

## Answer to a Question

### **The Reality of International and Regional Positions on the Battle of Idlib**

(Translated)

#### **Question:**

The Syrian regime mobilized its forces south of Idlib province, and Russia declared readiness to fight the battle of Idlib, "the last big battle!" in Syria, and it held military exercises; the largest in its modern history in east of the Mediterranean. Many were waiting for the start of the battles after the Russian-Turkish and Iranian summit held in Tehran on 7/9/2018. The Turkish President Erdogan expressed his objection to the military campaign on Idlib, and so the attack on Idlib was replaced by the demilitarized zone agreement that took place between Erdogan and Putin on 17/9/2018. What is the reason for this change? America also threatened with its harsh response if the chemical weapons were used, and some European countries followed this tone too ... What is the reality of the international and regional positions on the battle of Idlib?

#### **Answer:**

To understand the International positions on the battle of Idlib we must look at the following facts:

1- In the beginning, we say that America is not sincere in its pretense of its support for the opposition. It stands behind the Turkish and Saudi regimes to deceive the Syrian factions with the policy of "the carrots and stick" and dragged them to reconciliation and truces with the regime and handing over the territories to it. Indeed, America's message to the Syrian opposition in the south was clear and open, that they should not expect US support to repel the Syrian army's offensive. Regarding Idlib, US envoy to the United Nations Nikki Haley told a news conference: *"This is a tragic situation, and if they want to continue to go the route of taking over Syria, they can do that," referring to the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as well as its allies Russia and Iran...She added: "But they cannot do it with chemical weapons. (Reuters, 4/9/2018)*

The US declared opposition is to the use of chemical weapons rather than the regime's control over Syria. This includes what the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, called for. "Further discussions between Turks, Syrians and Russians on more precise counterterrorism operations would be the right approach, contrary to the wide scale conventional operations, he said: *"I'm suggesting that counter-terrorism operations should take place in a manner that mitigates the risk of the loss of innocent life"* (Reuters, 4/9/2018). America would call out the chemical issue whenever it wanted, and demand its action from the regime to become its pretext to implement its policies. The regime is very reassured of America's large support. Without it, Iran and Russia would not have come. Without it, Turkey and Saudi Arabia would not have pressed on the armed factions to sign the truces and withdraw from the territories so that they are captured by the Syrian regime. And without it, the tyrannical regime would not have returned to the international community and the Geneva negotiations and get the legitimacy it lost in the first years of the revolution.

2- America has allowed the Russian military intervention to support the regime. Russia and Iran and the militias completed the important task and the regime has taken control of many of the Syrian territory. The most prominent and of importance from the rest of the lands left is Idlib ... Russia is suffering in the swamp of Syria and wants to break into Idlib to end the military dilemma and focus on the political work, and America wants to arrange the political solution before the end of Idlib and to exploit of the subject of Idlib to extort Russia, by prolonging the military dilemma or shorten it, in accordance with Russia's approval of the plan of the American solution to Syria,

which entails the removal of Russian military bases as a condition for the political solution formulated by America and making the opposition insist on the removal of the bases as a condition, i.e. Russia will be satisfied to leave without more damages! Thus, Turkey's opposition to the Russian military action, which was designed to attack Idlib motivated by America...

3- Russia has continued to carry out its military mission in Syria, without any any political task in the horizon after the advent of the Trump administration, so the seizure of Ghouta took place by the Turkish cooperation, i.e. with the America consent, and in the same context the seizure of the South took place ... At the same time, America refuses to negotiate with Russia on Syria, in reference that the Trump administration does not see a political role for Russia at least before completing its military mission. When the armed Syrian revolution was squashed in Idlib, Russia wanted to continue its military operations, thus it mobilized forces, and conducted military exercises in the Mediterranean, with large battleships, strategic air launchers and closed airspace in the eastern Mediterranean for the first time in its history. It found itself in great trouble; Russia discovered things that it did not calculate for, including:

