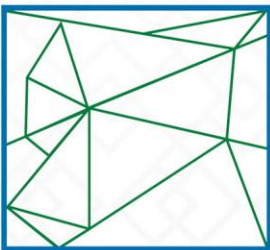


# Syria: Continued Violations and Opposition Intra-Factional Clashes in “Safe Areas”



## Syria: Continued Violations and Opposition Intra-Factional Clashes in “Safe Areas”

*Fighting between armed Syrian opposition groups escalated over the first half of 2022. The intensity of clashes reflected the failure of the Turkish government to assume its responsibilities as an occupying power*



## Executive Summary

"When the shooting started on the street, I panicked. I saw bullets flying around me, and I was extremely scared. I tried to run away and hide. Then I noticed that I started bleeding. I was five months pregnant. With the sound of bullets emanating from every side and the excessive fear that gripped me, I did not realize what had happened. After the clashes subsided, I was transferred to a hospital in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê. There, I learned that I lost the baby, my first child. This incident had a great impact on me. I no longer want to remain in this area. I want to go to Turkey or anywhere else, where there are no such clashes and a persistent feeling of fear. I do not want to have my children here, and I also need treatment for the stress and complications I developed after losing the baby,"

This testimony was given by a woman caught in a clash between fighters of the Syrian National Army (SNA).

This grim account presents a keyhole into the purportedly "safe areas", which are recurrently cited in the Turkish government's official [plan](#) to relocate over a million Syrian refugees in Turkey to northern Syria under the pretense of "voluntary return". While safety is the crux of the plan, Turkey-held areas, comprising the "Euphrates Shield", "Olive Branch" and "Peace Spring" strips, remain hotspots for weapon chaos and incessant intra-factional clashes between armed groups affiliated with the SNA of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG)/ the Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC). The factions engage in hostilities, competing for gains at the expense of these areas' civilians and indigenous population.

The plan coincides with the [announcement](#) made by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan that his country intends to launch an invasion/military operation into northern Syria to establish a new "safe area", 30 km deep in the country. The Turkish National Security Council [approved](#) the operation. The intended operation was met by strong objections from the US, the Russian Federation, and other countries active in the Syrian context.

Connecting the dots between the Turkish plans and factional violence, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) prepared this report which documents the toll of intra-factional fights, the reasons underlying the fights, and their catastrophic impact on the lives and properties of civilians. Additionally, the report sheds light on the role of the Turkish authorities, who ignited and fueled the fights on some occasions, and ignored the havoc they wrecked on the area on others.

The monitoring and documentation process STJ carried out revealed that since early 2022 and up to late June, Turkey-held areas witnessed nearly triple the fights that occurred in 2021, more than the total of the fights in 2020, and about twice those the factions engaged in over 2018, 2019, and 2021 collectively.

The figures that STJ verified over the past months indicate a widening rift within the SNA's military administration and an intensifying dispute spurred by pure personal interest, particularly financial gain, including royalty revenues collected from checkpoints, smuggling routes, and civilian properties across all three occupied stripes, while Turkish authorities did not take any serious measures to ensure the safety of the population in these territories.

Starting from 2018, STJ documented 69 SNA intra-factional clashes in the three strips, of which 28 occurred over the first half of 2022, nine in 2021, 26 in 2020, and six in 2018 and 2019.





In addition to immediate clashes, STJ registered several car-bomb and IEDs attacks in these areas, many of which were blamed on the Syrian government (SG) affiliated security services, Islamic State (IS) militants, and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighters, who operate in northeastern Syria. In other cases, the attacks were attributed to specific armed opposition groups, stemming from their disputes.

Moreover, STJ recorded several indiscriminate instances of [shelling](#). In many of these [attacks](#), the ammunition was fired from areas jointly controlled by Syria-Russia and the People's Protection Units (YPG).

Notably, the population in these areas consists of locals and internally displaced persons (IDPs), who fled their original places of residence and sought refuge across these strips. The suffering of both locals and IDPs is not limited to clashes, blasts, and indiscriminate bombings. The populations also struggle in the throes of colossal daily human rights [violations](#), including [expropriation](#) of properties and misuse of power by several faction commanders and fighters, who are not tried or held accountable for their wrongdoings over the past years, except in very rare cases and under popular pressure.

To track down the reasons at the heart of the clashes, STJ reached out to a variety of sources, including civilian victims, SNA commanders, and officials within the military and civil police. The sources said that the clashes are mainly motivated by a desire to seize civilian-owned properties and commercial structures. However, recently another reason triggered these clashes and created a detour in the course of the internal fighting, whereby factions fought each other for dominance over the military matrix as a whole.

The sources also attributed some of the clashes to the factions' desire to control strategic and vital areas, which are viewed as key for financing factions. In this context, the factions fought over the administration of the drug and human trafficking between different control areas within Syria or in Syria-Turkey border areas. There are also military activities between factions and other forces active in Syria for the internal crossings demarcating the opposition's areas of control.

In addition to reasons, affected civilians reported that the clashes caused deaths among civilians, cost them major financial losses, and threatened many with arrest. Involved factions embarked on raid and arrest drives, detaining persons on charges of dealing with enemy factions or for filing complaints against clashing factions.

In addition to arrests, civilians were sometimes forced to temporarily flee their homes fearing death during clashes. Upon their return, many found that their houses had been looted. Following a few similar cases, the warring factions announced peace agreements, which usually provide for compensating civilians for their material losses and paying the victims' blood money. However, several of the affected civilians did not receive compensation, and those who dared demand compensation were arrested or threatened with death.

The evidence and testimonies collected by STJ refute the allegations that Turkey-held areas are safe and demonstrate that these areas do not meet the [criteria](#) for voluntary return set by the United Nations (UN). Therefore, the findings of the report reiterate the commentary by the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, presented in their last 2021 report. The commission stated that “The Syrian Arab Republic does not yet offer a safe and stable environment for sustainable and dignified returns” (Document No. A/HRC/48/70).







For the purposes of this report, STJ carried out 11 intensive and focused interviews, with four affected civilians and seven first- and second-rank commanders within the SNA and affiliated bodies. Additionally, STJ reviewed the available documentation archive including videos, footage, and data saved in a dedicated database, and analyzed dozens of open-source videos and images that document the factional clashes and the harm they inflicted upon the residents in the factions' operation areas.

## Exploiting the Refugee Card and International Tensions

On 3 May 2022, Turkish President [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#) pledged a new project aimed at returning one million Syrian refugees from Turkey to Syria "voluntarily." Two days later, the Turkish newspaper *Sabah* [published](#) the eight-term plan and identified the areas of return. Refugees will be sent to the cities of Azaz, Jarabulus and al-Bab, in Aleppo's countryside, Tal Abyad, north of Raqqqa, and Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê, northwest of al-Hasakah province. All these areas are SNA-controlled, (and practically Turkey-held).

However, only 20 days later, the Turkish government tried to exploit international tensions to expand the scope of its geographical control in northern Syria and occupy additional batches. To this end, Turkey built on the exasperating stress between Russia and the West due to the Russian [invasion](#) of Ukraine, which started on 24 February 2022, and the proposal to join Finland and Sweden into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), while Finland and Sweden sought to persuade Turkey into voting with acceptance.

To back the expansive plans in Syria, the Turkish government claimed that the US and Russia did not abide by their commitments to withdraw the YPG, the backbone of the SDF to a distance of 30 KM from the Turkish border.

On 23 May 2022, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [announced](#): "the completion of the construction of the remaining part of the safe zone, with a depth of 30 KM along the border with Syria." He stressed the importance of completing the "security belt" as soon as possible, [considering](#) it an "urgent necessity."

The "security belt" declaration was built on several preceding measures taken by the government of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Parti), which address Syrian refugees in the country. The measures, according to STJ's researchers, fall within the framework of political competition and the desire to take the refugee card from the opposition's hand. While the opposition constantly threatens to return refugees to Syria as soon as they are in power, they also treat the refugee card as their way to power, by convincing the Turkish people that returning refugees is the only solution for most of Turkey's economic problems.

The onset of these measures was the foreigners' residence [limit](#) across the Turkish neighborhoods. The Turkish authorities raised the limit from 20% to 25%, closing 1,200 neighborhoods, instead of the previous 781, in all 54 Turkish states. With this, Syrian refugees are left with tight choices of places of residence.

Following residence limits, the Turkish authorities opted for tighter policing measures against Syrians who reside in the country illegally and started [deporting](#) them to northern Syria, through Bab al-Hawa, Jarabulus, Bab al-Salameh, and Tal Abyad border crossings. Cases of illegal residence include refugees who live and work in Istanbul while possessing a *kimlik* (temporary protection identity documents) issued by Gaziantep province. Notably, the [measures](#) did not





pay heed to potential family disintegration. Several families were broken because fathers were deported to northern Syria while the rest of the family members remained in Turkey.

In addition to unfair deportation measures, STJ discovered a huge gap in the figures reported on "voluntary returns". Official statements by Erdoğan and the immigration [department](#) claim that 500,000 Syrians returned home, while the UN [documented](#) only 134,907 returns since 2014.

