

# NATO and Turkey's Genocidal War on Syria

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*"President [Obama] has been clear: Any [military] action that he might decide to take will be a limited and tailored response to ensure that a despot's brutal and flagrant use of chemical weapons is held accountable."* [U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, speech at the U.S. State Department, Washington D.C., 30 August 2013] 1

*"What matters is to weaken the regime to the point where it gives up power. [...] What matters is to repeat here the Kosovo [War] precedent. Otherwise, [just] a 24 hours hit-and-run wouldn't work."* [Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, press remarks at the Victory Day reception, Cankaya presidential residence, Ankara, 30 August 2013]2

On March 16, the third anniversary of the NATO-led covert war on Syria, the Syrian army won a landmark victory by taking back the Yabroud town on the Lebanese border.3 Hours later, NATO-backed 'Al-Nusra Front in Lebanon' retaliated by launching a false-flag bombing attack in Lebanon.4

On March 18-19, the Israeli army bombarded Syrian Army positions by tank and artillery fire and airstrikes.5

On March 21, NATO-backed mercenary forces and Turkish Armed Forces launched a massive offensive on the Syrian border town of Kasab in the Latakia province. The unprecedented overt military aggression by Turkey and its NATO allies is the clearest indication of their desperation in the face of Syria's steady progress towards a decisive victory on all fronts.

This article details the flagrant war crimes committed by Turkey and NATO during the ongoing offensive on Kasab and puts them in a context.

## The offensive on Kasab

Turkey's Yayladagi-Kasab border crossing with Syria was unilaterally closed by Erdogan's government in the aftermath of the May 2013 false-flag attacks in the border town of Reyhanli "to prevent the suspects from fleeing".1 At the time, this was the only border gate along the border with Turkey which was controlled by the Syrian government and therefore the only legal and safe transit point for the civilians.7 Thanks to Turkey's full support, NATO-backed mercenary forces are currently occupying nine out of twelve border gates between Syria and Turkey.8

In the early stages of the covert war on Syria, Erdogan's government rendered the entire 877 kilometres-long border with Syria porous for the NATO-backed mercenaries who have been using it as a highway. In many areas along the Syrian border, fences and concrete barriers were removed and roads were stabilized to allow the passage of all sorts of

vehicles, including those rigged with bombs.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, with hindsight, the motive behind the removal of some 615,000 landmines on the Syrian border was to ease the passage of mercenaries as well as military and intelligence officials of Turkey's and allied NATO countries' security forces. Planted with NATO's support between 1957-1959, the activities to remove these landmines began in 2007, for which the help of NATO's Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) was sought in 2009.<sup>10,11,12</sup> Likewise, lifting mutual visa requirements with Syria in 2009 allowed Turkey to prepare the ground for destabilizing its neighbour.<sup>13</sup> In November 2013, Syria's Deputy Foreign Minister Fayssal Mikdad accused Turkey of letting terrorists from 83 countries to enter Syria to topple the government.<sup>14</sup>

Over the few months, mercenaries from Kosovo, the Balkans and other European countries had been deployed in Yayladagi and Samandag countryside in preparation for a cross-border offensive on the predominantly Armenian town of Kasab.<sup>15</sup> Seven villages on Turkey's border with Syria were evacuated and allocated to the mercenaries.<sup>16</sup> Just before the offensive, power outages occurred along the route through which military vehicles moved towards the Syrian border.<sup>17</sup>

According to the local villagers, on March 21, backed up by the heavy artillery fire of the Turkish Armed Forces, over 1500 mercenaries launched a coordinated assault from at least five separate points across Turkey's border with Syria. They were directly commanded by NATO's radar base on Keldagi (Mount Aqraa) on the border and supported by the Turkish Armed Forces. <sup>18,19,15</sup> The mercenaries used pick-up trucks fitted with anti-aircraft weapons, tanks belonging to the Turkish Armed Forces, vehicles loaded with heavy weaponry and lorries.<sup>19,20</sup> The primary and initial assault was the one launched from the Yayladagi border gate to the opposite Kasab border gate, during which masked Turkish special forces troops killed 15 Syrian border guards.<sup>20,21</sup>

