

Syria Situation Report: August 6 – 16, 2018

1 Aug 8: Jordanian Trade Minister Meets with Syrian Counterpart to Discuss Trade via Naseeb Border Crossing: Jordanian Ministry of Transport Secretary-General Annemar al-Khasawneh met with Syrian Industry and Trade Minister Mohammed Mazen Ali Yousef in Damascus on August 8 to discuss reopening the Naseeb Border Crossing on the Syrian-Jordanian Border. Al-Khasawneh stressed that the security of the route is a priority for the Government of Jordan once trade resumes between Jordan and Syria.

2 Aug 7: Emirati Business Delegation Travels to Damascus to Discuss Development Investment: An Emirati business delegation visited Damascus to discuss investment in a government-backed development project known as Marota City, southwest of Damascus. The delegation was led by Afaq Islamic Finance Council Vice Chairman and Emirates Development & Investment Company Chair Abdul Jalil Al-Baluki. The delegation met representatives of the Damascus Sham Holding Company as well as Damascus Province Governor Bishr al Sabban.

3 Aug 14: Turkish-Backed Opposition Group Targets Base in Hama Province: The National Liberation Front (NLF) attacked a base of the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) Tiger Forces in Western Hama Province with Grad Rockets. The Tiger Forces use the base to store helicopters. Opposition media sources claimed that the shelling damaged a government plane, two helicopters and one tank. Activists previously reported that government-affiliated "military helicopters" were transferred to the base from an unspecified location in Southern Syria on August 9.

4 Aug 14: Russian Forces Reportedly Attempt to Limit Pro-Government Escalation in Southern Idlib Province: Russian Military Police based in Northern Hama Province reportedly attempted to expel pro-government militias from positions near observation posts held by Turkey in Southern Idlib Province. The Syrian Arab Air Force dropped barrel bombs on Umm al-Khalakhil in Southern Idlib Province near front lines separating government forces from territory held by Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS). Civilians reportedly fled the area towards the Syrian-Turkish Border.

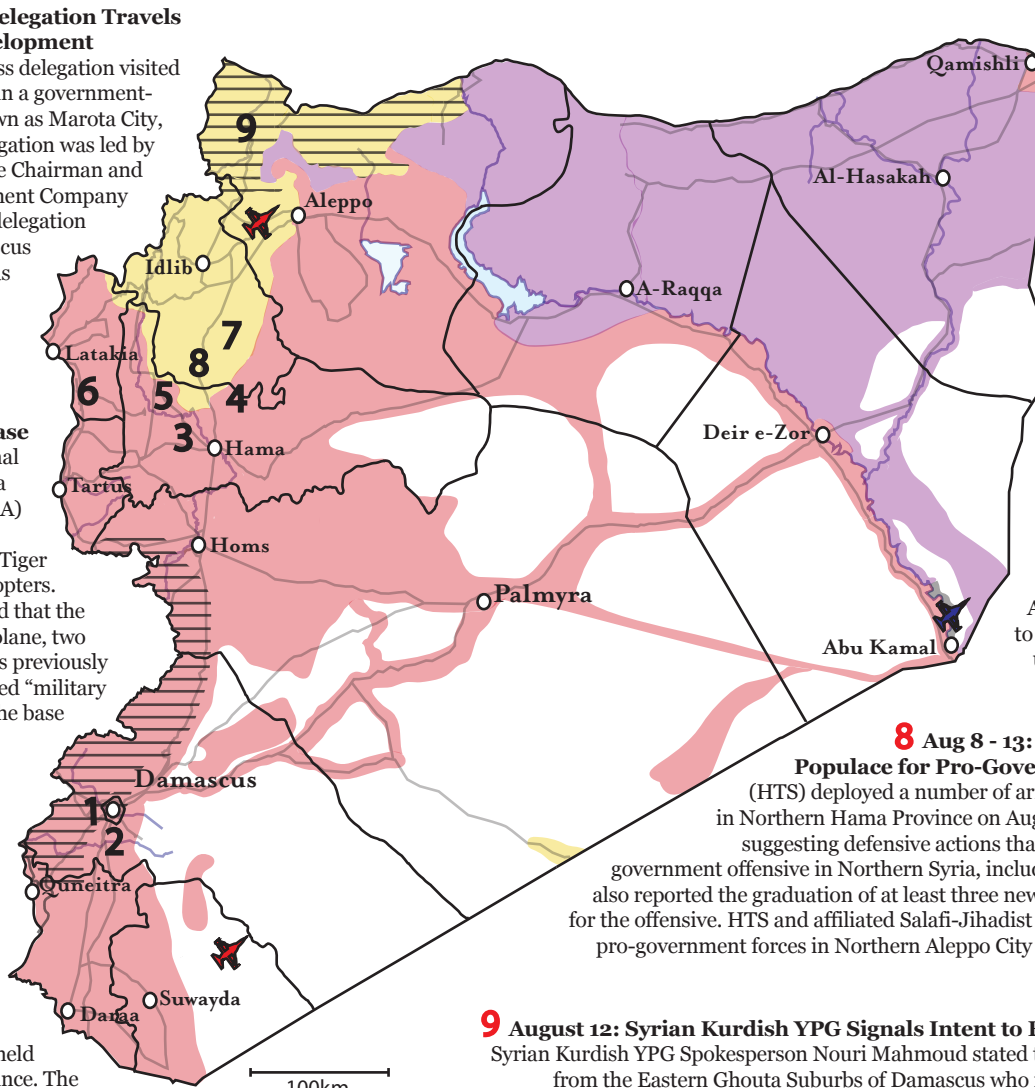
5 Aug 13 - 16: Pro-Government Forces Close Crossings into Idlib Province Amid Military Buildup: The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) closed frontline crossings at Qalaat al-Madiq and Morek in Northern Hama Province as a unspecified "preventative measure" on August 13. Pro-government forces later temporarily reopened crossings at Morek and Abu a-Duhur in Southern Idlib Province on August 16 in an attempt to persuade civilians to leave opposition-held areas of Idlib Province. The SAA warned that all of Idlib Province should be considered a "military zone" under the occupation of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS).

