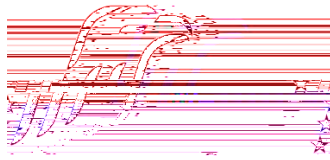


THE  
CARTER CENTER



**Weekly Conflict Summary**  
December 7-13, 2017

A political standoff is due to come to a head in the opposition-held Idlib pocket with the HTS-backed Salvation Government calling for the rival Syrian Interim Government (SIG) to vacate all offices by Friday, December 15. The SIG has called on units affiliated with the Free Syrian Army to protect SIG personnel and offices. Elsewhere, ISIS forces in eastern Hama governorate significantly expanded their territorial control, capturing at least seven small towns from HTS, briefly entering the administrative border of Idlib governorate before being pushed back by an HTS counteroffensive. ISIS advances in the area have benefitted from heavy Russian and government aerial bombardment of opposition forces as well as a simultaneous government offensive 15km to the west of ISIS positions. Government troop movements in the area are poised for a major offensive most likely in an effort to take the Abu Dhuhur air base and gain control over the Hama-Aleppo highway.



Figure 1 - Areas of control as of December 13, 2017. Arrows indicate advances made during the reporting period.



Figure 3 - Situation in eastern Syria by December 13

### Hama updates

Throughout the assessment period, HTS and ISIS have clashed in northeast Hama, during which ISIS achieved a significant advance, nearly doubling its territory by expanding to the north and west. ISIS forces briefly advanced into Idleb governorate before an HTS counter-offensive halted their progress. ISIS forces kept HTS fighters at checkpoints to the no