Turkish Armed Forces are giving cover to the mercenaries through mortar, artillery and rocket shelling across the border by armored vehicles and coordinated heavy machine-gun fire by helicopters. They are also using long-range assassination weapons and intercepting the communication of the Syrian Army.<sup>22,23,24,15</sup> This report by Alalam describes how Turkish Armed Forces' tanks pounded Syria's military bases in Kasab:

“[A] huge explosion was heard at a Syrian army base near Kasab after Turkish military targeted the area. The explosion has been followed with Turkish military firing several other rockets at Syrian army bases [...] Al-Qaeda's al-Nusra Front have raised their flags over several Turkish military tanks near Kasab, as a sign of having the area under their control.”<sup>25</sup>

The 'huge explosion', whose impact was felt from 15 kilometres, was caused by a missile fired from Turkey.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, according to a Syrian general taking part in this battle, Turkish Armed Forces were among the mercenary forces attacking the strategic hilltop 'Observatory 45' in Kasab.<sup>26</sup>

The majority of the mercenaries fighting in Kasab are of Chetchen, Albanian, Saudi and Turkish origin.<sup>18</sup> Ambulances are regularly crossing Turkey's border with Syria to collect the wounded mercenaries and transport them to hospitals across Turkey's Hatay province.<sup>17</sup> In fact, local protestors in Hatay's Harbiye district blocked the paths of those ambulances.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, by refusing entry to the mercenaries fleeing the attacks of the Syrian army, Turkey's border guards are forcing them to continue the fighting.<sup>17</sup> On the fifth day of the offensive on Kasab, mercenaries based in the towns of Yayladagi, Altinozu, Antakya, Reyhanli, Osmaniye and other areas were still being deployed to Turkey's border with Syria.<sup>18</sup>

The Syrian army was caught off guard as they were not expecting such an overt and extreme military aggression from Turkey.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, Syria's government still exhibits utmost restraint:

[Syrian] Foreign and Expatriates Ministry called on Wednesday<sup>26</sup> [26 March] in two identical letters to the UN Secretary-General and Chairman of the UN Security Council to take all measures required to condemn the Turkish involvement in supporting the armed terrorist groups which attacked Kasab district from Liwa Iskenderun [i.e. Hatay province] and to compel the Turkish government to stop its aggression.

"Syrian government has drawn the attention of the UN Secretary-General [Ban Ki-moon] and chairmen of the UN Security Council during the past three years to the acts and violations committed by the Turkish government against Syria's security and stability through the Turkish involvement in organizing, receiving, funding and hosting tens of thousands of terrorists from various takfiri movements and facilitating their entry into the Syrian territories and giving them background bases on the Turkish territories.

"After the failure of the attempts of the Turkish regime to undermine Syria, the Turkish army moved by Turkish prime minister [Erdogan]'s instructions to launch flagrant aggression on Syria as the Turkish army's tanks and artillery took part directly in the attack on Kasab, north of Syria, and its surrounding "[said Syrian Foreign Ministry]"<sup>28</sup>

The Syrian government said that Turkish Armed Forces' overt military participation for the first time represents a dangerous escalation"<sup>29</sup>:

"Syrian Ambassador to the UN Bashar al-Ja'afari told reporters outside the UN Security Council on Wednesday [26 March] that Turkey was facilitating attacks against Syrian forces by al-Qaeda-linked terrorist groups through the country's northern borders and the Israeli regime was doing the same in the occupied Golan Heights.

