



Crops Fires in North West and North East of Syria

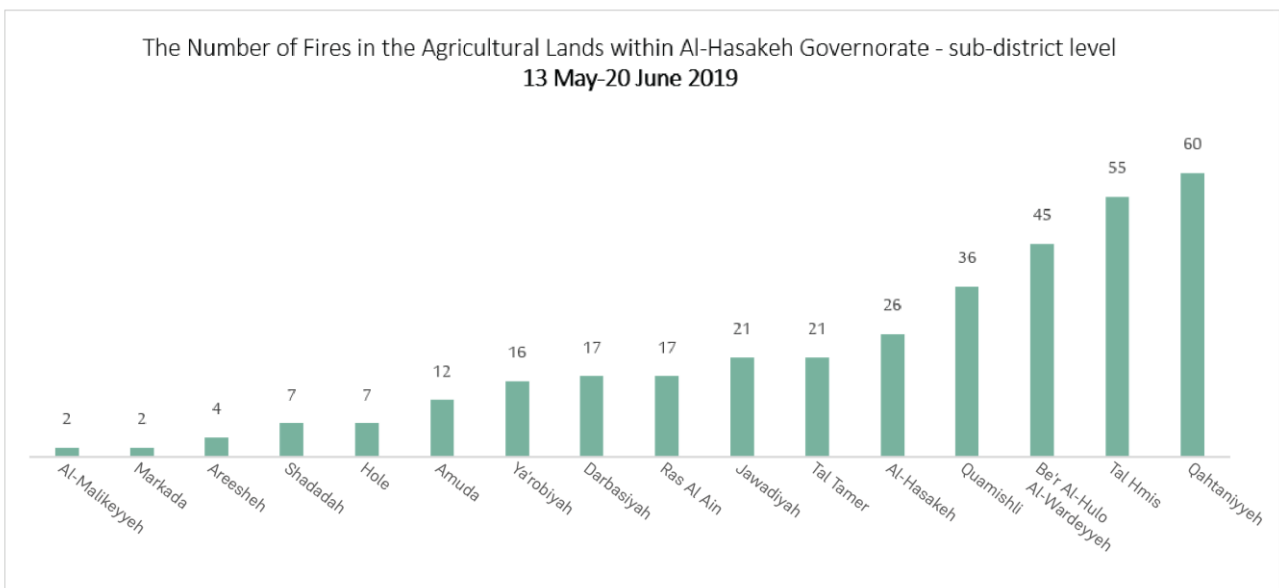
Al-Hasakeh governorate is considered to be the first source of wheat and barley strategic crops in Syria, where Ar-Raqqa governorate ranks second; and all the lands of these two governorates are under the control of PKK. The vast majority of the people there depend on barley and wheat crops. The two governorates have witnessed huge fires that broke up in the agricultural lands and engulfed the crops in the flames.

