

This report was authored by Hari Prasad, program associate, Jennifer Hudson and Jackson Schneider, Carter Center interns for spring 2022, and Hampton Stall, senior program associate of the Carter Center's Conflict Resolution Program. In addition, the report was made possible thanks to the comments and feedback of Carter Center Staff.

The war in Syria remains frozen this quarter with

Northwest	934	992	-58 (-6%)
South & Central	285	252	+33 (+13%)
Northeast	891	895	-4 (0%)
Syria Overall	2110	2139 2139	-29 (-1%)

Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of

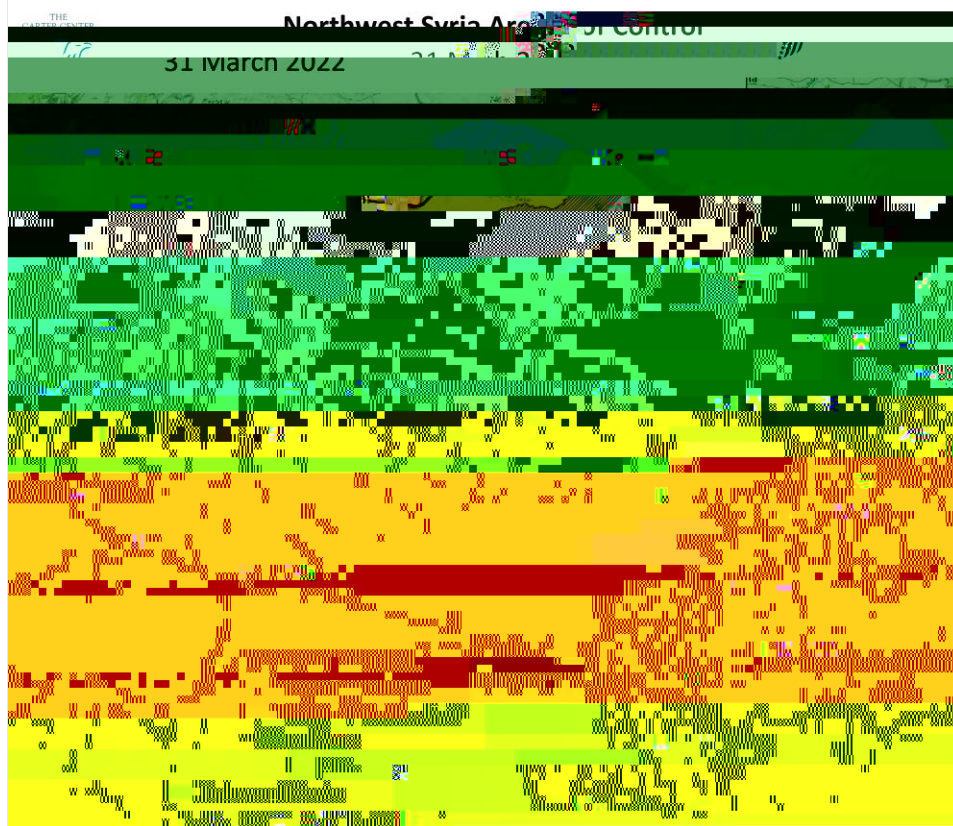


Figure 3: Areas of control in northwest Syria. Data from The Carter Center.

During the first quarter of 2022, there was a decrease in overall conflict activity in northwest Syria from 992 to 934 conflict events. Similar dynamics to the previous quarter were evident in the Aleppo and Idlib governorates where over 80 percent of the activity in the northwest region took place. Nearly 90 percent of shelling and aerial bombardment in Idlib was conducted by the GoS and Russian armed forces, while nearly 70 percent in Aleppo Governorate was conducted by Turkish armed forces.

Clashes between armed groups also took place predominantly in Idlib and Aleppo Governorates. In Idlib Governorate, clashes were predominantly between the GoS and armed opposition groups, though there was also some infighting among armed opposition groups. In Aleppo Governorate, clashes were predominantly between the Turkish armed forces and Turkish-backed armed opposition groups and SDF, though there was also some infighting among Turkish-backed armed opposition groups. Conflict event counts for the first quarter of 2022 (2022 Q1) and fourth quarter of 2021 (2021 Q4) are collected in the table below:

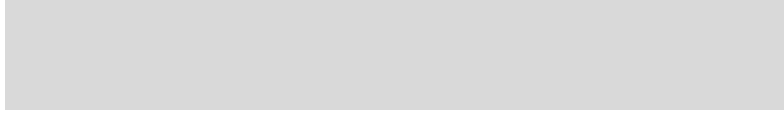


Figure 4: Conflict between GoS armed forces and armed opposition groups in northwest Syria from January to March 2022. The largest bubble represents 49 conflict events. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

foreign fighters through stricter security measures such as requiring resident identification cards for receipt of public services.⁷

Figure 5: The composition of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army's Azm Operations Room by 1 March 2022. Data from the Carter Center.

The Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) saw a sharp reduction in incidents of infighting this quarter, with only 11 incidents of infighting compared with 20 incidents in the previous quarter. This occurred alongside most of the SNA factions consolidating themselves under the Azm Operations Room. In January 2022, the Syrian Liberation Front and the Azm 'Revolutionaries' subgroup joined to form the Tharoun () Front For Liberation. This was followed by the creation of a new Azm subgroup, the Liberation and Construction Movement. These new mergers effectively s

bombardment by Turkish armed forces and Turkish backed-opposition groups targeting SDF positions, an increase from 115 in the last quarter of 2021.

In early February, in conjunction with attacks on Kurdish targets in Iraq, Turkish armed forces shelled multiple Kurdish positions in northern Syria.¹⁰ On 2 February, SDF general commander Mazloum Abdi declared aerial bombardment by Turkish armed forces as a declaration of war.¹¹ Turkish-backed Azm Operations Room called for the targeting of SDF

Dara'a	140	+9 (+7%)
As-Sweida	45	+21 (+88%)
Quneitra	4	-4 (-50%)
South Overall	189	+26 (+16%)
Homs	41	-10 (-20%)



Figure 9: Protests and clashes in As-Sweida Governorate between January-March 2022. The largest bubble represents 16 conflict events. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

Throughout most of the Syrian conflict, As-Sweida Governorate has largely avoided violence between the GoS and opposition. Despite this, tensions between the GoS and the local armed groups in the governorate has increased. This is due to several factors, including the deteriorating economic status and the activity of kidnapping and other criminal gangs with links to GoS armed forces. Since 2020, there have been major protests in As-Sweida decrying the economic situation.

Smaller protests were reported in January and March, which saw demonstrations against the lack of security and increasing crimes.¹⁴ Initially, these protests were limited. However, major protests broke out in February after a controversial GoS decision to remove 600,000 families in areas under GoS control from accessing food and gas subsidies.¹⁵ Protesters decried the worsening economic conditions as well as corruption among GoS officials.¹⁶ Some demonstrators called for a democratic or civil state.¹⁷ In response to the protests, GoS armed forces and Lebanese Hezbollah mobilized additional soldiers to the governorate.¹⁸ Despite this, there were few reports of GoS armed forces cracking down on protesters.

However, the increased mobilization of GoS soldiers and militia figures led to escalating tensions among the local As-Sweida armed groups and GoS. This followed a trend from the last quarter which saw standoffs in As-Sweida city between local groups and GoS armed

¹⁴ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/542509>, <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/557210>

¹⁵ <https://www.dw.com/en/hundreds-turn-out-for-rare-protest-in-southern-syria/a-60749896>

¹⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/11/syria-sweida-protesters-decry-corruption-poor-living-standards>

¹⁷ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/551360>, <https://www.dw.com/en/hundreds-turn-out-for-rare-protest-in-southern-syria/a-60749896>

¹⁸ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/546803>

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were clashes between ISIS and SDF and its allies, and 13 were clashes between ISIS and GoS and Russia.

On January 20th in Al-Hassakah city, ISIS attempted a prison break and infiltrated al-Sinaa prison, the largest ISIS detainee prison.²¹ The SDF backed by the US-led coalition engaged in battles for six days, while the US provided air support to regain control of the prison.²² Many perpetrators and prison escapees infiltrated al-Hassakah city, triggering the spread of violence throughout the city (see map below).²³ Kurdish forces regained control of the prison on January 26th.²⁴ ~~US operations in Idlib Governorate Syria culminated in the self-inflicted~~ death of ISIS leader Qurayshi during a US Special Operations Forces raid on February 3rd.²⁵ The Turkish-backed armed opposition groups also increased their operations against ISIS during this period in the northern Aleppo countryside.²⁶ ISIS-related conflict activity in the Al-Hassakah Governorate decreased throughout February and March. A notable clash occurred between SDF and ISIS cells at al Hol camp in late March.²⁷ In March, SDF initiated a sweep operation against ISIS cells south of Al-Hassakah.²⁸

²¹ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/01/islamic-state-attempts-prison-break-syrias-hasakah-sdf-says>

²² <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/01/islamic-state-prison-break-reinforces-value-us-military-protection-syrias-kurds>

²³ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/01/islamic-state-prison-break-reinforces-value-us-military-protection-syrias-kurds>; <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/01/syrias-kurdish-led-forces-advance-islamic-state-prison>

²⁴ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/01/syrias-kurdish-led-forces-regain-control-islamic-state-prison>

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) remains an increasingly important issue in Syria. Since 1 January 2021, there have been 248 reported incidents of civilians or others being killed by leftover landmines and other UXO. The White Helmets, an opposition-associated medical service that responds to airstrikes to rescue civilians and has taken on mine and UXO clearance in northwestern Syria, noted that between January 2021 to March 2022, at least 15 civilians were killed and multiple UXO were found in agricultural fields, civilian homes, and children's playgrounds.³² Human rights organizations have warned that despite the lack of new military offensives across Syria, the number of civilians killed by UXO has increased.³³ UXO impact civilian safety, humanitarian access, economic development, as well as environmental health, making it clear that their clearance should