US secures military agreement between Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces and jihadist HTS regime

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The Kurdish nationalist Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced Thursday that a preliminary agreement had been reached for three divisions to remain affiliated with them within the military structure of the Syrian Army. The announcement came immediately after the US Congress on Wednesday voted to permanently lift sanctions on Syria, pointing to the decisive role of US imperialism.

Hasan Muhammad Ali, Co-Chair of the Relations Office of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC)—the parliament of the de facto "Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria"—said on Rudaw Radio that the Syrian Ministry of Defense had presented a new proposal for the SDF's integration into the Damascus regime led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which has Al-Qaeda roots.

Ali said, "The US, France and Britain agree on a decentralized solution for Syria. It is reported that the new President Ahmed al-Sharaa has also shown flexibility on decentralization."

After the overthrow in December 2024 of the Russian and Iranian-backed President Bashar al-Assad regime by Islamist jihadi militias led by HTS, Washington and its regional allies, including Türkiye, sought to secure an agreement between the SDF and the new Damascus regime.

Israel, which has expanded its occupation in southern Syria and subjected the country's military infrastructure to extensive air bombardment, wanted the establishment of a "decentralized" political structure where it could maintain its influence, rather than a centralized Damascus regime aligned with Ankara. Committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, Israel posed as a defender of Druze, Alawites and Kurds.

For the integration of the SDF armed forces—which SDF Commander Mazlum Abdi says consists of 100,000 people—and the de facto autonomous administration with the Damascus regime, Syria's unelected President al-Shara and Abdi reached an agreement on March 10, 2025, amid massacres targeting the Alawite minority. To date there has been no progress on how that "integration" will be implemented.

Washington sees it as critical to prevent a civil war between its two allies in the regime-change war it instigated in 2011.

The US's main objective is to bring the region under full domination to block Russia and China from accessing the Middle East's resources and trade and energy routes. This policy is being built around an anti-Iran axis—Iran being the principal regional ally of Russia and China—and aims to subject Iran to imperialist domination.

The Abraham Accords between Israel and the Gulf monarchies were part of this orientation. The ongoing genocide in Gaza and the new colonial plans—the crushing of Hezbollah in Lebanon, the bombing of Yemen, the overthrow of the Assad regime in Syria and imperialist attack on Iran—are the consequences of this broad strategy.

Prior to the SDF–HTS agreement and the US Congress decision to lift sanctions, it was announced Saturday that an attack on US soldiers in Palmyra, Syria, had killed two US service members, one US interpreter and two Syrian security personnel. These were reported to be the first US troops killed in conflict in Syria since 2020.

Before the attack, alleged to have been carried out by an ISIS operative who had infiltrated Syrian security forces, US forces and a Syrian military convoy had been conducting a joint patrol. On November 10, US President Donald Trump met with al-Sharaa at the White House, after which it was announced that Syria had joined the international coalition fighting ISIS.

Israel's media sought to justify its own occupation in Syria by interpreting the attack as a sign that the Damascus regime cannot be trusted. In the *Jerusalem Post*, Seth J. Frantzman wrote that it is in US interests for the SDF to be integrated with Damascus-backed forces. However, in doing so, ISIS-minded individuals or other radicals must not be allowed to derail this integration.

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According to reports, Washington asked Israel not to disrupt US plans in Syria. On Monday, US Ambassador to Ankara and Special Envoy for Syria Tom Barrack met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Citing Israeli press, *Asharq Al-Awsat* reported that Barrack "outlined US 'red lines,' stressing Trump's desire to see stability there and warning that frequent Israeli operations could risk destabilizing the country."

The SDF argued that the attack confirmed the importance of Kurdish forces and the fight against ISIS. The SDF was "fully ready to carry this war to every part of Syrian territory and to work without hesitation to eliminate terrorism wherever it is." The SDF emerged as Washington's main proxy in Syria during the "fight against ISIS," and US bases were established in SDF-controlled areas; around 2,000 US troops remain in the region.

The SDF's agreement process with the HTS regime is being followed closely by the government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an.

Ankara, which continues to exercise military control over various parts of northwest Syria, has so far opposed the SDF's integration into the Syrian Army as a "separate unit." Türkiye is pushing for the liquidation of the Syrian Kurdish forces without granting them any legal status and has used its influence over HTS to that end.

In Ankara's negotiations with Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), to get the organization to lay down its arms, the future of the SDF, which sees Öcalan as its leader, plays an important role. Erdo?an and Öcalan have promoted a reactionary "Turkish, Kurdish, Arab" alliance against Israel's growing influence in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and the Middle East more generally.

In recent days senior Turkish officials have threatened that the SDF has to dissolve itself and join the Syrian Army by the end of the year in line with the March 10 agreement, otherwise options—including military operations—remain on the table.

Speaking to TRT World on Thursday, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said he believed "the 'SDF' is trying to buy more time. I think they are hoping to see some other opportunities for themselves, maybe in the form of some other regional crisis, maybe because of the Israelis' expansionist policies." Calling for the March 10 agreement to be implemented without further delay, Fidan said, "We don't want to see any need to resorting to military means again. But 'SDF' should understand the patience of the relevant actors are running out."

Fidan also stated in his interview with Al Jazeera on December 11 that "there is a relationship, a correlation between Israel's activity in Syria and the SDF's apparent reluctance... Now that Israel is sending different signals, we see that the YPG [People's Defense Units, the backbone of the SDF and sister organization of the PKK] is refraining from taking the necessary steps," thereby accusing Israel.

In an interview with the *Jerusalem Post* on 7 December, SDF leader Abdi did not address Ankara's allegations about SDF-Israel ties. He said: "President Trump wants to make Syria great again. In doing so, he must support the SDF. The SDF must be included in the global coalition against ISIS, and the SDF must be included in the new government of Syria." Abdi added, "US help is greatly needed with the decentralization of power in Syria."

Backing Trump's plan "to make Syria great again," Abdi said of the main force behind Syria's devastation since 2011, US imperialism, "Stability inside Damascus needs the United States to stay here in Northeast Syria."

Abdi emphasized readiness to work with the US against Iran: "But although Iran is now weaker, it is still trying to rebuild proxy groups. The SDF is ready to work with the United States and other active powers to protect Syria."

These statements confirm the *World Socialist Web Site*'s analysis of the bankruptcy of Kurdish nationalism. The Kurdish movement in Syria and elsewhere, like the Turkish bourgeoisie and state, is a reactionary, NATO- and imperialism-aligned movement, and is inherently incapable of furthering the democratic and social aspirations of the Kurdish people.

Workers in the Middle East of all nationalities, faiths and sects must reject having their fate subordinated to the imperialist powers that have wrecked the region for 35 years, or to their reactionary allies such as Türkiye or Israel, and must unite in the struggle for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East on the basis of their independent class interests.

This is the perspective fought for by the Socialist Equality Party, the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

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