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Syria's New President Has Russian Family Ties – Reports

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Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa. **Presidency of the Syrian Arab Republic**

Syrian president Ahmed al-Sharaa has family ties to Russia through his brother and top cabinet appointee, who is married to a Russian businesswoman, the investigative news outlet Agentstvo reported Monday.

Over the weekend, Syrian media reported that al-Sharaa appointed his brother, Maher al-Sharaa, as secretary-general to the presidency — a senior role overseeing administrative and organizational affairs.

Maher al-Sharaa is married to dual Russian-Syrian citizen Tatiana Zakirova, according to the investigative outlet Agentstvo, which cited leaked personal data. The couple has three children: Rashid, 23, who enrolled at Voronezh State University in 2020; Maria, 20; and Kamil, 13.

Agentstvo published family photos showing Zakirova with her husband and children.

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Zakirova previously held stakes in a vehicle inspection firm in the 2000s and a landscape design company until at least 2020. She had partnered with her sister, Yevgenia Zherebtsova, whose separate firm received up to 45 million rubles ($526,000) in state landscaping contracts from the city of Voronezh.

Maher al-Sharaa graduated from the Burdenko Voronezh State Medical University in 2000 and started working in Voronezh in 2013. He reportedly moved to Izmir, Turkey, in July 2022 and served as a health consultant in northern Syria between 2022 and 2023.

Russian state media highlighted Maher al-Sharaa's medical background in their coverage of his appointment. Agentstvo also cited a doctor-review website listing him as a Voronezh-based obstetrician-gynecologist with 25 years of experience and a five-star rating, last updated in December 2023.

According to Agentstvo, the Kremlin could use these connections to influence Damascus as it seeks to restore relations and maintain its military presence following the December overthrow of longtime Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad by Islamist-led rebels.

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