



### [Bashar Al-Assad Meets with Senior Middle Eastern Lawmakers in a Sign of Warming Relations After Decades of Isolation for Syria](#)

The meeting that occurred between Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, and a distinguished coterie of Arab legislators hailing from Oman, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Libya, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, signals a momentous occasion for Syria - one that breaks through years of being relegated to the fringes of the international community. This confluence of events hints at a thawing of relations between Syria and its Arab counterparts, portending a surge of opportunities for the country and its authoritarian leadership.

The meeting between Arab lawmakers and Syrian with al-Assad suggests that there is growing acceptance and partnerships between authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. This trend began to show after the Arab Spring, when many authoritarian regimes in the area, frightened by the prospect of a similar revolutionary movement, began working together to help each reinforce the power of their authoritarian regimes and undermine democratic movements in the region. This network of dictators has been slowly but steadily growing. The meeting with the Arab lawmakers is a significant boost for al-Assad, who has faced significant isolation from the Arab world since the 2011 uprisings against his government. The Arab League expelled Syria from the organization in 2011, and other Arab nations recalled their ambassadors from Damascus. This isolation made it difficult for Syria to access international aid, trade, and investment, making it challenging for the country to rebuild after years of war. Assad was welcomed in Abu Dhabi and Dubai last year on his first trip to an Arab country since the start of the war, and the UAE restored its Syrian embassy in 2018.

In a remarkable display of solidarity, Arab nations have rallied behind Syrian President Al-Assad in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that rocked Syria in February, claiming the lives of over 5,900 people. Countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, who previously supported rebels in their bid to overthrow Al-Assad during the early stages of the Syrian crisis, have contributed aid to the country. This outpouring of support has been further reinforced by the upcoming visit of Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry to Damascus - the first visit by an Egyptian foreign minister to Syria since the crisis began in 2011. Shoukry's visit aims to extend a message of compassion and solidarity from Egypt to the people of Syria, primarily focusing on humanitarian relief efforts. Natasha Hall, a senior fellow at the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, stated that the meeting between al-Assad and the delegation of senior Arab lawmakers indicates a significant turning point in the trend towards normalization. "We are seeing high-level diplomats meeting Assad and also real material support going to the regime," she added. This development follows recent high-level diplomatic visits, including Jordan's foreign minister Ayman Safadi's visit to Damascus and al-Assad's visit to

Oman. Additionally, Saudi Arabia has announced that there is growing consensus in the Arab world that isolating Syria is not effective and that dialogue with Damascus is necessary.

The winds of change seem to be blowing in Bashar al-Assad's favor, as he gradually mends his ties with the Arab world. However, it remains to be seen if this progress will lead to meaningful diplomatic and economic collaborations. Assad has rarely left Syria throughout the conflict, save for visits to Russia and Iran. This lack of diplomacy highlights the intense isolation that Syria has faced and the herculean task of reviving his country's international image. Undoubtedly, the recent meeting between al-Assad and senior Arab lawmakers marks a pivotal juncture for Syria after years of ostracism. Nevertheless, it also raises concerns about the rise of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and their potential collaborations. It is critical for the international community to continue supporting democratic movements in the region and work towards resolving the ongoing conflicts in Syria and other parts of the Middle East through peaceful means.