

Daesh suffers heavy losses in Syria despite Kurd pause

Author:

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At least 45 Daesh fighters have been killed around their last enclave in Syria despite a pause in a two-month Kurdish-led assault, a monitor said on Wednesday.

A Kurdish-led alliance backed by Washington announced the pause in its offensive in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor last week in protest against Turkish shelling of Kurdish areas along the northern border.

But waves of US-led airstrikes since Monday have killed 28 militants, including during an abortive Daesh assault on Tuesday on an oilfield north of the enclave, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) killed another 17 Daesh fighters while defending their base in the village of Al-Bahra just outside Daesh-held territory on Monday, the Britain-based monitoring group said.

Alliance spokesman Kino Gabriel had stressed that the pause in offensive operations did not mean SDF fighters would not defend themselves. The SDF launched its offensive against the Daesh enclave around the Euphrates Valley town of Hajin on Sept. 10.

But after making slow progress, they suffered a major setback last month when Daesh took advantage of sandstorms to launch a series of counter-attacks.

By the end of the month, they were back at square one with all of the territories they had won recaptured by the militants.

The Hajin enclave is the last significant remnant of the "caliphate" Daesh proclaimed in 2014 across a vast swathe of Syria and neighboring Iraq.

The rest has all been lost to offensives by multiple alliances on both sides of the border.

Outside the Hajin enclave, the group's operations are confined to sleeper cells and to hideouts in unpopulated desert and mountain areas.



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[Syrian regime wants Palestinian refugees back in Yarmouk](#)

Author:

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BEIRUT: The Syrian regime has created a plan for the return of Palestinians to the war-ravaged Yarmouk refugee camp in southern Damascus, the deputy foreign minister said Tuesday.

In an interview with Beirut-based broadcaster Al-Mayadeen, Faisal Al-Meqdad said there was a "plan for the return of all refugees to the camp," home to some 160,000 Palestinians before Syria's war broke out in 2011.

He did not specify how or when people would start returning.

The Syrian regime and allied forces retook the neighborhood in May from Daesh, pushing the militants out of their only bastion in the capital.

“Efforts are being made to clear (the camp) of mines left by... Daesh,” said Meqdad.

Founded in 1957 with tents for Palestinians who fled or were ousted from their homes with the establishment of Israel, Yarmouk grew into a bustling neighborhood.

In 2012, around 140,000 residents fled as clashes raged.

Those who stayed faced severe shortages of food and medicine under a withering years-long regime siege.

Daesh terrorists entered the area in 2015, bringing further suffering to remaining residents until being forced out in May.

Five months on, only a few residents have managed to return.

Meqdad said Damascus wanted to dispel any “rumors” that Palestinians had been displaced.

The once-busy district is now a ghost town piled with rubble and mangled steel rods.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, has said its 23 premises in the camp including 16 schools are damaged, but that it would not fix any unless the government officially allowed residents to return.

UN and Palestinian officials have criticized Damascus for not giving the go-ahead for reconstruction plans or officially allowing residents to return.

On Monday, Meqdad said the Syrian regime would not object to a “role for the Palestinian Authority or UNRWA in rebuilding the camp.”

More than 360,000 people have been killed since Syria’s multi-faceted war erupted in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-regime protests.



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