

5.3.4. Indiscriminate violence

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

The common analysis regarding the degree of indiscriminate violence combines quantitative and qualitative elements in a **holistic and inclusive assessment**. The security situation in the respective territories is assessed by taking into account the following elements (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Indicators in the assessment of the level of indiscriminate violence.





For more information on the methodology and indicators used to assess the level of indiscriminate violence in country guidance documents, see [‘Country Guidance: explained’](#).

The next sections provide detailed information and assessment of the level of indiscriminate violence and the risk it represents for civilians in Syria per governorate. Summaries are structured according to the following elements:

- **General information**

General information on the region/governorate includes the localisation of the region/governorate, the administrative built-up of the region/governorate, the estimation of the population, and, where relevant, the demographic composition of the region/governorate. Possible elements of strategic interest are also mentioned (for example, presence of important ports, factories, etc.).

- **Background and actors involved in armed confrontations**

This indicator looks into the presence of actors in the conflict in a region, including the presence of state and non-state armed groups. Furthermore, information regarding the territorial control of the region, to the degree possible, is included in the respective part of the COI summaries. See also [3.1. Areas of control and influence](#).

- **Nature of violence and examples of incidents**

The methods and tactics used in the armed conflicts ongoing in Syria differ according to the actors involved. All actors are reported to engage in activities which may (indiscriminately) affect civilians. However, some acts are by their nature more indiscriminate than others and create a more substantial risk for civilians.

Continuing hostilities and military operations that included air and ground attacks, targeted killings, and attacks with various types of IEDs, resulting in civilians being killed and injured were reported during the reference period. Along the contact lines in the northwestern Syrian Arab Republic, non-state armed groups and government and pro-government forces reportedly continued to exchange mutual fire and shelling. They also engaged in limited clashes, including attacks on civilian targets resulting in civilian casualties. [[Security 2023](#), 1.5.1, pp. 35-36].

GoS forces continued to employ ground-based and aerial attacks on populated areas resulting in civilian casualties [[Security 2023](#), 1.4.1, p. 26]. Russian airstrikes in support of the Syrian government in which civilians were injured and killed and which reportedly targeted food and water sources were also reported [[Security 2023](#), 1.5.2, p. 39].

Indiscriminate attacks were also committed by the SNA. SNA forces further engaged in hostilities with SDF forces resulting in civilian casualties [[Security 2023](#), 1.4.2, p. 28].

Furthermore, there were clashes between the SDF and Turkish-backed SNA militias deployed in the Operation Peace Spring area. Turkish forces also targeted SDF-controlled territory, including civilian infrastructure with airstrikes, drones and artillery shelling. [COI update 2023, 2, p. 4; [Security 2023](#), 1.4.3,

pp. 28-29]

ISIL attacks continued to be reported, including abductions and killings on civilians in several areas of the country. [[Security 2023](#), 1.5.1, pp. 36-37]

Iranian-backed militias also launched attacks on US military personnel in the northeast of the country using drone strikes, improvised missiles and mortar shells [COI update 2023, 2, p. 6; [Security 2023](#), 1.3.2, p. 21]. US retaliatory attacks were also reported. The US also continued to support the SDF in areas under its control with carrying out raids against suspected ISIL elements. [[Security 2023](#), 1.3.4, p. 23]

Israeli airstrikes targeted Iranian and Hezbollah military infrastructure as well as specific individuals. On certain occasions these attacks took place also in residential areas resulting civilian casualties. [[COI update 2023](#), 2, pp. 6-7; [Security 2023](#), 1.3.5, p. 24]

The conflict was also reported to have directly resulted in the destruction of critical civilian infrastructure, including schools, health facilities, markets, IDP settlements and farms. [[Security 2023](#), 1.5.4, p. 43]

For more information on the nature of methods and tactics used by the actors involved in armed conflicts, see also [3. Actors of persecution or serious harm](#).

- **Incidents: data**

The frequency of incidents is a useful indicator to assist in the assessment of the risk of indiscriminate violence. Based on available COI, derived from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) database, this indicator looks in particular at incidents coded as ‘battles’, ‘violence against civilians’, and ‘explosions/remote violence’, which are found to be of relevance in terms of their potential to indiscriminately affect civilians. They are further calculated as an average per week. Data concerning this indicator are based on ACLED reporting on the period from 1st August 2022 to 28th July 2023, along with additional information included in the [COI Update](#) for the period 1st August – 30th November 2023.

- **Geographical scope**

This element looks into how widespread the violence within each region is, highlighting the areas which are particularly affected by indiscriminate violence and/or the areas which are relatively less affected, where relevant information is available

- **Civilian fatalities: data**

The number of civilian fatalities (deaths) / casualties (injuries and fatalities) is considered a key indicator when assessing the level of indiscriminate violence and the associated risk for civilians in the context of Article 15(c) QD.

This indicator is based on data collected by the Syrian Network of Human Rights (SNHR). SNHR records only civilian fatalities. Data on injured civilians, which would also be relevant to take into account, are not systematically available. The available data correspond to the reporting period August 2022 – July 2023 and are further presented as an approximate number of civilian fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants in the governorate. The estimation uses UNOCHA data on population.^{[17](#)}

- **Displacement**

This element refers to (internal) displacement from the area in question.

This indicator is based on UNOCHA data focusing on IDP movements for the period from 1st January 2022 until 31st May or 30th June 2023, depending on the governorate. These IDP figures do not refer solely to conflict-induced displacement and can include also IDP movements for other reasons (e.g. poverty). Furthermore, UNOCHA data on spontaneous returns for the same time period are also provided.

- **Further impact on civilians**

In addition to the indicators above, where available, some examples of further impact of the armed conflicts on the life of civilians (e.g. existence of checkpoints, infrastructure damage, forced evictions, humanitarian access incidents) are mentioned and taken into account in the assessment.

It should, furthermore, be noted that the COI used as a basis for this assessment cannot be considered a complete representation of the extent of indiscriminate violence and its impact on the life of civilians. Concerns with regard to underreporting should be underlined.

Follow the links in the interactive map below to read more about the assessment of the level of indiscriminate violence in the different governorates of Syria.

Areas where the degree of indiscriminate violence reaches such an exceptionally high level that substantial grounds are shown for believing that a civilian, returned to the relevant area, would, **solely on account of their presence there**, face a real risk of being subject to the serious threat referred to in Article 15(c) QD.

Accordingly, additional individual elements are not required in order to substantiate subsidiary protection needs under Article 15(c) QD.

Areas where 'mere presence' in the area would not be sufficient to establish a real risk of serious harm under Article 15(c) QD, however, indiscriminate violence reaches **a high level**.

Accordingly, **a lower level of individual elements** is required to show substantial grounds for believing that a civilian, returned to the area, would face a real risk of serious harm in the meaning of Article 15(c) QD.

Areas where indiscriminate violence is taking place, 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 area, would face a real risk of serious harm in the meaning of Article 15(c) QD.

Areas where, in general, there is **no real risk** for a civilian to be personally affected within the meaning of Article 15(c) QD.

This may be because the criteria for an armed conflict within the meaning of this provision are not met, because no indiscriminate violence is taking place, or because the level of indiscriminate violence is so low, that in general there would be no real risk for a civilian to be affected by it.

17 For certain governorates (Aleppo, Dar'a, Quneitra, Latakia, Rural Damascus, Sweida and Tartous) SNHR recorded number of civilian fatalities also include civilians who reportedly drowned during migratory routes. These numbers have been deducted, where possible, from the data on civilian fatalities and have not been taken into account in the analysis of this indicator for the governorates in question. For further information see the EUAA Security 2023 COI report and the EUAA COI Update 2023 query response.