



1. General description of the security situation

1.1. Overview of current conflicts

On 27 November 2024, anti-Assad opposition forces led by the former armed group Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) launched an offensive^{[16](#)} in Idlib governorate^{[17](#)} that within days took control of Aleppo,^{[18](#)} Hama and Homs,^{[19](#)} and finally, on 8 December 2024, Damascus city.^{[20](#)} After former President Bashar Al-Assad fled to Russia,^{[21](#)} HTS established a transitional government^{[22](#)} led by HTS leader Ahmad Al-Sharaa, who was appointed transitional president of Syria on 29 January 2025.^{[23](#)} The period since the fall of Al-Assad witnessed instances of international armed conflict related to Israel's expanded military operations and presence in Syria^{[24](#)}, as well as a continuation of non-international armed conflicts that involved Assadist remnants, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the former Syrian National Army (SNA), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Sweida-based Druze militias, as well as activities of criminal networks.^{[25](#)} Further security challenges were related to retaliatory, communal^{[26](#)} and sectarian violence, including killings and kidnappings by local armed groups or unknown individuals.^{[27](#)}

Clashes involving Assadist remnants on the coast and in the centre: instability culminated in early March 2025 when Assad loyalists mounted a series of attacks against transitional security forces in the coastal governorates of Tartous and Latakia.^{[28](#)} Widespread clashes ensued, with security operations entailing sectarian and retaliatory attacks.^{[29](#)} According to the UN, members of the government forces and private individuals aligned with them killed more than 1 400 people, most of them Alawi civilians, across Latakia, Tartous, Homs and Hama. Violence continued in these areas throughout the rest of 2025, albeit with lesser intensity,^{[30](#)} with a spike in attacks by Assadist remnants on the coast in August 2025.^{[31](#)}

Fighting between the SDF and the transitional government/former rebels in the northeast: In the northeast, the Turkish-backed^{[32](#)} SNA launched an offensive in Aleppo governorate following the capture of Aleppo city by HTS-led forces in late November 2024,^{[33](#)} targeting SDF-controlled areas.^{[34](#)} As a result, the SDF lost territory west of the Euphrates, including Tall Rifaat and Manbij towns.^{[35](#)} In late December 2024, repeated clashes erupted between the SNA and SDF over control of the strategic Tishreen Dam area (Manbij countryside),^{[36](#)} while Turkish aerial strikes hit SDF targets and civilians.^{[37](#)} Despite a March 2025 agreement between the transitional government and the SDF that provided for the integration of the SDF into the state's structures by year's end, fighting continued along the northeastern frontlines throughout 2025.^{[38](#)} Meanwhile, the SDF also faced attacks by ISIL and a long-running struggle

with tribal armed groups in Deir Ez-Zor.[39](#) A temporary lull in clashes between the SNA and SDF in spring 2025[40](#) was followed by renewed escalations in fighting, now between the transitional government forces and the SDF, in August[41](#) and September.[42](#)

In early October 2025, new clashes erupted between government and SDF forces in the Kurdish-majority neighbourhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyeh of Aleppo city.[43](#) Then, shortly after the deadline for the integration of the SDF expired in December 2025,[44](#) government military forces took over Aleppo's Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyeh neighbourhoods amid intense clashes [45](#) (6 – 10 January 2026).[46](#) Subsequently, they captured broad swathes of SDF-held territory[47](#) further east, including Deir Hafer town[48](#) and, with the aid of militias[49](#) from local Arab tribes,[50](#) took control of the cities of Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor[51](#) and their respective governorates.[52](#) They then advanced further towards Hasaka[53](#) while surrounding the SDF forces in the town of Ain Al-Arab (Kobane).[54](#) Both parties accused one another of having committed extrajudicial killings during these hostilities.[55](#) A series of ceasefire agreements concluded between President Al-Sharaa and SDF leader General Mazloum Abdi between 18-30 January 2026 largely brought the clashes to a halt.[56](#)

Attacks by ISIL and other insurgents: Attacks attributed to ISIL continued, with the UN Sanctions Monitoring team member reported that Member States identified at least 129 such incidents between June and November 2025 alone, most of them attacks involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), ambushes and assassinations, mainly occurring in Deir Ez-Zor and targeting the SDF.[57](#) Several attacks were carried out after ISIL spokesperson Abu Hudhayfa Al-Ansari on 21 February 2026 made a call to action against the transitional government.[58](#) Other incidents, including a deadly December 2025 bombing of a mosque in Homs city[59](#) and at least two assassination attempts against President Al-Sharaa, were claimed by the group Saraya Ansar Al-Sunnah.[60](#) At the same time, transitional government[61](#) and US forces continued to target ISIL sites.[62](#)

Israeli operations in southern Syria: As the Al-Assad regime collapsed, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) moved into the UN-demilitarised buffer zone in the Golan Heights[63](#) and further into areas in Quneitra and Dar'a.[64](#) Between December 2024 and the end of 2025, the UN noted 900 reported Israeli ground incursions in Quneitra.[65](#) The IDF further carried out large numbers of airstrikes on former regime military sites in December 2024[66](#) and strikes continued to be reported at least into late 2025.[67](#) Ground operations caused multiple civilian casualties[68](#) and continued in 2026, involving regular patrols and raids.[69](#) In the one-year period after the fall of Al-Assad, the Syrian non-profit media organisation Enab Baladi documented 830 Israeli air raids and 15 instances of artillery bombardment, resulting in the destruction of military airbases and aircraft, air defences, radars, signalling stations, arms and ammunition depots, scientific research centres and warships.[70](#)

Conflicts involving Druze factions in Sweida: Longstanding competition between Druze and Bedouins (some of whom Druze leaders have accused of siding with Damascus) over money,[71](#) pastures, water and control of borderlands was exacerbated after the fall of the Al-Assad government as the new transitional government sought to expand its control across a unified Syria that includes Sweida. Some Druze leaders refused to disarm or fully accept the deployment of central government forces in the governorate.[72](#) Tensions between Druze and Bedouins escalated into heavy clashes in Sweida city[73](#) and villages to its north and west in mid-

July 2025.⁷⁴ To contain the violence,⁷⁵ the transitional government deployed forces in the area, which prompted Israel to respond by launching airstrikes on the government forces, citing obligations to protect Druze civilians. Reported 'mass killings, looting and forced displacement' of local Bedouins by Druze militias⁷⁶ prompted mass reinforcements from Bedouin tribes across the country.⁷⁷ Major clashes eventually subsided after ceasefire agreements were concluded on 18/19 July 2025.⁷⁸ According to the UN, these hostilities resulted in at least 1 700 deaths, the majority of them among the Druze community, but also among Bedouins and the government forces.⁷⁹ The killings were attributed to government military forces, Druze armed factions, tribal fighters,⁸⁰ and Israeli airstrikes.⁸¹ A subsequent roadmap to stabilise the governorate and integrate its institutions into the state structures, drawn up by the transitional government, the USA and Jordan in the absence of Druze leaders, saw limited implementation.⁸² Some fighting between government forces and Druze militiamen, albeit at a significantly lower scale than in July 2025,⁸³ erupted in November 2025⁸⁴ and January,⁸⁵ March⁸⁶ and May 2025.⁸⁷ At the time of writing, most of Sweida governorate remains under the control of local Druze authorities.⁸⁸

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