



**Weekly Conflict Summary**  
September 22-28, 2016

Major offensives have continued on almost all fronts in Syria, resulting in some significant territorial gains, and a spike in reported casualties. Two of these offensives were by pro-government forces, one in Aleppo city and another in the Eastern Ghouta in Rural Damascus. Opposition forces continue offensives in the northern Hama countryside, in the north of Quneitra, near the Golan Heights, and in the north of Aleppo along the Turkish border against ISIS.

However, the overwhelming majority of recorded conflict occurred in Aleppo governorate. Hama governorate also saw high levels of conflict. The past week's offensives were marked by a major increase in reported aerial bombardments, again focusing on Aleppo city.

Overnight on September 22 - 23, over 90 airstrikes were reported in besieged East Aleppo. On September 23, the Syrian Arab Army General Command announced a new operation to take the eastern Aleppo neighborhoods. The ground offensive began on September 27 as pro-government forces advanced in the area west of the citadel in Aleppo.

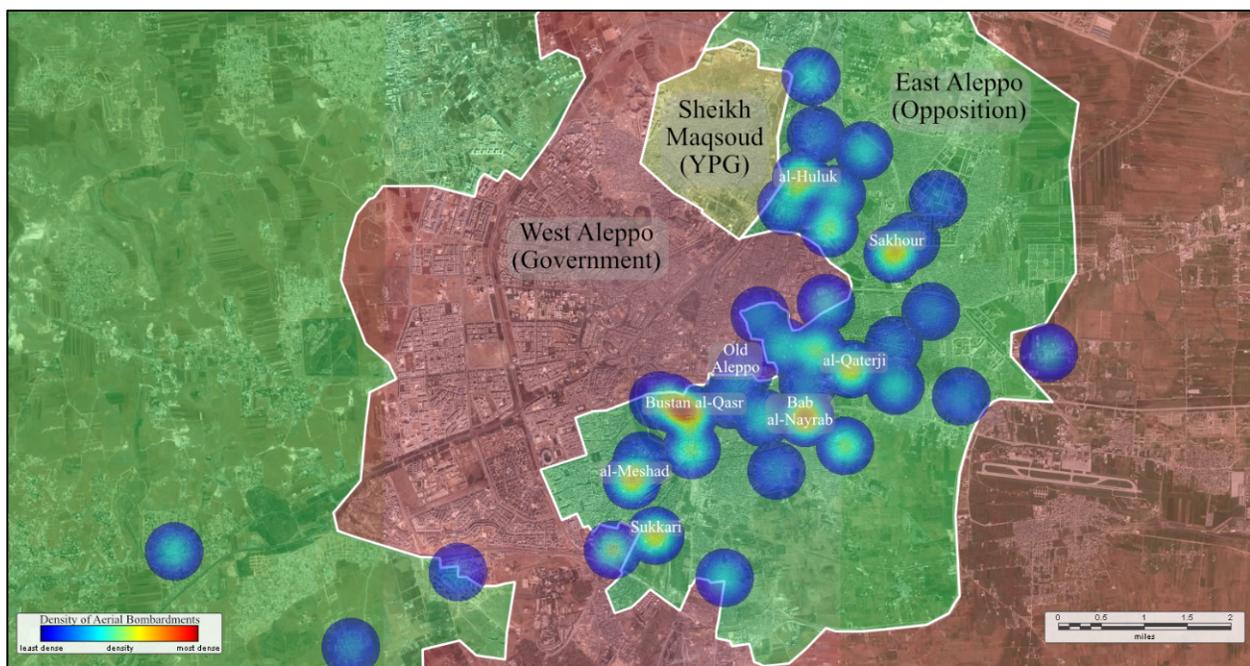


Figure 1 - Aerial bombardment on Aleppo, September 22-28. Map made using software from Palantir Technologies.

Airstrikes on September 22 and 23 put the Bab al-Nayrab Pumping Station and Zarbah Electrical Transformer Station, both in the outskirts of Aleppo city, out of operation. This led to the shutdown of the entire network of water infrastructure, leaving civilians in both opposition and government controlled areas of the city without access to water.

On September 22, FSA affiliated groups in northwest Aleppo announced the formation of the Free Idleb Army. The new group is comprised of the Northern Division, Liwa Soquor al-Jabal, and Division 13. The

groups will dissolve previous titles to join into one organization under one leadership. On September 27, they released their first conflict videos, mortar shelling in the northern countryside of Latakia and heavy Grad missile strikes on Handarat Camp in northern Aleppo.

The opposition offensive in the northern countryside of Hama achieved substantial territorial gains, with groups expanding on both southern and eastern frontlines. Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (JFS, formerly Jabhat al-Nusra) joined the fray and have focused offensive power along the Hama frontline. In Aleppo, JFS fighters have hunkered down along the difficult southern Aleppo frontline. Prominent JFS-supporting Sheikh Abdullah al-Muhaisni has released a video from the Hama frontline, announcing that JFS will fight a war on two fronts, in Aleppo and in Hama.

On September 22, opposition fighters and their families started to evacuate the al-Wa'er district of Homs city. Larger evacuations of al-Wa'er began a few days later on September 26.

On September 27, international coalition planes attacked al-Mayadin bridge in Deir Ezzor governorate. The area is controlled by ISIS and is just under 40 km southeast of government-controlled territory in Deir Ezzor city. Photos of the destruction have circulated through ISIS media channels.

Pro-government forces, including the 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade, National Defense Forces (NDF), and Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) have continued to gain territory in Eastern Ghouta. On September 27, pro-government forces captured a significant area around Tal Kurdi from opposition forces that remain there. Jaish al-Islam forces have attempted several counteroffensives around Reyhan, a key town near Duma in Rural Damascus.

On 22 September, an ISIS suicide attack in the town of Ankhel in Daraa governorate killed 13 people, including the minister for Local Administration and Humanitarian Aid and Refugee Affairs. 30 other civilians and local officials were wounded in the blast targeting an event inaugurating a new police station in the town.

Conclusions:

This week, Syria witnessed a sharp escalation in levels of violence as offensives continued throughout the country. A massive civilian toll has been exacted on East Aleppo.