

Syrian HTS regime clashes with Kurdish SDF forces, makes a deal with Israel

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The Syrian regime, led by the Al-Qaeda-rooted Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), announced on Wednesday that it had declared an “all-out war” against security checkpoints controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the predominantly Kurdish neighborhoods of Sheikh Maksud and Ashrafiya in Aleppo.

The clashes and declaration of war occurred with “integration” talks between HTS and the SDF stalled, and immediately after Israeli and Syrian representatives met in Paris under US auspices. On January 4, a high-level delegation led by SDF Commander Mazlum Abdi met with HTS government officials in Damascus, but no agreement was reached.

Washington, as part of the US’s drive to establish complete hegemony in the Middle East, aims to entirely eliminate Russia’s and China’s influence in the region. To this end, it is attempting to align both Ankara and Tel Aviv, as well as its proxies in Syria, behind imperialist aggression against Iran. The genocide launched in Gaza in October 2023, the war waged against Hezbollah in Lebanon, the regime change in Syria, and the imperialist-Zionist attack on Iran last June are all part of this drive.

Amid escalating global war, marked by imperialist aggression against Venezuela and the abduction of President Nicolas Maduro, US President Donald Trump has hinted that a new military attack on Iran, already shaken by protests, is imminent.

Less than a year after the overthrow of Russian and Iranian-backed President Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, US-allied forces in Syria have reached the brink of civil war, while the regime’s massacres of Alawites have continued. This underscores that the so-called “Syrian revolution” was a reactionary regime change supported by imperialism: ethnic, sectarian, and social problems have not been resolved, but have become even more severe.

The warnings of the *World Socialist Web Site* against

the shouts of “revolution” from the pseudo-left have been confirmed. As we wrote at the time, “What is unfolding in Syria is not a revolution but a reactionary, imperialist-led carve-up of the country.”

The regime claimed that while imposing a curfew on the neighborhoods in question, it had established two humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of civilians. Syrian Information Minister Hamza al-Mustafa stated that the neighborhoods must come under the complete control of Damascus and that their red lines were “One state, one government, one army.”

Co-chair of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, Ilham Ahmed, confirmed the declaration of war in a statement on social media and called on “government officials to take responsibility for what is happening in the neighborhoods and to find a realistic and lasting solution to the problems through dialogue, avoiding war and violence.”

The SDF warned that the clashes could escalate into a large-scale civil war, stating, “This development is seen as a serious warning sign of a potential and widespread military escalation; amid the ongoing international silence, it heightens concerns about the outbreak of a broader conflict.”

At least 12 people have been killed in two days of bombing and clashes, while tens of thousands have fled the area. Two neighborhoods in Aleppo, home to approximately 600,000 people, have been under intense blockade by the Damascus regime for five months. It was also reported that at least seven civilians were killed in clashes between government forces and the Internal Security Forces affiliated with the autonomous administration on Monday and Tuesday. The Damascus regime has reportedly amassed forces in the region and deployed nearly 80 tanks around the neighborhoods.

The SDF armed forces, which are said to consist of

approximately 100,000 people and serve as the main proxy of the US, and the de facto autonomous administration had reached an agreement on March 10, 2025 to integrate with the Damascus regime. Although it was announced that a preliminary agreement had been reached on assigning three divisions of the Syrian army to the SDF, no practical progress has been made. This situation underscores how fragile any potential agreement and “integration” process would be.

A spokesperson for the US State Department told the *Rudaw*, “The United States is closely monitoring the situation. We call on all parties to exercise restraint.” The spokesperson added, “The meetings facilitated by Ambassador Barrack focus on the implementation of the March 10 integration agreement between the SDF and the Syrian government and on recommitting to this agreement.”

Ankara, a major supporter of the HTS regime, wants the SDF, the Syrian sister organization of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) with which it is in negotiations, to dissolve itself without obtaining any legal status and submit to the new Damascus regime. The emergence of an autonomous or independent Kurdish territory right next to Turkey’s southern border, where an estimated 20 million Kurds live, is seen as an unacceptable security threat by Ankara.

Not only could the HTS attack on the SDF and the clashes in Aleppo reignite the civil war in Syria, but these events could also undermine the negotiations between President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s government and the PKK.

Erdoğan and Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, are promoting a reactionary “Turkish, Kurdish, Arab” alliance against Israel’s growing influence in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and the Middle East in general. Erdoğan, who supports Washington’s new colonialist “Gaza peace” policy, hopes that by getting along well with Trump he can advance the interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie in Syria and the region as a whole.

Israel, which is trying to expand its influence by encouraging the autonomy of the Druze, Kurdish, Alawite and Christian minorities in Syria, is also trying to challenge Ankara’s influence over the Damascus regime. It largely destroyed the country’s military infrastructure with air strikes as the Assad regime fell, and expanded its occupation of southern Syria under the pretext of security.

The day before the declaration of war in Aleppo, negotiations were held in Paris under US auspices between the HTS administration and an Israeli delegation

regarding a security agreement. The talks were attended by high-level officials including the US Ambassador to Ankara and Special Envoy for Syria Tom Barrack, the US President’s Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff, and Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner.

A joint statement issued after the meeting read, “Both sides have decided to establish a joint fusion mechanism—a dedicated communication cell—to facilitate immediate and ongoing coordination on their intelligence sharing, military de-escalation, diplomatic engagement and commercial opportunities under the supervision of the United States.”

According to *Harici*’s report, Amit Segal, editor of Israel’s N12News, wrote on his X account on Tuesday that the Trump administration was working to secure a more comprehensive economic agreement between Israel and Syria, stating that the agreement would feature “a sprawling joint economic zone along the current demilitarized strip—complete with energy projects, pharmaceutical plants, and, most Trumpian of all, a ski resort.”

According to Segal, the US and Syria’s proposal also include “a wind power plant, a crude oil pipeline, data centers, and pharmaceutical facilities.” Such projects, which will complete the plan to turn Gaza, subjected to genocide and ethnic cleansing, into the “Riviera of the Middle East”, further expose the neo-colonialist goals of Trump and his allies against the peoples of the Middle East.

No bourgeois regime or movement in the Middle East opposes US imperialism’s drive to plunder the region and subjugate its peoples; on the contrary, they are complicit in its crimes and are preparing for war to grab crumbs from the reactionary carve-up. The only way forward is to build sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International, to establish the international revolutionary unity of the working class in a socialist struggle for the seizure of power, throughout the Middle East and in the imperialist centers.



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