



## Spotlight on Syria

### March 16 –26, 2025

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

- ▶ Terrorist operatives shot at IDF forces near the village of Koayiah in southern Syria; there were no casualties. The forces responded with artillery and fire from UAVs, killing seven of the attackers. The Islamic Resistance Front in Syria claimed that four of its fighters were killed in the incident. Syria and other countries condemned Israel and called for the withdrawal of IDF forces from Syrian territory.
- ▶ The IDF attacked two Syrian air force bases and destroyed strategic capabilities used by the former regime, including fighter jets. According to reports, 12 Syrian soldiers were injured.
- ▶ The Syrian army warned that any violation by Hezbollah on the Syria-Lebanon border would be met with a decisive response.
- ▶ A senior representative of the American administration held first meeting with the Syrian foreign minister. The American representative reportedly presented a list of demands in exchange for easing sanctions.

#### The IDF in Syria

##### Exchange of fire in the Dara'a Governate

- ▶ On March 25, 2025, several armed operatives opened fire on IDF forces in southern Syria. The forces returned fire, and an aircraft attacked the operatives (IDF spokesperson, March 25, 2025). Several operatives had positioned themselves in an ambush on the outskirts of the village of Koayiah and shot at IDF soldiers from a distance of about 300 meters. The soldiers returned fire with the support of mortar shells, tanks and an Israeli UAV (Ynet, March 26, 2025).
- ▶ Syrian media reported that before dawn Israeli forces attempted to infiltrate the village of Koayiah in the western countryside of Dara'a, about nine kilometers from the ceasefire line, but were prevented by local residents. According to claims, Israeli forces attacked the village with tanks, artillery and UAVs, killing seven residents and injuring several. Some villagers

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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.

reportedly fled to nearby towns (Syria TV and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 25, 2025; Syrian Civil Defense X account, March 25, 2025).



**Residents fleeing the village of Koayiah after the exchange of fire between local armed operatives and the IDF (Telegram channel of Syria TV, March 25, 2025)**

- ▶ A Syrian organization calling itself "Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Men of Heroism" announced that four of its fighters were killed during a battle with the "Zionist occupation" in the village of Koayiah in "occupied" southern Syria. The organization called for the "occupier" to be "resisted" and expelled from Syrian land (Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Men of Heroism, March 25, 2025).<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ The incident in Koayiah sparked criticism and condemnation of Israel in Syria and beyond:
  - ◆ The Syrian foreign ministry condemned the Israeli attacks on Koayiah, calling them a "dangerous assault which seriously harmed civilians and damaged agricultural lands." The ministry called the incident in Koayiah a continuation of a series of Israeli "violations" which began with the incursion of forces into Dara'a and Quneitra. The ministry called on the Syrian people to hold fast to their land and reject all attempts to "displace" them (Syrian foreign ministry Telegram channel, March 25, 2025).
  - ◆ Anwar Taha al-Zoabi, governor of the Dara'a Governate, said the "violations of the occupation army" in Syrian territory, which included the incursion of forces into the town of Koayiah, led to clashes with residents and escalated attacks, including artillery fire and UAV bombings in the area. He said they held Israel responsible for all the casualties (Telegram channel Dara'a24, March 25, 2025).
  - ◆ In several towns in Dara'a, including al-Muzayrib and al-Sanamayn, demonstrations were held in support of Koayiah residents and against the Israeli presence in Syria.

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<sup>2</sup> For further information, see the ITIC report, "[Spotlight on Syria, January 8-15, 2025](#)).

Demonstrators chanted, "Netanyahu is a war criminal," "Oh Koayiah, we are with you until death," "Oh Julani, oh beloved – destroy Tel Aviv!" (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 26, 2025; Free Hauran Media YouTube channel, March 25, 2025).

◆ Hamas condemned the "barbaric Israeli aggression" against residential neighborhoods in the town of Koayiah, calling it "a dangerous escalation of Zionist violations" against Syria and its people and a "new war crime by the occupation government" (Hamas Telegram channel, March 25, 2025).

◆ The Jordanian foreign ministry condemned the attack on Koayiah, calling it a "blatant violation" of international law and Syrian sovereignty, and a dangerous escalation (Jordanian foreign ministry X account, March 25, 2025). The Qatari foreign ministry published a similar statement (Qatari foreign ministry X account, March 25, 2025).

