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After years of stagnant fronts characterized by low-level clashes between rebel factions and the Assad regime, the Syrian conflict took an unexpected turn. On December 8, 2024, a coalition led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) captured Damascus, toppling Assad's regime and opening a new chapter of uncertainty.

HTS is a radical Islamist organization that emerged from the Syrian civil war, tracing its origins back to Jabhat al-Nusra, Al-Qaeda's former affiliate in Syria.¹ Its current leader, Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, previously served under the Islamic State in Iraq before founding Al-Nusra.² In July 2016, Al-Jolani, then Al-Nusra's leader, declared a formal split from Al-Qaeda. This decision came after mounting internal and external pressure. Al-Nusra's repeated attempts to unite with Syrian opposition factions had failed, as many refused to align with a group tied to al-Qaeda. Facing isolation, senior leaders argued that breaking formal ties with Al-Qaeda was necessary to gain local support and secure a broader coalition. After intense internal debate, Al-Nusra rebranded as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (JFS), publicly cutting its ties with Al-Qaeda while quietly maintaining connections through key figures. The move fractured the group internally and strained relations with Al-Qaeda's leadership, which viewed the public split and the rebranding as a betrayal.³ By early 2017, Al-Nusra announced its dissolution and became part of the larger Syrian Islamist group, HTS. In May 2018, the US State Department designated HTS as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO),⁴ citing its connections to jihadist networks despite its claims of ideological divergence.

Under Al-Jolani's leadership, HTS has focused on local objectives, namely toppling the Assad regime and establishing Islamic governance in Syria, rather than other transnational goals typically associated with global jihadism. While HTS does not advocate democratic governance, it has tried to distance itself from global jihadism, presenting itself as a hardline Islamist organization transitioning toward other models. However, whether these models can be applied beyond the limited context of Idlib remains to be seen.⁵

HTS's evolution reflects a significant shift within jihadist movements. As one of the most pragmatic cases of political jihadism to date, the group has adopted a

¹ "Al-Nusra Front (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham)," Counter Extremism Project, 2024, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-nusra-front-hayat-tahrir-al-sham>.

² Charles Lister, "How al-Qa'ida Lost Control of its Syrian Affiliate: The Inside Story," *CTC Sentinel* 11, no. 2 (February 2018), <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/al-qaida-lost-control-syrian-affiliate-inside-story/>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ US Department of State, "Amendments to the Terrorist Organization of al-Nusrah Front," Media Note, May 31, 2018. <https://2017-2021.state.gov/amendments-to-the-terrorist-designations-of-al-nusrah-front/>.

⁵ Anchal Vohra, "Is Jolani Any Better Than Assad?" *Foreign Policy*, December 10, 2024. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/12/10/jolani-assad-syria-regime-government-democracy-hts/>.

calculated focus on day-to-day politics rather than theological purity. This approach raises important questions about the future of jihadist-Salafism and whether HTS's model could inspire a broader trend toward localized, politically driven governance within similar groups.⁶ HTS occupies a delicate position: it is no longer aligned with the global jihadi movement, yet remains deeply rooted in its origins as a coalition of jihadist factions—a wannabe 'third way' that raises more questions than it answers.

While a significant degree of uncertainty surrounds HTS's role in the transitional government and its future agenda, prominent players within the jihadi and Islamist ecosystem, both violent and non-violent, have already weighed in on these developments. This article does not aim to provide an exhaustive account but rather offers an illustrative overview of the perspectives and statements from key actors—both organizations and individuals—following the latest developments. It is structured into the following categories: violent Islamists and non-violent Islamists, with a further distinction between those based in the West and those operating elsewhere.

1. Violent Islamists' Reactions

In issue 473 of the **Islamic State's** official newsletter *Al-Nabā'*, published on November 13, the group criticized HTS, labeling its members as “jihadists turned politicians.” In the lengthy leading article of this issue the Islamic State accused HTS of abandoning its revolutionary ideals to align with the global order after being “tested, contained, and domesticated” to serve international interests. According to the Islamic State, HTS now acts as an intermediary tasked with suppressing other jihadist factions while maintaining stability.⁷

The article further underscores this shift by claiming that HTS has allegedly transitioned into a political entity. It cites its administration in Idlib as an example, which is portrayed as a prototype for a future “national regime” acceptable to global powers. This transformation, the text argues, represents a betrayal of jihadist principles, accusing HTS of pandering to the “global infidel system” under the guise of pragmatism and political maturity.

In the previous issue, published just before the capture of Damascus, the Islamic State framed the ongoing conflict in Syria as part of a larger divine test, in line with Islamic eschatology. At the same time, it sharply criticized HTS' political trajectory, focusing on its embrace of national and democratic projects. The Islamic State rejected proposals such as a "national constitution" or a “transitional council,”

⁶ Aaron Zelin, *The Age of Political Jihadism: A Study of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, May 10, 2022, 7.

⁷ *Al-Nabā'* newsletter #473. December 13, 2024. Archive of the authors.

arguing that such frameworks only serve Western-influenced political agendas and contradict Islamic Sharia. The critique further extends to HTS' conciliatory approach towards religious and ethnic minorities, as well as foreign powers like Russia and Iran. The Islamic State argues that the organization led by Al-Jolani has compromised its ideological purity by engaging in dialogue with entities its leaders consider to be enemies of Islam.⁸

As of the publication date of this document, **neither Al-Qaeda Central nor its loyalist group in Syria, Hurras al-Din**, has issued any official statements regarding the events. However, Abdelhaq al-Turkistani, the Al-Qaeda shura council member and head of Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP)—a Specially Designated Global Terrorist since 2009⁹—released a statement on October 8, affirming:

