Syria

Security and socio-economic situation in Tartous and Latakia governorates
This brief report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The report is a synthesis of information gathered from different sources, and it brings together condensed information in a relevant manner for the reader’s COI needs. It combines/organises information together thematically to form a coherent whole of the topic in question, instead of listing or quoting information source by source.

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Executive summary

As of September 2021, Tartou and Latakia governorates remained under control of the Government of Syria (GoS) with the exception of north-eastern rural Latakia. This north-eastern strip of the governorate is part of the environs of Idlib, where armed opposition groups were present and hostilities were ongoing. This part of Syria had reportedly seen a military escalation since the beginning of June 2021, with GoS forces having increased their bombing of opposition-held areas. As regards Tartou, anti-GoS armed groups were not present in the governorate.

From 1 December 2020 to 31 August 2021, two security incidents were reported in Tartou governorate. In Latakia governorate, 119 security incidents were recorded throughout this period. The vast majority of these security incidents took place in the rural north-eastern areas of the governorate, especially around the town of Kabani in the Jabal al-Akrad area.

Freedom of movement were affected by a severe fuel crisis in GoS-controlled areas, suspending traffic in Tartou and Latakia governorates, which in turn impacted access to healthcare, education and food and the availability of electricity and water. There was reportedly also an increase in the number of checkpoints in Latakia from 2020 to 2021.

The socio-economic situation in Tartou and Latakia governorates was negatively affected by the continued depreciation of the Syrian pound (SYP) and the country’s general economic decline, leading to increased prices on food, water, medicine and fuel. Food insecurity was widespread, and maximum monthly salaries of both public and private sector employees were no longer sufficient to cover a family’s monthly expenses.

Healthcare was generally available, and almost all public hospitals in the two governorates were fully functioning and accessible. However, the availability of medicine remained limited, and the COVID-19 pandemic continued to spread across the country.

Public education was available to all Syrian children in GoS-controlled areas. Yet, some families were forced to take their children out of school in order to have them work and bring home additional income.
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Introduction

The aim of this brief report is to provide updated information on the security situation, freedom of movement and the socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous and Latakia.

The report at hand is an update of the information on the situation in Tartous and Latakia in the report *Syria – Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra*, published by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) in December 2020.

The reference period for this report is December 2020 to September 2021.

This report is based solely on written sources and is written in compliance with the EASO COI Report Methodology. ¹

The report consists of three sections: the first section provides information on the current security situation in Tartous and Latakia governorates; the second section contains updated information on freedom of movement within Tartous and Latakia governorates; and the third section deals with the socio-economic situation in the two governorates.

Ultimately, attention should be paid to the volatile situation in Syria. For this reason, the information in this report may quickly become outdated and should be monitored periodically and brought up to date accordingly. The research and editing of this brief report was finalised on 30 September 2021.

The report can be accessed from the website www.us.dk and is thus available to all stakeholders in the refugee status determination process, as well as to the general public.

### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACLED</td>
<td>Armed Conflict Location &amp; Event Data Project</td>
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<td>COI</td>
<td>Country of Origin Information</td>
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<td>DIS</td>
<td>Danish Immigration Service</td>
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<td>EASO</td>
<td>European Asylum Support Office</td>
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<td>GoS</td>
<td>Government of Syria</td>
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<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
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<td>HTS</td>
<td>Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDF</td>
<td>Local Defence Forces</td>
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<td>MoH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
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<td>NLF</td>
<td>National Liberation Front</td>
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<td>SAA</td>
<td>Syrian Arab Army</td>
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<td>SARC</td>
<td>Syrian Arab Red Crescent</td>
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<td>SOHR</td>
<td>Syrian Observatory for Human Rights</td>
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<td>SYP</td>
<td>Syrian Pound</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIP</td>
<td>Turkestan Islamic Party</td>
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<td>ToT</td>
<td>Terms of Trade</td>
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<td>ToR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>UN OCHA</td>
<td>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>UNSC</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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1. Background

As of March 2021, after 10 years of conflict, most of Syria was under GoS control, including the governorates of Tartous and most of Latakia. In recent years, frontlines have stabilised and direct military confrontations have declined; however, some factors in Syria remained the same. Throughout the government-controlled areas, the authorities continued to engage in arbitrary arrests, torture, forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Moreover, hostilities continued in 2021 in some parts of the country, including northern Latakia.

The current socio-economic situation in Syria is affected by the country’s economic crisis, exacerbated by the fiscal crisis in neighbouring Lebanon and the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 90% of the Syrian population is estimated to live below the poverty line, and 13.4 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian assistance.

