

Syria Situation Report: October 27 - November 4, 2016

1 October 31: Assad States Intent to Remain President Through 2021: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad stated his intent remain in power through at least 2021 during a two-day conference with dozens of foreign journalists in Damascus. Assad ruled out any major political reforms before the end of the Syrian Civil War. Meanwhile, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem stressed that the regime will defeat any group that refuses to return to regime control, including the Syrian Kurds.

2 October 29 - 31: Pro-Regime Forces Seize Key Towns in Eastern Ghouta: Pro-regime forces seized the towns of Tel Kurdi and Tel Sawwan in the Eastern Ghouta Suburbs of Damascus on October 29, advancing within five kilometers of the opposition stronghold of Douma with the alleged support of airstrikes by Russia. The advance prompted renewed calls for unity between Salafi-Jihadist group Jaysh al-Islam and rival Islamist group Faylaq al-Rahman in Eastern Ghouta. Nonetheless, negotiations on a joint opposition operations room broke down on October 31 after fighters from Faylaq al-Rahman prevented a delegation from Jaysh al-Islam from attending a meeting to discuss its creation.

3 October 30: Inmates Riot in Tartus Central Prison: Regime forces imposed a cordon on the Tartus Central Prison after detainees seized the entire facility. The riot reportedly began after inmates prevented security forces from transferring a prisoner sentenced to death. The inmates demanded that the regime halt all death sentences, end the referral of political prisoners to military courts, and improve living conditions within the prison. The prison holds an estimated eight hundred inmates.

4 November 2: Pentagon Confirms U.S. Airstrike on Senior Al-Qaeda Member in Idlib Province: Pentagon Spokesperson Capt. Jeff Davis confirmed that a U.S. airstrike killed senior Al-Qaeda member Haydar Kilkan near Idlib City on October 17. Kilkan reportedly served as a facilitator, courier, and external attack planner for Jabhat Fatah a-Sham - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat a-Nusra. Meanwhile, Jabhat Fatah a-Sham claimed that a coalition airstrike killed two of its members near Kafr Takharim in Western Idlib Province. The U.S. Department of Defense has not yet claimed the strike.

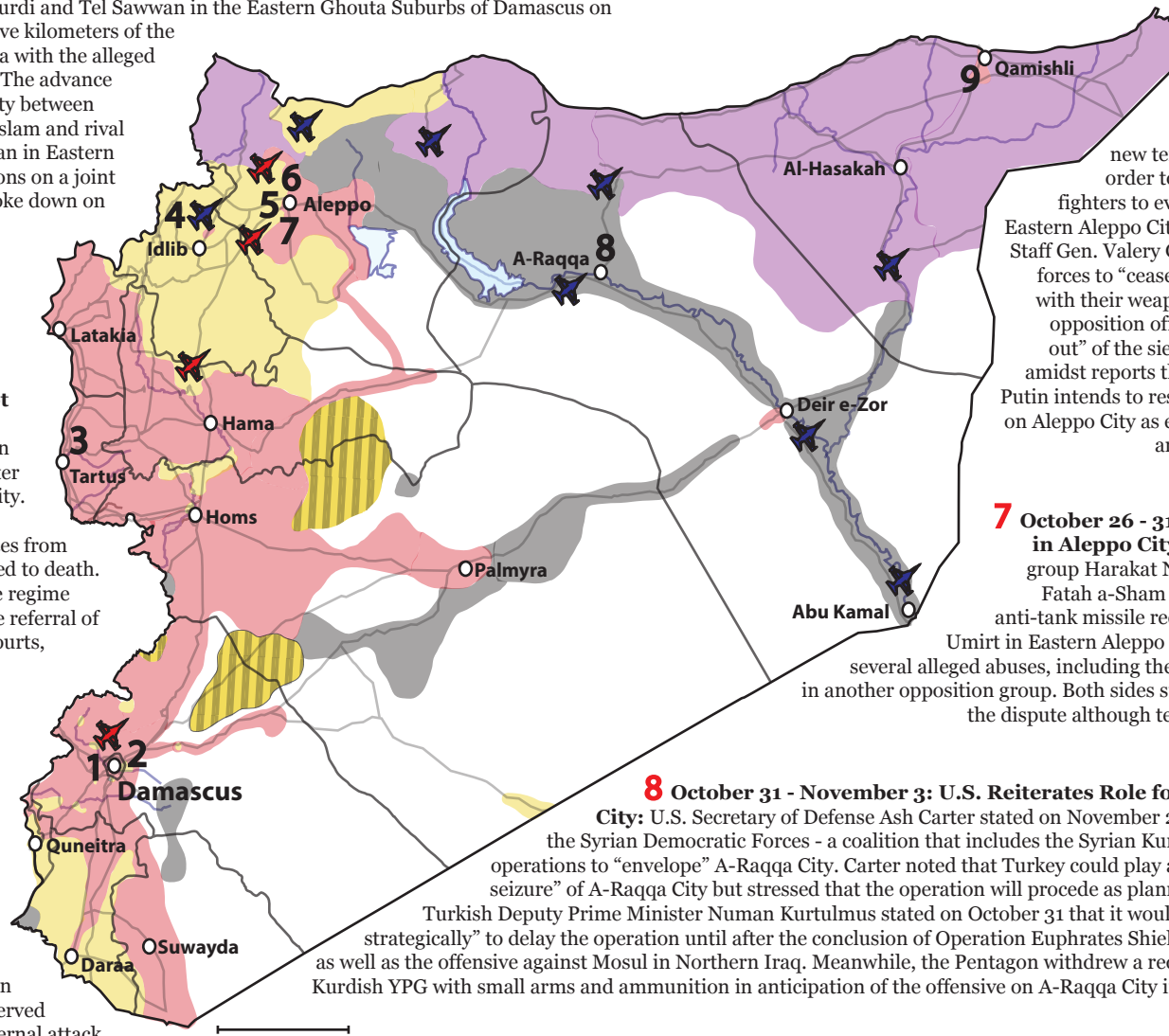
5 October 28 - November 3: Opposition Groups Launch New Battle to Break the Siege of Aleppo City: The Jaysh al-Fatah Operations Room - a coalition led by Jabhat Fatah a-Sham and Ahrar a-Sham - and the Fatah Halab Operations Room launched a new offensive to break the siege of Eastern Aleppo City. Opposition forces seized Minyan and the Dahiyat al-Assad District on the outskirts of Western Aleppo City following heavy clashes that included allegations of chlorine gas attacks as well as at least five SVBIED detonations. Clashes remain ongoing as opposition forces attempt to penetrate the dense urban terrain of the 3000 Apartments and New Aleppo Districts.

