

German response to Assad's downfall: glorifying HTS Islamists, militarism and anti-refugee agitation

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“Political reaction all along the line is a characteristic feature of imperialism,” Lenin declared in the midst of the mass extermination and barbarism of World War I. The reaction of the ruling class in Germany to the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria fully corresponds with this “feature.”

Politicians and media outlets of all stripes are celebrating the coming to power of Islamist militias in Damascus, advocating a stronger role for German imperialism in Syria and throughout the region, and demanding the rapid return of Syrian refugees to the war-torn country now terrorized by Islamists close to Al Qaeda.

In his first statement on the situation, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democrats, SPD) described “the end of Assad’s rule over Syria” as “good news.” Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock made a similar statement. One cannot “say exactly what is happening now in Syria. But what is clear is that the end of Assad means for millions of people in Syria a first big sigh of relief after an eternity of the Assad regime’s atrocities.”

Leading politicians of the opposition parties in the Bundestag and the major media outlets have joined forces to praise the Islamists in the strongest terms. Some of the particularly repulsive comments of jubilation in this regard can be found in the press close to the Left Party. “The late-blooming Revolution in Syria,” was the title of the first commentary in *Neues Deutschland*. It praised the “success of the opposition groups” as “unprecedented,” and fantasized:

“Initial official announcements give hope that the transition to a new Syria could actually be completed without further suffering. The leader of the Islamist militia Haiat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, instructed his fighters not to damage state institutions; he also assured that no distinction would be made between religions or ethnicities, all were Syrians.”

This corresponds to the propaganda of the German government, which in turn trivializes the Islamists and works with them to secure the influence of Berlin in the imperialist subjugation of Syria and the entire Middle East, and to push back the influence of Russia and Iran. The HTS militia has

created facts on the ground in “the last few days and, whether we like it or not, it will play a role in the further course of the reorganization of Syria,” said Federal Foreign Office spokesman Sebastian Fischer at the federal press conference centre on Monday.

HTS has “separated” from the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra Front and is “trying to pursue a different course, at least in its statements to the outside world.” In addition, it has “made efforts in recent months and years to distance itself from her jihadist origins” and “built up a civil administration in its territory in Idlib.” And, their leaders have “said in recent days that they call for the protection of minorities or warned against acts of revenge, for example.” Ultimately, HTS must be “measured by its actions.”

The “actions” of HTS, which politicians and media deliberately ignore, are as clear as they are vile. Nothing has changed about al-Jolani’s terrorism with the founding of HTS. While he, as the leader of the al-Nusra Front, was responsible for numerous terrorist attacks and massacres of religious minorities, he and his followers initially established an Islamist terrorist state in the Syrian province of Idlib, which is now to be expanded throughout Syria. Numerous videos on social media show how HTS Islamists have executed Christians, Alawites or supporters of the Shia Hezbollah militia in recent days.

The glorification of the Sunni Islamist terrorist forces goes hand in hand with the support of the Israeli regime, which is committing genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, and is now also massively bombing Syria and occupying part of the country with ground troops. At the federal press conference centre, Fischer defended the illegal action by saying “that Israel, in the confusing situation, is now first and foremost concerned with warding off a potential threat.” “The IDF’s entry into the disentanglement zone on the Golan Heights” is merely “temporary in nature.” A brutal war of aggression is justified by a “potential threat.” The complete breach of international law could not be defended more openly.

Defense Minister Boris Pistorius, who has visited German troops in Jordan and Iraq in recent days, also defended the destructive actions of the Israeli army. In view of the situation

in Syria, the Israeli attacks must be “seen in a broader context” and understood as a measure for regional security and beyond, he explained, adding cynically: “The idea that, for example, poison gas weapons from Syrian factories could fall into the wrong hands and play a role in Islamist-motivated attacks anywhere in the world is an idea that would hardly be tolerable.”

One doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Pistorius manages to justify Israel’s bombing campaign and the intervention of the imperialist powers in the Middle East with the “war on terror,” while at the same time supporting the de facto takeover of power by al-Qaeda-linked Islamists in Damascus. Obviously, Israel and its supporters are not interested in “peace” and “security” in the Middle East, but in subjugating the entire resource-rich and geostrategically central region by military force and bringing it under imperialist control.

Especially Berlin, which has played a central role in the regime change war in Syria from the beginning, sees the overthrow of Assad as an opportunity to increase its political and military weight in the region. “Against the background of the changed situation,” the issue is to expand “support” and the “political and military presence” in the region, “in order to make an important contribution to stabilization,” Pistorius explained in a live interview with the Tagesthemen from Iraq. “Europe and Germany cannot and must not allow themselves to be just spectators here, the region is too important for that.”

Pistorius brazenly brought an increase in German troops into play. “We may be ramping up our capacities,” he explained. For example, “in the training of the security forces and the armed forces here in Iraq.” It could mean “just as much that we are doing more in Erbil.” But “it could also mean that we [cooperate] with the new rulers in Syria, if they take advantage of the opportunity that’s now on offer and can quickly provide some peace and quiet on which to build.” One of the “mistakes 13 years ago” was “that no one in Europe cared intensively about Syria” and that “the field was ultimately left to Putin.”

Pistorius could not be more clear about the reactionary agenda of German imperialism. The ruling class is relying on al-Jolani’s HTS Islamists to pursue its imperialist interests in Syria and the region, especially against Russia, and to suppress any opposition in the working class with brutal terrorist methods. This also applies to the masses of new refugees who will try to flee from the Islamist death squads if they escalate their pogroms against dissenters and “infidels.”

On Wednesday, the German Foreign Office presented a so-called eight-point plan for the reorganization of Syria. In addition to the swift lifting of sanctions, a “pragmatic approach” to HTS and the appointment of a special coordinator for Syria to increase the “German presence” after the coup, the plan also provides for the return of Syrian refugees. Although the plan speaks of a “voluntary, safe and dignified return,” this is only the cynical language of the German deportation bureaucracy, a language with which brutal mass deportations

are regularly prepared and justified.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees suspended processing Syrian asylum applications earlier this week. In the election campaign, representatives of all parties are engaged in a vicious campaign against the approximately one million Syrian refugees in Germany. For example, the former Minister of Health and deputy leader of the CDU/CSU in the Bundestag, Jens Spahn, cynically proposed a “premium” for every deported Syrian refugee. “How about if the federal government says: Anyone who wants to return to Syria, for which we charter planes, will receive a startup grant of 1000 euros.”

Similarly aggressive was the leader of the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), a split-off from the Left Party. “I expect the Syrians who are cheering the coming to power of Islamists in this country to return to their home country as soon as possible,” Wagenknecht declared. Almost verbatim, the leader of the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD), Alice Weidel, wrote on X: “Whoever celebrates ‘free Syria’ in Germany has apparently no longer a reason for fleeing. They should return to Syria immediately.” She called on the German government to immediately “get in touch with the neighbouring countries that welcome or support the current situation.”

That is exactly what the Scholz government is doing. According to the Federal Government Press and Information Office, the Chancellor spoke by telephone with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday evening “about the situation and further developments in Syria.” Among other things, the two heads of state had agreed that “Syria must become a safe home for all Syrians.”

Given that the Erdogan regime itself occupies parts of Syria and finances and arms Islamist terrorist militias, this is a cynical threat. It aims to prepare the mass deportation of Syrian refugees and, if necessary, to stop any new wave of refugees by force. A new movement of refugees “cannot be permitted to happen again,” Pistorius also warned in an interview with the Tagesthemen, and announced that he would, to that end, meet with his Turkish counterpart in January.



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