A- Turkey's opposition to a comprehensive operation in Idlib: Turkey did not agree to a comprehensive war on Idlib. (The Turkish minister considered that the "terrorists" should be identified and fought, and it is not right to launch a full-scale war on Idlib and bombard it indiscriminately) l'nab Baladi 14/8/2018. Turkey's opposition to the war was clearly demonstrated during the Tehran conference between the presidents of Russia, Turkey and Iran. Turkey, in a surprise manner to Russia, highlighted its fears of the war against Idlib and the influx of refugees to it. It embarrassed Russia, by considering the war as a tool to eliminate the political solution in Syria. (Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish President said on Friday that the continuing attacks on the province of Idlib, controlled by the opposition, will lead to the collapse of the political process in Syria ... Al-Youm As-Sabi' 7/9/2018). And then with the rise of the American tone against the Russian efforts to the war on Idlib, Turkey has filled the points of control in Idlib with weapons, those points established within the agreement to reduce the escalation with the Russian and Iranian, (field sources and witnesses told "Sky News Arabia", Sunday, a Turkish military convoy headed to the city of Idlib, adjacent to the border with Turkey, controlled by the Syrian opposition factions and other groups The sources said that the Turkish military convoy entered the Syrian territory from the Kafr Lusin crossing towards Idlib and its countryside, north of Syria, it contained tanks, military equipment and was carrying ammunition ... Sky News Arabia 09/09/2018).

Thus, Turkey has become an obstacle to the Russian ambition to eliminate the military factions in Idlib. Because of this, it took a second meeting between Erdogan and Putin on 16/9/2018 in Sochi, i.e. just nine days after their meeting in Tehran.

B- Indicators of a change in the Iranian position: Iran has shown unusual discrimination at the summit of Tehran, on 7/9/2018 between the moderate armed factions and the "terrorist" ones in Idlib, as if supports the position of the Turkish President Erdogan rejecting the war which is against the Russian position, then took Iran positions started to become clearer: (Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, on Saturday, in press statements expressed his country's conviction that the solution in Syria is political rather than military, and Zarif said in an interview with German newspaper (Der Spiegel) that Iran is trying to spare Idlib what he called " Blood bath ", in reference to his country's opposition to any military attack on the region ... Zaman Turkish newspaper 15/9/2018). If this is the case of the Iranian position, Russia may find itself alone in the Idlib war if it persists on it, and it cannot fight it alone.

C- The most dangerous of all is probably the American position, which was quick to beat the drums of the military strike if the chemical weapon was used in Idlib. Russia knows that America through the regime is the one that hold and control the chemical strikes. This is why Russia was quick to accuse the armed opposition of preparing a chemical attack against itself to justify a US strike. It even accused Britain of involvement in what it called "chemical conspiracy", and the American strikes in general in Syria embarrass Russia a lot, but the American strike this time may

be more severe and larger! *"We've tried to convey the message in recent days that if there's a third use of chemical weapons, the response will be much stronger," Bolton said in a speech on policy. "I can say we've been in consultations with the British and the French who have joined us in the second strike and they also agree that another use of chemical weapons will result in a much stronger response."* (Arabi 21, 10/9/2018) Russia fears not only a US-Western strike that embarrasses it in Syria but also an attack on its troops there.

D- Also, the military strike of the Jewish entity on 4/9/2018 on Wadi al-Uyun, near Masyaf, west of Hama and Baniyas, in the countryside of Tartus, all near the Russian military bases (50 km from the Russian base of Hmeimim) and above the Russian base in Tartus and during the massive maneuvers set up by Russia on the Mediterranean from the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2018 with the participation of a large group of dozens of large pieces of the navy force and air forces, those exercises promoted by Russia as the largest Russian exercises in modern history in the Mediterranean. This strike by the Jewish entity carried an unprecedented challenge to Russia. "SANA news agency of the Syrian regime reported that the air defense systems of Assad' regime responded to several missiles launched from (Israeli) aircrafts on Wadi al-Uyun in Hama countryside. (SANA) reported that the air defense systems responded to the "Israeli" attack by aircraft that infiltrated at low altitude from the west of Beirut and headed north targeting some military sites in the provinces of Tartus and Hama. The rockets were dealt with "and some of them were shot down and the attacking planes were forced to flee." (Al-Arabiya.net 4/9/2018). Such a military strike near Russian bases the Jewish entity will not dare to hit without coordination with America, maybe they carry some of the messages that the American Technology is not impeded by the Russian air defenses (S-500), so that Russia would then be afraid that the Western bombardment would hit its bases in Syria or its planes.