While the returns and the measures governing them contextualize the military operation intended by Turkey, any such military activity in Syria cannot be launched without a relative consensus among international actors in Syria, including the US, the US-led coalition which backs the SDF, and Russia which backs the SG. The US's response to the Turkish planned military escalation had an evident effect on the goals and the course of the discussed military operation. On 24 May 2022, only two days after Erdoğan's operation declaration, the US [cautioned](#) Turkey against embarking on any new military campaign in northern Syria.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said his country is "very concerned" about the Turkish declaration. "We condemn any escalation and support maintaining the current ceasefire lines." Turkey's [response](#) to US concerns was relayed by Erdoğan personally, who stated that "We are entering a new phase of our decision to establish a safe zone 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) deep south (of the Turkish-Syrian border)", adding that they are establishing control over Tall Rifat and Manbij in Aleppo's countryside.

Unlike the US, Russia did not have a firm response to the operation, even though there are talks that the Russian command had already deployed reinforcements to Tall Rifat following the Turkish threats. The ambiguity overriding the Russian response was sustained in the call President Vladimir Putin had with President Erdoğan in May 2022, in which he did not voice his country's stand on the operation. The same attitude later governed the statements of Mikhail Leonidovich Bogdanov, deputy minister of Russian foreign affairs, who said that Russia will make contact on the matter.

The operation remained on the sidelines even when Sergey Lavrov, Russian foreign affairs minister, visited Turkey. Lavrov only hinted that the Turkish security concerns must be addressed. The only clear response was made by [Dmitry Peskov](#), Kremlin spokesman, who said that the expected Turkish military operation in Syria will not bring stability into the region.

It was not until 17 June 2022 that the Special Envoy for Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev, [told](#) the *RIA Novosti*, that his country would not fight the Turkish forces and the SNA. He added that "Our answer is to try to convince the Turks of the futility of this step. They can occupy the area, but it remains difficult to predict the consequences of further escalation."

Under this heated debate on Syrian refugee returns and military operation, it is important to stress that the term "safe areas" is not used in any international humanitarian law instruments. Instead, the instruments deploy the term "protected zones", to emphasize the continuity of the obligations of the parties in the conflict to provide protection to the civilian population. These obligations remain valid whether "protected zones" already exist or not.

In fact, "protected zones" are usually constructed when parties in the conflict do not comply with these legal obligations. Additionally, these zones are established as a means to reinforce protection in an attempt to compensate for the lack of compliance. Therefore, the purpose of





establishing “protected zones” is to ensure protection for the areas because civilians and other protected groups must naturally be protected either outside or within those created zones.<sup>1</sup>

There is no legal “obligation” that commits parties to the conflict to establish “protected zones” because their primary duty is to provide protection. One of the protection duty’s key binding rules—as a reflection of customary international humanitarian law, and also in the context of this report, is that constant care must be taken in the conduct of military operations to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects, and is that precautions must be taken in both attack and defense.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the protection duty is not only related to protection from enemy attacks or practices, but rather from the behavior of the defending party, which is related to the duty to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law by all parties. Thus, creating what Turkey calls “safe areas” should neither contradict nor nullify its principled duty and the duty of armed non-state actors it presides over to secure the protection of civilians in the areas they control.

In addition to the evident politicization of terminology, Turkey is exposing civilian populations to threats of attack and deprivation of necessary protection needs, through the intentional ambivalences it projects on concepts of “safety”, “protection”, and “state security and self-defense.” It is obvious that establishing the term “safe areas” mainly aims to pave the path for the forcible returns of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Through the term, Turkey alludes that safe return conditions exist, thus, abolishing its practices of the coercion they entail.

[The UNHCR Working Group](#) on International Protection has addressed this practice, stressing that no protection and prevention measures should replace the inherent right to asylum and non-refoulement. Special provisions in international law for “protected zones” or “demilitarized zones” apply to specific areas and/or objects, the most important of which are hospitals, which must be free from armed manifestations and spared any hostilities. Thus, manipulating terminology and trying to create the illusion of safety by borrowing concepts of a legal nature violates one of the key principles of international law represented in good faith during the implementation of its provisions. This deliberate mixing of terminology and positions exposes civilians - the very civilians Turkey claims it is seeking to protect- to hostilities by promoting Turkey's right to “defend itself” and create a 30-KM-deep “safe area” in Syria.

The imposition of any de facto status on the territory of another country without the authorization of the Security Council, in accordance with Article 42 of the [Charter](#) of the United Nations, is a violation of the law of war, specifically Article 2 (4) of the Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Because Turkey did not obtain a mandate from the Security Council, it resorts to the other exception, which is the ban on the use of force against another country under the pretext of self-defense in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter. Regardless of the complexity of the concept of self-defense and its applicability in this case, the activation of this concept, in turn, gives the Syrian state the right to confront this status, in addition to the existing armed conflict or conflicts or ones that may result from this status with other non-state armed actors, like the SDF.

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<sup>1</sup> Commentary on the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, Vol. 4: Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, ICRC, Geneva, 1958 (ICRC Commentary on GC IV), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> ICRC Customary International Humanitarian Law Database, rules 15 to 24.





The claim of establishing "safe areas", while target Syrian territories for these areas are considered active hostility hotspots- whether these hostilities are aimed at other parties or among parties affiliated with Turkey, as this report shows – renders the concept of "safety" meaningless and reduces the potential of protection, which is the duty of all parties.

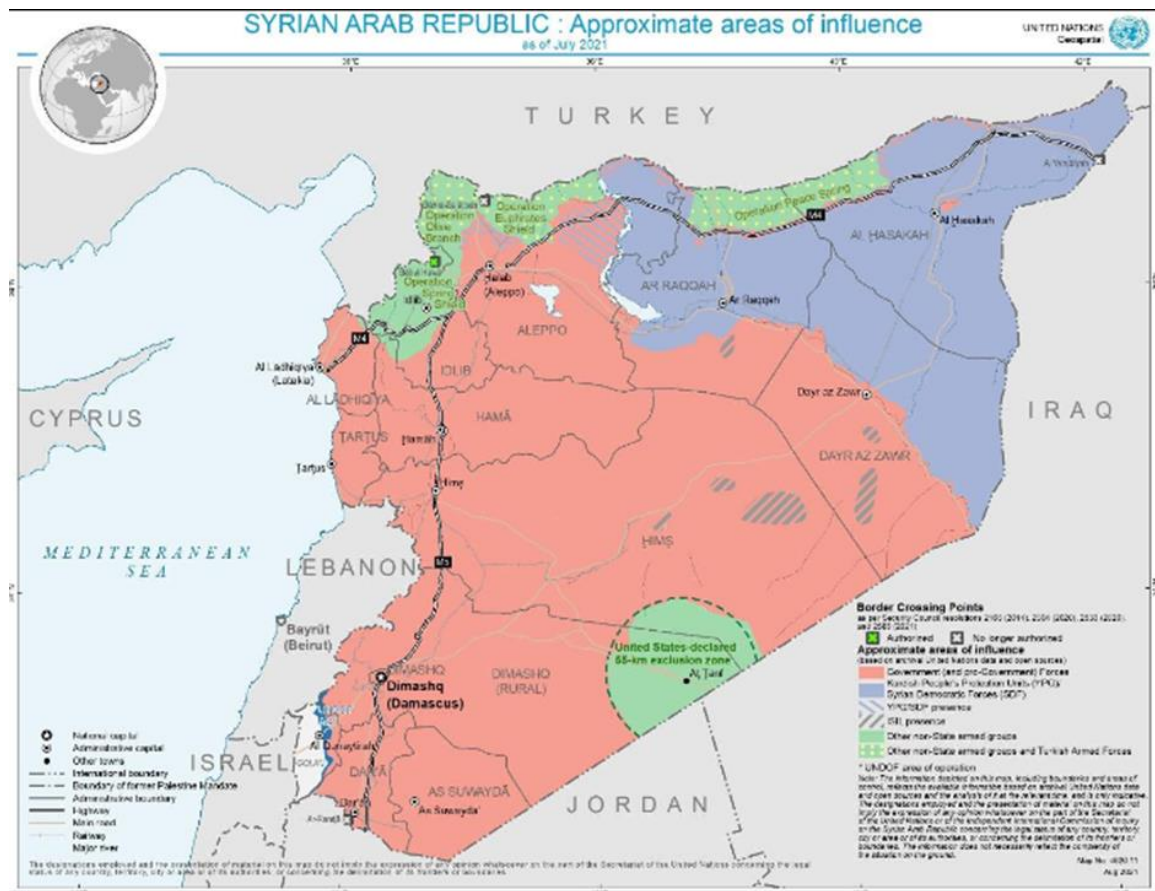


Image (1)—Map showing the different control areas across Syria throughout 2022. ([Source](#)).

