1 July 28 - August 5: Opposition Reorganizes in Southern Syria: Approximately twenty-five additional groups linked to the Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated Southern Front joined the National Liberation Front (NLF) in Southern Syria. The NLF, allegedly intends to hedge against the recent halt of covert military aid to vetted opposition groups by the U.S. in Syria. Opposition factions also announced the formation of a new ‘Free Police Force’ in Daraa Province on July 31. The force will operate under the Dar al-Adel Courthouse. Unidentified militants detonated an IED targeting Dar al-Adel President Ismat al-Abid in Eastern Dara Province on August 5.

2 August 1 - 9: De-Escalation Zone Strains Opposition Ties in Eastern Ghouta: Prominent Salafi-jihadist group Jaysh al-Islam expelled Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliates Jabhat Fateh al-Sham - from the Eastern Ghouta area. On August 2, HTS faced local protests demanding its withdrawal or dissolution in Eastern Ghouta following an ultimatum from Russia on July 26. Local Islamist group Fayq a-Rahman later accused Jaysh al-Islam of “fighting the revolution” by participating in the ‘de-escalation zone’ in Eastern Ghouta brokered by Russia and Syria on July 22. Pro-regime forces intensified an offensive against positions held by Fayq a-Rahman in the Jobar and Ayn Tarma Districts of Eastern Ghouta on August 7.

3 July 26 - August 3: HTS evacuates Arais on Syrian-Lebanese Border: Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) evacuated Arsal in Eastern Lebanon to Idlib Province in Northern Syria under a deal with Lebanese Hezbollah on August 2. The evacuation reportedly involved up to 1,000 HTS fighters including HTS in Lebanon Commander Abu Malik al-Talli as well as more than 6,000 Syrians from Arsal. The evacuation followed a prisoner swap between Hezbollah, HTS, and the Lebanese Armed Forces on August 1. Hezbollah and the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) launched clearing operations against HTS in Arsal on July 21.

4 July 30: Russia Conducts Naval Parade in Syria: Russia conducted a naval parade to celebrate Russian Naval Day in Tartus on the Syrian Coast. The parade included a submarine and six surface warships led by the Russian Frigate Admiral Essen as well as multiple warplanes over the Russian international airport in Latakia Province. The parade marks the first such display held outside Russia for Russian Naval Day.

5 August 2 - 4: Russia Announces Ceasefire Deal in Northern Homr Provinces: The Russian Ministry of Defense announced the start of a ceasefire between pro-regime and opposition forces in Northern Homr and Southern Hama Provinces brokered by Russia and Syria on August 3. Russian Military Police later deployed to several checkpoints in Northern Homr Province on August 4. The ceasefire agreement called for an “immediate cessation of all hostilities” and created a buffer zone of 150 meters between both sides. The agreement was the result of negotiations between Azerbaijan and Georgia.

6 August 2: Regime Reportedly Deploying Pro-Regime Militia: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad reportedly deployed scouts under Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) from Northern Homr Provinces. The group is believed to be sympathetic to the regime and its affiliates.

7 July 30: SVEST Targets HTS Meeting in Aleppo Province: An unidentified militant detonated an IED at the entrance to a headquarters of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in the town of Najjar in Southern Aleppo Province, killing four HTS members. The assault reportedly attempted to target a meeting between HTS, Salafi-jihadist group Ahrar al-Sham, and local tribal elders. HTS blamed the attack on ISIS in Idlib Province.

8 August 1 - 7: Ahrar al-Sham Appoints New Leader After Clash: With HTS: Pro-militant group Ahrar al-Sham reportedly began a major reorganization after its defeat by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Idlib Province. The Ahrar al-Sham Shura Council appointed new Ahrar al-Sham General Commander Hassan Soufan on August 1. Soufan - a former hardliner - stepped down in Smedina Prison near Damascus after his release as a prisoner exchange in Aleppo City in December 2016. Soufan later delivered his first public statement on August 7. Soufan promised comprehensive reforms within Ahrar al-Sham as well as a focus on operations against ISIS and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad following a long period of infighting against other factions in Idlib Province. Soufan noted that Ahrar al-Sham remains prepared to work with “all components” of the Syrian Revolution.

9 August 7: Opposition Group Detonates IEDs Targeting Pro-Regime Base in Aleppo City: The ‘Special Forces Company’ of the Abu Amara Brigades - an opposition group affiliated with Ahrar al-Sham and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham - detonated two IEDs at the Tarin bin Ziyad Barracks in the Sabit District of Western Aleppo City, killing at least twenty pro-regime fighters and other individuals. The bombing marks the sixth blast claimed by the group in Aleppo City since February 2017.

10 August 7 - 9: Pro-Regime Forces and ISIS Clash Over Sukhna: Pro-regime forces backed by Russia and Iran claimed to seize full control of Sukhna in Eastern Homr Province along the Palmyra - Deir ez-Zor Highway on August 7 following a week of clashes with ISIS. ISIS reportedly withdrew most of its fighters in Sukhna towards Deir ez-Zor Province in Eastern Syria. ISIS later launched a major counteroffensive to push out forces who took control of Sukhna on August 9.

11 July 27: Kurdish Led Government in Northern Syria Sets Election Schedule: The Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS) announced that it will hold three rounds of elections in areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Northern Syria. The DFNS will hold local, regional, and national elections respectively on September 22, November 3, and January 19. These elections will exclude Manbij and Ar-Raqqa City as well as thousands of Sunni Arabs resettled into Hasaka Province. The Kurdish National Council - a rival political organization backed by Turkey - denounced the “illegitimate” elections as a means to protect the dominance of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD). Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister also condemned the elections as a “joke” that promotes separatism in Syria.

12 August 4 - 8: Opposition Groups Plan Anti-ISIS Operations in Eastern Syria: Maghawir al-Haywa, Ahrar al-Sharqiya, and Jaysh Usad al-Sharqiya formed an “interim committee” to coordinate a future offensive against ISIS in Deir ez-Zor Province. The three groups all maintain past or current support from the U.S. and Turkey. Meanwhile, the Al-Qaqa Group claimed to burn four vehicles at a checkpoint run by ISIS in Abu Kamal in Deir ez-Zor Province on the Syrian-Iraqi border. The Al-Qaqa Group released a statement demanding that ISIS cease forced recruitment in Deir ez-Zor Province. The Al-Qaqa Group is likely linked to a former opposition group affiliated with Al-Qaeda in Eastern Syria in 2014.

**Graphic Credit:** Matti Sammenaro

Text Credit: Sana Sekkarie

©2017 by the Institute for the Study of War