

Then and Now: The Syrian Revolution to Date

A young nonviolent resistance
and the ensuing armed struggle



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Friends for a Nonviolent World

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Description: Dr. Mohja Kahf, University of Arkansas, provides a deeper understanding of the development and composition of the various components of the Syrian opposition from its origins to the present, discusses the current role of nonviolent groups and addresses the concerns raised by some in the peace movement.

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About Friends for a Nonviolent World, Saint Paul, Minnesota

Friends for a Nonviolent World is a Quaker-inspired organization of people who affirm the dignity inherent in each human being. We share a commitment to advancing non-violence as an ethic for honoring human dignity and a strategy for achieving peace and justice.

We promote non-violent, transformational social change through:

- Education of the public on peace-related issues through quarterly newsletters, weekly e-blasts, conferences, and study groups.
- Movement-building through collaborative efforts with other peace organizations.
- Training individuals to live nonviolently and to serve as peacemakers in their communities.
- Grassroots mobilization of constituents for non-violent actions, including protests, vigils, and call-in days related to various pieces of legislation.

Friends for a Non-Violent World commits to promote nonviolent living and action in our personal lives, in our community, and in the world.



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Introduction

SINCE 2011, FRIENDS FOR A NONVIOLENT WORLD has been supporting Syrian nonviolent organizations and activists in their struggle for freedom, justice, inclusivity and democracy. After 11 months, the nonviolent movement was eclipsed, but not eliminated, by armed struggle. The human toll in the revolution against a brutal dictatorial regime continues to be staggering.

The situation in Syria undoubtedly is complex and the future uncertain. However, we at FNVW have been disturbed and disheartened by the position of some in the peace movement who have characterized the opposition—nonviolent or armed—as the pawns or proxies of the West, the United States or regional powers and thus not worthy of support.

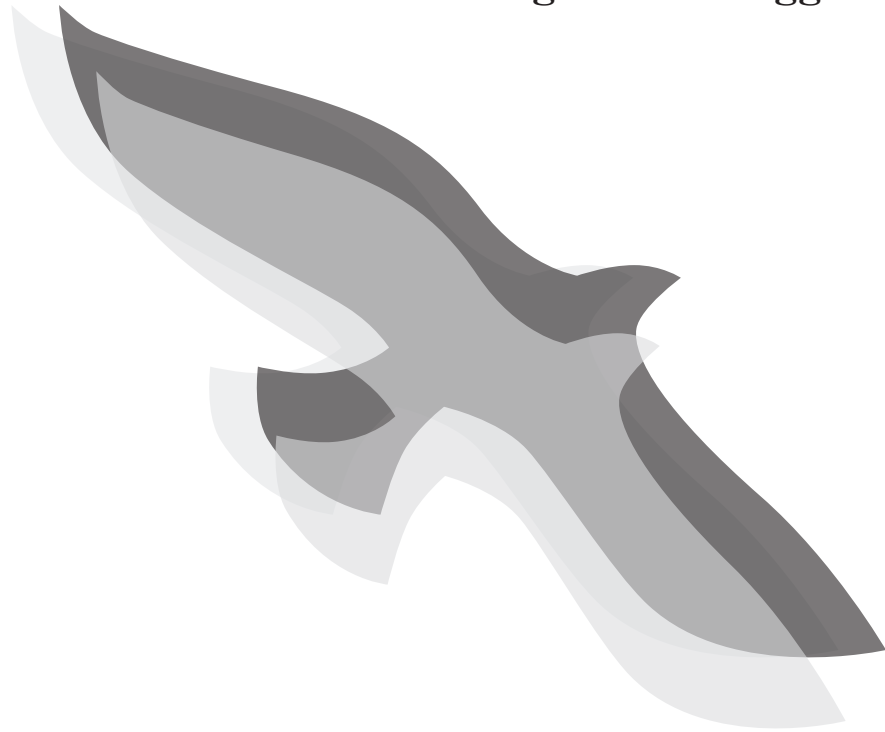
We asked Syrian writer, professor and nonviolent activist, Dr. Mohja Kahf from the University of Arkansas, to provide us with a deeper understanding of the development and composition of the various components of the Syrian opposition from its origins to the present, to discuss the current role of nonviolent groups and to address the concerns raised by some in the peace movement.

We gratefully acknowledge Dr. Kahf for her work and commitment in the writing of this excellent and thought-provoking report.

— *Gail Daneker* Friends for a Nonviolent World Director of Peace Education and Advocacy

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"I am a free woman, daughter of a free woman," exclaims a woman from Bayada, Syria, (above) on April 13, 2011, as all the women of the village pour onto the highway to protest.¹ "I am a human being. Not an animal. A human being," says Muhammad Abdulwahhab (above, right), an ordinary Syrian, on June 14, 2011.²

Each speaks into a microphone for probably the first time. That existential awakening, echoed by people across Syria, is the essence of the Syrian uprising.

Is it enough to carry Syria through the most difficult transition in its history as a modern nation-state?

THEN AND NOW

The Syrian uprising sprang from the country's grassroots, especially from youth in their teens, and adults in their twenties and thirties. They, not seasoned oppositionists, began the uprising, and are its core population. They share, rather than a particular ideology, a generational experience of disenfranchisement and brutalization by a corrupt, repressive, and massively armed ruling elite in Syria.

The Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions were empowering models for these Syrians. The uprising is characterized by wide geographic spread, significant rural and small-town involvement, and a basis in local communities organizing around local grievances, as well as in solidarity for each other. The protest movement did not mobilize around religious identity, showed a fundamental respect for the diversity of Syria, and included minority participants.

The uprising began nonviolently and the vast majority of its populace maintained nonviolence as its path to pursue regime change and a democratic Syria, until an

¹<http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=WsJSu88yIEY>

²<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3fRuqYLWxw>

armed flank emerged in August 2011.

The Syrian Revolution has morphed. From midsummer to autumn 2011, armed resistance developed, political bodies formed to represent the revolution outside Syria, and political Islamists of various sorts entered the uprising scene. Since then, armed resistance has overshadowed nonviolent resistance in Syria.

Between late summer and autumn 2011, oppositionists outside Syria formed a series of political structures which, for good or ill, have shaped world perception

The voices of the original grassroots revolution of Syria are nonviolent, nonsectarian, noninterventionist. They are still present in this revolution.



of the struggle. These entities are of different sorts: those committed to humanitarian work; those linked laterally to nonviolent grassroots activists inside; and those seeking to further the revolution through political

work. A fourth category comprises outside groups supporting the militarized flank of the revolution.

The latter two, political bodies and support groups for the revolution's militarized wing, have become venues for internal power struggles among opposition factions and individuals, and entry-points for foreign powers attempting to push their own agendas into a revolution sprung from Syrian grievances, grown from the spilling

of Syrian blood on Syrian soil.

Many in the global peace community can no longer discern the Syrian uprising's grassroots population through the smoke of armed conflict and the troubling new actors on the scene. Further, some in the global Left or anti-imperialist camp understand the Syrian revolution only through the endgame of geopolitics. In such a narrative, the uprising population is nothing but the proxy of U.S. imperialism.

Such critics may acknowledge that the Assad regime is brutal, but maintain from their armchairs that Syrians must bear this cost, because this regime has its finger in the dike of U.S. imperialism, Zionism, and Islamism. Or, perhaps they agree that a revolution against a brutal dictator is not a bad idea, but wish for a nicer revolution, with better players. Eyes riveted to their pencils and rulers and *idées fixés*, such critics abandon a grassroots population of disenfranchised human beings demanding basic human freedoms in Syria. This is a stunning and cruel failure of vision.

The voices of the original grassroots revolution of Syria are nonviolent, nonsectarian, noninterventionist, for the fall of the Assad regime, and for the rise of a democratic, human rights upholding Syria that is bound by the rule of law. They are still present in this revolution. Who will hear them now, after so much dear blood has been spilled, so much tender flesh crushed under blasted blocks of cement, so much rightful anger unleashed?

BACK THEN: The Syrian Revolution Begins

Syria is a country of 23 million people under martial law since 1963, when the Baath Party, whose ideology combined secular Arab nationalism with socialism, installed a police state.

While figures in a repressive state are

hotly contested, Sunni Muslim Arabs are roughly 62%; Kurds, mostly though not exclusively Sunni, are about 10%. Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmen, and Circassians round out Syria's major ethnic components (the first two groups are Christian; the latter two, Sunni). Syria is religiously as well as ethnically diverse: Christians, mainly Orthodox and Catholics, are about 10%, and Druze about 3%. Mainstream Shias are a tiny minority, while Alawites and Ismailis are members of branches of Shiism constituting about 3% each. Small communities of Yazidis and Jews round out the roster of religions. Half a million Palestinians form an integral part of Syria's demographics, settled in the country since being dispossessed by Israel. In addition, the Arab inhabitants of the Golan Heights, mainly Druze, consider Syria their homeland, despite Israel's 1967 military occupation of their area.

Baath rule followed a period of coups, one of them U.S.-sponsored, in the period from 1947–1963, a moment or two of democratic multi-party elections in the 1950s, and a failed experiment at Syrian union with Egypt. The Baath promptly stripped of citizenship 140,000 Kurds whose descendants are now half a million. Hafez Assad, a military officer, seized rule in 1971, suppressing former Baathist colleagues. He stripped his co-religionist Alawite minority of its civic institutions, engineering its overdependence on his personal authority and the state's repressive apparatus, manipulated factions in the Lebanese civil war, and massacred tens of



People from some of Syria's diverse nonviolence communities. Clockwise, from top right in blue: educator Hanan Laham; poet, writer, and humanitarian relief worker Khawla Dunia; visionary civic activist Yahya Shurbaji (imprisoned) of Daraya in the Damascus countryside; actress Fadwa Soliman; Daraya activist Osama Nassar; educator Dr. Mouhammad Alammari, from the southern rural province of Dara; "Stop the Killing" activist Rima Dali, Latakia-born; educator Dr. Dimitri Avyerinos, of Syrian-Greek heritage; and (top center) Syria's 81-year-old nonviolence teacher for over 50 years, from the ethnically Circassian village of Ber Ajam in the Golan, Jawdat Said.

thousands in Hama in 1982 to suppress armed Islamist revolt.

After Hafez' death in 2000, rule passed to his son, Bashar. In 2000, Bashar suppressed Druze protests, in which 20 were killed, by playing one sect against the other, in this case Druze against Sunni herdsmen. Bashar also suppressed a Kurdish uprising in 2004, killing 35 Kurds and successfully alienating the Arab majority from sympathizing with them.

Even though the ruling Baath Party initially came to power in 1963 on a program of radical socialism benefiting peasants and working classes, Hafez

The success of the Tunisian revolution, then the start of the Egyptian revolution, made Syrian youth buzz with the possibility of change.



SYRIA:

BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

- 60% of population under 40
- 26% unemployment
- 40% poverty rate
- 4,500 political prisoners
- 17,000 forced disappearances

of the Egyptian revolution, made Syrian youth buzz with the possibility of change.

Thirty-five-year-old Aleppan protest organizer Ghassan Yasin says, “The Tunisian youth made us think—we have no less reason to protest than Tunisians. So we began to try to organize protests in Aleppo, on a very small scale, in January and February, I and a small handful of youth in Aleppo. We failed then, but the Damascus youth were more successful;

they held solidarity rallies for Egypt’s and Libya’s revolutions.”³ By itself, Tunisia might have been a fluke, far away from Syrians. Egypt, for over a century a place to which Syrians looked as a younger sister looks toward an older sister, made rising up look possible in Syrian eyes.

