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WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 1 - 7 March 2021

SYRIA SUMMARY

- Violence escalated in Aleppo Governorate after Russia bombed an oil refinery in Turkish-held territory.
- Attacks against former opposition fighters and Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces continued in Dara'a Governorate.
- The predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) expanded its conscription campaign in Ar-Raqqa Governorate.

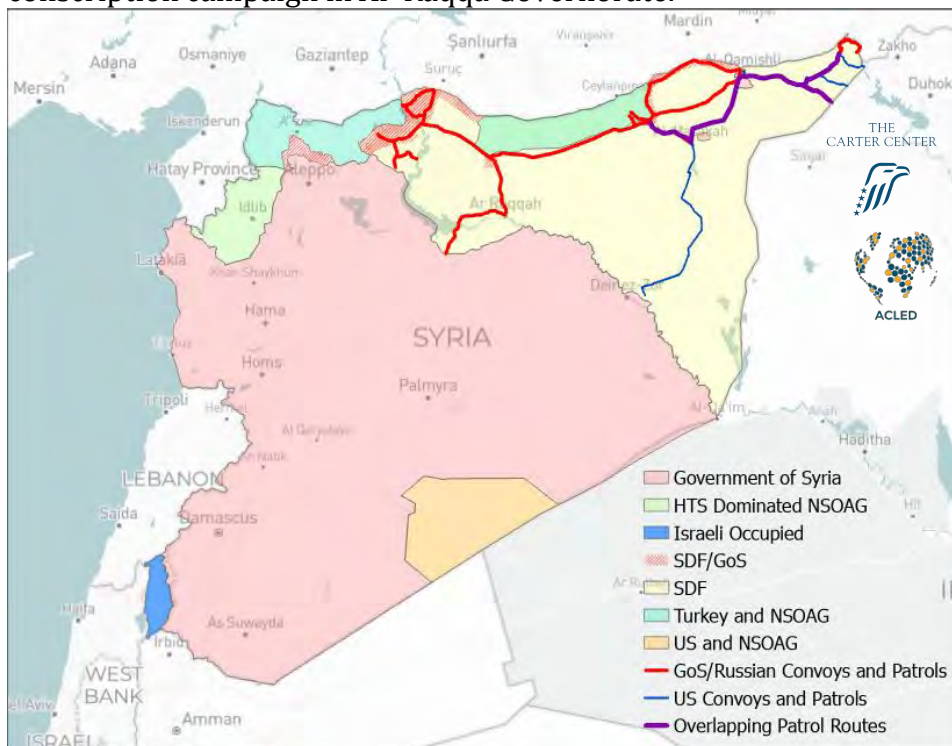


Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 7 March 2021.-NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see footnote 1.

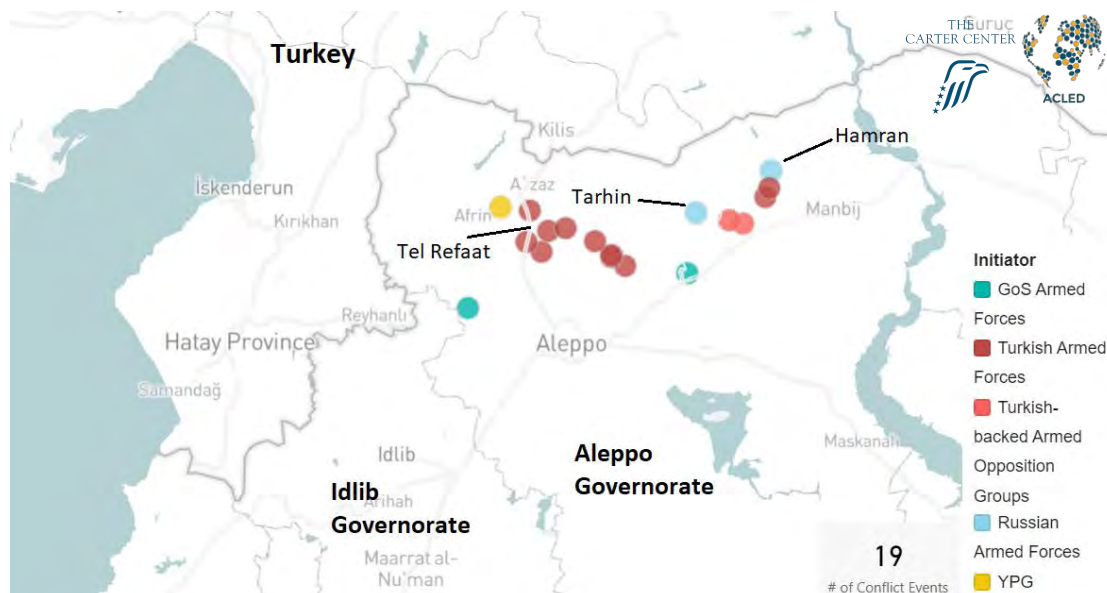
NORTHWEST SYRIA¹

Figure 2: Shelling, clashes, and aerial bombardment in Aleppo Governorate between 1-7 March 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Turkish-Russian Tensions in Northwest Syria

In Aleppo Governorate, there have been frequent shelling and clashes between Turkish armed forces and the Turkish-backed Syrian armed opposition groups on the one side and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces on the other. In recent weeks, both sides have reinforced their frontlines in northern and eastern Aleppo Governorates.

