



Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook
Version 8 (2017)



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This codebook concerns a) data entry for ACLED and b) understanding the output from the ACLED database.

Further information on sources of data is available on the Methodology page of the ACLED website

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Introduction and Brief Description

The ACLED project codes reported information on the type, agents, exact location, date, and other characteristics of political violence events, demonstrations and select politically relevant non-violent events. ACLED focuses on tracking a range of violent and non-violent actions by political agents, including governments, rebels, militias, communal groups, political parties, external actors, rioters, protesters and civilians. Data contain specific information on the date, location, group names, interaction type, event type, reported fatalities and contextual notes.

ACLED concentrates on the following events:

- Tracking rebel, militia and government activity over time and space;
- Recording violent acts between and across non-state groups, including political and communal militias;
- Recording political violence by unnamed agents, as violent groups may remain unnamed for strategic reasons
- Recording attacks on civilians by all violent political agents;
- Distinguishing between territorial transfers of military control from governments (and their affiliates) to non-state agents and vice versa;
- Locating rebel, militia and government bases, headquarters, strongholds and presence;
- Collecting information on rioting and protesting; and
- Non-violent 'strategic developments' representing crucial junctures in periods of political violence (e.g. rallies, recruitment drives, peace talks, high-level arrests).

ACLED data are derived from a wide range of local, regional and national sources and the information is collected by trained data experts worldwide. Version 8 of ACLED covers African states from 1997 into real-time, South and Southeast Asian states from 2010 into real-time (unless otherwise indicated), and Middle Eastern states from 2016 (unless otherwise indicated) into real-time.

ACLED data are available to the public and are released in real-time. The data come in four formats: an API (available at www.acleddata.com/data); a Microsoft Excel sheet (or



csv);¹ shapefiles for regions; and Excel files for particular event aggregations, including “Civil war” (events associated with government and rebel battles and all rebel activity), “Violence against civilians,” or specific actors (e.g. Boko Haram). Data for distinct groups are often filtered for use and available at www.crisis.acleddata.com.

¹ Excel files contain data disaggregated in the named state’s territory, including foreign groups active in a state’s territory.



Definitions of ACLED events

ACLED collects and codes reported information on political violence, demonstrations (rioting and protesting) and select non-violent, politically important events. It aims to capture the modes, frequency and intensity of political violence and opposition as it occurs.

Political violence is the use of force by a group with a political purpose or motivation. ACLED defines political violence through its constituent events, the intent of which is to produce a comprehensive overview of all forms of political disorder, expressed through violence and demonstrations, within and across states. A politically violent event is a single altercation where often force is used by one or more groups toward a political end, although some non-violent instances – including protests and strategic developments – are included in the dataset to capture the potential pre-cursors or critical junctures of a violent conflict.

The fundamental unit of observation in ACLED is the *event*. Events occur between designated actors – e.g. a named rebel group, a militia or a government.² 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 currently codes for nine types of events, both violent and non-violent, that may occur during a period of political violence and disorder. Table 1 displays the nine ACLED events.

² With the sole exception of ‘unidentified armed groups’ and generic categories including rioters, protesters, and civilians.



Table 1: ACLED Event Types

General	Event Type Code	Event Description
Violent	Battles-No change of territory	A battle between two violent armed groups where control of the contested location does not change. This is the correct event type if the government controls an area, fights with rebels and wins; if rebels control a location and maintain control after fighting with government forces; or if two militia groups are fighting. Battles take place between a range of actors.
	Battle-Non-state actor overtakes territory	A battle between two violent armed groups where non-state actors win control of a location. If, after fighting with another force, a non-state group acquires control, or if two non-state groups fight and the group that did not begin with control acquires it, this is the correct event. There are few cases where opposition groups other than rebels acquire territory.
	Battle-Government regains territory	A battle between two violent armed groups where the government (or its affiliates) regains control of a location. This event type is used solely for government re-acquisition of control. A small number of events of this type include militias operating on behalf of the government to regain territory outside of areas of a government's direct control (for example, proxy militias in Somalia which hold territory independently but are allied with the Federal Government).
	Violence against civilians	Violence against civilians is a violent act upon civilians by an armed, organized, and violent group. ³ By definition, civilians are unarmed and not engaged in political violence. Rebels, governments, militias, external forces, and rioters can all commit violence against civilians. Protesters are also civilians, and significant violence against protesters falls under this category.
	Remote violence	Events where engaging in conflict did not require the physical presence of the perpetrator. The main characteristic of this event is when a group determines the time, place, and victims of the attack, but is not directly present. These include bombings, IED attacks, mortar and missile attacks, etc. Remote violence can be waged on both armed agents (e.g. an active rebel group; a military garrison) and civilians (e.g. a roadside bombing).

