



# Syria

*Security situation*



## Syria – Security situation

This 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.

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## Executive summary

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Since the fall of the Assad government in December 2024, the security situation remains volatile and highly fragmented across different regions in Syria. While Damascus and some government-controlled urban areas have seen relative stability, various forms of violence persist nationwide.

Throughout the early months of 2025, the new security forces conducted extensive operations against remnants of the former government. Heavy clashes between the security forces and Assad loyalists in March 2025, particularly in the coastal governorates of Latakia and Tartous, resulted in significant casualties among security forces, Assad loyalists, as well as civilians and caused displacement of civilians. The March violence marked the most severe outbreak of violence since Assad's fall.

Alawites, Shia Muslims, and to a lesser extent Druze communities have faced targeted attacks, especially during the March 2025 violence. Vigilante killings, revenge attacks, and sectarian clashes have been reported, particularly in Homs, Hama, Latakia, Tartous, and Rural Damascus. There are also reports of Sunni extremist groups perpetrating attacks against Alawites and other minorities.

A general absence of accountability has fueled rampant criminal activity, including kidnappings, extrajudicial killings, and armed robberies across various governorates. Armed groups, some affiliated with the new authorities, have committed human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, torture, and executions, with limited government oversight.

Since Assad's fall, Israel has escalated its military activity in Syria, targeting military infrastructure and conducting cross-border incursions into Quneitra, Daraa, and Suweida. Israeli operations have resulted in both civilian and military casualties and displacement.

Islamic State (IS) remains an active threat, particularly in Deir ez-Zor, where multiple attacks have targeted both civilians and military personnel. The group continues to exploit local vulnerabilities, engaging in extortion and armed violence. However, the extent of the group's activity has decreased since the fall of the former government.

Freedom of movement has improved following the fall of the former government. Many checkpoints have been removed, scrutiny has eased, and incidents of extortion and arbitrary arrest are now rare. Whilst movement on major roads flows smoothly without major issues and the new authorities appear to actively ensure unobstructed movement on these roads, extremist groups continue to pose risks on secondary roads. Checkpoints still cause frustration among civilians, and transport options are limited and costly. In north-eastern Syria, increased security due to a reduction in Turkish bombardments has eased freedom of movement. Women's freedom of movement in Syria varies by area and checkpoint, with occasional ad hoc gender segregation in public transport.

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## Introduction

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The thematic Country of Origin Information (COI) report at hand examines the security situation in Syria in the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 May 2025, following the fall of the Assad government in December 2024. The report provides an overview of the general security situation in the country and identifies a number of security trends, relevant for understanding the current situation, followed by an overview of security incidents, based on data provided by ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project). Finally, the report examines freedom of movement in Syria.

The purpose of the report is to provide updated information on issues relevant for the processing of asylum cases.

The report is primarily based on written sources, supplemented with information gathered via online interviews with two sources with in-depth knowledge of the situation in Syria: the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) and a Syrian journalist.

The consulted sources were briefed about the purpose of the interviews and that their statements would be included in a public report. Minutes were written for each interview. These were forwarded to the sources for approval, giving them the opportunity to amend, comment or correct their statements. Both sources approved their statements, which can be found in [Annex 1](#). The sources were referenced in this report according to their own request.

For the sake of transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the interview minutes have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes. The Terms of Reference (ToR), which were drafted in consultation with the Asylum Division of the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) and the Danish Refugee Appeals Board, are included in [Annex 2](#).

The report is a synthesis of the information obtained from written and interviewed sources and does not include all details and nuances provided by the sources. In the report, care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The individual sources should not be held accountable for the content of the report.

Attention should be called to the changeable security situation in Syria and the fact that the information provided in this report may become outdated. Therefore, the issues addressed in this report should be monitored periodically and brought up to date accordingly.

The report is written in accordance with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) COI Report Methodology.<sup>1</sup> The research and editing of this report were finalised on 19 June 2025.

The report is available on the website of DIS, [us.dk](https://us.dk), and is thus available to all stakeholders in the refugee status determination process as well as to the public.

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<sup>1</sup> EUAA, *EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology*, 22 February 2023, [url](#)

## Abbreviations

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ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
COI	Country of Origin Information
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
FSA	Free Syrian Army – or Syrian Free Army (SFA)
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
IED	Improvised explosive device
IS	Islamic State
SAA	Syrian Arab Army
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SFA	Syrian Free Army – or Free Syrian Army (FSA)
SNA	Syrian National Army
SOHR	Syrian Observatory for Human Rights
ToR	Terms of Reference

# 1. Background

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## 1.1. Political development

On 8 December 2024, a coalition of opposition forces led by the Islamist armed group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), whose control had previously been limited to parts of the governorate of Aleppo and Idlib, overthrew the government of Bashar al-Assad after a 12-day military offensive.<sup>2</sup> The government fell after more than 13 years of civil war during which more than 500 000 people were killed; with the fall of the Assad government, more than 50 years of Baath Party rule in Syria ended.<sup>3</sup>

On 12 December 2024, the new Syrian government declared that it would suspend the constitution for a three months interim period, during which a new legal and human rights committee would review and amend it.<sup>4</sup>

On 29 January 2025, Ahmed al-Sharaa, previously known as Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, leader of HTS, was appointed President of Syria for a transitional period by the General Command in Syria. At the same time, the Military Operations Administration announced several important decisions, including that:

- al-Sharaa was authorised to form a temporary legislative council for this transitional period;
- the People's Assembly (i.e. the former Syrian parliament) would be dissolved;
- the 2012 constitution would be abolished and all emergency laws suspended;
- the army, all security services and militias of the Assad government would be dissolved;
- the ruling Baath Party and affiliated parties and organisations would be dissolved and prohibited from being reestablished; and
- all military and civil bodies would be dissolved and integrated into state institutions.<sup>5</sup>

On 25 February 2025, a National Dialogue conference was held in Damascus, which resulted in a 'temporary constitutional declaration' and a 'temporary legal council' to support determining Syria's future. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which control large parts of north-eastern Syria, were not invited to the conference.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, [url](#), para. 2; HRW, *World Report 2025 - Syria*, 16 January 2025, [url](#); Austria, ACCORD, *Information collection on developments regarding the fall of president Assad*, 11 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>3</sup> HRW, *World Report 2025 - Syria*, 16 January 2025, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, [url](#), para. 3-4; New Humanitarian (The), *The Alawites caught between revenge and a new Syria*, 26 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> New Arab (The), *Syria suspends constitution, celebrates fall of Assad as Israel continues attacks*, 13 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> Enab Baladi, *General Command appoints Ahmed al-Sharaa as President of Syria*, 29 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> Al Jazeera, *Key takeaways from Syria's National Dialogue conference*, 26 February 2025, [url](#); SCR, *March 2025 Monthly Forecast: Syria*, 1 March 2025, [url](#); AP, *Syria's national dialogue conference held as the battered country seeks to rebuild*, 25 February 2025, [url](#)



On 13 March 2025, President al-Sharaa signed a temporary constitution, effective for a five-year transitional period. The constitution establishes a presidential system in which the president holds executive power and appoints ministers. Moreover, it recognises Islamic law as primary source of jurisprudence, while promising to protect the rights of all ethnic and religious groups in Syria. The temporary constitution introduces a People's Committee as transitional parliament; two thirds of its members are appointed by a committee selected by President al-Sharaa and one third appointed by the president himself.<sup>7</sup>

On 29 March 2025, al-Sharaa announced the formation of a new transitional government, consisting of 23 ministers, including representatives of different religious groups; e.g. an Alawite as Minister of Transportation, a Druze as Minister of Agriculture, and a Christian woman with a background in the opposition as Minister of Social Affairs and Labour.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.2. Socio-economic situation

On the economic level, 13 years of conflict have devastated Syria's infrastructure. Entire towns have become uninhabitable while schools, hospitals, roads, water systems, and electrical grids lie in disrepair. Public services are barely operational, and the economy is in a state of collapse.<sup>9</sup>

The Syrian news outlet Enab Baladi reported on 26 March 2025, however, that the annual inflation rate – according to a report by the Central Bank of Syria – had decreased significantly. During the period from March 2024 to February 2025, the overall inflation rate decreased, reaching 36.8 % compared to 120.6 % in the same period the year before. The report attributes this decline in e.g. food prices to an increase in the value of the Syrian pound and in the supply of goods after the fall of the Assad government. In spite of this positive development, Syrians' purchasing power remains low due to a decrease in real income.<sup>10</sup>

As regards international sanctions, several sanctions against Syria have been suspended. For example, on 30 December 2024, the US suspended selected sanctions against Syria for six months to ease the flow of humanitarian aid.<sup>11</sup> On 27 January 2025, the EU decided on a step-by-step approach to suspend far-reaching sanctions against Syria, contingent on conditions being met on the ground in Syria such as the protection of all religious and ethnic minorities and the respect for human rights and women's rights.<sup>12</sup> On 24 February 2025, the EU suspended selected sanctions against Syria with immediate effect, including sanctions on oil, gas, and electricity, as well as restrictions on the transport sector, e.g. aviation.<sup>13</sup> In March 2025, Canada announced its intention to ease sanctions against Syria.<sup>14</sup> In April 2025, the UK

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<sup>7</sup> AP, *Syrian leader signs constitution that puts the country under an Islamist group's rule for 5 years*, 13 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> Reuters, *Syria's president al-Sharaa forms new transitional government*, 30 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> HRW, *Syria: US Lifting Sanctions Will Bolster Rights, Recovery*, 15 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> Enab Baladi, *Annual inflation rate decreases in Syria*, 26 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> Reuters, *US allows transactions with governing institutions in Syria despite sanctions*, 6 January, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> Euro News, *EU agrees on 'step-by-step' roadmap to start easing sanctions on Syria*, 27 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> Reuters, *EU suspends sanctions against Syria including on energy, banking*, 24 February 2025, [url](#); Al Jazeera, *EU suspends select Syria sanctions to encourage democratic development*, 24 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> Al Jazeera, *Canada announces plan to ease Syria sanctions, appoints ambassador*, 13 March 2025, [url](#)

lifted selected sanctions against Syria, including restrictions on Syria’s Ministry of Defence.<sup>15</sup> And on 28 May 2025, the EU officially removed all economic sanctions on Syria, with the exception of those related to security concerns.<sup>16</sup> Finally, a number of international donors have promised to provide economic support to Syria, including the EU and Canada.<sup>17</sup>

According to the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, the humanitarian needs in Syria are at an unprecedented level, with seven out of every ten Syrians – approximately 16.5 million people – still requiring assistance. Half of the population remains displaced, either within the country or abroad.<sup>18</sup> Over 90 % of the Syrian population live below the poverty line, with at least nine million not able to access enough quality food.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3. Rebuilding security forces

According to the Syrian Ministry of Defence, as of February 2025, between 70 and 100 armed groups had agreed to participate in the new administration and to be incorporated under the armed forces of the Syrian Defence Ministry.<sup>20</sup> In order to simplify this process, the Supreme Committee for the Regulation of Armed Forces Data has been formed to oversee the tracking of military capacities and personnel. At the same time, a group of officers is working on designing the structure of the new Syrian army. The government has emphasised that all military factions will be disbanded and incorporated into state institutions.<sup>21</sup>

Several media outlets announced in April 2025 that representatives from the Syrian Ministry of Defence began meeting with officers who defected from the Syrian army during the rule of President al-Assad. This was described as part of the efforts to restructure the Syrian army and reintegrate the defected officers into the Syrian armed forces.<sup>22</sup>

On 26 March 2025, the Arabic news site Al-Modon reported on the new criteria for (voluntary) recruitment to security and military institutions in the Syrian transitional government.<sup>23</sup>

The Syrian government is facing several difficulties in rebuilding the Syrian armed forces. Rebuilding its weapons arsenal and infrastructure is a major challenge.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>15</sup> BBC News, *UK lifts sanctions on Syrian defence ministry*, 24 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR, *Regional Flash Update #28; Syria situation crisis*, 22 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> France 24, *In Syria, EU official announces 235 mn euro aid package*, 17 January 2025, [url](#); AP, *Syria donors pledge \$6.5 billion in aid hoping to encourage its new leaders down the path to peace*, 17 March 2025, [url](#); Al Jazeera, *Canada announces plan to ease Syria sanctions, appoints ambassador*, 13 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> DG ECHO, *Syria*, 22 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> HRW, *Syria: US Lifting Sanctions Will Bolster Rights, Recovery*, 15 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> Washington Post (The), *Syria could allow Russia to keep its bases, new defense minister says*, 6 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> New Arab (The), *Forging a united front: The challenges of building Syria's new army*, 3 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> Syria TV, "الندفاع السورية" تجري مقابلات مع الضباط المنشقين عن النظام المخلوع [The Syrian Defence Ministry conducts interviews with officers who defected from the ousted regime], 8 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>23</sup> Al-Modon, شروط التجنيد الجديدة بسوريا.. الجيش الوطني يخشى إقصاءه [New recruitment requirements in Syria: The National Army fears exclusion], 26 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> New Arab (The), *Forging a united front: The challenges of building Syria's new army*, 3 February 2025, [url](#)

