2 in Aleppo, rural Damascus and Dara'a ([SCPR 2023](#)). It is estimated that over 14.9 million people in Syria will need life-saving primary and secondary health care in 2024, a slight decrease of around 400,000 people from the previous year ([UNOCHA 3/3/2024](#)). There are clinics in the smaller towns in the countryside, but there is a lack of staff ([Arzt in Damaskus 23/9/2024](#)).

There is a shortage of medical staff. 40% have left the country, they are the crème de la crème. Germany is the most popular destination country. Many are going to Germany. Many are now preparing for the move. Doctors and nurses are learning German because they want to leave the country. This is both legal and illegal migration. The current situation is the perfect formula for an increase in violence and migration. In the last twelve months, the number of asylum seekers and applications for migration has risen. An entire generation is being lost. It will take time to make up for this. The cohesion of society will not be restored immediately. The healthcare system is quite fragile. Support is needed to stabilise and modernise it ([IntOrgSYR1 21/9/2024](#)). The low salaries are problematic. The highest salary in the health sector is that of a university professor, who earns USD 100 per month. After the first year of internship, an assistant doctor earns USD 15 per month. A nurse with 20 years of experience earns USD 20 per month. Most doctors have their own private practice where they supplement their salary. Some work in public hospitals in the morning and in a private one in the afternoon. Many doctors have left the public sector and work in the private sector or they have left the country. From the fifth year of medical school at the latest, students also learn German ([Arzt in Damaskus 23/9/2024](#)).

Primary health care is free, but in reality it is not free. You still have to pay for medication and in many cases for consumables ([IntOrgSYR1 21/9/2024](#)). There is no public health insurance. There is private health insurance, but only 1% of the population can afford it. The majority of people go to public hospitals. In private hospitals you can have any operation, but you have to pay for it. You also have to pay to see a doctor in private practice. There are machines for dialysis in public hospitals, but you have to buy individual dialysis agents outside, which is very expensive. A single dialysis treatment costs at least 100 US dollars. NGOs and charitable organisations cover 50-70% of the costs, but not 100% ([Arzt in Damaskus 23/9/2024](#)). According to media reports in June 2024, the Syrian Ministry of Health has increased the fees for consultations with doctors, regardless of speciality, by almost 600% ([Enab 27/6/2024b](#); cf. [al-Watan 27/6/2024](#)).

Areas under the control of the opposition

Since 2015, the health systems in the opposition-held regions continued to rely on the structure of the Syrian public health system, but had gradually expanded it, mainly through the active participation of health directorates, civil society, UN organisations and donors in the design and planning of the health sector in the region. In the governorates that were outside the control of the Assad government, there was a severe shortage of public doctors (under the supervision of the Assad government) and they relied on the health systems developed by the opposition in the north-west and by DAANES in the north-east (SCPR 2023). In north-west Syria, 15 hospitals had ceased operations in 2023 due to funding shortages and more hospitals were at risk of closure. As the north-west was entirely dependent on donor funding, an estimated two million people could lose access to life-saving and emergency medical care if funding was not available (WHO 16/3/2024). In the north-west, healthcare is largely provided by NGOs. A doctor in the Assad government area earned 100 US dollars, in the north-west he earns 1000 US dollars. The facilities run by NGOs will disappear as soon as the funding is stopped. There is a lack of resources there too, despite the experienced doctors. Despite old equipment, care is better in the north-west (IntOrgSYR1 21/9/2024).

Areas under the control of Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS)

In the areas controlled by the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG), Syrian civil society had gained considerable importance in the provision of health services, primary health care and reproductive health. Hundreds of associations and initiatives dealing with health and humanitarian aid have helped to ensure that people in many areas, especially those under siege, receive basic medical care. After the Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS) took control of Idlib, a Ministry of Health was established, an authority characterised by fragility and limited ability to influence the sector, coupled with numerous restrictions on support to sustain health initiatives in the area. The medical non-governmental organisations and the Health Directorate continue to provide services in Idlib, but suffer from severe attacks on health facilities, a lack of resources, sanctions and poor coordination and management (SCPR 2023).

Areas under the control of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA)

The Turkish-backed opposition areas follow the structure of the Turkish health system and have developed their public facilities and infrastructure accordingly. Before the Turkish operations, medical non-governmental organisations played an important role in providing health services in these areas. However, the role of the Turkish government has limited the role of civil society in the provision of public services. Turkey's role is to monitor the sector and provide services, as well as to perform difficult treatments and surgeries and take on cases for which treatment is not available in local hospitals and clinics. In this area, the responsibility for procuring medicines and health services shifted from the public sector to citizens, local and international organisations or the private health sector, which worsened the economic situation of the people. In addition, Turkey's restrictions on cross-border operations, imports and exports had a negative impact on health conditions in these areas. The weakness of the transitional government's administrative

structure, especially in the health sector, was associated with a number of challenges, including lack of funding, instability, damaged infrastructure and a shortage of medical staff ([SCPR 2023](#)).

Epidemics, pandemics: Covid-19, cholera etc.

The first COVID-19 cases occurred in March 2020, after which the Syrian government imposed precautionary measures such as curfews, the closure of schools, public institutions and private businesses, with the exception of vital public services and productive businesses such as manufacturing and agriculture. Domestic trade almost came to a standstill and foreign trade with Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan fell by almost 80% ([SCPR 2023](#)). The impact of COVID-19 on Syria is difficult to assess. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), around 57,400 infections and 3,163 deaths related to COVID-19 have been reported as of January 2023. However, previous reports of increased mortality as well as satellite images of earth movements near cemeteries suggest that the numbers are much higher. Only 14.4% of the population has received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose and COVID-19 related measures have accelerated Syria's economic decline ([BS 19/3/2024](#)).

