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WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 19-25 April 2021

SYRIA SUMMARY

- Clashes continue between Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces and armed opposition groups in northwest Syria.
- GoS anti-aircraft missile lands near Dimona, Israel.
- Kurdish security forces capture a GoS-controlled neighborhood in Qamishli, Al-Hassakah Governorate.

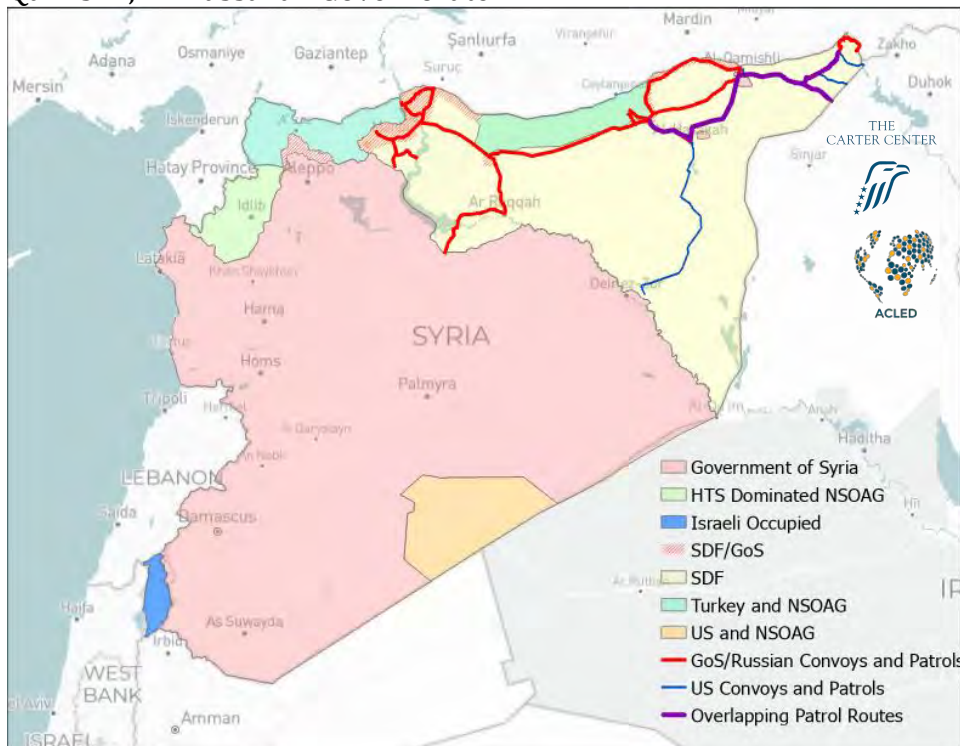


Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 25 April 2021.-NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see footnote 1.

