
Ceasefire reached in Syria's Sweida after deadly unrest



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DAMASCUS, July 16— A tentative ceasefire has taken effect in Syria's southern Sweida province following days of deadly clashes involving government forces, Druze fighters, and Bedouin tribes, alongside Israeli airstrikes on the capital Damascus.

The ceasefire was brokered between Syria's interim government and Druze spiritual leaders after

four days of escalating violence that claimed over 300 lives, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

State media reported that the deal requires the withdrawal of army units from Sweida, the restoration of local police authority, and the establishment of joint monitoring teams composed of government officials and Druze clerics. Government institutions will be restored under Syrian law, and steps will be taken to regulate heavy weapons.

The escalation began Sunday after Bedouin gunmen reportedly assaulted a young Druze man, sparking retaliation and clashes. Tensions spiraled into full-scale fighting, exposing longstanding unrest in the Druze-majority region that has remained relatively insulated during Syria's civil war.

Hours before the truce, Israel launched a wave of airstrikes on Damascus, targeting key government and military sites. Five missiles hit the General Command headquarters and the defense compound in Umayyad Square, while other strikes damaged infrastructure near the Al-Shaab presidential palace. At least one civilian was killed and 19 wounded.

Israel claimed the attacks were in defense of the Druze population in Sweida. Syria's foreign ministry condemned the strikes as a violation of sovereignty and international law.

While senior Druze cleric Sheikh Youssef Jarbouh endorsed the ceasefire, another influential

leader, Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri, rejected it, vowing to resist government forces.

With deep-rooted tensions unresolved, observers warn the fragile ceasefire may struggle to hold amid persistent mistrust and regional volatility.