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5.8.12. Dar'a governorate

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Map 14: © MapAction, Dar'a governorate[1496](#)

(a) Administrative division and population estimates

Dar'a governorate is divided into three administrative districts, namely Dar'a, Izra' and As-Sanamayn, which are further divided into a total of 17 sub-districts.[1497](#) Its capital is the city of Dar'a.[1498](#) As of March 2025, the population of Dar'a governorate was 1 268 536, including residents, IDPs, IDP returnees, and returnees from abroad, according to IOM estimates.[1499](#) By comparison, the WHO estimated the governorate's population at 1 081 657 as of the same month.[1500](#) For further background information on Dar'a governorate, [see section 2.12.1. of the EUAA COI Report Syria - Security Situation \(October 2024\)](#).

(b) Territorial control and main armed actors

As of the end of May 2025, Dar'a governorate was mapped by the ISW and the CTP as being almost entirely under the control of the transitional administration. Some sections along the governorate's eastern edges were being controlled by unidentified opposition groups whose realm of control extended into western Sweida. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) held a small stretch of territory in the southwest bordering the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights[1501](#) and Israeli forces operated across villages in the Yarmouk Basin (western rural Dar'a).[1502](#) Meanwhile, there were isolated pockets of presence of Assad remnants, including around As-Sanamayn town,[1503](#) where an armed faction formerly linked to the Assad-era Military Intelligence Directorate[1504](#) operated under the command of Mohsen Al-Hamid as of early March 2025.[1505](#) The

group was subsequently dismantled, although its leader escaped.[1506](#)

The Dar'a Division of the new Syrian army is led by former Ahrar al-Sham rebel commander Ahmad Binian al Hariri,[1507](#) who heads the 40th Division,[1508](#) a newly formed force[1509](#) initially known as the Southern Division.[1510](#) The MoD's forces include former members of the so-called central committees, bodies created in 2018 to administer previously opposition-held areas during Assad's rule[1511](#) that have since merged with the new ministry.[1512](#) The MoD started registration and recruitment of Dar'a locals into the 40th Division in March 2025[1513](#) in an effort to enhance control in the south, a region where the transitional administration's grip has remained weak.
[1514](#)

Up until mid-April 2025,[1515](#) the Eighth Brigade, a Dar'a-based armed faction under the leadership of Ahmed Al-Awda[1516](#) (also transliterated Ahmad Al-Awdeh),[1517](#) operated around its stronghold in Busra al-Sham town.[1518](#) The Eighth Brigade, the governorate's most prominent armed faction, was known for refusing to merge into the MoD forces[1519](#) and maintaining a 'degree of autonomy' in controlling parts of eastern Dar'a[1520](#) (for more information on the Eighth Brigade, [see section 2.12.2. of the EUAA COI Report Syria - Security Situation \(October 2024\)](#)).

However, on 13 April 2025, following clashes with a rival group affiliated with the transitional administration[1521](#) and large-scale deployment of security forces towards Busra al-Sham,[1522](#) the Eighth Brigade announced its dissolution.[1523](#) By 15 April, the transitional administration had taken over the Eighth Brigade's former positions in Busra al-Sham.[1524](#) With all armed factions in the governorate now dissolved,[1525](#) GSS permanently stationed 400 fighters in Busra al-Sham and took control of the region.[1526](#) However, supporters of Ahmed Al-Awda continued to be active in the area.
[1527](#)

(c) **Security trends**

Following a temporary decrease in assassinations and targeted attacks after the fall of Assad's rule,[1528](#) the governorate witnessed a renewed escalation of assassinations [1529](#) that according to social expert Ahmad al-Awadat were motivated by revenge and score-settling between parties that had been involved in years of conflict,[1530](#) alongside reports of some civilians being killed over sectarian affiliations.[1531](#)

In early March 2025, clashes broke out in As-Sanamayn city between GSS forces and the armed group commanded by Mohsen al-Hamid after the latter refused to disarm.

[1532](#) At least three civilians were killed while members of the Al-Hamid group resorted to indiscriminate gunfire[1533](#) as General Security stormed the city, dismantling the group.[1534](#)

As of mid-April 2025, Enab Baladi observed that despite the assumption of security control by the Mol's GSS forces, the security apparatus remained unable to significantly shift realities on the ground given the wide spread of weapons among the population and the lack of actual dissolution of armed groups.[1535](#) On 17 April 2025, following the announced dissolution of the Eighth Brigade, clashes were reported in Busra al-Sham between local residents and supporters of the group's leader Ahmed Al-Awda.[1536](#) Arrest campaigns were conducted several towns and villages in a marked escalation in security operations.[1537](#)

