

Southern Syria Updates

Opposition forces from the Jaysh Usoud al-desert over this week, reaching points west of Mayadin by May 2. ISIS attempted to retake several positions that it had lost to the Usoud al Sharqiya offensive on April 29th, however, the group and its allies in the Forces of the Martyr Ahmad Abdo were able to remain in control of many of the areas around Thawra Airport, west of Abu Kamal.

Figure 2 - Map of areas of control in southeastern Syria by May 3

Syrian Civil Defense medics reported being targeted by pro-government warplanes on May 1 while responding to a strike in Otayba, east of Damascus. Hezbollah targeted the medics again on May 2 in Eastern Daraa. In both cases, as with instances before, pro-government forces struck a civilian area, and waited for Civil Defense teams to arrive before striking again.

Inter-opposition fighting in Eastern Ghouta

On April 28, tensions between Jaysh al-Islam and Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, formerly Jabhat al-Nusra) came to a head as clashes broke out between the two in the towns of Arbin, Kafr Batna, Madyara, and al-
a, near Damascus. According to Jaysh al-Islam, HTS had been harassing Jaysh al-Islam fighters for months, and kidnapped a squad of fighters trying to pass through a HTS checkpoint en route to fight pro-government forces. HTS contests this, saying that Jaysh al-Islam

Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders, MSF) to terminate one of its programs in Eastern Ghouta. In response, Jaysh al-Islam issued yet another statement stating that it respects all medical centers, hospitals, and medical professionals, and does not target them.

Other armed groups in the area have taken sides on the issue. Ahrar al-Sham released a statement denouncing Jaysh al-Islam. Free Syrian Army-aligned (FSA) groups and the Revolutionary Council of Menegh issued a joint statement in support of Jaysh al-Islam (though, not all FSA-aligned groups appear to be in support of the statement). The Muslim Brotherhood also issued a general call for unity without taking sides.

On May 2, Jaysh al-Islam fighters killed Abu Najib, a captain of Faylaq al-Rahman, during its operations in Zamalka (Eastern Ghouta). Also on May 2, Colonel Abu Muhammad al-Kurdi defected to Jaysh al-Islam from Faylaq al-Rahman.

Pro-government forces have taken advantage of opposition infighting in the Eastern Ghouta, intensifying operations in the territory and advancing in Qaboun over this reporting period.

Developments within Kurdish-held areas

Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) advanced against ISIS in Tabqa, securing the entirety of the city on May 4 after a negotiated withdrawal of remaining ISIS fighters. Tabqa is the first major city south of the Euphrates to be captured by SDF forces, and affords the SDF-led Euphrates Wrath (EW) Raqqa offensive coalition a new foothold in the advance on the ISIS capital of Raqqa.

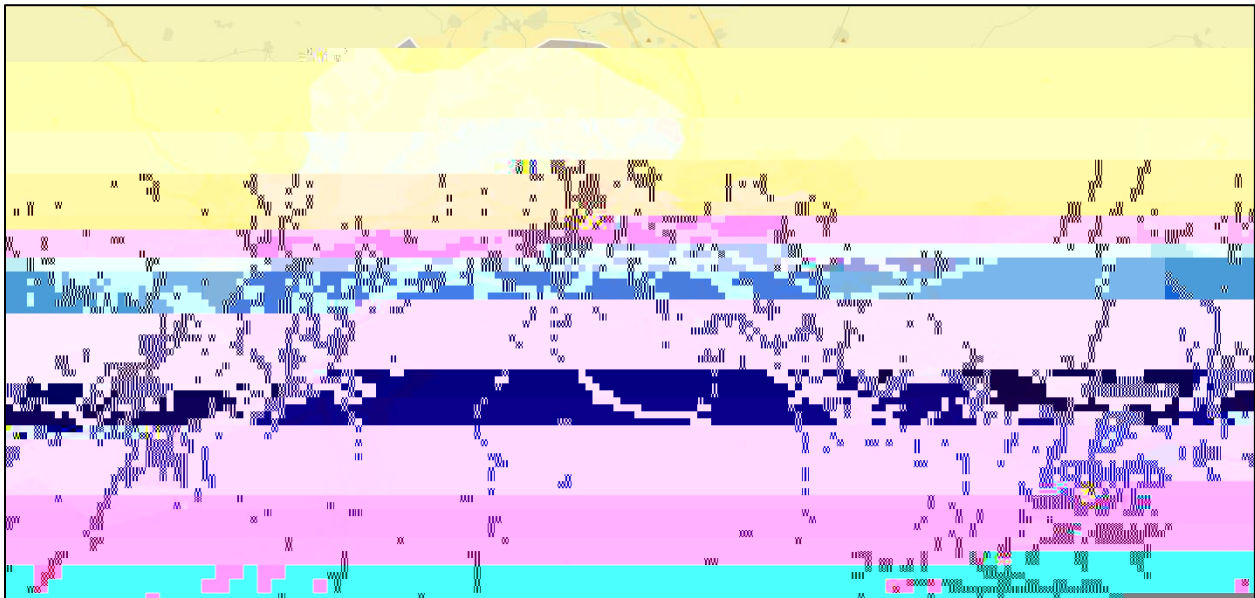


Figure 3 - Map of areas of control around Tabqa and Raqqa by May 3

airstrike in northeastern Hasakah, US armored personnel carriers (APCs) and US ground forces were seen entering Syria from Iraq on April 28, reportedly to deploy along the Turkish-Syrian border in Hasakah and to deter further escalation between YPG and Turkish forces in the area. What appears to be the same convoy of US armored vehicles accompanied by YPG units passed through the border city of Qamishli and was last seen in the village of Ghanamiyah in the Darbasiyah sub-district, 50 kilometers west of Qamishli near the location where the YPG and Turkish forces clashed at the