## Statistics on Factional Clashes

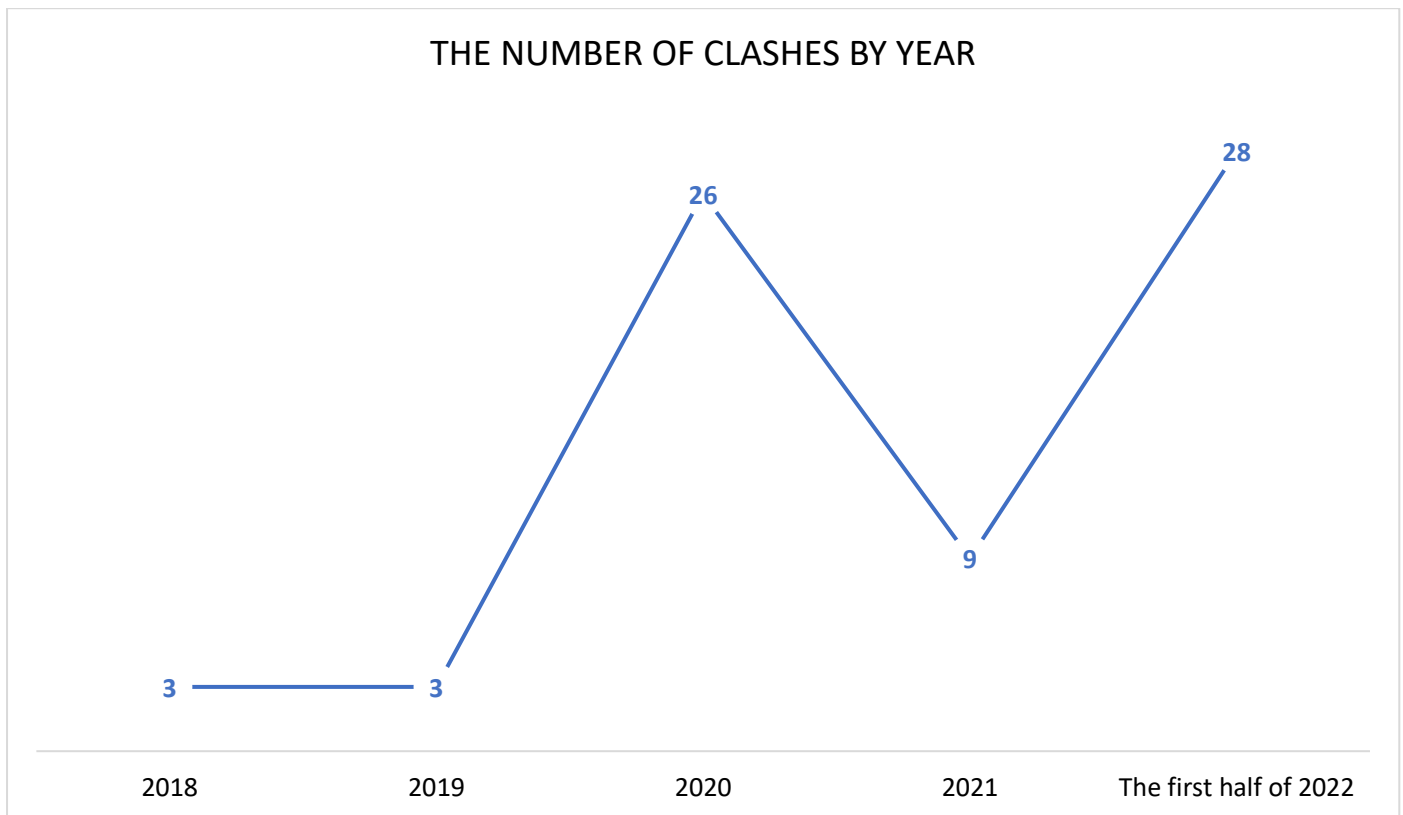
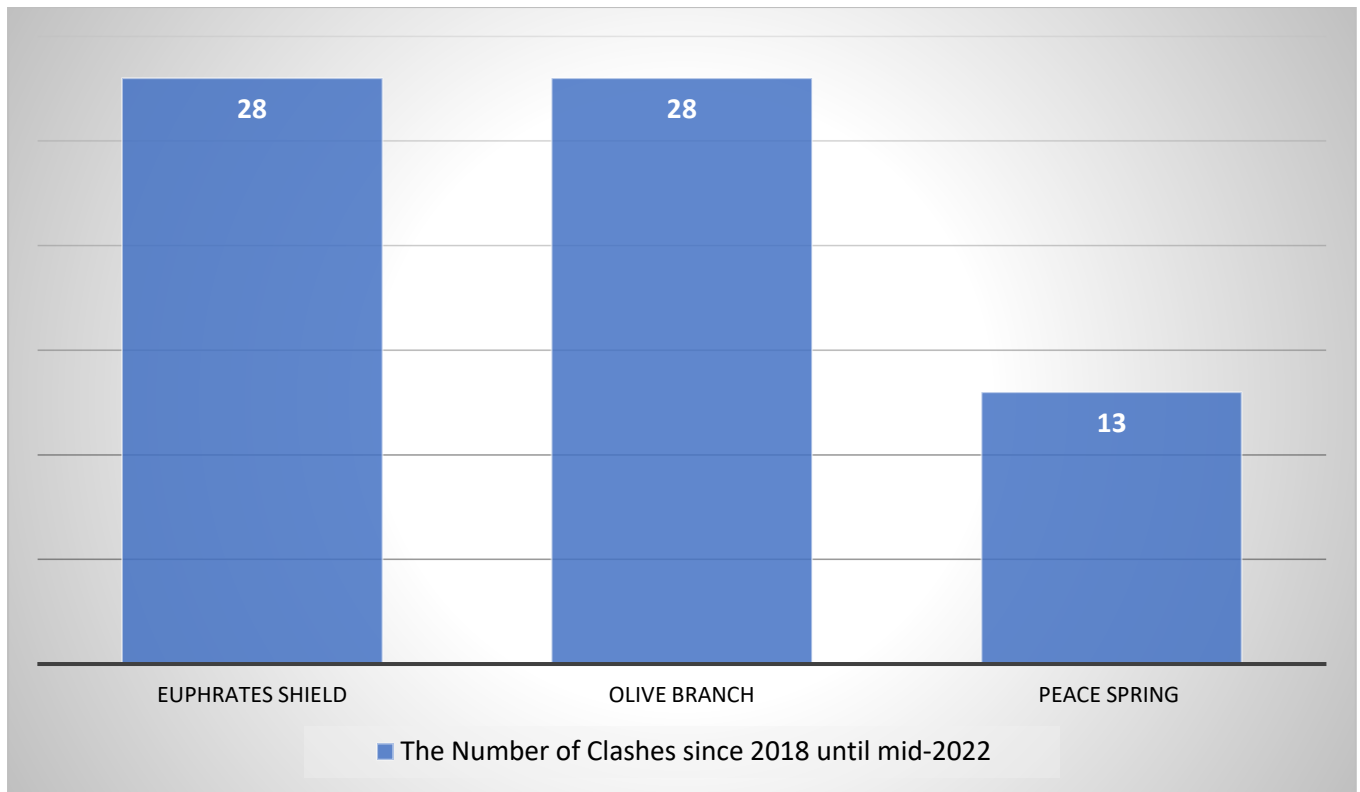
STJ's team obtained figures on the total of 69 factional clashes in the three Turkey-held strips since 2018. The section below offers the detailed toll of these hostilities:

1. In the "Euphrates Shield" strip, encompassing the areas of Jarabulus, Azaz and al-Bab: Opposition factions engaged in 28 clashes. The hostilities killed 7 civilians and injured 16 others, while they killed 13 fighters and injured 18 others.
2. In the "Olive Branch" Strip, encompassing Afrin region: Opposition factions engaged in 28 clashes. The hostilities killed 5 civilians and injured 20 others, while they killed 10 fighters and injured 68 others.
3. In the "Peace Spring" Strip, encompassing the areas of Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê: Opposition factions reneged in 13 clashes. The hostilities killed one civilian, without causing any civilian injuries, while they killed nine fighters and injured 21 others.

Notably, the factions are often discrete about their casualties in the clashes they engage in.







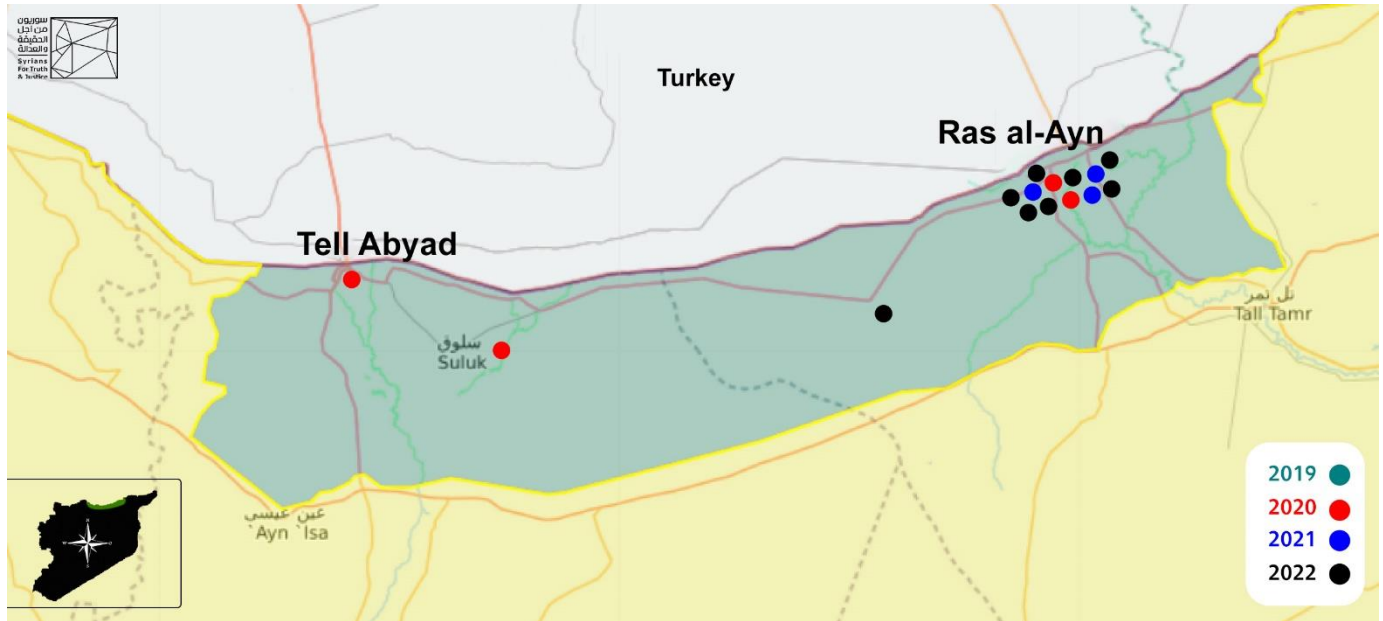


Image (4) – A map identifying the locations of clashes in “Peace Spring” areas between Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tal Abyad in the years 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022.

