

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

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WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 27 MAY – 2 JUNE 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

- **NORTHWEST** | Government advances in the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS)-dominated Idlib pocket stalled again this week, while aerial and ground bombardments continued to impact indiscriminately non-combatants.
- **SOUTH & CENTRAL** | In addition to low-level attacks against government-aligned personnel in the south, a small arms fire attack against humanitarians was recorded in Saham al Golan town. Ongoing ISIS activity continued in central areas of the country, while Israeli activity was recorded twice this week.
- **NORTHEAST** | New Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) security operations were recorded along the Euphrates River Valley and southern Hassakeh Governorate this week. Despite this activity, small arms fire and improvised explosive device (IED) activity continued, including a fatal attack on the home of an SDF member.

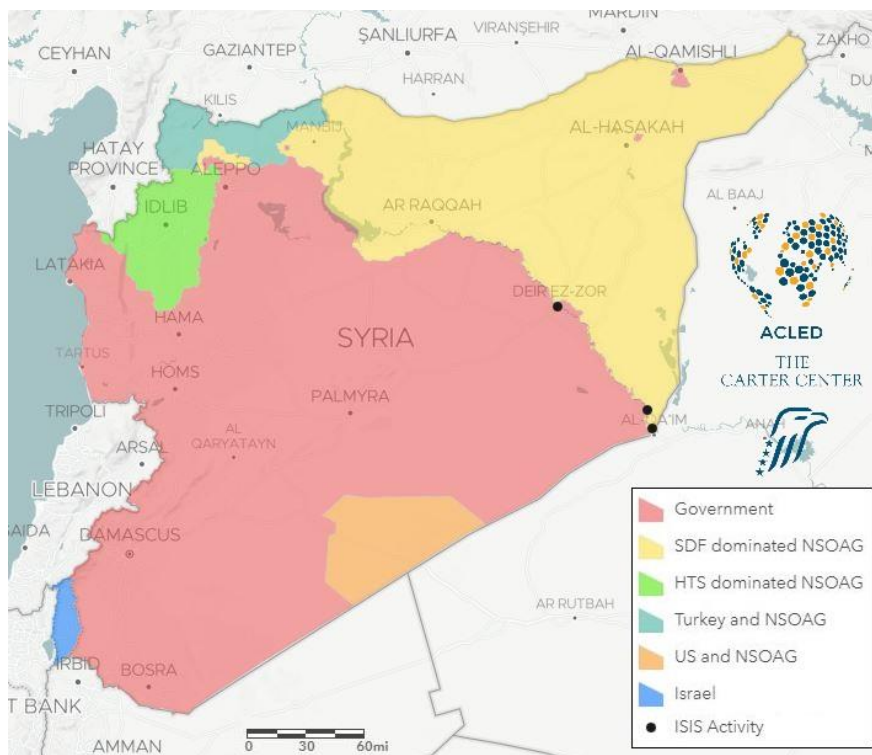


Figure 1: Dominant Actors' Area of Control and Influence in Syria as of 2 June 2019. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. For more explanation on our mapping, please see the footnote on page 2.

## NORTHWEST SYRIA

For a second consecutive week, Government of Syria's (GOS) advance in the southwest corner of the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS)-dominated Idlib enclave stalled with no further changes in territory. However, elevated levels of conflict activity continued with 288 events recorded (Figure 2), largely concentrated on the eastern and northern edges of Kafr Nabuda town and in Huwayz town area further west. These areas recorded 60% (175) of conflict events this week in the northwest.

Cases of government forces using internationally [prohibited](#) cluster [munitions](#) or incendiary [weapons](#) and were also recorded in internal areas, especially Kafr Sajnah and Al Bara towns.

