

Video: Syria Army Advance on Saraqib. Liberated Areas held by Al Qaeda (Hayat Tahir al Sham)

By [South Front](#)

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Idlib militants seem to be in disarray amid the developing advance of the Syrian Army. Since the liberation of Maarat al-Numan, government forces have achieved several important breakthroughs on the frontline in southeastern Idlib and southwestern Aleppo.

The army has liberated the villages of al-Qahira, al-Jaradah, Khan Assubul, Maarrat Dibsah and Ain Halbane, all located on the M5 highway north of Maartan al-Numan. Near Aleppo city, government forces have liberated Tell Maher, Tell Abiad, Tell al-Zaitoun, Tell al-Mahruqat, Jurf al-Sakhr, the Rashidin 5 neighborhood and one of the key militant strongpoints – Khan Tuman.

Most of these areas were liberated without significant resistance from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (formerly the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda) or the Turkish-backed National Front for Liberation. Despite this, according to pro-opposition sources, up to 200 militants have been killed or wounded in clashes with the Syrian Army.

The setbacks of al-Qaeda-backed militants and their pro-Turkish allies has caused discontent in Turkey. **President Recep Tayyip Erdogan** claimed that Russia “hasn’t abided by either the Astana or the Sochi agreements.”

https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/IMR_30_01_2020.mp4

“We have waited until now, but from this point, we are going to take our own actions. This is not a threat but our expectation is that Russia will give the regime the necessary warning,” the President said.

The main point of contradictions between Turkey and the Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance is the fighting of terrorism and the separation of opposition groups from terrorist groups like Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Ankara does not want or just cannot separate its proxies in Idlib from al-Qaeda. So, it sees anti-terrorism efforts by the Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance as a threat to its own interests and influence.

On January 29, reports appeared that Syrian government forces had shelled a Turkish military convoy west of Aleppo city. According to photos which appeared online, the shelling destroyed at least one vehicle. However, it remains unclear if it belonged to the Turkish Army. Turkish military convoys moving through Idlib often include members and equipment of Turkish-backed militant groups. So, one of these vehicles may have become a target of the Syrian strike. This would explain the lack of reaction from the Turkish Defense Ministry.

Currently, the advance of government forces seems to be focused on the M5 highway area.

The army and its allies exploit the internal contradictions among Idlib militant groups who have failed to cooperate properly to set up strong defenses deep inside the region. It is no secret that mighty Idlib fighters prefer taking selfies to digging trenches.

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