E- That is what took place, a Russian plane was shot down in the countryside of Idlib, making Russia virtually in trouble: "The Russian Air Force spokesman Major General Igor Konashnekov said that the (Israeli) pilots had covered up the Russian plane and made it vulnerable to the Syrian fire that caused it to fall. He added: "It was not possible for the (Israeli) flight controllers and the "F-16" pilots not to have seen the Russian plane, as it was descending to a height of 5 kilometers, yet they deliberately carried out the provocation." An EI-20 aircraft with 15 soldiers aboard, was downed, it was on its way back to the Hmeimim air base near the coastal city of Lattakia, which was then under attack from "hostile missiles" on Monday evening. The "Israeli" spokesman said that "Israel" did not warn the Russian forces in Syria in advance, and they received the report the operation through the hotline in less than a minute before the strike, adding: "Which did not allow us to take the Russian plane to a safe area" ... (Sky News Arabia, on Tuesday afternoon, 18/9/2018).

(Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashnekov said on Tuesday 18/9/2018 that (Israel) did not warn the leaders of Russian forces in Syria of its operations near Lattakia. Konashnekov said: "Israel did not inform the leadership of the Russian forces in Syria of the operation planned. The report came through the "hotline" less than a minute before the strike, which did not allow the Russian plane to retreat to a safe area." The spokesman said that the (Israeli) plane was able to cover the Russian plane, so the latter received the strike by Syrian defense system, adding that the aircraft (Israeli) deliberately created a dangerous situation in the Lattakia area, pointing out that four F-16s planes of the (Israeli) Air Force bombed targets near Lattakia on 17/9/2018. The strike was carried out from low altitude. Konashnekov said that the irresponsible measures resulted in the deaths of 15 Russia soldiers, which does not comply with the spirit of Russian- Israeli) partnership. (Arabic Sputnik News 18/9/2018)

**All these evidence has made Russia unable to resolve Idlib militarily to get out of the dilemma, and it is not able to withstand the provocations of the Jewish entity motivated by America!**

4- Thus, the US wants Russia to remain stuck in Syria, unable to get out of it until America completes the implementation of the political solution according to its plans. US National Security Adviser John Bolton said on Wednesday in an exclusive interview with Reuters: ("*Russia is "stuck" in Syria and looking for others to fund post-war reconstruction there,*" indicating that this gives Washington tools in the negotiations with Moscow. Bolton said that Washington had an arm in negotiations with Moscow because "*Russia is stuck there at the moment.*" He added: "*I don't think they want to be stuck there...*" (Source: Arabic. Sputnik News 22 / 8/2018)

Russia has become aware of this American policy, and perhaps realized the implication of America involving it in Syria. It is really stuck in it and cannot exit except with the permission of America, which has all the tools of influence in Syria, this is why it could not complete the attack it prepared for to end the crisis in Idlib in its way because Turkey objected (pushed by America) and Iran remained silent ... Thus, the meeting of Iran on 7/9/2018 failed to approve Russia's plan to attack Idlib and end the crisis in Russia's way. It has only been a few days since the Erdogan-Putin meeting and the attack was replaced by the establishment of a demilitarized zone! This was by the American blessing, Novosti news agency quoted an American official on 18/9/2018 saying to the agency: "We welcome and encourage Russia and Turkey to take practical steps to prevent the military attack from the government of Assad and its allies on the province of Idlib..." On Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the agreement with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan,

"The establishment of a "demilitarized zone" in the north-western province of Idlib by October 15<sup>th</sup>, that will be under the control of their respective countries. The Russian president said at the conclusion of his meeting with his Turkish counterpart in the Russian resort of Sochi: "We agreed the establishment of a "demilitarized zone" with the depth of 15 and 20 kilometers along the contact line, starting on October 15<sup>th</sup> of this year". Putin, said that this agreement represents a "serious solution" to achieve "progress in solving this problem". For his part, the Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Shweigo told Russian agencies that this agreement will prevent the attack expected for days on the last stronghold of the factions in Syria. In response to a question on whether this agreement means that there will be no military attack on Idlib, the minister replied "yes", according to the agencies Interfax and Tass ... In contrast, Erdogan said at the press conference after the meeting between the two presidents: "Russia will take the necessary steps to ensure that there is no attack on the de-escalation zone in Idlib." (France 24 / AFP 17/09/2018).

