Appendix for Civil Organizing in War: Evidence from Syrian Facebook Communities

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A: Facebook Pages and Posts

Page-Creation Over Time

The Syrian organizations represented by public Facebook pages in our dataset were primarily created following the onset of the March 2011 uprising. Figure A1 plots page creation dates to the time of dataset creation in 2018.
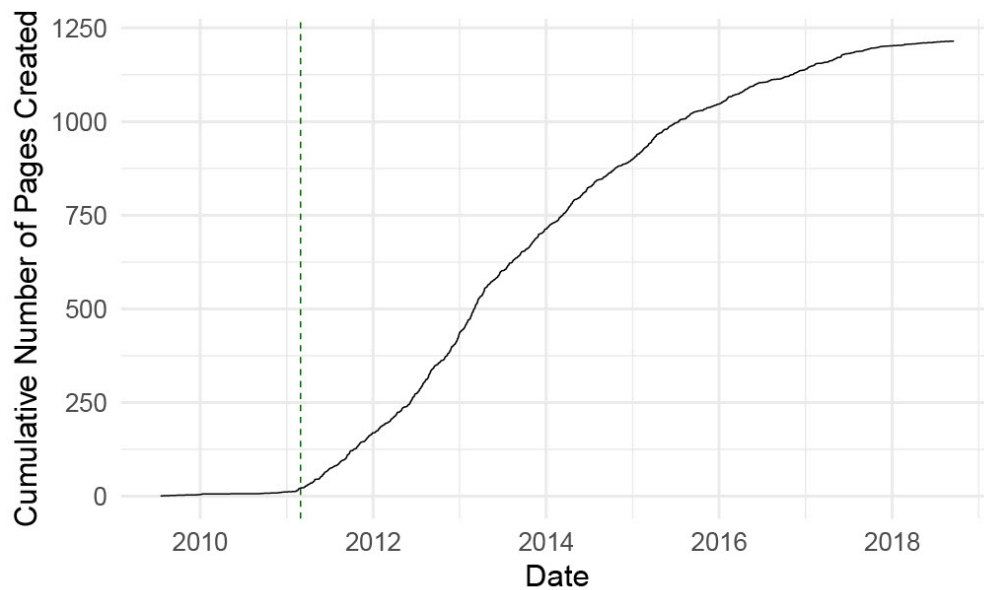

Figure A1: Cumulative page creation dates with vertical line at March 2011 uprising onset

Tracking Topics Over Time:

Analyses in the main text track the content of posts across all pages. This offers a dynamic view into adaptation and change over time. For example, if a group that was once engaged in contentious collective action like protest became more concerned with humanitarianism over time, we should see those concerns reflected in post content.

As noted in the main text, we base our analyses of organizations' substantive concerns on post content, rather than page content, in the main text. To that end, Table A1 displays the seed

words used in our word2vec models to identify key terms relevant to each topic of interest. This ensures that our dictionaries include a wide range of relevant terms including hashtags, slang, and other social-media specific discourse that might be missing from a traditional dictionary.

Survival & Protection	Governance	Contentious Politics
لاجئ	تنمية	عدالة
مهاجر	ادارة	حرية
نازح	تطوير	ثورة
وزع	خدمات	احتج
اغاثة	تعليم	تظاهر
انسانية	انتخابات	اضراب
احتياجات	لجنة	اعتصام
صحة	مكتب	مظاهرة
طبي	سجل	توثيق انتهاكات
مخيم	محكمة	حقوق
غذائية	قانون	معتقلين
حماية		مدنية

Table A1: Original list of key words by topic (keywords)

Volume of Posts by Location

Syria Only		Border States Only		Non-Border States Only		Translocal	
Locality	**Volume of Posts**	**Country**	**Volume of Posts**	**Country**	**Volume of Posts**	**Country**	**Volume of Posts**
Damascus	678500	Turkey	719475	UK	193674	Turkey	2575195
Idlib	594509	Jordan	31437	USA	50493	USA	297401
Aleppo	283002	Lebanon	23627	Germany	23462	France	55625
Rif Damascus	245557			Egypt	14002	Germany	55079
Homs	150644			Canada	11044	Belgium	49484
Deir al-Zur	145003			Netherlands	9979	Jordan	5924
Dar'a	91365			Greece	5595	Kuwait	3893
al-Hasakeh	82323			France	4857	Lebanon	1759
al-Raqqa	52574			Spain	2942	Morocco	393
Hama	48096			Italy	2631	UAE	383
al-Suwayda	24207			Sudan	1235	Sweden	324
Lattakia	18197			Switzerland	1080	UK	290
Quneitra	16654			Saudi Arabia	877	Switzerland	224
Northwest	14791			Denmark	739	Canada	188
Yarmouk	13939			Belgium	471		
Tartous	3166			Norway	449		
				UAE	72		
Syria Total	**2,462,527 (37%)**	**Border Total**	**774,539 (12%)**	**Non-Border Total**	**323,602 (5%)**	**Translocal Total**	**3,046,162 (46%)**

Table A2: Total volume of posts by governorate or region (for organizations operating within Syria) and by country (for organizations operating outside of Syria or Translocally).

