Please cite as: EUAA, '1.2.2. Governance under the Transitional Administration ' in *COI Report - Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025.

1.2.2. Governance under the Transitional Administration

(a) Political transition

Following the fall of Bashar Al-Assad's government on 8 December 2024, a transitional administration was created. Former Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Jalali formally transferred power to Mohammed al-Bashir, the newly appointed transitional prime minister,[99]in order to ensure the continuation of state functions, as explained by Al-Jalali, including the payment of public-sector salaries.[100]

Al-Sharaa stated that the organisation of national elections could take up to five years due to the necessity of reconstructing the electoral infrastructure. He further asserted that Syria would be structured as 'a republic with a parliament and an executive government.'[101]

On 29 December, Ahmad al-Sharaa outlined a multi-year roadmap involving the drafting of a new constitution within three years and subsequent elections, alongside plans for a National Dialogue Conference to promote reconciliation and inclusivity. As part of the transition process, Al-Sharaa emphasised the importance of preserving national unity, rejecting federalism.[102] Initial negotiations were held with the SDF and Kurdish National Council (KNC) to involve Kurdish factions in the political process.[103] But the National Dialogue Conference, initially planned for early January was later postponed to establish a broader preparatory committee representing all segments of Syrian society.[104]It eventually took place on 25 February 2025, preceded by preparatory workshops at a local level.[105] It convened in Damascus with around 600 participants, with its closing statement emphasising Syria's territorial integrity, condemning Israeli incursions, and calling for a withdrawal. It further set out the adoption of a temporary constitutional declaration, the formation of an interim legislative council, and the preparation of a draft permanent constitution focused on human rights and freedom. The closing statement further mentioned the importance of

women's participation, peaceful coexistence, and the establishment of ongoing national dialogue mechanisms.106 The conference, however, faced criticism for being hastily organised and insufficiently representative.107

At the end of January, the transitional administration declared the annulment of Syria's 2012 constitution and the disbandment of the former government's parliament, military, and security agencies. Al-Sharaa stated that he would establish an interim legislative council to assist in governance until the adoption of a new constitution.108

☐ (b) Government formation

Following the assumption of power in Damascus, the HTS established a caretaker government primarily composed of officials from the former Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) in Idlib, which Al-Sharaa described as a temporary measure to maintain stability and restore essential services.109 Initially, ministers from the SSG assumed national ministerial posts,110 with some officials and civil servants from the former government remaining in their positions to ensure continuity.111

On 10 December 2024, Mohammed Al-Bashir, an engineer from Idlib governorate and former leader of the SSG in northwestern Syria, which was created with HTS, was appointed as interim prime minister. His tenure and that of the interim government was set to end on 1 March 2025,112 but as of late January 2025 there was no date for elections to be held in Syria.113 Meanwhile, Ahmad Al-Sharaa, leader of HTS, emerged as Syria's de facto leader. 114On 29 January 2025, Al-Sharaa was named president for the transitional period.115

On 21 December, the interim government appointed Asaad Hassan Al-Shibani as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Murhaf Abu Qasra as Minister of Defense, both of whom were known allies of Al-Shara..116

Other appointments included Mohamed Abdel Rahman as Minister of Interior, Mohammed Yaqoub Al-Omar as Minister of Information, Mohamed Taha Al-Ahmad as Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, Nazir Mohammed Al-Qadri as Minister of

Education, and Shadi Mohammed Al-Waisi as Minister of Justice, all of whom had previously held positions within the Salvation Government. Additionally, Fadi Al-Qassem, Mohamed Abdel Rahman Muslim, Hossam Hussein, and Basil Abdul Aziz took up their respective roles as Minister of Development, Minister of Local Administration and Services, Minister of Endowments, and Minister of Economy.117 Anas Khattab (also known by his nom de guerre Abu Ahmad Hudood), a previous leader of the Nusra Front, was appointed head of the General Intelligence Service. The appointment of Maher Al-Sharaa as Minister of Health sparked controversy, as he is the brother of Al-Sharaa. The new administration also included one woman, Aisha Al-Debs, as Director of the Women's Affairs Office.118