“God willing, the infidels of China will soon taste the same doom that the infidels of Syria have just tasted. Our goal is the liberation of the Muslims of East Turkistan from the occupation of China and the attainment of Islamic independence with the help of the jihad of the Ummah. This is our goal and this is our commitment. I pray to God Almighty to help us on our way.”¹⁰

Although the silence of some of the most prominent contemporary ideologues of the Islamist movement closest to jihadism, such as Abu Qatada al-Filistini or Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, is notable, other historical militants have indeed reacted to the events. **Abu Basir al-Tartusi, the influential Syrian jihadist theoretician**, displayed his readiness by stating:

“Syria is now going through a transitional phase; an emergency phase, which requires the effort and cooperation of all its honest and loyal sons... Therefore, I suggest forming popular revolutionary committees to work in parallel to the mujahideen, and to the Salvation Government and the good efforts they are making in serving the country, the people, and guarding public institutions.”¹¹

A few days later, Al-Tartusi also shared his ideas on the possible composition of the future government “hop[ing] that the desired transitional government in Syria, and the governments that shall follow it, will not consider diversity in government

⁸ Al-Nabā' newsletter #472. December 6, 2024. Archive of the authors.

⁹ “Treasury Targets Leader of Group Tied to Al Qaida.” U. S. Department of the Treasury. April 20, 2009, <https://shorturl.at/w2hRq>.

¹⁰ Statement published by the Turkistan Islamic Party and signed by its emir, Abdelhaq al-Turkistani, on December 8, 2024. Archive of the authors.

¹¹ Statement published by Abu Basir al-Tartusi on his Telegram channel on December 9, 2024. Archive of the authors.

formations to please external parties at the expense of honesty, loyalty, good conduct, and high skills that ministers should possess.”¹²

Abu Hafs al-Mauritani, the former Al-Qaeda's Shura Council member and one of Bin Laden's top advisers, now president of the Mauritanian Islamic Forum, after congratulating the “good mujahideen and righteous steadfast ones who carried weapons on your shoulders and endured the suffering of Jihad,”¹³ shared some advice with HTS leadership. In addition to warning them about the counter-revolutionary dangers that can emanate from the deep state, Abu Hafs al-Mauritani made clear that, according to him, the focus must be on religion:

“State institutions must start from religion, be based on religion, and achieve their goals through religion. It is religion what achieves justice, removes injustice, and gives everyone his right, even if he is not a Muslim. [...] Keep this in mind and remember it, brothers, you have risen and struggled to establish this state, so do not weaken and do not accept to give up under any circumstances a state that establishes religion.”¹⁴

The Saudi national **Abdullah al-Muhaysini, former HTS religious authority** until he left the organization in September 2017, published a statement on his Telegram channel. In the statement, Al-Muhaysini defined Al-Jolani, whom he knew well, as “a man who possesses passion and jealousy for the religion of God, who combined with that a sharp innate intelligence and speed in learning from experiences, who is very optimistic with caution and bold in making decisions with deliberation, far removed from extremism, with piety and religiosity.”¹⁵

Addressing Sunni scholars on Al-Jolani, Al-Muhaysini added: “God has brought you from Amidst the turmoil of these revolutions a unique and brilliant leader [Al-Jolani] of Muslims, at whose hands and his brothers’ Allah opened the capital of the Umayyads, so support him. If the Shiites had someone like him, they would have made him a symbol.”¹⁶

¹² Abu Basir al-Tartusi (@Abubaseer123), “I hope that the desired transitional government in Syria, and the governments that follow it, will not consider diversity in government formations - to please external parties...,” X, December 11, 2024, accessed December 13, 2024. <https://x.com/Abubaseer123/status/1866711804920901956>.

¹³ Abu Hafs al Mauritani (@AbuHafsMuritani), “A message from Sheikh Mahfouz bin Al-Walid (Abu Hafs Al-Mauritani) on the occasion...” X video, December 11, 2024, accessed December 13, 2024. <https://x.com/AbuHafsMuritani/status/1865884056505688079>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Statement published by Abdullah al-Muhaysini on his Telegram channel on December 9, 2024. Archive of the authors.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

To reassure other Arab leaders, he added, “If your fears are intellectual, then I say to you that the leader Ahmed al-Sharaa is not from the Brotherhood or Al-Qaeda, and no harm will come to you from him.”¹⁷

In another short statement published later, Al-Muhaysini added: “Gratitude is due to Turkey and Qatar for their role in the success of the revolution and the liberation of people from tyranny.”¹⁸

In addition to statements coming from jihadist organizations and scholars, it is worth highlighting the reactions of other violent Islamist organizations such as **Hamas**. On the same day the Assad regime collapsed, Hamas published a press release "congratulat[ing] the brotherly Syrian people on their success in achieving their aspirations" and affirming:

"The brotherly Syrian people [...] are capable of overcoming all challenges and crossing this delicate stage for Syria to continue its historical and pivotal role in supporting the Palestinian people and their resistance to achieve the goals of their just cause, and to consolidate Syria's leadership role at the level of the Arab and Islamic nation.”¹⁹

On December 9, **the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)**, through its leader Ziyad al-Nakhala, issued an official statement echoing the rhetoric used in Hamas' statement:

“The PIJ believes that the changes in Syria are a Syrian matter, and it relates to the choice of the brotherly Syrian people. The PIJ hopes that Syria will remain a real support for the Palestinian people and its just cause as it has always been.”²⁰

As of the publication date of this article, **Hezbollah** had already issued several official statements, however, the organization's stance was best encapsulated in a video statement by its leader, Naim Qassem, on December 14. Addressing the most pressing issues for the terrorist organization, Qassem stated:

“The regime has fallen at the hands of new forces, but we cannot judge these new forces except when they decide and take clear positions and the regime's situation in Syria is regulated.”

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Statement published by Abdullah al-Muhaysini on his Telegram channel on December 12, 2024. Archive of the authors.