### **Aerial attacks**

► On March 21, 2025, the IDF carried out aerial attacks on strategic military facilities used by the Assad regime, which were located at the Syrian air force bases in Palmyra in central Syria and T4 in the Homs region (IDF spokesperson, March 21, 2025). "Sources" in Syria reported 12 security personnel wounded in the attacks (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 22, 2025). On March 25, 2025, the two bases were attacked again to destroy remaining military facilities (IDF spokesperson, March 25, 2025).

► According to reports, approximately twenty Sukhoi fighter jets were destroyed in the attacks, in addition to military equipment and weapons, radar positions, runways and control towers. The objective of the strikes was to prevent the new Syrian regime from using the former regime's military facilities, and in light of negotiations between the Syrian regime and Turkey for the transfer of an area near the city of Palmyra to the Turkish army in exchange for economic, military and political support (Israeli media, March 23–25, 2025).



**Right: Damage at the Palmyra airport (al-Mayadeen, March 25, 2025). Left: Aircraft destroyed at T4 base (YouTube channel of Radio Tip, March 22, 2025)**

### Activity on the ground

► This past week IDF forces reportedly continued carrying out targeted raids in villages in the Quneitra Governorate, both inside and outside the buffer zone in the Golan Heights, as well as in the Dara'a area. Reports noted the entry of forces into the village of al-Asha in the rural area of Quneitra; infantry forces accompanied by armored vehicles reached the outskirts of the village of Maariya in the Yarmouk Basin in the western rural area of Dara'a; Israeli forces detained four "young men" from the same family in a raid on the village of Umm al-Azem in the central rural area of Quneitra and conducted searches in several civilian homes; Israeli tanks fired shells at the road connecting the villages of Koayiah and Maariya in the Yarmouk Basin in the Dara'a Governorate; Israeli forces in five military vehicles entered the village of Abu Tina in the southern rural area of Quneitra, set up a checkpoint, conducted searches and questioned residents; Israeli forces carried out a nighttime raid in the village of al-Rafid in the rural area of Quneitra, and according to reports left behind them humanitarian aid, which was burned by local residents (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 19–26, 2025). The IDF reported that forces had conducted raids in several areas and located weapons, explosive devices, mortar shells, ammunition magazines and combat equipment (IDF spokesperson, March 25, 2025).

## Establishing the New Regime

### Security activity

► The fighting along the border between Syrian regime security forces and the Lebanese army (supported by Hezbollah-affiliated forces) ended; at least 22 people were killed and 52 others wounded. The Lebanese army reported that its forces had been deployed at several points along the border and had closed "illegal" crossings to prevent infiltration and smuggling from Syria (Lebanese army X account, March 19–20, 2025).

► The Syrian army announced that an agreement had been reached for the withdrawal of Syrian and Lebanese army units from the village of Housh al-Sayyid Ali, located on the border between the two countries, and for the return of civilians to the village with no military presence remaining inside it. The Syrian army added that was committed to implementing the agreement and said any Hezbollah violation of the understanding would be met with a firm and direct response without prior warning (SANA, March 21, 2025).

## Diplomacy

► Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated that Russian President Putin sent a letter to Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa, affirming Moscow's readiness to develop cooperation with Damascus and strengthen bilateral relations (RT, March 20, 2025).

► German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock arrived in Syria for her second visit since the fall of the Assad regime. She toured Damascus and reopened the German embassy, which closed in 2012 with the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War during the Assad regime. Baerbock met with Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa; also present was Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani (German news agency DPA and the Syrian President's Telegram channel, March 20, 2025).



**The German delegation, headed by the German Foreign Minister, meets with Syrian president (Syrian foreign ministry X account, March 20, 2025)**

► Six "sources," including two "senior Americans" and a "Syrian source," reported that Natasha Franceschi, American deputy assistant secretary of state for the Levant and Syria, met with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani on the sidelines of the Syria Donors Conference in Brussels on March 18, 2025. She delivered a list of conditions in exchange for easing the sanctions imposed on the country. The United States demanded the destruction of all remaining chemical weapons stockpiles in Syria, cooperation in counterterrorism, no appointment of foreign jihadist fighters to senior positions in the new Damascus government

and assistance in locating Austin Tice, the American journalist kidnapped in Syria. It was the first high-level direct meeting between the United States and Syria since the new American administration took office (Reuters, March 25, 2025).