

The Civil War in Syria

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with material from

*Jerusalem Center for Genocide Prevention
and observers based in the Middle East*

Recent months witnessed a considerable exacerbation of the situation in Syria that threatened to spill over globally. The horrific chemical attack upon Syrian civilians, killing several hundred (including many children) served as a catalyst for those seeking military intervention in Syria's bloody civil war which, to date, has resulted in possibly 110,000 deaths. British Prime Minister David Cameron sought (and failed) to involve Britain militarily, followed by US President Obama's decision, first, to strike Syrian government targets, and then, to seem to change his mind and ask US lawmakers to make the final decision. This gave way to Russian political intervention, followed by a UN-organised process of destroying Syria's stockpiles of chemical weapons (which has now begun). For now, at least, everything seems to have changed from what seemed a sure path to war just a few weeks ago.

Whatever the outcome, one thing is clear: the decision whether or not to intervene in Syria's civil war captured considerable world attention. On the one side, there were demands for swift and harsh action against a

brutal regime responsible for many thousands of Syrian deaths. On the other were those who maintained that to become involved in a conflict such as in Syria, together with all the regional ramifications that would ensue, would be utter madness. Others highlighted the Islamist nature of much of the rebel Syrian opposition, or focused instead on domestic political issues and motives driving Cameron, Obama, France's President Hollande, and others.

In the lead-up to what appeared to be a military strike on Syria, Evangelical Christians globally also expressed strong views on the issue, whether in Christian publications and media, from pulpits and through social media.

In this edition of the *Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* Forum we brought together viewpoints from different scholars and observers to comment on the situation in Syria, the aim being to provide Evangelical readers with comment and opinion pieces from different perspectives. Each contributor provided their piece independently of each other, without having seen other contributions beforehand.

Syria and American Evangelicals

by David Cowan

The primary reason Syria has come to dominate the political landscape for a while is that it did not follow in the hoped-for trajectory of the Arab Spring, and instead begat the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime on its own people, resulting in a tide of refugees into neighbouring countries with the increased risk of long-term instability in the region. These are the issues for Syria and the international community, but my interest here is to explore what specific challenges are set before America and assess the evangelical response.

In recent times, conservative evangelicals have tended to support assertive US foreign policy and military action, yet in the case of Syria many evangelicals have from the start come out against military action and questioned its legitimacy within the Just War framework. Cynics might suggest this is because it is an Obama war, but there is a little more to it than sheer opposition to the President and Democrats. Besides which, Obama himself prefers a negotiated settlement.

On September 3 the National Association of Evangelicals surveyed evangelical leaders to ask "Should Congress authorize direct U.S. military intervention in Syria?" 62.5% said "no" and 37.5% said "yes." Leith Anderson, President of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), said "There is no way to know, but most of our leaders think military action against Syria is the wrong way to go." This seems backed up by various official statements from the Southern Baptists, Family Research Council, and individual voices such as Rick Warren. They have been joined by their Roman Catholic

allies, such as Michael Novak and George Weigel. These are many of the same voices that supported George W. Bush in the Iraq invasion as a pre-emptive war.

This evangelical response perhaps reflects a nation weary of war, period. Yet, there are American national interests in play, which can be distilled into three foreign policy concerns:

1. The need for the US to regain their global leadership, which has been put in doubt by this episode and the role Russia has played in stepping up to the plate courtesy of a curveball from John Kerry. If America does not, then her future role is undermined.
2. The threat of chemical and biological weapons is a real threat to the US and the world.
3. What may be for many the core reason to act is in fact a debatable one in terms of how it plays out, and this is the argument that America has a responsibility to act and cannot stand by and watch another 100,000 die.