The cholera outbreak reported by the Syrian Ministry of Health in September 2022 continued into 2023, and by the end of October 2023, 221,836 suspected cases of cholera were reported from all 14 governorates of Syria, including 105 deaths ([UNOCHA 3/3/2024](#)). The disruption of basic services after the earthquake, combined with the ongoing conflict and humanitarian challenges, contributed to the protracted cholera outbreak, which was heavily concentrated in the governorates most affected by the earthquakes ([WB 28/5/2024](#)). However, cholera cases were reported from all 14 governorates, although the province of Deirez-Zour, the north and the coastal areas were the most affected ([ÖB Damaskus 2023](#)). Between 25.8.2022 and 21.10.2023, 217,512 suspected cases of acute watery diarrhoea or cholera were reported from all 14 governorates of Syria, with 106 associated deaths for a mortality rate of 0.05%. The most affected governorates so far are Idlib (90,768 cases, 41.7%), Aleppo (75,332 cases, 34.6%), ar-Raqqa (23,869 cases, 11%), Deirez-Zour (20,809 cases, 9.6%) and al-Hasakah (5,890 cases, 2.7%). Since the beginning of the outbreak, 33,261 suspected cases and ten deaths related to watery diarrhoea have been reported from camps for internally displaced persons across Syria ([WHO 23/11/2023](#)). As of 11/11/2024, 279 cases of cholera have been confirmed in north-east Syria. Cases of acute diarrhoea are on the rise. Due to limited testing capacity for cholera, it is difficult to confirm cholera cases ([NES 20/11/2024](#)).

In 2023, emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, vaccine-preventable neglected tropical diseases, influenza-like illnesses and waterborne diseases, including acute watery diarrhoea (AWD)/cholera, measles, meningitis, hepatitis A and leishmaniasis, continued to place a significant burden on communities in Syria, affecting more than two million people ([UNOCHA 3/3/2024](#)). There are still cases of cholera here and there, most of which are due to lack of access to water. Last year, people dug wells near sewage pits, so cases increased. Syrians are very educated. If you give them information and reasons, they try to act accordingly and prevent these problems. There are some cases in the north-west and north-east and in rural Damascus, as well as in

detention centres. But they are not yet confirmed, only suspected. They are sporadic cases, one or two here and there (IntOrgSYR1 21/9/2024).

Leishmaniasis is endemic in Syria (IntOrgSYR1 21/9/2024).

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16.1 Medical care in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

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[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

In the areas controlled by the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), the political authority has set up a health commission to monitor health facilities and pay the salaries of health workers. Cross-border partners supported the operations in the region. However, the Government of the Republic of Syria continued to operate in the region because DAANES was unable to meet the need for health services and medicines due to damaged infrastructure, weak administration and lack of staff, medical equipment and funding (SCPR 2023).

There is a high need for health support, especially in the north-east, where public healthcare options are limited. 14% of households cited medical needs as their greatest unmet need. In 22% of households, at least one household member suffers from a chronic disease (15% in the DAANES and 28% in North West Syria), with only 34% stating that they can find the necessary medication regularly (IRC 14/3/2024). In September 2024, a pharmacist in Qamishli warned that there has been a severe shortage of medicines for chronic diseases in the city for over four months. In the meantime, even replacement medicines are no longer available. The missing medicines include important treatments for diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and eye drops, with most medicines for chronic diseases largely unavailable. Importing foreign medicines is not possible as they often arrive through illegal channels and do not meet the needs of the population (NPA 29/9/2024).

Due to the power outages caused by the Turkish air strikes in this region, the quality of care in health facilities in affected areas is impaired, even if the Turkish air strikes do not directly hit medical facilities. Power outages lead to the interruption of the cold chain for vaccinations and medicines and have an impact on the functionality of medical equipment such as X-ray machines, MRIs, etc. (NES 20/11/2024).

In northern Syria, 52% of people aged two years and older have difficulties performing daily tasks or are disabled. Disabilities can make it difficult to access basic services such as water, education or market places, while households with disabled members are more likely to experience economic deprivation due to reduced access to economic resources or increased health expenses. Across northern Syria, disability both contributes to and exacerbates the existing vulnerability of millions of people and their households (ACU 27/11/2023).

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17 Return - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-08 21:23

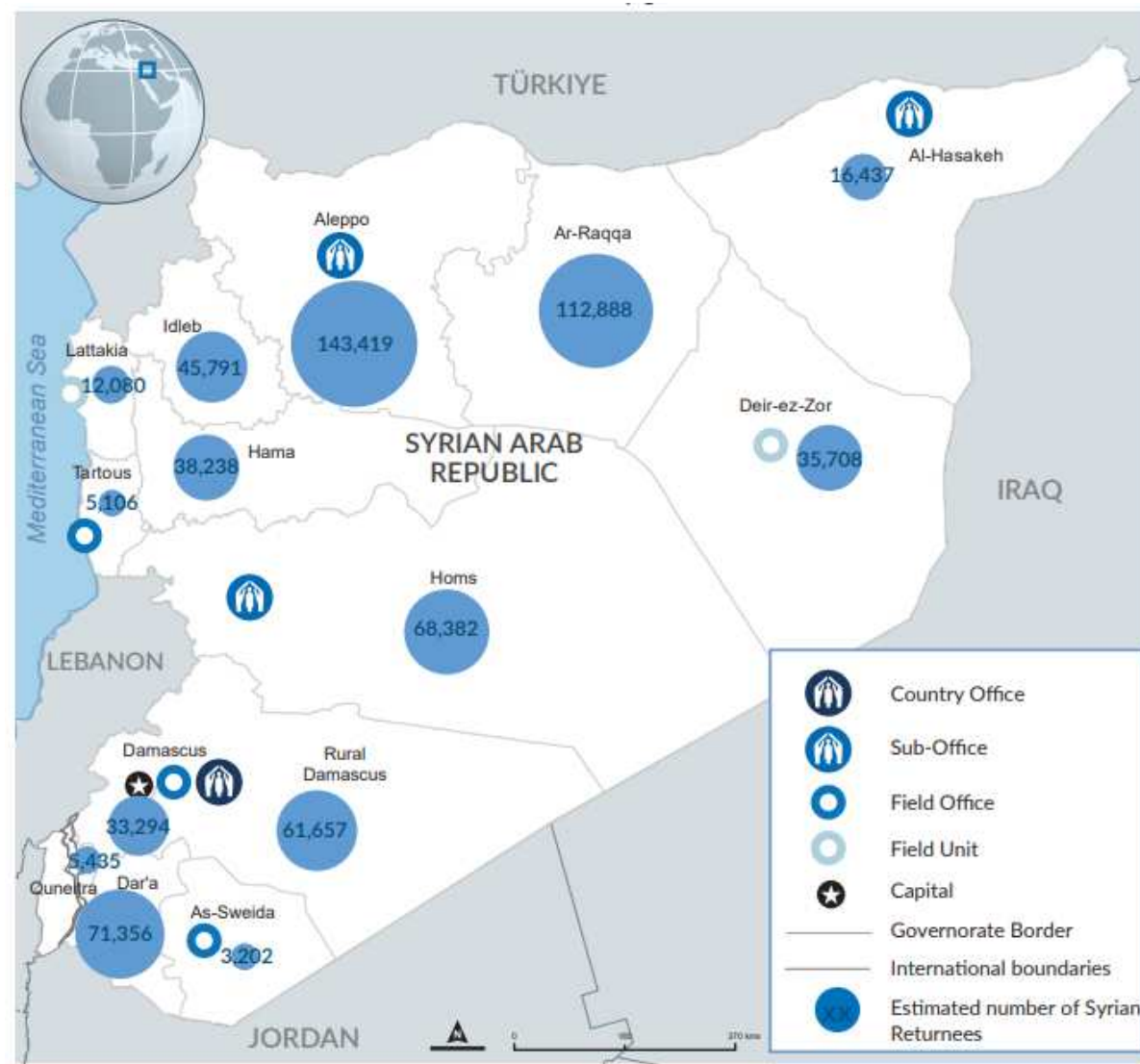
[The following presents the current situation as it appears from publicly available sources. In some cases, false information is disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