## 1.4. Other developments

As of 22 May 2025, an estimated 507 672 Syrians had returned to Syria via neighbouring countries since the fall of the Assad government, which brings the total of Syrians that have returned since early 2024 up to 868 512, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Moreover, 1 200 486 internally displaced persons had returned to their homes in the period from early December 2024 to 22 May 2025.<sup>25</sup>

Syria resumed international flights on 7 January 2025, starting with Qatar Airways.<sup>26</sup> Turkish Airlines,<sup>27</sup> Royal Jordanian,<sup>28</sup> and the Turkish low-cost carrier AJet followed, launching regular flights to Damascus between January and April 2025.<sup>29</sup> Direct flights to the United Arab Emirates also resumed in April 2025.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> UNHCR, *Regional Flash Update #28; Syria situation crisis*, 22 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> Al Jazeera, *Syria to resume international flights from Damascus airport next week*, 5 January 2025, [url](#); Enab Baladi, *الخطوط التركية.. ما شروط السفر إلى دمشق* [Turkish Airlines: What are the travel requirements to Damascus?], 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> Enab Baladi, *الخطوط التركية.. ما شروط السفر إلى دمشق* [Turkish Airlines: What are the travel requirements to Damascus?], 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> Enab Baladi, *الأردنية تستأنف رحلاتها إلى دمشق*, 16 January 2025, [url](#); New Arab (The), *Which international airlines have resumed flights to Syria?*, 23 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> Anadolu Ajansı, *Turkish low-cost air carrier to begin flights to Damascus*, 29 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> New Arab (The), *First Syrian passenger flight to UAE departs from Damascus*, 20 April 2025, [url](#)

1.5. Territorial control

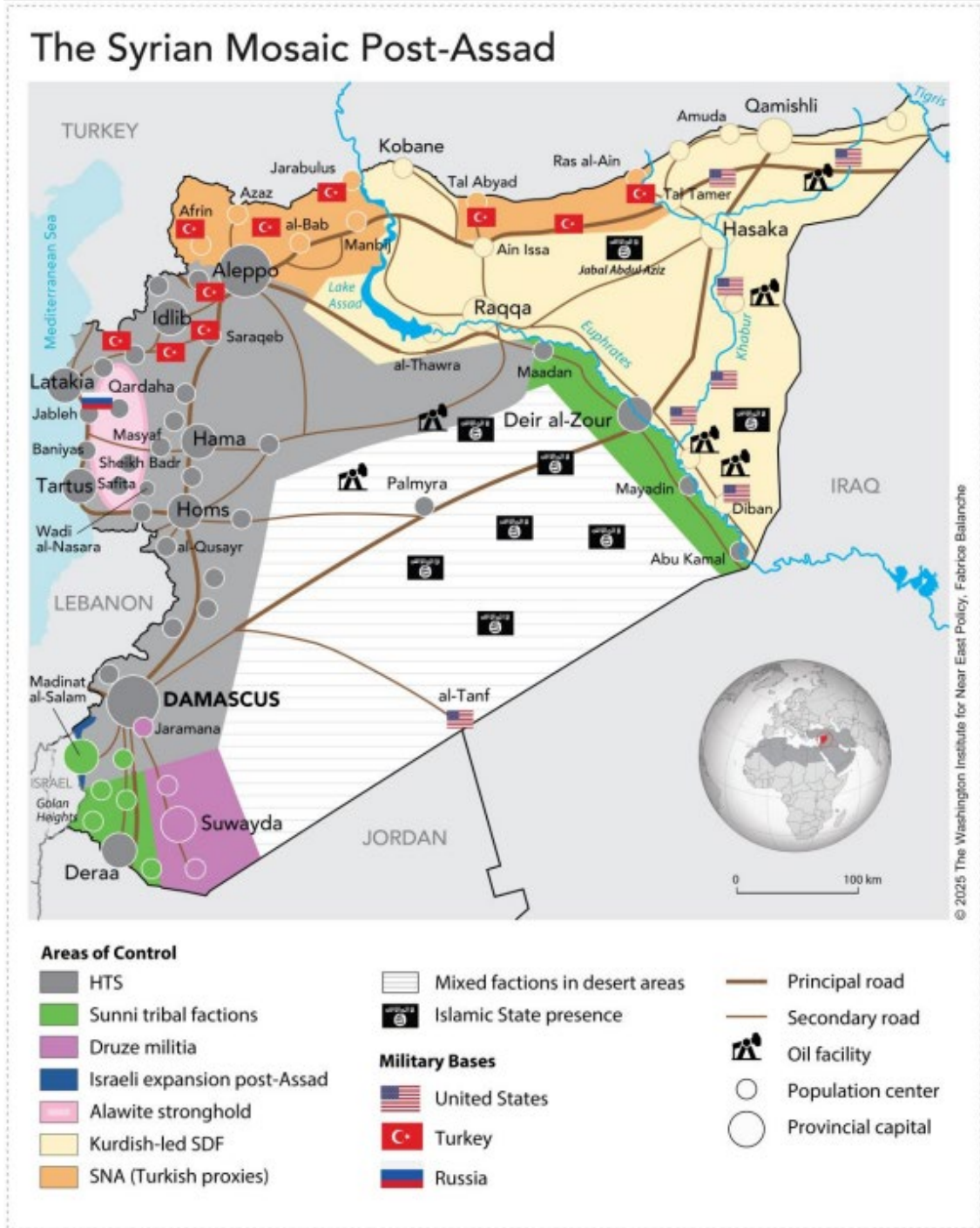


Figure 1: Map of territorial control by Fabrice Balanche, Washington Institute for Near East Policy<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Washington Institute for Near East Policy (The), *Rebuilding Syria May Require Federalism*, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

## 2. Security situation

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### 2.1. General security situation

According to the interviewed sources, it is very difficult to generalise about the security situation or the current violations in Syria, as security conditions vary significantly – even within the same city or region.<sup>32</sup>

Different factors impact the security situation in different areas of Syria, including: whether the area in question was previously a stronghold of the Syrian opposition or is perceived as having supported the former government; people’s political, religious, and sectarian affiliations; and local conditions and dynamics.<sup>33</sup>

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the overall security situation in Syria is nevertheless relatively stable, with fewer security incidents reported in the past two months (April and May 2025).<sup>34</sup> However, hostilities continue in some regions, including Israeli operations in southern Syria and incidents in Latakia and Tartous,<sup>35</sup> and the security situation remains fragile.<sup>36</sup> In various regions outside the capital, the situation remains volatile due to the presence of extremist Islamist groups, particularly in Hama, Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, Rural Damascus, and Deir ez-Zor. These groups contribute to ongoing insecurity through assassinations, kidnappings, and robberies.<sup>37</sup>

#### 2.1.1. Damascus

Since the fall of the former government, the new authorities have focused on securing key cities such as Damascus and Aleppo. As a result, violations in these areas are limited compared to other parts of the country.<sup>38</sup> In Damascus, which remains the most stable area, the situation is mostly secure, with signs of improvement reflected in fewer checkpoint arrests and an overall decline in security incidents.<sup>39</sup> Isolated violent events still occur, however, for instance, alcohol vendors being targeted by Islamist groups allegedly affiliated with the new government or a case of shooting in a casino in May 2025.<sup>40</sup>

#### 2.1.2. The coastal region

In the coastal region, widespread violations were committed against the local population in the immediate aftermath of the former government’s fall. These violations have since decreased in urban centres, but they continue in the countryside, including in the coastal areas as well as in

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<sup>32</sup> SOHR: 2; Syrian journalist: 1, 6

<sup>33</sup> Syrian journalist: 1

<sup>34</sup> SOHR: 1

<sup>35</sup> UNHCR, *Regional Flash Update #28; Syria situation crisis*, 22 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>36</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #25*, 26 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>37</sup> SOHR: 1; EUAA, *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>38</sup> Syrian journalist: 2

<sup>39</sup> Syrian journalist: 2; SOHR: 3; EUAA, *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>40</sup> SOHR: 3

Hama and Homs governorates. The nature of violations in the coastal areas differs from those in other parts of Syria, as these areas were once the heartland of the former government's military and security apparatus, and the current security personnel – many of whom are former opposition fighters – often display a hostile attitude towards the local population. This hostility stems from grievances over abuses committed by the former authorities in opposition-held areas, according to the interviewed Syrian journalist.<sup>41</sup>

### *2.1.3. Hama Governorate*

In Hama Governorate, there is generally no harassment at checkpoints in the city of Hama, as the city has been historically opposed to the former government. By contrast, residents of Alawite villages in Sahl al-Ghab (Hama Governorate) are reportedly subjected to ongoing violations. Recently, a military group forcibly displaced an entire village population in this area, allowing the group's relatives to resettle there after their original homes were destroyed.<sup>42</sup> In areas like eastern Hama, security dynamics are influenced by the fact that areas formerly controlled by the opposition have not been disarmed, unlike areas previously held by the former government. For instance, armed tribal groups from a formerly opposition-held area, which retained their weapons, attacked and stole livestock from disarmed shepherds in a previously pro-government village without facing repercussions. Residents in disarmed areas typically remain indoors after 20:00, whereas in areas where weapons have been retained, life continues outside into the evening.<sup>43</sup>

### *2.1.4. Homs Governorate*

In Homs Governorate, violations do occur but are less frequent than in northern rural Hama. In western Homs, near the Lebanese border, civilians face different threats. This area, once controlled by Hezbollah, was a hub for arms and drug smuggling. Some armed groups formerly opposed to the former government have now returned as gangs rather than formal military units, posing an ongoing challenge for the new authorities.<sup>44</sup>

### *2.1.5. Aleppo Governorate*

In Aleppo Governorate, the situation is more complex. Although the region is nominally under the control of the new authorities, divisions between territories that used to be controlled by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Syrian National Army (SNA) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) still do persist. In eastern Aleppo, previously controlled by SDF, areas witnessed kidnappings and robberies carried out by SNA within the reporting period. These violations against civilians were significant enough to prompt interventions by security forces in towns such as Manbij, Afrin, and Jarablus. In northern Aleppo, Kurdish civilians continue to face harassment and abuse. Similar patterns are observed in SDF-held areas such as Hasakah,

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<sup>41</sup> Syrian journalist: 3-4

<sup>42</sup> Syrian journalist: 5

<sup>43</sup> Syrian journalist: 14-15

<sup>44</sup> Syrian journalist: 7

Raqqa, and eastern Deir ez-Zor, where violations primarily are committed against the Arab population.<sup>45</sup>

### 2.1.6. Southern governorates

In southern governorates – Quneitra, Daraa, Suweida – the situation is volatile and unstable.<sup>46</sup> Central government control is limited in these governorates due to Israeli incursions. The Syrian journalist reported on violations – i.e. arrests, shootings, and killings of civilians – and he personally knows of two incidents in Quneitra and one in Daraa involving Israeli attacks on civilians.<sup>47</sup>

In Suweida, the security landscape is shaped by the presence of local armed factions operating independently of central government authority. The majority Druze population coexist with a Sunni Bedouin minority, the latter often accused of supporting the new government, while the Druze are conversely alleged to be aligned with Israel. This mutual suspicion has led to recurring clashes between the two groups. In addition, eastern Suweida regularly experiences mortar attacks, for which no group has claimed responsibility – likely reflecting broader sectarian tensions within the governorate.<sup>48</sup>

### 2.1.7. Deir ez-Zor Governorate

In Deir ez-Zor Governorate, the threat from pro-Iranian militias has decreased, but the threat posed by the Islamic State (IS) remains and is growing. Some of the residents of Deir ez-Zor City are sometimes accused of joining pro-Iranian militias during the previous government. Notably, Deir ez-Zor is the only governorate where the security situation in the city is largely similar to that of the countryside.<sup>49</sup>

The border area of al-Bukamal near the Iraqi border remains unstable; a couple of days before DIS conducted the interview with the Syrian journalist in May 2025, the authorities carried out search operations on villages in this area, which previously formed part of a key arms smuggling corridor between Iraq and Lebanon. The long-term impact of these raids on civilians is still unclear.<sup>50</sup>

In areas controlled by SDF, the security situation is largely stable. The only significant security threat in these areas stems from dormant cells of IS.<sup>51</sup>

### 2.1.8. Rural Damascus

In Rural Damascus, particularly in al-Tal, acts of revenge continue against individuals suspected of involvement with the former government. These acts are reportedly committed by former

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<sup>45</sup> Syrian journalist: 8-9

<sup>46</sup> UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, [url](#), para. 22, 28; EUAA, *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, [url](#), p. 18

<sup>47</sup> Syrian journalist: 18

<sup>48</sup> Syrian journalist: 19

<sup>49</sup> Syrian journalist: 10-11

<sup>50</sup> Syrian journalist: 12

<sup>51</sup> SOHR: 11

rebels who had been relocated to northern Syria by the Assad government and have since returned. In areas such as Jaramana and Sahnaya, tensions persist. Residents are sometimes accused of supporting Israel, which affects their daily lives and freedom of movement, especially when travelling to districts such as Bab Toma in Damascus.<sup>52</sup>

## 2.2. Recent security trends

In addition to the more general information on the overall security situation in Syria, a number of security trends can be identified, which are central to understanding the current security situation in Syria and its implications for civilians.

