

- HTS initiated a new security campaign against its rivals in opposition-controlled territory.
- Israel conducted airstrikes against Iranian-backed militias in Damascus and Rural Damascus Governorates.
- The predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces continued operations against ISIS in northeast Syria.

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*Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 11 April 2021.-NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups.*

*Figure 2: HTS raids and arrests in opposition-controlled territory between 5-11 April 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.*

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is continuing attacks against defectors from its own ranks and armed groups perceived as undermining its authority, particularly the Al-Qaeda affiliate Hurras al-Din (HD). The HTS crackdown on HD and other rival groups started in February 2021.<sup>2</sup> This campaign coincides with HTS's attempts to gain international recognition and present itself as a moderate part of the Syrian opposition.

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<sup>1</sup> 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](#).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2021/02/syria-idlib-hayat-tahrir-al->





Since the start of 2021, there has been a sharp escalation of ISIS attacks,<sup>17</sup> particularly in the Badia desert region of central and northeast Syria. Multiple operations against ISIS have had limited success. At times, operations by the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic i 727.18 Tm0 g0 G[in]-3(an)-3(tly)-436(Kur)5(d)-4