Comparison of Post Volume to Refugee Counts

Finally, in our analysis of the "when" of civil organizing in the main text, we demonstrate the persistence of Syrians' civil organizing despite high levels of violence by plotting annual conflict deaths against post volume. In Figure A4 we share a comparison of refugee counts from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to post volume. This analysis offers additional evidence of persistence despite hardship and threat of the conflict context.
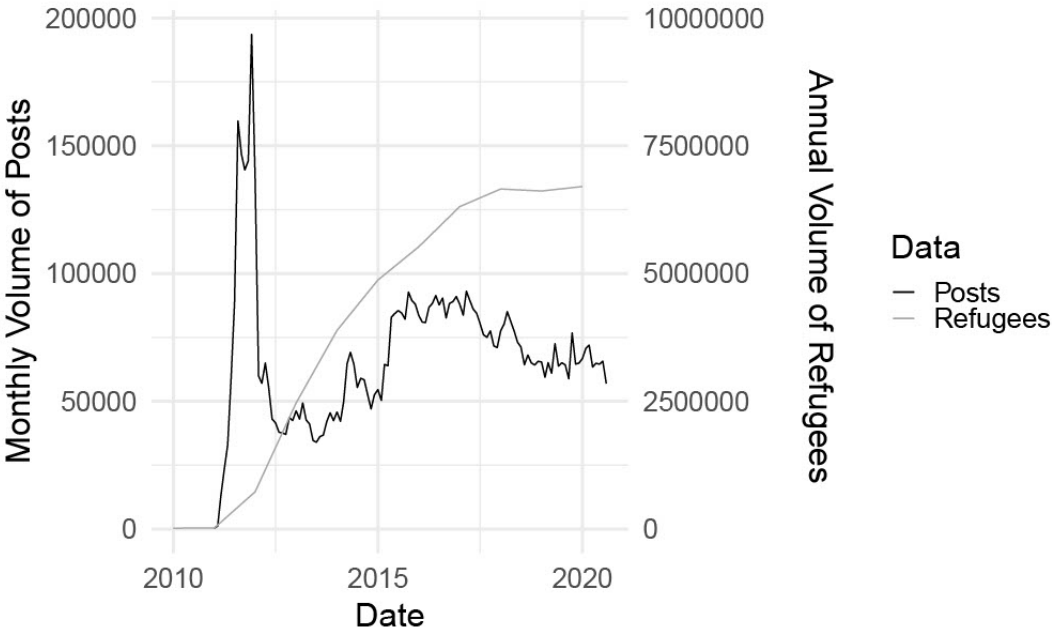
Figure A2: Monthly volume of posts over time across locations (left axis) compared to annual UNHCR refugee counts (right axis).

B: Qualitative Data

One of the authors conducted 130-plus semi-structured and in-depth interviews with displaced Syrians and international aid workers in Jordan, Turkey, and, less centrally, Lebanon over the course of ten months in the field from 2014 to 2017. Some interviews with activists and aid workers ran for less than one hour, others lasted many, and a few stretched over the years. Interviews with Syrians were generally conducted in colloquial Levantine Arabic. We took efforts to protect interview subjects and their confidentiality. Rather than arbitrate whether some individuals can be identified, for instance in the case they are publicly known figures or power-holders, we have retained everyone's anonymity. Accordingly, we cite them with a non-identifying number and year and country location of the interview. We do not share more granular details, such as the exact dates of interviews, because we believe this would pose undue risks to participants who may be of interest to Syrian, Jordanian, or Turkish intelligence agencies. The analytic advantages of greater detail would be extremely limited. We conveyed to participants the risks, (minimal) benefits, and purposes of participation, and obtained their verbal consent.[1]

Interview data was collected in the format preferred by the participant, and included audio recordings, handwritten notes, or no real time note-taking at all. We took steps to protect confidentiality such as de-identifying transcripts and destroying handwritten notes, among other procedures. Prior to traveling across international borders, we transferred files to a password-protected cloud, maintaining no digital files on our transported devices.

This author did not travel into Syria for research to protect themselves and interlocutors. The research might overrepresent the experiences of displaced Syrians. Yet the juncture of transnational and local processes in the border areas of the war is a feature, not a bug, of our account.

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[1] The research was approved by Northwestern University's Institutional Review Board (STU00094852).