

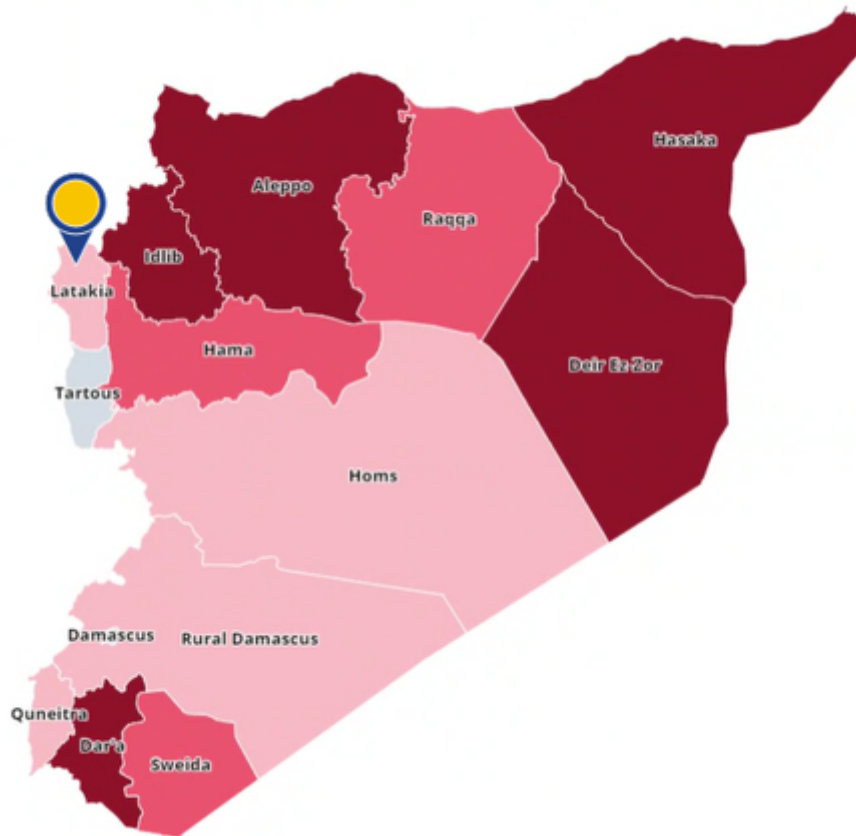
Latakia

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

[Main COI reference: [Security 2023](#), 2.1, pp. 84-89; [COI Update 2023](#), 2, pp. 3-10]



General information

Latakia governorate is situated in north-western of Syria and it borders Türkiye to the north, Idlib governorate to the north-east, Hama governorate to the east, Tartous governorate to the south, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Latakia is divided into four administrative districts, from north to south: Latakia, Al-Haffa, Al-Qardaha, Jablah. As of May 2022, UNOCHA estimated the population of Latakia governorate at 1 295 334 inhabitants.

Background and actors involved in armed confrontations

Most of Latakia governorate had been under government control since the start of the conflict. The city of Latakia has been a stronghold for the Alawites and the Assad family. Since 2013, the GoS managed to isolate rebel strongholds to the Kabani Mountain area in the northeast of Latakia. [[Security 2021](#), 2.4, p. 220]

Latakia governorate continued to be predominantly under the GoS control during the reporting period. However, antiGoS armed groups still controlled parts of the governorate as HTS controlled a strip of territory located in the north-eastern part of Latakia governorate. UN Security Council reported that Al-Qaida maintains a low-profile presence in the north of Latakia with its local branch, Hurras al-Din (HaD).

Iranian and Russian forces were also present in the governorate and deployed in several locations. Hmeimin Air Base, a Russia military base, was also operational in the governorate.

Some presence of Turkish forces has also been reported.

Nature of violence and examples of incidents

HTS launched a series of raids on GoS positions in northern Latakia, which were temporarily interrupted due to the earthquakes. On 26 February 2023, the military operations have resumed and HTS conducted new attacks on GoS positions in Latakia. In the same month, HTS attacked government headquarters in Jabal al-Akrad, northeast of Latakia city. Militants of the group infiltrated in the government premises and the clash resulted in 10 dead among GoS forces.

In late May 2023, in northern Latakia, HTS killed a Russian colonel, the highest-ranking Russian officer killed by anti-GoS since 2016. As a consequence, Russia intensified airstrikes on anti-GoS held areas in Idlib to an unprecedented level since late 2021 resulting in killing of civilians also in Latakia. In June 2023, Russian airstrikes were recorded hitting Wadi Khaled IDP camp and several villages in the north of Latakia resulting in at least 16 civilians killed and dozens severely injured.

GoS forces intensified attacks through artillery strikes targeting more than three dozen of towns across Idlib, Latakia and Aleppo provinces. In total, these attacks resulted in at least five civilian deaths and dozens of additional injuries, among which numerous children. Artillery attacks by GoS were also reported in Latakia suburbs, nearby the dividing lines with armed opposition groups.

In July 2023, a drone attack conducted by an unknown actor, likely to be identified in HTS, targeted the Russian base in Hmeimin. Moreover, several airstrikes attributed to Israel occurred in Latakia, resulting in the activation of the GoS anti-aircraft fire in response were also reported.

Clashes between HTS and GoS forces in North-west Syria, including Latakia governorate were reported in August and September 2023. In the aftermath of a drone strike on the Military College in Homs governorate in October 2023, which resulted in substantial casualties, GoS and Russian forces stepped up attacks on the HTS-controlled areas in Northwest Syria, while HTS reportedly responded with drone strikes, including in Latakia.

Incidents: data

ACLED recorded 263 security incidents (average of 5.1 security incidents per week) in Latakia governorate in the period from 1 August 2022 to 28 July 2023. Of the reported incidents, 185 were coded as

‘explosions/remote violence’, 74 as ‘battles’, and 4 as ‘violence against civilians’. In the period 1 August – 30 November 2023, 146 security incidents were recorded in Latakia representing an average of 8.4 security incident per week.

Geographical scope

Nearly all security incidents were recorded in the districts of Al-Hafa and Latakia.

Civilian fatalities: data

Between August 2022 and July 2023, SNHR documented five civilian fatalities in Latakia governorate. In August – November 2023, the SNHR recorded 3 civilian fatalities. Compared to the figures for the population as from May 2022, this represented one civilian fatality per 100 000 inhabitants for the whole reference period.

Displacement

As of May 2022, there were 447 947 IDPs in Latakia governorate.

According to UNOCHA, between January and December 2022, approximately 2 000 persons were displaced from Latakia, as well as 5 000 within the governorate. Roughly 5 000 persons were displaced from other governorates to Latakia. In the first six months of 2023, there were approximately 231 IDP movements out of Latakia. No movements to or within the governorate were recorded in the same period. Moreover, the displacement of approximately 172 000 people in Latakia as a result of the February 2023 earthquakes was also reported.

In terms of IDP returns, UNOCHA recorded in 2022 approximately 2 000 IDP returns from Latakia to other governorates. In the first five months of 2023, 7 IDP returns were recorded into Latakia and about 39 returns from Latakia to other governorates.

Further impact on civilians

As reported by Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor, all regions of Syria are affected by the presence of landmines. Moreover, as Latakia has been affected by cluster munitions attacks since 2012, the governorate is contaminated with unexploded ordnance, especially in the northern parts [[Security 2022](#), 2.4.3, pp. 121-122].

Looking at the indicators, it can be concluded that indiscriminate violence is taking place in the governorate of **Latakia**, however **not at a high level**. Accordingly, **a higher 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.