

Syrian Opposition Negotiating Positions Compared to International Frameworks¹

	Internationally-Brokered Frameworks for Negotiations		Syrian Political Opposition	Syrian Armed Opposition Elements	
	Geneva ¹	Vienna ² <i>Assumed to be consistent with Geneva where not specified</i>	Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC) ³	Southern Front (FSA) ⁴	Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiya (HASI)
Ultimate end state	Independence Territorial integrity National unity Sovereignty	Independence Territorial integrity Unity Secular character	Independence Territorial integrity Full unity Sovereignty	Independence Freedom Stability	Territorial integrity ⁵ National Unity ⁶ Islamic state ⁷ “Obtain freedom, justice, and security for all sectors of Syrian society, with its diverse multi-ethnic and multi-sect social fabric.” ⁸
Cessation of violence to enable establishment of transition government	Ceasefire Humanitarian access		Ceasefire Humanitarian access		
Regime change			Assad and “close associates” must go	“Overthrow of the Assad regime”	“Overthrow the current regime with all its symbols and foundations”
Character of future state	Multi-party democracy Complies with international standards of human rights & law Equal opportunity for all Syrians without sectarianism or discrimination		Multi-party democracy Complies with international standards of human rights & law Right of equal citizenship for all Syrians without discrimination Based on the rule of law and civil State	A representative government chosen by the Syrian people that “reflects the will of the people and respects minorities”	An Islamic State “unified” under Sharia law ⁹ Will allow for political parties so long as parties are “bound by the strictures of sharia” ¹⁰
New constitution	“Review of the constitutional order” subject to popular approval	New constitution	“Referendum on the constitution drafted by the constituent assembly,” supervised by the UN and ratified by a two-thirds majority of voters”	Immediate suspension of constitution to be replaced by the 1950 constitution “until the drafting of a permanent constitution for the country that shall be approved by a popular referendum”	Constitution chosen by the Syrian people based on Sharia law ¹¹
Elections	Free and fair multi-party elections	All Syrians, including diaspora, eligible to participate in elections	Free and fair multi-party elections in accordance with the terms of the constitution	National elections	Any future leader of Syrian state will be a Sunni Muslim selected within the bounds of an Islamic State. ¹² Will permit an electoral process to select candidates responsible for ensuring the implementation of Sharia law, although “voting on the sovereignty of sharia” is unacceptable. ¹³

¹This chart represents the negotiating positions of three of Syria’s most important opposition elements. The positions reflected in this chart are drawn from public statements by the groups and their leadership, which are cited in the endnotes. The positions listed here do not necessarily reflect the views of every member of the group, nor are they necessarily positions that the group will not soften. This chart merely seeks to demonstrate initial negotiating positions from a spectrum of Syria’s armed and political opposition as a framework for approaching negotiations with regime elements. Rows have been left blank when a position was not clearly articulated.

	Internationally-Brokered Frameworks for Negotiations		Syrian Political Opposition	Syrian Armed Opposition Elements	
	Geneva	Vienna <i>Assumed to be consistent with Geneva where not specified</i>	Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC)	Southern Front (FSA)	Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiya (HASI)
Disarmament Demobilization Reconciliation (DDR)	Must be addressed		Must be addressed “or the integration of their members into the armed forces or public and civil services”		
Security Service Transformation	Continuity of government institutions Continuity of staff Must “perform according to human rights Must operate under leadership that inspires public” confidence Must be under control of transitional body	“Institutions will remain intact”	Continuity of state institutions Continuity of qualified state employees Must perform according to human rights and IHL “The Syrian Supreme Military Command (SMC) operates under the civilian authority of the Coalition through the Ministry of Defense” within both the “Interim and succeeding Government.”	Continuity of qualified state employees The Southern Front will “transition from a military organization into a civilian defense force to contribute to establishing the appropriate conditions to enable a successful political transition in Syria.” “The armed forces will be requested to remain temporarily in their barracks until security and order restored”	Sees itself as providing the foundation for a post-Assad army. HASI stated the following after it restructured its military in late 2014: “the goal of the new military formation is to find an alternative military force for the regime’s army that is able to start organizing issues for a new Syria and the create infrastructure to restore state institutions ...the army that will be formed will have an Islamic character, and that it will be a national army spreading across all parts of Syria that is based on morality.” ¹⁴
Judiciary	Must be independent Accountability “must be addressed”		Must be independent		Sharia law
Accountability	Comprehensive package for transitional justice, including compensation or rehabilitation for victims of the present conflict, steps toward reconciliation and forgiveness Government of Syria must produce immediate, credible visible results on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release of arbitrarily detained persons • Freedom of Movement for journalists • Freedom of association and right to demonstrate • Immediate and full humanitarian access 		Establishment of “mechanisms to hold accountable those responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law” “Efforts aimed at achieving transitional justice and resolving social conflict” Release full list of arbitrarily detained persons and location to a “Transitional Governing Body” and not to obstruct international observers from visiting these locations		“Bring [the regime] to justice in fair trials, without acts of vengeance or retaliation” ¹⁵
Refugees		Participants will provide support for IDPs, refugees, and host countries		All Syrians should return	
Foreign Forces			“End of any kind of non-Syrian presence”	Must leave the country within a specified period of time	

References

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- ⁷ Malak Chabkoun, “Syrian Revolution’s Path after Attacks on Ahrar al-Sham,” Al Jazeera Center for Studies, September 14, 2014, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/ResourceGallery/media/Documents/2014/9/14/2014914843715734Syrian-Revolution.pdf>.
- ⁸ Scott Lucas, “Syria Document: Insurgents Issue ‘Revolutionary Covenant’.”
- ⁹ Malak Chabkoun, “Syrian Revolution’s Path after Attacks on Ahrar al-Sham.”
- ¹⁰ Aron Lund, “Syria’s Salafi Insurgents: The Rise of the Syrian Islamic Front,” The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, March 2013, <http://www.ui.se/eng/upl/files/86861.pdf>.
- ¹¹ Interview with former Ahrar al-Sham General Leader Hashim al-Sheikh in April 2015. Al-Sheikh was recently appointed to head of Ahrar al-Sham’s Shari’a office in November 2015. [“Today’s Meeting: Hashim al-Sheikh”], YouTube video posted by “Al Jazeera Arabic” April 17, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRj5Xjxfzfs>; “English Translation of Ahrar al-Sham Interview with Al-Jazeera,” ; “English Translation of Ahrar al-Sham Interview with Al-Jazeera”.
- ¹² [“Today’s Meeting: Hashim al-Sheikh”], YouTube video ; https://archive.org/stream/jhuf-aljzrahrr/final_djvu.txt
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- ¹⁵ Scott Lucas, “Syria Document: Insurgents Issue ‘Revolutionary Covenant’.”