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Fahad ALMASRI -Presentation n°1

First of all, I would like to express my pleasure and honor for this meeting and dialogue with you, and also thank you for your empathy with Syrian people and your defense of human values.

Would you please give me the chance to criticize some points in the book which I consider a very important book?

I will shed light on some issues depending on a lot of data and basics I have out of my political experience and full knowledge of the Syrian Regime.

Sorrowfully the book is entitled Civil War in Syria. It is even more painful that the term “Civil War” has occurred 289 times in the book. This persistent occurrence reinforces the false concept of the Western media and research centers. This false concept has been advocated throughout recent years just to justify the reluctance of the International community which wanted to escape its moral and legal commitments towards what is happening in Syria. This is due to the failure to implementing the International Law for protection of civilians on one hand. On the other hand, it was a pretext to invest in the long-term war to exhaust many regional and international players. It was intended for getting

multiple results and fulfill different objectives so as to control the outcome of this conflict through remote management.

You all know that Syrian people started their peaceful revolution to demand their basic rights to freedom, dignity and social justice. Syrians never took arms for more than six months although Assad's regime used violence to crack them down right from the beginning. The military option was preferred by the regime, and it used warplanes, tanks and artillery to target armless and helpless civilians. Mass-destruction and banned weapons including Skud missiles and chemical weapons were openly used. In this context, I would like to refer to a formal meeting that was held in Cairo on 14 September 2011 where I met Nabeel Al-Arabi, Secretary General of the Arab league. In that meeting, I told him the following:

“Unless a military intervention happens in Syria outside the Security Council for the protection of civilians, Syrians will be obliged to take arms for self-defense. Without such an intervention, Syria will become a haven for extremists and terrorists from all over the World.”

I would like to focus on the following remarks:

- The war in and for Syria was not a local war although some local tools were used. This includes Bashar Al-Assad and his allied militias, Palestinian factions and some Iraqi refugees living in Syria. Iran and its tools and Shite Militias were also involved, especially Hezbollah and other Shite militias from Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- The International Community is also responsible for facilitating the passage of all terrorists and extremists from different countries to Syria. Many countries wanted to get rid of those terrorists at any cost.
- The United States and European countries are also morally, politically and legally responsible to some extent. President Barak Obama has the biggest responsibility for Iran bullying in Syria and other Arab countries. He was responsible for Assad's use of chemical weapons and all other mass destruction weapons like Skud missiles.
- Obama's Administration is also responsible for the Russian military intervention in Syria ever since September 2015.
- The Security Council and the International Community are responsible for the destruction of Syria and the death of about one million persons and the deportation of millions of Syrians.

- The 10-year war in Syria is one of the aftermaths of the two World wars. What is happening in Syria is one of the proxy wars.
- Not so many were aware of the fact that Assad's regime was ready to what might happen in Syria ever since 2005 following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafeek Al-Harriri. Assad's Regime was convicted of killing Al-Harriri. Very few people know that Iran compelled Assad to kill him so that it caught two preys in one trap. It wanted to expel Assad from Lebanon because it could no longer tolerate the partnership with him in Lebanon and also wanted to get rid of the Saudi-supported Al-Harriri, a Sunni figure, who was an obstacle to Iran's domination in Lebanon.

After the death of Al-Harriri, Assad's Regime was internationally isolated, and Assad's intelligence was concerned about a plan to topple Assad down. Therefore, they started their scenario of Islamic State of Sydnaya, the well-known military prison. That scenario lasted from 2005 to 2008. Hundreds of Islamists detained in that prison were utilized as laboratory mice for establishing terrorist organizations. Assad's intelligence planted many intelligence officers who were imprisoned together with Islamists. These spies in Sydnaya were trained to understand the mental and cultural basics related to Sharia and Jihad. That scenario was a rehearsal for isis and Al Nusra Front. These two organizations appeared later when the Syrian Revolution started in 2011. Their emergence was just three months after the beginning of the Syrian Revolution. In June 2011, Assad released those detainees. This means that Assad's Regime wanted to demonize and Islamatize the revolution. No later than three months, all those prisoners became leaders of military factions with Islamic names. Al Joullani led Al Nusra, Zahran Alloush led Jaish Al-Islam and many other leaders led other Islamic factions.

After repeated air strikes of the US-led coalition, many of those leaders fled to Damascus, shaved their beards and went back to their former positions in branches of Syrian Intelligence. It is worth mentioning that many leaders of extremist organizations were former officers of the Iraqi intelligence and Republican Guards who were living in Syria as refugees under close supervision of the Syrian intelligence.

This scenario of Islamatizing the Syrian Revolution was an introduction to elimination of the Revolution by Assad and his allies who, by then, had the pretext for using extra military power. Assad and his allies succeeded in this plan and got the sympathy of some Arab and regional countries and throughout

the World. Approval of these states facilitated the arrival of thousands of Jihadists from many countries through the Turkish borders. The Syrian Revolution was stigmatized with Islamism of most military armed groups. They succeeded in dismantling the Free Syrian Army and controlling political opposition. many opposition forces are connected with Assad. These opposition figures were chosen in collaboration between Muslim Brotherhood and some communists. Real opposition figures were marginalized. Some of the leaders of the current opposition are envoys of Assad who controls and supervises them.

Fahad ALMASRI -Presentation n°2

In the conclusion of the book, on page 229, you quoted what my former friend, Patrick Seale said in his book: “The Struggle for Syria” following the French mandate in Syria and the fragility of its state up to the time of Hafez Assad takeover in 1970, I have the following remarks:

1- Since the II World War ended, countries which won the war have been controlling all political changes in the Arab States. However, some new regional powers have recently entered the arena of regional and international conflicts i.e., Israel, Iran and Turkey.

