



Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Religion Codebook



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Introduction and Brief Description

The ACLED-Religion project codes reported information on the type, agents, location, date, and other characteristics of religious disorder and repression events. ACLED-Religion includes violent and non-violent events involving members of religious groups or religion-based actors, including governments, rebels, militias, identity groups, political parties, external actors, rioters, protesters, and civilians. The full list of columns in ACLED-Religion is available in Table 1 below.

ACLED-Religion currently covers events in seven countries in the Middle East and North Africa region: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, and Yemen. Data are derived from a wide range of local, subnational, national, regional and international sources, and the information is collected by trained researchers worldwide.

ACLED-Religion data are available to the public and are released weekly. Data can be downloaded through the data export tool on the ACLED website or can be accessed through the ACLED-Religion API (a manual is available online).

Table 1: ACLED-Religion Data Columns

Column Name	Content
ISO	The numeric ISO-3 code for each individual country
EVENT_ID_CNTY	An individual identifier by number and country acronym
EVENT_ID_NO_CNTY	An individual numeric identifier within the event country
EVENT_DATE	The day, month and year on which an event took place
YEAR	The year in which an event took place



TIME_PRECISION	A numeric code indicating the level of certainty of the date coded for the event
EVENT_TYPE	The type of event
SUB_EVENT_TYPE	The type of sub-event
HARASS_EVENT_TYPE	The type of harassment event
HARASS_SUB_EVENT_TYPE	The type of harassment sub-event
RELIG_CONTEXT	The religious context(s) of the event
ACTOR1	The named actor involved in the event
ASSOC_ACTOR_1	The named actor associated with or identifying ACTOR1
RELIG_AFFIL_1	The religious affiliation of ACTOR1 and/or ASSOC_ACTOR_1
INTER1	A numeric code indicating the type of ACTOR1
ACTOR2	The named actor involved in the event
ASSOC_ACTOR_2	The named actor associated with or identifying ACTOR2
RELIG_AFFIL_2	The religious affiliation of ACTOR2 and/or ASSOC_ACTOR_2
INTER2	A numeric code indicating the type of ACTOR2
INTERACTION	A numeric code indicating the interaction between types of ACTOR1 and ACTOR2
REGION	The region of the world where the event took place
COUNTRY	The country in which the event took place



ADMIN1	The largest sub-national administrative region in which the event took place
ADMIN2	The second largest sub-national administrative region in which the event took place
ADMIN3	The third largest sub-national administrative region in which the event took place
LOCATION	The location in which the event took place
LATITUDE	The latitude of the location
LONGITUDE	The longitude of the location
GEO_PRECISION	A numeric code indicating the level of certainty of the location coded for the event
SOURCE	The source of the event report
SOURCE_SCALE	The scale (local, subnational, national, regional, international, or other) of the source
NOTES	A short description of the event
FATALITIES	The number of reported fatalities which occurred during the event
FATALITIES_PRECISION	A numeric code indicating the level of certainty of reports around the number of fatalities coded for the event
ACLED_ID	The EVENT_ID_CNTY value of the corresponding event in the ACLED data, if applicable



Definitions of ACLED-Religion Event and Sub-Event Types

ACLED-Religion collects and codes reported information on religious disorder and repression. It aims to capture the modes, frequency and intensity of religious disorder and repression as it occurs.

Religious disorder is defined as political violence involving one or more religion-based actors, or non-violent events involving religion-based actors that capture the potential precursors or critical junctures of a violent conflict or repression, like protests or strategic developments. A religion-based actor is one with explicit religious goals or a religiously defined agenda or pretense for political action.¹ Political violence is generally defined as the use of force by a group with a political purpose or motivation, such as overthrowing the ruling regime, gaining territory, changing laws or policies, or advocating for political rights.

There are two types of **religious repression** events included in ACLED-Religion.

The first is defined as violent or non-violent attempts to prevent an individual or group from observing, worshipping, practicing, teaching or identifying with their religion or belief in public or private. It excludes instances where the exercise of religion directly threatens the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. ‘Fundamental rights and freedoms’ include the right to life, liberty, health and safety, freedom from slavery and torture, and the right to work and education.²

¹ For more on ‘religion-based actors’, see ‘ACLED-Religion Actors’ section.

² In this way, ACLED-Religion can clearly distinguish between actions that are clearly intended to protect the general public versus actions that are merely justified as such, but that may be a pretense for restricting religious activity. For example, an event where an individual is arrested while engaging in a religious practice that physically harms someone else would not be included in the dataset. It has a direct consequence on the fundamental rights and freedoms of another person. Meanwhile, an event where a religious group’s activities are monitored and restricted in the name of general ‘state security’ would be included in the dataset. In this case, the group’s activities are not directly impacting the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, and so the restriction of them is captured as religious repression.



Second, religious repression is also defined as violent or non-violent attempts to force an individual or group to engage in actions or behaviors conforming to the beliefs or norms of a religion (their own or otherwise).

The fundamental unit of observation in ACLED-Religion is the *event*. Events involve designated actors – e.g. a named religious group, state forces with a religious mandate (e.g. morality police) or unnamed groups like rioters. They occur at a specific named location (identified by name and geographic coordinates) and on a specific day. Researchers work to ensure that the most specific location and time possible are recorded. ACLED-Religion codes for eight types of events and 35 types of sub-events, both violent and non-violent. Table 2 displays ACLED-Religion’s event and sub-event types.

Table 2: ACLED-Religion Event and Sub-Event Types

Event Type	Sub-Event Type
Violence against civilians	<i>Sexual violence</i>
	<i>Attack</i>
	<i>Abduction/forced disappearance</i>
Violent harassment	<i>Judicial violence</i>
	<i>Assault</i>
Non-violent harassment	<i>Judicial harassment</i>
	<i>Raids</i>
	<i>Religious property desecration</i>
	<i>Threats</i>
	<i>Prevention of practice</i>
	<i>Discrimination</i>
	<i>Change to religion law/policy</i>
	<i>Other harassment</i>
Battles	<i>Armed clash</i>
	<i>Government regains territory</i>
	<i>Non-state actor overtakes territory</i>



Explosions/Remote violence	<i>Chemical weapon</i>
	<i>Air/drone strike</i>
	<i>Suicide bomb</i>
	<i>Shelling/artillery/missile attack</i>
	<i>Remote explosive/landmine/IED</i>
	<i>Grenade</i>
Protests	<i>Peaceful protest</i>
	<i>Protest with intervention</i>
	<i>Excessive force against protesters</i>
Riots	<i>Violent demonstration</i>
	<i>Mob violence</i>
Strategic developments	<i>Agreement</i>
	<i>Arrests</i>
	<i>Change to group/activity</i>
	<i>Disrupted weapons use</i>
	<i>Headquarters or base established</i>
	<i>Looting/property destruction</i>
	<i>Non-violent transfer of territory</i>
	<i>Other</i>

Violence against civilians

ACLED-Religion defines ‘Violence against civilians’ events as violent events where an organized armed group or a sole perpetrator unaffiliated with an organized armed group deliberately inflicts violence upon unarmed civilians. By definition, civilians are unarmed non-combatants and cannot engage in political violence.³ The perpetrators of such acts can include state forces and their affiliates,⁴ rebels, militias, and external/other forces, as well as individuals not affiliated with an

³ Though they can be the perpetrator in ‘Non-violent harassment’ events.

⁴ This excludes events where state forces or their affiliates are using violence to carry out judicial punishment. Those events are coded as ‘Judicial violence’ (see below).



organized group (identified as ‘Sole Perpetrator’ in the coding). At least one actor in the event must be a religion-based actor, which means these events can include incidents where a religion-based actor perpetrates violence against a civilian (who is demonstrating a religious identity or otherwise), or where a non-religion-based actor perpetrates violence against a civilian who is demonstrating a clear religious identity.

In countries where there are salient religious cleavages, events that involve members of those religious cleavages are included *regardless of whether the target was demonstrating their religious affiliation through practice or expression*. For example, Coptic Christians are systematically persecuted by members of Egyptian society. An attack against a Coptic Christian civilian in Egypt would be captured by ACLED-Religion regardless of whether the victim was engaging in activity that would have made it clear they were being targeted for their religion, such as praying or preaching. These types of events are distinct from other ‘Violence against civilians’, ‘Violent harassment’, or ‘Non-violent harassment’ events. In those cases, the perpetrator’s motivations cannot be assumed based on the religious identity of the target. The target must be engaging in activity that clearly designates the event as religion-based (i.e. the target is praying or proselytizing at the time of the attack). Instead, these cleavages are intended to capture dynamics where the religious persecution of a group is systematic enough that any targeting of those groups can be assumed to be religion-related in some way.

In cases where the identity and actions of the victims are in question (e.g. the target may be employed as a police officer so it is unclear whether they are a non-combatant), ACLED-Religion determines whether the person is harmed or killed by an organized armed group or sole perpetrator. If they were harmed while unarmed and unable to either act defensively or counter-attack, then it is an act of ‘Violence against civilians’. There is no minimum number of civilian fatalities needed to meet a threshold to be an ACLED-Religion event.

‘Violence against civilians’ includes attempts at lethal violence or inflicting serious harm (e.g. beating, shooting, torture, rape, mutilation, etc.) or forcibly disappearing (e.g. kidnapping and disappearances) civilian actors.



The following sub-event types are associated with the ‘Violence against civilians’ event type: ‘Sexual violence’, ‘Attack’, and ‘Abduction/forced disappearance’.

Sexual violence

This sub-event type is used when any individual (regardless of gender) is targeted with sexual violence. ‘Sexual violence’ is defined largely as any action that inflicts harm of a sexual nature. This means that it is not limited to solely penetrative rape, but would also include actions like public stripping, sexual torture of men, etc.

Example: "An Islah-affiliated Imam raped an 8-year-old boy in a mosque in Taizz city (Salh, Taizz)."

Attack

This sub-event type is used when civilians are targeted with violence that can cause serious injury or harm by an organized armed actor or sole perpetrator. Attacks of sexual nature are coded as ‘Sexual violence’.

Example: "The Islamic State abducted and then executed 12 civilians in Al Mishraq and al-Zuhur areas (Mosul, Ninewa)."

Abduction/forced disappearance

This sub-event type is used when an actor engages in the abduction or forced disappearance of civilians, without reports of further violence. If fatalities or serious injuries are reported as a consequence of the forced disappearance, the event is coded as an ‘Attack’ instead.

Note that this sub-event type does not cover state-sanctioned arrests, unless they are reported to have been conducted extra-judicially. By contrast, non-state groups can never engage in arrests, and their activity engaging in ‘arresting’ is typically coded using this sub-event type.⁵

⁵ In rare cases where non-state groups are able to maintain some level of judicial/penal system, they would also be able to engage in ‘Arrests’, and these actions would not be coded as ‘Abduction/forced disappearance’ and would instead be coded under the ‘Arrests’ or ‘Judicial harassment’ sub-event types.



