

## Daraa Province Following Control by the Government of Syria

### Eighth Monitoring Report

15 October 2019

This report is the eighth of its kind issued by the Syrian Civic Platform (SCP) about the situation in Daraa province since the Government of Syria (GoS) retook control there with a reconciliation/settlement agreement brokered by Russia.<sup>1</sup>

The security situation is still deteriorating in most areas of the province. There have been an increasing number of assassinations throughout the area, targeting combatants from diverse affiliations and positions as well as civilians. The situation has led to a high level of fear within local communities and limited daily movement. In addition, it is not clear if the settlement agreement will be renewed. Amidst this uncertainty, raids and arrests of Daraa residents by GoS have continued.

In addition to the dire security situation, there is an absence of diverse and substantive civil society organizations. A number of organizations have stopped work because of GoS domination and efforts to control their work through its foundations such as the Syrian Red Crescent.

This report covers 46 towns and villages in Daraa province distributed across six geographical sectors, from July 7 to October 12, 2019.

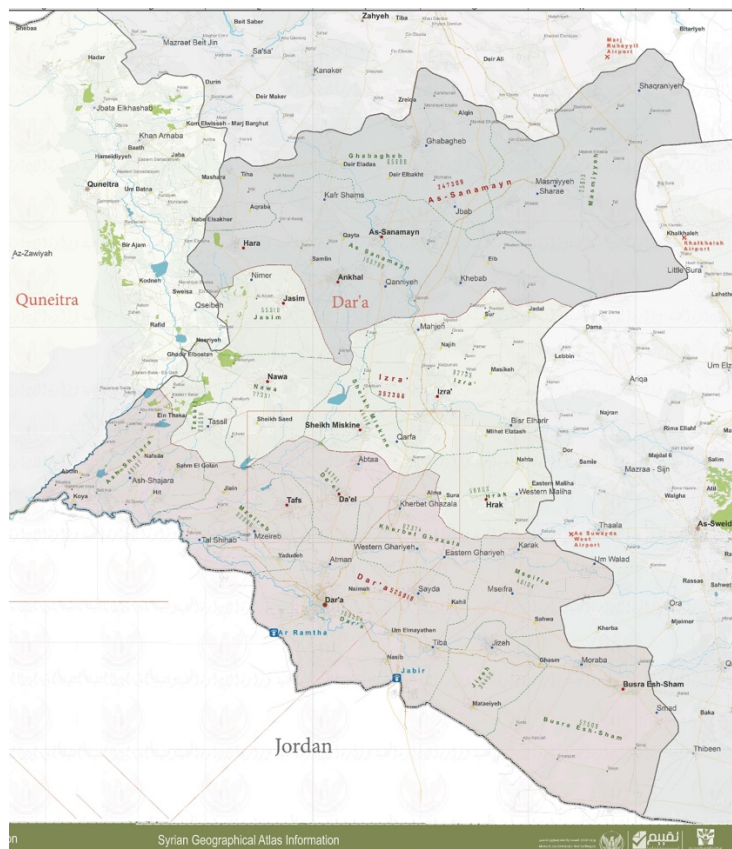


Figure 1. Daraa province including Daraa Al Balad, Daraa Al Madina, Yaddodeh and Atman

<sup>1</sup> The 2018 agreement stated that opposition armed groups had to hand over their heavy and medium-sized weapons and allow the gradual entry of GoS state institutions into their areas of control. The agreement also indicated that civilians would not be made the targets of retaliation by the GoS and its security services and militias, and the persecution of Daraa's residents by the GoS would end.



## 1. Daraa City, including the areas of Daraa Al Balad, Daraa Al Madina, Yadodeh and Atman.

Security situation in Daraa City: The situation is tense, especially in Daraa Al Balad where there are ongoing instances of assassination and targeting of people from all affiliations including civilians and military figures. The SCP has recorded the killing of 13 civilians (including at least one woman as well as a child) as a result of explosive remnants of war (ERWs). In addition, 20 people were assassinated: 16 were former members of the Free Syrian Army and four were from the GoS military. There have also been many attempted assassinations.

The tension in the Daraa camp continued after an attempt by GoS Air Force Intelligence members to arrest young men from the area who were passing through their checkpoint. After this incident the people in the area attacked the checkpoint, which led to the temporary withdrawal of the barrier. The civilians then closed the east entrance of the camp from the checkpoint side with mounds of dirt.

Cases of former members of the Free Syrian Army and civilians being arrested have been observed. Student S.S.<sup>2</sup> was arrested by the GoS Air Force Intelligence branch during the reporting period. Detainees have also been released. For example, detainee M. was released after being detained for two years. A doctor and a nurse from Daraa camp were also released after more than one month of detention.