¹⁹ Statement published by the official media branch of the Islamic Resistance Movement on Telegram on December 8, 2024. Archive of the authors. Some extracts from the statement can be found at: “Hamas and Palestinian factions comment on the overthrow of the Assad regime,” Al Jazeera, December 9, 2024, <https://shorturl.at/s4jpH>

²⁰ Statement published by Ziyad al-Nakhala in his official Twitter account on December 9, 2024. Archive of the authors.

According to Hezbollah, as articulated by Qassem, “the Syrian people have the right to choose their leadership, their rule, their constitution and their future. We hope that they will succeed in making choices that are not controlled by any of the other countries that have ambitions in Syria and want to serve the Israeli enemy.” He concluded his speech by stating: “We also hope that this new ruling party will consider Israel an enemy.”²¹

For its part, the **Iraq-based Iranian proxy militia Kata’ib Hezbollah** issued an official statement via its Telegram channel, making it clear that, for the organization, “the Syrian army represented a model of legendary steadfastness over decades [...], which will remain in the memory of the honorable people of the nation, and we hope that it will return to practicing its national role, even after a while.”²²

Regarding HTS, the statement asserted: “The criminal essence of Al-Nusra and ISIS will not change no matter how they pretend to be humane in front of the cameras, and the two countries that support these gangs are the ones who bear responsibility for any aggression against the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt or the transgression against their sanctities.”²³

The statement concluded by stating: “We are monitoring the situation inside Syria, and we are waiting for the emergence of parties with which we can reach an understanding on the basis of resistance and the Palestinian cause and rejecting those involved in the blood of the oppressed and innocent, and preserving the national balance in Syria.”²⁴

2. **Non-Violent Islamists’ Reactions**

While the previous section explored the responses of violent Islamist actors, this section shifts focus to non-violent Islamists’ reactions, examining the perspectives of Islamist political parties, prominent organizations, and influential individuals within the broader Islamist spectrum.

In a statement signed by Amer Busalema, the general supervisor of **the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood**, the organization stated:

²¹ Alaraby Tv News (@AlarabyTv_News), “Al Arabi Covers | Speech by the Secretary-General of the Lebanese Hezbollah, Naim Qassem,” YouTube, December 14, 2024, accessed December 15, 2024. <https://shorturl.at/s4EwT>

²² Statement published by Kata’ib Hezbollah on its official Telegram channel on December 10, 2024. Archive of the authors.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

“This blessed revolution did not take place, and the noble martyrs did not offer their blood except to establish justice, freedom and rights, to replace injustice with justice, corruption with righteousness, and selfishness with selflessness... Rather, everything that the martyrs were martyred for, and the mujahideen struggled for, was for the word of Allah to be supreme.”²⁵

The **Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan**, through its Foreign Affairs Ministry, also published a statement on December 8, “congratulat[ing] the leadership of Hayat Tahrir as-Sham (HTS) movement and the people of Syria on the recent advancements resulting in the removal of factor of conflict and instability, and the fall of the capital Damascus to the people of Syria under the leadership of HTS.”²⁶

The statement added:

“It is hoped that the power transition process is advanced in a manner that lays the foundations of a sovereign and service-oriented Islamic government in line with the aspirations of the Syrian people.”²⁷

Figure 1

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on Recent Developments in Syria.



²⁵ “Congratulations on the clear victory,” Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, December 8, 2024, accessed December 15, 2024. <https://shorturl.at/Hk0uB>

²⁶ "IEA-MoFA Statement Regarding the Recent Developments in Syria," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, December 8, 2024, accessed December 15, 2024. <https://mfa.gov.af/en/18019>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

The international Islamist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) shared its position on the events in a Q&A session held on December 8 on its official page. According to HT:

“The party that controlled the start of the attacks towards the de-escalation zones in Syria is Turkey and America is behind it. They want from this 'to start a credible political process,' 'a new phase' to arrange the new regime in Syria.”

“America, which controls the solution, will allow the interests of the Jews to be achieved, as America guaranteed it for them in the ceasefire agreement between the Jews and Lebanon at dawn on 27/11/2024, which is on the same day the military confrontation began in Syria.”

Addressing the Syrian people, the Islamist organization added:

“To them we address the call: to do their utmost to thwart the corrupt secular political solutions that the kafir colonizers and their agents want. And not to let their sacrifices in these events be wasted and become a forgotten trace! And to support those working to establish the rule of Islam, the Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly Guided Caliphate), so that they will have a great reward and a great victory.”²⁸

For its part, the Syrian branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir

“congratulate[d] the people of Al-Sham, the sincere revolutionaries, and the mujahideen on this great victory. [...] However, we caution them against the great deception being plotted against them to undermine their sacrifices and return us to square one. Our enemies aim to orchestrate superficial changes in leadership while maintaining the secular regime—whether republican, presidential, or parliamentary—so long as it upholds a civil state that excludes Islam from governance and state affairs.”

The statement continues:

“One of the fundamental principles of the blessed Syrian revolution remains the overthrow of the entire criminal secular regime, along with all its pillars and symbols, its constitution, its criminals, and its repressive institutions—both security and military. The alternative governance must arise from our creed, not be crafted by our enemies [...] to avoid repeating the post-revolution tragedies experienced in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen. Half-revolutions are deadly, and reliance on existing regimes is ruinous.”²⁹

Among the globally influential Islamist organizations that have made statements, it is worth starting with the Qatar-based **International Union of Muslim Scholars**

²⁸ "Answer to Question Events in Syria and the Fall of the Assad Regime," Hizb ut-Tahrir official website, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. <https://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/index.php/EN/tshow/5476>.

²⁹ Hizb ut-Tahrir Syria (@AttahrirSyria), “You have overthrown the tyrant of the Levant, so do not accept after him anything but the rule of Islam...,” X, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. <https://x.com/AttahrirSyria/status/1866028477280870820>.

