



WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 15 - 21 JULY 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

- **NORTHWEST** | Opposition groups within the Hayyat Tahrir Ash Sham (HTS)-dominated Idlib enclave attacked Qasabiyeh town. Confrontations also were noted in Kabani town, NW of the pocket, and the Tal Rifat pocket.
- **SOUTH & CENTRAL** | In addition to low-level attacks against government-aligned personnel, an attack targeting a vehicle was recorded near Sasa town. In central areas of the country, an improvised explosive device (IED) attack targeted a train near Busari.
- **NORTHEAST** | Low-level attacks continued against US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) despite ongoing security operations, including one that detained five women who had escaped Al Hol Camp. An IED attack also occurred in Hassakeh City.

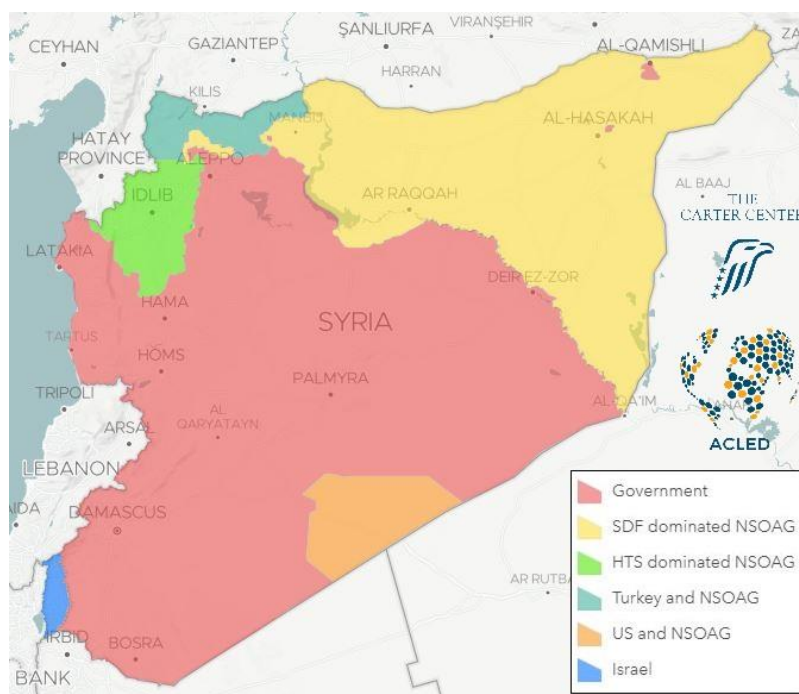


Figure 1: Dominant Actors' Area of Control and Influence in Syria as of 14 July 2019. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. For more explanation on our mapping, please see the footnote on page 2.

NORTHWEST SYRIA

For a second consecutive week, opposition groups, including HTS and Jaish al Izza, launched an assault on government positions in the south west of the Hayyat Tahrir Ash Sham (HTS)-dominated Idlib enclave. On the evening of 20 July, armed groups conducted a [raid](#) on Qasabiyah town, to the northeast of Kafr Nabuda town, which reportedly resulted in Republican Guard and 7th Division casualties (Figure 2). This came one week after an attack on Hammamiyat town.

