

UN affirms plans to offer assistance to Syria as envoy meets with HTS chief in Damascus

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UN Syria envoy Geir Pedersen (L) meets with head of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and its leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, also known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani, in Damascus, Syria, in this handout

photo released on December 15, 2024. (Photo via Reuters)

Damascus, December 16 (RHC)-- The leader of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) militant group, which took control of Syria following the fall of former Syrian president Bashar al-Assad's government, has met with visiting UN envoy Geir Pedersen.

Mohammed al-Golani discussed with the UN envoy "the changes that have occurred on the political scene" which the former said "make it necessary to update" a 2015 United Nations Security Council resolution "to suit the new reality," read a statement on the militants' Telegram channel.

The UN Security Council Resolution 2254 of 2015 set out a roadmap for a political settlement in the Arab country, and also mentioned the "terrorist" designation of Syria's branch of al-Qaeda, al-Nusra Front, from which Golani's HTS evolved.

According to the statement, Golani had emphasized "the need to focus on Syrian territorial unity, reconstruction and achieving economic development." He also raised "the importance of providing a safe environment for the return of refugees and providing economic and political support for this."

Earlier on Sunday, Pedersen called for a "political process ... that is inclusive of all Syrians." "That process obviously needs to be led by the Syrians themselves" with "help and assistance" from the rest of the world, he added.

In a statement issued on Monday, the UN envoy's office said Pedersen had assured al-Golani during the meeting that the United Nations plans to offer all kinds of help to the Syrian people.

Foreign-backed militants, led by HTS, took control of Damascus on December 8 and declared an end to Assad's rule in a surprise offensive that was launched from their stronghold in northwestern Syria, reaching the capital in less than two weeks.

Syria has been gripped by militancy since 2011, when various armed groups, sponsored by Western countries and their regional allies, began their attempts to overthrow the Syrian government.

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