2- Today, as ten years of conflict have passed with the conflict in and for Syria and following the eminent sacrifices of the Syrians, it has become impossible to ignore Syrians’ participation in decision-making. Syrians have become involved in the change in their country despite all the attempts of Arab, regional and other countries to alter Syrians’ will and make them feel despair through using impairment files and tools.

Today there are five conflicting projects competing for dominance i.e., the American, Israeli, Iranian, Turkish and Russian projects. The Russian project got involved in this crisis through direct military intervention in December 2015. At present there is an Arabic, regional and international consensus to eliminate the Iranian project because other projects have not accepted Iran as a partner in the region. This is clearly manifested by Iran’s behavior due to its awareness of the fact that it has been used as a tool for other projects.

Through a consistent strategy that lasted for years, Iran has been striving to inherit all files which were assigned to Assad’s regime. It did so in relation to Iraq and Lebanon following the US invasion of Iraq. These files include the Palestinian factions, Lebanon, Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic and terrorist groups.

Iran has succeeded in taking over most of these files and managed to expel Assad’s forces from Lebanon after it compelled Assad to assassinate Rafeek Al Hariri who was an obstacle in the way of Iran’s influence in Lebanon.

In recent years, Iran has been trying to deepen its roots in Syria so as to force Israel and the USA to recognize Iran as a partner.

For Iran, Syria is a frontline and defense margin for maintaining its interests and regional dominance and a gate to the Mediterranean and Europe. Through its existence in Syrian, Iran can besiege the Turkish dominance and put Israel between two pliers (Syria and Lebanon in the north together with Gaza Strip in the south)

All military actions taken by Israel and the United States against Iran's existence in Syria will never help in expelling Iran and its tools from Syria.

It is an irrefutable truth that Assad can not get rid of its organic connection with Iran. Being a coward, Assad is aware of the fact that if he does that, he will face the same destiny of Ali Abdullah Saleh.

If Israel and the United States are serious in their efforts to expel Iran from Syria, they need to topple Assad down. By doing so, Israel and the USA will undermine the Iranian pretext for being in Syria upon an invitation by what it considers a legitimate government in Damascus.

Moreover, Only Syrians can eliminate Iran's existence and expel it together with its tools, but this needs an international support and cooperation with all those who suffer from Iran's destabilizing activities in the region.

The fall of Assad's rule means the end of Iran's influence in Syria and thereby its existence in Lebanon. Even its influence in Iraq will decline. In this case, it will retreat into its borders and that will definitely lead to deep and important changes inside Iran itself.

3- Hafez Assad was not a superman, but when succeeded in oppressing Syrians. This led to his full control and having a full coverage by the influential powers which were sure that there was nothing to concern about in relation to the internal situation in Syria. At that point, he was authorized to manage many regional files. This authorization was not due to Assad's power as such, rather it was due to the geographical position of Syria and the strategic determinants owned by Syria together with the authorization granted to him by super powers as he was managing these important files on their behalf and under their supervision.

Fahad ALMASRI -Presentation n°3

Syria and the Israeli Dilemma

Until today, we haven't seen a concrete attitude by Israel towards the Syrian Revolution except for neutrality. Israel has never taken any concrete stance on the Arabic spring, mainly on the revolution of Syrian people. All that Israel has done so far is treating some of the Syrian injured with no other effort for rapprochement with the Syrian people. Benjamin Netanyahu has so far repeatedly addressed the Iranians with video speeches when he has done nothing like to the Syrians. Despite many years of war in and for Syria and the Iranian intervention with its militias, Palestinian and Iraqi militias, Israel is still unaware of the fact that Syrians have got new awareness and have reconsidered all preconceptions, values and slogans. Syrians no longer consider Israel an enemy. We all know that during the Syrian Revolution, Syrians have never raised any anti-Israel slogans. Syrians have never done so although most of them think that Israel protects Assad and prevents any possible collapse of his regime. We think that Israel has to make up for this. The least present and a token of friendship that Israel can give to the Syrian people is the head of Assad especially that Assad is very close to collapse.

We, in the National Salvation Front in Syria NSFS, have offered a road map for peace with Israel, and we truly expressed our will for a real and just peace. We have been looking forward to opening a new historical era between our two countries. We have stated that our only problem with Israel is the Golan Heights, not the Palestinian problem. The issue of Golan Heights can be solved through peaceful means that satisfy both Israeli and Syrian peoples. To our surprise, most Syrians positively responded to our initiative for peace. Therefore, we think that Israel should take this chance.

Israel's reluctance to seriously deal with the presence of Iran and its tools in Syria is not conceivable. Israel should be aware of the fact that the air strikes against Iranian targets in Syria will never be enough to keep Iran away from the border of Israel. Only Syrians on the ground will be able to kick Iran out together with its tools.

Syria has been a passage for all regional and international interests including Iran's interests, but conflict of interests started when Iran's interests flourished in Syria. It is a big mistake made by Israel when it believes that a divided and

weak Syria will serve Israel's interests and security concerns. On the contrary, a fragile, weak and socially fragmented Syria will be a timed bomb at the Israeli border.

It is a very big strategic mistake when Israel thinks that Iran's demographic change in Syria and the conversion to political Shite will serve Israel's interests through having Shite minorities to the North of its border up to Lebanon.

Despite the importance of peace between Israel and UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan, peace with Syria remains the key to regional peace.

I will wait the day when we have real partners for peace in Israel for the establishment of a better future for our children and generations to come. I am looking forward to the day when Syria and Israel will open embassies and exchange diplomats. It will be my greatest honor to deliver a speech in the Knesset on that same podium where Muhammed Anwar Al-Saddat talked to the Israeli people.