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TOWARDS THE SYRIAN NIGHTMARE?

THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN SYRIA AND POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC RESEARCH ORGANIZATION
USAK Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies

Ali Hussein Bakeer

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Author

Ali Hussein Bakeer

Report Team

Burç Köstem

Gülsüm Boz

Mehmet Hecan

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International Strategic Research Organization (USAK)

Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu

Ayten Sokak No: 21 Tandoğan/Ankara

Phone: (0312) 212 28 86-87 • Fax: (0312) 212 25 84

www.usak.org.tr - www.turkishweekly.net

www.usakanalist.com - info@usak.org.tr

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USAK CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN AND AFRICAN STUDIES

The USAK Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies (ODAM) is a leading Turkish research center for promoting knowledge of the Middle East and Africa. The Center is a source of sound information, recommendations, journals, and books, and a platform for forums and conferences on the Middle East and Africa. USAK-ODAM is regularly consulted by journalists, officials, politicians, diplomats, and other NGOs on Middle Eastern security and politics. Center staff regularly contribute to USAK publications and organize lectures and discussion forums on Middle Eastern topics. ODAM arranges lectures, seminars, conferences and other discussions, and sponsors research and publications. In addition, the Center has an extensive, private library on Middle Eastern and African subjects. The library includes Turkish, English, Arabic, and Persian publications and is available to USAK researchers and visitors. The corresponding desks conduct research in English and regional languages.



ALİ HUSSEIN BAKEER is a researcher in the Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. His work focuses on the Middle East, Turkey, Iran, American foreign policy towards the Middle East, geostrategy and international relations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks to evaluate the current situation of Syria through a carefully considered analysis. It aims to navigate safely through at times a conflicting myriad of information disseminated on the media and the Internet and make a projection about the future of the Syrian state as well as describing the various scenarios that may result.

Furthermore the report aims to offer decision makers a chance to define the challenges and opportunities, so that they could most accurately determine the risks that could arise during or after the crisis and help them take well-grounded and objective decisions based on facts from within Syria.

The present report discusses Syria's internal predicament taking into account humanitarian, social, economic, military and security considerations that have affected the revolution between March 2011 and the first week of January 2013, with several updates written till May 2013. The reports sheds light on the increasing role of the armed groups supporting Assad like Shabiha and the Lebanese Hezbollah as well as groups fighting against Assad such as the various Islamic groups that have been hotly discussed of late. Furthermore, the report discusses the role of minorities (Kurdish, Alawite, Christians, Druze, Turkmen) in their struggle and relation with the Syrian opposition, alongside the recent discussions around the creation of a Kurdish and an Alawite state within Syria's territories.

This study also discusses the use chemical weapons being deployed by the regime and expresses the possible scenarios with regards to the future of Assad and the Syrian state. While the report does consider the possibility that the Assad regime may be toppled at any time in the near future, the persistence of foreign assistance alongside the hesitation of the international community are factors that will help the Assad regime prolong its stay in power.

This report contends that should Assad leave (through an agreement, a bargain, escape or assassination) until the end of the first half of 2013, it is possible for Syria to be restored to its previous state despite considerable hardships that may be endured. Yet this is only possible through serious regional and international assistance and commitment. However if the regime isn't toppled and Assad remains in power till the end of his tenure

in July 2014, this means that the country will be facing a gravely dangerous situation. This situation will constitute a nightmare scenario for Syria. It is very likely that the situation will then go out of control with regards to all players and it will become highly probable that Syria will turn into a “failed state” which will hold grave dangers to the Syrian people, state as a whole as well as the regional situation. Below you can find a synopsis of the critical headings within the report:

Economic conditions: It has been 23 months since the Syrian regime first took the decision to quell the demonstrations using security and military intervention. In this time period the Syrian economy has undergone a most terrific destruction as a result of the regime demolishing the infrastructure for the main economic sectors that the country depends on. Consequently various economic sectors in the country are dormant, significantly damaged or completely destroyed. Inflation has risen 40 per cent compared to 2010 while the Syrian Lira has depreciated by more than 51 per cent since March 2011. Furthermore the countries gross domestic product is estimated to decrease by 20 per cent since 2011. Unemployment, which has faired around 10 per cent in the last 10 years has risen to 25 per cent according to the most optimistic figures in 2012. The foreign exchange reserves of the regime have also evaporated at a striking rate due to the over half a billion dollars the regime spends every month. According to estimations made on December 2012, the regime has around 3 billion dollars of foreign reserves remaining. This same number stood at 17 billion dollars around when the demonstrations first started.

Humanitarian conditions: The number of documented Syrian refugees in neighboring countries has reached 1.6 million according to a statement by the UN humanitarian chief Valerie Amos in June. Furthermore this number is expected to exceed 3.5 million by the end of 2013. The refugees are predominantly spread across four countries: Lebanon (over 450,000 refugees), Jordan (over 445,000 refugees), Turkey (over 300,000 refugees) and Iraq (over 140,000 refugees). The number of internally displaced persons within Syria is around 4.6 million. According to a statement by Antonio Guterres UN High Commissioner for Refugees 7,000 refugees are crossing Syrian borders each day.

Infrastructure: As of September 2012 there are over 2 million 865 thousand premises that have been destroyed by the regime. Of these 15 per cent have been completely raised to the ground and 85 per cent are barely standing or have been partially destroyed. It is estimated that at least 35 billion dollars are needed in the next 3 years for the reconstruction of these premises. Furthermore the losses sustained in important economic activities such as tourism, exports, industrial production and foreign investments alongside the destruction inflicted on infrastructure such as bridges, water and electricity supplies as well as the financial losses that result from the regime’s military expenditure, total around 100 billion dollars. It is thought that twice this number is required to restore Syria to its state prior to the revolution.

Goods and Services: As the economic burdens take their toll on the Syrian people there has also been a sharp increase in prices. For example it is estimated that gas prices have surged by 1300 per cent while the price of bread has risen by 100-400 per cent. Furthermore according to the numbers provided by International Medical Corps 35 percent of the hospitals within the country have been completely or partially destroyed, 10 percent

of health centers within the country have been damaged and 40 per cent of ambulances are malfunctioning. In addition 10 per cent of public schools are damaged while 1956 are being occupied by internally displaced persons as a result of the regimes attacks.

Military and Security Condition: During November and December of 2012 it has become evident that the nature of the conflict has changed and a shift in the balance of powers has occurred giving an advantage to the Free Syrian Army and the armed opposition. A striking improvement in the capabilities and performance of the armed opposition has been observed. This situation is clearly demonstrated with improvements in the communication network, specific attacks, coordination, orchestration of joint operations and the quality of the weapons used as well as many weapons and ammunitions that belong to the regular army being seized by the Free Syrian Army.

One can observe the countrywide retreat of the Regular Syrian Army (RSA) on several fronts. The regime doesn't have the human capacity to organize big military operations that would defeat the revolutionary forces. As a result the regime relies predominantly on the Fourth Brigade, the Shebbiha and foreign fighters (Hezbollah, IRGC, foreign militias etc.)

Defectors of the Regime: It is possible to express that higher-ranking officials leaving the regime have accompanied an increase in the rate of defections. Especially following the explosion that targeted the Syrian National Security building in Damascus on 18 July 2012 the number of defectors from the army has erupted. It is estimated that there are approximately 100.000 soldiers of different ranks and positions that have defected or avoided military service.

Casualties of the regime: According to official figures the regime forces have sustained approximately 2600 casualties as of April 2012. However sources close to the Syrian regime indicate that the number of casualties has reached 4.000 in July 2012. According to some unofficial estimates the number of casualties of the regime is around 8763 while the number of injured has risen to 21357 in the same period. The rate of casualties in the army and security forces has risen from 10 per day in the beginning of 2012, to 23 in June and 55 in December 2012.

Fighter Planes: From the beginning of the revolution till the end of March 2013 the armed opposition has shot down 187 air vehicles (assault helicopters and MIG fighter planes) 82 of which have been documented through video footage. In December 2012 alone 41 aircraft belonging to the regime have been shot down, the highest such number yet. The province of Idlib has also been the province where most air vehicles have been shot down with 46 aircraft.

Military Weaponry: From the beginning of 2012 till the end of October approximately 700 military vehicles of various categories (tanks armed vehicles and personnel carriers) have been either completely destroyed or otherwise incapacitated by the regime. This has impaired the regimes military capabilities putting their losses to 5.5-7.5 per cent of the weaponry that the regime currently holds.

Military Expenditure: In the first 12 months of the revolution, the operational cost of the army including vehicles, equipment, fuel and ammunition expenses has been around \$3 billion according to some studies on Syria. This figure alone exceeds the official budget for the Syrian Ministry of Defense, which stood around \$2 billion according to official numbers.

Regime's Signs of Despair: Many existing data indicates that the Syrian regime is incapable and hopeless in terms of achieving victory over the Syrian revolution and revolutionary forces and that it has lost the initiative in this regard. Furthermore this is another sign that the regimes capabilities are paralyzed and one by one seized by the revolutionary forces, as well as showing that the opposition's reign now extends over the whole of Syria. Apart from this there are also data that indicates the regime has been increasingly deploying Scud rockets as well as toxic and incendiary weapons against opposition forces and against civilians.

Regime Using Chemical Substances: Although the human and material losses inflicted by conventional weapons have not been short of chemical attacks in the Syrian case, chemical weapons will create several difficulties in terms of containing the area they afflict and making sure they do not affect regime forces along with the opposition. In this scenario Assad runs the risk of both killing his supporters and spilling the chemical weapons over to neighboring countries. However the present report doesn't altogether rule out the possibility of the Assad regime to use toxic or incendiary substances in low densities through different devices¹.

Partitioning Syria: The report contends that it is practically and objectively impossible at this stage to implement the idea of a Kurdish or Alawite state within the territories of Syria. Furthermore the report claims that this issue is exaggerated particularly with regards to finding a Kurdish state within Syria and that this is not possible to achieve. This is because the Kurdish population don't have the capacity to assert such a vision, aren't spread to an area that could cover all of northern Syria.

Yet despite these facts, the report claims that this claim nevertheless is still being conveyed by some sources and still finds an audience. There is no such physical space as a Syrian Kurdistan or a Northern Kurdish Syrian Area. This is because the Kurdish population doesn't form a band covering all of northern Syria from west to east. Rather the Kurdish population becomes denser only around the very northeast and very northwest corners of the country. Furthermore there hasn't been an international or regional support for such kind of a project. Even if such a state were to be found it is impossible for it to survive alone without external help. However changing facts on the ground along with the international position may drive Syria into a failed state scenario and can make fragmentation a more serious outcome.

Islamist Groups: Beside the activities of the regular army and FSA, the report noticed an increase involvement of the pro regime armed groups such as Shebbiha, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Shiite militia from Iraq mainly. It also noticed an increase in the activi-

¹ Several reports have confirmed this fact later starting from March 2013. For more information please see Figures 11 and 18.

ties and role the Islamic groups some of which are moving from within the FSA, some independent but acting in coordination with the FSA, and some completely unaffiliated with the FSA.

Such groups are fighting intensely and heavily against the Assad regime, claiming very specific victories on the battlefield. This has caused them to gain an increasing public support. The report finds that as the regime's massacres continue the intervention of Hezbollah and Iran increase and the hesitation of the international community in terms lending active support persists, the role of such groups will continue to increase.

Regional Risks of Syria Turning into a Failed State: Syria turning into a failed state will not only cause significant troubles for the region's countries it may also offer several opportunities for the regional and international supporters of Assad. Assad's supporters may find the opportunity to abuse a failed state in Syria to create a new geostrategic game in which they can defeat their opponents. To present an example in such a scenario, unlike other countries in the region Iran will not be an absolute loser since it already has the experience and tools necessary to deal with such a scenario. Consequently in such a situation it will not only continue its presence in Syria, it will also gain a solid influence, wielding this power to bring regional and international actors to the bargaining table.

The Advances of the Revolutionaries and Opportunities or Projections:² The report also claims that the advances and gains made in the battlefield by the revolutionaries constitute an opportunity in terms of Syria. Therefore in this time period all the efforts necessary must be deployed to make Assad leave including exerting pressure on the supporters of the regime. Furthermore the final section of the report makes some suggestion with regards to the future of Syria.

2 However from March 2013 onwards, Assad and his regional and international allies have increased their offensive efforts. For more information please see Figure 18.

INTRODUCTION

Currently Syrian regime is on the brink of being toppled because it is running out of options and has lost its strategic assets one after another. Therefore Syria is currently standing at a critical crossroads that can define the course of the current struggle going on inside Syria.

While many experts maintain that Assad's unflagging refusal of a political solution and the organized army's steady retreat from its strategic ranks indicates that the regime will be toppled in the near future, others hold that while the regime is faltering it is still capable of prolonging the war.

Important developments have taken place with regards to the Syrian crisis especially in the last two months of 2012 and the beginning of 2013. The most notable among these is the fact that the Syrian opposition has unified both in the political and the military levels. Alongside this the Free Syrian Army has made important advances in the northern and eastern parts of the country while the conflict has reached the center of Assad's security establishment in Damascus. These events constitute a new and gravely serious reality forcing international and regional powers to reconsider their stance towards the much-neglected Syrian issue.

In this context together with the advances of the revolution some countries have started reassessing their stances. For instance Russia and Iran have started to instigate many initiatives together with the United Nations and the Arab League special envoy al-Akhdar al-Ibrahimi in this regard. However these initiatives are premised on Assad resuming his role as the head of state despite the catastrophic massacres and destruction committed by the regime. Furthermore the political and the military wings of the Syrian revolution as well as the majority of the Syrian people refuse such proposals that are premised on Assad staying in power.

Syrian opposition prefers the peaceful and political solution and has stated this since the revolution had first erupted. The Syrian opposition has confirmed many times that it is ready for this solution on the condition that Assad along with other figures whose hands have been stained by the blood of the Syrian people will not be a part of the new regime as the opposition considers this would be not illogical given the sacrifices of the Syrian people.

However the problem stems not only from the actions of Assad's supporters, but also from the "wait and see" policy of the friends of Syria and the lack of decisive action from international community against Assad's policy of systematic destruction and the massacres committed against civilians. In fact according to a report released by the United Nations in the beginning of 2013 the number of civilian casualties has exceeded 60.000.

This neglecting and reluctant attitude adopted by the international community and Syria's friends has encouraged the Assad regime and given it breathing space. The fact that Assad has shown his face for the first time in 6 months on 6 January 2013 and that this is his fifth public address since the start of the revolution are the strongest indicators that the regime is being encouraged by this reluctance. This speech indicates that Assad hasn't completely detached from reality but is on the contrary resolute on dismissing any real, peaceful political solution and that he continues to opt for a military response.

In this regard Assad has repeated during a speech he delivered a year ago and clearly conveyed the message that he will refuse all peaceful attempts to a resolution of the conflict. In fact Assad has stressed that he will not loosen his grip on power and will continue the military tactics he has used since the beginning of the revolution in March 2011.

Taking these into consideration, information with regards to the nature of the conflict inside Syria, the status of the different parties and which side will take the initiative with regards to the conflict bears critical importance. It is also vital to make careful and realistic evaluations of the impact the conflict has on Syria and on the countries in the region.

This report aims to create a clearer impression of what is taking place inside Syria through a careful and detailed evaluation aimed for both decision makers and the public at large and as a result assist decision makers in taking more realistic and objective decisions.

This report relies on variable critical sources of information that can be listed below as:

- Private sources from within and outside Syria.
- Public sources on Syria in Arabic and English. (Including interviews, news stories, reports etc.)
- Reports published by the Syrian regime.
- Official reports released by regional and international institutions.
- Reports from think tanks and other NGOs.

This report is constituted of three main parts:

General Situation: This part discusses the general predicament Syria is currently in through economic, social, humanitarian, security and military approaches with gripping and rich data under every heading.

Role of Minorities: The second part deals with the issue of the role played by minorities in the Syrian conflict, especially focusing on the relation between the Kurdish population and the Syrian opposition as well as the issue of the partitioning of Syria into a Kurdish and Alawite state.

Future Scenarios: Lastly the third part evaluates the different scenarios that may arise depending on the course of events that take place between the 2013 to July 2014 when Assad's tenure is expected to end, as well as analyzing the regional risks that will result from Syria turning into a failed state.

This report aims to fill-in many of the gaps in terms of content that are apparent in other report with regards to Syria. The report also bring together many documents, analysis and future expectations on Syria. This report is also the first such report to discuss so many of the already existing debates in such great detail, enriching them with new numbers, figures, graphics, maps, details and information. The report explores the coming scenarios with regards to Syria's future.

Note: This report was original written in January 2013 and first published in Turkish on February 2013. The present version is an updated translation from Turkish to English.

1

GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN SYRIA

A. Main Developments Regarding the Unification of the Syrian Opposition

We have recently witnessed certain significant developments regarding the attitude of the Syrian opposition in their collaborated efforts to topple the Assad regime. The fact that some countries have criticized the Syrian opposition on their failure to overthrow Assad can be evaluated as an excuse towards evading responsibility in this regard. However, the Syrian opposition has lately developed on political and military dimensions and has decided to form a coalition in order to end these polemics and to achieve its above-mentioned goal.

1) Political Opposition

The opposition has chosen to act in unison in order to develop, to close its ranks, to enable the integration among the members of the opposition inside and outside the country, and to create a strong military force. To this end, a series of consultation meetings of three days were held at Doha, Qatar on November 8-11, 2012, and many opposition groups inside and outside Syria attended this meeting. Syrian Revolution General Commission, Local Coordination Committee, Syrian National Council, Syrian Business Forum, 14 representatives from local councils, Damascus Intellectuals Union, Kurdish National Council, Syrian Tribes Revolutionary Council, Revolution's Board of Trustees, Democratic Platform, Socialist Unity Party, Communist Labour Party, independent national figures, politicians who have defected from the regime and other people participated in the meeting.

At the end of the meeting, Syrian National Council, the leading representative body of the opposition, which also includes a great majority of the opposition, and other opposition and revolutionary forces came to an agreement, and "**National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces**" was established. Ahmed Moaz Al-Khatib was elected the president of the coalition, while Riyad Seyf, an important opposition leader, and Suheyr Attasi were elected the vice-presidents. Mustafa Sabbagh was elected the secretary-general of the coalition.

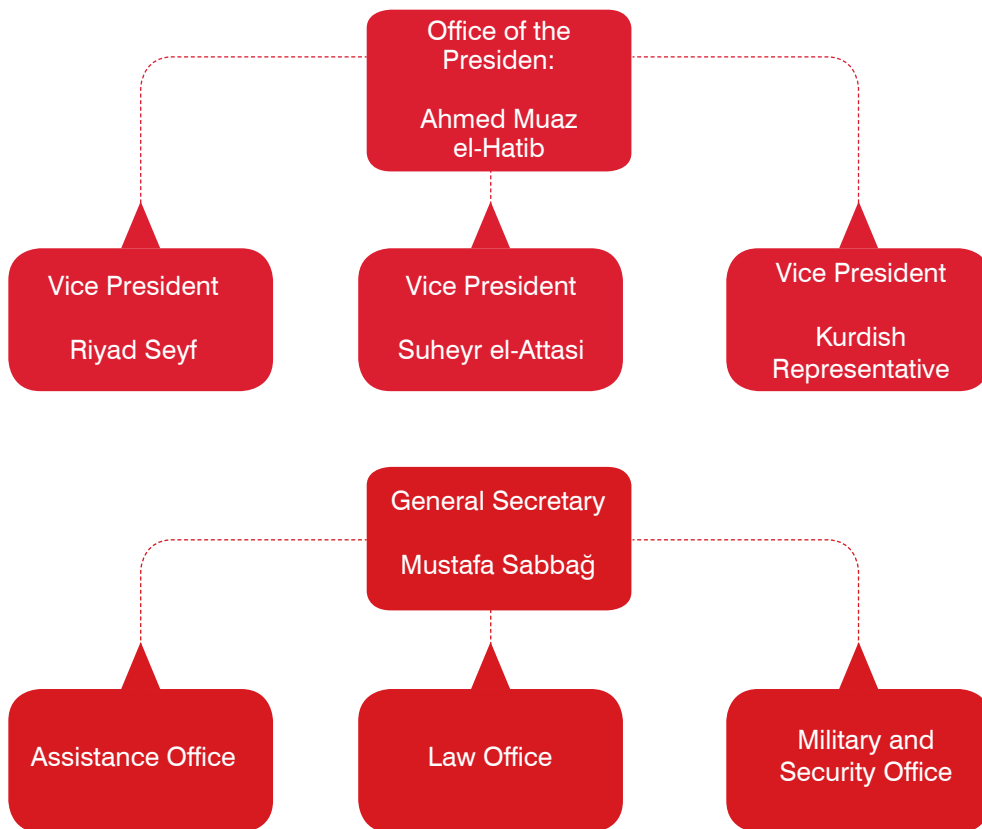
Who is Ahmad Mouath Al-Khatib?

Al-Khatib, born in 1960, carried out a duty as an imam and rhetorician at Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Al-Khatib is known as an open-minded and moderate person. He was arrested so many times on the grounds that he gave supports to the opposition forces in March, 2012 after the Syria crisis was broken out.

Al-Khatib won the presidency of the Coalition without any other rival

The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Oman) declared their recognition of the coalition as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people on November 12, 2012. Following the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, the League of Arab States also declared their recognition of the coalition as their legal addressee, with France, Italy, Turkey and United Kingdom followed suit. On December 12, 2012, the coalition was accepted as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people at the Friends of Syria meeting in Morocco hosting more than 130 countries.

Figure 1. The Organizational Schema of “The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces”



National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces explained certain principles regarding the protection of Syria's territorial integrity and the establishment of a new administration. These principles are as follows:

- Protecting the national sovereignty and ensuring the autonomy of national will within the decision making process,
- Protecting the national and territorial integrity of Syria,
- Protecting the integrity of the Syrian community,
- Toppling the regime with all its symbols, institutions and basic components,
- Dissembling the intelligence apparatus and charging the people who were involved in criminal activities against the Syrian people and dispersing these forces,
- Refusing to engage in dialogue or negotiations with the regime,
- Emphasizing the establishment of a civil, pluralistic and democratic Syria.

The aims of the coalition are as follows;

- Uniting the military revolution councils and the joint command support of the Free Syrian Army (FSA),
- Establishing a fund for supporting the Syrian people through international coordination,
- Establishing a Syrian National Law Committee,
- Establishing a transitional government after the coalition is recognized on the international level.

2) Armed Opposition

Together with the work directed at unifying the political initiatives against the Assad regime, a great deal of work has gone into unifying the military operations of the armed opposition against Assad. Therefore the unification of these two branches was a critical step towards toppling down the Assad regime. More than 500 members representing the military units, brigades and regiments of FSA fighting in the fields within Syria decided to establish a "High Joint Military Command Council" for all armed revolutionary forces within Syria on December 4-8, 2012.

Following the negotiations conducted during the same meeting, 30 members were elected for the "General Staff of the Military and Revolutionary Forces". Brigadier Dr. Selim Idris was elected the Chief of General Staff in order to be in constant communication with the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and the represented political opposition.

Figure 2. The Organizational Schema of Department of Chief of Staff of Military and Revolutionary Forces For Free Syrian Army



According to the new agreement, General Staff of the Military and Revolutionary Forces was organized under the FSA. Colonel Mustafa Abdulkarim was elected the vice chairman of the Chief of General Staff, Brigadier Dr. Selim Idris, and Colonel Abdulkadir Al-Salih were elected as assistant vice chairmen. Moreover, five assistants were charged with the responsibility of being directly liable for the conduct of the field operations at the below-mentioned regions. The regional commands are under the General Staff. The regions are as follows:

- Northern Region: Revolutionary Council of Aleppo and Revolutionary Council of Idlib,
- Central Region: Revolutionary Council of Homs,
- Eastern Region: Revolutionary Council of Deirez-Zor, Revolutionary Council of Al-Hasakah and Revolutionary Council of Al-Raqqah,
- Western Region: Revolutionary Council of Hama, Revolutionary Council of Latakia and Revolutionary Council of Tartus,
- Southern Region: Revolutionary Council of Damascus and Revolutionary Council of Daraa.
- According to some reports on December 19, 2012, Brigadier Selim Idris met with the president of the

Who is Selim Idris?

Idris was born in the village of Al-Mubarakiyye of Homs. Selim Idris who studied for doctorate in the field of Engineering, worked as the academician at the Syrian Military Academy. Idris , who knows five languages, is not attached to any political movement. Conspicuously, he places importance on the management and organization studies. He has an effective popularity in the military environments. He is known as a cultured and moderate person.

Than National Coalition Moaz Al-Khatib, and the following issues were underlined during the meeting:

- Toppling the Assad regime with all its symbols and dispersing the security forces of the regime,
- Enabling the Syrian people to defend themselves with whatever tools they can acquire,
- Giving the Syrian people the freedom to make their own decisions,
- Speeding up the process of establishing a temporary government in order to end the suffering of the Syrian people.

High Joint Military Command Council declared through FSA Media Center that Brigadier Selim Idris was promoted to the higher rank of major general on December 26, 2012.

3) Temporary Government

On March 18, 2013 the Syrian National Coalition elected Ghassan Hitto with an overwhelming majority (35 out of 50 votes) as head of the temporary government. Although some individual figures in the Syrian opposition didn't like the result for various reasons, to experience the first form of democratic election was a very significant, new and positive development.

The headquarters office of the temporary government will be located within the liberated areas inside Syria and its role is defined as: Exerting gradual organizational and administrative control over the liberated areas inside Syria as these areas will constitute the nucleus of the new Syria. Working closely with the FSA leadership and general staff to achieve this goal and to enforce security, rule of law, combat crime, reduce the chaos and the spread of arms, protect strategic facilities and assets, help Syrian recover private and public assets that can assist them in sustaining their lives in dignity. Priority will be given also to the issue of securing and rallying armed and financial support for the FSA as well as its General Staff and command. Helping the FSA topple the Assad regime and unequivocally rejecting any form of dialogue with the Assad regime. As for the long term goals these can be listed as: The transitional government will be responsible for preparing the grounds for a comprehensive national conference after toppling Assad. A transitional government at this stage would also be charged with conducting fair and just elections in Syria.

