



## ACLED Definitions of Political Violence and Protest

ACLED aims to capture how disorder occurs in states. Disorder encompasses a range of activity from severe political violence, such as targeted attacks on civilians and battles, to spontaneous demonstrations, mass arrests and property destruction. Many of these actions can occur simultaneously in unstable countries. ACLED has devised a system to define disorder by its constituent events. The taxonomy allows for data users to compare across time periods, forms of disorder, countries, agents and events. It begins with robust and broad definitions of political violence and demonstrations.

ACLED does not pre-define what a 'conflict' is. Those decisions are left to the user. ACLED does not categorize clusters or campaigns of events into categories of 'state', 'non-state', 'terrorism', 'insurgency'; etc. This is because political violence, protest, conflict and disorder are, in reality, aggregations of multiple actors, attacks, goals, etc. To classify events into parts of a 'civil war', 'livelihood', 'religious' or 'election' conflict (to name a few common versions) is often a reductive choice, leaving out the complex ways in which conflict creates multiple scales of violence and intended outcomes within a territory. ACLED allows users to select on the type of event, type of actor, type of interaction, named actors, location or time period. ACLED does not dictate nor frame a series of conflict events for researchers, but allows users to determine how to aggregate as they see fit.

[Access ACLED's codebook for a full explanation of our methodology.](#)

### Definitions of Political Disorder and Event Types

Political violence is the use of force by a group with a political purpose or motivation. ACLED defines political violence through its constituent events, the intent of which is to produce a comprehensive overview of all forms of political conflict within and across states. A politically violent event is a single altercation where force is often used by one or more groups to a political end, although some instances – including protests and non-violent activity – are included in the dataset to capture the potential pre-cursors or critical junctures in a period of disorder.

ACLED has six event types and 25 sub-event types.

**Battles** are violent clashes between at least two armed groups. Battle types are distinguished by whether control of a location is unchanged as a consequence of the event; whether a non-state group has assumed control of a location, or whether a government has resumed control of that location. Battles make up approximately one third of the dataset.

- **Armed clash:** Ghat local forces repelled an attempt by Libya Dawn to take over the Ghat airport. Some 25 armored vehicles carrying Libya Dawn forces were reported to have stormed the Ghat Airport on Friday night.



- **Armed clash:** Fighting flared between the Myanmar military and the SSA-South, with a member of the rebel group accusing government troops of staging an attack on its base in Shan State's Mauk Mae Township. No casualties were reported.
- **Government regains territory:** US-backed Iraqi military forces fought Islamic State fighters and captured the Mosul airport south of the city.
- **Government regains territory:** The Sudanese Army claims they killed between 41-100 rebel fighters (coded as 41) and took control of Angartu, near Kadugli, during fighting over the weekend, with assistance from the RSF.
- **Non-state actor overtakes territory:** AQAP took control of a Yemeni army checkpoint in Al-Rida area between Wadea district and Al-Maraqisha district, Abyan, after the soldiers fled during a 3am attack on Jan 09.
- **Non-state actor overtakes territory:** Hayat Tahrir al-Sham retook the village of Azmarin from Ahrar al-Sham as clashes broke out across Idleb governorate.

**Explosions/Remote violence** refers to events where an explosion, bomb or other explosive device was used to engage in conflict. They include one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the target to engage or defend themselves and their location.

- **Chemical weapon:** Iraqi military reported that missiles carrying Chlorine gas were fired at Iraqi soldiers by IS militants advancing to Al Qayyarah of Mosul district, Ninewa. No fatalities or injuries reported by source.
- **Air/drone strike:** The SPLM-N has claimed the Sudanese aviation bombed the area southwest of Kurmuk, killing 2 civilians and wounding 4 others (2 seriously) between January 12-13.
- **Suicide bomb:** A suicide bomber detonated himself at a wedding ceremony in Beybahce area of Sahinbey town of Gaziantep city. 56 civilians and the suicide bomber were killed. Islamic State was blamed for the incident.
- **Shelling/artillery/missile attack:** Two policemen were wounded in Boumerdes, 50 km east of Algiers, when their vehicle came under mortar fire from militants who were hiding near a mosque.
- **Remote explosive/landmine/IED:** An RCIED detonated in the outskirts of Khadija Haji village (40km SW of Beled Xaawo) in the afternoon of January 8th. Reports indicate that the target was reportedly a SNG commander. The device seriously injured five civilians.
- **Grenade:** A hand grenade was thrown at a restaurant in Sibenik, Croatia, causing material damage.

**Violence against civilians** involves violent attacks on unarmed civilians. These acts comprise a third of the collected data.

- **Sexual violence:** A soldier from the Security Belt Forces was reportedly arrested after he kidnapped a girl and subsequently attempted to rape her in Al Maalla district of Aden port city, southwestern Yemen.



- **Sexual violence:** AFP reported that a Ukrainian activist was tortured by masked men and subject to sexual violence by Russian police in a detention centre in Sevastopol, Crimea. The man was put in jail for ten days for a social media post in connection to a case against a local anarchist.
- **Attack:** 8 people were killed in a revenge attack by Pagoor youth on Tieptiep payam in Cueibet county, allegedly due to the release of a Tieptiep clan member who killed one of the Pagoor community. 2 others were injured, including the paramount chief.
- **Attack:** A Communist Party of India (Marxist) activist was hacked to death by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh activists at Chukku Bazaar, near Thrissur district, on Sunday night.
- **Abduction/forced disappearance:** Islamic State militants kidnapped 30 youths from Haweeja district near Kirkuk and took them to an unknown destination.
- **Abduction/forced disappearance:** LRA fighters abducted 3 civilians northwest of Mboki, Central African Republic. One of the hostages was given money to buy supplies in return for the release of the other two.

