

# “Feminist foreign policy” in action: German Foreign Minister Baerbock meets al-Qaeda terrorists in Syria

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When German Green foreign minister Annalena Baerbock presented her “Guidelines for a Feminist Foreign Policy” in March 2023, we wrote that this project, as absurd as it is reactionary, was “ultimately about enforcing geostrategic and economic interests.” If necessary, this would also be done in “close cooperation with the most reactionary regimes in the world.”

In this respect, Baerbock’s most recent trip abroad to Syria represented a new high point. In Damascus on Friday, she met representatives of the new Islamist HTS regime and its leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani (real name Ahmed al-Sharaa). To describe al-Jolani as reactionary would be an understatement. Jolani is the former emir of the al-Nusra Front, which was initially linked to the Islamic State and then to al-Qaeda. It was designated a terrorist organisation by the UN in 2013.

In the same year, al-Jolani announced in a video message: “The sons of the al-Nusra Front swear allegiance to Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri.” Al-Zawahiri had been the leader of al-Qaeda since the 2011 assassination of Osama bin Laden by US special forces. He subsequently supported al-Jolani with fighters and weapons, which al-Nusra used for deadly terrorist attacks.

In October 2013, Human Rights Watch published a report describing how the al-Nusra Front, together with other armed opposition groups, organised massacres in rural areas of the Syrian governorate of Latakia between 4 and 18 August 2013, killing at least 190 civilians and taking more than 200 hostages. At least 67 were allegedly executed in the operation near villages of the Alawite religious sect.

In 2015, al-Nusra released a video entitled “The Heirs

of Glory,” which included old audio recordings of Osama bin Laden, including his 1998 announcement: “This is how we want to incite the Islamic nation to rise up to liberate their countries and wage jihad in the way of Allah and establish the law of Allah, so that the word of Allah prevails.” The video also glorified the September 11 attacks.

In a report published in July 2016, Amnesty International accused al-Nusra of torture, child abduction and summary executions. In December 2014, for example, al-Nusra fighters executed a woman on charges of adultery and stoned to death women accused of extramarital relationships. Overall, they had “strictly interpreted Sharia law and imposed punishments for alleged violations that amount to torture or other ill-treatment,” the report said.

In addition, al-Nusra has carried out numerous terrorist attacks in major Syrian cities, including Damascus, Aleppo and Homs, each of which has claimed several dozen lives. The terror of al-Jolani’s fighters was so massive that the US government also classified the HTS (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham—Organisation for the Liberation of the Levant), which emerged from the al-Nusra Front, as a foreign terrorist organisation and imposed a \$10 million bounty on al-Jolani himself.

Meanwhile, the US has withdrawn the bounty and Western officials such as Baerbock and her French counterpart Jean-Noël Barrot are making a pilgrimage to Damascus on behalf of the EU to pay their respects to the jihadists. The reasons for this are obvious. “They all believe they can utilise HTS as their subcontractor to further their geostrategic interests in the war-ravaged country,” as we wrote in a recent analysis.

Berlin is particularly keen to play down the Islamists

in order to secure German influence in the imperialist subjugation of Syria and the entire Middle East after the fall of the Assad regime. In a statement, Baerbock said: “We know where HTS comes from ideologically, what it has done in the past. But we also hear and see the desire for moderation and for engagement with other key players.” She said they would continue to “measure HTS by its actions,” but should not “let the chance slip away to support the people in Syria at this important crossroads.”

In fact, mass protests against the HTS are already developing in Syria shortly after the Islamists came to power. The jihadists are seen as a particular threat by religious and confessional minorities. According to media reports, the number of house searches, lootings, harassment of women and executions has increased since the HTS came to power, especially in areas inhabited by a majority of Alawites.

All this did not deter Baerbock from giving al-Jolani the warmest of welcomes—even though he pointedly refused her the bloody handshake as a woman. In an interview on her return journey, however, Baerbock was pleased to note that she had also spoken to the Islamist about “women’s rights” in their “long and intensive conversation.” She also pointed out that the new head of the Syrian central bank was a woman.

Baerbock’s closing of ranks with the supposedly reformed HTS terrorists goes hand in hand with her support for the Israeli Netanyahu regime, which is committing genocide against the Palestinians and is now also bombing parts of Syria, and the NATO war escalation against Russia. Almost two years after the publication of her guidelines, it is clear what “feminist foreign policy” essentially means: imperialist terror, mass murder and war.



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