With the fall of al-Assad, thousands of Syrians returned to Syria from Lebanon and Turkey. For many, the Assad regime was the main obstacle to returning home. Host countries have capitalised on this enthusiasm to encourage more returnees (CSIS 11/12/2024). Ten days after the fall of the Syrian regime on 8 December 2024, the European Union (EU) stated that it estimated that around one million Syrian refugees would return to their country between January and June 2025. This was confirmed by the Director of the UNHCR Office for the Middle East and North Africa. Ahmad ash-Shara', the commander of military operations in Syria who later became the country's interim president, emphasised in a meeting with UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen that one of his first priorities was to rebuild destroyed homes and return the displaced to the last tent, while making very important economic decisions (Almodon 13/2/2025).

By August 2024, an estimated 34,000 refugees had returned, but following Israel's invasion of Lebanon in October 2024, a further 350,000 fled Lebanon back to Syria to escape the conflict.

With a further 125,000 returnees since the fall of al-Assad in early December, the total number of returnees in 2024 reached almost half a million ([FA 11/2/2025](#)). According to UNOCHA, 225,000 returnees were registered throughout Syria by 15 December 2024. The majority have returned to the governorates of Hama and Aleppo. This means that the number of newly displaced people has fallen from 1.1 million, as reported on 12/12/2024, to 882,000 people on 15/12/2024. Of this number, at least 150,000 people have been displaced more than once. Many families have returned to former camps in their areas of origin due to a lack of basic services or damaged infrastructure in their hometowns. Some families have also stated that they are waiting for the clearance of ordnance residues in their areas of origin before returning ([UNOCHA 16/12/2024](#)). UNHCR estimates that over 115,000 Syrians have returned to Syria from 8 December 2024 to 2 January 2025, based on public statements from host countries, contacts with immigration authorities in Syria and UNHCR, and border monitoring by partners ([UNHCR 2/1/2025](#)). According to the UNHCR, a total of 800,000 displaced Syrians have returned home, including 600,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) (as of 31 January 2025) ([AlHurra 31/1/2025](#)). The number of people returning to Aleppo governorate is the highest, with returnees citing the improved security situation and the abolition of military service as the main reasons for their return ([UNHCR 2/1/2025](#)). In general, the UN has recorded an increase in the number of Syrians living in the Middle East who are willing to return. Almost 30% state that they want to return to their home country. UNHCR head Grandi sees the sanctions as a major obstacle to return ([Zeit Online 26/1/2025](#)). The Syrian authorities stated that 100,905 citizens returned via the Turkish border crossings within two months of the liberation of Syria. The Jdaydat Yabous/Masna' border crossing with Lebanon processed 627,287 travellers in two months, including 339,018 Syrian citizens and Arab and foreign guests, and 288,269 departures. In the same period, the Nassib/al-Jaber border crossing with Jordan handled 174,241 passengers of Syrian nationals and Arab and foreign guests, of which 109,837 entered and 64,404 left the country. At the al-Bu Kamal/al-Qa'im border crossing, 5,460 Syrian citizens living in Iraq and returning to settle permanently in Syria were processed ([Nashra 11/2/2025](#)). With regard to returnees, the competent authorities and research centres are unable to determine whether these people have only returned to visit and meet their families or whether they have returned voluntarily and permanently ([Almodon 13/2/2025](#)).

The UNHCR map shows the distribution of Syrians who have returned since the beginning of 2025 by governorate:



Sources 21: [UNHCR 20/2/2025](#)

According to CNN, there was not only a stream of returnees, but also numerous families who wanted to leave the country out of fear of the new government, mostly because of their religion (CNN 12/12/2024).

In January 2025, UNHCR conducted a survey on the perceptions and intentions of refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt. An increasing proportion declared a clear intention to return. Overall, 80% of refugees hope to return to Syria one day. This represents a significant change in refugees' intentions to return compared to the last survey in April 2024, when only 57% of refugees expressed the hope of returning one day. Many refugees point to significant obstacles to returning, including debt in host countries and damage to their homes in Syria ([UNHCR 23/1/2025](#)). In the aforementioned survey, a quarter of respondents stated that they wanted to return in the next twelve months. More than half of the respondents who do not want to return within the next twelve months intend to return within the next five years. Almost all of them would like to return to their region of origin. Over 60% of respondents consider a 'go and see' visit to be

essential before making a final decision to return. 52% stated that al-Assad's overthrow had influenced their decision to return. Feedback received by UNHCR through direct communication with refugees indicates that the main concerns of those interested in returning are the provision of transport and cash grants to cover basic needs, as well as assistance inside Syria to rebuild their homes and lives. While an increasing number of Syrians expressed their intention to return in the next twelve months, the survey also shows that 55% of refugees do not yet intend to return, and of the 61% of refugees who own a house/property in Syria, 81% report that it is either completely destroyed or partially damaged and uninhabitable, which remains a major obstacle to their return (UNHCR 6/2/2025). According to a survey of 1,100 Syrians residing in Turkey between 9 and 11 December 2024, 70% wanted to return to Syria, compared to 45% before the fall of al-Assad. The study found that 45.5% of Syrians are willing to return home when the situation in Syria improves, while 26.7% want to return 'as soon as possible' (DS 27/12/2024). The journal 'Just Security' conducted a survey between February and April 2024 among 87 returned Syrians in different regions of Syria. Distrust among Arab returnees is particularly pronounced in the areas controlled by Turkey. 60% of them have no trust at all in the local authorities. There is also great scepticism among Turkmen returnees. 55% of them have little or no trust in these authorities (35% have little trust and 20% have no trust at all). 50.6% of the returnees surveyed from all regions of Syria reported experiences of discrimination, injustice and violence. While the highest proportion of respondents in Kurdish-controlled areas reported feeling able to exercise their rights fully, Arab returnees in Turkish-controlled areas were the least likely to report feeling able to exercise their rights (JS 29/1/2025). The Norwegian Refugee Council conducted a survey of 4,206 displaced people in north-west Syria about their future plans and spoke to hundreds of families who had returned years after fleeing. In IDP camps in the north-west, only 8% of respondents said they planned to return to their areas of origin within the next three months (NRC 13/2/2025).