(IUMS), one of the brainchildren of the late Yusuf al-Qaradawi. IUMS, which was unusually active in the initial days following the regime's fall, quickly moved to “extend congratulations and blessings to the leaders of the Mujahid revolution.”³⁰

In its first statement regarding the events, IUMS also “called on the great Syrian people, with all their ethnic, sectarian, and religious components, to maintain complete unity and engage in constructive cooperation with the revolution's leaders.”³¹ Still, on December 8, IUMS president Ali al-Qaradaghi appeared on a video message to clarify:

“There are some countries that took very strong positions and did not succumb to the temptations to restore relations with the regime of Bashar al-Assad, such as Qatar. Gratitude and appreciation are due to them, as well as to Turkey, which endured a lot and also deserves gratitude.”³²

Later, on December 11, IUMS

“condemn[ed] in the strongest terms the brutal Israeli aggression that targeted the capabilities of the Syrian army, from destroying aircraft, warships and strategic facilities, in the largest air operation in the history of the Israeli occupation [...]” The statement concluded by adding that “in light of this dangerous escalation, the Union calls for: Urgent international action: to hold the Israeli occupation accountable and deter it from its repeated violations; a unified Arab and Islamic position to defend Syria's sovereignty and protect the rights and capabilities of its people; and supporting the Syrian people: in the face of these crimes that target their security and stability.”³³

Established in Malaysia in 2014 to foster dialogue and collaboration among Brotherhood-aligned scholars, **The Kuala Lumpur Forum (KLF)** replicated the statement published by Abderrazak Makri, KLF's Secretary General and President of the Movement of Society for Peace—an Algerian political party inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood. In the statement, KLF asserted:

“The images transmitted by the media reflect a high level of civilization among the victorious fighters, who are refraining from vengeful actions, looting, or sabotaging facilities in Damascus—unlike the barbaric operations organized,

³⁰ "Official Statement: IUMS Congratulates the Syrian people on the Liberation," IUMS, December 8, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://iumsonline.org/ar/ContentDetails.aspx?ID=36861>.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² "Congratulations and a call to the Syrian people on the occasion of the success of their revolution." IUMS official YouTube channel, December 8, 2024, https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=AFc_zL3FGd8&ab_channel=علماءالمسلمين

³³ "Statement: In the largest air operation of the Israeli occupation, we condemn the destruction of Syria's capabilities and call for deterring the aggression," IUMS, December 11, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://iumsonline.org/ar/ContentDetails.aspx?ID=36895>.

incited, and carried out by American military forces during their entry into Iraq.”³⁴

The statement further added: “Liberating the Golan Heights should be a primary goal in the new Syria, and for Palestine to be the compass, and for supporting the Palestinian people and their resistance against the occupation to be evidence of the correct direction of the new system.”³⁵

The Scholars Forum, an online platform bringing together numerous clerics affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, described the events as “not just a military victory, but rather a conquest from Allah.”³⁶ In its official statement, the Forum elaborated:

“What distinguishes the Syrian revolution from others is this maturity and wisdom, which was evident in its recent decisions. The revolutionaries showed great wisdom when they decided to keep the prime minister temporarily to ensure a smooth transition of power, an action that reflects a deep understanding of their responsibilities.”³⁷

The Forum concluded by emphasizing:

“Unity is the secret of the strength of the nation, and it is the only guarantee for the stability of victory and the continuation of construction. The revolutionaries must understand that their strength lies in their unity, and that division will lead to the loss of victory and the weakening of the Umma.”³⁸

The Turkish-based **International Organization of Supporters of the Prophet**, another hub composed of influential members of the Global Muslim Brotherhood, began its first statement by “congratulat[ing] our brothers in Syria on this clear victory, for the sake of which pure blood was shed [...]”³⁹ However, it also cautioned the Islamist coalition:

“Be careful and do not lay down your weapons, and know that the enemies of the Syrian revolution—and they are many—have suffered a heavy defeat, but the dens of the counter-revolution are still lying in wait for you [...]. “Be gentle

³⁴ Kuala Lumpur Forum (@KLForum.org), “Official Statement,” Facebook, December 8, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://shorturl.at/g1PJF>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ “Statement on the fall of Bashar al-Assad and the liberation of most Syrian cities,” The Scholars Forum, December 8, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://www.msf-online.com/-بيان-بشأن-سقوط-الأسد-وتحرير-أغلب-إبشار-الأسد-وتحرير-أغلب-إبشار/>

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ “Congratulations from the International Organization of Supporters of the Prophet on the conquest of Damascus and the fall of the Assad regime,” International Organization of Supporters of the Prophet, December 8, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://shorturl.at/LJ1AT>.

with the Syrian people as a whole [...] and do not kill except those who fight or seek to cause sedition or corruption on Earth.”⁴⁰

Figure 2

Banner posted on Twitter by the International Organization of Supporters of the Prophet to accompany the official statement “Congratulations from the scholars of the nation and their advice to the revolutionaries of Syria.”



⁴⁰ Ibid.

Among numerous tweets referencing the events, drawing parallels with the Battle of Badr,⁴¹ and praising jihad and martyrdom,⁴² the International Organization of Supporters of the Prophet issued a set of recommendations for HTS, endorsed by 150 scholars.⁴³

First, the organization urged “Fear of Allah the Almighty,” as “Allah’s support for you in victory is conditional upon your support for Him in obedience.”

Second, it emphasized the necessity of unity and warned against internal conflict:

“Allah has commanded you to do, namely the necessity of unity, and to beware of disagreement and conflict,” [because] “we have seen in our contemporary experiences the evil of disagreement among the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, where the Mujahideen were initially victorious over the former Soviet Union [...], but their internal disagreements led to the application of God’s law upon them, resulting in their failure and the loss of their strength, after which Allah replaced them with others.”

