

## Rebels declare Damascus captured in stunning end to Assad family rule in Syria

*People celebrate in streets; Syrian president said to flee, whereabouts unknown; prime minister offers to cooperate; IDF deploys to buffer zone with Syria, bolsters border forces*

By [Agencies](#) and [Tel Staff](#) Today, 9:44 am

*Celebrations in Damascus and Homs as rebels declare end of Assad rule in Syria, December 8, 2024. (Muhammad Haj Kadour/STRINGER/AFP/AFPTV/AFP); a damaged portrait of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad hangs in the city of Qamishli, December 8, 2024. (Delil Souleiman/AFP)*



**The Syrian government fell early Sunday in a stunning end to the 50-year rule of the Assad family, after a sudden rebel offensive sprinted across government-held territory and entered the capital in 10 days.**

**Syrian state television aired a video statement by a group of men**

**saying that President Bashar al-Assad had been overthrown and all detainees in jails had been set free.**

The man who read the statement said the Operations Room to Conquer Damascus, an opposition group, called on all opposition fighters and citizens to preserve state institutions of “the free Syrian state.”

Residents **were seen cheering in the streets of the capital, as the rebel factions heralded the departure of “tyrant” Assad and “declare the city of Damascus free.”**

“After **50 years of oppression under Baath rule**, and 13 years of crimes and tyranny and (forced) displacement... we announce today the end of this dark period and the start of a new era for Syria,” the rebel factions said on Telegram.

**Syria’s army command notified officers on Sunday that Assad’s 24-year authoritarian rule had ended**, a Syrian officer who was informed of the move told Reuters, following the rapid rebel offensive that took the world by surprise.

**Residents of the capital reported hearing gunfire and explosions.** Footage broadcast on opposition-linked media showed a tank in one of the city’s central squares while a small group of people gathered in celebration. Calls of “God is great” rang out from mosques.

**Assad, who had crushed all forms of dissent, flew out of Damascus for an unknown destination earlier on Sunday, two senior army officers told Reuters**, as rebels said they had entered the capital with no sign of army deployments.

**BREAKING:** Syrian rebel forces say they have captured the capital Damascus and ousted Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s regime, Reuters reports.

Live updates: <https://t.co/GjA0AnuYPb>

???? Sky 501, Virgin 602, Freeview 233 and YouTube [pic.twitter.com/N5v0I933wk](https://pic.twitter.com/N5v0I933wk)

— Sky News (@SkyNews) [December 8, 2024](#)

**Prime Minister Mohammed al-Jalali said he was ready to cooperate** with “any leadership chosen by the Syrian people.”

**Thousands in cars and on foot congregated at a main square in Damascus waving and chanting “Freedom” from a half-century of Assad family rule**, witnesses said.

Damascus the first morning after its second independence – it’s true independence.

The sense of ecstasy is hard to describe [pic.twitter.com/rXH6nJEQPH](https://pic.twitter.com/rXH6nJEQPH)

— Hassan I. Hassan (@hxhassan) [December 8, 2024](#)

The dramatic collapse marks a seismic moment for the Middle East, ending the family's iron-fisted rule over Syria and dealing a massive blow to Russia and Iran, which have lost a key ally at the heart of the region.

In one suburb, a statue of Assad's father, the late President Hafez al-Assad, was toppled and torn apart.

Outside the city, rebels swept across the entire southwest over 24 hours and established control.

"We celebrate with the Syrian people the news of freeing our prisoners and releasing their chains and announcing the end of the era of injustice in Sednaya prison," the rebels said, referring to a large military prison on the outskirts of Damascus where the Syrian government detained thousands.

DAMASCUS:

1000s of prisoners have been freed from Sednaya prison, now flooding the streets, an monumental moment.

For many, the frantic search begins, desperate to know if their loved ones are among the living or the lost.

Either way, the "human slaughterhouse" is no more. [pic.twitter.com/CX1isl9Rqt](https://pic.twitter.com/CX1isl9Rqt)

— Rami Jarrah (@RamiJarrah) [December 8, 2024](#)

Syrian rebel leader Ahmed al-Sharaa said that it was prohibited to go near public institutions that he said would remain under the supervision of the "former prime minister" until they were officially handed over.

Footage shared online showed people storming Assad's abandoned palace in the capital.

HISTORIC: Al Arabiya live broadcasts the interior of Assad's Presidential Palace

[pic.twitter.com/kABLbpnN4u](https://pic.twitter.com/kABLbpnN4u)

— Ragıp Soylu (@ragipsoylu) [December 8, 2024](#)

Syria is free: Syrian people are now entering Assad's Presidential Palace in Damascus.

[pic.twitter.com/2Owfr55fjX](https://pic.twitter.com/2Owfr55fjX)

— Clash Report (@clashreport) [December 8, 2024](#)

The rapid developments in Damascus come only hours after the Islamist militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham said they had captured the strategic city of Homs, on the way to the capital.

The Israel Defense Forces on Sunday morning confirmed Syrian reports that it had taken up new positions in the buffer zone between the two countries in the Golan Heights, following the fall of the Assad regime.

"The IDF has deployed troops in the buffer zone and in a number of areas that are necessary to defend, in order to ensure the security of the communities in the Golan Heights and the citizens of Israel," the military said in a statement.

The move came following a fresh assessment and "the possibility of gunmen entering the buffer zone," the IDF said. "We emphasize that the IDF does not intervene in the events taking place in Syria," the military added.

The Syrian reports said that Israeli forces had pushed into the buffer zone in the Quneitra area, and launched artillery shells.

In addition, The IDF's 98th Division with the Paratroopers and Commando brigades was

dispatched to the Golan Heights as Israel bolstered its defenses on the border.

Over the weekend, amid the rebel offensive against the Syrian regime, the IDF said it sent more forces to the Golan Heights.

However, there will be no changes to guidelines for residents of the Golan Heights, local authorities said, following a fresh assessment held by the military.

*Syrians celebrate the arrival of opposition fighters in Damascus, Syria, Sunday, Dec. 8, 2024. (AP Photo/Omar Sanadiki)*



Earlier, Army Radio reported that the IDF was considering imposing restrictions on gatherings and schools following the fall of the Assad regime.

**The Golan Regional Council said in a statement that sounds of explosions may be heard as Israeli forces carry out operations in the buffer zone.**

#### **Assad's whereabouts unknown**

**The head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Rami Abdel Rahman, told AFP that "Assad left Syria via Damascus International Airport before the army security forces left" the facility.** The London-based Observatory is of unclear and unreliable resources.

AFP was unable to immediately confirm the report.

**The New York Times reported that screen captures shared on social media purport to show only a single flight leaving Damascus as the rebels moved in.** That flight went to Moscow.

**According to data from the Flightradar website, a Syrian airplane took off from Damascus airport around the time the capital was reported to have been taken by rebels.**

**Other footage appears to show chaos at the airport as staff and security left their posts.**

At Damascus Airport, Footage captures a scene of complete Chaos as Staff and Security Personnel suddenly vanish, leaving Travelers in a state of Panic, with many running in all directions.

Meanwhile, Flights are abruptly Canceled, adding to the Confusion. [pic.twitter.com/y2PXLf1Sk](https://pic.twitter.com/y2PXLf1Sk)

— OSINTdefender (@sentdefender) [December 8, 2024](#)

**Reports of the president having fled were followed by the premier saying he was ready to "cooperate" with a new leadership and any handover process.**

**"This country can be a normal country that builds good relations with its neighbors and the world... but this issue is up to any leadership chosen by the Syrian people,"** Jalali said in a speech broadcast on his Facebook account.

**He said he would go to his office to continue work in the morning and called on Syrian citizens not to deface public property.**

He did not address reports that Assad had left the country.

??????? ↗ Mohammed Ghazi Al-Jalali Prime Minister of Syria: I am in my home and I have not left Syria. [pic.twitter.com/ksbWJJC1pM](https://pic.twitter.com/ksbWJJC1pM)

— Lou Rage (@lifepeptides) [December 8, 2024](#)

**US President Joe Biden and his team were monitoring the "extraordinary events" in Syria** and were in touch with regional partners, the White House said.

