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WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 1 June - 7 June 2020

SYRIA SUMMARY

- **NORTHWEST** | Turkish and Russian armed forces continued their joint patrols in Idlib Governorate. Clashes between armed opposition groups and Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces and GoS-backed militias increased during the reporting period. Turkish armed forces expanded their presence in southern Idlib Governorate. There were increased air strikes by Israeli, Russian, and GoS air forces in the region.
- **SOUTH & CENTRAL** | Unidentified gunmen continued attacks against GoS soldiers and former opposition fighters across Dara'a Governorate. Attacks against civilians continued in Dara'a Governorate. Protests erupted in Dara'a and As-Swedia Governorates against GoS and deteriorating economic conditions.
- **NORTHEAST** | Russian armed forces attempted to establish a new military base in Al-Hassakah Governorate. Attacks against Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighters continued during the reporting period. The SDF continued its anti-ISIS raids in the region. Turkish-backed armed opposition groups destroyed crops within Turkish-held Operation Peace Spring areas.

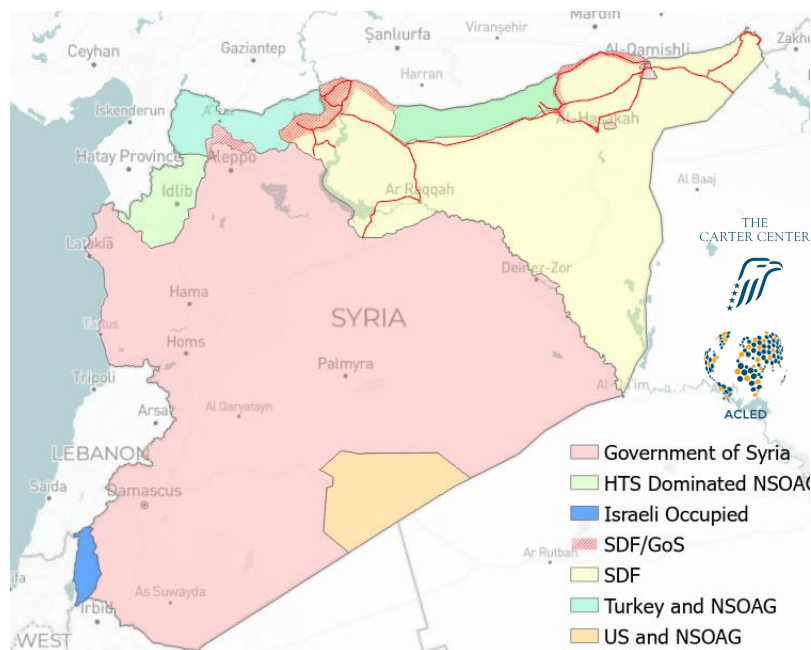


Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 7 June 2020. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see the footnote on page 2.

NORTHWEST SYRIA¹

During the reporting period, clashes between armed opposition groups on the one side against GoS armed forces and GoS-backed militias on the other side increased.² On 1 June, clashes erupted after the opposition armed group coalition Wa Harredh al Moa'mineen Operation Room fighters targeted GoS armed forces and GoS-backed militias on the Ruwaiha frontline in Idlib Governorate. GoS forces shelled opposition-controlled areas near Ruwaiha, in Idlib Governorate. Additional clashes in Ruwaiha took place the next day when GoS armed forces and GoS-backed militias fought against the Turkish-backed opposition's National Liberation Front (NLF). On 2 June, GoS armed forces and GoS-backed militias clashed with armed opposition groups in Banin, Idlib Governorate. The same day, additional clashes erupted in the village of Hersh Banin after GoS armed forces attempted to advance into opposition-controlled territory. On 6 June, GoS armed forces and armed opposition groups clashed in Fleifel and Salhiyeh in Idlib Governorate.

