

HÖGSTA DOMSTOLEN  
R 13INKOM: 2022-07-20  
MÅLNR: B 4923-22  
AKTBIL: 2

## Saeed Alnahhal

Saeed Alnahhal är reporter på Dagens Nyheter och tidigare redaktionschef på Syria News Desk i Beirut. Han har också arbetat på den statliga nyhetsbyrån, Syrian Arab News Agency - SANA, i Syrien. Han kom till Sverige 2015 och är intresserad av frågor som rör integration och relationen mellan svenska och nyanlända.

Följ



Allt från skribenten.

158 ARTIKLAR

VÄRLDEN  
2022-07-06

### Nilens historiska husbåtar rivs

Egyptisk polis började i slutet av juni att bogsera bort historiska husbåtar på Nilen i Zamalek-distriktet i ...

VÄRLDEN  
2022-06-30

### Mördad kvinna anses få skylla sig själv

När en egyptisk kvinnlig student mördades tidigare i juni skyllde en ansedd religionsprofessor mordet på ...

VÄRLDEN  
2022-06-28

### Allt fler syriska flyktingar byter namn - förbjuds i ny fatwa

Allt fler syriska flyktingar byter namn när de får ett annat medborgarskap. Men i en ny anvisning från en ...

VÄRLDEN  
2022-06-27

### Döda migranter begravda utan obduktion - "måste utredas"

Minst 23 migranter dog när de i slutet av förra veckan försökte ta sig till Spanien.

SVERIGE  
2022-06-18

### Leon dog i en överdos - lämnades i ett dike

Leon dumpades i ett dike för att hans vänner inte ville söka hjälp. Hans förtvivlade föräldrar söker ...



Trots frekventa missil- och flygbombningar av al-Assadregimen var de första tre åren under revolutionen ganska behagliga. Vi hade förmånen att delta i ett försök till förändring av samhället som sedan länge hade varit på gång. Min hemstad Yabroud var en oas i kriget, som Austin Tice, den amerikanska journalisten som skulle försvinna senare i de regimkontrollerade områdena, skrev i Washington Post.



STOCKHOLMS TINGSRÄTT

INKOM: 2020-09-30

MÅLN: B 15655-20

AKTBIL: 3

## Misstänkt jihadist blev journalist på Dagens Nyheter

3 september, 2020

Frågetecken har uppstått kring Dagens Nyheters journalistiska nyförvärv Saeed Alnahhal. Detta sedan han i en artikel beskrivit sin hemstad Yabroud i Syrien som en "behaglig oas" under de år då den stod under ockupation av muslimska terrorister. **Frågorna gäller vad slags journalistisk och/eller annan verksamhet Saeed ägnat sig åt där för att komma i åtnjutande av Al Nusra-frontens och al-Qaidas beskydd och gunst.**

ANNONS





Saeed rekryterades nyligen till DN-redaktionen från argaste konkurrenten Svenska Dagbladet. Under sin tid som anställd där beskrev han i en [intervju för Journalistförbundets tidning Journalisten](#) hur han först när Assad-regeringen återtog kontrollen över Yabroad flydde sitt hemland för att ta sig till Sverige.

I artikeln får läsarna veta hur Saeed efter ankomsten till Sveirige snabbt lärde sig svenska och fick arbete som journalist på den stora Stockholmstidningen. Det framgår av intervjun allmänt formulerat att Saeed hemma i Syrien "tog ställning för upproret" som inleddes under den så kallade arabiska våren.

Det väpnade rebellstyrkorna i Syrien har utgjorts av en brokig skara sinsemellan olika politiska grupperingar med enda gemensam nämnare att man velat störta Assad-regimen. Muslimska terrororganisationer har på flera håll dominerat i striderna mot Assad och varit de som tagit kontroll över områden där regeringsstyrkorna pressats tillbaka, bland annat i Saeeds hemstad Yabroad.

DN:s redaktionschef Caspar Opitz puffar i sociala medier för kollegan Saeeds artikel om sig själv och menar att denne skriver "gripande om flykten över Medelhavet och genom hela Europa". Från vem och på vilket sätt Opitz menar att Saeed varit tvungen fortsätta fly genom hela kontinenten och vidare ända upp till Sverige efter det att han satt fötterna på säker mark i Europa framgår inte.

En annan profilerad DN-medarbetare som läst Saeeds berättelse med ett känslösamt snarare än kritiskt granskande öga är tidningens Rysslandskorrespondent Anna-Lena Lauren. Hon säger sig blivit rörd till tårar av sin kollegas historia.

### **Poserade med hustrun i hårt åtsittande slöja**

Artikeln i Journalisten är inte den första i sitt slag där Saeed och hans familj uppmärksammas för sin långa resa till Sverige. Redan 2017 [publicerade StockholmDirekt ett stort bildreportage](#) om familjens nya liv på äldreboendet Vintertullen i centrala Stockholm som gjorts om till asylboende efter att de gamla tvingats bort från lokalerna. Saeeds fru Nariman är på bilderna iklädd stramt åtsittande slöja.