Example: "Unidentified gunmen kidnapped a 7-year-old Coptic Christian girl in Dakahlia Province in northern Egypt."

Violent harassment

ACLED-Religion defines ‘Violent harassment’ as acts of physical violence against civilians that fall below the threshold of ‘lethal violence’ or ‘serious harm’ used in the ‘Violence against civilians’ event type. This event type also includes acts of lethal or serious violence perpetrated by state forces in the course of administering judicial punishments, a subset of violence which is not included in the ACLED dataset.

Acts can be perpetrated by any actor (a sole perpetrator, member(s) of an organized group, or state forces) targeting religious individuals or groups, or may be perpetrated by religion-based actors targeting civilians (religious or otherwise).

While this event type is similar to the ‘Violence against civilians’ event type, it is distinct in the severity of violence involved or the judicial nature of the violence (i.e., violence that is carried out by state forces as punishment for crimes). For this reason, ACLED-Religion keeps these events separate from the ‘Violence against civilians’ event type. This also allows users to more easily compare ‘Violence against civilians’ events across the ACLED and ACLED-Religion datasets given the consistent methodology. Events that fall under the ‘Violent harassment’ event type at ACLED-Religion do not meet the threshold for inclusion in the ACLED dataset.

The following sub-event types are associated with the ‘Violent harassment’ event type: ‘Judicial violence’ and ‘Assault’.

Judicial violence

This sub-event type includes events where the state engages in the violent punishment of civilian(s) as a consequence of a legal proceeding. It includes executions, stoning, lashing, caning, or other forms of violence that is a result of legal sentencing. Acts of extrajudicial violence by state forces are



not included in this sub-event type. They are coded as 'Attack' events under the 'Violence against civilians' event type.

Example: "Two Baha'i men were executed in Iran after being convicted of espionage for the US and Israel."

Assault

This sub-event type includes events where civilians are targeted with violence that does not result in serious injury by an organized armed actor or a sole perpetrator. Attacks of a sexual nature are coded as 'Sexual violence' under the 'Violence against civilians' event type.

Example: "Security guards put a Haredi Jew to the floor to control him at the Tomb of rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron area (Safed, HaZafon) after they intervened because he wasn't following preventive coronavirus measures and wearing his mask properly."

Non-violent harassment

This event type includes acts of non-violent aggression or intimidation against civilians. Acts can be perpetrated by any actor (a sole perpetrator, member[s] of an organized group, or state forces) targeting religious individuals or groups, or may be perpetrated by religion-based actors targeting civilians (religious or otherwise).

This event type includes the following sub-event types: 'Judicial harassment', 'Raids', 'Religious property desecration', 'Threats', 'Prevention of practice', 'Discrimination', 'Change to religion law/policy' and 'Other harassment'.

Judicial harassment

This sub-event type includes arrests, detentions, sentencings, and summons of individuals due to their religious belief, identity, expression or practice (or lack thereof). Events can also include individuals being targeted in an effort to impose religious norms or beliefs (e.g. police forces



arresting individuals for not adhering to religious dress codes). Detentions or arrests can only be carried out by state forces or other actors exercising *de facto* control over a territory. If carried out by other actors, the event is coded as an ‘Abduction/forced disappearance’.

The impact of the event (whether it was an arrest, detention, summons, or sentence) is noted at the end of the event description written in the ‘NOTES’ section of the event, and is formatted in brackets denoting both the circumstance and number of people affected, as such: “[arrests=3]”. This stylistic tag allows users to quickly see how a victim was impacted in an event. Multiple tags can reference the same individual if they were impacted in different ways in the same event. For example, if a man is summoned and arrested in the same event, the ‘NOTES’ would include “[arrests=1][summons=1]”, with both numbers referencing the same individual. For this reason, users should *not* use these tags to produce a total count of victims. For more on victims and ‘victims tags’, see below.

Detentions and arrests in this sub-event type are distinct from those in the ‘Arrests’ sub-event type, which is limited to detentions or arrests of significant religion-based actors or mass arrests of religion-based actors for reasons not directly related to their religious identity or practice.

Example: “Egyptian security forces arrested a Coptic Christian teacher in the governorate of Ismailia after the Public Prosecutor of Ismailia ordered his detention for four days pending an investigation for charges of ‘contempt for religion and insulting Prophet Muhammad’. The teacher had said that Muhammad was ‘mentally disabled’ in a conversation on Facebook.”

Raids

This sub-event type includes incidents where religion-based actors or civilians demonstrating a clear religious identity are subject to a sudden search and/or seizure of materials at their private residence or at a public building used for religious purposes. Raids can only be carried out by state forces or state-backed militias.



Example: "Ministry of Information agents conducted an orchestrated raid of the residences of four Baha'is in the city of Sanaa (Old City, Amanat al Asimah). Security forces searched their homes and confiscated their mobile phones, computers, and religious books."

Religious property desecration

This sub-event type is used for incidents of religious property destruction or desecration, including looting, graffiti, arson, demolition, or general vandalism. Desecration can also include acts that treat religious objects or property with disrespect, such as the seizure of holy texts or sit-ins at other religions' houses of worship.

Religious property includes houses of worship, cemeteries or headstones targeted for religious reasons (e.g. graffiti on headstones in a Jewish cemetery), or other property used primarily for religious purposes (e.g. recreation centers, meeting spaces, etc.).

Significant acts of looting or property destruction of non-religious property by religion-based actors are coded as 'Looting/Property destruction' instead.

Example: "An unidentified perpetrator set fire to the restrooms of the Imam Ali Holy Shrine in the city of Najaf. No fatalities nor injuries were reported."

Threats

This sub-event type covers in-person⁶ threats of physical or non-physical harm, either directed at individuals because of their religious affiliation, made by religious individuals in the course of enforcing religious norms or ideals, or made by religion-based actors. 'Non-physical harm' can include being fired from a religious position, being fined for religious actions, or otherwise being

⁶ 'Threats' are limited to specific threats made in-person, including face-to-face threats or in an otherwise physical space (e.g. by posting a threatening note on a door). It excludes threats made over radio, television, or in speeches. For example, speeches where a militant leader says that followers of a certain faith should be killed are not coded as 'Threats'.



punished without the use of physical violence. Incidents of coercion are included, as in that case a threat is implied.

Threats can be written or verbal, but must be directed against a specific individual or group in a specific time and space. For example, a written note threatening a shop owner who stays open during religious holidays would be coded as a threat, while a general statement made on national television that shop owners who remain open on holidays should be punished is not coded as a 'Threat' event.

Any threat that escalates to a physical altercation would be coded as 'Attack' or 'Assault' sub-event types instead.

Example: "Pro-Houthi forces forced students in public and private schools across Ibb governorate to attend events celebrating Houthi martyrs and promoting Houthi 'sectarian centers'."

Prevention of practice

This sub-event type captures incidents where an individual or group is explicitly prevented from practicing their religion. It includes events where an individual or group is prevented in a specific incident from practicing their religion (e.g. their local mosque is closed by the government, or they are barred from gathering in public to pray, etc.)

Example: "A local ultra-Orthodox synagogue in the town of Modiin Illit (Ramallah, West Bank) posted a notice that due to coronavirus social distancing/spacing regulations, the women's section has been allocated to men. This means, for the foreseeable future, that women are not welcome in the synagogue."

Discrimination

This sub-event type includes cases where an individual or group is discriminated against on the basis of their religion, or lack thereof. It must be explicitly clear that any discrimination in the event



was directly due to religious affiliation or lack thereof. Discriminatory events can include – but are not limited to – the denial of services, exclusion from political participation on the basis of religion, the shutting down of businesses or schools, employment related discrimination, non-violent prisoner abuse (e.g. denying medical care due to the prisoner’s religion) or denial of religious registration or official recognition.

Example: “A man impersonating a railways inspector prevented several Haredi Jews from boarding a train at Bat Yam train station of Bnei Brak city (Tel Aviv), shouting ‘Haredim cannot get on the train.’”

Changes to religious law/policy

This sub-event type marks significant religious laws or policies introduced or amended in the country. It also includes significant court decisions pertaining to religion-related cases. In some cases, fatwas that have significant implications for religious dynamics in the country (i.e., they are issued by notable religious figures or institutions, and they may act as a precursor to changes in religious dynamics in the country) are coded.

Example: “The Expediency Council, Iran’s highest arbiter of disputes between state branches, voted by a two-thirds majority to amend the Law on the Formation, Duties, and Election of National Islamic Councils, thereby affirming the right of constitutionally recognized religious minorities to run in local elections.”

Other harassment

This sub-event type covers incidents of harassment that do not fall into any of the other ‘Non-violent harassment’ sub-event types. Examples can include enforcing restrictions on movement in and out of religiously homogeneous neighborhoods (e.g. enforcing roadblocks and checkpoints in predominantly Shiite neighborhoods), surveillance activities excluding raids, displacement caused by threats or attacks against members of a religious group, or sanctions and fines levied against religious activities, etc.



Example: “Bahraini authorities prevented Shiite leader Sheikh Abdullah Isa al-Mahroos, also known as Mirza al-Mahroos, from undergoing emergency IBS surgery despite doctors’ orders, while he is detained at Jaww Prison (Jaww, Southern). Al-Mahroos, the vice president of al-Zahraa Society of Orphans, was initially arrested in April 2011 and sentenced to 15 years.”

Battles

ACLED-Religion defines a battle as a violent interaction between two politically organized armed groups at a particular time and location. Battles can occur between armed and organized state, non-state, and external groups, and in any combination therein. *There is no fatality minimum necessary for inclusion.* One or both of the groups involved must be a religion-based actor (see below).

One-sided interactions – e.g. reports of shots fired into the air without a target – are categorized as ‘Strategic developments’ (see below). Violence against unarmed civilians is categorized as ‘Violence against civilians’, although civilians can also be harmed as ‘collateral damage’ in ‘Battles’ or ‘Explosions/Remote violence’ events (see below). When harmed in the event of a battle or explosion, a separate civilian-specific event is not recorded, but rather the fatalities, if any, are aggregated in the ‘Fatalities’ column.

The specific elements of that definition therefore are as follows:

- (1) A violent interaction is the exchange of armed force, or the use of armed force at close distance, between armed groups capable of inflicting harm upon the opposing side.
- (2) Organized armed groups are collective actors assumed to be operating cohesively around an agenda, identity, or political purpose, using weapons to inflict harm. These groups frequently have a designated name and stated agenda.
- (3) At least one group involved in the interaction must be a religion-based actor.



The following sub-event types are associated with the 'Battles' event type and are designated according to the outcome of the battle event: 'Armed clash', 'Government regains territory', and 'Non-state actor overtakes territory'.

Armed clash

If armed, organized groups engage in a battle, and no reports indicate a change in territorial control, the correct sub-event type is an 'Armed clash'.

