

From the Frying Pan into the Fire? Analysis of What is Happening in Syria in 2025

Transcript included

By [Michael Welch](#), [Drago Bosnic](#), and [Laith Marouf](#)
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Region: [Asia](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#),
[Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)
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[Media Disinformation](#)

"We are not talking about rule by individuals or personal whims, it's about institutional governance. Syria deserves a governing system that is institutional, not one where a single ruler makes arbitrary decisions."

- **Ab-Mohammad al-Jolani** (in December 6 interview with CNN) [1]

"So around 200,000 Christian Syrians crossed into Lebanon in the last month.

And these are just the documented numbers. So we're seeing a campaign of population transfers and demographic changes and ethnic cleansing campaigns that we haven't seen the likes of since World War I and World War II now being implemented in Syria."

- **Laith Marouf** (From this week's interview)

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In the late 1970s, Afghanistan had a socialist government with equal rights for women and broad democratic reforms for a brief period of time. Then, in 1979, the CIA under **U.S. President Jimmy Carter**, began funding Islamic extremists, the mujahideen, to lodge unrest against this government and soon the Soviet Union got drawn in. [2]

The Soviet troops withdrew nearly a decade later. In April 1992, the mujihideed defeated the Marxist Afghan government and slaughtered progressive government members. Four years later, the Taliban took power with a horrible record of violating human rights.[3]

This bears a resemblance to what happened in Syria recently. Again Islamic extremists, [funded by U.S. sources](#), kept active in the country. [Russia pulled out a "main part"](#) of its forces. Then after a renewed launch in late 2024, a renewed siege

by jihadists knocked over city after city and moved into the nation's capital, Damascus. Only this time, the elected President, **Bashar al Assad** was successful in fleeing to Moscow.[4]

Mission Accomplished.

Now reports are swirling about the attacks in Syria against non-Islamic faiths, like the Christians, were on the upswing. Whatever the problems some Syrian citizens may have had with the Assad government, it sought to protect religious and ethnic minorities across the country. [5]

And the leaders of the crew who came to liberate them from the Syrian regime was Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). It's leader **Abu Mohammad al-Jolani** created it. He formerly led the Nusra Front, which was an Al Qaeda affiliate. [6]

A vastly uncritical Western Press seems prepared to embrace the preposterous notion (20 years after 9/11!) that this man has changed his ways - that he will be a progressive, woke president of Syria. [7]

With the number of displaced Syrians escalating to over a million in just two weeks, and several countries like the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and France preparing to lift sanctions on the country now that the leadership is no longer a despot, it might be wise to examine the notions behind what the great powers outside are doing to support regime change. Is it for the people? Or for the resources financially, strategically and politically that may be part of the spoils. This is the topic we will examine in this critical episode of the Global Research News Hour.

In our first half hour, we are joined for the second week in a row by geopolitical and military analyst **Drago Bosnic**. He will go through the powers, principally the United States, Israel and Turkey who think they have HTS dancing at the ends of their puppet strings, try to assess where these powers are likely headed with their different aims, and what in God's name will befall the people of this country.

Then in our second half hour, we are joined by Middle East political commentator, **Laith Marouf**. He is in Beirut and will discuss what happened to the country, what recent refugees to Lebanon are saying, and what the "new boss in town" is all about, and what this new dynamic will mean for the Syrian people and the larger Middle East.

***Drago Bosnic** is a military and geopolitical analyst, regular author on Global Research and a frequent guest on the Global Research News Hour radio program. In December 2024, he received an award for his writings on geopolitical analysis and on nuclear war from the Mexican Press Club.*

***Laith Marouf** is an award-winning journalist and political commentator, working in media since 1999. He is currently the founder of Free Palestine TV. Previously, Laith worked as the Executive Director of Community University Television (CUTV). Laith launched and hosted "Under the Olive Tree" the Palestinian community radio show airing on CKUT 90.3 FM in Montreal and CFRC 101.9 FM in Kingston (2005-10). He is currently based in Beirut.*

(Global Research News Hour episode 456)

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Transcript of interview with Laith Marouf. January 8, 2024

Global Research: Laith, given your background as part Syrian yourself, after more than a decade of the dirty Syrian war, the appearance of the devastation of the Syria that you knew, could you share your thoughts and feelings right now about what you've seen and what has just happened?

