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Introduction

This Country of Origin Information (COI) Report was drawn up on the basis of the points for attention mentioned in the Terms of Reference (ToR) compiled by the Ministry of Asylum and Migration. The ToR for this Country of Origin Information Report were adopted on 11 August 2025. This ToR, together with the report, is available at the Dutch Government's website.

This general COI report describes the situation in Syria insofar as it is relevant to the assessment of asylum applications from persons originating from that country and to decision-making on the return of rejected Syrian asylum seekers. It is an update of the General Country of Origin Information Report of May 2025.¹ The reporting period runs from May 2025 to December 2025. Outlines of relevant developments of importance for answering the questions posed in the ToR are included up to the date of delivery.

This report is a factual, neutral and objective representation of the findings that were made during the period under consideration. It is not a policy document and does not reflect the vision or policy of the Dutch government in relation to Syria. The report does not contain any conclusions concerning immigration policy.

This COI Report has been compiled on the basis of public and confidential sources, using carefully selected, analysed and verified information. In the compilation of this report, use was made of information from various United Nations (UN) organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), reports from the European Country of Origin Information (COI) organisations, specialist literature and media reporting. Except where the facts are generally undisputed or unless stated otherwise, the content in this report is based on multiple sources. The public sources that were consulted are listed in Chapter 5 of this COI Report.

This COI Report also uses information obtained from interviews conducted with relevant and expert sources. These interviews were conducted partly in person – in particular, during fact-finding missions to Syria, Türkiye, Jordan and Lebanon – and partly online during the research for this COI Report. Some confidential information originates from the foreign diplomatic missions of the Netherlands. The information gleaned in this way was mainly used to support and augment passages founded on publicly available information. Each of these sources is marked as a 'confidential source' in the footnotes and accompanied by a date. Where possible, information obtained from confidential sources is supported by information from other sources.

Chapter 1 covers administrative and military control. Chapter 2 discusses the security situation. Chapter 3 discusses the human rights situation. The report concludes with a chapter on return to Syria.

¹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *COI Report on Syria*, May 2025, [url](#).

1 Administrative and military control

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Power takeover

On 8 December 2024, a broad ad hoc coalition of armed opposition groups, led by the Committee for the Liberation of the Levant (*Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*, HTS), overthrew the regime of President Bashar al-Assad during Operation Deterrence of Aggression by capturing the major cities of Aleppo (29 November 2024), Hama (5 December 2024) and Homs (7 December 2024) within twelve days, while another ad hoc coalition of armed groups from the southern provinces was the first to reach the capital, Damascus.² Following the takeover of power, an interim administration was established for a transitional period until March 2025.³ Within this administration, the key positions were assigned to individuals affiliated with HTS and the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG).⁴ See paragraph 1.6.4 of the general Country of Origin Information Report on Syria of December 2024 for further information on the SSG and paragraph 1.3.1 of the COI Report on Syria of May 2025 for further information on the interim administration.

1.1.2 Victory Conference

During the Victory Conference of the Syrian revolution in Damascus on 29 January 2025, the joint military command of HTS and affiliated armed groups (Military Operations Command, MOC) proclaimed HTS leader Ahmed al-Sharaa as president. A spokesperson for the MOC stated that the 2012 Constitution had been suspended and that the parliament, the Ba'ath Party and the security apparatus of the former regime had been formally dissolved. He further stated that all armed factions and 'political and civil revolutionary bodies'⁵ would be dissolved and integrated into state institutions.⁶

1.1.3 Transitional Government

In early March 2025, President al-Sharaa announced the establishment of a transitional government (Syrian Transitional Government, STG). This government was to remain in office for a period of five years. On 29 March 2025, President al-Sharaa announced the ministerial appointments. The number of ministries had been reduced from 30 to 23.⁷ The cabinet did not include a prime minister.⁸ Within the transitional government, the key positions, including the ministerial posts of Interior, Foreign Affairs and Defence, were held by individuals affiliated with HTS or the SSG.⁹ According to one source, it was not known whether the cabinet met on a

² The Syrian Observer, *Operation Deterrence of Aggression: Opposition forces redraw the map in northern Syria*, 30 November 2024; CNN, *The Assad regime ruled Syria for 50 years. Here's how it fell in less than two weeks*, 9 December 2024; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian president marks year since 'liberation' of Aleppo*, 30 November 2025.

³ EuroNews, *Syria's interim government will stay in power until March, reports say*, 10 December 2024; France 24, *New Syria PM says will 'guarantee' all religious groups' rights*, 12 December 2024.

⁴ Jihadology+, *Biographies of the HTS salvation government ministers*, 15 December 2024; confidential source, September 2025.

⁵ The Ba'ath party, the *National Progressive Front* (NPF) and affiliated organisations, institutions and committees.

⁶ Enab Baladi, *General Command appoints Ahmed al-Sharaa as president of Syria*, 29 January 2025; SANA, *Statement by Military Operations Command announcing Syrian Revolution Victory*, 30 January 2025; Al Jazeera, *Syria's Baath party dissolved: What happens next?*, 30 January 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syria: What comes after declaration of victory*, 6 February 2025; MEI, *Building Syria's new army: Future plans and the challenges ahead*, 12 June 2025.

⁷ CNN, *Syria swears in new transitional government months after Assad's removal*, 30 March 2025; Al-Monitor, *What we know about Syria's new government*, 30 March 2025.

⁸ The New Arab, *What to know about Syria's new cabinet and its top ministers*, 30 March 2025; Reuters, *Syria's president al-Sharaa forms new transitional government*, 30 March 2025; SANA, *President al-Sharaa chairs regular cabinet meeting*, 30 May 2025.

⁹ The New Arab, *Syrian president Ahmed al-Sharaa's brother gets senior role in government*, 6 April 2025; Etana, *Brief: Syria's interim cabinet – between inclusion & power consolidation*, 28 April 2025; IISS, *From fragmentation to*

weekly basis.¹⁰ See paragraph 1.3.2 of the COI Report on Syria of May 2025 for further information on the transitional government.

1.2 (State) institutions

1.2.1 State institutions in government-controlled areas

During the reporting period, the area under the control of the transitional government comprised the former opposition-held area in the north-west and large parts of the former regime-held area.¹¹ In practice, the transitional government exercised effective control primarily over the cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama and Idlib. In rural and desert areas, the control of the transitional government was generally limited.¹²

At the national level, close associates of President al-Sharaa and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Asaad al-Shaibani, including Maher al-Sharaa, the president's brother, and a limited group of advisers took the principal political and economic decisions.¹³ Close associates were also present within the ministries, for example in positions such as Head of the Public Relations Department.¹⁴ Several state institutions in government-controlled areas are discussed below.

1.2.1.1 People's Assembly

In June 2025, President al-Sharaa appointed the members of the electoral commission.¹⁵ Their task was to establish a temporary electoral system for the People's Assembly, which was to have a term of office of thirty months.¹⁶ On 27 July 2025, the commission reported that the indirect parliamentary elections would take place in September 2025 and that the number of seats would be increased from 150 to 210.¹⁷ Regional electoral colleges were to elect two thirds of the seats (140 seats), while the president would appoint one third (70 seats).¹⁸ On 23 August 2025, the electoral commission stated that the elections in the provinces of Suweida, Hasaka and Raqqa, which at that time were not, or only partly, under the control of the transitional government, had been postponed for security reasons.¹⁹

integration: Prospects for security sector reform in post-Assad Syria, October 2025, p. 19; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹ Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

¹² The Guardian, *The Guardian view on a new Syria: nurturing fragile hope amid the rubble*, 28 May 2025; New Lines Magazine, *In Homs, revenge is the only law left standing*, 25 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³ Nederlands Dagblad, *Voor heropbouw Syrië is meer nodig*, 17 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

¹⁴ New Lines Magazine, *In Homs, revenge is the only law left standing*, 25 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵ *The Higher Committee for the Elections of the People's Assembly*; Enab Baladi, *Al-Sharaa issues decree forming "Supreme Committee for People's Assembly Elections"*, 14 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria forms supreme committee for parliament elections*, 14 June 2025; L24, *Syria forms supreme elections committee to launch people's assembly vote*, 14 June 2025; NRC, *Eerste verkiezingen in Syrië sinds val Assad al komende september*, 28 July 2025; confidential source, August 2025.

¹⁶ Article 26 of the Constitutional Declaration; ConstitutionNet, *Constitutional declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 March 2025; SANA, *Higher committee for people's assembly elections meets dignitaries from Quneitra governorate*, 21 June 2025; Enab Baladi, *Election of Syrian people's assembly faces challenge of competence and representation demands*, 23 June 2025; SANA, *Supreme committee for people's assembly elections meets with several groups in Latakia*, 29 June 2025; L24, *Committee tours provinces as Syrians consider democratic revival*, 30 June 2025; confidential source, August 2025.

¹⁷ CNN, *Syria to hold parliamentary ballot in September as first elections since Assad's removal*, 27 July 2025; SANA, *People's assembly seats raised to 210 to increase governorates' shares*, 27 July 2025.

¹⁸ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria election officials detail seat allocation for September polls*, 28 July 2025; SANA, *Presidential decree approving provisional electoral system for people's assembly*, 20 August 2025; This Week in Northern Syria, *The upcoming elections: a brief explainer*, 26 August 2025; France 24, *Syria selects members of first post-Assad parliament*, 5 October 2025; VRT, *Syrië kiest een nieuw parlement: hoe democratisch zijn deze eerste verkiezingen onder het nieuwe bewind?*, 5 October 2025.

¹⁹ DW, *Syria delays election in Sweida and Kurdish areas*, 23 August 2025; Reuters, *Syria delays parliamentary vote in Sweida after sectarian violence*, 24 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria postpones elections in three provinces citing security concerns*, 24 August 2025.

Subcommittees of at least three members were established in each electoral district.²⁰ These were responsible for compiling the regional electoral colleges, which consisted of between 50 and 700 members.²¹ In early October 2025, more than 6,000 persons had been selected as members of the regional electoral colleges.²² They were permitted to nominate themselves as candidates and to cast their vote in the elections.²³ In the selection of candidates, the electoral commission sought to apply a number of quotas, including experts with an academic education (70%), prominent citizens (30%), women (20%) and war veterans (3%).²⁴ By the end of September 2025, there were 1,578 candidates.²⁵

On 21 September 2025, the electoral commission announced that the elections had been postponed for logistical reasons until 5 October 2025.²⁶ Furthermore, on 26 September 2025 the electoral commission presented the candidate lists containing the names of 1,578 individuals, including 221 women (14%).²⁷ Subsequently, on 28 September 2025, the commission presented the preliminary candidate lists for three electoral districts in the provinces of Raqqa and Hasaka that were under the control of the transitional government.²⁸ No extensive election campaign took place.²⁹

On 5 October 2025, more than 6,000 members of the electoral colleges cast their votes for 119 seats.³⁰ The remaining 21 seats remained vacant, as elections in most parts of the provinces of Suweida, Hasaka and Raqqa, and in the district of Ayn al-Arab (in Kurdish: Kobani) in the province of Aleppo, had been postponed for security reasons.³¹ On 23 October 2025, elections were held for two representatives from Tel Abyad in Raqqa province and one representative from Ras al-Ayn in the province of Hasaka.³² By the end of the reporting period, the one third of seats (70 seats) to be appointed by the president had not yet been filled.³³

²⁰ This Week in Northern Syria, *The upcoming elections: a brief explainer*, 26 August 2025; SANA, *Members of the subcommittees in Homs and Hama take the legal oath*, 3 September 2025; SANA, *Members of Hasakah and Raqqa parliamentary elections subcommittee take the legal oath*, 22 September 2025.

²¹ SANA, *People's Assembly Elections Committee issues instructions for selecting subcommittees*, 24 August 2025; This Week in Northern Syria, *The upcoming elections: a brief explainer*, 26 August 2025; SANA, *Process of selecting members of the electoral bodies kicks off*, HCPAE, 7 September 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian election body condemns killing of candidate ahead of poll*, 3 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

²² Al-Monitor, *Syria selects members of first post-Assad parliament*, 4 October 2025; Reuters, *Syrian electors cast ballots in indirect vote for first post-Assad parliament*, 5 October 2025.

²³ The Syrian Observer, *President Sharaa forms Syria's high electoral commission for people's assembly elections – Pedersen welcomes formation*, 16 June 2025; Enab Baladi, *Supreme committee for people's assembly elections sets its agenda*, 18 June 2025; This Week in Northern Syria, *The upcoming elections: a brief explainer*, 26 August 2025; confidential source, August 2025.

²⁴ Enab Baladi, *Election of Syrian People's Assembly faces challenge of competence and representation demands*, 23 June 2025; This Week in Northern Syria, *The upcoming elections: a brief explainer*, 26 August 2025; confidential source, August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

²⁵ SANA, *Syrian parliamentary electoral nomination closes with 1578 candidates*, 29 September 2025; Syria Direct, *Mixed reactions as Syria holds indirect vote for first post-Assad parliament*, 5 October 2025.

²⁶ NRC, *Parlementsverkiezingen in Syrië gepland voor 5 oktober*, 21 September 2025; Al Jazeera, *Syria sets October date for first election since al-Assad's fall*, 21 September 2025.

²⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian electoral committee issues final voter lists ahead of October polls*, 26 September 2025.

²⁸ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria poll body issues remaining voter lists for Raqqa, Hasaka*, 29 September 2025.

²⁹ De Volkskrant, *De parlementsverkiezingen in Syrië verdelen de geesten, ziet Midden-Oosten-correspondent Jenne Jan Holtland*, 9 October 2025.

³⁰ AP News, *What to expect as Syria goes to the polls for the first time since Assad's ouster*, 5 October 2025; The National, *Syrians vote in invitation-only election*, 5 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria's pro-government media tout significance of 'historic' election*, 5 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria announces preliminary results of first post-Assad elections*, 6 October 2025; VRT, *Weinig zetels voor vrouwen en minderheden bij Syrische parlementsverkiezingen: "Er is een onevenwicht"*, 7 October 2025.

³¹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrians set to vote in 5 October parliamentary election*, 4 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria-SDF standoff continues ahead of 5 October election*, 4 October 2025; France 24, *Syria selects members of first post-Assad parliament*, 5 October 2025; Reuters, *First results for Syria's new parliament show low share for minorities, women*, 6 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria elects few women and minorities to new parliament*, 7 October 2025.

³² SANA, *Supplementary elections in parts of Raqqa and Hasakah provinces are set for October 23*, 20 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria announces results of delayed polls in two towns*, 24 October 2025.

³³ BTI, *Syria's first parliament after Assad: Empty seats and empty promises?*, 2 December 2025.

1.2.1.2 National Security Council

In March 2025, President al-Sharaa established the National Security Council. He appointed the members of this council and chaired it. The council comprised the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence, the Director of the General Intelligence Service, the Minister of the Interior, two advisers appointed by the president and a technical expert appointed by the president.³⁴ This council was regarded as the highest authority in the field of security policy.³⁵ According to one source, the decisions of this council were rarely implemented, as command and control structures were lacking at lower administrative levels.³⁶

1.2.1.3 Internal security forces

During the reporting period, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) functioned as the national police. On 24 May 2025, the Ministry of the Interior announced the establishment of the Internal Security Command (ISC), under which all units of the Internal Security Forces and other police units were placed. In addition to general units responsible for combating crime, there were specialised police units, including the traffic police, the immigration and passports police, the tourist police, and units focusing on counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, communications, the protection of government buildings and embassies, border control, drug-related crime and emergency response.³⁷

Commanders of the ISC were appointed for twelve of the fourteen provinces to direct the units at the provincial level. These commanders generally held the rank of colonel or brigadier general. No ISC commanders were appointed for the provinces of Hasaka and Raqqa, which at that time were not, or only partly, under the control of the transitional government.³⁸ At the district level, the units fell under the command of the district head (mudir mantiqa).³⁹ According to one source, all regional directors were affiliated with the former HTS or the SSG.⁴⁰

The core of the Internal Security Forces consisted of police veterans who had received several years of training at the former HTS police academy in Idlib.⁴¹ Their ranks were supplemented by former police officers who had defected during the

³⁴ The establishment took place pursuant to Decree No. 5 of 11 March, 2025; Enab Baladi, *Al-Sharaa forms National Security Council in Syria*, 13 March 2025; France 24, *Syria's interim president announces formation of national security council*, 13 March 2025; DW, *Syria's interim president creates national security council*, 13 March 2025; The Syria Report, *Decision on the formation of the National Security Council*, 14 March 2025.

³⁵ Enab Baladi, *National Security Council in Syria: A necessity imposed by reality*, 6 April 2025.

³⁶ Confidential source, September 2025.

³⁷ The General Security Service (GSS) was the police force of HTS in Idlib. Following the takeover of power, the GSS focused on policing duties in the area under the control of the transitional government. Since the establishment of the Internal Security Command (ISC) in May 2025, reference was generally made to the ISF; SANA, *GSS forces find a mass grave*, Lattakia, 9 March 2025; SANA, *Interior Ministry has created a new structure that relies on good governance and institutional work, ensuring the rule of law and security*, 24 May 2025; The New Arab, *Syria reboot interior ministry as Damascus seeks to reassure West*, 25 May 2025; SANA, *Damascus police college graduates first batch of tourist police department*, 2 June 2025; SANA, *Internal Security Command in Aleppo arrests pilot at the time of the deposed regime, general Imad Nafouri*, 28 July 2025; SANA, *Idleb Internal Security arrests a criminal related to former regime militias*, 30 July 2025; SANA, *ISF in Homs finds a well containing a large quantity of mines*, 24 August 2025; SANA, *Interior ministry: Security campaign in Tartous targets outlawed terrorist cells*, 30 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian Interior Ministry opens new Immigration and Passports Department center in Damascus*, 10 September 2025; Enab Baladi, *Damascus traffic police chief admits city has only 800 officers*, 21 September 2025; Syria Direct, *In post-regime Daraa, insecurity overshadows the state*, 30 October 2025; New Lines Magazine, *In Homs, revenge is the only law left standing*, 25 November 2025; SANA, *Syria's Interior Ministry opens registration for Tourist Police Units*, 16 December 2025; SANA, *ISF crack down on weapons smuggling and terror cells*, 30 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

³⁸ SANA, *Interior Ministry has created a new structure that relies on good governance and institutional work, ensuring the rule of law and security*, 24 May 2025; The New Arab, *Syria reboots interior ministry as Damascus seeks to reassure West*, 25 May 2025; Rudaw, *Syrian authorities appoint security chiefs in 12 provinces, Rojava chiefly excluded*, 25 May 2025; Kurdistan24, *Syria appoints new internal security chiefs for each province amid sweeping restructuring*, 25 May 2025; Tesaa World, *Interior ministry suspends elements appearing in video addressing civil peace issues in Daraa*, 14 July 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

³⁹ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Local governance in post-Assad Syria: A hybrid state model for the future?*, 15 July 2025.

⁴⁰ Syria Revisited, *The new Syrian army: Structure and commanders*, 28 March 2025.

⁴¹ IISS, *From fragmentation to integration: Prospects for security sector reform in post-Assad Syria*, October 2025, p. 17.

previous regime.⁴² They were also reinforced by former fighters from HTS, the Syrian National Army (SNA),⁴³ and other armed groups.⁴⁴ This included, for example, fighters who had returned from the north-west and the north to their original places of residence following the takeover of power, such as Damascus or Homs.⁴⁵ In the province of Daraa, fighters from local armed groups were also incorporated into the Internal Security Forces.⁴⁶

The Internal Security Forces lacked sufficient capacity to exercise effective control over all parts of the area under the control of the transitional government.⁴⁷ As a result, extensive recruitment campaigns for the Internal Security Forces were conducted.⁴⁸ According to one source, large billboards appeared throughout Damascus.⁴⁹ In addition, in August 2025 the Internal Security Forces conducted a recruitment campaign in Afrin, in which Kurdish youth reportedly also enrolled.⁵⁰

According to various sources, training at the police academies was brief and basic.⁵¹ During the reporting period, hundreds of cadets graduated.⁵² As part of efforts to professionalise the Internal Security Forces, several hundred officers received additional training abroad. According to one source, more than 1,000 police officers participated in a specialised training programme in Qatar in May 2025. At the same time, more than 800 police officers took part in a programme in Saudi Arabia.⁵³ According to various sources, in September 2025 approximately 300 Syrians, mostly military personnel but also some police officers, received training at two bases in Türkiye.⁵⁴

The most commonly used weapon within the Internal Security Forces was the Kalashnikov.⁵⁵ The Internal Security Forces generally wore black uniforms, while regular police units wore blue.⁵⁶ In practice, some wore military camouflage, civilian

⁴² Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025.

⁴³ The SNA was a coalition of armed factions in northern Syria that formally consisted of three army corps. See paragraph 2.1.2 of the COI Report on Syria of May 2025 for further information on the SNA; AA, *Armed groups in Syria should be merged into single army: Turkish foreign minister*, 27 January 2025; Enab Baladi, *Three years: Turkey extends its military mission in Syria*, 22 October 2025; Aymenn's Monstrous Publications, *What's left of the SNA?*, 6 December 2025.

⁴⁴ Aymenn's Monstrous Publications, *What's left of the SNA?*, 6 December 2025.

⁴⁵ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Local governance in post-Assad Syria: A hybrid state model for the future?*, 15 July 2025; UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January – March 2025 (A/HRC/59/CRP.4)*, 11 August 2025, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Syria Direct, *Daraa security forces plagued by vendettas, abuse and controversial recruits*, 2 July 2025; SANA, *60 personnel from Daraa internal security forces graduated*, 6 July 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁴⁷ ICG, *Restoring security in post-Assad Syria: lessons from the Coast and Suweida*, 26 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁴⁸ Arab News, *Push to recruit Kurds and religious minorities to Syrian security forces brings hope and skepticism*, 23 August 2025.

⁴⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁵⁰ Kurdistan 24, *Syrian government launches minority recruitment drive in Afrin, raising hopes and doubts*, 23 August 2025; AP News, *Push to recruit Kurds and religious minorities to Syrian security forces brings hope and skepticism*, 24 August 2025.

⁵¹ Reuters, *Syria's new leaders turn to Islamic law in effort to rebuild Assad's police*, 23 January 2025; Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁵² SANA, *Interior Ministry graduates Internal Security Forces recruits in Tartous*, 10 November 2025; SANA, *Interior Minister honors top graduates of Internal Security Forces training course*, 11 November 2025.

⁵³ The Syrian Observer, *Syria's new security forces undergo intensive training in Qatar and Saudi Arabia amid fears of collapse*, 22 May 2025.

⁵⁴ Enab Baladi, *Turkey begins training the new Syrian army*, 9 September 2025; MEE, *Turkey begins training Syrian forces under new security deal*, 9 September 2025; L24, *Turkey and Syria strengthen military and diplomatic ties*, 13 September 2025.

⁵⁵ Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025.

⁵⁶ Reuters, *Syria's new leaders turn to Islamic law in effort to rebuild Assad's police*, 23 January 2025; Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Weeks 42-43*, 7 October 2025; The Syrian Observer, *US-Syrian joint operation in Damascus suburbs: Barrack says, 'Syria is back on our side'*, 20 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

clothing or face-covering garments.⁵⁷ According to one source, there was at times no funding for uniforms. In other cases, armed groups had not yet been fully integrated.⁵⁸ Additionally, the Internal Security Forces insignia was not consistently worn on uniforms.⁵⁹ The black uniforms were also available for purchase on the market, enabling criminals to impersonate members of the Internal Security Forces.⁶⁰ As a result, civilians were sometimes unable to determine whom they were dealing with, according to one source.⁶¹

On 13 January 2025, the Ministry of the Interior announced that identity cards would be issued to the members of the Internal Security Forces.⁶² According to one source, many officers did not identify themselves when requested to do so or merely stated that they were under the command of a local sheikh.⁶³ According to another source, some officers identified themselves on the basis of their membership of a local WhatsApp group.⁶⁴ In practice, many officers obeyed their local commanders or sheikhs, resulting in insufficient control over the Internal Security Forces by higher authorities.⁶⁵

Some officers were discharged from service.⁶⁶ For example, on 2 July 2025 the ISC in the province of Daraa announced that at least 200 members of the Internal Security Forces had been discharged for misconduct.⁶⁷ According to various sources, they had allegedly engaged in extortion and intimidation, among other offences.⁶⁸ On 21 November 2025, the Ministry of the Interior introduced a code of conduct for all ministry personnel.⁶⁹

1.2.1.4

Syrian National Army

Since December 2024, Major General (*liwa*) Murhaf Abu Qasra has held the position of Minister of Defence⁷⁰ since January 2025, Major General Ali Nour al-Din al-Naasan has served as Chief of Staff of the Syrian army, which is in the process of being established.⁷¹ On 1 June 2025, the President promoted Brigadier General Mohammed Khair Hassan Shuaib to Major General and appointed him Deputy Minister of Defence.⁷² Prior to the takeover of power, he had been a commander within HTS. He was also known as Abu al Khair Taftanaz. He had previously chaired a military council consisting of HTS and the National Liberation Front (NLF). He reportedly also established the military academy of the SSG.⁷³

⁵⁷ Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁵⁸ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

⁵⁹ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source; confidential source, November 2025.

⁶⁰ Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁶¹ Confidential source, November 2025.

⁶² Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025.

⁶³ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁶⁴ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁶⁵ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source.

⁶⁶ L24, *Syria's Interior Ministry continues reforms and security operations*, 3 July 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁶⁷ SANA, *Internal security command in Daraa: Ongoing personnel training and strict measures against violators*, 2 July 2025.

⁶⁸ Syria Direct, *Daraa security forces plagued by vendettas, abuse and controversial recruits*, 2 July 2025; Asharq Al-Awsat, *Violence in southern Syria fueled by tribal, sectarian tensions*, 3 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025.

⁶⁹ Enab Baladi, *Syrian Interior Ministry issues "code of conduct" for its personnel*, 21 November 2025.

⁷⁰ Reuters, *Syria's new rulers name HTS commander as defence minister*, 21 December 2024; Al Majalla, *Murhaf Abu Qasra on building a new army and Syria's future*, 24 January 2025.

⁷¹ The New Arab, *Syrian interim government appoints new army chief*, 10 January 2025; Asharq Al-Awsat, *Syrian defense ministry to restructure army with volunteer force*, 14 January 2025.

⁷² This appointment was made pursuant to Decree No 47; SANA, *New appointment in accordance with a presidential decree by president al-Sharaa*, 1 June 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025.

⁷³ ISW, *Iran update, December 30, 2024*, 31 December 2024.

Minister Abu Qasra focused on integrating all armed groups into a professional national army.⁷⁴ On 17 May 2025, he called on all armed groups, with the exception of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF, see paragraph 1.2.2.1), to join within ten days.⁷⁵ On 26 May 2025, he stated that he had consulted approximately 130 armed groups regarding their integration into the Syrian army to be formed.⁷⁶ In the southern province of Suweida, most leaders of local Druze armed groups continued to resist integration into the Syrian army.⁷⁷ In north-eastern Syria, SDF commander Mazloum Abdi stated since early 2025 that the SDF was willing to integrate into the Syrian army. He insisted that his fighters should remain a separate military force with its own command structure, to be deployed only in north-eastern Syria.⁷⁸ On 13 October 2025, Abdi stated that a preliminary agreement had been reached on a mechanism for the integration of the SDF.⁷⁹

As noted in the May 2025 COI Report, the integration of the patchwork of former opposition groups and other militias, each with their own leaders and interests, progressed slowly.⁸⁰ During the reporting period, little progress was made in developing a national military doctrine intended to lead to a unified army.⁸¹ In many cases, the organisational structures of the armed groups incorporated into the army remained intact.⁸² Several divisions were formed from HTS units, including the 50th Division in Latakia, which originated from HTS's 400th Division; the 60th Division in Aleppo, which originated from HTS's 111th Division; the 52nd Division in Homs, which originated from HTS's 103rd Division; and the 128th Division.⁸³ Several divisions were also formed from units of the National Liberation Front (NLF),⁸⁴ including the 44th Division in Rural Damascus, the 54th Division in Homs, the 64th Division in Idlib, and the 74th Division in Hama.⁸⁵ Furthermore, divisions were established incorporating SNA factions, including the 62nd Division in Hama and the 76th Division in Aleppo.⁸⁶ In eastern Syria (Deir ez-Zor, Hasaka and Raqqa), the

⁷⁴ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: HTS-linked body announces 'all' Syria armed factions to be dissolved*, 24 December 2024; Etana, *Between symbolism and substance: Syria's transition at 6 months, July 2025*, p. 12.

⁷⁵ SANA, *Minister of Defense announces integration of all military units under the Defense Ministry*, 17 May 2025; L'Orient Today, *The government gives armed groups 10 days to join its forces*, 17 May 2025; Reuters, *Syria sets deadline for 'small groups' to join Defence Ministry*, 18 May 2025; MEI, *Building Syria's new army: Future plans and the challenges ahead*, 12 June 2025.

⁷⁶ SANA, *General Abu Qasra: We will establish an army with national military doctrine to protect the Syrian people*, 26 May 2025.

⁷⁷ The New York Times, *After weeks of sectarian clashes in Syria, an uneasy truce takes hold*, 6 August 2025; TWI, *Implications of the recent violence in Suwayda*, 6 August 2025; TIMEP, *Suwayda's aftermath and the state of Syria's strained transition*, 8 August 2025; ICG, *Restoring security in post-Assad Syria: lessons from the Coast and Suweida*, 26 November 2025.

⁷⁸ Al Jazeera, *Syrian minister rejects Kurdish-led SDF's proposal for own military bloc*, 19 January 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

⁷⁹ VRT, *Koerdische strijders worden opgenomen in Syrisch leger*, 13 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian government, SDF 'reach preliminary deal' on integration*, 14 October 2025.

⁸⁰ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *COI Report on Syria*, May 2025, p. 28.

⁸¹ SANA, *General Abu Qasra: We will establish an army with national military doctrine to protect the Syrian people*, 26 May 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, November 2025.

⁸² Syria Revisited, *The new Syrian army: Structure and commanders*, 28 March 2025; HRW, *Syria: Türkiye-backed armed groups detain, extort civilians*, 14 May 2025; UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January – March 2025 (A/HRC/59/CRP.4)*, 11 August 2025, p. 6; The Jamestown Foundation, *The 'Amshat' and 'Hamzat': Turkey's militias still active in Syria*, 10 September 2025; Financial Times, *Syria on 'knife-edge' in wake of sectarian clashes, warns UN envoy*, 7 October 2025; ICG, *Restoring security in post-Assad Syria: lessons from the Coast and Suweida*, 26 November 2025; Aymenn's Monstrous Publications, *What's left of the SNA?*, 6 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

⁸³ Syria Revisited, *The new Syrian army: Structure and commanders*, 28 March 2025; New Lines Magazine, *In Homs, revenge is the only law left standing*, 25 November 2025; Aymenn's Monstrous Publications, *What's left of the SNA?*, 6 December 2025.

⁸⁴ The NLF was a coalition of armed groups in north-western Syria, such as Ahrar al-Sham and Suqour al-Sham. In October 2019, the NLF joined the SNA; MEE, *The Syrian National Army: Rebels, thugs or Turkish proxies?*, 7 December 2024.

⁸⁵ IISS, *From fragmentation to integration: Prospects for security sector reform in post-Assad Syria*, October 2025, p. 20-21.

⁸⁶ SANA, *3,000 soldiers finish their training at the military academy in Aleppo*, 1 July 2025; The New Arab, *Is six months enough to train Syria's new army?*, 14 July 2025.

86th Division was formed from former SNA factions.⁸⁷ On 5 May 2025, the Ministry of Defence appointed Ahmad al-Hais, also known as Abu Hatem Shaqra, as commander of this division. He had previously been commander of Ahrar al-Sharqiya, which was later incorporated into the SNA. He had allegedly been involved in executions and human rights violations in the recent past.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the former SNA faction Jaysh al-Islam (Army of Islam) returned to the East Ghouta region near Damascus following the takeover of power, where it was formally incorporated into the 70th Division.⁸⁹

In Syria, several thousand foreign fighters from at least fifteen countries were present who had previously been affiliated with HTS.⁹⁰ In 2019, the Syrian media outlet Enab Baladi reported that there were approximately 3,000 Uyghur fighters belonging to the Syrian branch of the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP, also known as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement). They originated from China and neighbouring countries. They resided alone or with their families in the western part of the province of Idlib and in the northern part of the province of Latakia.⁹¹ The commander of the Syrian branch of the TIP reportedly received the rank of brigadier general in December 2024.⁹² In early June 2025, the United States (US) approved the transitional government's proposal to integrate approximately 3,500 foreign fighters into the Syrian army.⁹³ According to Enab Baladi, the Syrian branch of the TIP stated in June 2025 that it had been dissolved and that its fighters fell under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence.⁹⁴ They were reportedly deployed partly alongside Syrian fighters in the 84th Division in the province of Latakia and partly in the 82nd Division in Idlib.⁹⁵

Several entirely new divisions were also formed, including the 56th Reserve Division in Latakia and the 42nd Division, which was stationed in the Badia desert.⁹⁶

The Ministry of Defence opened recruitment centres in several provinces.⁹⁷ According to various sources, religious instruction formed an important part of the training received by recruits.⁹⁸ In a statement on Facebook on 7 September 2025, the Ministry of Defence announced the conditions for admission to one of the three

⁸⁷ HRW, *Syria: Türkiye-backed armed groups detain, extort civilians*, 14 May 2025; SOHR, *Ongoing violations. Two members of the 76th division open fire on young man in Al-Ashrafiyah neighborhood in Afrin*, 6 October 2025.

⁸⁸ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian Kurds condemn naming of new regional army commander*, 9 May 2025; Aymenn's Monstrous Publications, *What's left of the SNA?*, 6 December 2025.

⁸⁹ The New Arab, *UAE detains Syrian ex-rebel leader Issam Bouidani*, 27 April 2025; Aymenn's Monstrous Publications, *What's left of the SNA?*, 6 December 2025.

⁹⁰ Enab Baladi, *A crisis of staying, a crisis of deportation. Foreign fighters, a thorny dilemma for Syria's nascent state*, 26 November 2025.

⁹¹ The Washington Post, *Syrian leader faces challenge of foreign militants who helped him win power*, 31 May 2025; The New Arab, *From rebels to soldiers: Foreign fighters in Syria's new army*, 10 June 2025; MEI, *Building Syria's new army: Future plans and the challenges ahead*, 12 June 2025; Syriac Press, *Foreign fighters and citizenship: Syria's post-Assad dilemma*, 2 July 2025; Kurdistan24, *Families of Uyghur fighters in Kurdish homes as demographic change deepens*, 16 August 2025; BNR, *Syrië integreert Oeigoeren in regeringsleger, China vreest deze geharde jihadisten*, 14 September 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian foreign ministry denies handing over Uyghur fighters to China*, 17 November 2025.

⁹² Reuters, *Syria appoints some foreign Islamist fighters to its military, sources say*, 31 December 2024; BBC, *Foreign fighters given senior Syrian army posts, reports say*, 31 December 2024; The Independent, *Uyghurs among foreign militants given ranks in Syrian military*, 31 December 2024.

⁹³ Reuters, *Exclusive: US gives nod to Syria to bring foreign jihadist ex-rebels into army*, 2 June 2025; Enab Baladi, *US approves integration of foreign fighters into Syrian army*, 2 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Jihadists, Islamists react to Syria foreign fighters joining army*, 3 June 2025; The New York Times, *They went to Syria to fight with rebels. Now some are joining the new army*, 8 June 2025.

⁹⁴ Enab Baladi, *A crisis of staying, a crisis of deportation. Foreign fighters, a thorny dilemma for Syria's nascent state*, 26 November 2025.

⁹⁵ The New Arab, *From rebels to soldiers: Foreign fighters in Syria's new army*, 10 June 2025; MEI, *Building Syria's new army: Future plans and the challenges ahead*, 12 June 2025; The Syrian Observer, *New Syrian army's senior officials linked to jihadist ideologies, raising concerns*, 8 August 2025; Chatham House, *Why China is hesitant to support Syria's new government as al-Sharaa faces a crucial month*, 3 September 2025; Enab Baladi, *A crisis of staying, a crisis of deportation. Foreign fighters, a thorny dilemma for Syria's nascent state*, 26 November 2025.

⁹⁶ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian army's special forces conduct 'live ammunition exercises'*, 28 July 2025.

⁹⁷ SANA, *Defense Minister inspects military recruitment center in Damascus province*, 15 October 2025.

⁹⁸ The New York Times, *Syria, rebuilding its military, relies on loyalists and religious teaching*, 11 December 2025; confidential source September 2025.

military academies. These included, among other requirements, that applicants had to be unmarried men between 18 and 22 years of age.⁹⁹ After Türkiye and Saudi Arabia pledged support to strengthen the capacity of the Syrian army, several hundred Syrian recruits received military training and education there.¹⁰⁰ According to various sources, in September 2025 approximately 300 Syrians, mostly military personnel but also some police officers, received training at two bases in Türkiye.¹⁰¹ In October 2025, the Syrian Minister of Defence stated that a cohort of officers would undergo training at military academies in Türkiye and Saudi Arabia.¹⁰² According to the Turkish Ministry of Defence, 49 Syrian cadets began their training at military academies in Türkiye on 31 October 2025.¹⁰³

On 11 August 2025, the Ministry of Defence stated that more than 3,000 former soldiers who had deserted from the former army had registered for the Syrian army.¹⁰⁴ A special committee was established to interview these individuals.¹⁰⁵ In November 2025, the Ministry of Defence stated that more than 2,000 of these former deserters had been incorporated into the army.¹⁰⁶

On 30 May 2025, the Ministry of Defence presented a code of conduct for the Syrian armed forces via social media.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, on 6 October 2025, the Ministry of Defence announced that it had begun issuing military identity cards to all army personnel.¹⁰⁸

During the reporting period, some soldiers were discharged for misconduct. For example, on 2 October 2025 approximately 170 soldiers of the 40th Division in the Al-Lajat region of the province of Daraa were discharged. These soldiers had originally been members of an armed Bedouin group led by a former opposition commander. They were accused of involvement in armed robbery and the smuggling of weapons.¹⁰⁹

1.2.1.5 General intelligence service

The General Intelligence Service (GIS, also known as the General Intelligence Directorate) was originally a continuation of HTS's intelligence service in Idlib.¹¹⁰ On 26 December 2024, the president appointed Anas Khattab, also known as Abu Ahmad Houdoud, as director of this service. Prior to the takeover of power, he had served as the first deputy to Al-Sharaa. Within HTS, he was responsible for internal affairs and security policy.¹¹¹ On 29 March 2025, the president appointed him

⁹⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria announces conditions for joining military training colleges*, 8 September 2025.

¹⁰⁰ SANA, *Defense minister meets officer cadets dispatched to Turkey and Saudi Arabia*, 22 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, November 2025.

¹⁰¹ Enab Baladi, *Turkey begins training the new Syrian army*, 9 September 2025; MEE, *Turkey begins training Syrian forces under new security deal*, 9 September 2025; L24, *Turkey and Syria strengthen military and diplomatic ties*, 13 September 2025; MEE, *Syrian military cadets to begin schooling in Turkey*, 30 October 2025.

¹⁰² Saudi Gazette, *Syrian officers to receive training in Saudi military colleges*, 23 October 2025; The New Arab, *Damascus sends officers to Turkey and Saudi Arabia for advanced weapons training*, 23 October 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syria sends military mission to Turkey and Saudi Arabia*, 24 October 2025.

¹⁰³ Reuters, *Syrians to use Turkish military barracks, attend military academies, Turkish ministry says*, 30 October 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian army units begin training in Turkey*, 30 October 2025.

¹⁰⁴ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 36*, 18 August 2025.

¹⁰⁵ Enab Baladi, *Syrian interior ministry prepares to reintegrate defected officers*, 1 November 2025.

¹⁰⁶ Enab Baladi, *Syrian interior ministry prepares to reintegrate defected officers*, 1 November 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian defense ministry to reintegrate defected NCOs into the new Syrian army*, 5 November 2025; SANA, *Defense minister: We have begun reintegrating the dissident recruits*, 7 November 2025.

¹⁰⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian military issues new code of conduct*, 31 May 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025; MEI, *Building Syria's new army: Future plans and the challenges ahead*, 12 June 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian defense ministry bans sewing of military insignia to regulate their use*, 30 September 2025.

¹⁰⁸ X.com, *Qalaat Al Mudiq*, 6 October 2025, [url](#); X.com, *Charles Lister*, 8 October 2025, [url](#); The Syrian Observer, *"Syrian Defense Ministry" begins issuing military IDs*, 10 October 2025.

¹⁰⁹ Etana, *Brief: Recent developments in south-west Syria*, 7 October 2025, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹¹ The New Arab, *Who is Syria's new intelligence chief, Anas Khattab?*, 27 December 2024; L'Orient Today, *Who is Anas Khattab, HTS' shadow figure now leading Syria's intelligence services?*, 29 December 2024.

Minister of the Interior.¹¹² Hussein Abdullah al-Salama, also known as Abu Musab al-Shuhail, was appointed as his successor at the GIS on 3 May 2025. Prior to the takeover of power, Al-Salama had been an HTS commander.¹¹³ The GIS was involved in dismantling ISIS cells and preventing attacks.¹¹⁴

1.2.1.6 Courts

Courts were active in the control area of the transitional government.¹¹⁵ The court system included administrative courts, courts for civil and criminal matters, reconciliation courts for minor disputes, and specialised courts, such as military courts, juvenile courts and religious courts.¹¹⁶ Religious courts handled matters such as marriages, divorces and inheritances.¹¹⁷ Sunnis, Shiites, Alawites and Ismailis could turn to Islamic family courts, which were also referred to as sharia courts. Christians could turn to so-called *ruhi* courts, and Druze could turn to a so-called *madhhabiyya* court.¹¹⁸ During the reporting period, courts handled several criminal cases.¹¹⁹ According to one source, some criminal cases had been transferred from Damascus to Idlib in order to expedite proceedings. A special family court was also opened in Aleppo to finalise divorce cases.¹²⁰ It remained unclear whether and how the military courts functioned.¹²¹ The national court system was not active in the control area of the SDF or in Suweida.¹²² The SDF control area had its own legal system.¹²³

1.2.1.7 National commission of inquiry into the violence in the coastal region

On 9 March 2025, President Al-Sharaa announced the establishment of a national commission to investigate the violence in the coastal region in March 2025. He promised that those responsible, including any security forces involved, would be punished.¹²⁴ On 22 July 2025, the commission of inquiry presented its findings at a press conference in Damascus. According to the commission, the political and military leadership had not been involved in the violence; however, individuals had committed acts of violence that resulted in 1,426 documented fatalities, including approximately 100 women. Many victims were Alawite civilians, particularly men. Most victims were killed outside the context of military combat operations. During the investigation, 563 suspects were identified, including 298 in relation to violence against Alawite civilians and 265 in relation to the initial violence against the internal security forces. At that time, 31 suspects had been arrested. The

¹¹² France 24, *What we know about Syria's new government*, 30 March 2025; SANA, *President al-Sharaa announces formation of the new government: We are witnessing the birth of a new phase in our national process*, 30 March 2025.

¹¹³ Tesaa World, *Who is Hussam Abdullah Salameh? Get to know the new head of the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate*, 3 May 2025; The New Arab, *Former HTS leader Hussein Al-Salama tapped to head Syrian intelligence*, 6 May 2025.

¹¹⁴ SANA, *Interior ministry, general intelligence service arrest ISIS terrorist cells, seize weapons*, 23 June 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Weeks 42-43*, 7 October 2025; SANA, *Syrian intelligence dismantles ISIS cell in Damascus countryside*, 18 October 2025; The Syrian Observer, *US-Syrian joint operation in Damascus suburbs: Barrack says, 'Syria is back on our side'*, 20 October 2025; SANA, *Syrian security forces dismantle ISIS cells in Idlib countryside*, 1 December 2025.

¹¹⁵ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁶ Syria Direct, *Daraa security forces plagued by vendettas, abuse and controversial recruits*, 2 July 2025.

¹¹⁷ SJAC, *A first step towards transitional justice in Syria*, 29 May 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syria raises judges' salaries up to \$1,200 in major pay hike*, 4 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁸ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Thematic Country of Origin Information Report on Syria, Documents*, December 2019, p. 22.

¹¹⁹ SJAC, *A roadmap for transitional justice in Syria*, 24 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹²¹ ICCT, *Syria embarks on a transitional justice project*, 1 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²² Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, 17 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²³ NRC, *Unlocking rights in Northeast Syria: The importance of civil and legal documentation*, 2 July 2025, p. 7; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁴ *Independent National Committee for Investigation and Fact-Finding on the Coastal Violence*; Enab Baladi, *Al-Sharaa extends work of investigation committee into coastal events*, 11 April 2025; Enab Baladi, *Two months in, Coastal Investigation Committee yields no results amid accusations of deliberate delay*, 14 May 2025.

investigation report, which included the list of names of the 563 suspects, was not made public in order not to complicate further criminal prosecution. The commission shared the list with the public prosecution service with a view to further prosecution.¹²⁵

Parallel to the investigation conducted by the national commission of inquiry, an investigation was carried out by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (CoI). On 14 August 2025, the CoI presented its report on the events of March 2025 in the provinces of Latakia, Tartous, Homs, Hama and Damascus.¹²⁶ According to the CoI investigators, armed Alawite loyalists of the previous regime, as well as military personnel and armed groups affiliated with the transitional government, and individual civilians, had been responsible for the violence.¹²⁷ UN investigators found no evidence that the military personnel and armed groups linked to the then interim administration had acted on orders from its leadership.¹²⁸ Alawites were subjected to ill-treatment, torture, execution, looting and arson. Attacks on medical facilities also occurred.¹²⁹ According to the investigators, some of the acts committed were likely to amount to war crimes. In several villages and neighbourhoods with an Alawite majority, ill-treatment, torture, killings and looting were widespread and systematic in March 2025. The investigators called on the transitional government to intensify efforts to identify and prosecute the perpetrators.¹³⁰

1.2.1.8 National Commission for Missing Persons

On 17 May 2025, the National Commission for Missing Persons (NCMP) was established. Mohammad Reda Jalkhi was appointed as head of this commission. Jalkhi was a lawyer and had been one of the members of the committee responsible for drafting the constitutional declaration (see paragraph 1.3.1).¹³¹ The NCMP was tasked with establishing a national database of all documented cases of missing persons, including victims of enforced disappearances.¹³² On 30 August 2025, the NCMP signed a memorandum of understanding with six Syrian NGOs to support the search for missing persons.¹³³ Furthermore, on 5 November 2025, the NCMP concluded a cooperation agreement with the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic (IIMP), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).¹³⁴

1.2.1.9 The National Commission for Transitional Justice

On 17 May 2025, the National Commission for Transitional Justice (NCTJ) was established.¹³⁵ This commission was tasked, among other things, with investigating crimes committed by the previous regime.¹³⁶ Abdulbasit Abdullatif was appointed as

¹²⁵ UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January – March 2025* (A/HRC/59/CRP.4), 11 August 2025, p. 19; UN OSES, *United Nations deputy special envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi briefing to the security council*, 22 October 2025, p. 3.

¹²⁶ UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January – March 2025* (A/HRC/59/CRP.4), 11 August 2025, p. 4.

¹²⁷ UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria*, 11 August 2025, p. 2.

¹²⁸ UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria*, 11 August 2025, p. 1.

¹²⁹ UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria*, 11 August 2025, p. 28.

¹³⁰ UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria*, 11 August 2025, p. 2.

¹³¹ France 24, *Syria forms committee to draft transitional constitutional charter*, 2 March 2025.

¹³² The establishment took place pursuant to Decree No. 19/2025; Reuters, *Syria forms transitional justice, missing persons commissions*, 18 May 2025; Enab Baladi, *National authority for the missing in Syria launches support group with civil society organizations*, 31 August 2025.

¹³³ Enab Baladi, *National Authority for the Missing in Syria launches support group with civil society organizations*, 31 August 2025; SJAC, *A roadmap for transitional justice in Syria*, 24 September 2025.

¹³⁴ SANA, *Syria's national commission partners with international bodies on missing persons*, 5 November 2025; The New Arab, *Syria, global bodies sign deal on detainees disappeared by Assad*, 6 November 2025.

¹³⁵ The establishment took place pursuant to Decree No. 20/2025; Reuters, *Syria forms transitional justice, missing persons commissions*, 18 May 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Syrian Justice Ministry initiates accountability process amid concerns over jurisdiction*, 1 August 2025.

¹³⁶ Enab Baladi, *Syria's National Authority for Transitional Justice defines its plan*, 24 May 2025.

chair of the commission. He had previously served as Secretary-General of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.¹³⁷ On 28 August 2025, the names of the other members of the NCTJ were announced.¹³⁸

1.2.1.10 National commission of inquiry into the events in Suweida

On 31 July 2025, the Ministry of Justice announced via Telegram that it had established a national commission consisting of seven members, including judges, lawyers and a military representative, to investigate the events in Suweida (see paragraph 2.2.5.1) The commission was tasked with presenting its final report within three months.¹³⁹ In early September 2025, the commission reported that police officers and military personnel had been questioned and referred to the judiciary on suspicion of committing crimes against civilians in Suweida.¹⁴⁰ On 1 November 2025, the commission discussed the progress of the investigation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁴¹ On 16 November 2025, the commission presented its main interim findings at a press conference. It had identified individuals involved in killings that had allegedly been recorded on video. The arrest of several police officers, military personnel and civilians was announced after their involvement in the unrest in Suweida had been confirmed. They were to be referred to the competent judicial authorities. The commission requested an extension of its mandate by two months.¹⁴²

Parallel to the investigation conducted by the national commission of inquiry, an investigation was carried out by an independent UN investigative body operating under the CoI. In early October 2025, the CoI visited the province of Suweida to speak with victims, survivors and witnesses (see also paragraph 2.2.5.1).¹⁴³

1.2.2 *Institutions in Northeast Syria*

During the reporting period, large parts of Northeast Syria were under the control of the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), which is affiliated with the SDF.¹⁴⁴ This included the area around Ayn al-Arab (Kurdish: Kobani) and Deir Hafer in the province of Aleppo, the northern part of the province of Raqqa with the exception of a strip along the Turkish border, the province of Hasaka with the exception of a strip along the Turkish border, and the eastern part of the province of Deir ez-Zor.¹⁴⁵ An estimated seventy to ninety percent of Syria's oil and gas reserves are located in Northeast Syria.¹⁴⁶ This region also contains important agricultural areas.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁷ This political organisation was established in 2012 to unite the various opposition movements against the previous regime during the Syrian civil war; The New Arab, *Syrians voice concern over transitional justice commission's 'one party's crimes' mandate*, 19 May 2025.

¹³⁸ The appointments were made pursuant to Decree No 149/2025; SANA, *President al-Sharaa issues decree forming National Commission for Transitional Justice*, 28 August 2025; The Syria Report, *Presidential decree number 149 of 2025: Formation of the Committee of the National Authority for Transitional Justice*, 29 August 2025; SJAC, *A roadmap for transitional justice in Syria – September 2025*, 24 September 2025.

¹³⁹ Reuters, *Syria forms committee to investigate Sweida violence*, 1 August 2025; ICJ, *Syria: Impartially and independently investigate the crimes committed in Suwayda*, 4 August 2025; The New York Times, *After weeks of sectarian clashes in Syria, an uneasy truce takes hold*, 6 August 2025.

¹⁴⁰ Reuters, *Syria detains defence, interior ministry members suspected of Sweida violence*, 3 September 2025; Asharq Al Awsat, *Syria detains interior, defense ministry members suspected of Sweida violence*, 4 September 2025.

¹⁴¹ SANA, *Minister al-Shaibani receives the National Committee investigating Sweida events*, 1 November 2025.

¹⁴² SANA, *National Committee probing Sweida events pledges justice and accountability*, 16 November 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian probe finds 'grave violations' in Suweida violence*, 17 November 2025.

¹⁴³ X.com, *UN Syria Commission of Inquiry*, 7 October 2025, [url](#); UN OHCHR, *"The future of Syria is in the balance: UN Commission sounds alarm on renewed violence amid hopes for justice and peace"*, 30 October 2025.

¹⁴⁴ MEI, *The Damascus-SDF agreement two months on: Fragile progress or delayed collapse?*, 9 May 2025; Financial Times, *Syria on 'knife-edge' in wake of sectarian clashes, warns UN envoy*, 7 October 2025; Etana, *Brief: Ceasefire pauses SDF-Damascus fighting*, 9 October 2025; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

¹⁴⁵ NRC, *Unlocking rights in Northeast Syria: The importance of civil and legal documentation*, 2 July 2025, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ Asharq Al-Awsat, *The Syrian oil: Time for new approach*, 9 November 2022; Al Jazeera, *What is behind US strategy of keeping troops in post-Assad Syria?*, 6 January 2025.

¹⁴⁷ Al Majalla, *Resource-rich yet underdeveloped, Syria's northeast could pay dividends*, 11 February 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

1.2.2.1 Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) was a military alliance that had existed since 2015.¹⁴⁸ Since its establishment, the SDF has received support from the US-led International Anti-ISIS Coalition in the form of military training and equipment for ground operations against ISIS.¹⁴⁹ Estimates of the number of SDF fighters ranged from 70,000 to 100,000 individuals.¹⁵⁰ At least half of all SDF fighters were of Arab origin.¹⁵¹ One of the (military) units within the SDF consisted of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*, YPG).¹⁵² The female equivalent was the Women's Protection Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Jin*, YPJ).¹⁵³ Other (military) units affiliated with the SDF included the internal security forces in Northeast Syria (*asayish*), the Al-Sanadid forces, the Counter-Terrorism Units (*Yekîneyên Antî Teror*, YAT), the intelligence service, the Syriac Military Council and the Deir ez-Zor Military Council.¹⁵⁴ According to Türkiye, the YPG and the SDF were extensions of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, PKK), with which Türkiye had been in conflict since the 1980s and which was designated as a terrorist organisation by Türkiye, the United States and the European Union.¹⁵⁵ According to various sources, some SDF officers had links with the PKK.¹⁵⁶

On 10 March 2025, President Al-Sharaa and SDF commander Mazloum Abdi signed an agreement. This concerned, among other things, the military integration of the SDF into the Syrian army.¹⁵⁷ In subsequent negotiations, the SDF advocated integration into the Syrian army as a unified military 'bloc' consisting of several divisions in Northeast Syria.¹⁵⁸ On 8 August 2025, the SDF organised a conference in Hasaka entitled Unity of the Position of the Components of Northeast Syria. Representatives of various ethnic and religious groups participated. Those present advocated a decentralised Syria, a position to which President Al-Sharaa did not respond positively.¹⁵⁹ The Alawite sheikh Ghazal Ghazal and the Druze sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri also participated via video.¹⁶⁰ This conference led to increased tensions between the transitional government and the SDF, with the former viewing the initiative as a jointly coordinated effort that undermined Syria's territorial

¹⁴⁸ IISS, *From fragmentation to integration: Prospects for security sector reform in post-Assad Syria*, October 2025, p. 22.

¹⁴⁹ Al-Monitor, *Will Turkey follow through on threats to attack Syria's Kurds?*, 13 August 2025; IISS, *From fragmentation to integration: Prospects for security sector reform in post-Assad Syria*, October 2025, p. 21.

¹⁵⁰ MEI, *Building Syria's new army: Future plans and the challenges ahead*, 12 June 2025; Al-Monitor, *Will Turkey follow through on threats to attack Syria's Kurds?*, 13 August 2025; IISS, *From fragmentation to integration: Prospects for security sector reform in post-Assad Syria*, October 2025, p. 15; Financial Times, *Syria on 'knife-edge' in wake of sectarian clashes, warns UN envoy*, 7 October 2025; Fabrice Balanche, *Territorial and political strife in Northeast Syria: A test for the future*, December 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵¹ MEI, *Building Syria's new army: Future plans and the challenges ahead*, 12 June 2025; IISS, *From fragmentation to integration: Prospects for security sector reform in post-Assad Syria*, October 2025, p. 23; Fabrice Balanche, *Territorial and political strife in Northeast Syria: A test for the future*, December 2025.

¹⁵² BBC, *Inside Syria's jail for IS suspects as officials say attacks by group are rising*, 26 October 2025.

¹⁵³ Enab Baladi, *Kurdish protection units: Key point of contention between Damascus and SDF*, 27 March 2025; De Groene Amsterdammer, *'Wij, vrouwelijke strijders, zijn er ook'; De Koerdische vrouwenrevolutie*, 23 September 2025.

¹⁵⁴ Enab Baladi, *What is SDF's military structure and why does it insist on a "one block" demand?*, 23 January 2025; Enab Baladi, *Kurdish protection units: Key point of contention between Damascus and SDF*, 27 March 2025; Enab Baladi, *Complex steps to establish new Syrian army*, 6 April 2025; Syriac Press, *Heavy security deployment by Sutoro in North and East Syria after suicide attack in Daramsuq*, 24 June 2025; Syriac Press, *Syriac officer Athro Lahdo assumes command of Internal Security Forces in North and East Syria*, 26 July 2025; Rudaw, *IDP return to Kurdish areas key focus in Rojava-Damascus talks: SDF chief*, 14 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Turkish media ramp up criticism of Kurdish forces amid Suweida clashes*, 21 July 2025; Al-Monitor, *Will Turkey follow through on threats to attack Syria's Kurds?*, 13 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Three years: Turkey extends its military mission in Syria*, 22 October 2025.

¹⁵⁶ Enab Baladi, *What is SDF's military structure and why does it insist on a "one block" demand?*, 23 January 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵⁷ Reuters, *Syria's interim president signs deal with Kurdish-led SDF to merge forces*, 11 March 2025.

¹⁵⁸ Enab Baladi, *Despite agreement with Damascus, SDF continues recruitment and training*, 28 May 2025.

¹⁵⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian Kurdish-led authorities hold multi-sect conference in Hasakah*, 9 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian government official criticises SDF-organised conference*, 9 August 2025; Fabrice Balanche, *Territorial and political strife in Northeast Syria: A test for the future*, December 2025.

¹⁶⁰ Tesaa World, *With the participation of Sheikh Ghazal Ghazal and Al-Hijri online.. SDF holds a conference on the unity of the positions of Syrian components*, 8 August 2025; Kurdistan24, *Druze and Alawite leaders endorse decentralized Syria, sparking fierce rebuke from Damascus*, 9 August 2025.

integrity.¹⁶¹ Tensions further increased due to skirmishes along the front lines between both sides in the north and northeast of the country.¹⁶²

Following an escalation of violence in the city of Aleppo (see paragraph 2.2.11.2), both parties agreed on a US-mediated ceasefire on 7 October 2025 covering all fronts.¹⁶³ A few days later, an SDF delegation visited Damascus to consult with the Minister of Defence regarding integration into the army. At the same time, a delegation of the internal security forces in Northeast Syria (asayish) held consultations with the Minister of the Interior on integration into the ministry's internal security forces.¹⁶⁴ On 13 October 2025, SDF commander Mazloum Abdi stated that a principle agreement had been reached on the mechanism for the integration of the SDF and the asayish.¹⁶⁵ A few days later, the SDF stated that the proposal was for the SDF to be incorporated into the Syrian army as three separate divisions and three independent brigades, including a brigade for the female fighters of the YPJ.¹⁶⁶ In this regard, the SDF submitted to the International Coalition a list of seventy SDF commanders who would be integrated into the Syrian army, as well as a proposal to allocate thirty percent of the army's general staff to SDF commanders.¹⁶⁷ On 4 January 2026, a further round of talks took place in Damascus between the SDF and the transitional government, although no concrete progress was achieved during these negotiations. Both parties nevertheless agreed to continue the discussions.¹⁶⁸

Following clashes between the transitional government and the SDF in the city of Aleppo on 6 January 2026 (see paragraph 2.2.11.1), and subsequently in Deir Hafer and Northeast Syria, both parties agreed to a ceasefire on 18 January 2026. This included, among others, a fourteen-point agreement concerning the integration of civilian institutions, oil and gas fields, and the SDF into the Syrian state.¹⁶⁹

1.2.2.2 Self-defence units

In areas under SDF control, compulsory military service of approximately one year has applied to men over the age of eighteen since 2017.¹⁷⁰ Conscripts served in the Self-Defence Units (*Hêzên Xwe Parastinê*, HXP).¹⁷¹ It was possible to obtain deferment of service for reasons related to education, health or family circumstances. Men between the ages of 18 and 25 were required to carry their

¹⁶¹ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian government official criticises SDF-organised conference*, 9 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Kurdish officials in Syria capital for talks to ease tensions*, 12 August 2025; The New Arab, *Federalism or fragmentation? The future of Syria's minorities*, 14 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Kurds, Syrian government officials to meet in Syria, not Paris, official says*, 18 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Kurdish-led authorities say negotiations with Damascus 'on hold'*, 24 August 2025.

¹⁶² Al Jazeera, *Syria's Kurdish-led SDF, government forces clash in Aleppo province*, 4 August 2025; Reuters, *Syrian soldier killed in clashes with SDF in Aleppo, state news agency says*, 12 August 2025; Al Jazeera, *Syrian gov't soldier killed in clashes with Kurd-led SDF in Aleppo province*, 12 August 2025.

¹⁶³ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian government, Kurdish forces reach truce after Aleppo clashes*, 7 October 2025; SANA, *Ceasefire reached after SDF night attacks in Aleppo: Reporter*, 7 October 2025; Trouw, *Staakt-het-vuren in Aleppo na gevechten tussen regeringstroepen en SDF*, 7 October 2025; Etana, *Brief: Ceasefire pauses SDF-Damascus fighting*, 9 October 2025.

¹⁶⁴ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian Kurdish-led SDF forces to visit Damascus to discuss integration*, 11 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian government, Kurdish forces resume talks on stalled deal*, 13 October 2025.

¹⁶⁵ VRT, *Koerdische strijders worden opgenomen in Syrisch leger*, 13 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian government, SDF 'reach preliminary deal' on integration*, 14 October 2025.

¹⁶⁶ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Kurdish officials say SDF to join Syrian army as three divisions*, 17 October 2025; confidential source, November 2025.

¹⁶⁷ Kurdistan24, *SDF submits list of 70 commanders to Coalition to be integrated into Syrian army*, 29 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *SDF submits list of 70 commanders for integration*, 5 November 2025.

¹⁶⁸ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian outlets provide contrasting coverage of SDF, Damascus talks*, 5 January 2026.

¹⁶⁹ The New York Times, *Syrian government and Kurdish-led force agree to merge after clashes*, 18 January 2026; BBC Monitoring, *Explainer: Syrian Kurdish forces lose strategic hold under new Damascus deal*, 20 January 2026; confidential source, January 2026.

¹⁷⁰ Enab Baladi, *Syria: Mass arrests in Raqqa for conscription, SDF denies*, 2 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁷¹ Syriac Press, *Self-Defense Forces of North and East Syria launch new training program amid rising ISIS threats*, 6 May 2025.

military booklets for the purpose of possible checks.¹⁷² It was reported that, during recruitment campaigns, conscripts were detained at checkpoints and transferred to the HXP.¹⁷³ Recruitment campaigns for the HXP constituted a significant source of tension within local communities in Northeast Syria. The SDF also faced difficulties in recruiting among non-Kurdish communities.¹⁷⁴ Large parts of Northeast Syria, such as Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa, had an Arab majority.¹⁷⁵ There was discontent among the Arab majority regarding the Kurdish-dominated de facto administration in Northeast Syria (see paragraph 1.2.2.3)¹⁷⁶ For further information on self-defence service, see paragraph 2.2.2 of the COI Report on Syria of December 2024.

¹⁷² NRC, *Unlocking rights in Northeast Syria: The importance of civil and legal documentation*, 2 July 2025, p. 15.

¹⁷³ SNHR, *At least 658 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in Syria in the first half of 2025 including 72 cases in June*, 4 July 2025, p. 17; SNHR, *At least 109 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in July 2025*, 2 August 2025, p. 8; The New Arab, *Kurdish-led authority urges IS repatriation as tensions in northeast Syria rise*, 29 September 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syria: Mass arrests in Raqqa for conscription, SDF denies*, 2 October 2025; SNHR, *Condemning the widespread detention for forced conscription by the Syrian Democratic Forces in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor since 29 September 2025*, 8 October 2025, p. 1; Enab Baladi, *Arrests, stalled talks, and military buildups. War drums beat in eastern Syria*, 8 October 2025; Enab Baladi, *Rights group condemns SDF's forced recruitment campaigns in Syria*, 9 October 2025.

¹⁷⁴ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁷⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria, Kurdish talks to resume in Paris 'within weeks'*, 29 July 2025; Al-Monitor, *Will Turkey follow through on threats to attack Syria's Kurds?*, 13 August 2025; Fabrice Balanche, *Territorial and political strife in Northeast Syria: A test for the future*, December 2025.

¹⁷⁶ Fabrice Balanche, *Territorial and political strife in Northeast Syria: A test for the future*, December 2025.

1.2.2.3 DAANES

The Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) constituted the de facto administration in Northeast Syria. It comprised various departments functioning in a manner comparable to ministries. DAANES applied its own administrative division within Northeast Syria.¹⁷⁷ The so-called social contract functioned as a temporary constitution.¹⁷⁸ For further information on DAANES, see paragraph 1.6.2 of the General Country of Origin Information Report of December 2024.

1.2.2.4 Syrian Democratic Council

The Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) was the political wing of the SDF.¹⁷⁹ The SDC was a confederation of multi-ethnic political parties, associations, civil society organisations and local activists established simultaneously with the SDF in December 2015.¹⁸⁰ The dominant political party within the SDC was the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat*, PYD), which was affiliated with the YPG.¹⁸¹

1.2.3 Institutions in Suweida

The majority of the southern province of Suweida, including the city of Suweida, was under the control of local Druze armed groups. These groups had operated there semi-autonomously for several years.¹⁸² Some groups consisted of small local neighbourhood guards, while others were more professional formations comprising over one thousand fighters.¹⁸³ The groups did not operate as a monolithic block and were internally fragmented. Armed confrontations between these groups occasionally resulted in casualties.¹⁸⁴

The three principal Druze spiritual leaders in Suweida were Sheikh Yousef al-Jarbou, Sheikh Hammoud al-Hennawi and Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri.¹⁸⁵ Al-Hijri, who adopted a critical stance towards Damascus, gained the support of most local Druze armed groups during the reporting period. From August 2025 onwards, he sought to establish a form of self-governance Suweida. He publicly stated that he was pursuing the creation of a "separate region".¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁷ DAANES, *The Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria - Provinces*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁷⁸ The Social Contract stipulated, inter alia, the official languages in the areas under DAANES control (Article 7), the fundamental rights and freedoms in those areas (Chapter 2), the responsibilities of the SDC (Article 93), and the organisation of the judicial system in those areas (Article 114); Rojava Information Center, *DAANES' Social Contract, 2023 edition*, December 2023; Enab Baladi, *Recycling de facto authority in northeastern Syria. "The Social Contract" and the concern of separation*, 26 February 2024; The Syrian Observer, *Assyrian Democratic Party condemns closure of Christian schools by autonomous administration*, 30 October 2025.

¹⁷⁹ Enab Baladi, *What is SDF's military structure and why does it insist on a "one block" demand?*, 23 January 2025; TWI, *Kurdish unity efforts gain momentum amid an uncertain future in Syria*, 27 January 2025; North Press Agency, *SDC condemns deadly attack on civilian bus in Damascus-Suwayda*, 29 October 2025.

¹⁸⁰ The Syria Report, *Syrian Democratic Council*, 19 October 2021.

¹⁸¹ Enab Baladi, *Kurdish protection units: Key point of contention between Damascus and SDF*, 27 March 2025.

¹⁸² Enab Baladi, *What is the "National Guard" formed by sheikh al-Hijri in Suwayda, Southern Syria?*, 24 August 2025; Financial Times, *Syria on 'knife-edge' in wake of sectarian clashes, warns UN envoy*, 7 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁸³ Al Majalla, *Unravelling the factions, sheikhs, and fighters of Sweida*, 24 July 2025; Enab Baladi, *In Suwayda, the Druze "National Guard" incorporates Men of Dignity as Sheikh al-Hijri calls for separation from Syria*, 25 August 2025; Syriac Press, *Syria: Men of Dignity Movement joins National Guard, reshaping power balance in Suwayda*, 2 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁸⁴ The Times of Israel, *Israel said arming, paying salaries of Druze militia in Syria's Sweida area*, 16 September 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 14-21*, 21 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *December 30, 2025-January 6, 2026*, 6 January 2026; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁸⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Explainer: How do Druze in Syria's Sweida view government, Israeli intervention?*, 18 July 2025; TWI, *Implications of the recent violence in Suwayda*, 6 August 2025.

¹⁸⁶ Enab Baladi, *Druze sheikhs in Suwayda unite in opposition to Damascus*, 10 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian Druze figure calls for forming 'separate region'*, 25 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian Druze cleric calls for partition, says future lies with Israel*, 14 January 2026.

