

Roundtable: Syria One Year After the Transition: Governing a Fragmented State

Since the end of 2024 and the fall of the Assad regime, Syria has entered a transitional phase marked by political centralization, limited economic recovery, and persistent insecurity. President Ahmed al-Sharaa has consolidated power at the center while redefining relations with key minority groups, particularly Kurds, Alawites, and Druze. Despite institutional changes, the state remains fragmented and weak in several regions.

Syria is governed under a Provisional Constitutional Declaration adopted in March 2025 for a five-year transition. The system is strongly presidential. Executive power is concentrated in the presidency, which appoints ministers and leads a 23 member interim government. Ministries and courts exist but have limited autonomy. Real decision-making is centralized within the presidential office and security institutions, with minimal political pluralism.

Economic conditions remain fragile. GDP growth in 2025 was estimated at around 1 %. The partial lifting of Western sanctions restored limited access to international banking and trade, but structural problems persist. Financial reforms are incomplete, inflation remains high, and public trust in state institutions is low. The exchange of Assad-era banknotes launched in January 2026 had mainly symbolic value.

Security governance remains one of the most serious challenges of the transition. Although the authorities have announced efforts to unify armed actors under state control, implementation has been inconsistent. Several armed factions continue to operate with a high degree of autonomy, including parts of the Syrian National Army. Comprehensive security sector reform has not yet been implemented, and mechanisms for civilian oversight, professionalization, and accountability remain weak. As a result, security conditions vary significantly across regions, and the state's monopoly on the use of force remains incomplete.

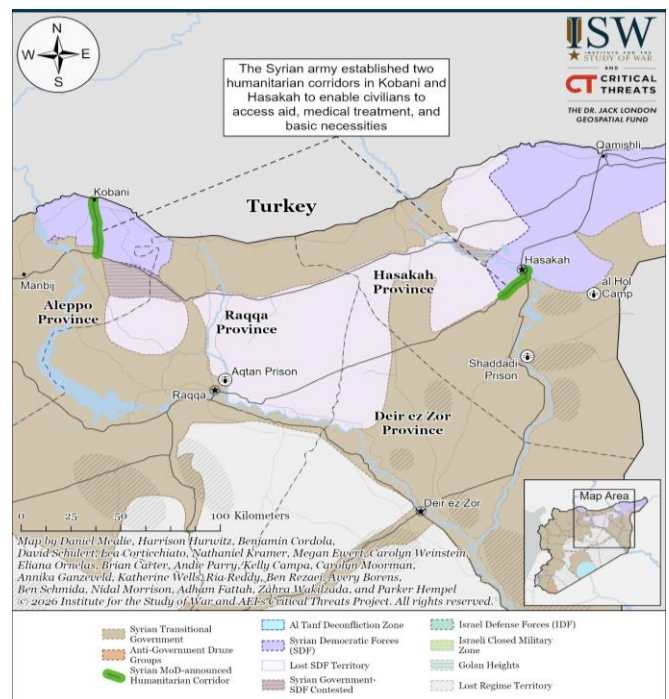


Fig 2 Assessed Control of Terrain in Eastern Syria
Source: ISW

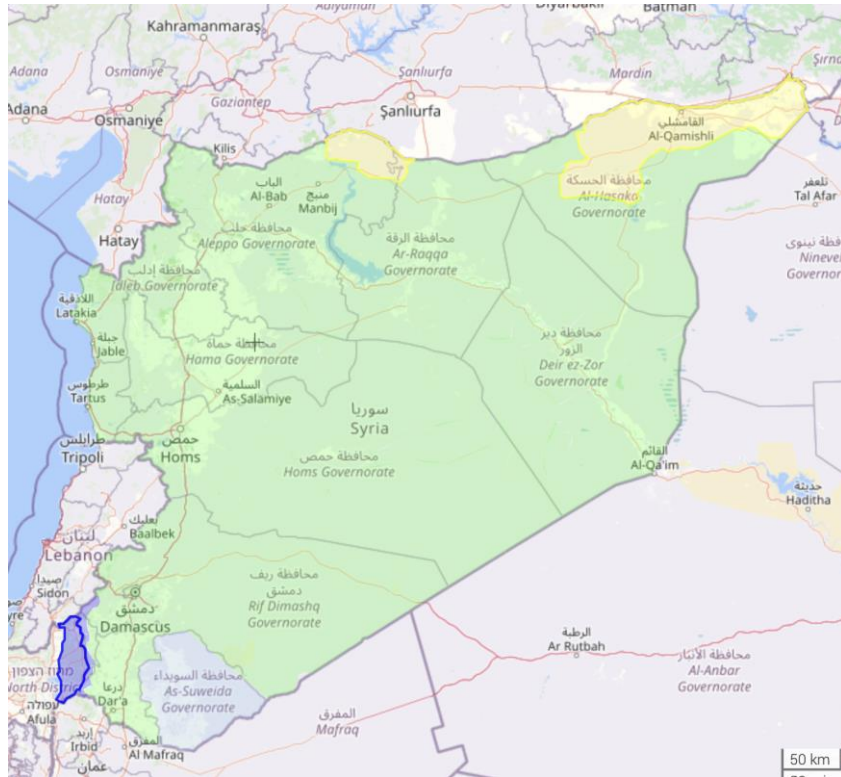


Fig. 2 Current map of control Syria 30.1.2026

Source: Liveuamap

*Legend: green=area under regime's control, yellow=SDF,
blue=IDF, grey=Druze*

Relations with the Kurdish population deteriorated in early 2026. Damascus took control over large parts of northeastern Syria, including strategic infrastructure. An April 2025 agreement on integrating the SDF into state structures stalled due to the absence of political and ethnic guarantees. Fighting began in Aleppo before spreading elsewhere. A ceasefire is in place but remains fragile. Not only Kurds left some parts in NE Syria, but also Russian forces have withdrawn from several bases in the northeast. Nevertheless, on beginning of February 2026, a ceasefire officially came into force between Kurdish forces and Syria. The integration of the SDFG into government forces is therefore expected, along with the takeover of the remaining areas under Kurdish control by government forces.

Relations with the Alawite minority remain tense following attacks in coastal areas in March 2025 and a bombing in Homs later that year. Tensions with the Druze escalated repeatedly in 2025, peaking in July in Suwayda, where Israel reportedly provided limited air support.

The humanitarian situation remains severe. Large parts of the population depend on aid, infrastructure damage is extensive, and returns of displaced persons are limited. Access to basic services varies widely by region.

While the transitional government has gained international recognition, domestic legitimacy remains weak. Governance relies on executive control rather than inclusive political processes. One year after the transition, Syria combines formal institutional rebuilding with unresolved security, social, and political fragmentation.