

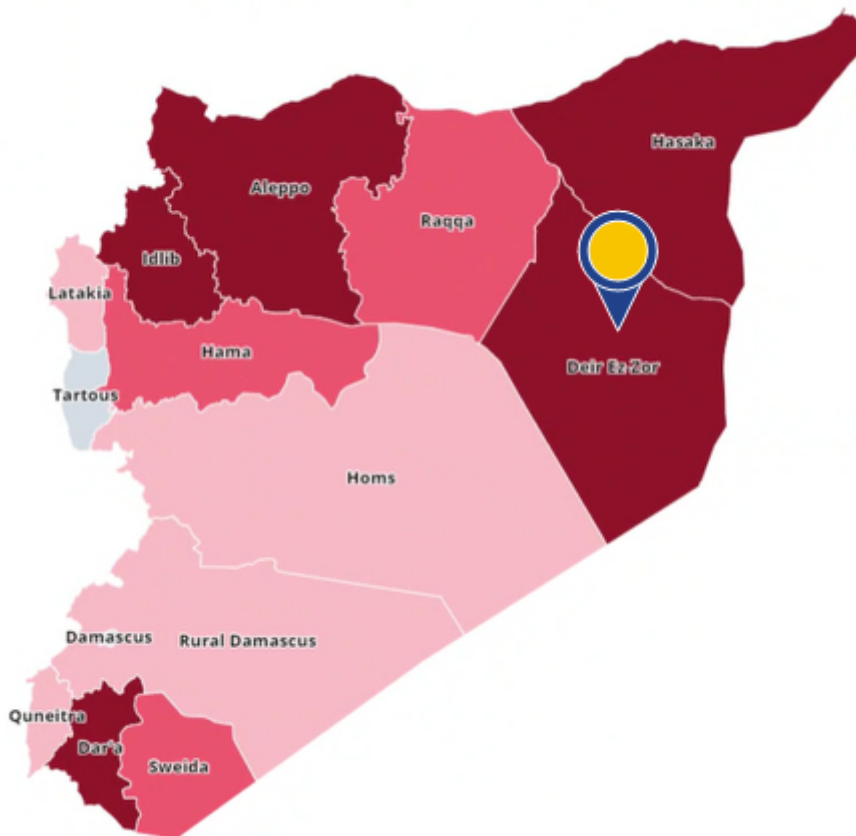
Deir Ez-Zor

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](#), 2.9, pp. 121-130; [COI Update 2023](#), 2, pp. 3-10]



General information

Deir Ez-Zor governorate is located in eastern Syria. The governorate has an international border with Iraq to the east, and internal borders with Homs to the south, with Raqqa to the west and with Hasaka to the north. The Euphrates River divides the governorate into a western part (al-Shamiya) and an eastern part (al-Jazeera). Deir Ez-Zor is administratively divided into three districts: Deir Ez-Zor, Al-Mayadin, and Al-Bukamal (alternatively Albu Kamal, Abu Kamal). The governorate's capital is Deir Ez-Zor city.

As of May 2022, UNOCHA estimated the population of Deir Ez-Zor governorate at 1 096 528 inhabitants. The governorate's population is almost entirely Sunni Arab and its demographic structure has been described as heavily tribal-based.

Background and actors involved in armed confrontations

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, Deir Ez-Zor governorate witnessed anti-government protests. The Arab tribes in the governorate showed a division of affiliation. Some factions joined the SDF, others were aligned with GoS forces, and the rest pledged allegiance to ISIL. The GoS and its allies had captured most of the areas west of the Euphrates River from ISIL by the end of 2017. The SDF and the US-led coalition captured the last ISIL-held territorial enclave on the eastern side of the river in March 2019. [[Security 2021](#), 2.9]

Deir Ez-Zor governorate was roughly divided into two areas of control: east and west of the Euphrates River.

The western part of the governorate was controlled by the GoS and its Iranian and Russian allies. This area covers the major cities of Deir Ez-Zor city, al-Mayadin and al-Bukamal.

Al-Bukamal hosted the Imam Ali base, the governorate's largest Iranian military site. The Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Iranian-backed militias reinforced their presence at military sites in the governorate, including in Deir Ez-Zor city and the alMayadin area. Iran-backed militias operated 30 local recruitment centres in areas west of the Euphrates and were backed by certain local tribes. Further Iranian and Russian sites were located in the desert areas west of the Euphrates.

Meanwhile, the areas east of the Euphrates River were mainly controlled by the Kurdish-led SDF although the GoS/Iran-backed militias held several towns in eastern Deir Ez-Zor.

Kurdish forces were located east of the Euphrates, including along the Euphrates and Khabour riverbanks and in the governorate's northern corner near the Raqqa and Hasaka borders. They were supported by forces of the US-led Coalition against ISIL, which operated several sites east of the Euphrates.

ISIL was still present and remained active in the first half of 2023, with pockets of the group's presence mapped in the desert areas west of the Euphrates. The group reportedly used this area as operational bases to rebuild cells, train its fighters and carry out attacks throughout the region [[Security 2023](#), 1.4.6, p. 33]. Since early 2023, ISIL increased its attacks and coercive activities in the governorate's urban belt. A rise in activity of ISIL cells was also reported in the SDF-held northern Deir Ez-Zor countryside.

