



[Syrian Delegation Travels to Saudi Arabia for Its First Official Trip Abroad Since the Ousting of Assad](#)

This week, a Syrian delegation led by newly-appointed Foreign Minister Asaad Al-Shaibani traveled to Saudi Arabia for its first official visit abroad since the toppling of the Assad regime last month. Al-Shaibani was appointed foreign minister back on December 21st by Syria's interim government, and the delegation also included Syrian Defense Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra. Saudi officials relayed discussing how to best support Syria's ongoing political transition, while Al-Shaibani himself called for the lifting of all sanctions on Syria and outlined the new administration's plans for the country's future. The visit was organized at the invitation of Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, with Al-Shaibani highlighting it as a critical opportunity to establish stronger relations between Syria and Saudi Arabia in various aspects.

Previously, Saudi Arabia had severed ties with the Assad regime early during the Syrian civil war, however, in May of 2023, Riyadh normalized relations and was a key figure in ending Syria's regional isolation and paving the way for its return to the Arab League under Assad. Now, following the ousting of the Assad regime, it is believed that Syria's new leadership is eager for Saudi investment in an effort to help rebuild the country's infrastructure which has been decimated by more than a decade of war. Experts have also pointed to how the swift and surprising toppling of Assad has presented Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations with an opportunity to try and fill the void by developing close ties with the new government in Damascus. Furthermore, Syria's new administration brings with it potential economic gains for other countries to engage in its post-conflict rebuilding – something that is certainly a factor in Gulf states' assessments for the benefits of involvement in this process. With Syria's infrastructure in major need of revamping, Saudi Arabia and others stand to profit from playing a role in its reconstruction efforts and are likely to use it as a means of seeking to hold sway over the country's future.

In addition to the delegation of Syrian officials' first diplomatic trip to Saudi Arabia, European ministers have also recently traveled to Syria in an attempt to strengthen ties with the new government. Top diplomats from Germany and France visited Damascus on behalf of the European Union in the latest show of outreach towards the new administration in Syria. Both the French and German foreign ministers met with Syrian officials this week, merely some of the latest efforts from various countries to begin forging ties with the new Syrian leadership. The visiting ministers expressed their support for a peaceful and inclusive transition in Syria, and made a stop at Sednaya Prison – touring the cells and underground dungeons of the facility where Assad regime officials committed atrocities against Syrian dissidents and opponents. Just a couple of weeks ago in late December, U.S. officials also met with their Syrian counterparts in Damascus, which included Syria's de-facto leader Ahmed al-Sharaa. U.S. diplomats came out of the gathering describing it as a “good” and “very productive” meeting with him regarding Syria's political transition.

So far, the new Syrian administration has appointed officials to oversee the political transition, and has stated its intent to establish a caretaker government in consultation with Syrians of all backgrounds, as well as a committee to draft a new Syrian constitution.