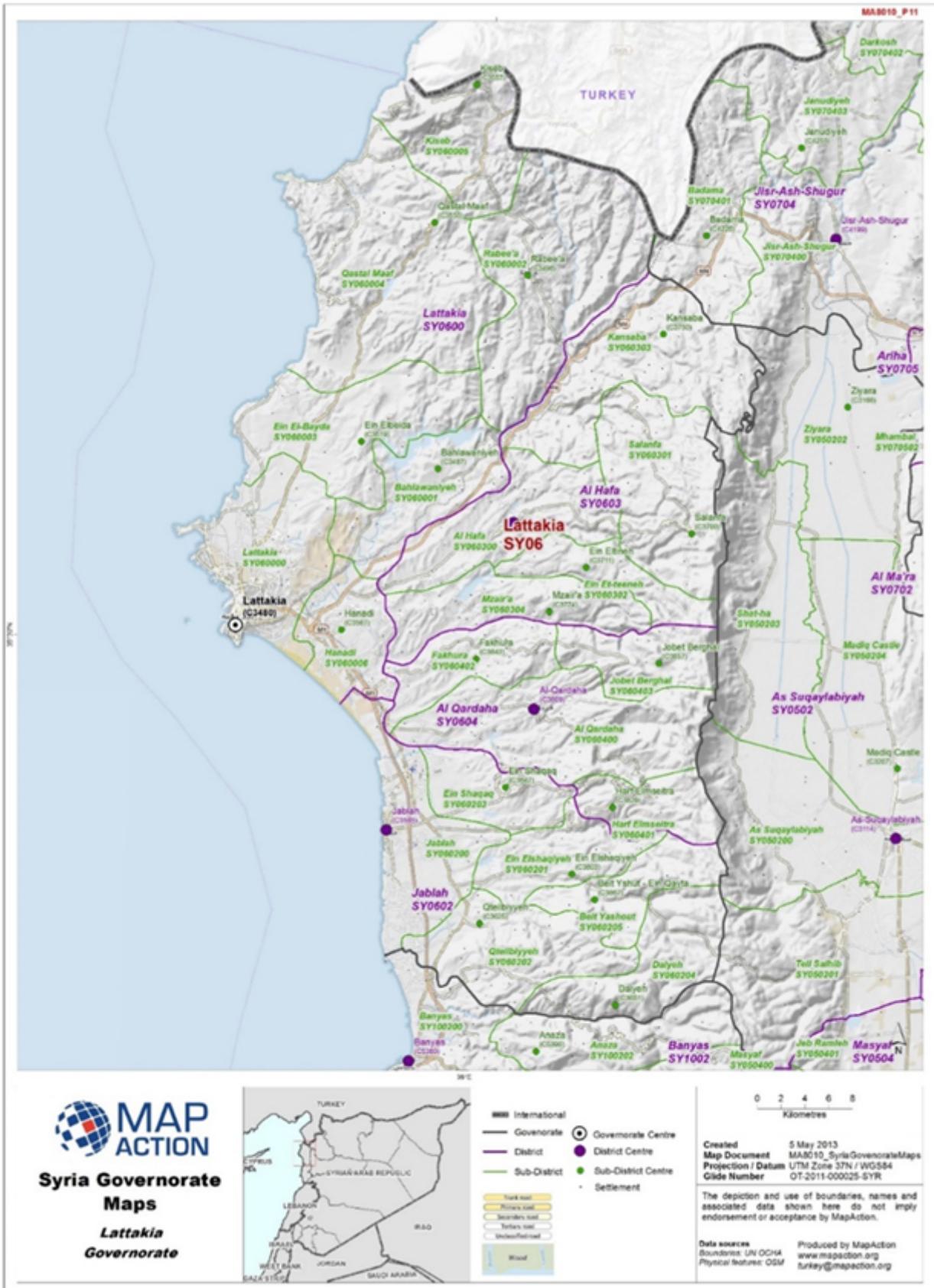


5.8.4. Latakia governorate



Map 6: © MapAction, Latakia governorate 1024

(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 village[1058](#) 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 2025[1062](#) 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 March[1068](#) 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](#)

