



FACT SHEET SYRIA

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On 9 October, Turkey along with Syrian militias launched an offensive against the YPG in northern Syria. The previously announced withdrawal of US forces made a Turkish invasion possible. The Kurdish fighters were Washington's most powerful allies within the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the fight against the Islamic State. One of Turkey's main objectives is to prevent the territorial unity of Rojava, the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria. Furthermore, Ankara also aims to resettle a large part of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees in the border area. In the course of the military offensive, Turkey and its allies occupied a 120 km long border strip between Tall Abyad and Ras al-Ain. Turkey's military

superiority forced the Kurds to call on Syrian President al-Assad for military assistance. Consequently, the regime was able to regain control over important cities in northern Syria; the weakening of Kurdish efforts for autonomy in Syria means not only a success for Damascus but also for Ankara. On 22 October, Erdoğan and Putin agreed on joint patrols in the border area while the YPG was given time to withdraw their troops from that area. However, al-Assad rejects a permanent Turkish presence in Syria. Moscow, which currently wants to strengthen the legitimacy of the Syrian government internationally, is the most powerful international actor in Syria.



MAP ANALYSIS

In the run-up to the offensive, President Erdoğan called for a buffer zone along the southern border with a length of 444 km between the Iraqi border and the river Euphrates. The Syrian army now controls certain cities and areas in the border region. Meanwhile, Turkey and its allies control a 120 km wide strip between Ras al-Ain and Tall Abyad. In accordance with the 10 point memorandum agreed by Russia and Turkey, the states conduct joint patrols 10 km east and west of this zone. Damascus not only controls parts of the border region, it has also regained control over strategically important cities such as Manbij and Kobane.

Note: No claim to completeness of the map is put forward.

FORECAST

Current conflict dynamics will persist. Small-scale military operations will not bring fundamental change. Furthermore, the armed actors are increasingly war-weary in the 9th year of civil war. Consequently, no conflict party will succeed in enforcing a final decision through military means. In the near term, a peaceful solution for Syria will not be found on the battlefield, but within the framework of international initiatives in which Turkey will be a leading figure. The Syrian government of al-Assad will further consolidate. Political initiatives regarding the Kurdish self-administration coupled with conferences concerning the shaping of a new Syrian constitution signal an ostensible political change. However, the negotiating parties' insistence on well-known positions will continue to determine future action. Although economic initiatives will achieve a minimum level of socio-economic stability for some people, a notable improvement of the overall living conditions of the Syrian population will fail to materialize. Currently, a sustainable peace in Syria cannot be expected.

The periodically published Fact Sheet compiles and analyzes significant developments pertaining to the Syrian conflict while providing maps and an outlook of possible future events.

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SOURCES: MEDIA ANALYSIS; **LAYOUT:** REF III/Medien, IMG



INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

10.10.: In the course of a UN Security Council meeting, six EU states, including Germany and the permanent members France and the United Kingdom, issued a declaration in which they called for an end to the Turkish offensive. In the face of European sanctions, Turkey threatened to terminate the migration deal with the EU that was established to prevent illegal migration in the Mediterranean.

14.10.: The Kurdish Autonomous Administration asked the Syrian government for support against the Turkish military offensive. Subsequently, Syrian soldiers were stationed at Tell Tamer, 30 km from the border town of Ras al-Ain. The agreement is based on temporary military assistance in the Syrian-Turkish border area. Kurdish autonomy and its potential future in northeast Syria were not addressed in the agreement.

17.10.: Turkish President Erdoğan agreed with US Vice President Pence on a temporary ceasefire in northern Syria. The five-day truce was intended to grant the YPG fighters time to withdraw. As a result of the offensive, the US imposed sanctions on Turkish ministers which would be lifted in the event of a permanent ceasefire.

21.10.: Germany's Minister of Defence Kramp-Karrenbauer called for an internationally controlled security zone in the northern Syrian border area. This should enable reconstruction and the return of refugees. Furthermore, efforts to fight the Islamic State should continue. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg expressed his positive opinion on the German proposal. The US emphasized that they did not want to contribute troops. After initial willingness to negotiate, Turkey rejected the proposal.

23.10.: Turkey and Russia agreed on a 10 point memorandum in Sochi, a few hours before the ceasefire, co-negotiated by the US, expired. In coordination with the Syrian regime, Russia enforced the withdrawal of YPG fighters. Turkey and Russia are conducting patrols on the edge of the Turkish-occupied territory, while Russian military police and Syrian border troops are jointly controlling parts of the rest of the border area.