It was primarily youthful women and men who mustered in Damascus early in 2011 to show solidarity with recent revolutions, referring to themselves as “shabab” (“guys and girls”). Those who participated on February 22, 2011, including 22-year-old Eslam Dabbas of Daraya and 26-year-old feminist Malak Shanawani of Damascus, knew very well that such a public assembly unlicensed by security was a rehearsal

Assad’s Corrective Movement took the edge off Baath socialism, and Bashar sallied into neoliberal economics.

A spark leading to changed attitudes

All Arab states, both monarchies and republics, have been police states for decades, in an interlocking grid in which the interests of world powers have been vested and from which there seemed to be no escape for the ordinary citizen. The fire of 26-year-old Tunisian fruit vendor Muhammad Bouazizi’s despair when he immolated himself on December 17, 2010, paradoxically lit a spark of change in people of his generation in the region.

The success of the Tunisian revolution in overthrowing a dictator, then the start

³Interview on Syrian Freedom Waves, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uR1IU-qY3u0>

for their own coming struggle in Syria.

The Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions gave Syrian youth not only a “can-do” sense; they modeled a method. It was not lost on Syrians how ordinary twenty-something Egyptian citizen Asma Mahfouz uploaded a video to YouTube saying, “Go down to Tahrir Square on January 25,”⁴ and it went viral; people responded. While the technological aspect is important, it can be overstated. The point is that Syrians saw an ordinary young person, formerly peripheral to political contestation, put out a call, with effective results. Anas Shugri, twenty-two years old, stood up in a crowd in Banyas, Syria, on March 18, 2011, and said, “People, if you want freedom, follow me,” and people followed him to the street. Similar calls went out all over Syria.

Young, formerly apolitical youth with rising expectations

“My first protest was the first time I felt I had a voice,” is a refrain heard from many in the Syrian uprising’s grassroots population. The uprising is driven by Syrians who came of age mostly in the 2000s, experiencing that era’s heightening of government economic corruption and political repression. Syria, where 60% of the population is under forty, had a 26% unemployment rate—as bad as during most of the Depression in the U.S.—and a poverty rate that sharply increased in the mid-2000s to 40%. It had 4,500 political prisoners and reportedly 17,000 forced disappearances dating from decades prior.

The main population of the current Syrian uprising came of age with Bashar Assad as president, when government corruption swelled with Bashar’s economic “opening,” and when police repression was unabated from the era of Hafez Assad.

Bashar was touted as more open-minded than Hafez. Bashar’s inauguration in

June 2000 ushered in what was called a “Damascus Spring,” a few months when the exercise of freedoms of speech and assembly increased slightly. Newspapers were launched with more margin for criticizing the state than before; fora convened where people discussed democracy and economics.

This soon ended; the regime swept budding activists and seasoned oppositionists into prison. Those who came of age during the killing of the Damascus Spring saw the curtain pulled back, for a moment, on a brutal police state based on Assad’s rule in perpetuity, masquerading as the anti-imperialist bearer of the pan-Arab Palestinian cause. They, and especially their younger cohorts, are now questioning all they were taught, in the most massive paradigm shift in Syria in five decades. Here are some factors that characterize this generation:

- The uprising’s core population is formerly apolitical youth, not Syrians who prior to the revolution were politicized or invested in Communism, Islamism, Nasserism, the Democratic Baath, or any other ideology. From such narratives, only belief in Palestinian self-determination survives among the uprising population. A small number of uprising youth had been invested in local community activism, nonviolence study, environmentalism, or feminism.
- While no Kurd in Syria can be entirely unpoliticized because of the special oppression experienced by a large number of Kurdish Syrians, the uprising’s Kurdish youth element is more invested in the need to eliminate the police state and the Assad regime that depends on it, than in the specific platforms of longstanding Kurdish opposition parties.
- The young generation’s hopelessness about life under dictatorship

⁴http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=SgJgMdsEuk

collided with rising expectations in the 2000s. These expectations were fed by exposure to satellite television and Internet technology, making this generation more aware of the world outside Syria. They often cite the discrepancy between their closed horizons in Syria and the world beyond. They felt their futures blocked unless they could come up with a scheme to get out of Syria (try to find a young Syrian without such a scheme).

Neither the establishment nor the militant fringe was the source of the uprising

Established oppositionists did not start the uprising, whether in exile or in Syria, although they immediately supported it. The revolution was not started by signatories of the Damascus Declaration, a document representing a brief historic moment of unity in Syrian dissent in 2005.

The uprising surprised people by being led by “unknowns,” that is, by teen to thirtysomething women and men, mostly without prior political activism.

Calling for gradual democratic reform, the Declaration was endorsed

by 250 signatories including the three opposition groupings long the bane of the regime: Muslim Brotherhood, Kurdish parties, and Communists. They constitute an older generation of dissent—a generation that failed to effect change in Syria.

Nor did the uprising spring from Syria’s fringe militant Islamist groups. Many of Syria’s “armed Islamist gangs,” which sent fighters to Iraq to resist U.S. occupation, were given resources by the Syrian state, then punished when the state wanted credit with the West for being anti-terrorism. Some wonder if these groups slipped out of Syrian state control to form the Islamist armed factions that would join the revolt in 2012.

The uprising surprised people by being led by “unknowns,” that is, by teen to thirtysomething women and men, mostly without prior political activism. The proportion of its population coming from small towns in agricultural areas was also surprising. Rural towns and agricultural areas still have strong extended family and clan units, which may be why such locales were on the leading edge of protests, compared to urban locales where social ties unbound to the state are weaker. In short, the uprising did not come from dissidents with whom the U.S. embassy staffers in Damascus had coffee in the mid-2000s, or from populations that the CIA or other foreign government agents knew in the slightest how to recruit as proxy agents.

Post-Tunisian unrest burgeons

Restiveness after the beginning of the Tunisian revolution appeared in geographically widespread locations in Syria. Each province and community has its local experiences of abuse at the hands of the state security apparatus. Thirty people protested in Dara city on February 25, 2011, as a result of outrage at the treatment of a local woman, Dr. Fatima Masalma. She had been imprisoned for remarking on the phone to her friend that Egyptian president Mubarak’s deposal should happen to “ours next.” Famously, on February 27, twenty boys were imprisoned for writing “freedom” and “the people want the fall of the regime” on the walls of their school in Dara; reports emerged that some of the boys were being tortured. Their fathers and tribal representatives appealed for their release to Dara security chief Atef Najib and were rudely rebuffed. Kurds in Syria’s north were extremely restive in February 2011, with arrest sweeps including four Kurdish children mid-month, and one Bouaziz-like suicide of a Kurdish man. The Raqqa countryside had local grievances that included children of Ma’dan village who, similarly to the Dara children, wrote anti-government slogans on school

walls on March 15, 2011. Other sparks included the Hamadiya Market rally of about 150 youth in Damascus on March 15, and the March 16 sit-in of about 300 people organized by women in front of the Interior Ministry, Damascus, for the release of prisoners.

In addition to many small protests around the country on March 18, 2011, four major Syrian cities saw protest crowds in thousands: Dara, seat of an agricultural province in the south; Homs in central Syria; Damascus, the capital; and coastal Banyas, with its higher Alawite demographics. Salamiya, a predominantly Ismailia town, was an early protest center (Ismailism, recall, is a branch of Shiism). Misyaf is another town with large minority make-up (Alawite, Christian, Shia) at the leading edge of the uprising. The fact that Banyas, Misyaf, and Salamiya are protest towns belies pundits who label the revolution as Sunni versus Alawite/Shia, without so much as a pause for research.

The funerals on March 19, for three Dara youths who had been killed by lethal regime fire on March 18, were simultaneously protests, and caused a domino effect of solidarity rallies. By March 20, the villages around Dara had entered the fray with demonstrations of their own. On March 25, a slew of smaller towns across Syria's rural governorates were in full swing as uprising hotspots, as well as the major cities of Qamishli, Idlib, Latakia. Deir Ezzor and Hama came out with masses in the thousands in May 2011. Perhaps the largest rallies were those of Hama in July, estimated at 400,000 to half a million (in comparison, two million demonstrated in Tahrir Square in Egypt, population eighty million). After the first week of uprising, during which protesters called for reforms, the uprising clearly called for the fall of the regime; the ouster of its current president Bashar Assad and his ruling elite; as well as the repeal of martial law; respect for "freedom;" and most especially, "dignity."

Factors that belie attempts to credit foreign powerbrokers with creating the protest movement:

- **Geographically widespread nature of the protests**
- **Diverse locations and demographics of protest hotspots**
- **Grassroots community basis of the protests**
- **Emergence from previously apolitical populations**
- **Emergence from youth**
- **Significant rural participation**



Solidarity across lines of sect, religion, and ethnicity characterizes the uprising's beginning.

A widespread, largely uncoordinated movement takes shape—at the same time rejecting interventionism

The grassroots protest movement emerged affirming noninterventionism, worth remembering in light of later developments. This, plus the wide geographic spread of protest cities is why the Iraqi model does not fit Syria. Mass protest crowds did not emerge in Iraq chant-

ing the same calls in eastern, western, northern, and southern cities as well as Baghdad. The call for regime change in Iraq came most resoundingly from outside Iraq, mainly from the U.S., in 2003.

In Syria, the geographically widespread nature of the protests, the locations and diverse demographics of protest hotspots,

participated in it at levels commensurate to their demographic proportions from the very beginning. The myth that minorities did not participate, from the start and in numbers reflecting demographics, needs to be put to rest. Authorities, clergy, and other spokespersons in minority communities were often not well informed

on what non-elites and youth in their communities—or indeed, youth in their own households—thought and did vis-à-vis the uprising. In reality, youth from a broad spectrum were involved:

- Kurdish youth did not wait for permission from established Kurdish parties to participate in the uprising, instead forming half a dozen new Kurd-

ish youth groups in its first weeks. Kurdish-led protests had sections for marchers from the traditional Kurdish opposition parties, distinct from sections in which the uprising youth marched.

- Christian youth in Syria did not abide by pronouncements of state-sponsored clergy, any more than Sunni youth abided by the Syrian state-sponsored imams condemning the uprising.
- Palestinian youth of Syria did not check in first with the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or any other Palestinian organizations, before joining caravans to break the regime's siege on Dara in May 2011, to provide medical aid to protesters in Latakia, or to protest in Damascus.



Feb. 26, 2013's nonviolent protest in Syria's heavily Druze city of Suwayda. The revolution is genuinely grassroots with a wide geographic spread across Syria—unlike Iraq, and unlike Lebanon of 1975–1990.

the grassroots community basis of the protests, their emergence from previously apolitical populations, their emergence from youth, and the significant amount of rural participation, are six factors that belie attempts to credit foreign power brokers with creating the protest movement. CIA agents, outsiders, and foreign agitators recruiting locals, would have had to mount a conspiracy of grand proportions indeed to create the uprising. The Syrian uprising is homegrown.

