

US Sponsored Terror: Syria Teeters on Obama's "Red Line"

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

The pages of history tell us that beautiful civilizations emerged and prospered in the ancient cities of Damascus and Aleppo, some of the oldest continually inhabited cities on earth. The harrowing circus of brutality that is the Syrian conflict, now in its third year, will soil and blacken those pages indefinitely.

No matter the political outcome of this horrible war, a once tolerant and diverse state has been shattered and terror itself has eaten into the destiny of Syria's people, inexorably changing the courses of their lives forever. Children have been orphaned; parents have faced the loss of their children – and by uncompromising means. Infants have been beheaded, the fates of innocent men and women have been sealed through summary executions, and families have been torn apart or destroyed all together. Recent developments in Syria are alarming.

Spokesmen of the Assad government recently accused foreign-backed militants of launching scud missiles containing chemical weapons in the city of Aleppo, killing dozens. Witnesses claim to have seen powder emanate from the rocket, causing those who inhaled the substance to suffocate or require immediate medical attention. An unnamed chemical weapons expert cited by Al-Jazeera claimed that the casualties were not consistent with Syria's reputed stockpile of chemical agents, stating, "If it's a chemical warfare agent, it's not working very well." Syria's ambassador to the UN, Bashar Ja'afari, called on the UN Secretary-General to form an independent technical mission to investigate the use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups operating in Syria.

While on his first state visit to Israel, Barack Obama cast doubt and expressed deep scepticism toward the Assad government's version of events, stating that if the government did indeed use chemical weapons, then it meant a "red line" had been crossed. Obama vowed not to make further announcements until concrete facts were established. What this essentially means is that Obama is now in a position to act on his statements and intervene more boldly and directly than the United States has already been doing since the beginning of the conflict. Additionally, NATO personnel have also indicated that they are prepared to employ a wide range of operations. US-European Command Admiral James Stavridis recently told media that the alliance was "prepared, if called upon, to be engaged as we were in Libya."

Those who have critically monitored the situation from the beginning are under no illusions. The way in which mainstream media sources have covered the Syrian conflict, perhaps more so than any other topic in recent times, shows unequivocally how certain content

providers have moved in step with the foreign policy of the Western and Gulf states who have enabled insurgent groups and provided diplomatic cover for opposition politicians who represent their economic and strategic interests. The Obama administration's policy toward Libya and Syria eyes the same familiar endgame as what the Bush administration sought in its foreign policy adventures. The fact that many of those on the left who campaigned against Iraq and Afghanistan are now generally silent, or even supportive of Obama's agenda, is proof that his policies have been packaged far more intelligently for mainstream consumption. The reality is that Syria is "*Shock and Awe*" by other means.

There are a myriad of reasons why Bashar al-Assad must go in the eyes of policy makers in Washington and Tel Aviv, and the destruction of his tenure could not have been possible without the financial muscle of Saudi Arabia and Qatar's wretchedly opulent Sunni Monarchs. These glittering kingdoms of disaster-capitalism are not only responsible for supplying weapons and cash; a major incentive of theirs is exporting the Wahhabist and Salafist ideologies that many of Syria's imported jihadists subscribe to, a warped and primal interpretation of Islam that has fueled the sectarian nature of the Syrian conflict and deepened social divisions to their most dangerous point – in a country that was once renowned for its tolerance of religious diversity. These Gulf kingdoms, which are more-or-less given a trump card to commit deplorable human rights violations institutionally, are also responsible for propping up the political arm of their militant foot soldiers, and that comes in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Syria's opposition coalition, which is itself entirely a creation of foreign powers, has recently elected its own interim prime minister – enter, Ghassan Hitto, a virtually unknown political novice with a US passport and a computer science degree from Purdue University. Hitto is an Islamist Kurd with strong ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood has politically dominated the Syrian National Council since its creation, in addition to organizing tactical elements of the insurgency. The backbone of the Brotherhood's relationship with the medieval monarchies of the Persian Gulf is grounded in a firm opposition to Shi'a Islam, as extolled by clerical leaders in Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah; Assad himself is also an Alawite, an offshoot of Shi'a Islam. It should be clear enough by now how enflaming sectarian divisions in the region was a prerequisite for those bank-rolling the insurgency, aimed at demolishing the secular Syrian state.

Several high-profile members of Syria's opposition coalition boycotted the vote for interim prime minister, citing what they viewed as a foreign-backed campaign to elect Hitto. Kamal Labwani, a veteran opposition campaigner, was reported as saying, "*We don't want what happened in Egypt to happen in Syria. They hijacked the revolution.*" Those who abstained from the vote accuse Hitto of being a puppet of the Muslim Brotherhood, and that the SNC's decisions were being dictated from the outside. Walid al-Bunni, another senior figure in the opposition, stated, "*The Muslim Brotherhood, with the backing of Qatar, have imposed their prime minister candidate. We will keep away if the coalition does not reconsider its choice.*" Let's just get this straight – Assad, a leader whose presence today is a testament to the fact that he continues to enjoy majority popular support, is considered to have lost his legitimacy. On the other hand, Hitto, a man with no political experience who received 35 votes out of 49 ballots cast during a Syrian National Coalition meeting, is supposed to be legitimate representative of the Syrian people?

These realities can only be interpreted as the boot of the so-called "*International Community*" squashing the face of the Syrian people, imposing on them a man who does

not represent them, but the business interests of multinational corporations who seek to plant their flags in the soil of a post-Assad Syria. Let's not humor ourselves by thinking John Kerry, William Hague, Laurent Fabius or Qatari Emir Khalifa Al Thani actually care about the people of Syria. However many casualties the Syrian conflict has incurred thus far can be attributable to the influx of foreign funds, foreign arms, and foreign fighters. It would be intellectually dishonest to deny that the tactics of Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian Arab Army have also caused widespread civilian casualties and suffering. It is an enormous challenge for a state military to quell unconventional insurgencies of the sort carried out by militants in Syria when these battles take place in densely populated residential areas.

One should not cynically credit Syrian government forces with intentionally killing their own people; this does not serve the purposes of the state in anyway. Civilian deaths that have occurred as a result of government forces engaging the insurgency should more accurately be seen as a heinous by-product of a foreign campaign to topple the Syrian government. While the foreign ministries of Western capitals cite politically charged death-toll statistics to justify their campaign against "*Assad the Butcher*", it is absolutely unconscionable that Paris and London have called for lifting the Syrian arms embargo, and for vowing to arm militant groups with or without the consent of the EU. Apparently some seventy thousand people have been killed in Syria according to the United Nations, and these cited European states, which allegedly are so concerned about terrorism, want to dump more guns into Syria – this is madness.

Western states want to install proxy leaders who will grovel to their multinationals and swallow IMF medicine, Gulf states seek unfettered hegemony in their own backyards, and they all want to see the Shi'a resistance smashed to pieces. Following the news of chemical weapons being used in Syria, the most immediate conclusion of this observer is that foreign-backed militants, who have used every opportunity to call for more material and support, employed the use of a smuggled chemical weapon of poor quality to bring about direct military intervention in their favor. Right on cue, Senators Lindsey Graham and John McCain are frothing at the mouth, urging President Obama to "*take immediate action*" and consider deploying troops. Graham was quoted as saying, "*If the choice is to send in troops to secure the weapons sites versus allowing chemical weapons to get in the hands of some of the most violent people in the world, I vote to cut this off before it becomes a problem.*" There is no surer sign of a pathological mind than when one credits others with the blood on their own hands.

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