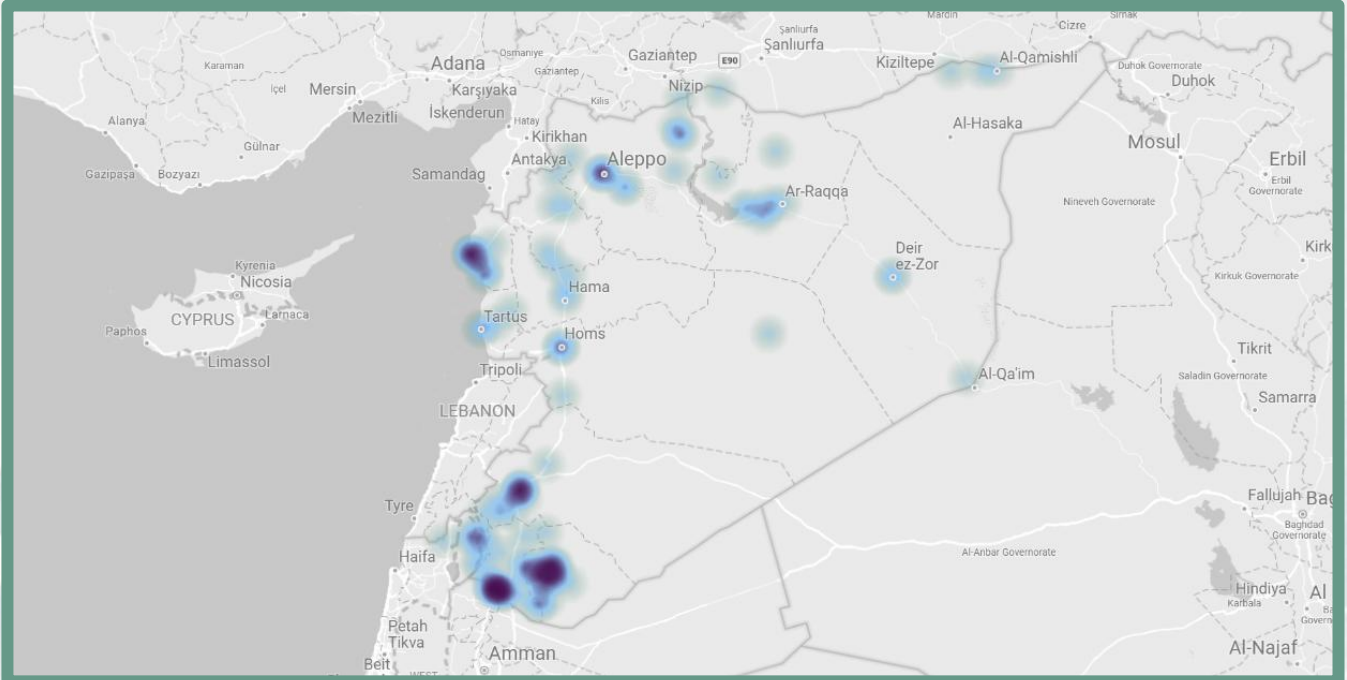




## SYRIA WEEKLY UPDATE, JULY 17-23, 2025

July 24, 2025



### Key Weekly Highlights:

- Sweida Governorate was engulfed in intense inter-communal violence, marked by significant territorial gains by Bedouin/tribal forces and retaliatory actions, despite multiple ceasefire declarations and efforts to stabilize the situation.
- The humanitarian crisis in Sweida has escalated dramatically, with widespread civilian casualties, mass displacement, and severe disruptions to essential services including electricity, water, and medical facilities.
- Despite intensive security campaigns by the SDF, backed by the International Coalition, ISIS cell activity remains a significant challenge, particularly in SDF-held areas of Deir Ezzor, undermining efforts to stabilize the region.
- A Saudi delegation led by the Investment Minister visited Damascus, signing 38 agreements and MoUs totaling over \$5 billion in various sectors, including real estate, infrastructure, and telecommunications. This initiative is aimed at fostering economic recovery in Syria.
- The US House of Representatives Financial Services Committee approved a bill to amend the Caesar Act, extending the sanctions exemption period from 180 days to two years, and potentially lifting the act entirely by 2029 if Syria meets human rights conditions and combats money laundering.



