

# Weekly Security Brief



**Iraq, Syria & Libya**

**11–17 August 2025**

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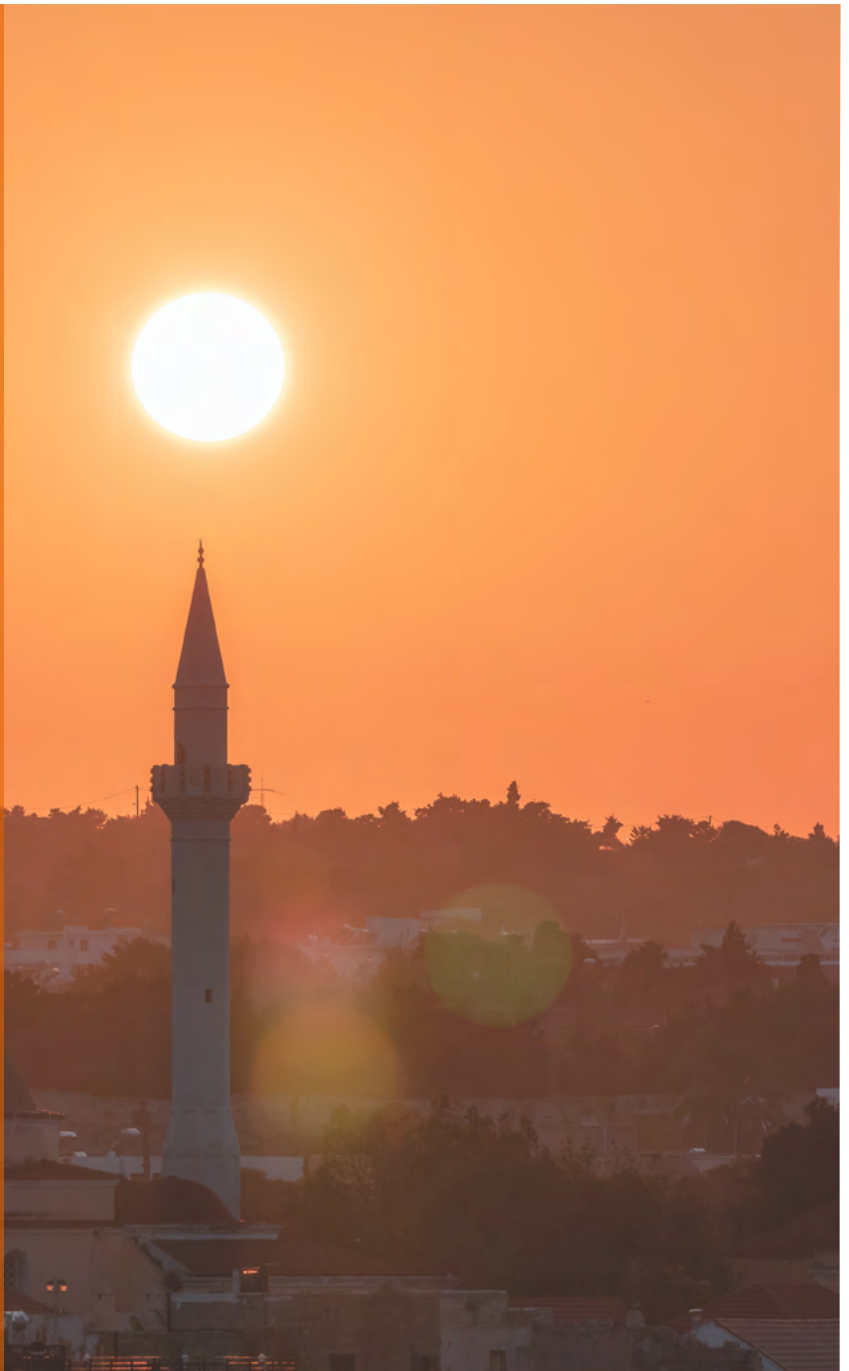
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## **Introduction**

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# Iraq Update

## Security Overview: 11–17 August 2025

**Iraq's security conditions remained fragile this week** amid infrastructure strain and ongoing militant threats. A nationwide power outage on 11 August underscored operational vulnerabilities, while Iran-aligned militias and ISIS remnants continued to pose localized risks. Political tensions simmered as authorities moved against certain candidates and activists, reflecting an uneasy calm under Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani's government.

Posture: **Volatile**

### Key Drivers **This Week:**

- **Critical Infrastructure Stress:** A heatwave-driven power grid collapse on 11 August caused a nationwide blackout, sparking public frustration and highlighting the strain on Iraq's utilities. Although power was gradually restored within hours, the incident has raised protest risks amid record 50°C temperatures and an influx of Shiite pilgrims in Karbala.
- **Militia Pressure in the North:** Drone strikes targeting oil facilities in the Kurdistan Region continued to strain Baghdad–Erbil relations. July saw a surge of at least 15 drone attacks on northern oil infrastructure, forcing production halts up to 150,000 barrels/day and undermining a key oil-revenue deal between Erbil and Baghdad. No group claimed responsibility, but evidence and accusations point to Iran-backed militias pressuring Kurdish authorities.
- **Insurgent & Legacy Threats:** ISIS legacy IEDs and sleeper cells remain a deadly hazard. On 5 August, an old improvised explosive device left from the ISIS war detonated in Anbar, killing a civilian. Meanwhile, Iraqi forces and Coalition partners maintain operations against ISIS hideouts, reporting successful airstrikes against militant leaders in the north (over 20 killed year-to-date). Sporadic Turkish airstrikes against PKK positions in northern Iraq also persist as a background risk.

### Tactical Incident **Overview**

- **Aug 11 – Nationwide:** A total power outage occurred after two critical transmission lines tripped amid extreme heat and peak demand, cutting over 6,000 MW from the grid. The blackout affected most provinces (autonomous Kurdistan notably spared) and disrupted public services, though no major unrest was reported; gradual restoration began by nightfall.
- **Aug 5 – Taji (Baghdad):** The Ansar al-Marjaiya Brigade (a Popular Mobilization Forces unit loyal to the Najaf religious authority) reported a drone strike on its camp, causing a fire. Baghdad Operations Command denied any attack occurred, calling the claim “false and baseless”. The brigade publicly urged PM al-Sudani to investigate and hinted that “criminals...for foreign interests” (implying rival militias) benefited from the incident. The dispute underscores frictions within PMF ranks and concerns over covert attacks in the capital.
- **Aug 5 – Haqlaniyah (Anbar):** A legacy ISIS IED exploded in the Haqlaniyah area, killing one civilian and injuring others. Local officials noted the device dated back to the ISIS insurgency, illustrating the enduring explosive threat in liberated areas. Security forces increased clearance operations in the western Anbar desert following the blast.

## Political & Militia **Landscape**

Iraq's political dynamics this week were marked by pre-election jockeying and intra-militia tensions. The Independent High Electoral Commission disqualified dozens of candidates (including two former provincial governors) from upcoming elections due to alleged criminal records, prompting accusations of politicization. In the Kurdistan Region, Sulaymaniyah police arrested New Generation party leader Shaswar Abdulwahid on an outstanding warrant, inflaming opposition supporters and exposing rifts between Kurdish parties and the ruling KDP/PUK. Prime Minister al-Sudani continues to balance between reining in Iran-aligned militias and maintaining their support for his government's stability. **The recent Kurdistan oilfield drone attacks have heightened Baghdad–Erbil distrust:** officials formed a joint committee to investigate, but no perpetrators have been named and strikes persist. Key Iran-backed groups (e.g. Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq) publicly deny involvement in the KRG attacks even as Western firms and U.S. advisors in the north are on alert. **Overall, militias under the Popular Mobilization Forces remain a double-edged sword – supporting anti-ISIS operations while at times pursuing their own agendas** (as seen in the Taji drone incident dispute). The federal government is also contending with public grievances: the massive power outage and an ongoing water crisis in Basra (with millions affected by salinity and shortages) are fueling impatience with governance. No major protests occurred during this week, but activists warn that service failures and corruption could re-ignite street demonstrations as summer hardships continue.

## 7–10 Day **Forecast**

- **North (Nineveh, Erbil, Kirkuk): High vigilance is warranted in northern provinces.** Iran-aligned militias may renew drone/sabotage attacks on energy infrastructure, particularly targeting Western-operated oil fields in Erbil and Duhok, which could prompt temporary field shutdowns. Turkey's military operations against the PKK will likely continue in border districts; **expect airstrikes in mountainous areas of Dahuk and northern Erbil.** In Ninawa (Nineveh), ISIS cells remain active in rural belts; **anticipate small-scale IED or ambush attempts**, especially around the Mosul outskirts and the Makhmur mountains. Kirkuk and Tuz Khurmatu areas face political demonstrations as Kurdish and Turkmen communities contest administrative control – **protests could flare but are likely to remain peaceful** under heavy security presence. Overall, northern Iraq's posture is tense but manageable, with local security forces and Peshmerga on heightened alert.
- **Central (Baghdad, Anbar, Salah al-Din): The Baghdad capital region is expected to stay under tight security.** No curfews are currently in place, but authorities will maintain a robust presence around government sites and Shiite pilgrimage routes (with the Arba'een observances approaching). **Further occasional rocket or drone harassment by shadow militia groups against the Baghdad International Zone or Camp Taji cannot be ruled out**, though U.S. and Iraqi air defenses have thus far deterred major incidents. In Anbar and Salah al-Din, ISIS pockets in desert and rural locales pose an ongoing threat – **security forces will likely launch clearance operations** (patrols, airstrikes) in the Makhoul mountains and west of Haditha. Highways (e.g. Highway 1 in Anbar) are generally open, but convoy movements face IED and ambush risks after dark. Expect temporary road closures if new IEDs are discovered or during military raids. **Tribal dynamics remain relatively calm;** however, isolated tribal clashes over land or smuggling routes (particularly near the Syrian border) could occur with little warning.
- **South (Basra, Dhi Qar, Maysan): Southern Iraq stays security-stable** but socially strained. Basra, Dhi Qar, and Maysan authorities are bracing for possible water and electricity protests – **local activists have threatened demonstrations** if power outages recur or if potable water supplies don't improve. Any protests will likely be met with a large but mostly restrained security deployment; **a repeat of last year's violent unrest is not expected** unless conditions severely deteriorate. Oil infrastructure in the south remains well-guarded by the Iraqi Army and energy police; major disruptions are unlikely, though labor strikes or road blockades by angry citizens could temporarily affect access to facilities. Cross-border transit at Shalamchah (Iran) and Safwan (Kuwait) is normal, but heightened scrutiny of arms smuggling means occasional seizures and arrests. **Overall, the southern region's near-term outlook is guarded: latent socio-economic grievances persist, yet significant violence is not anticipated in the next 7–10 days barring provocative incidents.**



