



WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 24 - 30 May 2021

**SYRIA SUMMARY**

- Clashes continue between the Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces and armed opposition groups in northwest Syria.
- President Bashar Assad is re-elected for a fourth presidential term.
- The predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) escalate conscription campaign.

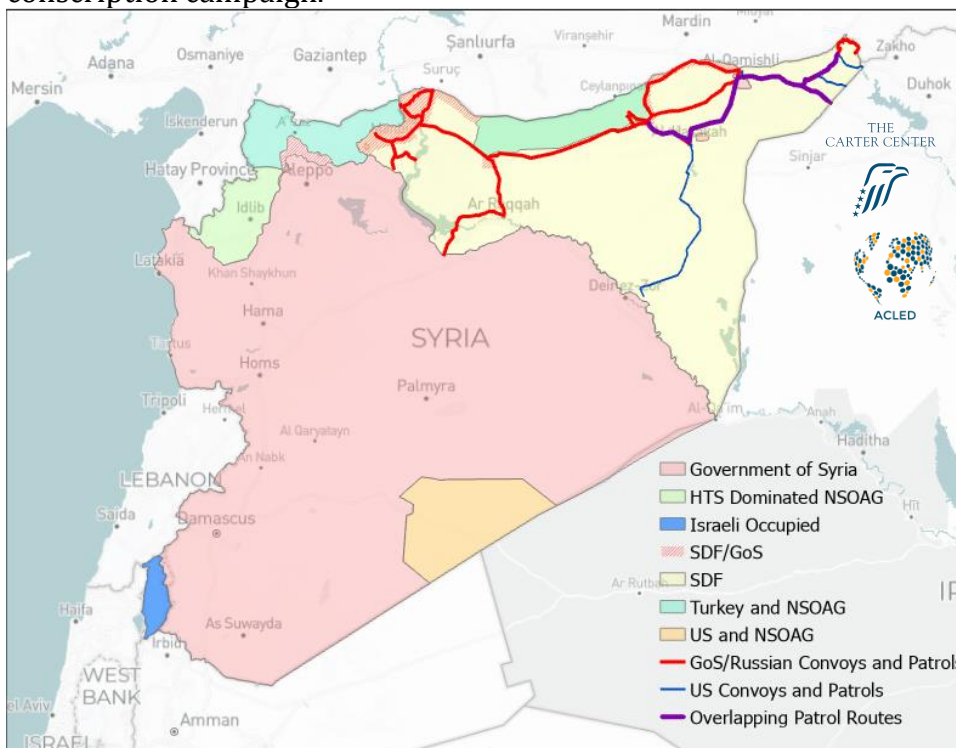


Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 30 May 2021.-NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see footnote 1.

**NORTHWEST SYRIA<sup>1</sup>**

Figure 2: Conflict events between GoS armed forces and armed opposition groups between 24 – 30 May 2021. Largest bubble represents 3 conflict events. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

**Conflict in Northwest Syria.**

Violence continued in northwest Syria with Russia assuming a more active role in hostilities in the region. Turkey continued to build up its military presence as well. 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.

**25 May**

An opposition Ansar Al-Tawhid sniper killed a GoS soldier near the Dar al Kabira frontline, Idlib Governorate.<sup>2</sup>

**26 May**

GoS armed forces shelled frontline villages in the Jabal al-Zawiyah area, southern Idlib Governorate.<sup>3</sup>

**27 May**

<sup>1</sup> 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](#).

<sup>2</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/x4tmf9h6>

<sup>3</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/898uy5ch>

GoS armed forces bombed villages in the Al-Ghab Plain, northern Hama Governorate, setting agricultural farms on fire.<sup>4</sup> The opposition Syrian Civil Defense alleged that GoS deliberately targeted the agricultural areas during harvest season.<sup>5</sup>

## SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA

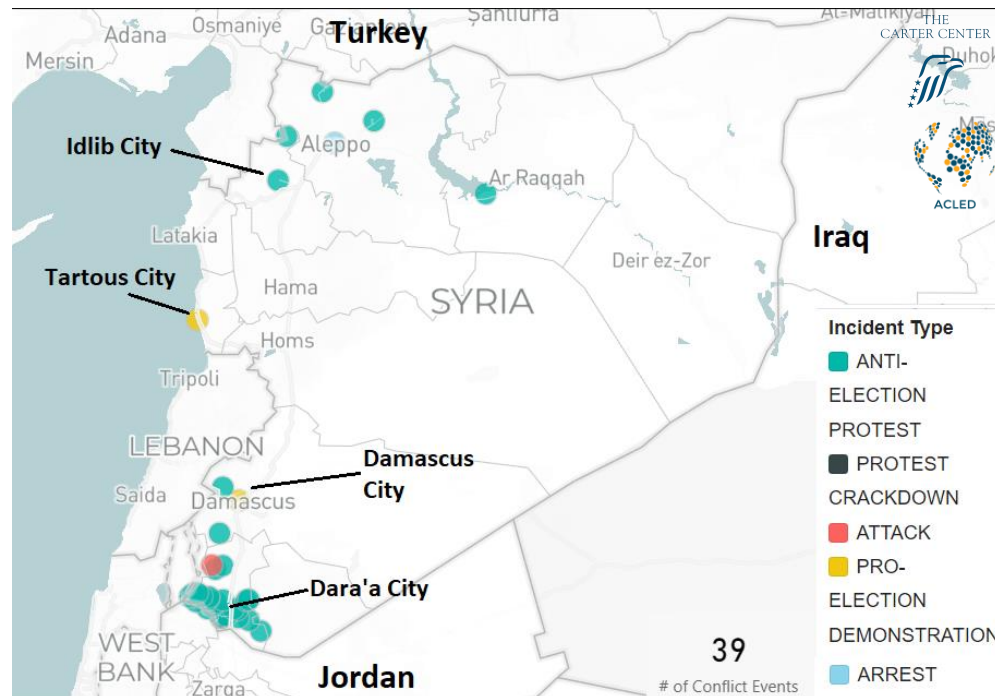


Figure 3: Conflict events related to the Syrian Presidential Election between 24 – 30 May 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

### Presidential Election in Syria

The presidential elections in Syria took place on 26 May 2021 in GoS-controlled territory. The Kurdish Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) criticized the election as contrary to UNSC resolution 2254.<sup>6</sup> The election was criticized by western countries and opposition groups as neither free nor fair. The Kurdish Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) criticized the election as contrary to UNSC resolution 2254.<sup>7</sup> However, analysts argued that the election served to assert and legitimize the authority of the government,<sup>8</sup> especially in areas that were retaken since the 2014 election. The election took place during a severe economic crisis affecting the country, as well as a standstill in the civil war.

### 26 May

The election was held in GoS-controlled territory. President Bashar Assad voted in the city of Douma, Rural Damascus Governorate, the site of the 2018 chemical

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/484387>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/484387>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/240520211>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/240520211>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/06/01/yes-assad-won-reelection-last-week-syrias-elections-serve-another-purpose/>

attack.<sup>9</sup> Protests criticizing the election were reported in Dara'a and Idlib Governorates.<sup>10</sup> The poll was canceled in some towns in Quneitra and Dara'a Governorates after repeated threats against Baath Party members.<sup>11</sup>

### 27 May

Parades celebrating the election outcome were reported in Damascus city<sup>12</sup> and in Tartous city.<sup>13</sup> GoS Air Force Intelligence and State Security reportedly arrested 14 civilians in Aleppo city for not participating in the elections.<sup>14</sup> Protests against the election were reported across Dara'a Governorate.<sup>15</sup> GoS armed forces violently crackdown on an anti-election demonstration in Dara'a city.<sup>16</sup>

### 28 May

Bashar Assad was declared the winner of the election, winning 95% of the vote.<sup>17</sup> Russia, Iran, China, and Venezuela congratulated President Bashar Assad on his election victory.<sup>18</sup> The UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen said that the election was not part of the political process established by UNSC resolution 2254, and reiterated the need for UN-administered election.<sup>19</sup>

