

Ten Massive Fake News Stories Western Media Has Been Feeding You On Aleppo

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) has secured control of Aleppo city after more than 4 years of fighting in what is Syria's most strategically important city, second to the capital Damascus. Western media has chosen to explain this victory to the world as bad news for the interests of peace and humanity in Syria, claiming that thousands of civilians will now die from government retaliation.

The reason the battle for Aleppo is so significant in the Syrian proxy war is because of its strategic importance to the country of Syria as a whole. Controlling Aleppo would give opposition groups leverage in a situation where Syria is broken into pieces. It is also part of the geopolitical concerns over [competing natural gas pipelines](#) which would be built partially in Syria.

The battle for Aleppo has been described inaccurately for years and what follows is an explanation of 10 common lies or omissions which still continue today.

1. The city is still under total siege because of the Syrian Army and Russians

Aleppo is an ancient city and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, populated since at least the 3rd millennium BC. Aleppo is both a rural province and an urban city inside of it, which is about the same size as Washington D.C. by land area. Western media reports about the ongoing battle do not account for this and conveys the images that millions of people are trapped in an urban city where the Syrian Army and Russians will not stop bombing them. Aleppo had a pre-war population of over 2 million people. It is a center of commerce and trading with Turkey, as well as a conduit between the Middle East and Europe.

The battle for Aleppo has been intense and has destroyed significant parts of the city's eastern neighborhoods. However, even at the height of the battle, western media reported claims that 250,000 people may be left in rebel-held areas and might die from starvation, water shortages, and lack of medical care. This number has been disputed and thought to be lower, however Russian officials say over 100,000 people have been escorted to safety from East Aleppo. Videos have shown [thousands of people](#) passing through corridors opened by the Syrian Army.

It is unknown how many civilians are left in the areas still under bombardment, but the scale of conflicting information is significant. There are no credible reports of how many casualties have been caused by bombing. The only specific number that western news has consistently

reported claims 82 civilians have been executed by Syrian government forces in recent weeks, which comes from the [controversial](#) Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

[BBC](#)

It is hard to know exactly how many people are in the besieged areas, although UN envoy Staffan de Mistura put the figure at about 50,000. He said there were approximately 1,500 rebel fighters, about 30% of whom were from the jihadist group formerly known as the al-Nusra Front. Other local sources say there could be as many as 100,000 people, many of them arriving from areas recently taken by the government.

Other reports claim what seems to be obvious, that East Aleppo is basically empty and most that are left are part of extremist groups or held hostage by them.

[WASHINGTON POST](#)

East Aleppo, which was under rebel control, is destroyed.

Syrian state television broadcast live footage throughout the day on Tuesday showing its reporters roaming through the ruins of the newly reconquered neighborhoods, trumpeting the government's victory as they climbed over piles of rubble, peered into abandoned homes and sifted through the remains of rebel defenses. There was no other sign of life in the empty streets.

About half of the city was controlled by government forces prior to the major offensive to retake the city began in July. Many civilians have been killed by shelling from opposition fighters who fire randomly into these parts of the city.

Opposition fighters have contributed to the siege over the years by controlling the major highways into the city, especially the two roads leading west towards Turkey and other major cities to the southwest. The opposition-controlled these strategic highways until July 2016 when the Syrian Army was able to make enough gains on the ground to re-open the roads. Fighters used the roads to receive weapons and supplies from Turkey.

Aleppo city was the [largest hub](#) for distributing fighters, weapons, and supplies to other parts of Syria. Al Mayadeen recently reported on one of the [weapons caches found](#) in an East Aleppo basement after the neighborhood was cleared by the Syrian army. The bunker contained GRAD missiles, which are typically fired from a system mounted on a truck.

There were other military grade weapons found, with English language labels, and enough of each to mean the weapons could have only been shipped in by truck. If the opposition fighters could receive so many weapons and supplies into Aleppo from Turkey, why could the Syrian Army somehow stop critical food and medical supplies as U.S. officials claim?

2. The Syrian Army is blocking humanitarian aid to Aleppo, creating the crisis

U.S. officials blame Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for ordering the army to block aid delivery and remove medical supplies from shipments that do come in. They ignore any role the terrorists groups play in that, as reported in September.

