

The Carter Center

# Special Report

Internal Conflict in Northwest Syria  
| Sep 2018 – Aug 2019

THE  
CARTER CENTER



Syria Project  
October 2019

# Table of Contents

- SUMMARY..... 1**
- 1 | INTRODUCTION..... 1**
- 2 | FREQUENCY OF ATTACKS ..... 3**
- 3 | GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF CONFLICT..... 3**
- 4 | ATTACK TYPES..... 5**
- 5 | IMPACT OF CONFLICT ..... 5**
- 6 | CONCLUSION..... 7**
- APPENDIX 1 | ARMED GROUPS IN NORTHWEST SYRIA..... 0**

## SUMMARY

From September 2019 through August 2019, conflict between armed opposition groups within the northwest of Syria has declined, especially following the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS)<sup>1</sup> takeover of Idleb in January 2019 and the Government of Syria (GoS) offensive that began in May 2019. However, at least 18 locations in the Idleb enclave have witnessed persistent internal violence throughout the year, suggesting that deep-rooted tensions between various groups remain.

At least 37 armed groups and sub-groups have participated in intra-opposition violence in the northwest in the past year. These groups can be classified into five categories: (1) HTS and allied groups (54% of activity), (2) Turkish-backed National Liberation Front (NLF) and allied groups (37%), (3) ISIS-aligned groups (5%), (4) Al Qaeda-linked Hurras al Din and allied groups (2%), and (5) independent/other groups (2%).

The growing complexity of the security environment in the northwest should be of concern. With non-HTS aligned armed groups withdrawing into HTS-dominated areas following the Syrian government offensive that began in May, untangling the various groups still active in the northwest is becoming increasingly difficult. The continuing presence of ISIS and Al Qaeda-linked Hurras al Din in the region further complicates the security environment.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The Government of Syria (GoS) takeover of the city of Khan Sheikhun, and the southern portion of the Idleb enclave at the end of August 2019, marked a turning point in the opposition-held northwest Syria. The Idleb enclave is an approximately 5,880 km<sup>2</sup> area in northwest Syria, stretching across Idleb Governorate and parts of Latakia, Hama, and Aleppo Governorates. It is dominated by Hayyat Tahrir al Sham (HTS), but contains hundreds of other opposition groups, as well as civil society and humanitarian actors (Figure 1).

The Idleb enclave is also home to an estimated 3 million people, half of whom are displaced from other areas of Syria. This number was bolstered between 2016 and 2018, when tens of thousands of opposition fighters and their families from various parts of opposition-held Southern Syria and Homs City were relocated to Idleb Governorate, after refusing terms of surrender to GoS during political negotiations. These agreements are widely known as “reconciliation” agreements. The northwest also contains a “deconfliction zone” that was established by a Memorandum of Stabilization Agreement in September 2018 between Russia and Turkey. As part of this agreement that aimed to reduce conflict in the northwest, Turkey established 12 military observation posts around its boundaries to monitor the implementation of the agreement. However, the GoS offensive in the southern portions of the Idleb enclave in May 2019 resulted in one Turkish military observation post in Morek being isolated from the Idleb enclave, after GoS forces retook the areas around it from

---

<sup>1</sup> HTS was formed in January 2017 by Jabhat Fatah ash Sham (JFS), Jaish al Sunna, Liwa al Haqq, and parts of Ansar al Din and Nour al Din al Zinki. Jabhat Fatah ash Sham was a long-time affiliate of al-Qaeda (under its previous name Jabhat al Nusra) until late 2016 when the group announced that it was no longer affiliated with al-Qaeda.

various groups.

These parts of the southern Idlib enclave had remained an exception from the HTS-dominated northwest after the group’s takeover of large parts of Idlib and western Aleppo Governorates in early 2019.<sup>2</sup> Groups in this area ranged from the Turkish-backed National Liberation Front (NLF), a conglomeration of divergent groups including former Free Syrian Army groups, Ahrar al Sham and former HTS aligned groups such as Nour al Din al Zinki, to at least three US designated terrorist organizations; Jabhat al Nusra (part of HTS), Hurras al Din, and ISIS.

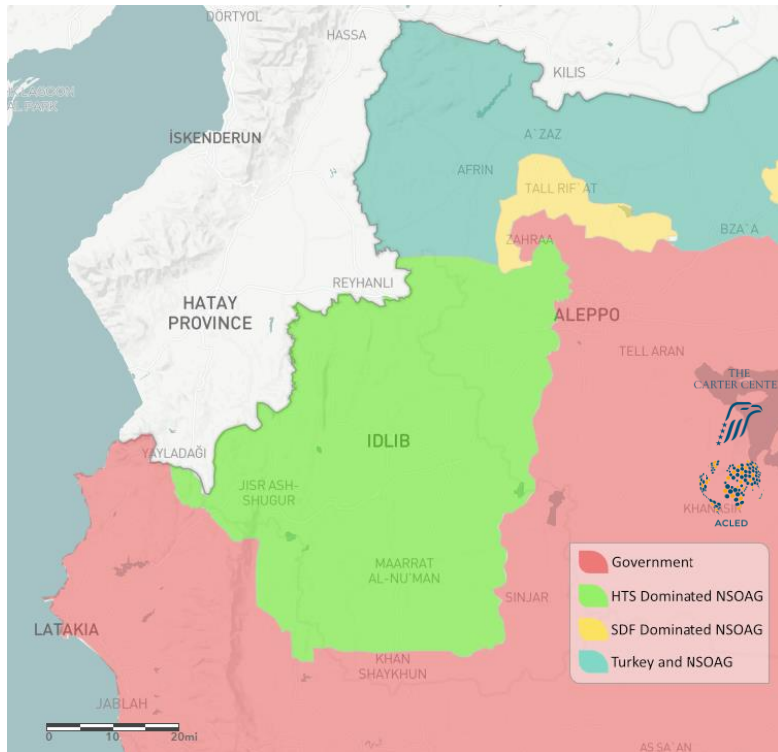


Figure 1: Northwest Syria with the Idlib enclave highlighted in light green as of 31 September 2019. Data from TCC and ACLED.

