



WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 22 - 28 JULY 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

- **NORTHWEST** | No changes in frontlines in the Hayyat Tahrir Ash Sham (HTS)-dominated Idlib enclave were recorded this week. In the Turkish-backed Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch areas of northern Aleppo Governorate, an increase in improvised explosive device (IED) activity was recorded. Ongoing extortion/arrest operations also continued in the Turkish-backed region, with three events recorded.
- **SOUTH & CENTRAL** | Low-level attacks against government-aligned personnel continued this week with at least six attacks including a suicide bomb detonation in eastern Daraa Governorate. Explosive activity and armed robberies impacted Damascus.
- **NORTHEAST** | Despite US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)/Global Coalition against Daesh arrest operations, a rise in IED use was reported in northeast Syria. Protestors attacked and damaged a SDF building during a demonstration, while Turkish shelling impacted three areas of northern Syria this week.

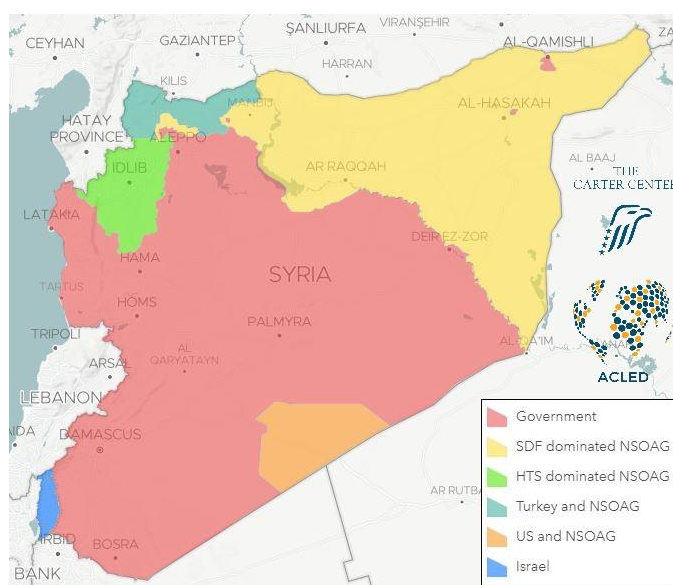


Figure 1: Dominant Actors' Area of Control and Influence in Syria as of 28 July 2019. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. For more explanation on our mapping, please see the footnote on page 2.

## NORTHWEST SYRIA

Despite a government offensive on Tal Mallah at the end of the reporting period, frontlines remained static between government territory and the Hayyat Tahrir Ash Sham (HTS)-dominated Idlib enclave (Figure 2). Government aerial and ground bombardments continued to impact the pocket, with 273 incidents recorded this week including [reports](#) of internationally prohibited cluster munitions (Figure 3).

