



2.1.2. Territorial control and main armed actors

Territorial control in Aleppo governorate changed during the reporting period. In November 2025, ISW and CTP mapped control of the governorate as divided between the Syrian transitional government in the centre and south, the SNA in the north, and the SDF in the northeast.[445](#) By mid-February 2026, however, the transitional government was assessed to control the vast majority of the governorate. The main exception was the north-eastern corner, where the SDF retained control,[446](#) although the area concerned had visibly decreased in size since November 2025.[447](#) The 60th, 72nd, 76th and 80th Divisions of the Syrian army were the principal formations present in Aleppo governorate.[448](#)

In January 2026, a military operation was launched in the Kurdish-controlled neighbourhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyeh in the city of Aleppo.[449](#) Between 6 and 10 January 2026, government forces established control over the whole of Aleppo City.[450](#) Following the withdrawal of Kurdish forces from the city, the army of the transitional government went on to capture dozens of towns in eastern Aleppo governorate, including the towns of Deir Hafer and Maskana and their surrounding areas.[451](#) On 18 January, a ceasefire and ‘full integration’ agreement was signed between the Syrian government and the SDF.[452](#) A further agreement, announced on 30 January, brought hostilities to a halt.[453](#) By 31 January 2026, government forces controlled most of the governorate, with Ain al-Arab remaining outside their authority at the time.[454](#) Under the agreement, the two parties decided to establish a military division comprising three SDF brigades, as well as a local brigade from Ain al-Arab affiliated with an army division from Aleppo.[455](#) At the end of February, it was reported that the integrating of the Ain al-Arab Internal Security Forces (Asayish) into the MoI had commenced.[456](#) In March 2026, the de facto Kurdish control of Ain al-Arab and the surrounding countryside continued, although SDF forces departed from the city in February after talks with the transitional government.[457](#) In May, Samir Oso, the Syrian defense minister for eastern region affairs, stated that the integration of the SDF remained ‘in its early stages’, although four new brigades –one of them in Ain al-Arab– had been formed.[458](#)

As for the role of the Syrian National Army (SNA) in the governorate, former SNA factions were reported to remain influential in the security landscape, particularly in Afrin in western Aleppo governorate,[459](#) with arbitrary arrests[460](#) and kidnappings of civilians by these forces reported during the reference period.[461](#) The 80th Division, which is present in Afrin, is led by a former Nour al-Din al-Zinki leader and includes fighters from former SNA groups, comprising elements of the Renaissance and Liberation Movement (RLM).[462](#)

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