This report provides an overview of the internal conflict dynamics of the various groups present in the Idlib area using data collected by The Carter Center’s Syria Project and publicly available data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED)<sup>3</sup> through August 2019. While the Carter Center has been tracking conflict activity in Syria since 2012, the information collected does not represent the totality of conflict events and related activity. This is due to the restrictive reporting environment and the limitations of data collection during an ongoing war. Therefore, figures presented in this report should be viewed as a minimum representation rather than an exact depiction of events.<sup>4</sup>

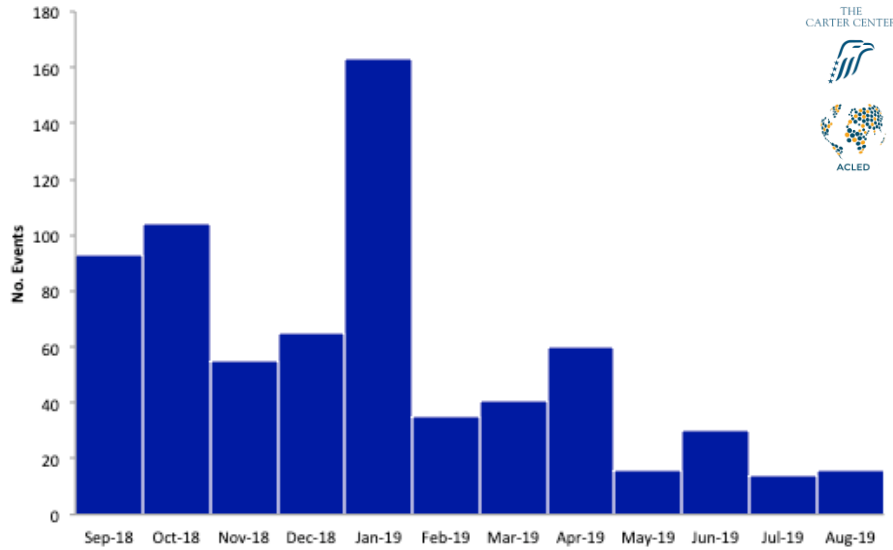
<sup>2</sup> For example, Khan Shieikhun was heavily dominated by Jaish al Izza, while Ahrar ash Sham, previously held frontlines around Morek town.

<sup>3</sup> ACLED. (2019). “Data Export Tool.” [acleddata.com/data](https://acleddata.com/data).

<sup>4</sup> Also note that the following incident types from ACLED’s data collection have not been included in this study: aerial bombardments, agreements, assaults/brawls, change to armed group, demonstrations, arrests/detentions, headquarters established, mass graves discovered, movement of forces, non-violent transfer of territory / government regain territory, population displacement, property destruction/looting, protests, riots, security operations/measures, landmine, and unexploded ordnance events. Also, frontline conflict, conflict events initiated by the government of Syria or its allies (i.e. Russia and Iran), Turkey, the US or Israel, as well as any events initiated from HTS or other groups within the northwest onto government-dominated areas or Turkish backed areas of northern Aleppo Governorate (i.e. Operation Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch areas) have not been included in this study as the focus of this report is on internal group dynamics within the Idlib enclave.

## 2 | FREQUENCY OF ATTACKS

Since September 2018, 692 conflict incidents have been recorded between armed opposition groups within the Idleb enclave (Figure 2). There has been a general trend of declining conflict activity between the armed opposition groups, with the exception of January when HTS expanded its dominance in the northwest through a mixture of military means and negotiated deals.



The frequency of intra-opposition conflict dropped following the start of the GoS offensive against the enclave in May 2019 (from 60 to 17 events). Levels of conflict have remained somewhat consistent since then, suggesting tensions between groups remain despite the existential threat from the GoS. An average of 20 violent events per month have been recorded since May, in contrast to the last four

Figure 2: Internal conflict between groups in northwest Syria since September 2018. Data from TCC and ACLED.

months of 2018, when an average of 81 intra-opposition conflicts occurred per month.

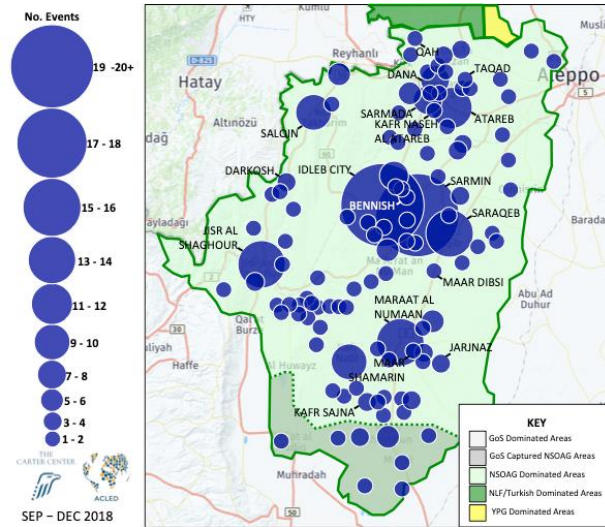
## 3 | GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF CONFLICT

When examining the long-term trends of internal conflict activity in the HTS-dominated Idleb enclave, 18 locations have witnessed consistent violence in the past 12 months.<sup>5</sup>

