

Why Israel must support Syria's minorities - opinion

Israel may be the only hope for vulnerable minorities in Syria in need of protection from the new Syrian regime.



THE US has lifted economic sanctions on Syria and President Donald Trump even met with Ahmed al-Sharaa in May, in Riyadh, praising him highly, the writer notes.(photo credit: SAUDI PRESS AGENCY/REUTERS)

By **MEM HUSEDIN, JASON SHVILI**

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Last week, the IDF attacked Syrian security forces in order to protect the Druze minority in southern Syria and prevent jihadist forces from approaching Israel's border. Despite Israel's efforts, however, hundreds of Druze were brutally massacred by Syrian forces and Beduin terrorists.

Israel may be the only hope for vulnerable minorities in Syria in need of protection from [threats emanating from the new Syrian regime](#), bent on centralizing power in Damascus, and from Turkey, whose Islamist president is determined to create a new Ottoman Empire.

After rebel forces led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, also known as Abu Muhammad al-Julani, deposed the regime of former Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, minority communities in the country became concerned for their safety. They had every reason to worry. Sharaa and his Sunni Islamist militant group, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), were formerly part of al-Qaeda – which has a brutal, bloody reputation for murdering anyone who disagrees with them, including ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East.

Indeed, it wasn't long before supporters of Syria's new regime began murdering members of the country's Alawite Muslim community – once the epicenter of support for the former Assad regime.

US President Donald Trump even met with Sharaa in May, heaping him with praise and hoping he and his new regime would restore peace and stability to Syria. In fact, Trump appears so convinced of Sharaa's desire for peace and stability that he opposed Israel's actions in southern Syria. On Friday, Israel and Syria began a US-brokered ceasefire.

Israel's concern about Syria's Druze and Kurds

The welfare of Syria's Druze is of particular concern to Israel, in great part due to the presence of a large Israeli Druze community, who have [strong ties to their kinsmen](#) in Syria. Israel's Druze have demonstrated fierce loyalty to the Jewish state. Like the country's Jewish citizens, Israeli Druze perform compulsory military service and have proven to be some of the country's best soldiers. Many have given their lives in the service of Israel, including some who have perished in the current war against Hamas and Iran's other Islamist proxy terrorist groups.

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It is in Israel's best interests [to protect the Druze](#) of southern Syria, not only because doing so is moral and just, but because Syria's Druze provide a buffer between Israel and Sharaa's Islamist forces. If they are exterminated, radical Islamist forces will be sitting right on the Syrian border with Israel. And obviously, Israel doesn't need more enemies on its borders.

Another minority group that Israel has a vested interest in protecting is the Kurds in northeastern Syria. The Kurds have been instrumental in combating the Islamic State in both Syria and Iraq. Therefore, the US has considered them a valuable ally. Approximately 12,000 brave Kurdish soldiers gave their lives to destroy ISIS and liberate the vast swathes of territory that the terrorist group once controlled.

After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the Kurds of north and northeastern Syria, who call the region they control the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) – known as Rojava to the Kurds – have enjoyed a measure of autonomy. Now, however, their future is under severe threat. Although they have expressed their willingness to integrate into a new Syria, they have insisted that they be allowed to keep a certain degree of autonomy – a demand that is more than reasonable.

In fact, the least countries that host large, indigenous Kurdish communities can do is give them control over their own affairs, especially when you consider that the Kurds were forcibly integrated into countries with artificial borders drawn up by European colonial powers.

Nevertheless, Sharaa has refused to allow [Syria's Kurds to maintain their current autonomy](#), insisting on a unitary Syria ruled from Damascus. And unfortunately, the US backs his position. In addition, the US has begun to withdraw its own forces from Kurdish-held territory in Syria, which have provided the Kurds protection against ISIS and a buffer against Turkey.

Turkey's encroachment

Turkey has been encroaching on Kurdish territory almost since the Syrian civil war began.

Turkish forces and proxy militias backed by Turkey have killed thousands of Kurds and driven thousands more from their homes, occupying a large part of northern Syria. The Turks have established bases in Syria, which pose a threat, not only to the Kurds, but potentially to Israel, as Turkey's Islamist President Recep Tayyip Erdogan regards the Jewish state as an abomination that must be destroyed.

As a NATO member, Turkey leverages its geography, controlling passage to the Black Sea to counter Russia, and securing Western support while pursuing its own ambitions in Syria.

Ankara views the Middle East as the hinterland of the Ottoman Empire, which it claims to have inherited under Erdogan's leadership, with Sunni Arabs as subjects and Israel as a "crusader state" to be expelled. Unlike Iran, which relies on Shia proxies such as Hamas, Turkey uses direct military force and territorial expansion in Syria and Iraq to assert dominance and hegemony.

Israel must decide: wage endless wars against successive imperial powers – Iran today, Turkey tomorrow – or support a redrawing of the region's arbitrary borders to foster stability.

These borders, drawn by colonial powers, ignore the region's demographic realities.

Just as Jews are the indigenous people of the land of Israel, the Kurds are the rightful inhabitants of their lands, with a history stretching back as far as recorded history and beyond. Supporting Kurdish autonomy in north and eastern Syria's Rojava region, alongside protections for the Druze and Alawites, aligns with Israel's interests. These minorities serve as buffers against hostile forces, from HTS to Turkey's expansionist agenda.

The West, focused on containing Russia, overlooks Turkey's imperial ambitions and ignores the challenges of Syria's minorities. The US withdrawal from Kurdish-held areas and its support for Sharaa's centralized Syria weaken the Kurds, leaving them vulnerable to Turkish aggression.

Israel cannot rely on Western intervention.

Instead, it must form and foster alliances with the Kurds and other minorities, leveraging their shared indigenous legitimacy to reshape the region's political map. By championing their autonomy, Israel can secure its borders and counter Turkey's growing threat. It is an either/or situation. If Israel does not intervene, Turkey will. Where Israel hesitates, its enemies will not.

This is a moment for bold leadership. Israel must act decisively to protect the Druze and support Kurdish self-determination, not only for moral reasons but to ensure a stable, secure future in a region plagued by imperial ambitions.

Mem Husedin, born in Iskenderun and based in Vancouver, is a writer on international politics, the Middle East, and Kurdistan. He is vice president of the Canadian Kurdistan Confederation and hosts the podcasts Rojava Kurdistan and KurdTalk. On X @mhusedin. Jason Shvili, based in Toronto, is a freelance writer and commentator on Jewish affairs, Israel and the Middle East. On X @JShvili.

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