

WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 6 – 12 MAY 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

- x NORTHWEST | Government forces began advances in the southwest corner of the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS) dominated Idlib pocket this week. Elsewhere, government troops have been deployed to the Tall Rifaat area, a week after an increase in conflict there.
- x SOUTH & CENTRAL | Low-level attacks against government aligned personnel continued in the south, while in As Sweida Governorate, two protests were held over the ongoing fuel crisis. In the capital, an explosive device was detonated in the Midan area.
- x NORTHEAST | Small arms and explosive attacks against military actors continued along the Euphrates River valley this week. Protests occurred in communities between Deir Ez Zor City and Baghuz village for a third consecutive week

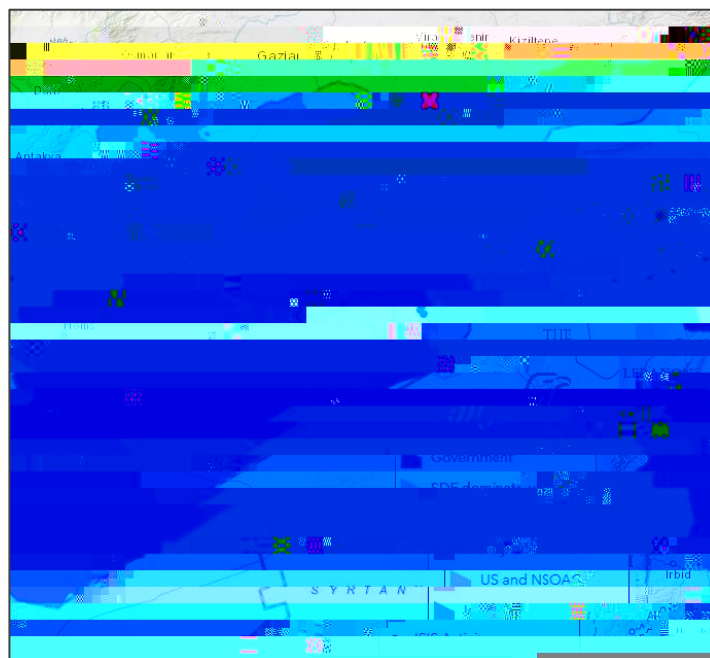


Figure 1: Dominant Actors' Area of Control and Influence in Syria as of May 2019. NSOAG stands for NoFor more explanation on our mapping, please see the footnote on page 2.

## NORTHWEST SYRIA

Following early indications of government action in the northwest in previous weeks, this week saw the beginning of government advances into the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS) dominated Idleb pocket. In conjunction with high levels of aerial and ground bombardments (400 events this week), government and aligned forces<sup>2</sup> broke through frontlines at Tal Uthman hill, north of Suqlabiyah town. Government forces then advanced on the opposition hub of Kafr Nabudah town, to the east, taking it on 8 May (Figure 3).

Figure 2 Government (blue) and NSO (red) activity in the northwest of Syria in 2019.

HTS and other opposition groups withdrew from villages around Madiq Castle, allowing the government to regain control of the southwest corner of the enclave by 10 May. By the end of the week, government forces had also captured Shar'ah and Msheirah Shamaliah towns. At the time of writing, government activity was focused on two fronts, northwards along the Shahshabu mountain range that leads to Jebal Zawiya and eastwards, towards Al Habit town on the Khan Sakhoun axis (Figure 3).

Despite the loss of territory, HTS and other opposition groups continued their shelling campaign on government dominated areas. This week saw an increase in this activity compared to previous weeks, with at least 13 bombardments impacting the towns of Jeb al Ahmar, Maghir, Karim, Braideel, Sheikh Hadid, Sdkkariyah, Sifafiyeh, Hiyalin, Tel Sakkin as well as Aleppo City.

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<sup>1</sup> Figure 1 denotes dominant actors' control and influence. Russia, Iran, Hezbollah and Iraqi militias maintain a presence in Syrian government

Figure 3 Direction of Government advances (red arrows) in northwest Syria May 2019.

Long-range Grad missiles also targeted Nayrab Airbase near Aleppo City government locations near Maghira and Suqalabiyah towns as well as toward the Russian operated Hameimim Airbase in Latakia Governorate.

At least one HTS attack was recorded behind government lines in the Tarasho area of Latakia Governorate on 12 May. The incident involved several suicide attackers assaulting a government position and resulted in a number of casualties according to pro-government [sources](#)

This week's activity continued to impact the civilian population in the northwest. Large IDP movements were recorded from southern areas to northern areas of the northwest. UNOCHA [stated](#) up to 180,000 people have been displaced from southern Idlib since 29 April. Further two medical facilities were taken out of service by [airstrikes](#), while Syrian civil defence centres across opposition-held northern Hama continued to be [affected](#) by the conflict.

Elsewhere in the northwest, low levels of conflict were recorded in the Tal Rifaat area,<sup>5</sup> with just three instances of shelling exchanges between the YPG and Turkish backed opposition groups. Such activity is in contrast to the previous week's spike in conflict, that resulted in Turkish backed opposition groups

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temporarily taking over three villages in the enclave.

Two contingents of government troops arrived in the Tal Rifaat area this week. The first arrived on 6 May with as many as 200 soldiers and armoured units stationed in Ard Ahras town, south of Tal Rifaat city. The second saw a contingent from the 30<sup>th</sup> division arrive to Tal Rifaat City a day later. These were the first government troop movements to the area this year.

#### SOUTH AND CENTRAL SYRIA

Low level attacks against government-aligned personnel and former opposition fighters in the south continued this week with four attacks recorded. Three occurred in Daraa Governorate; targeting a former Free Syrian Police commander in Daraa al Balad, a contingent of National Defence Force members on the road from Izra to Bosra al Harir, and an Air Force Intelligence officer in Um Elmayathin

Zor and Baghuz towns<sup>7</sup>. These continued to focus on SDF arrest policies, the lack of provision of basic services, the high prices of goods and the perceived unfair distribution of local oil resources, especially to government areas.

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<sup>7</sup> In Tayyana, Abu Hardoub, Shiheil, Basira, Daman, and Thiban towns.