## Weekly Overview

The period of July 17-23 in Syria was significantly shaped by the evolving and highly volatile conflict in Sweida Governorate, followed by a precarious ceasefire. What began as localized disputes rapidly escalated into a province-wide confrontation, characterized by broad offensives from Bedouin/tribal forces that made substantial territorial gains across rural regions, advancing into Sweida city. Intense clashes persisted in northern and eastern neighborhoods, particularly around Mshana Roundabout and areas like Walgha and Mazra'a, indicating entrenched internal frontlines. Multiple ceasefire agreements, including a formal declaration by the Syrian Ministry of Interior and a comprehensive ceasefire announced by the Syrian Presidency on July 20, initially failed to hold, with renewed fighting reported across several locations. However, a precarious ceasefire has been in place since the early morning hours of July 21, with sporadic clashes continuing in Walgha, Shahba, Al-Mazra'a, and Umm al-Zaytoon between remnant Bedouin forces and pro-Hajari groups, although these have reportedly been contained. The influx of armed tribal convoys from regions such as Idlib, Deir ez-Zor, and Aleppo had previously reinforced tribal positions, contributing to strategic shifts.

Diplomatic efforts were actively underway, with Turkish intelligence, in coordination with the United States, Israel, Jordan, and the Syrian government, leading de-escalation talks and high-level mediation. Both France and the United States issued public statements calling for restraint and urging investigations into reported human rights violations and ceasefire breaches. The Druze Spiritual Council appealed for international protection for the Druze community, with local figures requesting Israel's support, with the latter launching a number of airstrikes and dronestrikes on government and government-affiliated forces and locations in Sweida, Dar'a, Damascus, and Rural Damascus. Turkish President Erdogan announced that at least 3,000 Syrian Internal Security Forces (ISF) members would be deployed across Sweida and Dar'a to maintain stability, following the ceasefire announcement.

The humanitarian situation had drastically deteriorated, reaching a critical point across both urban and rural Sweida. Essential services such as electricity, water, and communication networks were heavily rationed, and in some areas, entirely cut for four consecutive days. Hospitals were increasingly non-functional, overwhelmed by casualties, and suffering from critical shortages in staff and supplies. Reports of widespread looting and infrastructure damage emerged from both Sweida city and countryside. Civilian displacement occurred on a significant scale, with dozens of Bedouin families reportedly targeted and thousands forced to flee, seeking safety internally within Sweida Governorate or in neighboring areas like Dar'a. Civil Defense teams were actively involved in evacuating civilians from conflict areas, but hostilities complicated these efforts.

In parallel with ground developments in Sweida, regional military activity intensified. Israeli military forces conducted at least four airstrikes targeting locations such as Lahtha, Walgha, Al-Mazraa, and the outskirts of Sweida city. Israeli drones and helicopters were observed conducting extensive aerial surveillance over Sweida, Dar'a, and Quneitra provinces. The Israeli army also conducted ground incursions into Quneitra city, demolishing the Alam roundabout and destroying columns, and advanced into Al-Rafid town in southern Quneitra countryside. Furthermore, Syrian Armed Forces intercepted heavy machine gun-equipped drones operated by Syrian Democratic Forces over Al-Bukamal in Deir ez-Zor, and Turkish military aircraft conducted intense airstrikes on Kurdish group positions near Tabqa Dam in Manbij countryside, east of Aleppo.

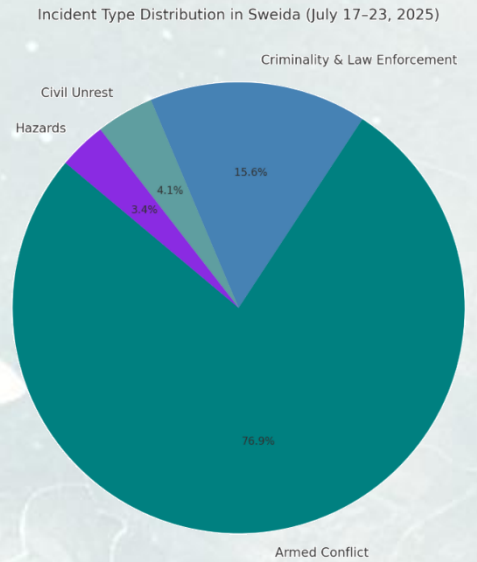
Elsewhere, ISIS cells in eastern Syria, particularly within SDF-held areas of Raqqa, Hasakeh, and Deir Ezzor, demonstrate an enduring operational capacity and tactical adaptation, shifting from territorial control to a decentralized insurgency. This strategy is characterized by targeted attacks, community infiltration, and exploitation of local grievances, as evidenced by a large-scale SDF operation in Raqqa



