SNAP

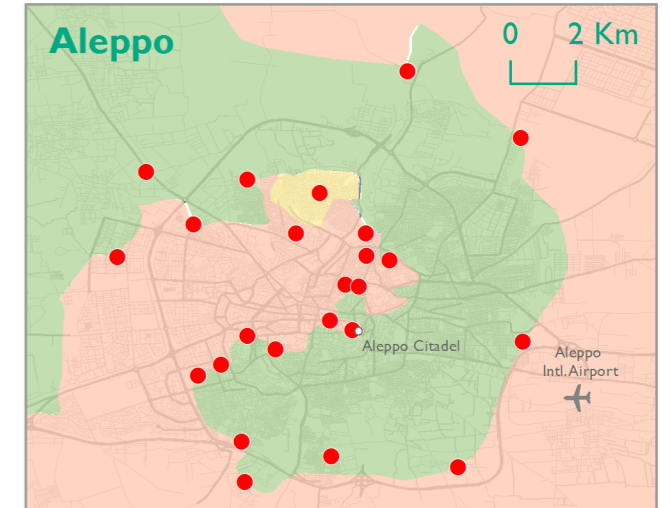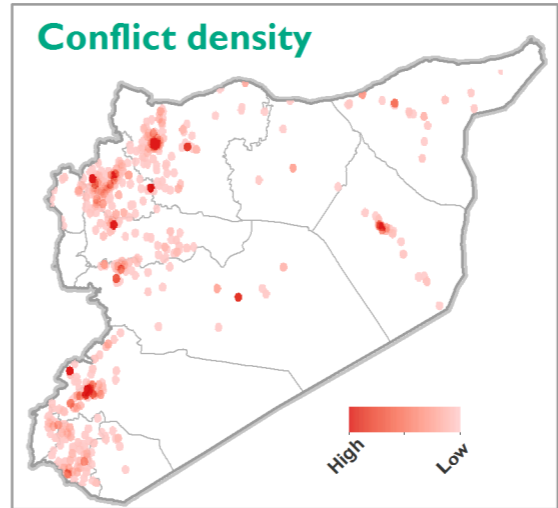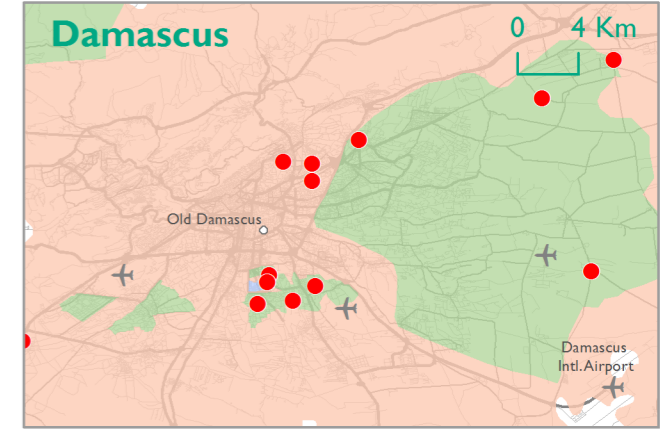## Estimated Areas of Control as of 31 May, 2015

acaps MapAction

Border crossings

⊖ Open

⊗ Restricted access

Generalised held areas

● Contested locations

Opposition forces

IS

YPG

Syrian armed forces

▨ Golan Heights

☐ Sub district

Map labels: Quamishli, Ain Al Arab, Azaz, Menbij, Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, Idleb, Ar-Raqqa, Lattakia, Hama, Tartous, Homs, Deir-ez-Zor, Tadmor, Abu Kamal, Yabroud, Al Qutayfah, Damascus, Quneitra, As-Sweida, Dar'a

Damascus inset — 0 — 4 Km — Old Damascus, Damascus Intl. Airport

Conflict density — High — Low

Aleppo inset — 0 — 2 Km — Aleppo Citadel, Aleppo Intl. Airport

0   50 Km

SNAP Estimated Areas of Control Map

May 2015

This map is intended to provide humanitarian actors with a regularly-updated picture of which groups control territory in Syria, in order to facilitate an estimation of the obstacles that may be faced in program operations. Due to the limitations of available data, it is not comprehensive, and should be used to complement, not replace, information from the field.

Methodology

The primary source for this map is a database of conflict incidents as recorded by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR). For each incident, SOHR's network reports which group is currently controlling the affected territory. SNAP maps these incidents to create a general impression of the latest developments in conflict areas. For every location, the group that was in control at the time of the latest incident in the reporting is taken to be the controlling party for mapping purposes. To generalize from points to areas of control, SNAP makes a best estimate based on secondary data (media reports, etc.), the availability of roads and other terrain features, and on information provided by SNAP's Syria analyst, from private interviews (PIs). Areas described by SOHR as "contested" are marked with red dots. As a baseline and cross-check, SNAP uses previous areas of control maps, including its own, those by the US State Department's Humanitarian Intelligence Unit, and other maps not currently published.

The final areas of control (colors) are overlaid onto a LandScan population density layer (colored vs. white areas) to more accurately represent the scope of populated territory controlled. Previous maps have tried to show areas under control of Jabhat Nusra, however this has been excluded from the current map due to the severity of the limitations in tracking control among multiple armed opposition groups (AOGs).

The conflict density shown in the insert is also derived from SOHR data.

Limitations

While this map can provide a dynamic impression of how the control of territory changes, it is only an estimate. In an information-poor environment, SOHR provides some of the broadest coverage and best access available, but it is still a single source, which carries limitations of its own, including potential for bias. While SOHR reports a significant number of conflict incidents, their coverage is unlikely to be comprehensive. A comparison with other datasets suggests that SOHR coverage is stronger in urban areas than rural ones, and covers Aleppo, Rural Damascus and Dar'a governorates more thoroughly than others. Furthermore, SOHR data may not include changes of control that are not conflictual, for example, truce agreement, withdrawals, or political agreements between AOGs.

The extrapolation of territorial areas of control from a limited set of incidents, and general situational awareness, also introduces the possibility for error. Previous SNAP maps, which are used as a baseline and cross-check, were based solely on the situational awareness of a SNAP Syria analyst via PIs, and may be distorted due to limitations or inherent biases in that network.

The inability to clearly distinguish between the territory held by various AOGs is a shortcoming of all currently available control maps.

There is a lack of updated population density information for Syria, even for the pre-crisis period. The population density layer used is from 2013, but because it is based on the presence of structures, it may not account for the changes in population resulting from the displacement of more than half of Syria's pre-war population. In addition, significant locations that are not per se "populated areas" such as oil wells, power plants, and water treatment facilities, may not be appear on this map.