

L'argument de l'urgence morale

REVUE DE PRESSE SYRIE

Mercredi 14 décembre 2011

- Deux allégations ont été développées par les organes de communication atlantistes. :
 - 1. Le rapport oral de la Haut-commissaire des Droits de l'homme au Conseil de sécurité validait l'accusation selon laquelle la répression aurait fait plus de 5 000 morts en Syrie en neuf mois. Pis, cette répression s'accélérerait, puisque l'on compterait 1 000 morts au cours des dix derniers jours. Il y aurait donc urgence à intervenir militairement pour protéger la population.
 - 2. L'intervention de l'ambassadeur de France à l'issue du rapport de la Haut-commissaire était conçue comme une mise en accusation de la Russie et de la Chine qui seraient complices, et à ce titre responsables, d'un massacre en cours.

La pluie de récompenses accordées aux opposants syriens fait partie intégrante de cette campagne. Elle leur donne une apparence de légitimité et fait oublier leur islamisme. La remise du Prix Sakharov par le Parlement européen à cinq leaders du « printemps arabe » dont une jeune syrienne s'ajoute à la liste des prix remis par divers think tanks et fondations, dont la Fondation Nobel.

- Cette rhétorique a deux objectifs :
 - 1. Dissuader la Russie et la Chine de faire à nouveau usage de leur veto lors du vote d'une résolution autorisant le recours à la force.
 - 2. Masquer la responsabilité des Atlantistes dans les massacres en cours. A contrario, le ministre russe des Affaires étrangères a qualifié d'« immoral » le refus des Atlantistes de rappeler leurs chiens de guerre.
- Parmi les nouveaux thèmes de propagande émerge l'imputation selon laquelle la Syrie réprimerait ses artistes. De son côté, *Newsweek* évoque une armée d'enfants qui se dresserait contre le régime. Ce bobard permet d'expliquer pourquoi le « régime » tue des enfants. Surtout, il valide le bien-fondé de la cause (« la vérité sort de la bouche des enfants », alors même que cette imputation, si elle était vraie, constituerait une glorification des enfants-soldats. (voir photo p. 28).
- Dans le *Washington Times*, Arnaud de Borchgrave s'inquiète de la doctrine Obama-Clinton de soutien à la démocratie dans le monde arabe. Cette politique ouvre la voie à l'élection de personnalités anti-américaines ou anti-israéliennes.
- La presse du Golfe, quand à elle, reprend une déclaration du roi de Bahreïn au *Daily Telegraph* d'hier (lire le texte p.30). Il y affirme qu'il n'y a pas de révolution dans son royaume, mais des troubles fomentés par l'Iran et la Syrie. Le renversement de Bachar el-Assad devient donc une nécessité pour que les Bahreïnis puissent vivre en paix.

The moto of moral emergency

SYRIA PRESS REVIEW

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

- Two claims were developed by the organs of atlanticist communication :
 - 1. The oral report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Security Council validated the accusation that the repression would have pèrovoque more than 5000 deaths in Syria in nine months. Worse, this repression would accelerate, since there were 1000 deaths over the last ten days. It would be therefore urgent to intervene militarily to protect the population.
 - 2. The intervention of the ambassador of France at the end of the report of the High Commissioner was intended as an indictment of Russia and China that are responsible for a massacre in progress .

The number of awards given to Syrian opposition is an integral part of this campaign. It gives them an appearance of legitimacy and help to forget their Islamism. The Sakharov Prize granted by the European Parliament to five leaders of the "Arab spring", including a young Syrian, added to the list of the prizes awarded by various think tanks and foundations, including the Nobel Foundation.

- This rhetoric has two objectives:
 - 1. Deter Russia and China to re-use their veto in the voting of a resolution authorizing the use of force.
 - 2. Hide the responsibility of NATO during the massacres. In contrast, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs has described as "immoral" the refusal of the Atlanticists to recall their dogs of war.
- Among the new propaganda themes emerged the imputation that Syria repress its artists. For its part, *Newsweek* shows an army of children who would stand against the regime. This canard helps explain why the "regime" kills children. Most importantly, it validates the merits of the case ("the truth out of the mouths of babes." Even though this imputation, if true, it would constitute a glorification of child soldiers. (See photo p. 28) .
- In the *Washington Times*, Arnaud de Borchgrave concerned about the Obama-Clinton doctrine of support for democracy in the Arab world. This policy paves the way for the election of personalities anti-American or anti-Israel.
- The press of the Gulf, for its part, took a statement from the King of Bahrain in yesterday's *Daily Telegraph* (read the text p.30). He says that there is no revolution in his kingdom, but unrest fomented by Iran and Syria. The overthrow of Bashar al-Assad becomes a necessity so that Bahrainis can live in peace.

La Croix (France)

Clandestine en Syrie, elle se bat pour la démocratie

Razan Zaitouneh
Avocate et opposante syrienne

Le Parlement européen décerne aujourd'hui le prix Sakharov 2011 pour la liberté de pensée à Razan Zaitouneh. Cinq figures du « Printemps arabe », son compatriote le caricaturiste Ali Farzat, l'Egyptienne Asmaa Mahfouz, les Libyens Ahmed Al Zuhair et Ahmed Al Samusi, et, à titre posthume, le Tunisien Mohamed Bouazizi sont aussi récompensés.

De sa cachette, d'où elle ne sort qu'à la crépuscule pour quelques furtives courses au village le plus proche, Razan Zaitouneh a accepté de répondre aux questions de *La Croix*, adressées par courriel depuis Beyrouth. Fâcheuse opposante au régime de Damas, elle fut une des premières, en mars dernier, à participer aux manifestations pour la liberté et à s'exposer publiquement sur les crimes commis par les forces de sécurité à Deraa, dans le sud du pays.

Une audace qui lui vaudra l'accusation d'être un agent à la solde de l'étranger. Le 30 avril 2011, au lendemain de son 34^e anniversaire, les services secrets syriens tentent de l'arrêter. Elle leur échappe de justesse et, depuis, vit cachée quelque part en Syrie. Mais son mari et le frère de celui-ci sont arrêtés. Ils resteront trois mois en prison, durant lesquels il est probable qu'ils aient été torturés.

Lever le coude mais efficace, elle dit s'être accommodée de cette existence clandestine, et « essayer de vivre normalement, sans se mettre en danger ». Cofondatrice en 2011, avec le juriste Haytham Al Maleh de l'Association syrienne des droits de l'homme, elle défend la cause des prisonniers d'opinion détenus en Syrie.

Le combat pour la liberté se poursuit, elle le sait, dans toutes les villes du pays. Une lutte qui, selon elle, « a majoritairement conservé son caractère pacifique ». Razan Zaitouneh reconnaît toutefois « le rôle important » que joue l'Armée syrienne libre, dont elle veut croire qu'elle se contente « de protéger les manifestants pacifiques ». Elle déplore les divisions de l'opposition, mais dit les « comprendre après autant d'années de répression ». Elle estime cependant que celle-ci commence « à être mieux organisée sous l'égide du Conseil national syrien », dont elle est membre.

Connectée à Internet, Razan recueille des informations sur la situation dans le pays et alerte l'opinion publique mondiale. En faveur des sanctions internationales « qui contribuent à affaiblir le régime »,

elle estime que « beaucoup d'autres actions devraient être menées dans ce sens. Combinées à la poursuite quotidienne des manifestations, elles devraient mener à la chute du régime sans qu'il soit nécessaire de recourir à une intervention militaire », écrit-elle.

La chute du régime, un espoir mais pas une fin en soi. « C'est seulement une première étape », dit-elle, consciente du chemin qui reste à parcourir. « Nous avons encore beaucoup à apprendre et nous devrons être patients. Il nous faudra reconstruire ce que le régime a détruit durant quatre décennies. Ce ne sera pas facile, mais c'est la seule voie pour faire de la Syrie un pays démocratique. »

En son absence, le prix Sakharov 2011 sera remis à son compatriote Radwan Ziadeh, en exil à Washington. Un prix qu'elle dédie dans un message d'espoir à un orphelin de 6 mois, Ghiath Matar, fils du jeune militant pacifiste du même nom, torturé à mort en septembre dernier par ses bourreaux syriens.

JULIEN COUTURIER (à Beyrouth)

**La chute du régime,
un espoir mais pas
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« C'est seulement
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Libération (France)

L'ONU «moralement responsable» en Syrie

La France a dénoncé l'inaction du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies lundi soir, après plusieurs mois de blocage de la Chine et de la Russie et l'annonce d'un bilan s'élevant au moins à 5 000 morts.

REPÈRES



» Au moins 19 civils ont été tués, hier, par les forces du régime de Bachar al-Assad, notamment dans la province d'Idlib, nord-ouest, limitrophe de la Turquie. Onze d'entre elles ont été victimes de tirs lors d'une manifestation, et six autres ont été abattues à des baraquages routiers.
» Des éléments de l'armée ont tué dans cette même province sept membres des forces de sécurité lors d'une embuscade en représailles.
» Une explosion a eu lieu dans la nuit d'e lundi à mardi sur un gazoduc près de Homs (centre). C'est le quatrième incident visant des infrastructures d'acheminement d'hydrocarbures depuis mars.

«Nos partenaires [...] ne veulent pas condamner les violences des groupes armés extrémistes contre les autorités légales [de Syrie].»

Sergueï Lavrov chef de la diplomatie russe

Par MARC SEMO

Ce sont des mois très lourds, rarement vécus devant le Conseil de sécurité. Lundi soir, la haut-commissaire des droits de l'homme des Nations unies, la Sud-Africaine Navi Pillay, dressait un tableau accablant des crimes commis depuis huit mois par le régime de Bachar al-Assad, avec plus de 5 000 morts, des violos, des meurtres, des actes de torture, des exécutions sommaires, des assassinats d'enfants. Peu après, l'ambassadeur de France à l'ONU, Gérard Araud, prend la parole, accusant la plus haute instance des Nations unies d'être «moralement responsable de ce qui se passe aujourd'hui en Syrie». «C'est le rapport le plus épouvantable que nous ayons entendu depuis au moins deux ans», martèle le diplomate qui, avant de siéger à New York, avait notamment été en charge des négociations sur le nucléaire iranien. Connus et appréciés pour son franc-parler, ce polytechnicien et énarque insiste: «Restons sobres: que le Conseil, dirigé de l'opposition des deux membres et dirigé de l'opposition des autres, n'ait pas pu agir pour exercer une pression sur les autorités syriennes...»

