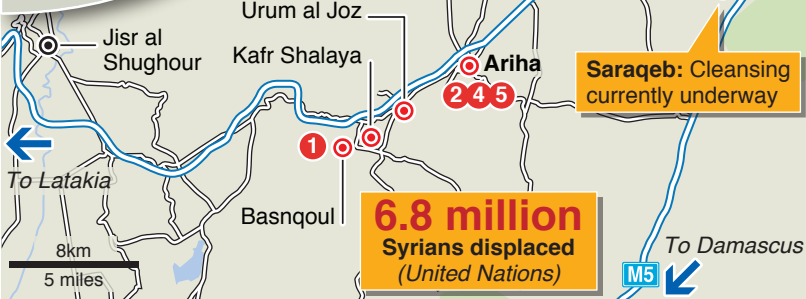


# Syrian army adopts "cleansing" tactics

Syrian forces have embarked on a strategy of "cleansing" towns and villages by bombarding them with their heaviest weapons in a bid to control a strategic government supply route



**Jun:** Three rebel groups with U.S.-backed **Free Syrian Army** join forces with Al Qaeda-linked **Nusra Front** to coordinate attacks on M4 supply route



**1 Jun-Jul:** Cleansing begins when government troops occupy **Basnqoul**, **Kafr Shalaya**, and **Urum al Joz**. Reports of massacres of residents – more than 15,000 people displaced

**2 Jul 17, Ariha:** Main market comes under mortar bombardment. Market is crowded at end of daylong fast during Ramadan

**3 Aug 1-3, Kafr Najd:** Troops execute civilians in door-to-door raids

**4 Aug 2-3, Ariha:** Troops enter town, killing civilians. **Aug 19:** Rebels retake town and close supply route

**5 Aug 21-Sep 2:** Two-week **Battle of Ariha** involves 600 rebels facing 1,000 government troops. 70,000 inhabitants displaced