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WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 22 – 28 APRIL 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

- **NORTHWEST** | Elevated levels of conflict impacted the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS) dominated Idleb enclave, including an increase in airstrike activity with 26 strikes recorded. An agreement between HTS and Suqor ash Sham saw the former expand its governance north of Maraat al Numan town.
- **SOUTH & CENTRAL** | For a second consecutive week, explosive devices detonated in Damascus City. Further south, a new group, Ahrar Bilada Kanakar, announced its presence in areas south of the capital. In Daraa Governorate, ongoing attacks against individuals aligned with the Syrian government continued, while in the central Homs desert, ISIS ambushes against government troops continued.
- **NORTHEAST** | An increase in protests against SDF control was recorded along the Euphrates River Valley.

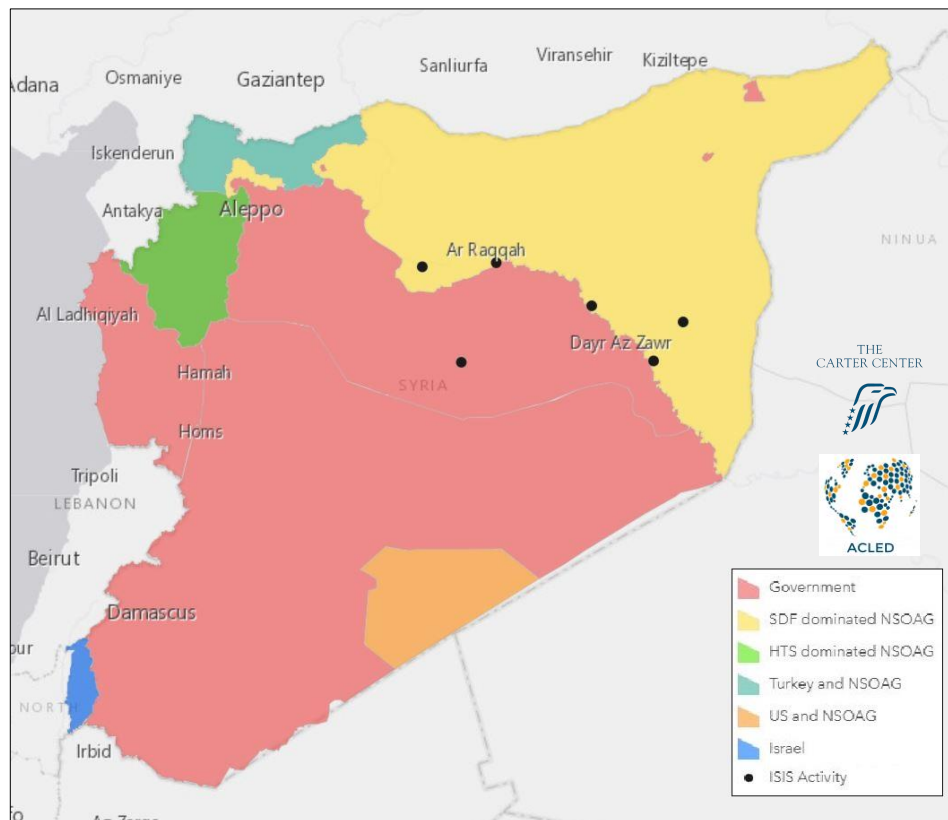


Figure 1: Dominant Actors' Area of Control and Influence in Syria as of 28 April 2019. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. For more explanation on our mapping, please see the footnote on page 2.

NORTHWEST SYRIA

The elevated conflict levels in the Hayyat Tahrir Ash Sham (HTS)-dominated Idlib pocket continued this week with 212 incidents of clashes, shelling, and airstrikes recorded. There was also an increase in Russian/Syrian airstrikes, with at least 26 strikes recorded, in contrast to 13 recorded in the first three weeks of April.