MUELLER. La Russie et la Chine menacent en effet à chaque fois de mettre leur veto, bloquant un projet de résolution, comme ce fut le cas le 4 octobre. Mais le patron de la diplomatie russe, Sergueï Lavrov, a jugé «inadmissible» la mise en cause française. D'importants pays émergents, tels l'Inde, le Brésil et l'Afrique du Sud, membres non permanents, entraînent aussi les pieds devant tout ce qui leur paraît être une forme d'ingérence occidentale. Et font bloc «contre ces Etats membres du Conseil qui veulent obtenir un changement d'égérie au nom de la protection des civils», selon les mots employés en octobre par l'ambassadeur indien. Depuis le début de la crise en Syrie, le Conseil est resté muet, à part une condamnation verbale durant l'été, après les attaques à Damas des ambassades française et américaine. «L'absence de la communauté internationale va encourager les autorités syriennes», a prévenu Navi Pillay.

économiques ciblées, visant les dirigeants du régime, qui se sont durcies au fil des mois. A son tour, la Ligue arabe a adopté le 27 novembre au Caire des sanctions économiques, fait sans précédent contre un de ses Etats membres. Seuls le Yémen, le Liban et l'Irak – qui s'est abstenu – ont refusé. La Turquie, longtemps partenaire économique privilégié de la Syrie, s'y est mis également, pourtant avec autant de véhémence que Paris les atrocités du régime. Ces mesures commencent à avoir leurs effets (voir ci-contre).

MOTEUR. Dans cette stratégie de pressions tout à la fois politiques, diplomatiques et financières «pour arrêter les massacres et ramener le régime déocratique» – selon les mots d'un diplomate – les Européens sont peu ou prou unanimes, et la France joue un rôle moteur.

Aupoint de devenir une cible, comme l'a montré l'attaque vendredi à Tyr, dans le sud du Liban, contre des Casques bleus français de la Rimil. «Nous avons de bonnes raisons de penser que cet attentat vient de Syrie», a affirmé ainsi le ministre français des Affaires étrangères, Alain Juppé, qui, tout en reconnaissant ne pas avoir de preuves, a mis en cause le Hezbollah, «le bras armé» du régime, au Liban.

Face à l'urgence et à la dégradation de la situation humanitaire, notamment dans les villes phares de la révolte telles Hama ou Homs, Paris avait évoqué il y a un mois la mise en place de possibles «couloirs humanitaires», mais cela reste pour le moment une simple hypothèse, car, à moins d'avoir laval du régime, cela impliquerait de recourir, d'une manière ou d'une autre, à une protection militaire et donc à un impossible feu vert de l'ONU. La Syrie n'est pas la Libye, d'autant que le précédent libyen, incré Moscou et Pékin, mais aussi Brasilia ou New Delhi, à verrouiller encore plus leurs positions. Une intervention militaire à caractère humanitaire étant exclue, les Européens, Paris en tête, misent sur des «couloirs humanitaires», proposition de la Ligue arabe qu'elle espère faire accepter à Damas. Mais cela peut paraître dérisoire, alors que la Syrie semble peu à peu glisser dans la guerre civile, entre un régime aux abois et une opposition tentée de plus en plus par la lutte armée pour répondre à la répression. D'où ces efforts pour tenir de faire bouger les lignes à l'ONU. □

Le pouvoir peine à encaisser les sanctions

Les alignements de bidons en plastique ou de bonnes de gaz aux pieds des pères de famille faisant la queue devant les points de distribution de carburants illustrent le quotidien des localités syriennes ces dernières semaines. Faire face à la pénurie de gaz ou pour le chauffage et de gaz de cuisine, sans parler de l'essence pour les véhicules, est devenu la principale préoccupation d'une population qui apparaît comme la première victime des sanctions internationales contre le secteur pétrolier.

Les mesures prises depuis septembre, par l'Union européenne (UE) notamment, ont privé la Syrie des marchés qui absorbaitent 90% de ses exportations de brut, mais aussi des produits raffinés par les géants du pétrole qui viennent d'arrêter leurs activités dans le pays. La crise des carburants est imputée par le régime syrien aux sanctions ainsi qu'aux «armes chimiques» de trafiquants qui détournent des camions-citerne. Elle résulte aussi d'une désorganisation dans l'acheminement des produits du fait des problèmes de sécurité ainsi que d'une situation de panique dans les services de l'Etat.

«Le carburant pourrait manquer pourtant, sauf pour les chars. Les ressources du pays sont mobilisées pour la répression et tout doit être analysé en fonction de la lutte du régime pour sa survie», affirme un éminent économiste de l'opposition qui tient à garder l'anonymat. Or, la Syrie a encore des réserves, comme le proclament avec arrogance, mais à juste titre, ses principaux responsables face aux annonces de sanctions.

Elle peut compter sur ses alliés iranien, russe et même chinois et indien. Toujours, la baisse considérable ces derniers mois des revenus des exportations, des douanes et des taxes va s'aggraver, pèvrant le pays des devises qui commencent à manquer cruellement. Tandis que le dollar (0,78 euro) s'échange aujourd'hui à 60 livres syriennes – contre 20 avant le soulèvement –, les bureaux de change dans les principales villes du pays sont devenus des lieux dangereux, perquisitionnés par les forces de sécurité pour interdire aux citoyens de convertir leurs économies en devises.

Revenus. Le régime de Bachar al-Assad n'est pas le plus affecté par les sanctions économiques déjà appliquées, et surtout celles décidées récemment par la Ligue arabe et la Turquie. Qualifiées de «décision de guerre» par le ministre des Affaires étrangères, Walid Moallem, les mesures arabes seront réexaminées samedi par une nouvelle réunion de la Ligue et suspendues au cas où le régime accepterait les observateurs sur le terrain. L'arrêt des exportations syriennes vers les pays arabes, qui repétebnt environ cinq milliards de dollars par an, entraînerait des effets dévastateurs pour la population. Des milliers d'agriculteurs, d'artisans et de commerçants seraient privés de revenus. En outre, les transferts qui effectuent les deux millions d'expatriés syriens dans les pays du Golfe représentent des compléments de revenus indispensables pour leurs familles restées au pays. «Si les virements bancaires sont effectifs,

ment interdits, et surtout si les voies reliant Damas aux principales capitales arabes sont coupées, cela bloquera l'arrivée des voyageurs transportant ces fonds en Syrie. La situation de beaucoup de gens sera intenable», explique l'économiste cité plus haut. Les gens en voudront-ils davantage aux pays qui ont pris ces sanctions ou au régime qui les a suscitées, notamment quand il a refusé l'initiative arabe exigeant l'arrêt de la répression? La révolte sociale pourrait grossir les rangs de la protestation politique. «Pour le moment, c'est surtout le choc qui guette avec une hausse de la contestation, des troubles, de la criminalité et de l'insécurité», note l'économiste.

Désigis. L'effet des sanctions sur les milieux d'affaires, dont le soutien au régime lui est vital tant politiquement que financièrement et socialement, risque d'accélérer les choses. Les partenaires les plus liés aux affaillistes du clan Al-Assad – notamment à Rami Makhlouf, cousin germain de Bachar al-Assad – visés nominalement par l'UE ont vu leurs comptes bloqués en Europe et aux Etats-Unis, pays qui leur sont intérieurs. Ils n'ont plus les moyens de contribuer à la répression, comme ils le faisaient payant les redoutables sbires, ces militiens qui règnent la terreur parmi les manifestants.

«Le carburant pourrait manquer pour tout, sauf pour les chars. Les ressources du pays sont mobilisées pour la répression et tout doit être analysé en fonction de la lutte du régime pour sa survie.»

Un économiste syrien souhaitant rester anonyme

D'autres hommes d'affaires prennent leur distance. «Le bateau prend l'eau de toutes parts», affirme un entrepreneur à Damas. A posteriori nous courrons les bouches des associations européennes et américaines qui s'ouvre le feu également des sanctions arabes.» L'arrêt des échanges avec la Turquie va entraîner des dégâts considérables pour les entrepreneurs du nord du pays, en particulier de la région d'Alep, qui avaient investi en Turquie dans des usines d'habillement, de mobilier ou autres produits de consommation courante. Tout est bloqué par la suspension de l'accord de libre-échange entre les deux pays. Nombre de ces compagnies, surtout dans les villes insurrectionnelles d'Idleb, Hama ou Homs, sont déjà passées du côté des protestataires qu'ils aident financièrement, selon les comités de coordination de la révolution.

L'étranglement économique du régime syrien, objectivisé par les sanctions, passera par une déterioration générale des conditions de vie de la population. Si la grève entamée dimanche à l'appel du mouvement de protestation venait à s'étendre, elle accroîtrait la tension politique et sociale. Cette pression intérieure accrue, s'ajoutant à la pression sur le terrain et à l'isolement diplomatique, ne peut être gérée durablement par le régime. «Il ne faut pas négliger les effets psychologiques de toutes ces mesures sur le moral des troupes», observe l'économiste qui parle sur «un événement inattendu, un hasard qui peut tout faire basculer».

HALA KODMAN

Le Monde (France)

Plus de 5 000 morts en Syrie, selon les Nations unies

La haute-commissaire de l'ONU aux droits de l'homme presse le Conseil de sécurité d'agir

New York (Nations unies)

Correspondante

Le bilan de la répression sanglante en Syrie « dépasse probablement les 5 000 morts », a fait savoir la haute-commissaire de l'ONU aux droits de l'homme, Navi Pillay, au Conseil de sécurité, lundi 12 décembre, lors d'une séance à huis clos organisée à la demande de la France. Ce bilan comprend 300 enfants, dont 56 pour le seul mois de novembre, des soldats déserteurs, des militaires exécutés pour avoir refusé de tirer sur les manifestants, et les victimes issues des forces de l'ordre. Par ailleurs depuis mars, plus de 14 000 personnes ont été arrêtées et 12 400 autres ont fui le pays.

« C'est le rapport le plus épouvantable que nous ayons entendu devant ce Conseil depuis au moins deux ans », a déclaré l'ambassadeur français Gérard Araud, après l'exposé livré par la juriste sud-africaine.

