



Weekly Conflict Summary
July 28-August 3, 2016

Pro-Government forces in Aleppo succeeded in fully encircling opposition-held portions of Aleppo city, capturing Bani Zeid, and a large portion of the Castello Road and Layramoun by July 28. After several failed attempts to recapture lost territory, opposition fighters have focused their attention on government-controlled portions of southwest Aleppo. Figure 1 (below) shows the degree to which conflict has impacted Aleppo city and the surrounding area. The high level of conflict in the southwest of the city highlights the two major opposition fronts: one in al-Hamadaniya neighborhood through the area known as the 1070 Apartments and one in Sheikh Sa'id through Ramousa and the Ramousa Artillery School. Much of the initial push into government-held territory was led by Ahrar al-Sham, though the offensive now boasts a large coalition of anti-government forces. Civilians of besieged East Aleppo also burned tires over the weekend (July 29-31) to obscure the vision of Russian and Syrian government war planes.

In the first two days of the opposition offensive to break the government siege on the city, a number of civilians from government-controlled areas of al-Hamadaniya fled their homes due to increased shelling by opposition forces and the proximity to new front lines near the 1070 Apartments. The Syrian government announced the opening of four humanitarian crossings leading exclusively to government-controlled areas of the city. This announcement came with a statement that pro-government forces had prepared temporary shelters to accommodate up to 3,000 of the new internally displaced persons (IDPs). Reliable information about numbers of people using these crossing points is currently not available. This new policy has been criticized by international humanitarian NGOs due to its restrictions on travel to territory outside of government-controlled parts of Aleppo city.

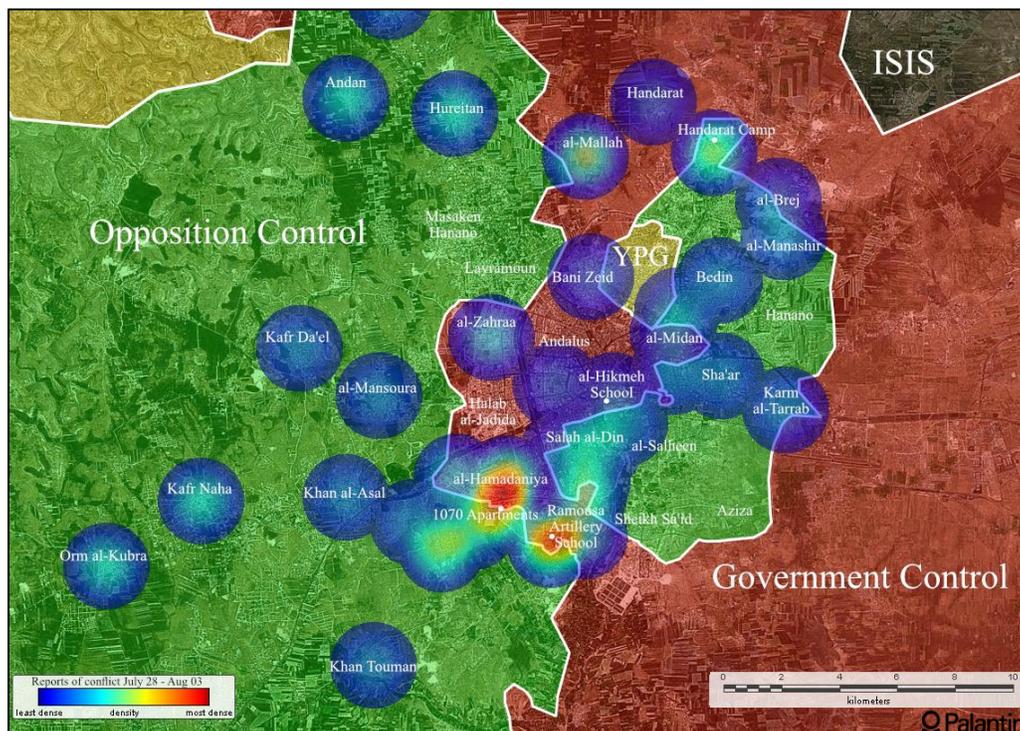


Figure 1 - Map of density of reports of conflict (clashes, shelling, air strikes, IEDs) in Aleppo city and the surrounding area.