On 16 September 2025, the transitional government, Jordan and the United States agreed on a six-step roadmap to resolve the political crisis with the Druze community in Suweida.¹⁸⁷ Druze leaders from Suweida were not involved in the drafting of this roadmap. Al-Hijri rejected the roadmap almost immediately.¹⁸⁸ In October 2025, he called for an independent Suweida.¹⁸⁹ Thereafter, implementation of the roadmap did not materialise.¹⁹⁰

1.2.3.1 Supreme Legal Committee in Suweida

On 6 August 2025, the establishment of the Supreme Legal Committee in Suweida was announced. The committee consisted of six judges and three lawyers.¹⁹¹ In a statement, the committee indicated that its mandate was to organise local governance, security, and public services in Suweida in the absence of central government authority from Damascus.¹⁹² The committee also appointed an executive committee composed of eight members to manage public services in Suweida.¹⁹³ Furthermore, the committee appointed Brigadier General Shakib Nasr as head of the internal security forces in Suweida and Brigadier General Anwar Radwan as his deputy. Shakib Nasr had recently served as head of the Political Security Directorate in Tartous. Anwar Radwan had previously served as head of the Baniyas district in Tartous province.¹⁹⁴ Following criticism of his appointment, Shakib Nasr resigned within a week. Judge Shadi Fayez Murshid reportedly replaced him. Murshid was also a member of the Supreme Legal Committee in Suweida.¹⁹⁵ According to one source, the committee was scarcely effective in practice, as the local economy in Suweida had come to a standstill.¹⁹⁶

1.2.3.2 National Guard Forces in Suweida

On 23 August 2025, approximately thirty Druze armed groups announced that they would cooperate within a military coalition, the National Guard Forces (NGF).¹⁹⁷ These included *Quwat Qalib al-Karama*, *Sayf al-Haq Forces*, the *Al-Fahd Forces*, the *Al-Uliya Forces*, the *Liwa al-Jabal* and the Counter-Terrorism Forces.¹⁹⁸ Subsequently, several additional groups joined the alliance, including the 164th Brigade, the Men of Dignity Movement (*Rijal al-Karama*), the Unitarian Popular Resistance, the Southern Shield Forces and the Mountain Shield Forces.¹⁹⁹ According

¹⁸⁷ Reuters, *Syria, Jordan, US agree on 7-step roadmap to solve crisis in Suwayda*, 16 September 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

¹⁸⁸ Etana, *Brief: Suwayda roadmap agreement faces pushback*, 23 September 2025; confidential source, November 2025.

¹⁸⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria Druze leader calls for 'full independence' for Suweida province*, 28 October 2025.

¹⁹⁰ Enab Baladi, *"Legal committee" rejects roadmap for solution in Suwayda*, 17 September 2025; North Press Agency, *Suwayda governor rejects "legal committee", says roadmap key to stability*, 23 September 2025; confidential source, October 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

¹⁹¹ The Syrian Observer, *Syrian justice ministry refers Suweida's "Supreme Legal Committee" judges for investigation*, 8 August 2025.

¹⁹² The Syrian Observer, *Suweida's supreme legal committee appoints alleged war criminal to lead internal security*, 8 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Why Suwayda's Druze spiritual leadership formed a new local administration in Syria*, 11 August 2025; Syria Direct, *Suwayda between self-administration and division: Are civil initiatives too late?*, 12 August 2025.

¹⁹³ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Executive body formed in Syria's Suweida to run province*, 7 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Why Suwayda's Druze spiritual leadership formed a new local administration in Syria*, 11 August 2025.

¹⁹⁴ Enab Baladi, *Why Suwayda's Druze spiritual leadership formed a new local administration in Syria*, 11 August 2025; Syria Direct, *Suwayda between self-administration and division: Are civil initiatives too late?*, 12 August 2025; L24, *Sectarian separatist agendas deepen ongoing crisis in Suwayda*, 18 August 2025.

¹⁹⁵ The Syrian Observer, *Syrian justice ministry refers Suweida's "Supreme Legal Committee" judges for investigation*, 8 August 2025; ANHA, *Appointment of new commander for Internal Security Forces in Sweida*, 19 August 2025; X.com, *Wladimir van Wilgenburg*, 20 August 2025, [url](#); ANHA, *2 judges in Sweida dismissed, decision linked to their roles in administration*, 27 November 2025.

¹⁹⁶ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁹⁷ UNHCR, *Flash update on the situation in As-Sweida #7*, 9 September 2025, p. 1.

¹⁹⁸ Enab Baladi, *What is the "National Guard" formed by Sheikh al-Hijri in Suwayda, Southern Syria?*, 24 August 2025; Aymenn's Monstrous Publications, *Druze Factions in al-Suwayda': Interview with Quwat Qalib al-Karama*, 24 November 2025.

¹⁹⁹ Enab Baladi, *In Suwayda, the Druze "National Guard" incorporates Men of Dignity as Sheikh al-Hijri calls for separation from Syria*, 25 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media unpick Druze calls for 'separate region' in south*, 26 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Druze factions unite under 'National Guard' as spiritual leader calls for secession*, 26 August 2025; Syriac Press, *Syria: Men of Dignity Movement joins National Guard, reshaping power balance in Suwayda*, 2 October 2025.

to one source, the Suweida Military Council (SMC) also joined.²⁰⁰ On 25 September 2025, units of the National Guard Forces held a military parade in the city of Suweida.²⁰¹ They stated that their focus was on the defence of Suweida.²⁰² They reportedly received support from, among others, Israel.²⁰³ See paragraph 2.2.5.1 for a description of several violent incidents involving the National Guard Forces.

1.3 Legislation

1.3.1 *Constitutional declaration*

On 2 March 2025, interim president al-Sharaa appointed a committee of seven legal experts to draft a constitutional declaration.²⁰⁴ President Al-Sharaa signed this declaration on 13 March 2025.²⁰⁵

Article 2 of the constitutional declaration stipulates that the religion of the president is Islam and that Islamic jurisprudence constitutes the principal source of legislation.²⁰⁶ In this respect, there was a degree of continuity, as Article 3 of the 2012 Constitution stated that the religion of the president is Islam and that Islamic jurisprudence would be an important source of legislation.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, Article 51 of the constitutional declaration provides that existing laws remain in force unless they are amended or repealed. In view of Article 52 of this declaration, it serves as the legal framework for a transitional period of five years, after which a constitution would be adopted and general elections would be held.²⁰⁸ See paragraph 1.3.3 of the COI Report on Syria of May 2025 for further information on the constitutional declaration.

1.3.2 *Legislative revisions*

During the reporting period, no comprehensive revisions were made to existing legislation, such as the Penal Code, the Personal Status Law, and the Labour Law. No new laws were introduced.²⁰⁹ Instead, amendments were made to procedures or certain legal provisions were suspended.²¹⁰ For example, in the registration of life events, the intermediate step requiring individuals first to visit the local mayor (*mukhtar*) was removed.²¹¹

1.3.3 *Rights of different groups*

According to the constitutional declaration, all Syrians are equal before the law, regardless of their origin or religion. The constitutional declaration promises to protect the rights of all Syrians and shield them from discrimination. As far as is known, no developments occurred in this regard during the reporting period.²¹²

²⁰⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

²⁰¹ SOHR, *Affirming military readiness. "Druze National Guards" stages parade in Al-Suwaitaa*, 25 September 2025; Etana, *Brief: Latest developments in Suwayda*, 30 September 2025, p. 2.

²⁰² Confidential source, September 2025.

²⁰³ The Times of Israel, *Israel said arming, paying salaries of Druze militia in Syria's Sweida area*, 16 September 2025; The Washington Post, *How Israeli covert activities in Syria seek to thwart its new government*, 23 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

²⁰⁴ France 24, *Syria forms committee to draft transitional constitutional charter*, 2 March 2025.

²⁰⁵ BBC, *Syria leader signs temporary constitution for five-year transition*, 14 March 2025; CNN, *Syrian leader signs constitution that puts the country under an Islamist group's rule for 5 years*, 14 March 2025.

²⁰⁶ Reuters, *Syria keeps role for Islamic law in 5-year transition*, 13 March 2025.

²⁰⁷ ConstitutionNet, *Syrian Arab Republic 2012*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

²⁰⁸ ConstitutionNet, *Constitutional declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 March 2025.

²⁰⁹ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

²¹⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

²¹¹ DIS, *Syria. Security situation, return, and documents*, December 2025, p. 35; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

²¹² Confidential source, September 2025.

1.3.4 *Family law*

Family law fell under Law No. 59 of 1953, referred to as the Personal Status Law. This law consisted of six parts: marriage, dissolution of marriage, parentage and its consequences, guardianship, wills and inheritance.²¹³ A modified version of this law applied in the SDF control area.²¹⁴ According to one source, family law did not change during the reporting period.²¹⁵

1.3.5 *Demobilisation*

Since December 2024, compulsory military service has not been in force in areas under the control of the transitional government.²¹⁶ On 9 December 2024, the Military Operations Command (MOC) announced an amnesty for all soldiers who had served as conscripts in the former army.²¹⁷ They could report to a registration centre (*marakiz at-taswiya*) to surrender their weapons and military identity cards in exchange for temporary identification cards demonstrating their demobilisation.²¹⁸ These cards were valid for three months.²¹⁹ Following registration, an investigation would be conducted into any possible war crimes committed by the individuals concerned. Once this investigation had been completed, their files would be closed and they would receive a civilian identity card. During the reporting period, one source reported that many investigations had not been completed, leaving numerous demobilised individuals in a state of uncertainty and unable to obtain civilian identity cards. Fearing that they might be recognised as former soldiers at a checkpoint and run into trouble as a result, many stayed home.²²⁰

1.4 **Recruitment of minors**

According to the human rights organisation Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), forced recruitment of Kurdish and Arab minors and young adults, both boys and girls, took place in Northeast Syria by the Kurdish group Revolutionary Youth Movement of Syria. These recruits often ended up with armed groups affiliated with the SDF.²²¹ For example, in August 2025 armed men linked to the SDF abducted a 14-year-old girl in the Sheikh Maqsoud district of Aleppo. It was suspected that this constituted forced recruitment.²²²

²¹³ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Syrian Personal Status Laws*, December 2018, p. 2.

²¹⁴ Lena-Maria Möller, *Between religious diversity and national unity: The role of family law in Syria's transitional justice journey*, 15 January 2025.

²¹⁵ Confidential source, September 2025.

²¹⁶ The New Arab, *Why Al-Sharaa's scrapping of conscription for Syrians matters*, 16 December 2024.

²¹⁷ The Telegraph, *Syrian regime soldiers granted amnesty*, 10 December 2024.

²¹⁸ Enab Baladi, *Military Operations Administration opens settlement centers for former regime elements*, 18 December 2024; De Volkskrant, *De voorgedrukte kaarten met het woord 'dood' hoefden alleen nog te worden ingevuld*, 18 December 2025.

²¹⁹ The New Arab, *'Reconciliation centres' for Assad regime personnel spark debate*, 19 December 2024.

²²⁰ Syria Direct, *Assad's former fighters underground as demobilization stalls*, 7 October 2025.

²²¹ SNHR, *The Syrian Democratic Forces kidnapped the child Muhammad Yusuf for forced conscription in Aleppo on June 12, 2025*, 24 June 2025; SNHR, *At least 658 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in Syria in the first half of 2025 including 72 cases in June*, 4 July 2025, p. 17; SNHR, *At least 109 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in July 2025*, 2 August 2025, p. 8; SNHR, *Syrian Democratic Forces kidnapped child Omar Abdul Rahim Qader for forced conscription in Aleppo Governorate on October 16, 2025*, 19 October 2025.

²²² Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

2 The security situation

2.1 Developments in the security situation

During the reporting period, Syria experienced a significant lack of stability.²²³ The escalation of violence in Suweida in mid-July 2025 underscored the continued unrest and the transitional government's lack of control. Ongoing violent incidents in various provinces (see paragraph 2.2), tensions with the SDF in the north and northeast, tensions in Suweida, revanchist sentiments, military operations by the Israeli army, attacks claimed by ISIS, attacks by armed supporters of the previous regime,²²⁴ internal displacement, a humanitarian crisis, significant socio-economic challenges and regional tensions contributed to the lack of stability in the country.²²⁵ As a result, Syria ranked among the least peaceful countries in the world. This was reflected, among others, in the Global Peace Index 2025 of the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), in which Syria ranked 157th out of 163 countries.²²⁶ This was also reflected in the ACLED Conflict Watchlist of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), in which Syria ranked third out of fifty countries.²²⁷

2.1.1 Conflict-related violence in Syria

On 20 January 2026, data on violent incidents were extracted from the ACLED database.²²⁸ Three types of violence were selected: battles, explosions/remote violence, and violence against civilians.²²⁹ 'Battles' refers to an armed confrontation between warring parties. 'Explosions/remote violence' refers to incidents in which one of the parties uses a type of weapon that is deployed remotely and is highly destructive by nature. This may include the use of artillery and grenade shelling, missile and drone attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).²³⁰ If the adversary seeks to intercept drones with an air defence system, ACLED codes the violence as a 'battle'.²³¹ 'Violence against civilians' refers to the deliberate use of force by an armed group against unarmed civilians.²³²

²²³ IEP, *Global Peace Index 2025*, June 2025, p. 80; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian response priorities. January-December 2025*, 24 July 2025, p. 20; The New York Times, *Violence on Syrian coast likely amounts to war crimes, U.N. says*, 14 August 2025; The Century Foundation, *A Catch-22 of suspicion imperils Syria's transition to democracy*, 27 October 2025; The New Arab, *Will foreign fighters test the stability of post-Assad Syria?*, 29 October 2025; Enab Baladi, *UN inquiry: Recurring violence undermines Syria's stability and tests government's capacity for justice*, 31 October 2025; The Syrian Observer, *International Commission of Inquiry: Syria's transitional phase remains fragile*, 8 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

²²⁴ These were cells or groups that had emerged from the military and paramilitary structures of the Assad regime. They were commonly referred to as *fuloul* (Arabic for 'remnants'); confidential source, September 2025.

²²⁵ IEP, *Global Peace Index 2025*, June 2025, p. 15; The Century Foundation, *A Catch-22 of suspicion imperils Syria's transition to democracy*, 27 October 2025.

²²⁶ IEP, *Global Peace Index 2025*, June 2025, p. 9.

²²⁷ The ACLED Conflict Index assesses how and where conflicts vary in each country and territory worldwide on the basis of four indicators: lethality, danger to civilians, geographic spread, and the number of armed groups; ACLED, *Conflict Index*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

²²⁸ This was done using an application called the Data Export Tool. The user requires a so-called access key for this purpose.

²²⁹ [This footnote may be removed from the English version.]

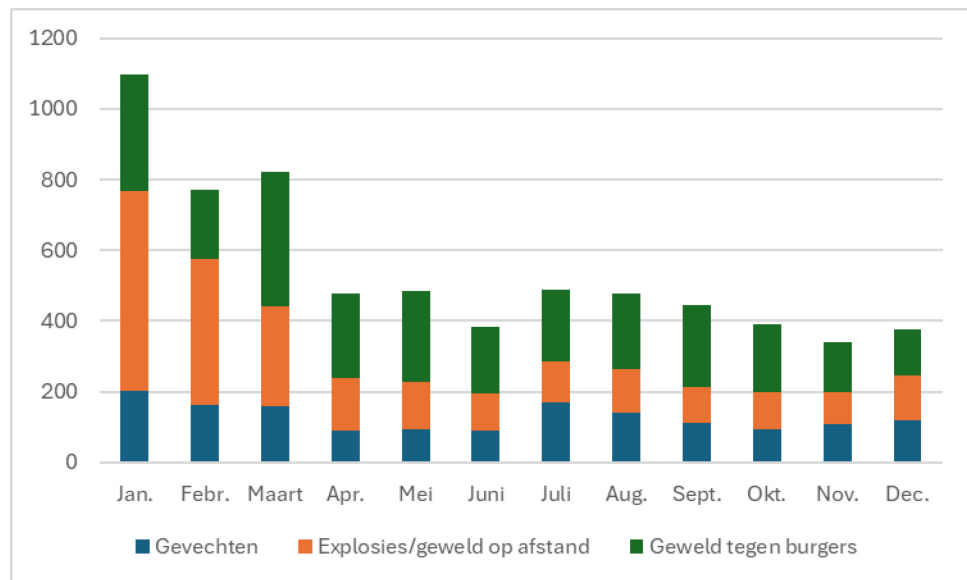
²³⁰ Roadside bombs are an example of IEDs.

²³¹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Syria*, December 2025, p. 59.

²³² Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Syria*, May 2024, p. 30.

Given that ACLED relies primarily on secondary reporting, there may be issues of underreporting, particularly in less densely populated or less accessible areas. Based on the data presented below, no concrete distinction can be made between the numbers of incidents of random and of targeted violence. This is because violent incidents are not coded on the basis of this distinction. ACLED also records the number of fatalities recorded for the various types of incidents. Because ACLED does not distinguish between killed combatants and killed civilians in these counts, these data are not included here.²³³

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 3,385 violent incidents in Syria. Of these, 925 incidents concerned battles, 902 incidents concerned explosions/remote violence, and 1,558 incidents concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 340 (November 2025) and 488 (July 2025) during this period. Compared with the preceding reporting period, the ACLED data presented below showed a decrease in the number of registered violent incidents in Syria during the reporting period. An increase was observed in July 2025, followed by a decrease from August 2025 onwards and a increase in December 2025.²³⁴

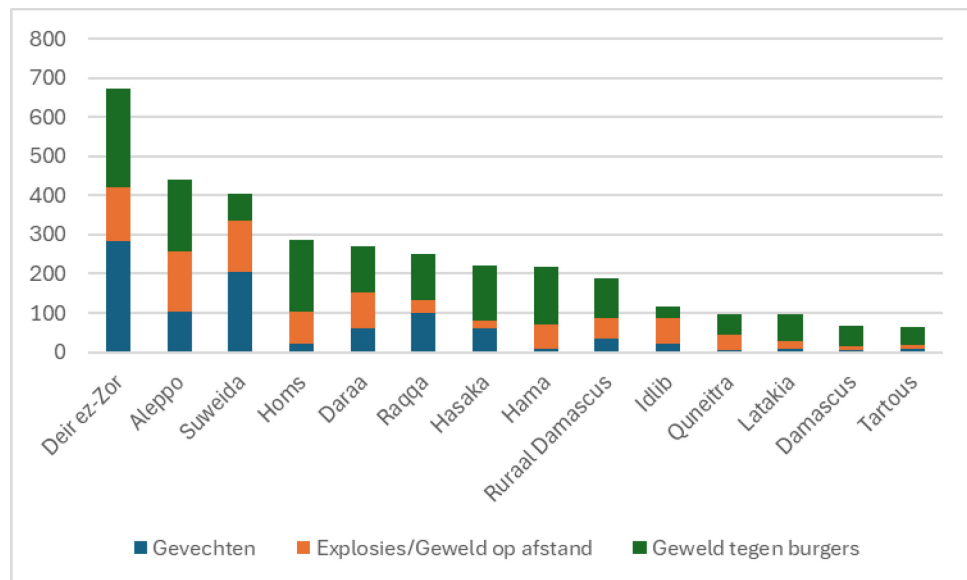


Graph 1: Violent incidents in Syria between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025.. Source: ACLED.

²³³ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *COI Report on Syria*, May 2025, p. 161.

²³⁴ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic.

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded the highest number of violent incidents in the province of Deir ez-Zor (671), followed by Aleppo (439), Suweida (404), Homs (285), Daraa (269), Raqqa (250), Hasaka (220), Hama (217), Rural Damascus (188), Idlib (115), Quneitra (98), Latakia (97), Damascus (69) and Tartous (63).²³⁵



Graph 2: Violent incidents per province between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

On 8 January 2026, analyst Charles Lister reported that lethal violence in Syria had declined from September 2025 onwards to one third of the level observed during the preceding nine months (December 2024 to August 2025). According to Lister, this reduction was largely attributable to the transfer of responsibility for internal security from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of the Interior’s efforts to recruit local personnel, measures to integrate its activities with political directorates at the provincial and district levels, and arrest campaigns targeting criminal organisations involved in organised crime, terrorism, vigilantism, and sectarian violence.²³⁶

2.1.2 Israeli military activities

Almost immediately after the fall of the previous regime, Israel moved into the demilitarised zone between the occupied Golan and Syria, in violation of the 1974 agreements, stating that this was necessary to guarantee border security. During the reporting period, the Israeli army remained present in the demilitarised zone and continued to conduct airstrikes and ground operations in Syria. For example, in July 2025, airstrikes on the Syrian capital, Damascus, struck the building of the Syrian Ministry of Defence and the presidential palace. In September 2025, President Al-Sharaa stated that Israel had conducted more than 1,000 airstrikes and at least 400 ground operations in Syria.²³⁷

²³⁵ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, url, accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles; Explosions/Remote Violence; Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Al Hasakeh, Aleppo, Ar Raqqa, As Sweida, Damascus, Dara, Deir ez Zor, Hama, Homs, Idleb, Lattakia, Quneitra, Rural Damascus, Tartous.

²³⁶ Syria Weekly, *Data Update (December 30, 2025-January 6, 2026)*, 8 January 2026.

²³⁷ Al Jazeera, *Syria, Israel edge closer to 'de-escalation' pact: US envoy*, 24 September 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian leader discusses 'shift from exporting crises' at Doha forum*, 6 December 2025.

2.1.3 ISIS

Cells of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) remained active in Syria.²³⁸ Since ISIS lost its last territorial holdings in Syria in March 2019, its militants mainly operated in concealment in the remote desert areas of Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor (the Badia desert).²³⁹ ISIS subsequently claimed responsibility for attacks and guerilla operations in both the SDF control area and the control area of the transitional government.²⁴⁰ Following the takeover of power in December 2024, ISIS cells moved from rural areas to urban areas in the central and western parts of the country, including Damascus.²⁴¹ Most attacks claimed by ISIS were directed against the SDF. During the reporting period, ISIS also claimed several attacks in the control area of the transitional government.²⁴² For example, ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack on a police patrol on 14 December 2025 on the road to Ma'arrat al-Nu'man in the province of Idlib province, in which four police officers were killed and one was injured.²⁴³

Civilians could also be targeted by ISIS. According to information from the human rights organisation Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) of 5 November 2025, ISIS members allegedly fired at the house and storage facilities of a trader in the village of Al-Takihi in Deir ez-Zor province. They reportedly ordered him to pay religious tax (*zakat*). Since the beginning of 2025, SOHR recorded 211 ISIS operations in the parts of Deir ez-Zor, Hasaka and Raqqa provinces under SDF control, including armed attacks and explosions. These incidents resulted in 97 fatalities, including 68 fighters of the SDF and affiliated military units, 15 civilians and 13 ISIS members.²⁴⁴

In Northeast Syria, forces of the US-led International Anti-ISIS Coalition were present. They were stationed at the Qasrak base near the town of Tal Tamr in Hasaka province and at the Al Tanf base in southern Syria.²⁴⁵ In April 2025, the United States announced plans to reduce the number of US troops in Syria and to close three bases in north-east Syria.²⁴⁶ On 2 June 2025, Fox News reported that the United States had withdrawn approximately 500 troops in the preceding weeks.²⁴⁷ According to the US Department of Defense, approximately 1,000 US

²³⁸ De Morgen, *Komt er een heropleving van IS na de val van het Assad-regime? 'Verhoogde activiteit gesignaleerd'*, 12 June 2025; BBC, *Inside Syria's jail for IS suspects as officials say attacks by group are rising*, 26 October 2025.

²³⁹ BBC, *Inside Syria's jail for IS suspects as officials say attacks by group are rising*, 26 October 2025; The New York Times, *Syria's leaders pledge to join fight against Islamic State*, 12 November 2025.

²⁴⁰ IEP, *Global Peace Index 2025*, June 2025, p. 78; BBC Monitoring, *IS infographic highlights recent operations in Syria*, 16 October 2025; BBC, *Inside Syria's jail for IS suspects as officials say attacks by group are rising*, 26 October 2025; De Volkskrant, *IS-aanhanger schiet 2 Amerikaanse militairen en tolt dood in Syrië, Trump belooft terug te slaan*, 15 December 2025.

²⁴¹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *COI Report on Syria*, May 2025, p. 49; BBC Monitoring, *Syria dismantles 'IS cell' in Idlib*, 7 August 2025; The New York Times, *Syria's leaders pledge to join fight against Islamic State*, 12 November 2025; confidential source, October 2025; confidential source, November 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

²⁴² BBC Monitoring, *IS supporters cheer group's claim of killing 'government spy' in Syria*, 28 November 2025; BBC Monitoring, *IS claims rare attacks outside usual areas of activity in Syria*, 1 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *IS claims rare attack in Syria's Idlib province*, 1 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: IS supporters laud rare attack on Syrian government forces*, 2 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *IS claims killing two members of Syrian government patrol in Aleppo*, 4 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria says two officers killed in Aleppo ambush claimed by IS*, 4 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *IS claims IED attacks near Syrian capital and in Idlib province*, 9 December 2025.

²⁴³ SANA, *Four internal security members martyred in attack on a patrol near Maarrat al-Numan*, 15 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *IS claims killing four Syria soldiers in Idlib province, as supporters celebrate*, 15 December 2025.

²⁴⁴ SOHR, *Asking for paying "zakat". ISIS cells attack house and stores belonging to merchant in Deir Ezzor countryside*, 5 November 2025.

²⁴⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Syria monitor reports US withdrawal from two key bases*, 2 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: US troops withdrawal attracts limited discussion in Syrian media*, 3 June 2025; Al Jazeera, *US to reduce military presence in Syria, keeping only one base operational*, 3 June 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Nearly a quarter of U.S. forces withdraw from Syria*, 3 June 2025; De Volkskrant, *Met de heropleving van IS in Syrië rijst de vraag of de regering-Al Sharaa alle problematiek wel aankan*, 28 June 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Washington sends military reinforcements to northeastern Syria*, 28 October 2025; The New York Times, *3 Americans killed in ISIS attack in Syria, Trump says, vowing to retaliate*, 13 December 2025.

²⁴⁶ The New York Times, *U.S. is withdrawing hundreds of troops from Syria*, 17 April 2025.

²⁴⁷ The Syrian Observer, *Nearly a quarter of U.S. forces withdraw from Syria*, 3 June 2025.

military personnel were stationed in Syria in December 2025.²⁴⁸ The International Anti-ISIS Coalition carried out several operations against ISIS cells together with the SDF.²⁴⁹

Security forces of the transitional government also conducted operations against ISIS cells.²⁵⁰ On 10 November 2025, the transitional government joined the International Anti-ISIS Coalition.²⁵¹ On 30 November 2025, the US military stated that, in cooperation with the Syrian Ministry of the Interior, it had destroyed more than fifteen ISIS weapons depots in Rural Damascus province between 24 and 27 November 2025.²⁵²

2.1.4

Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Syria

According to ACLED, 44% fewer violent incidents occurred between 1 January 2025 and 28 November 2025 compared with the first eleven months of 2024. According to ACLED, more than 4,670 civilians were killed in Syria between 1 January 2025 and 28 November 2025 as a result of targeted violence. A combination of political rivalry, sectarian violence and foreign interference resulted in 7,692 conflict-related deaths. In 2025, violent confrontations and killings involving Druze and Alawite communities occurred in the provinces of Latakia, Suweida, Tartous, Hama, and Homs, resulting in more than 4,600 reported deaths, or 60% of the total number of deaths in Syria.²⁵³

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documents civilian deaths resulting from extrajudicial operations.²⁵⁴ The organisation bases its work on both public sources and an extensive network in Syria.²⁵⁵ Based on the data presented below, no concrete distinction can be made between the number of deaths resulting from indiscriminate violence and those resulting from targeted violence, as SNHR does not document victims according to this distinction.²⁵⁶

No information was found on the total number of civilians injured in Syria in 2025 as a result of conflict-related violence.

In 2025, SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths. The SNHR data presented below show that the number of documented civilian deaths peaked in July 2025 during the reporting period:²⁵⁷

²⁴⁸ The New York Times, *3 Americans killed in ISIS attack in Syria, Trump says, vowing to retaliate*, 13 December 2025.

²⁴⁹ SNHR, *At least 658 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in Syria in the first half of 2025 including 72 cases in June*, 4 July 2025, p. 17; SNHR, *At least 109 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in July 2025*, 2 August 2025, p. 8; BBC Monitoring, *Kurdish-led forces in Syria say arrested 39 IS members*, 30 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria's Kurdish-led force arrests dozens of suspects in anti-IS raids*, 31 August 2025.

²⁵⁰ SANA, *Internal security forces arrest a number of Daesh terrorist cells, Damascus countryside*, 26 May 2025; Asharq Al-Awsat, *ISIS attempts to revive operations in Syria*, 31 May 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025; CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. July 2025*, 11 August 2025, p. 2; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: IS militants killed, arrested in 'US-Syria operation' near Damascus*, 19 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria conducts two anti-IS operations in Idlib*, 1 December 2025.

²⁵¹ BBC, *Syria to join US-led coalition to defeat IS group after Trump meeting*, 11 November 2025; The New York Times, *Syria's leaders pledge to join fight against Islamic State*, 12 November 2025.

²⁵² U.S. Central Command, *U.S., Syrian forces locate and destroy ISIS weapons caches in southern Syria*, 30 November 2025.

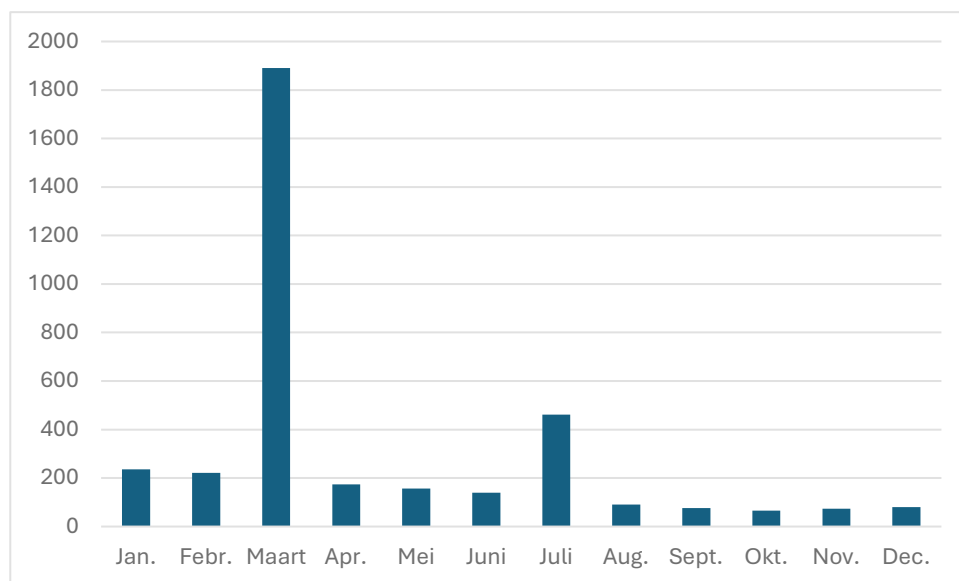
²⁵³ ACLED, *Sectarian violence threatens Syria's chance at stability*, 11 December 2025.

²⁵⁴ SNHR, *Syrian Network for Human Rights working methodology*, p. 12, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

²⁵⁵ SNHR, *Syrian Network for Human Rights working methodology*, p. 2, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

²⁵⁶ SNHR, *The death of 157 civilian including 20 children and 11 women, and one death due to torture recorded in May 2025*, 1 June 2025; SNHR, *The death of 2818 civilian including 201 children and 194 women, and 17 deaths due to torture recorded in the first half of 2025*, 3 July 2025; SNHR, *The death of 89 civilians including 13 children and 10 women, and one death due to torture recorded July 2025*, 1 August 2025; SNHR, *The death of 91 civilian including eighteen children and five women, and four deaths due to torture recorded in August 2025*, 1 September 2025; SNHR, *The death of 70 civilians including seven children and three women, and three deaths due to torture recorded in September 2025*, 1 October 2025; SNHR, *The death of 66 civilians including nine children and seven women, and three deaths due to torture recorded in October 2025*, 1 November 2025.

²⁵⁷ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 2.



Graph 3: Number of civilian deaths in Syria in 2025 documented by SNHR. Source: SNHR.

See Annex 5.6 for a table of the number of civilian deaths documented by SNHR per province in 2025.

2.1.5

Incidents involving explosive remnants of war

Explosive remnants of war, such as landmines and unexploded ordnance, posed a threat to the lives of civilians in large parts of Syria, including farmers, herders, children and internally displaced persons returning to their original places of residence.²⁵⁸ In October 2025, the Syria Mine Action Area of Responsibility (AoR) reported that most incidents in Homs occurred in agricultural areas, particularly when families resumed seasonal cultivation and farming activities. Several incidents involved children and young adults, often while tending livestock or playing near fields. In Aleppo, incidents were linked to the return of internally displaced persons, the restoration of their homes, and efforts to generate income through scrap metal collection. Furthermore, in Daraa most incidents occurred in agricultural and rural areas, frequently involving internally displaced persons or children engaged in activities to support their livelihoods.²⁵⁹

Many areas were heavily contaminated with explosive remnants of war, including the agricultural areas south of Idlib, the area south of the M4 highway in Idlib, the Ghouta region around Damascus, areas in the provinces of Homs and Hama, the eastern part of the city of Aleppo, the Euphrates basin and desert areas in Deir ez-Zor. This hampered the return of internally displaced persons and Syrians abroad to their original areas of residence.²⁶⁰ It also complicated, for example, efforts to extinguish major wildfires in Latakia in the summer of 2025.²⁶¹ According to the Landmine Monitor 2025 of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Myanmar recorded the highest number of landmine casualties in 2024 (2,029), followed by Syria (1,015) and Afghanistan (624).²⁶²

²⁵⁸ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 17 June 2025, p. 1; The HALO Trust, *Syrian landmine casualties set to spiral as school year ends*, 20 June 2025; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4; The HALO Trust, *Syria*, [URL](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

²⁵⁹ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4-5.

²⁶⁰ UNICEF, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian situation report No. 16, October 2025*, 28 November 2025, p. 2; confidential source, September 2025.

²⁶¹ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 1; De Volkskrant, *Achtergebleven granaten richten een stil bloedbad aan in Syrië*, 5 December 2025.

²⁶² International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor 2025*, December 2025, p. 4.

According to the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), between December 2024 and October 2025 there were at least 813 incidents involving explosive remnants of war. These incidents resulted in 563 fatalities, including 156 children (28%), and 935 injured people, including 383 children (41%).²⁶³ The International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO) recorded 206 incidents involving explosive remnants of war between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in 143 deaths and 361 injured people.²⁶⁴ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded 102 incidents, resulting in 39 deaths and 113 injured people.²⁶⁵ According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), there were 59 incidents in October 2025, resulting in 16 deaths and 74 injured people.²⁶⁶ In November 2025, UNOCHA reported 48 incidents, resulting in 21 deaths and 65 injured people.²⁶⁷

In Syria, the clearance of explosive remnants of war was carried out by the Syrian army, the Ministry of Emergency and Disaster Management (including the former White Helmets), the British NGO The HALO Trust, the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).²⁶⁸ Several NGOs estimated that clearance operations would take at least thirty years.²⁶⁹ According to the Syria Mine Action AoR, more than 787,000 persons in Syria received awareness training on the presence of explosive remnants of war in 2025.²⁷⁰ The effect of this training is not known.

2.1.6 *Impact on the humanitarian situation in Syria*

Conflict-related violence had an impact on the humanitarian situation in Syria. This impact varied by region. The following provides an overview of the impact in a number of provinces for the purposes of substantiation and illustration. The overview below cannot be regarded as exhaustive.

2.1.6.1 Impact in Suweida

According to the Syrian organisation Etana, the escalation of violence in mid-July 2025 (see paragraph 2.2.5.1) led to food shortages in Suweida, as food storage facilities were looted and crops could not be harvested.²⁷¹ On 28 July 2025, a relief convoy of 27 Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) vehicles carrying approximately 200 tonnes of flour was granted humanitarian access.²⁷² Subsequently, additional relief convoys entered the province.²⁷³ On 25 September 2025, most public bakeries in Suweida ceased operations due to a shortage of flour. A delivery of approximately 200 tonnes of flour on 27 September 2025 by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) provided temporary relief.²⁷⁴ According to one source, the humanitarian situation remained poor and the population in Suweida continued to depend on humanitarian assistance.²⁷⁵ According to UNOCHA,

²⁶³ UNICEF, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian situation report No. 16, October 2025*, 28 November 2025, p. 2.

²⁶⁴ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

²⁶⁵ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 2.

²⁶⁶ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 1. October 2025*, 20 November 2025, p. 3.

²⁶⁷ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 2. November 2025*, 23 December 2025, p. 5.

²⁶⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

²⁶⁹ Syria Weekly, *Weekly data update (July 15-22, 2025)*, 24 July 2025.

²⁷⁰ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 6*, 8 December 2025, p. 5.

²⁷¹ Etana, *Brief: Suwayda under siege*, 31 July 2025.

²⁷² BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria media showcase arrival of humanitarian aid in Suweida*, 28 July 2025; ICRC, *Syria: ICRC gains access to Sweida, calls for sustained humanitarian response*, 29 July 2025; Etana, *Brief: Suwayda under siege*, 31 July 2025.

²⁷³ Enab Baladi, *Humanitarian aid convoys resume entry into Suwayda after security tensions*, 6 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Washington announces humanitarian aid for Suwayda*, 27 October 2025; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. South escalation response dashboard. As of 09 November 2025*, 9 November 2025, p. 1; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 1. October 2025*, 20 November 2025, p. 2.

²⁷⁴ SOHR, *Under supervision of Red Crescent and World Food Program. Aid convoy carrying 200 tons of flour arrives in Al-Suwaydaa*, 27 September 2025; Etana, *Brief: Latest developments in Suwayda*, 30 September 2025.

²⁷⁵ Confidential source, November 2025.

humanitarian needs and the consequences remained significant five months after the escalation of hostilities in Suweida, with civilians continuing to bear the brunt of the crisis.²⁷⁶

According to UN organisations, the unstable security situation and road closures disrupted the delivery of humanitarian aid.²⁷⁷ Both the transitional government and local Druze armed groups imposed restrictions on access, generally citing security considerations. For example, the highway to Damascus remained closed until the end of August.²⁷⁸ Only access routes from Busra al-Sham and Busra al-Harir in Daraa province were used to a limited extent for humanitarian assistance.²⁷⁹ The Busra al-Sham crossing was briefly closed in early August 2025 due to security incidents.²⁸⁰ In a statement of 31 July 2025, Etana reported that aid convoys en route to Suweida had been turned back by militia members affiliated with the transitional government.²⁸¹ Furthermore, in December 2025 UNICEF stated that the ceasefire was holding, but that checkpoints and security measures continued to disrupt supply routes.²⁸²

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), ground fighting and Israeli airstrikes in July 2025 caused failures in electricity, water and telecommunications infrastructure across large parts of Suweida.²⁸³ Since 17 July 2025, internet services, mobile communications and landline telephone services had been disrupted.²⁸⁴ Furthermore, damage to the electricity supply and fuel supply led to an interruption of the water supply systems. As a result, water could no longer be pumped.²⁸⁵ Dozens of wells became inoperable.²⁸⁶ Consequently, many internally displaced persons had insufficient access to water.²⁸⁷ Damage was also caused to health infrastructure, for example because hospitals were attacked and occupied.²⁸⁸ According to UNICEF, seventeen health centres were damaged.²⁸⁹ The national hospital in the city of Suweida temporarily suspended almost all normal services during and immediately after the escalation of violence in July 2025 due to shortages of fuel, staff, medicines and medical equipment.²⁹⁰ During the escalation of violence, ambulances were also obstructed and attacked. For example, ambulance personnel were unable to reach certain neighbourhoods due to the presence of snipers.²⁹¹ In addition to critical infrastructure, residential and non-

²⁷⁶ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response in Southern Syria - Situation Report No. 4 (as of 14 December 2025)*, 15 December 2025, p. 2.

²⁷⁷ UNICEF, *Humanitarian flash update #3. Escalation of hostilities in As-Suweida governorate*, 14 August 2025, p. 1; UN OSES, *United Nations special envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen briefing to the security council*, 21 August 2025, p. 1; UNOCHA, *Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator – Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

²⁷⁸ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 21 August 2025, p. 2; Enab Baladi, *Damascus sets date to reopen Suwayda highway*, 22 August 2025.

²⁷⁹ Enab Baladi, *Security incidents disrupt Busra al-Sham corridor to Suwayda in southern Syria*, 22 August 2025.

²⁸⁰ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria reopens humanitarian corridor to Suweida as calm returns*, 4 August 2025; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 6. Escalation of hostilities in As-Suweida governorate. As of 5 August 2025*, August 2025, p. 2; Enab Baladi, *Humanitarian aid convoys resume entry into Suwayda after security tensions*, 6 August 2025.

²⁸¹ Etana, *Brief: Suwayda under siege*, 31 July 2025.

²⁸² UNICEF, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian situation report No. 17 - November 2025*, 24 December 2025, p. 2.

²⁸³ HRW, *Syria: Abuses, humanitarian emergency amid Sweida clashes*, 22 July 2025.

²⁸⁴ GEM, *As-Suwayda under fire: Escalating humanitarian crisis and human rights implications for the most vulnerable*, 20 July 2025; UNICEF, *Humanitarian flash update #3. Escalation of hostilities in As-Suweida governorate*, 14 August 2025, p. 1; L24, *Syrian government relief and commerce continue despite ongoing obstruction*, 29 October 2025.

²⁸⁵ Etana, *Brief: Suwayda under siege*, 31 July 2025.

²⁸⁶ UNICEF, *Humanitarian flash update #3. Escalation of hostilities in As-Suweida governorate*, 14 August 2025, p. 1.

²⁸⁷ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 7. Escalation of hostilities in As-Suweida governorate*, 13 August 2025, p. 4.

²⁸⁸ BBC, *'They shot patients in beds' - BBC hears claims of massacre at Suweida hospital*, 22 July 2025.

²⁸⁹ UNICEF, *Humanitarian flash update #3. Escalation of hostilities in As-Suweida governorate*, 14 August 2025, p. 1.

²⁹⁰ GEM, *As-Suwayda under fire: Escalating humanitarian crisis and human rights implications for the most vulnerable*, 20 July 2025; SNHR, *Urgent appeal to allow all forms of humanitarian aid to reach Suwayda and forcibly displaced persons*, 22 July 2025, p. 1.

²⁹¹ GEM, *As-Suwayda under fire*, 20 July 2025.

residential buildings were damaged or destroyed. According to various sources, several villages were looted and destroyed by fire.²⁹² Banks and markets in Suweida also ceased functioning during the escalation of violence.²⁹³ Approximately 7,000 students in Suweida were unable to take their final examinations.²⁹⁴ On 22 October 2025, all schools in Suweida were closed for security reasons.²⁹⁵ Schools in Suweida reopened on 4 November 2025.²⁹⁶

2.1.6.2 Impact in Suweida

The escalation of violence from mid-July 2025 in Suweida led to a flow of internally displaced persons towards Daraa.²⁹⁷ In August 2025, internally displaced persons from Suweida were accommodated in temporary reception centres and school buildings in the eastern part of Daraa province and in hotels in the city of Sayyida Zeinab in Rural Damascus province.²⁹⁸ Most of the displaced persons who fled from Suweida to eastern Daraa were Bedouins.²⁹⁹ On 21 July 2025, several hundred civilians were evacuated to eastern Daraa under the supervision of the SARC.³⁰⁰ On 23 July 2025, more than 500 civilians were evacuated.³⁰¹ On 2 August 2025, a convoy carrying nearly 400 civilians left Suweida province for Daraa via the Busra al-Sham corridor under the supervision of the SARC.³⁰²

In mid-August 2025, the governor of Suweida presented a plan to rehabilitate sixteen villages, including the village of Al-Mazra'a, in order to facilitate the return of these internally displaced persons.³⁰³ On 14 September 2025, shortly before the start of the new school year, approximately one hundred families reportedly returned from Daraa to the predominantly Bedouin village of Al-Asfar in Suweida province under the supervision of the internal security forces.³⁰⁴ No information was found indicating that returns to the village of Al-Mazra'a had taken place.

2.1.6.3 Impact in Quneitra

The numerous ground operations carried out by the Israeli army were at times accompanied by the destruction of homes, deforestation, the confiscation of livestock, the sealing off of agricultural areas and damage to farmland.³⁰⁵ These operations were also sometimes accompanied by arrests and occasionally resulted in

²⁹² Reuters, *Bodies and looted homes: Syria's Druze reeling after Sweida bloodshed*, 18 July 2025; Etana, *Brief: Suwayda under siege*, 31 July 2025; De Volkskrant, *Voor dit druzische gezin is de droom van één Syrië voorbij*, 3 September 2025.

²⁹³ North Press Agency, *Suwayda faces severe food, medicine shortages, says ICRC*, 18 August 2025.

²⁹⁴ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 7. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 13 August 2025, p. 2; UNICEF, *Humanitarian flash update #3. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 14 August 2025, p. 1; confidential source, October 2025.

²⁹⁵ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 13–14.

²⁹⁶ Syria Weekly, *October 28-November 11*, 11 November 2025; UNICEF, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian situation report No. 16, October 2025*, 28 November 2025, p. 2.

²⁹⁷ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 21 August 2025, p. 1; UNHCR, *Flash update on the situation in As-Sweida #7*, 9 September 2025, p. 2.

²⁹⁸ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 7. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 13 August 2025, p. 2; AP News, *Displaced Bedouin families in limbo as Syrian government and Druze authorities remain at odds*, 6 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

²⁹⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Bedouin civilians flee Syria's Sweida amid fragile ceasefire*, 17 July 2025.

³⁰⁰ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media document 'displacement' of Bedouin tribes from Suweida*, 21 July 2025; Trouw, *Bedoeien geëvacueerd uit door gevechten getroffen stad*, 22 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: State media touts relief efforts in southern Syria*, 23 July 2025; SANA, *Sweida governor and commander of internal security visit a number of shelters, Daraa*, 3 September 2025.

³⁰¹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media report ongoing evacuations from Suweida*, 24 July 2025.

³⁰² UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 7. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 13 August 2025, p. 1.

³⁰³ The Syrian Observer, *Suweida governor unveils plan to repatriate displaced residents and rehabilitate 16 villages*, 13 August 2025.

³⁰⁴ L24, *Bedouin families return to Suwayda amid ongoing fears*, 17 September 2025; Enab Baladi, *Suwayda governorate launches "humanitarian initiative" to facilitate the return of the displaced*, 15 October 2025.

³⁰⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian outlets question government response to Israel incursions*, 19 June 2025.

civilian casualties (see paragraph 2.2.3.2).³⁰⁶ In several locations, the Israeli army assumed control of critical water infrastructure.³⁰⁷

2.1.7

Internally displaced persons in Syria

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated Syria's population at 27,239,039 in December 2025.³⁰⁸ UNHCR estimated the number of internally displaced persons at 7,408,809 on 15 May 2025.³⁰⁹ and at 7,096,053 on 11 December 2025. As of 21 August 2025, an estimated 4.8 million displaced persons were living outside designated locations for internally displaced persons, while 1.4 million were residing across 1,782 locations for internally displaced persons, primarily in displacement camps and informal settlements in the northwest and northeast. On 11 December 2025, UNHCR reported that the events of 27 November 2024 and recent incidents in Suweida had led to further displacement, resulting in more than 894,665 new internally displaced persons.³¹⁰

According to IOM, a total of 13,109 persons were displaced in May 2025.³¹¹ In June 2025, this concerned 9,544 persons; in July 2025, 167,819 persons; in August 2025, 35,711 persons; in September 2025, 39,446 persons; in October 2025, 17,610 persons; in November 2025, 15,677 persons; and in December 2025, 19,579 persons. The escalation of violence in Suweida in mid-July 2025 (see paragraph 2.2.5.1) resulted in the highest levels of displacement.³¹²

According to UNHCR, 1,955,879 persons returned to their former places of residence between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025. Most returns took place in Aleppo province (39.9%), followed by Hama (16.2%), Idlib (14.0%), Homs (14.0%) and Rural Damascus (5.5%).³¹³ Between 27 November 2024 and 13 November 2025, 1,062,229 persons returned from the northwest and northeast of Syria.³¹⁴

According to IOM, an estimated 186,780 internally displaced persons returned to their areas of origin in May 2025.³¹⁵ In June 2025, this concerned 149,851 persons; in July 2025, 133,998 persons; in August 2025, 116,441 persons; in September 2025, 86,256 persons; in October 2025, 77,120 persons; in November 2025, 57,020 persons; and in December 2025, an estimated 70,375 persons.³¹⁶

³⁰⁶ Enab Baladi, *Israeli army kills civilian in Quneitra, southern Syria*, 26 August 2025; SANA, *Israeli occupation forces penetrate Quneitra countryside, arrest 7 civilians*, 3 September 2025.

³⁰⁷ L24, *Israel increases illegal attacks and occupation in Syria*, 3 January 2025; MEMO, *Israel bombs rural Damascus, occupies Al-Mantara dam*, 3 January 2025; The New Arab, *Damascus is running out of water. The culprit? Climate change, conflict...and Israeli land grabs*, 26 August 2025; SANA, *Israeli drone targets al-Mantara Dam in Quneitra countryside*, 24 December 2025.

³⁰⁸ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

³⁰⁹ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 15 May 2025*, 15 May 2025.

³¹⁰ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

³¹¹ IOM, *Syrian Arab Republic. Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5.

³¹² IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 6. July 2025*, 18 August 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 9. October 2025*, 10 November 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 10. November 2025*, 19 December 2025, p. 4; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 4.

³¹³ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

³¹⁴ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #54. Syria situation*, 21 November 2025, p. 1.

³¹⁵ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 6.

³¹⁶ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 6; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 6. July 2025*, 18 August 2025, p. 6; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 6; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 6; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 9. October 2025*, 10 November 2025, p. 6; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 10. November 2025*, 19 December 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 5.

Upon return, tensions sometimes arose between internally displaced persons and the local population. Returned displaced persons considered, for example, that they should receive all humanitarian assistance and accused the population that had remained behind of supporting the previous regime or the SDF. Conversely, returned internally displaced persons were sometimes reproached for having left.³¹⁷

2.2 Security situation by province

A description of the security situation in Syria's fourteen provinces is provided below. It should be noted that these descriptions are not exhaustive and are intended only to provide a general overview.

2.2.1 *Damascus*

Damascus Governorate is located in southwestern Syria, approximately fifty kilometres from the border with Lebanon. The province of Rural Damascus surrounds Damascus (see paragraph 2.2.2). According to UNOCHA, the province has an area of nearly 117 km².³¹⁸ IOM estimated the population at 1,887,256 in December 2025, of whom 31% were internally displaced persons.³¹⁹ The centre of Damascus remained intact during the civil war (2011–2024). This did not apply to other parts of Damascus, such as Yarmouk and Jobar, where extensive destruction occurred.³²⁰ The city of Damascus formed part of the control area of the transitional government.³²¹

³¹⁷ Confidential source, July 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

³¹⁸ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

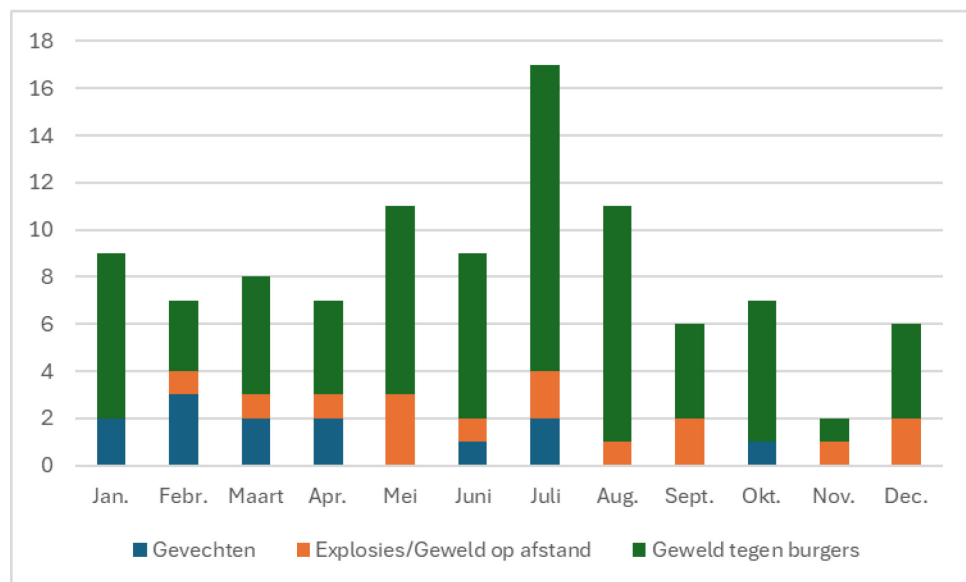
³¹⁹ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

³²⁰ Qantara, "Debris isn't waste", 29 October 2025; RTL Nieuws, *Zijn kinderen groeiden op in Sassenheim, maar Ahmad keerde terug naar Syrië: 'Dit is thuis'*, 9 December 2025.

³²¹ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

2.2.1.1 Conflict-related violence in Damascus

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 69 violent incidents in Damascus. Of these, 4 concerned battles, 12 concerned explosions/remote violence and 53 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 2 (November 2025) and 17 (July 2025). In many cases, the violent incidents recorded by ACLED involved unidentified armed groups. The ACLED data presented below showed relatively low numbers of registered violent incidents in Damascus during the reporting period. No clear trend was observed:³²²



Graph 4: Violent incidents in Damascus between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence. This overview is not exhaustive.

Several explosions and rocket attacks occurred in Damascus.³²³ For example, on 16 August 2025 a bomb exploded beneath an abandoned car in front of the Ministry of Information on the Mezzeh highway. No casualties were reported.³²⁴ On 3 September 2025, a bomb exploded in the predominantly Alawite neighbourhood of Mezzeh 86. According to the Ministry of the Interior, there were no casualties.³²⁵ On 15 November 2025, unidentified individuals launched two Katyusha rockets from the outskirts of the city, which landed in the Mezzeh 86 neighbourhood. According to the Ministry of Defence, at least one person was injured.³²⁶ Also, on 3 January 2026 unidentified individuals launched three rockets at the Mezzeh district. No casualties were reported.³²⁷

³²² ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, url, accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Damascus.

³²³ BBC Monitoring, *Blast reported in Alawite neighbourhood in Syrian capital*, 12 September 2025.

³²⁴ SANA, *Explosive device planted inside car goes off in Mezzeh area of Damascus*, 16 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

³²⁵ SANA, *Atikah: Explosion in Mezzeh 86 caused by bomb targeting one of internal security forces*, 4 September 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Blast in Syrian capital targets security official, no casualties reported*, 4 September 2025.

³²⁶ SANA, *Defense ministry: A heinous attack with two Katyusha rockets hits Mezzeh vicinity*, 15 November 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian Defense Ministry says rockets fired from outskirts of Damascus toward Mezzeh*, 15 November 2025; Enab Baladi, *Two Katyusha rockets behind Mezzeh explosions in Damascus*, 15 November 2025.

³²⁷ SANA, *Three rockets fired at the Mezzeh area of Damascus, no casualties*, 3 January 2026; BBC Monitoring, *'Unidentified' shells target Damascus neighbourhood*, 4 January 2026.

During the reporting period, the Israeli army carried out several airstrikes in Damascus. On 2 May 2025, an airstrike took place near the presidential palace. No casualties were reported. According to the Israeli government, this attack was a clear message to the transitional government that it would not allow the deployment of troops south of Damascus or any threat to the Druze community. At that time, there were escalations of violence in the suburbs of Jaramana, Ashrafiyet Sahnaya and Sahnaya in Rural Damascus and in a number of locations in Suweida province (see paragraph 3.3.2.8 of the COI Report on Syria of May 2025).³²⁸ On 16 July 2025, the building of the Ministry of Defence was targeted. There were reports of casualties (see paragraph 2.2.1.2). At that time, there was an escalation of violence in Suweida province involving the deployment of Syrian military forces.³²⁹ On 16 July 2025, the Israeli army also carried out airstrikes near the presidential palace.³³⁰ No casualties were reported in connection with these airstrikes near the palace.³³¹

2.2.1.2

Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Damascus

SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 25 civilian deaths in Damascus.³³² The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

On 22 June 2025, a suicide attack took place during a church service at the Greek Orthodox Saint Elias Church in the Duweila district in eastern Damascus. At least 25 civilians were killed, and 60 were wounded.³³³ According to the transitional government, the preliminary investigation indicated the involvement of ISIS cells, although ISIS itself did not claim responsibility.³³⁴ On 24 June 2025, the relatively unknown group Supporters of the Sunna Battalions (*Saraya Ansar al-Sunna*) claimed responsibility for the attack via Telegram.³³⁵ According to the transitional government, this group was merely a front for ISIS.³³⁶

In the aforementioned Israeli airstrike on the Ministry of Defence at Umayyad Square in central Damascus on 16 July 2025, several civilian deaths were reportedly recorded. According to SNHR, at least 3 civilians were killed and 36 others were injured in this attack.³³⁷

³²⁸ The Guardian, *Syria calls Israeli air strikes on Damascus a 'dangerous escalation'*, 2 May 2025; BBC, *Israel says it struck near Syria palace over violence in Druze areas*, 3 May 2025; The Guardian, *Israel strikes Syria's defence ministry in third day of attacks*, 16 July 2025.

³²⁹ Reuters, *Israel launches heavy airstrikes in Damascus, vowing to protect Druze*, 17 July 2025; BBC, *BBC reports from severely damaged Syrian defence headquarters*, 17 July 2025.

³³⁰ Al Jazeera, *World reacts to Israeli attacks on Syria's Damascus*, 16 July 2025.

³³¹ SNHR, *Three civilians killed and 34 others wounded in Israeli bombing targeting the Ministry of Defense headquarters in Damascus on July 16, 2025*, 19 July 2025, p. 1; SNHR, *The death of 89 civilians including 13 children and 10 women, and one death due to torture recorded July 2025*, 1 August 2025, p. 4.

³³² SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

³³³ Al Jazeera, *Syria church bombing kills 25, dozens wounded*, 22 June 2025; UN News, *Security council press statement on terrorist attack in Syria*, 26 June 2025.

³³⁴ Trouw, *Zeker 22 doden bij zelfmoordaanslag tijdens zondagsmis in kerk Syrië*, 23 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria blames suicide bombing in church on Islamic State*, 23 June 2025; Syriac Press, *Syrian government points finger at Islamic State over attack on church of Mar Elias*, 23 June 2025; Asharq Al-Awsat, *Damascus gov't on alert to prevent ISIS resurgence*, 26 June 2025; De Volkskrant, *Met de heropleving van IS in Syrië rijst de vraag of de regering-Al Sharaa alle problematiek wel aankan*, 28 June 2025.

³³⁵ BBC Monitoring, *New shadowy Syria jihadist group claims Damascus church attack*, 24 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Syria jihadist group appoints Egyptian 'Emir' to lead Damascus operations*, 2 July 2025.

³³⁶ Atlantic Council, *Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum*, 25 August 2025.

³³⁷ SNHR, *Three civilians killed and 34 others wounded in Israeli bombing targeting the Ministry of Defense headquarters in Damascus on July 16, 2025*, 19 July 2025, p. 1.

- 2.2.1.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants in Damascus
INSO recorded four incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 October 2025. It was not known whether these incidents resulted in casualties.³³⁸ In Damascus, the Ministry of Emergency and Disaster Management was involved in the clearance of explosive remnants of war.³³⁹
- 2.2.1.4 Internally displaced persons in Damascus
UNHCR estimated the number of internally displaced persons in Damascus at 588,781 on 11 December 2025.³⁴⁰ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in Damascus during the reporting period. This information does not indicate to what extent this was linked to conflict-related violence.³⁴¹ According to one source, displacement in Damascus was in part caused by house evictions (see also paragraph 4.5).³⁴²

A case that attracted considerable attention during the reporting period concerned a property dispute over land ownership in the Al-Somariyah district, on the outskirts of Damascus. This land originally belonged to residents of the village of Muadamiyat al-Sham. Since 1960, land has been expropriated there and used for informal settlements with low-cost single-storey housing. Around 1980, military housing blocks were also constructed. Despite the expropriations and construction activities, the land registry (*tabu*) for the land on which the buildings stood in many cases remained in the names of residents of Muadamiyat al-Sham. A local committee reportedly announced on 26 August 2025 that an investigation into property rights in the district would be conducted as part of urban development plans. In the following days, armed uniformed men went door to door, issuing eviction orders to some residents stating that they had 72 hours to vacate their homes. In many cases, eviction followed within 24 hours. Some residents were expelled from their homes without an eviction order. Some people were also briefly detained and ill-treated. These actions were reportedly carried out in a heavy-handed manner, leading to the displacement of thousands of residents. Residents lodged complaints with the local police, the governor and various media outlets regarding these events. The Ministry of the Interior subsequently decided to reverse the measures and to allow people to return.³⁴³

According to UNHCR, an estimated 12,194 internally displaced persons returned to Damascus between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.³⁴⁴

³³⁸ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

³³⁹ SANA, *Syrian Civil Defense clears 2,370 war remnants in Damascus and southern Syria*, 18 November 2025.

³⁴⁰ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

³⁴¹ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 10 – November 2025*, 19 December 2025, p. 5.

³⁴² Confidential source, September 2025.

³⁴³ L'Orient Today, *Alawites flee Damascus neighbourhood in face of death threats*, 30 August 2025; Syriac Press, *Alawites in Daramsuq (Damascus) face forced displacement*, 31 August 2025; AP News, *Alawite families flee Damascus suburb after violence and eviction threats*, 31 August 2025; EuroNews, *Alawites flee homes in Damascus suburb after threats from armed group*, 2 September 2025; Syria Direct, *Evictions in Alawite slums of al-Somariyeh reignite historic property disputes*, 10 September 2025; Enab Baladi, *Al-Sumariyah: A battle over land and identity on the walls of Damascus*, 10 September 2025; Reuters, *How Syrian forces emptied Alawite suburb: X means stay, O means go*, 12 September 2025; The New Arab, *Syrian forces empty Alawite-majority Damascus suburb of al-Somaria*, 13 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

³⁴⁴ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

2.2.2 Rural Damascus

The inhabited part of Rural Damascus is located in southwestern Syria. This province extends from the Lebanese border in the west to the Jordanian border in the east and surrounds the separate Damascus Governorate. The neighbouring provinces are Suweida, Daraa and Quneitra in the south and Homs in the north. According to UNOCHA, the province has an area of 26,262 km².³⁴⁵ IOM estimated the population at 5,325,501 in December 2025, of whom 37% were internally displaced persons.³⁴⁶ Rural Damascus was originally a largely agricultural province in which rapid, unplanned urbanisation occurred in the Ghouta region around Damascus in the decades preceding the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. These predominantly Sunni suburbs of the capital became early centres of protest and military activity against the previous regime.³⁴⁷ The civil war resulted in large-scale destruction of housing and infrastructure in suburbs of Damascus, such as Darayya and Harasta.³⁴⁸ The province of Rural Damascus formed part of the control area of the transitional government.³⁴⁹

2.2.2.1 Conflict-related violence in Rural Damascus

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 188 violent incidents in Rural Damascus. Of these, 36 concerned battles, 51 concerned explosions/remote violence and 101 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 15 (December 2025) and 34 (May 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of violent incidents in Rural Damascus (48), followed by Qatana (37), Douma (34), Al-Zabadani (25), Al-Tall (14), Al-Nabk (12), Darayya (10), Yabroud (6) and Al-Qutayfah (2). The violent incidents recorded by ACLED frequently involved unidentified armed groups, the Israeli army, internal security forces or the Syrian army. The ACLED data presented below showed fluctuations in the number of registered violent incidents in Rural Damascus during the reporting period, followed by a decline from October 2025 onwards:³⁵⁰

³⁴⁵ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

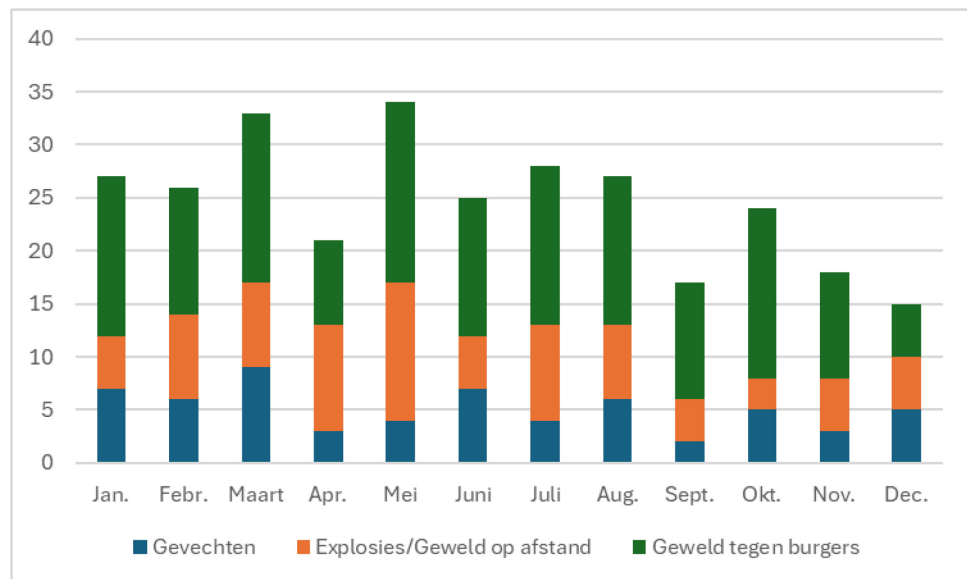
³⁴⁶ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

³⁴⁷ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Syria*, December 2024, p. 45.

³⁴⁸ The New York Times, *A shattered city asks for its sacrifice to be repaid*, 31 August 2025; Der Spiegel, *Wadephul rechnet nicht mit rascher Rückkehr von Syrern*, 31 October 2025.

³⁴⁹ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

³⁵⁰ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Rural Damascus Admin2: Al Qutayfah, An Nabk, At Tall, Az Zabdani, Darayya, Duma, Qatana, Rural Damascus, Yabroud.



Graph 5: Violent incidents in rural Damascus between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

According to various sources, the Israeli army carried out ground operations near the Hermon Mountain (Arabic: *Jabal al-Sheikh*) and the village of Beit Jinn.³⁵¹ According to several sources, the Israeli army also conducted multiple airstrikes.³⁵² ACLED recorded 21 Israeli military actions in this province during the reporting period, with each recorded incident sometimes involving multiple airstrikes and various targets.³⁵³ For example, on 8 June 2025 a drone strike took place near the village of Beit Jinn. According to the Israeli army, the airstrike targeted an individual affiliated with the Palestinian organisation Hamas.³⁵⁴ Also, on 26 August 2025 at least five Syrian soldiers were killed in a drone strike on a building of the 44th Division near the town of Al-Kiswah.³⁵⁵

Security forces of the transitional government conducted operations in Rural Damascus aimed at neutralising alleged ISIS cells.³⁵⁶ Similar security operations

³⁵¹ SNHR, *Documentation of the killing of one civilian and the arrest of seven others during a ground incursion carried out by Israeli occupation forces in the town of Beit Jinn in Rif Dimashq, June 12, 2025*, 25 June 2025; Enab Baladi, *Israel penetrates areas in Quneitra and Beit Jinn*, 29 June 2025; SANA, *Syria strongly condemns Israeli occupation military incursion into Damascus countryside*, 25 August 2025; The New Arab, *Israel carries out raids on southern Syria, sets up checkpoints*, 25 August 2025; The Times of Israel, *'Dangerous escalation': Syria accuses IDF of incursion into border village*, 25 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *100 Israeli troops conduct incursion in Rural Damascus*, 25 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian foreign ministry condemns Israeli incursion in Damascus countryside*, 25 August 2025; Reuters, *Syria says Israel takes some territory around Mount Hermon despite talks*, 25 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Israeli army kills civilian in Quneitra, Southern Syria*, 26 August 2025; Reuters, *Six Syrian soldiers killed in Israeli drone strikes in Damascus countryside, state-run TV says*, 27 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Civilians killed and wounded in Israeli strike on Beit Jinn in southern Syria*, 28 November 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media report Israeli army exercises near crucial water sources*, 7 December 2025.

³⁵² Reuters, *Six Syrian soldiers killed in Israeli drone strikes in Damascus countryside, state-run TV says*, 27 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Israeli strike on Syria kills six soldiers, amid ongoing incursions*, 27 August 2025; The New York Times, *Israeli airstrikes kill soldiers in Syria, officials there say*, 28 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Israeli airstrikes target military sites in Damascus countryside, Syria*, 28 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian news outlets scrutinise Israeli 'air drop' south of Damascus*, 28 August 2025.

³⁵³ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 1/5/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Rural Damascus Actor1: Military Forces of Israel (2022-).

³⁵⁴ The Times of Israel, *IDF says it targeted Hamas member in drone strike in southern Syria*, 8 June 2025.

³⁵⁵ The Times of Israel, *Six Syrian soldiers killed in Israeli drone strike near Damascus – state TV*, 27 August 2025; SNHR, *Condemning the Israeli airstrike near the city of Al-Kiswah in the Damascus countryside, which resulted in the killing of five members of the Syrian Ministry of Defense on August 26, 2025*, 29 August 2025.

³⁵⁶ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report*. September 2025, October 2025, p 2.

took place on 23 June 2025 in Harasta and Kafr Batna. According to the Syrian Ministry of the Interior, two suspects were killed. Six others, suspected of involvement in the attack on a church service in Damascus on 22 June 2025, were arrested.³⁵⁷ The Ministry of the Interior published their photographs on Facebook on 24 June 2025.³⁵⁸ No information was found regarding any subsequent conviction of these suspects.

2.2.2.2 Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Rural Damascus
SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 79 civilian deaths in Rural Damascus province.³⁵⁹ The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Several civilian casualties were reportedly recorded during military operations conducted by the Israeli army, including airstrikes carried out on 3 May 2025, according to various sources. According to the Syrian state news agency SANA, one civilian was killed near the town of Harasta.³⁶⁰ According to several sources, the Israeli army conducted a ground operation in the village of Beit Jinn on 12 June 2025. One resident was reportedly killed and seven others were arrested. The detainees were reportedly transferred to territory under the control of the Israeli army.³⁶¹ According to the Israeli army, members of Hamas were arrested during this ground operation.³⁶²

On 28 November 2025, the Israeli army conducted a military operation in the village of Beit Jinn. According to the Israeli army, the operation aimed to arrest two members of the Lebanese branch of the Sunni movement Islamic Group (*Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*). Following the arrests, Israeli soldiers reportedly came under fire from unidentified armed men. According to the Israeli army, six soldiers were injured and an unknown number of armed men were killed in the gun battle. Under cover of air support, all soldiers were able to withdraw.³⁶³ According to UNOCHA, 13 civilians were killed and approximately 35 others were injured during this military operation.³⁶⁴

Several civilians were also targeted and killed in Rural Damascus. The perpetrators and motives for these killings largely remained unknown.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria forces raid 'IS hideouts', arrest church attack suspect*, 23 June 2025; SANA, *Interior ministry, general intelligence service arrest ISIS terrorist cells, seize weapons*, 23 June 2025; Syriac Press, *Syrian security services report arrests and death of those responsible for Mar Elias attack*, 23 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Three Lebanese arrested in Syria over Damascus church attack*, 28 June 2025.

