

Military activity in Syria decreased during the month of June, with the majority of armed groups in Syria solidifying territorial claims and consolidating power. In Idlib Governorate, Syrian Islamist opposition group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) carried out an arrest campaign targeting Syrians suspected of being in support of reconciliation talks with Damascus. HTS also deployed military equipment to the frontline between Hama and Idlib Governorate, as pro-regime forces, including Russian forces, closed and reopened border crossings as talks of an upcoming military offensive began.²

ISIS continues to lose territory in Syria; however, the group carried out at least two attacks in Idlib and Suwayda Governorates against Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and the Syrian regime respectively, indicating that it retains operational capabilities outside of its territorial control. Pro-regime militias began operations to oust ISIS from its territorial holdings in Suwayda Governorate after reportedly relocating hundreds of militants to from the Yarmouk Basin to Suywada.³

In Deir ez-Zor Governorate military operations continued in an effort to force out ISIS from the area. However, infighting between pro-regime forces, including Russian and Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, was reported. At the end of the reporting period, members of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Front reportedly clashed with SARG forces after deploying to al-Bukamal.⁴

In Aleppo Governorate, Turkish-backed forces were accused of intentionally destroying the Martyr Avesta Xabur Shrine and Cemetery in Afrin (). Video footage showed heavy machinery present in the cemetery. ASOR CHI has previously reported on Turkish forces and the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (FSA) vandalizing and carrying out intentional destruction of Kurdish sites in Aleppo Governorate.⁵

In Raqqa Governorate, Internal Security Forces discovered three tombs that had been looted at an unknown time (). Also, in Raqqa satellite imagery showed damage to a mosque as a result of explosives ().

In Deir ez Zor Governorate, US-led Coalition airstrikes reportedly damaged a mosque in the village of al-Marashda ().

⁵ For additional reporting on intentional destruction of Kurdish sites in Aleppo Governorate, see ; and , in the ; and in the ; and available at: <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/incident-report-feature-afrin-religious-sites/>