La longue liste des exactions commises par les forces syriennes dont elle a rendu compte devant les 15 pays-membres – exécutions sommaires, arrestations arbitraires, disparitions forcées, tortures, parfois avec des violences sexuelles – est à peu près celle déclinée dans le rapport de la commission d'enquête internationale mandatée par le Conseil des droits de l'homme à Genève, publié fin novembre.

Navi Pillay se réfère à des « informations crédibles provenant de diverses sources », dont 233 victimes de violations des droits de l'homme ou témoins d'exactions, parmi lesquels figurent des civils et des déserteurs des forces de l'ordre.

Selon ces mêmes sources

« dignes de foi », a-t-elle insisté plus de 200 personnes ont été tuées par les forces syriennes depuis le 2 décembre. Autant d'exactions de « nature répandue et systématique » qui constituent des crimes contre l'humanité, a-t-elle souligné avant d'appeler le Conseil de sécurité à déferer le cas de la Syrie à la Cour pénale internationale (CPI).

Double veto

Si l'ambassadeur russe Vitali Tchourkine, qui préside le Conseil ce mois, s'est dit « trouble » par la poursuite des violences, il a rappelé que son pays considérait le « dialogue politique » comme la seule solution acceptable à la crise syrienne et a accusé « certains membres-clés de la communauté internationale » de vouloir se débarrasser du régime syrien. « Le Conseil de sécurité est moralement responsable, et son silence est un « scandale », a estimé Gérard Araud, en allusion au travail de sape mené par la Russie depuis neuf mois pour empêcher toute condamnation de son allié syrien.

« L'inaction de la communauté internationale va enhardir les autorités syriennes et assurer l'impunité aux auteurs » de ces tueries, a mis en garde Navi Pillay, qui a soumis plusieurs recommandations aux 15 pays-membres, dont la création d'une commission d'enquête internationale et l'envoi en Syrie d'observateurs étrangers. Déterminés à venir à bout de la résistance russe, les Occidentaux ont fait savoir qu'une fois connue l'issue des prochaines réunions de travail de la Ligue arabe, ils décideraient « quelle action entreprendre ». ■

ALEXANDRA GENESTE

El Mundo (Espagne / Spain)



Este equipo de informadores clandestinos exhibe una pancarta en castellano que dice 'Queremos libertad', en la localidad siria de Kam Safrar. (Foto: AP)

Los 'ojos de la revolución' siria

Un grupo de camarógrafos aficionados equipados con satélites transmite en directo las protestas desafiando la presencia de tanques a pocos kilómetros

JABAL ZAWYAH / JABAL ZAWYAH (Siria)
Entrevista especial
Abu Mahmud, integrante del Ejército Libre de Siria (ELS) y familiar de Feras Jarba, dice que lo último que supieron de Feras fue que había sido arrestado el 19 de noviembre por el servicio de Inteligencia de la Rama Adraa. Una de las más temidas del régimen.

Su cadáver apareció a las 24 horas. Tirado en una de las principales avenidas de su ciudad natal, Al Qazir, en la provincia de Homs. «Le habían sacado los ojos. Feras era quien transmitía todas las imágenes de las protestas a los cadenas drábea», explica el insurgente.

La sorprendedora acción impidió a las fuerzas de seguridad certificar el significado que han adquirido ciertos de personajes como Feras, camarógrafos aficionados que una vez total ausencia de periodistas independientes, llevan meses convertidos en los únicos testigos ocultos capaces de documentar con sus videos la revuelta siria.

Mohamed Yihad un sello su armillito durante algunos minutos cuando las balas trazadoras procedentes de las posiciones sirias surcaron el cielo nocturno. «Estábamos en vivo, no podemos cortar la transmisión», señaló.

Cientos de personas se habían congregado en finca, una de las aldeas de Jabal Zawya. A menos de dos kilómetros se encontraban los tanques del ejército leal a Bashar

Asad. El joven manzana conocida su cámara a un sacerdote inmortalizó todo los días para Al Yazira, precisó. Tan sólo una hora después, cuando se espació el rumor de que los blindados avanzaban sobre Elshia, el joven recogió su equipo y partió a la carretera junto a los clientes de opositores

y un miembro del ejército, o Milad Fadel, un exiliado francés.

Dos días más tarde, el grupo dispone de tres transmisores vía satélite –donados, según Milad, por un empresario saudí y otros dos sirios– con los que documentan las protestas y ataúds que están sufriendo la población de esa re-

gión. Desde el inicio de la revuelta, los chavales que grababan las movilizaciones con sus teléfonos móviles se han erigido en uno de los principales objetivos de los francotiradores del régimen. Hay varias grabaciones en las que el propio autor es alcanzado por uno de estos sitiadores emboscados.



Un sirio quema una ilustración de Bashar Asad. (Foto: AP)

congregados en el villorrio. «Rápidamente hay que salir de aquí», indicó el joven sirio.

Yihad forma parte de la decena de activistas integrados en el llamado «centro de información» de Jabal Zawya. Un grupo de muchachos tan ajenos al periodismo como Abdo Radl, experto en arqueología, antiguo recluta del Corán

glín asediada. Una labor que paró un calco de lo que asumían los jóvenes libios durante el cerco de Misrata o el de las montañas de Nafusa. Como en Siria, allí el enorme costo de estas transmisiones era cubierto de forma gratuita por hombres de negocios acuñados que simpatizan con la causa. Milad Fadel es consciente del riesgo

que asumen. Desde el inicio de la revuelta, los chavales que grababan las movilizaciones con sus teléfonos móviles se han erigido en uno de los principales objetivos de los francotiradores del régimen. Hay varias grabaciones en las que el propio autor es alcanzado por uno de estos sitiadores emboscados.

«La gente ha aprendido a disimular sus teléfonos escondiéndolo en alguna parte de la ropa o en una bolsa porque grabar de forma obvia es una semilla de muerte», precisa el sirio de 24 años.

Desde hace diez, añade, miembros del régimen han localizado su teléfono y lo llaman a menudo para intentar que abandone su trabajo.

«Me ofrecen una amnistía, pero nunca aceptan. Aquí, o vencemos o morimos», señala parafraseando la famosa semilla del líder guerrillero Ibbi Omar al Muyar.

Los apodados ojos de la revolución han establecido una sofisticada organización capaz hasta de inventar códigos secretos para reclamar que se exhiben en cada movilización. Cuando un grupo de periodistas españoles se personó hace días en Kam Safrar, la capital rebelde, los activistas de inmediato escribieron sobre una de las pancartas un extraño mensaje en castellano que rezaba: «Queremos libertad».

Wahid Sheh Wall, un estudiante de 21 años, aclara que los comités locales de coordinación son los que eligen el nombre que llevará la manifestación del viernes, la principal de cada semana. «Nos envían el slogan por email», asegura.

«Le sacaron los ojos, era quien transmitía todas las imágenes», explica un insurgente

«Retransmitimos todos los días para Al Yazira», dice otro periodista accidental

Cuando el Ejecutivo de Asad acudió a la cadena Al Yazira hace varios meses de difundir grabaciones de movilizaciones retransmises en decorados ficticios fuera del país, los activistas reaccionaron con presura y ahora al inicio de casi todos los videos colocan una pancarta con el díal y la localización de la marcha.

En las regiones fronterizas con Turquía donde no disponen de Internet, militares como Wahid Sheh Wall recurren a la señal 3G de los teléfonos del país vecino. «Le envío las imágenes a mi hermano que está en Antioquia y él es quien las sube a Internet», dice. Los chavales han suplido los móviles por cámaras Sony Handycam, que en lugares tan conflictivos como Homs deben ocultar como si se tratara de material bélico.

«Hice vez la escuché doblar de un burro de mi padre que estaba durmiendo», dice Emir, un chico de Homs, que huyó al Líbano cuando las autoridades le descubrieron.

Los opositores han creado además una red de medios alternativos que intentan suprir la carencia de periodistas. Semanarios clandestinos como Al-Haq, que se edita en un barrio de Damasco, Nusrah Siria –que en su primer número en septiembre se inspiró en Gandhi y proclamó en su primera página: «Cuando el estadio decide no seguir sirviendo, se casa sus caderas»– y Oxygén, una web que ya acoge más de 2500 videos de la revolución.

Los responsables de la publicación semanal francesa Libres de la Siria libre, que está en Facebook ni siquiera esconden sus nombres. «El miedo ya no es un factor determinante sino muestra fe en la causa. Nos sometemos a un continuo acceso escribimos o no», declaró Luma, uno de los responsables de esa página web al diario catalán El País.

El Mundo (Espagne / Spain)

Europa lava su imagen con los premios Sajarov

Entregan el galardón a cinco activistas de la Primavera Árabe

ROSA MENESES / Estrasburgo
Enviada especial

Que Europa ha cerrado los ojos durante años ante las dictaduras árabes lo saben muy bien Ahmed al Zurbair Ahmed al Senusi y Asma Mahfuz. Al Senusi es el preso político que más tiempo ha pasado en las cárceles de Muamar Gadafi: 31 años. Mahfuz, de 26 años, lleva desde 2008 ayudando al Movimiento Juvenil 6 de Abril a organizar huelgas en defensa de los derechos fundamentales en el Egipto que goberna Hosni Mubarak.

«En mayo, visité Bruselas y participé en un debate con parlamentarios europeos. Les dije que Europa había apoyado a Mubarak y que ellos tenían parte de culpa en que su régimen se hubiera prolongado. Les dije que a pesar de que no hemos contado con su ayuda, los egipcios logramos poner fin a la dictadura», explica Mahfuz. «Algunos parlamentarios se disculparon», añade.

Los Premios Sajarov a la Libertad de Conciencia otorgados este año simbolizan un poco ese sentimiento de culpa. «Con los Sajarov, Europa reconoce que ha habido un error político al no apoyar la democracia en estos países», reconoce María Muñiz, miembro de la Comisión de Exteriores del Parlamento Europeo, la institución que concede esta distinción cada año.

«Me siento extremadamente feliz con este premio, que es un apoyo moral y simbólico a todos los pueblos que luchan por su libertad. Con él siento que los años que pasé en la cárcel no han sido en vano», afirmó

Al Senusi a *EL MUNDO*. Con tono pausado, este anciano de 78 años que transmite una enorme paz, dice que espera que los libios «construyan su democracia y elijan el sistema que quieren para su país».