Crops Fires in North West and North East of Syria Situation Report – June 2019

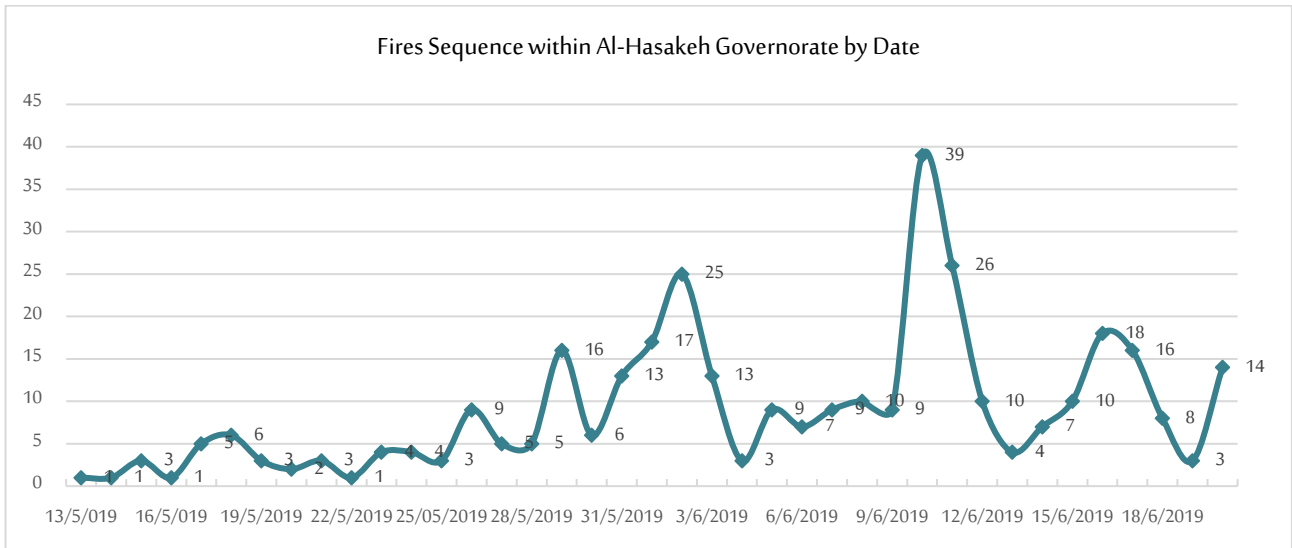
First: PKK-Held Areas

Al-Hasakeh governorate is considered to be the first source of wheat and barley strategic crops in Syria, where Ar-Raqqa governorate ranks second; and all the lands of these two governorates are under the control of PKK. The vast majority of the people there depend on barley and wheat crops. The two governorates have witnessed huge fires that broke up in the agricultural lands and engulfed the crops in the flames. The Municipality of the People in Ar-Raqqa in Tal Kojar (Ya'robiyah sub-district in Al-Hasakeh governorate) issued the overall statistics of the burnt lands within many sub-districts of Al-Hasakeh on 12 June 2019, and the estimated number of burnt dunums of agricultural lands is 15,360 dunums, distributed among 23 towns, with 60% of the agricultural lands in the area are estimated to have been burnt.

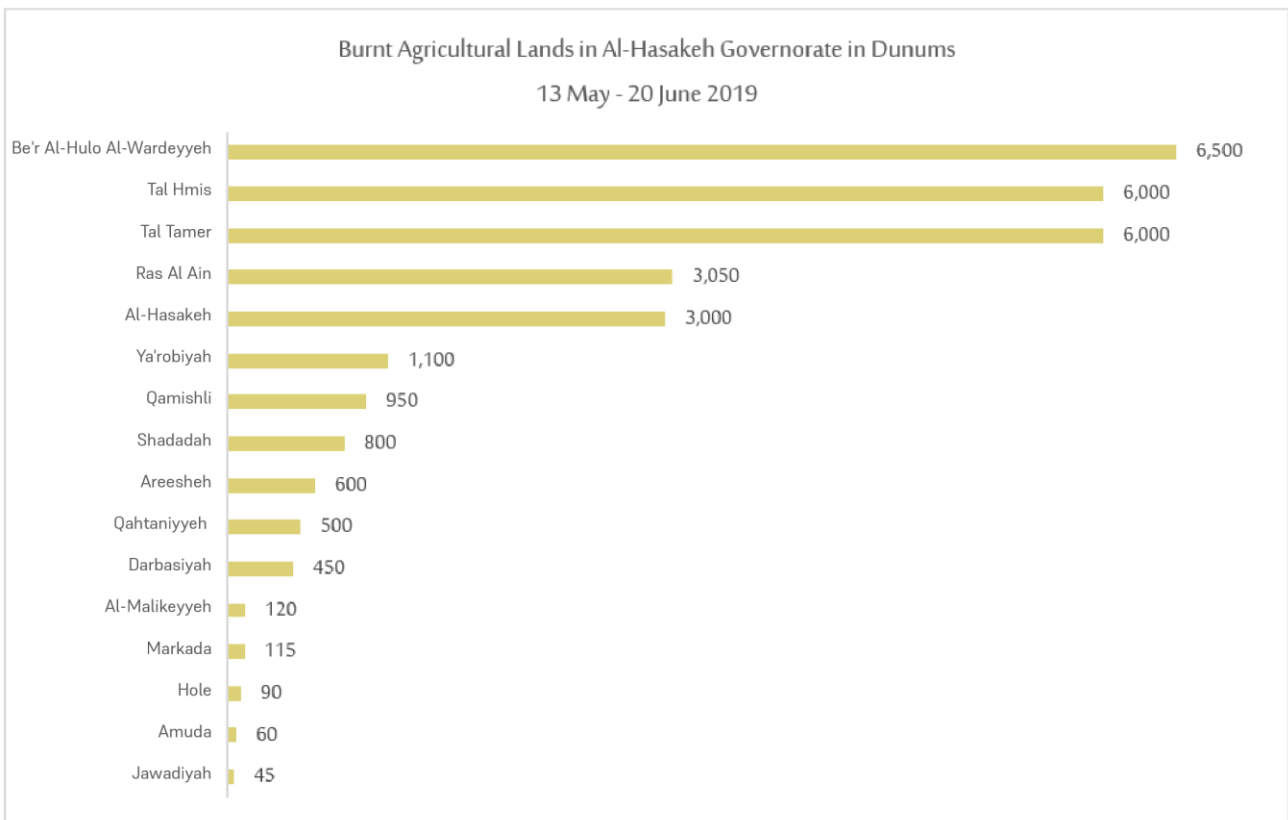
The enumerators of the IMU in the ACU, managed to count 348 fires that engulfed the crops of Al-Hasakeh governorate with 60 fires broke down in Qahtaniyyeh sub-district.



