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1.3.1. Military reforms

Upon taking power, the interim government dismissed former regime soldiers and security staff 76 including the police.77 The authorities have reportedly engaged in rapid recruitment drives for both the police and GSS, though training has been brief and units remain poorly equipped.78 Officials stated they are rapidly training new police recruits, with classes of 800 - 1 000 individuals graduating every few weeks. Despite these efforts, a New York Times investigation from March revealed that many towns and neighbourhoods still lacked a meaningful police presence. In Homs' Zahra district, for example, residents retreated indoors by sundown, leaving the streets nearly deserted.79 In the Christian neighbourhood of Bab Touma in Damascus, local volunteers have stepped in to compensate for the limited police presence, protecting the area from theft and proselytising by Salafist groups.80

Although some former police officers have been reinstated81 and a May agreement between the interim government and Druze leaders provided for the reinstatement of dismissed police officers in Sweida,82 the government's pledge to reinstate dismissed police officers had yet to be fulfilled.83 While individuals have been invited to reapply for their positions, the process lacks transparency and is reportedly discouraging to Alawite applicants.84 According to analyst Gregory Waters, no visible progress has been made in recruiting non-Sunni locals into the local police and GSS forces. While minority communities, particularly Ismaili, but also some Christian and Alawite areas, do host armed volunteer groups, these formations have not yet been formally integrated into the police command structure, despite months of discussions on the issue. Local officials cite the lack of salaries and qualified trainers as reasons for the delay. However, growing scepticism among minority community members suggests rising doubts about whether integration will ever take place.85

The interim government adopted a policy to exclude non-defected officers of the former Syrian Arab Army (SAA), particularly those implicated in repression and war crimes, from the future national army. In contrast, enlisted personnel and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) with clean records may be reintegrated into the army or police through requalification programmes.86

The MoD announced its intention to include defected officers from the former SAA in the new army.87 Several high-ranking defected officers were invited to assist in forming the new national army based on their areas of expertise. A delegation of these senior defectors visited Damascus

and held talks with the new military leadership to discuss restructuring plans.88 In April, the MoD launched an online application process inviting former SAA soldiers who defected and joined the Syrian opposition, to re-enlist in the national army.89 The 16-question form requests personal data, military service history, specialisation, and date of defection.90 Several former defectors now lead divisions within the MoD91 or are occupying senior police position such as the police command of Damascus.92

On 16 May, Syria 24 published a report claiming that significant security sector reforms are planned within Syria's MoI. The proposed multi-phase process would divide the country into five security regions, each with newly established security structures reporting directly to Damascus. According to the report, the reform aims to streamline the management of security operations, unify MoI policing units under the joint oversight of the Interior and Defence Ministries, and establish new departments focused on addressing insurgent activity.93

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