The Arab League gave its full support to the temporary government giving it the official seat of Syria during 26th of March 2013 Arab Summit Conference in Doha. The Arab league also gave the right to any member state to provide for the Syrian people any means of support needed (humanitarian and military included) to defend themselves against the massacres committed by the Assad regime. Arab league also promised to advocate for acquiring a seat for the opposition in all international organizations including the UN.

Unfortunately Al-Khatib declared his resignation on 24th of March stating clearly that the reason was the lack of interest at the international level and the indifferent position of international powers and institutions with regards to allowing Syrians to defend themselves in spite of the horrible massacres and destruction being committed by Assad as well as the humanitarian tragedy this was causing inside and around Syria. The statement also implied that some international powers were trying to manipulate the Syrian crisis, since they refused to take actions that would end the massacres being committed as a result such powers were not really interested even in the humanitarian side of the Syrian crisis. Al-Khatib's resignation became effective in April and George Sabra temporarily took his place.

Idris Plan

Along with the formation of a temporary government, the FSA Chief of Staff proposed a plan that would support the temporary government.

Formation of a highly trained and equipped professional military unit consisting of 30 thousand people, who could later constitute the core of the new military after the regime is toppled. The financial cost of training and equipping such a unit is estimated to be \$35-40 million (\$100 salary for each soldier).

The role of this unit would be to:

- Protect oil and gas fields
- Protect wheat and cotton depots
- Securing the border crossings and check points already under control of the FSA and other groups

B. Economic Condition

It has been 25 months since the Syrian regime took the decision to suppress the demonstrations with security forces and military intervention. During this process, main economic sectors on which the Syrian government relied went through a tremendous catastrophe and either came to a stop or were completely demolished and collapsed. This resulted from the fact that the regime through its military operations destroyed the economic infrastructure of the state. Agriculture, industry, tourism and service sector are among these sectors.

The inflation rate has increased at a rate of 40%, and “the Syrian pound” has depreciated by over 51% since March 2011³. Moreover, the gross national product of the country

³ The Syrian pound falls to record low in June to lose another 20% of its value in just four days and has lost 77% of its value since the start of the anti-Assad uprising.

decreased at a rate of 20% in 2012. Unemployment rates of 2012 were about 25% according to the most conservative estimates. As a result of the regime's lavish expenditures amounting to almost half billion dollars a month, foreign reserves of the country have dramatically declined according to most estimates by international sources. Estimations as of October 2012 indicated that cash reserves of the country were about 4-5 billion dollars. However, this number stood around 17 billion dollars at the beginning of the revolution. The Central Bank Governor in Syria has denied these forecasts in April 2013 saying, "our foreign reserves are much more than \$3 billion"

The condition of the economic sectors within the country can be summarized on a sectorial basis as follows:

1) Tourism Sector

The share of the tourism sector within the country's economy was about 9 billion dollars prior to the revolution. However, tourism has recently come to a complete stop. Moreover, the country suffered economic damages of over 1 billion dollars because of the attacks carried out against tourist sites and facilities. The most recent example of this conduct was the attacks carried out on the Aleppo Bazaar which is a site listed under the World Heritage List. The regime caused serious devastation in many historic and tourist facilities, which indicate this sector, may not be able to recover for a long time to come.

International reports (World Heritage Fund) indicate that the Syrian Army occupied at least 13 historic places and used these places as military barracks. Again, the army demolished 13 sites, three of which were recognized as international heritage sites and 10 of which were recognized as national heritage sites.

2) Agriculture Sector

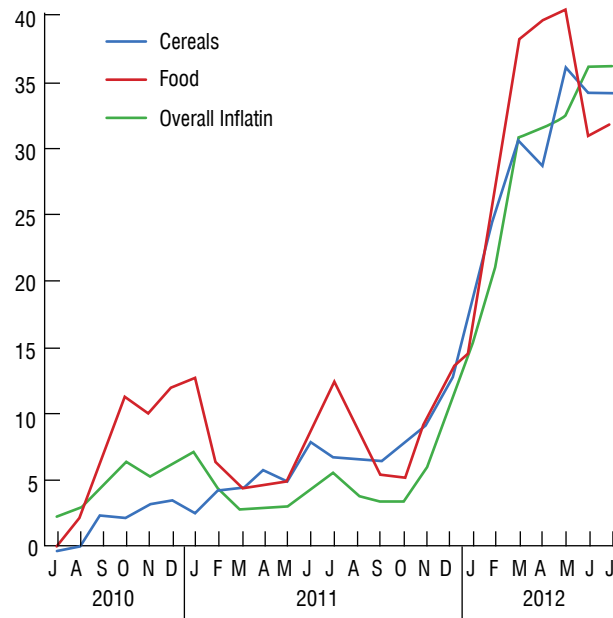
The share of the agriculture sector within the Syria's gross national product was about 20% according to the 2010 figures. Again, 50% of the workers in the rural areas of Syria are engaged with agriculture, which constitutes 20% of the total workforce of Syria.

Today, this sector experiences some serious difficulties as a result of military operations; because the regime not only destroyed the homes and workplaces of the people living in the rural areas where the revolts began but also destroyed the economic basis of the population by setting fire to their fields, work places, agricultural lands and products. The situation got worse when the rural agrarian population was forced to migrate, and the prices of fuel oil and fertilizer increased by 300% because of a resulting famine. The government which could not foresee this increase soon became dependent on certain monopolists for the procurement of the above-mentioned products.

All these circumstances resulted in a serious increase in the prices of agricultural products. This is particularly so since a majority of the military operations conducted by the regime have taken place in agricultural areas; for example Al-Hasakah, Aleppo and Idlib all having been subject to attacks also bear planted areas of 1.6 million, 1,1 million and around 356 thousand hectares, respectively.

Syria, which had been considered to be self-sufficient until quite recently, has become dependent on grain aid and imports of about 4 million tons in order to meet the domestic food deficit. The closing of this gap is under the regime's discretion. According to UN reports 3 million Syrians suffer from the famine (experience food insecurity). Out of these 1.7 million require urgent and immediate assistance within a 3 months period.

Figure 3. Monthly Inflation in the Syrian Arab Republic



Source: UN Agriculture Organization

3) Industry Sector

The country's industry sector has been severely damaged. Industrial activities have especially centered in Aleppo, the economic capital of the country. Considering the disasters the city was subjected to due to the military operations carried out by the regime, it can be said that a great part of the country's economic foundations (due to the destruction of the environment suitable for industry and the transfer of the jobs to other countries) either came to a halt, was bankrupted or was destroyed completely. As a matter of fact, relevant reports indicate that the number of Syrian businessmen and investors taking refuge in Egypt doubled in the last quarter of 2012.

4) Petroleum Sector

Petroleum is a significant sector for Syria; because petroleum constitutes at least one third of the government's revenue, about one quarter of the capital budget and about 40% of the total exports of Syria. Syria's petroleum exports reached about 5 billion dollars in 2010, and European Union countries imported petroleum of about 4 billion dollars from Syria within the same year. The sanctions imposed on the petroleum sector of Syria by the international community meant that the regime was deprived of the

ability to use this export which provided a stable source of foreign currency, to finance its military operations carried out against the Syrian cities and to feed its proponents and security forces through the above-mentioned sources.

However these sanctions carried with them certain adverse side effects such as, losses of around 400 million dollars from direct investments, deepening of the economic recession and the increasing of the inflation rate. Again, the problems encountered within the sector had repercussions in other sectors, resulting in the industry sector to be paralyzed; and the shortage of fuel used to get warm in the winter led to social unrest. Nevertheless, the regime is able to substitute the revenues of this sector through the financial aids of Iran and the cut back of the cash reserves of the country.

In late April, the EU decided to lift the sanctions on Syrian oil export, as they said this would help the opposition especially after the FSA gained control of many oil fields. However this step seems meaningless without supporting the security measure needed to protect these oil fields or providing vehicles for carrying oil exports, not to mention the lack of resources and expertise for the opposition to run these oil fields, since the regime can bomb these oil fields or the vehicles carrying the oil for export, at any time.

5) Investment, Banking and Finance

The figures published by the Syrian Investment Board indicate that most of the ongoing financial projects were cancelled between January 2012 and September 2012 due to the developments in Syria. Moreover, the figures also show that there has been a decrease of 74% this year compared to the year 2011.

Especially the restrictions imposed on commercial banking, the freezing of deposits and the prohibition of bringing dollars to Syria resulted in an increase in transaction, exportation and insurance costs. Moreover, some of the demand for foreign currency moved from formal economy to black market, which led to a serious devaluation in Syrian pound.

Table 1. Annual Economic Indicators of Syria

%	2010a	2011b	2012b	2013c
GDP	3,2	-3,4	-15,2	-1,0
Private Consumption	7,6	-3,0	-16,0	-3,0
Government Consumption	10,8	7,2	-7,0	1,6
Gross fixed investment	13,6	-2,5	-12,0	-3,0
Exports of goods & services	11,2	-12,0	-22,0	2,0
Imports of goods & services	15,1	-3,2	-15,0	-2,5
Domestic demand	n/a	n/a	-13,6	-2,1
Agriculture	-9,6	0,0	-8,0	1,0
Industry	8,5	-4,0	-37,8	-1,0
Services	5,6	-5,0	-15,0	-3,0
Fiscal indicators (% of GDP)	23,5b	21,8	12,8	11,2
Central goverment revenue	24,9b	32,8	26,4	24,4
Central government balance	-1,4	-11,0	-13,6	-13,2
Net public deblt	22,7b	35,2	47,4	56,1
International reseves (US\$ m)				
Total international reserves	14.833	4.774	2.976	3.002
<i>a = Actual</i>				
<i>b = Economist intelligence Unit estimates.</i>				
<i>c = Economist intelligence Unit forecasts.</i>				
The forecast was made on December 2012.				
Source: Central Bank of Syria, IMF, International Financial Statistics, World Bank, Global Development Finance				

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C. Assessing Social and Humanitarian Situation

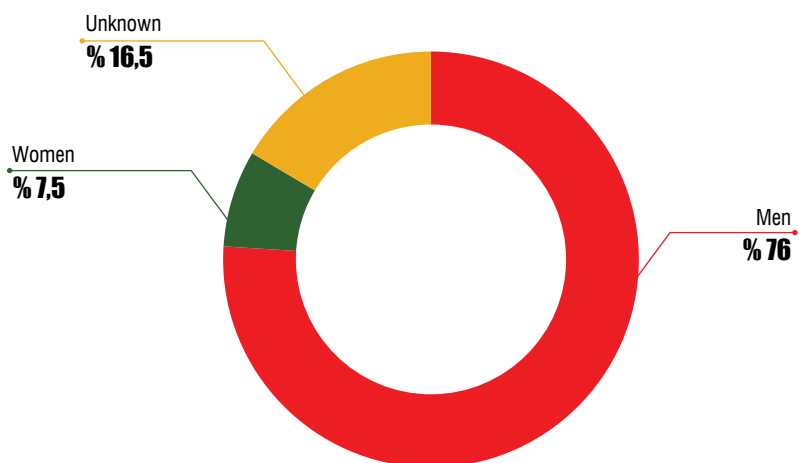
Every day, the humanitarian tragedy the Syrian people face, becomes more and more troubling.

Table 2. The Registered Death Toll from March 2011, when the Revolution Began, to the end of December 2012: 57,973

City-based classification													
Damascus Rural	Homs	Aleppo	Idlib	Daraa	Hama	Damascus	Deirez-Zor	Latakia	Ar-Raqqah	Al-Hasakah	Quneitra	Tartus	As-Suwayda
10153	8858	6340	6329	4098	3830	3453	3288	722	342	214	128	86	25
Source: SRCU - Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union													

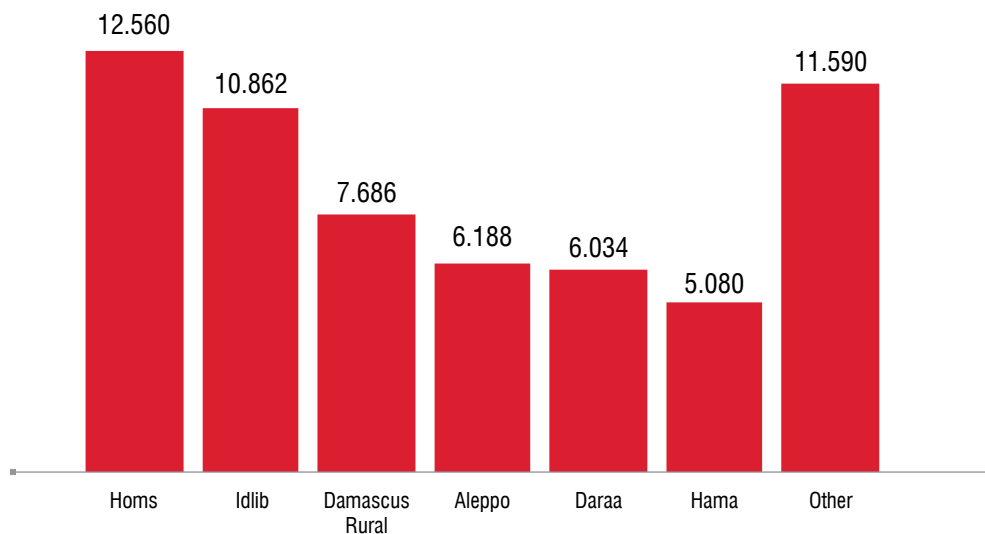
United Nations estimated, relying on numbers provided by several human rights watchdogs that the number of people who had lost their lives as a result of the conflict stood around 40 thousand by the end of 2012. However, through a comprehensive study based on the comparison of the data collected from various sources including the Syrian government, the UN revised this estimate publishing a new report in the first week of January 2013. According to the report, the number of Syrians who had lost their lives and whose names and causes of death were registered was around 60 thousand between March 2011 and December 2012. Nevertheless, considering the inherent limitations in ascertaining the number of confirmed casualties, it is thought that this number too doesn't reflect the casualties of the Syrian people. It is estimated that the death toll has exceeded 100,000 till Jun 2013. Till December 2012 there were 57,973 documented dead during the conflict. Rural areas of Damascus have the highest number of casualties with around 13 thousand of documented deaths (undocumented number of casualties is believed to be about 20 thousand).

Table 3. The Distribution of 60,000 People Reported Casualties According to Gender



Source: UNHCR – United Nations Human Rights Council

Table 4. The Distribution of 60,000 People Reported Casualties According to Cities



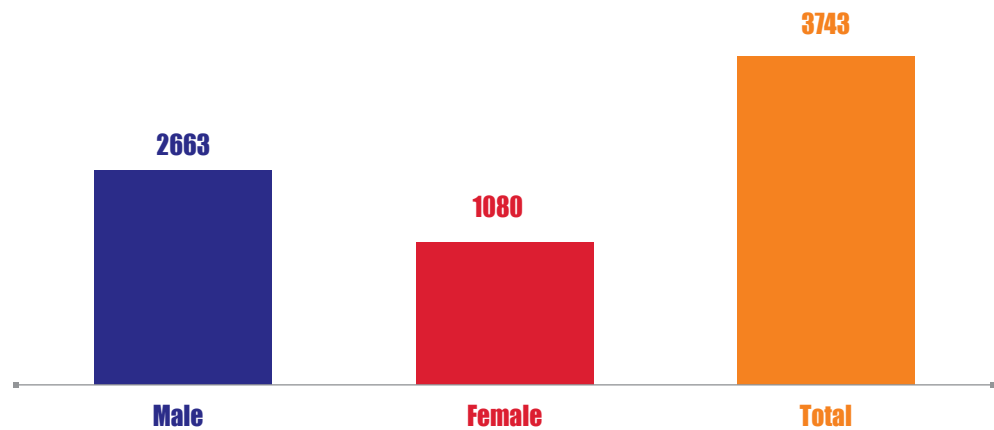
Source: UNHCR – United Nations Human Rights Council

1) Vulnerable Groups: Women and Children

Children

According to the SNHR, the percentage of women and children is ordinarily considered to not exceed 2% of total civilian casualties during wars. However in the Syrian case this percentage jumped to at least 5.2%. The SNHR documented till 31/12/2012, names, places, date and photo or video footage of 3743 children who have lost their lives.

Table 5. Number of documented casualties among children



Out of 194 thousand citizens arrested by Assad regime there is more than 9000 minors (individuals under 18 years old). At least 32 of these children were documented to have lost their lives under severe torture, according to the available information. It is also estimated that at least 64 thousand children were orphaned.

Women

At least 3509 women were killed by Syrian government forces since Assad's first assault in march 2011 till December 2012. All of these cases were document by names, places, dates and a photo or video footage. This same number is 124 amongst children less than two years old and 67 for seniors over sixty years old.

Other sources have confirmed that the number of women who have been killed exceeds 5500 during two years of the revolution. As for the number of women arrested by the government more than 6500 cases include children and senior women.

Enforced Disappearances of Women: At least 200 women have been subject to enforced disappearances mainly by Shabiha as well as the government. The government denies the families of these women any information about them.

Rape and Sexual Assault: Assad regime and Shabiha have used rape as a weapon against the rebels and civilian population not fully supporting the regime, as it is socially a very sensitive issue with often negative implications for the victim, as well as her family.

According to the SNHR at least 4000 cases of rape have occurred till December 2012 while also “noting that it is very difficult to obtain an accurate number in this issue due to its sensitive nature”. At least 700 cases have occurred inside regime prisons.

Abduction: The government has arrested or abducted at least 6405 women. Most of the women arrested were between 17-29 years and most of these arrest cases occurred in bus stations, universities and houses. As for cases of abduction, these have primarily occurred on military check points of the Syrian regime and Shabiha.

2) Refugees

Many Syrians have left the country as a result of the military’s increasingly violent operations since March 2011, the beginning of the Syrian crisis, until today. Most of the Syrian refugees are hosted in neighboring countries, while others are dispersed across Northern Africa and some taking refuge in European countries. According to figures provided by UNHCR, the number of Syrian refugees who have applied for or granted registration has exceeded 1 million as of March 2013. The number of documented Syrian refugees in neighboring countries has reached 1.6 million according to a statement by the UN humanitarian chief Valerie Amos in June. Furthermore this number is expected to exceed 3.5 million by the end of 2013. According to a statement by Antonio Guterres UN High Commissioner for Refugees 7,000 refugees are crossing Syrian borders each day.

The refugees are predominantly spread across four countries: Lebanon (over 450,000 refugees), Jordan (over 445,000 refugees), Turkey (over 300,000 refugees) and Iraq (over 140,000 refugees). The number of internally displaced persons within Syria is around 4.6 million. Therefore, it can be inferred that these countries have reached a saturation level in terms of accepting refugees. This is the case with especially Lebanon and Jordan. These countries have limited resources lacking the power or sufficiency to accept this amount of refugees. Furthermore according to a report published on December 24 by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid, the number of refugees in Turkey has exceeded the capacity of the refugee camps by 12%. Subsequent to this declaration, Turkey has opened new camps and has welcomed new Syrian refugees into the country. Egypt has also started welcoming refugees and now hosts more than 50,000 Syrians.

Although Turkey initially received the majority of the Syrian refugees, recently the number of refugees escaping to Lebanon and Jordan has increased dramatically. This can be attributed to two factors: One is that the military operations of the regime expanded towards the regions towards Lebanese and Jordanian borders, and the other is that the field dominance of the opposition increased and expanded over the region towards the Turkish-Syrian border.

Figure 4. Distribution of Refuges

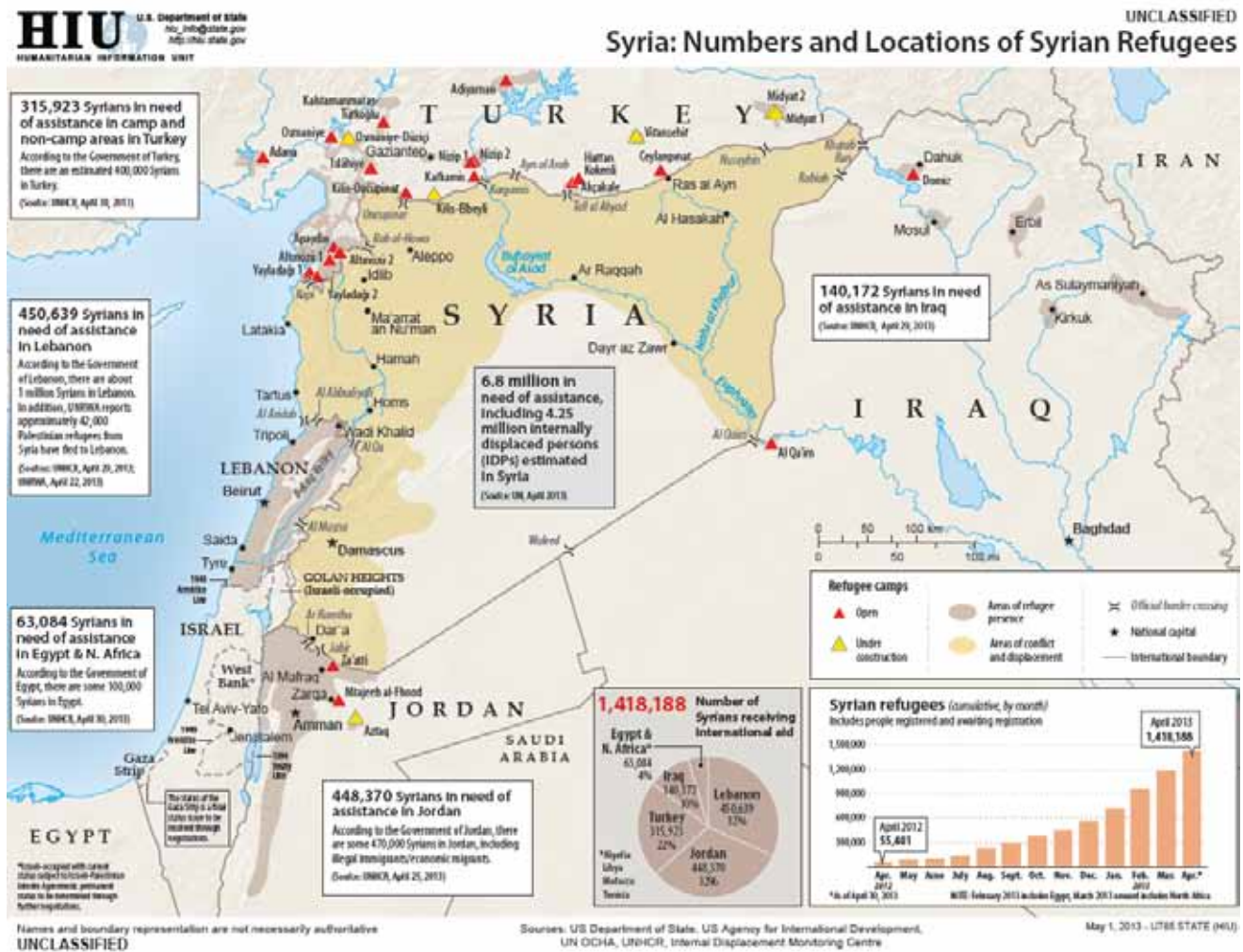


Table 6. Syrian Refugees in Neighboring countries As of December 21st 2012 and Future Predictions

Country	Registered/Receiving Help	Estimated Number as of June 2013
Egypt	11,190	30,000
Iraq	66,532	90,000
Jordan	155,147	300,000
Lebanon	164,626	300,000
Turkey	144,755	380,000
Total	542,250	1,100,000

Source: Based on predictions and data provided by the UNHCR as of December 21st and may vary

Most of these refugees experience some serious problems and live under unacceptable conditions because of their constantly increasing number. Moreover, children under 17 constitute more than 54% of the refugees. It is important to remind that the number of refugees was previously expected to exceed 1 million by the end of June 2013, when this number was already exceeded by March 2013.

3) Internally Displaced People

The latest reports of the UN indicate that the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria rose from 2 million by the end of 2012 to 4.6 million by May 2013. The number of Syrians in need of assistance according to the UN is 6.8 million and will reach 10 million nearly half the population by end of 2013. On the other hand the data obtained by the Syrian Network for Human Rights indicates that these numbers are much higher. The data obtained from the SNHR is constantly updated according to the information received from the field inside Syria.

