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MONTHLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | October 2021

SYRIA SUMMARY

- Conflict between the Turkish armed forces and their allies and the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) escalate across northern Syria.
- Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) conducts military operation against two of its rivals in northern Latakia Governorate.
- Government of Syria (GoS) completes new settlement agreements in Dara'a Governorate.

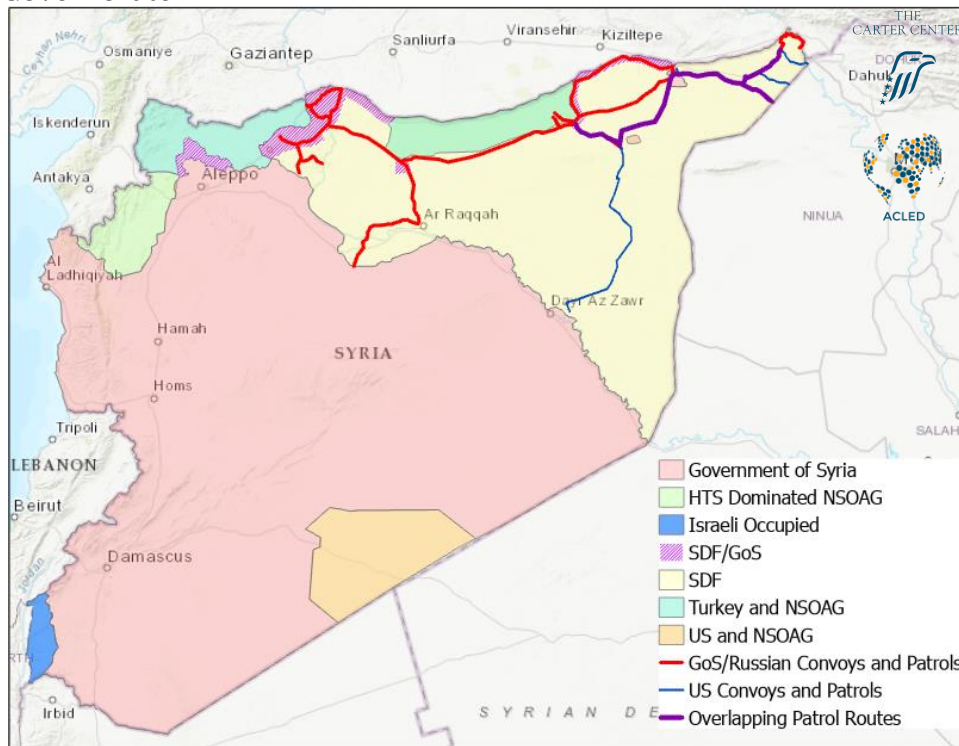


Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 31 October 2021. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see footnote 1.

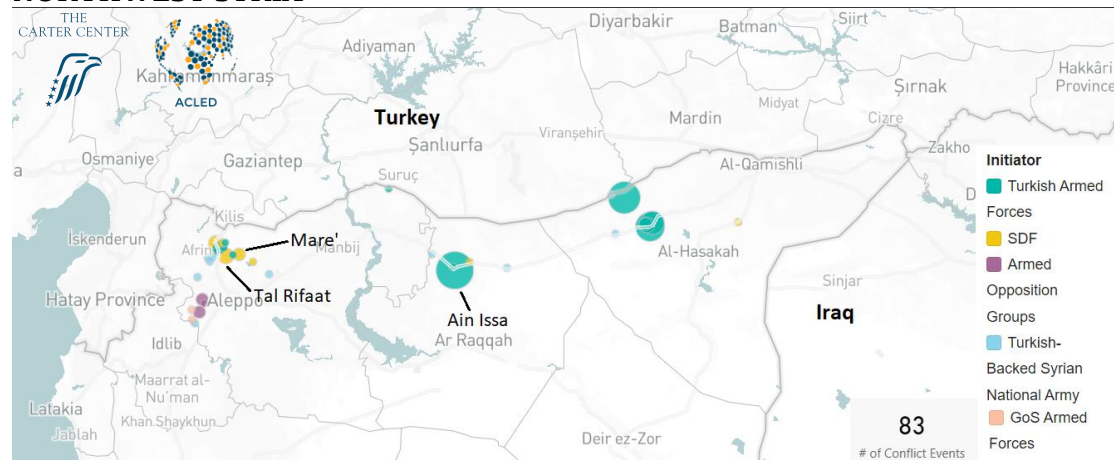
NORTHWEST SYRIA¹

Figure 2: Conflict involving Turkish armed forces and their allies on the one side and the SDF and GoS armed forces on the other side between 1-31 October 2021. Largest bubble represents 13 conflict events. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Turkey-SDF Tensions

