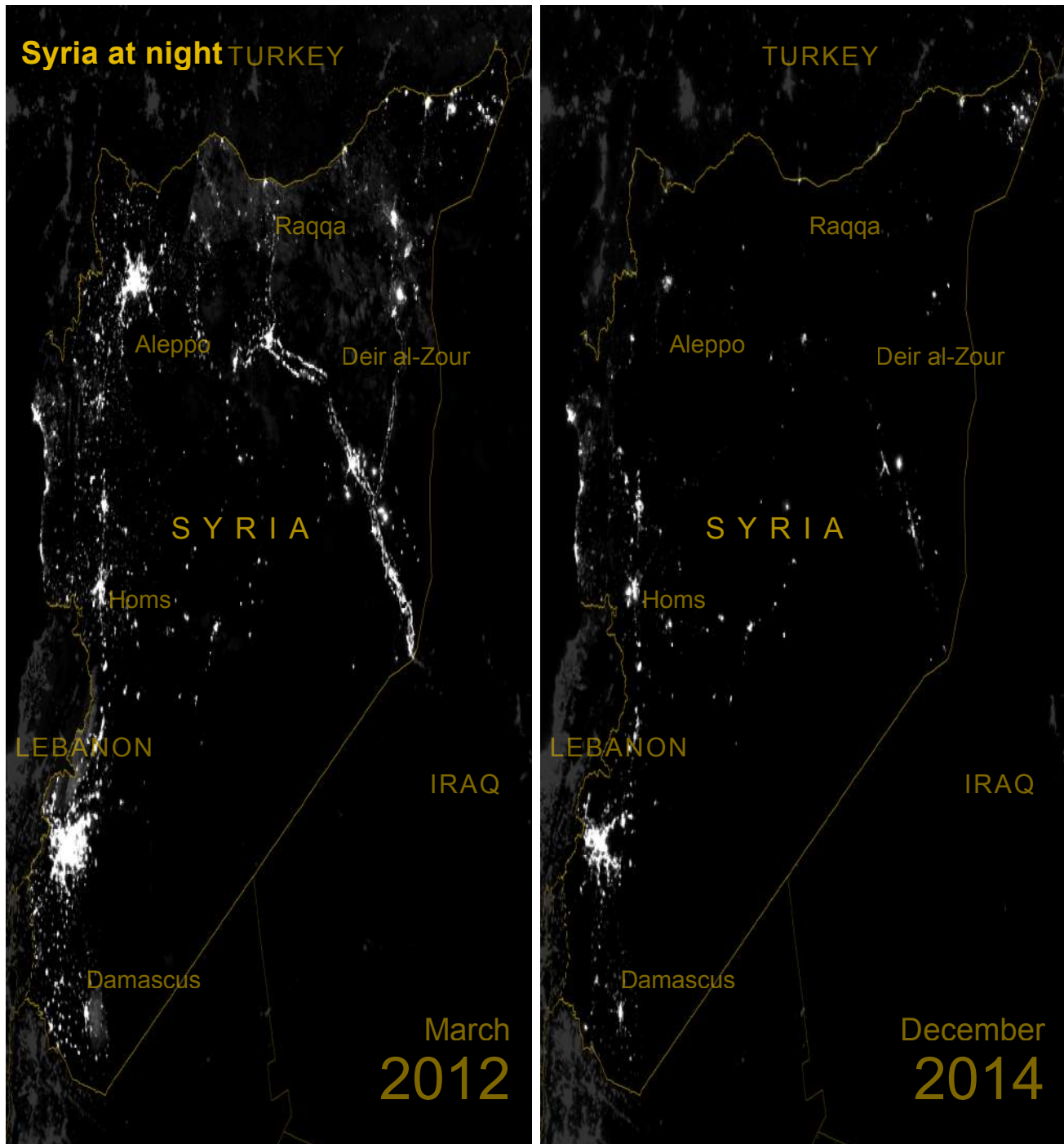


Syria After Four Years of Mayhem

By SERGIO PEÇANHA, JEREMY WHITE and K.K. REBECCA LAI MARCH 12, 2015

A four-year conflict has dismembered Syria, inflaming the region with one of the world's worst religious and sectarian wars. Most of its major cities are in shambles, and more than 200,000 people have been killed. Nearly half of Syria's residents have been forced to flee their homes.

