The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Meets With Syrian President at Kremlin Amid Uncertainty Over Russian Bases

By AFP

January 28, 2026



Ahmed al-Sharaa and Vladimir Putin. **Sergei Bobylev / POOL / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin met with Syria's Ahmed al-Sharaa for talks at the Kremlin on Wednesday as Russia seeks to maintain control of its military bases in the Middle Eastern country.

Moscow was a key backer of Sharaa's predecessor, Bashar al-Assad, throughout Syria's 14-year civil war. Assad's ouster by Sharaa's rebel forces dealt a major blow to Russia's regional influence and cast doubt on the future of its military bases in Syria.

Since then, Putin has moved to build ties with Sharaa, though Russia's decision to grant asylum to Assad and his wife in Moscow has remained a major obstacle to improving relations.

"Much has been accomplished in terms of restoring our interstate relations," Putin said in a televised meeting with Sharaa.

"We have closely monitored your efforts to restore Syria's territorial integrity, and I want to congratulate you on the momentum this process is gaining," Putin said in an apparent reference to Sharaa's recent offensive against Kurdish forces in Syria's northeast.

Related article: Russia Starts Pulling Forces From Base in Northeast Syria – Reuters

In his second meeting with Putin since coming to power, Sharaa said Russia had played a "historic role not only in Syria's unity and stability, but in that of the entire region."

Neither leader publicly addressed Russia's military presence in Syria, though Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said earlier that he had "no doubt" the issue would be discussed.

Russia has two remaining military bases in Syria — the Hmeimim airbase and Tartus naval base on the Mediterranean coast. They are Russia's only military bases outside the former Soviet Union.

Earlier this week, Russia withdrew its forces from Qamishli airport in Syria's Kurdish-controlled northeast.

Sharaa's government has signaled a willingness to cooperate with Moscow but has repeatedly called for Assad's extradition.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/01/28/putin-meets-with-syrian-president-at-kremlin-amid-uncertainty-over-russian-bases-a91806