



WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 17 - 23 May 2021

SYRIA SUMMARY

- Former opposition fighters from Um Batna, Quneitra Governorate are stranded at the Abu Zandin crossing, Aleppo Governorate.
- Unidentified gunmen attack Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces and former opposition fighters in Dara'a Governorate.
- Protests erupt after the Kurdish Autonomous Administration (KAA) raised fuel prices in Al-Hassakah Governorate.

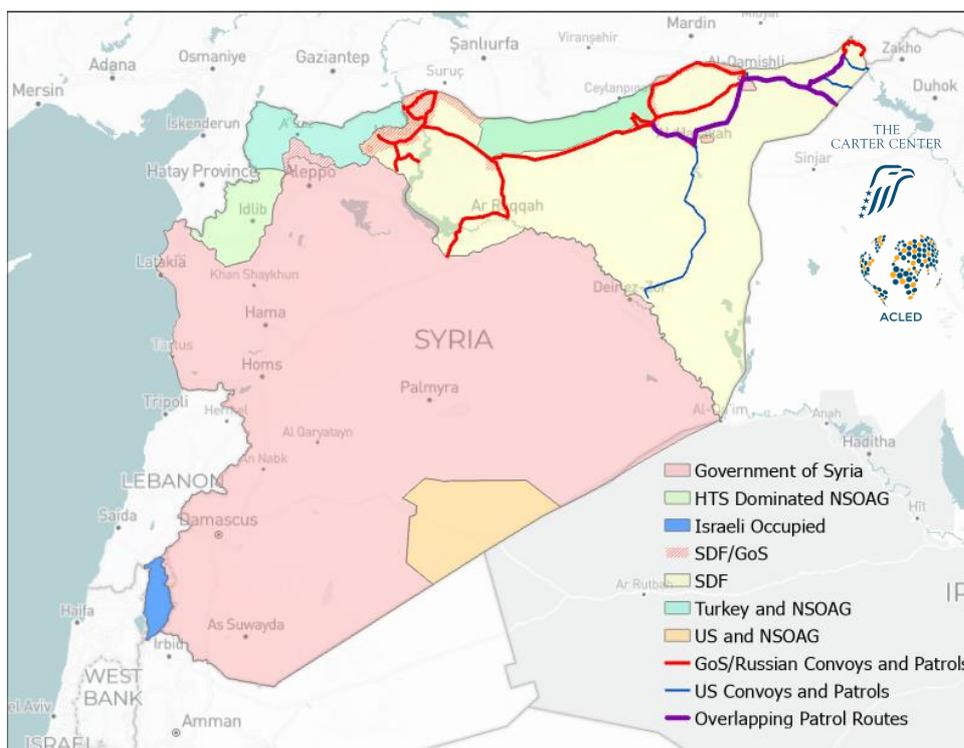


Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 23 May 2021.-NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see footnote 1.

