

WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 10 August - 16 August 2020

SYRIA SUMMARY

- NORTHWEST | Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) arrested critics in Atma, Idlib Governorate. Russia announced the suspension of its joint patrol with Turkey in Idlib Governorate. The first UN aid convoy since humanitarian aid was renewed by the UNSC in July reached northwest Syria. A US drone strike killed an Uzbek commander in Idlib Governorate. The Turkish-backed opposition Syrian Interim Government announced new anti-COVID measures.
- SOUTH & CENTRAL | Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces deployed reinforcements to Jasim, Dara'a Governorate. Attacks against GoS officials and former opposition fighters increased in southern Syria. COVID-19 cases continued to increase in GoS-controlled territories.
- NORTHEAST | Tensions continued between the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Arab tribes. Operations against ISIS continued in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. Tensions emerged between Iranian-backed militias and GoS-backed militias in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. COVID-19 cases continued to increase in northeast Syria.

Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 16 August 2020. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see footnote

conflict in Idlib Governorate. On 13 August, Russia announced that it was suspending its participation in the joint patrols due to increased terrorist attacks.¹⁴ The Turkish-Russian joint patrols were mandated by the 5 March ceasefire agreement (see figure 2 below).

Figure 2: The Turkish-Russian Joint Patrol on the M4 highway in Idlib Governorate. Data from ACLED and The Carter Center.

COVID-19 cases continued to increase in the region. On 13 August, there were a total of 50 reported infections in Idlib and Aleppo Governorates.¹⁵ The same day, 2 patients in Aleppo Governorate recovered from the virus.¹⁶ On 16 August, the Turkish-backed opposition's Syrian Interim Government issued new measures to combat the spread of the virus, including prohibiting public gatherings, issuing free masks, and encouraging social distancing in restaurants and cafes.¹⁷

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Governorate as each party tries to cement their influence among GoS-backed militias⁴³ and their own proxies.⁴⁴

COVID-19 cases continued to increase in northeast Syria. On 12 August, the KAA announced 27 new cases, bringing their total case count to 171 in SDF-controlled areas of Syria.⁴⁵ On 13 August, the Kurdish National Council said it was temporarily closing all of its offices in the region due to the spread of COVID-19.⁴⁶ As of 16 August, there were 204 total reported COVID cases and 11 deaths in the region.⁴⁷

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The Carter Center's Syria team will be rolling out a new format for the weekly conflict summary to focus on key trends in a new, interactive setting. Coming soon, stay tuned!

⁴³ Pro-GoS or GoS-backed militias refer to armed groups that are funded or in some way supported by GoS and coordinate with or fight alongside GoS armed forces, but are not part of the state-run military.

⁴⁴ <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2020/8/4/syria-insight-russia-moves-into-iran-controlled-eastern-syria>

⁴⁵ <https://syriadirect.org/news/mapping-coronavirus-in-syria-unofficial-cases-and-hot-spots/>

⁴⁶ <https://nedaa-sy.com/news/21775>

⁴⁷ <https://anfenglishmobile.com/rojava-syria/coronavirus-cases-in-northeast-syria-on-the-rise-45992>