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Improvised explosive device (IED) attacks dominated reporting from Idleb G

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A to northwest Aleppo and Idleb Governorates at the start of 2019, steady low levels of asymmetrical attacks involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and shootings against local armed actors were seen for a third week in a row. This period saw at least eight events, including a high-profile suicide attack against the HTS-aligned National Salvation Government 1 building in Idleb city on 29 January. Unusually, the attack was conducted by a female suicide bomber and denied by ISIS two days later, after media outlets linked the attack to ISIS.

Figure 2: Timeline of IED activity in northwest Syri

Figure 3:

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However, unlike previous months, oncidents of non-violent resistance have also been recorded across southern Syria in the past month. There were at least three cases of anti-government graffiti appearing in various towns around Daraa since the start of 2019, while on 29 January a protest took place in Daraa city against ongoing government arrests for conscription.⁵

While concerning, especially the development of non-violent forms of resistance, the low numbers of events have yet to generate any momentum towards a sustained or coordinated resistance against the government of Syria. Rather, the current events are more reflective of the ongoing challenges faced by the government to establish full law and order across the governorate.

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This week, the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) advanced against the remaining ISIS-controlled villages in the southwest corner of Deir Ez Zor governorate. By the end of the reporting period, the villages of al Sousah and Marashidiyah were effectively under SDF control. However, the southern offensive from Baghuz Fawqani town that began last week stalled somewhat this period (Figure 5).

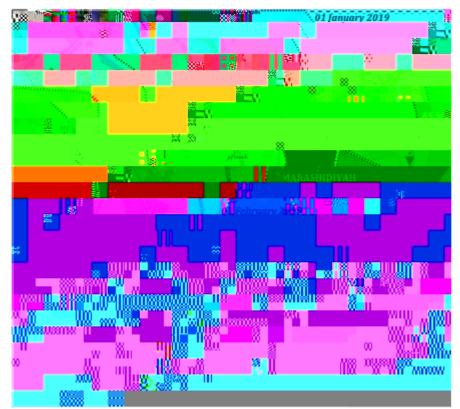


Figure 5: Progress of SDF anti-ISIS campaign in southwest Deir Ez Zor Governorate January 2019.

⁵ Sogans continues

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The watch list outlines various dynamics that The Carter Center is monitoring in the coming weeks:

Further high-profile attacks or growing IED activity within Idleb, especially against HTS, or further signs that the September 2018 De-escalation