America's objectives are clear. There is the need to regain the lead role in advancing a negotiated settlement, build global and regional support, limit the role of Russia and Iran, and undermine the Assad regime. However, there are barriers to be overcome. With over 1200 opposition groups, there is no single obvious group to side with, added to which is a lack of coherence among international forces, the UN and Arab Council. At the time of writing there is a hiatus as Syria supplies details of its arsenal. The military option may remain, but the danger of concerted action is that if forced into a

corner Assad may attack Israel, Saudi Arabia and others, not necessarily with direct military action but through terrorist groups.

We are at a stage where the best option is to let this play out a little more, remind Syria there is still a threat of use of force, build internal agreement among allies and the UN generally, regional support specifically, and learn more about opposition groups and what a post-Assad Syria would look like. Without deciding on this last question, we are left not knowing the end game, whatever the strategic option chosen, and finding we all quickly end up back at square one. Getting this balance right suggests agreement on a long-term goal that outweighs short-term thinking, as failing in the task will take us to the brink again very soon. Leaving Russia in the driving seat is not an option for America either. America needs to support options to facilitate dialogue among the various opposition groups in Syria, while also finding those options which promote its primary role if it is to retain its superpower status.

The notion of a compromised superpower status has given rise to a whole debate about American exceptionalism. Conservative evangelicals have long cherished a belief in America as an exceptional nation, with its Manifest Destiny. Syria gave President Obama an opportunity to assert American exceptionalism, which he took when he said “The burdens of leadership are often heavy, but the world is a better place because we have borne them.” A retort quickly came back from sparring partner Vladimir Putin, who said America should refrain from striking Syria, concluding “it is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding

their way to democracy. Their policies differ, too. We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord’s blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal.”

Syria is a mess, it is a convoluted mess, and there are no quick and easy solutions. There are various national interests in the mix, and the role of international cooperation is once more under test. As the Broadway saying goes, this one will run and run. Yet in the midst of this mess, we would do well to recall Isaiah 17, where we read the prophecy against Damascus, when Jerusalem’s enemies are condemned during the time of the Assyrian invasion, as the Lord declares “See, Damascus will cease to be a city and will become a heap of ruins. Her towns will be deserted forever.” We are left to ponder, what dangers are there should the world desert Damascus and leave Syrian citizens to continue flooding into neighbouring countries leaving behind a nation in misery, silenced only by chemical weapons?

David Cowan

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Syria is not Munich

by Eric Patterson

Secretary of State John Kerry told the American public that the civil war in Syria, heightened by the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime, is this generation's Munich crisis. Kerry, and President Obama, have their history wrong; this situation is simply not analogous to Munich. And now that Russia has made the U.S. back down, the Administration will try to use the Munich analogy as a whitewash for Washington's foreign policy embarrassment.

In a nutshell, the Munich reference is about appeasing a dictator bent on conquering his neighbors. Assad has meticulously avoided provoking his neighbors; his draconian actions are the response of a dictator to a rebellion, not a plan for regional conquest.

Recall that Adolf Hitler, languishing in prison following a failed 1923 putsch, used his jail time to write down his plan for German purification and European domination in *Mein Kampf*. He told his readers that Germany must be cleansed of its internal enemies (e.g. Jews and Communists) and that the German people needed to take over lands on their borders ("living space" or *lebensraum*). He forecast a war with Russia.

Christians in the West did nothing.

When Hitler came to power, he broke international treaties by rebuilding Germany's military, attacked Germany's internal enemies, and then remilitarized the Rhineland (1936). He strong-armed Austria into annexation (April 1938) and then, thanks to Western appeasement in the Munich Pact, appropriated the German-speaking Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia

(1938). It would be a full year before World War II officially started, with Hitler's invasion of Poland. It was then that the Western Allies, sans the U.S., responded—because it was in their national interest to finally do so. The U.S. did not get involved for another 51 months: when Germany's partner, Imperial Japan, infamously attacked Pearl Harbor.

During much of this time, Christians in the West did nothing to stop Hitler. Sadly, many were sympathetic to his revitalizing of Germany and many Christians were anti-Semitic. Most Western denominations crusaded against war in the 1920s and 1930s, rather than arguing for responsible deterrence of the Nazis.