³ In rare occasions, rioters may attack civilians; if civilians are severely harmed, it would be coded as an act of Violence against civilians, rather than a Riot.



Demonstrations	Protests and Riots	A protest is a public demonstration in which the participants do not engage in violence, though violence may be used against them. Often – though not always – protests are against a government institution. Rioting is a violent form of demonstration where the participants engage in violent acts, including but not limited to rock throwing, property destruction, etc. Both of these can be coded as one-sided events. All rioters and protesters are noted by generic terms (e.g. “Rioters (Country)” or “Protesters (Country)”); if representing a group, the name of that group is recorded in the respective “associated actor” column.
Non-violent Actions	Non-violent transfer of territory	Situations in which rebels, governments, or affiliates of both acquire control of a location without engaging in a violent act.
	Headquarters or base established	A violent group establishes a permanent or semi-permanent base or headquarters. This event is not violent. There are few, if any, cases where opposition groups other than rebels establish a headquarters or base (e.g. AMISOM forces establish bases in Somalia). These events are coded as one-sided events without a second actor involved.
	Strategic development	Contextually important information regarding the activities of violent groups that is not itself political violence. For example: recruitment drives, looting, incursions, and rallies qualify for inclusion. It also records the location and date of peace talks and both arrests of high-ranking officials as well as mass arrests. The inclusion of such events is limited, as its purpose is to capture pivotal events within campaigns of political violence.

Violent Events

Battles

ACLED 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 organised state, non-state, and external groups, and in any combination therein. *There is no fatality minimum necessary for inclusion.*

The specific elements of that definition are as follows:



(1) A violent interaction is the use of armed force, including guns or military hardware, machetes, knives or any tool to inflict harm upon the opposing side.

(2) Organized armed groups are a cohesive collection organized around an agenda, identity, or political purpose, using weapons to inflict harm. These groups frequently have a designated name and stated agenda.

Battle events are coded in one of three ways depending on the result (see below).

No change of territory

ACLED assumes that the government is in control and holds all territory under its internationally recognized mandate. If armed, organized groups engage in a battle, and no reports indicate a change in territorial control, this event is coded as battle with no change of territory. Areas under a non-state group's control at night, but not during the day, are assumed to be tacitly under government control. Note that although the term "battle" is used here to describe various kinds of encounters between parties – e.g. "the ceasefire is broken" – battles must be violent events involving at least two armed actors. One-sided interactions – e.g. reports of shots fired into the air without a target – are categorized as "Strategic developments" (see below). One-sided violence against unarmed civilians is categorized as "Violence against civilians".

Non-state actor overtakes territory

When a non-state actor wins control and/or subdues government forces, and/or have won territory in which they can now act with impunity and are regarded as having a monopoly of force within that territory, "Battle: Non-state actor overtakes territory" is the correct event type. In cases where government and non-state forces fight many times in a location after a non-state group gain controls, only the initial territorial acquisition uses this event code. All other battles in that location are coded as "Battle-no change of territory". This code can also be used to note the transfer of control from one non-state group to another by violence.

Government regains territory

This event occurs after a non-state group has held an area but a battle involving government forces (or their affiliates) results in the regime regaining control of that



location. This code is only used for re-establishment of government control and not for dual non-state violence. In the course of violent disorder, control over locations may change hands many times.

Violence against civilians

“Violence against civilians” is a deliberate violent act perpetrated by an organized armed group against unarmed non-combatants. These conflict events harm or kill civilians. The perpetrators of such acts include rebels, militias, governments, or external forces. In rare occasions, rioters may attack protesters or civilians; if they are severely harmed as a result, this is also an act of Violence against civilians.

In cases where the identity and actions of the victims are in question (e.g. the target may be employed as a police officer), ACLED determines that if a person is harmed or killed while unarmed and unable to either act defensively or counter-attack, this is an act of “Violence against civilians”. If individuals engage in organized violence, they are not operating as unarmed civilians. There is no minimum number of civilian fatalities needed to qualify as an ACLED event.