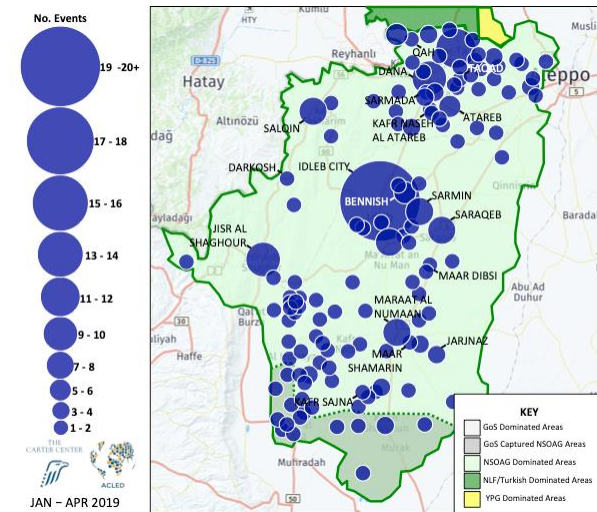
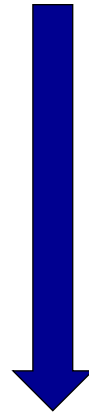
Prior to the GoS offensive that began in May 2019, intra-opposition fighting in the northwest was focused in three geographies: (1) in the southwest corner of the enclave in an arc from Maarat an Numaan, eastward to Kafr Nobel and north-westward to Jisr al Shaghour; (2) in central Idleb Governorate in a triangle between Idleb City, Ariha and Saraqeb towns; and (3) in north Idleb Governorate between Atareb, Dana and Sarmada towns.

<sup>5</sup> Atareb, Bennish, Dana, Darkosh, Idleb City, Jarjnaz, Jisr al Shaghour, Kafr Naseh Al Atareb, Kafr Sajna, Maraat al Numan, Maar Dibsi, Maar Shamarin, Qah, Salqin, Saraqeb, Sarmada, Sarmin and Taqad. The remaining activity was split among an additional 176 communities.

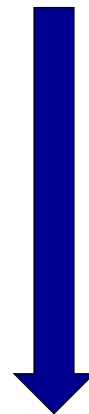
The last four months in this study were marked with a significant reduction in intra-opposition conflict in the southwest, with activity focused around city Idleb City and Dana towns (Figure 3).



SEP - DEC 2018



JAN - APR 2019



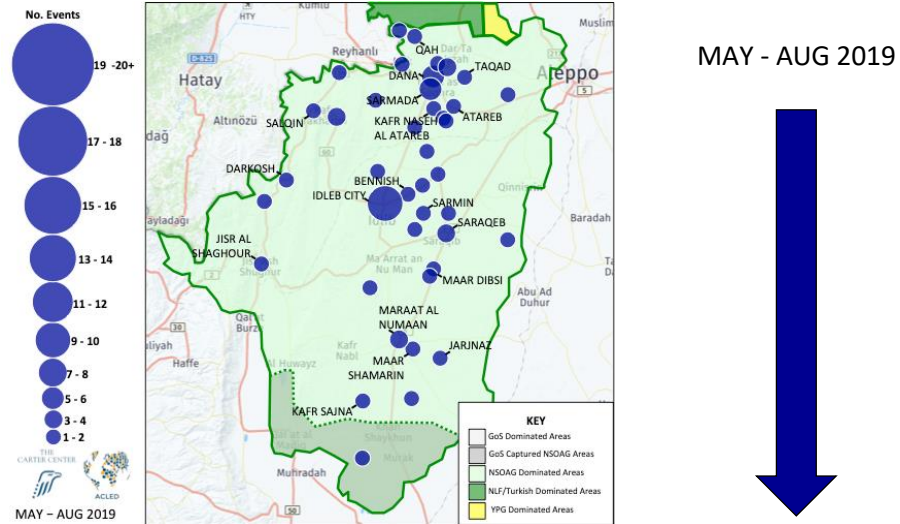


Figure 3: Locations of internal conflict in northwest Syria Sep 2018 – Aug 2019. Data from TCC and ACLED.<sup>6</sup>

## 4 | ATTACK TYPES

The conflict among opposition groups were carried out predominately with small arms or heavy machine gun fire (43% of recorded incidents), followed by improvised explosive device (IED) activity (38% or 262 incidents). This includes 21 car bombs and 13 suicide bombers. The remaining 19% of activity was split between murders (56), kidnappings (30), extrajudicial executions (18), shelling (12), grenade attacks (9), and other types of events that could not be categorized (5)<sup>7</sup> (Figure 4).

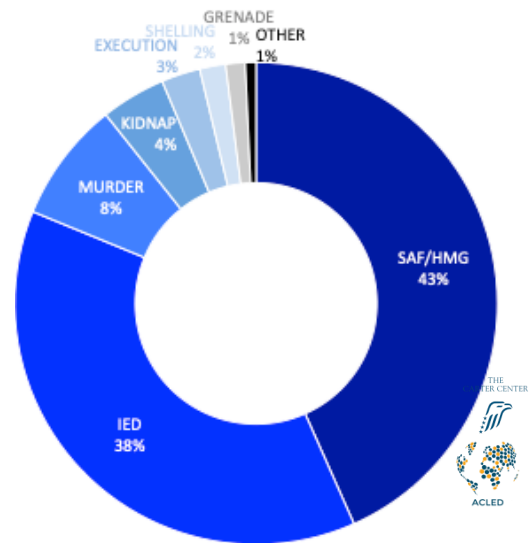


Figure 4: Breakdown of attack types in Northwest Syria since Sept 2018. Data from ACLED and TCC<sup>1</sup>

## 5 | IMPACT OF CONFLICT

While it is not always possible to determine the intended target of each conflict event and who is responsible, patterns emerge when viewing conflict data for the northwest in the past year. While a mixture of armed groups was the target of conflict activity, civilians and civilian infrastructure were the target of 35% of conflict activity. Approximately 8% (53) of events could not be identified as

<sup>6</sup> “Raleigh, Clionadh, Andrew Linke, Håvard Hegre and Joakim Karlsen. (2010). “Introducing ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data.” *Journal of Peace Research* 47(5) 651-660.” <https://www.acleddata.com/>

<sup>7</sup> These were rocket propelled grenade attacks (2), stabbings (2) and a robbery (1)

impacting a particular target.

