

COMMENTARY

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An Open Letter to President Assad

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The Druze writer, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, Salman Masalha, addresses President Assad personally and reproves him for the failure of the hollow pan-Arab slogans of brotherhood and equality that his party uses in order to justify the oppression of his people and the murderous brutality of recent decades. The article was originally published on the Internet site *Elaph* about six months ago, and now appears on *Megafon* with comments by Mordechai Kedar.

Dear Mr. President,

It is difficult for me to address you with this title, but because at least officially, as of now, you carry this title and fulfil this role, politeness and protocol oblige me to address you in this way. And so, I will begin:

Dear Mr. President,

Ever since the flames licked the body of Bouazizi in Tunisia (in December 2010, the start of the "domino effect" of the "Arab Spring"), and their sparks then flew to various locations of the Arab world, you haven't understood, nor have any of those who raised you to power by means of a constitutional farce, explained to you, that the Arab coals hidden under the Arab dust and sand for so many long generations of tyranny will set your house aflame as well.

You have declared many times, to the Western media, of course, that Syria is different from Tunisia, different from Libya and different from Egypt. Indeed, in the process of aggressive investigative reporting, the truth did rise to the surface, proving the emptiness of the whole false Ba'ath ideology which claims "one Arab nation with an eternal mission".

Even so, with the kindling of the flames in the Arab states, the power of this slogan quickly collapsed. Its thunderous fall, as you expressed it in your own words, exposed to all, the nationalist lie that the Ba'ath has been spreading for many generations. These glittering slogans have aroused us for such a long time, and unfortunately still excite the feelings even of those who have outgrown Arab nationalism.

The false ideology behind the Ba'ath slogans, in Iraq as well as in Syria - where it still rules officially - hides the darkness of the prisons into which all of the seekers of freedom among the Arab citizens - the cultural as well as the political - are thrown.

Indeed, this Ba'ath party was never anything but a racist Arab ideology, and because of this it became, essentially, a tribal ideology. Yes, this was the situation in the land of Aram Naharaim, Iraq of Saddam Hussein, and this is the current situation in Syria. When you became president, there were those who hoped, naively, that because you studied in the West and you became acquainted with Western culture, and because you know how to use the Internet, Facebook and other modern media, perhaps some wisps of the aroma of freedom and openness of the Western world would have clung to you.

Oh! What naivety! Indeed, they were all naive because they didn't know that you yourself were never free. All the years that passed in the West were carried away in the wind. What is depressing is the speed with which the glittering slogans disappeared with the first wind of freedom. There is another son, recently captured, who was said to have received Western education, and that he is open, in contrast to his father. However, the moment that the intifada broke out in Libya, we saw how Saif al-Islam Quaddafi returned to his nature, which overcame everything that he had acquired in the West. Overnight, those who were involved in the intifada became rats.

And the same goes for you too, Mr. President. Yes, you were not a free man, not even for one day. Why, you are the son of your father. And therefore, if you had really been free you would have refused to allow your father pass down the rule to you by a constitutional farce. If you had been really free you would have insisted on continuing your work as an ophthalmologist. You would have continued to support people to see the light with your

assistance. But you were not that sort. Your studies in the cultured West did not avail you, and none of its culture of freedom clung to you.

You returned to the natural tribal Arab nature that overcomes anything else that may have been acquired. That is how the saying, "Syria is not Tunisia and isn't Egypt..." became a banner of return to his tribal Arab roots. These roots are the source of the sorrows of the Arabs. These principles are what push these human societies to the abyss whenever some members of this nation attempt to break free from it.

Yes, Mr. President. This primitive tribal fanaticism is what presents the greatest pitfall to a modern state. This fanaticism is what prevents the emergence of a people, in the full sense of the term.

Mr. President, it is so painful to tell you: this is the truth about you. Actually, this is the truth about all of us. And now, after all of these crimes carried out by the regime that you head, life in Syria will never return to the way it was in the past. It cannot be that the storms of emotion will be calmed as if nothing ever happened. Mr. President, the time has come for you to understand the bitter truth, and so you must pack your suitcases. You must let the people be.