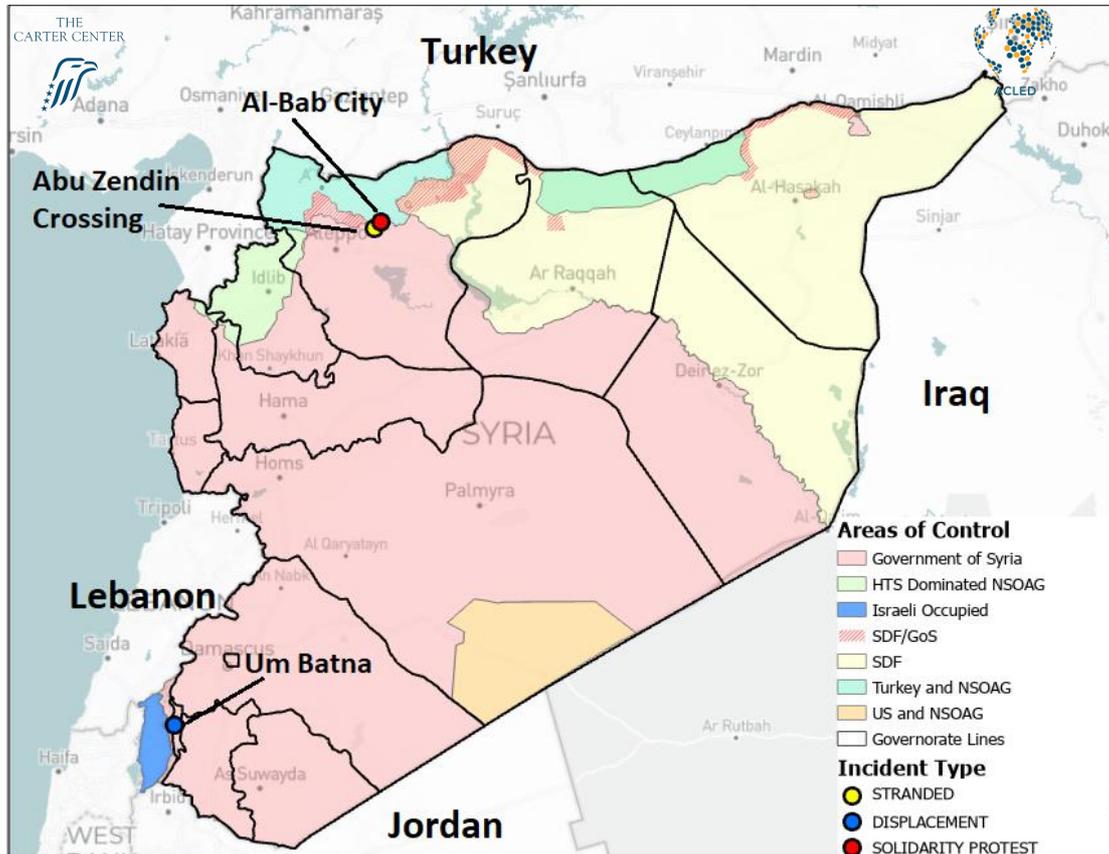
NORTHWEST SYRIA¹

Figure 2: Conflict events related to the movement of Um Batna fighters between 17-23 May 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Movement of Former Opposition Fighters

As the Government of Syria (GoS) has regained territory, it has often allowed the movement of opposition fighters and their families to opposition-controlled territory in northwestern Syria. At times, Turkish armed forces and Turkish-backed armed opposition groups have refused to accept the displaced fighters and civilians in Turkish-held Aleppo Governorate, forcing them to move instead to (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) HTS-controlled Idlib Governorate.² On 15 May, the siege of Um Batna, Quneitra Governorate, ended with an agreement, which stipulated that 30 former opposition fighters and their families would be sent to northern Syria.³

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 <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/483127>

³ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e7f1862d58d8432cb2a50f1c8cff0328>

20 May

Russian military police escorted 150 opposition fighters and families from Um Batna to Turkish-held territory in Aleppo Governorate.⁴