³⁵⁸ BBC Monitoring, *Syria reveals details of alleged church bombers*, 25 June 2025.

³⁵⁹ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

³⁶⁰ Enab Baladi, *Israel used 12 aircraft in its raids on Syria*, 3 May 2025.

³⁶¹ SANA, *Israeli occupation forces kill one civilian, kidnap seven from Beit Jinn, Damascus countryside*, 12 June 2025; Arab News, *Syria condemns Israeli incursion into Damascus countryside*, 12 June 2025; SNHR, *Documentation of the killing of one civilian and the arrest of seven others during a ground incursion carried out by Israeli occupation forces in the town of Beit Jinn in Rif Dimashq, June 12, 2025*, 25 June 2025; SNHR, *Israeli ground incursions continue in southern Syria amid escalating violations against civilians*, 8 July 2025, p. 2.

³⁶² BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria media report death and arrests during Israeli incursion*, 12 June 2025.

³⁶³ The Times of Israel, *Six soldiers wounded as IDF detains terror suspects in southern Syria*, 28 November 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria says 11 killed in major Israeli raid in south*, 28 November 2025; The Times of Israel, *Report: IDF mulling expanded op in Syria, checking whether Sharaa's forces fired on troops*, 29 November 2025; The Jerusalem Post, *Sharaa's general intelligence behind attack on IDF in Syria's south, Druze in east – report*, 29 November 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Lebanese Islamist group denies operating in Beit Jinn after Israeli accusations*, 2 December 2025.

³⁶⁴ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 2. November 2025*, 23 December 2025, p. 2.

³⁶⁵ SOHR, *Security vacuum. Young man and woman of Alawite community shot dead in Rif Dimashq*, 19 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *August 19-26, 2025*, 26 August 2025; X.com, *Qalaat Al Mudiq*, 25 October 2025, [url](#); Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025.

- 2.2.2.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Damascus
Several incidents involving explosive remnants of war occurred in Rural Damascus.³⁶⁶ INSO recorded ten incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in eleven deaths and fifteen injured people.³⁶⁷ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded eight incidents, resulting in eight deaths and eleven injured people.³⁶⁸ Around the city of Damascus, several teams of the Syrian army and the Ministry of Emergency Relief and Disaster Response were engaged in the clearance of explosive remnants of war.³⁶⁹ The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) were also involved in the removal of explosive remnants of war in Rural Damascus.³⁷⁰
- 2.2.2.4 Internally displaced persons in Rural Damascus
UNHCR estimated the number of internally displaced persons in Rural Damascus at 932,816 on 11 December 2025.³⁷¹ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in various parts of the province during the reporting period, although it does not specify to what extent this was related to conflict-related violence.³⁷² According to UNOCHA, approximately 15,000 people were displaced in Rural Damascus between 30 April 2025 and 6 May 2025 due to the escalation of violence in Jaramana and Ashrafiyet Sahnaya (see paragraph 3.3.2.8 of the COI Report on Syria of May 2025).³⁷³ Furthermore, according to UNOCHA, approximately 1,500 persons were displaced as a result of the military operation in Beit Jinn on 28 November 2025.³⁷⁴

According to UNHCR, an estimated 107,824 internally displaced persons returned to their original places of residence in Rural Damascus between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.³⁷⁵ In addition to returns from abroad and from displacement camps in the northwest, internally displaced persons also returned from the Rukban camp. This camp was located in a desert area near the US military base at Al-Tanf, close to the borders with Jordan and Iraq. On 7 June 2025, the transitional government stated that the last families had left this camp on 6 June 2025.³⁷⁶

³⁶⁶ Syria Weekly, July 1-8, 2025, 8 July 2025; SNHR, *A woman and her child were killed, and three others, including two children, were injured when a landmine exploded in the Sakik area, west of the Rif Dimashq, on August 6, 2025*, 9 August 2025; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 7. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 13 August 2025, p. 2; Enab Baladi, *Syrian defense ministry soldiers killed in landmine blast in Damascus countryside*, 26 August 2025.

³⁶⁷ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

³⁶⁸ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

³⁶⁹ SOHR, *Attempting to dismantle landmines. Member of engineering teams killed in Rif Dimashq*, 28 May 2025;

SANA, *Syria tests German drone to detect landmines*, 16 November 2025.

³⁷⁰ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 4 and 8; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 7; UNMAS, *Syria*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

³⁷¹ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

³⁷² IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

³⁷³ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 21 May 2025.

³⁷⁴ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 2. November 2025*, 23 December 2025, p. 2.

³⁷⁵ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

³⁷⁶ SANA, *Closure of Rukban camp ends one of most severe humanitarian tragedies-emergency minister*, 7 June 2025; SANA, *Dismantling Rukban Camp: An end to a decade of displacement pain*, 8 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria closes Rukban displacement camp near Jordan border*, 9 June 2025.

2.2.3

Quneitra

Quneitra is located in the far southwest of Syria, bordering Israel and Lebanon. According to UNOCHA, the province has an area of 1,718 km².³⁷⁷ IOM estimated the population at 117,977 in December 2025, of whom 6% were internally displaced persons. Quneitra therefore had the lowest population of any province.³⁷⁸ Due to drought, Quneitra faced problems relating to water supply and food security.³⁷⁹ The eastern part of the province formed part of the control area of the transitional government.³⁸⁰ Israel has occupied the western part of the province since 1967, when it captured the Golan Heights. Along the demarcation line, there was an eighty-kilometre demilitarised buffer zone that has been monitored since 1974 by UN troops of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).³⁸¹ On 30 June 2025, the UN Security Council renewed the UNDOF mandate for six months.³⁸² In December 2024, the Israeli army entered the buffer zone. Since then, Israel has occupied territory in the buffer zone separating Syria and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, as well as areas beyond this buffer zone.³⁸³ On 19 November 2025, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited a military post in the buffer zone.³⁸⁴

2.2.3.1

Conflict-related violence in Quneitra

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 98 violent incidents in Quneitra. Of these, 4 concerned battles, 39 concerned explosions/remote violence and 55 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 6 (October 2025) and 21 (December 2025). ACLED recorded 94 violent incidents in Quneitra and 4 in Fiq. In most cases, the violent incidents recorded by ACLED involved the Israeli army. The ACLED data presented below showed relatively low numbers of registered violent incidents in Quneitra during the reporting period. No clear trend was observed:³⁸⁵

³⁷⁷ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

³⁷⁸ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

³⁷⁹ Al Jazeera, *In Quneitra, nobody can celebrate al-Assad's fall amid Israel's invasion*, 26 December 2024; confidential source, September 2025.

³⁸⁰ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

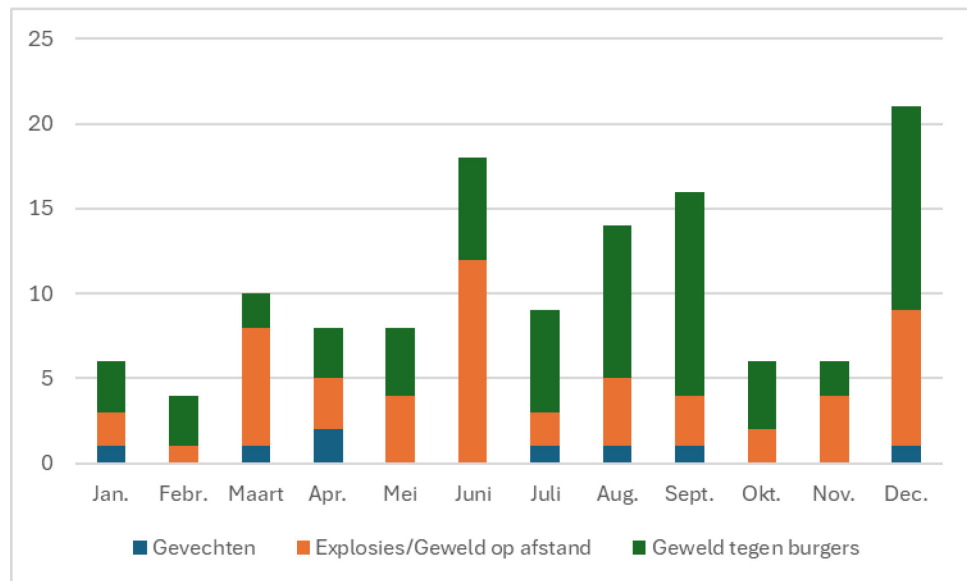
³⁸¹ SANA, *Israeli forces intensify violations in Quneitra, conduct two new incursions*, 28 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: UN force 'flies its flag' at post near Israel base in Syria's Quneitra*, 12 November 2025.

³⁸² UNSC, *Resolution 2782. S/RES/2782 (2025)*, 30 June 2025.

³⁸³ Al Jazeera, *In Quneitra, nobody can celebrate al-Assad's fall amid Israel's invasion*, 26 December 2024; SANA, *UN official: the presence of Israeli forces in the disengagement zone violation of 1974 treaty*, 28 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria condemns Israeli PM tour of Golan Heights*, 20 November 2025.

³⁸⁴ The Times of Israel, *IDF presence in Syria of 'immense importance,' Netanyahu tells troops during visit*, 19 November 2025; Al Jazeera, *Syria condemns Israeli PM Netanyahu's 'illegal visit' to seized territory*, 19 November 2025.

³⁸⁵ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Quneitra Admin2: Al Fiq, Quneitra.



Graph 6: Violent incidents in Quneitra between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

A series of Israeli ground operations took place in Quneitra, each involving several dozen to more than one hundred soldiers.³⁸⁶ These ground operations involved house searches, temporary checkpoints, the arrest of civilians, the confiscation of homes, the erection of barriers, and the removal of buildings and vegetation. In some cases, drones, aircraft, armoured vehicles and bulldozers were used.³⁸⁷ For example, a spokesperson for the Israeli army announced that on 3 August 2025 the army had carried out simultaneous raids on four targets in the vicinity of the village of Hader in rural Quneitra, north of the Syrian Golan Heights. The raids formed part of what the spokesperson described as efforts to prevent smuggling and the presence of “terrorist elements” near the border.³⁸⁸

On 19 August 2025 the Israeli army also intercepted a group of more than forty Israeli settlers who had crossed the Syrian border to build a settlement in

³⁸⁶ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Israeli military raids escalate in southern Syria*, 18 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Israeli forces make arrests in Syria’s Quneitra province*, 2 July 2025; SNHR, *Israeli ground incursions continue in southern Syria amid escalating violations against civilians*, 8 July 2025, p. 2; Enab Baladi, *Israel raids Quneitra in Southern Syria: Arrests and house searches*, 11 August 2025; The New Arab, *Israel carries out raids on southern Syria, sets up checkpoints*, 25 August 2025; SANA, *Israeli occupation forces penetrate Quneitra countryside, arrest 7 civilians*, 3 September 2025; Enab Baladi, *Israeli forces raid “Abidin village” in Daraa countryside, southern Syria*, 4 September 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media report Israeli incursions, violations in Quneitra*, 31 August 2025; Etana, *Brief: Recent developments in south-west Syria*, 7 October 2025, p. 1; Enab Baladi, *Israeli incursions in Quneitra, southern Syria, put civilians at risk and erode their sense of belonging*, 21 October 2025.

³⁸⁷ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #29. Syria situation*, 30 May 2025, p. 2; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Israeli forces make arrests in Syria’s Quneitra province*, 2 July 2025; The Times of Israel, *For 2nd time in days, IDF says troops arrested terror cell in Syria working for Iran*, 7 July 2025; SNHR, *Israeli ground incursions continue in southern Syria amid escalating violations against civilians*, 8 July 2025, p. 2; Enab Baladi, *Israel raids and searches homes in Quneitra, Syria*, 26 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian, Israeli media report Israeli army spokesman near Damascus*, 1 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian media report fresh Israeli incursions*, 9 August 2025; HRW, *Syria: Israel forcibly displaces villagers in occupied south*, 17 September 2025; SANA, *Israeli new incursion into southern Quneitra’s Saida town*, 28 September 2025; SANA, *Israeli forces carry out ground incursion in Quneitra countryside, southern Syria*, 8 October 2025; The New Arab, *Israel army plants mines in Quneitra, while two soldiers killed in Al-Bab*, 27 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media report surge in Israeli incursions in south*, 3 November 2025; Al Jazeera, *Israel sets up checkpoint in Syria’s Quneitra in new breach of sovereignty*, 5 November 2025.

³⁸⁸ The Times of Israel, *IDF says soldiers questioned suspected dealers, seized arms in overnight Syria raid*, 3 August 2025.

Quneitra.³⁸⁹ On 27 November 2025, the Israeli army intercepted at least thirteen Israeli settlers who had crossed the Syrian border at two locations in Quneitra province.³⁹⁰

An unidentified armed group calling itself the Syrian National Resistance claimed on 30 September 2025 that it had carried out a rocket attack on an Israeli army position.³⁹¹ A video also appeared online on 30 September 2025 showing Israeli soldiers raising the Israeli flag in the town of Quneitra.³⁹²

- 2.2.3.2 Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Quneitra
SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 8 civilian deaths in Quneitra province.³⁹³ Various sources also reported on 26 August 2025 that a civilian had been killed in an Israeli shelling incident in Quneitra province.³⁹⁴ According to the Syrian media outlet *Enab Baladi*, at least three civilians were injured on 9 December 2025 after being shot at by the Israeli army near the village of Khan Arnabeh.³⁹⁵
- 2.2.3.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Quneitra
INSO recorded three incidents involving explosive remnants of war between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in two deaths and one injury.³⁹⁶ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded one incident, resulting in one injured person.³⁹⁷ UNMAS was present in Quneitra.³⁹⁸
- 2.2.3.4 Internally displaced persons in Quneitra
UNHCR estimated the number of internally displaced persons in Quneitra at 3,124 on 11 December 2025.³⁹⁹ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in various parts of the province during the reporting period, although it does not specify to what extent this was related to conflict-related violence.⁴⁰⁰ According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), Israeli ground operations led to displacement in Quneitra.⁴⁰¹

According to UNHCR, an estimated 1,347 internally displaced persons returned to their original places of residence in Quneitra between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁴⁰²

³⁸⁹ The Times of Israel, *Israeli activists briefly cross Syria border in bid to establish settlement*, 19 August 2025.

³⁹⁰ The Times of Israel, *Settler activists cross into Syria, are returned by IDF after brief pursuit*, 27 November 2025.

³⁹¹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Group opposed to 'Jolani' claims attack on Israel force in Syria*, 1 October 2025.

³⁹² Enab Baladi, *Quneitra governorate clarifies incident of Israeli flag raising*, 2 October 2025; Etana, *Brief: Recent developments in south-west Syria*, 7 October 2025, p. 1.

³⁹³ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

³⁹⁴ Enab Baladi, *Israeli army kills civilian in Quneitra, southern Syria*, 26 August 2025; SANA, *Young man martyred in Israeli strike on Quneitra countryside*, 26 August 2025; SOHR, *Dramatic escalation. Israeli forces arrest young man and strike leaves civilian dead in Al-Quneitra countryside*, 26 August 2025.

³⁹⁵ Enab Baladi, *Israeli army targets civilians in Khan Arnabeh in Quneitra*, 9 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria-Israel tensions rise after Quneitra drive-by, Israeli gunfire*, 10 December 2025.

³⁹⁶ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

³⁹⁷ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

³⁹⁸ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 9.

³⁹⁹ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁴⁰⁰ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁴⁰¹ HRW, *Syria: Israel forcibly displaces villagers in occupied south*, 17 September 2025.

⁴⁰² UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

2.2.4 Daraa

Daraa is located in the far south of Syria along the border with Jordan. The surrounding provinces are Quneitra, Rural Damascus and Suweida. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of nearly 3,834 km².⁴⁰³ IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 1,352,606 persons, of whom 5% were internally displaced persons.⁴⁰⁴ The M5 highway runs through Daraa, connecting Damascus with the Jordanian capital, Amman.⁴⁰⁵ Daraa province was part of the control area of the transitional government.⁴⁰⁶ In practice, however, the transitional government had limited control over this province due to the presence of dozens of local armed groups.⁴⁰⁷ According to one source, there were many mutual conflicts and tensions among these groups.⁴⁰⁸ Some of these groups nominally fell under the Ministry of Defence, but in practice they operated in a semi-autonomous manner.⁴⁰⁹ As a result, territorial control in Daraa was highly fragmented.⁴¹⁰

2.2.4.1 Conflict-related violence in Daraa

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 269 violent incidents in Daraa. Of these, 62 concerned battles, 89 concerned explosions/remote violence and 118 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 22 (December 2025) and 48 (June 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of violent incidents in Daraa (133), followed by Izraa (83) and Al-Sanamayn (53). In most cases, the violent incidents recorded by ACLED involved unidentified armed groups or the Israeli army. The ACLED data presented below showed fluctuations in the number of registered violent incidents in Daraa during the reporting period, followed by a decline from October 2025 onwards:⁴¹¹

⁴⁰³ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

⁴⁰⁴ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁵ Al Arabiya, *Prospects of a security agreement between Syria and Israel*, 9 October 2025; CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁶ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

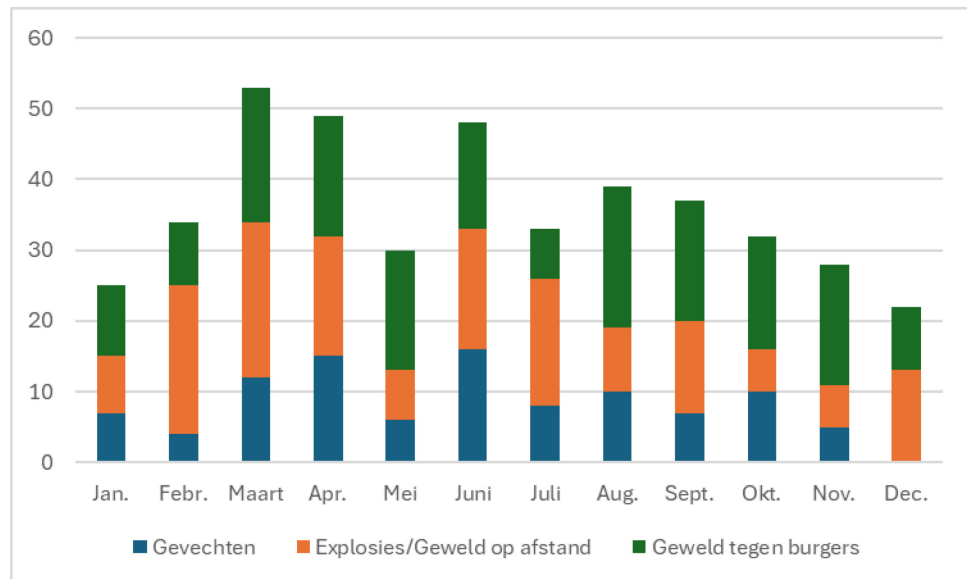
⁴⁰⁷ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁴⁰⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁴⁰⁹ Syria Direct, *Why the delay in merging Daraa's factions into a new Syrian army?*, 21 February 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁴¹⁰ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *COI Report on Syria*, May 2025, p. 12; confidential source, September 2025.

⁴¹¹ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Dara. Admin2: As Sanamayn, Dara, Izraa.



Graph 7: Violent incidents in Daraa between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Israeli army positions were located in the west of the province.⁴¹² According to various sources, the Israeli army carried out multiple ground operations. In some cases, these operations involved house searches, civilian arrests, checkpoints, road closures, artillery shelling and the use of armed drones.⁴¹³ According to several sources, the Israeli army also conducted multiple airstrikes in Daraa.⁴¹⁴

Two groups calling themselves the Great Power Battalions (*Kataib Awli al-Bas*) and the Martyr Mohammed al-Deif Battalions (*Kataib Shaheed Mohammed al-Deif*) claimed that on 3 June 2025 they had launched rocket artillery from Tasil towards Israeli army positions.⁴¹⁵

On 14 September 2025, ISIS published a video showing members of an ISIS cell in the town of Nahta executing a member of the internal security forces on charges of espionage.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#); confidential source, September 2025.

⁴¹³ BBC Monitoring, *Israel says it detained 'militants' from Syria's Deraa following raids*, 29 June 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025; SNHR, *Israeli ground incursions continue in southern Syria amid escalating violations against civilians*, 8 July 2025, p. 2; The New Arab, *Israeli army carries out raids near Damascus, conducts drills*, 12 July 2025; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 7. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 12 August 2025, p. 2; L24, *Israeli incursions in Syria and expansionist rhetoric raise international alarm*, 20 August 2025; Al Jazeera, *Israeli army carries out its latest ground incursion in southern Syria*, 14 September 2025; Enab Baladi, *Israel shells Koya farmland in western Daraa after incursions and threats*, 23 October 2025; SANA, *Israeli forces carry out aggression on Daraa countryside and Quneitra*, 23 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media report surge in Israeli incursions in south*, 3 November 2025; Enab Baladi, *Israeli army raids home in rural Daraa, southern Syria*, 14 November 2025.

⁴¹⁴ MEE, *Israeli bombing of Daraa in Syria a 'provocation', foreign minister says*, 4 June 2025; SANA, *SANA reporter: Israeli occupation warplanes launch airstrikes targeting the outskirts of Izraa city in Daraa countryside*, 15 July 2025; Al Jazeera, *Israel attacked Syria more than 600 times over the past year*, 9 December 2025.

⁴¹⁵ The Times of Israel, *Unrecognized Syrian militia claims responsibility for rocket fire on Israel, says it's only the start*, 4 June 2025; Syria Weekly, *June 3-10, 2025*, 10 June 2025.

⁴¹⁶ Shafaq News, *ISIS executes Syrian security officer in Daraa*, 15 September 2025; Etana, *Brief: Recent developments in south-west Syria*, 7 October 2025, p. 2; The Syrian Observer, *Black flags in southern Syria: Who is helping ISIS expand and regroup?*, 10 October 2025.

- 2.2.4.2 Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Daraa
 SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 164 civilian deaths in Daraa province.⁴¹⁷ The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Multiple targeted killings of civilians occurred in Daraa. The perpetrators and motives for these killings largely remained unknown.⁴¹⁸ Several shootings at passing vehicles also took place on the road from Suweida to Damascus. For example, on 8 August 2025 a SARC aid convoy came under fire in Daraa, damaging several vehicles.⁴¹⁹ On 15 August 2025 a woman was killed and others were injured when unidentified armed men shot at two cars near Busra al-Sham in Daraa province while they were travelling from Suweida to Damascus.⁴²⁰

- 2.2.4.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Daraa
 Several incidents involving explosive remnants of war occurred in Daraa.⁴²¹ INSO recorded nine incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in four deaths and five injured people.⁴²² Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded eleven incidents, resulting in six deaths and thirteen injured people.⁴²³ In Daraa, several teams of the internal security forces were involved in demining operations.⁴²⁴ The HALO Trust and UNMAS were also engaged in the removal of explosive remnants of war in Daraa.⁴²⁵

- 2.2.4.4 Internally displaced persons in Daraa
 UNHCR estimated the number of internally displaced persons in Daraa at 52,621 on 11 December 2025.⁴²⁶ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in various parts of the province during the reporting period, although it does not specify to what extent this was related to conflict-related violence.⁴²⁷

According to UNHCR, an estimated 42,026 internally displaced persons returned to their original places of residence in Daraa between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁴²⁸

⁴¹⁷ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

⁴¹⁸ Al Majalla, *What Daraa's assassinations say about Syria's transition*, 24 June 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 7. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 13 August 2025, p. 2; Syria Weekly, *August 19-26, 2025*, 26 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁴¹⁹ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 7. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 13 August 2025, p. 1.

⁴²⁰ SNHR, *Ms. Nada Amer was killed by unknown gunmen in the vicinity of the town of Al-Kaheel in the eastern Daraa countryside on August 15, 2025*, 16 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Suwayda, southern Syria: Protests demand independence, raise Israeli flags*, 17 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Surge in killings highlights Syria's worsening security breakdown*, 18 August 2025.

⁴²¹ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 7. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 13 August 2025, p. 2; Syria Weekly, *August 19-26, 2025*, 26 August 2025; SNHR, *Mubarak al-Matar was killed by the explosion of an unexploded ordnance (UXO) in the city of Inkhil in the northern Daraa countryside on September 6, 2025*, 8 September 2025.

⁴²² Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

⁴²³ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁴²⁴ Etana, *Brief: Recent developments in south-west Syria*, 7 October 2025, p. 3.

⁴²⁵ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 4, 8 and 9; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 6.

⁴²⁶ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁴²⁷ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁴²⁸ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

2.2.5 Suweida

Suweida is located in the far south of Syria. The province borders Jordan to the south, Rural Damascus province to the north and east, and Daraa province to the west. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of 6,358 km².⁴²⁹ IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 476,231 persons, of whom 22% were internally displaced persons.⁴³⁰ Druze constitute a large proportion of the population in Suweida.⁴³¹ In 2010, ninety percent of the population of Suweida consisted of Druze, seven percent of Christians and three per cent of Sunnis.⁴³² Following the escalation of violence in mid-July 2025, more than thirty villages in the north and east of the province came under the control of the transitional government.⁴³³ The towns of Suweida, Shahba and Salkhad, and the surrounding areas, were under the control of local Druze armed groups, many of which had joined the National Guard Forces in Suweida (see paragraph 1.2.3.2).⁴³⁴

2.2.5.1 Conflict-related violence in Suweida

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 404 violent incidents in Suweida. Of these, 205 concerned battles, 129 concerned explosions/remote violence and 70 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 19 (June 2025) and 126 (July 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of violent incidents in Suweida (309), followed by Shahba (80) and Salkhad (15). In most cases, the violent incidents recorded by ACLED involved unidentified armed groups, the Syrian army, armed Bedouins or local Druze armed groups. Compared with the preceding reporting period, the ACLED data showed an increase in the number of registered violent incidents in Suweida. A peak was observed in July 2025. From October 2025 onwards, there was a further increase, followed by a slight decrease in December:⁴³⁵

⁴²⁹ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

⁴³⁰ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

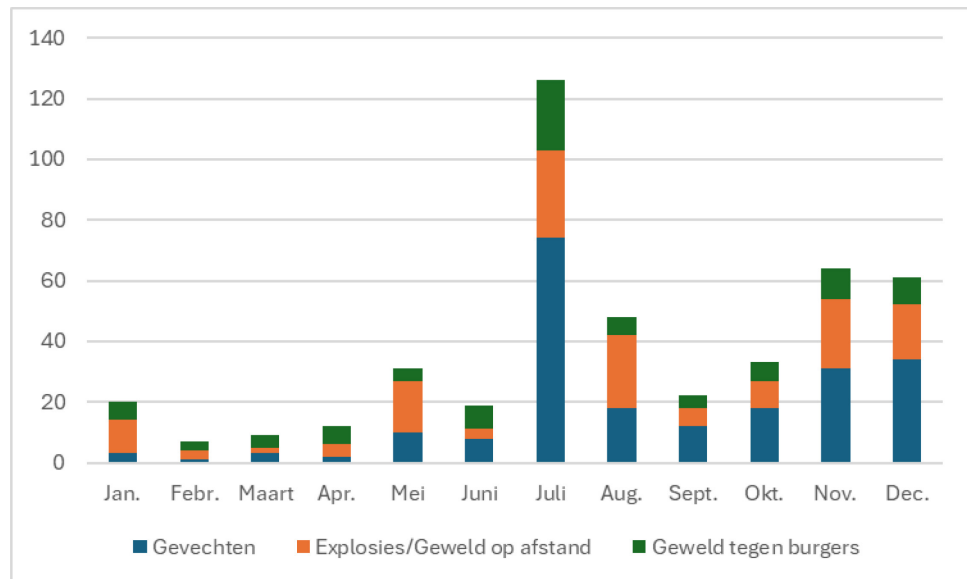
⁴³¹ Al Jazeera, *Israel bombs Syria's Druze-majority city of Suwayda hours after ceasefire*, 16 July 2025.

⁴³² TWI, *The Druze and Assad: Strategic bedfellows*, 20 October 2016.

⁴³³ Etana, *Brief: Suwayda roadmap agreement faces pushback*, 23 September 2025; Enab Baladi, *Al-Hijri states his demands: What is happening in Suwayda is "genocide"*, 11 October 2025; Enab Baladi, *Suwayda governorate launches "humanitarian initiative" to facilitate the return of the displaced*, 15 October 2025.

⁴³⁴ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: 'Cautious calm' in Syria's Suweida after ceasefire announcement*, 20 July 2025; CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. July 2025*, 11 August 2025, p. 2; Enab Baladi, *Suwayda security chief in southern Syria urges residents' cooperation on kidnappings*, 17 September 2025; Etana, *Brief: Suwayda roadmap agreement faces pushback*, 23 September 2025; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

⁴³⁵ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: As Sweida. Admin2: As Sweida, Salkhad, Shahba.



Graph 8: Violent incidents in Suweida between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence. This overview is not exhaustive.

There were multiple violent incidents between local Druze armed groups, armed Bedouins and the security apparatus of the transitional government.⁴³⁶ On 2 May 2025, clashes broke out between unidentified armed groups from the east of Daraa province and local Druze armed groups from the west of Suweida province.⁴³⁷ On that day, four members of a village militia in the village of Kanaker were killed in a drone strike.⁴³⁸

On 6 May 2025, internal security forces reportedly fell into an ambush in the village of Al-Dour by local Druze armed groups affiliated with the Suwayda Military Council. Two members of the internal security forces were killed and four were injured.⁴³⁹

On 21 May 2025, an unidentified armed group briefly abducted Mustafa Bakour, the Sunni governor of Suweida, who commuted daily between Damascus and Suweida. Local Druze armed groups, including the Mountain Brigade and the Men of Dignity, freed the governor.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁶ DW, *Syria: Dozens killed in sectarian clashes*, 14 July 2025; Le Monde, *In Syria, 37 killed during clashes in predominantly Druze city*, 14 July 2025; Trouw, *Voor Syrië dreigt chaos zoals eerder in Libië en Irak*, 4 August 2025.

⁴³⁷ DW, *Latest deadly violence in Syria: What you need to know*, 3 May 2025.

⁴³⁸ Enab Baladi, *As-Suwayda: Four killed while attempting to confront Israeli aircraft*, 2 May 2025; The New Arab, *Turkey interferes with Israeli air electronics amid deadly Syria airstrikes*, 3 May 2025.

⁴³⁹ Syria Direct, *As tensions run high, will Suwayda's security agreement hold?*, 7 May 2025.

⁴⁴⁰ The National, *Governor of Druze-majority Suweida released after being held hostage at town hall*, 22 May 2025; Enab Baladi, *As-Suwayda: Armed group storms governor's office*, 22 May 2025.

In July 2025, an escalation of violence occurred between local Druze armed groups and armed Bedouins in Suweida. The immediate trigger was reportedly an incident on 11 July 2025 involving a Druze trader.⁴⁴¹ As a result of the escalation, the transitional government closed the highway between Suweida and Damascus on 12 July 2025.⁴⁴² On 13 July 2025, clashes broke out in the Bedouin-inhabited Al-Maqwas neighbourhood in the city of Suweida between local Druze armed groups and armed Bedouins.⁴⁴³ The fighting quickly spread to other areas in the west of the province, including Arman and Shahba. Videos circulated on social media, including misinformation, which further fuelled the violence.⁴⁴⁴

Between 14 and 19 July 2025, the Syrian Ministry of Defence deployed more than 12,000 soldiers to Suweida to restore order.⁴⁴⁵ From 14 July 2025 onwards, Israel also carried out airstrikes in southern Syria⁴⁴⁶ and demanded the demilitarisation of the southern provinces of Daraa, Suweida and Quneitra.⁴⁴⁷

On 15 July 2025, the Syrian army entered the city of Suweida, where it engaged in combat with local Druze armed groups.⁴⁴⁸ Violence against civilians also occurred.⁴⁴⁹ During the day, the transitional government stated that a ceasefire had been agreed. Violence continued nevertheless.⁴⁵⁰ On 16 July 2025, fighting concentrated around the national hospital in the city of Suweida. That same day, the Israeli army carried out a series of airstrikes on military positions in Damascus, Rural Damascus and Suweida. At approximately 17.00 on 16 July 2025, the Minister of the Interior announced a ceasefire in Suweida.⁴⁵¹ During the night of 16 to 17 July 2025, the Syrian army withdrew from the province.⁴⁵² In a speech on 17 July 2025, President Al-Sharaa stated that responsibility for the security situation in Suweida would be left to local Druze armed groups.⁴⁵³ On 18 July 2025, the US Ambassador to Türkiye reported that Israel and Syria had agreed to a ceasefire, supported by Türkiye, Jordan and other neighbouring countries.⁴⁵⁴ In a speech on 19 July 2025, President Al-Sharaa called on the conflict parties to reconcile.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁴¹ BBC, *Dozens killed in clashes between Druze and Bedouin in southern Syria*, 14 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 8-15, 2025*, 15 July 2025; AP News, *Who are the Druze in Syria, and why are they clashing with government forces?*, 16 July 2025; The Guardian, *Clashes continue in Sweida after Syrian presidency's ceasefire declaration*, 20 July 2025.

⁴⁴² DW, *Syria: Dozens killed in sectarian clashes*, 14 July 2025; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 6. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate. As of 5 August 2025*, August 2025, p. 2.

⁴⁴³ Reuters, *More than 30 killed in sectarian clashes in Syria's Sweida, interior ministry says*, 14 July 2025.

⁴⁴⁴ Le Monde, *In Syria, 37 killed during clashes in predominantly Druze city*, 14 July 2025; DW, *Syria: Dozens killed in sectarian clashes*, 14 July 2025; BBC, *Dozens killed in clashes between Druze and Bedouin in southern Syria*, 14 July 2025.

⁴⁴⁵ BBC, *Dozens killed in clashes between Druze and Bedouin in southern Syria*, 14 July 2025; Le Monde, *In Syria, 37 killed during clashes in predominantly Druze city*, 14 July 2025; DW, *Syria: Dozens killed in sectarian clashes*, 14 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian factions trade blame as Sweida violence resurges*, 14 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian military intervenes in Sweida after scores killed in clashes*, 14 July 2025; IISS, *From fragmentation to integration: Prospects for security sector reform in post-Assad Syria*, October 2025, p. 3.

⁴⁴⁶ DW, *Syria: Dozens killed in sectarian clashes*, 14 July 2025; BBC, *Dozens killed in clashes between Druze and Bedouin in southern Syria*, 14 July 2025; The Guardian, *Israel strikes Syria's defence ministry in third day of attacks*, 16 July 2025.

⁴⁴⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Israel demands demilitarisation of southern Syria*, 16 July 2025; The Times of Israel, *Netanyahu: No Syrian forces are to head south of Damascus, which is an area that must be demilitarized*, 17 July 2025.

⁴⁴⁸ Enab Baladi, *In Suwayda, the Druze "National Guard" incorporates Men of Dignity as Sheikh al-Hijri calls for separation from Syria*, 25 August 2025.

⁴⁴⁹ AP News, *Security footage from Syria hospital shows men in military garb killing medical worker*, 11 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025.

⁴⁵⁰ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria declares ceasefire in Sweida after sectarian clashes*, 15 July 2025.

⁴⁵¹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria Druze leader backs ceasefire to end sectarian violence*, 17 July 2025; AP News, *Syrian forces who fought Druze militias leave Sweida province under a ceasefire*, 18 July 2025.

⁴⁵² Syria Direct, *Damascus begins Suwayda withdrawal after days of bloodshed*, 16 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian government forces withdraw from Sweida as ceasefire takes hold*, 17 July 2025; Al Jazeera, *Syria to deploy forces as more Bedouin-Druze clashes erupt in Suwayda*, 18 July 2025; AP News, *Syrian forces who fought Druze militias leave Sweida province under a ceasefire*, 18 July 2025.

⁴⁵³ AP News, *Syrian forces who fought Druze militias leave Sweida province under a ceasefire*, 18 July 2025; Al Jazeera, *Syria to deploy forces as more Bedouin-Druze clashes erupt in Suwayda*, 18 July 2025.

⁴⁵⁴ Al Jazeera, *Syria to deploy forces as more Bedouin-Druze clashes erupt in Suwayda*, 18 July 2025.

⁴⁵⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian president urges reconciliation following ceasefire*, 19 July 2025.

Following the withdrawal of the Syrian army on 17 July 2025 and the subsequent withdrawal of armed Bedouins, small-scale ceasefire violations occurred. On 20 July 2025, mortar shelling reportedly took place near the village of Umm al-Zaytoun. Later that day, drone strikes reportedly targeted armed Bedouin fighters in the west of the province.⁴⁵⁶ On 25 July 2025, skirmishes reportedly occurred between armed Bedouins and local Druze armed groups near Umm al-Zaytoun.⁴⁵⁷ On 29 July 2025, clashes reportedly took place between fighters of the Suwayda Military Council and the Syrian army in Shahba. There were also drone strikes that same night. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), these strikes targeted armed Bedouins in Thaalaa.⁴⁵⁸

Skirmishes continued in August 2025.⁴⁵⁹ On 3 August 2025, clashes broke out between local Druze armed groups and armed Bedouins around Tal al-Hadid in western Suweida, resulting in the deaths of at least five Bedouins and Syrian army soldiers and two Druze fighters.⁴⁶⁰ On 4 August 2025, exchanges of fire involving mortar shells and small arms reportedly took place between armed Bedouins and local Druze armed groups in the western part of the province; no casualties were reported.⁴⁶¹ On 12 August 2025, a machine-gun battle occurred near Najran.⁴⁶² On 13 and 14 August 2025, a video circulated on social media showing armed men firing at the Grand Mosque in the city of Suweida, reportedly following the abduction of the imam by local armed groups. Some Syrian media indicated that the footage dated from the July 2025 clashes and had been reused to incite anti-Druze sentiment.⁴⁶³

In early September 2025, local media reported the death of a commander of the Druze-based National Guard Forces in Suweida, allegedly in an ambush by unidentified armed men (see paragraph 1.2.3.2).⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁵⁶ Syria Weekly, *July 8-15, 2025*, 15 July 2025; Enab Baladi, *Tribes withdraw, security forces deploy...Suwayda moves toward calm*, 20 July 2025.

⁴⁵⁷ SOHR, *Ceasefire violations. Gunmen in military uniform open fire in Umm Al-Zaytoun village and three other areas in Al-Suwayda*, 25 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 22-29, 2025*, 29 July 2025.

⁴⁵⁸ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Israeli drone strikes target Bedouin fighters in Suweida*, 30 July 2025.

⁴⁵⁹ UNICEF, *Humanitarian flash update #3. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 14 August 2025, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁰ Enab Baladi, *Renewed clashes between tribal fighters and local militias in Syria's Suwayda*, 3 August 2025; AP News, *Fresh clashes break out in Syria as the interim government struggles to ease tensions*, 3 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media give contrasting reports on fresh deadly clash in Suweida*, 3 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

⁴⁶¹ Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

⁴⁶² Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 7. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate*, 13 August 2025, p. 2.

⁴⁶³ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian social media, regular media swept by 'wave of misinformation'*, 21 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria media scrutinise Suweida mosque video*, 14 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁴⁶⁴ Syria Now, *Killing of National Guard commander in Suwayda*, 2 September 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 2-9, 2025*, 9 September 2025.

In September and October 2025, multiple skirmishes occurred along the border between Daraa and Suweida, involving machine guns, mortars, anti-aircraft weapons and drones.⁴⁶⁵ On 15 October 2025, clashes reportedly took place between the Syrian army and local Druze armed groups; no casualties were reported.⁴⁶⁶ On 27 October 2025, seven members of the National Guard Forces were reportedly injured in a suicide drone attack near the Al-Naql checkpoint north of the city of Suweida.⁴⁶⁷

On 11 November 2025, skirmishes reportedly occurred in the Ariqa and Tel Hadid areas between internal security forces and the National Guard Forces involving heavy machine guns and mortars; no casualties were reported. On 13 November 2025, skirmishes reportedly occurred along various frontlines between internal security forces and the National Guard Forces involving drones, anti-aircraft weapons and mortars, with an unknown number of injured people on both sides.⁴⁶⁸

Several skirmishes also took place near the village of Al-Mazraa. On 1 November 2025, clashes reportedly occurred there.⁴⁶⁹ On 22 December 2025, Druze fighters reportedly fired heavy machine guns in the direction of Al-Mazraa; no casualties were reported.⁴⁷⁰ On 9 January 2026, Druze fighters reportedly attacked government forces near Al-Mazraa using heavy machine guns and mortars; no casualties were reported. On 11 January 2026, Druze fighters reportedly fired mortar shells at Al-Mazraa, leading to heavy fighting; no casualties were reported.⁴⁷¹

ISIS cells were active in the remote desert areas in eastern Suweida. On 30 May 2025, ISIS claimed responsibility for a car bomb attack on a Syrian army vehicle in the Al-Safa desert on 22 May 2025, reportedly resulting in seven casualties.⁴⁷² On 28 May 2025, a roadside bomb exploded in the Al-Safa region as a reconnaissance vehicle of the Syrian Free Army (SFA) passed, reportedly killing one person and injuring three. ISIS also claimed responsibility for this attack.⁴⁷³

2.2.5.2

Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Suweida

SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 445 civilian deaths in Suweida province.⁴⁷⁴ The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

In relation to the escalations of violence between 29 April 2025 and 4 May 2025 in Jaramana, Ashrafiyet Sahnaya and Sahnaya in Rural Damascus and in parts of Suweida province (see paragraph 3.3.2.8 of the May 2025 COI Report on Syria), SNHR documented 111 fatalities, including civilians, internal security forces and local armed fighters. On 2 May 2025, a civilian in Rasas reportedly died from injuries

⁴⁶⁵ SOHR, *Amid ceasefire violations. Drone attacks Al-Majdal village, injuring two persons*, 26 September 2025; Etana, *Brief: Latest developments in Suwayda*, 30 September 2025, p. 1-2; confidential source, September 2025.

⁴⁶⁶ Syria Weekly, *October 14-21*, 21 October 2025.

⁴⁶⁷ SOHR, *12 government drones. Seven members of National Guards injured in Al-Suwaitdaa*, 27 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 21-28, 2025*, 28 October 2025.

⁴⁶⁸ X.com, *War Correspondent*, 12 November 2025, [url](#); Enab Baladi, *Renewed clashes in Suwayda amid mutual accusations of violating the ceasefire agreement*, 14 November 2025; AP News, *Druze groups and Syrian forces exchange ceasefire violation claims as clashes in Sweida resume*, 14 November 2025.

⁴⁶⁹ Syria Weekly, *October 28-November 11*, 11 November 2025.

⁴⁷⁰ Syria Weekly, *Conflict & Security: December 9-30, 2025*, 30 December 2025.

⁴⁷¹ Syria Weekly, *January 6-13, 2026*, 13 January 2026.

⁴⁷² Al Jazeera, *ISIL (ISIS) launches first attacks against new Syrian government*, 30 May 2025.

⁴⁷³ CNN, *ISIS claims first attacks against forces loyal to new government in Syria*, 31 May 2025.

⁴⁷⁴ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

sustained during mortar shelling.⁴⁷⁵ On 4 May 2025, mortar and heavy machine-gun fire was reported near the Druze village of Al-Thaalah and the Bedouin village of Al-Daraa. According to several sources, the incident resulted in civilian casualties and forced civilians to flee. The precise number of civilian casualties was not known.⁴⁷⁶

At the end of the reporting period, investigations by the national commission of inquiry into the events in Suweida and by the CoI had not been completed. Consequently, the precise number of civilian casualties and responsibility for the violence in July and August 2025 remained unclear (see also paragraph 1.2.1.10).

Regarding the escalation of violence in Suweida between 13 July 2025 and 1 August 2025, SNHR reported in early August 2025 a total of 1,013 deaths. At that time, it was unclear how many of these were civilians. According to SNHR, those killed included civilians, internal security forces, soldiers, members of local Druze armed groups and armed Bedouins. At least 986 persons were injured.⁴⁷⁷

On 8 August 2025, SOHR reported that the number of deaths resulting from armed confrontations, bombardments, extrajudicial executions and Israeli airstrikes across several Syrian provinces since the start of the escalation in Suweida on 13 July 2025 had risen to 1,622. Of these, 723 were from Suweida, including 166 civilians, among them 21 children and 56 women.⁴⁷⁸

According to UNICEF, at least 22 children were killed and 21 injured as a result of the hostilities in Suweida.⁴⁷⁹

Multiple reports indicated that on 15 and 16 July 2025 security forces and unidentified armed men in civilian or camouflage clothing killed Druze civilians in Suweida.⁴⁸⁰ At the end of July 2025, the UN referred to credible reports of widespread violations and abuses during the fighting by all parties, including summary and arbitrary executions, looting and arson.⁴⁸¹ SOHR reported the death of nineteen civilians in the village of Sahwat al-Balatah after security forces entered the village.⁴⁸² CNN reported that an American of Druze origin and seven of his family members were shot dead by masked men in military uniforms.⁴⁸³ Also, local Druze armed groups reportedly took Bedouins hostage in the village of Umm Al-Zaytoun.⁴⁸⁴ Videos circulating on social media showed armed fighters ill-treating captured Druze. In some cases, Druze men were reportedly humiliated by having their moustaches shaved, cut or pulled out. The moustache holds important symbolic significance within the Druze faith.⁴⁸⁵ HRW reported that, among other

⁴⁷⁵ SNHR, *The death of 157 civilians including 20 children and 11 women, and one death due to torture recorded in May 2025*, 1 June 2025, p. 6.

⁴⁷⁶ Enab Baladi, *Clashes return to As-Suwayda...Agreement with Damascus continues*, 5 May 2025; Asharq Al-Awsat, *Clashes erupt between local factions, armed tribal groups in Syria's Suwayda*, 6 May 2025; Syria Weekly, *April 29-May 6, 2025*, 6 May 2025; Etana, *Syria update #24*, 8 May 2025; New Lines Magazine, *In Southern Syria, tensions simmer between Druze and Bedouin neighbors*, 6 June 2025.

⁴⁷⁷ SNHR, *The death of 89 civilians including 13 children and 10 women, and one death due to torture recorded July 2025*, 1 August 2025, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁸ SOHR, *Armed attack. Two persons killed in rural Al-Suwaydaa*, 8 August 2025.

⁴⁷⁹ UNICEF, *Urgent action is needed as humanitarian needs of children and families in As-Sweida continue to surge*, 13 August 2025.

⁴⁸⁰ France 24, *After days of bloodshed, residents of Syria's Sweida confront devastation*, 17 July 2025; SJAC, *Verified evidence reveals rights violations in Suwayda*, 30 July 2025.

⁴⁸¹ UN OSES, *United Nations special envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen briefing to the security council*, 28 July 2025, p. 1.

⁴⁸² SOHR, *Death toll update. 718 people killed since beginning of escalation in Al-Suwaydaa, while tribal forces continue advancement amid fierce clashes*, 18 July 2025.

⁴⁸³ CNN, *US citizen among eight Druze family members executed during Syria's sectarian violence*, 23 July 2025.

⁴⁸⁴ SJAC, *Verified evidence reveals rights violations in Suwayda*, 30 July 2025.

⁴⁸⁵ AP News, *Who are the Druze in Syria, and why are they clashing with government forces?*, 16 July 2025; AP News, *Syria announces ceasefire after sectarian clashes, but more fighting and abuse alleged*, 16 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Islamists praise humiliation tactics targeting Syria's Druze*, 17 July 2025; BBC, *'There were bodies everywhere': Druze residents describe 'bloodbath' in Syrian city Suweida*, 18 July 2025.

incidents, on 15 July 2025 local Druze armed men stopped Bedouins travelling towards Daraa near the village of Zibin, surrounded their vehicles, opened fire and beat them with rifle butts and metal rods.⁴⁸⁶ Following the ceasefire, Syrian media reported retaliatory actions by local Druze armed groups against Bedouins, prompting the mobilisation of several thousand armed Bedouins from Daraa, Deir ez-Zor and Rural Damascus.⁴⁸⁷

From 10 August 2025 onwards, a video circulated on social media reportedly showing armed men in army uniforms shooting a healthcare worker in the national hospital in Suweida; the footage reportedly dated from 16 July 2025. On 10 August 2025, the transitional government condemned the incident and pledged to prosecute those responsible.⁴⁸⁸ On 12 August 2025, it was reported that several members of the 82nd Army Division had been arrested in connection with the incident.⁴⁸⁹ It is not known whether they were subsequently convicted.

On 21 August 2025, UN experts stated that attacks on the villages of Ta'ara, Al Doura and Al Douweira reportedly involved the use of heavy artillery, machine guns and looting, resulting in 1,000 deaths, including at least 539 identified Druze civilians, among them 39 women and 21 children. At least 196 persons, including 8 children and 30 women, were reportedly extrajudicially executed. More than 33 villages were reportedly burned.⁴⁹⁰

On 2 September 2025, Amnesty International stated, based on verified video footage and eyewitness testimony, that 46 Druze, including 44 men and 2 women, had been extrajudicially executed on 15 and 16 July 2025. Amnesty International attributed responsibility to security forces of the transitional government and affiliated forces. These executions reportedly took place in a public square, in homes, in a school, in a hospital and in a party hall in Suweida.⁴⁹¹

Outside the escalation of mid-July 2025, several incidents during the reporting period resulted in civilian casualties. SNHR documented eight civilian deaths in October 2025, five in November 2025 and nine in December 2025 in Suweida province.⁴⁹² The following provides an overview of incidents involving civilian casualties in the reporting period.

On 29 May 2025, a roadside bomb exploded on the road between the villages of Ariqa and Nijran as an ambulance passed, injuring six civilians.⁴⁹³

On 27 July 2025, two civilians were reportedly killed near Al-Walga during a gun battle between armed Bedouins and local Druze armed groups.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁶ HRW, *Syria: Accountability lacking for Sweida abuses*, 15 January 2026.

⁴⁸⁷ Etana, *Brief: Suwayda truce collapses following tribal mobilization*, 18 July 2025; HRW, *Syria: Abuses, humanitarian emergency amid Sweida clashes*, 22 July 2025.

⁴⁸⁸ Enab Baladi, *Suwayda: Surveillance cameras capture execution at National Hospital*, 10 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria 'execution video' in Suweida hospital sparks fresh concerns*, 11 August 2025; SANA, *Syrian Interior Ministry launches investigation into Sweida National Hospital video*, 11 August 2025.

⁴⁸⁹ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 36*, 18 August 2025.

⁴⁹⁰ UN OHCHR, *Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls*, 21 August 2025.

⁴⁹¹ Amnesty International, *Syria: New investigation reveals evidence government and affiliated forces extrajudicially executed dozens of Druze people in Suwayda*, 2 September 2025.

⁴⁹² SNHR, *The death of 66 civilians including nine children and seven women, and three deaths due to torture recorded in October 2025*, 1 November 2025, p. 3; SNHR, *The death of 73 civilians including 12 children and six women, and two deaths due to torture recorded in November 2025*, 1 December 2025, p. 3; SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 9.

⁴⁹³ SNHR, *Six civilians, including two women, were injured and an ambulance was destroyed when an explosive device exploded in the western countryside of As-Suwayda Governorate on May 29, 2025*, 29 May 2025; Syria Weekly, *May 27-June 3, 2025*, 3 June 2025.

⁴⁹⁴ Syria Weekly, *July 22-29, 2025*, 29 July 2025.

On 24 October 2025, unidentified armed men reportedly shot and killed a man in Al-Tayma.⁴⁹⁵

According to SOHR, a drone strike in the city of Suweida on 9 November 2025 injured two civilians.⁴⁹⁶

According to various sources, on 28 and 29 November 2025 the National Guard Forces arrested at least five individuals in the city of Suweida on suspicion of cooperation with the transitional government, including two Druze sheikhs. Videos circulated on social media showing one of the sheikhs being ill-treated and humiliated by having his moustache shaved.⁴⁹⁷ On 2 December 2025, it was reported that both sheikhs had died.⁴⁹⁸

On 23 December 2025, clashes occurred between internal security forces and the National Guard Forces, including near the village of Rima Hazem. Drones, mortars and heavy machine guns were reportedly used. Two members of the internal security forces, one fighter of the National Guard Forces and one civilian were reportedly killed.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁵ Syria Weekly, *October 21-28, 2025*, 28 October 2025.

⁴⁹⁶ SOHR, *Leaving two persons injured. Drone attacks car near Al-Suwaitaa prison*, 9 November 2025.

⁴⁹⁷ Enab Baladi, *Arrests in Suwayda to "foil a coup" against al-Hijri*, 30 November 2025; Enab Baladi, *Suwayda, the "National Guard" accuses detainees of "conspiring with Damascus"*, 30 November 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media report arrests, unrest in southern Suweida*, 1 December 2025.

⁴⁹⁸ SANA, *Armed militia abducts and tortures to death Sheikh Raed al-Matani in Swieda*, 2 December 2025; SANA, *Laith al-Balous condemns killing of Sheikh al-Matani, holds armed group responsible*, 2 December 2025; X.com, *Qalaat Al Mudiq*, 2 December 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Killing of prominent Druze cleric in Syria sparks outcry*, 3 December 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Body of Sheikh Raed al-Matni arrives at Suweida hospital two days after arrest*, 3 December 2025; L'Orient Today, *Summary executions and tensions: Sweida plunges deeper into turmoil*, 4 December 2025; The New Arab, *Suweida National Guard alleges 'Syrian government plot' as cleric deaths spark anger*, 4 December 2025.

⁴⁹⁹ Enab Baladi, *Four killed in clashes between Syrian Interior Ministry forces and Suwayda factions*, 23 December 2025.

- 2.2.5.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Suweida
INSO recorded six incidents involving explosive remnants of war between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in ten deaths and eleven injured people.⁵⁰⁰ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded two incidents, resulting in one injured person.⁵⁰¹ MAG, DRC and UNMAS were active in Suweida in the removal of explosive remnants of war.⁵⁰²
- 2.2.5.4 Internally displaced persons in Suweida
UNHCR estimated the number of internally displaced persons in Suweida at 7,184 on 11 December 2025.⁵⁰³ Information from IOM indicates that large-scale displacement occurred in Suweida during the reporting period, linked to conflict-related violence.⁵⁰⁴ For example, on 9 May 2025 UNHCR reported that 2,055 persons in Suweida province had been displaced following an escalation of violence.⁵⁰⁵ The escalation of violence in mid-July 2025 also led to displacement within Suweida and Daraa and to movement of internally displaced persons towards the city of Damascus.⁵⁰⁶ On 9 September 2025, UNHCR reported that approximately 187,200 people had been displaced by the violence, representing more than one third of Suweida's population.⁵⁰⁷ In December 2025, UNOCHA reported that more than 155,000 people were displaced at that time as a result of the mid-July 2025 escalation of violence.⁵⁰⁸

According to UNHCR, an estimated 1,329 internally displaced persons returned to their original places of residence in Suweida between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁵⁰⁹

- 2.2.6 *Tartous*
Tartous borders the Mediterranean Sea to the west and Lebanon to the south. The surrounding provinces are Latakia, Hama and Homs. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of nearly 1,874 km².⁵¹⁰ IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 1,263,045 persons, of whom 4% were internally displaced persons.⁵¹¹ Alawites constitute a large proportion of the population in Tartous.⁵¹² Other population groups in Tartous include Sunnis, Christians and Ismailis.⁵¹³ The city of Tartous is an important port city for Syria.⁵¹⁴ During the reporting period, the

⁵⁰⁰ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

⁵⁰¹ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁵⁰² Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 9; confidential source, October 2025.

⁵⁰³ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁵⁰⁴ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁵⁰⁵ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #26. Syria situation crisis*, 9 May 2025, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ SOHR, *Unprecedented displacement wave from Al-Suwaitaa. Nearly 35 villages emptied following bloody clashes*, 7 August 2025; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 21 August 2025, p. 1; UNHCR, *Flash update on the situation in As-Sweida #7*, 9 September 2025, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁷ UNHCR, *Flash update on the situation in As-Sweida #7*, 9 September 2025, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁸ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria by Joyce Msuya, ASG for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, on behalf of Tom Fletcher, USG for Humanitarian Affairs*, 18 December 2025; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 2. November 2025*, 23 December 2025, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁹ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁵¹⁰ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries, url*, accessed on 21 January 2026.

⁵¹¹ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

⁵¹² The Syrian Observer, *Tartus panicked by number of young victims*, 22 May 2014; Arab News, *At least 10 people dead in Syria as gunmen target civilians in Tartus and Homs*, 31 March 2025.

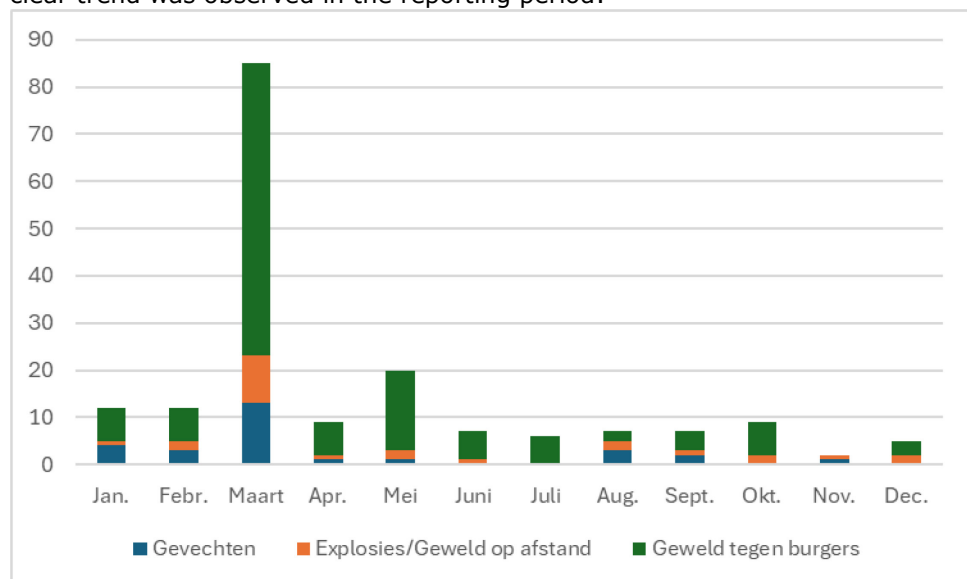
⁵¹³ Atlantic Council, *Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum*, 25 August 2025; Syria Direct, *How Syria's Ismaili community keeps a fragile peace*, 2 October 2025.

⁵¹⁴ SANA, *94,000 tons of wheat arrive at Tartous port to strengthen Syria's strategic reserves*, 5 November 2025.

Russian army used a berth in the port of Tartous.⁵¹⁵ Tartous province was part of the control area of the transitional government.⁵¹⁶

2.2.6.1 Conflict-related violence in Tartous

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 63 violent incidents in Tartous. Of these, 7 concerned battles, 11 concerned explosions/remote violence and 45 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 2 (November 2025) and 20 (May 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of incidents in Tartous (36), followed by Baniyas (15), Qadmus (4), Al-Dreikish (3), Al-Sheikh Badr (3) and Safita (2). In most cases, the incidents recorded by ACLED involved unidentified armed groups, internal security forces or the Syrian army. The ACLED data presented below showed relatively low numbers of registered violent incidents in Tartous during the reporting period. No clear trend was observed in the reporting period:⁵¹⁷



Graph 9: Violent incidents in Tartous between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of violent incidents and trends during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Small groups of armed supporters of the previous regime remained active in Syria.⁵¹⁸ They were mainly concentrated in the higher-elevation parts of the coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartous.⁵¹⁹ These included the Coastal Shield Brigade (*Saraya Dir al-Sahel*), the Military Council for the Liberation of Syria and the Men of

⁵¹⁵ SOHR, *Over 40 military vehicles. Large Russian military convoy heads toward Tartus*, 1 October 2025; SOHR, *Second patrol in a week. Russian military convoy heads from Hmeimim base to Tartus harbour, before returning to the base*, 6 October 2025.

⁵¹⁶ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

⁵¹⁷ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Tartous. Admin2: Banyas, Dreikish, Qadmous, Safita, Sheikh Badr, Tartous.

⁵¹⁸ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁵¹⁹ IEP, *Global Peace Index 2025*, June 2025, p. 78.

Light (*Saraya al-Jawad*).⁵²⁰ During the reporting period, these groups carried out several attacks on the security apparatus of the transitional government.⁵²¹

Several violent incidents involving armed groups occurred. On 18 August 2025, unidentified armed men fired at a patrol of the internal security forces on the outskirts of the city of Tartous, killing two officers.⁵²² In response, on 30 August 2025, internal security forces, supported by the 56th Army Division, carried out a large-scale security operation in the suburbs of Tartous targeting armed supporters of the former regime. During this operation, several armed men were killed and others were arrested.⁵²³ On 18 September 2025, an armed man was reportedly killed near Tartous after firing at a checkpoint.⁵²⁴ On 25 September 2025, an armed man was killed during a gun battle and an internal security officer was injured.⁵²⁵

On 27 October 2025, an explosive device attached to a police vehicle detonated at the police station in the city of Baniyas. No casualties were reported.⁵²⁶

2.2.6.2

Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Tartous

SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 376 civilian deaths in Tartous province.⁵²⁷ The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Multiple targeted killings of civilians occurred in Tartous. The perpetrators and motives for these killings largely remained unknown.⁵²⁸ According to one source, there were relatively many retaliatory killings in Tartous.⁵²⁹ For example, on 29 July 2025 unidentified armed men abducted a man in the Al-Marqab area, who was shortly afterwards shot dead.⁵³⁰ Also, on 7 September 2025 unidentified armed men abducted a man in the city of Baniyas, who was shot dead shortly afterwards.⁵³¹ On 30 September 2025, a masked man shot and killed a parliamentary election candidate in his home in the village of Miar Shaker. According to the election commission, armed supporters of the⁵³² previous regime were responsible.⁵³³

⁵²⁰ Syria in Transition, *Sedition on the coast. How Iran attempted to turn Syria's coastal region into a protectorate*, May 2025; Enab Baladi, "Saraya al-Jawad": Group launches attacks against the government in Syria's coastal region, 7 September 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 39*, 8 September 2025; The New Arab, *Is an Assadist insurgency emerging on the Syrian coast?*, 1 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 7-14*, 14 October 2025; SANA, *Criminal network broken up by security forces in Tartous*, 3 November 2025.

⁵²¹ The New Arab, *Assad remnants accused of insurgent attacks in Syria's coastal region*, 15 August 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 36*, 18 August 2025; Enab Baladi, "Saraya al-Jawad": Group launches attacks against the government in Syria's coastal region, 7 September 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Weeks 42-43*, 7 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁵²² BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Gunmen kill two Syrian policemen in coastal region*, 19 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

⁵²³ L24, *Security forces target regime cells in Tartous operation*, 30 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *August 26-September 2, 2025*, 4 September 2025.

⁵²⁴ Syria Weekly, *September 16-23, 2025*, 23 September 2025.

⁵²⁵ Syria Weekly, *September 23-29, 2025*, 30 September 2025; SANA, *Internal security in Tartous arrests outlaw group involved in criminal acts*, 2 October 2025.

⁵²⁶ SANA, *Explosive device detonated in police car in Banyas, no injuries reported*, 27 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 21-28, 2025*, 28 October 2025.

⁵²⁷ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

⁵²⁸ Syria Weekly, *August 26-September 2, 2025*, 4 September 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 9-16, 2025*, 16 September 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 16-23, 2025*, 23 September 2025.

⁵²⁹ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

⁵³⁰ Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

⁵³¹ Syria Weekly, *September 2-9, 2025*, 9 September 2025.

⁵³² These were cells or groups that had emerged from the military and paramilitary structures of the Assad regime. They were commonly referred to as *fuloul* (Arabic for 'remnants'); confidential source, September 2025.

⁵³³ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria election candidate killed, 'former regime remnants' accused*, 2 October 2025; SANA, *Electoral committee condemns assassination of candidate Haidar Shahin*, 3 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian election body condemns killing of candidate ahead of poll*, 3 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 30-October 7, 2025*, 7 October 2025.

- 2.2.6.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Tartous
INSO recorded one incident between 1 May 2025 and 15 October 2025, killing one person and injuring two.⁵³⁴ This concerned a landmine explosion in the Al-Zouba area on 31 August 2025.⁵³⁵
- 2.2.6.4 Internally displaced persons in Tartous
NHCR estimated the number of internally displaced persons in Tartous at 139,919 on 11 December 2025.⁵³⁶ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in Tartous during the reporting period, although it does not specify to what extent this was related to conflict-related violence.⁵³⁷

According to UNHCR, an estimated 5,627 internally displaced persons returned to their original places of residence in Tartous between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁵³⁸

- 2.2.7 *Latakia*
Latakia borders the Mediterranean Sea to the west and Türkiye to the north. The surrounding provinces are Idlib, Hama and Tartous. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of 2,388 km².⁵³⁹ IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 1,437,529 persons, of whom 10% were internally displaced persons.⁵⁴⁰ Alawites constitute a large proportion of the population in Latakia.⁵⁴¹ In 2010, approximately fifty percent of the population of the city of Latakia consisted of Alawites, forty percent of Sunnis and ten percent of Christians.⁵⁴² Latakia formed part of the control area of the transitional government.⁵⁴³

- 2.2.7.1 Conflict-related violence in Latakia
Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 97 violent incidents in Latakia. Of these, 10 concerned battles, 19 concerned explosions/remote violence and 68 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 5 (November 2025) and 28 (May 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of incidents in Jableh (39) and Latakia (37), followed by Al-Qardahah (13) and Al-Haffah (8). In most cases, the incidents recorded by ACLED involved unidentified armed groups, internal security forces, the Israeli army or the Syrian army. The ACLED data presented below showed relatively low numbers of registered violent incidents in Latakia during the reporting period. No clear trend was observed in the reporting period:⁵⁴⁴

⁵³⁴ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁵³⁵ Syria Weekly, *August 26-September 2, 2025*, 4 September 2025.

⁵³⁶ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁵³⁷ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁵³⁸ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁵³⁹ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

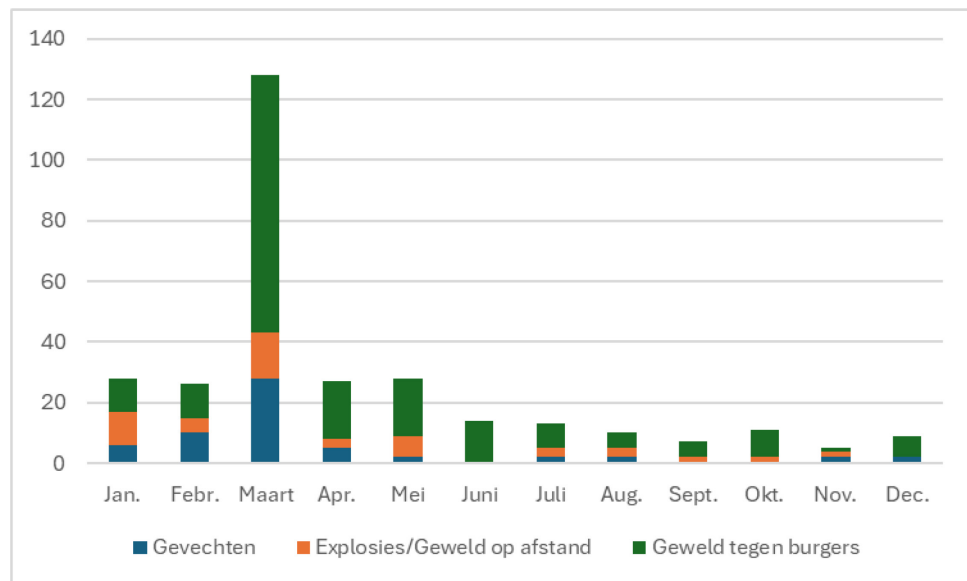
⁵⁴⁰ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

⁵⁴¹ Syriac Press, *Between mountains and sea: Christians and Alawites in a shattered Latakia, post-Assad*, 19 August 2025.

⁵⁴² TWI, *Latakia is Assad's Achilles heel*, 23 September 2015.

⁵⁴³ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

⁵⁴⁴ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Lattakia. Admin2: Al Haffa, Al Qardaha, Jablah, Lattakia.



Graph 10: Violent incidents in Latakia between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Armed groups were active in Latakia that the transitional government often described as armed supporters of the former regime.⁵⁴⁵ Unidentified armed men carried out multiple attacks. For example, on 20 May 2025 two armed men attacked the Hmeimim air base southeast of the city of Latakia, where Russian troops were present.⁵⁴⁶ The two attackers were reportedly killed.⁵⁴⁷ On 7 August 2025, an attack took place on a checkpoint near Qardaha.⁵⁴⁸ On 12 August 2025, unidentified armed men fired at a checkpoint.⁵⁴⁹ On 14 August 2025, unidentified armed men reportedly attacked a Syrian army vehicle travelling on the Al-Burjan bridge on the road from Baniyas to Jableh.⁵⁵⁰ On 26 October 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed two soldiers near Al-Bab.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁵ Syria in Transition, *Sedition on the coast. How Iran attempted to turn Syria’s coastal region into a protectorate*, May 2025; Enab Baladi, *“Saraya al-Jawad”: Group launches attacks against the government in Syria’s coastal region*, 7 September 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 39*, 8 September 2025; The New Arab, *Is an Assadist insurgency emerging on the Syrian coast?*, 1 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 7-14*, 14 October 2025.

