



Riots & Protests and Strategic Developments

What ACLED collects

ACLED collects information on riots and protests, as well as information on 'strategic developments'. There can be ambiguity about how to discern these events from each other when their manifestations can be similar. If a user is questioning what is included in the data, they should remember these important rules:

ACLED concentrates on collecting group activity, not individual activity. This means that riots and protests need to have at least three people coming together, physically in person, for consideration. The actions of individuals are not to be coded as unique events.

ACLED covers the occurrence of events, not the absence of action. This means that strikes, in which people stay home from work, or hunger strikes in which people choose to forego food in protest (yet do not physically congregate) would not be coded. Such events can be coded under the "Strategic Development" category, but only if they are significant enough to political dynamics in a state (e.g. include a very large group; include political agents; etc.).

ACLED covers many countries, and an important attribute of the work is the generalizability of our categories. If the inclusion of an event requires specifications about a context or country, it is unlikely that we will include it. The coding for different countries should not have different rules.

Given those qualifiers, what are ACLED's definitions?

Keep in mind that in most cases, the type of event to code is obvious. In select cases, ACLED has developed a series of guidelines:

Riots: a public demonstration by a spontaneously organized group that uses violence;

Protests: a public demonstration where the demonstrators are peaceful;

Strategic development: contextually important events that are not political violence, yet may contribute to a state's political history and/or may trigger future events.

Riots and Protests

Riots and protests are coded with a specific, shared event type (Riots/Protest), and distinguished by the names of the actors and the inter code and interaction type. All rioting events includes a 'Rioters (xxxx)' actor name, a '5' in the associated inter code and an interaction code that includes a '5'. All protest events are coded with a



“Protesters (xxxx)” actor name, a ‘6’ in the associated inter code and an interaction code that includes a ‘6’. Accompanying notes clarify or add information for the context of the demonstration.

How multi-day demonstrations are coded:

- The first day is coded;
- Days in which reports indicate that people actually came together and did something are coded;
- Days where police or military forces engaged with demonstrators are coded.

Examples of Riots and Protest

- The SANDU and the SASFU held massive protests and strikes, expressing dissatisfaction with the way their unions have been treated by the government.
- Wildlife workers strike and engage in protest at Queen Elizabeth Park in Pietermaritzburg over a labour issue. The protest caused an area school to close.
- Violent incidents reported during strikes over farm worker pay in Western Cape.
- Protesters, aligned to the Food and Allied Workers Union, had been beaten by private security guards and workers during strike action in the Philippines.

What is NOT coded as a riot or protest:

Symbolic public acts: such as turning one’s back, displays of flags, disrobing, public prayers, etc.

- Such events would only be coded if they involved an accompanying demonstration involving 3 or more people coming together in person (then it would be coded as a riot or protest).

Non-cooperation and economic interventions: such as strikes (defined as withdrawing from work), hunger strikes (by a single person or a group), etc.

- Such events would only be coded if they involved an accompanying demonstration involving 3 or more people coming together in person (then it would be coded as a riot or protest).
- If such events are significantly large and involve a collective group (e.g. industrial strikes or withdrawing from work; mass, organized hunger strikes; ‘dead city’ strikes), they can be coded as a Strategic Development (see below).

Acts by individuals: this includes self-harm and psychological interventions, such as an individual immolation or a hunger strike involving only 1 person. This also includes formal statements and speeches made.

- Such events would only be coded if they involved an accompanying demonstration of 3 or more people coming together in person (then it would be coded as a riot or protest).



Strategic Developments

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, mass arrests, rallies, peace talks, mass hunger strikes, other strikes (e.g. 'dead city'), 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. More information about Strategic Developments can be found on the Resources page of the website including the breakdown of events that populate this event type.

The inclusion of an event in the strategic development category is based on its significance. Therefore, the consideration of its significance must be based on the strong impression that it is or will be important to the future of political violence and protest. These events are not typically used in analysis, but are used to understand violence.

To distinguish from demonstrations, what kinds of activity are coded as a Strategic Development:

- Significant, large strikes that do not involve people actually coming together physically (e.g. withdrawing from work; hunger strike) that yet involve a collective group;
 - In such cases, only the first day is coded;
- Non-violent land seizures;
- Certain acts by individuals. These include:
 - *Action involving a senior, politically important individual*: this includes things such as an arrest, an inciting speech, or an individual non-violent demonstration.
 - *Self-harm and psychological interventions*: this includes things such as an individual immolation. Hunger strikes by a single individual are never coded.

Examples of Strategic Developments:

- Hundreds of Palestinians in Israeli jails launched a hunger strike Monday following a call from leader and prominent prisoner Marwan Barghouti, a movement that could mark a serious challenge to Israeli authorities if sustained. Israel's Prison Service stated that the mass hunger strike of Palestinian prisoners ended after 40 days on May 27, 2017, after sparking public demonstrations throughout the region.
 - *This is included given the mass hunger strike has resulted in fueling public demonstrations. Not all hunger strikes are necessarily included.*



- “Dead city” strikes were held in Kabo, Ndele and Kaga-Bandoro on the call of ex-Seleka militias. The “dead city” initiative was allegedly held for different reasons by different ex-Seleka groups, but the common theme was rejection of the DDRR process and to memorialize fighters who have recently died in fighting with anti-Balaka forces.
 - *This is included as there is a high possibility that the ‘dead city’ strike rejecting the DDRR process can result in complications around the DDRR process being effective, which can lead to political violence.*
- Land seizures across the north result in farmers losing their land, though no violence or casualties reported.
 - *This is included as land seizures can result in subsequent land-related political violence; while the event in question is non-violent, it may spark political violence.*
- A self-immolation in the square has sparked public demonstrations in the region.
 - *This is included given the immolation has resulted in fueling public demonstrations. Not all self-immolations are necessarily included.*
- The leader of the primary opposition party has been arrested by the regime and is being held in prison.
 - *This is included given the impact this high-level arrest could have on the primary opposition party, which may manifest itself as political violence.*

To distinguish from demonstration, what is NOT coded as a strategic development or at all:

- *A hunger strike by fewer than 3 individuals*
- *Formal statements and speeches:* while important, these are often too common for inclusion. Further, the actions that follow a meaningful speech are what ACLED aims to cover.

Examples of activity not coded at all:

Several types of activity are not coded in ACLED as their occurrence is either very common, not likely to be nationally significant, or not of an overly political nature.

- A journalist begins a hunger strike after his passport was confiscated in Algeria.
- Public universities “paralyzed” when teachers went on strike for days by not coming to work after the government did not meet their various demands.
- An office building begins to display the state flag in support of the ruling regime when before they did not have one on display.
- A human rights activist makes a formal statement about the status of human rights in Egypt.