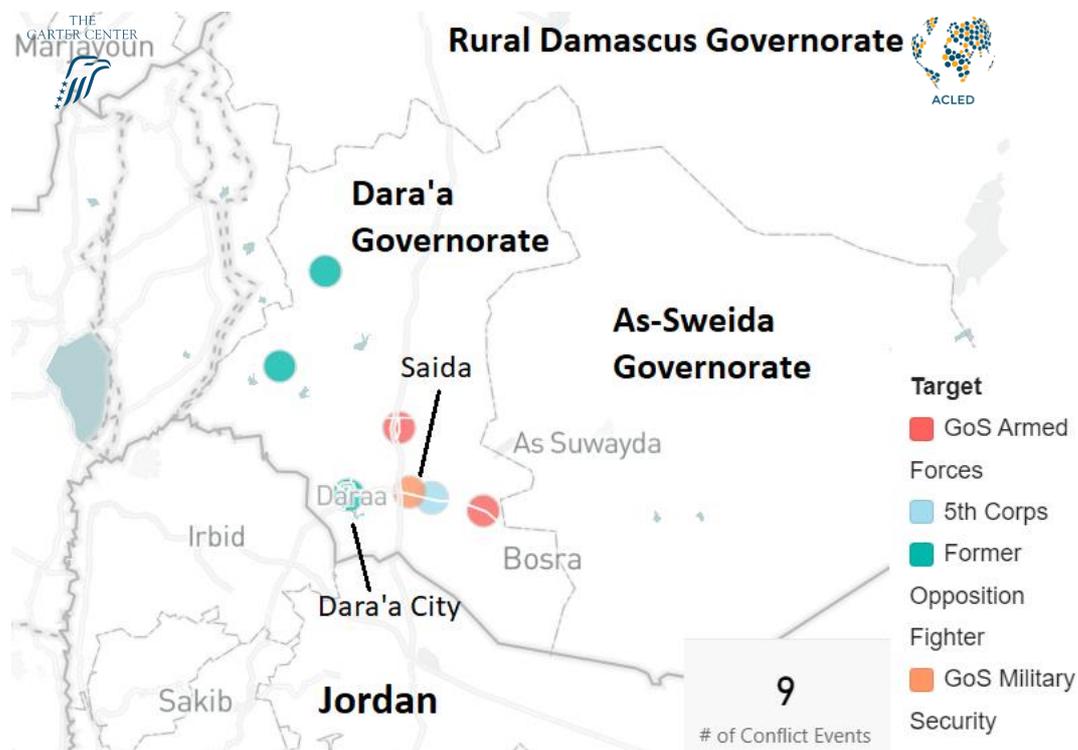
21 May

Turkish armed forces and the Turkish-backed opposition Syrian National Army (SNA) prevented the Um Batna families from entering Turkish-held territory, stranding the families at the Abu Zandin crossing, near Al-Bab city, northern Aleppo Governorate.⁵ Turkish officials accused Russia of failing to coordinate the transfer.⁶

Protestors in Al-Bab city denounced Turkey's and the SNA's rejection, demanding that the Um Batna families be allowed to enter their territory. In response, SNA fighters dispersed the protests violently,⁷ claiming that they were attempting to find accommodation for the Um Batna families and check their COVID-19 status.⁸

22 May

After a 30-hour wait, the Um Batna families were sent to HTS-controlled territory in Idlib Governorate.^{9,10}

SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA

⁴ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/482946>, <https://npasyria.com/en/59590/>

⁵ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/483127>

⁶ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/483127>

⁷ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/483269>

⁸ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/483269>

⁹ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/483351>

¹⁰ <https://npasyria.com/en/59639/>

Figure 3: Attacks against former opposition fighters and GoS armed forces in Dara'a Governorate between 17-23 May 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Attacks against GoS and Former Opposition Fighters

Since the takeover of Dara'a and Quneitra Governorates by the GoS in 2018, tension between former opposition commanders, who have gained prominence by leading influential political and military groups, and GoS officials have resulted in arrests and violence in Dara'a Governorate. Mostly unidentified perpetrators have continued attacks and assassinations of GoS officers and former opposition commanders.

18 May

Unidentified gunmen shot and killed the son of a prominent Iranian militia leader near Dara'a city.¹¹

20 May

Unidentified gunmen shot and killed 2 GoS Military Security fighters in Sayda, eastern Dara'a Governorate.¹²

21 May

The Russian-backed 8 Brigade of the 5th Corps of the GoS armed forces took control of a GoS Air Force Intelligence checkpoint in Dara'a city.¹³ The clashes took place after the GoS Air Force Intelligence attempted to arrest a civilian for conscription.¹⁴

