

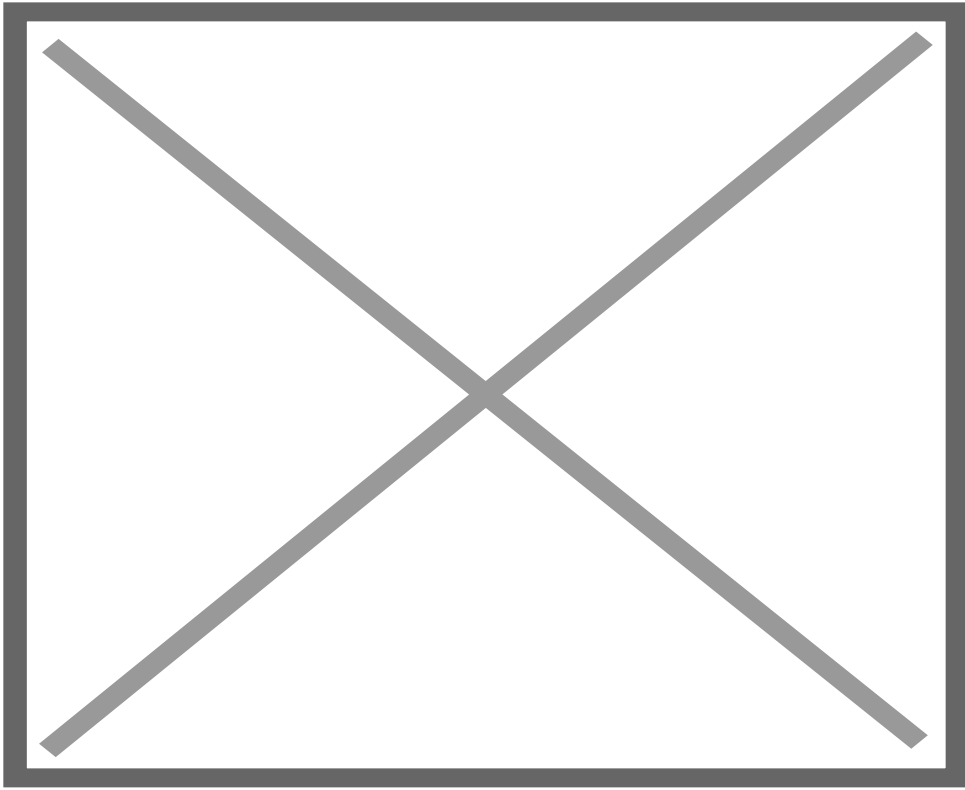
# Homs

COMMON ANALYSIS  
Last update: November 2021

[Main COI reference: [Security 2021](#), 2.6]

## General information

The governorate of Homs is located in central Syria and has borders with Iraq to the east and Lebanon to the west. The Syrian E-Government website stated that Homs governorate shares an international border with Jordan to the east as well. It has internal borders with Deir Ez-Zor, Raqqa, Hama, Tartous, and Rural Damascus governorates. The governorate is divided in six districts: Homs (where its capital Homs is also located), Al-Qusayr, Tal Kalakh, Ar-Rastan, Al-Maghrim and Palmyra. In a March 2021 report, UNOCHA estimated the population of Homs governorate to be of 1 465 616.



Natural resources facilities like oil and gas fields as well as phosphate mines are situated in the governorate.

### **Background of the conflict**

Early in the conflict, violence in Homs had a sectarian character. Shia residents of Homs City were forcefully displaced, and neighbourhoods started to become either purely Sunni or purely made up of other sects. The GoS forces applied a 'kneel or starve' strategy accompanied by indiscriminate attacks against neighbourhoods held by anti-government groups, up until May 2014. The recapture of Homs city by GoS in May 2017 and the military operation by SAA in northern rural Homs in April 2018 led to the mass evacuation of rebels and their families from the governorate. Those who chose to stay in the area had to reconcile with the GoS. A significant number of reconciled combatants were incorporated in the SAA forces. A state of lawlessness was reported in 2019. Especially in the eastern parts of the governorate, there were reportedly numerous incidents involving ISIL and SAA/pro-government forces. There were also reports of escalating clashes between government forces and pro-GoS militias for economic interests and conflicting agendas.