Nature of violence and examples of incidents

The security situation in Deir Ez-Zor governorate is described as 'volatile', with continuing reports of targeted killings. These were carried out by means of firearms and IEDs.

Mutual strikes between US forces and IRGC forces/Iran-backed militias, as well as Israeli air bombing were reported. Deadly infighting between NDF and GoS forces, Air Force Intelligence Directorate and the IRGC, and between NDF members was also reported.

Following the eruption of the Israel-Hamas conflict in October 2023, Iran-backed armed groups have attacked U.S. forces in Syria with drone strikes, improvised missiles and mortar shells, including in the countryside of Deir Ez-Zor governorate. Retaliatory airstrikes by the US on sites belonging to Iranian-backed armed groups in the governorate were also reported.

In August 2023, clashes between SDF and Arab tribal fighters, members of the Deir Ez-Zor Military Council, broke out resulting in several fighters and civilians killed. Clashes between protesters and SDF members resulted in two civilians killed when security forces fired shots to disperse protesters. The clashes continued in September in eastern Deir Ez-Zor as tribal forces attacked SDF positions, leading to casualties and displacement. Although SDF reestablished control over its territory in Deir Ez-Zor, attacks by Arab tribal groups on its positions were reported to continue in October, leading to casualties among combatants and civilians. Sporadic attacks by tribal groups against SDF were also reported in November 2023.

ISIL launched regular attacks in the governorate. It continued to conduct asymmetric attacks during the reference period, targeting GoS forces, SDF members and civilians. Moreover, ISIL attacks increasingly targeted IRGC and Iran-backed militias.

In early 2023, the group shifted its focus in GoS-held areas to military targets closer to the Euphrates. At the beginning of August 2023, ISIL claimed an attack on a bus carrying SAA soldiers near the Iraqi border south of Deir Ez-Zor city, leading to at least 33 deaths. Incidents targeting civilians included attacks on truffle hunters in the desert of western Deir Ez-Zor and on contractors and businessmen in the oil industry. Moreover, the group bombed several money exchange offices in al-Zar and al-Ghurba towns following their owners' refusal to pay Islamic 'zakat' (tax) to the group. 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.

GoS and affiliated/allied forces launched several operations against ISIL cells in western and eastern rural Deir Ez-Zor. The SDF/US forces likewise conducted several anti-ISIL operations resulting in the arrest/killing of ISIL leaders, including in the al-Kasrah area (western rural Deir Ez-Zor)

Incidents: data

ACLED recorded 1 089 security incidents (average of 21,1 security incidents per week) in Deir Ez-Zor governorate in the period from 1 August 2022 to 28 July 2023. Of the reported incidents, 588 were coded as 'battles', 255 as 'violence against civilians' and 246 as 'explosions/remote violence'. In the period 1 August – 30 November 2023, 742 security incidents were recorded in Deir Ez-Zor representing an average of 42.9 security incident per week.

Geographical scope

Security incidents were recorded in all districts during the reference period, with the significantly highest numbers being documented in Deir Ez-Zor district

Civilian fatalities: data

Deir Ez-Zor recorded the second highest number of civilian fatalities out of all governorates [[Security 2023](#), 1.5.3, pp. 40-42]. Between August 2022 and July 2023, the SNHR recorded 167 civilian fatalities. In August – November 2023, the SNHR recorded 70 civilian fatalities. Compared to the figures for the population as from May 2022, this represented twenty-two civilian fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants for the whole reference period

Displacement

As of May 2022, there were 153 814 IDPs in Deir Ez-Zor governorate.

According to UNOCHA, between January and December 2022, approximately 1 000 persons were displaced from Deir Ez-Zor, as well as 1 000 within the governorate. Approximately 1 000 persons were displaced from other governorates to Deir Ez-Zor. In the first five months of 2023, there were approximately 22 IDP

movements out of Deir Ez-Zor. No displacement to or within the governorate has been documented in the same period.

In terms of IDP returns, UNOCHA recorded in 2022 approximately 7 000 IDP returns to Deir Ez-Zor. No spontaneous IDP returns from Deir Ez-Zor to other governorates were recorded in the same period. In the first five months of 2023, 83 IDP returns were recorded into Deir Ez-Zor and about 11 returns from Deir Ez-Zor to other governorates.

Further impact on civilians

Deir Ez-Zor governorate witnessed significant destruction during the conflict years, both in urban and rural areas, with an estimated 75 % of Deir Ez-Zor city's infrastructure damaged or destroyed. Around 40 % of the city's sewage network has been damaged. There was also significant destruction of residential properties.

Deir Ez-Zor is considered one of Syria's most affected governorates with regard to explosive ordnance contamination. Areas previously controlled by ISIL showed the highest levels of contamination, as retreating ISIL forces left large quantities of improvised landmines and other IEDs.

During the first quarter of 2023, 127 deaths from remnants of war in Deir Ez-Zor were reported, more than in any other governorate.

Looking at the indicators, it can be concluded that in the governorate of **Deir Ez-Zor**, indiscriminate violence reaches such a high level that substantial grounds are shown for believing that a civilian, returned to the governorate, would, **solely on account of their presence on its territory**, face a real risk of being subject to the serious threat referred to in Article 15(c) QD.

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