

Jeddah Meeting Unites the Arab League with Damascus

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Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was met at the airport by Prince Badr bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz on May 18 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia ahead of the Arab League summit.

Prince Badr, who is the Deputy Emir of Makkah Province, walked with al-Assad into the reception room, where they sat and exchanged pleasantries. This marks the first Arab League summit attended by al-Assad since 2011, when Syria was suspended after the US-NATO attack on Syria for regime change began.

On May 19, Assad was warmly embraced by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as they shook hands prior to the summit commencement. The Crown Prince was the host of the meeting, and had worked toward bringing Assad back into the brotherly league of Arab countries. After the summit, in which leaders spoke including al-Assad, the two met briefly together.

Saudi Arabia would "not allow our region to turn into a field of conflicts", the Crown Prince said, saying the page had been turned on "painful years of struggle".

A consensus had been building across the Middle East for the need to engage Syria to end the conflict, and not turn a blind eye to suffering. Leaders began to form the opinion that the Syrian conflict was an Arab problem, and should be solved by the Arab world.

The Middle East has long suffered from Western intervention and US-led regime change adventures, such as in Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, and Syria. The result has been catastrophic and left those countries devastated, most notably in Iraq, which has never recovered from the US invasion and occupation. Syria needs billions, and perhaps decades to recover.

The Arab League is just a meeting place to be used as networking tool bringing those with money to help Syria together, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Syria's economy

has collapsed and needs cash influx to rebuild infrastructure damaged and ruined from years of fighting against armed terrorists supported by the US and its allies.

The Obama-Biden regime change project in Syria depended on massive participation of Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates. Once the Crown Prince came into a leadership position in the Kingdom, he changed course and withdrew funding of terrorists following Radical Islam, a political ideology.

US-EU sanctions on Syria are an obstacle to helping Syria to rebuild and end the suffering of the people, including bringing home refugees from abroad. The UAE and Saudi Arabia hope to work toward lifting or easing the sanctions in order to help the Syrian people recover.

The Crown Prince is an independent leader and making decisions in the best interest of his country, which is not always aligned with US directives from the Oval Office. He has taken several steps to let Washington know that the Kingdom comes first, such as when he declined to increase oil output after US President Biden requested he pump more oil to bring down the price of gasoline for American consumers.

The current Saudi administration is at the height of its power, reminiscent of the days [of King Faisal](#) who shut off the oil supplies to the US following President Nixon's \$2.2 billion support to Israel during the October 1973 war.

King Faisal's son, [Prince Turki Al Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud](#), the former Saudi intelligence chief often is seen standing at the right hand of the Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman. Prince Turki gave an interview in which he said the kingdom took a strict stance towards Israel decades ago, and it will not normalize ties with Israel before a solution is reached to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Saudi Arabia was once heavily influenced by the US, and this led to its involvement in the regime change attack on Syria. That influence has waned as the US has left the Middle East, instead focused on weakening Russia through the US-sponsored war in Ukraine.

With the US focused elsewhere, China stepped in as a peacemaker and brokered a deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which may end the war in Yemen, and paved the way toward inviting Syria back to the Arab League and the restoring of relations with Saudi Arabia.

[Saudi Vision 2030](#) is a strategic framework to reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil, diversify its economy, and develop public service sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, recreation, and tourism.

This has been the brain-child of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and to pull it off he needs peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

He also needs strong leaders in the region, and Assad has proven capable of restoring security to a war zone of international proportions, when the US, NATO, EU and US allies were supplying, funding and supporting the destruction of Syria for over a decade. President Trump finally cut the funding for the CIA program Timber Sycamore in 2017, which trained and supported the armed fighters in Syria.

Qatar and Morocco have resisted normalizing relations with Syria. The chief reason is their

alliance with the US, and their pattern of following directives written in Washington.

Qatar has tried to spin their hardline anti-Assad stance as being on the side of the Syrian people, social justice and grassroots movements, and opposed to autocratic Arab regimes. However, Qatar is governed by a Prince who is an authoritarian leader, with no elections, or democratic institutions.

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani arrived in Jeddah, shook hands with the Crown Prince, and then left abruptly before addressing the summit. The Syrian state news agency said he shook hands with Assad before leaving.

Assad's speech at the summit noted the "danger of expansionist Ottoman thought", describing it as influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. This was in reference to President Erdogan of Turkey and his support of terrorists in Syria, and the continued Turkish occupation of Syria.

The Muslim Brotherhood is a global terrorist group, outlawed in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Syria and Egypt, but is still supported by Turkey and Qatar.

Vedant Patel, US State Department spokesperson, said that "we have a number of shared objectives" such as bringing home Austin Tice, a former US Marine who went missing in Syria in 2012. The US official position is against all peacemaking efforts by the Arab world towards Syria.

Even though the US sanctions have prevented chemotherapy drugs from entering Syria in the past, and recently have prevented the arrival of US and EU aid to the earthquake victims in Latakia and Aleppo, the US insists on keeping sanctions in place, while knowing that they will not remove the government, but will only make innocent civilians suffer.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy attended the summit, and Crown Prince Mohammed restated Riyadh's readiness to mediate in the war with Russia. Addressing the summit, Zelenskiy asked the delegates to support Ukraine's formula for peace and thanked Riyadh for its role in mediating a prisoner release last year.

Arab Gulf states have tried to remain neutral in the Ukraine conflict despite Western pressure. Russia is a fellow OPEC+ member, which ties Putin to the oil rich Gulf monarchies.

While there may be division between Qatar and Syria now, they are united in their support of seeking the freedom of Palestine, which has been the source of conflict and extremism in the Arab world for at least 70 years. Under new leadership, new vision and new goals the Arab world might be entering a golden age.

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