



WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 14 - 20 June 2021

SYRIA SUMMARY

- Fighting between the Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces and armed opposition groups continue to escalate in northwest Syria.
- Unidentified gunmen attack Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces and former opposition fighters in Dara'a and Quneitra Governorates.
- GoS armed forces and allies launch a new anti-ISIS operation in the Badia desert region of eastern Syria.
- Tensions increase between the Kurdish Autonomous Administration (KAA) and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq after a KAA delegation was detained in Erbil, Iraq.

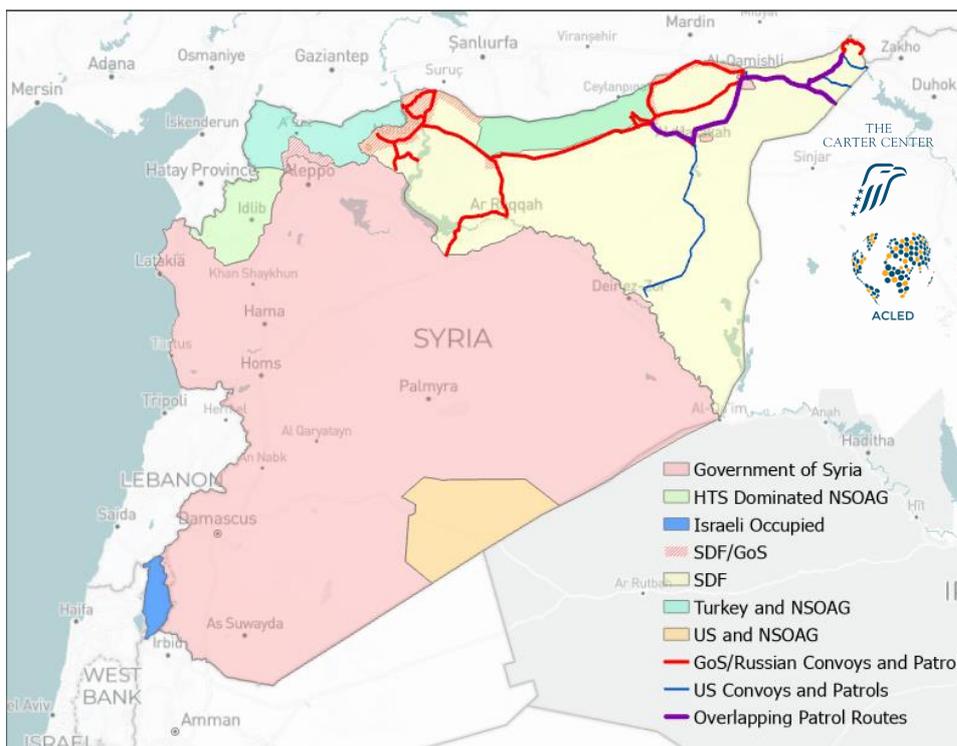


Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 20 June 2021.-NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see footnote 1.

NORTHWEST SYRIA¹

Figure 2: Conflict events between GoS armed forces and its allies on one side and armed opposition groups and allies on the other between 14-20 June 2021. Largest bubble represents 5 conflict events. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Conflict in Northwest Syria

Violence continued in northwest Syria. Fighting between Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces and their allies on the one side and armed opposition groups on the other side has been concentrated in the frontline areas near Jabal al-Zawiyah, Idlib Governorate. In recent weeks, violence has escalated along the frontline regions of northwest Syria, with both Russia and Turkey taking a more active role in the fighting. Civilians have been displaced from the frontlines of the Jabal al-Zawiyah area.²

16 June

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham shelled GoS armed forces in Kafr Nabl, Idlib Governorate, but reportedly caused only material damage.³

¹ Figure 1 depicts areas of the dominant actors' control and influence. While "control" is a relative term in a complex, dynamic conflict, territorial control is defined as an entity having power over use of force as well as civil/administrative functions in an area. Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah maintain a presence in Syrian government-controlled territory. Non-state organized armed groups (NSOAG), including the Kurdish-dominated SDF and Turkish-backed opposition groups operate in areas not under GoS control. The area along the junction of the Syrian border with Iraq and Jordan is a 55km de-confliction zone, established by the US-led coalition that also includes a number of aligned local armed groups. Patrols are also depicted in the map to show the presence of actors that may have influence in an area. This is particularly relevant as US and Russian forces regularly patrol towns and routes in the northeast. While they do not control local administration or local forces, there is an assumption of a high degree of coordination with local de facto authorities. Data collected is by the publicly available project [ACLED](#).