[TELEGRAPH](#)

A convoy of 20 UN trucks carrying enough aid for 40,000 people is languishing at the Turkish border as diplomats try to secure agreement from both rebels and regime forces to allow the vehicles through.

“Some parties to the conflict are trying to use this for political gain,” said David Swanson, a UN spokesman. “The challenge for us is ensuring that all parties to the conflict are on the same page. If one element of the chain is not there we cannot proceed.”

The UN would not say if the hold was up was being caused by the Assad regime or its rebel opponents but at least part of the problem appeared to be inside east Aleppo itself.

Activists there said they intended to reject the UN aid in protest at the ceasefire agreement which was brokered between the US and Russia without input from the Syrian opposition.

Video from Aleppo showed a large demonstration against the UN had gathered at Castello Road, the key supply route that the aid convoy would have to travel down.

At least some of the demonstrators were waving the black flags of Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (JFS), an al-Qaeda linked jihadist group formerly known as the al-Nusra Front.

3. The rebels in East Aleppo are ordinary Syrians who are fighting a civil war against government abuse

While it is unclear how many civilians remained in Aleppo, what is known is that most of the fighters are from the official Al Qaeda group in Syria called Al Nusra, and other groups that have formed public alliances with them. There have been dozens of groups under different names that the United States has called “moderate” opposition, however, many of them were either in alliance with or commanded by Al Nusra itself.

Colonel Steve Warren, spokesperson for the U.S. coalition against Islamic State, said “it’s primarily al-Nusra who holds Aleppo,” in [April 2016](#) prior to the Aleppo offensive.

In 2012, as the intensity of the war grew, [thousands of foreign jihadists](#) came to the city and helped take over neighborhoods in the east. Most of these fighters had no ties to Syria before the war and were given support and weapons by wealthy terror financiers from Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The Qatari foreign minister [just pledged](#) to continue sending weapons and assistance to these groups regardless of what Western allies do.

The war crimes committed and infighting with “moderates” became so bad that the U.S. government and the United Nations was forced to declare them terrorists after regional news reporting led the Washington Post to write that Al Nusra was the most effective and influential group on the battlefield. Al Nusra was then declared a terrorist organization by the U.S., other western countries and the United Nations. That was after almost a year of clandestine U.S. support as part of opposition groups.

The November 2012 article describes Al Nusra when they were still part of the popular term “Free Syrian Army” which was used by the U.S. to describe a moderate opposition who should not be bombed.

The Jabhat group now has somewhere between 6,000 and 10,000 fighters, according to officials of a non-governmental organization that represents the more moderate wing of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). They say that the al-Qaeda affiliate now accounts for 7.5 percent to 9 percent of the Free Syrian Army's total fighters, up sharply from an estimated 3 percent three months ago and 1 percent at the beginning of the year.

The extremist group is growing in part because it has been the most aggressive and successful arm of the rebel force. "From the reports we get from the doctors, most of the injured and dead FSA are Jabhat al-Nusra, due to their courage and [the fact they are] always at the front line," said a message sent today to the State Department by the moderate Free Syrian Army representatives, warning of the extremists' rise.

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"In some areas, other extreme groups are merging with [Jabhat] al-Nusra, in others many are leaving it because they did not fulfill promises of support," notes one report sent to the State Department.

In the chaos of the Syrian battlefield, smaller battalions drawn from neighborhoods or small towns are combining forces with larger groups to form brigades, many of them led by extremists. "This means more [mergers] of extreme groups within Jabhat al-Nusra as it becomes more and more franchised," the report explains. "Their risk is paying off. They are on a high [rate] of growth."

After this occurred, many groups began to merge and change their names, however, the majority of what became the Free Syrian Army has been proven to be made up of extremist groups who would otherwise be declared terrorists. The largest "moderate" groups in Aleppo, Ahrar al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam, and Nour Din al-Zinki have been [prevented by the United States](#) from being declared terrorists at the United Nations. The U.S. fought with Russia for months to keep these groups off the list of terrorist groups in Syria. This was a consistent point of failure in Syria peace negotiations. As a result, the groups continued to receive protection from America by including the groups in the Syrian ceasefire.

