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Sources

In accordance with EUAA COI methodology, a range of different published documentary sources have been consulted on relevant topics for this report. These include: COI reports by governments; information from civil society, advocacy groups, humanitarian organisations, and NGOs; international and NGO human rights reports; reports produced by various bodies of the United Nations; Syrian and regionally-based media; academic publications and think tank reports and specialised sources covering Syria. All information from these sources was consulted within time constraints.

In addition to using publicly available documentary sources, an interview with the human rights organisation Syria Justice and Accountability Centre was conducted for this report. The source was assessed for their background, publication history, reputability and current ground-level knowledge. The source is further described in Annex 1: Bibliography.

Sources on security incidents

For data on violent incidents, publicly available curated datasets from the organisation Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) have been used. ACLED is a project collecting, analysing and mapping information on crisis and conflict in Africa, south and south-east Asia and Middle East and provides datasets on conflict incidents. It collects data on violent incidents in Syria, coding each incident with the time and place, type of violent incident, the parties involved and the number of fatalities. The information is collected in a database that is openly accessible, searchable and kept continuously up to date. The data primarily come from secondary sources such as traditional media reports, but also from reports by international institutions and non-governmental organisations, targeted new media platforms, and data provided by local partners of ACLED.3 On Syria, ACLED incorporates data from a number of partners, including the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), Airwars, the Carter Center, Liveuamap, Syria Direct, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the London School of Economics' Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit, the International Security and Development Center, and Clingendael Institute.4

ACLED codes security incidents as follows:

- **Battles**: violent clashes between at least two armed groups. Battles can occur between armed and organised state, non-state, and external groups, and in any combination therein. Sub-events of battles are armed clashes, government regaining territory and non-state actor overtaking territory.

- **Violence against civilians**: violent events where an organised armed group deliberately inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants. It includes violent attacks on unarmed civilians such as sexual violence, attacks, abduction/forced disappearance.

- **Explosions/remote violence**: events where an explosion, bomb or other explosive device was used to engage in conflict. They include one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the targets to engage or defend themselves and their location. They include air/drone strikes, suicide bombs, shelling/artillery/missile attacks, remote explosives/landmines/IEDs, grenades, chemical weapons.

- **Riots**: are a violent demonstration, often involving a spontaneous action by unorganised, unaffiliated members of society. They include violent demonstration, mob violence.

- **Protests**: public demonstration in which the participants do not engage in violence, though violence may be used against them. It includes peaceful protests, protests with intervention, excessive force against protesters.

- **Strategic developments**: information regarding the activities of violent groups that is not itself recorded as political violence, yet may trigger future events or contribute to political dynamics within and across states. It includes agreements, changes to group/activity, non-violent transfers of territory, arrests.[5]

For the purpose of providing information for the assessment of serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict (Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive), only the following type of events have been included in the analysis: battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians.

Additionally, ACLED codes actors involved in security incidents as follows: Actor1 is the 'named actor involved in the event' and Actor2 is the 'named actor involved in the event, while "[i]n most cases, an event requires two actors, noted in columns 'ACTOR1' and 'ACTOR2'". However, event types 'Explosions/Remote violence', 'Riots', 'Protests', and 'Strategic developments' can include 'one-sided events'.[6] The ACLED coding of Actor1 and Actor2 does not necessarily indicate that one is the aggressor (e.g Actor1) and the other one (e.g. Actor2) the target or victim.[7] When focusing on the involvement of specific actors within certain regions, the drafters based their analysis on all those incidents, where ACLED coded the relevant actor either as 'Actor1' or as 'Actor2'. This approach aims to illustrate the general level of involvement of the respective actors in the conflict without distinguishing between Actor1 and Actor2, as these categories, according to ACLED's methodology, do not indicate any differentiation in terms of content/semantics.

Characteristics and potential limits for COI use of ACLED data are:

- Data primarily come from secondary sources such as media reports. Lack of or underreporting might critically affect the depiction and the assessment of the situation on

the ground.

