

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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