p  
a  
n  
n  
o  
n  
s

# Journalisten

NYHETER LEDARE KRÖNIKOR DEBATT FOLK EVENEMANG KONTAKT

FRÅGA FÖRBUNDET GRN-BESLUT PON-BESLUT PROFILEN FÖR DJUPNING GRODO

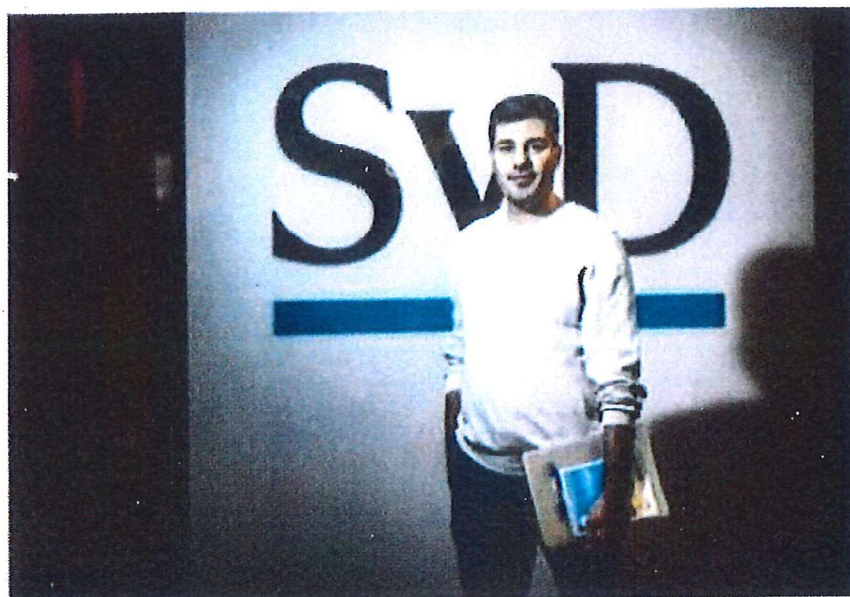


FOTO: Terje Nilsson

## ”Vi funderade inte ens. Vi bara gjorde.”

13 FEBRUARI 2019

I Syrien arbetade Saeed Alnahhal på den statliga nyhetsbyrån. När den arabiska våren nådde landet **tog han ställning för upproret**. Han blev sparkad, sattes i fängelse och flydde sedan till Sverige. På bara tre år i Sverige har han lärt sig språket nästan flytande – och blivit anställd som reporter på Svenska Dagbladet.

I artikeln berättar Saeed att det var Assad-regimen som familjen ville bort från, inte IS eller andra muslimska terroristers framfart i området. Han vidgår också att familjen passerat en lång rad säkra länder på vägen till den utvalda slutdestinationen Sverige.

ANNONS

Sponsrat Innehåll

KODASTREK



2020-09-09

Misstänkt jihadist blev journalist på Dagens Nyheter » Samhällsnytt



Which Country Is The Most Romantic In The World?



7 Truly Incredible Facts About Black Holes



7 Ways To Understand Your Girlfriend Better

Saeed är i intervjun med StockholmDirekt tydlig med att han ser sig och sin familj mer som reguljära immigranter i jakt på ett nytt och bättre liv än som flyktingar. Han slår fast att de inte har för avsikt att återvända till Syrien oavsett hur situationen utvecklas där utan ser Sverige som sitt nya land.

Uppgifterna har inte föranlett Migrationsverket att ifrågasätta familjens asylstatus eller om de enligt Dublinförordningen borde återbördas till Grekland eller Italien där familjen steg i land efter att Saeed betalat människosmugglare för att ta dem illegalt över Medelhavet.

# StockholmDirekt

## Från Syrien till Söder – Här börjar det nya livet i Vintertullen

På några månader har Vintertullen blivit stans största boende för nyanlända. Ett boende som staden tycker fungerar "otroligt bra". Största utmaningen har varit att så många barnfamiljer flyttat hit. Vi har besökt familjen Alnahhal.



Saeed och Nariman Alnahhal, med Lujain, 6 år och Micham, 4 år. De har bott i Vintertullen i fyra månader och trivs. "Vi har inte känt oss som främlingar här, många har välkomnat oss" säger Saeed. Foto: Sacha 'as Kallidén

### Syriska hemstaden "behaglig oas" under terroristers ockupation

Saeeds oppositionellt journalistiska arbete i hemlandet Syrien väcker nu frågor i samband med att han klargör att familjen haft en fristad i Yabroad under de år då staden kontrollerades av muslimska terrorister. Saeed beskriver tillvaron som "behaglig" och staden som en "oas".

Vidare berättar Saeed hur han fick "förmånen" att delta i ett försök till förändring av samhället. Det är omvittnat hur IS och andra muslimska terrorstyrkor drivit igenom förändringar av samhället i de

10/9/2020



2020-09-08

Misstänkt jihadist blev journalist på Dagens Nyheter » Samhället



en de ockuperat där invånarna tvingats underkasta levnadsregler enligt fundamentalistisk  
g av Koranen och sharia.

Det är denna tid – "de första tre åren under revolutionen" – som Saeed nu lovordar och vars  
sammanslagning av aktiviteter han säger sig själv aktivt ha deltagit i. Samtidigt beskriver han de  
regimkontrollerade områdena i negativa ordalag som områden där människor försvinner.

### Vill inte svara på frågor

Men när Saeed får frågor om vad han mer konkret ägnade sig åt under de år då Yabroud var en  
"behaglig oas" under terroristisk ockupation, då vill han inte svara.



**Egor Putilov**  
@EgorPutilov

Vad arbetade journalisten @Saeed\_Alnahhal med i en  
stad som kontrollerades av islamister och terrorister?

Translate Tweet

4:59 PM · Sep 2, 2020 · Twitter for Android

8 Likes



**Saeed Alnahhal** @Saeed\_Alnahhal · 3h

Replying to @EgorPutilov  
FYI: du vet inget om Yabroud.



**Egor Putilov** @EgorPutilov · 3h

Kan du svara på frågan?



7 more replies



**Bo-Göran Bengtsson** @BoGoranBengtsson · 3h

Replying to @EgorPutilov and @Saeed\_Alnahhal  
Körde ambulans?



**Saeed Alnahhal** @Saeed\_Alnahhal · 3h

Eller som journalist?



ANNONS  
ANNONS  
ANNONS

## Svenskar "brölände rasister som bör utvisas till världens krigshärdar"

På Twitter lyfter Saeed fram en kommentar han fått på sin artikel i DN och vars budskap han uppskattar särskilt mycket. Personen ifråga menar att Sverige bör ta emot ännu fler syrier och att svenskar som är kritiska till en sådan invandringspolitik bör deporteras till världens krigshärdar – detta eftersom de är "brölände rasister".

Det är oklart vilken bakgrunds kontroll – om någon – som Dagens Nyheter och tidigare Svenska Dagbladet gjort i samband med att Saeed Alnahhan anställdes.



