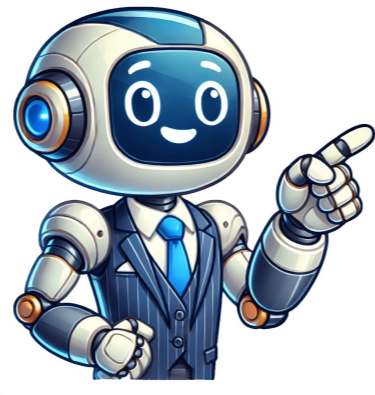


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Conflict in Syria has escalated with Israel launching bombing raids against its northern neighbour. It follows months of fluctuating tensions in southern Syria between the Druze minority and forces aligned with the new government in Damascus. Clashes erupted in the last few days, prompting Israeli airstrikes in defence of the Druze by targeting government bases, tanks, and heavy weaponry. Israel Minister Amichai Chikli has called the Syrian president Ahmed al-Sharaa – a terrorist, a barbaric murderer who should be eliminated without delay. Despite the incendiary language, a ceasefire has been reached, halting the fighting – for now. Syrian forces have begun withdrawing heavy military equipment from the region, while Druze fighters have agreed to suspend armed resistance, allowing government troops to regain control of the main Druze city of Suwayda. What do the Druze want? The Druze are a small religious minority estimated at over one million people, primarily concentrated in the mountainous regions of Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and Jordan. Druze people from the Golan Heights visiting the ceasefire zone earlier this month. Atef Safadi/AAP In Syria, their population is estimated at around 700,000 (of around 23 million total Syrian population), with the majority residing in the southern As-Suwayda Governorate – or province – which serves as the traditional stronghold. Since the 2011 uprising against the Assad regime, the Druze have maintained a degree of autonomy, successfully defending their territory from various threats, including ISIS and other jihadist groups. Following Assad's fall late last year, the Druze – along with other minority groups such as the Kurds in the east and Alawites in the west – have called for the country to be federalized. They advocate for a decentralised model that would grant greater autonomy to regional communities. However, the transitional government in Damascus is pushing for a centralised state and seeking to reassert full control over the entire Syrian territory. This fundamental disagreement has led to periodic clashes between Druze forces and government-aligned troops. Despite the temporary ceasefire, tensions remain high. Given the core political dispute remains unresolved, many expect renewed conflict to erupt in the near future. Why is Israel involved? The ousting of the Assad regime created a strategic opening for Israel to expand its influence in southern Syria. Israel's involvement is driven by two primary concerns: 1. Securing its northern border Israel views the power vacuum in Syria's south as a potential threat, particularly the risk of anti-Israeli militias establishing a foothold near its northern border. During the recent clashes, the Israeli military declared The Israeli Defence Forces will not allow a military threat to exist in southern Syria and will act against it. Likewise, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has stated he will allow Syrian forces south of Damascus: We are acting to prevent the Syrian regime from harming them [the Druze] and to ensure the demilitarisation of the area adjacent to our border with Syria. In line with these warnings, the Israeli Air Force has conducted extensive strikes against Syrian military infrastructure, targeting bases, aircraft, tanks, and heavy weaponry. Protests in Aleppo following Israeli strikes on the Syrian army. Bilal Al-Hammoud/AAP These operations are intended to prevent any future buildup of military capacity that could be used against Israel from the Syrian side of the border. 2. Supporting a federated Syria Israel is backing the two prominent allied minorities in Syria – the Kurds in the northeast and the Druze in the south – in their push for a federal governance model. A fragmented Syria, divided along ethnic and religious lines, is seen by some Israeli policymakers as a way to maintain Israeli domination in the region. This vision is part of what some Israeli officials have referred to as a "New Middle East" – one where regional stability and normalisation emerge through reshaped borders and alliances. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar recently echoed this strategy, stating: A single Syrian state with effective control and sovereignty over all its territory is unrealistic. For Israel, the logical path forward is autonomy for the various minorities in Syria within a federal structure. The United States' role? According to unconfirmed reports, Washington has privately urged Israel to scale back its military strikes on Syria in order to prevent further escalation and preserve regional stability. The US is promoting increased support for Syria's new regime in an effort to help it reassert control and stabilise the country. There are also indications the US and its allies are encouraging the Syrian government to move toward normalisation with Israel. Reports suggest Tel Aviv has held talks