

Western Powers Are Using Aid as a Cover to Keep a Terrorist-ruled Syrian Region Afloat...Just Because It's Anti-Assad

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Global Research, June 19, 2021

[RT Op-Ed](#) 17 June 2021

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

Theme: [Intelligence, Terrorism, US NATO](#)

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The Western desire to keep open the Bab al-Hawa corridor for aid into the extremist-controlled Idlib region of Syria is a ploy to continue destabilizing the Assad government, by propping up a murderous al-Qaeda offshoot.

Among the matters [under discussion](#) by US **President Joe Biden** and Russian **President Vladimir Putin** in Geneva on Wednesday was Washington’s call to keep open the last United Nations aid crossing into Syria, in an opposition-held northwest part of the country at Bab al-Hawa on the Turkish border. It is set to be closed on July 10 under the terms of a UN Security Council Resolution.

MP Sarah Champion, chairwoman of the House of Commons International Development Committee, is [urging](#) British **Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab** to tow the US line in a similar manner.

Presenting the aid entry point as the last bastion of humanitarian rescue efforts in the war-ravaged country, Biden said in a follow-up press conference to the summit that the effort to keep aid flowing in the northwest is supposedly part of “*the urgent need to preserve and reopen the humanitarian corridors in Syria.*”

But Biden’s loose nomenclature is misleading, because the aid corridor in question is one that pipes in foreign aid money from abroad without passing it under the scrutiny of Bashar Assad’s government in Damascus, which as the territorially sovereign government of Syria has the right to coordinate all foreign aid inflows.

President Putin has underscored this point, as Assad has regained control over much of Syria formerly overrun by factious jihadists, helping shut down similar UN aid crossings into those areas as Damascus broadened its own reach in distributing aid. Shortly before his summit with Biden, the Russian leader [said](#) that “[Humanitarian] assistance should be given through the central government.”

In addition, the recipient of the foreign aid at issue is the breakaway region of Idlib, under the control of a [terrorist](#) faction lacking international recognition, which has [stoned](#) women to death and slaughtered religious minorities as part of its *modus operandi*.

What sounds at the outset like an issue of genuine humanitarian concern, then, is on closer inspection an iteration of a common Western regime-change ploy, to keep breakaway regions as vassals under the pretext of international assistance disbursed by Western entities.

Maintaining a foreign aid crossing into northwest Syria unregulated by Damascus would allow the band of butchers in Idlib to continue to influence that funding or even benefit directly from it, under the leadership of **Abu [Mohammad al-Jolani](#)**, the head of Al-Qaeda's Syrian branch.

This same Jolani, a terrorist theocrat, is the focus of a slick Western PR campaign that has kicked into high gear alongside the Western diplomatic offensive to keep Idlib tied to foreign NGOs – both with the aim of presenting Jolani as a viable Western [“asset”](#) merely because he coalesces a contingent of anti-Assad militants.

This rebranding effort is meant to distract attention from years-long US and British [support](#) that has funded the rise of Jolani and other extremists wreaking havoc on Syrian civilians, all in the name of anti-Assad opposition.

Since 2013, the CIA has been funneling large tranches of covert money to a group of Syrian oppositional elements dominated by Islamist extremist groups. Jolani was a member of that group who ascended in prominence, having crossed into Syria in 2012 as a member of Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia and helping establish Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's Islamic State.

A feud with him led Jolani to set up Jabhat al-Nusra, the official Syrian offshoot of Al-Qaeda. With CIA backing, Nusra took control of Idlib Province and instituted a bloody regime of theocratic oppression. Encouraged by its foreign supporters to distance itself from Al-Qaeda while continuing its brutal methods, Nusra changed its name to Jabhat Fateh al-Sham and then to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), by which it is currently known.

In reply to deliberately friendly overtures from HTS claiming to be a purely anti-Assad organization rather than a terrorist one, **James Jeffrey**, President Donald Trump's Special Representative for Syrian Engagement, [said](#), *“I couldn't agree more... Keep me informed as often as possible,”* while reporting back to then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, according to a recent interview Jeffrey gave with PBS *Frontline's* Martin Smith.

