



WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 10 – 16 JUNE 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

- **NORTHWEST** | Government forces and Hayyat Tahrir Ash-Sham (HTS)-dominated groups consolidated gains made the previous week in the south west of Idlib. A short-lived Russian/Turkish brokered ceasefire on 13 June had little effect on the level of conflict. Turkish Military Forces also retaliated against two attacks on its observation posts in the northwest. In Afrin, there has been a spike in abductions.
- **SOUTH & CENTRAL** | Low-level attacks against government-aligned personnel in the south, and ISIS ambushes against government patrols in central areas of the country continued this week. Israeli strikes also targeted locations in Daraa Governorate this week.
- **NORTHEAST** | Joint US Coalition/Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) security operations were recorded this week, building on such activities in the previous month. However, low-level activity against military actors along the Euphrates River Valley continued. An IED attack also occurred in Hassakeh City following a similar attack last week.

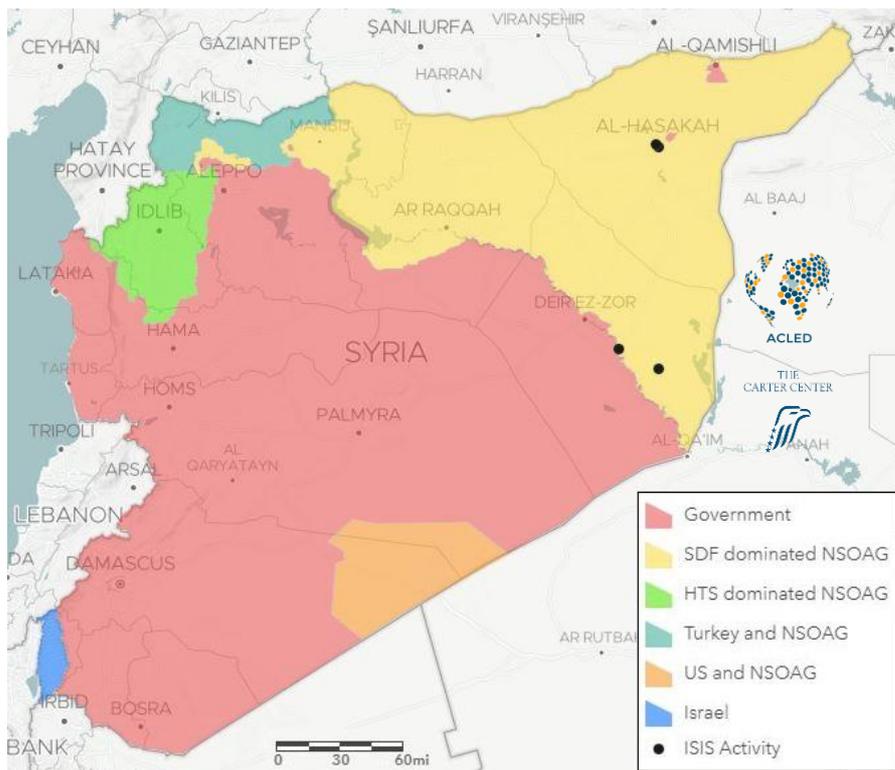


Figure 1: Dominant Actors' Area of Control and Influence in Syria as of 16 June 2019. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. For more explanation on our mapping, please see the footnote on page 2.

NORTHWEST SYRIA

This week, Government of Syria (GoS) forces consolidated their gains from last week around Qasabiyeh, Qurutiyah, Qirouta villages, in the southwest corner of the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS)-dominated Idlib enclave. However, despite heavy aerial and ground bombardments, with at least 192 this week and troop arrivals from the [National Defense Forces \(NDF\)](#), [Republican Guard](#), and [Al Quds Brigade](#), no further GoS advances were recorded this week.

Further south, Tal Mallah and the eastern areas of Jamlah town remained under HTS and other opposition groups control, despite GoS counter-attacks. Pro-GoS [sources](#) reported that this action resulted in at least 32 casualties, while opposition groups also [announced](#) casualties, including a commander of the previously Daraa-based Jaish Ababil.