1.1. Tartous and Latakia governorates
The governorate of Tartous is situated on the Mediterranean coast on Syria’s western border. Tartous borders Latakia governorate to the north, the governorates of Hama and Homs to the east and Lebanon to the south. The governorate is divided into five administrative districts, Baniyas, Sheikh Badr, Dreikish, Safita and Tartous City, which are divided into 27 sub-districts. In August 2020, Tartous had an estimated population of 930,000.

The governorate of Latakia is located in north-western Syria on the Mediterranean coast. Latakia borders Tartous to the south, Hama to the east, Idlib to the northeast, and to the north, Latakia shares an international border with Turkey. Latakia consists of four administrative districts, Latakia, al-Haffa, al-Qardaha and Jablah, which are divided into 20 sub-districts. In August 2020, Latakia had an estimated population of 1.2 million. Around 50% of the population are Alawites, 40% are Sunni Muslims, and 10% are Christians.

1.2. Conflict background

Tartous governorate has been controlled by the Government of Syria (GoS) throughout the conflict, but has witnessed violent incidents in the earlier years of the Syrian conflict. In 2011 and 2013, there were violent clashes in the Sunni-majority city of Baniyas, which caused more than 200 deaths, according to opposition activists. In 2016, the Islamic State (IS) targeted Tartous city in four separate bomb attacks, which killed close to 100 people.

Latakia has been a stronghold for the Alawites and the presidential family, and most of the governorate has been under government control throughout the conflict. However, opposition forces have reportedly kept a presence in the governorate during nearly the entire war. The north-eastern area of Jabal al-Akrad has been an armed rebel stronghold since 2012, and the town of Kabani (also referred to as Kabana or Kabaneh (Arabic: كبة)) in the mountain range of Jabal al-Akrad has been controlled by armed opposition groups since August 2016.

1.3. Armed actors present in Tartous and Latakia governorates

Syrian Arab Army (SAA) and affiliated armed groups

In 2020, it was reported that SAA units were present in Latakia governorate. For SAA deployments in Latakia governorate as of 3 April 2020, see the EASO-report Syria – Security situation from May 2020. Pro-
GoS shabiha militias\(^{16}\) were also present in Latakia governorate, assisting in maintaining security in the governorate.\(^{17}\) The Syrian president’s brother Maher al-Assad, who commands the SAA’s 4\(^{th}\) armoured division, reportedly controlled the cities of Latakia and Tartous, with branches of the 4\(^{th}\) division overseeing the Latakia and Tartous ports.\(^{18}\) Pro-government Local Defence Forces (LDF)\(^{19}\) also had a presence in both Latakia and Tartous governorates.\(^{20}\)

**Anti-GoS armed groups**

As of December 2020, anti-GoS armed groups were not present in Tartous governorate.\(^{21}\)

Anti-GoS armed groups were present in the Kabani mountains in Latakia governorate.\(^{22}\) Ethnic Turkoman and Uyghur militant groups had a presence in these mountains, and the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) held positions inside Kabani town.\(^{23}\) The armed groups operating in the Kabani mountains were reportedly linked with al-Qaeda groups.\(^{24}\)

Another anti-GoS armed actor operating in Latakia governorate was Fatah al-Mubin Operations Room, a coalition of armed groups including Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Turkish-supported National Liberation Front (NLF), and Jaysh al-Izza.\(^{25}\)

**Foreign actors**

Russia and Iran had a military presence in both Tartous and Latakia.\(^{26}\) Russia has a naval base in Tartous harbour,\(^{27}\) and the Russian air force has its own airbase in Latakia in Hmeimim.\(^{28}\)

In Latakia governorate, Turkey was also present and had set up a new military post in Jabal al-Akrad in January 2021. Turkey reportedly had two posts in Latakia governorate in the form of roadblocks, Russia three bases and military posts and Iran six posts and bases.\(^{29}\)

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\(^{16}\) For additional information on the pro-government shabiha militia and its role in the war in Syria, see: BBC, *Syria unrest: Who are the shabiha?*, 29 May 2012, [url](https://www.bbc.com/).  
\(^{17}\) DIS, *Syria: Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra*, 18 December 2020, [url](https://www.dis.org/).  
\(^{19}\) For more information on the LDF, see: Atlantic Council, *Factbox: Iranian influence and presence in Syria*, 5 November, 2019, [url](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/).  
\(^{21}\) DIS, *Syria: Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra*, 18 December 2020, [url](https://www.dis.org/).  
\(^{22}\) DIS, *Syria: Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra*, 18 December 2020, [url](https://www.dis.org/).  
\(^{24}\) DIS, *Syria: Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra*, 18 December 2020, [url](https://www.dis.org/).  
\(^{27}\) DIS, *Syria: Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra*, 18 December 2020, [url](https://www.dis.org/).  
2. Security situation

Throughout the reporting period, the GoS controlled all of Tartous and most of Latakia. An exception were parts of Jabal al-Turkman and Jabal al-Akrad on the north-eastern edge of Latakia governorate, which were controlled by the armed opposition groups Hay‘at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP).  