The armed groups documented with intra-opposition conflict activity can be divided in five broad categories: (1) HTS and allied groups (54% of activity); (2) Turkish-backed National Liberation Front (NLF) and allied groups (37%); (3) ISIS-aligned groups<sup>8</sup> (5%); (4) Al Qaeda-linked Hurras al Din and allied groups (2%); and (5) independent / other groups (2%). Within these broad categories, at least 37 individual armed groups and sub-groups could be identified<sup>9</sup> (Figure 5).

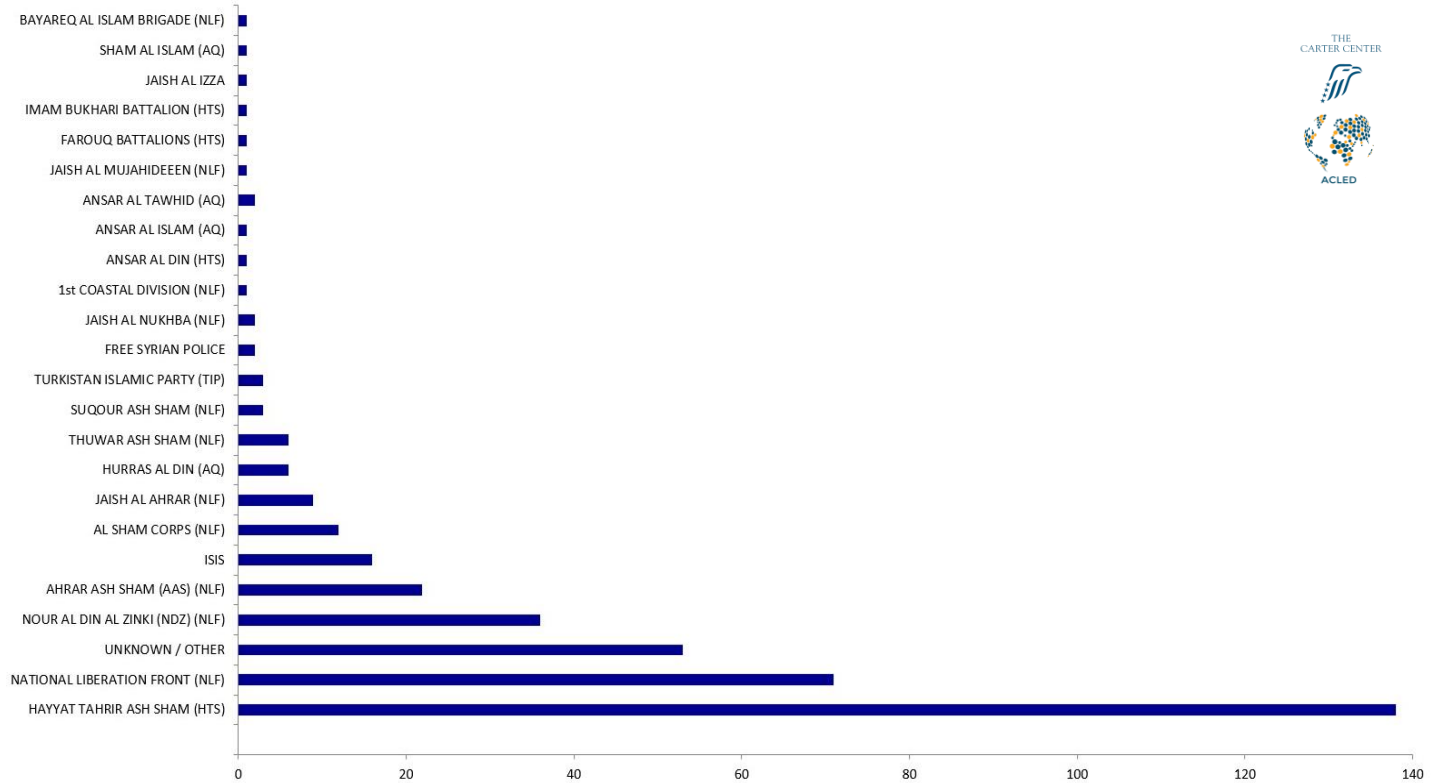


Figure 5: Number of times internal conflict actors were affected by conflict in northwest Syria since September 2018. Data from the Carter Center and ACLED.<sup>10</sup>

HTS was involved in conflict with the largest number of armed groups (16) including: Ahrar ash

<sup>8</sup> Including three previously unknown ISIS sub-groups: The Khalid Bin Al Walid Companies, The Wadi Haj Khalid Cell, and the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

<sup>9</sup> Including the 1<sup>st</sup> Coastal Division (NLF), 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion (ISIS), Ahrar ash Sham, Al Sham Corps, Ansar al Din, Ansar al Islam, Ansar al Tawhid, Aqrabat Brigade, Artillery Battalion (HTS), Bayareq al Islam Brigade, Criminal Groups, Farouq Battalion, Fawj 111, Free Syria Police, Alleged GoS collaborators, Hayyat Tahrir as Sham (HTS), Hurras al Din, Imman Bukhari Battalion, ISIS, Islamic Tahrir Party, Jaish Abu Bakr Al Siddiq, Jaish Al Ahrar, Jaish al Izza, Jaish al Mujahideen, Jaish al Nukhba, Jaish Ummar Ibn Al Khattab, Jaish Uthman Ibn Affan, Military Council of Maraat al Numan, Military Council of Maraat Harma, National Liberation Front (NLF), Nour al Din al Zinki, Saddiq Brigades, Sarayya Khalid Bin Al Walid, Suqour ash Sham, Thuwar Ash Sham, Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) and Wadi Haj Khalid Cell.

