

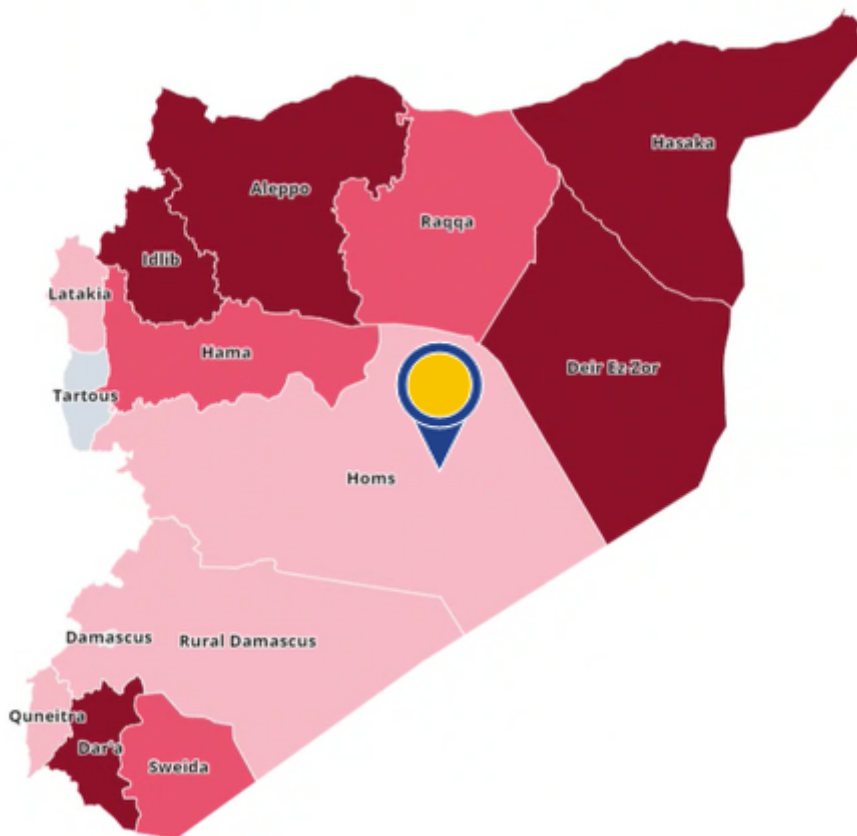
Homs

Following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, this document has been reviewed and updated. Please consult '[Interim Country Guidance: Syria \(2025\)](#)'

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: April 2024

[Main COI reference: [Security 2023](#), 2.6, pp. 94-101; [COI Update 2023](#), 2, pp. 3-10]



General information

The governorate of Homs is located in central Syria and has borders with Iraq to the east and Lebanon to the west. It also shares an international border with Jordan to the east as well. Homs has internal borders with Deir Ez-Zor, Raqqqa, Hama, Tartous, and Rural Damascus governorates. The governorate is divided into six districts: Homs, Al Makhrim, Al-Qusayr, ArRastan, Tadmor (Palmyra) and Tall Kalakh. Homs was the

largest governorate in Syria in terms of surface, and the third in terms of population, as of May 2014. The capital of the governorate is Homs city which is also the central city of Homs district. As of May 2022, UNOCHA estimated the population of Homs governorate at 1 502 706 inhabitants.

Background and actors involved in armed confrontations

The city of Homs was one of the most affected cities of the war. Its old city was besieged for two years until it became accessible again in May 2014. Sectarian violence and forced displacement occurred there in 2011, and only a few neighbourhoods retained their mixed sectarian elements. The recapture of Homs city by GoS in May 2017 and the military operation by SAA in northern rural Homs in April 2018, forcing rebel groups in the region to either negotiate their withdrawal to northern Syria or reconcile with the GoS, led to the mass evacuation of rebels and their families from the governorate [[Security 2022](#), 2.6.2, p. 130].

During the reference period, Homs governorate was under the control of the GoS.

A so-called US-declared 55-km deconfliction area stretching between the southeast of the governorate and neighbouring Rural Damascus governorate around AlTanf, was controlled by US troops and the Free Syrian Army (FSA), formerly known as Mughawir al-Thawra (MaT), a rebel group consisting of former Syrian military officers.

Homs was reportedly among the Syrian governorates under Iranian ‘influence’ and continued to house Iranian military positions. Lebanese Hezbollah and Iranian forces operated in the neighbourhood of the Al-Dabaa airbase near Al-Qusayr, an area which has been a centre of Hezbollah’s activity since 2012.

Iranian-backed militias continued to have positions in Tadmor (Palmyra), where they were storing drones. It has also been reported that some Iranian-backed Iraqi militants reportedly had travelled to Homs governorate from other positions in the country.

ISIL presence in the east of the governorate has also been reported.

