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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Syria

Developments concerning military service, the situation of Kurds, and the security situation in areas (formerly) controlled by Kurdish-led forces

1. Military service and recruitment by Kurdish-led forces

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), formed in 2015, are a paramilitary group, predominantly made up of Kurds.¹ The group controlled most of northeastern Syria during the Syrian civil war,² although by February 2026, the SDF's control was limited to areas around the cities of Qamishli, Hasaka and the town of Kobane on Syria's border with Turkey.³ Sources indicated that the SDF retained between 70 000⁴ and 100 000 soldiers,⁵ although a considerable portion of their military force had defected, specifically Arab fighters, following the Syrian government's military advances on 17–18 January 2026.⁶

As of June 2024, the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), the Kurdish-led government entity in which the SDF serves as the main military force,⁷ announced that individuals born between 1998 and 30 June 2006 are required to perform 'self-defense duty' in the region, adding that those turning 18 must report to self-defense centres to obtain a duty card.⁸ Further information on SDF compulsory military service could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

On recruitment methods, sources indicated that the SDF were carrying out forced conscriptions, as of October 2025.⁹ An October 2025 article by The New Arab, citing a local news source affirmed that the SDF 'have launched a widespread conscription campaign

¹ DW, Kurds vs. Syrian government troops: What you need to know, 20 January 2026, [url](#)

² DW, Kurds vs. Syrian government troops: What you need to know, 20 January 2026, [url](#)

³ Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

⁴ FDD, SDF moves forward with integration into new Syrian security forces, 17 October 2025, [url](#)

⁵ Arab Centre Washington DC, Syria's Fragile Integration: The SDF Joins the Army but Autonomy Remains Elusive, 5 November 2025, [url](#); FDD, SDF moves forward with integration into new Syrian security forces, 17 October 2025, [url](#)

⁶ Middle East Institute, Integration or conflict in northeastern Syria? Ten key points to consider, 29 January 2026, [url](#); ACCORD, Syrian Arab Republic - Information collection on developments regarding the SDF and Kurdish areas, 12 March 2026, [url](#)

⁷ Denmark, DIS, Syria: Military recruitment in North and East Syria, June 2024, [url](#), p. 7

⁸ Denmark, DIS, Syria: Military recruitment in North and East Syria, June 2024, [url](#), p. 13; Enab Baladi, Arrests, stalled talks, and military buildups War drums beat in eastern Syria, 8 October 2025, [url](#)

⁹ Arab Weekly (The), Return of forced conscription in Raqqa undermines fragile SDF-Damascus accords, 1 October 2025, [url](#); New Arab (The), SDF forcibly drafts young men amid fear of conflict with Syrian government, 1 October 2025, [url](#); SNHR, Condemning the Widespread Detention for Forced Conscription by the Syrian Democratic Forces in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor since 29 September 2025, 8 October 2025, [url](#); Enab Baladi, Arrests, stalled talks, and military buildups War drums beat in eastern Syria, 8 October 2025, [url](#)

targeting young men, in what is believed to be a preparation for confrontation with Syrian government forces'.¹⁰ The same source added that the SDF were targeting young people born between 1999 and 2007.¹¹ An October 2025 article by the independent local news source Enab Baladi reported that the SDF had 'intensified compulsory recruitment campaigns under what they call the "duty of self-defense,"' in Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and Hasaka provinces in northeastern Syria.¹² The source further noted that at the end of September, the SDF Military Police detained more than 500 people in Raqqa alone.¹³ A January 2026 Al Jazeera article, quoting a local resident from Deir ez-Zor following the government forces' takeover of the area, reported that many feared repression by the SDF, as well as the prospect of forced conscription.¹⁴

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported in October 2025 that between 29 September and 5 October 2025, the Syrian Democratic Forces arbitrarily detained at least 113 individuals, including 12 children and several students in the neighborhoods of Raqqa city and areas under their control in Deir ez-Zor governorate.¹⁵ Citing 'reliable local and field sources', the article added that detained individuals were sent to SDF forced-recruitment camps and the detentions occurred at checkpoints into Raqqa city and surrounding villages as well as through raids targeting the detainees' transportation.¹⁶ The New Arab affirmed that the detained men in the cities of Raqqa and Hasaka were transported to "self-defence" camps so they could be drafted into the SDF's military forces'.¹⁷ Further, the SNHR stated in October 2025, that there were a 'significant escalation recently' of forced conscription, 'particularly through detentions and raids' aimed at civilians, children, and college students.¹⁸ In December 2025, the news site Levant 24 cited Fadel Abdulghani, director of the SNHR, who stated that 'the recruitment of children is one of the most widespread violations in the Syrian conflict, with the SDF among the main parties responsible in recent years'.¹⁹ The SDF denied these claims, stating that they were false and that the activities in question were routine security checks, in a statement issued through its official channels, according to an October 2025 Arabic-language news article by Syria News.²⁰

¹⁰ New Arab (The), SDF forcibly drafts young men amid fear of conflict with Syrian government, 1 October 2025, [url](#)

¹¹ New Arab (The), SDF forcibly drafts young men amid fear of conflict with Syrian government, 1 October 2025, [url](#)

¹² Enab Baladi, Arrests, stalled talks, and military buildups War drums beat in eastern Syria, 8 October 2025, [url](#)

¹³ Enab Baladi, Arrests, stalled talks, and military buildups War drums beat in eastern Syria, 8 October 2025, [url](#)

¹⁴ Al Jazeera, Syrian army offensive overjoys some, leaves others with 'existential' fear, 27 January 2026, [url](#)

¹⁵ SNHR, Condemning the Widespread Detention for Forced Conscription by the Syrian Democratic Forces in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor since 29 September 2025, 8 October 2025, [url](#)

¹⁶ SNHR, Condemning the Widespread Detention for Forced Conscription by the Syrian Democratic Forces in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor since 29 September 2025, 8 October 2025, [url](#)

¹⁷ New Arab (The), SDF forcibly drafts young men amid fear of conflict with Syrian government, 1 October 2025, [url](#)

¹⁸ SNHR, Condemning the Widespread Detention for Forced Conscription by the Syrian Democratic Forces in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor since 29 September 2025, 8 October 2025, [url](#)

¹⁹ Levant 24, Reports Reveal Systematic Child Recruitment by the SDF, 21 December 2025, [url](#)

²⁰ Syria News, "تتفي الأنباء حول التجنيد في الرقة.. ومصادر محلية تؤكد استمرار الاعتقالات" (The SDF denies reports of recruitment in Raqqa, while local sources confirm that arrests are ongoing.), 3 October 2025, [url](#)

Sources from 2024 and 2025 further indicated that the SDF, or groups affiliated with the SDF,²¹ carried out forced recruitment of children in Northeast Syria.²²

For further information on child recruitment, see Section 2.7. (b) and for further information on the SDF and other non-state armed groups, see Section 5.1. Armed Actors, of the [EUAA COI Country Focus Report Syria, published in July 2025](#).

2. Military service under the Syrian transitional government and its impact on Kurds

According to sources, the Syrian transitional government has ended compulsory military service, making enlistment entirely voluntary²³ as of December 2024.²⁴ Mandatory conscription may only be reinstated in the event of a declared national emergency.²⁵ Sources from 2025 stated that the Syrian government has launched a recruitment and advertising campaign encouraging young men to enlist in the military,²⁶ including minorities such as Kurds.²⁷ However, the defense ministry has not released official data on how many people joined.²⁸ According to the news site Middle East Forum, citing a February 2025 interview, President Ahmad al-Sharaa stated that ‘thousands’ had enlisted.²⁹

For further information on military service and Syria’s government forces under the Syrian transitional government, see Section 3.1. Security Institutions, of the [EUAA COI Country Focus Report Syria, published in July 2025](#).

Information on the impact on Kurds could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query. However, the following information may be relevant.

²¹ HRW, Northeast Syria: Military Recruitment of Children Persists, 2 October 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/61/62, [url](#), p. 43

²² SHCR, SDF militia increases kidnapping and recruiting children in areas under its control in NE Syria, 3 September 2024, [url](#); HRW, Northeast Syria: Military Recruitment of Children Persists, 2 October 2024, [url](#); SNHR, SNHR’s Monthly Report on Arrests/Detentions in Syria. At least 89 Arbitrary Arrests Recorded in Syria in April 2025, 3 May 2025, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/61/62, [url](#), p. 16; SNHR, At least 109 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention Recorded in July 2025, 2 August 2025, [url](#), p. 8

²³ New Arab (The), Why Al-Sharaa’s scrapping of conscription for Syrians matters, 16 December 2024, [url](#); Middle East Institute, Building Syria’s new army: Future plans and the challenges ahead, [url](#); Noon Post, Breaking Free from Militarization: The New Syria Abolishes Mandatory Conscription, 29 September 2025, [url](#)

²⁴ Middle East Forum, Syria’s New Military Is a Future Threat, 15 December 2025, [url](#)

²⁵ New Arab (The), Why Al-Sharaa’s scrapping of conscription for Syrians matters, 16 December 2024, [url](#)

²⁶ Syria TV, وزارة الدفاع تفتح باب التطوع في الجيش العربي السوري (The Ministry of Defense opens the door for volunteering in the Syrian Arab Army), 21 August 2025, [url](#); Financial Times (The), Syria’s defence ministry opens applications for Assad-era troops, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

²⁷ AP News, Push to recruit Kurds and religious minorities to Syrian security forces brings hope and skepticism, 24 August 2025, [url](#)

²⁸ Middle East Forum, Syria’s New Military Is a Future Threat, 15 December 2025, [url](#)

²⁹ Middle East Forum, Syria’s New Military Is a Future Threat, 15 December 2025, [url](#)



Sources from 2026 indicated that Syria's transitional government has made efforts to bring the SDF under its authority.³⁰ In March 2025, SDF leaders reached an agreement with the Syrian government to merge their military units and civilian institutions into the new national administration.³¹ On 30 January 2026, the two sides further established a new military division comprising three SDF brigades and a Kobani brigade linked to the Syrian government, alongside additional brigades that would operate jointly across the northeast.³² A January 2026 article by Al Jazeera, citing a statement issued by the SDF, reported that the agreement includes the 'phased integration of the Kurdish military forces into the army'.³³ Syrian state television also confirmed the agreement, stating that it also included the 'gradual integration of Kurdish civil institutions into state structures'.³⁴

³⁰ DW, Kurds vs. Syrian government troops: What you need to know, 20 January 2026, [url](#); AP News, Syria's interior ministry forces enter key city under deal with Kurdish-led SDF, 2 February 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Kurdish-led SDF agrees integration with Syrian government forces, 30 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Syria announces ceasefire agreement with Kurd-led SDF after heavy fighting, 18 January 2026, [url](#)