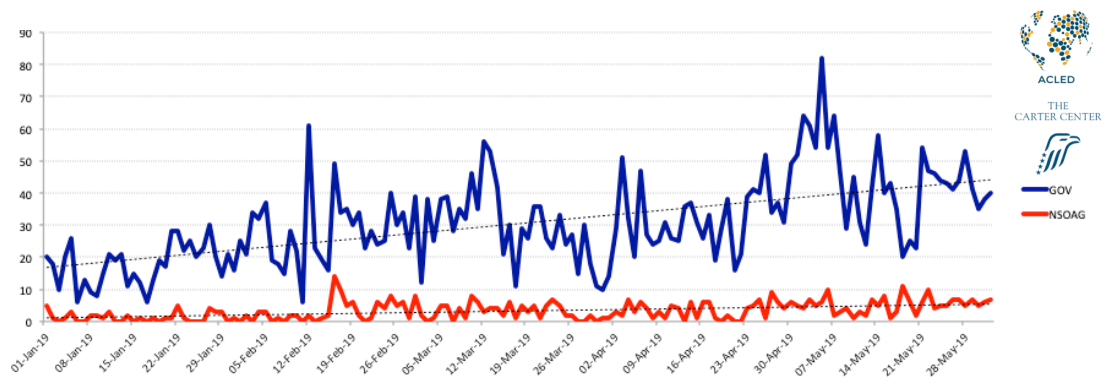


Figure 2: Government (blue) and NSOAG (red) Conflict Activity in Northwest Syria in 2019

The government-aligned al-Quds Brigade [announced](#) they had suffered at least 20 casualties in the previous week alone. Former opposition fighters from Daraa Governorate, who surrendered to the government last year and were incorporated into the Syrian military, were also [killed](#) in the fighting this week.

Further north, after a brief respite in conflict activity between 27 and 30 May, aerial strikes and barrel bombings resumed on Kabani town in Latakia Governorate. While the government launched an operation to capture the area nearly three weeks ago, no changes in territory have been recorded (Figure 3).

Just after the reporting period ended, on 3 June, government forces broke through frontlines north of Kafr Nabuda and reached Al Qasabiyeh town, where fighting continues at the time of writing. Further government troop movements were also recorded after the period ended, arriving near [Kabani](#) and [Hayaleen](#) towns.

HTS and other aligned groups continued shelling on government-dominated areas at a lower level this week. This included activity in Qamhana town (4 bombardments), As Suqaylabiyah town (3), Maghir (2) and Tal Salhab (2). Three

<sup>1</sup> Figure 1 denotes dominant actors' control and influence. Russia, Iran, Hezbollah and Iraqi militias maintain a presence in Syrian government-dominated territory. Non-state organized armed groups (NSOAG), including the Kurdish dominated, US backed SDF and a variety of other groups operate in areas not under Syrian government control. The NSOAG labeled area along the 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.

GRAD rocket bombardments and a weaponized drone [attack](#) was also recorded on the government-held Jub Ramlah helicopter base, the third military location in northern Hama in as many weeks to be targeted in such a way. HTS and other opposition groups also targeted further infrastructure this week, with a rocket bombardments striking close to Shaghaydilah Dam in southern Aleppo. This attack comes after the previous weeks' targeting of the Zahra Power Station.

HTS also launched a [counter attack](#) to government gains in Huwayz town last month, while further north, the group also conducted a [raid](#) behind government lines in the Qalaat Mountains.

