



**Weekly Conflict Summary**  
September 8-14, 2016

The introduction of the new cessation of hostilities has dramatically reduced the levels of violence throughout Syria. Prior to its introduction, the level of conflict along major front lines had spiked, but quickly reduced to a trickle on September 13. Since the cessation began, localized conflict has continued, but at a much lower level than previously, with a few noteworthy exceptions.

On September 10, a group of opposition forces including Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (JFS), Ahrar al-Sham, and Ansar Beit al-Maqdis launched an offensive in the countryside of Quneitra. Battles have centered around Khan Arnaba and the villages near it. Fighting has been intense, though only minor gains have been made. Conflict on this frontline has been recorded both before and during the ceasefire.

Prior to the start of the cessation, pro-government forces in Lattakia captured the villages of Ayn Qantarrah, Tal Rasha, Tal al-Awizrat, Dhaher Abu As'ad, Nahshaba and Ruwaisah Kataf in an ongoing offensive against opposition forces in the area.

On September 10, warplanes struck a large gathering of civilians buying groceries for Eid al-Adha in a market in Idleb city. Death counts were high. Reports suggest Russian planes were responsible.

The cessation of hostilities went into effect starting with a 48-hour ceasefire beginning on September 12 at 7:00pm local time. A key part of this deal is that humanitarian access must remain unimpeded, with initial successes. The implementation of the new cessation of hostilities led to 24 hours without a single reported civilian death. Also, civilians in the opposition-held al-Wa'er suburb of Homs city received aid deliveries for the first time in months. Despite these successes, by September 14, the Syrian government still had not authorized aid deliveries from the UN. It is unclear whether this was due to attempts to block the delivery from the central government, or obstinate local commanders.

Both Ahrar al-Sham and JFS released statements against the ceasefire deal. Jund al-Aqsa has also refused to accept the ceasefire. Additionally, 20 opposition groups signed a joint statement listing their concerns with respect to the cessation, but stopped short of rejecting the truce. Despite these expressed concerns, front lines through much of the country remain quiet.

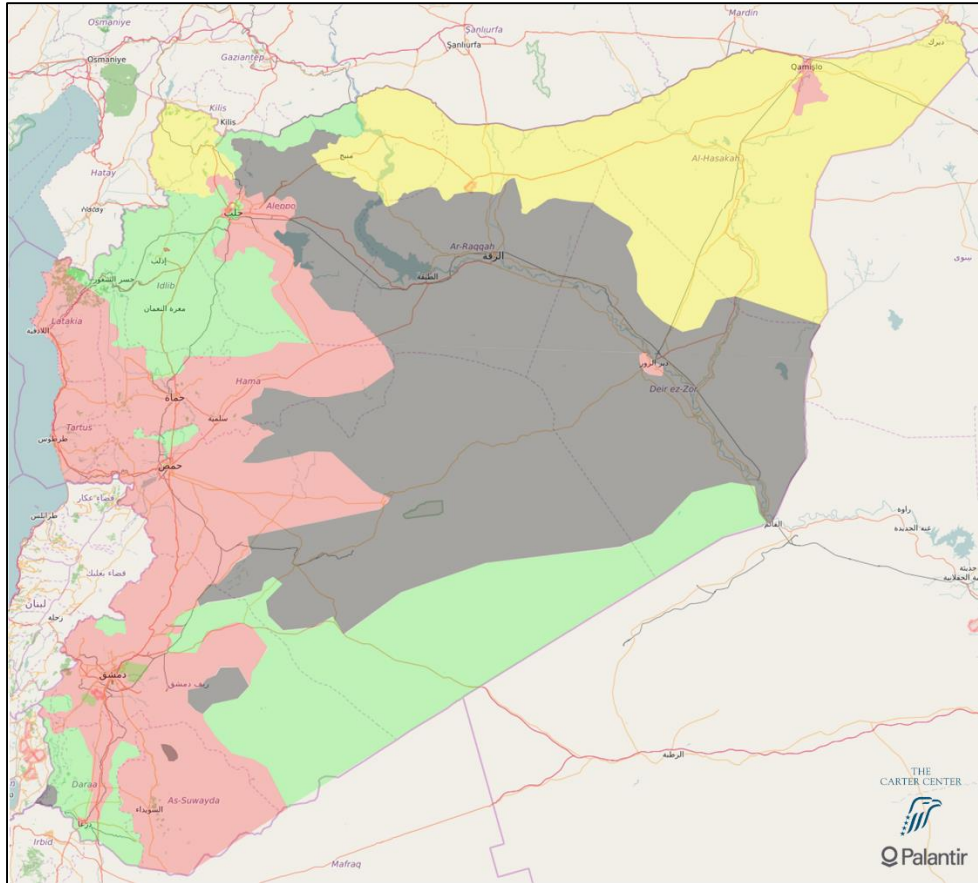


Figure 1: Areas of control throughout Syria as of September 14, 2016.

The afternoon of September 13, Jaish al-Islam commenced a new offensive against pro-government forces in the Eastern Ghouta, violating the 48-hour ceasefire. Firefights lasted into the night until Jaish al-Islam were forced to retreat.

By September 14, Russian leadership indicated support for another 48-hour extension of the initial 48-hour ceasefire.

Conclusions:

Despite some groups having rejected the cessation of hostilities, and incomplete humanitarian access, the first few days of the new cessation have been successful. Airstrikes have stopped on most major civilian areas, aid had been delivered to some besieged areas, and civilians have been able to move across front lines in many places. All efforts should be made to ensure that localized breaches of the cessation are contained and do not cause a general rise in violence. Places of particular concern for repeated outbreaks of violence that could threaten the cessation include northern Lattakia, the eastern suburbs of Damascus, and Aleppo city and its surroundings.