### **Actors: control and presence**

As of March 2021, the entire Homs governorate was under the control of GoS forces, with the exception of the Al-Tanf region, which was controlled by the US, and an area of ISIL presence southeast of Al-Sukhna in eastern rural Homs. On the government side, the presence of SAA and pro-government militias was reported and Iranian as well as Iranian-backed forces were deployed in several military sites and strategically important posts in the governorate. Russia was reportedly operating from military facilities in Homs governorate.

### **Nature of violence and examples of incidents**

During the reporting period, the strategically important Al-Sukhna region in Homs was the scene of ISIL attacks and security chaos affecting both, fighters and civilians. Despite extensive military operations by the regime, the Iranian and Russian air forces in al-Sukhna, ISIL reportedly increased its activities. ISIL carried out limited complex attacks, for instance briefly occupying several GoS positions in and around Al-Sukhna, Homs governorate in April 2020. Other examples of security incidents include an IED attack by ISIL cells on a bus carrying soldiers, several explosions at a weapons depot and an explosion at a government-owned crude oil transportation company as well as the shooting of civilians by Iranian-backed militias.

Israel is reported to have continued its airstrikes on Iranian positions.

There is also various information on civilian casualties from landmines or unexploded ordnance in Homs governorate.

### **Incidents: data**

ACLED recorded 147 security incidents (average of 2 security incidents per week) in Homs governorate in the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2021. Of the reported incidents, 67 were coded as 'battles', 59 as 'explosions/remote violence', and 21 as incidents of 'violence against civilians'.

### **Geographical scope**

Security incidents were recorded in all Homs governorate districts during the reporting period, with the highest number of overall incidents being recorded in Tadmor/Palmyra.

### **Civilian fatalities: data**

VDC recorded 44 civilian fatalities in 2020 and 9 civilian fatalities in the first three months of 2021. SNHR recorded 15 civilian fatalities in 2020 and 10 civilian fatalities in the first three months of 2021. For the full reporting period, this represented 53 civilian fatalities in total or approximately 3 civilian fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants according to VDC and 25 civilian fatalities in total or approximately 1 civilian fatality per 100 000 inhabitants according to SNHR.

## Displacement

In 2020, UNOCHA registered 3 000 IDP movements from, including within, Homs governorate. For the first three months of 2021, UNOCHA reported on 664 IDP movements from, including within, the governorate.

Regarding return movements to Homs governorate, approximately 11 000 were reported by UNOCHA for 2020 and about 2 100 for the first three months of 2021. It was reported that Syrians were routinely denied return to their places of origin due to restrictions on access placed by the GoS and fear of arrest in retaken and formerly besieged areas, including Homs.

## Further impact on civilians

In the reference period, there were reports about looting, security restrictions and the lack of enforcement of the law. In terms of property damage, Homs governorate is one of the most impacted ones. Sources described the severe damage to buildings, making parts of Homs uninhabitable for returnees. The Al-Khalidiya and Jurat Al-Shayyah neighbourhoods are considered the most severely damaged. Communication was reportedly almost non-existent, schools were still destroyed and health centres were not sufficient. A lack of basic services and daily needs, especially electricity and bread, was also reported. According to a January 2021 WHO report, four health centres in Jaboureen, Tir-Maaleh, Kafr-Nan, and Taldu were renovated with Russian support.

Looking at the indicators, it can be concluded that indiscriminate violence is taking place in the governorate of **Homs**, however **not at a high level**. Accordingly, a **higher level of individual elements** is required in order to show substantial grounds for believing that a civilian, returned to the territory, would face a real risk of serious harm within the meaning of Article 15(c) QD.