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Leftover Landmine Kills School Children in Deir Ez-Zor: The Aftermath of the Islamic State

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Earlier this week at Ibn Sina School, in al-Taybah, in the eastern Syrian province of Deir Ez-Zor a landmine exploded in the school courtyard.¹ Five children were reportedly killed from the attack and another 17 were injured.² The death toll could rise in the days following the attack, due to the number of children still in critical condition, according to hospital officials.³ Unfortunately, incidents like this are not uncommon in many areas liberated from the Islamic State (IS) . Later, on the same day of the school landmine explosion, a farmer was martyred on his own land from another leftover landmine, outside of Tal Bazzam, in the Hama countryside.⁴ Landmines are still being found all throughout the

¹ "5 Children Die and Others Injured, in Mine Explosion inside a School on the Outskirts of al-Mayadin City East of Deir Ezzor • The Syrian Observatory For Human Rights," *The Syrian Observatory For Human Rights* (blog), November 24, 2019, <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=148362>.

² "A Massacre Takes Place in Al-Mayadeen and All the Victims Are Children," *Deirezzor 24 - English* (blog), November 24, 2019, <https://en.deirezzor24.net/a-massacre-takes-place-in-al-mayadeen-and-all-the-victims-are-children/>.

³ Mu Xuequan, "Landmine Explosion Kills 5 Children in Eastern Syria - Xinhua | English.News.Cn," XinhuaNet, November 24, 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/24/c_138580381.htm.

⁴ "Two Civilians Including Girl Child Martyred, 17 Children Injured in Landmine Blasts in Deir Ezzor and Hama," *Syrian Arab News Agency* (blog), November 24, 2019, <https://sana.sy/en/?p=179147>.

eastern province of Deir Ez-Zor, as well as other regions throughout Syria. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 213 people have died in 2019 alone from landmine explosions left by IS.⁵ Leftover remnants of the Islamic State are still being discovered, many in instances of explosions of landmines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). While the eastern province is no longer under control of IS, the weak government presence in the region doesn't seem to bring a greater sense of security to the residents of Deir Ez-Zor.⁶ Little is being done to improve the complex security situation in the oil-rich province, as Coalition and SDF forces clash with local groups, and US military forces attempt to secure the oil resources from the Assad regime.⁷

Members of Islamic State sleeper cells have been caught in recent weeks throughout Deir Ez-Zor province. Some being captured and arrested by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), while others are targeted in raids.⁸ While the regime has retaken control over the region, there are still instances of attacks and instability throughout Deir Ez-Zor. Syrian forces struggle to establish a sense of security throughout the region, as IS sleeper cells are identified and the aftermath of the Islamic State's reign over Deir Ez-Zor is still being felt through instances like the school landmine explosions.

⁵ "Landmine Explosion Kills 5 Children in Eastern Syria," *The Syrian Observatory For Human Rights* (blog), November 26, 2019, <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=148553>.

⁶ "SDF: 75% of Residents of Deir Ez-Zor Wanted by Assad," *Middle East Monitor*, October 24, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191024-sdf-75-of-residents-of-deir-ez-zor-wanted-by-assad/>.

⁷ "Security and Killings Escalate as Activity of ISIS Cells in SDF Areas Northeast Syria • The Syrian Observatory For Human Rights," *The Syrian Observatory For Human Rights* (blog), August 19, 2019, <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=138132>.

⁸ "SDF Carry out Security Operation in Deir Ezzor Countryside and Arrest 8 ISIS Members and Leaders • The Syrian Observatory For Human Rights," *The Syrian Observatory For Human Rights* (blog), November 11, 2019, <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=146960>.

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