The throats that your brutal "Shabikha" have slit, scream from under the earth: Yalla, Get out of here, O Bashar!

And if slogans have any power, our way may prove successful.

This concludes the article of Salman Masalha. Since these words were written, the situation in Syria has deteriorated, and the worse the situation of the regime, the more murderous it has become, and the more cruel it becomes, the more determined are the rebels.

Mutual deeds of slaughter in recent months have taken the lives of dozens and more every day among children, women and men whose only sin was that they belong to the wrong ethnic group: Muslims slaughter Alawites, and they - in revenge - slaughter Muslims. Scenes of horror appear in all the media, and even the nations of the world have begun to feel uncomfortable with these spectacles.

The pressure on Russia is increasing, and its leaders are beginning to talk about the "Syrian people" and their suffering, not because they have become supporters of the revolution or human rights, but rather because they fear the loss of all of their assets in Syria - ports on the Mediterranean Sea and many investments - if the rebellion ultimately succeeds. They are

concerned that the next Syrian regime will throw them out in revenge for their support of Assad. But talk is one thing and deeds are another: The Russians have begun to transfer attack helicopters to the Syrian regime, those that can shoot rockets on the citizens, despite the fact that these rockets are intended mainly to destroy tanks. They still try to breathe life into the Syrian regime, despite that - and perhaps because - the battles have now reached the suburbs of Damascus.

The latest development is that an air defence battalion has crossed over to the rebels' side, and in response, the battalion was bombed from the air, and it's not clear how much the air defence battalion can actually contribute to the rebellion. Nevertheless, this does signify a widening of the cracks in the walls of the military, because the plague of desertion is spreading, and senior officers are crossing over to the side of the rebels. The "Free Syrian Army" received anti-tank ammunition from Turkey and Libya via Lebanon, and the funding for it comes from Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The leaders of the rebellion call to the Syrians living outside of Syria, Arabs and people of conscience in the world to demonstrate in front of the Russian embassy, to stop it from supporting the regime. The United States protests to Russia about the supply of helicopters, but finds it difficult to contribute more than harsh words to the effort of the Syrian people to get rid of the butcher that rules them.

In this situation, where the world stands and passively watches how a mass murderer, son of a mass murderer, slaughters his people, Israel must come to three necessary conclusions:

A. If, God forbid, there is a situation where the neighbours will ever overcome Israel, there is no reason to assume that its enemies will relate to it any better than the way in which they relate to one another. If they only could, they would slaughter Israelis and humiliate and slaughter its citizens at least in the same way in which they do to the men, women and Syrian daughters. The behaviour of the tribes in Libya and in Yemen to each other, just as the way that the Egyptian military treats the demonstrators, shows how they would behave toward Israelis if they only could. Can anyone prove otherwise?

B. The world has been standing for a year and a half, watching impotently as the butcher of Damascus slaughters his citizens. There is no reason to believe that the world would behave any differently if one were in a similar situation to the Syrian people. This is nothing new: After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, it took the world half a year to shoot the first shot against Saddam's military, and during this period the Iraqi soldiers killed hundreds of Kuwaitis, humiliated beyond words all the daughters of the state, looted all the banks and emptied all the possessions of the houses of the Kuwaitis. Israel, just like the Syrians, cannot depend on the

conscience of the world (if there is such a thing) in any matter that relates to its national and personal security.

C. The borders of Israel must be determined according to the worst case scenario: the possibility of an Iranian invasion into Jordan via Iraq obligates it to remain forever in the Jordan Valley, and the possibility that a Palestinian state in the West Bank will become a Hamas state like Gaza obligates one to remain forever in the rural areas in the West Bank. Peace agreements like those that it has with Egypt and Jordan are not a guarantee of security, especially while there are regime changes such as those that one sees see these days in Egypt.

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<http://israelagainstterror.blogspot.co.il/2012/06/mordechai-kedar-open-letter-to.html>

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