

5.3. Recent security trends

Syria's interim government consolidated control over parts of the country including in the cities of Damascus, Aleppo, and Hama [793](#) and expanded its presence in areas of central, northern [794](#) and southern Syria. [795](#) However, insecurity persisted in many areas of the country. [796](#) In early March, pro-Assad loyalists launched an insurgency against the interim government's security forces primarily in the coastal areas of Tartous and Latakia. [797](#) The escalation triggered intense hostilities and sectarian violence, which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians [798](#) and the displacement of tens of thousands. [799](#) Since peaking in March, insurgent attacks by pro-Assad loyalists have significantly declined. [800](#) In Sweida and Dar'a governorates, resistance of local armed groups to government control and integration into state forces, [801](#) resulted at times in clashes and casualties. In late April and early May, fighting between local Druze armed groups and pro-government forces in Rural Damascus [802](#) and Sweida resulted in more than 100 fatalities [803](#) including dozens of civilians. [804](#)

The interim government's forces have reportedly been overstretched, [805](#) operating with limited effectiveness and facing challenges from armed groups that, while nominally integrated in their structure, have been operating semi-independently. [806](#) At times, armed groups affiliated with the interim government reportedly operated outside its control [807](#) and committed violations against civilians, notably during the violence in the coastal areas in early March [808](#) and in Druze-majority areas in late April. [809](#) The interim government's forces have faced challenges in responding to sectarian violence, [810](#) kidnappings [811](#) and looting. [812](#) Revenge killings targeting individuals linked to the former Assad regime's security apparatus and the Alawite community by unidentified actors continued to be reported across multiple governorates. [813](#) Sectarian-motivated assassinations of Alawites have been particularly notable in Homs governorate. [814](#) An increase in criminal activity and lawlessness, including of kidnappings [815](#) and murders [816](#) has been reported across the areas controlled by the interim government. [817](#) This situation has been partly attributed to post-Assad security vacuum, [818](#) deep societal divides and economic hardship caused by the civil war, [819](#) the interim government's shortcomings in bringing competing armed groups under its control, [820](#) and the lack of effective transitional justice mechanisms. [821](#)

Meanwhile, Israel 'has emerged as the most destabilising external force in post-Assad Syria' according to International Crisis Group. [822](#) It continued to occupy the demilitarised zone in the Golan Heights and a 'buffer zone' in southern Syria. [823](#) Israel continued to carry out incursions and attacks in south-west Syria [824](#) and airstrikes on multiple targets, including in the vicinity of the Presidential palace in Damascus. [825](#) It has reiterated its position against the deployment of Syrian forces south of Damascus and has actively sought the support of the Druze minority in

the area, offering them protection.[826](#)

In northeast Syria, the integration agreement between the interim government and SDF in early March led to a significant decline in armed confrontations between the SDF and the SNA factions nominally affiliated with the government.[827](#) However, tensions between SDF and the interim government remain[828](#) and the integration of military and civilian institutions of the DAANES into the state remained largely unresolved as of late May.[829](#)

Sporadic ISIL attacks targeting interim government's forces,[830](#) the SDF[831](#) and civilians[832](#) particularly in Deir Ez Zor governorate, were reported during the reference period. An increase in ISIL activity and anti-ISIL operations by the interim government's forces was reported in May.[833](#)

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