2.1. Security incidents in Tartous and Latakia governorates

In Tartous governorate, few security incidents were reported. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) recorded two security incidents from 1 December 2020 to 31 August 2021, as illustrated in figure 3 above.

In Latakia governorate, ACLED recorded 119 security incidents from 1 December 2020 to 31 August 2021, as illustrated in figure 4 below.

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30 Netherlands (The), MFA, Country of origin information report Syria, June 2021, [url], p. 21; Carter Center (The), Exploring Historical Control in Syria, n.d., [url]
31 ACLED, curated data files, Syria (13 September 2021), [url]
32 ACLED describes itself as ‘a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project. ACLED collects the dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events’. ACLED, About ACLED, n.d., [url]
33 ACLED uses the term ‘security event’ when registering these security incidents. In accordance with EASO’s use of ACLED data (e.g. see the EASO-report Syria - Security situation, July 2021, p. 50), the term ‘security incident’ is used here and solely includes these three event categories: battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians.
34 ACLED, curated data files, Syria (13 September 2021), [url]
35 ACLED, curated data files, Syria (13 September 2021), [url]
In December 2020, DIS reported on continuous clashes and shelling in the Kabani mountains in Jabal al-Akrad, Latakia governorate, throughout 2020.\textsuperscript{36} The ACLED data indicates that this security trend continued, as 65% of the 119 recorded security incidents from 1 December 2020 to 31 August 2021 took place in the Kansaba sub-district where Jabal al-Akrad and the town of Kabani are located.\textsuperscript{37}

Throughout the reporting period, GoS forces continuously targeted opposition factions in Latakia governorate in a number of ways. There were reports of GoS forces targeting opposition forces with bombardment, artillery shelling, rocket attacks, guided missiles and airstrikes, as well as airstrikes conducted by Russia in support of the GoS. The majority of these attacks took place in the Jabal al-Akrad area.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} DIS, Syria: Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, 18 December 2020, \url{url}, p. 8
\textsuperscript{37} ACLED, curated data files, Syria (13 September 2021), \url{url}
\textsuperscript{38} ACLED, curated data files, Syria (13 September 2021), \url{url}
\textsuperscript{39} SOHR, Ceasefire violations | Regime forces shell positions in Idlib, Hama and Latakia, while Turkistan Islamic Party attacks military position in Jabal Shashaboo, 7 December 2020, \url{url}; SOHR, Ceasefire violations | Opposition factions shell regime positions in Sahl Al-Ghab, while regime rocket fire pounds towns in southern Idlib, 9 December 2020, \url{url}; SOHR, Ceasefire violations | Opposition factions shell regime positions in rural Idlib, while regime forces shell positions in Latakia, Hama and Idlib, 21 December 2020, \url{url}; SOHR, After ground shelling on Latakia, Hama and Idlib | Tense calm prevails “de-escalation zone”, 22 December 2020, \url{url}; SOHR, “De-escalation zone” | Rebels and regime forces exchange fire on frontlines of Jabal Al-Zawiya and Sahl Al-Ghab, and one regime soldier killed in Latakia mountains, 25 December 2020, \url{url}; SOHR, “De-escalation zone” | Regime soldier killed and others injured in rural Latakia, while bombardment renews on Jabal Al-Zawiya and Sahl Al-Ghab, 25 December 2020, \url{url}; SOHR, After hours of tense calm | Regime forces shell Idlib and Latakia countryside, while rebels kill regime soldier in southern Idlib, 6 December 2020, \url{url}; SOHR, “De-escalation zone” | Three members of jihadist factions killed in failed infiltration attempt into regime forces’ positions,
Opposition factions likewise conducted numerous attacks targeting GoS positions in the northern countryside of Latakia, with rockets, gunfire, shelling, heavy artillery and mortars.¹⁰
There were also reports of violent clashes and exchange of fire between GoS forces and opposition factions on several frontlines in Latakia countryside.¹¹

Lastly, several sources reported on Israeli airstrikes targeting GoS positions, as well as positions of Iranian forces and proxy forces across the governorate on 5 May 2021.¹²

DIS has not been able to find additional new information from written sources regarding the security situation in Tartous and Latakia since the last brief report was published in December 2020, apart from the following information on northern Latakia. This area of Latakia differed from the rest of the governorate and Tartous governorate concerning the security situation.