Hoy, Mahfuz y Al Senusi serán los únicos dos galardonados de la Primavera Árabe que podrán recoger su trofeo en Estrasburgo. Los otros tres premiados por contribuir a «cambios históricos» en la región no podrán estar presentes en la ceremonia. Es la cara oscura de la Primavera Árabe. Porque en esta lucha por la dignidad muchos se quedaron en el camino. Uno de ellos, recibirá el premio a título póstumo: Mohamed Buazizi se inmoló el pasado 17

Zaituneh se encuentra en la clandestinidad, en algún lugar desconocido de Siria, después de que las autoridades hayan arrestado a su marido y a su hermano. Esta abogada creó un blog en el que informa sobre las atrocidades que comete la dictadura y sus post y vídeos son una de las fuentes más importantes de información para los medios internacionales, que no pueden entrar en Siria.

Farzat se encuentra ahora mismo en Kuwait, recuperándose de sus heridas. Originario de Hama, Farzat (de 60 años) tiene una dilatada carrera como caricaturista. A causa de sus dibujos contra el Gobierno sirio el 25 de agosto fue arrestado por hombres enmascarados y recibió una brutal paliza. Los matones se cebaron contra sus manos.

Pese a la condena en el Parlamento Europeo a la represión en Siria, que ya ha acabado con la vida de más de 4.000 personas, Bruselas aún no ha articulado una respuesta unificada contra Asad. «No hay una política europea para establecer acciones como la expulsión de embajadores. A diferencia de Libia, en Siria la UE reconoce a la 'oposición organizada', pero debería prepararse para reconocer a la oposición en el exilio para cuando se vaya Asad», afirmó Muñiz.

Mucho queda por hacer en la UE para responder de forma adecuada a los procesos democráticos en el mundo árabe. Pero ayer, mientras se debatían en la Eurocámara alternativas a las políticas de vecindad para estos países, el hemiciclo estaba casi vacío.

«Ha habido un error al no apoyar la democracia», reconocen en la UE

de diciembre de 2010 en Sidi Bouzid, un pueblo del interior de Túnez. Su gesto desesperado y su muerte, el 4 de enero de 2011, prendió una llama que aún no se ha apagado en Oriente Próximo.

Que esas brasas siguen encendidas lo demuestra la ausencia de los otros dos premiados. Los activistas sirios Razan Zaituneh y Ali Farzat tienen serias dificultades para estar hoy en Estrasburgo porque son víctimas de la represión del régimen por su oposición a Bashar Asad.

ABC (Espagne /Spain)

Un enviado especial de ABC relata la peligrosa odisea vivida antes de llegar a la zona controlada por los rebeldes

«Bienvenido a Siria libre»

DANIEL IRIARTE
YEBEL ZAWI (SIRIA)
ENVIADO ESPECIAL



En mitad de la noche, un guía nos escolta a través de los campos que se extienden a ambos lados de la frontera entre Siria y Turquía. Hay luna llena, lo que no nos ayuda: somos demasiado visibles. «¿Tienes miedo?», pregunta el guía. Y me deja claro que debería tenerlo: si el Ejército sirio nos intercepta antes de llegar al territorio bajo control rebelde, nos disparaán sin hacer preguntas.

Ambo países comparten más de ochocientos kilómetros de frontera. El régimen sirio se esfuerza por sellarla, pero hasta ahora, los combatientes del Ejército Sirio Libre han logrado mantener varias rutas abiertas para el traslado de heridos, combatientes y dinero. Este es el camino utilizado por este enviado especial para entrar en el norte de Siria, al territorio donde los rebeldes se han hecho fuertes.

Cruzamos un pequeño río, donde nos espera un grupo de hombres. En lo alto de un montículo recortado contra la luna, un combatiente vigila ar-

mado con una escopeta de caza. Otro militante me conduce hasta una casa en mitad del campo. «Esto es seguro», afirma. Al poco, llega una docena de hombres, en pequeños grupos, por seguridad. «Te presento al Ejército Sirio Libre», dice el guía.

A pesar del nombre, la escopeta de caza y algunas pistolas son las únicas armas de fuego con las que cuenta ese «ejército». «Tenemos cuchillos... y alguna sorpresa», dice uno de ellos, y enseña una porra eléctrica capaz de paralizar, e incluso matar, a una persona de una descarga.

Es un grupo eficaz. Sin duda. En menos de dos horas han coordinado el operativo para que continuemos camino. Me montan en un tractor, que después cambiamos por una camioneta. Al rato llegamos a una pequeña ciudad del noreste del país, el punto más complicado de todo el viaje: aquí, la presencia del Ejército es numerosa, y abundan los controles. Uno de mis acompañantes me escolta por las callejuelas de la ciudad. «Si alguien nos para, no digas más que "Salam aleikum". Si preguntan, diré que eres el cuñado de mi primo», me explica. Dice que me quite las gafas, me coloca un gorro, y caminamos con las manos en los bolsillos. En una esquina aguarda una moto. Subo en ella mientras mi acompañante desaparece por otro callejón. Salimos disparados. En las afueras, me espera otro coche, que me llevará hasta un piso franco en el campo. Aquí, aparentemente, estamos a salvo. Y aquí pasamos lo que queda de noche.

«Sangre árabe y española»

A la mañana siguiente, descubro que mis anfitriones tienen un plan: van a aprovechar mi aspecto moreno y barba de varios días. «Pareces sirio», dice uno de ellos. «Se nota que los españoles tenemos sangre árabe», asegura. Me colocan unas botas de goma, me disfrazan de local. Y a lomos de nuevo de una moto, mi nuevo acompañante y yo pretendemos ser dos campesinos camino del trabajo.

Llegamos a un pueblo en la ladera de una colina. Frente a nosotros está Yebel Zawi, una zona montañosa controlada casi totalmente por los rebeldes. Pero este último tramo es el más peligroso, pues el ejército corta las carreteras de forma intermitente.

Debo esperar, porque el vehículo que me llevará hasta Yebel Zawi ha ido a Turquía a evacuar a un herido. A las pocas horas regresa, y montó de-

lante (ya no tiene sentido continuar con mi disfraz), mientras que en la parte trasera un combatiente amarilla un kalashnikov. Estos hombres saben que si los capturan serán torturados hasta la muerte, de modo que en el caso de que traten de detenernos

nos abriremos paso a tiros. Así, aguantando la respiración y con todos nuestros sentidos puestos en la carretera, iniciamos la parte final del viaje. A la entrada de cada aldea, pregunto a los locales si hay algún control del ejército. Por fortuna, no hay ni rastro de los soldados. Menos de una hora después, nos detenemos en Ibdita, la localidad natal del coronel Riad El Asaad, el líder del Ejército Sirio Libre, y epicentro del territorio bajo control rebelde. Los hombres bajan del vehículo, y son saludados con grandes abrazos y besos por los lugareños. Todos corren a saludarnos, a observarnos. Finalmente, uno de ellos me tiende la mano y, en un rudimentario inglés, me espeta:

«Bienvenido a la Siria Libre». Hemos llegado.



Funeral de un militante de la oposición siria en la ciudad rebelde de Hula

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PRETENSADOS Y ARMADOS PARA LA CONSTRUCCIÓN, S.A.
El Administrador de la Sociedad Pretensados y Armados para la Construcción, S.A., convoca a los señores accionistas de esta asociada a la Junta General Extraordinaria que tendrá lugar el próximo viernes 16 de diciembre de 2011 en la sede social de Ajalvir a Extremadura Km. 15,700 a las 15:30 horas en primera convocatoria y en segunda al siguiente día hábil, es decir, el 30 de diciembre de 2011 a la misma hora y lugar con arreglo al siguiente

ORDEN DEL DÍA

1º.-Nombramiento auditor para el ejercicio 2011
2º.-Cuentas y aprobación del resultado del ejercicio 2011
Madrid, 12 de diciembre de 2011.-Don Julián Sánchez Primo
Administrador Unico

ACUSACIÓN EN LA ONU

«El Tribunal Penal Internacional debería juzgar al régimen sirio»

MARÍA G. PICATOSTE
CORRESPONSAL EN NUEVA YORK

Más de 5.000 muertos, 14.000 detenidos y cerca de 12.000 exiliados. Estas son las cifras que Navi Pillay, la máxima responsable de Derechos Humanos de Naciones Unidas, ha puesto sobre la mesa del Consejo de Seguridad para solicitar que lleve el

caso de Siria ante el Tribunal Penal Internacional.

«Me baso en la naturaleza sistemática y generalizada de los asesinatos, las detenciones y los actos de tortura para creer que estos actos constituyen crímenes contra la Humanidad», dijo Pillay durante una reunión a puerta cerrada.

Desde que en marzo las manifestaciones para derrocar al Gobierno del presidente Bashar Al Assad se expandieron hasta los últimos confines del país, Naciones Unidas no ha conseguido alcanzar un acuerdo respecto a la situación en Siria. Su única decisión fue una resolución de condena a los actos de Damasco.

Pero a Pillay se le ha agotado la paciencia tras meses de inacción en el organismo internacional. «Necesitamos tomar medidas urgentes y efectivas para proteger a los sirios», solicitó al Consejo de Seguridad, a sabiendas de que dos de sus miembros per-

manentes, China y Rusia, están del lado del Gobierno sirio. El veto de estos dos países puso freno en octubre a la única propuesta de sanción que ha pasado por este Consejo y que buscaba castigar a Siria si seguía la violencia contra los manifestantes.

Según Pillay, la cifra de muertos por la represión, ahora por encima de los 5.000, está engrasada por las de más de 300 niños, pero no incluye las miles de bajas que el Gobierno ha sufrido entre policías y militares. Pillay explicó que estos datos tienen su origen en las declaraciones de más de 230 testigos.

LAS CIFRAS DE LA TRAGEDIA

5.000

personas pueden haber muerto como consecuencia de la represión en Siria, según la alta comisión para los Derechos Humanos de la ONU

300

niños menores de edad habrían perdido la vida en las operaciones militares y operaciones represivas llevadas a cabo por el régimen

33

personas murieron ayer en Siria en diversas operaciones de represión perpetradas por el régimen y combates desarrollados en la frontera, donde se hacen fuertes los rebeldes

2

militantes de la oposición murieron cuando el Ejército disparó ayer contra los asistentes a un funeral

Publico (Portugal)

ONU admite mais de 5000 mortos na Síria

● Mais de cinco mil mortos, 300 dos quais crianças, é o mais recente balanço das Nações Unidas sobre a violência “intolerável” que se arrasta desde Março na Síria - números que o regime de Damasco rejeita, acusando a alta-comissária para os Direitos Humanos de fazer parte de “uma grande conspiração montada” contra o país.

