



Syria and the Prospect of Regional Stability

Since the ousting of the Assad regime back in December of last year, Syria has been in the midst of a delicate political transition that many observers have outlined as being crucially important for the prospect of regional stability. The new government's ability to unify the country and address significant economic, political, and humanitarian challenges will ultimately determine the path forward for Syria. One of the current developments that analysts are particularly keen to follow is the upcoming elections that are due to take place. The first parliamentary elections following the collapse of the previous regime are scheduled for this coming Sunday, October 5th, and will help produce a new People's Assembly of Syria. While this will consist of an indirect and transitional voting system whereby one-third of representatives will be appointed by Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa, the elections represent a key step in the transitional process and the potential for increased governmental legitimacy in the eyes of the Syrian population and the world at-large.

Experts have highlighted that the process signals the interim government is interested in initiating institutional reconstruction and encouraging the political participation of its citizens. As such, the upcoming elections will serve as a vital test of the new administration's commitment to building state institutions and creating a more inclusive civil society in the country. Others have also referenced how the formation of a new legislative body will offer a telling indication as to whether Syria's current leadership is prepared to embrace pluralism and institutional reform. All of this comes at a critical time for the bolstering of the new government's legitimacy, both domestically and internationally. Last week, Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa addressed the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), marking the first time that a Syrian head of state had done so since 1967. The appearance at the UNGA was a notable occasion and signaled the country's return to the international stage after decades of global isolation under the repressive Assad regime.

The new People's Assembly of Syria that is slated to be formed following the upcoming parliamentary elections will include 210 members. It was initially planned to consist of 150 members but was later expanded after community consultations. Two-thirds of members will be selected through a committee-led process, while the remaining one-third will be appointed by the president. As for the reasoning behind the planned format of this upcoming election, Syrian authorities have expressed that it would not be feasible to create an accurate voter registry and conduct a popular vote at this junction given that millions of Syrians were internally or externally displaced by the country's nearly 14-year conflict and many have lost personal documents. Thus, the intent is to have the newly established parliament serve a 30-month term, during which the government will prepare for a popular vote in the next elections.

Stability in Syria is vital to the entire region as a whole. Years of conflict between 2011 and 2024 under the now deposed Assad regime resulted in one of the largest displacement crises in the world, with millions of Syrians becoming refugees in neighboring countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. Therefore, increased stability and domestic societal improvements in Syria would help create the environment that allows many of those that were forcibly displaced to safely reintegrate. It can also alleviate humanitarian conditions in Syria by enabling the delivery of essential aid and attracting foreign investment in order to facilitate much-needed infrastructure reconstruction following decades of repressive rule. Additionally, a unified Syria will be less susceptible to

destructive external interference (from Israel in particular) and mitigate regional tensions driven by outside forces. Ultimately, a stable Syria signals a commitment to peace and encourages increased regional and international diplomacy, support, and engagement in the country's recovery and development.