2.1. The security situation in northern Latakia

Rural northern Latakia is part of the environs of Idlib and constitute one of the last remaining areas beyond government control in Syria.²² It is likewise part of the area referred to as north-west Syria, where hostilities are still ongoing.²³ According to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Idlib governorate and its surrounding areas, including the countryside of Latakia governorate, continued to be ‘the epicentre of armed clashes between pro-government forces and armed opposition groups.’ In the second half of 2020, armed confrontations continued in parts of Latakia governorate. Kabani and its surrounding hills were one of the ‘areas with the highest profile military clashes’ in 2020. Intermittent clashes took place between GoS and opposition forces together with occasional ground bombardment by both sides in this area.⁴⁵

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¹¹ SOHR, “De-escalation zone” | Regime soldier killed and others injured in rural Latakia, while bombardment renues on Jabal Al-Zawiyyah and Sahi Al-Ghab, 25 December 2020, url; SOHR, Ceasefire violations | Rebels shell and attack regime positions in Idlib and Latakia countryside, leaving scores dead and wounded, 8 January 2021, url; SOHR, “De-escalation zone” | Regime forces shell positions in Hama and Latakia countryside, while exchange of fire leaves casualties in Latakia, 22 January 2021, url; SOHR, Ceasefire violations | Two regime soldiers killed in Latakia, while regime forces renew shelling positions in Idlib and Hama countryside, 12 February 2021, url; SOHR, “De-escalation zone” | 13 regime soldiers killed and wounded in shelling by rebels in Idlib countryside, and clashes erupt on frontlines of Latakia countryside, 9 March 2021, url; SOHR, “De-escalation zone” | Regime forces clash with rebels in Latakia countryside, and renew shelling Idlib countryside, 19 April 2021, url

²² Carter Center (The), Weekly conflict summary | 3-9 May 2021, url; BBC Monitoring, Suspected Israeli strikes reported in Syria’s Latakia, 5 May 2021, url; SOHR, Israeli attacks | nearly 20 people killed and wounded in airstrikes on Latakia and Hama, 5 May 2021, url; Reuters, Syria says Israeli raids target Mediterranean port region of Latakia, 5 May 2021, url; Asharq al-Awsat, Syria Says Israeli Raids Target Mediterranean Port Region of Latakia, 5 May 2021, url; Arab Weekly (The), Israeli raids target Syria’s Latakia, 5 May 2021, url; Haaretz and Associated Press (The), Israel Struck Near Latakia Overnight, Syria TV Reports, 5 May 2021, url; Times of Israel, Damascus: Israeli airstrike hit targets in northern Syria, killing one, 5 May 2021, url; Al-Jazeera, One killed in Israeli attack on Syria’s Latakia, state media says, 5 May 2021, url; SOHR, Israeli attack | Eight members of IRGC and affiliated militia killed in latest airstrike on Hama and Latakia, 7 May 2021, url


⁴⁵ Netherlands (The), MFA, Country of origin information report Syria, June 2021, url, pp. 19, 22
On 16 June 2021, the Syrian opposition news outlet Enab Baladi reported that north-western Syria had seen a military escalation since 5 June, and GoS forces had increased its bombing of opposition-held areas.\textsuperscript{46} Syria Direct likewise reported on 7 July 2021 that the GoS and Russia had ‘engaged in a deadly show of force’ against the Idlib area, including north-eastern areas of Latakia, with hundreds of strikes killing and injuring dozens of civilians.\textsuperscript{47} The UN similarly reported on an increase in violence in the Idlib de-escalation area, which also covers north-eastern areas of Latakia,\textsuperscript{48} during June and July 2021, with an increase in ‘mutual shelling and limited clashes across contact lines’. Additionally, aerial bombardments were reported in rural Latakia, Idlib and Hama, striking military sites, including sites of HTS, and damaging civilian infrastructure.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{46} Enab Baladi, \textit{Rationales for the Syrian regime’s military escalation in northwestern Syria}, 16 June 2021, url
\textsuperscript{47} Syria Direct, \textit{Difficult diplomacy: Russia’s stranglehold on northwest Syria}, 7 July 2021, url
\textsuperscript{48} In May 2017, an agreement was signed by Russia, Iran and Turkey to end hostilities between forces fighting on behalf of GoS and opposition groups in four de-escalation zones, primarily in opposition-held areas of Syria. One zone covered north-eastern areas of Latakia, Idlib, western areas of Aleppo and northern areas of Hama. Presently, this de-escalation zone remains the last of the four zones not retaken by the GoS. Al-Jazeera, \textit{Syria’s ‘de-escalation zones’ explained}, 4 July 2017, url; EASO, \textit{Syria: Security situation}, July 2021, url, pp. 14, 64
3. Freedom of movement

3.1. Freedom of movement within Tartous and Latakia governorates

Farmers in Latakia reported an increase in the number of checkpoints from June 2020 to June 2021. According to Elizabeth Tsurkov, these checkpoints were manned by 4th Division trafiq (armed convoys providing protection to traders) collecting informal taxes and bribes.50

A severe fuel crisis in all GoS-controlled areas have affected the transportation situation in Tartous and Latakia, leading to an almost complete suspension of transportation, including public transport, in March and April 2021.51

In October 2020, an international security organisation informed DIS that neither domestic nor international flights were flying to Latakia Airport.52 UN OCHA reported that Latakia Airport was partially open for international flights in November 2020,53 and in February 2021, international commercial flights were ongoing.54

3.2. Security on roads connecting Tartous and Latakia governorates to Damascus International Airport

DIS has not been able to find updated information from written sources regarding security on the roads connecting Tartous and Latakia to Damascus International Airport in 2021. Therefore, the following section is based on information from the DIS-report Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra from December 2020, pp. 11-12.