“Violence against civilians” includes inflicting significant harm (e.g. shooting, torture, rape, mutilation, etc.) or accosting victims (e.g. kidnapping and disappearances). It does not include incidents in which people are not physically harmed (e.g. looting or burning of buildings, destruction of sacred spaces, and forced displacement.) These events are covered in ACLED by the event “Strategic development”.

Remote violence

Remote violence is a broad category of targeted violence where the characteristics include the tool to engage and the removed actions of the perpetrators. These actions include bombings, IED attacks, drone activity, mortar and missile attacks, air strikes, etc. Remote violence can be waged on both armed agents (e.g. an active rebel group; a military garrison) or on civilians (e.g. a roadside bombing). When accounting for all attacks on civilians, remote violence with civilian targets should be included.



Demonstration Events

Riots/Protests is a combined category that includes two discrete types of events.

Protests

Events involving individuals and groups who peacefully demonstrate against a political entity, government institution, policy, group, tradition, businesses or other private institutions are “Protests”. If protesters are violently attacked and severely injured during a protest, the event is not coded as a “Protest” but as “Violence against Civilians”. The victims will retain their title as “Protesters” to distinguish these actions from wider patterns of Violence against civilians.

Riots

Spontaneous acts of violence by disorganised groups, which may target property, businesses, other disorganised groups or security institutions, are coded as “Riots”, and their participants are “Rioters”. Rioters may begin as protestors, or may be intent on engaging in spontaneous and disorganized violence from the beginning of their actions. In the event that rioters target protesters or civilians, the event is coded as “Violence against civilians”.

Non-Violent Events

Non-violent transfer of territory

This designation applies when a group transfers or acquires control of a location without violence. Rebels establishing control of a location without any resistance is an example of this event.

Headquarters or base established

Non-state and state actors often establish bases and headquarters during their active periods. ACLED records the date, location, and actor involved in base or HQ establishment.

Actors can have many active bases simultaneously. These bases may be either inside or outside the country/countries in which the agents operate. In the Notes field,



Researchers may specify whether the position is the main headquarter or a regional base (or forest base, mountain base, border base, etc.).

Strategic development

This category is designed to capture contextually important events that are not political violence, yet may contribute to a state's political history and/or may trigger future events. It includes arrests of key political figures, rallies, peace talks, mass hunger strikes, recruitment drives, looting, destruction of property, etc. It can also include instances in which bombs are diffused prior to an attack, or when a bomb is accidentally detonated earlier than intended. 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.

Coding detail: The event type as noted above will appear in “Event Type” column for each event.

Important Notes Regarding Event Type Codes

One or more events can occur in the same location on the same day. If two similar events between the same actors in the same location are reported, they may be noted as a single aggregate event. If another event type occurs, it is coded separately. For example: (1) a rebel group may fight with a government in a town and win control. The government may then engage in acts of violence against civilians outside of the battle with rebels. In this case, two events have occurred; (2) in a large city on the same day, there may be a riot and violence against civilians committed by an armed group, or two protests involving different groups and different demonstrations.⁴

But ACLED researchers do not ‘double count’ events. For example, if civilians are killed in the context of a battle, then their fatalities will be added to the total number of fatalities and this will be noted in the ‘notes’ section, but it will not constitute a separate

⁴ In rare cases, specifically in large cities, more than one event might be coded involving the same actors, event type, and location; this is only done in cases where reports suggest the two events were indeed distinct (e.g. Iraqi military forces engage in a battle with IS rebels in the northern part of Mosul resulting in 3 fatalities on March 3, and a second battle between Iraqi military forces and IS rebels in the southern part of Mosul results in 25 fatalities). In such cases, the reports are not aggregated as they refer to two distinct events.



event. Further, if an attack – such as remote violence- is meant to strike militants, but does hurt civilians, civilians may be mentioned in the ‘Associated Actor’ column, and 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, then civilians are the main group affected, and will be in the ‘Actor 2’ column. Militants may appear in the ‘Associated Actor’ column.

