

WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 11 May - 17 May 2020

SYRIA SUMMARY

NORTHWEST | Conflict between Hurras al Din and Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces and militias continued. Turkish-backed opposition militias clashed with GoS, the Kurdish dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and the Afrin Liberation Forces. Again this week, rioters confronted the joint patrols by Russian and Turkish forces. The Israeli air force attacked pro-Iranian militia positions in central Aleppo Governorate.

SOUTH & CENTRAL | GoS armed forces continued their military buildup

NORTHWEST SYRIA¹

Conflict between Hurras al Din and GoS armed forces and militias

conducted only 2 airstrikes in northwest Syria, and 11 total airstrikes in the region since 1 January 2018 (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Israeli airstrikes between 1 January 2018 to 16 May 2020. Data from ACLED and The Carter Center.

SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA

Following a deadly police station attack in Mzeireb during the preceding week, GoS continued its military buildup in Dara'a Governorate. Between 10-13 May, GoS armed forces and pro-Iranian militias reinforced their positions within Dara'a Governorate⁹ in anticipation for a military offensive targeting Tafas city, to capture the individuals who carried out the attack in Mzeireb. This military build up is part of a larger campaign to rid the southern region of anti-government "sleeper cells"¹⁰ (see figure 3 depicting locations of attacks against GoS forces since January 2020 and locations of the military reinforcements). Widespread protests against the planned offensive took place on 13 May in Tafas city.¹¹ Additional protests took place on 14-15 May in Tafas city, Sahm El Golan, and Dara'a city. The protests were against the military buildup and demanded that pro-Iranian militias withdraw from the governorate.

Attacks against pro-GoS personnel and former opposition fighters continued across Dara'a Governorate. On 11 May, a former opposition fighter was killed in Dara'a city by unidentified gunmen. GoS armed forces clashed with unidentified gunmen in Hrak on 12 May, resulting in the aati pT(2)-5()Tf1 0 7(r)-5m71.9 Tm0r(nm)-9(e)8(n)

Attacks by ISIS-affiliated individuals continued this week. On 14 May, an alleged ISIS gunman killed two GoS soldiers in Mseifra in Dara'a Governorate.¹² On 17 May in Al-Sukhnah, Homs Governorate, ISIS executed four people on allegations that they were GoS spies reporting on ISIS positions in the Al-Sukhnah desert. ISIS had kidnapped these four people two months earlier.¹³

GoS armed forces (4th Division) demolished 50 houses in Harasta city in Rural Damascus Governorate, continuing a pattern since it retook the area in May 2017. GoS checkpoints prevented civilians from entering the area.¹⁴

Figure 3: Incidents in Dara'a Governorate, 11-16 May 2020 as well as locations of the military reinforcements (red). Largest bubble is equal to 20 incidents, smallest bubble is 1. Data from ACLED and The Carter Center.

NORTHEAST SYRIA

On 17 May, a suspected Israeli airstrike hit pro-Iranian militias in Al-Bukamal city on the Iraqi border, Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.¹⁵ Prior to the strike the strike t8-81(b)7(o)-8(r)-5(

circulating that additional pro-Iranian militias were coming into the area.¹⁶ Israel has increased its airstrikes in Syria as global attention has focused on COVID-19.¹⁷

This week, the SDF engaged in several raids and clashes in Al-Hassakah Governorate. On 12 May, Turkish forces and SDF clashed after the latter entered Turkish-held Operation Peace Spring (OPS) areas, resulting in the deaths of three SDF fighters. On 13 May, SDF

Administration¹⁹. According to the Autonomous Administration, there is only one other recorded case of COVID-19 in the area under their administration.

Figure 4: Anti-ISIS raids and clashes in northeast Syria between 1 January to 16 May 2020. Data