

*Speech by al-Qaeda's Leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, 24 January 2014*

My kind, dear, gracious brothers, mujahideen of Islam, lions of jihad in all the groups of resistance and jihad in *al-Sham* [Syria, sometimes “the Levant”];

*Wa Alaikum as-salam wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh* [May the peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you];

To proceed:

Kind, beloved brothers, you know that my brothers in *Tandheem Qaedat al-Jihad* [“The Base/Vanguard of Jihad Organization”, the full name of al-Qaeda] have love and respect for you, and we know your status, and we commend your steadfastness, and we look at you as the hope of the *umma* [Muslim community] in establishing the Islamic governance of resistance and jihad in Syria. You are the hope for liberating *Bayt al-Maqdis* [Jerusalem], and that your blessed jihad is an advanced step on the path of bringing back the mature Caliphate on the prophetic method, soon God-willing.

And dear brothers, you know that throughout numerous statements, whether issued from me or my living or martyred brothers, may God accept all of them, we all spoke to you like brothers without distinction between Muslim and Muslim, and *mujahid* [jihadist] and mujahid. On the contrary, we consider you all brothers in Islam, jihad, *hijra* [migration], and resistance. And it has been repeated from the media of the group [al-Qaeda] more than once that the brotherhood of Islam between us is stronger than all the temporal concerns, transcending organizational links, and your unity and unification and harmony is more important, dearer, and more valuable for us than any organizational bonds. Your unity and unification and the coalescence of your ranks rise above organizational loyalty and the partisan extremism. On the contrary, these partisan organizational links are to be sacrificed—without hesitation—if they conflict with your harmony, unity, and standing in one rank like a solid building in confronting your secular, sectarian enemy, which is supported by the Shi'a, the Safavid powers [Iran], Russia, China, and the contemporary Crusader campaign cooperates with it [i.e. the West].

You know that we do not accept any violation of the sanctity of a Muslim mujahid; his life, money, honour, or dignity must not be assaulted, nor charges of *kufri* or apostasy cast on him, and we consider the organizations of resistance and jihad in Syria—those that sacrifice themselves and their money for the cause of God, in raising the words of God, and in seeking to establish the governance of the shari'a of God—as our brothers, whom we do not accept can be described as apostates, infidels, or heretics. And I remind the dear mujahideen of Islam, of resistance and jihad, in Syria of the saying of the Prophet [to not call Muslim brothers infidels].

Dear brothers, you know that we have called and we continue—God willing—calling upon everyone to seek to establish a Muslim government of resistance and jihad in Syria, to choose whom you agree upon of those who possess the shari'a-based conditions as ruler, and that whomever they choose would be our choice. We do not agree with anyone who enforces themselves upon you, because we seek the return of the Caliphate on the prophetic methodology, which rules with shari'a, proceeds with *shura* [consultation], spreads justice, protects people's rights, and repels aggression.

Dear brothers, mujahideen of Islam in all the jihadi groups in Syria, our hearts and the hearts of the *umma*—whose hearts are connected with you—bled from the *fitna* [strife], which spread amongst the Islamic mujahideen. And so we call upon all of our brothers in all the jihadi groups, and we call upon the gracious ones from the people of Syria—the scholars, advocates, notable figures, tribal chiefs, professionals, traders, writers, journalists, media men, and [public] opinion influencers, and every free, honourable one in Syria who seeks to bring down Assad's secular, sectarian, criminal ruling gang and establish [in its place] a just Muslim government—to seek to halt this *fitna*, since only God knows where it will lead.

We invite them all to seek to stop this infighting between the brothers of jihad and Islam immediately, and to establish a shari'a arbitration committee that would rule between the various groups regarding the injustices each group claims against its jihadi sister group, and to form a method to oblige everyone with its rulings.