

WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 14-20 JANUARY 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

- x NORTHWEST | Open conflict between Hayyat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) and the National Liberation Front (NLF) decreased in Idleb and Western Aleppo Governorates as a ceasefire continues to hold.
- x SOUTH | More Israeli airstrikes impacted sites close to Damascus after a similar incident last week. Elsewhere, an improvised explosive device (IED) explosion took place in the southern part of the capital.
- x NORTHEAST | An ISIS claimed suicide attack against US troops in Manbij City highlighted the enduring resilience of the group in northeast Syria as well as the spoiling effect this and other groups can have on peace building.

NORTHWEST SYRIA

This week saw a slowdown of Al Qaeda linked Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham's (HTS) expansion into Turkish backed National Liberation Front (NLF) areas of Idleb and Western Aleppo governorates. Open conflict between the two sides dropped in numbers significantly, from 109 events recorded last period to just 20 this week. Notably, 80% of this week's incidents involved asymmetrical tactics - shootings or improvised explosive devices (IEDs) - focusing

Suqour Al Sham came to an [agreement](#) with HTS to remain on frontlines with government forces there. While the reduction in violence may appear positive, without any guidance as to where or for how long the latest HTS / NLF ceasefire agreement applies, questions remain over how long it will last.

The recent military and administrative gains by HTS in northwest Syria have also raised concerns over the humanitarian impact of this activity. It was [announced](#) this week that funding to health projects in opposition-held parts of Aleppo governorate had been suspended. On a wider level, despite the ~~shown~~ of HTS action against the NLF, the ongoing targeting of government areas by elements from the Idlib pocket continues to threaten the long-standing Russian / Turkish brokered ceasefire agreement for the northwest of Syria.³ [Comments](#) made by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on 18 January about HTS “continuing to shoot at Syrian troop positions and civilian facilities from the Idlib zone” and that the 0.002 Tw [(a)-2.o.om4.58m[(a)z(0)3 daeting the adn-

Away from this activity, a rare IED event was recorded in the southern part of the capital on 20 January. The IED had been placed on the eastern section of Al Motahalik al Janoubi Street – a major thoroughfare through southern Damascus – near a military intelligence complex. It was either [dismantled](#) or [detonated](#) with few casualties, according to conflicting reports. The Abu Amara Brigade, a group that has not previously conducted IED attacks in Damascus, [claimed](#) responsibility for the attack.

This is the first IED event in the central part of the city (see [map](#)).