# Security Advisory

## Recommended Posture:

**Maintain a high vigilance posture across Iraq.** Travel with security escorts in volatile northern areas and western deserts; defer non-essential movements at night. In cities, reinforce office/residence contingency plans for utilities failure (generators, water storage) given infrastructure instability. Continue a Guarded operational stance – normal activities can proceed with caution, but be prepared to elevate to Restricted posture on short notice in response to militia threats or civil unrest.

## Operational Impact:

The 11 Aug blackout demonstrated the **potential for sudden nationwide service outages to disrupt operations**. Companies should expect sporadic power cuts and communications downtime during peak demand; ensure backup systems are in place. Militia attacks on oil assets in KRG have already prompted some production halts and evacuations of non-essential staff those operating in the energy sector in the north should have evacuation and redundancy plans. **Frequent security checkpoints (especially around Baghdad and pilgrimage sites) may cause travel delays; allow extra transit time.** If protests erupt in southern cities or Baghdad, anticipate road closures, internet shutdowns, or curfews in affected areas.

## Caution Areas:

**High-risk zones include northern oil facilities in Kirkuk, Erbil, Duhok, and the Kirkuk–Erbil highway** (vulnerable to militia harassment). Avoid border districts near Syria (Rabia, al-Qaim) due to ISIS infiltration and cross-border strikes. **In Baghdad, the International Zone and airport vicinity remain potential militia target areas** – minimize time spent in these locales and use hardened transport when transiting. Western Anbar (Rutba to Trebil) and certain Jazeera desert pockets in Salah al-Din are no-go areas without military coordination, given residual ISIS presence. In the south, **Basra’s protest hotspots (e.g. Governorate HQ, Umm Qasr port road) merit caution during any gatherings**. Maintain heightened situational awareness in crowded religious events (Karbala, Najaf) as ISIS has historically targeted such venues. Overall, personnel should exercise caution throughout Iraq, with particular emphasis on north/central conflict flashpoints and any location where unattended munitions or militant activity have been reported.



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# Syria Update

## Security Overview: 4–11 August 2025

**Syria’s security environment deteriorated further in this reporting period**, reflecting the volatile aftermath of last year’s regime collapse. A fragile ceasefire in the south was punctuated by renewed sectarian unrest in al-Suwayda, and the transitional government’s authority remains tenuous in several regions. In the north and east, armed skirmishes between interim government forces and the Kurdish-led SDF underscored persistent frictions. Meanwhile, external actors continued to intervene: Israel carried out security raids in southern Syria and Turkish forces maintained pressure on Islamist factions in Idlib. The overall security conditions are unstable and prone to sudden escalations as Syria navigates its post-Assad transition.

Posture: **Deteriorating**

## Key Drivers This Week:

- **Sectarian Clashes in the South:** Tensions in Suwayda province remained a critical driver following last month’s Druze–Bedouin conflict that killed hundreds. This week saw the largest Druze protests since those deadly July clashes, with demonstrators in Suwayda city openly rejecting the Damascus interim authorities and demanding self-rule. The fragile truce brokered in late July is under strain – minor ceasefire violations and mutual distrust between Druze militias and government security forces persist, threatening to reignite violence.
- **Power Struggles with Kurdish Forces:** In northern Syria, the uneasy arrangement between the transitional government (led by President Ahmad al-Sharaa) and the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) saw fresh turbulence. Over the weekend, armed confrontations erupted in Aleppo province as government-affiliated fighters and SDF units exchanged rocket and artillery fire near Manbij, wounding several fighters. Each side blamed the other for “unprovoked” shelling, underscoring the tenuous nature of Kurdish–Damascus cooperation. These incidents threaten efforts to integrate SDF-held territories and could escalate if not contained, especially as hardliners on both sides test the limits of the recent reconciliation framework.
- **Fragmented Control & Foreign Interventions:** The fragmentation of control across Syria continues to drive insecurity. In northwestern Idlib, the Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) faction – which played a major role in toppling Assad – governs amid reports of infighting and unexplained explosions (e.g., this week’s deadly blast at an Idlib arms

depot). Concurrently, external military actions are shaping the risk landscape: Israeli forces conducted a ground raid in Quneitra on the 8th aimed at interdicting weapons smuggling, reflecting Israel’s heightened post-war security posture along the Golan. Turkey also continues to pressure HTS and Kurdish YPG elements, with drone strikes and shelling along its border. These foreign interventions, alongside residual ISIS insurgent activity (especially in the central desert), **keep Syria on edge and complicate the interim government’s attempts to stabilize the country.**