Secular beginnings and minority participation characterize the uprising's start

The Syrian uprising did not mobilize on the basis of religious difference, and youth from all of Syria's religions, sects, ethnicities, as well as Syria's Palestinians,

⁵ Rally in Homs on October 2, 2011, led by Alawite man who speaks about the diversity of Syria from minute 3:50: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GPmyx07bEQ&feature=related>; and on November 10, 2011, featuring actress Fadwa Soliman, who is Alawite, leading the chants: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUidPijBe3A&feature=related>

- Alawite youth in Homs and other urban centers led rallies, created protest groups, and emerged as activists, without waiting for permission from anyone⁵.

Solidarity across lines of sect, religion, and ethnicity among the grassroots population that began and drove the Syrian uprising in its first phase is one reason why the spectre of the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990), where politicized identity played a key role in forming the lines of conflict, does not match the facts of the Syrian uprising. The majority of the protesters are Sunni because the majority in Syria is Sunni. Despite their smaller numbers, minority members played not only proportionate but historical roles in the uprising.

In the first video of the March 15, 2011, “trigger protest” in Hamadiya Market, downtown Damascus, a breathless voice with a distinct Alawite accent says, “We are Alawites, Sunnis, people of every sect, and we want to topple this regime.”

At the Umayyad Mosque protest on March 18, 2011, a sign bearing a cross and crescent was held aloft. Khawla Dunia, a poet of Alawite background and one of the early literary voices pouring out of the uprising, posted on Facebook testimony about how she went to protest at the mosque.

Her husband Dr. Jalal Nofal, whose background is Druze, attended numerous protests launched from mosques. Alawite, Christian, Druze, Shia, and Kurdish youths in the uprising created Facebook pages that reflect minority participation in the uprising, tired of media underreporting the topic. Other examples include:

- The first Banyas crowds of March 18,

2011, memorably sang “Sunnis and Alawites, we all want freedom.”⁶

- “Peaceful, peaceful; let there be no sectarianism; Islam and Christian...,” sang the protesters at a Banyas rally on April 13, 2011⁷.
- “Neither Salifist nor Ikhwan,” said the woman who led the chants at the massive Jasem, Dara rally, April 28, 2011⁸.
- Both a cross and a crescent upheld by Daraya protesters, May 13, 2011⁹.
- “Sunnis and Alawites ... peaceful, peaceful”—a Homs rally chants on July 7, 2011¹⁰.

Ignoring the overwhelming affirmation of religious diversity in protests, some critics of the Syrian revolution made much of the frequent use of mosque Friday congregational services as launch-points for protests.

The mosque at noon on Friday is the only venue in Syria where large public assembly is permitted.

“Where do you want us to go, to the Baathist-controlled cultural centers? To the halls of the state-sponsored unions? On campus, where the minute students get together to protest, the armed regimist student union starts beating them? Besides the mosque, what other large venue is there for public assembly, in our country so rich with civil society institutions?” as one protester put it sarcastically. “I never prayed a day in my life, but I sure

The Syrian uprising began as a nonviolent civilian movement, and remained so until the Free Syrian Army announced its formation on July 29, 2011.

⁶ “Sunnis and Alawites, we all want freedom.”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCjLWBfaYCg&feature=results_video&playnext=1&list=PLAECF881C5FC322BC

⁷ “Peaceful, peaceful; let there be no sectarianism; Islam and Christian...” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDUYcFKyCEg>

⁸ “Neither Salifist nor Ikhwan.” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wxBIwCq9rY>

⁹ Cross and crescent upheld by Daraya protesters. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mSIA7iDpmU>

¹⁰ A Homs rally. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gjHWvVW3NO>

as hell am going to the mosque to protest” is a statement typically heard among protesters. Attendance at mosque services on Friday prior to the revolution had been unremarkable in many areas where mosques became launching points for protests.

The speeches of Adnan Aroor, a Salafist Syrian preacher living in Saudi Arabia, portrayed the revolution in hate-soaked sectarian anti-Alawite terms, in YouTube videos that were initially fringe but started to gain attention in the uprising population in May. (In response, Syrian uprising folk, among them Tamer Awwam — later reported killed by regime forces—launched a Facebook page, called “Against Aroorization of the Revolution.”) Discourses emanating from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, from non-Syrian preachers as well as Syrian expatriates, and on the pro-regime side from Hezbollah-controlled media in Lebanon, egged on anti-Shia and anti-Sunni sentiments, respectively.

Expatriated Syrian communities badly need to become re-acquainted with the Syrian generation of the core uprising population which, by and large, respects and includes the diversity of Syria. Sectarian discourses were generated mostly outside Syria.

In Syria, activist Rima Dali did march in one early protest where the infamous “Christians in Beirut, Alawites to the grave” chant was sung—and was shut down after protesters objected to the few singing it. Was this a harbinger of latent sectarianism that would crawl out of the woodwork of a society long under police state rule with prominent Alawite leadership in its repressive apparatus? Meanwhile, the regime did its best to put Alawites out as its human shield and to fan the flames of sectarianism, not only by its media and economic resources but by its targeted military assault strategies.

Certainly by January, 2012, if not earlier, political Islamists had mobilized in the uprising. Is this a key reshaping of the revolution, or a paper reality created by disproportionate media focus on and

alarmism about it, which then has the self-fulfilling effect of enhancing its importance on the ground? Whatever the answer, the revolution began nonsectarian, and wherever the core revolution population—teens to thirtysomethings from the grassroots social levels inside Syria—is still at the forefront, this value remains integral.

Nonviolence characterized the uprising’s early phase

The Syrian uprising began as a nonviolent civilian movement, and remained so until the Free Syrian Army announced its formation on July 29, 2011. “Peaceful, peaceful,” cried the protest crowds those first months, sometimes bearing olive branches or clapping hands overhead to show they were unarmed. The uprising followed the nonviolent path until August 2011, despite the longstanding availability of arms smuggling routes from Lebanon.

Localized incidents of violence during the early uprising do not nullify that the collective choice of protesters overwhelmingly was for nonviolence.

There are reports of an armed attack on regime soldiers in Dara in the first month of the uprising. The June 2011 violent response of the youth of Jisr al-Shughur to government military assault (which reportedly included the organized rape of girls from local families in the sugar-factory-turned-regime-army-barracks), is another example. Young men of the town reportedly raided a government munitions warehouse, then used the weapons captured to blast regime soldiers. The fact that those youth covered up their use of violence at that time reveals their awareness that they had violated the collective will of tens of thousands of protesters who maintained nonviolence as the path.

Armed regime repression of the nonviolent protests was a constant from the first day of protests. To justify this, the regime created a narrative in which the statistically very small incidents of violence were identical to the uprising of tens of

thousands of nonviolent protesters. That is why, as Damascus University math professor Khawla Haydar put it on her chalkboard one day in December, 2011, simultaneously announcing her resignation, “The regime story of the armed gangs is a lie.”

The grassroots organized

The grassroots youth who populate this revolution began to organize themselves into small, community-based, ad hoc local committees by April 2011.

One of the earliest organizations that sprang up was a media group in Dara city, Shaam News Network (SNN), containing a handful of people from their late teens to their thirties who uploaded Dara protest footage to the Internet. SNN members had been present at the first protests in Dara.

The following week, these youth trained people from villages outlying Dara whose villages had started protesting. Next, protest committees formed in municipalities such as Daraya (a Damascus countryside town) and other small towns, and in those neighborhoods within Syria’s major cities that became protest sites. (Daraya’s Local Coordination Committee remains one of those most firmly committed to the nonviolent path.)

Many of those local protest-organizing committees, soon numbering in the hundreds in locales all across Syria, began to communicate with each other, and larger coalitions of local committees formed. Three early coalitions, emerging by mid-summer 2011, were: *Local Coordination Committees of Syria* (LCC), led by 36-year-old lawyer Razan Zaitouneh, today having 80 local committees; *Syrian Revolution General Commission*, led by blogger and Damascus Spring survivor Suhair Atassi; and the *Syrian Revolution Higher Commission*, initially including Rima Fleihan, a woman from Suwayda, home to many of the Druze in Syria. Later, Islamist-leaning Bashar Herakli of Dara emerged as leader of this coalition. A fourth coalition soon emerged, the *Horan Coalition* (Horan is the traditional name of the region covered by the Dara

governorate), and a fifth coalition of united local coordinating committees in Homs.

Women are a prime part of the uprising’s local organizing.

That women are integral at the ground levels is attested by the local committee populations. Two of the first three coalitions were led by women.

Young

women swelled the rank and file of many local committees. Duma had its own parallel women’s coordination committee. Generally in the Syrian uprising, the more ad hoc and localized the level of the activism, the more women are its mainstay. When organizing inside Syria proceeded to the next higher level of integration, the command councils, women were less represented, except in the media and relief

Localized incidents of violence during the early uprising do not nullify that the collective choice of protesters overwhelmingly was for nonviolence.



segments of the command councils. In political bodies formed outside, including the Syrian National Council, and culminating thus far in the Syrian National Coalition of Opposition and Revolutionary Forces, women were represented at roughly ten percent, at best. In the militarized flank, women are almost entirely sidelined—as is typical with militarization. An important early women’s group is *Syrian Women to Support the Syrian Intifada* (SANAD). Working for a post-Assad secular, democratic state bound by the rule of law, it formed inside Syria, preferring the nonviolent path. SANAD “supports the uprising of our people in every form.”

A few of the prisoners of conscience in Syria, clockwise from bottom left: Kawthar AbuBakr, and her mother and sister, since Oct. 29, 2012; Shatha Maddad, since Nov. 1, 2012; Sawsan Abbar, since Jan. 9, 2012; Salma Abdulrazak, Feb. 2013, from Yarmouk Camp, Palestinian.

THEN & NOW: NOW

The revolution has shape-shifted since autumn 2011, and especially since the start of 2012.

The regime's early siege of Dara and military assaults on other cities; the security services' repressive sweeps and subjection of increasing numbers of people to arbitrary detention—sometimes nearly all the male populations of whole towns such as Bayada and Dara city were detained, in stadia and schools turned into torture centers; the regime's use of snipers and soldiers against unarmed protesters; these swelled the uprising population. Whole towns joined, as well as artists, intellectuals, health workers, and other professionals, along with a steady trickle of defectors among recruits and officers in military and security forces, and business people. These people changed the uprising population's make-up, and extended its average age range. Then, through August and September 2011, new organizations emerged, of three types: military; political groups organized by expatriates; and more developed grassroots structures inside Syria.

Coinciding with these changes, the "revolution flag," the green-topped flag adopted by Syria in its struggle against French control in mid-twentieth century (see page 18), was adopted by the uprising in autumn 2011. The red-topped flag then became associated with regime loyalists. (This foiled the state-run media's spin games with protest footage.)

Political Groups Emerge Abroad, Islamists Enter the Scene, & Foreign Pressures Abound: Will the Grassroots Prevail?

