

Former Al-Qaeda in Syria Founder Named as Caretaker Foreign Minister

Members of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham continue to fill posts in Syria's new caretaker government after the fall of Bashar al-Assad

By [The Cradle](#)

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*The General Command of the Armed Opposition Factions in Syria has appointed **Asaad Hassan al-Shibani**, a founding member of Al-Qaeda in Syria, as the country's new caretaker foreign minister.*

The official Syrian news agency (SANA) [reported](#) on 21 December that Shibani, a 37-year-old graduate of Damascus University, was chosen to fill the post. He previously led the political department of the National Salvation Government, which has ruled Syria's northwestern governorate of Idlib since **Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) conquered it in 2015**.

HTS, led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, launched an assault from Idlib on 27 November and quickly toppled the cities of Aleppo, Hama, and Homs. HTS militants entered Damascus, toppled the government of Bashar al-Assad, and seized power in Syria on 8 December.

Sharaa, also known as **Abu Mohammad al-Julani, is the former leader of Al-Qaeda in Syria, previously known as the Nusra Front.**

According to the opposition Syria TV, which broadcasts from Istanbul, Foreign Minister Shibani was previously known as Zaid al-Attar. He was in charge of the foreign relations file and oversaw the transformation of the Nusra Front into HTS.

The *Al-Marifa* website [reported](#) that Attar, who resided in Turkiye until 2024, is one of the founders of the Nusra Front alongside Sharaa.

Reuters notes the US, other western powers, and many Syrians were glad to see HTS militants topple Assad, "but it is not clear whether the Islamist group will impose strict Islamic rule or show flexibility and move towards democracy."

On 10 December, **Mohammed al-Bashir**, another member of Sharaa's National Salvation government in Idlib, was named president of the caretaker government in Syria.

Sharaa began his militant career with Al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2003. He was sent by future ISIS leader **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi** to create a branch of Al-Qaeda in Syria and to fight the Syrian government in 2011.

The US designated Sharaa as a terrorist in 2013, despite providing weapons and money to

his group throughout the war and despite his role as an [agent](#) for effecting US foreign policy.

Washington announced it would remove a \$10 million bounty on his head on Friday to more openly support him and his new government in Damascus, despite Sharaa's terrorist past.

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