



Al-Jolani lead Jihadist militias since 2012. Now using his real name, al-Sharaa, he has become the leading politician for Syria.

FEBRUARY 2025 | SH'VAT - ADAR 5785

# REBRANDING THE TERRORIST

By **Shira Sorko-Ram**

The day was December 8, 2024. All Israel was talking about the new ceasefire agreement with Hezbollah! Israel and Lebanon signed the historic document, with the United States co-signing. Most importantly, the agreement included a crucial guarantee from the U.S. that Israel would have full freedom to respond forcefully against Hezbollah if it violated the terms of the ceasefire.

The main debate centered not on *if*, but *when*, Hezbollah would default on the terms, whether by restocking weapons, smuggling more terrorists, and so on. Other pressing questions were also being raised as well.

Would the 60,000 Israelis who had evacuated from the northern border next to Lebanon for more than a year now be able to return to their homes?

How long would it be before schools and pre-schools would be open? What about the many businesses in northern Israel that were bankrupted because their workers were fighting in Gaza or Lebanon or Judea and Samaria? What about the many houses and warehouses that were damaged or destroyed?

Reports were flying around that it would take years to rebuild the communities.

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Bashar al-Assad was president of Syria for 25 years. He was overthrown by insurgents from many different Syrian militias on December 8, 2024.

**Syria—one of seven fronts Israel had been fighting simultaneously—had suddenly collapsed.**

**The fall of Assad and the rapid advance of the rebel forces took the entire region by surprise.**

**Domino Effect**

On that same pivotal day of December 8<sup>th</sup>, when Israelis dared dream of quiet along the Lebanese border, all eyes suddenly turned towards a roar next door. Syria—one of seven fronts Israel had been fighting simultaneously—had suddenly collapsed.

In actuality, Syria had been mired in an ongoing civil war for 14 years. Struggles between various warring factions opposing President Bashar al-Assad's regime intensified since August 2023. But on the same day the brutal Hezbollah warriors in Lebanon admitted defeat after their leadership had been gutted by Israel, Syria's many armed factions with various Islamic theologies took courage and fought an all-out war against Assad's troops.

The fall of Assad and the rapid advance of the rebel forces took the entire region by surprise.

### What Is this Revolution all About?

What most people don't know about Syria is that its citizens are not a singular people group. Syria was historically made up of numerous tribes and sects, each governing its own region. The simplified version is that when the Ottoman Empire fell, the area became a French mandate with provinces that even included an independent Druze state. In 1945, a newly independent state of Syria played a role in the founding of the

United Nations which legally established their statehood and ended France's legal authority to remain. It also ended the self-rule of the various sects.

Syria's sectarian violence never really ceased and the nation arguably knew more days of martial law and attempted coups than it did of stable governance. That is until Hafez al-Assad's bloodbath positioned him as an iron dictator in 1970. Hafez would rule until his death. His second-born son Bashar al-Assad succeeded him in 2000.

The West held high hopes that the London-educated Bashar who married a British-born Syrian would be good for creating a state with Western values that promotes freedom, civility and economical success.

But Bashar, with support from Russia, continued his father's cruel rule over the people of Syria and he allied with Iran and Hezbollah against Israel. So, on December 8<sup>th</sup>, it was Russia that offered refuge to a fleeing Bashar when his rule was overthrown.

Bashar's cruelty rarely made the news despite his documented slaughter of more than half a million civilians in Syria, including Palestinians! But if there was ever any doubt of his depravity, the horrifying evidence was undeniable—videos of tens of thousands tortured and maimed prisoners, revealed the grim reality. It took days to rescue them from the underground dungeons. Among the prisoners were children born in captivity who had never actually seen sunlight.

## Israel Leaps into Action

Israel's immediate reaction to the collapse of the Syrian regime was to destroy former President Assad's massive weaponry across Syria before the various terrorist groups could get their hands on it.