Given the sequence of fires in Al-Hasakeh governorate, the fires first broke up in May 2019; noting that the number of fires increased in the first half of June 2019.



After surveying the burnt agricultural lands in Al-Hasakeh governorate, the IMU in the ACU estimates the dunums of the burnt agricultural lands in Syria to be 29,380 dunums in May and June 2019. The largest part of the lands burnt were in Be'r Al-Hulo Al-Wardeyyeh sub-district, and the estimated number of burnt agricultural lands in Tal Hmis and Tal Tamer sub-districts is 6,000 dunums.



PKK has issued a decision setting the prices of agricultural crops for this year. Several websites have published information on the wheat price set by PKK. These sites confirmed that the price set by PKK (150 SYP per kilogram of wheat; 100 SYP per kg of barley), which is low in comparison with the prices set by the regime, as the regime set the price of 1 kg of wheat at 185 Syrian Pounds. According to the sites that published the news, PKK

attributed the low prices due to the presence of large quantities of crops exceeding the absorptive capacity of local markets. As it was reported, PKK is monopolizing the purchase of agricultural crops from all farmers in its areas of control and is preventing the sale of crops to traders or the transfer of crops outside their areas of control.

Several days later, the PKK self-government issued a decision to raise the purchase price of wheat from farmers from 150 Syrian pounds per 1 kg to 160 Syrian pounds, while the price of barley purchase was not raised, and was set by 100 SYP per 1 kg. It is noteworthy that the PKK had already set the purchase price of wheat by 150 SYP per 1 kg and barley price by 100 SYP several days ago. However, popular protests took place in all PKK-held areas, in objection to the low price set by PKK compared to that set by the Syrian regime, prompting PKK to raise the price of wheat only, yet the prices remained lower than the prices set by the regime. On a related context, the head of the Economy and Agriculture Department of PKK said that farmers should not be prevented from selling their crops to any party, as long as they are to be in PKK-held areas. The farmers considered this as the circumvention of the farmers and their rights to obtain prices that cover the costs of agriculture, as the PKK traders and its affiliates are the only entities that are trading wheat in these areas. A lot of people think that PKK forces are the ones who set the fires in the agricultural lands due to their inability to provide competitive prices as those offered by the regime and the opposition. Several websites have published a video¹ that shows PKK forces setting fires in the agricultural lands of Ein Al-Arus in Ar-Raqqa governorate, (below is the link to the video), and in the sub-districts under the control of PKK; on 15 June 2019, 12 civilians were killed in the fire that broke up in Al-Hasakeh governorate, where two women were among those killed, in addition to five charred bodies who weren't even possible to be identified. Seven civilians, including three women, were lost in the fires, and tens of people with various burn injuries were rushed to the hospitals. Furthermore, people died while trying to put out the fires set in their lands.

Second: Opposition-Held Areas

The crops of wheat and barley are found in the southern countryside of Aleppo governorate and southern countryside of Hama governorate. The farmers suffer from the regime's shelling on their agricultural lands and the inability to plant them. During the past years of revolution, the farmers have been forced to give some part of their crops to the commanders at the checkpoints of the Syrian regime in order to allow the farmers to harvest their lands, in that if they don't do so, the regime would target them and their agricultural equipment. Tens of cases have been recorded of people being killed while harvesting their lands.