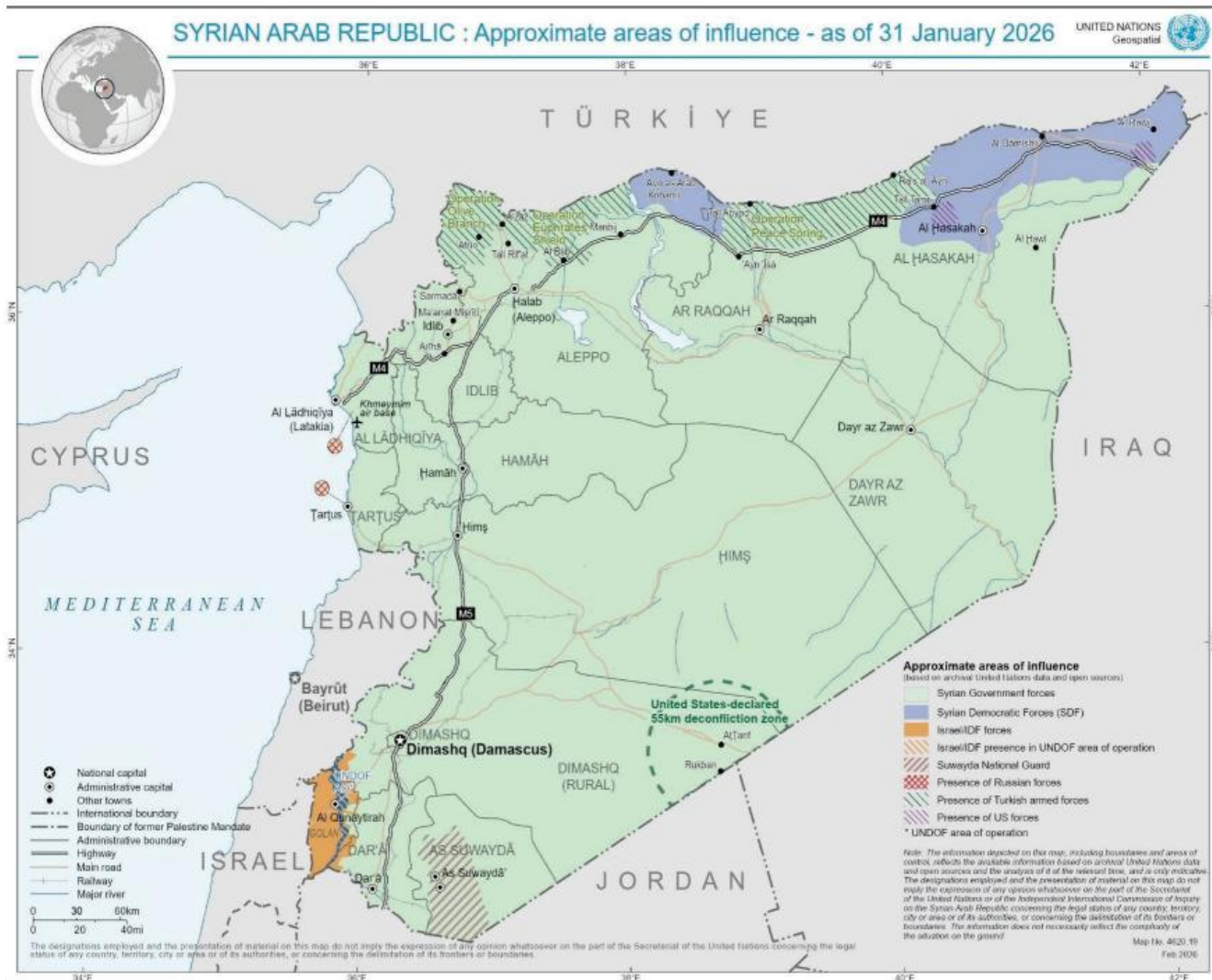
³¹ Al-Monitor, Syria's president announces deal to integrate Kurdish-led SDF into state structure, 10 March 2025, [url](#); BBC News, Kurdish-led SDF agrees to integrate with Syrian government forces, 11 March 2025, [url](#)

³² Reuters, Syrian government, Kurds agree integration deal, US hails 'historic milestone', 30 January 2026, [url](#); Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

³³ Al Jazeera, Kurdish-led SDF agrees integration with Syrian government forces, 30 January 2026, [url](#)

³⁴ Al Jazeera, Kurdish-led SDF agrees integration with Syrian government forces, 30 January 2026, [url](#)

3. Territorial control and influence of the SDF/YPG



Map 1. Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence – as of 31 January 2026, © United Nations Human Rights Council, 12 March 2026³⁵

³⁵ Syrian Arab Republic: Approximate areas of influence – as of 31 January 2026, United Nations Human Rights Council, 12 March 2026

As shown in the map of approximate areas of influence in a report by the United Nations Human Rights Council, published on 12 March 2026, the SDF controls two separated parts of Syria, which include the cities of Hasaka, Qamishli, and Kobani.³⁶

Since 18 January 2026, following clashes with Syria's transitional government, the SDF lost approximately 80 % of its territory,³⁷ that it had held at the beginning of the year.³⁸ Armed clashes began on 6 January in predominantly Kurdish districts of Aleppo,³⁹ following SDF drone strikes on government police vehicles east of Aleppo on 5 January, which caused the situation to 'rapidly' deteriorate.⁴⁰ Between 6 and 10 January, government forces secured control of all of Aleppo City.⁴¹

A 'wider' military confrontation began on 17 January as the Syrian transitional army gained control of Raqqqa and Deir ez-Zor governorates and moved towards areas in Hasaka governorate,⁴² resulting in the withdrawal of SDF forces from the Arab-majority governorates it had controlled for years and that contain Syria's main oilfields.⁴³

Following the January 2026 conflict, the areas remaining under SDF control in northeastern Syria included the cities of Qamishli and Hasaka and the town of Kobane on Syria's border with Turkey,⁴⁴ which have a higher density of Kurds than other parts of the territories formerly held by DAANES.⁴⁵ On 18 January, a ceasefire and 'full integration' agreement was signed by President Ahmad al-Sharaa between the Syrian government and the SDF.⁴⁶

