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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 events⁵⁵⁵ 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 Assad⁵⁵⁶ whose ranks included jihadi fighters.⁵⁵⁷ By early March 2025, Israeli defence minister went as far as referring to the transitional administration as a 'terrorist regime of radical Islam'.⁵⁵⁸

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.⁵⁵⁹ Simultaneously, Israeli ground forces seized control of the demilitarised buffer zone between the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights and Syria⁵⁶⁰ and conducted ground incursions on southern Syrian territory beyond the buffer zone (mainly in Quneitra,⁵⁶¹ but also in Dar'a), seizing villages⁵⁶² and strategic positions and carrying out efforts to disarm local residents.⁵⁶³ Meanwhile, Israeli forces continued to launch air strikes on former SAA sites in southern Syria, ⁵⁶⁴ near Damascus city⁵⁶⁵ and on the coast.⁵⁶⁶ While the Israeli government initially emphasised the temporary nature of the seizure of the buffer zone,⁵⁶⁷ in late January 2025, Defence Minister Israel Katz declared that the Israeli forces would remain in that zone 'indefinitely'.⁵⁶⁸ 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.⁵⁶⁹

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

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

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