



# Syria Protest Update, September 12–September 18

Andie Parry

September 20, 2023

Information Cutoff: September 18, 5:00 pm ET

**Anti-regime protests are occurring almost exclusively in Suwayda Province and are very unlikely to endanger the stability of the Syrian regime.** Anti-regime protests outside of Suwayda Province declined for the third consecutive week and almost entirely stopped between September 12 to 18. Friday protest turnout in Suwayda on September 15 grew to the largest since the start of the movement two days after pro-regime forces fired on demonstrators.<sup>1</sup> Organizers in rural Suwayda have further improved their coordination, with small towns taking turns to host large evening demonstrations this week.<sup>2</sup>

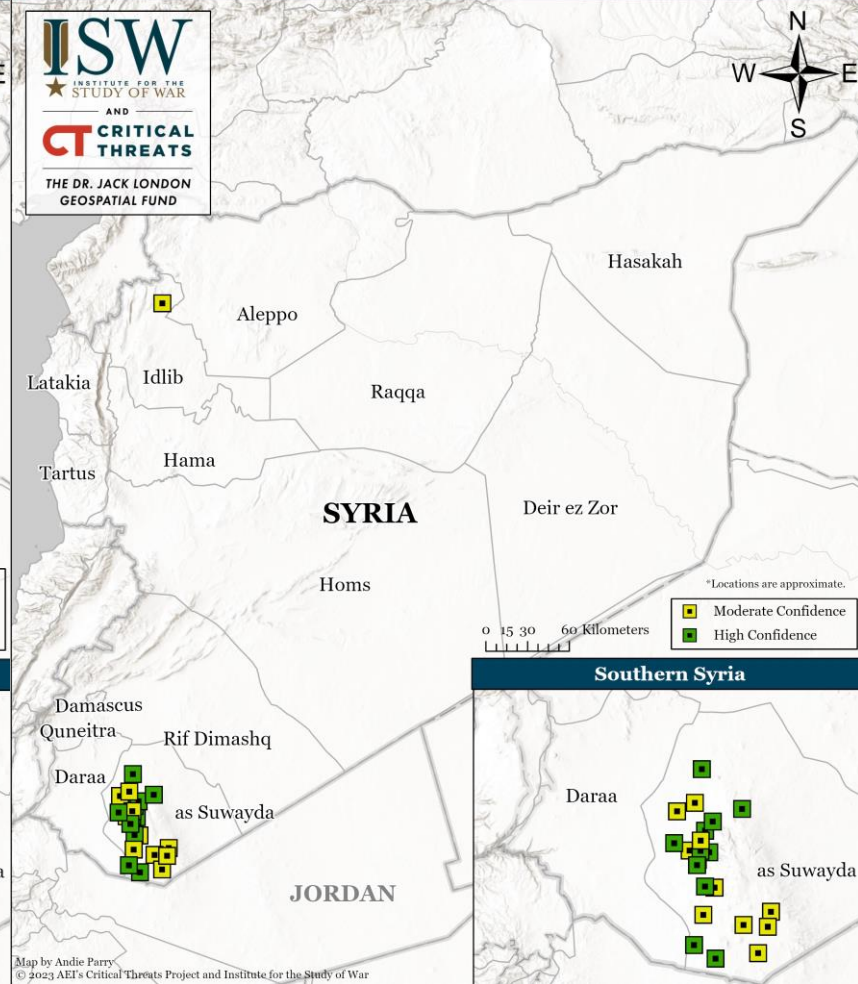
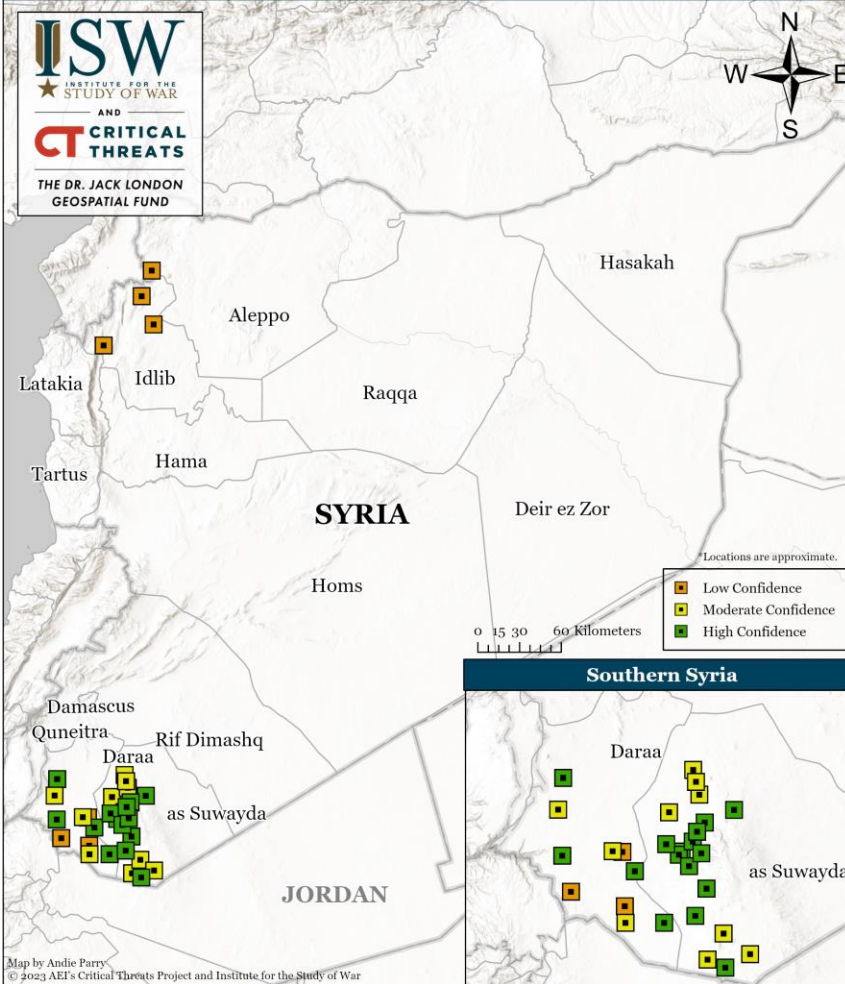
- ISW recorded 50 protests in Suwayda Province from September 12 to 18.<sup>3</sup> The only protest that occurred outside of the province took place in rebel-held Idlib.<sup>4</sup> ISW did not record any anti-regime protests in Daraa Province, which is a decrease from nine during the previous week.<sup>5</sup> The protest groups that organized anti-regime social media campaigns across the country were also less active, compared to a month ago.<sup>6</sup>
- Pro-regime forces fired at and injured three protesters at the Baath party headquarters in Suwayda City on September 13.<sup>7</sup> The attack is the first well-documented instance of pro-regime forces using violence against protesters in Suwayda since the protests erupted in mid-August 2023. The protesters and community leaders blamed both the Baath party and Iranian-backed militias for the crackdown, but the location of fire indicates the shooters were Baath party guards.<sup>8</sup>
- The protestors in Suwayda Province directed their chants and actions at the Baath party and pro-regime militias since the September 13 crackdown.<sup>9</sup> Demonstrators wrote anti-Baathist graffiti on a school, closed most Baath Party headquarters in Suwayda Province, and destroyed images of Bashar al Assad.<sup>10</sup> Protestors have also replaced Baathist iconography with pre-Baathist leaders and symbols.<sup>11</sup>