⁵⁴⁶ MEI, *Russia’s military presence in post-Assad Syria: A growing security liability undermining stability*, 2 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Explainer: Has Russia lost all hope of retaining influence in Syria?*, 23 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Lavrov says Syria wants Russian military bases to stay*, 13 October 2025; The New York Times, *Syria’s new leaders are talking to a former enemy: Russia*, 15 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria minister says Assad-era agreements with Russia ‘on hold’*, 20 October 2025.

⁵⁴⁷ Enab Baladi, *Latakia: What is the story behind the clashes in Hmeimim?*, 23 May 2025; Forbes, *Russia’s Hmeimim airbase in Syria is extremely vulnerable*, 24 May 2025.

⁵⁴⁸ SANA, *One security officer was martyred and another injured at a security checkpoint, Qardaha*, 7 August 2025.

⁵⁴⁹ Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

⁵⁵⁰ Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

⁵⁵¹ Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025.

According to various sources, the Israeli army carried out multiple airstrikes on military targets in Latakia. For example, SOHR reported a series of explosions during the night of 30 July 2025 after a rocket storage facility of the 107th Brigade near the coastal town of Jableh was hit in Israeli airstrikes.⁵⁵²

2.2.7.2

Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Latakia

SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 645 civilian deaths in Latakia province.⁵⁵³ The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Civilian casualties were reportedly recorded as a result of an Israeli airstrike. On 30 May 2025, an airstrike targeted the base of the 107th Brigade in Ayn Sharqiyah. According to Syrian media, one civilian was killed and three others were injured.⁵⁵⁴

According to SOHR, on 30 July 2025 internal security forces reportedly shot and killed a young man at a checkpoint near Al-Qardaha. According to a statement by the internal security forces, the victim drove into an officer and was then shot as he attempted to flee.⁵⁵⁵

There were reports of killings of civilians in Latakia that were attributed to, or claimed by, armed supporters of the previous regime. For example, on 7 October 2025 unidentified armed men shot and killed a student in the city of Jableh. On 9 October 2025 the Coastal Shield Brigade claimed responsibility, stating that the student was a spy for the transitional government.⁵⁵⁶ On 26 October 2025, the body of a man was found in the city of Latakia. According to local media, he had been abducted and killed by armed supporters of the previous regime because he had expressed support for the transitional government.⁵⁵⁷ On the same day, the body of a man was found in the city of Jableh; according to local media, he had also been killed by armed supporters of the previous regime.⁵⁵⁸ On 4 November 2025, unidentified armed men abducted a man in Latakia, who was reportedly later shot dead on accusations of cooperation with the transitional government.⁵⁵⁹

Multiple targeted killings of civilians also occurred in Latakia, with the perpetrators and motives largely remaining unknown. According to one source, there were also relatively many retaliatory killings in Latakia.⁵⁶⁰ For example, on 26 May 2025 two masked men on a motorcycle fired at residents of the village of Mashqita, killing five and injuring one.⁵⁶¹ On 14 August 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed a man in the village of Slenfeh.⁵⁶²

On 28 December 2025, protests broke out in various locations in Latakia, Tartous, Homs and Hama following the bombing in Homs on 26 December 2025 (see paragraph 2.2.8.2). Violent clashes reportedly occurred in various locations between

⁵⁵² BBC Monitoring, *Israel strikes missile base on Syrian coast*, 31 July 2025.

⁵⁵³ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

⁵⁵⁴ SANA, *One civilian killed, three injured in an Israeli airstrike on sites in Latakia and Tartous*, 31 May 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025.

⁵⁵⁵ SOHR, *Sources dismiss accusations by internal security forces. Narratives conflict about killing of civilian near security checkpoint in Al-Qardaha*, 31 July 2025.

⁵⁵⁶ Syria Weekly, *October 7-14*, 14 October 2025.

⁵⁵⁷ Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025.

⁵⁵⁸ Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025.

⁵⁵⁹ Syria Weekly, *October 28-November 4*, 11 November 2025.

⁵⁶⁰ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

⁵⁶¹ SOHR, *Following attack by masked gunmen. Mass funeral held for victims of Sanabel Al-Qamh massacre in northern Latakia*, 28 May 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025; STJ, *Left to their fate: Grave violations against Alawites following the coastal massacres*, October 2025, p. 11-12.

⁵⁶² Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

demonstrators, pro-government counter-demonstrators and security forces.⁵⁶³ According to the Syrian state news agency SANA, 4 persons were killed and 108 were injured in Latakia. The casualties included civilians and security personnel. According to SANA, one member of the security forces was killed by armed supporters of the previous regime.⁵⁶⁴ On 30 December 2025, the authorities in the city of Latakia imposed a curfew and arrests were made in various locations.⁵⁶⁵

2.2.7.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Latakia
INSO recorded five incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in one death and nine injured people.⁵⁶⁶ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded six incidents, resulting in ten injured people.⁵⁶⁷ In Latakia, the 50th Army Division was involved in demining.⁵⁶⁸

2.2.7.4 Internally displaced persons in Latakia
UNHCR estimated the number of internally displaced persons in Latakia at 449,619 on 11 December 2025.⁵⁶⁹ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in Latakia during the reporting period, although it does not specify to what extent this was related to conflict-related violence.⁵⁷⁰ In July 2025, hundreds of people in Latakia were displaced due to wildfires.⁵⁷¹

According to UNHCR, an estimated 43,512 internally displaced persons returned to their original places of residence in Latakia between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁵⁷²

2.2.8 Homs

Homs is located in central Syria. It borders Lebanon to the west and Iraq to the east. The surrounding provinces are Deir ez-Zor, Raqqa, Hama, Tartous and Rural Damascus. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of 43,231 km², making it the largest province in the country.⁵⁷³ IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 1,554,623 persons, of whom 8% were internally displaced persons.⁵⁷⁴ The city of Homs is located on the fertile plain on the eastern riverbank of the Orontes River (also known as the 'Asi) in the west of the province. The city forms a link between the coastal region and Damascus⁵⁷⁵ and is also located on the M5 highway connecting Damascus to northern Syria. The Rastan Bridge in the north forms an important part of this highway.⁵⁷⁶ The eastern part of the province forms

⁵⁶³ SANA, *Three killed, 60 injured in Latakia, as remnants attack security forces (update)*, 28 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *At least three reported killed in Syria's Alawite region during protests*, 28 December 2025; VRT, *Doden en gewonden bij protesten in Syrië: minderheidsgroep eist meer autonomie na sektarisch geweld*, 28 December 2025; Al Jazeera, *Deadly protests and clashes in Syria – what happened and what's next?*, 29 December 2025.

⁵⁶⁴ SANA, *Four killed and 108 others were injured in remnant attacks in Latakia*, 29 December 2025.

⁵⁶⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian authorities impose curfew, carry out arrests in Latakia*, 30 December 2025.

⁵⁶⁶ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁷ Syria Mine Action AoR, *situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁸ SANA, *Road cleaning and mine clearance campaign in Jabal al-Akrad, Latakia countryside*, 27 June 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 36*, 18 August 2025.

⁵⁶⁹ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁵⁷⁰ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁵⁷¹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Large fires continue to rage in north-western Syria*, 5 July 2025; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 28 July 2025, p. 2.

⁵⁷² UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁵⁷³ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

⁵⁷⁴ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

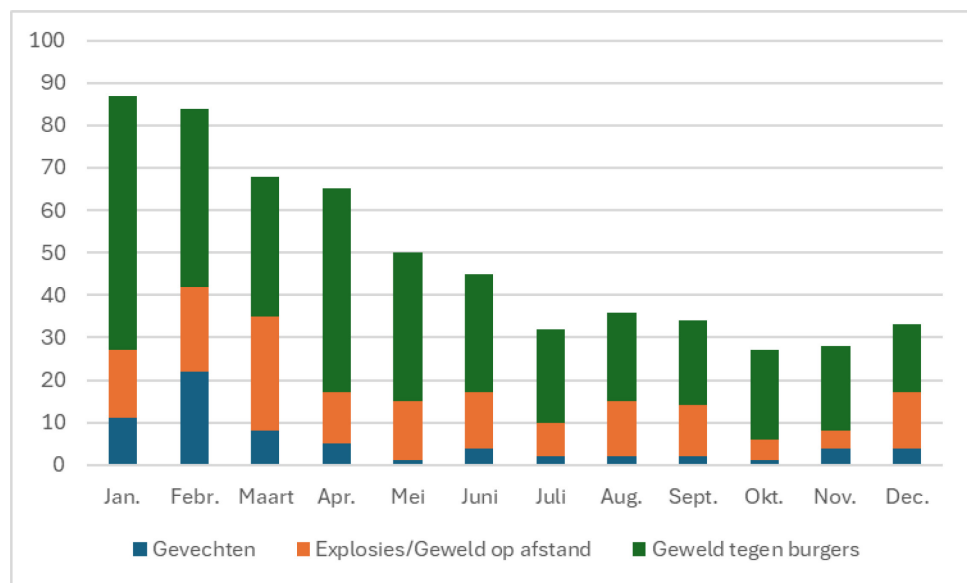
⁵⁷⁵ ABC News, *Rebels in Syria announce capture of Homs as insurgents encircle Damascus in rebellion against Assad regime*, 7 December 2025.

⁵⁷⁶ SANA, *German delegation inspects vital bridge rehabilitation north of Homs*, 9 November 2025.

part of the vast and sparsely populated Badia desert.⁵⁷⁷ Homs province formed part of the control area of the transitional government.⁵⁷⁸

2.2.8.1 Conflict-related violence in Homs

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 285 violent incidents in Homs. Of these, 20 concerned battles, 82 concerned explosions/remote violence and 183 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 27 (October 2025) and 50 (May 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of incidents in Homs (156), followed by Tadmur (59), Talkalakh (36), Al-Qusayr (19), Al-Rastan (10) and Al-Mukharram (5). The incidents recorded by ACLED frequently involved unidentified armed groups or internal security forces. Compared with the preceding reporting period, the ACLED data showed a decrease in the number of registered violent incidents in Homs.⁵⁷⁹



Graph 11: Violent incidents in Homs between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

According to SOHR, on 19 September 2025 unidentified armed men attacked a patrol of internal security forces near the village of Tal al-Shour, resulting in three injured persons. One of the injured persons died the following day from his injuries.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁷ Syria Times, *Homs Badia .. Measures to protect medicinal, aromatic plants*, 17 January 2025.

⁵⁷⁸ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

⁵⁷⁹ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Homs. Admin2: Al Makhrim, Al Qusayr, Ar Rastan, Homs, Tadmor, Tall Kalakh.

⁵⁸⁰ SOHR, *Security chaos in Homs. Member of Internal Security Forces killed and two others injured in armed attack on military patrol*, 20 September 2025.

ISIS cells were present in the central desert areas.⁵⁸¹ Security forces of the transitional government carried out operations in Homs aimed at dismantling these ISIS cells.⁵⁸²

On 13 December 2025, a member of the internal security forces killed two US soldiers and a US interpreter in an attack near Palmyra in Homs province. The attacker was also killed. In addition, three US soldiers and two members of the Syrian security forces were injured. According to the transitional government and the US military, the attacker had links to ISIS.⁵⁸³ In response, on 19 December 2025, the US military carried out strikes on more than seventy ISIS-related targets.⁵⁸⁴

2.2.8.2 Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Homs
SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 268 civilian deaths in Homs province.⁵⁸⁵ The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Targeted killings of civilians occurred in Homs on an almost weekly basis. The perpetrators and motives for these killings largely remained unknown.⁵⁸⁶ According to one source, there were relatively many killings targeting former members of pro-regime militias.⁵⁸⁷ For example, on 15 May 2025 unidentified armed men shot and killed a former member of a pro-regime militia in Talkalakh.⁵⁸⁸ On 4 August 2025, unidentified armed men attacked the home of a man in the Qaniyat Asi area who was suspected of having been a member of a pro-regime militia, killing two children and injuring one child.⁵⁸⁹

Following the double murder of a Bedouin couple in their home in the village of Zaidal south of the city of Homs, unrest broke out in the city of Homs on 23 November 2025. Armed Bedouins attacked neighbourhoods predominantly inhabited by Alawites. Security forces were quickly deployed and a curfew from 17.00 was imposed to stop the violence. No casualties were reported.⁵⁹⁰ On 3 December 2025, a spokesperson for the Ministry of the Interior stated that the suspect in the double

⁵⁸¹ Asharq Al-Awsat, *Syrian interior ministry conducts security campaign against ISIS cells in country's east*, 10 November 2025.

⁵⁸² L24, *Syrian forces launch sweeping raids against ISIS cells nationwide*, 9 November 2025.

⁵⁸³ X.com, *U.S. Central Command*, 13 December 2025, [url](#); The New York Times, *3 Americans killed in ISIS attack in Syria, Trump says, vowing to retaliate*, 13 December 2025; The New York Times, *Syrian who killed U.S. soldiers was member of security forces, officials say*, 14 December 2025; AP News, *Attacker who killed US troops in Syria was a recent recruit to security forces, official says*, 14 December 2025; The New York Times, *U.S. soldiers and translator killed in Syria are identified*, 15 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria state TV airs divergent views on Palmyra attack*, 15 December 2025.

⁵⁸⁴ U.S. Central Command, *CENTCOM launches Operation Hawkeye strike against ISIS in Syria*, 19 December 2025.

⁵⁸⁵ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

⁵⁸⁶ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media differ in coverage of killings near Lebanon-Syria border*, 11 June 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 27*, 17 June 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 23-29, 2025*, 30 September 2025; STJ, *Left to their fate: Grave violations against Alawites following the coastal massacres*, October 2025, p. 12; Syria Weekly, *September 30-October 7*, 7 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 7-14*, 14 October 2025; SOHR, *New sectarian-based attack. Two girls injured in Homs city*, 21 October 2025; CSW, *Alawite schoolteacher killed amid wave of sectarian attacks*, 27 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025; BBC, *'Killed because they are Alawites': Fear among Syria's minorities after the fall of Assad*, 10 November 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Curfew imposed in Homs as sectarian tensions erupt after brutal double murder*, 24 November 2025; New Lines Magazine, *In Homs, revenge is the only law left standing*, 25 November 2025.

⁵⁸⁷ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

⁵⁸⁸ Syria Weekly, *May 13-20, 2025*, 20 May 2025.

⁵⁸⁹ Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

⁵⁹⁰ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Curfew imposed in Syria's Homs amid reported sectarian violence*, 23 November 2025; The New York Times, *Grisly killings of a married couple spark new sectarian unrest in Syria*, 24 November 2025; The New Arab, *Syria extends curfew in Homs after murder, sectarian violence*, 24 November 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Curfew imposed in Homs as sectarian tensions erupt after brutal double murder*, 24 November 2025; New Lines Magazine, *In Homs, revenge is the only law left standing*, 25 November 2025; The Syria Report, *Attackers burn Alawite homes in Homs*, 2 December 2025.

murder was a family member of one of the victims and that the incident was likely a robbery. The spokesperson also stated that 120 people had been arrested on suspicion of involvement in the unrest that followed the double murder.⁵⁹¹

On 26 December 2025, a bombing took place during Friday prayers at the Alawite Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib Mosque in the city of Homs. At least eight people were killed and twenty were injured. The group *Saraya Ansar al-Sunna* claimed responsibility for the attack.⁵⁹²

2.2.8.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Homs

Several incidents involving explosive remnants of war occurred in Homs.⁵⁹³ INSO recorded 27 incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in 19 deaths and 29 injured persons.⁵⁹⁴ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded 21 incidents, resulting in 3 deaths and 23 injured persons.⁵⁹⁵ In Homs, the Syrian army and volunteers from Idlib were involved in demining campaigns.⁵⁹⁶ NPA was also engaged in the removal of explosive remnants of war.⁵⁹⁷

2.2.8.4 Internally displaced persons in Homs

UNHCR estimated the number of internally displaced persons in Homs at 221,895 on 11 December 2025.⁵⁹⁸ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in the west of the province during the reporting period, although it does not specify to what extent this was related to conflict-related violence.⁵⁹⁹

According to UNHCR, an estimated 274,784 internally displaced persons returned to their original places of residence in Homs between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁶⁰⁰ This included families returning from internally displaced persons camps in Northwest Syria.⁶⁰¹

2.2.9 Hama

Hama is located in central Syria. The surrounding provinces are Idlib, Aleppo, Raqqa, Homs, Tartous and Latakia. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of nearly 11,095 km².⁶⁰² IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 1,974,478 persons, of whom 6% were internally displaced persons.⁶⁰³ The M5 highway runs through the province, linking Damascus with northern Syria.⁶⁰⁴ Sunnis

⁵⁹¹ The Syrian Observer, *Government discloses identity and motive of Zeidel murderer; Announces arrest of 120 suspects in subsequent rioting*, 4 December 2025.

⁵⁹² BBC Monitoring, *Syria mosque blast kills at least five, injures 20*, 26 December 2025; SANA, *8 killed, 18 injured in terrorist explosion at mosque in Homs, update*, 26 December 2025; BBC, *Blast at Syrian mosque during Friday prayers leaves at least eight dead*, 26 December 2025; UN News, *Syria: Guterres deplores deadly mosque blast in Homs*, 26 December 2025; The New York Times, *8 killed in Syria mosque blast, government says*, 25 December 2025; SNHR, *Eight civilians were killed and 21 others were injured as a result of an IED explosion inside a mosque in Wadi al-Dahab neighborhood in Homs*, 5 January 2026.

⁵⁹³ SOHR, *Old ordnance. Four civilians killed and wounded by landmine explosion in eastern Homs*, 27 July 2025.

⁵⁹⁴ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁵ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁵⁹⁶ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25, 2 June 2025*; SANA, *A large-scale campaign to remove mines and unexploded ordnance in Palmyra*, 3 September 2025.

⁵⁹⁷ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 8; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 21 October 2025, p. 7.

⁵⁹⁸ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁵⁹⁹ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁶⁰⁰ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁶⁰¹ SANA, *Eighty displaced families return to Homs from northern Syria*, 8 May 2025; SANA, *50 families return from Idlib to their villages in al-Qusayr, Homs countryside*, 11 August 2025; SANA, *Fifty families return to the city of al-Qusayr in Homs countryside*, 14 August 2025.

⁶⁰² UNOCHA, *Hama; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

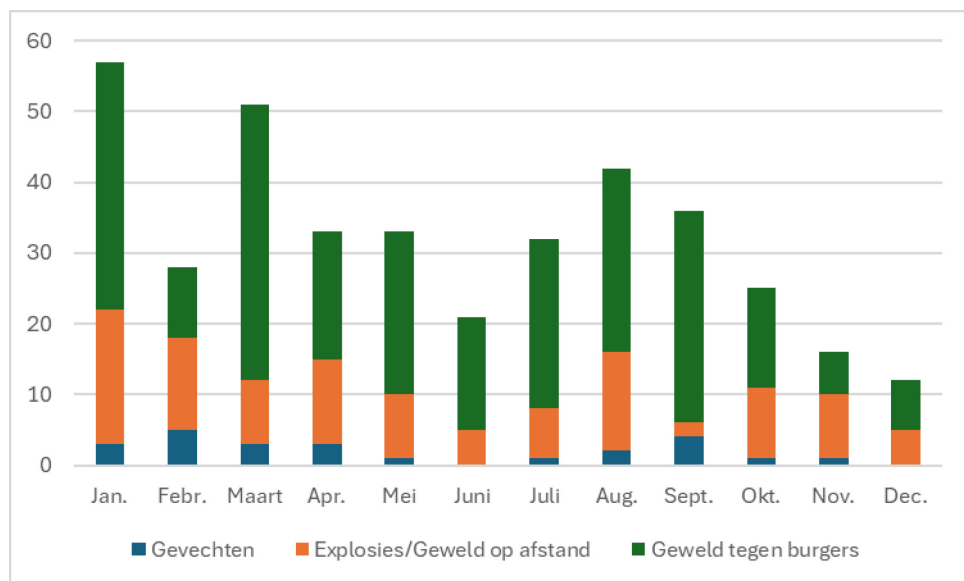
⁶⁰³ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

⁶⁰⁴ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2.

constitute a large proportion of the population in Hama. Other population groups in Hama include Alawites, Ismailis and Christians.⁶⁰⁵ Hama formed part of the control area of the transitional government.⁶⁰⁶

2.2.9.1 Conflict-related violence in Hama

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 217 violent incidents in Hama. Of these, 10 concerned battles, 61 concerned explosions/remote violence and 146 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 12 (December 2025) and 42 (August 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of incidents in Hama (107), followed by Al-Suqaylabiyah (48), Al-Salamiyeh (30), Masyaf (17) and Muhradah (15). In most cases, the incidents recorded by ACLED involved unidentified armed groups. The ACLED data showed a decline in the number of registered violent incidents in Hama from September 2025 onwards.⁶⁰⁷



Graph 12: Violent incidents in Hama between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Several attacks were carried out by unidentified armed groups. For example, on 4 July 2025 two soldiers were killed in an ambush on the road to Athriya, including a member of the 86th Division.⁶⁰⁸ On 24 September 2025, unidentified armed men abducted a soldier near Salhab. A video subsequently circulated on social media showing the man being tortured. In response, relatives of the abducted soldier attacked the predominantly Alawite village of Hawrat Hamourin, resulting in one death.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁵ New Lines Magazine, *Syria's Christians are facing new fears*, 26 June 2025; Syria Direct, *How Syria's Ismaili community keeps a fragile peace*, 2 October 2025; New Lines Magazine, *Stalled reconciliation leaves Hama's Alawites in limbo*, 13 October 2025.

⁶⁰⁶ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report*. September 2025, October 2025, p 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

⁶⁰⁷ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Hama. Admin2: As Salamiyeh, As Suqaylabiyah, Hama, Masyaf, Muhradah.

⁶⁰⁸ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian security forces killed in an ambush in Hama*, 5 July 2025.

⁶⁰⁹ Syria Weekly, *September 23-29, 2025*, 30 September 2025.

Security forces of the transitional government carried out operations in Hama aimed at dismantling ISIS cells.⁶¹⁰

2.2.9.2 Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Hama
SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 398 civilian deaths in Hama province.⁶¹¹ The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Several civilian casualties were reportedly recorded during military operations conducted by the Israeli army, including airstrikes carried out on 3 May 2025, according to various sources. According to SANA, four civilians were injured near the village of Shat'ha in Hama province.⁶¹² On 4 June 2025, an Israeli drone strike reportedly targeted an ammunition depot near the village of Al-Rabiyah. Civilian casualties were reportedly caused when a vehicle was hit by shrapnel.⁶¹³

Several targeted killings of civilians occurred in Hama, with perpetrators and motives largely remaining unknown. On 4 June 2024 unidentified armed men fired on a minibus from both sides on the road between the villages of Matin and Al-Rabiyah, killing eight bus passengers, including three women. Four others, including three women, were injured.⁶¹⁴ In early July 2025, an armed group from the village of Rahiyah reportedly entered the village of Al-Shaheib, resulting in one civilian death and additional injured persons.⁶¹⁵ On 28 September 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed four construction workers on their way home in the village of Jadrin.⁶¹⁶ In early July 2025, unidentified armed men also shot and killed a man and his daughter on the road between Shathah and Ayn al-Kurum. According to local media, they were travelling to Qardaha in Latakia province to work as herders in the mountains.⁶¹⁷

Targeted killings of former members of the previous regime's security apparatus also occurred in Hama.⁶¹⁸ The perpetrators largely remained unknown.⁶¹⁹ In May 2025 unidentified armed men shot and killed a former member of a pro-regime militia in the city of Hama.⁶²⁰ On 26 May 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed a former member of a pro-regime militia in the Ayn Louzah neighbourhood in Hama.⁶²¹ Also, on 3 July 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed a former member of a pro-regime militia in the city of Hama.⁶²² On 25 September 2025,

⁶¹⁰ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: IS supporters downplay Syria raid that US says killed IS official*, 20 September 2025.

⁶¹¹ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

⁶¹² Enab Baladi, *Israel used 12 aircraft in its raids on Syria*, 3 May 2025.

⁶¹³ SOHR, *Amid flight of drones. Violent explosions hit air defence battalion in Hama countryside, leaving casualties among civilians*, 4 June 2025.

⁶¹⁴ This is Beirut, *Syria monitor says 13 Alawites killed by security forces*, 4 June 2025; SNHR, *Eight civilians were killed and four others, including women, were wounded when unknown gunmen opened fire on a minibus in the western Hama countryside on June 4, 2025*, 5 June 2025; Syria Weekly, *June 3-10, 2025*, 10 June 2025; ICG, *CrisisWatch. Syria: June 2025*, July 2025; STJ, *Left to their fate: Grave violations against Alawites following the coastal massacres*, October 2025, p. 12.

⁶¹⁵ SOHR, *Sectarian violence. Alawite young man killed in an attack on Al-Shaheib village in Al-Salamiyah*, 5 July 2025.

⁶¹⁶ The National, *Four Alawite villagers killed as Syria seeks greater overseas support for stability*, 29 September 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 23-29, 2025*, 30 September 2025.

⁶¹⁷ SOHR, *Serious escalation. Young man and little girl killed in armed attack in western Hama and voice recording incites ethnic hatred*, 5 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025.

⁶¹⁸ SOHR, *Security vacuum. Two persons assassinated in Hama and Idlib*, 10 July 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

⁶¹⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian media outlet warns of escalating violence in Hama*, 14 October 2025.

⁶²⁰ SJAC, *Revenge killings targeting Assad regime affiliates (December 2024-May 2025)*, 22 May 2025.

⁶²¹ Syria Weekly, *May 20-27, 2025*, 27 May 2025; SOHR, *Security chaos. Wave of assassinations claims three lives in Hama, Homs and Aleppo*, 31 May 2025.

⁶²² Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025.

unidentified armed men shot and killed a former officer of the former army in the city of Hama.⁶²³

2.2.9.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Hama

Multiple incidents involving explosive remnants of war occurred in Hama.⁶²⁴ INSO recorded 23 incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in 10 deaths and 26 injured persons.⁶²⁵ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded 13 incidents, resulting in 3 deaths and 16 injured persons.⁶²⁶ In Hama, the Ministry of Emergency and Disaster Management and engineering units of the 62nd Division of the Syrian army were involved in the removal of explosive remnants of war.⁶²⁷

2.2.9.4 Internally displaced persons in Hama

UNHCR estimated the number of internally displaced persons in Hama at 194,395 on 11 December 2025.⁶²⁸ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in Hama during the reporting period, although it does not specify to what extent this was related to conflict-related violence.⁶²⁹

According to UNHCR, an estimated 316,702 internally displaced persons returned to their original places of residence in Hama between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁶³⁰ This included families returning from internally displaced persons camps in Idlib, Aleppo and Raqqa to Hama.⁶³¹

2.2.10 Idlib

Idlib is located in northwest Syria and borders Türkiye. The surrounding provinces are Aleppo, Hama and Latakia. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of 5,416 km².⁶³² IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 2,633,164 persons, of whom 36% were internally displaced persons.⁶³³ Idlib contained the largest concentration of internally displaced persons living in displacement camps (see also paragraph 2.2.10.4). Many internally displaced persons living there were dependent on humanitarian assistance.⁶³⁴ Idlib formed part of the control area of the transitional government.⁶³⁵

⁶²³ Syria Weekly, *September 23-29, 2025*, 30 September 2025.

⁶²⁴ SNHR, *The death of a child identified as Ahmed Al-Jarou as a result of the explosion of cluster munitions remnants of a previous bombing on the village of al-Suha in Hama on May 2, 2025*, 6 May 2025; SANA, *Four children injured by landmine blast in Hama countryside*, 28 May 2025.

⁶²⁵ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

⁶²⁶ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁶²⁷ SANA, *Ministry of Defense continues mine and war remnant clearance in western Hama countryside*, 21 May 2025; SANA, *CDO condemns the attack on the war remnants removal team in the countryside of Hama*, 23 May 2025; Syria Weekly, *May 20-27, 2025*, 27 May 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 39*, 8 September 2025; SNHR, *A Syrian Civil Defense volunteer was killed by a cluster munition left over from previous shelling in the village of Kafr al-Tun, Hama countryside, on December 16, 2025*, 17 December 2025.

⁶²⁸ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁶²⁹ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁶³⁰ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁶³¹ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 6 – July 2025*, 18 August 2025, p. 6; SANA, *40 families return from camps in northern Syria to their town in the Hama countryside*, 24 August 2025.

⁶³² UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

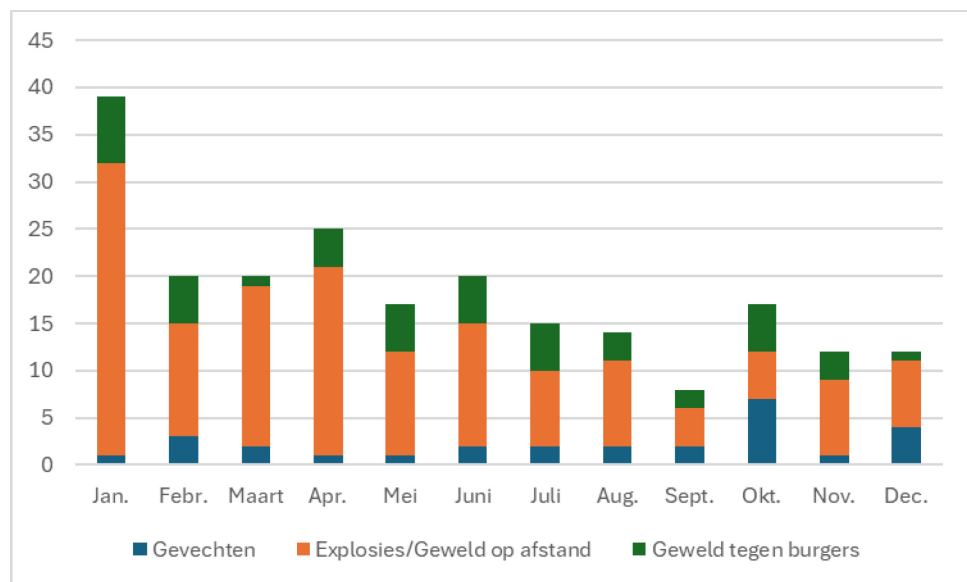
⁶³³ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

⁶³⁴ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 30th October 2025*, 30 October 2025.

⁶³⁵ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

2.2.10.1 Conflict-related violence in Idlib

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 115 violent incidents in Idlib. Of these, 21 concerned battles, 65 concerned explosions/remote violence and 29 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 8 (September 2025) and 20 (June 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of incidents in Al-Ma'arrat al-Nu'man (48), followed by Idlib (35), Harem (23), Ariha (5) and Jisr al-Shughour (4). In most cases, the incidents recorded by ACLED involved unidentified armed groups. Compared with the preceding reporting period, the ACLED data showed a decrease in the number of registered violent incidents in Idlib:⁶³⁶



Graph 13: Violent incidents in Idlib between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Several attacks were carried out by unidentified armed groups. On 11 October 2025 unidentified men shot and killed a Syrian army trainer in the town of Sarmada.⁶³⁷

On 10 June 2025, two men on a motorcycle were killed in a drone strike on the road between Al-Dana and Sarmada. Shortly afterwards, a man in a car was killed in a drone strike on the road from the town of Atmeh.⁶³⁸

On 21 October 2025, internal security forces carried out a security operation towards the Al-Fardan camp on the outskirts of the city of Harem near the Turkish border. The camp reportedly housed several dozen foreign fighters of the Foreigners Brigade (*Firqat al-Ghuraba*), most of whom were from France. The operation was reportedly a response to complaints from camp residents about misconduct by the fighters, including the abduction of an eleven-year-old girl.⁶³⁹ The fighters refused

⁶³⁶ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Idleb. Admin2: Al Mara, Ariha, Harim, Idleb, Jisr Ash Shugur.

⁶³⁷ SOHR, *Second time today. Military trainer in the Syrian army killed in Sarmada*, 11 October 2025.

⁶³⁸ Syria Weekly, *June 3-10, 2025*, 10 June 2025.

⁶³⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria-based French jihadist group again denies child abduction*, 9 December 2025.

to surrender, and armed clashes occurred. Light weapons, machine guns and drones were reportedly used. The following morning, Uzbek fighters reportedly arrived to reinforce the positions of the Foreigners Brigade.⁶⁴⁰ On 23 October 2025, the transitional government stated that a truce had been agreed. No casualties were reported.⁶⁴¹

Several operations against ISIS cells took place in Idlib.⁶⁴² For example, on 20 August 2025 the International Anti-ISIS Coalition carried out an airstrike in the village of Atmeh targeting an ISIS cell.⁶⁴³ On 28 September 2025, the Turkish Ministry of the Interior stated that it had conducted a joint operation with its Syrian counterpart against an ISIS cell in Atmeh. Eight ISIS fighters were killed, two were injured, and six people were arrested.⁶⁴⁴ On 2 October 2025, the International Anti-ISIS Coalition reportedly carried out an airstrike on a vehicle on the road between Harem and Barisha.⁶⁴⁵

- 2.2.10.2 Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Idlib
SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 140 civilian deaths in Idlib province.⁶⁴⁶ The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

There were a small number of targeted killings of civilians in Idlib, with perpetrators and motives largely remaining unknown. For example, on 9 October 2025 unidentified armed men shot and killed an ex-soldier of the former army in Ariha.⁶⁴⁷

On 13 October 2025, unidentified armed men threw a hand grenade at the dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Aleppo during his visit to the city of Khan Sheikhoun.⁶⁴⁸

- 2.2.10.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Idlib
INSO recorded 33 incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in 22 deaths and 43 injured persons.⁶⁴⁹ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded 10 incidents, resulting in 4 deaths and 10 injured people.⁶⁵⁰ The Syria Civil Defence (the White Helmets) and The HALO Trust were involved in the removal of explosive remnants of war.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁰ MEE, *Syria: Inside the camp in Idlib harbouring wanted French fighters*, 16 September 2023; France 24, *Syrian launches operation against foreign jihadists in push to capture French fighters*, 22 October 2025; The New Arab, *Clashes between Syrian govt, French Islamist fighters in Idlib province after kidnapping incident*, 22 October 2025; SARI Global, *Syrian government raid on foreign fighters in Al-Fardan*, 22 October 2025.

⁶⁴¹ France 24, *Syrian forces negotiate truce with French-led jihadist group holed up in camp*, 23 October 2025; The New Arab, *Syria reaches truce with French-led militant group in Idlib*, 24 October 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Crackdown on French fighters in Syria: Is the Sharaa government targeting its own backbone?*, 24 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025.

⁶⁴² SANA, *Ministry of Interior: ISIS terrorist cell dismantled in Idlib countryside*, 7 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria conducts two anti-IS operations in Idlib*, 1 December 2025.

⁶⁴³ Al-Monitor, *US forces raid in northern Syria against IS target, sources say*, 20 August 2025; Reuters, *Senior ISIS member killed in US military operation in Syria, official says*, 20 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria state TV details US-led raid on IS figure in Idlib*, 21 August 2025.

⁶⁴⁴ Daily Sabah, *Türkiye hunts down Daesh suspects in Syria after driver's murder*, 29 September 2025.

⁶⁴⁵ SOHR, *Amid reports about casualties. Coalition airstrike targets car on Harem-Barisha highway in northern Idlib*, 2 October 2025.

⁶⁴⁶ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

⁶⁴⁷ Syria Weekly, *October 7-14*, 14 October 2025.

⁶⁴⁸ Syria Weekly, *October 7-14*, 14 October 2025.

⁶⁴⁹ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

⁶⁵⁰ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁶⁵¹ The HALO Trust, *Syrian landmine casualties set to spiral as school year ends*, 20 June 2025; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 6; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 5; De Volkskrant, *Achtergebleven granaten richten een stil bloedbad aan in Syrië*, 5 December 2025.

2.2.10.4 Internally displaced persons in Idlib

On 11 December 2025, UNHCR estimated that 1,400,400 internally displaced persons in Idlib were residing in displacement camps, and that 732,359 were living outside these camps.⁶⁵² According to IOM, displacement occurred in Idlib during the reporting period. For example, 2,386 persons were displaced in June 2025. The information does not indicate to what extent this was related to conflict-related violence.⁶⁵³

According to UNHCR, an estimated 275,380 internally displaced persons returned to their original places of residence in Idlib between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁶⁵⁴

2.2.11 Aleppo

Aleppo is located in northwest Syria, along the border with Türkiye. The surrounding provinces are Raqqa, Hama and Idlib. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of 19,891 km².⁶⁵⁵ IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 5,629,033 persons, of whom 23% were internally displaced persons. This makes Aleppo the most populous of all provinces.⁶⁵⁶ Aleppo is considered the commercial heart of Syria.⁶⁵⁷ The largest part of Aleppo province formed part of the control area of the transitional government.⁶⁵⁸ During the reporting period, the Tishreen Dam on the Euphrates was formally under DAANES oversight.⁶⁵⁹ West of the Euphrates, the area around Deir Hafer was under SDF control during the reporting period.⁶⁶⁰ In the north of the city of Aleppo, the neighbourhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh were under the control of the SDF and the asayish during the reporting period.⁶⁶¹

2.2.11.1 Conflict-related violence in Aleppo

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 439 violent incidents in Aleppo. Of these, 102 concerned battles, 154 concerned explosions/remote violence and 183 concerned violence against civilians. During the reporting period, the monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 34 (November 2025) and 72 (September 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of incidents in Jabal Semaan (155), followed by Manbij (74), Al-Bab (69), Ayn al-Arab (59), Al-Safira (25), A'zaz (23), Afrin (23) and Jarablus (11). In many cases, the incidents recorded by ACLED involved unidentified armed groups, the SDF or the Syrian army. Compared with the preceding reporting

⁶⁵² UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁶⁵³ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁶⁵⁴ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁶⁵⁵ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

⁶⁵⁶ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

⁶⁵⁷ Le Monde, *Amid Syria's ruined economy, Aleppo's textile industry dreams of revival*, 23 March 2025.

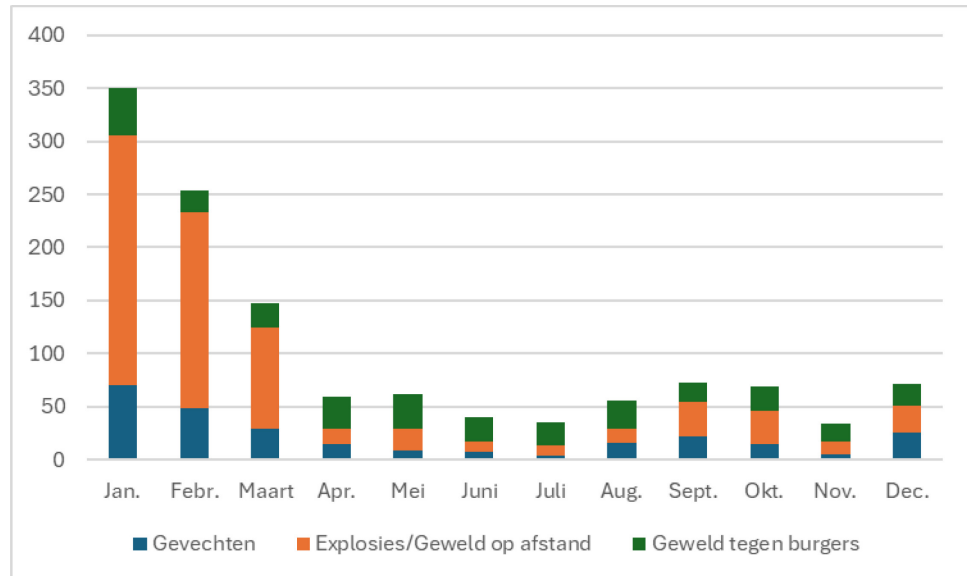
⁶⁵⁸ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

⁶⁵⁹ France 24, *Syrian forces deploy at key dam under deal with Kurds: media*, 12 April 2025.

⁶⁶⁰ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

⁶⁶¹ The National, *Under pressure, Kurdish militia resumes integration talks with Damascus*, 2 June 2025; Enab Baladi, *Damascus-SDF negotiations hit a hurdle with detainees in Aleppo*, 7 June 2025.

period, the ACLED data showed a decrease in the number of registered violent incidents in Aleppo:⁶⁶²



Graph 14: Violent incidents in Aleppo between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence. This overview is not exhaustive.

From 2 August 2025 onwards, multiple armed confrontations took place along front lines near Deir Hafer in the east of the province.⁶⁶³ The SDF stated that on 4 August 2025 armed factions affiliated with the transitional government attacked four of its positions in the village of Al-Imam.⁶⁶⁴ The Syrian Ministry of Defence stated on 12 August 2025 that a soldier was killed during fighting with the SDF near the village of Tall Ma’az.⁶⁶⁵ Pro-government media reported further skirmishes near Tall Ma’az on 31 August 2025,⁶⁶⁶ which the SDF denied.⁶⁶⁷ The SDF stated that on 23 September 2025 two drone attacks targeted military positions near Deir Hafer, injuring three SDF fighters.⁶⁶⁸ On 5 October 2025, the SDF stated that a suicide-drone attack on a military vehicle near Deir Hafer injured three SDF fighters. In a separate suicide-drone attack on an asayish patrol, four asayish members were injured.⁶⁶⁹ Mortar fire and drone attacks reportedly took place near Deir Hafer on 22 October 2025.⁶⁷⁰ According to the Syrian Ministry of Defence, on 5 January 2026 three soldiers were

⁶⁶² ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Aleppo. Admin2: Afrin, Ain Al Arab, Al Bab, As Safira, Azaz, Jarablus, Jebel Saman, Membij.

⁶⁶³ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria army, Kurdish force trade accusations over attacks in north*, 3 August 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Weeks 42-43*, 7 October 2025.

⁶⁶⁴ Reuters, *Kurdish-led SDF says it clashed with government forces in northern Syria*, 4 August 2025; Al Jazeera, *Syria’s Kurdish-led SDF, government forces clash in Aleppo province*, 4 August 2025.

⁶⁶⁵ Al Jazeera, *Syrian gov’t soldier killed in clashes with Kurd-led SDF in Aleppo province*, 12 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Syrian soldier killed in SDF attack in Aleppo countryside*, 13 August 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 36*, 18 August 2025.

⁶⁶⁶ SANA, *Army foils SDF infiltration attempt east of Aleppo*, 31 August 2025.

⁶⁶⁷ North Press Agency, *SDF refutes alleged skirmishes with Syrian army in Aleppo*, 31 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Damascus reports clashes with SDF, which denies involvement*, 2 September 2025.

⁶⁶⁸ Shafaq News, *Syrian army, SDF trade strikes again in Aleppo*, 23 September 2025.

⁶⁶⁹ Rudaw, *SDF accuses ‘Damascus-linked militants’ of escalating drone attacks*, 5 October 2025; Kurdistan24, *SDF reports seven injured in new attacks by Damascus-linked militants*, 5 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 30-October 7*, 7 October 2025.

⁶⁷⁰ SOHR, *Ceasefire violations. Governmental forces and SDF trade mortar fire on Deir Hafer frontline*, 22 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025.

injured in a drone attack on a military police checkpoint near Deir Hafer.⁶⁷¹ On 17 January 2026, the Syrian army entered Deir Hafer after the SDF withdrew.⁶⁷²

Skirmishes also took place along front lines near the strategically located Tishreen Dam.⁶⁷³ The dam on the Euphrates served as a natural buffer for the SDF, which captured the dam from ISIS in 2015. It was also critical infrastructure, providing water for irrigation and generating electricity through hydropower.⁶⁷⁴ According to the Damascus-based media outlet Enab Baladi, in mid-May 2025 the SDF attacked two positions of the 76th Division near the Tishreen Dam. No casualties were reported.⁶⁷⁵ On 10 September 2025, rocket artillery shelling took place in the Maskanah area.⁶⁷⁶ On 21 September 2025, mortar shelling targeted the Jabal al-Qashla and Al-Naymiya areas.⁶⁷⁷ According to SOHR, artillery shelling occurred on 28 September 2025 in areas around the Tishreen Dam.⁶⁷⁸ On 1 October 2025, multiple sources reported attacks around the dam involving tanks, field artillery and suicide drones.⁶⁷⁹ According to SOHR, shelling resumed near the Tishreen Dam on 5 October 2025.⁶⁸⁰ On 9 October 2025, the Ministry of Defence stated that the SDF attacked military positions near the Tishreen Dam, resulting in one soldier killed and several injured.⁶⁸¹ On 29 October 2025, the Ministry of Defence further stated that the SDF shelled a military position near the dam with a rocket, killing two soldiers and injuring one.⁶⁸² On 18 January 2026, fighting broke out at the Tishreen Dam between the Syrian army and the SDF.⁶⁸³

Skirmishes also took place along front lines near Manbij. For example, on 18 September 2025 an armed confrontation occurred between the army and the SDF near the village of Al-Khusha.⁶⁸⁴

From August 2025 onwards, tensions and (violent) incidents increased between the Syrian army and the SDF in the Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh neighbourhoods of Aleppo city.⁶⁸⁵ A large proportion of the population in these two neighbourhoods was of Kurdish origin. The SDF stated on 11 August 2025 that government forces had patrolled in these neighbourhoods.⁶⁸⁶ The asayish stated on 13 August 2025 that two asayish members were injured in a drone attack in Sheikh Maqsoud.⁶⁸⁷ On 22 September 2025, a Syrian army soldier was reportedly killed and another injured after being shot at Layramoun roundabout.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁷¹ SANA, *Syrian Arab Army targets SDF drone launch sites east of Aleppo*, 5 January 2026.

⁶⁷² BBC, *Syrian army moves east of Aleppo after Kurdish forces withdraw*, 17 January 2026; DW, *Syrian army enters areas east of Aleppo as Kurds withdraw*, 17 January 2026; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian army advances further north after securing eastern Aleppo*, 17 January 2026.

⁶⁷³ Tesaa World, *Militärische Eskalation im Osten von Aleppo: "SDF" zielt mit Artillerie und Kamikaze-Drohnen auf Stellungen der syrischen Armee nahe dem Tscherschin-Staudamm*, 1 October 2025.

⁶⁷⁴ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁶⁷⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian army positions 'attacked' at strategic Tishreen Dam*, 19 May 2025.

⁶⁷⁶ SOHR, *Aleppo. SDF and Turkish-backed factions exchange shelling*, 10 September 2025.

⁶⁷⁷ Syria Weekly, *September 16-23, 2025*, 23 September 2025.

⁶⁷⁸ SOHR, *Aleppo. SDF drone attacks two military posts of Turkish-backed faction in eastern countryside*, 28 September 2025.

⁶⁷⁹ Facebook, *Syrian Arab News Agency SANA*, 1 October 2025, [url](#); SOHR, *Foiled infiltration. Artillery shelling follows drone strike near Tishreen dam*, 1 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 30-October 7*, 7 October 2025.

⁶⁸⁰ SOHR, *Military escalation. Damascus government forces and SDF exchange shelling in Aleppo*, 5 October 2025.

⁶⁸¹ SANA, *Defense ministry: SDF violates ceasefire agreement, targets army eastern Aleppo*, 9 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 7-14*, 14 October 2025.

⁶⁸² SANA, *SDF forces target a Syrian Arab army position near Tishreen Dam with guided missile*, 29 October 2025.

⁶⁸³ Enab Baladi, *Aleppo, clashes continue on Tishreen Dam front*, 18 January 2026.

⁶⁸⁴ Syria Weekly, *September 16-23, 2025*, 23 September 2025.

⁶⁸⁵ Rudaw, *Kurdish forces accuse Damascus affiliates of militant, drone attack in northern Aleppo*, 22 September 2025.

⁶⁸⁶ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria, Kurds trade truce breach claims as integration push stalls*, 13 August 2025.

⁶⁸⁷ Channel 8, *SDF commander Mazloum Abdi urges Syrian Kurds to secure place in Syria's future amid talks with Damascus*, 13 August 2025; Rudaw, *Syria denies attacks on Kurdish neighborhoods in Aleppo*, 13 August 2025.

⁶⁸⁸ X.com, *Qalaat Al Mudiq*, 22 September 2025, [url](#); Syria Weekly, *September 16-23, 2025*, 23 September 2025.

On 6 October 2025, violence escalated along front lines in Aleppo city between transitional government security forces and the SDF. In the morning, the Syrian army reportedly discovered an SDF tunnel and subsequently destroyed it. By the evening, all roads leading to Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah were closed. Civilians were allowed to leave these neighbourhoods, but were no longer permitted to enter.⁶⁸⁹ According to the Syrian state news agency SANA, one internal security officer was killed and three were injured. Several civilians were reportedly injured by mortar and heavy machine-gun fire, and snipers were reportedly active.⁶⁹⁰ According to the SDF, the Syrian army fired on the two neighbourhoods with snipers, tanks, mortars and heavy machine guns, ⁶⁹¹ reportedly killing two asayish officers.⁶⁹² According to the White Helmets, a civilian was killed and five civilians were injured when rockets fired by the SDF landed nearby.⁶⁹³ According to UNOCHA, at least three civilians were killed in these skirmishes.⁶⁹⁴ In addition, according to the transitional government, on 22 December 2025 at least two civilians were killed and eight civilians were injured in shelling of neighbourhoods in Aleppo. According to the SDF, at least one civilian was killed and 23 people were injured by shelling by transitional government security forces.⁶⁹⁵ According to SANA, on 26 December 2025 an internal security officer was injured when snipers shelled a checkpoint at Sheihan roundabout.⁶⁹⁶

From 6 January 2026 onwards, fighting between transitional government security forces and the SDF flared up again. The parties used heavy machine guns, artillery, rockets, tanks, armoured vehicles, mortars and drones.⁶⁹⁷ In the afternoon of 7 January 2026, the Syrian army declared the Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah neighbourhoods 'closed military zones'.⁶⁹⁸ The army reportedly also stated that all SDF military positions in these neighbourhoods were legitimate targets, and ordered residents to leave.⁶⁹⁹ Two corridors were temporarily opened for civilian evacuation.⁷⁰⁰ In the afternoon of 8 January 2026, the army imposed a curfew on Sheikh Maqsoud, Ashrafiyah and Beni Zayed.⁷⁰¹ After several days of fighting, the SDF withdrew towards the Euphrates in the east of Aleppo province, and on 11 January 2026 the Syrian army entered the two neighbourhoods.⁷⁰²

Several security operations against ISIS cells took place in Aleppo.⁷⁰³ For example, on 17 May 2025 security forces carried out an operation against an ISIS cell in the

⁶⁸⁹ Syria Direct, *In Aleppo's Kurdish neighborhoods, another setback for SDF-Damascus integration*, 9 October 2025; SOHR, *After blocking lasted for weeks. Transitional government reopen roads leading to Al-Ashrafiyah and Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhoods*, 22 October 2025.

⁶⁹⁰ SANA, *SDF attack in Aleppo city kills one security officer, wounds civilians*, 6 October 2025; The New York Times, *Deadly clashes erupt between Syrian government forces and Kurdish fighters*, 7 October 2025.

⁶⁹¹ The New York Times, *Deadly clashes erupt between Syrian government forces and Kurdish fighters*, 7 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian government, Kurdish forces reach truce after Aleppo clashes*, 7 October 2025.

⁶⁹² North Press Agency, *Funeral held for Asayish members killed in clashes with government forces in Aleppo*, 11 October 2025.

⁶⁹³ Syria Weekly, *September 30-October 7*, 7 October 2025; Syria Direct, *In Aleppo's Kurdish neighborhoods, another setback for SDF-Damascus integration*, 9 October 2025.

⁶⁹⁴ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 1. October 2025*, 20 November 2025, p. 6.

⁶⁹⁵ SANA, *SDF attack wounds civilians, security forces in Aleppo*, 22 December 2025; DW, *At least 2 killed in Aleppo clashes between army and SDF*, 22 December 2025; CNN, *Deadly clashes erupt between Syrian army and Kurdish-led SDF amid integration talks*, 22 December 2025.

⁶⁹⁶ SANA, *SDF violates signed agreements, targets an Internal Security checkpoint in Aleppo*, 26 December 2025.

⁶⁹⁷ Al Jazeera, *Updates: Syria to launch military operation against SDF in Aleppo*, 7 January 2026.

⁶⁹⁸ France 24, *Syria govt demands Kurdish fighters leave Aleppo neighborhoods*, 7 January 2026.

⁶⁹⁹ Al Jazeera, *Updates: Syria to launch military operation against SDF in Aleppo*, 7 January 2026.

⁷⁰⁰ Al-Monitor, *Deadly clashes resume in Syria's Aleppo between government, Kurdish forces*, 7 January 2026; Al Jazeera, *Updates: Syria to launch military operation against SDF in Aleppo*, 7 January 2026; SANA, *Aleppo governorate extends civilian exit from Sheikh Maqsoud and Al-Ashrafiyah*, 8 January 2026; SANA, *Syrian Army warns SDF organization against targeting civilians leaving neighborhoods*, 8 January 2026.

⁷⁰¹ The National, *Syria announces 'targeted operations' and curfew in Aleppo as deadly clashes continue*, 8 January 2026; SANA, *Syrian army to begin targeted operations against SDF organization in Aleppo*, 8 January 2026.

⁷⁰² The New York Times, *Syrian military takes Aleppo neighborhoods after clashes with Kurds*, 11 January 2026.

⁷⁰³ SANA, *Interior Ministry: Security operation targeting ISIS cell in Aleppo ends*, 17 May 2025; SANA, *Ministry of Interior: A number of members of a terrorist cell affiliated with ISIS were arrested*, 18 May 2025; HLN, *Amerikaanse leger meldt dat het "een verantwoordelijke van IS" heeft gedood in Syrië*, 13 June 2025.

Haydariyeh neighbourhood of Aleppo city. Three armed fighters and one member of the security services were killed.⁷⁰⁴ On 25 July 2025, the International Anti-ISIS Coalition carried out a military operation in the city of Al-Bab targeting an ISIS cell.⁷⁰⁵

Multiple incidents involving explosions occurred in Aleppo. For example, on 22 July 2025 security forces discovered a car bomb in Kafr Nunan.⁷⁰⁶ On 17 August 2025, an unidentified man blew himself up in Aleppo's Al-Maysar neighbourhood. According to the Syrian Ministry of the Interior, this was not a terrorist attack.⁷⁰⁷ On 17 September 2025, a bomb exploded in a car in Manbij; No casualties were reported.⁷⁰⁸ On 31 December 2025, an unidentified man blew himself up at a checkpoint in Aleppo's Bab al-Faraj neighbourhood, killing one internal security officer and injuring two others.⁷⁰⁹

On 4 September 2025, at least one person was reportedly killed when a car on the road to Aleppo International Airport was hit by rockets fired from a drone.⁷¹⁰

According to Syrian media, on 26 October 2025 unidentified armed men on a motorcycle shot and killed two soldiers of the 80th Division at a checkpoint in the city of Al-Bab.⁷¹¹

2.2.11.2

Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Aleppo

SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 265 civilian deaths in Aleppo province.⁷¹² The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

Reportedly, skirmishes between the Syrian army and the SDF resulted in some civilian casualties. For example, on 2 August 2025 the Syrian Ministry of Defence stated that it had repelled an SDF attack, during which the SDF allegedly carried out a rocket attack on the village of Al-Kayariye near Deir Hafer. Four soldiers and three civilians were reportedly injured.⁷¹³ On 20 and 21 September 2025, an escalation occurred near Deir Hafer in eastern Aleppo province, during which the SDF and the Syrian army exchanged artillery fire and drone strikes. On 20 September 2025, one of the drone strikes and artillery bombardments hit the village of Umm Tina, which was under SDF control. The SDF stated that the Syrian army was responsible and reported that seven civilians were killed and four other civilians were injured.⁷¹⁴ In response, the Ministry of Defence stated that the SDF had committed a massacre of civilians in Umm Tina and that the SDF had also shelled other nearby villages.⁷¹⁵ On

⁷⁰⁴ Reuters, *Syrian government forces raid Islamic State hideouts in Aleppo*, 17 May 2025; Het Nieuwsblad, *Vier doden bij operatie tegen IS in Aleppo*, 17 May 2025; ICG, *CrisisWatch. Syria: May 2025*, June 2025.

⁷⁰⁵ NOS, *Amerikaanse leger claimt doden IS-kopstuk in Syrië*, 26 July 2025.

⁷⁰⁶ Syria Weekly, *July 15-22, 2025*, 22 July 2025.

⁷⁰⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian interior ministry says Aleppo blast motivated by 'personal disputes'*, 18 August 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 36*, 18 August 2025.

⁷⁰⁸ Syria Weekly, *September 16-23, 2025*, 23 September 2025.

⁷⁰⁹ SANA, *One internal security personnel martyred, others injured in suicide bombing in Aleppo*, 31 December 2025; The New York Times, *Suicide bomber in Syria kills security officer in New Year's Eve attack*, 31 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: IS supporters on Facebook cheer Aleppo suicide bomb blast*, 1 January 2026.

⁷¹⁰ Enab Baladi, *Drone strike targets car on road to Aleppo International Airport in northern Syria*, 4 September 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Casualties reported after Syrian state media say drone 'hit civilian car'*, 4 September 2025.

⁷¹¹ SOHR, *New assassination. Two members of 80th division of "national army" killed in Aleppo*, 26 October 2025; The New Arab, *Israel army plants mines in Quneitra, while two soldiers killed in Al-Bab*, 27 October 2025.

⁷¹² SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

⁷¹³ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Kurds report new 'attack by pro-government factions' in northern Syria*, 4 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Syrian soldier killed in SDF attack in Aleppo countryside*, 13 August 2025; ICG, *CrisisWatch. Syria: August 2025*, September 2025.

⁷¹⁴ North Press Agency, *Seven civilians killed in government shelling of Aleppo countryside*, 20 September 2025.

⁷¹⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian army disputes SDF accusation of 'massacre' in Aleppo province*, 21 September 2025.

22 September 2025, SOHR reported that eight people were killed in the violence in Umm Tina, including five women and two children. Four people were also injured, including three women.⁷¹⁶ In addition, SOHR reported that on 23 September 2025 an artillery bombardment targeted the village of Zubeida, reportedly injuring four children.⁷¹⁷ According to SOHR, on 5 October 2025 a civilian was injured in a drone strike on the highway between Aleppo and Raqqa near Deir Hafer.⁷¹⁸

Multiple targeted killings of civilians also took place in Aleppo. With perpetrators and motives largely remaining unknown. For example, on 29 May 2025 unidentified armed men shot and killed a former member of a pro-regime militia in the city of Aleppo.⁷¹⁹ On the same day, unidentified armed men shot and killed a former member of the National Defence Forces (NDF), affiliated with the former regime.⁷²⁰ On 17 August 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed a former SNA commander in the city of Azaz. The next day, a man surrendered to the authorities in Aleppo, stating that he committed the killing because he held the victim responsible for his father's death in April 2024.⁷²¹ On 30 September 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed a former officer of the former army in Aleppo's Jabriyah neighbourhood.⁷²² On 1 October 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed a former member of a pro-regime militia in Aleppo's Al-Shaar neighbourhood.⁷²³ On 27 October 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed a former soldier of the former army in Aleppo's Sukkari neighbourhood.⁷²⁴

⁷¹⁶ SOHR, *Military escalation. Infant dies affected by his injuries, bringing the number of deaths due to massacre in Deir Hafer to eight people*, 22 September 2025.

⁷¹⁷ SOHR, *Syrian government shelling. Four children wounded in Aleppo*, 23 September 2025.

⁷¹⁸ SOHR, *Amid growing tensions. Civilian injured in drone attack in eastern Aleppo*, 5 October 2025; Shafaq News, *Battles erupt between Syrian forces and SDF in eastern Aleppo*, 5 October 2025; SOHR, *Military activity. Kamikaze drone attacks checkpoint of internal security forces in Deir Hafer*, 22 October 2025.

⁷¹⁹ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025.

⁷²⁰ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025.

⁷²¹ The Syrian Observer, *Assassination of "Farouq Abu Bakr" shakes northern Syria as interior ministry vows retribution*, 18 August 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 36*, 18 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

⁷²² Syria Weekly, *September 30-October 7*, 7 October 2025.

⁷²³ Syria Weekly, *September 30-October 7*, 7 October 2025.

⁷²⁴ Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025.

- 2.2.11.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Aleppo
There were multiple incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Aleppo.⁷²⁵ INSO recorded 25 incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in 17 deaths and 22 injured people.⁷²⁶ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded 15 incidents, resulting in 5 deaths and 15 injured people.⁷²⁷ In Aleppo, the Syrian army and the Ministry of Emergency and Disaster Management were involved in clearing explosive remnants of war.⁷²⁸ The HALO Trust was also involved.⁷²⁹
- 2.2.11.4 Internally displaced persons in Aleppo
On 11 December 2025, UNHCR estimated that 565,951 internally displaced persons in Aleppo were residing in displacement camps, while 1,030,881 were living outside these camps.⁷³⁰ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in Aleppo during the reporting period. Although it does not specify to what extent this was related to conflict-related violence.⁷³¹ According to IOM, more than 5,000 people were displaced in Aleppo in June 2025.⁷³² On 6 October 2025, skirmishes in Aleppo city between transitional government security forces and the SDF led to the temporary displacement of several families.⁷³³ Tensions in Aleppo city in December 2025 also led to displacement.⁷³⁴ In addition, on 7 January 2026, UNOCHA reported that the escalation of violence in Aleppo city that began on 6 January 2026 resulted in the displacement of approximately 30,000 persons. More than 2,000 people left for Afrin district, and 1,100 people ended up in nine shelters.⁷³⁵

According to UNHCR, an estimated 780,334 internally displaced persons returned to their places of origin in Aleppo between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁷³⁶ According to IOM, more than 25,000 displaced persons returned to Aleppo in July 2025.⁷³⁷

- 2.2.12 *Raqqa*
Raqqa is located in northern Syria along the border with Türkiye. The surrounding provinces are Hasaka, Deir ez-Zor, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of 17,627 km².⁷³⁸ IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 872,021 persons, of whom 21% were internally displaced.⁷³⁹ Raqqa is regarded as one of Syria's most important agricultural provinces. Crops cultivated in the province include grain, maize and cotton.⁷⁴⁰ Arabs form a large

⁷²⁵ North Press Agency, *Three injured in war remnant explosion in Aleppo countryside*, 20 October 2025.

⁷²⁶ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

⁷²⁷ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁷²⁸ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 39*, 8 September 2025; SANA, *Civil Defense continues to clear the land of war remnants*, 6 December 2025.

⁷²⁹ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 7; Syria Mine Action AoR, *situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 6.

⁷³⁰ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁷³¹ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁷³² IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5 – June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5.

⁷³³ The New York Times, *Deadly clashes erupt between Syrian government forces and Kurdish fighters*, 7 October 2025; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 22 October 2025.

⁷³⁴ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Tensions in Kurdish-held areas of Syria's Aleppo triggers displacement*, 27 December 2025.

⁷³⁵ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 1 - Escalation of violence in Aleppo (as of 07 January 2026)*, 7 January 2026, p. 1.

⁷³⁶ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁷³⁷ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 6 – July 2025*, 18 August 2025, p. 6.

⁷³⁸ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

⁷³⁹ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

⁷⁴⁰ Rudaw, *Rojava wheat harvest expected to reach 350k tons amid drought*, 22 May 2025; North Press Agency, *AANES receives over 12,000 tons of cotton from farmers in NE Syria*, 13 October 2025.

share of Raqqa's population.⁷⁴¹ According to an estimate from 2008, ninety percent of the population consisted of Arabs, most of whom were Sunni. The remaining ten percent included Kurds, Turkmen, Circassians and Armenians.⁷⁴² During the reporting period, a large part of the area around Tel Abyad, between the Turkish border and the M4 highway in the north of the province, belonged to the control area of the transitional government. The area around the M4 highway and around the Euphrates was under SDF control during the reporting period. The area south of that was under the control of the transitional government.⁷⁴³ Turkish troops were present along the border with Türkiye in the north.⁷⁴⁴ On 21 October 2025, the Turkish parliament approved President Erdoğan's request to extend the mandate of the Turkish army for three years to conduct military operations in Syria.⁷⁴⁵

2.2.12.1 Conflict-related violence in Raqqa

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 250 violent incidents in Raqqa. Of these, 100 concerned battles, 34 concerned explosions/remote violence, and 116 concerned violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 21 (June 2025) and 50 (September 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of incidents in Raqqa (160), followed by Al-Thawra (51) and Tel Abyad (39). In most cases, the incidents recorded by ACLED involved the SDF, unidentified armed groups or the *asayish*. Compared with the preceding reporting period, ACLED data showed a decrease in the number of recorded violent incidents in Raqqa. No clear trend was visible during the reporting period:⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴¹ Syria Direct, *Raqqa's Arab tribes navigate 'uneasy calm' under SDF rule*, 13 November 2018; confidential source, July 2025.

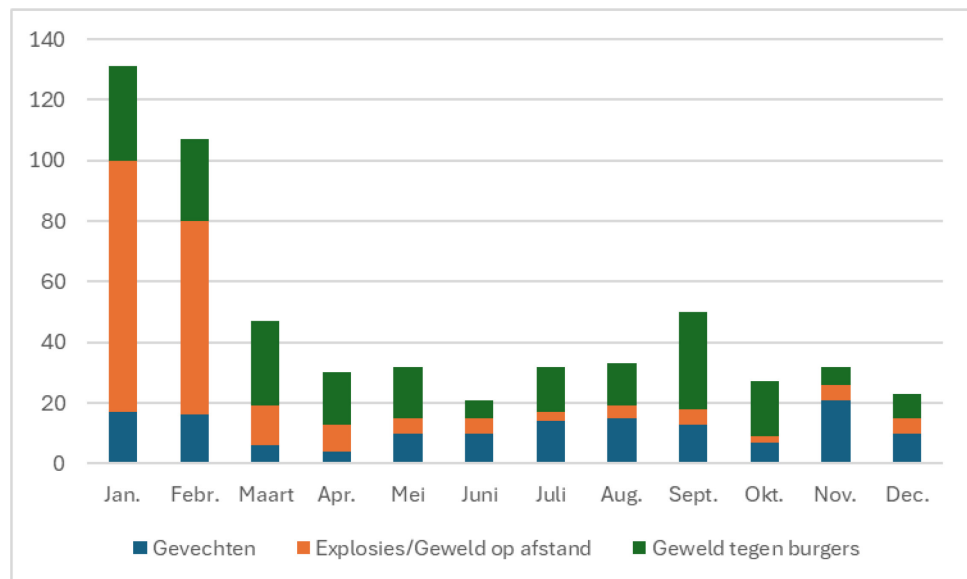
⁷⁴² OPC, *The kin who count: Mapping Raqqa's tribal topology*, 24 March 2021.

⁷⁴³ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

⁷⁴⁴ SOHR, *Sluk. Tense calm prevails in the town following intervention of Turkish forces and the number of fatalities in yesterday's clashes jumps to four*, 28 May 2025; Syria Direct, *Turkey in Syria: Temporary necessity turned permanent presence?*, 27 June 2025; SOHR, *Turkish intelligence and civil police. Joint patrol arrests elderly Kurdish man in Afrin*, 10 July 2025; STJ, *Northern Syria: Communication to UN special procedures regarding ongoing violations of property rights in the Operation Peace Spring area*, 5 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Arrests, stalled talks, and military buildups. War drums beat in eastern Syria*, 8 October 2025.

⁷⁴⁵ Enab Baladi, *Three years: Turkey extends its military mission in Syria*, 22 October 2025.

⁷⁴⁶ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Ar Raqqa. Admin2: Ar Raqqa, Ath Thawra, Tell Abiad.



Graph 15: Violent incidents in Raqqa between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence. This overview is not exhaustive.

From June 2025 onwards, several skirmishes took place along front lines in Raqqa between the Syrian army and the SDF. For example, on 9 June 2025 two SDF fighters were killed and others injured when they were intercepted by the army near Maadan Atiq.⁷⁴⁷ The army stated on 2 September 2025 that it had repelled an SDF infiltration attempt in the Maadan Badia area; No casualties were reported.⁷⁴⁸ On 14 September 2025, the army stated that it had repelled an SDF infiltration attempt in the village of Mardoud; no casualties were reported. According to SOHR, however, this incident involved an internal clash between two former SNA factions.⁷⁴⁹ From 15 November 2025 onwards, skirmishes took place along the front line near the village of Ghanem Al-Ali in the east of the province, involving drones, artillery and heavy machine guns.⁷⁵⁰ On 21 November 2025, the two sides agreed to a ceasefire in eastern Raqqa.⁷⁵¹ On 18 January 2026, the Syrian army entered the cities of Tabqa and Raqqa after the SDF withdrew.⁷⁵²

Raqqa also saw multiple ISIS attacks targeting SDF forces. On 20 August 2025 two asayish members were killed during an armed confrontation in Raqqa city with suspected ISIS fighters.⁷⁵³ On 21 August 2025, suspected ISIS fighters opened fire on an SDF vehicle at the Baroudeh checkpoint; No casualties were reported.⁷⁵⁴ The SDF stated on 31 August 2025 that it had repelled an ISIS attack on a military post in Raqqa city, in which two ISIS fighters were killed.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁴⁷ Syria Weekly, *June 3-10, 2025*, 10 June 2025.

⁷⁴⁸ Enab Baladi, *Syrian army says it repelled SDF infiltration attempt in Raqqa countryside*, 3 September 2025.

⁷⁴⁹ SOHR, *SOHR denies any clashes with SDF. Internal clashes erupt among "national army" factions in Al-Raqqah countryside*, 14 September 2025.

⁷⁵⁰ SOHR, *Second round in 24 hours. Clashes renew between SDF and transitional government forces in Al-Raqqah*, 16 November 2025.

⁷⁵¹ The New Arab, *Syrian government and SDF agree ceasefire amid wider northeast tensions*, 22 November 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian army and SDF reach truce in Raqqa*, 23 November 2025.

⁷⁵² BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian army seizes strategic oil, gas fields from SDF in east*, 18 January 2026; CNN, *Syria's military has seized swaths of Kurdish-held territory. Here's what we know*, 19 January 2026.

⁷⁵³ Syria Weekly, *August 19-26, 2025*, 26 August 2025.