**Riots** are a violent demonstration, often involving a spontaneous action by unorganized, unaffiliated members of society.

- **Violent demonstration:** Two student unions affiliated with the ruling CPN-UML and main opposition UCPN (Maoist) clashed over the appointment of Campus Chief at Lainchour-based Amrit Science Campus. The students also vandalised the office of the Campus Chief.
- **Violent demonstration:** After three anti-slavery activists received prison sentences, dozens of their supporters stormed the courthouse and smashed police van windows. Police used tear gas to disperse them, leaving four injured. Clashes between police and anti-slavery activists expanded from the courthouse to the civil prison area, causing closure of the city market. Rioters surrounded police vehicles and police used tear gas to disperse them.
- **Mob violence:** In Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina, two fractions of SDS political party got into a mass fight. There were no reports of injuries.
- **Mob violence:** Violence erupted in the Maadeed neighborhood in the Moroccan capital between dozens of inhabitants and Sub-Saharan African immigrants. Knives, swords, iron rods and batons were used in the fight while stones were thrown from windows and rooftops.

**Protests** are non-violent demonstrations, involving typically unorganized action by members of society.

- **Peaceful protest:** Health workers at the PTS I Hastings Ebola Treatment Center in Freetown peacefully demonstrated against the non-payment of their December hazard incentives.
- **Peaceful protest:** More than 50 CNRP officials seeking the removal of lawmaker Ke Sovannaroth as the party's head in Siem Reap province, Cambodia,



demonstrated for two hours outside the opposition's headquarters in Meanchey district. The protesters accused Ms. Sovannaroath of nepotism and spending irregularities.

- **Protest with intervention:** More than 200 villagers stage a demonstration at Masvingo Central Police Station against failure by Chiefs Musara and Chikwanda to resolve a boundary dispute. 8 of the demonstrators are arrested.
- **Protest with intervention:** In Brest, Belarus, police arrested three activists during a demonstration where signatures were collected to stop the construction of a battery factory.
- **Excessive force against protesters:** Two demonstrators in Kufr Qaddum were severely injured during a protest in the village on Mar 4. A 12 year old boy and a Palestinian man were both shot by Israeli forces during the demonstration.
- **Excessive force against protesters:** A group of Bahraini students gathered outside their school on Sitra island to show solidarity with a prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim. Bahrain police forces intervened and a young boy was shot in the face during the chaos, injuring him severely.

ACLED includes some activity that can broadly be described as 'non-violent' but differs in its role within contexts of disorder. These events, named *Strategic developments*, include incidences of looting, peace-talks, high profile arrests, non-violent transfers of territory, recruitment into non-state groups etc., and accounts for a small proportion of the total dataset. These common events suggest the context of disorder.

- **Agreement:** A peace conference has started in Mundri, South Sudan to resolve disputes between pastoralists and local farmers in the area following clashes which began in October 2014.
- **Arrests:** Rwandan genocide suspect Jean Paul Birindabagabo is arrested and extradited to the ICC.
- **Change to group/activity:** A new armed group was formed by remnants of the Islamic State between Kifri and Tuz Khurmato near Khanaqin, Iraq. The group is composed of around 70 members calling themselves Hazmiyoon.
- **Disrupted weapons use:** Police discover and dismantle a bomb targeting the Owerri Capital Development Authority (OCDA) office in Owerri, Nigeria.
- **Headquarters or base established:** UAE-backed Security Belt forces reportedly moved into the air defence base in Bir Fadl area of Aden port city, Yemen.
- **Looting/property destruction:** Israeli forces demolished a house in Jabal al-Mukabir neighborhood in Jerusalem. Neither injuries nor fatalities were reported.
- **Non-violent transfer of territory:** Al Shabaab forces take control of three Bay villages (Hagarko, Barbaare – near Qansadheer – and Buulo Barako) following the withdrawal of government forces.
- **Other:** On 15 May 2018, President of Russia Vladimir Putin inaugurates the newly constructed bridge that connects Russia with the Kerch City of Crimea, four years after the annexation of Crimea.



Both event types and sub-event types are hierarchical to accommodate for concurrent tactics within the same event, in order to avoid double-counting. This means that an Explosions/Remote violence event (e.g. an air strike) occurring within the same context as a ground Battle event would be coded as one Battles event. Or a Violence against civilians event (e.g. attack on a civilian) occurring with the same context as an Explosions/Remote violence event (e.g. use of a remote explosive) would be coded as one Explosions/Remote violence event. A similar structure holds for sub-event types. Shelling occurring simultaneously as an air strike being dropped would be coded as Air/drone strike as it is higher on the hierarchy than Shelling/artillery/missile attack. Or a civilian abducted and then killed would be coded as Attack because it is higher on the hierarchy than Abduction/forced disappearance. The event types and sub-event types noted above are presented in hierarchical order. It is important to keep these distinctions in mind when drawing interpretations of the data.