

Syria

BREAK THE WALL
OF SILENCE

There are Syrians Who Deserve to be Heard

A Monthly Bulletin by ARCHumankind

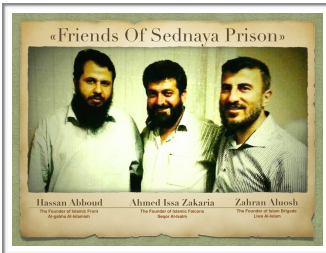
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ARCHUMANKIND

DIRECTOR DECLARATION

Paulo Casaca

**On the launching of the initiative
“Syria: Break the wall of silence!”**

ARCHumankind was launched in the end of 2010 by a group of five friends with their eyes focused on the Greater Middle East. Foreseeing the Arab Spring, we were trying our best to provide a humane, democratic, tolerant alternative to the old sitting authoritarian regimes and the reactionary jihadi movement, which was and is waiting for its opportunity to tighten its grip on the Arab World.

However, the support we were looking for did not materialise, and soon most of us had to divert attention to other issues and challenges. An exception was Kamal Batal, ARCHumankind vice-president. In the first half of 2011, Kamal Batal committed himself to Lebanon with the goal to support the refugees escaping the violent repression of the Syrian regime, and he conveyed to us testimonies of its brutality.



Kamal Batal



Paulo Casaca

It was Kamal Batal who made it known across the World that Syrian wounded protesters had been assassinated by Iranian Revolutionary Guards acting as “doctors” at Syrian hospitals.

Kamal Batal, a symbol of integrity and commitment in the struggle for the liberation of the Greater Middle East from its tyrants and the respect of human rights passed away on June the fourth 2011 after an unexplained heart attack in the Beqaa Valley from where he was not timely evacuated to Beirut.

It took us over three years to get back to where Kamal left us, and it is with my thoughts on Kamal and on all of those who fell victim to the despicable acts of the different fanatic factions in Syria that we announce here the reanimation of our dedication to the country.

At the beginning, we had a democratic uprising using peaceful ways to express its will to get rid of the tyrants. However, more than the local tyrants, the Iranian theocracy who evermore controls them, decided Syrians should not have an opportunity to express and to rule themselves.

Iranian Revolutionary Guards, affiliated terror groups from Lebanon and Iraq as well as Afghan refugees turned mercenaries, have now a major and increasing presence supporting a puppet regime in Damascus. At the same time, rival jihadi forces of a conflicting sectarian brand, relying on global networks have been combatting both Syrian democratic forces and the Iranian led regime.

In broad terms, half of the Syrian population had to find exile, war casualties represent one per cent of the whole population, Syria became one of the worst if not the worst country in the World to live in.

As was recently correctly observed: "In the Middle East, jihadists on both sides of the Sunni-Shia divide tear at societies and dismantle states in quest of visions of global revolution based on the fundamentalist version of their religion.*

A regime without support from the Syrian people became a full puppet of the Iranian theocracy and tries to convince minorities its rule is the only alternative to the rival brand of Sunni Jihadism.

Deception has always played a central role in the Shia Jihadi tradition, in full contrast with the logic of full publicity of murderous psychotic activities of rival Sunni Jihads such as the Islamic State.

This has created the illusion in some quarters that democracy and freedom lovers should prefer the Iranian sponsored Jihads to their rivals.

Nothing could be further from reality. As I explained in my 2008 book** and major research has also shown, Jundal-al-Islam, or the Islamic State, as the organisation developed and became known in 2006, was created in September the first 2001 at the Iranian-Iraqi border of Kurdistan. It was created under strict instructions of Osama Bin Laden and with the blessing and support of the Iranian clerical regime, to the point where its first working language was the Farsi of Iran.

The new Al-Qaeda – as it was correctly baptised –received a big boost after the 2003 invasion when the US authorities under Iranian influence decided to destroy the Iraqi state and sent into the void millions of civil servants, including hundreds of thousands of military and allowed for Iranian sponsored groups to terrorise the population and eventually capture the state mechanisms.

By 2006, the Iraqi Al-Qaeda section had grown to the point where it felt confident to declare the launching of the "Islamic State" on the land of the two rivers, a name that later evolved into including Syria and to declare its independence from the successor of Bin Laden.

*Kissinger, Henry, "World Order", Penguin, 2014, p.7. Although I have many differences with Kissinger views and actions, it is only fair to acknowledge his insight on this issue.

**"The hidden invasion of Iraq", 2008. Books like.....

After the US destroyed the Ansar-al-Islam headquarters in the Kurdish Iranian-Iraqi border, the group mostly operated from Syria up to our present day. After the beginning of the democratic revolution, the Islamic State became a major tool of the Syrian regime in attacking the democratic opposition and in terrifying minorities into believing they had no alternative but to surrender to Damascus' tyrants.

The decapitation video of Nicholas Berg by al-Zarqawi on May the 7th 2004 – a US media worker kidnaped on April the eleventh – became the symbol under which the Jihadi leader pulled together four major Iraqi jihadi groups – including the rebranded Ansar-al-Islam – under the name of the original Zarqawi terrorist Jordanian group “Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad” – better known as the Iraqi Al-Qaeda branch.

Recent beheadings of local and Western captives performed by the group in 2014 are exact copies of this original beheading of 2004, whose shocking images are widely available in the net.

Western decision makers have fallen into the trap of Western media logic, where the past is rapidly erased and anything happening is portrayed as a brand new story.

The Caliphate declared by Imam Ibrahim appears as something fallen from the sky instead of a natural sequence in the development of the organisation initially established in Kurdistan in 2001 by Bin Laden to allow the continuation of Al-Qaeda after the expected US response to September 11.

Instead of reminding that the Islamic State (on the land of the two rivers, as it was called at the time) had already once covered a large portion of Northern and Western Iraq, and that the US managed to successfully combat it by engaging the Sunni population (Sons of Iraq), the recent spreading of the organisation is presented as a completely new phenomenon.

Similarly, one tends to forget that the US policy of abandoning the Sunni population to the exactions of the Jihadi Shia occupying the leverages of power in Iraq after 2009 was the direct reason why of the regain of strength of Sunni jihadism.

The lessons here for the course of action in Syria should have been absolutely clear to everyone: to abandon entire sectors of the population to the exactions of rival sectarian forces is tantamount to encourage extreme, sectarian Jihadi responses.



In other words, a zero tolerance policy to the actions of Sunni Jihadi groups – such as Islamic States, al-Nuzra and others – or their Shia Jihadi correspondents – such as Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraqi Imam Ali Brigades or Iranian revolutionary guards should be applied.

On this basis, I think the following driving principles should be followed by the European Union regarding Syria.

1. Demand the immediate retreat of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard from Syria, their client terror forces from Lebanon and Iraq, Afghan mercenaries as well as the foreign forces constituting the Islamic State and all other jihadi groups.

On this regard, the European Union has major responsibilities, as it developed into being one of the major sources for jihadi fighters in Syria. A revision of educational, cultural and religious indoctrination mechanisms that allowed this to happen should be undertaken as a topic of major priority by the European Union on all levels of action.

The European Union should commit itself to do its utmost, by all possible means, to stop immediately its export of jihadists to the region and to obtain the repatriation of those who are there.

2. To support the formation of an exclusive free zone within Syrian borders for the refuge of every Syrian willing to respect common basic humanity principles, with no possible discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion or democratically held political beliefs.

In this regard, the neighbouring Regional Government of Kurdistan and the Kingdom of Jordan are the neighbouring powers with whom cooperation should be a priority. A joint effort within NATO and with other democratic forces is necessary.

3. To draw clear and commonly agreed guidelines for the support of all Syrian opposition forces, and to commit itself to a long-lasting strategic effort. As the Iraqi experience of the creation of the “Sons of Iraq” demonstrated, a short-lived punctual effort followed by retreat is a certain recipe for failure.

ARCHumankind is ready to undertake discussions with the European civil society or its institutions on all of these issues.

Stalos, 2014-10-22

Paulo Casaca





The Story of “Sednaya’s Friends”

The Three Strongest Men in Syria Today!

Bassel Al-Junaidy - The republicgs.net

In a rare photo together, three of the strongest men in Syria appear smiling and standing next to each other after being released from Sednaya prison. This photo shows Zahran Alloush, Liwa al-Islam (Islam Brigade) commander, who has been later inaugurated as the commander of Jaysh al-Islam (The Army of Islam); next to him appears Hassan Abboud, known as Abo Abdullah al-Hamwi, Harakat Ahrar ash-Sham (Movement of the Free Men of the Levant) commander; and Issa al-Sheikh, Suqour al-Sham Brigade (Falcons of the Levant Brigade) commander.