ANNONS



"Bitcoin får dig att tjäna  
7000 SEK på en dag"



"Bitcoin får dig att tjäna  
7000 SEK på en dag"



"Bitcoin får dig att tjäna  
7000 SEK på en dag"



"Bitcoin får dig att tjäna  
7000 SEK på en dag"



This Game Will Make you  
Crazy, be Sure to Be  
Alone!



"Bitcoin får dig att tjäna  
7000 SEK på en dag"

Kommentarer förhandsgranskas inte av Samhällsnytt och är inte redaktionellt material. Du är själv juridiskt ansvarig för det du skriver i kommentarsfältet.

[Klicka här för att läsa våra kommentarsregler.](#)





Isabel Nassief

## BACKGROUND

March 26, 2014

## THE FALL OF YABROUD AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE LEBANESE BORDER

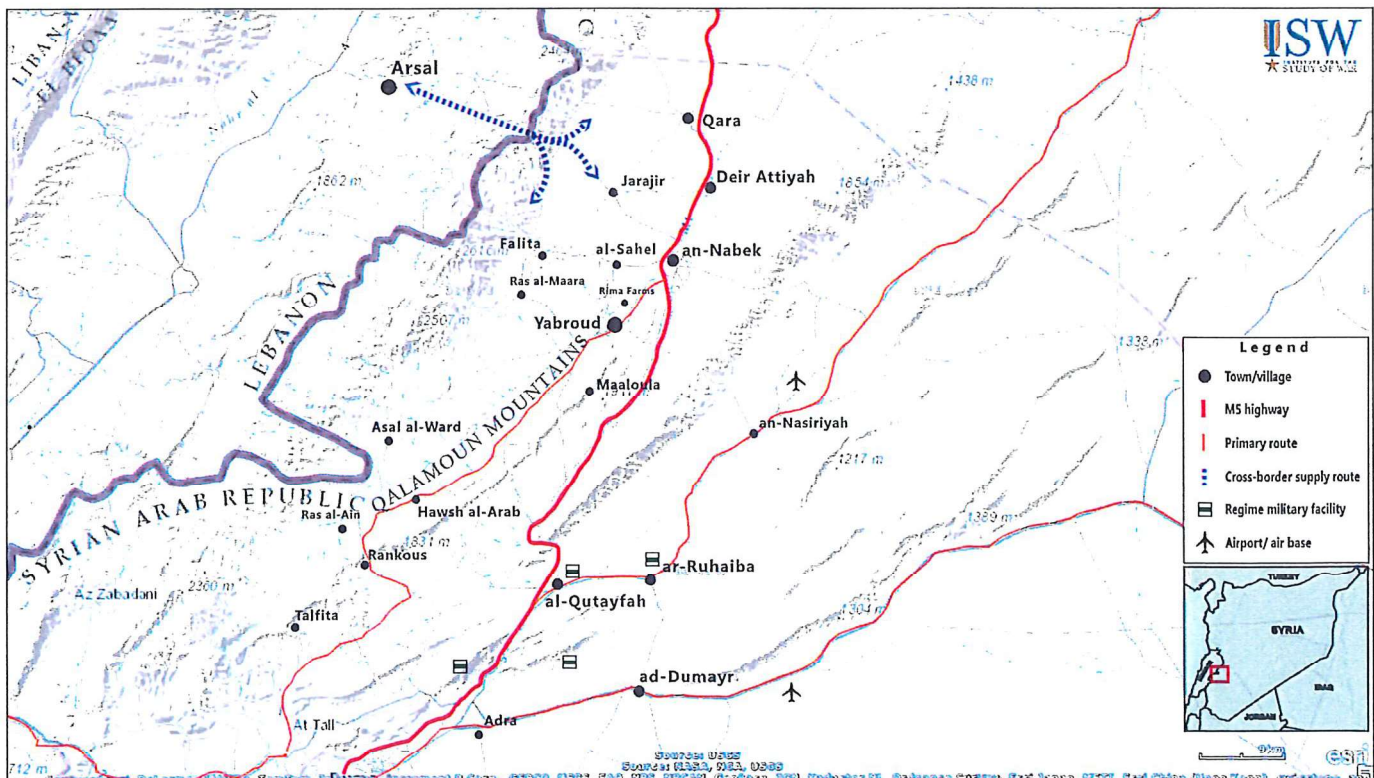
As the most significant remaining rebel stronghold in the Qalamoun region, the fall of Yabroud is an important strategic victory for the regime and demonstrates improved operational planning by pro-Assad forces.

### YABROUD OFFENSIVE

Yabroud is located in the rugged terrain of the Qalamoun Mountains and sits astride the M5 highway which connects Damascus to Homs and the Mediterranean coast. Rebel control of Yabroud had disrupted the regime's freedom of movement along the M5 highway and created a staging ground for rebel attacks against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon. In mid-November 2013, the regime intensified operations to clear the area in order to regain control of the section of the M5 highway running from Qara to Yabroud. Regime forces supported by Hezbollah and National Defense Force (NDF) fighters pushed along the main highway moving from north to south, and seized

Qara on November 15<sup>th</sup>, Deir Attiyah in late November, and an-Nabek in mid-December.<sup>1</sup> Pro-regime forces then pressed towards Yabroud where their advance slowed until launching a renewed offensive against the town in February 2014.<sup>2</sup>

The Yabroud offensive began with clearing operations and air strikes on the town's surrounding areas in order to isolate rebels in Yabroud from their supply lines, a tactic that was used in the battles for al-Qusayr and as-Safira in 2013. Throughout the month of February, regime forces advanced from the north, concentrating air strikes and bombardments on the Rima farms which lie in the northern outskirts of Yabroud. Air strikes and bombardments also targeted the road northwest of Yabroud to





Falita, the town of al-Sahel to the north, and the surrounding mountains of Mar Maroun.<sup>3</sup> Hezbollah played a leading role as it has throughout the regime's Qalamoun operations, particularly in reconnaissance missions which allowed regime forces to identify and target rebel ground lines of communication between Yabroud and Aarsal in Lebanon.