On 30 January, the two sides further announced an agreement that halted hostilities.⁴⁷ Under the deal, SDF forces positioned along the northern front lines would withdraw, while government forces would enter the SDF-controlled areas of Hasaka and Qamishli, and a new military division comprising SDF brigades linked to Syria's transitional government would operate across the northeast.⁴⁸ Furthermore, under the 30 January agreement, government forces will avoid entering Kurdish-majority areas, while small contingents of security forces reporting to the interior ministry, will assume control of state institutions in Hasaka and Qamishli, including civil registries, passport offices, and the airport.⁴⁹ According to the

³⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/61/62, [url](#), p. 45

³⁷ Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#); Middle East Institute, Integration or conflict in northeastern Syria? Ten key points to consider, 29 January 2026, [url](#)

³⁸ Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

³⁹ Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#); Middle East Institute, Integration or conflict in northeastern Syria? Ten key points to consider, 29 January 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁰ Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

⁴¹ Middle East Institute, Syria is stabilizing, but US help remains vital, 13 February 2026, [url](#)

⁴² HRW, Syria: Civilian Protection Lacking in Northeast Escalation, 25 January 2026, [url](#)

⁴³ Al Jazeera, Syrian government, SDF agree on a four-day ceasefire, 20 January 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁴ Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁵ Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁶ SANA, Terms of the Ceasefire and Integration Agreement between Syria and SDF, 18 January 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Middle East Council on Global Affairs, How Damascus Reclaimed Syria's Northeast, and What Integration Now Means, 4 February 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁸ Reuters, Syrian government, Kurds agree integration deal, US hails 'historic milestone', 30 January 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁹ Al Jazeera, Syrian army enters Kurdish city of Hasakah as ceasefire takes hold, 3 February 2026, [url](#); AP News, Syria's interior ministry forces enter key city under deal with Kurdish-led SDF, 2 February 2026, [url](#)

research organization, the Arab Center Washington DC, the ‘comprehensive agreement’ between the Syrian transitional government and the SDF was ‘generally’ implemented, ‘despite some violations’.⁵⁰

4. Situation of Kurds in areas under transitional government control (formerly controlled by the SDF/YPG)

Information on the situation of Kurds in areas under the control of the transitional government (formerly controlled by the SDF/YPG), was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query. However, the following information may be relevant.

Following the January 2026 offensive, during which Syrian government forces took control of Kurdish neighbourhoods in Aleppo, sources reported that approximately 400 Kurdish fighters were evacuated to the northeast, while around 300 Kurds were arrested.⁵¹ Kurdish combatants stated that the evacuation was carried out ‘to stop the attacks and violations against our people in Aleppo’.⁵² Sources further indicated that the Kurdish population has faced abuses by the Syrian government forces in northeast Syria during the conflict⁵³ including desecration of remains, vandalised burial sites, and unguided munitions used in civilian areas.⁵⁴ A 25 January article by Human Rights Watch (HRW) added that as of 18 January, 6 000 people had arrived at displacement locations in Aleppo and Hasaka governorate, while approximately 7 000 were in transit.⁵⁵ The same source, citing the United Nations, stated that the displaced ‘face critical shortages of food and fuel for heating, underscoring the urgent need for life-saving assistance’.⁵⁶

On the 30 January agreement, sources described that provisions of the agreement intended to safeguard the civil and educational rights of Kurds and to allow displaced Kurdish residents to return to their homes.⁵⁷ Additionally, a government decree designated Kurdish as an official national language, recognized the Kurdish new year as an official public holiday, and granted citizenship⁵⁸ to tens of thousands of Kurds, who had effectively remained stateless since 1962.⁵⁹

⁵⁰ Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

⁵¹ Arab Weekly (The), Syria government forces take control of Aleppo’s Kurdish neighbourhoods, 12 January 2026, [url](#); New Arab (The), Syria govt forces detain 300 Kurds, evacuate 400 fighters from Aleppo, 11 January 2026, [url](#)

⁵² New Arab (The), Syria govt forces detain 300 Kurds, evacuate 400 fighters from Aleppo, 11 January 2026, [url](#)

⁵³ European Parliament, Violence in north-east Syria may amount to war crimes, warn MEPs, 12 February 2026, [url](#); Middle East Institute, Integration or conflict in northeastern Syria? Ten key points to consider, 29 January 2026, [url](#)

⁵⁴ European Parliament, Violence in north-east Syria may amount to war crimes, warn MEPs, 12 February 2026, [url](#);

⁵⁵ HRW, Syria: Civilian Protection Lacking in Northeast Escalation, 25 January 2026, [url](#)

⁵⁶ HRW, Syria: Civilian Protection Lacking in Northeast Escalation, 25 January 2026, [url](#)

⁵⁷ BBC News, Syrian government reaches deal with Kurdish-led forces, 30 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Syria decree grants Kurds new rights, formally recognising Kurdish language, 17 January 2026, [url](#); Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

⁵⁸ BBC News, Syrian government reaches deal with Kurdish-led forces, 30 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Syria decree grants Kurds new rights, formally recognising Kurdish language, 17 January 2026, [url](#); Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

⁵⁹ Arab Centre Washington DC, The Shrinking Space for Kurdish Autonomy in Syria, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

Regarding Kurds in government-controlled areas, a confidential source interviewed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in April 2025 indicated that there were no reported issues between the Kurds in Damascus and the transitional government.⁶⁰

Furthermore, a December 2025 report by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) covering the situation of certain groups in Syria, citing external sources, indicated that ‘ordinary Kurds’ living in government-controlled areas ‘generally continue their daily lives without major restrictions, harassment, mistreatment, discriminatory treatment, or attacks based on their ethnicity’, provided they are not involved in political activity.⁶¹ The same source, citing a Kurdish civil society activist, stated that Kurds were not prevented from accessing housing or public services, had not faced ethnically motivated dismissals from public employment, and noted the presence of several high-ranking Kurdish officials within government institutions, including the Minister of Education.⁶² Moreover, according to a Kurdish civil society activist, the current government has shown greater tolerance toward Kurdish flags and symbols ‘compared with the previous government’.⁶³ It has also not revoked the citizenship of Ajanib Kurds from Hasaka who were naturalised in 2011 under the former government.⁶⁴