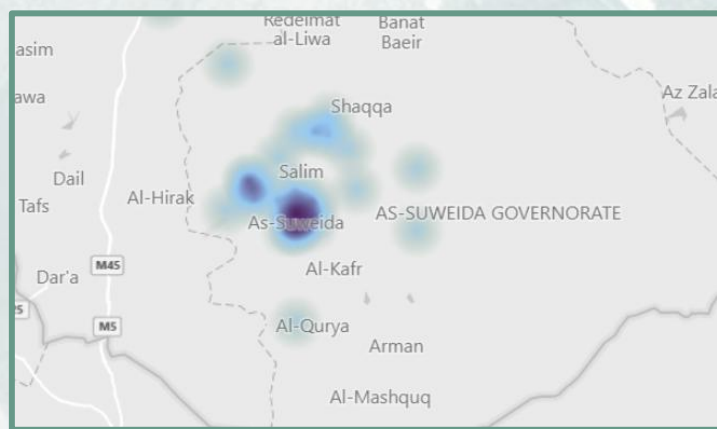
detaining 33 suspected operatives, a brief ISIS attack on an SDF checkpoint in Hasakeh, and the growing activity of ISIS cells in Deir Ezzor, including a targeted injury of an SDF member.

### Geographic Zoom-In

**As-Sweida Governorate:** The heart of the current conflict, Sweida has seen significant and volatile territorial shifts throughout the reporting period. As of the morning of July 18, Bedouin/tribal forces launched a broad offensive, seizing control of multiple strategic locations including Al-Mazraa, Al-Sura Al-Kubra, Athla, Al-Agood roundabout, Khalkhala, and Hizam, signaling a clear weakening of Druze defensive positions. The most notable advance and semi-permanent established presence was into Walgha village, approximately five kilometers northwest of Sweida city, establishing one of their closest positions to the city center and placing immense pressure on Druze factions. Intense urban clashes persisted in northern and eastern neighborhoods of Sweida city, particularly around Mshana Roundabout, indicating an internal frontline between advancing tribal units and residual defenders.



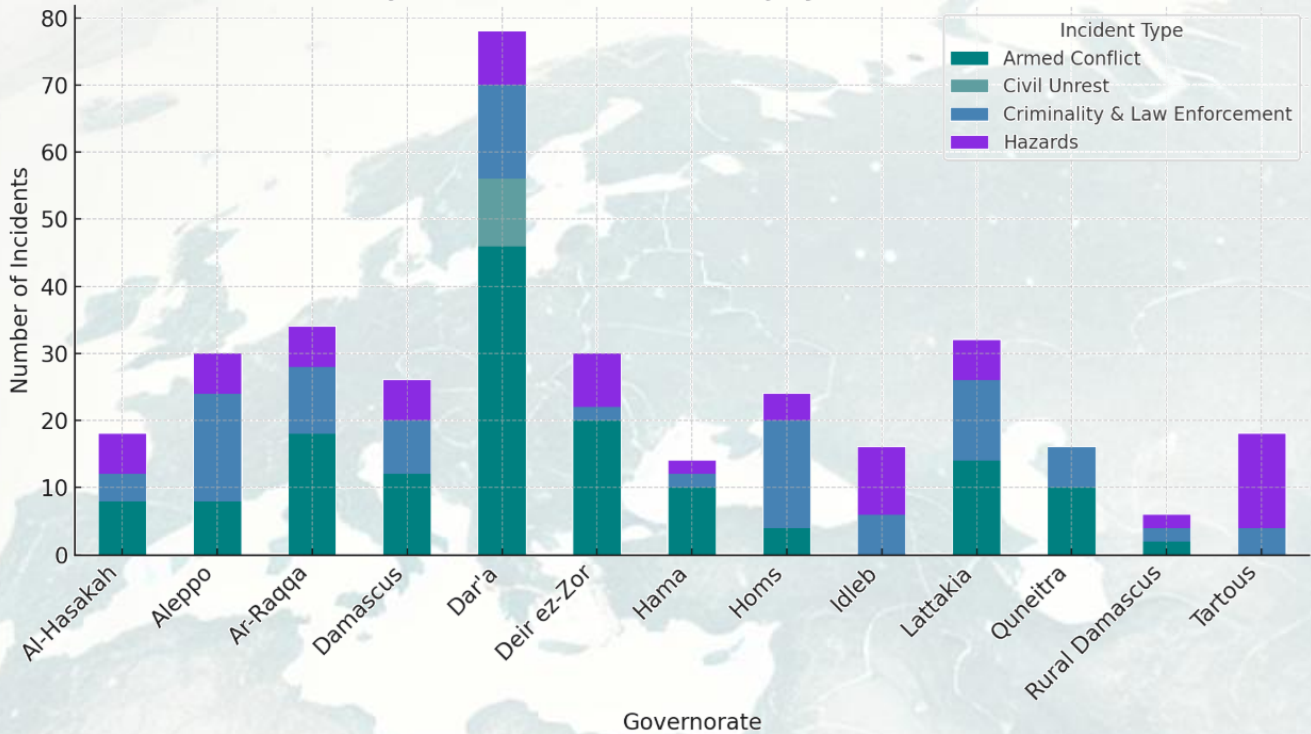
Despite the Syrian presidency’s announcement of a complete ceasefire on July 20, intense clashes resumed, resulting in dozens of deaths and injuries, with scenes of bloodshed in the streets. This pattern of ceasefire violation was evident from July 18, when heavy clashes resumed after an agreement was broken. However, a precarious ceasefire has been largely in place since the early morning hours of July 21, with sporadic clashes in Walgha, Shahba, Al-Mazra’a, and Umm al-Zaytoon reportedly contained and minimal violations recorded on July 23. Essential services were severely disrupted for four consecutive days, with complete cuts to electricity, water, and communication networks. Hospitals were increasingly non-functional, overwhelmed, and critically short on staff and supplies. Widespread looting and infrastructure damage were reported in both city and countryside. Large-scale civilian displacement continues to be ongoing, with Bedouin families reportedly killed or forced to flee, many seeking refuge in neighboring Dar'a.



