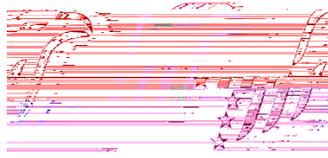


THE
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Weekly Conflict Summary
July 06-12, 2017

New ceasefires in southern Syria were successful in slowing the rising tide of conflict in the area, particularly in Daraa city. This most recent ceasefire comes on the heels of the largely abandoned attempt at forming “de-escalation zones” throughout much of western Syria. The limited geographic scope of this southern ceasefire may increase prospects for success, particularly as most belligerents appear to be more concerned with advancing against rapidly-collapsing ISIS frontlines in eastern Syria. The decrease in fighting in Daraa, however, has coincided with an increase in pro-government activity to the east near the Jordanian and Iraqi borders.

Despite the decrease in violence in Daraa, fighting in Rural Damascus, both between pro-government and opposition forces as well as within opposition forces, remained intense during this reporting period. In Syria’s southeastern desert, pro-government forces have advanced further into opposition-held areas in an apparent attempt to isolate a pocket of opposition-held territory in rural Damascus and eastern Suweida governorates. In northern Syria, tensions remain high between Ahrar al-Sham and Hai’yat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, formerly al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra), especially around the Bab al-Hawa border crossing in northern Idlib. Frontlines between Kurdish groups and Arab opposition forces have also seen increased tension, including major protests against Kurdish advances.

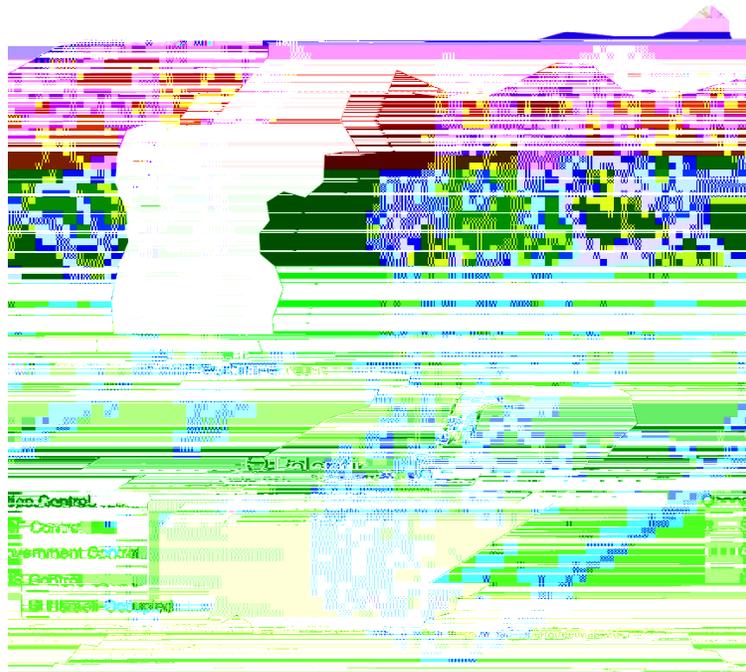


Figure 1 - Areas of control in Syria by July 12, with arrows indicating advances since the start of the reporting period

deal does not have the backing of the UN, given the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the environment in Syria to which the refugees are returning.

Territorial Changes in the Badiya

Since the beginning of the US-Russia-Jordan brokered ceasefire in southwest Syria on July 9 that includes Quneitra, Daraa, and Suweida governorates, fighting has substantially increased in the Badiya region of Rural Damascus near the administrative border with Suweida.



Figure 3 - Situation in Syria's southeast (also known as the "Badiya") by July 12

On July 10, as part of a surprise government offensive in violation of the ceasefire, pro-government forces captured positions from opposition forces east of Khalkhala (in northern Suweida governorate). The same day, FSA-linked Jaysh Usoud al-Sharqiya re-established control over Um Rumam, approximately 60km to the east. A day later, Usoud al-Sharqiya damaged and set fire to a government helicopter near al-Seen airbase. Pro-government forces have advanced south of al-Seen airbase and taken control of Jabal Makhoul and Jabal Seis. Usoud al-Sharqiya and Quwat al-Shaheed Ahmad al-Abdo also released a joint statement condemning Russia's role of providing air support for pro-government ground operations, calling for action from the international community and urging other opposition groups not to back any deal where Russia is a guarantor. By July 13, fighting on these fronts cooled. Pro-government units involved in this latest round of fighting included the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), National Defense Forces (NDF), and the Palestinian Liberation Army, in addition to elements of the Syrian Arab Army. Though fighting has subsided, the territory recently gained by pro-government forces places them in a strong position to advance further and isolate the opposition-controlled territory in eastern Suweida governorate.

While the offensive on Baath City in Quneitra has finished, clashes continue between pro-government and opposition forces in the governorate. On July 8, before the ceasefires, pro-government forces tried to take al-Ajraf and Western Samadaniyah, resulting in clashes with the opposition's Liwa Saif al-Sham. The Syrian Arab Army also clashed with HTS, capturing Mukhtar on July 9.

Reports have circulated for the past few weeks that up to 100 FSA-aligned Maghawir al-Thawra fighters had moved from the area near al-Tanf on the Iraqi border to al-Shaddadi, an SDF-controlled area in al-Hasakeh. The leader of Maghawir al-Thawra, Mohammed al-Tala'a, and the head of the group's media office, Albara' al-Fares, both clarified the situation this week. According to their statements, Maghawir al-Thawra has been in negotiations with the International Coalition about Maghawir al-Thawra opening a base

in al-Shaddadi. However, Maghawir al-Thawra has expressed a wish to remain independent of the SDF, a demand that has caused the negotiations to stall. Secondly, the bulk of Maghawir al-Thawra's fighters have not yet been deployed to al-Shaddadi, with only 40 having traveled to the northern city. This move would bring Maghawir al-Thawra fighters, most of whom are from Deir Ezzor, closer to home, which has been

Two HTS fighters were killed by Soqour al-Sham, a sub-unit of Ahrar al-Sham, in Sarjah town in southeastern Idlib, further raising tensions in the area. Additionally, an HTS fighter fired shots in a confrontation with Syrian Civil Defense (SCD, also known as the “White Helmets”) in Jisr al-Shughour over a local dispute. An HTS statement confirms shots fired but explained they were the improper actions of an individual fighter, and the issue appears to have been resolved.

Figure 5 - Frontines around Tadmor by July 12

After a week of relative inactivity, at least some elements of Tiger Forces have resumed their eastward offensive. The frontlines around Tadmor have shifted eastward by approximately 10-15 kilometers. This indicates a renewed offensive posture by the forces in the area.

SDF fighters also advanced once more on the southern banks of the Euphrates, south of Raqqa city. Offensives in this area have further solidified the siege of Raqqa, and begun what appears to be an advance towards Mayadin, where much of the remaining ISIS leadership is believed to have fled.

The full capture of Mosul was announced this week after a year of combat and heavy destruction of the