### 2.2.1. Clashes between the new security forces and Assad loyalists

From 1 January to 31 May 2025, there have been reports of local, bloody clashes in several governorates between the new Syrian security forces and remnants of the former Assad government, sometimes during security operations by the new security forces targeting individuals with perceived affiliation with the former Assad government.<sup>53</sup>

Throughout the reporting period, the new security forces conducted raids across the country to capture Assad government remnants, including in Tartous, Latakia, Homs, Hama, Deir ez-Zor, Rural Damascus, Damascus, Daraa, Idlib, and Aleppo.<sup>54</sup> Both high-ranking figures and low-level affiliates, as well as former members of *shabiha* (loosely organised, paramilitary groups formed by Assad government officials early in the 2010s uprising to violently suppress dissent<sup>55</sup>), were arrested, and large quantities of weapons were seized during these arrest operations.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Syrian journalist: 16-17

<sup>53</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #13*, 10 January 2025, [url](#); Enab Baladi, *How effective are security campaigns against remnants of Assad's regime?*, 22 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Daily death toll | 15 people killed on February 27 across Syria*, 27 February 2025, [url](#); Guardian (The), *Thirteen Syrian security officers killed in clashes with Assad loyalists*, 6 March 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria security forces kill two 'Assad loyalists' near capital*, 1 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Syrian outlets highlight arrest of 'prominent' Assad-era intelligence officer*, 23 April 2025, [url](#); GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #13*, 10 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #19*, 22 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #20*, 2 March 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #22*, 24 March 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, [url](#); HRW, *Syria: End Coastal Killing Spree, Protect Civilians*, 10 March 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Security campaign | 35 individuals arrested by members of General Security forces in Deir Ezzor's neighborhoods*, 3 February 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *الأمن العام يعتقل مرتكبي انتهاكات ومشاركين بقتل أبناء الشعب السوري وينفذ حملات بحثاً عن بعضهم* [General Security arrests the perpetrators who have committed violations and those who have participated in the killing of the Syrian people, and conducts searching campaigns to find them], 4 February 2025, [url](#); Enab Baladi, *General Security Service arrests Atef Najib in Latakia*, 31 January 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Homs | Security Forces use heavy weapons to execute and arrest dozens in Shiite town in countryside*, 21 January 2025, [url](#); Enab Baladi, *How effective are security campaigns against remnants of Assad's regime?*, 22 January 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Tartous | General Security forces arrest retired office and seize his farm*, 13 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media detail several security operations, seizure of weapons*, 27 April 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Security campaign | Two former members of military security arrested in eastern Deir Ezzor*, 30 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> Al Jazeera, *Syrian government organised feared 'shabiha' militias: Report*, 4 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, [url](#)



Remnants of the former government have sporadically conducted small-scale, hit-and-run attacks against the new security forces across the country, both in response to arrests and, at times, unprovoked.<sup>57</sup> According to the Syrian NGO Etana, some armed Alawite groups seem to have re-militarised in response to the arrest campaigns led by the new authorities. And former *shabiha* members are likely involved in some of the attacks targeting the new security forces.<sup>58</sup>

In January and February 2025, Assad-loyalists reportedly attacked the interim security forces in 32 cases in the governorates of Latakia, Tartous, Hama, Homs and Rural Damascus.<sup>59</sup>

In early March 2025, heavy clashes erupted in western Syria after Assad-loyal fighters ambushed the new security forces in coordinated attacks on 6 March, targeting military and security sites linked to the interim government's defence and interior ministries, mainly in Latakia, Tartous, and Hama. The new security forces, supported by local factions and foreign Islamist groups nominally affiliated with the Ministry of Defence, launched security operations across the coastal region. In these clashes, an estimated 231 security personnel, 250 Assad-loyal fighters, and 830 civilians were killed,<sup>60</sup> while other sources report up to 1 700 civilian deaths.<sup>61</sup> These events, which took place in the period 6–10 March 2025, reportedly marked Syria's worst outbreak of violence since the ousting of President Assad in December 2024.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, [url](#); RFE/RL, *Hundreds Of Civilians Said To Have Been Killed By Syrian Security Forces*, 8 March 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #22*, 24 March 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #21*, 8 March 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #19*, 22 February 2025, [url](#); Sweden, Migrationsverket, *Den fortsatta utvecklingen i Syrien: Stor osäkerhet och enorma utmaningar [The continued development in Syria: Great uncertainty and enormous challenges]*, 10 March 2025, [url](#), p. 5; ISW, *Understanding Syria's Emerging Insurgency*, 10 March 2025, [url](#); ISW, *The West Must Offer Syria's Interim Government Tightly Conditioned Aid against an Emerging Assadist Insurgency*, 7 March 2025, [url](#); Al Majalla, *Jableh ambush risks igniting larger Türkiye-Iran confrontation*, 8 March 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria official survives blast as violence flares in Deraa*, 15 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>58</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>59</sup> Sweden, Migrationsverket, *Den fortsatta utvecklingen i Syrien: Stor osäkerhet och enorma utmaningar [The continued development in Syria: Great uncertainty and enormous challenges]*, 10 March 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>60</sup> HRW, *Syria: End Coastal Killing Spree, Protect Civilians*, 10 March 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Syria leader vows to hunt down those responsible for bloodshed*, 9 March 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #21*, 8 March 2025, [url](#); International Crisis Group (The), *A Glimmer of Peace in Syria's North East*, 28 March 2025, [url](#); New Humanitarian (The), *The Alawites caught between revenge and a new Syria*, 26 March 2025, [url](#); RFE/RL, *Hundreds Of Civilians Said To Have Been Killed By Syrian Security Forces*, 8 March 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Worst violence in Syria since Assad fall as dozens killed in clashes*, 7 March 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: War monitor reports deadly attack in village on Syria's coast*, 31 March 2025, [url](#); International Crisis Group (The), *The New Syria: Halting a Dangerous Drift*, 28 March 2025, [url](#); ISW, *The West Must Offer Syria's Interim Government Tightly Conditioned Aid against an Emerging Assadist Insurgency*, 7 March 2025, [url](#); SNHR, *803 Individuals Extrajudicially Killed Between March 6-10, 2025*, 11 March 2025, [url](#); Etana, *BRIEF: Armed Clashes & Sectarian Violence on Syria's Coast*, 8 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>61</sup> BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria security forces kill two 'Assad loyalists' near capital*, 1 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>62</sup> RFE/RL, *Hundreds Of Civilians Said To Have Been Killed By Syrian Security Forces*, 8 March 2025, [url](#); SNHR, *803 Individuals Extrajudicially Killed Between March 6-10, 2025*, 11 March 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Worst violence in Syria since Assad fall as dozens killed in clashes*, 7 March 2025, [url](#); ISW, *The West Must Offer Syria's Interim Government Tightly Conditioned Aid against an Emerging Assadist Insurgency*, 7 March 2025, [url](#)

### 2.2.2. Sectarian and retaliatory violence

Since the fall of the Assad government, certain ethno-religious groups have faced elevated risks of violence across Syria. According to SOHR, ordinary civilians generally face a limited risk of physical harm. However, Alawites, Shia Muslims, and, to a lesser extent, Druze face the risk of being targeted, though the level of threat varies across governorates.<sup>63</sup>

During the above-mentioned clashes in March 2025, massacres and extrajudicial killings primarily targeted Alawites – the ethnoreligious group to which the Assad family belongs – especially in the coastal governorates of Latakia and Tartous. Sunni civilians were also targeted but on a smaller scale. Hundreds of civilians from the coastal areas fled their homes, seeking refuge at the Russian Hmeimim airbase, in remote mountain villages, or across the border in Lebanon.<sup>64</sup> Many had reportedly not returned as of 23 May 2025.<sup>65</sup> Although the violations have since decreased in urban centres, they continue in rural parts of the coastal region as well as in Hama and Homs governorates.<sup>66</sup>

Sectarian violence has also occurred outside the coastal region. On 28 April 2025, sectarian clashes erupted between armed Druze and Sunni gunmen in Jaramana, a mixed Sunni-Druze suburb of Damascus, following the circulation of an audio recording allegedly featuring a Druze cleric insulting the Prophet Muhammad. The violence spread to Ashrafiyat Sahnayah, another Druze-majority town south of Damascus. Despite a ceasefire agreement on 30 April ending the clashes, fighting erupted the following night in Suweida after security forces entered the town, resulting in the killing of the mayor of Ashrafiyat Sahnaya and his son. By 1 May 2025, 102 individuals, including members of the Druze minority and security personnel, had reportedly been killed.<sup>67</sup>

In another example, the Sunni militant group named Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah – which also claim to have participated in the sectarian violence of March 2025 in the coastal region – claimed responsibility for multiple killings throughout January–April 2025, many of which targeted Alawites and/or Assad government remnants. The attacks reportedly took place across the governorates of Homs, Latakia, Tartous and Aleppo.<sup>68</sup> Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah, which emerged in January 2025, has continued to call for violence against Alawites to impose demographic change in Alawite areas, especially in Homs, Hama and the coastal areas. The group has also

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<sup>63</sup> SOHR: 5, 8

<sup>64</sup> BBC News, *Syria leader vows to hunt down those responsible for bloodshed*, 9 March 2025, [url](#); HRW, *Syria: End Coastal Killing Spree, Protect Civilians*, 10 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>65</sup> SOHR: 6

<sup>66</sup> Syrian journalist: 3-4

<sup>67</sup> BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Pro-government Syria TV airs rare criticism amid sectarian violence*, 30 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria authorities reach agreement amid fresh clashes near capital*, 30 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Former Syrian mayor killed after 'welcoming' government forces following clashes*, 1 May 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Sectarian violence exacerbates divisions among Syrians online*, 1 May 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria Druze leader questions government narrative on violence*, 1 May 2025, [url](#); Al-Monitor, *Israel strikes near Damascus presidential palace over Druze violence*, 1 May 2025, [url](#); Syrian journalist: 17

<sup>68</sup> BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: New Syria jihadist group claims ongoing attacks on Alawites*, 21 April 2025, [url](#)

incited violence against Syrian Druze, although on a smaller scale, and Shias, as well as Syrians who support Alawites or fail to excommunicate Druze.<sup>69</sup>

As of 19 May 2025, SOHR had documented that 663 persons, including 20 women and 9 children, had been killed in so-called ‘murder crimes and eliminations that come under retaliatory actions’ in Syria since the beginning of 2025. The distribution of these deaths per governorate was as follows:

- Homs: 241 deaths, thereof 102 sectarian-based
- Hama: 127 deaths, thereof 48 sectarian-based
- Tartous: 59 deaths, thereof 37 sectarian-based
- Latakia: 59 deaths, thereof 32 sectarian-based
- Rural Damascus: 62 deaths, thereof 8 sectarian-based
- Damascus: 22 deaths, thereof 6 sectarian-based
- Aleppo: 44 deaths
- Idlib: 15 deaths
- Suweida: 3 deaths, thereof 2 sectarian-based
- Daraa: 26 deaths
- Deir ez-Zor: 5 deaths<sup>70</sup>