In January, the transitional administration conducted its first major cabinet reshuffle, replacing Mohammad Abdul Rahman with Ali Kidda as Minister of Interior. Kidda was reportedly a close associate of Al-Sharaa.119

According to BBC News, there was no transparent mechanism for selecting individuals for ministerial positions, and it remained unclear whether these appointments were made through consultation or solely by Al-Sharaa. This uncertainty fuelled discussions about potentially expanding the government to include members of the opposition abroad and domestic experts.120

☐ (c) Military reforms

Prior to their entry into Damascus on December 8, the HTS pledged to maintain Syria's institutional framework, later declaring a general amnesty for Syrian army soldiers.121 The transitional government consequently initiated a settlement process (for more information see section 1.3.1), which facilitated the reintegration of large numbers of former government and military personnel, including high-ranking officials, some of whom were involved in significant wartime abuses, such as Fadi Saqr. Next to the voluntary settlement procedures taking place, the Military Operations Administration (MOA), the umbrella command centre122 of the new HTS-led transitional administration, tracked down individuals evading settlement.123 As part of these campaigns previous officers were arrested, while others were released after it was established that they had not participated in abuses. According to Etana, concerns arose over a lack of process, as reports suggest executions of low-level militiamen, which authorities are framing as isolated acts of community revenge.124 The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), a UK-based monitoring organisation, reported in mid-January that 8 000 individuals struck reconciliation deals at the MOA centers in

Sallamiyah, Hama within a few days. The number of officers and members of the previous government's forces in prisons such as Adra, Hama, and Harim increased to over 9 000, including 2 000 who were returned from Iraq. Most were arrested after being caught in raids or checkpoints.125

The transitional government further abolished conscription,126 except in situations such as national emergencies.127According to Samir Saleh, member of the military command in Damascus countryside, the Syrian army is going to be an army of volunteers in which the population will be encouraged to participate, with the aim to secure the country's borders.128 Previous defectors, such as officers from the Free Syrian Army (FSA) will be given a special status within the structure of the Ministry of Defense, depending on their expertise.129 On December 29, a list of 49 new military commanders was published, including members of HTS, defected officers from the Syrian army, and at least six non-Syrians, with the seven highest-ranking positions reportedly filled by HTS members.130

Finally, the transitional government committed to integrating all rebel factions into the Ministry of Defense.131Between January and February 2025, the interim ministries of Defense and Interior undertook efforts to unify all armed factions into a single military and police force. The Ministry of Defence reported that over 70 factions across six regions had agreed to integrate, and a Supreme Committee was established to regulate military assets, including personnel, bases, and weaponry. On 29 January, the interim government formally announced the dissolution of all opposition parties and military groups, though the extent to which this applied to the SDF remained unclear. The SDF initially resisted integration, particularly after its proposal to join as a semi-autonomous entity was rejected by the Defence Ministry, which accused it of delaying negotiations,132but in early March it was announced that the SDF signed a deal to integrate their armed forces and civilian institutions into the new Syrian government. 133 By mid-February, the transitional administration had successfully integrated around 100 armed factions, including the U.S.-backed Syrian Free Army, into a new Syrian military and Ministry of Defense. However, some factions, such as the one of Ahmad al-Awda in southern Syria and various Druze military groups, remained resistant.134 The armed factions of Sweida governorate remained fully intact, with two new military bodies emerging in January.135