with the new Sharaa-led regime about the possibility of Syria joining the Abraham Accords (diplomatic agreements between Israel and several Arab states), which the regime in Damascus appears open to. US Special Envoy Tom Barrack has described the recent clashes as "worrisome", calling for de-escalation and emphasising the need for a peaceful, inclusive outcome for all stakeholders – including the Druze, Bedouin tribes, the Syrian government, and Israeli forces. Given the deep-rooted political divisions, competing regional agendas, and unresolved demands from minority groups, the unrest in southern Syria is unlikely to end soon. Despite another temporary ceasefire, underlying tensions remain. Further clashes are not only possible but highly probable. Iterative interrogative technique Not to be confused with Five Ws. Five whys (or 5 whys) is an iterative interrogative technique used to explore the cause-and-effect relationships underlying a particular problem.[1] The primary goal of the technique is to determine the root cause of a defect or problem by repeating the question "why?" five times, each time directing the current "why" to the answer of the previous "why". The method asserts that the answer to the final "why" asked in this manner should reveal the root cause of the problem.[2] While the technique is referred to as 5 whys, the number of whys may be higher or lower depending on the complexity of the analysis and problem. The technique was described by Taiichi Ohno at Toyota Motor Corporation. Others at Toyota and elsewhere have criticized the five whys technique for being too basic and having an arbitrarily shallow depth as a root cause analysis tool (see § Criticism). An example of a problem is: bolts are cross-threading in the engine block on the production line. Why? - The threads aren't cut cleanly. Why? - The replacement cutting tool bin was empty. Why? - The bin's contents had fallen and rolled under the shelves. Why? - One of the feet on the shelves has rusted and failed, making the shelves unstable, and when it was jostled, many parts fell on the floor, including the lost cutting tools. In this example, five iterations of asking why is sufficient to get to a root cause that can be addressed.[3] The key idea of the method is to encourage the troubleshooter to avoid assumptions and logic traps and instead trace the chain of causality in direct increments from the effect through any layers of abstraction to a root cause that still has some connection to the original problem. In this example, the fifth "why" suggests a broken shelf foot, which can be immediately replaced to prevent the recurrence of the sequence of events that resulted in cross-threading bolts. The nature of the answer to the fifth why in the example is also an important aspect of the five why approach, because solving the immediate problem may not solve the problem in the long run; the shelf foot may fall again. The real root cause points toward a process that is not working well or does not exist.[4] In this case, the factory may need to add a process for regularly inspecting shelving units for instability, and fixing them when broken. In history, there are early examples of repeated questions to gain knowledge, such as in Plato's Meno. Aristotle developed a different approach with the four causes to develop four fundamental types of answer to the question "why?". Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz used iterative why questions in his letter to Magnus von Wedderkop in 1671, in which he applied elements of argumentation that he later used to solve the question of theodicy: Consider Pilate, who is damned. Why? (Cur Pilatus damnatus est?) Because he lacks faith. (Quia fidem non habuit.) Why does he lack it? (Cur fidem non habuit?) Because he lacked the will to be attentive. (Quia voluntatem attentandi non habuit.) Why does he lack this? (Cur voluntatem attentandi non habuit?) Because he did not understand the necessity of the matter, the usefulness of being attentive. (Quia utilitatem non intellexit.) Why did he not understand? (Cur non intellexit?) Because the causes of understanding were lacking. (Quia causae intellegendi defuerunt.) The modern technique was originally developed by Sakichi Toyoda and was used within the Toyota Motor Corporation during the evolution of its manufacturing methodologies. It is a major component of problem-solving training, delivered as part of the induction into the Toyota Production System. The architect of the Toyota Production System, Taiichi Ohno, described the five whys method as "the basis of Toyota's scientific approach by repeating why five times[5] the nature of the problem as well as its solution becomes clear." [2] The tool has seen use beyond Toyota, and is now used within Kaizen, lean manufacturing, lean construction and Six Sigma. The five whys were initially developed to understand why new product features or manufacturing techniques were needed, and was not developed for root cause analysis. In other companies, it appears in other forms. Under Ricardo Semler, Semco practices "three whys" and broadens the practice to cover goal setting and decision-making.