



2.13.2. Territorial control and main armed actors

Syria's southern region has seen a broad proliferation of armed groups between 2018 and 2024, [1211](#) and Sweida governorate has a long history of militias and tribal networks engaging in smuggling of various goods. [1212](#) As of mid-April 2026, Sweida governorate's northern, northwestern and western parts bordering Dar'a governorate appeared to be under the control of the Syrian Transitional Government. Significant southern and central areas around the cities Shahba, Salkhad and Sweida were under the control of Druze groups. [1213](#) These groups had operated there for many years in a semi-autonomous manner, with armed confrontations occasionally occurring between them. [1214](#) They resisted integration into the transitional government's security apparatus, reportedly out of fear to jeopardise their influence. [1215](#) At the time of writing, most of Sweida governorate, including Sweida city, [1216](#) remained outside of transitional government control. [1217](#)

After violence escalated in Sweida in mid-July 2025 between local Druze armed groups and armed Bedouins, the transitional government deployed forces to the governorate allegedly to quell the fighting, [1218](#) but ended up clashing with the Druze itself. [1219](#) It subsequently took over around 30 villages in the northern and eastern parts of the governorate. [1220](#) Interventions by the Israeli military were reported, [1221](#) according to Israeli officials aiming at protecting the Druze community. [1222](#) A ceasefire agreement was reached the same month. [1223](#) In a December 2025 report, researcher Abdullah Al-Jabassini noted that these events and the continuing threat of further Israeli interventions have contained the transitional government's authority across much of Sweida governorate. The report noted that emergent local actors, particularly the Supreme Legal Committee [1224](#) and the National Guard Forces, [1225](#) who reportedly received support from Israel [1226](#) and were established by spiritual Druze leader Hikmat Al-Hijri, [1227](#) took care of governance and security affairs. This limited state authority, enabling militarised criminal networks to resume drug smuggling into neighbouring Jordan. [1228](#) Syria Weekly referred to Al-Hijri as the leader of the governorate's de facto authorities. [1229](#) He reportedly aimed at establishing a form of self-governance in Sweida. [1230](#)

The Sweida Military Council, established after the fall of the Assad regime by a group of retired officers and defectors, was reportedly the backbone of the Sweida National Guard (also National Guard Forces). [1231](#) The formation of the National Guard Forces in August 2025 reportedly included fighters who had previously served in Assad-led government forces. This was said to be the largest reorganisation of Druze armed groups since the conflict began. [1232](#) It is said that both the Supreme Legal Committee and the National Guard Forces included several officers who had served under the Assad government. [1233](#) In a May 2026 article, Charles Lister noted that

more than half of the National Guard force's leadership were former senior Assad government officers, while other leading figures in the National Guard had been involved in organised crime related to Assad's Military Intelligence Directorate.[1234](#) The landscape became even more complex due to internal rifts within the Druze community, as certain factions promoted the idea of integrating into state institutions while others preferred decentralised control. More hardline armed factions, such as the National Guard forces, have reportedly taken on confrontational stances.[1235](#)

In early January 2026, ISW and CTP reported that transitional government forces had been deployed to Al-Shaab village at the request of the village's residents and had taken control of the village from drug smugglers.[1236](#)

ISIL cells were reportedly active in eastern Sweida's remote desert areas.[1237](#)

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