With the advent of 2019, the Syrian regime has escalated its shelling on the agricultural lands in northern Hama countryside and southern Aleppo countryside. The director of the civil defense, Ali Jomaa, stated that the regime forces, along with their Iranian and Russian allies, had set fires in more than 200 hectares of agricultural lands in the western and southern countryside of Aleppo during the past month. The director also asserted that 50 hectares of the burnt lands had been planted with wheat and barley, but hadn't been harvested yet, whereas 150 hectares of lands had already been harvested though included hay that is used as fodder for livestock.

It is so difficult to put out the fires in northern Hama countryside due the regime's shelling on the area with Napalm every day. On 7 June 2019, the regime burnt more than 300 dunums of unharvested agricultural lands in Kafr Zeita sub-district. In a related context, the teams of the civil defense have been trying to put out the fires, but their attempts were limited due to the lack of the necessary equipment, such as ambulances.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ECAaOEHHk>

Third: The Sequence of Events

17 May 2019

In the southern countryside of Aleppo, the regime shelled its heavy artillery against the towns of Khalsah and Zeitan, which led to the outbreak of large fires in the agricultural crops.

20 May 2019

Several websites have published information on the wheat price by PKK forces this year. These sites confirmed that the price set by the PKK (150 Syrian Pounds per kilogram of wheat; 100 SYP per kg of barley), which is low in comparison to the prices set by the regime, as the regime set the price of 1 kg of wheat at 185 Syrian Pounds. According to the sites that published the news, PKK attributed the low prices due to the presence of large quantities of crops exceeding the absorptive capacity of local markets. As it was reported, PKK monopolizes the purchase of agricultural crops from all farmers in its areas of control and prevents the sale of crops to traders or the transfer of crops outside their areas of control.

22 May 2019

In the northern Ar-Raqqa countryside, large fires broke out in the agricultural land within Tell Abiad district; fire gutted large parts of agricultural crops. Residents of the area confirmed that the fires were intentional (someone set the fire deliberately); the area of the burned land was estimated at more than 7,000 hectares. The civilian community was displeased with the PKK's irresponsibility for firefighting and searching for its reasons. It should be mentioned that the PKK had previously confirmed that it had detained the cells of the regime responsible for setting the fire in the agriculture crops.

25 May 2019

In the northern countryside of Hama, the regime warplanes shelled Kafr Zeita city with 18 air strikes, while the regime helicopters shelled the city with two explosive barrels; as well as, the regime bombed the city and its surrounding farms with incendiary phosphorus; which resulted in setting a massive fire.

In the eastern governorates, the PKK self-government issued a decision to raise the purchase price of wheat from farmers from 150 Syrian pounds per 1 kg to be 160 Syrian pounds, while the price of barley purchase was not raised, and was set by 100 SYP per 1 kg. It is noteworthy that the PKK had determined several days ago the purchase price of wheat by 150 Syrian pounds per 1 kg and barley price by 100 Syrian pounds. However, popular protests dominated all PKK-held areas, in objection to the low price set by the PKK in compare with the price set by the Syrian regime, prompting the PKK to raise the price of wheat only, but the prices remained lower than the prices set by the regime. On a related context, the head of the Economy and Agriculture Department of the PKK said that farmers should not be prevented from selling their crops to any party, as long as they do not exit the PKK-held areas. The farmers considered this as a circumvention of farmers and their rights to obtain prices that cover the costs of agriculture, as the PKK traders and its affiliates are the only entities that are trading wheat in these areas.

In the northern Ar-Raqqa countryside, a massive fire broke out in Al Jahbal and Sayda villages of Ein Issa sub-district; these fires have wiped out large areas of agricultural crops without any intervention of the PKK, which controls these villages.

26 May 2019

In the western countryside of Ar-Raqqa governorate, massive fires broke out in the towns of Mahmudli, Hadaj, Abu Qubai', Al-Taraka, and Al Yamamah of Jurneyyeh sub-district; the fire wiped out large areas of cultivated land with wheat and barley. However, the PKK, which controls the area, has not intervened to put out the fires or search for its causes.

In the countryside of Al-Hasakeh, a massive fire broke out in the towns of Mas'adah, Quraish, Derdara, Tweirash, where the fire wiped out large areas of cultivated land with wheat and barley. However, the PKK, which controls the sub-district, has not intervened to put out the fires or search for its causes. In this context, the farmers rush to harvest their lands for fear of the outbreak of fire in them.

27 May 2019

In the northern Hama countryside, the regime warplanes and helicopters shelled Kafr Zeita city and the towns of Latmana and Sayad with dozens of air strikes and explosive barrels; an act of hostility resulted in killing a civilian in Kafr Zeita and setting a massive fire in the agriculture lands.