In early March 2014, regime forces continued shaping operations around Yabroud, seizing the village of al-Sahel, north of Yabroud, the Kuwait and Qatari hills which overlook Yabroud, and the Rima farms on March 11<sup>th</sup>.<sup>4</sup> Opposition forces claimed to have pushed back the following day but pro-regime forces launched a final attack against the town on March 14<sup>th</sup>.<sup>5</sup> The attack began with Hezbollah fighters conducting a diversionary operation from the west and north before pro-regime forces launched the main attack from the east.<sup>6</sup> A passage was left open for rebel withdrawal either to the south of Yabroud leading to south-western towns and village of Qalamoun or northwest into Lebanon.<sup>7</sup> After the fall of Yabroud, rebels retreated to other towns in the southern part of Qalamoun, namely Falita, Rankous, Hawsh al-Arab and Assal al-Ward as well as across the border to Aarsal in Lebanon.<sup>8</sup>

The emergence of Qalamoun as an important rebel support zone was caused in part by the relocation of rebels from al-Qusayr to Qalamoun after Hezbollah forces negotiated a rebel withdrawal. By allowing a safe passage, however, pro-regime forces were able to minimize resistance when ground troops entered to clear and hold the area, thus maximizing available manpower resources. This highlights the regime's continued limitations on manpower. Nonetheless, the regime followed with a series of air raids on Aarsal, indicating the intent to target rebels who had been displaced from Qalamoun.<sup>9</sup> This is an important development in the regime's operational objectives as it indicates that although the regime does not have the forces necessary to destroy rebels in a given area, it is attempting to prevent rebel groups from reconstituting in alternate locations.

## REBEL OPERATIONS IN QALAMOUN

As the regime has made gains in Qalamoun, rebel groups in the area have struggled to mount a successful counteroffensive. In late December 2013, after seizing the Mahin arms depot in Homs province under the named operation "The Doors of God Do Not Close," rebels announced "The Doors of God Do Not Close (Phase 2)" and formed a unified operations room under Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) command for rebels fighting in Qalamoun. A number of rebel groups participated in the operations room including Jaysh al-Islam and Ahrar al-Sham of the Islamic Front. The unified operations room divided Qalamoun into three fronts: Yabroud, Maalula, and Rankous.<sup>10</sup>

As the regime launched a renewed offensive against Yabroud in early February, defected Col. Abdul al-Rifai established a second coordinating body called the "United Military Command of

Qalamoun."<sup>11</sup> The United Military Command sought to unite all operations rooms and "unify battalions indiscriminately under one banner." According to an official statement, it was comprised of 24 groups including Islamic Front's Ahrar al-Sham, and Jaysh al-Islam, local coordinating bodies such as the Yabroud Operations Room and the Military Council in al-Qusayr and Rif al-Qusayr, as well as a number of smaller local brigades, and JN.<sup>12</sup> JN, however, released a statement denying its involvement in the United Military Command but emphasizing that there was coordination between all factions in Qalamoun.<sup>13</sup> ISIS also participated in the Yabroud fighting and, unlike the north of Syria where JN and other rebel groups have been fighting against ISIS, rebel groups appear to have cooperated in Qalamoun.

After the fall of Yabroud, however, a JN spokesman in Qalamoun, Abdullah Azzam al-Shami, claimed that JN was the last opposition group to remain in Yabroud fighting regime forces. JN took to social media to accuse other rebels of abandoning Yabroud and implied that there may have been collusion between those groups and the regime.<sup>14</sup> Despite the intent to form a local command and control structure for operations in Qalamoun, both JN's unified operations room and Col. al-Rifai's United Military Command appear to have had little success in making operational gains. Since then, a rebel operation led by Zahran Alloush of the Islamic Front's Jaysh al-Islam, has targeted towns to the east of the M5 highway, such as ad-Dumayr, in order to offset regime gains in Qalamoun.<sup>15</sup>

With the fall of Yabroud the regime has secured the section of the M5 between Qara and Yabroud, which was the key objective for its Qalamoun operations. Yabroud was also an important victory for Hezbollah, which has identified Yabroud as one of the primary staging zones for attacks against Hezbollah positions in Lebanon. Since January 2014, at least eight Vehicle-Born IEDs (VBIEDs) have struck Hezbollah and Iranian targets throughout Lebanon, many of which Hezbollah believes were assembled in Yabroud.<sup>16</sup>

In order to destroy rebel systems in Qalamoun and rebels' ability to conduct operations in Lebanon, pro-regime forces will have to continue their offensive in the southern towns of Qalamoun, namely Rankous, Assal al-Ward, Hawsh al-Arab, and Ras al-Ain, and continue to hold territory in the northern section which they have already seized. Given the mountainous terrain of Qalamoun and the large geographic area, securing the towns of Qalamoun will be more difficult than it was in al-Qusayr.

## CAMPAIGN FOR THE LEBANESE BORDER

The regime's ongoing Qalamoun offensive and victory in Yabroud should be understood within the context of a larger campaign for the Lebanese border. In the last month, regime forces seized control of several towns and villages along Lebanon's northern

