

# Sweida

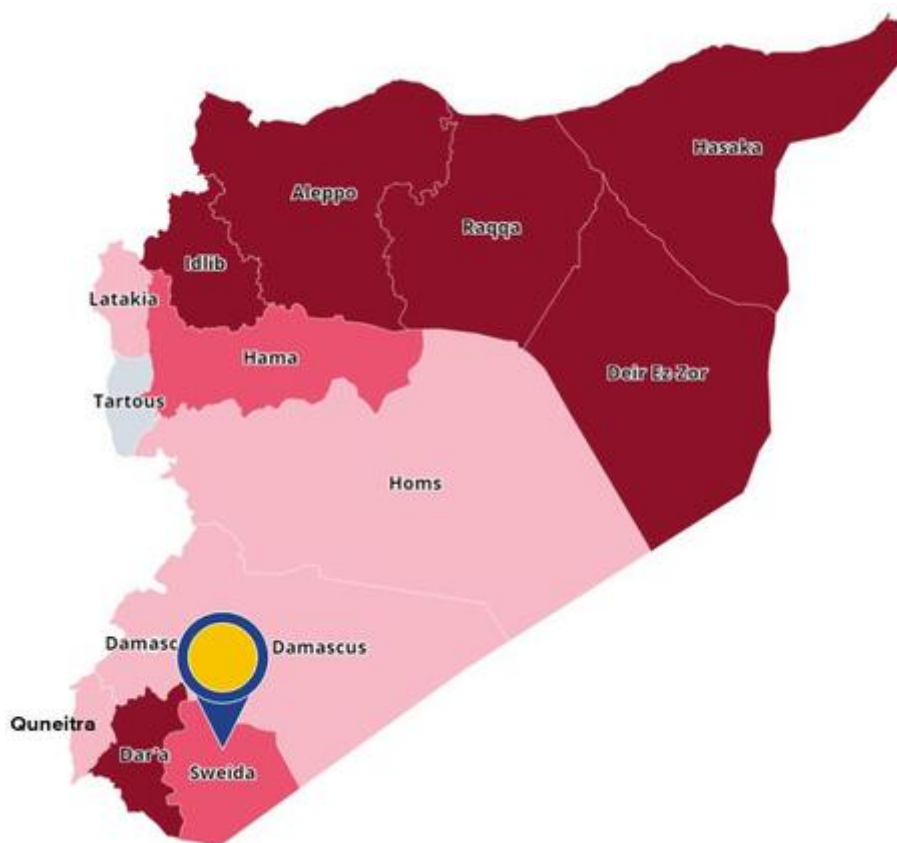
## COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: February 2023

[Main COI reference: [Security 2022](#), 2.14, pp. 233-247; [COI Update 2022](#), 2., pp. 3-8]

## General information

The governorate of Sweida is located in the southern part of Syria and has borders with the governorates of Dar'a and Rural Damascus and an international border with Jordan to its south. Sweida governorate comprises three districts: As-Sweida, Shahba and Salkhad. As of February 2022, UNOCHA estimated the population of Sweida to be of 540 409 inhabitants. The Druze community makes up 91 % of the governorate's total population.



Factors such as the geographical proximity to Jordan, the limited GoS-control, the considerable influence of armed gangs and high crime rate in the governorate have contributed to making Sweida one of Syria's smuggling hotspots.

### **Background of the conflict**

During the conflict, the governorate of Sweida has officially remained under GoS control. However, the GoS has not exercised its power directly in Sweida, having mainly relied on local armed factions sponsored by intelligence agencies and security branches.

### **Actors: control and presence**

As of July 2022, Sweida governorate was formally under GoS-control, while various sources point out the chaotic character of the fragmented security control in Sweida governorate. At the end of 2021 nine security and military points within the governorate were operated by Russia, while eight were operated by Iranian-affiliated forces and Hezbollah. The Military Intelligence and Hezbollah in Sweida are reportedly deeply involved in drug trafficking. ISIL was reported to have an active presence in the governorate in 2022. Local armed factions and criminal gangs were reportedly trying to establish own areas of influence at the expense of the GoS. New armed groups involved in criminal activities such as kidnappings, emerged during the reporting period.

## **Nature of violence and examples of incidents**

Improvised explosive attacks, targeted killings, exchanges of fire as well as clashes of limited extent and kidnappings have been recorded during the reporting period. Local disputes at times evolved to clashes between various armed groups and forces, sometimes including GoS-forces, or even the civilian population.

The lack of rule of law within the governorate led to an increased violence. Estimations of 500 kidnapped persons in Sweida governorate from 2018 until 2021, amounting to approximately 10 persons per month kidnapped for ransom, have been provided. Kidnappings and criminal activities of gangs linked to GoS forces, were also reported during the first quarter of 2022.

Tensions were reportedly rising between Dar'a's and Sweida's inhabitants due to land disputes and mutual kidnappings. Civilian casualties have been reported in this regard.

Attacks with improvised explosive devices (IEDs), targeted killings, kidnappings and limited clashes were reported in August - September 2022.

### **Incidents: data**

ACLED recorded 82 security incidents (average of 1.2 security incidents per week) in Sweida governorate in the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 July 2022. Of the reported incidents, 36 were coded as 'battles', 35 incidents of 'violence against civilians' and 11 as 'explosions/remote violence'. In the period 1 August - 31 October 2022, 13 security incidents were recorded in Sweida representing an average of 1 security incident per week.

### **Geographical scope**

Security incidents were recorded in all districts. The large majority of them took place in Sweida district.

### **Civilian fatalities: data**

The SNHR recorded 11 civilian fatalities in Sweida in the nine months between April and December 2021. In January - October 2022, the SNHR recorded 30 civilian fatalities. This represented eight civilian fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants for the first ten months of 2022.

## Displacement

As of January 2022, the number of IDPs in Sweida governorate was stated to be 71 313.

UNOCHA recorded 19 IDP movements from Sweida governorate in 2021. In the first five months of 2022, IDP movements increased to 700. Continuing insecurity in the south of Syria is driving young people out of the region and to leave Syria in increasing numbers. Clashes between residents of the two governorates of Dar'a and Sweida also caused IDP movements.

In 2021, 176 IDP return movements were recorded to Sweida governorate, as well as 144 IDP return movements within the governorate. In the first five months of 2022, 156 IDP return movements to the governorate were registered by UNOCHA.

## Further impact on civilians

Lawlessness, chaos and rampant criminal and political violence impacted the security situation. 4.59 % of the residents were assessed to live in damaged buildings. Three attacks against healthcare were reported between January 2021 and March 2022. It was reported that at least eight civilians died in 2021 due to explosions of remnants of war within the governorate, most of whom were children.

Looking at the indicators, it can be concluded that 'mere presence' in the area would not be sufficient to establish a real risk of serious harm under Article 15(c) QD in the governorate of **Sweida**, however indiscriminate violence reaches **a high level**. Accordingly, **a lower level of individual elements** is required in order to show substantial grounds for believing that a civilian, returned to the territory, would face a real risk of serious harm within the meaning of Article 15(c) QD.