In the northwest, Latakia front, GoS advances were recorded on the southern edges of the hill-top town of Kabani on 13 June. However, HTS and the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) [pushed](#) back government forces to their original positions later on the same day (Figure 2).

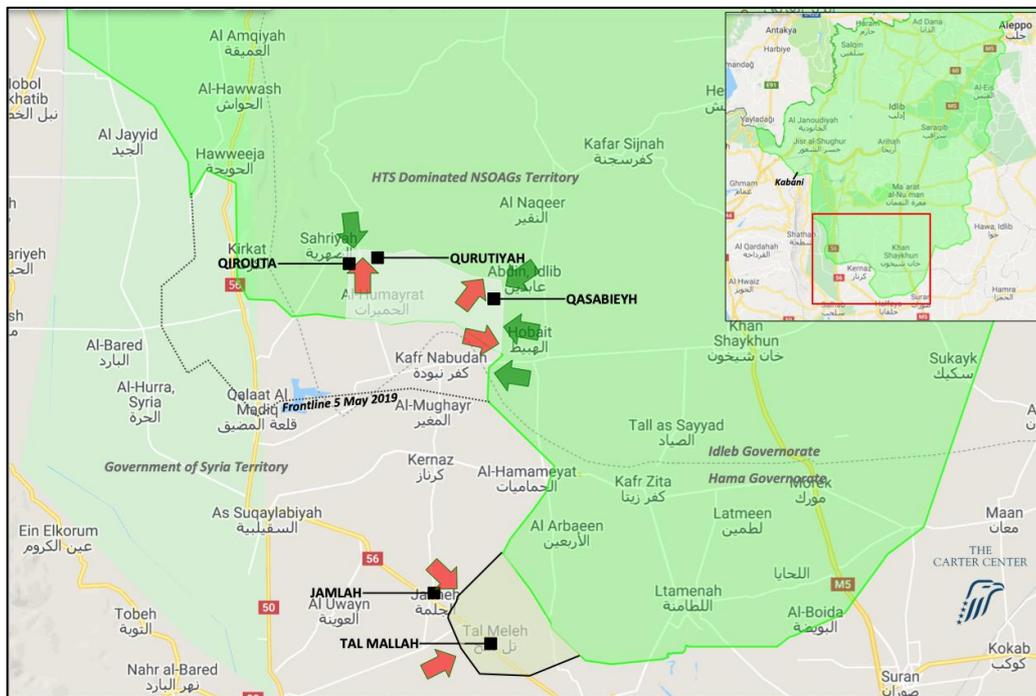


Figure 2: Current Frontlines in the northwest of Syria as of 16 June 2019.

¹ Figure 1 denotes dominant actors' control and influence. Russia, Iran, Hezbollah and Iraqi militias maintain a presence in Syrian government-dominated territory. Non-state organized armed groups (NSOAG), including the Kurdish dominated, US backed SDF and a variety of other groups operate in areas not under Syrian government control. The NSOAG labeled area along the 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. Data collected is by the publicly available project ACLED.

Elsewhere, the Turkish Military fired two artillery salvos against GoS locations this week. The move came after government shelling struck two Turkish Military observation posts near Morek and Jebal Zawiya on 13 and 16 June.² According to the Turkish Ministry of Defence, several Turkish soldiers were injured in the attacks. While shelling has struck Turkish observation posts [previously](#), this is the first incident of shelling on the observation posts during the current escalation in conflict in Idlib since early May.

HTS and other opposition groups also continued to shell GoS positions, with 11 GRAD or rocket bombardments recorded on Hamamiyat, Azaziyyeh, Shezer, Shiekh Hadid, Khattab, Majdal, Huzeiz and Ar Rasif towns, as well as on the GoS-held Hama Airbase and Jeb Ramlah Helicopter Base. As in previous weeks, weaponized drones were also used, including on [Latakia](#) frontlines. The Abu Amara Task Force, part of the Turkish-backed Sham Front, also [claimed](#) to have conducted a raid behind government lines in the Salma area of Latakia Governorate, in an attempt to blow up a building used by GoS forces.

