

Country/entity	Syria
Region	Middle East and North Africa
Agreement name	Agreement between Ahrar al-Sham, Desert Sector (AAS), and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, Northern Desert Sector (HTS), on Tel Touqan.
Date	14 Jul 2017
Agreement status	Multiparty signed/agreed
Interim arrangement	Yes

Agreement/conflict level Intrastate/local conflict

Syrian Conflicts (1948 -) (1976 - 2005) (2011 -)

The agreements relate to three different conflict contexts. Israel-Syria and Syria-Lebanon. The Syrian-Israeli conflict was a key factor for the Syrian intervention during the Lebanese Civil War, with Syrian-backed Palestinian Liberation Army units intervened in 1976 against the Palestinian/Leftist militias. Following a massacre at Tel al-Zaatar that year, Syria was forced to accept a ceasefire at a meeting of the Arab League. However, the Arab League also mandated an Arab Deterrence Force, consisting of mostly Syrian soldiers with token contributions from other Arab League states, thus further legitimizing the Syrian presence in Lebanon. During a second bout of fighting that began in 1989, caused by the formation of rival Lebanese regimes in East and West Beirut, the Syrian-backed regime won and in 1991 the 'Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination' was signed to legalize the Syrian occupation as a means to ensure the security of Syria. Syrian forces were forced to withdraw in 2005 following possible involvement in the assassination of Lebanon's President Hariri.

Syria-internal. In 2011, domestic upheaval following a wave of protests across the Arab World soon led to violent repression of protestors by Syrian government troops. The violence progressed steadily and by July 2011 the Free Syrian Army (FSA) was formed consisting of defected military units and new recruits. The FSA and rebel umbrella group known as the Syrian National Council represented the first attempt at coordinating rebel factions in late 2011. However, a steady influx of foreign fighters and increased sectarianism radicalised opposition groups, which relied on foreign funding. The nature of the conflict changed drastically in late 2013 as infighting among the opposition groups increased. One of the more significant developments was the split between the al-Qaeda outfits the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, ISIS), and Jabhat al-Nusra in early 2014 in addition to the intensified targeting of other rebel factions by ISIS fighters in particular, including the Kurdish Peshmerga, the FSA and other jihadist outfits. Since the summer of 2014, the conflict was further internationalized when ISIS announced the formation of an Islamic state eroding the state line between Iraq and Syria and also in mid-2015 when Russian forces intervened on behalf of the Bashar al-Assad government in Damascus.

Close
Syrian Conflicts (1948 -) (1976 - 2005) (2011 -)

Stage Pre-negotiation/process

Conflict nature Inter-group

Peace process Syrian Local Agreements

Parties [Illegible] al-Hashimi [signature]
Al-Sheikh Walid al-Sulayman [signature]

Representing Ahrar al-Sham (Desert Sector) and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (Northern Desert Sector) (HTS)

Third parties

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Description

4-point confidence building measures agreement aiming to resolve tensions between HTS and Ahrar al-Sham around Tel Touqan village (30km east of Idlib). Agreement provides for the release of detainees; removal of checkpoints and opening of roads; referring the cause of Tel Touqan to the Sharia Committee and agreement on the earlier ruling on Tel Touqan.

Agreement document

[SY_170714_Agreement between Ahrar al-Sham and HTS_EN.pdf \(opens in new tab\)](#) | [Download PDF](#)

Agreement document (original language)

[SY_170714_Agreement between Ahrar al-Sham and HTS_AR.pdf \(opens in new tab\)](#)

Local agreement properties

Process type Informal but persistent process

Rationale -> Local issues only; no external support mechanism; culture of signing There is no formally established mechanism to support the negotiation between Salafi armed groups. Moreover, this agreement cannot be linked to the national peace process. Indeed, both groups have a Salafist ideology; they oppose the rule of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and reject the idea of a national negotiation to solve the conflict. Yet, it seems that both signing parties choose to solve daily pragmatic issues related to their armed struggle through agreements. Although one cannot speak of a “culture” of signing peace agreements, the parties are involved (in a non-proactive and non-conscious way) in a persistent practice of signing local agreements.

Is there a documented link to a national peace process?

No

Link to national process: articulated rationale No link to the national peace process in Syria is mentioned in the agreement, neither it can be inferred from further research. First, the agreement does not involve local governance actors; and the signing parties themselves are not official state representative. Second, all parties to the agreement reject the national peace process, as it would maintain Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government in power. Yet, the agreement is related to multiple local level processes in Idlib governorate in July 2017.

Name of Locale Tal Touqan

Nature of Locale City

GPS Lat/Long (DD) 35.829063, 36.959018

Participant type Local armed group

Mediator, facilitator or similar No mention of mediator or similar

Local issues

Ritual/prayer and process (including use of scripture) Page 1, In the name of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate
Praise be to God and prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah and on his family and his companions and those who follow him.

Page 1, God bless.

Grievance List The agreement addresses the grievances of two Salafi-jihadi groups that lost a number of men during clashes for the control of Tel Touqan in Idlib governorate. Although the agreement does not refer to specific causes of the conflict, it lists four provisions to address local grievances.

Page 1,
The release of detainees from both sides.
Removal of armed checkpoints and lookouts, and the opening of roads.
To refer the Tal Touqan¹ case to the Sharia Committee.
Agreed upon the previous Tal Touqan issue.

Cattle rustling/ banditry No specific mention.

Social cover No specific mention.