Exiled oppositionists, beginning in summer 2011, formed political groups. These bodies were meant to support the uprising inside but, inadvertently or not, often sidelined those same grassroots populations who started and drove the

revolution. There were at least four major attempts by expatriate oppositionist Syrians to create a political body:

1. *Antalya, Turkey. June 1, 2011.* Secular oppositionists ran this one, many of them interventionists. It was funded by the four Sanqar brothers, wealthy businessmen whose Mercedes dealership in Damascus had been bankrupted by the corruption of Bashar's maternal cousin, Rami Makhlouf.
2. *National Salvation Conference, July 16, 2011.* Held in Istanbul, funded by exiled Syrian doctors and businessmen, this conference attempted to integrate the grassroots inside Syria by convening at two locations simultaneously: The Istanbul meeting was supposed to be only half of the conference; the other half was to be beamed in via Skype from a secret location in Damascus. Regime forces stormed that location the night before the conference opened, killing people there. Moderate Kurdish oppositionist Meshal Temmo (later assassinated on October 7, 2011, it is believed by regime forces) still opened the Salvation conference via Skype from Damascus, but the in-country half of the conference crumbled. The smuggling out of Syria of opposition figures, such as 81-year-old human rights lawyer Haytham Maleh, was the conference's big coup for legitimacy, but Salvation was plagued with problems. Syrian political Islamists from a neighboring conference for ulema (Islamic religious authorities) rushed in uninvited; Kurdish representatives walked out in protest at changes introduced after-hours without debate into the proposed proclamation; one did not have to be Kurdish to see that the democratic process was subverted. The Islamist-leaning Maleh turned off the younger set in particular, who held a protest meeting in the lobby. "Salvation" was a fail.

3. *The Syrian National Council (SNC)*, the next attempt at a unified opposition body in exile, formed in September 2011 by youngish expatriate lawyers and academics working over matrices for inclusion of Syrian diversity. The Muslim Brotherhood, allotted four seats, stocked the General Secretariat and General Assembly with useful allies by November, filibustering its decision-making, and later stacked the SNC executive council. SNC membership ballooned in response to pressures of greater inclusivity, until it was logistically unmanageable for the General Assembly to meet. Ironically for inclusion issues, this left the executive council the only body capable of meeting together, effectively excluding SNC general membership from decision-making, while still giving the SNC legitimacy from having many uprising participants nominally in it.

4. *Syrian National Coalition of Opposition and Revolutionary Forces*. In November, 2012, exiled opposition at U.S. urging, and led by seasoned oppositionist Riad Seif, formed a tighter body called the Syrian National Coalition of Opposition and Revolutionary Forces. "Opposition" refers to older, established oppositionists, while "revolutionary" refers to the younger, grassroots uprising population. This body, both in nomenclature and composition, attempted to do a bit more than the SNC to integrate grassroots youth leaders. Into this body the Muslim Brotherhood has also rushed, creating some of the same tensions that debilitated the SNC.

Also, on June 2012, expatriated Syrian businesspeople sympathetic to the uprising formed the *Syrian Business Forum (SBF)*. The SBF created an initial fund of \$300 million to support "all components" of the uprising¹¹ with much of it supporting armed resistance and political bodies.

A gathering of commercial rather than political interests, the SBF can avoid altogether questions of democratic process and inclusion.

Influx of political Islamists

Political Islamists hustled in mid-2011 to catch up with the revolution they did not begin, but want to run. The influx of political Islamists in an organized fashion began in summer

2011. Prior to that, the scene was not entirely devoid of individuals

Exiled oppositionists formed political groups. These bodies were meant to support the uprising inside but often sidelined those same populations.

with Islamist leanings. For example, the Facebook page called "The Syrian Revolution Against Bashar Assad," begun by six exiles based in Jordan, Lebanon, and the United Kingdom, ranging in age from eighteen to fortyish, was a venue where a generic, though not necessarily card-carrying Muslim Brotherhood, Islamist mindset was latent in its content, which lacked gender and minority inclusivity. Yet the Facebook page's often proprietary tone toward the revolution was belied on the ground inside Syria, where the uprising was inclusive, nonsectarian, and non-ideological. Indeed on occasion the early ground uprising, was outright hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood, which has little meaningful presence among a generation in Syria born after the capital ban on Brotherhood membership (struck into Syrian law as "Article 49" in 1980). Not a few protests in Syria chanted anti-Muslim Brotherhood slogans in the early months.

Political bodies formed by expatriate Syrian oppositionists, foreign powers, attempt to exert influence

Foreign agendas abound at venues such as the "Friends of Syria" summits, further muddying the waters of the revolution's aims, and further distancing the youthful, community-based, grassroots populations

¹¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/06/201266133319930526.html>

whose energies produced the uprising, and whose blood continues to spill and spill in Syria. Friends of Syria is a summit of some seventy to ninety countries, called by the French prime minister, who convene quarterly to support the Syrian revolution in response to Russia, China, and Iran stonewalling United Nations resolutions condemning the Syrian regime. Qatar and Saudi Arabia, whose interests overlap with but are not identical to those of their military backer the U.S., are reported to have indirectly channeled funding to certain factions within the FSA and possibly other armed groups that have emerged. Turkey has hosted a portion of the FSA. The U.S. sends “non-lethal aid” to secular activist groups, and in summer 2012 authorized the Syrian Support Group created by Syrians in the U.S. to raise money for the FSA. Apparently, also, the U.S. State Department recommended arming the FSA but was overruled by the president, even as Russia and Iran continue to help the Syrian regime militarily.

The Syrian uprising was, and is, in need of support. What is the line between controlling political gains and being played by more powerful players? Political bodies as well as military flanks, despite the presence of people of good intent in them, are places in the revolution wherein outside powers have attempted to exert political influence. These agendas remain add-ons, not organic to the uprising, and while they are important, their outcomes are by no means certain for any side involved.

Will Grassroots Organizing Prevail?

The grassroots uprising population and its community-based organizations have not handed over authority over this revolution to anyone. A working unified structure for the grassroots of the Syrian uprising on the ground in Syria would be a powerful rebuttal to the attempts of outside powers to control the outcome of the uprising, bypassing the need for outside bodies, whose representation of the revolution in exile can only be partial and under-informed at best, and at worst rife with opportunism and foreign influence.

Grassroots protesters on the ground in Syria continued in August 2011 to develop the next level of their own organizational structure, based on local communities. Nonviolence visionary Yahya Shurbaji, of Daraya’s Local Coordinating Committee, before his imprisonment September 6, 2011, was among those working inside to unify grassroots organizations. This work went on to produce Command Councils in Damascus, Damascus Countryside, Hama, Homs, Idlib, and other places inside, most by October 2011. Command Councils did not replace the network of small, community-based local coordinating committees, but added a new layer of higher organization.

The *Damascus Countryside (“Rif Dimashq”)* *Command Council* is a well-developed example. It includes a representative from each member town’s local coordination committee, and has divisions for municipal governance and conflict mediation; local human rights violations documentation; medical work; relief work; media work; transportation; and alternative schooling for displaced children. Local FSA brigades send representatives to the Council and are thus somewhat subordinated to civilian political leadership in these structures. The Councils have seats on the Syrian National Coalition of Opposition and Revolutionary Forces.

To date, grassroots organizing has not reached a level powerful enough to be an independent force. Such organizing is hampered by conditions of humanitarian disaster and security threats from the regime, by inability to travel outside the country, and by a dire need for financial resources—yet much can be done with more vision than money. In-country political organizing has a great deal of potential for producing a post-Assad state that is both independent and democratic.

Armed Groups Emerge: First FSA, Then Salafist

Between August 2011 and February 2012, armed groups formed, proliferated, and became key players in the Syrian revolution. Their popularity is strongest in areas heavily assaulted by the regime's military. FSA brigades are organic products of local communities, a characteristic they share with civilian organizations in the revolution. That brigade members are local guys with local concerns has the positive effect of making them accountable.

A fair number of FSA fighters are the same young men who initially went out for nonviolent demonstrations, then turned to what they see as self-defense, as local residents banded together to protect their neighborhood, homes, and families, against regime assault. It is personal for them, not abstract or ideological but fraught with familial feeling and a sense of duty, honor, and self-sacrifice. That is why local protesters cheer the FSA; no strangers with guns, they are their brothers and cousins, standing between their children and the regime's home invasions, capturing regime snipers who aim at the threshold where mom carries home the grocery bags.

There was a season when advocating continued nonviolence was taken by people under regime assault as tantamount to saying it was acceptable for their families to be slaughtered. This is why, although FSA's are not universally popular in uprising populations, open criticism

of them inflames extreme emotions, and is often muted. "Salute the Free Army" became a regular cheer at demonstrations.

The *Free Syrian Army* formed after an abortive attempt by army defector Husain Harmoush to form a "Free Officers Movement" as he called it in a July 14, 2011, video uploaded to YouTube. Harmoush was captured by the Syrian regime. Defected army officers segregated into their own refugee camp in Turkey declared their formation of The Free Syrian Army on July 29, 2011, led by Riad al-Asaad (who, before his defection, had been shooting unarmed protesters in Latakia). Brigades, independent franchises which took the name Free Syrian Army, formed inside Syria regularly from that point onward.

The FSA's purported leadership in Turkey had little control of them, nor was a clear chain of command established among these independent guerilla units. Each week saw the upload of more videos on YouTube of FSA brigades announc-

Grassroots organizing is hampered by conditions of humanitarian disaster and security threats from the regime, by inability to travel outside the country, and by a dire need for financial resources—yet much can be done with more vision than money.

ing themselves, ranging in size from four or five men to thirty or forty. Some took secular names such as "Freedom Brigade" or named themselves after a fallen hero of the revolution; others took Islamic names. In autumn 2011, the "FSA" or more properly the plural "FSAs" claimed to number 40,000 troops (in contrast, the regime army had 500,000).

With little cohesive strategy among the under-armed brigades, a brigade's very presence, while it may defend local

families for several weeks, usually brings aerial regime assault down on the very community the brigade formed to defend. The local community, filled with gratitude at the sacrifice these young men have made, is often reluctant to acknowledge the brigade's failure—much less to call it out for human rights abuses. Regime-assaulted communities are often unwilling to admit that the brigades and the regime are stalemated and, with personal emotional investment, color the local brigade's every action in the glow of glory, even while suffering tremendous loss of life.

There are civilian populations wherein the FSAs are not welcomed as local sons defending the neighborhood, but resented for appropriating houses, cars, and resources. "The first day at the FSA checkpoint, we offered them cigarettes and clapped them on the shoulders," said an activist in a private Facebook group in spring 2012, the height of the months when anyone criticizing the FSA openly was mostly likely to be shouted down. "The second day, they helped themselves to cigarettes unasked, but we didn't say

anything—they're risking their lives for us, after all. The third day, they demanded we go fetch them cigarettes!"

There are situations where the FSA brigade comes in from another locale, with markedly ambivalent reception by the community. The villages of Ber Ajam and Breqa are in a U.N. demilitarized zone meters from the Occupied Golan Heights. In November, 2012, an FSA brigade from neighboring Horan hid in the villages, probably thinking the regime would not attack under the noses of U.N. blue helmets. Regime forces rained gunfire on both villages. The Ber Ajamites and Breqites, who had invited neither side, huddled in their homes as their fields burned; those in the bomb shelters ran out of food; one of the residents trying to get food to the shelters got killed by sniper; finally the villagers evacuated themselves under cover of fog, their homes nearly demolished behind them—a microcosm of what happened in many locations in Syria.