Third, the organization advised HTS to: “remain steadfast in your religion, and do not compromise your principles, being cautious of backsliding when you are tested.”

Fourth, the statement recommended to “be wise and proceed gradually in internal reforms, avoiding rushing into them, as you are facing the consequences of decades of corruption within the country and its people.”

Finally, the fifth piece of advice stressed the importance of prioritizing the overwhelming number of tasks that you face.⁴⁴

On the individual level, these days have seen intense communicative activity from prominent Islamist preachers. **Mauritanian Muslim Brotherhood leader and renowned preacher Mohamed al-Hassan Ould Dadou** proclaimed: “May this manifest victory become the base for further conquests, the first of all, God willing, the liberation of

⁴¹ International Organization of Supporters of the Prophet (@SupportProphetM), “The Prophet spread confidence in victory in the Battle of Badr,” X, December 10, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/SupportProphetM/status/1866433931039617308>.

⁴² International Organization of Supporters of the Prophet (@SupportProphetM), “The Prophet’s love for jihad and martyrdom,” X, December 10, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/SupportProphetM/status/1866429740246020275>.

⁴³ “Congratulations from the scholars of the nation and their advice to the revolutionaries of Syria,” International Organization of Supporters of the Prophet, December 13, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://supportprophetm.com/syriafree2024/>.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Palestine and the purification of Al-Aqsa from the vicious Jews, the enemies of Islam and its Prophet.”⁴⁵

In a video message broadcasted through Tanasuh TV, **the hardline Islamist Grand Mufti of Libya, Sadeq al-Gharyani**, advised HTS

“to learn from the lessons of the Arab revolutions that came before them. These revolutions in Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Sudan were usurped by their enemies. Behind this failure lies the Zionist project, also known as the international community, along with its agents in the Arab countries. They are the ones who caused these revolutions to fail.”

Regarding the form of governance that Syria might adopt in the future, Al-Gharyani recommended HTS “to avoid at all costs creating a fertile ground for democracy. Authority must remain under strict control. [...] They should not allow anyone to challenge their authority. Power and weapons must remain under their direct control.”⁴⁶

Sheikh Muhammad al-Sagheer, a former Egyptian Member of Parliament representing the Building and Development Party of Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya, congratulated “the people of Syria on the success of their revolution, the conquest of their cities, and the liberation of Damascus.”

He extended his congratulations to “The State of Qatar, which has adhered to its principles and has not changed its positions and has remained more loyal to Syria and its revolution,”⁴⁷ and to “Al Jazeera, the voice of oppressed peoples. The people will never forget Al Jazeera's stand beside them and its support for their revolutions.”⁴⁸

According to al-Sagheer, “What is being said now was said before about the liberation of Kabul, and the victory of Afghanistan over the American alliance [...]. The future of this religion is not just the title of a book by Sayyid Qutb, may God have mercy on him, but rather the title of a stage whose features appeared with the liberation of Afghanistan after 20 years of occupation, and were confirmed by the

⁴⁵ Mohamed al-Hassan Ould Dadou (@ShaikhDadow), “Congratulations and advice to the revolutionaries of Syria...,” X video, December 8, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/ShaiKhDadow/status/1865675161107661085>.

⁴⁶ Sadeq al-Gharyani (@Tanusah-Foundation), “A message to the victorious revolutionaries of Syria,” YouTube, December 11, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://shorturl.at/AzLyr>.

⁴⁷ Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sagheer (@drassagheer), “We congratulate the people of Syria on the success of their revolution...,” X, December 8, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/drassagheer/status/1865667221013356907>.

⁴⁸ Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sagheer (@drassagheer), “Al Jazeera, the voice of oppressed peoples...,” X, December 8, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/drassagheer/status/1865671055245005270>.

steadfastness of the people of Gaza and the bravery of their resistance after 14 months of the war of extermination taking place on its land, and what happened in Syria is not far from the events of the Al-Aqsa flood and its fruits. [...] Every inch liberated in the Greater Levant is a step towards the liberation of Al-Aqsa and Palestine.”⁴⁹

Figure 3

Screenshot from a video shared on Twitter by Muhammad al-Sagheer, showing Afghan children dressed in military fatigues and carrying weapons as they congratulate Syrian children on their revolution.⁵⁰



The Jordan-based **hardline-Islamist preacher Eyad Qunaibi** commented on the events with the following statement:

“We do not know what will happen to those who carried out the liberation in the coming days. We ask God to grant them success, guidance, assistance, and unity in His obedience. [...] We take a lesson from Afghanistan: after a long and painful struggle, it was liberated from the Russians, but its brothers fought among themselves and disputed over power. Then, someone from among the Afghans emerged to free them from these warring factions and from two global

⁴⁹ Muhammad Al-Sagheer, "Iran between the Syrian revolution and the Al-Aqsa flood," The Turk Press, December 4, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://www.turkpress.co/node/103735>.