On incidents involving Kurds in government-controlled areas, the December 2025 report by the Danish Immigration Service, citing local sources, noted that there was a ‘persistent sense of fear regarding potential repercussions’ should tensions increase between the SDF and the authorities.⁶⁵ Furthermore, there were ‘reported isolated incidents’ involving Kurds originating from outside Damascus.⁶⁶ For instance, Kurdish travellers from the northeast were reportedly questioned or harassed, and some individuals from the northeast were arbitrarily detained but were later released, often following negotiations.⁶⁷

There were also reports of Kurds being arrested in Damascus for speaking Kurdish and some of those detained were ‘reportedly tortured in detention’ due to suspected links to the SDF’s intelligence operations; however, they were ultimately released.⁶⁸ The arrests ‘coincided’ with the Kurdish Democratic Union Party’s attempts to open offices in government-controlled areas, which reportedly increased scrutiny and detentions of Kurds suspected of having links to the SDF.⁶⁹ Corroborating information could not be found.

For further information on the situation of Kurds in Syria, prior to the reference period of this COI Query Response, see [EUAA COI Query Syria: Major human rights, security, and socio-](#)

⁶⁰ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Algemeen ambtsbericht Syrië [General Country Report Syria], May 2025, [url](#), p. 100

⁶¹ Denmark, DIS, Syria: Situation of Certain Groups, December 2025, [url](#), p. 31

⁶² Denmark, DIS, Syria: Situation of Certain Groups, December 2025, [url](#), p. 31

⁶³ Denmark, DIS, Syria: Situation of Certain Groups, December 2025, [url](#), p. 32

⁶⁴ Denmark, DIS, Syria: Situation of Certain Groups, December 2025, [url](#), p. 32

⁶⁵ Denmark, DIS, Syria: Situation of Certain Groups, December 2025, [url](#), p. 32

⁶⁶ Denmark, DIS, Syria: Situation of Certain Groups, December 2025, [url](#), p. 32

⁶⁷ Denmark, DIS, Syria: Situation of Certain Groups, December 2025, [url](#), p. 32

⁶⁸ Denmark, DIS, Syria: Situation of Certain Groups, December 2025, [url](#), p. 32

⁶⁹ Denmark, DIS, Syria: Situation of Certain Groups, December 2025, [url](#), p. 32

[economic developments, published 1 October 2025](#) and [EUAA COI Country Focus Report Syria, published in July 2025](#)

5. Security situation in former SDF-Controlled areas: Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor, Raqqa, and Hasaka

Concerning the January 2026 clashes, multiple sources documented isolated crimes by both government forces and Kurdish militiamen.⁷⁰ Reported incidents by government forces included the desecration of SDF corpses, vandalism of an SDF graveyard, and the use of unguided munitions in civilian areas.⁷¹ Kurdish militiamen were further accused of causing nearly 20 civilian deaths through sniper fire, as well as carrying out extrajudicial executions.⁷² The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) affirmed ‘alleged violations of international law’, including reports of summary executions, attacks on civilians, torture and the desecration of bodies and graves.⁷³ HRW also noted that ‘both parties have exchanged allegations of extrajudicial killings’ and ‘committed abuses that violate international law’ in the hostilities.⁷⁴

Amid limited progress toward the year-end deadline for the implementation of the March 2025 integration agreement,⁷⁵ armed confrontations ensued, including clashes between Syrian army forces and the SDF near Tishreen Dam in eastern Aleppo governorate on 15 December 2025,⁷⁶ with the hostilities reportedly continuing until the following day.⁷⁷ Clashes erupted again between the Syrian army and SDF forces on 22 December 2025 in Aleppo city⁷⁸, following a visit to Damascus by Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, who stated the SDF had failed to integrate into the Syrian army by the agreed-upon deadline.⁷⁹ According to media sources, two civilians were killed and several others injured during the clashes,⁸⁰ with both sides agreeing to a ceasefire later the same day.⁸¹ Since the beginning of 2026, tensions between the government and the SDF have remained at high levels, with frequent small-scale

⁷⁰ Middle East Institute, Integration or conflict in northeastern Syria? Ten key points to consider, 29 January 2026, [url](#); OHCHR, UN experts urge restoration of peace, human rights and security in North-East Syria, 29 January 2026, [url](#); HRW, Syria: Civilian Protection Lacking in Northeast Escalation, 25 January 2026, [url](#)

⁷¹ Middle East Institute, Integration or conflict in northeastern Syria? Ten key points to consider, 29 January 2026, [url](#)

⁷² Middle East Institute, Integration or conflict in northeastern Syria? Ten key points to consider, 29 January 2026, [url](#)

⁷³ OHCHR, UN experts urge restoration of peace, human rights and security in North-East Syria, 29 January 2026, [url](#)

⁷⁴ HRW, Syria: Civilian Protection Lacking in Northeast Escalation, 25 January 2026, [url](#)

⁷⁵ International Crisis Group, An Opportunity for Calm in North-eastern Syria, 30 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Syrian government, Kurdish-led SDF agree on ceasefire: What to know, 18 January 2026, [url](#)

⁷⁶ Syrian Observer (The), Clashes Between the Army and the SDF Near the Tishreen Dam, 17 December 2025, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Syria: October 2025 – February 2025, n.d., [url](#)

⁷⁷ Syrian Observer (The), Clashes Between the Army and the SDF Near the Tishreen Dam, 17 December 2025, [url](#)