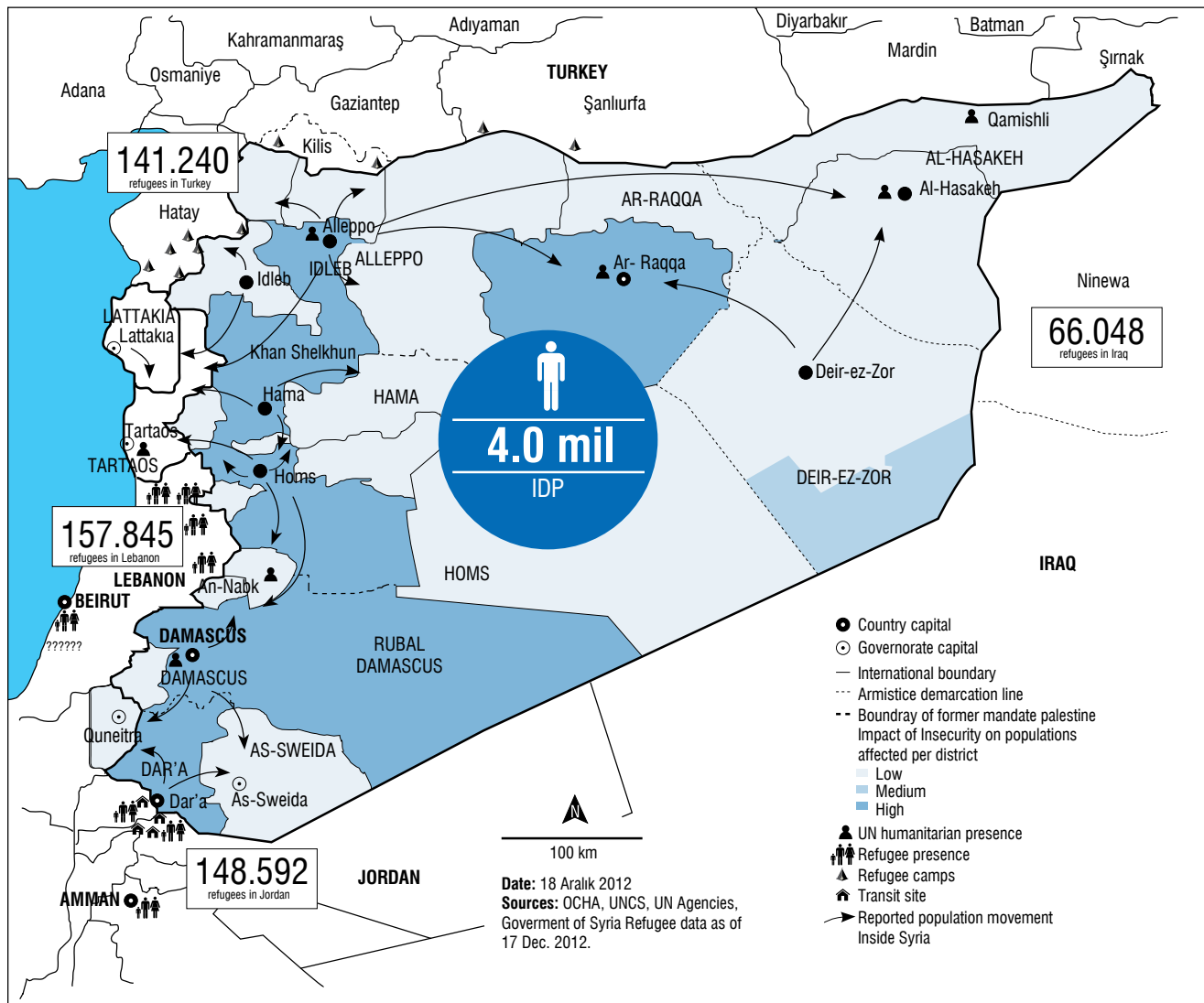
Table 7. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Syria until December, 2012

Zone of Migration	Number
Aleppo	1.6 Million
Homs	950 Thousand
Damascus	775 Thousand
Deirez-Zor	380 Thousand
Latakia	300 Thousand
Hama	225 Thousand
Daraa	200 Thousand
Idlib	180 Thousand
Total	2 Milyon 865 Bin
Source: Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)	

Some of the displaced people take refuge in schools and public buildings under unfavorable living conditions; while most of them are welcomed by their relatives or ordinary people. This situation also affects the living conditions of these families negatively. On the other hand, many displaced people within the country started to reside in fields and gardens, and even in their automobiles and trucks.

Seasonal temperature changes, water and food shortages, power-cuts, increased petrol prices and lack of heating devices affected the lives of the migrants negatively, thus causing a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. The UN reports indicate that over 4 million displaced Syrians are in need of food aid.

Figure 5. Humanitarian Situation Summary 2012

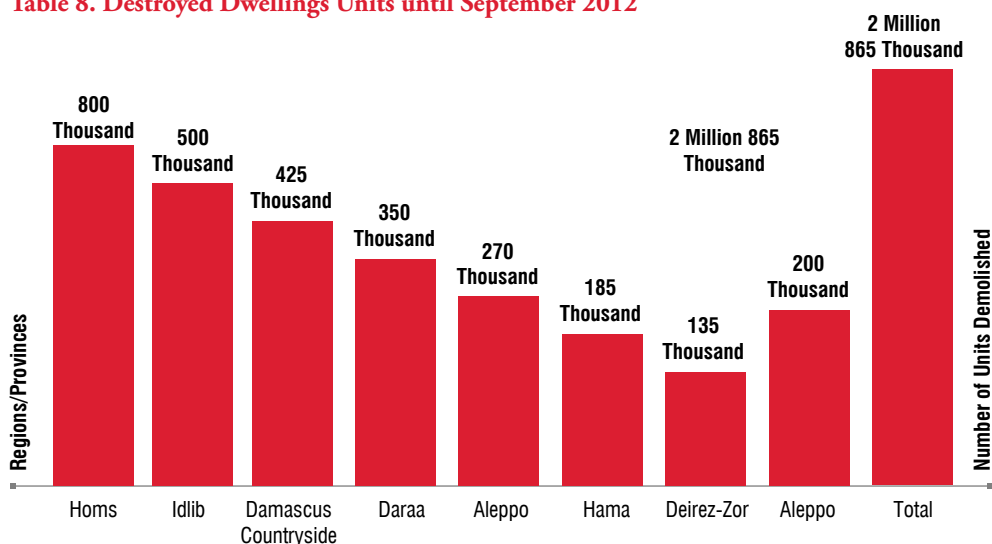


4) Infrastructure

Military operations of the Syrian regime during which advanced and strategic weapons were used against crowded residential areas and large cities led to an enormous devastation. Attacks of the aircrafts, helicopters and Scud missiles had a great role in the devastation of Syrian infrastructure (This will be further discussed). Moreover, destructions with heavy weapons aimed to terrorize civilians.

Syrian Ministry of Finance stated that the reconstruction and renovation of the country would cost about 27 billion dollars. However, this figure is quite low compared to the forecasts of various reports indicating the great destruction caused by the regime; e.g. according to the estimations of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the number of the destroyed residential units in Syria reached 2 million 865 thousand until September 2012. (15% of this number was completely destroyed, while 85% was completely or partly destroyed.)

Table 8. Destroyed Dwellings Units until September 2012



Source: Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)

Estimations of the SNHR indicate that at least 35 billion dollars are needed for the reconstruction cost of these units for the next three months. Another field research regarding the size of the destruction in Syria indicates that the cost of the destruction exceeded 36.5 billion dollars until September 2012. The fact that major economic activities such as tourism, exportation, industrial production and foreign investments came to a halt and that workplaces, trade areas and infrastructure systems such as bridges, water and electric lines were damaged resulted in a serious financial damage which is estimated to be about 100 billion dollars. Governor of the Syrian Central Bank Adlib Mayyala admitted on April 2013 that Syrian economy incurred a loss that exceeds 25 billion Euros during the two years of the Syrian revolution. Moreover, twice of this figure is needed for the reconstruction of Syria to restore the country to its state before the revolution first erupted.

Table 9. Approximate Costs of Destructions and Damages in Syria until July 2012 (in US Dollars)

Affected Area	Number of Houses and Facilities Damaged	Savings Lost	Number of Cars Destroyed	Total Regional Losses
Edlib	1.681.060	1.286.080	76.300	3.043.440
Haseke	150.760	376.960	10.725	538.445
Lattakia	74.000	46.240	1.790	122.030
Aleppo Rural	955.240	1.194.050	52.262	2.201.552
Hama	769.280	2.799.110	142.704	3.711.094
Homs	5.299.960	1.346.530	167.540	6.814.030
Daraa	581.930	1.749.220	64.940	2.396.090
DeirEzzor	350.880	2.111.910	24.956	2.487.746
Damascus Rural	4.671.120	6.874.910	354.380	11.899.680
Total	14.534.230	17.784.280	1.120.201	33.214.407
General Total				33.214.407

Source: Syrian Constitutional Movement (SCM). This table is a summary of a research undertaken that extensively documents the period until July 2012

5) Services

Ongoing military operations of the Syrian regime affected the inland services; that is the citizens have to wait in long queues in order to meet their basic needs such as bread, water, gas, fuel oil and petrol.

As a matter of fact, access to basic needs gets even harder everyday due to the economic difficulties, expanded military operation fields, insufficiency or lack of international aid- and increasing rate of migrants leaving the engagement areas within the country. Moreover, there are significant increases in prices; e.g. the price of a bottled-gas increased by 1300% according to the lowest estimate. Again World Food Program (WFP) states that the price of a loaf of bread increased by 100-150% according to the lowest estimate, and even jumped by 400% in some regions.

Many hospitals became unoperational and could not be put into service because of the lack of equipment, power cuts and migration of the doctors (e.g. according to the figures of the International Medicine Council (IMC), more than 50% of the doctors in Homs left their country). Moreover, some hospitals have been used as military headquarters or torture centers by the Syrian army, in so much that the citizens refrain from going to these hospitals out of the fear of arrest.

Syrian Government stated that about 35% of the hospitals in the country were severely destroyed. Furthermore, about 10% of the health centers and about 40% of the total ambulances within the country were damaged. According to the reports of the IMC, drug shortages in the pharmacies are over 40%.

Syrian Ministry of Education stated that about 10% of the public schools were damaged. According to SNHR 3873 schools have been damaged till December in Syria of which at least 470 were completely destroyed while more than 1000 schools turned into military facilities or detention centers for the military. Moreover, according to the November 2012 figures provided by the UNHRC, the IDPs within the country started to use 1956 schools as their residences in order to be protected from the military operations of the regime.

D. Assessing Security and Military Situation

As of November and December 2012, it was clear that there is a change in the nature of the battle on ground and that there is a shift in the balance of power towards the armed opposition which started to expand steadily along the Syria since the Aleppo battle of July 2012. Opposition groups have expanded in the field showing an increased resistance against the attacks of the regime as of the Aleppo War in July 2012; and such attacks started to fail altogether during November-December 2012, swinging the balance of power in favour of the FSA and the armed opposition groups.

1) Free Syrian Army (and Armed Opposition)

There has been a dramatic recovery in the performance of the armed opposition following the unification of the political and armed efforts towards toppling down the Assad regime. This situation reveals itself both in communication, targeting important figures of regime establishment, point shots and coordination and in joint operations. Moreover, the quality of the weapons used improved to a great extent following the seizure of many weapons and ammunition from the Syrian Army. The armed Opposition has the capacity to also manufacture its own military ammunition, explosives and short-range missiles.

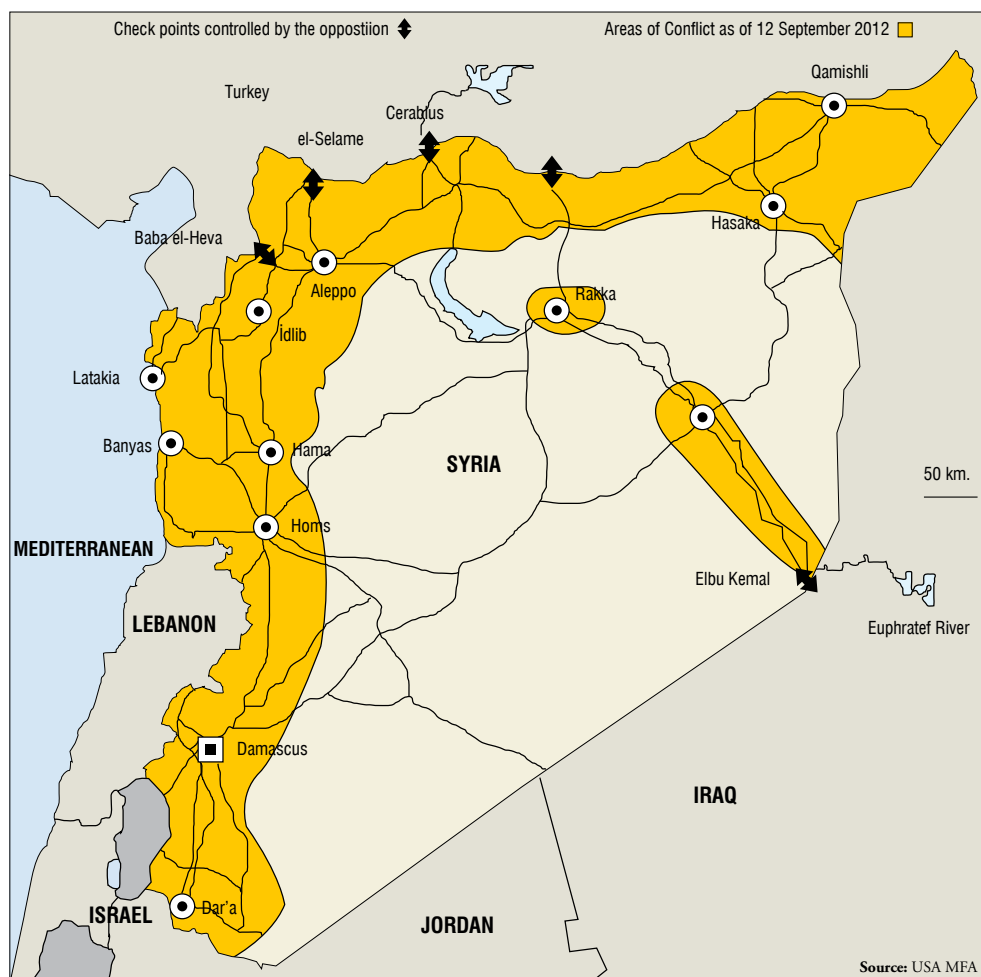
Regarding planning and operations it was obvious that they are not moving chaotically as before and have started to conduct operations on a more organized basis. The primary aim can be stated as swearing out the regime in various fronts and to expand the operations in three main axes including the borderlands, big cities and the capital Damascus. Accordingly, it was clear at that point that the armed opposition moved from reaction into action and started to take initiative. A clear tactic and strategy were adopted at that moment. Most noticeable of these strategies are:

a) Control Over Transit Routes and Border Checkpoints

In July 2012, the strategy of establishing dominance over the gateways was put into action. The first gateway that was targeted was the “Abu-Kamal” gateway near Al-Kaim connecting Syria to Iraq. 13 police stations here were occupied and a complete military dominance was established within the area. Then, dominance was established over the gateway “Al-Yarubiyya” connecting Northern Syria to Iraq, and the border checkpoints “Aazaz” in the Aleppo Rural and “bab Al-Salam” in the Idlib Rural linking Syria to Turkey. After that, the strategic border checkpoint “bab Al-Hawas” at the border of Turkey and the border checkpoint “Jarables” were taken control of. Finally, the border checkpoint “Kesb” at the border of Turkey which was controlled by the Syrian regime was occupied by the opposition.

In December 2012, the FSA also managed to establish dominance over the border checkpoint with Lebanon “Rankus” which has a strategic importance in terms of the relationship between pro-Iranian Hezbollah and the Syrian regime and is one of the three gateways to Lebanon.

Figure 6. Control Over Transit Roads and Border Crossings



Apparently we can say that the strategy of achieving dominance over the border check-points aims to:

- Preparing the grounds for establishing a safe area for the refugees at the far corners of the country; because the borders are areas where the regime's reach and power is the weakest.
- Creating de facto buffer zones through practical actions. The only shortcoming of this article is that it lacks the power to impose a no-fly-zone that could keep Assad's aircrafts out. However, this shortcoming can be overcome by providing the opposition with anti-aircraft missiles.
- Supporting the supply and procurement operations for the FSA fighters.
- Leaving the regime in lurch through ground operations and exercising power on the regime by cutting the supply chains of the regime.
- Encouraging the high-level defections within the regime and the army as dominance established over strategic spots would be considered to be a weakness of the regime, at least in regions near the border check points.

b) Cutting the Supply Chains of the Regular Army

FSA has recently focused on establishing dominance over the supply chains of the Regular Syrian Army, especially over the international highway which connects Daraa to the south to Aleppo and other regions on Northern Syria. This highway was the main road used to provide the regime forces across the country with logistic support. The aim was to prevent the regime to send reinforcing forces to the cities away from the central capital area or to cities still under the regime's control.

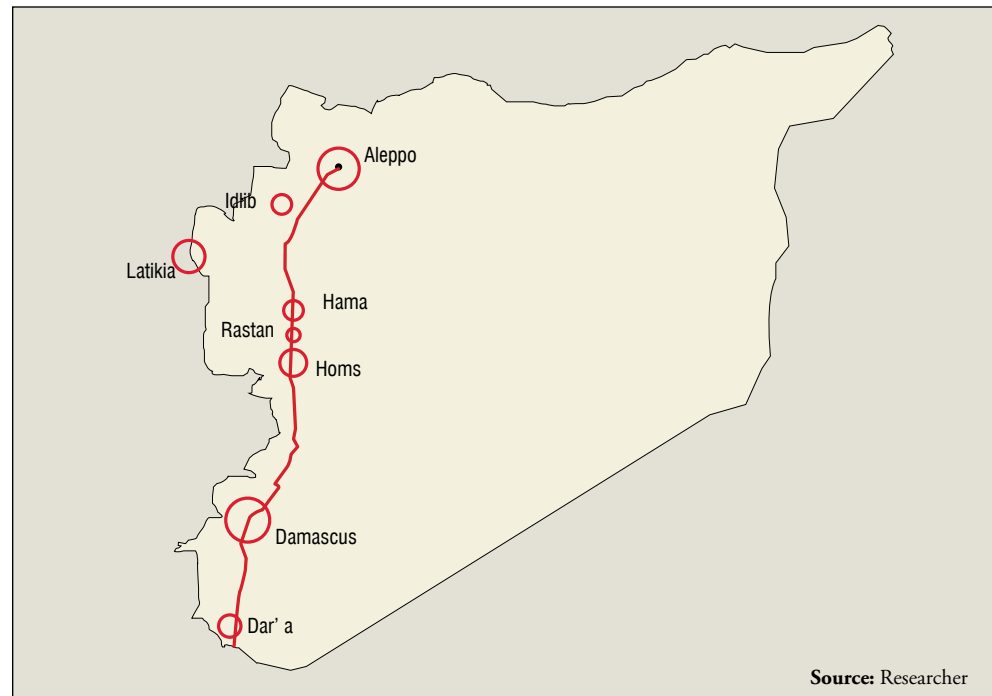
In April 2013, FSA and militant groups succeeded in cutting the highly significant supply route for the regime (Homs-Tartus) in their efforts to break the siege of Homs.

Now, the main aim is to cut the supply chains of every city and several fronts. Thus, the military bases of the regime deployed in the security centers and the cities have been isolated and weakened. Therefore the military bases are turning into easy targets that are incapable of attacking the cities and that cannot resist and defend themselves. Therefore, many military bases have been surrounded and isolated, and their only supply means is a couple of helicopters.

c) Fatigue of the Regime in Big Cities

After establishing dominance over the border checkpoints and cutting the supply chains of the army, FSA groups concentrated on opening lots of fronts in the big cities of Syria. The activities of FSA started with the Aleppo conflict in which Syrian regime was deprived of all its military capabilities, and soon spread to Al-Bukamal (Abu Kamal) on the east, to Daraa on the south, to Aleppo and Idlib on the north, to central Homs and Al-Rastan, and to the capital Damascus. All the conflicts led to the gradual destruction of the regime forces in different fronts. Cutting the supply chains of the regime forces deployed in the cities and depriving the army of sufficient man power prevented the regime to launch ground attacks that would enable it to take back the territories it lost (Homs is an exception). On the other hand, collapse of the main command and control system of the regime forces tied the regime's hands in every city. Large military bases and headquarters on the defense line soon remained under the pressure of intense and specific attacks of the revolutionaries.

Figure 7. The Main Road Connecting the South of Country to the North of It and Regarded as the Primary Route for the Logistics sent By the Regime to Different Parts of Country



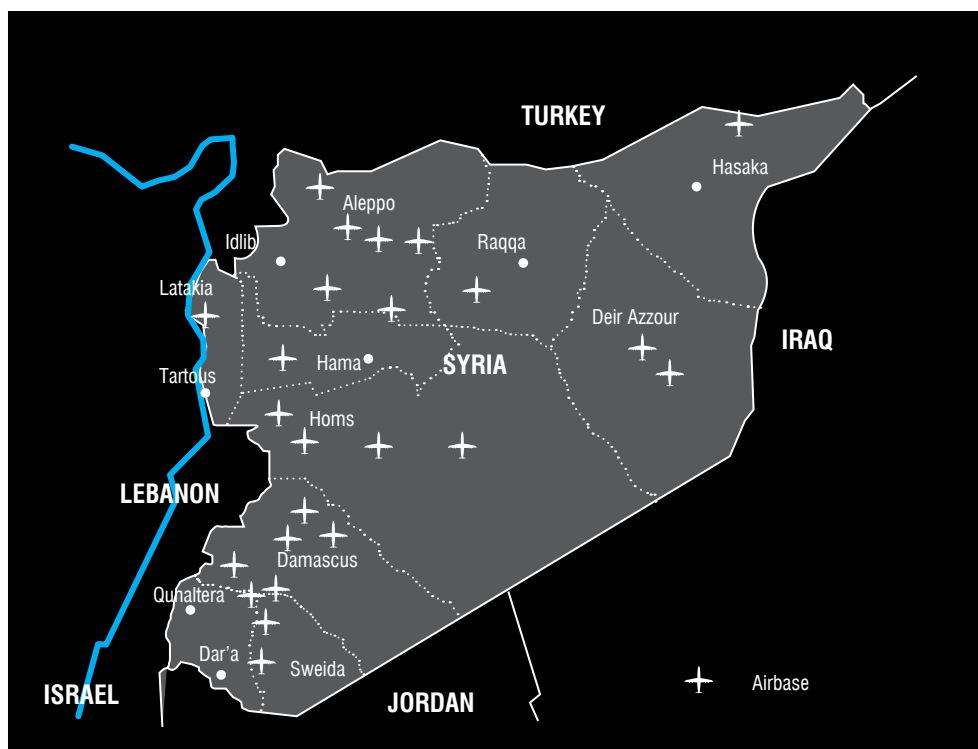
d) Targeting Military Air Bases

The unquestionable air supremacy of the regime reveals itself in the intense bombardments against the cities and revolutionaries. This situation prevents the armed opposition from establishing a complete dominance over the territories they control and because they were left without anti-aircraft weapons, they had to come up with this strategy of attacking airports.

Accordingly, the following aims were set during the decision-making period in order to organize systematic attacks on military airports:

- Making the air supremacy of the regime ineffective,
- Preventing the regime from utilizing the airports as military logistic bases or for the purpose of bombing the cities with aircrafts or artillery batteries,
- Seizure of the ammunition and weapons; as the regime, as stated above, started to use the airports as military bases in the military logistic operations, thus stocking substantial weapons and ammunition here.
- Choking the regime and prevent it from receiving outside support through airports after seizing the border gates.
- End all forms of regime sovereignty inside areas under FSA control.

Figure 8. Air Bases in Syria



e) Control Over Strategic Establishments

The FSA has recently focused on targeting vital and strategic centers of great importance that at the same time are vulnerable against ground attacks compared to other targets. They first targeted the air bases, air defense bases, missile batteries and radar centers (one of the three radars of Syria's early warning system was destroyed at the end of November), and then focused on more powerful and secure targets of the regime. There are certain reasons behind these actions.

- These areas are not properly protected against ground attacks.
- In case of a victory, the present ammunition and weapons would make a great financial gain.
- The actions will raise the spirit of the FSA which will affect the psychology of the regular army negatively.
- The FSA will be more capable of restricting the actions of the regime's air forces.
- The FSA will be able to use these areas as military training camps.
- The FSA will be able to create the necessary infrastructure to target the more powerful and secure bases in order to destroy all cities of the regime. Seizing those strategic military establishments paves the way for targeting and seizing larger and more protected military bases.

46th Regiment Affiliated to the Regime Forces

- It is a military barracks located near the region of el-Etarib in Aleppo Countryside.
- The area of the regiment's barracks is about 12 km².
- An artillery battalion, a Special Forces battalion, and also a bazooka battalion and a mortar battalion are available in the body of the regiment.
- It is considered as a supply center of the Regime Forces in Aleppo.
- Regime turned the areas near this regiment into military barracks in order to take the regiment under protection.
- Free Syrian Army achieved to rule over the regiment after an encompassment lasting 45 days.

Moreover, attacks have focused on checkpoints, administrative centers of the security forces, military academies, military barracks and police stations, and even establishing dominance over the more powerful military bases and the oil wells in large cities; e.g. one of the most important oil wells, Al-Werd, in Deirez-Zor near the Iraq border of Syria was seized on 4 November 2012. FSA also seized some other wells including one in Al-Amrat the end of the month and one in Tenkin December 2012.