The Syria situation is entirely different. It is a civil war, with atrocities committed by all three sides (the government, the jihadists, and the non-jihadist rebels). The Assad regime is repugnant to the West for many good reasons, but he has not explicitly threatened Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, or Iraq in the context of this rebellion. Assad is an ally of the rogue regime in Tehran, but there is no evidence that an "arc of Shiism" is waging this war in order to destabilize governments in the region nor to grab the land of their neighbors. Indeed, the real threats to regional stability, at the moment, are two-fold. The first is the refugee crisis that has sent millions of destitute individuals streaming out of the country into camps along the borders. The second crisis is the introduction of radical Sunni Islamists of the al Qaeda variety, who vie with more traditional rebels for position and influence.

It is true that the Syria debacle is a nightmare

and that the world community should be watching it carefully. It is also true that Damascus appears to have violated international law by introducing chemical weapons. But this is not a genocide: genocide is the systematic attempt to eliminate a racial or ethnic group. There is no evidence that the regime is trying to do so. In short, the Syrian civil war is ugly but it is not clear that international law compels the introduction of U.S. military power, nor is doing so necessarily in American interests.

This is the fundamental question that Kerry and Obama have not answered: how is it in the best interests of the citizens of this country to, at a minimum, spend millions of dollars of taxpayer money by launching missiles (at very least) into Syria? Why should it be the U.S., rather than Saudi, Turkish, or Qatari military aircraft, doing the dirty work? If the Jordanians, Turks, and Iraqis will not intervene, why should the U.S.?

There is an answer to this question, and the American citizenry will not like it. For many Democrats, especially those like Obama, Kerry, and new U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power, the U.S. should only use military force *when it is not in our interest*. The U.S. should not fight to protect an ally like Israel, intervene to keep the oil lanes open, or punish our enemies (Afghanistan) because that is a callow expression of self-interest. Instead, according to them, we should only intervene in those spots where we have absolutely no interest, in order to demonstrate our altruism, such as in Kosovo, Rwanda, and now Syria.

Is there a Christian response to all of this? Is there an evangelical Christian response? Evangelicals, of any political stripe, can do some things such as pray for peace, pray for wisdom for all parties involved, pray for President Obama and his advisors, pray against

those powers that revel in “killing, stealing, and destroying” human life. Evangelicals simply do not spend enough sustained time asking for divine direction and intervention in cases of calamity abroad. Evangelicals, who typically are politically conservative and emphasize the non-governmental sector, can provide money to those charities (e.g. Samaritan’s Purse, Operation Blessing, and many others) that are trying to meet the basic human survival needs of millions of refugees in the region.

But back to politics: is there a clearly Christian response at the U.S. government-policy level? The only unequivocal affirmative answer to this is that “yes” the U.S. must keep the promises that it has made in international law, such as NATO commitments and implementation of the Genocide Convention. We did not do this when Hitler aggrandized his neighbors in the 1930s nor when the Nazis implemented the Final Solution. But, Syria is not a genocide and none of the immediate neighbors are calling for aid; it seems clear that an attack would more likely be a U.S. violation of international law at this point.

What about interests vs. altruism: does the Syria imbroglio suggest some clearly Christian answer to this point? Is it “less Christian” to work for the commonweal of one’s own country, such as protecting the oil lanes of the Persian Gulf? Is it “more Christian” to send our young men and women in uniform to die in an overseas humanitarian intervention in a place where the U.S. has little experience and no interests? Alternately, should Christians make public pronouncements and parade against the notion of war...would that change anything? Would we answer these questions differently if we were thinking about military action by the Guatemalan or Senegalese military in Syria instead of that of the United States?