# Tactical Incident Overview

- **Aug 14 – Idlib Province:** A large explosion rocked an outskirts of Idlib city at what regime media described as a depot for “war remnants” (unexploded ordnance). The blast killed at least 4 people and injured 5. However, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the site was in fact a weapons depot used by foreign fighters, and put the toll higher at 6 dead (including 2 children). The cause remains unclear – no airstrike was confirmed, raising speculation of an accidental detonation or internal sabotage. Local rescue teams and the Idlib emergency ministry highlighted the incident as evidence of pervasive unexploded munitions hazards and militia stockpiling in HTS-held northwest Syria.
- **Aug 16 – Suwayda:** Hundreds of Druze protesters gathered in Sweida city and nearby towns (Shahba, Salkhad) in the largest demonstrations since last month’s clashes. Waving Druze flags – and even some Israeli flags in gratitude for Israel’s intervention in July – the crowd demanded self-determination and justice for atrocities committed against their community. The protests remained peaceful but underscored deep Druze rejection of the interim central government. Notably, this unprecedented public call for autonomy prompted no immediate crackdown by security forces, who mostly kept a low profile. Tensions in the south remain high; observers fear any provocation could see protests turn into renewed fighting between Druze militias and nearby pro-government Bedouin groups.
- **Aug 12 – Quneitra (Golan border):** The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) carried out a cross-border raid near Hader village, just east of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Israeli troops, supported by drones, seized arms caches and detained several individuals suspected of weapons trafficking to militant groups. This operation – one of several IDF incursions since Assad’s ouster – reflects Israel’s aggressive stance on preventing hostile militia build-up near its frontier. The Syrian transitional government protested the incursion, but it has limited capacity to respond militarily. Local impact was minimal (no casualties reported), though such raids deepen the populace’s sense of insecurity in southern Quneitra.
- **(Early Aug) Aleppo Province:** Following ceasefire breaches over 2–3 August, intermittent clashes persisted between interim government forces and SDF fighters in eastern Aleppo province (vicinity of Manbij). On 3 August, state media confirmed a Druze militia attack on a security checkpoint in western Suwayda, killing one soldier and one Druze fighter – an event that effectively broke the Suwayda ceasefire. Simultaneously in the north, the Syrian Defense Ministry reported that SDF rockets struck near Manbij city on 2 August, wounding 3 civilians and 4 soldiers. The SDF countered that it was returning fire after government-allied “undisciplined factions” shelled SDF-held Deir Hafer. Though outside the core 11–17 Aug window, these incidents set the stage for this week’s dynamics: by mid-August the Aleppo front was quiet but tense, while Suwayda remained under a shaky truce punctuated by protests rather than firefights.

# Political & Militia Landscape

**Nearly eight months into post-Assad Syria, the political and militia landscape is highly fragmented.** Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa – a former regime insider who led the Islamist-leaning insurgent coalition that ousted Bashar al-Assad last December – nominally heads a transitional government in Damascus. Al-Sharaa’s administration, however, faces significant legitimacy challenges. Many minority groups and secular factions distrust the new government’s Islamist tilt and its reliance on hardline militant allies. In practice, Syria is de facto partitioned among various power centers:

**In the northwest,** HTS and allied rebel militias maintain control. HTS (a Sunni jihadist group) spearheaded the offensive that toppled Assad in Idlib and remains entrenched there. Its leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani has reportedly cooperated with Turkey to administer Idlib, but intra-rebel rivalries simmer beneath the surface. The Idlib arms depot blast and last month’s explosions at a Turkistan Islamic Party cache hint at either accidents or covert factional struggles within the rebel camp.

**In the north and northeast,** the Kurdish-led SDF still holds large swathes (Hasakah, Raqqa, parts of Aleppo and Deir ez-Zor) and operates with relative autonomy. The transitional government and SDF struck a tentative understanding to reintegrate Kurdish-held areas, but implementation is slow and fraught – exemplified by this week’s clashes around Manbij. The SDF enjoys continued support from U.S. forces against ISIS, and it has demanded constitutional guarantees for Kurdish rights in any new Syria.

**The south is particularly unstable.** Druze militias like Rijal al-Karama and local armed factions in Suwayda are now unified against what they perceive as both Sunni extremist threats and a neglectful central government. The Sunni Bedouin tribes in the region, some of whom aligned with the regime and now with interim authorities, are effectively in a blood feud with Druze groups after the July massacres. Government troops sent to enforce peace in Suwayda have been ambushed and are viewed with suspicion by Druze leaders. In Daraa, former rebel commanders (from the 2018 reconciliation deals) hedge their loyalties between the interim government and local interests, ensuring a fragile calm but one that could shatter if Suwayda’s conflict spills over.