⁷⁵⁴ Syria Weekly, *August 19-26, 2025*, 26 August 2025.

⁷⁵⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Kurdish-led force says foiled IS suicide attack in eastern Syria*, 1 September 2025.

In cooperation with the International Anti-ISIS Coalition, the SDF conducted operations against ISIS in Raqqa.⁷⁵⁶ For example, the SDF reportedly carried out an operation in June 2025 in the village of Al-Mansoura.⁷⁵⁷

2.2.12.2 Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Raqqa

In 2025, SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths, including at least 43 in Raqqa province.⁷⁵⁸ The following provides an overview of a number of violence trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

From 26 May 2025 onwards, several security incidents occurred in the village of Suluk in Tel Abyad district. The direct trigger was reportedly an attack by a member of *Suqour al-Sunna*, an armed group affiliated with the former SNA, against a civilian. The following day, residents organised a sit-in and set up a tent. By evening, *Suqour al-Sunna* took the village by force. They set the tent on fire and detained fifteen young men. After intervention by the 60th Army Division of the Ministry of Defence, the fifteen men were released. On 28 May 2025, reinforcements from internal security forces and the military police arrived in the village to bring the situation under control.⁷⁵⁹ According to SNHR, two civilians were killed after being detained. Two other civilians were killed during fighting in the village. Eight civilians were injured. Three houses were destroyed by fire, a shop was looted and more than twenty families fled.⁷⁶⁰ In addition, on 2 August 2025 unidentified armed men shot and killed a police officer from Tel Abyad in Suluk.⁷⁶¹

Some civilians were killed during SDF operations. For example, on 21 September 2025 the SDF raided an apartment building in Tabqa's Al-Wahb neighbourhood, resulting in at least three deaths and fifteen injured people.⁷⁶² Some civilians were also killed at SDF checkpoints.⁷⁶³ In early July 2025, public outrage followed after an SDF fighter shot and killed a teenage boy at a checkpoint in Raqqa on 2 July 2025.⁷⁶⁴

There were also some targeted killings of civilians in Raqqa. With perpetrators and motives largely remaining unknown. For example, according to SOHR, on 3 August 2025 an armed man on a motorcycle affiliated with the Al-Hamzat Division shot and killed a man on the road between the villages of Jamous and Filo in Tel Abyad district.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁵⁶ North Press Agency, *Night curfew in Raqqa to counter ISIS sleeper cells*, 26 August 2025.

⁷⁵⁷ North Press Agency, *SDF dismantles ISIS cell in Raqqa in joint operation with coalition*, 12 June 2025.

⁷⁵⁸ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

⁷⁵⁹ SOHR, *Security vacuum. Clashes in Al-Raqqa countryside leave casualties*, 27 May 2025; Syria Weekly, *May 20-27, 2025*, 27 May 2025; SOHR, *Sluk. Tense calm prevails in the town following intervention of Turkish forces and the number of fatalities in yesterday's clashes jumps to four*, 28 May 2025; SOHR, *Growing tension in Sluk. Schools and shops closed for second day in a row, amid demands to expel "Suqour Al-Sunnah" faction*, 29 May 2025; SNHR, *Documentation of the killing of four civilians, detentions, displacement, and attacks on property in the town of Suluk in the Raqqa countryside between May 26 en 28*, 6 June 2025, p. 1; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian outlet spotlights tensions in Raqqa province*, 7 June 2025.

⁷⁶⁰ SNHR, *Documentation of the killing of four civilians, detentions, displacement, and attacks on property in the town of Suluk in the Raqqa countryside between May 26 en 28*, 6 June 2025, p. 2.

⁷⁶¹ SOHR, *Ongoing security chaos. Member of civil police shot dead in town within "Peace Spring" area*, 2 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

⁷⁶² Syria Weekly, *September 16-23, 2025*, 23 September 2025.

⁷⁶³ Syria Weekly, *June 24-July 1, 2025*, 1 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

⁷⁶⁴ X.com, *Charles Lister*, 2 July 2025, [url](#); The New Arab, *Syria: Outrage after 14-year-old boy 'executed' by SDF fighter in Raqqa*, 3 July 2025; SNHR, *The killing of the child Ali Abbas Al-Aouni by a member of the Syrian Democratic Forces near a checkpoint north of Raqqa on July 2, 2025*, 4 July 2025.

⁷⁶⁵ SOHR, *Daily death toll. 20 people killed on August 3rd across Syria*, 3 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

2.2.12.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Raqqa
INSO recorded sixteen incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in eleven deaths and twenty injured people.⁷⁶⁶ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded three incidents, resulting in one death and one injured person.⁷⁶⁷ In Raqqa, the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), DanChurchAid (DCA) and the Roj Mine Control Organisation (RMCO) were involved in clearing explosive remnants of war.⁷⁶⁸

2.2.12.4 Internally displaced persons in Raqqa
On 11 December 2025, UNHCR estimated that 143,806 internally displaced persons in Raqqa were residing in displacement camps and that 136,699 were living outside these camps.⁷⁶⁹ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in Raqqa in August 2025. This information does not indicate the extent to which this was related to conflict-related violence.⁷⁷⁰

According to UNHCR, an estimated 7,231 internally displaced persons returned to their places of origin in Raqqa between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁷⁷¹

2.2.13 *Hasaka*

Hasaka is located in the northeastern corner of Syria. It borders Türkiye and Iraq. The neighbouring provinces are Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of almost 23,169 km².⁷⁷² IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 1,348,235 persons, 24% of whom were internally displaced.⁷⁷³ Hasaka is known as Syria's breadbasket,⁷⁷⁴ and cotton is also widely cultivated there.⁷⁷⁵ The province contains oil and gas fields, including the Al-Suwaidiyah fields and the Jibseh fields.⁷⁷⁶ During the reporting period, the SDF controlled almost the entire province of Hasaka. The SDF also controlled the Semalka border crossing with Iraq, which was a crucial link to the outside world for the SDF.⁷⁷⁷ During the reporting period, the sparsely populated area between the city of Ras al-Ayn and the M4 highway along the border with Türkiye belonged to the control area of the transitional government.⁷⁷⁸ Hasaka hosted several military bases of the International Anti-ISIS Coalition.⁷⁷⁹ Reportedly, some Russian troops were also present at Qamishli airbase.⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁶⁶ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

⁷⁶⁷ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁷⁶⁸ Syria Mine Action AoR, *situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 1; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 5-7.

⁷⁶⁹ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁷⁷⁰ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5.

⁷⁷¹ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁷⁷² UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

⁷⁷³ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

⁷⁷⁴ Reuters, *Historic drought, wheat shortage to test Syria's new leadership*, 18 August 2025.

⁷⁷⁵ North Press Agency, *AANES receives over 12,000 tons of cotton from farmers in NE Syria*, 13 October 2025; CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 20.

⁷⁷⁶ The Syrian Observer, *Oil fields transferred from SDF to Syrian state control*, 14 March 2025.

⁷⁷⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria, Kurds trade truce breach claims as integration push stalls*, 13 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *What lies behind the Syrian flag raised at the "Semalka" border crossing in SDF-controlled territory?*, 1 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

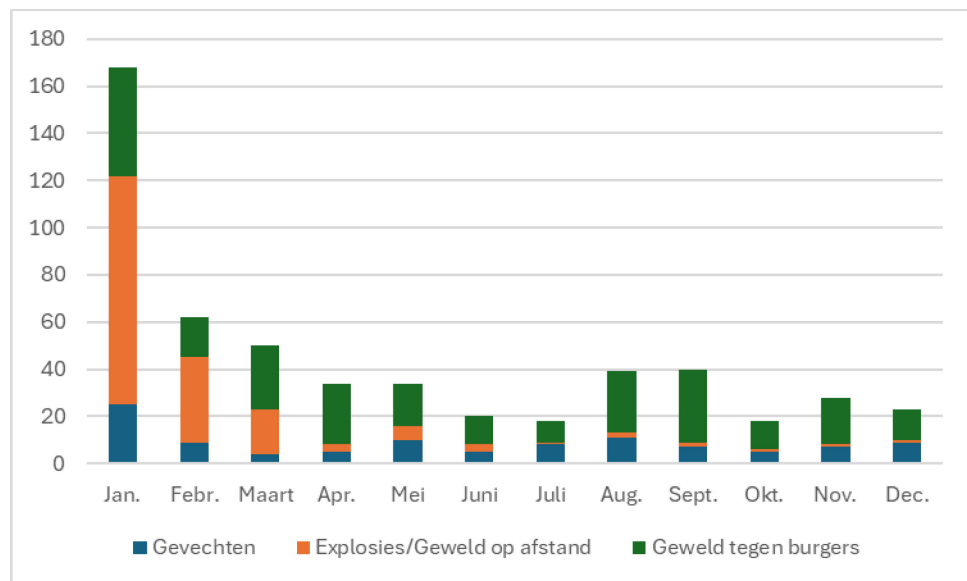
⁷⁷⁸ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

⁷⁷⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Syria monitor reports US withdrawal from two key bases*, 2 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: US troops withdrawal attracts limited discussion in Syrian media*, 3 June 2025; Al Jazeera, *US to reduce military presence in Syria, keeping only one base operational*, 3 June 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Nearly a quarter of U.S. forces withdraw from Syria*, 3 June 2025; De Volkskrant, *Met de heropleving van IS in Syrië rijst de vraag of de regering-Al Sharaa alle problematiek wel aankan*, 28 June 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Washington sends military reinforcements to northeastern Syria*, 28 October 2025.

⁷⁸⁰ Kurdistan24, *Russia expands military presence at Qamishli airport: Report*, 11 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Russia bolsters military presence in Qamishli, signaling strategic shift in Northeast Syria*, 14 August 2025.

2.2.13.1 Conflict-related violence in Hasaka

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 220 violent incidents in Hasaka. In 62 cases these were battles, in 17 cases explosions/remote violence, and in 141 cases violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 18 (July and October 2025) and 40 (September 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of incidents in Hasaka (129), followed by Qamishli (56), Ras al-Ayn (22) and Al-Malikiyyah (13). In many cases, the incidents recorded by ACLED involved the SDF, unidentified armed groups or ISIS. Compared with the preceding reporting period, ACLED data showed a decrease in the number of recorded violent incidents in Hasaka. No clear trend was visible during the reporting period:⁷⁸¹



Graph 16: Violent incidents in Hasaka between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence. This overview is not exhaustive.

During the reporting period, several skirmishes took place between the army and the SDF. For example, on 31 August 2025 the Tal Tamr Military Council stated that it had repelled an infiltration attempt by the army along the frontline near the village of Tal al-Laban. At least two people were injured. In addition, on 4 October 2025 artillery exchanges took place between the army and the SDF near the village of Al-Tawilah. No casualties were reported.⁷⁸²

In collaboration with the International Anti-ISIS Coalition, the SDF carried out operations in Hasaka against ISIS cells.⁷⁸³

⁷⁸¹ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, url, accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Al Hasakeh. Admin2: Al Hasakeh, Al Malikeyyeh, Quamishli, Ras Al Ain.

⁷⁸² BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria-SDF standoff continues ahead of 5 October election*, 4 October 2025; SOHR, *Al-Hasakah. "National army" factions and "Tel Tamr Military Council" trade fire in northern countryside*, 4 October 2025.

⁷⁸³ Rudaw, *SDF captures suspected senior ISIS operative in Hasaka*, 6 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: IS spotlights 'escalation of operations' in Syria*, 8 August 2025.

- 2.2.13.2 Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Hasaka
SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 9 civilian deaths in Hasaka province.⁷⁸⁴
- 2.2.13.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Hasaka
INSO recorded eight incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, killing five people and injuring seven.⁷⁸⁵ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded three incidents, killing one person and injuring two.⁷⁸⁶ In Hasaka, MAG, ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF) and RMC0 were involved in clearing explosive remnants of war.⁷⁸⁷
- 2.2.13.4 Internally displaced persons in Hasaka
On 11 December 2025, UNHCR estimated that 120,257 internally displaced persons in Hasaka were residing in displacement camps and that 255,947 were living outside these camps.⁷⁸⁸ Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in Hasaka during the reporting period. This information does not indicate the extent to which this was related to conflict-related violence.⁷⁸⁹

According to UNHCR, an estimated 3,012 internally displaced persons returned to their places of origin in Hasaka between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁷⁹⁰

- 2.2.14 *Deir ez-Zor*
Deir ez-Zor is located in eastern Syria along the border with Iraq. Deir ez-Zor is bordered by Homs, Raqqa and Hasaka. According to UNOCHA, the province covers an area of almost 25,158 km².⁷⁹¹ IOM estimated the population in December 2025 at 1,367,340 persons, 2% of whom were internally displaced.⁷⁹² Sunni Arabs form a large share of the population in Deir ez-Zor.⁷⁹³ A small Christian community resides in the province as well.⁷⁹⁴ Deir ez-Zor has oil and gas fields, including the Al-Omar and Jafra oil fields and the Conoco gas field.⁷⁹⁵ The Al-Qa'im (Anbar province, Iraq) / Al-Bukamal (Deir ez-Zor province) border crossing is located in this province, on the land route between Damascus and Baghdad.⁷⁹⁶ The Euphrates divides Deir ez-Zor into roughly two equal parts. During the reporting period, the area west of the river was largely under the control of the transitional government. The transitional government also controlled the Al-Qa'im (Anbar province, Iraq) / Al-Bukamal (Deir

⁷⁸⁴ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 8.

⁷⁸⁵ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁶ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁷⁸⁷ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 7-8; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 6-7.

⁷⁸⁸ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁷⁸⁹ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 5. June 2025*, 8 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁷⁹⁰ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 30th October 2025*, 30 October 2025.

⁷⁹¹ UNOCHA, *Home; Datasets; Syrian Arab Republic – Subnational administrative boundaries*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

⁷⁹² IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2026, p. 7.

⁷⁹³ The Syrian Observer, *Tartus panicked by number of young victims*, 22 May 2014; Arab News, *At least 10 people dead in Syria as gunmen target civilians in Tartus and Homs*, 31 March 2025; Tesaa World, *Who is Hussam Abdullah Salameh? Get to know the new head of the new head of the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate*, 3 May 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian tribe declares mobilization against SDF in eastern Deir Ezzor after killing of young man*, 11 September 2025; North Press Agency, *Coalition discusses stability, security in Deir ez-Zor with al-Baggara figures*, 19 October 2025.

⁷⁹⁴ North Press Agency, *Disappearance of Deir ez-Zor's Christian community, struggle for return*, 18 May 2025; Deir ez-Zor 24, *In Deir Ezzor, sacred spaces lie in ruins as war leaves religious heritage in tatters*, 16 July 2025.

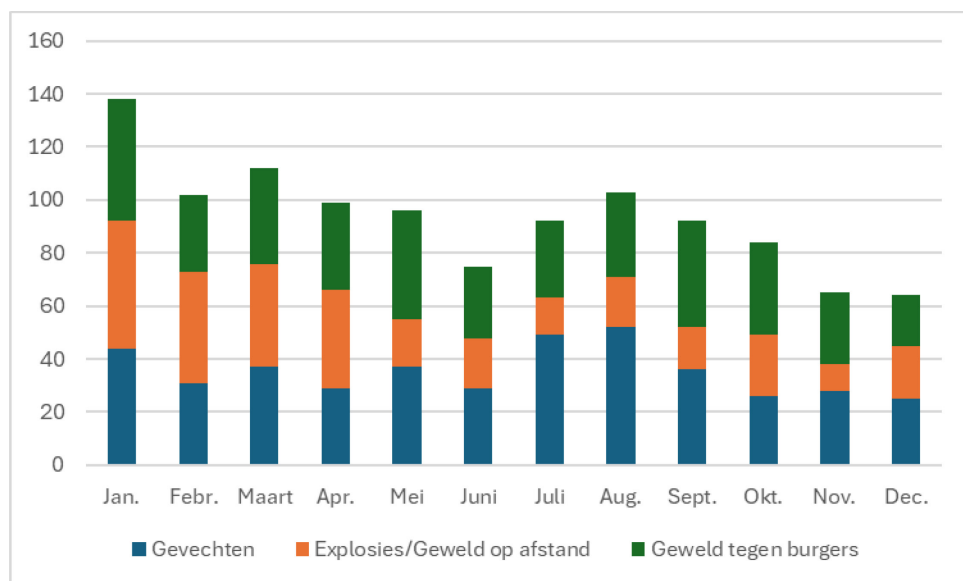
⁷⁹⁵ The Syrian Observer, *Oil fields transferred from SDF to Syrian state control*, 14 March 2025; Asharq Al-Awsat, *Coalition bases in Northeast Syria on high alert amid fears of militia attacks*, 14 June 2025; TWI, *Maintaining momentum in Syria's energy sector*, 19 August 2025.

⁷⁹⁶ Enab Baladi, *Iraq: Military measures to secure the border with Syria*, 30 September 2025.

ez-Zor province) border crossing. During the reporting period, the area east of the Euphrates was largely under SDF control. The left bank of Deir ez-Zor city was controlled by the transitional government during the reporting period, while the SDF controlled the right bank.⁷⁹⁷

2.2.14.1 Conflict-related violence in Deir ez-Zor

Between 1 May 2025 and 31 December 2025, ACLED recorded 671 violent incidents in Deir ez-Zor. In 282 cases these were battles, in 139 cases explosions/remote violence, and in 250 cases violence against civilians. The monthly number of violent incidents fluctuated between 64 (December 2025) and 103 (August 2025). ACLED recorded the highest number of violent incidents in Deir ez-Zor (333), followed by Al-Mayadin (198) and Al-Bukamal (140). In many cases, the incidents recorded by ACLED involved unidentified armed groups, the SDF or ISIS. ACLED data showed a decrease in the number of violent incidents recorded in Deir ez-Zor from September 2025 onwards:⁷⁹⁸



Graph 17: Violent incidents in Deir ez-Zor between 1 January 2025 and 31 December. Source: ACLED.

The following provides an overview of a number of trends and incidents involving violence. This overview is not exhaustive.

⁷⁹⁷ Reuters, *Syria risks rupturing as armed camps face off across the Euphrates*, 19 September 2025; CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 2; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 2. November 2025*, 23 December 2025, p. 8; Liveuamap, *Syria*, 31 December 2025, [url](#).

⁷⁹⁸ ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, [url](#), accessed on 20 January 2026. Selected criteria: Date from: 01/01/2025. Date to: 31/12/2025. Event type: Battles, Explosions/Remote Violence, Violence against civilians. Country: Syrian Arab Republic. Admin1: Deir ez-Zor. Admin2: Abu Kamal, Al Mayadin, Deir ez Zor.

Along the front lines by the Euphrates, multiple skirmishes took place between the army and the SDF. These generally remained limited to artillery exchanges and the use of machine guns and anti-tank grenades.⁷⁹⁹ For example, on 9 August 2025 an SDF fighter was injured during shelling near Al-Jazrat.⁸⁰⁰ Fighting also broke out in Deir ez-Zor city on 14 August 2025, involving machine guns and rockets. Several soldiers and local fishermen were injured.⁸⁰¹ According to the SDF, on 24 August 2025 armed groups allegedly affiliated with the transitional government attacked an SDF post in the village of Al-Junaynah, reportedly using a machine gun and a drone. The SDF stated that five SDF fighters were injured and that there were also casualties among the attackers.⁸⁰² Skirmishes also occurred on 9 October 2025 between government forces and the SDF in the northeast of the province. According to the SDF, one SDF fighter was killed and nine others were injured. Pro-government media also reported that a soldier of the transitional government was killed and another soldier was injured.⁸⁰³ On 25 October 2025, skirmishes took place between the army and the SDF near the villages of Al-Makhan and Al-Kashima; No casualties were reported.⁸⁰⁴ On 18 January 2026, the Syrian army took control of the Al-Omar oil field and the Conoco gas field after the SDF withdrew.⁸⁰⁵

In and around the town of Gharanij, skirmishes took place on 13 August 2025 between local armed men and the SDF. The local armed men reportedly captured four SDF fighters. The SDF stated that it detained twelve wanted individuals with ties to ISIS. On 15 August 2025, the SDF carried out a large-scale operation and succeeded in freeing the four SDF fighters.⁸⁰⁶

The province saw multiple attacks on SDF forces and transitional government forces that may have been carried out by ISIS.⁸⁰⁷ For example, on 8 May 2025 ISIS claimed that it had killed an SDF member near the town of Mayadin who allegedly spied on and interrogated ISIS members.⁸⁰⁸ On 18 May 2025, three police officers were killed in an attack on a police station in Mayadin; this attack was attributed to ISIS.⁸⁰⁹ In June 2025, several attacks targeted oil tanker trucks.⁸¹⁰ The SDF reported on 3 August 2025 that five of its fighters were killed in an ISIS attack on their post in the town of Huwayl on 31 July 2025.⁸¹¹ On 18 August 2025, two ISIS fighters on a motorcycle attacked an asayish post in Al-Sabha; No casualties were reported.⁸¹² On 22 August 2025, an internal security officer at a checkpoint in Mayadin was killed while intercepting two ISIS fighters wearing suicide vests. Both

⁷⁹⁹ Enab Baladi, *Clashes between Syrian ministry of defense forces and the SDF in Deir Ezzor, Eastern Syria*, 14 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Deadly clashes between gunmen, Kurdish fighters in eastern Syria*, 14 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria army, Kurdish SDF militia clash in Deir al-Zour*, 26 October 2025.

⁸⁰⁰ Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

⁸⁰¹ BBC Monitoring, *'Significant escalation' reported in north-east Syria*, 14 August 2025; The New Arab, *Clashes break out in Deir az-Zour between Syria government troops, Kurdish-led SDF*, 14 August 2025.

⁸⁰² The National, *SDF blames armed groups linked to government for attack in eastern Syria*, 25 August 2025; Shafaq News, *SDF repels Damascus-aligned attack in eastern Syria*, 25 August 2025.

⁸⁰³ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian army, Kurdish-led forces clash after ceasefire deal*, 10 October 2025.

⁸⁰⁴ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria army, Kurdish SDF militia clash in Deir al-Zour*, 26 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 21-28, 2025*, 28 October 2025.

⁸⁰⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian army seizes strategic oil, gas fields from SDF in east*, 18 January 2026; Reuters, *Syrian forces seize major oil, gas fields in eastern Syria, security sources say*, 18 January 2026; DW, *Syrian army extends control in north, seizes oil fields*, 18 January 2026.

⁸⁰⁶ The New Arab, *Clashes break out in Deir az-Zour between Syria government troops, Kurdish-led SDF*, 14 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

⁸⁰⁷ Enab Baladi, *Deir Ezzor: Ten attacks by Islamic State in May*, 20 May 2025; UN OSES, *United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen briefing to the Security Council*, 21 May 2025, p. 4; BBC Monitoring, *IS claims killing three SDF fighters in east Syria*, 3 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Syria's north-east hit by suspected IS attacks*, 8 June 2025; SANA, *Deir Ezzor internal security foils ISIS terrorist attack in Mayadin*, 22 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Armed attack targets SDF in Deir Ezzor, eastern Syria*, 20 September 2025.

⁸⁰⁸ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: IS boasts of killing SDF 'spy' in Syria*, 9 May 2025.

⁸⁰⁹ SANA, *Three police personnel martyred in an explosion near al-Mayadeen police station*, 18 May 2025; ICG, *CrisisWatch. Syria: May 2025*, June 2025.

⁸¹⁰ BBC Monitoring, *IS claims attacks on SDF oil tankers in east Syria*, 20 June 2025; SOHR, *New attack. ISIS cells attack oil truck in eastern Deir Ezzor countryside*, 27 June 2025.

⁸¹¹ BBC Monitoring, *Five Kurdish fighters killed in IS attack in east Syria*, 3 August 2025.

⁸¹² Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

ISIS fighters were killed before they could detonate their vests.⁸¹³ On 25 September 2025, water tankers escorted by the SDF were ambushed by ISIS in the village of Al-Bahra. ISIS detonated a landmine and fired an anti-tank grenade. According to an ISIS statement, five SDF fighters were killed.⁸¹⁴ On 26 September 2025, unidentified armed men attacked an SDF headquarters in the village of Al-Briha, killing at least four SDF fighters. On 28 September 2025, ISIS claimed responsibility for this attack.⁸¹⁵

There were also multiple violent incidents involving unidentified armed groups. For example, on 25 July 2025 unidentified armed men shot and killed an internal security officer in Deir ez-Zor's Al-Sina neighbourhood.⁸¹⁶ On 13 August 2025, unidentified armed men in Deir ez-Zor city carried out a failed assassination attempt on a commander of the 66th Division.⁸¹⁷ On 16 October 2025, unidentified armed men detonated a bomb on the road from Deir ez-Zor to Mayadin as a Ministry of Energy bus passed, killing at least four security personnel and injuring at least nine others.⁸¹⁸

2.2.14.2 Civilian casualties from conflict-related violence in Deir ez-Zor
SNHR documented at least 3,666 civilian deaths in 2025, including at least 134 civilian deaths in Deir ez-Zor.⁸¹⁹ The following provides an overview of a number of violence trends and incidents involving civilian casualties during the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

SDF security operations sometimes resulted in civilian casualties. For example, on 3 August 2025 the SDF shot and killed a baker in Darnaj. According to local media, he had returned from Damascus the day before after receiving medical treatment.⁸²⁰ On 9 August 2025 the SDF shot and killed a man who approached a checkpoint near Dhiban.⁸²¹ On 16 August 2025 a man was killed during an SDF raid in Al-Kashkiya.⁸²² On 27 October 2025 tensions arose in Kisreh after a resident was shot dead by the SDF while they were attempting to arrest him.⁸²³ On 3 November 2025, SANA reported that two civilians were killed during an SDF raid in the village of Gharanij.⁸²⁴

On 8 August 2025, four civilians were shot while crossing the Euphrates near Al-Busayrah. The army and the SDF each accused the other of being responsible for this incident.⁸²⁵

⁸¹³ AA, *Syrian security member killed in ISIS suicide attack in eastern Deir ez-Zor province: Report*, 22 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *August 19-26, 2025*, 26 August 2025.

⁸¹⁴ BBC Monitoring, *IS says deadly attack on SDF in Syria was 'revenge' for al-Hol families*, 26 September 2025; BBC Monitoring, *IS steps up deadly attacks against Kurdish-led forces in Syria*, 27 September 2025.

⁸¹⁵ BBC Monitoring, *IS claims killing six SDF fighters in Syria HQ attack*, 28 September 2025.

⁸¹⁶ Syria Weekly, *July 22-29, 2025*, 29 July 2025.

⁸¹⁷ Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

⁸¹⁸ SANA, *Terrorist attack on worker's bus in Deir Ezzor, kills four, wounds nine*, 16 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Bus blast kills oil guards in Syria's Deir al-Zour*, 16 October 2025; Arab News, *Syria bus blast kills five defense ministry personnel: official*, 16 October 2025.

⁸¹⁹ SNHR, *The death of 157 civilians including 20 children and 11 women, and one death due to torture recorded in May 2025*, 1 June 2025; SNHR, *The death of 2818 civilians including 201 children and 194 women, and 17 deaths due to torture recorded in the first half of 2025*, 3 July 2025; SNHR, *The death of 89 civilians including 13 children and 10 women, and one death due to torture recorded July 2025*, 1 August 2025; SNHR, *The death of 91 civilians including eighteen children and five women, and four deaths due to torture recorded in August 2025*, 1 September 2025; SNHR, *The death of 70 civilians including seven children and three women, and three deaths due to torture recorded in September 2025*, 1 October 2025; SNHR, *The death of 66 civilians including nine children and seven women, and three deaths due to torture recorded in October 2025*, 1 November 2025.

⁸²⁰ Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

⁸²¹ Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

⁸²² Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025.

⁸²³ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

⁸²⁴ SANA, *SDF accused of killing two civilians during raid in Deir ez-Zor's Gharanij*, 3 November 2025.

⁸²⁵ Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

There were also some targeted killings of civilians in Deir ez-Zor. The perpetrators and motives often remained unknown.⁸²⁶

- 2.2.14.3 Incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Deir ez-Zor
Explosive remnants of war were left scattered across Deir ez-Zor.⁸²⁷ INSO recorded 37 incidents between 1 May 2025 and 15 August 2025, resulting in 22 deaths and 39 injured people.⁸²⁸ Between 15 August 2025 and 15 October 2025, INSO recorded 13 incidents, resulting in 7 deaths and 14 injured people.⁸²⁹ In Deir ez-Zor, demining was carried out by the army.⁸³⁰ In addition, Humanity & Inclusion (HI), The HALO Trust and the Safe Land Organisation were involved in clearing explosive remnants of war in this province.⁸³¹
- 2.2.14.4 Internally displaced persons in Deir ez-Zor
On 11 December 2025, UNHCR estimated that 47,088 internally displaced persons in Deir ez-Zor were residing in displacement camps and that 72,311 were living outside these camps.⁸³² Information from IOM indicates that displacement occurred in Deir ez-Zor during the reporting period. This information does not indicate the extent to which this was related to conflict-related violence.⁸³³

According to UNHCR, an estimated 84,577 internally displaced persons returned to their places of origin in Deir ez-Zor between 27 November 2024 and 11 December 2025.⁸³⁴

⁸²⁶ Syria Weekly, July 22-29, 2025, 29 July 2025; Syria Weekly, July 29-August 12, 2025, 12 August 2025; Syria Weekly, August 19-26, 2025, 26 August 2025.

⁸²⁷ MSF, *People killed and injured by landmines in Deir ez-Zor as they return home*, 5 June 2025; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian situation report No. 7 (As of 23 June 2025)*, 30 June 2025, p. 3; confidential source, September 2025.

⁸²⁸ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 4.

⁸²⁹ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 4.

⁸³⁰ SANA, *Syrian Arab Army continues demining operations in Deir ez-Zor*, 5 August 2025.

⁸³¹ Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 4 (May 1 – August 15, 2025)*, 21 August 2025, p. 5; Syria Mine Action AoR, *Situation update No. 5 (August 15 – October 15, 2025)*, 15 October 2025, p. 6 and 8.

⁸³² UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

⁸³³ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 4. May 2025*, 12 June 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 7. August 2025*, 12 September 2025; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 5.

⁸³⁴ UNHCR, *Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview. As of 11th December 2025*, 11 December 2025.

3 Human rights situation

This chapter examines the human rights situation in Syria since the COI Report of May 2025.

3.1 Position of specific groups

3.1.1 *Religious and ethnic groups*

The religious and ethnic composition of the Syrian population is diverse. The largest religious group consists of Sunni Muslims. According to some estimates, Sunnis make up between 70 and 75 percent of the population. Smaller religious groups include Alawites, Twelver Shiites, Ismailis, Christians, Druze and Yazidis.⁸³⁵ Arabs constitute the largest ethnic group. Estimates from the recent past placed them at more than 90 percent of the population.⁸³⁶ Smaller ethnic groups include Kurds, Turkmen, Armenians and Circassians.⁸³⁷

Following the takeover of power, President Al-Sharaa presented a vision of an inclusive society in a united Syria. On various occasions, he promised to protect Syria's ethnic and religious groups.⁸³⁸ Partly as a result of the escalation of violence in the coastal region in early March 2025 (see paragraph 3.3.5.2 of the COI Report on Syria of May 2025) and the escalations of violence in Jaramana and Ashrafiyet Sahnaya in late April 2025/early May 2025 (see paragraph 3.3.2.8 of the COI report on Syria of May 2025), a number of population groups began to lose confidence in the transitional government's inclusive agenda. There were also population groups, or parts thereof, that had had no confidence in it from the outset.⁸³⁹ According to a research carried out by the Syrian organisation Etana in mid-May 2025, 70% of respondents belonging to non-Sunni communities stated that they felt unsafe.⁸⁴⁰ At the same time, calls for greater autonomy by the Druze in Suweida and the Kurds in Northeast Syria grew louder.⁸⁴¹

Following the escalation of violence in Suweida in mid-July 2025 (see paragraph 2.2.5.1), President Al-Sharaa reiterated that protecting the rights and freedoms of Syria's various population groups was one of his priorities.⁸⁴² The suicide attack on the church in Damascus in June 2025 (see paragraph 2.2.1.2), the escalation of violence in Suweida in mid-July 2025, and violent incidents elsewhere in Syria (see paragraph 2.2) further undermined confidence in the transitional government

⁸³⁵ Geographical, *Exploring Syria's religious landscape*, 12 December 2024; DW, *Syria's ethnic and religious groups explained*, 18 December 2024; North Press Agency, *Yazidis in Syria struggle for survival amid rapid changes*, 21 December 2024; PBS News, *Syria's minority sects concerned new government won't protect them*, 21 February 2025.

⁸³⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Syria*, January 2013, p. 8.

⁸³⁷ WorldAtlas, *The largest ethnic groups in Syria*, 9 August 2024; Geographical, *Exploring Syria's religious landscape*, 12 December 2024; DW, *Syria's ethnic and religious groups explained*, 18 December 2024; New Lines Magazine, *In Homs, revenge is the only law left standing*, 25 November 2025; SANA, *Circassians in Syria: a deep-rooted identity and cultural diversity*, 27 December 2025.

⁸³⁸ The Guardian, *Clashes continue in Sweida after Syrian presidency's ceasefire declaration*, 20 July 2025.

⁸³⁹ The Century Foundation, *A Catch-22 of suspicion imperils Syria's transition to democracy*, 27 October 2025; ICG, *Restoring security in post-Assad Syria: Lessons from the coast and Suweida*, 26 November 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

⁸⁴⁰ Etana, *Survey: Public opinion on Syria's transition*, 17 June 2025.

⁸⁴¹ Confidential source, August 2025.

⁸⁴² France 24, *Syria's al-Sharaa vows to protect Druze minority's rights following deadly sectarian violence*, 17 July 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

among many population groups, including Alawites, Twelver Shiites, Ismailis, Christians and Druze.⁸⁴³

Despite President Al-Sharaa's emphasis on the rights and freedoms of different population groups, individuals with extremist views continued to express opposing sentiments. These individuals were found both within the transitional government's support base and outside it, such as within ISIS.⁸⁴⁴ Their views appeared both on social media and in the public sphere, for example through posters and flyers.⁸⁴⁵ There were multiple reports of Sunni extremist groups carrying out attacks against certain population groups. One such group, *Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah*, claimed attacks on supporters of the previous regime, Alawites, Druze and Ismailis in several provinces.⁸⁴⁶ Non-Sunni communities feared that the transitional government was unable or unwilling to protect them from Islamic hardliners, who often regarded them as heretics.⁸⁴⁷ Representatives of several non-Sunni communities considered, for example, that the transitional government was doing too little to counter incitement in mosques and hostile rhetoric on social media.⁸⁴⁸

President Al-Sharaa met with leading figures from various population groups. Not all population groups had clear leaders who could engage with the transitional government on their behalf, such as the Alawites and Twelver Shiites.⁸⁴⁹ Non-Sunni Arab population groups were underrepresented in the highest political and administrative positions relative to their demographic share of the population as a whole. In practice, state institutions were controlled mainly by Sunni Arabs. President Al-Sharaa appointed an Alawite, a Christian, a Druze and a Kurd to the transitional government.⁸⁵⁰ In parliament, Muslims held 118 seats, distributed among 112 Sunnis, 3 Alawites and 3 Ismailis. One seat was held by a Christian. The Druze were not represented.⁸⁵¹ In terms of ethnic distribution, Arabs held 111 seats, followed by Kurds and Turkmen with four seats each.⁸⁵² Some of the above-mentioned religious and ethnic groups are discussed below.

3.1.1.1 Alawites

Alawites mainly live in the coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartous, and in smaller areas in and near the cities of Homs, Hama and Damascus.⁸⁵³ After the Sunnis, Alawites constitute the largest religious group in Syria.⁸⁵⁴ Estimates of the size of the Alawite population range from 10 to 15 percent of the Syrian population.⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁴³ Kurdistan24, *Syria sees surge in sectarian killings as 26 die in 12 assassinations over four days*, 5 June 2025; The New York Times, *Firing squads and forced death leaps: A tipping point in Syria*, 22 October 2025; confidential source, July 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

⁸⁴⁴ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

⁸⁴⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Islamists share video threatening Syrian Alawites, Christians*, 15 October 2025.

⁸⁴⁶ BBC Monitoring, *Syria jihadist group brags of killing 'online monitors'*, 9 May 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Shadowy Syria jihadist group names media officials, affiliated outlets*, 3 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian jihadist group resurfaces after month-long absence*, 25 August 2025.

⁸⁴⁷ The New York Times, *Firing squads and forced death leaps: A tipping point in Syria*, 22 October 2025.

⁸⁴⁸ Confidential source, September 2025, confidential source, October 2025.

⁸⁴⁹ Enab Baladi, *Alawite council in Syria rejects coastal fact-finding committee*, 26 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Alawite leader rejects committee findings on Syrian coastal killings*, 26 July 2025; Enab Baladi, *Supreme Alawite council rejects Syria's parliamentary elections*, 18 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, November 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

⁸⁵⁰ Syria Weekly, *Assessing Syria's transitional government*, 30 March 2025.

⁸⁵¹ UN OSES, *United Nations deputy special envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi briefing to the security council*, 22 October 2025, p. 2.

⁸⁵² BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria elects few women and minorities to new parliament*, 7 October 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Syria's new parliament: Debates about representation*, 14 October 2025; UN OSES, *United Nations deputy special envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi briefing to the security council*, 22 October 2025, p. 2.

⁸⁵³ New Lines Magazine, *The existential challenge for Syria's Alawites*, 12 May 2025.

⁸⁵⁴ Reuters, *What's driving killings in Syria and who are the Alawites?*, 10 March 2025.

⁸⁵⁵ France 24, *In Syria's Alawite area, joy at Assad fall but fear of Islamism*, 16 December 2024; DW, *Syria's ethnic and religious groups explained*, 18 December 2024; DW, *Syria's Alawite community: Once feared, now living in fear?*, 28 December 2024; Reuters, *Why Syria's sectarian mix poses a dilemma for its new rulers*, 16 July 2025; UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January – March 2025 (A/HRC/59/CRP.4)*, 11 August 2025, p. 8; CIA, *The world factbook – People and society – Ethnic groups*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

Part of the Alawite community regards its faith as an offshoot of Shiite Islam.⁸⁵⁶ A small part of the Alawite population belongs to the Murshidis, who emerged in the twentieth century.⁸⁵⁷ In the eyes of some other Islamic groups, Alawites appear secular, in part because Alawite women generally do not wear headscarves.⁸⁵⁸

In the control area of the transitional government, Alawites were underrepresented in the highest political and administrative positions.⁸⁵⁹ During the previous regime, the main administrative and military positions were generally held by Alawites – the population group to which the Assad family belonged – from the provinces of Tartous and Latakia. Following the takeover of power, Alawites were subjected to discrimination and acts of retaliation.⁸⁶⁰ Incidents occurred that had a possible anti-Alawite dimension. It was not always clear, however, whether the violence targeted certain individuals because they were Alawite, because they were associated with the previous regime due to their background, because the incident was criminal in nature, or because a personal feud was involved. In most cases, the perpetrators remained unidentified.⁸⁶¹

The largest escalation of violence involving many Alawite victims took place between 6 and 10 March 2025 in, for example, the Alawite neighbourhoods of the cities of Tartous, Baniyas, Jableh and Latakia in the coastal region, and in villages in Hama province (see paragraphs 3.3.4.2 and 3.3.5.2 of the COI Report on Syria of May 2025).⁸⁶²

Following the outbreak of violence in March 2025, tens of thousands of Alawites moved to villages in the coastal provinces or to Lebanon. This movement continued during the reporting period.⁸⁶³ In rural Tartous, many Alawites kept a very low profile out of fear.⁸⁶⁴ A June 2025 Etana survey found that 79% of respondents of Alawite background in the control area of the transitional government felt unsafe.⁸⁶⁵ Most Syrians who fled to Lebanon during the reporting period were Alawites.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁵⁶ European Parliament, *Understanding the branches of Islam: Shia Islam*, January 2016, p. 7-8; The Conversation, *Why Syria's reconstruction may depend on the fate of its minorities*, 18 December 2024.

⁸⁵⁷ CSW, *Three members of religious minority community shot and killed in Homs*, 23 April 2025; X.com, *Qalaat Al Mudiq*, 27 June 2025, [url](#); CSW, *Another member of the Al-Murshidi community killed in Homs*, 20 June 2025; SOHR, *After "Shahshbo" threats. Rise in sectarian assassinations against Alawite and Murshidi community in Hama*, 7 July 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁸⁵⁸ BBC, *The 'secretive sect' in charge of Syria*, 17 May 2012; confidential source September 2025.

⁸⁵⁹ Syria Weekly, *Assessing Syria's transitional government*, 30 March 2025; UN OSES, *United Nations deputy special envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi briefing to the security council*, 22 October 2025, p. 2.

⁸⁶⁰ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Regime change and minority risks: Syrian Alawites after Assad*, 21 July 2025.

⁸⁶¹ DW, *Kidnapped, abused: Reports of missing Alawite women in Syria*, 7 November 2025.

⁸⁶² The Conversation, *Understanding the violence against Alawites and Druze in Syria after Assad*, 23 July 2025.

⁸⁶³ SOHR, *Damascus. Humiliating practices targets Alawite people in Al-Worod neighbourhood*, 11 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source; confidential source, October 2025.

⁸⁶⁴ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁸⁶⁵ Etana, *Survey: Public opinion on Syria's transition*, 17 June 2025.

⁸⁶⁶ The New Humanitarian, *Syrian Alawites flee to Lebanon, with little aid to meet them*, 4 June 2025.

CoI investigators stated in August 2025 that, while drafting their report on the violence in the coastal region, they continued to receive reports of Alawites being murdered.⁸⁶⁷ There were almost weekly reports of civilians of Alawite origin being targeted in assassination attempts involving light weapons.⁸⁶⁸ There were also multiple reports of Murshidis in Hama and Homs becoming victims of murder.⁸⁶⁹ For example, on 7 July 2025, two unidentified armed men on a motorcycle shot and killed a Murshidi man in the village of Aynab in Hama.⁸⁷⁰ On the same day, the body of a Murshidi man was found in the village of Nour Shatha.⁸⁷¹ Furthermore, on 27 September 2025 unidentified armed men shot and killed a Murshidi man in the Tasnin area in Homs.⁸⁷²

There were also multiple reports of Alawite civilians falling victim to disappearance or abduction. They could become victims of disappearance or abduction at different moments, for example on their way to university or to work.⁸⁷³ In some cases, their bodies were later found, suggesting that they had been victims of revenge killings.⁸⁷⁴ In other cases, the abductors demanded ransom.⁸⁷⁵

There were persistent reports of disappearances and abductions of Alawite women and girls.⁸⁷⁶ According to various sources, these cases could involve forced marriage, ransom, extortion, forced prostitution or revenge.⁸⁷⁷ According to one source, there was also trafficking in women between Syria and Lebanon.⁸⁷⁸ Reuters reported in June 2025 that, since the takeover of power, at least 33 Alawite women and girls aged between 16 and 39 had been abducted or had gone missing. These 33 women and girls came from the provinces of Tartous, Latakia and Hama.⁸⁷⁹ Amnesty International reported in July 2025 that, since February 2025, at least 36 Alawite women and girls aged between 3 and 40 had been abducted. These 36 women and girls came from the provinces of Tartous, Latakia, Homs and Hama.⁸⁸⁰

⁸⁶⁷ UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January – March 2025* (A/HRC/59/CRP.4), 11 August 2025, p. 20.

⁸⁶⁸ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 21*, 12 May 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025; France 24, *Five Alawites found dead after being detained by Syrian security forces, war monitor says*, 4 June 2025; This is Beirut, *Syria monitor says 13 Alawites killed by security forces*, 4 June 2025; SOHR, *Sectarian violence. Alawite young man killed in an attack on Al-Shaheib village in Al-Salamiyah*, 5 July 2025; SOHR, *After "Shahshbo" threats. Rise in sectarian assassinations against Alawite and Murshidi community in Hama*, 7 July 2025; SOHR, *Security vacuum. Young man and woman of Alawite community shot dead in Rif Dimashq*, 19 July 2025; SOHR, *Following assassination of two Alawite civilians. Tension grows in western Homs and angry protestors condemn increasing security chaos*, 24 July 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 36*, 18 August 2025; SOHR, *New assassination. Civilian shot dead in Baniyas*, 28 August 2025; The National, *Four Alawite villagers killed as Syria seeks greater overseas support for stability*, 29 September 2025; SOHR, *After having been humiliated. Alawite civilian killed at Al-Mashrafah checkpoint*, 30 September 2025; STJ, *Left to their fate: Grave violations against Alawites following the coastal massacres*, October 2025; SOHR, *New assassination. Agricultural engineering academic killed in Tartus countryside*, 1 October 2025; CSW, *Alawite schoolteacher killed amid wave of sectarian attacks*, 27 October 2025; BBC, *'Killed because they are Alawites': Fear among Syria's minorities after the fall of Assad*, 10 November 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding Security in New Syria: Year 2, Week 3*, 29 December 2025; Syria Weekly, *Conflict & Security: December 9-30, 2025*, 30 December 2025; SOHR, *New assassination. Masked men shoot young man dead in front of his family in Hama countryside*, 13 January 2026; SOHR, *New assassination. Alawite young man killed and another injured in Homs*, 15 January 2026.

⁸⁶⁹ CSW, *Another member of the Al-Murshidi community killed in Homs*, 20 June 2025; SOHR, *After "Shahshbo" threats. Rise in sectarian assassinations against Alawite and Murshidi community in Hama*, 7 July 2025; confidential source.

⁸⁷⁰ Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025.

⁸⁷¹ Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025.

⁸⁷² Syria Weekly, *September 23-29, 2025*, 30 September 2025.

⁸⁷³ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 29*, 1 July 2025.

⁸⁷⁴ UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January – March 2025* (A/HRC/59/CRP.4), 11 August 2025, p. 20; confidential source, September 2025.

⁸⁷⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian interior ministry denies arrest of prominent Syrian businessman*, 20 September 2025.

⁸⁷⁶ France 24, *Syria's Alawite women face growing threats*, 4 June 2025; The National, *'Get the money fast if you want her alive': Syria's Alawite women and girls disappear in abductions*, 1 July 2025; UN OHCHR, *Syria: UN experts alarmed by targeted abductions and disappearances of Alawite women and girls*, 23 July 2025; New Lines Magazine, *A rape case highlights sexual violence in Syria*, 18 September 2025; SOHR, *A few days after kidnapping child "Mohamed Hayder". Girl survives kidnapping attempt in Latakia*, 12 October 2025.

⁸⁷⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria reveals findings of probe into missing women on coast*, 2 November 2025.

⁸⁷⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁸⁷⁹ Reuters, *'She's not coming back': Alawite women snatched from streets of Syria*, 30 June 2025.

⁸⁸⁰ Amnesty International, *Syria: Authorities must investigate abductions of Alawite women and girls*, 28 July 2025.

Furthermore, in August 2025 UN investigators reported the abduction of 38 Alawite women and girls in various provinces between March and July 2025.⁸⁸¹ Due to the continued reports of abductions, many Alawites felt that their community was under attack.⁸⁸² This led to many Alawite women and girls staying at home after sunset.⁸⁸³ Many female Alawite pupils and students in Tartous, Latakia and Hama also discontinued their education.⁸⁸⁴ According to one source, more Alawite women began wearing headscarves out of fear of abduction.⁸⁸⁵

On 2 November 2025, the Syrian Ministry of the Interior presented the findings of an investigation into disappearances and abductions of Alawite women and girls. The investigative team had documented 42 cases in the provinces of Latakia, Tartous, Homs and Hama. According to the ministry, 12 cases involved women and girls who had voluntarily run away from home with romantic partners, 9 involved disappearances lasting less than 48 hours, 6 involved escape from domestic violence, 6 involved false claims on social media, 4 involved extortion or forced prostitution, 4 involved criminal offences, and 1 involved abduction.⁸⁸⁶ According to various sources, this government report was primarily intended to refute claims regarding the alleged abductions and was far from objective.⁸⁸⁷

The CoI investigators stated that they continued to receive reports of property being seized from those who had fled the violence in March 2025.⁸⁸⁸ In addition to these property seizures, Alawites were confronted with evictions, including in Damascus and Homs.⁸⁸⁹ In some cases, members of the internal security forces moved into the vacated homes with their families.⁸⁹⁰

According to one source, Alawites experienced daily problems at checkpoints in Tartous. Incidents reportedly occurred in which Alawites were humiliated.⁸⁹¹ There were also several reports of incidents in which Alawites were victims of ill-treatment or sexual violence. For example, on 9 September 2025, three men in the uniforms of the internal security forces reportedly raped a woman of Alawite origin near the village of Hawrat Ammourin in Hama province.⁸⁹² According to SOHR, on 6 November 2025 an Alawite shopkeeper in Al-Dimas in Rural Damascus province was assaulted by an unidentified group of armed men, after which his shop was looted.⁸⁹³

⁸⁸¹ UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January – March 2025* (A/HRC/59/CRP.4), 11 August 2025.

⁸⁸² Confidential source, September 2025.

⁸⁸³ Qantara, *Why women in Syria are disappearing*, 6 June 2025.

⁸⁸⁴ The National, *'Get the money fast if you want her alive': Syria's Alawite women and girls disappear in abductions*, 1 July 2025.

⁸⁸⁵ Confidential source, December 2025.

⁸⁸⁶ SANA, *Interior ministry says online claims of abductions in coast region "largely false"*, 2 November 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria reveals findings of probe into missing women on coast*, 2 November 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Ministry of Interior unveils findings on alleged kidnapping cases*, 3 November 2025.

⁸⁸⁷ Arab News, *Syrian probe debunks kidnap allegations*, 2 November 2025; Syrian Feminist Lobby, *Joint statement on the report issued by the Ministry of Interior's committee regarding the crimes of abduction*, 2 November 2025; Syriac Press, *Wave of kidnappings targets Christians and Alawites across Syria amid government denial*, 4 November 2025; CSI, *Syrian government's denial of Alawite women abductions contradicts mounting international evidence*, 12 November 2025.

⁸⁸⁸ UN HRC, *Violations against civilians in Coastal and Western Central Syria in January – March 2025* (A/HRC/59/CRP.4), 11 August 2025, p. 20.

⁸⁸⁹ Confidential source, September 2025, confidential source, October 2025.

⁸⁹⁰ Reuters, *In Syrian military housing, former rebels take the homes of Assad's officers*, 31 December 2024; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

⁸⁹¹ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁸⁹² New Lines Magazine, *A rape case highlights sexual violence in Syria*, 18 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁸⁹³ SOHR, *Sectarian driven attack. Unidentified gunmen attack Alawite civilian and sabotage and loot his shop in Rif Dimashq*, 6 November 2025.

Some Alawite shrines were attacked.⁸⁹⁴ For example, on 21 October 2025 unidentified armed men threw a grenade into an Alawite shrine in the village of Mawrid in Tartous province.⁸⁹⁵

There were online and offline expressions of hate speech against Alawites. Alawites were referred to as Nusayris, unbelievers and apostates.⁸⁹⁶

Among Alawites, alongside the generally shared sense of insecurity and lack of trust in the transitional government, there was also a strong sense of marginalisation. Following the takeover of power, thousands of Alawites lost their jobs in the security sector, government institutions and the business sector.⁸⁹⁷ Although the mass dismissals in December 2024 and January 2025 affected all population groups, various sources indicated that Alawites were disproportionately affected.⁸⁹⁸ This led to major discontent among Alawites in the provinces of Latakia and Tartous. During the reporting period, dismissals of Alawites continued on a large scale.⁸⁹⁹ Poverty increased among many Alawites. Due to the loss of their sources of income, they were barely able to meet their basic needs.⁹⁰⁰

In some government departments, former civil servants of Alawite origin were rehired because insufficient knowledge and experience remained.⁹⁰¹ In Homs, not all civil servants wished to return because they felt marginalised. In Tartous, several Alawite civil servants from the previous regime had decided to integrate into the new structures, but some were displeased at having to sign a document agreeing to be deployed anywhere in the country.⁹⁰²

3.1.1.2 Twelver Shiites

Twelver Shiites mainly live in and near the cities of Damascus and Homs. In Aleppo and Idlib, there are several villages inhabited by Shiite communities, such as the villages of Nubl and Al-Zahra in Aleppo province.⁹⁰³ It was not known how many Twelver Shiites were present in Syria during the reporting period, but according to various sources they constituted a numerically small population group.⁹⁰⁴ Estimates from the recent past assumed less than one percent of the population. According to various sources, most Shiites fled to Lebanon after the takeover of power.⁹⁰⁵

⁸⁹⁴ SOHR, *Ongoing violations. Armed masked group storms Alawite mosque in Al-Nuzhah neighborhood in Homs city*, 27 September 2025.

⁸⁹⁵ SOHR, *Ongoing violations. Unidentified individuals throw bombs inside shrine in Tartus countryside*, 21 October 2025; X.com, *Qalaat Al Mudiq*, 22 October 2025, [url](#); Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025.

⁸⁹⁶ SOHR, *Serious escalation. Young man and little girl killed in armed attack in western Hama and voice recording incites ethnic hatred*, 5 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Islamists share video threatening Syrian Alawites, Christians*, 15 October 2025; The New Arab, *Syrians condemn hate-inciting slogans in pro-government rallies*, 29 November 2025.

⁸⁹⁷ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁸⁹⁸ Le Monde, *In Syria, a climate of purge in the public sector*, 21 February 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁸⁹⁹ SOHR, *Causing widespread discontent. 78 employees dismissed from municipality of Latakia*, 2 October 2025; SOHR, *Amid dreadful economic and living conditions. 234 employees dismissed in Latakia and Jabblah*, 9 October 2025; SOHR, *Ongoing dismissal decisions. 600 employees dismissed in the Syrian coast areas*, 12 October 2025.

⁹⁰⁰ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, October 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

⁹⁰¹ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁰² Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

⁹⁰³ Enab Baladi, *Return of limited number of residents to Nubl and Zahra in Aleppo*, 5 December 2024; SOHR, *Having been kidnapped 13 days ago. Young man found dead in eastern Aleppo*, 24 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 16-23, 2025*, 23 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁰⁴ This Week in Northern Syria, *What the HTS governance legacy in Idlib says about today*, 2 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁰⁵ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source.

Within the small Twelver Shiite community, the situation was tense, because other Syrians often associated Shiites with Iran and Hezbollah.⁹⁰⁶ There were expressions of hate speech against Shiites on social media and in some Sunni mosques.⁹⁰⁷

The Sayyida Zeinab shrine in Rural Damascus was the most important Shiite shrine in Syria.⁹⁰⁸ According to the transitional government, the ISIS cell responsible for the suicide attack on a church in Damascus on 22 June 2025 (see paragraph 2.2.1.2) had also planned to attack this shrine.⁹⁰⁹ As a precaution, the Shiite community held their activities in connection with *Muharram*⁹¹⁰ in June–July 2025 and *Ashura*⁹¹¹ on 5 July 2025 mainly inside the *husseiniyas*⁹¹² rather than in the streets.⁹¹³

Several incidents occurred that had a possible anti-Shiite dimension. In a number of these incidents, Shiite civilians were killed as a result of violence. It was not always clear, however, whether this violence targeted certain individuals because they were Shiite, because they were former supporters of the previous regime, because the incidents were criminal in nature, or because they were related to a personal feud. In most cases, the perpetrators remained unidentified.⁹¹⁴ For example, on 9 July 2025 unidentified armed men killed a Shiite sheikh in his place of residence, Al-Mazra'a, in Homs province.⁹¹⁵ According to SOHR, on 25 July 2025 unidentified armed men in Rural Damascus province shot and killed a Shiite taxi driver. Furthermore, according to SOHR, on 31 July 2025 unidentified armed men in Rural Damascus province beat to death a Shiite taxi driver from Sayyida Zeinab.⁹¹⁶ On 21 September 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed a Shiite man near the village of Al-Zahra in Aleppo province. Two others were injured.⁹¹⁷ On 24 October 2025, the internal security forces arrested two former opposition fighters in the village of Banayun on suspicion of this murder.⁹¹⁸ Furthermore, on 28 September 2025 unidentified armed men shot and killed a Shiite man in his home in the Ghowr area of Homs province.⁹¹⁹

There were also multiple reports of Shiites becoming victims of disappearance or abduction. According to SOHR, on 11 August 2025 unidentified armed men abducted a Shiite truck driver from the village of Nubl in Aleppo province. On 24 August 2025, his body was found near Deir Hafer in Aleppo province.⁹²⁰ According to one source, unidentified armed men abducted a Shiite man in Sayyida Zeinab in August 2025. He was reportedly assaulted and then shot dead.⁹²¹ Furthermore, on 28 September 2025 unidentified armed men abducted a Shiite man in the Al-Zahra neighbourhood of Homs. His body was found the next day.⁹²² According to SOHR, an unidentified

⁹⁰⁶ The Independent, *In Syria, a Shiite shrine and community navigate a changed landscape*, 21 May 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁰⁷ SOHR, *Sectarian strife in Rif Dimashq. Imam leads campaign against Shiite community, amid growing tension in Sayeda Zeinab*, 10 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁰⁸ The Independent, *In Syria, a Shiite shrine and community navigate a changed landscape*, 21 May 2025.

⁹⁰⁹ The Independent, *Shiite neighborhoods in Damascus commemorate Ashoura quietly after Assad's ouster*, 6 July 2025.

⁹¹⁰ The first month of the Islamic calendar.

⁹¹¹ This is observed on the tenth day of the month of Muharram. On this day, Shiites mark the end of the ten-day mourning period commemorating the death of Imam Hussein.

⁹¹² A husseiniya is a building where Shiites hold commemorative ceremonies.

⁹¹³ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian authorities deny issuing ban on Shia Muharram gatherings*, 28 June 2025.

⁹¹⁴ SOHR, *New assassination. Shiite civilian shot dead in Homs city*, 1 January 2026.

⁹¹⁵ CSW, *Prominent Shi'a cleric assassinated in Homs*, 10 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Tensions brewing in Syria following killing of Shia cleric*, 10 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Hezbollah condemns killing of prominent Shia cleric in Syria*, 13 July 2025.

⁹¹⁶ SOHR, *Security chaos. Shia taxi driver shot dead in Rif Dimashq*, 25 July 2025.

⁹¹⁷ Syria Weekly, *September 16-23, 2025*, 23 September 2025.

⁹¹⁸ Syria Weekly, *October 21-28, 2025*, 28 October 2025.

⁹¹⁹ Syria Weekly, *September 23-29, 2025*, 30 September 2025.

⁹²⁰ SOHR, *Having been kidnapped 13 days ago. Young man found dead in eastern Aleppo*, 24 August 2025.

⁹²¹ Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

⁹²² Syria Weekly, *September 23-29, 2025*, 30 September 2025.

armed group abducted a Shiite man in Latakia in late September 2025.⁹²³ According to another source, his abductors demanded 250,000 dollars. On 3 October 2025, his family reportedly received a video showing the man being beheaded.⁹²⁴

3.1.1.3 Ismailis

Ismailis live mainly in the city of Salamiyah in the province of Hama.⁹²⁵ Smaller communities live in the town of Masyaf in the west of the province of Hama, in the city of Hama and in the town of Qadmus in Tartous province.⁹²⁶ Ismailism is an esoteric movement within Shiism. The Nizari branch of Ismailism is the only Shiite branch with an imam as spiritual leader: Aga Khan V.⁹²⁷ It is not known how many Ismailis were present in Syria during the reporting period. An estimate from 2017 put the figure at 200,000 persons.⁹²⁸

The Ismaili community was well organised. It had coherent leadership, which enabled it to negotiate with the transitional government at a high level. The Ismaili community distanced itself from the previous regime and adopted a neutral position towards the transitional government.⁹²⁹ It also had connections with the international development organisation the Aga Khan Foundation, which according to its website carried out humanitarian aid programmes in thirteen Syrian provinces.⁹³⁰ In addition, the Ismaili community was represented in parliament by three delegates.⁹³¹

According to one source, some Ismailis in Salamiyah had been subjected to evictions.⁹³²

3.1.1.4 Christians

Christians live mainly in and around the major cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Latakia, and in SDF-controlled areas in Hasaka province.⁹³³ It is not known how many Christians were present in Syria during the reporting period. Most estimates put the number at around 300,000 people.⁹³⁴

There were various Christian denominations in Syria. Most Syrian Christians belonged to one of the traditional Orthodox or Catholic churches. There were two patriarchs. Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II was the head of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, and Patriarch John X was the head of the Greek Orthodox

⁹²³ SOHR, *After being kidnapped. Shiite young man killed in Latakia*, 3 October 2025.

⁹²⁴ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Weeks 42-43*, 7 October 2025.

⁹²⁵ New Lines Magazine, *In Syria's fractured landscape, Salamiyah stands apart*, 29 August 2025.

⁹²⁶ Syria Revisited, *The Ismaili mediators of Qadmus*, 18 March 2025.

⁹²⁷ The Indian Express, *Who was the Aga Khan IV? And who are the Nizari Ismailis, the community he led?*, 6 February 2025; Syria Direct, *How Syria's Ismaili community keeps a fragile peace*, 2 October 2025.

⁹²⁸ WPR, *Ismaili population by country 2026*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

⁹²⁹ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹³⁰ New Lines Magazine, *In Syria's fractured landscape, Salamiyah stands apart*, 29 August 2025; SANA, *Syria and Aga Khan Foundation sign MoU to strengthen disaster response*, 19 October 2025; This Week in Northern Syria, *What the HTS governance legacy in Idlib says about today*, 2 December 2025; Aga Khan Foundation, *Syria*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

⁹³¹ UN OSES, *United Nations deputy special envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi briefing to the security council*, 22 October 2025, p. 2.

⁹³² Confidential source, September 2025.

⁹³³ SANA, *Director of Political Affairs in Al-Hasakah, receives representatives of the Christian community*, 19 June 2025; The New York Times, *Syria chooses a parliament of revolutionaries*, 6 October 2025.

⁹³⁴ The Syrian Observer, *Report: Number of Christians in Syria dropped from 1.5 million to 300,000*, 18 November 2022; Al-Monitor, *Fear among Syrian Christians after deadly attacks*, 10 March 2025; The Syrian Observer, *The exodus of Syrian Christians: Between dissolution and endurance*, 17 November 2025; Open Doors, *Syria*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026; confidential source, September 2025.

Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East.⁹³⁵ There were also smaller groups of Evangelicals, Baptists and Anglicans.⁹³⁶

In Syria, the Christian community was well organised. There were several meetings between Christian religious leaders and representatives of the transitional government, including between President Al-Sharaa and the two patriarchs.⁹³⁷ During the funeral of the victims of the attack on the Mar Elias Church in Damascus on 24 June 2025, Patriarch John X criticised the transitional government.⁹³⁸ In August 2025, he reconciled with President Al-Sharaa.⁹³⁹

In the control area of the transitional government, some Christians were represented in the highest political and administrative positions. For example, a woman of Christian origin served in the transitional government.⁹⁴⁰ In addition, a Christian from Damascus was a member of the electoral commission (see paragraph 1.2.1.1).⁹⁴¹ There was one Christian in parliament.⁹⁴² In Northeast Syria, Christians were also represented in political and administrative positions. There were several Christian political parties, such as the Syriac Union Party (SUP) and the Assyrian Democratic Party (ADP).⁹⁴³ There were also armed Christian formations affiliated with the SDF, such as the Syriac Military Council and the Assyrian internal security forces (*Sutoro*).⁹⁴⁴

During the reporting period, churches were open and Christians were able to hold their services.⁹⁴⁵ According to one source, following the suicide attack on 22 June 2025 during a church service at the Greek Orthodox Saint Elias Church in the Duweila neighbourhood in eastern Damascus (see paragraph 2.2.1.2), a number of churches suspended activities outside church buildings, such as summer camps and processions, for several weeks as a precaution.⁹⁴⁶ During holidays and in the event of a threat of attack, security forces guarded church buildings and Christian neighbourhoods.⁹⁴⁷ According to one source, there was generally peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in Syria.⁹⁴⁸

⁹³⁵ L24, *Syrian president and patriarch John X meeting emphasizes unity*, 17 August 2025; SANA, *Emergency minister, patriarch Aphrem II discuss strengthening community cooperation*, 21 October 2025; SANA, *President al-Sharaa congratulates Patriarch John X on Christmas and the New Year*, 4 January 2026.

⁹³⁶ Nederlands Dagblad, *'Beter lokale zendelingen ondersteunen dan ze zelf uitzenden'*, 26 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹³⁷ SANA, *Defense minister meets a delegation of Christian clergymen*, 12 May 2025; SANA, *President al-Sharaa meets a delegation of Christian community in Aleppo province*, 28 May 2025; SANA, *President al-Sharaa meets with a delegation of Christian communities during his visit to Daraa*, 7 June 2025; L24, *Syrian president and patriarch John X meeting emphasizes unity*, 17 August 2025; SANA, *Emergency minister, patriarch Aphrem II discuss strengthening community cooperation*, 21 October 2025; SANA, *Information minister visits Patriarch John X Yazigi in Mariamite Damascus Cathedral*, 29 October 2025.

⁹³⁸ Reuters, *Syrian Christian leader chides president over deadly church bombing*, 24 June 2025.

⁹³⁹ L24, *Syrian president and patriarch John X meeting emphasizes unity*, 17 August 2025.

⁹⁴⁰ Le Monde, *Hind Kabawat, the only woman in Syria's transitional government: 'Al-Sharaa has a vision, and he knows he cannot govern alone'*, 2 April 2025.

⁹⁴¹ Syria Weekly, *June 10-17, 2025*, 17 June 2025.

⁹⁴² The New York Times, *Syria chooses a parliament of revolutionaries*, 6 October 2025.

⁹⁴³ Syriac Press, *Assyrian Democratic Party on the SDF and Syrian transitional government agreement: "the failure to mention the Assyrian component in the terms of the agreement is unfortunate and unjustified"*, 13 March 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Assyrian Democratic Party condemns closure of Christian schools by autonomous administration*, 30 October 2025; Syriac Press, *Syriac Union Party co-chair Sanharib Barsom: Syria's entry into the International Coalition against the Islamic State is a positive step toward stability*, 12 November 2025.

⁹⁴⁴ Syriac Press, *SDF marks decade since founding, highlights Syriac Military Council's pivotal role in defense*, 10 October 2025.

⁹⁴⁵ Syria Revisited, *Idlib's Christians between safety and oppression: Interview*, 12 August 2025; SANA, *Inauguration of "Saint Anna" Church in Al-Yaqoubiya village, west of Idlib*, 31 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria media spotlight church reopening in Idlib*, 2 September 2025; SANA, *Al-Ghassaniyah people in Jisr al-Shughur hold first mass after 13 years of displacement*, 28 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁴⁶ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁴⁷ SOHR, *Fears of attacks. Heavy security deployment near churches and Christian neighbourhoods*, 13 July 2025; Syria Revisited, *Idlib's Christians between safety and oppression: Interview*, 12 August 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 36*, 18 August 2025.

⁹⁴⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

During the reporting period, a number of incidents occurred with a possible anti-Christian dimension. A non-exhaustive overview is provided below.

In Christian neighbourhoods of Damascus, Salafist preachers sometimes drove around calling on Christians through loudspeakers to convert to Islam.⁹⁴⁹

On 6 August 2025, the commander of the internal security forces in Tartous stated that, on 14 July 2025, they had arrested three armed men who had allegedly planned to carry out a bombing at the Maronite Saint Elias Church in the village of Al-Khraybat in Tartous province.⁹⁵⁰

According to various sources, in August 2025 officers at a checkpoint in Damascus detained a Christian man after discovering that he was carrying two bottles of alcohol. He was allegedly taken to a detention centre where he was ill-treated and pressured to convert to Islam. He was reportedly released after his relatives, with support from the church, paid USD 10,000.⁹⁵¹

Some Christians were confronted with hate speech and threats on social media and in daily life.⁹⁵² For example, on 20 May 2025 a text was pasted on the wall of the Syriac Maronite church in the city of Tartous calling on Christians to convert to Islam.⁹⁵³ On 6 July 2025, Christians in the city of Safita in Tartous province found leaflets near their churches and shops signed by *Saraya Ansar al-Sunna*. One of the priests in Safita dismissed this as an attempt by loyalists of the previous regime to spread fear.⁹⁵⁴ In addition, Christians were called polytheists in graffiti written during the night of 6 November 2025 on Saint Cyril's Church in the Al-Qassaa neighbourhood of Damascus. In graffiti from 10 November 2025 on an outer wall of Saint Elias Church in the village of Maarat Saidnaya in Rural Damascus, Christians were called unbelievers.⁹⁵⁵

A well-known place where Christians formed a majority was the village of Maaloula in Rural Damascus province.⁹⁵⁶ This was one of the few places where the inhabitants speak Aramaic.⁹⁵⁷ Following the takeover of power, the return of several Muslim families to Maaloula led to tensions in the village. During one dispute, a Christian shot one of the returned Muslims.⁹⁵⁸

In Daraa, Christians lived in several villages, including Khabab and Kharaba.⁹⁵⁹ In this province, some Christians became victims of abduction for ransom.⁹⁶⁰ According

⁹⁴⁹ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁵⁰ Open Doors, *Syrian church narrowly escapes bombing*, 14 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 8-15, 2025*, 15 July 2025; SANA, *Internal security in Tartous foils a plot to bomb-up a church*, 6 August 2025; SOHR, *Nearly three weeks after the incident. Ministry of Interior announces the arrest of suspects in an attempt to target church in Tartus countryside*, 6 August 2025.

⁹⁵¹ The Syrian Observer, *Christian man tortured and forced to recite Quran in Syrian detention center*, 13 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁵² Confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁵³ SOHR, *SOHR warns against serious repercussions of racist campaigns. Unknown individuals stick call-for-Islam sticker stuck on wall of Maronite Church in Tartus city*, 20 May 2025; Syriac Press, *Extremist poster targeting Christians sparks outrage in Tartus, Syria*, 20 May 2025; Open Doors, *Christelijke gemeenschap door incidenten in grote onzekerheid*, 13 June 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁵⁴ SOHR, *Hate speech top the events in Tartus countryside. Leaflets with sectarian slogans written on them stuck on walls of churches and shops in Safeta*, 6 July 2025; SOHR, *Fears of attacks. Heavy security deployment near churches and Christian neighbourhoods*, 13 July 2025; Atlantic Council, *Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum*, 25 August 2025.

