ACLED Fact Sheet: Civilians in Conflict
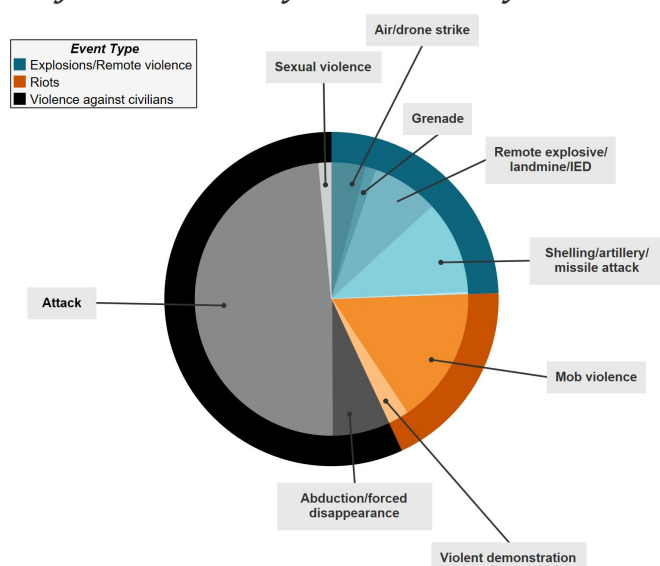
23 May 2019: Twenty years after the United Nations officially added the protection of civilians in armed conflict to the Security Council agenda, noncombatants continue to be targeted at alarming rates (UN OCHA, 2019). While overall reported fatalities from events directly targeting civilians declined over the past year, conflict continues to exact a devastating toll on civilian populations, with tens of thousands reportedly killed in 2018 alone. ACLED has already recorded over 8,000 reported fatalities stemming from anti-civilian violence so far this year – and in some regions, civilian targeting is on the rise (ACLED, 2019).[1]

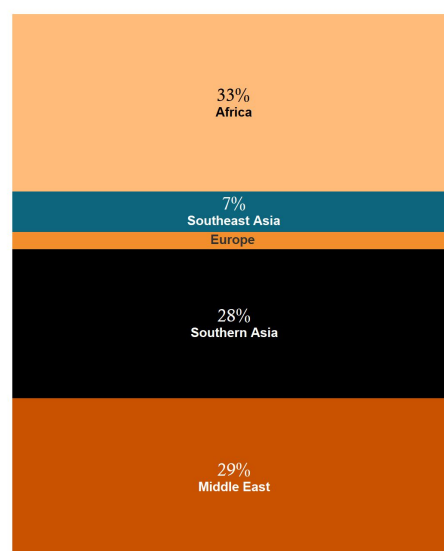The data are clear: across ACLED's areas of coverage, civilians remain at serious risk.

Key Data Points:

- ACLED has recorded nearly 7,700 violent events targeting civilians from 1 January 2019 to 18 May 2019, resulting in over 8,200 reported fatalities.
- Political militias and unidentified armed groups are responsible for the highest proportion of civilian targeting in 2019, at nearly one-third of all events. State forces are responsible for over a quarter of all civilian targeting.
    - The chief perpetrators vary by region: political militias and unidentified agents commit the most anti-civilian violence in Africa and Europe; state forces in the Middle East and Southeast Asia; and rioters or mobs in South Asia.

Violence targeting civilian events by type, from 01 January 2019 - 18 May 2019

Violence targeting civilian events by region, from 01 January 2019 - 18 May 2019
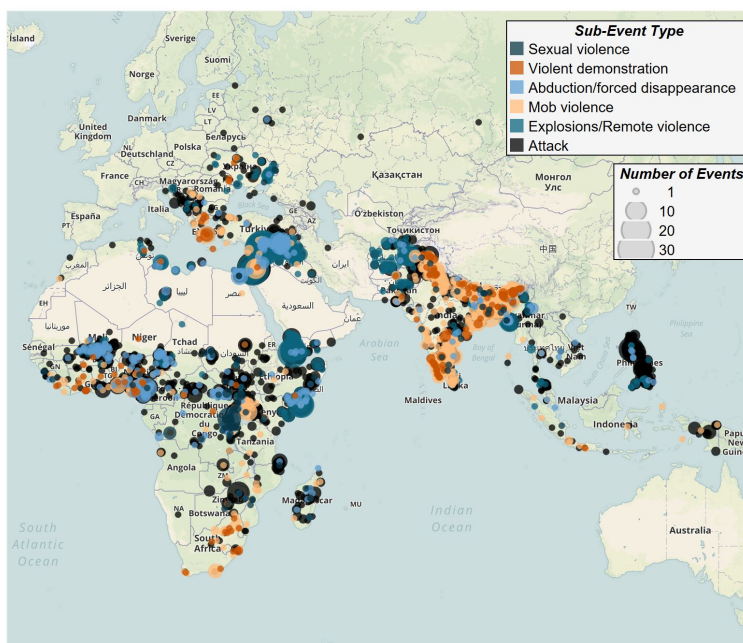

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[1] *Anti-civilian violence includes all events in the ACLED dataset that involve violence perpetrated against civilians; this includes both those events under the 'Violence against civilians' event type, as well as events under the 'Explosions/Remote violence' event type and 'Riots' event type which target civilians. ACLED only records civilian fatalities that are reported in connection with these events, in which they are directly targeted for violence. Reported civilian fatality figures do not include fatalities from attacks where civilians are not the primary target, such as 'collateral' civilian fatalities.*

High-Risk Areas:

- Africa has both the highest levels of civilian targeting and the highest number of reported civilian fatalities from direct targeting so far this year according to ACLED data, followed by the Middle East and South Asia.

- Countries with the highest number of civilian targeting events in 2019 (approximate):
    1. India - 1,385 events
    2. Syria - 1,160 events
    3. Yemen - 500 events
    4. Philippines - 345 events
    5. Nigeria - 340 events

- Countries with the most reported fatalities from civilian targeting in 2019 (approximate):
    1. Syria - 1,180 reported fatalities
    2. Nigeria - 1,175 reported fatalities
    3. Burkina Faso - 670 reported fatalities
    4. Yemen - 555 reported fatalities
    5. Mali - 490 reported fatalities

Violence targeting civilian events from 01 January 2019 - 18 May 2019

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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