In parallel to sectarian violence, individuals suspected of affiliation with the former government face a high nationwide risk of being killed or injured, with killings reported on a daily basis.<sup>71</sup> In January 2025, the Syrian NGO Etana reported that ‘a wave of vigilante attacks’ were increasing across Syria, targeting former government personnel through assassinations and mob violence. Targets included individuals with well-documented involvement in past abuses against civilians since 2011; others, however, included reconciled former government members, low-ranking conscripts and apparently random young Alawite men.<sup>72</sup>

Although the March 2025 events marked the peak of violence since the change of government, revenge attacks against individuals affiliated with the former government have continued throughout the country, particularly in Latakia, Tartous, Hama, Homs, and Rural Damascus.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: New Syria jihadist group claims ongoing attacks on Alawites*, 21 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *New Syrian jihadist group incites against Druze*, 30 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>70</sup> SOHR, *Ongoing executions | Civilian killed in his apartment in Homs city*, 19 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>71</sup> SOHR: 4

<sup>72</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #14*, 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #14*, 17 January 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Worst violence in Syria since Assad fall as dozens killed in clashes*, 7 March 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *163 murder crimes | Nearly 300 people killed under retaliatory actions since early 2025*, 20 February 2025, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, [url](#), para. 25; New Humanitarian (The), *The Alawites caught between revenge and a new Syria*, 26 March 2025, [url](#); International Crisis Group (The), *The New Syria: Halting a Dangerous Drift*, 28 March 2025, [url](#); Sweden, Migrationsverket, *Den fortsatta utvecklingen i Syrien: Stor osäkerhet och enorma utmaningar [The continued development in Syria: Great uncertainty and enormous challenges]*, 10 March 2025, [url](#), p. 5; ISW, *The West Must Offer Syria's Interim Government Tightly Conditioned Aid against an Emerging Assadist Insurgency*, 7 March 2025,

Even Sunni Muslims may be targeted if suspected of ties to the former government. This includes for instance individuals who served as mukhtars or were associated with *shabiha*. In Aleppo, Sunni civilians have reportedly been killed on accusations of affiliation with the former government.<sup>74</sup>

### 2.2.3. Crime, lawlessness and absence of accountability

In various regions, the security situation is reportedly volatile and insecure due to crime and lawlessness, as the new authorities fail to prevent ongoing extrajudicial killings and assassinations.<sup>75</sup>

In the beginning of 2025, violence and lawlessness were on the rise in northern Syria across an area stretching between Homs, Latakia and Aleppo, with reports of almost daily incidents of killings and militant activity throughout the area.<sup>76</sup>

In February and March 2025, there were continued reports of killings and kidnappings for ransom or revenge in some areas of the country, especially in Homs Governorate which had become a hub for kidnappings<sup>77</sup> – particularly in Homs City, which is home to both Alawites, Sunnis, Shiites and various Christian denominations.<sup>78</sup> Between December 2024 and February 2025, several cases of kidnappings and disappearances were documented, including women, children, and elderly victims; many victims were Alawite, and several were later found dead.<sup>79</sup>

In May 2025, SOHR reported that kidnapping operations and armed attacks were increasing, with no effective measures to maintain security.<sup>80</sup>

From March to May 2025, there were reports of killings of civilians by unknown perpetrators in different areas of Syria, including in the governorates of Tartous, Hama, Homs, Damascus, Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa.<sup>81</sup> On 17 May 2025, SOHR reported on growing assassination operations the

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[url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: War monitor reports deadly attack in village on Syria's coast*, 31 March 2025, [url](#); Syrian journalist: 16

<sup>74</sup> SOHR: 5, 8

<sup>75</sup> EUAA, *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, [url](#), p. 63; SOHR, *Amid absence of accountability | 49 people executed in different areas across Syria in ten days*, 11 May 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Security vacuum | Young man shot dead in northern Latakia countryside*, 13 May 2025, [url](#); SOHR: 8; GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>76</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> International Crisis Group (The), *The New Syria: Halting a Dangerous Drift*, 28 March 2025, [url](#); New Lines Magazine, *Sectarian Violence Simmers in Homs*, 10 March 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #19*, 22 February 2025, [url](#); GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>78</sup> New Lines Magazine, *Sectarian Violence Simmers in Homs*, 10 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>79</sup> New Lines Magazine, *Sectarian Violence Simmers in Homs*, 10 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>80</sup> SOHR, *Security chaos | Man in his forties kidnapped by unidentified gunmen in Jableh*, 14 May 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Security chaos | Child kidnapped by gang in eastern Deir Ezzor*, 7 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>81</sup> BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian human rights monitors report further extrajudicial killings*, 4 April 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Ongoing executions | Civilian killed in his apartment in Homs city*, 19 May 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Following dispute over*

previous weeks in eastern Aleppo countryside, with targeted killings becoming increasingly frequent.<sup>82</sup>

As of 18 May 2025, SOHR had documented killings of 167 civilians in 150 so-called ‘murder crimes’ in areas controlled by the new government since the beginning of 2025, most of which were committed by unknown perpetrators. The murder crimes and civilian fatalities were distributed as follows:

- Damascus: 13 murder crimes; 14 fatalities.
- Rural Damascus: 9 murder crimes; 10 fatalities.
- Aleppo: 14 murder crimes; 15 fatalities.
- Homs: 6 murder crimes; 6 fatalities.
- Hama: 17 murder crimes; 20 fatalities.
- Latakia: 12 murder crimes; 13 fatalities.
- Deir ez-Zor: 18 murder crimes; 17 fatalities.
- Idlib: 18 murder crimes; 20 fatalities.
- Daraa: 25 murder crimes; 28 fatalities.
- Tartous: 3 murder crimes; 6 fatalities.
- Suweida: 13 murder crimes; 15 fatalities.
- Quneitra: 1 murder crime; 1 fatality.
- Raqqa: 2 murder crimes; 2 fatalities.<sup>83</sup>

As regards SDF-controlled areas in Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, Hasakah and Aleppo, SOHR had documented 55 ‘murder crimes’ in the period from early 2025 to 19 May 2025.<sup>84</sup>

SOHR has repeatedly characterised the current situation in Syria as a ‘security vacuum’<sup>85</sup> or ‘security chaos’,<sup>86</sup> with arms proliferation and absence of laws controlling civilians’ possession

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*priority to have medical checkup | Young man killed and another slaughtered in eastern Deir Ezzor, 19 May 2025, [url](#); SOHR, Following dispute over possession of farmland | Young man killed in Al-Raqqah countryside, 19 May 2025, [url](#); SOHR, Ongoing executions | Young man shot dead in Damascus, 18 May 2025, [url](#)*

<sup>82</sup> SOHR, *New execution | Man shot de\*ad in eastern Aleppo countryside, 17 May 2025, [url](#)*

<sup>83</sup> SOHR, *Security chaos | Man shot de\*ad by unidentified gunman in Aleppo, 18 May 2025, [url](#)*

<sup>84</sup> SOHR, *Following dispute over possession of farmland | Young man killed in Al-Raqqah countryside, 19 May 2025, [url](#)*

<sup>85</sup> SOHR, *Security vacuum | Group of gunmen kidnaps four young men in Baniyas countryside, 18 May 2025, [url](#);*

*SOHR, Security vacuum | Young man shot dead in northern Latakia countryside, 13 May 2025, [url](#);*

*SOHR, Security vacuum | Young man shot dead in Rif Dimashq, 12 May 2025, [url](#);* *SOHR, Security vacuum | Three children and elderly woman injured, following armed attack on their house in Hama countryside, 9 May 2025, [url](#);* *SOHR, Security vacuum | Guard of well found dead in southern Al-Suwaidaa, 6 May 2025, [url](#)*

<sup>86</sup> SOHR, *Security chaos | Man shot de\*ad by unidentified gunman in Aleppo, 18 May 2025, [url](#);* *SOHR, Security chaos | Young man shot de\*ad by unidentified gunmen and another injured in Hama, 17 May 2025, [url](#);* *SOHR, Security chaos | Elderly man and woman injured in shooting by unidentified gunmen in Jarabulus, 17 May 2025, [url](#);* *SOHR, Security chaos | Armed groups storm Qatyon Village and spark fear among residents, 16 May 2025, [url](#);* *SOHR, Security chaos | Man in his forties kidnapped by unidentified gunmen in Jableh, 14 May 2025, [url](#);* *SOHR, Security chaos | Young girl shot de\*ad and five people injured with stray bullets in Daraa, 14 May 2025, [url](#);* *SOHR, Security chaos | Child kidnapped by gang in eastern Deir Ezzor, 7 May 2025, [url](#);* *SOHR, Security chaos | Five people injured in sectarian shooting in Homs, 7 May 2025, [url](#)*

of weapons, with security breakdown in an area such as Homs, and an escalating security chaos e.g. throughout the governorates of Hama and Suweida.<sup>87</sup>

In addition to retaliatory killings, SOHR has documented civilian deaths and injuries, including women and children, from indiscriminate and accidental gunfire and collateral damage caused by widespread possession of arms and grenades among civilians.<sup>88</sup>

Although some killings are perpetrated by unknown actors, state-affiliated groups are allegedly behind some of the sectarian and political killings. In some cases, the authorities have failed to intervene, and it remains unclear whether these acts are ordered by senior officials or carried out by rogue elements.<sup>89</sup>

In addition to killings, HTS-led security forces have been implicated in other violations against civilians.<sup>90</sup> Groups affiliated with the ministries of defence and interior have reportedly carried out raids, arrests and acts of intimidation against civilians, without oversight and without being held accountable by the government in Damascus.<sup>91</sup>

Sources have reported on cases where persons arrested by the new security forces or affiliated forces have been subjected to torture, abuse and extrajudicial killings. Some have died in custody of the new General Security.<sup>92</sup> In other cases, recent detainees – mostly former army personnel – have been released after investigations found no evidence of their involvement in past abuses.<sup>93</sup>

At times, perpetrators of violence have reportedly worn military uniforms, making them appear to be official security forces, according to the Syrian NGO Etana. As a result, civilians have had difficulty distinguishing between legitimate and impersonated security personnel. In response, General Security has warned civilians of impersonators carrying out unauthorised arrests.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> SOHR, *Gunfire of unknown origin | Civilian killed in Daraa countryside*, 15 May 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Security chaos | Five people injured in sectarian shooting in Homs*, 7 May 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Armed attack | Civilian shot dead in northern Hama*, 7 May 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Security vacuum | Guard of well found dead in southern Al-Suwaydaa*, 6 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>88</sup> SOHR, *Appeals for dignitaries to interfere | Three people killed in tribal clashes in Al-Suwaydaa*, 18 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>89</sup> SOHR: 8-9

<sup>90</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>91</sup> SOHR, *Ongoing violations | Gunmen attack houses of civilians in Tartous countryside*, 8 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>92</sup> HRW, *Syria: End Coastal Killing Spree, Protect Civilians*, 10 March 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, [url](#); Guardian (The), *Syrian fighters execute 35 in three days, war monitor says*, 26 January 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *“Shabiha-like” behaviour | Video footage showing members of general security forces humiliating arrested people triggers broad public anger in Homs*, 4 January 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *SOHR condemns these acts | Horrifying scenes of torturing electrifying detainees in Hama*, 15 January 2025, [url](#); SNHR, *SNHR Condemns Torture, Death of Three Detainees at the Hands of the Transitional Government’s General Security Directorate*, 3 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>93</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>94</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #16*, 3 February 2025, [url](#)

#### 2.2.4. Israeli strikes and incursions

Shortly after the fall of the Assad government in December 2024, Israel started launching intensified air strikes in Syria and seized former Syrian military bases beyond the demilitarised zone between the two countries.<sup>95</sup> Since the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad, Israel has conducted hundreds of strikes across the country to destroy military assets as well as numerous cross-border incursions into the governorates of Quneitra, Daraa and Suweida, with the reported purpose of creating a temporary security zone.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, Israel has demanded a complete demilitarisation of Quneitra, Daraa and Suweida, rejecting the presence of Syrian forces in those governorates.<sup>97</sup>

Israel has occupied the demilitarised buffer zone, which was created after the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, and had by early April 2025 constructed nine bases across the area, including seven inside the buffer zone.<sup>98</sup>

Throughout the reporting period, Israeli strikes – including drone strikes, air strikes, ground shelling, gunfire – continued targeting air bases, air defence systems, jets, tanks, missiles, scientific research centres, weapon factories and ammunition depots as well as Syrian security forces.<sup>99</sup>