Although I think there are thoughtful, Christianity-rooted answers to these questions rooted in the thinking of individuals like Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Niebuhr, Lewis, Bonhoeffer, Ramsey, Elshtain, Tillich, and others, I hope that by asking the question I am provoking the reader to think critically on the issues. In the end, there is one virtue that all Christians embrace that is appropriate to this debate: the modesty to realize that in a fallen

world we cannot fix everything.

Eric Patterson

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Western Involvement in Syria: A Pentecostal Perspective

by Tony Richie

The topic of Western influence on the situation in Syria is admittedly complicated. Although there are different takes on details, there's little doubt that under President Bashar al-Assad Syria's human rights violations have been blatantly atrocious. Syria has become increasingly unstable and volatile both in the immediate region, earning suspension from the Arab League and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, and on the international scene, with severed relations with countries such as Britain, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, the United States, Belgium, Spain, and the Gulf States. Since March 2011, Syria has been embroiled in civil war against Assad and the neo-Ba'athist government. An alternative government was formed by the opposition umbrella group, the Syrian National Coalition, in March 2012. However, opposition forces appear to be at best a mixed bag—good, bad, and plain unknown.

Reportedly, Assad has researched, manufactured, and used weapons of mass destruction. He used chemical weapons on his

own citizens, including civilians and including women and children. The rest of the world cannot and must not tolerate such barbarity and cruelty! However, under threat of a US military strike Syria agreed to surrender its WMDs. On September 14, 2013, the United States and Russia announced an agreement allegedly leading to elimination of Syria's chemical weapon stockpiles by mid-2014. Hopefully, progress is being made. Yet Syria doesn't have a good track record on honoring agreements. Ambiguity and uncertainty are perhaps the best descriptive terms for the current situation.

What, then, should be the role of Western nations, for example, of the United States, in such situations? What should Christians, particularly Pentecostal Christians, hope and pray for? What should we work for? One must beware of simplistic solutions. Nevertheless, consistent application of Pentecostal faith and values can prove helpful in charting a way forward consistent with Christian beliefs and democratic ideals.

Generally speaking, contemporary Pentecostal Christianity arises out of biblical and theological emphases on robust trinitarianism resisting pneumatological subordinationism. Therefore, Pentecostal movements reaffirm the ongoing agency of the Holy Spirit in the operation of charismata, or spiritual gifts of divine grace, rejecting cessationism because it restricts them to ancient history and thereby effectively annuls their continuing relevance. More specifically, Pentecostal affirmation of the life-giving and liberating identity and influence of the divinely sovereign Holy Spirit (Rom 8:2; 2 Co 3:17) invites involvement in Christian witness and activism for life and freedom in every arena of life. That biblical leaders were anointed with the Spirit of the Lord for service (1 Sam 16:13) and that administration or government (1 Co 12:28) is described as spiritual gift encourages applying pneumatological faith and values in civic and political matters. Thus Pentecostal spirituality and theology appropriately inspire attempts to influence civic and/or political decisions and actions toward implementation of foundational values of life and liberty. Pentecostals, with other Christians, have both a right and a responsibility to be salt and light in the world (Matt 5:13-14).

So then, now what? Basically, a military strike doesn't seem like a good idea. Admittedly, the threat of a strike achieved some positive preliminary results; but, there's a clear failure to meet required just war criteria. The moral waters are murky. A dubious strategy of declaring the strike not a war "in the classic sense" is unconvincing. It certainly would involve the use of military force with collateral loss of lives. Would these people be dead "in the classic sense"? Previously, US involvements, covert or overt, in similar situations have had disastrous consequences, especially in the long

run. Remember Iran? Iraq? We're still paying for those moves and with more than just money—much more. History demonstrates that resentment inevitably builds against nations with repeated tendencies to invade others. It is advisable to avoid short term solutions that don't deal with real causes and their contributory factors.