Starting on December 8, Israel's fighter jets conducted 480 airstrikes for 48 straight hours. Tanks, fighter jets, helicopters, ships, air defense system, scud missiles, coast-to-sea missiles, air defense missiles, factories, intelligence facilities, hangars—everything that the army of the Syrian state had built for decades—was destroyed.

This meant the rebel government would have to start from scratch with the few weapons they had in their hands, like their Kalashnikov rifles, to rebuild their military capabilities. Establishing a new and functional military would take years to get organized—and to train skilled personnel. This became glaringly evident when some videos went viral including one of rebel fighters looking up YouTube videos of “How to fly a helicopter” as they sat flipping switches on the flight deck of a helicopter that apparently survived the Israeli attacks.



Army photo of Israel's Shaldag elite Air Force fighters on one of the most dangerous expeditions in its history.

Courtesy of IDF

## How Did Israel Know?

But how did Israel know about almost every possible location of advanced equipment, including chemical weapons hidden below and above the sands and soil of Syria? As with Lebanon, Israel spent decades gathering intel on military locations and waited patiently for the



President al-Assad spent more than half of his rule mired in a civil war with the many sects that make up Syria. During this time, Assad destroyed large sections of Syria and oversaw the slaughter of 500,000 of his fellow Syrians.

**Mr. al-Sharaa was known in the Arab world as Abu Mohammed al-Jolani. Al-Jolani had once sworn allegiance to both ISIS and then Al-Qaeda. He eventually started his own terrorist army HTS—Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.**

Leader of new Syrian administration, al-Sharaa welcomes Qatar's Minister of State and his entourage. Al-Sharaa currently has many foreign officials visiting him.

precise opportunity to remove the threat. In addition, back in September 2024, before the Assad regime collapsed, Israel executed an operation of a covert raid, deep within Syrian territory that was possibly the most dangerous expedition in Israel's history.

IDF troops from the Air Force's elite Shaldag and 669 commando units covertly infiltrated Syria with 120 ground troops. Shaldag, one of the IDF's three most highly rated, secretive commando units, was transported by helicopter into a facility of Syria's Scientific Studies and Research Center. This facility, operated by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, served as a manufacturing hub for missiles and military equipment with Hezbollah operatives.

Israeli fighter jets' heavy bombing nearby diverted the attention away from the soldiers. The reason Israel didn't simply bomb the weapon's center from the air was that Shaldag soldiers were searching for and found a massive load of documents, before rigging the facility with explosives and detonating the complex remotely. The documents revealed every main site, warehouse and military factory in Syria. All Israeli soldiers returned home unscathed!

## Mr. Ahmed Al-Sharaa Alias Abu Mohammed Al-Jolani

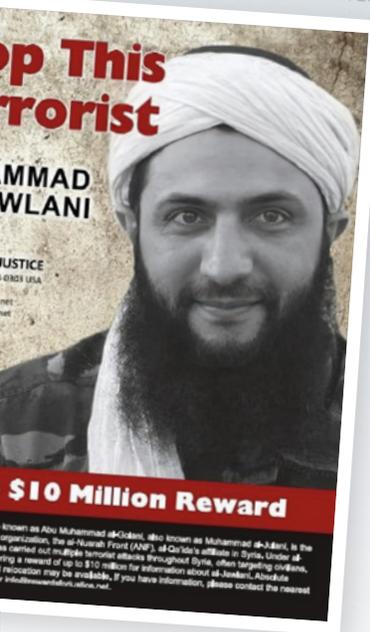
Nature abhors a vacuum, and when Syria fell, the search for a new voice of authority for Western leaders was immediate. Ahmed al-Sharaa, a handsome rebel Syrian leader, appeared on Arabic news channels. Having trimmed his long beard and shed his army garb for a suit and tie. He spoke words of reason and hope. Mr. al-Sharaa was quickly picked up by the *New York Times* and European media.