**On the national stage,** the Transitional Cabinet struggles to extend effective governance. Basic services and reconstruction are lagging, especially with ongoing conflict zones. The UN and international community continue to push for an inclusive political process; a UN Security Council meeting this month is reviewing Syria’s progress (or lack thereof) on political reconciliation and humanitarian access. Notably absent is any strong Russian or Iranian involvement in stabilizing Syria – Russia’s influence waned after it failed to save Assad from the HTS-led uprising, and Iran is preoccupied domestically and with the fallout of the Israel-Iran war. Iran’s reduced support to proxies has weakened groups like Lebanese Hezbollah and pro-Iran militias in Syria, leaving a power vacuum in some regime-loyalist areas. This vacuum has sometimes been filled by local warlords or even ISIS resurgence in the central desert.

**In summary,** Syria’s political landscape is one of competing authorities and militias: the interim Islamist government in Damascus; autonomous Kurdish administration in the northeast; HTS and Islamist factions in Idlib; and restive Druze and Arab communities in the south. The risk of factional collapse or a slide back into multi-front conflict is high. The coming weeks will test whether President al-Sharaa can hold the center – by accommodating Kurdish demands and placating southern grievances – or whether Syria will further fragment along ethnic and sectarian lines.



# 7-10 Day Forecast by Region

- **North (Idlib, Aleppo, Hasakah): Expect the status quo of volatility to persist.** In Idlib, HTS will likely tighten security after the recent depot blast; further mysterious explosions or Israeli drone strikes on jihadist targets are possible, given patterns (a late-July strike hit a Uyghur militant depot). Civilians in Idlib should beware of restricted areas and unexploded ordnance. In Turkish-patrolled zones of Aleppo (Afrin to Jarabulus), occasional IED attacks or infighting among Turkish-backed rebel factions may occur, but no major offensives are anticipated. Around Manbij and Kobani, tensions between SDF and interim government forces remain high – a localized firefight or exchange of mortar fire could recur if either side oversteps patrol demarcation lines. Hasakah and Qamishli in the northeast are relatively stable under SDF control, but the threat of ISIS guerrilla attacks persists in rural stretches and al-Hol camp. Coalition forces might conduct raids against ISIS cells in Hasakah/Deir ez-Zor (as they did in late July in Aleppo province, per ISW reports). Overall, northern Syria will see a precarious calm; any new flashpoint would likely be Manbij (if integration talks break down) or Idlib (if HTS faces internal or external attacks).
- **Central (Raqqa, Hama, Deir ez-Zor):** The central corridor, largely under Damascus interim authority, **faces two main risks:** ISIS insurgency and communal tensions. ISIS is expected to continue its low-level insurgency in the desert expanses of eastern Homs, Raqqa, and western Deir ez-Zor – anticipate sporadic IEDs on highways (Palmyra-Deir ez-Zor road), hit-and-run attacks on isolated checkpoints, and possibly an attempted ambush of security convoys. The Syrian military (now reorganized under transitional leadership) will likely launch sweep operations in the Badiya (central steppe) to preempt any ISIS concentration. Meanwhile, tribal frictions in Deir ez-Zor could flare: Arab tribes resentful of Kurdish-led administration might stage protests or skirmishes, especially if fueled by rumors of oil revenue disparities. No major battles are forecast in Hama or Homs – these central provinces are firmly held by pro-government forces, though latent pro-Assad underground networks could attempt small-scale sabotage or demonstrations (particularly around Hama city) in protest of the new regime. Any such incidents would probably be quickly suppressed. A key wild card is humanitarian conditions – with severe fuel and bread shortages reported in interior regions, there is potential for unrest in towns like Salamiyah or Suqaylabiyah if aid does not improve.
- **South (Damascus, Daraa, Suwayda): The south remains Syria's most concerning hotspot for the next 7-10 days. In Suwayda, the situation is highly volatile:** despite the current pause in fighting, the large Druze demonstrations could embolden militia hardliners. **We assess a moderate likelihood of armed clashes resuming in Suwayda's western periphery** – Druze fighters might retaliate if Bedouin gunmen (or government forces perceived as aligned with them) do not fully withdraw as promised. The strategic Tal al-Hadeed area, which saw fighting on Aug 3, is a potential flashpoint for renewed confrontations. The interim government will likely send additional police or negotiate through Russian mediators to prevent a relapse into violence. In Daraa, conditions are calmer but tense; any spillover from Suwayda (e.g. Bedouin refugees or fleeing militants) could destabilize west Daraa. Local former rebels there might mobilize in sympathy with Druze if the conflict reignites. Damascus city itself remains under heavy security – no protests have been observed in the capital, but the regime is wary after an Israeli airstrike hit the Defense Ministry in July. Expect frequent checkpoints and patrols in Damascus, especially in Druze neighborhoods and near high-value sites. Israeli forces may continue limited operations in Quneitra: another IDF raid or drone strike at suspected Hezbollah/Iran-linked targets in the Golan area is possible given ongoing Israel-Syria security talks. Finally, the Jordanian border (Jaber/Nassib crossing) is seeing tighter controls amid concerns of weapons smuggling and militant movement; this could slightly disrupt cross-border commerce but also helps contain the security situation in Syria's far south.