Some serious self-examination is also in order. And that is almost always painful. Human rights concerns behind Western objectives regarding Assad's Syria, primarily driven by the graphic media images of suffering children, taken along with longstanding legalized abortion policies in the US, seem disingenuous at best, hypocritical at worst. Does a country that kills its own unborn have moral authority to call another nation to account for killing its children that happen to be a little older? Neither action is ethically noble. Both are evil. All nations should *consistently* respect and protect the sacredness of all life!

Not surprisingly there has been rampant politicization. It is in the economic interests of the US and the rest of the West to maintain stability in this oil producing region. Syria itself isn't important as a major oil producer but its neighbors are and if the region is destabilized it affects them as well. The regional interests of no one nation, such as the US, should be, either in reality or in perception, the driving impetus for any action.

An ethically and politically applied pneumatology compels us to work for the life and liberty of others, including those suffering from the current Syrian regime and from the fallout of civil war waged by opposition forces. A diplomatic solution is preferable. Economic sanctions and international pressure can be brought to bear. Admittedly, this can be an imperfect and uneven process. However, if the

situation in Syria escalates or deteriorates, an international coalition could still be constructed. Military force could be a last resort. If it comes to it, fighting for the life and liberty of fellow human beings is a worthy—and worthwhile—endeavor.

Bottom line: the United States and other Western nations should work, so far as possible, peaceably for the life and liberty of human beings everywhere, including in the East, not as the world's police but as its partners.

Tony Richie

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Syria, Israel and Scripture: A Messianic Perspective

by Mitch Glaser

My heart breaks for those killed during the Syrian civil war, especially for Syrian Christians who have suffered persecution by fellow Syrians and Muslim fundamentalist soldiers from other countries. Yet what concerns me the most is the possibility that chemical weapons will find their way to the borders of Israel. This is a threat that has caused even more concern than the previous fear that Syria would unleash missiles with chemical warheads upon Israeli cities.

Last May Israeli warplanes struck targets in Lebanon for the stated purpose of shutting down efforts by Syrian forces presumed to be transferring chemical weapons to Hezbollah forces. At the time, an Israeli embassy spokesman in Washington said, "Israel is determined to prevent the transfer of chemical weapons or other game-changing weaponry by the Syrian regime to terrorists, especially to Hezbollah in Lebanon." Many believe the Assad regime has already moved a large number of their chemical weapons outside of Syria, especially to

Hezbollah forces in Lebanon.

If a transfer of some of these weapons to Hezbollah has already taken place, it is possible that these chemical weapons are presently in the hands of Hamas and terrorist forces focused on the destruction of Israel. This is the position of the Israeli and United States governments, and so I believe that this is a real threat.

It is my hope that the resolution of the UN Security Council to restrain Syria will be upheld. I believe that the enforcement itself will be difficult, but if weapons are already in the hands of Israel's enemies, then it might just be a matter of time before they are used. This concern will keep Israelis on edge and only increases the hair-trigger threat of terrorism that Israelis live with on a daily basis. I find myself praying for the safety of Israelis who are collecting gas masks for their families and especially for our staff and those we are serving in Israel. I also pray for the elderly Holocaust survivors and Russian Jewish immigrants who

cannot easily defend or take care of themselves.

As Bible believers, we cannot help but view current events in light of what we read in the Bible. So what does the Bible say about the future of Damascus? In Isaiah 17:1-3, the prophet writes,

Behold, Damascus will cease from being a city, and it will be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; They will be for flocks which lie down, and no one will make them afraid. The fortress also will cease from Ephraim, the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria; they will be as the glory of the children of Israel," says the Lord of hosts.