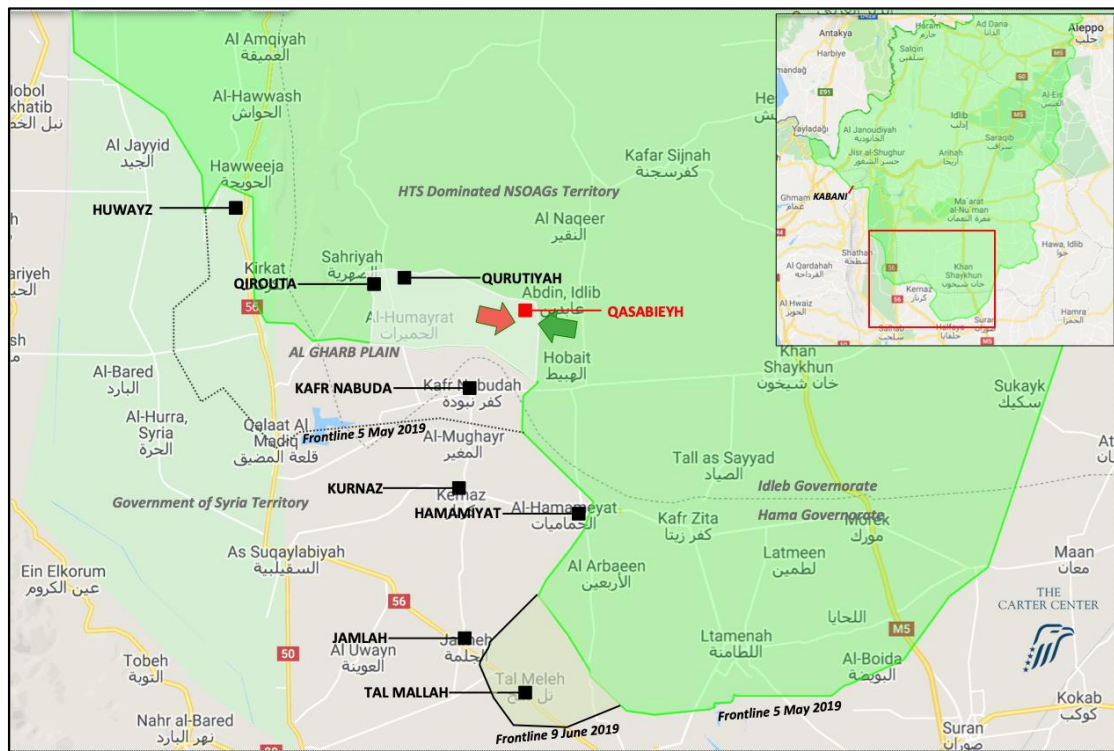


Figure 2: Current Frontlines in the northwest of Syria as of 20 July 2019 with Qasabiyeh town highlighted in Red.

In response to the opposition attacks, the Syrian government resumed airstrikes this week, first recorded in the area since early June. Overall levels of conflict remain high as government of Syria (GOS) aerial and ground bombardments continued in the Idlib pocket, with 283 events recorded this week including in Kabani, in northeast Latakia governorate² (see Figure 3).

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.

² At least three aerial bombardments and four ground shelling salvos were recorded this period, compared to 10 shelling and aerial bombardments in the two weeks prior to this.

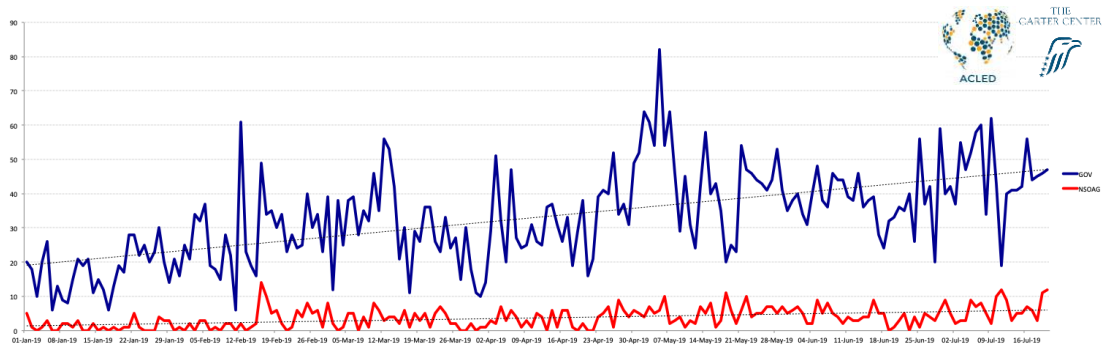


Figure 3: Government and NSOAG (including HTS) Conflict Activity in northwest Syria 2019.

HTS and other aligned groups continued their shelling on government-dominated areas this week. At least 19 areas were impacted by rockets and artillery during the week, including Muhradah Power station marking the fourth time it has been impacted in 2019.³ The Russian Center for Reconciliation and Conflicting Sides also [reported](#) that a further eight settlements had been impacted by shelling in the previous week.