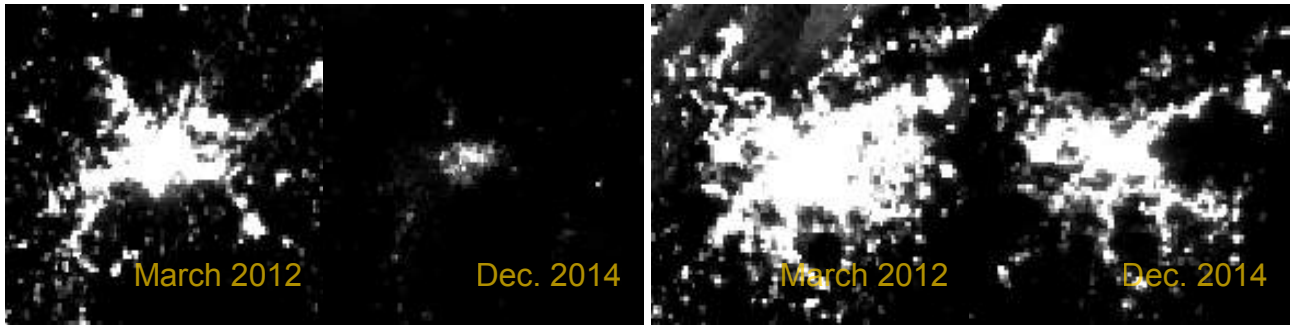


A Nation Going Dark

An analysis of satellite photographs taken over Syria found that the country is 83 percent darker at night than before the war. Widespread migration is one of the main causes.