Example: "Pro-Houthi forces claimed to have thwarted an attack of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula militants in the Qayfa region northwest of Al Bayda governorate (Wald Rabi, Al Bayda) with no report of fatalities nor injuries."

Government regains territory

This sub-event type is used to describe cases where government forces or their affiliates fighting against competing state forces or against a non-state group regain control of a location. This code is only used for re-establishment of government control and not for dual non-state violence. Short-lived territorial exchanges that do not last for more than one day are coded as 'Armed clash'.

Example: " Iraqi military forces claimed to have regained control over the villages of Qaryat al Karamah and Hajj Ali (Ninewa, Mosul), killing 24 Islamic State militants and arresting 10 others."

Non-state actor overtakes territory

When a non-state actor wins control and/or subdues government forces, and/or has won territory in which they can now act with impunity and are regarded as having a monopoly of force within that territory, 'Non-state actor overtakes territory' is the correct sub-event type. Short-lived territorial exchanges that do not last for more than one day are coded as 'Armed clash'.

Example: "Jihadi groups attacked a police station in Al Arish city (El Arish 1, North Sinai), using rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns, with no report of fatalities nor injuries."



In cases where government and non-state forces fight many times in a location before a non-state group gains control, only the final territorial acquisition is coded as 'Non-state actor overtakes territory'. All other battles in that location are coded as 'Armed clash'.

This sub-event can also be used to note the transfer of control from one non-state group to another by violence.

Explosions/Remote violence

ACLED-Religion defines 'Explosions/Remote violence' as 'one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the target to respond'. The tools used in instances of 'Explosions/Remote violence' are explosive devices, including, but not limited to, bombs, grenades, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), artillery fire or shelling, missile attacks, heavy machine gun fire, air or drone strikes, or chemical weapons. Suicide attacks implicating the use of bombs also fall under this category.

ACLED-Religion does not code multiple event types within the context of a single event involving the same actors at the same location on the same day. Instead, a hierarchy is used to determine which event type is coded. Thus, when any instance of 'Explosions/Remote violence' is reported in the context of an ongoing battle, they are merged and coded as a single 'Battles' event. For more on event type hierarchies, see the section on 'Important Notes Regarding Event Type Codes'.

'Explosions/Remote violence' can be waged on both armed agents or on civilians. *When accounting for all attacks on civilians, explosions/remote violence with civilian targets should be included.* At least one of the actors involved must be a religion-based actor.

The following sub-event types are associated with the 'Explosions/Remote violence' event type: 'Chemical weapon', 'Air/drone strike', 'Suicide bomb', 'Shelling/artillery/missile attack', 'Remote explosive/landmine/IED', and 'Grenade'.

Chemical weapon



This sub-event type is coded whenever chemical weapons are used in warfare in the absence of any other engagement. ACLED-Religion considers chemical weapons all substances listed in the [Schedule 1 of the Chemical Weapons Convention](#), including sarin gas, mustard gas, chlorine gas, and anthrax. Napalm, white phosphorous, as well as tear gas and other non-lethal crowd control substances, are not considered to be chemical weapons within this sub-event type.

Example: "Islamic State militants launched shells loaded with mustard gas on Peshmerga fighters on the Makhmur front (Makhmur, Erbil), injuring at least 30."

Air/drone strike

This sub-event type is coded whenever air or drone strikes have occurred in the absence of any other engagement. Please note that any air-to-ground attacks fall under this sub-event type, including attacks by helicopters that do not involve any exchange of fire with forces on the ground.

Example: "Egyptian military attack helicopters fired missiles on suspected Islamist militants in the area of Sheikh Zuweiyid (Rafah, North Sinai) after an attack on security checkpoints nearby."

Suicide bomb

This sub-event type is coded whenever a suicide bombing occurs in the absence of any other engagement (other engagement could include gun fire against other armed groups or civilians). It also includes suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (SVBIED) attacks.

Example: "A suicide car bomb of unidentified origin exploded outside a Coptic Church in the city of Alexandria (Bab Sharqi, Alexandria) as worshippers were exiting following a Christmas Eve mass. Twenty-three were killed and 79 injured according to Human Rights Watch. An al-Qaeda subsidiary later claimed responsibility."

Shelling/artillery/missile attack

This sub-event type is coded whenever a long-range artillery or missile system is used in the absence of any other engagement. It also includes attacks described as shelling, the use of artillery



either stand-alone or tank based, mortars, or guided missiles. Planes shot down by rockets or artillery fall under this sub-event type; unmanned drones shot down, however, given no human targets, are coded as an interception under 'Disrupted weapons use' (see below). Similarly, while planes shot down using rockets or artillery fall under this sub-event type, an interception of a strike itself (such as by the Iron Dome of Israel) are coded as 'Disrupted weapons use' as well given no human targeting. Rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) are coded under the 'Shelling/artillery/missile attack' sub-event type, as opposed to 'Grenade' (see below), given their similarities to artillery.

Example: "The Al-Qaeda inspired group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis claimed to have fired mortars at al-Zohour military camp in Sheikh Zuweiyid area (Rafah, North Sinai). No fatalities nor injuries were reported."

Remote explosive/landmine/IED

This sub-event type is coded whenever remotely- or victim-activated devices are detonated in the absence of any other engagement. Examples include landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) whether alone or attached to a vehicle, or any other sort of remotely detonated or triggered explosive. Unexploded ordinances (UXO) also fall under this category.

Suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIED) are coded as 'Suicide bomb', while the safe defusal of an explosive or its accidental detonation by the actor who planted it (with no other casualties reported) are coded under 'Disrupted weapons use' (see below).

Example: "A bomb of unidentified origin detonated near the convoy of Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim in Nasr City area of Cairo (Nasr City 1, Cairo), killing 2 people and injuring 19 others, including both police officers and civilians, but leaving the interior minister unharmed. The bombing was later claimed by Al-Qaeda inspired group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis."

Grenade

This sub-event type is used when a grenade or another explosive is thrown in the absence of any other engagement. Events involving 'crude bombs' (such as Molotov cocktails, firecrackers, cherry



bombs, petrol bombs, etc.) as well as ‘stun grenades’ are not coded in this category but are included under either ‘Riots’ or ‘Strategic developments’ depending on the context where they occurred.

Example: "A grenade explosion of unidentified origin targeted the Houthi-Ansar Allah camp in the city of Maabar (Jahran, Dhamar), killing three members of the group."

Protests

A protest is defined as a public demonstration in which the participants do not engage in violence, though violence may be used against them. Events include individuals and groups who peacefully demonstrate against a political entity, government institution, policy, group, tradition, businesses or other private institutions. Events that are not coded as protests are symbolic public acts such as displays of flags or public prayers (unless they are accompanied by a demonstration), protests in legislatures such as parliamentary walkouts or MPs staying silent, strikes (unless they are accompanied by a demonstration), and individual acts such as self-harm actions (e.g. individual immolations or hunger strikes). At least one actor involved must be a religion-based actor and/or a focus of the protest must be religion-related.

Protesters are noted by generic terms (e.g. ‘Protesters (Country)’); if representing a group, the name of that group is recorded in the respective associated actor column.

The following sub-event types are associated with the ‘Protests’ event type: ‘Excessive force against protesters’, ‘Protest with intervention’, and ‘Peaceful protest’.

Excessive force against protesters

This sub-event type should be used when individuals are engaged in a peaceful protest and are targeted with violence by an actor leading to (or if it could lead to) serious/lethal injuries.

Example: "Military and riot police forces violently dispersed a protest of Coptic Christians in front of the state TV building in Cairo (Al Wayli, Cairo). Thirteen protesters were killed as at least two military vehicles ran over the crowd, and a further 24 were killed by live ammunition."



Protest with intervention

This sub-event type should be used when individuals are engaged in a peaceful protest during which there is an attempt to disperse or suppress the protest without serious/lethal injuries being reported or the targeting of protesters with lethal weapons. Additionally, this sub-event type should cover any instance where armed groups or rioters interact with peaceful protesters without resulting in serious/lethal injuries.

Example: "Members of the Muslim Brotherhood held a protest against the government in the city of Asyut (Assuit), prompting the intervention of security forces. The latter conducted a number of arrests but no clashes were reported."

Peaceful protest

This sub-event type is used when demonstrators are engaged in a protest while not engaging in violence or other forms of rioting behavior and are not faced with any sort of force or engagement.

Example: "A Shiite crowd held a protest in the city of Daih (Capital) to commemorate the death anniversary of Shiite cleric Sheikh al-Jamri."

Riots

'Riots' are violent events where demonstrators or mobs engage in disruptive acts, including but not limited to rock throwing, property destruction, etc. They may target other individuals, property, businesses, other rioting groups or armed actors. At least one actor involved must be a religion-based actor motivated and/or the focus of or catalyst for the riot must be religion-related.

Rioters are noted by generic terms (e.g. 'Rioters (Country)'); if representing a group, the name of that group is recorded in the respective 'Associated actor' column. Rioters may begin as peaceful protesters, or may be intent on engaging in spontaneous and disorganized violence from the beginning of their actions. Contrary to armed groups, rioters do not use sophisticated weapons such



as guns, knives or swords. 'Crude bombs' (e.g. Molotov cocktails, petrol bombs, firecrackers) may be used in rioting behavior.

The following sub-event types are associated with the 'Riots' event type: 'Violent demonstration' and 'Mob violence'.

Violent demonstration

This sub-event type is used when a group of individuals engages in a demonstration involving violence or destructive behavior. Examples of rioting behavior include clashing with police; vandalism; looting; road-blocking using barricades, burning tires, or other material; and other types of violent and/or destructive behavior.

*Example: "Shiite anti-regime rioters who are part of the contestation led by the February 14 Youth Coalition blocked a street in the city of Sitrah (Capital) with burning tires. *Note that the February 14 Youth Coalition is currently commemorating the third anniversary of the execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nirm in Saudi Arabia."*

Mob violence

This sub-event type is used when rioters violently interact with other rioters, another armed group or civilians, outside of demonstrations and without the use of lethal weapons like guns, knives, swords, etc. A mob is defined as 'a large crowd of people, especially one that is disorderly and intent on causing trouble or violence.' Note that this type of violence can also include (unarmed or crudely armed) vigilante mobs clashing with other armed groups or attacking civilians. Vigilante groups that are more than crudely armed are not considered to be spontaneous mobs and rather are assumed to be organized and would hence not be included here.

Example: "Violence between Christian and Muslim residents erupted in the city of Salamut in southern Egypt (Markz Salamut, Menia) over renovation work at a local church. Three people were injured."



Strategic developments

This event type captures contextually important information regarding the activities of violent groups that is not itself recorded as political violence or a demonstration, yet may trigger future events or contribute to political dynamics within and across states. At least one actor in these events must be a religion-based actor. The inclusion of such events is limited, as its purpose is to capture pivotal events within campaigns of political violence. They typically include a disparate range of events, such as recruitment drives, looting, incursions, as well as the location and date of peace talks and the arrests of high-ranking officials or large groups. While it is rare for fatalities to be reported as a result of such events, they can occur in certain cases – e.g. the suspicious death of a high-ranking official, accidental detonation of a bomb resulting in the bomber being killed, etc.

