

## Video: ‘Moderate Rebels’ Bite Hand that Feeds Them. 2 Turkish Soldiers Killed in Idlib

By [South Front](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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*Syria entered the second half of the week with a new spike of tensions in Greater Idlib. This escalation has been widely expected because militant groups are sabotaging key parts of the Russian-Turkish agreement on de-escalation in the area.*

Radicals kept their positions along the M4 highway, where a security zone was set to be created, and blocked the planned joint Russian-Turkish patrols there. On March 19, they expanded their strategy with direct actions against Turkish and Russian forces. At least two improvised explosive devices exploded along the route of a Turkish military column near the village of Muhamabal. 2 Turkish soldiers were killed and several others were injured. Opposition sources initially reported that Horas al-Din, one of multiple al-Qaeda-affiliated organizations in Idlib, was behind the attack. Nonetheless, Horas al-Din itself denied responsibility for the incident. There is no surprise that the group indirectly receiving support from Turkey denied such a move. Later, pro-militant media adapted their version of events blaming ISIS cells and even Assad agents. The March 19 developments demonstrated that Ankara does not fully control the terrorist organizations that it is protecting from the Syrian Army in an attempt to solidify its own influence in the region. Therefore, in some conditions, Turkish-backed terrorists become a threat to Turkey and its forces themselves.

[https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/IMR\\_20\\_03\\_2020.mp4](https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/IMR_20_03_2020.mp4)

The Turkish leadership fully understands that the ceasefire will not survive too long without the neutralization of terrorists. So, the Turkish Army continues its military buildup in the area. Turkish forces set up new positions near Ram Hamadan and al-Jinah. Additionally, three Turkish convoys, consisting of dozens of battle tanks, armored vehicles, rocket launchers and howitzers crossed the Turkish border with the Syrian province of Idlib.

Turkish units also conducted a modest attempt to de-block the M4 highway by removing earthen mounds left by militants. The situation on the frontline is also escalating. Late on March 19, the Syrian Army repelled an attack on its positions near Hizareen. Syrian state media claimed that militants suffered heavy casualties in the clashes. Wa Harid al-Muminin, a coalition of small al-Qaeda-linked groups, claimed responsibility for the attack. It released its own statement saying that 15 “regime troops” had been killed.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Army and the National Defense Forces started reinforcing their positions in southern Idlib and northern Lattakia with fresh troops and military equipment. Pro-government sources claim that Jisr al-Shughur, the town controlled by the Turkistan Islamic Party, will become the target of the army offensive, if the ceasefire collapses.

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