The three friends, who had been detained for years (around 2004) due to religious extremism (along with Abo Muhammad al-Fateh al-Jawlany, the al-Nusra Front emir), were released from Sednaya prison as part of an amnesty by the Syrian government in 31st May, 2011 just after the outburst of the Syrian revolution. This amnesty was a presidential decree to fool people’s thirst for change. It was accompanied by the regime’s forceful media efforts to denigrate the revolution and fabricating slander that could not be believed even by pro-regime supporters.



from Iraq while the al-Nusra Front was being established.

Estimates vary about the exact number of fighters led by Sednaya's friends, but they all agree that the friends lead the largest number of Syrian rebel fighters. While Zahran Alloush commands "Jaysh al-Islam" a merger of 43 military factions and 30000 fighters, it is believed that Harakat Ahrar ash-Sham is the largest brigade in Syria with 18000 fighters. The approximate number of the fighters with Suqour al-Sham Brigade is about 9000. Although al-Nusra Front might seem the smallest in number, it is not less in strength because of its discipline, ordnance, and combative capabilities. All this means that the friends who were previously in Sednaya prison now lead about 60% of the rebel fighters in Syria.

According to the above-mentioned facts, we can suspect that the new intrusion of ISIS into the military map is highly infiltrated by the regime and that a lot of its fighters coordinate directly or indirectly with the regime. This cooperation is most obvious on the oil wells exploitation. In the story of Sednaya's prison friends, we recall the role of Assad's Syria in providing a rear basis for the Islamic State operating in Iraq since 2004, and its either secret or

declared relations with both the propagandists of Jihadist's thoughts and the founders of the Islamic State. Otherwise, one can also suspect that the "Sednaya's friends" were presented on purpose as heroes emerging from the womb of oppression, suppression, and prisons' darkness. Otherwise, the military platoons led by these "friends" are different from most of the opposition and they enjoy the best reputation among civilians. They are generally the least offensive, they form legislatures to secure private and public rights and, most importantly, they played a significant role in the military operations in Daraa, Damascus, Idleb countryside, Aleppo and Raqqa. It can be stated here, with no exaggeration, that half of Syria which is under the rebels' control now has been so as a result of "Sednaya's friends" essential role in the operations to liberate those lands of the regime forces.

Conversely, ISIS has been engaged in managing the territories it occupies and in establishing a preaching and organizational ground in them, not caring for the war against the regime as much as caring for arresting revolutionary activists and opening fronts with the Kurdish forces and the Free Syrian Army. Its actual participation in the confrontations against the regime seems to be little and limited with the most important incident (or the only one) being the take-over of the Menagh Military Air Base after months of attacks and in which ISIS participated at the final stages.



Syrians vacillate between these two readings of events: the one that places “Sednaya’s Friends” with ISIS, and the other that considers them heroes and knights. Personally, I will adopt a third belief away from conspiracy theories and I will note one undoubted issue: the regime has systematically pushed the revolution to where it exactly wanted it to be,

politically, militarily and economically speaking. The regime sometimes needed to coordinate with individuals and groups external to it, and at other times, it provided the fertile ground that solely produced what the regime wanted to reap. In spite of everything happening since the first amnesty, the plan has not backfired yet.

Kobani: Symbol Of Resistance

Dr. Ghayath Naisse



Kobani (Ain El-Arab) is a City in Syrian Kurdistan (Rojava) under attack and siege by the reactionary forces of the Islamic State (Daesh, ISIS or ISIL) for well over a month. ISIS may storm the whole city at any moment, civilians have escaped to Turkey facing tremendous difficulties due to the lack of cooperation by the Turkish armed forces, but as these lines are written, Kobani resists the large and heavily armed ISIS forces, valiantly and heroically.

Kobani formed the model of resistance

This resistance raises admiration and is shaping a model of defence that could be followed, as it contrasts completely what happened in other cities like Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria. These cities fell nearly without resistance under Daesh control.

Many Syrian cities expressed solidarity with the “Kobani of resistance” through demonstrations. The Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PUD) and the “Kurdish people protection units” that are affiliated to this party lead Kobani’s defence. Some Arab combat battalions such as the “Raqqa’s rebels” brigade, “Shams Ashamal” and “Carchemish” battalions are also participating in the city’s defence. On the 4th of October the free Syrian army announced the decision to send a thousand members of its fighters to Kobani in order to defend it.

Moreover, the international coalition which is being led by the US started pounding ISIS on September 23th, but the air strikes did not achieve the expected results as ISIS, which was 60km far off of Kobani when the strikes started, were still able to storm the gates of the city after two weeks of bombing.

The leader of Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) announced on September 30th that his party requested the western countries to provide arms for the Party. He also accused Turkey of obstructing the decision of providing arms.

Kobani is defending itself alone, as the whole Syrian people are.

Strikes and demonstrations

The emergence of ISIS comes as a result of the US occupation of Iraq and the destruction of the social structures that have been caused by it. In addition to the external dimension of the phenomenon, one can also see integration between groups of jihadis who were somewhat close to Al-Qaeda with some Baathist officers from the previous regime of the dictator Saddam Hussein. This combination gives ISIS high leverage in comparison with other jihadi groups and gives them a “fascist stamp”.

The military offensive of ISIS did not slow down and did not stop in spite of the strikes of the international coalition. Moreover, these strikes caused numerous civilian casualties and, as a response, the Syrian cities witnessed around a hundred demonstrations on September 26th, 2014 under the slogan “the civilians need no international assassins!”





These demonstrations reflect the prevailing feelings on the uselessness of the strikes on the one hand, and on the other hand they represent a “national” affiliation symbol.

These whims of the on-going transformation in the mood of the Syrian mass also reflect the return to the roots of the Syrian popular uprising; this transformation can be noticed in the anthems, slogans and flags of the demonstrations that took place on 3rd of October 2014.

In the same context, and in addition to some facts we will mention later, it is worth noting that two important worker strikes took place in the “liberated” regions of Aleppo. The first was the cleaner’s strike against the interim government of the Opposition Syrian National Alliance on September 20th and the second was organized on 21st September by the national defence labour union against the very same government. Furthermore, an independent campaign was launched for the sake of revealing the corruption, those who are corrupted within the Syrian opposition assemblies as well as prosecuting them.

Back to the roots...

Regarding the areas under regime control known as “loyal”, it is important to stress the large protest gathered at Akrama “loyal” district of Homs city on 21st October 2014, condemning the terrorist attack which killed dozens of innocent kids, and raised mottos against the government officials such as “public wants to overthrow the governor”. At the very same day, another protest marched out at an AlWaer “opposition” district in solidarity with the victims. This episode came approximately one month after the detentions carried out by the security forces targeting some activists, who considered themselves to be loyal to the Syrian regime, for merely initiating a campaign named “ **Waynun** ” = Where are they? grousing on the regime abandonment of hundreds of its helpless soldiers, making them an easy prey for ISIS to kill at Al Raqqa airport and elsewhere. Furthermore, several demonstration campaigns spread widely in July and August of this year with titles such as “We want life” and “Scream” and distributed statements showed some defiant phrases such as “The Chair is yours, the coffins for our sons”.

It is indeed the return to the roots of the genuine public revolution.

Translation by Basel Watfa

Why is the Islamic State Progressing?

Bashir Al-Bakr

A Syria poet and Deputy Editor at Al-Araby Al-Jadeed Website



The Islamic State, also known as the Caliphate, Daesh – following Arabic initials – or by its former name, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Syria), that is, ISIS or ISIL is gaining ground due to a sole reason: it is receiving popular support that is becoming broader and stronger in Syria and Iraq. This is the fact known by all stakeholders that they however do not want to face and prefer to *beat about the bush*.

The increasing power of Daesh, needless to say, is the consequence of the worsening situation in both Syria and Iraq, result of the policies of the former Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Miliki, the criminal behaviour of the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad and Iran's ambitions and opportunist policy that it has been seeking, since the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, to advance its own agenda at the expense of Arabs,



and under the pretext of supporting the resistance against Israel. Since August, the US has been trying to form a coalition of Sunni Arabs in Iraq and Syria to fight against Daesh. They do know this is the starting point to stop this “monster”, but they are far from succeeding, as Sunni Arabs are still standing still.

It seems that so far Iraqi and Syrian Sunni Arabs see no clear benefit in fighting Daesh. The Iraqi sees Daesh as the only power capable of facing the deadly Shia militias in Iraq, and they know that the end of Daesh will mean the return of these militias. As long as the US does not succeed in controlling these infamous militias, they will never succeed in forming a Sunni Arab based alliance to support them. In the past, the US sponsored the “awakening” movement in Iraq with success because it was based in equilibrium of Iraqi components, but as long as the balance of power tilts in favour of sectarian Iran-supported militias, the Arab Sunnis will not participate in a war against Daesh. This is the reason why 80% of Anbar fell to Daesh and why Daesh is preparing to storm Baghdad. As long as the US does not engage in overcoming the sectarian inheritance left by Al-Maliki there will be no solution.

Only when this is done, can the Iraqi Sunni Arabs be persuaded that fighting Daesh is a patriotic duty.