6 August 13: Unknown Militants Escalate Frequency of Drone Attacks on Russian Military Base: Russia stated that its air defenses destroyed at least five drones attempting to reach the Bassel al-Assad International Airport on the Syrian Coast. The incident is the fifth such drone attack targeting the base from Idlib Province since August 8. Russia blames the attacks on Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS)

7 July 27 - Aug 6: HTS Cracks Down on Supporters of Reconciliation in Idlib Province: Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS) and Salafi-Jihadist group Ahrar a-Sham arrested at least eighty individuals across Southern Idlib Province for their alleged support for political reconciliation with Damascus. The detainees reportedly included at least seventy members of the Forces of Martyr Ahmed al-Abdu - a Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated opposition group that relocated to Idlib Province from Eastern Qalamoun in April 2018 under an evacuation deal with Damascus and Russia.

8 Aug 8 - 13: Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham Prepares Forces, Local Populace for Pro-Government Offensive in Idlib: Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS) deployed a number of armed vehicles and other equipment toward front lines in Northern Hama Province on August 10. HTS officials have put out several statements suggesting defensive actions that can be taken to prepare opposition-held towns for a government offensive in Northern Syria, including the digging of fortified trenches. Pro-HTS media also reported the graduation of at least three new units of fighters from training camps in preparation for the offensive. HTS and affiliated Salafi-Jihadist group Jabal Islam have conducted limited attacks on pro-government forces in Northern Aleppo City and Jabal al-Turkman in Northern Latakia Province.

9 August 12: Syrian Kurdish YPG Signals Intent to Expel Displaced Arabs Living in Afrin Canton: Syrian Kurdish YPG Spokesperson Nouri Mahmoud stated that the YPG will seek to expel displaced Sunni Arabs from the Eastern Ghouta Suburbs of Damascus who resettled in majority-Kurdish Afrin Canton in Aleppo Province. Mahmoud stressed that "those who came from outside Afrin" will be a legitimate "target" in order to return Kurds to their homes in Afrin Canton. Local sources reported Turkey and affiliated opposition groups facilitated the movement of IDPs to Afrin Canton following their evacuation from Eastern Ghouta in April 2018.



Areas of Control*

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

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 30 AUG 2018