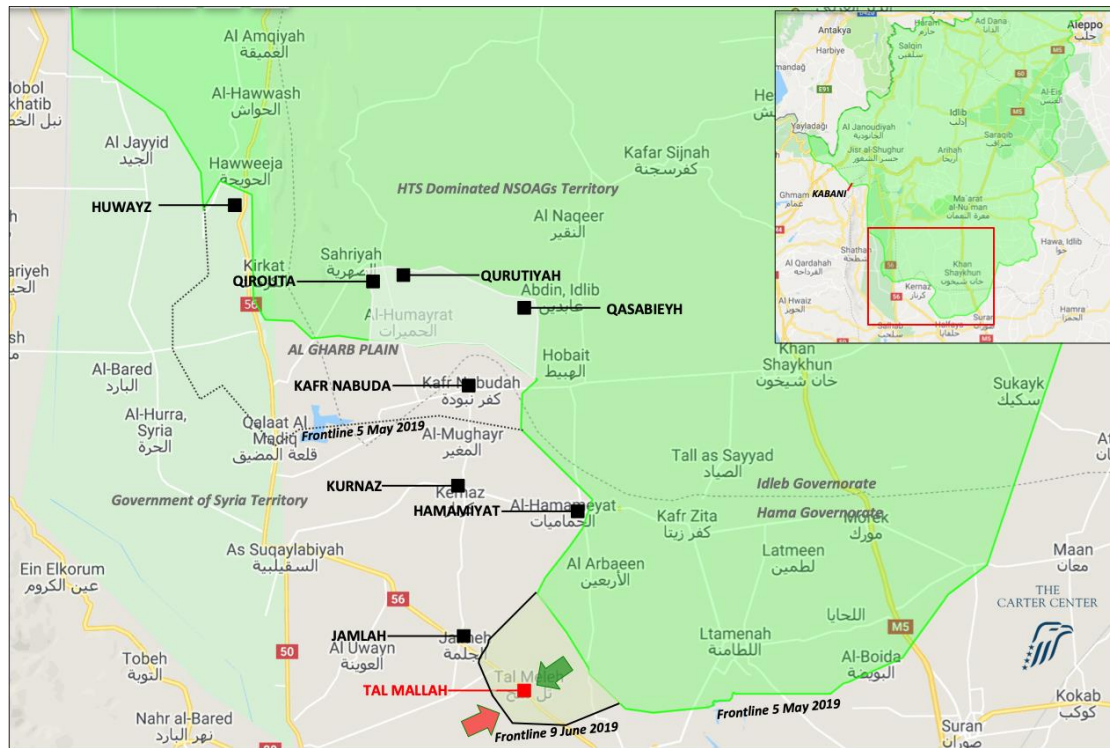
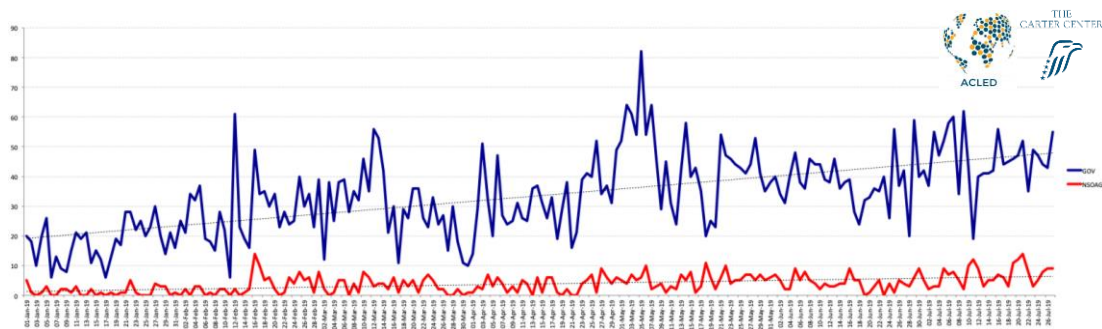


Figure 2: Current Frontlines in the northwest of Syria as of 28 July 2019 with Qasabiye town highlighted in Red.



<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.

*Figure 3: Government and NSOAG (including HTS) Conflict Activity in northwest Syria 2019.*

In areas away from frontlines, various non-state armed groups, including Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS), launched at least 36 artillery and rocket bombardments on 20 government-dominated areas.<sup>2</sup> A pro-opposition [video](#) also showed the HTS-aligned Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) working with Ansar al Tawhid to launch multi-launched rocket systems and artillery onto government positions in northern Hama Governorate. The Russian Center for Reconciliation and Conflicting Sides also [reported](#) bombardments on Al Hamdaniyah and the Said al Dayiya districts of Aleppo City.

Further north, in the Turkish backed Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch areas of northern Aleppo Governorate, an increase in improvised explosive device (IED) activity was recorded this week. Eight incidents were recorded, including five detonations on 27 July, in Al Bab, Aghtrin (x2), Ghandorah, Tel Battal, Azzaz, Jarablus, and Basuta towns. Explosive activity is common in the region, on average occurring 10 times per month in 2019.

Ongoing extortion/arrest operations also continued in the Turkish-backed region, with the arrest on 25 July of a medical doctor in Afrin City by an unidentified group, which demanded \$3000 from his family for his release. The Sultan Murad Division and Sultan Suleiman Brigade, which are aligned with the Turkish-backed National Liberation Front (NLF), also confiscated homes in Darkair village (Ma'btali sub-district), over accusations that the residents were working with the People's Protections Units (YPG). They also forced payment from the operators of farm vehicles conducting harvests in Baju sub-district and confiscated a sumac spice harvest from residences in Kakhray village (Ma'btali sub district). As previously [reported](#), such activity has increased since May.