Overall conflict activity continued at a similar level to previous weeks, despite Russia announcing it had implemented a three-day [ceasefire](#) with [Turkey](#) beginning on 13 June.(Figure 3).

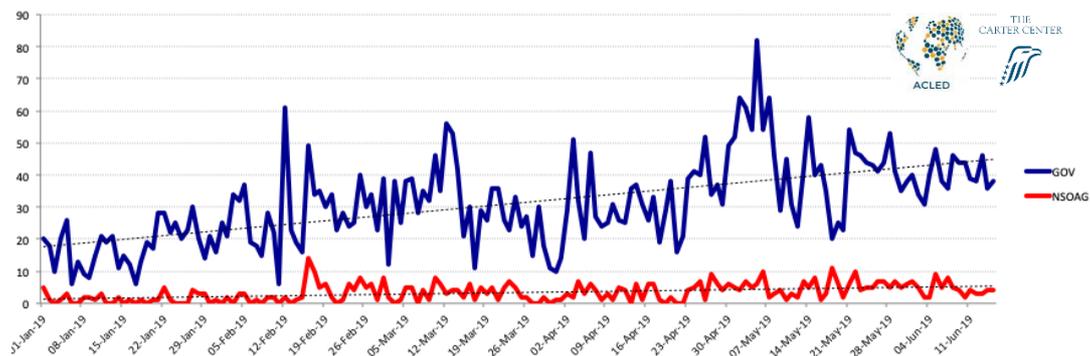


Figure 3: Government and NSOAG Conflict Activity in northwest Syria May to June 2019.

Further north, in the Afrin District, a spike in detentions occurred this week. Turkish-backed local opposition forces³ conducted at least five detention operations in Ma'btali, Sharan (2), Sinnara and Afrin towns. At least 23 people were arrested in the operations, all on charges of alleged ties to the Kurdish YPG. In three of the incidents, the arresting local groups told families that payments of between US\$8000-\$15000 were required to secure an individual's release.

While such activity has been common in the Turkish-backed Operation Olive Branch area, with at least 51 such events recorded since April 2018, 20% of this activity has been recorded since 4 May.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL SYRIA

Reported attacks against GoS and aligned personnel continued in southern Syria this week. In the Daraa governorate, four small arms fire attacks were recorded including against a GoS checkpoint in Bosra al Harir, an individual affiliated with

² In the attack in Jebal Zaywiya, up to 35 mortar shells [impacted](#) the observation post site.

³ National Police Forces, Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade, Liwa Samarkand, Syrian National Army.

an Iranian Cultural Center in Mzeireb, a government soldier in Tafas, and a former defected Air force intelligence officer and opposition group commander (Ahrar Nawa Brigade) was shot dead in-front of his house in Nawa on 10 June.

In Sanamayn town, unidentified men kidnapped two government soldiers, while opposition-aligned [sources](#) reported that explosives destroyed a building associated with Hrak Police Directorate on 16 June. An attack targeting a GoS soldier was also recorded in Quneitra Governorate on 12 June, only the second such attack in 2019.

Israeli airstrikes also impacted several Syrian military locations near Tal al Harra in northwest Daraa Governorate on 12 June. While Israeli activity is common in Syria, especially Rural Damascus and Quneitra Governorates,⁴ it is only the third such strike in the Daraa Governorate this year.

Further north, in central areas, reports of ongoing ISIS activity against the Government of Syria continued. At least two ambushes against GoS patrols occurred near Tadmor and Sokhneh towns on 11 and 13 June that resulted in at least 17 casualties, while, in the Quriyah desert of Deir Ez Zor, ISIS and Iranian militias clashed on 11 June. Such activity has become increasingly common in 2019 (Figure 4).

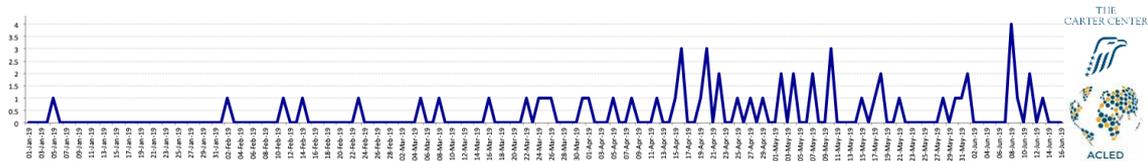


Figure 4: Recorded ISIS activity in central Syria in 2019.