It took a few months for people to realize that the FSAs could save a family or protect a neighborhood temporarily, but

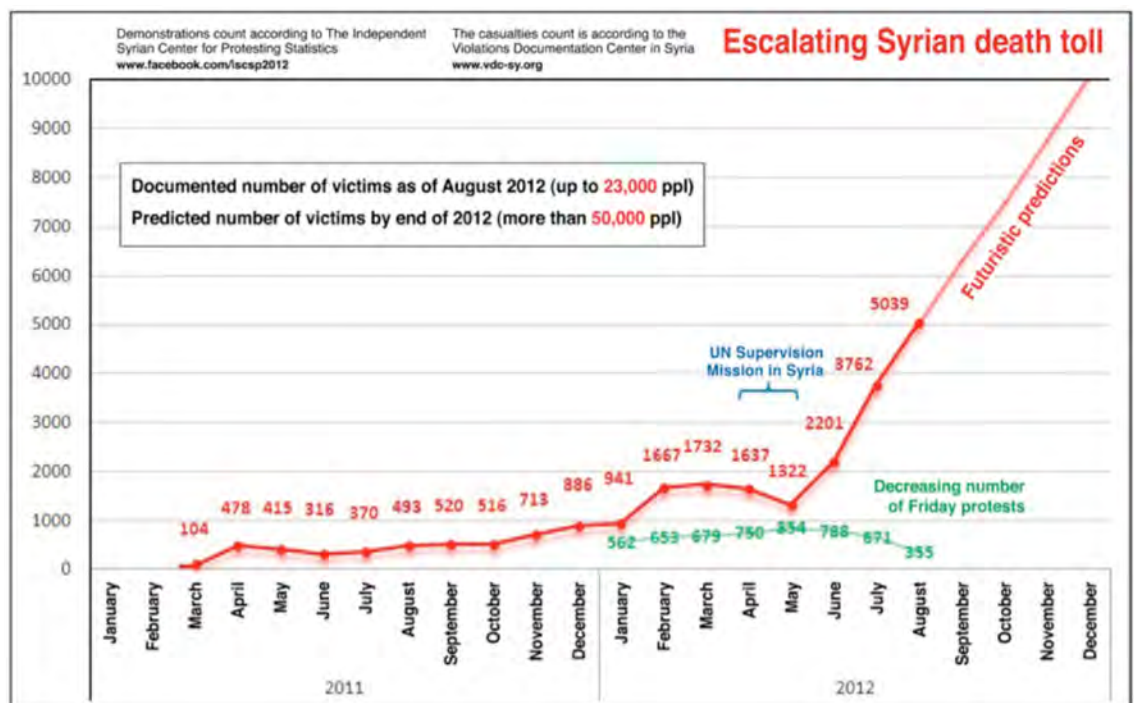


Figure 1: Death toll Before/After Armed Resistance Emerged, by Freedom Days Syria

the cost later was that the entire neighborhood would be flattened by regime assault. Death tolls in Syria after the uprising's militarization skyrocketed, from an unbearable five or six to thirty victims of regime fire per day in the nonviolent phase, to seventy to three hundred victims of regime fire per day (See Figure 1). This was what nonviolence activist Osama Nassar warned in October 2011 would be the result of embarking on the militarization path, but no one wanted to listen then. By summer 2012, the climate for internal criticism of the armed resistance was more open.

If self-defense is the immediate goal of the armed resistance, the fall of the regime is its long-term objective. Despite the initially popular notion that brigades were formed by army defectors, civilians untrained in the danger inherent in arms and unfamiliar with military strategy fill the FSAs, and the ranks of even less transparent and less controllable armed groups—the Salafists. Meanwhile, hundreds of genuine defectors from the regime armed forces sit in refugee barracks in Turkey and Jordan. These trained officers, some activists suggest, could swell the disciplined FSA forces with those who understand the necessity of civilian political authority over armed entities, and know military strategy.

Despite some in the global left insisting from the first day that the U.S. was funding the FSA, there has been little evidence that the major flow of arms to the armed resistance in Syria was, up to recent months, obtained by anything more than a) capturing state munitions and b) the usual smuggling routes running through the towns of Moadamiya and Zabadani to Lebanon. If Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Libya, the CIA, etc., were funding and arming the FSA from the start, why was the FSA so poorly armed for so long, and why is it still not well-armed? In summer 2012, FSA fighters in Zabadani told a medical relief worker who is a member of the Syrian Nonviolence Movement that

their brigade was purchasing weapons from Hezbollah, of all sources, albeit at jacked-up prices. Where is the money coming from? The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, by some accounts, is funding about a quarter to a third of the FSAs; about three-quarters of the FSAs are secular in orientation. Later in 2012, it started to be plausible that donors based in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey (not necessarily from those countries' governments, but with tacit approval) were funding arms purchases for Syrians. Each donor seems to fund its pet faction, using Syrian middlemen. Who are these donors? What are their agendas? One of the few donors about which there is transparency is the *Syrian Support Group* (SSG), formed in the U.S. with executive order approval. SSG has a former NATO staffer as one of its advisors.

Salafists enter the Syrian uprising

In January, 2012, at least three other armed organizations besides the FSA announced themselves, all Salafist: Jabhat al-Nusra, an Islamist group with an extremist, or Salafist, ideology and alleged ties to "al-Qaeda;" Ahrar al-Shaam; and Suqur al-Shaam, both also Salafist, forming in Idlib. Other armed Salafist groups exist. "Salafist" describes Sunni Muslims who follow a brand of very strict adherence to Islamic injunctions which they believe it is their moral imperative to spread, by social reform and political programs, and by force if necessary.

The black flag with the Islamic testimony of faith, "There is no deity but God, and Muhammad is His messenger," indicating the presence of one or another Salafist group, began to appear in protests alongside the green-topped revolution flag in autumn 2012. By anecdotal accounts, Ahrar al-Shaam and Suqur al-Shaam target Idlib-area Alawites for ransom kidnappings and murder, in addition to their military activities aimed at removing territory from regime control. Ahrar and Suqur follow the FSA pattern of being local men with local ties.

Jabhat al-Nusra, on the other hand, seems

to be a whole different species of armed resistance. While its membership appears to be largely Syrian despite rumors of Muslims from other countries populating it, Jabha fighters do not seem to be from the local communities around which Jabha brigades operate. Jabha members have attacked non-Sunni religious beliefs and indicate that they aim to install a state “based on the Quran,” post-Assad¹². The

experience of Dr. Tayseer Karim, a field doctor who treated the wounded in makeshift hospitals in Latakia, Idlib, and the Aleppo countryside, areas where he had to travel under the protection of armed brigades. “For all the talk of foreign Islamist jihadists,” he says, “I saw among all the armed men only four non-Syrians (Libyans and Saudis)—and I saw approximately a thousand armed men in all, after overnighing in fifteen villages. The people respect them for leaving their lives behind to fight by their side. They seem to come just to die—to earn martyrdom.” In January 2013, reports stated that some may be earning martyrdom at each other’s hands, as secular FSA and Salafist Jabha fighters turned against each other.



On Facebook:

FB User *Stop the killing, we want to build a country for all Syrians (English)* says:

“Just so our readers are in the know—the one on the left is the flag of the political Islamist extremist armed group, Jabhat al-Nusra. The one on the right is the Syrian revolution flag adopted by the uprising since Oct–Nov 2011. Nowadays, you sometimes see both side by side, in certain protests—and in other protests, the black flag is notably absent. In a Saraqeb protest on Feb 5, 2013, a black flagger pulled down a green flag, punched its holder, and broke his flag stick. Last week there was a surge of Syrian activists posting “the rev (green-topped) flag represents me.” There is a language of flags in this revolution, and that’s just part of it.”

Jabha kidnapped Syrian state television presenter Muhammad Saeed from his home in July 2012, and announced that it had executed him. Jabhat al-Nusra has claimed responsibility for the January 6, 2012, suicide car-bombing in Medan, Damascus, which apparently was aimed at riot police busses but killed mainly civilians; February 10, 2012, twin blasts at state security offices in Aleppo, also suicides via detonated vehicles; and numerous other suicide car bombings.

The group has claimed, in fact, most of the car bombings that began to be features of the violence in Syria starting in 2012. The size of blasts claimed by the Jabha reportedly require significantly larger amounts of ordnance than the FSAs seem to possess.

Who are Jabhat al-Nusra’s backers?

Theories include: the Syrian regime; the U.S.; Islamist extremists such as al-Qaeda. The Institute for the Study of War links it to Syrian government-sponsored jihadist groups that fought U.S. troops in Iraq. In any case, the Jabha is regarded as extraordinarily well-funded, in a class by itself in the armed resistance.

The presence of non-Syrian jihadists may be overstated, at least in the anecdotal

The armed resistance came to control portions of northern Syria by spring 2012. A nonviolence activist who toured FSA-controlled areas reported several categories of brigades going under the title of Free Syrian Army. Mainstream FSAs, the most disciplined, are defected soldiers who want to serve the goals of civilian self-defense and the fall of the regime for a democratic secular post-Assad state to which they are prepared either to report as regular army, or surrender weapons.

Another sort is opportunists, in it for cigarette-money stipends from Riad Asaad’s faction in Turkey, plus roving hoodlums who used FSA street cred to loot, rob, and kidnap for ransom. A final category comprises brigades with Salafist ideologies, or those who have pretensions to such beliefs in the interest of earning a weapon. All types of brigades made it no secret that they held prisoners, trials, and executions, the nonviolence activist observer said.

The Syrian “Third Way” emerged.

In autumn 2011, a group of political figures in Syria declared themselves a “third way.” The first way is the regime’s

¹² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18048033>

way, they say; the second way is the revolution; they are on neither side. The litmus test of “Syrian Third Way” is that its members do not criticize the person of the president. Misunderstood Bashar is not at fault for any of the repression in Syria, Third Wayers maintain. Reformists, they agree that the regime should not kill civilian protesters, and that the regime should democratize, whatever that means in light of their inability to question the cult of the leader in perpetuity. They characterize themselves as a homegrown, anti-imperialist, nonviolent, noninterventionist, secular opposition; but unlike the nonviolent uprising participants, Third Wayers do not broach the subject of dismantling the police state or the transition to a Syria without Assad as head of state. This is what causes most of the Syrian uprising population to characterize Third Wayers as soft regimists, or at best dangerously naïve. Nonviolence activists who genuinely want to see a democratic post-Assad Syria suffer backlash from Third Wayers’ appropriation of the terminology of peacemaking.

For all their limitations, Syrian Third Wayers may be able to do some good, for example, by negotiating some releases of prisoners of conscience. The regime needs Third Wayers, so it can point to a permitted internal opposition as a sign of its tolerance. However, sometimes even a Third Wayer will cross a line (this is easy to do in Syria, with its labyrinth of rival security agencies), and be imprisoned for a time.

Third Wayers include some well-meaning people. A few Third Wayers are out-and-out regimists, whose names can still be found on the boards of entities funded by Bashar’s right-hand man, maternal cousin Rami Makhlouf. Something Third Wayers share with the nonviolent resistance is that these two groups are more equipped than the armed resistance to bring over, at least a notch or two toward the side of

change, the “silent majority,” those Syrians still neutral about the uprising. Prominent Third Wayers include:

- *Mohammad Habash*, a parliamentarian well-known for his pro-regimist stands, author of the term “Syrian Third Way,” and one of this movement’s prominent spokespersons.
- *Massalha*, a group sponsored by the Melkite church in Syria, is Third Way. So are the secular groups Maan and Tayar Bina al-Dawla (Movement to Build the State). Ali Rahmon of Maan was imprisoned in September, 2012.
- *The National Coordination Bureau* is often included in this category; however, it occupies a slightly more ambiguous position between soft regimists and nonviolent oppositionists, more so when it started out. This may be a strength it can leverage—if it has any members left who are not in prison, or have not resigned from the group, joining the rest of the revolution in the clear call for the fall of the regime. At the August 2011 founding meeting of the National Coordination Bureau, three hundred participants were invited. One hundred were from state-sanctioned “opposition” parties in Syria. One hundred were “independents.” One hundred were from the actual grassroots protest movement. These, however, withdrew in frustration a month or two after NCB formation, pulling the rug out from its claim to represent the grassroots uprising; many of those abdicators were then imprisoned. In September 2012, one of NCB’s last remaining key figures, Dr. Abdulaziz Khayyir, an Alawite, was imprisoned, and there are serious concerns for his health.