The country to which people are returning is fundamentally different from the one they left. The destruction of homes and key infrastructure, missing loved ones, widespread poverty, the risk of resurgent violence and uncertainty about the country's inexperienced new leaders - in addition to the ongoing humanitarian crisis of the last decade - are to be mentioned (FA 11/2/2025). Ongoing insecurity - including armed clashes, increased criminal activity and unexploded ordnance - continues to pose challenges for the civilian population and will likely influence the potential decision of Syrians living outside the country to return home (UNHCR 2/1/2025). In addition to security concerns, destruction of property and inadequate infrastructure also influence the return decisions of refugees and IDPs (UNOCHA 30/1/2025). Many also do not want to return due to the lack of jobs and basic services. Many refugees also have no home to return to. Some homes were destroyed during the war, others have new residents and many refugees have no documents to prove their ownership (CSIS 11/12/2024). Many refugees and displaced persons are shocked upon returning to their areas, towns and villages after the fall of the regime when they realise that others are living in their homes. In some cases, these current residents have documents proving that they bought the properties, but research shows that these are often forgeries, including fake proof of ownership and court judgements, which are extremely difficult to trace (HLP Syria 20/1/2025). [Further information on problems related to property

and housing can also be found in the chapters [Legal protection / Judiciary \(developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)\)](#) and [Basic services and economy / Housing situation and infrastructure](#). Returning in winter is particularly difficult as the refugees do not know whether their homes offer protection from the cold or not. It is unclear who refugees can turn to if they have problems with housing or property rights after their return, and whether the transitional government will be able to provide basic services ([CSIS 11/12/2024](#)). UNOCHA partner organisations also stress that access to civil documentation and legal services, including those related to housing, land and property issues, are key obstacles to return. Currently, not all registry offices and courts across the country are functional or are only partially functional, making access difficult ([UNOCHA 30/1/2025](#)). It is unrealistic to expect that the existing problems will be solved by the removal of al-Assad alone. There is little evidence to suggest that Syria will follow a unique or different path from other comparable cases ([JS 29/1/2025](#)). According to one economist, the biggest obstacle for returnees is the lack of state institutions capable of providing basic services such as electricity and water, which makes daily life costly and difficult. The lack of organised markets offering basic goods and the absence of supply control have led to economic chaos, leaving returnees in a financially unstable environment. The dramatic rise in prices, both for rents and basic services, places an additional burden on returnees as they have to bear a high cost of living on a limited income. In addition to the economic and security challenges, many returnees experience a psychological crisis due to the large gap between their hopes and the reality they have found ([AlHurra 11/2/2025](#)). Most refugees who have integrated into the new societies abroad and found job opportunities and a decent income do not want to return, others are afraid of the security situation, with minorities being the most reluctant to return ([Almodon 13/2/2025](#)). A poorly organised mass return will strain the country's already limited resources and put enormous pressure on the Syrian transitional authorities, UN agencies and Syrian civil society, writes Foreign Affairs magazine ([FA 11/2/2025](#)). There is currently moderate UN aid on the ground, for example to rebuild houses ([ÖB Amman 6/2/2025](#)).

Many displaced families preparing to return also expressed safety concerns related to contamination from explosive ordnance. Since November 2024, a total of 136 landmine fields and mine presence points have been newly identified in Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, Deir ez-Zour and Latakia. In the first three weeks of January alone, at least 51 people were killed and 75 others injured in 87 incidents involving explosive ordnance across the country, according to UNOCHA partner organisations ([UNOCHA 30/1/2025](#)).

The new government has standardised customs duties. This decision does not serve the interests of Syrians, but is a burden on their livelihoods. On the one hand, this measure is intended to pave the way for the return of hundreds of Syrian factories and companies in neighbouring countries as quickly as possible so that they can work on Syrian territory again. Secondly, the aim is to invite Syrian expatriates and foreign investors to set up factories and companies in Syria with the aim of setting the wheels of the economy in motion, creating thousands of jobs for Syrians and thus building an integrated national economy. As a result, Syrian products are now being imported into Syria with customs duties to make it more attractive for Syrian traders

and businesses abroad to come back to Syria. The new government has offered many benefits to attract investment to Syria ([AJ 10/2/2025b](#)).

Returnees by host country

[Information on border crossings and further information on entry and exit and on returnees can be found in the chapter [Freedom of movement - developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)](#)].

Lebanon

Lebanon is home to over 1.5 million Syrian refugees ([HRW 16/1/2025](#)). Between 8/12/2024 and 16/12/2024, less than 10,000 Syrians have returned from Lebanon. Some of these movements back to Syria appear to be 'temporary', mainly to check on property and family members ([UN-OCHA 16/12/2024](#)). According to a CNN report, entry was not always smooth. Sometimes there were problems with documents or because of illegal departures and children born outside Syria ([CNN 12/12/2024](#)). According to the UN, the number of Syrians leaving Lebanon via official border crossings is low but constant ([UN News 2/1/2025](#)) and averages between 1,000 and 1,500 refugees per day ([UNHCR 23/1/2025](#)). Syrian refugees attempting to reach Europe from Lebanon have been intercepted and turned back by the Lebanese and Cypriot authorities, with many forcibly returned to Syria by the Lebanese army ([HRW 16/1/2025](#)). On 19/02/2025, The New Arab reported that the Lebanese authorities have issued a new directive allowing Syrians being deported from Europe to pass through Beirut airport on their way back to Syria. The circular, signed by the head of airport security on 17 February 2025, instructed airlines to facilitate the transport of Syrians who had entered Europe by irregular means and wanted to travel through Lebanon before continuing on to Syria ([TNA 19/2/2025](#)).