The majority of Syrians are not concerned with fighting Daesh since their main problem is the regime of Bashar al-Assad who has displaced them, destroyed the country and continues to do so every day. The Syrian disappointment can be clearly noticed when the International Coalition did not consider the terrorism of Bashar al-Assad and Daesh as being equally unacceptable; had it been the case, the Syrians would have been among the first to fight Daesh today.

The widespread belief in Syria is that fighting Daesh will turn to al-Assad's advantage. The Turkish side shares this belief and it was the country's justification for not actively participating in the international coalition. Turkish officials have explicitly discussed this issue and refused to support Kurds in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) when the leader of the Democratic Union Party, Saleh Muslem, did not accept to break the alliance with Bashar al-Assad as a condition to receive Turkish support against Daesh.

On the other hand, a fundamental question presented by the Syrian side is: Why should the Syrians fight Daesh and stand by the pro-Assad Kurdish Protection Units? Moreover, the protection units do not conceal their ambitious project in creating a Kurdish Canton in Syria; so, would it be rational to get the Arabs of al-Hasakah to stand against Daesh who hoisted the black flag to dismantle this canton?

Taking the danger of Daesh into consideration, it may seem an exaggeration to present the situation this way. However, anybody following the discussions at research centres and western experts' milieux will come up with one sole conclusion: The Kurds are the future ally of the West.

Translation by: D.F

Death Defying Journeys

On the Way to Sweden: Four Syrian Asylum Seekers in Boats of Death



Malath Alzoubi [The Republics.net](http://TheRepublics.net)

Mossy water and a piece of gauze

«Our group had six people. Three of us made it while the other three died on the way», said Alaa', a young Syrian man who illegally crossed the Turkish-Greek sea border with the hope of reaching Sweden, the Mecca for Syrians seeking asylum in Europe since the start of the Syrian Revolution more than three years ago.

The 27-year-old software engineer from Der'aa is one of thousands of Syrians who have embarked upon frightful seas bound for the Scandinavian country. We know that the journey has cost many lives, though the total number of Syrians seeking asylum in Sweden is difficult to determine.

Wanted by Syrian Security Forces for participating in anti-regime demonstrations, Alaa' was forced to flee to Jordan where he was repeatedly harassed by the Jordanian authorities. He had also begun to receive threats from the «Al-Nusra Front», a jihadist group operating in Syria, which also has operatives in Jordan.

He made his way for Turkey; first to Istanbul, and then to the western port city of Izmir, where he immediately sought the services of a people smuggler from Aleppo. For 2200 Euros Alaa' would secure a spot on the smuggler's boat and would soon be on Greek soil. Little did he anticipate the perils of the crossing. No sooner had the boat set off than it began to experience mechanical problems, but the smuggler refused to sail back to Izmir. Alaa' and the other five passengers were off to a slow start as the boat idled and rocked for hours.

«The rickety boat was only the first of many unpleasant surprises», Alaa' told *The Republic*. A Hellenic Coast Guard vessel spotted the boat as it drew close to the Greek port where it was agreed that the smuggler would drop the passengers off. Instead, he cast them out onto a remote and rocky beach, and made a swift getaway. «We were lost, surrounded by jagged rocks and with only the narrowest track to walk on», said Alaa'.

The group, consisting of Alaa', another young man, and a family of four from Latakia, endured a long day in an unforgiving environment, without water, food, or shelter. They contacted Greek police from a mobile phone, to no avail. The Latakian father eventually decided to swim for help; while his wife and two children became so exhausted they stopped walking. The last thing the mother said to Alaa' and the other young man was: «Please fetch us some water before we die! »

The two men kept on trekking. Alaa' recounts that at one stage his companion, who suffered from back aches and low blood pressure, lost his balance and fell. He then asked Alaa' «not to wake him up if he fell asleep and to let him die peacefully». Alaa' continued, «After two hours of walking we stumbled upon a deserted, derelict and overgrown church. There, we found an urn full with mossy water, so I took off a piece of gauze I had around my knee and used it to filter the water. We drank all we could and collapsed on the ground soon after. Seven hours later we woke to the smell of smoke and the sirens of fire engines and police cars. A bushfire raged all around us. The police arrested us on the spot, took us to the police station and charged us with arson. We told them about the mother and two children we left behind, but they made no attempt to rescue them».



The next day the father of the children went to the police station and asked the Greek authorities for help with finding his family. Eventually, the police gave Alaa' the opportunity to provide his testimony regarding the whereabouts of the family. The authorities failed to launch a search for the missing mother and children, claiming the area was inaccessible to the police. The father was left to conduct the search on his own. A week later, he found the corpses of his wife and two children.

Alaa' faced myriad charges, ranging from arson to terrorism and spying for the Turkish government. He was detained for three weeks before he was allowed to make a two-minute phone call to his mother, who wept during the whole conversation. He was transferred to the central prison in Athens where he spent «the worst days of his life». He was eventually released.

Four passports and blue contact lenses

29-year-old banker Wassim had a similar experience. He and his wife boarded a ship with a group of 12; among them the smugglers own cousin and her three children.

Wassim knew all too well about the dangers associated with such a voyage. He had heard many stories about asylum seekers who perished crossing from Turkey to Greece. «Many are lost for hours while crossing the border, while refugees who are reluctant to continue the journey for any reason are murdered in cold blood by the smugglers themselves», he told *The Republic*.

Wassim was deceived in much the same way as Alaa'. His journey proceeded from Gaziantep to Istanbul, and then on to Izmir, followed by a five hour drive to a forest by the coast. From here the group was forced to walk through the water for an hour before reaching the boat. Following a 30-minute boat ride they finally made it to land in Greece. The smuggler told the group to proceed on foot up a gentle hill towards a police station, claiming the walk would only takes 90 minutes.

The group soon discovered that their journey was going to be far more arduous than the smuggler had implied. For eight hours they had to find their way through rough terrain and heavy rain. It was pitch black and they could not use their torches for fear of being detected. They felt like they were going in circles and their attempts to call the smuggler for directions proved futile. Fortunately, a member of the group was able to determine their approximate location by accessing Google Earth from his phone.

As the group walked on, their shoes ripped apart and clothes tore. Wassim added, «we often saw bits of clothes that belonged to those who walked before us and wondered whether they ever made it to their destination». Exhausted and with no drinking water, they stopped for rest twice. One young man experienced heart palpitations while another had an asthma attack.

Wassim's wife vomited three times, experienced hallucinations, and wept uncontrollably during most of the crossing.

Upon arriving at the police station, Wassim was detained for two days before being transferred to the central prison in Athens where he was incarcerated for 45 days. Following his release, Wassim started to devise a plan for himself and his wife to ultimately reach Sweden via another European country. He secured two fake passports, a Croatian one for his wife and an American one for himself, and they headed to Barcelona. While his wife was successful in reaching her destination, Wassim was unmasked. His fake documents were confiscated but he was not arrested. He then used Swedish residency papers in his attempt to enter Switzerland, but this too failed. On his third attempt Wassim was successful in getting to Stockholm via Amsterdam. He used a French passport belonging to a man who looked remarkably similar to Wassim, though unlike the Syrian asylum seeker, the Frenchman had blue eyes. Wassim wore blue contact lenses and made it to his final destination.

While at a facility for Syrian refugees in Sweden, Wassim heard various stories of Syrians crossing into Europe. One of such story tells of a young man who arrived in Greece wearing nothing but his laptop bag and underwear, while another tells of a man who travelled from Turkey to Italy by hiding inside the tank of a petrol tanker.

Pickle boats

21-year-old Palestinian Syrian Huda also crossed from one side of the Mediterranean to the other. In 2012, she was forced to leave her life as a sociology student at the University of Damascus and go to Egypt. Accompanied by her nine-month-old daughter, husband and mother-in-law, Huda then left Alexandria because «we had no other choice», she told us. «We could not go back to Syria, and life in Egypt was becoming a living hell for Syrians».

Huda had relatives who had already attained refugee status in Sweden and who assured her that getting to the Scandinavian country was quick and leisurely. «But we were shocked to realise that the boat that they told us was going to transport 60 people turned out to be nothing but a small fishing boat. They crammed 170 of us on this tiny vessel, like pickles in a jar», said Huda.

The family carried with them some food, drinking water, clothes, and life jackets. Five days later, still at sea, the passengers were told that they had to move to an even smaller boat in order to avoid getting spotted by the Italian Coast Guard. This next leg of the trip was supposed to take no longer than four hours, but the second boat lost its way for two whole days. Fuel and food were running low and eventually the boat's captain used his satellite phone to contact the Italian authorities, which subsequently came to the passengers' rescue.

In Italy, Huda and her family sought the aid of another smuggler who transported them to France and then on to Germany.