⁹⁵⁵ SOHR, *Hours after attacking St. Cyril Church. New threats targets St. Elias Church in Maarat Saydnaya*, 7 November 2025; Open Doors, *Threatening messages left at two churches in Syria*, 11 November 2025.

⁹⁵⁶ The New York Times, *Ancient Syrian town seeks interfaith peace after long war*, 14 April 2025.

⁹⁵⁷ VRT, *In Maaloula in Syrië klinkt opnieuw de taal van Jezus, tussen angst en hoop*, 21 April 2025.

⁹⁵⁸ Qantara, *Fear lingers in an ancient community*, 17 April 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁵⁹ Syriac Press, *Christians in Druco (Daraa) in Syria keep holding their religious rituals despite crises burden*, 17 March 2024; Open Doors, *Christelijke gemeenschap door incidenten in grote onzekerheid*, 13 June 2025.

⁹⁶⁰ SOHR, *Kidnapped a few days ago. Security force free Christian civilian in Rif Dimashq*, 16 June 2025; Etana, *Brief: Recent developments in south-west Syria*, 7 October 2025, p. 2; SOHR, *For unknown motives. Christian young*

to one source, Christians in Daraa were harassed by Bedouins, causing many of them to leave for Suweida or Damascus after the takeover of power.⁹⁶¹

In Suweida, Christians lived in the city of Suweida and in several villages in the countryside. According to various sources, several dozen Christian families were displaced during the escalation of violence in July 2025. They were generally accommodated temporarily in church buildings.⁹⁶² According to various sources, several church buildings were damaged during this escalation of violence by shelling, arson and looting.⁹⁶³ According to Christian sources, during the escalation of violence on 18 July 2025 in the city of Suweida, a Druze convert to Christianity who served as a pastor in an Evangelical church was killed in his home together with a large number of his family members.⁹⁶⁴

In Homs, there were multiple incidents with a possible anti-Christian dimension. For example, on 8 June 2025 unidentified individuals reportedly fired at a cross mounted on the front façade of the Syriac Orthodox cathedral in the Bustan Al-Diwan neighbourhood in the city of Homs.⁹⁶⁵ On 26 July 2025, SOHR reported that an unidentified armed man on a motorcycle had thrown a hand grenade near a church in the Al-Sabil neighbourhood in Homs.⁹⁶⁶ Furthermore, on 10 September 2025 it was reported that a butcher from the Melkite Greek Catholic community in the village of Kafra in Wadi al-Nasara (Valley of the Christians) in Homs province had died in Al-Balona prison in Homs fifteen days after being arrested on charges of selling spoiled meat. According to his relatives, he had been tortured.⁹⁶⁷ According to a Christian media source, unidentified armed men abducted a Christian in the Bustan al-Diwan neighbourhood in Homs on 11 September 2025. He was released after ransom had been paid.⁹⁶⁸ On 1 October 2025, a masked man on a motorcycle opened fire on a group of Christians sitting in front of the office of the village mayor (*mukhtar*) in the village of Anaz in Wadi al-Nasara in Homs province. This resulted in two deaths and one injured person. The incident provoked anger and protests among the population, during which residents of Wadi al-Nasara set fire to an internal security forces checkpoint, blocked the road between Anaz and the nearby village of Al-Hosn, and went on strike. In protest, a number of Christian candidates withdrew their candidacy for the parliamentary elections.⁹⁶⁹ Furthermore, on 9 November 2025 a Christian and an Alawite were killed and another person injured when unidentified armed men fired at their vehicle near the village of Al-Rablah.⁹⁷⁰

man kidnapped in Rif Dimashq, 17 October 2025; SOHR, *After paying large ransom. Kidnappers release Christian young man in Rif Dimashq*, 25 October 2025.

⁹⁶¹ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁶² Open Doors, *Christians flee homes in Suwayda, Syria, as violence continues in region*, 18 July 2025; SOHR, *Destruction of churches and shrines. SOHR documents blatant violations during July's bloody escalation in Al-Suwaydaa*, 4 September 2025.

⁹⁶³ SOHR, *Worship places violence. Druze shrines, churches, and mosque targeted in Al-Suwaydaa*, 13 August 2025; Syriac Press, *Desecration of Christian graves in Suwayda sparks outrage*, 3 October 2025.

⁹⁶⁴ X.com, *Balanche*, 19 July 2025, [url](#); Syriac Press, *Pastor Khalid Mezher martyred alongside his family in Suwayda*, 19 July 2025.

⁹⁶⁵ Atlantic Council, *Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum*, 25 August 2025.

⁹⁶⁶ SOHR, *Grenade attack. Gunman attacks church in Homs, amid concerns about future attacks on places of worship*, 26 July 2025.

⁹⁶⁷ SOHR, *Under torture. Christian detainee killed in Al-Balona prison*, 10 September 2025; Syriac Press, *Death of Christian villager Milad al-Farakh by torture in Hmoth prison sparks outrage*, 11 September 2025; New Lines Magazine, *A rape case highlights sexual violence in Syria*, 18 September 2025.

⁹⁶⁸ Syriac Press, *Christian man abducted and tortured in Hmoth (Homs) amid rising sectarian attacks in Syria*, 12 September 2025.

⁹⁶⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Deadly attack reported in Christian-majority town in Syria*, 2 October 2025; Syriac Press, *Christian parliamentary candidates in Syria withdraw after deadly attack in Valley of Christians, residents hold procession and vigil in commemoration*, 2 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Protests erupt after deadly attack in Syrian Christian-majority area*, 3 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 30-October 7*, 7 October 2025; BBC, *'Killed because they are Alawites': Fear among Syria's minorities after the fall of Assad*, 10 November 2025.

⁹⁷⁰ Syria Weekly, *October 28-November 4*, 11 November 2025.

In Hama, there were three Christian villages. According to one source, their agricultural land was under the control of TIP. On 17 May 2025, the car of a Christian family was set on fire in the city of Hama and threatening letters were left nearby.⁹⁷¹

Several dozen Christians lived in villages in western Idlib province, including Jdayda, Al-Qunyah and Al-Yaqoubiyah.⁹⁷² In the village of Al-Yaqoubiyah, some Christian families reportedly encountered problems in reclaiming their property.⁹⁷³

At the time of the takeover of power, an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 Christians lived in the city of Aleppo.⁹⁷⁴ According to one source, this had declined during the reporting period to between 16,000 and 19,000.⁹⁷⁵ According to SOHR, in June 2025 several Christian families from different neighbourhoods in Aleppo moved to the Kurdish neighbourhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah because of the deteriorating security situation in the city.⁹⁷⁶ According to one source, Christians also moved from the city of Aleppo to Wadi al-Nasara in Homs province. From rural Aleppo, some Christians moved to the city of Aleppo. Others moved to Hasaka or Qamishli.⁹⁷⁷

In Hasaka province, Christians lived in the city of Hasaka, in the city of Qamishli, in the village of Qahtaniyah, in the town of Al-Malikiyah (Aramaic: Derik), and in and around the village of Tel Tamr.⁹⁷⁸ In Hasaka, there was a dispute over the school curriculum.⁹⁷⁹ In early September 2025, DAANES banned the national curriculum of the Syrian Ministry of Education that had been used by a number of Christian private schools in Northeast Syria.⁹⁸⁰ In early October 2025, DAANES closed a number of private schools in Hasaka province because they refused to implement the DAANES curriculum.⁹⁸¹ Following consultations, these schools resumed teaching on 3 November 2025 using the national curriculum of the Syrian Ministry of Education.⁹⁸²

3.1.1.5 Druze

Druze live mainly in the southern province of Suweida and in the suburbs of Jaramana and Ashrafiyet Sahnaya near Damascus. There are also Druze communities on the southeastern slope of Mount Hermon (Arabic: Jabal al-Sheikh) in Quneitra province and in villages in the north of Idlib province, including Maarat al-Ikhwan.⁹⁸³ According to one estimate, there were 700,000 Druze in Syria before the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, representing three percent of the

⁹⁷¹ Atlantic Council, *Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum*, 25 August 2025.

⁹⁷² SOHR, *Efforts to revive Armenian religious activity. St. Anna church opened in Jisr Al-Shughour countryside*, 1 September 2025.

⁹⁷³ Syria Revisited, *Idlib's Christians between safety and oppression: Interview*, 12 August 2025; Atlantic Council, *Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum*, 25 August 2025.

⁹⁷⁴ Syria Direct, *'Shades of gray': Aleppo's Christians between HTS promises and painful memories*, 5 December 2024; The Washington Post, *Christians in Aleppo fear for their future after Islamist takeover*, 6 December 2024.

⁹⁷⁵ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁷⁶ SOHR, *Fearing violence. Dozens of Christian families displaced from neighborhoods in Aleppo to Al-Sheikh Maqsoud and Al-Ashrafyah*, 23 June 2025.

⁹⁷⁷ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁷⁸ Syriac Press, *Collapsed lifeline: How the collapse of the Tel Tamr bridge is isolating villages and burdening residents*, 18 February 2025; AP News, *Syria's Christians mark a decade since a horrific IS attack and worry about their future*, 21 February 2025.

⁹⁷⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁸⁰ Etana, *Brief: Ceasefire pauses SDF-Damascus fighting*, 9 October 2025.

⁹⁸¹ SANA, *Syriac orthodox church rejects SDF curriculum, condemns closure of Christian schools*, 7 October 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Assyrian Democratic Party condemns closure of Christian schools by autonomous administration*, 30 October 2025.

⁹⁸² Shafaq News, *Deal ends standoff over church education in northeast Syria*, 2 November 2025.

⁹⁸³ Al Jazeera, *Syria's Druze divided as sectarian tensions linger after violence*, 9 May 2025; AP News, *Who are the Druze in Syria, and why are they clashing with government forces?*, 16 July 2025; Al Jazeera, *Israel bombs Syria's Druze-majority city of Suwayda hours after ceasefire*, 16 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

population.⁹⁸⁴ The number of Druze present in Syria during the reporting period is not known.

The Druze faith originated in the tenth century as an offshoot of Ismaili Shiite Islam.⁹⁸⁵ It is mystical in nature and incorporates elements of Islam and other, non-Islamic belief systems.⁹⁸⁶ The Druze faith generally excludes outsiders. Druze are ethnically Arab and speak Arabic.⁹⁸⁷

In the control area of the transitional government, Druze were only represented in the highest political and administrative positions to a limited degree. One Druze was a member of the transitional government.⁹⁸⁸ As far as is known, he had no ties to the local Druze armed groups in Suweida province.⁹⁸⁹ Druze were not represented in parliament.⁹⁹⁰

From the end of April 2025 onwards, an escalation of violence took place in the partly Druze suburbs of Jaramana and Ashrafiyet Sahnaya near Damascus. Local Druze armed groups were present in these suburbs, such as the *Jaramana Shield Brigade*.⁹⁹¹ On 28 April 2025, severe gun battles broke out in Jaramana between these groups and local Sunni armed groups. The violence spread to Ashrafiyet Sahnaya later that same day.⁹⁹² In this context, Druze students felt threatened on university campuses in Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Latakia in late April and early May 2025.⁹⁹³ This reportedly led to approximately 9,000 Druze students leaving university campuses in May 2025 and departing for Suweida.⁹⁹⁴ Many Druze students did not return to university afterwards.⁹⁹⁵ According to various sources, in mid-May 2025 a local Druze armed group in Suweida prevented students from returning to universities outside Suweida.⁹⁹⁶ See paragraph 3.3.2.8 of the COI report on Syria of May 2025 for further information on this escalation of violence.

The largest escalation of violence involving many Druze civilian deaths occurred in 13 July 2025 (see paragraph 2.2.5.1). There were also reports of disappearances and abductions of Druze women and girls during this escalation of violence.⁹⁹⁷ In August 2025, UN experts stated that at least 105 Druze women and girls had reportedly been abducted by armed groups affiliated with the transitional government. By the end of August 2025, 80 of them were still missing. Some women who had been released were unable to return home because of security risks. In at least three cases, Druze women were reportedly raped before being

⁹⁸⁴ Le Monde, *In Syria, 37 killed during clashes in predominantly Druze city*, 14 July 2025.

⁹⁸⁵ AP News, *Who are the Druze in Syria, and why are they clashing with government forces?*, 16 July 2025.

⁹⁸⁶ BBC, *Dozens killed in clashes between Druze and Bedouin in southern Syria*, 14 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Explainer: Amid Suweida unrest, what is the Islamist case against the Druze?*, 23 July 2025.

⁹⁸⁷ BBC, *Who are the Druze and why is Israel attacking Syria?*, 17 July 2025.

⁹⁸⁸ Syria Weekly, *Assessing Syria's transitional government*, 30 March 2025; AP News, *Who are the Druze in Syria, and why are they clashing with government forces?*, 16 July 2025.

⁹⁸⁹ ICG, *What lies in store for Syria as a new government takes power?*, 25 April 2025.

⁹⁹⁰ UN OSES, *United Nations deputy special envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi briefing to the security council*, 22 October 2025, p. 2.

⁹⁹¹ Etana, *Brief: Armed clashes erupt in Jaramana & Sahnaya*, 1 May 2025.

⁹⁹² AP News, *At least 10 dead in Syria after sectarian clashes in Druze suburb of Damascus*, 29 April 2025.

⁹⁹³ Daraj, *Sectarian tensions in Syrian universities: The ugly side of school mates appears*, 14 May 2025.

⁹⁹⁴ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian officials deny 'forced departure' of Druze students from campus*, 9 May 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

⁹⁹⁵ Syria Direct, *University students latest pressure point in Damascus-Suwayda tensions*, 20 May 2025; Daraj, *Education in Suwayda: Threats against the province "with no illiteracy"*, 15 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

⁹⁹⁶ The Syrian Observer, *Armed group blocks university students from returning to campus in Syria's Suweida province*, 15 May 2025; Syria Direct, *University students latest pressure point in Damascus-Suwayda tensions*, 20 May 2025.

⁹⁹⁷ UN OSES, *United Nations special envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen briefing to the security council*, 28 July 2025, p. 2; Qantara, *Why women in Syria are disappearing*, 6 June 2025; De Volkskrant, *Voor dit druzische gezin is de droom van één Syrië voorbij*, 3 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

executed. At that time, 763 persons, including women, were still missing.⁹⁹⁸ Druze sheikh Al-Hijri accused the transitional government of abducting more than 600 inhabitants of Suweida province in July 2025, including many Druze women.⁹⁹⁹

On 22 September 2025, the Syrian Ministry of the Interior stated that it had released a group of detainees from Suweida from Adra prison. They had been held there since the escalation of violence in July 2025. According to some sources, this group consisted of 22 persons. Other sources referred to 23 or 24 persons.¹⁰⁰⁰

During the escalation of violence in mid-July 2025, some Druze shrines were destroyed.¹⁰⁰¹ Armed Bedouins reportedly destroyed, among other things, the Druze Al-Khidr shrine in the village of Sami'a in Suweida province.¹⁰⁰²

Although the ceasefire of July 2025 largely held (see paragraph 2.2.5.1), several incidents subsequently occurred in which Druze civilians were killed as a result of violence. A non-exhaustive overview is provided below.

According to SOHR, on 16 September 2025 unidentified armed men shot and killed a Druze shepherd in the village of Aysam in Rural Damascus province.¹⁰⁰³

On 21 October 2025, unidentified armed men fired at a minibus near the village of Kafr Maris in Idlib province. Three Druze civilians were killed and others were injured.¹⁰⁰⁴

Furthermore, on 28 October 2025 at least two Druze bus passengers were killed and at least six others injured when the bus in which they were travelling came under fire at the Marjana petrol station on the highway from Damascus to Suweida in Rural Damascus province.¹⁰⁰⁵

On 28 October 2025, unidentified armed men abducted a doctor outside his practice in the village of Al-Deir Ali in Rural Damascus province. The internal security forces arrested several suspects on 4 November 2025. They subsequently recovered the doctor's body in the village of Al-Matallah in Daraa province, enabling his relatives to bury him in his home village on 6 November 2025.¹⁰⁰⁶

On 15 November 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed a Druze man in the village of Mughayr Mir in Rural Damascus province.¹⁰⁰⁷

⁹⁹⁸ UN OHCHR, *Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls*, 21 August 2025.

⁹⁹⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria Druze leader calls for 'full independence' for Suweida province*, 28 October 2025.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Enab Baladi, *Suwayda security chief announces release of detainees held by Syria's interior ministry*, 22 September 2025; L24, *Authorities release detainees in Suwayda amid reconciliation push*, 24 September 2025; Etana, *Brief: Latest developments in Suwayda*, 30 September 2025, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰¹ SOHR, *Worship places violence. Druze shrines, churches, and mosque targeted in Al-Suwaydaa*, 13 August 2025; Etana, *Brief: Latest developments in Suwayda*, 30 September 2025, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰² BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Shrine 'blown up' in Syrian Druze area in revenge over old video*, 15 August 2025; SOHR, *Destruction of churches and shrines. SOHR documents blatant violations during July's bloody escalation in Al-Suwaydaa*, 4 September 2025.

¹⁰⁰³ SOHR, *Armed attack. Young man from the Druze community killed while herding sheep in Rif Dimashq*, 16 September 2025.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025.

¹⁰⁰⁵ The New Arab, *Gunmen kill two on coach in Syria's Druze-majority Suweida province*, 28 October 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 21-28*, 28 October 2025; SNHR, *Two civilians, one of them a woman, were killed and six others wounded by gunfire from unidentified assailants on the Damascus-Suwayda road on October 28, 2025*, 30 October 2025.

¹⁰⁰⁶ SOHR, *Rif Dimashq. Fate of kidnapped doctor and former member of People's Parliament remains unknown week after being kidnapped*, 2 November 2025; SOHR, *Kidnapped a few days ago. Doctor of the Druze community died under torture in Rif Dimashq*, 6 November 2025; CSW, *Druze doctor dies from severe mistreatment after abduction*, 10 November 2025.

¹⁰⁰⁷ SOHR, *Armed attack. Druze elderly man shot dead by unidentified gunmen in western Rif Dimashq*, 16 November 2025; Syria Weekly, *November 11-18, 2025*, 18 November 2025.

Partly because of the escalation of violence at the end of April 2025, the escalation of violence in mid-July 2025, and reports of incidents involving Druze victims, many Druze felt threatened by the transitional government.¹⁰⁰⁸ For this reason, dozens of local Druze armed groups in Suweida decided to act jointly (see paragraph 1.2.3.2). In addition, Israel presented itself as the protector of the Druze in Syria.¹⁰⁰⁹ In August 2025, hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets in the city of Suweida. They protested against the presence of the transitional government's security forces and also demanded greater self-governance and justice for those killed in earlier incidents.¹⁰¹⁰ Druze flags, Israeli flags and images of Al-Hijri were visible during these protests.¹⁰¹¹ These developments fuelled polarisation between Druze and other population groups in Syria.¹⁰¹² On social media, there were expressions of hate speech against Druze. Druze were portrayed as unbelievers, traitors or agents of Israel.¹⁰¹³

3.1.1.6 Kurds

Kurds live mainly in the north and northeast of Syria, in particular in Hasaka province, in Afrin and in Ayn al-Arab (Kurdish: Kobani) in Aleppo province. In the cities of Aleppo and Damascus there are several Kurdish neighbourhoods, and there is a Kurdish community in Rural Damascus province. In the parts of Northeast Syria controlled by the SDF during the reporting period, Kurds made up an important part of the population, although they were not the majority there.¹⁰¹⁴ After Arabs, Kurds are the largest ethnic population group in Syria. Estimates of the proportion of Kurds range from seven to ten percent of the population.¹⁰¹⁵ In Syria, most Kurds are Sunni.¹⁰¹⁶

In the control area of the transitional government, several Kurds were represented in the highest political and administrative positions. For example, a man of Kurdish origin from Damascus served in the transitional government. As far as is known, he was not affiliated with the SDF or DAANES.¹⁰¹⁷ There were four Kurds in parliament.¹⁰¹⁸

According to one source, there were no problems between the Kurds in Damascus and the transitional government.¹⁰¹⁹ In Aleppo province, some arrests and

¹⁰⁰⁸ Al Jazeera, *Syria's Druze divided as sectarian tensions linger after violence*, 9 May 2025; AP News, *Syria's Druze fear for their future after sectarian clashes*, 25 July 2025; TWI, *Implications of the recent violence in Suwayda*, 6 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁰⁹ RTL Nieuws, *Druzen in Syrië zitten niet te wachten op steun van Israël: 'Ze voelen zich gebruikt'*, 2 May 2025; BBC, *Who are the Druze and why is Israel attacking Syria?*, 17 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Israel will remain in Mount Hermon, defence minister says*, 26 August 2025.

¹⁰¹⁰ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Protests in southern Syria call for government troop withdrawal*, 1 August 2025; DIS, *Syria. Situation of certain groups*, December 2025, p. 29.

¹⁰¹¹ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian media highlight presence of Israeli flag at Suweida protests*, 2 August 2025; DW, *Syria: Hundreds demonstrate for Druze 'self-determination'*, 16 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media fear 'partition' as Suweida protests call for secession*, 17 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Suwayda, Southern Syria: Protests demand independence, raise Israeli flags*, 17 August 2025; AP News, *Druze demand self determination in largest protest held since deadly clashes in Syria*, 17 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Suwayda protests raise separatist demands under Israeli flags, pushing Syria toward a critical juncture*, 18 August 2025.

¹⁰¹² The New Arab, *Druze demands for self-determination: Is Syria's political map being redrawn?*, 26 August 2025; Le Monde, *In southern Syria's Sweida, Druze and Bedouin communities are locked in hatred*, 28 October 2025.

¹⁰¹³ Daraj, *Sectarian tensions in Syrian universities: The ugly side of school mates appears*, 14 May 2025; UN OHCHR, *Syria: UN experts alarmed by attacks on Druze communities, including sexual violence against women and girls*, 21 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Syrian MP incites against women, Druze and Kurds: Who bears responsibility?*, 22 October 2025; ISD, *How violence in southern Syria fuelled anti-Druze hate and online misinformation*, 28 November 2025.

¹⁰¹⁴ SANA, *President al-Shara to CBS News: Syria's liberation ended its international isolation*, 15 October 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

¹⁰¹⁵ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

¹⁰¹⁶ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰¹⁷ Syria Weekly, *Assessing Syria's transitional government*, 30 March 2025.

¹⁰¹⁸ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria elects few women and minorities to new parliament*, 7 October 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Syria's new parliament: Debates about representation*, 14 October 2025; UN OSES, *United Nations deputy special envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi briefing to the security council*, 22 October 2025, p. 2.

¹⁰¹⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

detentions concerned persons of Kurdish background who were associated with the SDF, for example when photographs related to the SDF were found on their mobile phones.¹⁰²⁰

Following the takeover of power, tens of thousands of internally displaced persons of Kurdish origin returned to Afrin.¹⁰²¹ According to the NGO Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), they were confronted with the illegal occupation of their homes and agricultural land upon return. In some cases, the people occupying these homes demanded money in order to leave.¹⁰²² According to various sources, some returnees were subjected to extortion and intimidation by local armed groups or to arrest by security forces.¹⁰²³ According to SOHR, olive theft occurred in several Kurdish-inhabited villages. In some cases, entire olive trees were stolen. In other cases, olive trees were split in two, cut down or set on fire. Some Kurdish inhabitants were subjected to violence by local armed groups.¹⁰²⁴

During the reporting period, the Kurdish-led SDF controlled large parts of Northeast Syria. On 10 March 2025, President Al-Sharaa and SDF commander Mazloum Abdi signed an eight-point agreement. This concerned, among other things, the administrative integration of Northeast Syria into the central Syrian state.¹⁰²⁵ One of the other points in this agreement was recognition of the Kurdish community as an integral part of the Syrian state and the guarantee of full civil rights and all constitutional rights.¹⁰²⁶ Implementation on several essential points proceeded with difficulty due to the differing visions of both parties.¹⁰²⁷ The transitional government aimed to unify all of Syria under a single central administration. It rejected the idea of a federal model for the country, whereas the SDF advocated a more decentralised system of governance.¹⁰²⁸ As a result, the number of concrete steps remained limited during the reporting period. One of the few concrete steps was that, from June 2025 onwards, pupils in Northeast Syria were able to sit the national final examinations of the Ministry of Education.¹⁰²⁹

On 16 January 2026, President Al-Sharaa signed a decree confirming that Kurds are an integral part of Syria and promising to recognise cultural and linguistic rights, including official status for the Kurdish language and *Nowruz*¹⁰³⁰ as a national holiday.¹⁰³¹

¹⁰²⁰ SNHR, *At least 658 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in Syria in the first half of 2025 including 72 cases in June*, 4 July 2025, p. 12; SOHR, *Unknown fate. Two young men from Afrin detained in Aleppo*, 9 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian war monitor highlights 'abuses' at crossings by government forces*, 21 November 2025; SOHR, *Having pictures with Kurdish symbols. Three civilians arrested at makeshift checkpoint near Deir Hafer crossing*, 14 December 2025.

¹⁰²¹ The New Arab, *Northwest Syria: 70,000 Kurds have returned to Afrin since fall of Assad regime*, 29 January 2025; Syria Direct, *'Afrin belongs to its people': More Kurds return to Afrin, while others wait for guarantees*, 30 April 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰²² STJ, *Looted homes and risky return: Extortions and violations against returnees to Afrin after the regime's fall*, 22 July 2025.

¹⁰²³ STJ, *Looted homes and risky return: Extortions and violations against returnees to Afrin after the regime's fall*, 22 July 2025; SOHR, *Violations against returnees. Members of "Al-Amshat" division arrest young man and assault his father in Afrin countryside*, 8 September 2025.

¹⁰²⁴ SOHR, *Afrin. "National army" factions continue their violations against indigenous inhabitants*, 6 November 2025.

¹⁰²⁵ Reuters, *Syria's interim president signs deal with Kurdish-led SDF to merge forces*, 11 March 2025.

¹⁰²⁶ The Syrian Observer, *Anticipated negotiations between Damascus and the SDF set for this week*, 12 November 2025.

¹⁰²⁷ MEI, *The Damascus-SDF agreement two months on: Fragile progress or delayed collapse?*, 9 May 2025.

¹⁰²⁸ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Damascus, SDF miss year-end integration deadline*, 1 January 2026; Aymenn's Monstrous Publications, *Observations on the recent fighting in Aleppo city*, 8 January 2026; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰²⁹ UN OSES, *United Nations deputy special envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi briefing to the security council*, 17 June 2025, p. 2; SANA, *UN official welcomes formation of supreme electoral committee for people's assembly*, 18 June 2025.

¹⁰³⁰ During Nowruz, Kurds celebrate the beginning of the astronomical new year and the arrival of spring.

¹⁰³¹ The New York Times, *Syria's president affirms Kurds' rights, in overture to the minority*, 16 January 2026; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian president issues decree recognising Kurdish rights, identity*, 17 January 2026; confidential source, January 2026.

3.1.2 *Atheists and apostates from Islam*

According to various sources, atheists and apostates from Islam in Syria generally did not openly express their non-religious or non-believing identity or their apostasy outside their own circle.¹⁰³² This was a major taboo for many people.¹⁰³³ The consulted sources were not aware of concrete examples of atheists and apostates from Islam who encountered problems during the reporting period.¹⁰³⁴

3.1.3 *Non-practising Muslims*

In Syria, there were relatively many Muslims who practised their faith little or not at all. For example, they might attend only Friday prayers. According to one source, there were more non-practising Muslims in the capital of Damascus than, for example, in the more conservative Idlib.¹⁰³⁵ In the control area of the transitional government, the authorities generally did not impose strict religious rules.¹⁰³⁶ For example, the transitional government did not impose specific Islamic dress codes on Muslims, nor did it compel Muslims to pray or fast.¹⁰³⁷ As a result, Muslims in Damascus, for example, were able to decide for themselves how to dress and whether to drink or dance.¹⁰³⁸ According to various sources, not practising Islam generally did not lead to problems with the transitional government.¹⁰³⁹ There were, however, signs of further Islamisation in society.¹⁰⁴⁰ For example, there were reports of university lectures in Aleppo being interrupted for Islamic prayer.¹⁰⁴¹

3.1.4 *LGBTIQ+ people*

3.1.4.1 *Position of LGBTIQ+ people*

The position of LGBTIQ+¹⁰⁴² people did not change.¹⁰⁴³ In Syrian society, LGBTIQ+ issues remained a major taboo.¹⁰⁴⁴ Generally, LGBTIQ+ people in Syria were not open about their sexual orientation, gender identity or transgender background.¹⁰⁴⁵ In society, LGBTIQ+ people were generally not accepted.¹⁰⁴⁶ LGBTIQ+ people risked rejection by family members, friends and others in their social environment. They could face stigmatisation, discrimination, threats, violence, extortion or, in the case of women attracted to women, forced marriage.¹⁰⁴⁷

¹⁰³² De Volkskrant, 'Ik wil gewoon vrij kunnen leven zonder geloof', 6 December 2016; Atlantic Council, *Understanding how the Syrian conflict politicized religious identity*, 8 February 2017; Humanistisch Verbond, 'Ik heb er nooit bij gehoord', 13 December 2017; Humanists International, 'Als atheïst in Syrië ben ik niet vrij om mezelf te zijn': het verhaal van W., 21 October 2021; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰³³ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰³⁴ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰³⁵ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰³⁶ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰³⁷ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰³⁸ The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025.

¹⁰³⁹ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁴⁰ NOS, *Yasser zag zijn universiteit veranderen na val Assad-regime: 'Ik zie maar één ideologie'*, 8 December 2025.

¹⁰⁴¹ Open Doors, *Christelijke gemeenschap door incidenten in grote onzekerheid*, 13 June 2025.

¹⁰⁴² Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other persons.

¹⁰⁴³ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁴⁶ RTL Nieuws, *Amjad probeerde in Syrië zijn homoseksualiteit te 'genezen': 'Mocht mijn broertje niet meer knuffelen'*, 28 July 2025; The Telegraph, *Syrian influencer leaves Denmark after seeing rainbow flags in kindergarden*, 2 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Inkstick, *War, love, and isolation for transgender Syrians in Lebanon*, 4 June 2025; Syria Direct, *How Bulgaria is quietly disposing of its Syrian refugees*, 24 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source October 2025.

- 3.1.4.2 **Criminalisation of sexual acts**
 Sexual acts between persons of the same sex could be punished under Section 520 of the Penal Code of 1949 by a prison sentence of up to three years.¹⁰⁴⁸ The consulted sources were not aware of any LGBTIQ+ persons who had been convicted under this provision.¹⁰⁴⁹
- 3.1.4.3 **Discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ+ people**
 LGBTIQ+ people generally had greater difficulty than heterosexual or cisgender persons in finding employment or housing.¹⁰⁵⁰ They were also more likely than heterosexual or cisgender persons to become victims of physical violence or death threats from family members or people in their neighbourhood.¹⁰⁵¹ They were subjected to discrimination, ill-treatment, humiliation or arrest, for example when it was noticed at a checkpoint that their appearance did not fully correspond to the photograph on their identity card.¹⁰⁵² For example, according to various sources, on 4 August 2025 Lebanese authorities arrested a group of ten Syrian trans women in Lebanon. On the same day, the Lebanese authorities deported them to Syria. Upon arrival, they were reportedly abducted immediately by an unidentified armed group. After a ransom was paid, they were released and returned to Lebanon. It later emerged that they had been ill-treated by their abductors in Syria.¹⁰⁵³ At the end of August 2025, a video also circulated on social media showing a trans woman being chased by a crowd in a park in Damascus.¹⁰⁵⁴
- 3.1.4.4 **Protection options**
 There was no legislation in Syria protecting LGBTIQ+ people against violence and discrimination.¹⁰⁵⁵ According to one source, it was not possible for LGBTIQ+ people to obtain protection from the authorities. There were no civil society organisations in Syria openly advocating for the rights of LGBTIQ+ people.¹⁰⁵⁶
- 3.1.5 ***Palestinians in Syria***
 According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), there were approximately 438,000 Palestine refugees¹⁰⁵⁷ in Syria in December 2023.¹⁰⁵⁸ They were registered with the General Administration for Palestinian Arab Refugees in Syria (GAPAR)¹⁰⁵⁹ of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. On the basis of this registration, they could obtain a work permit and a travel document. They also thereby gained access to basic services, such as education and healthcare.¹⁰⁶⁰ Palestine refugees were, in principle, not eligible for

¹⁰⁴⁸ The Syrian Observer, *Queer Syrians in Germany: Dreaming of a homeland that protects them*, 9 September 2025; ILGA World, *Syria*, url, accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Inkstick, *War, love, and isolation for transgender Syrians in Lebanon*, 4 June 2025.

¹⁰⁵¹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁵² UNFPA & Gender-Based Violence AoR Syria, *Voices from Syria 2025*, 12 October 2025, p. 37; DW, *Germany's Syrian deportation plan seen as purely 'symbolic'*, 21 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁵³ Confidential source, August 2025, confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁵⁴ GEM, *Mob bullying: Tens of young men harass a transgender woman in Damascus*, 22 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁵⁵ The Syrian Observer, *Queer Syrians in Germany: Dreaming of a homeland that protects them*, 9 September 2025.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Palestinian refugees refers to refugees who are registered with UNRWA or who are eligible for registration with UNRWA and for whom UNRWA has a mandate.

¹⁰⁵⁸ UNRWA, *Syria, Lebanon and Jordan emergency appeal 2025*, 9 December 2024, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵⁹ GAPAR is a Syrian government body that registers Palestine refugees. This organisation coordinates with the UNRWA in providing services to Palestine refugees, such as education, healthcare, housing and civil documentation; UNRWA, *Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine Refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis*, July 2025, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶⁰ UNRWA, *Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine Refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis*, July 2025, p. 3; Trouw, *'Geef ons de rechten die we verdienen', zeggen Palestijnen in Syrië*, 22 September 2025.

Syrian citizenship.¹⁰⁶¹ In September 2025, GAPAR called on all unregistered Palestinians in Syria to register with GAPAR.¹⁰⁶²

In July 2025, controversy arose after it became apparent that Palestine refugees were registered in the national civil registry database as 'Palestinian residents'. In response, the transitional government stated that an error had occurred during the merger with the Idlib database and that the relevant field would be changed to 'Palestinian Syrian'.¹⁰⁶³

¹⁰⁶¹ Trouw, 'Geef ons de rechten die we verdienen', zeggen Palestijnen in Syrië, 22 September 2025.

¹⁰⁶² The New Arab, *Syria invites undocumented Palestinian refugees to legalise for first time in decades*, 29 September 2025.

¹⁰⁶³ The New Arab, *Syria corrects 'erroneous' classification of Palestinians as foreigners amid shock*, 15 July 2025; Trouw, 'Geef ons de rechten die we verdienen', zeggen Palestijnen in Syrië, 22 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

Most Palestine refugees, like the rest of the population in Syria, lived under severe economic conditions. Approximately 33% of adults were employed.¹⁰⁶⁴ A 2022 UNRWA survey found that 89% of the approximately 438,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria were living below the international poverty line of less than USD 2.15 per person per day.¹⁰⁶⁵ According to UNRWA, food insecurity among Palestinian refugees rose from 46% in September 2022 and 56% in September 2023 to 62% in March 2024.¹⁰⁶⁶ According to one source, food insecurity among Palestinian refugees had increased further in 2025.¹⁰⁶⁷ UNRWA reported that more than 95% of Palestinian refugees depended on UNRWA support for their basic needs.¹⁰⁶⁸

In the western half of Syria, in areas under the control of the transitional government, there were twelve Palestinian refugee camps where UNRWA provided services to Palestinian refugees. Nine of these camps were official, and three were unofficial. The nine official camps were in Neirab (Aleppo province), Jaramana, Sbeineh, Qabr Essit, Khan Dannoun and Khan Eshieh (all in Rural Damascus province), Hama, Homs and Daraa. The three unofficial camps were in Yarmouk, Latakia and Ayn al-Tal (Aleppo province).¹⁰⁶⁹ In Rural Damascus, there was also a concentration of Palestinian refugees in Huseiniya.¹⁰⁷⁰ Six of these camps had largely been destroyed during the civil war (2011–2024), especially Yarmouk camp south of Damascus, Daraa camp, and Ayn al-Tal camp in Aleppo province.¹⁰⁷¹

According to UNRWA, approximately 40% of the 438,000 Palestinian refugees living in Syria were protractedly displaced.¹⁰⁷² In recent years, several thousand of the most vulnerable displaced Palestinian refugees had returned to the camps because they could no longer afford rent elsewhere. In Yarmouk and in the other devastated camps, they lived among the ruins. There, they lacked basic amenities.¹⁰⁷³

Due to a shortage of funds, UNRWA halted almost all financial assistance in July 2025.¹⁰⁷⁴ Only some earmarked funds could still be used in a few places, for example to provide financial support for house repairs or for cash-for-work programmes. Other essential forms of assistance, such as food aid and healthcare, were also reduced.¹⁰⁷⁵

¹⁰⁶⁴ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian response priorities (January to December 2025)*, 24 July 2025, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶⁵ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian response priorities (January to December 2025)*, 24 July 2025, p. 13; UNRWA, *Where we work - Syria*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁰⁶⁶ UNRWA, *UNRWA in Syria: Factsheet*, 13 March 2025, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁶⁸ UNRWA, *Syria crisis*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁰⁶⁹ UNRWA, *UNRWA in Syria: Factsheet*, 13 March 2025, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷⁰ UNRWA, *Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis*, July 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁷¹ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian response priorities (January to December 2025)*, 24 July 2025, p. 13; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁷² UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian response priorities (January to December 2025)*, 24 July 2025, p. 13; UNRWA, *Where we work - Syria*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁰⁷³ New Lines Magazine, *Amid the ghosts of a refugee camp*, 20 June 2025; De Volkskrant, *Ramia gaat niet meer weg uit haar verwoeste huis, al eindigt ze levend onder het puin*, 5 December 2025.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Enab Baladi, *"UNRWA" announces its services for Palestinians returning to Syria*, 9 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁷⁵ UNRWA, *Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine Refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis*, July 2025, p. 3.

For medical support, such as access to primary healthcare, dental care and standard vaccinations, Palestinian refugees could attend consultations at one of the UNRWA health centres in the camps.¹⁰⁷⁶ Pupils could receive free primary education (grades 1 to 9) at UNRWA schools.¹⁰⁷⁷ Most of these schools were located in the camps.¹⁰⁷⁸ From grade 10 onwards, children registered with GAPAR could enter the public education system.¹⁰⁷⁹ UNRWA offered technical training programmes ranging from three months to two years in various parts of the country.¹⁰⁸⁰ It also provided legal assistance in some civil matters, such as obtaining documents and divorce cases.¹⁰⁸¹ In addition, UNRWA operated a microfinance programme.¹⁰⁸²

3.1.6 (Former) supporters of the previous regime

Various groups can be categorised as (former) supporters of the previous regime. These may include former members of the Ba'ath Party, former soldiers, former employees and informants of the previous regime's security apparatus, former senior figures of the previous regime, or people who had close ties to the former regime, but it may also include people who had demonstrated loyalty to the previous regime before the takeover of power, or even people who had never clearly spoken out against the previous regime before the takeover.¹⁰⁸³

Part of the previous regime's security apparatus had fled abroad, including to Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and Russia.¹⁰⁸⁴ A group of former loyalists, including many former army officers, gathered in northern Lebanon.¹⁰⁸⁵ Key figures who had gone into hiding in Syria were targeted by arrest campaigns. During the reporting period, internal security forces arrested officers of the former army and former intelligence and security services, and leaders of former pro-regime militias, among others.¹⁰⁸⁶ Arrests and detentions also took place of persons suspected of having been involved in serious crimes during the previous regime.¹⁰⁸⁷ It is not known how many persons were arrested and detained during the reporting period on suspicion of involvement in serious crimes committed under the previous regime.

The situation of (former) supporters of the previous regime varied from case to case. A person's wealth could play a role. For example, someone with considerable

¹⁰⁷⁶ UNRWA, *Rebuilding lives and infrastructure: Yarmouk camp Syria*, 8 May 2025; UNRWA, *Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine Refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis*, July 2025, p. 1; Trouw, 'Geef ons de rechten die we verdienen', *zeggen Palestijnen in Syrië*, 22 September 2025.

¹⁰⁷⁷ UNRWA, *Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine Refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis*, July 2025, p. 2; Trouw, 'Geef ons de rechten die we verdienen', *zeggen Palestijnen in Syrië*, 22 September 2025; UNRWA, *EU and UNRWA strengthen education for around 50,000 students in Syria*, 6 October 2025; UNRWA, *Former UNRWA student ranks top in Syria*, 15 October 2025; UNRWA, *Where we work - Syria*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁰⁷⁸ UNRWA, *Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine Refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis*, July 2025, p. 4; UNRWA, *Education in Syria*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁰⁷⁹ UNRWA, *Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine Refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis*, July 2025, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸⁰ UNRWA, *Empowering futures: UNRWA's Damascus Training Centre links skills with opportunity*, 18 July 2025; UNRWA, *Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine Refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis*, July 2025, p. 2; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁸¹ UNRWA, *Information on UNRWA services available to Palestine Refugees from Syria returning from displacement due to the Syria crisis*, July 2025, p. 3; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁸² UNRWA, *Rebuilding Yarmouk: Samira's shop and the power of microfinance*, 6 July 2025; UNRWA, *Where we work - Syria*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁰⁸³ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *COI Report on Syria*, May 2025, p. 105; DIS, *Syria. Situation of certain groups*, December 2025, p. 15.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Al Arabiya, *Around 2,000 Syrian soldiers cross to Iraq*, 7 December 2024; The National, *Syrian army generals and security officers fled to Lebanon, sources say*, 20 December 2024; Le Monde, *Lebanon returns fleeing pro-Assad soldiers to Syria*, 1 January 2025; The Wall Street Journal, *Iran pulls most forces from Syria, in blow to Tehran's regional ambitions*, 7 January 2025; The New York Times, *The vanishing act: How Assad's top henchmen fled Syria, and justice*, 16 October 2025.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025; Arab News, *Syrian authorities arrest Assad-era general in charge of notorious Sednaya prison*, 23 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁸⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian forces arrest Bashar al-Assad's cousin*, 21 June 2025; Tesaa World, *The internal security in Al-Bab arrests Zuhair Abdul Hai and four collaborators for crimes and impersonation of official identities*, 3 September 2025; L24, *Syrian government targets Assad-era crimes in ongoing arrest sweep*, 10 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian security forces arrest member of pro-Assad Palestinian group*, 6 September 2025.

financial means could buy off potential problems and reconcile with the transitional government.¹⁰⁸⁸ In some cases, the position a person had held under the previous regime could also play a role. For example, if someone had held a low rank and kept a low profile, few would pay attention.¹⁰⁸⁹ According to one source, it was mainly people in the middle ranks who encountered problems. They were not wealthy enough to buy themselves out of trouble, but held too high a rank to go unnoticed.¹⁰⁹⁰ It could also depend on the religious group to which a former supporter belonged and whether that person had been involved in serious atrocities in the past.¹⁰⁹¹

Some (former) supporters of the previous regime could face exclusion and discrimination. For example, at the end of September 2025 the electoral commission stated that anyone who had supported the former regime or had provided it with any form of support would be excluded from participation in the parliamentary elections.¹⁰⁹² Some (former) supporters also lost their jobs in government institutions following complaints from society.¹⁰⁹³ For example, on 7 July 2025 the Ministry of Health revoked the appointment of the Director of Health in Raqqa following complaints about his previous support for the former regime.¹⁰⁹⁴ Some (former) supporters could also face the closure of their businesses.¹⁰⁹⁵

Negative reactions towards (former) supporters could also come from society.¹⁰⁹⁶ They could face social exclusion.¹⁰⁹⁷

There were weekly reports of personal acts of revenge and targeted killings of (former) supporters of the previous regime. Among the victims were individuals who had merely been passive members of the Ba'ath Party, as well as former members of the previous regime's security apparatus and people accused of having acted as informants.¹⁰⁹⁸ Sometimes the homes of (former) supporters of the previous regime were set on fire or shot at.¹⁰⁹⁹ In some cases, the perpetrators were suspected of belonging to local armed groups nominally forming part of the internal security forces or the army.¹¹⁰⁰

3.1.7 *Family members of (former) supporters of the previous regime*

According to the media outlet Syria Direct, family members of (former) supporters of the previous regime could face social exclusion.¹¹⁰¹ According to another source, they could face acts of revenge at the local level.¹¹⁰²

¹⁰⁸⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁹¹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁹² The Syrian Observer, *Supporters of ousted Assad regime barred from candidacy and voting*, 30 September 2025; L24, *Syria certifies first post-Assad parliamentary elections*, 9 October 2025.

¹⁰⁹³ TWI, *Syria's post-Baath mass dismissals: Transitional justice of catalyst for division?*, 10 October 2025; De Volkskrant, *Echte verkiezingen? Nog even niet. Logisch, vinden de studenten. 'President Sharaa heeft tijd nodig'*, 13 December 2025.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Syria Untold, *Syrian wine industry: hidden resistance in jars*, 30 December 2025.

¹⁰⁹⁶ SOHR, *At gunpoint. Folk singer "Omar Khairi" humiliated in Al-Bab city for "practicing Tashbih"*, 1 August 2025.

¹⁰⁹⁷ DIS, *Syria. Situation of certain groups*, December 2025, p. 15.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in New Syria: Weeks 30 & 31*, 31 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *October 14-21*, 21 October 2025; Al Jazeera, *The fragile fight for justice in a post-Assad Syria*, 7 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Etana, *Brief: Recent developments in south-west Syria*, 7 October 2025, p. 2.

¹¹⁰⁰ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Department of Asylum and Migration Policy, *Fact-finding mission – Syria*, August 2025, p. 8.

¹¹⁰¹ DIS, *Syria. Situation of certain groups*, December 2025, p. 64-65.

¹¹⁰² Confidential source, September 2025.

3.1.8 *Women living alone*

Syria is a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW).¹¹⁰³ According to Article 21 of the constitutional declaration, the state guarantees the social status of women, protects their dignity and their role within the family and society, and guarantees their right to education and work. The state also guarantees women's social, economic and political rights and protects them against all forms of oppression, injustice and violence. In practice, there was a lack of women's participation in all areas.¹¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the poor economic conditions led to a situation in Syria in which child marriage, gender-based violence and economic violence against women occurred.¹¹⁰⁵ No figures were available on the number of child marriages, cases of gender-based violence and economic violence against women in the different parts of the country during the reporting period.

3.1.8.1 Access to work

The extent to which women had access to work varied by region and community. The labour participation rate among women has traditionally been low.¹¹⁰⁶ According to the World Bank, the unemployment rate among women rose from 22% in 2010 to 24% in 2022.¹¹⁰⁷ In 2024, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated unemployment among the female labour force aged 15 to 24 at 47.9%.¹¹⁰⁸

Women who had employment often worked in traditional occupations, meaning that women in Syria played an important role in education, healthcare, humanitarian assistance and civil society.¹¹⁰⁹ In rural areas, women generally worked on the land.¹¹¹⁰ As a rule, working women were paid significantly less than men for the same work.¹¹¹¹

¹¹⁰³ Treaty Database, *Verdrag inzake de uitbanning van alle vormen van discriminatie van vrouwen – Partijen*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹¹⁰⁴ Confidential source, September 2025, confidential source, October 2025.

¹¹⁰⁵ Forbes, *The epidemic of digital violence against Syrian women and girls*, 5 September 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Child marriage in Idlib sparks debate over early marriage risks in Syria*, 16 September 2025; UNFPA & Gender-Based Violence AoR Syria, *Voices from Syria 2025*, 12 oktober 2025; De Volkskrant, *De mannen in Zeinabs familie verdwenen spoorloos onder Assad, haar kinderen betalen nu de prijs*, 11 December 2025.

¹¹⁰⁶ UN OHCHR, *Gendered impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic on women and girls*, 12 June 2023.

¹¹⁰⁷ World Bank Group, *Syria. Macro-fiscal assessment*, June 2025, p. 8.

¹¹⁰⁸ World Bank Group, *Unemployment, youth female (% of male labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate) – Syrian Arab Republic*, 7 January 2025, [url](#).

¹¹⁰⁹ The New Arab, *Syrian women still being held back in politics amid prevailing social norms and 'token measures'*, 6 October 2025; De Volkskrant, *De mannen in Zeinabs familie verdwenen spoorloos onder Assad, haar kinderen betalen nu de prijs*, 11 December 2025.

¹¹¹⁰ Confidential source, July 2025.

¹¹¹¹ The Borgen Project, *The gender wage gap in Syria and the fight for empowerment*, 15 July 2025; 963media, *Syrian women in workforce: Will new Syria deliver justice for its women?*, 17 October 2025.

3.1.8.2 Political and administrative positions

Women were underrepresented in the highest political and administrative positions.¹¹¹² According to various sources, their roles were often reduced to symbolic appointments or symbolic representation.¹¹¹³ One woman held the post of Minister of Social Affairs and Employment in the transitional government. Two of the eleven members of the electoral commission were women.¹¹¹⁴ In October 2025, 6 of the 119 seats in parliament were held by women (5%).¹¹¹⁵ There was no female representation from the cities of Damascus, Aleppo and Idlib.¹¹¹⁶

3.1.8.3 Women living alone

According to one source, the position of women living alone did not improve during the reporting period.¹¹¹⁷ According to another source, cuts to humanitarian aid by international donors had a negative impact on the position of women living alone.¹¹¹⁸

As a result of the civil war (2011–2024), there were relatively many female-headed households.¹¹¹⁹ In most cases, these were women whose husbands had been killed or gone missing during the civil war. Widows or women whose husbands had gone missing could face problems in claiming property because of a lack of documents, such as documents proving the death or disappearance of their husbands.¹¹²⁰ Often, the home remained registered in the husband's name, which meant that the women could not claim it. In some cases, they were evicted from their homes by their in-laws as soon as they no longer had a husband.¹¹²¹

3.1.8.4 Gender-based violence

According to various sources, many women and girls were affected by widespread insecurity and gender-based violence.¹¹²² In addition, women and girls were greatly affected by online harassment and hate speech.¹¹²³ Honour-based violence against¹¹²⁴ women and girls also occurred.¹¹²⁵ Honour-based violence mainly took place at the hands of family members or people from their own community.¹¹²⁶ In

¹¹¹² NRC, *Nour durft haar haar weer te verven, maar veel Syrische vrouwen vrezen nog altijd dat zij hun vrijheid kunnen verliezen*, 29 June 2025; The New Arab, *Syrian women still being held back in politics amid prevailing social norms and 'token measures'*, 6 October 2025.

¹¹¹³ The New Arab, *Syrian women still being held back in politics amid prevailing social norms and 'token measures'*, 6 October 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

¹¹¹⁴ Enab Baladi, *Election of Syrian people's assembly faces challenge of competence and representation demands*, 23 June 2025; Al Jazeera, *Everything you need to know about Syria's first post-Assad elections*, 5 October 2025; UN OSES, *United Nations deputy special envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi briefing to the security council*, 22 October 2025, p. 1.

¹¹¹⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria announces preliminary results of first post-Assad elections*, 6 October 2025; Reuters, *First results for Syria's new parliament show low share for minorities, women*, 6 October 2025; The New York Times, *Syria chooses a parliament of revolutionaries*, 6 October 2025; VRT, *Weinig zetels voor vrouwen en minderheden bij Syrische parlementsverkiezingen: "Er is een onevenwicht"*, 7 October 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Syrian people's assembly: Weak representation of women and only two seats for Christians*, 7 October 2025.

¹¹¹⁶ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

¹¹¹⁷ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹¹⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹¹⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹²⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹²¹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *COI Report on Syria*, May 2025, p. 109.

¹¹²² UNFPA & Gender-Based Violence AoR Syria, *Voices from Syria 2025*, 12 October 2025, p. 21; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 22 October 2025, p. 4; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 2. November 2025*, 23 December 2025, p. 6; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹²³ UNFPA & Gender-Based Violence AoR Syria, *Voices from Syria 2025*, 12 October 2025, p. 28-31; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹²⁴ Here, 'honour-based violence' refers to violence motivated by so-called 'honour motives'. This is linked to certain social and gender norms within a community. 'Honour-based violence' is therefore often classified by international organisations under the category of (sexual and) gender-based violence.

¹¹²⁵ Enab Baladi, *How have provisions of "honor killings" evolved in Syrian law*, 19 March 2020; Al-Monitor, *Syria's top Islamic body issues decree against honor killings: What to know*, 6 June 2025; UNFPA & Gender-Based Violence AoR Syria, *Voices from Syria 2025*, 12 October 2025, p. 31; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 2. November 2025*, 23 December 2025, p. 6; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹²⁶ Forbes, *The epidemic of digital violence against Syrian women and girls*, 5 September 2025.

practice, this violence often went unpunished. According to the human rights organisation STJ, honour-based violence led to self-censorship among women. They often reportedly experienced sexual violence or threats thereof, but did not report this out of fear of violence or even murder.¹¹²⁷ No figures were available on the scale and locations of honour-based violence.¹¹²⁸ Nor were any cases known of perpetrators of honour-based violence being convicted during the reporting period.¹¹²⁹ According to one source, the number of reported cases of honour-based violence declined after the takeover of power.¹¹³⁰ According to another source, there were only a limited number of cases of honour-based violence in Syria.¹¹³¹ According to yet another source, honour-based violence was a major taboo in Syria about which little was spoken or reported.¹¹³² On 28 March 2025, President Al-Sharaa appointed Osama al-Rifai as Grand Mufti of Syria. Since 2021, Al-Rifai had performed this role from the opposition. President Al-Sharaa also decided to establish the Higher Fatwa Council.¹¹³³ On 6 June 2025, this council ruled that revenge killings and extrajudicial retaliation, including honour-based violence, were not permitted.¹¹³⁴

Social stigma, fear of retaliation, a lack of protection mechanisms and a lack of trust in the authorities meant that gender-based violence often went unreported.¹¹³⁵ In some cases, this violence was not recognised as such.¹¹³⁶ According to one source, the authorities generally did not investigate reports of gender-based violence.¹¹³⁷ The police also sometimes blamed women and girls who reported gender-based violence for that violence.¹¹³⁸ According to various sources, the police did not always allow victims to file a complaint. They were ignored or sent away with an excuse, for example.¹¹³⁹ There was also hardly any shelter available for victims of gender-based violence.¹¹⁴⁰

3.1.9 Unaccompanied minors

Unaccompanied minors were more vulnerable than other children. They could face insults and discrimination compared with children who were not unaccompanied or orphaned. They could also face physical violence from other children. In addition, they could become victims of exploitation and neglect.¹¹⁴¹ The poor humanitarian situation in Syria affected the position of unaccompanied minors. For some families, the level of need was so high that they abandoned their children, often at the roadside or in hospitals.¹¹⁴² According to various sources, 2.4 million children in

¹¹²⁷ STJ, *Syria's transitional phase: "Honor" killings persist amid failing protection and legal response*, 19 June 2025.

¹¹²⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹²⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹³⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹³¹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹³² Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹³³ The Grand Mufti of Syria is regarded as the highest Sunni legal scholar in Syria. A grand mufti may issue legal opinions to Muslims. These are known as fatwas.; The Syrian Observer, *The opposition's grand mufti of Syria: Who is sheikh Osama al-Rifai*, 1 December 2021; L24, *Syria appoints grand mufti, establishes independent fatwa council*, 29 March 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria's new religious body sets out its tasks, urges 'reconciliation'*, 4 June 2025.

¹¹³⁴ Al-Monitor, *Syria's top Islamic body issues decree against honor killings: What to know*, 6 June 2025; Enab Baladi English, *Syrian Fatwa Council prohibits revenge killings outside judicial framework*, 6 June 2025; The New Arab, *Syria religious authorities issue fatwa against extrajudicial killings, revenge attacks*, 7 June 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Syria's highest fatwa council bans vigilante justice: A step toward rule of law*, 9 June 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Islamists slam Syrian government decree prohibiting revenge attacks*, 9 June 2025.

¹¹³⁵ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 21 May 2025; UNFPA & Gender-Based Violence AoR Syria, *Voices from Syria 2025*, 12 October 2025, p. 41.

¹¹³⁶ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹³⁷ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹³⁸ Forbes, *The epidemic of digital violence against Syrian women and girls*, 5 September 2025.

¹¹³⁹ UNFPA & Gender-Based Violence AoR Syria, *Voices from Syria 2025*, 12 October 2025, p. 41; confidential source.

¹¹⁴⁰ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 21 May 2025; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 22 October 2025, p. 3.

¹¹⁴¹ UNFPA & Gender-Based Violence AoR Syria, *Voices from Syria 2025*, 12 October 2025, p. 36.

¹¹⁴² Lena-Maria Möller, *Legal reform for Syria's war-affected children: adoption, fostering, and state responsibility in transition*, 17 October 2025, p. 3.

Syria were not attending school and 1.6 million children were at risk of dropping out of education.¹¹⁴³ Child labour occurred.¹¹⁴⁴ According to one source, the number of children living on the streets in Damascus increased after the takeover of power. They earned a living by working or begging.¹¹⁴⁵ Children could be seen in public spaces begging or selling tissues to motorists during the day.¹¹⁴⁶ However, it was not known exactly how many street children there were, nor to what extent these children were unaccompanied or whether a parent or caregiver was present in the background.

3.1.9.1 Care by relatives

As a rule, children who no longer had parents, or at least no parents able to care for them, were taken in by people in their immediate surroundings, such as close relatives, neighbours or close family friends. In many cases, this was arranged informally without the involvement of a court.¹¹⁴⁷ A family court could appoint someone as guardian.¹¹⁴⁸

3.1.9.2 Foster care

Syria has no official adoption scheme for Muslim families.¹¹⁴⁹ Two forms of alternative care by Muslim families were possible: *kafala* and *al-haq*.¹¹⁵⁰ *Kafala* is a form of sponsorship in which an unrelated family takes care of a child if the parents are unable to do so. The child cannot claim the family name or an inheritance from the family providing childcare. The foster family could formalise the child's inclusion in the family before a sharia court.¹¹⁵¹ *Al-haq* was reserved for abandoned children whose parents were entirely absent. Under this form of care, a foster family signed a one-off contract for a period of one year. In practice, the child remained connected to the family until the age of eighteen.¹¹⁵²

3.1.9.3 Institutional care

In the control area of the transitional government, there were several orphanages and childcare institutions.¹¹⁵³ Most were run by charities, religious groups or humanitarian organisations that depended largely on private donations and funding from abroad.¹¹⁵⁴ The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour was responsible for supervising these institutions. According to one source, conditions in these institutions were generally very poor. There was also little to no oversight of these institutions.¹¹⁵⁵

¹¹⁴³ Save the Children, *Syria: Save the Children opens first national office in Syria as looks to expand support for children*, 25 August 2025; WeWorld, *Syria. Flash update #3. November 2025*, 28 November 2025, p. 1.

¹¹⁴⁴ WeWorld, *Syria. Flash update #3. November 2025*, 28 November 2025, p. 1; UNICEF, *Syria crisis*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹¹⁴⁵ Confidential source, March 2025.

¹¹⁴⁶ Save the Children, *OP-ED: Syria is changing but its children cannot wait*, 10 June 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁴⁷ Confidential source, March 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁴⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁴⁹ STJ, *Adoption in Syria*, 2 March 2022; Al Jazeera, *'My soul and beating heart': Orphaned Syrian children find new family*, 20 November 2023; Lena-Maria Möller, *Legal reform for Syria's war-affected children: adoption, fostering, and state responsibility in transition*, 17 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁵⁰ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *General Country of Origin Information Report on Syria*, December 2024, p. 122; confidential source, March 2025.

¹¹⁵¹ UNICEF & World Vision International, *Alternative care in Northwest Syria*, June 2021, p. 46, 58-59; Al Jazeera, *'My soul and beating heart': Orphaned Syrian children find new family*, 20 November 2023; Lena-Maria Möller, *Legal reform for Syria's war-affected children: adoption, fostering, and state responsibility in transition*, 17 October 2025, p. 7; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁵² ISS, *Assessment of the alternative care system in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 14 February 2011, p. 26; OSAR, *Syrie: pratiques en matière d'adoption intrafamiliale*, 4 July 2019, p. 4; SOS Children's Villages, *The national child protection system and alternative child care in Syria*, January 2021, p. 18.

¹¹⁵³ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁵⁴ Trouw, *Onder Assad werden honderden kinderen in weeshuizen geplaatst. 'Mijn dochter noemde elke vrouw van mijn leeftijd mama'*, 10 September 2025; HIHFAD, *Empower a vulnerable orphan for dignified futures*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026; confidential source, March 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁵⁵ Confidential source, March 2025.

3.1.9.4 Care in Al-Hol and Al-Roj camps

The vast Al-Hol camp and the smaller Al-Roj camp in the east of Hasaka province mainly housed the women and children of former ISIS militants.¹¹⁵⁶ Al-Hol camp also included a heavily guarded Annex where women and children who were neither Syrian nor Iraqi were held.¹¹⁵⁷ A space for children was available in the Annex. In Al-Hol camp there were two childcare centres where a limited number of children, including abandoned babies, could be accommodated temporarily. In Al-Roj camp there was one childcare centre. Some children stayed overnight in this centre and others with foster families.¹¹⁵⁸

3.2 Behavioural and dress code

3.2.1 Alcohol

The transitional government did not impose a legal ban on alcohol.¹¹⁵⁹ In Damascus, many cafés and restaurants were open.¹¹⁶⁰ When going out, customers in the hospitality sector could order alcoholic drinks in various parts of Damascus, such as in the Bab Touma and Jaramana districts.¹¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, some hospitality business owners applied precautionary restrictions.¹¹⁶² For example, a large hotel in Damascus reportedly no longer served alcohol in its restaurant, but only in hotel rooms.¹¹⁶³ Other business owners in Damascus and Latakia served alcohol in soft-drink bottles, teacups or coffee cups. In some cases, customers had to bring their own alcoholic drinks.¹¹⁶⁴ Some people also no longer attended weddings where alcohol was served.¹¹⁶⁵ As far as is known, business owners in Idlib did not serve alcohol.¹¹⁶⁶

¹¹⁵⁶ Amnesty International, *Syrië moet onwettig detentiestelsel opheffen waarin tienduizenden mensen vastzitten*, 21 May 2025; BBC, *Inside Syria's jail for IS suspects as officials say attacks by group are rising*, 26 October 2025; The New York Times, *Islamic State camps pose a dangerous problem for Syria's leaders*, 10 December 2025.

¹¹⁵⁷ The New Humanitarian, *Despite promises, returns from notorious Syrian camp remain rare*, 12 November 2025; The New York Times, *Islamic State camps pose a dangerous problem for Syria's leaders*, 10 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁵⁸ Save the Children, *Syria: Save the Children opens first national office in Syria as looks to expand support for children*, 25 August 2025; confidential source, March 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁵⁹ Al-Monitor, *Between freedom and restrictions, Syrians navigate new reality*, 3 June 2025; The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025; Atlantic Council, *Dispatch from Syria's Christian strongholds: A new government, a full political spectrum*, 25 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁶⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁶¹ The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁶² Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁶³ Al-Monitor, *Between freedom and restrictions, Syrians navigate new reality*, 3 June 2025.

¹¹⁶⁴ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁶⁵ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁶⁶ The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025.

Local authorities in Damascus, Aleppo and Latakia threatened some hospitality establishments with temporary or permanent closure because of problems with their licences.¹¹⁶⁷ It was not always clear why this occurred, since this had not been an issue in the recent past.¹¹⁶⁸ For example, on 22 May 2025 the governor of Damascus launched a campaign aimed at fining and closing liquor shops, cafés and restaurants in the Bab Touma and Bab Sharqi districts on the grounds that they lacked a valid licence to serve alcohol. Hospitality business owners complained that no new licences were being issued.¹¹⁶⁹ Following considerable controversy, this campaign was suspended and many establishments reopened.¹¹⁷⁰

In some cases, business owners were threatened and pressured to stop selling alcohol.¹¹⁷¹ One source cited the example of a restaurant in Latakia where internal security forces raided the premises and assaulted the owner because alcohol was being served there. A few streets away, however, the local commander of the internal security forces told the owner of another restaurant that he was entitled to serve alcohol.¹¹⁷²

3.2.2 *Entertainment venues*

In early May 2025, two incidents relating to going out caused controversy. Footage from a security camera appeared on social media showing unidentified armed men raiding the Layali al-Sharq restaurant in Damascus on 29 April 2025. As the visitors came outside, they were struck with clubs and rifle butts. In response to the outcry, the Ministry of the Interior stated on 4 May 2025 that it had identified and arrested the perpetrators.¹¹⁷³ In addition, masked armed men in army uniform raided the Al-Karawan nightclub in Damascus on 5 May 2025. They opened fire inside the venue. Reportedly, a dancer was killed and others were injured. According to the local commander, internal security forces conducted patrols to protect nightclubs.¹¹⁷⁴ According to one source, however, this latter incident was connected to a personal feud and the authorities had nothing to do with it.¹¹⁷⁵

3.2.3 *Dress code*

There was no government legislation concerning dress codes.¹¹⁷⁶ Women both with and without headscarves walked the streets of Damascus. Some wore a *niqab*.¹¹⁷⁷ In Damascus, going out in public without a headscarf generally did not cause

¹¹⁶⁷ NRC, *Nour durft haar haar weer te verven, maar veel Syrische vrouwen vrezen nog altijd dat zij hun vrijheid kunnen verliezen*, 29 June 2025; Syria Untold, *Syrian wine industry: hidden resistance in jars*, 30 December 2025; WEER, September 2025.

¹¹⁶⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁶⁹ SOHR, *Due to violations related to alcoholic beverages. Restaurants closed in Bab Touma and Bab Sharqi in the capital, Damascus*, 23 May 2025; France 24, *Between freedom and restrictions, Syrians navigate new reality*, 4 June 2025.

¹¹⁷⁰ Etana, *Study: Between symbolism and substance: Syria's transition at 6 months*, 9 July 2025, p. 7; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁷¹ SOHR, *Amid threats to kill Christians. Masked men in military uniform attack alcoholic beverages store in Homs countryside*, 5 May 2025; The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025.

¹¹⁷² Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁷³ The Syrian Observer, *Armed raid on Damascus nightclub sparks outrage over assault on women*, 5 May 2025; Shafaq News, *Gunmen kill woman in Damascus nightclub attack*, 5 May 2025; Reuters, *Damascus nightclub raid fuels fears despite official condemnation*, 6 May 2025.

¹¹⁷⁴ The New Arab, *Attack on Damascus nightclub kills woman, Druze shrine burnt in southern Syria*, 5 May 2025; France 24, *Damascus club shooting sparks fears of restriction on freedoms*, 5 May 2025; Arab News, *Woman killed as gunmen attack Damascus nightclub: monitor, witness*, 6 May 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Nightclub attacks in Syria fuel fears for personal freedoms*, 7 May 2025; The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025.

¹¹⁷⁵ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁷⁶ Al-Monitor, *Between freedom and restrictions, Syrians navigate new reality*, 3 June 2025; NRC, *Nour durft haar haar weer te verven, maar veel Syrische vrouwen vrezen nog altijd dat zij hun vrijheid kunnen verliezen*, 29 June 2025; The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁷⁷ EW, *Geen Assad, maar ook geen vereniger*, 30 October 2025.

problems.¹¹⁷⁸ In the streets of Idlib, women generally wore headscarves or niqabs.¹¹⁷⁹ According to various sources, women were encouraged at some institutions to cover their hair.¹¹⁸⁰ In some cases, men and women were addressed by bystanders in the street or by their employers at work about their style of dress.¹¹⁸¹

3.2.4 Swimming pools and beaches

On 9 June 2025, the Ministry of Tourism announced a number of measures for swimming pools and public beaches for the second half of the year.¹¹⁸² These measures included lifeguards, beach flags and the wearing of modest swimwear at swimming pools and public beaches.¹¹⁸³ On 11 June 2025, the Deputy Minister of Tourism explained on television that certain public beaches would be designated where conservative families could, for example, spend time wearing burkinis, while other public beaches would allow foreign tourists to wear Western swimwear such as bikinis. He also stated that the decision contained only guidelines that took different social groups into account.¹¹⁸⁴ It was not clear whether any sanction applied for non-compliance with this decision.¹¹⁸⁵

3.2.5 Segregation of the sexes

During the reporting period, the transitional government did not introduce legislation promoting segregation of the sexes in public spaces.¹¹⁸⁶ At the local level, however, some segregation occurred.¹¹⁸⁷ Since April 2025, for example, women and men had been separated in the courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.¹¹⁸⁸ Some buildings had separate entrances for men and women.¹¹⁸⁹ On some buses, women had to sit at the back and men at the front.¹¹⁹⁰

¹¹⁷⁸ The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025.

¹¹⁷⁹ New Lines Magazine, *Islamism is still thriving in Idlib*, 12 March 2025.

¹¹⁸⁰ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁸¹ NRC, *Nour durft haar haar weer te verven, maar veel Syrische vrouwen vrezen nog altijd dat zij hun vrijheid kunnen verliezen*, 29 June 2025; Syria Revisited, *Idlib's Christians between safety and oppression: Interview*, 12 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁸² Decree number 294; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria issues new dress code for beaches, swimming pools*, 11 June 2025.

¹¹⁸³ VRT, *Syrië scherpt kledingvoorschriften aan: vrouwen moeten bedekt naar het strand, mannen niet langer met bloot bovenlijf op straat*, 10 June 2025; Aymenn's Monstrous Publications, *Syrian Ministry of Tourism guidelines and rules on beaches, pools and clothing*, 11 June 2025.

¹¹⁸⁴ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian government defends swimwear decision as 'visual safety'*, 12 June 2025; The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025.