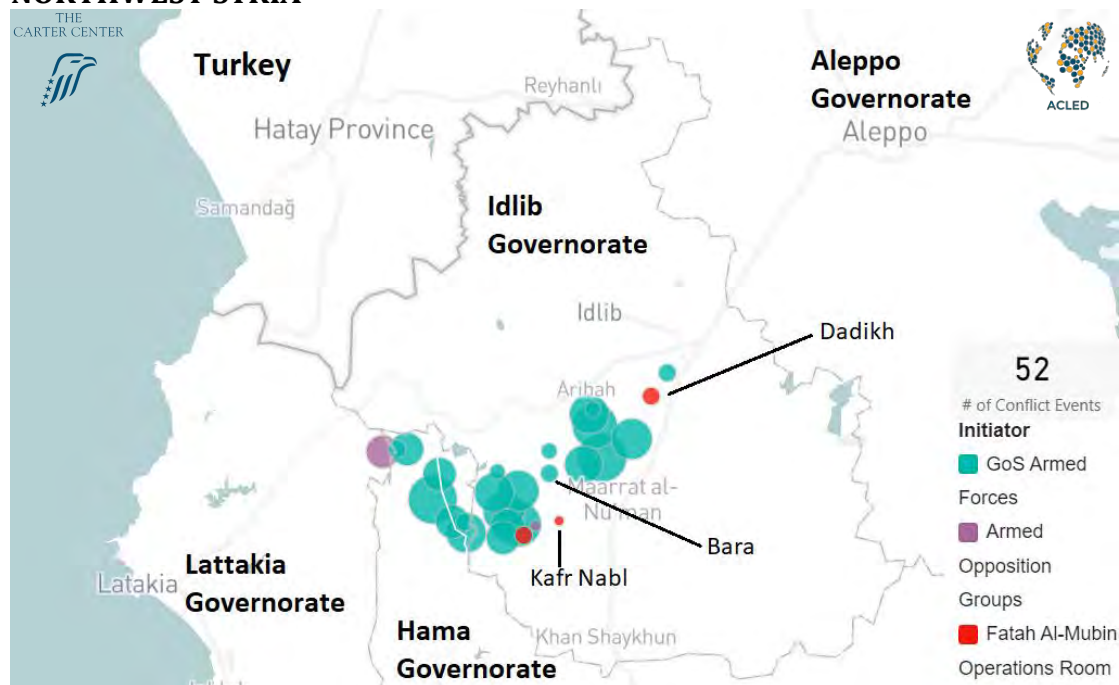
NORTHWEST SYRIA¹

Figure 2: Conflict events between armed opposition groups and GoS armed forces in northwest Syria 19-25 April 2021. Largest bubble represents 4 conflict events. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Conflict in Northwest Syria.

Violence continued in northwest Syria. With the 5 March 2020 ceasefire weakening, Russia assumed a more active role in hostilities in the region. Turkey continued to build up its military presence as well, while withdrawing its military bases from nearby Government of Syria (GoS)-controlled territory. Fighting between GoS armed forces and their allies on the one side and armed opposition groups on the other side has been concentrated primarily in the frontline areas near the Jabal al-Zawiyah area, Idlib Governorate.

22 April

The Fatah Al-Mubin Operations Room² shelled GoS armed forces positions in Kafr Nabl and Dadikh, Idlib Governorate.³

23 April

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 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 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 A coalition of armed opposition groups, including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, The Turkish-backed opposition National Liberation Front, and Jaysh al-Izza.

³ <https://npasyria.com/en/58084/>

GoS armed forces shelled the Fatah Al-Mubin Operations Room's military posts in Al-Bara and Kafr Oweid in the Jabal al-Zawiyah region, southeastern Idlib Governorate.⁴

25 April

Opposition snipers shot and killed a GoS 25th Division soldier near Kafr Nabl, southern Idlib Governorate.⁵ The same day, GoS armed forces shelled Ftireh and Kansara in the Jabal al-Zawiyah region.⁶

SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA

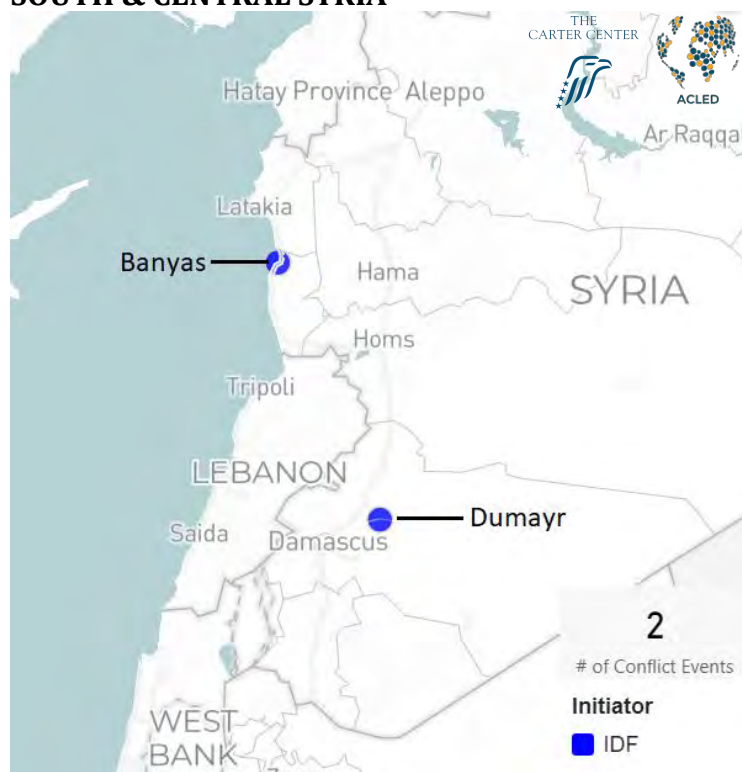


Figure 3: Israeli airstrikes in Syria 19-25 April 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Israeli Airstrikes

Israel regularly conducts airstrikes across Syria against Iranian and GoS targets, but rarely comments on its attacks.⁷⁸ Attacks targeting Israeli armed forces in the occupied Golan Heights often provokes response. In 2021, the pace of Israeli airstrikes has increased, particularly in cities near the Syria-Iraq border, Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.

22 April

During an Israeli airstrike against a GoS defense base in Dumayr, Rural Damascus Governorate, a GoS anti-aircraft missile landed near Dimona, Israel.⁹ According to the Israeli Defence Forces, this was an errant Syrian missile that was fired at one

⁴ <https://npasyria.com/en/58127/>

⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/5kh3cw3k>

⁶ <https://npasyria.com/en/58225/>

⁷ Iranian-backed militias refers to armed groups that are supported by Iran, like Hezbollah, and include militias from Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, or Pakistan.

⁸ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/432892>

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-56842502>

of the Israeli jets.¹⁰ Israel responded by bombing GoS anti-air missile batteries in undisclosed locations in Syria.¹¹

24 April

A suspected Israeli drone struck an Iranian oil tanker off the coast of Banyas, Tartous Governorate.¹² However, some Iranian news outlets denied that the ship was Iranian,¹³ with other sources reporting that the damage to the ship was due to an accident.¹⁴ The GoS Ministry of Oil claimed that a drone attacked the ship.¹⁵ In recent months, Israel and Iran have attacked each other's ships in the Mediterranean and Red Seas.¹⁶