(d) Public sector reforms

In the early stages of the transition, the new administration intended to keep and reactivate key state institutions in order to maintain basic services. As a result, many important state institutions continued to function.[136] During the reporting period the new administration initiated some institutional reforms. Upon assuming control, the transitional administration reinstated public sector employees previously dismissed for their involvement in the Syrian revolution[137] while simultaneously dismissing hundreds of employees from a single directorate as part of a restructuring effort with the declared aim of downsizing institutions and removing ineffective personnel.[138] While the transitional administration is stating economic reasons for the dismissals, some former employees accuse the new administration of basing their dismissals on sectarian and political grounds.[139] Qatar announced its intention to help fund a 400 % increase in public sector wages, which had been pledged by the interim government. The foreign funding was not yet confirmed at the time of writing.[140]

In order to remove members of the bar association who had been appointed by the Baath Party, the transitional administration replaced the council of Syria's Central Bar Association with members of the Free Bar Association from Idlib.[141] Khitam Haddad, Deputy Minister of Justice since 2023, retained her position and announced at the beginning of January that criminal and civil cases would resume under the transitional authorities, but that crimes committed during the previous regime would not yet be addressed. Some lawyers criticised the transitional authorities' unelected Bar Association council as authoritarian, while Assad-era legal structures, including the terrorism law, remained intact.[142]

Further steps by the new administration included the transfer of control over border crossings with Türkiye — such as Bab Al-Salama, Al-Rai, and Jarablus — to the transitional administration, as well as the integration of educational institutions like the University of Aleppo under the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Damascus.[143] Finally, NGOs were required by the Ministry of Social and Labour Affairs to go through a process of re-registration, which according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) has impeded the restoration of numerous health and protection facilities, limiting their ability to sustain the provision of medical and social services.[144]

(e) Economic reforms and sanctions

The transitional administration started to initiate economic reforms, with HTS announcing its intention to implement a free-market system.145 Institutional reforms included the layoffs of state employees to downsize state institutions, with plans to dismiss a third of all public sector employees – including so called 'ghost employees' – and to move to a free-market economy.146 Maysaa Sabrine was appointed governor of the Central Bank, and transitional Finance Minister Mohammed Abazeed introduced plans to restructure government ministries for improved efficiency and accountability, though specific modernisation measures remained unclear. Abazeed also proposed an overhaul of the tax system. To mitigate potential shortages in goods, the government reopened the Nasib border crossing with Jordan, a key trade route, and directed the state-owned Syrian Petroleum Company to resume operations. Meanwhile, Türkiye signalled its willingness to invest in Syria's economy.147

In early January, the United States issued a six-month sanctions exemption, effective until 7 July, to facilitate humanitarian aid following Assad's departure. The exemption allowed specific transactions with governing institutions at all levels, including hospitals, schools, and utilities, as well as entities affiliated with HTS across Syria. While the sanctions themselves were to remain in place, the exemption permitted activities related to the sale, supply, and storage of energy, including petroleum and electricity, and enabled personal remittances and certain energy-related transactions aimed at supporting economic recovery.148 On 24 February, the EU Council decided to lift various restrictive measures, including those affecting the energy and transport sectors. It also excluded four banks and Syrian Arab Airlines from the list subject to asset freezes and permitted the Syrian Central Bank access to financial resources. Furthermore, exceptions were made to allow banking relations between Syrian banks and financial institutions within member states. The existing humanitarian exemption was extended indefinitely, and a new exception was introduced for personal use concerning the export ban on luxury goods to Syria.149

(f) Political transition in accordance with UN Resolution 2254

Ahmad Al-Sharaa has criticised international organisations, particularly the United Nations, for their perceived ineffectiveness in addressing Syria's humanitarian crises. He highlighted the UN's failure to secure the release of detainees and facilitate the return of refugees over the past 14 years.150 Emphasising the need for domestic solutions, Al-Sharaa called for updates to UN Resolution 2254, originally adopted in December 2015 to guide Syria's political transition, arguing that its framework was no longer fully applicable to the situation since the fall of Bashar Al-Assad.151 In an interview with Al Arabiya, Al-Sharaa reiterated his criticism of the UN and advocated for an alternative transition process. He proposed delaying elections for up to four years to allow for the development of a revised political framework. During a meeting with UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen, he rejected the rigid adherence to what he called outdated resolutions and outlined his vision for a transition process that reflects Syria's current realities.152 Despite his criticisms, Al-Sharaa affirmed that Syria is prepared to accept the deployment of UN forces within the United Nations-established buffer zone along the Israeli border.153