For example, on 30 April 2025, Israeli drone strikes targeted the new security forces in Sahnaya, Rural Damascus, reportedly to protect the Druze community following sectarian violence in the area; the drone strikes killed one Ministry of Defence fighter and injured at least two Druze civilians.<sup>100</sup> On 2 May 2025, Israel carried out airstrikes near the presidential palace in Damascus, in addition to launching another series of airstrikes later the same day, stating that

<sup>95</sup> BBC Monitoring, *Israel reportedly constructing new barrier inside Syria*, 25 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>96</sup> BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, [url](#); Enab Baladi, *Israeli forces arrest civilian, injure another in Quneitra*, 24 January 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Israeli forces 'raid homes, school' in Syria's Quneitra province*, 23 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Israel reportedly constructing new barrier inside Syria*, 25 April 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Syria condemns 'unjustified' Israeli strikes as tensions rise over Turkey*, 3 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>97</sup> BBC News, *Syria condemns 'unjustified' Israeli strikes as tensions rise over Turkey*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); ISW and CT, *Iran Update*, 30 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>98</sup> BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, [url](#); MEMO, *Israel builds nine military bases, infrastructure in Syria*, 12 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>99</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 3 Apr 25*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, [url](#), para. 22; BBC News, *Syria condemns 'unjustified' Israeli strikes as tensions rise over Turkey*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, [url](#); SHRC, *The Israeli occupation launches a new aggression, killing civilians in Daraa Governorate and destroying other areas across the country*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); ISW and CT, *Iran Update*, 30 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Israeli army says it conducted 'warning operation' in Syria*, 30 April 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Israel says it struck near Syria palace over violence in Druze areas*, 3 May 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Israeli strikes reported in Syria's coastal region*, 31 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>100</sup> ISW and CT, *Iran Update*, 30 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Israeli army says it conducted 'warning operation' in Syria*, 30 April 2025, [url](#)

Israel will not allow any threat to the Druze minority or the deployment of Syrian forces south of Damascus.<sup>101</sup>

Israeli forces likewise continued to conduct ground incursions into Syria's south-western governorates, beyond the demilitarisation line of 1974, throughout the reporting period.<sup>102</sup> On 4 April 2025, BBC News reported that Israel had conducted more than 70 ground incursions since February into south-western Syria.<sup>103</sup>

During these ground incursions, Israeli forces raided former army bases as well as Syrian villages and homes to seize weapons; at times, arrests were reported.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, there have been reports of clashes between Israeli forces and armed locals opposing Israel's advance into Syria.<sup>105</sup> In late March 2025, clashes between Israel and local fighters made at least 3 000 civilians flee the area, with most residents returning the following day though.<sup>106</sup> In addition, Israeli incursions has reportedly resulted in dozens of dunams (1 dunam equivalent to approximately 1 000 sq. m.) of forested land being bulldozed.<sup>107</sup>

Finally, Israeli strikes in Quneitra and Daraa has led to the killing and injuring of individuals, among those civilians.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Al-Monitor, *Israel strikes near Damascus presidential palace over Druze violence*, 1 May 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 2 May 25*, 2 May 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Israel says it struck near Syria palace over violence in Druze areas*, 3 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>102</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #13*, 10 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Israeli forces 'raid homes, school' in Syria's Quneitra province*, 23 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 3 Apr 25*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, [url](#), para. 22; BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Israel reportedly constructing new barrier inside Syria*, 25 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *War monitor says Israeli incursions causing 'resentment' in Syria border area*, 21 May 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #25*, 26 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>103</sup> BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>104</sup> Enab Baladi, *Israeli forces arrest civilian, injure another in Quneitra*, 24 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #13*, 10 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Israeli forces 'raid homes, school' in Syria's Quneitra province*, 23 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 3 Apr 25*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/58/66]*, 14 March 2025, [url](#), para. 22; BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Israel reportedly constructing new barrier inside Syria*, 25 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Israeli forces 'raid homes, school' in Syria's Quneitra province*, 23 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>105</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Syria condemns 'unjustified' Israeli strikes as tensions rise over Turkey*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 3 Apr 25*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #17*, 8 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>106</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #23*, 31 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>107</sup> Etana, *Syria Update #13*, 10 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>108</sup> Enab Baladi, *Israeli forces arrest civilian, injure another in Quneitra*, 24 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #15*, 28 January 2025, [url](#); Etana, *Syria Update #18*, 15 February 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Israeli strikes in Syria a challenge to Turkey*, 4 April 2025, [url](#); BBC News, *Syria condemns 'unjustified' Israeli strikes as tensions rise over Turkey*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *BBCM Middle East and North Africa Watchlist 3 Apr 25*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); SHRC, *The Israeli*



### 2.2.5. Clashes between SDF and SNA/Türkiye

Clashes between the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) had already erupted before Assad's fall. In December 2024, SNA launched 'Operation Dawn of Freedom', capturing Tal Rifaat and nearby villages from SDF,<sup>109</sup> and subsequently attacked Manbij, a strategic town west of the Euphrates with 300 000 inhabitants.<sup>110</sup> After negotiations between the US and Türkiye – supporting SDF and SNA respectively – SDF withdrew from Manbij,<sup>111</sup> which allowed SNA to advance and seize the Suleyman Shah Tomb, raising concerns of further conflict near Kobane.<sup>112</sup>

Fighting persisted throughout December 2024, with SDF attempting to retake lost areas,<sup>113</sup> including clashes near the strategic Tishrin Dam.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, Syria's new government and Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) took control of Deir ez-Zor city from SDF.<sup>115</sup>

In early 2025, negotiations began between the transitional government, SDF, and SNA, but Türkiye and SNA continued attacks, including heavy strikes on Kobane.<sup>116</sup> The collapse of a ceasefire around Manbij led to renewed clashes between SNA groups and SDF, involving heavy weapons and Turkish air support, causing several hundred deaths, including civilians, by mid-January 2025, according to SOHR.<sup>117</sup> Turkish forces also targeted SDF positions and infrastructure in Hasakah and Raqqqa.<sup>118</sup>

Fighting persisted into February 2025, worsening the humanitarian situation and displacing over 100 000 civilians into SDF-controlled areas.<sup>119</sup> By mid-February, over 600 people had

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*occupation launches a new aggression, killing civilians in Daraa Governorate and destroying other areas across the country, 3 April 2025, [url](#)*

<sup>109</sup> New Region (The), *Syrian opposition groups seize control of Tal Rifaat from SDF amid intense clashes*, 1 December 2024, [url](#); Medya News, *Clashes intensify in Syria amid multi-front offensive*, 1 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>110</sup> Rojava Information Center, *Explainer: Turkish and SNA offensive on Manbij*, 7 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>111</sup> Reuters, *Rebels take Syrian city from U.S.-backed group after U.S.-Turkey deal, source says*, 9 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>112</sup> Middle East Eye, *US rushes to contain Turkey-backed offensive against SDF in Syria*, 11 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>113</sup> Euro News, *Kurdish forces fight back against Turkish-backed rebels amid clashes in northern Syria*, 24 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>114</sup> New Arab (The), *Clashes erupt near Syria's Tishrin Dam as Turkish-backed SNA and Kurdish-led SDF battle for control*, 26 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>115</sup> Middle East Monitor, *HTS-led Syria government captures Deir ez-Zor city from Kurdish SDF*, 11 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>116</sup> Rudaw, *Damascus in talks with SDF, SNA over 'disputed' areas: Minister*, 6 January 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Military escalation | Turkish forces fire heavy artillery shells positions in western Ain Al-Arab (Kobani) countryside*, 9 January 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Renewed airstrikes | Turkish fighter jets attack positions in Ain Al-Arab (Kobani)*, 17 January 2025, [url](#); North Press Agency, *Turkish Drone Strike Targets Syria's Kobani Countryside, Casualties Reported*, 9 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>117</sup> SOHR, *Amid ongoing attempts by Turkish forces to take control of Teshreen dam and Qarquzaq bridge | 401 people killed in clashes, airstrikes and bombardment in 36 days*, 17 January 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Military escalation | 17 civilians killed and injured in Turkish airstrikes on Teshreen dam*, 18 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>118</sup> SOHR, *New attack | Turkish drone executes three airstrikes on Khatouniyah silos and power station in Al-Raqqah countryside*, 9 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>119</sup> HRW, *Northeast Syria: Camp Detainees Face Uncertain Future*, 7 February 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Ongoing escalation | Two Turkish soldiers killed and military site destroyed in SDF attack on Qarra Quzaq frontline*, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

reportedly been killed as a result of the clashes between SDF and SNA groups since December 2024.<sup>120</sup>

On 27 February 2025, Abdullah Öcalan, founder and leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which SDF is historically affiliated with, issued a statement from prison, calling on PKK to disband and lay down its arms in its fight against the Turkish state. Mazloum Abdi, the commander-in-chief of the SDF, later stated that Öcalan's call does not apply to the forces he commands.<sup>121</sup>

In spite of Abdi's statement and already on 10 March 2025, an agreement was reached between the Syrian transitional government and SDF, stating that SDF's military and civilian structures will be integrated into the Syrian state. The details about how the agreement will be implemented in practice are still unclear. According to the agreement, the Syrian state will assume control over north-eastern Syria's institutions, including borders, airports, oil resources, and reportedly also camps and prisons holding IS fighters and affiliates, though the latter remains unconfirmed.<sup>122</sup>

In March 2025, heavy clashes intensified in north-eastern Syria with increased Turkish airstrikes on SDF positions in eastern Aleppo and Raqqa, causing high casualties but leaving frontlines unchanged, including around Tishrin Dam and Qarraha Qarquzaq Bridge.<sup>123</sup> In April 2025, Syrian security forces entered the Tishrin Dam area under an agreement with SDF to stabilise the region, following previous SDF-SNA clashes and a Türkiye-US agreement.<sup>124</sup> In early May 2025, the Kurdish-dominated Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) declared the end of its operation to secure the dam; on 19 May 2025, however, a Syrian army post near the dam was reportedly attacked, with SDF accused of being behind the attack but no claim of responsibility was made.<sup>125</sup>

At the Syrian Revolution Victory Conference on 29 January 2025, the majority of armed opposition factions – including SNA – announced their dissolution and integration into the newly established Ministry of Defence.<sup>126</sup> While SNA commanders have nominally agreed to integrate into the new Syrian army, several commanders from smaller factions oppose disarmament.<sup>127</sup> In May 2025, Human Rights Watch accused SNA factions of ongoing serious

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<sup>120</sup> SOHR, *Killing and injuring five fighters | Turkish fighter jets attack SDF position in Aleppo countryside*, 20 February 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Ongoing escalation | Two Turkish soldiers killed and military site destroyed in SDF attack on Qarra Quzaq frontline*, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>121</sup> Al Jazeera, *Will PKK leader Öcalan's call for group to dissolve end Türkiye conflict?*, 27 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>122</sup> ISW, *Iran Update*, 10 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>123</sup> ISW, *Iran Update*, 10 March 2025, [url](#); Etana Syria, *Syria Update #21*, 8 March 2025, [url](#); ISW, *Iran Update*, 25 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>124</sup> Enab Baladi, *Syrian army enters Tishrin Dam in Aleppo countryside*, 12 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>125</sup> Enab Baladi, *"قسد" تهاجم نقطة عسكرية في سد "تشرين" | ["SDF" attacks a military point in "Tishrin" Dam]*, 19 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>126</sup> MEMRI, *Syrian Leader Ahmed Al-Sharaa Delivers 'Victory Speech,' Outlines Syria's Future Roadmap, Announces Dissolution Of Ba'ath Party, Armed Factions Into New 'Syrian Army'*, 29 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>127</sup> New Lines Magazine, *Syria's New Rulers Are Working To Unify Military Power*, 25 February 2024, [url](#)

human rights abuses despite the fall of the Assad government.<sup>128</sup> Several factions within SNA maintain strong ties with Türkiye.<sup>129</sup>

### 2.2.6. *Clashes between government forces and Druze forces in the south*

Following the ousting of President Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, Syria has experienced significant political fragmentation in the Druze-majority governorate of Suweida. The Druze community has increasingly mobilised to assert autonomy and safeguard their interests.<sup>130</sup>

This has led to escalating tensions and violent confrontations between Druze militias and Syrian security forces. In February 2025, several Druze factions in Suweida established the Suweida Military Council, an umbrella organisation aimed at protecting the region from external threats and maintaining internal security. The council's formation was a response to the power vacuum left by the Syrian Arab Army's (SAA) withdrawal and the interim government's inability to assert control effectively.<sup>131</sup> The council has emphasised principles of secularism, democracy, and decentralisation, seeking integration into a reformed Syrian army while maintaining a degree of autonomy.<sup>132</sup>