The following sub-event types are associated with the ‘Strategic developments’ event type: ‘Non-violent transfer of territory’, ‘Agreement’, ‘Headquarters or base established’, ‘Disrupted weapons use’, ‘Change to group/activity’, ‘Looting/property destruction’, ‘Arrests’, and ‘Other’.

Non-violent transfer of territory

This sub-event type is used in situations in which rebels, governments, or affiliates of both acquire control of a location without engaging in a violent interaction with another group. Rebels establishing control of a location without any resistance is an example of this event.

Example: "Houthi-Ansar Allah forces seized the missiles brigades in Faj Attan area of Sanaa (As Sabain, Aminat al Asimah) without any resistance from army soldiers."

Agreement

This sub-event type is used to record any sort of agreement between different actors (such as governments and rebel groups). The substance of the agreement itself does not necessarily need to be religion-related, but at least one party of the agreement must be a religion-based actor. Examples include peace agreements/talks, ceasefires, evacuation deals, prisoner exchanges, negotiated territorial transfers, prisoner releases, surrenders, repatriations, etc.



Example: "A Saudi diplomat who was kidnapped three years ago by al-Qaeda in southern Yemen was freed and handed over to Yemeni tribal leaders in Shabwah governorate, according to a Yemeni interior ministry."

Headquarters or base established

This sub-event type is used when a violent group establishes a permanent or semi-permanent base or headquarters. There are few, if any, cases where opposition groups other than rebels can also establish a headquarters or base.

Example: "The pro-Islah forces led by Hamud al-Mikhlafti established two new military camps in Taizz city (Salh, Taizz), allegedly with Qatari funding."

Disrupted weapons use

This sub-event type is used to capture all instances in which an event of 'Explosions/Remote violence' is prevented from occurring, or whenever armed actors seize significant caches of weapons. It includes the safe defusal of an explosive, the accidental detonation of explosives by the alleged responsible of planting it, the interception of explosives in the air, as well as the seizure of weapons or weapon platforms such as jets, helicopters, tanks, etc. Note that in cases where a group other than the one who planted an explosive is attempting to render an explosive harmless and it goes off, this is coded under the event type 'Explosions/Remote violence', as the explosive has harmed someone other than the group that planted it.

Example: "A Muslim Brotherhood member was killed in the city of Damietta (Dumyat 1, Damietta) while he was attempting to assemble a bomb."

Change to group/activity

This sub-event type is used to code significant changes in the activity or structure of religion-based armed groups. It can cover anything from the creation of a new rebel group or a paramilitary wing of the security forces, 'voluntary' recruitment drives, movement of forces or any other non-violent



security measures enacted by armed actors. This sub-event type can also be used if an armed group is absorbed into a different (existing) armed group or to track large-scale defections.

Example: "The Vanguard of Conquest and Jihad Movement militant groups announced that they have agreed to unify their ranks, arguing that violence was the only answer to Israeli policies."

Looting/property destruction

This sub-event type is used when organized armed religion-based groups engage in looting or seizing of non-religious goods or property other than weapons or weapon systems (in which case the sub-event type 'Disrupted weapons use' should be used). This can occur during raiding or after the capture of villages or other populated places by armed groups that occur without reported violence. Looting or seizing of religious goods or property is coded in the 'Religious property desecration' sub-event type.

Example: "Islamic State militants set alight an oilfield in the Himreen mountains northeast of Tikrit."

Arrests

This sub-event type is used whenever state forces, or other actors exercising *de facto* control over a territory, either detain a particularly significant religion-based actor or engage in mass arrests of religion-based actors. The reasons for the arrest are not directly related to religious practice (for arrests linked to religious identity or practice, see the 'Legal harassment' sub-event type). Examples include arrests of members of religious political parties, leaders of religion-based armed groups, or influential religious leaders while not actively engaged in religious practice (i.e., preaching, leading prayer, etc.).

Example: "Police forces arrested more than 200 supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood in Alexandria (Bab Sharqi, Alexandria) after scuffles during parliamentary by-elections."



Other

This sub-event type is used to cover any significant development that does not fall into any of the other 'Strategic developments' sub-event types. Examples include the occurrence of a coup, the displacement of civilian population as a result of fighting, or the discovery of mass graves.

Example: "The Peshmerga forces uncovered a mass grave in Sinjar district (Ninewa), containing the remains of 288 unidentified people believed to have been killed by the Islamic State."

Important Notes Regarding Event Type Codes

One or more events can occur in the same location on the same day. If multiple events between the same actors in the same location are reported, they are noted as a single aggregate event. For example:

1. A rebel group fights with government forces in a town and wins control. Rebel artillery strikes are reported throughout the day. In this case, only a single 'Battles' event between the rebels and the government forces is recorded;
2. On the same day, demonstrators staged peaceful protests and also engage in clashes with security forces. In this case, a single 'Riots' event is recorded;
3. In the same incident, a church is raided by state forces and ten members of the congregation are arrested. In this case, a single 'Non-violent harassment' event is coded.

In these types of events, a hierarchy is used to determine which event type to code. Event and sub-event types are presented in hierarchical order in Table 3.

Table 3: Hierarchy of ACLED-Religion Event and Sub-Event Types

Event Type	Sub-Event Type
Battles	<i>Government regains territory</i>
	<i>Non-state actor overtakes territory</i>



	<i>Armed clash</i>
Protests	<i>Excessive force against protesters</i>
	<i>Protest with intervention</i>
	<i>Peaceful protest</i>
Riots	<i>Violent demonstration</i>
	<i>Mob violence</i>
Explosions/Remote violence	<i>Chemical weapon</i>
	<i>Air/drone strike</i>
	<i>Suicide bomb</i>
	<i>Shelling/artillery/missile attack</i>
	<i>Remote explosive/landmine/IED</i>
	<i>Grenade</i>
Violence against civilians	<i>Sexual violence</i>
	<i>Attack</i>
	<i>Abduction/forced disappearance</i>
Strategic developments	<i>Non-violent transfer of territory</i>
	<i>Agreement</i>
	<i>Headquarters or base established</i>
	<i>Disrupted weapons use</i>
	<i>Change to group/activity</i>
	<i>Looting/property destruction</i>
	<i>Arrests</i>
	<i>Other</i>
Violent harassment	<i>Judicial violence</i>
	<i>Assault</i>
Non-violent harassment	<i>Judicial harassment</i>
	<i>Raids</i>
	<i>Religious property desecration</i>
	<i>Threats</i>
	<i>Prevention of practice</i>
	<i>Discrimination</i>
	<i>Change to religion law/policy</i>
	<i>Other harassment</i>



This means that an air strike occurring within the same context as a ground battle would be coded as one 'Battles' event, with no separate 'Explosions/Remote violence' event recorded. A similar structure holds for sub-event types. A civilian abducted and then killed would be coded as an 'Attack' because it is higher on the hierarchy than 'Abduction/forced disappearance' within the 'Violence against civilians' event type. Similarly, an arrest made during a raid would be coded as 'Judicial harassment' as it is higher on the hierarchy than 'Raids' within the 'Non-violent harassment' event type.

In cases where a 'Violent harassment' or 'Non-violent harassment' incident occurs within the same event as a non-harassment sub-event type, the non-harassment event and sub-event type are prioritized in coding of the 'EVENT_TYPE' and 'SUB_EVENT_TYPE' variables, per the hierarchy. However, in order to capture trends around religious repression, the harassment event and sub-event types are noted in the 'HARASS_EVENT_TYPE' and 'HARASS_SUB_EVENT_TYPE' columns, respectively. For example, if a mosque is vandalized during a riot, the event would be coded with "Riots" in the 'EVENT_TYPE' column and "Mob violence" in the 'SUB_EVENT_TYPE' column, and 'Non-violent harassment' in the 'HARASS_EVENT_TYPE' column with "Religious property desecration" in the 'HARASS_SUB_EVENT_TYPE' column.

In cases where multiple harassment sub-event types occur in the same event, the event type hierarchy is used to select which one to report in the primary 'EVENT_TYPE'/'SUB_EVENT_TYPE' columns. That same event/sub-event type is reported in the 'HARASS_EVENT_TYPE' and 'HARASS_SUB_EVENT_TYPE' columns. *This means no event will report multiple harassment types, similar to how no event reports multiple non-harassment event types.* Likewise, in cases where multiple harassment sub-event types are occurring alongside a non-harassment sub-event type, the non-harassment event/sub-event type is reported in the primary 'EVENT_TYPE'/'SUB_EVENT_TYPE' columns. Subsequently, the hierarchy presented in the table above is used to determine which of the harassment event/sub-event types are reported in the harassment event type columns.



If multiple events involving different actors occur on the same day, they are coded separately. Hence, it is possible to have multiple events – involving distinct actors – occur in the same location on the same day. For example, if a raid is carried out in the city center and later on the same day a civilian is attacked in the city center, two events are coded to accurately capture the raid and the distinct civilian attack.

If civilians are killed in the context of a battle, then their reported fatalities will be added to the total number of fatalities reported for the battle event. This will be noted in the 'NOTES' section of the event, but it will not constitute a separate event. In battle events, civilians are never coded as associated actors, as both parties are assumed to engage in violence.

Further, if an attack – such as an air strike – is meant to target militants, but does also hurt civilians, civilians are coded as an associated actor. Again, the fatalities, if mentioned, are aggregated together. In cases where a bombing occurs with a vague and unspecified military target (e.g. a bombing occurs in a city that has some militants in it, rather than an area controlled and actively used by militants), but civilians are the main group affected, they will be coded in the 'ACTOR 2' column. Militants may appear in the 'ASSOC_ACTOR_1' and 'ASSOC_ACTOR_2' columns.

In most cases, an event requires two actors, noted in columns 'ACTOR1' and 'ACTOR2'. However, event types 'Explosions/Remote violence', 'Riots', 'Protests' and 'Strategic developments' can include one-sided events. If more than two actors are reported, only the most important engagement is coded as the primary actors, and the additional groups may be coded as associated actor(s), depending on the context. For example, if police forces intervene respond forcefully to disperse peaceful counter-protesters, the actors in the event would be coded as police forces and protesters, with the affiliations of both groups of protesters noted in the respective associated actor column; this is because the forceful engagement by police in an otherwise peaceful protest is the more important engagement in this context.



The order of actors has no meaning in the ACLED-Religion system except for 'Violence against civilians', 'Violent harassment', or 'Non-violent harassment' events, where the target is always coded as 'ACTOR2'. In all other ACLED-Religion event types, 'perpetrators' and 'targets', or 'who started it', are not assigned. Relying on secondary sources (as ACLED-Religion does) makes it impossible to determine – without biases – which actor initiated the interaction. For these events, ACLED-Religion is not coding that the actor in the 'ACTOR1' column is the perpetrator nor that the actor in 'ACTOR2' is the target.