# Security Advisory

## Recommended Posture

All operations in Syria should proceed under a **High Security/Restricted posture**. The environment is highly unstable, so non-essential travel, especially outside secure urban zones of Damascus and coastal Tartous/Latakia, should be curtailed. Organizations are advised to minimize staff presence in conflict-prone areas (Idlib, southern Syria) and rely on remote monitoring where possible. **If travel is unavoidable, use hardened vehicles, vary routes, and coordinate with reliable local security units.** Given the risk of sudden clashes, maintain evacuation contingencies for all team members – have pre-identified rally points and multiple evacuation routes (including cross-border options to Jordan, Iraq, or Turkey). **In summary, an extreme caution approach is warranted: assume deteriorating conditions and plan accordingly.**

## Operational Impact

The volatile security climate will continue to impede normal operations. Key impacts include: transport disruptions – checkpoints and road closures (e.g. the Damascus-Suwayda highway may shut if violence resumes) can delay movements or cut off areas entirely. International air travel to Damascus could face short-notice suspensions if security in the capital degrades or if airstrikes occur; monitor NOTAMs and have regional alternatives. The humanitarian situation (fuel, electricity shortages) may also hamper logistics – e.g. fuel rationing is common, and sporadic power cuts could affect communications. Humanitarian access is heavily dependent on truces; any breakdown in Suwayda or the northeast might force UN/NGO aid convoys to cancel or re-route. Organizations should anticipate periodic internet and telecom outages, either from infrastructure damage or government-imposed blackouts (Damascus has been known to cut internet in restive areas).

Staff safety is the priority: recent events show **even supposedly safe zones can become battlefields overnight (e.g. Sweida city center saw deadly clashes)**. All teams must maintain daily security check-ins and be prepared to hibernate in place for 72+ hours if fighting erupts unexpectedly.

## Caution Areas

- **Avoid all of southern Syria** (Suwayda, Daraa, Quneitra) until stability improves – the area is a patchwork of armed checkpoints and is at risk of renewed fighting. Idlib province and northwest Aleppo (HTS-held) are extremely high-risk due to jihadist control, airstrikes, and lack of reliable local partners; travel there is strongly discouraged.
- **Eastern Syria (Deir ez-Zor, rural Raqqa)** also remains dangerous, with ISIS ambushes and Iranian-backed militias operating – only essential humanitarian missions with military escort should venture there. Within government-held territories,
- **Damascus requires caution:** limit time near potential targets (government buildings, security installations) given Israel's demonstrated willingness to strike even in the capital.
- **Airports:** exercise caution at Aleppo and Damascus international airports, which could be targeted in tit-for-tat strikes (Damascus airport was hit in past Israeli raids).
- For personnel still in the field, **stay clear of militia convoys, demonstrations, and military facilities.** In urban settings, maintain a low profile and have a curfew for staff movements (dusk-to-dawn) due to elevated risk of kidnapping or mistaken-identity incidents at night. Always have the latest UN security bulletins and adhere to any movement restrictions they advise. In summary, treat all parts of Syria as a potential conflict zone, with special avoidance of the most volatile enclaves and border areas.



Iraq

Syria

Libya





# Libya Update

## Security Overview: 4–11 August 2025

**Libya’s security conditions during 11–17 August were relatively static**, with an uneasy calm holding in the aftermath of recent turmoil. In the capital Tripoli, no major clashes erupted this week as rival militias observed an informal truce following the heavy fighting in May. However, the situation remains tense – armed groups still control key neighborhoods and minor skirmishes or standoffs continue to be one trigger away. Elsewhere in the country, operational risk is moderate: there were no significant new combat operations between east and west, but criminal violence and localized conflicts (especially in the west) persist at a low level. Political uncertainty and militia fragmentation continue to shape the risk environment, leaving Libya’s overall stability fragile and subject to sudden shifts.

**Posture:** Volatile

## Key Drivers This Week:

- **Post-Clash Power Balance in Tripoli:** The fallout from the May militia clashes in Tripoli (which were the worst in years) remains a key driver of the security posture. The death of warlord Abdulghani “Ghaniwa” al-Kikli and disbandment of some of his SSA forces have altered Tripoli’s militia equilibrium. This week saw continued nervous quiet as surviving armed groups like the Stabilization Support Apparatus (SSA) and 444 Brigade avoided open conflict, but tensions are high. Any perceived provocation – e.g. an arrest of a militia leader or an attempt by the government to reshuffle security positions – could reignite fighting. The GNU’s Defense Ministry is deploying units to maintain order in former clash zones (Abu Salim, Salahaddin), yet the underlying rivalry among Tripoli’s militias remains a destabilizing factor.
- **Public Dissent and Protest Momentum:** Public discontent is an equally important driver. In the wake of the May violence, there have been ongoing weekly protests in western Libya demanding the ouster of all current political bodies and swift elections. During this week, smaller-scale demonstrations continued in Tripoli’s Martyrs’ Square and cities like Misrata, fueled by frustration at the stalemate in governance. Protesters are specifically angered by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah’s refusal to step aside and the militia-fueled insecurity; their chants of “No East, No West, Libya is one” and calls to end militia domination reflect a broad rejection of the status quo. So far protests have remained mostly peaceful (security forces have refrained from heavy-handed crackdowns), but the persistence of public unrest keeps pressure on all factions. Any incident of protester fatalities or harsh repression could escalate unrest dramatically.