Turkey

Turkey harbours almost 3.3 million Syrian refugees ([HRW 16/1/2025](#)). Amid anti-refugee sentiment, Turkey deported or otherwise pressured thousands to leave the country for northern Syria in 2024, including to Tall Abyad, a remote Turkish-occupied district where lawlessness prevails and the humanitarian situation is catastrophic ([HRW 16/1/2025](#)). According to the Turkish Interior Minister, 7,621 Syrians [under temporary protection](#) returned to Syria from Turkey between 9 and 13 December 2024 ([VB Istanbul 18/12/2024](#)). Although the number of returnees doubled immediately after the fall of al-Assad ([VB Istanbul 11/12/2024](#)), there was only a slight overall increase in the number of actual returnees. The main change was in the profile of returnees, namely men travelling alone. Most of them come from the region around Idlib and Aleppo. Usually one member of family groups is sent ahead to assess the situation on the ground (security, living conditions, etc.) before the rest of the family would follow ([VB Istanbul 13/12/2024](#)). Between 8.12.2024 and 9.1.2025, 52,622 Syrians returned to Syria from Turkey. The majority of these, 41,000 people, travelled back as families. The rest were individual travellers ([T24 9/1/2025](#); cf. [CNN Türk 9/1/2025](#)). UNHCR, on the other hand, mainly records individuals returning alone, often because there are no dependent family members living in Turkey or because they want to check the conditions in Syria before reuniting with their families. The main reasons for

return include improved security, political change and family reunification, with some also citing homesickness or economic considerations. Most returnees wish to return to their provinces of origin, with Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus and Hama being the most common destinations ([UNHCR 23/1/2025](#)). The return of 40,000 Syrians from Turkey in a short period of time has triggered a cross-border and internal crisis, affecting resources that were already insufficient for the existing population, an expert on refugee issues told the Arabic-language newspaper Almodon ([Almodon 13/2/2025](#)). In the meantime, the refugee organisation in Turkey has reported several cases of returnees regretting their decisions. Above all complaints involve the lack of education and health services. The Turkish Interior Minister Yerlikaya announced that a total of 81,576 Syrians returned to Syria from Turkey between the fall of al-Assad on 8 December 2024 and the end of January 2025 ([REU 5/2/2025a](#)). The Turkish Directorate of Migration Management announced that it would set up offices in Syria to coordinate the entry and exit of Syrians to Turkey with the new Syrian officials and ensure that the refugees do not have problems with identification ([DS 27/12/2024](#)). The destroyed infrastructure, stifling economic conditions and insecurity presented enormous challenges, making it almost impossible for a large proportion of returnees to find their way. While some have lost the right to return to Turkey, others, especially those with Turkish residency and citizenship, have begun to reconsider their decision and seriously consider returning to the 'land of refuge' ([AlHurra 11/2/2025](#)). From 1 January to 1 July 2025, Syrian refugees in Turkey, more precisely the heads of households, will be allowed temporary visits (go-and-see visas) to Syria. Accordingly, the same family member can travel to Syria a maximum of three times within six months and the departure is organised via two border crossings. Syrians who use the possibility of a temporary visit retain their temporary protection status ([UNHCR 27/12/2024](#)).

Jordan

In Jordan, there are said to be 400,000 Syrian refugees in Irbid alone who have fled since 2011 ([VB Amman 9/12/2024](#)). Between 8 and 13 December, UNHCR registered a total of 340 departures of Syrians from Jordan to Syria. High numbers of returnees from Jordan were described in the media, but could not be confirmed ([VB Amman 17/12/2024](#)). According to the Jordanian Ministry of the Interior, 52,406 Syrian citizens left for Syria between 8 December 2024 and 11 January 2025. 11,315 of these were refugees ([VB Amman 12/1/2025](#)). According to the UNHCR, as of 24 January 2025, 20,100 registered refugees who were previously in Jordan have travelled to Syria since 8 December 2024 ([VB Amman 30/1/2025](#)). By 6 February 2025, around 30,000 Syrian refugees had returned from Jordan and a further 60,000 had travelled back via Jordan ([ÖB Amman 6/2/2025](#)). According to the Jordanian Interior Minister al-Faraya, the return from Jordan is voluntary and not forced. For those who wish to return, the necessary facilities are being provided, including luggage transport. There are no obstacles for Syrian refugees to leave Jordan. Even those who are fined due to work permits (overstay) can leave. Return procedures have been simplified and some previously required pre-departure security checks have been abolished. Syrians from abroad can enter Jordan, visit Syria and return to their original place of residence ([VB Amman 6/2/2025](#)).

Iraq

Ali Abbas, spokesperson for the Iraqi Ministry of Migration, explained that Syrians have been arriving in Iraq since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, with the majority settling in the Kurdistan Region, where camps have been set up in accordance with international agreements. According to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), there are currently around 260,000 Syrian refugees living in the Kurdistan Region, both in and outside camps (Bas 25/1/2025). Syrians have also returned from Iraq (Rudaw 15/12/2024). Their number is unknown (VB Bagdad 20/12/2024). The Iraqi authorities in Baghdad and Erbil have also arbitrarily detained Syrians and deported them to Damascus and parts of north-east Syria under the control of Kurdish-led forces (HRW 16/1/2025). However, the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Refugees has confirmed that Syrian refugees living in the country can return to Syria voluntarily and are not being pressurised to leave the country. There are no official statistics on the number of Syrian refugees who have returned after the fall of the Assad regime because the decision to return lies solely with the refugees and they do not notify the ministry when they leave the country (Bas 25/1/2025). On 11 February 2025, UNHCR wrote that over 5,000 Syrians have returned to Syria from Iraq since 8 December 2024, including almost 400 registered refugees (UNHCR 11/2/2025). Since 8 December 2024, 948 Syrians have returned permanently to Syria at the Faysh Khabour border crossing as part of official repatriation procedures, including 105 (11%) Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR (as of 2 January 2025) (UNHCR 2/1/2025).

Egypt

Between 8 December 2024 and 21 January 2025, Syrian refugees in Egypt submitted over 3,700 applications to the UNHCR for the suspension of proceedings, which concerned over 7,050 people. This represents an average of 125 applications per day, compared to an average of only seven applications per day in November 2024. On 20 January 2025, the acting head of the Egyptian embassy in Damascus reportedly confirmed to al-Watan newspaper that Egypt has reopened the visa process for several categories of Syrians, including Syrian students enrolled in various levels of education, Syrian investors and their families, and spouses of Egyptian nationals. This cancels a rule introduced by the Egyptian authorities in the previous month that required Syrians entering Egypt from all countries to receive security clearance (UNHCR 23/1/2025). In Egypt, many Syrians expressed reluctance to return, with a small minority expressing interest, but mostly not within the next twelve months (UNHCR 19/12/2024).