5 March

Turkish armed forces and the Turkish-backed armed opposition groups shelled Tel Refaat and Mengh town, northern Aleppo Governorate.² According to pro-GoS sources, the shelling hit residential areas in both towns.³

Russian armed forces fired missiles against the Hamran area near Jarabulus and Tarhin area near Al-Bab city, Aleppo Governorate,⁴ killing 4 civilians⁵ and

¹ Figure 1, the Carter Center's areas of control map, depicts areas of the dominant actors' control and influence. While "control" is difficult to determine 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 have patrolled 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://sana.sy/en/?p=224967>

³ <https://sana.sy/en/?p=224967>

⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/sp2fumc>

⁵ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/463759>

reportedly destroying 200 fuel tank trucks and oil refineries.⁶ Turkey responded by shelling GoS/YPG-controlled areas in eastern Aleppo Governorate.⁷

7 March

Turkish armed forces shelled the towns of Tel Refaat, Aleppo Governorate. The shelling was reportedly in response to YPG and GoS mortar strikes on Al-Bab city, Aleppo Governorate.⁸ One civilian was killed in the shelling exchange.⁹ The same day, Turkish armed forces reportedly killed 7 YPG fighters near Tel Refaat, Aleppo Governorate.¹⁰

SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA

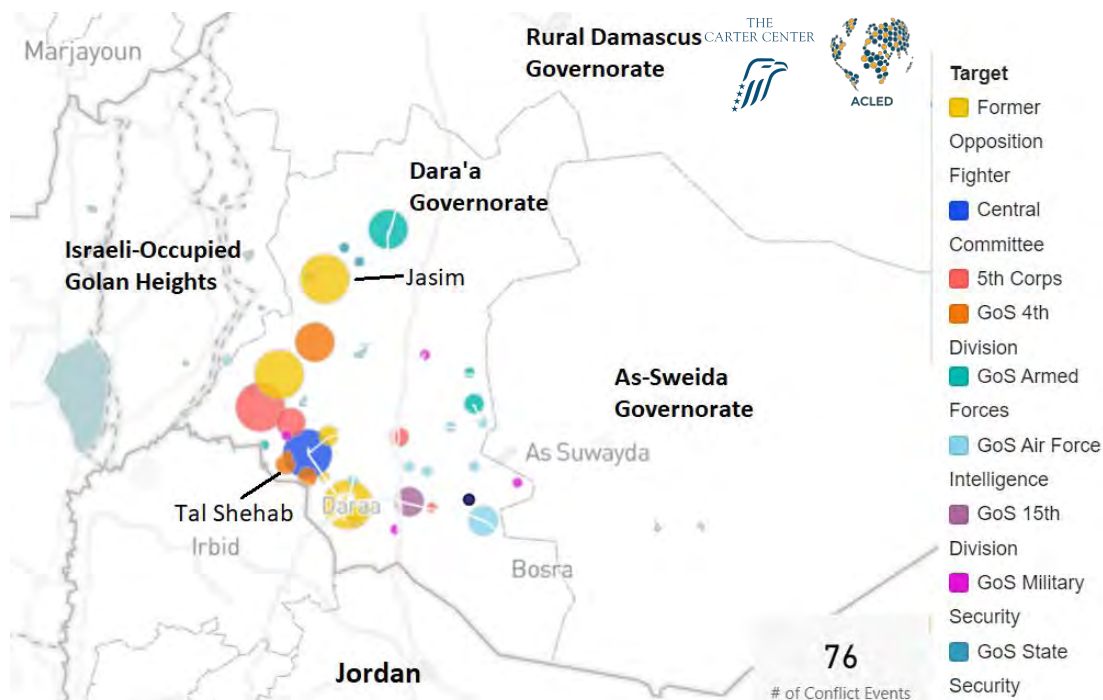


Figure 3: Attacks against former opposition fighters and GoS armed forces since 1 January 2021. Largest bubble represents 5 conflict events. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Instability in Southern Syria

Since the takeover of Dara'a Governorate by the GoS in 2018, some former opposition commanders have gained prominence by leading influential political and military bodies. At times, tensions between those two sides have resulted in arrests and violence, such as the January-February standoff in Tafas, Dara'a Governorate. Tensions have been exacerbated by continuing attacks and assassinations of GoS officers and former opposition fighters, mostly by unidentified perpetrators.

