

Biden Says Assad Must Go

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While on the campaign trail, President Joe Biden spoke with some "Syrian American activists" who favor increased sanctions on the country as well as regime change in Damascus, during a private fundraiser in Maryland last month. According to [neoconservative columnist Josh Rogin](#) - [one of Bill Kristol's protégés](#) - Biden told these regime change [advocates](#) that, among other things, [Assad must go](#). Rogin says these activists "took advantage of their audience with Biden... to implore him to do more to oppose" Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Alla Tello, a Syrian American from Massachusetts, said she declared to Biden that "Assad must go," to which the president responded "I agree." That [rallying cry](#) was first uttered in 2011, when the Barack Obama administration [began launching](#) its [dirty war](#) against Damascus, an ultimately failed but extremely bloody regime change effort.

Al-Qaeda affiliated militants and Islamic State fighters waged a war against the people of Syria and its government that is [estimated](#) to have resulted in the deaths of more than 500,000 people. The terrorist forces that carried out the failed regime change attempt were supported often by the [CIA](#) and its allies, including [the British, the French, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar](#).

Consequently, Russia maintains a significant military presence in Syria, having intervened at the request of Assad in 2015 to help beat back ISIS and al Qaeda elements wreaking havoc. Iran and Hezbollah also came to the aid of Damascus. Tello demanded that that Washington do more to "help the Syrian people free themselves from the grip" of Assad, Tehran, and Moscow. "[Biden] said, 'I can't promise you, but I will do the best I can,'" she told Rogin.

"Encouragingly, these activists told me, Biden not only seemed to care deeply about the plight of Syrians but also seemed to want to do more about it," Rogin writes. This rings hollow as for years, on a [near-weekly basis](#), Tel Aviv has [dropped bombs](#) on Syria. Last year,

the *Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that a large portion of these air raids are carried out with the US military's coordination. The Israelis claim their constant airstrikes are meant to counter Iranian forces in the country, though they routinely target and [kill](#) Syrian soldiers as well as [civilians](#), along with [airports](#), and other civilian infrastructure. This year, following a [devastating earthquake](#) which killed thousands of Syrians, the Aleppo airport – which was a [vital channel for aid](#) – was [bombed on three separate occasions](#) and rendered inoperable by the Israeli Air Force.

During the last several decades, Biden has been known as [apartheid](#) “[Israel’s man in Washington](#).” Since becoming president, he has said emphatically that US ties with Tel Aviv are “[bone-deep](#),” including in the [wake](#) of the Israeli military’s [murder](#) of an [American journalist](#), Shireen Abu Akleh. In May, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [boasted](#) that since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to power last December, the airstrikes in Syria have doubled. Reportedly, Israel has bombed Syria at least [19 times](#) this year alone.

“We have to save Idlib,” Muhammad Bakr Ghbeis, Tello’s husband, told Biden. This northwestern province has been controlled by [al Qaeda affiliates](#) for years as a result of Washington’s policy. Even the hawkish Brett McGurk, the former anti-ISIS envoy under Obama and Trump, [admitted](#) in 2017 that “Idlib Province is the largest Al Qaeda safe haven since 9/11.” McGurk is now Biden’s top Middle East official on the National Security Council.

“Please save Idlib, Mr. President,” Ghbeis pleaded, to which Biden replied “I hear you, but I can’t send U.S. soldiers to Syria.” Washington currently has about 900 troops illegally deployed to eastern Syria, backing the Kurdish-led SDF, and [occupying](#) about a third of the country, where US forces control most of Syria’s oil and wheat resources. This is [not the first time](#) Biden has [forgotten](#) he has US forces [engaged in combat](#) in Syria and dropping bombs.

As Gen. Michael “Erik” Kurilla, the commander of CENTCOM, has conceded, the American troops’ unwanted presence is becoming increasingly dangerous as there have been numerous close calls with [Russian forces](#) as well as [aircraft](#) and dozens of attacks by ostensibly [Iranian](#) backed groups. Nevertheless, Biden is not reducing troop levels, instead [another base is being built](#) in the northern province of Raqqa.

Ultimately, these so-called activists at the Maryland fundraiser were agitating for a more bellicose sanctions policy aimed at thwarting the regional realignment which has taken place this year, namely with Riyadh [normalizing relations](#) with Damascus and Syria being [welcomed back](#) into the Arab League. Syria’s neighbors including former adversaries have largely accepted that Assad is not going anywhere. However, Biden’s administration [opposes](#) these moves toward bringing Assad in from the cold and, following the Arab League’s decision, [imposed more sanctions](#) on Syria.

Rogin said these activists insisted “[the White House] publicly support a bipartisan bill called the Assad Regime AntiNormalization Act that would stiffen penalties on any entity that aids the Assad regime.”

After more than a decade of brutal war, rebuilding Syria will [cost an estimated \\$250-400 billion](#). Secretary of State Antony Blinken, America’s top diplomat, has [made clear](#) that the administration is absolutely committed “to oppose the reconstruction of Syria” absent regime change. To that end, Washington has for years implemented a harsh sanctions regime on Syria using the bipartisan [Caesar Act](#), a law which can target any person or entity

of any nationality that attempts to do business with the war-torn country. These sanctions deliberately target the country's engineering and construction sectors.

As a result, the civilian population has been [devastated](#). According to Alena Douhan, a UN special rapporteur on unilateral coercive measures who visited Syria for twelve days last year, the sanctions "severely harm human rights and prevent any efforts for early recovery, rebuilding and reconstruction." She [added](#) that "12 million Syrians grapple with food insecurity" and "90% of Syria's population currently lives in poverty," with limited access to food, shelter, water, electricity, healthcare, heating, cooking, fuel, and transportation.

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