

6.2. Parties or organisations

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: February 2023

*Minor updates: April 2024

Many areas in Syria are influenced by insurgent groups and some groups, in particular HTS, are currently in (contested) control of some territory. However, the Kurdish forces in northeast Syria are the only actor that may be considered to control substantial parts of the territory and could, therefore, be subject to analysis under [Article 7\(2\) QD](#).

Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria

Kurdish-controlled areas of north and east Syria

Following the retreat of the GoS forces from the northeast Syria, the predominantly Kurdish inhabited area was left abandoned. This allowed the Kurds to gain greater autonomy in 2014. In January 2014, the PYD adopted the so-called 'Social Contract' as a 'provisional constitution' for the Autonomous Administration. The Social Contract foresaw a federal, decentralised system by which the Autonomous region would remain a part of Syria, but with a regulated relationship with the central government in Damascus. The proclamation of a federal system in the Kurdish-controlled areas was rejected by the GoS, other Syrian opposition groups, the US and Türkiye. [[Actors](#), 3.1.1, pp. 39-41]

The SDF hold a demographically heterogeneous region of about 30 % of the Syrian territory, comprising most of Hasaka governorate as well as areas in Deir Ez-Zor and Raqqa governorates and a small enclave in Aleppo countryside [[Security 2023](#), 1.4.3., p. 28]. In particular, SDF/YPG are in control of or have presence in Aleppo city (in the neighbourhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiya), in the Tall Rifaat area north of Aleppo city and in Manbij and Ain al-Arab (Kobane) in eastern Aleppo governorate [[Security 2023](#), 2.2.2., p. 63].

The AANES is led by the Syrian Democratic Council (the political wing of the SDF), with the Movement for a Democratic Society as the ruling coalition. The PYD is viewed as the dominant political actor in the Kurdish-controlled areas, where it exercises ultimate control, making decisions for the entire region. PYD's system of governance is described by sources as authoritarian, and other political parties have been marginalised. [[Actors](#), 3.1.3, pp. 42-43]

Two justice systems continue to operate along each other, the system of GoS and the one of AANES, not recognised by GoS. The AANES justice system is based on the 'Social Contract', a document that lays out the essential aspects of coexistence. This has led to confusions on which law to apply as well as to the possibility for judges to ignore written law and use social justice principles instead. It was reported that

practitioners within the court system were either trained in a different legal system or completely untrained in law. Further, most cases have to pass through a locally based non-judicial committee, made up of untrained persons, before being brought to court. The court system was described as suffering from a ‘fundamental lack of independence from the executive’. PYD, YPG and/or PKK reportedly interfered in the administration of justice, particularly if courts were perceived to interfere with security or military interests, as well as intervened in individual cases etc. Gaps in the legal system, which undermine due procedures and the right to a fair trial remained. [[Security 2022](#), 1.4.3, pp. 32-34; [Actors](#), 3.1.4, pp. 43-45]

In 2015, the YPG established the terrorism court - known as the ‘People’s Court’ - to prosecute ISIL fighters and affiliates. Thousands of Syrian ISIL suspects have reportedly been tried in flawed proceedings [[Actors](#), 3.1.4, p. 4]. The YPG does not allow the right to a defence and the applicable counter-terrorism law has not been made public [[Security 2022](#), 1.4.3, p. 34]. Recent sources reported that thousands of ISIL fighters were still held by the SDF throughout the AANES territory [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, p. 38].

It was reported that various tribes in Hasaka as well as in eastern Deir Ez-Zor governorates agreed to reaffirm a tribal judicial system, called Madbata, to resolve inter-clan disputes, such as robberies, lootings and actions of revenge, due to lack of judicial alternatives accepted by the population. [[Security 2022](#), 1.4.3, p.34]

The SDF reportedly engaged in extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance as well as torture in detention centres [[Security 2023](#), 1.3.4., p. 30]. Cases of enforced disappearance and torture and sexual violence against women were also reported [[Targeting 2022](#), 13.4.1, pp. 117-118].

It can be concluded that AANES in the Kurdish-controlled areas in Syria does not qualify as an actor of protection who is able to provide effective, non-temporary and accessible protection.

See other topics concerning actors of protection:

- [The State](#)
- *Parties or organisations, including international organisations*

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