

*Palestinian groups have mixed reaction to the ouster of Syria's al-Assad, saying they hope the new government will support their cause*

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## **Palestinian factions say they hope the new Syrian authorities will support Palestine's struggle for freedom and justice**

**Protesters wave Palestinian flags and those of the Syrian opposition at a rally in the opposition-held town of Atme in Syria's northwestern Idlib province, on October 17, 2023 [Rami al-Sayed/AFP]**

Ramallah, December 10 (RHC)-- Palestinian factions have largely expressed support for the Syrian people after the ouster of former President Bashar al-Assad while saying that they hope the new authorities will support the Palestinian cause.

As daylight broke in Damascus in the early hours of Sunday morning, Syrians woke up to a dramatically changed country after opposition forces swept into Syria's capital less than two weeks into a lightning offensive.

Here's how leading Palestinian groups reacted to the fall of al-Assad over the past days:

### **Palestinian Authority (PA)**

The State of Palestine, run by the PA, said on Sunday that it stands by the Syrian people, "respecting their will and political choices, in a way that guarantees their security and stability and preserves their achievements".

The Palestinian presidency added in a statement that it affirms "the need to respect the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, and to preserve its security and stability, wishing continued progress and prosperity for the brotherly Syrian people."

The presidency stressed that political parties should prioritise the interests of the Syrian people and back Palestinians' "just cause towards freedom and independence".

### **Hamas**

Hamas congratulated the Syrian people on Monday for achieving their "aspirations for freedom and justice."

"We stand strongly with the great people of Syria ... and respect the will, the independence, and the political choices of the people of Syria," the Palestinian group said in a statement.

It also urged Syrians to unite and "rise above the wounds of the past", condemning what it called the "brutal aggression" by Israel against Syria.

Hamas added that it hopes that Syria will continue "its historical and pivotal role in supporting the Palestinian people".

Hamas sided with the uprising against al-Assad early in the crisis despite its alliance with Iran, which backed the government in Damascus. The Palestinian group's position cooled down ties with Tehran and Hezbollah in Lebanon, but the alliance was eventually revived despite disagreements over Syria.

### **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)**

The Palestinian faction, which is allied with Hamas and Iran, said the recent developments are a Syrian matter that relates to the “choices of the brotherly Syrian people”.

“The Islamic Jihad hopes Syria will remain a true supporter and backer for the Palestinian people and their just cause, as it has always been,” Ziad al-Nakhala, the head of the PIJ, said in a statement.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

The PFLP, which had previously voiced support for the Syrian government, did not address al-Assad’s fall in its first official statement after opposition fighters captured Damascus.

Instead, the PFLP focused on condemning ongoing Israeli attacks on Syria.

“This Zionist aggression against Syrian territory carries dangerous dimensions that require solidarity to confront them,” the group said.

“The Front stresses that the Zionist enemy’s air strikes against Syria and its incursion into Syrian territory amount to a dangerous escalation in the aggression against the people and states of the region,” it added.

“The enemy is trying to take advantage of the phase of internal changes in Syria to achieve renewed goals of aggression against Syria and its people.”

The Palestinian National and Islamic Forces in Damascus

The coalition, which includes several Palestinian factions, described the ouster of al-Assad as an internal Syrian affair.

“The Palestinian National and Islamic Forces in Damascus looks forward sincerely to the Syrian people’s right to determine their future and build a unified, fully sovereign Syria in a framework of freedom, justice, democracy and equal citizenship without discrimination,” the coalition said.

It added that it hopes for a “Syria that continues to fulfil its brotherly and national duties towards the Palestinian people.”

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