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2 >



Role of the Druze in advancing Israeli agenda in Syria

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OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Rising tensions between the Druze community in Suwayda and the Syrian government led by Ahmad al-Sharaa have opened a window for Israel to step in with military backing for this religious minority to advance its political strategy in Syria.

The Druze, an Islamic-rooted religious minority, comprise around 3% of Syria's population, with most residing in the southern province of Sweida. This region's location near the Jordanian border and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights has elevated its geopolitical value in recent years.

With ethnic and religious ties to Israel's own Druze population, their presence provides Israel with a strategic foothold. Supporting Muslim minorities in neighboring countries has become one of Tel Aviv's tools for projecting influence in the region, enabling them to act as proxies or representatives of Israeli interests abroad.

What makes the Druze especially valuable in this regard is their relatively successful integration into Israeli society. Unlike many other Arab groups who remained in their homeland after the 1948 establishment of Israel, segments of the Druze community have carved out a more accepted role within Israeli society—at least in the eyes of the Zionist regime.

This perceived assimilation has made them a focal point of Israel's political and military investments in Syria.

Page 2 >

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2 >



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses senior judiciary officials during a meeting in Tehran on July 16, 2025.

Leader.ir

Israel bombs Syria army HQ following deadly clashes in south

International Desk

The Israeli regime launched Wednesday rare airstrikes in the heart of Damascus, hitting the Syrian Defense Ministry headquarters following deadly clashes in the southern Syrian city of Sweida, which have killed more than 300 people. Israel's attack came hours after a drone strike on the same building. Syrian state media reported at least 13 people wounded. Another strike hit near the presidential palace in the hills outside of Damascus.

As clashes have raged for days in the southern Syrian city of Sweida between government forces and Druze armed groups. Israel has launched dozens of strikes targeting government troops and convoys, which it claims are in support of the religious minority group, and has vowed to escalate its involvement. The escalating violence appears to be the most serious threat yet to the ability of Syria's new rulers to consolidate control of the country after a rebel offensive led by insurgent groups ousted longtime leader, Bashar Assad, in December.

Israeli minister of military affairs, Israel Katz, said after the airstrike in a post on X that the "painful blows have begun." An Israeli military official who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations said the occupation army was preparing for a "multitude of scenarios" and that a brigade, normally comprising thousands of soldiers, was being pulled out of Gaza and sent to the Golan Heights.

Over 300 killed in Sweida

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) claimed that since clashes erupted on Sunday, 69 Druze fighters were killed as well as 40 civilians,

27 of whom in "summary executions... by members of the defense and interior ministries", while 165 government forces and 18 Bedouin fighters were also killed, along with 10 members of the government's security forces in Israeli strikes. Syrian government forces on Tuesday entered the majority-Druze city of Sweida, with the stated aim of overseeing a cease-fire agreed with Druze community leaders after clashes with local Bedouin tribes left dozens dead.

However, witnesses reported that the government forces joined with the Bedouin in attacking Druze fighters and civilians in a bloody rampage through the city.

The fighting marks the most serious outbreak of violence in Syria since government forces battled Druze fighters in Sweida Province and near Damascus in April and May, leaving more than 100 people dead.

Israel has portrayed itself as a defender of the Druze, although some analysts say that is a pretext for pursuing its own military goal of keeping Syrian government forces as far from the border as possible.

Page 2 >



The picture shows a view of the damage following Israeli strikes on the Syrian Defense Ministry headquarters in Damascus on July 16, 2025.

LOUAI BESHARA/AFP



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3 >



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PERSPECTIVE 4-5 >



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8 >