



[Russia Breaks the Ceasefire and Resumes Air Strikes in Idlib](#)

The Russian military launched air strikes in Syria's Idlib province this week, breaking a three-month ceasefire in Syria's last rebel-held enclave. Turkey and Russia had brokered a ceasefire in early March of this year that temporarily stopped the fighting in Idlib, but the Russian strikes this week broke the truce. Rescuers reported that two civilians were killed and a further three were injured when the rockets struck villages in Idlib's south. Pro-opposition activists in the area said that twelve villages were targeted by the attack, and civilians were fleeing in anticipation of additional air strikes. The White Helmets, a volunteer search-and-rescue organization on the ground in Syria, said the villages targeted were al-Maouzrah and Jabal al-Zawiya in southern Idlib.

The ceasefire in Idlib came to fruition due to cooperation between Russia and Turkey, despite the two supporting opposing parties in the Syrian conflict. Russia and Turkey work bilaterally in other policy areas, and were able to come to an agreement to stop the fighting in Idlib. The Syrian government heavily relied on Russian air support to aid the campaign to capture Idlib, which gave Russia leverage to convince the Assad regime to accept the truce.

Since the ceasefire in Idlib was agreed upon back in March of this year, violence in the province has decreased significantly. Idlib is the last remaining province under rebel control in Syria's ten-year conflict. Prior to the truce, a bloody three-month campaign to take Idlib was waged by Russia and the Syrian government. During this onslaught, hundreds of civilians were killed and nearly a million more were displaced and fled north toward the Syrian border with Turkey. Turkey supports the opposition in Syria, and has been driven to find a solution to the conflict due to the millions of displaced Syrian refugees that crossed the border into Turkey.

During the campaign to take Idlib, Syria and Russia were accused of perpetrating war crimes by the United Nations. A report released in February found evidence that the Syrian regime, along with its Russian ally, were indiscriminately bombing civilian targets in Idlib. A hospital, a school, and an internally displaced persons camp were all targeted by air strikes, and resulted in mass civilian casualties. The most recent attack by Russian forces in Idlib mirrors the strategy used in previous ones, as there is no evidence of any military installations in the villages that were targeted this week.

Russia has long argued that its air strikes deliberately target terrorist entities, and certain radical groups are known to be active in Idlib. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based monitoring organization, has previously said that the Russian air strikes are aimed at displacing rebel fighters from positions near government forces, and to push radical organizations to the fringes of the conflict. However, critics of the Russian approach argue that the air strikes are indiscriminate, and fail to take civilian casualties into account.