

Syria Update: September 4-12, 2014

1 05-12 September: Regime airstrikes within ISIS-controlled territory in north and eastern Syria incurred a high number of civilian casualties, placing pressure on ISIS's ability to maintain social control. In Ashara in Deir ez-Zour Province, residents protested on September 5 in front of an ISIS post, demanding that ISIS remove its positions from within populated areas in order to avoid civilian deaths caused by airstrikes. In Raqqa, a regime airstrike that targeted a bakery killed 41 civilians on September 7. In al-Bab in Aleppo Province, ISIS reportedly started withdrawing from the city on September 11 after agreeing to evacuate its positions in order to spare residents from aerial bombardments.



2 September 08: Jabhat al-Nusra and other rebels seized the regime's 90th Brigade Headquarters in central Quneitra and have continued to seize other villages in the province. This is part of a rebel attempt announced on September 2 aimed at linking the rebel systems in Quneitra and Damascus's Western Ghouta.



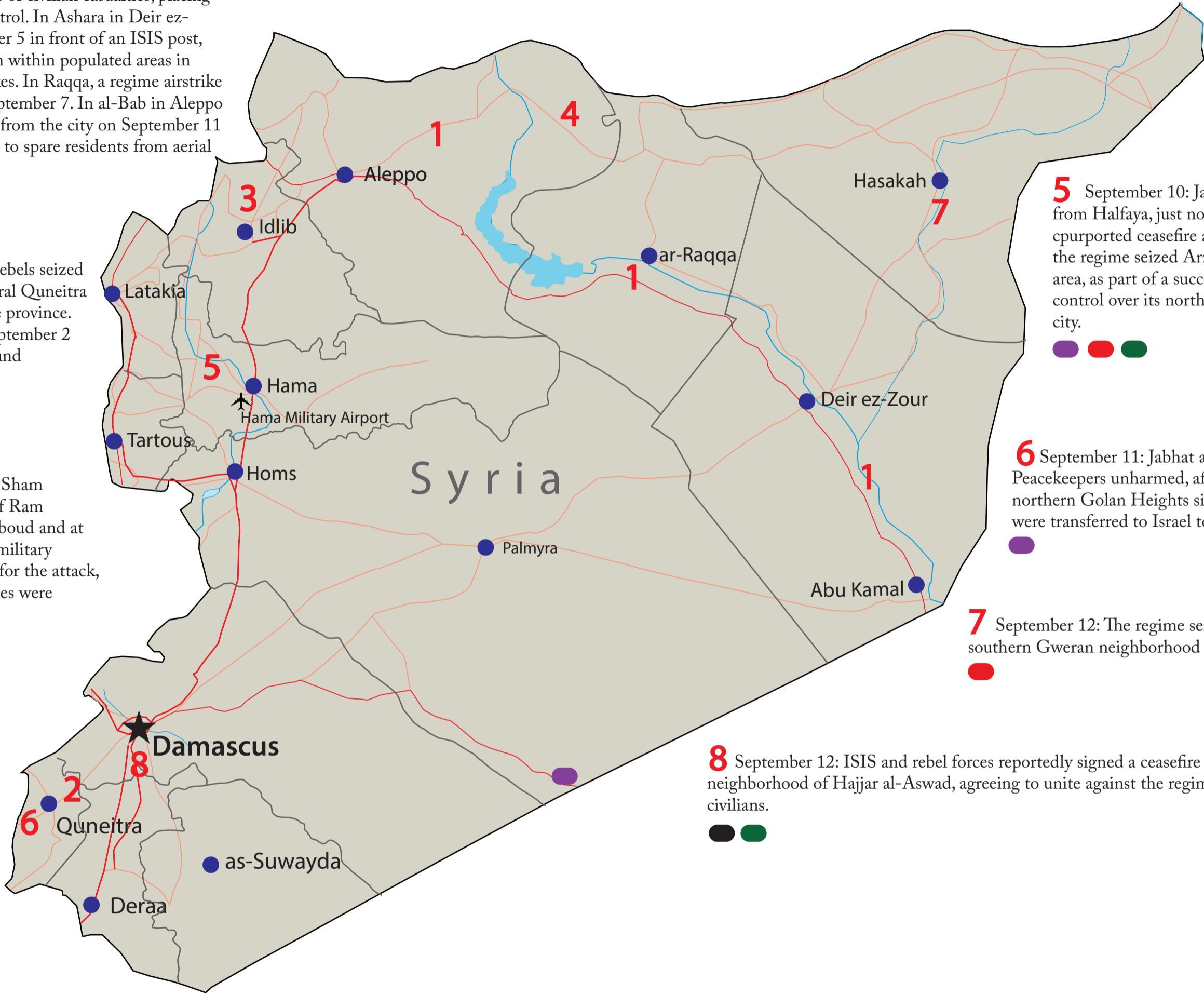
3 September 09: An explosion at an Ahrar al-Sham (HASI) Shura Council meeting in the village of Ram Hamdan in Idlib killed HASI leader Hassan Aboud and at least 20 senior members, including the group's military commander, Abu Talha. No one claimed credit for the attack, and it is possible that either ISIS or regime forces were responsible.



4 September 10: The YPG and rebel groups announced the formation of a joint operations room to fight ISIS named the "Euphrates Volcano" in the countryside of Aleppo and Raqqa. The groups participating called on those who wish to see ISIS defeated to provide the operations room with material support.



- Opposition Forces
- Pro-Regime Forces
- YPG
- ISIS
- Jabhat al-Nusra (JN)



5 September 10: Jabhat al-Nusra agreed to withdraw from Halfaya, just northwest of Hama City, after a purported ceasefire agreement occurred. This comes after the regime seized Arzeh and Khattab, located in the same area, as part of a successful counteroffensive to regain control over its northwestern supply route out of Hama city.



6 September 11: Jabhat al-Nusra released all 45 Fijian UN Peacekeepers unharmed, after holding them captive in the northern Golan Heights since August 28. The peacekeepers were transferred to Israel to undergo medical evaluation.



7 September 12: The regime seized the western half of Hasaka's southern Gweran neighborhood from local gunmen.



8 September 12: ISIS and rebel forces reportedly signed a ceasefire in the Southern Damascus neighborhood of Hajjar al-Aswad, agreeing to unite against the regime and giving rights to civilians.



by the ISW Syria Team

The assassination of Hassan Aboud, the leader of hardline Salafist Ahrar al-Sham and a former associate of al-Qaeda representative Abu Khalid al-Suri, is likely to have major repercussions for the capacity of rebels to coordinate their efforts across fronts. Ahrar al-Sham is the largest cross-provincial rebel group in Syria and worked closely with other rebel brigades in nearly every Syrian province. Meanwhile, the regime's counteroffensive in Hama province culminated with the seizure of all terrain previously captured by Jabhat al-Nusra and other groups northwest of the city. With the threat to the Hama Military Airport, a major regime transport hub, temporarily neutralized, the regime can allocate resources to other fronts such as Quneitra, where rebels have been making steady gains since at least mid-August 2014.