**US President-elect Donald Trump has said the US should not be involved in the conflict and should "let it play out."**

**Separately, Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan said the Biden administration had no intention of intervening.**

**Assad has for years been backed by Lebanese Hezbollah, whose forces "vacated their positions around Damascus,"** according to a source close to the group.

Hezbollah "has instructed its fighters in recent hours to withdraw from the Homs area, with some heading to Latakia (in Syria) and others to the Hermel area in Lebanon," the source also told AFP.

#### **Damascus celebrations**

**Crowds of Syrians gathered to celebrate in the central squares of Damascus, chanting anti-Assad slogans** and honking car horns. In some areas, celebratory gunshots rang out.

"My feelings are indescribable," said Omar Daher, a 29-year-old lawyer. "After the fear that he (Assad) and his father made us live in for many years and the panic and state of terror that I was living in, I can't believe it."

**Daher said his father was killed by security forces and his brother was in detention, his fate unknown. Assad "is a criminal, a tyrant and a dog," he said.**

"Damn his soul and the soul of the entire Assad family," said Ghazal al-Sharif, another reveler in central Damascus. "It is the prayer of every oppressed person and God answered it today. We thought we would never see it, but thank God, we saw it."



*People celebrate at Umayyad Square in Damascus on December 8, 2024. (LOUAI BESHARA / AFP)*

**An Associated Press journalist in Damascus reported seeing groups of armed residents along the road on the outskirts of the capital and hearing the sounds of gunshots. The city's main police headquarters appeared to be abandoned, its door left ajar with no officers outside.**

**Another AP journalist shot footage of an abandoned army checkpoint where uniforms were discarded on the ground under a poster of Assad's face.**

**In Damascus, people rushed to stock up on supplies.** Thousands went to Syria's border with Lebanon, trying to leave the country. Lebanese border officials closed the main Masnaa border crossing late Saturday, leaving many stuck waiting.

HISTORIC: Hafez al-Assad statue toppled in Jaramana, just kilometers from Damascus.

[pic.twitter.com/P1zqNsetDW](https://pic.twitter.com/P1zqNsetDW)

— Clash Report (@clashreport) [December 7, 2024](#)

**Many shops in the capital were shuttered, a resident told The Associated Press, and those still open ran out of staples such as sugar.** Some were selling items at three times the normal price. The UN said it was moving noncritical staff outside the country as a precaution.

#### **Rapid developments**

**The pace of events has stunned Arab capitals and raised fears of a new wave of regional instability.**

**Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Russia issued a joint statement saying the crisis was a dangerous development and calling for a political solution.**

**Syria's civil war, which erupted in 2011 as an uprising against Assad's rule, dragged in big outside powers,** created space for jihadist militants to plot attacks around the world, and sent millions of refugees into neighboring states.

**Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the strongest rebel group, is the former al Qaeda affiliate in Syria regarded by the US and others as a terrorist organization,** and many Syrians remain fearful it will impose draconian Islamist rule.

**HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Golani has tried to reassure minorities that he will not interfere with them and the international community that he opposes Islamist attacks abroad.** In Aleppo, which the **rebels captured a week ago, there have not been reports of reprisals.**

When asked on Saturday whether he believed Golani, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov replied, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating."

Assad's long rule relied on allies to subdue the rebels. Russian warplanes conducted bombing while Iran sent allied forces including Hezbollah and Iraqi militia to reinforce the Syrian military and storm insurgent strongholds.

But **Russia has been focused on the war in Ukraine since 2022 and Hezbollah has suffered big losses in its own grueling war with Israel, significantly limiting its ability or that of Iran to bolster Assad.** <https://www.timesofisrael.com/rebels-declare-damascus-captured-in-stunning-end-to-assad-family-rule-in-syria/>

#### **Russia says Assad has left office and fled Syria, but whereabouts remain unknown**

**One report indicates ousted dictator was killed in plane crash, another hints he departed Russian base on aircraft; Syrian civilians loot his home in Damascus**

By [Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 3:01 pm



*A damaged portrait of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad hangs in the city of Qamishli, as Syrian Kurds celebrate the fall of capital Damascus to anti-government fighters on December 8, 2024. (Delil SOULEIMAN / AFP)*

**The Russian foreign ministry said on Sunday that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had left office and departed the country after giving orders there be a peaceful handover of power.**

In a **statement**, the ministry did not say where Assad was now and said Russia has not taken part in the talks around his departure. Earlier reports suggested that Assad may have been killed in a plane crash as he attempted to flee the

country.

The Kan **public broadcaster reported that shortly before the Russian statement was released, a transport plane lifted off from the Russian base in the Syrian city of Latakia**, hinting at Assad's potential presence on the aircraft.

**"As a result of negotiations between [Bashar] Assad and a number of participants in the armed conflict on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, he decided to resign from the presidency and left the country**, giving instructions for a peaceful transfer of power," the Russia statement said.

**"Russia did not participate in these negotiations."**

**Assad's Prime Minister Mohammed al-Jalali was seen in footage escorted by rebel fighters to a meeting with their leaders to coordinate the transition.** He later said in a statement he had been in contact with rebel commander Abu Mohammed al-Golani to discuss managing the transitional period.

The new de-facto ruler of [#Syria](#).

Mohammed Ghazi al-Jalali, the prime minister of the (former) regime is now meant to head a transitional government. He appears to be guarded by rebel forces as he leaves his home to head to work. [pic.twitter.com/R3dBAHpy2M](https://pic.twitter.com/R3dBAHpy2M)

— Thomas van Linge (@ThomasVLinge) [December 8, 2024](#)

**Moscow was extremely worried by events in Syria and urged all sides to refrain from violence**, it said.

"We urge all parties involved to refrain from the use of violence and to resolve all issues of governance through political means," the statement said. "In that regard, the Russian Federation is in contact with all groups of the Syrian opposition."

**It said Russia's military bases in Syria had been put on a state of high alert, but that there was no serious threat to them at the current time.**

**Assad's fate unknown**

**A Syrian airplane took off from Damascus airport around the time the capital was reported to have been taken by Syria's rebels overnight**, according to data from the Flightradar website earlier, suggesting Assad may have been onboard.

**The aircraft initially flew toward Syria's coastal region, a stronghold of Assad's Alawite sect, but then made an abrupt U-turn and flew in the opposite direction for a few minutes before disappearing off the map.**

Reuters was not able to ascertain who was on board.

**Two Syrian sources said there is a very high probability that Assad may have been killed in a plane crash** as it was a mystery why the plane took a surprise U-turn and disappeared off the map.

Developing:

A Syrian IL-76T coming from Damascus lost fast altitude near Homs and possibly crashed west of that city. There are rumors that it was Assad's plane. [pic.twitter.com/K6lvQILlsw](https://pic.twitter.com/K6lvQILlsw)

— (((Tendar))) (@Tendar) [December 8, 2024](#)

**A senior diplomat from the United Arab Emirates, which had sought to rehabilitate Assad's image and has welcomed high-profile exiles in recent years, declined to comment on his whereabouts** when asked by reporters at a conference in Bahrain.

**Anwar Gargash said Assad's destination at this point is a "footnote in history,"** comparing it to the long exile of German Kaiser Wilhelm II after World War I.

**Assad has been accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the war,** including a 2013 chemical weapons attack on the outskirts of the capital.

There **was no immediate comment from Iran, which had been Assad's staunchest supporter.**

Opposition forces had not reached Damascus since 2018, when Syrian troops recaptured areas on the outskirts of the capital following a yearslong siege.

In the **wake of Assad's presumed departure, dozens of Syrians explored the fallen dictator's luxurious Damascus home after it was looted on Sunday,** an AFP correspondent said.

