1.2.1. Syrian transitional government security forces

On 29 January 2025, the HTS-led then Military Operations Command (MOC) dissolved the former Al-Assad regime's armed forces and security agencies.[90] The armed insurgent factions were likewise formally dissolved[91] as HTS and dozens of other former opposition groups including the SNA pledged to integrate into a new army under the transitional government's Ministry of Defence (MoD).[92] Al-Sharaa[93] and the former HTS took the helm of the new military apparatus [94] which consisted of previous rebel militias 'reflagged' as divisions, brigades, or battalions. As of September 2025, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and the Critical Threats Project (CTP) assessed that the new army consisted of 20 active divisions. Divisions are grouped by operational region. Many of the divisions are either dominated by a single reflagged former armed faction or are comprised of multiple re-flagged factions. Armed factions were incorporated largely intact as units, preserving their internal command structures and composition. Former HTS commanders held the largest share of command positions in the active new divisions (about one-third), followed by former commanders of the group Ahrar Al-Sham.[95]

Territorial control by transitional government forces changed significantly over the reference period of this report. In November 2025, ISW and CTP mapped control of the transitional government as encompassing most of the country's territory, while the SDF-governed areas in the northeast (Hasaka, much of Raqqa, and parts of Deir Ez-Zor governorates) and large parts of Sweida governorate remained outside of government control.[96] By mid-February 2026, however, the transitional government was assessed to control nearly the entire country, including most of Aleppo governorate, all of Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor governorates, and much of Hasaka.[97] Only large parts of Sweida,[98] Ain Al-Arab (Kobane) in Aleppo, some areas of Hasaka, and Israeli-held territories in the south remained outside the government's realm of control.[99]

The transitional government has actively sought to incorporate the armed contingents of non-Sunni communities that had neither fought alongside the former opposition nor explicitly operated as part of the former Assad regime's forces, mainly the Kurdish SDF and southern Druze militias.[100] Such efforts led to the conclusion of an agreement on 10 March 2025 that provided for the integration of the SDF into the new state's institutions by the end of 2025.[101] The deal further mandated a full cessation of hostilities and required the SDF to relinquish control of border posts, airport infrastructure, and key oil and gas fields.[102] However, at year's end, this agreement remained unimplemented,[103] while there was no progress in the integration of Druze factions.[104] As of late 2025, former rebels continued to form the bulk of the new Syrian army.[105]

Following military confrontations with the SDF that began in Aleppo on 6 January 2026 and eventually led to the government's capture of Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor, both sides reached a first ceasefire agreement on 18 January.[106] Apart from a cessation of hostilities, this 14-point agreement stipulated the integration of SDF personnel into MoD and Ministry of Interior (MoI) structures as individuals[107] rather than as a whole unit, as the SDF had demanded in previous negotiations.[108] After this ceasefire was repeatedly violated, both parties agreed on a new four-day ceasefire.[109] This was followed by a new agreement on 30 January providing for a comprehensive ceasefire that entailed the withdrawal of troops from contact lines and the entry of MoI forces into the cities of Hasaka and Qamishli to reinforce stability and start integrating SDF forces.[110] This new agreement was viewed as more conciliatory towards Kurdish positions as it defined protocols to integrate entire SDF units (a military division composed of three SDF brigades in Hasaka governorate and a Kobane-specific brigade) into state structures.[111] In early May, it was announced that four SDF brigades had officially been integrated.[112]

In a notable new development, the transitional government joined the US-led Global Coalition against ISIL in November 2025.[113] Meanwhile, it continued to face challenges with regard to establishing a unified military structure,[114] and Al-Sharaa had only 'relatively limited' control over certain units such as the former Hamza Division, Suleiman Shah Division, Sultan Murad Division, and Ahrar al Sharqiya,[115] all previously affiliated with the former SNA.[116] Such groups were implicated in the coastal mass-killings in March 2025, as well as in further extrajudicial killings and looting.[117] According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), between October 2025 and March 2026, government-linked forces were involved in the killings of 16 civilians.[118] By late 2025, the government had begun taking some measures seen to be aimed at mitigating these issues, including stricter army recruitment, redeploying undisciplined units to places where they could inflict less harm,[119] and 'quietly' arresting perpetrators of violence.[120] Internal security responsibilities were transferred from the MoD to the MoI.[121] A comprehensive evaluation process was announced for military officers[122] and a set of rules was issued for members of the military to protect confidentiality of information as part of an overall effort to transform the army from a faction-based structure to a more disciplined and institutionalised organisation.[123]

In the sphere of law enforcement, in May 2025 the government established the Internal Security Command (ISC)[124] as an institution under the MoI.[125] Due to their historically close ties to the former HTS leadership in Idlib, MoI units were estimated to operate under more structured ministry command than those operating under the MoD.[126] The MoI initially appointed ISC commanders for 12 governorates, with notably no postings for Hasaka and Raqqa,[127] which at the time were still largely located outside the transitional government's realm of control.[128] But in a new development in late January 2026, the MoI appointed an ISC commander for Hasaka.[129] ISC units were involved in anti-ISIL operations alongside the General Intelligence Directorate[130] as well as in raids and arrests of persons with alleged ties to the former regime.[131] Amnesty International pointed to arrests of Alawite community members without warrants, including low-ranking former Assad government officials. Some arrestees were held in undisclosed locations over weeks or months before their families were given permission to see them.[132] In late 2025, the MoI issued a 'Code of Conduct for Personnel' aimed at enhancing integrity, discipline and performance across the security sector,[133] while stricter recruitment practices were introduced for the ISC.[134]

- 90

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