On 6 February, the transitional administration prolonged the UN's authorisation to deliver humanitarian aid via the Bab al-Hawa crossing for an extra six months, until 7 August.154

- 99

  Al Jazeera, Syria's new rulers must not repeat the past mistakes of Lebanon and Iraq, 16 December 2024, url

- 100

  Syrian Observer (The), Al-Jalali: Employees' Salaries Secured by the Central Bank, 12 December 2024, url

- 101

  France24, Syria's interim president says organising elections could take up to five years, 3 February 2025, url

- 102

  L24, Al-Sharaa Outlines Vision for Syria's Future, 29 December 2024, url

- 103

  Rudaw, Syrian government to engage SDF, ENKS in national dialogue conference, 30 December 2024,url

- 104

  Al Mayadeen, Syrian Christians cannot afford to keep turning the other cheek, 23 January 2025, url

- 105

  Enab Baladi, With 18 points… National Dialogue Conference concludes its work, 26 February 2025, url

- 106

  UNHCR, Regional Flash Update #16, Syria situation crisis, 27 February 2025, url, p. 2

- 107

  Reuters, Syria to hold dialogue conference amid criticism over inclusivity, 24 February 2025, url; Etana Syria, BLOG: Syrian National Dialogue Conference falls short of expectations, 3 March 2025, url

- 108

  BBC News, Ahmed al-Sharaa named Syria's transitional president, 31 January 2025, url

- 109

  International Crisis Group, Key Decision Loom as Syria Enters a New Era, 14 January 2025, url

- 110

  Al Jazeera, What to know about Syria’s new caretaker government, 15 December 2024, url

- 111

  CRS, Syria: Regime Change, Transition, and U.S. Policy, 13 December 2024, url, p. 3

- 112

  MEE, Mohammed al-Bashir: Who is Syria's new interim prime minister?, 10 December 2024, url; Al Jazeera, Syrian fighters name Mohammed al-Bashir as caretaker prime minister, 10 December 2024,url

- 113

  Al Jazeera, President al-Sharaa and no more Baath party: What else has Syria announced?, 29 January 2025, url

- 114

  Al Arabiya, Syria’s new elections and draft constitution: Al-Sharaa outlines timeline, 29 December 2024, url

- 115

  Al Jazeera, President al-Sharaa and no more Baath party: What else has Syria announced?, 29 January 2025, url

- 116

  Al Jazeera, Syrian authorities appoint HTS figures as foreign, defence ministers, 21 December 2024url

- 117

  Al Jazeera, تشكيلة الوزراء في حكومة تصريف الأعمال السورية بعد خلع الأسد [The lineup of ministers in the Syrian caretaker government after the ouster of Assad], 25 December 2024, url

- 118

  BBC News, أنس خطّاب، من مُدرج على قائمة العقوبات إلى رئيس لجهاز الاستخبارات في سوريا [Anas Khattab, from Sanctions Listed to Head of Intelligence in Syria], 24 December 2024, url

- 119

  Syrian Observer (The), Syria Appoints Ali Kidda as Minister of Interior in a Significant Reshuffle, 20 January 2025, url

- 120

  BBC News, أنس خطّاب، من مُدرج على قائمة العقوبات إلى رئيس لجهاز الاستخبارات في سوريا [Anas Khattab, from Sanctions Listed to Head of Intelligence in Syria], 24 December 2024, url

- 121

  Al Jazeera, Syria’s new rulers must not repeat the past mistakes of Lebanon and Iraq, 16 December 2024, url

- 122

  Waters, G., Security in Alawite regions in post-Assad Syria, MEI, 21 January 2025, url