Turkish patrols in the enclave continued this week on 15, 18, 19 and 20 April. However, these patrols have had no obvious impact on the overall levels of violence in the de-escalation zone (Figure 2).

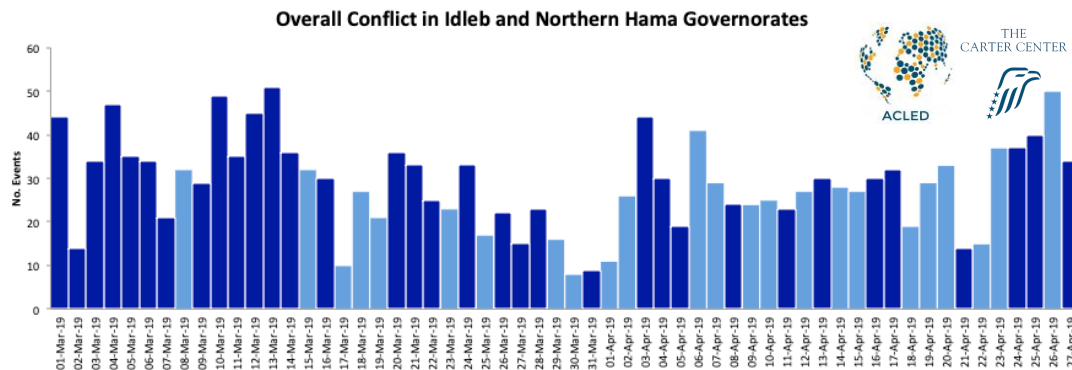


Figure 2: Conflict Levels on the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS) dominated Idlib pocket with days of recorded Turkish Patrols highlighted in light blue from March to April 2019.

HTS conducted five attacks against government-held locations this week. These occurred in the Khan Tuman, Harish, Zmar, Masharee'e and Hakora areas. In Hakora, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives inside a government position that resulted in as many as 10 casualties. The HTS-dominated opposition also launched several GRAD rocket missiles in the vicinity of Masyaf, Jurin, As Suqaylabiyah towns and Hmemeim Airbase. Weaponized drones were also used twice to [target](#) the Russian operated airbase.

Additionally, for a second consecutive week, a large convoy of mechanized Syria forces was [seen](#) travelling northwards through Hama Governorate toward the Idlib area.

It was also [reported](#) that HTS reached an agreement with Suqor Ash Sham in the Jabal al Zawia area, north of Mara'at al Numaan. The sides agreed to end hostilities, allowing HTS freedom of movement in the area as well as allowing HTS's Salvation Government to expand its administration to the area.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL SYRIA

For a second consecutive week, IED explosions took place in the capital. On 24 April, an IED placed under a car detonated in the Nahr Asiah area in south Damascus, killing one person and wounding five others. The group Saraya Qasioun

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

[claimed](#) the attack and, in an online statement, said that it targeted a government intelligence officer. The group also claimed one of the two IED attacks last week in Damascus.

On 24 April a previously unknown group - Ahrar Bilada Kanakar (Freemen of the Kanaker Area) – [released](#) an online statement calling for the government and Russia to abide by the terms of a 2017 “reconciliation” agreement in the area, particularly concerning detentions, or face the consequences.

In the last six months, at least six new groups have formed and claimed attacks in government dominated areas in central and southern Syria: The Popular Resistance, The Southern Companies, Qasioun Companies, Special Task Companies, Mohassim Revolutionary Brigades, and the Freemen of the Kanakar Area.

In Daraa, attacks against Syrian government-aligned officials or former opposition fighters continued. Six attacks were recorded in the governorate, including two against former opposition-aligned Mutaaz Billah Army commanders in Tafas and Mzeireb towns.

In central areas, government re-enforcements were [sent](#) to the Sokhneh area on 25 April in response to recent ISIS activity. This included a contingent of Hezbollah fighters according to some reports. However, on 27 April, ISIS ambushed a government patrol to the east of Sokhneh town, resulting in casualties. In Sayyal and Jalaa towns close to Deir Ez Zor city, ISIS and government forces also clashed.