Table 10. The Achievements of the FSA in Damascus Central and Rural in 2012

Date	Name of the Military Facility
11/22/2012	Artillery Battalion in Al-Meyadin
11/17/2012	Al-Hamdan Military Airport in Elbu Kemal
10/20/2012	Border post
10/12/2012	Al-Rahabe Military Headquarter in Al-Meyadin
09/12/2012	Al-Saikah Military Barracks
08/31/2012	Air Defense Battalion in Elbu Kemal

Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)

Table 11. The Successes Gained by FSA in Al-Hasakah in 2012

Date	Name of the Military Facility
11/23/2012	Artillery Battalion

Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)

Table 12. The Successes Gained by FSA in Idlib in 2012

Date	Name of the Military Facility
12/12/2012	Air Defense Battalion
11/03/2012	Al-Duveyle Battalion
10/10/2012	35. Special Forces Regiment
08/31/2012	Ebu'z Zuhur Military Airport
Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)	

Table 13. The Successes Gained by FSA the Center and Country Parts of Aleppo in 2012

Date	Name of the Military Facility
12/24/2012	135. Infantry Base
12/22/2012	135. Brigade
12/22/2012	Kaybar Battalion
12/15/2012	Infantry School
12/14/2012	Administrative Affairs Academy
12/13/2012	Al-SHa'aleh Radar Battalion
12/12/2012	Air Defense Battalion in Al-Sefira
12/09/2012	111. Regiment
12/18/2012	46. Regiment
12/09/2012	Handerat Air Defense Battalion
12/07/2012	Henanu Military Barrack
Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)	

Table 14. The Successes Gained by FSA in Shore in 2012

Date	Name of the Military Facility
10/21/2012	Beyt Avan Military Barrack
10/10/2012	35. Regiment
Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)	

Table 15. The Successes Gained by FSA in the Center and Country Parts of Homs in 2012

Date	Name of the Military Facility
12/22/2012	Al-Isharah Battalion – Deyr Baalba
10/13/2012	Air Defense Battalion – Deyr Ful Village
06/11/2012	Missile Battalion
Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)	

Table 16. The Successes Gained by FSA in Al-Quneitra in 2012

Date	Name of the Military Facility
10/19/2012	Tank Battalion
10/18/2012	Artillery Battalion in Al-Meshara
Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)	

Table 17. The Successes Gained by FSA in Daraa in 2012

Date	Name of the Military Facility
12/18/2012	34. Brigade
10/18/2012	Shakra Ordnance Battalion
12/05/2012	Ahmed Al-Rufai Military Barrack
12/04/2012	Al-Museyfra Air Defense Battalion
Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)	

Table 18. The Successes Gained by FSA in Al-Al-Raqqah in 2012

Date	Name of the Military Facility
11/03/2012	Al-Kayseriyye Battalion
Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)	

f) Control Over Oil fields

Rebels control about 70-90% of Syria's oil fields mainly in Al-Raqqah province, Al-Hasaka and DeirEzzor province including the most important three oil fields:

- Al-Ward oil field in DeirEzzor, 36 km from Al Bokamal on the Iraqi border was seized on 4th November, 2012.
- Al-tanak oil field, 15 km East of DeirEzzor was occupied on December 2012.
- Al-Tim oil field, 40 km Southeast of DeirEzzor was occupied on December 2012.
- Kanko gas field, biggest gas field in Syria and said to be the 3rd biggest gas field in the Middle East.
- Al-Jafra gas field located 15 km East of DeirEzzor.
- Nearly alloil and gas fields, except for the ones on the coast of Syria and that lack a safe route to reach are under FSA control, however these fields need to be defended from airborne attacks.

g) The Expansion of Operations into Damascus

Following intense fighting in regions that the armed opposition occupied south of capital Damascus, the FSA made great progress in its operations aiming to establish dominance over the capital Damascus and its rural areas in terms of the operations and of the

strategies used at the end of 2012. Moreover, the revolutionaries tried to occupy the International Damascus Airport. There has been intense fighting at airport across the country as of December 2012, in order to prevent all kinds of foreign assistance from reaching the regime and thereby eliminating the regime through closings all exits and entrances to the country.

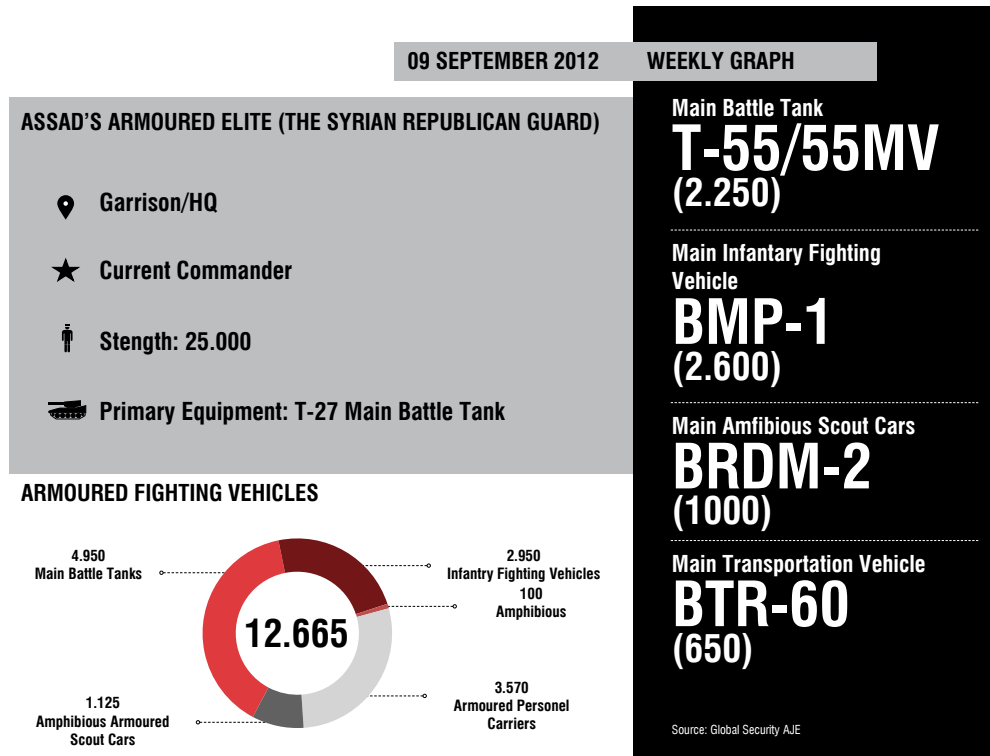
FSA's attempts and efforts in Damascus have brought Assad face to face with difficult choices. According to the relevant scenarios, the forces in the cities will either retreat and defense the capital Damascus, the last castle of the regime, or retreat to the coastal regions and deploy there, or the present policy will be maintained. All these scenarios indicate to a renunciation for the Syrian regime and regular army.

2) Regular Syrian Army

Parallel to the de facto expansion of the FSA, a concrete retreat was observed in the Regular Syrian Army in various fronts around Syria. The regime apparently lacks the necessary human power for big military operations that can defeat the revolutionaries. Therefore, the regime mostly relies on the Fourth Brigade. Here are some indicators that reinforce this observation:

- The regime could not completely take back the territories under the FSA around the Syria.
- The regular army acts according to the massacre policy, not to the fighting strategy; because the regime lost its power to engage in direct conflict and focused more on the aircrafts and distant artillery shots instead.
- The regime turned the security headquarters and military camps within the big cities into sheltered castles; which indicates that it takes on the defense position instead of the attack position.
- The airports within the cities were turned into military barracks and firing sites in order to bomb the territories under the control of the revolutionaries. This indicates that the regime actually lost these places.
- The regime left its units and military barracks away from the capital to which it could not send any supplies as a result of the fact that the FSA established dominance over the main supply chains or cut or seizure them.

Figure 9. Syria Armored Vehicles



Moreover, it can be observed that the Regular Syrian Army lacks not only proper plans and strategies but also efficient commanders. Therefore, there is almost no efficient command and control system within the army; as neither the Chief of the General Staff nor the primary security authorities are present in the fields. Military operations are commanded and conducted under such conditions, and there is no nation-wide command and control system; which probably means that the field commanders give the force commanders deployed in the cities extensive authority. This explains why they do not have a consistent plan other than a systematic massacre and destruction.

a) Regime's Losses

i) Defections

There is no official record of the number of people defecting from the Regular Syrian Army and other security institutions of the regime. However, this number is estimated to be significantly high and is expected to gradually increase especially as of 2012. Staff Colonel Mustafa Ahmed Sheikh, who left the Assad regime in January 2012, estimated that the number of people defecting from the regime was about 20 thousand within the first 10 months of the revolution. This number increased to a great extent especially following the explosion at the Syrian National Security Head Quarters in the capital Damascus on July 18, 2012. General Dawud Rajha, Syrian Minister of Defense; General Asef Shawkat, Deputy Minister of Defense and the uncle of the Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad; Hasan Turkmani, Deputy Director for Military Affairs and the President of

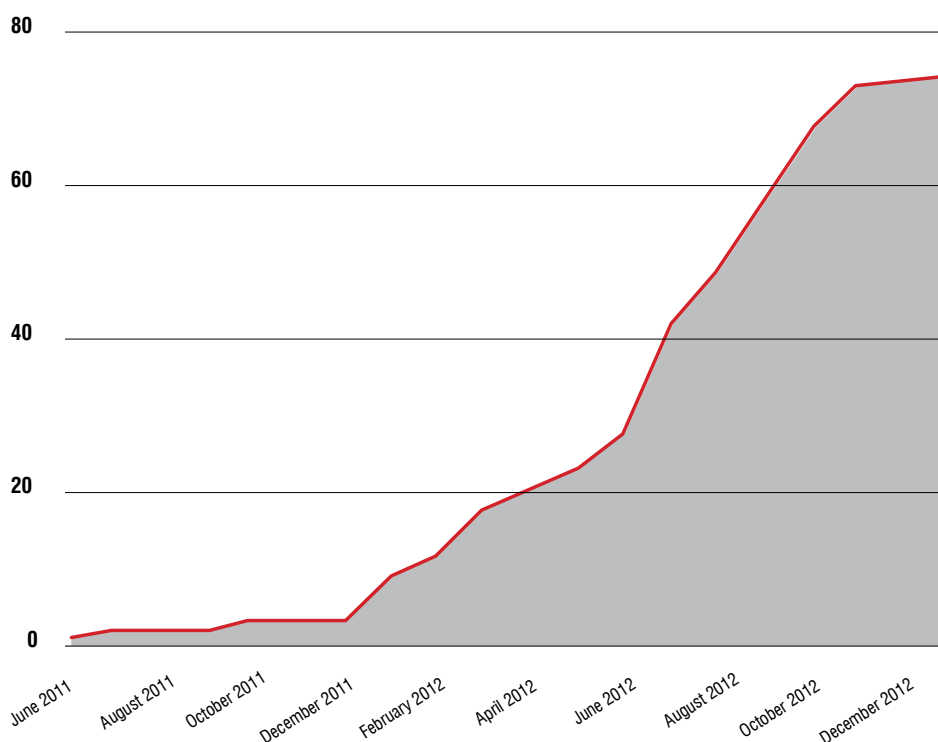
the Crisis Unit; and Hesham Bakhtiyar, the President of the National Security Office, lost their lives in the above-mentioned explosion. Muhammed Al-Sha'ar, Minister of Internal Affairs, was injured in the explosion.

Moreover, the number of people who refused to join the army or have defected during their compulsory military service has also increased. Afaq Ahmed, who previously worked at the office of the President of the Special Operations, Syrian Air Force Intelligence Directorate, stated after defecting that there were a total of 450 thousand personnel at the Regular Syrian Army and the Ministry of Defense, and that the number of the officers, sergeants and privates that defected from the regime exceeded 100 thousand until the beginning of March 2012.

Table 19. Number of High Level Defections as of December 27, 2012

	Senior Military & Security Officials	Cabinet	Parliament	Diplomats	Total
	54	3	4	13	74
Definitions	Colonel or General including those in the intelligence	Any Minister in the Cabinet	MPs	Diplomats	

Figure 10. Cumulative Number of High Level Defectors as of 27 December 2012



Source: Aljazeera

All these defections led to the weakening of the security system and the army, and caused distrust towards Sunni military units. The regime fear that the Sunnis may switch allegiances or abandon the regime, thus it tries to refrain from scaring them off by deploying them during intense battles. Relevant reports, as widely recognized, indicate that many normal or high-ranking officers want to leave but cannot dare as they are first concerned about securing their families. Some of the officers prefer to maintain their works and leak significant and sensitive information to the FSA, a situation which was approved by the FSA itself many times. Finally and most importantly, Major General Abdulaziz Jasim Al-SHellâl, the Provost Marshall whose primary duty is to prevent the defections within the army, left the Regular Syrian Army on December 25, 2012.

ii) Personnel Losses

According to official records, the regular army and the security forces lost about 2600 personnel until April 2012. The government has not made a statement regarding the number of personnel losses as of this date. However, according to a report, the pro-Syrian channel Al-Meyadinstated that this number reached 4 thousand at the beginning July 2012. Another unofficial report mentions that the number of casualties reached 8763 while the number of injured people reached 21357, all of which were reported to be lost in both the army and the security forces within the same period.

According to military specialists, death rate within the army and the security forces increased from 10 to 23 people on a daily basis at the beginning of 2012, and reached up to 55 people in December 2012; which resulted from the rapid increase in the operations organized against the military vehicles (tanks, armored vehicles, personnel carriers). In each operation targeting a tank, at least 4 personnel are dead, while the number varies between 10-20 personnel in operations targeting armored vehicles and personnel carriers. The number of casualties increases incases where the military bases and military barracks are targeted.

The armed opposition's attacks against the regime's tanks are usually described as "tank massacres". For example during one attack against a military convoy of 12 tanks and 25 military vehicles in the Idlib Rural in mid-August 2012, only one tank survived.

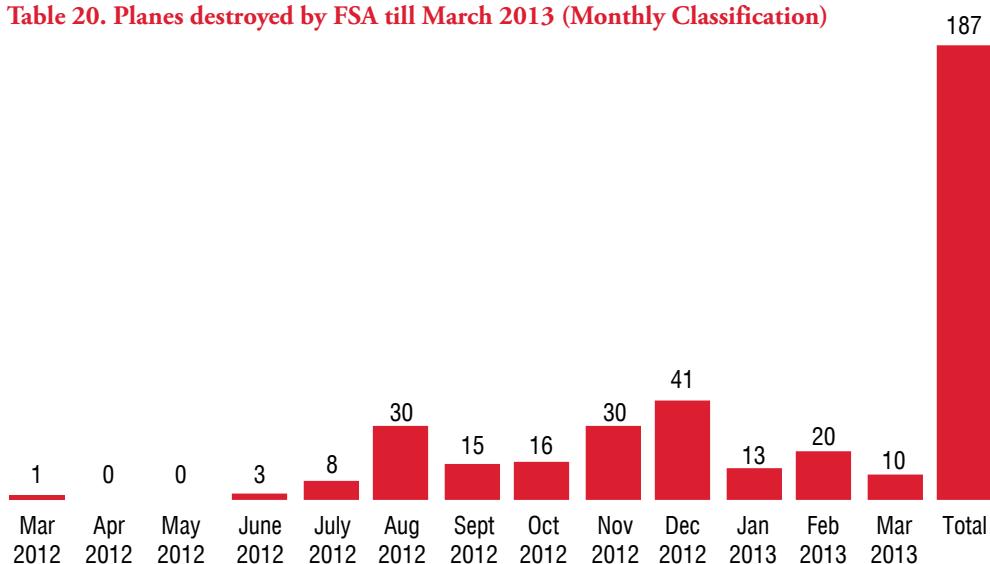
iii) Fighter Planes and Other Aircrafts

Figures related to monitoring the shooting down of the aircrafts of the Regular Syrian Army Air Forces shows that the numbers obtained from Syria indicate that the armed opposition completely or partially destroyed 187 aircrafts (attack helicopters and MIG aircrafts) since the beginning of the revolution till March 15, 2013, over 82 of which were recorded on video. The number of aircrafts destroyed or shot down reached a new high with 41 a monthsince the end of 2012. Again, Idlibranked the highest in the list of regions where the aircrafts of the regime were shot down or destroyed with 55 aircrafts.

These aircrafts were probably shot down using Twin ZU-23 antiaircraft guns or alternatively targeted before they took off at the airports. Recently there have been reports of aircraft being shot down with antiaircraft missiles obtained from the regime's arsenal.

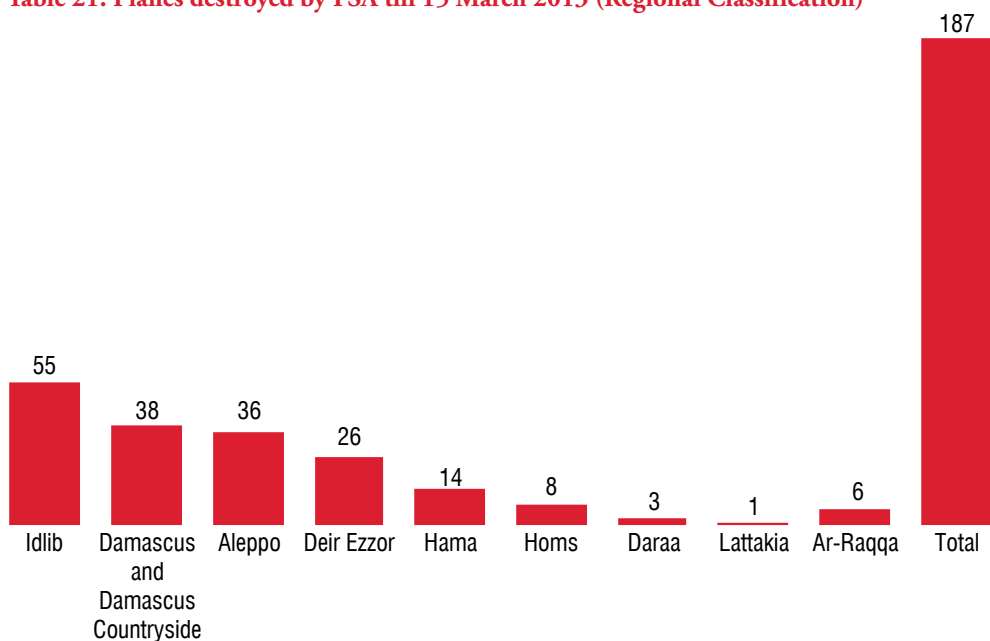
Most of these aircrafts were shot down between November-December 2012, as the regime does not have sufficient attack helicopters to recieve the revolutionaries at every front. Moreover, maintenance problems and lack of sufficient human power restricted the number of air forces the regime could deploy on the battle field.

Table 20. Planes destroyed by FSA till March 2013 (Monthly Classification)



Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)

Table 21. Planes destroyed by FSA till 15 March 2013 (Regional Classification)



Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)

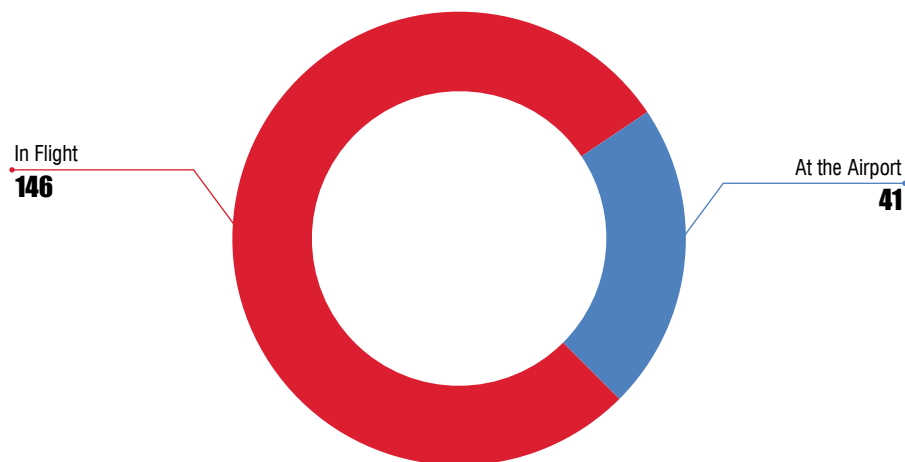
Table 22. Planes destroyed by FSA in 2012 (Classification by Type)



Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)

***Note:** It is suspected that the attack helicopters mentioned above include helicopters that are used by the regime for bombardment.*

Table 23. Planes destroyed by FSA in 2012



Source: Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (SRCU)

iv) Armored and Military Vehicles

According to information obtained from some opposition groups in Damascus, based on the statements of the sources in the official “Armaments Committee Group”, the FSA completely or partly destroyed about 700 military vehicles such as tanks, armored vehicles and personnel carriers since the beginning of 2012 to the end of October 2012.

These numbers correspond to approximately 5.5-7.5% of the total number of vehicles within the Regular Syrian Army. Moreover, numbers attributed to the “Directorate of

Vehicles” of the Syrian regime indicate that at least 200 military vehicles (tanks and armored vehicles) which were damaged but in a reparable condition were brought to the maintenance department of the Regular Syrian Army within the last three months. Looking at the number and models of the damaged tanks, it can be inferred that the models (T-55) and (T-72) were targeted; and most of the armored vehicles targeted were (BM-1) vehicles.

Table 24. Syria Army General Summary 2012

Personnel	
Personnel	295000
Active	314000
Vehicles	
MBT	4950
RECCE	590
AIFV	2450
APC (W)	1500
Air Forces	
Fighter Planes	72
Surface and Ground Attack Planes	156
Carrier Planes	48
Training Planes	12
Helicopters	191
Mi-2	20
Mi-8	100
Mi-17	
Mi-25	36
SA342L	25
Source: Military Balance Report 2012, Global Security	

According to available information the regime has some serious problems regarding the maintenance of these vehicles while it is in the middle of conducting such large military operations. Moreover, big maintenance workshops themselves are one of the strategic targets of armed opposition. Perhaps the most important of these workshops was the “Directorate of Military Vehicles” in Al-Guta Al-Sharqiyya in Rural Damascus which was attacked at the beginning of December 2012 and considerable areas inside was captured by the FSA. Invasions were carried out in these areas. Therefore this indicates that operational costs alone will certainly exceed this limit during the next 12 months of the Syrian revolution.

Headquarters of the Military Vehicles Directorate in El-Gavta, Ash Sharqiyah

- *It is located in the Haraste–Arabin–Medeira triangle, and on a wide area exceeding 400 thousand meter square.*
- *It is the main responsible for the maintenance of all military vehicles belonging to the Syria Arab Army.*
- *It is consisted of three units. These are Administrative Unit, 446th Military Vehicle Receiving Unit responsible for the maintenance and Technical Academy Unit.*
- *Military Vehicles Directorate includes all types of heavy weapons. For instance; short, medium and long-range, mortars, missile batteries and tanks. Moreover it contains so many various armories within itself.*
- *Military Vehicles Directorate was turned into the military operations center of the Syria Army and a headquarters operations center for the attacks to el-Gavta Ash Sharqiyah affiliated to Damascus Countryside from the beginning of the revolution.*

v) Military Expenditures

The operational cost of the army and the security forces including the vehicles, equipment and the fuel oil and weapon expenditures was estimated to be about 3 billion dollars within the first 12 months of the revolution. This number alone exceeds the 2011 budget of the Syrian Ministry of Defense which is about 2 billion dollars; and is enormous for Syria which has limited resources. That is, it is not possible for the regime to engage in combat through solely relying on its own sources. Therefore assuming that yearly operational costs alone exceed 2 billion dollars the cost of the regime's operations will definitely exceed this limit in the next 12 months of the Syrian revolution.

b) Indicators of Regime's Hopelessness

A great number of data indicates that the regime gets more and more desperate everyday regarding winning a victory against the Syrian revolution and revolutionaries, and has lost the power to take initiatives; the strategic capabilities of the regime were paralyzed; the dominance of the armed opposition has expanded around Syria; and that the regime lost a large area from north to east and from south to west. However, more violence is expected. Some indicators of desperation within the regime are as follows:

i) Use of Mortars and Rocket Launchers

The regime avoids engaging in ground conflict as of the Baba Amr war in Homs and the Aleppo war in July 2012 (except for Qusayr because he was supported by the Hezbollah elite ground forces); and this indicates that the regime lacks the power to go into intense fighting with ground forces against the armed opposition. Therefore, the regime has tried to compensate this by using all forms of long range fire power and distant bombing methods such as mortars, artillery shots, air bombardments and missiles aimed at the regions occupied by the revolutionaries.

ii) Use of Aircrafts

Last year it became evident that the Syrian regime has started to prefer aircrafts (helicopters and fixed winged aircrafts) instead of artillery fire and rocket launchers it previously used in order to bomb the cities and rural areas the revolutionaries occupy. This supports the hypothesis that the regime does not have the power to gather ground forces in order to take back the occupied territories or to reach areas that are far from its control.

The bombardments by this air force was observed to be carried out in order to destroy the infrastructure and take revenge from the civilians rather than being directly aimed at the armed opposition. Accordingly, crowded places and residential areas such as, queues in front of bakeries, schools, gas stations, hospitals, gas distribution points and even funerals were the target of deliberate and systematic attacks by the regime. All these acts are nothing but attempts to punish the civilians because they support the FSA, and to pave the way for a possible sectarian division by provoking the sectarian differences within the country in order to create the foundations for other future scenarios such as the possible creation of an Alawite state.

Table 25. Selected Bakery Bombings in Aleppo During August 2012

Name	Province	Date	Evidence
Bakery in Maare	Northern Aleppo	22-Aug	Observed by HRW
Bakery in Al Bab	Northeastern Aleppo	Aug 21- August 22	Observed by HRW
Aqyuol Bakery in Bab Al Hadid	Aleppo City	21-Aug	Observed by HRW
Al-Zarra Bakery in QadiAskar	Aleppo City	16-Aug	Observed by HRW
Kanjou Bakery in Al Maysar	Aleppo City	16-Aug	Observed by HRW
Bakery in Halwaniya	Aleppo City	16-Aug	Observed by HRW
Bakery in Manbij	Northern Aleppo	24-Aug	Reported to HRW
Hussein Bakery in Al Qaterji	Aleppo City	16-Aug	Reported to HRW
Bakery in Tariq al-Bab	Aleppo City	10-Aug	Reported to HRW
Bakery in al-Sheikh Sa'id	Aleppo City	11-Aug	Reported to HRW

Source: Human Rights Watch

iii) Use of Scud Missiles

Data obtained from local sources within Syria and from many international and regional reports indicates that the regime has started to use Scud missiles within the country since last year. The accuracy of these reports was reinforced with video footage for the first time in December 2012. The videos released depicted the launch of multiple

SCUD missiles being fired by what is believed to be the 578th battalion in 155th brigade stationed in Al-Nasiriyye (Rural Damascus) on the road between Damascus-Homs, probably targeting Aleppo or Edlib.

