



- Clashes erupted in Idlib Governorate between Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and a coalition of armed opposition groups organized around the “So Be Steadfast” (Fathbatou) Operations Room. There were reports of an increased Government of Syria (GoS), Turkish military and opposition militias buildup in Idlib and Hama Governorates. Clashes involving Turkish armed forces and Turkish-backed armed oppositions groups on the one side and Kurdish and GoS armed forces on the other continued this week. Multiple demonstrations and protests were held in Idlib and Aleppo Governorates.
- Protests continued in As-Sweida and Dara’a Governorates. Clashes erupted between GoS armed forces and the Russian-backed 5th Corps in Dara’a Governorate. The Israeli air force targeted GoS armed forces in As-Sweida Governorate.
- There were increased protests throughout the region. Iran expanded its presence in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. The Israeli air force struck GoS armed forces and Iranian-backed militias in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. ISIS continued to conduct attacks in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.

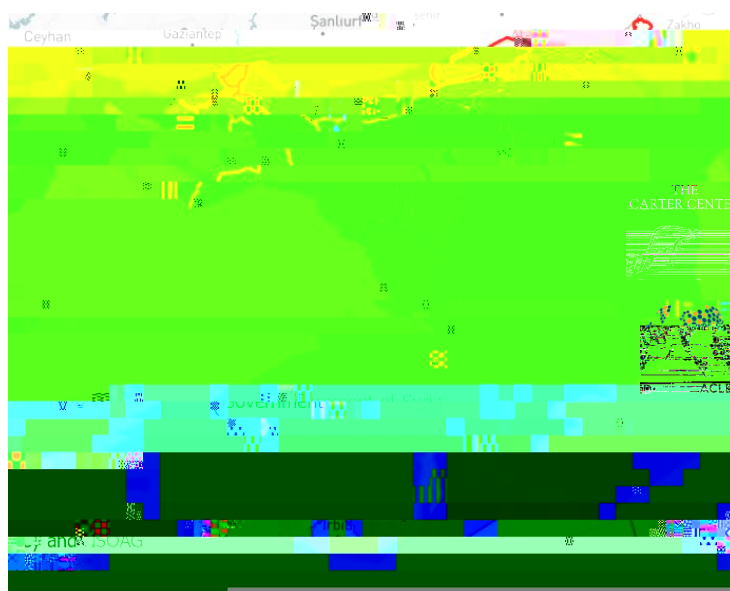


Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 28 June 2020. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see the footnote on page 2.

Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) on the outskirts of Mare' in northern Aleppo Governorate. On 24 June, Turkish-backed opposition's National Liberation Forces (NLF) repelled GoS armed forces and GoS-backed militias⁸ after the latter crossed the Hersh Benin frontlines near Jabal al-Zawiya in southern Idlib Governorate. Russian special forces were reportedly involved in the attack,⁹ which would be a first incident of Russian involvement since the 5 March ceasefire agreement.

in nearby Ain al Arab city, Aleppo Governorate. On 26 June, Ain al Arab residents organized a protest in front of a Russian military base in Ain al Arab city due to Russian s

in Syria. The same day, demonstrations expressing support for President Bashar Assad took place in Al-Bukamal city, eastern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. On 24 June, residents in Abu Hamam, Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, held a silent protest demanding better living conditions and better pay for teachers. On 25 June, protests against Turkish armed forces and Turkish-backed armed opposition groups occurred in Darbasiya and Western Alouk town within Al-Hassakah Governorate and Tell Abiad in Ar-Raqqa Governorate. The next day in Tell Abiad, local residents held a demonstration against the transfer of wheat to Turkey. On 27 June, local residents protesting against deteriorating economic conditions and the transfer of wheat to Turkey took place in Hammam al-Turkman in the countryside of Ar-Raqqa Governorate. The same day, a protest against Turkish armed forces was assembled at the Russian military base in Istrahat Wazir by Al-Hassakah city, Al-Hassakah Governorate. On 27 June, local residents in Shadadah city, Al-Hassakah Governorate, demonstrated against SDF and U.S. forces, which resulted in protesters burning tires and blocking streets in the city. In recent weeks, there have been increasing reports of protests across Syria due to the worsening economic situation in the country.

Iran expanded its presence in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. On 25 June, Iranian-backed militias began land purchases in Al-Bukamal and nearby towns in eastern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.¹⁸ The reason for these purchases was not revealed. On 27 June, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)-Quds Force commander Esmail Ghaani was reported to have visited Al-Bukamal and delivered a speech to Iranian-backed forces in the city.¹⁹ This was the first visit to Syria of an IRGC-Quds Force commander after the assassination of Qassem Soleimani on 3 January 2020. On 28 June, the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) opened new recruitment centers in eastern Al-Bukamal, reportedly requiring all internally displaced persons returning to the city to have a family member serve with an Iranian-backed armed group.²⁰

The Israeli air force carried out multiple airstrikes in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. On 23 June, the Israeli air force attacked GoS armed forces and Iranian-backed militias in Kaba Jeb along the Sokhneh-Deir-ez-Zor highway in western Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, and in As-Sweida and Hama Governorates. On 27 June, Israeli airstrikes hit GoS armed forces and Iranian-backed militias in Abbas town, Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, reportedly killing 6 Iranian-backed fighters. The town is close to the city of Al-Bukamal, which IRGC-GC Commander Esmail Ghaani visited this week (see above).²¹ These were the first airstrikes Israel had conducted in northeastern Syria since 4 May 2020. Since 1 January 2019, Israel has conducted 4 airstrikes against Iranian-backed militias in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate (see figure 3).

ISIS continued to conduct attacks in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. On 22 June, ISIS prisoners rioted in Kasra jail in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. The prisoners demanded

¹⁸ <https://nedaa-sy.com/news/21034>

¹⁹ <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/irans-quds-force-commander-makes-first-visit-to-syria-since-qassem-soleimanis-assassination/>

²⁰ <https://nedaa-sy.com/news/21061>

²¹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-iran-usa/iran-news-agency-reports-visit-of-new-quds-chief-to-syria-idUSKBN23YOKL>