¹¹⁸⁵ BBC, *Syria government says women must wear burkinis at public beaches*, 11 June 2025; NRC, *Nour durft haar haar weer te verven, maar veel Syrische vrouwen vrezen nog altijd dat zij hun vrijheid kunnen verliezen*, 29 June 2025.

¹¹⁸⁶ Al-Monitor, *Between freedom and restrictions, Syrians navigate new reality*, 3 June 2025; The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025.

¹¹⁸⁷ NOS, *Yasser zag zijn universiteit veranderen na val Assad-regime: 'Ik zie maar één ideologie'*, 8 December 2025.

¹¹⁸⁸ The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025; EW, *Geen Assad, maar ook geen vereniger*, 30 October 2025; De Volkskrant, *Een jaar na de val van Assad wachten velen in Damascus nog op de verandering die zou komen*, 4 December 2025.

¹¹⁸⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁹⁰ DIS, *Syria - Security Situation*, June 2025, p. 52; France 24, *Between freedom and restrictions, Syrians navigate new reality*, 4 June 2025.

3.3 Freedom of expression

3.3.1 Critics and opponents of those in power

Immediately after the takeover of power, greater openness and space emerged in the control area of the transitional government for public criticism of the authorities.¹¹⁹¹ At the same time, events such as the outbreak of violence in the coastal region in March 2025 and the escalation of violence in Suweida in July 2025 deepened polarisation in society.¹¹⁹² This led to extensive hate speech and online aggression, insults and intimidation directed at critics, dissenters, non-Sunni population groups and women.¹¹⁹³ The transitional government took little action against this.¹¹⁹⁴

In practice, it was possible to criticise the transitional government openly.¹¹⁹⁵ According to one source, however, this could lead to very negative reactions in society, because it was strongly divided between people who supported President Al-Sharaa and people who opposed him. Few people adopted a middle position. As a result, many people kept their criticism to themselves, and self-censorship occurred.¹¹⁹⁶

As far as is known, there were no arrest campaigns in the reporting period in the control area of the transitional government targeting people who expressed criticism.¹¹⁹⁷ There were no known reports of civilians being arrested by the authorities for voicing criticism.¹¹⁹⁸

There were many political opponents in Syria. In the control area of the transitional government, however, there was no system allowing political parties to register. As a result, political parties were unable to participate in the indirect parliamentary elections of October 2025, and it was not possible for them to conduct opposition activities in a structured manner.¹¹⁹⁹

According to one source, civil society was sometimes subjected to intimidation. According to this source, members of the internal security forces appeared at some discussion meetings. This created an intimidating atmosphere and caused people to be more cautious in expressing themselves.¹²⁰⁰ According to various sources, prior permission from the General Secretariat for Political Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was required in order for civil society to organise political activities.¹²⁰¹

¹¹⁹¹ De Volkskrant, *Op comedyavondje in Damascus vloeit alle spanning weg: 'Hier kunnen we zeggen wat we willen'*, 12 September 2025; Trouw, *Opinie: Leer Syriërs wat wij kunnen: eindeloos vergaderen*, 2 December 2025; De Volkskrant, *Een jaar na de val van Assad wachten velen in Damascus nog op de verandering die zou komen*, 4 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁹² Enab Baladi, *Syrian media institutions discuss draft code of professional conduct*, 15 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

¹¹⁹³ UN OSES, *United Nations special envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen briefing to the security council*, 28 July 2025, p. 3; Forbes, *The epidemic of digital violence against Syrian women and girls*, 5 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁹⁴ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source.

¹¹⁹⁵ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁹⁶ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁹⁷ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁹⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹¹⁹⁹ Etana Syria, *Study: Between symbolism and substance: Syria's transition at 6 months*, 9 July 2025; Al Jazeera, *Everything you need to know about Syria's first post-Assad elections*, 5 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria elects few women and minorities to new parliament*, 7 October 2025; Syria in Transition, *Is Syria heading to political pluralism?*, 6 November 2025; This Week in Northern Syria, *What the HTS governance legacy in Idlib says about today*, 2 December 2025.

¹²⁰⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁰¹ The New Arab, *Why Syria needs better governance...and a new kind of opposition*, 9 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

Not all forms of expression were permitted. Under the constitutional declaration, for example, it was a criminal offence to glorify the former regime.¹²⁰² Incitement was also punishable. For example, on 16 September 2025 the Public Prosecutor of Damascus reported the arrest of a woman for posting inciting texts on social media.¹²⁰³ It is not known whether this woman was subsequently convicted.

There were several reports by SOHR concerning the arrest of civilians of Kurdish origin in Aleppo province that may have been linked to their expressions. According to SOHR, on 23 June 2025 internal security forces arrested an 18-year-old man in the village of Rajo in Afrin district. It was suspected that this was connected to a TikTok video in which he had praised the Kurdish people and Kurdistan. According to SOHR, on 28 June 2025 security forces also arrested a 24-year-old man from the village of Ehras in Aleppo province at a checkpoint on the road from Deir Hafer to Aleppo because he possessed images with Kurdish symbols on his mobile phone.¹²⁰⁴ According to SOHR, on 3 September 2025 security forces arrested an internally displaced person upon his return to his village in Afrin on suspicion of links with DAANES.¹²⁰⁵ According to SOHR, on 7 October 2025 security forces arrested a Kurdish man in the Al-Siryani Al-Jadida district of Aleppo after searching his mobile phone and finding images of Kurdish symbols.¹²⁰⁶

In Northeast Syria, there was some space to express criticism in public. The red line there concerned criticism or expressions that could be interpreted as a threat to the SDF. In this regard, several arrests and convictions of Arab men took place.¹²⁰⁷ For example, on 10 June 2025 the SDF arrested two men at a checkpoint in the city of Raqqa. According to local media, they were arrested after the Syrian national flag was found on their mobile phones.¹²⁰⁸ On 22 July 2025, the SDF arrested a man in the city of Hasaka because of his support for the Arab part of the population on his Facebook page.¹²⁰⁹ On 9 August 2025, the SDF arrested a man in the city of Raqqa in connection with a series of Facebook posts in which he had expressed support for the transitional government.¹²¹⁰ According to SOHR, in August 2025 a people's court in Raqqa sentenced someone to three years' imprisonment for criticising the SDF in a Facebook post.¹²¹¹ Furthermore, in late August and early September 2025, the SDF reportedly arrested dozens of civilians of Arab origin in Hasaka province. According to the SDF, the security operation in Hasaka was a response to reports of increasing ISIS cell activity. According to local sources, however, those arrested included people who had recently visited Damascus and were regarded as pro-government.¹²¹² In early September 2025, the SDF arrested a man after a Syrian national flag and pro-government material were reportedly found on his mobile phone. Three days later, on 9 September 2025, the SDF handed over the man's

¹²⁰² Article 49(2) of the Constitutional Declaration; ConstitutionNet, *Constitutional declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 March 2025; Enab Baladi, *Constitutional declaration criminalizes glorification of Assad: What penalties await violators?*, 14 March 2025.

¹²⁰³ SANA, *Judiciary detains suspect over sectarian content on social media*, 16 September 2025.

¹²⁰⁴ SOHR, *For "possessing images containing Kurdish symbols on his mobile phone". Young man arrested in Aleppo countryside*, 29 June 2025; SOHR, *Ongoing violations. "Al-Hamzat" and "Al-Amshat" launch new arrest campaign in Aleppo*, 1 July 2025.

¹²⁰⁵ SOHR, *Having been forcibly displaced in 2018. Young man arrested in Afrin countryside after returning to his village*, 6 September 2025.

¹²⁰⁶ SOHR, *Ongoing violations in Aleppo. Gunmen kidnap young man and demand 10,000 USD for his release*, 16 October 2025.

¹²⁰⁷ SNHR, *At least 658 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in Syria in the first half of 2025 including 72 cases in June*, 4 July 2025, p. 17; SNHR, *At least 109 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in July 2025*, 2 August 2025, p. 8.

¹²⁰⁸ Syria Weekly, *June 3-10, 2025*, 10 June 2025.

¹²⁰⁹ SNHR, *The Syrian Democratic Forces arrested civilian Jassem Mohammed Hijel in the city of Hasaka on July 22, 2025*, 24 July 2025.

¹²¹⁰ Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

¹²¹¹ SOHR, *Arbitrary trials. Man sentenced to three years over Facebook post in Al-Raqqa*, 4 August 2025.

¹²¹² Syria Weekly, *August 26-September 2, 2025*, 4 September 2025.

body to his relatives.¹²¹³ On 15 September 2025, the SDF arrested three money changers in Hasaka on charges of facilitating donations to a fundraising campaign of the transitional government.¹²¹⁴ According to one source, a sheikh was sentenced to six years in prison for posting Facebook messages criticising the SDF.¹²¹⁵

The transitional government declared 8 December 2025 Liberation Day and stated that all public institutions would be closed on 7 and 8 December 2025.¹²¹⁶ In response, the SDF reportedly stated on 6 December 2025 that public or social gatherings in Northeast Syria were prohibited on 7 and 8 December 2025.¹²¹⁷ On 9 December 2025, *Enab Baladi* reported that the SDF had arrested a person in the city of Raqqa who was demonstrating against this SDF decision.¹²¹⁸

3.3.2 *Family members of critics and opponents of those in power*

The consulted sources did not report any concrete cases in which family members of critics or opponents encountered problems in areas under the control of the transitional government during the reporting period.¹²¹⁹

In Northeast Syria, family members of critics and opponents could encounter problems.¹²²⁰ For example, on 23 May 2025 the SDF arrested a man in the village of Al-Mansoura in Raqqa province. According to local media, his arrest was connected to the defection of his son from the SDF to the Syrian army.¹²²¹ Furthermore, on 23 August 2025 the SDF arrested a woman in Hasaka. According to local media, her arrest was linked to criticism of the SDF expressed by her son on Facebook while residing in Lebanon.¹²²²

3.3.3 *Journalists*

On 1 January 2025, the Minister of Information, Mohamed al-Omar, promised to strive for a free press and to preserve freedom of expression.¹²²³ Nevertheless, Syria ranked 177th in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders (*Reporters sans frontières*, RSF), an international NGO committed to press freedom. The ranking lists 180 countries.¹²²⁴

On 5 May 2025, Syrian News Channel (*Al-Ikhbariya al-Suriya*) resumed broadcasting in a renewed format.¹²²⁵ According to Mohamed al-Omar, this was a positive step towards a free press.¹²²⁶ In early July 2025, the Ministry of Information published the rules for licensing television channels and news websites. Existing licences had to be renewed by the end of the year.¹²²⁷ In the control area of the

¹²¹³ The Syrian Observer, *Death of detainee under torture in SDF custody amid widespread arrest campaign*, 11 September 2025; L24, *Anger grows as SDF is accused of killings and abductions*, 13 September 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 9-16, 2025*, 16 September 2025.

¹²¹⁴ Syria Weekly, *September 9-16, 2025*, 16 September 2025.

¹²¹⁵ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹²¹⁶ The New Arab, *Syria to mark first anniversary of Assad's fall with public holiday*, 4 December 2025.

¹²¹⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Syria's SDF issues ban on celebrations marking Assad fall*, 6 December 2025; Enab Baladi, *Abdi congratulates Syrians on liberation after banning celebrations*, 8 December 2025.

¹²¹⁸ Enab Baladi, *Raqqa, SDF arrests participant in liberation day celebrations*, 9 December 2025.

¹²¹⁹ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²²⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹²²¹ Syria Weekly, *May 20-27, 2025*, 27 May 2025.

¹²²² Syria Weekly, *August 19-26, 2025*, 26 August 2025.

¹²²³ The New Arab, *Syria's new information minister promises 'freedom of expression'*, 1 January 2025; RSF, *RSF calls on Syria's new authorities to adopt seven priority measures in line with their promises to safeguard press freedom*, 7 January 2025.

¹²²⁴ RSF, *2025 World Press Freedom Index*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹²²⁵ Tesaa World, *Syrian News Channel to launch its official broadcast with a new visual identity tomorrow*, 4 May 2025; SANA, *Syrian News Channel (al-Ikhbariya) officially launches new visual identity via satellite*, 6 May 2025.

¹²²⁶ SANA, *Former minister of Information: Al-Ikhbariya new broadcast is a step towards free media*, 7 May 2025.

¹²²⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Syria issues rules for licensing new TV channels, websites*, 3 July 2025; SANA, *Information ministry gives media outlets until year-end to renew licenses*, 12 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

transitional government, only pro-government media were generally present at the national level, which often meant that a counter-narrative was lacking.¹²²⁸

Journalists were required to register with the Ministry of Information.¹²²⁹ Journalists were not always granted permission by this ministry to report on certain events. From 26 July 2025 onwards, for example, journalists were not allowed to enter the Druze-controlled part of Suweida.¹²³⁰ According to various sources, journalists who had worked in the former HTS control area in Idlib generally had greater access to information than other journalists.¹²³¹

In the control area of the transitional government, some journalists were subjected to arrest.¹²³² According to one source, there were incidents in which journalists were arrested at checkpoints, ill-treated, and released shortly afterwards without their relatives having been informed of their whereabouts in the meantime and without the possibility of legal assistance being offered. These cases were usually dismissed by the authorities as isolated incidents and misunderstandings.¹²³³ In many cases, the Ministry of Information intervened when internal security forces had arrested a journalist.¹²³⁴ The following provides an overview of incidents involving civilian casualties in the reporting period. This overview is not exhaustive.

On 8 May 2025, a journalist from the city of Douma in Rural Damascus went missing.¹²³⁵

In June 2025, a journalist from *Syria Monitor* and *963media* and a journalist from the Lebanese media outlet *Al-Modon* were reportedly chased by Israeli soldiers while working in Quneitra. According to the Israeli army, they had entered a military zone.¹²³⁶

Furthermore, on 27 June 2025 internal security forces arrested a Kurdish journalist in his home in Damascus. The reason for his arrest and the place where he was being held remained unknown.¹²³⁷ According to SOHR, he was released on 3 July 2025.¹²³⁸

On 1 July 2025, internal security forces in Quneitra arrested a journalist from *Al-Modon*. Several hours after *Al-Modon* contacted the Minister of Information, the journalist was released.¹²³⁹

¹²²⁸ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²²⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹²³⁰ The New York Times, *After weeks of sectarian clashes in Syria, an uneasy truce takes hold*, 6 August 2025; IFJ, *Syria: One journalist killed, several attacked amid clashes in Sweida*, 8 August 2025; De Volkskrant, *Voor dit druzische gezin is de droom van één Syrië voorbij*, 3 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²³¹ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²³² SOHR, *After criticizing prominent figures. Female journalist subjected to arrest attempt in Damascus*, 2 September 2025; Welat TV, *Syrian security detains journalist in Damascus after his return from the United States*, 15 December 2025.

¹²³³ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹²³⁴ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²³⁵ SANA, *Information ministry expresses its deep concern over disappearance of journalist Mohammad Khalti*, 16 May 2025; SOHR, *Nearly ten days since the disappearance of journalist Mohammad Khiti in Damascus. Growing concern and calls to disclosure his fate*, 17 May 2025.

¹²³⁶ CPJ, *Israeli forces chase, hold, and shoot at journalists in southern Syria*, 8 August 2025.

¹²³⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian Kurdish-led authority calls on Damascus to free journalist*, 28 June 2025; CPJ, *Kurdish journalist Hassan Zaza detained in Syria, whereabouts unknown*, 30 June 2025; The New Arab, *Journalist freed in Syria after brief detention as press fears grow*, 2 July 2025.

¹²³⁸ SOHR, *After being detained for a week. Syrian authorities release Kurdish journalist "Hassan Zaza" in Damascus*, 3 July 2025.

¹²³⁹ The Syrian Observer, *Syrian security arrests journalist Nour al-Hassan in Quneitra over media work*, 2 July 2025; The New Arab, *Journalist freed in Syria after brief detention as press fears grow*, 2 July 2025.

During the escalation of violence in Suweida in mid-July 2025, several journalists became victims of the violence. For example, a photojournalist from *Suwayda24* was fatally struck on 14 July 2025 while reporting on the fighting in the village of Ta'ara.¹²⁴⁰ Furthermore, on 15 July 2025 a reporter from the local media collective *Ahrar Horan* was hit by shrapnel during a drone attack. A freelance journalist was injured in the hand the same day by a sniper's bullet.¹²⁴¹

One case that caused controversy on social media concerned the arrest of an Alawite journalist in the Mezzeh district of Damascus on 26 July 2025. This reportedly occurred in connection with her Facebook posts. She was released on 30 July 2025 on procedural grounds, because she had allegedly been arrested without a warrant. Following her release, the Minister of Information stated that he had requested her release and that his ministry would stand surety for the bail. A warrant was subsequently issued nonetheless. According to the public prosecutor, her release had no effect on the case brought against her. She was reportedly charged with inciting sectarianism.¹²⁴²

On 3 August 2025, the lifeless body of a journalist and media activist was reportedly found in his apartment in the Al-Joura district of Deir ez-Zor. This activist had documented human rights violations in Deir ez-Zor. A few days before his death, he had been released by internal security forces. He had returned from Germany a month earlier. According to some, his body showed signs of torture. On 5 August 2025, the commander of the internal security forces in Deir ez-Zor announced an investigation into his death.¹²⁴³

According to various sources, on 24 September 2025 the authorities detained a journalist at the Jdeidat Yabous (Rural Damascus province) / Masnaa (Beka province, Lebanon) border crossing. He was released on bail the following day. According to the Ministry of the Interior, his arrest was connected to documents concerning the Sednaya military prison that he had in his possession.¹²⁴⁴

According to SOHR, on 4 October 2025 unidentified armed men shot a journalist and her father in the city of Latakia.¹²⁴⁵

On 14 December 2025, security forces arrested a journalist in Damascus. Reportedly, a lawyer had filed a complaint against him, among others on charges of defamation and slander.¹²⁴⁶

¹²⁴⁰ CPJ, *Syrian photojournalist killed while covering clashes in Sweida*, 30 July 2025; IFJ, *Syria: One journalist killed, several attacked amid clashes in Sweida*, 8 August 2025; IFJ, *Sari Majid Al-Shoufi*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹²⁴¹ CPJ, *Journalist killed, wounded, media office damaged in Syria violence*, 30 July 2025.

¹²⁴² SOHR, *Without charges. Journalist Noor Suleiman arrested for the second time*, 29 July 2025; The New Arab, *Syrian journalist Noor Suleiman released after arrest in Damascus*, 30 July 2025; SANA, *Damascus judiciary affirms legal measures against Nour Suleiman despite her release*, 31 July 2025.

¹²⁴³ BBC Monitoring, *Activist 'found hanged' in his home in east Syria*, 3 August 2025; Deir ez-Zor 24, *Syrian authorities arrest suspect in killing of media activist in Deir Ezzor*, 4 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *From Germany to Deir ez-Zor: The untold story of activist Kandi Al-Adai before his assassination*, 6 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

¹²⁴⁴ The New Arab, *Outrage after Syria detains Prisons Museum co-founder Amer Matar*, 25 September 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Arrest and release of Syrian journalist sparks controversy over human rights museum*, 26 September 2025; Syriac Press, *Journalist and human rights advocate Amer Matar released by Syrian authorities*, 26 September 2025.

¹²⁴⁵ SOHR, *Ongoing security chaos. Unidentified gunmen attack journalist's house in Latakia*, 6 October 2025.

¹²⁴⁶ The Syrian Observer, *Damascus solicitor general orders release of Syrian journalist Iyad Sharbaji*, 16 December 2025.

According to various sources, on 6 January 2026 the National Guard Forces in the city of Suweida reportedly shot a journalist in the leg and then took him to an unknown location.¹²⁴⁷

In Northeast Syria, journalists could also encounter problems.¹²⁴⁸ For example, in early July 2025 the asayish arrested a reporter for *Kurdistan24* who had travelled from Iraq to visit family in the village of Amuda in Hasaka province. He was released the following day.¹²⁴⁹ Furthermore, on 8 December 2025 the SDF arrested a journalist in his home in Raqqa on charges of collaborating with the transitional government.¹²⁵⁰

3.3.4

Demonstrators

Small-scale demonstrations and strikes took place almost daily in the control area of the transitional government, for example calling for salary increases, permanent contracts, payment of salaries, better working conditions, reforms or transitional justice.¹²⁵¹ In such cases, the authorities generally did not intervene.¹²⁵²

On 18 July 2025, activists held a sit-in in front of the parliament building in Damascus. A group of unidentified men, some of whom were carrying wooden sticks, attacked several of these activists. The internal security forces present did not intervene.¹²⁵³

On 25 November 2025, tens of thousands of Alawites protested in various locations in Latakia, Tartous, Homs and Hama against the violence that had flared up in Homs two days earlier following a double murder (see paragraph 2.2.8.2). In the city of Latakia, this led to a counter-demonstration during which insults were shouted at Alawites. Security forces fired into the air in order to disperse both groups of demonstrators.¹²⁵⁴ In the city of Jableh in Latakia province, clashes reportedly took place between demonstrators and supporters of the transitional government. Several people were injured.¹²⁵⁵ In response to these protests, President Al-Sharaa delivered a televised speech on 27 November 2025 in which he called for national unity.¹²⁵⁶

Demonstrations also took place in Northeast Syria, for example in support of a democratic and decentralised Syria.¹²⁵⁷ No reports were found indicating that the SDF intervened in these demonstrations.

¹²⁴⁷ SANA, *Journalist Murhaf al-Shaer kidnapped by National Guard militia in Sweida*, 7 January 2026; L24, *National Guard leader shoots and abducts journalist in Suwayda*, 7 January 2026; Syria Weekly, *January 6-13, 2026*, 13 January 2026.

¹²⁴⁸ Syria Direct, *Restrictions on local journalists in northeastern Syria multiply*, 4 July 2024.

¹²⁴⁹ Kurdistan24, *Kurdistan24 urges immediate release of employee in Northeastern Syria*, 3 July 2025; Kurdistan24, *Kurdistan employee Raman Abdulsalam Hiso released*, 3 July 2025; SNHR, *The Syrian Democratic Forces arrested journalist Raman Hasso in the town of Amuda in the Hasaka countryside on July 1, 2025*, 4 July 2025.

¹²⁵⁰ RSF, *Northeastern Syria's Kurdish authorities must free journalist held for past month*, 7 January 2026.

¹²⁵¹ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 39*, 8 September 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Unprecedented teachers' protests demand justice and fair pay*, 12 November 2025; CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 11; The New Arab, *Why Syria needs better governance...and a new kind of opposition*, 9 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁵² Syriac Press, *Daramsuq silent protesters attacked as Syrians demand end to bloodshed*, 19 July 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source,, September 2025.

¹²⁵³ SNHR, *Call on the Syrian government to prosecute those who attacked civil activists during a peaceful protest in front of the people's assembly in Damascus*, 20 July 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁵⁴ Reuters, *Syrian security forces use gunfire to disperse rival protests in Alawite heartland*, 26 November 2025.

¹²⁵⁵ The New Arab, *Alawites protest on Syrian coast following sectarian violence*, 25 November 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Violence reported as thousands protest in Syria's Alawite heartland*, 25 November 2025.

¹²⁵⁶ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria president urges unity after mass Alawite protests*, 28 November 2025.

¹²⁵⁷ Rudaw, *Thousands rally for a decentralized Syria in Rojava*, 17 September 2025.

3.4 Freedom of movement

3.4.1 Travelling in Syria

Civilians were generally able to travel unhindered within the control area of the transitional government. From Damascus, civilians could travel to other parts of the country. According to various sources, freedom of movement between locations was largely unrestricted.¹²⁵⁸

Because of widespread criminality, the poor security situation and the condition of the roads, travelling in Syria was not without danger.¹²⁵⁹ Travelling after sunset was not considered safe because of the poor state of the roads, the lack of nationwide mobile network coverage and the absence of street lighting.¹²⁶⁰ Travellers sometimes became victims of theft, robbery, abduction or shootings.¹²⁶¹ For example, on 17 August 2025 unidentified armed men attacked a minibus in Daraa. The passengers were travelling from Sahnaya in Rural Damascus province to Suweida. The twelve occupants, including six women, were subsequently abducted.¹²⁶² In addition, in September 2025 there were reports of the abduction and disappearance of several young Kurdish women on the road from Deir Hafer to Aleppo.¹²⁶³ ISIS cells were active in some areas (see paragraph 2.1.3).¹²⁶⁴

As a result of skirmishes and escalations of violence, the transitional government's security forces temporarily closed roads leading to the northeast and the south of the country.¹²⁶⁵ For example, the highway between Damascus and Suweida was closed in July and August 2025.¹²⁶⁶ Furthermore, from 6 October 2025 onwards, the transitional government's security forces temporarily closed the access roads to the Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah neighbourhoods in the city of Aleppo.¹²⁶⁷ In 2025, several crossings for civilian and commercial traffic were in use between the control areas of the transitional government and the SDF. The crossing at Deir Hafer on the road from Aleppo to Raqqa closed in early October 2025.¹²⁶⁸ The crossing at Tabqa on the road from Homs to Raqqa also closed in early October 2025.¹²⁶⁹ The crossing

¹²⁵⁸ NRC, *Unlocking rights in Northeast Syria: The importance of civil and legal documentation*, 2 July 2025, p. 14; IOM, *Syrian Arab Republic. Communities of return index. June 2025. Round 2*, 6 August 2025, p. 7.

¹²⁵⁹ Confidential source, September 2025, confidential source, October 2025.

¹²⁶⁰ The New York Times, *A shattered city asks for its sacrifice to be repaid*, 31 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁶¹ Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Security incidents disrupt Busra al-Sham corridor to Suwayda in southern Syria*, 22 August 2025; confidential source, August 2025.

¹²⁶² Syria Weekly, *August 12-19, 2025*, 19 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian interior ministry announces release of kidnapped aid workers in Daraa*, 21 August 2025.

¹²⁶³ SOHR, *Amid public appeals to disclose her whereabouts. Displaced woman from Afrin arrested by "National Army" factions on Deir Hafer-Aleppo highway*, 14 September 2025; SOHR, *Unknown fate. Young girl from Derek reported missing on Deir Hafer road in Aleppo*, 14 September 2025; Rudaw, *Three Kurdish girls, including a German citizen abducted in Damascus-held town*, 16 September 2025; Rudaw, *Syria captors threaten to kill Kurdish-German girl if family fails to pay \$100k*, 17 September 2025.

¹²⁶⁴ U.S. Central Command, *CENTCOM degrades ISIS in Syria*, 12 November 2025.

¹²⁶⁵ Enab Baladi, *Damascus sets date to reopen Suwayda highway*, 22 August 2025; Welat TV, *Syrian government closes Athreya road linking its areas to SDF-controlled territories*, 5 October 2025.

¹²⁶⁶ DW, *Syria: Dozens killed in sectarian clashes*, 14 July 2025; UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Flash update No. 6. Escalation of hostilities in As-Sweida governorate. As of 5 August 2025*, August 2025, p. 2; BBC Monitoring, *First aid convoy enters Syria's Sweida as highway reopens after deadly clashes*, 28 August 2025.

¹²⁶⁷ North Press Agency, *Security tensions rise in Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah in Aleppo*, 6 October 2025; +963, *Government forces block roads to Kurdish neighborhoods in Aleppo*, 6 October 2025; Syria Direct, *In Aleppo's Kurdish neighborhoods, another setback for SDF-Damascus integration*, 9 October 2025; North Press Agency, *Syrian authorities reopen roads to Kurdish neighborhoods in Aleppo*, 9 October 2025; SOHR, *After blocking lasted for weeks. Transitional government reopen roads leading to Al-Ashrafiyah and Sheikh Magsoud neighbourhoods*, 22 October 2025; SOHR, *After removing checkpoint. Roads of Al-Sheikh Maqsoud and Al-Ashrafiyah opened as others remain closed*, 24 October 2025.

¹²⁶⁸ SOHR, *Turkish reinforcements. Highway between Aleppo and Al-Raqqa and roads leading to Deir Hafer closed*, 27 September 2025; Rudaw, *Damascus shuts 'vital arteries' linking Rojava to Syrian interior: Sources*, 5 October 2025; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 22 October 2025; This Week in Northern Syria, *Weekend notes*, 22 November 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

¹²⁶⁹ Rudaw, *Damascus shuts 'vital arteries' linking Rojava to Syrian interior: sources*, 5 October 2025; This Week in Northern Syria, *Weekend notes*, 22 November 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

at Madan on the road from Deir ez-Zor to Raqqa closed on 20 November 2025.¹²⁷⁰ Only the crossing via the unpaved bridge on the road from Deir ez-Zor to Hasaka near Mayadin remained open for a longer period.¹²⁷¹

In Suweida, the security situation made it difficult for civilians and aid workers to travel between the control area of the transitional government and the city of Suweida.¹²⁷² According to one source, travel to villages in Suweida that were under the control of the transitional government and armed Bedouins was not possible.¹²⁷³

Travel to some parts of Quneitra was not always possible because of the presence of checkpoints and barriers of the Israeli army.¹²⁷⁴

The so-called expat card was a residence document issued by DAANES.¹²⁷⁵ According to the humanitarian organisation Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), until December 2024 Syrians from outside Northeast Syria were required to apply for this residence permit if they wanted to settle in Northeast Syria or visit the area. The requirement to apply for this document applied both to Syrians originally from outside Northeast Syria and to Syrians moving between different regions within Northeast Syria. In areas under DAANES control, security forces checked passers-by for this residence permit at checkpoints. According to NRC, from May 2025 onwards anyone could enter areas under DAANES control without having to show this residence permit. In addition, internally displaced persons staying in camps in areas under DAANES control were only allowed to travel with permission from the camp management.¹²⁷⁶

3.4.2 Checkpoints

In the control area of the transitional government, checkpoints in urban areas were generally staffed by the internal security forces. In rural areas, they were generally staffed by soldiers of the Syrian army.¹²⁷⁷ At some checkpoints, both the internal security forces and local police officers and soldiers were present.¹²⁷⁸ According to one source, it was not always clear who was exactly manning the checkpoints, for example because insignia were missing from uniforms.¹²⁷⁹ According to another source, at some checkpoints the white-and-black flag bearing the Islamic declaration of faith was displayed.¹²⁸⁰

In general, checkpoints were located at important traffic junctions, along the access roads and main roads of large cities, and near some government buildings.¹²⁸¹ According to one source, there were few checkpoints within Damascus itself. There were several between Damascus and the various suburbs. According to the same source, there were more than ten checkpoints on the road from Damascus to

¹²⁷⁰ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian war monitor highlights 'abuses' at crossings by government forces*, 21 November 2025; This Week in Northern Syria, *Weekend notes*, 22 November 2025.

¹²⁷¹ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 22 October 2025, p. 3; This Week in Northern Syria, *Weekend notes*, 22 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁷² X.com, *Wladimir van Wilgenburg*, 6 October 2025, [url](#); UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 22 October 2025, p. 3; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁷³ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁷⁴ Etana, *Brief: Recent developments in south-west Syria*, 7 October 2025, p. 1.

¹²⁷⁵ JFL, *Expat card in Northeastern Syria. Considerable controversy and consensus to take measures to preserve the rights of civilians*, February 2022, p. 7; JFL, *Expat card: restricting freedom of movement in North and East Syria*, 1 May 2023; Enab Baladi, *Deir Ezzor: Displaced people without IDs amid restrictions and aid deprivation*, 9 November 2023; Enab Baladi, *AANES calls on refugees in Turkey to return*, 10 July 2024; ACCORD, *Anfragebeantwortung zu Syrien*, 22 November 2024.

¹²⁷⁶ NRC, *Unlocking rights in Northeast Syria: The importance of civil and legal documentation*, 2 July 2025, p. 14.

¹²⁷⁷ Syria Revisited, *A new Syria starts to take shape*, 29 September 2025.

¹²⁷⁸ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

¹²⁷⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁸⁰ Confidential source, November 2025.

¹²⁸¹ Confidential source, September 2025.

Aleppo.¹²⁸² Temporary checkpoints were set up near areas experiencing major social unrest, criminal activity and escalating violence.¹²⁸³ For example, after the violence in the coastal region in March 2025, the transitional government's security forces set up temporary checkpoints in various locations in the provinces of Latakia and Tartous. In August 2025, the Syrian media outlet *Enab Baladi* reported that it had observed checkpoints being removed in several large towns and villages in Latakia and Tartous, leaving only a few checkpoints on the outskirts of Baniyas and Jableh.¹²⁸⁴ Temporary checkpoints were also set up by the transitional government's security forces along the access roads to the Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiya neighbourhoods in the city of Aleppo.¹²⁸⁵

In Northeast Syria, checkpoints were staffed by SDF fighters and the asayish. They sometimes set up temporary checkpoints, for example during security operations.¹²⁸⁶ During ground operations in southern Syria, the Israeli army also sometimes set up temporary checkpoints.¹²⁸⁷

3.4.3 Procedure at checkpoints

The procedures in place at checkpoints in the control area of the transitional government could vary from one checkpoint to another. In most cases, vehicles were allowed to pass through unhindered.¹²⁸⁸ According to one source, the level of supervision at checkpoints in Latakia and Tartous was low.¹²⁸⁹ In some cases, identity documents were checked and vehicles searched.¹²⁹⁰ In Aleppo, private photographs on mobile phones were sometimes inspected.¹²⁹¹ According to one source, the internal security forces particularly asked civilians about their religious background at checkpoints in Homs and Aleppo.¹²⁹² On some occasions, the security forces fired at vehicles if drivers refused to stop.¹²⁹³ At checkpoints on the road to Northeast Syria, drivers sometimes had to stop and explain the purpose of their journey.¹²⁹⁴ According to one source, extensive checks were carried out at checkpoints on the three access roads from Daraa to Suweida.¹²⁹⁵

The crossing in Deir ez-Zor province to the SDF control area consisted of a narrow unpaved bridge over the Euphrates.¹²⁹⁶ There, the SDF carried out identity checks.¹²⁹⁷ In some cases, mobile phones were checked and travellers had to

¹²⁸² Confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁸³ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian media outlet warns of escalating violence in Hama*, 14 October 2025; Logistics Cluster & WFP, *Syria. Meeting minutes. Damascus, 14 October 2025*, 22 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁸⁴ Enab Baladi, *"Syrian interior ministry" removes checkpoints from areas in Syria's coast*, 16 August 2025.

¹²⁸⁵ SOHR, *After removing checkpoint. Roads of Al-Sheikh Maqsoud and Al-Ashrafiya opened as others remain closed*, 24 October 2025; SOHR, *Seige on Al-Sheikh Maqsoud and Al-Ashrafiya neighbourhoods. Checkpoints reestablished and prevention of entry of fuels in Aleppo*, 13 December 2025.

¹²⁸⁶ Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Weeks 42-43*, 7 October 2025; Reuters, *Kurdish-led force says armed group attacks Syria prison holding thousands of Islamic State members*, 19 January 2026.

¹²⁸⁷ SANA, *Israeli forces conduct incursion in Rwhinah Town, Quneitra countryside*, 17 October 2025; SANA, *Israeli forces infiltrate into Ofania village of Quneitra*, 7 November 2025; SANA, *Israeli forces set up checkpoints in Quneitra countryside*, 17 November 2025.

¹²⁸⁸ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁸⁹ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

¹²⁹⁰ Qantara, *Why women in Syria are disappearing*, 6 June 2025.

¹²⁹¹ SOHR, *For "possessing images containing Kurdish symbols on his mobile phone". Young man arrested in Aleppo countryside*, 29 June 2025; SOHR, *Ongoing violations. "Al-Hamzat" and "Al-Amshat" launch new arrest campaign in Aleppo*, 1 July 2025.

¹²⁹² Confidential source, September 2025.

¹²⁹³ Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

¹²⁹⁴ Confidential source, November 2025.

¹²⁹⁵ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

¹²⁹⁶ SOHR, *Deir Ezzor. Soil bridge between SDF-held areas and areas controlled by Damascus government reopened, hours after reporting its closure by SOHR*, 14 June 2025; SOHR, *Deir Ezzor crossings between SDF-controlled areas and areas controlled by transitional government opened for humanitarian cases*, 6 October 2025.

¹²⁹⁷ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

explain the purpose of their journey.¹²⁹⁸ At some SDF checkpoints, all bus passengers had to get off the bus.¹²⁹⁹

3.4.4 Problems at checkpoints

According to various sources, non-Sunni civilians were sometimes subjected to humiliation and intrusive questioning at checkpoints.¹³⁰⁰

According to various sources, on 1 July 2025 the Ministry of the Interior sent internal security forces from Damascus to Daraa province to take control of a checkpoint along the highway from Damascus to Suweida near the village of Al-Masmiya after travellers had complained about extortion and the imposition of arbitrary fines.¹³⁰¹

In Northeast Syria, some travellers could also encounter problems. According to an article by *Enab Baladi*, residents of the town of Abu Hammam in Deir ez-Zor province complained about theft and robbery at SDF checkpoints.¹³⁰² In some cases, conscripts were detained at checkpoints during recruitment campaigns and transferred to the HXP (see paragraph 1.2.2.2).¹³⁰³ In that connection, SNHR reported that arrests took place between 29 September and 5 October 2025 at checkpoints at the entrances to the city of Raqqa and surrounding villages.¹³⁰⁴

3.4.5 International airports of Damascus and Aleppo

At least fifteen international airlines resumed their commercial flights to and from Damascus and Aleppo.¹³⁰⁵ For example, the Romanian airline started direct flights between Bucharest and Damascus in June 2025.¹³⁰⁶

3.5 Legal protection

In general, civilians in the control area of the transitional government were able to report crimes at police stations.¹³⁰⁷ The degree of assistance and protection provided varied by station and depended on local circumstances.¹³⁰⁸ One source described the functioning of legal protection as chaotic and unsystematic.¹³⁰⁹ For example, not all areas had an operational general system for filing reports. There

¹²⁹⁸ Syria Weekly, *June 3-10, 2025*, 10 June 2025; Syria Weekly, *September 9-16, 2025*, 16 September 2025.

¹²⁹⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁰⁰ The New York Times, *Clashing visions of Syria's future play out in ancient alleys of Damascus*, 11 August 2025; SOHR, *After having been humiliated. Alawite civilian killed at Al-Mashrafah checkpoint*, 30 September 2025; SOHR, *Cold blooded murder. Civilian killed in Azrael village by gunmen at mobile checkpoint*, 30 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁰¹ SOHR, *Ongoing violations. Damascus-Al-Suwayda road blocked at Al-Masmiyah checkpoint*, 1 July 2025; Asharq Al-Awsat, *Violence in Southern Syria fueled by tribal, sectarian tensions*, 3 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁰² Enab Baladi, *SDF checkpoints steal from passersby in Abu Hammam eastern Deir Ezzor*, 30 June 2025.

¹³⁰³ The Arab Weekly, *Return of forced conscription in Raqqa undermines fragile SDF-Damascus accords*, 1 October 2025.

¹³⁰⁴ SNHR, *Condemning the widespread detention for forced conscription by the Syrian Democratic Forces in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor since 29 September 2025*, 8 October 2025.

¹³⁰⁵ SANA, *Syrian Airlines launches first flight to Istanbul after 12-year hiatus*, 11 June 2025; SANA, *Flights from Damascus airport to be resumed as of next Thursday*, 24 June 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *First Air Arabia flight lands in Syrian capital*, 11 July 2025; SANA, *Emirates Airlines resumes its flights to Damascus after a 13-year hiatus*, 16 July 2025; SANA, *Turkish airline "AJet" to launch flights to Aleppo as of August*, 18 July 2025; SANA, *New round-trip flights to Aleppo International Airport launched*, 18 July 2025; Arab News, *15 airlines resume flights at Syria's Damascus airport*, 15 October 2025.

¹³⁰⁶ The Romania Journal, *DAN Air officially launches scheduled flights between Bucharest and Damascus. The Romanian airline is the only EU-based carrier operating commercial flights to Syria*, 16 June 2025; Up in the Sky, *Eerste Syrië-vluchten vanuit EU herstart*, 18 June 2025.

¹³⁰⁷ The New Arab, *Syria reboot interior ministry as Damascus seeks to reassure West*, 25 May 2025; Syria Revisited, *Rebuilding security in new Syria: Week 25*, 2 June 2025; Qantara, *Why women in Syria are disappearing*, 6 June 2025; New Lines Magazine, *A rape case highlights sexual violence in Syria*, 18 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁰⁸ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁰⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

was no coherent, standardised approach to handling cases.¹³¹⁰ The priority given to cases varied by station.¹³¹¹ Some cases received little or no priority or were not pursued at all, such as cases relating to gender-based violence or acts of revenge against (former) supporters of the previous regime.¹³¹² In addition, the police faced a lack of experience and capacity to handle cases.¹³¹³ In some areas where the internal security forces were present, the response was weak and ineffective.¹³¹⁴ According to various sources, the authorities sometimes paid some attention to a case only after public controversy had arisen in the media or on social media.¹³¹⁵

3.6 Jurisprudence

3.6.1 The legal system

According to various sources, the legal system functioned poorly.¹³¹⁶ Many judges who had been active under the previous regime were dismissed after the takeover of power.¹³¹⁷ Since then, many judicial appointments were made.¹³¹⁸ Some of those appointed had previously worked in Idlib as legal professionals or judges. They had been trained in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) rather than in ordinary Syrian law.¹³¹⁹ In some cases, they did not hold a law degree.¹³²⁰ In early June 2025, several judges were appointed who had left their posts or had been discharged during the civil war.¹³²¹ Nevertheless, some vacant positions remained unfilled due to a shortage of suitable candidates and a lack of financial resources. In addition, many courts and prisons had been destroyed during the fall of the previous regime. For example, there were no functioning courts in western and eastern Hama.¹³²² There were also no fully functioning courts in the north and east of Afrin district.¹³²³ Furthermore, according to one source, coordination and cooperation between the Ministries of the Interior and Justice functioned poorly.¹³²⁴ There was also a lack of structure and transparency in the courts, meaning that it was not always clear whether cases were handled correctly.¹³²⁵ As a result, many cases remained pending. Only the less complex cases were dealt with, some cases were transferred to other courts, relatively few hearings took place, and relatively many suspects were released for lack of evidence.¹³²⁶ Many civilians also turned to alternatives,

¹³¹⁰ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Department of Asylum and Migration Policy, *Fact-finding mission – Syria*, August 2025, p. 8; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³¹¹ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹³¹² Forbes, *The epidemic of digital violence against Syrian women and girls*, 5 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³¹³ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³¹⁴ STJ, *Looted homes and risky return: Extortions and violations against returnees to Afrin after the regime's fall*, 22 July 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³¹⁵ New Lines Magazine, *A rape case highlights sexual violence in Syria*, 18 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³¹⁶ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³¹⁷ The Syrian Observer, *Syrian Justice Ministry initiates accountability process amid concerns over jurisdiction*, 1 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *The executive's grip on justice: How post-Assad Syria subdued its judiciary*, 4 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³¹⁸ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³¹⁹ Financial Times, *Syria on 'knife-edge' in wake of sectarian clashes, warns UN envoy*, 7 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³²⁰ STJ, *Syria – The newly created position of "sheikh/head of the judicial directorate": Entrenching loyalties at the expense of judicial independence*, 2 October 2025; The Syrian Observer, *The executive's grip on justice: How post-Assad Syria subdued its judiciary*, 4 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³²¹ The appointments were made under Decree No. 70.; The New Arab, *Syrian judges who defected during Assad era reinstated in anti-crime push*, 6 June 2025; Kurdistan24, *Systematic "Arabization": Syria removes Kurdish judges, staff from Afrin courts in sweeping decree*, 3 September 2025; STJ, *Syria – The newly created position of "sheikh/head of the judicial directorate": Entrenching loyalties at the expense of judicial independence*, 2 October 2025.

¹³²² Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Local governance in post-Assad Syria*, 15 July 2025.

¹³²³ Kurdistan24, *Systematic "Arabization": Syria removes Kurdish judges, staff from Afrin courts in sweeping decree*, 3 September 2025.

¹³²⁴ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹³²⁵ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source.

¹³²⁶ De Volkskrant, *'Als er niets gebeurt, gaan we het recht in eigen hand nemen'*, 22 May 2025; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Local governance in post-Assad Syria: A hybrid state model for the future?*, 15

such as informal local committees.¹³²⁷ Several incidents occurred that raised concerns about police violence and the justice system under the transitional government, such as the assault on a judge on 24 May 2025 at a police station in Aleppo while he was conducting an investigation.¹³²⁸

At the end of January 2025, the Ministry of Justice appointed in each province a jurist as head of the judicial directorate. These were jurists trained in Islamic law. Many of them had recently worked in Idlib as lawyers or judges in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). As heads of the judicial directorate, they were responsible for nominating judges for transfers, appointments, leave requests, and the allocation of official residences and official cars.¹³²⁹

On 18 November 2025, two public court hearings were held in Aleppo in relation to the crimes committed in the coastal regions in March 2025 (see also paragraph 1.2.1.7). The first hearing concerned seven supporters of the previous regime who were charged with inciting sectarian unrest, theft and attacks on police officers and soldiers. The second hearing concerned seven members of the security forces who were charged with theft and murder.¹³³⁰

In areas under SDF control, the national court system and the national civil registry offices were not operational.¹³³¹ People from Northeast Syria had to travel to Aleppo or Homs to register life events. It was also not possible to authorise lawyers in Northeast Syria.¹³³² In Northeast Syria, the SDF/DAANES had its own legal system.¹³³³

3.6.2 *The legal profession*

In December 2024, a union council for the Syrian Bar Association was selected consisting of members of the Bar Association from Idlib. This replaced the council that had been elected under the previous regime. Syrian lawyers responded by organising a petition calling for the independence of the Bar Association.¹³³⁴ On 27 July 2025, the union council was dissolved and a temporary council was appointed instead.¹³³⁵

A case that caused considerable unrest among lawyers concerned the arrest of a lawyer in early September 2025. This lawyer was arrested without a warrant and was not given the opportunity to contact his family members or appoint a colleague

July 2025; Kurdistan24, *Systematic "Arabization": Syria removes Kurdish judges, staff from Afrin courts in sweeping decree*, 3 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³²⁷ These are bodies based within the local community that often combine traditional (tribal) practices with religious law (sharia) or customary law, and that resolve local disputes, for example in matters relating to property; Syria Direct, *Daraa residents turn to clan reconciliation over the court system*, 4 April 2024; Atlantic Council, *How Syria's grassroots civil peace committees can help prevent intercommunal conflict*, 1 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³²⁸ SOHR, *Growing tension. Judges and lawyers stage sit-in protest inside Justice Palace in Aleppo*, 26 May 2025; The National, *Assault on Syrian judge in Aleppo leads to fears about integrity of legal system*, 27 May 2025; SNHR, *Statement: the assault by members of the internal security forces on a judge while performing his duties in Aleppo*, 29 May 2025.

¹³²⁹ STJ, *Syria – The newly created position of "sheikh/head of the judicial directorate": Entrenching loyalties at the expense of judicial independence*, 2 October 2025; The Syrian Observer, *The executive's grip on justice: How post-Assad Syria subdued its judiciary*, 4 November 2025.

¹³³⁰ Enab Baladi, *Fact-finding committee announces start of trials for suspects in Syria's coastal-region violence*, 17 November 2025; SANA, *Public trials for coastal region violence suspects open at Aleppo palace of justice*, 18 November 2025.

¹³³¹ Confidential source, 17 September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³³² Confidential source, September 2025.

¹³³³ NRC, *Unlocking rights in Northeast Syria: The importance of civil and legal documentation*, 2 July 2025, p. 7; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³³⁴ Arab News, *Syrian lawyers demand free bar association elections*, 31 December 2024; The Syrian Observer, *Syrian lawyers demand the restoration of bar association independence*, 2 January 2025; Le Monde, *In Syria, lawyers worry about the new regime's stranglehold on the bar*, 20 January 2025; confidential source September 2025.

¹³³⁵ Syria Weekly, *July 22-29, 2025*, 29 July 2025; confidential source, December 2025.

to defend him. After his arrest, his relatives were not informed of the place where he was being held or of the charges against him.¹³³⁶

On 7 September 2025, unidentified armed men shot and killed a lawyer in his home in the village of Ma'araba in Daraa province.¹³³⁷

3.7 Prison conditions

3.7.1 *Operating prisons*

Following the takeover of power, the former detention centres of HTS remained in use, including Harem Prison, Sarmada Prison and Al-Maasra Prison in Idlib province.¹³³⁸ These facilities held prisoners arrested on suspicion of links to *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (Party of Liberation), participation in demonstrations against HTS, or criticism of HTS on social media.¹³³⁹ In addition, Adra Prison in Rural Damascus province and the central prisons of Hama and Homs remained in use.¹³⁴⁰ There were also several military prisons.¹³⁴¹

3.7.2 *Conditions in detention centres*

There was limited information on conditions in detention centres. According to one source, most detention centres were overcrowded. According to the same source, conditions in detention centres were generally poor, but compared with the era of the previous regime, food provision and medical care had improved. Reports of torture and deaths in detention were less frequent than under the previous regime.¹³⁴²

On 29 November 2025, the Ministry of Justice reported that it would open a legal help desk in Adra Prison to provide prisoners with access to legal assistance and the possibility of submitting complaints.¹³⁴³

3.7.3 *Deaths in detention*

There were multiple reports of civilian deaths in detention.¹³⁴⁴ SNHR documented 32 such cases in 2025. SNHR attributed responsibility to the security apparatus of the transitional government, the SDF, local Druze armed groups and the security apparatus of the previous regime.¹³⁴⁵ An overview of several deaths of civilians in detention is provided below. This overview is not exhaustive.

On 31 July 2025, controversy arose over a Syrian who had returned from Germany for a family visit and died in detention around 30 July 2025. He had reportedly

¹³³⁶ SNHR, *A demand for immediate disclosure of the fate of lawyer Malek Mahmoud Al-Juyush who is being detained without legal justification*, 20 September 2025.

¹³³⁷ SNHR, *Mohammed al-Huwaidi was killed by unknown gunmen in the town of Ma'araba in the eastern Daraa countryside on September 7, 2025*, 8 September 2025.

¹³³⁸ SANA, *Minister of Interior inspects prisons in Idlib province*, 24 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³³⁹ Syria Direct, *The exceptions: Prisoners of conscience languish in Idlib prisons*, 14 August 2025.

¹³⁴⁰ SNHR, *At least 658 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in Syria in the first half of 2025 including 72 cases in June*, 4 July 2025, p. 13; L24, *Authorities release detainees in Suwayda amid reconciliation push*, 24 September 2025; SOHR, *Under the supervision of the Red Crescent. 35 detainees, including a 15-year-old boy, from Al-Suwaydaa released by the General Security Forces*, 8 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁴¹ SNHR, *At least 658 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in Syria in the first half of 2025 including 72 cases in June*, 4 July 2025, p. 16; New Lines Magazine, *In Homs, revenge is the only law left standing*, 25 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁴² Confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁴³ Syrian Future Movement, *A law office was opened in Adra prison*, 1 December 2025.

¹³⁴⁴ BBC Monitoring, *Syrian war monitor reports 'violations' in Syrian government prisons*, 4 July 2025; Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025.

¹³⁴⁵ SNHR, *The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria*, 1 January 2026, p. 7.

returned on 26 July 2025 and was arrested by internal security forces near the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. A few days later, the authorities handed over his body to his relatives. Different explanations circulated regarding the cause of death. For example, on 31 July 2025 the Ministry of the Interior stated that he had injured himself by banging his head against a wall and had died as a result. According to his relatives, he had died as a result of torture. In response to the controversy, the Ministers of Justice and the Interior announced an investigation.¹³⁴⁶ In August 2025, the Public Prosecutor of Damascus stated that the criminal investigation had been completed and that the case had been referred to the court.¹³⁴⁷ The results of the investigation were not made public.¹³⁴⁸

On 11 August 2025, the death of a detainee at a police station in the Al-Kalasa district of Aleppo was reported. This led to public outrage and a protest outside the station. According to activists and relatives, he had been tortured to death by police officers. In response, the head of the internal security forces in Aleppo promised a thorough investigation. He announced the detention of four police officers pending the investigation.¹³⁴⁹ The outcome is unknown.

According to SOHR, around 19 August 2025 four civilians of Alawite origin, including two students, died in a prison in Homs as a result of torture. They had reportedly been arrested by security forces in January 2025 in the village of Qanaya in Homs province.¹³⁵⁰

3.7.4 *Detention centres in Northeast Syria*

In Northeast Syria, a network of more than twenty detention centres guarded by the SDF was in place, including Panorama Prison and Al-Sina Prison in Hasaka province. These detention centres held more than 8,000 men from dozens of countries who were suspected of being former ISIS members or of having ties to ISIS. These prisons were said to constitute fertile ground for radicalisation.¹³⁵¹

3.7.5 *Al-Hol en Al-Roj*

The vast Al-Hol camp and the smaller Al-Roj camp in the east of Hasaka province mainly housed the women and children of former ISIS militants.¹³⁵² During the reporting period, the SDF guarded these camps.¹³⁵³ Approximately 2,400 persons were staying in Al-Roj.¹³⁵⁴ Approximately 26,000 persons were staying in Al-Hol, including around 15,000 Syrians, 4,800 Iraqis and 6,300 foreign women and children from 42 different countries.¹³⁵⁵ Al-Hol also included a heavily guarded

¹³⁴⁶ The New Arab, *Syrian man dies 'under torture' days after return from Germany*, 31 July 2025; SANA, *Justice minister committed to holding accountable all those involved in al-Labbad case*, 31 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Jihadists, Islamists add sectarian spin to death of Syrian man*, 31 July 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Conflicting narratives surround the death of Youssef Labbad in Damascus custody*, 1 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian government denies torture in mosque death amid online anger*, 1 August 2025.

¹³⁴⁷ X.com, *Levant24*, 19 August 2025, [url](#).

¹³⁴⁸ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁴⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria arrests four policemen in Aleppo custody death probe*, 12 August 2025.

¹³⁵⁰ SOHR, *Seven months after having been arrested. Four civilians from Alawite community die inside government's prison*, 19 August 2025.

¹³⁵¹ USDOS, *Report to congress on the al-Hol displacement camp in Syria and associated ISIS-detention sites administered by the Syrian Democratic Forces*, 24 September 2025, p. 2; BBC, *Inside Syria's jail for IS suspects as officials say attacks by group are rising*, 26 October 2025; The New York Times, *Clashes erupt around Syrian prisons holding Islamic State fighters*, 19 January 2026.

¹³⁵² Amnesty International, *Syrië moet onwettig detentiestelsel opheffen waarin tienduizenden mensen vastzitten*, 21 May 2025; BBC, *Inside Syria's jail for IS suspects as officials say attacks by group are rising*, 26 October 2025; The New York Times, *Islamic State camps pose a dangerous problem for Syria's leaders*, 10 December 2025.

¹³⁵³ BBC Monitoring, *Around 15,000 IS-linked Iraqis await repatriation from Syria*, 5 July 2025; Enab Baladi, *Security operation launched in al-Hol camp, northeast Syria, after mass escape attempt*, 5 September 2025; The New Humanitarian, *Despite promises, returns from notorious Syrian camp remain rare*, 12 November 2025.

¹³⁵⁴ The New Humanitarian, *Despite promises, returns from notorious Syrian camp remain rare*, 12 November 2025.

¹³⁵⁵ BBC Monitoring, *Around 15,000 IS-linked Iraqis await repatriation from Syria*, 5 July 2025; USDOS, *Report to congress on an interagency strategy with respect to ISIS-affiliated individuals and ISIS-related detainee and other displaced persons camps in Syria*, August 2025, p. 1; BBC, *Inside Syria's jail for IS suspects as officials say attacks by group are rising*, 26 October 2025; The New Arab, *New wave of Syrians leave al-Hol camp for home provinces*, 27

Annex where the women and children who were neither Syrian nor Iraqi were held.¹³⁵⁶ Weapons and actual or potential militants were smuggled into and out of the camp. ISIS also attempted to free people from the camps.¹³⁵⁷ There were also multiple escape attempts.¹³⁵⁸ The SDF carried out repeated operations in these camps to identify ISIS members and weapons.¹³⁵⁹

On 25 May 2025, representatives of the transitional government, DAANES and the International Anti-ISIS Coalition met in Al-Hol and agreed on a mechanism for the return of families from the camp.¹³⁶⁰ Ninety Syrian families were granted permission to leave Al-Hol and return to their original areas of residence in Syria, such as Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor and Idlib.¹³⁶¹ On 15 June 2025, the first group of 42 families, consisting of 160 persons, departed.¹³⁶² At the end of July 2025, a second group of 36 families, consisting of 127 persons, left.¹³⁶³ A third group of 12 families, consisting of 55 persons, departed in October 2025.¹³⁶⁴ According to one source, there were concerns about their integration into local communities, for example because of the conservative views of these families. Many also lacked documentation, for example because documents had been lost during the civil war and the children had never been registered in the civil registry.¹³⁶⁵

In addition, repatriation to foreign countries took place, particularly to Iraq. For example, in October 2025 a group of 249 Iraqi families, consisting of 840 persons, departed for the Al-Jeddah Community Rehabilitation Center (formerly Jeddah 1 camp) in Ninewa province in northern Iraq.¹³⁶⁶ On 1 December 2025, a further group of 240 Iraqi families, consisting of 858 persons, left for Iraq.¹³⁶⁷

3.8 Torture

Torture of civilians reportedly occurred. Both the security apparatus of the transitional government and the SDF were associated with it.¹³⁶⁸ Torture reportedly took place in, for example, police stations, detention centres, at checkpoints and during raids on homes.¹³⁶⁹ No figures were available on the number of cases of

October 2025; The New Humanitarian, *Despite promises, returns from notorious Syrian camp remain rare*, 12 November 2025; The New York Times, *Islamic State camps pose a dangerous problem for Syria's leaders*, 10 December 2025.

¹³⁵⁶ The New Humanitarian, *Despite promises, returns from notorious Syrian camp remain rare*, 12 November 2025; The New York Times, *Islamic State camps pose a dangerous problem for Syria's leaders*, 10 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁵⁷ BBC, *Inside Syria's jail for IS suspects as officials say attacks by group are rising*, 26 October 2025; The New York Times, *Islamic State camps pose a dangerous problem for Syria's leaders*, 10 December 2025.

¹³⁵⁸ Enab Baladi, *Security operation launched in al-Hol camp, northeast Syria, after mass escape attempt*, 5 September 2025; The New York Times, *Islamic State camps pose a dangerous problem for Syria's leaders*, 10 December 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syria Kurdish-led forces thwart escape from camp for jihadists*, 12 December 2025; SOHR, *Attempting to escape. A man, 11 women and 18 children arrested in Al-Hawl camp*, 3 January 2026.

¹³⁵⁹ SOHR, *Security campaign. SDF arrests senior ISIS members in Al-Hol Camp*, 30 July 2025; Asharq Al-Awsat, *ISIS plants explosives in Syria's al-Hol, CENTCOM chief meets Abdi*, 6 September 2025; Shafaq News, *SDF captures senior ISIS leader in al-Hol Camp raid*, 8 November 2025.

¹³⁶⁰ The Syrian Observer, *Damascus and Kurdish administration reach agreement on Al-Hol camp*, 27 May 2025. Confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁶² UN OSES, *United Nations deputy special envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi briefing to the security council*, 17 June 2025, p. 2; The New Humanitarian, *Despite promises, returns from notorious Syrian camp remain rare*, 12 November 2025.

¹³⁶³ The New Humanitarian, *Despite promises, returns from notorious Syrian camp remain rare*, 12 November 2025.

¹³⁶⁴ The New Arab, *New wave of Syrians leave al-Hol camp for home provinces*, 27 October 2025; The New Humanitarian, *Despite promises, returns from notorious Syrian camp remain rare*, 12 November 2025.

¹³⁶⁵ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁶⁶ Shafaq News, *Iraq repatriates +800 citizens from Syria's al-Hol camp*, 27 October 2025; The New Humanitarian, *Despite promises, returns from notorious Syrian camp remain rare*, 12 November 2025.

¹³⁶⁷ EPIC, *ISHM: November 20 – December 4, 2025*, 4 December 2025.

¹³⁶⁸ STJ, *Torture persists: Testimonies and indicators reveal alarming incidents in post-Assad Syria*, 26 June 2025; SOHR, *Torture victims. Civilian dies in SDF prison in Al-Hasakah*, 15 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁶⁹ Confidential source, September 2025.

torture in the different parts of the country during the reporting period. Nor was it clear how many cases of torture in the reporting period could be attributed to the various armed groups.

3.9 Arrests and detentions of civilians

Both the security apparatus of the transitional government and the SDF were associated with the arrest or detention of civilians without legal basis or the required legal safeguards. For example, no arrest warrant was present, or detainees were not shown an arrest warrant.¹³⁷⁰ In some cases, detainees were not informed of the legal basis for their arrest, the precise charges, the evidence against them, or the place where they were being held.¹³⁷¹

At times, arrests were accompanied by a high level of violence. For example, on 31 July 2025 a video circulated on social media showing a raid by the internal security forces on the home of a Syrian in Eastern Ghouta, carried out with considerable violence. The resident had reportedly come from the Netherlands to visit his family. After meeting with the resident's relatives, the Minister of the Interior stated that it had been a mistake. He apologised for it and stated that the head of the patrol and the security personnel who had accompanied him had been arrested. It is not known whether they were subsequently convicted.¹³⁷²

In some cases, family members or lawyers were unable to contact detainees or obtain information about the place where they were being held. In several cases, individuals who were thought to be missing had in fact been arrested by the internal security forces. For example, on 29 July 2025 an unidentified armed group in Daraa reportedly abducted a Syrian who had returned from Germany in mid-June 2025. The armed group handed him over to the internal security forces, who transferred him to Damascus. His relatives were subsequently unable to contact him or obtain information about his exact whereabouts.¹³⁷³ In addition, an Alawite sheikh went missing. In August 2025, it became known that he was being held in Latakia. According to his relatives, his arrest had taken place without an arrest warrant and without formal charges. His relatives were subsequently not permitted to visit him.¹³⁷⁴

According to one source, police investigations were at times carried out by persons not authorised to do so, including clerics.¹³⁷⁵

SNHR documented monthly cases of arrest or detention without legal basis or the required legal safeguards.¹³⁷⁶ In this regard, SNHR noted that, in light of the scale

¹³⁷⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁷¹ SNHR, *The Syrian Democratic Forces arrested Kabriel Shamoun in the city of Qamishli, Hasakah, on June 2, 2025*, 14 June 2025; SNHR, *At least 658 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in Syria in the first half of 2025 including 72 cases in June*, 4 July 2025, p. 16; SNHR, *At least 109 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in July 2025*, 2 August 2025, p. 7; SNHR, *Syrian Democratic Forces arrest Oqla Muhammad Swati in Hasakah city on October 14, 2025*, 16 October 2025; SNHR, *Syrian Democratic Forces arrest two civilians, including a doctor, in Mansoura town, Western Raqqa countryside, October 5, 2025*, 20 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁷² X.com, *Haid Haid*, 1 August 2025, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, *Raid on Syrian returnee sparks uproar among Islamist and jihadist channels*, 1 August 2025; Enab Baladi, *Where it succeeded and where it failed. Syria's interior ministry caught between security setbacks and abuses undermining public trust*, 13 August 2025.

¹³⁷³ ACHR, *Briefing: Security situation facing returnees. Four cases of human rights violations against recently returned Syrian refugees highlight how Syria is still not safe*, 8 August 2025, p. 1.

¹³⁷⁴ USCIRF, *Religious freedom and U.S. policy in post-Assad Syria*, 1 July 2025, p. 3; SOHR, *Prevent family visits. Alawite religious leader Saleh Mansour held without charge in Latakia*, 4 August 2025.

¹³⁷⁵ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁷⁶ SNHR, *At least 157 arbitrary arrests recorded in Syria in May 2025*, 4 June 2025; SNHR, *At least 109 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in July 2025*, 2 August 2025; SNHR, *At least 124 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in August 2025*, 2 September 2025; SNHR, *At least 127 cases of arbitrary arrest and*

of the violations and the exceptional difficulties involved in documenting them, the monthly reports reflected only the absolute minimum of the actual figures, which could be much higher.¹³⁷⁷ In 2025, SNHR documented at least 1,108 cases of arrest or detention without legal basis or the required legal safeguards by the SDF (768 cases), by security forces of the transitional government (252 cases) and by SNA factions (88 cases).¹³⁷⁸

detention recorded in September 2025, 2 October 2025; SNHR, At least 197 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in October 2025, 2 November 2025.

¹³⁷⁷ SNHR, *At least 1,108 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in 2025, of which 52 were recorded in December*, 3 January 2026, p. 3.

¹³⁷⁸ SNHR, *At least 1,108 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention recorded in 2025, of which 52 were recorded in December*, 3 January 2026, p. 5.

4 Return

This chapter addresses return since the COI Report of May 2025. It is not known how many Syrians remained permanently in Syria after their return and how many Syrians decided to leave the country again after their return. Official figures are lacking, and it is not possible for foreign governments and international organisations to monitor this.¹³⁷⁹

4.1 Syrians abroad

Countries in the region have traditionally hosted Syrian migrants. For example, Syrian migrants in Lebanon and Jordan could work through the so-called *kafala* system.¹³⁸⁰ After the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, millions of Syrians fled abroad. According to UNHCR information of 8 January 2026, there were 3,765,583 registered Syrian refugees in the region. Türkiye hosted the largest number, with 2,343,518 persons,¹³⁸¹ followed by Lebanon with 532,357 persons,¹³⁸² Jordan with 420,835 persons, Iraq with 308,226 persons and Egypt with 118,475 persons. A further 43,283 registered Syrian refugees were staying in North Africa.¹³⁸³ The number of Syrian refugees in the region was actually higher, as not everyone was registered. In the case of Lebanon and Jordan, the actual number was considerably higher (see paragraphs 4.2.2 and 4.2.3).¹³⁸⁴

On 11 September 2025, UNHCR published the results of a survey conducted in June 2025 among Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. The survey revealed that 80% of respondents hoped to return to Syria one day. 18% percent stated that they planned to return within twelve months.¹³⁸⁵

Since 2011, hundreds of thousands of Syrians had fled to Europe and beyond. Within the European Union, most Syrian refugee asylum seekers were in Germany (60%).¹³⁸⁶ According to the *Ausländerzentralregister* of the German asylum agency *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (BAMF), approximately 955,000 Syrians were staying in Germany in July 2025.¹³⁸⁷ According to *Statistiska centralbyrån* (SCB), 196,152 people born in Syria were residing in Sweden in 2024.¹³⁸⁸ According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS), on 1 January 2025 there were 166,006 people of Syrian background living in the Netherlands who had been born outside the Netherlands and 26,415 people of Syrian background who had been born in the

¹³⁷⁹ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Department of Asylum and Migration Policy, *Fact-finding mission – Syria*, August 2025, p. 18.

¹³⁸⁰ CFR, *What is the Kafala system?*, 18 November 2022; Mixed Migration Center, *Lebanon's escalating conflict: what are the displacement and migration consequences?*, 10 October 2024.

¹³⁸¹ In the case of Türkiye, UNHCR relies on information from the Turkish government; UNHCR, *Operational data portal. Syria regional refugee response*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹³⁸² An estimated 1.4 million Syrians were in Lebanon. The figure of more than 600,000 refers only to those registered by UNHCR in cooperation with the Lebanese government up to 5 May 2015. After that date, the Lebanese government no longer permitted this registration; The Conversation, *'Lebanon wanted us gone... it was a risk to leave' – Syrian refugees who fled Israeli bombs face hostility and uncertainty on return*, 5 December 2024; UNHCR, *Lebanon – Registration*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹³⁸³ UNHCR, *Operational data portal. Syria regional refugee response*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹³⁸⁴ UNHCR, *Operational data portal. Syria Regional Refugee Response. Lebanon*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹³⁸⁵ UNHCR, *Enhanced regional survey on Syrian refugees' perceptions and intentions on return to Syria*, 11 September 2025, p. 4.

¹³⁸⁶ IOM, *Reconsidering 'home': Aspirations and intentions of Syrians in the Netherlands in the context of Syrian political transition*, September 2025, p. 3.

¹³⁸⁷ DW, *Interior minister says Berlin wants deportation deal with Syria*, 27 September 2025.

¹³⁸⁸ Statistical Database, *Population by country of birth, age and sex. Year 2000-2024 – Syrian Arab Republic - 2024*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

Netherlands.¹³⁸⁹ According to *Statistik Austria*, 104,833 people with Syrian nationality were residing in Austria on 1 January 2025.¹³⁹⁰ According to Eurostat, 46,548 persons born in Syria were residing in Belgium in 2024.¹³⁹¹ In addition, 46,296 people of Syrian background were residing in Denmark in the fourth quarter of 2025.¹³⁹²

4.2 Returns from abroad

In host countries, UNHCR provided advice and information, directly or through partner organisations, to Syrians wishing to return voluntarily.¹³⁹³ Since the end of March 2025, information had been available on the online platform *Syria is Home*.¹³⁹⁴ In cooperation with the Syrian General Authority for Land and Sea Ports (GALSP), UNHCR set up information desks at border crossings with Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.¹³⁹⁵

On 19 January 2026, UNHCR reported that an estimated 1,354,245 Syrians had returned from other countries, including neighbouring countries, between 8 December 2024 and 16 January 2026.¹³⁹⁶ According to UNHCR, most returned to the provinces of Damascus, Aleppo, Idlib, Rural Damascus and Homs.¹³⁹⁷

Syrian nationals could enter the country by showing a document at the border proving their nationality.¹³⁹⁸ This could be a valid national identity card or a valid national passport.¹³⁹⁹ Syrians not in possession of these documents could, at certain Syrian diplomatic representations abroad, including the Syrian embassies in Brussels and Amman, apply for an emergency passport (*laissez-passer*) before returning.¹⁴⁰⁰ In addition, Syrians without identity documents but with an entry in the population register could, after verification by Syrian migration officials at the border, obtain an individual civil registry extract from the population register. On this basis, they were granted entry.¹⁴⁰¹

According to the consulted sources, border procedures were not complicated and border crossings functioned reasonably smoothly.¹⁴⁰² One source indicated that there was no bribery at Syrian border crossings.¹⁴⁰³ On 23 November 2025, the General Authority for Borders and Customs was established. This institution was

¹³⁸⁹ CBS, *Population; sex, age, country of origin, country of birth, 1 January*, 14 May 2025, [url](#).