² <https://npasyria.com/en/60845/>

³ <https://sana.sy/en/?p=238138>

18 June

GoS shelling wounded seven civilians in Bazabour, Jabal al-Zawiyah, Idlib Governorate.⁴

19 June

GoS armed forces shelled the headquarters of the opposition Syrian Civil Defense in Qastun, northern Hama Governorate, reportedly killing one Civil Defense volunteer.⁵

20 June

GoS armed forces shelled opposition armed groups in Bara and Mantaf in the Jabal al-Zawiyah region. In response, the latter shelled GoS armed forces positions in Jurin, Hama Governorate, and Khan al-Sabil, eastern Idlib Governorate.⁶

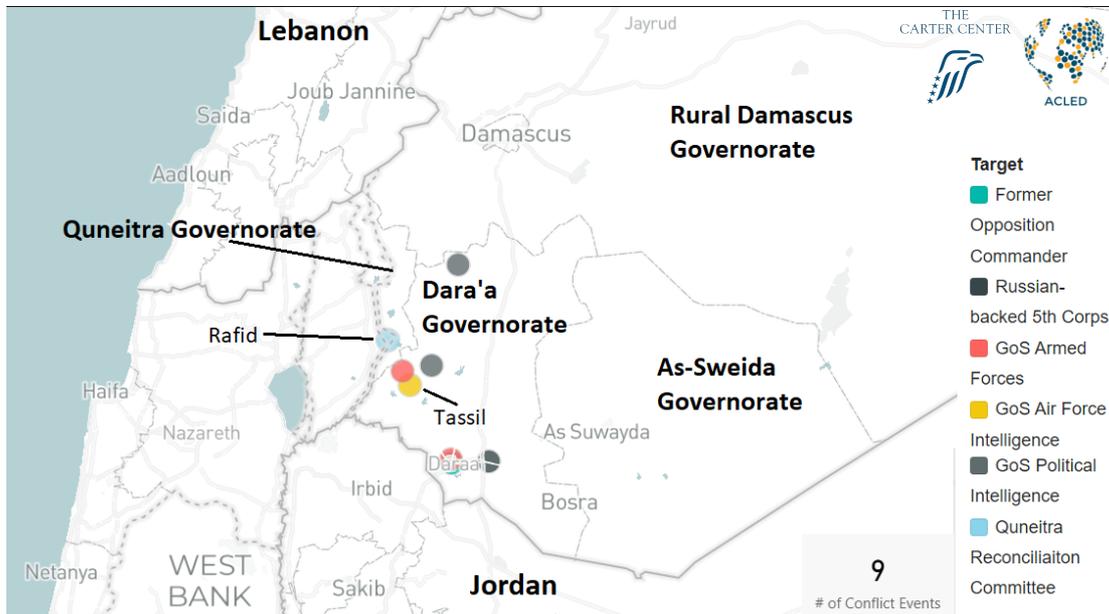
SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA

Figure 3: Attacks against GoS armed forces and former opposition fighters in southern Syria between 14-20 June 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Attacks Against Former Opposition Fighters and GoS Armed Forces

In Dara'a and Quneitra Governorates, some former opposition commanders gained prominence by leading influential political and military groups, occasionally leading to tensions with GoS soldiers and officials. This tension is exacerbated by attacks carried out by unidentified perpetrators targeting GoS officers and former opposition commanders.

17 June

An improvised explosive device (IED) planted by an unidentified armed group wounded the head of the Quneitra reconciliation committee in Rafid, Quneitra Governorate.⁷⁸

⁴ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/488539>

⁵ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/488812>

⁶ <https://tinyurl.com/4zh7m98d>

⁷ <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/191612>

⁸ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/488333>

19 June

An unidentified armed group threw grenades at a GoS Air Force Intelligence headquarters in Tassil, western Dara'a Governorate.⁹

