1.3.2. Capacity and effectiveness of security forces

Sources reported that MoI forces had stronger command and generally exhibited higher professionalism compared to the MoD forces[107] who displayed weak discipline and performed poorly during the events violence in the coastal areas (March 2025) and in Sweida (July 2025) [108] where they engaged in human rights violations.[109] Early army deployments revealed unsanctioned sectarian violence and other abuses, highlighting weak command and control over certain units, including SNA factions.[110] According to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (UNCOI), deficiencies in control, coordination, diversity, training, and discipline among nominally integrated factions contributed to violations, including those reported in coastal areas and in Sweida.[111]

At times, security forces reportedly operated without a clearly defined chain of command,[112] and security personnel manning checkpoints[113] or carrying out security operations often lacked uniforms or identification, blurring the distinction between state actors and affiliated armed groups.[114] As of September 2025, there were approximately 800 traffic officers in Damascus and 250 in Rural Damascus. Their performance has prompted criticism of weak oversight, poor organisation, and inadequate knowledge of basic duties among some officers.[115] In Dar'a governorate, former fighters from local armed groups were integrated in the security forces but in July 2025, Syrian authorities dismissed at least 200 of them over misconduct following a series of abuses by GSS members, including killings, mistreatment of corpses, and involvement in blood feuds and personal disputes.[116]

According to Syrian Women's Political Movement (SWPM), the training and discipline of police and internal security forces vary widely, with effective responses in some areas while reports of abduction or violence are ignored in others. Although authorities occasionally announce disciplinary action, accountability remains inconsistent, and it is unclear whether shortcomings stem from limited capacity or insufficient political will.[117]

The transitional government has taken steps to strengthen control over security forces by centralising recruitment, tightening vetting procedures, and routing salaries received from Türkiye by former SNA factions through the MoD.[118] Some progress has also been made in redeploying army units with records of abuse away from sensitive areas, such as the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade (now the 62nd Division) and Hamzat division (now the 76th Division) from the coastal areas to Hama and Aleppo, respectively, and the 42nd Division involved in the Sweida clashes to the Syrian desert.[119] Although the MoD's forces conduct appeared to improve during later operations such as against the SDF in Aleppo city in early 2026,[120]

widespread distrust persists.121

Training on international humanitarian and human rights standards for army factions began in mid-2025 with support from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN, but stronger accountability measures, including comprehensive vetting, lustration, and professionalisation, were still required according to the UNCOI. The MoI also reported professionalisation efforts in 2025, such as issuing a code of conduct and creating a public complaints mechanism that led to accountability for cases of violence and corruption.122

Generally, the presence and functioning of security forces and law enforcement structures are considered to be more consistent in major urban centres123 such as Damascus,124 Homs, Aleppo, Latakia125 and Hama,126 where security forces have a stronger presence. However, security conditions remain uneven across regions, with some areas still prone to instability, local tensions, and communal violence.127 Rural and peripheral areas remain harder to police due to widespread weapons and limited state authority, allowing armed groups and local actors greater autonomy.128 Diverse areas such as the coastal region and the Hama and Homs governorates, home to Alawite, Christian, and Ismaili communities, pose particular challenges, as intense civil war violence there has left strong grievances and desires for retribution.129

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