There have also been death notices issued for people who died under detention. The death notice of Abdul Shafi Subaihi, who had been detained for more than a year by GoS, was publicized during this time. Mr. Subaihi had worked with the Free Syrian Army and had been carrying a GoS settlement card. In addition, M.S. disappeared after being transferred to a hospital in Damascus to receive treatment.

Other security incidents observed include:

- 1) A grenade was thrown at I. A. A. because he was suspected of dealing with the GoS.
- 2) A mortar shell fell from the base towards the old customs area in Daraa without any damage.
- 3) A Russian car was targeted with an explosive device.
- 4) A 4th Division bus was targeted between Al-Yadouda and Al-Dahieh with an explosive charge and more than 20 people were injured.
- 5) Checkpoints were put on the western side of Daraa Al Balad. This instigated a great deal of anger among the local population and resulted in demonstrations for their removal.
- 6) There were also demonstrations in Daraa camp demanding the release of detainees and the improvement of service conditions.

The area was also tense after a delegation from the GoS security leadership visited the Crisis Unit of the province<sup>3</sup>, which called for demonstrations after Friday prayers to demand an easing of the security grip on the province, improving the daily quality of life, removing the new checkpoints and releasing detainees. The demonstrations were postponed after promises were made by the military security to respond to the demands.

Services: The period covered by this report was characterized by unprecedented activity to re-open markets and rehabilitate the infrastructure through cooperation with multiple international

---

Full names are not used to protect the individual's and their family's security.<sup>2</sup>  
The Crisis Unit was formed in 2018 by opposition armed groups in the area. It is composed of military, social and<sup>3</sup> human rights leaders, and its mission is to negotiate with the GoS and Russia on the demands of the province.



organizations (United Nations Development Programme, Premiere Urgence Internationale, Action Against Hunger, UNICEF). In addition, decisions were issued for shops owners to renovate stores, re-open them and put them back in service. The most important developments related to that include:

- 1) Opening of the west and east roads between downtown Daraa city and Daraa Al Balad due to rubble removal.
- 2) Processing of sewage in many areas.
- 3) Repairing of some main roads.
- 4) Lifting and equipping the earthen mounds that formed air security barriers on the Daraa / Tafas road.
- 5) Clearing 9,000 cubic meters of rubble from Mansheya through collaboration with UNDP.
- 6) Providing citizens with a smart card to use for obtaining services.

## **2. Western Daraa countryside, including the areas of Al Shajarah, Sahem Jawlan, Nafaa, Zayzoun, Tseel, Glenn, Tel Shihab, Al- Muzeireeb, Tafas**

Security situation: Assassinations have continued in this area, with grenades thrown at the houses of those targeted, or by the planting of explosive devices. The assassination of 13 Free Syrian Army members who had settled and begun working with GoS was recorded, as well as the killing of 6 GoS army members. In addition, two civilians were assassinated: the mayor of Al-Shajarah and the mayor of Al- Muzeireeb.

In terms of arrests, approximately 10 civilians were arrested at GoS checkpoints. T.A. and A.J. were killed in GoS prisons after less than a year of detention. A.S., a GoS soldier who defected and then re-joined the GoS military 8 months ago was killed. His family had no news about him until they received his death notice. Other recorded events include:

- 1) Eight people from a single family were injured by a mine explosion. They were taken to a hospital in the town of Tseel.
- 2) A car exploded in front of the Air Force Security detachment headquarters in Tseel.
- 3) Five civilians were injured by a mine explosion in Tseel.
- 4) In the first recorded incident in Zayzoun, GoS forces were attacked by an unknown entity present in Zayzoun camp, and five officers were injured.
- 5) Residents of the town of Tel Shehab were subjected to several incidents of harassment by the checkpoints located at the town entrances, increasing their suffering. The period was characterized by its difficulty as a result of a series of attacks. During the most significant of these, Tel Shehab Hospital was bombed but did not sustain damages.
- 6) Tensions continued in Tafas as GoS forces gathered and threatened to storm the town, in addition to the arrest of a number of young people from the city at various checkpoints in the province.

## **3. Eastern Daraa countryside, including the villages of Al-Hirak, Giza, Al-Taybeh, Al-Ghariyya, Al-Sharqiya, Al-Sahwa and Alma.**

As in all areas of Daraa, the people implementing the reconciliation agreement continue to be threatened in the governorate, with eight assassinations recorded during the reporting period. In addition, a Sheikh from the Shia sect and seven civilians, including two children, were killed as a result