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17.1 Return to areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 21:23

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

The situation of displaced persons in north-east Syria is dramatic. Over 44,000 people are living there in 250 collective accommodation centres that have been set up in municipal buildings, schools, mosques, stadiums and other facilities. Since 4 December 2024, families have fled to these collective shelters due to the fighting in Tall Ref'at and Aleppo ([UNOCHA 16/12/2024](#)).

Source

- UNOCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (16/12/2024): Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 6 on the Recent Developments in Syria, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-flash-update-no-6-recent-developments-syria-16-december-2024-enar>, accessed 18/12/2024

17.2 Return assistance from the Austrian state

Last modification 2025-01-09 14:36

*[This chapter is based on information provided by the Austrian Federal Agency for Care and Support Services (BBU GmbH) as of **December 2024** ([BMI 6/12/2024](#)). Changes may occur at short notice in the area of return assistance. For further information, please refer to the relevant [BBU page](#)].*

The employees of the Federal Agency for Care and Support Services (BBU GmbH) provide individual information on the options for voluntary return and the available support services.

Return assistance includes the following services:

- Free individual counselling on voluntary return including application for financial support from the BBU
- Organisational support with travel preparations
- Assumption of the costs of travelling home
- Financial start-up aid of up to €900
- Participation in a reintegration programme in the destination country after return

There is no legal entitlement to these support services. Authorisation is granted by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA). Further information on the current support programmes (return support including reintegration support) is available on the website www.returnfromaustria.at.

The BBU provides support with travel planning and flight bookings as well as with the procurement of travel documents home, any necessary medical care and the assumption of return travel costs. Organisational support can generally be provided in any procedural constellation. The prerequisite for the assumption of the costs of travelling home is that the returning person is destitute.

Financial start-up aid

The amount of financial start-up assistance is regulated in a degressive model and is staggered according to the time of application for assisted voluntary return:

- During the ongoing asylum or foreign law procedure up to one month after the return decision becomes final: €900 per person; from one month after the return decision becomes final: €250 per person
- Core families: maximum amount of €3,000 per family
- Special constellation: For vulnerable returnees who would generally be excluded from the financial start-up aid, a one-off amount of € 250 per person can be granted following an individual case-by-case assessment by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA).

Criteria for receiving financial start-up assistance and reintegration support (exceptions possible in individual cases):

- Voluntary departure
- Financial need or destitution
- First-time receipt of the support benefit
- Sustainability of the departure
- No evidence of a security risk due to voluntary return
- No serious criminal offence

EEA citizens, persons from the Western Balkan states and citizens of countries with visa-free entry to Austria (e. g. Georgia, Moldova) are excluded from receiving financial start-up assistance.

Special constellation: For vulnerable returnees from these regions, who would generally be excluded from financial start-up assistance, a one-off amount of € 250 per person can be granted following an individual case-by-case assessment by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA)

Reintegration support

For 42 countries of origin, voluntary returnees can apply for reintegration support worth up to €3,500 in line with the guiding principle of 'return with prospects'.

The reintegration offer is processed with the cooperation partners:

- Frontex ([EU Reintegration Programme EURP](#))
- IOM Austria ([RESTART IV reintegration programme](#))
- Caritas Austria ([IRMA plus III reintegration programme](#))
- OFII (French [Office for Immigration and Integration](#))
- ETTC ([European Technology and Training Centre](#), an NGO active in Iraq)

As part of the reintegration programmes, returnees receive comprehensive support for reintegration in their country of origin. This includes individual, personal counselling and mainly benefits in kind, e.g. economic, social and psychosocial support. The programmes offer a wide range of services to ensure the best possible use of resources.

Further information on the respective programmes and for which countries of origin they are offered can be found on the above pages ([BMI 6/12/2024](#)).

Source

- BMI - The Federal Ministry of the Interior [Austria] (6/12/2024): Österreichische Rückkehrunterstützung – Übersicht der Leistungen

18 Documents - Developments since the fall of the Assad regime (since 8 December 2024)

Last modification 2025-05-06 17:11

[The entire state system in Syria is currently in a state of upheaval. Many administrative issues are currently unresolved and no information is available on many topics. In the following, the current status is presented as it appears from publicly accessible sources. In some cases, false information is being disseminated, particularly on social media channels, which subsequently finds its way into other reports. The procedure for researching and compiling this country information corresponds to the standards laid down in the methodology of the Staatendokumentation. No claim is made as to the completeness or accuracy of the information provided. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Barriers to obtaining legal identity and civil documents, including birth certificates for children, threaten to deny millions of people access to services, freedom of movement and legal entitlements, as incomplete registers, non-functional civil authorities and unrecognised documents hinder the administration of justice, governance and social inclusion ([GPC 3/4/2025](#)).

Travel documents

A statement was published on the official website of the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expats on 17 December 2024, in which the ministry declared that it and its diplomatic missions abroad continue to advocate for Syrian citizens and take care of their affairs ([MoFAExSYR 17/12/2024](#)).