The Al-Qaeda run cabal in Idlib ramped up its charm offensive in 2020, rebranding itself as the “Syrian Salvation Government” and creating an office of media relations, helping Western journalists access the region and, via government-endorsed guides, showing them exactly what HTS wanted them to see.

During one such staged on-location interview in March 2021, also with Martin Smith of PBS, Jolani told Smith that Idlib *“is not a staging ground for executing foreign jihad,”* blithely ignoring the ongoing jihadist extremism carried out against Syrian citizens in the region, by his own government.

As ‘refugees’ from formerly extremist enclaves in Syria fled into Idlib after Assad's forces brought those regions back under national control, Western pundits and politicians

deliberately conflated the supposedly humanitarian needs of this population with real support for Syrian sovereignty.

In fact, though, the Idlib regime's extremist enforcement of narrow religious doctrines repeatedly plays out in routine, prejudicial persecution of fellow Syrians, while essentially holding the burgeoning population of refugees as leverage to extract aid money from Western nations. They, in turn, are more focused on humanitarian plight than the brutal regime directing the inflows of aid.

In this dangerous nexus, US aid money earmarked for Idlib has been siphoned off by the ruling terrorists. In a report released in 2018, the Pentagon's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) [revealed](#) that USAID funds were implicated in *"numerous instances of possible or confirmed diversions to armed groups in Idlib Governorate in northwestern Syria, including Ha'yat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization."* NGO contractors willfully used their USAID disbursements to assist HTS, and in some instances HTS had already infiltrated the NGOs themselves.

Although USAID's own investigation into this behavior led to a crackdown on such funding and the Trump administration's official refusal to send aid to HTS-controlled Syrian areas in 2018, aid to Idlib is still a politicized weapon used by the West against the Assad regime. The Brussels-headquartered International Crisis Group, funded by the EU and other Western governments, ran a highly sympathetic [interview](#) with Jolani in 2020, quoting him as saying, *"we pledge non-interference"* in the work of NGOs delivering aid to Idlib.

Ken Roth, executive director of regime-change promoting Human Rights Watch (HRW), emphatically [endorsed](#) this interview at the time, while Gerry Simpson, an HRW associate director, [claimed](#) recently that shutting down the Bab al-Hawa corridor would *"unleash a humanitarian calamity."*

These are partisan statements that take the words of a murderer at face value, even though his actions have repeatedly contradicted any promises of respect for all Syrians' civil liberties. Falsely portraying Jolani's Idlib as a bastion of workable democracy and sending aid to territory under its control automatically burnishes the image of the HTS elite, by implying they are victims rather than dangerous usurpers. Attention instead ought to be given to the fact that with Assad having regained control of much of Syria, his government is now far-better placed than foreign NGOs to coordinate the delivery of aid to all Syrian regions and has repeatedly expressed its willingness to do so.

Indications have already [emerged](#) that World Food Organization trucks have been used to smuggle terrorists and weapons into Syria in the past, and with Western furor over the potential closing of a UN aid corridor into Idlib rising while their rebranding of HTS kicks into full pitch, it would seem probable that the Bab al-Hawa aid corridor is the only avenue the regime-change activists have left in funding the illegitimate, extremist HTS regime.

If these activists were not engaged in [propping up](#) HTS under cover of an ostensibly humanitarian guise, they would have no problem with the corridor's shutdown and would simply coordinate their aid through Damascus.

As Special Representative Jeffrey said in his PBS [interview](#), *"we were perfectly willing to go on in a questionably sustainable attrition situation"* by opening indirect channels to HTS in Idlib *"to keep the other side from winning in Syria."*

That “other side” is represented by President Assad, who has already [won](#) another presidential election as the sovereign ruler of Syria. Disturbingly, as Jeffrey has served in key diplomatic posts under George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and [Donald Trump](#), his warped anti-Assad views on Syria appear to reflect bipartisan continuity proceeding apace under Biden, Obama’s former vice president.

Propping up HTS and its murderous Idlib tyranny as a jingoistic cat’s paw against the Damascus government and its Russian, Chinese, and Iranian allies – whether through diplomacy, aid, publicity, or weapons – only delegitimizes the terrorists and their Western apologists even further.

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