Security incidents in Latakia: 9 December 2024 - 31 May 2025

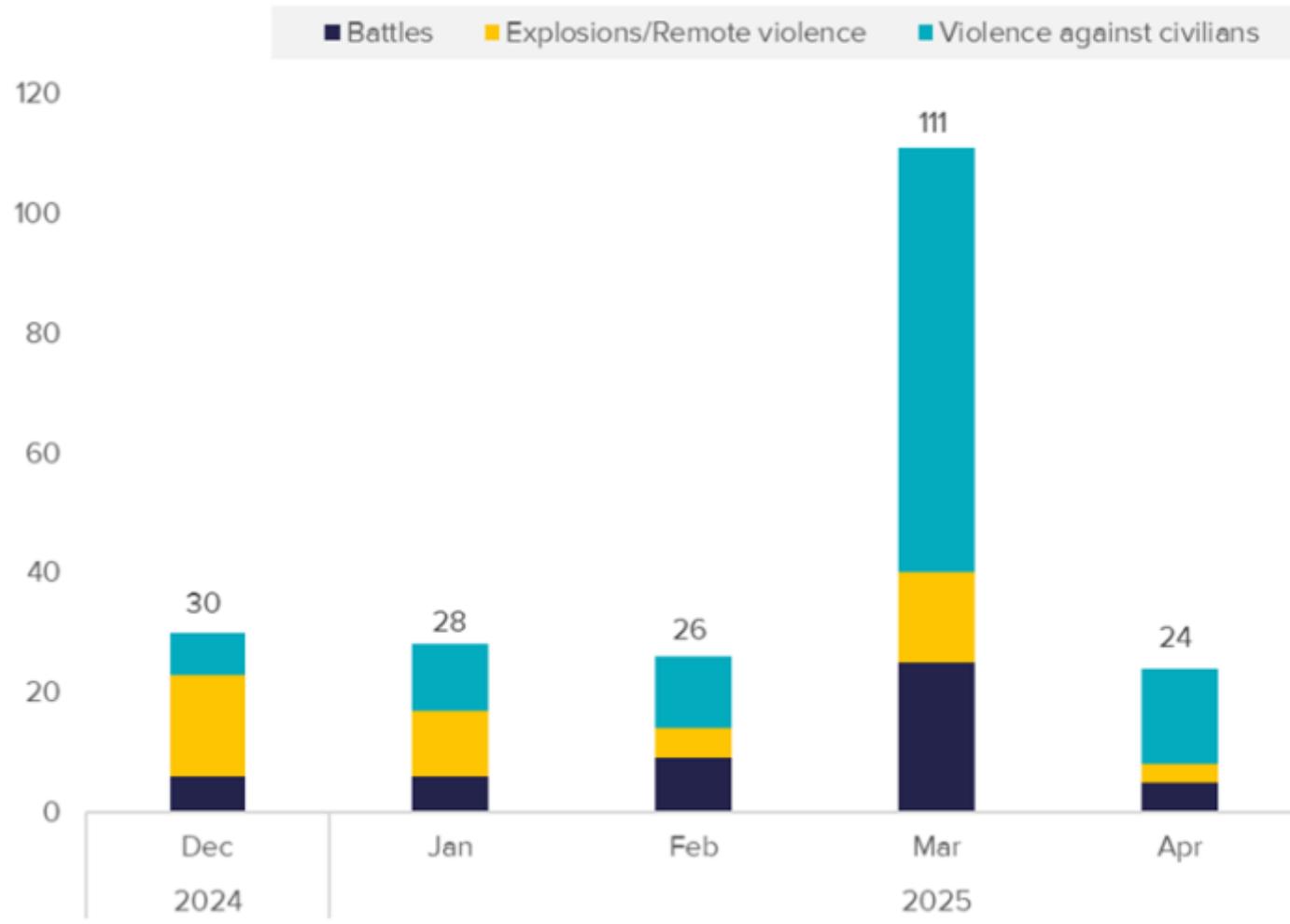


Figure 15: Evolution of security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ in Latakia governorate between 9 December 2024 and 31 May 2025, based on ACLED data.[1085](#)

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](#)