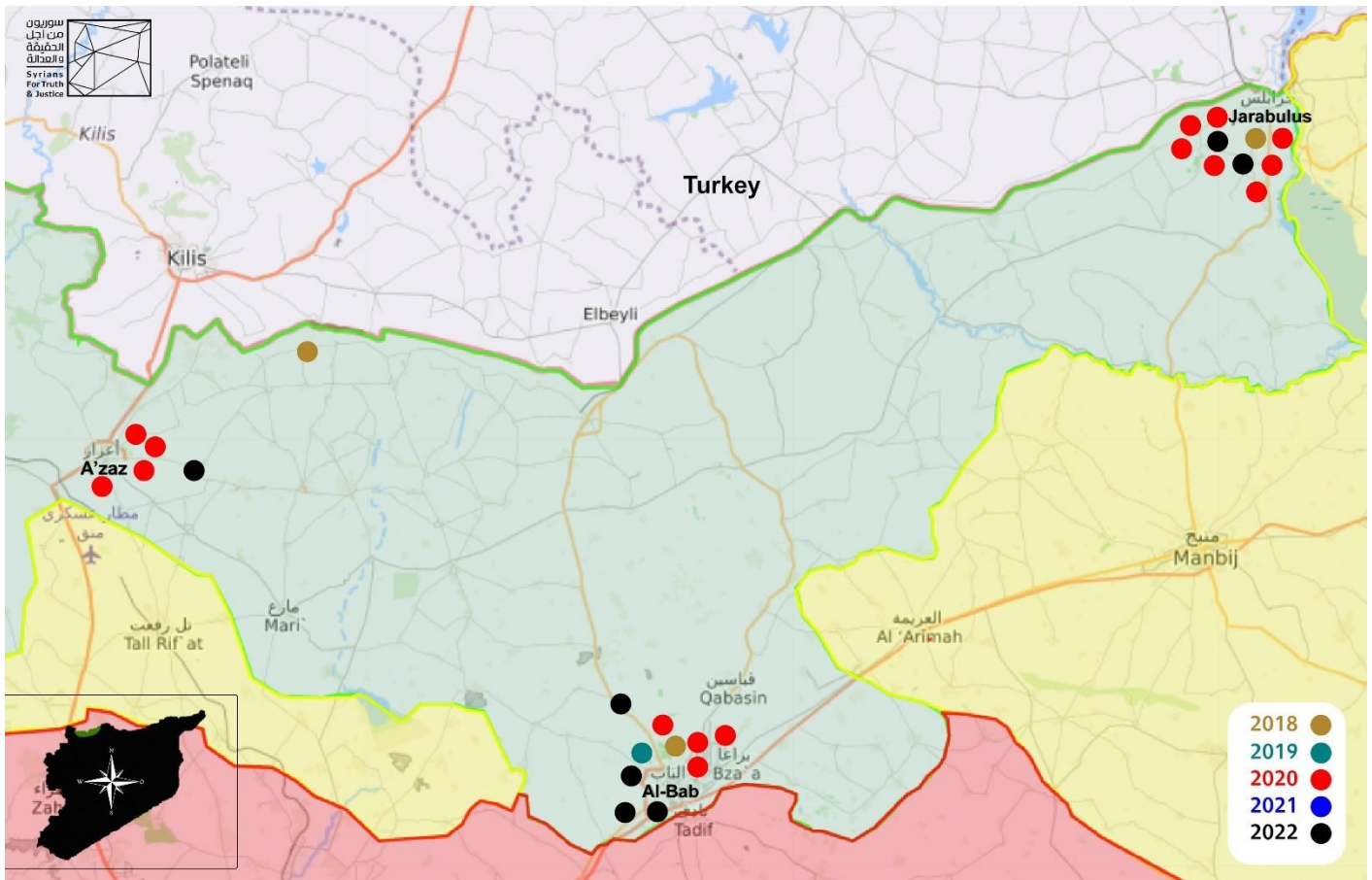


Image (5) – A map identifying the locations of clashes in the “Euphrates Shield” areas of Jarablus, Azaz, and Al-Bab in the years 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022.



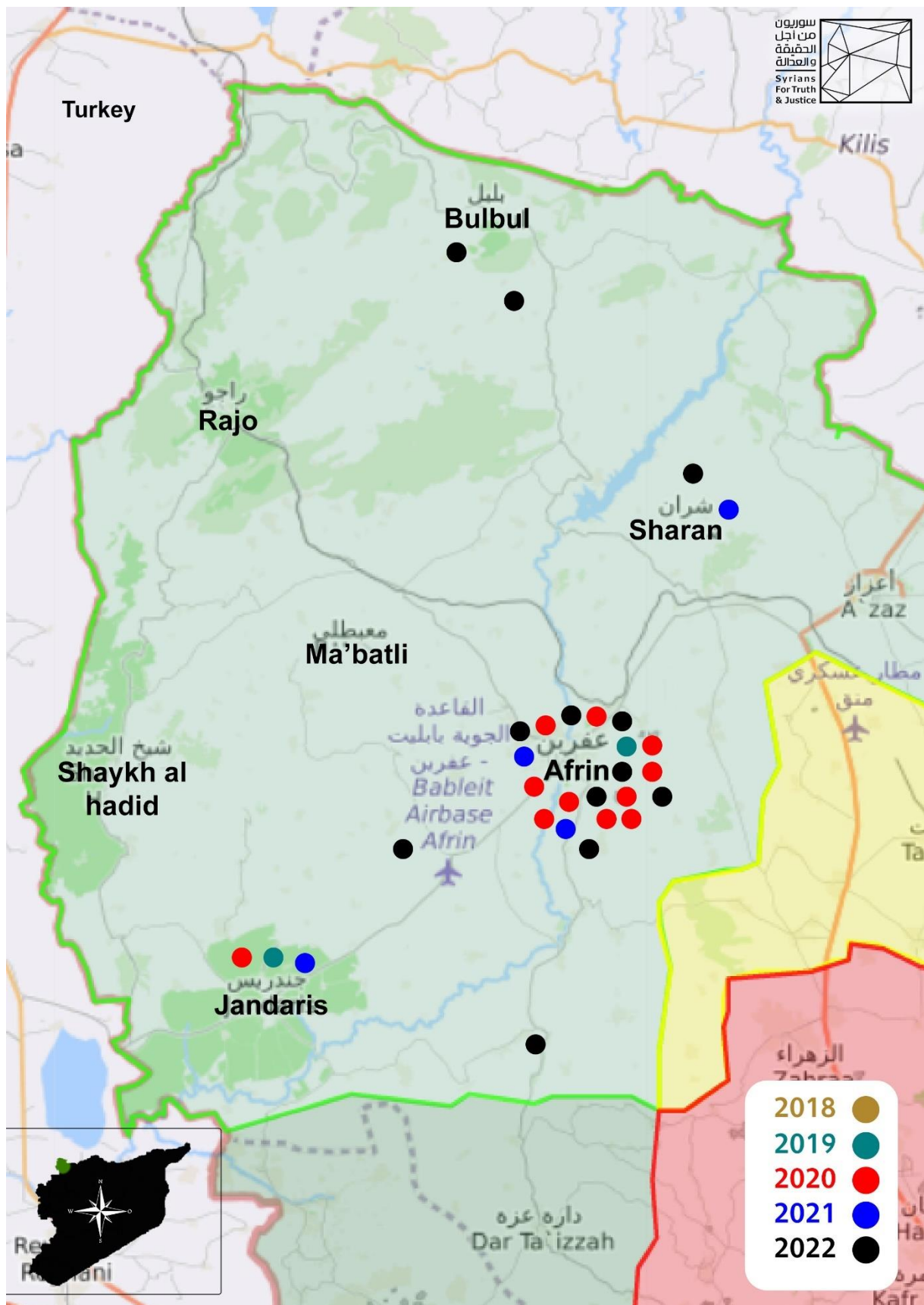


Image (6) – A map identifying the locations of clashes in the “Olive Branch” areas of Afrin in the years 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022.