Definitions of ACLED-Religion Religious Context Types

ACLED-Religion events include information about the ‘religious context’ of the incident. Reported in the ‘RELIG_CONTEXT’ column, the ‘religious context’ of an event describes the element(s) of religious activity targeted or involved in the event (e.g. a form of practice, belief, expression, etc.). Events can have multiple ‘religious contexts’ or none at all if a specific religious activity was not targeted or exercised in the event, or if it is unknown. ACLED-Religion codes for five ‘religious context’ types: ‘Practice’, ‘Belief’, ‘Expression’, ‘Political expression’, and ‘Imposition’. Each context type can include a variety of specific actions relating to that category. These actions are described in detail below. All applicable context types will be reported for each event.

The context types allow users to differentiate between two events of the same sub-event type. For example, in two arrest events, the religious context of each event will let the user know what specific element of religious activity was targeted. An arrest event with a context type of ‘Practice’ would indicate that individuals were arrested for practicing their religion (e.g. praying or proselytizing). Meanwhile, an arrest event with a context type of ‘Belief’ would indicate that the individual was arrested for adhering to a specific faith.

In two-sided events involving a victim engaging in religious activity, the ‘religious context’ type often reflects the activities of the victim, not the perpetrator. This is because, by definition, the context type that applies to the perpetrator is in most cases ‘Imposition’ (i.e., cases where an individual is imposing his/her beliefs upon another individual). The exception is cases where a specific religious practice is used to target others (e.g. breaking into a mosque to perform Talmudic rituals). In those instances, the ‘Practice’ context type is used to describe the actions of the perpetrator.

In two-sided events where the victim is *not* engaging in religious activity, the ‘Imposition’ context type is used. In these cases, the primary religious element of the event is that a religious viewpoint is being imposed on someone not otherwise engaging in religious activity. For example, this would include cases where morality police arrest a woman for not wearing a hijab, or when Islamist



militants attack a man for drinking alcohol. In these examples, neither victim was engaging in explicit religious activity, yet the perpetrator was imposing their religious views on another.

In one-sided events (e.g. 'Peaceful protests') the religious context is assigned based on the event in general. For example, a protest calling for increased legal recognition of a religious minority group would be coded with the 'Political expression' context type.

Practice

This context type includes acts of religious practice and observance. Events where individuals were targeted while performing activities related to their religious practice, or explicitly because they performed these practices at another point in time, will be coded with the 'Practice' religious context type. In addition, events where the perpetrator engaged in violence or harassment as a result of religious practice will be coded with the 'Practice' religious context type. Religious practices do not necessarily need to adhere to traditional manifestations of religious practice for a religion, like church attendance or daily prayer.

The activities included in this context type include, but are not limited to:

- Attendance/involvement in religious services
- Prayer
- Proselytizing
- Missionary activity/evangelizing
- Holiday observance
- Rituals
- Teaching/Attending religious schools
- Preaching
- Visiting holy sites
- Construction of holy site or house of worship
- Pilgrimages



- Other worship activities

Example: "Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya gunmen stormed a church near the town of Abu Qurqas (Markz Abu Qurqas, Menia), around 240 km (150 miles) south of Cairo, and opened fire on a youth meeting."

Belief

The 'Belief' context type captures events where the religious beliefs of an individual form the basis of the act. As opposed to the 'Practice' context type that focuses on specific acts of practice or observance, the 'Belief' context type covers events where the stated or assumed beliefs of a person are the explicit reason for the targeting or perpetration of the event. For example, an event where a Jewish man was attacked while the perpetrators shouted religious slurs at him would be coded as an attack targeting his religious beliefs or identity. In contrast, an attack on a Jewish man while he prays would be coded with the 'Practice' context type.

This context type includes events that involve religious belief in ways including, but not limited to:

- Conversion
- Religious affiliation
- Blasphemy
- Apostasy

Example: "Islamic State militants killed 4 civilians which the organization had previously arrested for 'blasphemy' in Yakla area in central Yemen (Wald Rabi, Al Bayda)."



Expression

The 'Expression' context type includes harassment or violent events involving acts of religious expression other than religious practice or political expression. Events are coded with the 'Expression' context type if they involve religious expression in ways including, but not limited to:

- Dress
- Jewelry
- Symbols
- Possession or production of religious texts or writings
- Non-political speech (e.g. sermons, speeches given at holiday observances, remarks made during interviews, etc.)

In all cases, the religious expression being targeted must be explicit and not assumed. For example, an event involving an individual being targeted for wearing a hijab would have the 'expression' context type, but a wedding photographer arrested for taking 'un-Islamic' photographs would not be given the 'expression' context type because it is not clear from the event that the photographer was expressing a specific religious viewpoint during the incident.

Example: "Bahraini security forces arrested a Shiite religious singer for allegedly insulting the companions of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The prosecution detained him for a week pending further investigations (coded to Manama capital city)."

Imposition

The 'Imposition' context type is coded for events where an individual is attempting to enforce or impose their religious beliefs or practices onto another person. It must be explicitly clear from the event that the individual was imposing, or attempting to impose, a specific religious act. General actions of religion-based actors toward others would not be coded with the 'Imposition' context type. For example, a general act of violence by a religion-based actor, such as the Islamic State, toward another person would not be coded as 'Imposition'. In contrast, an act of violence against a



person who was violating a religious norm (e.g. drinking alcohol during Ramadan) or was trying to enforce a religious norm (e.g. attacks against religious police) would be coded with the 'Imposition' context type. These events are not limited to actions taken against individuals of a different religion (or no religion) as the perpetrator, and can include events where members of an individual's same religion are imposed upon to observe or practice that religion differently. Situations where the 'Imposition' context type would be coded include, but are not limited to:

- Enforcement of religious norms
- Forced conversion

Example: "Morality Police forces arrested a significant number of citizens in the city of Tehran (Tehran) for 'non-observance of the hijab in their car'"

Political expression

The 'Political expression' context type includes events involving the political expression of religion. Political expression can occur in the context of participating in activities of religious political organizations (i.e. political organizations with a religious goal or motivation) or religious political parties, as well as engaging in demonstrations with a religion-related political goal. Individuals performing these acts can be politicians, activists, religious leaders, or any other individual. In events where a perpetrator and target are identified, either actor can be invoking political expression through their actions (e.g. a perpetrator can be acting on behalf of a religious political organization, or a target can be targeted for participating in a religious political party's rally). Acts can include, but are not limited to:

- Attending or giving political speeches
- Participating in political rallies or marches
- Performing the duties of a political office



Example: “Two-thousand protesters gathered in front of a mosque in the town of Tanta (Tanta 2, Gharbia), calling for reforming the religious institutions in Egypt, including electing the imam, or prayer leader, of the influential Al-Azhar Mosque.”

ACLED-Religion Actors

ACLED-Religion recognizes a range of actors including state forces, rebels, militias, identity groups, demonstrators, civilians, sole perpetrators, and external and other forces. Some of these actors are also classified as ‘religion-based’ actors.

In ACLED-Religion, politically violent actors include government forces and its affiliates, rebel groups, militias, sole perpetrators, external or private forces (e.g. UN missions) and other political groups who interact over issues of political authority (e.g. territorial control, government control, access to resources, etc.). All organized actors have an official name⁷ and a political purpose, and use violence for political means. For inclusion as agents of political violence, organizations must be cohesive and not assembled for single events. Further, the events of organizations must be connected to each other as a means to achieve a larger political purpose. This necessary and sufficient definition of actors allows for the establishment of campaigns and trajectories of movements. The exception is events involving mobs or sole perpetrators. Mobs are spontaneous in nature, and thus do not need to be cohesive or assembled for events beyond the riot they are involved in. Sole perpetrators are, by definition, not part of an organized group and those same individuals may not engage in violence again beyond that discrete event. Still, their actions speak to the overall use of violence to further specific ideological causes.

Protesters, rioters, sole perpetrators, and civilians are actors whose inclusion deviates from the organization and armed group rules. Rioters and protesters involve spontaneous, atomic acts of organization that may, or may not, continue beyond a discrete event. Sole perpetrators are individuals who are unaffiliated with an organized group yet are engaging in violence driven by a

⁷ Barring the ‘unidentified’ category, sole perpetrators, and other generic named groups (e.g. ‘Islamist Militia’ or ‘Mercenaries’).



certain ideology (e.g. Islamophobia). Civilians are unarmed non-combatants (at the time of the event). They may be associated with an organized group or another actor (in which case that actor would appear as an associated actor).

The name of each primary actor is noted in the 'ACTOR1' and 'ACTOR2' columns of the dataset. The actor *type* is recorded in the 'INTER1' and 'INTER2' columns, while their dual engagement is noted in the 'INTERACTION' column.

The 'ASSOC_ACTOR_1' and 'ASSOC_ACTOR_2' columns record the associated actors for specific events as well as the identity of specific actors. In the former case, an associated actor may be allies in actions, like two armed organized groups that are engaging in attacks against a common enemy. In the latter case, the 'ASSOC_ACTOR_1' and 'ASSOC_ACTOR_2' columns may record additional information concerning the victims of an attack or the socio-political affiliation of demonstrators or ethno-religious identity of a civilian victim. An 'Explosions/Remote violence' event that is intended for an armed, organized group, but also affects civilians, will have both actors noted – the primary actor will be the ostensibly intended target, while civilians (the collateral damage in this case) would be the associated actor.⁸ In cases where there is no associated actor to note, these columns will be blank.

The 'RELIG_AFFIL_1' and 'RELIG_AFFIL_2' columns record any religious affiliation(s) of the actor(s) (primary and associated) of the event, respectively. When possible, the most specific religious denomination or branch of the actor is noted (e.g. 'Islam (Shiite)' or 'Christianity (Baptist)'). Otherwise, the broader religious group is noted (e.g. 'Islam' or 'Christianity'). If sources are ambiguous about the religious affiliation of an actor (e.g. 'A man is attacked while praying' with no further detail about the religious affiliation) then the affiliation is coded as 'Unknown'. If there is no

⁸ While civilians are coded as an associated actor when they are collateral damage in 'Explosions/Remote violence' attacks, they are not coded as such in 'Battles' events. This is because events under the former involve one-side not engaging in any violence within the course of the event; in 'Battles' events, both sides, by definition, are engaging in violence, and it would hence be incorrect to denote that civilians are associated with either side.



evidence that the actor has a religious affiliation, then the corresponding 'RELIG_AFFIL' column is left blank.

Religion-Based Actors

'Religion-based actors' in ACLED-Religion are defined as actors that have religious ideologies or goals that are made explicit through words or actions.⁹ They include state forces, rebels, militias, identity groups, demonstrators, sole perpetrators, civilians, and external or other forces that are motivated by religious goals or a religiously defined agenda for political action.