Turkish armed forces expanded their presence in southern Idlib Governorate. On 2 June, the Turkish-backed NLF declared the villages in the eastern area of Jabal Zawiya in Idlib Governorate a military zone.³ Following this announcement, Turkish armed forces established new military bases in southern Idlib Governorate. Two Turkish bases were built near the M4 highway in the villages of Al Qiyasat and Besnql.⁴ Additional Turkish military bases were reportedly built on 4 June in the towns of Marata and Marayan.⁵

During the reporting period, there were increased airstrikes by Israeli, GoS, and Russian air forces in the region. On 2 and 3 June, GoS and Russian air forces carried out airstrikes in Kabani town and the Al-Ghaab region in Latakia and Hama Governorates respectively. The airstrikes allegedly targeted the opposition's Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) and Hurras al-Din bases in the region.⁶ On 4 June, the Israeli air force attacked a GoS military base in Masyaf in Hama Governorate, which reportedly contained Iranian-backed militias.⁷ The next day, the Russian air force conducted an airstrike in Al-Sirmaniyah in Hama Governorate, the target remained unidentified. On 7 June, the GoS air force attacked armed opposition group bases in Jabal Al-Zawiya and the Al-Ghaab plain in Idlib and Hama

¹ Figure 1 denotes dominant actors' control and influence. Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah maintain a presence in Syrian government-controlled territory. Non-state organized armed groups (NSOAG), including the Kurdish dominated SDF and a variety of other groups operate in areas not under GoS control. The US continues to have a presence in the SDF-controlled east of the country. 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. Data collected is by the publicly available project [ACLED](#).

² Pro-GoS/GoS-backed militias refer to armed groups that are funded or in some way supported by GoS and coordinate or fight alongside GoS armed forces, but are not part of the state-run military.

³ Sarja, Ruwaiha, Banin, Kadoura, Mantaf, and Maarzif.

⁴ <https://nedaa-sy.com/news/20692>

⁵ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/390544>

⁶ <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/russian-syrian-warplanes-strike-foreign-jihadists-in-hama-latakia/>

⁷ <https://nedaa-sy.com/news/20709>

Governorates.⁸ Due to the increased air strikes, armed clashes, and shelling exchanges, civilians in southern Idlib Governorate were displaced.⁹

Turkish and Russian armed forces continued their joint patrols in Idlib Governorate. 2 joint patrols were reported during the week. On 2 June, the Turkish-Russian joint patrol along the M4 highway in Idlib Governorate reached Orm Eljuz village in opposition-held territory.¹⁰ On 4 June, the Turkish-Russian joint patrol reached the village of Kafr Shalaya to the southwest of Ariha city. This is the longest distance the joint patrol has covered to date.¹¹ The Turkish-Russian joint patrols were mandated by the 5 March ceasefire agreement and are required to reach Ayn Al Hawr village in opposition-controlled territory (see figure 2). To date, there have been 15 joint patrols in Idlib Governorate.

