

Video: SDF Releases Tens of ISIS Members in Eastern Syria. Turkey, Russia Struggle with Idlib De-escalation

By [South Front](#)

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On March 23, Russian and Turkish forces carried out a second limited joint patrol in southern Idlib. The patrol involved six armoured vehicles and took place along a short chunk of the M4 highway west of the government-controlled town of Saraqib. This part of the highway remains the only safe place within the entire security zone, which was set to be established in the framework of the Russian-Turkish de-escalation agreement.

After the March 23 patrol, the Turkish side got additional time to neutralize terrorists and radicals entrenched in the agreed to buffer zone. This was the second time when Moscow provided Ankara with such an opportunity. However, Ankara seems to be taking very little or no efforts to do so.

Over the past days, the Turkish Army established observation points near Khattab and Msheirfeh and made a formal attempt to de-block the highway removing earthen mounds made by terrorists. Despite these heroic efforts of the Turkish military, the M4 remains in the hands of al-Qaeda-linked groups and the security zone there exists only on paper. Such a situation on the ground is slowly but inevitably leading to the resumption of hostilities in the region.

https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/IMR_24_03_2020.mp4

Humanitarian conditions are deteriorating in the Rukban refugee camp within the US-controlled zone of al-Tanf. According to media reports, people in the camp have to pay money for tents and the bare necessities, and are forcefully recruited into the ranks of US-backed militant groups. Additionally, militants sabotage the evacuation of refugees from the camp.

A series of IED attacks rocked the town of Tabqah, controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), on March 21. IED explosions targeted positions, vehicles and personnel of the SDF next to the Andalusia pool and the Maysalun roundabout. 6 SDF members were reportedly killed. Pro-opposition sources immediately blamed 'Assad agents' for the attack. Kurdish sources blame ISIS and Turkey.

On March 22, the SDF released 80 ISIS members that had been captured during the combat operations along the eastern bank of the Euphrates. All the released individuals are reportedly Syrian citizens, from the governorates of Raqqa, al-Hasakah and Deir Ezzor. During the last few years, the SDF has released hundreds of ex-ISIS fighters.

The group often does this for money or upon request from influential figures, like tribal leaders, businessmen and local commanders. This SDF behavior likely contributed to the reemergence of ISIS cells in eastern Syria. Last week, ISIS announced that its fighters had assassinated 40 people in the province of Deir Ezzor during the last 3 months alone.

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