29 May 2019

In the western and southern Aleppo Countryside, the director of the Civil Defense center "Ali Joma" has stated that the Syrian regime and its allies of the Russians and Iranians have burned more than 200 hectares of the agricultural lands in the western and southern countryside of Aleppo during the last month. Moreover, he has confirmed that 50 hectares contained unharvested wheat and barley, while 150 hectares contained harvested agricultural land, but they contained fodder, which is used as feed for livestock. More to the point, the regime and its allies burned the land and the agricultural crops by directly bombing with hundreds of air strikes and explosive barrels, as well as heavy artillery and rocket launchers. The regime warplanes also shelled cattle of sheep with an air strike, killing 25 sheep.

In the northern Hama countryside, the regime warplanes shelled Kafr Zeita city with two air strikes. Furthermore, the regime opened its heavy artillery shells on the mentioned city and the towns of Latmana, Latmin, Ankawi, and new Zayzun, which resulted in setting a massive fire in the agriculture crops.

1 June 2019

The regime opened its heavy artillery shells on the towns of Al Zaqoum and Qalidin; the aggression on Qalidin resulted in killing more than 50 sheep, as the shelling targeted a sheep grazing area, and huge fires broke down in the agricultural lands.

2 June 2019

In the northern Hama countryside, the regime shelled Kafr Zeita city; as well as, the towns of Latmana, Sayad, and Latmin.

It should be mentioned that the fire on the agriculture lands of Kafr Zeita sub-district is hardly extinguished due to the intensity of the shelling. From another side, the regime shelled the agriculture land of Arbayeen town with kornet missile (man-portable missile); an aggression resulted in killing a civilian and injuring another one. The regime also shelled a tractor in the agriculture land of Hasraya town with kornet missile, resulting in the destruction of the tractor and the death of several sheep

7 June 2019

In the northern Hama countryside, the regime warplanes and helicopters shelled the sites and the towns in northern Hama countryside with more than 100 air strikes. The air strikes targeted Kafr Zeita city and the towns of Murak, Latmana, Zakat, Hasraya, Jbine, Tal Milh, Latmin, Lahaya, and Sayad, whereas the regime opened dozens of heavy artillery and rocket launcher shells from the land-based launchers on the mentioned town and cities. The aerial and land bombardment resulted in the burning of more than 300 dunums of unharvested agricultural land and massive destruction of property. From another hand, the regime shelled a civil car with kornet missile, injuring a civilian and burning the car. Besides that, the regime shelled Ankawi town with dozens of heavy artillery shells.

10 June 2019

In the northeastern countryside of Aleppo, several sources confirmed the burning of over 25 hectares of unharvested agricultural lands in Menbij district last month. The PKK forces started those fires as their elements and vehicles were seen in the sites a few minutes before the fires were started.

11 June 2019

In the northern countryside of Ar-Raqqa, several media sites disseminated video clips showing the PKK forces committing acts of arson in the crops in Ein Al-Arus town.

In the northern countryside of Al-Hasakeh, massive fires wiped out the agricultural lands in Upper Kherbet Elbir, Middle Sehrij, Trablah, Jheishyeh, Sdedyeh, Lower Arar and Sabe Jfar towns.

12 June 2019

In the northeastern countryside of Aleppo, fires were started in the agricultural lands between Ain Al Arab (Kobane) and Tell Abiad cities and agricultural lands in the southern countryside of Ain Al Arab sub-district and wiped out crops in hundreds of dunums in Sahm – Shish, Bir Arab, Mazghana, Mattin, Eskeif – Koshkar and Jalabiyeh towns.

15 June 2019

In the northern countryside of Al-Hasakeh, massive fires were started in unharvested agricultural lands in Hseiniyeh and Unaizee towns, reached Krefati town and wiped out the crops. In an attempt to extinguish those fires, 12 civilians were burnt to death, including two women and five other identified charred corpses, seven civilians went missing, including three women, and tens of people were transferred to hospitals for suffering various degrees of burns.

17 June 2019

In the northern countryside of Al-Hasakeh, large fires out broke in the unharvested agricultural land in Abra town; it was unable to extinguish the fires that extended to the civilians' homes. Huge fires outbroke in the unharvested agricultural lands near Quamishli military airport, it is noted that this airport is under the control of the Syrian regime.

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