While the regime has denied using these missiles, the estimated total number of scud missiles launched by the regime against civilians exceeds 200 missiles as of April 2013, while about 90 of them were used until February 2013. The SNHR also reports that the number of Ballistic Scud missiles as of March 2013 stood at 61 in northern and eastern parts of the country. The vast majority of these missiles have directly targeted residential areas, civilian gatherings, homes resulting in high casualties among children and women.

According to some testimonies, not yet verified, by defected soldiers Syrian regime is estimated to possess between 500-800 missiles and about 45 mobile rocket launchers or fixed launchers.

Again according to some sources the most famous Scud depots are suggested to be in Rural Aleppo, Nasiriyye, Al-Gutaifa in Rural Damascus and defense production factories in Hama.

155th Brigade

- *This is one of the most important brigades in Syria, located in the Southern Qalamun area with Al Gutaifa city at its East, Hufair town at its North and the international Damascus-Homs motorway at its South and Southeast.*
- *The 155th Brigade is situated between two mountain ranges (Abu-Alata and Tal-al Sarir) along a 10 km length.*
- *Inside the brigade there is a network of roads and tunnels that connect the depots underground.*
- *According to available information, the Brigade consists of many missile battalions such as Battalion 51, 52, 77 and 79 in addition to air defense Battalion 580 as well as a technical battalion. The brigade owns a depot of chemical arsenal and an unknown number of missiles with chemical heads ready to be used.*
- *The Brigade underwent modernization with assistance from Russian and Iranian experts.*

Table 26. Missiles in the Regime's Possession

R-17/ R300 Elbrus	
Designer	USSR
Source	USSR, North Korea, Iran
NATO Name	SS-1C Scud-B
Launching Method	Short-Range Ballistic Missile - Portable
Length	11.25 m
Diameter	88 cm
Rocket Warhead Load Capacity	High explosive of 985 kg or chemical/biological substance of 985kg
Offset Distance	450 m
Rocket Fuel	Liquid Rocket Fuel
Missile Guidance System	Inner Guided
Condition	Active
Velocity	Mach 5
Range	300 km

R-17 VTO Aerofon	
Designer	Russia
Source	North Korea, Iran, Domestic
NATO Name	Scud D
Launching Method	Short-Range Ballistic Missile - Portable
Length	13.5 m
Diameter	88 cm
Rocket Warhead Load Capacity	High explosive of 500 kg or chemical/biological substance of 500 kg
Offset Distance	50-190 m
Rocket Fuel	Liquid Rocket Fuel
Missile Guidance System	Inner Guided
Condition	Active
Velocity	Mach 5
Range	700 km

R-17M ElbrusM	
Designer	USSR
Source	USSR, North Korea, Iran
NATO Name	SS-1D Scud-C
Launching Method	Short-Range Ballistic Missile - Portable
Length	11.25 m
Diameter	88 cm
Rocket Warhead Load Capacity	High explosive of 450-600 kg or chemical/biological substance of 450-600 kg
Offset Distance	50-900 m
Rocket Fuel	Liquid Rocket Fuel
Missile Guidance System	Inner Guided
Condition	Active
Velocity	Mach 5
Range	500-700 km

M 600	
Designer	Syria
Source	Domestic, Iran, China
NATO Name	CSS -8
Launching Method	Short-Range Ballistic Missile - Portable
Length	8.86m
Diameter	61 m
Rocket Warhead Load Capacity	High explosive of 500 kg or chemical/biological substance of 500 kg
Offset Distance	100 m
Rocket Fuel	Solid Rocket Fuel
Missile Guidance System	Inner Guided
Condition	Active
Velocity	Mach 3.7
Range	210-250 km

P 15 Termit	
Designer	USSR
Source	USSR
NATO Name	SS-N-2C Styx
Launching Method	Cruise/Submarine Missiles-Portable
Length	6.4m
Diameter	65 cm
Rocket Warhead Load Capacity	High explosive of 1000 kg or chemical/biological substance of 1000 kg
Offset Distance	N/A
Rocket Fuel	Liquid Rocket Fuel
Missile Guidance System	Radar Guided
Condition	Faal
Velocity	Mach 0.9
Range	80 km

OTR-21 Tochka U	
Designer	USSR
Source	USSR
NATO Name	Scarab-B
Launching Method	Short-Range Ballistic Missile - Portable
Length	6.4m
Diameter	65 cm
Rocket Warhead Load Capacity	High explosive of 1000 kg or chemical/biological substance of 1000 kg
Offset Distance	95 m
Rocket Fuel	Solid Rocket Fuel
Missile Guidance System	Inner Guided
Condition	Faal
Velocity	Mach 6
Range	120 km

P 800 Yakhont	
Designer	Russia
Source	Russia
NATO Name	SS-N-26 Onyx
Launching Method	Cruise/Submarine Missiles-Portable
Length	8.9 m
Diameter	67 cm
Rocket Warhead Load Capacity	High explosive of 250 kg
Offset Distance	N/A
Rocket Fuel	Ramjet
Missile Guidance System	Inner Guided
Condition	Active
Velocity	Mach 2.6
Range	300 km

R-70 Luna	
Designer	USSR
Source	USSR
NATO Name	Frog 7-B
Launching Method	Artillery Rocket -Portable
Length	9.4m
Diameter	54 cm
Rocket Warhead Load Capacity	High explosive of 500 kg or chemical/biological substance of 500 kg
Offset Distance	500-700 m
Rocket Fuel	Liquid Rocket Fuel
Missile Guidance System	Gravity
Condition	Active
Velocity	Mach 5
Range	70 km

Dong Feng 11	<i>It is not clear that the Assad regime possess this missile</i>
Designer	China
Source	China
NATO Name	CSS-7
Launching	Short-Range Ballistic Missile - Portable
Method	7.5 m
Length	80 cm
Diameter	High explosive of 500 kg or chemical/biological substance of 500 kg
Rocket Warhead Load Capacity	500-600 m
Offset Distance	Katı Roket Yakıtı
Missile Guidance System	İç Güzümlü
Condition	Faal
Velocity	Mach 10
Range	280-300 km

Dong Feng 15	<i>It is not clear that the Assad regime possess this missile</i>
Designer	China
Source	China
NATO Name	CSS-6
Launching	Short-Range Ballistic Missile - Portable
Method	9.1 m
Length	100 cm
Diameter	High explosive of 500 kg
Rocket Warhead Load Capacity	100-500 m
Offset Distance	Katı Roket Yakıtı
Missile Guidance System	İç Güzümlü
Condition	Faal
Velocity	Mach 6
Range	600-800 km

Note: The launch of liquid missiles takes a long time, thus it is possible to detect them before they are launched. Offset distance is calculated according to the formula “circular error probable”.

	Nuclear	Biologic
Missile Warheads of the Regime	Although the regime does not possess nuclear weapons, it is a known fact that studies are being conducted in this regard.	Although there is no proof that Syria possesses biological weapons, American authorities doubt that Syria has a biological weapon program conducted ambitiously.
Nerve Agent Tabun	Nerve Agent Sarin	Nerve Agent V Series
General Adnan Sillou, who left the Regular Army, stated that the regime possess this nerve agent which was developed but not used in Germany.	People exposed to Sarin nerve agent die choking within minutes. Sarin nerve agent is 25 times more toxic than hydrogen cyanide.	Although it is argued that the Syrian regime started to develop this nerve agent in 1990s, there is no official report regarding this matter. V series nerve agents are 10 times more effective than Sarin nerve agent.
	Mustard Gas	Conventional
	Exposure to mustard gas generally does not lead to deaths; however, it causes blisters on the skin, in the eyes and on the lungs of the victims.	High explosive of 500 kg can create a hole of 15.2 m long and 11 m deep in the ground based on the velocity of the explosive.
Sources: Center for Strategic and International Studies(CSIS), Nuclear Threat Initiative, Monterey Institute of International Studies		

iv) Use of Incendiary and Chemical Weapons

Parallel to the reports regarding the use of Scud missiles, as of December 2012 video footage has been released suggesting that some unidentified toxic and incendiary materials were used against certain neighborhoods of Homs such as Al-Khalidiyyah, Al-Beyyâdah and Deyr Ba'ala by the regime.

The Syrian Information Center has also confirmed that the Regular Syrian Army used bombs of toxic gases and materials against some neighborhoods resulting in, 6 people losing their lives, paralyzing 4 people causing loss of sight in 4 people and injuring 63 others who are still being treated. Exposure to toxic materials can lead to the following symptoms: Miosis (contraction of the pupil), nausea, shivering, foam at the mouth, chronic diarrhea, high fever, quick pulse etc. Therefore, the FSA announced through Al-Jazeera that it calls on the UN and relevant organizations to send qualified specialists who will examine the injured people and determine the type of the weapon used.

In December 2012, US reports monitored what is reported to be Syrian military units mixing substances that would be deployed on warheads, where it is also believed that the Syrian regime has technically reached an advanced level on the technical preparations and is now capable of deploying these chemical weapons on airplanes or rockets. These observations and reports were reinforced by private internal correspondences of the US government indicating Assad's use of chemical substances published on the January 2013 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

On the other hand, Washington and the Western powers declared again and again that no kind of chemical attack would be allowed stressing that this is a redline. As it is widely acknowledged the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime would be the equivalent of suicide. Although the damages inflicted by the weapon already in use are no less than the damages that could be inflicted by chemical weapons, the use of chemical weapons is quite serious in that the areas they affect is harder to contain and therefore both the opposition and the regime's supporters may be affected by them. Therefore, Assad would face the risk of both killing his own supporters and even potentially affecting the neighbor countries.

However, it is possible that the Assad regime uses these highly dangerous substances through various devices aimed at only certain areas in low concentrations or in small quantities. (As it has taken place later on March 2013).

On 19 March 2013 both Assad and opposition accused each other of using chemical weapons against civilians.

Opposition accused Assad regime of using chemical weapons against some areas of Aleppo including "Khan al Asal" The attack resulted in 25 people losing their lives as well as 100 injured. The Assad regime responded by saying that the opposition was responsible for the attack and accused the opposition of being terrorists and using chemical weapons. The Media Minister held Turkey and Qatar responsible regarding this attack. Rus-

sia and Iran directly supported the Assad regime's claims adding that they were worried this would raise the confrontation to a new level. There are two important points to address with regards to this.⁴

- Addressing the claims that opposition forces have used chemical weapons.
- No internal, regional or international source or agency, including the Syrian regime announced before, after or during the claims that the opposition used chemical weapons that the opposition forces have actually managed to get their hands on any chemical weapons depots or military depots containing this kind of material. This is reinforced by the information that the US and Israel especially are closely monitoring depots where these substances are kept and would not hesitate to bomb them as soon as they believe that the armed opposition have put their hands on such material.
- The use of such weapons requires special units that could operate such material. However the units and structure of the opposition doesn't suggest that they possess qualifications units, unlike the Syrian regime.
- The use of chemical weapons ordinarily require time and preparation therefore it would be impossible for opposition forces to undertake such an action without being recognized.
- The targeted neighborhood in Aleppo (Khan el Asal) was captured by opposition forces in February so it isn't logical for the opposition forces to target areas under its own control.

Therefore the only logical explanation seems to be:

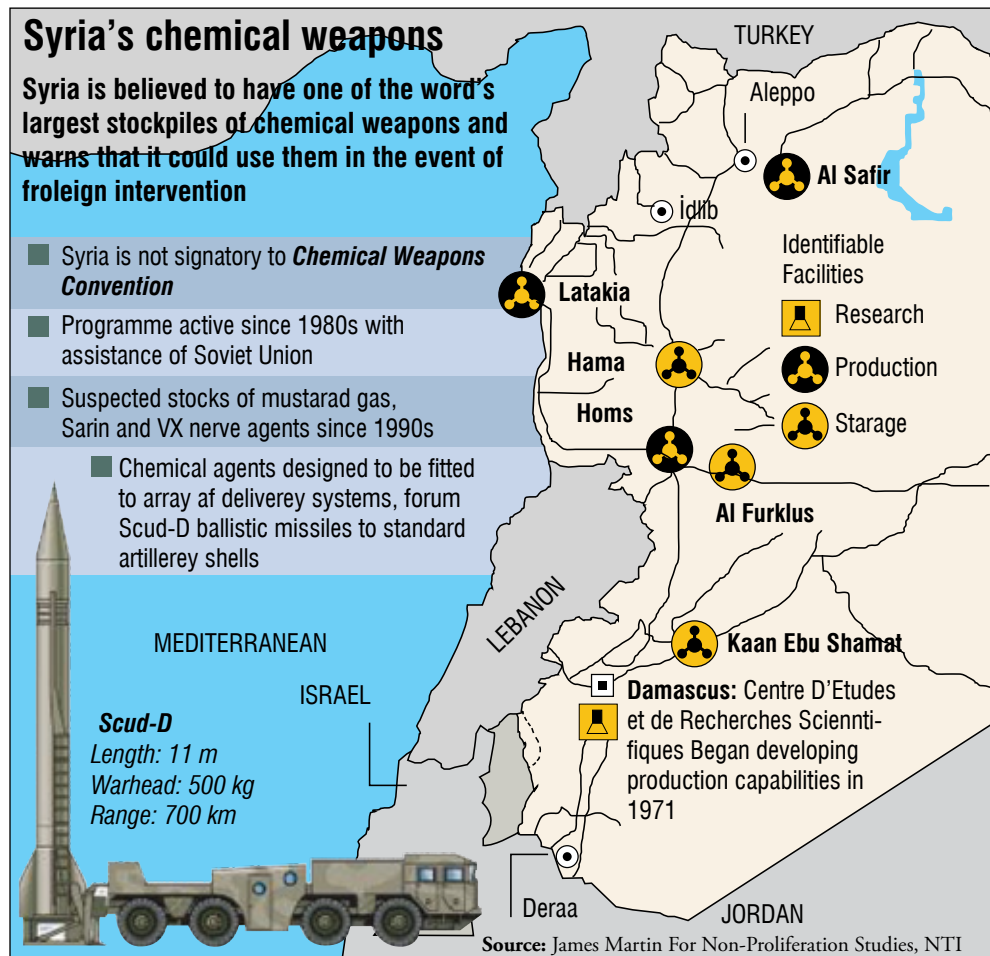
- The Assad regime wanted to make use of the international community's sensitivity towards this issue and used this card. Other cases of chemical weapons use also indicate the same.
- The Assad regime wanted to disturb the opposition and counter balance the Arab League's recognition.
- The Assad regime wanted to test the limits of the reaction of international and US politicians. It did the same by first using tanks and then escalating its violence with helicopter fighters, Scuds etc. Therefore as long as there is no strong decisive reaction, it means that the Assad regime will always go further. In that sense the redlines drawn by the US and the West are becoming green lights for Assad's interpretation of the reactions. The US reaction especially was disappointing.

⁴ As of May 7th 2013 the UN commission charged with investigating the possible use of chemical weapons found "no conclusive findings" of use. However the Commission was denied entry into Syria by the Assad regime.

Chemical Weapons in Syrian Army

- It is believed that each division in the army has a depot of chemical substances in its arsenal that can be categorized as toxic substances.
- The head of the division has the right to use these substances from the division's arsenal.
- Republican Guards divisions and the 4th Army store chemical substances with higher toxic levels in their arsenals. These weapons can be categorized as lethal weapons that neutralize enemy targets and are highly toxic substances.
- The decision to use highly toxic substances on targets is taken by senior level military and political officials. Usually crisis management meetings that includes: head of national security, military and air force intelligence heads, interior minister, defense minister, military chief of staff. This body passes its recommendation to the commander in chief of the armed forces.
- Assad has used chemical weapons on Khan al Asal and Sheikh Maksod.

Figure 11. Syria's Chemical Weapons



3) Other Armed Groups

Parallel to the operations of the Regular Syrian Army and the FSA, other armed groups also play an important role in this conflict. There has been a serious increase in the assistance provided to the Syrian regime both in Syria and in Lebanon by actors such as the Lebanese Hezbollah, as well as in the role of Islamic groups which conduct their activities within the FSA, independent of but coordinated with the FSA or completely independent of the FSA.

a) Shabiha

Shabiha are armed groups constitute mostly of criminals of Alawite origin. They generally engage in illicit trafficking and drug smuggling of various sorts. Today, they make use of the support of the security and intelligence forces in return for loyalty to the regime, and committing inhumane massacres.

Generally, they identify themselves using Shia symbols and have tattooed faces of the Assad family in order to display their loyalty and love for the regime. Shabiha has an absolute immunity and an unlimited authority regarding licensing fire arms, organizing checkpoints, searching, abducting, detaining and interrogating people. They usually carry handguns, machine guns, knives, daggers and cleavers.

Their numbers are estimated to be about 25 thousand, and they receive a salary of 300-500 dollars. The Syrian regime receives support from Shabiha in order to relieve the burden on the regular army and to commit more brutal crimes against the civilians. Therefore, it provides them with any money and guns they need. Many reports hold Shabiha responsible for the massacres committed against civilians in the villages and for committing horrible crimes such as raping, killing and injuring the women and children during the Syrian revolution (e.g. about 50 of the 180 people stabbed and killed in Houla are children).

Moreover, Shabiha members often take pictures and videos of the massacres, tortures, killings and rapes they commit in order to glorify their crimes and demonstrate their strength and commitment to the Assad regime. Various video footage and pictures show that some of the Shabiha members are also within the ranks of the regular army units and fasten red headbands on their helmets in order to distinguish themselves.

As of September 2012, it has been observed that Shabiha were deployed in the Alawite neighborhoods in various cities of Syria, and held the Alawite residents of the city “ransom”, subjecting them to extortion and “tax” claiming that they needed the money for food, drink, maintenance and repair of their vehicles and weapons and above all keeping them safe from the FSA (e.g. in the Al-Zehra neighborhood of Homs).

This situation also proves that the Regular Syrian Army has weakened as it sent these armed groups instead of its own soldiers to protect the Alawite neighborhoods. On the other hand, the fact that these groups collect money from the Alawites indicates that the regime is unable to finance these groups and has lost its financial power. Considering

the shortage of resources, it can be deduced that the Shabihatry to earn their income through the taxes they impose on the Alawites and the acts of stealing and plundering.

b) Hezbollah

The leaders of Hezbollah, especially Hasan Nasrallah, first refused the allegation that Hezbollah has become a party to the conflict supporting the Assad regime. However, the discovery of the dead bodies of many Hezbollah members within Syria clearly refutes any doubts with regards to Hezbollah's involvement. Moreover, Hezbollah Al-Manartel- television of Lebanon and the Al-Intikad newspaper published news related to the funerals of Hezbollah members arranged at the places they were born. Yet the places of death and the missions of these people remained unknown. How Hezbollah has sustained these losses was dubious in that its conflict with Israel has been calm for over more than six years.

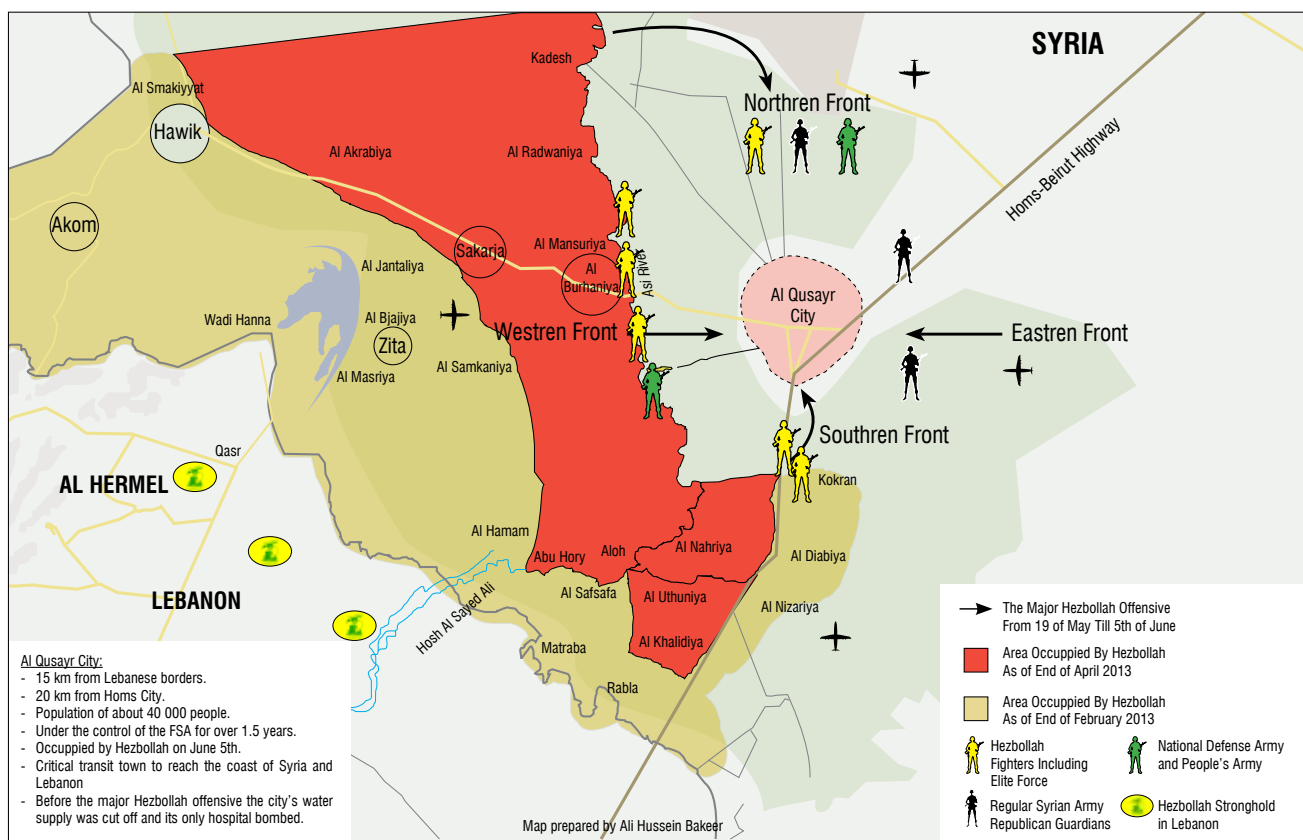
Figure 12. Main Areas of Hezbollah Activity Inside Syria



However, following the death of Ali Hussein Al-Haj Nasif, alias Abu-Al Abbas, and the ambushing of his group at Homs by the FSA in September 2012, the Hezbollah fact could no longer be denied. Ebu'l Abbas was the commander of the Hezbollah operations and was responsible for the organization of a military unit of Hezbollah within Syria. Following his death, Hezbollah made no effort to hide its operations and engaged in open combat on the side of the Syrian regime. Clear indicators regarding this matter are as follows:

- Many casualties from Hezbollah: This fact was recognized at the official funerals in October and November 2012.
- The bombing of Al-Kasr: It was proven that the Al-Kasr region of Homs which was on the Syrian-Lebanese border and included many FSA units was bombed by Hezbollah. Hezbollah bombed the region from Curud, Al-Hermel in Lebanon in November and December 2012.
- Establishment of a detainment camp in Al-Kasr: Al-Kasr is a city on the Syrian-Lebanese border. According to reports from Lebanon, Hezbollah uses the city to arrest Syrian rebels and their Lebanese sympathizers. Following the prisoner exchange between the regime and the FSA in October, some Lebanese detainees released from the camp also verified the above-mentioned information.
- The emergence of the military education camps: Al-Gavtah Al-Sharqiyya rebels conducted a raid upon these camps and house Shia fighters. One of these camps was the "Imam Mahdi Youth" military barrack on the road to the Damascus International Airport. The documents acquired by the rebels indicate that there are 10870 fighters of Hezbollah who receive a military and religious education based on books directly approved by Hezbollah and Iran.
- Presence of Hezbollah's forces in Damascus: There are many reports confirming that Hezbollah has forces in Al-Mezze, EbuRamean and especially in Al-Sayyide Zeyneb regions of Damascus.

Figure 13. The Occupation of Al Qusayr City



Starting from early 2013, Hezbollah involvement in Syrian on behalf of Iran and Assad became an unequivocal fact. In late April and early June 2013, Nasrallah paid a secret visit to the Iranian supreme Leader Ali Khamenei after which he openly declared the full support of Hezbollah fighters to Assad citing different explanations.

Hezbollah fighters together with the support of the “national defense” militia, “people’s army” militia and the Republican Guards of Regular Syrian Army launched a major operation to capture and occupy Al-Qusayr city in Homs near the Lebanese borders. The operation lasted from 19 June till 5 July. As of 5 July 2013, it is estimated that around 7000 Hezbollah fighters are actively operating inside Syrian borders including elite forces, while Hezbollah losses are estimated to be more than 250.⁵

c) Islamic Groups

As stated above, there has been a significant increase in the number of Islamic groups fighting against the Syrian regime recently. Some of these groups conduct their activities within the FSA, some are independent of but coordinated with the FSA, and some are completely independent of the FSA. The situation may be regarded acceptable consider-

⁵ For more details about Hezbollah activities in Syria, places of operations, number of fights and its casualties, Hezbollah Policy Brief published by this author on USAK website.

ing the fact that most of the Syrian population consists of pious people. However, the issue is handled and discussed on the basis of insufficient or inappropriate information in the Western media, focusing solely on some groups or branding them all under one category, person or ideology on a superficial basis.

Examples of these groups whose numbers are gradually increasing are Ahraru'sh SHam (Free Damascus People), Sukuru'l Islam (Hawks of Islam), Ensaru'l Islam (Supporters of Islam), Jabhatu'un Nusrah (Victory Front), Al-Faruk and Tevhid brigades. Among these groups, Ahraru'sh Sham was established on September 21, 2012. The structure called the Islamic Front Against Assad includes the following groups: Al-Haq (Homs), Al-Fajr Al-Islamiyye (Islamic Dawn) (Aleppo and the Aleppo Rural), Al-Talia Al-Islamiyye (Islamic Leader) (Idlib Rural), Ensaru'sh Sham (Supporters of Damascus) (Latakia and the Latakia Rural), Mus'ab bin Umeyr (Aleppo Rural) and Tevhid (Deirez-Zor), and also Sukuru'l Islam (Hawks of Islam), warrior Iman brigades, special task forces and the Hamza bin Abdulmuttalib brigade in Damascus and the Damascus Rural.