Tensions escalated in April 2025 when pro-government forces clashed with Druze fighters in Jaramana and surrounding areas, resulting in nearly 100 deaths. As previously mentioned, Israel conducted airstrikes targeting Syrian military posts and anti-aircraft units in response, with the stated aim to protect Druze communities and prevent hostile forces from entering Druze villages.<sup>133</sup>

In May 2025, Druze representatives in the Jaramana area, located in the suburbs of Damascus, reached an agreement with Syrian government officials to surrender heavy weapons held by the Druze to the Syrian government and to support the presence of Syrian security forces in the region. Additionally, the governor of Suweida Governorate announced another agreement that allows the entry of official Syrian security forces into the area. This marks the first time that Syrian government forces are present in Suweida since the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government and the subsequent rise of Ahmad al-Sharaa to power.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>128</sup> HRW, Syria: *Türkiye-backed Armed Groups Detain, Extort Civilians*, 14 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>129</sup> Middle East Eye, *The Syrian National Army: Rebels, thugs or Turkish proxies?*, 7 December 2024, [url](#); Guardian (The), *Who are the main actors in the fall of the regime in Syria?*, 9 December 2024, [url](#); Voice of America, *A look at groups that captured Syria's Aleppo*, 2 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>130</sup> Guardian (The), *'We will keep protesting': Druze minority demands a voice in new Syria*, 30 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>131</sup> Türkiye Today, *Druze militias' strategy of patience in Sweida and Damascus*, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>132</sup> AP, *Syria's Druze seek a place in a changing nation, navigating pressures from the government and Israel*, 10 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>133</sup> AP, *UN envoy condemns intense wave of Israeli airstrikes on Syria*, 3 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>134</sup> Times of Israel (The), *After clashes, Syrian Druze leaders sign deal to hand over heavy weapons to regime*, 2 May 2025, [url](#)

After the Syrian government and Druze representatives had signed the agreements, clashes broke out between local forces loyal to the central Syrian government and another armed group in Suweida Governorate.<sup>135</sup>

In May 2025, it was announced that a police force composed of residents from Suweida had begun operating in the governorate. Despite this, tensions remained high in the area that same month when armed gunmen assaulted Governor Mustafa al-Bakour at gunpoint, demanding the release of a convicted prisoner who was subsequently set free.<sup>136</sup> The governor resigned a few days after the incident.<sup>137</sup>

### *2.2.7. Clashes between security forces and Lebanese militias in the border areas*

In February 2025, clashes erupted between armed forces under the control of the Syrian interim government and Lebanese militias on the border between Syria and Lebanon. The fighting has been concentrated in a zone that crosses the border between the two nations, close to the town of Qusair, roughly 30 kilometres south-west of Homs.<sup>138</sup>

In March 2025, Syria's interim government claimed that fighters from the Lebanese militia Hezbollah entered Syrian territory, ambushed and kidnapped three Syrian soldiers, brought them back to Lebanese territory, and executed them. Although Hezbollah denied the accusation, Syrian forces began shelling Lebanese territory, resulting in dozens of casualties.<sup>139</sup> After a couple of days of fighting, a ceasefire was agreed upon between the defence ministers of Syria and Lebanon.<sup>140</sup>

Media outlets reported in April 2025 that hostilities had been reignited along the Syrian-Lebanese border, as skirmishes allegedly broke out between unknown combatants from both countries. Syrian authorities blamed Hezbollah for sparking the renewed conflict.<sup>141</sup>

High level meetings between Syrian and Lebanon continued in the end of May in order to improve cooperation between the authorities alongside the border to coordinate efforts to combat smuggling operations.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Syria Direct, *As tensions run high, will Suwayda's security agreement hold?*, 7 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>136</sup> Enab Baladi, *As-Suwayda: Armed group storms Governor's office*, 22 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>137</sup> Enab Baladi, *Governor of As-Suwayda Mustafa Bakour resigns following recent attack*, 24 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>138</sup> Le Monde, *Fighting between Syria's new army and Lebanese militias rages on border*, 10 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>139</sup> Al Jazeera, *Lebanon-Syria border clashes reflect new realities on the ground*, 24 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>140</sup> Reuters, *Lebanon and Syria agree on ceasefire after deadly cross-border clashes*, 17 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>141</sup> This is Beirut, *Renewed Lebanese-Syrian Border Clashes*, 24 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>142</sup> Arab News, *Lebanon takes border measures in coordination with Damascus to curb smuggling*, 29 May 2025, [url](#)

### 2.2.8. *Attacks by the Islamic State (IS)*

The Islamic State (IS) continues to pose a threat to the security in Syria. In 2024, IS was resurgent in Syria and was conducting on average 59 attacks per month. After the fall of the Assad government in December 2024, the attacks have fallen to an average of 12 per month.<sup>143</sup>

In January 2025, Syrian authorities foiled an attempt by IS fighters to blow up a revered Shia shrine in a Damascus suburb, state news agency SANA reported.<sup>144</sup>

In April 2025, IS killed five Kurdish fighters in an attack in Deir ez-Zor, eastern Syria, marking one of its deadliest assaults in recent times. The attack has caused growing concerns about IS' resurgence. Farhad Shami, spokesperson for the Kurdish-led SDF, confirmed the deaths, emphasising the significance of this assault.<sup>145</sup>

In May 2025, IS reportedly conducted its first attack against Syrian government forces since the fall of Bashar al-Assad; in two separate incidents, IS claimed to have attacked the new security forces with IEDs (improvised explosive device) in Suweida on 22 and 28 May 2025.<sup>146</sup>

According to the Syrian journalist interviewed for this report, the threat posed by IS remains and is growing in the governorate of Deir ez-Zor; between 1 and 21 May 2025, the source reported 11 IS attacks in the area, targeting both military and civilian actors. In the Badiya desert, however, stretching from Deir ez-Zor to Suweida, IS activity has declined, supposedly due to the presence of the US-led coalition's al-Tanf base, which provides support to Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces in the area. In addition to conducting attacks, IS has reportedly extorted civilians on the pretext of collecting alms.<sup>147</sup>

Although IS thus continues to conduct attacks, the number of fatalities has dropped significantly since the fall of the Assad government.

Currently, an estimated 9 000 to 10 000 IS combatants and approximately 40 000 of their family members are detained in north-eastern Syria under the control of SDF.<sup>148</sup>

### 2.2.9. *Explosive hazards*

After 14 years of conflict, Syria is heavily contaminated by mines, shells, bombs and other explosive remnants of war. More than 1 million explosive munitions have presumably been used in Syria since 2011, and, according to mine action experts, 10–30 % of explosive munitions

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<sup>143</sup> Middle East Institute, *ISIS is on the ropes in Syria. A successful transition in Damascus could deliver a knockout blow*, 14 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>144</sup> Al Jazeera, *Syrian intelligence says it thwarted ISIL attempt to blow up Shia shrine*, 11 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>145</sup> Al Jazeera, *ISIL group kills five Kurdish fighters in attack in eastern Syria*, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>146</sup> BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian outlets assess first IS attacks since fall of Bashar al-Assad*, 30 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>147</sup> Syrian journalist: 10, 13

<sup>148</sup> Middle East Institute, *ISIS is on the ropes in Syria. A successful transition in Damascus could deliver a knockout blow*, 14 April 2025, [url](#)

fail to detonate. This explosive ordnance contamination across Syria constitutes a fatal risk for civilians returning home.<sup>149</sup>

Explosive hazards such as unexploded ordnance, IEDs and landmines kill or injure people in Syria on a regular basis. Syrian children reportedly constitute one third of casualties.<sup>150</sup> As more displaced persons are returning home, sometimes to villages that have been abandoned for years, casualties of explosive hazards are reportedly increasing.<sup>151</sup> Since December 2024, more than 600 people have been killed or injured by explosive remnants of war across Syria.<sup>152</sup>

Unexploded ordnance in Syria is found on farmland, roads, in irrigation systems, in water and electricity infrastructure in hospitals, schools, riverbeds, on bridges, commercial properties and in residential areas. Since December 2024, the majority of accidents occurred in agricultural sites, e.g. as people were trying to cultivate land.<sup>153</sup>

Explosive remnants of war constitute particularly a hazard in areas where deminers have had limited access, such as Manbij, Tel Abiad and Ras al-Ain pocket, Kobane, Deir ez-Zor, Rural Damascus, Suweida, Daraa, Hama, rural Aleppo and rural Idlib.<sup>154</sup> Returnees in former frontline areas in north-west Syria face high levels of explosive ordnance contamination.<sup>155</sup>

On top of heavy contamination in some rural areas, military bases are contaminated by unexploded ordnance. Human Rights Watch spoke with parents of children injured by unexploded ordnance at abandoned military bases in Daraa. Many military bases are reportedly not closed or secured, which makes it possible for children to enter the bases to play, with the risk of encountering unexploded ordnance.<sup>156</sup>

Finally, in addition to endangering lives, unexploded ordnance disrupts livelihoods; farmers report that the unexploded ordnance contamination is affecting their livelihoods, as they cannot cultivate their land or have their animals graze on it.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, [url](#); GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); New Humanitarian (The), *Mines: The deadly legacy of Syria's war*, 10 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>150</sup> GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); New Humanitarian (The), *Mines: The deadly legacy of Syria's war*, 10 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>151</sup> New Humanitarian (The), *Mines: The deadly legacy of Syria's war*, 10 April 2025, [url](#); HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>152</sup> HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>153</sup> GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>154</sup> GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); New Humanitarian (The), *Mines: The deadly legacy of Syria's war*, 10 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>155</sup> GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>156</sup> HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>157</sup> GPC, *Protection landscape in Syria; A snapshot | March 2025*, 3 April 2025, [url](#); HRW, *Syria: Landmines, Explosive Remnants Harming Civilians*, 8 April 2025, [url](#)

### 2.3. Security incidents

In the reporting period from 1 January to 31 May 2025, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)<sup>158</sup> recorded 3 544 security incidents: 690 of these were coded as battles; 1 527 as explosions/remote violence; and 1 327 as violence against civilians.<sup>159</sup>

Most recorded security incidents took place in January (1 077), with fewer incidents in April (464) and May (470). In March, violence against civilians constituted a larger proportion of the total recorded security events in that month compared to other months, which is likely related to the violence in the coastal areas described above.<sup>160</sup>

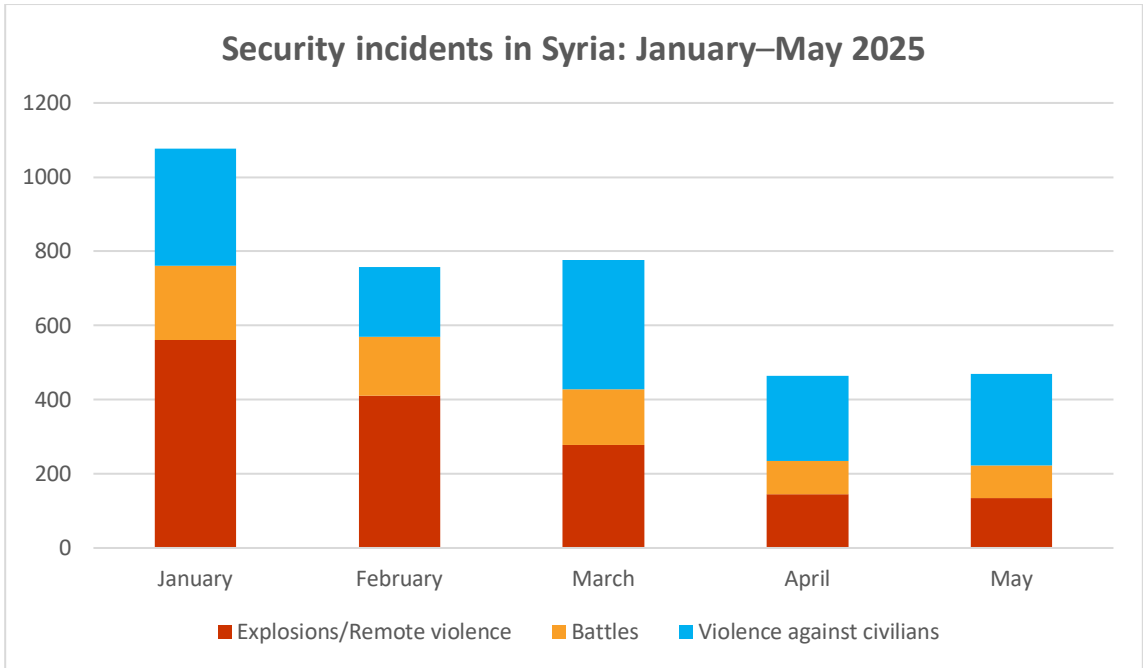


Figure 2: ACLED security events coded as ‘Battles’, ‘Explosions/Remote violence’, and ‘Violence against civilians’<sup>161</sup> between 1 January and 31 May 2025.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>158</sup> ACLED describes itself as ‘a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping initiative. ACLED collects information on the dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events around the world.’ ACLED, *About ACLED*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>159</sup> ACLED uses the term ‘security event’ when registering these security incidents. In accordance with EUAA’s use of ACLED data (e.g. see the EUAA report *Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, p. 10), the term ‘security incident’ is used here and solely includes these three event categories: battles; explosions/remote violence; and violence against civilians