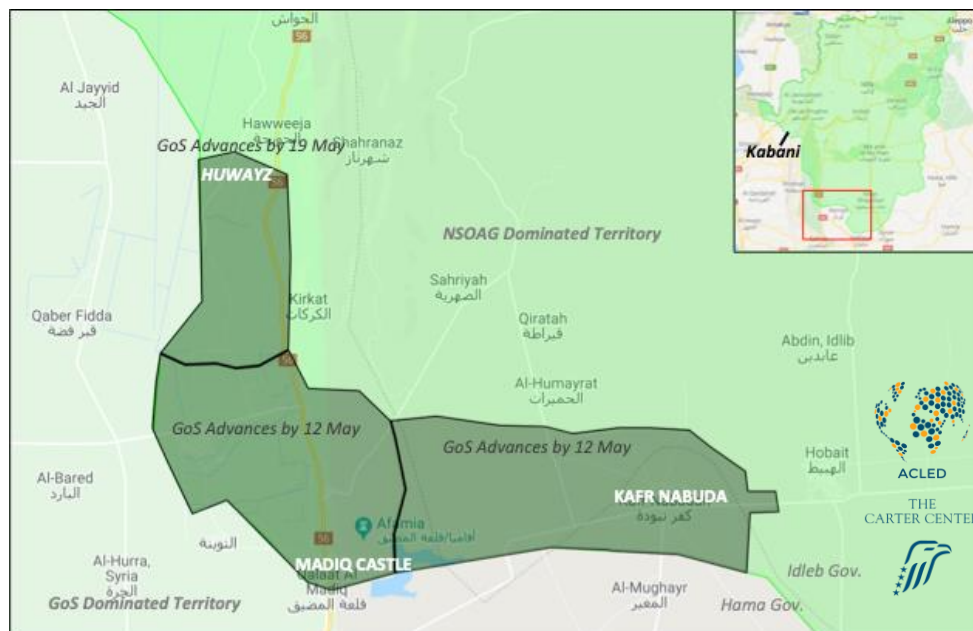


Figure 3: Areas taken by Government Offensive in the northwest of Syria as of 2 June 2019.

On the humanitarian front, civilian communities continued to be affected by the conflict. This included one event in Ariha town that saw a mother, wife and three of four children of an individual [killed](#) by an airstrike.

Over 75 prominent medical organisations and individuals supporting operations in Idlib<sup>2</sup>, including Nobel peace prize-winner Denis Mukwege and Nobel literature prize winner Peter Agre, [called](#) for a halt in Syrian and Russian aerial bombings against medical facilities this week. Stating that at least 25 hospitals have been directly impacted by airstrikes in the northwest in the previous month, the call stated that at least nine facilities had [shared](#) coordinates with Russia, via the UN, and were still struck. At least one NGO [stated](#) that they would no longer share coordinates of their facilities as that did not provide protection

Government bombardments resulted in crop fires in Idlib for a second week, especially near [Al Rai](#), [Kafr Zita](#), Kafr Sajnah and Khan Sheikhun towns, adding to long-term food security concerns for the area.

Russia announced it had [opened](#) a second humanitarian corridor near Suran

<sup>2</sup> For a full list, please see [here](#)

town this week, after a corridor near Abu Dhuhur opened last week. However, the corridor has not been used in large numbers according to [Human Rights Watch](#).

## SOUTH AND CENTRAL SYRIA

Low-level activity against government-aligned personnel and former opposition fighters continued this week. Attacks included former opposition-aligned Ababil Horan Battalion members targeting government soldiers accused of sexually assaulting women in Jassim town, and unidentified actors targeting a former ISIS-aligned Jaish Khalid Bin Walid member in Tafs Town.

In addition, humanitarian workers from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), an International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) affiliate, came under fire from an unidentified armed group during food distribution on 30 May in Sahm al Golan. According to reports, the incident occurred after SARC refused to provide the armed group with meals. No casualties were recorded.

This is the first record of a humanitarian organisation coming under fire in southern Syria since the previously IS held area was retaken by government forces in mid-2018.

In central areas of the country, ISIS activity against government forces continued. At the start of the week, ISIS fighters ambushed a 17<sup>th</sup> Division convoy near Fayda, southwest of Mayadin city. Later in the week, on 30 and 31 May, ISIS members [attacked](#) government patrols east of Tadmor City, and near Sokhneh town. On 1 June, ISIS members [ambushed](#) a government convoy along the Sokhneh to Deir Ez Zor road. Pro-government media [reported](#) as many as 100 personnel have been killed in 2019 so far from this type of activity (Figure 4).

ISIS attacks continue in the region despite a government's anti-ISIS [operation](#) along the border with Iraq, as well as further re-enforcements of government troops [sent](#) to the area this week. This is now the second contingent of reinforcements to arrive in the area within three weeks.

