

# The Liberation of Idlib: Turkey Is in the Way, with Russia Slowing Down

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*Turkey is pushing further reinforcements of troops, commando units and tanks into the northern Syrian city of Idlib and around it, for a specific objective: to disrupt the attack against the city by the Syrian forces and their allies supported by Russia. Ankara is indeed taking advantage of the Russian slowing down of its strategy to liberate the city from jihadists (including al-Qaeda) due to the US threat to bomb the Syrian Army and government forces under that excuse of “using chemical weapons”. This “chemical weapon” has become part of the battle of Idlib, used as a tool to wage war on Syria just as the war is coming to an end.*

Russia considers the Turkish reinforcements as a breach of the Astana Turkish-Russian-Iranian deal, which limited the number of observation points and the military presence around the city and rural areas of Idlib. Moreover, Russia effectively considers Turkey to be unable to fulfil its commitment to totally end the presence of jihadists, especially including the group of al-Qaeda, stationed in the city and around it. In fact, the Turkish president Erdogan has asked for an extended delay to meet the Russian and the Iranian demands related to Idlib. This delay has been rejected by the government of Damascus whose leaders believe it is counterproductive to the interests of the country (to liberate the whole of Syria) and, further, would confirm the Russian president’s hesitancy which is apparently due to the US threat.

Decision makers in Damascus said “Turkey has offered Russia the protection of its military base in Hmaymeem by preventing any further drone attack against it. The Russian base has been subject to over 55 armed drone attacks, all shot down by the Russian defence system around the base which is on the Syrian coast. Actually, Russia itself is prepared to attack rural Latakia in order to create a safety zone for its base and remove the presence of the jihadists who have claimed responsibility for most of the attacks. Russia has rejected the Turkish offer, asking Ankara to abide by its agreement and eliminate the Jihadists from the city using Turkish influence to avoid the attack. Damascus believes Turkey would like to annexe Idlib and is, therefore, rejecting any deal with Turkey beyond the one already signed in Astana which consisted of a commitment to “finish off” all jihadists”.



**Donald J. Trump** ✓  
@realDonaldTrump



The terrorists in Syria are calling themselves REBELS and getting away with it because our leaders are so completely stupid!

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Furthermore, according to the sources, Turkey “promised to include Jabhat al-Nusra, aka Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham, within one single army in Idlib to satisfy the Russian demands and show its control over the jihadists. Ankara’s troops are bringing in more military personnel – as Turkey presents it – to support all Turkish proxies in their battle against jihadists who refuse to surrender or merge with the other groups. According to recent information provided by Turkish intelligence to Russia and Iran, the Turkish army is prepared to attack any group refusing to submit to Turkey. Moreover, it seems that hundreds of jihadists have left Syria for another destination. Ankara is facilitating the exit- or else- of all jihadists: otherwise, these will have to fight and die in Idlib”.

Turkey is asking for more time, to delay the attack against Idlib for few more weeks. In the meantime, Syria’s allies are determined to control the rural area around Idlib, including rural Hama and Latakia. For this purpose, and for fear of a possible attack on Aleppo by jihadists as a way to divert the Syrian forces attack, the allies are sending large numbers of troops digging in for defensive purposes around Aleppo.

Syria’s allies and Damascus itself consider Russia to have slowed down the pace of its attack, thus allowing Turkey to raise concerns worldwide about the necessity of the attack on Idlib. Turkey encouraged the US to take its time to prepare its bank of objectives (targets) in Syria in the case it decides to bomb Syria. Also, it has pressed the international community, mainly the Europeans, to intervene to prevent a possible “flood of refugees and jihadists towards the continent of Europe in the case of an attack on Idlib”. Today, the two superpowers (Russia and the US) have conducted military manoeuvres in the Mediterranean facing the Syrian coast and in Syria (Tanf). So they are indeed “walking on the edge of an abyss” while flexing their muscles to each other.



According to my sources, Turkey “is asking for more time to solve the situation in Idlib without a fight. Also, it is proposing to solve the issue of tens of thousands of its armed Syrian proxy militants when the political reconciliation has matured. All these indicate strongly that Turkey is not willing to leave Syria”.

Moscow has substantial strategic interests engaged with Ankara (commercial exchange, armaments, plus facilitating and selling energy) as well as with Tehran (commerce and energy exchange- one consequence of the Turkish rejection of the US unilateral sanctions on Iran). President Erdogan is playing on this strategic relationship to stop the battle of Idlib. Nevertheless, both Russia and Iran themselves sustain a more profound strategic relationship with Syria, where the desire to put an end to the war and see all of Syria liberated is much stronger.

“There is no plan to attack the city of Idlib for now”, say the sources. The liberation of rural Hama, Latakia and Idlib are the main objectives. The almost two million Syrian civilians are not expected to exit to Turkey or Europe. They are invited to leave all areas which are under the control of the jihadists (mainly al-Qaeda and its partners or its armed supporters) and move into the city of Idlib under Turkish control.

What is clear so far is the certainty that President Assad is not ready to give up Idlib to President Erdogan. Assad is said to be ready to start the attack in a few weeks even alone, at the cost of dragging everybody behind him onto the battlefield.

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