Nature of violence and examples of incidents

ISIL regularly launched lethal attacks in various governorates, among which Homs, including attacks on civilians and against GoS forces in eastern Homs as well as attacks on pro-GoS militias, resulting in casualties. ISIL reportedly further clashed with NDF and SAA units near Arak village in February 2023. After a number of high-intensity attacks during the season of truffle harvesting, ISIL activity in central Syria decreased in May 2023 and the GoS downscaled major operations against ISIL in eastern Homs. Reportedly, ISIL fought GoS and Russian Wagner forces around Al-Kawm continuously until mid-April 2023. Airstrikes by Russia against ISIL positions in the governorate were also reported.

In June 2023, a GoS general was reportedly killed in an IED attack by ISIL in the city of Homs, which, according to a source, was the first attack in Homs city since 2017. According to a UN Security Council report of July 2023, ISIL continued to carry out asymmetric attacks in Homs governorate but ‘at a relatively lower frequency’ while regular attacks by small cells occurred on a regular basis in north Tadmor (Palmyra). An ISIL-attributed attack in November 2023 killed at least 34 GoS soldiers and members of the NDF in the desert area of al-Rasafah located between Raqqa, Homs and Deir Ez-Zor governorates.

On 5 October 2023, a drone strike on the Military College in Homs governorate reportedly killed at least 89

people and wounded 277 others. While the attack was not claimed by any group, the GoS attributed it to 'armed terrorist organizations backed by known international parties', with the HTS being the main group suspected.

Israeli airstrikes in areas near the city of Homs, the Shayrat air base, and an alleged drone development unit site belonging to Hezbollah at the Al-Qusayr airport were also reported. Some of these attacks resulted in casualties among civilians and military personnel.

Iranian-affiliated groups attacked the US-controlled Al-Tanf base in Homs governorate in August 2022, although no casualties were reported. Military personnel were reportedly injured in drone attacks on the base in January 2023 by undisclosed perpetrators.

Furthermore, it was reported that the IDP camp Al-Rukban, situated in the Al-Tanf area close to the borders with Jordan and Iraq, continued to be besieged by GoS and Russian forces

Incidents: data

ACLED recorded 215 security incidents (average of 4.2 security incidents per week) in Homs governorate in the period from 1 August 2022 to 28 July 2023. Of the reported incidents, 81 were coded as 'explosions/remote violence', 80 as 'battles', and 54 as 'violence against civilians'. In the period 1 August – 30 November 2023, 65 security incidents were recorded in Homs representing an average of 3.8 security incident per week.

Geographical scope

Security incidents were recorded in all Homs governorate districts during the reporting period, with the highest number of overall incidents being recorded in Tadmor district, followed by Homs city, Ar-Rastan, Al-Makhrim, and Al Qusayr. By comparison, very few incidents were recorded in the district of Tall Kalakh.

Civilian fatalities - data

Between August 2022 and July 2023, SNHR documented 73 civilian fatalities in Homs governorate. In August – November 2023, the SNHR recorded 60 civilian fatalities. Compared to the figures for the population as from May 2022, this represented nine civilian fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants for the whole reference period.

Displacement

As of May 2022, there were 299 525 IDPs in Homs governorate, including 189 147 in Homs district.

According to UNOCHA, between January and December 2022, approximately 1 960 persons were displaced from Homs, as well as 35 within the governorate. Approximately 960 persons were displaced from other governorates to Homs. No conflict-induced IDP movements were recorded in Homs governorate in the first five months of 2023.

In terms of IDP returns, no spontaneous IDP returns from Homs to other governorates were recorded by UNOCHA in 2022. On the contrary, some 6 000 IDP returns from other governorates into Homs were recorded in the same period. In the first five months of 2023, approximately 83 IDP returns were recorded into Homs and no returns from Homs to other governorates.

Further impact on civilians

Homs is among the Syrian governorates where contamination from UXOs represented a particularly major security concern. Civilians were killed and injured by explosive devices of war for example in Duwayzin, located on the border between Hama and Homs, such as in the area of Al-Haswiya. ERWs reportedly had not been yet removed from residential areas in Homs city and continued to claim the lives of civilians. Mines also reportedly existed along past contact lines as well as remnants of cluster bombs used by GoS forces in the northern rural areas of Homs and the Al-Houla plain against opposition factions and in the Badia desert against ISIL. Children and farmers were particularly affected by the dangers posed by them.

Increased attacks near the IDP camp Rukban in the Al-Tanf deconfliction area, including a drone attack on a health clinic critical for the camp residents in January 2023 were also reported.

Looking at the indicators, it can be concluded that indiscriminate violence is taking place in the governorate of **Homs**, however **not at a high level**. Accordingly, **a higher level of individual elements** is required in order to show substantial grounds for believing that a civilian, returned to the territory, would face a real risk of serious harm within the meaning of Article 15(c) QD.

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