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### **The al-Anfal Campaign for the Syrian Coast**

On March 21, 2014 three armed opposition groups, the Ansar al-Sham Battalions, the

1. ["Statement of the al-Anfal Campaign in the Syrian Coast"], Youtube video, posted by: "AboRyan Lattakia," March 20, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-ngB4fOZO>[www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-ngB4fOZO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-ngB4fOZO)
2. Twitter post, posted by: "@mhesne," March 25, 2014, <https://twitter.com/mhesne/status/448517844138229761>
3. Jonathan Steele, "Syria: massacre reports emerge from Assad's Alawite heartland," October 2, 2013, The Guardian, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/02/syria-massacre-reports-alawites-assad> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-ngB4fOZO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-ngB4fOZO)



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*The al-Nusra Front:* Present throughout Syria, the group is the official al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. The front is led by the Syrian commander 1 TNt45gary and its forces are

*The Ansar al-Sham Battalions:* Based on the Syrian coast, the Ansar al-Sham Battalions is a member of the Islamic Front but maintains a low profile.<sup>4</sup> The group is led by a Syrian known as Abu Omar from Latakia city and a Chechen commander known as Abu Musa. Its rank and file members are primarily Syrian. Throughout the Syrian conflict it has been intent on maintaining neutrality amidst tensions between Islamist and non-Islamist armed opposition forces in the area despite its own Islamist leanings.<sup>5</sup> Despite its membership in the Islamic Front, an armed opposition umbrella organization that rejects the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (the Coalition) and the Supreme Military Council (SMC), the Ansar al-Sham Battalions are reportedly receiving support for the al-Anfal Campaign from the SMC aligned Military Council.<sup>6</sup>

the official al-Qaeda affiliate of the Islamic Front

4. "Syria Countrywide Conflict Report #3," March 14, 2014, The Carter Center, [https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict\\_resolution/syria-conflict/NationwideUpdate\\_march-14-2014.pdf](https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/syria-conflict/NationwideUpdate_march-14-2014.pdf)

5. Tam Hussein, "The Ansar al-Sham Battalions," March 24, 2014, The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Syria in Crisis, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55066>

6. ["The revolutionaries plan to form an operations room for military coordination"], Youtube video, posted by: ["al-Akhbar"], March 31, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ova9d2yUDn4>

7. ["Moroccan jihadis establish the "Sham al-Islam," organization in Syria close to al-Qaeda"], September 3, 2013, al-Sharq al-Awsat, <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=12698&article=742084#.UzHktK1dU4R>

Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "The Syrian rebel groups pulling in foreign fighters," December 24, 2013, BBC News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25460397>



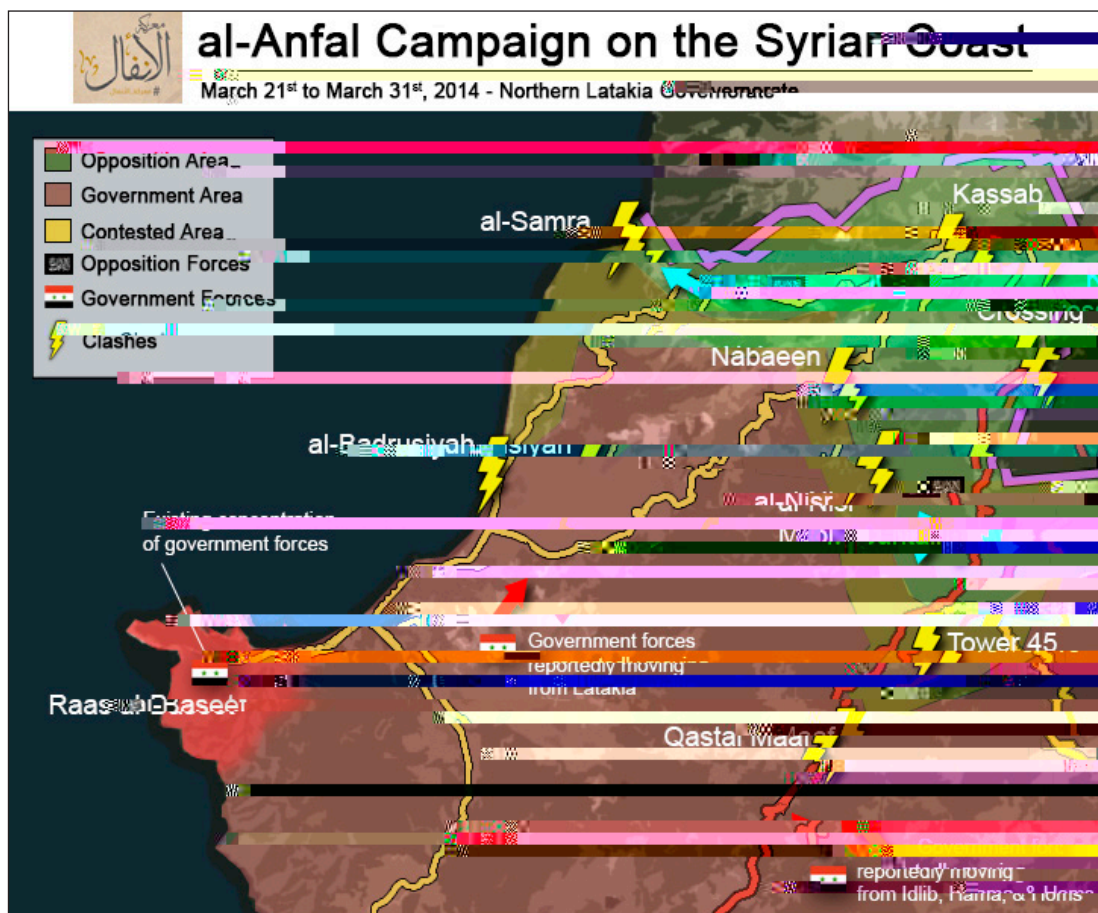
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am Legion also initiated a shelling offensive on al-Qardaha, the ancestral home of the Assad family in Latakia.<sup>8</sup> Smaller, local units based in the northern Latakia countryside such as the Shamina Gathering and the Nusrat al-Mathloom Gathering have also been involved on the front-lines in the north.<sup>9</sup>