[6] Two primary techniques are used to perform a five whys analysis:[7] the fishbone (or Ishikawa) diagram and a tabular format. These tools allow for analysis to be branched in order to provide multiple root causes.[8] The five whys technique has been criticized as a poor tool for root cause analysis. Teruyuki Minoura, former managing director of global purchasing for Toyota, criticized it as being too basic a tool to analyze root causes at the depth necessary to ensure an issue is fixed.[9] Reasons for this criticism include: Tendency for investigators to stop at symptoms rather than going on to lower-level root causes. Inability to go beyond the investigator's current knowledge – the investigator cannot find causes that they do not already know. Lack of support to help the investigator provide the right answer to "why" questions. Results are not repeatable – different people using five whys come up with different causes for the same problem. Tendency to isolate a single root cause, whereas each question could elicit many different root causes. Medical professor Alan J. Card also criticized the five whys as a poor root cause analysis tool and suggested that it be abandoned because of the following reasons:[10] The artificial depth of the fifth why is unlikely to correlate with the root cause. The five whys is based on a misguided reuse of a strategy to understand why new features should be added to products, not a root cause analysis. To avoid these issues, Card suggested instead using other root cause analysis tools such as fishbone or lovebug diagrams.[10] Eight disciplines problem solving Five Ws (information-gathering) Four causes Issue map Issue tree Root cause analysis Socratic method Why-because analysis ^ Olivier D. Serrat (February 2009). The Five Whys Technique. Asian Development Bank. Retrieved September 5, 2019. ^ a b Ohno, Taiichi (1988). Toyota production system: beyond large-scale production. Portland, OR: Productivity Press. ISBN 0-915299-14-3. ^ Serrat, Olivier (2017). "The Five Whys Technique". 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Retrieved September 5, 2019. ^ a b Card, Alan J. (August 2017). "The problem with '5 whys'". BMJ Quality & Safety. 26 (8): 671–677. doi:10.1136/bmjqs-2016-005849. PMID 27590199. S2CID 42544432. "Dauerspezial" commercial of Deutsche Bahn, where the question "why" is posed 5 times (in German) Retrieved from " Are there Epstein files? Biden might not have cared. By Joseph AllenPublished July 16 2025, 5:01 p.m. ETSource: MegaAlthough Donald Trump is usually pretty good at controlling narratives, he has struggled to control the one focused on Jeffrey Epstein. After promising his supporters that he would release all files related to the case and take down all those who knew him, he has now suggested that people should stop talking about it altogether. Article continues below advertisementThat about-face has turned into a genuine controversy inside the Trump administration, and it's also left some wondering why Joe Biden didn't simply release the files when he was president, especially if they have damaging information about Trump in them. Here's what we know.Source: MegaArticle continues below advertisementThe first thing to establish is that when we talk about the Epstein files, we're usually talking about what could be a bunch of different things. The thing most people are interested in is flight lists that indicate who else Epstein would invite onto his private planes, which is often where he performed the sexual assaults that he was ultimately convicted for. Conspiracies have swirled suggesting that Epstein had various powerful people on those planes. After suggesting on the campaign trail that there was cover-up at work in the Epstein case, and that there may have been foul play in his death, an investigation by the DOJ and FBI came to the same conclusion as previous investigations, saying that there was no client list and that he died by suicide. Plenty in far-right circles believe Trump's administration is hiding something, although we don't know for sure. Article continues below advertisementAs for why Biden didn't release this information himself, there could be any number of explanations. It's possible that he looked into it and determined that the conclusions of the original investigation were correct. It's also possible that he didn't spend much time thinking about Jeffrey Epstein while he was trying to run the government. Or, of course, it's possible that he or someone he knows is also implicated in this whole sordid affair. Bill O'Reilly doubled down: "Epstein was convicted under Merrick Garland's Justice Department." Leiland Vitert. "He was arrested in 2019, and he committed suicide in 2019... So the Biden administration was not involved in a conviction or a trial of him." O'Reilly. "But he was... pic.twitter.com/OYT5daBbQW — Blue