

Syria Situation Report: August 18 - August 25, 2016

1 August 25: Opposition groups allegedly reach ceasefire deal in Darayya. Opposition groups in Darayya in the Western Ghouta Suburbs of Damascus allegedly agreed to a ceasefire deal with pro-regime forces allowing opposition fighters to evacuate to Idlib Province. Less than 1,000 opposition fighters reportedly remain in Darayya, which has been besieged by pro-regime forces since 2012.

2 August 24: Opposition group calls for Unified Military Operations Room in Eastern Ghouta. Islamist group Faylaq a-Rahman released a statement calling for the formation of a Unified Military Operations Room that includes all factions in the Eastern Ghouta Suburbs of Damascus in response to recent gains by pro-regime forces. Faylaq a-Rahman also announced the transfer of all of its security operations to local police forces and judicial councils. The measure comes amidst growing public criticism of Faylaq a-Rahman and other groups for infighting and hoarding supplies.

3 August 24: UN and OPCW blames regime for chemical attacks. The Joint Investigative Mechanism run by the UN and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) issued a report blaming the regime for using barrel bomb containing chlorine gas on 21 APR 2014 in Talmenes and 16 MAR 2015 in Sarmin, both in Idlib Province. The report also accused IS of conducting an attack using sulfur mustard gas in Mare'a in Northern Aleppo Province on 21 AUG 2015. The inquiry did not attribute blame for six additional attacks.

4 August 18: Russia expresses support for 48-hour ceasefires in Aleppo City. The Russian Ministry of Defense released a statement expressing support for the implementation of a weekly 48-hour "humanitarian pause" in Aleppo City as called for by UN Special Envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura. The statement noted that a "pilot program" will deliver aid via two separate routes to both regime-held and opposition-held districts of the city. The UN later stated on August 25 that it was prepared to send humanitarian aid but still required approval from other actors on the ground.

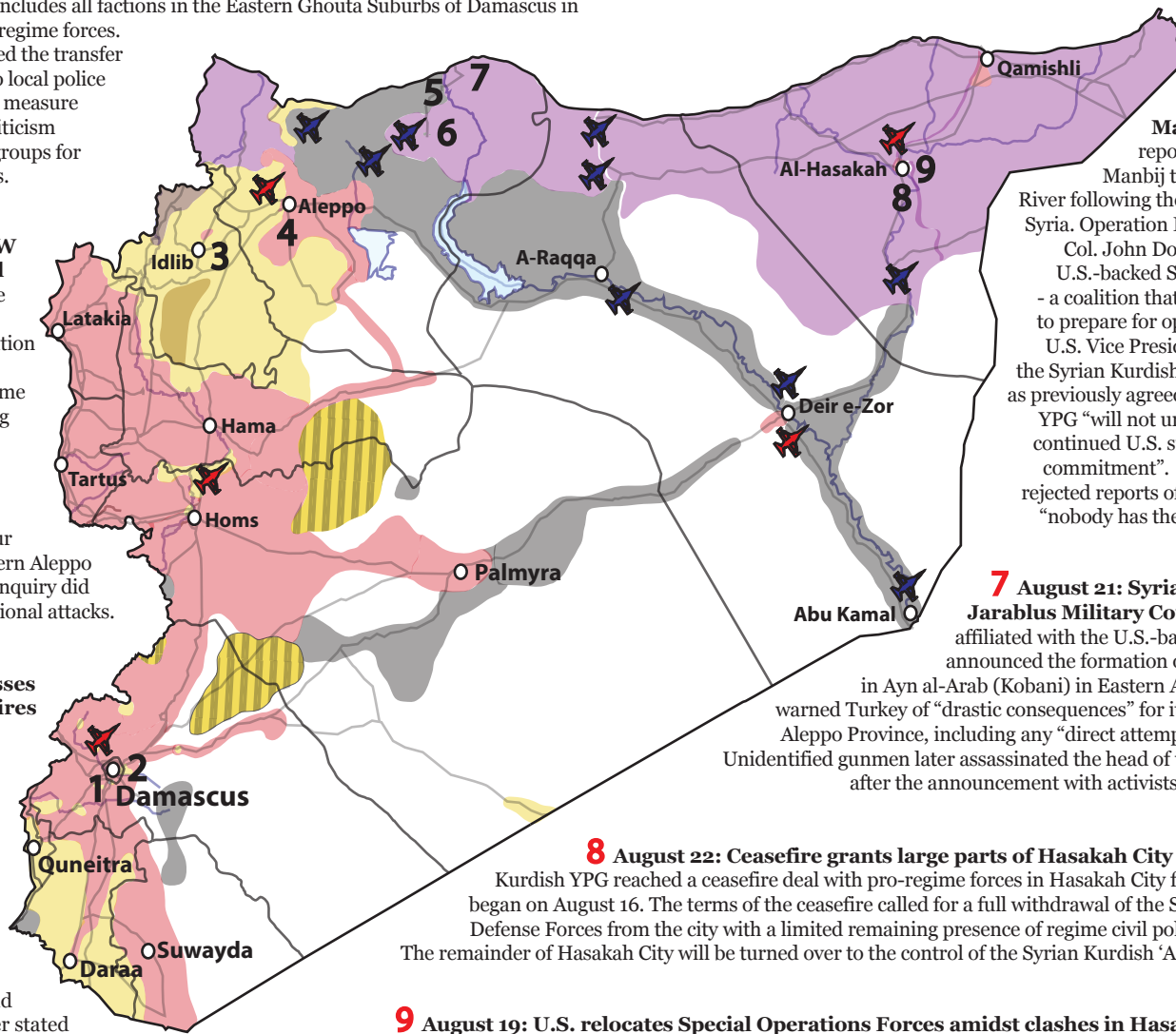
5 August 24: Turkey conducts cross-border operation to seize Jarablus. Opposition groups backed by the U.S. and Turkey seized the IS-held town of Jarablus as well as several nearby villages after launching a cross-border offensive entitled 'Operation Euphrates Shield'. The operation involved an estimated 1,500 opposition fighters as well as deployments of tanks and special operations forces by the Turkish Armed Forces. The U.S. also provided airstrikes and intelligence support to the operation. Turkish President Recep Erdogan stated that the operation targeted both IS and the Syrian Kurdish YPG, noting the importance of "protecting the territorial integrity" of Syria.