⁷⁸ DW, At least 2 killed in Aleppo clashes between army and SDF, 22 December 2025, [url](#); Le Monde, Deadly clashes in Aleppo as Turkey urges Kurds not to be obstacle to Syria's stability, 22 December 2025, [url](#)

⁷⁹ DW, At least 2 killed in Aleppo clashes between army and SDF, 22 December 2025, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Syria: October 2025 – February 2025, n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁰ DW, At least 2 killed in Aleppo clashes between army and SDF, 22 December 2025, [url](#); Al Jazeera, At least two killed in Aleppo clashes between Syrian army, Kurdish-led SDF, 22 December 2025, [url](#)

⁸¹ Al Jazeera, At least two killed in Aleppo clashes between Syrian army, Kurdish-led SDF, 22 December 2025, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Syria: October 2025 – February 2025, n.d., [url](#)

clashes,⁸² leading to an escalation of hostilities on 6 January 2026.⁸³ Intense fighting mainly affected the Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyeh neighbourhoods of Aleppo, both predominantly Kurdish areas under de facto SDF control.⁸⁴ Following a ceasefire deal and the withdrawal of SDF forces,⁸⁵ as of 10 January 2026, the Syrian transitional government took control over the aforementioned areas,⁸⁶ thereby assuming full control of Aleppo city.⁸⁷ As a result of the clashes, at least 23 people were killed⁸⁸ and 100 others were injured, according to Aleppo's Health Directorate.⁸⁹ Furthermore, at least 140 000 people were displaced.⁹⁰ According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 'significant material damage' has occurred to public and private properties in Sheikh Maqsoud, Ashrafiyeh, and adjacent areas, including healthcare infrastructure, while surrounding government-controlled neighbourhoods have also been impacted by shelling.⁹¹

Following the 6 – 10 January clashes, which media sources reported as the most intense fighting since Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's fall in December 2024,⁹² a significant reduction in hostilities was observed.⁹³ Sources indicated that the security situation has largely stabilized, apart from sporadic drone attacks reported in and around Aleppo city.⁹⁴ After SDF forces announced a withdrawal, the Syrian army forces continued their offensive eastward into SDF-controlled territory.⁹⁵ After advancing east of Aleppo, they took control of Deir Hafer city on 17 January 2026; according to Syrian authorities, 4 000 people had left the

⁸² Lister, C., How Damascus and the SDF came to blows in Aleppo — and what might come next, MEI, 13 January 2026, [url](#)

⁸³ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 4 - Clashes in Aleppo (as of 12 January 2026), 12 January 2026, [url](#), p. 2

⁸⁴ Lister, C., How Damascus and the SDF came to blows in Aleppo — and what might come next, MEI, 13 January 2026, [url](#); UN News, Syria: Aleppo fighting leaves civilians dead, displaces thousands, 7 January 2026, [url](#)

⁸⁵ BBC News, Last Kurdish forces leave Aleppo after ceasefire deal reached, 11 January 2026, [url](#); Reuters, Last Kurdish fighters leave Syria's Aleppo city after days of clashes, 11 January 2026, [url](#)

⁸⁶ New York Times (The), Syrian Military Takes Aleppo Neighborhoods After Clashes With Kurds, 11 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Relative calm in Syria's Aleppo as Kurdish fighters disarm, 10 January 2026, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Lister, C., How Damascus and the SDF came to blows in Aleppo — and what might come next, MEI, 13 January 2026, [url](#)

⁸⁸ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 4 - Clashes in Aleppo (as of 12 January 2026), 12 January 2026, [url](#), p. 2; AP News, First responders enter devastated Aleppo neighborhood after days of deadly fighting, 11 January 2026, [url](#)

⁸⁹ Al Jazeera, Relative calm in Syria's Aleppo as Kurdish fighters disarm, 10 January 2026, [url](#)

⁹⁰ AP News, First responders enter devastated Aleppo neighborhood after days of deadly fighting, 11 January 2026, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No.3 - Clashes in Aleppo (as of 10 January 2026), 10 January 2026, [url](#), p. 2

⁹¹ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 1 - Escalation of violence in Aleppo (as of 07 January 2026), 7 January 2026, [url](#), pp. 1, 2

⁹² New York Times (The), Syrian Military Takes Aleppo Neighborhoods After Clashes With Kurds, 11 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Relative calm in Syria's Aleppo as Kurdish fighters disarm, 10 January 2026, [url](#)

⁹³ Guardian (The), Syria president claims 'victory for all' as ceasefire with Kurdish-led force announced, 19 January 2026, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 4 - Clashes in Aleppo (as of 12 January 2026), 12 January 2026, [url](#), p. 2

⁹⁴ Lister, C., How Damascus and the SDF came to blows in Aleppo — and what might come next, MEI, 13 January 2026, [url](#); UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Flash Update No. 4 - Clashes in Aleppo (as of 12 January 2026), 12 January 2026, [url](#), p. 2; Al Jazeera, Relative calm in Syria's Aleppo as Kurdish fighters disarm, 10 January 2026, [url](#)

⁹⁵ Security Council Report, February 2026 Monthly Forecast, 1 February 2026, [url](#)

area.⁹⁶ By 18 January 2026, the Syrian army forces, aided by government-allied tribal militias,⁹⁷ gained control of most of Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor governorates,⁹⁸ including important infrastructure such as the Euphrates Dam and major gas and oil fields across both governorates.⁹⁹ Syrian government forces also made advances within the Hasaka governorate.¹⁰⁰

