

## R2P “Humanitarian” Intervention in Syria “Could Cause 100,000 Deaths”

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*“Russia is ready to look for answers together with Western countries. And we don’t accept this kind of criticism. And we don’t accept this kind of mythology that the insurgents are pro-reform people. Because we know very well that they have been financed and armed by the monarchies of the Persian Gulf. They don’t even hide this fact and I hardly see a situation where democracy in Syria will be established with the help of Saudi Arabia and Qatar.”*

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*Alexei Pushkov, the Chairman of the Russian Duma’s International Affairs Committee, offers his assessment of the conflict unfolding in Syria in an exclusive interview with the Voice of Russia.*

I think that what we have been hearing from the US is very partial. Somehow the US thinks that the only source of civil war in Syria is the government, which is not the case. There are 33 thousand people who are fighting the Syrian government, and they’re fighting the Syrian government with heavy weapons, not just Kalashnikovs and pistols.

It’s heavy machine guns, it’s anti-tank guns and all of these armaments were on display when a ship coming from Libya full of US weapons was arrested in Lebanon. On the photos you can see what kind of armament was sent to the insurgents. It’s the Syrian force which has been trained outside of Syria. Some of them are really professional fighters. There’s some information about people who have been fighting in Libya, now are fighting on the side of the insurgents. I think that the US had better look at what kind of people they try to support there and what these people will bring to Damascus.

Until now Syria was a secular country where different ethnicities and different religious factions were living in peace and for many years – that’s very valuable. You have Christians, Sunnis, Alawis, Druze, Kurds and quite a few other groups. And if all of this explodes, I don’t think that we’ll have 10 thousand victims, we’ll have maybe 100 thousand victims. Russia wants to prevent this explosion. What we hear from our Western partners is that Assad should go and they are willing to support the insurgency. But supporting the insurgency, they are basically throwing oil into the flame. That is why Russia suggested having

international conference where we can try to find the solution that would be proposed to both sides in the Syrian conflict. The key Russian position is that we are ready to influence Assad's government, but the West should influence the insurgents. Otherwise it will not work out.

*Do you think that the Western media was unfairly portraying Russia?*

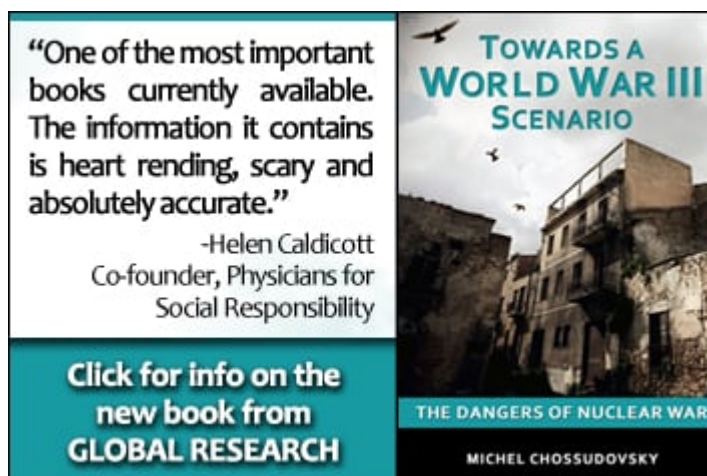
I think one of the reasons the West has been so critical about Russia in the Syrian issue is that the West doesn't have a policy at all towards Syria. I'm not pretending that Russia has the answers, but Russia fulfills a very important role for the Western media. By this could not criticize their own governments for not having any kind of solutions. Because the only political program the West has is that Assad should go. OK, what happens after Assad goes? How the regime falls? Who will come in its place?

*Is Russia prepared for that situation?*

Russia is ready to look for answers together with Western countries. And we don't accept this kind of criticism. And we don't accept this kind of mythology that the insurgents are pro-reform people. Because we know very well that they have been financed and armed by monarchies of the Persian Gulf. They don't even hide this fact and I hardly see a situation where democracy in Syria will be established with the help of Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

*And finally there have been some accusation that Russian foreign policy towards Syria is driven by its business interests. How do you respond to that?*

I think that the most important thing is not business. Syria doesn't play such a huge role in Russian foreign trade. The key factor in the Russian position is a very clear stand against so-called regime change, against so-called humanitarian intervention. We think that the Libyan example showed that these kinds of interventions lead to chaos and to the creation of a parallel international law: when you have a UN charter and at the same time you have some kind of parallel law which is being conducted by either friends of Syria or the Coalition of the Willing, something which goes around the UN rules and charter. We don't want to accept a world where there would be another international law instead of the internationally accepted one. Syria is just a very serious example of the Russian desire to fight for international law which is universally accepted.



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