In the Tal Rifat pocket, an increase in shelling exchanges between the Kurdish People's Protections Units (YPG) and Turkish military forces and their allied local groups was recorded this week. At least nine bombardments were recorded in Azaz (2), Tal Rifaat (3), Ein Daghneh, Menagh, Tal Madeeq, and Um al Qarah. Such retaliatory activity is common in the area, most recently occurring in early July.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL SYRIA

Low-level attacks against government-aligned personnel in southern Syria continued this week, with six recorded events, including two improvised explosive device (IED) attacks near Yadudah and Nawa (Figure 4), and an explosive [attack](#) on a vehicle in Sasa town, to the southwest of Damascus.

The attack in Sasa town occurred on the afternoon of 21 July when an explosive projectile destroyed a car, resulting in two people killed and one person injured. Pro-opposition [sources](#) reported it as an anti-tank guided missile strike, targeting a pro-government figure from Hadar, while other reports stated it was an artillery shell explosion. This is the first recorded conflict event in the area since January 2018.

³ Aleppo City (4), Ammurin (1), As Suqaylabiyah (3), Bahsa (4), Baideej (10), Ein El Kurum (1), Fawru (1), Jerniyeh (1), Jurin (5), Maar Dis (1), Magharet Merza (2), Maghir (1), Muhradah (5), Shatheh (1), Sheikh Hadid (1), Shezer (1), Tal Hawash (2), Tal Shalhab (1), and Tal Risho (1).

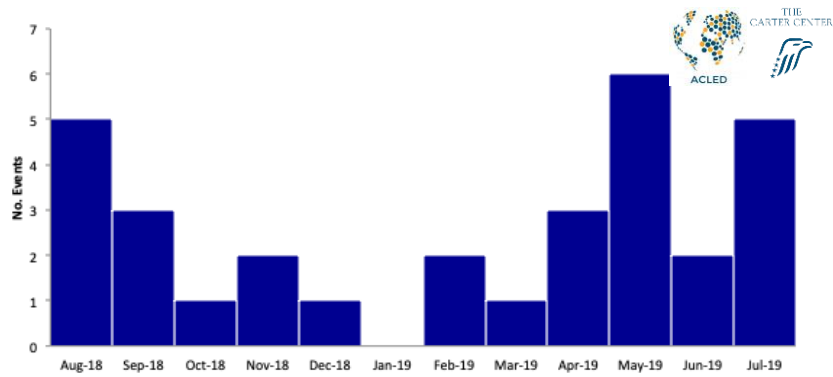


Figure 4: IED attacks in southern Syria (Daraa, Quneitra and As Sweida governorates) since August 2018.

Further north, ongoing ISIS activity against government patrols and convoys in central Homs Governorate continued this week with three attacks recorded. Two of the attacks occurred in the Badayia area, southeast of Mayadin city, when an IED attack struck a joint Syrian Army/Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) convoy, followed by a clash between ISIS fighters and a government patrol three days later. The third attack occurred on the road between Tadmor and Homs, when an IED killed a commander of the government-aligned Palestinian Liberation Army.

These attacks bring the total number of ISIS linked activity against government and aligned-forces in central areas of Syria to 102 events since the beginning of the year. Despite growing numbers of attacks in early 2019, a decrease in ISIS activity has been correlated to an increase in government security operations since late April (Figure 5). Nearly 60% (61 events) of ISIS activity in this time period has occurred in the area between Tadmor, Sokhneh, Deir Ez Zor, Mayadin, and Al Bukamal towns (Figure 6).

