



2.2.2. Territorial control and main armed actors

HTS initially became the dominant force in Idlib governorate in 2017⁵²⁶ and governed it through its political and administrative arm, the Syrian Salvation Government.⁵²⁷ HTS remained dominant in Idlib⁵²⁸ until it was dissolved in January 2025.⁵²⁹ Former members of the Salvation Government, as well as HTS members, were assigned important posts in the transitional government announced in March 2025.⁵³⁰

As of mid-December 2024, a map produced by ISW and CTP showed Idlib governorate as being controlled by HTS-led opposition forces.⁵³¹ By 16 February 2026, the governorate was shown as being controlled by the Syrian Transitional Government.⁵³² As of November 2025, the 64th and 98th divisions of the new Syrian Army were based in Idlib.⁵³³

During the reporting period, veteran foreign jihadi fighters continued to be present in Idlib.⁵³⁴ A group of about 50 jihadist foreign fighters known as Firqat al-Ghuraba and led by French national Omar Diaby, alias Omar Omsen, was living in a camp in Harim district,⁵³⁵ with their families.⁵³⁶ Reportedly, the camps of French foreign fighters had established a parallel policing system operating outside Syrian state authority, including trials and the issuing of sentences.⁵³⁷ The presence of Uzbek foreign fighters, which were described by an interior ministry official as operating in 'mafia-like' ways,⁵³⁸ was also reported.⁵³⁹

The Emirates Policy Center (EPC) reported on 30 December 2025 that, although Türkiye's focus was shifting away from Idlib to the Kurdish conflict in Aleppo, the country maintained more than 20 000 military and security personnel in the northwest of Syria. Türkiye run bases and observation points in southern Idlib as well as major sites such as Al-Mastumah camp and the Taftanaz Airport in the northern part of the governorate.⁵⁴⁰ Deadly ISIL activity was recorded at the end of 2025⁵⁴¹ and a security campaign against ISIL cells was launched on 8 November 2025 by the Mol in Idlib and other governorates.⁵⁴²

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