<sup>10</sup> “Raleigh, Clionadh, Andrew Linke, Håvard Hegre and Joakim Karlsen. (2010). “Introducing ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data.” Journal of Peace Research 47(5) 651-660.” <https://www.acleddata.com/>



Sham, Al Sham Corps, Ansar al Din, Ansar al Tawhid, Al Qaeda affiliated Hurras al Din, Bayareq Al Islam Brigade, ISIS, Islamic Tahrir Party, Jaish al Ahrar, Jaish al Nukhba, National Liberation Front (NLF), Nour al Din al Zinki, Suqour ash Sham, Thuwar ash Sham, as well as alleged GoS collaborators and criminal group members. Nour al Din al Zinki was linked to conflict with four other actors in addition to HTS: Thuwar al Sham, Bayareq al Islam, Ahrar ash Sham, and the NLF.

At least 12 nationalities were identified as members of armed groups in northwest Syria. HTS had the largest array of foreigners present in their ranks, including Chechen, Egyptian, Lebanese, Libyan, Maldivian, Moroccan Qatari, Saudi, Turkish, and Uzbek nationals. Hurras al Din, Sham al Islam, the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), and the Imam Bukhari Battalion had French, Moroccan, Turkmen, and Uzbek nationals in their ranks. Some analysts have [estimated](#) up to 103 nationalities are present within different armed group in northwest Syria.

*For a more detailed summary on the make-up and relations of the armed groups referenced, see Appendix 1.*

## 6 | CONCLUSION

The increasingly complex security environment in the northwest makes it difficult to untangle the growing number of groups still active in the HTS-dominated enclave. This is especially the case for non-HTS aligned groups, many of whom have been forced to withdraw into HTS-dominated areas or enter into agreements with the group for self-preservation after the widespread HTS-takeover of Idleb, or in reaction to the recent GoS offensive. Questions remain over Turkey's long-term support to the NLF and whether this relationship may change in response to international pressure and the shifting dynamics of the northwest and elsewhere in Syria.

Another concern is the continuing violence in the area, despite HTS' consolidation of control. The differences between these groups are at risk of being exacerbated by further government advances in the northwest.

The enduring presence of ISIS and Al Qaeda-linked Hurras al Din is another concern. Despite losing significant influence in the northwest in 2018<sup>11</sup> and in Syria as a whole in 2019<sup>12</sup>, ISIS still retains the capacity to operate in an extremely hostile environment and with few allies, even managing to organize attacks outside of Syria as shown by an [uncovered](#) plot in Lebanon in late 2018.

The five local ISIS sub-groups identified in this report lends further credence to the Carter Center's report ["A Review of ISIS in Syria 2016 - 2019"](#), published in March 2019, that the group is no longer a unified coherent entity and increasingly relies on local entities to continue its legacy. A more nuanced understanding of the group will be key for countering ISIS in Syria.

For Hurras al Din, although it appears a distinct entity in the northwest, signs that the group is

---

<sup>11</sup>After the Abu Duhur Government Offensive in 2018 and the subsequent crackdown by HTS against ISIS in the northwest.

<sup>12</sup> With the loss of its last piece of physical territory in Syria after the fall of Baghuz town in Deir Ez Zor Governorate in early 2019.

coordinating with HTS have been seen in recent months. The group has [launched](#) attacks behind government lines from HTS-controlled areas in western Idleb since June. Additionally, videos from mid-August [show](#) the group's Wa Harredh al Moa'mineen Operations room fighting alongside the HTS-aligned Fatah al Mubeen Operations Room. The two US strikes against Hurras al Din in June and August this year, the first US action in the northwest since 2017, indicate that the international community considers Hurras al Din as a serious threat.

While the conflict dynamics in the northwest continues to be dominated by the GoS and Russian military joint offensive against the enclave targeting all armed groups and impacting the [estimated](#) 3 million civilians living there, in many cases held hostage by the armed groups, the conflict between opposition armed groups further aggravates the humanitarian situation throughout the region.

###

## APPENDIX 1 | ARMED GROUPS IN NORTHWEST SYRIA

In this appendix we provide brief profiles of non-state armed groups operating in the northwest as recorded in data curated by The Carter Center during the 12 months ending in August 2019. Connections between the groups have also been highlighted, and while not exhaustive, the following pages aim to shed light on the complexity of armed group formations in the northwest. Due to the difficulties in monitoring sudden changes in armed group relations, the figures should be taken as a representation rather than an exact depiction.

### HAYYAT TAHRIR ASH SHAM (HTS)

HTS was formed in January 2017 by Jabhat Fatah ash Sham (JFS), Jaish al Sunna, Liwa al Haqq, and parts of Ansar al Din and Nour al Din al Zinki. JFS was a long-time affiliate of al-Qaeda (under its previous name Jabhat al Nusra) until late 2016 when the group announced that it was no longer affiliated with al-Qaeda. HTS members who were still loyal to Al Qaeda's ideology left HTS to form Hurras al Din in early 2018. Nour al Din al Zinki also left HTS and allied itself with the Turkish-backed National Liberation Front (NLF) in July 2018 due to tensions with Ansar al Din and disagreements over the strategic and ideological direction of HTS.

Since then, other groups have joined HTS, especially after May 2019 when the group established the Fatah al Mubeen Operations Room to coordinate the defense against the GoS offensive in northwest Syria. [Over](#) 20 groupings are currently thought to be part of HTS (Figure A).

