

## **WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 20 - 26 MAY 2019**

### **WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY**

- **NORTHWEST** | Government advances in the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS)-dominated Idleb pocket slowed this week after an HTS counter offensive on Kafr Nabuda town. Elsewhere, opposition bombardments on government areas widened to

## NORTHWEST SYRIA

The momentum of the Government of Syria's advance in the southwest corner of the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS)-dominated Idlib enclave slowed this week despite advances in the previous two weeks, and ongoing aerial and ground bombardments<sup>2</sup> (Figure 2).

*Figure 2: Reported Government (blue) and NSOAG (red) activity in the northwest of Syria in 2019 (bottom).*

While momentum slowed last week coinciding with a prisoner exchange between HTS and the government on 17 May and a Russian [announcement](#) that a ceasefire would be applied to the northwest, a HTS counter-

*Figure 3: Areas taken by Government Offensive in the northwest of Syria by 26 May 2019*

The humanitarian situation in the Idleb pocket continued to deteriorate. The UN [reported](#) that more than 200,000 people had been displaced from southern Idleb / Northern Hama governorates due to the fighting in May, some as far as Jarablus in the Turkish-dominated Euphrates Shield area. The [report](#) also stated that 20 health facilities, 25 schools, three IDP settlements and one refugee camp had been affected by the hostilities.

Government bombardments also resulted in setting crops on fire in the vicinity of [Al Naqir](#) and [Khan Sheikhun](#) towns. The civil defence organisation, The White Helmets, [reported](#) that they had responded to 38 fires in the Idleb and Hama governorates in the previous week alone. Such events are concerning for the long-term food security of the area.

### **SOUTH AND CENTRAL SYRIA**

In the South, attacks against government-aligned personnel or former opposition fighters continued. Two small arms fire attacks were recorded, the first against a government checkpoint in As Sanamayn town, and the second against a former Mutaaz Bilah Army member in Mzeireb. These attacks bring the total number of attacks in southern Syria since January 2019 to 97. On average

*Figure 4: Attacks against government and aligned personnel in southern Syria (Daraa, Quneitra and As Sweida Governorates) in 2019.*

Pro-government sources [reported](#) that an unidentified group assaulted a military intelligence base near Jileen town on 23 May, temporarily taking control of the town and holding a number of government intelligence officers hostage. This is the first case of a takeover of a government-dominated location since opposition groups held large parts of Daraa Governorate last year.

In central areas of the country, more ISIS attacks occurred this week. On 21 May, a contingent of ISIS fighters [ambushed](#) a Syrian Army patrol using small arms and anti-tank weapons near the Bushri mountain, east of Sokhneh town. Three days

the second involved a motorcycle SVBIED detonating in Tal Tamer town near Shadadah town.

At least three suicide attacks have been recorded in this area in the previous 12 months, most recently on 9 April 2019. Overall IED activity is frequent in the district, with 35 events recorded since January 2019.

Arson attacks against agricultural fields were also recorded across northeastern Syria this week. Crops were set on fire in Mhemideh town, Markada town, Hasakah City and [Raqqqa City](#). The perpetrators and relationship between the events are unknown. However, continued arson attacks could have a detrimental effect on the long-term food security of the region.

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