

# Video: New Idlib Ceasefire Is Already Crumbling and Nobody Is Surprised

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*On March 6, the Syrian region of Greater Idlib entered another ceasefire phase with al-Qaeda-linked groups breathing a sigh of relief thanks to Turkish sacrifices in the battle against the Syrian Army. However, the pause in the Turkish-Syrian military confrontation just reduced the tensions rather than put an end to them.*

A few minutes after the start of the ceasefire agreed by Turkish and Russian presidents in Moscow, an intense fighting erupted between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and pro-government forces. ‘Democratic al-Qaeda rebels’ attacked positions of regime troops near Fleifel, Sufuhon and Fatterah. Meanwhile, Turkish-backed groups carried out an attack on Russia’s Hmeimim airbase with unmanned aerial vehicles.

In the following days, Idlib militant groups regularly shelled army positions near Saraqib and Kafr Nabul simultaneously complaining about ceasefire violations by the Syrian military. The most active yammerer was the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), an al-Qaeda-affiliated group mostly consisting of Chinese Uyghurs. Its stronghold, Jisr al-Shughur, is located within the agreed buffer zone along the M4 highway. The situation is especially ironic because the terrorist organization is excluded from the ceasefire. The group’s leadership fully understands that the creation of the buffer zone is not possible as long as it presents there. So, it reasonably expects a Syrian Army operation there.

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The TIP’s more courageous counterparts from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham announced that they reject the Moscow agreement. The main reason is that it excludes the al-Qaeda-linked terrorist groups like the TIP and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Additionally, the former offshoot of al-Qaeda in Syria officially thanked Turkey for the assistance in the battle against the Damascus government. The Syrian Army responded to a series of failed militant attacks with a limited offensive in southern Idlib. On March 7, it liberated the villages of Marat Makhus and Burayj.

On March 8, Turkish President Recep Erdogan, to whom Hayat Tahrir al-Sham officially sent its thanks, once again threatened to take a military action in Idlib if the ceasefire deal is not adhered to.

“If the promises made regarding Operation Spring Shield are not kept, we reserve the right to clean up [the area] using our own methods,” the Turkish president said. “We signed this agreement to provide a solution to the crisis in Idlib without further bloodshed. Otherwise,

we will continue to walk our own path.”

The statement came as the Turkish Armed Forces continued their military buildup in Greater Idlib sending more and more troops and equipment to Syria. Recently Erdogan forces established several new posts north of the M4 highway, as always just near positions occupied by al-Qaeda terrorists.

The Turkish leader too quickly forgot that his forces recently failed to turn into reality the previous batch of threats against Syria and promises regarding a swift and easy victory in Idlib. Instead, they suffered notable casualties, failed to achieve any of declared goals and got a painful reminder that the real war is not a piece of cake.

The newly-appointed commander of Iran’s Qods Force, Brig. Gen. Esmail Ghaani, recently visited the province of Aleppo. He was photographed alongside with several other persons, apparently Qods Force officers working on the ground in Syria. The visit of Brig. Gen. Ghaani to Aleppo is a signal that Iran is not going to abandon its Syrian allies and will support Damascus in the event of a new round of escalation in the region.

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