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## 5.8.1. Aleppo governorate

### (a) Administrative division and population estimates

Aleppo governorate is divided into eight administrative districts, namely Afrin (or Efrin), Ain Al-Arab (or Kobane), Al-Bab, As-Safira, A'zaz (or Azaz), Jarabulus, Jebel Saman (Mount Simeon district) and Menbij (or Manbij), which are further divided into a total of 40 sub-districts.<sup>861</sup> Its capital is the city of Aleppo.<sup>862</sup> As of March 2025, IOM estimated the governorate's population at 5 184 674, including residents, IDPs, and returnees from abroad<sup>863</sup> and the WHO estimated it at 4 754 560.<sup>864</sup> For further background information on Aleppo governorate, [see section 2.2.1. of the EUAA COI Report Syria – Security Situation \(October 2024\)](#).

### (b) Territorial control and main armed actors

As of late May 2025, the south-western part of Aleppo governorate bordering Idlib governorate was mapped by the ISW and CTP as being under the control of the transitional administration. However, there was one small pocket west of Aleppo city where pro-Assad remnants maintained a presence. In the cities Afrin, A'zaz, Al-Bab and Menbij as well as around the Tishreen dam the transitional administration was reportedly present. The north-western and northern parts of the governorate bordering Türkiye were mapped as being under control of the Turkish-backed SNA,<sup>865</sup> which together with other armed factions has formally come under the control of the MoD.<sup>866</sup> In March 2025, the transitional government claimed that the country's armed factions, including the SNA, had been integrated into the Syrian army. In practice, however, the SNA did not appear to be fully under the command and control of the new Syrian Defence Ministry<sup>867</sup> or to have dissolved.<sup>868</sup> Please see section 1.3.2 (a) of this report for further information on the integration process of the SNA into the new Syrian army.

The north-eastern and eastern parts of Aleppo governorate were mapped as being largely under control of the SDF, though some eastern areas around the Khafsah Water Treatment Plant and west of the Jirah Air Base were marked as being contested between the SNA and the SDF.[869](#) According to the ISW and CTP, these were areas where both the SDF and the SNA conducted offensive and defensive manoeuvres, while neither group fully controlled the areas.[870](#) One area in the south-eastern part of the governorate was mapped as 'Lost Regime Territory'.[871](#), [872](#) In March 2025, the GPC reported that the transitional government and SNA groups dominated most of northern Syria, including Aleppo governorate, while the SDF retained parts of the country's northeast.[873](#)

Following the signing of the agreement between SDF and the transitional government on 10 March 2025, ISW and CTP reported that Kurdish forces reduced their military presence in Aleppo city.[874](#) In early April 2025, a temporary deal was reached between the transitional government and the SDF, allowing transitional government forces to move into SDF areas of Aleppo city and operate alongside Kurdish forces.[875](#) A Rudaw article from early April 2025 noted that both sides had agreed that the Asayish, the internal security forces affiliated with the SDF, remained present in the predominantly Kurdish neighbourhoods of Ashrafiyeh and Sheikh Maqsood[876](#) in Aleppo city.[877](#) The New Arab reported in mid-April that SDF forces were supposed to withdraw from the two neighbourhoods and head towards north-eastern Syria,[878](#) and individual reports indicated that former Asayish members had been integrated into the local police forces.[879](#)

In early April 2025, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported that, according to a Syrian Defence Ministry official, pro-Turkish Syrian groups had reduced their presence in Afrin district following the March 2025 deal.[880](#) It was also reported that general security forces had been deployed in Afrin city by early April 2025.[881](#)

Furthermore, aerial activity of military forces of Türkiye was reported in the reference period,[882](#) including in the Tishreen Dam area of Menbij district[883](#) and around the Qara Qozak bridge near the city of Ain Al-Arab.[884](#)

Non-state armed groups in the governorate whose activities or presence were reported during the reference period include ISIL[885](#) and Saraya Ansar Al-Sunnah,[886](#) a Sunni sectarian group that has claimed attacks targeting Alawites[887](#) and has signalled its ideological alignment with ISIL.[888](#) Furthermore, the formation of the new 'Special Accountability Task Force' in Aleppo governorate,[889](#) formed by armed men from former opposition groups who intended to pursue remnants of the Assad government, was reported in the reference period.[890](#)