Ahrar al-Sham was known to consistently have over [20,000](#) fighters, despite frequent losses.

Jaysh al-Islam grew to [25,000 fighters](#) by some recent estimates. Jaysh al-Islam integrated over 100 smaller groups, and led Syria's largest remaining alliance, Fatah Halab as they renamed themselves in Aleppo. This alliance also included Ahrar al-Sham and Nour Din al-Zinki.

U.S. and Russian officials have been arguing over whether these groups should be targeted for bombing since they fight in the same areas as Al Nusra. The U.S. has claimed since February 2016 that it would persuade moderate groups to separate from Al Nusra, but it never happened despite the U.S. being in daily contact with them.

In response to this continued trend, Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI) introduced Stop Arming Terrorists Act last week to ban funding of terrorists groups, whether direct or indirect.

[HOUSE.GOV](#)

Rep. Tulsi Gabbard said, "Under U.S. law it is illegal for any American to provide money or assistance to al-Qaeda, ISIS or other terrorist groups. If you or I gave money, weapons or support to al-Qaeda or ISIS, we would be thrown

in jail. Yet the U.S. government has been violating this law for years, quietly supporting allies and partners of al-Qaeda, ISIL, Jabhat Fateh al Sham and other terrorist groups with money, weapons, and intelligence support, in their fight to overthrow the Syrian government.[i]

“The CIA has also been funneling weapons and money through Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and others who provide direct and indirect support to groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda. This support has allowed al-Qaeda and their fellow terrorist organizations to establish strongholds throughout Syria, including in Aleppo.

4. Rebels in East Aleppo are not terrorists. They are “moderate” and do not commit war crimes.

The most unbalanced part of Western news reporting on Aleppo is the deliberate effort to not report the war crimes committed by opposition groups, while confirming unverifiable claims about atrocities by the Syrian Army or from Russian airstrikes. Reporters have [brought up this concern](#) multiple times with U.S. officials and specifically when making the claim that [Russian airstrikes hit hospitals](#) in Syria but refusing to give evidence, [twice](#).

In April 2016, Jaysh al-Islam [admitted to using chemical weapons](#) in the city of Aleppo. They have consistently used civilians as human shields, sometimes [locking them in metal cages](#) on the back of trucks.

The US also defended Ahrar al-Sham after they recently massacred an unknown number of people and kidnapped over 100 from the small village of Zaara in May 2016. State Department officials were confronted about specifically on May 24 with one reporter asking “Is this a yellow card? How many villages do they have to massacre before they become bad guys?” in relation to removing them from the protection of being declared a moderate group.

Ahrar al-Sham has been singled out for war crimes by [Amnesty International](#) just before the Zaara massacre. The Amnesty report also condemned the group for torture, kidnapping, and rape as well as using chemical weapons on multiple occasions.

Nour Din al-Zinki became most well known for beheading a sick young Palestinian boy on video which went viral on social media. U.S. State Department officials [refused to condemn the group](#) and still allowed them protection under Syrian ceasefire agreements.

The United Nations admitted last week that they received reports of opposition fighters shooting at civilians trying to leave East Aleppo, despite months of ignoring these claims. The U.S. State Department has also [declined to admit](#) the groups they call moderate have been involved in shooting at civilians.

INDEPENDENT

Take the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. After last week running through its usual – and perfectly understandable – fears for the civilian population of eastern Aleppo and their medical workers, and for civilians subject to government reprisals and for “hundreds of men” who may have gone missing after crossing the frontlines, the UN suddenly expressed other concerns.

“During the last two weeks, Fatah al-Sham Front [in other words, al-Qaeda] and the Abu Amara Battalion are alleged to have abducted and killed an unknown number of civilians who requested the armed groups to leave their

neighbourhoods, to spare the lives of civilians...," it stated.

"We have also received reports that between 30 November and 1 December, armed opposition groups fired on civilians attempting to leave." Furthermore, "indiscriminate attacks" had been conducted on heavily civilian areas of government-held western as well as 'rebel' eastern Aleppo.

