

Weekly Conflict Summary

August 11-17, 2016

Continuing a trend from previous weeks, reports of conflict in Syria from August 11-17 remained extremely high in Aleppo governorate. Throughout this period, the majority of conflict took place in the northern governorates, though several events of humanitarian concern continue outside of northern Syria as well.

After months of gains in the countryside and weeks of slow-but-steady advance in urban Menbij, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) took control of the city from ISIS. Over the weekend, SDF fighters began to de-mine the city and confirmed control of Menbij by August 17. After more than two months of conflict, the medical services of the city are badly damaged, severely lacking medical personnel, medicine, and necessary supplies. In some cases, nurses and medics have no capacity to respond to critical injuries from landmines in the city and nearby countryside.

During the week of August 15, a renewed pro-government counter-offensive in southwest Aleppo city afforded significant results. By August 17, much of the 1070 Apartments located in Ramousa neighborhood had been recaptured by pro-government forces. The apartments border the Ramousa highway, which the opposition was attempting to use as a resupply route into East Aleppo. Both opposition and government-controlled areas of Aleppo city are receiving only limited shipments of food, aid, and other goods as forces from both sides restrict badly damaged resupply routes. No roadblocks have yet been installed on either resupply line in the south of Aleppo.

Figure 1 - Frontlines in Aleppo by August 17 and two resupply routes.

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Russian officials this week recognized that three-hour ceasefires would not be long enough for aid organizations to provide properly for civilians in Aleppo. While no firm policy was proposed by Russia by August 17, diplomats and military leaders had not yet declined the UN's suggestion of 48-hour truces over weekends, keeping open the possibility of such an arrangement. Currently, internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the 1070 Apartments are seeking shelter in informal camps in Salah al-Din, al-Furqan, and the University area of Western Aleppo.

In northern Aleppo, opposition fighters advanced on ISIS-held al-Rai'i, led by Fastaqim Kama Umirt with air support from the US and shelling from Turkey. The opposition forces were unable to hold gains against strong counterattacks. Control of the town has changed several times, but ISIS was in control of the area as of August 17. In northern Aleppo countryside, tensions remained high between SDF and opposition forces following clashes near opposition-controlled A'zaz to the west.

ISIS renewed an offensive on the area surrounding Kwaieres Airbase, located east of Aleppo city. This resulted in high casualties for pro-government fighters due to a round of suicide attacks and the clashes that followed. Locals claim that ISIS launched a chemical attack on Mare' on August 16, almost exactly a year after a chemical attack by ISIS in August 2015.

Attacks against civilian areas and medical facilities by Syrian government or Russian airplanes continue this week. On August 12, a women and children's hospital in Kafr Hamra was destroyed by airstrikes.

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