Sweida conflict map, July 17-23.



### Syria Incident Breakdown: July 17-23, 2025



**Dar'a Governorate:** Dar'a played a significant role as a primary destination for displaced Bedouin families fleeing the intense violence in Sweida. On July 18, dozens of Bedouin residents from Sweida migrated towards Dar'a's eastern countryside, specifically to Al-Musayfirah, Kharaba Ghazala, and Al-Harak, following the withdrawal of Syrian Defense Ministry forces and ongoing violence. In the following days, dozens of families from Arab tribes migrated to Dar'a due to retaliatory actions. Aid efforts quickly mobilized; on July 18, shelter centers were prepared in Khirbat Ghazalah to host arriving families, and by July 19, a gathering center in Al-Malihah East hosted over 180 displaced Bedouin families. Popular initiatives in Dar'a continued to support these displaced individuals on July 22, and the Ministry of Health allocated 28 ambulances for emergency services.

Beyond displacement, Israeli military activity significantly impacted Dar'a; on July 18, a reconnaissance aircraft belonging to Israeli forces was observed over the southern region, including Dar'a and Sweida, and four Israeli drones flew over the governorate. On July 20, Israeli airstrikes targeted areas near the road connecting Busr al-Harir and western Sweida countryside, and hot air balloons were launched by Israeli military aircraft over Dar'a and Sweida. On July 22, Israeli reconnaissance aircraft carried out surveillance flights over Dar'a and its surroundings, and the Israeli military conducted raids in the Yarmouk Basin area, seizing weapons. The Israeli army announced that the operation was carried out by its 210th Division and Unit 504.

**Quneitra Governorate:** Quneitra experienced notable Israeli military activity, particularly ground incursions and aerial surveillance. On July 17, Israeli military forces launched a ground incursion into Quneitra city, establishing a pop-up checkpoint at the 'Alam Roundabout' and questioning passing civilians. Later that day, two more incursions were launched into the villages of Rafid in southern Quneitra and into Baqasem. On July 18, Israeli drone aircraft patrols were observed over Quneitra, Dar'a, and Sweida provinces. The Israeli army advanced into Quneitra city, demolishing the Alam Roundabout, destroying columns, and closing the road towards the western region of the governorate. An Israeli patrol also advanced west of Al-Rafid town in southern Quneitra countryside on both July 18 and July 19. On July



21, a convoy of three Israeli military vehicles entered areas west and south of Al-Rafid, and Israeli forces in Tel Amr West fired heavy machine guns toward Tel Amr East.

**Al-Hasakah Governorate:** The governorate saw security incidents involving both internal and external actors. On July 19, clashes in Tartaab village near Qamishli resulted in two fatalities among armed forces and four civilian fatalities, including a woman and three children, due to an attack on a civilian's home and subsequent crossfire. Turkish drone activity was reported over Qamishli and Raqqa on July 19, with local forces responding with ground-based missile defenses. On July 20, an explosion was reported in Qamishli city. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) conducted mobilization and checks on personal aircraft at city entrances in Qamishli on July 22, and their "Military Police" established mobile checkpoints around Qamishli, detaining 16 young men for compulsory service. International coalition aircraft activity increased on July 21, with takeoffs and landings in Al-Hasakah involving equipment transfer from Shaddadi base to Iraq, and a US military cargo plane landed at Kharab al-Jir base with troops and advanced equipment, indicating regional reinforcement.