Aleppo MP Fares Shehabi also confirmed that terrorists had turned state-run hospitals into command centers in a [heated argument](#) on the UK's Channel 4 News.

The terrorists even had their own prisons and torture centers.

[RUPTLY](#)

Soldiers showed what appears to be militant flags, graffiti, and machine tools for making munitions, and even cells and alleged means for torturing captives.

SOT, Muhammad Hamud, Soldier, Syrian Arab Army (Arabic): "We released nearly 15 civilians. That was in a male prison. In Qadi Askar there was another prison which was a joint male and female prison. It was in the headquarters of the Sharia centre."

5. People are unhappy the Syrian Army has taken over the city again

There is a reason the leader of the Syrian Kurds said it "[would be a disaster for everyone](#)" if the Assad government were to fall to the extremist opposition. The alternative to Aleppo city being controlled by Al Nusra, or worse, extremists could fight for control of it and further divide the region.

Western news reports described the victory in different degrees of terror, saying the people of the city were in shock at the army's victory, ignoring the thousands of people celebrating in Aleppo areas controlled by the government. U.S. State Department spokesman John Kirby made the [most controversial of the statements](#) saying that he had not seen "any dancing in the streets" as celebrations were ongoing.

"I've been many times to Homs, to Maaloula, to Latakia and Tartus [in Syria] and again, Aleppo, four times. And people's support of their government is absolutely true. Whatever you hear in the corporate media is completely opposite," Canadian journalist Eva Bartlett described at a United Nations press event.

"And, on that note, what you hear in the corporate media, and I will name them - BBC, Guardian, the New York Times etc. - on Aleppo is also the opposite of reality," she added.

6. Desperate pleas for help on social media by local Syrians show just how bad the situation is in East Aleppo

Western news media marketed a coordinated campaign of videos claiming to be average Syrian citizens pleading for international action to intervene in the Syrian war as the battle of Aleppo came to an end. A combination of children, social media activists and claimed independent journalists have been featured as genuine accounts from East Aleppo, however, these transmissions have been questioned.

[THE FREE THOUGHT PROJECT](#)

But there is one major problem with these well-articulated video pleas: these

aren't simple civilians of Aleppo, but bloggers and filmmakers - who have played active roles in supporting the regime change operation - who are now magically being given prime time slots for worldwide TV coverage. Interestingly, Aleppo has no cell service or electricity, so how these "civilian" videos are being recorded/disseminated is also an open question, which implies less than organic means.

According to Anissa Naouai, host of RT's 'In the Now', a quick search of the Internet reveals the identities of these "civilians."

A 7-year-old girl named Bana Alabed has become a known Twitter personality during recent months for her videos which are said to be recorded in Aleppo. Confirmed Syrian activist Maytham Al Ashkar contacted the account for Bana on November 27, offering to evacuate her family from eastern Aleppo. According to screenshots of conversations, someone who identified herself as Bana's mother responded about a month later. The responses received led him to believe the account was fake and being operated by someone who preferred speaking in English instead of Arabic.

[SPUTNIK](#)

[Bana's account](#), designated by Twitter as "verified", was set up three months ago, and has since gathered over 310,000 followers. The tweets, written by both Bana and her mother, Fatemah, who says she taught her daughter to speak English, depict life under siege in east Aleppo.

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Many have called the authenticity of the account into question, pointing to [videos where Bana appears to be reading from a prompt](#). It is also unclear whether Bana's posts are genuine, since any user, anywhere in the world can post from the account, as long as they have the password.

Pro-government activist [Maytham Al Ashkar](#) is originally from Al-Zahraa in northern Syria, currently in Beirut, but often travelling to Damascus and Aleppo. He offered to help evacuate Bana and her family, contacting Bana's Twitter account on November 27.

"This person was contacted by Bana, who told him she wanted my offer. Once he got my approval, Bana (the account) contacted me directly," Maytham explains.

"When I got contacted by Bana's account, I started to chat in Arabic since we are all Syrians and Arabic is our mother tongue. However, it was obvious that the person behind the account preferred English as a language of communication."