2 March

⁶ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/463759>

⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/sp2fumc>

⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/ywzkubtw>

⁹ <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/181271>

¹⁰ <https://tinyurl.com/jncupczn>

Unidentified gunmen killed a former opposition fighter in Tal Shehab, western Dara'a Governorate.¹¹

3 March

Unidentified gunmen killed 2 former opposition commanders who had joined GoS Military Security in Mseifra, eastern Dara'a Governorate.¹²¹³

4 March

A former opposition commander with GoS State Security and his cousin were wounded by unidentified gunmen in Jasim, northern Dara'a Governorate.¹⁴

NORTHEAST SYRIA

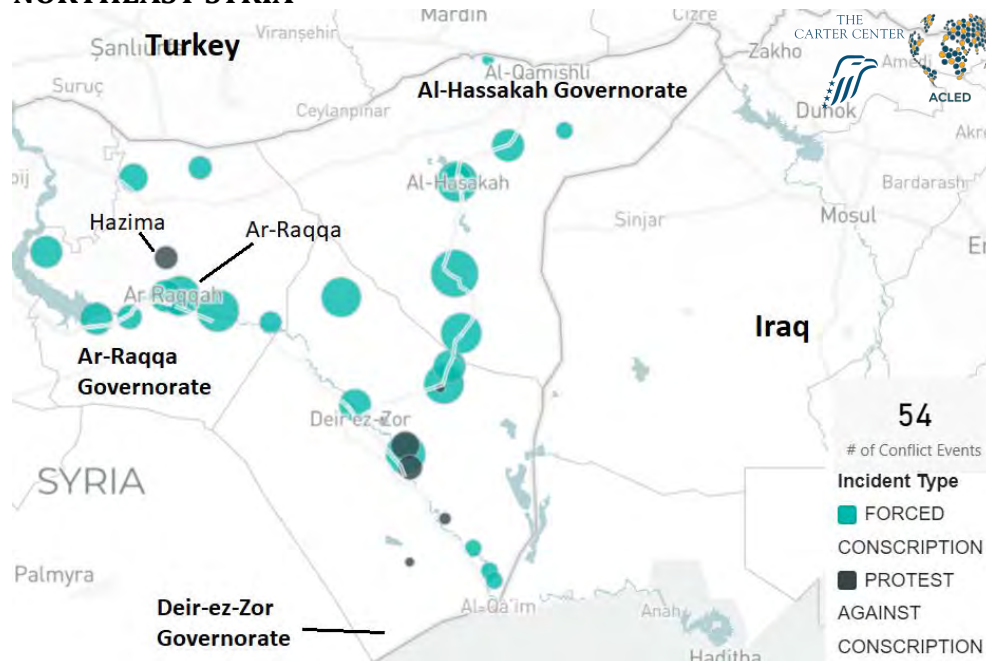


Figure 5: Conscription related events by the SDF in northeast Syria since 1 January 2021. Largest bubble represents 11 conflict events. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Conscription in Northeast Syria

In 2019, the Kurdish Autonomous Administration (KAA) ratified a controversial conscription law for all areas under its control.¹⁵ The Syrian Network For Human Rights has claimed that the conscription of teachers has deprived half a million students of a proper education.¹⁶ Residents have argued that the forcible recruitment and arrests by the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) has disrupted economic life.¹⁷ Since 1 February 2021, there have been 20

¹¹ <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/180818>

¹² <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/180957>

¹³ <https://npasyria.com/en/55439/>

¹⁴ <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/181062>

¹⁵ <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2021/02/conscription-by-sdf-agonizing-raqqa-residents/>

¹⁶ <https://sn4hr.org/blog/2021/02/19/55948/>

¹⁷ <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2021/02/syria-conscription-sdf-is-army-volunteer.html?emailaddress=hariprasad%40gwu.edu#>

recorded events of forced conscription by the SDF, with 8 events recorded in the first week of March alone.

2 March

After the KAA declared that it would dismiss educators who refuse to serve in the SDF, teachers in Hazima, northern Ar-Raqqa Governorate, went on strike.¹⁸

5 March

Teachers held a protest against the forcible conscription of educators by the SDF in Ar-Raqqa city.¹⁹ The protests coincided with increasing tensions between the SDF and teachers over curriculum concerns.²⁰

6 March

Between 5-6 March, the SDF forcibly conscripted 150 youth in Ar-Raqqa city.²¹

7 March

The SDF continued its conscription campaign, forcibly recruiting dozens of youth around Ar-Raqqa city.²²

For earlier weekly conflict summaries, please click [here](#).

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¹⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/35wpbbma>

¹⁹ <https://tinyurl.com/jr84wnjd>

²⁰ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f2743380d9654b5a959527d3cbde9857>

²¹ <https://tinyurl.com/j5z8ymbb>

²² <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/181443>