**Deir ez-Zor Governorate:** This governorate experienced significant military activity between Syrian Armed Forces and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). On July 20, Syrian Armed Forces intercepted heavy machine gun-equipped drones operated by Syrian Democratic Forces over Al-Bukamal. SDF also launched mortar shells at sites associated with Syrian government affiliated forces near Al-Bukamal city and deployed additional military reinforcements to the front lines in Al-Bukamal. Aerial activity was notable on July 20, with military aircraft and a second unknown reconnaissance aircraft observed flying over Al-Bukamal city near the Syrian-Iraqi border. An explosion was reported near Al-Bukamal city on the Iraq-Syria border, and a militant group leader was killed by an unidentified drone on July 20. On July 21, Syrian Armed Forces in Albu Kamal again intercepted heavy machine gun fire from reconnaissance drones operated by SDF, while internal security forces seized large quantities of stolen items. American aircraft were observed flying over Deir ez-Zor city on the Iraqi-Syrian border on numerous occasions during this past week.

**Aleppo Governorate:** Aleppo saw a mix of inter-factional movements, external airstrikes, and criminal incidents. On July 18, Bedouin fighter groups moved from Manbij towards Sweida, refusing orders from another Bedouin fighter group, to engage with the Druze community. Concurrently, groups in Jarablus were observed mobilizing to head to Sweida. Turkish military aircraft conducted airstrikes on locations associated with Kurdish groups near Tabqa Dam in Manbij countryside, east of Aleppo, on July 20, and again on July 21 near Tishrin Dam, killing three SDF members on July 22. Turkish unmanned aircraft continued surveillance flights over Ayn al-Arab and Tishrin Dam east of Aleppo on July 23. In Aleppo city, a 14-year-old female was kidnapped in Sheikh Maksoud district on July 20. An explosion was reported in Aleppo city on July 20, and an individual was stopped and arrested by SDF at a checkpoint on July 22. A General Security Leader, Abdullah Al-Bikari, was murdered by armed individuals in Al-Safira on July 22, though the internal security department later arrested the armed group responsible for killing an elderly woman during a jewelry theft in Al-Safira on July 23.

**Damascus Governorate:** During the period of July 17-23, 2025, Damascus city experienced significant internal security challenges. This included the arrest of several members of Kurdish-led militia intelligence forces by Syrian intelligence, and a heightened security presence with road closures near Al-Shami Hospital and Umayyad Square. Further incidents contributing to instability were two shooting incidents in the Barzeh area.



**Rural Damascus Governorate:** An explosion was reported near the outskirts of Rural Damascus on July 20. On July 20, the Israeli military advanced and reached the town of Qatana, with a further advance reported on July 21 towards Qatana community. A shrine, tomb, and religious site in Beit Jinn were reportedly destroyed by armed groups associated with Syrian government affiliated forces on July 20, with the Sheikh Abdullah shrine being damaged by an explosion on July 21.

An Israeli airlift operation was reported in Qala'at Jandal area in Qatana on July 20. Israeli Forces continue to operate in Qatana, southern part of Rural Damascus and close to the Lebanese borders, in an area that has experienced significant Israeli presence since 2024. Rural Damascus also saw over 950 documented IDPs arrive from Sweida during the conflict as of July 22, with hundreds of additional ones making their way since then.

**Lattakia Governorate:** Lattakia saw airstrikes, criminal incidents, and administrative issues related to displaced populations. On July 18, the Syrian Air Force conducted two airstrikes on a convoy in the western part of Lattakia. Criminal incidents included the detention of two individuals near al-Mukhtariya village on July 20 for attempting to set dry grass on fire, and the arrest of an individual impersonating a security officer who carried out theft and extortion activities against citizens on July 21. A civilian in Lattakia was also kidnapped, his shop robbed, and he was later thrown from a vehicle on July 22. On July 21, General Security moved people residing in tents on the premises of Hmeimim Airport to the government complex in Jableh city. 200 civilians, mostly displaced individuals from the Alawite community, had set up tents on the premises of the base amid fears of further sectarian violence linked to recent unrest along the Syrian coast. Their presence, reportedly facilitated by bribery of government officials at checkpoints, raised concerns among Russian forces. As a result, General Security patrols, per the request of the Russians, relocated the civilians to a government complex in Jableh city, though some individuals later returned to the airport vicinity. The scene underscores continuing anxieties among displaced families who sought refuge near Hmeimim due to recent sectarian tensions and fear of renewed attacks. Furthermore, the Government's Committee tasked with overseeing the investigation for the massacres targeting primarily Alawite communities earlier this year in Lattakia and Tartous announced its findings, with this covered later in this report.