- Geographical precision is variable: the provincial capital will represent the region if no further precisions are available and may be over-represented.

Security incidents numbers and associated graphs/maps at country and governorate level are based on a publicly available ACLED dataset for Middle East.[8] Whenever other sources on security incidents were available over the reference period, ACLED's data have been corroborated/contrasted with other data.

Sources on civilian casualties

The main source on civilian fatalities in Syria used in this report is the Syrian Network of Human Rights (SNHR). The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) is a non-profit human rights organisation founded in 2011 which works on documenting human rights violations in Syria. SNHR relies on a network of volunteers in each governorate to compile lists of civilian fatalities and verify victims' identities by photo or video and by speaking with family members, witnesses, and hospitals. SNHR reports fatalities by gender, age, perpetrator, governorate, and other classifications. It only records civilian fatalities – with the exception of the death toll among victims who died due to torture, which includes armed combatants and civilians.[9] Where available, information from other sources documenting civilian casualties in the Syrian conflict (Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, the Syrian Human Rights Committee, Action on Armed Violence, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights) has been included.

Additionally, data on civilian[10] deaths collected by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) has been also included. UCDP is a 'data collection project for civil war'.[11] UCDP provided EUAA with a Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) covering the reference period of the report. UCDP's methodology is explained on its website as well as its GED Codebook.[12] The unit of analysis of UCDP is the 'event'[13] which is defined as '[a]n incident where armed force was used by an organised actor against another organised actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date.'[14] This leads, among other things, to 'seemingly low estimates' because 'a number of factors can preclude a potential conflict event from inclusion in the UCDP GED', for example, unclear actors or uncertainty about whether fatalities occurred.[15] UCDP provides three estimates for fatalities for each event – a low estimate, a best estimate, and a high estimate. In addition, UCDP provides an estimate of the number of civilian deaths.[16] According to UCDP, 'it is quite likely that there are more fatalities than given in the best estimate, but it is very unlikely that there are fewer'.[17]

The stricter definition of an event of UCDP excludes violent incidents that are recorded by ACLED. This includes ACLED's option to assign violent events to 'unidentified armed groups'. The difference in definitions is one explanatory factor to why the number of events recorded by ACLED can be significantly higher than events recorded by UCDP.[18] In this report, UCDP data have been used to contrast ACLED data and to provide figures on civilian deaths. To reflect the security dynamic in Syria, where the actor behind many security incidents is unknown, EUAA not only includes events that meet all UCDP's set criteria (codified as 'clear' events in the UCDP dataset), but also include events codified as 'unclear' and 'not applicable'.

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  ACLED, Methodology, April 2019, url ACLED, FAQs: ACLED Sourcing Methodology, March 2023, url

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  ACLED, Syria Partner Network, April 2019, url; ACLED, ACLED Integrates New Partner Data on the War in Syria, 5 April 2019, url

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  ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 7 October 2024, url, pp. 10-20

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  ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 7 October 2024, url, p. 22

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  ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 7 October 2024, url, p. 4

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  ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 6 June 2025, url

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  For detailed information on SNHR's methodology see url; SNHR, Extrajudicial Killing Claims the Lives of 1,734 Civilians in Syria in 2020, Including 99 in December, 1 January 2021, url, p. 4

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  According to UCDP methodology, it defines civilians as 'unarmed people who are not active members of the security forces of the state, or members of an organized armed militia or opposition group. Government officials, such as members of parliament, governors, and councilors, are also excluded and are instead seen as representatives of the government of a state'. UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, url, pp. 30-31

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  UCDP, About UCDP, n.d., url

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UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., url; UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, url, p. 4

- 13

  UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., url

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  UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, url, p. 4

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  UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., url

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  UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, url, pp. 5, 11, 24

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  UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., url

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  ACLED, Comparing Conflict Data, Similarities and Differences Across Conflict Datasets, August 2019, url, pp. 5–7

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