Challenges to nonviolent resistance:

- Significant numbers of activists are imprisoned
- Many have been killed, are displaced or are forced into hiding, with hampered mobility
- Many venues for nonviolent activism are closed by conflict conditions

The Nonviolent Resistance

Nonviolent resistance has diminished since the emergence of the armed resistance—a statistically typical occurrence when any uprising develops an armed flank. Yet nonviolent resistance has continued, despite being overshadowed by the raging battle between the regime and the militarized flank of the revolution and beleaguered by tensions with the armed resistance. Nonviolence groups are small, but we know that small, thoughtful groups can make big change. Most are run democratically, with elections rotating officers. Most tend to be gender-balanced in membership and leadership, and to reflect the diversity of Syrian demographics. Regardless of whether conservative religious Sunnis or people of other leanings populate them, all nonviolent resistance groups believe in a democratic, civil state, in which all are bound equally by rule of law, with accountable government which does not impose religion or any other ideological system, but upholds the best international standards of human rights.

Nonviolence thought in Syria has three generations of organizational history

1. Since the 1960s, Jawdat Said, now 81, and his late sister, Laila Said (d. 2005), began teaching Islamic nonviolence (with an outlook that includes Buddhist thought, Gandhi, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as the Quran), spawning study groups and

small private grade schools. Educator Hanan Laham of Damascus, now in her seventies, and 51-year-old physician Dr. Mouhammad Alammar of Dara studied with Jawdat and Laila and formed circles of their own, while a Kurdish group based on Said's teachings formed in the Jazira region of north Syria in 2000.

2. Starting in 1998, a youth group in the Damascus countryside town of Daraya took Said's Islamic nonviolence as a springboard for community activism such as litter clean-up and a library project, only to be targeted for an arrest sweep in 2003; its members were among those who, in the recent uprising, organized the Daraya protests, including Yahya Shurbaji, now imprisoned.
3. In the 2000s, two Assyrian PhDs, Dr. Kajo Kajo and Dr. Akram Antaki, and a Syrian of Greek heritage, Dmitri Avyerinos, began a series of multicultural seminars on nonviolence in Homs. Their collective, which was not religious but spiritual-ethical, was called *Maaber*; they and the Said's circles intersected collegially.

Those devoted to nonviolence principles in Syria were a small number historically. There is a significant jump from these small groupings to the widespread youthful nonviolence inspired by Tunisian and Egyptian youth activists. Still, many young people who had been exposed to these prior trends ended up in the rosters of today's nonviolent resistance.

After the emergence of armed resistance, many of the uprising's initially *de facto* nonviolent protesters became FSA fighters. Many civilian groups, some of which are part of the support system of the armed resistance, engage in nonviolent activism. What is meant here by "the nonviolent resistance" is groups and individuals dedicated to the nonviolent path to regime change.

The nonviolent resistance is distinct from Third Way in sharing with the rest of the uprising population the goal of the fall of the Assad regime. Most in the nonviolent resistance have reached an existential crossroads, like the rest of the uprising population, and are prepared to risk their careers, education, social ties, and lives. Unlike most Third Wayers, members of nonviolent resistance tend to be part of the grassroots uprising population: young, disenfranchised, not seasoned in political work except at the local level, and out in the streets protesting from day one.

Who is the nonviolent resistance?

These are important examples, not a comprehensive list:

- *Nabd* (“Pulse”) formed in April, 2011, in Homs. *KeshMalek* (“Checkmate”), and the Kurdish group *Ava*, both in Aleppo, and *The Street is Ours*, a nonviolent collective in the predominantly Ismailia city of Salamiya, formed in summer 2011. *Mondassa* (“the Infiltrator”), also formed in summer 2011, naming itself after Bashar’s infamous speech labeling the uprising a bunch of foreign “infiltrators,” *Civil Society*, *Nufus Kiram* (“Dignified Selves”), *Syrian Week*, and about a half-dozen other small nonviolence groups formed inside Syria during summer and autumn 2011, with some fluidity as one group morphed into the next. Syrian Week’s membership was decimated by arrests in December 2012; some of its members joined *Waey* (“Awareness”). *The Collective for Democracy* in Suwayda and *Revolution Guys and Girls of Suwayda*, formed in autumn 2012.
- *The Syrian Nonviolence Movement* registered as an NGO in Europe, formed in April 2011 by Syrians abroad, some of them fresh from in-country protests. It aligns with the in-country group *Freedom Days Syria* (below).
- The *LCC* (*Local Coordination Committees*)

remains committed to nonviolence, although it works supportively with FSA brigades, believing pragmatically that by working to bring armed groups under civilian aegis, human rights abuses of armed factions can be curtailed.

- In April 2012, 32-year-old activist Rima Dali started a campaign called “Stop the Killing, We Want to Build a Country for All Syrians,” creating new energy for nonviolence activism. In its neutral language, the campaign was formulated to appeal to the “silent majority,” constructively stressing future-building. At least 26 “Stop the Killing” marches were held between April and July, 2012, including in the predominantly Kurdish city of Amoude in the north to Suwayda, a heavily Druze city in the south, and rallies in conservative Sunni locales such as the rural town of Tal, as well as rallies in which youth with minority backgrounds played highlighted roles (Rima herself is Alawite). (See Appendix 1: List of “Stop the Killing” events.)

Rima did not stop organizing nonviolence initiatives when the “Stop the Killing” movement lost momentum. She was among four women dressed in bridal gowns and carrying banners that said “100% Syrian,” and “Stop all military operations in Syria,” who marched for nonviolence in Damascus on November 21, 2012. Arrested on the spot, the four women remained imprisoned until January 9, 2013. Freedom Days Syria immediately uploaded videos of this street theater protest, showing that the “Brides of Peace” acted with support from the broader nonviolent resistance.

- *One Plus One* is a group of radio activists committed to nonviolence, begun in summer 2012, able occasionally to transmit on radio waves in Damascus. Its programming reflects the original nonsectarian, nonviolent, noninterven-

tionist values of the revolution. *Souriali* is another radio station started by nonviolence activists. Journalism as well as artistic, creative resistance, are fields where nonviolence groups have multiplied. *Free Men*, for example, is a group of youth in Damascus, from Dara and the Damascus area, none of them over twenty-two years old, who began in December 2011 to produce YouTube videos with silent tableaux in which they mime thoughtful criticism of the revolution.

- *The Ethical Alternative* is a branch of Syrian nonviolence activism begun in November 2012, aiming to revive the original values of the uprising, and proactively mobilizing against human rights abuses committed by some of the armed revolutionists.
- *Freedom Days Syria* is a network connecting some dozen nonviolence groups inside plus the Syrian Nonviolence Movement outside. It formed in September 2011 and has become the hub for coordinating most nonviolent Syrian activism.

Nonviolent resistance in Syria has suffered many blows and faces many challenges. A significant chunk of the initiators and activists of nonviolent resistance are imprisoned. Their release would be a major boost for the nonviolent resistance. A number of nonviolent activists have been killed by the regime, are among the displaced and refugees, or are forced into hiding, moving from safehouse to safehouse to avoid arrest, their work hampered by limited mobility. Many venues for nonviolent activism, including demonstrations, are closed by conflict zone conditions.

Positive, creative acts of nonviolence can reconcile, educate and transform

Despite these challenges, nonviolence activism is doing important work:

- Hand in hand with a commitment to nonviolence comes a commitment to

negotiation and mediation. Nonviolence activists work to promote civil reconciliation and tolerance of religious diversity. Nabd (“Pulse”) is a prime example. Formed by Alawite youth in Homs, soon it had chapters in most major cities in Syria, including youth of every sect/religion in Syria. Mediating local sectarian conflict is Nabd’s specialty. One overlooked asset nonviolence activists bring is their ability to work quietly behind the scenes to reconcile elements within the revolution. There are religious members of nonviolent groups who are suited to dialogue with Islamist groups; there are those who have the “street cred” to curb the dangers inherent in militarized elements.

- Nonviolence activists criticize the armed resistance’s human rights violations. Their signs in protests, for example, alert the FSAs and other armed factions that such abuses will not be tolerated by the uprising population. (See photo suite sampling such signs, Appendix 3.) The Damascus masked-theater troupe Free Men often sharply criticizes elements in the revolution. The LCC condemns the practice of detonating suicide car bombs, calling them “terrorist acts”¹³.
- Another chunk of nonviolent activists have answered the ringing alarm bells of relief work. The militarized flank of the resistance is able to secure weapons, but not medical or humanitarian assistance for those suffering from the battles that result from those weapons. For that, they rely on sucking up the energies of the nonviolent resistance. *Najda Now*, a humanitarian relief organization formed inside Syria and registered in Germany as a non-profit NGO, though hampered by limited funds and administrative problems, tries to address the needs of revolution orphans and the flood of internally displaced

Syrians, including schooling for displaced children banned from state schools. The women's group SANAD does what it can to support displaced women left without resources. Freedom Days Syria devotes considerable efforts to the psychological needs of traumatized children, and of adults suffering post-traumatic stress after an imprisonment. Activists committed to nonviolence often remain with the last civilian residents of evacuated cities, those who are unable or unwilling to leave, and help them to survive day-to-day, cleaning up hazardous garbage, for example, while the areas' brigades are preoccupied with violent conflict. Freedom Days member Mohammed Kreitem died doing such work in Daraya, in December 2012.

- Many nonviolence activists are hands-on, bottom-up, workers on transitional justice. Yes, the "Day After Project," underwritten by the U.S. government, at which forty-five Syrians convene regularly to plan how to restructure the post-Asaad government, is producing important work for transitional justice and reconstruction, but it is training a group of professionals, academics and technocrats. Nonviolence activists are working to bring civic education to the masses inside Syria. This is not simply an eye to the future; it is an asset that can improve the course of the revolution now, curbing the impulse to revenge violence. When Nabd members scatter small scraps of paper promoting religious tolerance in the language of ordinary Syrian folk, those seemingly insignificant bits of writing impart civil society concepts in a manner with far wider reach than the ideas of "heavies" in Berlin seminar rooms. When the group

Waey distributes a graphic about the day-to-day pragmatics of equality, they teach transitional justice to far greater numbers than does a speech by an exiled oppositionist.