In most cases, an event requires two actors, noted in columns “Actor 1” and “Actor 2”. However, event types “Remote Violence”, “Headquarters or base established” “Strategic development”, “Riots/Protests” and “Non-violent-transfer of territory” can be single actor events. More than two actors can also be coded, as the additional groups (besides the main agents noted in “Actor 1” and “Actor 2” columns) can be coded in the respective “Associated Actor” columns for both main agents. *The order of actors has no meaning in the ACLED system.*



ACLED Actors

All actors have an official name,⁵ a political purpose and use violence or protest for political means. For inclusion as agents of political violence, organizations must be cohesive and are not assembled for single events, with the exception of riots and protests. 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 us to establish campaigns and trajectories of movements.

ACLED recognizes a range of actors including governments, rebels, militias, ethnic groups, active political organizations, external forces, and civilians. In ACLED, politically violent actors include state forces (e.g. military), rebels, militias, external forces (e.g. UN missions) and organized political groups who interact over issues of political authority (e.g. territorial control, government control, access to resources, etc.). Protesters, rioters 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.

Each actor is recognized in the following ways: their specific name is noted in the “Actor” columns of the dataset. In addition, the type of group is noted in the respective “Inter” columns, and the compounded group type is noted in the “Interaction” column.

Associated groups for specific events are noted in the respective “Assoc Actor” columns. An associated group may be allies in actions, in the case of battles, or both be victims of an attack. In the former case, two armed organized groups that are engaging in attacks against a common enemy are ‘associated’. In the latter case, an attack that is intended for an armed, organized group, but also affects civilians, may have both groups noted. The first (in ACTOR1 or 2) will be the ostensibly intended target, while the associated actor will be civilians.

⁵ Barring the “unidentified” category.



Actor Names, Types and Inter Codes

ACLED 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. There are thousands of individually named groups within the ACLED data project, and the Inter code groups organizations by whether they have similar organizational structures, goals and practices. Group type designates all groups into one of eight ACLED categories, and assigns a number in the “Inter” column to that categorization.

These categories offer a way to distinguish between actors, and determine how patterns of activity conform to goals and organizations. ACLED 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, 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).

Inter Code 1: Governments and State Security Services

Governments are defined as internationally recognized regimes in assumed control of a state. Government actors are named by ACLED as a series of separate regimes rather than a uniform body (e.g. Congo/Zaire (1965-1997), Democratic Republic of Congo (1997-2001), and Democratic Republic of Congo (2001-) as opposed to Congo/Zaire (1962-present)).⁶ As the strength, capacity and policies of governments can vary widely from one regime to the next, ACLED designates governments by their leading regimes. This enables researchers to capture the differences in government involvement and

⁶ 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. This choice will be outlined and discussed extensively in reference to that country’s data. Updates will appear in the crisis.acleddata.com blog.



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)”.⁷ Mutinies of militaries are coded as “Mutiny of Military Forces of State (20xx-20xx)”.

This code relates to state forces, including military (and mutinous military), police and other security agents and government agents.

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 groups often have predecessors and successors due to diverging goals within their membership. ACLED tracks these evolutions in analysis. Rebel forces are known by a specific chosen name, the groups are open and transparent about their intentions and leadership; they typically operate in significantly large areas of a state; and conduct activity against the central government and its associates.

In cases where aggregate groups are contesting the government, we often use an overarching name rather than factions (e.g. Hutu Rebels active in Burundi; Southern Muslim Separatists active in Thailand). Specific or local factions may or may not be acknowledged in reports, but when they are, they are added to the overarching group name (e.g. PALIPEHUTU-FNL: National Forces for Liberation-Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People as a specific Hutu Rebel group in Burundi; RKK: Runda Kumpulan Kecil as a specific Southern Muslim Separatist group in Thailand).

⁷ Branches of the military or police forces are coded as, for example, “Military Forces of State (20xx-20xx) Special Presidential Division”.



This code relates to groups that seek the replacement of the central government, or the establishment of a new state.

Inter Code 3: Political Militias

Political militias are a more diverse set of violent actors, who are often created for a specific purpose or during a specific time period (i.e. Janjaweed) and for the furtherance of a political purpose by violence. 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. 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, groups such as the Sudanese Janjaweed or Serbian Tigers are pro-government militias that work as supplements to government 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. These political militias may be associated with defined ethnic, regional or other identity communities, but they also operate outside of ethnic homelands and for goals other than the promotion of ethnic interests. The Mungiki of Kenya, War Veterans Group in Zimbabwe, and Mayi-Mayi of DR-Congo are examples of these groups.