At least eight major ISIS attacks against government patrols have been recorded in central Homs deserts since mid-April (Figure 3).

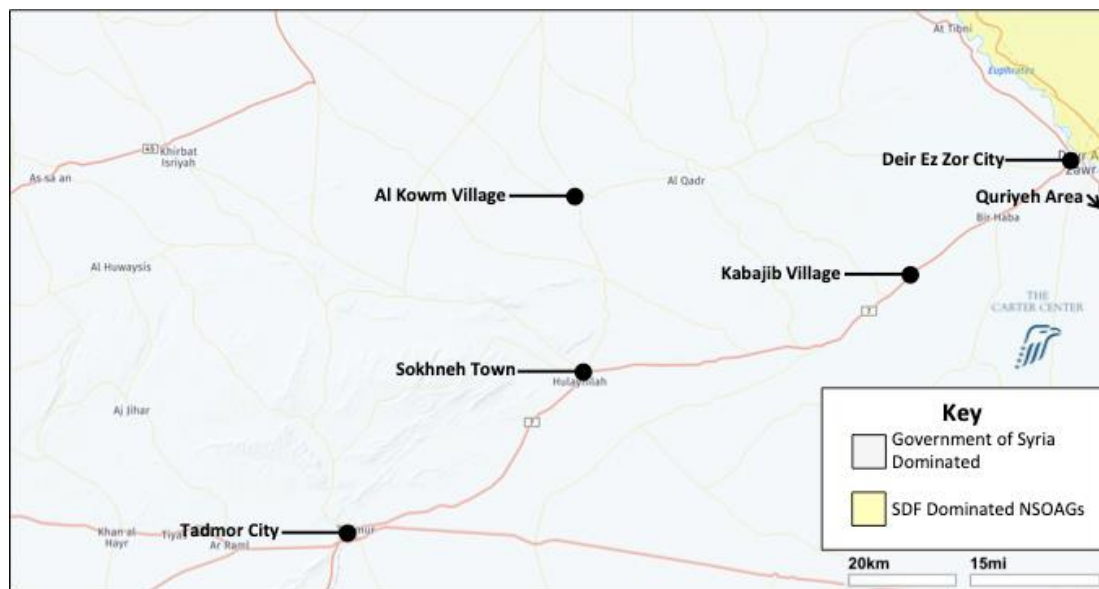


Figure 3: Map of desert areas between Tadmor and Deir Ez Zor City.

NORTHEAST SYRIA

IED and shooting attacks in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-dominated northeast continued this week. This included the chairman of the Reconciliation Tribal Council and his son being wounded in the drive by shooting in Tabqa town,

while in Darnaj, Tayyana, Al Sabkhah and Basira, similar events against SDF forces were also recorded. IED activity against SDF patrols also occurred in Thiban town, and Raqqa City, where two explosive devices detonated in the Amin area of the city on 26 April. As reported [previously](#), these areas have increasingly witnessed such attacks.

There was an increase in recorded protests along the Euphrates Valley this week, with 12 demonstrations across Basira (3), Shiheil, Al Hessian (2), Mweileh, Daman, Jneineh, Kasra and Mhemideh towns against SDF arrests, the lack of basic services, high prices of goods, and the perceived unfair distribution of oil. Prior to this week, only eight protests had been reported against the SDF in 2019.

In a development for the humanitarian situation in northeast Syria, the Yazidi Supreme Spiritual Council issued a [statement](#) this week allowing unaccompanied women, as well as children born out of rape, would be allowed to return to their place of origin in Iraq. The move will apply to thousands of people currently in various IDP camps in Hasakeh province and could further alleviate some of the pressures on the SDF after last month's agreement to return thousands of Iraqi nationals to Iraq.