Data obtained from Syria indicates that the Islamic groups, brigades and battalions have an ever increasing popularity as they have engaged in intense combat and had specific achievements on the military field. Moreover, these groups consist of people having no criminal records of robbery, plundering, raping and racketeering. In fact, they put their own lives in danger at a time when most people avoid fighting.

The attitude of the Syrian opposition towards the Islamic groups developed on such a basis; therefore, the fact that the USA included Jabhat'un Nusra into a list of terrorist organizations was disapproved of by the political and military groups within the Syrian opposition, and by a majority of the Syrian people.

It has been observed that the above mentioned groups and communities were provoked through an exaggeration of the role they play and a misrepresentation of the nature and extent of their Islamic orientations. Some of these groups are claimed to be related to Al-Qaeda, which still remains an unfounded allegation as there is no solid evidence or reasonable ground in this regard. None of these groups have made an effort to look after foreign benefits, have targeted civilians or have conducted ideological or Al-Qaeda related operations.

However after the announcement by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi that the entity that calls itself the Iraqi Islamic State has merged with the Jabhat Al Nusra under the name "Islamic State of Iraq and Sham", the head of Jabhat al Nusra Al-Joulani denied such a merger. Apparently following this denial several conflicts took place between both sides while at the same time Jabhat Al Nusra was listed in the UN list of designated terrorist organizations. This also caused a split within Jabhat Al Nusra and its members.

It seems clear that the role these groups play will increase in the future should the regime continue to carry out more severe massacres, should Hezbollah and Iran increase the number of their operations and involvement in Syria, and lastly should the international community continue its indifference in protecting the Syrian people.



THE ROLE OF THE MINORITIES IN THE CONFLICT

A. Kurds and the Syrian Revolution

The Syrian security forces withdrew from the north-eastern and north-western villages and towns on the Turkish border in July and August of 2012. They handed over the management of the region and the government organizations to the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and some other Kurdish parties within the region. This has caused the issue of Syrian Kurds to resurface and become more visible. However, the withdrawal of the Syrian forces was not a mere coincidence but a planned act based on certain objectives, on the part of the regime. Some of these objectives are as follows:

Leading the troops withdrawn from the Northern region to Aleppo in order to fight the FSA and relieve the pressure upon the Regular Syrian Army together with the regular military units deployed within these areas.

Establishing a buffer zone between the Syrian Regime and Turkey as the Kurdish armed groups within Syria pose a threat to the security of Turkey. That is, laying a trap against Turkey in case it directly interferes in the conflict, even if Turkey has no intent to do so. Moreover, drawing attention to the Kurdish issue in Turkey, and focusing the present internal discussions around this issue rather than the fall of the Syrian regime.

Fracturing and fragmenting the Syrian opposition, while at the same time paving the way for a possible conflict between the Kurdish and Arab components of the opposition based on their relationship with Turkey. Moreover, according to the future turn of events, dividing Syria on the basis of minorities and laying the grounds for the establishment of possible Kurdish and Alawite states.

1) Relationships Between the Kurds and the Syrian Opposition

The number of the Syrian Kurds is about 1.6 million people, most of which live in the furthest north-eastern regions while some of them live in the north-western regions on the Syrian-Turkish border. The fact that there are more than 16 Kurdish political parties in competition with each other to win the support of the Kurdish people indicates that the Syrian Kurds are fragmented to a great extent.

Syrian Kurds do not possess a charismatic leader who would pioneer and rally their political sentiments them such as Barzani and Talabani in Iraq. Some of the famous per-

sonalities within the society were either disbanded or were assassinated. The most recent example of this is Mashaal Tammo, the leader of the Kurdish Future Movement Party supported the Syrian revolution against the Assad regime and tried to rally the support of Syrian Kurds behind the revolution.

Iraqi Kurdish Leader Massoud Barzani realized this deep fragmentation and tried to unite the Syrian Kurds in the hope of a common agenda and joint efforts of various groups, and prohibited them from fighting and propagating against each other. Thus, the first public meeting uniting these groups was held in Erbil, during which some important suggestions were made. The members of the Kurdish National Council in Syria confirmed that they supported the Syrian revolution but demanded self-determination for the Syrian Kurdish people and autonomous government within their own region. However, the Syrian opposition rejected these demands.

The attitude of the Kurds towards the Syrian revolution was can be characterized around three different groups:

The first group has given its full support to the Syrian revolution from the beginning and acts within a comprehensive national agenda across Syria. The group consists mostly of independent Kurds, a section of the youth and the Kurdish Future Movement Party, which, worked to rally the support of the Syrian Kurds in assisting the Syrian revolution, and was until very recently led by Mashaal Tammo who was assassinated by the Syrian regime.

The second group is indecisive regarding the issue in that they seek to gain the highest profit out of the situation. Therefore, they state that they support the Syrian revolution on one hand and try to claim certain demands within a nationalist framework on the other. For example the demands of self-determination and autonomy in their own regions. As a matter of fact, they even demand federalism as stated by the Kurdish National Council. All these demands are rejected by the Syrian opposition, as they propose the Kurds and all the other citizens to unite as Syrian people on the basis of common rights and obligations and equality for all. The Syrian opposition contends that neither the Kurds nor any other minorities are justified to make such demands that could cause the division of the nation, therefore they think such demands are illegitimate.

The third group adopts a separatist attitude and, though not clearly stated, makes effort for sovereignty in the Kurdish regions. They are represented by the armed Democratic Union Party (PYD) which has recently cooperated with the Syrian regime.

a) Kurds and the Syrian National Council

The Syrian National Council consciously adopts an attitude parallel to the attitude of the Syrian opposition. Therefore, the Syrian National Council argues that the Syrian people should be equally treated in terms of their rights and obligations regardless of their religion, ethnicity or sect. This argument was rearticulated many times in various documents such as the official documents, plans and principles of the Council.

The National Council has been led by Syrian leaders of different political orientations since its establishment; e.g. liberal Burhan Galyun and Kurdish Abdulbaset Seyda. This demonstrates that the Council has no problems in its relationships with the Kurds. Following certain arrangements parallel to its involvement in the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, the National Council is now led by the left-wing Christian George Sabra.

However, neither the Syrian National Council nor the Syrian opposition has stepped out of this frame in terms of its respect for civil and social rights nor have they accepted to back the demands of federalism, autonomy and even of self-determination. These demands have no legal grounds and threaten the integrity and sovereignty of Syria.

On the other hand, the National Council avoids coming face to face with the Kurdish groups as a great number of Kurds support the Syrian revolution, because such an encounter would result in divisions within the opposition groups, break the union of forces, and shift the focus from the fall of Assad. Therefore, the National Council adopts a participatory attitude towards the Kurdish issue and a rational and calm policy free from hostility. Thus, it confirms that the Kurds should be given political and social rights as Syrian citizens on one hand, and rejects any tendency towards nationalistic demands that could lead divisions or federalism on the other.

Again, there have been negotiations between the Syrian National Council and the Kurdish National Council regarding the union of both structures so that the members could conduct activities in both of the councils. However, despite solid improvements, the Kurds preferred to remain an independent and parallel structure in the hope of gaining more profit in the future. Therefore, the National Council charged Abdulbaset Seyda with both making negotiations with the parties of the Kurdish National Council and taking visits to Iraq. During his visit to Iraq, Seyda met Barzani within the scope of the Council's participatory policy.

b) Kurds and the “National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces”

Following the establishment of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and with the constantly developing opposition, Kurds were indecisive whether to join the coalition; and there have been dissidences between the Kurdish National Council and the People's Council of Western Kurdistan in this regard.

The Kurdish National Council laid down four demands as conditions in order to approve the participation in the Syrian National Council. The demands are as follows:

- Recognition of the Kurdish people as a community living in Syria and giving them national rights.
- Representation of the Kurds within the coalition in parallel with their population in Syria (15%).
- Changing the official name of Syria as the “Syrian Republic” instead of the “Syrian Arab Republic”.

- Choosing one of the deputy presidents of the coalition among the Kurds following the recognition of them as a community living in Syria.

Then coalition president at the time Moaz Al-Khatib stated that the Coalition cannot take such decisions and that only the future parliament will be authorized to deal with such matters. Therefore, Al-Khatib rejected the first three demands with the following words: *“Decisions regarding these constitutional demands shall be taken after the parliamentary elections. Thus, it is not possible for the Coalition to go beyond its willpower and make a decision regarding these constitutional issues.”*

However, the Executive Board of the Kurdish National Council decided to join the coalition on December 11, 2012, as it feared that the Kurds would be left out of the issue, the opposition would gain more power, and that it could not share any possible success of Syria according to the statement of Ahmed Süleyman, member of the Secretary-General of the Kurdish National Council and the Political Bar Association of the Kurdish Future Movement Party in Syria.

The Kurds thus joined the Coalition under the name of the “Supreme Kurdish Council” and three seats were allocated to them. As is known to all, the Syrian Kurds have three more seats within the Coalition apart from the Kurdish Council. These are AbdalbâsıtSeyda from the Syrian National Council, Muhammed Hadar Veli from the Youth Movement and billionaire Yahya Al-Kurdi from the list of the Syrian National Figures.

On the other hand, Salih Muslim, the president of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), stated that he rejected the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces in Doha claiming that the Kurds within the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces do not represent the Syrian Kurds and were by elected by Turkey.

c) Kurds and the Free Syrian Army

The former policy of the FSA was to avoid a second conflict with certain Kurdish armed groups and refrained from engaging in conflicts and any other obstacle that would distract it from achieving its primary objective of overthrowing the Assad regime. Therefore, the FSA refrained from engaging in military conflicts with certain Kurdish groups having separatist demands; as such a situation would only serve the benefit of the Syrian regime during the Battle of Aleppo in July 2012.

However, within the period following the Battle of Aleppo, the FSA started to follow a different policy of two phases:

Sending strong and unequivocal messages stating that the FSA will take a defense position at all hazards in response to any effort of the Kurds towards establishing an autonomous, federal or semi-independent region.

Enabling the Kurds who want to participate in the national armed conflict to join the FSA. The FSA created warrior Kurdish battalions in line with this purpose, the most

important of which are “Salahaddin Battalion” in Afrin, Shuheda-i Mekke (Mecca Martyrs) in A’zaz, Salahaddin Al-Ayyubi in Al-Bab, Yousuf Al-Azamand Nesur Al-Peshmerga in Al-Bab and A’zaz. These battalions then constituted the Kurdish Military Council of the FSA in the Aleppo Rural at the end of September 2012. Again, the “Joint Military Council for Syrian Kurds” was established in order to unite all the Kurdish warriors under the roof of the revolutionary military councils within the regions of the FSA in December 2012.

Aims of the Joint Kurdish Military Council The following issues were indicated in the statement of the Council:

- *Overturing the current regime with all its symbols and foundations.*
- *Protecting the principle concerning the establishment a national army, liable to protect the state.*
- *Studying for establishing a civil democratic and pluralistic state depending on the principles of equal citizenship, separation of powers, authority alternation, and rule of law and protection of minorities.*
- *Recognition of the national identity of the Kurd People in the constitution, considering the Kurdish question as a main part of the national issue of the country and recognition of Kurdish People’s Right within the national and territorial integrity of Syria.*

A great deal of conflict took place between the Kurdish Militia (YPG), which was believed to be related to PYD and the Syrian regime, and the FSA. Many ambushes were laid against the FSA units in Al-Hasakah. It was observed that the Kurdish National Council tried to prevent a non-Kurdish armed person to enter the Kurdish cities, but could not succeed.

In October, the FSA entered the Kurdish neighborhood Al-Eshrafiyye in Aleppo, and, according to the news records, was welcomed by the residents there. Ahrar Al-Kurd battalion of the FSA was established on December 22, 2012. This battalion then joined the revolutionary council in Aleppo and the Aleppo Rural.

Every day, the FSA wanted more to resolve any armed conflict that would prevent it to achieve its primary objective of toppling down the Syrian regime. Moreover, it is observed that the territories under the FSA expanded towards the Kurdish regions both over its own units and the Kurdish battalions under its command. It is important that the FSA made efforts to claim areas in the Kurdish and Alawite regions in that these empty areas are feared to be exploited in a way that would strengthen separatist orientations.

2) Is It Possible to Establish a Kurdish State in the North of Syria?

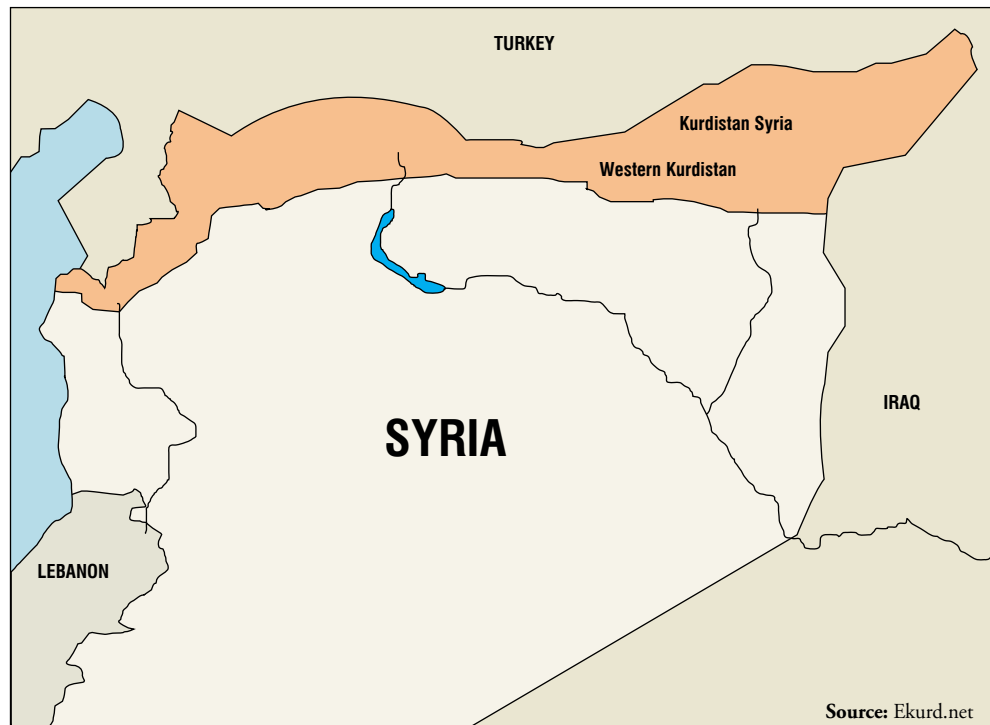
Following the withdrawal of the Regular Syrian Army from the Kurdish regions, the Syrian regime was severely defeated by the FSA and lost its sovereignty in many regions of the country. As a result, a possible division of Syria has come to the fore recently. Assad is also suspected to consider establishing an Alawite government because of the

support he gives to the rise of a Kurdish nationalistic discourse and his attitude towards the minorities within the regime.

Accordingly, data was obtained regarding the fact that certain Kurdish groups sent committees to the USA and some European countries in order to receive support for their demand of federalism after the fall of the Assad regime, thus paving the way for furthering their demands in the future.

On the other hand, it is thought that the data regarding the Kurdish population and the territories they expanded was exaggerated. These overstatements are surely reflected on the maps published lately. Moreover, some regional and international parties were observed to use the terms “Syrian Kurdistan”, akin to the “Iraqi Kurdistan”, or the “Kurdish Southern Syria” while talking about the Kurdish issue in Syria. Many maps were published lately in this regard; however, they certainly do not reflect the reality, and were only prepared to spread the idea of a Syrian Kurdistan.

Figure 14. An Example of Exaggerated Claims by Some Kurdish Groups



Kurdish Centre for Legal Studies Consultancy (YASA), whose headquarter is in Bonn, Germany, published a map in December 2012, and stated that it showed the “Syrian Kurdistan Region” expanding from the northeast to the northwest of Syria. According to the center, the number of the Kurds in Syria is about three million people.

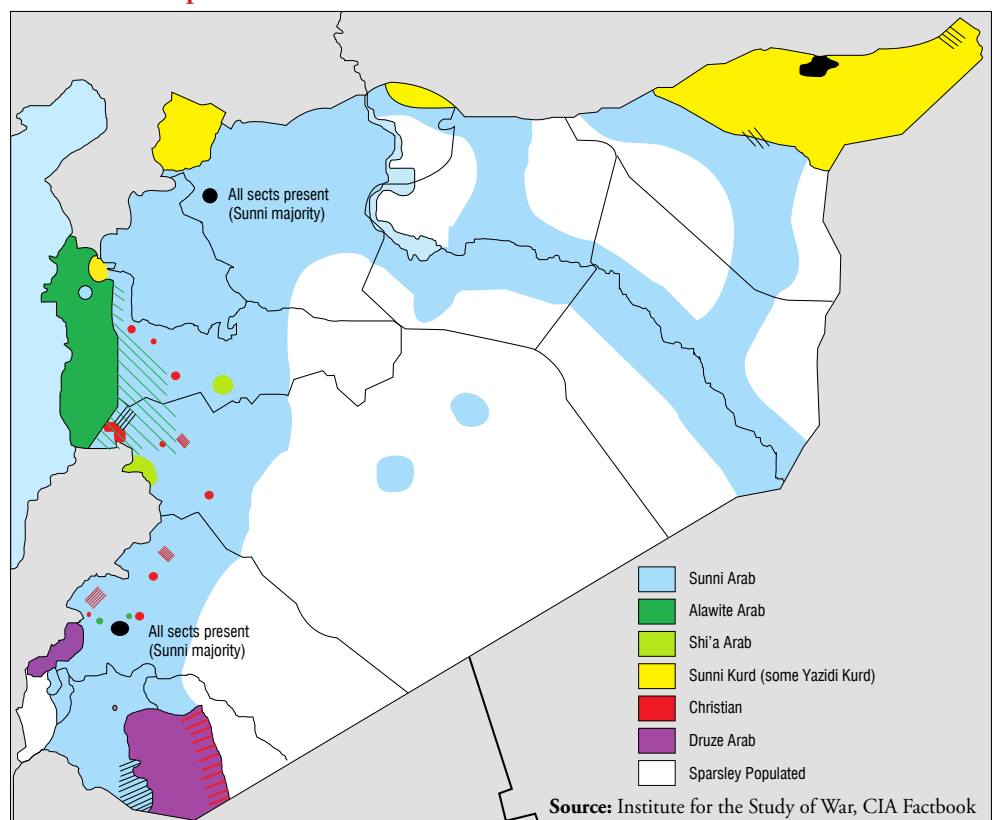
Despite these overstatements and the speculations regarding the possible establishment of Kurdish and Alawite states in Syria, it can easily be seen that this is not as easy as

claimed. At this stage, the establishment of a Kurdish state, or even an autonomous region for the Kurds just as is the case with Iraq, is not possible. Some of the reasons behind this fact are as follows:

The number of the Kurds in Syria does not exceed the number of the Kurds in Turkey, Iran and even Iraq. The proportion of the Syrian Kurds to the Syrian population is not high at all; as the number of the Kurds in Syria is about 1.6 million, while the Syrian population is over 23 million. Therefore, it is quite hard for the Kurdish population to shove their demands down the throat of the Syrian people.

The geographical distribution of the Syrian Kurds does not cover the overall northern borderline of Syria, including only certain regions. Most of the Syrian Kurds live in the northeastern end of the country (these regions are not densely Kurdish-populated regions, they are inhabited by a mixed population), while some Kurdish groups live in the northwest of the country; and Arabs live in the region in between. So these dispersed groups of people prevent the Kurds to establish a state or an autonomous region. All these facts indicate that there is no proper area for the establishment of a Syrian Kurdistan or no land to be called the Kurdish Northern Syria. All these names are deceptive and do not reflect the reality. Some people use these names without knowing what they mean, while some others, especially the reports prepared by the Western institutions, deliberately use these deceptive definitions.

Figure 15. Observe the Distribution of the Kurdish Population and Compare/Contrast with the Previous Map



The Syrian opposition promised to recognize the civil rights of the Kurds and other groups, thus enabling equality among all the Syrian people in terms of their rights and obligations; while there is a certain and absolute refusal of any demand of self-determination, self-government (similar to Iraq) and decentralization. The Syrian people also do not see any legitimate ground for such demands.

Up until now, regional or Western actors have not supported demands of self-determination or self-government; and it seems pretty hard that the Syrian Kurds make any progress without the support of the international community or Western societies.

Even if they could make progress in the establishment of self-government, such a region cannot gain sustainability and survive. Therefore, such a structuring is not possible at the moment.

B. Alawites and the Syrian Revolution

The Assad regime succeeded in both eerily commoving the sectarian hatred in Syria and establishing an identity relationship between the regime and the Alawite minority. However, these do not mean that every member of the Alawite sect supports Assad. Assad and its regime made vigorous efforts in order to bring forward the impression that every member of the sect supports them, just like all other minorities.

It is observed that some civilian Alawites also supported the revolution. Although the number and the voices of these Alawites were quite low, what matters is that they participated in the revolution. Accordingly, some reports indicate that the Alawites joined the FSA in February and March 2012, and that many Alawite officers were sent to Jordan at the time of the collective breakaways.

There were inner conflicts between the Alawite families and tribes. Some reports also stated that there were armed conflicts between the pro-Assad Alawites and the anti-Assad Alawites, especially the Osman and Al-Hayyar families who are one of the biggest families in Al-Kardâha and have religious and cultural reputation before the Alawite sect) and the Assad families in the Al-Kardâha village of Latakia, where Assad was born; and that many people lost their lives during these conflicts. Again, the Human Rights Watch stated that Shabiha committed a massacre in Akrab, Hama on December 11, 2012, and that there were many Alawite victims of the massacre.

Moreover, the Alawites held a conference in Cairo on 23-24 March 2013 involving many prominent Alawites and opposition figures where 30 other opposition leaders also joined including Burhan Ghalion. The conference ended issuing the "Cairo Declaration" which stresses on:

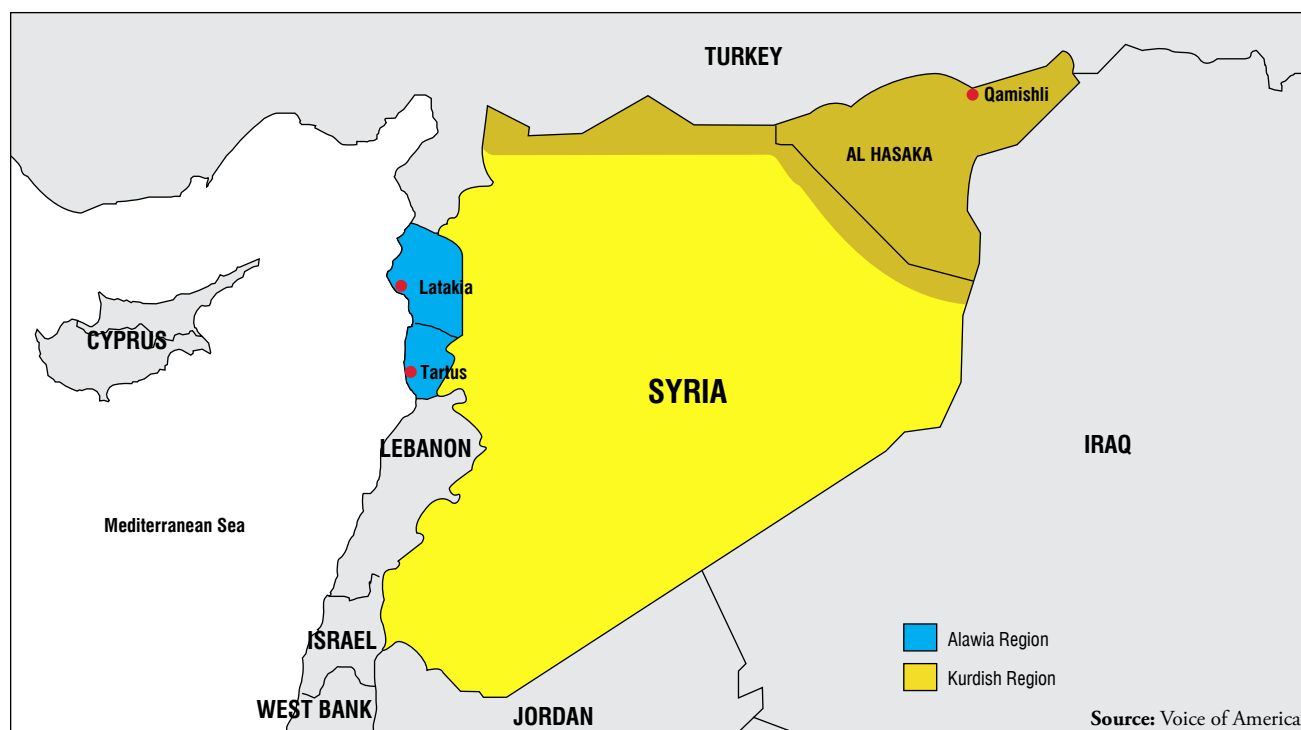
- The necessity to differentiate between the Alawite sect which Assad belongs to and Assad and his regime, as it is a moral and political mistake to mix the two.
- The condemnation of Assad's consistent attempts to kidnap people of the Alawite sect and put them in situations of confrontation with other sects.
- Uncovering Assad's presences of portraying himself as a protector for minorities while in reality he is trying to intimidate Syrian.

- Syrian revolution is a public revolt against tyranny and corruption.
- The ultimate goal should not only be the overthrow of the regime but also dismantling of the structure of the totalitarian regime and building a state of law and order.
- The need not to accept less than a historic trial for the members of this regime, which has committed horrible atrocities that have left a mark of shame on the conscience of humanity and history.
- The need to explain to the Alawite people that their future and security will be achieved through supporting the Syrian revolution.

