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Weekly coverage round-up (May 6 - 10)

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Al-Jumhuriya Collective



A quick English summary of our Arabic news coverage this week.

“Idlib burns as international powers feud” (6 May, 2019). More than 50 civilians have been killed and over 100,000 displaced in a dramatic escalation of violence by the Assad regime and its Russian backer in Syria’s Idlib and Hama provinces. Attacks ranging from airstrikes to barrel bombardments to thermobaric missile launches have struck targets including health facilities, schools, and camps for internally displaced civilians; the UN has described it as the worst use of barrel bombs anywhere in Syria in over a year. The apparent cause of the escalation is a recent deterioration in ties between Turkey and Russia, both of whom support opposing forces in the areas in question. For more, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“Deir al-Zor protests in a minefield” (7 May, 2019). A dire local economy combined with perceived misrule by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) has sparked significant protests in the rural regions of Syria’s Deir al-Zor Province. The protests, now in their second week, began as economic in nature—a response to shortages of fuel, electricity, food, and infrastructural development—but have since grown more explicitly political, with calls for self-rule and criticisms of what some demonstrators decry as a “Kurdish occupation” of their hometowns. The SDF has responded to the popular uprising with arrests and, in some cases, live gunfire. For more details and analysis, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“North Syria’s medical sector under fire” (8 May, 2019). The current wave of violence by the Assad regime and Moscow

in northern Syria has seen Russian airstrikes target numerous hospitals, in a repeat of a pattern witnessed in previous Russian bombardments of opposition areas across Syria. Recent days have seen hospital buildings repeatedly smashed from the air until rendered out of service; at present the provinces of Northern and Western Hama and Southern Idlib are effectively devoid of a healthcare sector, according to doctors and activists on the ground. That Moscow is targeting the sites deliberately can be inferred from the fact their coordinates are known to the Russian military. For more, including a detailed breakdown of all the medical sites struck, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“Idlib: The battle line” (9 May, 2019). On Wednesday, the Assad regime succeeded (with heavy Russian air support) in taking over the town of Kafr Nabuda in northern Hama province. The town was considered among the most important bases held by opposition forces in the area. It appears the regime’s next major target for recapture is the nearby town of Khan Shaykhun in southern Idlib Province, which has witnessed intense bombardment in recent days. For more on the military aspect of the recent eruption of violence in northern Syria, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“Iran and US push one another to the brink” (10 May, 2019). Tensions have spiked between Washington and Tehran in recent days, owing to a number of developments, including but not limited to the tightening of US sanctions against the Iranian economy; the dispatching of American naval and air force assets to the Arabian Gulf; Washington’s

formal designation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization and Iran's tit-for-tat designation of US forces in the Middle East as terrorists; and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's statement that Iran would resume high level enrichment of uranium if the remaining signatories to the 2015 nuclear agreement did not shield Iran's oil and banking sectors from new US sanctions. For more, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).