

Remarks by Mr. George Sabra

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Remarks

George Sabra

Acting President of the Syrian Coalition

Istanbul, Turkey

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George Sabra:

Ladies and gentlemen, we are not here today to insult Assad's regime and expose its crimes, because the continuous footage coming from inside Syria speaks louder than any words. We came here today to reveal facts and numbers, and those who ignore those facts and numbers are either blind or turning a blind eye to the bloodshed. Those who ignore the facts and numbers also choose to ignore the threat that the Assad regime poses to all Syrians in the region.

For the past three days, the people of southern Damascus and the western countryside have been slaughtered, and the war of aggression continues in Homs.

Hundreds of burned, lacerated, or shot bodies have been discovered in the farms of Jdeidet Artooz and Jdeidet al-Fadel, in one of the most horrific scenes ever. This slaughter came after the massacres in Moadamia and al-Dahra neighborhoods in Artooz.

Most of those who live in Jdeidet al-Fadel are the people of Golan who were displaced and forced to leave the Golan Heights in 1967 after the Israeli occupation. They resided there for 46 years, awaiting return to their homes and expecting the leader of the supposed "resistance" to liberate that land. But instead, Bashar al-Assad sent them Shabiha and murderers to kill them. Those Shabiha used knives, actual knives, to murder nearly 500 people, and injure more than 1000 civilians. And now, Brigade Number 100 of Assad's Republican Guards is preparing for another massacre.

The events that unfolded in the Damascus countryside are crimes against humanity.

This is genocide, plain and simple, and the whole world must act to put an end to these horrific crimes.

Pick-up trucks filled with bodies were roaming the streets of Damascus, especially in the al-Maza neighborhood, while Shabiha chanted slogans of victory and scenes of jubilation filled the place.

In the Homs countryside, others belonging to the “resistance axis” are playing the role of mercenaries. Hezbollah occupies villages in Homs and kills those who ask for freedom and dignity. Villages like Joseih, Safsafeh, Dyabiah, Samkania, Wadi Hanna, Abu Hori, and Sumaqiat are all occupied by Hezbollah and its citizens are being treated inhumanly as well. The United Nations and human rights organizations must act immediately to address these atrocities. The Syrian people are human beings too and Syria is a member of several international organizations.

Such international organizations are sensitive about the issue of fundamentalist armed forces. However, they tend to be tolerant of fundamentalist terrorists like Hezbollah, who cross the borders and occupy our villages. They are also tolerant of a professional terrorist, like Bashar al-Assad himself.

The Lebanese government must also express a sense of urgency when dealing with the Syrian crisis, because Syrians are not going to forgive those who occupy their land and kill their sons, whomever these perpetrators might be.

The Lebanese people must voice their rejection of killing free Syrians. Shia Lebanese in particular should prevent their sons from killing Syrians. They should not fall victim to this conflict.

Those people are connected with regional and international governments of totalitarian regimes that do not care about basic human rights.

What is happening in Homs’ countryside is a declaration of war against Syrians, and the Arab League should deal with the matter accordingly. The Lebanese government and president need to realize the seriousness of this situation, because future relations of the two countries are at stake, and more importantly, Syrians’ lives are in jeopardy everyday.

The international community is hesitant to provide Syrians with the arms they need to defend themselves because of the very crimes committed against the Syrians. These crimes expose future policies of Assad’s regime and the threat they pose to people in this region.

Our enemies want us to fight each other. They want to destroy Syria in order to achieve the goal they set: “choose Assad or we burn the land.” Will this cowardly world we live in approve of this? Will the world leave Syria to be destroyed and its people to be killed?

I urge our people in Syria not to be dragged into this trap. I call upon those whom Bashar is trying to persuade to pick up arms for the sole purpose of doing his dirty work. I call upon them to refuse him. I call upon the sufferers to be patient and to depend on God. We will work together to face this calamity.

Christians, Alawites, Druze, Ismailis, Shiites, Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians Syriacs, Muslims are not our enemies, Bashar is. Syria is for everyone.

The Syrian Coalition will provide immediate aid to the afflicted villages.

I pay tribute to the souls of martyrs, the wounded, the FSA fighters, and the sons of Golan whom we used to call “the displaced” but today we proudly call the “heroes of Syria.” I also pay tribute to those who have opened their homes to aid the afflicted in Qatana, Artooz, Khan Alsheeh, Darkhabya, Sahnaya, and the rest of the villages.

Shame on those who do not help the Syrians and provide them with weapons to defend themselves.

Shame on those who betray the people and support the murderous villain Bashar.

May the revolution be blessed and victorious.

Long live Syria, unified and democratic.

Long live the Syrian people.

Moderator: We will take some questions from the media. Could you please identify yourselves and the agencies you are working for.

Question: (speaking in English) (inaudible) Exactly what happened over the last four days? What was the government trying to do as you understand it? Exactly how much resistance was there? Who controlled the territory, and who controls it now?

President of SNC George Sabra: (speaking in English) What happened the last four, five days was really something unbelievable in Syria. There were massacres during the last two years in the villages of Jdeidet al-Fadel, Jdeidet Artooz, Artooz, and Moadamia; More than 500 people were slaughtered, and at least a thousand of injured. Some of the victims were killed by knives in very barbaric ways; it is really something unbelievable. Also, we were afraid that this kind of behavior would continue with other villages in the area. It is a massacre, and a crime against humanity. We convey this fact to the international community to do what they feel is appropriate.