**Hama Governorate:** Hama experienced targeted violence and explosions. On July 20, armed groups attacked a homeowner's residence in northern Hama, resulting in the death of a man and his son. A displaced civilian was shot and killed while working at a roundabout in Hama on the same day. An unknown explosion occurred in Hama city on July 21, resulting in rising smoke columns. An individual was killed by unidentified gunmen near the bridge of the town of Suran, north of Hama, on July 22.

**Homs Governorate:** Homs saw internal security incidents and reports of looting. On July 20, two explosions from sound bombs occurred in Zahraa neighborhood, leading to gunfire during authorities' pursuit of a motorcycle, and heavy gunfire was reported in the Wadi Al-Dahab area. Internal security arrested an individual in Al-Nuzha neighborhood for throwing detonating bombs and possessing illicit substances on July 20. On July 22, internal security arrested Ahmed Abed Al-Faraj, a member of a former regime's armed groups, for abusing civilians. Widespread looting of shops occurred on July 22 during an attack by government-affiliated forces on Sukhnah city and rural areas.

**Tartous Governorate:** The governorate reported environmental and minor security incidents. On July 18, a fire in Bashra'il was uncontrollable due to long-standing water shortages in the village. On July 22, an area-wide power outage affected the Dreibish rural area, with the area facing a near-total blackout over the past 72 hours. A loud device exploded in Al-Areech neighborhood in Tartous on July 23 after an assailant on a motorbike dispatched a sound grenade, causing no damage.



## Trend Analysis

### Escalating Instability and Intercommunal Violence in Sweida

The events in Sweida during the past ten days illustrate a rapid and devastating escalation. The abduction of a Druze trader led to broader intercommunal violence involving Bedouin and Druze militias, with Syrian government forces also participating. Reports indicate widespread abuses by Bedouin and government-affiliated forces, including extrajudicial killings, degrading treatment of detainees, kidnappings, and looting, which triggered widespread public outrage and galvanized local resistance. The National Hospital in Sweida was operating beyond capacity, with insufficient medical staff and supplies, and without access to water, electricity, and fuel for generators; its morgue was also over capacity with hundreds of deceased individuals. Despite a US-brokered ceasefire on July 17, retaliatory attacks by Druze factions targeting Bedouin residents resumed, leading to a wider intercommunal confrontation driven by revenge until July 21. Israeli airstrikes in Damascus on July 16, explicitly stated as a warning in defense of the Druze community, further highlight the regional implications of this conflict.

The escalating violence in Sweida presents an acute humanitarian crisis requiring urgent and multi-faceted responses from NGOs. The high number of casualties and large-scale, rapid displacement necessitate immediate provision of emergency shelter, food, water, and critical medical supplies. The reported abuses by government forces and the involvement of multiple armed actors make access highly complex and dangerous, requiring robust security risk management and continuous negotiation for humanitarian corridors. NGOs must also be prepared for fluctuating access and potential fragile pauses in fighting, which may offer temporary windows for aid delivery but remain highly unpredictable. The strain on local healthcare facilities, such as the National Hospital in Sweida, indicates a critical need for medical support, staff, and supplies. Furthermore, the intercommunal nature of the conflict means NGOs must prioritize conflict-sensitive programming to avoid exacerbating tensions and ensure that aid is perceived as impartial and reaches all vulnerable populations, irrespective of their affiliation.

### The Persistent and Adaptive ISIS Threat in Eastern Syria

The enduring operational capacity and tactical adaptation of ISIS cells in eastern Syria, particularly in SDF-held areas of Raqqa, Hasakeh, and Deir Ezzor, constitutes a significant trend. Despite ongoing counter-terrorism efforts by the SDF and the International Coalition, ISIS has shifted from territorial control to a decentralized insurgency, characterized by targeted attacks, infiltration of communities, and exploitation of local grievances.

In Raqqa city, on July 17, SDF forces conducted a large-scale operation seeking suspected ISIS operatives and detained 33 individuals, demonstrating the presence of active, clandestine networks within urban centers. In Hasakeh, on July 22, ISIS militants launched a brief attack on an SDF checkpoint on the outskirts of al-Shadadi, confirming their continued willingness and ability to engage directly with security forces, even if in a limited capacity. The most pronounced evidence comes from Deir Ezzor Province, where an SDF member was seriously injured after being targeted by two gunmen of ISIS cells riding a motorbike in Al-Sa'wa town, western Deir Ezzor countryside. This incident occurred amid growing ISIS cell activity in SDF-held areas of Deir Ezzor, despite intensive security campaigns by SDF backed by the International Coalition. This highlights ISIS's adaptive tactics, focusing on targeted assassinations and hit-and-run attacks, which are harder to counter through conventional security operations. The fact that this activity is growing despite intensive security campaigns underscores the resilience and deep-rooted nature of these cells. Broader assessments also indicate that ISIS has increased its activity since December 2024, acquiring former Assad regime weapons, attempting to infiltrate Ministry of Defense positions, and developing the capability for vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices in the Middle



Euphrates River Valley, requiring significant logistical tails and support zones. Their efforts to leverage discontent and potentially recruit from internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps like Al-Hol also show their strategic adaptation to a post-territorial environment.