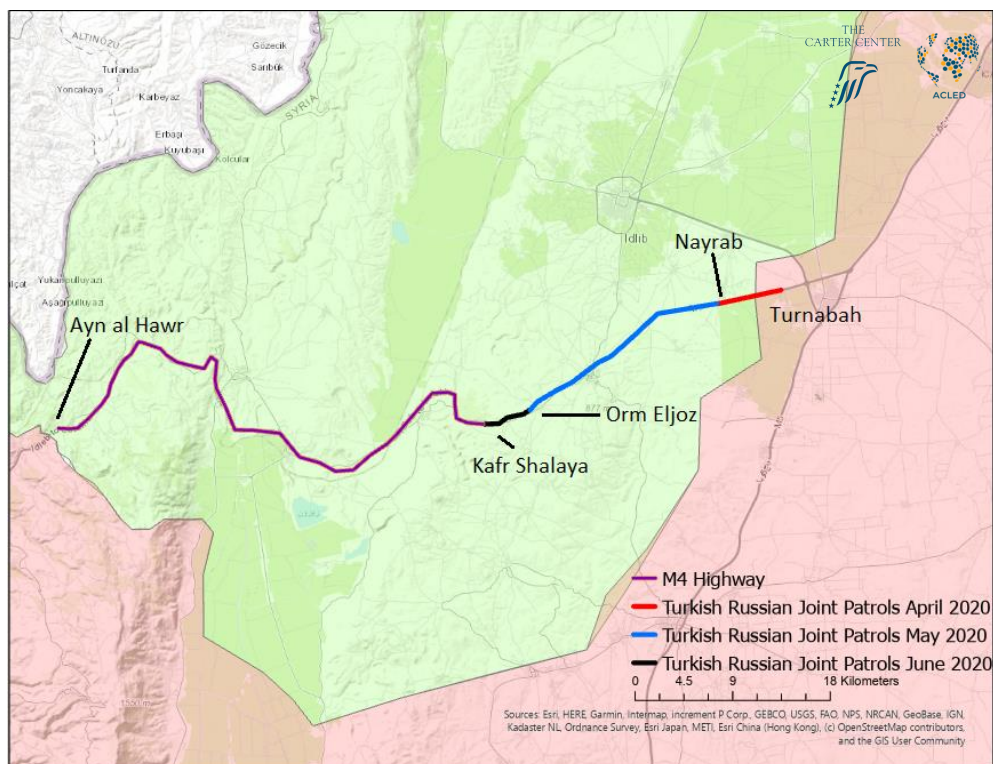


Figure 2: Turkish-Russian Joint Patrol on the M4 highway in Idlib Governorate. Data from ACLED and The Carter Center.

SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA

Attacks against GoS soldiers and former opposition fighters by unidentified gunmen continued across Dara'a Governorate. On 1 June, unidentified gunmen killed a GoS 4th division soldier on the Nahta – Eastern Maliha road near Nahta city in eastern Dara'a Governorate. The next day, gunmen opened fire on a GoS air force intelligence checkpoint near Hrak town in eastern Dara'a Governorate. On 3

⁸ <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-air-force-launches-heavy-strikes-on-jihadist-bases-near-turkish-border/>

⁹ <https://nedaa-sy.com/news/20679>

¹⁰ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/389975>

¹¹ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/390474>

June in Dara'a city, gunmen attacked a former opposition fighter, who escaped without injury. On 5 June, an unidentified gunman killed two GoS 4th division soldiers near Um Elmayathen in southeastern Dara'a Governorate.¹²

Attacks against civilians continued in Dara'a Governorate. On 2 June, unidentified gunmen abducted a young boy near Izra' city in northeastern Dara'a Governorate. On 4 June, a civilian was killed by unidentified gunmen near Aqraba in northwestern Dara'a Governorate. The same day, a Palestinian civilian was kidnapped from Mzeireb. On 6 June, two civilians were attacked by unidentified gunmen in separate incidents. Both civilians were injured.

During the reporting period, protests erupted in As-Swedia and Dara'a Governorates. On 7 June,¹³ protests erupted in As-Swedia Governorate calling for the removal of GoS President Bashar Assad and against deteriorating economic conditions.¹⁴ The same day, similar protests emerged in Tafas, Dara'a Governorate.¹⁵ Since 24 May, protests have been held in As-Swedia Governorate regarding the deteriorating economic conditions. During the reporting period, the Syrian Pound continued to lose value, leading to worsening economic conditions across the country. On 6 June, the Syrian pound was valued on the black market at 2,600 to a single American dollar.¹⁶

NORTHEAST SYRIA

Russian armed forces faced resistance as they attempted to establish a military base in the village of Qasir Dib in Al-Hassakah Governorate, within SDF-controlled territory. On 2 June, a Russian military patrol bringing materials to the base site was forced back after protests from village residents and the arrival of a US armed forces.¹⁷ On 3 June, Russian armed forces stationed some of its forces in the area,¹⁸ before withdrawing the next day after continued protests.¹⁹ This move comes among reports about Russian efforts to expand their presence in northeast Syria.²⁰

Attacks against Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighters continued during the reporting period. On 1 June, two unidentified gunmen killed a SDF fighter in Ibriha, Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. On 3 June, unidentified gunmen fired on a SDF military vehicle in Ar-Raqqa city in Ar-Raqqa Governorate. On 4 June, two attacks against SDF fighters were recorded in Ar-Raqqa Governorate. An unidentified armed group killed a SDF fighter in the Kdeiran town in the Ar-Raqqa countryside. SDF fighters clashed with the Turkish-backed opposition's Faylaq al Majd near the Tell Abiad frontline in Ar-Raqqa Governorate. The clashes took place after SDF fighters entered Turkish-held Operation Peace Spring (OPS) areas. On 6 June, an

¹² <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/390760>

¹³ <https://nedaa-sy.com/news/20752>

¹⁴ <https://suwayda24.com/?p=14210>

¹⁵ <https://nedaa-sy.com/news/20746>

¹⁶ <https://www.thenational.ae/world/syrian-currency-woes-demonstrations-break-out-in-druze-heartland-1.1030268>

¹⁷ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/390219>

¹⁸ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/390293>

¹⁹ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/390595>

²⁰ <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/russia-eyes-military-expansion-northeast-syria>

improvised explosive device (IED) exploded near a SDF checkpoint in Gharanij town in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.