**The Syrian regime is taking steps to disrupt and degrade the protests in Suwayda and is unlikely to initiate a widespread crackdown during the next few weeks.** The Syrian regime has used Druze leaders and communities to discredit protesters in Suwayda Province by issuing statements and organizing pro-regime rallies in other Druze-majority areas since early September.<sup>12</sup> Regime forces removed many road barriers and checkpoints across Syria, including in Suwayda Province, during the past week.<sup>13</sup> Syrian President Bashar al Assad and state media have not acknowledged the protests. This indicates the regime does not see the protest as an imminent threat that requires a strong security response.

- The Syrian regime attempted to divert the movement by creating a new parallel Druze spiritual council on September 4 that excludes pro-movement sheikhs.<sup>14</sup> A group of demonstrators in Suwayda announced their political allegiance to the head Druze sheikh in Suwayda on September 12, despite Assad's efforts to create the new body.<sup>15</sup> Druze leaders in Lebanon and Israel have also come to the defense of the Suwayda Druze leaders in the past week.<sup>16</sup>

## Anti-Regime Protest Activity in Syria September 5-September 11, 2023

## Anti-Regime Protest Activity in Syria September 12-September 18, 2023



Anti-regime protests declined in span from September 12 to 18 compared to the previous week. Protests are almost exclusively occurring in Suwayda Province.



%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b3%d9%84%d9%85/ ;  
https://www.facebook.com/Suwayda24/posts/pfbid0DsSoWDta2MVR5qYwxYaaCgqiVQdqrxAE6Ug1Cv92oYq2AP7QjpX4VRu58vMemPful?\_\_cft\_\_ [0]=AZWkzYPkuelethRbOe32t86egiKeXdtAc2q5QnSexU5foCHHQOD8CmCZdlqpLxJM2hKyRwjgWe4NLSCNIY7hLgujRAf0tKfzj5wqfb4RzW4x7WL3VLI-VHAVopPOCNvJsEraJqAOK7-bk5xN\_aezIDUHzQforE2Lq2MFDS6mz05YW3wkl8AicGBYtkcH7Qp9ns&\_\_tn\_\_=%2CO%2CP-R  
13 https://www.horanfree dot com/archives/14113 ; https://t.me/damascusv011/18315  
14 https://orient-news dot net/ar/news\_show/205430  
15 https://orient-news dot net/ar/news\_show/205534; https://www.facebook.com/Suwayda24/videos/1006460270387379/?\_\_tn\_\_=%2CO  
16 https://orient-news dot net/ar/news\_show/205626 ;  
https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100045012558253&\_\_cft\_\_ [0]=AZWJsDdHYOkfDE6eXNaEGY3i4CH16QD-e77yjURSjPCU8Swmsaul6hLrg5O8myw8uRt-ek\_ywCNj4W75TS6\_klC27Jo0sBb9yU9alNPqFbyxBg1s6wCFXG4sjNlSetgk6KtFhfdcCAjHnOT8o4doac4lN6Fhf6i9fyJSUWufNCwAFA26Ozl\_bwV9tg-NuiYbtA&\_\_tn\_\_=-UC%2CP-R