In October 2020, there were checkpoints at all the entrances to the main cities and on all main roads, including the road between Tartous and Latakia and Damascus International Airport. These checkpoints were manned by the SAA or Syrian security services personnel.55

When passing a checkpoint, one was required to present ID-card and other documents. Individuals returning to Syria having unresolved security issues with the Syrian authorities were at risk of experiencing increased security measures at checkpoints or at the airport.56

50 Tsurkov, E., Syrian Regime No Longer Able to Provide for Loyalists, 4 June 2021, url
51 COAR, New Lows as Syria Beset by Fuel, Fiscal, and COVID Crises, 12 April 2021, url; SOHR, Fuel hardship in regime-held areas | Transportation suspended almost completely in Latakia and Tartus streets, 29 March 2021, url; Tsurkov, E., Syrian Regime No Longer Able to Provide for Loyalists, 4 June 2021, url
52 DIS, Syria: Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, 18 December 2020, url, p. 11-12
55 DIS, Syria: Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, 18 December 2020, url, p. 12
56 DIS, Syria: Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, 18 December 2020, url, p. 12
4. Socio-economic situation

Most of the information in this section describes the general socio-economic situation in the GoS-controlled territories of Syria, while highlighting local differences where they exist and/or where information is available.57

The socio-economic situation in Syria is affected by the country’s economic crisis, exacerbated by the fiscal crisis in Lebanon and the COVID-19 pandemic.58 The continued depreciation of the Syrian pound (SYP) has had an adverse effect on the general socio-economic situation in Syria. The Syrian pound has depreciated 30% since last year, reaching 3,210/USD in July 2021, 59 and more than 90% of the Syrian population are estimated to live below the poverty line.60

The country’s economic crisis has led to popular discontent over lack of fuel and electricity, increased corruption and rising poverty rates in GoS-controlled areas, including in Tartous and Latakia, otherwise considered the loyal base of the Syrian government.61 According to one media source, at least eight people accused of cybercrime and spreading false news for criticising state corruption on social media were arrested in Latakia in February 2021.62 In an attempt to reduce the consequences of the country’s financial crisis, the GoS initiated several initiatives to counteract the eroding value of workers’ salaries, including raising salaries.53 These increases set the maximum monthly salary of public sector employees at 90,000 SYP (approx. 30 USD) in July 2021 and private sector employees at 225,000 SYP (approx. 75 USD), while the estimated monthly expenses of a four-member middle class family exceeded one million SYP (approx. 300 USD) in July 2021.64

57 For additional information on the general socio-economic situation in Syria and the situation in Tartous and Latakia governorates, see the DISS-Reports Syria – Security and socio-economic situation in the government-controlled areas from October 2020 and the DIS-report Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra from December 2020.
61 SOHR, “Salary is not enough for buying even a chicken” and “we have not had meat for three years” / Popular discontent grows in Tartus and entire regime-controlled areas over low income and unaffordable prices, 18 December 2020, url; SOHR, Severe crises in Syrian coastal cities / Popular discontent grows, as fuel and bread crises worsen, 12 January 2021, url; Middle East Eye, Arrests in Syria’s Latakia signal discontent among pro-Assad communities, 4 February 2021, url; SOHR, Fuel hardship in regime-held areas / Transportation suspended almost completely in Latakia and Tartus streets, 29 March 2021, url; Financial Times, Economic crisis begins to crack the bedrock of Assad’s Alawi support, 13 April 2021, url.
62 Middle East Eye, Arrests in Syria’s Latakia signal discontent among pro-Assad communities, 4 February 2021, url.
63 Sana, the president’s official media channel, President al-Assad issues a decree increasing the pension of military and civilian personnel by 40%, 11 July 2021, url; Sana, President al-Assad issues a decree disburasing a stipend of 50,000 pounds to civilian and military workers and 40,000 pounds to pension holders, 16 March 2021, url; COAR, Accountability within Reach? International Community Digs in on Syria, 22 March 2021, url; WFP, Syria Country Office – Market Price Watch Bulletin: July 2021 (Issue 80), 31 July 2021, url, p. 2; Sana, the president’s official media channel, President al-Assad issues a decree to raise the wages of teaching hours in primary and secondary schools and vocational training schools and centres, 16 March 2021, url; Sana, President al-Assad issues a decree to increase salaries and wages for civilian and military workers by 50%, 11 July 2021, url; Al-Jazeera, Syrian government announces steep rise in bread, diesel prices, 11 July 2021, url; SOHR, As large shipment of solar panels heading to Latakia harbor / Power crisis in Syrian-regime controlled areas continues until solar panels are sold, 24 July 2021, url; Sana, President al-Assad issues a decree increasing the pension of military and civilian personnel by 40 percent, 11 July 2021, url.
64 SOHR, As large shipment of solar panels heading to Latakia harbor / Power crisis in Syrian-regime controlled areas continues until solar panels are sold, 24 July 2021, url.
4.1. Access to food, water, sanitation and electricity