NORTHEAST SYRIA

¹¹ <https://tinyurl.com/cafvnhjk>

¹² <https://tinyurl.com/5aaabfnc>

¹³ <https://tinyurl.com/2kxyy9w7>

¹⁴ <https://www.horanfree.com/?p=8984>

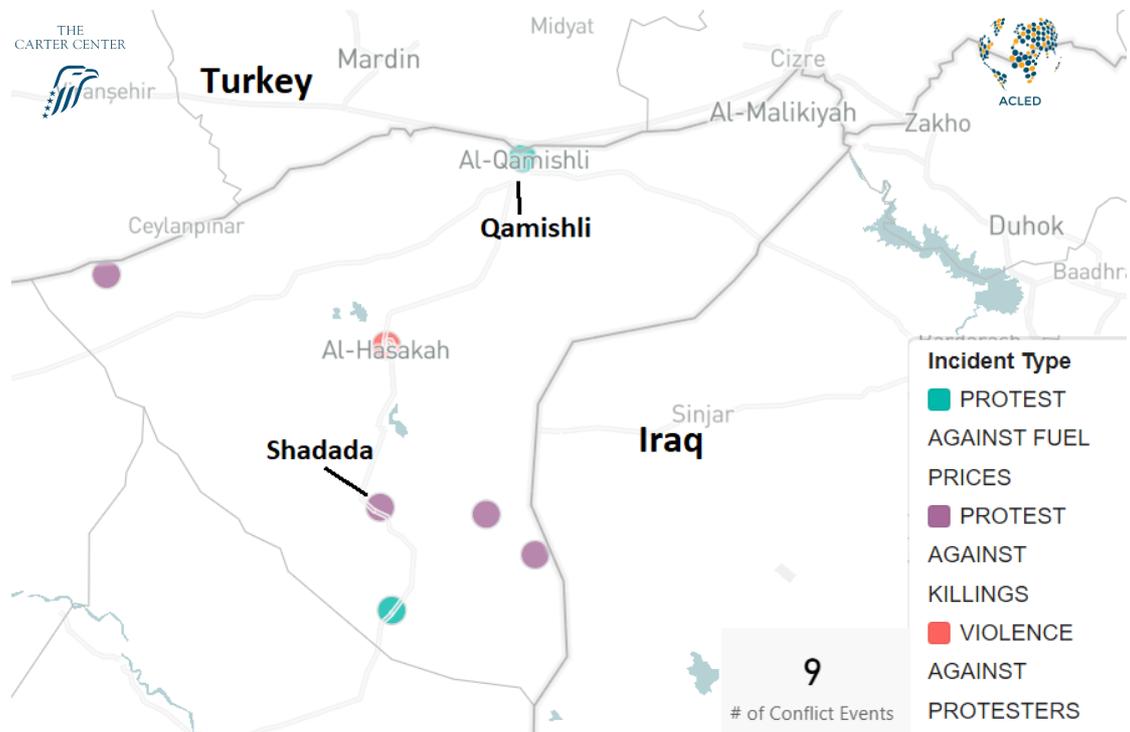


Figure 4: Protests and other conflict events related to the rise of fuel prices in northeast Syria between 17-23 May 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Protests in Al-Hassakah Governorate

Syria's economic crises have caused deterioration in living standards across the whole country. The currency crises in particular has affected the purchasing power of ordinary Syrians.

17 May

The Kurdish Autonomous Administration doubled the price of fuel and oil in territories under its control. This included gas, petrol, and cooking oil.¹⁵ Kurdish political parties criticized the move, arguing that it would raise the price of basic goods in the region.¹⁶ KAA officials justified the increase because of higher prices to procure oil.¹⁷

18 May

Demonstrations against the higher fuel prices were held across Al-Hassakah Governorate. The SDF dispersed by force the protests in Shadada and other cities and towns in Al-Hassakah Governorate, reportedly killing up to 7 protestors.¹⁸ The predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alleged that gunmen among the protestors attacked security forces in Shadada.¹⁹

19 May

¹⁵ <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/188535>

¹⁶ <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/19052021>

¹⁷ <https://syrianobserver.com/news/66225/angry-protests-against-fuel-price-hikes-in-northeastern-syria.html>

¹⁸ <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/188537>, <https://tinyurl.com/jvvwb43f>

¹⁹ http://sdf-press.com/en/2021/05/regarding-the-events-of-shaddada-to-our-people-and-public-opinion/?fbclid=IwAR0H6if_Tft3wKltiApT2WvPQ-tzI9OpWipp3CrmO4nq9DE9fq-qHMcNBDw

Facing widespread discontent, the KAA revoked the fuel price increase.²⁰ However, demonstrations continued over the killing of protesters the previous day.²¹

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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²⁰ <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/24536-Following-protests.-Kurdish-led-authorities-in-northeast-Syria-overturn-fuel-price-increase>

²¹ <https://www.syriahr.com/en/216594/>