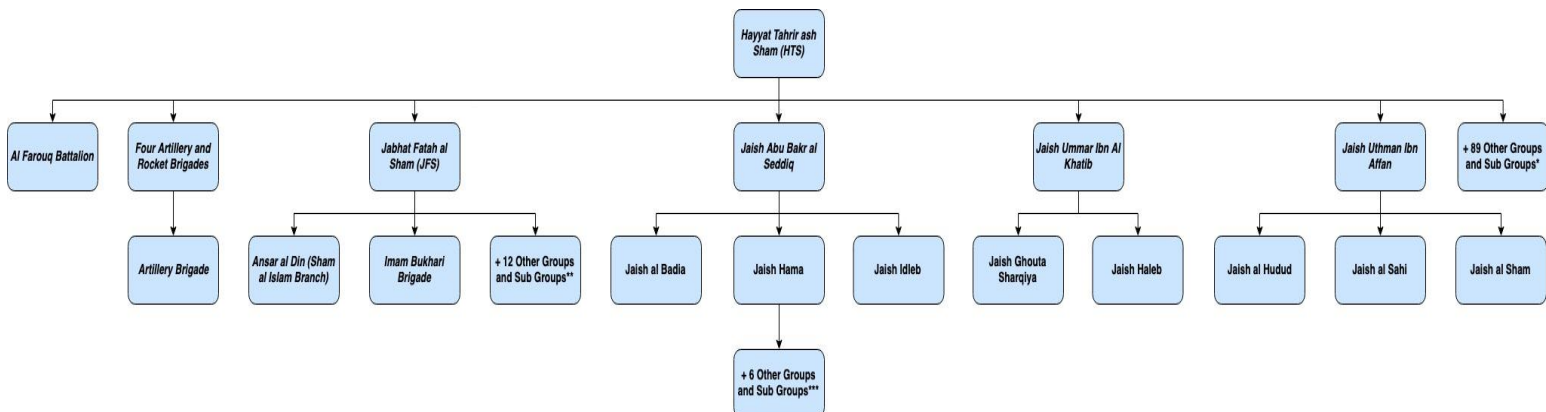


Figure A: Groups in Northwest Syria that joined HTS, some of which have dissipated or change names.

#### \*89 Other Groups & Sub Groups in HTS

- 1st Regiment (Idleb)
- Abbas Brigade
- Abu Darda Islamic Union Brigade
- Abu Mohammed al-Hamawi Battalion
- Ahmad Asfan Battalions
- Ajnad al-Sham
- al-Hijra Brigade
- Ansar al Din
- Abu Amarra Battalion
- Abu Islam Armoured Brigade
- Abu Talhah al-Ansari Battalion
- Ahrar Mariyaan
- al-Hasakah Group
- Al-Khattab Battalions

- al-Noor Islamic Movement
- Al-Qadisiyah Brigade
- Al-Sa'b al-Abiya Tribal Militia
- Ansar al-Sham
- Jaish Ali bin Abi Talib
- Ashida'a Mujahideen Brigade
- Battalions of Companions
- Company of Victory Brigade
- Dawn of Islam Brigade
- Free Men of the Central Mountain
- Glory of Islam Brigade
- Haryatan Mujahideen Battalions
- Imarat Kavkaz
- Jamaat Bayt al-Maqdis al-Islamiya
- Jaysh al-Sham
- Jaysh Usrah
- Kata'ib al-Sayf al-Umri
- Katibat al-Siddiq
- Katibat Aswed al-Harb
- Knights of the Caliphate Battalion
- Kurdish Janah
- Lightning Battalion
- Lions of Hamza Battalion
- Lions of Tawhid Battalion
- Liwa al-Haqq
- Martyr Khalid Zaarour Battalion
- Martyrs of Islam Front
- Mountain Army
- Movement of Mujahideen of the Sunnis
- Qassem Battalion
- Qawafil Shuhada
- Riya al-Jannah Battalion
- Sham al-Salayn
- Special Forces Brigade (Inghimasi)
- Supporters of Justice Brigade
- Tamkin Brigade
- Victory of Islam
- Al-Oqab
- al-Quds Brigades
- al-Ukhwat Brigade
- Jaish Al-Ghab Plain
- Asaad al-Khilafah
- Banners of Islam Movement
- Central Forces
- Conquest Brigade
- Desert Regiment
- Ghuraba al-Sham
- Hani al-Nasr Brigade
- Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman Battalions
- Jabhat as-Sadiqin
- Jamaat Fursan al-Sunna
- Jaysh al-Sunna
- Jihad in the Path of God Battalion
- Katibat al-Shahid Abu Usid
- Katibat Ashbal al-Sunnah
- Katibat Khateeb
- Knights of the Levant Battalion
- Levant Revolutionaries Battalion
- Lions of Banu Umayya
- Lions of Rahman Battalion
- Liwa Ahl al-Sham
- Martyr Ibrahim Qabbani Battalion
- Martyr Omar Djaluk Battalion
- Mohamad al-'Asfourah Battalion
- Mountain Lions Battalion
- Mufid A'awar Battalion
- Qatih Badiya
- Rashid Battalions
- Saraya al-Aqsa
- Soldiers of the Epics
- Sunni Islam Brigade
- Taliban Battalion
- Tawhid Battalion

#### **\*\*12 Other Groups & Sub Groups of Jabhat Fatah al Sham**

- Al Bara
- Dhu Nurayn
- Jaish al Muhajireen wal Ansar
- Jaish Muhammad
- Supporters of Jihad
- Syrian Islamic Jihad Union
- Al Sawaiq
- Green Battalion
- Jaish al Sham
- Khorasan Group (disputed)
- Suqour al Ezz
- Tawhid and Jihad Battalion

#### **\*\*\*6 Other Groups & Sub Groups of Jaish al Hama**

- Abdullah Azzam Brigade
- Ahl al Bayt Brigade

- Al Imam Brigade
- Lions of Islam Brigade
- Al Majd Brigade
- Usud al Harb Brigade

## NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (NLF)

The Turkish-backed National Liberation Front (NLF) was established in the spring of 2018 by 11 opposition armed groups. It is led by Faylaq al Sham (Al Sham Corps). It includes former HTS-aligned groups, such as Nour al Din al Zinki (a founding member of HTS), which left HTS in mid-2017 due to disagreements with other groups (Figure B).