⁵⁰ Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sagheer (@drassagheer), "A Congratulatory Message...," X video, December 10, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/drassagheer/status/1866587540440092789>.

powers. The Afghans endured horrors but remained patient, fighting against occupation for 20 years until liberation came again. In Afghanistan’s experience, America believed it had secured the loyalty of the fighters and that they would not act against its will. However, its ambitions were thwarted, and it left defeated after two decades.”⁵¹

Mohammed Mokhtar al-Shinqiti, the prominent Mauritanian Islamist, stated:

“Politics without jihad is empty dreams, and jihad without politics is a failure. The advantage of Al-Jolani is not that he abandoned his jihadi background —as is rumored— but that he refined it with political wisdom, intellectual balance, and strategic planning. The wise man is the one who learns after suffering.”⁵²

The President of the Association of Scholars of the Great Maghreb Hassan al-Kettani, issued a video statement “encourage[ing] Syrians to emulate the Afghan experience by uniting their mujahideen under a unified leadership and a clear vision.”⁵³ In another statement posted by Al-Kettani, he expressed his support to Al-Jolani, affirming that “as long as this man [Al-Jolani] holds power, we ask God for success for the revolution.”⁵⁴

Regarding the general situation in Syria, Al-Kettani further stated:

“Jihad will remain a duty in Syria as long as there are infidel foreign forces in the country. We rejoice at the entry of the mujahideen into Damascus and we expect a lot from them, but we are upset by the rampage of the Jews in the south, the occupation of the Americans in the east, and the Russians remaining in some bases.”⁵⁵

Prominent Syrian Islamist scholar Muhammad Rateb al-Nabulsi issued a video statement celebrating the toppling of the Assad’s regime, describing the new phase as: “The moment of closing ranks and unifying them. The day of cooperation in righteousness and piety. For tolerance creates heroes.” The cleric further issued “a call

⁵¹ Eyad Qunaibi (@Dr_EyadQun), “Should I be happy about the liberation of Syria?” X video, December 9, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. https://x.com/Dr_EyadQun/status/1866074254061846751.

⁵² Mohammed Mokhtar al-Shinqiti (@Muntada_Alulama), “Politics without jihad is empty dreams...,” X, December 12, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. https://x.com/Muntada_Alulama/status/1867267224521547889.

⁵³ International Organization of Supporters of the Prophet (@SupportProphetM), “Special congratulations from Sheikh Hassan bin Ali al-Kettani...,” X video, December 9, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/SupportProphetM/status/1866213542912795052>.

⁵⁴ Hassan al-Kettani (@hassamaghribihejazi), “As long as this man [Al-Jolani] holds power...,” Telegram, December 9, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://t.me/hassamaghribihejazi/296>.

⁵⁵ Hassan al-Kettani (@hassamaghribihejazi), “Jihad will remain a duty in Syria as long as there are infidel foreign forces in the country...,” Telegram, December 10, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://t.me/hassamaghribihejazi/302>.

on our people to fully adhere to the instructions of the Military Operations Command (the Islamist coalition led by HTS).”⁵⁶

The leading Libyan member of the Muslim Brotherhood and IUMS Secretary General Ali Sallabi, also expressed his views through a series of public statements. He praised Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, describing him as “a mercy from God’s mercies to the Turkish people and to the oppressed peoples,” praying God “to raise his status among the reformers.”⁵⁷

Sallabi also acknowledged the Syrian people’s enduring loyalty in supporting the Palestinian cause: “Suffice it to mention the great scholar and Mujahid Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, son of the Syrian city of Jableh (may God have mercy on him).”⁵⁸ Sallabi further discussed the importance of general amnesties in political transitions, referencing the decision made by the Taliban following their capture of Kabul.⁵⁹ Regarding his vision for Syria’s future governance, Sallabi asserted: “Humans are only suited to a policy that is governed by the values of religion and the rules of morality, adhering to the standards of good and evil, and the balance of truth and falsehood.”⁶⁰

3. Islamist Organizations and Individuals in the West

This last section examines the responses to the fall of Assad’s regime by non-violent Islamist organizations and individuals based in Western democracies to the fall of Assad’s regime.

The **Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)**, one of the main organizations associated with the Muslim Brotherhood network in the United States, issued a written statement on December 9, addressing the significance of the event: “The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, today congratulated the Syrian-American community,

⁵⁶ Muhammad Rateb Al-Nabulsi (@MhdRatebNabulsi), “A speech about the liberation of our country and the end of tyranny,” Facebook video, December 8, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2029524644216824>.

⁵⁷ Ali Sallabi (@alsallabi1), “Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a mercy from God to the Turkish people and to the oppressed peoples...,” X, December 8, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/alsallabi1/status/1865574826532032688>.

⁵⁸ Ali Sallabi (@alsallabi1), “The Syrian people are among the most loyal peoples in supporting the Palestinian people and their just cause in the past and present...,” X, December 9, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/alsallabi1/status/1866175157406224815>.

⁵⁹ Ali Sallabi (@alsallabi1), “General Amnesty: A Step by Free Syrians Towards Building a State of Justice and Institutions...,” X, December 9, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/alsallabi1/status/1866253496812753217>.

⁶⁰ Ali Sallabi (@alsallabi1), “Humans are only suited to a policy...,” X, December 12, 2024, accessed December 16, 2024. <https://x.com/alsallabi1/status/1867212549621715310>.

the liberated people of Syria, the Muslim world, and everyone who supports justice for all on the fall of the brutal Assad dictatorship”⁶¹

On another statement regarding the Israeli intervention in Syria, CAIR stated:

“The criminal Israeli government’s war of ethnic cleansing in Gaza has now spread to occupied Syrian territory, where Netanyahu’s fighters are destroying water networks and electrical towers to force Syrians out of their homes. The Biden administration must stop enabling this radical regime’s campaign of chaos, killing and destruction. Syrians must be able to rebuild their nation, free from Israeli occupation.”⁶²

Nihad Awad, Executive Director and co-founder of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), issued a statement on December 8, addressing U.S. policy in light of Assad’s fall. Awad called for a shift in approach under the incoming Trump administration, emphasizing the importance of respecting Syrian sovereignty:

“We encourage the incoming Trump administration to make plans to phase out the unauthorized presence of U.S. troops in Syria, turn over occupied land to the Syrian people and ensure that neither our government nor the lawless Israeli government undermines democracy-building in Syria or otherwise interferes with Syrian sovereignty.”⁶³

In another statement on December 12, Mr. Awad stated:

“We strongly condemn the Biden administration, especially Antony Blinken and Jake Sullivan, for attempting to justify the Israeli government’s lawless, criminal bombing of Syria. Secretary Blinken, Mr. Sullivan and other members of the Biden foreign policy team have spent the past year shredding international law, enabling war crimes, and lying to the American people, all at the behest of Benjamin Netanyahu and his racist, genocidal regime. The end of the Biden team’s disastrous time in office cannot come quickly enough.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibrahim Hooper, "CAIR Congratulates Syrian-Americans, Liberated People of Syria on Fall of Assad Dictatorship," CAIR Press Release, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-congratulates-syrian-americans-liberated-people-of-syria-on-fall-of-assad-dictatorship/.

