

Iran Update



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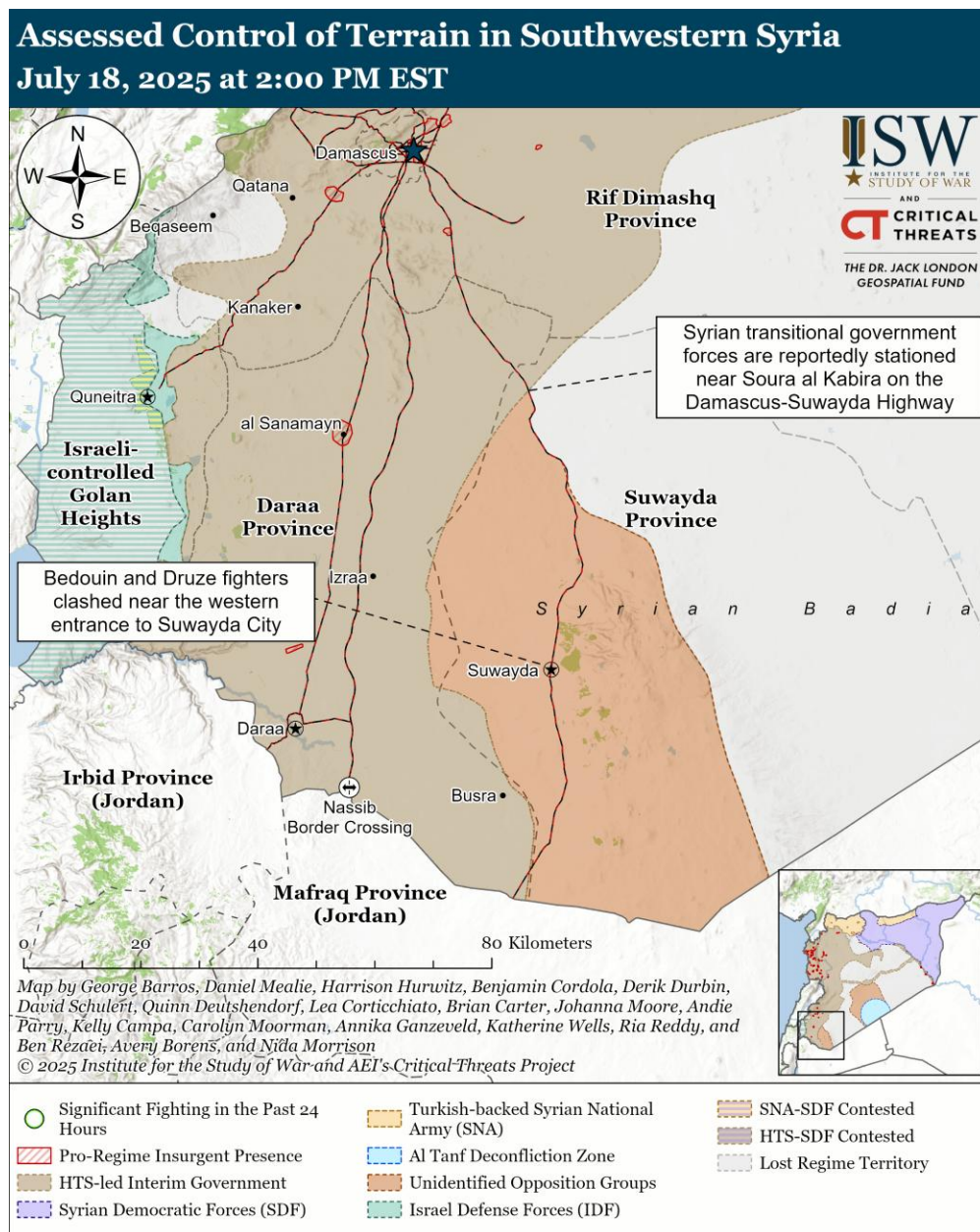
Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

Israel reversed its previous demand that Syrian transitional government forces refrain from intervening in Suwayda Province, southern Syria. An unspecified Israeli official reported on July 18 that Israel will “allow” a limited number of Syrian transitional government forces to enter Suwayda for the next 48 hours to restore stability.[1] Syrian transitional government forces withdrew from Suwayda Province on July 17 after Israeli airstrikes conducted “to protect” the Druze inflicted heavy losses on transitional government forces.[2] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on July 16 that Israel would continue to enforce its demand for a demilitarized Syria south of Damascus.[3] Bedouin clans across Syria exploited the security vacuum created in the withdrawal of government forces and deployed to Suwayda to fight Druze militias that are conducting retaliatory killings against Bedouins.[4] These killings by Druze militias are retaliation for the atrocities committed against the Druze in Suwayda by predominantly Sunni militias over the last week. Fighting between factions and attacks on civilians has intensified across Suwayda Province since the government forces withdrew on July 17.