The Bible is very clear on the ultimate fate of Damascus. The Hebrew words for *cease* and *ruinous heap* leave us with little doubt that one day Damascus will be destroyed and no longer occupied. Isaiah's prophecy about the judgment of destruction of Damascus in chapter 17 is eschatological, and yet to be fulfilled. According to Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser,

Isaiah 17 locates this prophecy "in that day" (17:4, 9), thus a city that has been occupied and served as a capital for all these years is threatened with "no longer being a city" (17:1b) and will be reduced to "a heap of ruins" (17:1c). It will then "be deserted" (17:2a) and a place that is no longer filled with buildings of the city, but a place to pasture flocks and herds! When did this ever happen in history? Even if it is hyperbolic, it surely must point to some major tragedy that is coming. So a major "fortified city will disappear and a royal power from Damascus" (17:3). [personal correspondence to author]

Well-known author Joel Rosenberg adds,

Isaiah's prophecy about the judgment of destruction of Damascus in chapter 17 is eschatological, and yet to be fulfilled. Damascus is never in history utterly destroyed and made

uninhabitable. To the contrary, it is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. What's more, the book of Isaiah indicates that he received the prophecies concerning the judgment of the Gentile nations, including the judgment of Damascus in chapter 17 after Tiglath-Pileser, (the Assyrian King) conquered Damascus. (2 Kings 16:7-18).¹

I must add that there are also many excellent Bible scholars who believe the prediction in Isaiah 17 refers in one way or another to the destruction of Damascus by the Assyrians in 734 BC. Yet while I believe that the destruction of Damascus by the Assyrians did fulfill previous prophecies, I nonetheless continue to believe it more plausible that the predictions in Isaiah chapter 17 will take place in the future.

All too often we miss the relationship between prayer and prophecy. Even though we know that one day Damascus will be destroyed, we are still called to pray for the salvation of Syrians and for peace in the Middle East. We must continue to pray for those on both sides of the civil war in Syria. We should pray for a cessation of hostilities and for the Gospel to go out among Syrians, including the hundreds of thousands of refugees entering Jordan and other countries. We should pray that the use of chemical weapons will end as we look forward to a day when weapons of war will be turned into instruments of peace and the wolf will lie down with the lamb. In that glorious day, our true King will reign from His rightful throne and His kingdom will be established. In that day we will understand the meaning of peace in a way that we have only understood "through a glass darkly."

The Scriptures tell us in Psalm 122:16 to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." By praying

¹ <http://www.joelrosenberg.com/files/2013/09/STUDY-Damascus-prophecies-R.pdf>

for peace in the Middle East, we are praying for the salvation of Israelis and Syrians who are suffering as a result of the conflict and heightened tensions.

In Syria, there are now more than 100,000 reported dead resulting from the conflict between the rebels and the Assad regime. Hundreds of thousands have been injured, and hundreds of thousands have been detained and disappeared. 4.5 million are internally displaced, and 1.7 million have fled the country as refugees. Even more tragically, UNICEF and Save the Children reported recently that over 2 million children have been brutalized and victimized while women have been the targets of sexual violence and related honor killings. The report stated:

“Crimes against humanity are being perpetrated by government forces and affiliated militias as they carry out widespread attacks against civilian populations through

indiscriminate shelling, unlawful killing, torture, enforced disappearance, and sexual violence. They are systematically inflicting sieges against towns perceived as hostile, while populations have been forcibly displaced. Anti-government armed groups have also besieged towns, especially in Aleppo Governorate. They are committing war crimes on an increasing scale, including extra-judicial executions, torture, hostage-taking, and pillage. The violations and abuses committed by anti-government armed groups did not reach the intensity and scale of those committed by Government forces and affiliated militias.”

Mitch Glaser

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Responses to Butchery in Syria A Regional Perspective

Local academic, church and human rights voices have expressed their views about the situation in Syria in a joint statement made available to this journal. The statement is preceded by a timeline of events. Both are published with permission.

Here is a timeline of Responses to Butchery In Syria prepared by the Jerusalem Center for Genocide Prevention:

March 16, 2011: incoming Secretary of State John Kerry said Assad was a man of his word who had been “very generous with me.” Kerry had met with Assad 5 times between 2009-2011. He added that under Assad; Syria will change as it embraces a legitimate relationship with the United States.” There were no reported deaths at the time.