Organized groups may present a religious ideology or mission in their charters, statements or writings, and when available, those sources will form the basis of their classification as 'religion-based'. By relying on self-proclaimed goals and aspirations when possible, ACLED-Religion avoids introducing bias from third party assessments of a group's goals or researcher biases. ACLED-Religion does not classify groups as 'religion-based' based solely on the religious affiliation of the majority of their members. This avoids the over-classification of groups as religion-based, particularly in countries with a single dominant religious identity where the majority of members of any group are likely to be of a single religion.

Certain government actors or state forces can also be classified as religion-based actors if their explicit mission is to enforce religious norms, practices or laws (e.g. morality police). When civilians are clearly targeted for their religion, the religious group of the individual is included in the respective RELIG_AFFIL column. The religious identity of spontaneous groups, such as mobs organized according to a religious affiliation, or protesters, is captured in the same way (e.g. A mob of Hindus targeting a truck driver transporting cattle to slaughter is coded with 'Hindu' in the RELIG_AFFIL column relative to 'Rioters (COUNTRY)', which would be the primary actor).

'Battles', 'Explosions/Remote violence', 'Strategic developments', 'Violence against civilians', 'Violent harassment', and 'Non-violent harassment' event types require the involvement of at least one

⁹ Actors advocating for secularization are also classified as 'religion-based' as their goals relate to religion-related issues.



religion-based actor. For 'Protests' and 'Riots' events, a religion-based actor is not required, but in those cases the focus or catalyst of the demonstration must be religion-related.

ACLED-Religion recognizes that for event types like 'Battles', 'Explosions/Remote violence' or 'Strategic developments', the motivation behind the event is impossible to accurately decipher from secondary sources alone. For that reason, all events meeting the criteria for those event types which involve a religion-based actor are coded. This is with the greater assumption that all events involving a religion-based actor are in service of an overarching religion-related goal. In other words, all 'Battles' involving the Islamic State – a religion-based actor – are captured in the ACLED-Religion data rather than solely 'Battles' where the 'stated objective' of the event was religion-related.



Actor Names, Types and Inter Codes

ACLED-Religion records the recognized name of groups as reported, whenever possible. In exceptional circumstances described in detail below, the name of a group is generated to reflect their origins and composition.

Each named actor is also designated as a type of organization or actor. There are hundreds of individually named actors within the ACLED-Religion dataset, and the 'INTER' code groups actors by whether they have similar organizational structures, goals and practices.¹⁰ Actors are grouped into one of eight ACLED-Religion categories and assigns a number in the 'INTER' column to that categorization.

These categories offer a way to distinguish between actors and to determine how patterns of activity conform to goals and organizations. ACLED-Religion does not use a pattern of activity to designate what kind of agent a group is: *it specifically observes the goals and structure of an organization, where possible, its spatial dimension and its relationships to communities.*

As such, the 'INTER' code of a group can change over time. For example, if a rebel group is successful in overthrowing a regime or seceding from a state, its armed agents may then become the armed wing of a political party within the new regime structure (this would be a change in Inter code from 2 to 3) or the government forces of the new state (this would be a change in Inter code from 2 to 1 – for example, the Houthi Movement turned into Yemen's state forces after the formation of the Supreme Revolutionary Committee in February 2015).

Certain types of violent agents may appear to fall outside of this categorization, but ACLED-Religion has designed these classifications to flexibly fit the universe of agents operating in conflict. For example, militant religious organizations can have various goals including overtaking the state, influencing political processes and supporting regional political elites, and engaging in communal contests over access to religious sites. In choosing to categorize actors as rebels, militias, communal

¹⁰ Except in the case of 'Sole Perpetrator' actors, where no organizational structure is assumed.



organizations, protesters, etc., *ACLED-Religion does not allow for ‘insurgents’ or ‘terrorists’ as types of agents*. Many violent organizations may use insurgency tactics or commit acts against civilians with intended high fatality levels as part of their violent repertoire. *Instead, ACLED-Religion considers the goal and organization of each actor to be the basis for their classification.*

Inter Code 1: State Forces

State forces are defined as collective actors that are recognized to perform government functions, including military and police, over a given territory. Government actors are named by ACLED-Religion as a series of separate regimes rather than a uniform body (e.g. Government of Iraq (2014-2018), Government of Iraq (2018-2020) and Government of Iraq (2020-) as opposed to Government of Iraq (2014-present)). As the strength, capacity and policies of governments can vary widely from one regime to the next, ACLED-Religion designates governments by their leading regimes. This enables researchers to capture the differences in government involvement and reaction to violence.

As militaries and police forces are a direct arm of the government, these actors are noted as ‘Military Forces of State (20xx-20xx)’ or ‘Police Forces of State (20xx-20xx)’. Mutinies of militaries are coded as ‘Mutiny of Military Forces of State (20xx-20xx)’. Various units of these state forces are coded distinctly as well – such as ‘Police Forces of Bahrain (1999-) National Security Agency’ or ‘Military Forces of Iran (1989-) Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ – given that such units can engage in distinct patterns of behavior; pro-government militias with *indirect* links to the state are not included under ‘state forces’ here given their deliberate distance from formal ties to the state; they are coded as militias (see below).

Specific branches of the government can be classified as ‘religion-based’ actors if their explicit directive is to enforce religious norms or religious laws. This can include religious or morality police, but would not include a police force in general that enforces religious laws in addition to other non-religious laws. For example, the Guidance Patrol in Iran enforces religious dress codes and would be classified as a religion-based state actor. Meanwhile, Police Forces of Iran (1989-)



would not be classified as such because their primary mandate is not to enforce religious laws, although they may at times do so in accordance with broader Iranian laws.

In cases where the authority of a government is severely challenged, or where two or more groups have a claim to be the government (with an associated military), a distinct choice is made about how to proceed with coding – often resulting in both forces being coded as ‘state forces’. For example, there are competing state forces coded as active in Yemen from 2015 onwards.

Inter Code 2: Rebel Groups

Rebel groups are defined as political organizations whose goal is to counter an established national governing regime by violent acts. Rebel groups are named according to the title they publicly use to represent themselves. The designation as a rebel group means that the group has a stated political agenda for national power (either through regime replacement or separatism), are acknowledged beyond the ranks of immediate members, and use violence as their primary means to pursue political goals.

Rebel forces are known by a specific chosen name, the groups are open and transparent about their intentions and leadership; they typically operate within and across states, and conduct activity against the central governments and their associates. Rebel groups often have predecessors and successors due to diverging goals within their membership. If splinter groups or factions within a group emerge, these are recorded as distinct actors.

In cases where aggregate groups are contesting the government, an overarching name is often used rather than factions.

Inter Code 3: Political Militias & Sole Perpetrators

Political militias are a more diverse set of violent actors, who are often created for a specific purpose or during a specific time period and for the furtherance of a political purpose by violence. Political militias are recorded by their stated name. These organizations are defined by their political goals of influencing and impacting governance, security and policy. However, these groups



are not seeking the removal of a national power, but are typically supported, armed by, or allied with a political elite and act towards a goal defined by these elites or larger political movements. These political militias may be associated with defined ethnic, religious, regional or other identity communities, but they also operate outside of ethnic homelands and for goals other than the promotion of ethnic interests and as such are coded as ‘political militias’ as opposed to ‘identity militias’ (more on that below). The National Resistance Forces in Yemen or the Badr Organization in Iraq are examples of these groups.

Political militias operate in conjunction, or in alliance, with a recognized government, governor, military leader, rebel organization, political party, business elite, or opposition group. Whereas opposition parties will often have a militia arm, pro-government militias work as supplements to government power yet maintain *indirect* links to such power. These groups are not subsumed within the category of government or opposition, but are noted as an armed, distinct, yet associated, wing given their purposeful indirect ties to the state.

In some cases, an ‘unidentified armed group’ (UAG) perpetrates political violence. These groups often operate like political militias as they can be used by elites under the guise of anonymity. The use of the UAG category is due to two reasons: the first is a lack of information about the group from reports received; however, the second reason may be more common: groups benefit from being unidentified to the larger public, as they can pursue violent actions without liability. Their activity is coded using the name ‘Unidentified Armed Group (Country)’.¹¹

For events in the ‘Violence against civilians’, ‘Violent harassment’, or ‘Non-violent harassment’ event types, a ‘sole perpetrator’ can perpetrate the violence or harassment. An actor is coded as a ‘sole perpetrator’ if they are unaffiliated with any organized group and not part of a mob. Events involving sole perpetrators are coded in two scenarios.

¹¹ An ‘Unidentified Armed Group’ is coded with Interaction 3, unless they are an ‘Unidentified Military’ (a rare case that has an interaction of ‘1’ of ‘8’, depending on the context) or ‘Unidentified Ethnic/Communal/Clan/Tribal Militia’ which is noted as a ‘4’, as discussed below.



First, if the religious affiliation of the target is known and that identity represents a salient religious cleavage in the country, then the event is captured in the ACLED-Religion data *regardless of whether the target was engaging in religious activity at the time of the event or if the perpetrator was enforcing a specific religious norm or ideology*. Second, sole perpetrators are coded if they target an individual demonstrating a clear religious identity (i.e., engaging in activity related to their religion), in which case sole perpetrators are coded regardless of their own religious identity (or lack thereof). They are also coded if they are imposing their own religious identity on the victim, in which case the victim's religious identity is irrelevant.

These actors are noted as 'Sole Perpetrator (Country)' with a '3' interaction code.

Inter Code 4: Identity Militias

ACLED-Religion includes a broad category of 'identity militias' that signifies armed and violent groups organized around a collective, common feature including community, ethnicity, region, religion or, in exceptional cases, livelihood. Therefore, for ACLED-Religion's purposes, identity militias include those reported as 'tribal', 'communal', 'ethnic', 'local', 'clan', and 'religious' and 'caste' militias. Events involving 'identity militias' are often referred to as 'communal violence' as these violent groups often act locally, in the pursuance of local goals, resources, power, security, and retribution.

An armed group claiming to operate on behalf of a larger identity community may be associated with that community, but not represent it (i.e., Sufi Muslim Militia Gonabadi Dervish Sect in Iran or Coptic Christian Militia in Egypt). Recruitment and participation are by association with the identity of the group. Identity militias may have a noted role in the community. When an unidentified group that is armed perpetrates local political violence, their activity is coded using the name 'Unidentified Communal Militia (COUNTRY)' in the 'ACTOR' columns, and a '4' as the interaction code – rather than as an 'Unidentified Armed Group' with '3' as the interaction code, given the localized nature of their activity.¹²

¹² Or 'Unidentified Caste Militia', 'Unidentified Clan Militia', etc. depending on the country-context.



Inter Code 5: Rioters

Rioters are individuals or ‘mobs’ who either engage in violence during demonstrations or in spontaneous acts of disorganized violence, and are noted by a general category of ‘Rioters (Country)’. If a group is affiliated or leading an event, the associated group is named in the respective associated actor column. Rioters are by definition violent, yet are unarmed (or crudely armed at most) and are not organized; they may engage in a wide variety of violence or destructive activity, including property destruction, engaging with other armed groups (e.g. security forces, private security firms, etc.) or in violence against unarmed civilians.