**Women, children and men could be seen inspecting the six-story home and its large garden, with the entrance to the residence burnt down and the rooms completely empty, save some furniture and a portrait of Assad thrown on the floor.**

Bashar Al Assad's home being looted. [pic.twitter.com/TeBLGwYC5T](https://pic.twitter.com/TeBLGwYC5T)

— 5Pillars (@5Pillarsuk) [December 8, 2024](#)

**The end of Assad's rule deals a major blow to Iran and its allies,** already weakened by over a year of conflict with Israel. The rebels now face the daunting task of healing bitter divides in a country ravaged by war and still split among different armed factions. Turkey-backed opposition fighters are battling US-allied Kurdish forces in the north, and the Islamic State group is still active in some remote areas.

**Syrian state television aired a video statement early Sunday by a group of rebels saying that Assad had been overthrown and all prisoners had been set free. The** man who read the statement called on rebel fighters and citizens to preserve the institutions of "the free Syrian state."

Many of the capital's residents were in disbelief at the speed at which Assad lost his hold on the country after a grinding civil war that killed hundreds of thousands of people, displaced half the country's prewar population of 23 million, and drew in several foreign powers.

The rebel advances since November 27 were the largest in recent years and saw the cities of Aleppo, Hama and Homs fall in a matter of days as the Syrian army melted away. Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, which provided crucial support to Assad throughout the uprising, abandoned him in the final days as they reeled from other conflicts.

The rebels are led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, or HTS, which has its origins in al-Qaida and is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and the United Nations.

Its leader, al-Golani, has sought to remake the group's image and says he is committed to a Syria that will serve all its citizens, including sizable religious and ethnic minorities. HTS set up a "salvation government" in 2017 to administer a large region in northwestern Syria under its control. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/russia-says-assad-has-left-office-and-fled-syria-but-whereabouts-remain-unknown/>

## **Israel captures Syrian Hermon; Netanyahu: 'This is a historic day'**

**IDF forces seize control of Jabal al-Sheikh outpost on Syrian side of Mount Hermon following withdrawal of Assad army forces; PM: 'The Assad regime has fallen as a direct result of the blows we delivered to Iran and Hezbollah'**

[Lior Ben Ari, Yoav Zitun](#)|08:40

**Israeli Air Force commandos captured the highest peak of Mount Hermon on the Syrian side, sources told Ynet on Sunday.**

**According to reports, fighters from the elite Shaldag Unit secured the strategic summit as part of an operation to bolster the Israeli military's control in the area.** The peak offers a commanding view and firing range over other ridges of Mount Hermon, making it a critical asset for observation and defense.

**The report also claimed that Israeli forces have taken over sites in the demilitarized zone along the 1974 disengagement line between Israel and Syria.**

**For the first time since the collapse of the Assad regime, Israeli Air Force jets launched a wave of strikes across Syria, targeting military installations, according to various reports. The attacks included strikes on the Al Mazzeh military airport in Damascus, the Halhala region in southern Syria—home to a major airport—and rural areas in Daraa and Sweida provinces.**

**The Voice of the Capital, a Syrian opposition-affiliated outlet, reported that Israel is conducting systematic attacks on military brigades and air defense systems formerly operated by the Assad**

**regime.** The site reported that “Israel is systematically destroying all brigades, battalions, missile depots, and weapons development facilities that could threaten its security.”



*Israeli forces on the Syrian side of Mount Hermon*



*Earlier, Saudi outlet Al Hadath reported that Israeli forces have seized control of the Jabal al-Sheikh outpost on Mount Hermon in Syria.*

**Foreign reports also indicated that Israeli strikes over the weekend targeted advanced weapons stockpiles, production facilities and a chemical weapons depot near Damascus.** An unnamed Syrian opposition source claimed that additional targets are expected to be destroyed imminently.



*Attack attributed to Israel in Syria*

**Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the Mount Bental area in the Golan Heights near the border on Sunday morning. Accompanied by Defense Minister Israel Katz, Netanyahu received a briefing from Northern Command chief Maj. Gen. Ori Gordin.**

**“This is a historic day in the annals of the Middle East,” Netanyahu declared. “The Assad regime is a central link in Iran’s axis of evil, and this regime has fallen. This is a direct result of the blows we delivered to Iran and Hezbollah, the primary supporters of Assad’s regime. This has created a chain reaction throughout the Middle East among those seeking to free themselves from this oppressive and tyrannical regime.”**

**Netanyahu added that while the developments present significant opportunities for Israel, they are not without risks. “We are first and foremost acting to secure our borders.** This area was defined for nearly 50 years as a buffer zone under the 1974 Disengagement Agreement, which has now collapsed. Syrian forces have abandoned their posts.”

**He stated: “Together with the defense minister, and with full backing from the cabinet, I instructed**

**the IDF yesterday to take control of the buffer zone and the nearby dominant positions.** We will not allow any hostile force to establish a presence on our border. At the same time, we are pursuing a policy of good neighborliness, the same approach we maintained when we set up a field hospital here that treated thousands of Syrians injured during the civil war. Hundreds of Syrian children were born here in Israel.”



*Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz in the Golan Heights near the Syrian border (Photo: GPO)*

**In response to the escalating conflict, the IDF announced Sunday that it had reinforced its presence in the demilitarized buffer zone near the Golan Heights to prevent potential incursions** into Israeli territory. "The IDF is not intervening in the events in Syria but will act as necessary to protect the State of Israel and its citizens," the army said in a statement.

**The IDF also issued warnings to rebel forces occupying parts of the Syrian Golan Heights, urging them not to cross the Alpha**

**Line into the demilitarized zone.** Concurrently, the [Northern Command has elevated its alert level](#) and activated emergency measures to bolster Golan Heights defenses against potential threats from the east.

**Defense Minister Katz, speaking from the Golan Heights, said: "The prime minister and I, with Cabinet approval, directed the IDF to take control of the buffer zone** and strategic positions to ensure the safety of all Israeli communities in the Golan Heights—Jewish and Druze alike—so that they are not exposed to threats from across the border."

**Hezbollah withdraws from Syria amid rebel gains**

**Security sources in Lebanon reported that Hezbollah, a key ally of the ousted Assad regime, has withdrawn its forces from Syria. Syrian military sources told Reuters that Hezbollah troops evacuated from al-Qusayr, a strategic city in Homs province, shortly before it fell to rebel forces.**

**At least 150 armored vehicles carrying hundreds of Hezbollah fighters reportedly left al-Qusayr in stages.** The city, which Hezbollah had controlled since 2013, served as a key route for the movement of weapons and fighters between Syria and Lebanon.

The developments highlight growing instability in southern Syria, with Israel appearing to intensify its efforts to neutralize security threats in the region as the conflict in Syria evolves.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/r1cfs7qvkg#autoplay>

## **MKs urge reinforcing regional alliances, Israel's borders after fall of Assad regime**

**Lapid urged Israel to strengthen regional alliances with Saudi Arabia and the Abraham Accords nations to confront growing instability in the region.**

By [ELIAV BREUER](#) DECEMBER 8, 2024 08:01 **Updated:** DECEMBER 8, 2024 11:41



*Syrian rebels pose for a picture with an army helicopter at the Nayrab military airport in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo on December 2, 2024. (photo credit: AAREF WATAD/AFP via Getty Images)*

**Israeli politicians reacted to the unfolding events in Syria on Sunday morning, providing a number of strategy proposals and input on the likely fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime.**

**Opposition head Yair Lapid urged Israel to strengthen regional alliances with Saudi Arabia and the Abraham Accords nations to confront growing instability in the region.**

**In a statement on Sunday, Lapid highlighted the weakening of the Iranian axis as a strategic opportunity for Israel. He called for a comprehensive diplomatic initiative to enhance regional stability, which he said would also strengthen Israel's position**

**in Gaza** and the West Bank.

מול האירועים בסוריה חשוב יותר מתמיד ליצור קואליציה איזורית חזקה, עם סעודיה ומדינות הסכמי אברהם, כדי להתמודד ביחד עם חוסר היציבות האיזורי. הציר האיראני נחלש באופן משמעותי, וישראל צריכה לחתור להישג מדיני כולל שיסייע לה גם בעזה וביו"ש  
— Yair Lapid (@yairlapid) December 8, 2024

**Lapid emphasized the need for cooperation with key regional partners** to address shared security challenges and promote peace and stability.

