

Syria Situation Report: October 28 - November 10, 2020

1 Oct. 29 - Nov. 1: ISIS Continues Assassination Campaign against Leaders of Security and Governance Institutions in Eastern Syria. ISIS claimed the assassination of the director of the oil department within the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-supported Deir e-Zor Civil Council in al-Sabha on October 29. Possible ISIS militants attempted and failed to assassinate Abu Khawla, the head of the Deir e-Zor Military Council in Hasakah city, Hasakah Province, on November 1. ISIS also claimed the assassination of Commander Hafal Riad of the Kurdish Internal Security Forces in Markadah, Hasakah Province, on the same day.

2 Nov. 2: Iranian-affiliated Militiaman Confesses Plot to Degrade Security Situation by Assassinating Key Figures. Authorities arrested Radwan al-Hajji when he attempted to assassinate Hammouda Abu Ashour, the leader of the Al-Furqan Brigade, in Kanaker, Damascus Province. Al-Hajji revealed a list of 17 Kanaker dignitaries and leaders, including reconciled members of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), he planned to assassinate. Al-Hajji stated that he acted under the direction of Omar Hafez and his assistant Walid Hafez, who are affiliated with Iranian militias which make up the 121st Brigade of Kanaker.

3 Nov. 2 - 5: The Syrian Regime Restructures Economic Institutions amidst Deteriorating Economic Situation. President Bashar al-Assad established the Monetary and Credit Council within the Central Bank of Syria on November 2. The former Governor of the Central Bank of Syria Dr. Hazem Karfoul will assume the role of president of the Council. Syrian Prime Minister Hussein Arnos appointed Deputy Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade Bassam Haidar to head a new board of directors at the General Foundation for Free Zones on November 5.

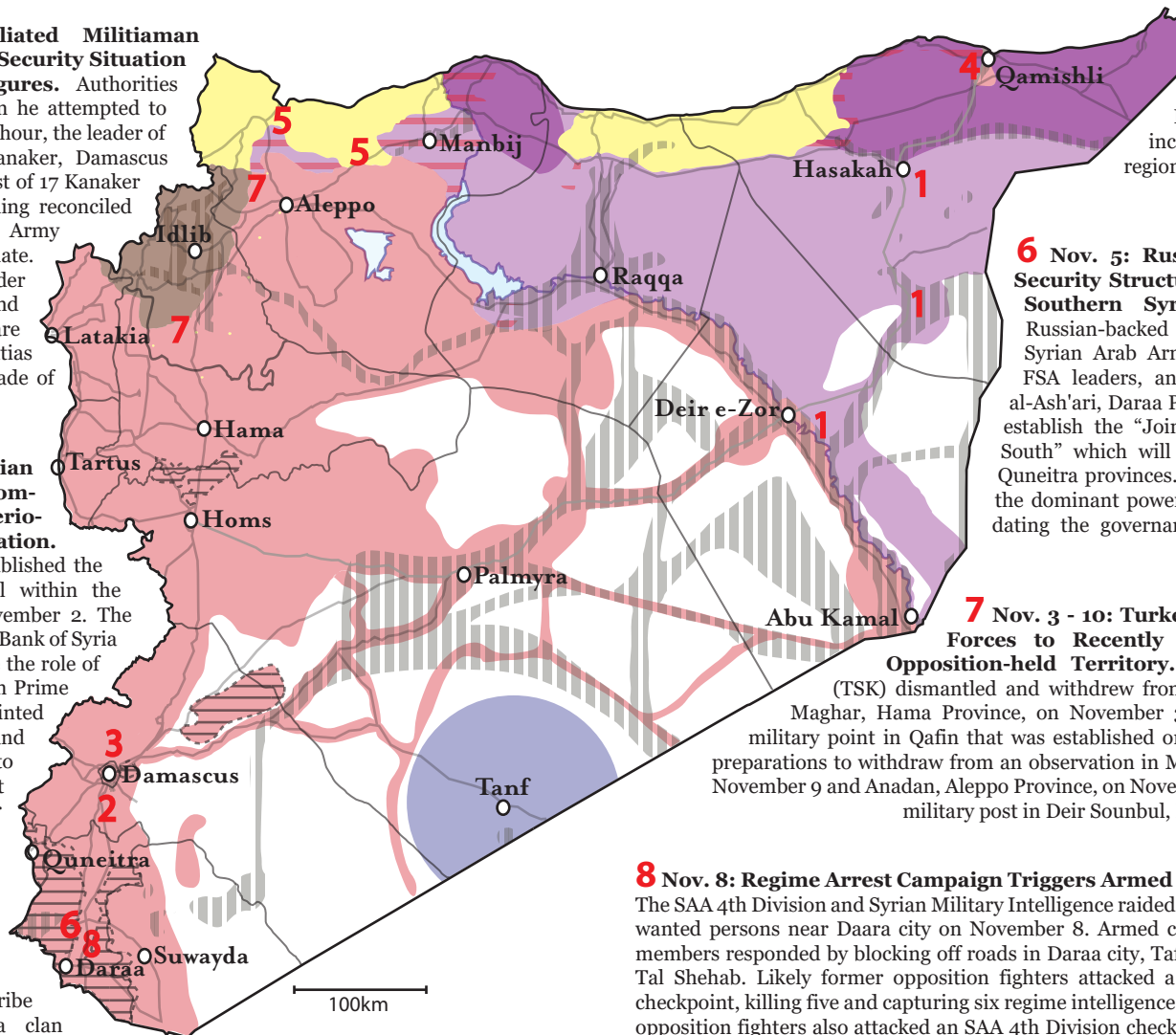
4 Nov. 3: The SDF is Likely Arresting Arab Tribal Sheikhs to Prevent Cooperation with the TSK. The SDF arrested Tayy tribe spokesman and Bani Sabaa clan representative Sheikh Fawaz Al-Mahwis without providing a reason in Qamishli, Hasakah Province. Representatives of the Tayy tribe have previously called for a Turkish presence around Qamishli, so the SDF likely fears Tayy tribe fighters may assist in a Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) offensive.