Finally, in the capital, a [detonation](#) occurred in the Dummar area of northern Damascus at a 4th Division ammunition storage facility on 15 June. Despite some [reporting](#) suggesting it was an Israeli airstrike, the detonation was a result of a fire at the site.

NORTHEAST SYRIA

Several joint security operations by US-led coalition and local Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) were recorded this week in the northeast. In Raqqa City, coalition forces and aircraft supported two SDF arrest operations against suspected ISIS groups in the city, while in Thiban, a combined SDF/US force arrived by helicopter to conduct a raid in the al Latwa area of the town on 13 June. The SDF also conducted an arrest operation in the Al Jurdi area of Deir Ez Zor.

Despite numerous security operations in the previous months, low-level small arms fire (SAF) and improvised explosive device (IED) activity continued to be recorded. This week saw three attacks in Abu Hardoub village, Al Shamiyyeh and in Raqqa City, where three IEDs detonated near the Firdous Mosque, Al Mashahadani Hospital and Al Rasheed park on 13 June. These types of attacks are typically concentrated between Hajin and Basira towns in areas that also see a concentration of security operations (Figure 5).

⁴ With these two governorates recording 62% of the 34 incidents in 2019.

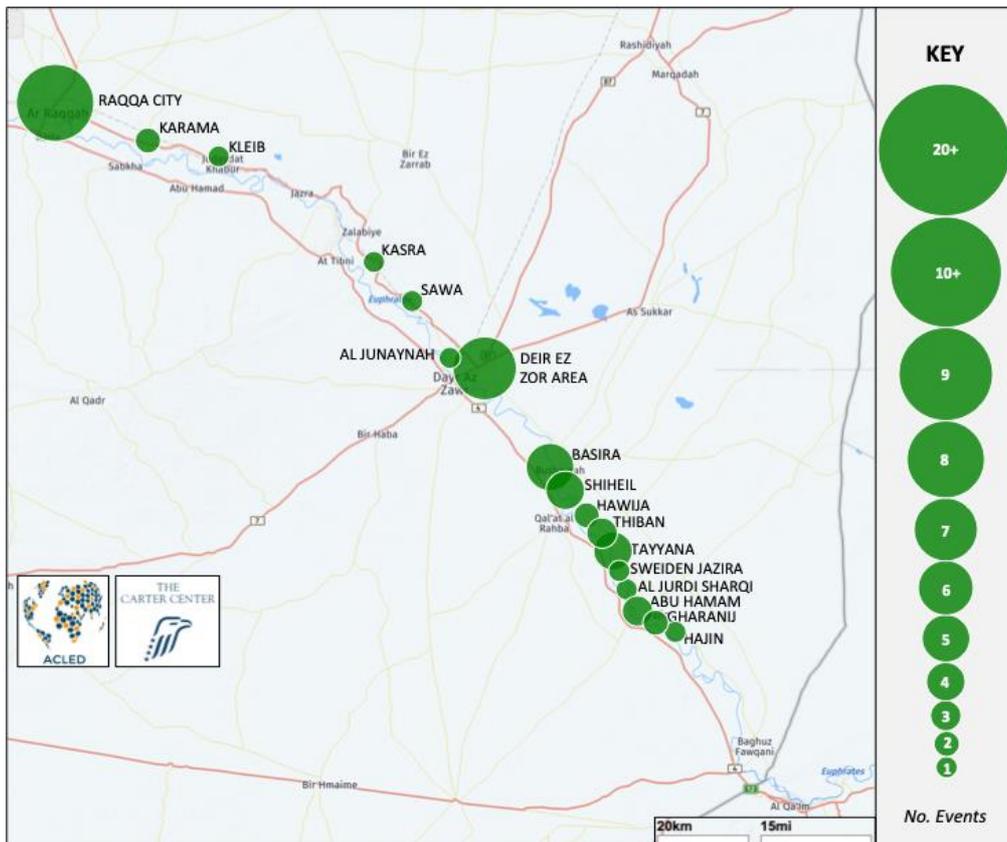
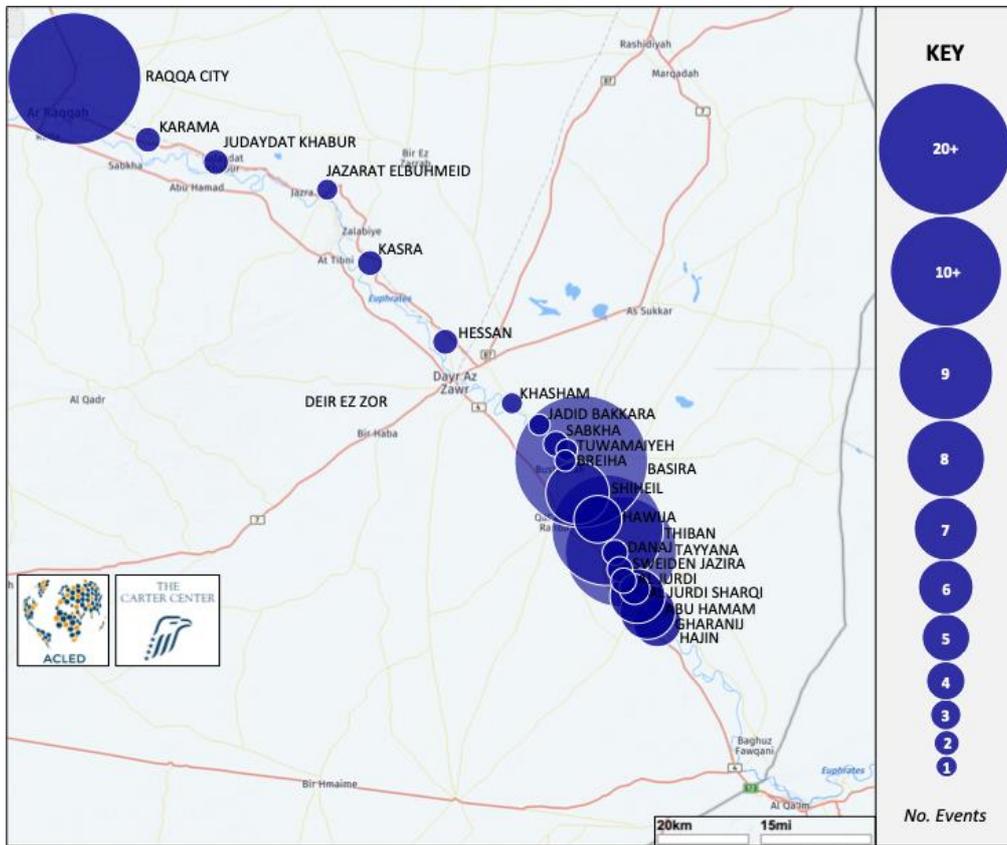


Figure 5: Small arms fire and IED attacks against SDF (top) and SDF arrest operations (bottom) between Raqqah City and Hajin town 2019

For a second consecutive week, an IED attack was recorded in Hassakeh city. On 15 June, a motorcycle IED detonated in the al Ta'ai area of the city killing at least one local SDF-aligned security member. As stated previously, such events have increased since 8 May with six of the eight-recorded events in 2019 occurring since this time (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Recorded IED activity in Hasakeh City.

A tribal clash was also recorded in Deir Ez Zor Governorate. On 10 June clashes erupted in Abu Nital Village between members of the Al Bakir clan from the Jdaydit Ekyad communal militia, and members of the Bufferio and al Bujamil clans from Namliyah and Hreiji villages. The incident involving small arms and mortars began due to allegations that members of the Buferio clan killed a member of the SDF earlier in the week. Three casualties were recorded and civilians from the village were temporarily displaced to the surrounding areas due to the intensity of the clashes.