In reality, Mr. al-Sharaa was known in the Arab world as Abu Mohammed al-Jolani. Al-Jolani had once sworn allegiance to both ISIS and then Al-Qaeda. He eventually started his own terrorist army HTS—Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Al-Jolani, was one of the U.S. top 5 most wanted terrorists in the world with a \$10 million bounty on his head.

Al-Jolani had engaged in campaigns of violence against Christians, Druze and Alawites. In some villages, residents were forced to convert to Islam or face death. His HTS army was famous for butchering civilians opposed to their extremist ideology. In other cases, they massacred entire villages. The Jihadists carried out car bombings, suicide attacks and indiscriminate shelling of densely populated areas. Women controlled by



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Before the fall of Assad, Abu Mohammed Al-Jolani was considered armed and extremely dangerous. This is a U.S. Government issued poster publicizing a \$10 million dollar reward for his capture.

al-Jolani's militia were subject to forced marriages, often to child fighters. That's why the U.S. put a bounty of \$10 million on him.

### Western Wisdom

If there is anything that has made it difficult for Westerners to understand the Middle East, it is that terrorists study strategic Western thought as much (or more) than they train with weapons.

When al-Jolani—now Ahmed al-Sharaa—began to address the world media in suit and tie, promising a democratic future, the world began listening. Even a few daffy Israeli journalists wondered out loud if this man could have transformed from a bloody vicious terrorist who has slaughtered and tortured multitudes of Arab opponents, not to mention Arab Christians and minorities, to a smooth politician.

On December 20, 2024, a high U.S. official, Barbara Leaf, visited Damascus and met with al-Sharaa. She found him “very pragmatic” and “moderate” on various issues from women's rights to the protection of equal rights for all communities.

Immediately, the U.S. removed the \$10 million bounty on Mr. al-Sharaa's head for his horrific terrorist activities. He won't even have to apply to remove his HTS army from the U.S. terrorist watchlist as he plans to dissolve it and make one big army of all the militias in Syria. He has promised elections within four years and in three years, they hope to draft a new constitution.

### Should Al-Sharaa be Trusted?

Journalists and leaders in the West are presenting al-Sharaa as a pragmatic figure. Perhaps they believe positive thinking is the key to forming reality. Perhaps they are longing for a resolution in the region and the return of Syrian refugees from Western countries back to Syria. But, as a general rule, if you're ever looking to understand what's happening in a far-off Muslim land, *observe how the locals react.*

## MAP OF THE LEVANT



### Syria's new leader founded the terrorist militia Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)—Arabic for Organization for the Liberation of the Levant

The term Levant includes Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Cyprus. The HTS's mission of “Liberation” is to turn the Levant into an Islamic caliphate.

In the first days of the fall of Syria, fearing the new Jihadi leadership, six of the Druze tribes on the Syrian side (who have never expressed love for Israel) gathered together and publicly begged Israel to absorb them into their territory. The IDF assured protection to the Syrian Druze but stopped short of committing to annexation.

In addition, Druze residents in Israel's Golan Heights began to actively seek Israeli citizenship—something they have refused to do since the 1967 war, hoping to one day rejoin Syria. Of course, Israel has been happy to oblige.

Among other reliable voices, Mosab Hassan Yousef, known as the Green Prince, is the famous son of the co-founder of Hamas and a born-again Christian. He spent years spying for Israel and is a strong advocate



One of the countless rebel groups (against Assad) as they took control of another Syrian village.

AP Photo/Omar Albarm

**Right now, the internet is flooded with videos of Syria's Islamic militias cutting their enemies' heads off. Yes, today Christians are in danger. This is the new Syria.**

for the state of Israel. He has explicitly warned the West against recognizing or giving legitimacy to al-Sharaa. He said, "A new Islamic empire is born; don't feed it, starve it."