## **SOUTH AND CENTRAL SYRIA**

Low level attacks against government and aligned personnel in southern Syria continued this week. At least two attacks were recorded in Jasim and Ash Shajarah against a local Baath Party Politician and a 5<sup>th</sup> Corps member, while open sources reported attacks in [eastern](#) As Sweida Governorate, [Daraa City](#), [Tal Shihab](#), [Tassil](#), and [Yaddudeh](#).

One attack involved a suicide bomber detonating his device at a Syrian Military Checkpoint in Mleitat Atash town, northeast of Daraa City on 27 July. A day later, ISIS [claimed](#) the attack, this is only the second attack the group has claimed in southern Syria since their former areas of dominance were recaptured by government forces in August 2018. It is also only the second suicide attack to occur in southern Syria in the past 12 months.<sup>3</sup> Similar to the other attack claimed by ISIS, this week's event also occurred outside their previous area of dominance

<sup>2</sup> Including Abu Thohur (1), Al Shari'ah (1), Aleppo City (4), As Suqaylabiyah (1), Aslieh (1), Ayn Rayhaniyah (1), Ayn Sulaymu (1), Brideej (1), Ein Al Kurum (1), Hokora (1), Hama Airbase (2), Jeb Ramlah (1), Jurin (3), Kafr Hud (1), Karnaz (1), Lower Shateha (1), Masyuf (1), Naurat Shathah (1), Qalat Mirza (1) and Shatheh (2),

<sup>3</sup> After a detonation in As Sweida City earlier this month on 3 July.

(Figure 4).

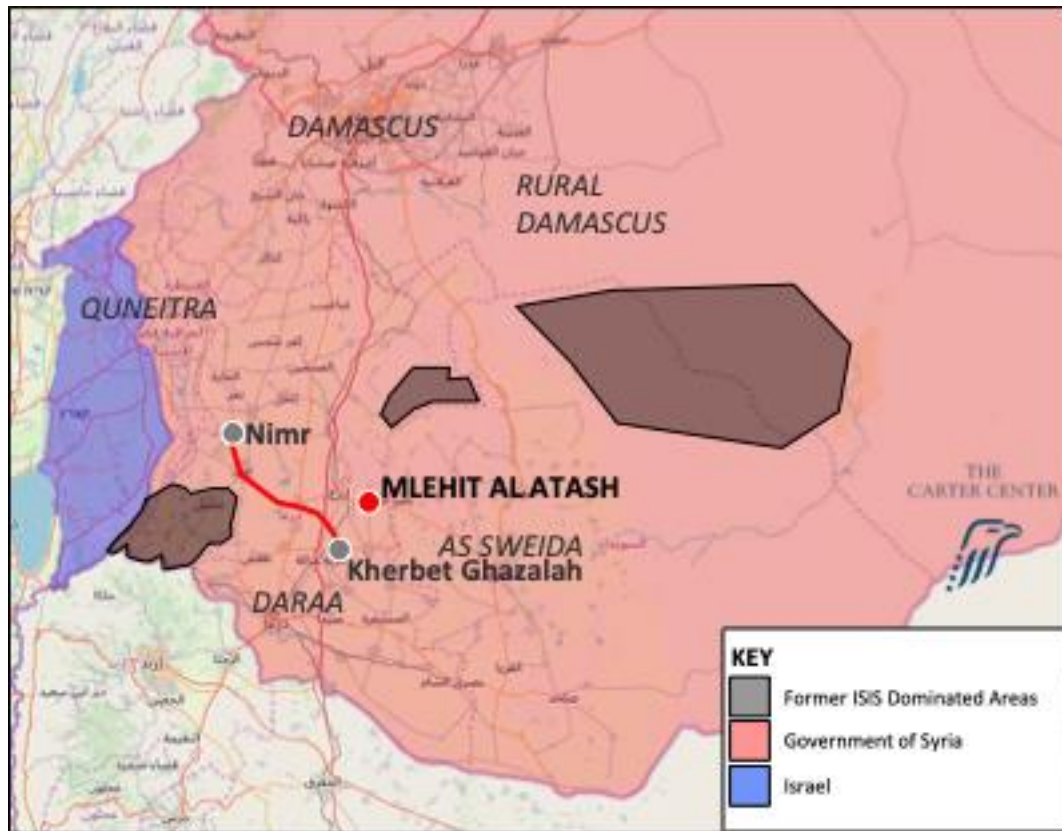


Figure 4: Former ISIS dominated areas in southern Syria (black) and locations of claimed attacks in 2019 (red).

