

Weekly Conflict Summary
November 16-22, 2017

Pro-

Fight against ISIS

On November 19, pro-government forces succeeded in gaining control over the city of Abu Kamal in eastern Deir Ezzor governorate. The pro-government ground forces assaulting the city from the west were made up primarily of Syrian, Lebanese, and Iraqi Hezbollah units, as well as other Iranian-backed armed groups from Syria and Iraq. These forces were supported by airstrikes from Russian and Syrian warplanes, and by artillery fire from both pro-government positions inside Syria to the west of Abu Kamal and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Unit (PMU) positions across the border in Iraq. Little attempt was made on the part of international or pro-government media sources to disguise or downplay the dominant role of Iranian-backed forces in the operations around Abu Kamal.

Figure 2 - Frontlines in eastern Syria by November 22

The Pentagon stated that they are planning on remaining in Syria after the defeat of ISIS. The Pentagon has previously stated that the US is only in Syria to fight ISIS. They claim that a continuing American presence will help prevent the rise of another similar group. The Syrian government and its allies have all called for the US to leave Syria, declaring its presence illegitimate.

Talal Silo, a leading figure of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD)

operations room. Following the NDZ-HTS ceasefire, opposition leaders from NDZ, HTS and Ahrar al-Sham have met to discuss a joint operations room styled on the “Jaish al-Fateh” operations room of 2015.

Figure 3 - Frontlines in northern Hama by November 22

A pro-government offensive in the northeast Hama countryside renewed this week, with initial success in advancement against opposition groups around Abu Dali. Units from the Syrian Armed Forces’ Fourth Armored Division are playing a prominent role in the area. Pro-government forces have also made slight gains in northeastern Hama.

On November 21, ISIS forces in northern Hama successfully launched an attack on HTS territory and are in full or partial control of an additional four to six towns, more than doubling their area of control. Clashes are ongoing.

Fighting between pro-government and HTS forces southwest of Khanaser continued this week. Pro-government forces, including National Defense Force (NDF) units, were unsuccessful in their attempt to capture al-Rashidiyah village.

Southern Syria

November 14 marked the beginning of ongoing clashes in Harasta between pro-government forces and the “Indeed They Were Wronged” (Wa innahum Dhalamou) operations room. The operations room is led by Ahrar al-Sham, though Faylaq al-Rahman is involved as well. The clash areas have been targeted by airstrikes throughout the week, but Ahrar al-Sham has managed to control territory near the al-Ajami neighborhood.

In addition to the clashes in Harasta, airstrikes have targeted the Eastern Ghouta for seven consecutive days,

Shams in Daraa have closed their crossings into government-held territory as a gesture of solidarity with the besieged towns of the Eastern Ghouta.

Jaysh al-Islam targeted ISIS positions on Beirut Street on November 20. Beirut Street is located between the Jaysh al-Islam-controlled town of Yalda and the ISIS-controlled portion of the Yarmouk Camp south of Damascus.

On November 19, Jaysh Ahrar al-Asha'ir announced that it had formed a new “military police,” a unit tasked with preserving order among the group. Jaysh Ahrar al-Asha'ir also announced a partnership with the courts in Houran to eliminate ISIS forces in the area. The partnership with the court system likely comes due to recent assassination attempts on military and court officials, as the court also seeks greater security for its judges.