⁶² Ibrahim Hooper, "CAIR Condemns Israeli Ethnic Cleansing in Syria After Occupation Destroys Roads, Water Networks to Force Out Residents," CAIR Press Releases, December 15, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-condemns-israeli-ethnic-cleansing-in-syria-after-occupation-destroys-roads-water-networks-to-force-out-residents/.

⁶³ Nihad Awad (@NihadAwad), "We call on the incoming Trump administration to develop plans to end the unauthorized presence of U.S. forces in Syria," X, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. <https://x.com/NihadAwad/status/1865806135434850667>.

⁶⁴ Ibrahim Hooper, "CAIR Condemns Blinken, Sullivan for Justifying 'Lawless' Israeli Attacks on Syria," CAIR Press Release, December 12, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-condemns-blinken-sullivan-for-justifying-lawless-israeli-attacks-on-syria/.

Another CAIR official, **Zahra Billoo**, Executive Director in San Francisco Bay Area, also reacted with a brief Twitter (X) statement on December 8: "Syria now, Alhamdulillah. Palestine soon, InshaAllah."⁶⁵

Ahmad Musa Jibril, the prominent Palestinian-American Islamist radical preacher, reacted to the events through a statement on his Telegram channel. While acknowledging the overthrow of Assad, Jibril emphasized that true liberation can only occur under the implementation of Sharia:

"Every Muslim feels immense joy upon the overthrow of any Tāghūt, even if the change is led by another Tāghūt. However, our deepest joy is found only when the pure Sharī'ah of Allah is fully implemented across the territories. The retreat of the enemy from a town and the fall of its Tāghūt is not considered a Sharī'ah 'liberation' until the country is governed by the Laws of Allah and the secular laws that have hindered the implementation of these Divine Laws are eliminated. Replacing a rusted Tāghūt with a polished Tāghūt who doesn't implement the pure Sharī'ah of Allah cannot be considered "liberation" or "freedom". Rather, it's merely a repetition of oppression and a reproduction of Tughyān. Liberating territories in the name of "freedom" may lead to some vanishing worldly benefits, whereas liberating lands to establish Sharī'ah is the goal that will grant one a Jannah more expansive than both heaven and earth. Today, we express our gratitude to Allah for allowing us to witness the decline of one of the most prominent oppressors of our time. We pray that Allah fills our hearts with joy as we observe the demise of the remaining tyrants, enabling us to live under the shade of Tawheed in those areas, under the governance of the pure righteous Muwahideen."⁶⁶

With regard to the European continent, the **Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE)**⁶⁷ released an official statement on December 8, emphasizing the importance of unity:

"The early hours of this day have brought the glad tidings of freedom for the Syrian people, marking the end of an era of oppression and dictatorship and the beginning of a new chapter of liberation and dignity. The Council of European Muslims congratulates the Syrian people, particularly those displaced in Europe, on regaining their freedom on this historic day; expresses its gratitude to the European nations and communities that welcomed and protected Syrians during their time of hardship, and calls on all segments of the Syrian people to

⁶⁵ Zahra Billoo (@ZahraBiloo), "Syria now, Alhamdulillah. Palestine soon, InshaAllah," X, December 9, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. <https://x.com/ZahraBiloo/status/1865912817695789173>,

⁶⁶ Ahmad Musa Jibril (@sh_Ahmad_Jibril), "Every Muslim feels immense joy upon the overthrow of any Tāghūt...," X, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. https://x.com/sh_Ahmad_Jibril/status/1865678159879995530.

⁶⁷ The authors have decided to use the acronym FIOE to refer to the Council of European Muslims. This is due to the fact that, although it changed since it changed its name in 2020, this acronym continues to be the most widespread variant to refer to the institution.

unite and work together to build a Syria founded on justice, freedom, and prosperity.”⁶⁸

Samir Falah, FIOE’s chairman and former president of the German Muslim Society (DMG), issued a statement saying, “Congratulations to Syria and the Syrians on their freedom. Freedom was their primary demand: God, Syria, and freedom only. And on that day, the believers will rejoice in the victory of God.”⁶⁹

Khaled Hanafi, a professor at the European Institute of Human Sciences (IESH) and a prominent figure within the German Brotherhood milieu, shared his reaction to Assad’s fall in a Facebook message on December 8: “Make our joy complete by fully liberating Al-Sham, and liberating all the oppressed everywhere, and liberating Jerusalem and the rest of the Arab capitals.”⁷⁰

During a debate about Al-Jolani on Al Hiwar TV, **Azzam Tamimi, a well-known figure of the British Brotherhood milieu,** stated:

“Listen to the statements made by Ahmed al-Sharaa, better known as Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, as well as those given to the media by members and leaders of this movement. The discourse is balanced, eloquent, and speaks of national unity, employing refined and highly humane language, regardless of any prior affiliations or speculations. Of course, some people attempt to revive the image of Abu Muhammad al-Jolani from the past—the young man who was supportive of or linked to Al-Qaeda in some way—by referencing his earlier statements and combining them with certain recent Western positions. This creates a clear narrative surrounding Jolani.”⁷¹

Adnan Hamidan, Vice President of the Palestinian Forum in Britain (PFB) and Executive Director of Al-Arab in UK, issued a series of statements on Facebook. On December 8, Hamidan celebrated the opposition’s peaceful entry into the Syrian capital:

“Where are those who were shouting at the top of their voices warning against the opposition, accusing it of being nothing more than gangs of mercenaries,

⁶⁸ Council of European Muslims (FIOE) (@eumuslims_org), “The early hours of this day have brought the glad tidings of freedom for the Syrian people...,” Instagram, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DDU1yNPiRAM/>.