Explosive device activity also impacted southern Damascus this week. On 22 July an IED placed in a vehicle detonated in the Nahr Eshe area, in the north of the Kadam neighbourhood. It was the eighth explosive device to impact the capital this year following an attack on 27 June in the Mezzeh area of the city. As previously [reported](#), such activity has increased since April.

Both [ISIS](#) and the newly established [Saraya Qasioun](#) claimed the attack that targeted a National Defence Force (NDF) commander. However, both groups have made unreliable claims of attacks in the capital in the [past](#).

Also in the capital, one of two armed robberies targeting the same money transfer company was recorded in Damascus this week. On the afternoon of the 25 July, armed men robbed the Al Haram Money Transfer Company in the Qudsaya suburb north of Damascus City. During the incident, the branch manager was killed and two civilians injured. Another armed robbery targeted an Al Haram Money Transfer Company branch in the Jableh area of Latakia Governorate on the same day.

In central areas of the country, ongoing ISIS activity continued to target government patrols this week. At least three ambushes took place in the Al Mayadin desert on 21, 26, and 27 July that resulted in over 20 government

casualties.

The grave of 13 government soldiers was found near the road between Nawa and Shiekh Saad. Reports suggest that they were killed six years prior. It is the second reported case of a mass grave in southern Syria after one was found containing 16 government soldiers in Sahwa town, near Msiefra, in June 2018.

## NORTHEAST SYRIA

US-Backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) continued their arrest operations in the northeast of Syria this week. Three events were recorded in Areesheh, Jul al Ashra, and Ras al Ein villages, while joint SDF/Global Coalition against Daesh troops conducted four operations in Abu Hamam, Kishkiyeh, Raqqa City, and southern Hassakeh Governorate.

Despite this activity, ongoing small arms fire and IED attacks against SDF personnel continued. At least 17 such events were recorded this week in Abu Hardoub, Basira, Dashishah, Jurneyyeh, Kasrat Faraj, Markada, Msheirfeh, Nweijet al Abd, Omar Old Field, Raqqa City, Shadadah (x3), Shiheil (x2), Tal Hmeis, and Thiban (x2), seven of which involved IED attacks. In the previous month, an increase in the use of IEDs against military actors in SDF dominated areas of the northeast has been detected, continuing an upward trend this year (Figure 5).