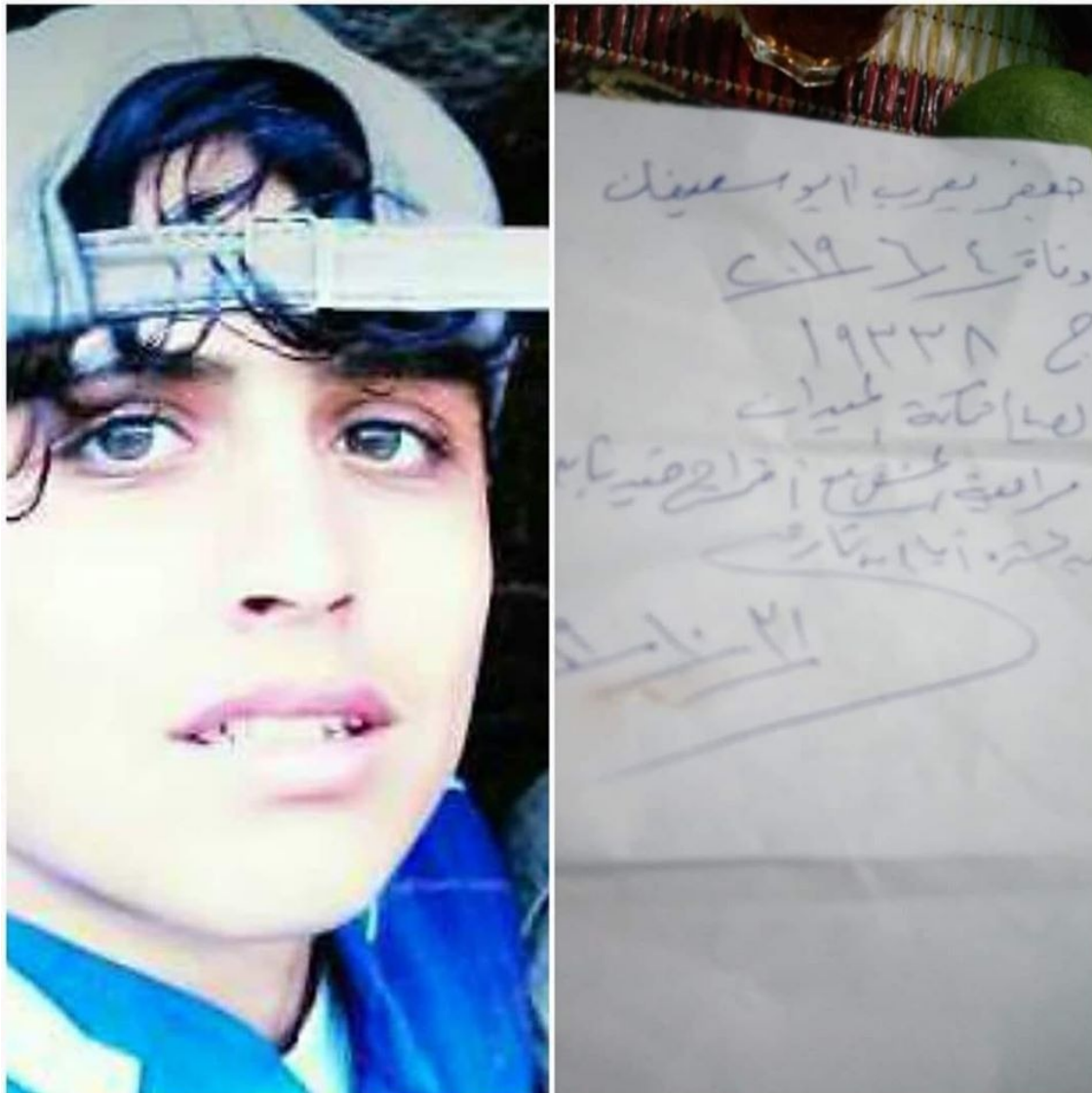


of explosive remnants of war. An attempt was also made to assassinate a GoS officer, which triggered a campaign of raids in the area to find the perpetrators.

In terms of arrests, four civilians were released. For example, H.M. from the Free Syrian Army was released after a year of detention; H.Q. was released after a five month detention; A.G. and R.T.H. were released; and the former eastern sector official of the Civil Defense (White Helmets) Kamal Salti was arrested at Damascus airport when he returned from the UAE, although he had settled his situation with the GoS. Meanwhile, the killings of M. F. and M.S. were recorded in GoS detention centers.

In other incidents, the return of graffiti to the village of Giza was observed. Unidentified gunfire was recorded at a GoS checkpoint between Al-Harak and Al-Soura with no injuries reported. A raid was also carried out on a farm east of Harak town, in which an Islamic State affiliate is based. Finally, new cases of car theft were carried out by former members of the Free Syrian Army.

\* A



photograph of one of those executed in the field, with a paper stating that his family must receive his identity card which is a death certificate.



#### **4. Al-Jaidour area, including Nawa, Jassim, Al-Hara, Inkhel, Sheikh Saad**

Mass graves were discovered, holding the bodies of GoS forces from the 61<sup>st</sup> Brigade. It should be noted that one area of 61<sup>st</sup> Brigade deployment is under the control of opposition armed groups and in other parts is controlled by the Khaled Army. It is not possible to determine where the graves were discovered exactly, as the brigade extends over several villages and towns in the western countryside.

The assassinations of 10 people affiliated with the reconciliation, or accused of working with GoS intelligence or with the Lebanese group Hezbollah were recorded, along with the killing of four civilians under different circumstances. Members of GoS intelligence were targeted, and two members of the police and the army were wounded.

The arrests of seven youths were monitored by the Military Security in Jassem. A number of civilians were released, including M., A., S.H., M., Q., and D. The deaths of S.A., H.J., M.K.H., and A.H. in GoS prisons were recorded, following detention periods not exceeding one year for each of them. In Nawa city, a number of shooting incidents were reported at the checkpoints of the district directorate and the GoS checkpoints between Jubailiya and Nawa, which led to a campaign of raids for some neighborhoods in Nawa. In Jassem, a bomb explosion was recorded on the Jassem Hospital road, and two bombs were detonated in a former faction headquarters of the Free Syrian Army. The Sheikh Saad checkpoint ran a campaign of arrests against a number of Free Syrian Army members, which led to an attack on the checkpoint as a result of repeated abuse of the population. New military and air security checkpoints have been observed between Glenn and Sheikh Saad.

#### **5. The Central Sector, including Dael, Sheikh Miskin, Ibttaa, and Khirbeh towns.**

Continuing the security tensions in this sector, new GoS checkpoints were observed along with reinforcements. The detonation of explosive devices was recorded at some checkpoints.

Assassinations were also recorded of people affiliated with the reconciliation, two of which were documented. One was a member of GoS intelligence, another was a civilian who died in a landmine explosion, and another was assassinated by unknown persons on a motorcycle. Nearly three people were arrested, including a woman who had been married to a member of the Free Syrian Army who had previously been killed. In addition, the killing of four people in GoS prisons was recorded and the death certificates were handed over to their relatives. The deceased were A.K.H., A.B., A.S. and M.S.H., as well as A. SH. who was a military defector who had settled his situation. A death certificate was handed to his family, and two people were released.

The GoS also handed over the death certificates of a group of young people returning from military service, namely, A.H., A.G., M.A. and A.A., who made settlements with the GoS after its entry to the area. They died of military field execution, or during battles.

#### **6. The Northern Sector, including Sanamin, Izraa, Basra Al-Harir, Nimr, Namr, Maliha Al-Atash, Jabab, Lajah, Al-Faqee, Karak/Umm Walid, Nahta, Mahajja, Ghabagheb**

Sanamin city witnessed the tensest cases in the area, with a heated conflict between several parties seeking to control it, and the GoS preparing to storm the city. An explosive charge was detonated in front of a GoS checkpoint, and tensions were high due to the fact that a young man and a child were harassed by the checkpoint in the city. Checkpoints have concentrated people at the entrances to the



city and prevented citizens from being able to go out to their work. In addition, assassinations were recorded of people affiliated with the GoS, the reconciliation, or traders. The situation is not different in other towns and villages of the area, where there have been assassinations as well as car jackings related to kidnappings and assassinations.

Five people were also killed in GoS prisons. Their names are: W.Q., a military defector; M.Q., a Free Syrian Army member; H.N., a civilian; and A.H. and A.M., military defectors who returned to their divisions after settling their status with the GoS; as well as S.Q. after his arrest and seven years in GoS prisons. Mass arrests were also observed, with 16 people from the civil status centers arrested, and the arrest of another people group who had settlements with the GoS. F.G. was also released after one year from his arrest.

### **Recommendations:**

Upon monitoring the situation continuously in Daraa province, the Syrian Civic Platform (SCP) believes that the continuation of a tense and deteriorating security situation is due to the lack of a political solution at the national level and the lack of legitimacy for the local government authorities. The SCP therefore recommends:

- 1) The need to expedite a just and comprehensive political solution for all Syrian regions in accordance with UN Resolution 2254
- 2) Engaging Syrians in local government bodies in the areas where they are located.
- 3) The need for all parties to abide by their commitments, especially the Russian government.
- 4) Allow international organizations, including the United Nations and the media, to access the humanitarian situation in the governorate.
- 5) Establish an international committee to monitor the humanitarian and human rights situation in all areas where local agreements have been made to ensure that all parties fulfill their commitments.
- 6) Organizations should be given freedom to operate without interference in their work and without imposing laws to control them.
- 7) The Russian government should press for the provision of humanitarian, medical and necessity to ensure the provision of antisera vaccines from wild animals.
- 8) Urgently work on dealing with explosive remnants of war from mines, unexploded shells and other scattered munitions.