



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CONFLICT IN SYRIA (Jay Report)

The conflict began on July 11, when a Druze merchant was abducted and robbed on the Damascus-Suweida highway. Druze militias accused Bedouin tribal elements of involvement, prompting armed retaliation.

By July 13, fighting had erupted across Suweida and surrounding areas. Sectarian tensions between Druze groups and Bedouin fighters escalated rapidly. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) and local medical sources reported 30–50 fatalities and over 150 injuries, including civilians.

Syrian Government Forces Enter the Fray

On July 13, the Syrian transitional government, under interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa, dispatched internal security forces to contain the violence. However, Druze groups accused elements within the government-backed forces, specifically fighters aligned with Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) of launching attacks on Druze neighborhoods.

Footage circulating online showed disturbing scenes of Druze civilians being executed, with soldiers ripping off the mustaches of Druze men before executing them or after they were killed in a deliberate act of humiliation. Videos of Syrian soldiers filming themselves mowing down Druze prisoners of war, along with images of piled bodies and graphic atrocities, further inflamed tensions.

Israeli Intervention

On July 15, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched airstrikes on Syrian military assets in and around Suweida, targeting tanks and positions it claimed were threatening Druze civilians. Israel Defense Minister Israel Katz described the strikes as a “warning shot,” vowing further action if Islamist and regime forces did not halt their assault on Druze communities.

That same day, Suweida’s governor Moustafa al-Bakkour and Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Hammoud al-Hinnawi called for de-escalation. A U.S. and Turkish-backed ceasefire was briefly established, but was soon violated by Jolani-aligned units.

On July 16, following reports of massacres and additional footage showing HTS militants laughing over corpses and continuing abuses against the Druze, including videos circulating of Islamist groups aligned with the Syrian government capturing an elderly Druze Sheikh, Marhej Shaheen, in his 70s or 80s, who was assassinated after Syrian soldiers stormed his home in Al-Tha'la, mocked him, ripped off his mustache, and violated him, Israel stated it would expand its campaign to protect the Druze if the violence did not stop. The violence persisted, and Israel Katz announced that a harsher response would follow. The IDF struck targets near Damascus, including a building adjacent to the Syrian Ministry of Defense and locations near the presidential palace, in addition to renewed strikes in Suweida and Daraa.

The Syrian Ministry of Health confirmed three deaths and 34 injuries in the latest wave of IDF attacks.

Israeli officials stated the strikes were conducted in full coordination with the United States. A senior Israeli source emphasized, "Southern Syria serves as a strategic buffer. Israel will not allow jihadist forces to entrench near its border."

Following the escalation, the U.S. government urged all parties, including Syrian forces and Jolani's men, to withdraw from Suweida. Washington also called on Israel to limit its military operations in the region amid efforts to broker a renewed truce.

Following U.S. pressure, Syrian government forces withdrew from the Druze city of Suweida by late July 16, easing days of deadly sectarian clashes. The pullback, part of a ceasefire with Druze leaders, came after fighting that left at least 260 dead, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

It remains unclear if this is a lasting calm or just a pause.

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