

THE
CARTER CENTER



Weekly Conflict Summary
October 27-November 2, 2016

On October 28, the opposition launched another large-scale offensive to break the government siege of East Aleppo. Opposition forces attacked the western axis between al-Zahraa in the north and the 1070 Apartments in the south. The offensive, announced as the “Mother of all Battles” by opposition media, began with an overwhelming wave of grad missile strikes and vehicle-borne suicide bombings on West Aleppo. At least 14 suicide attacks were reported to have targeted government forces by November 2. The offensive saw some initial gains, including the full capture of Dahiyet al-Asad, advances in the 1070 Apartments south of Ramousa Road, and a minor portion of the Project 3000 Apartments in al-Hamadaniya. Opposition forces also took control of a small portion of al-Zahraa district to the north, though the advance has been very slow.

Heavy rains starting around October 31 caused a pause in advances and a halt to airstrikes on frontlines. This weather continued for a couple of days before minor opposition gains on November 2. During this lapse in activity, Fastaqem Union and Nur al-din al-Zenki fighters in East Aleppo began to fight against each other, marking yet another instance of intra-opposition fighting on key frontlines.

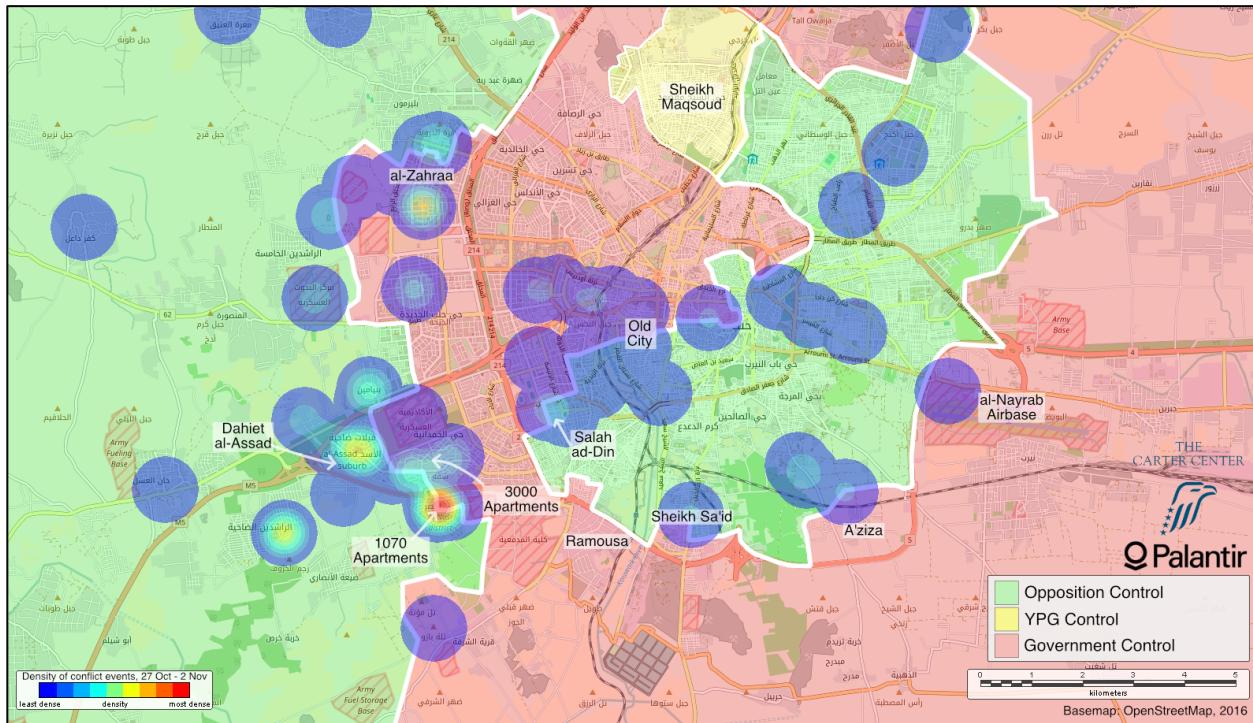


Figure 1 - Frontlines in Aleppo by November 2 and conflict events from October 27 - November 2

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On October 30 and 31, it was reported that chlorine bombs were dropped by government aircraft on western frontlines in Aleppo. The second barrel was accidentally dropped on friendly targets in al-Rashidein.

On October 27, pro-government forces made major advances into Souran, Hama. Over the 48 hours that followed, soldiers secured the rest of the city and expelled opposition forces from their positions.

Throughout the week, a large pro-government air campaign on the western Aleppo countryside continued. Areas around Orem al-Kubra (Big Orm) were hit nearly every day this week.

On November 2, Russia announced that on Friday from 9am-7pm local time, opposition fighters and civilians are to leave East Aleppo. In addition to previous evacuation corridors, Russia has identified two corridors designated specifically for opposition fighters to leave East Aleppo. The statement claimed that starting Friday night, Russia, Syrian troops, and pro-government militia will escalate conflict to clear East Aleppo.

On October 27, in advance of the opposition offensive into Aleppo, opposition forces in Idleb and Hama launched multiple grad missile attacks. Many of these were on frontlines in Hama, but the Center has recorded multiple sightings of attacks on Lattakia governorate, and on Aleppo supply routes for pro-government forces.

On October 27, a day after a pro-government strike hit a school complex in Idleb, opposition forces shelled a school in the Shahba neighborhood of West Aleppo, killing 3 children and injuring another 14.

In Northern Aleppo countryside, Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) forces were beset with the largest ISIS counteroffensive on that front yet. 15-25 villages remained in flux for most of the week, though by November 2, OES forces were able to regain much of the territory they lost over the previous 48 hours. ISIS forces have been expelled from the territory south of the SDF's recent advances to east of Wahshiyeh. ISIS forces retreated from these locations, and pro-government forces then moved to occupy these territories.

Fighting between OES and SDF forces slowed down this week as ISIS went on the counteroffensive. Fighting north of Aleppo has caused significant displacement in the last 3 weeks. Around 2,000 IDPs from the al-Bab area have arrived in Menbij during this time.

In Rural Damascus, pro-government forces took Tal al-Kurdi from the remaining opposition fighters. This represents yet another significant reduction in opposition-controlled territory in the Eastern Ghouta region.

Conclusions:

The safety of the remaining civilian populations in all of Aleppo remains of tantamount importance. Those under siege in East Aleppo may be in danger when trying to evacuate, and those living in West Aleppo have been affected by indiscriminate shelling by the opposition.