## Clashes Debunk the “Safety” Myth Promoted by Turkey

The documented clashes have a pattern. They are often sudden and occur within populated areas. These blasts of hostilities take a huge toll on residents because they cause a state of instability and security, akin to the horror that overrides locals during the sudden shelling of an area.

In terms of location, STJ recorded that clashes erupted in marketplaces, residential neighborhoods, and streets, near schools and mosques, and on highways connecting villages and towns. Other clashes occurred at faction-operated checkpoints, inspection posts, and crossings which are frequently navigated by civilians moving between different areas. The locations of the clashes further threaten the lives of civilians.

STJ documented the key armed clashes, presenting each through the narratives of affected civilians or sources informed of the reported acts of violence.

### Clashes in Tell Halaf Town

On 19 May 2022, members of the civil and military police were caught in skirmishes in the area stretching between al-Barid and al-Jawzeh roundabouts, on the road to Tell Halaf [town](#). Both sides used light and medium weapons.

A local woman witnessed the clashes. She narrated to STJ the horror that overcome her, and how the violence robbed her of her first baby. She recounted:

“When the shooting started on the street, I panicked. I saw bullets flying around me, and I was extremely scared. I tried to run away and hide. Then I noticed that I started bleeding. I was five months pregnant. With the sound of bullets emanating from every side and the excessive fear that gripped me, I did not realize what had happened. After the clashes subsided, I was transferred to a hospital in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê. There, I learned that I lost the baby, my first child. This incident had a great impact on me. I no longer want to remain in this area. I want to go to Turkey or anywhere else, where there are no such clashes and a persistent feeling of fear. I do not want to have my children here, and I also need treatment for the stress and complications I developed after losing the baby.”

### Clashes in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê City

On 30 March 2022, fighters from the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division and the 20th Division exchanged fire in the Kanayes neighborhood, in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê. The fighting broke out when a group of the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division’s fighters defected and joined the ranks of the 20th Division. Inquiring into the repercussions of the incident, STJ reached out to a civilian, based in the neighborhood where the clashes occurred. He confirmed that several civilian houses were looted after families fled temporarily during the hostilities. He recounted:

“That day, the people were scared. A state of fear predominated due to the extensive sounds of shooting. Several families fled Kanayes Street and sought refuge at the homes of relatives in other neighborhoods. Some even found protection in the mosque and the school. When the sounds subsided and the clashes ended, we returned to our homes and discovered that they were tampered with. Several expensive objects were stolen. They even took the food people had in storage.”







He added:

“After the civilians’ return, fighters from the clashing factions raided and searched houses, alleging that they heard the sound of shooting coming from the houses while they fought. They vandalized furniture during the inspections. Also, both factions arrested several civilians on the pretext that they are allies of the opponent faction. The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division held one civilian for a week, claiming he was an informer with the 20th Division. They wanted to horrify and instill fear in civilians to prevent them from filing complaints, or even objecting to the arrests.”

## Weapon Tests in Mirkān Village, in Afrin Region

On 28 March 2022, the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division was preparing to scale up military readiness. Over the course of the process, fighters from the division experimented with machine guns at the center of Mirkān (Mirkan) village, in Maabatli/Mabeta district. The tests were carried out near the area’s school and during school hours. The fighters were heedless of the students and the civilians in the vicinity. Several projectiles and stray bullets landed in the school, injuring eight children. For further details on the incident, STJ interviewed a commander from the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division. He recounted:

“The children were injured by the projectiles of a 23 mm caliber weapon—a 23mm caliber anti-aircraft machine gun, firing several types of ammunition, including explosive ones—that landed in an elementary school, while the weapon was tested for operation. The faction was on alert in preparation for any surprises from other factions. At that time we had problems with several factions, and we had to be fully prepared.”

He added:

“This is not the first time that a weapon is tested in a populated area, nor are the injuries caused by the test. We are sometimes forced to test weapons inside villages when we are on alert because it is not easy to seek a peripheral area. It also must be acknowledged that weapon test decisions within residential villages are individual, taken either by a fighter or a commander. As for the faction’s general commander, what matters the most is that we are fully ready, regardless of when, how, or where we try the weapons.”

## Clashes near a School in Ashrafieh Neighborhood, in Afrin

On 20 April 2022, two sub-groups under the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya engaged in clashes in the Ashrafieh neighborhood, in Afrin city. This fighting incident is particularly fatal because the fighters exchanged fire near three adjacent schools for about an hour and a half. STJ reached out to one of the schools’ staffers, who narrated:

“The largest responsibility a school staff has to bear is ensuring protection for students during clashes. We tend to be helpless and at a loss of the right way to behave; do we send them home all at once, do we stay in the school showered with bullets from every direction, or do we talk to the faction and ask them to delay the fight until the school hours are done!”

He added:

“On that day, over 200 bullet cases landed in the school yard and the windows of several classrooms shattered. Luckily, none of the children were hurt. However, parents are





very scared for their children, and some have even decided not to send their children to school again. Naturally, they have all the right to such a decision because no one is capable of protecting the students."

## Clashes in a Marketplace in al-Bab City

On 2 April 2022, fighters from the Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya and the Military Police exchanged fire on the street where a marketplace is established in al-Bab city. The fighters of the movement attempted to enter the market with all their weapons and equipment and the military police prevented them. The movement's fighters returned, however, with larger reinforcements and started shooting. The shooting developed into skirmishes between the two groups. Documenting the market hostilities, STJ spoke to one of the shop owners on the street where the clashes erupted. He gave a first-hand account of the day's violence:

"My shop is located near the al-Center Roundabout. It was during the month of Ramadan and the market was crowded, particularly the fronts of restaurants. All of a sudden, I saw militants taking a position at the head of the street, while others were stationed just across from them. Random shooting started and a state of horror took over the center of the jammed market. Passersbys crashed against each other and pumped into cars and motorcycles. Some drivers even abandoned their vehicles on the street and ran away. Everyone was trying to hide in the shops. The clashes lasted very long, and when the street regained calm, we left the shops and saw the damages caused by the fight. Even though there were no civilian casualties, the material losses were massive."

He added:

"One of my neighbors at the market filed a complaint at the Civil Police. They told him that the case was registered against unidentified perpetrators. And when he referred to the station of the Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya and asked them for compensation in return for the damages that befell his car and shop, they said that it was caused by the other side (the military police). Then, they detained my neighbor for 20 days on the charge of raiding the faction's station."

## Turkish Authorities' Inaction

The Turkish authorities and their operative services in the three strips have been markedly inactive over the course of their control. Neither the forces within the Turkish bases nor the intelligence officers who maintain immediate contact with faction commanders took measures to limit the weapon chaos or end the factional clashes. Additionally, none of these Turkish sides intervened to stop active clashes, unless in rare cases where the end of violence was to the advantage of the Turkish government. With this response, Turkish authorities turned a blind eye to dozens of clashes, which took a toll on civilian lives.

In addition to their passive control over the factional violence, the Turkish authorities, as a party in control of the territory, did not act to hold accountable the fighters of the factions that caused





the death or injury of civilians, or oblige the factions to compensate civilians for their material losses during clashes.

To gain insights into the Turkish role in relation to the SNA's internal rift and clashes, STJ interviewed a second-rank officer within the Military Police. The officer narrated:

"When Turkey decides to intervene, the decision is always ultimate. However, the Turks interfere in these fights only on rare and very few occasions, when the clashes would adversely affect their interests. For instance, enmity and clashes between the Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East and the 20th Division continued for over a year, and for the whole duration, no Turkish officer intervened. However, the hostility between the two factions negatively affected the distribution of power and the spread of the fighters within the Peace Spring strip. The clashes also obstructed the Turkish patrols and their operation in the strip. For this, the intelligence officer in charge of the Syrian file summoned the two factions' commanders to a meeting, forced them to reconcile, and end the fighting. Indeed, this was realized one week after the two commanders met the Turkish officer."

The source added:

"Turkey intervened in clashes for a second time and ordered the elimination of the East Army/Jaysh al-Sharqiya in al-Bab. Turkey assigned this task to the Islam Army/ Jaysh al-Islam and greenlighted raids into al-Sharqiya's stations in al-Bab city. Turkey also deprived al-Sharqiya of funds for four months. Back then, Turkey opted for this step to put a limit to and bring under control the faction that attacked the Military Police. Thus, Turkey disciplined the faction and sent a message to the other factions that it will cut off funds to those who jeopardize its interests."

The source added:

"When it comes to the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya, the clashes and the problems it caused, the Turkish authorities followed other means to pressure the faction and subjugate it, including imposing restrictions on its first- and second-rank commanders' movement, and authorizations for their navigation into and out of Turkey."

Stemming from the nature of the clashes and the legal implications cited above, the Turkish State has double the responsibility to curb these practices and hold accountable perpetrators and the officials behind them. This responsibility is hinged on two legal frames. In addition to the international humanitarian law, which governs Turkey's claims that its intervention in Syria is to create "safe areas", obliging the Turkish state to ensure human rights are met in regions it controls, there is also the International law relative to occupation. Under the second frame, Turkey's effective control over these "safe areas" activates its transnational human rights obligations,<sup>3</sup> most notably in the context of this report, the right to life and personal security, which are increasingly violated by the Turkish-controlled factions, in addition to affected civilians' right to an effective remedy, which they are deprived of.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g., ECtHR, *Al-Skeini and Others v. UK*, Appl. No. 55721/07, Judgment, 7 July 2011, para. 136.





