

Syria: Proxy War Powder Keg

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

As the Syrian conflict escalates and continues unabated, so too does the intense rhetoric and diplomatic wrangling surrounding it, revealing the war's immense geopolitical stakes. With the potential for a wider, regional war increasing day by day, it is all the more pressing to understand the intricacies of Syria's strife and begin working toward its peaceful resolution.

Two conflicting narratives have developed to explain the country's recent violence: On one side, Western and Gulf policymakers and media have portrayed the uprising as spontaneous and peaceful, and the Syrian government as a ruthless and indiscriminate murderer of its civilians. Other Arab governments, along with independent media and analysts, assert that the government is fending off terrorists armed and funded from abroad. As time passes, the details emerging of the situation unfortunately confirm the latter.

Even before the current phase of armed insurgency, Syria was being purposefully destabilized by U.S. State Department-funded groups. The Washington Post discussed this in their article, "U.S. Secretly Backed Syrian Opposition Groups, Cables Released by Wikileaks Show." [1] The country is just one of the many targeted by the West's engineered geopolitical ploy of the 'Arab Spring,' which swept through the Middle East and north Africa, overturning sovereign states less than compliant to U.S. interests in the region. When demonstrations failed to topple the regime as had happened in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen, armed groups were inserted by U.S. and NATO planners to instead bring down Damascus through violence.

Since April, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the United States have overtly coordinated financing and material support for the rebels. [2] Saudi Arabia, Qatar and others are admittedly also providing weapons to the rebels via U.S. coordination and logistical support in Turkey and Lebanon. [3] Lebanon's March 14 alliance, vehemently anti-Syrian, has also had a hand in supplying weapons to the Syrian rebels. [4] These details had extensive prior documentation, and were then made public as official policy. Even the former focal point of the Arab Spring, Libya, has committed weapons to the insurgency. [5] The Obama administration has also licensed a U.S. group to collect money for arms purchases, [6] effectively allowing the unwitting or nefarious to sponsor bloodshed. In addition, C.I.A. officers are currently stationed in southern Turkey, supplying automatic rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, ammunition and antitank weapons to the rebels, once again financed by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. [7]

The recipients of this foreign political, financial, material and logistical support, collectively labeled the Free Syrian Army, have been repeatedly cited for their human rights abuses and the presence of extremist elements within their ranks – most noticeably by Human Rights Watch.

The motivation for these abuses are in many cases along sectarian lines, Syria being one of the few remaining havens in the Middle East for the Shia and Alawite communities. With the presence of al-Qaeda and other Sunni militant groups now openly admitted in the mainstream media, [8] political cover is being given to the rebels to carry out sectarian warfare against the Alawite community including the al-Assad regime, and the Shia and Christian communities.

Al-Qaeda's presence is brazenly displayed across the country, [9] with the group's signature black flag now awash in the country, harkening back to post-revolution Libya, where the flag was hoisted most prominently atop Benghazi's courthouse.



Human Rights Watch's extensive list of abuses carried out by the opposition run the gamut from kidnapping and detention to torture, forced confessions and execution. [10] This is an all too familiar repeat of the abuses carried out by Libyan rebels last year, including in that case widespread genocide of the country's black African population. [11] During the League of Arab States' observer mission in Syria, these systematic abuses were confirmed in cities such as Homs, where kidnappings, sabotage of government and civilian facilities, and armed blockades were all attributed to the insurgents, creating a desperate humanitarian situation within the city. The governor of Homs stated that the armed groups were responsible for the city's escalation in violence, defying pleas for peace from religious figures and city notables. [12] This fact of the conflict, that the armed opposition is responsible for escalating the violence, has been confirmed by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. [13]

The insurgents crossing into Syria are often not even Syrian nationals, rendering 'Free Syrian Army' a misnomer at best and destroying the credibility of their stated goals. Many rebels were previously committed to jihad against NATO forces and Shi'ites in Iraq, and have traversed the border to unleash similar devastation inside Syria. An aide to Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki stated, "Al Qaeda that is operating in Iraq is the same as that which is operating in Syria. We are 100 percent sure from security coordination with Syrian authorities that the wanted names that we have are the same wanted names that the Syrian authorities have." The origin of other fighters include Libya, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many eyewitnesses have reported the fighters as having foreign dialects, and the bodies of fighters killed in action later have been found burned, in an attempt by others to cover their tracks and conceal their true origins.