ALEPPO

DAMASCUS



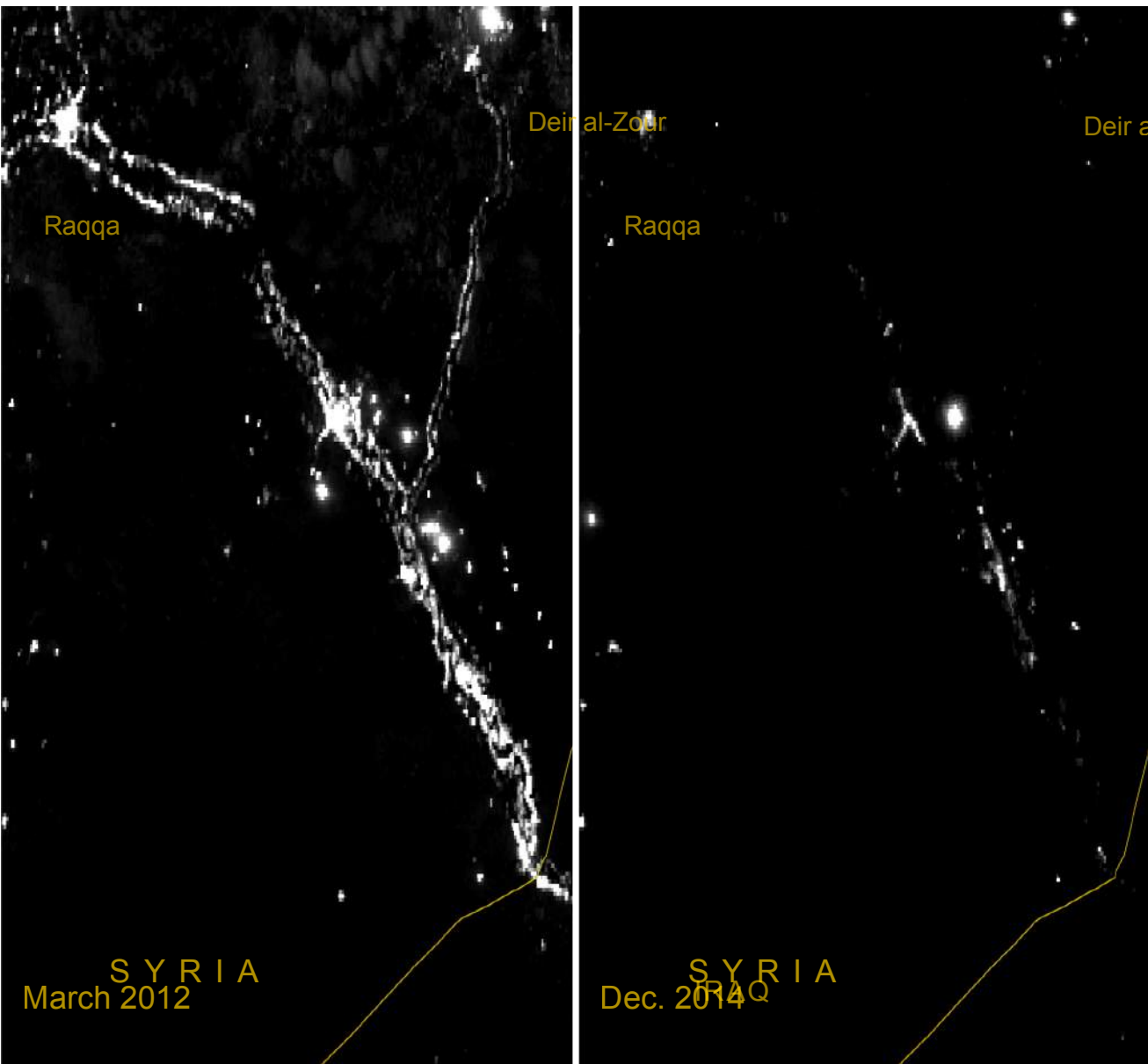
The New York Times

Aleppo has been an active battle zone for nearly three years. Home to two million people before the war, the city is now 91 percent darker at night. Population migration, power cutoffs and destruction of infrastructure were the main reasons for the decline, according to Xi Li, one of the authors of the study.

The analysis compared composite images from satellite photographs, taken on five to 10 nights each month since the beginning of the war. Regions that are not firmly held by a specific group are more prone to population displacement and power shortages, two of the main reasons for losing their night lights, Mr. Li said.

Damascus has been under government control but is now 35 percent darker than before the war. But the capital's suburbs, where fighting has been fierce, are 63 percent darker.

In **Deir al-Zour** and **Raqqah**, which are largely controlled by the Islamic State, the group has struggled to keep power flowing, especially after the [coalition airstrike campaign](#) that began in August last year.



