

International calls for inclusive gov't in Syria after Assad's fall

International Desk

Many countries in the world are calling for the formation of an inclusive, new government in Syria after militants toppled the government of Bashar al-Assad following a shock attack.

Iran's Foreign Ministry in a statement on Sunday called for the formation of an inclusive government representing all Syrian people, stressing that the country's future should only be decided by the Syrians. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan also said on Sunday that Syria's new administration must be inclusive because Syrian people would determine their own future.

Syrian militants declared the fall of Syrian government after seizing control of Damascus on Sunday, ending the Assad family's rule after more than 13 years of war in the Arab country.

Turkey, which has been supporting militants since the beginning of war in 2011, has said it did not support the militant operation in northern Syria, and that Assad's refusal to engage in a serious political solu-

tion had triggered his downfall. A new government will soon be formed, according to the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) that seized Damascus over the weekend. "Our forces are about to finish imposing order in the capital and preserving public property, and the new government will begin its work as soon as it is formed," the militants said in a statement on Telegram on Monday.

Meanwhile, Syrian Prime Minister Mohammad Ghazi al-Jalali, who had been in power under Assad's rule, said in a video statement that, "We are ready to cooperate with any leadership chosen by the Syrian people by providing all possible facilities to ensure a smooth transfer of various government files."

Al-Jalali said in a separate interview that they were working to ensure a calm and brief transitional period and that most ministers were in their offices.

'Peaceful transition'

The EU has also called for "an orderly, peaceful and inclusive transition" in Syria that rejects "all forms of extremism" and



Syrian men wave the flag of the opposition in the central Umayyad Square in Damascus on December 9, 2024.
● LOUAI BESHARA/AFP

protects religious minorities. "It is critical to preserve the territorial integrity of Syria and to respect its independence, its sovereignty, as well as state institutions, and to reject all forms of extremism," the EU said in a statement.

France said it will support the transition to a new government in Syria only if the rights of minority populations are respected, Jean-Noel Barrot, French caretaker foreign minister, said. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk on Monday said there was a "huge chance" for inclusive dialogue on the political transition in Syria's new era after the ousting of Assad.

Damascus was relatively quiet after a day of chaos and looting on Sunday, with armed members of the militants spread out across the city as they sought to restore order a day after the collapse of the Assad govern-



ment, who left the country for Russia where he and his family have been granted asylum.

Delisting of HTS

In another development, the UK said the government is "quickly" considering its stance on

the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, which is proscribed by the UK as a terrorist organization, and that the immediate future in Syria is "very uncertain."

HTS is also designated as a terrorist group by the United States, and its leader Abu Mohammed

al-Julani, has a long history of militancy, before breaking away from Al-Qaeda and seeking to rebrand it as a nationalist force. US officials are also considering removing the HTS from the US terrorist list, The Washington Post reported on Monday.

Iran open to talks, but will never be blackmailed: VP

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Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said Iran is open to negotiations and interaction with the Western countries, but will never be blackmailed.

Aref made the remark as he toured an exhibition of Iran's nuclear industry achievements held at the Atomic Energy Agency Organization (AEOO) on Monday.

He referred to recent "baseless remarks" about activating the snapback mechanism against Iran, saying that the Western countries

repeatedly threatened to activate the process and have seen Iran's reaction, especially during the tenure of US President Donald Trump, "but they themselves know that although we are open to negotiations, but we will never be blackmailed." Aref said that if the Western countries trigger the snapback mechanism that fully reinstates anti-Tehran sanctions that were lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal, they have practically moved toward the complete death of that agreement. The Iranian official also warned the Western

countries that the strategy of the Islamic Republic is "action for action." However, he said that the approach of the current government is constructive interaction and negotiation aimed at lifting the "cruel sanctions" reimposed by the West on Iran after the US withdrawal from the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). He recommended that parties to the agreement return to full compliance with the deal, saying, "We have not withdrawn from the JCPOA, and if the other parties return

to the JCPOA, we are ready."

In 2015, Iran proved the peaceful nature of its nuclear program to the world by signing the JCPOA with six world powers. However, Washington's unilateral withdrawal in 2018 and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran left the future of the deal in limbo.

In 2019, Iran started to scale back the limits it had accepted under the JCPOA after the other parties, especially the European ones, failed to live up to their commitments.

Egypt, Jordan rebuke Israel's takeover of Syrian territory



International Desk

Egypt and Jordan condemned Israel's takeover of the buffer zone with Syria after militants subverted the Damascus government following a surprise attack.

Egypt's Foreign Ministry said the Israeli move represented "occupation of Syrian land, and a severe breach of the two countries' 1974 disengagement agreement." It said Israel had "contravened international law, ex-

ploited the [current] state of fluidity and vacuum in Syria in order to occupy more Syrian land and to impose new facts on the ground in contravention of international law."

Egypt called on the UN Security Council and international powers to take a "firm position" towards "Israeli attacks" on Syria. Meanwhile, Jordan denounced Israel's decision to seize Syrian-held areas in a UN-patrolled buffer zone in the Golan Heights.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on Sunday he had ordered the army to "seize" the demilitarized zone in the Syrian-controlled part

of the Golan Heights.

"We condemn the fact that Israel has entered Syrian territory and taken control of the buffer zone," Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told parliament.

Safadi, whose country borders the Golan Heights, called the move a "violation of international law." Most of the Golan Heights plateau has been occupied since 1967 by Israel, which later annexed it in a move not recognized by most of the international community.

In 1974 a buffer zone was established to separate the Israeli-held and Syrian territories, with UN peacekeepers stationed there.

World must stand up to end Israel's century-long genocide: FM spokeswoman

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said the world must stop the Israeli regime's horrific century-long genocide of Palestinians.

Baghaei made the remark in a post on his X account on Monday on the occasion of the anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on December 9, 1948, Press TV reported.

"It is high time that the int'l community stood up in support of humanity and put an end to this horrific century-long genocide," he said.

More than 44,700 Palestinians, mostly children and women, have been killed in the Israeli campaign of genocide that began on October 7, 2023 following Operation Al-Aqsa Flood by the Palestinian resistance movements.

The brutal military onslaught enjoys unreserved military and political support on the part of the Israeli regime's Western allies, including the United States and France.

Baghaei added that genocide is defined as a specific set of acts committed in order to destroy, in whole or in part, a na-

tional, ethnic, racial or religious group. He emphasized that the Israeli regime is carrying out a "textbook case of genocide" in occupied Palestine 76 years after the adoption of the convention that avowed "never again."

The Iranian spokesperson said, "Israel is predicated on the goal of Palestinian erasure; its entire political system is directed towards this goal" as Special Rapporteur for Palestine Francesca Albanese has outlined in her October 2024 report to Human Rights Council (A/79/384).

"In fact, genocide is part of a century-long project of eliminatory settler-colonialism in Palestine, a stain on the international system and humanity, which must be ended, investigated and prosecuted," Baghaei wrote.

He noted that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on January 26 ruled that Israel must stop genocide and take all measures to prevent any acts contrary to the Genocide Convention.

"The occupying regime has been defying all SIX ICJ's provisional measures and continuing its barbaric genocide," he added.



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Cartoonist

