

The Netherlands has never supported jihadist groups in Syria

[Rena Netjes](#) & [Jan Jaap de Ruiter](#)

An independent committee will investigate Dutch aid to rebel groups in Syria. At the time, in 2018, news program [Nieuwsuur](#) and newspaper [Trouw](#) released the news that a Syrian fighting group, al-Jabha al-Shamiyya, the Levant Front, which received help from the Netherlands, would be jihadist. The news sparked commotion in the media and among politicians. Members of Parliament [Mr Van Helvert](#) and [Mr Omtzigt](#) of the Christian Democratic Appeal and [Mrs Karabulut](#) of the Socialist Party adopted the allegations and without seemingly realizing their ridiculousness they assumed that the Netherlands would have actively supported a fighting group that pursued a Caliphate. *Nieuwsuur* and *Trouw* based themselves on the Dutch Public Prosecution Service that said that said fighting group was a jihadi terrorist movement. Later after the report, however, the Prosecution Service informed us that the said label only applied for the period from mid-2014 to mid-2015, and that it was strictly related to the criminal case of Syria fighter [Driss M.](#), who was later acquitted.

The Netherlands was a member of the international coalition against IS from September 2014 and participated in bombing raids against this terror group. As part of the NLA mission (Non Lethal Assistance), the Netherlands, together with Americans and British, among others, supported the Levant Front in the fight against IS in 2017 (not in 2014-2015!), but the Front is not jihadist-terrorist. Charles Lister, American Syria expert, reacted in astonishment at the time: 'The suggestion that the Levant front is the same as al-Qaeda or ISIS is completely ridiculous. The Levant Front led the fighting against ISIS in opposition areas, and resisted al-Qaeda'. German Syria expert Christoph Reuter said: 'A terrorist movement? Complete nonsense! We (Reuter et al.) traveled with the Levant front to East Aleppo in 2014 and 2015. They were anything but a Jihadist group. They fought hard against IS'. Aymenn al-Tamimi, a major expert on parties in the Syrian civil war, wrote a [blog](#) about the Dutch report in which he made clear arguments that the Levant Front is not a jihadist movement.

Nieuwsuur and *Trouw* have not questioned Lister, Reuter or Tamimi about the matter.

It is to be expected that brigades commit atrocities in a war situation. [Nikolaos van Dam](#), former Dutch Syria envoy, rightly states in his book [Grenades and minarets](#): '... no one could have guaranteed ... that the Syrian armed opposition groups involved would never commit human rights or war crimes. If the Netherlands had wanted to exclude this 100 percent, we should never have participated'. It was words in the same vein that Tamimi also used in the aforementioned blog.

Nieuwsuur journalist [Milena Holdert](#) stated that 'the leaders of the Levant front are difficult to approach,' but we got in touch with them easily. The military spokesman of the Levant front told us that he could not say anything about the Dutch support to Holdert and her colleague because the program was secret. When the leaders of the Front later saw the *Nieuwsuur* broadcast on television, they were baffled and the spokesman said in frustration: 'We thank the Dutch government, and the Dutch people, and then they say: "You are jihadists"'. *Nieuwsuur* and *Trouw* have left journalism seriously miserable and politicians became in the

end concerned about a dead sparrow. The Netherlands has never supported jihadist groups in Syria. Our further evidence in this case can be found at <https://www.dossierjihadisten.nl>.

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