Laith Marouf: Well, it is a shock that I and much of the Syrian people in Syria and around the world are still grappling with. And, you know, there is nostalgia setting in for me, for instance, being Syrian and Palestinian. I feel right now that I have no homeland on both sides.

I lived much of my life advocating for the Palestinian people. And that's my mother's side of the family. And I, even with all this advocacy and work and family relation with Palestine, I still felt that I had a homeland in Syria that is still free.

And this month, I think I joined the Palestinian people that are fully Palestinian in this sense of detachment from reality and being outside of your homeland, unable to reach it because I can't go back to Syria right now. There's a fascist government that is there that is targeting any and all criticism, anything that is anti-imperialist, anti-Israeli. And that's not only about people's religious backgrounds.

And by the way, just for our listeners to understand, something like 70% of the population of Syria is Muslim Sunni, but the vast majority of those Muslim Sunnis, like 90% of them, are following the Sufi sects, Sufi schools, meaning mystics. They're not followers of the orthodox schools of the Sunni Islam. And although we hear a lot about, rightly so, about the targeting of Alawi shrines and the attacks on Alawi populations and Christian sites, the vast majority of attacks on religious temples is on Muslim Sunni mosques where HTS thugs are coming in and lynching Sufi imams and appointing Wahhabi imams.

And this is going to be a hard thing for the majority of the population to accept. And we're already seeing responses from people in the neighborhoods when they're coming to their mosques and seeing Wahhabi preachers instead of their beloved Sufi mystic preachers. They're reacting angrily.

And a few mosques in Damascus, in the old city, there was scuffles where the parishioners kicked out these Wahhabi preachers. So I'm just throwing that out just maybe to help everybody understand that the situation in Syria is not about Islam versus other religions. It's about an imported cult, the Wahhabi cult that has been working for the CIA and the Saudi establishment, the Saudi monarchy, to poison all the Muslim countries that are defending themselves against American imperialism.

GR: Now, I thought Assad was winning, because with the Russians assisting them, they fought back against this insurgence of, I guess, foreign terrorists, basically, the

cult. And then all of a sudden, in late November, well, in early December, his government totally collapsed.

I mean, you know, these guys just came in and all of the soldiers in place just, you know, dropped their arms, essentially. I mean, didn't even put up a fight, from what I heard. What is your understanding and insights of precisely of the speed by which it suddenly just fell apart? What was going on there?

LM: So the crucial thing that happened is that Russia made a deal with the United States, with the Trump administration, that Russia will get to keep all the territory it captures in Ukraine, in return for Russia abandoning Syria and President Assad.

And what had happened is that, you know, a few days before the attack on Aleppo, the President Assad and his family were invited to Moscow for dinner, and they were never allowed to return. And as you clearly mentioned in the beginning, President Assad is also the chief of staff of the military, commander-in-chief. So with him, the command was taken to by the Russians.

And what happened on the ground is a coordinated attack by Turkey, Israel, and the Wahhabi death squads. The Syrian military fought in outside Aleppo and fought outside Homs and Hama. But every time the confrontations were happening, the Russian communication equipment would be jammed, and then orders for retreat were given.

Another thing that everybody should understand is that Syria has been under a one of a kind siege and sanctioned, that the country didn't have any more of its resources that are being looted by the United States occupation of the gas, oil, and wheat fields in the northeast, and the occupation of much of its agricultural land and olive oil orchards in the north in Idlib that the Turks were looting. So the country had 15 years of sanctions and destruction of the economy to the point where the salary of a soldier was around \$20 a month. And so there was no more, especially after the stagnation of the battle fronts after 2016, and the fact that Syria was not able to take back any of its main sources of income, like the oil fields, gas fields, and what have you, the country lived a total collapse economic, and service in the military did not anymore give a patriotic feeling.

So you had a demoralized military, seeing that the Russians were not allowing Syria to retaliate to the hundreds, if not thousands of attacks by the Israeli Air Force that happened over the last decade. And as we saw after the managed collapse of the Syrian military that happened, the first thing that Israelis did was destroy all the caches of weapons that Syria had built up over the last 50 years, and that could not have happened without Russian information on where the equipment are and the ship caches. So this is a deal.