A few hours after the fall of the regime, the Israeli Air Force launched airstrikes on strategic and military targets, including the Passports and Emigration Department in Damascus ([SRIL Guardian 9/12/2024](#)), which went up in flames ([Independent 9/12/2024](#)). Due to damage to the building, the Immigration and Passport Department had ceased operations ([Jarida 14/12/2024](#)). Some embassies then made it possible for Syrians to renew expired passports free of charge for six months ([Jarida 14/12/2024](#); cf. [Khaleej 11/12/2024](#); [MasrYoum 12/11/2024](#); [KhaIT 10/12/2024](#); [Seyassah 8/12/2024](#)). Other services, such as the legalisation of educational documents and passports or the issuing of powers of attorney, could still be carried out ([Turkpress 14/12/2024](#)). The Syrian civil status databases, with which civil status documents (extract from the civil register, family register, marriage register, etc.) could also be verified from abroad using the QR code, were offline (information 18.12.2024) ([VB Amman 18/12/2024](#)). No civil status certificates could be issued ([Turkpress 14/12/2024](#)). The main problem with the work of the immigration and passport authorities was that they are all connected to the main centre in az-Zabaltani, which burnt down last year. This has disrupted the immigration and passport service for the people and the entire Syrian population, both domestic and diaspora. In addition, some immigration centres were affected by thefts and fires, which delayed the delivery of passports. The data on the servers is secure, but the servers have electronic damage and need maintenance ([Asharq 8/1/2025](#)). An employee of the immigration authority said on 3.1.2025 that the equipment for issuing passports and the computers in the centre in the Damascus area were stolen. Some passports were completed before the overthrow and could already be issued, but employees are waiting for instructions from the new government ([TNA 3/1/2025](#)). The foreign minister of the new Syrian government announced that the transitional government is considering extending the validity of passports for its citizens living abroad ([Asharq 8/1/2025](#); [AlMon 2/1/2025](#)). The Syrian Immigration and Passports Authority assured all those who had registered on the platform for issuing new passports or renewing expired passports before the fall of the Assad regime, whether in the country or in the diaspora, that the delivery of their passports will begin from mid-January 2025, indicating the availability of about half a million new passports. Passports that will be issued before then are ones that were printed before the fall of the regime. The period for replacing the passports is between six months and one year ([Quds 7/1/2025](#)). On 13 January 2025, the Department of Immigration and Passports of the Syrian Ministry of Interior announced the resumption of the issuance of passports, which had been suspended since the fall of the deposed regime on 8 December 2024 ([Enab 28/1/2025](#)). On 27.1.2025, the Director of the Department of Immigration and Passports at the Syrian Ministry of Interior confirmed that the department had started issuing new passports after opening registration for them. He pointed out that the registration is only open for instant passports for now and soon the registration for expedited and regular passports will also be opened. Applicants for instant passports have

priority. There are currently no changes to the prices for issuing passports. The expected time for the issuance of an instant passport is 48 hours, the issuance for an expedited passport is 10 days and the issuance for a regular passport is 45 days. The director pointed out that there are no changes to the passport, but that the validity period of passports has been changed to 6 years for all without exception and that a package of changes to the passport is being considered (SANA 27/1/2025). Registration will be carried out by logging in to the registration platform, entering personal data and a photo of the identity card and paying the registration fees electronically via a bank account. Individuals living outside the country have the right to register for the passport in the Syrian governorates through their parents or a legal representative, noting that ID cards issued by the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) are accepted for registration and that old passports are valid until the specified deadline. At the beginning of February, the Department of Immigration and Passports had reopened all Immigration and Passport Authority buildings in the provinces, with the exception of Suweida, Quneitra, al-Hasakah and ar-Raqqa, because the infrastructure of the buildings there had been damaged and the necessary equipment stolen. The cost for a regular passport is 312,700 Syrian pounds (SYP), for an expedited passport 432,700 SYP and for an immediate passport 2,010,700 SYP. A regular passport for citizens outside the country costs 300 US dollars and an expedited passport costs 800 dollars. According to the ministry, the registration platform will open soon (SANA 2/2/2025). According to the NPA Egypt website, the applicant must be in Syria during the

renewal process (NPAEgy 12/2/2025).

The consulate in Vienna explained in an e-mail to the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) in mid-March 2025 that it is possible to extend the validity of expired passports, but that new passports cannot be issued at the embassy. A Syrian citizen in Vienna reported to ACCORD in early March 2025 that his Syrian passport, which had been expired for two years, was extended by nine months at the Syrian embassy in Vienna because the website of the online consulate was not yet working. The extension was carried out without a fee and by means of a sticker in the passport, which was no longer valid. According to the Syrian consulate in Brussels, all Syrian citizens living in Europe, including those living in Austria, can make an appointment via the platform of the electronic consular centre and have a passport issued via the embassy in Brussels. According to YouTube videos accessed by ACCORD, appointments can be made via an online portal at selected embassies in Europe, namely Athens, Brussels or Stockholm, to apply for a passport in person (ACCORD 19/3/2025).

The Department of Immigration and Passports of the Ministry of Interior has announced the steps to apply for the Syrian passport, which should save time and effort without the need to visit an official location. This development comes as part of the digitalisation of government services to simplify procedures, speed up transactions and reduce the burden on citizens. Applications are submitted via the ecsc.gov.sy website. [*This page is not accessible as of 25 April 2025, Note*] (NPAEgy 16/2/2025).

The Suweida Governorate Police Command contacted the Immigration and Passport Authority in Damascus to reprint passports that were completed and stolen before the fall of the former

regime. A first batch of passports arrived in Suweida on 29 January 2025. The passports are passports for citizens outside Syria whose relatives submitted the required passport documents to the Department of Immigration and Passports in Suweida between 8 November 2024 and 5 December 2024, as well as citizens inside Syria who submitted their original documents to the Department of Immigration and Passports in Suweida on 4 and 5 December 2024 (SANA 29/1/2025).

In the future, the mechanism of the electronic platform for issuing passports will be maintained, possibly with a reduction in fees (Quds 7/1/2025), although this step will take some time (Asharq 8/1/2025).

The Chargé d'Affaires of the Syrian Embassy in Jordan announced that the embassy has issued almost 30,000 passports since 9 December 2024 and that all applicants have been given a six-month period to renew their passports free of charge in accordance with the decision of the new Syrian government (TNA 3/1/2025). According to media reports, Turkey is printing new identity cards, passports and driving licences of Syrian citizens to support the Syrian authorities (DS 27/12/2024). El Nashra reported on 17 February 2025 that passports cannot be issued without the approval of the relevant authorities in the Syrian capital Damascus. Passport applications are made via an electronic platform that is monitored from Damascus. The role of the embassy is limited to receiving and processing the application and waiting for authorisation from the Syrian capital. The embassy is an intermediary between the Syrian citizen and the Department of Immigration and Passports (Nashra 17/2/2025).

In the future, passports may be issued in a different form than before. Sources from the online newspaper al-Quds believe that the time of corruption in issuing passports is over (Quds 7/1/2025).

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18.1 Documents in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

Last modification 2025-05-08 21:24

[This document focuses on the general situation after the upheaval on 8 December 2024. The situation in Kurdish-dominated areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) has not changed significantly so far and has therefore not been dealt with in the usual depth due to time, personnel and financial resources. If you have any questions, please refer to the previous version of the country information or contact us with an enquiry. The inclusion of current sources and information on the situation in DAANES will be updated in a timely manner. Further information on this country information can be found in the chapter [Country-specific notes](#)].