Food

Food insecurity persisted nationwide in the reporting period. According to World Food Programme (WFP), 12.4 million Syrians (60%) were food insecure in July 2021, an increase from 7.9 million in early 2020.56 Between 1.27 and 1.3 million people were considered severely food insecure, representing a 50% increase from early 2020.58

As of February 2021, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) estimated 600,000 children to be chronically malnourished, with 90,000 being acutely malnourished.69

As of August 2021, the average price of a food basket in Syria was 173,634 SYP, which represents a year-on-year increase of 107%.70 In the same month, the Terms of Trade (ToT) between wheat flour and wage labour indicated a decrease in purchasing power since October 2020.72

In Tartous governorate, the price of a food basket in August 2021 was 170,610 SYP. This represents a year-on-year increase of 100% and an increase of 23% since February 2021.73

In Latakia governorate, the price of a food basket was 177,309 SYP. This represents a year-on-year increase of 100% and an increase of 20% since February 2021.74

According to a survey conducted by WFP in August 2021, 44% of surveyed households in Syria reported inadequate food consumption, with 38% and 43% in Tartous and Latakia respectively.75

WFP stated in August 2021 that female-headed households reported higher levels of poor or borderline food consumption (49%) compared to all surveyed households (44%).76 The conflict in Syria has led to an increase in the number of female-headed households.77

The country’s continued fuel and electricity shortage has challenged citizens’ access to markets. According to a survey conducted by WFP in August 2021, 34% in Latakia and 40% in Tartous reported facing

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56 WFP, *Syria - Situation Report #8: August 2021*, 23 September 2021, [url], p. 1
70 DIS, *Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra*, 18 December 2020, [url], p. 19; For additional information on access to services for women, see p. 19 of this report.
challenges accessing markets. In July 2021, markets represented the primary source of food for 92% of interviewed households across Syria.

Environmental factors have affected access to food in GoS-controlled areas. Below average rainfall has negatively affected wheat production in GoS-held territories in 2021. Additionally, wildfires across Syria have on estimate destroyed more than 35,000 hectares of agricultural land, including 9,000 hectares in Latakia, Tartous and Homs governorates alone, and are expected to impact food production in the long term.

The lack of wheat has affected the availability of bread, which has resulted in price increases. On 10 July 2021, the government raised the price of subsidised bread with a 100% increase from 100 SYP/bundle to 200 SYP/bundle. The government simultaneously decreased subsidised bread allocations. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), citizens reported discrimination in the distribution of bread, as well as a deterioration of the quality of bread, with some describing the bread as almost inedible and black with age.

Water and sanitation

According to Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR), the lack of electricity and frequent power cuts in GoS-controlled areas of Syria affected water provision in these areas. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) additionally reported interruption in water supply in areas controlled by the government in July 2021.

In Tartous, the average retail price for 1.5 litres of drinking water was 1066.67 SYP in August 2021 compared to 275 SYP in October 2020. In Latakia, the average retail price for 1.5 litres of drinking water was 927.22 SYP compared to 275 SYP in October 2020.

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78 WFP, Syria Country Office – Market Price Watch Bulletin: August 2021 (issue 81), 31 August 2021, url, p. 4
79 WFP, Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 57: July 2021, 16 August 2021, url, p.4
82 COAR, Out to Sea: Mediterranean Migration, Return, and Syrians Continuing Plight, 17 May 2021, url; Reuters, Syrian drought puts Assad’s ‘year of wheat’ in peril, 21 June 2021, url
83 WFP, Syria Country Office – Market Price Watch Bulletin: July 2021 (issue 80), 31 July 2021, url, p. 2; WFP, Situation Report #7: July 2021, 23 August 2021, url, p. 1; Al-Jazeera, Syrian government announces steep rise in bread, diesel prices, 11 July 2021, url; SOHR, As large shipment of solar panels heading to Latakia harbor | Power crisis in Syrian-regime controlled areas continues until solar panels are sold, 24 July 2021, url
85 HRW, Syria: Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure, 21 March 2021, url
86 COAR, Dar’a Siege: Russia Abouts Face, Amps up Pressure, 5 July 2021, url
87 SOHR, As large shipment of solar panels heading to Latakia harbor | Power crisis in Syrian-regime controlled areas continues until solar panels are sold, 24 July 2021, url; For additional information on water and sanitation, see the DIS-report Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra from December 2020.
88 WFP, vam – food security analysis, n.d., url
89 DIS, Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, 18 December 2020, url, p. 19
90 WFP, vam – food security analysis, n.d., url
91 DIS, Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, 18 December 2020, url, p. 19
Electricity and fuel

