

# Divisions within the Syrian “Opposition”? The FSA and the Supreme Military Council Support Al Qaeda Terrorists

By [Phil Greaves](#)

Global Research, July 13, 2013

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

*Recent reports within mainstream media are pushing the theory that divisions are forming within the various camps of opposition militants in Syria, while also making attempts to highlight the disparity between the supposed “moderate” rebel forces of the “FSA” - [which does not exist](#) beyond a small cadre of defectors with no autonomy inside Syria - and the Al Qaeda affiliated militia of Jabhat al Nusra, (JaN) or the Islamic state of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), while also whitewashing the presence of the larger Salafist brigades that fight alongside them, predominantly Ahrar al-Sham [\(SIF\)](#).*

To comprehend these alleged divisions, it is fundamental to understand what exactly the “FSA”, or “Supreme Military Council” consists of. In short, these Western-backed outfits and the oft-referenced “spokesmen” that carry them hold no value inside Syria, or any amount of authority among the plethora of militia fighting on the ground. This has been the case since day one of the Syrian crisis. The “FSA” was a retroactive PR stunt implemented by the West and the GCC to uphold a facade of “moderation”, and bolster the false image of militants fighting for “freedom and democracy”. In reality, the FSA represents a branding exercise; enabling foreign powers to rally behind disparate groups of militants - often led by extremists - to undertake their desired use and mask the true identity of what are, by western legal standards, “terrorists”.

When the media refer to the “FSA”, at best it is lazy journalism, at worst it is disingenuous and designed to mislead the reader - otherwise known as propaganda. Yet the “FSA”, or “SMC” seem to have a new lease of life within the media. Furthermore, General Salim Idriss has been at the forefront of recent media campaigns to persuade foreign powers to increase military aid to the rebels (including [a photo-op](#) with renowned peace advocate John McCain); rebels that Idriss, nor any other commander in the “SMC” or “FSA” have any control over. I [posited the theory in early May](#) that the US and its GCC partners (now minus the deposed Qatari Emir) were attempting to marginalize the very militants they fomented, sponsored and armed in order to build a new “moderate” force under their control that is agreeable to the public, and the many European and American Parliamentarians and Congressman that have expressed concern about the “rising” influence of radicals among the militants they are indirectly supporting.

Recent attempts to purport divisions could be construed as part of this “re-branding” policy. In a [Reuters report](#) titled “New front opens in Syria as rebels say Al Qaeda attack means war” we learn that a “Commander” from the Supreme Military Council was assassinated by ISIS’ Emir: Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Whether this is even true remains to be seen;

several prominent analysts have cast doubt on the report, claiming it may be a psy-op on the FSA's behalf; presumably in order to marginalize Baghdadi and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham militants that follow him.

These artificial divisions bear hallmarks to recent reports and recent analysis covering the supposed "split" between the Syrian wing of Al Qaeda, otherwise known as Jabhat al Nusra (JaN), and the Iraqi wing of Al Qaeda, otherwise known as the Islamic state of Iraq (ISI). When Baghdadi, the Emir of ISI [retroactively announced the "merger"](#) of these groups and declared the militia should now be addressed as the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham, a spat broke out between him and Jabhat al-Nusra Emir Abu Mohammed al-Jolani. The following analysis and reports covering the dispute were blown out of all proportion and have continued in this vain ever since. Again, actual divisions on the ground between ISI and JaN were minimal and did not affect either tactical, nor ideological cooperation and kinship.

ISI and JaN are one and the same, in both a tactical and ideological sense, there are slight differences in their outlook for a possible future Syria, but crucially, both the tactical relationship and core ideologies remain untouched and unified. Furthermore, JaN was conceived through ISI funding and logistic cooperation. Journalists and analysts suggesting these groups are separate do not understand their mutual ideology, or they are being purposefully misleading to suit an agenda - that agenda seems to be to highlight ISI as the "bad rebels", this could be to allow space for the "good rebels" under JaN's leadership - which are predominantly led by Syrians and not foreigners, therefore more likely to win "hearts and minds" - to join the "moderate" brigades under the SMC command.

The first paragraph of the Reuters report fulfills the false narrative that the "FSA" represents a larger force than that of "Islamists": (NB: Reuters lazy wording not mine.)

Rivalries have been growing between the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the Islamists, whose smaller but more effective forces control most of the rebel-held parts of northern Syria more than two years after pro-democracy protests became an uprising.

