

WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 7 - 13 JANUARY 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

NORTHWEST | Hayyat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) continued its military and administrative expansion against the Turkish backed National Liberation Front (NLF) in Idleb governorate, focusing activity on the Ghab plains in the south west.

NORTHWEST SYRIA

Consolidating their substantial gains in northeast Idleb Governorate and western Aleppo last week, Al Qaeda-aligned Hayyat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) continued its expansion campaign in the north west of Syria. This week, the group switched its focus to the southwest portions of the opposition pocket, with fighting between HTS and the Turkish Backed National Liberation Front (NLF) concentrated around the Ghab plains. As a result, HTS took over several NLF controlled towns by the end of the period, including Sahel Ghab, Mount Shashabo, Hamidiya, Dukmak, Al

Kurdish groups in Syria. On 13 January, President Trump [tweeted](#) that the US "...will devastate Turkey Economically if they hit the Kurds...", implying further sanctions could be placed on Turkey. Adding further confusion to the situation, President Trump also implied Turkey should "create [a] 20-mile safe zone" without further elaboration.

WATCH LIST

The watch list outlines various dynamics that The Carter Center's Syria Project is monitoring in the coming weeks:

NORTHWEST | Ongoing internal dynamics within the Idlib pocket, especially signs for further HTS or NLF territorial changes, a widening of HTS's civilian control or signs of government preparations for a military operation against the enclave.

SOUTH | Signs of any change to Iranian or Israeli strategy in Syria.

NORTHEAST | The ongoing anti-ISIS campaign in south west Deir Ez Zor governorate, ongoing political dynamics between Damascus and Kurdish groups in the northeast as well as between Turkey and the US.