## ○ (c) Security trends

The International Crisis Group reported in March 2025 that the transitional administration forces were able to quickly expand their presence in several parts of Syria, particularly in central cities like Aleppo, where they succeeded in restoring confidence and preserving calm.[891](#)

Unidentified armed men shot and killed civilians in the governorate in the reference period.[892](#) In March and April 2025, the Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies reported of a rise in targeted assassinations,[893](#) with a sharp surge in mid-April.[894](#) Incidents of kidnappings, raids, arrests and security operations against illegal drug traders in Azaz and Bab were also reported,[895](#) as were armed clashes.[896](#) The Harmoon Center also reported an increase in criminality and the pursuit of Assad government remnants in the governorate in April.[897](#)

In early March, the number of Turkish airstrikes around the Tishreen Dam and the Qara Qozak Bridge, as well as armed engagements between the SDF and Turkish-backed forces, decreased following the PKK's ceasefire announcement on 1 March.[898](#)

However, in the second week of March, an escalation in Turkish airstrikes against SDF positions in eastern Aleppo was reported, resulting in 'some of the highest daily death tolls in weeks'.[899](#) As of mid-March 2025, Türkiye had conducted aerial attacks on SDF positions in several Syrian governorates, including in Aleppo, on an almost daily basis since December 2024.[900](#) Furthermore, clashes were reported between the SDF and Turkish-backed SNA forces near the Tishreen Dam in Menbij district and near the Qara Qozaq Bridge to the south of Ain Al-Arab city,[901](#) two locations over which the SNA had attempted to gain control.[902](#) Clashes between the SDF and the SNA around the Tishreen Dam had been ongoing for months by early April 2025.[903](#) According to ACLED, confrontations between the SNA and the SDF sharply declined after the 10 March agreement was signed by the transitional government and the SDF ([see section 5.1.1](#)), coinciding with fewer Turkish airstrikes on SDF areas.[904](#)

Following the aforementioned agreement in March 2025, Turkish aerial attacks continued, including an attack on Ain Al-Arab in March that killed a family of 11. However, shortly afterwards, Türkiye and its affiliated forces largely suspended attacks on SDF positions.[905](#) In late March, Etana Syria reported that, although there were 'signs of cautious support' from Türkiye for the agreement, the shelling of SDF positions in eastern Aleppo by Turkish-backed forces continued, including in the Tishreen Dam area. Turkish airstrikes on SDF targets[906](#) and retaliatory SDF attacks on SNA positions near the dam and the Qara Qozaq Bridge also continued.[907](#) Agreements signed between the SDF and the transitional government, including a ceasefire agreement signed on 12 April, aim to create a demilitarised or buffer zone in the

Tishreen Dam area.[908](#) According to UNOCHA, the agreements led to an improved security situation in parts of the governorate, with a reduction in attacks affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure.[909](#) However, relations between the two parties had ‘rapidly deteriorated’ by late April, as the SDF had stepped back on its promises to withdraw forces and had begun imposing new conditions.[910](#) Referring to social media sources, ISW and CTP stated that neither Türkiye, nor the SNA nor the transitional government forces had attacked the SDF near the Tishreen Dam since early April.[911](#)

SNHR reported incidents of abductions of minors by the SDF-affiliated Revolutionary Youth (Al-Shabiba Al-Thawriya) in Aleppo governorate in the reference period.[912](#)

Sources reported sporadic attacks by the group Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah between March and April 2025 in Aleppo governorate.[913](#)

#### □ (d) Security incidents

Between 9 December 2024 and 31 May 2025, ACLED recorded 1 048 security incidents in Aleppo governorate, the highest number of any governorate (see Figure 9). For the period between 1 March 2025 and 31 May 2025, ACLED recorded 261 security incidents (defined as battles, explosions/remote violence, and violence against civilians) in Aleppo governorate. Of these, 129 were coded as explosions/remote violence, 80 as incidents of violence against civilians, and 52 as battles. The majority of the incidents occurred in March (145 incidents).[914](#)

915\_evolution\_security\_events\_Aleppo\_dec24\_may25\_072025\_coi\_syria\_country\_focus

**Figure 9: Evolution of security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ in Aleppo governorate between 9 December 2024 and 31 May 2025, based on ACLED data.**[915](#)