However, after the 18 January 2026 ceasefire, intermittent clashes, shelling and drone strikes reportedly continued for several days along the front lines,¹⁰¹ including fighting in areas surrounding prisons holding ISIL detainees, such as al-Shaddadi in Hasaka and Al-Aqtan in Raqqa,¹⁰² with the Syrian transitional government and SDF exchanging blame for breaching the ceasefire.¹⁰³ On 20 January 2026, the SDF withdrew from the Al-Hol detention camp in Hasaka governorate, north-east Syria's largest detention facility housing over 20 000 relatives of suspected ISIL members.¹⁰⁴ During a brief security vacuum before government forces took control, thousands allegedly exited the camp, spreading throughout Syria and some leaving the country.¹⁰⁵ According to media sources, following the camp's closure and evacuation, Syria's Interior Ministry confirmed on 25 February that 'mass escapes' took place.¹⁰⁶ Following the 30 January 2026 agreement, government forces entered the cities of Hasaka on 2 February 2026,¹⁰⁷ and Qamishli on 3 February 2026.¹⁰⁸ IOM noted that the security situation in Hasaka governorate remained 'relatively stable' as of 11 March 2026, with no major clashes reported,¹⁰⁹ although in a previous publication on 4 March 2026 noted that tensions continued in Ras Al Ain area.¹¹⁰

⁹⁶ BBC News, Syrian army moves east of Aleppo after Kurdish forces withdraw, 17 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Photos: Syrian army enters Deir Hafer after SDF withdrawal, 17 January 2026, [url](#)

⁹⁷ CNN, Syria's military has seized swaths of Kurdish-held territory. Here's what we know., 19 January 2026, [url](#)

⁹⁸ National (The), Syrian army returns provinces held by Kurdish forces to government control, 18 January 2026, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Syria: October 2025 – February 2025, n.d., [url](#)

⁹⁹ ACLED, Syria: The collapse of the ceasefire risks putting thousands of ISIL prisoners into play — Expert comment, 23 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Syrian forces capture oilfields, dam as allied tribal fighters inside Raqqa, 18 January 2026, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ National (The), Syrian army returns provinces held by Kurdish forces to government control, 18 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Syrian forces capture oilfields, dam as allied tribal fighters inside Raqqa, 18 January 2026, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ International Crisis Group, An Opportunity for Calm in North-eastern Syria, 30 January 2026, [url](#)

¹⁰² ACLED, Syria: The collapse of the ceasefire risks putting thousands of ISIL prisoners into play — Expert comment, 23 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Syria-SDF ceasefire hangs in balance after renewed clashes, faltering talks, 20 January 2026, [url](#)

¹⁰³ CNN, Syria's military has seized swaths of Kurdish-held territory. Here's what we know., 19 January 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Syria-SDF ceasefire hangs in balance after renewed clashes, faltering talks, 20 January 2026, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ Al Jazeera, Syria confirms 'mass escape' from camp housing relatives of ISIL fighters, 26 February 2026, [url](#); Euronews, Syria starts evacuating Al-Hol camp housing thousands linked to IS, officials say, 17 February 2026, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ Reuters, Few people left at Syria camp that held Islamic State families, former director says, 18 February 2026, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Syria: October 2025 – February 2025, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ Al Jazeera, Syria confirms 'mass escape' from camp housing relatives of ISIL fighters, 26 February 2026, [url](#); France 24, Chaos as jihadist relatives left Syrian camp, witnesses say, 26 February 2026, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ Al Jazeera, Syrian forces deploy in Hasakah under ceasefire agreement with SDF, 2 February 2026, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Syria: October 2025 – February 2025, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ Reuters, Syrian security deploy in key Kurdish city under US-backed deal, 3 February 2026, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Emergency Mobility Tracking: Aleppo/ North East Syria (NES) Conflict — Round 15, 11 March 2026, [url](#), p. 1

¹¹⁰ IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Emergency Mobility Tracking: Aleppo/ North East Syria (NES) Conflict — Round 14 (04 March 2026), 5 March 2026, [url](#), p. 1

Security incidents in the Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor, Raqqa, and Hasaka governorates since February 2026, as reported by sources, include two attacks by unidentified gunmen against Syrian government forces in Deir ez-Zor on 19 March,¹¹¹ and an attack on a civilian taxi in northern Aleppo countryside on 16 March that killed one civilian and injured three others.¹¹²

Earlier incidents include two attacks by unidentified armed individuals targeting government-affiliated security forces in eastern Deir ez-Zor on 10 March, leaving one member injured,¹¹³ and an attack on 6 March in Aleppo countryside that killed two Syrian government personnel.¹¹⁴

On 5 March, multiple incidents were reported, including clashes between government-affiliated internal security forces and unidentified groups in Raqqa,¹¹⁵ inter-communal fighting in the Tayeb al-Fal desert area of Deir ez-Zor over oil wells,¹¹⁶ an attack on a checkpoint in eastern Deir ez-Zor,¹¹⁷ and landmine explosions injuring two civilians in Raqqa and two children in Deir ez-Zor,¹¹⁸ followed by an earlier attack on 25 February targeting the Syrian army's 86th Division headquarters in Albu Kamal, which caused no reported casualties.¹¹⁹

UNOCHA noted that explosive ordnance contamination remained 'a critical threat across northern Syria'.¹²⁰ Between 11 February to 4 March 2026, the same source documented 16 related incidents, resulting in 11 deaths and 8 injuries of civilians.¹²¹

According to sources, the escalation of hostilities across Aleppo, Raqqa, Hasaka, and Deir ez-Zor since early January 2026 triggered large scale displacement.¹²² UNOCHA indicated that as of 4 March 2026, 116 900 IDPs remain internally displaced across Aleppo and Hasaka governorates, with women and children accounting for approximately 89 % of the total displaced population.¹²³ According to the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), since the 18 January ceasefire and as of 11 March 2026 an estimated 79 % of displaced individuals have returned to Aleppo governorate.

