Syria Update: October 29 - November 04, 2014

1 28 OCT – 03 NOV: JN, Jabhat Ansar al-Din, Harakat Hazm, the Islamic Front, and several other rebel groups signed a local truce on October 28 in order to prevent rebel infighting from spreading to Aleppo city and threatening the rebel defense against the regime. Meanwhile, clashes erupted between ISIS against JN and other rebel groups in the northern Aleppo countryside near Marea on November 3.

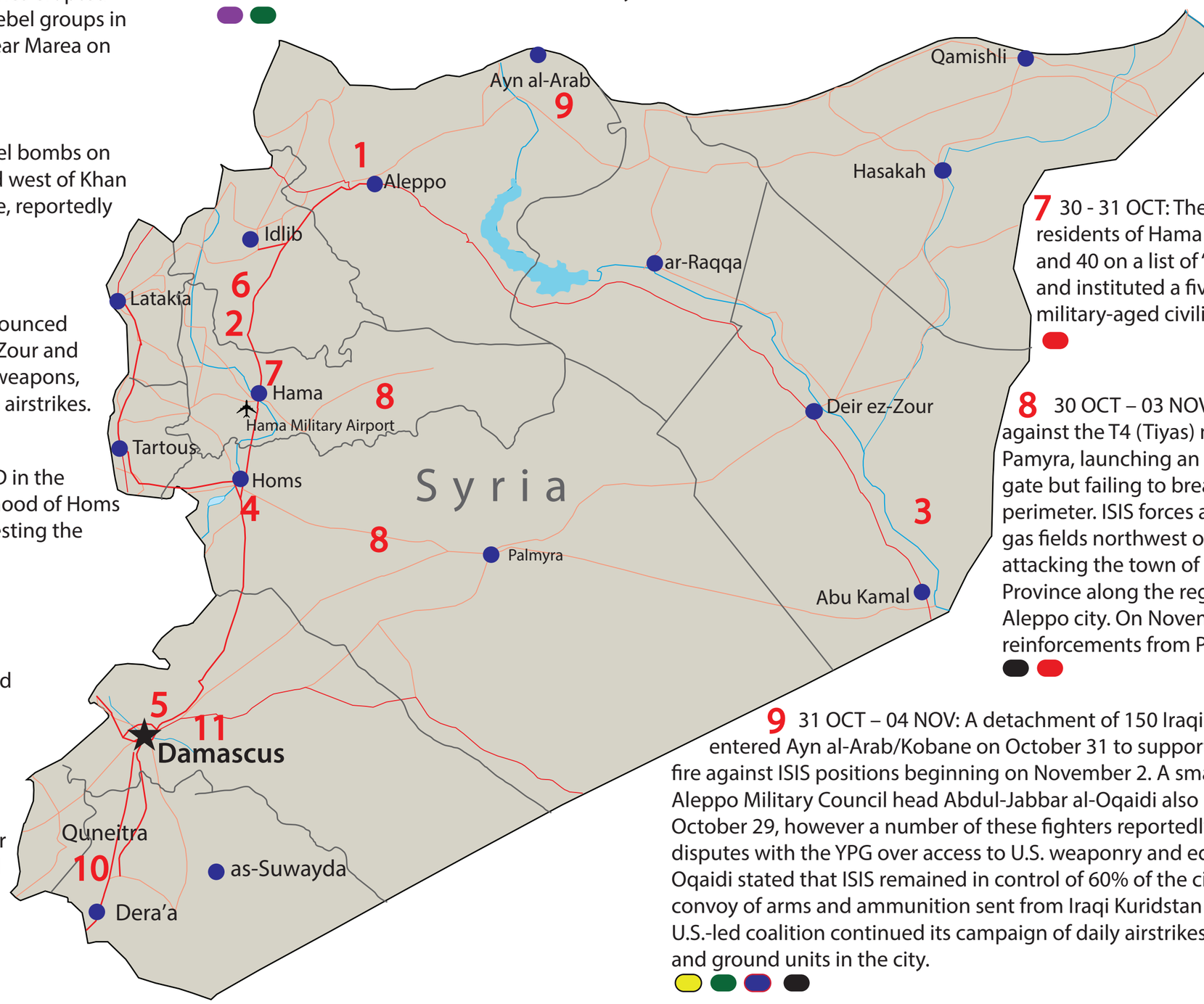
2 29 OCT: The regime dropped barrel bombs on the al-Nazihin refugee camp, located west of Khan Sheikhoun in southern Idlib province, reportedly killing at least 60 Syrian refugees.

3 29 OCT: She'tat tribal fighters announced that they would fight ISIS in Deir ez-Zour and ar-Raqqa Provinces if they received weapons, even without support from coalition airstrikes.