In some cases, an “unidentified armed group” perpetrates political violence. 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” or “Unidentified Communal Group” in the “Actor” columns. Within the “Unidentified Armed



Group” designation, a country of origin is specified, such as “Unidentified Armed Group (Sudan).”⁸

This code relates to armed, organized groups that have a specific political objective that is designated by their political elite patron.

Inter Code 4: Identity Militias

ACLED 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’s purposes, identity militias include those reported as “tribal”, “communal”, “ethnic”, “local”, “community”, “religious” and “livelihood” 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. Luo Ethnic Militia in Kenya). Recruitment and participation is by association with the identity of the group. Identity militias may have a noted role in the community, such as the long-term policing units common among Somali clans. ACLED includes vigilante activity under identity militias as the group actions are designed to provide a form of local security by the participants. Local and ethnically bounded militias are considered distinct from militias that operate as armed and violent wings of government, opposition groups, the forces of political elites or a religious organization.

When an “unidentified armed group” perpetrates local political violence, their activity is coded using the name “Unidentified Communal Group” in the “Actor” columns, and a ‘4’ in the interaction.

This code relates to groups engaged in local political competition, often traditionally based contests between ethnic, community or local religious groups.

⁸ 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/Community Group” which is noted as a ‘4’, as discussed below.



Inter Code 5: Rioters

Rioters are individuals who either engage in violence during demonstrations or in spontaneous acts of disorganised violence, and are noted by a general category of “Rioters (Country)”. If a group is affiliated or leading an event (e.g. ZANU-PF political party), the associated group is named in the respective associated actor category. Rioters are by definition violent, but rioters are not organized, armed groups – they are *spontaneous*, violent groups. Rioters may engage in a wide variety of violence, including property destruction, engaging with other armed groups (e.g. security forces, private security firms, etc.) or in violence against unarmed individuals.

This code relates to demonstrators engaging in violence, or disorganized groups engaging in spontaneous acts of violence.

Inter Code 6: Protesters

Protesters are individuals who do not engage in violence during demonstrations, and are noted by a general category of “Protesters (Country)”; if a group is affiliated or leading an event (e.g. MDC political party), the associated group is named in the respective associated actor category. 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).

This code relates to peaceful, unarmed demonstrators.

Inter Code 7: Civilians

Civilians, in whatever number or association, are victims of violent acts within ACLED as they are, by definition, unarmed and, hence, vulnerable. They are noted as “Civilians (Country X)”. In cases where communities are attacked based on identity, the civilian labelled is replaced with the specific community group label (e.g. Pokot Ethnic Group (Kenya)).

This code relates to unarmed individuals not engaging in violence.



Inter Code 8: External/Other Forces

Small categories of “other” actors include hired mercenaries, private security firms and their employees, United Nations or external forces. They are noted by their name and actions. The military forces of states are coded as ‘other’ when active outside of their home state (e.g. the military of Kenya active in Somalia).

This code relates to non-domestic or non-political forces including hired mercenaries, private security firms and their employees, UN, or external forces (such as the military forces of another state).

Certain types of violent agents may appear to fall outside of this categorization, but ACLED has designed these classifications to flexibly fit the universe of agents operating in conflict. For example, militant religious organizations can have various goals (e.g. Taliban), 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 organizations, protesters, etc., ACLED does not allow for “insurgents” or “terrorists” as types of agents. Many non-state violent organizations may use insurgency tactics or commit acts against civilians with intended high fatality levels as part of their violent repertoire. Instead, ACLED considers the goal and organization of each group to be the basis for their classification.

Coding detail: In the dataset, a group’s name will appear in the Actor 1 or Actor 2 column. Associated actors in the event to Actor 1 will appear in “Associated Actor 1” column, and associated actors for Actor 2 will appear in “Associated Actor 2” column. Each Actor 1 and Actor 2 category has a corresponding “Inter 1” and “Inter 2” category, respectively. If an event has two actors, both Inter 1 and Inter 2 are recorded in reference to both actors; if an event has only one actor, Inter1 is recorded along with a 0 (in reference to there being no Actor 2). The “Inter” code refers to the main actors, and not associated actors.



Interaction codes

The “Interaction” code is the combination of “Inter” codes. Single actor type codes are recorded in “Inter1” and “Inter 2” columns, and the compounded number is recorded in the Interaction column. For example, if a country’s military fights a political militia group, and the respective “Inter 1” and “Inter 2” 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”. Interaction codes are recorded for all events, including non-violent activity. For single actor events, the empty second actor category is coded as “0”.

