

Syrian Trappist Nuns Say Western Powers and Factional Media Fuel War Propaganda

By [AsiaNews](#)

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In a written appeal, the religious systematically take apart the version of the conflict touted by governments, NGOs and international news organizations. In Ghouta east, jihadists attack the capital and use civilians as human shields. The Syrian government and people have a duty to defend themselves from external attacks. The conflict alone has undermined the coexistence between Christians and Muslims in the country.

"We, the people who live in Syria, we are really exhausted and exasperated by this global indignation that issues blanket condemnations of people who defend their lives and their land". Because the victims of a bloody war now in its seventh year, are not only hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, but also the truth and information too often enslaved by the interests of foreign governments and powers. These are the harsh words contained in a written appeal issued by the Syrian Trappist sisters, who have first-hand experience of the tragedy of the conflict.

In recent weeks, international bodies, Western chancelleries and large news networks have launched a frontal attack on the Damascus government and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, accusing them of deliberately targeting civilians trapped in Ghouta East, a rebel enclave in the suburbs of the capital. However, the religious say, it is from that area "that the attacks against the civilians who live in the part controlled by the government began, and not vice versa". Moreover, those in the area "who did not support the jihadists, were put in iron cages: men, women, hung outdoors and used as human shields".

The religious do not spare the neighbouring countries that have favoured the entry of "mercenaries" to fuel the conflict and the governments in the West who have trafficked with the jihadists to get oil below cost. "Today to tell Syria, the Syrian government, not to defend its nation – the nuns emphasize – is against all justice". And those who speak of "the Churches' partisan reverence of " Assad, they conclude, "reveal that they do not know Syria, because Christians and Muslims live together in this land. This war alone is to blame for wounding this cohabitation in many parts of the country".

Below, we publish the testimony of the Trappist sisters sent to AsiaNews.

When will they silence their weapons? And when will they silence so much partisan journalism? We, the people who actually live in Syria, we are really exhausted, nauseated by this global indignation that issues blanket condemnations of those who defend their lives and their land.

We have gone to Damascus several times in these months; we went after the

rebel bombs had massacred a school, we were there a few days ago, the day after they had dropped 90 others from the Goutha, on the governmental part of the city. We have heard the stories of the children, the fear of leaving home and going to school, the terror of having to see their classmates still being ripped apart mid-air, or they themselves being ripped apart ... children who cannot sleep at night, for fear that a missile will crash through their roof. Fear, tears, blood, death. Are not these children worthy of our attention too?

Why did the public not bat an eyelid, why was no one indignant, why were no humanitarian or other appeals launched for these innocent people? And why only when the Syrian government intervenes, arousing the gratitude of Syrian citizens because at last they feel defended from so much horror (which we have seen with our own eyes and of which we hear), are we indignant about the ferocity of the war?

Of course, even when the Syrian army bombs there are women, children, civilians, wounded or dead. And we pray for them too. Not only the civilians: we also pray for the jihadists, because every man who chooses evil is a lost child, is a mystery hidden in the heart of God. And it is to God that we must leave judgment, He who does not want the death of the sinner, but that the sinner be converted and live.

But this does not mean that you do not call things by their name. And you can not confuse those who attack with those who defend themselves.

The attacks on civilians in Damascus, began from the Goutha area into the government-controlled part, and not vice versa. The same Goutha where – must we really remind people? – civilians who did not support the jihadists were put in iron cages: men, women, exposed outdoors and used as human shields. Goutha: the district where today the civilians who want to escape, and take refuge in the government-area, who dare to take advantage of the truce granted, are targeted by rebel snipers ...

Why this blindness on the part of the West? How is it possible for those who inform the public, even in the ecclesial context, to be so one-sided?

War is bad, oh yes, yes it is so bad! You do not need to tell the Syrian people this, a people who have seen the war rob them of their home for seven years now ... But we cannot be scandalized by the brutality of the war and keep quiet about who the wanted war and still wants war today, or keep quiet about the governments that have poured their powerful weapons, their military intelligence into Syria in recent years... not to mention the mercenaries deliberately allowed to enter Syria passing through neighbouring countries (many who went on to join Isis, the West should at least recognise these initials and what they mean).

We cannot keep quiet about the governments that have earned and gained from this war. Just look at what has happened to the most important Syrian oil wells. But this is just a mere detail, there is [something] much more important at stake here.

