

Weekly Conflict Summary
March 15-21, 2018

During the reporting

Eastern Ghouta

Pro-government forces advanced into Hammouriyeh (east of Arbin) on March 15, after overnight airstrikes targeting the area. In the preceding days, pro-government forces also took Saqba and Kafr Batna (east of Ain Terma). As many as twenty thousand people evacuated from opposition-held areas of Eastern Ghouta in two days as pro-government forces continued their offensive to retake the pocket. According to UN OCHA, more than 50,000 people have been displaced due to fighting and shifting front lines, and more than 1,600 civilians have been killed (including due to opposition shelling of Damascus city, which has persisted throughout the past few weeks) for the increasing rate of civilian displacement.

Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, formerly al-Qaeda affiliated Jabhat al-Nusra) in northern Idlib and western Aleppo. Much of the fighting appears to be centered around the border between Afrin and Idlib, seemingly in a struggle to gain control over commerce routes moving through the area. There are currently no indications that fighters from the Operation Olive Branch will redeploy south to engage in this fight, though evacuated fighters from Eastern Ghouta could potentially tip the military