If a non-violent rebel event occurs where only “Inter 1” is noted with a “2”, “20” is coded in the “Interaction” column). Only the main actor for Actor1 and Actor2 are the basis for the interaction codes.

The following interaction codes translate to:

- 10- SOLE MILITARY ACTION (e.g. base establishment by state forces; remote violence involving state military with no reported casualties; non-violent military operations)
- 11- MILITARY VERSUS MILITARY (e.g. military in-fighting; battles between a military and mutinous forces; arrests of military officials)
- 12- MILITARY VERSUS REBELS (e.g. civil war violence between state forces and a rebel actor)
- 13- MILITARY VERSUS POLITICAL MILITIA (e.g. violence between state forces and unidentified armed groups; violence between police and political party militias)
- 14- MILITARY VERSUS COMMUNAL MILITIA (e.g. military engagement with a communal militia; police engagement with a vigilante militia)
- 15- MILITARY VERSUS RIOTERS (e.g. suppression of a demonstration by police or military)
- 16- MILITARY VERSUS PROTESTERS (e.g. suppression of a demonstration by police or military)
- 17- MILITARY VERSUS CIVILIANS (e.g. state repression of civilians; arrests by police)



- 18- MILITARY 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 casualties; 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 vigilante militias or other 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 [a strategy commonly used in civil war])
- 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 casualties; 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 vigilante militias or other 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)
- 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)
- 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 casualties; non-violent external military operations)



Further notes on interactions

(a) Civilians cannot attack other civilians or engage in violence

(b) An ethnic identity militia is associated with a direct ethnic community and no other identifier. For example, the Turkana, Pokot, or many Somali militias are described as armed units for ethnic group contest and protection. These are referred to as “identity” in the interaction column.

(c) For ACLED’s purposes, identity militias include those reported as “tribal”, “communal”, “ethnic”, “local”, “community”, “religious” and “livelihood” militias.



Event Geography

There are up to seven different types of spatial information recorded in each ACLED event: (1) the name of the specific location of an event, as noted by the report; (2) the geographic coordinates of that specific location; (3) the name of the *first*, *second* and *third* level administrative zones that the specific location is found in according to GIS based assignments and updated administrative codes; (4) the region in which the event occurred; (5) the country in which the event occurred; and (6) a spatial precision code.

The most specific location for an event is sought for each ACLED code, and several sources may be used to triangulate better location information.

Location Information

Coordinates for locations are generally found using NGA Geonames (www.geonames.org) and other locational gazetteers, including Google maps. Coders can use a range of additional sources, including online gazetteers such as www.fallingrain.com. The fallingrain website collects coordinates of villages, towns, cities, and airports alphabetically by country. It also notes alternate spellings and names.

The country, the first administration unit, and the second and the third administration units (when available) are incorporated into each country sheet, having been standardized from the GADM file (<http://www.gadm.org>). Some countries do not provide administration information below the first or second level. Version 8 of the dataset uses GADM version 3 updated in 2012. In select cases, updated UN shapefiles for countries (e.g. South Sudan, Kenya, etc.) are used to correct administration names and location placement. These are available from humanitarianresponse.info.

All ACLED data are checked in GIS and associated with additional location information before annual public release.

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 in the direct outskirts of a town or city, this same precision code is employed. If a larger region is mentioned, a provincial capital is chosen to represent the region and noted with precision level “3”. With few exceptions, the provincial capital should be selected to represent the larger regions. No ACLED event should be associated with the “country” as the smallest location unit available.

When events occur in neighbourhoods of large cities and distinct neighbourhood/district coordinates are available, these are used to identify the suburban 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 neighbourhood/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.

Coding detail: The columns that provide spatial information include “Region”, “Country”, “Admin 1” (administrative unit that corresponds to provincial level, or similar); “Admin 2” (administrative unit that corresponds to county level, or similar); “Admin 3” (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 code: (1) the date of each event; (2) the year; and (3) the temporal precision. Dates are a necessary component of each ACLED event. ACLED events are atomic as events are coded by day; if a military campaign in an area starts on March 1, 1999 and lasts until March 5, 1999 with violent activity reported on each day, this is coded as five different events in ACLED with a different date for each entry. This episode would not be entered as a single campaign of violence. This allows ACLED to capture the exact number of active days. Events which source material note occurred in the space of three months are 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, “2” is noted in the time precision field and the middle of that week 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 does not include events with less temporal information.