Turkey justifies its control of territory in northern Syria as a secure zone along the border to prevent alleged threats from armed Kurdish groups.² Shelling and clashes along the frontlines between Turkish armed forces and Turkish-backed armed opposition groups on one side and GoS armed forces and the predominantly Kurdish SDF on the other are frequent. Turkey has argued that the SDF is aligned with the anti-Turkey Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

10 October

Turkey claimed 2 of its police officers were killed by PKK fighters in Mare', Aleppo Governorate and alleged the fighters came from SDF/GoS-controlled Tal Rifaat, northern Aleppo Governorate.³ The Turkish President condemned the attack and called it the "final straw," arguing that he would take active steps to fight the threat in northern Syria.⁴

13 October

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 U.S.-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 U.S. 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://www.voanews.com/world-news/middle-east-dont-use/ap-explains-turkeys-operation-olive-branch-afin-syria>

³ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/518820>

⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/erdogan-says-latest-kurdish-ypg-attack-turkish-police-is-final-straw-2021-10-11/>

The Turkish-backed opposition Syrian National Army (SNA) shot down a Russian armed forces drone near Mare, Aleppo Governorates.⁵ On 15 October, Reuters reported that Turkey was prepping a new military operation.⁶

21 October

A Turkish drone killed an official with the Kurdish-run Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) official near Kobani, northern Aleppo Governorate.⁷ In the last couple of months, Turkey has increased its use of drone strikes against AANES officials across northern Syria.

HTS Crackdown

HTS remains the most powerful anti-government armed group in opposition-controlled territory in northwest Syria. Since the July 2020 clashes with Hurras al-Din and its allies,⁸ HTS has taken a hardline approach toward any independent armed group within its territory. After June 2021, HTS called on Jund Al-Sham to either join ranks or leave Idlib Governorate.⁹ Facing pressure from HTS, Jund Al-Sham reportedly disbanded.¹⁰ The war of words escalated between the two groups with Jund Al-Sham's leader Muslim al-Shishani releasing statements criticizing HTS and its leader Jolani.

24 October

HTS launched a new operation targeting Jund al-Sham and Jundallah in Jabal al-Turkman, northern Latakia Governorate.¹¹ HTS views Jundallah as an extension of ISIS and blames them for attacks in Idlib Governorate.¹²

25 October

The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) brokered a ceasefire agreement between HTS and Jund al-Sham.¹³ The agreement allowed for Jund al-Sham fighters to withdraw.¹⁴

26 October

HTS arrested Chechen leaders operating with al-Shishani in northern Latakia Governorate.¹⁵ The next day, protests condemning HTS's military operation were held in Bab Al-Hawa, Idlib Governorate.¹⁶

⁵ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/519472>

⁶ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/519933>

⁷ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/521129>

⁸ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f12a006dfaf84cc58a4348cbb23ab137>

⁹ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/489992>

¹⁰ <https://tinyurl.com/2mvub2sm>

¹¹ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/521883>, <https://tinyurl.com/xthpzhfs>, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/11/syrian-jihadi-group-cracks-down-last-pocket-rivals-idlib>

¹² <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/11/syrian-jihadi-group-cracks-down-last-pocket-rivals-idlib>

¹³ <https://tinyurl.com/6p2vp53a>

¹⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/6p2vp53a>

¹⁵ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/522264>,

<https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/522047>

¹⁶ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/522478>

28 October

HTS announced it ended its operation against the foreign groups in northern Lattakia Governorate.¹⁷