“Ela deixou-se usar na manipulação da opinião pública”, disse o embaixador sírio na ONU, acusando Navi Pillay de basear a sua opinião em dados que lhes são fornecidos pelos dissidentes. Reagindo à acusação, um porta-voz garantiu que o alto comissariado está em contacto “com pessoas dentro do regime” e voltou a exigir que os seus observadores sejam autorizados a entrar no país. Ouvida no Conselho de Segurança, Pillay disse que a contestação ao regime de Bashar al-Assad permanece maioritariamente pacífica, “mas aumentaram os ataques atribuídos a forças da oposição, incluindo o autoproclamado Exército Livre Sírio”. O número de vítimas inclui, por isso, membros das forças de segurança. A comissária destacou também a continuação da repressão contra populações inteiras, como é o caso do “alarmante” cerco à cidade de Homs.

Daily Telegraph (Royaume-Uni / United Kingdom)

Assad kills 1,000 in 10 days, claims UN

By **Richard Spencer**
Middle East Correspondent

THE death toll in Syria has risen by another 1,000 in 10 days, according to a United Nations report yesterday.

The findings deepened divisions within the UN over how to respond to the crisis.

On top of those figures, scores more deaths were reported.

Navi Pillay, the UN human rights commissioner, said more than 5,000 people had been killed since the uprising against President Bashir al-Assad began in March.

At the beginning of the month, the total stood at 4,000. That does not include deaths among Mr Assad's security forces.

Ms Pillay said 300 of those killed had been children. About 14,000 rebels were in prison, many tortured, and 12,400 had fled the country.

"Independent, credible and corroborated accounts demonstrate that these abuses have taken place as part of a

widespread and systematic attack on civilians," she told the Security Council.

She called for the regime to be referred to the International Criminal Court, as happened with Col Muammar Gaddafi.

A dispute flared between Russia and the West over the measures being taken against its Middle Eastern ally.

Gerard Araud, the French ambassador, said: "It is scandalous that the council, because of opposition from some members, has not been able to act to exert pressure on the Syrian authorities."

The Russians hit back but America urged them to support Security Council action.

Ms Pillay's death tally includes civilians, defectors and soldiers killed for refusing to obey orders, but not government troops.

The authorities claim more than 1,100 soldiers have died.

Despite the UN outrage, diplomats say the regime is prepared to ignore the West.

The Independent (Royaume-Uni / United Kingdom)

The UN counts the cost in Syria

The United Nations attracts a mixed press, and it can never be greater than the sum of its parts. But as the largely unforeseen events in North Africa and the Middle East have unfolded this year, it has not acquitted itself badly. It has exerted pressure on doomed regimes, urged restraint on panicked governments, and condemned violence ordered by leaders against their own people. The Security Council authorised the internationally co-ordinated no-fly zone designed to defend civilians in Libya. And last month the Secretary General reported, with admirable clarity, on the conflict's left behind, and the dangers of militia violence spreading. Now, the UN Human Rights Commission, Navi Pillay, has delivered a report on the vio-

lence in Syria, and not pulled her punches. She told the Security Council that more than 5,000 civilians had been killed since the start of the uprising in March, including 300 children that 14,000 were believed to be under arrest and that almost as many had fled the country. Her conclusion was that the Syrian regime's use of violence against its own people was such as to warrant referral to the International Criminal Court. Neither the findings nor the conclusion should surprise anyone who has followed Syria's descent into violence. The figures do not seem out of proportion with first-hand reports that have reached the outside world, despite all the attempts by Damascus to seal the country off. If the regime has more authoritative figures, it

should produce them – and not just for casualities among its own forces.

What the HRC's report does is quantify the appalling human cost to date of the uprising in Syria. Russia's claim yesterday that the opposition has an interest in provoking a catastrophe in order to secure foreign help is cynical in the extreme, and should be seen in the light of Moscow's own domestic troubles. International military intervention is no option; not only are the risks too great, but the usefulness of intervention in Libya in the longer term remains to be assessed. It may not seem much, against the force applied by the regime, but the threat of referral to the ICC sends a message – one that Bashar al-Assad and his security forces would do well to heed.

International Herald Tribune (USA)

More deaths as Syria drifts toward insurgency

BEIRUT

Government forces open fire on funeral procession near border with Turkey

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Syrian security forces fired on a funeral procession near the northern border region on Tuesday, killing two people and raising the day's death toll to at least 28, activists said.

The violence in Idlib Province illustrated how Syria's uprising, which earlier this year involved mostly peaceful demonstrations in small towns and cities, has become a virtual insurgency in the countryside along the Turkish border.

Rami Abdul Rahman, director of the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, and other Syrian activists said thousands of people were taking part in the funeral of civilians killed here earlier in the day when the gunfire erupted.

Government forces swept through villages in the area near the Turkish frontier and attacked suspected insurgents, he reports and Syrian news media said. Anti-government fighters staged a real army ambush and assassinated a senior officer earlier Tuesday, he reports said.

Many defectors known as the Free Syrian Army have found shelter alongside thousands of Syrian refugees on the Turkish side, making use of mountainous terrain, local smuggling networks and support among villages on the Syrian side of the cross-border area.

President Bashar al-Assad's forces have responded with stepped-up border patrols and reprisal raids on villages where anti-government protests have been frequent.

The bloodshed in Syria, which the United Nations said Monday had left at least 5,000 dead, has resulted in increasing pressure on the Assad government, including sanctions by the United States, the European Union and the Arab League.

Some key nations have resisted the measures. Russia's foreign minister on Tuesday rebuffed calls for his country to back the sanctions, and criticized the West for ignoring violence by the Syrian opposition.

The deadliest incident in the past two days took place in two villages near the Turkish border early Tuesday, after security forces entered and shot two civilians dead, said Mr. Abdul-Rahman of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Residents of the villages, Maaret Musreen and Kfar Bahloul, responded by closing a main road to the Syrian troops, who then opened fire at random, Mr. Abdul Rahman said, killing 11 civilians and wounding 26.

Security forces also killed three other people in the provincial capital of Idlib and two in the central Homs Province, Mr. Abdul Rahman said.

The Local Coordination Committees, another activist group, gave a similar death toll.

Later in the morning, army defectors retaliated by attacking a security convoy in the nearby town of Bab el-Hawa, killing seven troops, Mr. Abdul Rahman said. Syria's state media, for its part, reported that border guards intercepted 15 gunmen trying to infiltrate from Turkey on Monday night. It said that two were killed in the ensuing firefight and that others were injured.

It was the second reported attempt at a cross-border attack in a week.

Since the revolt began, the Assad government has placed blame for the bloodshed on terrorists acting out a foreign conspiracy to divide and undermine Syria. Until recently, most deaths appeared to be caused by security forces firing on mainly peaceful protests.

Wall Street Journal (USA)



Associated Press

An amateur-video image made available by Ugarit News group Monday is said to show security forces in Deraa, Syria.

Armed Clashes in Syria Escalate Near Border

BY NOUR MALAS

Armed clashes in Syria escalated sharply, with activists reporting Tuesday that 36 antigovernment protesters were killed, and at least seven state-security officers left dead in an ambush on a convoy.

Fighting between what activists identify as defected soldiers and government troops has erupted daily for the past week in towns across Syria, the activists say. The intensified fighting has raised concern among some in Syria's antigovernment movement that the growing number of dissident soldiers and other armed civilians are acting out of step with the Free Syrian Army, the main armed contingent fighting President Bashar al-Assad's forces.

"There are more soldiers defecting, but the clashes are so frequent now it's hard to tell who is fighting who," said Rami Abdul Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a U.K.-based group tracking events in Syria.

The activist network the Local Coordination Committees said 21 of the 36 killed were from the Idlib province that borders Turkey. The fighting was sparked by the attack on the convoy crossing Idlib, activists said.

Syria's government described the Idlib fighting as a clash with an armed terrorist group. "Authorities managed to kill and injure several terrorists and confiscate their weapons," the state news agency Sana reported. That came after Syrian guards on the Turkish border foiled an "infiltration attempt" by terrorists into Syria, with border guards killing two of the infiltrators and wounding others, Sana said.

A spokesman for the Turkish foreign ministry said the only report of gunfire at the border Tuesday involved Syrian troops shooting at two cattle smugglers, one Turkish and one Syrian, and neither were believed to be injured.

The United Nations on Monday put the death toll from Syria's nine-month-long uprising—counting civilians and defected soldiers killed by government forces—at more than 5,000, just two weeks after it estimated the number dead had crossed the 4,000 mark.

On Sunday, the coordination committees reported clashes in towns around the southern city of Deraa—the cradle of Syria's protest movement—in which dissident troops burned three tanks. A video posted on YouTube on Monday shows what is described as a group

of freshly defected soldiers in Jabal al-Zawiya, a vast northern region in Idlib that has been the scene of fighting between the army and dissident troops in earlier months of the uprising.

In the footage, at least two dozen soldiers in uniform—most smiling—pump their rifles into the air, chanting revolutionary slogans.

The Syrian Observatory said Tuesday's violence began when a gunbattle broke out between government loyalists and protesters in the town of Maaret Mesreen after a pro-government crowd broke shop windows to protest a strike. Stores were closed for a third day in the town, as part of a nationwide general strike called by activists.

Two antigovernment activists were killed in the gunbattle, prompting activists from a neighboring town to block a main road with tires and rocks to pre-empt any military action. Security forces shot at those makeshift roadblocks, killing at least seven more people, and a group of dissident soldiers opened fire on a security convoy, killing at least seven officers.

It isn't clear whether the Free Syrian Army planned the attack.

—Marc Champion contributed to this article.

Washington Post (USA)

Syrian troops fire on funeral procession

Assault comes after day of deadly fighting near Turkish border

BY BASSEM MROUE

BEIRUT — Syrian security forces fired on a funeral procession in a restive northwestern border region, killing two people and raising Tuesday's death toll to at least 28, activists said.

The flare-up of violence in Idlib province highlighted the extent to which Syria's uprising, which earlier this year involved mostly peaceful demonstrations in small towns and cities, has become a virtual insurgency in the countryside along the Turkish border.

In Damascus, a prominent U.S.-born Syrian blogger and press

freedom campaigner was charged Monday by Syrian authorities with trying to incite sectarian strife, her organization said.

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression in the Arab World (SCM) said Tuesday that Razan Ghazzawi also was charged with spreading false information and weakening national sentiment — a charge often leveled against those who challenge the Syrian government.

The charges could carry a prison sentence of up to 15 years. The statement issued Tuesday by the SCM, where Ghazzawi worked, said she denied the charges.

She was arrested Dec. 4 at the border while on her way to Jordan for a conference on press freedom. Rami Abdul-Rahman, director of the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, and other Syrian activists said thousands

of people were taking part in the funeral in the city of Idlib of civilians killed there earlier in the day when the gunfire erupted.

Earlier Tuesday, government forces had swept through villages in the area near the Turkish frontier and attacked infiltrators at the border, and anti-government fighters had staged a retaliatory ambush and assassinated a senior officer, the activist reports and Syrian media said.

Military defectors known as the Free Syrian Army have found shelter alongside thousands of Syrian refugees on the Turkish side, making use of rugged terrain, local smuggling networks and support among villagers on the Syrian side to stage cross-border attacks. President Bashar al-Assad's forces have responded with stepped-up border patrols and reprisal raids.

— Associated Press

Washington Times (USA)

SYRIA

28 are killed in violence near border with Turkey

Among the dead are 2 in funeral procession

BY BASSEM MROUE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT | Syrian security forces fired on a funeral procession in a restive northwestern border region, killing two people and raising Tuesday's death toll to at least 28, activists said.

The flare-up of violence in Idlib province highlights how Syria's uprising, which earlier this year involved mostly peaceful demonstrations in small towns and cities, has become a virtual insurgency in the countryside along the Turkish border.

Rami Abdul-Rahman, director of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, and other Syrian activists said thousands of people were taking part in the funeral for civilians killed there earlier in the day when the gunfire erupted.

Regime forces swept through villages in the area near the Turkish frontier and attacked infiltrators at the border, and anti-regime fighters staged a retaliatory ambush and assassinated a senior officer earlier Tuesday, the reports and Syrian media said.

Military defectors known as the Free Syrian Army have found shelter alongside thousands of Syrian refugees on the Turkish side, making use of mountainous terrain, local smuggling networks and support among villagers on the Syrian side to stage cross-border attacks.

President Bashar Assad's forces have responded with stepped-up border patrols and reprisal raids on villages where anti-regime protests have been frequent.

The bloodshed in Syria, which the U.N. said Monday has killed at least 5,000, has resulted in increasing pressure on the Assad regime, including sanctions by the United States, the European Union and the Arab League.

Some key nations have resisted the measures. Russia's foreign minister on Tuesday rebuffed calls for Moscow to back the sanctions and slammed the West for ignoring violence by the Syrian opposition.

The deadliest incident in the past two days took place in two villages near the Turkish border early Tuesday, after security forces entered and shot two civilians dead, Mr. Abdul-Rahman said.

Residents of Maaret Musreen and Kfar Bahmoul responded by closing a main road to the Syrian troops, who then opened fire at random, he said, killing 11 civilians and wounding 26.

The observatory said security forces also killed three other people in the provincial capital of Idlib and two in the central province of Homs.

The Local Coordination Committees, another activist group, gave a similar death toll.

Later in the morning, army defectors retaliated by attacking a security convoy in the nearby town of Bab el-Hawa, killing seven soldiers, Mr. Abdul-Rahman said.

Syria's state media reported that border guards intercepted 15 gunmen trying to infiltrate from Turkey on Monday night.

MIDDLE EAST

By Arnaud de Borchgrave

To those who hail the Arab Spring and the first free elections in Egypt in 60 years, a prominent Israeli responded, "Remember Mussolini, remember Hitler." Two years after seizing power in 1922 with a march on Rome, one-time socialist Benito Mussolini's fascist party won 64 percent of the popular vote and 374 seats of 535 in parliament.

Once in power, Mussolini outlawed left-wing parties. His coup inspired Adolf Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch, which failed. But in 1933, Hitler legally came to power in a free election.

For Zalman Shoval, 81, Israel's ambassador to the United States twice, a member of the Knesset for 40 years, and close adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the "Arab Awakening" is an "anti-democratic, anti-human-rights movement camouflaged as a victory for human rights."

Most Arab elections, warned Mr. Shoval while in Washington last week, will produce anti-U.S., anti-Israel parliaments.

Twenty years after the Cold War, he said, "Israel is facing the longest erosion of its strategic environment" while "America's strategic environment is also eroding."

In Egypt, said Mr. Shoval, 87 million hungry people can't be fed, so a perfect geopolitical storm is generated to divert the people's attention in the direction of "enmity toward Israel."

Syria, now in a civil war, under its present leadership "is the indisputable link between Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon. If President [Bashar] Assad falls, there is no way of predicting what comes next."

Hezbollah, said Mr. Shoval, now has 30,000 missiles and Hamas, the no-peace-with-Israel regime in Gaza, is also dominant in the West Bank.

"Today, everyone is more concerned about Iran and its drive for nuclear weapons and it will seek hegemony irrespective of a Palestinian settlement," he explained.

Islamist advances in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia "have made the next six, 12, 18 months totally unpredictable," Mr. Shoval predicted.

Arab-Israeli negotiations are at a dead end, he argued, "because the Palestinians do not wish to negotiate."

They ask for a freeze on settlements in the West Bank, but the settlements are only 1.1 percent of that territory."

He was presumably referring to the settlements that lie beyond the 420-mile-long wall of separation. Everything between the 120-mile-long 1967 border and the wall is now presumably annexed to Israel.

The 1.1 percent refers to Jewish settlements between the wall and the Jordan River. And those will presumably be dismantled in a final settlement, much the way 21

Beware the Arab Spring

Long-time Israeli diplomat warns democracy will morph into Islamism



ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN CAMEJO

Jewish settlements with 9,000 people in Gaza were abandoned in 2005.

But Mr. Shoval made clear Israel will also demand a physical security presence for the Israel Defense Forces along the Jordan River.

The Palestinians believe time is on their side, Mr. Shoval said. But "security cooperation between Israel and the U.S. is at the highest level in memory." The \$3 billion Israel receives yearly

from the United States for defense is a tiny fraction of America's \$3 trillion budget, "which enhances stability and makes it less likely the Arab world would start a new war. And the \$3 billion goes back to U.S. [defense] jobs."

"The Middle East is increasingly topsy-turvy and there is only one stable ally who shares America's values." The U.S. has pre-positioned dual-use equipment in Israel and this should be expanded as it doesn't cost any money.

"The debate on the solidity of the U.S.

relationship is key to understanding that if we stopped building settlements and returned the entire West Bank, it still would not be Scandinavia," Mr. Shoval said, adding that he did not see "any erosion in the U.S. relationship."

"Once you believe you're becoming weak and impotent, you will become so," he warned.

The emergence of a Palestinian state in the West Bank as a result of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations has never seemed more remote.

An Islamist majority in Egypt's new parliament — 37 percent for the Muslim Brotherhood and 24 percent for the ultra-radical Islamist Nour ("Light") party — is now a given. The radicals, known as Salafists, want to turn the clock back to the behavior of the first Muslim converts. They are violent, demand a ban on alcohol (which would kill the tourist industry, or 15 percent of the economy), and a dress code for women that makes them look like ambulatory tents.

Salafism is the key religious ingredient in jihadism. In normally moderate Tunisia, the Salafi message is circulating freely, unimpeded by now dismantled censorship.

The less dogmatic Brotherhood projected moderation in the campaign but is now quietly purging those who became genuinely moderate. It is also talking about revisions in Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, which it says the Jewish state is not respecting.

The Arab Spring was a western construct, based on the illusory hope of real democracy — hence, the Egyptian army high command's determination to hang on to real power behind the scenes. It will resist any move that might provoke Israeli retaliation. But to placate Islamists, the army will be less accommodating with Israel on minor border issues.

Next door in Libya, the array of weapons and ammunition stashed in underground depots is staggering. And it would be nothing short of a miracle if al Qaeda's supporters hadn't absconded with some of what the new Libyan armed forces discovered in the Sokna and Al-Rawagha regions near the Niger and Chad borders: stockpiles of nerve and mustard gas. A plant was built with special barrels for the production of these agents with a capacity of 10,000 liters.

Scores of old Soviet SAM-7 anti-aircraft missile launchers as well as mortars and artillery pieces with shells were left unguarded for months.

New Libyan leaders from all walks of life are now feeling each other out to determine who might be best qualified to assess the country's defense needs. They say they need another 100 days.

On the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea, Syria is, by all accounts, another Arab country in the throes of a civilian revolution against the army — not good news there, either. Salafists and Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers were busy there, too.

Arnaud de Borchgrave is editor-at-large of The Washington Times and United Press International.

USA Today (USA)

On verge of civil war, Syrian fighters seek assist

Post-Libyan crisis, U.S. sits on sidelines

By Mona Alami
Special for USA TODAY

BEIRUT — Syrian dissidents and Western diplomats are urging Syrians to wage war against the government forces that have killed thousands of people to put down a protest movement against President Bashar Assad. Riad al-Assad, a former colonel in the Syrian air force who defected in July, says the time for peaceful protest is over.

"President Obama knows the true nature of the regime, which has slaughtered thousands of people," he says. "Thousands of martyrs have died ... fighting a minority that is clinging to power ... The world has changed, and Syria can never go back."

Al-Assad is now a colonel in the Free Syrian Army (FSA), a force of Syrian exiles who believe the Assad regime must be deposed militarily. They are asking for help from the West, much as the rebels recored in Libya against Muammar Gadhafi.

That NATO air campaign destroyed Gadhafi's arms advantage and allowed rebels to fight back. Though the U.S. and Euro-



By AP Wirephoto/ASSOCIATED PRESS (AP Wirephoto/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Beyond peaceful protest: Soldiers of the Free Syrian Army, formed by army deserters, take aim.

body weapons locally, but they are both expensive and difficult to find," he said.

Burhan Ghalioun, head of the Syrian National Council, the main Syrian opposition group in exile, says the FSA should avoid engaging in direct confrontation. The State Department also has expressed concern about reports of FSA attacks on intelligence headquarters outside of Damascus and Baath Party headquarters inside the capital. "We certainly don't condone this kind of violence ... in any way, shape or form," State spokesman Mark Toner said.

Despite the warnings, the FSA is increasing its operations against the current Syrian government and its military forces, al-Assad says. The militant group consists largely of Sunnis, who are the majority in Syria but are ruled by a regime dominated by the Alawite community — a Shiite offshoot to which the Assad family belongs.

Still, the FSA faces obstacles, dissidents say. "The FSA is not a unified army with a paramilitary structure and a central command," says Tali al-Atache, the Syrian-based co-author of *When Syria Awakes*.

The border state of Turkey and the Arab League have demanded the violence stop, but backed in August by government forces using tanks and planes. Abu Ali says he was a dem- uniator in Latakia, a city on the Mediterranean Sea that was at-

tacked in August by government forces using tanks and planes. "A few hundred of us have taken refuge on the borders separating Syria from Turkey. We want to fight and are trying to avenge the death of their loved ones killed during the protests as well as indoctrinated Islamists linked to the Muslim Brotherhood," he says.

Al-Assad denies ordinary civilians are taking part. "The FSA is comprised of soldiers, mostly from lower and medium ranks, I believe over 25,000 soldiers have joined our ranks," he says.

He says the FSA is equipped with small arms, such as machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

Al-Atache says that is no

match for the Syrian army,

which spent \$3 billion on Rus-

sian military equipment in 2010,

and whose forces total 435,000.

He says that without outside

help of arms or protection, "the

regime won't face a meaningful

military challenge."

Al-Assad says a protected buffer zone for his base along the Turkey border and a no-fly zone would strengthen the FSA position.

"The most important player,

the United States, has shied

away from direct intervention," says Tomy Badran, a research fellow for the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, who says

Obama is sticking to calls for

"international" munitions and

deepening economic and politi-

cal pressure."

Newsweek (USA)

**News
Gallery**

Dec. 6, 2011

NORTHERN SYRIA

**A Thousand
Tiny
Protesters**

Child war arrives in Syria. Nine months after ordinary citizens took to the streets demanding government reform, the regime has viciously ramped up its bloody crackdown. The latest victim of the violence: Syria's children; more than 300 of whom have been slaughtered so far, according to the United Nations.

The assault has only served to radicalize protesters. In recent weeks, a group of military defectors calling themselves the Free Syrian Army have begun launching cross-border attacks, a dangerous development that hints at a long battle for control of the country.

In an interview with Barbara Wertheim last week, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad denied ordering the security forces to massacre ordinary people. "No government in the world kills its people, unless it's led by a crazy person," he said.

Spoken like a true madman.

—RUBASH DEBAGHANGSHEH

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

RICARDO BARRIO VILANOVA

UP & INSIDE
For a street-level view of the violence, James Harkie reports for *The Daily Beast* on Home, Syria's *Inside the City of Fear*.



Jerusalem Post (Palestine occupée / Occupied Palestine)

Syria death toll hits 5,000 as insurgency spreads

UN human rights chief Navi Pillay: Damascus should be referred to international court

- Latest Syrian violence makes success of local elections, strike hard to gauge



PROTESTS RALLY IN THE STREETS OF Homs yesterday against the rule of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.

AMMAN (Reuters) - Security forces shot dead 17 people in Syria on Tuesday and rebels killed seven police in an ambush, activists said, after the UN human rights chief gave the death toll from two months of protests against President Bashar Al-Assad at 3,000.

The bloodshed in the northern province of Idlib, which borders Turkey, highlighted the獻慘烈的 situation in Syria where an insurrection has begun to overshadow what started as peaceful street protests against Assad's 11-year rule.

The U.N.'s Navi Pillay said the death toll was 1,000 higher than 40 activists she interviewed 10 days earlier. It included civilians, army defectors and those coerced for acting as shock troops, but not soldiers or security personnel killed by opposition forces, she said.

The Syrian government has said more than 1,100 members of the army, police and security services have been killed.

Syria's actions could constitute war crimes against humanity, said Pillay, issuing a formal call for the council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court.

"To see the sheer horrifying暴行 that we've had in the country. Countries have been bombed, tortured, beaten to death over the last two years," British Ambassador

John Marsh, 17 of last said he had seen "absolutely horrific" acts which have triggered a "desperate opposition movement" in Syria, Russia, China and Saudi said.

The sharp rise in the death toll is believed to lead enough people to show up to protest to draw international intervention to stop the bloodshed in Syria, which some fear is becoming really driving French and militia members.

Two more were shot dead and 19 were wounded when security forces opened fire to break up a funeral procession, which now often becomes impromptu protests. The Observatory said army shelling attacked a crowded cemetery, killing at least seven people. This was to immediately report from state media of a strike, but the NASA news agency said initially it had been several strikes. In the last few months as defectors soldiers, but not civilians or fighters back in winter areas.

Activists from Syria's opposition have launched a popular front to set up the Free Syrian Army. Its gunmen have been active in the city of Homs to try and counter pro-Assad forces who residents say attempted to massacre the population into submission. In the latest violence, activists claim on Tuesday morning forces shot dead 17 people in the southern Hama province. Both sides claimed they had been killed in

Assad's assault on Hama, which is a cluster of towns and villages in the south of Syria, a key player in security forces and supporters of Assad.

Pillay appeared before the council for a session that was part of a "large emergency" concerned against Syria from the beginning." She told the panel in Geneva's International Court of Justice that her report had been submitted. "My main concern is a growing backlog of thousands dead," said Pillay, adding that the council must take action to prevent further violations of human rights and to go to the root cause of the conflict.

Activist Abdoula al-Khatib said there had been internally displaced, Pillay said, referring to reports of moves against the city of Homs. Basile Antoun, Syria's ambassador to the United Nations, said he too was worried about the situation in Syria. He argued that the conflict in Syria had to be resolved through negotiations between the parties involved.

Activists from Syria's opposition have launched a popular front to set up the Free Syrian Army. Its gunmen have been active in the city of Homs to try and counter pro-Assad forces who residents say attempted to massacre the population into submission. In the latest violence, activists claim on Tuesday morning forces shot dead 17 people in the southern Hama province. Both sides claimed they had been killed in

Assad's assault on Hama, which is a cluster of towns and villages in the south of Syria, a key player in security forces and supporters of Assad.

Pillay said: "I am deeply concerned about the situation in Syria."

Humanitarian "aid" has been suspended to Syria to "enable the government to save our country from the consequences of its policies" and Syria and Turkey had blocked the path to the 160,000 stranded Syrians.

Assad has said actions cannot be taken in "territorially mixed Syria, which is a cluster of towns and villages in the south of Syria, a key player in security forces and supporters of Assad."

Pillay said: "I am deeply concerned about the situation in Syria."

Jerusalem Post (Palestine occupée / Occupied Palestine)

Syria's wounded make dangerous trek toward refuge in Lebanon

Activists say Syrian hospitals unsafe, wounded being hunted down • Lebanese locals work in secret to ease border crossings

• By ERIKA SOLOMON

BEKAA VALLEY, Lebanon (Reuters) — The elderly Lebanese doctor gets a text message: "Your bag of eggplants is ready."

He jumps in his jeep and races into the foothills on the Syrian border, searching for the wounded protester he knows is waiting for his help.

"Sometimes I get a call to treat a stomach ache, but find a Syrian smuggled in with a bullet in his side. I see at least one of them a day now," said Dr. Mahmoud, using a false name.

Moving the wounded over the tense and closely watched frontier requires coded messages, he said. Syrian intelligence may be monitoring calls and texts from Syria's opposition.

Over 5,000 Syrians have died in a crackdown on the nine-month revolt against President Bashar al-Assad's rule, according to latest UN figures.

Thousands more wounded dare not seek help at home because their bullet and shrapnel wounds would betray them to the police as protesters or insurgents.

Some manage to make the short but risky trek to Lebanon for medical care: They sneak past army troops, navigate mined borders and withstand bitter winter cold.

Almost daily, Mahmoud slithers through the muddied roads in his impoverished border town toward a safe house hidden among the crumbling cement homes that wind along the mountains.

This time, the doctor finds Ahmed, shot in the leg.

Ahmed dragged himself over snow-frosted foothills and down into Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. He hid in the underbrush as Syrian forces searched for him. It took all night to make the 7 kilometer journey from his nearby Syrian village, Qusair.

"In Syria, the army and intelligence are everywhere, even hospitals. We are too scared to go there with injuries," Ahmed said. "If you didn't walk into the clinic with a bullet in the head, you might come out of it that way."

The wounded who come to Lebanon say the secret, makeshift clinics now operating in Syria, do not have the equipment to treat their wounds.

Sympathizers carry them on foot, motorcycle and even horseback. Some wait days until it is safe to cross.

"I bled for hours. I was almost unconscious from pain and I couldn't walk," said 24-year-old Hassan, a student. He fled Homs, the violent epicenter of the uprising, after gunshots shattered his lower-left leg.

"I had no idea who most of the people helping me were. I was terrified they might be secret police. But they saved me. They propped me up between two plastic containers of kerosene on a horse, so we looked like fuel smugglers," he said.

Hundreds of Syrians, both unarmed protesters and armed rebels fighting the government, have turned to Mahmoud's Bekaa town as a gateway into Lebanon.

Some have died waiting to cross, Lebanese locals say.

Local officials support these efforts, but ask that their town not be named to avoid stirring trouble. Not far away are Lebanese who support Assad. The roads are dotted with billboards of the Syrian president standing with Lebanon's pro-Syrian Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

Syria has tried to suppress by force a revolt against 41 years of Assad family rule that began in March as peaceful street protests. Now, some soldiers have deserted with their guns and formed a rebel force that is attacking Assad's security machine on the roads, and even in its bases.

The government in Damascus says it is fighting foreign-backed terrorists and has lost over 1,100 men in an uprising that is sliding gradually towards civil war.

Omar is a 20-year-old army deserter who has escaped a nightmare. His brown eyes are wide with grief for his lost comrades.

"I think I was shot 14 times," he said. His heavily bandaged hands point out bullet wounds on his chest, arms and stomach. A thick trail of stitches runs down his abdomen.

"My unit was brought out to suppress protests. We did things I don't want to remember," he said. "When we got the chance, we fled to Homs and began fighting."

In a clash with the army sever-

al weeks ago, Omar fell unconscious among five dead comrades. He lay there for hours as friends trying to retrieve him waited for the gunfire to stop.

