Please cite as: EUAA, '5.8.6. Homs governorate' in *COI Report - Syria: Country Focus*, July 2025.

5.8.6. Homs governorate

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Map 8: © MapAction, Homs governorate map.1165

(a) Administrative division and population estimates

Homs governorate is divided into six administrative districts, namely Al-Makhrim, Al-Qusayr, Ar-Rastan, Homs, Tadmor, and Tall Kalakh, which are further divided into a total of 23 sub-districts.1166 The governorate's capital is Homs city,1167 a religiously diverse city, with a Sunni majority and large Alawite, Christian and Shia minority communities.1168 As of March 2025, the population of Homs governorate was 1 438 401, including residents, IDPs, and returnees from abroad, according to IOM estimates. 1169 In comparison, the WHO estimated the population at 1 505 561 as of March 2025. 1170 For further background information on Homs governorate, see section 2.6.1. of the EUAA COI Report Syria – Security Situation (October 2024).

(b) Territorial control and main armed actors

As of 30 May 2025, a map by the ISW and CTP showed the western part of Homs governorate as well as a corridor linking that part of the governorate with the city of Deir Ez-Zor as being controlled by the HTS-led transitional administration. Adjacent to the so-called Al Tanf Deconfliction Zone along the border with Iraq and Jordan was an area shown as being controlled by unidentified opposition groups. That area extended until the above-mentioned Homs-Deir Ez-Zor corridor which is running across the centre of the governorate. In the vicinity of Homs city, ISW and CTP indicated the presence of pro-Assad insurgents.1171

ACLED noted that hostilities between pro-Assad non-state armed groups and security forces in the coastal region in early March 2025 also expanded to locations in Homs governorate,1172 leading to widespread security operations and raids by the transitional administration's armed forces in rural Homs.1173

Saraya Ansar Al Sunnah, a militant Sunni group claimed responsibility for several targeted killings of Alawites and 'regime remnants' in Homs governorate during the reporting period.1174 Israeli forces launched several airstrikes on – mostly military – targets in Homs governorate in March1175 and April 2025.1176

☐ (c) Security trends

Following the escalation of violence in the coastal region in early March 2025, as mentioned above, security forces and supporting armed groups launched security operations and raids in areas affected by the violence. The SNHR reported on incidents in rural Homs, where houses were raided and burnt down by security forces.1177

The International Crisis Group observed that, while the GSS had been able to quickly gain control over Damascus and other central cities and maintain public safety in these areas, they appeared to face more challenges in other areas such as Homs city and countryside. There, a series of revenge killings and kidnappings, often targeting Alawites, contributed to a general feeling of danger and undermined particularly the latter group's trust in the new authorities.1178 Similarly, SJAC pointed to a 'pattern of violence' that had 'ebbed and flowed' since January 2025 – the apparently targeted killing of Alawite civilians. The source noted that, according to reports these killings seemed to be motivated by the presumed identification of this group with the Assad regime and appeared to be particularly prevalent in and around Homs city, potentially because of past acts of violence committed by the former regime against the Sunni population in that area.1179

Other sources also reported on persisting tensions between Alawites and other communities,1180 incidents of 'reprisal discrimination',1181 and an increase in kidnappings and killings in Homs city,1182 often targeting religious minorities,1183 such as the Al-Murshidi religious community,1184 and, predominantly, Alawites,1185 and/or persons affiliated with the former Assad government.1186 As of March 2025, the civil society organisation 'Civil Peace Group' reportedly documented 86 cases of kidnappings and disappearances in Homs since 9 December 2024, with 23 of those individuals being executed and the fate of the others unknown.1187 Killings were often perpetrated by unidentified gunmen on motorcycles,1188 leading the GSS to announce

in early May a ban on the use of motorcycles in Homs city after 7 pm.1189 In April, the SNHR pointed to 'a surge in violent and unlawful killings' in Homs city, where at least 20 people were killed in the period 23 to 28 April 2025. Most of the killings occurred in predominantly Alawite neighbourhoods and most of the victims had been shot dead. 1190 Security forces reportedly established checkpoints across the city as well as at the Al-Zahra and Al-Nahda neighbourhoods, fencing these areas off from the rest of the city.1191 At the end of May 2025, the ISW and CTP observed a 'decline in sectarian violence' in Homs and other major cities since mid-May 2025 and suggested that this might be related to security measures implemented by the transitional authorities including the nightly ban on motorcycles and the deployment of GSS forces.1192