The Assad regime relied more and more on the security units (aircrafts, missiles, toxic materials and explosives) in order to destroy the cities of Syria and prevent the progression of the FSA following the successive defeats it suffered. Therefore, the regime went bankrupt, and, as stated by the former prime minister of Syria, suffered an economic, emotional and military collapse. The fact that the regime survives thanks to the support of Russia and Iran becomes clearer in this regard.

In light of all the above-mentioned information, statements and analyses claiming that Assad may step aside in the Alawite regions and establish an Alawite state as a last resort increase.

Figure 16. A Map Being Circulated Regarding the Possible Establishment of a Kurdish State



1) Indicators of the Establishment of an Alawite State

a) Triggering a Sectarian Civil War

As indicators that Assad loses the war increase, the tendency of the regime to start a civil war also increases. Such a war would create a proper medium where every regime could raise its demands and increase the concerns of the West regarding the minorities.

Therefore, the regime has focused on deliberate sectarian provocations, especially recently, as of the beginning of the revolution. It is observed that the regime called attention to the presence of gangs such as terrorists, radicals and armed groups in order to provoke sectarian concerns of the regime. Moreover, Assad introduced himself as the protector and defender of the minorities such as Christians, Alawites and Druze, and made attempts to justify their operations in this regard.

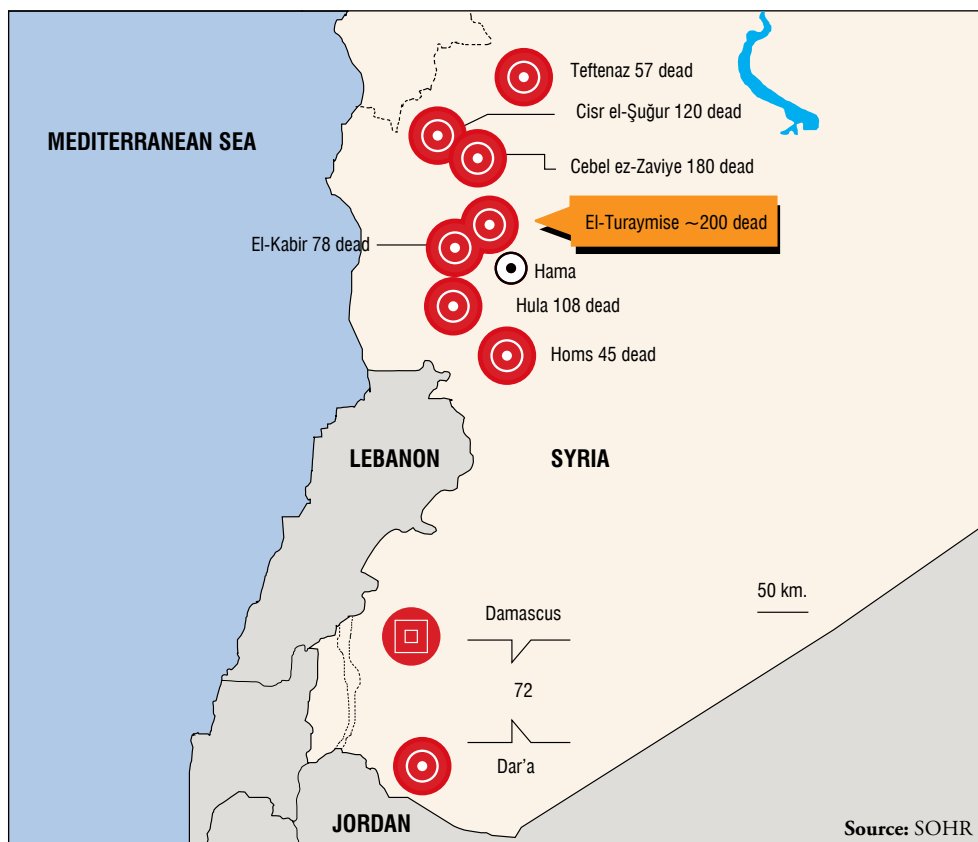
Repressing the minorities and dragging them into solitude, exclusion and nervousness in their own regions enables the establishment of isolated regions. Therefore, the establishment of an Alawite state, at least on a theoretical basis, seems a lot easier considering the justifications that others would take revenge, the social and sectarian solidarity, common interests and the creation of an appropriate medium for all.

b) Drawing a Sectarian Demographic Line Parallel to the Syrian Coast

Not all the territories suggested for the establishment of an Alawite state consist of Alawites; therefore, the regime made efforts for an ethnic cleansing, committed severe massacres at Sunni villages, and evacuated these regions. As a result of the attacks on a line parallel to the Syrian coast, the Sunnis here were obliged to flee to the hinterlands of Syria.

A similar policy (See the map below) was observed at the Houla massacre in which 110 people were killed including women and children. People were cut using knives or sharp objects or strangled, and some people (including children) were executed by shooting. Other massacres in Al-Haffe, Al-Kabir and Al-Turaymise followed the Houla massacre. At the Al-Turaymise massacre, more than 200 people were killed in constant operations. All these operations and massacres can be described as “sectarian cleansing”. It is known that the Homs Rural and Lattakia where Sunnis live were also exposed to such “ethnic cleansing” operations.

Figure 17. Some of the Massacres Committed Parallel to the Coastline



c) Moving Important Military Equipment and Weapons to the Coast

The security reports of certain policy institutes and some news broadcast on the media state that the Assad regime started to transfer strategic weapons, baggage and ammunition to the cities of strategic importance for the defense of the Alawite regions such as Lattakia and Tartus. This indicates that the Alawite regions in Syria are prepared to be protected in the future.

Moreover, the transfer of the weapons may be considered as an indicator that the regime is prepared to retreat to this secure region. Some people, however, consider this move as an indicator that the regime has an intention to establish an Alawite state; as it is not possible to establish an Alawite state without the strategic weapons on rough and steep mountainous terrains.

d) Construction of a Military Complex in Lattakia

During the Tehran visit of Muhammed Nasif Hirbek, Deputy Vice-President for Security Affairs in Syria, Iran accepted a highly controversial agreement in June 2011. According to the agreement, a huge military complex would be constructed for billions of dollars to serve as a military base near the Lattakia airport in Tehran. Iran government

paid 23 million dollars provided that the construction of the military complex would be completed until the end of 2012.

In case that this military base is constructed, Iran will be able to provide heavy weapons and baggage by sea without the interference of a third party. The construction of the base will also serve for the future Alawite state, if established; as such a state would need any kind of support which then could be given directly through the military base in Iran. Moreover, this base, as will be discussed further in the present report, will also serve for the protection of the relationships between Iran and the Alawite state and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

e) Systematic Destruction of the Big Cities Inside Syria

Assad is known to follow a systematic and comprehensive destruction policy as he attacks big cities, especially Daraa, Homs, Aleppo and Deirez-Zor, and rural areas, especially the Damascus Rural; targets residential areas, buildings, neighborhoods, water, food and oil reserves, and main and vital facilities; destroys factories and workplaces; and set the petrol oil wells, threshing fields, and agricultural lands and products. However, the regime does not involve densely Kurdish- and Alawite-populated regions in this policy. All these acts of the regime are considered as efforts to establish an Alawite state.

2) Those who will benefit from the Alawite State Scenario

Some people argue that it is highly possible that Assad will establish an Alawite state, and thus, first withdraw his forces to the sheltered coastal regions; while others suspect that there will be beneficiaries of this scenario, who most probably encourage the regime in this direction. Considering that these countries will lose a strategic ally, Syria, in case of a successful revolution and will no longer be able to look after their interests following the reestablishment of Syria, this possibility increases. Therefore, the parties to be injured following the fall of the Assad regime may have such a tendency to look after their interests. Some of these parties are as follows:

a) Israel

Israel feels uncomfortable with the possibility of an alternative regime instead of the Assad regime. Although it tried hard to disprove this thought, it expressed its discomfort many times especially within the first year of the Syrian revolution. An important figure within the Israeli government, Amos Gilad, who is the president of the Political and Security Board of the Israel Ministry of Defense, once said *“If the regime of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad falls, this would result in a disaster and bring the end of Israel!”* and caused heated debates.

The reason why Assad is so important for Israel is the security guaranty he promises for the Golan Heights in Syria and the war he fights against the Islamists. However, the fact that the Assad regime weakened to a great extent following the Syrian revolution resulted in Israel to change its policy in this regard. Israel now follows a controlled weakening

policy against the Syrian government through all its institutions. Parallel to this policy, some groups in Israel want Syria to be divided into little states, one of which would certainly be the Alawite state. Establishment of such a state may either be considered as a solution to the inner conflicts or to the security risks Israel may encounter in case that an Islamic state is established instead of the Assad regime and a civil war breaks out; because little states within Syria would be weaker against Israel at any war in the future.

b) Iran

Iran feels that the Syrian regime is on the brink of a fall despite the political, financial, economic and military supports and also the support given through the media. The most recent indicator of this is that Hashemi Rafsanjani, the chairman of the Expediency Discernment Council, stated that it was very unlikely that Assad would remain in power at the beginning of 2013.

The fact that Iran supported the Assad regime put its relationships with the Syrian opposition and the Arab world in great danger. Therefore, Iran had better look for some new alternatives as it is not in the position or power to take the responsibilities of the damages of the investments it made in the Arab world for about 30 years and the regional consequences of the geopolitical shock in case that a Syrian government is established.

Thus, establishment of an Alawite government would be for the benefit of Iran under these circumstances; as it would reduce its geopolitical losses, enable it to reach towards Lebanon both through Mediterranean and Hezbollah, and maintain its position in the region.

c) Hezbollah

Although Hezbollah states on the media that he does not want the region to be divided, he probably supports the idea of the establishment of an Alawite state; as the state will serve as a base for Hezbollah and secure the former interests of the Assad regime. Otherwise, the success of the Syrian revolution means the end of Hezbollah.

Therefore, Hassan Nasrallah defends Assad and his regime all the way. Moreover, some groups within Hezbollah are known not to be chary of the scenario regarding the establishment of an Alawite state in case that Assad loses Syria.

d) Russia

The most common analysis of the experts on the Syrian policy of Russia is that Russia puts its own interests in danger by supporting Syria in the hope of an access to the Mediterranean via the naval base in Tartus. However, this analysis is far from being convincing. The main reasons behind Russia's attitude are as follows: Russia fears that Iran will left alone following the fall of the Assad regime, Sunni political Islam will rise over the region, and that an international intervention will be made in the internal affairs of Syria.

However, considering the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of the Tartus base and the Syrian coast for Russia, the establishment of an Alawite state will be for the benefit of Russia. Russia will be able to control the state, thus having a Russian base of its own near the Mediterranean in the Middle East.

3) Difficulty of Establishing an Alawite State in Syria

There are a few important factors to be considered regarding the possibility that Assad or its allies may establish an Alawite state where they can take shelter after losing Damascus. However, despite the matters discussed within the present report, the division of Syria and the establishment of Alawite and Kurdish states are not as easy and possible as thought. The most important reasons why it is highly unlikely to establish an Alawite state today are as follows:

a) Demographic Situation

Contrary to the common statements on the media, not only Alawites live on the mountainous areas, especially in Tartus and Lattakia, behind the Syrian coastline. The demographic structure of the country has changed to a great extent following the extreme employment of the Alawites in the government agencies and security forces and the migration of the Alawites to the cities and the Sunnis to the coastal regions for the last fifty years. It is a known fact that many cities on the coastline are densely Sunni-populated regions; e.g. the proportion of the Sunnis to the overall population of the region is about 45% and over 50% in Lattakia and Tartus, respectively. The population is highly mixed in rural areas. Some villages are densely Sunni-populated regions while some are densely Alawite- or Shia-populated regions. However, the coastal region is a densely Alawite-populated region.

Therefore, the establishment of an Alawite state is quite hard, if not impossible, unless these densely-populated Sunnis leave the coastal and rural regions. An inner coast line was drawn and a large Sunni population was sent from the region in line with the purpose of establishing an Alawite state, and various massacres were committed by the regime. (The Baniyas Massacre is just one of these horrible atrocities). However, all these did not help the regime to achieve its main objective; hence, the Sunni population still lives within the region.

b) Infrastructure

As is known to all, the Assad family wants to establish sovereignty over the whole country rather than just a certain area of Syria, and considers that the efforts towards supporting and developing the Alawite regions may hinder their plan of establishing sovereignty over the whole Syria. Therefore, they opened the gates of the army and the security institutions to the members of the Alawite sect and employed them in order to guarantee the future of the regime. Thus, the distribution of the Alawites was country-wide, not regional.

An adverse effect of this policy is that cities on which an Alawite state will be established do not have a proper economic infrastructure compared to the other regions. Moreover, these coastal regions, except for Tartus Harbor, do not have the natural wealth and industrial centers to enable the sustainability of an Alawite state. Considering all these factors, it is clear that establishing an Alawite state is not as easy as thought despite the will to do so.

c) Geographical Position

Establishment of an Alawite state means that the hinterland of Syria will become a closed area without access to the sea. Syria will surely not accept such a situation; because access to the sea indicates to a strategic importance for any state. Thus, this situation means another factor why Syria wants to prevent the establishment of such a state.

d) Security Situation of the Region Concerned

These areas are not suitable for defense except for the mountainous terrains and the possible retreat of Shabiha on the mountains. The fact that other Alawites within the Regular Syrian Army live on these areas does not necessarily mean that these are sheltered areas. The assumed Alawite state can only resist a possible attack for a while; therefore, it would not be quite possible to stop the progress of the FSA and other forces towards Damascus in case that Damascus falls and Assad and his supporters withdraw to the mountains. On the contrary, the victory would encourage them to further to the other regions, as the ones establishing sovereignty over the whole Syria would want to control other cities on which an Alawite state will be established.

e) International Stance

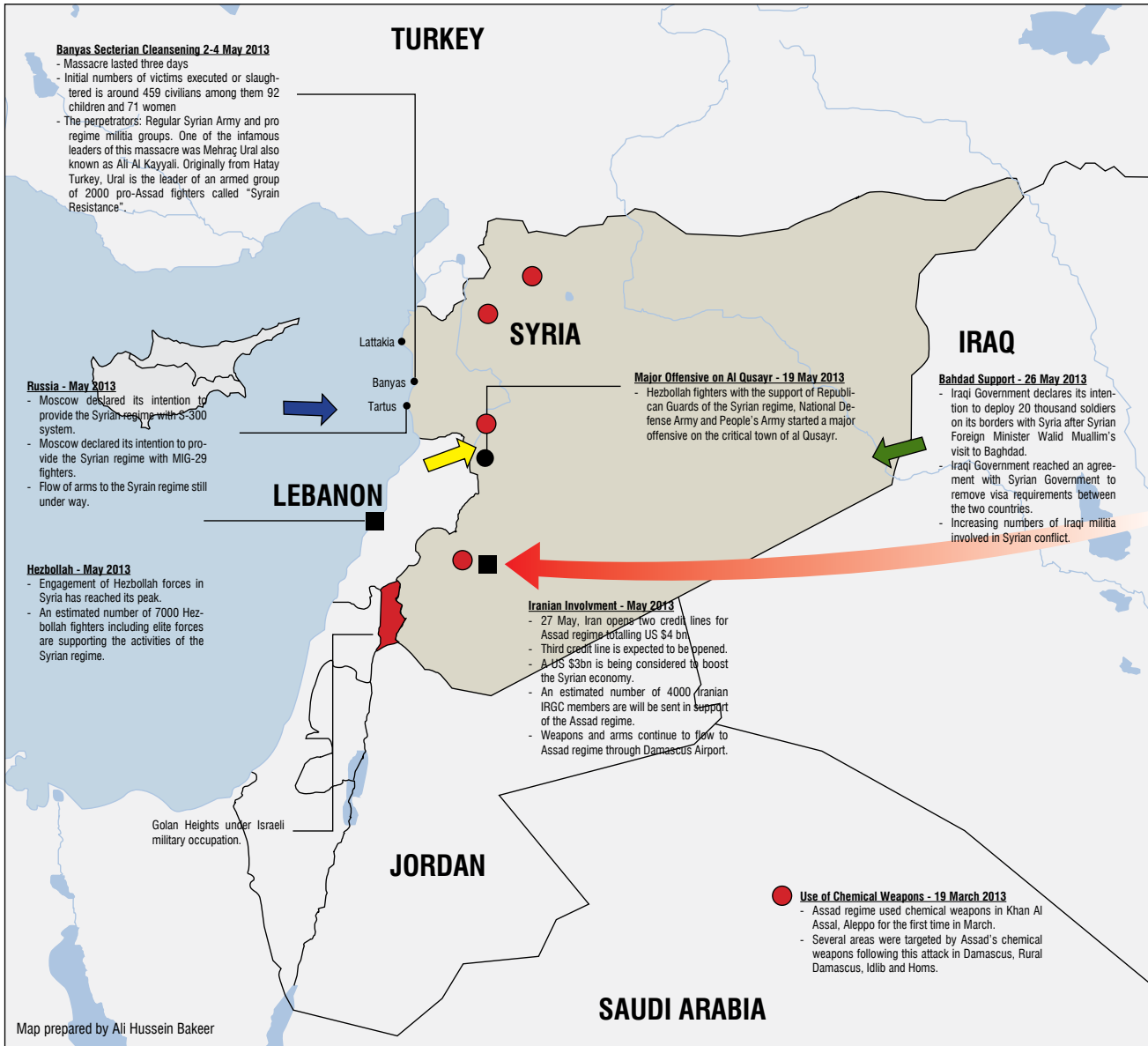
As is known to all, establishment of a new state requires an effective regional and international support. The idea of the establishment of such a state has not yet been supported by the Western states. Therefore, “de facto” establishment of an Alawite state is quite hard only with the support of Iran and Russia. On the other hand, establishment of this state may encourage the Kurdish population to establish a similar state of their own within Syria. Regional forces troubled by this possibility may be expected to oppose to a possible Alawite state. Therefore waiting for the reaction of the international community may later influence whether there is a support for such a step which is very dangerous, should such a possibility materialize.

f) Position of the Free Syrian Army

It is observed that the above-mentioned minorities have recently made certain attempts towards exploiting the current authority gap and the conflict between the regime and the armed opposition in line with the purpose of extending their own areas of sovereignty and security cordons and establishing self-government within these areas. Considering all these developments, it can be concluded that the FSA extends towards these

regions in order to strengthen its existence, and creates military councils in compelling regions such as Lattakia and Al-Hasakah in order to stand ready at all times and prevent any exploitation operations towards gathering pro-regime forces.

Figure 18. Assad's Friends Up the Offensive – From March 2013



C. Other Minorities

1) Christians

Like other groups, Syrian Christians are also an important component of the Syrian society. They played an important role in Syria's history on many levels. As there is no official statistics for the population of religious or ethnic groups in Syria, the most common estimation ranges from 5-10%. Lately some foreign circles are exaggerating these percentages for a reason that is yet to be seen, circulating figures of 15% and even 20% as one foreign diplomat claimed.

Assad regime practiced many actions and psychological techniques to exert pressure on the Syrian Christian community when the revolution erupted, in order to keep them under its control and prevent them from joining the revolution.

Assad regime mainly tried to scare the Christian population and consequently offer them its protection from others. The propaganda machine of the regime has played an important role in dispersing these fears and tried to portray the regime as the last "bulwark against Sunni's", arguing that life under Assad is better than under a Sunni-dominated government.

Nevertheless, a growing number of Christians, including George Sabra, Fayez Sara, Michel Shammass and Michel Kilo have joined opposition groups like the Syrian National Council and Syrian National Coalition and the Assyrian Democratic Organization, which has openly opposed Assad regime since the initial uprising in 2011, in clear defiance of the official Church.

Role of the Christian Church: The role of the official church (Orthodox and Catholic) was very negative regarding their open support for the Assad regime. As Syrian Christian George Sabra, the head of the Syrian National Council argues, the Christian community has not been served well by its leaders and the Church's hesitancy in aligning itself with the revolution can be a significant strategic error and can politically harm the majority of the Christians in the post Assad era.

Sabra also noted that the church doesn't reflect the desire and ambitions of the Syrian Christians, as so many of them rejects the position of the church. Lebanese Patriarch Beshara al-Rai for example who is known for his controversial statements paid a surprise visit to Syrian in February 2012 on the occasion of the appointment of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch John al-Yaziji, in Damascus, ending a long history of estrangement between the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerke (Lebanon) and the regime in Damascus.

Al-Rai who was ironically elected when the Syrian revolution erupted on 15 March 2011, is implicitly supporting Assad and has many statements claiming that the regime is "the most democratic in the Arab world."

Knowing the sensitivity of the Christian issue for the West, Assad regime played this card very well making use of the position of the Church to rally support from minorities inside and to raise fears outside.

The regime also tried to win hesitant Christians by granting them some official posts, such as Dawood Rajha being appointed as the Minister of Defense during the revolution.

Moreover, the Assad regime recruited Christian religious figures to defend the regime on Western media outlets. The most striking case in this regard is Sister Agnes-Mariam, Sister Agnes-Mariam de la Croix has lived in Syria since 2000 and has close affiliations with the regime. She carries Lebanese and French passports and is close to pro-Assad-Hezbollah leader in Lebanon, Micheal Aoun. She is very active in pro-Assad and Western media outlets, she fabricated dozens of stories to convince others that Christians are being kicked out and killed through horrible means by radical Islamist groups in Syria.

The nun has already been condemned by Father Paolo Dell'Oglio, who was expelled by the regime for his criticisms after spending 30 years of his life in the country. Father Paolo is an example of those Christians who refused to stay silent or to accept the regime's narrative. He was well known for his support for young people, sheltering the needy and injured. The fate of all the Christians who were similar to Paolo is expulsion, torture, imprisonment or otherwise assassination.

The Assad regime has also been accused of destroying and plundering churches that they claim have been financially supporting the opposition as well as assassinating religious figures like Priest Basilius Nassar while he was helping a Christian who was injured during clashes between the government and opposition forces.

2) Druze

The number of Druze in Syria is estimated to be between 3-5% of the population. The vast majority of them are in Suwaida Province south of the country. The number and rate of participation by Druze people in the Syrian revolution is increasing day by day. In fact, many reports indicate that Druze community members started to join the revolution within its first 10 days where Suwaida province witnessed peaceful protests. Of course it was not mass protests (minorities didn't rally mass protests in general) but it was an indication that they refused to abide by the current situation.

The Assad regime tried through a lot of effort to neutralize the Druze and in many occasions tried to provoke them against the Sunni of the region. For the regime the minorities were essential as allies that could balance the majority of the Sunni.

The Druze military leader Khaldon Zin el din, was among the first to defect from the regime forces and established "Sultan pasa Al-Atrash" battalion within the FSA, which had a very active and influential role in the FSA's areas of operation against regime troops. Atrash battalion operations reached its peak in December 2012 and January 2013 where Khaldon Zin el Din died during one of the fiercest battles against Assad army in the southern parts of Syria.

3) Turkmen

Turkmen like other minorities is an important component of the social structure of Syria. They are mainly located in Aleppo, Lattakia, Homs, Hama and Damascus. The unique character of the Turkmen minority is that they are fully integrated in the Syrian society because the vast majority of them are Sunni and because they are more familiar with the marriage relations and traditions of the Sunni majority of the population. While there are some efforts to try to undermine their presence alleging that the number of Turkmen is 50 thousand in Syria, others clearly exaggerate the number claiming that there are 3 million Turkmen across Syria. While there is no official statistics, most credible estimations today state that the number is around 200,000.

Turkmen joined the revolution early and they formed 12 Battalions, most famous among them “Sultan Salim” and “men of God”. As they are trying to politically organize themselves, Syrian Turkmen founded “The Syrian Turkmen Council on 31/3/2013 during the second general conference of the Syrian Turkmen which was organized by the Syrian Turkmen Platform held in Ankara, Turkey. Syrian opposition figures as well as senior Turkish officials (including Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu) joined the meeting after the council adapted its internal charter.

The honorary president of the council is Turkish citizen Mohammed Chander, a member of the Turkish Parliament. The council consists of 39 members and the executive committee consists of 9 members.

The council is supposed to hold a meeting every three months for one year, after that a new council will be elected. The day the council formed it received many criticisms from Turkmen both inside and outside of Syria for many reasons. The most prominent reason was the council’s decision to appoint an anti-Syrian revolution figure as its head.

Most prominent parties and movement of the Syrian Turkmen currently are:

- “Syrian Democratic Turkmen Movement” was established on 21 March 2012, as a political party. The Movement’s primary goals are to rally Turkmen to the protection of the independence of the country, to maintain Syria’s unity, and to achieve a democratic Syria where justice and equality will prevail with equal rights and responsibilities for every citizen.
- “The Syrian Turkmen national Bloc” was established through a declaration issued in İstanbul on February 2012. The main aim of this group is to rally Syrian Turkmen under its own umbrella to achieve political representation. The bloc expresses its support for the FSA and Syrian opposition.
- Turkmen groups always stress the unity of Syria as they seek a new country for all Syrians.



THE FATE OF ASSAD AND SYRIA

A. First Scenario: Assad Steps Down

The fact that the balance of power and the data in favor of the regime changed within the first year of the revolution indicates that Assad has gradually lost hope with regards to achieving a possible victory, some considering this situation may cause Assad to leave (as a result of an agreement, an escape or an assassination).

Again, the progress made by the revolutionaries has revived the hopes for a new era in Syria, in turn affecting the regional and international attitudes towards the issue. As a matter of fact, Russia has started to review its attitude towards Syria, and has left a door open for last-minute negotiations about Syria with Washington.