There, the car in which they were travelling was pulled over by police and they were arrested. As luck would have it, the driver of the vehicle was intoxicated. They were transferred to a refugee camp in Germany but fled and carried on their journey to Denmark, finally arriving in the Swedish city of Malmö.

Seven days at sea

Like Huda, Othman also arrived in Italy from Egypt. Like many other Syrians, the clothing retailer from Jisr al-Shughur suffered the effects of the economic recession that paralyzed his country. He decided to leave Syria when Regime army officers and soldiers occupied his shop. He first moved to Turkey, and then to Egypt where he spent nine months. He was initially apprehensive about illegal migration but eventually warmed up to the idea after hearing stories of older people and children who had braved the journey and reached their destinations. He boarded a boat with one hundred other people; mainly Syrians and Palestinian Syrians, and some Egyptians.

The first three days went smoothly, disrupted only by occasional seasickness. «But everything changed on the fourth day», Othman told us. «The engine ceased, the weather turned, and we were hit by high waves. The boat floated but its course was beyond the captain's control. Over the next three days, we had exhausted all of our food and water supplies. Ships and cruise liners spotted us but the high waves made it impossible for them to come close. Then the Italian authorities made a number of attempts to save us,

but to no avail. Eventually, military helicopters dropped life jackets and food packages in the water nearby. I jumped in the sea and grabbed the food, as the children on board had not eaten in days».

When the squall eased, the Italian authorities transferred the asylum seekers to Sicily. From there, Othman went to Milano, then Paris, before travelling through Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark, finally arriving to Sweden.

Costly ventures

Othman paid his smuggler 2,500 Euros. He hopes to return to his hometown when the conflict in Syria is resolved. «I have a shop, a house, and a future there. I want to marry and have a family in Syria, whereas here my life is limited to mere survival», he said.

Wassim, on the other hand, is not entertaining the idea of going back to Syria even if some kind of stability returns to his country. «Coming to Sweden was more of an investment for me», said Wassim, whose journey with his wife cost them 24,000 Euros, more than half of which they paid to the smugglers.

Huda is now learning Swedish. Her family's journey cost them around 7,000 Euros. She has aspirations of going back to Damascus, if and when the political regime changes in Syria, «although, as a family, life conditions are much better for us here in Sweden».

At the time of writing, Alaa' remains in Greece. He is broke but is still trying to devise a way to reach Sweden. His adventure has so far cost him 10,000 Euros.

Translated by: Firas Massouh

LIQUIDATION OF THE SICK MAN'S HERITAGE

Mohammad Sabra – Syrian Jurist and lawyer- Al-Araby Al-Jadeed Website 12.10.2014



One of the most important outcomes of the axis nations' debacle resulting from World War I was the division of the heritage of the so-called "sick man of Europe" (the Ottoman Empire). The Ottoman Empire was forced to consent to the Sèvres Treaty of 1920 by which it was forced to abandon a large chunk of the lands that were part of its national soil boundaries.

Such an ignominious treaty provoked the rising of national sentiments on which Ataturk formed the Turkish nation and led the Turkish national movement against both foreign intervention and the Ottoman sultanate.

Ataturk `s successful recapture of Izmir province in 1922 formed the bedrock of the Turkish national republic proclamation and the definitive abolition of the Islamic Caliphate.

This allowed Ataturk to reject the enforcement of some Sèvres treaty clauses and to minimize Turkish losses at the Lausanne treaty of 1923 that reinstated some lands that were demanded by the Turks. However, the rise of the Turkish nation on the remains of a crumbled vast empire, encountered major geographical challenges and still does, either to the North (Armenia), the West (Greece) or to the Southeast (Kurdistan).

During the years following the republic's proclamation, and despite the challenges, the Turkish national state could sustain its position and keep the conflicts with the adjacent states under reasonable conditions, and yet in some moments this geopolitical balance was severely shaken with potential massive disasters on the horizon.

The chance of transforming a national state in a state based upon citizenship presented itself when the Justice and Development party (AKP) took over. This transformation included a new compromise with the national minorities, Kurds in particular, and reconciliation with Ottoman imperial history.

The opening started by the AKP inside Turkey either by recognizing some Kurdish linguistic rights or reconsidering some historical facts on the conflict with Armenians was positive for the AKP, as it allowed a Turkish regional role as a major player and policy maker. This new attitude paved the way for the Turkish leverage to extend beyond its borders and within states that in the past were former Ottoman territories.

In this context, the Arab Spring and the entente between the new prominent Islamic political powers and the AKP government convinced AKP of the possibility of materialising their dreams of once again commanding the entire Islamic World. However, these dreams collided with three major actors: Iran, the ambitious state, which aims to play the same regional role; Saudi Arabia's fear of what might question its statute of traditional leader of the Islamic world; and finally, the western refusal of proceeding more seriously to topple Assad's regime, to the point that Turkish policy ventured into cornering itself into a strategic "uni-option", that is a situation where they can only accept one outcome, which results in losing all flexibility regarding the issue.

The retraction of the Islamic political movement in the Arab spring countries manifested by what occurred particularly in Egypt and partially in Libya, foreshadowed the beginning of the Turkish leverage abatement in the region, and thus Turkey had no room to act in another way than to attempt to influence constitutionally, the incidents taking place in Syria.



Since its very beginning, the Syrian revolution was the most significant challenge to Turkish policy due to several interrelated humanistic, political, and economic factors, in addition to the strategic and daily tactical ones, which are, by and large, overlapped.

Turkey's destiny, its stability and its equable economic growth, entwined altogether with the on-going occurrences close to its southern boundaries and thus Turkish policy was implicated into a real cul-de-sac which put it in direct confrontation with challenges imposed by both Iranian and Saudi leverages from two different angles. Iran is a strict corroborator to Bashar Al Assad, while Saudi Arabia is its fierce foe, which aspires to topple him, but not out of altruism. The Syrian revolution has mutated from a public upheaval demanding freedom against tyrannical regime into a tussle over the regional repositioning among the leading regional powers, a tussle that will determine the future of these three powers (Turkey- Iran – Saudi Arabia). Emergence and dilation of what's called Islamic state (ISIS/ISIL) could probably be part of this tussle that has already reached its maximum extent, and entails a crucial action to end it through re-characterization of the role and volume of the mentioned three powers in the region. But seemingly up to now, the issue is not progressing in congruence with Turkish and Saudi interests; quite the contrary, it seems that the struggle is going to result in a situation favouring the third player (Iran).

This could lead to a scenario where Iran has a free hand to extend into Yemen and stabilize its presence in Iraq and that means, ipso facto, an encirclement of Saudi Arabia from both the south and the north.

If one follows, deliberately and thoughtfully, the modus operandi of American policies one would come to the conclusion that it evidently contradicts the very interests of its two strategic allies (Turkey – Saudi Arabia), while simultaneously being compatible with its strategic enemy as described by its own media (Iran). The Turkey-Saudi contradiction, in addition to the failure of both states in accomplishing a strategic agreement, played a crucial role that allowed the US to override them and, consequently, to threaten their stature in the region. The Islamic state, ironically, was left to mushroom from a tiny faction, which could have been wrecked in its cradle, into an organization being aggrandized until it reached a stage in which it became capable of distorting the inherited regional constants, which had been sustained immediately after WWI, by dissolving the international borders and leaving the geography wide open between Syria and Iraq, which posits several possibilities in terms of re-mapping the entire region.

The condition sine qua non to overcome that historical concern is related to the Kurdish cause and the needful solutions for it. For that, Turkey was pressured by several actors to intervene with ground troops to block ISIS advancement towards Ayn Al Arab (Kobanê),

and that directly would embroil Turkey in an ambiguous war with an unsure outcome due to the uncertainty and ambivalence of the US policy. In addition, given the pivotal Kurdish factor and its role inside Turkey, Turkish intervention might posit the possibilities of Turkey's map reconsideration, and this point would, put us back into a Sèvres treaty like situation and its clauses which the uprising national Turkey refused to enforce at that time.

Since the very beginning, Turkish diplomacy predicted that US policy intends to drag it into a grave slide-slip, hence, Turkey demands guarantees with regards to the establishment of a buffer-zone, overthrowing Assad's regime, and an international cover allowing it to engage in a ground war, all to avoid

the fallouts of its intervention that might reflect on the Turkish inner situation in terms of Kurds in particular. What Turkey fears the most is, the US inapprehensible refusal to establish a buffer-zone and granting actual guarantees about giving the final word concerning the destiny of Assad's regime. Will the international coalition of war on terror lead to a new liquidation of what remains of the "sick man's" heritage, which took place in the aftermath of WWI? The developments in the upcoming weeks will carry the answer to this question. By now, what must be noted above all is that, Syrians are the biggest losers of what is going on in their country, as they were thrown out of the scene. Beyond that, Saudi will face its second strategic loss in two decades.

