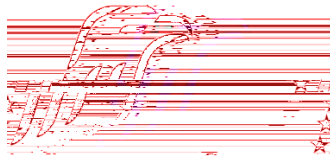


THE
CARTER CENTER



Weekly Conflict Summary
May 25-31, 2017

Over the course of this reporting period, ISIS has continued to lose large swathes of territory, especially to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and pro-government forces. Conflict around Daraa city and pro-government offensives are slated to start. Intra-opposition strife continued in Aleppo province and in Rural Damascus.



Figure 1 - Areas of control in Syria by May 31, with arrows indicating advances since the start of the reporting period. The underlying map is shaded based upon the density of population centers, with darker areas indicating greater density.

Fight against ISIS

In the eastern Aleppo countryside, pro-government forces advanced south from Jirah Airbase to reach the outskirts of Maskana, the last major ISIS-controlled town in Aleppo governorate. The government's Tiger Forces took control of the Maskana train station to the west of Masakana by May 28 while a pro-government force including elements of the 5th Assault Corps advanced rapidly towards Jaboul Lake, taking control of the entire eastern shoreline by May 29.

After weeks of preparations in Eastern Hama, on May 31 a pro-government offensive against ISIS started. The offensive aims first, to prevent ISIS from further harassing communities and supply lines. Tf1 0 0 1 537.34

soldiers were accused of looting, corruption, and maintaining allegiance to Nur al-Din al-Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, formerly the al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra).

Figure 5 - Map of the situation around the Turkey-backed Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) pocket in northern Syria by May 31

Ahrar al-Sham released a statement on May 31 that both underscored its commitment of non-aggression towards other groups while simultaneously promising a strong response to opposition groups that it claims are plotting to attack its fighters and positions. Ahrar al-Sham has previously clashed with Liwa Sultan Murad, a former ally within Operation Euphrates Shield, and last week announced its decision to relocate its positions from within Jarablus to the outskirts to defuse tensions within the city and protect citizens from potential infighting.

The shaky peace between Jaysh al-Islam, Faylak al-Rahman, and HTS came to an end during the reporting week. On May 25, the Syria Direct news platform released a report alleging that Faylak al-Rahman and HTS had forcibly removed the families of Jaysh al-Islam fighters from their homes. On May 30, Jaysh al-Islam attempted to storm HTS/Faylak al-Rahman positions in al-Ashari (Duma pocket). The resumption of infighting means that Jaysh al-Islam is now fighting on frontlines with both opposition and government forces.

Mergers and potential opposition developments

In the opposition-held Rastan pocket in northern Homs countryside, Faylak Homs announced its merger with Ahrar al-Sham, making Ahrar al-Sham the largest opposition group in the Rastan pocket.