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Two days after rebels reached a deal with Russia to end fighting in southern Syria, Moscow and the Assad regime are already back on the offensive. Meanwhile, Daraa's tens of thousands of displaced civilians scramble west toward Quneitra, where the bloodshed may soon follow them.

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The early hours of Sunday morning witnessed intense bombardment carried out by Russian and Syrian regime fighter jets on the south Syrian town of Umm al-Mayadhin, in the countryside east of the provincial capital of Daraa, as well as on various neighborhoods within the city of Daraa itself. Shortly afterwards, regime forces stormed Umm al-Mayadhin, taking it over, while also achieving a significant breakthrough on the Daraa City front; winning control of the Air Defense Brigade base and its strategic hill west of the city, thereby severing the so-called “**war route**” connecting the parts of Daraa’s eastern and western countrysides under opposition control, and besieging opposition-held neighborhoods in Daraa City as well as in the plains extending from them to the Jordanian border.

These developments followed a lull that had lasted around two days, since the announcement on Friday of a ceasefire agreement reached between the Russians and a delegation of opposition factions, known as the Central Operations Room in the South, which issued a **statement** explaining the dire circumstances that compelled it to sign the agreement, calling for UN guardianship to confirm it and the implementation of its terms. The agreement is supposed to be implemented in stages, incorporating various steps such as the withdrawal of the regime from certain villages it has taken over, and the gradual handover by opposition brigades of their heavy and medium weaponry, and the guarantee of a safe return for the internally displaced. Of these stages, only the first has yet been carried out, which was the handover of the opposition-held Naseeb border crossing with Jordan to the Assad regime.

During this lull, some of the tens of thousands of civilians displaced along the Jordanian border strip began returning to their home regions, with wire services **reporting** the number of returnees at over 60,000. One such displaced person, however, told Al-Jumhuriya that many of these civilians were not heading for their villages—now occupied by regime forces—but rather for Quneitra province in the west, which now houses the largest number of those who fled the bombardment and wider military campaign launched by the regime last month.

The agreement also included the optional displacement of those among the opposition factions and their families wishing to head north to Idlib Province, though the resumption of battle and bombardment put an end to that process, which was scheduled to start Sunday morning from Daraa City's Sijna neighborhood. With no statement issued by the Central Operations Room about the regime's latest violations, or about the details of the agreement's implementation and the stage at which it's arrived, it appears the situation in Daraa Province is heading toward increasing disunion in the opposition camp, the negotiation delegation of which has now returned to Jordan, where it is based. Meanwhile, the latest field developments put the factions of Daraa City in danger, with regime forces succeeding in breaking through defenses that had held firm for a long time on the Air Defense Brigade hill, as well as advancing along the Jordanian border zone from the Naseeb crossing that came into their possession two days ago.

To the west, Free Syrian Army forces as well as others from Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham clashed with the regime in Quneitra province, with a number of factions: Jaysh al-Ababil; Jaydur Hawran Brigades; Jaysh al-Thawra in the Jaydur Area; the

“Wa’tasimu” Operations Room; the Military Councils of al-Hara and Tasil; and other factions. in Daraa’s western countryside announcing in a **statement** the formation of “Jaysh al-Janub” (“The Army of the South”), and calling on the general public in the area to take up arms en masse, affirming that “our decision is war [with or] without our dignity and land.” The announcement of this new formation is thought to indicate a decline of the role of the usual leadership in Daraa after the latest agreement, and the area entering a state of unraveling in favor of more local decision-making by actors closer-tied to the towns and surrounding regions.

The field developments since Sunday morning reveal a desire on the part of Russia and the Assad regime to inflict the maximum possible damage on the opposition factions present in Daraa City, the capabilities of whom were the main card in the opposition’s hands during negotiations with the Russians, after they’d waged ferocious battles in recent years, managing to hold firm against continuous regime onslaughts and thousands of Russian air strikes.

It appears clear that Moscow is determined to implement the scenario of a complete takeover of Daraa by the regime and its allies, without providing any true concessions, and that the likely result of this will be an increase in the number of those opting for displacement to the north, if the only alternative is to remain in regime-controlled territory without any guarantees. There may now be a higher chance, moreover, of the regime executing a military solution in Daraa’s western countryside and Quneitra, resembling what has just happened over the past few weeks in the eastern countryside, which would confirm the existence of a Russian-Israeli agreement on handing the

area over to the Assad regime, in exchange for Russian guarantees about the movement of Iran's militias therein.

What does not appear clear, on the other hand, is the fate of the hundreds of thousands of civilians, and thousands of opposition fighters, in Daraa. All that's certain is that no serious guarantees can be extracted from Russia regarding their fate, and that the world in general has turned its back on them, happy to see them surrender completely to Russia, or be displaced to the north, at a time that further fighting by the increasingly weakened and divided opposition factions seems of little value, given that the regime doesn't advance after victories in land battles, but rather after the Russian air force has leveled whole towns and villages to the ground.