"Ja'afari added that Syria has been the target of an orchestrated joint military operation conducted by the Turkish government and the Israeli regime as well as the terrorist groups operating both along Syria's northern border and its southern border." <sup>30</sup>

As the offensive on Kasab entered its fourth week, Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mikdad has strongly condemned the United Nations' deliberate and consistent policy of ignoring the existence of terrorism in Syria since Spring 2011 and made the following remark about the ongoing offensive: "The massacres of Erdogan government-backed terrorist groups against the residents of Kassab town are still a living example that appeals to every UN official to feel ashamed of having turned into a tool for supporting terrorism"<sup>31</sup>

### **The downing of the Syrian military jet**

On the second day of the offensive on Kasab, a drone belonging to the Turkish Armed Forces was shot down by the Syrian army as it was flying over Kasab. This was one of the drones and fighter jets used by the Turkish Air Force to collect intelligence for the mercenaries on the ground and intercept the communication of the Syrian army. Turkey's politicians and media remained silent over this incident as the location where the drone crashed was 1,5 kilometres inside Syrian territory.<sup>18</sup>

On March 23, NATO radar base in Keldagi (Mount Aqraa) blocked a Syrian MIG-23 military jet's contact with the air control tower. While flying over Kasab, the jet was hit by a missile fired from Turkey. Having survived the attack, the pilot of the Syrian jet gave a statement: "The Syrian pilot whose aircraft was shot down in Kasab area on Saturday said that a Turkish aircraft fired a missile at him while he was pursuing terrorists within Syrian territories. The pilot told Syrian TV that he was carrying out a mission of pursuing terrorists within Syrian territories, more than 7 kilometers away from the borders, and after arriving at the target's location, establishing visual contact, and carrying out his mission, he turned around to return to base when a rocket fired by a Turkish aircraft hit his aircraft, so he left it using the ejector seat. He asserted his target was within Syrian territories and he parachuted inside Syrian territories"<sup>32</sup>

The downing of the Syrian military jet was broadcast live by Turkey's private TV channel Habertürk from the border area which is forbidden military zone.<sup>20</sup> This reveals the pre-meditated nature of this specific act of war. During his speech at a local election rally, Prime Minister Erdogan blatantly lied by claiming that Turkey's airspace had been violated:

"Around 12:15pm today yet another Hashasi [assassin], a Syrian plane has violated our borders, our airspace. Our F-16 [jets] took off and hit this plane. Why? Because if you violate my airspace, our slap will be hard after that. So, I would like to congratulate the head of the Turkish Armed Forces [Necdet Ozel] in particular, our Armed Forces, those honourable pilots of ours and our Air Force in your presence."<sup>33</sup>

By making a historical reference to the 'Hashasi' sect, Mr Erdogan tried to demonize both Syria and Iran.

True to form, the U.S. State Department declared its overt support for this act of war by Turkey:

"We are committed to Turkey's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We note that the Turkish Government has been fully transparent about the rules of engagement it is operating under"<sup>34</sup>

### **Local elections in Turkey**

On the eve of the March 21 offensive on Kasab, Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister Besir Atalay implicated the Syrian state in a shooting attack in Nigde, which is located some 400 kilometres from the Syrian border:

"The word Syrian was mentioned in the briefing [note] I was given. The martyrdom of a soldier and a police officer of ours in the run up to the [local] elections is a very grave incident. It may be that some are trying to spoil the

election atmosphere.”<sup>35</sup>

The next day, it turned out that, the perpetrators were two Albanians and a Kosovar mercenaries who were on their way back from fighting in the ranks of the ‘Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant’ against the Syrian state.<sup>36</sup>

On March 14, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu rehashed Turkey’s threat of launching a 25-kilometres border incursion of into Syria to defend a 10,000 square metres enclave that belongs to Turkey<sup>37</sup>:

“Any kind of attack towards there [i.e. the Suleiman Shah Tomb] which might come from the [Syrian] regime, the radical groups or another place would be equally retaliated and Turkey would take all sorts of precautions, without any hesitation, for the defense of that national territory.”<sup>38</sup>

Actually, as early as May 2011, a somewhat similar scenario was disclosed by the relentless propagandist Robert Fisk<sup>39</sup> :

