

Who is Syria's Abu Mohammed al-Golani?

The militant leader and his Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham stand to be a major player in how Syria will be governed following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime



■ **1982:** Born **Ahmed al-Sharaa** in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where his father works as a petroleum engineer

■ **1989:** The family returns to Syria, settling near Damascus

■ **2003:** He moves to Iraq, joining fighters aligned with **Al Qaeda** battling U.S.-led invasion



■ **2006:** Arrested by U.S. forces in Iraq and held for five years

■ **2011:** Tasked with establishing **Nusra Front** in Syria by Iraqi militant leader **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, who later goes on to head so-called Islamic State group

■ **2016:** Golani severs ties with Al Qaeda, rebranding Nusra as **Jabhat Fatah al-Sham** and later as **Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)**

■ **2017:** HTS establishes civilian front – so-called **Syrian Salvation Government (SSG)** – in areas it controls during Syria's civil war

■ **2018:** U.S. places \$10 million bounty on Golani and brands HTS a terrorist organisation – group continues to be proscribed by UN, U.S. and EU

■ **2021:** In first interview with U.S. journalist on **PBS**, Golani says his group poses no threat to the West

■ **Dec 8, 2024**
HTS-led rebels take control of Damascus, toppling Assad regime. Golani drops nom de guerre and uses his real name



■ **Dec 9:** Sharaa meets Assad's outgoing prime minister, **Mohammed Jalali**, to discuss transfer of power to SSG