<sup>160</sup> ACLED, *Curated Data Files, Syria* (17 June 2025), [url](#)

<sup>161</sup> ‘Explosions/Remote violence’ includes attacks using landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and chemical weapons, regardless of whether the target is civilian or military; ‘Battles’ involves armed clashes between two organised parties; and ‘Violence against civilians’ refers to deliberate attacks on non-combatant individuals. ACLED, *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Codebook*, [url](#)

<sup>162</sup> DIS analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, *Curated Data Files, Syria* (17 June 2025), [url](#)

Most security incidents recorded by ACLED during the reported period occurred in Aleppo (853) and Deir ez-Zor (547), with fewer incidents recorded in Quneitra (32) and Damascus (42), as illustrated in figure 3 below.<sup>163</sup>

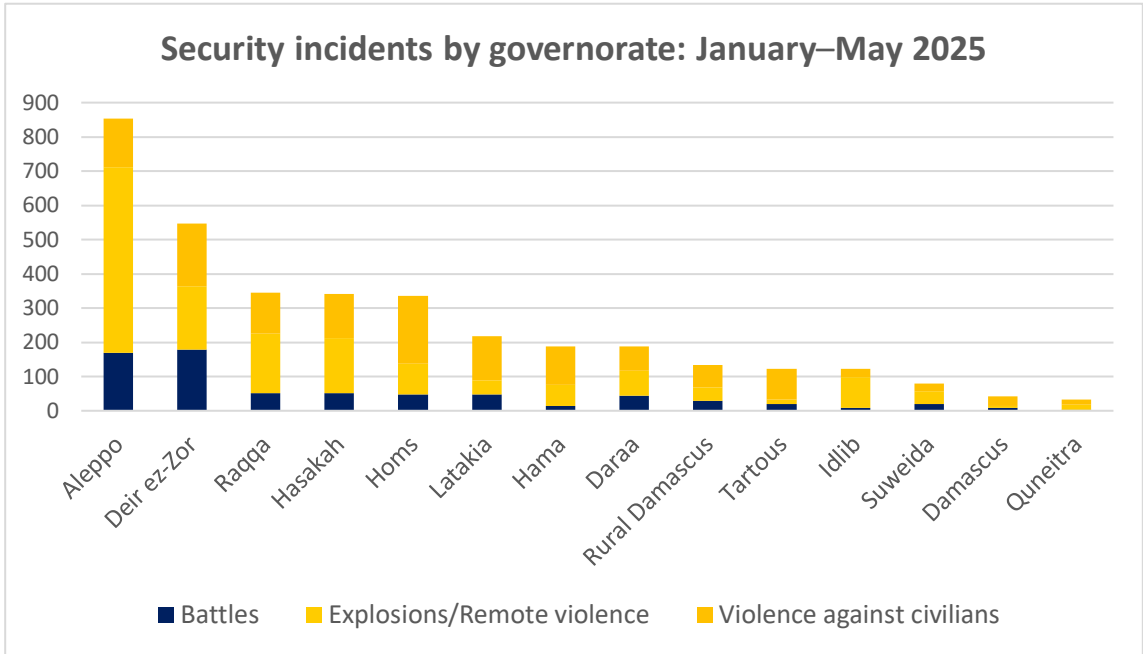


Figure 3: ACLED security events coded as ‘Battles’, ‘Explosions/Remote violence’, and ‘Violence against civilians’<sup>164</sup> on governorate level between 1 January and 31 May 2025<sup>165</sup>

<sup>163</sup> ACLED, *Curated Data Files, Syria* (17 June 2025), [url](#)

<sup>164</sup> ‘Explosions/Remote violence’ includes attacks using landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and chemical weapons, regardless of whether the target is civilian or military; ‘Battles’ involves armed clashes between two organised parties; and ‘Violence against civilians’ refers to deliberate attacks on non-combatant individuals. ACLED, *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Codebook*, [url](#)

<sup>165</sup> DIS analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, *Curated Data Files, Syria* (17 June 2025), [url](#)



### 3. Freedom of movement

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Freedom of movement in Syria has generally improved since the fall of the former government. Civilians are now able to travel between governorates and within major cities, such as Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo, as well as in the cities in Rural Damascus without facing significant restrictions.<sup>166</sup> Fixed checkpoints that previously impeded travel have largely disappeared from urban areas, with remaining checkpoints mainly situated along intercity highways and in considerably lower numbers than before.<sup>167</sup> The level of scrutiny at these checkpoints has also decreased, and the risk of arbitrary arrests has been significantly reduced.<sup>168</sup>

Reports of extortion at checkpoints, once widespread, are now rare and considered exceptions rather than the norm.<sup>169</sup> Under the former government, extortion at checkpoints was particularly rampant. For instance, on routes between Damascus and SDF-controlled areas, travellers were often stopped, forced to pay bribes, and questioned about their sectarian affiliations. This practice continued for two to three months after the fall of the previous government during which time travellers were also questioned about their sectarian background, including whether they were Alawites.<sup>170</sup>

The new authorities appear to actively ensure unobstructed movement on major roads to avoid negative publicity.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, a degree of caution still governs people's travel patterns, particularly after dark. People generally do not have anxieties about travelling during the daytime across most governorates; however, many civilians avoid nighttime travel due to persistent security concerns.<sup>172</sup> In former opposition-controlled areas in north-western Syria, for instance Idlib city and northern Aleppo, residents reportedly feel safe moving around at night,<sup>173</sup> although in rural areas of Idlib, the security environment is different – in these areas, people refrain from moving around after dark.<sup>174</sup> In areas suspected of being supportive of the Assad government, residents are generally reluctant to travel outside their localities, even during the day, due to fear of abuse at checkpoints.<sup>175</sup>

Women's freedom of movement, i.e. travelling from one city to another without being stopped or being subjected to harassment, also varies depending on the area and the checkpoint in question.<sup>176</sup> Ad hoc gender segregation has been observed in public transportation, preventing

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<sup>166</sup> SOHR: 12; Syrian journalist: 22

<sup>167</sup> Syrian journalist: 22

<sup>168</sup> SOHR: 14; Syrian journalist: 22

<sup>169</sup> Syrian journalist: 22

<sup>170</sup> SOHR: 13

<sup>171</sup> SOHR: 17

<sup>172</sup> SOHR: 15; Syrian journalist: 23

<sup>173</sup> Syrian journalist: 23; SOHR: 15

<sup>174</sup> SOHR: 15

<sup>175</sup> Syrian journalist: 23

<sup>176</sup> SOHR: 16

unrelated men and women from sitting next to each other. This practice, however, is not formalised or consistent, and it is not clear whether it results from local initiatives or central directives.<sup>177</sup> According to the news outlet Watan (11 January 2025), the Syrian transport company ‘Zajal Transport’ planned to introduce gender segregation on its buses in Damascus as already implemented in the company’s busses in cities like Idlib and Aleppo. Men would sit at the front and use the front door, while women would sit at the back and use the rear door. The measure was planned for all Syrian cities.<sup>178</sup>

The gender segregation in public transport tends to draw more attention in the former government-held areas where residents are not accustomed to such practices. In some rare instances, checkpoint personnel have intervened directly in passenger seating arrangements.<sup>179</sup> SOHR mentioned a recent case of a Christian woman traveling from Hama city to Maharda being questioned for sitting in the front seat without covering her hair.<sup>180</sup>

Despite the reduction in formal obstacles, the continued presence of checkpoints and military personnel manning them remains a source of irritation for many Syrians who perceive them as restrictions on their freedom of movement. Although civilians sometimes lodge complaints about mistreatment, responses from authorities are inconsistent.<sup>181</sup>

Challenges also persist with regard to transportation infrastructure and affordability. While bus connections between Damascus and other governorates are relatively functional, the availability of public transport between certain governorates remains limited; for instance, there are only three to four daily bus departures between rural areas near Hama and Hama city itself.<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, the cost of public transportation remains high relative to ordinary Syrians’ purchasing power, even though the Syrian pound has recently appreciated.<sup>183</sup>

In north-eastern Syria, east of the Euphrates River, freedom of movement remains largely unchanged; however, the cessation of Turkish bombardments has alleviated some of the fear associated with traveling in the region, for instance moving between cities such as Hasakah and surrounding rural areas, including towns near the Turkish border like al-Malikiyah, as well as between Hasakah and Deir ez-Zor.<sup>184</sup>

On smaller roads, security risks persist due to the presence of extremist groups who sometimes harass travellers at checkpoints. According to SOHR, although such actors are not authorised to operate independently and require orders from higher authorities, incidents of harassment remain widespread, and the authorities are allegedly aware of their prevalence.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> SOHR: 16

<sup>178</sup> Watan News, *Damascus to Enforce Gender Segregation on Public and Private Buses*, 11 January, [url](#)

<sup>179</sup> Syrian journalist: 24

<sup>180</sup> SOHR: 16

<sup>181</sup> Syrian journalist: 25

<sup>182</sup> Syrian journalist: 26

<sup>183</sup> Syrian journalist: 27

<sup>184</sup> Syrian journalist: 28

<sup>185</sup> SOHR: 17

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## Annex 1: Meeting minutes

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### Online interview with a Syrian journalist, 22 May 2025

*About the source:* The source currently works for a Syrian TV channel and has previously worked for the Syrian news outlet, Enab Baladi.

#### *General security situation*

1. There are different factors impacting the security situation in different areas in Syria, making it difficult to generalise about the security situation. These factors include among others:
  - whether the area in question was previously a stronghold of the Syrian opposition or perceived as having supported the former government,
  - people's political, religious, and sectarian affiliations,
  - local conditions and dynamics. For example, the source's place of origin – Salamiyah in Hama Governorate – was previously viewed as loyal to the former government, however, the area is today considered one of the calmest and most stable areas in Syria.
2. Since the fall of the former government, the new authorities have focused on securing key cities such as Damascus and Aleppo. As a result, violations in these areas are limited compared to other parts of the country. Damascus remains the most stable area, due to the central authorities' emphasis on maintaining order in the capital.
3. In the coastal region, widespread violations were committed against the local population in the immediate aftermath of the former government's fall. These violations have since decreased in urban centres, but they continue in the countryside, including in the coastal areas as well as in Hama and Homs governorates.
4. The nature of violations in the coastal areas differs from those in other parts of Syria. As these areas were once the heartland of the former government's military and security apparatus, the current security personnel – many of whom are former opposition fighters – often display a hostile attitude towards the local population. This hostility stems from grievances over abuses committed by the former authorities in opposition-held areas. For instance, a civilian from Slanfah – a town formerly supportive of the previous government – may be subjected to hostile treatment by new security personnel at a checkpoint in rural Latakia, despite standing orders not to harass civilians. However, this attitude cannot be generalised to all security personnel.
5. In Hama, the situation is different. The city of Hama, which historically opposed the former government, generally does not witness harassment at checkpoints. By

contrast, residents of Alawite villages in Sahl al-Ghab (Hama Governorate) are reportedly subjected to ongoing violations. Recently, a military group forcibly displaced an entire village population in this area, allowing the group's relatives to resettle there after their original homes were destroyed.

