INTRODUCTION

Since March 2011, reports show that fighting in Syria has killed an estimated 465,000 Syrians and wounded millions. As Bashar al-Assad’s forces continue to crackdown on opposition in Syria, one must reflect upon the people that are impact by such a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. The horrifying scene that is left behind amid fleeing Syrians, refugees, and internally displaced people is unprecedented. A Geospatial analysis of both demographics and source of attacks can help us answer who exactly Assad is targeting. The goal of this project is to determine the locations of Syrian government-sponsored attacks in Syria and to calculate the impact of attacks on the Sunni population as an opposing identity.

SPATIAL QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This project seeks to answer the following spatial questions:
1. Where are the Assad regime’s attacks taking place in Syria?
2. Of those areas of concentration, what are the dominant corresponding ethnicities?

Methodology:
To answer the spatial questions, the dataset used a combination of conflict data, ethnicity data, and data on night-time lights as a proxy for population dynamics. A raster calculation of average night-time light intensity images in Syria serves to understand the magnitude of those that vacated areas of the country. A Kernel Density analysis of Syrian Government Attacks on the Sunni population reveals “hot spots” of targeted areas in Syria. Joined point data of Sunni demographic and conflict fatalities serve to answer questions regarding dominant corresponding ethnicities to attacks.

FINDINGS

The provinces with the most attacks are Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, Hama, and the Suburbs of Damascus.

Density of Attacks on Sunni Population

The provinces with the most attacks are Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, Hama, and the Suburbs of Damascus.

The Assad regime and affiliates are targeting areas with a large concentration of Sunnis.

CONCLUSION

A spatial analysis of conflict and ethnic data concludes the following:
- Syria is getting “darker” while surrounding areas are getting lighter.
- Of the locations that are getting dark, a large Sunni population resides.
- The Assad regime and affiliates are targeting areas with a large concentration of Sunnis.
- The provinces with the most attacks are Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, Hama, and the Suburbs of Damascus.

Limitations

This project was limited in scope to using limited ethnic data on the Sunni population in Syria. Availability and lack of complete and reliable conflict data severely limited the scope of this project. The most recent census data conducted in Syria was in 2004. This project would have benefited from more recent census and ethnicity data.

Cartographer: Marina Shalabi
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Projected Coordinate System: WGS_1984_UTM_Zone_37N

"We don't kill our people...no government in the world kills its people, unless it's led by a crazy person."  
Bashar Al-Assad- December 7, 2011