30.10.: The Syrian Constitutional Committee met for the first time since the outbreak of the civil war. The 150 representatives - one third each from the government, the opposition and representatives selected by the UN - are discussing constitutional reform under the auspices of Special Envoy Pedersen in Geneva, which is seen as the first step towards a political solution to the conflict. The constitutional process is part of the international efforts to end the Syrian conflict and is based on a UN resolution of 2015.

26.11.: At a meeting with UN Secretary General Guterres, the German Chancellor Merkel emphasized the willingness to solve the Syrian civil war. Germany wants to play an active part in the course of the constitutional process.

29.11.: The delegates of the Syrian Constitutional Committee met in Geneva for the second time. However, no consensus on further steps could be reached for the time being.

MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

09.10.: The Turkish operation "Peace Spring" began with air strikes on the border towns of Tall Abyad, Ras al-Ain and Al-Qamishli and the town of Ain Issa, located halfway between the border and Ar-Raqqa. The ground offensive started the following day, it was not carried out primarily by the Turkish army but by Islamist militias, including the Syrian National Army (SNA). In response, the SDF fired on cities on the Turkish side of the border.

11.10.: IS fighters who were able to flee their detention because of the ongoing battle were suspected to be responsible for the bomb attack in Al-Qamishli. US forces near Kobane reported that they came under Turkish fire, whereas Turkey claimed to have fired on SDF positions. Heavy fighting occurred between SDF and SNA over Ras al-Ain and Tall Abyad, as well as surrounding villages and connecting roads along the border.

13.10.: More than 700 presumed IS supporters and fighters managed to escape from a detention camp near Ain Issa during the Turkish military offensive.

14.10.: With the consent of the Kurds the Syrian army began to advance to Manbij and Kobane, while Russian military police patrolled to separate Syrian and Turkish troops. The two parties also faced each other at Ain Issa and Tell Tamer.

18.10.: The temporary ceasefire, which was negotiated with US participation, began. The SDF obliged to evacuate the Turkish occupied territory by the end of October. A week later, US troops moved from Iraq to the oil fields in the province of Deir ez-Zour to secure them.

27.10.: IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in an operation by US Special Forces in Idlib province.

10.11.: In November there were repeated battles between Turkish backed units and the SDF in the towns of Ain Issa, Tall Abyad and Tell Tamer. Several car bombings took place in Tall Abyad. In Idlib province, fightings between Syrian government troops and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) intensified.

DOMESTIC POLITICS

11.10.: Civic, social and religious activists gathered in the cities of Al-Hasaka and Al-Qamishli to express condemnation of the Turkish invasion on Syrian territory, which they deemed an act of aggression.

22.10.: President Bashar al-Assad visited the contested region of Idlib for the first time since the outbreak of the civil war. Most of the area is controlled by HTS, a branch of al-Qaeda.

28.10.: Syria's permanent representative to the UN, Bashar al-Jaafari, stated that the occupied Golan will remain a priority for Syria and that Syria's sovereignty over the disputed territory has to be restored.

05.11.: In the resolution titled "The Syrian Golan", adopted by a recorded vote of 91 in favour to 9 against, with 65 abstentions, the UN General Assembly demanded Israel to withdraw from the occupied territory.

13.11.: The "Forum of Business and Economic Opportunities with Syria" took place at headquarters of the Trade Promotion Organization in Tehran. The forum introduced Iranian private sector companies to investment opportunities in Syria in order to rehabilitate the productive sectors in the war torn country.

20.11.: Syria continued to intensify its international trade relations as well as its political ties. Relations with Oman were reinforced, economic cooperation with Crimea was strengthened and a cooperation with the Communist Party of China envisaged. Moreover, meetings took place with representatives of Nepal, India, Serbia, Cuba, Iran and Indonesia.

26.11.: At the 24th conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in The Hague, Syria's Permanent Representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Bassam Sabbagh, affirmed that Syria has fulfilled all its obligations and has destroyed all its chemical weapons and production facilities. As a consequence, Syria will reject any conclusion issued by the OPCW-fact-finding mission which investigates the possible use of toxic chemicals in Syria during the civil war.

03.12.: Hundreds of Syrian refugees returned home after protests broke out in Lebanon.

08.12.: The Syrian-North Korean Joint Economic Committee held their 11th meeting in Damascus aiming to boost their economic ties.



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