On January 12, 2020 the Russian Embassy official account on Twitter posted a tweet attached with a photo of Syrians, saying:

“RUS Reconciliation Center gets appeals from Syrians under illegal armed formations in Idlib to help them return home in Gov't controlled areas. To arrange it crossing points to open JAN13 in Habit, Abu Duhur, alHadir. Information is being distributed”

Attached to the tweet was also a news link on the official website of the Russian Ministry of Defense. The news provided a briefing on Syrian refugees and information about the amount of food aid provided and military operations carried out by the ministry, in addition to locating the three safe crossings that Russia opened and a repetition of the above tweet.
Image (1) a screenshot of the tweet posted on the Russian Embassy in Syria’s official account on Twitter, on January 12, 2020.

The tweet confused the readers, especially activists, since the photo attached to it has been already used in different contexts. The tweet doesn’t indicate that people in the attached photo are not at one of the crossing points it mentions, which means that the photo was used for the purpose of indirect deception. People on social media circulated this photo on the basis of being of Syrians trying to return voluntary through “humanitarian crossing points” recently opened by Russia, notwithstanding the fact that the tweet states that the crossings would be opened on January 13, 2020; a day after the tweet was posted.

STJ tracked the published photo and found that it has been attached to dozens of articles talking about Syrian issues, especially the refugee situation.

On June 6, 2018, by way of example but not limited to, the Turkish Anadolu Agency (Turkish version) published news on the returns of Syrians to their hometowns in order to spend Ramadan holiday¹.

People in this Photo aren’tExiting Idlib via “Humanitarian Crossing Points”

www.stj-sy.org

Image (2) a screenshot of the abovementioned tweet in the Turkish version.

On the very same day the Anadolu Agency (Turkish version) published the same photo under the title “Syrians return home to spend Ramadan holiday”.²

Image (3) a screenshot of the abovementioned tweet in the English version.

On October 15, 2018, the same agency published a news about a new batch of Syrians returning from Lebanon, and attached it to the same previously published photo³.