

## 3.5. Israel

For information regarding Israel's involvement in Syria prior to November 2024, see section 1.3.5. of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security Situation \(October 2024\)](#).

Israel, while celebrating the fall of Assad as a 'historic' turn of events<sup>555</sup> that removed a keystone of Iran's arc of proxy and allied militias that enabled it to threaten Israel, has shown scepticism towards the insurgents who ousted Assad<sup>556</sup> whose ranks included jihadi fighters.<sup>557</sup> By early March 2025, Israeli defence minister went as far as referring to the transitional administration as a 'terrorist regime of radical Islam'.<sup>558</sup>

Following the fall of the Assad government, Syria witnessed an escalation of Israeli airstrikes that targeted numerous facilities, destroying radar systems, missile sites, and aircraft.<sup>559</sup> Simultaneously, Israeli ground forces seized control of the demilitarised buffer zone between the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights and Syria<sup>560</sup> and conducted ground incursions on southern Syrian territory beyond the buffer zone (mainly in Quneitra,<sup>561</sup> but also in Dar'a), seizing villages<sup>562</sup> and strategic positions and carrying out efforts to disarm local residents.<sup>563</sup> Meanwhile, Israeli forces continued to launch air strikes on former SAA sites in southern Syria,<sup>564</sup> near Damascus city<sup>565</sup> and on the coast.<sup>566</sup> While the Israeli government initially emphasised the temporary nature of the seizure of the buffer zone,<sup>567</sup> in late January 2025, Defence Minister Israel Katz declared that the Israeli forces would remain in that zone 'indefinitely'.<sup>568</sup> In late February, members of the Israeli government announced that Israel would not allow the transitional administration to establish control over Syria's south, demanding its full demilitarisation.<sup>569</sup>

Initially, Israel appeared to avoid targeting HTS,<sup>570</sup> but a mid-January 2025 drone strike killed two HTS fighters in Quneitra.<sup>571</sup> However, as of early March 2025, 'no major clashes' have been reported between Israeli forces and Syria's new security forces.<sup>572</sup>

For further information on Israel's involvement in Syria since November 2024, [see section 4.4.](#) of this report.

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