

ISIS flags flowing Syria after US-backed rampage

The Grayzone's Max Blumenthal and Aaron Mate explain how the military assault by the new Syrian government of former Al Qaeda leader Ahmad Al-Sharaa has opened the door for a resurgence of ISIS after removing the Kurdish SDF from the country's strategically significant northeast region. They point out that the military campaign was approved by the Trump administration, which has embraced Al-Sharaa even as it demonizes what it calls "radical Islam." ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

#Max

This appears to be a contemporary video from this week. Many people, especially supporters of Ahmed al-Sharra, the Syrian rebranded Al-Qaeda president, tried to claim it was old. But this was filmed this week in Raqqa, northeastern Syria.

#Guest

This is a video from northeastern Syria.

#Max

I feel like I'll get demonetized if I play an ISIS nasheed, but we oppose ISIS. We're anti-ISIS. Just—YouTube censors, don't get any ideas here.

#Aaron

One of the few leftist channels on Syria that are actually critical of ISIS.

#Max

Yeah, unlike The Intercept and Democracy Now, we're willing to—well, opposing that is considered using "war on terror" rhetoric, according to the Trotskyist left. This week, and this was all thanks to Tom Barrack, another billionaire real estate guy who was given an envoy position by Donald Trump. And this is what Tom Barrack had to say: "The greatest opportunity for the Kurds in Syria right now lies in the post-Assad transition under the new government led by President Ahmed al-Sharaa. It

offers a pathway to full integration into a unified Syrian state, with citizenship rights, cultural protections, and political participation that were denied under Assad, where Kurds faced statelessness.”

#Aaron

That's exactly what Assad offered them—exactly. But the U.S. blocked it. Anyway, sorry.

#Max

So, yes, the U.S. blocked it. Assad offered them that. I'm going to ask you about that in a second, but I'm just trying to summarize. Tom Barrack is imposing federalization on all the minorities of Syria in order to consolidate the rule of Ahmed al-Sharaa, because he has bowed before the U.S. and effectively allowed Israel to take the Golan. The Kurds are now suffering a rampage from al-Sharaa's forces, who are a collection of bandits, many of them from abroad, including Egyptian jihadists wanted in Egypt. Kurdish female fighters have had their throats slashed, their hair cut off—effectively scalped—are being massacred, and ISIS prisoners are being let out by the thousands in northeast Syria. Aaron, why was northeast Syria off-limits to the Assad government, and why is it now being federalized?

#Aaron

Well, the U.S. was occupying it to steal Syria's oil and wheat, to weaken the state enough so that it could push for regime change and overthrow Assad—which they finally achieved. During this period, they were using the Kurds to help keep Syria fragmented. They were essentially blocking a deal between the Kurds and the Syrian government because they didn't want to see a unified Syria. They wanted to keep it divided. They kept telling the Kurds, “Don't make a deal with Assad. You'll be denied your rights. Hold out for something better.”

Now that the U.S.'s only real goal has been achieved—which is overthrowing Assad—they're now turning around and telling the Kurds, “You must make a deal with the new government.” And in the process, they're letting the new government's forces massacre the Kurds. We've seen footage circulating on social media of gruesome atrocities committed against them. So this is the U.S. selling out another ally, because that ally was only supported as long as it served geopolitical goals—in this case, U.S.-Israeli hegemony by overthrowing a disobedient state in the form of the Assad government.

#Max

Very well put. We warned that after regime change, black flags would be flying over cities across Syria, and our detractors—who called us Assadists and tried to basically destroy us—would either say we were crazy conspiracy theorists or maybe even welcome it. But that's what's happening right

now. That's why Russia, Iran's IRGC, and Hezbollah intervened in Syria: to prevent that from happening. Iran wanted to stop it because, as Qasem Soleimani said during his life, if they didn't, it would end up inside Iran itself. And Syria is Iran's doorstep. So now it's happening. Everything we predicted is coming true. The government in Damascus does not respect minority rights, and its fighters—especially the foreign jihadists—see Alawites, Druze, and Kurds as basically satanic.

#Aaron

And in the process, a number of ISIS prisoners who were being held in Kurdish-controlled areas have been released.

#Max

Yes.

#Aaron

And it's unclear by whom. I mean, the bottom line is that the chaos caused by the U.S. selling out the Kurds and letting the new government attack them has led to the release of ISIS prisoners. And what's going to happen now? I mean, this is a really volatile situation. Yes, they're very indoctrinated—and now they're free to run wild. And the people will pay the price.

#Max

So, U.S. CENTCOM announced that it fears a breakout of these prisoners, which would pose a direct threat to the U.S. So they're transferring 7,000 ISIS detainees from Syria to Iraqi-controlled facilities—moving ISIS fighters closer to the Iranian border. They're saying they don't trust Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, a.k.a. al-Julani, or the Syrian government with these ISIS detainees anymore. But Syrian minorities who are not Sunni are expected to trust them with their lives. And they're moving them closer to Iran. We all know ISIS has been moved around to threaten any geopolitical foe the U.S. wanted to threaten. John Kerry admitted that in leaked recordings. That's essentially the thesis of my book, **The Management of Savagery**, which explains this whole project. And now it's happening again, at a time when the U.S. is potentially moving toward a regional war—war on Iran.

#Aaron

During the so-called U.S.-led campaign against ISIS under the Obama administration, the U.S. military watched as ISIS crossed through the desert and took Raqqa. They watched it happen. They let it happen because they wanted to use ISIS to weaken the Assad government. And it's the same playbook being repeated now—except this time it's the Kurds who have to pay the price for the U.S.

desire for hegemony. The reason they stand behind Damascus is because they have someone willing to do their bidding. But there are people like Lindsey Graham, who's now voicing outrage at the Kurds being abandoned.

#Max

Because he speaks on behalf of Israel, and Israel is actually not very comfortable with what's happening in Syria, it wants to keep the pressure on.

#Aaron

It's such a mess.

#Max

It's a mess, but it's actually not that complex if you just focus on the basics and where the U.S. stands. It was spelled out very clearly on a 2019 **Newsweek** cover: if Iran falls, ISIS rises again. It's just that simple. Look at the ISIS-like attacks that took place inside Iran on January 8th and 9th. Look at what's happening in northeast Syria after the Syrian army under Assad and Russia were pushed out of that area. The U.S. used the SDF as a card to hold it—the Kurds—and now the Kurds are removed and ISIS is rising again. And then they're moving ISIS fighters into Iraq, which is a majority Shia country. It's all very clear. It's a mess, but you don't have to be confused about it.

#Aaron

When is that cover from—2019?

#Max

And it was by one of the last good national security reporters at **Newsweek**—or really any mainstream publication—Tom O'Connor.

#Aaron

Well, that's another example of how we've regressed. There's no way that could be published now—absolutely no way. Just like our friend Alexander Cockburn and his wife, Leslie—they made documentaries in the '80s on PBS. There's no way you could air something like that now, about the Israeli military arming death squads in Central America or the CIA protecting drug runners. You just couldn't do that anymore. And just as you couldn't, in any major U.S. outlet, publish what was just published online. And that's all because of the Israel-first mindset, as we continue.

#Max

Not entirely, but yeah.

#Aaron

Well, I mean, okay.

#Max

State Department propaganda. Sure.

#Aaron

Yeah.