It wasn't a military win for al-Qaeda, it was a managed demolition of the Syrian military and Syrian state between the new colonial powers, the United States, Israel, Turkey, and Russia making the deal over Ukraine.

GR: So I saw on Russia Today reports that several people in Syria had fled to the border with Lebanon, clearly afraid of what these terrorist slash freedom fighter groups were about to do to their country. Laith, what are some of the more shocking

details you've heard about what they, I mean, this is after the launching of the attack in late November.

What are the shocking details you've received about what they all endured in that space of time?

LM: Well, you know, currently as we're speaking every day, there's at least 200 people that are being killed in the streets of Syria. So these are numbers that are equivalent to what was happening in Gaza. And this has been ongoing right now for a month.

And the Shia population in the areas around Aleppo, Hama, and Homs have basically been exiled. They were made to march from their villages to Lebanon. Close to a quarter million Shia Syrians crossed the border into Lebanon and were actually gathered in really horrible conditions on the illegal crossing points around the mountain ranges between Syria and Lebanon.

The villages in the mountains of the Qalamoun that are right on the border, there's also around 12 Lebanese villages that fell in Syrian territory when the French drew the border at the end of 1942. And that lived since then inside Syria, having all their homes and so forth, but having a special relationship where they are carrying Lebanese citizenship, but are allowed to reside permanently in Syria in their villages. These were also marched at gunpoint by HTS into Lebanon.

And finally, the areas south and west of Damascus, where the oldest churches in the world are, the areas where people still speak Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus Christ. And at the time, these are villages like Maaloula and Sayyid Naya that have the historic oldest churches in the world. They were also marched at gunpoint.

And this area clearly, nobody knows what happened to the nuns of Maaloula. Everybody's still trying to figure that out. But clearly, nobody in the West cares about them.

But the Christian population also in the what is called the Christian Valley in Hama province was also targeted. People were forced to leave their homes. So around 200,000 Christian Syrians crossed into Lebanon in the last month.

And these are just the documented numbers. So we're seeing a campaign of population transfers and demographic changes and ethnic cleansing campaigns that we haven't seen the likes of since World War I and World War II now being implemented in Syria. And this is, I haven't even spoken yet about the Alawite in the coast and coastal mountain region that have actually are facing the brunt of the mass killings in the streets and the lynchings.

And they have responded right now by arming themselves and forming militias and are conducting attacks against HTS. Over the last week, there's been at least five different attacks on HTS commanders and their offices in different parts of the coastal region.

GR: So Laith, I've heard that among the targeted groups, I know there is the burning of a Christmas tree around Christmas Day. And there is also a report that when the German foreign minister came to his country, opening up talks for the first time, this

guy, Al-Jolani refused to shake her hand because of his extreme beliefs or whatever.

And that seems to suggest that maybe he's not as woke as people are thinking he is. And this kind of reminds me of the fable about a fox agreeing to swim across a river with a scorpion on his back and then being stung halfway across, dooming them both. And the scorpion explained, I couldn't help it.

It's my nature! I'm a scorpion! So for all of his talk about being progressive and woke and everything else, I have doubts about the new Syrian leader's ability to change into Thomas Jefferson or something overnight.

Leopards generally don't change their spots. But is there any hope that the US or Israel or what have you can reign them in in any way over the long term? And if not, what sorts of horrors can you imagine await the people of Syria?

LM: Well, let's be very clear. Israel has moved in on more Syrian territory and occupied a huge part right now of the south of Syria and is a few kilometers away from the main highway that connects Damascus to Beirut.

And in this land grab, they captured the top of Mount Hermon, as it's called in English, or Jabal al-Sheikh in Arabic. And this is the highest point in the Golan Heights and is Syrian territory. And right beside the peak of Mount Hermon is a cross up there commemorating the visit of Prophet Jesus with his disciples to that location.

And the Christian Syrians every year renovate and put the cross there. The Israeli military destroyed it and filmed themselves, the Israeli soldiers, desecrating the shrine. So no, Israel is in full agreement with the Wahhabis.