According to SOHR, an electricity crisis across the GoS-controlled areas led the GoS to increase electricity rationing to nearly 22 hours without electricity, and in some areas up to 48 hours followed by only one hour of electricity in June 2021. Moreover, electricity flow was often interrupted during hours when electricity was supposed to be available. Lack of electricity was also prevalent in areas traditionally prioritised by the Syrian government, such as Latakia governorate.

Syria has been experiencing a fuel crisis since late 2018. According to WFP, the situation got more severe from January 2021 onwards due to several foreign and domestic incidents that limited the delivery of fuel to the GoS-controlled areas.

The continued shortage of fuel led to three price increases from January 2021 to July 2021, raising the price of petrol (Octane 95) from 1,350 SYP/litre in January to 3,000 SYP/litre in July 2021. The price of subsidised petrol (Octane 90) increased from 250 SYP/litre in October 2020 to 750 SYP/litre in March 2021.

In October 2020, the rationing on petrol (Octane 90) allowed each household to acquire only 30 litres of fuel every five days, with a limit of maximum 100 litres subsidised petrol and 100 litres non-subsidised petrol every month. As of May 2021, the government further limited allocations to 25 litres every seven days, with a monthly limit of 75 litres per household. The limited fuel allocations have led people to resort to the black market to acquire fuel.

The fuel crisis resulted in long lines at gas stations making people wait for hours and sometimes days for fuel. In an attempt to manage the fuel shortage, the government introduced an SMS-system to notify citizens of the time and place to collect their fuel allocations. However, the queues persisted.
On 4 April 2021, the government announced a reduction in working hours of up to 60% at government ministries in an attempt to reduce the use of fuel and electricity.\(^{104}\)

### 4.2. Access to healthcare

In Syria, healthcare services are provided by both public and private hospitals and health clinics and NGOs.\(^{105}\)

According to World Health Organization (WHO), as of December 2020, the number of healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses and midwives) per 10,000 inhabitants in public hospitals nationwide was 14.8,\(^{106}\) an increase of 0.1 since June 2020.\(^{107}\) As of December 2020, the number of healthcare professionals in public healthcare centres was 8 to 10,000 individuals,\(^{108}\) which was the same as in June 2020.\(^{109}\)

In December 2020, the availability of medicines in Syria remained limited.\(^{110}\) According to a survey conducted by WFP in August 2021, two out of five interviewed households (41%) reported being unable to afford the necessary medicines. In the same survey, one out of five interviewed households (20%) reported facing obstacles in accessing healthcare services.\(^{111}\)

In a survey by WFP from March 2021, more female-headed households (21%) reported challenges accessing medical care services compared to interviewed households overall (18%).\(^{112}\)

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to spread across Syria. As of 31 August 2021, there were 27,915 officially confirmed cases of COVID-19 across Syria, including 2,013 fatalities.\(^{113}\) As of December 2020, the number of healthcare professionals in public healthcare centres was 8 to 10,000 individuals,\(^{108}\) which was the same as in June 2020.\(^{109}\)

In Tartous, the Ministry of Health (MoH) had reported 1,841 cases of COVID-19, as of 10 June 2021.\(^{115}\)

As of December 2020, all seven public hospitals in Tartous governorate were fully functioning and accessible,\(^{116}\) and all of the 147 healthcare centres in Tartous were fully functioning.\(^{117}\) However, one of the

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\(^{104}\) WFP, Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 54: April 2021, 17 May 2021, \url{...}, p. 1; COAR, New Laws as Syria Beset by Fuel, Fiscal, and COVID Crises, 12 April 2021, \url{...}; Tsurkov, E., Syrian Regime No Longer Able to Provide for Loyalists, 4 June 2021, \url{...}; For additional information on access to electricity and fuel, see the DIS-report Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra from December 2020, p. 18.

\(^{105}\) DIS, Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, 18 December 2020, \url{...}, p. 20; For additional information on access to healthcare, see this report, pp. 20-24.