Already, building his new coalition, al-Jolani has installed known foreign terrorists from Jordan, Turkey and elsewhere in his new government—alarming both the international community and many Syrian citizens. The main fear remains centered on what these new Sunni Muslim leaders will do with Syria's large minority groups—especially Christians.

### Christians and Minorities

Israel's current orientation is this: once an Islamic terrorist, always an Islamic terrorist. That's reality. Israel has no doubt that al-Jolani is following the historical precedent of proclaiming freedom, while shrewdly, step-by-step, instituting Sharia law. "*Al-Jolani is not a pragmatist, but a sophisticated strategist,*" says the *Jerusalem Post*.

Syrian Christians know well the ways of Islamist rulers down through history. For hundreds of years,

when Islamists would take over an area, they promised religious and cultural freedom for the various minorities. But look for the phrase when they begin to use: "rule of law." It means Sharia Law.

Right now, the internet is flooded with videos of Syria's Islamic militias cutting their enemies' heads off. Yes, today! Perhaps the victims are Alawite citizens. Perhaps they are Kurds. Perhaps they are of religious minorities. Perhaps they are Christians.

This is the new Syria.

Historically, under Sharia law, the number of Christians and Jews in Islamic countries, has dwindled to almost none. The numbers have dropped as Christians fled, were kidnapped and trafficked or murdered. As sharing the Gospel is prohibited, growth in numbers can only openly happen via birth. While Muslims are encouraged to convert Christians, attempts by Christians to share their faith with Muslims is punishable by death.

It may seem ironic amidst all the protests worldwide, but it is no surprise that the safest place for Christians and Jews—and non-Jihadi Muslims—in the Middle East is the nation of Israel. Which means supporting Israel's existence and stability, therefore, is actually good for everyone. ■



## Shalom from Jerusalem,

Once or twice in our lifetime we find moments when the whole world shifts. People migrate en masse, new borders are drawn and new governments are formed from the ashes of an upheaval.

These windows of time are rare opportunities to reach into crevices of society that are inaccessible otherwise.

Right now, **millions of refugees from Syria and other unstable Middle Eastern countries are unsure of their future.** Many of them have been steeped in the anti-West mantra even as they were welcomed by those very western countries.

So many Muslims living in the West have never been offered an alternative to their belief in a god who decrees genocide and torture. And we as believers are the only ones who can provide it.

If we can reach them now with the truth of eternal life, one of two scenarios will play out. **Either they will eventually return home carrying with them the seeds of salvation deep into the Islamic dominated Middle East—or they will stay long term in their current host nation and help thwart the Islamic invasion of Europe and beyond.**

The initial stage of our outreach to Muslim refugees this year will include **creating online Gospel resources in Arabic** as well as **sending Arab members of the Maoz team out to minister in Europe.** Reaching Muslims through in-person ministry trips and online outreach will cost an estimated **\$67,000.**

Jihadi Muslims have long been building an army to infiltrate and conquer the West. If you've visited cities where Muslims are no longer a minority, you know the change they bring. And yet, **it's not too late**—if God's army will take its place before the throne and fight for the eternal lives of the Arab people—who too are of the seed of Abraham.

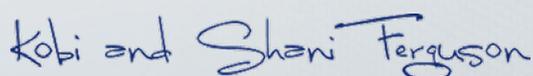
This is quite profoundly the chance of a lifetime to reach Muslims when they are open and **not under the control of their Islamic governments.**

We have a window. We have the language. We have the people on board who yearn to reach their Arab brethren.

Help us reach them while there is still time.

Our children's freedom may very well depend on it.

In His service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kobi and Shani Ferguson".

**Kobi & Shani Ferguson**

**Kobi Ferguson**  
President & CEO

**Shani Ferguson**  
COO





# SAKHNINI BROTHERS

The Sakhnini Brothers, born and raised in Nazareth, have brought Arabic worship and the Gospel message to Muslims in Israel for years. Now they are looking to take it to Muslims all over Europe.



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