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Syria Situation Report: October 10 - 24, 2017

1 October 10 - 11: Opposition Groups Withdraw from Stretch of Syrian-Jordanian Border: Jaysh Usud a-Sharqiyah and the Martyr Ahmad al-Abdo Brigade - two opposition groups backed by the U.S. and Jordan - withdrew from positions along the Syrian-Jordanian Border in Rif Dimashq Province. The two groups relocated to the outskirts of the Rukban IDP Camp in Eastern Homs Province within the fifty-five kilometer "de-confliction zone" brokered by the US and Russia near A-Tanf on the Syrian-Iraqi Border. The withdrawal reportedly occurred at the behest of the U.S. and Jordan.

2 October 12 - 13: Russia Brokers Local Ceasefire in Southern Damascus Ahead of Potential Regime Clearing Operation in IS-held Districts: Three

opposition groups including Salafi-Jihadist group Jaysh al-Islam announced a "preliminary" local ceasefire in several districts of Southern Damascus after negotiations brokered by Russia and Egypt in Cairo on October 12. The agreement did not include the regime. Pro-regime forces later launched their first airstrikes in two years targeting IS-held positions in the Hajar al-Aswad District of Southern Damascus on October 13.

3 October 16: Syria Fires Anti-Aircraft Missile at Israeli Planes Over Lebanon: A Syrian Arab Army (SAA) S-200 Surface-to-Air Missile System (SAMS) fired an anti-aircraft missile at a routine reconnaissance overflight by the Israeli Defense Forces in Lebanon. The SAA claimed that the missile targeted a warplane that violated the Syrian-Lebanese Border. Israel later conducted airstrikes that "incapacitated" a regime-operated anti-aircraft battery near Dumayr in the Eastern Qalamoun Mountains outside Damascus. Israel also conducted an airstrike targeting a regime artillery position in Northern Quneitra Province on October 20 after cross-border shelling struck the Golan Heights.

4 October 11: IS Conducts New Attack in Damascus: IS detonated three SVETs in an attack against the Damascus Police Headquarters in Central Damascus, killing at least five people and injuring at least six others. Two attackers detonated their explosives after clashing with security guards at the entrance to the headquarters. The third attacker detonated his explosives after police encircled him in a nearby market. IS conducted a similar triple suicide attack against a police station in the Midan District of Central Damascus on October 2.

5 October 21: Pro-Regime Forces Regain Key Crossroads Town in Eastern Qalamoun: Pro-regime forces regained full control over the key town of Qaryatayn in the Eastern Qalamoun Mountains after a withdrawal by IS. Pro-regime forces allegedly granted safe passage from the town to roughly two hundred fighters and civilians in exchange for the release of a number of hostages. Pro-regime forces later discovered at least seventy civilians executed for alleged collaboration with the regime after IS seized Qaryatayn on October 1. Activists later reported regime executions of local civilians with suspected affiliation to IS.

6 October 12 - 24: Turkish Armed Forces Launch Intervention into Idlib Province: Turkey launched a cross-border intervention involving hundreds of soldiers and tens of armored vehicles into Greater Idlib Province on October 12. The deployment established "observation posts" in Western Aleppo Province south of the majority-Kurdish Afrin Canton. The deployments occurred in coordination with Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS) - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat Fatah a-Sham. Turkish President Recep Erdogan stated that Turkey had "largely completed" military operations to establish a "de-escalation zone" in Idlib Province on October 24. Erdogan stated that subsequent operations will focus on the threat of the Syrian Kurdish YPG in Afrin Canton.

7 October 20 - 22: Russia Deploys Forces in Kurdish-Held Northern Aleppo Province: Russia reportedly deployed military personnel to key areas held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Northern Aleppo Province near the majority-Kurdish Afrin Canton on October 20, including the Menagh Military Airbase and Tel Rifaat. The deployments reportedly coincided with the arrival of a military delegation from the Turkish Armed Forces to Al-Bab in Northern Aleppo Province. Opposition sources later claimed ongoing negotiations between Turkey, Russia, and the U.S. to return turn over the positions to opposition groups backed by Turkey in Operation Euphrates Shield.

8 October 14 - 22: SDF Declares Victory Over IS in A-Raqqa City: The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and U.S. Anti-ISIS Coalition formally declared the total defeat of IS in A-Raqqa City on October 20. The success followed a deal brokered by the SDF-affiliated Raqqa Civilian Council that allowed for the surrender and evacuation of 275 Syrian IS fighters and civilians from A-Raqqa City on October 14. The deal excluded foreign fighters at the request of the U.S. Anti-ISIS Coalition. The Syrian Kurdish YPG later raised images of outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) Founder Abdullah Ocalan in Central A-Raqqa City on October 20, prompting outrage from Turkish President Recep Erdogan. The Pentagon condemned the display. Harakat al-Qiyam - a small militant group - issued a call for opposition groups to launch low-level attacks against the Syrian Kurdish YPG across Northern Syria on October 22.

9 October 16 - 23: Pro-Regime Forces Launch Offensive on IS-Held Districts of Deir e-Zor City: Pro-regime forces launched a major offensive to clear remaining IS-held districts in Deir e-Zor City on October 16. Pro-regime forces backed by heavy airstrikes reportedly advanced into the city after the alleged withdrawal of IS from several districts in Eastern Deir e-Zor City. Pro-regime forces also reportedly seized all villages along the Deir e-Zor-Mayadeen Highway south of Deir e-Zor City. Syrian Arab Army (SAA) Republican Guard 104th Brigade Commander Brig. Gen. Issam Zahreddine—a major pro-regime propaganda figure—reportedly died after his convoy struck an IED near Deir e-Zor City on October 18. Pro-regime warplanes later conducted an airstrike in the regime-held Qasour District of Deir e-Zor City on October 23, killing and wounding dozens of civilians. Pro-regime media blamed the strike on the U.S. Anti-ISIS Coalition. The Coalition denied conducting any recent airstrikes in Deir e-Zor City.

10 October 14 - 22: Pro-Regime Forces and SDF Continue 'Race' Down Euphrates River Valley: Pro-regime forces reportedly seized full control of Mayadeen in Deir e-Zor Province following heavy clashes with IS that began on October 4. IS had allegedly relocated a significant portion of its leadership, media and external attack cells in recent months to Mayadeen in response to coalition offensives against Mosul and A-Raqqa City. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) later seized the Omar Oil Field from IS in Eastern Deir e-Zor Province on October 22. The Omar Oil Field is the largest such oil field in Syria.

Areas of Control*

- Pro-Regime Forces
- Opposition Forces
- The Islamic State
- Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham
*Formerly Jabhat al-Nusra
- Kurdish Forces

Airstrikes

- ✈ Pro-Regime
- ✈ U.S. / Coalition



*THIS MAP DOES NOT DEPICT AL QAEDA CONTROL IN WESTERN SYRIA. ISW IS DEVELOPING A NEW CONTROL OF TERRAIN MAP THAT WILL ASSESS THE FULL EXTENT OF AL QAEDA PRESENCE IN SYRIA.

*Control of Terrain Accurate as of 10 OCT 2017

Text Credit: Sana Sekkarie

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