6 November 4: Russia Implements New 'Humanitarian Pause' in Aleppo City: Russia began a new ten-hour 'humanitarian pause' in order to allow civilians and opposition fighters to evacuate the besieged districts of Eastern Aleppo City. Russian Chief of the General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov called on opposition forces to "cease hostilities" and depart the city with their weapons, stressing that the ongoing opposition offensive has "no chance to break out" of the siege. The temporary truce comes amidst reports that Russian President Vladimir Putin intends to resume a "major military assault" on Aleppo City as early as next week, according to anonymous intelligence officials.

7 October 26 - 31: Opposition Groups Clash in Aleppo City: Former U.S.-backed Islamist group Harakat Nour a-Din al-Zenki and Jabhat Fatah a-Sham clashed with U.S.-backed TOW anti-tank missile recipient Tajamu Fastaqim Kama Umirt in Eastern Aleppo City after accusing the group of several alleged abuses, including the assassination of a commander in another opposition group. Both sides subsequently agreed to arbitrate the dispute although tensions reportedly remain high.

8 October 31 - November 3: U.S. Reiterates Role for Syrian Kurds in A-Raqqa City: U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter stated on November 2 that the U.S. will partner with the Syrian Democratic Forces - a coalition that includes the Syrian Kurdish YPG - in the first phase of operations to "envelope" A-Raqqa City. Carter noted that Turkey could play a potential role in the "eventual seizure" of A-Raqqa City but stressed that the operation will proceed as planned. The statement comes after Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus stated on October 31 that it would be "better both militarily and strategically" to delay the operation until after the conclusion of Operation Euphrates Shield in Northern Aleppo Province as well as the offensive against Mosul in Northern Iraq. Meanwhile, the Pentagon withdrew a request to directly arm the Syrian Kurdish YPG with small arms and ammunition in anticipation of the offensive on A-Raqqa City in a likely concession to Turkey.

9 October 28: Syrian Kurds Set to Announce Formation of New 'Federal Army': The Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) is reportedly preparing to announce the reorganization of the Syrian Kurdish YPG into the 'Federal Army of Rojava - Northern Syria' to serve as the armed forces of the autonomous Federation of Northern Syria - Rojava. Hasaka Province (Cizire Canton) Defense Authority Co-Chair Rezan Gilo stated that the force will include all armed units currently operating in Northern Syria.



Areas of Control*

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

Airstrikes

- Pro-Regime
- U.S. / Coalition

