



2.7.3. Druze

The Druze constituted 3 % of Syria's pre-war population,^{[598](#)} accounting for approximately 700 000.^{[599](#)} Historically, they have been concentrated in the southern governorate of Sweida,^{[600](#)} with smaller communities near Damascus,^{[601](#)} notably in Jaramana and Ashrafiyat Sahnaya.^{[602](#)} Traditionally, the Druze in Syria have maintained a level of autonomy, including the formation of local militias,^{[603](#)} consisting of 'tens of thousands of fighters.'^{[604](#)} After the fall of the Assad regime, the resistance of Druze community leaders and local armed groups to government control and integration into state forces,^{[605](#)} resulted at times in clashes and casualties. In late April and early May 2025, fighting between local Druze armed groups and pro-government forces in Rural Damascus^{[606](#)} and Sweida caused more than 100 fatalities^{[607](#)} including dozens of civilians.^{[608](#)}

The July 2025 violence in Sweida killed over 1 700 people and displaced nearly 200 000.^{[609](#)} During the first and deadliest wave of violence from 14–16 July, government forces, aided by tribal fighters, committed widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law against Druze civilians in western Sweida and Sweida city. This included murder, torture, arbitrary detention, and pillage, with men separated from women and children for execution, and others shot in the streets or killed in their homes alongside family members. The second wave began on 17 July after government forces withdrew following Israeli airstrikes on Sweida and Damascus. Druze armed groups then targeted Bedouin civilians, committing serious violations, including murder, torture, arbitrary detention, forced displacement, and pillage, ultimately displacing nearly the entire Bedouin community from areas under their control. The third and most destructive wave, from 17–19 July, was carried out by tribal fighters in retaliation against Druze civilians. Nearly all homes, businesses, and religious sites in up to 35 Druze-majority or mixed villages were burned and looted, and civilians killed or abducted. Some government forces personnel removed their uniforms to join the attacks.^{[610](#)}

Based on 409 firsthand testimonies and field visits conducted with government access, the UNCOI documented widespread destruction, particularly in Druze villages, where tens of thousands of homes, businesses, and places of worship were burned. The Druze community suffered 1 190 men, 99 women, 22 boys, and 31 girls killed in July 2025, while the smaller local Bedouin community lost 53 men, 9 women, 5 boys, and 3 girls. Most victims were civilians or no longer participating in hostilities, though some Druze and Bedouin men were combatants. At least 225 government personnel also died, many in Israeli airstrikes on 14–16 July in Sweida and Damascus, with additional tribal fatalities reported, bringing the total reported deaths to over 1 707. ^{[611](#)}

Of the nearly 200 000 people displaced in July, around 155 000, mainly from burned Druze villages, remain unable to return. Almost the entire Bedouin population remains forcibly displaced, many living in inadequate shelters, while other communities, including Christians and non-Bedouin Sunnis, continue to report insecurity and fear of renewed violence.[612](#)

Many individuals were also abducted, kidnapped, or unlawfully detained. While most have been found and released, about 100 Druze, 20 Bedouin, and 30 government personnel remain missing, along with a Syrian Civil Defense volunteer who disappeared during evacuation efforts. Initial reports of large numbers of missing women were largely unsubstantiated, though three Bedouin women and one girl, and three Druze women, remain unaccounted for. The violence had a pronounced gendered impact, as men and boys were particularly targeted. Druze and Bedouin communities also reported sexual violence against women and girls, including rape, though only a limited number of cases have been confirmed and the full extent is still under investigation.[613](#)

Israel's military intervention, alongside earlier attempts to disrupt government operations and sow division, caused deaths and injuries while exacerbating instability. This fuelled accusations of treason against Druze leaders, online incitement, retaliatory attacks, and community divisions. According to the UNCOI, each wave of violence included sectarian insults against Druze and Bedouin civilians, with clear patterns of targeting based on religion, ethnicity, age, and gender. [614](#) The scale of the violence overwhelmed existing systems for receiving and identifying bodies, issuing death certificates, and conducting dignified burials.[615](#)

On 17 March 2026, the Syrian National Investigation Committee released its report on the July 2025 violence in Sweida between Bedouin and government forces and Druze militias. It recorded 1 760 deaths, 2 188 injuries, and the destruction or burning of about 36 villages, resulting in mass displacement.[616](#) The committee classified the violations as individual rather than systematic, with 23 security and military personnel reportedly detained for trial. Human rights observers criticised the findings, arguing that this characterisation shields senior leadership from accountability and that the committee's government-appointed status undermines its independence and credibility as a transitional justice mechanism.[617](#)

Cross-community relations remain tense following the violence, with sporadic clashes, road closures, and targeted attacks continuing to disrupt daily life. Civic space in Sweida has significantly narrowed,[618](#) and critics of local military and civilian authorities are increasingly targeted. There are allegations of torture and executions by the Sweida National Guard, including the reported deaths of two Druze sheikhs and a prominent poet[619](#) in late November and early December 2025 following alleged torture in custody, as well as ongoing looting of Bedouin homes.[620](#)

Sporadic clashes between Druze local armed groups and transitional government forces in Sweida were reported during the reference period, at times leading to casualties among combatants.[621](#) The parties exchanged prisoners on a couple of occasions, with the government releasing dozens of Druze detainees.[622](#) Some sources assessed that many of those released were civilians previously abducted by tribal groups and later transferred to government authorities, who subsequently held them in custody.[623](#) The National Investigation Committee on Sweida documented prisoner exchanges, including the release of 119 Druze and 25

individuals from Bedouin, tribal, and government forces, while noting that several people remain missing.[624](#) The UNCOI stated that at least 100 Druze arbitrarily detained or abducted during the July 2025 violence remain missing.[625](#)

The violence in Sweida deepened communal divisions and reinforced a sense of existential threat among the Druze community,[626](#) created mistrust between the Druze community and the Syrian government and, to some extent, conservative Sunni groups.[627](#) The Druze have increasingly been portrayed as aligned with Israel,[628](#) while many within the community report heightened security fears and feelings of political marginalisation.[629](#)

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