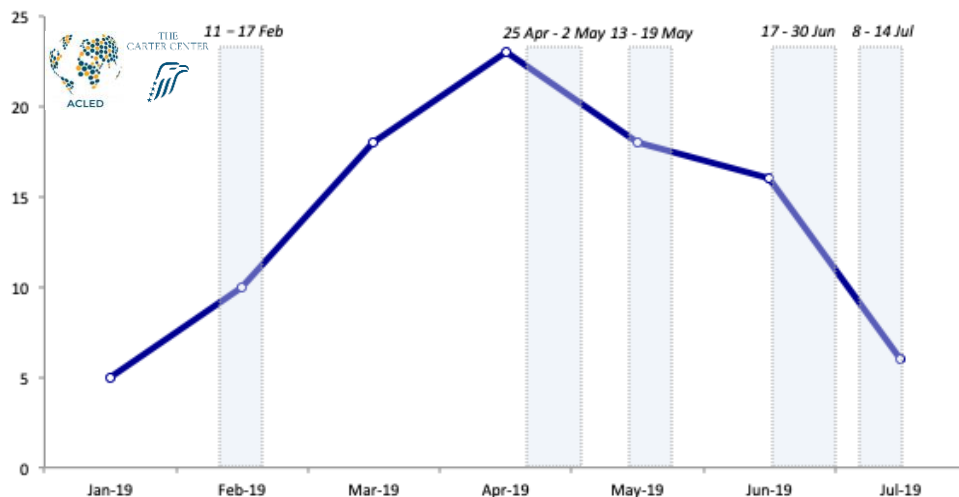


Figure 5: ISIS linked activity in government-dominated central Syria (Homs, Raqqa and Deir Ez Zor Governorates) in 2019 with government security operations highlighted in blue.

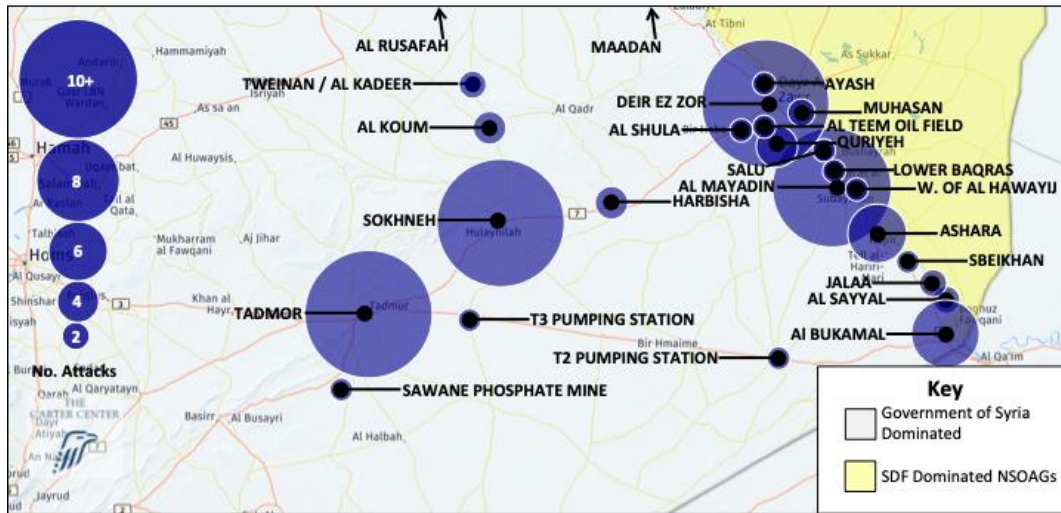


Figure 6: ISIS linked activity against government and aligned personnel linked to the nearest location in Central Syria in 2019.

Syria's Ministry of Transport also [announced](#) that one of its trains had been the target of an IED attack near Al Busari, to the southwest of Tadmor city. The train had been returning from the Khunayfis/Sawane Phosphate mines when it was struck by several IEDs, causing the engine car to derail.

The train was the second piece of infrastructure in the area to be targeted with explosives within two weeks, after an attack on a pipeline from the Sha'er/Ibla Gas field on 14 July. At the time of writing, no group has claimed the attacks and it is not clear if the two events are linked.

NORTHEAST SYRIA

The US-backed and Kurdish dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and its allies continued to conduct security operations against alleged ISIS members in the northeast. Four operations were recorded this week in Markarda (x2), Tal Mashhan, and in Basria, where support from Global Coalition against Daesh aerial assets were used. Coalition aircraft also conducted sorties over Takihi village near Basira, and the Omar Oil Field on 16 July.

Despite these activities, low-level attacks against SDF personnel continued, with eight events recorded this week in Basira, Dahleh, Gharanij (x2), Markada, Mweileh, Shiheil, and Thiban. Overall, attacks against the SDF and its allies in July increased while the number of SDF security operations decreased (Figure 7).