Saraya Ansar al Sunnah Sunni militia claimed several attacks and killings of Alawites and/or former members of the Assad-government.1193

Israeli forces conducted several airstrikes against targets in Homs governorate: in March 2025, airstrikes included the Mukhayber Bridge in the Hosh Al-Sayyid Ali area near the border with Lebanon,1194 military installations in Shinshar and Jdeidet Al-Sharqiyeh,1195 the Al-Shairat Military Airport,1196 and the Tadmur base in Palmyra. 1197 Moreover, airstrikes were launched against the Tiyas (or T4) airbase in March 1198 and April 2025,1199 where Türkiye was reportedly planning to install air defence systems,1200 and possibly already had transferred some equipment.1201

Several sources reported on the seizure of smuggled arms,1202 and the raiding of arms depots used by insurgents.1203 In May 2025, Etana Syria noted that GSS arrested several individuals suspected of having links to ISIL cells in Homs governorate. 1204

☐ (d) Security incidents

Between 9 December 2024 and 31 May 2025, ACLED recorded 379 security incidents in Homs governorate (see Figure 19). In the period between 1 March and 31 May 2025, ACLED recorded 180 security incidents (defined as battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians) in Homs governorate. Of these incidents, 14 were coded as battles, 53 as explosions/remote violence, and 113 as violence against civilians.1205

1206_evolution_security_events_Homs_dec24_may25_072025_coi_syria_country_focus

Figure 19: Evolution of security events coded 'battles', 'explosions/remote violence' and 'violence against civilians' in Homs governorate between 9 December 2024 and 31 May 2025, based on ACLED data.1206

During the reference period, security incidents were recorded in all six districts of Homs governorate. The highest number of such incidents was recorded in Homs district (102 security incidents), followed by Tadmor (30) and Al-Qusayr (27 incidents). The fewest incidents were recorded in Al-Makhrim and Ar-Rastan districts (3 security incidents each). According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved as a main actor (coded as either 'Actor 1' or 'Actor 2') in slightly more than 73 % of all security incidents recorded during the reference period, particularly in incidents coded as 'violence against civilians' and 'explosions/remote violence', where in most cases civilians were also involved.

'Forces of Syria', including military and police forces, were involved in around 29 % of all security incidents, particularly in incidents coded as 'violence against civilians' and 'explosions/remote violence', where Israeli forces were often involved as another actor (conducting airstrikes on Syrian positions).1207

☐ (e) Civilian casualties

SNHR documented the killing of 48 civilians across Homs governorate in March 2025.1208 A similar number of civilian fatalities was recorded in April 2025 (47), most of them killed by unidentified parties.1209 In May 2025, SNHR recorded the killing of 24 civilians, again, most of them killed by unidentified parties.1210 SNHR does not provide more detailed information on these fatalities. For the period between March and May 2025, UCDP recorded 136 civilian fatalities in Homs governorate.1211

1206_evolution_security_events_Homs_dec24_may25_072025_coi_syria_country_focus

Figure 20: Civilian fatalities in Homs governorate between March and May 2025. Monthly breakdown based on SNHR data.1212

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

Several sources have reported that civilians have been killed or injured by landmines and other ERW near Palmyra1213 and in areas of eastern rural Homs.1214 Enab Baladi

noted that, according to the Syrian Civil Defence, Homs was one of the areas where most incidents involving war remnants occurred between 27 November 2024 and 14 March 2025.1215

Civilian property was reportedly damaged in an IED attack by Saraya Ansar al Sunnah Sunni fighters on an Alawite neighbourhood in Homs city on 10 April 2025.1216 The Ein Al-Tannour Water Station in Al-Qsair city in western Homs was damaged by a missile attack, presumably by Hezbollah on 17 March 2025.1217

☐ (g) Conflict-induced displacement and return

According to UNHCR estimates, as of 12 June 2025, there were 283 779 IDPs living in Homs governorate, as well as 159 516 individuals who had returned to areas of the governorate from internal displacement since 27 November 2024.1218 UNHCR further estimated that a total of 86 533 returnees who had returned from abroad since the beginning of 2024 were living in the governorate by 15 May 2025, with the majority of them (64 598) returning to Homs district, followed by Al-Qusayr (10 911 individuals). Since 8 December 2024, 65 843 individuals had returned to Homs governorate from abroad, predominantly to Homs city.1219

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