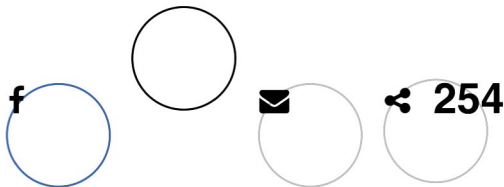


- Qatar (/countries/qatar)
- Russia (/countries/russia)
- Saudi Arabia (/countries/saudi-arabia)
- Sudan (/countries/sudan)
- Syria (/countries/syria)
- Tunisia (/countries/tunisia)
- Turkey (/countries/turkey)
- UK (/countries/uk)
- United Arab Emirates (/countries/uae)
- US (/countries/us)
- Yemen (/countries/yemen)

Donald Trump and his son, Donald Jr (AFP)

MEE staff (/users/mee-staff)

Published date: 24 November 2016 12:07 GMT | **Last update:** 8 years 9 months ago



Donald Trump's son held meetings in Paris with a prominent member of a Syrian "patriotic opposition" group strongly backed by Russia, strengthening expectations that the new US administration will side with Moscow in the Syrian war.

Donald Trump Jr was at the French capital's Ritz hotel on 11 October, according to the Wall Street Journal (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/donald-trump-jr-held-talks-on-syria-with-russia-supporters-1479920753>), to hold meetings co-hosted by Randa Kassis (<http://randakassis.eu/en/>), a politician backed by Moscow which supports Russian intervention and is viewed as pro-government by opposition groups currently backed by the US.

Her husband Fabien Baussart, a French businessman who runs the Centre of Political and Foreign Affairs think tank who has strong commercial ties to Russia, was also at the conference. According to the newspaper the meetings also involved diplomats, businessmen and politicians.

Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway confirmed to the Journal that the president-elect's eldest son attended the meeting but played down his involvement.

Nevertheless, the meeting suggests the president-elect's son will play a prominent role in the new administration and raises a predicted pivot by the US on Syria, and the sidelining of mainstream opposition groups fighting the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

New MEE newsletter: Jerusalem Dispatch

Sign up to get the latest insights and analysis on Israel-Palestine, alongside Turkey Unpacked and other MEE newsletters

Subscribe

Randa Kassis (AFP)

Kassis recently posted comments on her Facebook page about the meeting, saying: “Syria’s opposition got hope that political process will move forward and Russia and the United States will reach accord on the issue of the Syrian crisis, because of Trump’s victory. Such hope and belief is the result of my personal meeting with Donald Trump Jr in Paris in October.”

“I succeeded to pass [to] Trump, through the talks with his son, the idea of how we can cooperate together to reach the agreement between Russia and the United States on Syria.”

'I succeeded to pass [to] Trump, through the talks with his son, the idea of how we can cooperate together to reach the agreement between Russia and the United States on Syria'

Randa Kassis, Syrian politician

Kassis's website says she was expelled from the Syrian National Council, the broad coalition of groups opposed to Assad, "due to her many declarations alerting the Syrian opposition about the rise of Muslim fundamentalists".

She formed the "Movement for a Pluralistic Society" in 2012, which advocates "political transition" in Syria involving Assad. The US-backed SNC has said any peace deal must include the removal of the current president.

"Russia intervened to save the country, for the sake of Syria," Kassis said on Al Jazeera on Tuesday. "The problem is that you don't know the Russians, you don't understand the Russians ... you just accuse the Russians of being against the opposition but you need to understand them."

READ: Trump and his misconceptions about Syria (<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/setting-record-straight-trump-s-misconceptions-about-syria-176697789>)

Throughout his election campaign, Trump praised Russia and the Syrian government for "fighting IS", despite Russia concentrating its firepower on other groups in Aleppo.

In an interview with The New York Times on Wednesday, Trump said: "I have a different view on Syria than everybody else."

Earlier this month, Assad appeared to give the president-elect his endorsement, saying Trump would be a "natural ally" in Syria's fight against "terrorists".

The Guardian quoted Joseph Bahout, a Syrian expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, as saying Kassis was a good friend of Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov.

"He invited her and several others to Moscow and they created what is known – with a certain irony – as the 'Moscow opposition'," Bahout said.

“The Russians in their cynicism tried to impose these people as an opposition delegation to the peace talks in Geneva. But of course the rest of the opposition all objected.”

Middle East Eye delivers independent and unrivalled coverage and analysis of the Middle East, North Africa and beyond. To learn more about republishing this content and the associated fees, please fill out this [form](https://middleeasteye.net/form/mee-syndication) (<https://middleeasteye.net/form/mee-syndication>). More about MEE can be found [here](https://middleeasteye.net/about-middle-east-eye) (<https://middleeasteye.net/about-middle-east-eye>).



HydroXSeal Lepak za Popravku



Moćno vezivno sredstvo za podove i zidove! HydroXSeal...

Отвори >

Recommended

[Israel bombs vicinity of Syrian presidential palace \(/news/israel-confirms-strikes-syrian-presidential-palace\)](/news/israel-confirms-strikes-syrian-presidential-palace)

[Israeli army to stay in Jenin and Syria, says defence minister \(/news/israeli-army-stay-jenin-syria-defence-minister\)](/news/israeli-army-stay-jenin-syria-defence-minister)

[Syria slashes tariffs on 269 Turkish goods to ease trade tensions \(/news/syria-slashes-tariffs-269-turkish-goods-ease-trade-tensions\)](/news/syria-slashes-tariffs-269-turkish-goods-ease-trade-tensions)