The Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham-al-Qaeda Dispute: Primary Texts (XII)

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For prior parts in this series, see <u>here</u>.

The document that is the subject of this post is a joint statement by two al-Qaeda loyalists: Abu Muhammad al-Sudani and Abu al-Qassam al-Urduni (the latter a <u>familiar figure in these</u> <u>disputes</u>). The statement is mostly self-explanatory. Like other al-Qaeda loyalists in this dispute, the two men call for arbitration of the dispute on weapons etc. through Islamic scholars. In addition, the statement repeats the loyalists' charge about Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) proposals for the military council and opening up an important highway. Finally, a short account is offered of the agreement that was struck between HTS leader Abu Muhammad al-Jowlani and Abu Humam al-Shami. This account draws in particular on Sudani's testimony.



In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Prayers and peace be upon the most noble of those sent and all his family and companions. As for what follows:

God Almighty says: "Oh you who have believed, obey God and obey the Messenger and those in

charge of affairs among you. If you conflict on something, refer it to God and the Messenger if you believe in God and the Last Day." And the Almighty and Exalted says: "And if you have disagreed on something, its ruling belongs to God." And Exalted is He who says: "Indeed the believers have said when they have called to God and His Messenger to rule between them: we have heard and obeyed. Those people are the successful ones."

Dear brothers, these noble verses call on the believers when conflict occurs among them in anything (and "thing" here is an indefinite noun, i.e. in anything, little or small) to have the conflict referred to God and His Messenger: i.e. the Book of God and the Sunna of His Messenger (SAWS), and the matter is simple, very simple. And there is no complication in it, and in it is a solution to our problems and it is that these problems and conflicts should be referred to the ruling of God. And if conflicts arise and you do not refer them to the ruling of God, failure and defeat and the disappearance of strength occur. The Almighty has said: "And do not conflict, for you will fail and your strength will disappear." And if the obligation is to refer the disagreements to the Book of God and the Sunna of His Messenger there must be students of knowledge in whom we trust and in whose religion we trust to be a reference point of authority for us. And these students of knowledge, we must respect and honour them and bring down all who transgress against them or try to bring them down. SAWS said: "From honouring God is honouring the aged Muslim, who memorizes the Qur'an and does not exaggerate in pronouncing it or forget it, as well as honouring the just ruler"- narrated by Abu Dawud and deemed authentic by al-Albani. And these students of knowledge to whom we have referred the matter to rule on it, most if not all of them have agreed to review and judge on the disagreement between the mujahideen if the parties are content with that.

So brothers, we sincerely advise you: go back to your true 'ulama and make them a point of reference for you, and honour them, for indeed honouring them is honouring God (Almighty and Exalted is He), and these students of knowledge are from within the jihadi movement and not outside it. And more or less all of them have been driven out and expelled from their land and have endured harm in this path, and some of them are people of precedence and old age, and they have ample experiences, and some of them have spent years of their life in prison in opposing the Tawagheet [idolatrous tyrants] and supporting the mujahideen.



As for the issue of forming the military council and appointing a defecting officer from the 'Free Army' or 'al-Faylaq' and opening the highway, we have been witness to that and our ears have heard it in meetings besides the meeting of 'Abu Saleh al-Khatyar.'

So we must not quarrel with each other in derivative and side issues and leave side the big picture which is: will this matter be implemented or not? The days will show us that. So fear God

in this field as it has become the last base of the mujahideen and the blood of the martyrs and commandos and martyrdom operatives have been expended in liberating it. And all that has been in order to establish the religion of God (Almighty and Exalted is He), for it [the field] is not the possession of a faction or individual but rather for every devoted person and mujahid, and indeed also for generations that have passed and handed us this banner. So it is not reasonable that a faction or individual should judge on its great cases, and it is not reasonable that we should neglect it and the blood of its martyrs after these great sacrifices, and the religion must be established even if our necks were all to be struck.

As for the 16 points agreement between the commission [HTS] and Hurras, the agreement was before the naming of Hurras and I- Abu Muhammad al-Sudani- admit to the signing of the agreement, but this agreement was rejected by Abu Humam's Shura [consultation council] and we returned to the brother Jowlani to modify some of the clauses or have us released from it and Jowlani rejected modifying any clause in it, so we agreed that the agreement would be binding to us despite what some of us considered to be in it from injustice and fraud. And we decided not to violate the agreement in fulfilment of pacts, and not long after and prior to the commission's fight against Zinki (the first fight), the brother Jowlani agreed to cancel the agreement in the presence of some of the brothers, and thus there arose disengagement from the two sides from the agreement, and after that we named Hurras al-Din and we began our work.

Exalted are you oh God and in priase of You. I bear witness that there is no deity but You. I seek Your forgiveness and I repent to You.

Abu Muhammad al-Sudani Abu al-Qassam al-Urduni