

The New Syria and the War on Political Islam

(Translated)

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By: Ustadh Ahmed Al-Qasas*

It has become clear to anyone familiar with international and regional policies in the Eastern Mediterranean region that what's happening in Syria is part of a larger plan by the United States for the region. This plan has faced some obstacles, which the U.S. has worked hard to overcome, in the aftermath of the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation. This includes the destruction of Gaza and efforts to weaken Hamas's military strength, targeting Iran's Lebanese military branch in both Lebanon and Syria, as well as airstrikes on Iran's nuclear program. Before all this, the U.S. had already engaged Russia in the war in Ukraine.

Currently, the U.S. strategy for the region is progressing. The most cooperative state in this strategy right now seems to be Syria. In Gaza, Hamas is still negotiating; in Lebanon, the Hezb of Iran, the Iranian-backed group, is still maneuvering; and even Iran is still looking for deals to maintain some of its strength and influence in the region. However, in Syria, things are flowing smoothly within the U.S. plan. There is almost complete alignment between the Syrian government and the U.S., with signs of this growing stronger each day. One recent example is Syria's president attending United Nations meetings and having side meetings, including one with the U.S. president. Also, a significant meeting took place between him and former U.S. General David Petraeus, who was once the head of US Central Command (USCENTCOM) and the CIA. Their meeting was marked by a friendly and cooperative tone.

There have also been several statements indicating agreement between both sides, especially when it comes to the idea of stopping political Islam, or Islamism, in Syria. For instance, in August, U.S. special envoy for Syria, Tom Barrack, stated an allowance "to keep their own integrity, their culture, their own language, and no threat of Islamism." His words were echoed by Syrian official Ahmed al-Sharaa, who, though controversial, stated in a public interview that "Islamic principles are a failure." He also said, "We cannot import ready-made systems or bring in historical systems and apply them to Syria." His words clearly reject the idea of applying Islamic governance in Syria. No one is suggesting that Syria should adopt Roman, Greek, or Persian systems, but the repeated question remains: Will the new Syria embrace Islamic Shariah Law as its system of governance?

In Syria, there has been talk of a unique cultural identity for the Syrian people that spans thousands of years. This statement suggests that the Syrian identity and civilization are not part of the broader Islamic civilization, which began with the rise of Islam, but rather a distinct, ancient heritage that predates Islam by millennia. The strange irony is that while the former Baathist regime of the Assad family used to promote a shallow Arab nationalist agenda, now the jihadist leader al-Jolani has tried to place Syria in a smaller, artificial shell, the idea of a nationalistic identity.

In this context also comes the Syrian regime's stance of blocking the Muslim Brotherhood from opening a branch in Syria. It is no secret that this stance aligns with the decision of regional regimes subservient to the US decision to ban any activity or even any presence of the group, including the Jordanian regime, which has long been known for containing the Muslim Brotherhood. This position in Syria was taken on by Al-Jolani's media broker, Ahmed Muwaffaq Zaydan, who had previously justified the arrest campaign launched by Al-Jolani in Idlib against Hizb ut Tahrir dawah carriers, most of whom are still in Idlib's prisons to this day.

The latest shock for the people of Syria came when the Minister of Education issued a decision to reduce the number of Islamic culture classes, from the already limited four hours per week to just two, while increasing hours for subjects like music and arts. In a similar vein, after videos surfaced showing school students chanting Islamic slogans in Syria – most notably the slogan – “Our leader forever is our master Muhammad” – the Ministry of Education issued a directive banning any chants or slogans, in both public and private schools at all educational levels. This ban would remain in place until the national anthem of the Syrian Arab Republic was adopted as the official school song. The ministry clarified in a memo to local education directors that no type of slogan or anthem would be allowed in any school, based on the decisions of the Higher Education Council.

These actions clearly show that the Damascus regime isn't just enforcing a secular constitution and ruling in a non-Islamic manner, but also following U.S. directives to eliminate any visible signs of Islam from the state's institutions – whether in schools, universities, the military, or security forces. They have even banned any political activity based on Islamic principles or governance systems.

Furthermore, the Syrian Ministry of Defense issued a new regulation, at the end of August, that prohibits the use or display of any unapproved symbols or flags on military uniforms, including religious symbols. The regulation mandates that military personnel must only wear the official insignia approved by the ministry, after many soldiers had been attaching the Islamic declaration of Iman, the Shahada – “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah” – on their uniforms.

And after all that, the question is: will the people of Syria accept secularism, forget the Islamic project, stop living an Islamic life, and abandon their civilization and Islamic system?

The answer is: it won't be long before Syrians see the conspiracy to impose secularism on them. Many are already shocked as they watch even the smallest signs of Islam in their children's education being attacked. Right now, this is only an exceptional case – a transitional stage. Later, the aware elite – especially those who follow Islam and adhere themselves to its Aqeedah (doctrine)– will realize that the current project in Syria is a secular one and that it is part of America's plan for the region. When that happens, the struggle to restore the Islamic way of life will grow stronger. And who is more suitable than the people of al-Sham, the heart of the abode of the believers, to lead such a project?

*** Member of the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir**