

The Syrian–Israeli Meeting in Paris: Why It’s a Watershed Moment



In a historic political precedent, Syria’s Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani met with an official Israeli delegation in the French capital, Paris, on Tuesday evening, in the presence of U.S. Middle East envoy Thomas Barrack.

The meeting marked a pivotal political shift, signaling a realignment of Damascus’s role in the regional equation following the ousting of the Assad regime.

According to Syria’s state news agency SANA, the discussions focused on a range of security and political issues, most notably de-escalation, non-interference in Syria’s internal affairs, regional stability initiatives, monitoring the ceasefire in Suwayda province, and reactivating the 1974 disengagement agreement.

These talks, conducted under direct American sponsorship, are part of a new diplomatic track aimed at bolstering security, preserving Syria’s unity and territorial integrity, and shielding the south from the protracted regional conflict.

The Significance of Those Present

To grasp the full meaning of the meeting, one must consider the identities of the participants. What stood out was not merely the timing or the topics discussed, but the composition of the delegations—an indication of shifting patterns in regional diplomacy.

The Syrian delegation was led by Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani, a central figure in the new Syrian political leadership that assumed power after the collapse of the Assad regime. Appointed early in the transitional period, al-Shibani has come to symbolize the new face of Syrian foreign policy—more pragmatic and open to negotiation than his predecessors.

Representing Israel was Ron Dermer, Minister of Strategic Affairs and one of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s top advisors. A key architect of Israel’s regional security doctrine and one of the main designers of the Abraham Accords, Dermer’s presence lent both official and strategic weight to the meeting.



Al-Shibani and U.S. envoy Tom Barrack with French FM Jean-Noël Barrot in Paris last month (SANA).

Meanwhile, the American mediator, Thomas Barrack a businessman and special envoy with deep ties across the Middle East has played an increasingly active role in recent weeks in bridging gaps among various parties.

His presence signals Washington’s embrace of quiet diplomacy between Israel and the “new” Syria and its attempt to recalibrate Syria’s power dynamics through soft-power mechanisms.

In a related development, Barrack also met with Sheikh Mowafaq Tarif, the spiritual leader of the Druze community in Israel and a close ally of the Israeli

authorities, to discuss the situation in Suwayda.

According to a statement on Tarif’s official Facebook page, the U.S. envoy was urged to push for an immediate and sustained ceasefire, the opening of a secure land corridor with American guarantees to deliver aid from Israel to Suwayda, lifting what was described as a “siege,” releasing hostages, and ensuring the return of displaced residents to Druze villages in the province’s north and west.

Specific Files and Broader Messages

According to Axios, the talks likely centered on a set of practical issues directly tied to the situation on the ground in southern Syria, with the potential to pave the way for broader security and political understandings. Four main topics reportedly dominated the agenda:

1. De-escalation in the South

Topping the list was the matter of calming tensions in Suwayda province, which in recent months has witnessed unprecedented military escalation, with the rise of local armed groups and the encroachment of regional actors seeking to fill the security vacuum. Damascus is believed to have demanded Israeli-American guarantees to halt territorial expansion in border cities.

2. Ceasefire Monitoring Mechanisms

A key focus was establishing a stable mechanism to monitor a ceasefire in the region—likely involving an expanded role for international observers and the activation of direct communication lines via security intermediaries to prevent unintended escalation. A third-party guarantor may also be considered to ensure implementation on the ground.

3. Reactivating the 1974 Agreement

Reviving this agreement is thought to be a priority for the Syrian delegation, as it offers a legal and security framework to restore stability along the border and remove the south from the cycle of perpetual clashes. Damascus has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to the 1974 deal in recent months.

4. Non-Interference in Syria’s Internal Affairs

Minister al-Shibani emphasized, in remarks reported by SANA, that one of the key demands was a firm commitment to non-interference in Syria’s domestic affairs—considered a prerequisite for any future regional understanding. This appears to be a core principle of the new Syrian government’s strategy to curb foreign support for rogue armed groups.

5. The Humanitarian Corridor to Suwayda

Outside the scope of the Syrian–Israeli meeting itself, Sheikh Mowafaq Tarif

reiterated during his separate meeting with Barrack calls for opening a U.S.-guaranteed humanitarian corridor from Israel to Suwayda. He also called for lifting the “siege” on the city, freeing abductees, and facilitating the return of displaced Druze residents.

Taken together, these issues suggest an unprecedented negotiation process that bridges both political and security concerns—reflecting the readiness of all parties, particularly the new Syrian leadership, to enter into regional understandings that could reshape the dynamics in the south.

The Realities on the Ground Dictate the Agenda

Despite the high-profile nature of the Paris meeting, it does not necessarily signal a fundamental shift in Damascus’s position toward the Israeli occupation or any move toward open normalization. Rather, the talks appear to be a tactical response to pressing field conditions in southern Syria and a bid to contain an escalating local crisis, rather than a strategic, long-term policy shift.

Since the ousting of Bashar al-Assad and the onset of a fraught transitional period, Damascus has faced a multitude of complex challenges: a security vacuum in the south, crushing economic hardship, and the daunting task of restoring internal stability. These pressures have continually forced the capital to reassess its priorities.

Moreover, neither the format nor the content of the meeting suggests a clear pathway toward a permanent political settlement or an official agreement with Israel. While speculation abounds that the Abraham Accords may eventually be extended to Syria under U.S. pressure, Western analysts still consider normalization unlikely in light of the new leadership’s makeup, ongoing ties with Tehran and Moscow, and the political risks such a move would entail domestically.

Another significant development was the meeting between Thomas Barrack and Sheikh Mowafaq Tarif. The encounter revealed that the real locus of authority over Suwayda no longer lies solely with the Druze religious leadership within Syria, represented by Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri.

Instead, it increasingly includes Sheikh Tarif, widely seen as aligned with the Israeli establishment and now presented in Western capitals as a key interlocutor on Druze-related issues. This suggests that the Suwayda file will remain at the center of regional and international tug-of-war, far from being a strictly local matter.

In conclusion, the Paris meeting—laden with subtle messages—marks the beginning of a potential reconfiguration of regional alignments. Damascus is



attempting to break out of its isolation through temporary understandings, Washington is reasserting its presence via calibrated diplomacy, while Tehran and Moscow watch with growing unease. Yet, this remains merely the first step in a long and uncertain journey, whose ultimate destination has yet to be determined.

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