## Types and Causes of Clashes

The military sources STJ met for the purposes of this report, among them SNA, civil, and military police commanders, indicated that clashes are of three types, each spurred by a unique set of causes.

### 1. Inter-Factional Clashes

Based on information obtained from several sources within the SNA and its affiliated bodies, the clashes among factions can be tracked down to a dispute over influence, power, trade, and financing sources. Commenting on these causes, a commander within the SNA's 1<sup>st</sup> Legion said:

"The commanders of the factions are warlords. They are motivated by influence and the desire to maintain hegemony over the decision-making process within the SNA as an institution. This applies to the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya, which attempts to establish hegemony over the whole region, the way Abu Mohammad al-Julani, [Commander of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)] did in Idlib, while it lacks the needed resources. There are also the motives of money and trade. In this context, the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division would stand out. The division maintains a large-scale control over smuggling routes, and drug and artifact trafficking. Additionally, there is the aspect of control and the desire to expand influence over the largest territory possible. This can be traced to the efforts of both the Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East and the 20th Division, reflected in their fight over the land of the Libyan Company in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê. The fight was ended through an understanding, under which the 20<sup>th</sup> Division was allocated the al-Tufaha smuggling crossing, while al-Sharqiya controlled the company's land."

### 2. Intra-Factional Clashes

Fights between the commanders of sub-groups within the same faction are often stirred by personal disputes and struggles over administrating certain trade activities in specific areas. Elaborating on this fighting category, a first-rank officer within the SNA said:

"Fights between sub-groups can often be attributed to areas of control and the profit and wealth opportunities they bring about. For instance, not long ago, we witnessed clashes between the groups of a faction, I prefer not to name. The clashes occurred due to marketing and selling drugs and violating the drug payment agreement. We witnessed other clashes within another faction due to disputes over a smuggling crossing, and, to put it correctly, the whole fight happened because of a client."

He added:

"Some clashes started due to personal frictions and grudges that groups' commanders hold against each other. Such clashes happened in Ramadan. Two commanders exchanged fire due to the food rations allocated to each of their groups. They accused each other of sealing the rations. However, everyone knew that the two commanders hate each other and that the rations were only a pretext to start a fight."

### 3. Clashes between the Civil and Military Police







A commander from the Civil Police told STJ that the civil and military police do not have disputes or reasons to clashes that are unique to them. However, they were affected by the clashes between the factions, or fights among their fighters. The two police services were affected by those hostilities due to gaps in their foundation. The two services were composed of faction fighters and commanders. The fighters harbor loyalty to the faction, rather than the police, while commanders maintain their position within the faction simultaneously with their police duties. Therefore, the police clashes are caused by fighters and the commanders, who due to their affiliation, bring the problems of their factions into the police departments. The source told STJ:

"The fight between institutions is an extension to the fight between the factions. All the members and commanders within the police services have factional backgrounds. A majority of the members and commanders receive two salaries, one from the faction and the other from the police. So, it is only natural that if a faction commander decides to engage in clashes, or launch an arrest and raid drive, he would give instructions to an affiliate commander within the police. In some cases, police commanders harassed organizations and attacked them under orders from the commanders of factions they are affiliated with. The police service even indulges in clashes with certain factions working on the orders of another faction."

## The Role of Sharia Officers in Reconciliations

For the purposes of the report, STJ interviewed two men of religion, who operate as Sharia officers within two SNA factions. Notably, the two officers stressed that the majority of the persons affected by the clashes are civilians and that families of killed fighters were not delivered the compensation they were assigned during the reconciliation sessions that are held to bring together most of the clashing factions.

One of the interviewed Sharia officers said that officers holding this position do not play an effective role in achieving reconciliation or even justice among the disputed factions. Such initiatives are secretly led by the clashing parties themselves, who choose this means so as not to tarnish their power images openly. The Sharia officer pointed that:

"A Sharia officer cannot stop clashes by resorting to his shrewdness or personal efforts. In truth, the two fighting sides would be willing to reconcile, while insisting on their positions and the gains they achieved. So, they assign two Sharia officers as mediators to resolve the struggles just before the public eye. However, none of these parties have a real desire to observe the right or even restore rights."

He added:

"During all the disputes and the clashes I witnessed, no rights were ever restored to their rightful owners."

The second Sharia officer commented on the retaliatory responses civilian complainants suffered from:

"To be honest when a civilian files a complaint that he/she lost a house, a car, or has been affected in clashes, we now advise him/her to forget and give on the idea of demanding their rights from the concerned faction. This is so, simply because I witnessed several cases in which civilians asked the factions to restore their rights, and they were detained





and tortured. The faction would even ask the family to pay a ransom in exchange for the detainee's release. This had happened on a large scale in the Peace Spring and Olive Branch strips."

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Ensuring protection for Syrian areas from further Turkish attacks and invasion rests with the international community, specifically the UN [Security Council](#), which is supposed to undertake, under [the UN Charter](#), the tasks of maintaining international peace and security in accordance with the UN principles and purposes. Turkey has grossly failed to assume its responsibilities as an occupying power in the Syrian areas and has not been able to prevent the ongoing violations against the residents of these areas and/or the people displaced to them from other Syrian areas. Therefore, STJ recommends the following:

- The Syrian armed opposition groups, in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law, must not establish their headquarters and military presence in or near civilian areas or civilian places of residence. The commanders of these factions bear the legal responsibility for this matter, and the Turkish authorities, as the occupying power, bear the responsibility to ensure compliance with these obligations.
- The Turkish authorities, as the occupying power, must do their utmost to ensure the security and well-being of the people of the occupied areas, including maintaining the law, holding violators accountable, and refraining from exposing the civilian population to extortion and security and military threats.
- The commanders of the factions and civil authorities, and before them the Turkish occupation authorities, are responsible for ensuring the right of all victims of these hostilities to access effective redress by creating effective, clear and accessible redress mechanisms that guarantee prompt and impartial investigation, hold violators accountable, and impose appropriate reparation measures for the victims.

## Annex: All Factional Clashes Since 2018

#	Clashes Date	Clashes Location	First Party	Second Party	Victims				Notes/Reasons/Background
					Militants		Civilians		
					Dead	Wounded	Dead	Wounded	
1.	25 March 2018	Al-Bab	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East	1	-	-	-	An individual stole a vehicle of the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division. The robber was then identified as an affiliate of the Ahrar al-





									Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East.
2.	7 May 2018	Hawar Kilis	The Sultan Murad Division	The Mountain Hawks Brigade	-	6	-	-	The Mountain Hawks Brigade attempted to station their forces within Hawar Kilis village and establish a center there. The village is under the control of the Sultan Murad Division.
3.	11 July 2018	Jarabulus	Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya	The Northern Brigade/Liwa al-Shamal	-	-	2	-	The clashes spread anger among the locals, who held <a href="#">protests</a> on the following day, expressing their disdain over violence.
4.	5 November 2019	Afrin (Jindires)	Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya	The Eastern Army/Jaysh al-Sharqiya	-	-	-	1	Fighters from Ahrar al-Sham harassed a young woman while in a cellphone shop. Because she hails from Deir ez-Zor province, fighters from the Eastern Army/Jaysh al-Sharqiya stepped in. The two factions engaged in clashes.
5.	10 November 2019	Al-Bab	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	The Sultan Murad Division	1	-	-	-	Fighters from al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division stole a water tank from the house of a fighter from the Sultan Murad Division. The house was located near the Youth Housing area, near one of the al-Hamzat's centers.
6.	19 November 2019	Afrin	Tajammu Shuhadaa al-Sharqiya/Gathering of Martyrs of the East	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division, The Sultan Murad Division, and The Eastern Army/Jaysh al-Sharqiya	-	38	-	3	Turkey decided to ultimately eliminate the presence of the Tajammu Shuhadaa al-Sharqiya/Gathering of Martyrs of the East and its fighter, Abu Khaoulah Muhsen, in Afrin. The decision was a response to the Gathering's raid into





									Tadef city, adjacent to SG forces-held al-Bab city, without Turkey's permission. The building where the Gathering's fighters were stationed was hit by Turkish military aircraft.
7.	5 January 2020	Jarabulus	The Eastern Army/Jaysh al-Sharqiya	Military Police	1	2	-	-	Turkey ordered the removal of the Eastern Army/Jaysh al-Sharqiya from Jarabulus with force. This happened after a military police officer was killed.  The faction was denied funds twice. The fund ban lasted over a period between 100 and 120 days.
8.	17 January 2020	Al-Bab, Jarabulus, Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê, Suluk, Afrin	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East	20 <sup>th</sup> Division	-	-	-	-	The 20 <sup>th</sup> Division was accused of allowing the entry of a car-bomb.
9.	8 March 2020	Tal Abyad	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya	-	-	-	-	Military casualties were documented, but the reasons for the clashes remain unknown.
10.	19 March 2020	Al-Bab	Civil Police	A judge charged with corruption	1	-	-	-	Clashes erupted between the Civil Police and Omar Hmaid, who was prosecuted for corruption cases. Hmaid died on the spot.  Notably, Hmaid is the judge that cleared Abu Amsha of <a href="#">rape accusations</a> .
11.	20 March 2020	Afrin (Bassouta)	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	The Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham	1	6	-	-	The clashes extended over to the villages of Abdallou and Kafr Zait. The reasons remain unknown.