Thus, Russia stopped its shelling of Idlib and returned its ships, which conducted the military exercises in the Mediterranean, and it is still begging America directly or through Turkey to resolve the issue of Idlib militarily before the political solution. But America wants a political solution before any military solution in Idlib, to use it as a pressure card to blackmail Russia on its military bases in Syria and then make the opposition raise the subject of the bases in the political solution ... That is, the interest of Turkey and the US behind it to stop Russia's attack on Idlib was primarily for the benefit of America and not to prevent the regime from reaching Idlib or to protect civilians, but rather at the time that America enforces the solution that it wants and subject Russia to it. Then they will not be concerned of the blood of Idlib, civilians or non-civilians, demilitarized or non-demilitarized ... and their history speaks of this in different areas of Syria, and their crimes are well known...

5- This is the reality of the influential positions on the issue of the war on Idlib, internationally and regionally ... But there is something that can, Allah willing, turn the table on the international and regional positions, which is that the role of factions in Idlib is correctly carried out honestly and sincerely to Allah (swt). These factions are two types:

The first: is the military factions affiliated with Turkey, which carried out withdrawals and betrayals in different regions. And spread the ideas of reconciliation and truces due to the heavy Turkish pressure, which is accompanied by the purchase of the conscience of the leaders of these

factions and flooding them with Saudi money. These are the factions that Turkey dragged into the Astana negotiations, resulting in the areas of reduced escalation. I.e. Allow the Regimes control and surrenders the areas to it. These factions today stand in front of the truth, namely that it was the tool that weakened the Syrian revolution and the loss of many areas due to Turkish promises that show their falsity ... Because the ranks of these factions are not devoid of loyal individuals, a noticeable whisper that is almost heard is circulating among factions about the deceit of Turkey to them, Erdogan noted this, as expressed at the Tehran summit with the presidents of Russia, Putin and Iran's Rohani, when he said "the opposition feels deceived by the developments after the establishment of those areas," de-escalation zones" (Al Jazeera.net 7/9/ 2018). Erdogan admits that his plans to deceive the Syrian factions have been revealed to them, which is what Erdogan fears, these factions so far did not rush to fight the factions rejecting the peaceful solution according to the Turkish plan ... and the exposure of the Turkish deception can be used to make these factions rush and fight fiercely if attacked...

Second, the other factions are often referred to by the media as "terrorists." This force has increased the deportation of many revolutionaries from different areas in Syria, like Ghouta, the south, Homs, the eastern city of Aleppo and others. This force controls significant parts of the region. And despite the difference in its numbers and the degree of armament, but their fear from them can be summarized as previously reported in the US reports on Syria, which states that the "extremist" forces in the Syrian opposition, although not the most numerous, but it is engaged in major battles on the Syrian arena. That is, it is a solid force that is not easy to defeat ... especially since the Idlib area is considered the last area of the revolutionaries, the fighting in it, in general will be fierce as the revolutionaries are trapped in it and there is no other way out of it. For all this, the military battle is not necessarily settled in favor of the regime despite the large military buildup prepared by Russia for this. Rather the length of the battle in Idlib and the concentration of the regime of its local forces and its followers there could open the door to other areas previously controlled by the regime to be out of its control.

Therefore, these factions of all kinds if they are sincere to Allah, and exploited the dilemma of Russia as a result of America's pressure to blackmail it, and disobeyed the deception of Turkey and the money of Saudi Arabia ... And before this and that to always remember the saying of Allah (swt): ﴿كَمْ مِنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ﴾ **“How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah”** [Al-Baqarah: 249].

And does not surrender and supports Allah sincerely then they by Allah's will, will demolish the plans of the enemies of Islam and Muslims and will defeat them in Idlib.

﴿وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ﴾

**“And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.”** [Al-Hajj: 40]

12 Muharram Al-Haram 1440 AH

22/9/2018 CE