- Creative resistance is another power of nonviolence activists. LCC activists splashed bags of red paint on eight major streets in Damascus



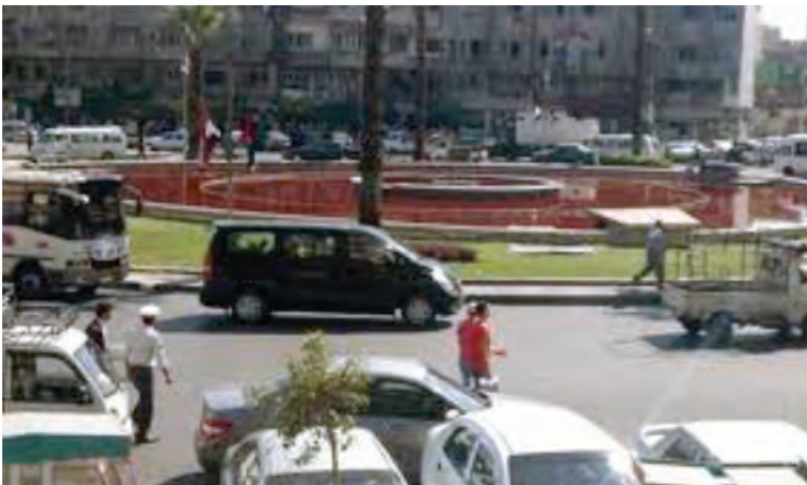
on January 24, 2013, to protest the January 15 massacre of students at Aleppo University; *Revolutionary Guys and Girls of Suwayda* have defiantly planted trees named for child victims in neighboring Dara; an origami artist making cranes for each Syrian prisoner of conscience was herself imprisoned. Eighteen-year-old medical student Yaman Qadri and her friends threw thousands of small cutouts saying "democracy" and "freedom" from Damascus University dorm towers, for which security pursued her for three weeks, savagely beat her on campus, then electrocuted her during her imprisonment from November 3 to 26, 2011. Actions such as these may seem unimportant given the bloodiness of the armed conflict. The fact is, armed resistance renders the rest of an uprising population, those unwilling or unable to carry arms, passive.

¹³ <https://www.facebook.com/6-D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%3%D8%D81%D8%A%8A7/egaring-the-terrorist-bombings-in-salamieh/593092337384573>

Creative resistance creates a continuing channel for more widespread participation in the revolution. This is vital because it reconnects people to the original wellspring of the uprising: their newfound sense of empowerment, their “I am a human being” place. It does so against all odds, in an uphill struggle, in the midst of death and destruction. Creative resistance allows people to redeem the pain and loss they are experiencing into constructive, life-affirming action, which carrying weapons or waiting to be victims of weapons do not. We do not underestimate the power of the imagination in revolution.

- Strike work is the most practical contribution of the nonviolent resistance toward the fall of the regime. The keys to a nonviolent overthrow of the regime, if it is still possible, are boycott, international divestment,

Creative nonviolent resistance creates a channel for more widespread participation in the revolution. This is vital because it reconnects people to the original wellspring of the uprising: their newfound sense of empowerment.



A fountain dyed red reminds everyone of the sacrifices being made.

and strike. Strike inside, with divestment outside, brought down the apartheid regime South Africa. It is what brought down the dictatorship in Nicaragua, even though the Nicaraguan Revolution’s militarized wing took credit. Boycott, Divest, and Strike (BDS) is gaining ground as an international movement to support the Palestinian cause. A BDS movement could be a nonviolent, noninterventionist path to the fall of the regime in Syria.

Freedom Days Syria led the call for the most recent strike, that of December 2–3, 2012. This action was endorsed by 38 organizations, including command councils, FSA, and the Syrian National Coalition of Opposition and Revolutionary Forces. This was the largest cooperation in a strike thus far, uniting in-country and outside bodies as well as nonviolent and armed resistance. Major cities Raqqa, Hama, Homs, and Dara participated, as well as smaller towns in rural regions, such as Tal in the Damascus countryside. Freedom Days posted 25 videos showing strike results on the first day, and a similar number on the second day. The regime broke locks to forcibly open stores in Damascus’ Medhat Basha marketplace, and the strike was not widespread in Damascus.

The strike that breaks the regime must be sustained for far longer. For that, preparation is needed. Hungry people must have bread; both nonviolent and armed resistance are working with relief groups to produce a system of alternate neighborhood bakeries. An alternative revolution economy must be more developed to sustain such a strike. It must be coupled with stronger international divestment. The political opposition is working on unfreezing Syrian government assets for use by the revolution; these must not be funneled into more arms but into support for a massive strike until the fall of the regime.

THE FUTURE: WORSE THAN ASSAD?

First: There is no worse. The fever-pitch of violence has laid chunks of Syrian infrastructure to rubble in at least five major cities. The United Nations says 870,000 Syrians are refugees. Inside Syria, three million people have been displaced by the destruction. Massacre follows massacre, almost daily. Rivers of blood run in Syria, not figuratively but literally; see Figure 2 (Daraya, November 10, 2012). Assad-



An origami artist made peace cranes, one for every prisoner of conscience, and was herself imprisoned for it.

controlled halves of cities such as Maarat al-Noman and Aleppo fight the revolution-controlled halves. The cautious refrain from citing the highest numbers of the dead; suffice it to say thousands of files of documentation of the dead await vetting in courts of justice. What appears to be a scorched-earth policy by the regime poses a threat of annihilation for Syria.

Violence is guaranteed to linger in Syria after the fall of the regime, because violence begets violence. There will be those who will grind the pain of loss into angry retribution. Regime warlords, and warlords created by the revolution, may

refuse to disarm. That is a very different level of violence than the mass violence now pounding Syria.

Second: The Islamists will come. This was obvious from the beginning of the recent revolutions. For that, police states and U.S. foreign policy acquiescence to dictatorships for decades helped to set the scene. Ruling elites, in the name of protecting people from Islamists, have given Islamists the victimized outsider card, and they will make every effort to cash it in. The Syrian

Muslim Brotherhood, as the more moderate Islamist faction, may be the beneficiary of the country's fear of Salafist Islamists, when the dust clears. The Islamists will come, and the struggle will continue for universal human rights, and Syrians will begin that struggle by removing the brutal police state that already exists over them.

Third, the Islamists might not come. Crystal balls based on elections in Egypt and Tunisia

do not take into account that Syria is far less homogenous than Egypt's 90% Sunni Muslim demographics, and Tunisia's even greater homogeneity. It is possible, as some Syrian activists on the ground suggest, that the current seeming popularity of the Islamist fighting factions such as Jabhat al-Nusra is a product of prolonged desperation and lack of options, and would evaporate when the circumstances producing that desperation are gone.

Fourth: The threat of a Balkanized Syria, devolving into three or four separate states, is held over the head of the revolu-



Figure 2: Daraya, November 10, 2012. Rivers of blood: no empty metaphor, in Syria now.

tion. The uprising population is committed to a whole, sovereign Syria; so is the outside opposition. Kurds in the revolution are tired of being suspected of secessionism. No one in the revolution wants a fractured Syria. Nor would a vulnerable Alawite state on the coast, cut off from Damascus, be a consolation prize for regime remainders.

On the other hand, regional and world powers may benefit from such a development. Some Syrians conjecture that this is why foreign governments trickle arms to the brigades as opposed to arming them fully: to keep the violence going until an enervated Syria can be controlled from abroad.

What of Syrians? Must Syrians sacrifice their self-determination to the interlocked grid of regional and world vested interests for another half-century? Not one moment longer will it pass for justice that Syrians must accept lives under a police state in the name of fear of an uncertain future.

“As if we didn’t have fear before? We lived in fear of the future,” Syrian artist Tammam Azzam reminds us¹⁴. He points out, “We didn’t have a country anyway. Everything in it was an illusion. Names were illusions. Stars were illusions. Everything was based on distorted relationships.”

Fear of the “three i’s,” imperialism, Israel, and Islamism, has been used for decades to stall change in Syria. No longer will fear shape the present. Freedom, now. Syrians of the uprising prepare clear-eyed for what other terrors may yet come, but walk firmly into the future nonetheless. There is enough goodwill and honesty in the Syrian youth who marched into the fire to sustain this struggle toward the equality and freedom of all Syrians. Let those who can believe there is a worthwhile spark in this generation of Syrians walk with us.

¹⁴ Interview on Syrian Freedom Waves radio, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DV5aNVRXbQ8&feature=youtu.be>

About the Author:

Dr. Mohja Kahf

Born in Damascus, Dr. Mohja Kahf is a member of the Syrian Nonviolence Movement, and an associate professor of comparative literature. A poet (*E-mails from Scheherazad*, 2003) and novelist (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, 2006), she has taught Middle East Studies at the University of Arkansas since 1995, with courses in Palestinian Literature, Syrian Literature, and Arab Women's Writing.

A signatory to the U.S. Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel and former local board member of Arkansas' chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, Kahf has marched against the U.S. war on Iraq and taken part in environmental protests in northwest Arkansas.

She won the Arkansas Artist Award for poetry in 2002 and a Pushcart Prize for creative nonfiction in 2010. A short story of Kahf's was recently published in *Feminist Studies*, and her poetry has appeared in the *Paris Review* and *Grand Street*. Her 2002–2004 sex columns at the progressive site *MuslimWakeUp.com* (since defunct) earned her death threats from Islamist extremists, and she has given keynote addresses at conferences such as Muslim Women and the Challenge of Authority (Boston University, 2012) and Arab American Women (Kansas State University, 2009). You can read some of her personal Syria stories at:

<http://therumpus.net/2011/12/the-daughters%E2%80%99-road-to-syria/>

and <http://www.arktimes.com/arkansas/the-damascene-horse-dealers-daughter/Content?oid=1428935>.

Kahf tweets for the Syrian revolution @profkahf, focusing on nonviolence, nonsectarianism, noninterventionism, prisoners of conscience, and women.

Appendix 1:

Events in the “Stop the Killing” Campaign of 2012, with links to video footage:

1. April 8 – Rima Dali’s solo stand in front of Parliament building, Damascus:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHL11BEKXew>
2. April 10 – In front of Parliament building, Damascus:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Na97zb3DGBc>
3. April 10 – In front of Justice Palace, Damascus:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQTO-gqUI0>
4. April 11 – In Citizens Mall, Kafr Soussa, Damascus: Sufana Baqla, a talented harpist and church choir singer, was arrested for this flash mob/street theater action, along with another young woman and two young men:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxmtO64lqUQ>
5. April 12 – In Tel, Damascus countryside:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ywsh1Ha_PSw & http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ywsh1Ha_PSw
(Tel is a predominantly Sunni, conservative, town of about 70,000.)
6. April 18 – In Shaalan, Damascus:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUyPxKUM8hU> & <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQlcGZ6nJKU>
Another version of the video bears an English title:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVCSlzPHdRM>
7. April 19 – Civil society group Nabd supported this “Stop the Killing” action in Latakia, a city on Syria’s Mediterranean coast:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7EkkCdeFA0>
8. April 19 – a Damascus “Stop the Killing” action by two protesters:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygLyKGLhxyQ>
9. April 22–29 – Mais Mubarak and her brother Samer and two others were arrested for this stand in Damascus, and remained imprisoned for about a month:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTXgYiOwa_4
10. April 28 – In front of Justice Palace, Damascus:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbqdz7jir64> and
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuZz8MIa9oA> and
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbqdz7jir64&feature=share>
11. April 28 – Suwayda: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMzlGngLIJ8> supported by the nonviolence group Syrian Week. Suwayda is a predominantly Druze part of Syria.