- **Continued Localized Conflicts and Crime:** Across Libya, ongoing localized violence serves as a driver of operational risk. In the western coastal city of Zawiya, rival militias involved in fuel smuggling and organized crime have sporadically clashed (outside this week’s window, but an enduring trend). In the south (Fezzan), tribal conflicts between Tebu and Arab communities (e.g. around Murzuq) and the presence of foreign mercenaries pose intermittent security issues. This week was largely quiet on these fronts, but reports of smuggling convoys and the occasional gunfight underscore that lawlessness in peripheral regions remains unresolved. Additionally, the potential resurgence of ISIS or Al-Qaeda cells in Libya’s vast south is a lingering concern – no high-profile attacks occurred this week, but security forces in Sabha and Kufra have maintained a heightened alert after recent counter-terror raids earlier in the summer. In summary, while no single local conflict dominated this week’s headlines, the sum of these smoldering issues contributes to an overall volatile environment that can impact operations with little warning.

## Tactical Incident Overview

- **Aug 16 – Tripoli (Hay al-Andalus):** A municipal election in the Hay al-Andalus district was marred by militia interference. On Saturday morning, voters discovered that two major electoral lists had been struck off polling station registers by armed men. According to witnesses and activist posts on social media, members of the so-called “Public Security” militia – linked to the brother of GNU Interior Minister Imad Trabelsi – entered multiple polling centers and falsified the voter lists, falsely claiming certain opposition lists were disqualified. The militia’s action, apparently to benefit its own affiliated candidates, sparked outrage among voters and candidates. While the incident did not escalate to violence, it prompted urgent appeals to Libya’s High National Elections Commission and UN mission to intervene. This blatant attempt to manipulate a democratic process highlights the ongoing power that militias wield over civil affairs in Tripoli. Authorities later announced an investigation, but no arrests were reported by week’s end.
- **Aug 14 – Tripoli:** Security sources report that a group of armed men briefly surrounded the Intelligence Directorate office in Tripoli’s Furnaj area on the night of 14 August. The standoff occurred after an intelligence officer allegedly detained a relative of a militia commander. No shots were fired; negotiations led the armed group to withdraw, and

the detainee was released. This minor incident illustrates the continued friction between official security institutions and militia elements, even as Tripoli remained generally calm.

- **Aug 12 – Sabha (South):** Local authorities in Sabha city discovered an arms cache and arrested two suspects believed to be tied to cross-border smugglers. The cache included RPGs and assault rifles, likely destined for Sudan or Chad conflict zones. The operation, while low-profile, underscores the prevalence of arms trafficking in Libya’s south and the potential for such weapons to fuel violence regionally. No resistance was encountered during the raid, and the suspects are in custody under the 116th Brigade’s watch.

*(No large-scale battles or high-casualty incidents were recorded in Libya during the week of 11–17 August, reflecting a tentative stability.)*





## Political & Militia Landscape

**Libya's political landscape remains split and dominated by armed factions**, though notable developments emerged in both camps this week. In Tripoli (West), Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah and his GNU face mounting disillusionment after three weeks of street protests demanding his resignation and elections. On 12 August, he announced a “three-track plan” to strengthen the army, dissolve militias, and prepare for polls. Critics see this as stalling; militias still operate freely, as shown by the Hay al-Andalus incident. After May's clashes, the 444 Brigade grew stronger while the SSA (Ghaniwa's faction) was weakened. Other actors like the Rada Force remain powerful, controlling Mitiga airport. Rivalries continue: one study counted 64 armed group clashes in Tripoli since 2021, a figure likely to rise if integration falters.

**In the East**, Haftar and the LNA maintain control with backing from the HoR and a rival prime minister, Osama Hammad, though the latter lacks recognition. On 10 August, Italian media reported Haftar allegedly offered to resettle up to one million Palestinians in Libya in exchange for support and oil control – unconfirmed, but reflective of his efforts to build leverage. The LNA projects stability in the south, conducting anti-terror operations and guarding oilfields, and again demanded reform of oil revenue management in UN talks.

**UN mediation is stalled:** Special Envoy Bathily is pressing for a roadmap to elections, **warning Libya risks “another wave of violence” if the vacuum persists**. International actors (Italy, France, U.S., Egypt) remain divided in their support, worsening the deadlock.

**Militias remain the true power brokers.** Misrata's brigades (Halbous, Mahjoub) stayed out of the May Tripoli clashes but could intervene. On the northwest coast (Zawiya–Sabratha), smuggling-linked militias still dominate despite a June GNU crackdown with drone strikes. In the southwest, Tebu, Tuareg, and Arab groups coexist under fragile truces brokered by the LNA; renewed violence is possible if attention lapses.

Libya's oil sector remains stable: the NOC reports output around 1.37m bpd, with exports secure. Both sides avoid disrupting oil, but blockades remain a latent risk.

**In summary, Libya is locked in a fragile balance: two rival governments without mandate, propped by militias.** Dbeibah holds Tripoli's finances but is weakened by protests and militia distrust; Haftar controls territory and military power but lacks legitimacy. Without a breakthrough, this tense equilibrium endures, with the security outlook tied to how political leaders manage or unleash their allied forces.