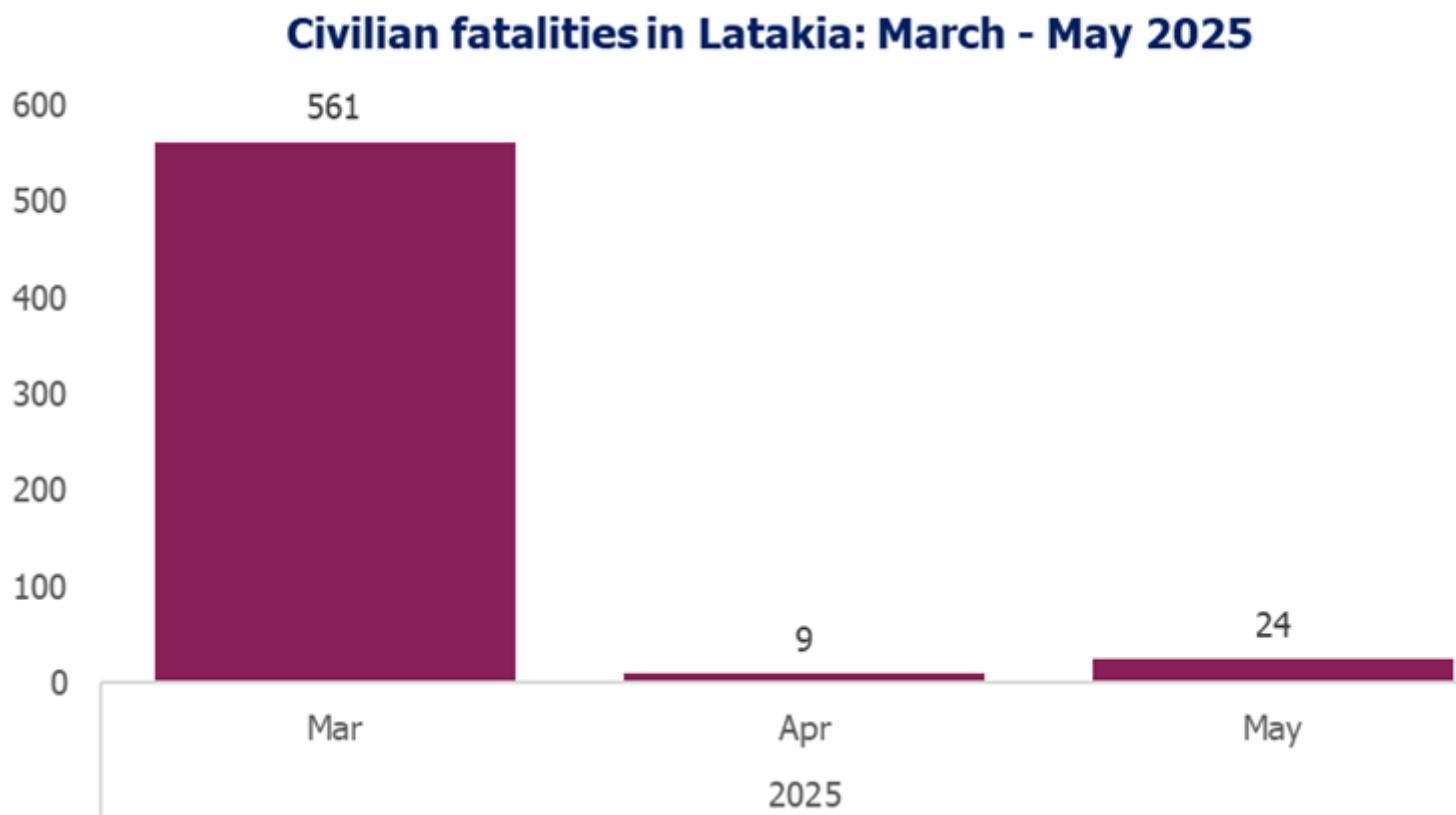


Figure 16: Civilian fatalities in Latakia governorate between March and May 2025. Monthly breakdown based on SNHR data.[1091](#)

(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 villages[1092](#) and infrastructure damage[1093](#) 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 city[1097](#) 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 northern[1101](#) 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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