The reference period saw multiple attacks on GSS members by unidentified armed men,[1538](#) including while being off-duty.[1539](#) On the other hand, killings of former local militia members[1540](#) and individuals previously affiliated with the political[1541](#) and security apparatus of the former Assad government were reported in various parts of the governorate.[1542](#) At the same time, numerous attacks by unidentified gunmen caused casualties among individuals with no reported affiliation to any military party.[1543](#) Several casualties arose from armed disputes between tribal groups[1544](#) and families.[1545](#)

The reference period further witnessed several Israeli airstrikes[1546](#) that caused multiple casualties,[1547](#) including in Dar'a city,[1548](#) as well as regular Israeli ground incursions.[1549](#) Following an attempt by local armed men to stop advancing Israeli ground forces,[1550](#) the IDF escalated operations in late March, launching an incursion into Koya town in the Yarmouk Basin.[1551](#) This operation involved Israeli artillery and drone strikes as well as armed clashes,[1552](#) with sources reporting between four[1553](#) and six deaths among local residents.[1554](#) Another Israeli incursion into the Nawa town area in early April left nine people dead.[1555](#)

(d) **Security incidents**

Between 9 December 2024 and 31 May 2025, ACLED recorded 219 security incidents in Dar'a governorate (see Figure 29). For the period between 1 March and 31 May 2025, ACLED recorded 128 security incidents (defined as battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians) in Dar'a governorate. Of these, 33 were coded as battles, 43 as explosions/remote violence and 52 as incidents of violence against civilians. The number of security incidents across the governorate was highest in March (52) and

April (48) and dropped to 28 in May.[1556](#)

[1557_evolution_security_events_Dar_a_dec24_may25_snhr_072025_coi_syria_country_focus](#)

Figure 29: Evolution of security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ in Dar’a governorate between March and May 2025, based on ACLED data.[1557](#)

During the reference period, security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all three districts of the governorate, with the highest number documented in the district of Dar’a (53 incidents). According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved as a main actor (coded as either ‘Actor1’ or ‘Actor2’) in around 65 % of all security incidents recorded during the reference period, particularly in incidents coded as violence against civilians. Military and police forces of Syria were involved in around 30 % of all security incidents, including in battles with unidentified armed groups. Israeli forces were involved in around 18 % of all security incidents, mainly in incidents where military forces of Syria were also an actor.[1558](#)

(e) Civilian casualties

In March 2025, the SNHR recorded 39 civilian fatalities in Dar’a governorate caused by parties to the conflict or controlling forces in the governorate.[1559](#) In April 2025, SNHR recorded 32 civilian fatalities,[1560](#) and in May 2025, 8 civilian fatalities were recorded in the governorate.[1561](#) SNHR attributed responsibility for the majority of the civilian fatalities it recorded over this three-month period to unspecified/unidentified parties (67 deaths, including 37 in March) and Israeli forces (9 deaths, all in April).[1562](#) SNHR does not provide more detailed information on these fatalities. For the period between March and May 2025, UCDP recorded 41 civilian fatalities in Dar’a governorate.[1563](#)

[1564_civilian_fatalities_Dar_a_mar_may25_snhr_072025_coi_syria_country_focus](#)

Figure 30: Civilian fatalities in Dar’a governorate between March and May 2025. Monthly breakdown based on SNHR data.[1564](#)

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

A high degree of contamination with unexploded remnants of war was observed on premises of unsecured military bases and in certain rural areas, causing deaths and injuries among civilians.[1565](#) Numerous such incidents were reported across the governorate, including in western,[1566](#) northern,[1567](#) and eastern rural Dar'a[1568](#) and in the city of Busra al-Sham.[1569](#) In March 2025, GPC reported that the majority of unexploded ordnance accidents since December 2024 in several governorates, including in Dar'a, had occurred 'in agricultural settings as people were trying to cultivate land or graze animals'.[1570](#)

Information on conflict-related infrastructure damage during the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

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

According to UNHCR estimates, as of 12 June 2025, 66 480 IDPs and 24 122 individuals who had returned to areas of the governorate from internal displacement since 27 November 2024, were living in the governorate.[1571](#) The violence around Koya town in late March 2025 prompted at least 3 000 local residents to flee for other areas within western Dar'a in what was reported as the largest displacement incident seen in months in southern Syria. Most of these displaced returned the following day.[1572](#)

UNHCR further estimated that, as of 15 May 2025, a total of 71 498 individuals who had returned from abroad since the beginning of 2024 were living in the governorate, the vast majority having returned to Dar'a (42 422) and Izra' (22 915) districts. Since 8 December 2024, 43 822 individuals had returned to Dar'a governorate from abroad.
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