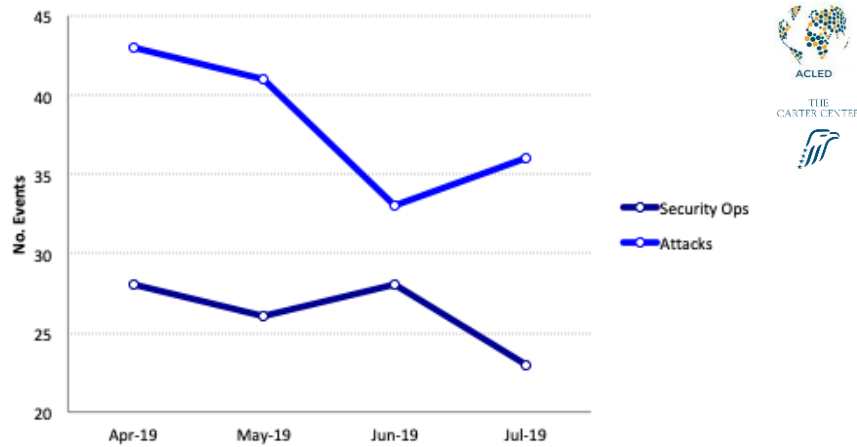


Figure 8: Recorded SDF/Coalition Security Operations in the North East (Hasakeh, Deir Ez Zor and Raqqa Governorates) vs small arms fire and IED attacks against SDF and aligned personnel

On 19 July, SDF forces arrested five women in Menbij City who had escaped from Al Hol Camp, which is [currently](#) holding some 70,000 women and children who had formerly lived in ISIS dominated areas of Syria. The women had been smuggled out of the camp and were heading “outside of SDF controlled areas.”

In Hassakeh City on 17 July, a vehicle-borne IED was detonated in the Ghoweran neighborhood resulting in casualties. The attack comes a week after three motorcycle IEDs were detonated in the city on 10 and 11 July. A total of 41 IED attacks have been recorded in the city in the past 12 months. Of the 22 incidents that could be mapped,⁴ a notable concentration of attacks occurred in southern areas of the city (Figure 8).

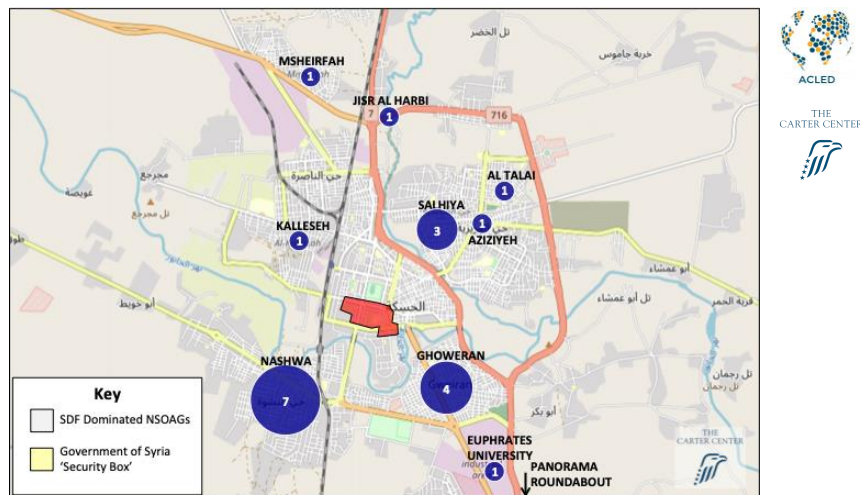


Figure 8: IED activity in Hasakeh City in 2018/2019 (approximate locations)

⁴ 19 incidents were coded to Hassakeh City in general, while the following 22 events could be traced to specific locations in the city; Al Nashwah neighbourhood (7), Al Talai neighbourhood (1), Aziziyeh neighbourhood (1), Euphrates University (1), Goweran neighbourhood (4), Jisr al Harbi (1), Kalleseh neighbourhood (1), Msheirfeh neighbourhood (1), Panorama Roundabout (2) and the Salhiyah neighbourhood (3).