



Weekly Conflict Summary
September 29-October 5, 2016

This week, the highest recorded incidence of conflict once again occurred in Aleppo governorate. Rural Damascus was the second most active governorate for conflict, although Aleppo governorate experienced double the recorded conflict that rural Damascus governorate did, with the vast majority of conflict being focused on Aleppo city itself.

Pro-government forces tightened their siege of East Aleppo by advancing on the northern and western fronts into opposition-held territory. After intense shelling and clashes in Handarat Camp, opposition forces withdrew on September 29, 2016. This comes just a week after a significant and continuing rise in the [deployment of grad missiles](#) among opposition forces, including on the frontlines of Handarat Camp. On October 2, pro-government forces took al-Kindi Hospital in Aleppo. Video from the scene shows that the hospital has been reduced to rubble over the course of the war.

Kurdish forces in the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood of Aleppo advanced against opposition forces northward into the factories of al-Shaqif, aiding the government forces in expelling opposition forces from areas west of the much fought-over Jandoul roundabout. Opposition and government forces clashed intensely this week in the area of the roundabout.

Russian and Syrian aircraft dropped Russian bunker buster bombs (in addition to general-purpose bombs) on East Aleppo several times this week, including twice on underground hospitals. The hospitals closed after being struck September 30 and October 3. Fatalities among staff and patients were high.

Fighting has intensified in rural Damascus. Opposition forces in Eastern Ghouta have continued to lose ground throughout 2016, and have faced repeated aerial and artillery bombardments. Heavy bombardment on the city of Duma on October 2 forced the closure of schools.

On October 3, a drone strike in Idleb province by the International Coalition killed a leader from Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra), Ahmed Salama Mabrouk (also known as Sheikh Abu al-Farj al-Masri). Mabrouk appeared in the video statement announcing the formation of JFS. His death was confirmed by official JFS channels.

On 2 October, warplanes struck an IDP camp in southeastern Idleb. The besieged towns of al-Fo'ah and Kafrayya were also shelled by opposition forces, although they separately received aid and ammunition via airdrop.

In the north of Syria, opposition fighters backed by Turkish forces advanced further against ISIS this week. Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) joint forces advanced from the east and west towards the key ISIS town of Dabeq, which holds great symbolic importance to ISIS due to its reference in prophecies about the apocalypse. OES forces have also nearly surrounded the town of Souran, an ISIS stronghold and one of the few major cities remaining under ISIS control in the area.

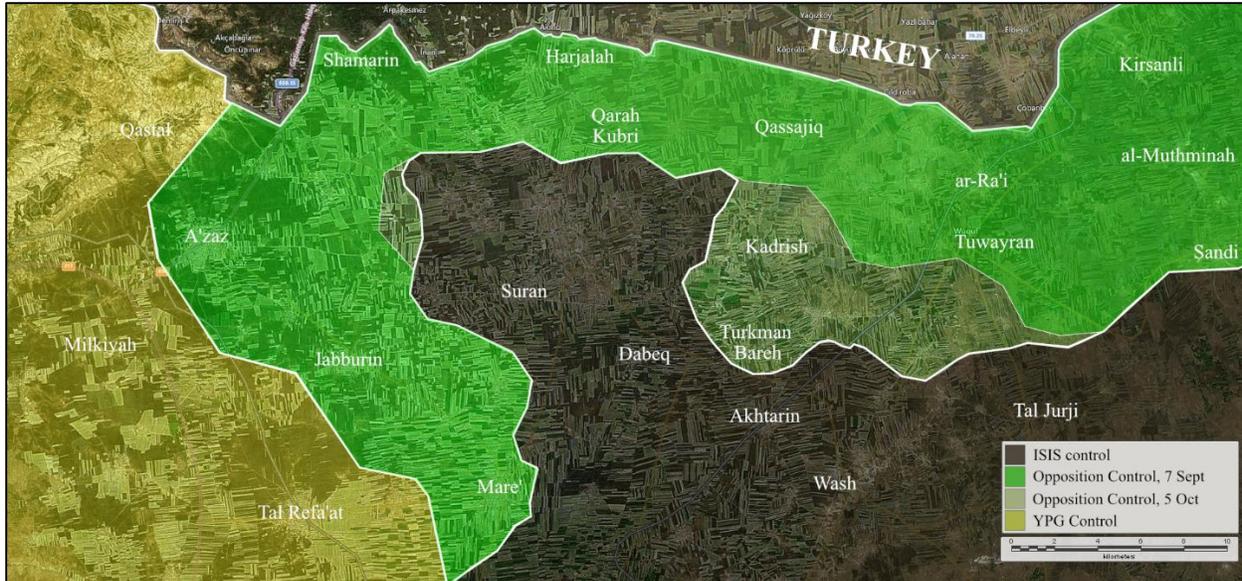


Figure 1- Map of OES gains against ISIS since last month. Map made using software provided by Palantir Technologies

De-mining operations continue in territory captured from ISIS since the summer. In Kurdish-held Menbij, engineering teams from Menbij Military Council continued to sweep residential and commercial buildings for mines and IEDs this week. Despite disarming more than 7,000 mines, 4 children were reported killed by a mine on October 6 in Menbij. The prolonged process of demining the city is delaying the return of civilians to their homes. In general, IEDs continue to account for an extremely high proportion of deaths among Kurdish forces advancing against ISIS positions.

An estimated 25,000 civilians are now living in the town of recently liberated city of Jarablus, which is receiving substantial aid and investment in infrastructure for basic services such as electricity and water from the Turkish government and aid agencies.

Turkish warplanes reportedly struck the Kurdish town of Tathana on October 5, killing over a dozen civilians.

About 280 families displaced from Da'el, Abtaa, Atman, and the Yarmouk basin area in western Daraa have been forced to seek refuge in western Daraa in concrete hangars intended for housing livestock due to a lack of available tents or other shelter. The new camp, referred to as “the second shelter camp” (المخيم الثاني) lacks access to medical services and is not considered suitable for habitation due to the proximity of livestock.

Conclusion:

This week marks another bleak week of conflict in the ongoing Syrian war. Offensives against ISIS have proven to be very effective in the past month, but the humanitarian toll of offensives against other factions have been exceedingly high. The suspension of bilateral talks by the US and Russia are of deep concern for hopes for a diplomatic solution in Syria, as is the continuing military escalation throughout the country.