Question: (speaking in English) Do you have evidence? Do you have documentary evidence to show those numbers? Because that is a huge number of people.

President of SNC George Sabra: (speaking in English) No doubt about that, and I think the area is now open for journalists and for the media, so you can go investigate these numbers for yourself.

Question: Ahmed Zakaria from Radio al-Kul. Mr George I have two questions if you please. The first is: will you request the UN General Assembly to issue a binding resolution under chapter 7 in an attempt to avoid the Russian veto in the Security Council? The second question is: you addressed the minorities during your speech, but is it not better that the Coalition calls upon the Arab states and Turkey to send troops to protect the Syrian people from the massacres committed by Hezbollah and Assad's forces?

President of SNC George Sabra: Regarding your first question about the General Assembly, the answer is yes. We intend to submit this issue to the General Assembly to get a resolution. We also asked the Friends of Syria to try and obtain a Security Council Resolution to stop the death of Syrians by Scud missiles. These missiles cause mass destruction within 400 kilometers of its explosion. We are hopeful a resolution will be issued. In terms of your second question about protecting the Syrians, we always ask for protection for the Syrians by all possible means including through a no-fly zone or any other means that neighboring countries see fit.

Question: Muaiad Skief from Orient News. In the last couple of days we have seen many massacres. It is obvious the regime is escalating the situation. Is this the regime's response to the meeting of Friends of Syria being a meeting that came up with nothing new?

President of SNC George Sabra: We think this is a clear message from the regime that it does not care about Friends of Syria. It does not even care about Syria and its people and the people in the region. The international community along with our Arab brothers must understand the regime's message that it has absolute freedom to do whatever it likes undeterred by any political, moral, or humanitarian considerations. This is a huge responsibility that rests with Friends of Syria because they must realize that conferences, statements, and declarations cannot stop the killing. What stops the killing is either defending the Syrians or enabling them to defend themselves.

Question: But they did not do anything.

President of SNC George Sabra: Until now, they have not done anything to stop the bloodshed and the evidence is clear. This is actually very painful.

Question: Mohieldin (inaudible) from (inaudible) News, Iraqi Kurdistan. I have three questions. The Syrian people have been asking for days about the real reasons behind the resignation of Mouaz Al Khatib. We would like to know the real reasons. Second, you asked the minorities in your speech not to be enemies of Muslims because Bashar is the real enemy. Do not you think that this message might be understood as if those minorities were supporters of Assad? Third, since the inception of the Syrian Coalition, there has been talk about the Kurds joining the Coalition, but until now they have not. We would like to know the reasons behind that too.

President of SNC George Sabra: As for the resignation of Sheikh Mouaz Al Khatib, he declared that it was "in protest against the international community's failure to relieve the Syrians and provide them with weapons to defend themselves." He said that clearly in front of everyone. As for my message to the minorities, no, it was not because they support Bashar Al Assad. It was because Bashar Al Assad is trying to induce those minorities to take up arms pretending to be protecting them, and perhaps it is true he somehow succeeded with some groups but failed with others. And don't you ever believe that any Syrian has any friend inside the regime. All components of Syrian society, including the Alawites, are now targeted by the Assad regime. Those minorities,

like all Syrians, lost their freedom, dignity, and livelihood because of the Assad's regime. The participation of those communities in the revolution is obvious. The first demonstration we see on television every Friday, for the past two years, is Amoda's demonstration. So we should not question the participation of the Kurds in the revolution as well as the participation of Christians. No one is asking for proof of any community's participation, but what we are trying to do is prevent the regime from using some weak people to destroy the strong Syrian national unity.

Regarding the Kurds joining the Coalition, well, they were present during all negotiations. They even participated in the session when the Coalition was created. They promised to take a decision and come back. Their seats are still available for them including the seat of vice president of the Syrian Coalition. So we are awaiting their return patiently.

Question: (inaudible) Your Excellency is the president of SNC and now you are president of the Syrian Coalition, how will you manage the two posts? Also we have heard news about withdrawing Ghassan Hitto's mandate to form the government, is that true? If yes, what are the reasons behind that?

President of SNC George Sabra: I will start by answering the second question, as it is absolutely untrue. Mr Hitto is still entrusted with forming the government. As for the first question, my duty as a president of the Syrian Coalition is temporary, and within a few days the Syrian Coalition's General Assembly will convene and a new president will be elected. It was actually in accordance with article 11 of the statute of the Syrian Coalition.

Moderator: The last question.

Question: Nizar al-Abdullah from Deir ez-Zor channel. Regarding chemical weapons, what has the meeting of Friends of Syria done to address this issue? And what will the Syrian Coalition and Friends of Syria do to free the governorates under siege for 300 days now?

President of SNC George Sabra: As for governorates under siege, especially Homs, we are doing our best to break this siege. Firstly, by sending aid to support our people in these areas, and also some battalions managed to open routes to deliver aid and weapons to steadfast the fighters in Homs. Homs has been under siege now for 310 days. Deir ez-Zor also has been under siege for 300 days. We aspire to do more especially towards Deir ez-Zor. We have provided relief programs, and we are trying to get the international community to recognize our right of taking up arms because only by weapons will we be able to break the siege and achieve victory. We must not forget Daraya, the city of martyrs that has been under siege and constant attacks for more than 150 days.

Moderator: Thank you. That is the end of the press conference. Mr. George Sabra and other members of the Syrian Coalition will be available for interviews. Thank you.

