

US Media Defends Al Qaeda in Syria

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When is a terrorist group not a terrorist group? Apparently when US foreign policy requires it not to be. This is precisely the case regarding Al Qaeda's Syrian branch - Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) - the most recent rebrand of Jabhat Al Nusra - which currently occupies the northern Syrian governorate of Idlib.

The US corporate media has recently attempted to generate public sympathy for HTS - as well as animosity toward Syrian, Russian, and Iranian forces seeking to liberate the supposedly one million people trapped under the terrorist organization's rule.

Another factor behind US media support for HTS is the necessity to explain why NATO member Turkey is providing direct military and material support for a US-designated terrorist organization, and why the US itself is in turn providing Turkey support to do so.

Articles have appeared in Newsweek - for example - framing Russian opposition to negotiations with HTS as negative - and echoing US State Department efforts to support the terrorist organization despite it appearing on Washington's official Foreign Terrorist Organization designation list.

The article titled, "[Russia Warns Against Any U.S. Talks with Militant Group It's Bombing in Syria](#)," is actually referring to Al Qaeda's HTS front when it refers to the "militant group" Russia is bombing in Syria.

Newsweek places Russian statements regarding the US designation of HTS as a terrorist organization in quotes as if to question the veracity of the claim.

However, a visit to the US State Department's own website reveals a 2018 statement titled, "[Amendments to the Terrorist Designations of al-Nusrah Front](#)," which openly admits:

The Department of State has amended the designation of al-Nusrah Front - an al-Qa'ida affiliate in Syria - to include Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and other aliases. These aliases have been added to al-Nusrah Front's designations as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) under Executive Order 13224.

In January 2017, al-Nusrah Front launched the creation of HTS as a vehicle to advance its position in the Syrian uprising and to further its own goals as an al-Qa'ida affiliate. Since January 2017, the group has continued to operate through HTS in pursuit of these objectives.

Thus - according to all sides of the Syrian conflict including Washington - HTS is without doubt - unequivocally a terrorist organization.

And eventually - 5 paragraphs in - Newsweek also admits HTS is a US-designated terrorist organization - and even includes quotes from US military leaders admitting that Idlib is overrun by extremists. Yet the US-based publication still attempts to frame Syrian and Russian efforts to liberate Idlib from these extremists negatively.

Newsweek is just one example of the US corporate media obliquely defending terrorism. The New York Times would provide a much more robust defense.

New York Times Does PR for Al Qaeda in Idlib

To illustrate just how far the US corporate media is willing to go to bolster Al Qaeda's HTS and its Turkish and US backers, the New York Times claims its staff actually accompanied HTS terrorists in Idlib in order to write their emotionally manipulative article, "['The Only Choice Is to Wait for Death'.](#)"

The article's author - Carlotta Gall - claims:

I made a rare visit into Idlib with a photographer and interpreter on Wednesday, crossing the border from Turkey. We were accompanied by relief workers of a Syrian charity and members of a jihadist rebel group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which controls the province.

While the identity or organization these "relief workers" are affiliated with is never mentioned in the article - they are almost certainly from the so-called "White Helmets" and their presence alongside Al Qaeda HTS militants would only further confirm that they themselves are nothing more than Al Qaeda auxiliaries.

The article contains weepy anecdotes devoid of any actual evidence, playing on the familiar "humanitarian" concerns the US and its media often use to demonize its adversaries and justify its own - very real - aggression and abuse globally.

In this case - the aggression and abuse the US and its media are attempting to justify is the continued existence of Al Qaeda's HTS in northern Syria and its rule over an alleged population of "one million" civilians.

The article describes Syrian and Russian security operations to liberate Idlib from Al Qaeda with paragraphs like:

There has been no letup for the people of Idlib Province as the forces of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, backed by Russian air power, have smashed their way forward, demolishing towns and villages in the south and east of the province with punishing airstrikes.

Only until *twenty-five paragraphs* into the New York Times' article, does author Carlotta Gall finally admit HTS is a US-designated terrorist organization, claiming:

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, has been designated a terrorist group by the United Nations but recently allowed Western journalists into Idlib in cooperation with Turkey, which has wanted to build international pressure against Russia and Syria.

In other words – Al Qaeda and its Turkish backers want to build pressure against Russia and Syria who are attempting to liquidate the terrorist organization and restore order to Idlib – and the New York Times is willingly – even eagerly – aiding Al Qaeda and Turkey in doing so.

The US Has Flattened Cities and Nations in Pursuit of “Terrorists”

Cities held by terrorist organizations – or even entire nations for that matter – have served as a pretext for the United States and its allies to carry out brutal military operations. For example – the alleged presence of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan served as the pretext for the now 19 year war the US has waged there since 2001.

In 2004 – citing the presence of extremists in the Iraqi city of Fallujah – the US military would flatten the urban center not once – but twice.

One might imagine that the US military and its allies would be eager to move against the northern governorate of Idlib in Syria – admittedly held by the terrorist HTS front.

Yet here the truth about America’s so-called “War on Terrorism” is revealed.

While extremists may have been based in Afghanistan in 2001 or active in the Iraqi city of Fallujah in 2004 – that is not why the United States moved against them. The US had overarching geopolitical plans that required the long-term occupation of Afghanistan – with the presence of extremists serving merely as a pretext to pursue these plans.

In Fallujah it was not the militants or their extremism that bothered the United States – as Washington had previously armed and backed many of the groups there in proxy conflicts for decades beforehand and for nearly two decades since – it was their resistance to the US occupation that triggered the two battles for the city.

Al Qaeda in northern Syria serves US interests – the fact that it appears on the US State Department’s own terrorist designation list is merely a political inconvenience at the moment – one the above-mentioned Newsweek article even admits US diplomats are trying to work around.

Newsweek claimed:

James Jeffrey, the U.S. special representative on Syria and special envoy to the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State militant group (ISIS), told a press briefing earlier this month he had not seen Hayat Tahrir al-Sham “planning or carrying out international terrorism attacks.” He made similar comments days earlier.

The obvious implications of Jeffery’s comment is that – at the moment and despite HTS’ status as a US-designated terrorist organization – the US does not see it as one. And not because HTS isn’t a terrorist organization – but simply because at the moment – such a designation is not politically convenient for US objectives in northern Syria.

So while the US has flattened entire cities in pursuit of “terrorists,” it currently seeks to complicate and draw out the Syrian conflict – placing the lives of “one million” civilians in the balance – in *defense* of terrorists.

The malignant nature of US foreign policy is fully illustrated by Washington and the US media’s stance regarding Al Qaeda’s HTS in northern Syria – amid circumstances where unequivocal terrorists threatening the lives of what the US itself claims are “one million” civilians have attracted the attention and support of American journalists and diplomats.

The coordinated nature of this support – spanning the corporate media and the US government itself – indicate just how deep the rot is within US foreign policymaking and helps explain why – no matter who sits in the White House – this agenda continues forward, unabated and unfazed no matter how much the light of truth is shone upon it.

The fact that large amounts of resources are still being invested by Washington and the US corporate media indicates that US efforts to destabilize and destroy Syria are still very much in play – and now more than ever those seeking to restore order in Syria must guard against complacency.

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