NATO forces have been widely reported to be training Syrian rebels in southeast Turkey, [14] in preparation for their entry into the country. Once inside Syria, the rebels dutifully carry out mass murder to then blame upon the Assad regime as a pretext for further outside meddling. The most prominent of these massacres occurred in the village of Houla, in which 108 civilians were killed. The rebels and complicit mainstream media immediately named and shamed the Syrian government, intensifying their calls for regime change and outside

intervention. As eyewitness reports later confirmed, [15] the Houla massacre was the work of armed groups who had seized control of the area and then indiscriminately murdered men, women and children. President Assad made a speech soon after, saying, “Even monsters couldn’t perpetrate what we have seen.” [16]



The crisis being engineered inside Syria must be viewed in the context of a much larger geopolitical endgame. As Syrian parliamentarian Khaled Aboud has said, “it is not an internal conflict between the spectra of Syrian people, but a clash over the strategic interests between regional and international powers.” [17] The overarching objective is the limiting of Iran’s regional sphere of influence, Tehran being the current epicenter of the ‘Resistance’ movement in opposition to American and Israeli imperial interests. In this sense, Syria has truly become an unspoken proxy battleground between the NATO and Resistance power blocs. If Assad is able to survive the current influx of foreign mercenaries, Tehran will have a continued and strengthened sphere of influence stretching from central Asia to the eastern Mediterranean.

To topple Syria, Iran’s foremost ally and proxy, the Sunni-Shia divide has been co-opted to systematically dismantle the Iranian axis and solidify Israel’s position as the sole regional hegemon. The Sunni monarchies of the Gulf are eager to limit Persian Shia influence in the region, and their participation in the anti-Syrian campaign also provides cover for their continued crackdown on dissenters. The same is true of Turkey regarding their Kurdish population. The collapse of the Assad regime also removes Hezbollah’s next-door state sponsor, killing two Iranian proxies with one stone. This is the motivation behind the Lebanese Hariri faction’s participation in fueling the insurgency, as it will remove the political influence of Iran and the March 8 movement.

Iran has been reluctant to stand idly by during all of this, despite the backlash that could result from Syria’s and Iran’s hypocritical aggressors. U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has said in testimony, “We are seeing a growing presence by Iran and that is of deep concern to us that that’s taking place. There’s now an indication that they’re trying to train a militia within Syria to be able to fight on behalf of the regime.” [18] The State Department has likewise accused Hezbollah of training and advising government forces, [19] although without presenting evidence for the accusation. Whether or not these accusations are true, they are important in that they portray Iran as a source of instability in the conflict,

despicably attempting to mitigate a full-blown proxy invasion. However, Iran is still pursuing peaceful and diplomatic resolution to the conflict. This was on display recently in Tehran, when Iran hosted representatives from nearly 30 countries including Russia and China, collectively representing over half the world's population standing in defiance of Western imperial designs.



Iran's efforts, no matter how futile they might appear at this stage, should be welcomed as Tehran is now the only external player making serious attempts to preserve Syrians' lives, infrastructure and uncertain future.

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Notes

[1]

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-secretly-backed-syrian-opposition-groups-cables-released-by-wikileaks-show/2011/04/14/AF1p9hwD_story.html

[2]

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/02/world/middleeast/us-and-other-countries-move-to-increase-assistance-to-syrian-rebels.html?_r=1

[3]

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/syrian-rebels-get-influx-of-arms-with-gulf-neighbors-money-us-coordination/2012/05/15/gIQAds2TSU_story.html

[4] <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2011/aug2011/leba-a12.shtml>

[5]

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/8917265/Libyas-new-rulers-offer-weapons-to-Syrian-rebels.html>

[6]

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/08/01/2925990/us-eases-arms-purchases-for-syrian.html>

[7]

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/21/world/middleeast/cia-said-to-aid-in-steering-arms-to-syrian-rebels.html?pagewanted=all>

[8]

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/25/world/middleeast/al-qaeda-insinuating-its-way-into-syrias-conflict.html?pagewanted=all>

[9] http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/NH14Ak01.html

[10]

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/20/syria-armed-opposition-groups-committing-abuses>

[1 1]

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/feb/16/libyan-militias-detainee-torture-amnesty-international>

[12] http://globalresearch.ca/Report_of_Arab_League_Observer_Mission.pdf

[13] <http://sana.sy/eng/22/2012/08/11/435872.htm>

[14] <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/214641.html>

[15] <http://www.syrianews.cc/marat-musin-anna-news-syria-report-houla/>

[1 6]

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/04/world/middleeast/assad-condemns-houla-massacre-blaming-outside-terrorists.html>

[17] http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2012-08/14/c_131784980.htm

[1 8]

<http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/08/14/pentagon-iran-training-pro-regime-militias-in-syria/>

[1 9]

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/11/world/middleeast/us-officials-say-hezbollah-helps-syrias-military.html>

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