



Weekly Conflict Summary

May 5-11, 2016

Two weeks of elevated levels of conflict in both Aleppo and rural Damascus have led to a joint Russian-US statement re-affirming the two countries' commitment to the cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access, and a political settlement to the conflict. The cessation of hostilities (CoH), however, remains strained with continued clashes and front-line changes in south of Aleppo city, and in Eastern Ghouta.

Near Aleppo city, a coalition of forces from Jaysh al-Fateh (including Jabhat al-Nusra, Jund al-Aqsa, and the Turkestan Islamic Party, with possible artillery support from other coalition members) succeeded in capturing the suburb of Khan Touman following a large suicide attack on a pro-government checkpoint to the north of the city. Pro-government forces responded with aerial bombardments.

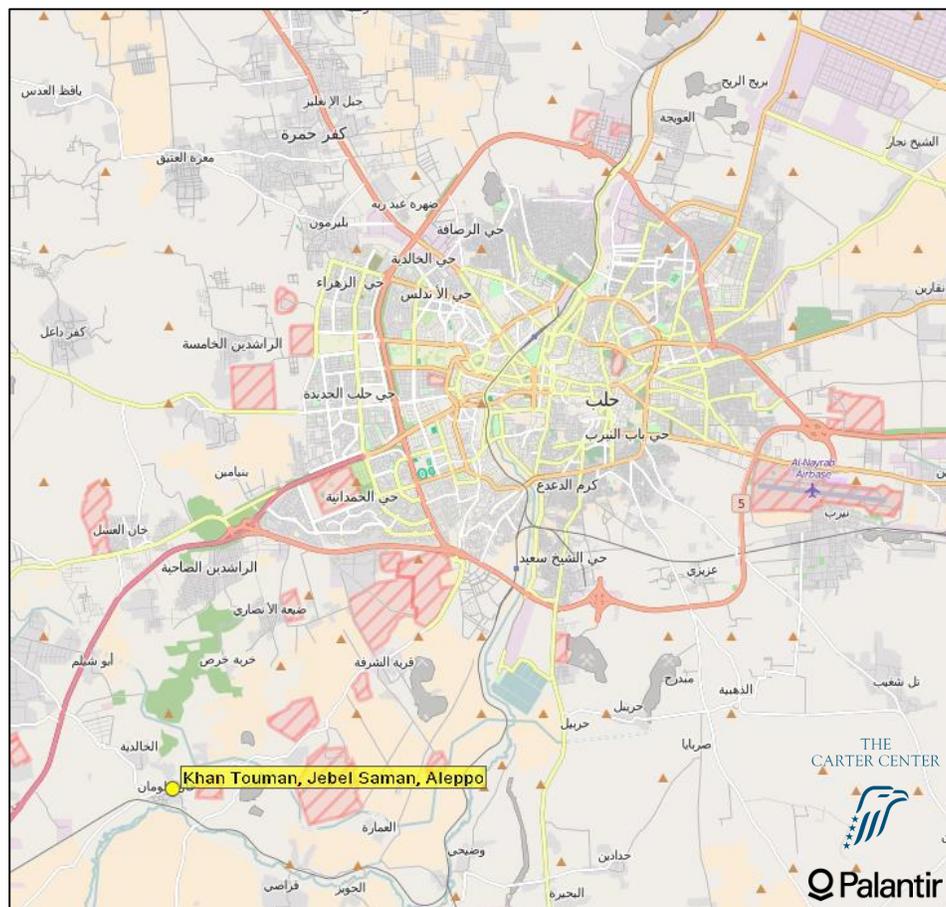


Figure 1: Khan Touman in relation to Aleppo city (Open Street Map imagery).

In Idlib governorate, near the Turkish border, an attack on an IDP camp killed several refugees. The attack has been blamed on Russian or Syrian warplanes, though no hard evidence has emerged to substantiate these claims.

In the Eastern Ghouta area of rural Damascus, opposition infighting between Faylaq al-Rahman and Jaysh al-Islam appears to have ceased, following the signing of an agreement between the two. Fighting continues between opposition and pro-government forces around Bala and Marj al-Sultan, north of the Damascus International Airport.

Homs governorate saw an uptick in violence as ISIS forces succeeded in capturing the al-Shaer gas fields from government forces to the north of Palmyra/Tadmur. The gas field, which has been the subject of several back-and-forth clashes since mid-2014, has been held by the Syrian government since November 2014.

Conclusion

It remains to be seen how the parties to the conflict will respond to the recent re-assertion of the cessation of hostilities. Early reports indicate a reduction in aerial bombardments in Aleppo city, though recent fighting in Khan Touman brings active front lines (and a large concentration of non-CoH participants) perilously close to the city.