5 Nov. 4 - 7: ISIS Attack Cells May Have Strengthened in Aleppo Province. ISIS claimed responsibility for an improvised explosive device (IED) that killed a commander of the Turkish-backed Faylaq al-Sham in al-Bab on November 4. ISIS militants detonated an IED in al-Bab on November 7, killing three Free Syrian Police officers. On the same day, ISIS claimed responsibility for an IED that killed one and injured an unknown number of people in Shamarikh. This amount of ISIS activity is unusual in Turkish-controlled Aleppo Province and may indicate increased capabilities in the region or that ISIS is transitioning this area to an attack zone.

6 Nov. 5: Russian-backed Military and Security Structures Consolidate Power in Southern Syria. Representatives of the Russian-backed Daraa Central Committee and Syrian Arab Army's (SAA) 5th Corps, former FSA leaders, and other local leaders met in al-Ash'ari, Daraa Province. The meeting aimed to establish the "Joint National Committee in the South" which will govern Daraa, Suwayda, and Quneitra provinces. Russia will effectively become the dominant power in southern Syria by consolidating the governance and military structures it controls.

7 Nov. 3 - 10: Turkey Continues to Reposition Forces to Recently Established Positions in Opposition-held Territory. The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) dismantled and withdrew from an observation post in Sher Maghar, Hama Province, on November 3. The forces redeployed to a military point in Qafin that was established on October 15. The TSK started preparations to withdraw from an observation in Ma'ar Hattat, Idlib Province, on November 9 and Anadan, Aleppo Province, on November 10. The TSK established a military post in Deir Sounbul, Idlib Province, on November 9.

8 Nov. 8: Regime Arrest Campaign Triggers Armed Clashes in Daraa Province. The SAA 4th Division and Syrian Military Intelligence raided agricultural areas searching for wanted persons near Daara city on November 8. Armed civilians and former opposition members responded by blocking off roads in Daraa city, Tafas, al-Yadudah, Muzayrib, and Tal Shehab. Likely former opposition fighters attacked a Syrian Air Force Intelligence checkpoint, killing five and capturing six regime intelligence members near al-Karak. Likely opposition fighters also attacked an SAA 4th Division checkpoint near Jallin, capturing 12. Regime forces responded by shelling Daraa city and al-Karak, causing gunmen to attack a regime checkpoint near al-Sahwa. A delegation from the Russian-backed SAA's 5th Corps mediated a solution to stop the fighting and for the release of the captured regime fighters until a more permanent solution can be reached.



- Pro-Regime
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)
- Turkey-Opposition
- ISIS Support Zones
- US and Partner Forces
- Former Opposition Terrain (Reconciled)
- Al Qaeda-Dominated*
- Core SDF-Held Kurdish Terrain
- SDF-Dominated, Regime Presence

*AL QAEDA-LINKED GROUPS CONTROL NEARLY ALL GOVERNANCE AND MILITARY STRUCTURES IN GREATER IDLIB PROVINCE. VARIOUS LOCAL ACTORS ASSERT LIMITED CONTROL OVER ISOLATED AREAS OF GREATER IDLIB. Control of Terrain Accurate as of November 10, 2020

Key Takeaway: Competition between the Syrian regime and its backers is destabilizing southern Syria and enabling Russia to consolidate its influence. Regime forces and Iranian-backed militias are carrying out arrest campaigns and assassinations likely in response to repeated waves of anti-Assad and anti-Iran unrest in Daraa Province. Russia and its proxies are capitalizing on the unrest to position themselves as necessary mediators and security guarantors for the region.