They're both the fascists. And in fact, it's funny that you brought in the German Nazi foreign minister, the Green Nazi, Baerbock. Because it shows you how all of these things actually play in together.

The Wahhabis, the Nazis, and the Zionists are all the frontline attack dogs of imperialism. And here is this supposed icon of women power in Western civilization, who, you know, in Germany, there was an immigrant who received the citizenship and during his swearing in ceremony, refused to shake the hand after he already pledged allegiance to Germany and so on, refused to shake the hand of the woman officiating the ceremonies. And the German state, you know, denied him citizenship because of that.

And if we, so seeing this woman, you know, accepting this when it is her own dog, the Zion, you know, the Wahhabi dog that works for the empire. And also another indication of showing you how none of these people actually believe of what they speak, including this Jolani. You know, he had, there was multiple videos of Jolani's walking in the streets of Damascus over the last month and forcing women to put hijab on and that he saw with no covering on their heads.

But when he met this, his white master, his white Nazi master coming from Germany, this woman with no headscarf, he didn't force her to put a headscarf. Okay. Notice also the Western media who did this, if you remember, Amanpour from CNN did this stunt where she refused to put the hijab on when she was going to sit down with an Iranian official.

And then you notice how now CNN is sending its female journalists putting on hijab when they're talking with HTS. So it shows you how all of this is theatrics. The Germans, the Americans, the Israelis, the Turks, they are in bed with the Wahhabi cult.

And this is all being played. And you started your discussion about Al-Jolani, and I'm sorry that I'm going on a tangent here, by mentioning that he was the leader of Al-Qaeda in Syria. Well, he started his career in American jail in Iraq, in Abu Ghraib, with Al-Baghdadi.

He started before that, before he was captured, he was the second in command of the Islamic State in Iraq, led by Al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian, before it became the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. And then he was captured and put in, supposedly captured and put into Abu Ghraib with Al-Baghdadi. And then they come out together, and they start ISIS.

And then he splits up and he creates Al-Qaeda in Syria, and becomes second in command of that. And finally, he rebrands as HTS. These are chameleon Contras that change their fatigue and the patch on the side of their shoulder, according to what the empire requires them to.

And Al-Giuliani is not a Syrian citizen. He is a Saudi citizen who is right now governing Damascus. Oh boy.

GR: With Syria probably collapsing, just like Libya, and just like Iraq, or Ukraine even, how does this affect the Middle East chessboard?

LM: Syria is the most important chessboard in all of the Arabic world. And this is not because, I'm not saying it because I'm Syrian.

This is what geography tells us and what the history books tell us. What happens on the fields of Syria ends and begins empires. In recorded history, the battles that happened in the fields of Syria set the century after them.

And what we are witnessing right now is a very similar moment to the combined crusader invasion of Syria in the 1100s and the Mongol invasion that came simultaneously. And this is what we see, the crusader invasion from Palestine, which is part of Syria, and combined with a one-two punch with the Turkic-Mongolic invasion of these Al-Qaeda ISIS types coming from Central Asia, all the way from the Uyghurs to the Uzbeks to the Turkmens and everything in between. A modern Mongol horde, basically.

And, you know, if we look back at the history book from that moment, the lesson would be that it's not going to bode well for any of the invaders.

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The programme is also broadcast weekly (Monday, 1-2pm ET) by the [Progressive Radio Network](#) in the US.

The programme is also podcast at globalresearch.ca

Notes:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Psg2MYoN1FU>
2. <https://www.globalresearch.ca/afghanistan-a-tale-of-never-ending-tragedy/2750>
3. *ibid*;
4. <https://www.rt.com/russia/610595-russia-point-finder-israel-syria/>
5. <https://www.rt.com/shows/news/609856-rtnews-december-25-10msk/>
6. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/4/who-is-abu-mohamad-al-julani-the-leader-of-hayat-tahrir-al-sham-in-syria>
7. <https://www.mintpressnews.com/from-terrorist-to-freedom-fighter-how-the-west-rebranded-al-qaedas-jolani-as-syrias-woke-new-leader/288820/>

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