March 27, 2011: Hilary Clinton states that the US will not enter into conflict with Syria because member of the US Congress from both parties view Assad as a ‘reformer’. At that time there were first reports of deaths.

May 12, 2011: Hilary Clinton condemns Assad. By then the reported death toll was approaching a thousand.

August 18, 2011: Obama, 6 other world leaders call on Assad to resign. US freezes all Syrian assets. By then the death toll had exceeded 2,000.

November 27, 2011: the Arab League approves sanctions against Syria. By then the death toll had surpassed 4,500

January 14, 2012: Russia and China veto UN resolution calling for Assad’s resignation. By then the death toll had exceed 6,000.

February 23, 2012: Kofi Annan is appointed UN-Arab League envoy to Syria. By then the death toll had reached 8,000.

April 14, 2012: UN observer mission to Syria is approved. By then the death toll had reached 10,000.

May 29, 2012: US and eight other countries expel their ambassadors from Syria. By then the death toll had exceeded 12,000.

July 20, 2012: UN extends the UN Supervision Mission in Syria for another 30 days. By then the death toll had reached 16,000.

August 17, 2012: Lakhdar Brahimi named Special Envoy to Syria after Kofi Annan steps down on August 2nd. By then the death toll had reached an estimated 25,000.

December 23, 2012: Syrian rebels claim that Syrian soldiers are using chemical weapons. By then the death toll had climbed to 50,000.

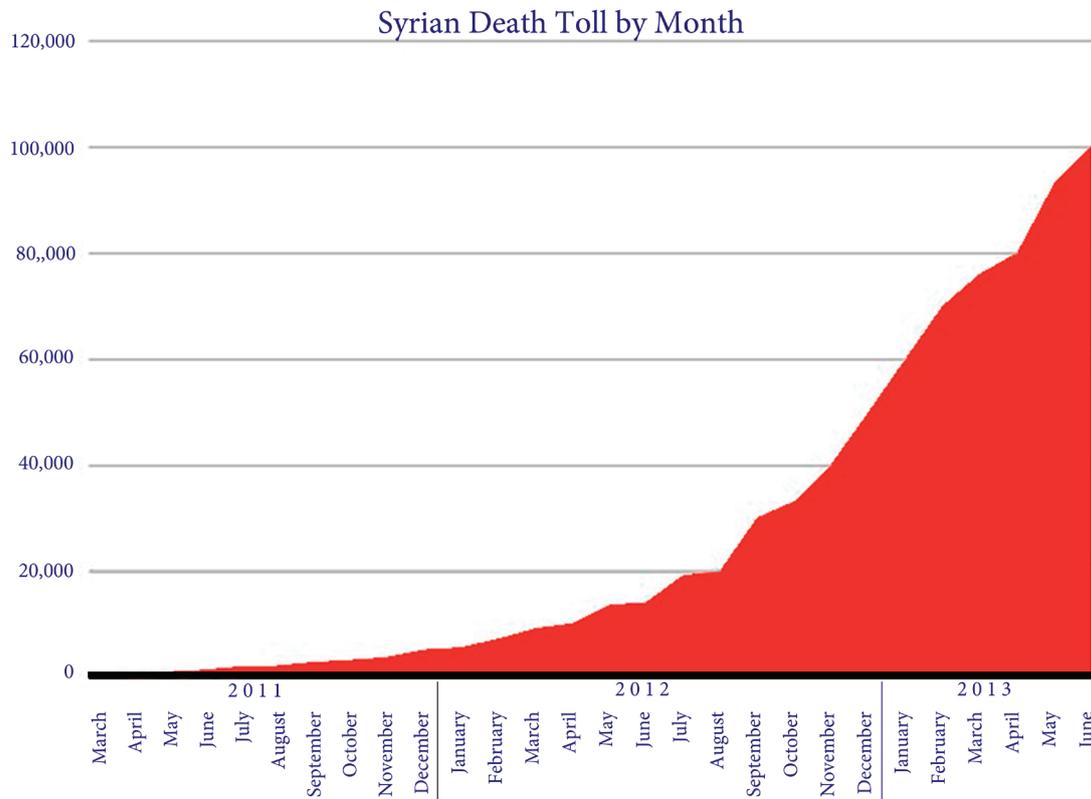
February 28, 2013: US sends roughly \$60 million in aid (food, medicine, water) to Syrian rebels. By then the death toll had reached 65,000.

