

The run is on

Clearance sale in Syria

by Karin Leukefeld,* Germany/Syria



Karin Leukefeld
(Photo ma)

The US, the EU, Israel, Turkey and their Arab partners in the Gulf – Saudi Arabia and Qatar – have achieved what they set out to do 20 years ago. The Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad no longer exists; the new rulers are those who

have been armed and trained by the “Friends of Syria” since 2011 with tens of billions of US dollars. “Sanctions are a slow-acting poison, like arsenic” explained Joseph Borrell, then EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to the EU Parliament in February 2023. “It takes time for them to take effect, but they are irreversible.” Unilateral economic sanctions imposed on Syria by the European Union and the United States have destroyed the country’s economy. Millions of US dollars paid to government and military defectors have paid off.

For 14 years, Syria has held out and, with the support of friendly states, has been able to defend its sovereignty against the powerful onslaught of its opponents. It stood by its strategic partnership with Iran, supported the Palestinian organisations in their resistance against Israel, and insisted on the return of the Syrian Golan Heights, which Israel had occupied in 1967 and annexed in 1981 in violation of international law. For 14 years, Syria defended itself exclusively within its national borders and – although con-



16 December 2024. Col. Jacques Baud:¹ “The purpose of the [HTS] insurgency was not to remove Bashar al-Assad. The purpose was to divide Syria.” (Picture ma)

stantly attacked, mainly by Israel, but also by NATO member Turkey – never attacked any of its neighbouring countries.

The country’s former educated elite now stabilises the gross national product in Europe. In the media and at universities, clever young Syrians are making sure that the independence of their homeland – which offered them a good education, free health care and a good life, especially in the years 2000 to 2011 – is sold for “freedom and democracy”. In doing so, they overlook the fact that none of them is given a say in the redesign of their country.

Syria, where dozens of armed groups and thousands of fighters from almost 100 countries around the world have been fighting with or against each other since 2011 with the help of their regional and international sponsors, is now controlled by “Al Qaeda in suits”. *Abu Mohamed al-Jolani*, alias *Ahmed as-Sharaa*, has shaved off his beard and ditched his uniform for tailored suits. He receives his guests in the presidential palace and sits with them in mother-of-pearl armchairs on cushions covered with Damascus silk brocade.

* Karin Leukefeld studied ethnology as well as Islamic and political sciences and is a trained bookseller. She has done organisational and public relations work for, among others, the Federal Association of Citizens' Initiatives for Environmental Protection (BBU), the Green Party (federal party) and the El Salvador Information Centre. She was also a personal assistant to a PDS member of parliament in Germany (foreign policy and humanitarian aid). Since 2000, she has worked as a freelance correspondent in the Middle East for various German and Swiss media. She is also the author of several books on her experiences from the war zones in the Middle East.

And the “Friends of Syria”, who have been isolating and sanctioning the country to death since 2011, are lining up in Damascus to demand their share of the spoils from the new ruler.

After the heads of the secret service from Turkey and Qatar, the Turkish foreign minister – himself a long-standing head of his country’s secret service and a good acquaintance of Al-Jolani – paid his respects to the new ruler. Foreign ministers from Jordan, Libya and Bahrain followed, and the Saudi Kingdom invited the foreign minister appointed by Al-Jolani and the new defence minister, along with the head of the secret service, to Riyadh to discuss further cooperation. The Lebanese Druze leader *Walid Jumblatt* travelled to Damascus with a delegation, and even a delegation from the Kurdish-led *Syrian Democratic Forces* (SDF) came to the Syrian capital for a “good” talk.

The Ukrainian Foreign Minister received special attention, and Al-Jolani immediately agreed to a “strategic partnership”. The Ukrainians had secured and supported the HTS advance into Aleppo at the end of November with advisors and their special forces, a foreign legion and the delivery of large quantities of drones.

Now *Annalena Baerbock*, foreign minister of the defeated Berlin traffic light government, has also arrived in Damascus. With helmet and protective vest and the newly appointed special coordinator for Syria, *Tobias Lindner* in tow, she marched at the head of her delegation to meet with Al-Jolani. Also present was the foreign minister of the current French government, *Jean-Noël Barrot*, with advisors. Although the end of the term of office of the German foreign minister has already been determined and no one knows how long the current French government can hold office, both travelled on behalf of the EU.

In a statement issued in advance by the Berlin *Foreign Office*, it was said that there could be a “fresh start” for Syria, provided that “all Syrians” were involved in the political process. The trip was a “clear signal” to the Syrians that “a new

political beginning between Europe and Syria, between Germany and Syria” was possible. After the “Assad chapter”, a “new chapter” was now being opened, but it had “not yet been written”.

The Syrians now had “the chance to take the fate of their state back into their own hands”. Ms Baerbock emphasised that the future relations of “the new Syrian government” with Germany and “Europe” would depend on the rights of women and men and all ethnic and religious faith communities. They must all be “protected”. French Foreign Minister Barrot also stated that “France and Germany stand by the Syrian people in all their diversity”. It is hoped that Syria will be “sovereign, stable and peaceful”.

Germany’s Green Party Foreign Minister Baerbock promised to help with the “processing of war crimes committed by the Assad regime” and with reconstruction. She demanded that there should be no foreign interference in Syria, that Russia must leave the country and that Syria’s sovereignty, and territorial integrity must be respected.

Germany and the EU had an objective in mind that was also desired by “millions of Syrians”: Syria should once again become a respected member of the international community and a “safe home for all its people” with “full control over its territory”. She explained that Syria’s security was “Europe’s security”.

The massive bombings in Syria by Israel’s air force, the advance of Israeli troops through the UN buffer zone on the Syrian Golan and the establishment of Israeli positions on Syrian territory, was not mentioned by Baerbock, nor was the occupation of Syrian oil fields and large areas in the northeast and south (Al Tanf) of the country by the US military, which is in violation of international law, and the occupation of northern and northwestern Syria by Turkish troops.

Source: *Zeitung vom Lëtzebuerger Vollek*, <https://www.zlv.lu/db/1/1499541394812/0>, 4 January 2025

(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WTIz0TFvXg>