

Trump meets with former al-Qaeda leader Ahmed al-Sharaa at the White House

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US President Donald Trump met Monday at the White House with Ahmed al-Sharaa, the former al-Qaeda leader who led the overthrow of the Syrian government last year. The meeting was a milestone in the long-term relationship of the United States with al-Qaeda-linked forces in Syria.

Commenting on the visit, the *Jerusalem Post* wrote:

It was a photo few could have imagined even a year ago: the president of the United States shaking hands in the White House with a man who, not long ago, was wanted for terrorism and carried a \$10 million bounty on his head.

The visit by al-Sharaa was preceded just days earlier by the announcement from the State Department that it had removed him from its list of international terrorists.

Regardless, al-Sharaa was taken in through the side entrance of the White House with no cameras present. It was the first time that a former member of al-Qaeda has been welcomed to the White House.

In 2001, the United States proclaimed the “war on terror,” citing as a pretext to invade and occupy Iraq and Afghanistan the al-Qaeda attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. This “war on terror” was cited to erode bedrock constitutional protections against warrantless wiretapping, torture and, under the Obama administration, the extrajudicial killing of American citizens.

In 2003, US General Wesley Clark revealed that the Bush administration planned to launch “seven wars in five years,” including regime-change wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Iran. Ultimately, Bush was able to overthrow only two of those regimes,

leaving the rest to subsequent presidencies.

In 2007, US imperialism carried out what journalist Seymour Hersh called a “redirection,” allying with al-Qaeda-linked forces in an effort to reduce the power of Iran in the Middle East. In March 2011, Ahmed al-Sharaa, an al-Qaeda leader in prison in Iraq, was released. He and other Islamist militias then initiated an effort to overthrow the pro-Iranian, pro-Russian Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad.

Under the Obama administration, the United States set up clandestine ratlines of money and fighters in its years-long effort to overthrow the Syrian government, spending billions on an operation known as “Timber Sycamore.” This effort ultimately proved successful in December 2024 in the context of the broader US-Israeli rampage throughout the Middle East. Underlying these decades of war throughout the Middle East was the struggle by US imperialism to overturn the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

Commenting on the meeting with al-Sharaa, Trump said, “He’s a very strong leader. He comes from a very tough place. Tough guy. I like him.” He added, “I get along with the president, the new president in Syria, and we’ll do everything we can to make Syria successful.”

Trump added, “People said he’s had a rough past. ... And I think, frankly, if you didn’t have a rough past, you wouldn’t have a chance.”

Congress is currently debating repealing the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, which sanctions nearly all international transactions related to Syria. The Trump administration has suspended enforcement of the measure on a temporary basis.

On Sunday night, al-Sharaa met with members of Congress, including Florida Republican Brian Mast. Mast said in a statement, “He and I are two former

soldiers and two former enemies. I asked him directly, ‘Why are we no longer enemies?’ His response was that he wishes to ‘liberate from the past and have a noble pursuit for his people and his country and to be a great ally to the United States of America.’”

The *Wall Street Journal* hailed the visit by al-Sharaa to the White House, proclaiming in an editorial, “Syria Comes to Washington—at Long Last.”

Commenting on the favor with which the new Syrian regime is seen in Israel, the *Jerusalem Post* wrote, “Israel may quietly welcome parts of this shift. A Syria linked to Washington is far preferable to one beholden to Tehran.”

The embrace of Ahmed al-Sharaa by the Trump administration demonstrates the complete fraud of the effort by factions within the pseudo-left, including France’s New Anti-Capitalist Party, the Pabloite *International Viewpoint* publication and the US-based International Socialist Organization, to present the US-backed regime-change operation in Syria as a “popular revolution.”

In reality, the regime headed by al-Sharaa is a bloody Islamist dictatorship, operating in alliance with US imperialism and in de facto alliance with Israel, which is carrying out a genocide against the population of Gaza. Since al-Sharaa’s coming to power, Syrian soldiers have massacred thousands of members of Syrian religious minorities, including Christians, Druze and Alawites. In a report in October, the *New York Times* documented “at least five separate episodes of men in military fatigues summarily executing Druse civilians, including groups of unarmed men being marched down the street to their deaths by impromptu firing squads.”



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