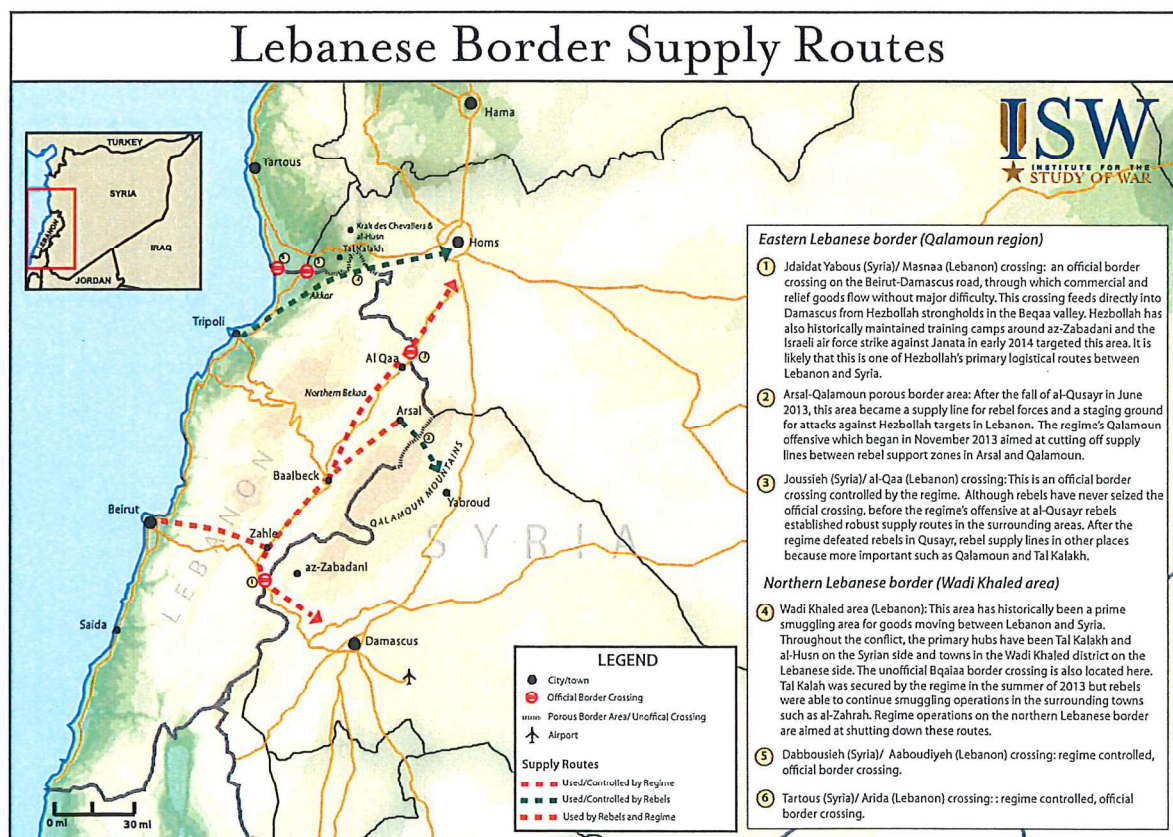


border with Homs province. For the regime, this campaign is significant as it demonstrates the regime's strategic interests and priorities. It will be necessary for rebels to maintain access to resources and reinforcements along the Lebanese border in order to contest key terrain along the central corridor. Rebel positions along this border are also instrumental in maintaining logistical connections between areas of control in northern and southern Syria, which is crucial for any attempts by rebel groups to form national level command and control structures.

The most significant regime victory on Lebanon's northern border was the seizure of as-Zarah on March 8<sup>th</sup> after a month-long operation.<sup>17</sup> Az-Zarah has a majority Turkmen population and lies north of Tal Kalakh near the Homs-Tartous highway. Pro-regime forces then focused on the crusader fortress of Krak des Chevaliers, which is 25 miles west of Homs city. Regime forces entered from the adjacent town of al-Husn before seizing Krak des Chevalier on March 20<sup>th</sup>. According to an activist in Homs city, the fortress fell after rebel fighters and government forces reached an agreement to allow rebels to withdraw into Lebanon.<sup>18</sup> Clashes and bombardments continued as at least 300 refugees fled into the northern Lebanese area of Wadi Khaled.<sup>19</sup> Syrian troops then closed the Bqiaa border in order to block additional rebels and civilians from escaping the violence into Lebanon.<sup>20</sup>

The ramifications of the regime's ongoing campaign for the Lebanese border can also be seen in Lebanon, where the aftermath of the regime's victory in Yabroud was most visible. Pro-regime celebrations erupted in Dahiyeh while Hezbollah created checkpoints to isolate Aarsal from surrounding Shiite communities.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, Sunni protests erupted throughout Lebanon in solidarity with the residents of Aarsal and JN's branch in Lebanon detonated a VBIED in the town of Nabi Othman in the Beqaa Valley, killing a Hezbollah official.<sup>22</sup> Hezbollah first secured itself as a target inside Lebanon after its involvement in the al-Qusayr offensive in mid-2013. After the fall of al-Qusayr, both JN and the Free Syrian Army threatened to increase attacks against Hezbollah in Lebanon. Less than a year later, the response to the fall of Yabroud indicates an escalation in the spillover into the Lebanon from the Syrian war.

Regime operations along the Lebanese border are an important indicator of Hezbollah and the regime's intent to secure the Lebanese border in order to prevent the escalation of violence in Lebanon and cut off vital rebel supply lines. On both the northern and western borders, pro-regime forces will continue to target pockets of rebel control while facing the challenge of holding previously seized territory in order to prevent rebels from reestablishing control in those areas. Rebels, on the other



This map estimates rebel and regime supply routes along the Lebanese border into Syria.



hand, will seek to establish new support and staging zones on both sides of the border. In the short-term, the regime's recent victories have disrupted rebels' ability to launch attacks against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon. In the long-term, however, groups such as the Abdullah Azzam Brigades and JN's Lebanon branch, which have built networks and infrastructure to facilitate such attacks, will likely attempt to escalate operations against Hezbollah targets and Iranian assets. Furthermore, the continued displacement of combatants and civilians into Lebanese territory, namely Aarsal and the Wadi Khaled district, will exacerbate tensions and weaken Hezbollah's ability to enforce stability in Lebanon.

*Isabel Nassief is a Syria Analyst at ISW.*

## NOTES

1. "Syria troops seize strategic town of Qara," Aljazeera, November 19, 2013. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/11/syria-troops-seize-strategic-town-qara-20131119131748807601.html>; "Syria army retakes Deir Attiye town near Damascus: TV," Daily Star, November 28, 2013. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Nov-28/239226-syria-army-retakes-deir-attiye-town-near-damascus-tv.ashx>; "Syria regime forces 'advance in Lebanon border region,'" Agence France Presse, December 8, 2013, accessible at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hBDmqgSrCTuu9vcSLGoZ9abm7I7w?docId=28860895-07aa-440e-a83a-f122a8915f7c>.