\(^{108}\) According to WHO's global strategy on health staff for 2030, the minimum density of healthcare staff is 44.5 per 10,000 inhabitants (WHO, Global strategy on human resources for health: Workforce 2030, 2016, \url{...}, p. 42); WHO, HeRAMS Annual Report: January – December 2020: Public Health Centres in the Syrian Arab Republic, 2020, \url{...}, p. 26


\(^{110}\) DIS, Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, 18 December 2020, \url{...}, p. 21; For additional information on the availability of medicine, see this report, pp. 21-22.

\(^{111}\) WFP, Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 58: August 2021, 29 September 2021, \url{...}, p. 4

\(^{112}\) WFP, Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 53: March 2021, 13 April 2021, \url{...}, p. 5

\(^{113}\) WFP, Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 58: August 2021, 29 September 2021, \url{...}, p. 1


\(^{116}\) WFP, Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 54: April 2021, 17 May 2021, \url{...}, p. 1; COAR, New Laws as Syria Beset by Fuel, Fiscal, and COVID Crises, 12 April 2021, \url{...}; Tsurkov, E., Syrian Regime No Longer Able to Provide for Loyalists, 4 June 2021, \url{...}; For additional information on access to electricity and fuel, see the DIS-report Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra from December 2020, p. 18.

\(^{117}\) DIS, Syria – Security and Socio-Economic Situation in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, 18 December 2020, \url{...}, p. 20; For additional information on access to healthcare, see this report, pp. 20-24.
governorate’s health centres was difficult to access. In the same month, there were 38.8 health staff per 10,000 inhabitants in public hospitals and 32 health staff in public health centres in the governorate.

In Latakia, as of June 2021, the official number of COVID-19 cases was 3,814 cases.

According to a survey conducted by WFP in July 2021, lack of access to hospitals and health care centres was more apparent in Latakia (28%) compared to surveyed households nationwide (21%).

As of December 2020, six out of seven public hospitals in Latakia were fully functioning, while one was partially functioning. All seven hospitals were accessible to both patients and staff. As of December 2020, 110 of the governorate’s 119 public healthcare centres were fully functioning, while nine were non-functioning. 113 of Latakia’s public health centres were fully accessible, while six centres were not accessible. As of December 2020, in public hospitals and health clinics in Latakia, there were 39.3 and 18 health professionals respectively per 10,000 inhabitants.

A DIS-report with detailed information about access to healthcare services, medicines and specialised treatment in Syria covering Latakia and Tartous governorates is forthcoming and is expected to be published on www.us.dk primo 2022.

4.3. Access to schools

In 2020, free public education was generally available to all Syrian children in areas under GoS-control. However, according to a survey conducted by WFP in August 2021, 11% of households nationwide have been forced to take children of mandatory school age out of school and have them working instead, in order to bring home additional income to the family. According to UNICEF, as of March 2021, almost 2.45 million children in all of Syria were not enrolled in school.

In April 2021, citing a surge in the number of COVID-19 cases, the Syrian government suspended university classes for two weeks and closed down primary schools, ending the school year early in GoS-controlled

122 WFP, Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 57: July 2021, 16 August 2021, url, p. 4
130 WFP, Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 58: August 2021, 21 September 2021, url, p. 3
131 UNICEF, Syria conflict 10 years on: 90 per cent of children need support as violence, economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic push families to the brink, 10 March 2021, url
areas. According to one media source, however, the reason behind the closure was the severe fuel shortage across GoS-controlled areas limiting students’ access to their places of education.

4.4. Housing and infrastructure

According to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and a report by UN-secretary general’s office, the wildfires in Tartous and Latakia in October 2020 caused material damage to residential homes, assets and agricultural lands, as well as loss of power and water supply and limited access to services. The damages from the fires affected at least 27,000 families (an estimated 200,000 people) in the coastal region.

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132 UNICEF, Whole of Syria – Humanitarian Situation Report: April 2021, April 2021, [url], p. 3; WFP, Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 54: April 2021, 17 May 2021, [url], p. 1; Al-Fanar Media, Syria Suspends Classes as Fuel Shortage Paralyzes the Nation, 6 April 2021, [url]; AP News, Syria to close schools and universities over virus surge, 3 April 2021, [url]

133 Al-Fanar Media, Syria Suspends Classes as Fuel Shortage Paralyzes the Nation, 6 April 2021, [url]

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Annex I: Terms of Reference

1. General security situation in Tartous and Latakia governorates December 2020-August 2021

Development of the general security situation since December 2020
Armed actors present in Tartous and Latakia governorates
Prevalence of security incidents and the extent and type of casualties

2. Freedom of movement in Tartous and Latakia governorates

Freedom of movement inside Tartous and Latakia governorates
Security situation on the roads connecting Tartous and Latakia governorates to Damascus International Airport

3. Socio-economic situation in Tartous and Latakia governorates

Access to electricity, water, sanitation and food
Access to healthcare
Access to schools
Housing and infrastructure