Syrian transitional government forces are reportedly stationed on the outskirts of Suwayda Province.[5] It is unclear if Syrian government forces have entered Suwayda at this time. Syrian media reported on July 17 that Syrian government forces are present near Soura al Kabira on the Damascus-Suwayda Highway and have reportedly allowed non-government fighters to pass through government checkpoints to enter Suwayda.[6] Syrian media reported on July 18 that Syrian General Security Service (GSS) convoys reached the northern countryside of Suwayda but have not advanced beyond the city of Liwa, northeast of Suwayda Province.[7] An unspecified security source told Reuters on July 18 that Syrian government forces “were awaiting a final green light to enter Suwayda.”[8] Suwaydawi media reported on July 18 that some Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Interior (MoI) fighters have removed their uniforms and begun supporting Bedouin fighters.[9] CTP-ISW is unable to verify these claims. The existence of these claims in the information space, combined with atrocities committed by government forces against the Druze over the last week, will have extremely deleterious effects on the government’s ability to present itself as a neutral security guarantor and restore order in Suwayda Province.

It is very unlikely that the Syrian transitional government will be able to re-secure and establish lasting stability in Suwayda Province within the Israeli-dictated 48-hour window. Government forces initially deployed to Suwayda on July 14 to quell intercommunal violence between Druze and Bedouin communities.[10] Unsanctioned violence and abuses committed by government forces between July 14 and July 16 deepened existing distrust between the government and

the Druze.[11] Violence in Suwayda Province has intensified as Sunni Bedouin fighters have flooded Suwayda in the wake of the government forces' withdrawal. These tribal fighters have seized large swaths of Suwayda's territory. Government forces returning to Suwayda to quell the violence will need to successfully position themselves so that they can adequately protect both Druze and Sunni Bedouin populations in Suwayda before setting up lasting security mechanisms to suppress violence over the long term. This would likely require a ceasefire among the many armed groups involved in the violence, along with a well-disciplined stay-behind force that could protect both the Druze and Sunni Bedouins equally without resorting to the abuses that government forces have been involved in over the last week. A plan that relies on undisciplined government forces or local, communal-based militias is likely to drive additional violence because these forces would continue to conduct retaliatory killings, contribute to a cycle of violence, and fail to protect the local populations.



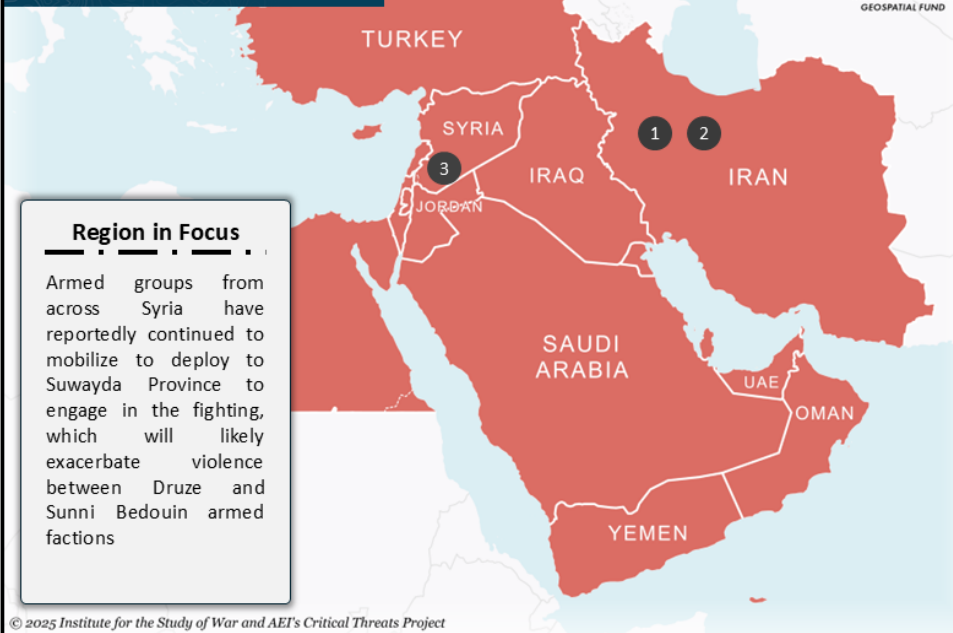
The E3 (the United Kingdom, Germany, and France) urged Iran to deliver “concrete results” or the E3 would trigger the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism, but more time is unlikely to result in changes to Iranian policy.^[12] The E3 foreign ministers held a teleconference with Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi on July 17 to urge Iran to resume nuclear negotiations and cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to avoid snapback sanctions.^[13] An unspecified French diplomatic source stated the E3 seeks a “verifiable and lasting” deal and reiterated their readiness to reimpose UN sanctions if Iran fails to produce results by the end of August.^[14] The E3 would have to initiate the process to impose snapback sanctions by September 3 to complete the 45–65-day process before the measure expires in October 2025.^[15] A *Wall Street Journal* reporter noted that the E3 foreign ministers and European Union Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas also suggested extending the snapback deadline during the call.^[16] He added that such an extension would reportedly require agreement from Iran and its UN Security Council allies, Russia and China, to amend the timeline.^[17] There is no provision in the JCPOA to extend the snapback clause, however.^[18] It is unclear how the UN Security Council could amend the snapback timeline, given that the JCPOA is a political agreement among its participants and not a legally binding UN treaty.^[19]