One has to wonder how the supposed "Islamists" which, according to Reuters are a smaller force than the "FSA" can possibly hold more territory than the Western-backed moderates. Again, Reuters is pushing a false narrative upon its readers to uphold the image that the majority of "rebels" fighting inside Syria are moderate secularists under the command of the "FSA", or "Supreme Military Council". The truth of the matter has always been that Jabhat al Nusra - who are one and the same as Al Qaeda in Iraq with slightly different outlooks for their respective homelands - along with the more populist, and larger in number Salafi militia, such as Ahrar al-Sham, who operate under the umbrella group the Syrian Islamic Front (SIF), represent the vast majority of opposition fighters in Syria. These groups have close links, and it is likely that fighters often interchange depending on expertise, experience and geographical requirements. Since the onset they have cooperated closely with logistics and paramilitary operations.

Supposed "secular" opposition forces in Syria simply do not exist; under the "FSA" command or anywhere else. There are many smaller groups that espouse an inclusive, and indeed, moderate outlook for a future Syria. These groups have in the majority been rampant with criminality, infighting, and a lack of funds. Leaving disillusioned fighters with the option of joining the better organised and funded Salafi brigades; which have

consistently [received funding and arms from both state and non-state actors in the Gulf.](#)

The “FSA” commander quoted in the Reuters piece claims: “we are going to wipe the floor with them”. Presumably this is aimed at Baghdadi and his fellow ideologues, or as Reuters labels them: “Islamists”. Again, we are supposed to buy the theory that the FSA is in a position to strike anyone militarily inside Syria – let alone a commander of one of the strongest opposition groups operating. At this moment in time, the “FSA” as a fighting force could possibly be at its weakest since its artificial inception. Recent reports have suggested there are up to 6,000 foreign militants fighting against the government in Syria. It is likely that the vast majority of foreigners have joined the more radical outfits such as ISIS, for the same reasons as mentioned above, but can also be explained by the public sectarian tone being applied to the conflict, and calls to the regions Sunni community to engage in “Holy War” against the Syrian state from influential clerics such as Yusuf Qaradawi.

Recent political developments also shed light on the “re-branding” of the Syrian opposition. The Emir of Qatar’s unexpected departure from the throne – to be replaced by his son – may have been an indicator as to [Qatar’s failures in leading the Syrian insurgency.](#) It is common knowledge that Saudi Arabia have been given the “Syria File”. A fact that is portrayed with no irony by western analysts; who manage to conveniently whitewash exactly which state actor is delegating the “files” – could it be [“Mother”?](#) This handing over of the baton was solidified with the departure of SNC Prime Minister Ghassan Hitto – a Muslim Brotherhood member chosen by Qatar in attempts to consolidate the Muslim Brotherhood’s hold on the SNC. Hitto was replaced by [Ahmed al-Jarba](#), an influential tribal figure with close links to the Saudi Monarchy.

Reports on the ground in Syria have also suggested that the rebels weapons flow – including such basics as ammunition – have come to an almost standstill. And several rebel commanders have [relayed their frustration at the lack of promised US weapons.](#) Recent developments in the US Congress have also given Obama the back-door he was looking for, at least to buy himself more time until a more suitable fighting force is able to undertake the task at hand – if such force ever materializes. Direct US arms supplies – or, to be precise; the official funding for arms supplies – have been blocked by Congress until the administration can determine exactly which rebel groups it intends to arm, and what exactly the administration intends to achieve from what seem to be futile efforts to validate the now almost two-year covert policy of arming the rebels, and achieving nothing but bloodshed and destruction – of course, it would be ridiculous to suggest that was the [plan?](#) US allies in the region will undoubtedly be working under their own terms with regard to their destructive policies in Syria, to some extent.

Contrary to the Saud monarchies renewed efforts to wrest control of the insurgency; recent developments on the ground, along with Russia’s steadfast support and mass public opinion against supporting the extremist dominated rebels; the Syrian Army have kept the insurgency at bay whilst they choose their strategic victories. [Homs](#) is about to become the latest “rebel stronghold” to fall, as rebels announced this morning another “tactical retreat”.

One imagines the [rebel siege being laid upon 2 million civilians](#) – a war-crime that Western “diplomats” seem reluctant to “intervene” on, or indeed make any mention of – in government controlled Western Aleppo will be the Syrian military’s next priority. The Saudis through their new puppet al-Jarba have promised a huge influx of “game-changing” weapons, but without a massive influx of military hardware, and indeed, trained fighters to use them, it appears the trajectory of the conflict will remain in the Syrian military’s favour.

What the various actors supporting the insurgency are willing to do to change that trajectory in the short-term, if anything substantial, remains to be seen. There are at least three interested and powerful parties whose objectives can be served by allowing the Syrian conflict to drag on for years to come; yet none of them necessarily want to see Assad fall.

**Phil Greaves** is a UK based writer/analyst, focusing on UK/US Foreign Policy and conflict analysis in the Middle East post WWII. <http://notthemsm.com.wordpress.com>

The original source of this article is Global Research  
Copyright © [Phil Greaves](#), Global Research, 2013

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Phil Greaves](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)