Translation by Basel Watfa



A coalition with neither strategy nor Syrians

Azmi Bishara – Arab author

Al-Araby Al-Jadeed Website 11/10/2014



The so-called US-led coalition on terror has no obvious political strategy beyond air strikes that are carried out against the Islamic state (ISIS). As far as one can see the coalition has a course of action thought for Iraq, given the pressure exerted by the US for the formation of a new government and the idea often mentioned by officials of the repetition of the former so-called “awakening” experience (Al Sahawat) evoking a role for the Sunni Arabs in general. However, nothing of the sort exists for Syria.

While coalition strikes ISIS gatherings in some portions of Syria using smart bombs, some other parts of the country are still under the regime bombardment under its “goofy” barrels. This tit-for-tat action gave an impression that such bombardments are, somehow, harmonic but, in effect, they are not. The coalition praxis gave rise to this interpretation as it has no strategic plan to either liquidate ISIS or to overthrow Assad’s regime. In other words, a 40 states coalition against ISIS is unfathomable.

Who does believe that this is strategically meaningful? If an actual political plan would be displayed, there would be no need for a coalition of 40 states in charge exclusively of one mission: implementing air strikes. One should bear in mind some of these states were there merely in order to provide a symbolic stance.

The regional attitudes are divided as follows: 1) Iran wants to join the coalition but only if the so-called "war on terror" will be declared to be done supporting the Assad regime , but the intervention and the US presence in it are not obstacles as they have never been obstacles in Iraq and Afghanistan. 2) Turkey stipulates a strategy which both can liquidate ISIS and the Assad regime through a ground war, including a no-fly zone imposition and buffer-zones created to accommodate the Syrian refugees inside their country.

Otherwise, the Arab nations do not form any sort of axis whatsoever (neither moderate nor of resistance). The Syrian regime is willing to join the coalition under one sole condition; to get accepted as a member in it. Other Arab nations, individually or collectively, will join US unconditionally, and the rest are out of track.

The major absentee in all ongoing discussions pertaining to the role of the so-called international coalition against terror is the Syrian people and it's truly representatives. The root of this absence can be traced back to a second misfortune faced by Syrians. At first, Syrians were targeted by a brutal war with the dimensions of an holocaust carried out by the regime against them but, at the most complicated circumstances and gloomiest of the times, a second catastrophe took place: the opposition could not form a united national leadership to control and subdue the armed powers when the revolution transformed into an armed strife.

The second catastrophe has many reasons, but I would like to highlight some: The lack of political and organizational experience under the tyrannical rule; the prolonged life in exile; the narcissistic behaviour, even concerning unimportant matters, as a result of a long repression of the "Ego" under despotism or the dispersion of the armed factions which can be attributed to their spontaneous appearance as defensive initiatives led by local figures who could not achieve the needful leadership standard.



This fragmentation was further aggravated by the expansion of many armed factions raising religious-political slogans that had nothing to do with the goals announced at the very beginning of the 2011 revolution, and finally, the international society which communicates directly with the armed groups and never asks for a consolidated political leadership.

The coalition has never consulted even one Syrian citizen (neither from the regime nor the opposition circles) with regard to its strategy as it does not recognize the regime legitimacy and does not take the opposition seriously. However, the opposition comprises a band of firm soldiers, holding arms constantly for three years. Their ground-breaking experience cannot be simply ignored, as the experience and perception of politicians and intellectuals who suffered detention and exile for a long

time along with their extensive knowledge on Syria and the region. Regrettably, such valuable experience are of no avail since both political and military oppositions are scattered and in such a situation that even the constitutional documents that the majority had committed to in 2012 were ignored. This can be seen when scrimmages flare up in meetings concerning membership or even chairmanship of bogus organizations which have no actual active existence. No one, sadly, gives the slightest attention to those documents upon which the opposition factions have already agreed and that are so deeply important to Syria's future.

When plans that identify means, strategy and goals are non-existing, the regime won't fall, rather it will roughen, wear out and then collapse dragging Syria down along with it.

Translated by: Basel Watfa



Syrians, not the regime apparatus, will remove Assad

**The pro-Regime folks will not revolt against it,
but its failures frustrate them.**



Abdulwahab Badrakhani

Lebanese journalist and writer – translation from Al Hayat Newspaper – originally published 9th October 2014

By the end of 2011 both conflicting parties in Syria were hopeful, believing that a possible and near ending of the crisis was looming as neither the regime had an interest in prolonging it nor did the opposition aim to destroy the country and prolong the victims list. However, a high-ranking regime official, reportedly, disclosed confidentially to a bunch of his closest companions: "Alas, there is no close solution for the crisis and never will be I am afraid: Iran insists to fight till the last Alawite in Syria".

By now, four years afterwards and while we can count almost 107.000 Alawite victims, more than 60.000 of them soldiers, Alawites are forced to swallow the bitter reality of the regime's failure to live up to its promise of close decisiveness and political openness to be achieved after the presidential elections. What was pictured as "decisiveness" did not end the crisis and what was labelled as "openness" merely led to a government shouldering all criticisms, as Alawites, like other Syrians, are not authorized to criticize the regime directly.

Frequent disappointments and tragedies casted their shadows on the scene recently when Alawites saw the most brutal massacres carried out by ISIS fighters at Al Raqqa city. After the downfall of the 17th military division's headquarter that had been sieged since mid-2013, there was the downfall of the military brigade No.93 and finally by the Al Raqqa airport incident. Furthermore, they witnessed the bloody hostilities that occurred along with the ISIS invasion of Al Shaaer oil field which the regime regained later. There were hundreds of victims within few days, most of them Alawites. Videos which showed executions on the spot reminded us of the regime crimes that his thugs known as "Shabbiha" committed earlier. Last but not least, there were rumours about high-rank officers escaping from Al Raqqa airport taking with them some soldiers who could afford to pay them a bribe, leaving those who could not pay to their fatal fate. All these occurrences unnerved Alawites at large and were reflected in a website called Waynun "Where are they?" One forwarded message to Bashar Al Assad says: "The Chair is for you and the coffins are for our sons" and at the same stage, a black joke was spread talking about a Syrian official visiting a family of a soldier martyr and addressing it: your son is a hero, lifted his home's head high, sacrificed his life for the sake of the home master, his martyrdom blesses us. The father of the martyr answered the official: "Thank you sir, may your son gets this honour too."

Thereafter, the international coalition against terror was assembled and the regime attempted to be part of it by any means, the adherents of the regime considered this intervention of the West an opportunity to help the regime in restoring its inner "legitimacy" and regaining its regional position. When the coalition bombardment started, Damascus newspapers headlined "Washington and its allies fighting terror in the same ditch side by side with the Syrian army". However Assad's bets on the terror card will not win the day. In parallel with the international shelling and ISIS advancement towards Ayn Al Arab (Kobanê), two concurrent massive explosions took place nearby a school at Akrama district (in Homs City) in which Alawites constitute the majority. It caused a dreadful massacre, 54 victims were recorded, 47 of them were children (some of them Palestinian). The victims' funeral turned into a protest where the anguished people expressed their extreme outrage and demanded the governor and the security officers to be replaced.

The national TV did not, in effect, broadcast what its cameras recorded that day, but YouTube conveyed the actual details of what happened and showed furious statements blaming the government's ignorance for not having protected them and not even having condoled them in their mourning (given the national TV continuation of its normal broadcasting).

The social networks posted questions and doubts and even direct accusations hinting that the regime fabricated those two explosions.

Thereby, Akrama district joins dozens of districts in Damascus and other cities whose inhabitants accuse the regime of committing crimes even in its loyal areas, but where is the regime's favour dwelling, if it were to be culprit, in Akrama explosion? The public intuition is faster and more influential than the official investigations as it is not an ordinary incident for those who are seen as regime followers and know its nature to point their accusing finger towards this very same regime.

According to some analysts the objectives of the regime might be twofold. First to send a message to the "international coalition" that the terror is hitting an area close to their operations in which Alawites are the minority. Second to fasten the grip on the sect reminding it that it is a sitting duck like never before, having no choice but to stay fully loyal to the regime.

Needless to say the regime realizes its growing unpopularity within its inner circle and realises it did not follow the best tactic. Akrama protests and popular insistence to gather and march despite all attempts to dissuade them from doing so as well as the official weak reaction to the tragedy, remind us of the protests that took place at Al Hareeqa market in Damascus (mid-February 2011) and constituted the eruption of a public upheaval.



So should we expect the regime "adherents" to revolt against it? Definitely not! Undoubtedly, there is wrath and malice rage as regime supporters cannot forget hundreds of soldiers and civilians still arrested in its prisons, and the Alawite hostages who are originally from the coastal suburbs who have been held by the opposition factions since August 2013, in addition to the hostages at Adraa industrial area who have been held hostage since December 2013 while the regime refuses to interchange them with some of its detainees from the opposition.