Iran has set a de facto precondition to negotiations that would require the United States to guarantee Iran’s right to enrich before the resumption of any negotiations. Iran has repeatedly reiterated its unwillingness to concede on its right to enrich, though there is an ongoing debate in Iran over resuming negotiations, and this policy could change. Iranian officials have maintained their position on retaining uranium enrichment capabilities despite pressure from the United States and European countries. The delay of snapback sanctions is unlikely to change Iran’s position on nuclear enrichment because a delay does not incentivize Iran to change its position. The Iranian Supreme Leader’s International Affairs Adviser, Ali Akbar Velayati, stated on July 14 that Iran would not oppose negotiations without “preconditions” if the United States guarantees Iran’s right to enrichment.^[20] The recognition of this right is itself a precondition, however. US officials repeatedly rejected the demand and insisted on “zero enrichment.”^[21] Senior Supreme Leader adviser Ali Larijani separately stated on July 17 that “no talks are underway” and argued that Iran should not rush into negotiations, leaving it to Khamenei to decide when to proceed.^[22]

Senior Iranian commanders are discussing air defense modernization as they assess force readiness after the Israel-Iran War. Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Abdol Rahim Mousavi inspected Iran’s air defense headquarters on July 18 to assess postwar readiness.^[23] Mousavi highlighted the need for updated air defense systems, creative tactics, and operational agility to counter “future threats.”^[24] Khatam ol Anbia Air Defense Headquarters Commander Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi Fard also presented a report during Mousavi’s visit on recent efforts to strengthen Iran’s air defense capabilities.^[25] The emphasis on modernization follows Iran’s ineffective defense against Israeli strikes between June 12 and June 24, using domestically produced systems.^[26] Iranian officials may seek to acquire advanced systems from partners like China after domestically produced systems failed.^[27]

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July 11, 2025



Region in Focus

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- 1 **NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS.** The E3 urged Iran to deliver “concrete results” or the E3 would trigger the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism, but more time is unlikely to result in changes to Iranian policy. Iran has set a de-facto precondition to negotiations that would require the United States to guarantee Iran’s right to enrich prior to the resumption of any negotiations.
- 2 **IRAN.** Senior Iranian commanders are discussing air defense modernization as they assess force readiness after the Israel-Iran War. The emphasis on modernization follows Iran’s ineffective defense against Israeli strikes between June 12 and June 24 using domestically produced systems.
- 3 **SUWAYDA.** Israel reversed its previous demand that Syrian transitional government forces refrain from intervening in Suwayda Province, southern Syria. Syrian transitional government forces are reportedly stationed on the outskirts of Suwayda Province. It is very unlikely that the Syrian transitional government will be able to re-secure and establish lasting stability in Suwayda Province within the Israeli-dictated 48-hour window.

Key Takeaways:

- The E3 urged Iran to deliver “concrete results” or the E3 would trigger the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism, but more time is unlikely to result in changes to Iranian policy. Iran has set a de facto precondition to negotiations that would require the United States to guarantee Iran’s right to enrich before the resumption of any negotiations.
- Senior Iranian commanders are discussing air defense modernization as they assess force readiness after the Israel-Iran War. The emphasis on modernization follows Iran’s ineffective defense against Israeli strikes between June 12 and June 24, using a domestically produced system.

