

Fight against ISIS

On October 17, the SDF captured the final neighborhoods of Raqqa city from ISIS, marking the end of Operation Euphrates Wrath after nearly a year of advancement. In the days following, SDF member groups, including the mainly-Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG and YPJ), have documented civilians leaving heavily-mined zones. Much of the city has been destroyed and the civilian toll of the Coalition-provided close air support has been significant. Though the last neighborhoods were captured on October 17, clean-up operations persist and ISIS fighters are still surrendering to SDF units in large numbers.

No more measurable progress has been made into ISIS-controlled Deir Ezzor, with both the SDF and pro-



Figure 3 - Frontlines at the southeastern border of the opposition-held Idleb pocket by October 18

During the previous reporting period, Hai'yat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, formerly Jabhat al-Nusra) lost significant territory to a surprise ISIS offensive. This ISIS advance on October 9 created a temporary ISIS-controlled pocket in northeast Hama. HTS halted and reversed the ISIS advance with a counter-offensive involving the use of artillery, armored vehicles, and suicide attacks. The HTS counter-offensive is most active from the west end of the ISIS "pocket" and has so far captured a little less than half of the towns lost in the initial ISIS attack. HTS has so far recaptured Um Miyal, Abu Kahf, Abu al-Ghar, Rahjan, and Mustarihah, and Northern and Southern Sarha.

Developments within the opposition

Intra-opposition clashes in northern Aleppo broke out between the Sham Front and Sultan Murad Division following the decision by the Sham Front to hand over control of the lucrative Bab al-Salama border crossing to the opposition's Syrian Interim Government. The Sham Front decision to hand over control to the Syrian Interim Government was also a response to previous threats by Sultan Murad to take over the crossing by force of arms. Clashes between the groups have since ceased and the matter is being arbitrated.

Weekly Conflict Summary

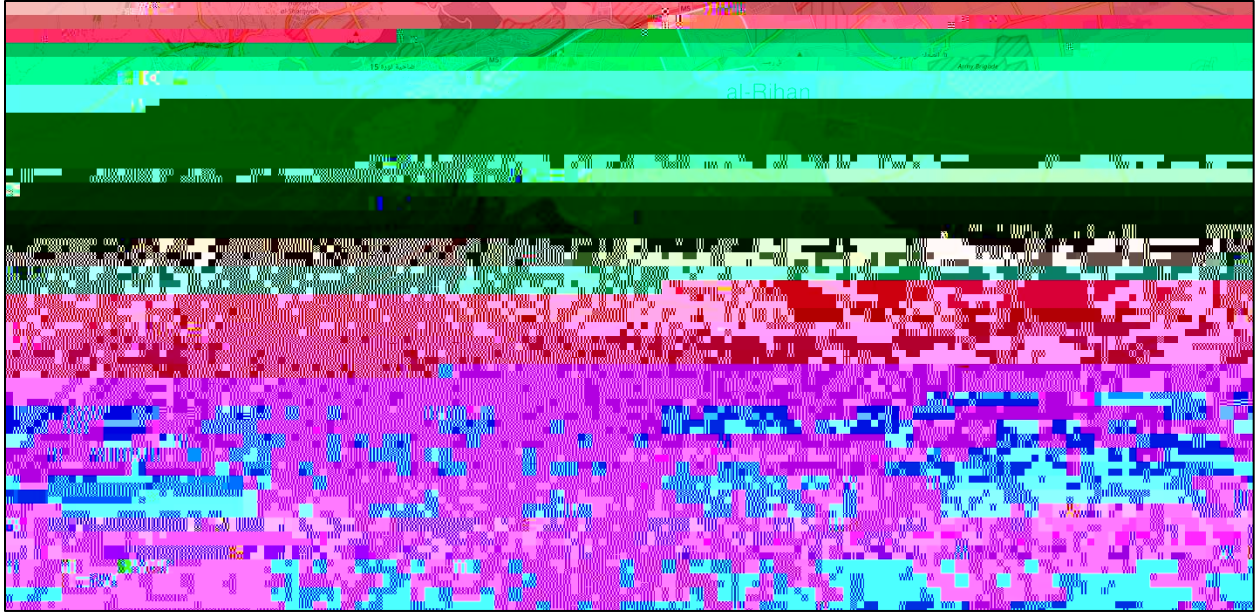


Figure 6 - Areas of control around Damascus and the Eastern Ghouta by October 18

Eastern Ghouta continues to witness regular clashes, aerial bombardment, and shelling. Harasta was shelled on October 13, followed by airstrikes on Shifouniyeh and Reyhan on October 13. On October 16, government forces shelled Kafr Batna, Misraba, Duma, and Beit Sawa, and launched airstrikes on Hazzeh, Hosh al-Dawahira, and Hazarma. Clashes between Faylaq al-Rahman and pro-government forces on the Ain Terma front have continued.

A ceasefire was reached between Jaysh al-Islam and pro-government forces with Russia and Egypt mediating. No details about the duration or precise location of the ceasefire areas have been released, but it is expected that it includes Yalda and Beit Sahem. Given the relatively low levels of conflict in the area, residents worry that citizens could be forcibly displaced as in the case of previous reconciliation deals.

FSA forces in the Syrian desert (Jaysh Osoud al-Sharqiya, Quwwat al-Shaheed Ahmad al-Abdo, and Maghaweir al-Thawra) have all retreated into the deconfliction zone surrounding the Tanf base. This retreat solidifies pro-government forces' control in the Badia along the Jordanian border. Ten fighters from Quwwat al-Shaheed Ahmad al-Abdo defected to pro-government forces prior to the retreat.

A Syrian surface-to-air missile targeted an Israeli military plane during a routine flight over Lebanese airspace, prompting Israel to respond by striking a Syrian airbase east of Damascus and warning Syria “not to play with fire.”