



1.2.3. Assad-aligned militias

Since the collapse of the Assad regime, previously senior members of the regime's military and security apparatus formed new groups and networks to fight the transitional government.^{[181](#)} By February 2025, their operations against government troops showed a growing degree of coordination.^{[182](#)} Groups formed in the months after the former regime's downfall included the Coastal Shield Brigade,^{[183](#)} led by former Republican Guards commander Miqdad Fatiha,^{[184](#)} and several outfits that emerged amid the escalation of violence in coastal Syria in March 2025.^{[185](#)} Groups active during the reference period include the Coastal Shield Brigade^{[186](#)} and a new group called Men of Light—Saraya Al-Jawad that emerged in August 2025.^{[187](#)} Men of Light—Saraya Al-Jawad is associated with Suhail Al Hassan,^{[188](#)} a former regime commander who amongst others led the former SAA's 25th Special Tasks Division/'Tiger Forces'.^{[189](#)} On the ground, the group was led by Bashar Abdullah Abu Raqiya before he was killed in an ISC security operation in February 2026.^{[190](#)} During the reference period, ISW and CTP mapped that Assad-aligned militias did not control any territory in Syria.^{[191](#)} While several exiled high-ranking former regime officials were planning to build an armed insurgency from abroad to retake territory in the coastal areas, the degree to which these former officials posed a threat to the government was unclear.^{[192](#)} Inside Syria, after March 2025, the Coastal Shield Brigade shifted its focus towards targeting Alawite civilians it suspected of collaborating with the transitional government.^{[193](#)}

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