6. It remains difficult to generalise about the current violations in Syria. In one recent incident in Salamiyah (Hama Governorate), a man drinking alcohol at home was attacked and beaten by security personnel, who also ransacked his house. The attackers fled the scene, suggesting the assault was not officially sanctioned. Enab Baladi contacted the General Intelligence Service (GIS) (in Arabic جهاز المخابرات العامة), which subsequently announced that the responsible individuals had been dismissed and arrested.
7. In Homs Governorate, violations do occur but are less frequent than in northern rural Hama. In western Homs, near the Lebanese border, civilians face different threats. This area, once controlled by Hezbollah, was a hub for arms and drug smuggling. Some armed groups formerly opposed to the former government have now returned as gangs rather than formal military units, posing an ongoing challenge for the new authorities.
8. In Aleppo Governorate, the situation is more complex. Although the region is nominally under the control of the new authorities, divisions between formerly held territories persist. In eastern Aleppo, previously controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), areas have witnessed kidnappings and robberies carried out by the Syrian National Army (SNA). These violations against civilians were significant enough to prompt interventions by security forces in towns such as Manbij, Afrin, and Jarablus.
9. In northern Aleppo, Kurdish civilians continue to face harassment and abuse. Similar patterns are observed in SDF-held areas such as Hasakah, Raqqah, and eastern Deir ez-Zor, where violations now primarily are committed against the Arab population.
10. In Deir ez-Zor Governorate, the threat from pro-Iranian militias has decreased, but the threat posed by the so-called Islamic State (IS) remains and is growing. Between 1 and 21 May 2025, the source reported 11 IS attacks in the area, targeting both military and civilian actors. IS has reportedly extorted civilians on the pretext of collecting alms.
11. Some of the residents of Deir ez-Zor City are sometimes accused of joining pro-Iranian militias during the previous government, although these affiliations were often economically rather than ideologically motivated. Notably, Deir ez-Zor is the only governorate where the security situation in the city is largely similar to that of the countryside.

## SYRIA – SECURITY SITUATION

12. In Al-Bukamal, near the Iraqi border, the authorities carried out raids on villages just 48 hours before the interview. This area previously formed part of a key arms smuggling corridor between Iraq and Lebanon. The long-term impact of these raids on civilians is still unclear, but the area remains unstable.
13. In the Badiya desert, stretching from Deir ez-Zor to Suweida, IS activity has declined. This reduction is attributed to the presence of the US-led coalition's al-Tanf base, which provides support to Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces in the area.
14. In areas like eastern Hama, security dynamics are influenced by the fact that areas formerly controlled by the opposition have not been disarmed, unlike areas previously held by the former government. For instance, Tel Jedid—a pro-government village—has been disarmed, while Uqayribat, once under opposition control, retains its weapons. Armed tribal groups from Uqayribat have attacked shepherds in Tel Jedid and stolen livestock without facing repercussions. The situation is the same in the areas of eastern Hama, though it cannot be generalised to all regions.
15. Residents in disarmed areas typically remain indoors after 8 p.m., whereas in areas where weapons have been retained, life continues outside into the evening.
16. In Rural Damascus, particularly in al-Tal, acts of revenge continue against individuals suspected of involvement with the former government. These acts are reportedly committed by former opposition fighters who had been relocated to northern Syria by the Assad government and have since returned.
17. In areas such as Jaramana and Sahnaya, tensions persist. Residents are sometimes accused of supporting Israel, which affects their daily lives and freedom of movement, especially when travelling to districts such as Bab Toma in Damascus.
18. In southern governorates such as Suweida and Quneitra, central government control is limited due to Israeli incursions. The source reported violations – i.e. arrests, shootings, and killings of civilians, including journalists and farmers. The source personally knows of two incidents in Quneitra and one in Daraa involving Israeli attacks on civilians.
19. In Suweida, the security landscape is shaped by the presence of local armed factions operating independently of central government authority. The majority Druze population coexists with a Sunni Bedouin minority, the latter often accused of supporting the new government, while the Druze are conversely alleged to be aligned with Israel. This mutual suspicion has led to recurring clashes between the two groups. In addition, eastern Suweida regularly experiences mortar attacks, for which no group has claimed responsibility – likely reflecting broader sectarian tensions within the governorate.

20. The Druze face multiple threats: Israeli expansion, tribal attacks, mortar fire, and a central government that many Druze distrust. Internal divisions among the Druze community are not necessarily based on support for or opposition to Israel or the central government, but rather on competing priorities – whether to focus on preserving Druze unity or on participating in a unified Syrian state.
21. The largest military groups in Suweida have expressed willingness to integrate into the new security forces and to allow the entry of central government forces into the governorate.

### *Freedom of movement*

22. Civilians now generally experience greater freedom of movement compared to the period under the former government. Fixed checkpoints have largely disappeared from major cities such as Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, and towns in the Rural Damascus region. Checkpoints are mainly found along intercity highways, though they are far fewer in number than before. Reports of civilians being extorted at checkpoints – once widespread – are no longer common, and if such incidents occur, they are considered exceptions. Moreover, checks at these points are not conducted with the same level of scrutiny as in the past.
23. There is a notable difference between daytime and nighttime mobility. In most governorates, civilians move freely during the day but tend to avoid travel after dark. The degree of caution varies by region. For example, in northwestern Syria, including Idlib and northern Aleppo, which were previously controlled by the opposition, people do move around within these areas – even at night – but refrain from travelling outside their area to other governorates at night. In contrast, in areas associated with support for the Assad government, although residents may still move around within their own locality, they are generally reluctant to travel outside it – even during the day – due to fears of abuse at checkpoints.
24. In areas formerly under government control, a new phenomenon has been observed: the occasional gender segregation in public transportation. This entails that unrelated men and women are not permitted to sit next to each other. It is important to note that this segregation is ad hoc and not a formal or consistent practice, even in the areas where it has been observed. It remains unclear whether this stems from a central directive or is the result of actions by private individuals or local actors. Gender segregation has also been noted in areas that were formerly under opposition control but tends to draw more attention in the former government-held areas where residents are not accustomed to such practices. In rare instances, checkpoint personnel have also intervened in the seating arrangements of buses, instructing passengers on how men and women should be seated.

25. Forty years of rule under the Assad family created a strained relationship and deep mistrust between civilians and the military. As a result, many people are irritated by the continued presence of checkpoints and military personnel, regardless of who controls them, seeing them as obstacles to their freedom of movement. Civilians sometimes voice complaints about mistreatment at checkpoints to the relevant authorities. These authorities occasionally intervene but not consistently.
26. An ongoing issue when travelling between governorates is the shortage of transport options. Existing vehicles are insufficient to meet public demand. While bus travel between Damascus and other governorates is relatively straightforward, transportation between or within other governorates remains difficult. For instance, there are only three to four daily bus departures between rural areas near Hama and Hama city itself.
27. Another challenge is the cost of public transportation, which remains relatively high for many Syrians. Although the Syrian pound has recently appreciated – a positive development – this has not translated into improved living conditions or purchasing power for ordinary citizens.
28. In the areas east of the Euphrates River in northeastern Syria, the situation regarding freedom of movement remains largely unchanged. However, Turkish bombardments have ceased, leading to a notable decline in fear among civilians when traveling between cities such as Hasakah and surrounding rural areas, including towns near the Turkish border like al-Malikiyah, or between Hasakah and Deir ez-Zor.

### Online interview with the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), 23 May 2025

#### *General security situation*

1. The overall security situation in Syria is relatively stable, with fewer security incidents reported in the past two months. However, the situation remains volatile in various regions due to the presence of extremist Islamist groups, particularly in Hama, Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, Rural Damascus, and Deir ez-Zor. These groups contribute to ongoing insecurity through assassinations, kidnappings, and robberies. As long as security responsibilities remain divided between state and non-state actors, stability cannot be entirely ensured.
2. It is not possible to generalise about the security situation at the governorate level, nor can broad distinctions be drawn between urban and rural areas. Security conditions vary significantly, even within the same city or region. For instance, the day before the

interview, an incident occurred in Idlib, a city otherwise considered to have a relatively stable security situation, involving the extrajudicial execution of two individuals suspected of killing a member of the general security service.

3. Another example is Damascus, where the situation has shown signs of improvement, with fewer checkpoint arrests and a reduction in overall security incidents. However, isolated violent events still occur. One recent case involved a shooting inside a casino. Nightclubs are also considered vulnerable to attacks. Islamist groups affiliated with the new government have reportedly targeted alcohol vendors in both Damascus and Homs.
4. The risk of being killed or injured does not differ significantly by region for those suspected of affiliation with the former government. Such individuals are considered to be at high risk nationwide. Killings of perceived affiliates of the former government occur on a daily basis.
5. For ordinary civilians, the risk of physical harm is limited, except for specific groups, including Alawites, Shia Muslims, and, to a lesser extent, Druze. Even Sunni Muslims may be targeted if suspected of ties to the former government – for instance, individuals from areas previously under Assad government control such as Damascus and surrounding areas or those who served as mukhtars or were associated with *shabiha*. It might happen that an armed, extremist person attacks an Alawite even in Damascus.
6. During the events of 7–9 March 2025, massacres and acts of genocide were perpetrated against Alawite communities. If international media had not reported on those incidents, there would have been much more bloodshed. Many Alawite residents of coastal areas and the governorates of Hama and Homs have yet to return to their homes.
7. Individuals perceived as opponents of the current government led by al-Sharaa, along with Alawites and, to a lesser extent, Shia Muslims, remain under threat. A notable example cited is a Saudi cleric who currently leads Friday prayers in Baniyas (Tartous) – a city where many Alawites were killed in March – and who has openly called for the killing of Alawites.
8. The risk of being killed or injured for the above-mentioned groups varies across governorates but is not limited to minority groups. In Aleppo, Sunni civilians have reportedly been killed on accusations of affiliation with the former government. The new authorities have not intervened to prevent these killings; state-affiliated groups are allegedly behind those killings.



9. It remains unclear whether such killings occur on orders of or with consent of senior government officials or whether they are carried out by rogue elements not under central control. Between 1 and 23 May 2025 alone, 82 individuals were reportedly executed on sectarian grounds or due to accusations of affiliation with the former government.
10. From 1 January to 23 May 2025, a total of 670 civilians were reportedly killed for sectarian or political reasons, excluding the March killings along the coast. Victims include Alawites, Shia Muslims, a smaller number of Druze, and Sunnis. The figure does not include armed members of the former government; all 670 were unarmed civilians.
11. In areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the security situation is largely stable. The only significant security threat in these areas stems from dormant cells of the Islamic State (IS).

### *Freedom of movement*

12. Freedom of movement across Syria is generally unrestricted. It is currently possible to travel between governorates and within major cities – such as Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, and in cities in Rural Damascus – without significant issues.
13. Under the former government, travel was hindered by checkpoints where extortion was common. For example, drivers travelling from Damascus to SDF-controlled areas were frequently stopped and forced to pay bribes. This practice continued for two to three months following the fall of the previous government, during which time travellers were also questioned about their sectarian background, including whether they were Alawites.
14. Today, movement has become considerably easier. Although checkpoints still exist, the level of scrutiny has decreased, and people do not risk being arbitrarily arrested as under the previous government. Traffic between Damascus and the coastal region, or between Damascus and Aleppo, flows freely.
15. While daytime travel is common, people generally avoid travelling at night due to security concerns. An exception is Idlib city, which has been under opposition control throughout the conflict. Here residents reportedly do not fear moving around after dark. In contrast, the situation is different in rural areas of Idlib.
16. Women's freedom of movement, i.e. travelling from one city to another without being stopped or being subjected to harassment, also varies depending on the area and the checkpoint in question. For instance, a Christian woman travelling by minibus from Hama city to Maharda (a Christian town in rural Hama) was recently questioned at a checkpoint for sitting in the front seat and not covering her hair.

17. Freedom of movement is widely observed on major roads. The new authorities seek to avoid negative publicity and therefore work to ensure unobstructed travel on main roads. However, travelling on smaller routes remain unsafe due to the presence of extremist groups who may harass travellers at checkpoints. The authorities are allegedly aware of such harassments, which are reportedly widespread, as these actors are not authorised to act independently and require orders from higher-level authorities.

## Annex 2: Terms of Reference (ToR)

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### Syria – Security situation after the fall of the Assad government

1. General security situation in Syria
  - 1.1. Armed actors and territorial control
  - 1.2. Latest developments
  - 1.3. Security incidents across Syria
  - 1.4. Freedom of movement
  
2. Security situation by governorate
  - 2.1. Damascus
  - 2.2. Rural Damascus
  - 2.3. Latakia
  - 2.4. Tartous
  - 2.5. Aleppo
  - 2.6. Homs
  - 2.7. Daraa
  - 2.8. Quneitra
  - 2.9. Idlib
  - 2.10. Hama
  - 2.11. Suweida
  - 2.12. Raqqa
  - 2.13. Deir ez-Zor
  - 2.14. Hasakah