6 August 24: Syrian Kurdish YPG reportedly begins withdrawing from Manbij. The Syrian Kurdish YPG reportedly began withdrawing from Manbij to the east side of the Euphrates River following the entry of Turkey into Northern Syria. Operation Inherent Resolve Spokesperson Col. John Dorrian stated that the bulk of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - a coalition that includes the YPG - moved east to prepare for operations against A-Raqqa City. U.S. Vice President Joe Biden also called upon the Syrian Kurdish YPG to withdraw from Manbij as previously agreed with Turkey, warning that the YPG "will not under any circumstance" receive continued U.S. support "if they do not keep that commitment". YPG Spokesperson Redur Xelil rejected reports of a redeployment, stressing that "nobody has the right to impose a withdrawal".

7 August 21: Syrian Democratic Forces form Jarablus Military Council. Local opposition groups affiliated with the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces announced the formation of the Jarablus Military Council in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) in Eastern Aleppo Province. The statement warned Turkey of "drastic consequences" for its "aggressive acts" in Northern Aleppo Province, including any "direct attempts to occupy" territory in Syria. Unidentified gunmen later assassinated the head of the council less than four hours after the announcement with activists blaming Turkey for the killing.

8 August 22: Ceasefire grants large parts of Hasakah City to Syrian Kurds. The Syrian Kurdish YPG reached a ceasefire deal with pro-regime forces in Hasakah City following a week of clashes that began on August 16. The terms of the ceasefire called for a full withdrawal of the Syrian Arab Army and National Defense Forces from the city with a limited remaining presence of regime civil police in the government quarter. The remainder of Hasakah City will be turned over to the control of the Syrian Kurdish 'Asayish' internal security forces.

9 August 19: U.S. relocates Special Operations Forces amidst clashes in Hasakah City. The U.S. reportedly relocated its Special Operations Forces from locations near Hasakah City after the Syrian Arab Air Force conducted strikes targeting positions held by the Syrian Kurdish YPG amidst ongoing clashes in the city. Incoming Operation Inherent Resolve Commander Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend warned that the U.S. "will defend ourselves if we feel threatened" in Northern Syria.



Areas of Control*

- Pro-Regime Forces
- The Islamic State
- Kurdish Forces
- Jabhat Fatah a-Sham
*formerly Jabhat al-Nusra
- Opposition Forces
- Mixed Control

Airstrikes

- ✈ Pro-Regime
- ✈ U.S. / Coalition



*Control of Terrain accurate as of 11 AUG 2016