



2.12.2. Territorial control and main armed actors

During the reporting period, Dar'a governorate appeared to be under the control of the Syrian Transitional Government,[1123](#) although its authority and security presence were reportedly contested and not fully established.[1124](#) Syria's southern region has seen a broad proliferation of armed groups between 2018 and 2024,[1125](#) and Dar'a governorate has a long history of militias and tribal networks engaging in smuggling of various goods.[1126](#) The presence of numerous local armed groups reportedly constrained the transitional government's control, with territorial control in Dar'a described as 'highly fragmented' in January 2026. Some groups were nominally under the control of the MoD, but effectively 'operated in a semi-autonomous manner'.[1127](#) By mid-February 2026, anti-government Druze groups controlled areas in Sweida governorate along the south-eastern border of Dar'a governorate.[1128](#) As of March 2026, local warlord Ahmad Al-Awda maintained a power base around Busra Al-Sham.[1129](#) In mid-April 2025, the transitional government took over his Dar'a-based armed faction, the Eighth Brigade, in Busra Al-Sham, while his supporters remained active in the region.[1130](#) He reportedly submitted himself to the authority of the transitional government's MoD in February 2026, after which he left Busra Al-Sham for Damascus.[1131](#) Additionally, numerous small armed groups, consisting of six to ten members, were reportedly operating in the Tafas area as of October 2025.[1132](#)

In February 2025, the transitional government established the 40th Division of the Syrian army [1133](#) as the primary division for Dar'a governorate.[1134](#) In October 2025, a new cohort of 250 'Special Tasks Forces' members reportedly graduated in the governorate. A member of the internal security forces in northern Dar'a indicated that these forces were still being developed, highlighting that the police force faced a shortage of qualified personnel.[1135](#)

The Israeli army, having advanced deep into the UN-monitored demilitarised zone separating the occupied Golan Heights and the Syrian-held territory in Quneitra since December 2024,[1136](#) has established positions in western Dar'a governorate.[1137](#) In an opinion piece published in May 2026, SNHR's executive director Fadel Abdulghany noted that reports indicated the existence of 10 Israeli military bases in the Dar'a and Quneitra governorates by July 2025. Incursions into villages in these governorates continued until April 2026.[1138](#) The transitional government maintained a presence on Dar'a's roads connecting localities and large cities, reportedly giving locals the impression of strong security control. This control reportedly becomes weaker in the Al-Yarmouk Basin,[1139](#) [1140](#) where the Israeli army's military post near Ma'raya village, known as Al-Jazira barrack,[1141](#) and regular patrols, have created a zone of constrained operational freedom and presence for the transitional government.[1142](#) Since the onset of the US-Israeli conflict with Iran in late February 2026, Israeli forces had reportedly

achieved significant aerial dominance over southern Syria, intercepting Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) over Dar'a and Quneitra governorates. As part of enhanced security measures for Quneitra governorate, a first line of two internal security checkpoints was reportedly set up in western Dar'a governorate by transitional government forces.^{[1143](#)} Sources reported that the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) conducted patrols in various cities in Dar'a during the reporting period,^{[1144](#)} entering Al-Sanamayn city in late December 2025 for the first time,^{[1145](#)} as part of their mandate to gather information from residents and assess Israeli incursions into the area.^{[1146](#)}

The execution of an internal security forces member in Dar'a by ISIL in mid-September 2025 suggests a potential resurgence of ISIL in the South.^{[1147](#)} In February 2026, the UN Secretary General reported assassination attempts targeting Al-Sharaa in 2025 by Saraya Ansar Al-Sunnah, a group identified as a front for ISIL, including in Dar'a governorate.^{[1148](#)}

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