



## Report From Syria: « The Terrorists are Criminals and Killers, They Do It for Money »

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*We met Gotaibah Shabaan at a restaurant not far from the Souk. He was smoking cigarettes, and talking to his girlfriend.*

*He recognized us as newcomers, and was eager to talk.*

*He earned scholarships in both Syria and Russia, for his Masters degree in Maths, and he hopes to continue his education and earn a Phd. Syria, despite the war and the sanctions, is still able to pay him about \$700.00 per month.*

In contrast to terrorist occupied areas, he explains that “there is no school without the government” and that “there is no life without the government”. This would be one of a myriad of reasons that explains why there are millions of internally displaced Syrians: the options are not attractive.

He states the obvious when he says that the terrorists are criminals and killers, and he explains that they do it for money. We know that Saudi Arabia and other countries allied to the West pay their mercenaries well, so it makes sense.

When I asked him how he would characterize the war against Syria, he explained that it is worse than a “regular” war that pits opposing armies against each other.

This too is consistent with reality. House to house, inner city fighting is both dangerous and costly. Foreign-funded terrorists have so far killed about 100,000 Syrian Arab Army soldiers. In contrast, whereas the West carpet bombed Falluja with a view to saving the lives of American soldiers, the Syrian army excludes that option, so that it can save civilian lives, regardless of the cost.

The Syrian government is prosecuting this war so that it can grow and rebuild the future. Occupying imperial armies do not share those scruples. For the West, it’s all about sanctions, “shock and awe”, and willful terror and destruction: total subjugation of the target population is the unstated goal. (Sanctions alone prior to the illegal invasion of Iraq killed over 500,000 children under the age of five, as well as more than one million others.) Syria, in contrast, cleanses terrorists within a framework of protecting as many citizens as possible. Syria is fighting a war in defense of its homeland, whereas invading imperialists fight wars to destroy other peoples’ homelands. The goals are quite different.

Gotaibah asserts matter of factly that of course most Syrians like their President, Bashar al-

Assad. Assad is the protector of Syria.

**Maher Bekdash** (image below), who has been studying law in Syria for three years, has more nuanced opinions about Syria and the war. His thoughts, he explains, are not as common.



Religious issues, emerge, he says, when people are excluded from the political arena, so unpopular opinions should have a stronger political voice. By looking inwards, Syria can own up to its mistakes and try to fix them.

He agrees that Syrians themselves should decide who is to govern, through free and fair elections, and that he would prefer to see Assad in the government, but not as President. That way, he says, Syria would “feel” more democratic.

When asked about those countries opposing Syria, he explained that Syria is more civilized and educated than all the Arabian Gulf countries, and that Syria doesn't trust the West, because the West supports Israel, and he sees Israel as being a key agent of war and division in the Middle East.

More interviews, and more opinions, to follow ....

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