The HTS takeover of Idleb in January 2019 diminished NLF's dominance in the area. Many NLF aligned groups either withdrew into Turkish-backed Operation Euphrates Shield and Operation Olive Branch areas of northern Aleppo Government, or remained in the Idleb enclave after entering in political agreements with HTS, especially in southern areas of the enclave, further complicating their operating environment there.

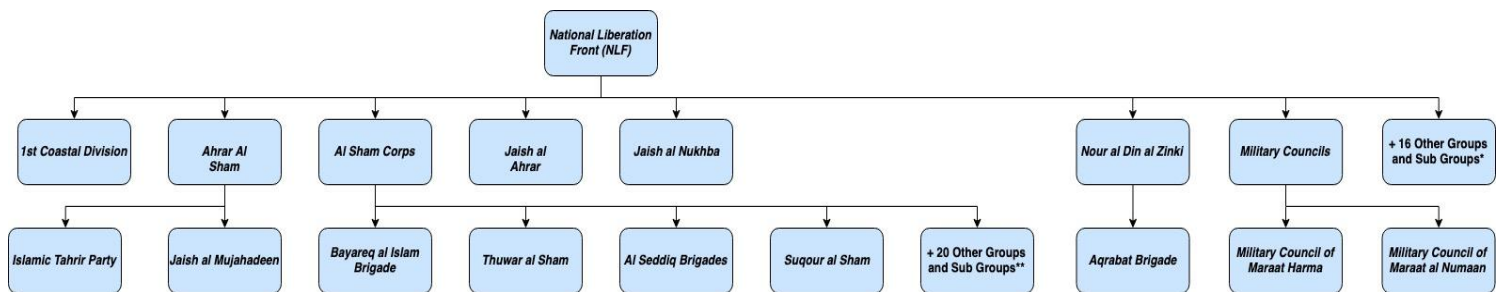


Figure B: NLF Groups in Northwest Syria, those in italics have been active in the past year according to data available.

### \*16 Other Groups and Sub Groups in NLF

- 1st Infantry Division
- 23rd Division
- 2nd Coastal Division
- Damascus Gathering
  - Brigades and Battalions to Unite the Capital
  - Hamza Ibn Abdul Muttalib Battalion
- Farqa 23
- Free Haran Brigade
- Free Idleb Army
- Free North Brigade
  - Imam Ali Brigade
- Jaish al Nasr
- Jaish Al Thani
- Liwa Huriyah
- Miqdad Ibn Amr Brigade
- Unit 82 Swat Forces

### \*\*20 other Groups and Sub Groups of Al Sham Corps

- Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a
- Ahrar Ewijel
- Ahrar Kafr Basin
- al-Murabitoun
- al-Qassam
- al-Tawheed
- al-Wathiq Billah
- Ansar Al-Sunnah Battalion
- Dibo Ismail
- Fawj 111
- Hurras al-Aqsa
- Jaysh Al Ahfad
- Jund Allah
- Liwa Shuhada al Islam
- Saad bin Moaaz
- Saraya al-Shahba
- Shuhada'a Ewijel
- Shuhada'a Hour
- Shuhada'a Kafrnaha
- Yamin Ghayyath

## ISIS

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS or Daesh in Arabic acronym) adopted its name in April 2013 after expanding its control across large parts of Syria in the preceding two years. In the northwest, the group has had a long-standing presence since 2013, but was largely defeated after the Syrian government-led Abu Duhur Offensive into the Idlib enclave in February 2018, as well as after a widespread HTS crackdown against the group soon after.

The group has mainly worked through two affiliates: Liwa al Daoud and Liwa Allahu Akbar. At least three other entities not previously identified have become active in the northwest during the past 12 months: Khalid Bin Al Walid Companies, The Wadi Haj Khalid Cell and the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion. It is unclear their relation to the earlier established ISIS affiliates (Figure C).

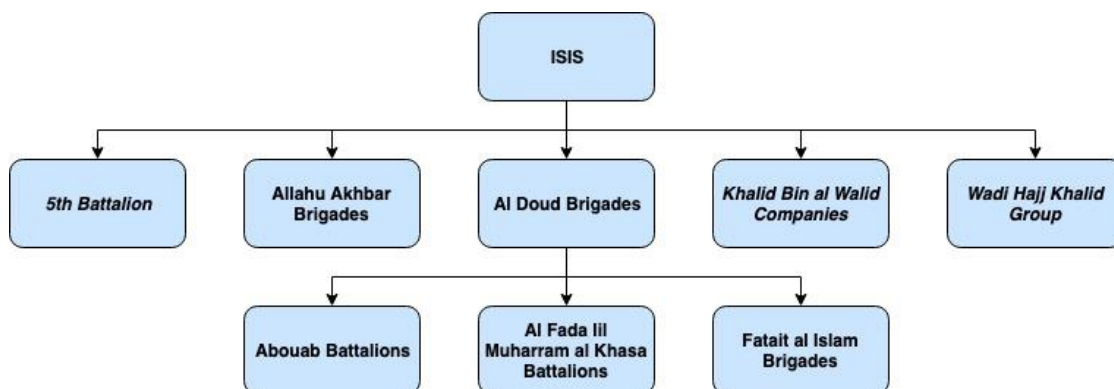


Figure C: ISIS linked Groups in Northwest Syria. Groups in italics have been active in the past year.

## AL QAEDA ALIGNED GROUPS

Hurras al Din was established in February 2018 by former members of HTS, especially former members of Jabhat al Nusra, who remained loyal to al-Qaeda after HTS cut its ties with the latter in 2016. Hurras al Din is considered to be Al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria.

In late 2018 the group established the 'Wa Harredh al Moa'mineen' Operations Room (Rouse/Incite the Believers Operations Room) made up of members from Ansar al Tawhid, Ansar al Din, and Ansar al Islam to resist attacks against it (Figure D).