4 29 – 30 OCT: JN detonated a VBIED in the majority-Alawite al-Zahra neighborhood of Homs city, prompting a civilian strike protesting the regime's inability to secure the city.

5 29 OCT – 04 NOV: The regime continued to bombard the rebel-held neighborhood of Jobar, striking the neighborhood with 12 surface-to-surface missiles on October 31 as well as two chlorine gas attacks on October 29 and November 4. Meanwhile, on October 31, the rebel Eastern Ghouta Unified Judiciary issued new laws making reconciliation with the regime punishable by death after a truce was reportedly concluded between rebels and the regime in the al-Qadam neighborhood of southern Damascus on October 30.

6 29 OCT – 04 NOV: JN and Jund al-Aqsa seized an additional eight villages in the Jabal al-Zawiya region of southern Idlib Province, including the SRF stronghold of Deir Sunbul and the Harakat Hazm stronghold of Khan Sibel, after the surrender and withdrawal of local forces. Dozens of SRF fighters reportedly defected to JN and Jund al-Aqsa, and in a likely PR stunt JN later claimed to discover mass graves of civilians supposedly killed by the SRF and Harakat Hazm near the groups' former headquarters. On November 1, JN and Jund al-Aqsa released a joint statement agreeing to a ceasefire followed by Sharia court arbitration and a prisoner exchange amidst reports that SRF commander Jamal Maarouf has fled to Turkey.



7 30 - 31 OCT: The regime reportedly put 70,000 residents of Hama city between the ages of 18 and 40 on a list of "reservists to be mobilized" and instituted a five-year jail sentence for military-aged civilians who fail to enroll in the

8 30 OCT – 03 NOV: ISIS launched an offensive against the T4 (Tiyas) military airbase, west of Pamyra, launching an SVBIED against the base's main gate but failing to break through the base's perimeter. ISIS forces also seized the Sha'er and Juhar gas fields northwest of Palmyra in addition to attacking the town of al-Salamiya in eastern Hama Province along the regime's alternate supply route to Aleppo city. On November 3, the regime deployed reinforcements from Palmyra to the T4 airbase.

9 31 OCT – 04 NOV: A detachment of 150 Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga fighters entered Ayn al-Arab/Kobane on October 31 to support YPG forces, launching indirect fire against ISIS positions beginning on November 2. A small FSA force led by former Aleppo Military Council head Abdul-Jabbar al-Oqaidi also reached Ayn al-Arab on October 29, however a number of these fighters reportedly left on October 31 following disputes with the YPG over access to U.S. weaponry and equipment. On November 3, Oqaidi stated that ISIS remained in control of 60% of the city, amidst reports of a second convoy of arms and ammunition sent from Iraqi Kuridstan to Ayn al-Arab. Meanwhile, the U.S.-led coalition continued its campaign of daily airstrikes against ISIS forward positions and ground units in the city.

10 01 – 04 NOV: The regime launched an operation to seize the town of Sheikh Miskin, north of Dera'a city. In response, JN and the FSA-affiliated Southern Front announced the battle of 'Edkholo Alayhem al-Bab' to repel regime forces and have reportedly made initial gains against the regime.

11 02 NOV: An SVEST detonated at the entrance of University of Damascus medical school, killing two students and wounding five others. No group claimed responsibility, but the explosion occurred within a few hundred meters of a regional Military Intelligence branch office

- Opposition Forces
- Pro-Regime Forces
- ISIS
- YPG
- U.S.-Led Coalition
- Jabhat al-Nusra (JN)

ISW INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR

by Christopher Kozak and Jennifer Cafarella

An ISIS offensive against regime military bases and infrastructure in eastern Homs province appears targeted to relieve pressure on ISIS in Deir ez-Zour by disrupting the regime's supply lines to Deir ez-Zour city through eastern Homs Province. The regime continues to conduct limited airstrikes and bombardment of ISIS positions in Deir ez-Zour city and the surrounding countryside, likely exacerbating the disruptive effect of U.S.-led coalition airstrikes in the area. Combined with the resumption of clashes in northern Aleppo province, ISIS' ability to conduct a major operation in eastern Homs indicates that ISIS offensive capabilities have not been significantly degraded despite the losses taken during the battle for Ayn al-Arab/Kobane and the continued anti-ISIS air campaign. Furthermore, recent activity indicates ISIS may take advantage of the chaos created by JN's consolidation in Idlib to advance against the town of Azaz in northern Aleppo Province. While rebel forces appear to have maintained their defenses in Aleppo city despite the conflict in Idlib, the successful consolidation by JN of territory previously held by moderate rebel forces threatens the viability of the moderate opposition in northern Syria. Critically, the lack of popular resistance to JN's expansion in Idlib is a key indicator of JN's local popularity acquired through its continued effective military action against the Syrian regime.