Proof of identity (Arabic: Shahadat at-Ta'rif - شهادة الت عرف; Kurdish: Nesnameh) is essential for administrative tasks such as applying for driving licences, jobs, residence permits for the areas of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) and rental contracts in the areas controlled by the DAANES. Although it is not an official identity document, this certificate confirms a person's identity and residence, parental details and the reason for issuing it, such as recruitment into the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) or employment. However, this certificate is not issued according to a standardised template. The main reason for issuing this document is the prevailing security situation in north-east Syria, which makes it necessary to verify the identity of the person through the local Komeen [= administrative unit see [Chapter Political situation \(developments since the fall of the al-Assad regime \(since 8 December 2024\)\) / Political situation in the areas under the control of the Kurdish-dominated SDF - Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria \(DAANES\), Note](#)] ([DIS 8/2024](#)).

The DAANES authorities issue a variety of documents, including court documents related to marriage and divorce, driving licences, educational certificates from primary school to university, vehicle registration certificates and rental contracts for residential properties. Visitor cards are issued by the Assayish, the Kurdish internal security and police authority, to people from other areas of Syria who wish to enter and stay in the DAANES. Driving licences are issued by the DAANES authorities throughout the DAANES. There is an office in each city within the DAANES where people can take the theoretical and practical driving test and obtain a driving licence. DAANES documents are only valid within the DAANES. DAANES also issues family registration documents that are valid in DAANES-controlled areas and for entry into the Kurdistan Region of Northern Iraq ([DIS 8/2024](#)).

Source

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19 List of abbreviations

Last modification 2025-05-08 21:28

Abbreviation	Written out	Note
AANES	Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria	Name of the Kurdish autonomous administration in north-east Syria before the name was changed to DAANES in 2023
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management	
Col	Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic	of the United Nations
DAANES	Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria	
DFNS	Democratic Federation of Northern Syria	Name of the local system in North and East Syria before the establishment of AANES in 2018
DIS	Danish Immigration Service	
DMO	Department of Military Operations	Alliance of opposition forces
FSA	Free Syrian Army	Coalition of rebel groups of the Syrian opposition; was renamed SNA in 2017
FSLA	Free Syrian Lawyers Association	NGO
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organisation	
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council	
GFTUW	General Federation of Trade Unions	loyal to the regime
GSS	General Security Service	

HAD	Huras ad-Din	Islamist, jihadist rebel group
IDF	Israel Defence Forces	Israel Defence Forces
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	
IED	Improvised Ex- plosive Device	
IRGC-QF	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps - Quds Force	Elite unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) or the Pasdaran for foreign missions
ISIS	Islamic State	Terrorist organisation
HLP	Housing, Land and Prosperity	
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham	Terrorist Organisation
MSME	Micro, small and me- dium-sized enterprises	
KRG	Kurdistan Re- gional Government	Autonomous government of Kurdistan in northern Iraq
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq	Autonomous Region of Kurdistan in northern Iraq
LDF	Local Defence Forces	Militias and auxiliary forces loyal to the former regime
MAT	Maghawir ath-Thawra	Association of Syrian Arabs
MSD	Mecîsa Sûriya Demokratîk (Syrian Democratic Council)	Political wing of the Kurdish-dominated SDF
NDF	National Defence Forces	Militias and auxiliary troops loyal to the former regime
NLF	National Liberation Front	Sub-group of the SNA
ÖB	Austrian Embassy	
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	see also UNOCHA
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurdistan Workers' Party)	in Turkey; listed as a terrorist organisation by the EU and Turkey
PYD	Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (Democratic Union Party)	
RSF	Reporters sand frontières (Reporters without Borders)	NGO
SAA	Syrian Arab Army	Army of the ousted Assad government
SANA	Syrian Arab News Agency	State news agency

SDC	Syrian Democratic Council	Political wing of the SDF
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces	Kurdish-dominated alliance of several Kurdish and Arab armed groups
SFA	Syrian Free Army	Group in at-Tanf supported by the USA
SIG	Syrian Interim Government	Opposition government in north-west Syria; led by the SNA; not to be confused with the transitional government after the fall of al-As-sad on 8 December 2024
SNA	Syrian National Army	Union of several armed rebel groups; supported by Turkey; former FSA
SNHR	Syrian Network for Human Rights	NGO that documents human rights violations
SSG	Syrian Salvation Government	Government in Idlib led by the HTS (until 8 December 2024)
STJ	Syrians for Truth and Justice	NGO
SYP	Syrian Pound	National currency (also: Lira)
TEV-DEM	Tevgera Civaka Demokratîk (Democratic Movement of Civil Society)	Left-wing umbrella organisation in northern Syria
TIP	Turkistan Islamic Party	Jihadists who originate from China and have settled in rural Latakia and Idlib.
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	see also (OCHA)
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	
USAID	United States Agency for International Development	United States Agency for International Development
USDOS	United States Department of State	Responsible for the foreign policy of the United States

UAE	United Arab Emirates	
CPI	Consumer Price Index	
WHO	World Health Organisation	
YAT	Yekîneyên Antî Teror (Anti-Terror Units)	Special units of the SDF
YPG	Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (Kurdish People's Defence Units)	Armed Kurdish militia in Syria
YRA	Yekîtiya Ragihandina Azad (Union of Free Media)	

20 Imprint

Published by Staatendokumentation, the Country of Origin Information Unit (Staatendokumentation) Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum Vienna (BFA – <https://bfa.gv.at>), Austria

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Quality assurance of the machine translation by DeepL was carried out by: Katherine Bodner

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Official signature - figurative mark (117,7 KB)

https://www.bfa.gv.at/Impressum/files/Amtssignatur_Bildmarke_Veroeffentlichungstext_2020.pdf

20.3 Published Versions

- Version 11, Valid from 27-03-2024 to 08-05-2025
- Version 10, Valid from 14-03-2024 to 27-03-2024
- Version 9, Valid from 17-07-2023 to 14-03-2024
- Version 8, Valid from 29-12-2022 to 17-07-2023
- Version 7, Valid from 10-08-2022 to 29-12-2022
- Version 6, Valid from 27-04-2022 to 10-08-2022
- Version 5, Valid from 24-01-2022 to 27-04-2022
- Version 4, Valid from 01-10-2021 to 24-01-2022
- Version 3, Valid from 30-06-2021 to 01-10-2021
- Version 2, Valid from 23-02-2021 to 30-06-2021

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