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## Obama: US Officially Recognizes ‘Syrian Opposition Coalition’

By John Glaser

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President Barack Obama on Tuesday [declared](#) that the US officially recognizes the Syrian Opposition Coalition as the sole “legitimate representative” of its country’s people.

“We’ve made a decision that the Syrian Opposition Coalition is now inclusive enough, is reflective and representative enough of the Syrian population that we consider them the legitimate representative of the Syrian people in opposition to the Assad regime,” Obama [said](#), paving the way for the greater US support.

“Obviously, with that recognition comes responsibilities,” Obama said in an interview Tuesday with ABC News. “To make sure that they organize themselves effectively, that they are representative of all the parties, that they commit themselves to a political transition that respects women’s rights and minority rights.”

The Associated Press misleadingly [reported](#) that Obama announced US recognition of “Syria’s main opposition group.” But that seriously mischaracterizes the so-called Syrian Opposition Coalition.

The group was formed as a US initiative and was officially acknowledged after a [US-orchestrated conference](#) in Qatar in November.

The Coalition is supposed to be made up of Syrian dissidents and opposition groups from across the spectrum. But it is largely another exile group without strong roots inside the country, and vehemently rejected by the armed rebel groups fighting the Assad regime on the ground in Syria.

Other Western governments, like Britain and France, have already formally recognized the Coalition.

The Obama administration's announcement came immediately after the State Department's decision to officially designate one of Syria's foremost rebel groups, Jabhat al-Nusra, a group tied to hundreds of suicide bombings and al-Qaeda in Iraq, as a terrorist organization.

That decision was met with ardent backlash from more than 100 rebel groups on the ground inside Syria, who signed a petition expressing solidarity with al-Nusra and promoting the slogan "No to American intervention, for we are all Jabhat al-Nusra."

"It has united a broad spectrum of the opposition — from Islamist fighters to liberal and nonviolent activists who fervently oppose them — in anger and exasperation with the United States," [reports](#) *The New York Times*.

So as the US announced its recognition of a detached, pro-Western, unrepresentative exile group as the legitimate leader of the Syrian people, the great bulk of the actual Syrian opposition – both armed and civilian – threw their support behind a notorious jihadist group with ties to the same fighters that battled US troops in Iraq.