

3.3. Syrian Democratic Forces and Asayish

Following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, this document has been reviewed and updated. Please consult '[Interim Country Guidance: Syria \(2025\)](#)'

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: April 2024

The **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)** are the main armed force of the Autonomous Administration of North and East of Syria (AANES). They are militarily and financially supported by the US to fight ISIL in northeast Syria. The SDF is a mixed force, with Arab, Kurds and fighters of other minorities within its ranks. They are a coalition of Arab and Kurdish militias as well as tribal groups, among which the Kurdish components form the People's Protection Units (YPG). The YPG are the strongest fighting component and constitute the military leadership of the SDF. In comparison, the **Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG)**, which leads the SDF, only features Kurdish fighters from Syria, Iraq, Türkiye and Iran, and is considered by some sources to have links with the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party - Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) [[Security 2023](#), 1.4.3., p. 28; [Security 2022](#), 1.4.3, p. 31].

The **Asayish** are the police force of the AANES and fulfil various security roles that range from police to counterterrorism. Similarly to SDF, they also receive funding from the US to train, equip and pay their members. The Asayish reportedly have command centres in each canton of the Kurdish-controlled region, some of which operate independently from each other. There are also 30 000 police officers operating in Kurdish-controlled areas in northeast Syria [[Security 2023](#), 1.4.3., p. 28; [Actors](#), 3.2.2, p. 46].

The SDF hold a demographically heterogeneous region of about 30 % of the Syrian territory, comprising most of Hasaka governorate as well as areas in Deir Ez-Zor and Raqqa governorates and a small enclave in Aleppo countryside. Due to the threat of Turkish incursions, the SDF further had to negotiate with Russia and the GoS, accepting SAA reinforcements into its territory near the contact lines with Turkish-backed forces in Tall Rifaat and Manbij. [[Security 2023](#), 1.4.3., p. 28]

Recent sources noted that, the SDF engaged in extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance as well as torture in detention centers. [[Security 2023](#), 1.4.3., p. 30] SDF continued to recruit children, whose number increased in 2022 [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.4, p. 41].



For further information on human rights violations committed by the SDF and the Asayish and their relevance as potential exclusion grounds, see [8. Exclusion](#).

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