

# Syria Summary - Towards the End of the Caliphate

By [Moon of Alabama](#)

Global Research, August 28, 2017

[Moon of Alabama](#) 27 August 2017

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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*The first map below from the [last Syria summary](#) shows the forming of two cauldrons north and north-west of Palmyra. ISIS forces there were enclosed by the Syrian army progressing eastwards on several axes.*

Ten days later the most eastward of those cauldrons has been eliminated.

The Syrian army progresses further east and continues to move onto Deir Ezzor on three axes.

ISIS attempted counterattacks towards the supply line to Aleppo and along the Euphrates southeast of Raqqah. Both were defeated within a day or two and the attacking ISIS forces were eliminated. There is clearly a change in the pattern of ISIS deployment. It is now lacking manpower and is giving up in outlining areas. Its counterattacks use swarming tactics and lack the command and force of monolithic military units. In Iraq the army and the popular militia units took just 10 days to liberate the ISIS held city of Tal Afar. Of the estimated 2,000 ISIS forces there only some 200 non-locals had remained. 1,800 had been evacuated towards east-Syria. In the Qalamun area at the Lebanese border the Lebanese army and Hizbullah attacked the last ISIS enclave along that border. Today the remaining 200 ISIS fighters in the area agreed to lay down arms in exchange for an evacuation towards east-Syria.

Three ISIS pockets remain in Syria. One is in Raqqah where the enclosed ISIS units will fight to death. The U.S. military and its Kurdish proxy forces are literally destroying the city to save it. It is unlikely that the remaining ISIS forces in the city will give up or agree to an evacuation deal. In an earlier deal with Kurdish forces a group of ISIS fighters negotiated a retreat from the Tabqa dam in exchange for free passage towards Raqqah. The U.S. military [broke the deal](#) by attacking the retreating ISIS fighters.



Map by [Weekend Warrior](#) – [see bigger picture here](#)



Map by [Islamic World News](#) – [see bigger picture here](#)

A second pocket is in the semi desert north-west of Palmyra. ISIS fighters there have dug elaborate cave systems ([video](#)). The caves may protect against detection from the air but these positions are indefensible against a ground assault. The area will likely be cleansed within a week.

The third ISIS pocket left is near the Israeli border in Golan heights. The area still awaits a solution but there is no doubt that the Takfiri forces there will eventually be eliminated. Israel has tried to press the U.S. and Russia for protection of the area from an expected onslaught by the Syrian Hizbullah. It also asked to suppress all Iranian influence in Syria. But Washington as well as Moscow [rejected](#) the Israeli [requests](#). Netanyahu lost the war he waged on Syria and Israel will now [have to live](#) with a far more capable force along its northern borders.

What is left of ISIS, probably some 10,000 fighters in total, is now confined to east Syria and west Iraq. No more replenishment is coming forward. No new fighters are willing to join the losing project. Its resources are dwindling by the day. The U.S. is [extracting its assets](#) within the organization. The Euphrates valley west and east of Deir Ezzor will become the last defensible territory it holds. Six month from now it will be defeated. Its Caliphate will be gone. ISIS though will [probably continue](#) as a desert insurgency.

The other Jihadi project in Syria is run under the various names of al-Qaeda in Syria. It is now mainly confined to Idleb province. The estimated strength is some 9,000 fighters with some 12,000 auxiliary forces of local “rebels”. Like ISIS, al-Qaeda in Syria is now isolated and no one is willing to come to its help. Its local helpers will give up and reconcile as soon as the Syrian army will move in on them. The hard-core militants will be killed.

The U.S. [has told](#) its proxy “rebels” to give up on their political project. Jordan is sending [peace signals](#) towards Damascus. The Syrian President Assad will not be removed and the country will stay under the protection of Russia and Iran. The U.S. still supports the Kurdish YPG fighters in Syria’s north-east. But its relation with its NATO member Turkey will always be more important than any national Kurdish project. In the end the Kurds, like others, will have to accept the condition Damascus will set for them.

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