Another problem has been the spread of false images represented as civilian casualties in Aleppo. One [fake image](#) of Aleppo violence was actually a screenshot from a [2014 music video](#).

7. The Syrian Army is now butchering people, executing civilians in the streets

If United States officials are watching the battle of Aleppo so closely, why has it not released any evidence of civilian casualties being caused by Syrian and Russian airstrikes? No satellite imagery, no pictures or video of large-scale casualties, no documentation of the alleged hundreds of bodies in the streets as claimed by news media like the [New York](#)

[Times](#). In the same article, the New York Times was forced to show pictures of the thousands of civilians being escorted to safety by the Syrian Army. Many pictures showed soldiers helping civilians, even carrying them when needed.

There have been genuine images from hospitals showing innocent civilians wounded in the fighting or people rescued from the rubble of buildings, but where are the images showing the mass casualty events described?

[BBC](#)

Syrian pro-government forces in eastern Aleppo have been killing people, including women and children, on the spot in their homes and on the street, the United Nations says. The UN's human rights office said streets were full of bodies.

Meanwhile, the UN children's agency cited a doctor as saying a building housing as many as 100 unaccompanied children was under heavy attack.

As noted earlier, the only consistent report of civilian deaths last week was the claim that 82 people were executed by Syrian government forces. The claim was reported as verified fact by most of Western news media, including [Reuters](#), [BBC](#), [New York Times](#).

The common source for these claims is the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which sounds like an independent and official source, but is an unaccountable organization made up of sources on the ground who are kept private.

[NEW YORK TIMES](#)

Military analysts in Washington follow its body counts of Syrian and rebel soldiers to gauge the course of the war. The United Nations and human rights organizations scour its descriptions of civilian killings for evidence in possible war crimes trials. Major news organizations, including this one, cite its casualty figures.

Yet, despite its central role in the savage civil war, the grandly named Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is virtually a one-man band. Its founder, Rami Abdul Rahman, 42, who fled Syria 13 years ago, operates out of a semidetached red-brick house on an ordinary residential street in this drab industrial city [Coventry, England].

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All sides in the conflict accuse him of bias, and even he acknowledges that the truth can be elusive on Syria's tangled and bitter battlefields. That, he says, is what prompts him to keep a tight leash on his operation.

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He does not work alone. Four men inside Syria help to report and collate information from more than 230 activists on the ground, a network rooted in Mr. Abdul Rahman's youth, when he organized clandestine political protests. But he signs off on every important update. A fifth man translates the Arabic updates into English for the organization's Facebook page.

8. The Syrian Army prevents civilians from leaving

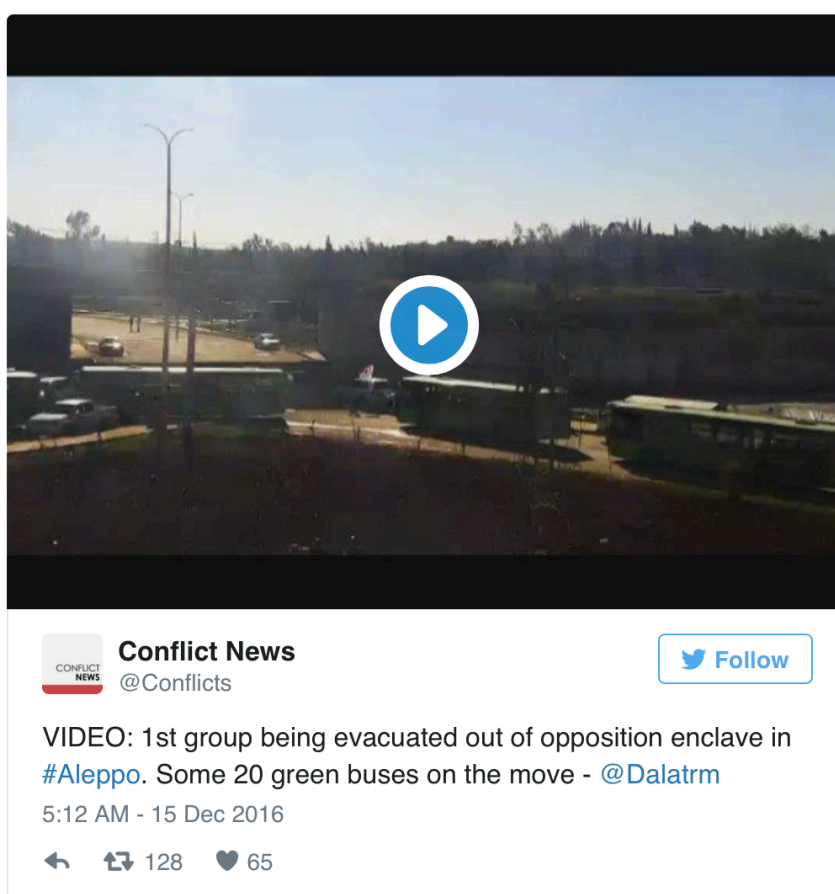
It is reported that many civilians feared leaving East Aleppo for government-controlled areas because they might be tortured or killed. These reports cannot be verified and will not be trivialized here, however Russian officials noted that more than 100,000 civilians had been evacuated since operations began in November.

Wednesday, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria released a statement confirming it received reports that the opposition was preventing civilians from leaving, holding them hostage as human shields.

[UNITED NATIONS](#)

Alongside a pattern of indiscriminate attacks, the Commission has further received allegations of opposition groups, including the terrorist group Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra) and Ahrar al-Sham preventing civilians from leaving as well as opposition fighters embedding themselves within the civilian population, thus heightening the risk to civilians of being killed or injured.

Tens of thousands of civilians have been seen on video leaving the areas of battle, being received by Syrian and Russian soldiers. Russia announced it distributed [35 tons of humanitarian aid](#) this week in eastern Aleppo to civilians in need.



9. The “Regime” is slaughtering the opposition

In a show of restraint, Syrian government forces honored an agreement to allow militants in east Aleppo to evacuate the city with some of their light weapons. The deal was reached earlier this week between Turkey and Russia, without the influence of the United States. The evacuation of militants from east Aleppo has begun as dozens of buses were seen lined up on major roads beginning Wednesday.

[RUSSIA TODAY](#)

Nearly 3,500 militants from eastern Aleppo have surrendered to the Syrian government, while thousands have seized the chance to leave through special

corridors with light weapons. The evacuation was partly halted on Friday after militants tried to leave the city with heavy weapons, which is not permitted under the agreement allowing them to exit eastern Aleppo.

It is also reported that opposition groups [fired artillery shells](#) at one of the evacuation routes, causing the process to be delayed.

Aleppo MP Fares Shehabi has been one of the loudest supporters for the Syrian Army clearing the city of terrorists.



10. The Syrian Army is purposely destroying civilian infrastructure

One favorite propaganda lie told by U.S. officials when justifying war is that the dictator's army is destroying public resources to hurt the civilian population.

As it relates to Aleppo, U.S. officials and allies have said that the Syrian government forces have purposely destroyed drinking water supplies to the city in an effort to hurt opposition fighters and the civilians supporting them.

However, in 2014, Al Nusra sabotaged the entire city's water system while trying to target government-controlled areas. The Syrian Army [recently restored](#) the same water plant destroyed in this attack.

[INDEPENDENT - MAY 12 2014](#)

In a botched attempt to stop drinking water reaching government-held districts of Aleppo, **rebels managed to cut off water supplies to large parts of the city in northern Syria including their own strongholds.** Women and children are being forced to queue up with cooking pots, kettles and plastic bottles to get water from the fountains of mosques and wells that may be

contaminated.

The water shortage started 10 days ago when the rebels, who control the two main pumping stations, tried to keep water flowing to their areas in east Aleppo, but stop it reaching the government-held west of the city. Describing the action as “a crime”, Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said that the al-Qa’ida affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra and other rebel groups were responsible for the water shortage.

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A member of the Aleppo Water Department told the Beirut paper al-Akhbar that the Sharia Authority, which unites the rebel movements, controls a crucial pumping station in the Suleiman al-Halabi region. He said that there is a “danger of insurgents pumping water only to the neighbourhoods that they control as it might lead to the collapse of the integrated water system”.

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