12. April 28 – Kobani & Qamishlo, supported by the nonviolence group Syrian Week:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krx8D-FtpTs>
13. April 29 – Aleppo Universtiy student stand, held near the mechanical engineering department:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sPUPGBt1M4&feature=uploademail>
14. April 30 – Four young women (supported by many other activists) in Damascus give out flowers on the street, with notes attached echoing martyr Ghiyath Matar’s words, “This country fits us all. Stop the killing.” They posted a suite of photos rather than a link; see photo suite collected on the Facebook page entitled “Stop the killing, we want to build a country for all Syrians (English).”
15. May 1 – in Damascus: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AtsF7bm7EE>
16. May 4 – in Amude, a predominantly Kurdish area in northern Syria:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLNc_OcJf2M
17. May 6 – Actions by nonviolence groups Atyaf and Nabd:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATNfjvNS1fQ>
18. May 7 – Salamiya city, organized by nonviolence groups Nabd and Atyaf:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hU1R5f6A-gE> Salamiya is a predominantly Ismaili city.
19. May 12 – A “Stop the Killing” Candle Vigil for all the fallen of Syria, in Old Damascus, by the citadel wall:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaPn16n90TO>
Participants were arrested.
20. May 15 – Misyaf, “Stop the Killing” graffiti:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58BjuAL6ce4>
Misyaf is a city with large Alawite and Ismailia populations.
21. May 15 – Tel, in Damascus countryside:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgwKiM8w6Rc>
22. May 18 – Suwayda: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlpWEL3F3eY>
Video featuring a “Stop the Killing” graffiti action.
23. May 20 – Nabd’s videotaped action, Latakia:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCdx5Oj4yuo>
24. May 24 – Duma: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcYMBY9rvKo>
25. July 7 – Famed nonviolence activist team known collectively as “The Graffiti Man” does a “Stop the Killing” graffiti activity, in Aleppo’s SalahEldeen area: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOs77FhcmXo>
26. July 16 – In front of Interior Ministry, Damascus:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjrW9BEDK1A>

Appendix 2:

Recommended Reading list:

“Supporting nonviolence in Syria,” by Stephen Zunes: http://edition.cnn.com/video/?iid=article_sidebar#/video/bestoftv/2013/02/22/exp-ctw-exiled-syrian-writer-published-in-english.cnn

“Syria: An Orderly Transition,” by Rene Wadlow:
<http://www.transcend.org/tms/2013/02/syria-an-orderly-transition/>

“The Forgotten Revolution in Salamiya,”
<http://brownpanther01.wordpress.com/2013/02/10/the-forgotten-revolution-in-salamiyah/>

A set of useful articles on Syria by the International Crisis Group:
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/egypt-syria-lebanon/syria.aspx>

“The Syrian Revolution on Four Packs a Day,” by Mohja Kahf:
<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4274/the-syrian-revolution-on-four-packs-a-day>

Holding Fatima in the Light (poem), by Mohja Kahf:
<http://arablit.wordpress.com/2012/09/25/mohja-kahf-holding-fatima-in-the-light/>

“Stop the killing, we want to build a country for all Syrians (English)”:
<https://www.facebook.com/buildingasyria4all>

Appendix 3:

Photo Suite: Brief Sampling of 2012 Syrian Uprising Signs Critical of Human Rights Abuses Committed by the Armed Resistance in Syria

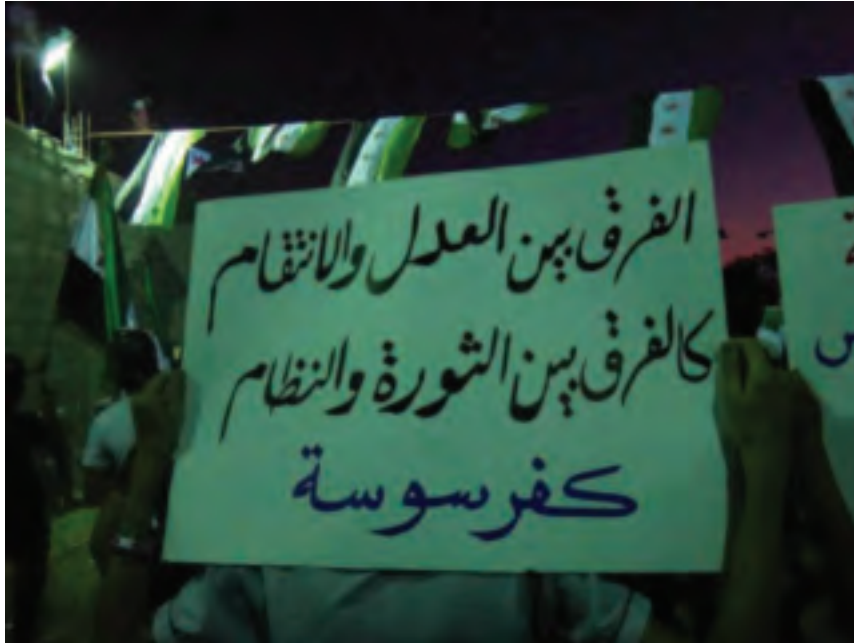
1. Daraya, February 24, 2012: "The blood of a Syrian is sacrosanct/forbidden to Syrians."



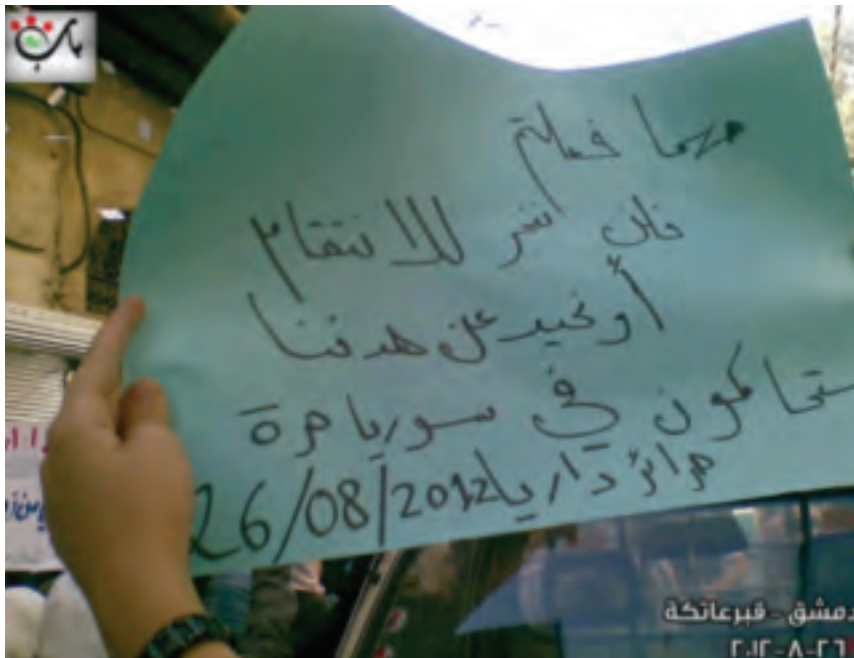
2. Khirbet Ghazala, Dara, sometime in April, 2012. Sign is signed by LCC (Local Coordination Committee of Khirbet Ghazala): "The first Friday after the fall of the regime, the people want the weapons turned in."



3. Kafr Sousa, Damascus, July 2012: "The difference between justice and revenge is the difference between the revolution and the regime."



4. Daraya, August 26, 2012, the very day after a regime massacre reportedly killed hundreds in the city: "No matter what you do, we will not be dragged to revenge, or swerve from our goal. Your trial will be in the courts of free Syria."



5. Saraqeb's Local Coordination Committee, September 30, 2012: Dignity Revolution, not Revenge Revolution."



6. Bustan al-Qasr, Aleppo, October 5, 2012: "To Jabhat al-Nusra and its likes: We are the ones who said, he's a traitor he who kills his people—whoever he may be."

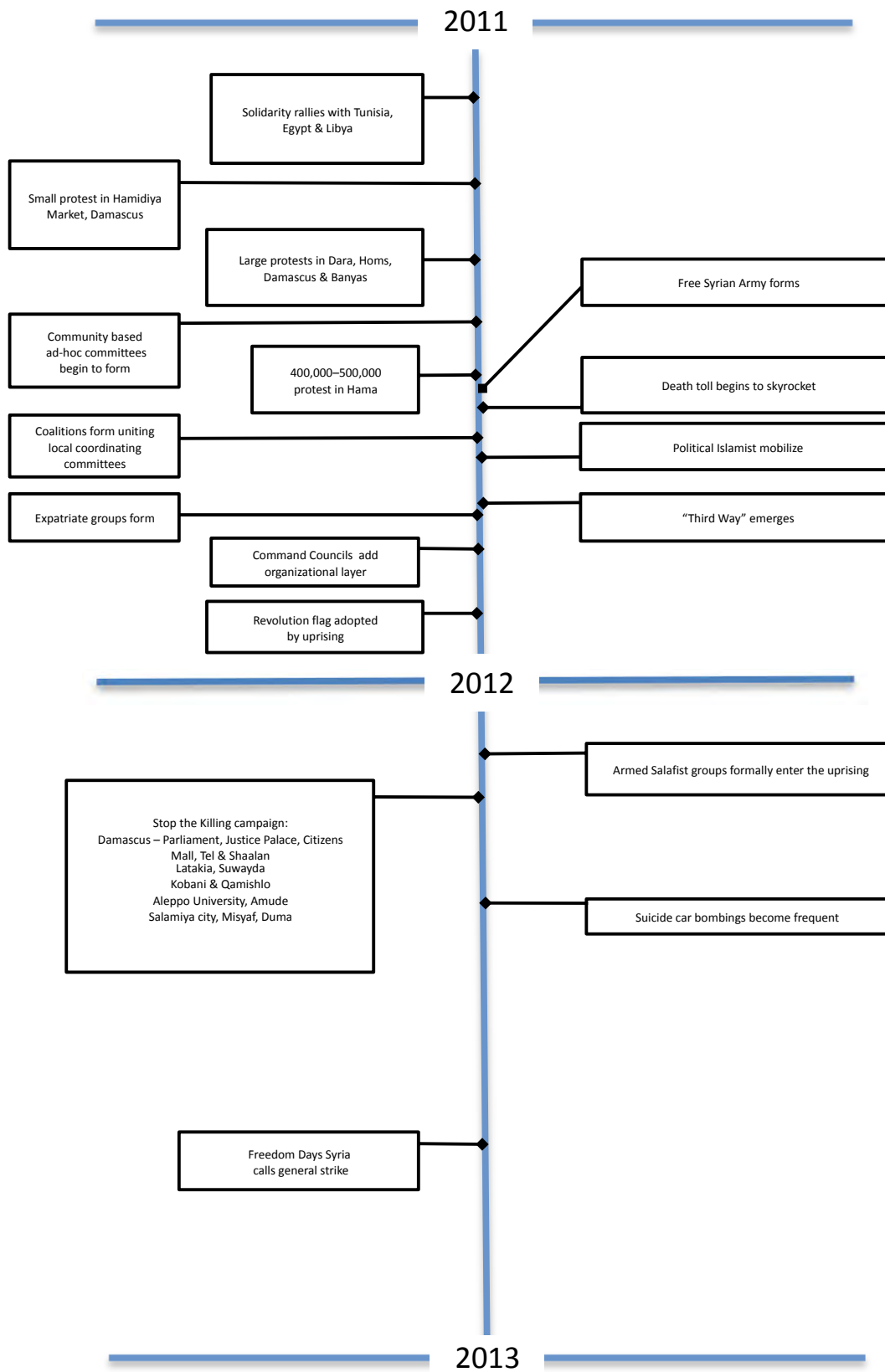


7. Qamishlo, November 18, 2012: "Leaders of the Free Army, respect our nonviolent participation in the revolution and distance the shadow of your bullets from our doves."



Appendix 4:

Timeline of Syrian uprising events.





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