**Chikli calls to reclaim Mount Hermon**

**A spokesperson for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed ministers on Sunday not to comment publicly on the events in Syria.**

**However, prior to the instruction, Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli urged Israel to reclaim Mount Hermon and establish a defensive line along the 1974 ceasefire boundary to counter regional threats** and prevent extremist groups from gaining a foothold near its borders in a post on X on Sunday.

האירועים בסוריה רחוקים מלהיות סיבה למסיבה. למרות הריברנדינג של היאת תחריר א-שאם ומנהיגה אחמד א שרע, בשורה התחתונה מרבית סוריה נמצאת כעת בשליטת ארגוני בת של אל- קאעידה ודעאש. החדשות הטובות הן התחזקות הכורדים והרחבת שליטתם בצפון מזרח המדינה (מרחב דיר א-זור). אופרטיבית על ישראל...  
[pic.twitter.com/AJG3fhFrji](https://pic.twitter.com/AJG3fhFrji)

— Amichai Chikli (@AmichaiChikli) December 8, 2024

**Chikli warned of the increasing presence of jihadist groups in Syria**, noting that while [Hayat Tahrir al-Sham](#) (HTS) and its leader, Abu Mohammad al-Julani (Ahmad Hussein al-Sharaa), have rebranded, much of Syria remains under the influence of al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates.

**He also highlighted the expansion of Kurdish control in northeastern Syria as** a positive development. Still, he stressed that Israel must act decisively to prevent extremist groups from gaining a foothold near its communities.

**Israel must pay attention**

**Yisrael Beytenu chairman MK Avigdor Liberman argued that Israel must pay special attention to how the events in Syria will affect Jordan.**

In an interview on 103FM Radio on Sunday morning, Liberman pointed out that there was a “not insignificant” number of refugees from Iraq and Syria in Jordan and that “stability in Jordan is the basic thing that Israel must track.”

“The rebels are not identical, there are all shapes and sizes: Al-Qaeda, Islamic State, and the Free Syrian army,” Liberman continued. “Will they try to continue from Syria to Jordan?”

“The fall of dictators in Iraq and Libya did not necessarily bring stability and calm to the area and did not really help the State of Israel either. What is clear is that the big losers are Iran, which, according to estimates, invested between 15 to 17 billion dollars in Syria, including tenders to search for chemicals and oil, purchasing real estate, military bases, and militias,” Liberman said.

In the early hours of Sunday, the Syrian military's command informed officers that Assad's regime had ended, with Syrian rebels announcing Damascus had been freed.

**'Either you're strong, or you're destroyed'**

**Religious Zionist Party MK Ohad Tal, a member of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, said in response to a query: "The developments in Syria remind us once again of the basic rule in the Middle East: Either you're strong, or you're destroyed."**

"If Israel isn't strong, it simply won't exist," Tal said.

"The Iranian-Shiite axis has suffered another heavy defeat, but undoubtedly, Erdogan's radical Turkey will try to take its place along with the Islamist militias it supports.

"Israel must seize the opportunity to create a new buffer zone, establishing defensible borders in the Golan and Lebanon.

We cannot miss this historic opportunity," Tal concluded. <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-832438>

## Syrian rebel supporters enter embassy in Athens, police intervene

*Greek media reported that protesters also tore down Assad's portrait in the embassy but a senior Greek police official could not confirm this.*

By REUTERS DECEMBER 8, 2024 15:37 Updated: DECEMBER 8, 2024 17:40



Alompeint Maarouf, 59, Mazhar Hamdeh, 60, and Nader Halbuni, 61, react in front of the Syrian embassy in Athens following an occupation of the embassy by Syrians living in Greece, after Syrian rebels announced that they have ousted President Bashar al-Assad, in Athens, Greece, December 8, 2024. (photo credit: REUTERS/STELIOS MISINAS)

**Supporters of the Syrian rebels that ousted President Bashar al-Assad entered the Syrian embassy in Athens on Sunday and hoisted the rebel flag from the rooftop, police and a Reuters reporter said.**

**Police entered the embassy compound and detained four people but left the flag flying,** said a Reuters reporter at the scene.

**Syrian rebels declared Assad's ouster after seizing control of Damascus on Sunday, forcing him to flee and ending his family's decades of rule after more than 13 years of civil war.**

**A small group of people celebrated outside the embassy compound in Athens.**

#### **Indescribable joy**

"Our joy is indescribable, 55 years of horrible dictatorship has finally ended and ... the dictator escaped and left the people," said Alompeint Marouf, 59.

*Alompeint Maarouf, 59, Mazhar Hamdeh, 60, and Nader Halbuni, 61, react in front of the Syrian embassy in Athens following an occupation of the embassy by Syrians living in Greece, after Syrian rebels announced that they have ousted President Bashar al-Assad, in Athens, Greece, December*

*8, 2024. (credit: REUTERS/STELIOS MISINAS)*

Greek media reported that protesters also tore down Assad's portrait in the embassy but a senior [Greek police](https://www.ipost.com/breaking-news/article-832534) official could not confirm this. <https://www.ipost.com/breaking-news/article-832534>

## **Aleppo's Christians celebrate Christmas amid changing leadership**

**After opposition factions take control of Aleppo, the city's Christian community prepares for the holidays while navigating newfound freedoms and lingering uncertainties.**

By RIZIK ALABI/THE MEDIA LINE DECEMBER 8, 2024 00:27



*A Syrian man cycles past a Christmas tree being decorated in the Christian-majority neighbourhood of Hamidiyeh in the old city of Homs (photo credit: YOUSSEF KARWASHAN / AFP)*

**Years ago, Ibrahim Hanna Malaki, a Christian legal professional from Aleppo, fled his hometown after being imprisoned for his activism against the Syrian regime. Now living in Switzerland, Malaki reflects on returning to reconnect with family, assess his property, and celebrate the holidays in a city long defined by its Christian heritage.**

**As Syrian opposition factions consolidate control over Aleppo, the city's Christian community—numbering over**

**20,000—has begun decorating Christmas trees and preparing for holiday celebrations. Aleppo is home to 30 churches representing 11 Christian denominations, including Syriac Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, and Greek Orthodox communities.**

**In an exclusive interview with The Media Line, Malaki shared that he contacted his relatives in Aleppo after the opposition factions took control, congratulating them on their Christmas**

**preparations.** Festivities for Saint Barbara's Day were held in neighborhoods such as Suleimaniyah, Aziziyeh, and Villa areas, as well as parts of Jaberiyah.

**Malaki emphasized that Christians in Aleppo have not faced harm from opposition factions, contrasting this with threats previously posed by the Syrian regime. He called on Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and the affiliated Salvation Government to ensure peaceful coexistence for all Aleppo residents, allowing Christians and Muslims to freely practice their faith.**

**Syrian journalist Ayman Abdel Nour, based in Washington, confirmed that opposition factions have assured Aleppo's Christians of their religious freedom. Activist Mohammed Khudair, speaking from Aleppo, corroborated this, noting that Christians conducted prayers last Sunday, just 24 hours after the city fell to the opposition.**



*People gather around a Christmas tree during the holiday season in Damascus (credit: FIRAS MAKDESI/REUTERS)*

**Khudair noted that Aleppo's Christians, like the rest of the city's residents, are engaging in daily activities and shopping in the markets. They are interacting with opposition factions and activists with a sense of growing ease.**

**Bishop Ephraim Maalouli met with volunteers from the Diocese Sons group to coordinate support for Aleppo's Christians during what he described as "a sensitive period." Speaking to The Media Line from Aleppo, Bishop Maalouli said, "We are fine and will remain in our city of Aleppo. We will stand by our community through every**

**circumstance, from the harshest to the best. Prayers continue in our churches." He confirmed there had been no threats or restrictions on their prayers, except for a recent Russian airstrike on a Christian school in Aleppo.**