During the reference period, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all eight districts of the governorate, with the highest number documented in the district of Ain Al-Arab (101 incidents), followed by Jebel Saman (54 incidents) and Menbij (35 incidents). By comparison, the fewest incidents were recorded in As-Safira district (7 incidents). According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were the main actor involved in around 40 % of all recorded security incidents (coded as either ‘Actor1’ or ‘Actor2’) during the reference period, particularly in incidents coded as violence against civilians, where civilians were shot and killed, and as explosions/remote violence caused by landmines and IEDs. Military forces of Türkiye were involved in around 28 % of all security incidents, also particularly in incidents coded as explosions/remote

violence. SDF were involved in around 24 % of all security incidents, mainly in incidents coded as battles (where military forces of Syria were also often an actor) and in incidents coded as explosions/remote violence, while military forces of Syria were involved in 20 % of all security incidents, mainly in incidents coded as battles, and police forces of Syria were involved in 5 % of all security incidents. The Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) was responsible for 3 % of all security incidents (8 incidents), all of which were coded as violence against civilians and were cases of abductions of minors.[916](#)

#### □ (e) **Civilian casualties**

In March 2025, the SNHR recorded 29 civilian fatalities in Aleppo governorate, accounting for around 2 % of the total number (1 562) recorded across all governorates,[917](#) in April 2025, SNHR recorded 21 civilian fatalities,[918](#) and in May 2025, 25 civilian fatalities were recorded in the governorate.[919](#) For the period between March and May 2025, UCDP recorded 94 civilian fatalities in Aleppo governorate.[920](#)

921\_civilian\_fatalities\_Aleppo\_mar\_may25\_snhhr\_072025\_coi\_syria\_country\_focus

**Figure 10: Civilian fatalities in Aleppo governorate between March and May 2025. Monthly breakdown based on SNHR data.**[921](#)

#### □ (f) **Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war**

According to GPC and UNICEF, as of March 2025, fighting around the Tishreen Dam had kept the dam non-functional since December 2024. This affected the access to pumped water and electricity of over 400 000 people in Menbij and Ain Al-Arab districts.[922](#) In mid-March 2025, UNOCHA reported that most civil and cadastral offices in the governorate remained non-functional as the situation in Aleppo remained volatile, among others due to ERW threats.[923](#) In late March 2025, a petrol station in the town of Sarrin was reportedly hit by shells fired by Turkish-backed forces.[924](#)

The Syria Civil Defence was quoted by Enab Baladi as saying that following Idlib, Aleppo was one of the governorates witnessing the highest numbers of incidents relating to remnants of war between 27 November 2024 and 14 March 2025.[925](#)

Detonations of unexploded ordnance caused civilian deaths and injuries in rural northern Aleppo,[926](#) including in Menbij district,[927](#) and in rural eastern Aleppo.[928](#) In March 2025, GPC reported that the majority of unexploded ordnance accidents since December 2024 in several governorates, including in Aleppo, had occurred 'in agricultural settings as people were trying to cultivate land or graze animals'.[929](#)

UNOCHA reported in May 2025 that UXOs, ERWs, mines and IEDs are 'reportedly widespread and affect residential areas, farmland, infrastructure, and key access routes' particularly in a handful of Syrian governorates, including in Aleppo.[930](#) The same month, the MAG reported that the extensive use of cluster munitions and deployment of air-dropped bombs in Aleppo governorate during the Syrian war often led to 'massive UXO contamination'.[931](#) In an April 2025 article, NPA reported that according to the MoD western rural Aleppo, including Andan, Hreitan and Kafr Hamra, were heavily contaminated by landmines and UXO and that 'northwestern neighborhoods of Aleppo city and former frontline agricultural zones and roads' were also affected.[932](#)

#### □ (g) **Conflict-induced displacement and return**

According to UNHCR estimates, as of 12 June 2025, there were 1 545 049 IDPs living in the governorate and 467 198 individuals who had returned to areas of the governorate from internal displacement since 27 November 2024.[933](#) As of March 2025, intensified hostilities in the vicinity of the Tishreen Dam had resulted in the displacement of 20 000 people.[934](#) According to GPC, major return areas in Aleppo governorate were characterised by frequent security incidents, infrastructure damage and contamination by explosive ordnance.[935](#)

UNHCR further estimated that a total 197 265 returnees who had returned from abroad since the beginning of 2024 were living in the governorate by 15 May 2025, with the vast majority (25 137) returning to Jebel Saman district, followed by Al-Bab (5 683) and Menbij (5 121). Since 8 December 2024, 103 629 individuals had returned to Aleppo governorate from abroad.[936](#)

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