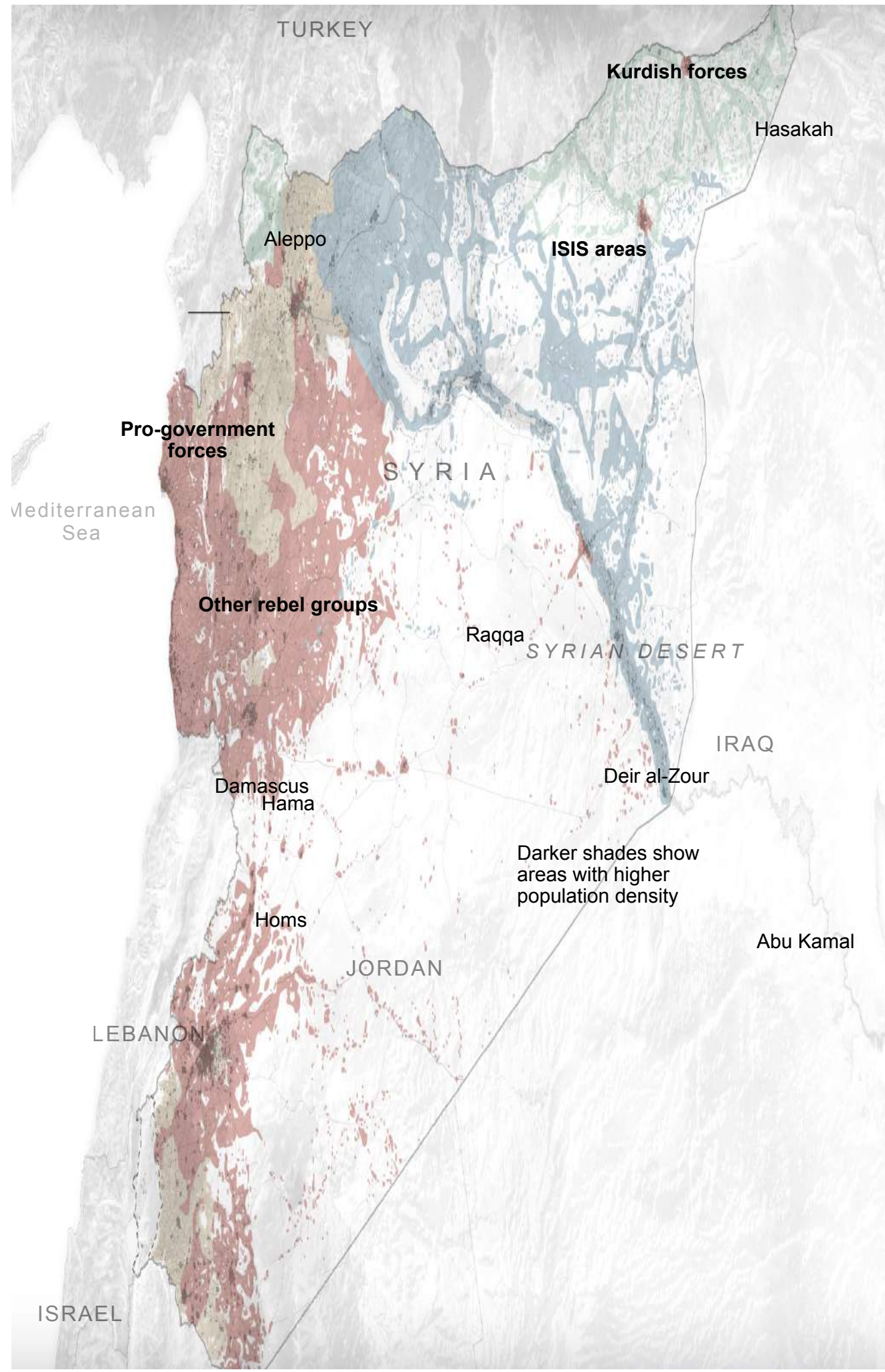
IRAQ

The New York Times

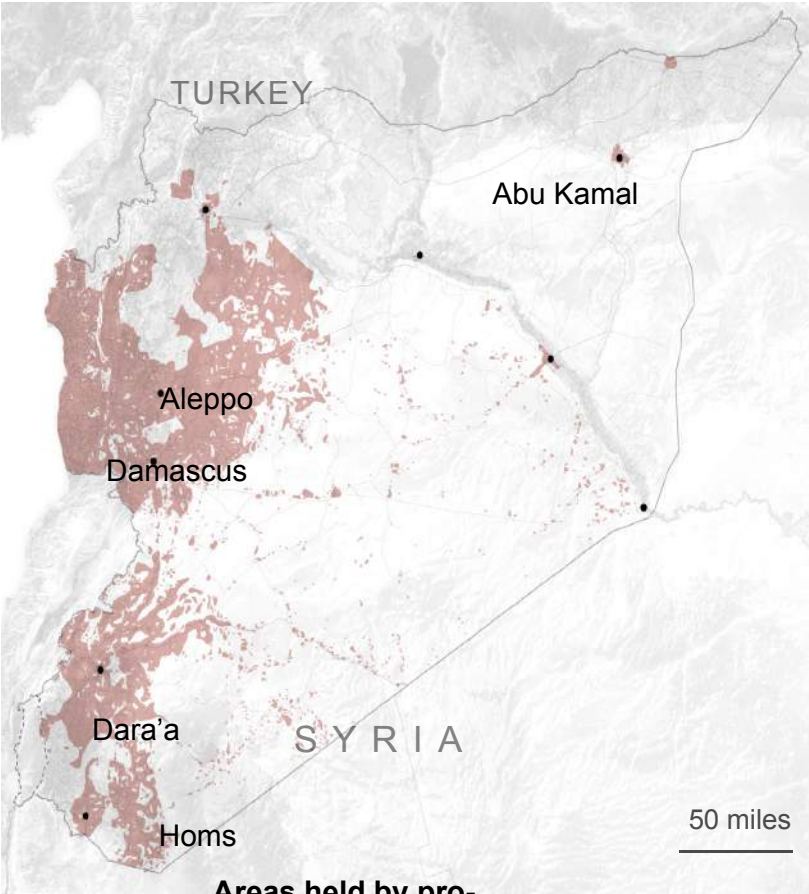
A Country Torn Apart

Syria is splintered among government forces and a number of rebel groups. The most prominent rebel group, the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, took control of large parts of the country last summer. The division has remained largely unchanged since then.





50 miles



Areas held by pro-

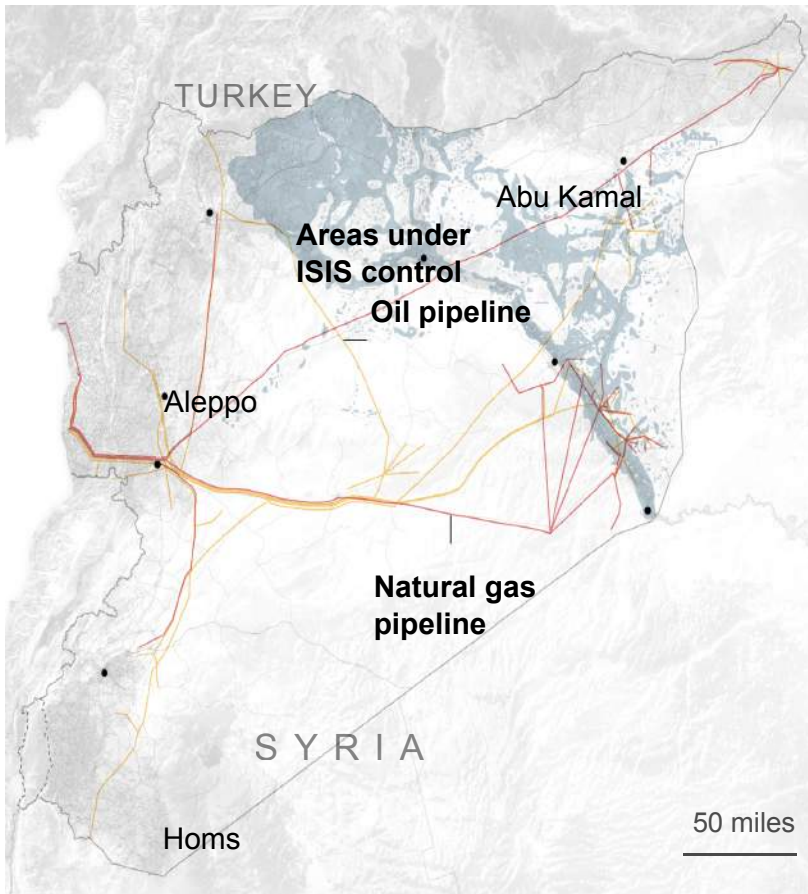
The New York Times

Pro-Government Forces

Pro-government forces control the coastal areas, where a significant part of the population is made up of Alawites, the same religious sect to which President Bashar al-Assad belongs. While the government controls major population centers in the west, the provincial capitals of Dara'a and Aleppo are battlegrounds. Pro-government forces made some recent gains in Damascus's eastern suburbs, where they have also faced strong resistance.

