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# 5.8.4. Latakia governorate

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Map 6: © MapAction, Latakia governorate1024

### ☐ (a) Administrative division and population estimates

Latakia governorate is divided into four administrative districts, namely Latakia, Al-Haffa, Al-Qardaha, and Jablah, which are further divided into a total of 22 sub-districts.1025 Its capital is the city of Latakia.1026 As of March 2025, the population of Latakia governorate was 1 455 135 including residents, IDPs, and returnees from abroad, according to IOM estimates.1027 By comparison, the WHO estimated the governorate's population at 1 299 538 as of the same month.1028 For further background information on Latakia governorate, see section 2.4.1. of the EUAA COI Report Syria – Security Situation (October 2024).

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

As of the end of May 2025, Latakia governorate was mapped by the ISW and CTP as being entirely under the control of the transitional administration, although there were multiple pockets across the governorate where pro-Assad remnants maintained a presence.1029 Forces of the new Syrian army present in the governorate included the 400th Division (consisting of former HTS units), the Coastal Division (former NLF units), and the newly created 56th Reserve Division.1030

Non-state armed groups in the governorate whose activities were reported during the reference period include Saraya Ansar al Sunnah, a Sunni sectarian group that has claimed attacks targeting Alawites.1031 A number of Assad loyalist insurgent groups operated in the governorate, including the so-called Military Council for the Liberation

of Syria,1032 the Syrian Popular Resistance,1033 the Liwa' Dara' al-Sahel (Coastal Shield Brigade),1034 and groups associated with Suheil al-Hassan,1035 the former commander of the SAA's 25th Special Missions Forces Division.1036

During a major uprising of pro-Assad remnants that erupted on 6 March 2025, these groups expanded their operational reach to the cities,1037 although the transitional administration's forces subsequently secured most urban zones1038 and gradually pushed these groups out of the cities, as reported in early April.1039 While ISW and CTP described the Al-Qardaha area as a likely pro-Assad support zone as of April 2024, 1040 by mid-May they stated that it was unclear if this was still the case given the lack of further insurgent attacks in coastal Syria.1041 Nonetheless, some remnants were reported to remain in the governorate as of late May.1042

The general mobilisation initiated across the country in response to the March 2025 uprising1043 saw the deployment of MOA, General Security, HTS and SNA forces, as well as non-official fighters to the coastal region,1044 including Latakia city and Jablah. 1045 While the MOA claimed that up to 500 000 troops had been mobilised, Etana Syria estimated these numbers at around 70 000.1046 Approximately 150 security checkpoints were subsequently set up by the transitional administration1047 across western Syria.1048 For further information on the events of early March 2025, see section 4.1.2. of the EUAA COI Report Syria – Country Focus (March 2025).

Furthermore, there were continuing reports of Israeli aerial operations in the governorate.1049

### ☐ (c) Security trends

The reference period saw the emergence of new conflict dynamics in the coastal areas, driven by a significant increase in crimes and violence motivated by sectarian differences or perceived links to the former Assad government.1050

In a trend continuing since the second half of February, the early days of the reference period witnessed rising numbers of hit-and-run attacks attributed to former Assad military personnel, targeting checkpoints and security patrols in several towns,1051 including Latakia city.1052 Then, between 6 and 10 March 2025, the security situation significantly worsened1053 as an estimated 5 000 well-armed pro-Assad fighters1054 launched coordinated attacks on military and security forces in the coastal region,1055 targeting multiple sites in the cities of Latakia, Jablah, Al-Qardaha, as well as in rural areas of the governorate.1056 Ensuing large-scale security operations against the

perpetrators of the attacks were accompanied by killings of a retaliatory and sectarian nature,1057 including of civilians in Latakia city and Mukhtariya village1058 as Alawite-majority communities were being targeted.1059 In mid-April, the SNHR put the total toll of those killed during the hostilities in Latakia and other parts of the coastal region between 6 and 10 March at 1 662. These deaths included at least 231 civilians killed by pro-Assad armed groups and at least 1 217 individuals, among them civilians and disarmed Assad remnants, who were killed during security operations,1060 mainly at the hands of fighters from two former SNA rebel factions, the Sultan Suleiman Shah brigade and the Hamzat division.1061 For further information on the events of early March 2025, see section 4.1.2. of the EUAA COI Report Syria – Country Focus (March 2025).

While the large-scale operations against Assad remnants were officially announced to have ended on 10 March 20251062 and effectively wound down,1063 some targeted raids by GSS against Assad loyalist cells continued.1064 In mid-April, GSS conducted a major search operation with the proclaimed aim of dismantling suspected 'criminal' networks in Latakia city.1065 Targeted raids against Assad remnants were reported into late May 2025.1066 Sporadic attacks by Assad remnants targeting the security forces also persisted after 10 March,1067 but the general security situation was reported to have calmed significantly by late March1068 and early April 2025.1069 In late May, the governor of Latakia claimed that the situation in Latakia city had considerably improved since March. However, the New Arab reported that some parts of Latakia, particularly in the countryside, were seeing continued violence and instability.1070