12.	27 March 2020	Afrin	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya	1	3	-	-	Clashes between fighters of the 51 <sup>st</sup> Division in Ashrafieh neighborhood.
13.	28 March 2020	Al-Bab	Civil Police	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	3	3		Unidentified	While the streets in al-Bab city were evacuated after local administrations ordered the closure of markets to combat COVID-19 spread, a dispute developed into clashes.
14.	21 April 2020	Afrin	Military Police	The Northern Brigade/Liwa al-Shamal	-	-	-	-	No details
15.	27 April 2020	Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	20 <sup>th</sup> Division	-	Undeclared	-	-	The clashes ended with the arrest of commander Abu Jammou and three of his fighters.
16.	30 April 2020	Jarabulus	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	9 <sup>th</sup> Division	1	-	-	-	The clashes were motivated by dormant revenge among the fighters. Fighter Abu Obaida was killed by fighters from the Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East at the al-A'oun checkpoint.
17.	1 and 2 May 2020	Jarabulus	Al-Sharqiya factions	SNA	1	4	-	-	The clashes lasted for several days and <a href="#">caused</a> deaths and injuries.
18.	2 May 2020	Jarabulus	The Eastern Army/Jaysh al-Sharqiya	Military Police	1	-	-	-	The clashes started after fighters from the Eastern Army/Jaysh al-Sharqiya killed a Military Police officer.  The officer was killed during a protest held by other officers, objecting to their dismissal from police. These officers asked for





									help from their relatives, who are fighters within the al-Sharqiya faction, who were present on site. The fighters killed the officer during the protest.
19.	7 May 2020	Afrin	Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya	-	-	-	-	No details
20.	16 May 2020	Al-Bab	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	-	-	2	2	Unidentified
21.	23 May 2020	Azaz (Sajo)	SNA factions	Civilian IDPS from Tall Rifat	-	-	3	5	Civilians demanded to be returned to their cities and a military operation in Tall Rifat. Turkey denied them those demands. The situation developed into clashes.
22.	29 May 2020	Afrin	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	Civilian	-	-	2	2	The case of the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division related to al-Mahmoudiya Street.
23.	21 June 2020	Afrin	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East	-	-	-	-	Clashes within the faction.
24.	10 July 2020	Azaz (Shmarekh)	National Security Service with the Police	Members from the al-Sa'b Tribe	1	-	-	2	The death of police officer Abdulmajid Taha.  A dispute erupted between members of the National Security and the al-Sa'b Tribe at the Shmarekh Camp, located in rural Azaz north of Aleppo province.  The situation went out of control and machine guns were used.





									A member of the police and the General National Security was killed and several civilians were injured.
25.	30 July 2020	Afrin	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	-	-	-	-	Clashes within the faction in the neighborhoods of Ashrafieh and al-Villat.
26.	14 October 2020	Jarabulus	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	-	2	-	-	Clashes near al-A'oun Checkpoint between fighters from the same faction.
27.	25 October 2020	Azaz (Shamardin)	SNA	SNA	-	-	-	-	Tribal clashes, whereby the members of these clashes are affiliated with various SNA factions.
28.	5 November 2020	Al-Bab	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	Civilian	-	-	-	-	A row between fighters from the Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East and the civilian Asad al-Faqi, who is an owner of a car showroom. The dispute erupted near al-Anwar Mosque.
29.	8 November 2020	Jarabulus	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	The Eastern Army/Jaysh al-Sharqiya	-	-	-	2	A fight among fighters in al-Mala'b Camp for unidentified reasons.
30.	30 November 2020	Afrin	The Liwa Samarkand /Samarkand Brigade	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	-	-	-	-	No details
31.	4 December 2020	Afrin	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya	-	-	-	-	No details
32.	13 December 2020	Afrin (Jindires)	Nour al-Din al-Zenki Movement/ The Glory Corps/Faylaq al-Majd	Jaysh Tahrir al-Sham/ Army of the Liberation of the	-	1	-	+5	The clashes happened due to disputes over civilian properties.





				Levant/ Firas Bitar					
33.	23 December 2020	Azaz (Shamar in)	The Levant Front/al- Jabha al- Shamiya	The Mu'tasim Division	-	-	-	1	The clashes occurred in al- Nour Camp.
34.	14 February 2021	Afrin (Jindires )	The Eastern Army/Jays h al- Sharqiya	Ahrar al- Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	-	-	-	-	No details
35.	15 February 2021	Afrin	Jaysh al- Islam/ Islam Army	The Levant Front/al- Jabha al- Shamiya	-	-	-	-	Additional details in a previous STJ <a href="#">report</a> .
36.	27 March 2021	Afrin (Bassout a)	The al- Hamza/al- Hamzat Division	The Sham Legion/Fayl aq al-Sham	1	6	-	-	The clashes <a href="#">occurred</a> over the Bassouta Crossing.
37.	2 June 2021	Afrin (Midank ey)	Elite Army/Jays h al- Nukhba	The Northern Hawks Brigade	-	3	-	-	The reasons remain unknown.
38.	17 June 2021	Ras al- Ayn/Ser ê Kaniyê	Ahrar al- Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	20 <sup>th</sup> Division	-	-	-	-	Fighters from both sides were injured, but the reasons remain unknown.
39.	8 August 2021	Afrin	9 <sup>th</sup> Division	Ahrar al- Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	-	-	-	8	The dispute started when the 20th Division attempted to expel families from Deir ez-Zor, who maintain ties with the Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East, from houses it seized in the al- Villat neighborhood in Afrin city. The situation escalated when fighters from al-Sharqiya raided a center for the Division and the house of one of its commanders.
40.	29 September 2021	Ras al- Ayn/Ser ê Kaniyê	The al- Hamza/al- Hamzat Division	The Mu'tasim Division	6	-	-	-	The clashes happened due to disputes over the control of security







									checkpoints and a few houses.
41.	30 September 2021	Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	Civil Police	-	-	-	-	Fighters from the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division <a href="#">assaulted</a> the Director of a Civil Police Department in al-Mahattah neighborhood, in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê city. The fighters beat the director and his companion and took his car.
42.	12 February 2022	Afrin (Jindires and the two villages of Julaqan and Faqiran )	Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	2	1	-	-	A fighter of Ahrar al-Sham and another from the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division had a fight over a sum of money. However, the fight rapidly developed into a shooting between the two sides in the two villages. The two fighters died on the spot, and a third was injured.
43.	30 March 2022	Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê Kanayes neighborhood	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	20 <sup>th</sup> Division	-	5	-	-	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division and the 20 <sup>th</sup> Division exchanged machine gun fire in Kanayes neighborhood, in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê, over the distribution of seized civilian houses and properties.  The hostilities occurred after the Ahrar al-Qa'qa', commanded by Abu Amar, split from al-Hamzat and joined the 20th Division.
44.	2 April 2022	Al-Bab (Aulan area)	Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya	-	-	-	-	A group of Ahrar al-Sham fighters refused Abu Ahmad Nour's decision to dismiss Abu Audai, the commander of the Security Department in Aulan area, for the violations he committed. The Levant Front gave the fighters of Ahrar al-Sham one hour to surrender





									<p>themselves, while a military convoy of the Liwa Asifat al-Shamal/ Northern Storm Brigade, advanced from Azaz towards Idlib to back the Front.</p> <p>The convoy blocked the roads leading to Aulan village, in rural al-Bab city, and heavy shooting was heard at al-Hadath village crossroad.</p> <p>A group of the Front's fighters was captivated by Ahrar al-Sham in Aulan village.</p> <p>Major damages were inflicted upon the al-Battoushi Gas Station, at the crossroads of al-Hadath village. It was bombarded during the clashes.</p>
45.	3 April 2022	Afrin	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East	The 51 <sup>st</sup> Division	1	-	-	-	A fight between fighters from the two factions.
46.	6 April 2022	Ras al-Ayn/Ser ê Kaniyê	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	Malik-Shah Brigade	-	Undeclared	-	-	<p>The Malik-Shah Brigade/Nawaf al-Turkawi engaged in clashes with the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division/Abu Shehadeh over passengers. These passengers are civilians that factions smuggle from Syria to Turkey. The clashes injured several persons.</p>
47.	7 April 2022	Afrin (Bulbul)	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	The Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham	-	-	-	Undeclared	<p>The Sham Legion and the al-Hamzat Division engaged in clashes in Bulbul district, injuring several civilians.</p> <p>The two groups clashed, according to STJ sources, due to drugs. One of the factions purchased an</p>





									amount of hashish and did not pay for it.
48.	7 April 2022	Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê	The Mu'tasim Division	The Mu'tasim Division	-	-	-	-	<p>Clashes between two sub-groups within the Mu'tasim Division in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê. The groups used machine guns and rockets.</p> <p>The fight occurred due to disputes between commanders over a house owned by one of the city's IDPs.</p> <p>The clashes lasted for nearly an hour in the Hawarneh neighborhood and al-Diwan Square, at the center of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê.</p>
49.	8 April 2022	Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	-	-	-	-	<p>Fighters from the al-Hamzat Division engaged in clashes due to disputes and hostilities between a group led by Abu Hamid and a group led by Abu Ibrahim al-Hayib. The clashes occurred because one of the groups arrested a fighter from the opponent group.</p>
50.	10 April 2022	Azaz(Ihtaimlat)	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya (51 <sup>st</sup> Division)	Town locals	-	1	-	2	<p>Locals from the Ihtaimlat village, hailing from al-Mwali Tribe, engaged in machine gun clashes with the 51<sup>st</sup> Division, operating under the Levant Front. The clashes broke out at a Front-operated checkpoint on the village's outskirts, in Azaz city, north of Aleppo.</p> <p>The clashes broke out after a checkpoint of the Division shot at civilians, injuring two, one seriously.</p> <p>The clashes also injured a fighter of the Division.</p>