¹¹¹ NPA, Unknown gunmen launch two attacks on gov't forces in Deir ez-Zor, 19 March 2026, [url](#)

¹¹² ANHA, One killed, three injured in armed attack in Aleppo countryside, 17 March 2026, [url](#); SOHR, Security chaos: One Shiite killed and others injured in attack on taxi in Aleppo, 16 March 2026, [url](#)

¹¹³ NPA, Two attacks target government forces in Deir ez-Zor, 11 March 2026, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ NPA, Two government soldiers killed in attack in Aleppo countryside, 6 March 2026, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ ANHA, Wave of violence, clashes, explosions across Syria in 24 hours, 6 March 2026, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ SOHR, Amid escalating security chaos: Fierce clashes erupt in Deir Ezzor countryside following rivalry over oil wells, 5 March 2026, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ SOHR, Believed to be of ISIS cells: Unidentified gunmen attack checkpoint of internal security force in eastern Deir Ezzor, 5 March 2026, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ ANHA, Wave of violence, clashes, explosions across Syria in 24 hours, 6 March 2026, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ ANHA, Military and security sites of interim government targeted in Deir ez-Zor, 25 February 2026, [url](#)

¹²⁰ UNOCHA, Syria: Humanitarian Response in Aleppo and the North-East | Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4 (As of 4 March 2026), 8 March 2026, [url](#), p. 3

¹²¹ UNOCHA, Syria: Humanitarian Response in Aleppo and the North-East | Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4 (As of 4 March 2026), 8 March 2026, [url](#), p. 3

¹²² Rudaw, Up to 170,000 displaced seek shelter across Rojava: Kurdish Red Crescent, 5 February 2026, [url](#); IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Emergency Mobility Tracking: Aleppo/ North East Syria (NES) Conflict — Round 7, 25 January 2026, [url](#), p. 1

¹²³ UNOCHA, Syria: Humanitarian Response in Aleppo and the North-East | Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4 (As of 4 March 2026), 8 March 2026, [url](#), pp. 1, 2

The same source estimated that 47 % of those displaced have returned to Hasaka governorate.¹²⁴

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) noted that the 2026 hostilities led to a ‘humanitarian crisis’ in the four governorates, including the damage of critical infrastructure and the suspension of public services.¹²⁵ According to the same source, the situation has ‘significantly’ limited access ‘to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response services’, particularly amongst displaced population.¹²⁶ Restrictions on movement, suspension of public services, and disruptions to water networks, transport routes, and essential infrastructure affected areas in Aleppo and north-east Syria, as reported by UNOCHA.¹²⁷ Similarly, IOM indicated that humanitarian needs in north-east Syria remained ‘high’ as of 11 March 2026.¹²⁸

Moreover, UNOCHA noted that across north-east Syria security incidents occurring between 11 February to 4 March 2026, including ISIS attacks in Raqqa Governorate, ‘have contributed to heightened fear and a more volatile protection environment’.¹²⁹

On Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) activity in the region, sources from February 2026 indicated that ISIL attacks on Syrian government forces have increased in northeastern Syria,¹³⁰ ‘following the group’s declaration of war on the country’s leadership’.¹³¹ Security incidents linked to ISIL activity include an attack on 23 February, when the Interior Ministry reported that four Syrian security personnel were killed at a checkpoint in Raqqa city. The ministry also stated that one ISIL fighter died in the ensuing clashes; however, according to Rudaw, ISIL had not claimed responsibility for the attack as of that date.¹³² Additionally, on 21 February, two separate attacks targeting Syrian army forces were recorded in Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa. ISIL claimed responsibility for these incidents, while the Syrian Ministry of Defense confirmed that one soldier and one civilian were killed, attributing the attacks to what it described as ‘unknown assailants’.¹³³ Sources further stated that Syrian authorities have accused ISIL of attempts to destabilise the region’.¹³⁴

¹²⁴ IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Emergency Mobility Tracking: Aleppo/ North East Syria (NES) Conflict — Round 15, 11 March 2026, [url](#), p. 1

¹²⁵ UNFPA, Situation Report Aleppo and Northeast Syria: 6 January - 12 February 2026, [February 2026], [url](#), p. 1

¹²⁶ UNFPA, Situation Report Aleppo and Northeast Syria: 6 January - 12 February 2026, [February 2026], [url](#), p. 1

¹²⁷ UNOCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Overview Issue No. 4 (January - February 2026), 16 March 2026, [url](#), p. 2

¹²⁸ IOM, Syrian Arab Republic — Emergency Mobility Tracking: Aleppo/ North East Syria (NES) Conflict — Round 15, 11 March 2026, [url](#), p. 1

¹²⁹ UNOCHA, Syria: Humanitarian Response in Aleppo and the North-East | Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4 (As of 4 March 2026), 8 March 2026, [url](#), p. 2

¹³⁰ Asharq Al-Awsat, ISIS Intensifies Lone Wolf Attacks in Syria, 27 February 2026, [url](#); National (The), ISIS launches daily attacks in north-eastern Syria as fears of security vacuum grow, 25 February 2026, [url](#)

¹³¹ National (The), ISIS launches daily attacks in north-eastern Syria as fears of security vacuum grow, 25 February 2026, [url](#)

¹³² Rudaw, Suspected ISIS attack kills four members of security forces in Syria’s Raqqa, 23 February 2026, [url](#)

¹³³ Arab Weekly (The), ISIS declares ‘new phase’ as attacks challenge Sharaa’s authority, 22 February 2026, [url](#)

¹³⁴ National (The), ISIS launches daily attacks in north-eastern Syria as fears of security vacuum grow, 25 February 2026, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Syria faces twin battles as Assad loyalists and ISIL attack in west, east, 25 February 2026, [url](#)

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