2. Nazeer Rida, "Syria: Government forces step up Yabroud campaign," Asharq al-Awsat, February 13, 2014. <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/02/article55328899>; "Syrian troops bombard rebel stronghold of Yabroud," BBC, February 13, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26171825>; "Syria warplanes hit Yabrud near Damascus: activists," The Daily Star, February 12, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Feb-12/247102-syrian-forces-step-up-assault-near-lebanon-border-activists.ashx#axzz2srZxy5ZJ>

3. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights Facebook page, February 26, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/121855461256134/posts/494403874001289>; Syrian Observatory for Human Rights Facebook page, February 15, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/121855461256134/posts/489301737844836>; Syrian Observatory for Human Rights Facebook page, February 18, 2013. <https://www.facebook.com/121855461256134/posts/491017431006600>; "Syrian forces press assault near Lebanon border: activists," Reuters, February 12, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/12/us-syria-crisis-yabroud-idUSBREA1BoHZ20140212>; "Syria warplanes hit Yabrud near

Damascus: activists," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights Facebook page, February 12, 2014. [https://www.facebook.com/syriahroe/posts/487788837996126?stream\\_ref=10](https://www.facebook.com/syriahroe/posts/487788837996126?stream_ref=10).

4. "Syria-SAA liberated al-Sahel town, Aqaba area in al-Qalamoun and Hweijet al-Mreiyia in Deir Ezzor," YouTube, March 3, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gI4VGdzrovY>; "Air strikes near Syria rebel bastion Yabrud," AFP, March 4, 2014. <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/140304/air-strikes-near-syria-rebel-bastion-yabrud>; "Syrian Army Firmly controls Rima Farms, Beseiges Yabroud in Qalamoun," al-Manar, March 6, 2014. <http://www.almanar.com.lb/english/adetails.php?eid=139192&cid=23&fromval=1&frid=23&seccatid=20&si=1>; "Syrian army controls the Kuwait and Qatari hill in Yabroud," Aleshraq. <http://aleshraq.org/5349>; Syrian forces advance to edge of rebel border town," Reuters, March 11, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/11/us-syria-crisis-town-idUSBREA2A1C320140311>

5. Qalamoun Media Center Facebook page, March 12, 2014. [https://www.facebook.com/Qalamoun1/posts/362394967232709?stream\\_ref=10](https://www.facebook.com/Qalamoun1/posts/362394967232709?stream_ref=10); "Violent clashes in Yarmouk Camp..." al-Watan, March 11, 2014. <http://www.alwatan.sy/view.aspx?id=12891>

6. Scott Lucas, "Week Past, Week Ahead: Syria—A Big Victory for Assad's Forces," EA WorldView, March 17, 2014. <http://eaworldview.com/2014/03/syria-daily-assad-forces-capture-yabroud/>; Elijah J Magnier, "The Latest Developments in The Yabrud Offensive," Brown Moses Blog, March 16, 2014. <http://brown-moses.blogspot.com/2014/03/elijah-j-magnier-on-latest-developments.html>

7. Elijah J Magnier, "Special Report on the Yabroud Offensive," Brown Moses Blog, February 15, 2014. <http://brown-moses.blogspot.com.tr/2014/02/special-report-on-yabroud-offensive-from.html>; Nicholas Blanford, "Hezbollah close to cutting off key route for Syrian rebels, refugees," Christian Science Monitor, March 14, 2014. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Security-Watch/2014/0314/Hezbollah-close-to-cutting-off-key-route-for-Syrian-rebels-refugees>

8. Mariam Karouny, "Syrian forces fully control rebel stronghold near Lebanon," Reuters, March 16, 2014. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/03/16/uk-syria-crisis-town-idUKBREA2Fo5D20140316>; "30,000 displaced from Yabroud to Assal al-Ward and the commission shares in relief work and accommodation," The National Coordination Authority, March 2, 2014. <http://syrianncb.org/2014/03/02/30->; Syrian army captures strategic border town," Aljazeera, March 17, 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/03/syrian-army-captures-strategic-border-town-20143167587954232.html>



9. "Syrian warplanes raid Lebanon's Arsal," NOW, March 16, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539405-syrian-warplanes-raid-lebanons-arsal>
10. Unified Operations Room in Qalamoun- The Doors of God Do Not Close Phase 2 Facebook page, December 27, 2013. [https://www.facebook.com/abwab.allah.2/posts/1434442386784817?stream\\_ref=10](https://www.facebook.com/abwab.allah.2/posts/1434442386784817?stream_ref=10); "The Doors of God Do Not Close Phase 2- Unified Operations Room in Qalamoun" YouTube, December 24, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GArEvORY4zE>
11. "Will Qalamoun turn into a new battleground between "al-Nusra" and "Daash"?" al-Mayadeen, March 4, 2014. <http://www.almayadeen.net/ar/news/syria->
12. For the Unified Military Command's founding statement see: <https://twitter.com/barq-ig-sy/status/435103582556143617/photo/1>; For a list of groups involved see: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/BhkRvKrCAAlbh4V.jpg:large>
13. Statement from Jabhat al-Nusra, posted on Jabhat al-Nusra in Qalamoun Twitter feed, February 28, 2014. [https://twitter.com/JabhtAnNusrah\\_Q/status/439521983856779264](https://twitter.com/JabhtAnNusrah_Q/status/439521983856779264)
14. Abdullah Azzamal-Shamy Twitter feed, March 16, 2014. [https://twitter.com/3zzam\\_alshamy/status/445193023975333889](https://twitter.com/3zzam_alshamy/status/445193023975333889); Ahrar al-Sham Twitter feed, March 16, 2014. <https://twitter.com/Ahraralsham/status/445135512916201472>.
15. "Storming the 559<sup>th</sup> Ammo Depots under the command of the leader of Jaysh al-Islam," Video posted on YouTube March 22, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qXQY95y9Wg&feature=youtu.be>
16. "ISIS claims Dahiye car bomb," NOW, January 4, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/528577-isis-claims-dahiye-car-bomb>; Rakan al-Fakih and Dana Khraiche, "Nusra branch says Hermel blast response to Hezbollah in Syria," Daily Star, January 17, 2014. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jan-17/244320-nusra-branch-says-hermel-blast-response-to-hezbollah-in-syria.ashx#axzz2tgWiimTj>; "Explosion hits Beirut Dahiye," NOW, January 21, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/531523-explosion-hits-beirut-dahiye>; "Explosion heard in Lebanon's Hermel," NOW, February 1, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/533484-explosion-heard-in-lebanons-hermel>; <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB1000142405270230491420457939245055266017203> FEB: car bomb in Choueifat, Dahiye area claimed by no one <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/533822-suicide-bombing-rips-through-van-south-of-beirut>; <http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/16/world/meast/lebanon-suicide-car-bomb/>; Farnaz Fassihi, "Beirut Bomb Target Iranian Center," The Wall Street Journal, February 19, 2014. <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304914204579392450552660172>.
17. "Syria army captures town in strategic Homs province," AFP, March 8, 2014. <http://news.yahoo.com/syria-army-captures-town-strategic-homs-province-142026860.html>
18. Aryn Baker, "Syrian Forces Reclaim Historic Crusader Castle from Rebels," TIME, March 21, 2014. <http://time.com/33207/syria-crusader-castle-recaptured-government-forces/>
19. Nabih Bulos and Patrick J. McDonnell, "Syria government forces seize strategic town near Lebanon border," Los Angeles Times, March 8, 2014. <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-syria-fighting-20140309,0,6277729.story#axzz2xIisC4kF>; "Syria army fighting for control of Krak fort: Official," AFP, March 19, 2014. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/97050/World/Region/Syria-army-fighting-for-control-of-Krak-fort-Offic.aspx>
20. "Syria closes Lebanon border amid clashes," Aljazeera, March 20, 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/03/syria-closes-lebanon-border-amid-clashes-201432094736392440.html>
21. Albert Aji and Diaa Hadid, "Syrian troops and Hezbollah seize rebel supply town Yabroud on Lebanese border," The Independent, March 16, 2014. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syrian-troops-and-hezbollah-seize-rebel-supply-town-yabroud-on-lebanese-border-9195823.html>
22. "One dead as Sunni protests sweep Lebanon," NOW, March 18, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539735-protesters-block-beqaa-roads-in-support-of-arsal> ; "Deadly car bomb strikes eastern Beqaa," NOW, March 16, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/539468-deadly-car-bomb-strikes-eastern-beqaa>



