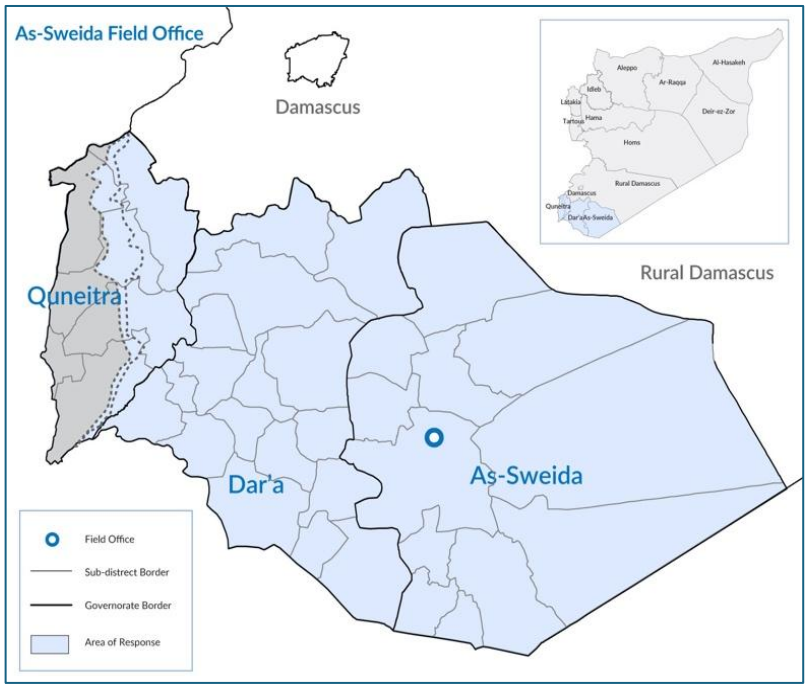
Flash Update on the Situation in As-Sweida

@16:00, 16 July 2025

Overview

As of mid-July 2025, the situation in As-Sweida has escalated into intense outbreaks of sectarian violence. The unrest began on the evening of 12 July when clashes broke out between armed Druze factions and Bedouin tribal fighters. Hostilities erupted after kidnapping incidents occurred, including the abduction of a Druze merchant on 12 July on the Damascus-As-Sweida highway.



The situation deteriorated quickly, causing the closure of the highway to Damascus. The Internal Security Forces (ISF) have been deployed to the area to disengage the two fighting parties and protect civilians in the populated towns along the highway. A curfew in the governorate was declared at noon on 13 July, and negotiations between the parties are ongoing, leading to an exchange of hostages. However, the clashes have been continuing, and additional ISF forces was reportedly deployed to the area.

Adding a significant international dimension to the crisis, the Israel Defense Forces carried out airstrikes on 14 July, targeting Syrian military tanks near the village of Sami' in As-Sweida. The Israeli government stated that the strikes were intended to neutralize threats against the Druze community living near its border and warned the Syrian regime against any further military buildup in the south. On 16 July, Israeli warplanes targeted the Syrian Defense Ministry, military headquarters, and areas near the presidential palace in central Damascus.

As of the morning, 16 July, casualties reportedly exceeded 135 fatalities, impacting civilians, members of the internal security forces and Bedouin tribal fighters. Further assaults on houses and medical facilities are ongoing. While the As-Sweida National Hospital had continued to operate at full capacity despite electricity cuts, armed elements reportedly attacked the hospital on 15 July, which resulted in the injury of civilians and medical staff, and the death of a doctor. The hospital has reached near-full capacity, while emergency health care needs, including trauma care, continue rising.

Despite the Minister of Defense announced a ceasefire on 15 July after negotiating with local Druze leaders, heavy shelling, motor fire, looting and others are still ongoing at the time of writing. The clashes, particularly in the city centre, have intensified, and sounds of small arms fire and rocket-propelled grenade explosions are echoing throughout the city. The warehouse of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), a UNHCR partner, was also burned down by indiscriminate shelling.

