

SDF Begins Mass Release of ISIS Members and Sympathizers, October 16, 2020

KT: The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) has begun large-scale releases of ISIS detainees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), including ISIS sympathizers and the families of ISIS members. The SDF declared a general amnesty for detained criminals and ISIS fighters on October 15 and ISIS sympathizers in the al-Hawl IDP camp on October 14. The SDF clarified that the amnesty does not apply to ISIS members found guilty of killing Syrians, an effort to mitigate public backlash. However, the SDF cannot consistently apply that standard, as it does not have the ability to investigate and prosecute all of its detainees or IDPs. The SDF does not have a process to deradicalize or reintegrate released ISIS sympathizers. The SDF released 631 detainees from Alaya Prison near Qamishli on October 15 and 289 IDPs from al-Hawl on October 13. More releases will likely follow in coming days. ISIS will benefit from the injection of new fighters into its insurgency and will likely intimidate and recruit vulnerable civilian returnees.

KEY



DETENTION FACILITY: A facility holding ISIS members and often criminals. This map shows only major facilities in Northern Syria. It does not depict all detention facilities across Syria.



DISPLACEMENT CAMP: An official facility housing internally displaced persons (IDPs). This map shows only formal facilities supported by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). It does not depict all informal displacement camps in Syria.



MAJOR DETAINEE OR IDP RELEASES: A displacement camp or detention facility where a major portion of residents are being released by the SDF.



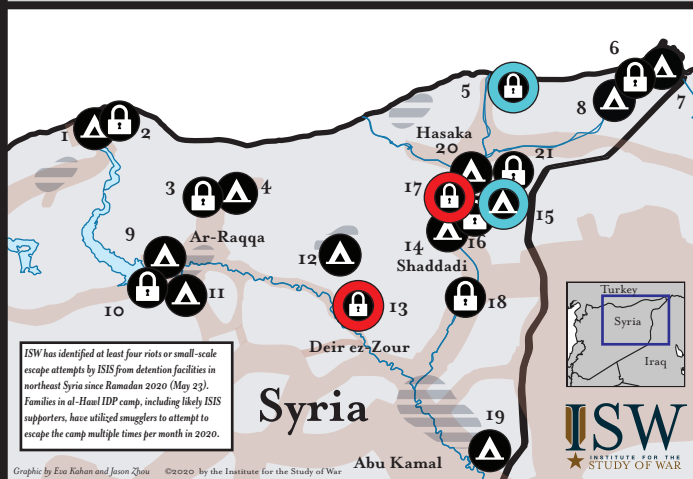
RIOT OR ATTEMPTED BREAKOUT: A detention facility or IDP camp where ISIS members or supporters participated in a known riot or breakout attempt since Ramadan 2020 (May 23).



ISIS SUPPORT ZONE: An area free of significant action against ISIS which permits logistical and administrative tasks by its forces. Updated May 2020.



DENSE IDP SETTLEMENTS: An area with a concentration of settlements of displaced persons recognized by local authorities and receiving administration and management. This map shows an approximation of these concentrations of smaller settlements.



ISW has identified at least four riots or small-scale escape attempts by ISIS from detention facilities in northeast Syria since Ramadan 2020 (May 23). Families in al-Hawl IDP camp, including likely ISIS supporters, have utilized smugglers to attempt to escape the camp multiple times per month in 2020.

Graphic by Eric Kahan and Jason Zhu ©2020 by the Institute for the Study of War

KEY FACILITIES IN SYRIA

1. Kobani IDP Camp
2. SDF Detention Facility near Kobani
3. SDF Detention Facility near Ayn Issa
4. Ayn Issa IDP Camp
5. Alaya Detention Facility (SDF)
6. SDF Detention Facility near Malikiyah
7. Newroz Refugee Camp
8. Roj IDP Camp
9. Twahina IDP Camp
10. SDF Detention Facility near Tabqa
11. Suwaydiyah Karirah IDP Camp
12. Abu Khashab IDP Camp
13. SDF Detention Facility near Kasra
14. Arishah IDP Camp
15. Al-Hawl IDP Camp
16. Hasaka Detention Facility (SDF)
17. Sina'a Detention Facility (SDF)
18. SDF Detention Facility near Dashisha
19. Hajjin IDP Camp
20. Al-Tuwinah IDP Camp
21. SDF Detention Facility near al-Hawl