

Country/entity	Syria
Region	Middle East and North Africa
Agreement name	Agreement between Harakat Ahraru al-Sham and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in al-Ghab Plain
Date	9 Jan 2019
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	Ceasefire/related
Conflict nature	Inter-group
Peace process	Syrian Local Agreements
Parties	Hayat Tahrir al-Sham Harakat Ahraru al-Sham
Third parties	-
Description	Short agreement that provides for the dissolving of Harakat aḥrāru a-Shām and the administrative and military arrangements that follow.
Agreement document	SY_190109_Agreement between Harakat Ahraru a-Sham and Hay at Tahrir al-Sham in al-Ghab Plain.pdf (opens in new tab) Download PDF
Agreement document (original language)	SY_190109_Agreement between Harakat Ahraru a-Sham and Hay at Tahrir al-Sham in al-Ghab Plain_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 (especially Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) 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. The agreement is related to multiple local level processes in Idlib governorate in late-2018 and early-2019 between opposition groups. Also, the two signing parties agreed on prisoners exchanges in this same locale the day before this agreement was signed.
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. Finally, the agreement should be understood in the context of an “intra-religious insurgent groups” conflict where several factions that all oppose Bashar al-Assad engaged in fighting and took some distance from their initial raison d’être in the context of the Syrian civil war.

Name of Locale al-Ghab area and mountain Shashabo

Nature of Locale Region

GPS Lat/Long (DD) 35.546858, 36.405168

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 Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Grievance List Although the agreement does not refer to specific causes of the conflict, sources confirm that it was brokered following clashes between the two signing parties in al-Ghab area the day before the agreement was agreed on. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham launched an offensive against Al-Jabhat al-Wataniya lil-Tahrir in Al-Ghab Plain region in northwestern Hama. According to reports, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham captured Al-Ankawi and Al-Amqiya, as well as Al-Zaqum, Al-Daqmaq, Qalidin, and Al-Hamidiyah.

Cattle rustling/ banditry No specific mention.

Social cover No specific mention.