April 30, 2013: US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel claims chemical weapons were used in Syria. He also states that it is believed that Assad’s forces are behind the use of these weapons. By then the death toll had reached 80,000.

May 22, 2013: The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 15-3 for legislation that would send arms to “vetted” moderate members of the Syrian opposition. By then the death toll had reached 90,000.

June 4, 2013: U.N. Panel Reports Increasing Brutality by Both Sides in Syria. By then the death toll had reached 100,000.

This timeline, prepared by the Jerusalem Center for Genocide Prevention, shows the dismal results to all the diplomatic shadowboxing. The timeline of the climbing death tolls provides damaging evidence that the responses, first to Assad’s butchery In Syria, and then to both Assad’s forces and the rebels, have been exercises in futility. A butcher and his enablers, suppliers and protectors have outsmarted the world.



Prepared by Noah Osher for Jerusalem Center of Genocide Prevention

Here is our response:

We condemn: the mass atrocities, including summary executions, the indiscriminate use of force, the use of chemical weapons, the rapes, kidnappings, beheadings and torture and forced expulsions directed against the Syrian people – all crimes against humanity.

We condemn: the Assad regime that bears the overwhelming responsibility for the death and suffering of so many Syrians and the suppression of their human rights.

We condemn: the continuing persecution, demonization, hostility, expulsions and brutality directed against religious and ethnic minorities – Christians, Druze, Kurds, Alawites, Palestinians, Circassians, Hazaras, Yazidis and Armenians perpetrated especially by jihadists among the rebels.

We condemn: the support that China, Russia, Iran and its proxy, Hezbollah are providing for the murderous activities of the Assad regime. They bear a special responsibility for enabling these crimes against humanity.

We condemn: the passivity of the Western powers, the United States in particular, who are once again

acting as bystanders and allowing unspeakable atrocities to continue without a challenge. Their failure to stop the bloodbath in Syria undermines their credibility and authority as the world's powers and risks the danger of wider regional conflicts.

We call upon the international community: to stop the mass atrocities and crimes against humanity, in Syria against civilians, and the assault on human rights, the most basic of which is life itself.

We call upon the major powers: to take whatever actions are necessary to enforce an immediate and permanent cease-fire, (including the use and spread of chemical weapons) to protect vulnerable minorities in keeping with their international responsibilities to “prevent and protect” and the norms of morality and law. A political solution can wait, but the killing, butchery and atrocities must be stopped. So far, declarations and resolutions have accomplished nothing. The major powers must take responsibility for providing safe havens for threatened minorities.

We call on the international community: to bring all those who have committed war crimes to justice, both from the regime and rebel groups.

We call upon all countries, especially those in the Middle East: to actively assist the Syrian people with humanitarian aid, and to protect vulnerable minorities from persecution and expulsion.

Evil results from human choice and bystander indifference. It is time to stop the drift towards ever more suffering and loss of life.

How many more Syrians will be sacrificed because of western indecisiveness, or for the interests of realpolitik? Hundreds? Thousands? A million?

We call upon all to join this call to action. The nations of the world have a responsibility to “prevent and protect”. The peoples of the world have to hold their governments accountable, now more than ever.

Signed:

Bassem Eid
Palestine Human Rights Monitoring Group

Professor Mohammed S. Dajani-Daoudi
Al Quds University and Founder of Wasatia

Uriel Levy
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