Continuing accounts were emerging of 'sectarian attacks, execution-style killings and other violations against civilians' by factions nominally affiliated with the military and security forces,1071 including in Latakia city,1072 in the town of Saqoubin,1073 and in the vicinity of Masaytara.1074 The governorate further witnessed multiple killings of civilians by unidentified gunmen,1075 kidnappings,1076 and disappearances.1077 There were numerous reports of violence in western Syria allegedly perpetrated against the Alawite community,1078 although not all of these accounts could be verified.1079 Militants launched an attack on Russia's Hmeimim air base in May 2025, killing two soldiers.1080

Israeli airstrikes struck a former SAA military site in Qardaha (early March 2025),1081 military installations, including weapon depots, in the al Bayda Port and a naval site at Ras Shamra (late March),1082 and weapons caches in Bizama and Burj al-Islam villages (late May).1083

### ☐ (d) Security incidents

Between 9 December 2024 and 31 May 2025, ACLED recorded 246 security incidents in Latakia governorate (see Figure 15). For the period between 1 March and 31 May 2025, ACLED recorded 162 security incidents (defined as battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians) in Latakia governorate. Of these, 32 were coded as battles, 25 as explosions/remote violence and 105 as incidents of violence against civilians. The number of security incidents across the governorate peaked in March (111 incidents) and subsequently dropped to less than 30 incidents in April and May.1084

1085_evolution_security_events_Latakia_dec24_may25_072025_coi_syria_country_focus

**Figure 15: Evolution of security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ in Latakia governorate between 9 December 2024 and 31 May 2025, based on ACLED data.**1085

During the reference period, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all four districts of the governorate, with the highest number documented in the district of Latakia (65 incidents). By comparison, the fewest incidents were recorded in Al-Qardaha district (19 incidents). According to ACLED data, military and police forces of Syria were involved as a main actor (coded as either ‘Actor1’ or ‘Actor2’) in around 68 % of all security incidents recorded during the reference period, particularly in incidents coded as battles (where militia opposed to the MOA were often involved as another actor) and violence against civilians. Unidentified armed groups were involved in around 30 % of all security incidents, almost exclusively in incidents where civilians were also an actor. Anti-MOA militia were involved in around 23 % of all security incidents, mostly in battles also involving Syrian military and police forces.1086

### ☐ (e) Civilian casualties

In March 2025, the SNHR recorded 561 civilian fatalities in Latakia governorate and an additional 339 civilian victims who died at unspecified locations in the coastal region. Latakia was the governorate witnessing the highest number of civilian fatalities during that month, accounting for around 36 % of the total number (1 562) recorded across all governorates.1087 The number of civilian fatalities then significantly decreased to 9 in April and 24 in May.1088 SNHR attributed responsibility for the majority of the civilian

fatalities it recorded over this three-month period to armed forces involved in the security crackdowns in the coastal region (477 deaths, including 474 in March) and non-state armed groups linked to the former Assad government (57 deaths, all in March).1089 SNHR does not provide more detailed information on these fatalities. For the period between March and May 2025, UCDP recorded 610 civilian fatalities in Latakia governorate.1090

1091_civilian_fatalities_Latakia_mar_may25_snhr_072025_coi_syria_country_focus

**Figure 16: Civilian fatalities in Latakia governorate between March and May 2025. Monthly breakdown based on SNHR data.**1091

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

The escalation of hostilities in early March 2025 resulted in the burning of homes in Alawite villages1092 and infrastructure damage1093 that affected at least one hospital and 26 schools in the governorate.1094 Widespread power outages led to disruptions in water supplies.1095 Later the same month, fires set by individuals affiliated with the MoD spread across wide areas in the Al-Qardaha countryside, including forests, in which civilians had sought refuge from extensive operations directed against them. 1096 Other fires were set by unidentified men to civilian properties in Jablah city1097 and, purportedly, by Saraya Ansar al Sunnah in forest areas in Al-Qardaha district.1098 No information could be found on conflict-related infrastructure damage in April and May.

The Syria Civil Defence was quoted by Enab Baladi as saying that - following Idlib, Aleppo and Hama - Latakia was one of the governorates witnessing the highest numbers of incidents relating to remnants of war between 27 November 2024 and 14 March 2025.1099 Detonations of unexploded ordnance caused civilian deaths and injuries in Latakia city (where an incident in mid-March 2025 resulted in at least 16 deaths)1100 and in the northern1101 and eastern Latakia countryside.1102

### ☐ (g) Conflict-induced displacement and return

According to UNHCR estimates, as of 12 June 2025, 447 179 IDPs and 25 005 individuals who had returned to areas of the governorate from internal displacement since 27 November 2024 were living in the governorate.1103 The large-scale hostilities in March 2025 resulted in the displacement of an estimated 51 000 people across the two governorates of Latakia and Tartous, of whom 6 000 fled to Lebanon.1104

UNHCR further estimated that, as of 15 May 2025, a total of 18 544 individuals who had returned from abroad since the beginning of 2024 were living in the governorate, the vast majority (16 368) having returned to Latakia district. Since 8 December 2024, 13 327 individuals had returned to Latakia from abroad.1105

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