

Fall of the Assad Dynasty in Syria – Challenges Ahead for Israel

BACKGROUND: Hafez al-Assad was a Syrian military officer and member of the minority (10%) Ba'ath Party, who in 1971 ascended to the presidency via a coup. He governed for 29 years and died in June 2000. His son, Bashar al-Assad, ran unopposed and was elected in July 2000 as President of Syria. Under their leadership, the Syrian government used violence to suppress demonstrations, making extensive use of police, military, and paramilitary forces.

Note: The Syrian nation of 25+ million people is 80-90% Arab, 9% Kurdish, and 1-10% others. Their religion is 87% Islam (74% Sunni, 13% Alawite and Shia), and 10% Christian.

By 2011, the Assad Syrian government, led by Bashar, faced an unprecedented challenge to its authority when pro-democracy protests erupted throughout the country. Opposition militias began to form in 2011, and by 2012, the conflict had expanded into a full-fledged civil war that continued until the present time. In late November 2024, as the government's support from military allies collapsed, it could not stave off a rapid offensive by a coalition of opposition forces. Half a century of rule by the Assad family crumbled with astounding speed after the insurgents took city after city in a matter of days and converged on the capital, Damascus. On December 8, 2024, the Assad government fell, and immediately the insurgents took over the Assad's government Presidential palace. Assad soldiers fled, changed into civilian clothes, abandoning uniforms, equipment, and weapons, while officers even removed their insignia. The rapid fall of Assad's regime in Syria involved four key coalitions: Al-Fatah, Al-Mubin, SNA (Syrian National Army (originally the Free Syrian Army), and the SDF (Kurdish led coalition forces actually supported by the U.S. in the past). Each encompasses numerous groups with diverse ideologies, showing the complex nature of Syrian alliances. The situation remains fluid with ongoing power struggles.

According to Russian Media from the Kremlin, Assad and their family left Syria and were granted political asylum in Russia. The Assad regime leaves over 70% of the population below the poverty line, with inflation at 100% a year.

CURRENTLY:

According to Israeli Messianic believer Amir Tsarfati (on his Telegram channel on December 9), Syria has been taken over by Abu Mohammad al-Julani, who was born in Saudi Arabia to Syrian parents originally from the Golan Heights (hence his name, al-Julani, "The Golani"). He grew up in Damascus and became a jihadist in Iraq following the U.S. invasion in 2003. In 2011, he returned to Syria from Iraq to establish al-Qaeda's Syrian branch.

"Hayat Tahrir al-Sham" is the group that currently took over the country, with al-Julani as leader. Sham is the Arabic term for "Greater Syria"—a region that encompasses modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. It's the Arabic equivalent of the term "Greater Land of Israel," an ancient concept tied to territorial aspirations, including the "liberation" of Jerusalem, not just Syria's current borders. It was reported that Hayat Tahrir al-Sham stated: "We entered the Great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, then we will enter the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and the Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia."

ISRAEL'S CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE:

The Quneitra Crossing is a border crossing on the north Golan Heights, established in 1974 after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. It marks the ceasefire line separating the two countries of Israel and Syria. The area was patrolled by the UN Disengagement Force (UNDOF), a peacekeeping mission that was established after that war to supervise and oversee the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces. It was also to continue to monitor the areas of separation. It functions as a kind of border. There are several Druze villages located there (that Israel plans to protect). The anti-

Assad rebels in Syria saw a weakened Hezbollah accept a ceasefire with Israel, and they saw their chance to topple the Assad government.

The UNDOF has left, and with the overthrow of the Assad regime in Syria, there is no legitimate legal government in Syria. Therefore, Israel believes the 1974 agreement is voided and they now have the right to seize the Golan Heights to protect their nation, especially in the light that anti-Assad rebels are also anti-Israel forces and would move to seize control of the vital area.

Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Katz in a statement in the Golan Heights said: "I instructed the IDF to seize the buffer zone with Syria and the controlling positions adjacent to it, we will not allow any hostile force to establish itself on our border." On December 8, the IDF Chief of Staff was quoted saying, "Starting tonight the battlefield will move to Syria. We will start fighting on the Syrian front and will not allow anyone to reach our border."

Within 24 hours of the fall in Damascus, airstrikes were made, and Israel is systematically destroying Assad's military. Every possible military target that belonged to the Syrian regime was destroyed - tanks, planes, intelligence facilities, and advanced military equipment. The air force bases have been operating in the last day as a freeway of planes that leave and return from waves of attacks, with heavy bombs of a ton and also bombs that penetrate bunkers. Israeli airstrikes on the Mezzeh airbase near Damascus destroyed the Buk-M1 air defense systems of the Assad regime. It appears Israel aims to prevent these systems from falling into the hands of Syrian revolutionary forces.

There has been an axis of evil with Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria's Assad. We may be seeing the downfall of this evil coalition. Amir Tsarfati reported, "In the coming hours and days, Israel is shaping its reality for years to come. By amending border lines that were based on an agreement with a regime that no longer exists, and by denying the new enemy its military capabilities, we are working hard to ensure a safer future free of Iran's proxies on our borders."

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu stated: We extend a hand of good neighborliness and peace, first of all to our Druze neighbors in Syria, also to Kurds, Christians and Muslims, who want to live in peace with Israel."

There is grave concern for the Christians and Kurds in Syria and there are reports of them fleeing for their lives.

Pray for:

- Christians and Kurds need our prayers for their protection, and for God to lead them to safety.
- Pray for God's divine wisdom, counsel, and unity for the Israeli government and the IDF.
- Pray that angelic hosts from God will shield the borders of Israel and the Israeli Defense Forces from all evil coming into the nation, and for the safety of all their citizens.
- Pray for Syria, that God Almighty will direct the course of this nation and bring it into divine order, protecting the innocent, and revealing Jesus Christ as Lord in their midst!

TIDBIT: In the Bible, *Syria* or *Aram*, both names refer to the same nation. (Aram's father was Shem, son of Noah.) The borders of Syria or Aram are much the same as they were in biblical times, with a central location being its capital, Damascus. Syria plays a significant role throughout the Bible.

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