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On 17 August, an improvise explosive device (IED) struck a Turkish-Russian joint patrol on the M4 highway in Ariha city, Idlib Governorate, damaging a Turkish armed forces vehicle. The Khattab al-Shishani (Chechen) Brigades daimed responsibility for the attack. While previous patrols began in Turnabah, this patrol started in Ain al-Hawr (see figure 2). This was the second attack by the group, having previously targeted the joint patrol on 14 July. On 18 August, the Russian air force attacked armed opposition groups allegedly responsible for the attack on the joint patrol in Idlib Governorate. This was the first time in August that Russia conducted airstrikes in Idlib Governorate.

Figure 2: The Turkish-Russian joint patrol on the M4 highway in Idlib Governorate. Data from ACLED and The Carter Center.

On 18 August, Government of Syria (GoS) changed the leadership for its military intelligence for frontline areas of northwest Syria.<sup>6</sup> Wafiq Nasser was appointed to lead the Military Intelligence in Aleppo Governorate. Wafiq Nasser played an integral role in GoS military operations in As-

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before his transfer	to Hama Gove	ernorate in 2	2018. <sup>7</sup> Human	rights group	s have

The US imposed new sanctions on GoS officials and officers under the Caesar Act. On 20 August, the US treasury imposed new sanctions on six individuals <sup>36</sup> affiliated with and GoS-backed militias. On 28 July, the US had imposed Caesar Act sanctions on 14 individuals and entities providing support to GoS.

On 17 August, US armed forces clashed with GoS armed forces in Tal al-Dahab<sup>37</sup> near Qamishli city, Al-Hassakah Governorate. <sup>38</sup> A

region of Syria, often attacking GoS armed forces in Homs and Deir-ez-Zor Governorates.<sup>51</sup>

Tensions continued between the SDF and Arab tribes in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. On 17 August, the Al-Baggara tribe refused to hand over weapons to US armed forces, after the tribe forced out the SDF from multiple towns in eastern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. <sup>52</sup> On 19 August, the SDF Commander-in-Chief Mazloum Abdi met with tribal leaders to defuse tensions and discuss ongoing differences. <sup>53</sup> On 20 August, pro-GoStribes gathered in Aleppo city and declared their loyalty to the GoS and solidarity with tribes in the Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. <sup>54</sup>

The Turkish armed forces and Turkish-backed armed opposition groups stopped the water supply to Al-Hassakah city and its surrounding areas at the Alouk pumping station near Ras al-Ain, Al-Hassakah Governorate.<sup>55</sup> At least one million people were affected. On 22 August, the GoS criticized Turkey for the water cutoff..<sup>56</sup> The same day, an agreement was reached to restore the water supply in exchange for the GoS supplying additional electricity to Turkish-held areas.<sup>57</sup> This incident was the 8<sup>th</sup> reported time that Turkish armed forces had stopped the water supply to SDF-controlled areas in northeast Syria.<sup>58</sup>

COVID-19 cases continued to rise during the reporting period. On 17 August, the International Rescue Committee reported a 60% increase in COVID-19 cases in northeast Syria and highlighted the threat to healthcare workers in the region. On 23 August, 27 new infections were reported, for a total of 354 infections and 7 deaths. ODF-controlled areas have reported a shortage of oxygen supplies due to the spread of COVID-19.61

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> https://cgpolicy.org/articles/strengthening-and-expanding-isis-central-syria-campaign/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-tribe-refuses-to-handover-weapons-to-us-forces-in-deir-ezzor/

<sup>53</sup> https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/190820201

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/over-50-syrian-tribes-announce-unconditional-support-for-uprising-against-us-coalition/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/08/turkey-starves-water-syria-northeast-coronavirus-hasakeh.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syria-calls