# Yabroud town - a strategic prize for Syria government

🕒 21 March 2014



REUTERS

A banner of Bashar al-Assad now sits in the centre of the recently-taken town of Yabroud

**With the capture of the town of Yabroud near the border with Lebanon, Syrian government forces made an important territorial gain. Its fall closes off a key supply route for the rebels, but as Paul Wood reports from Beirut, the war for control of Syria grinds on.**



A seven-year-old boy called Youssef was being treated for a head wound in a makeshift clinic in the Lebanese border town of Aarsal.

"They shelled us with cannon as we were fleeing," he said, talking about the retreat from Yabroud.

The doctor in charge, Qassem Zien, declares for the activist videoing this scene: "We've had dozens of wounded like this, mostly women and children. I ask Hezbollah and Bashar: Are these terrorists?"

Undoubtedly, many fighters were fleeing Yabroud along with the civilians.

An aid worker in Aarsal reports being approached by a desperate rebel. Would the aid agency give him safe passage out of Aarsal to another part of Lebanon? He explained he was afraid of being caught by Lebanon's Shia Hezbollah militia.

That conversation, if accurate, shows the disarray and, perhaps, the collapse in morale among some rebel fighters after the fall of Yabroud, just over the border from Aarsal.

Hezbollah - though Lebanese - have been used as the Syrian government's shock troops in this and other assaults in what is an ongoing offensive.

The fighter must have feared that Hezbollah would continue their operations against the Syria rebels inside Lebanon, trying to capture those who had fled over the border.

The Syrian war has gradually (and some will fear inexorably) crossed the border into Lebanon.

It is manifested in bomb attacks by the Syrian Islamists of the Nusra Front against Hezbollah areas of Beirut - and in the on-off sectarian skirmishing in Tripoli in the north.

It seems, though, that only a handful of the rebel forces fleeing Yabroud made it to Aarsal.

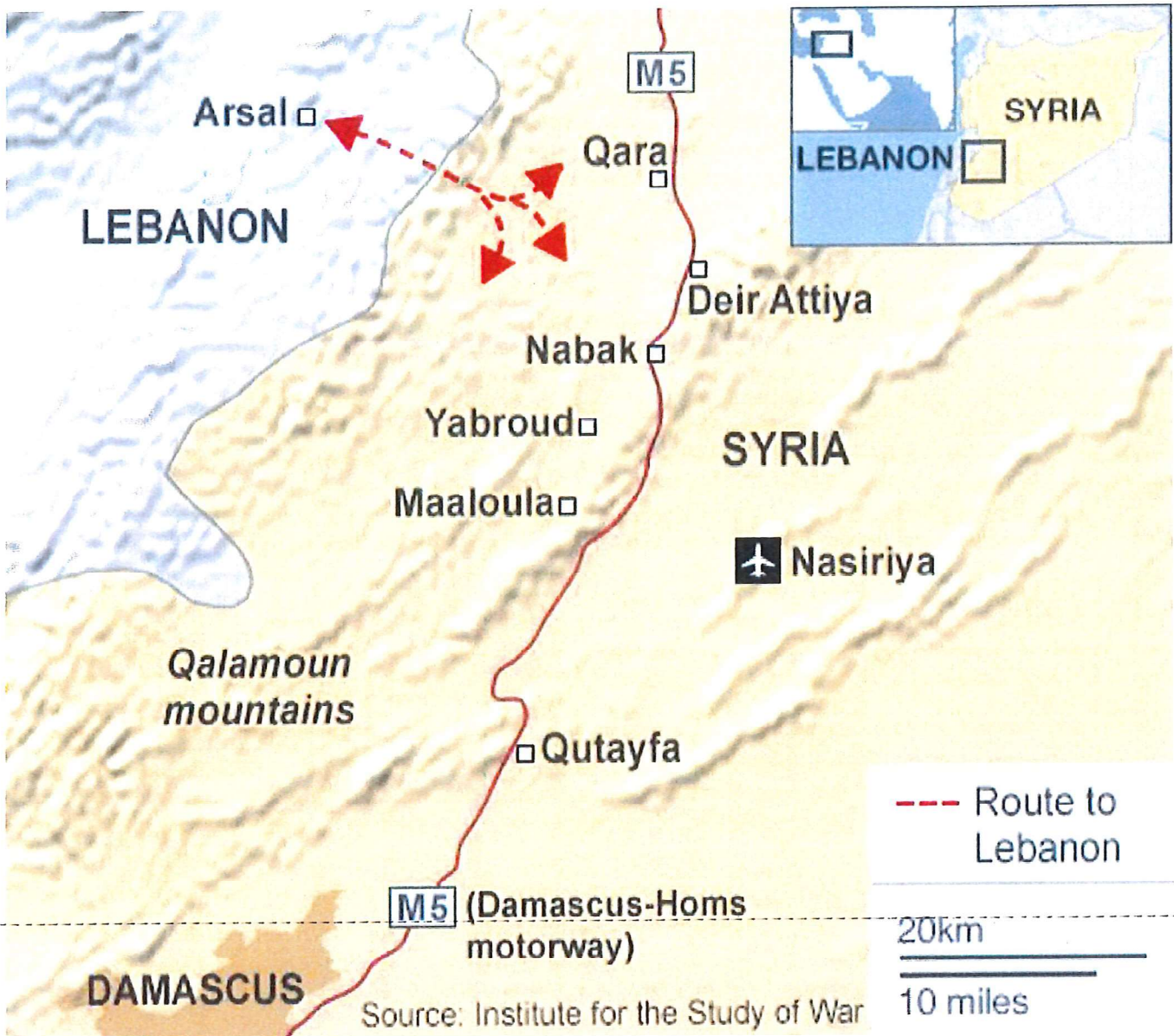
Many remain in the mountains, their retreat cut off by the Syrian Army.