- Israel reversed its previous demand that Syrian transitional government forces refrain from intervening in Suwayda Province, southern Syria. Syrian transitional government forces are reportedly stationed on the outskirts of Suwayda Province. It is very unlikely that the Syrian transitional government will be able to re-secure and establish lasting stability in Suwayda Province within the Israeli-dictated 48-hour window.

Iran

See topline section.

Iraq

The spokesperson for Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani’s Reconstruction and Development parliament bloc confirmed on July 18 that Parliament will “proceed” with the Popular Mobilization Authority Law despite objections from unspecified political blocs.[28] The Popular Mobilization Authority Law would integrate Iranian-backed Iraqi militias that operate outside of the Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) into the PMF before the PMF integrates into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).[29] Sudani withdrew a previous version of the law from the parliament agenda in March 2025 to prevent political deadlock and to prevent the removal of Popular Mobilization Committee Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh.[30] A previous version of the law would have required around 3,500 PMF leaders, including Fayyadh, to retire. Shia Coordination Framework-aligned Deputy Parliament Speaker Mohsen al Mandalawi directed the Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee to complete all amendments to the law and submit the final version of the law to Parliament Speaker Mahmoud al Mashhadani for a vote during a parliament session on July 16.[31] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. The amended version of the law allows PMF leaders who entered their posts before the law’s passage to maintain their positions.[32] Sudani reportedly withdrew the amended law from the parliamentary agenda on July 17 following US concerns over the legislation.[33]

Syria

Bedouin and Druze fighters have continued to fight across Suwayda Province.[34] Bedouin fighters have reportedly advanced into several towns in western Suwayda Province on July 17 and 18, according to Syrian media.[35] There were also engagements between Bedouin and Druze fighters near the western entrance to Suwayda City.[36] The Suwayda Military Council (SMC), a Druze force opposed to the Syrian transitional government, claimed on July 18 that its forces control most of Suwayda Province.[37] The SMC is affiliated with the prominent Druze Sheikh Hikmat al Hijri, who has led much of the fighting against the transitional government.[38] The SMC announced that it is conducting operations to clear “extremist terrorist elements” that came to Suwayda from other Syrian provinces.[39] The SMC said that its forces will not “accept any form of surrender” or any concession of Druze rights.[40] The SMC blamed the killings in Suwayda on “extremist terrorist groups” that have entered Suwayda in support of the Syrian transitional government.[41] Footage and images circulated by Syrian media accounts reportedly showed Druze militias affiliated with Hijri also publicly displaying the dead bodies of Bedouin tribesmen throughout Suwayda Province on July 18, which will deepen the animosity between Bedouin and Druze groups and make long-term security in the area more difficult.[42] Neither the Bedouin nor the Druze organizations can be relied upon to properly or

adequately provide security in Suwayda because both groups are contributing to continued cycles of violence. Both Bedouin clans and Druze fighters have committed abuses during the ongoing insurgency in Suwayda Province.[43]

Armed groups from across Syria have reportedly continued to mobilize to deploy to Suwayda Province to engage in the fighting, which will likely exacerbate violence between Druze and Sunni Bedouin armed factions.[44] Syrian media reported on July 18 that at least 30 Bedouin fighters in Deir ez Zor Province began mobilizing to deploy to Suwayda Province.[45] Syrian media also reported on July 18 that unspecified armed convoys from the Syrian desert began deploying to Barek, northeast of Suwayda Province.[46] Bedouin clans across Syria have mobilized and deployed to Suwayda since July 17 to fight Druze militias that are conducting retaliatory killings against Bedouins after the transitional government withdrew from the province.[47] It is unclear at the time of writing how many groups, if any, have successfully deployed to Suwayda. The arrival of armed groups will likely increase intercommunal violence in Suwayda if there continues to be no neutral forces to prevent intercommunal violence.

The Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – the First of the Brave said on July 17 that it will confront sectarian strife with “weapons and reason.”[48] The group is opposed to Israel and uses iconography widely associated with and inspired by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). It is relatively weak and limited to no military capability to seriously threaten IDF formations.[49] The Islamic Resistance Front of Syria – the First of the Brave previously claimed responsibility for a small-scale rocket attack from southwestern Syria into the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights on June 3.[50] The Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – the First of the Brave declared a general mobilization of all free fighters to move towards sites in which Israeli forces are present.[51] Israeli forces have been positioned in several Syrian towns in Daraa and Quneitra provinces since December 2024.[52]

Arabian Peninsula

Nothing significant to report.

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.



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