

- Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and Turkish-backed armed opposition groups cracked down on rival armed groups in northwest Syria.
- Protests in Northwest Syria denounced the forthcoming presidential election.
- GoS armed forces and local militias clashed in southern Syria.
- US armed forces bombarded Iranian-backed militias in Al-Bukamal, Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.

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*Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and i*

*Figure 2: Locations where Hayat Tahrir al-Sham arrested Hurras al-Din fighters since February 1, 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.*

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) continued the domination of opposition-controlled territory in the northwest following the 23-26 June 2020 clashes with the “So Be Steadfast Operation Room”,<sup>2</sup> Idlib Governorate.<sup>3</sup> In this effort, HTS is continuing attacks against defectors and armed groups perceived as undermining its authority, particularly the Al-Qaeda affiliate Hurras al-Din (HD). In February 2021, HTS increased its crackdown on HD and other rival groups.<sup>4</sup>

Turkish armed forces and Turkish-backed Syrian armed opposition groups have faced multiple attacks from unidentified armed groups and Kurdish militias. Since 1 January 2021, there has been an increase of conflict events within Turkish-held

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<sup>1</sup> Figure 1, the Carter Center’s areas of control map, depicts areas of the dominant actors’ control and influence. While “control” is difficult to determine 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.





As-Sweida Governorate.<sup>14</sup> Hezbollah fighters and GoS officials have been accused of profiting from the drug trade.<sup>15</sup>

GoS State Security arrested a former opposition leader in Ankhel, Dara'a Governorate. Supporters of the former opposition leader took dozens of GoS soldiers and police officers as hostages in Jasim.<sup>16</sup> Following negotiations, both sides agreed to release their prisoners and hostages.<sup>17</sup>

The Central Committee of Dara'a, a group composed of former opposition fighters responsible for negotiating with Russia and the GoS about local governance grievances, concluded an agreement with Russian armed forces,<sup>18</sup> conceding that Russian armed forces and GoS Military Security forces would patrol between Izra, Tafas, and Dara'a city.<sup>19</sup> The agreement also

