

Syria Situation Report: May 12 - 20, 2016

1 May 16 - 20: Pro-regime forces attack district north of Aleppo City. Pro-regime forces mounted repeated attempts to advance in the Handarat Camp north of Aleppo City amidst numerous airstrikes and heavy clashes with opposition factions. Meanwhile, the Syrian Kurdish YPG began shelling the Castello Road - the only major ground line of communication into opposition-held Aleppo City - from the Sheikh Maqsooud District of Aleppo City.



2 May 13: Airstrike targets top Jabhat a-Nusra militants in northwest Syria. An unidentified airstrike struck the Abu al-Duhur Military Airbase in Idlib Province, killing a foreign commander and several prominent local leaders from Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat a-Nusra. Warplanes from the U.S., Syria, and Russia have all previously targeted the airbase, although no group claimed responsibility

3 May 12: Jabhat a-Nusra and allied groups seize Alawite village in Hama Province, killing almost twenty civilians. Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat a-Nusra, prominent Salafi-Jihadist group Ahrar a-Sham, and other allied groups seized the Alawite village of Zara in Southern Hama Province following clashes with local pro-regime fighters. Activists reported that Jabhat a-Nusra executed at least nineteen civilians during the clashes and abducted dozens of others. Opposition groups later seized a nearby train station in another advance.



4 May 18: Kurdish and pro-regime forces clash in al-Hasakah City. Clashes erupted between pro-regime militiamen and Kurdish Asayish internal security forces in al-Hasakah City, killing one fighter and wounding three others. The clashes reportedly began after a disagreement over jurisdiction in the administration of high school exams for local students.



5 May 14 - 15: IS mounts offensive on besieged portions of Deir e-Zor City. IS launched a major attack against regime positions on the southern outskirts of Deir e-Zor City in Eastern Syria, temporarily seizing a hospital and military base before being forced to withdraw. Clashes remain ongoing at the southern entrance to the city. IS also seized the majority of the Tahtuh District near the Deir e-Zor Military Airbase following clashes that included an SVBIED.



6 May 16: Islamic State destroys strategic oil and gas infrastructure in Homs Province. IS reportedly detonated explosives at several pumping stations in the Sha'er Gas Fields in central Homs Province, generating a blast felt over thirty miles away. IS later seized several positions from pro-regime forces at the nearby Jazal Oil Field on May 17. Recent efforts by IS to seize and destroy oil infrastructure in Syria and Iraq likely forms part of a larger strategy to deny key resources to its opponents.



7 May 17 - 20: Opposition forces prepare for regime offensive in Western Ghouta. Opposition fighters reported the deployment of heavy vehicles and reinforcements on the outskirts of Darayya in the Western Ghouta suburbs of Damascus in anticipation of an operation to seize the besieged enclave. Meanwhile, pro-regime forces also engaged in fierce clashes with opposition groups in nearby Khan al-Shih in an attempt to impose a full siege on the town.



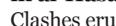
8 May 19: Regime seizes large region in opposition-held Eastern Ghouta. Regime forces supported by Lebanese Hezbollah seized Zebdeen, Deir al-Asafir, and at least eight other villages on the southern outskirts of the Eastern Ghouta suburbs of Damascus. Pro-regime forces launched the multi-pronged attack on May 17 after the alleged redeployment of fighters and armored vehicles from Dera'a Province to Damascus. The gains also come amidst continued infighting between prominent Salafi-Jihadist group Jaysh al-Islam and rival Islamist groups Faylaq a-Rahman and Jaysh al-Fustat that killed over fifty opposition fighters between May 16 and May 18 despite the release of a statement from twenty-four Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated factions calling for a ceasefire in order to focus on the fight against the regime.



9 May 18: Humanitarian aid enters besieged town in Eastern Ghouta. The UN and International Committee for the Red Cross deployed a convoy to the besieged opposition-held town of Harasta in the Eastern Ghouta suburbs of Damascus, delivering aid to its estimated 10,000 residents for the first time since October 2012. The delivery comes after the International Syria Support Group called for a campaign of airdrops beginning on June 1 if pro-regime forces continue denying humanitarian access to certain towns.



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- Pro-Regime Forces
- The Islamic State
- Kurdish Forces
- Jabhat a-Nusra
- Opposition Forces

- Pro-Regime Airstrike
- Anti-IS Coalition