The SDF continued its anti-ISIS raids across the region. On 2 and 4 June, SDF fighters raided the Al-Hol camp in Al-Hassakah Governorate, arresting several alleged ISIS women. On 4 June, the SDF launched a new anti-ISIS campaign in the region as a response to the increase in ISIS attacks. The new campaign is being conducted in conjunction with similar operations by Iraqi forces and the US-led Global Coalition Against Daesh in Iraq.²¹ The campaign will be focusing on the Badia desert region of Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, as well as securing the Syria-Iraq border.²² Following this announcement, the SDF reportedly mobilized thousands of its fighters and launched several raids in the Deir-ez-Zor countryside to arrest alleged ISIS fighters.²³

Attacks against civilians and agricultural fields by Turkish armed forces and Turkish-backed opposition groups continued in Al-Hassakah Governorate. On 2 June, Turkish-backed armed opposition groups set fire to crops and agricultural lands in Amiriyeh, Leylan, Madhba'a, Kherbet al Sha'er, and Umm al-Khair in the Ras al Ain district of Al-Hassakah Governorate. The same day, Turkish-backed factions imposed more taxes on farmers within Turkish-held areas. On 3 June, Turkish armed forces reportedly burned agricultural lands in Al-Qamishli along the Syrian-Turkish border in Al-Hassakah Governorate. Since 1 April 2020, Turkish armed forces and Turkish-backed opposition armed groups have engaged in 26 recorded instances of crop burning or agricultural land destruction in the region (see figure 3). 22 incidents have been recorded since 22 May 2020.

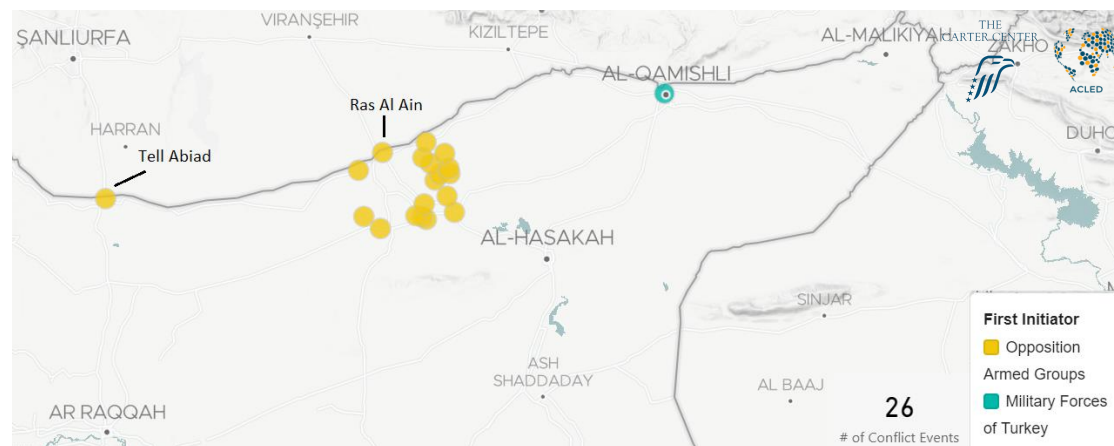


Figure 3: Incidents of agricultural/crop destruction and crop tax imposition by Turkish forces and militias between 1 April 2020 and 6 June 2020. Data from ACLED and The Carter Center.

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²¹ <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/major-anti-isis-operation-launched-in-syria-amid-resurgence-fears-1.1030034>

²² <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/19a71daf-310b-4d7f-9b94-456b300ccc7>

²³ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/390499>