¹³⁹⁰ Statistik Austria, *Statistisches Jahrbuch. Migration & Integration. Zahlen. Daten. Indicatoren. 2025*, 16 July 2025, p. 25.

¹³⁹¹ HLN, *Meer dan 100 Syriërs keerden dit jaar vanuit België terug naar hun thuisland*, 25 July 2025; De Morgen, *Asielaanvragen Syriërs nog tot eind oktober gepauzeerd*, 6 August 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

¹³⁹² Statistics Denmark, *Immigrants and their descendants disaggregated by country of origin*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹³⁹³ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #52. Syria situation*, 8 November 2025, p. 1.

¹³⁹⁴ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #52. Syria situation*, 8 November 2025, p. 2; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #56. Syria situation*, 5 December 2025, p. 3.

¹³⁹⁵ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #55. Syria situation*, 28 November 2025, p. 1; Syria is Home, *Frequently asked questions - Assistance and financial support - What are the available UNHCR services at border crossing points in Syria?*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹³⁹⁶ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #60. Syria situation crisis*, 19 January 2026, p. 1.

¹³⁹⁷ UNHCR, *Syria governorates of return overview. As of 15th January 2026*, 15 January 2026.

¹³⁹⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹³⁹⁹ Syria is Home, *Frequently asked questions - Documentation and legal matters - What are the immigration entry and/or exit regulations at the Syria border for returnees? What civil documents should I carry when returning to Syria?*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁰⁰ NRC, *Still on the journey home. Challenges and barriers for Syrian refugees in Jordan returning to Syria*, 22 September 2025, p. 11; DTenV, *Aanvraagformulieren Ip Syrië*, 14 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴⁰¹ Syria is Home, *Frequently asked questions - Documentation and legal matters - What are the immigration entry and/or exit regulations at the Syria border for returnees? What civil documents should I carry when returning to Syria?*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁰² Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴⁰³ Confidential source, September 2025.

intended to unify supervision of all land and sea border crossings, free zones and customs services under a single organisational structure.¹⁴⁰⁴

No information was found about Syrians encountering serious problems at the border upon return.¹⁴⁰⁵ Many returning Syrians had exit bans because, sometimes without their knowledge, they were on wanted lists of the previous regime, which had used exit bans to punish, for example, political dissidents and activists. Returning Syrians could have their exit bans removed by public prosecutors or border officials.¹⁴⁰⁶ On 19 November 2025, the Syrian Minister of the Interior stated that his ministry had removed more than 4.8 million procedures relating to exit bans and movement restrictions imposed by the previous regime.¹⁴⁰⁷

4.2.1 *Return from Türkiye*

According to the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), on 15 January 2026 there were 2,339,543 Syrians with temporary protection status in Türkiye (hereinafter: TP status holders). Most were registered in the provinces of Istanbul (409,164) and Gaziantep (329,101).¹⁴⁰⁸

On 8 December 2025, the Turkish Minister of the Interior stated that 578,000 Syrians had returned voluntarily between 8 December 2024 and 8 December 2025.¹⁴⁰⁹ Syrians wishing to return voluntarily could make an appointment online with the provincial PMM office in their place of residence. The PMM would then issue them with a voluntary return form and an exit permit.¹⁴¹⁰ According to UNHCR, voluntary return took place by way of the airports of Istanbul and Ankara, and the following seven border crossings:

- Cilvegözü (Hatay province)/Bab al-Hawa (Idlib province);
- Yayladağı (Hatay province)/Kessab (Latakia province);
- Öncüpınar (Kilis province)/Bab al-Salama (Aleppo province);
- Karkamış (Gaziantep province)/Jarablus (Aleppo province);
- Akçakale (Şanlıurfa province)/Tel Abyad (Raqqqa province).
- Zeytindalı (Hatay province)/Jindires (Aleppo province);
- Çobaybey (Kilis province)/Al Rai (Aleppo province).¹⁴¹¹

From 14 July 2025 onwards, these border crossings were open 24 hours a day.¹⁴¹² According to UNHCR, the provinces of Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus and Hama were the most common destinations.¹⁴¹³

Between 1 January 2025 and 1 July 2025, a “go and see” arrangement was in place. On this basis, some Syrian refugees registered in Türkiye could visit Syria in preparation for their return. Heads of household were permitted to travel back and

¹⁴⁰⁴ SANA, *President al-Sharaa issues decree creating “General Authority for Borders and Customs”*, 23 November 2025; Enab Baladi, *Al-Sharaa establishes General Authority for Border Crossings and Customs*, 24 November 2025; The Syrian Observer, *The establishment of the General Authority for Ports and Customs: How Sharaa seized Syria’s financial and border gateways*, 25 November 2025.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴⁰⁶ STJ, *Syria: Testimonies reveal the continued restriction of the right to movement despite the decision to lift travel bans*, 25 June 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴⁰⁷ SANA, *More than 150,000 travel-ban entries removed to ease citizens’ movement in Syria*, 19 November 2025; SANA, *Interior Ministry is removing restrictions imposed by former regime – Spokesperson*, 20 November 2025; Enab Baladi, *Syrian Interior Ministry removes five million names from travel ban lists*, 20 November 2025; Arab News, *Syria removes 5m people from Assad-era travel ban list*, 20 November 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Syrian interior ministry removes 5 million names from travel ban lists*, 21 November 2025.

¹⁴⁰⁸ PMM, *Temporary protection*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁰⁹ PMM, *Minister of Interior Ali Yerlikaya: “After 8 December 2024, 578,000 of our Syrian brothers and sisters have returned to their country”*, 8 December 2025.

¹⁴¹⁰ Daily Sabah, *Over 410,000 Syrians return from Türkiye since Assad’s fall*, 14 August 2025.

¹⁴¹¹ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #43. Syria situation*, 4 September 2025, p. 3.

¹⁴¹² UNHCR, *Announcement about border crossing with Türkiye*, 13 July 2025.

¹⁴¹³ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #55. Syria situation*, 28 November 2025, p. 4.

forth up to three times in order to facilitate their return. If the heads of the family were unable to travel, another adult family member could go in their place.¹⁴¹⁴ They were then permitted to re-enter Türkiye through the same border crossing through which they had left.¹⁴¹⁵ According to UNHCR, the “go and see” visits took place via the Çobaybey (Kilis province) / Al-Rai (Aleppo province), Zeytindalı (Hatay province) / Jinderes (Aleppo province) and Yayladağı (Hatay province) / Keseb (Latakia province) border crossings.¹⁴¹⁶ According to UNHCR, more than 27,000 “go and see” visits were registered.¹⁴¹⁷ Since the abolition of the “go and see” arrangement on 1 July 2025, a TP status holder automatically lost temporary protection status upon departure from Türkiye.¹⁴¹⁸

See paragraphs 10.2 and 10.7 of the General Country of Origin Information Report on Türkiye of February 2025 for more information on Syrians in Türkiye.

4.2.2

Return from and to Lebanon

According to an estimate by the Lebanese government, 1.1 million Syrians were staying in Lebanon, out of a total population of approximately 5.7 million inhabitants.¹⁴¹⁹ According to UNHCR information of 31 December 2025, there were 532,357 registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Since 6 May 2015, the Lebanese government no longer allowed UNHCR to register refugees.¹⁴²⁰ Lebanon is not a party to the Refugee Convention.¹⁴²¹

During the reporting period, tens of thousands of Syrians returned from Lebanon to Syria for short or longer periods. This took place through both legal and illegal routes.¹⁴²² Because of the porous borders, Syrians were able to travel back and forth illegally with relative ease.¹⁴²³ In some cases, only the breadwinner returned to Lebanon while the rest of the family remained in Syria.¹⁴²⁴

On 1 August 2025, the Lebanese government, in cooperation with UNHCR and IOM, launched a programme for the voluntary return of Syrians.¹⁴²⁵ Within the framework of this return programme, the Lebanese General Security Directorate announced that Syrian and Palestine refugees wishing to leave Lebanon and return to Syria would not face customs duties on furniture, entry bans or fines upon departure until 30 September 2025.¹⁴²⁶ These were usually fines of approximately USD 200.¹⁴²⁷ This measure was extended until 31 March 2026.¹⁴²⁸ Under this programme, UNHCR

¹⁴¹⁴ Syria Direct, *In a Turkish border city swelled by Syrians, many prepare to leave*, 24 June 2025; UNHCR, *Türkiye - Key information for Syrians - Voluntary repatriation to Syria - Movement procedures*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴¹⁵ Syria is Home, *Frequently asked questions - Border and customs regulations - Can refugees leave and return to asylum countries for short periods i.e. enter and exit Syria?*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026; UNHCR, *Türkiye - Key information for Syrians - Voluntary repatriation to Syria - Movement procedures*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴¹⁶ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #30. Syria situation*, 6 June 2025, p. 3.

¹⁴¹⁷ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #30. Syria situation*, 6 June 2025, p. 2.

¹⁴¹⁸ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

¹⁴¹⁹ BBC Monitoring, *Explainer: Lebanon's ambitious scheme for Syrian refugee returns*, 23 October 2025; L'Orient Today, *Around 400 Syrian refugees and migrants leave Lebanon in sixth 'voluntary return' convoy*, 23 October 2025; UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal. Syria regional refugee response - Lebanon*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴²⁰ UNHCR, *Operational data portal. Syria regional refugee response - Lebanon*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴²¹ Treaty database, *Verdrag betreffende de status van vluchtelingen - Partijen*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴²² Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴²³ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴²⁴ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴²⁵ UNHCR, *Lebanon - UNHCR/IOM Supported Organized Voluntary Return Programme*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴²⁶ LCPS, *Lebanon's 2025 Syrian repatriation agenda: Consent under constraint?*, 19 June 2025; Welat TV, *Lebanon allows Syrians to leave without paying fees or fines*, 2 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian refugees return from Lebanon under government plan*, 29 July 2025; UNHCR, *Lebanon. Syrian returns & movements snapshot at 31 August 2025*, 10 September 2025; Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴²⁷ BBC Monitoring, *Explainer: Lebanon's ambitious scheme for Syrian refugee returns*, 23 October 2025.

¹⁴²⁸ UNHCR, *Lebanon - UNHCR/IOM Supported Organized Voluntary Return Programme*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

provided a one-off financial contribution of USD 100 per family member at departure.¹⁴²⁹ Depending on the availability of funds, returned families could receive a further USD 400 upon arrival.¹⁴³⁰ Syrians wishing to make use of this programme could organise their own return in consultation with UNHCR or make use of organised return convoys.¹⁴³¹ These return convoys were organised by the Lebanese authorities in cooperation with the Lebanese General Security Directorate, UNHCR, IOM, the Lebanese Red Cross and other humanitarian organisations.¹⁴³² On 4 December 2025, the twelfth return convoy organised under this programme took place.¹⁴³³

On 12 December 2025, UNHCR reported that an estimated 437,586 Syrians had returned to Syria from or via Lebanon since 8 December 2024.¹⁴³⁴

Voluntary departures of Syrians from Lebanon generally took place via the Masnaa (Beka province, Lebanon) / Jdeidat Yabous (Rural Damascus province) border crossing.¹⁴³⁵ In addition, the Arida (Akkar province, Lebanon) / Tartous border crossing had been in use since 3 June 2025.¹⁴³⁶ The Qaa (Baalbek-Hermel province, Lebanon) / Joussieh (Homs province) border crossing could also be used.¹⁴³⁷ From Lebanon, return generally took place to destinations in Hama, Homs, Idlib, Aleppo and Rural Damascus.¹⁴³⁸

Alongside the considerable number of returns, more than one hundred thousand Syrians also arrived in Lebanon at the same time. In January 2026, UNHCR reported that 115,006 Syrians had arrived in Lebanon between 8 December 2024 and 16 January 2026.¹⁴³⁹ According to various sources, these new refugees were mainly Alawites from the coastal provinces.¹⁴⁴⁰ In addition, there were reports of Syrians who had previously left Lebanon, had returned to Syria, and later left Syria again and returned to Lebanon for various reasons. Reasons mentioned included the lack

¹⁴²⁹ L'Orient Today, *Nearly 400,000 Syrians repatriated from Lebanon in 2025, says UNHCR*, 5 December 2025; UNHCR, *Lebanon - UNHCR/IOM Supported Organized Voluntary Return Programme*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴³⁰ BBC Monitoring, *Explainer: Lebanon's ambitious scheme for Syrian refugee returns*, 23 October 2025.

¹⁴³¹ BBC Monitoring, *Lebanese army oversees 'voluntary' repatriation of Syrian refugees from Arsal*, 10 May 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian refugees return from Lebanon under government plan*, 29 July 2025; SANA, *Some 300 Syrian refugees return from Lebanon as part of a voluntary return program*, 12 September 2025; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #45. Syria situation*, 19 September 2025, p. 1; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #47. Syria situation*, 3 October 2025, p. 4; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #49. Syria situation*, 17 October 2025, p. 1; BBC Monitoring, *Explainer: Lebanon's ambitious scheme for Syrian refugee returns*, 23 October 2025; L'Orient Today, *Around 400 Syrian refugees and migrants leave Lebanon in sixth 'voluntary return' convoy*, 23 October 2025.

¹⁴³² UNHCR, *Nearly 300 Syrian refugees voluntarily return from Lebanon with support from UNHCR, IOM and Lebanese authorities*, 11 September 2025; This is Beirut, *Voluntary return of displaced Syrians from Lebanon enters seventh phase*, 30 October 2025; L'Orient Today, *147 Syrian refugees return via Arida in 9th 'voluntary return' convoy*, 20 November 2025; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #55. Syria situation*, 28 November 2025, p. 2.

¹⁴³³ LBC, *Lebanon's General Security: 12th phase of refugee return via Masnaa border crossing on Thursday*, 3 December 2025; L'Orient Today, *Nearly 400,000 Syrians repatriated from Lebanon in 2025, says UNHCR*, 5 December 2025; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #57. Syria situation*, 12 December 2025, p. 5.

¹⁴³⁴ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #57. Syria situation*, 12 December 2025, p. 5.

¹⁴³⁵ UNHCR, *Border movements and working hours during Eid al-Adha*, 4 June 2025; L24, *Syria and Lebanon cooperate to facilitate return of Syrian refugees*, 12 June 2025; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #47. Syria situation*, 3 October 2025, p. 1.

¹⁴³⁶ Tesaa World, *The Al-Arida border crossing between Syria and Lebanon will open before Eid al-Adha*, 1 June 2025; L'Orient Today, *After reopening of Arida border crossing, traffic already intensifying between Lebanon and Syria*, 3 June 2025; SANA, *Reopening of al-Arida border crossing with Lebanon*, 3 June 2025; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #30. Syria situation*, 6 June 2025, p. 2; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media report on refugees returning home*, 9 June 2025; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #48. Syria situation*, 13 October 2025, p. 2; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #49. Syria situation*, 17 October 2025, p. 1; SANA, *About 500 Syrian refugees return home from Lebanon*, 7 November 2025.

¹⁴³⁷ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #48. Syria situation*, 13 October 2025, p. 1; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #49. Syria situation*, 17 October 2025, p. 2; BBC Monitoring, *Floods trigger bridge collapse, closing Lebanon-Syria Arida crossing*, 3 January 2026.

¹⁴³⁸ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #48. Syria situation*, 13 October 2025, p. 2; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #49. Syria situation*, 17 October 2025, p. 2.

¹⁴³⁹ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #60. Syria situation*, 19 January 2026, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

of housing, the poor economic situation, the lack of work and income, and the unstable security situation in Syria.¹⁴⁴¹

4.2.3 *Return from Jordan*

According to an estimate by the Jordanian authorities, more than 1.4 million Syrians were living in Jordan.¹⁴⁴² On 31 December 2025, 420,835 Syrian refugees and asylum seekers were registered with UNHCR in Jordan. Most Syrian refugees lived outside the official refugee camps, with significant concentrations in the governorates of Amman and Irbid.¹⁴⁴³ According to UNHCR, 52,079 Syrians were living in the Za'atari refugee camp and 34,558 in the Azraq refugee camp on 1 December 2025.¹⁴⁴⁴

According to UNHCR, nearly 180,000 refugees registered with the organisation voluntarily returned to Syria from Jordan between 8 December 2024 and 10 January 2026.¹⁴⁴⁵ More than 26,000 Syrian refugees returned from Za'atari camp and more than 11,000 from Azraq camp.¹⁴⁴⁶ In June 2025, the Emirati-Jordanian Camp (EJC) closed. In the weeks following its closure, 4,932 Syrians returned to Syria. A further 1,147 persons were transferred to Azraq camp.¹⁴⁴⁷

The trailers in which the Syrian refugees in the camps were living remained the property of UNHCR. If Syrians wished to return to Syria from these camps, they first had to return these trailers before they were granted permission to leave.¹⁴⁴⁸ From September 2025 onwards, UNHCR operated a pilot scheme for Syrian refugees wishing to return voluntarily. Each household could receive financial assistance of 70 Jordanian dinars (approximately 85 euros), on condition that they returned to Syria within two weeks.¹⁴⁴⁹ In addition, since 20 January 2025, UNHCR has coordinated and supported bus transport for Syrian refugees from Jordan to their final destinations in Syria.¹⁴⁵⁰ On 4 November 2025, IOM, in cooperation with UNHCR, supported the transport of fifteen Syrian refugees from Azraq camp to their final destination in Syria.¹⁴⁵¹

The Jaber (Mafraq governorate) / Nasib (Daraa province) border crossing was in use for voluntary return.¹⁴⁵² According to UNHCR, most Syrian refugees voluntarily returning from Jordan originated from the Syrian provinces of Daraa, Homs and Rural Damascus.¹⁴⁵³ Jordan did not have a "go and see" scheme for Syrian refugees and asylum seekers.¹⁴⁵⁴

¹⁴⁴¹ Confidential source, September 2025, confidential source, October 2025.

¹⁴⁴² European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, *Middle East and Northern Africa – Jordan*, 14 November 2025, [url](#).

¹⁴⁴³ UNHCR, *Jordan: Irbid field office. September 2025*, 1 December 2025; UNHCR, *Registered refugees and asylum-seekers in Jordan*, 1 December 2025; UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal - Jordan*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁴⁴ UNHCR, *Registered refugees and asylum-seekers in Jordan*, 1 December 2025.

¹⁴⁴⁵ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #60. Syria situation*, 19 January 2026, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴⁶ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #57. Syria situation*, 12 December 2025, p. 5; UNHCR, *Voluntary returns of Syrian refugees from Jordan. UNHCR Jordan – January, 2026*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁴⁷ UNHCR, *Closure of the Emirati-Jordanian Camp. 18 May – 23 June 2025*, 30 June 2025.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Syria Direct, *As Syrian refugees leave Za'atari, some bring their 'caravans' with them*, 27 August 2025.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Jordan News, *27% decline in Syrian refugees returning from Jordan in September*, 22 October 2025; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #52. Syria situation*, 8 November 2025, p. 4; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #54. Syria situation*, 21 November 2025, p. 5; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #56. Syria situation*, 5 December 2025, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵⁰ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #30. Syria situation*, 6 June 2025, p. 1-2; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #52. Syria situation*, 8 November 2025, p. 5; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #56. Syria situation*, 5 December 2025, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵¹ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #52. Syria situation*, 8 November 2025, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵² UNHCR, *Regional flash update #30. Syria situation*, 6 June 2025, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵³ UNHCR, *Voluntary returns of Syrian refugees from Jordan. UNHCR Jordan – January, 2026*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁵⁴ NRC, *Still on the journey home. Challenges and barriers for Syrian refugees in Jordan returning to Syria*, 22 September 2025, p. 27; Syria is Home, *Frequently Asked Questions - Border and customs regulations - Can refugees leave and return to asylum countries for short periods i.e. enter and exit Syria?*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

4.2.4 Return from Iraq

According to UNHCR, 308,226 Syrian refugees were residing in Iraq on 31 December 2025, including 91,635 Syrian refugees living in camps.¹⁴⁵⁵ In most cases, they were staying in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.¹⁴⁵⁶

According to UNHCR, 6,988 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR returned to Syria in 2025.¹⁴⁵⁷ Most returned via the Semalka border crossing near the villages of Faysh Khabur (Duhok province) and Khanik (Hasaka province). Others returned via Erbil airport. The provinces of Aleppo, Hasaka and Damascus were the most common destinations.¹⁴⁵⁸

On 14 June 2025, Iraq opened the Al-Qa'im (Anbar province) / Al-Bukamal (Deir ez-Zor province) border crossing.¹⁴⁵⁹ Iraq did not have a "go and see" scheme for Syrian refugees and asylum seekers.¹⁴⁶⁰

4.2.5 Return from Europe

In the Netherlands, Syrians could apply for return assistance through the Repatriation and Departure Service (*Dienst Terugkeer en Vertrek*, DTenV). This included assistance with the purchase of tickets and travel documents and financial support of up to 2,815 euros in cash per adult. In return, they were required to relinquish their residence rights or withdraw pending applications.¹⁴⁶¹ From 17 November 2025 until 31 December 2025, Syrians could apply for financial support of up to 5,000 euros per adult (2,500 euros per minor).¹⁴⁶² Syrians could also apply for return assistance through IOM and the Dutch Solid Road foundation.¹⁴⁶³ According to DTenV, 945 Syrians had voluntarily returned with return assistance between 2025 and 1 January 2026.¹⁴⁶⁴ This included a group of 84 Syrians who returned on 16 September 2025 on a charter flight organised by the Netherlands.¹⁴⁶⁵ According to information from IOM Netherlands, a further four Syrians voluntarily returned with IOM assistance between January and November 2025.¹⁴⁶⁶ No information is available on the number of Syrians who returned voluntarily without return assistance.¹⁴⁶⁷

Since 13 January 2025, the German BAMF has operated a programme for the voluntary return of Syrians.¹⁴⁶⁸ On 9 August 2025, the German Ministry of the Interior stated that 1,867 Syrians had returned to Syria with financial support from the federal government.¹⁴⁶⁹ On 23 December 2025, Germany deported a Syrian

¹⁴⁵⁵ UNHCR, *Operational data portal - Syria regional refugee response - Iraq*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁵⁶ UNHCR, *Operational data portal - Iraq operation*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁵⁷ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #60. Syria situation*, 19 January 2026, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵⁸ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #57. Syria situation*, 12 December 2025, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Reuters, *Iraq reopens Syria crossing for trade and passenger traffic*, 14 June 2025; SANA, *Al-Qaim-Albukamal border crossing with Iraq reopens*, 14 June 2025.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Syria is Home, *Frequently Asked Questions - Border and customs regulations - Can refugees leave and return to asylum countries for short periods i.e. enter and exit Syria?*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026; UNHCR, *Help Iraq - Private: How to seek help - For Syrians entering and leaving the Iraqi territory through Peshkhabur border crossing point*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁶¹ DTenV, *Ruim tachtig Syriërs keren vrijwillig terug naar Syrië*, 16 September 2025.

¹⁴⁶² The Dutch Ministry of Asylum and Migration, *Kamerbrief over terugkeerondersteuning naar Syrië*, 21 October 2025; DTenV, *Verhoging terugkeerondersteuning Syrië*, 22 October 2025.

¹⁴⁶³ Solid Road, *Speciale chartervlucht naar Syrië op 16 september 2025*, 29 September 2025; IOM Nederland, *Landenlijst herintegratieondersteuning*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁶⁴ DTenV, *Instroom- en vertrekcijfers*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Trouw, *Syriërs kiezen onder druk voor terugkeer. 'In Nederland zagen we geen uitweg meer'*, 17 September 2025.

¹⁴⁶⁶ IOM Netherlands, *Maandelijks cijfers vrijwillige terugkeer met IOM van 2008 tot heden*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁴⁶⁷ NRC, *'Dan ga ik maar', zei hij tegen zijn kinderen en stapte op het vliegtuig naar Syrië*, 17 October 2025.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Handelsblatt, *Syrien-Rückkehrer bekommen Geld für Reise und Neustart*, 17 January 2025.

¹⁴⁶⁹ The National, *Germany's Syrian generation not ready to pack up and go home*, 27 August 2025; DW, *German conservatives seek incentives for Syrian refugees to return home*, 8 September 2025.

man to Syria after he had served a prison sentence in Germany.¹⁴⁷⁰ The Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior (*Bundesministerium für Inneres*, BMI) also had a programme for the voluntary return of Syrians. Since 16 December 2024, this included start-up support of up to a maximum of 1,000 euros.¹⁴⁷¹ In early October 2025, the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (*Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl*, BFA) reported that 644 Syrians had returned with return assistance since December 2024.¹⁴⁷² On 3 July 2025, Austria deported a Syrian man to Syria after his asylum application had been rejected following a criminal conviction.¹⁴⁷³ On 10 September 2025 and 2 October 2025, Austria again deported Syrians who had been convicted of criminal offences.¹⁴⁷⁴ In addition, on 1 October 2025, the Belgian Minister for Asylum and Migration stated that 171 Syrians had voluntarily returned from Belgium in 2025.¹⁴⁷⁵

4.3 Access and settlement

The Syrian transitional government indicated that it was open to the return of all Syrians, provided that return should take place gradually.¹⁴⁷⁶ There were no strict rules for access to or settlement in the control area of the transitional government.¹⁴⁷⁷ Any Syrian who could prove Syrian nationality could gain access.¹⁴⁷⁸ Only Syrians who also held an Israeli or Iranian passport or who had an Israeli stamp in their passport could be refused entry.¹⁴⁷⁹

In practice, most returnees went back to their original area of residence, or to family members in that area, or to a large city near their original place of residence.¹⁴⁸⁰ According to IOM, between December 2024 and December 2025, 1,071,424 Syrians returned from abroad, of whom 97% returned to their place of origin and 3% to other locations.¹⁴⁸¹

According to the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, access to Northeast Syria was strictly controlled by the SDF. In general, persons of Kurdish origin whom the SDF could identify were granted access. In most cases, persons of Arab origin were granted access only if they had a connection with the area. This could be demonstrated, for example, through proof of previous residence, ownership of immovable property, or possession of an identity card.¹⁴⁸²

¹⁴⁷⁰ DW, *Germany deports criminal to Syria after yearslong halt*, 23 December 2025; Reuters, *Germany deports criminal to Syria as pressure mounts on migration*, 23 December 2025; Le Monde, *Germany deports man to Syria for first time since 2011*, 23 December 2025.

¹⁴⁷¹ BFA, *Rückkehrhilfe für syrische Staatsangehörige: Erhöhung der finanziellen Starthilfe*, 16 December 2024.

¹⁴⁷² BFA, *Rund 2.200 Außerlandesbringungen von Menschen aus Syrien und Afghanistan aus Österreich seit 2022*, 6 October 2025.

¹⁴⁷³ Tagesschau, *Österreich schiebt wieder nach Syrien ab*, 3 July 2025; Het Nieuwsblad, *Oostenrijk stuurt Syrische crimineel terug naar eigen land: "Primeur binnen de EU"*, 3 July 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025; Amnesty International, *Austria: European Court of Human Rights denies vital reprieve, allowing man to be deported to Syria*, 25 September 2025.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Die Presse, *Österreich schiebt erneut Straftäter nach Syrien ab*, 18 September 2025; Bundesministerium Inneres, *Abschiebungen nach Syrien – Österreich einziges europäisches Land*, 2 October 2025; Heute, *Österreich schiebt weiteren Straftäter nach Syrien ab*, 2 October 2025.

¹⁴⁷⁵ De Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers, *Commissie voor Binnenlands Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken*, 1 October 2025, p. 12.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Confidential source, October 2025, confidential source, October 2025.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴⁷⁹ France 24, *Iranians and Israelis barred from entering Syria, airport source says*, 17 January 2025.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴⁸¹ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 11. December 2025*, 15 January 2025, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸² Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Department of Asylum and Migration Policy, *Fact-finding mission – Syria*, August 2025, p. 28.

4.4 Problems after return from abroad

One of the main obstacles to return to Syria was the large-scale damage to or destruction of infrastructure, residential buildings and non-residential buildings.¹⁴⁸³ In areas that had been retaken by military means during the civil war, destruction was widespread.¹⁴⁸⁴ According to the World Bank, the provinces of Aleppo, Rural Damascus and Homs were the most severely affected in terms of total damage.¹⁴⁸⁵ According to IOM, damage in Idlib and Hasaka was also extensive.¹⁴⁸⁶ According to one source, 30% of the infrastructure was destroyed.¹⁴⁸⁷

A UNHCR survey published in September 2025 showed that 40% of households owned immovable property in Syria. Of these, 87% indicated that their homes had been destroyed or severely damaged. 12% regarded their homes as habitable.¹⁴⁸⁸ Many Syrians returned to damaged homes or stayed in makeshift accommodation after returning.¹⁴⁸⁹ They often lacked the funds to repair their homes.¹⁴⁹⁰ In many places, returning Syrians faced problems accessing their property because of the presence of explosive remnants of war.¹⁴⁹¹

¹⁴⁸³ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian situation report No. 7 (As of 23 June 2025)*, 30 June 2025, p. 4; UNHCR, *Enhanced regional survey on Syrian refugees' perceptions and intentions on return to Syria*, 11 September 2025, p. 4; The New York Times, *Syria, in ruins*, 19 January 2026.

¹⁴⁸⁴ The New Arab, *Russia's history of bombing civilian infrastructure in Syria*, 16 March 2021; The New York Times, *A shattered city asks for its sacrifice to be repaid*, 31 August 2025.

¹⁴⁸⁵ World Bank Group, *Syria's post-conflict reconstruction costs estimated at \$216 billion*, 21 October 2025.

¹⁴⁸⁶ IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 8 – September 2025*, 24 October 2025, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Confidential source, December 2025.

¹⁴⁸⁸ UNHCR, *Enhanced regional survey on Syrian refugees' perceptions and intentions on return to Syria*, 11 September 2025, p. 5.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Al Jazeera, *Syrians return to villages destroyed by war*, 29 May 2025; Etana, *Study: Between symbolism and substance: Syria's transition at 6 months*, 9 July 2025, p. 4; IOM, *Population mobility and baseline assessment. Round 6 – July 2025*, 18 August 2025, p. 3.

¹⁴⁹⁰ STJ, *Looted homes and risky return: Extortions and violations against returnees to Afrin after the regime's fall*, 22 July 2025; The New York Times, *A shattered city asks for its sacrifice to be repaid*, 31 August 2025; De Volkskrant, *In verwoest Aleppo sterft langzaam de hoop*, 15 September 2025.

¹⁴⁹¹ MSF, *People killed and injured by landmines in Deir ez-Zor as they return home*, 5 June 2025; NRC, *Syrische boeren kampen met extreme droogte en akkers vol landmijnen*, 14 October 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

Households that did not own immovable property had difficulty finding adequate housing upon return.¹⁴⁹² The supply of suitable housing was limited and the continuing rise in rents was unaffordable for many people.¹⁴⁹³

There were serious concerns about the security situation.¹⁴⁹⁴ Events such as the outbreaks of violence in the coastal region in March 2025 (see paragraph 1.2.1.7), the attack on Saint Elias Church in Damascus on 22 June 2025 (see paragraph 2.2.1.2), and the escalation of violence in Suweida in mid-July 2025 (see paragraph 2.2.5.1) contributed to these concerns, especially among non-Sunni Syrians.¹⁴⁹⁵ Weapons were widespread and many armed individuals were visible in public, such as motorcyclists carrying machine guns or grenade launchers.¹⁴⁹⁶ In some cases, returning Syrians became victims of violent incidents.¹⁴⁹⁷ For example, the weekly *Al Majalla* referred in June 2025 to the murder of a man who had shortly before returned from Jordan.¹⁴⁹⁸ SOHR reported in July 2025 on the murder of a man who had shortly before returned from Switzerland.¹⁴⁹⁹ Around 30 July 2025, a Syrian who had returned from Germany for a family visit died in detention under suspicious circumstances (see paragraph 3.7.3).¹⁵⁰⁰ In addition, a journalist and media activist who had returned from Germany died under suspicious circumstances in August 2025 (see paragraph 3.3.3).¹⁵⁰¹

There was a severe lack of employment opportunities.¹⁵⁰² Unemployment was high. In 2024, ILO estimated unemployment among the male labour force aged 15 to 24 at 27.8%.¹⁵⁰³ ILO estimated unemployment among the female labour force aged 15 to 24 at 47.9%.¹⁵⁰⁴ At the same time, the cost of living was high. Most salaries ranged between USD 50 and USD 200 per month. In many cases, these were too low to cover basic daily needs.¹⁵⁰⁵ Because of the liquidity crisis, banks did not grant customers full access to their savings. Since the beginning of August 2025, customers had been allowed to withdraw a maximum of 600,000 Syrian pounds

¹⁴⁹² Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

¹⁴⁹³ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian situation report No. 7 (As of 23 June 2025)*, 30 June 2025, p. 4; CeSPI, *Syrian returning to their homeland from Türkiye*, September 2025, p. 11; NRC, 'Dan ga ik maar', *zei hij tegen zijn kinderen en stapte op het vliegtuig naar Syrië*, 17 October 2025; DW, *Germany's Syrian deportation plan seen as purely 'symbolic'*, 21 October 2025; Nu.nl, *Vrijwillig terug naar Syrië: 'Vreselijke spijt, ik kon beter in Nederland blijven'*, 14 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

¹⁴⁹⁴ UNHCR, *Enhanced regional survey on Syrian refugees' perceptions and intentions on return to Syria*, 11 September 2025, p. 4; Arab News, *Why Syria's uncertain new dawn is straining the hopes of those returning home*, 25 November 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁴⁹⁵ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian situation report No. 7 (As of 23 June 2025)*, 30 June 2025, p. 4; confidential source, October 2025.

¹⁴⁹⁶ DW, *Germany's Syrian deportation plan seen as purely 'symbolic'*, 21 October 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

¹⁴⁹⁷ ACHR, *Briefing: Security situation facing returnees. Four cases of human rights violations against recently returned Syrian refugees highlight how Syria is still not safe*, 8 August 2025.

¹⁴⁹⁸ Al Majalla, *What Daraa's assassinations say about Syria's transition*, 24 June 2025.

¹⁴⁹⁹ SOHR, *Days after returning to Syria. Syrian-Swiss young man killed in Rif Dimashq*, 29 July 2025.

¹⁵⁰⁰ The New Arab, *Syrian man dies 'under torture' days after return from Germany*, 31 July 2025; SANA, *Justice minister committed to holding accountable all those involved in al-Labbad case*, 31 July 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Jihadists, Islamists add sectarian spin to death of Syrian man*, 31 July 2025; The Syrian Observer, *Conflicting narratives surround the death of Youssef Labbad in Damascus custody*, 1 August 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian government denies torture in mosque death amid online anger*, 1 August 2025.

¹⁵⁰¹ BBC Monitoring, *Activist 'found hanged' in his home in east Syria*, 3 August 2025; Deir ez-Zor 24, *Syrian authorities arrest suspect in killing of media activist in Deir Ezzor*, 4 August 2025; The Syrian Observer, *From Germany to Deir ez-Zor: The untold story of activist Kandi Al-A dai before his assassination*, 6 August 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 29-August 12, 2025*, 12 August 2025.

¹⁵⁰² Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵⁰³ World Bank Group, *Unemployment, youth male (% of male labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate) - Syrian Arab Republic*, 7 January 2025, [url](#).

¹⁵⁰⁴ World Bank Group, *Unemployment, youth female (% of male labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate) - Syrian Arab Republic*, 7 January 2025, [url](#).

¹⁵⁰⁵ NRC, 'Dan ga ik maar', *zei hij tegen zijn kinderen en stapte op het vliegtuig naar Syrië*, 17 October 2025; De Stentor, *De worsteling van Somar (23) als hij voor even 'thuis' is in Syrië: 'Ik kreeg steeds die vraag...'*, 18 October 2025; Nu.nl, *Vrijwillig terug naar Syrië: 'Vreselijke spijt, ik kon beter in Nederland blijven'*, 14 December 2025; The New Arab, *Why Syria needs better governance...and a new kind of opposition*, 9 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

(approximately USD 60) per transaction per week.¹⁵⁰⁶ Many Syrians depended on money sent by relatives or friends from abroad.¹⁵⁰⁷

According to UNOCHA, an estimated 16.5 million Syrians, including 7.2 million internally displaced persons and almost 2 million returned internally displaced persons, were in need of humanitarian assistance.¹⁵⁰⁸ An estimated 90% of the population lived below the poverty line of USD 2.15 per day. More than half of the population faced food insecurity and nearly three million people faced severe food insecurity.¹⁵⁰⁹

There were many problems with basic services. The Syrian electricity grid barely functioned and there was a major electricity shortage.¹⁵¹⁰ Because a large part of the power stations and electricity grids had been damaged, partly due to copper theft, electricity from the public grid was available in most places for only a few hours per day.¹⁵¹¹ Those who could afford it installed solar panels and private generators.¹⁵¹²

There was a shortage of water.¹⁵¹³ The country had been facing drought for several years, resulting in problems with water supply.¹⁵¹⁴ Some water sources were polluted.¹⁵¹⁵ There was also extensive damage to water infrastructure. During the civil war (2011-2024), many water treatment plants, pumping stations and water towers had fallen into disuse, and little maintenance had been carried out on water distribution systems, causing significant water loss in transit.¹⁵¹⁶ In some areas, piped water was rationed and was available only once or twice per week, for example.¹⁵¹⁷ In other areas, residents depended on bottled drinking water from shops or on water deliveries by tanker truck.¹⁵¹⁸

¹⁵⁰⁶ Karam Shaar, *Freezing bank deposits gives rise to a parallel market*, 24 September 2025.

¹⁵⁰⁷ The New Arab, *Why Syria needs better governance...and a new kind of opposition*, 9 December 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵⁰⁸ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 1. October 2025*, 20 November 2025, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰⁹ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 21 May 2025; NRC, *Syrische boeren kampen met extreme droogte en akkers vol landmijnen*, 14 October 2025.

¹⁵¹⁰ BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Anger in Syria over massive electricity price hike*, 31 October 2025.

¹⁵¹¹ Open Doors, *Juliette doet verslag uit Syrië: Het is hier fragiel, blijf bidden voor mijn land*, 19 May 2025; De Volkskrant, *Zal sanctieverlichting stabiliseren?*, 24 May 2025; De Standaard, *Oorlog mag dan voorbij zijn, Syrië worstelt nu met grote droogte*, 10 June 2025; NRC, *De Syrische economie komt sputterend op gang: 'De mensen in Aleppo werken altijd door'*, 13 June 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025; IOM, *Syrian Arab Republic. Communities of return index. June 2025. Round 2*, 6 August 2025, p. 10.

¹⁵¹² Etana, *Study: Between symbolism and substance: Syria's transition at 6 months*, 9 July 2025, p. 5; NRC, *'Dan ga ik maar', zei hij tegen zijn kinderen en stapte op het vliegtuig naar Syrië*, 17 October 2025; De Stentor, *De worsteling van Somar (23) als hij voor even 'thuis' is in Syrië: 'Ik kreeg steeds die vraag...'*, 18 October 2025; SOHR, *After blocking lasted for weeks. Transitional government reopen roads leading to Al-Ashrafyah and Sheikh Magsoud neighbourhoods*, 22 October 2025.

¹⁵¹³ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 21 May 2025; NRC, *Terug in hun verwoeste land hopen de Syriërs dat de beloning zoet zal zijn*, 6 June 2025; IOM, *Syrian Arab Republic. Communities of return index. June 2025. Round 2*, 6 August 2025, p. 10; The New Arab, *Damascus is running out of water. The culprit? Climate change, conflict...and Israeli land grabs*, 26 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵¹⁴ Karam Shaar, *Ringling the alarm bells: Syria may be facing its worst drought in decades*, 25 May 2025; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 17 June 2025, p. 1-2; The National, *Syria left high and dry as water system evaporates, experts say*, 6 August 2025; The New Arab, *Damascus is running out of water. The culprit? Climate change, conflict...and Israeli land grabs*, 26 August 2025; NRC, *Syrische boeren kampen met extreme droogte en akkers vol landmijnen*, 14 October 2025; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 22 October 2025.

¹⁵¹⁵ Etana, *Study: Between symbolism and substance: Syria's transition at 6 months*, 9 July 2025, p. 5.

¹⁵¹⁶ Enab Baladi, *Rif Dimashq: Delays in water network maintenance burden residents, reveal funding weakness*, 10 May 2025; Syria Weekly, *July 1-8, 2025*, 8 July 2025.

¹⁵¹⁷ De Standaard, *Oorlog mag dan voorbij zijn, Syrië worstelt nu met grote droogte*, 10 June 2025; The New Arab, *Damascus is running out of water. The culprit? Climate change, conflict...and Israeli land grabs*, 26 August 2025; Syria is Home, *Frequently Asked Questions - Water and sanitation - Will I have access to clean and safe drinking water when I return to Syria?*, URL, accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁵¹⁸ Enab Baladi, *Rural Damascus: Emergency plan to face upcoming water crisis*, 16 May 2025; Etana, *Study: Between symbolism and substance: Syria's transition at 6 months*, 9 July 2025, p. 5; The New Arab, *Damascus is running out of water. The culprit? Climate change, conflict...and Israeli land grabs*, 26 August 2025; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 22 October 2025, p. 3.

There was a severe shortage of functioning healthcare.¹⁵¹⁹ There was a major lack of medical personnel.¹⁵²⁰ There were also shortages of electricity, medical equipment and ambulances.¹⁵²¹ A large number of hospitals and medical centres had been damaged. According to estimates by the Ministry of Health, almost 40% of health infrastructure had been destroyed during the civil war. In addition, between 50% and 70% of healthcare staff had left the country.¹⁵²² According to UNOCHA, 57% of hospitals and 37% of primary healthcare centres were fully functional.¹⁵²³ According to UNICEF, one third of hospitals were not functioning.¹⁵²⁴ Although the Ministry of Health had renovated dozens of medical centres and hospitals and had opened new medical centres, many institutions were still awaiting renovation.¹⁵²⁵ In addition, several hospitals were threatened with closure because of shortages.¹⁵²⁶

Because of a shortage of teachers and the large number of damaged school buildings, there was little confidence that the school system would be able to absorb returning children.¹⁵²⁷ The mass dismissals following the takeover of power had worsened the teacher shortage.¹⁵²⁸ The civil war had also left deep marks on education because school buildings had been damaged or destroyed.¹⁵²⁹ At the beginning of 2026, the Syrian Ministry of Education reported that renovation of 1,003 schools had been completed, while another 1,015 schools in various provinces were under renovation.¹⁵³⁰ Some schools were inaccessible because of the presence of explosive remnants of war.¹⁵³¹ Although hundreds of school buildings had been repaired after the civil war, thousands were still awaiting renovation. According to UNOCHA, around one in three school buildings was unusable because it had been damaged or because it was sheltering internally displaced persons.¹⁵³² In addition, according to UNOCHA, 2.5 million children were unable to attend school.¹⁵³³

Another problem was that many children of returning Syrians faced language deficits. Some Syrian children had integrated into the societies of host countries before returning to Syria.¹⁵³⁴ Children who had grown up abroad were not always able to integrate well into the Syrian education system. For example, they might not be able to read or write Arabic, or they might not have had access to the local education system in the host countries.¹⁵³⁵

According to various sources, there were sometimes tensions between Syrians who returned and the local population that had remained in their places of residence

¹⁵¹⁹ IOM, *Syrian Arab Republic. Communities of return index. June 2025. Round 2*, 6 August 2025, p. 2; The New York Times, *A shattered city asks for its sacrifice to be repaid*, 31 August 2025; UNHCR, *Enhanced regional survey on Syrian refugees' perceptions and intentions on return to Syria*, 11 September 2025, p. 4; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 22 October 2025, p. 3.

¹⁵²⁰ The Syrian Observer, *Syrian doctors in Germany face dilemma: Stay in Europe or return to a country in dire need of medical professionals*, 22 October 2025.

¹⁵²¹ Trouw, *De gezondheidszorg in Syrië ligt in puin: 'We hebben zelfs geen ambulance'*, 9 June 2025.

¹⁵²² Health Policy Watch, *Syria's seeks to rebuild shattered healthcare system – But sectarian violence impedes progress*, 5 August 2025.

¹⁵²³ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 1. October 2025*, 20 November 2025, p. 2.

¹⁵²⁴ UNICEF, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian situation report No. 16, October 2025*, 28 November 2025, p. 2.

¹⁵²⁵ L24, *Syria expands health projects amid reconstruction push*, 2 September 2025.

¹⁵²⁶ UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 21 May 2025; UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 17 June 2025, p. 2; Etana, *Study: Between symbolism and substance: Syria's transition at 6 months*, 9 July 2025, p. 5; IOM, *Syrian Arab Republic. Communities of return index. June 2025. Round 2*, 6 August 2025, p. 10.

¹⁵²⁷ CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 5; confidential source, October 2025.

¹⁵²⁸ Syria Untold, *Fighting corruption or revenge for the past?*, 6 March 2025.

¹⁵²⁹ SARD, *The state of education in Syria*, 2 September 2025.

¹⁵³⁰ SANA, *Syria rebuilds schools, expands digital education*, 4 January 2026.

¹⁵³¹ Confidential source, March 2025.

¹⁵³² UNOCHA, *Briefing to the security council on the humanitarian situation in Syria*, 22 October 2025.

¹⁵³³ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian overview. Issue No. 2. November 2025*, 23 December 2025, p. 5.

¹⁵³⁴ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

¹⁵³⁵ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian situation report No. 7 (As of 23 June 2025)*, 30 June 2025, p. 4; CeSPI, *Syrian returning to their homeland from Türkiye*, September 2025, p. 10; confidential source, September 2025, confidential source, October 2025.

under the previous regime. Those who had stayed were dismissed as loyalists of the previous regime, while those who had left were reproached for having had an easier time and for not having suffered as much.¹⁵³⁶

4.5 Property disputes

A major obstacle to return was the large-scale and legally complex issue regarding ownership of homes, land and other property.¹⁵³⁷ There were many property disputes, some of them long-running.¹⁵³⁸ In Afrin, for example, disputes existed between, for example, internally displaced persons from elsewhere in Syria who had confiscated houses in Afrin and the original residents who wished to return to Afrin. There were also disputes there concerning businesses, fields and olive groves. One of the complicating factors was that many properties were still registered in the names of the original residents' grandparents.¹⁵³⁹

The deliberate demographic engineering¹⁵⁴⁰ carried out under the previous regime complicated return.¹⁵⁴¹ In some cases, land had been expropriated under the previous regime and houses had been built illegally on it, after which ownership had changed hands several times. In addition, there was no proper system for registering property rights. This made it difficult to reclaim property.¹⁵⁴²

In various areas, courts and local committees dealt with establishing property rights.¹⁵⁴³ During 2025, the Ministry of Justice decided that complex cases could no longer be handled by local committees, but only by courts. In practice, there were many problems with the implementation of this decision.¹⁵⁴⁴

In many cases, the properties of returning Syrians had been occupied by others and could not be reclaimed because ownership documents were missing or because false ownership documents existed.¹⁵⁴⁵

In many cases, there was a lack of a fair and transparent procedure. Nor was the law followed in all cases. As a result, much remained unclear and many disputes over property rights remained unresolved.¹⁵⁴⁶ These problems were particularly acute in Homs, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor and the coastal areas.¹⁵⁴⁷ According to one source, some property disputes also appeared to have sectarian overtones.¹⁵⁴⁸

¹⁵³⁶ Etana, *Study: Between symbolism and substance: Syria's transition at 6 months*, 9 July 2025, p. 4; confidential source, October 2025.

¹⁵³⁷ Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵³⁸ Confidential source, 1 October 2025.

¹⁵³⁹ Rudaw, *More Kurds return to Afrin after Damascus-SDF deal: Local*, 13 March 2025; Syria Direct, *'Afrin belongs to its people': More Kurds return to Afrin, while others wait for guarantees*, 30 April 2025; North Press Agency, *Syria's Afrin Kurds see return of IDPs as key to reviving city*, 30 September 2025.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Demographic engineering is a deliberate attempt to change the population composition of an area. In addition, under the previous regime, homes, apartments and other property belonging to Syrians who had left the country had been expropriated by armed actors, particularly in former opposition-held areas, for the benefit of loyalists or pro-Iranian militias.

¹⁵⁴¹ Pax, *No return to Homs. A case study on demographic engineering in Syria*, 13 October 2017.

¹⁵⁴² Confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, October 2025.

¹⁵⁴³ The Syria Report, *Governorates establish committees to restore seized properties*, 3 June 2025; The Syria Report, *Delayed justice: How is Syria's transitional administration managing HLP?*, 8 September 2025, p. 19; Enab Baladi, *Syrian justice ministry moves to address unlawful property seizures*, 24 October 2025; The Syria Report, *Specialised courts assigned to examine Assad-era property ownership cases*, 4 November 2025.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Etana, *Study: Between symbolism and substance: Syria's transition at 6 months*, 9 July 2025, p. 4; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025.

¹⁵⁴⁷ UNOCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian situation report No. 7 (As of 23 June 2025)*, 30 June 2025, p. 4; IOM, *Syrian Arab Republic. Communities of return index. June 2025. Round 2*, 6 August 2025, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Confidential source, September 2025.

4.6 Support for returning Syrians

Vulnerable Syrian families who had permanently returned from Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt could qualify for financial support from UNHCR in the form of a one-off return and reintegration grant (USD 600 in cash per household).¹⁵⁴⁹ Up to 5 December 2025, 36,535 households had received this financial support.¹⁵⁵⁰ UNHCR also provided material support in the form of packages containing blankets, heaters, mattresses and winter clothing. Up to 8 November 2025, more than 17,000 Syrians returning from abroad and returned internally displaced persons had received this support.¹⁵⁵¹

During the reporting period, UNHCR supported 71 community centres where returning Syrians, internally displaced persons and local communities could seek assistance.¹⁵⁵² These centres were located in all fourteen provinces.¹⁵⁵³ The local volunteers and lawyers working there also provided legal support in obtaining civil documents. Some medical aids could also be distributed there. Case management was available for gender-based violence and child protection. Awareness-raising was provided on the presence of explosive remnants of war and on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse. Mental healthcare and psychosocial support were available. Limited financial support was possible for income-generating activities. Inclusive care was also available for older persons and persons with disabilities.¹⁵⁵⁴ On 17 November 2025, UNHCR launched the Arrive Call Center for questions relating to financial support for return and reintegration.¹⁵⁵⁵

In cooperation with local partners, UNHCR provided transport support to returning Syrians at the border crossings of Cilvegözü (Hatay province, Türkiye) / Bab al-Hawa (Idlib province), Öncüpınar (Kilis province, Türkiye) / Bab al-Salama (Aleppo province) and Qaa (Baalbek-Hermel province, Lebanon) / Joussieh (Homs province).¹⁵⁵⁶

UNHCR worked together with other UN agencies, including WFP, IOM, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF, in order to ensure that the different forms of support complemented one another.¹⁵⁵⁷ For example, in cooperation with UNHCR, WFP distributed food to returning Syrian refugees at bus stations in Idlib and Aleppo.¹⁵⁵⁸ In addition, in cooperation with UNHCR, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) distributed hygiene kits to women and girls who

¹⁵⁴⁹ Syria is Home, *Frequently Asked Questions - Assistance and financial support*, [url](#), accessed on 15 December 2025.

¹⁵⁵⁰ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #56. Syria situation*, 5 December 2025, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵¹ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #52. Syria situation*, 8 November 2025, p. 2; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #54. Syria situation*, 21 November 2025, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵² UNHCR, *Regional flash update #52. Syria situation*, 8 November 2025, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵³ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #56. Syria situation*, 5 December 2025, p. 3; UNHCR, *Contact for Syrians. UNHCR supported community centres*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁵⁵⁴ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #52. Syria situation*, 8 November 2025, p. 2; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #54. Syria situation*, 21 November 2025, p. 3; Syria is Home, *Frequently Asked Questions - Assistance and financial support - What types of other assistance can returnees expect e.g., food assistance, core relief items?*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁵⁵⁵ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #54. Syria situation*, 21 November 2025, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵⁶ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #54. Syria situation*, 21 November 2025, p. 2; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #56. Syria situation*, 5 December 2025, p. 1; Syria is Home, *Frequently asked questions - Assistance and financial support - Is transportation assistance available for returnees inside Syria?*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

¹⁵⁵⁷ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #52. Syria situation*, 8 November 2025, p.

¹⁵⁵⁸ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #55. Syria situation*, 28 November 2025, p. 2; Syria is Home, *Frequently asked questions - Assistance and financial support - What types of other assistance can returnees expect e.g., food assistance, core relief items?*, [url](#), accessed on 21 January 2026.

had returned.¹⁵⁵⁹ In cooperation with UNHCR, SARC distributed basic relief items.¹⁵⁶⁰

UNHCR also carried out renovation projects on a limited scale, including the renovation of public buildings, houses and apartments.¹⁵⁶¹

4.7 Reconstruction

In October 2025, the World Bank estimated that the reconstruction of Syria would cost USD 216 billion.¹⁵⁶² Supporting reconstruction were the announcements by the United States and the European Union that economic sanctions would be lifted.¹⁵⁶³ On 11 December 2025, the US House of Representatives voted in favour of lifting sanctions against Syria.¹⁵⁶⁴ Syria also gained access to the international SWIFT banking system.¹⁵⁶⁵

During the ninth Brussels Conference on Syria in March 2025, the European Union raised several billions to support the transition process in Syria and reconstruction.¹⁵⁶⁶ The Gulf States pledged major investments in projects relating to infrastructure, natural gas supply, real estate, telecommunications, information technology and logistics, including the construction of a metro in Damascus, the building of cement factories and the reconstruction of the port of Tartous.¹⁵⁶⁷ These announcements did not, however, immediately translate into concrete results or major injections of funds into the Syrian economy.¹⁵⁶⁸

The transitional government also established the Syrian Development Fund in September 2025, which would focus on, for example, reconstruction projects.¹⁵⁶⁹ Fundraising campaigns for reconstruction were organised in various provinces.¹⁵⁷⁰

There was no large-scale reconstruction during the reporting period. Reconstruction and rubble-clearing campaigns were carried out on a limited scale.¹⁵⁷¹

¹⁵⁵⁹ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #55. Syria situation*, 28 November 2025, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶⁰ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #29. Syria situation*, 30 May 2025, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶¹ UNHCR, *Regional flash update #52. Syria situation*, 8 November 2025, p. 3; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #54. Syria situation*, 21 November 2025, p. 3; UNHCR, *Regional flash update #57. Syria situation*, 12 December 2025, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶² World Bank Group, *Syria's post-conflict reconstruction costs estimated at \$216 billion*, 21 October 2025.

¹⁵⁶³ The New York Times, *Trump says U.S. will lift sanctions on Syria under new government*, 13 May 2025; The White House, *Providing for the revocation of Syria sanctions*, 30 June 2025; Reuters, *Syria hopes for full lifting of US sanctions in coming months*, 21 October 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian media, officials hail US House vote on Caesar Act*, 11 December 2025.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Al Jazeera, *US Congress advances bill to nix Caesar Act sanctions on Syria*, 11 December 2025; ABC News, *Lifting of US sanctions on Syria could spur refugee returns, says UN official*, 18 December 2025.

¹⁵⁶⁵ HLN, *Syrië voltooit eerste banktransactie via SWIFT sinds begin oorlog in 2011*, 19 June 2025; Reuters, *Syria sends first Swift message to New York Fed, central bank governor says*, 20 November 2025; SANA, *Syria's Central Bank resumes SWIFT operations after 14-year halt*, 21 November 2025.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Europese Raad, *Negende conferentie in Brussel over "Standing with Syria: meeting the needs for a successful transition"*, 18 March 2025.

¹⁵⁶⁷ France 24, *In Damascus, US envoy inks \$7 billion energy deal, calls for Israel-Syria peace pact*, 29 May 2025; Reuters, *For Syria, Qatar's \$7 billion power plan hinges on fixing its grid*, 2 June 2025; NRC, *De Syrische economie komt sputterend op gang: 'De mensen in Aleppo werken altijd door'*, 13 June 2025.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Reuters, *Saudi Arabia announces \$6.4 billion in Syria investments*, 24 July 2025; SANA, *The Damascus metro... a base for modern transportation network*, 6 August 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source, September 2025; confidential source September 2025.

¹⁵⁶⁹ SANA, *In the presence of president al-Sharaa, Syrian Development Fund launched*, 4 September 2025; SANA, *Al-Sakkaf: Syrian Development Fund is call to contribute to rebuild the homeland*, 5 September 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Syrian government launches development fund*, 5 September 2025.

¹⁵⁷⁰ The Syrian Observer, *"Absheri Houran" campaign raises \$37 million to revitalise Daraa's education, health and water sectors*, 1 September 2025; The Syria Report, *Fundraisers for reconstruction kick-start at governorate and state level*, 9 September 2025; CA-SYR, *Syria monthly report. October 2025*, November 2025, p. 12-13; confidential source, July 2025.

¹⁵⁷¹ SANA, *Civil Defense removes rubble in Daraya area in preparation for residents' return*, 29 June 2025; De Volkskrant, *In verwoest Aleppo sterft langzaam de hoop*, 15 September 2025; SANA, *Large-scale rubble removal campaign launched in Maaret al-Numan*, 1 December 2025; The Syria Report, *Darayya residents return, but rubble and property issues persist*, 9 December 2025.

5 Annexes

5.1 List of abbreviations used

| | |
|---------|---|
| AB | Country of Origin Information Unit |
| ACLED | Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project |
| ADP | Assyrian Democratic Party |
| BAMF | Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge |
| BFA | Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl |
| BMI | Bundesministerium für Inneres |
| CBS | Statistics Netherlands |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| COI | Country of Origin Information |
| CoI | Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic |
| DAANES | Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria |
| DCA | DanChurchAid |
| DRM | Disaster Risk Management |
| DTenV | Repatriation and Departure Service |
| DTM | Displacement Tracking Matrix |
| EJC | Emirati-Jordanian Camp |
| GAPAR | General Administration for Palestinian Arab Refugees in Syria |
| GALSP | General Authority for Land and Sea Ports |
| GEM | Guardians of Equality Movement |
| GIS | General Intelligence Service |
| HI | Humanity & Inclusion |
| HRW | Human Rights Watch |
| HTS | Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (Organisation for the Liberation of the Levant) |
| HXP | Hêzên Xwe Parastinê (Self-defence units) |
| ICMP | International Commission on Missing Persons |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IDF | Israel Defense Forces |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| IEP | Institute for Economics & Peace |
| IIMP | Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| INSO | International NGO Safety Organisation |
| ISC | Internal Security Command |
| ISF | Internal Security Forces |
| ISIS | Islamic State in Iraq and Syria |
| ITF | International Trust Fund |
| LGBTIQ+ | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other diverse identities |
| MAG | Mines Advisory Group |
| MOC | Military Operations Command |
| NCMP | National Commission for Missing Persons |
| NCTJ | National Commission for Transitional Justice |
| NDF | National Defense Forces |
| NGF | National Guard Forces |

| | |
|--------|--|
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NLF | National Liberation Front |
| NPA | Norwegian People's Aid |
| NPF | National Progressive Front |
| NRC | Norwegian Refugee Council |
| ONSUR | International Association for Relief and Development |
| PKK | Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party) |
| PMM | Presidency of Migration Management |
| PYD | Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (Democratic Union Party) |
| RMCO | Roj Mine Control Organisation |
| RSF | Reporters sans frontières |
| SARC | Syrian Arab Red Crescent |
| SCB | Statistiska centralbyrån |
| SDC | Syrian Democratic Council |
| SDF | Syrian Democratic Forces |
| SFA | Syrian Free Army |
| SMC | Suwayda Military Council |
| SNA | Syrian National Army |
| SNHR | Syrian Network for Human Rights |
| SOHR | Syrian Observatory for Human Rights |
| SSG | Syrian Salvation Government |
| STG | Syrian Transitional Government |
| STJ | Syrians for Truth and Justice |
| SUP | Syriac Union Party |
| TIP | Turkistan Islamic Party |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| TP | Temporary Protection |
| UNDOF | United Nations Disengagement Observer Force |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNHRC | United Nations Human Rights Council |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| UNMAS | United Nations Mine Action Service |
| UNOCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East |
| UN | United Nations |
| US | United States |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| PC | Penal Code |
| YAT | Yekîneyên Antî Teror (Counter-Terrorism Units) |
| YPG | Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (People's Protection Units) |
| YPJ | Yekîneyên Parastina Jin (Women's Protection Units) |

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- *Ongoing reinforcement. Coalition cargo plane carrying military and logistical supplies lands in Al-Shaddadi base, 17 August 2025.*
- *Seven months after having been arrested. Four civilians from Alawite community die inside government's prison, 19 August 2025.*
- *Having been kidnapped 13 days ago. Young man found dead in eastern Aleppo, 24 August 2025.*
- *Dramatic escalation. Israeli forces arrest young man and strike leaves civilian dead in Al-Quneitra countryside, 26 August 2025.*
- *New assassination. Civilian shot dead in Baniyas, 28 August 2025.*
- *Efforts to revive Armenian religious activity. St. Anna church opened in Jisr Al-Shughour countryside, 1 September 2025.*
- *After criticizing prominent figures. Female journalist subjected to arrest attempt in Damascus, 2 September 2025.*

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- *Having been forcibly displaced in 2018. Young man arrested in Afrin countryside after returning to his village, 6 September 2025.*
- *Violations against returnees. Members of "Al-Amshat" division arrest young man and assault his father in Afrin countryside, 8 September 2025.*
- *Aleppo. SDF and Turkish-backed factions exchange shelling, 10 September 2025.*
- *Under torture. Christian detainee killed in Al-Balona prison, 10 September 2025.*
- *Damascus. Humiliating practices targets Alawite people in Al-Worod neighbourhood, 11 September 2025.*
- *SOHR denies any clashes with SDF. Internal clashes erupt among "national army" factions in Al-Raqqah countryside, 14 September 2025.*
- *Amid public appeals to disclose her whereabouts. Displaced woman from Afrin arrested by "National Army" factions on Deir Hafer-Aleppo highway, 14 September 2025.*
- *Unknown fate. Young girl from Derek reported missing on Deir Haff road in Aleppo, 14 September 2025.*
- *Armed attack. Young man from the Druze community killed while herding sheep in Rif Dimashq, 16 September 2025.*
- *Security chaos in Homs. Member of Internal Security Forces killed and two others injured in armed attack on military patrol, 20 September 2025.*
- *Military escalation. Infant dies affected by his injuries, bringing the number of deaths due to massacre in Deir Hafer to eight people, 22 September 2025.*
- *Syrian government shelling. Four children wounded in Aleppo, 23 September 2025.*
- *Affirming military readiness. "Druze National Guards" stages parade in Al-Suwaidaa, 25 September 2025.*
- *Amid ceasefire violations. Drone attacks Al-Majdal village, injuring two persons, 26 September 2025.*
- *Under supervision of Red Crescent and World Food Program. Aid convoy carrying 200 tons of flour arrives in Al-Suwaidaa, 27 September 2025.*
- *Ongoing violations. Armed masked group storms Alawite mosque in Al-Nuzhah neighborhood in Homs city, 27 September 2025.*
- *Turkish reinforcements. Highway between Aleppo and Al-Raqqah and roads leading to Deir Hafer closed, 27 September 2025.*
- *Aleppo. SDF drone attacks two military posts of Turkish-backed faction in eastern countryside, 28 September 2025.*
- *After having been humiliated. Alawite civilian killed at Al-Mashrafah checkpoint, 30 September 2025.*
- *Cold blooded murder. Civilian killed in Azrael village by gunmen at mobile checkpoint, 30 September 2025.*
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- *New assassination. Agricultural engineering academic killed in Tartus countryside, 1 October 2025.*
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- *Ongoing security chaos. Unidentified gunmen attack journalist's house in Latakia, 6 October 2025.*
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- *Second patrol in a week. Russian military convoy heads from Hmeimim base to Tartus harbour, before returning to the base, 6 October 2025.*
- *Ongoing violations. Two members of the 76th division open fire on young man in Al-Ashrafiyah neighborhood in Afrin, 6 October 2025.*
- *Under the supervision of the Red Crescent. 35 detainees, including a 15-year-old boy, from Al-Suwaidaa released by the General Security Forces, 8 October 2025.*
- *Amid dreadful economic and living conditions. 234 employees dismissed in Lattakia and Jabblah, 9 October 2025.*
- *Second time today. Military trainer in the Syrian army killed in Sarmada, 11 October 2025.*
- *A few days after kidnapping child "Mohamed Hayder". Girl survives kidnapping attempt in Latakia, 12 October 2025.*
- *Ongoing dismissal decisions. 600 employees dismissed in the Syrian coast areas, 12 October 2025.*
- *Ongoing violations in Aleppo. Gunmen kidnap young man and demand 10,000 USD for his release, 16 October 2025.*
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- *After blocking lasted for weeks. Transitional government reopen roads leading to Al-Ashrafiyah and Sheikh Magsoud neighbourhoods, 22 October 2025.*
- *After removing checkpoint. Roads of Al-Sheikh Maqsoud and Al-Ashrafiya opened as others remain closed, 24 October 2025.*
- *After paying large ransom. Kidnappers release Christian young man in Rif Dimashq, 25 October 2025.*
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5.5 Map of Syria with provinces and capitals



Source: Atlas Mapmakers

The boundaries and names on this map and the designations used should not be construed as an endorsement or acceptance thereof by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

5.6 The number of civilian deaths documented by SNHR per province

| Provincie | Jan. | Febr. | Maart | Apr. | Mei | Juni | Juli | Aug. | Sept. | Okt. | Nov. | Dec. | Totaal |
|-----------------|------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|--------|
| Aleppo | 83 | 52 | 29 | 21 | 25 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 5 | 9 | 258 |
| Damascus | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 25 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 45 |
| Daraa | 12 | 7 | 39 | 32 | 8 | 21 | 3 | 8 | 18 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 167 |
| Deir ez-Zor | 23 | 33 | 23 | 12 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 133 |
| Hama | 39 | 36 | 153 | 15 | 19 | 25 | 21 | 19 | 22 | 10 | 15 | 14 | 388 |
| Hasaka | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Homs | 13 | 32 | 48 | 47 | 24 | 22 | 18 | 27 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 8 | 269 |
| Idlib | 20 | 21 | 17 | 21 | 6 | 4 | 13 | 11 | 5 | 6 | 10 | 5 | 139 |
| Latakia | 20 | 11 | 561 | 9 | 24 | 11 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 651 |
| Quneitra | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Raqqa | 3 | 10 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 42 |
| Ruraal Damascus | 5 | 4 | 11 | 1 | 12 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 11 | 15 | 79 |
| Suweida | 8 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 16 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 62 |
| Tartous | 3 | 8 | 338 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 374 |
| Overig | 0 | 0 | 667 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 372 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1045 |
| Totaal | 236 | 222 | 1890 | 174 | 157 | 140 | 461 | 91 | 76 | 66 | 73 | 80 | 3666 |

Table 1: Number of civilian deaths per province in Syria in 2025 documented by SNHR.

Source: SNHR.

The row labelled 'Other' shows the number of 667 for March 2025. This concerns the number of civilian casualties from the Syrian coastal provinces who were killed at unknown locations. Furthermore, the row labelled 'Other' shows a figure of 372 for July 2025. The monthly report for July 2025 reported a figure of 89 civilian casualties. Because the report of July 2025 did not mention the number of civilian casualties resulting from the escalation of violence in Suweida in mid-July 2025 due to difficulties in documenting the situation at the time, SNHR only included the civilian casualties from Suweida province for whom it had been confirmed that they had fallen victim to extrajudicial executions in its annual report of January 2026. After these verified cases had been added, the total number of civilian casualties for July 2025 increased by 372. Furthermore, the row labelled 'Other' shows a figure of 6 for September 2025. For September 2025, SNHR registered six additional civilian casualties that it was only able to identify after the publication of the monthly report. These cases were therefore included in the annual report of January 2026, bringing the total for September 2025 to 76 civilian casualties.¹⁵⁷²

¹⁵⁷² SNHR, 236 civilian deaths, including 32 children and 18 women, as well as one woman's death due to torture, documented in Syria in January 2025, 21 civilians were killed by SDF, 1 February 2025; SNHR, 222 civilian deaths, including 17 children and 37 women, as well as nine deaths due to torture, recorded in February 2025 in Syria, 1 March 2025; SNHR, 1,562 deaths, including 102 children and 99 women, as well as 33 medical personnel, recorded in March 2025 in Syria, 9 April 2025, p. 9; SNHR, The death of 174 civilians including 23 children and 13 women, and 5 deaths due to torture recorded in April 2025 in Syria, 2 May 2025; SNHR, The death of 157 civilians including 20 children and 11 women, and one death due to torture recorded in May 2025, 1 June 2025; SNHR, The death of 2818 civilians including 201 children and 194 women, and 17 deaths due to torture recorded in the first half of 2025, 3 July 2025; SNHR, The death of 89 civilians including 13 children and 10 women, and one death due to torture recorded July 2025, 1 August 2025, p. 3-4; SNHR, The death of 91 civilians including eighteen children and five women, and four deaths due to torture recorded in August 2025, 1 September 2025; SNHR, The death of 70 civilians including seven children and three women, and three deaths due to torture recorded in September 2025, 1 October 2025; SNHR, The death of 66 civilians including nine children and seven women, and three deaths due to torture recorded in October 2025, 1 November 2025; SNHR, The death of 73 civilians including 12 children and six women, and two deaths due to torture recorded in November 2025, 1 December 2025; SNHR, The death of 3666 individuals including 328 children and 312 women, and 32 deaths due to torture recorded in the year 2025 in Syria, 1 January 2026.