**In the Aziziyeh district, Christmas trees now adorn streets, cafes, and balconies, according to activist Abu Sham.**

**Christian resident Lina shared that she visits the market daily to shop for household needs without harassment but expressed concern that this sense of safety might only be temporary until HTS consolidates its control over the city.**

**In this context, Hanna Saeed, a Christian citizen from Aleppo, told The Media Line that life in Aleppo feels normal. "Surprisingly, services have improved since the factions took control of Aleppo. We were living under difficult service conditions, but now things are better, especially with the security provided by the factions. They assured us we would not face any harm."**

#### **Abu Muhammad al-Julani in Aleppo**

**HTS leader Abu Muhammad al-Julani made his first public appearance in Aleppo on Wednesday, appearing at the city's citadel among crowds of civilians. The leader of the group, designated as a terrorist organization by the US, announced plans to dissolve the organization and form a transitional council to govern the city. According to affiliated sources, this council will oversee the establishment of new institutions and the reinstatement of employees in Aleppo.**

**With the Syrian regime's influence waning, some observers see a rare chance for political engagement. Malaki remarked that Christians, who had long been barred from politics, now have an opportunity to help shape Syria's future. Syrian researcher Mustafa Al-Naemi echoed this sentiment, urging Syrians to collaborate in rebuilding their country.**

**While markets in Aleppo have reopened, high prices reflect the Syrian pound's collapse. One US dollar now equals 27,000 Syrian pounds in Aleppo, compared to 15,000 in Damascus. Financial experts speculate that the factions may adopt the Turkish lira for stability, as has been done in Idlib and Aleppo's countryside.**

**There have also been rumors about appointing Bishop Hanna Allouf as Aleppo's governor. Many Syrians expressed support for the idea, but Allouf denied the claims, telling The Media Line that he does not engage in politics.**

**As discussions and uncertainties continue, Aleppo's Christians maintain their faith and traditions. They celebrate Christmas, decorate their churches, and continue to pray, even as the city's leadership**

and landscape rapidly change around them. Many fled due to Iranian influence and regime crackdowns, but those who remain maintain their traditions, contributing to the city's diverse social fabric.

**"Christians in Aleppo have lived for centuries as part of the social fabric of the city,** and churches have always welcomed Christian children for baptism," Malaki said. "These rituals remained unchanged even under the control of the Syrian government forces." <https://www.jpost.com/christianworld/article-832410>

## Iran launches military satellite, sending nation's largest-ever payload to orbit: reports

By [Brett Tingley](#) published yesterday

*The satellites weighed a combined 660 pounds (300 kilograms).*



*An Iranian Simorgh rocket launches on Dec. 6, 2024. (Image credit: Iranian Ministry of Defense)*

**Iran's space program continues to make progress as the nation announces the successful launch of its largest payload yet.**

**Iranian state media says one of the nation's two-stage Simorgh rockets launched on Friday (Dec. 6) with payloads weighing a combined 660 pounds (300 kilograms). Those payloads include a space tug known as Saman-1 that can boost satellites to higher orbits,**

the Fakhr-1 [cubesat](#) and an undisclosed "research payload," [according to Reuters](#).

**The three payloads were placed into an elliptical, or oval-shaped, low Earth orbit reaching up to 255 miles (410 kilometers) at its highest point, or apogee, and 184 miles (300 km) at its lowest, or perigee. While Iranian media is lauding the launch as "a milestone for Iran's space sector," some analysts in the West say the launch only serves to further the country's burgeoning nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.**

**The Saman-1 space tug launched on Friday would enable Iran to boost satellites in low Earth orbit up to higher orbits such as geosynchronous orbit, where spacecraft remain over the same area of Earth at all times. Such a capability to raise orbits would eliminate the need for larger launch vehicles and reduce fuel costs, making it easier for Iranian [satellites](#) to reach higher orbits.**

**The Fakhr-1 cubesat, meanwhile, is a technology demonstration mission,** intended to verify the ability of the Simorgh rocket's second stage to deploy multiple satellites, [according to Iranian state media](#).

**Iran's space program is criticized in the West. The United States and other nations accuse Iran of defying United Nations Security Council resolutions that prohibit the nation from developing ballistic missile technologies,** which are parallel to [rocket](#) development.

**A U.S. intelligence report released in July claimed that Iran's Simorgh rocket "probably would shorten the timeline to produce an intercontinental ballistic missile, if it decided to develop one, because the systems use similar technologies," [according to Reuters](#).**

**Iran's launch of these three satellites today follows a similar flight in January 2024 that marked the [first orbital launch of the Simorgh rocket](#).** That launch also placed three Iranian-made satellites into low Earth orbit.

**Months earlier, Iran launched what it described as an "indigenous bio-capsule" in order to verify technologies to help put its own astronauts into space. Some media reports claimed there were animals aboard, but these remain unconfirmed.** <https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/iran-launches-military-satellite-sending-nations-largest-ever-payload-to-orbit-reports>

## Israeli drone kills Hezbollah operative, reports of more strikes in southern Lebanon

**IDF says motorcyclist was posing threat to Israeli troops, violating ceasefire, as shaky truce still holds; Lebanese media say five dead, five wounded in separate Israeli airstrike**

By [Emanuel Fabian](#)

Today, 8:26 am



*This picture shows destroyed buildings, reportedly the aftermath of Israeli strikes, in the southern Lebanese village of Khiam, near the border with Israel, on December 7, 2024. (AFP)*

**The Israel Defense Forces said it killed a Hezbollah operative in a drone strike in southern Lebanon on Saturday, while Lebanon said a separate Israeli strike killed five people.**

**According to the military, the operative, who was killed while riding a motorcycle in the village of Deir Siryan, “posed a threat to IDF troops deployed to the area, in violation of the agreement between Israel and Lebanon.”**

The military published video of the strike.

**In the southern Lebanese town of Beit Lif, the Lebanese health ministry reported five dead and five wounded in an Israeli airstrike.**

**There was no immediate comment from the IDF.**

**Despite reaching a ceasefire ending over a year of fighting with Hezbollah, Israel has vowed to continue carrying out strikes to prevent the ceasefire from being violated**, in its words, by Hezbollah attempting to regroup near the Israeli border or rearm.

**“The IDF continues to be committed to the understandings regarding the ceasefire in Lebanon,”** the military said, adding that troops are still deployed to southern Lebanon “and will work to remove any threat to the State of Israel and its citizens.”

**Meanwhile, troops of the 146th Division located several rocket launchers aimed at Israel,** during operations in the western sector of southern Lebanon, the military said.

**During scans, the troops found and destroyed launchers, mortars, dozens of rockets, ammunition crates and assault rifles, according to the military.**

במהלך היממה האחרונה, צה"ל פעל במרחב דרום לבנון, מול מספר פעולות שהיוו איום על מדינת ישראל. מוקדם יותר היום, כלי טיס של חיל האוויר תקף מחבל חזבאללה שזוהה במרחב דרום לבנון, והיווה איום על כוחות >>צה"ל הפרוסים במרחב, תוך הפרה של ההסכם בין ישראל ללבנון [pic.twitter.com/fzlfPrea9W](https://pic.twitter.com/fzlfPrea9W) — צבא ההגנה לישראל (@idfonline) December 7, 2024

**A ceasefire that came into effect last month stipulates that the IDF has 60 days to withdraw from southern Lebanon, where troops have been operating since October to drive Hezbollah from the border region,** and cede responsibility for the area to the Lebanese army.

An American-led committee is to adjudicate complaints regarding potential ceasefire violations.

**Hezbollah forces would leave southern Lebanon, and the terror group’s military infrastructure in the south would be dismantled, according to the agreement.**

The US has also reportedly provided a side letter specifying Israel’s rights to respond to any violations of the deal. The letter is said to include guarantees from Washington that allow Israel reconnaissance flights over Lebanon as long as they do not break the sound barrier.

Hezbollah began firing into Israel one day after Hamas’s October 7, 2023, onslaught in southern Israel, in support of its fellow Iran-backed terror group, drawing Israeli reprisals and leading to the displacement of some 60,000 residents of northern Israel.

