

# “Syria Allowed Israel to Bypass Its Airspace to Strike Iran”

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**By Maya Cohen**

JERUSALEM—Summary of the article: The Israeli operation (intended to target Iran’s nuclear core and missiles, and to deter Iran and its allies) has strengthened the new Syrian regime.

Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa did not interfere in the Israeli operation in Iran for several reasons, most prominent of them that the strikes benefited his newly formed regime, University of Haifa Professor Amatzia Baram argued in an interview with *Maariv*, published Thursday.

When Israeli planes crossed Iranian skies for 12 days through Syria, Tehran closely monitored the operation, as did the office of Ahmed al-Sharaa, the Syrian leader, in Damascus. According to Baram, the conclusions drawn by the Syrian leader could help stabilize our northern border for the years to come.

“If I were in al-Sharaa’s place, I would tell my people that, even if I could make it difficult for the Israel Air Force, I have no interest in doing so,” Baram said, explaining the new Syrian thinking. “I have an interest in the Israelis attacking Iran as much as possible.”

- The Syrian interest is clear: Any blow to Iran weakens the largest strategic rival of the new regime in Damascus.

“Every blow to Iran is pure benefit to al-Sharaa’s regime,” Baram asserted, explaining why the Syrians would not interfere with the Israeli operation, even if they had the capability to do so.

Beyond the geopolitical interest, the Israeli operation taught al-Sharaa two key lessons about Israeli capabilities.

- The first concerns the operational range of the Israeli air force.

“The fact that Israel can maintain a continuous air presence over Iranian territory for 12 days, almost 2,000 kilometers away, uninterrupted,” Baram emphasizes. “This is something al-Sharaa now knows, understands and internalizes.”

- The second lesson relates to Israel’s intelligence capabilities.

The operation showed how Israel can strike precisely and deeply into enemy territory. “The fact that Israel can eliminate all the senior Iranian military leader-

ship within two or three days, and then strike the most important Revolutionary Guard bases," Baram says, "illustrates the depth of intelligence achievements."

The most impressive aspect is the surgical precision of the actions. "They reach their apartments, 2,000 or 1,500 kilometers away, strike the apartment and kill the senior scientist or officer," Baram described. "I imagine that al-Sharaa also noted this down in the notebook he keeps in the left pocket of his military uniform."

■ Al-Sharaa concludes that Israel can reach him at any moment.

The Syrian conclusion is clear and troubling: "I might be wrong, and we might not have such capabilities, but, if I were al-Sharaa, I would conclude that Israel can reach me at any moment," Baram asserts. "He understands that, if he doesn't want to commit suicide, it's better not to get entangled with us."

However, Baram emphasizes that, even without the fear of Israel, al-Sharaa has no real interest in confronting us.

Baram said: "He is not Palestinian. We haven't taken from him what he believes is his historic homeland. We took the Golan Heights from Assad, but the Golan is not a sufficient reason for a bloody conflict: Even the Assad family, Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar, essentially recognized de facto that the Golan belongs to us, since they didn't try to take it back after 1973, and every Syrian knows this. In other words, there is already a precedent of half a century where the Syrian regime has accepted Israeli control over the Golan. Therefore, Syrian nationalists and jihadists who try to incite the public against al-Sharaa for not going to war to liberate the Golan will face discomfort."

In fact, according to Baram, al-Sharaa is "quietly grateful to us for what we've done. The Iranians are looking for a way to get rid of him and return Syria to their sphere of influence. He knows this, and he understands that now it will be more difficult for them to do so."

Moreover, the Israeli operation showed al-Sharaa that Israel effectively deters both the Shiite militias in Iraq and Hezbollah, two of his natural enemies.

Baram pointed out: "Al-Sharaa sees that the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and Hezbollah did nothing during the 12 days of the war despite the fact that Iran built Hezbollah specifically for this moment. I assume he's quietly grateful to us for this as well."

In the current situation, it is easier for al-Sharaa to convince his supporters, some of whom are still Sunni jihadists, to maintain at least stability, if not cooperation, along the contact lines with Israel.

In practice, a paradoxical situation has emerged in which the Israeli operation, intended to target Iran's nuclear core and missiles and deter Iran and its allies, has strengthened the new Syrian regime and created a basis for indirect cooperation between Israel and al-Sharaa's Syria.

This is an improvement in the regional balance of power, which could influence the Middle East for years to come. However, the only regional Shiite allies of Iran who were not affected by the 12-day war are the Houthis in Yemen.