“Turkish generals have thus prepared an operation that would send several battalions of Turkish troops into Syria itself to carve out a “safe area” for Syrian refugees inside Assad’s caliphate. The Turks are prepared to advance well beyond the Syrian border town of Al Qamishli – perhaps half way to Deir el-Zour [...] to provide a “safe haven” for those fleeing the slaughter in Syria’s cities.”<sup>40</sup>

Three days before the March 30 local elections, the audiotapes of a meeting between Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, National Intelligence Organization (MIT) director Hakan Fidan and the deputy head of the Turkish Armed Forces Yasar Güler was ‘leaked’ on YouTube.<sup>41</sup> According to the transcript of the YouTube video, MIT director Fidan suggested staging a false flag attack on the aforementioned Tomb of Suleiman Shah to provide a justification for a possible war with Syria.<sup>42</sup>

Mr Erdogan implied that the leak was a U.S.-hatched conspiracy against his government and Turkey’s sovereignty. In a speech delivered after winning the local elections, he referred to those whom he accuses of collaborating:

“How [dare] you threaten our national security? Turkey is currently in a state of war with Syria. They are harassing our airplanes. The 10,000 square metres [land] of the Tomb of Suleiman Shah is our territory, [so] any attack on it is an attack on the 780,000 square metres [territory of Turkey]. Can we remain silent to this? The traitors eavesdropped this meeting and then leaked it to the world. They are even worse than the Hashasis.”<sup>43</sup>

Mr Erdogan’s insinuation of a U.S.-hatched conspiracy is lent credence by the leading global media corporation’s depiction of Erdogan, since the beginning of the anti-government protests in May 2013, as a leader who is deeply hostile to Western values and liberties. The motive behind this domestic and global disinformation campaign is to obfuscate the Erdogan government’s utmost complicity in the NATO-led genocidal war on Syria, not to mention the war crimes against Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is also worth noting that YouTube is notorious for censoring material that exposes the crimes against the people and government of Syria, whilst systematically promoting anti-Syria propaganda.<sup>44</sup>

Actually, this “leak” is a highly sophisticated WikiLeaks-style psy-ops which seeks to divert attention away from the utterly criminal cross-border offensive on Kasab by NATO-backed mercenary forces and the Turkish Armed Forces. Furthermore, on April 1 the Syrian government has revealed that the aim of the offensive on Kasab is to keep the Syrian army busy so that the mercenary forces in Damascus could carry out a false-flag chemical attack<sup>45</sup> :

“Syria’s Permanent Representative to the UN Dr. Bashar al-Jaafari said that terrorist groups are planning to launch attacks using chemical weapons in Jobar area to accuse the Syrian government of it , as indicated by a phone call between terrorists monitored by the authorities. [...]

“There’s nothing called international community, unfortunately,” al-Jaafari said, “we directed two letters to the Security Council to have the countries that keep talking about the threats of chemical weapons to pressure the countries sponsoring and funding these terrorist groups - specifically the Turkish, Saudi, and Qatari governments - to prevent such terrorist acts by pressuring these gangs and terrorist gangs,” adding that now this matter is in the hands of the [U.N.] Security Council. [...]

“These terrorist groups came from Turkish territories and were covered by Turkish artillery, tanks and aircrafts so that they aren’t engaged by the Syrian Army in that area, with the purpose of the Turkish military involvement being an attempt to distract the Syrian Army from these terrorist groups so that they may commit their heinous acts,” he said.<sup>46</sup>

Over the last three years, Turkey and its NATO-led allies have totally exposed themselves and exhausted their credibility by blatantly resorting to all sorts of false-flag attacks imaginable against Syria in order to topple President Bashar al-Assad and/or instigate a war.

In fact, Turkey has a long history of false flag attacks on Syria, including a failed assassination attempt on the then-President Hafez al-Assad in 1996.<sup>47</sup> A selection of news reports from 2011 and 2013 below offer a glimpse of Turkey’s utmost criminality.

### **Flashback to 2011**

In late March 2011, only two weeks after the launch of the NATO-led covert war on Syria, CIA director Leon Panetta secretly visited Turkey’s border with Syria.<sup>48</sup> A month later, Turkish newspaper Sabah announced Panetta’s visit and CIA’s cooperation with Turkey over Syria:

“CIA Director Leon Panetta made a surprise visit to Turkey at the end of March [2011]. Panetta’s 5 day visit to Ankara was hidden from the public opinion as a top secret. [...] Panetta met with Turkey’s National Intelligence Organization (MIT) Hakan Fidan, as well as officials from the government and the General Staff of Turkish Armed Forces. [...] During the consultations, it was pointed out that Syria is at a “critical threshold” [...] that the country would be dragged into chaos if Assad doesn’t take urgent steps. Details of what was described as Turkey’s “classified” [plan] concerning Syria were also discussed. It has been pointed out that the “classified” [plan] entails regime change in Syria”<sup>49</sup>

The following day, Sabah revealed Turkey's plan for toppling Syrian President Bashar al-Assad:

"In the face of the escalation of events in Syria, Turkey [has decided] to launch its classified "Plan B" instead of its Plan A which envisaged Assad to remain in power. "Plan B" covers the possibilities of chaos, civil war and migration. [...] [The border provinces of] Hatay, Sanliurfa, Kilis and Mardin have been designated for [setting up] reception camps and field hospitals."<sup>50</sup>

What is particularly striking is that this plan of setting up five refugee camps (including two in Hatay) along some 600 kilometres-long segment of the Syrian border was conceived before any violent incident occurred in north Syria.

On May 31st, 2011 Turkey hosted a three-day 'regime change' conference in a five-star hotel in Antalya with the participation of some 300 members of the Syrian opposition.<sup>51,52</sup>

The first major false flag attack of the NATO-led covert war on Syria was orchestrated through the military and intelligence cooperation of the U.S. and Turkey. On June 6, 2011, 120 Syrian soldiers were brutally massacred by the Muslim Brotherhood mercenaries in the town of Jisr al-Shughour, located 10 kilometres from the border with Turkey.<sup>53</sup> At the time, this report by SANA was largely ignored by the mainstream and alternative media alike:

"The Syrian TV broadcast photos of the brutal massacres perpetrated by organized armed terrorist groups against the civilians and the army, police and security forces groups in Jisr al-Shughour in the province of Idleb.

"Members of the terrorist groups used government cars and military uniform to commit their crimes of killing, terrifying people and sabotaging. They filmed themselves committing vandalism acts to manipulate the photos and videos and distort the reputation of the [Syrian] army.

"The terrorists attacked police and security centers as well as other governmental and private institutions, violated the streets, neighborhoods and houses and used rooftops to sniper and shoot at citizens and security forces. [...]

"They also set up ambushes for police and security forces, mutilated the bodies of some martyrs and threw the bodies of others into the Orontes River, in addition to putting barriers on the roads and terrifying people.

"The groups members also kidnapped a number of the martyrs' bodies and buried them in the ground to later promote them as if they are mass graves with the help of the channels they are working with in inciting against Syria. [...]

"The number of the martyrs of police and security members exceeded 120 until Monday evening, who were killed at the hands of the armed terrorist groups in Jisr al-Shughour."<sup>54</sup>

These two reports by Press TV provide details of Turkey's complicity in the Jisr al-Shughour massacre:

“According to informed sources in Damascus that cited an unspecified classified report, the “unprecedented intensification” of unrest in Syria stems from deals between Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and some unknown groups in the region.”<sup>55</sup>

“The Syrian government says the weapons used during clashes in Jisr al-Shughour were smuggled into the country from Turkey and that some members of the terrorist groups behind days of deadly clashes in the town have escaped to Turkey.

“Meanwhile, [Syrian] state TV broadcast a phone call between two members of the armed groups who committed terrorist acts in Jisr al-Shughour region, revealing that the armed men are planning to leave the area for Turkey as displaced local citizens.”<sup>56</sup>

Turkish Armed Forces troops crossed into Syria through the border under the guise of helping the fleeing civilians.<sup>53</sup> The Jisr al-Shughour massacre occurred six days before the 2011 general elections in Turkey. Prime Minister Erdogan has fully capitalised in the ensuing migration to Turkey:

“Syria is practically a domestic issue for us, I have said this many times. [...] Currently there are [people] entering Turkey through the Altinozu [district]. [...] We really cannot close our gates to people fleeing for their lives and seeking refuge in Turkey. We have to let them in. [...] [Assad’s brother Maher] is chasing after savagery. This [situation] is inevitably leading to the United Nations Security Council’s involvement”<sup>57</sup>

### **Flashback to 2013**

The NATO-led coalition of countries had nearly succeeded instigating a war with Syria after NATO-backed mercenaries massacred civilians by launching a chemical false flag attack in East Ghouta on August 21, 2013.<sup>58</sup> Editor Yossef Bodansky sheds some light on Turkey’s role in this mind-boggling conspiracy:

“On August 13-14, 2013, Western-sponsored opposition forces in Turkey started advance preparations for a major and irregular military surge. Initial meetings between senior opposition military commanders and representatives of Qatari, Turkish, and US Intelligence [“Mukhabarat Amriki”] took place at the converted Turkish military garrison in Antakya, Hatay Province, used as the command center and headquarters of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and their foreign sponsors. Very senior opposition commanders who had arrived from Istanbul briefed the regional commanders of an imminent escalation in the fighting due to “a war-changing development” which would, in turn, lead to a US-led bombing of Syria.

“The opposition forces had to quickly prepare their forces for exploiting the US-led bombing in order to march on Damascus and topple the Bashar al-Assad Government, the senior commanders explained. [...] [U]nprecedented weapons distribution started in all opposition camps in Hatay Province on August 21-23, 2013. In the Reyhanli area alone, opposition forces received well in excess of 400 tons of weapons [...] which were distributed from store-houses controlled by Qatari and Turkish Intelligence under the tight supervision of US Intelligence.”<sup>59</sup>



According to Mihrac Ural, the leader of the Latakia-based popular anti-imperialist militia force 'Syrian Resistance' (Muqawamat al-Suriyah), shortly before the false-flag chemical attack in East Ghouta, a similar plot had been foiled. Mr Ural sums up the testimony of a Dutch-Kurdish mercenary who is originally from Turkey and who was captured by the Syrian Resistance on August 16, 2013 whilst fighting in the Latakia countryside:

“[Turgay Yasar] explained that he brought the sarin gas from the Netherlands [to Turkey] via the VIP section [under the auspices of] the authorities from [Turkey’s ruling] Justice and Development Party (AKP) and handed them over to the al-Nusra Front. [He also disclosed that although the NATO-backed mercenaries] had made preparations to deploy the sarin gas on the Alawite [civilians] during the ongoing battles in the Latakia countryside, they haven’t had the opportunity in the face of a series of resounding victories by [the Syrian Resistance and the Syrian army]”<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

All the available evidence indicates that U.S., U.K., Israel, Turkey, France and Saudi Arabia meticulously planned the genocidal covert war on Syria for years before actually launching it in 2011. Right from the beginning, Turkey has been at the epicenter of this war in every possible respect. In the face of the increasingly brutal and reckless attacks across all of its land borders, the Syrian state, army and people have been displaying an outstanding resistance, courage and solidarity.

As the prospect of a decisive victory by the Syrian army becomes ever more certain, the orchestrators of this genocide are disseminating all sorts of propaganda on a global scale to obfuscate and cover up their monumental war crimes. However, Turkey and NATO’s overt participation in the ongoing cross-border offensive on Kasab provides an incontrovertible evidence of these crimes for those who seek peace and justice for Syria and the entire humanity.

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