Georgia (@BlueATLGeorgia) July 15, 2025 Source: Twitter@BlueATLGeorgiaArticle continues below advertisementWhen it comes to Epstein, there's plenty that we don't know. Most people have long assumed that everything about Epstein was as it seemed. He was a wealthy abuser who took advantage of his wealth and was connected to plenty of powerful people. Now, though, even those of us who didn't think there was any grand conspiracy at work are wondering why Trump is working so hard to hide the ball here. Whatever there is to learn about Epstein, if it's anything, we may never know. What's clear, though, is that Trump is not interested in talking about this anymore, and we don't know whether Biden ever really was. Epstein's death was the inspiration for reams of conspiracy theories, but it was also a reminder of how much power he wielded while he was alive. Although he's been dead for years now, he still has a pretty powerful grip on the imagination of at least some portion of America, perhaps including the president. Latest Politics News and Updates Even after President Donald Trump called some of his followers "stupid" and "foolish" for their persistent calls for his administration to divulge the details of the Jeffrey Epstein files, many of his most prominent MAGA supporters and congressional Republicans continue to demand answers.Their calls stemmed from years of media prompts from prominent right wing figures, including Trump himself, who have pushed accusations about the convicted sex offender and alleged human trafficker and the "deep state" that's protecting the elites that were purportedly his clients.Republican Presidential Nominee Donald Trump and retired Lieutenant General Mike Flynn at a rally inside an aircraft hangar, Grand Junction, Colo., Oct. 18, 2016.David Hummer/Getty ImagesRight-wing influencers such as Michael Flynn have been pushing for the list that they believe is in the hands of the Justice Department of Epstein's clients, who they allege, without evidence, are powerful liberals. Flynn, one of Trump's staunchest supporters who has pushed OAnon conspiracies related to sex trafficking, went on X Wednesday imploring Trump to reconsider his claim that the Epstein controversy was a "hoax," contending that the allegations against Epstein were too serious to ignore."All we want at this stage is for a modicum of trust to be reestablished between our federal government and the people it is designed to serve," he said in his post."With my strongest recommendation, please gather your team and figure out a way to move past this. The roll out of this was terrible, no way around that. Americans want America to be successful, therefore, WE NEED YOU TO BE SUCCESSFUL," Flynn added.Some congressional Republicans who are among Trump's strongest supporters have bucked the president's wishes to drop the subject.Speaker Mike Johnson said told right-wing podcaster Benny Johnson that he's for releasing the files."I'm for transparency," Johnson said. "It's a very delicate subject, but we should put everything out there and let the people decide."Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, one of Trump's fiercest supporters in Congress, told the New York Times, "It's definitely a full reversal on what was all said beforehand, and people are just not willing to accept it."GOP Sen. John Kennedy of Louisiana told reporters Tuesday, "I think it's reasonable for the American people to ask who [Epstein] sex trafficked these young women to – if anybody besides himself. And if there were others involved, why haven't they been prosecuted? That's a perfectly understandable question, and I think the Justice Department is going to have to answer it."Sen. John Kennedy speaks with reporters as Senate Republicans vote on President Donald Trump's request to cancel about \$9 billion in foreign aid and public broadcasting spending, at the Capitol in Washington, D.C., July 16, 2025.Republican Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri said, "This is the worst one, the worst human trafficking rings in American history, run by this scumbag. And I think the more we know about it, the more we get out there, the better it is." Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., said Tuesday.Sen. Josh Hawley walks from the Senate chamber as Senate Republicans vote on President Donald Trump's request to cancel about \$9 billion in foreign aid and public broadcasting spending, at the Capitol in Washington, D.C., July 16, 2025.The MAGA base's arguments about the Epstein files grew among podcasters, social media posts and other influencers after Trump's first term endedFor years, Kash Patel, now Trump's FBI director, pushed conspiracies related to the Epstein investigation and made baseless allegations about the "deep state."In this May 7, 2025, file photo, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kash Patel testifies before the House Appropriations Committee in the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill, in Washington, D.C.Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images, FILEPatel called for the public disclosure of the Epstein documents and those of other investigations, arguing in November that Trump "can expose the documents that these folks have written for decades, allowing [their] corrupt activities."Dan Bongino, a former Fox News host and now deputy director of the FBI, repeatedly brought up Epstein on his podcast, in interviews and on his social media pages, alleging that the Democrats were covering up the investigation.Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Deputy Director Dan Bongino leaves after meeting with Republican lawmakers at the U.S. Capitol on June 25, 2025 in Washington, DC.Kayla Bartkowski/Getty Images"Listen, that Jeffrey Epstein story is a big deal, please do not let that story go. Keep your eye on this," Bongino said in a 2023 episode of his podcast.On Wednesday, some of those influencers sounded off on the matter.Key Trump ally Steve Bannon put pressure on the administration to release more details."I've argued with the Epstein situation. People want accountability. Even people that are late to this story and don't know much about Epstein, they think something's murky here," he said.Podcaster Johnson responded to Trump comparing the Epstein case to the other "hoaxes" he frequently cites, arguing that Trump should want all the information on Epstein out there."But my point to the president, respectfully, is the only way we know that all those are fake and that that's all garbage is that the federal is that it eventually we got all of the information ... So, like, by Trump's own logic, here, we should be releasing everything, which I think would be a great pressure release valve for all this," he said. The podcast just struck a deal with Fox News. By Niko MannPublished July 16 2025, 12:26 p.m. ETSource: Ruthless Podcast / YouTubePeople want to know why Comfortably Smug wears sunglasses during the Ruthless podcast. The host of the conservative politics podcast often wears shades during the podcast and while appearing on television programs. Article continues below advertisementComfortably Smug – whose real name is Shashank Tripathi — hosts Ruthless with Josh Holmes, Michael Duncan, and John Ashbrook, and the podcast just struck a deal with Fox News.Source: Ruthless Podcast / YouTubeArticle continues below advertisementComfortably Smug has not publicly addressed why he wears sunglasses during his podcast or during his television appearances. During a contentious appearance on Inside Politics with Dana Bash, the news anchor teased the podcast host about his monkier and his sunglasses. "Smug? That's your — I'm guessing your parents didn't give you that name," said Dana. "That's what I'm known as, and it makes me and everyone else happy," replied the Ruthless host. "OK, and you have to come back, because we're running out of time to get into a discussion about the sunglasses," she replied.While the podcast host didn't reveal why he wears sunglasses on TV, there has been speculation that he wears them to protect his real identity and bring mystique to his media personality. Article continues below advertisementWhile the Ruthless host didn't address the reasons for his sunglasses, the show did address their recent deal with Fox News during the July 15 episode. John Holmes delivered the news to the audience. "Good day," he said. "We come to you today with breaking news out of New York. Fox News has announced a new media expansion that includes a licensing agreement with Ruthless Podcast."Article continues below advertisementRuthless he continued, "CEO of Fox News Media Suzanne Scott says, quote, "The Ruthless Deal is a natural extension of our powerhouse brand as audiences reshape how they consume quality content. Since its launch as an alternative to progressive podcasts ahead of the 2020 presidential election, the fellow's irreverent variety of next generation conservative talk with a dry sense of humor has solidified it as the preeminent go-to podcast for political power players." Comfortably Smug added his two cents about the deal with Fox."Yeah, to me, I mean, it's it's an incredible day," he said. "I told everyone today was going to be an insane day, and this is what happened, each and every day. But honestly, this is I'm I'm so thrilled and grateful because of our audience. We have the best listeners and viewers on YouTube that anyone could ask for. And this is an opportunity with Fox where the only thing that changes is you get more episodes every week."Article continues below advertisementRuthless was created in 2020 by Josh, a conservative strategist, and Comfortably Smug. The mission of the podcast was to bring "fun" to right-wing politics. The podcast routinely attacks liberal politics, and Comfortably Smug often uses the phrase "own the libs" to express his conservative views. The podcast is popular among men between 18 and 45. Latest Influencers News and Updates

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