- 123

  Etana Syria, Syria Update #13: 10 January, 9 January 2025, url

- 124

  Etana Syria, Syria Update #13: 10 January, 9 January 2025, url

- 125

SOHR, Hama | 8,000 people settle security situations in centres of Military Operations Administration in Sallamiyah in ten days, 17 January 2025, url

- 126

  New Arab (The), Why Al-Sharaa's scrapping of conscription for Syrians matters, 16 December 2024, url

- 127

  New Arab (The), Why Al-Sharaa's scrapping of conscription for Syrians matters, 16 December 2024, url

- 128

  Memri TV, Military Command Member In Damascus Countryside: We Are Ending Mandatory Military Conscription – The New Syrian Army Will Be An Army Of Volunteers, 11 January 2025, url

- 129

  Asharq Al-Awsat, Syrian Defense Ministry to Restructure Army with Volunteer Force, 14 January 2025, url

- 130

  France24, 'Foreign jihadists' in Syria leader's pick for army officers: monitor, experts, 30 December 2024, url

- 131

  Guardian (The), Syrian HTS leader says rebel factions that overthrew Assad will be ‘disbanded’, 17 December 2024, url

- 132

  New Arab (The), Forging a united front: The challenges of building Syria's new army, 3 February 2025, url

- 133

  BBC News, Kurdish-led SDF agrees to integrate with Syrian government forces, 11 March 2025, url

- 134

  Zelin, A.Y, The Status of Syria’s Transition After Two Months, TWI, 12 February 2025, url

- 135

Syria Direct, Can Suwayda’s factions enforce security and stop the spread of weapons?, 6 February 2025, url

- 136

  Al Jazeera, What to know about Syria’s new caretaker government, 15 December 2024, url; Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (The), A Post-Assad Syria: Navigating the Transition Ahead, 19 December 2024, url

- 137

  Enab Baladi, Syria’s new administration reinstates dismissed workers to their jobs, 23 December 2024, url

- 138

  ARK News, Protests in Daraa Over Dismissal of 700 Health Directorate Employees, 9 January 2025, url

- 139

  Le Monde, En Syrie, climat de purge dans le secteur public, 20 February 2025, url

- 140

  Reuters, Exclusive: Qatar plans to help boost Syrian government salaries, sources say, 7 January 2025,url

- 141

  Le Monde, In Syria, lawyers worry about the new regime's stranglehold on the bar, 20 January 2025, url

- 142

  BBC News, Calls for justice and accountability in Syria grow after Assad's fall, 6 January 2025, url

- 143

  Syria TV, Syrian Interim Government: No Contact with New Damascus Government, 16 January 2025, url

- 144

  UNFPA, Situation Report #1 Humanitarian Needs in Syria, 15 January 2025, url, p. 3

- 145

  Al Jazeera, Rebuilding Syria’s economy: Can stability return after war?, 8 January 2025, url

- 146

Reuters, Syria's new Islamist rulers to roll back state with privatizations, public sector layoffs, 31 January 2025, url

- 147

Al Jazeera, Rebuilding Syria’s economy: Can stability return after war?, 8 January 2025, url

- 148

Reuters, US allows transactions with governing institutions in Syria despite sanctions, 6 January 2025, url

- 149

European Council, Syria: EU suspends restrictive measures on key economic sectors, 24 February 2025, url

- 150

Levant24, Al-Sharaa Outlines Vision for Syria’s Future, 29 December 2024, url; Guardian (The), The UN wants to influence a pluralist Syria – but will the country listen?, 8 January 2025, url

- 151

Enab Baladi, “2254”..Uncertain presence in Syria’s future, 4 January 2025, url

- 152

Guardian (The), The UN wants to influence a pluralist Syria – but will the country listen?, 8 January 2025, url

- 153

Reuters, Syria's de facto leader says country ready to welcome UN forces in buffer zone with Israel, 16 January 2025, url

- 154

Security Council Report, Syria: Briefing and Consultations, 11 February 2025, url

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu