

Syria

Overall, reported attacks on education decreased in Syria during the 2024-2025 reporting period. Most attacks took place in Aleppo and Idlib and involved attacks on schools with explosives.

Context

Armed conflict continued in Syria during the 2024-2025 reporting period, with hostilities in several areas of the country.¹ However, a major political shift during this time period altered conflict dynamics across the region. In late November 2024, non-state armed groups led by Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), along with factions of Türkiye-backed Syrian National Army (SNA), began an offensive which led to the fall of the Assad government on December 8, 2024.² The US-backed armed group Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) continued to control much of northeastern Syria by the end of 2024,³ while Türkiye maintained a military presence in parts of northern Syria along the border, where Turkish-aligned groups also exercised local control. Human Rights Watch reported human rights abuses by both the Assad government forces and HTS, as well as the transitional Syrian government attempting to consolidate control.⁴ Beginning in March 2025, transitional government forces reportedly massacred hundreds in the coastal regions (including Jableh, Banyas, Tartous, and Latakia governorates).⁵ Alawi civilians appeared to be targeted with these killings, as well as abductions and torture.⁶ In Baniyas, Tartous governorate, more than 80 teachers, students, and relatives of faculty at Martyr Faheem Mohammad Official High School were allegedly killed during the violence.⁷ *The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic* found that pro-former government fighters (PFGFs) and interim government force members, as well as private individuals, committed these acts, which likely amount to war crimes.⁸

During the reporting period, conflict dynamics were also impacted by wider regional security concerns by neighboring countries, including Lebanon, Israel, and Iran. Airstrikes carried out by Syrian and Russian military continued in 2024 in northwestern Syria until December.⁹ Human Rights Watch reported that Israel carried out airstrikes in several densely populated areas of Syria in 2024.¹⁰ During the reporting period, Israeli forces expanded their occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights,¹¹ and the UN reported that Israeli hostilities, including airstrikes, in southern Syria impacted infrastructure and farming, and killed civilians.¹² On July 27, 2024, a rocket from Lebanon struck a football field in Majdal Shams in the Golan Heights, which killed 12 people, most of whom were children.¹³ Unexploded ordinance (UXO) caused death and injury, especially to children playing outside schools or their homes. The UN reported 870 UXO incidents between December 2024 and December 2025, which killed 167 children, and injured 383 more.¹⁴

The effects of this protracted conflict as well as other environmental dangers seriously impacted Syrians across the northern, southern, eastern, and coastal regions during the 2024-2025 reporting period. Following the collapse of Assad's government, food shortages existed in major cities, such as Deir ez-Zor, Damascus, and Hama.¹⁵ By the end of 2025, approximately 16.5 million people, including 5.5 million internally displaced, still needed humanitarian aid.¹⁶

Use of schools as shelters for those internally displaced, as well as school closures resulting from severe weather conditions, reduced children's access to education during the 2024-2025 reporting period. For example, in December 2025, severe cold and heavy snow closed schools in northern Syria while extensive flooding in central Syria damaged infrastructures across Homs and Hama.¹⁷ At the end of 2024, more than 3.7 million children had experienced disruption to their education, and over 12,000 schools had closed as a result of hostilities.¹⁸ Caretaker authorities announced the reopening of schools in December 2024, although attendance rates varied by region.¹⁹ However, all schools were suspended in March 2025 in Latakia and Tartous regions, amid hostilities.²⁰ Displacement, in addition to the recent arrival of returnees, led to overcrowding in schools.²¹ At the end of 2025, 2.5 million children were out of school in Syria, and 40 per cent of schools were not operational, according to the UN.²²

Attacks on schools

GCPEA collected around 62 reports of attacks on schools during the reporting period, 51 in 2024 and 11 in 2025. This represents a decrease as compared to the 83 incidents recorded in 2023 and 12 in 2022.²³

The UN identified at least 51 attacks on schools in 2024.²⁴ GCPEA collected around 22 reports of attacks on schools in 2024, although this number was not added to the UN total number, to avoid double counting.²⁵ Additionally, the UN reported in December 2024 that 20 schools had been vandalized or looted in Deir Ez-Zour governorate,²⁶ although it was not clear whether these incidents were perpetrated by parties to the conflict, or by civilians. Similarly, the UN reported in April 2025 that 26 schools in Latakia and 30 in Tartous had been damaged or looted,²⁷ although it was not clear whether these attacks were conflict-related. For this reason, these attacks were also not included in GCPEA's count, since they may not meet GCPEA criteria.

Examples of attacks identified by GCPEA in 2024 included:

- As reported by Syrian Network for Human Rights, on January 8, 2024, Syrian forces allegedly fired artillery shells directly hitting the fence of an operational elementary school in Ebleen, Jabal al-Zawiya, Idlib governorate. Students had recently been dismissed from school before the attack occurred.²⁸

- As reported by Syrian Network for Human Rights, on January 18, 2024, Syrian forces allegedly fired two rockets that directly hit the Msaibin 2 Model Elementary School in Msaibin, Idlib governorate. The building was partially destroyed and had been operational. Students were on vacation at the time of the attack.²⁹
- As reported by *Al Jazeera*, on February 21, 2024, missiles allegedly coming from the Israel-occupied Golan Heights hit an empty school bus near the Al-Bawader Private School in Kafr Sousa, Damascus, which was in session at the time of the strike.³⁰
- As reported by *Enab Baladi*, on July 10, 2024, Russian forces allegedly conducted two airstrikes that directly hit a vocational high school in Jisr al-Shughour, western Idlib governorate causing significant damage to the building.³¹
- As reported by Syrian Network for Human Rights, on October 16, 2024, the SDF allegedly launched a rocket attack on al-Mahsanli village, Jarablos city, Aleppo governorate, damaging a school; four children and two teachers were injured.³²

GCPEA identified at least 11 attacks on schools in 2025.³³ Examples of attacks identified by GCPEA in 2025 included:

- As reported by Syrian Network for Human Rights, on January 21, 2025, the SDF allegedly conducted a drone strike that hit Rasm al-Mastaha School, Rasm al-Mastaha, Menbij, Aleppo governorate. At the time of the strike, IDPs sheltered in the school building and four civilians were injured.³⁴
- As reported by ACLED and Syrian Network for Human Rights, on January 23, 2025, armed actors allegedly launched and detonated a vehicle in front of a school in Menbij, Aleppo governorate.³⁵
- As reported by ACLED and Syrian Network for Human Rights, on June 15, 2025, Israeli forces allegedly stormed and vandalized a public school in Hurriyeh, Khan Arnaba, Quneitra governorate.³⁶
- As reported by Syrian Network for Human Rights, on September 20, 2025, the SDF allegedly launched multiple explosives that hit the Al-Habouba Primary School in Al-Habouba, Aleppo governorate. This operational school was damaged as a result.³⁷

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

GCPEA identified at least four attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel in the current reporting period. This was a decrease in the number of reported attacks as compared to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified two attacks in 2023 and eight in 2022. However, it is unclear whether changing conflict dynamics or decreased monitoring and reporting are responsible for this decrease in reports.

GCPEA did not identify any reported attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel during 2024.

In 2025, GCPEA identified four attacks:

- As reported by ACLED and local media, on June 14, 2025, Israeli forces allegedly stormed a school in Kodneh, Quneitra governorate, and shot two warning shots into the air. During this incident, they allegedly detained two children and accused them of taking photos of Israeli military posts.³⁸
- As reported by ACLED and Syrian Network for Human Rights, on October 7, 2025, unknown gunmen shot and killed Layal Damar Gharib, a teacher on her way to work, in front of the Walid al-Najjar School in Jab al-Jandali, Homs governorate.³⁹
- As reported by ACLED and *Shaam Network*, on October 8, 2025, unknown gunmen allegedly abducted a student in front of the Jamal Daoud School, Latakia governorate. He was later released on November 1, 2025.⁴⁰
- As reported by ACLED and local media, on November 11, 2025, the SDF allegedly detained a school principal in Qahtaniyyah, Quamishli, Al Hasakah governorate, who had objected to the Autonomous Administration's ban on teaching the official Syria curriculum.⁴¹

Military use of schools and universities

GCPEA identified 13 reports of military use in the 2024-2025 reporting period.

Fewer reports of the military use of schools and universities were identified compared to the previous reporting period, when *Education under Attack 2024* included 23 incidents of military use in 2023 and 48 in 2022.⁴² This decrease may be a result of changing conflict dynamics or changes in reporting.

The UN verified 11 cases of the military use of schools in 2024.⁴³ Separately, GCPEA identified one case of military use, although this was not added to the UN number, to avoid double counting:

- On February 14, 2024, in the village of al-Shnan in eastern rural Deir Ez-Zour governorate, Syrian Democratic Forces who were stationed at al-Shnan School allegedly shot and killed a boy, as reported by the Syrian Network for Human Rights.⁴⁴

GCPEA identified two incidents of military use of schools or universities in 2025:

- As reported by ACLED and local media, on February 1, 2025, SDF allegedly using *Al-Ittihad* University campus in Kasrat Mohamed Ali, Ar Raqqa governorate were supposedly targeted with an airstrike from Turkish forces.⁴⁵
- As reported by ACLED and local media, on August 18, 2025, Israeli forces using vehicles allegedly positioned themselves near a school in Ain Ziwan, Al Khashniyyeh, Quneitra governorate. From this position, they organized home searches and fired rounds of live ammunition.⁴⁶

Child recruitment at, or on the way to or from, school

GCPEA identified at least five reports of child recruitment at, or on the way to or from, school, in the current reporting period. This is a consistent rate compared to the previous reporting period, when three and two such incidents were identified in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

GCPEA did not identify any reports of child recruitment at, or on the way to or from, school, in 2024.

GCPEA identified five reported incidents of child recruitment in 2025.

- As reported by ACLED and local media, on March 26, 2025, suspected members of an armed group allegedly kidnapped a female student from the That Al Nitagen school, Al Nasirah, Al Hasakah governorate specifically for conscription.⁴⁷
- As reported by Syrian Network for Human Rights, on April 16, 2025, the youth faction of SDF allegedly abducted a female high school student returning home from school in Qarah Qawi Tehtani, Kubani, Aleppo governorate. They then allegedly brought her to an SDF recruitment camp.⁴⁸
- On September 29, 2025, SDF allegedly raided several schools in Al Tabqa, Ath Thawrah, Ar Raqqa governorate and forcefully conscripted at least 16 students.⁴⁹

Attacks on higher education

GCPEA identified three attacks on higher education during the 2024-2025 reporting period. In 2022-2023, no such attacks were found.⁵⁰

GCPEA identified one attack in 2024: on November 29, 2024, in Aleppo city and governorate, four male students were allegedly killed when shelling struck Aleppo University student housing, as reported by Syrian Network for Human Rights and the UN.⁵¹

In 2025, GCPEA identified two reported attacks on higher education. These included:

- As reported by Syrian Network for Human Rights, on January 20, 2025, unidentified gunmen abducted a female assistant professor, Rasha Naser al-Ali, at the Faculty of Arabic Language at Homs University, Homs governorate, on her way to work.⁵²
- As reported by ACLED and local media, on December 27, 2025, Syrian armed forces allegedly abducted two university students on their way home from classes at the University of Aleppo at gunpoint. At the time, the students were at a checkpoint in the Aleppo-Zuhour neighborhood of Aleppo city, Aleppo governorate.⁵³