

Syria Situation Report: April 1 - 14, 2020

1 Apr 1: HTS Demonstrates Continued Strength of Judiciary by Executing Prominent Regime Defector for Alleged Spying: Al Qaeda-affiliated Hay'at Tahir al-Sham (HTS) executed a former member of the Syrian Parliament on charges of espionage near the city of Jisr al-Shughour, in western Idlib Province. The man had been a member of Parliament until 2011, prior to his defection. HTS had reportedly caught the man providing voice messages to members of the regime's security forces. HTS may have conducted the execution in response to critics who believe it has allowed Turkey to gain inordinate influence in the region, or that it is too soft on alleged subversive elements.

2 Apr 4: Russia Asserts Influence in Qamishli following Clash between Regime and Kurdish Forces: Members of the regime's National Defense Forces (NDF) fired on a Kurdish Internal Security Forces (Asayish) patrol in the regime-held part of Qamishli in northern Hasakah Province. The shooting took place during the birthday celebration of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan. The attack killed one Asayish member and wounded another, according to local Kurdish reports. A Russian unit intervened to de-escalate the situation and negotiate with the Asayish.

3 Apr 6: Former Rebels Retain Power to Deny New Police Chief Entry to Area of Daraa City and Compel Talks: Unidentified rebel gunmen, likely belonging to reconciled rebel groups, prevented the new Daraa Chief of Police, Brig. Gen. Dherar Mahjam al-Dandal, from entering the Daraa al-Balad neighborhood of Daraa City. Gunmen opened fire on a police outpost and regime roadblocks to prevent his entry. Dandal was later able to enter the area after hours of talks with the former rebels.

4 Apr 7: ISIS May be Looking to Reassert Presence in Southern Syria with Assassination of Prominent Political Figure: ISIS claimed responsibility for the assassination of Secretary of the Syrian Baath Party's Nawa Branch Silwan al-Jundi. A gunman on a motorcycle shot and killed Al-Jundi outside the Nawa Baath Party office, 19 miles north of Daraa City. The took place on the 73rd anniversary of the founding of the Baath Party.

5 Apr 8: Continued Failures of Russia and Turkey to Conduct Joint Patrols in Greater Idlib Province Threaten Long-Term Viability of Ceasefire in Region: Russian and Turkish forces cut short their third attempted joint patrol of the M4 Highway due to protests on April 8. The patrol began in Tarnaba, east Idlib Province, and was forced to turn around in Nayrab, approximately 8 km to the west. The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) continued the patrol for another 10 km and reportedly established a new military position in Ariha, Idlib Province. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar reportedly claimed the patrol was a success in accordance with the Russian-Turkish ceasefire agreement, despite Russian forces only briefly participating.

6 Apr 9: ISIS Exploits Gaps in Syrian Desert to Conduct Attacks on Pro-regime Forces: ISIS militants attacked an unspecified pro-regime position near Wadi al-Waer in southeastern Homs Province, approximately 85 km southwest of Abu Kamal on the Syria-Iraq border. Pro-regime forces, including the Russian-backed Syrian Arab Army (SAA) 5th Corps, repelled the ISIS attack. Russian fixed-wing aircraft struck ISIS positions with dozens of airstrikes to expel the attacks as well.