Fighting intensified in late September, with Israel killing much of Hezbollah’s leadership and launching a limited ground incursion on October 1 that has seen soldiers search villages for rockets and other arms held by the terror group, and tackle its terror tunnels and other infrastructure. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-drone-kills-hezbollah-operative-reports-of-more-strikes-in-southern-lebanon/>

**Preparing for deal, Hamas tells fellow Gazan terror groups to identify hostages they hold**  
**Israeli official says two recent propaganda videos released by Hamas of young male hostages indicate the group is looking for a comprehensive deal to free all captives**

By [AFP](#), [Lazar Berman](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 4:19 pm



*Israelis attend a rally calling for the release of those held hostage by the Hamas terror group in Gaza, at Hostages Square in Tel Aviv, December 7, 2024. (Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90)*

**Sources within various Palestinian terror groups in Gaza said Sunday that Hamas has told them to compile information on the hostages they hold in preparation for a potential ceasefire and hostage deal with Israel.**

Hamas has told factions including Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front and the Popular Resistance Committees to prepare information

such as whether their hostages are alive or dead, the sources told AFP.

**Qatar's prime minister said on Saturday that there was renewed "momentum" for a ceasefire and hostage release deal following the election of Donald Trump in the United States.**

**A Hamas source told AFP there had been "intensified contacts" recently between Hamas and Qatari, Egyptian and Turkish mediators, and that the group expects a new round of talks in Cairo "will begin in the coming days."**

**The same source called on Israel to halt the war, claiming the presence of its forces made it "difficult to reach all the captive groups to know the details of the living and dead prisoners."**

**Israel has long said it won't halt fighting without the return of all hostages** and the defeat of Hamas as a military and governing force in Gaza.



*People check the damage outside the Kamal Adwan hospital in the northern Gaza Strip, December 6, 2024. (AFP)*

**Amid its murderous onslaught on October 7, 2023, Hamas and terror groups took 251 hostages from Israel into Gaza.**

Since then, 109 of them have been released, mostly during a weeklong truce in late November 2023, **eight have been rescued alive** and the **bodies of 38 have been recovered.**

**Israel believes that 96 hostages taken captive on October 7 remain in Gaza, including the bodies of at least 34**

**confirmed dead** by the IDF — including those killed during by Hamas during the initial onslaught as well as those slain in captivity.



**Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday evening that Israel is working to "take advantage of every opportunity that arises to advance negotiations."** His office said he made the comments in a conversation with Einav Zangauker, the mother of hostage Matan Zangauker, after Hamas [released a propaganda video](#) showing the first sign of life from Matan after 14 months in captivity.

*Einav Zangauker, the mother of hostage Matan Zangauker, and other demonstrators call for the release of those held hostage by the Hamas terror group in the Gaza Strip, outside the Kirya military base in Tel Aviv, December 7, 2024. (Miriam Alster/Flash90)*

An Israeli official told The Times of Israel on Sunday that the two recent hostage videos released by Hamas – of Zangauker and US-Israeli soldier Edan Alexander – lead Israel to believe that the Palestinian terror group is looking for a comprehensive deal to free all captives.

Neither of the young men is classified in the “humanitarian” category, and as such would not have been freed in a [partial release](#) proposal that was discussed last week.

There are low-level talks about the hostages all the time, the official said, but a senior official delegation will only be sent to Cairo if Israel sees that there has been real progress.

Now that there is some positive movement toward a deal, the official said, Qatar is trying to “get back into the spotlight” and be in the position to take credit for a hostage release and ceasefire.

The Israeli official said that the Egyptian proposal floated last week would see an extended ceasefire that would allow the elderly, children, women, ill and badly wounded hostages to be released. The number of living hostages in these groups is today understood to be fewer than the 33 that was previously discussed in talks over past months.

Hamas has until now repeatedly refused agreements that do not include a permanent end to the war and a full withdrawal of Israeli troops. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/preparing-for-deal-hamas-tells-fellow-gazan-terror-groups-to-identify-hostages-they-hold/>

## Zelensky rejects Trump’s peace call

*The conflict “cannot simply end with a piece of paper and a few signatures,” the Ukrainian leader has said*

8 Dec, 2024 15:38



*French President Emmanuel Macron, US President-elect Donald Trump and Ukrainian leader Vladimir Zelensky during their meeting in Paris. © Getty Images / Oleg Nikishin*

Ukrainian leader Vladimir Zelensky has rejected a call by US President-elect Donald Trump for an immediate truce and peace talks between Ukraine and Russia.

Following a meeting between Trump, Zelensky, and French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on Saturday, the president-elect issued a lengthy post on his Truth Social platform saying, “there should be an immediate ceasefire and negotiations should begin” to settle the Ukraine conflict. According to Trump, Ukraine “would like to make a deal and stop the madness.”

However, Zelensky made it clear that this is not the case in an even longer post published on X on Sunday, in which he said the conflict “cannot simply end with a piece of paper and a few signatures.”

“A ceasefire without guarantees can be reignited at any moment... To ensure that Ukrainians no longer suffer losses, we must guarantee the reliability of peace and not turn a blind eye to occupation,” the Ukrainian leader stated.

He stressed that “in the occupied territories of Ukraine, at least several million people remain,” once again ruling out the possibility of Kiev making any territorial concessions to Moscow in exchange for peace.

“It is precisely such peace through strength that we discuss with all our partners, as well as the steps and guarantees needed for the people and the state attacked by Russia,” Zelensky said.

Trump has repeatedly claimed that he could end the Ukraine conflict within a day of returning to the White House, and has criticized the outgoing US administration for spending too much on arming Kiev. According to earlier media reports, he may try to enforce a freeze of the conflict along the current battle lines, using US aid to Kiev as leverage.

Moscow has repeatedly said it considers a freeze of the conflict unacceptable. It has insisted that any settlement is only possible if Ukraine withdraws its forces from Russian territory, including the former Ukrainian regions, ensures the rights of its Russian-speaking population and adheres to neutrality.

<https://www.rt.com/news/608988-zelensky-trump-ceasefire-talks/>

## US admits much-hyped tanks failed in Ukraine

## **Kiev already retired its dwindling stock of M1 Abrams earlier this year**

8 Dec, 2024 14:39



*A man looks at a captured M1 Abrams battle tank at an exhibition in St. Petersburg, Russia, November 3, 2023 © Getty Images / Artem Priakhin*

**American-made M1 Abrams tanks were “not useful” to the Ukrainian military, despite being billed as a potential “game changer” in the conflict with Russia, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has admitted.**

**After months of requests from Ukrainian leader Vladimir Zelensky and his officials, the White House approved the transfer of 31 M1 Abrams main battle tanks – enough to equip an entire tank battalion – to Ukraine in**

**January 2023. President Joe Biden said the tanks would help “counter Russia’s evolving tactics and strategy on the battlefield in the very near term,” while multiple US media outlets described them as a “game changer” ahead of Kiev’s planned counteroffensive against Russian forces that summer.**

**This was not the case, Sullivan said at the Reagan National Defense Forum in California on Saturday. Asked whether the Biden administration could have better prepared Ukraine for the counteroffensive had it supplied Kiev with more heavy weapons, he cited the Abrams tanks as an example of how not everything in America’s arsenal worked in Ukraine.**

**”When it comes to Abrams tanks, we sent Abrams tanks to Ukraine,” he replied. “These Abrams tank units are actually undermanned because it’s not the most useful piece of equipment for them in this fight.”**

**Shortly after their deployment, the Russian Defense Ministry began releasing videos of Abrams tanks burning on the battlefield.** According to some [estimates](#), as many as 20 of the 31 tanks sent to Ukraine in 2023 have since been destroyed, and Ukrainian commanders began withdrawing the rest from service earlier this year, American officials told [AP](#).