Access to electricity and water in Aleppo have been affected by the fighting. On August 2, the General Services Administration reported that the Dahiye electrical transformer station in Hamadaniya neighborhood had been damaged in the clashes and could not be repaired at the time due to the ongoing violence. As of August 3, the water pumping stations of Aleppo were not operating due to a lack of coordination between opposing forces about the transport of fuel used to run the electrical generators that power the city's water pumps.

In eastern Aleppo governorate, the SDF advance on Menbij continues and the group now controls well over half of the city. Remaining ISIS forces are currently being pushed to the northeast section of the city. The international coalition launched 66 airstrikes on Menbij alone in the last week, and have been accused of carrying out airstrikes that killed tens of civilians.

As a result of ongoing violence, civilians continue to flee the city. On August 3, an IDP camp in the village of Hayyeh, approximately 15 km east of Menbij, received 2,034 new IDPs. Additionally, over the course of the last week, 2,600 additional IDPs from Menbij arrived in the northwestern district of Afrin—approximately 1,200 in the sub-district of Raju, 300 in the district of Jandairis, and the remaining 1,100 in unspecified locations around the Kurdish-controlled district.

For the third consecutive week, the town of Atareb in the western Aleppo countryside was targeted by intensive airstrikes by Syrian government and Russian warplanes. Dozens of civilians were reported killed or injured and sources in Atareb described a large scale displacement of up to 70% of the current population estimated to be 21,000 people.

Ongoing Syrian government and Russian aerial bombardment across northern Syria has resulted in widespread damage to medical facilities and public infrastructure. Idleb governorate in particular was consistently targeted throughout the past week, creating the potential for another humanitarian crisis throughout the province if no health care alternatives are provided. On July 28 in the city of Saraqeb, Syrian government airstrikes damaged several medical centers and the only operational blood bank in the city, causing the facilities to shut down. Further strikes in Kafr Takharim damaged equipment at the local children's hospital. This resulted in the indefinite suspension of hospital operations on July 29. Hospitals in Jisr al-Shughur, Ihsam, Idleb city, and Saraqeb have been forced to shut down or suspend operations within the last month as a result of airstrikes.¹

Additionally, doctors and medical response teams in Saraqeb, Idleb report that Syrian government helicopters carried out an airstrike using canisters filled with chlorine gas on residential neighborhoods on August 1. Airstrikes around Saraqeb have escalated in intensity following the downing of a Russian helicopter northeast of the city in opposition-held Idleb on August 1. All Russian personnel on board were killed in the crash.

Shells fell on the al-Takhi IDP camp near the village of Delbiya along the Turkish border, damaging 5 tents on July 30. The camp, which was established in 2013, houses approximately 2,000 IDPs. Mortar shells fell on the Samidoun IDP Camp near Salqin, also along the Turkish border. The initiators for these attacks remain unknown.

In the Daraa governorate, Syrian government warplanes struck Radwan field hospital in Jasim city on July 31 during a series of four airstrikes on the city. The airstrike on the hospital resulted in an estimated 10 deaths, including the hospital manager and a pharmacist. The field hospital served over 400,000 people in the governorate. It is currently closed due to damage to the building. Jasim city has one other clinic

¹ Humanitarian information included in this report is provided by Humanitarian Research Services, Inc.

serving residents but it does not receive emergency cases. The airstrike on the field hospital came one day after it received aid and supplies from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

The government of Jordan continues to prevent humanitarian access to thousands of displaced Syrians stranded in Hadalat and Rukban refugee camps along the Syria-Jordan border. Jordanian authorities at the Tal Shihab border crossing continue to block entry of severely injured persons to medical facilities in Jordan. Very serious medical cases are now being transferred to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights for treatment.

The government offensive for Eastern Ghouta continued in Rural Damascus as the Syrian government pushed from the west and east into the opposition stronghold. This was coupled with consistent airstrikes on the towns of Douma, Darayya, and Khan al-Shih. In Darayya, government forces now control over half of the city, with fighting continuing daily.

Conclusion

This week saw a continuation of the high levels of conflict throughout Syria. Major frontline changes in Aleppo city have imperiled civilians throughout both sides of the city. Flows of IDPs from Aleppo and areas of Idleb indicate the very real human impact of the ongoing conflict and serve to further highlight the importance of seeking a lasting solution to the conflict. Attacks on hospitals and the closure of medical facilities throughout Syria has further exacerbated the already bleak conditions faced by Syrians.