For NGOs operating in eastern Syria, the persistent and adapting ISIS threat translates into substantial and evolving security risks. The shift to targeted attacks, including potentially against infrastructure or personnel seen as supporting governing authorities, demands heightened vigilance and adaptable security protocols. NGOs must assess the specific risks associated with attacks involving motorbikes and the potential for improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in areas of ISIS activity. The infiltration of communities and the exploitation of grievances mean that NGOs need to conduct thorough context analyses to avoid inadvertently becoming targets or being perceived as aligned with one side. The continued counter-terrorism operations by the SDF and the International Coalition may also lead to periodic access restrictions, increased checkpoints, and a complex coordination environment. Furthermore, the potential for ISIS to recruit from vulnerable populations, including IDPs, underscores the need for comprehensive humanitarian responses that address root causes of vulnerability and provide alternative pathways for affected communities, reducing their susceptibility to radicalization.

### **The State's Failure of Accountability & Narratives of Justification in the Coast**

The Syrian government's apparent failure to conduct impartial investigations into large-scale atrocities, such as the March 2025 coastal massacres in Lattakia and Tartous, may cause distrust with certain communities. This is compounded by efforts to control the narrative by downplaying systematic violence, shielding senior officials, and presenting sectarian motives as mere "political revenge" rather than sectarian-based violence. This systemic lack of accountability fuels impunity and undermines efforts for justice and reconciliation.

The Syrian Coastal Massacres Investigations report details the killing of 1,426 Alawite civilians, including 90 women, during sectarian violence in March 2025, reportedly triggered by pro-Assad loyalist attacks on new government forces, which also resulted in 238 security personnel killed. Despite 200,000 armed men being mobilized, some of whom committed abuses, only 37 arrests were made out of 298 identified suspects, most of whom were tied to former pro-Assad factions. The report, based on 938 witness statements gathered across 33 sites in Lattakia, Tartous, and Hama, revealed critical investigative gaps: no senior security or military officials were implicated. Sectarian motives were portrayed as "revenge," rather than an ideological component, effectively minimizing the gravity and intent of the violence. Furthermore, state-aligned militias were not fully investigated. A number of public and media reactions strongly criticized the report that shielded senior leadership, downplayed systematic violence and overlooked the state's possible role in arming and incited militias. The ongoing displacement of tens of thousands of Alawites to Lebanon further underscores the lasting impact of this unaddressed violence.

### **Pervasive Small-Scale Criminality and Rule of Law Deficits**

Widespread and unaddressed small-scale criminality, encompassing various forms of arbitrary arrests, extortion, human trafficking, and localized violence, significantly impacts civilian populations across Syria, notably in Damascus and parts of northern Syria, including Aleppo, Lattakia, and Tartous. This environment is exacerbated by a lack of clarity in legal frameworks, weak state control, and a situation where victims may resort to self-justice due to insufficient official recourse.

Evidence from various sources points to this pervasive issue. Human trafficking is a pervasive market, with Syria identified as a major source and destination for forced labor, sexual exploitation, and domestic servitude, affecting women, children, and men. While Deir ez-Zor and Al Qaim serve as major trafficking hubs, human smuggling also occurs along borders with Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq, often facilitated by



actors linked to the state. This extensive network extends beyond specific conflict zones, indicating a nationwide problem. Extortion and protection racketeering are interconnected with geopolitical developments, with opposition militias reportedly imposing taxes on businesses and civilians in areas under their control, often misusing religious obligations like zakat for financial gain. Reports also indicate that nearly all highway trade and transportation throughout the country are subject to regular extortion.

For NGOs, this pervasive small-scale criminality and weak rule of law present significant operational challenges and risks. Staff, beneficiaries, and assets are vulnerable to arbitrary detention, extortion, and various forms of violence, including those associated with human trafficking and organized crime networks that exploit instability. The absence of accountability and efficient law enforcement outside of Damascus city means that avenues for addressing grievances are limited, hindering NGOs' ability to protect their personnel or ensure that aid reaches intended beneficiaries without diversion. Access to affected populations can be consistently hampered by informal checkpoints and "taxes" imposed by various actors. NGOs and international agencies must implement stringent security protocols, including comprehensive threat assessments tailored to localized criminal networks, and develop strong community acceptance strategies to mitigate risks. Advocacy for stronger rule of law, independent oversight, and protection of civilians from arbitrary detention and exploitation is crucial, alongside programs that address the socio-economic drivers of such criminality.