Inter Code 6: Protesters

Protesters are peaceful, unarmed demonstrators, noted by a general category of ‘Protesters (Country)’; if a group is affiliated or leading an event, the associated group is named in the respective associated actor column.¹³ Although protesters are nonviolent, they may be the targets of violence by other groups (e.g. security institutions, private security firms, or other armed actors).

Inter Code 7: Civilians

Civilians, in whatever number or association, can be perpetrators of non-violent acts or victims of violent acts within ACLED-Religion. They are, by definition, unarmed actors. They are noted as ‘Civilians (Country)’. Some normally armed actors may be coded as civilians if they are targeted with violence in situations where they are unarmed -- examples include off-duty state soldiers targeted in their homes or members of armed groups subject to violence or execution while imprisoned.

Inter Code 8: External/Other Forces

Small categories of ‘other’ actors include international organizations, state forces active outside of their main country of operation, private security firms and their armed employees, and hired mercenaries acting independently. They are noted by their name and actions. The military forces of

¹³ Though non-violent, protesters may engage in disruptive behavior, like burning effigies or shoe-throwing.



states are coded as 'other' when active outside of their home state (e.g. the military of the United States active in Yemen).

Interaction codes

The joined interaction code is the combination of the two 'INTER' codes associated with the two main actors. Single actor type codes are recorded in 'INTER1' and 'INTER2' columns, and the compounded number is recorded in the 'INTERACTION' column. For example, if a country's military fights a political militia, and the respective 'INTER1' and 'INTER2' codes are '1' and '3', respectively, the compounded Interaction is recorded as '13'.

Interaction numbers are always the smallest possible number (for example, 37 instead of 73), regardless of the order of 'ACTOR1' and 'ACTOR2' -- especially as the order in which actors appear is not significant. Interaction codes are recorded for all events, including non-violent activity. For one-sided events, the empty second actor category is coded as '0'. If a non-violent rebel event occurs where only 'INTER1' is noted with a '2', '20' is coded in the 'INTERACTION' column. Only the main actors recorded in the 'ACTOR1' and 'ACTOR2' columns are the basis for the interaction codes.

The following interaction codes translate to:

10- SOLE STATE FORCES ACTION (e.g. base establishment by state forces; remote violence involving state military with no reported casualties; non-violent military operations)

11- STATE FORCES VERSUS STATE FORCES (e.g. military in-fighting; battles between a military and mutinous forces; arrests of military officials)

12- STATE FORCES VERSUS REBELS (e.g. civil war violence between state forces and a rebel actor)

13- STATE FORCES VERSUS POLITICAL MILITIA (e.g. violence between state forces and unidentified armed groups; violence between police and political party militias)



- 14- STATE FORCES VERSUS COMMUNAL MILITIA (e.g. military engagement with a communal militia)
- 15- STATE FORCES VERSUS RIOTERS (e.g. suppression of a demonstration by police or military)
- 16- STATE FORCES VERSUS PROTESTERS (e.g. suppression of a demonstration by police or military)
- 17- STATE FORCES VERSUS CIVILIANS (e.g. state repression of civilians; arrests by police)
- 18- STATE FORCES VERSUS OTHER (e.g. inter-state conflict; state engagement with private security forces or a UN operation; strategic developments between a regime and the UN or another external actor)
- 20- SOLE REBEL ACTION (e.g. base establishment; remote violence involving rebel groups with no reported target; accidental detonation by a rebel group)
- 22- REBELS VERSUS REBELS (e.g. rebel in-fighting; violence between rebel groups and their splinter movements)
- 23- REBELS VERSUS POLITICAL MILITIA (e.g. civil war violence between rebels and a pro-government militia; violence between rebels and unidentified armed groups)
- 24- REBELS VERSUS COMMUNAL MILITIA (e.g. violence between rebels and local security providers)
- 25- REBELS VERSUS RIOTERS (e.g. spontaneous violence against a rebel group; a violent demonstration engaging a rebel group)
- 26- REBELS VERSUS PROTESTERS (e.g. violence against protesters by rebels)
- 27- REBELS VERSUS CIVILIANS (e.g. rebel targeting of civilians)



28- REBELS VERSUS OTHERS (e.g. civil war violence between rebels and an allied state military; rebel violence against a UN operation)

30- SOLE POLITICAL MILITIA ACTION (e.g. remote violence by an unidentified armed group with no reported target; accidental detonation by a political militia; strategic arson as intimidation by a political party)

33- POLITICAL MILITIA VERSUS POLITICAL MILITIA (e.g. inter-elite violence)

34- POLITICAL MILITIA VERSUS COMMUNAL MILITIA (e.g. violence between communal militia and an unidentified armed group; violence between political militia and local security providers)

35- POLITICAL MILITIA VERSUS RIOTERS (e.g. violent demonstration against a political party; spontaneous violence against a political party)

36- POLITICAL MILITIA VERSUS PROTESTERS (e.g. peaceful demonstration engaging a political party)

37- POLITICAL MILITIA VERSUS CIVILIANS (e.g. out-sourced state repression carried out by pro-government militias; civilian targeting by political militias or unidentified armed groups)

38- POLITICAL MILITIA VERSUS OTHERS (e.g. violence between private security forces and unidentified armed groups; violence between pro-government militia and external state military forces)

40- SOLE COMMUNAL MILITIA ACTION (e.g. destruction of property by a communal militia; establishment of a local security militia)

44- COMMUNAL MILITIA VERSUS COMMUNAL MILITIA (e.g. intercommunal violence)

45- COMMUNAL MILITIA VERSUS RIOTERS (e.g. violent demonstration against an identity militia; spontaneous violence against an identity militia)



- 46- COMMUNAL MILITIA VERSUS PROTESTERS (e.g. peaceful demonstration engaging an identity militia)
- 47- COMMUNAL MILITIA VERSUS CIVILIANS (e.g. civilian targeting, especially in the context of intercommunal violence)
- 48- COMMUNAL MILITIA VERSUS OTHER (e.g. external state military engaging in violence against a communal militia)
- 50- SOLE RIOTER ACTION (e.g. 1-sided violent demonstration; spontaneous arson)
- 55- RIOTERS VERSUS RIOTERS (e.g. 2-sided violent demonstration in which both sides engage in violence)
- 56- RIOTERS VERSUS PROTESTERS (e.g. 2-sided demonstration in which only 1 side engages in violence)
- 57- RIOTERS VERSUS CIVILIANS (e.g. violent demonstration in which civilians are injured/killed; spontaneous violence in which civilians are targeted by a mob)
- 58- RIOTERS VERSUS OTHERS (e.g. mob violence against regional or international operation)
- 60- SOLE PROTESTER ACTION (e.g. 1-sided peaceful protest)
- 66- PROTESTERS VERSUS PROTESTERS (e.g. 2-sided peaceful protest)
- 67- PROTESTERS VERSUS CIVILIANS (e.g. peaceful protesters engaging civilians)
- 68- PROTESTERS VERSUS OTHER (e.g. peaceful demonstration engaging private security forces)
- 78- OTHER ACTOR VERSUS CIVILIANS (e.g. regional or international operation targeting civilians; private security forces targeting civilians)



80- SOLE OTHER ACTION (e.g. strategic developments involving international or regional operations; remote violence by external military forces with no reported target; non-violent external military operations)

88- OTHER ACTOR VERSUS OTHER ACTOR (e.g. armed clashes between two external military forces)

Further notes on interactions

In the dataset, a group's name will appear in the ACTOR1 or ACTOR2 column. Associated actors in the event to Actor 1 will appear in the 'ASSOC_ACTOR_1' column, and associated actors for Actor 2 will appear in the 'ASSOC_ACTOR_2' column. Each Actor 1 and Actor 2 column has a corresponding 'INTER1' and 'INTER2' column, respectively. If an event has two actors, both 'INTER1' and 'INTER2' are recorded in reference to both actors; if an event has only one actor, 'INTER1' is recorded, while 'INTER2' is recorded as a 0 (in reference to there being no 'ACTOR2'). The interaction codes refer to the main actors, and not to associated actors.



Event Geography

There are up to six different types of spatial information recorded for each ACLED-Religion event:

1. the continental region in which the event occurred;
2. the country in which the event occurred and its associated ISO code;
3. the name of the *first*, *second* and *third* level administrative zones that the specific location is found in according to GIS-based assessments and updated administrative codes;
4. the name of the specific location of an event;
5. the geographic coordinates of that specific location; and
6. a spatial precision code.

The most specific location for an event is sought for each ACLED-Religion code, using multiple sources to triangulate better location information.

Spatial precision codes

If the report notes a particular town, and coordinates are available for that town, the highest precision level '1' is recorded. If the source material notes that activity took place in a small part of a region, and notes a general area, a town with georeferenced coordinates to represent that area is chosen and the geo-precision code will note '2' for 'part of region'. If activity occurs near a town or a city, this same precision code is employed. If a larger region is mentioned, the closest natural location noted in reporting (like 'border area', 'forest' or 'sea', among others) is chosen to represent the region – or a provincial capital is used if no other information at all is available – and is noted with precision level '3'.

No ACLED-Religion event is associated with the 'country' as the smallest location unit available.

When events occur in neighborhoods of some large cities and distinct neighborhood/district coordinates are available, these are used to identify the sub-urban area. This location is coded as: 'City Name [hyphen] district name' (e.g. 'Mosul - Old City') in the 'LOCATION' column. If information



about the specific neighborhood/district is not known, the location is coded at the city level (e.g. 'Mosul'). In both cases, geo-precision 1 is used. The hyphenate feature allows for users to aggregate events by city if needed.

The columns that provide spatial information include 'REGION', 'COUNTRY', 'ADMIN1' (administrative unit that corresponds to provincial level, or similar); 'ADMIN 2' (administrative unit that corresponds to county level, or similar); 'ADMIN3' (administrative unit that corresponds to district level, or similar); 'LOCATION' (the village or town name); 'LATITUDE' (in decimal degrees); 'LONGITUDE' (in decimal degrees); and 'GEO_PRECISION' (coded as either 1, 2, or 3).



Event Time

Three forms of temporal information are found in each ACLED-Religion code:

1. the date of each event;
2. the year; and
3. the temporal precision.

Dates are a necessary component of each ACLED-Religion event. ACLED-Religion events are coded by day; if a military campaign in an area starts on March 1, 2020 and lasts until March 5, 2020 with violent activity reported on each day, this is coded as five different events in ACLED-Religion, with a different date for each entry. This episode would not be entered as a single campaign of violence. This allows ACLED-Religion to record the exact number of active days. When source materials note that an event occurred in the space of three months – like long-running protests – the event is only coded for the days in which reported activity took place (not as 90+ days). This avoids over-counting event occurrence.