## NORTHEAST SYRIA

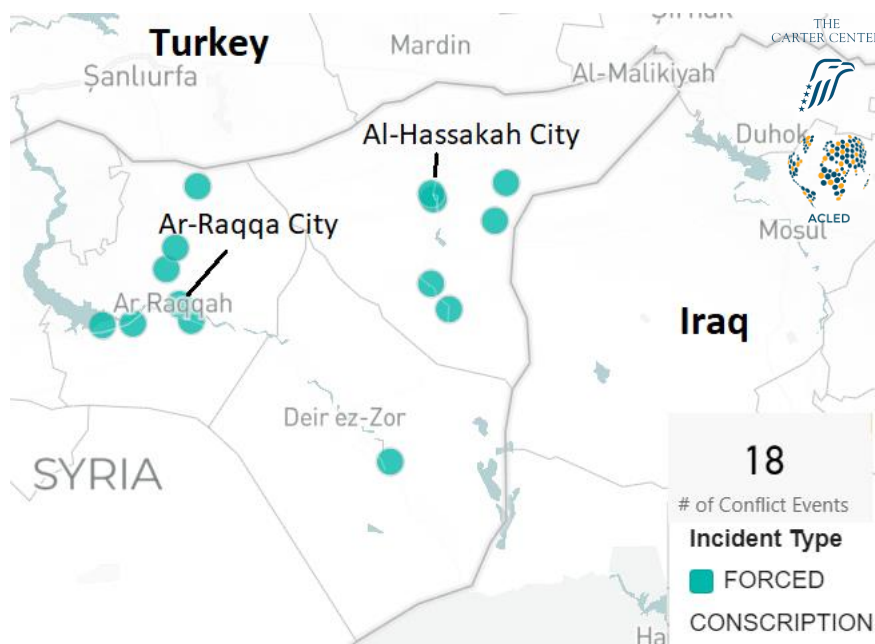


Figure 4: Forced conscription in SDF-controlled territory between 24 -30 May 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/484220>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/484362>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/484177>

<sup>12</sup> <https://sana.sy/en/?p=235513>

<sup>13</sup> <https://sana.sy/en/?p=235486>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/484514>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/484555>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/484581>

<sup>17</sup> <http://sana.sy/en/?p=235531>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/484672>

<sup>19</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/united-nations-special-envoy-syria-geir-pedersen-briefing-security-6>

## Conscription in Northeast Syria

In 2019, the Kurdish Autonomous Administration (KAA) adopted a controversial conscription law for territories under its control.<sup>20</sup> The Syrian Network For Human Rights has claimed that the conscription of teachers has deprived half a million students of a proper education.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, people in the region have argued that the forcible recruitment and arrests by the SDF have disrupted economic life.<sup>22</sup> The KAA has also complained about the continuing use of GoS curriculum in schools in the area. Teachers have argued that the use of GoS curriculum is necessary for purposes of recognition of credentials by other educational institutions in Syria.<sup>23</sup>

### 26 May

The predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) established new checkpoints in Ar-Raqqa city and arrested young men for avoiding conscription.<sup>24</sup>

### 27 May

The SDF reportedly arrested 150 men in Ar-Raqqa city and nearby villages for avoiding conscription.<sup>25</sup>

### 28 May

The SDF reportedly forcibly conscripted young men in Ar-Raqqa city, Al-Hassakah City, Deir-ez-Zor city, and in Manbij, eastern Aleppo Governorate.<sup>26</sup>

For earlier weekly conflict summaries, please click [here](#). For an interactive map of historical areas of control in Syria, please click [here](#).

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<sup>20</sup> <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2021/02/conscription-by-sdf-agonizing-raqqa-residents/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://sn4hr.org/blog/2021/02/19/55948/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2021/02/syria-conscription-sdf-is-army-volunteer.html?emailaddress=hariprasad%40gwu.edu#>

<sup>23</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/ym6qcme3>

<sup>24</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/23nx65zk>

<sup>25</sup> <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/189521>

<sup>26</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/9jd27k7w>