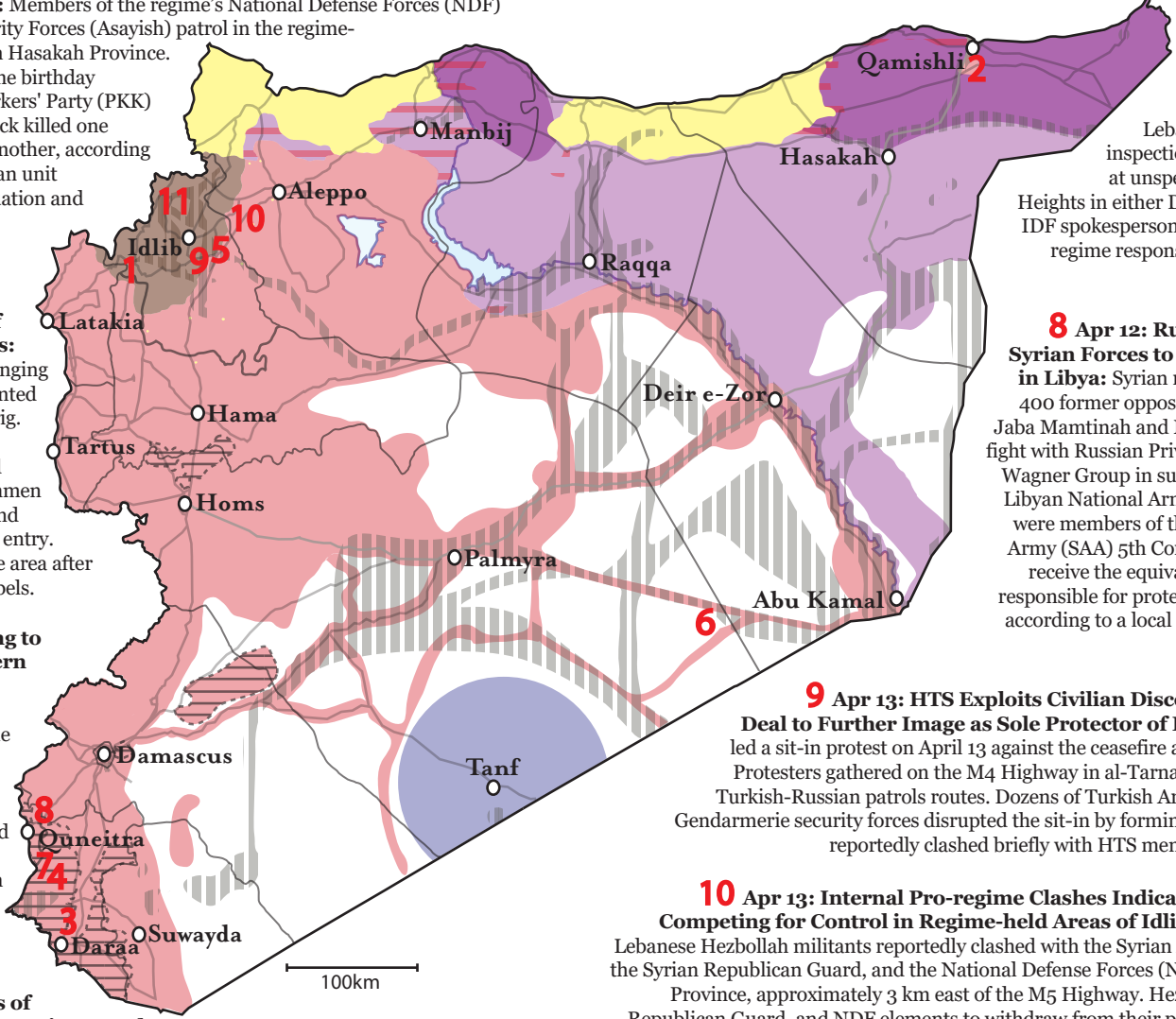
7 Apr 10: Israel Warns Syrian Regime against Cooperating with Hezbollah in Southern Syria: The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) released a video of senior leadership within the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) and Lebanese Hezbollah conducting an inspection tour of pro-regime positions at unspecified locations near the Golan Heights in either Dera'a or Quneitra Province. An IDF spokesperson said Israel will hold the Syrian regime responsible for "any sabotage activity" launched from Syria to Israel.

8 Apr 12: Russia Leverages Reconciled Syrian Forces to Support Russian Presence in Libya: Syrian regime agents recruited around 400 former opposition fighters from the towns of Jaba Mamtina and Mashara, Quneitra Province, to fight with Russian Private Military Contractor (PMC) Wagner Group in support of Khalifa Haftar and the Libyan National Army (LNA) in Libya. The recruits were members of the Russian-backed Syrian Arab Army (SAA) 5th Corps. These forces will reportedly receive the equivalent of \$1,000 a month and be responsible for protecting LNA-controlled oil fields, according to a local activist source speaking to pro-opposition media.

9 Apr 13: HTS Exploits Civilian Discontent with Russo-Turkish Deal to Further Image as Sole Protector of Rebel-held Northwest: HTS led a sit-in protest on April 13 against the ceasefire agreement reached on March 5. Protesters gathered on the M4 Highway in al-Tarnaba, east of Idlib City, near joint Turkish-Russian patrols routes. Dozens of Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) soldiers and Gendarmerie security forces disrupted the sit-in by forming a human wall. Turkish forces reportedly clashed briefly with HTS members after the TSK intervened.

10 Apr 13: Internal Pro-regime Clashes Indicate Pro-regime Factions are Competing for Control in Regime-held Areas of Idlib around the M5 Highway: Lebanese Hezbollah militants reportedly clashed with the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) 4th Division, the Syrian Republican Guard, and the National Defense Forces (NDF) in Zaytan, western Aleppo Province, approximately 3 km east of the M5 Highway. Hezbollah forced the 4th Division, Republican Guard, and NDF elements to withdraw from their positions in the town. Hezbollah militants killed one NDF member and wounded several others. The number of Hezbollah casualties is unclear.

11 Apr 14: Unidentified Militants Assassinate HTS-backed Judge with VBIED: Unidentified militants targeted a Syrian Salvation Government (SSG)-affiliated judge with a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) in Kafr Takharim, Idlib Province. The attack killed two people, including the judge, and wounded several others. HTS backs the SSG.



- Pro-Regime
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)
- ISIS Support Zones
- Al Qaeda-Dominated*
- Turkey-Opposition
- U.S. and Partner Forces
- SDF-Dominated, Regime Presence
- Core SDF-Held Kurdish Terrain
- Former Opposition Terrain (Reconciled)

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*AL QAEDA-LINKED GROUPS CONTROL NEARLY ALL GOVERNANCE AND MILITARY STRUCTURES IN GREATER IDLIB PROVINCE. VARIOUS LOCAL ACTORS ASSERT LIMITED CONTROL OVER ISOLATED AREAS OF GREATER IDLIB. Control of Terrain Accurate as of Apr 16, 2020