

## Syria conflict: Damascus suburb sees heavy fighting

Written by Administrator

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***There has been further heavy fighting in the Syrian capital, Damascus, and the northern city of Aleppo. Activists said government forces were closing in on Hajar al-Aswad, a southern suburb of Damascus, and the situation for residents was desperate, BBC News informs.***

State media said troops had killed many of what they called "terrorists". Earlier, Amnesty International warned that indiscriminate air and artillery strikes were causing a dramatic rise in civilian casualties in Idlib and Hama.

The report said the plight of people in the two provinces had been under-reported because world attention had focused on Damascus and Aleppo.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi held talks with President Bashar al-Assad and other officials in Damascus. Mr Salehi said a solution to the conflict, which the UN estimates has left at least 20,000 people dead, lay "only in Syria and within the Syrian family".

Black and white plumes of smoke rise from Damascus all through the day. There is a frequent wail of ambulance sirens. There is now regular government shelling of some districts, mostly on the outskirts of the city, known to have a strong opposition presence.

Much of the heavy fire seems to come from Mount Qassioun, which overlooks Damascus. One aid worker told me they were now holding their meetings in the basement because of the constant bombardment.

Across the city, there are many more checkpoints including sand-bagged positions, with Syrian flags and photos of President Assad, as well as impromptu security checks on key roads. The government has reinforced its control of large parts of Damascus after intense fighting in July reached the heart of capital. But the battles clearly are not over and there's mounting concern over the human cost as people flee their homes, and parts of some neighbourhoods lie in ruin.

Rebels have also taken full control of the Tal al-Abyad border crossing with Turkey after a lengthy battle with government forces overnight, according to Turkish officials and witnesses.

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The crossing is further to the east than any of the others previously captured by rebels, and could make it easier for them to get fighters and ammunition in and out of Syria, says the BBC's Jim Muir in Beirut.