



## Spotlight on Syria

### March 26 –April 2, 2025

#### Overview<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ IDF forces continued targeted raids in the buffer zone area of the Golan Heights and located weapons in new areas on the Syrian side of Mount Hermon. According to reports, armed operatives intercepted an Israeli drone in Daraa Governate. ISIS condemned Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa (Abu Muhammad al-Julani) for merely issuing statements of condemnation in response to Israeli activity and not taking action.
- ▶ President al-Sharaa presented the new Syrian government of 23 ministers. The foreign and defense ministers remained in their positions, and for the first time, a woman and ministers of Druze, Kurdish and Alawite origin were appointed. The Kurds were dissatisfied the composition of the government and stated that they were not obligated to implement its decisions.
- ▶ The defense ministers of Syria and Lebanon signed an agreement for coordination along the shared border, and the presidents of both countries spoke and agreed to strengthen security cooperation.
- ▶ Turkey continues to reinforce its presence in Syria: An agreement was reached for a joint operations center, and Turkish forces were reportedly preparing to take control of the T4 military airbase, possibly to deter the Israeli Air Force.

#### IDF Activities in Syria

- ▶ Over the past week, IDF forces operated at new sites on the Syrian summit of Mount Hermon to remove potential threats against the State of Israel. The forces located military facilities, equipment and an explosive device weighing tens of kilograms (IDF spokesperson, March 30, 2025).

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<sup>1</sup> Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.



**IDF forces on Mount Hermon (IDF spokesperson, March 30, 2025)**

- ▶ This past week, IDF forces continued targeted operations in and beyond the buffer zone in the Golan Heights. Reports included Israeli activity in Bir al-Ajam in the Quneitra Governorate, in the village of Sayda al-Jolan in southern Quneitra, and in Sayda in western Daraa. Military sites were blown up in the village of Ain Aisha and near Kom Muhaires; Tel Ahmar was attacked with artillery and a checkpoint was erected in a road in Quneitra Governorate. Vehicles were seized and suspects were questioned (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 26 – April 2, 2025).
- ▶ On March 27, 2025, Israeli aircraft struck in the White Port area north of the coastal city of Latakia. Six consecutive strikes reportedly attacked various military targets, including weapons depots (SANA Telegram channel, March 27, 2025). The targeted area reportedly included a base housing non-Syrian fighters (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 27, 2025). Israel did not comment on the reports or issue a statement.
- ▶ On March 30, 2025, armed operatives in the village of Kuwayya in the Yarmouk Basin of Daraa Governorate reportedly shot down an Israeli drone. Parts of the drone fell in open areas; there were no casualties (Daraa 24 Telegram channel, March 30, 2025). The IDF did not respond to the report.



**The [alleged] downed Israeli drone in Daraa Governorate  
(Daraa 24 Telegram channel, March 30, 2025)**

- ▶ A "source from the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria" confirmed that organization operatives clashed with IDF forces in Kuwayya on March 25, 2025, and four operatives were killed by IDF fire. According to the source, 14 operatives have been killed since the Front began operations in January 2025. The source denied that the Front received support from Iran, Hezbollah, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party or Russia, claiming the Front had political, social, media and "military" offices, as well as a legal office operating outside Syria which planned to file a formal complaint against Israel at the International Criminal Court (al-Nahar, March 27, 2025).
- ▶ On March 28, 2025, Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa participated in a virtual conversation with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, French President Emmanuel Macron, Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. Al-Sharaa said Syria had to deal with many security challenges, including on its southern border, where he said the Israeli presence on Syrian territory was an ongoing threat to regional peace and security. The aforementioned national leaders reportedly condemned the Israeli attacks in Syria, and al-Sharaa said Syria would continue to defend its rights (Syrian presidential office Telegram channel, March 28, 2025).
- ▶ An editorial in ISIS's weekly publication condemned Syrian President al-Sharaa for failing to take action against Israel despite ongoing Israeli attacks and IDF ground activity in Syrian territory. ISIS claimed the army of the new Syrian regime "does not even consider the possibility that it has the right to respond to military aggression on its territory, which has become solid ground beneath the feet of the invading Jewish forces. They come and go, and the Syrian regime limits itself to issuing condemnations." ISIS called on Muslims to prepare for an "inevitable confrontation with the Jewish state" (al-Nabā', March 27, 2025).

## Concern over Palestinian terrorist activities

► According to "Israeli security," the Syrian regime released operatives and leaders of Hamas and other terrorist organizations from Syrian prisons. Israel has reportedly conveyed messages to the Syrian regime indicating it will not allow terrorist elements to regroup and gain strength along its border. According to the report, the Israeli operations in Syria have the full backing of the American administration (Walla!, April 1, 2025). In response, a "source from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad branch in Syria" denied that operatives from the organization and from Hamas, who were arrested during the Assad era, had been released following the regime's fall. According to the source, all the operatives held in Assad's prisons were dead (Syria TV, April 1, 2025).