Accordingly, Iran has put forward a six-item plan prepared by its Foreign Ministry in the hope of recovering for its stringent attitude towards Syria. However, it is a well-known fact that Iran's commitment to Assad and his regime is more critical than that of Russia.

Similarly, Ibrahim Al Akhdar, Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States is demanding a political solution to end the present conflict in Syria, claiming that otherwise Syria would be driven into a great chaos. Thus, the "Initiative Last Chance" was launched in December 2012 given the political stalemate with regards to the attitude of Russia and the United States. The initiative calls for the establishment of a transitional government with full authority, until new elections are held in Syria. However, this initiative provides that Assad, although as a matter of formality, should nevertheless remain in power until 2014.

The main problem with both of these initiatives, especially the latter one, is that they both foresee Assad not being left out of the equation. On the other hand the opposition, represented by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, demands an immediate implementation of the peacetime transition period on the condition that Assad and the main figures of the regime resign.

The scenario concerning Assad leaving power (as a result of an agreement, an escape or an assassination) is currently on the agenda on a theoretical basis; however, dictators have been observed to resist and stay in power until the very last moment in history.⁶ Assad will probably follow this path.

⁶ Shah of Iran, Mubarak, Pinochet, Than Shwe...there are many counter examples.

Assad has rejected all peaceful attempts towards a political solution to the present crisis since the beginning of the events. Since then the Arab League has suggested three initiatives to prevent an international intervention and solve internal problems with the help of other Arab nations, in August 2011, November 2011 and January 2012.

The initiative in August 2011 did not foresee Assad leaving power but suggested that presidential elections take place within three years after the general elections. Moreover, it was also suggested that the general elections take place under the supervision of a coalition including the opposition groups. The initiative proposed on November 2011 also did not demand Assad to leave power. The initiative in January 2012 suggested that a government of national unity should be established, and that Bashar Al-Assad should cooperate with this new government in order to end the crisis and delegate all his authorities to the vice president. However, Assad directly rejected all these political initiatives based on peaceful settlements.

If one assumes that Assad will leave, one way or another, within the first two quarters of 2013, it is still possible to say that the predicament Syria faces may be overcome despite all its problems. This is if internal and external efforts are united in line with the purpose of supporting Syria, as a result the country may regain its pre-revolutionary status albeit through a long and complicated process.

B. Challenges Likely to Face Syria in This Scenario

If Assad leaves within this period, Syria will encounter the following problems:

1) Economic and Social Situation

In light of the facts laid out in the first sections of the present report, a significant support and investment plan akin to the Marshall Plan will be immediately needed to put into action for the reconstruction of Syria. Collapsed and destroyed infrastructure must be renewed so that the required economic support can be distributed and Syria's young population put back into work.

A great effort should be undertaken in order to cover the expenses of the returning refugees, to facilitate the reintegration of these people to the society, and to compensate and reconstruct the properties they have lost. The opposition and Syrian National Council stated in November 2012 that the Syrian government needed approximately 60 billion dollars in the first stage in order to cover for the expenses of reconstructing about 2.5 billion houses demolished by the regime (according to the estimation of the Council), money needed to govern the day to day lives of Syrians and for resuming the efforts conducted for the reconstruction of the country.

However, the main problem is that the international community is not doing its fair share of the duty, when it comes to assisting the Syrian people. Therefore, some states cannot be relied upon or expected to offer great help when it comes to the reconstruction of Syria; e.g. the economic condition of the United States and most EU

countries indicates that both they will probably not volunteer to initiate such a plan that would support the Syria. Thus, an initiative led by the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and Turkey, together with the efforts and contributions of a limited number of donors and volunteers, seems more likely to be effective.

2) Security Situation

In this scenario instituting public order and security country-wide will become a crucial need. The army and the state's security forces, though weakened, may recover should Assad leave the regime now. The humanitarian and financial resources of the army and the security forces have been squandered; however, most of these losses can be compensated should Assad withdraw in the near future. For instance, the army has not been fully destroyed. Accordingly, the fact that armed individuals have started to organize within collective and structured movements indicates that controlling the spread of arms will not be much of a problem despite the relevant concerns. Syrian military and security institutions will be able to go through a fast and easy recovery process. However, this process will also require regional and international support.

On the other hand, the spread of arms among conflicting groups may present serious problems for the subsequent governments. It will become especially important to integrate those individuals who are eligible volunteers to join the new army and security institutions, while those who have abandoned their weapons should be rehabilitated through education and work programs in order to integrate them in the society and prevent them from becoming a source of instability.

Moreover establishing control over the borders of Syria is of the utmost importance in this regard. Negligence in this matter may result in the deterioration of the country's security condition and may therefore require even greater effort being undertaken to reinstate security in these areas. Provision of the security throughout the country is also quite important to secure the interests of certain international powers and countries suffering from this situation, especially as there are also certain actors that may benefit from a tenuous security environment, such as Iran.

3) Political Situation

The Syrian opposition, represented by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, declared that it is ready to start the transition period. The security, economic and social problems awaiting any subsequent Syrian government and the insufficient support coming from the international community and countries in the region make a transition currently impracticable.

The above mentioned situation will probably witness ideological conflicts among secular, liberal and Islamist groups; whose common objective of "overthrowing Assad" will have been realized. Therefore, the transition period may become an arena with various political parties having different priorities will compete. In that case, Islamist groups will gain an advantage, which in turn may invoke a backlash among other political groups.

However, Syria may be able to overcome such a fracturing considering that various political and ethnic groups have historically lived in mutual understanding.

Such a polarization parallel to the deterioration in the fields of security, economy and society within the country may trigger the rise of some separatist and sectarian groups in regions especially where the economic, industrial and agricultural infrastructure has been slightly damaged; because these regions are more likely to meet their own needs compared to other destroyed regions.

Therefore, as the transitional government that will be formed immediately subsequent to Assad leaving or being toppled becomes functional, the Syrian National Coalition in particular and the Syrian opposition in general should preserve its unity and should bear these difficulties together. This unity is needed especially as this period will be extremely difficult and will require a lot of effort.

C. Second Scenario: Assad Refusing to Leave (Syria As A Failed State)

If Assad refuses to leave until the second quarter of 2013, and he tries to remain in power on the basis of the infamous slogan adopted by his supporters: “Either Assad remains in power or we will destroy this country”, until he is either killed or until his term ends in July 2014, in that case, the world will be facing a completely different situation. In this scenario, the regime will aim to completely destroy the country, resulting in Syria becoming a “failed state”. Such a turn of events would be a nightmare scenario of which many parties within and outside the country are deeply concerned.

Therefore, the recent initiative of Ibrahim Al Akhdar which was based on Moscow’s suggestion is not expected to succeed; it makes no sense that Assad would remain in power or sign a new agreement after the Syrian people, the Syrian government and the Syrian institutions have incurred such damage and paid such a heavy price due to the decisions of Assad and his regime.

If Syria becomes a failed state, the biggest share of responsibility will belong to the international community. Thus, deficiencies such as the lack of compromise between the members of the international community, the conflicts of interest that have in turn cost many Syrians’ lives and the ignorance with regards to the level of support actually provided caused a crucial role in lengthening the crisis. All these factors strengthened Assad’s hand, and led to the ignorance of all the massacres and destructions within the country.

It is observed that the United States and some other countries have been reluctant and hesitant regarding their efforts to solve Syria issue and all forms of help that is needed in Syria. This attitude has not change even after the Syrian opposition united its political and military ranks and achieved some important successes. That the international community has not yet taken deterrent precautions against the regime or its allies may increase the level of destruction in Syria and encourage the regime to continue its violent

acts. Assad encountered no deterrent force from the international community it slowly increased the level of violence first using tanks, mortar and artillery shots, then helicopters, aircrafts, Scud missiles and then the recent toxic and caustic materials.

According to the reports by the Syria Humanitarian Action Response Plan (SHARP), the humanitarian support and aid sent to Syria is insufficient under the present circumstances, as the massacres and destructions of the Syrian regime cannot be stopped. Moreover, the regime and the Syrian opposition are likely to enter a long-term war of attrition.

This war will no doubt have serious humanitarian, financial and military consequences for Syria. Most importantly, the Syrian state will probably weaken to a great extent. Such destruction will place a heavy burden on the shoulders of any government succeeding Assad.

D. What This Scenario Implies for Syria

Continuation of the present crisis will greatly and directly affect the Syrian state.

1) On Economic Level

If the present crisis continues whatever is left of the Syrian economy will be completely destroyed. Should this take place, main economic sectors of the country such as the tourism, industry, agriculture and service sectors, that have currently come to a stop or are already partly destroyed, will fully collapse. Likewise, the Assad regime will then dry up all the cash reserves of the country. The devaluation of money, the collapse of the economic sectors and the drying up of the cash reserves of the country will result in a serious economic and financial disaster.

Although it some parties assume that a regional and international support plan will be prepared regarding the economic and financial condition of Syria, the Syrian economy returning to anything near its prewar level is hardly foreseeable in the near future. Progress during the transition period will be unsteady and highly dependent on economic, security and political developments in the country as well as the level and nature of international support afforded to Syria.

Without strong regional or international will and support, Syria with limited resources will be condemned to become the plaything of conflicting regional and international interests and will certainly end in disaster.

2) On a Social Level

This desperate situation will soon very likely devolve into a nightmare scenario for Syria in many different levels. Social and humanitarian statistics Syria already portray a terrifying situation. Yet how does the prospect of the crisis lasting another year reflect on the humanitarian level? Should the crisis drag on for another year, the number of casu-

alties in the conflict is estimated to double. The number of refugees, homeless, missing or otherwise displaced persons is also estimated to double within the same time period.

The transitional government will face some difficult choices as a result of the increasing number of refugees and homeless people. The government will also face some difficulties regarding the floundering economy, the insufficient structuring of government organizations, the high rate of unemployment, the instability of the security environment, and the destruction of the basic institutions of the government.

All this paves the way for the emergence of criminals, gangs, fanatic groups, smugglers, mercenaries and terrorist groups working for foreign powers. Moreover, Syria will be a fertile ground for the activities of intelligence services working for various regional and international actors. Such a situation will surely heighten internal tensions and encourage separatist orientations; which in turn will make things difficult for the political parties.

This situation will also generate pressure not only within Syria but also on the neighboring countries, whose capacities for sheltering refugees have already been exceeded, overwhelming the resources of such countries. Jordan and Lebanon, for example, declared in 2012 that they cannot accept any more refugees. In this case, the situation of the refugees will not only be of humanitarian but also security concerns.

3) On Security Military Level

Should Assad fight it out until the end, the regular army will be degraded and eventually destroyed. Furthermore, as the attitude of the army towards the demonstrators and the civilians has become more violent, this caused defections and fragmentation among the ranks of the army, turning the army into a sectarian gang rather than a protective power for all Syrians against external threats. This perception gains popularity among the Syrian people every day. Due to these in the future it may prove even more difficult to establish a comprehensive process that would reinstate a national army, in the true sense of the word.

Regardless of how it is structured, the transitional government will definitely face security and military problems due to the regular army constantly losing of military vehicles such as tanks and aircrafts as a result of the ongoing fighting. The scarcity in both weapons and qualified personnel will make the training of personnel difficult.

Therefore, the insufficient support of the international community and the allies of Syria is feared to result in Syrian people losing faith in the political opposition, which lacks sufficient resources and is unable to deliver anything material to the Syrian people. Such a situation will drift apart not only the people and the political opposition itself but also the Free Syrian Army and other armed groups; as the armed opposition will probably believe that it will be more effective acting individually on actual grounds and that it is not interdependent to the international community. This will, of course, have some serious reflections on the control of the armed groups within Syria in terms of their agendas and orientations.

As the international apathy prevails, the persistence of the conflict and the ongoing violent acts of the regime against civilians will result in an even greater increase in the number of armed groups, especially the Islamist groups, fighting against the regime. Should the conflict go further out of control, the number of armed groups will increase with the participation of revolutionary groups, groups of external interests, groups of intelligence services and groups led by regional and international powers. The contradicting activities, interests and objectives of all these groups will lead to a completely negative atmosphere in the country Syria will then turn into a conflict area, leading to a local, regional and international disaster.

Under these circumstances, Syria is most likely to be partitioned into smaller states or independent cantons. As previously mentioned in the second section of the present report, there will be a greater likelihood of partition as the number of armed groups and the nature of sectarian violence increases.

E. Regional Risks of Syria Turning Into a Failed State

A failed state in Syria will not only be a heavy burden for the countries within the region but also an opportunity for Assad's regional and international supporters. Countries supporting Assad may consolidate and strengthen their position inside the country which will enable them to outflank their international and regional rivals after Syria becomes a failed state, and may have the opportunity to take advantage of "failed" Syria in a new geostrategic game.

In such a scenario it is possible to say that Iran's losses will be relatively smaller, as it has vast experience in the management of such situations and has certain effective tools that it could employ in a failed state scenario. Therefore, it will not only survive in Syria but also cultivate a reliable population, giving it leverage to negotiate with regional and international powers.

A failed state in Syria will benefit Iran in at least three ways:

- It will gain Iran time for its nuclear program.
- It will contribute to the protection of Iran's national security. As some analysts indicate, Iran defends itself by setting up a security cordon through its proxies, reaching through the borders of many countries in the region: Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain and Yemen. Therefore, a failed state in Syria would imply a new field this strategy.
- Iran may also utilize such a scenario in its chess game of regional authority and prestige against opponents such as Turkey or Saudi Arabia

Such a scenario is quite dangerous for little states such as Lebanon and Jordan as it may increase separatism and radicalism within the region. Additionally a failed state in Syria offers Iran many cards that will be briefly stated below:

Kurdish Card: There is increasing evidence that points to Iran supporting terrorist groups against Turkey during the Syrian crisis. Therefore it is possible for Iran to use this card against its regional rivals. About a year ago, Ziyad Yusuf, PKK media representative, suggested a “Kurdish-Shia” (PKK-Iran) coalition to be established, and said “This should be done for the interests of both parties; there is a proper ground for the establishment of such a coalition”. He described the coalition as: “the best option for Iran considering that it lost its ally Assad, and NATO came to its borders through Turkey, whose popularity in the region increases every day as an Islamist model against that of Iran. Such a coalition would gain Iran a new operation area extending from Lebanon to Afghanistan, and give it a fresh start.”

Alawite Card: The failed state Syria will enable Iran to convert Syrian Shia minorities into its clients. Iran will attempt to guarantee its interest in Syria through the use of armed and trained military groups similar to Hezbollah in Lebanon and organizations in Iraq. Iran will thus control the vital points within the country which link Shia areas to Lebanon and serve as channels for supplying Hezbollah with weaponry and money.

Such a development will divide Syria into cantons and weaken it so that the different groups become more powerful than the government. Moreover this step will further destabilize Lebanon and harm the influential Arab states that have interests in Syria and Lebanon, thus feeding the separatist orientations.

Radical Groups Card: Iran wants to prevent the establishment of a powerful Syrian state that could replace Assad and will use radical militias against Israel, other groups and sects, and the security and stability of Syria as a whole.

4

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Today, Syria is on the edge of a critical inflection point. The most ideal solution for the future of Syria and the region seems to be Assad leaving power.

However, Assad insists on remain in power overshadowed by the slow but stable progress of the FSA in various fronts. Unless the Assad regime is overthrown soon, Syria and the region may face a crisis that could last for decades turning Syria into a failed state.

The surest way to prevent the realization of the failed state scenario is that Assad and his supporters leave the country by a peaceful regime change. However, the above-mentioned regional conflict of interest requires Turkey to be prepared for other scenarios, even for the worst scenario. Therefore one could make several suggestions for Turkey:

Turkey and the Syrian Opposition

It is important for the international community to support the National Coalition and all its units, especially the Assistance Coordination Unit while also increasing the speed and volume of the aid and assistance provided on the political, diplomatic and financial levels. This is especially important as the members of the Coalition and the Syrian opposition are developing a perception that the international community has given up on them. Several reports state that the volume of assistance provided has decreased since the union of the Syrian opposition, and most of the promises made by the international community have gone unfulfilled.

Should the international community continue its ambivalence towards supporting the National Coalition, this may give birth to deep concerns within Syria. The possibilities of the Coalition losing its political significance and resources, as well as the faith of the Syrian people; the relationship between the Coalition and the FSA as well as the trust between the Coalition and the Syrian people deteriorating to a great extent would prove to have catastrophic consequences. Should the political dimension of the Coalition be made impotent through the ambivalence of the international community and the political-will of the opposition collapse, this may result in reinforcing the belief among the Syrian people that the revolution may only succeed through military means, which will lead to a painful transition process in the country.

Therefore Turkey should rally collective efforts to carry out and implement the decisions made by the “Friends of Syria”, on a regional and international level. Most decisions

made in meetings have yet to be implemented because there is no enforcement mechanism, thus rendering the declarations of this group as just mere words. This effort is significant as the “Friends of Syria” group currently lacks such a working mechanism.

The relationship between the National Coalition and the FSA should be strengthened by giving the National Coalition access to advanced weaponry, to be delivered to the FSA. The FSA should be supported with advanced weaponry now that the military efforts of the opposition are united. This is needed because the FSA is currently fighting with the weapons it has obtained from the occupied armories of the regime, or alternatively bought or smuggled into Syria. The FSA won great successes with these weapons for the last three months of 2012. Yet without advanced weaponry this limits the capabilities of the FSA’s operations thus further helping to prolong the conflict.

Moreover, the war may last for a long time and the present problems may not be solved unless the advanced weapons are provided to the FSA on a regular basis. This situation may lead to the drying up of the current resources and the complete destruction of the infrastructure, and cause an unprecedented disaster.

The regions within Syria that are fully liberated should be directly supported. We have witnessed entire and contiguous fully liberated regions within Syria, except for Homs which is still under siege, that require assistance for its security and governance of day-to-day issues. The regime still has complete dominance over certain areas, especially the coastal regions and the areas that provide connection points with the Hezbollah in Lebanon. However the Syrian revolutionaries have made great progress in various fronts, especially on the north and east of the country, in Damascus and on the southern areas of Syria. Therefore, there may soon appear fully liberated areas especially on the north of the country when the Teftnaz Military Airport, Mennagh Military Airport and the Aleppo International Airport fall.

The city Menbic on the northeast of Aleppo, for example, should be considered as an example of a region that is under the dominance of the FSA and governed by the revolutionary forces. There are many similar regions within the country. These regions need direct assistance in their governance so that the FSA can better allocate its resources towards protecting the civilians and fighting the regime.

The efforts of various Syrian NGOs should be supported to create a network connecting the NGOs within and outside of Syria. This will provide greater coordination in determining the needs of the Syrian people and enable the proper and effective transmission of aid and assistance.

In fact, UN institutions mostly act within the discretion of the Syrian regime for the delivery and distribution of the international assistance. However, it has been demonstrated on several occasions that the Syrian regime prevents the distribution of aid and assistance. Therefore this coordination of aid efforts is important.

Any step towards the establishment of a temporary government within the liberated areas in Syria should be supported, and consultations and cooperation should be made

with the National Coalition and the Arab states, respectively in this regard. There is a tendency to establish a temporary or wide-scale government within the liberated areas to serve as a basis for the transition period before the regime fully collapses.

Pressure should be exerted on the supporters of the Syrian regime by all means available especially within this period. The exigency and haste with which this pressure is exerted is crucial as there is still a chance to save what's left from Syria and prevent it from becoming a failed state. It is true that Russia is looking to reevaluate its attitude in general but hasn't yet stepped out of its conventional framework premised on Assad remaining in power. This is an unacceptable premise for the Syrian opposition. On the other hand, the attitude of Iran is more important on regional grounds; as the Assad regime will collapse within a short period of time should Iran cease its support for Assad as a result of international pressures.

Turkey and the Syrian Kurds

Turkey should approach the Kurdish issue in Syria on a careful and sensitive basis; as any improper policy may have some serious and dangerous consequences not only for Turkey but also for Syria and the Syrian revolution. Therefore, Turkey should follow a careful policy and take the following matters into consideration:

According to the existing information, although there are many platforms that aim to bring Syrian Kurds together none of them have succeeded in achieving unity among Syrian Kurds. Moreover, there are disagreements between the armed Kurdish groups such as the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and Kurdish groups working at a political level. Therefore, should Turkey adopt hasty policies that overlook the differences between the working structures of these two factions, this may inadvertently result in helping unite the political and armed groups while at the same time reinforce nationalist tendencies. Therefore Turkey should be careful to adapt its policies with regards to the nuances that exists between these factions. Failing to do so may advance the position of the PYD within Syria, spread hostility against Turkey, and gain the PYD superiority against other Kurdish parties. Such developments will be against Turkey's interests.

The issue of Syrian Kurds appears frequently on the Turkish media, and the deliberate or accidental distribution of misleading and inaccurate information through such channels creates a dangerous situation. Moreover, it is of the utmost significance that Turkey refrains from evaluating the issue of Syrian Kurds from the perspective of its own experiences with Iraqi Kurds and the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Evaluating these different subject matters from the same point of view may result in certain difficulties in Turkey's foreign policy and containment of the issue of Syrian Kurds. Such a predicament may have negative on Turkey

The issue of Syrian Kurds shouldn't be made the subject matter of domestic point scoring between the Turkish government and opposition. Such attempts would only benefit the Syrian regime and its allies. Therefore, the Kurdish issue in Syria shouldn't become the subject of internal polemics in Turkey

Building relationships with the Syrian Kurds through their contacts with Barzani would be an improper course of action. Such an attitude overestimates Barzani and legitimizes his efforts to extend his influence into Syria. Such a situation will definitely not be for the benefit of the Syrians and may even damage Turkey in the future. Therefore, mutual relationships with the Syrian Kurds should be built through the Syrian people; a situation which requires to act in coordination with the Syrian opposition (the National Coalition and the FSA) regarding the Kurdish issue in Syria. Acting in coordination with the Syrian opposition is also convenient as the opposition follows a participatory policy regarding the Kurdish issue in Syria, and acts on a rational basis. Again, the attitudes and interests of the Syrian opposition are in line and compatible with the attitudes and interests of Turkey, especially when it comes to the concerns that certain Kurdish areas should not be turned into safe havens for the PKK or that no autonomous regions should be established within these areas.

Moreover, coordination should be established with the Arab states and the League of Arab States as they are effective and influential figures in the Syrian issue adopt common attitudes with Turkey and share common concerns with Turkey regarding a possible partition of Syria along sectarian or ethnic lines. Therefore should Turkey act together with these parties, this may relieve some its burdens regarding the Syrian issue matter.

In case Turkey has some concerns about the partition of Syria or the possibility of the PKK taking advantage of a power vacuum along the Turkish-Syrian border to conduct operations from there, it should convey these concerns to the UN and the EU. This means Turkey should flex its diplomatic muscles. As stated above, it is not possible for the Syrian Kurds to establish an autonomous region without international support. Therefore, any such support should be stymied before such a scenario comes to pass

Turkey and the Forthcoming Period

As a matter of fact, it is assumed that in the future Turkey will be swifter in responding to challenges and developments in Syria than it had been in the past. However such an effort requires Turkey to mobilize all its political, economic and technical capabilities to focus and respond to the Syrian crisis. This situation will, of course, have some reflections on both local and regional dimensions. Therefore, the present report presents the following suggestions for Turkey in this regard:

Turkey should refrain from adopting policies that construe the issue of minorities from an ethnic-nationalist or sectarian basis. Instead, the concept of citizenship and common rights and responsibilities of the citizen should be emphasized.

Syria's territorial integrity should be protected. The security and integrity of Syrian nation should be protected with every means and neighboring countries with common interests should coordinate to this end. Only such an effort can prevent the projects conducted to partition Syria or turn it into a failed state.

Turkey needs to establish a constructive and robust dialogue with Qatar and Saudi Arabia, as it is clear that both countries clearly have had increasing influence within Syria

since the beginning of the revolution. Similarly, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are expected to have a serious influence and power regarding the reconstruction of Syria when the crisis ends. Therefore, cooperation between countries that portray a common attitude towards Syria such as Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia is tantamount to prevent any future conflict and assist the Syrian people and a new government in Syria.

Countries poised to benefit from the deterioration of Syria's current predicament should face external pressure. This is especially so since Assad refusing to leave power will help Syria turn into a battleground for regional and international conflicts. Therefore Syria turning into a failed or weak state or the deterioration of the situation in Syria may benefit certain regional and international players. In order to prevent this, countries set to benefit from a failed state scenario should be put under pressure.

Turkey should not wait for the fall of the Assad regime or the emergence of an international will to start reconstructing Syria. It should be prepared for this scenario, and focus on evaluating the severe damages Syria has suffered. The destruction within the country is tremendous and the international community lacks the funds and will to support the country. Thus, Turkey should already start rallying regional and international initiatives for the reconstruction of Syria.

After Assad falls Turkey shouldn't wait for international donors to organize a conference with regards to the reconstruction of Syria. Rather it should undertake this initiative and should be already prepared to evaluate the damages Syria has suffered. Therefore Turkey should focus on filling the gap between the great amount of financial resources that is needed to restore Syria and the floundering support from international donors.

Turkey should be prepared to contribute to the reconstruction process of Syria on an effective basis. Turkey already has one of the leading construction and contracting industries in the world, and is rivaled by none within the region also due to its proximity with Syria. Therefore, reaching a regional agreement whereby Syria would be reconstructed through the financial support of Gulf countries and the execution of Turkey may greatly benefit Turkey. This will save time and efforts by accelerating the reconstruction of Syria.

Turkey should also be well-prepared in the field of security both in the sense of helping the Syrian people and in the scenario of Syria turning into a failed state. Whether Syria will become a failed state depends on the shape of things to come. Considering that countries such as Iran will maintain their presence inside Syria subsequent to Assad's fall, it may become compulsory for Ankara to also maintain -even if indirectly- a presence inside Syria

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Mebusevleri Mahallesi, Ayten Sokak, No: 21 06570, Tandoğan, Ankara

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