Coding detail: Dates are recorded as Day, Month, Year. Time precision is recorded as 1, 2 or 3.



Notes

The “Notes” column records any additional important details. Notes are intentionally kept short and should add clarity and detail to the event.



Reported Fatalities

Events coded by ACLED do not have to meet a minimum fatality level for inclusion. ACLED only codes estimated fatalities when reported by source materials. It cannot verify the numbers reported from sources and does not use fatalities as the basis for event inclusion. Very often, no fatality information is available for events from sources and such reported fatality totals are often erroneous, as the numbers tend to be biased upward.

If reported in a source or across several sources, the number (or estimated number, if several sources report various totals) is found in the fatalities column. If source reports differ or a vague estimate is provided, the lowest number of fatalities is reported.

If reports mention “several”, “many”, “few” or plural fatalities, yet the exact number is unknown, “10” is recorded as the total. If a report mentions “dozens”, this is recorded as “12” fatalities. If a report mentions “hundreds”, this is recorded as “100” fatalities. If a note mentions “massacres”, a default number of 100 fatalities is recorded. If there is no reference made to fatalities in the report, “0” fatalities are recorded.

If summarized fatalities 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 total number of fatalities is divided and that fraction is recorded for each day of the event (e.g. 4 fatalities per battle day, in the example above). If an odd number (including 1), the proportion of fatalities is divided by assigning the first day the additional fatality and distributed as evenly as possible. Such disaggregation of fatalities is noted in the Notes section.

Coding detail: ACLED does not use a fatality criterion in its inclusion of events. The number used is conservative, in that it is the most reliable, smallest number reported.



Information Sources

ACLED sources material in three ways: (1) information from local, regional, national and continental media is reviewed daily; (2) NGO reports are used to supplement media reporting in hard to access cases; (3) regionally focused news reports and analyses are integrated to supplement daily media reporting. The result is the most comprehensive and wide-reaching source material presently used in disaggregated conflict event coding. Every ACLED event is composed from at least one source. The name, acronym, and/or website are noted in the source column. The publication details are sufficient to enable a data user to find the original source with ease.

If more than two sources are used, the most thorough report is cited or both are noted in the source column.

The “**Source Scale**” column refers to whether the source for most information is at the local, regional, national or international level. One scale over another does not guarantee more direct information, accuracy, or legitimacy, but ACLED supports gathering and using local sources whenever possible. ACLED has arrangements and partnerships with many local organizations for data exchange in pursuance of this goal.

Coding detail: A new column noted as ‘Source scale’ has been added to the dataset as of Version 8. This records the approximate geographic scale (local, regional, national, international) of the reporting source.



Relationships to Other Datasets

The conflicts coded in ACLED are generally compatible with other conflict data collections. ACLED information may be joined with many, if not all, other conflict datasets by country, year, actor or specific locality. ACLED data are event data, and as such, care should be given in joining its information with other datasets using different units of analysis (e.g. campaigns of violence instead of violent events by day). Please see Raleigh, Linke & Dowd 2012 for a review of compared event data.

As ACLED codes a wide range of constituent events for periods and areas affected by political violence and disorder, the information collected is far more numerous than datasets that focus on specific forms of violence (e.g. civil war, terrorism, or those with fatality criterions) or only campaigns of violence instead of events.

Generally, ACLED disaggregates civil wars into their constituent events. However, the threshold for inclusion as an ACLED event is lower than most “civil war” datasets. As a result, ACLED records some events that are not recorded in other datasets.

Previous Versions

Version 8 is an extension of the previous versions, which focused on African states. Earlier codebooks are available for Versions 1-7 of the dataset upon request.



Table 2: ACLED Data Columns

Column Name	Content
ISO	A numeric code for each individual country
EVENT_ID_CNTY	An individual identifier by number and country acronym (updated annually)
EVENT_ID_NO_CNTY	An individual numeric identifier (updated annually)
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
ACTOR1	The named actor involved in the event
ASSOC_ACTOR_1	The named actor associated with or identifying ACTOR1
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
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, regional, national, international) of the source
NOTES	A short description of the event
FATALITIES	The number of reported fatalities which occurred during the event