

Violations of the De-escalation Zones Agreement in Idlib Province

March 30, 2019

The Government of Syria (GoS) has started to blatantly violate the De-Escalation Zone agreement for Idlib province. The area is one of four de-escalation zones established as a result of the De-Escalation Zones Agreement reached between Russia, Turkey and Iran in Astana.

This report attempts to shed light on the most significant violations committed by the GoS in the northwest of Syria: in Idlib province, the northern countryside of Hama province and the western countryside of Aleppo province.

Idlib

The region that includes Idlib province and its surrounding areas is the last major stronghold of the Syrian opposition.

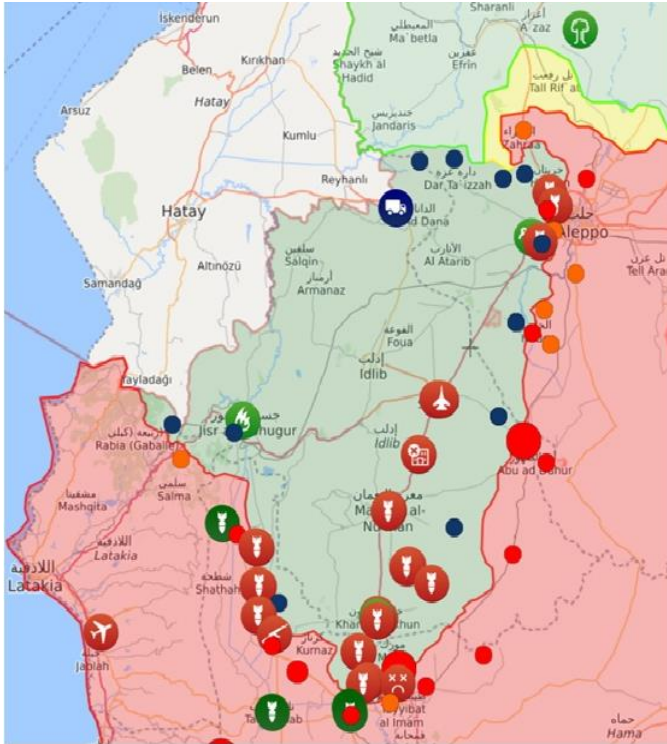
The province is one of the main destinations for all Syrian IDPs who have been forcibly displaced from other Syrian regions, as part of the so-called “reconciliation” or ceasefire agreements reached between the GoS and the opposition armed groups.

According to the latest statistics of the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU), the region includes an estimated 3.5 million people, of which one million are IDPs.

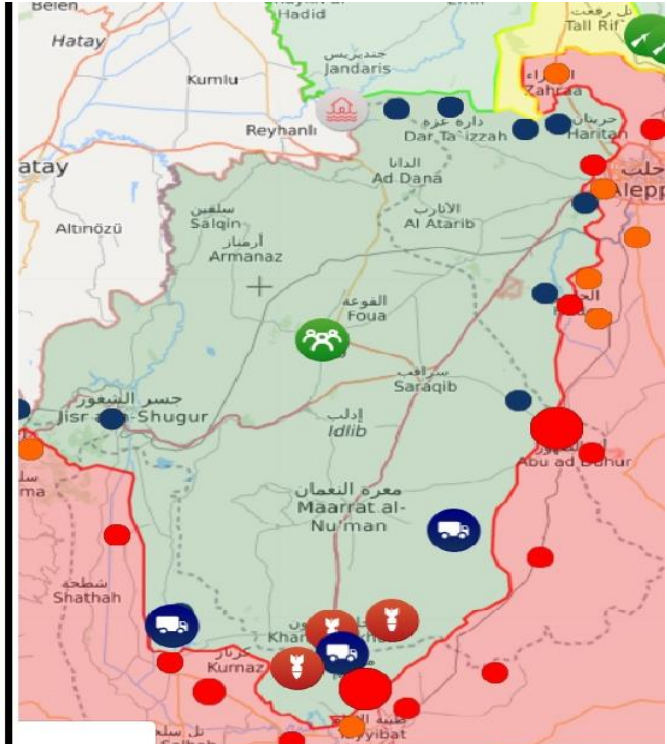
Field developments and violation of the de-escalation zones agreement in Idlib province

By the end of 2018, the GoS had strengthened its military presence on the outskirts of Idlib province. It had shelled villages in Idlib’s southern countryside and in Hama’s northern countryside, in violation of the de-escalation zones agreement. Since the beginning of 2019, roughly 370 violations have been documented, according field observers in the province.

Since the beginning of February 2019, the GoS has expanded its military attacks to more than 40 points including the towns of Khan Sheikhun, Maarrat al-Nu'man, Saraqib, al-Tih and Jarjnaz. The number of violations during February exceeded 95, with 800 shells and 17 air strikes. The map below shows a comparison of the places in which violations occurred throughout March.



The maps from: syria.liveuamap.com, 1/3/2019



The maps from: syria.liveuamap.com, 30/3/2019

The violations have led to the following:

- There have been a large number of victims, most of whom are women and children. By March 26, the number of victims was 85 according to Idlib Health Directorate.
- Some 60,000 families were internally displaced in Idlib in February 2019 due these violations.
- The assaults have resulted in the almost total destruction of infrastructure, accompanied by a halt to markets and schools, and a complete stop in all the humanitarian sectors in the towns of al-Tamanah, Jarjnaz, al-Hubait and Khan Sheikhun.

Local resident A.P, from the town of Khan Sheikhun, confirmed that they are being subjected to artillery shelling from the town of Abu Dali on a daily basis.

M.N said that the region is now completely stagnant in terms of markets, schools and business sectors because of the indiscriminate shelling.

	Date of assault	Location	Death toll	Injuries	Frequency
1	February	Khan Sheikhun	43	150	120 shells
2	February	Maarrat al-Nu'man	23	72	70 shells
3	February	Sfohen	2	4	
4	February	Khan al-Sabil	1	2	
5	February	Al-Tamanah	3	5	
6	February	Jub Sulaiman	1	3	
7	February	Al-Hubait	3	12	
8	February	Kafr Nabl	2	4	
9	February	Saraqib	1	6	
10	February	Zayzun	3	9	
11	February	Al-Ziyara	1	2	
12	February	Bdama	2	5	
13	March	Maarrat al-Nu'man	1		7
14	March	Khan al-Sabil	2		14
15	March	Jisr al-Shughur	7		21
16	March	Saraqib	4		12

Recommendations

- The Syrian Civic Platform calls on the guarantor states of the ceasefire agreement to assume their responsibilities to preserve the De-Escalation Zone's Agreement for Idlib.
- The Syrian Civic Platform calls on all Syrian parties to press for a cease-fire in northwest Syria.
- The Syrian Civic Platform calls on civil and humanitarian organizations to resume their activities after the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in all areas and to respond to the needs of the recent wave of IDPs and the spiraling humanitarian crisis resulting from the shelling.