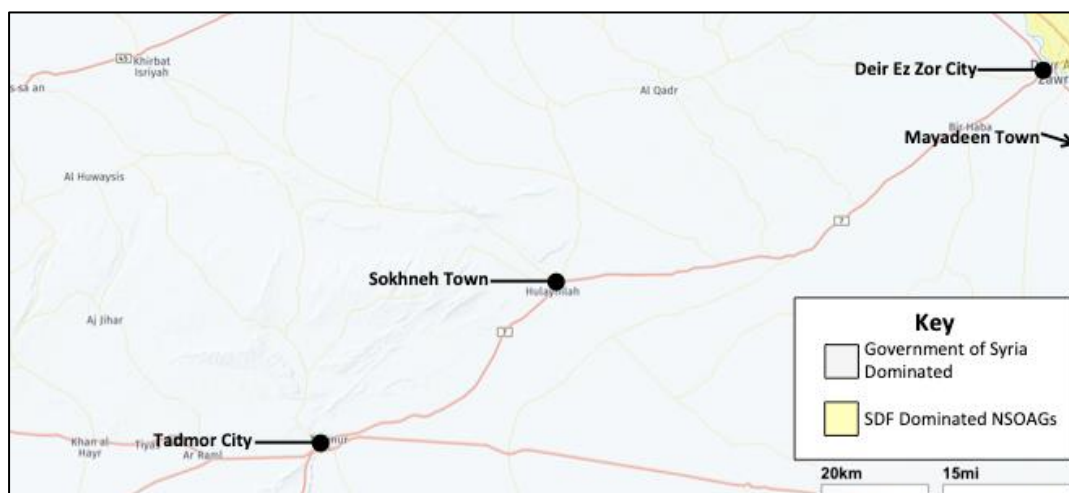


Figure 4: Locations in Central Syria of ISIS attacks in 2019.

Israeli action in Syria was recorded twice during the period after projectiles were fired from Syria towards the Israeli occupied Golan Heights. In the first

event on 27 May, Syrian Air Defence Forces fired an anti-aircraft missile towards an Israeli Defence Force (IDF) jet above the Golan, prompting the IDF to respond with retaliatory airstrikes against an air defence battery in the 121<sup>st</sup> Brigade base near Tal Sha'ar in Quneitra Governorate.

The second event occurred late on June 1, after two rockets were fired from the Khan al Shih areas towards the Israeli occupied Golan Heights without causing casualty or damage. The IDF responded by conducting airstrikes across multiple locations in Syria. At least five attacks in Quneitra Governorate, Khan El Shih, and Kisweh were [claimed](#) by the IDF.

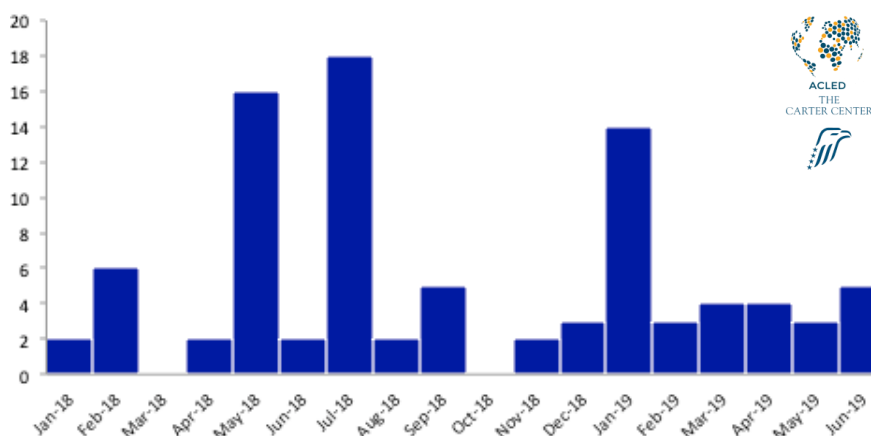


Figure 5: Israeli Defense Force Activity in Syria 2018 and 2019.

## NORTHEAST SYRIA

The frequency of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) security operations increased in the northeast this week, with six operations reported along the Euphrates River Valley, between Jneineh and Jurdi al Sharqi villages, and in the Markadah and Shadadah districts of southern Hasakah Governorate. One of these operations in Qana village involved the US-led coalition air forces to support the arrest operation.

The SDF also began enforcing its new military service campaign in the northeast this week, with arrests of civilian males recorded in Deir Ez Zor, Hassakeh and Raqqa Governorates. The recent activity came after the SDF Defense Committee [called](#) on all men between the ages of 18 and 28 to serve their “self-defense duty” on 14 May.

However, despite this activity, attacks against military actors along the Euphrates River Valley continued. Four small arms fire and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks were recorded in Al Jana, Al-Sa’ada and in Raqqa City, where an ISIS suicide vehicle born IED (SVBIED) detonated at al Naem roundabout, resulting in at least 10 casualties.

Unidentified gunmen also killed an SDF member in Sweidan Jazira near Thiban in his home on 31 May.

On 30 May, a mass grave was discovered in the grounds of a house at a former ISIS detention center in Shafa town. This is the seventh mass grave discovery recorded in 2019.