War is bad. But we have not yet reached the goal, where the wolf and the lamb will dwell together, and for those who believe, we must remember that the Church does not condemn legitimate defence; and even if she certainly does not wish for a recourse to arms and war, faith does not condemn those who defend their country, their family, not even their lives. You can choose non-violence, until you die. But it is a personal choice, which can only be brought to bear on the life of those who choose it, we cannot certainly ask a whole nation, an entire people for this.

No one, man or woman, who has a minimum of true humanity can wish for war. But today to say to Syria, to the Syrian government, not to defend its nation is against all justice: too often it is the only way to facilitate the task of those who want to plunder the country, massacre its people, as happened in these long years in which truces have been used above all to re-arm the rebels, and the humanitarian corridors to allow new weapons and new mercenaries to enter ... and how can we forget what atrocities have happened in these years in the areas controlled by the jihadists? violence, summary executions, rapes ... the stories we have heard from those who finally managed to escape?

Recently an article was brought to our attention: so many words spent on a single thesis, namely that all the Churches of the East are mere servants of power ... for convenience ... Some beautiful sentences to that effect, such as reverence bishops and Christians to the Syrian Satrap ... a way to delegitimize any appeal by the Syrian Church that reveals the other side of the coin, the one the mass media ignores.

Beyond any useless defence and polemics, let's make a simple reasoning, starting with a consideration. And that is that Christ – who knows well the heart of man, that is, knows that good and evil cohabit in each of us, wants his to be leaven in the dough, that is the presence that little by little, from the inside, makes a situation grow and orients it towards truth and goodness. It supports where support is needed, it changes where change is needed. With courage, without duplicity, but from within. Jesus did not support the sons of thunder, who invoked a fire of punishment.

Of course Syrian politics suffers from corruption (as in all the countries of the world) and there is sin in the Church (as in all the churches, as the Pope has so often complained)

But, appealing to the common sense of all, even non-believers: what is the real alternative that the West invokes for Syria? The Islamic State, Sharia? This in the name of freedom and democracy of the Syrian people? Don't make us laugh, actually, don't make us cry.

But if you think that in any case it is never legitimate to compromise, then for consistency we remind you, just to give one small example, that you would not have gas "without compromising with the strong powers", given that most companies have bought cheap oil from ISIS, across the bridge of Turkey: so when you drive a few kilometers, you do it thanks to the death of someone from whom this oil was stolen, consuming the diesel oil that was supposed to heat the house of some child in Syria..

If you really want to bring democracy to the world, make sure of your freedom from the satrapies of the West, and worry about your consistency, before intervening in that of others.

Last but not least, one should at least suspect the fact that if a Christian or a Muslim denounces the atrocities of jihadist groups it meets with a media silence, he finds only a rare echo in marginal agencies, while those who criticize the Syrian government gain the front pages of the big media. Does anyone remember an interview or an intervention by a Syrian bishop on some important newspaper in the West? One can disagree, obviously, but true information supposes different points of view.

Moreover, those who speak of an interested reverence of the Syrian Church towards President Assad as a defense of the short-sighted interests of Christians, proves that they do not know Syria, because in this land Christians and Muslims live together. It was only this war that hurt cohabitation in many parts, but in areas secured by the army (unlike those controlled by "others"),

we still live together. With deep wounds to be tended, today unfortunately also with great difficulty to forgive, but still together. And good is good for everyone: I am witness to the many works of charity, relief, development run by Christians and Muslims together.

Of course, those who live here know this, even in the midst of so many contradictions, not those who write from behind a desk with many stereotypes of opposition between Christians and Muslims.

“Deliver us Lord from the war ... and deliver us from bad journalism ...”.

With all due respect to journalists who really try to understand situations, and really inform us. But they will certainly not take us to task for what we write.

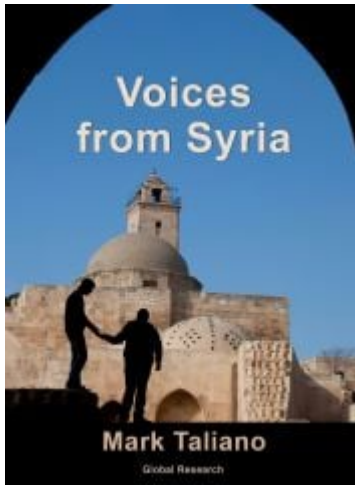
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