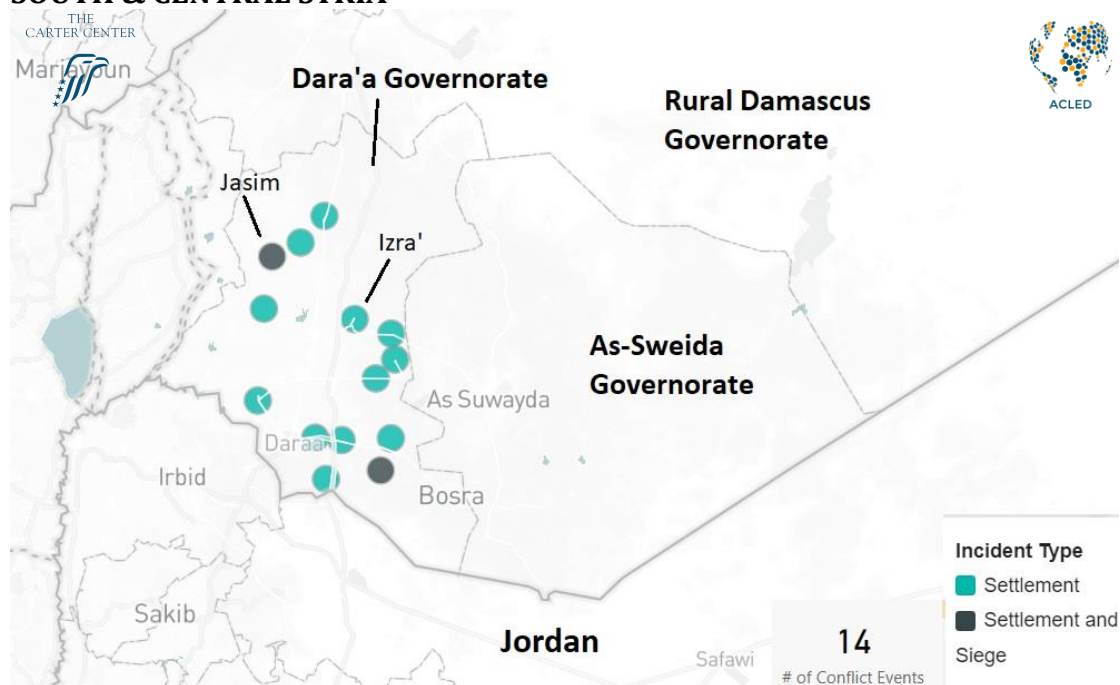
SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA

Figure 3: New settlement agreements and sieges in Dara'a Governorate between 1-31 October 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

The Siege of Dara'a al-Balad

After the siege of Dara'a al-Balad was withdrawn on 5 September, GoS armed forces coerced former opposition fighters and their allies into accepting new settlement deals across Dara'a Governorate. These settlement deals typically require former opposition fighters and wanted individuals to register with the GoS security forces, defer military conscription, and turnover their weapons to authorities. After new settlement deals were agreed to across central Dara'a Governorate, GoS armed forces began to mobilize to Jasim city.

3 October

GoS began implementing a new security settlement in Jasim.¹⁸ However the next day, GoS demanded more weapons from Jasim.¹⁹ On 5 October, GoS closed off roads to Jasim.²⁰ On 7 October, GoS completed new security settlements in Inkhil, Jasim, Al-Hara, Nimr, and As-Sanamayn in northern Dara'a Governorate.²¹

10 October

¹⁷ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/522632>

¹⁸ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/517233>

¹⁹ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/517667>

²⁰ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/517706>

²¹ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/518109>

GoS began settlements in Sidon, the first area in eastern Dara'a Governorate.²² The settlements in Sidon's villages were directly within the Russian-backed 8th Brigade areas of influence.²³

11 October

Reports suggested that the Russian-backed 8th Brigade would be dismantled or integrated into the GoS armed forces.²⁴

14-24 October

Between 14-22 October, GoS signed new settlement deals in multiple towns across eastern Dara'a Governorate, with them using coercive measures on Jizeh²⁵ and Hrak.²⁶ After implementing a new settlement deal in Izra on 24 October, GoS declared the completion of all their settlement deals in Dara'a Governorate.²⁷ Bushra al-Sham, an 8th Brigade stronghold, was not subject to a new settlement deal.

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

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²² <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/518694>

²³ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/518899>

²⁴ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/519229>

²⁵ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/520181>

²⁶ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/521554>

²⁷ <https://www.horanfree.com/?p=10111>