

What Prospects for Peace in Syria With Al Qaeda at the Geneva Talks...?

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

The UN endorses the representation of Al Qaeda.

I thought Al Qaeda was on the UN terror list. But no, they are now officially a member of the UN family. Its all for a good cause (M.Ch. GR Editor)

Today, a new round of talks on the settlement of the Syrian crisis will begin in the Swiss city of Geneva. As with the previous rounds of talks, the goal is to find a solution that will eventually lead to the end of the crisis in Syria that has been going on since March 2011.

While the idea of such negotiations might seem promising, there is but little hope of a positive outcome of these negotiations. There are several obstacles in the path towards a peaceful solution.

Each type of negotiation requires at least the minimum-level consent between the two negotiating sides, that is to say they at least recognize each other's legitimacy in their existing form. This, is, however not the case with the particular talks on Syria.

The so-called "Syrian opposition" side predominantly consists of parties and groups who are the talking heads for Al Qaeda, already in advance, offering no solution as they continue to claim that the only way to end the current crisis is the departure of the Syrian president Bashar Al Assad and his government. As a result no negotiations on the settlement of the Syrian crisis have so far earned the expected (or rather idealized) results.

The goal of these negotiations is to reach a solution through mediation that would eventually lead to the compromise, to which the parties involved in conflict will submit. But in order to be able to find a way towards such compromise, the parties involved need to act as if they came to negotiate, first. Setting the terms and conditions in a one-sided way means no negotiations.

It is merely an expression of what was already told before, and may have even been the cause of conflict in the first place. And exactly this is the main reason why no Geneva or any similar talks have brought any positive long-lasting effects so far.

While it is important to recognize the fact that some of the Syrian opposition parties, such as the Syrian Democratic Forces and the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change, have expressed their will to negotiate with Bashar Al Assad and his government, the majority of other opposition groups insist on the departure of Bashar Al Assad and his government as the one and the only solution on ending the Syrian crisis.

As such these groups are not fit for the negotiations since they do not wish to negotiate and this is also where the problem lies within the UN. The UN, who are in charge of organizing the Geneva talks, should have realized by now that such opposition groups shall be excluded from negotiations as their presence in Geneva will clearly not lead to any solution or compromise. Instead, the UN shall focus only on the talks between the Syrian government and the opposition groups, who openly express their readiness for negotiating with the government of Syria. By allowing the presence of the groups not willing to negotiate, the UN are basically violating the first paragraph of the Article 33 under the Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which states that the negotiating parties shall first and foremost, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement.



The actions taken by the UN to date display a rather biased attitude of the UN towards the settlement of the Syrian crisis. The controversial thing with the armed Islamist opposition groups is that not only are they not willing to negotiate, but also that they shouldn't exist as political groups at all.

The foundation of these groups is based on grave violations of international law, UN charters, conventions and declarations. The armed wings of these particular groups, commanded by the same people that are now sit at the negotiating table, have committed several war crimes against the Syrian civilians and defence personnel, in addition to committing acts of ethnic cleansing, religious persecution, organ harvesting, kidnappings, child labour and the use of adolescent persons as combatants.

One of such example includes Abdullah Alloush, leader of Jaysh Al Islam and a brother of the slain terrorist leader, Zahran Alloush, who was personally involved in some of the most disturbing crimes against the Syrian civilians, notably during the ethnic cleansing in Adra in December 2013 when dozens of Syrian civilians were cremated alive.

Having such people on board will not save the sinking ship. Rather, it will make its sinking longer and more agonizing. Although Syria, thanks to the efforts of its army, is far from being a ship that is about to sink this instant, it must nonetheless stop traveling towards the iceberg. Sadly there are forces who are not willing to end this.

The further reason why none of the forces, belonging to the Islamist 'Syrian National Council', shall be given any importance is that they are losing the ground on a daily basis.

There is little point to negotiating with a side that might lose its occupied territory at any moment as in such case its territory would immediately have peace and stability restored by the legitimate Syrian forces, thus making any further negotiations completely meaningless.

In order to negotiate in accordance with the standards, mutual respect between the

negotiating sides needs to be given, and the rule of the law must be granted. In this particular case, the Syrian government has fulfilled all of its obligations as it expressed its readiness to negotiate with opposing parties, including those who expressed their contempt ahead of the negotiations.

An important fact that must be taken into account is that the groups, who only seek Bashar Al Assad's departure, are not acting alone. Certain political powers (in particularly majority of the NATO member states, Qatar and Saudi Arabia), some of which are even the permanent members of the UN Security Council, invested way too much money, effort and time in the armed Islamist opposition groups, to just let Bashar Al Assad walk away with a trophy.

Despite the fact that the situation on the ground is developing in his favour and that the full scale victory of the Syrian Army will sooner or later become an unavoidable reality, these powers will nonetheless try to pull all ropes left available, only to disrupt their opponent.

Such behaviour is, especially at this point, not only irresponsible and irrational, it also displays a complete disregard for international law and displays how international law has basically become just a piece of paper (or an electronic document). The even more shocking thing, is that its granter, the UN, is doing nothing to preserve or protect it.

To conclude, what can be said is that the new round of Geneva talks today will likely bring the same results as the previous rounds of talks, with nothing more than some short-lasting ceasefire agreements.

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