### The Campaign

Armed opposition forces began their offensive immediately following the March 20th announcement. Approaching from the Idlib governorate to the east and allegedly from the Syrian-Turkish border to the north, opposition

forces reached the town of Kassab and the nearby Syrian-Turkish Kassab border crossing on March 20th.<sup>10</sup> By March 21st the crossing was under opposition control after what appears to have been a government retreat. The capture of the crossing was important not only for its symbolism, but also strategically as it opened a potential supply line for opposition forces pushing south. Establishing a reliable supply line was something opposition forces had failed to do during the previous coastal offensive. Continuing their assault, opposition forces gained complete control of the town of Kassab on March 24th.



8. ["Shelling the regime strongholds in al-Qardaha with grad missiles"], Youtube video, posted by: "Aksalser.Com", March 31, 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_4H8SikCjzc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4H8SikCjzc)

9. ["Latakia, Tajamuaa Nusrat al-Mathloom fre grad rockets on shabihah headquarters 22/3/2014"], Youtube video, posted by: ["Latakia Coordination"], March 22, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFIKaTZdvPQ>

10. Fehim Tastekin, "Fall of Kassab will be costly for Turkey," March 31, 2014, al-Monitor, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/03/fall-kassab-syria-costly-turkey.html>



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11. ["Turkish determination...the revolutionaries control Kassab and the regime uses its maritime weapons"], March 23, 2014, Zaman al-Wasl, <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/47943.html>
- [Latakia Countryside: Operations Room of the al-Anfal Campaign in the Syrian Coast announces the complete liberation of al-Samra and a sea port for the first time"], March 25, 2014, Aksalser, [http://aksalser.com/?page=view\\_news&id=3428499f0212328aa5be268bb0d26511](http://aksalser.com/?page=view_news&id=3428499f0212328aa5be268bb0d26511)
12. ["Ten soldiers from regime forces killed during their attempt to storm tower 45 in Kassab – Akhbar Alaan"], Youtube video, posted by: "AlAanTV," March 29, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuZzK68BOW4>
13. "More than 1000 fighters killed in Lattakia clashes," March 31, 2014, Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, [http://syriahr.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_news&nid=2023&Itemid=2&task=displaynews#.UzmVA61dU4S](http://syriahr.com/en/index.php?option=com_news&nid=2023&Itemid=2&task=displaynews#.UzmVA61dU4S)
14. ["Hilal al-Assad cousin of Syrian president killed"], March 23, 2014, Elaph, <http://www.elaph.com/Web/News/2014/3/888687.html>
15. ["Hilal al-Assad from smuggler to president of the coast"], March 25, 2014, al-Sharq al-Awsat Arabic, <http://aawsat.com/details.asp?>





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25. Osam al-Masri, ["Syrian Revolutionaries' Front joins the battle for the coast... Maarouf to al-Sharq: We must strike Assad in his own house"], March 25, 2014, al-Sharq, <http://www.alsharq.net.sa/2014/03/25/1107353>
26. ["Syrian Revolutionaries' Front target with B9 mortars one of the buildings which the convoy is centered in"], Youtube video, posted by: ["Syrian Revolutionaries' Front"], March 26, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F0O-9qMRuQ>
27. ["President of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Brigadier General Selim Idris delivers a statement of his meeting with the leadership of the military fronts and councils"], Youtube video, posted by: ["Media Office of the Chiefs of Staff"], February 19, 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Modr\\_UXqxo0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Modr_UXqxo0)



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