**The M1A1 variants sent to Ukraine were first stripped of their depleted uranium armor, leaving them vulnerable to Russian drones and anti-tank missiles.**

**One of the heaviest main battle tanks in service worldwide, the M1 Abrams weighs in at 60 tons, with the latest M1A2 variant increasing this heft to more than 73 tons. An M1 Abrams tank costs more than \$450 per mile in fuel and repairs, according to a 1991 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report adjusted for inflation.**

**The GAO report stated that the average M1 Abrams needs its track replaced after as little as 710 miles, with engines typically suffering catastrophic “blowouts” after 350 hours of operation.**

**Even before Biden authorized their delivery to Ukraine, US military officials warned that the Abrams tanks would prove unsuitable for Kiev’s needs.**

**“The challenge with the Abrams is, it’s expensive. It’s difficult to train on. It is very difficult to sustain. It has a huge, complicated turbine engine that requires jet fuel,”** US Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl warned in early January 2023. **“Frankly, our assessment is just that the Abrams is not the right capability at this time.”**

<https://www.rt.com/news/608990-abrams-tanks-failed-ukraine/>

## **Trump’s estimate of Russian losses wrong – Kremlin**

**The US president-elect earlier put the number at 600,000 soldiers and Ukrainian losses at 400,000**

8 Dec, 2024 15:05

**Incoming US President Donald Trump’s estimate of Russia’s losses in the Ukraine conflict is far off the mark and is based on Kiev’s interpretation, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Sunday.**

**Peskov was commenting on a post Trump made on his Truth Social platform earlier on Sunday, where he claimed that Moscow has lost some 600,000 servicemen in the conflict.**

**The day before, Trump had a meeting with Ukrainian leader Vladimir Zelensky in Paris. While calling for an “immediate ceasefire and negotiations” between Moscow and Kiev and signaling that Ukraine was willing to “make a deal with Russia,” Trump also gave an estimate of Kiev’s losses, which he claimed stood at some 400,000 troops “and many more civilians.”**

**“As for the figures given about losses on both sides, it is obvious that they are presented in the Ukrainian interpretation and reflect the official position of Ukraine. The real figures of losses are completely different,”** Peskov said in a press statement. **He stressed that “Ukrainian losses are many times higher than the losses on the Russian side.”**

The spokesman also warned that prolonging the conflict, which the US and other Western states are doing by aiding the Kiev regime, could **“lead to the complete exhaustion of the Ukrainian army.”**

Russia **does not make public its losses in the conflict.** President Vladimir Putin explained back in June that it is simply not done **“as a rule,”** while those who do announce such figures tend to **intentionally “distort”** the information. He noted at the time, however, that the ratio of losses on the two sides is **approximately one Russian loss for every five Ukrainian losses.**

In late November, **The Economist** reported that up to half a million Ukrainian troops had been **killed or wounded in the conflict, based on leaked intelligence reports,** official statements, and open sources.

On Sunday, Zelensky claimed in a post on X that since the escalation of the conflict in 2022, **only some 43,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed.** Back in February of this year, he insisted that Kiev had lost only 31,000 troops. **According to the Russian Defense Ministry, Kiev’s army has lost 39,260 servicemen over the past four months alone.**

In his **statement, Peskov reiterated that Moscow is open to negotiations and is eager to end the conflict, but stressed that it could only be done if Russia’s conditions for a settlement were met.** Moscow has repeatedly insisted that any settlement is only possible if Ukraine withdraws its forces from Russian territory, **including the former Ukrainian regions, ensures the rights of its Russian-speaking population, and adheres to neutrality.** <https://www.rt.com/russia/608985-kremlin-trump-losses-wrong/>

## **WATCH: Will Donald Trump pardon himself? President-elect goes public**

By [Joe Kovacs](#) [December 8, 2024](#)



*President-elect Donald Trump talks with NBC's Kristen Welker, on 'Meet the Press,' Sunday, Dec. 8, 2024*

**PALM BEACH, Florida – In the wake of Joe Biden's presidential pardon of his son Hunter, President-elect Donald Trump was asked if he will pardon himself in connection with any legal cases remaining against him.**

**Trump answered the question from NBC's Kristen Welker on "Meet the Press" Sunday morning.**

**"I didn't do anything wrong," Trump said.**

**"I was given the option, and the lawyers told me, very specific. I don't have to go into who, but very high up in in the administration said, 'Sir, if you pardon yourself, you're going to look guilty and you did nothing wrong.' Oh, I had that option."**

**"I could have saved myself a lot of legal fees. But it turned out that I was right.** Look at what's gone on. Everything's being dropped. I still have a Fani Willis, Fani, a total hoax. That's a total hoax. It's all being dropped."

WATCH: Will Donald [#Trump](#) pardon himself? President-elect goes public

Also thrashes everybody on Jan. 6 Committee: 'Honestly, they should go to jail' [#J6 #MeetthePress](#) [pic.twitter.com/g6vTzWiE0F](https://pic.twitter.com/g6vTzWiE0F)

— WorldNetDaily (@worldnetdaily) [December 8, 2024](#)

**Welker also asked the president-elect about reporting that Biden is considering "preemptive pardons for some of the people who have clashed with Mr. Trump, including senator-elect Adam Schiff, Dr. Anthony Fauci, and former congressman, Liz Cheney."**

**Welker said: "As part of his response, Mr. Trump lashed out at the Jan. 6th Committee, accusing it of unfairly targeting him and even of destroying its records, which the committee denies."**

**"And she [Cheney] was behind it. And so was Bennie Thompson and everybody on that committee," Trump explained. "For what they did, honestly, they should go to jail."**

Welker asked: **"So you think Liz Cheney should go to jail?"**

**"For what they did ... I think that everybody, anybody that voted in favor," Trump responded.**

**"Are you going to direct your FBI director and your attorney general to send them to jail?" Welker asked.**

Trump replied: **"No, not at all. I think that they'll have to look at that, but I'm not going to, I'm gonna focus on drill, baby, drill."**

Trump was also **asked if he would end birthright citizenship on Day One** in office.

"Yeah, absolutely," he said.

**Welker mentioned the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution saying all persons born in the United States are citizens.**

"Can you get around the 14th Amendment with an executive action?" she asked.

**"We'll have to get a change. Maybe have to go back to the people. But we have to end it.** We're the only country that has it," Trump said.

**"Someone sets a foot, one foot, on our land, congratulations, you are now a citizen of the United States of America! Yes, we're going to end that, because it's ridiculous."**

"Through executive action?" Welker asked.

"Well, if we can, through executive action, Trump said, then pointing to his first term in office.

"I was going to do it through executive action, but we had to fix COVID first, to be honest with you. We have to end it."

**Trump was also asked if he would he concede his loss in the 2020 presidential election.**

"No. No. Why would I do that?" he responded.

The full broadcast of "Meet the Press" can be viewed [here](#).

Follow Joe on Twitter [@JoeKovacsNews](#)

<https://www.wnd.com/2024/12/watch-will-donald-trump-pardon-himself-president-elect-goes-public/>

**'Overreach': Feds ordered to preserve 'all records' of their legal attacks on pro-lifers**  
**'Since January 2021, the Civil Rights Division has brought a total of 24 FACE Act cases against 55 defendants, with only two of these cases – consisting of five defendants – concerning attacks on pregnancy resource centers'**

By [Bob Unruh](#) [December 8, 2024](#)



*A Pennsylvania National Guardsman hugs a loved one at Harrisburg International Airport in Middletown, Pennsylvania, after returning from a yearlong deployment to Africa, Thursday, Oct. 31, 2024. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Travis Mueller)*

**There's no question that Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, with their extremist ideology on the issue of abortion, the wanton destruction of unborn children, ran an administration that actually put a bull's-eye on the backs of those who pursue pro-life goals.**

They used the FBI and the Department of Justice to do that work, with charges against and prosecutions of groups and individuals who opposed the abortion industry mandates that they wanted to impose.

Now those bureaucracies have been warned by a member of Congress to keep all their records of those legal campaigns against pro-lifers.



The Daily Wire reports it is Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, who has dispatched a letter to the FBI and DOJ instructing officials to preserve all records of their prosecutions of peaceful pro-lifers.

*U.S. Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas*

He told the FBI's Christopher Wray and Attorney General Merrick Garland there are "serious questions" lawmakers must evaluate regarding how the Biden-Harris administration turned to the "weaponization" of the FACE Act.

That law makes it a crime to block the entrance to a health business, including abortion operations.

Roy heads the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited Government and said, "Congress has a sacred duty to preserve the rights of the American people,

**including the First Amendment, against any overreach by the Executive Branch.** As we examine how to best protect Americans' fundamental freedoms, the Subcommittees must first understand how the DOJ and FBI enforce the FACE Act."

**That law is supposed to also be used to protect both churches and crisis pregnancy centers, but the Biden-Harris team used it almost exclusively to jail grandmothers and others who were defending the unborn.**

Roy wrote, "Since January 2021, the Civil Rights Division has brought a total of 24 FACE Act cases against 55 defendants, with only two of these cases – consisting of five defendants – concerning attacks on pregnancy resource centers.

**"You should construe this preservation notice as an instruction to take all reasonable steps to prevent the destruction or alteration, whether intentionally or negligently, of all documents, communications, and other information, including electronic information and metadata, that are or may be responsive to this congressional inquiry."** <https://www.wnd.com/2024/12/overreach-feds-ordered-to-preserve-all-records-of-their-legal-attacks-on-pro-lifers/>

OP ED

## The Wrong Side of History

Sat, 7 Dec 2024 6:34 PM PST by Daniel Greenfield



**The Left is a religious movement. Its manic enthusiasms are fueled by the conviction that it can and will save the world. But what happens if the world does not want to be saved by the Left?**

That is the dilemma of the 2024 election for believers in the 'right side of history'.

In 2000 and 2016 leftists resorted to conspiracy theories to explain not only to us but to themselves why they did not really lose, but the 2024 election was a landslide in which not only the electoral college, but the popular vote, not only straight white men, but the entire spectrum of the electorate rejected not just Joe Biden, but his black female girl power ringer

When the Left lost the working class, it blamed the loss on racism. The factory workers and coal miners, the proletariat on whom generations of leftists had pinned their hopes for a national regeneration, were cast out for their whiteness. Henceforth, minorities would be the standard bearers for transforming the national culture and inheriting power at the dawn of the new age.

Now that virtually every minority group except black women has turned on them, what's left?

Apart from the essays explaining why black women and 'trans kids' are the only virtuous minorities still out there (often written by straight white men) there isn't a backup plan.

The problem was built into the leftist paradigm which seeks to identify and elevate oppressed groups, but the more those groups are elevated, the less need they have for the Left, and the more likely they are to object when their former patrons start wrecking all their achievements.

Everyone has something to lose and those with the most to lose are not the children of the rich trashing the system, but those near the bottom who are the most vulnerable to social chaos.

Unleashing BLM made black voters much more concerned about crime and opening the borders got former generations of California illegal aliens to wave Trump flags. The divisiveness of identity politics sounds good when it means cutting ahead in line for college admissions, job placement and other special privileges, but everyone except Ivy League grads sours on it when it means criminals and migrants overrunning their neighborhoods.

The Left campaigns on social change, but what it's really after is revolutionary change. Social change alters the rules while revolutionary change destroys the whole system. There are a lot of takers when social change under names such as 'equity' is rigging the system to favor designated 'oppressed' groups, but far fewer of them want to stay around to watch it all burn.

But if the 'oppressed' groups just cash in their social change chips for a house in a nice neighborhood with two cars in the garage, how is the revolution ever going to happen?

The Left is a long way from actually losing the minority vote, but 2024 was the most urgent in a series of warnings, especially from Latinos and Asians, that they want stability and a prosperous economy a whole lot more than they want woke nonsense like 'Latinx' or 'StopAsianHate'.

That's the same message the white working class delivered during the era of the counterculture.

The working classes, of whatever race, rejecting the culture war is small surprise. The average black or Latino family has as much sympathy for drag queen story hour as the white steelworkers of another era did for hippies. A rainbow coalition encompassing racial and ethnic minorities, and the alphabet alliance of upper class fetishes, was a fantasy anywhere outside the activist echo chambers where '[Fags for Hamas](#)' is an actual movement not a Gutfeld joke.

Decadent culture wars were a means to an end (much like the elevation of minorities) and were quickly stamped out in the aftermath of every successful Communist revolution. After the 2024 election, a 'reconsideration' of transgenderism is already underway in the movement.

The same media that spent a decade stomping on the dreams of thousands of female athletes is now willing to consider throwing transgenders overboard if they hold back the cause. As quickly as women were erased, transgenders can be erased and women brought back.

The Left can sideline the culture war, but it can't sideline the revolution.

After replacing the white working class with minority groups, what is it going to replace minorities with? The Left is running out of potential bases to deploy into battle.

Leftist revolutions always depend on lies until the moment of turnaround occurs, but the evolution of the counterculture into the culture, the radicals working within the system to effect gradual social change while escalating the crises, put the moment of turnaround farther away.

And how can the moment of turnaround be reached if the base defects halfway into the crisis?

That is the core of the post-election crisis that has divided and consumed the Democrats. The party that emerged from the compromises that integrated the counterculture into it is unfit for either the purposes of the radicals or the liberals. The radicals have managed to alienate every base the Democrats ever had except for those elites that have already been radicalized.

The remaining moderates and liberals have kept the party from functioning as a purely revolutionary party even as its ideological culture becomes more radical from year to year. If this goes on, the Democrats would simply become the DSA, the party of Bernie, Warren and AOC, but 2024 is a warning that it would have a limited time to rule before the public turned on it.

The conflict between the gradualists and the revolutionaries played out in the Biden-Harris administration with revolutionaries out to break the country in control of policy and pragmatists in control of the campaign so that it was at odds with itself from the very beginning. Revolutionaries would wreck the economy to seize power, not to win an election, and pragmatists would bolster the economy to win elections while expanding the welfare state.

Instead a radical agenda and a pragmatic campaign led to a historic defeat for the Democrats.

The best American leftists could hope for was not the USSR or Communist China, but a shaky Latin American banana republic, and more likely would have to settle for a mediocre European social democracy spiraling into further decline every year. But Americans aren't Russians, Chinese, Latin Americans (yet) or Europeans (anymore) and have different expectations.

To get to the USSR or China, leftists would have to show more ability to execute a violent revolution after a major crisis. Once upon a time liberals had persuaded their leftist offspring that this was unnecessary because America would willingly be transformed.

Americans would willingly bow to the right side of history. Didn't Obama's victory prove it?

Much as the myth of the fall of Camelot justified leftist radicalism and violence, Trump's first victory undid the myth of Obamalot and ushered in a new wave of radicalism and terror. But if Trump's first victory was Nixon, his second victory is Reagan: a growing national consensus that is immune to the old tools of the counterculture because it is not a reaction, but a realignment.

After the 2024 election, the idea that America was redeemable seems far fetched to leftists. Didn't nearly every group choose Trump? What is there about America to be redeemed? And if Americans are innately on the wrong side of history, then a violent takeover is the only way.

And yet even revolutionary leftists don't appear especially emboldened after the 2024 election. The violent riots have been mostly notable by their absence. Even revolutionaries need a base to work with and the election outcome hammered home to them that they don't have one.

The Left has rejected America before only to come crawling back. Moving to Canada, or touring the third world to incite revolutions, are not realistic options. But to come back, the Left must once again delude itself about what Americans want. And about what they don't want.

Politics is the art of illusion and delusion. Activists and officials lie to the people, but they also lie to themselves. Defeats come out of nowhere because they refuse to recognize that what most people want is not ideology, but a better life, and the politicians are usually standing in the way.

The right side of history is Marxist nonsense filtered through unitarianism: a messianic vision of ideological inevitability that is ever doomed to crash into the realities of human nature.

The Left wants to rule, but it also wants to be wanted by the people and by some larger immanent force that it does not quite dare to recognize as a higher power, that is on its side and advancing its righteous aims. After Election Day, its faith is shaken, not in its own theories, but in the American public and in the idea that a right side of history will ever come to America.

And yet it must believe. So it will find a way to believe in transforming America once again.

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