Time precision codes

If sources include an actual date of an event, a time precision code of '1' is entered. If sources note that an event happened during a specific week or during the weekend, '2' is noted in the time precision field and the middle of that week (or of the weekend) is used as the reference date. If sources note only that an event took place within a particular month, without reference to the particular date, the month mid-point is chosen unless the beginning or end of the month is noted (in which case, the first and last date are used, respectively) and '3' is noted as the time precision level. ACLED-Religion does not include events with less temporal information, such as events for which only the year information is known.

Dates are recorded as 'year-day-month' or 'day/month/year'. Time precision is recorded as 1, 2 or 3.



Notes and Reported Fatalities/Victims

Notes

The 'NOTES' column records important details surrounding the event. Notes are kept short to only report significant details about the specific event. In some cases, additional relevant information is added to provide context to the event.

Reported fatalities and victims

ACLED-Religion records reported fatality figures as well as the reported number of victims involved in the event. *Events coded by ACLED-Religion do not have to meet a minimum number of fatalities or victims for inclusion.* For both fatality and victim counts, the number used is conservative, in that it is the most reliable, smallest number reported.

The victim count is explicitly stated in the 'NOTES' column, at the end of the event description, and formatted in brackets denoting both the circumstance and number of people affected, as such: "[arrests=3]".¹⁴ This 'victims tag' allows users to quickly see how a victim was impacted in an event: by being sanctioned, summoned, sentenced, arrested, abducted, detained, or injured. The tags are formatted as "[impact=X]" with 'X' being the number of victims as reported by the source and 'impact' being how the victim was impacted. For example, an event that resulted in the arrest of three individuals would have "[arrests=3]" written at the end of the note.

The ways in which victims can be impacted can co-occur in the same event (i.e., a person can be injured and then arrested as part of the same incident). In these cases, multiple tags may be

¹⁴ Victim counts are recorded inside 'victims tags' for 'Violence against civilians', 'Violent harassment', and 'Non-violent harassment' event types, as well as the 'Arrests' sub-event type. These events are assigned event types based on the very criteria that the 'victims tags' report on (i.e., an 'Arrests' event will always report on the number of arrests in the event, even if it does so vaguely). In contrast, reports on other event types – like Battles or Explosions/Remote violence – do not systematically include information on the types of impacts included in the 'victims tags'. Including 'victims tags' for these types of events would introduce bias, implying that certain event types result in more injuries than others, for example.



included in the notes even though the victim is the same person. For this reason, it is important to note that the 'victim tags' are intended to allow users to calculate how sources report on the impact of specific events on victims, *not* as a means for tallying the number of victims across events. In the situation outlined above, a tallying of the 'victims tags' would imply that there were two victims involved in the event, instead of just one victim being impacted in two different ways within the same event.

Victims must be a direct target of an event or directly involved in the event, and in either case their involvement must be specific. This ensures that the impact of the event is not overestimated. For example, if police arrest five members of a congregation of one hundred people, then the victim count is coded as "5" and not "100" despite the other members of the congregation being present and 'involved' in the event.

When the reported number of victims is imprecise, such as "several" or "many", this will be reported in the 'victims tag' in lieu of a precise number. For example, if the source report only mentions "many" people were summoned, the 'victims tag' will be "[summons=many]". If "several" people are sanctioned, the 'victims tag' be "[sanctions=several]".

If a 'victims tag' is applicable to the event but the sourcing notes that there were no victims, the tag will report "0" victims. For example, an 'Assault' event could or could not have injuries associated with it. If the source reports that no one was injured in the assault, then "[injuries=0]" will appear in the 'NOTES' column.

The fatality number is found in the 'FATALITIES' column. If source reports differ or a vague estimate is provided, the lowest number of fatalities is reported unless a more reliable or corroborated estimate has become available. ACLED-Religion distinguishes between 'fatalities' and 'casualties'. Fatalities are assumed to be deaths. Casualties are assumed to be injuries and/or fatalities; as such, if a report only notes 'casualties', the conservative approach that ACLED-Religion takes is to assume all casualties are injuries and hence reports 0 fatalities.



For events in an active warzone, if reports mention “several”, “many”, “few” or plural fatalities, yet the exact number is unknown, “10” is recorded as the total.¹⁵ Outside of an active warzone, “3” is recorded as the total.¹⁶

If a report mentions “dozens”, this is recorded as “12” fatalities. If a report mentions “hundreds”, this is recorded as “100” fatalities.¹⁷ If a note mentions “massacres”, a default number of “100” fatalities is recorded. If there is no reference made to fatalities in the report, or if it is unclear whether fatalities occurred at all (for example, when ‘casualties’ are mentioned, which, by definition, means “injuries and/or fatalities”, per above), “0” fatalities are recorded.

ACLED-Religion only codes estimated fatalities or victims when reported explicitly by source materials. It cannot verify the numbers reported from sources and does not use fatalities or victim counts as the basis for event inclusion. Fatality and victim data are typically the most biased, and least accurate, component of any conflict data. They are particularly prone to manipulation by armed groups, and occasionally the media, which may overstate or under report fatalities or victims for political purposes. As such, all figures recorded by ACLED-Religion should be treated as ‘*reported fatalities*’ and ‘*reported victims*’.

When summarized fatalities or victims are reported, but events occur across several days or in multiple locations simultaneously (e.g. “12 fatalities result from fighting over a span of 3 days”), the

¹⁵ The fatalities are coded as 3 if there is evidence that the number is lower than 10 – such as in the case of a bombing of a motorcycle, which could not have housed 10 individuals. Additionally, in countries that are active warzones, violence involving other peripheral parties (e.g. communal groups) will not be coded with an unspecified number of fatalities equal to 10, and will instead be coded as 3; even violence yielding an unspecified number of fatalities that does indeed involve the conflict parties will not necessarily always be coded with an unspecified number of fatalities equal to 10 if the event is of a more limited scope. Ten is chosen for the unknown number of fatalities as this was the approximate average fatality rate across fatal events for an earlier subset of ACLED data.

¹⁶ A country is defined as a war zone if a single group or coalition is attempting to violently challenge the legitimacy and authority of the central government, and that same group is active in over 20% of the state; this assessment is conducted qualitatively. Yemen is the only active warzone among the countries currently covered by ACLED-Religion.

¹⁷ If injuries or other categories of victims are reported as “dozens”, they are recorded as “dozens” in the ‘victims tag’ and not “12”. This is because the ‘FATALITIES_PRECISION’ column allows users to differentiate between estimated and precise fatalities. If “dozens” of victims are recorded as “12”, however, it is impossible to differentiate those counts from events where the source specifically reports 12 injuries.



total number of fatalities is divided and that fraction is recorded for each day of the event (4 fatalities per battle day, in the example above). If an odd number (including 1) is reported, the proportion of fatalities is divided by distributing the fatalities evenly and assigning the additional count to the first day. Such disaggregation of fatalities is recorded in the 'NOTES' column. The full number of victims is reported for each event, with the caveat that the count occurs over multiple days (e.g. "100 injuries occurring over three days" would appear as "[injuries=100 over 3 days]").

Fatality precision

The 'FATALITY_PRECISION' column contains codes that are a measure of the clarity of the reported fatality count. The fatality precision codes therefore provide a similar function to the time and geo-precision codes.

A precision code of '1' describes a clearly reported fatality count (e.g. the source says "8 people were killed"). This also includes events where no fatalities were reported at all and there is no indication that fatalities may have occurred (e.g. a report of a peaceful protest with no intervention would not note "no fatalities" because there is no reason to believe that fatalities would have occurred). This will generally apply to non-violent events such as 'Peaceful protests'.

If a range or estimate (e.g. hundreds) is noted, a precision code of '2' should be used. A range of fatalities can come from either a single source or by combining different estimates from multiple sources. It also includes mass fatality counts that are split over multiple events, as the attributed fatality count for each individual event is an estimate.

A precision code of '3' is used in a number of circumstances. First, if the source uses vague language which could include fatalities, such as "killed OR injured", general "casualties", or, second, if context implies that fatalities were highly probable but not reported (e.g. a town is shelled but no fatalities are reported). Third, this code would be used for circumstances where fatalities were specifically reported but no clues were given as to the exact number (e.g. "unknown killed AND injured", "many fatalities", etc.).



Information Sources

ACLED-Religion researchers collect information primarily from secondary source information and apply the guidelines outlined in their respective codebooks to extract information from news reports. The data are collected each week after individual researchers have scrutinized the information from reports; they are then be aggregated and revised by the researchers as a first reviewer, then investigated and cross-checked by a second reviewer, after which the event notes and details will be inspected by a third and final reviewer. The process is designed to ensure:

1. Validity through intra-coder, inter-coder, and inter-code checks;
2. Accuracy to correct mistakes in coding; and
3. Relevance by determining whether each compiled event constitutes an act of religious disorder or repression.

Every event is coded using the same rules on “who, what, where, and when”, to maximize comparability, validity and the production of thorough information. Additional information, such as event ID numbers, religious contexts in which the event takes place, precision scores for location, time, fatalities and victims, notes to provide further details on the context of the event, fatality and victim numbers if reported, codes to distinguish between types of actors, and additional spatial information are also provided in each row of information. The most recent version of the dataset will be available via the ACLED-Religion API as well as the Data page of the ACLED website.

ACLED-Religion tracks events from four main types of sources:

1. local, national, regional, and international media reviewed on a daily basis;
2. reports from NGOs or international organizations used to supplement media reporting;
3. select trusted and verified new media sources, including Twitter and Telegram; and



4. information and data provided through partnerships with local conflict observatories in hard-to-access cases.¹⁸

Every ACLED-Religion event is composed from at least one source.¹⁹ Their names or acronyms are noted in the 'SOURCE' column. With the exception of some local sources who may aim to remain anonymous, the publication details are sufficient to enable a data user to find the original source name with ease. Researchers may often refer to more than one report to confirm the details of an event. If additional information is gleaned from a second source, then the second source will also be cited -- with further additional sources cited if they contribute new information. If a second source does not provide any additional information, then it is not cited in the 'SOURCE' column; this means that the 'SOURCE' column is *not* a reflection of all media that may have reported on a single incident.

The 'SOURCE_SCALE' column describes whether the sources used for coding an event operate at the local, subnational, national, regional, international, or at another level. One scale over another does not guarantee more direct information, accuracy, or legitimacy, but ACLED-Religion prioritizes gathering and using local sources whenever possible. When multiple sources with different scales are cited, the two lowest level scales are reported, separated by a hyphen. The exception is if one of the reported sources is from a local partner, in which case 'Local Partner' is the only scale reported.

¹⁸ For safety reasons, some partners that wish to remain anonymous are noted as an 'Undisclosed Source' in the 'SOURCE' column.

¹⁹ ACLED-Religion uses the same sourcing methodology as the original ACLED dataset. For more on ACLED sourcing, see the [ACLED sourcing methodology FAQ document](#).



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