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NORTHWEST SYRIA1
Government of Syria (GoS) troops captured Khan Sheikhun and the area south of
the town in northern Hama Governorate this week after the withdrawal of various
armed groups, including Jaish al Izza, from the area on 23 August.
2 In the following
days, GoS forces entered the main towns of Kafr Zeita, Latamenah and Morek,
where a Turkish Military Observation post is located – now isolated from the rest
of the Idleb de-escalation zone.
Sporadic fighting was recorded in some areas, as GoS forces consolidated their
gains, including one event where a Russian national was killed in Khan Sheikhun.
According to pro-government sources, the individual was a private military
contractor. Further north, GoS aerial and ground bombardments continued to
impact major urban centers in southern Idleb throughout the week, especially
Tah, Tamaniyah, Kafr Nabel, Jarjanaz, Maniz, and Maraat al Numan towns, among
others.
GoS attempted to recapture the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham

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Figure 2: Frontlines in the northwest of Syria as of 25 August 2019 with recaptured areas in grey.
There were signs of an HTS crackdown on descent inside the Idleb enclave this
week, with HTS authorities arresting

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For more on conflict dynamics on southern Syria, see our ‘Special Report: Conflict in
Southern Syria | August 2018 – July 2019.’
In central areas of the country, GoS forces conducted rocket and artillery
bombardments, while Russian aircraft conducted several airstrikes, on suspected
ISIS locations in the desert areas between Deir ez Zor and Mayadeen towns. These
were the first Russian/Syrian airstrikes in the region since April and coincide with
a major government anti-ISIS operation underway in southeast Deir Ez Zor
governorate.
On the evening of 24 August, an Israeli airstrike targeted an alleged Iranian
Republican Guard Corps (IRGC) site close to Kisweh town, south of Damascus. Pro-government sources reported that five Hezbollah members had been killed in the
attack. The event prompted a rare

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between the US and Turkey over a proposed “safe zone” along Syria’s northern
border.
Low-