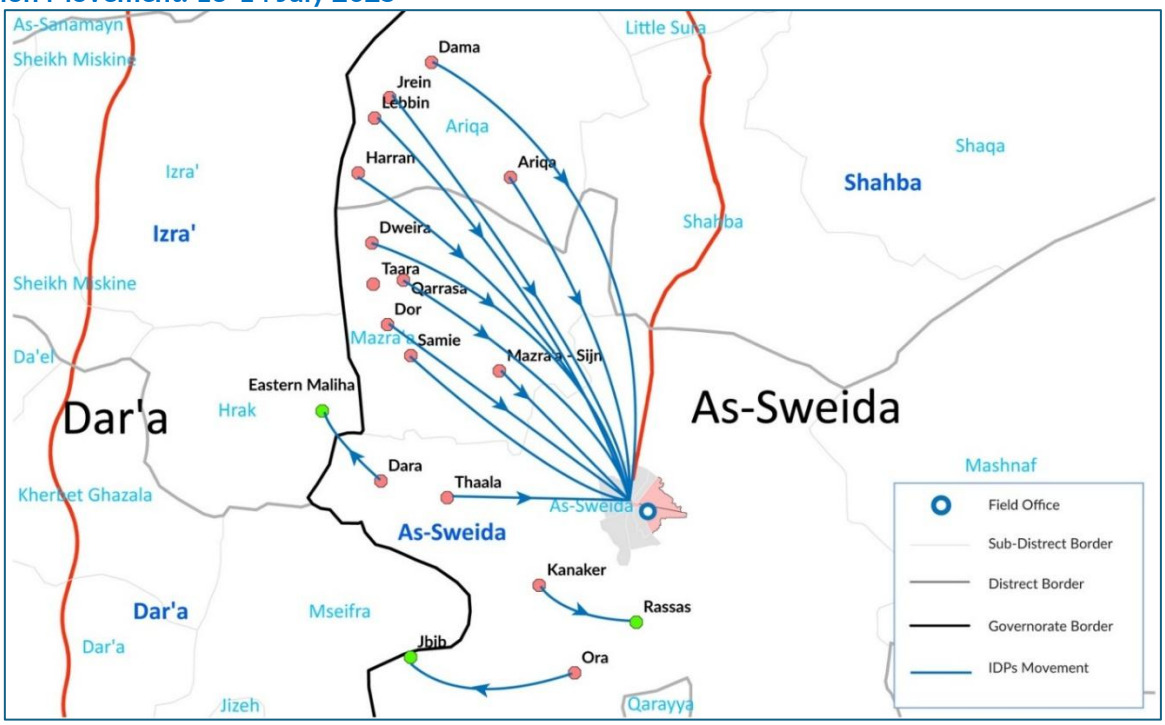
The UN and civilian movement on the highway and all humanitarian activities, including those at the UNHCR-supported community centre, have been suspended.

Displacement situation

During the conflict under the Assad regime, As-Sweida Governorate which was less affected by the war had received displaced people from the neighbouring governorates, such as Dar'a and Rural Damascus. Therefore, the number of Syrian refugee returnee to As-Sweida since the beginning of 2024 is considerably limited with some 4,600 as of 10 July.

However, according to the reports from the field **as of 15 July,** the clashes caused displacement of **some 1,180 families (5,900 individuals),** mainly to As-Sweida city from surrounding affected villages. The majority of the displaced people are women, children and the elderly. The number of displaced people has continued increasing, and **as of 16 July, it is estimated over 25,000 people, potentially rising to 60,000**. The latest report indicated that the displaced population are secondarily displaced to Salkhad. The authorities have reportedly established seven collective centers to accommodate those who need refuge.

Population Movement: 13-14 July 2025



UNHCR, the only UN agency with a full-fledged presence in As-Sweida, is closely monitoring the situation and exploring the possibility of delivering core relief items to the affected people in collaboration with its partners, when the security situations allow. In its role as a lead agency of Protection Sector, UNHCR is also coordinating with Sector partners and sharing critical updates with the wider humanitarian community.

UNHCR calls on all parties to the hostilities to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians, and to enable civilians who wish to flee to do so in safety and dignity. UNHCR also joins the call of humanitarian community for immediate and unhindered humanitarian access to affected populations. It is vital that humanitarian actors are allowed to deliver life-saving aid and protection services without delay or obstruction.