ACLED
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BREAKING: Even as Overall Violence Drops, Civilians Face Record Threats in Syria

22 March 2019: Eight years into the Syrian Civil War, the country remains one of the deadliest places for civilians according to data collected by the [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)](). While overall conflict levels have steadily declined as the Bashar al-Assad regime has consolidated control over regained territory, ACLED has continued to record thousands of reported fatalities from direct attacks targeting civilians through the end of 2018, with nearly 500 reported so far this year. Regime forces have [gradually intensified]() their bombardment of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) around the last rebel enclave in Idleb, violating the ceasefire agreement and reportedly killing a record number of civilians just last month. The DMZ is now poised to collapse entirely -- putting millions of civilians at an even greater risk of violence.

Total conflict fatalities:
- **ACLED has recorded more than 80,000 reported conflict-related fatalities in Syria from January 2017 through February 2019**[1]
- **As levels of violence fell throughout 2018, reported fatalities decreased by approximately 50% from 2017**
- **Overall reported fatality rates have continued declining into January and February 2019**, with less than half the number of reported fatalities recorded during the same period in 2018

Total civilian fatalities:
- Between January 2017 and February 2019, **ACLED recorded upwards of 11,700 direct attacks targeting civilians, resulting in approximately 26,000 reported fatalities**, including over 7,000 last year[2]
- **Responsibility for the highest number of reported civilian fatalities in Syria is linked to military forces loyal to the Bashar al-Assad regime**, with almost 10,000 reported fatalities from January 2017 until February 2019 -- including nearly 4,000 in 2018 -- stemming from their direct involvement
- Proportion of total reported fatalities linked to direct attacks on civilians by actor, 2017-2019:
    - The Syrian military: over 1/3
    - The Global Coalition Against Daesh: over 1/10
    - The Islamic State: over 1/10
    - Syrian Democratic Forces: about 1/50
    - Hayat Tahrir al-Sham: about 1/100

Flashpoints:
- **Reported civilian fatalities from Assad regime shelling of the DMZ in Idleb province hit an [all-time high]() in February 2019**, more than quadrupling the monthly average and threatening to scupper the truce altogether
- **Civilians in Deir ez-Zor have faced the highest percentage of targeted attacks in recent years**: approximately 20% of all reported fatalities from direct attacks targeting civilians from 2017 to February 2019 occurred in Deir ez-Zor as the fight against the Islamic State has become increasingly centered in the province
- As the political violence landscape evolved last year, concentrated attacks on civilians also shifted to different areas: **in 2018, over 1/3 of all reported fatalities linked to direct attacks on civilians occurred in Rural Damascus, primary resulting from regime offensives to retake areas around the capital**

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[1] Fatality numbers are frequently the most biased and poorly reported component of conflict data. While ACLED codes the most conservative reports of fatality counts to minimize over-counting, this does not account for biases that exist around fatality counts at-large. Find more information about ACLED's methodology for coding fatalities [here]().

[2] This figure includes only civilians killed as a result of direct civilian targeting. It does not include collateral civilian fatalities. As such, the number is assumed to represent an underestimate of the total conflict-related civilian fatalities in Syria.

A US-based 501c3 established in 2014, [ACLED](#) *is the highest quality, most widely used, real-time data and analysis source on political violence and protest around the world.*

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