Islamic State

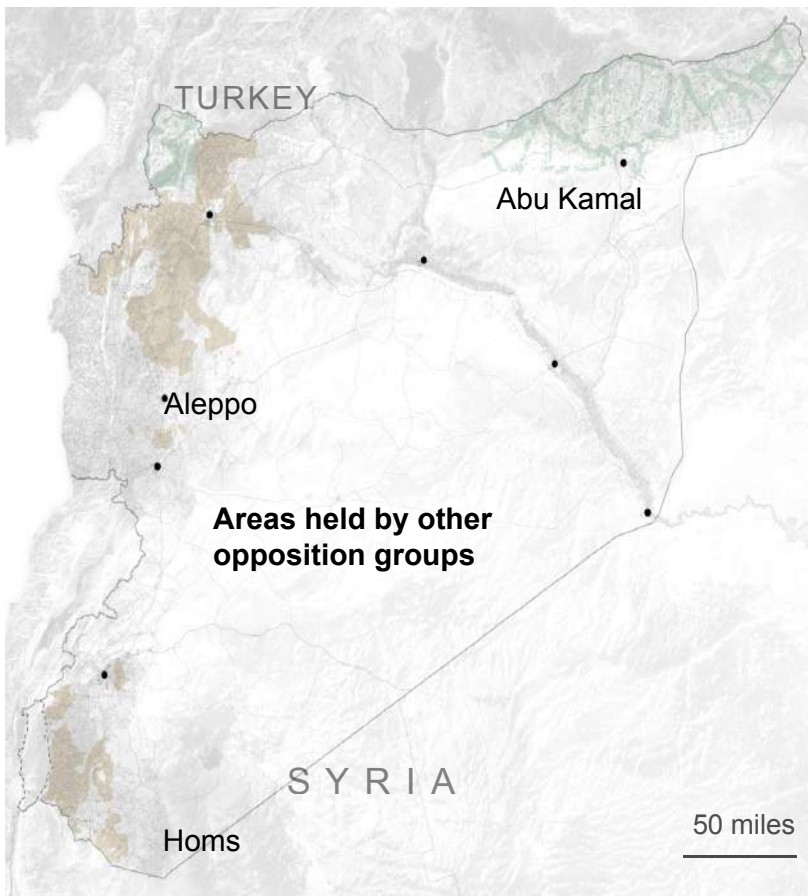
The Islamic State is under pressure from battles with pro-government fighters and other rebel groups, and from bombings from the American-led coalition. Airstrikes against oil infrastructure have disrupted one of the group's important sources of revenue, but have had little effect on its war effort, said Jennifer Cafarella, an analyst at the Institute for the Study of War. "The effectiveness of airstrikes against ISIS is limited to the areas in northern Syria where a ground partner is available, and have not actually challenged ISIS in the Syrian interior," Ms. Cafarella said.



The New York Times

Other Opposition Groups

In September, the [United States Congress](#) approved arming and training rebels in the Free Syrian Army, a loosely knit group that includes citizens who have taken up arms, army defectors and Islamists perceived as moderate by the United States. In Aleppo, one of the war's most important battlefronts, American-supported groups have collaborated with the Nusra Front, a local branch of Al Qaeda and a U.S.-designated terrorist organization.