## 'Tightening the noose'

Smugglers in Aarsal supplied the weapons and ammunition for rebel groups from Yabroud itself to the outskirts of Damascus, giving them the means to prosecute their guerrilla war.

Now, that resupply seems impossible: another victory for the government's offensive.

The offensive also recaptured the famous old crusader castle of Krak des Chevaliers, a rebel (and Islamist) base for two years.



Activists say more than a thousand people fled from the village that nestles just below the castle. They walked into northern Lebanon in the dead of night and amid shellfire that caused dozens of casualties.

Before sending in ground troops to Yabroud, the Syrian Army pounded the town for weeks with heavy artillery and air strikes.

Video taken by a cameraman close to the rebels just days before they abandoned the town shows collapsed buildings and rubble spilling into a main street.

Days later, **reporters** travelling with government troops said they had found the town's Catholic church - one of the world's oldest churches - vandalised.

The crucifix behind the altar was smashed, bibles had been burned - an act of desecration blamed on retreating **Islamist fighters**.



After capturing Yabroud, the Syrian military said in a statement carried on the official news agency: "This new success... is an important step towards securing the border area with Lebanon, and cutting off the roads and tightening the noose around the remaining terrorist cells in Damascus province."

## Brave face

Some activists admit that Yabroud's loyalties never truly lay with the revolution. It was a town with many government sympathisers and a significant Christian population that did not want to take sides.

But Yabroud's significance lay mainly in its geographical position.

The rebels once controlled a large swathe of territory along Syria's border with Lebanon. They once moved freely back and forth across that border.

Now they are being squeezed into a smaller and smaller area. They cling to a few villages near Yabroud that might give them a chance of keeping their supply lines across the border open.

The main group involved in the defence of Yabroud was the Islamist Nusra Front, which has pledged its loyalty to al-Qaeda.

In an account published on Twitter, the Nusra brigade's spokesman, Abdallah Azzam Al-Shami, bitterly blamed other rebel groups for the fall of Yabroud, accusing them of cowardice and betrayal.

---

"Most of the [other] main factions in town fled... They left us and abandoned their positions," he said.

He claimed that the leaders of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in the town had met in secret and decided to retreat without offering any resistance to the Syrian Army and to Hezbollah.

"Was Yabroud sold?" he tweeted, implying there had been a corrupt deal. "They found no shame in handing over Yabroud."

The FSA do not accept that version of events, of course, but it is evidence of the bitterness and division among the rebels in the wake of this damaging defeat.







Troops loyal to Bashar al-Assad walk through Yabroud after its capture



Syrians have been fleeing across the border to Aarsal in Lebanon

The activists and citizen journalists who used Yabroud as a base for the past years are trying to put on a brave face.

"The fall of Homs or the fall of Yabroud doesn't mean the end of the revolution," said Ahmad al-Homsi, a young activist working to transport casualties across the border to Aarsal.

"The Free Syrian Army still control vast pieces of land stretching from Flita to Rankous (villages south of Yabroud on the Syrian-Lebanese border)."

Another activist, Nader Hussein, told the BBC's Arabic TV: "The regime claims to 'liberate' towns but we look at the regime as an occupying force... The revolution still lives in the hearts and souls of the people, a people abandoned by everybody and left to face this regime alone."



Elsewhere in Syria, the rebels are said to be planning new offensives.

They are pushing into parts of Latakia province, emptying Alawite villages loyal to the government and sending people fleeing for the big government-controlled towns.

A new attack on Damascus is said to be fomenting in the southern province of Deraa, where the Americans have reportedly given the rebels new weapons.

So the fall of Yabroud is not the end of the uprising. But in this part of Syria at least - the strategically vital border with Lebanon - it is clear the government is winning.

---

## Related Topics

[Syria](#)[Lebanon](#)

---

## Related Internet Links

[United Nations](#)[Syrian Arab Red Crescent](#)

---

[Syrian Foreign Ministry \(Arabic\)](#)[Syrian Observatory For Human Rights](#)

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites.

---

## Top Stories

### Growing concern over Brazil coronavirus variant

Researchers say the new variant could be contributing to soaring infections in Brazil's Amazonas state.

🕒 5 hours ago

### Dutch government to quit over welfare fraud scandal