⁶⁹ Samir Falah (@samir.falah.9), Facebook, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. <https://www.facebook.com/samir.falah.9/posts/pfbid02SRbWWGPJq4eR6p6WDpMGgPNi3Vz6eMXZcEZV6VqHiHhgQ43i2B2PyhwCxBVRQAjI>.

⁷⁰ Khaled Hanafi (@dr.hanafi), “Make our joy complete by fully liberating al-Sham, and liberating all the oppressed everywhere, and liberating Jerusalem and the rest of the Arab capitals,” Facebook, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. <https://www.facebook.com/dr.hanafi/posts/pfbid00guGCdUE77ZwyQzdgHVRNDWTWMZSadRWSJ6XJWa1oGr1TdB5LWVvt5K8ousH95cLI>.

⁷¹ Al Hiwar TV (@alhiwarchannel), “Who is Abu Muhammad al-Julani (Ahmad al-Sharaa) and how did he succeed in leading the opposition factions?” YouTube, December 12, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=-0sZ4vX6R5E&ab_channel=AlHiwarTV قناة الحوار.

terrorists and Takfiris?! Here they are today entering the capital in peace, protecting public property, and preventing civilians from entering the northern regions until things are settled! Even more than that, they are keen to keep the local government running. It seems that all those warnings were nothing more than an empty bubble!”⁷²

Later, on December 9, Hamidan expressed skepticism toward former regime officials: “Every official from the previous era who changed and altered and now claims that he woke up to attack the defunct regime, cannot be trusted at all. They change their positions like a chameleon does with its skin, which it sheds several times.”⁷³

Finally, on December 12, Hamidan stated:

“Some leftists in our country (the UK) leave the Islamists alone in the face of injustice and tyranny, offering everything precious and valuable until they reach victory. However, when success is achieved and the doors of power are opened, the Islamists are expected to take a step back and give up their positions to prove that they are 'democrats'! However, if the people choose the Islamists again through elections, this is for them 'reactionary and backward' that cannot be accepted. Indeed, we find ourselves in a state of confusion!”⁷⁴

Similarly, on December 8, **Anas al-Tikriti, former President of the Muslim Association of Britain and Founder of The Cordoba Foundation (TCF)**, reacted to the fall of Assad’s regime through a series of tweets. “What makes the liberation of Syria that much sweeter, is that it happened without the intervention of the US, UK or Europe. This is a revolution that deserves to be held as an example of what magnificent things come of patience, perseverance, sacrifice and dogged determination.”⁷⁵

In a follow-up tweet, Al-Tikriti went further and wrote: “Since you’re already there... how about carrying on for just a little bit more and liberating the Golan Heights?!”⁷⁶

⁷² Adnan Hamidan (@adnanhmidan), “Where are those who were shouting at the top of their voices warning against the opposition...,” Facebook, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. <https://www.facebook.com/adnanhmidan/posts/pfbid02YwnfyvqLaP2KGajstCTZDgZSPijvN9xQdx1XLi7BmptsmpWqxpeDd5wv9jJhnFEI>.

⁷³ Adnan Hamidan (@adnanhmidan), “Every official from the previous era who changed and altered and now claims that he woke up to attack the defunct regime, cannot be trusted at all...,” Facebook, December 9, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/adnanhmidan/posts/pfbid0aG8MU3w4nDzAJwnEFgxaeLh9LGKCP2J1nCZdLLAPRAnxDg6eMqwEYvGFxmSsZpl>.

⁷⁴ Adnan Hamidan (@adnanhmidan), “Some leftists in our country (the UK) leave the Islamists alone in the face of injustice and tyranny...,” Facebook, December 12, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. <https://www.facebook.com/adnanhmidan/posts/pfbid0PCjepYjadCDu5zGviczmeCfPArQxZKDB3kFjp92M196xXzUNiW8nE554rDTYwFmQl>.

⁷⁵ Anas al-Tikriti (@anasaltikriti), “What makes the liberation of Syria that much sweeter, is that it happened without the intervention of the US, UK or Europe...,” X, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. <https://x.com/anasaltikriti/status/1865625522786472132>.

⁷⁶ Anas al-Tikriti (@anasaltikriti), “Since you’re already there...how about carrying on for just a little bit more and liberating the Golan Heights?!” X, December 8, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. <https://x.com/anasaltikriti/status/1865630265529287053>.

Monzer Abdullah, the leader of the Danish chapter of Hizb ut-Tahrir, published an article following the events in Syria stating:

“Holding elections under the same system inherited from the previous regime will suffocate the revolution and restore the old order. Elections are merely a mechanism used to implement a particular system. Therefore, the revolution’s victory must result in the abolition of the existing constitution and everything built upon it. Subsequently, an Islamic constitution should be adopted that reflects the nation’s faith and identity while fulfilling the revolution’s objectives and the aspirations of the rebels. [...] The revolution’s victory must symbolize the triumph of Islam over the secular nation-state imposed upon us by the West. [...] A state for the Ummah (the Islamic nation) must be established to express its identity, embody its faith, and revive jihad within it.”⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Monzer Abdullah (@hizb_dk), "The Revolutionary Struggle in the Levant: Between Islamic Identity and the Secular System...", X, December 15, 2024, accessed December 17, 2024. https://x.com/hizb_dk/status/1868297680943784163.



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