



2.3. Individuals perceived to be opposing the SDF/YPG

During the Syrian civil war, the SDF controlled most of north-eastern Syria.^{[357](#)} In early 2026, the Syrian transitional government took control of large parts of the territory previously held by the SDF in Deir Ez-Zor, Raqqa, Aleppo and Hasaka governorates.^{[358](#)} By February 2026, SDF presence had reportedly been reduced to areas around the cities of Qamishli and Hasaka, as well as the border town of Kobane,^{[359](#)} areas where the transitional government also deployed security contingents.^{[360](#)} The transitional government assumed control of civil administration in formerly SDF-controlled areas^{[361](#)} and the integration of SDF forces into state military institutions was ongoing^{[362](#)} (for more information see sections [1.1.3. Developments in the relationship between the transitional government and SDF](#) and [1.3. Security institutions](#)).

Since the January 2026 loss of territorial control and agreement to integrate into state institutions, SDF and affiliated forces have carried out less arrests. According to SNHR, during the first three months of 2026, the number of detainees released (417) by SDF significantly exceeded the number of arbitrary arrests (42) recorded during the same period.^{[363](#)} The large number of releases was attributed to the transitional government's takeover of detention centres formerly under SDF control, release agreements between the two parties pursuant to the agreement of 29 January 2026 and popular discontent with forced conscription campaigns.^{[364](#)}

Prior to January 2026, SDF reportedly carried out arbitrary arrests against individuals accused of criticising its practices, supporting the transitional government,^{[365](#)} or on issues related to conscription.^{[366](#)} The SDF-led DAANES administration had also imposed restrictions on public gatherings commemorating the anniversary of the fall of the Assad regime. The enforcing of the ban on gatherings included the dispersal of assemblies with live fire, intensified checkpoint searches, restricted access to public spaces, and arrests linked to participation, filming, or expression of opinions.^{[367](#)} Cases of incommunicado detention and enforced disappearances at the hands of SDF were also reported in 2025, including against individuals who celebrated the transitional government's assumption of power.^{[368](#)}

Deaths in SDF custody were reported throughout 2025, with allegations that torture and inadequate medical care contributed to fatalities among men and children. Several cases across Aleppo, Hasaka, Deir Ez-Zor, and Raqqa governorates, including deaths following arrest-related injuries and the deaths of children in detention, were documented, with investigations ongoing.^{[369](#)}

In the context of clashes between the transitional government and the SDF in early 2026, some residents claimed that SDF forces and Asayish (Kurdish internal security) restricted civilian movement by blocking access to humanitarian corridors in Aleppo.[370](#) Additional reports indicated that civilians in Hasaka were shot at or arrested for violating curfews imposed by the SDF, including in instances where individuals gathered to welcome the arrival of transitional government forces.[371](#) On 18 January 2026, Raqqqa governorate experienced a major escalation marked by tribal and popular armed clashes with the SDF across several towns, villages, and parts of Raqqqa city. Tribal fighters temporarily seized multiple areas, while the SDF destroyed key bridges and allegedly deployed snipers who targeted civilians, causing casualties amid a partial withdrawal of SDF personnel. According to SNHR, SDF fighters killed at least 22 civilians in the events, the majority by sniper fire.[372](#)

Over the reference period there were also limited reports of journalists being detained by Kurdish-led authorities in northeast Syria allegedly for collaboration with the transitional government.[373](#)

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