There are criticisms, complaints, and curses spread, occasionally emerging through Facebook pages, about how Alawites became only cannon fodder for a regime which cares only about its own destiny and how Alawites themselves are also exposed now to the regime's thug's brutality. There is floundering and apprehension on the unknown and explicit doubts on the regime capacity to protect them, such as " who adheres to Assad, is aiming only to prolong the tragedy and make the damage even worse" and " Assad is not a solution,

he is a mere catastrophe" besides several frequent suggestions such as "an autonomy establishment in Alawite area" or "the fastest way to end this war : overthrowing Bashar Al Assad and an autonomy for Alawites" noting that such suggestion "does not mean Syria division, rather it is the only possible solution to maintain the Syrian entity".

In the past, Alawites were not all loyal, supporters and admirers of the regime. Like any other sect (Sunni Arabs or Christians for instance), they had a silent majority fearing but coexisting with other sects. Similarly to other sects, they accommodated groups of privileged who supported the regime as well as a tiny intellectual "elite" of opponents who demanded reforms.

Since the 80's in the last century, privileged Alawites have monopolized the power's clout and prerogatives and became the pivotal regime pillar.

Through this sectarian gate, as well as through the gradual deterioration of the position of relatives controlling the state's articulations, Iranians jumped up from the position of Hafez Al Assad allies to be part of the regime solid structure, dominating its inner circles and its political and military decisions let alone the policy of liquidation of untrustworthy figures.

Prior to the uprising in 2011, the "regime Alawites" were highly confident of their absolute domination over the state articulations as much as their grip over people lives, hence, they deemed the public protests as a crucial challenge resembling a crime to be treated only by brutal repression.

At the very beginning, in Deraa, the regime had not acted as a "state" for all Syrians, rather considered himself as a "State owned by a sect or a family". It considered itself to be in the cross fire threatened by collapse if it bent to public pressures and granted any sort of "concessions". To conceal the sectarian background of the violence it commits, Baathist knowledge combined with the Iranian acquired experience to produce a theory of "universal conspiracy" against the regime and the resistance course it should abide to.

While Assad proceeded with his bloody path to survive, the Alawite silent majority was trapped into the regime faults. Neither the regime left room for a "national reconciliation" which it needed, nor could the Alawite sect bridge the gap with other sects, while the Iranians could not invest their shrewdness, pragmatism, or their planning skills in creating political solutions. Instead, their ideological blindness dragged them into a Sunni- Shiite war in a country in which three-quarter of its citizens are Sunnis. Ultimately, Alawites discovered that conversion into Shia faith is wanted only if Alawite appropriation of power is guaranteed.

Translation by: Basel Watfa



THE SYRIAN BELGIAN RELIEF COALITION

HAND IN HAND TO HELP SYRIANS

A meeting with the President of the Coalition of the Syrian relief in Belgium

Mr. Atwan Kamal, and the General Coordinator Mr. Mohammed Salim Mobarak.

Can you give us an idea about the projects and activities that the Coalition works on?

The non-profit association Coalition Belgo-Syrienne de Secours is a Belgian aid organization founded in 2013.

The CBSS aims to create several relief projects in the Syrian refugee camps, both within Syria and in camps situated in the southeastern region of Turkey, in Jordan and Libanon.

One of these projects provides aid to the refugees through the distribution of food, medicines and clothes to the neediest families. The association provides education as well to refugee children by giving them school requisites and by supporting the educational institutes. Coalition Belgo-Syrienne de Secours also provides urgent medical aid.

The association has worked as well on the construction of field kitchens which feed many homeless families on a daily base.

However, the aid and support to refugee children and orphans through the mentoring project, remains the main activities of the organization. This project offers the children access to a fair educational system, to nourishment and allows them in addition to that, to fulfill many related costs (medial costs, clothing, food, ...). This project has already helped a lot of orphans, disabled children and refugee families.

Who supports your projects?

Thanks to the help of our generous donators, the association CBSS has been able to work on several projects regarding the transport of drinking water to the different Syrian refugee camps near to the Turkish border.



The further relief work is assured thanks to the cooperation with several institutes in Syria which are recognized because of their humanitarian actions and which are present on the field for some years.

What are the criteria for considering who to benefit from your projects?

The biggest concern of the association is the relief work to the neediest. For that reason, the association considers the most important requirement regarding to the award of collected gifts, the degree of indigence and the presence of orphans.

What message do you work on delivering?

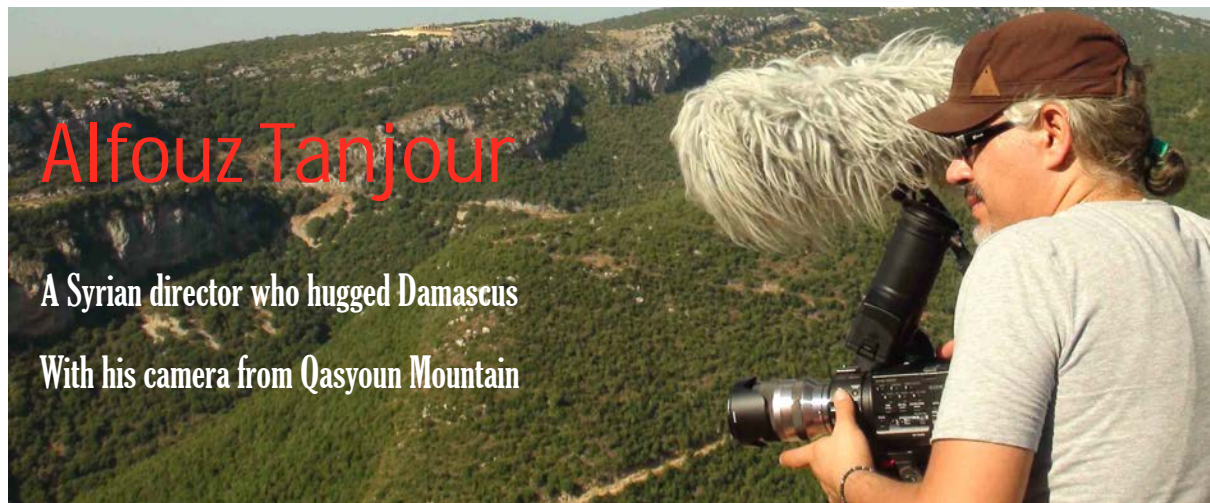
As a Belgian relief organization and through our actions, we would like to be a hope for the many war victims so they can, despite all the suffering, pick up their life again. We also apply very strict rules in order to guarantee that the donated funds achieve the right persons.

How can the donors communicate with you?

Our association's registered office in the Rue de des deux Eglises 81 Saint-Josseten-Noode -Brussels.

info@cbss.be www.cbss.be

Maan Alhasbane - ARCHumankind



Who is Alfouz Tanjour?

I was born in Salameih, Syria in 1975. I studied Filmmaking at the Academy of Fine Arts in the Republic of Moldova from 2000 to 2004. Since graduating, I have made several projects as director, director of photography, editor, or executive producer, including more than 15 documentaries for the Al Jazeera Documentary Channel.

I made the long-form documentaries 'Wooden Rifle' (2012), about the Lebanese Civil War, and 'Rebellious Spirits, Jibran Khalil Jibran' (2013). My short 'A Little Sun' (2007) won the Bronze Tanit at the Carthage Film Festival in 2008 and a Special Jury Mention at the Love International Film Festival in Mons, Belgium in 2009. 'Wooden Rifle' won the Public Liberties and Human Rights Award at the 9th Al Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival in 2013.

What is the charming secret of Cinema?

Cinema narrates its own worlds, stories and characters using images. Its pictorial expression is like the expressing of dreams; as Fellini said, 'Dreams are the only reality'.

I love images, stories and dreams – this intellectual and imaginative combination initially stemming from the long process of observing reality. I love making films and I love living them in life.

Through cinema I can say what I want, create characters and events. The aim of all this is to solve the mystery of reality, to reveal the secrets, thoughts, dreams and lives of human beings.

In transferring the soul of reality into scenes, what do you see the key element in narrating a story vividly?

I feel that the image in cinema is the most important and fundamental element in telling the story; it should not lose its primary function as a visual medium of expression.

For me only the image in the film bears the viewpoint of the author, of reality, of life; it is the most important and fundamental element in telling the story. The image constantly monitors time – the movement of the film -- in a true and important way. However, it must be a self-portrait which reflects the author's perspective, and essentially expresses this perspective to break through reality,

and access the worlds of characters and places. With this vision, I choose the actor to be an essential part of the picture; the actor in my films is a model playing a role, and together we create characters and discover new worlds again via the image.

How far is the life of Alfouz Tanjour, the person, reflected in your films as a director?

Everything I say in my films is a personal story, something I have been through, dreamed about, read or heard.

In narrative films, I build everything, re-creating everything to resemble the image of reality from a specific perspective. Thus I build my world as I want, with everything related to telling the story, whatever it requires – lighting, camera movements, the actors' performance and the scenery; they are all derived to create the shape and content of the story, the film. The aim is to solve the mystery of reality, not to create a reality of unconnected symbols.