## 7–10 Day Forecast by Region

- **North (Tripoli, Misrata, Zawiya):** Northwestern Libya is likely to see fragile stability with latent hazards. Tripoli should stay under GNU control, with no major flare-ups expected unless a trigger such as a militia leader's arrest occurs. Security forces, backed by a recent “major security operation,” will keep an assertive presence around government sites and Friday protests. **Another large protest in Martyrs' Square is likely**, with road closures and possible internet slowdowns. The risk of militia clashes is moderate; tensions between the Rada and 444 Brigade could reignite violence if provoked. **Misrata should remain calm, with its brigades aligned to the GNU**, though solidarity rallies may echo Tripoli's demands. Zawiya is a wildcard: anti-smuggling operations or vendettas could spark clashes, potentially near oil facilities. The Tripoli–Tunisian border road is generally open, but checkpoints may increase around Zawiya and Sorman. **In summary, expect a tense quiet, with forces on alert to pre-empt violence while managing unrest.**
- **Central (Sirte, Jufra, Waddan):** Central Libya – the East-West interface – **is expected to remain in stalemate**. The ceasefire line around Sirte and Jufra holds; neither GNU-aligned forces nor Haftar's LNA appear intent on hostilities. Sirte (under LNA) is quiet, with fortification south of the city. Jufra airbase, a key LNA asset, may still host Wagner personnel. **No direct clashes are anticipated**, though accidents such as friendly fire or depot blasts are possible. The Sirte Oil Basin could see labor protests or brief shutdowns, but oil is likely to keep flowing. If political talks resume, they may convene in Sirte, prompting heightened security and no-go zones. Otherwise, central Libya will remain a militarised buffer: **superficially stable** but marked by mistrust across the Sirte-Jufra line.
- **South (Sabha, Murzuq, Ghat):** The south (Fezzan) will **likely see continued low-level instability**. No large offensives are expected, but risks remain: tribal clashes, smuggling violence, and terrorism. Sabha should stay calm under LNA oversight, though robberies and kidnappings threaten outskirts and highways. In Murzuq, disputes between Tebu and Arab groups could reignite, especially if arms circulate. Near Ghat, arms and drug trafficking may rise as routes shift from Niger, risking clashes with border guards. Along the Chad frontier, **mercenary and RSF movements are likely, though not expected to spark conflict inside Libya**. ISIS and AQIM remain weakened but could mount a small-scale attack on a checkpoint or convoy. Overall, the south will stay a law enforcement challenge rather than a war zone, **with incidents localised but unpredictable – requiring strict vigilance for movements**.

## Security Advisory

### Recommended Posture

**A heightened security posture is advised**, adjusted by region. In Tripoli and western cities, adopt a Guarded stance for routine operations, escalating to Restricted if clashes or unrest occur. Limit night movements in militia-heavy districts (Abu Salim, Tajoura) and **avoid solo travel**. In central and eastern areas under LNA, a **Moderate posture is sufficient in Benghazi or Sirte**, though crime and political uncertainty persist. **In the south, use Restricted – only essential travel with security escort and strong comms**. Across Libya, maintain contingency plans and ensure staff register with UNDSS or embassies. Approach should be “eyes open, movements minimal” until stability improves.

### Operational Impact:

**Expect sudden disruptions. In Tripoli, militia maneuvers can cause roadblocks** (Airport Road, Salahaddin, Ain Zara) – have alternates ready. Mitiga Airport was closed 48 hours during May clashes; similar closures are possible, so keep evacuation options flexible, including overland to Tunisia. **Weekly protests may slow services**, with ministries closing early; prior unrest led to GNU minister resignations, and further resignations could cause delays. Communications risk persists: militias may enforce blackouts or internet cuts to curb protest organization. **Field operations, especially in the south, face fuel and logistics constraints – maintain reserves and use armored high-clearance vehicles. UXO hazards remain near old frontlines (Sirte, Tripoli's outskirts); personnel should undergo UXO training. Medical evacuation still requires planning via Tunisia or Egypt.**

### Caution Areas:

**Tripoli militia hotspots require maximum caution.** Avoid non-essential visits to Abu Salim, Souq al-Jumaa, and Ain Zara – all remain armed enclaves. Avoid militia convoys; if technicals gather, withdraw immediately. Zawiya and the western coastal road to Tunisia remain high risk for clashes and crime; **use armored transport and delay if tensions rise**. In Benghazi, avoid Ganfouda and Sabri unless accompanied by trusted locals; sporadic explosives still surface. Derna is under LNA control but reconstruction zones remain off-limits. **In the south, Murzuq, Qatrun, and border areas are no-go without LNA liaison due to banditry and tribal violence**. Confirm security at Sharara and El Feel oilfields before travel – both have a history of protests. Off the western coast, maintain distance: waters near Zawiya and Tripoli remain risky, with prior drone strikes on smuggler vessels. Domestic flights should be daylight only, as delays from air defense alerts occur. **In summary, avoid flash-point areas, disengage from armed groups, and monitor UNSMIL and local partners daily. Rigorous planning and strict security discipline are key to mitigating risks.**

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