## Humanitarian Outlook, Risk Assessment, and Recommendations:

### Humanitarian Outlook:

The humanitarian outlook for Syria remains exceptionally fragile and is deteriorating in several key regions due to the confluence of pervasive criminality, unresolved large-scale atrocities, escalating intercommunal violence, and the persistent threat of ISIS. In northern and coastal areas, ongoing small-scale criminality and a systemic lack of accountability contribute to a pervasive sense of insecurity and erode trust, making community-based interventions challenging. The unaddressed coastal massacres leave a lasting scar on affected communities, with thousands displaced and a deep need for justice and reconciliation that is currently unmet. In Sweida, the recent surge in intercommunal violence has created an acute crisis, stretching medical facilities to breaking point and leading to massive, rapid displacement that overwhelms existing aid capacities. The persistent and adapting ISIS threat in eastern Syria continues to endanger civilians and restrict humanitarian access, forcing NGOs to operate in volatile and unpredictable environments. Across all these areas, the compounding effects of insecurity, displacement, and a fragile economic situation will continue to drive humanitarian needs, demanding sustained and flexible international assistance.

### Risk Assessment:

**Security Risk: Direct Harm to NGO Personnel and Assets.** International agencies' staff and assets face a high likelihood of critical impact from various threats. These include arbitrary detention, extortion, targeted attacks by ISIS cells such as vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) and motorbike assaults, and being caught in crossfire during intercommunal clashes or security operations in areas like Sweida, Raqqa, Deir Ezzor, and the Damascus outskirts. This necessitates stringent security protocols, real-time threat monitoring, secure communication, and robust emergency response plans.

**Access and Operational Risk: Severe Access Constraints and Aid Diversion.** There is a high likelihood of high impact due to pervasive criminality, active conflict zones, and ongoing counter-terrorism operations in Eastern Syria. These factors lead to unpredictable road closures, informal checkpoints, and a high potential for aid diversion through extortion or forced contributions by various actors. NGOs must



actively advocate for humanitarian access, develop strong community engagement strategies, diversify supply routes, and implement rigorous monitoring to ensure aid reaches intended beneficiaries.

**Protection and Accountability Risk: Complicity in Abuses and Erosion of Trust.** Operating in contexts where the state or powerful non-state actors are implicated in large-scale human rights violations, such as the coastal massacres, or where accountability is systematically suppressed, carries a medium likelihood of critical impact. This risks NGOs being perceived as complicit or losing the trust of affected communities if not managed carefully. Strict adherence to humanitarian principles, independent documentation of abuses, and strategic advocacy for accountability are crucial to mitigate this risk.

**Humanitarian Needs Overwhelm Risk: Acute Humanitarian Needs Surpassing Capacity.** The rapid, large-scale displacement, particularly observed in Sweida, coupled with ongoing crises, has led to overwhelming needs in health, shelter, food, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH). This situation is highly likely to have a critical impact, as existing local services and humanitarian response capacities are severely strained. NGOs must be prepared for rapid mobilization of emergency response teams, advocate for increased and flexible international funding, and strengthen coordination with all stakeholders to optimize resource allocation.



## SARI Global

ALL DATA AND INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT ARE EITHER PRIMARILY SOURCED THROUGH SARI GLOBAL'S PROPRIETARY RESOURCES OR SECONDARILY OBTAINED THROUGH THE REFERENCED ENTITIES CITED WITHIN THE REPORT.

ANY USE, REPRODUCTION, OR DERIVATION OF THE INFORMATION OR DATA FROM THIS REPORT IS SUBJECT TO COPYRIGHT BY SARI GLOBAL. PROPER ATTRIBUTION MUST BE PROVIDED BY REFERENCING SARI GLOBAL BY NAME AND INCLUDING A DIRECT LINK TO THE REPORT OR THE SARI GLOBAL WEBSITE, ALONG WITH THE DATE THE DATA WAS ACCESSED. FOR EXAMPLE:

*SARI GLOBAL, [WWW.SARI.GLOBAL](http://WWW.SARI.GLOBAL), DATE RETRIEVED: MM, DD, YYYY.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR PERMISSIONS, PLEASE CONTACT US THROUGH OUR WEBSITE.

CONTACT: [INFO@SARI.GLOBAL](mailto:INFO@SARI.GLOBAL)