## Establishing the New Regime

### Forming a new government

► On March 29, 2025, a new Syrian government was formed to replace the temporary government put in place on December 9, 2024, immediately after the fall of the Assad regime. The new Syrian government has 23 ministers, most of whom are new appointees. Some had been involved in "opposition organizations" which fought the Assad regime, especially al-Sharaa's Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani and Defense Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra remained in their positions, while National Security Advisor Anas Khattab was appointed minister of the interior. There is one woman in the new government, Hind Kabawat, minister of labor and welfare, a Christian, and other ministers of Druze, Alawite and Kurdish origin. However, they apparently do not represent political forces but were appointed based on their qualifications (Syria TV, March 29–30, 2025; al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 30, 2025).



**President al-Sharaa and the members of the new government (Syrian presidential office Telegram channel, March 30, 2025)**

► Syrian President al-Sharaa called the formation of the government a "decisive moment in the nation's history" and the beginning of a new era in the "national journey." He said the government would focus on protecting citizens and strengthening stability, and its objective was to restore security to all areas in Syria and to work with regional and international partners to combat threats (Syrian presidential office Telegram channel, March 29, 2025).

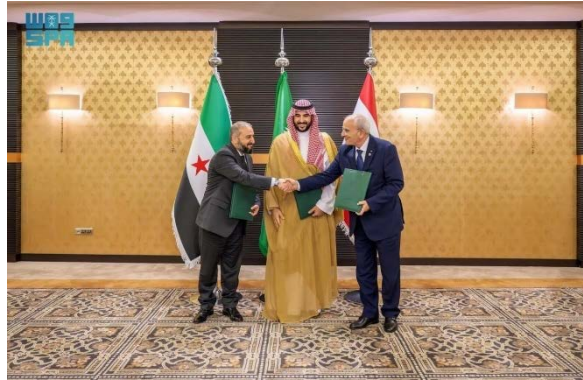
► However, the Kurdish autonomy in northeast Syria said that the new government was similar to the previous one because it "lacked diversity and did not represent Syria's varied population." According to the Kurds, such a government would not be able to manage the country properly, and therefore they would not be obligated to implement its decisions (Syria TV Telegram channel, March 30, 2025).

### **Security activity**

► The Syrian ministry of the interior announced that the Security Directorate in Damascus had launched a campaign against cells affiliated with Hezbollah in the al-Sayyidah Zaynab area of Damascus. According to reports, the cells were planning to carry out "criminal activities" and some of the operatives were arrested. The ministry added that the campaign was part of ongoing efforts to improve regional security and stability (SANA, March 27, 2025).

### **Diplomacy**

► Michel Menassa, Lebanese defense minister and his Syrian counterpart, Murhaf Abu Qasra, met in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Saudi Arabian Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman was also present. They discussed improving security and stability along the border and other issues of mutual Syrian-Lebanese interest. They signed an agreement noting the strategic importance of the demarcation of their mutual border, which included appointing joint committees and coordinating to address security and military challenges. They agreed to meet again in Saudi Arabia in the near future (Saudi Press Agency, March 28, 2025).



**Defense ministers of Lebanon and Syria with the Saudi defense minister behind them at the signing of the agreement (Saudi Press Agency, March 28, 2025)**

- ▶ According to reports, the Syrian representatives at the meetings said that only the Lebanese army should have a presence in the border villages, particularly in 40 Shi'ite villages along the eastern border which, according to the Syrians, were controlled by Hezbollah rather than the state. The Lebanese defense minister promised that only the Lebanese army would be present along the border and would even be reinforced, but demanded that Syrian security forces halt acts of aggression in the border villages and curb the gangs of smugglers (Asas Media, March 30, 2025).
- ▶ Al-Sharaa and the leaders of Lebanon, France, Cyprus and Greece held a virtual meeting to discuss securing the Syria–Lebanon border, and noted the importance of increasing security cooperation. Al-Sharaa raised the issue of lifting the sanctions still imposed on his country, and according to his office, all participants in the meeting expressed their support (Syrian presidential office Telegram channel, March 28, 2025).

## Turkish Intervention in Syria

- ▶ "Sources in the Turkish ministry of defense" reported that at the request of the new Syrian government and with the agreement with "several countries," a "joint operations center" was being established. According to the sources, Turkey's efforts to support the new government included the establishment of a training base for the Syrian army to increase its order of combat. They reported that Turkey placed great importance on preserving Syria's territorial integrity and on consolidating control throughout the country (Türkiye Today, March 27, 2025).
- ▶ "Sources" also reported that Turkey had begun taking steps to take control of the T4 Airbase in the Palmyra area in central Syria, where it was preparing to deploy aerial defense systems. One source stated that the base would help Turkey achieve regional aerial control and support its efforts to combat ISIS. Another source noted that the presence of Turkish air defense

systems and UAVs could deter Israel from conducting airstrikes in the area (The Middle East Eye, April 1, 2025). The IDF has attacked the T4 Airbase twice in the past in light of reports of advanced contacts between the Syrian regime and Turkey regarding the transfer of certain areas to Turkish military control in exchange for economic, military and political support.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For further information, see the March 26, 2025 ITIC report, "[Spotlight on Syria](#)."