Everything in the film therefore becomes personal and carries one perspective – that of the author/director.

How are the narrative and documentary films distinguished?

For me, narrative and documentary film overlap in many places: in their sincerity, truth-telling, construction, form and content; in my concept of the performance of the model/actor/character in front of the camera; sometimes in the narrative, and often while retuning life to take on another dimension to allow a different and new understanding of reality.

Are there any links available to your films?

Here's some links of my Films Websites:

A little Sun:

<http://vimeo.com/56258243>

Damascus City Symphony:

<http://vimeo.com/72163541>

Rebellious Spirits:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGD0vdR32IA>

Faraway, so Close:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yroOTxnkZJI>

Maan Alhasbane - ARCHumankind



ADEL DAUOOD

SYRIAN PAINTER, COLOURS ARE HIS DAILY LIFE

How was this passion for art shaped in your soul?

I am Adel Dauood, born in 1980. I have started my way in art from a simple environment filled with diverse cultures and extended deep in the history from a city located in the north-eastern part of Syria and called Al-Hassakah. The city which is far from industrial and commercial fields, but contains considerable amount of complex details and which were reflected later in my paintings. Those details were represented with isolated people living in emptiness, rejecting to be part of the flock.

I was isolated in my studio which consists of wood and some concrete stones thrown in the corner of the house. In 1999, I started my academic studies in the Center of Fine Arts in Al-Hassakah for four years, and participated in many exhibitions inside Syria. In 2007, I entered the "Oil Painting" Department in the University of Fine Arts in Damascus.

In what exhibitions have you participated so far?

I had my first solo exhibition in Damascus in 2011 (at Art House Gallery) which led me to another space that reflected my soul into a dream or a fantasy quite different from my concerns which were confined to my memory and the details of my life as the small concrete rocks in my studio. After that, I had my second solo exhibition in 2012 (at Ruaa Gallery) in Amman, Jordan, titled "Painted Spaces from my Simplified Memory". Then I started participating in workshops and group exhibitions in Beirut that reflected the harsh reality my country Syria is facing in gray colors after it lost its real color. Then I moved to Austria and participated in three group exhibitions in Klein Gallery with artist from after the Second World War such as Adolf Frohner...etc. Through the chaos and absurdity in my life, and my experience of a new world that is totally different from the previous one, I managed to complete my career but in a different form and new works. This experience places me in a new deep tunnel which goes beyond the sense narratives and changes in the painting.

And are there any coming exhibitions?

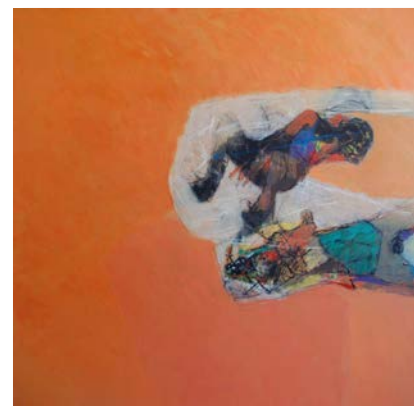
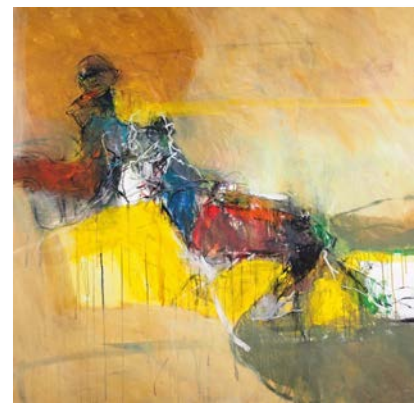
I am selected with 23 artists out of 756 Austrian artist to set up an exhibition summarized in the title of "The Future of Painting in Austria" from October 2, 2014 to February 8, 2015 in Essel Museum of Contemporary Art in Vienna, a city known to the art arenas of Europe. I am proud to be selected to present the future of painting in Austria, and I think that this experience will be the beginning of a new phase in my career.

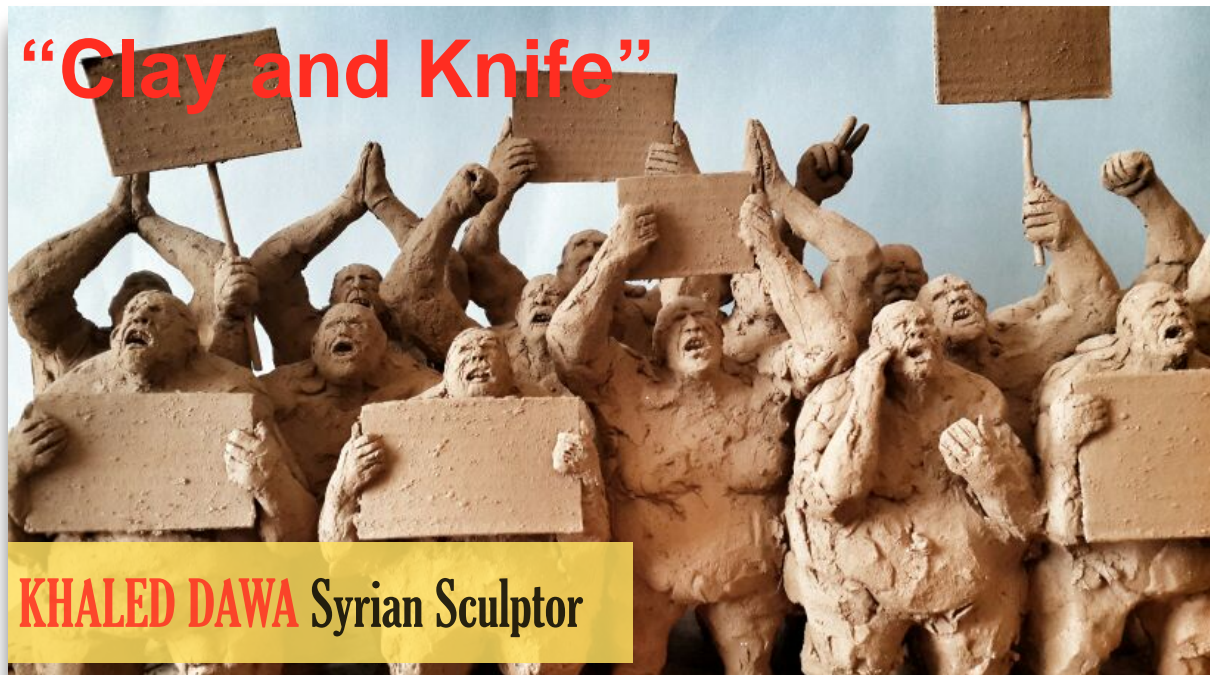
Any links available to see your work?

<http://www.essel.museum/jart/prj3/essel/main.jart?content-id=1409653487967&rel=de&reserve-mode=active>

http://www.essel.museum/ausstellungen/ausstellungen?article_id=1382947214357&event_id=1382947214359

Maan Alhasbane - ARCHumankind





Since 2007, **Khaled Dawa** has been digging into the concept of “waiting” through several sculpting artworks; this “waiting” which the uprisings in the Arab world has given it a new dimension. What used to be a personal waiting has become a collective one, but “waiting” for a miracle is merely the absence of “action”, and an idle anticipation that can only indicate a deeply rooted deformation in the physical, intellectual and aesthetic construct of those individuals that will only bring their demise.

How this waiting affects us, and how an individual would deal with his/her personal waiting, is the main proposition of his characters. Where “fragility” infects the roots of a being, spreading through every other constituent in its existence, it starts falling apart, its hands fall down, its legs are deformed, and its face erodes. It would also lose its heart and intestines, while its eternal chair would collapse, to eventually integrate with it. It would be rotting in front of this harsh reality, for which it has done nothing but waiting, while it should have done something, when it has to rise up.

Despite all the darkness in that phase, in 2011 he made a clay sculpture titled “The Free of the Atelier Appeal to the Statues of the World to Save the Human Race” which included a number of characters holding banners and screaming their demands which represent those who came out in the beginning of the Arab Spring. After three sweeping years, and after Arabs has recognized, both on the individual and collective levels, their right in obtaining the truth, this work of “The Free of the Atelier” comes back to revive some hope, and to turn the page of the waiting stage, to reach a new phase of action, at least some of its characters will do.

Since 2011 Khaled has participated in the Syrian revolution through his sculptures and artworks, it was his way to reach all over the world the Syrian’s demands of freedom, freedom of expression, right of demonstration...etc.

It was impossible for security reasons to exhibit the artworks of Khaled during his staying in Damascus, so he starts photos his sculptures and displays them on his own page on Facebook till the end of 2013 when he was forced to leave Syria.