NORTHEAST SYRIA

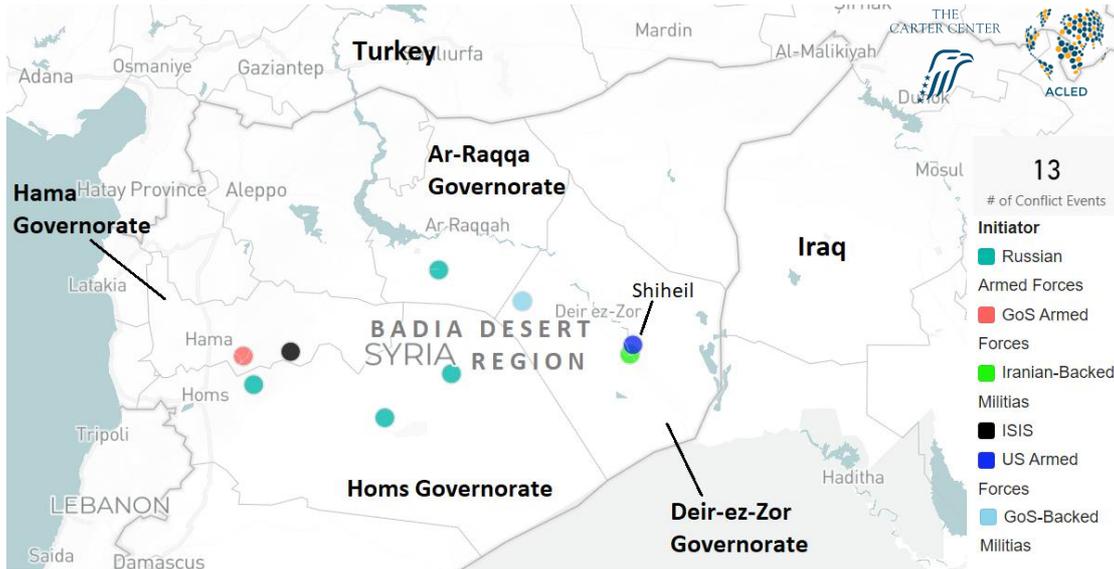


Figure 4: Conflict events involving ISIS between 7-13 June 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

The Battle Against ISIS

ISIS continued to be active in the Badia desert region of central and east Syria. ISIS has launched multiple high-casualty attacks against the GoS armed forces and its allies. Operations against ISIS have had limited success. At times, SDF operations have exacerbated tensions between the KAA and Arab tribes in the region.

14 June

GoS armed forces and Iranian-backed militia¹⁰ reinforcements were mobilized in the Badia desert region in preparation for a renewed anti-ISIS campaign.¹¹

15 June

GoS armed forces carried out search operations for ISIS remnants in the Badia desert region as Russian armed forces escalated their air campaign in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.¹² The same day, U.S. armed forces shot and killed one ISIS fighter and arrested two others in Shiheil, Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.¹³

20 June

In response to the increased activities by the various military forces, ISIS reportedly withdrew some of its fighters to Iraq.¹⁴

⁹ <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/191907>

¹⁰ Iranian-backed militias refers to armed groups that are supported by Iran, like Hezbollah, and include militias from Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, or Pakistan.

¹¹ <https://tinyurl.com/nzrayj3b>

¹² <https://alwatan.sy/archives/262359>

¹³ <https://tinyurl.com/95rtf7pc>

¹⁴ <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/191899>

KAA/KRG Tensions

Relations between the Kurdish Autonomous Administration (KAA) in northeast Syria and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq remain tense due to the former's close relations with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). This has led occasionally to clashes between militias from both regions.¹⁵ On 10 June, 2 KAA officials were arrested in Erbil, Iraq.¹⁶ On 15 June, the KAA demanded the release of their officials from Erbil.¹⁷ On 20 June, the KAA shut down the Kurdistan 24 northeast Syria branch, a news organization from KRG territory.¹⁸¹⁹

For earlier weekly conflict summaries, please click [here](#). For an interactive map of historical areas of control in Syria, please click [here](#).

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¹⁵ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/12/washington-syrian-kurdish-allies-sdf-pkk-kdp-fight-iraq.html>

¹⁶ <https://npasyria.com/en/60903/>

¹⁷ <https://npasyria.com/en/60925/>

¹⁸ <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/24787-Statement-from-Kurdistan-24-Company-for-Media-and-Research-Ltd>.

¹⁹ <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/191922>