									The locals took control over the checkpoint, vandalized it, and set fire to its location.
51.	10 April 2022	Al-Bab (Abu al-Zendain crossing)	Malik-Shah Brigade	The Sultan Murad Division	-	-	-	-	A sub-group, operating under the Malik-Shah Brigade, led by Ayman Hamameh, shot at one of the posts of the Sultan Murad Division, led by Fahim Issa, at the Abu al-Zendain crossing, because they held the Harakat Thaeroon/Rebels Movement flag. The shooting stopped without casualties.
52.	10 April 2022	Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê	Martyrs of Badr Army/Jaysh Shuhada'a Badr (Under the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division)	Martyrs of Badr Army/Jaysh Shuhada'a Badr (Under the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division)	-	-	-	-	Two groups fought over the price of a drug shipment. The first group planned to distribute the drugs in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and then pay the other group.
53.	14 April 2022	Afrin (Bassouta and Jabal al-Ahlam)	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	-	-	-	-	Sub-groups under the al-Hamzat Division engaged in heavy weapon clashes in Bassouta and Jabal al-Ahlam areas.
54.	15 April 2022	Jarabulus	Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat)	Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya	1	Undeclared	-	-	Groups of the al-Amshat and Ahrar al-Sharqiya engaged in clashes in Jarabulus city, causing the death of al-Amshat fighter Yasser al-Qjeh  Several fighters from both factions were also injured.
55.	15 April 2022	Afrin (al-Ghazawiyah)	Hayat Tahrir al-Sham	The Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham	-	-	-	-	Groups of HTS and the Sham Legion had an argument at the al-Ghazawiyah crossing, which separates rural Idlib





		crossing )							from the Olive Branch areas in rural Aleppo.  The situation developed into exchanged arrests and summoned forces from both sides.
56.	17 April 2022	Al-Bab	Military Police	Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya	-	-	-	-	The police prevented fighters of Ahrar al-Sham from entering the marketplace with their weapons, causing friction.  The fighters left and then returned with backup. They shot at the police personnel within the market. The shooting injured several members from both sides.  Local media reported that the clashes happened after one of the fighters harassed a young woman in the market, causing a problem between the police and the fighter, which developed into clashes.
57.	17 April 2022	Afrin	The Mu'tasim Division	9 <sup>th</sup> Division	1	7	1	-	The causes of the clashes remain unknown.  However, the clashes caused the death of fighter Hussam Moussa, from Saraqib city, in Idlib, and a fighter from the Mu'tasim Division.  The clashes also injured seven fighters, four from the Mu'tasim Division and three from the 9 <sup>th</sup> Division.
58.	18 April 2022	Afrin	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya	51 <sup>st</sup> Division	-	-	-	-	No details
59.	20 April 2022	Afrin	The Levant Front/al-	The Levant Front/al-	-	-	-	-	Two sub-groups under the Levant Front engaged in clashes. The first is







			Jabha al-Shamiya	Jabha al-Shamiya					<p>affiliated with the central forces of the Front, and the second is led by Abu Wakil al-Homs. The dispute started when a central fighter asked for the removal of a car belonging to the Abu Wakil's group. This developed into a heated argument, followed by the spread of both sides' fighters on rooftops.</p> <p>Clashes and indiscriminate shootings started. The clash continued for almost an hour and a half, among civilian homes and shops.</p>
60.	21 April 2022	Jarabulus	Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya	Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat)	1	-	-	-	No details
61.	22 April 2022	Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê	The al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division	The Harakat al-Tahrir wa-l-Binaa (Movement of Liberation and Construction)	2	13	-	-	<p>The Liwa al-Qa'qa'/al-Qa'qa' Legion, under the al-Hmzat Division, operating within the Harakat Thaeroon/Rebels Movement, engaged in clashes with the Civil Police, which was backed by the Movement of Liberation and Construction, whose members are mainly from al-Fara'n Tribe.</p> <p>The clashes happened after the security officers of Thaeroon arrested members of the police and shaved their heads.</p> <p>The arrested members engaged in clashes after they were released.</p>





									The clashes stopped after the Turkish army intervened.
62.	23 April 2022	Afrin	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya (51st Division)	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya (Liwa al-Salam/Peace Brigade)	-	-	1	1	<p>Mustafa Abayeh, a fighter within the ranks of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Legion of the 51<sup>st</sup> Division, had a dispute with Abu Salih, a fighter from the Peace Brigade, who hails from Deir ez-Zor.</p> <p>Abayeh demanded a sum of money from Abu Salih, amounting to 100 USD, which is the price of a sold rifle. Abayeh asked for the money near the scrap market, across from the al-Mahabeh Hospital. The matter developed into a quarrel and then a physical fight.</p> <p>Abu Salih sought help from Mustafa Adel Oso, a commander within the Peace Brigade. The dispute lasted for two days and developed into clashes.</p> <p>The hostilities killed a police officer and injured an old man from Hama.</p>
63.	23 April 2022	Al-Bab	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya	The Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham	-	-	-	-	Disputes over a smuggling route.
64.	2 May 2022	Afrin (Bulbul)	The Northern Hawks Brigade	Al-Hayib Tribe	1	3	1	-	<p>The clashes happened after fighters, serving at a checkpoint of the Northern Hawks Brigade, shot and killed Bashar al-Swaidan from the al-Hayib Tribe. The fighters and the dead young man had a disagreement in Ras al-Ahmar village, in Midankey.</p>





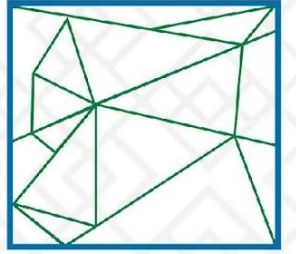
									<p>Armed men from the tribe spread in villages in Bulbul District, in Afrin's countryside, while they engaged in extensively violent clashes with the brigade's fighters. Both sides used mortar shells.</p> <p>Three fighters from the Northern Hawks Brigade died, and three others were injured.</p>
65.	4 May 2022	Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê (Mabrouka town)	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East	Military Police	-	-	1	-	<p>The clashes developed after disagreements on human trafficking operations to Turkey carried out by the Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East.</p> <p>The clashes that continued for over half an hour killed a civilian, who hailed from al-Shu'aytât tribe.</p> <p>The slain civilian was called Thamer al-Ttraiha.</p>
66.	4 May 2022	Afrin (Midank ey)	The Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham	The Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham	1	Undeclared	-	-	<p>The clashes developed after the commanders of two divisions quarreled and exchanged insults after Iftar meals, during Ramadan, were distributed to one, but not, the other division. The division denied rations accused the other of stealing its food allocations.</p> <p>Groups of fighters from the Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham cordoned groups from the same faction within one of the faction's centers in Midankey.</p>





67.	18 May 2022	Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê	Civil Police	Military Police	1	3	-	-	<p>Bursts of fighting between officers from the civil and military police services.</p> <p>The services used medium weapons and machine guns.</p> <p>The clashes occurred between al-Barid and al-Jawzeh roundabouts, on the road to Tell Halaf town.</p> <p>The police officers, both military and civil, are affiliates of antagonistic factions in the area.</p>
68.	12 June 2022	Akhtarin	The Mu'tasim Division	Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East	-	-	-	2	<p>Fighters from the Division headed to arrest a fighter from the al-Sharqiya in Ka'ibah village, administratively affiliated with Akhtarin. This led to clashes.</p>
69.	16 June 2022	Al-Bab	The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya	Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant/Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya	Unidentified	Unidentified	Unidentified	Unidentified	<p>The clashes happened following internal disputes within the Ahrar al-Sham group, operating under the flag of the front, which serves within the 3<sup>rd</sup> Legion of the SNA.</p> <p>Even though a reconciliation committee and council were held, the situation spiraled out of control later, and clashes occurred. In the beginning, the Front took over centers operated by the Ahrar. However, the Ahrar restored control after it deployed convoys of its forces stationed in Idlib and Afrin. The Ahrar was backed by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the dominant faction in Idlib.</p>





## About Us:

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization monitoring human rights violations in Syria. Founded in 2015, STJ has been based in France since 2019.

STJ is an impartial and independent Syrian human rights organization operating across Syria. Our network of field researchers monitor and report human rights violations occurring on the ground in Syria, while our international team of human rights experts, lawyers, and journalists gather evidence, examine emerging patterns of violations, and analyze how violations break domestic Syrian and international law.

We are committed to documenting violations of human rights committed by all parties in the Syrian conflict and elevating the voices of all Syrians victimized by human rights violations, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, class, and/or gender. Our commitment to human rights monitoring is founded on the idea that professional human rights documentation meeting international standards is the first step to uncovering the truth and achieving justice in Syria.



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