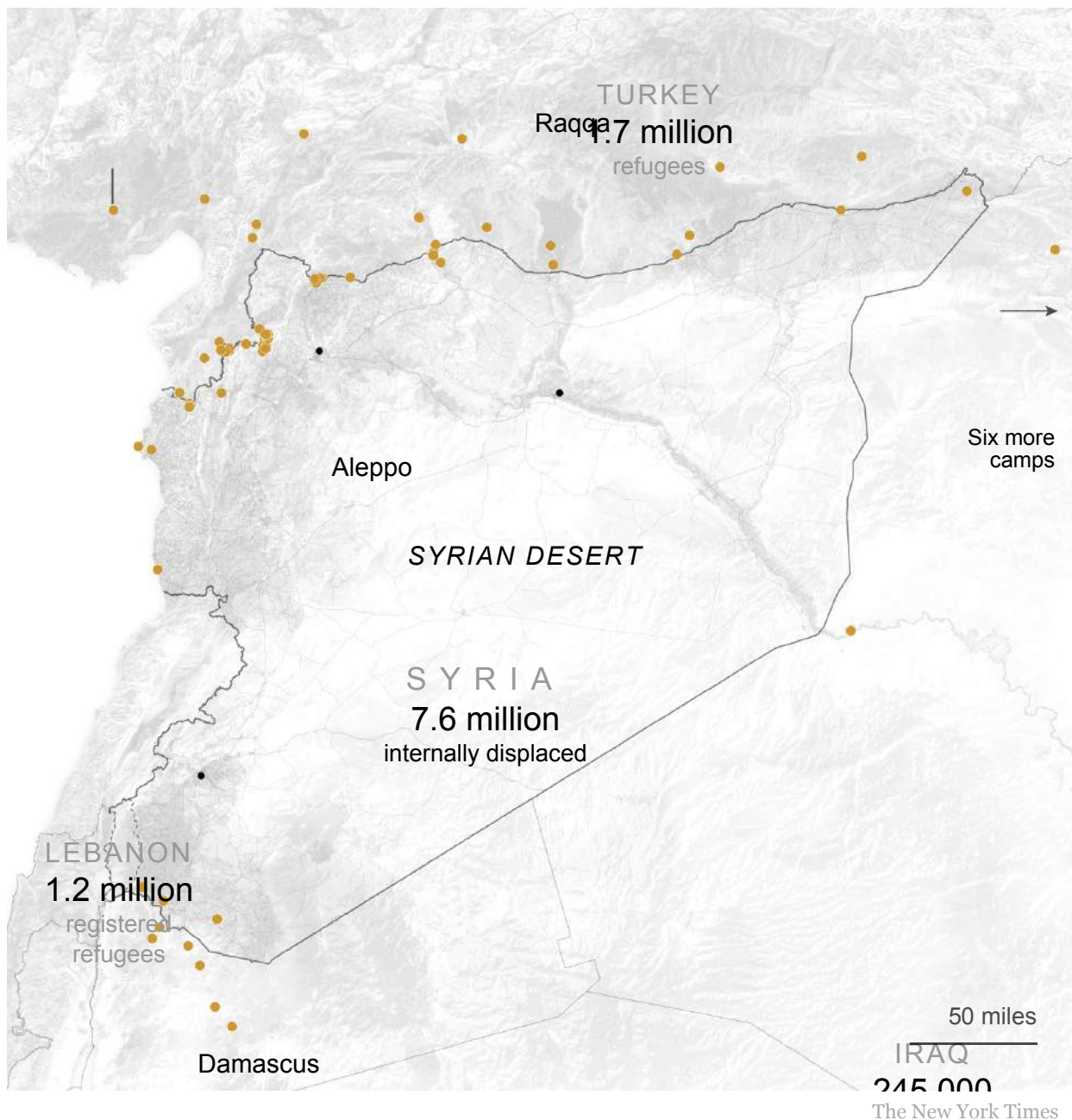
The New York Times

Half of Syrians Displaced

The war has displaced 7.6 million people inside Syria and pushed 3.9 million more — half of them children — to seek refuge in other countries, according to figures collected by United Nations agencies.



A Syrian Kurdish woman waited with her children to be taken to a shelter in Turkey, after fleeing Kobani, a Kurdish town, last September. Bryan Denton for The New York Times



The flood of refugees has put enormous pressure on Syria's neighbors. Turkey has made some effort to integrate the more than one million Syrians living there by granting them access to education and social services. But in Lebanon, officials began to require visas from Syrians in January. The nation, which had just 4.5 million people before the war, now hosts about 1.2 million registered refugees and an estimated 500,000 unregistered.

About 5.6 million children inside Syria are enduring hardships that include poverty, displacement and the dangers of living in conflict zones, according to figures from Unicef.

Sources: Xi Li and Deren Li, Wuhan University, and Rui Zhang, University of Maryland at College Park (nighttime lights analysis); Strategic Needs Analysis Project (areas of control in Syria); IHS Energy Data Information Navigator (oil and gas data); United States Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit (refugee camps); United Nations.

Additional work by Archie Tse, Karen Zraick and David Furst.