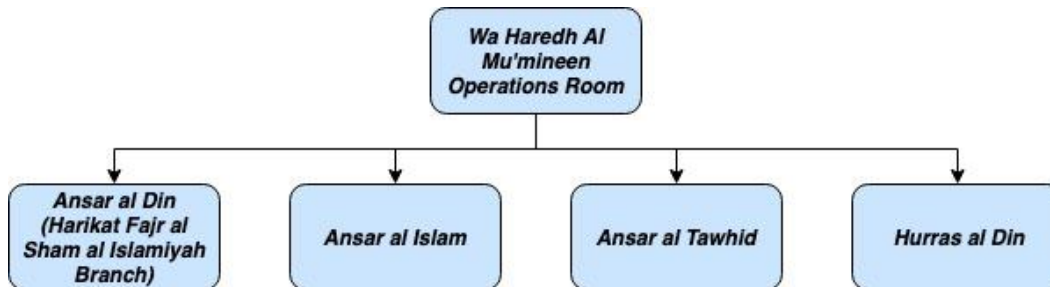


Figure D. Al Qaeda-Aligned groups active in northwest Syria in 2018/2019.

## INDEPENDENT GROUPS

Two independent groups have been active in 2018/2019; Jaish al Izza and the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP).

**Jaish al-Izza** was established in 2013 and largely operated in northern Hama Governorate under the Free Syrian Army (FSA), a faction of former or defected Syrian military personnel. However, by 2014, Jaish al Izza had identified itself as an independent entity, no longer aligned with any other entity. However, Jaish al Izza has fought alongside or coordinated with a diverse number of groups over the years in the northwest, including the National Liberation Front (NLF)-aligned groups, HTS as well as the Al Qaeda-aligned Hurras al Din and the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). Following the GoS offensive in May 2019, the group lost its historical territorial control in northern Hama and moved to HTS controlled areas of Idleb. One sub group, Liwa Homs al-'Adiyat, has been [identified](#) as affiliated with Jaish al Izza.

**The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP)** was established in 1988 by Uigher Muslims who were seeking to create an independent state in western China. The group has previously operated in Afghanistan and Pakistan (aligned with the Taliban and Al Qaeda) from the late 1990s onwards. It is unclear when the group began operating in Syria, with TIP [media](#) encouraging its members to fight in Syria as early as 2012. It was not until mid 2014 when a [video](#) was released by the group showing TIP members in Syria, that the group became established in Syria, notably taking part in the Jisr al Shaghour offensive of 2015.

While the group did not join HTS, it has coordinated with HTS, especially in the mountain town of Kabani, in northeast Latakia Governorate. Previously, TIP has coordinated with the Al Qa'eda aligned Hurras al Din and the Turkic speaking Junud al Makhdi group (Figure E).

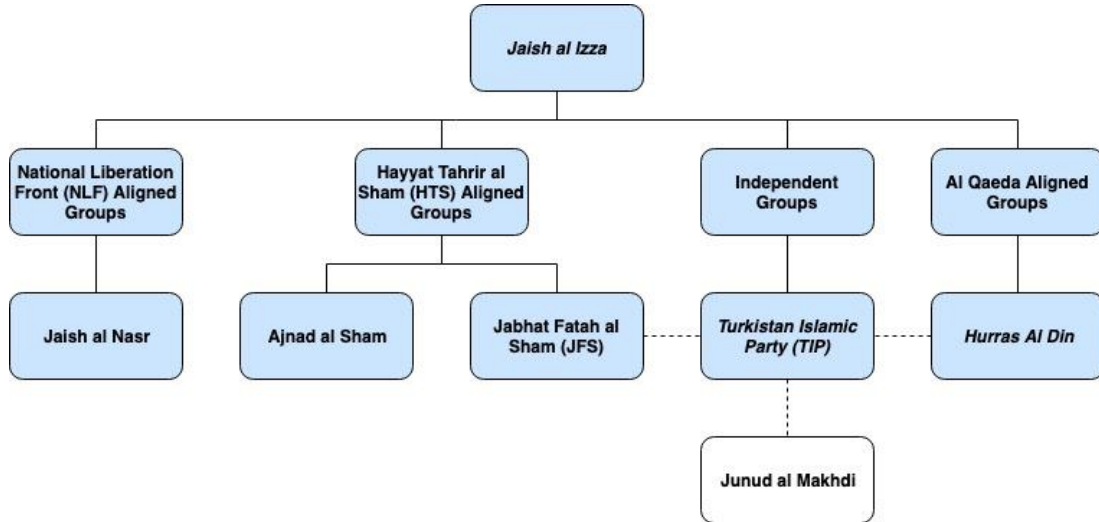


Figure E: Jaish al Izza and Turkistan Islamic Party Group connections in Northwest Syria in 2018/2019.



THE  
CARTER CENTER



*For queries or comments about this report, please contact [kate.keator@cartercenter.org](mailto:kate.keator@cartercenter.org)*

### **SYRIA CONFLICT MAPPING**

Since 2012, The Carter Center's Conflict Resolution Program has endeavored to analyze open-source information related to the Syrian conflict in as much detail as possible, with the goal of assisting mediators and conflict responders with up-to-date, detailed analysis of developments in the country.

Using these publicly available resources, as well as information gleaned from consultations with stakeholders, the Center has documented and mapped 155,000 conflict events in Syria as well as the ever-changing relations between armed groups. For more information, visit our website at [www.cartercenter.org](http://www.cartercenter.org).

The Center's Syria Conflict Mapping also produces weekly conflict summaries, covering the main developments of the week. To sign up, please visit [https://www.cartercenter.org/peace/conflict\\_resolution/syria-conflict-resolution.html](https://www.cartercenter.org/peace/conflict_resolution/syria-conflict-resolution.html) and select "Subscribe Now".