As a new start for Khaled to interact with people's fears dreams and demands, "Clay and Knife" was created; it is a Facebook page for the sculptures and artworks of the Syrian sculptor Khaled Dawa. It was created by the end of 2013, and it aims to touch the humanitarian conditions influenced by the socio-political transformation in the region, ensure the ability of art to express the people's feelings and demands, approach different segments, especially those who are not interested in cultural means of expression, rebuild the relationship between intellectuals and society, and bestow arts and culture their significant roles in socio-political transformation. Since then "Clay& Knife" successfully reaches and acquires the attention of an extensive positively- interacted audience. (<https://www.facebook.com/clayandknife>)



Khaled Dawa:
 BA in Fine Arts - Department of Sculpture. Damascus University
 In 2011 he participated in establishing "Al-Bustan" atelier under the supervision of "Fares Helou" Famous Syrian Actor.
 In September 2013, he was forced to leave Syria to Lebanon for security reasons, where he is preparing his solo exhibition.

Miriam Khalili-Syria



Aleppo

IS UNDER SIEGE, MOM

D.F Syrian Writer



And his fingers slackened on the hesitant door-knob waiting for an excuse that would sound more merciful on his old mother's heart. Undoubtedly, once she sees him, she would ask him about the news outside her humble, full of love and hope, room.

The trembled thoughts just gushed out of the bleeding womb of humanity:

How can he hide the heavy mourning smell that has covered every corner of this city and masked the destruction with death and smoke?

How can he apologize to her motherhood amidst the mothers' sighs of 38 martyrs who passed in one hour?

How can he draw a map for the jasmine of her memory whose identity has always been one and never accepted to be parted; whose identity is neither eastern for the rebel-governed city, nor western for the regime-governed one.

How can he smother the lineaments of a wait in his eyes that has been coldly amputated by the promises of blind declarations and the pledges of deaf statements? Would she believe that the moment of a whole building collapse is the same moment the local TV station hosted a singing program? Would the new set of candles whisper to her that electricity has become a bitter hostage for endless negotiations? That the empty bottles of water, filling every home, are the repeated omen of an everlasting thirst menacing this inhabited wasteland? Would she hear the silence of streets yearning to be touched again by its vendors while nothing left in the market but the shadows of empty wheelbarrows and the silent cries of men gasping to earn a living?

* Fajr is an Arabic name that means Dawn.

He anxiously checked the dear withered bundle of parsley that would save him, after hours of searching for food, from visiting her (again) with a bare hand that this siege has ripped it off from whatever can be bought.

Swallowing his agitation, he opened the door and let his feet embrace the warmth of her room. There, she was lying down on a white bed that resembled her pearl-like forehead.

The kiss on her hand woke her up, and the rustling noise of his humble parsley bag turned into a trill upon hearing the motherly prayer of "May God bless you, son".

He closed his eyes for a moment to help his soul caress the soothing sense of peace in this blessed room; a feeling that all his senses miss so deeply.

"Please son, calm my heart and tell me, what's the news?" The letters could hardly find their way out of her worried lips.

"Mom, Aleppo ..."

And suddenly, all the images of violence, death and blood just surrendered to allow a slight thread of hope to satisfy her longing voice; the voice that has been long yearning for any piece of peaceful news.

"Mom, Aleppo witnessed a great event yesterday!" and he tried to make his words wear the happy excited tone. *Fajr, your grandson, uttered his first word! Next time, I want him to say your name, and the one after he will speak the names of all mothers! Yes, he should keep talking and never stop expressing himself out loud; nothing will silence his free will."

The warm kiss on her hand sent her back to her dreams, but this time with a deep calm smile that believed Fajr will visit her soon... real soon.



Center “Tomorrow is ours”

The establishment of the Psycho-Social Support Center «Tomorrow is ours» is enlisted in the frame of the Psycho-social inclusive plan that the NNI is currently working on. Children and adolescents make up a large proportion of the Syrian citizens who have been forced to leave their homes and towns because of bombardment and systematic military operations.

These children and adolescents have witnessed horrific accidents, killing and torture as well as serious physical injuries, the victims of which may have been members of their family or friends. They will also have seen material damage to their houses and streets. Psychological Science considers these age groups especially vulnerable to psychological trauma caused by war and civil strife. Various multiple pathological responses can develop in children and adolescents as a result.

The above information highlights the importance of the «Tomorrow is ours» project. We will be working to provide psychological and social support for children and teenagers from refugee families in Lebanon. In addition to this the project will provide educational and recreational activities.

Our psychological support Programme:

The psychological support Programme aims -with the help of specialists- to help children overcome the atrocities they have lived through. A variety of activities will be provided through a series of workshops. Interactive theater workshop, drawing, handicrafts, sculpture and pottery painting, creative writing workshop to help children deal with their suffering by expressing themselves on paper .

Our recreational activities

The camp environment is unhealthy psychologically and physically due to its narrow streets, and the lack of open spaces and children’s playgrounds. Many children who were caught in the midst of the ongoing fighting have suffered immensely and are now trapped in the miserable environment of the camp. Our recreational Programme can help to raise their morale and put smiles back on their faces. the recreational Programme will contain: an interactive theater workshop followed by a play, an exhibition of artwork completed during a drawing workshop. a collection of stories written by the children during a writing workshop, puppet shows. an animated film adapted from the children’s drawings and stories. a Film Club, trips outside the camp to introduce the children to other parts of Lebanon.

Our education support Programme:

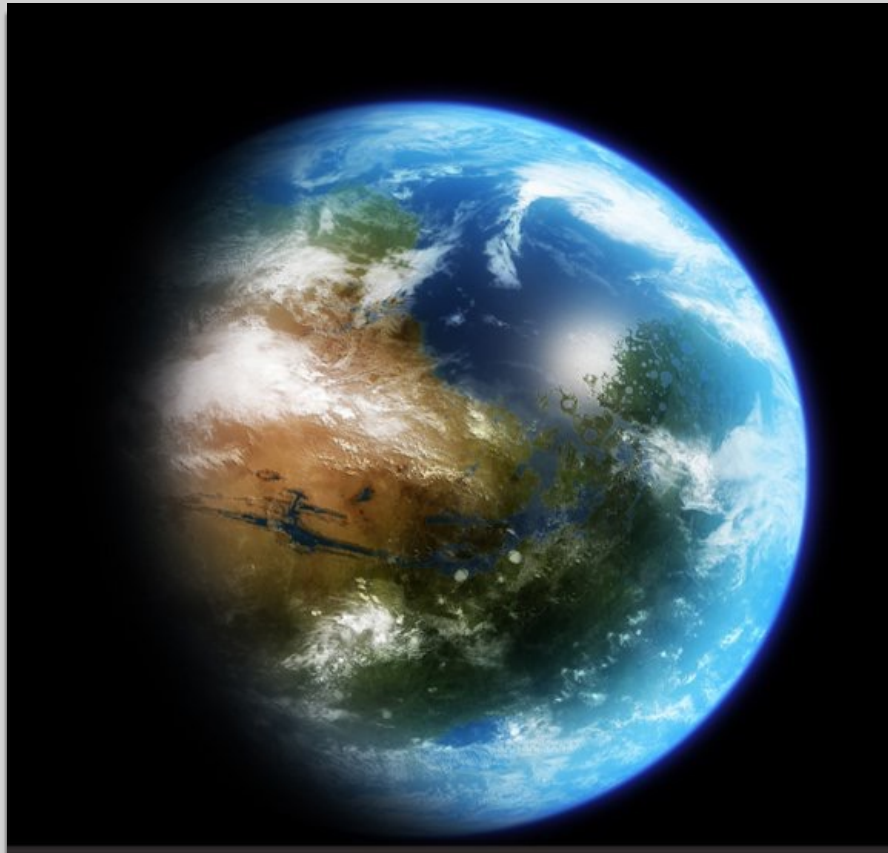
Syrian students in Lebanon are facing a big problem because of differing educational methods. Most Lebanese schools give preference to French or English which causes many Syrian students to fall behind or drop out. Fear and insecurity as well as the distance between refuge areas and schools also play negative roles. As a result many families take their children out of school. We Now provides children who do not attend school for any of the above reasons with the following support:

English language reinforcement sessions to help students adapt to the new educational system; learning support in other subjects and help with homework. Classes will be held after school hours by Lebanese and Syrian volunteers. courses to combat illiteracy and help children return to school. Courses will be held during school hours in the activity center and will prepare the students to return to school by introducing them to subjects taught in the Lebanese curriculum. Classes will be taught by Lebanese and Syrian volunteers. All teachers will undergo special training to establish a uni- fied teaching method, Interactive sessions with parents to help them understand the necessity of education, explain the circumstances in each region and encourage them not to take their children out of school. The center’s library has a large variety of books suitable for different age groups and provides reading Programme to encourage children to enjoy books. and our care center takes care of about 50 children between the ages of 4 and 6 during the morning shift. Our goal is to nurture these children and provide them with a modern educational Programme.

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