

Syria: Does This “Cessation Of Hostilities” Allow Attacks On Jaish al-Fatah?

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

Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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[Joint Statement of the United States and the Russian Federation, as Co-Chairs of the ISSG, on Cessation of Hostilities in Syria](#)

... Consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the statements of the ISSG, the cessation of hostilities does not apply to “Daesh”, “Jabhat al-Nusra”, or other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council.

There is a word missing in the above when compared to the relevant part of [UNSC Res 2254](#):

... specifically by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da’esh), Al-Nusra Front (ANF), **and all other individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with Al Qaeda or ISIL**, and other terrorist groups, ...

The “associated” with Al Qaeda are not mentioned in the cessation document. In Idleb and other parts on north Syria [Jaish al Fatah](#) is the major terrorist alliance:

The **Army of Conquest** (“Arabic: جيش الفتح) or **Jaish al-Fatah**, abbreviated **JaF**, is a joint operations room of Islamist Syrian rebel factions participating in the Syrian Civil War.

...

At its founding, Jaish al-Fatah contained seven members, three of them — al-Nusra, Ahrar ash-Sham, and Jund al-Aqsa are directly connected to Al-Qaeda or have a similar ideology. With Ahrar ash-Sham being the largest group, al-Nusra and Ahrar ash-Sham together were reported to represent 90 percent of the troops. Another prominent Islamist faction in the operations room included the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria linked Sham Legion (Faylaq Al-Sham). Jaish al-Fatah collaborated with more moderate Free Syrian Army factions such as Knights of Justice Brigade.

Leaving out the “associated” in the cessation of hostilities declaration gives room for Ahrar al-Sham and a few others, which are clearly “associated” with al-Nusra/al-Qaeda in their Jaish al-Fatah alliance, to take part in it.

There are conditions to that. From the “Terms For Cessation Of Hostilities In Syria attached to the Joint Statement linked above:

The nationwide cessation of hostilities is to apply to any party currently engaged in military or paramilitary hostilities against any other parties other than “Daesh”, “Jabhat al-Nusra”, or other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council.

...

To take part in the cessation of hostilities, armed opposition groups will confirm – to the United States of America or the Russian Federation, who will attest such confirmations to one another as co-chairs of the ISSG by no later than 12:00 (Damascus time) on February 26 2016 – their commitment to and acceptance of the following terms:

- To full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, adopted unanimously on December 18, 2015, - including the readiness to participate in the UN-facilitated political negotiation process;
- To cease attacks with any weapons, including rockets, mortars, and anti-tank guided missiles, against Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic, and any associated forces;
- To refrain from acquiring or seeking to acquire territory from other parties to the ceasefire;
- To allow humanitarian agencies, rapid, safe, unhindered and sustained access throughout areas under their operational control and allow immediate humanitarian assistance to reach all people in need;
- To proportionate use of force (i.e., no greater than required to address an immediate threat) if and when responding in self-defense.

The same condition plus a cessation of aerial bombing apply to the Syrian government side.

It is “proposed”(?) that the cessation of hostilities commence at 00:00 (Damascus time) on February 27, 2016.

The immediate estimates of various observers of the war on Syria on how long a cessation of hostilities under these conditions would hold varied between 30 seconds and 4 weeks.

The big problem is of course that al-Qaeda is so intermingled with the “moderate rebels” that the U.S. even [tried](#), contrary to UNSC Res 2254, to get the cessation of hostilities applied to it.

Let us assume that Ahrar al-Sham agrees to the cessation of hostilities and follows its terms. The Syrian and Russian intelligence suddenly get good information about the location of the joint operations room of al-Nusra, Ahrar ash-Sham and Jund al-Aqsa.

Now would that joint operations room or headquarter be a legitimate bombing target under the cessation of hostilities agreement? In my view bombing it would obviously be allowed because al-Nusra/al-Qaeda is there. But the “moderate” terrorists, the U.S. and their other sponsors would scream bloody murder about such bombing.

That is why I believe that this cessation of hostilities, should it come in force at all, will hold no longer than one week.

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