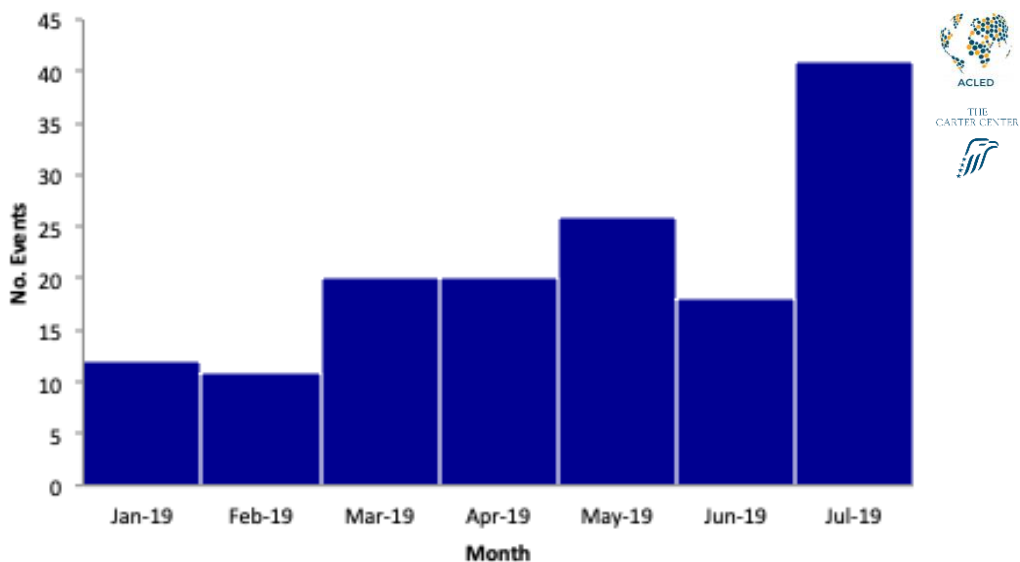


Figure 5: IED use in SDF dominated areas of the northeast of Syria in 2019

On 24 July residents from Basira demonstrated against SDF arrest policies after a man from the town died in SDF custody a day earlier. Some protesters attacked and damaged an SDF building in the town. This brings the total number of demonstrations against SDF policies in the northeast in 2019 to 38, nearly a third (11) of which have occurred in or around Basira (Figure 6).

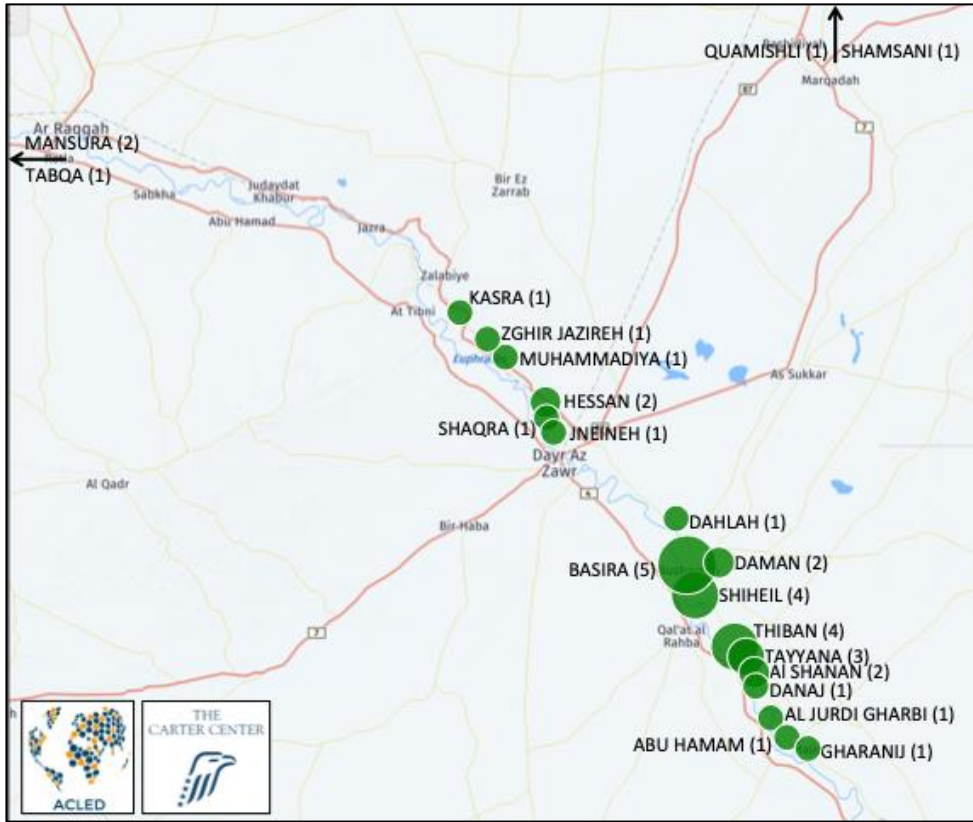


Figure 6: Recorded demonstrations against the SDF in the northeast of Syria in 2019

Elsewhere, Turkish forces in Turkey fired into Syria three times at the start of the week; shelling the Tal Allouk and Ras al Ain areas of northern Hassakeh Governorate as well as opening fire at a vehicle near Ain al Arab in Aleppo Governorate. There have only been seven recorded cases of Turkish military forces firing into Syria prior to these attacks, occurring in July (1), May (2), April (2) and January (2). Previous activity has focused on the Ras al Ain sub-district that recorded 4 of the 10 events in 2019. The remaining six events were split between five other sub districts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tall Abiad (2), Ain al Arab (1), Malikiyyeh (1), Lower Shyookh (1) and Hassakeh (1)