NORTHEAST SYRIA

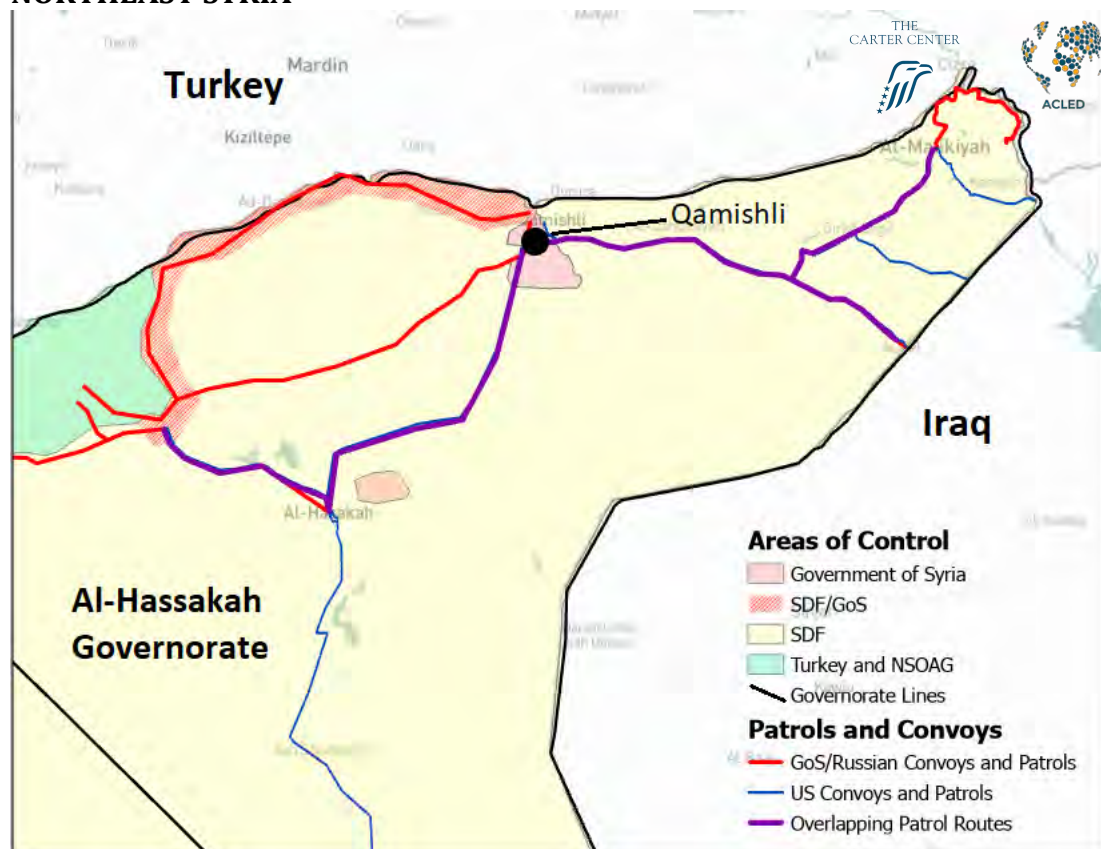


Figure 4: Qamishli city in Al-Hassakah Governorate. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Battle of Qamishli

GoS armed forces and the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) share control of key cities in Aleppo and Al-Hassakah Governorates. This has caused tension between the SDF and GoS soldiers, occasionally escalating into

¹⁰ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/rocket-alert-sirens-sound-near-dimona-blasts-felt-in-central-israel-jerusalem/>

¹¹ <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/alarms-sound-in-south-of-israel-665953>

¹² <https://npasyria.com/en/58222/>

¹³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/25/fire-extinguished-on-oil-tanker-off-syria-after-suspected-attack>

¹⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/3kavz4c4>

¹⁵ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/476803>

¹⁶ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/476730>

clashes between the two sides.¹⁷ Since December 2020, minor clashes and arrests have occurred between the SDF and GoS. This has resulted occasionally in sieges between the two sides. Although Russia has mediated these conflicts, the Kurdish Autonomous Administration (KAA) officials have accused Russia of attempting to blackmail Kurdish forces, especially over Ain Issa, Ar-Raqqa Governorate.^{18 19}

20 April

Clashes broke out between the SDF affiliate Asayish (Internal Security Forces) and the GoS-backed²⁰ National Defense Forces (NDF) after the former arrested an NDF commander in Qamishli, Al-Hassakah Governorate.²¹ An Asayish fighter was killed in the clashes.

22 April

A tribal leader who participated in the ceasefire negotiations in Qamishli was assassinated by unidentified gunmen. Pro-opposition and Kurdish sources blamed the NDF for the killing.²² Clashes continued as the Asayish captured several NDF checkpoints in the Al-Tai neighborhood of Qamishli.²³

23 April

Russian mediation continued as clashes between Asayish and NDF went on.²⁴

25 April

The Asayish announced a “permanent truce” mediated by Russia in Qamishli.²⁵ The Asayish said that residents forced to flee will be able to return.²⁶ The Asayish would remain in control of the Al-Tai neighborhood.²⁷

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

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¹⁷ <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2020/04/what-is-behind-tension-between-kurdish-led-nes-and-syrian-regime-in-qamishli/>

¹⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/4fy46kb4>

¹⁹ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-linked-attack-on-iranian-ship-seems-like-a-deliberate-escalation-1.9691972>, <https://www.ipost.com/breaking-news/syrian-oil-tanker-damaged-after-being-hit-by-suspected-drone-attack-666224>

²⁰ GoS-backed militias refer to armed groups that are funded or in some way supported by GoS and coordinate with or fight alongside GoS armed forces, but are not part of the state-run military.

²¹ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/475501>

²² <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/186355>

²³ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/476070>

²⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/2wd3b9cd>, <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/476181>

²⁵ <https://npasyria.com/en/58276/>

²⁶ <https://npasyria.com/en/58276/>

²⁷ <https://npasyria.com/en/58291/>