Parts of Homs, where most of the wounded in Lebanon have come from recently, are like a war zone. Activists say the army hunts the wounded.

Hamad, a 30-year-old protester from Homs, said he and dozens of injured were hidden in abandoned buildings, to protect their families from harassment, or arrest, if they were found at home.

"I waited there for 10 days. My leg was rotting," he said, grimacing as a Lebanese doctor dressed and re-bandaged the hole in his thigh.

Medics work at government hospitals by day and treat protesters at night. They sneak out to help when they can.

But the worst cases have to be smuggled out.

Even on Lebanese soil, the wounded do not feel totally safe. They are moved quickly out of the mostly Shi'ite, pro-Syrian Bekaa Valley in case they attract hostile attention.

The Red Cross transports them to the northern port town of Tripoli, a Sunni Muslim stronghold sympathetic to an uprising that is led by Syria's Sunni majority population.

There, exiled Syrian doctor Mazen has set up secret clinics. Lebanon's public hospitals treat wounded Syrians, but will only let them stay there for four days.

"For a serious injury, it's not enough. We need help treating these people for months," said Mazen, pale and scrawny 24-year-old who graduated in Homs last spring. He spent his first months as a doctor treating gunshot wounds.

Mazen brought Reuters to an abandoned hospital wing in Tripoli where he has set up a clinic, with the help of secret donors, to treat those who will need months to heal.

Their families can't be told where they are.

Like others, Omar has passed on a message through secret channels and hopes his mother and father know he is alive.

"I feel like someone who died and was brought back to life," he smiled. "As soon as I am healed I want to go back and fight the regime to the death. It's them or us."

The Saudi Gazette (Arabie saoudite / Saudi Arabia)

UN estimates over 5,000 dead in Syria crackdown

DAMASCUS — Forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad killed at least 13 people Tuesday, reports said, after the UN estimated more than 5,000 have died in a nine-month crackdown on dissent.

UN rights chief Navi Pillay gave the lowest death toll — amounting to a jump of 1,000 in less than two weeks — as she appealed to the UN Security Council to launch a crimes against humanity case.

Pillay's private briefing to the 15-nation council — where Russia and China blocked a resolution condemning Assad in October — heightened divisions over how to respond to the Syria troubles.

She told reporters after the meeting that she had given the new toll of more than 5,000 dead — including more than 300 children — and recommended Assad's crackdown be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"The widespread and systematic nature of the killings, the detentions and the acts of torture — I felt that

these acts constituted crimes against humanity," said Pillay.

The "intolerable" situation in Syria — where more than 14,000 have been detained — has seen 12,400 flee into neighboring countries since protests erupted in March, she said.

As Syria is not a signatory to the ICC statute, only the Security Council could refer the case to the tribunal, as it did in the case of Libya this year. "Inaction by the international community will embolden Syrian authorities, and ensure perpetrators go unpunished," said Pillay.

The Security Council meeting came as Western nations step up pressure to condemn Assad's campaign. "I think it is necessary that those countries in the Security Council which are still hesitating change their mind," German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said after meeting Pillay.

France's UN envoy said the council was "morally responsible" for the daily deaths by staying silent. — AFP



Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal, Chairman of ROTA with Sheikha Moza Bint Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Chairperson and the First Lady Mrs. Margit Fischer, operations for the building of schools in

'Syria training Bahrain rivals'

LONDON — Syria is training opposition figures in Bahrain, King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa said in an interview published on Tuesday, in which he also denied systematic rights abuses during state crackdowns on pro-democracy protests earlier this year.

Al-Khalifa's interview with Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper comes a day after he met British Prime Minister David Cameron, who urged the king to press ahead with national reconciliation and to engage with Bahrain's opposition.

"We have evidence that a number of Bahrainis who oppose our government are being trained in Syria ... I have seen the files and we have notified the Syrian authorities, but they deny any involvement," he said, giving no further details.

"It is not the policy of the Ministry of Interior to go and kill people on the roads. The policemen and soldiers involved in the killings did not take notice of the discipline side of matters," King Hamad said, adding that wrongdoers would be held accountable. — Reuters

Iran rejects US plea to return downed drone

TEHRAN — Iran has rejected a US call for the return of a surveillance drone captured by Iran's military earlier this month. The unmanned aircraft was now "property" of Iran and it was up to Iran to decide what to do with it, Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi said.

Vahidi said the US should apologise for invading Iranian air space. Iranian TV has broadcast pictures of the RQ-170 Sentinel. Tehran says it was brought down using electronic warfare; Washington says it malfunc-

tioned. "The American espionage drone is now Iran's property, and our country will decide what steps to take regarding it," Vahidi was quoted as saying by the IRNA news agency, following a call for the aircraft's return by US President Barack Obama Monday.

"It seems that US has forgotten that our air space was violated, a spying operation conducted and international law trampled," Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told a news conference. — Agencies

Gulf News (EAU /UAE)

Syria role in Bahrain unrest

KING SAYS MANAMA HAS EVIDENCE OF YOUTH BEING TRAINED TO OVERTHROW GOVERNMENT

Gulf News Report

Dubai Bahrain's King Hamad Bin Eisa Al Khalifa has said the kingdom has evidence that Syria was training young Bahrainis to overthrow the ruling family even as fresh violence claimed 24 more lives in Syria yesterday. The UN put the death toll in the nine-month-old protests at 5,000.

"We have evidence that a number of Bahrainis who oppose our government are being trained in Syria," King Hamad told *The Daily Telegraph* on Monday. "I have seen the files and we have notified the Syrian authorities, but they deny any involvement."

Arab foreign ministers will hold an emergency meeting in Cairo on Saturday to respond to Syria's proposal to admit observers in exchange for an end to regional sanctions, the Arab League said.

These developments came as security forces yesterday shot dead 17 people in the northern province of Idlib, which borders Turkey, and rebels killed seven policemen in an ambush, activists said.

UN human right chief Navi Pillay said the death toll in the Syrian crackdown was 1,000 more than an earlier estimate. It includes civilians, army defectors and those executed for refusing to shoot civilians, but not soldiers or security personnel killed by opposition forces, she said.

Also yesterday, Iran passed a bill for a free trade agreement with Syria in a show of support for Bashar Al Assad.

Gulf News (EAU /UAE)

UN faces renewed calls to intervene in Syria

RUTHLESS REPRESSION MAY LEAD TO CIVIL WAR, COUNCIL TOLD

Damascus (Bloomberg & AFP)

The United Nations Security Council faced new calls to intervene in Syria after the UN's top human rights official raised the civilian death toll in the country to more than 5,000 and said President Bashar Al Assad's government should be investigated for crimes against humanity.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay told the 15-member body in New York yesterday that the situation in Syria was "intolerable," and asked that "gross violations" committed by Al Assad's security forces be referred to the International Criminal Court. "Ruthless repression" may soon plunge Syria into "civil war," she said in prepared remarks.

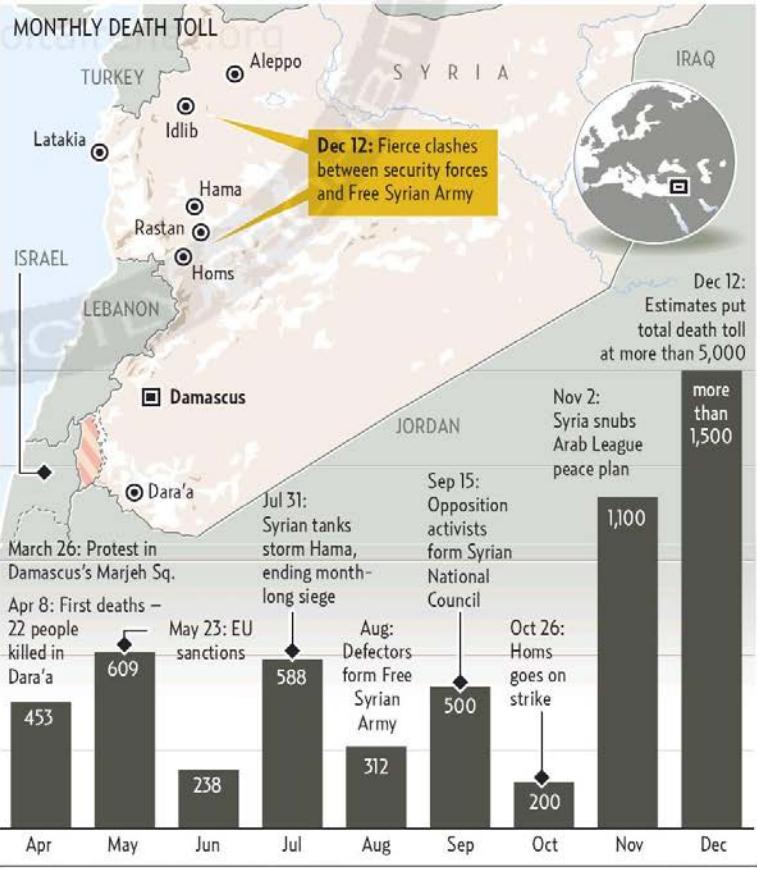
Pillay said the number of deaths probably exceeds 5,000. "Inaction by the international community will embolden Syrian authorities, and ensure perpetrators go unpunished," said Pillay.

At least 23 civilians died yesterday, most of them in the northern province of Idlib, where army defectors then killed seven members of the security forces, Rami Abdul Rahman the head of the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said by phone. One of the civilians died as a result of torture, he said.

'Kill or be killed'

"It's a situation of kill or be killed," Patrick Seale, a biographer of Al Assad's late father, former President Hafez Al Assad, said yesterday by phone from London. "They are desperately trying to crush

Death toll escalates in uprising



Source: Wire agencies, UN, Syrian Observatory for Human Rights

Graphic News/©Gulf News

the uprising because they recognise it is gathering momentum with external support."

Pillay's private briefing to the 15-nation council — where Russia and China blocked a resolution condemning Al Assad in October — heightened divisions over how to respond to the Syrian troubles.

The Security Council meeting came as Western

nations ramped up pressure to condemn Al Assad's campaign.

"I think it is necessary that those countries in the Security Council which are still hesitating change their mind," German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said.

France's UN envoy said the council was "morally responsible" for the daily deaths by staying silent.

But Russia said Western ac-

cusations that it was blocking UN action condemning the crackdown were "immoral" because the West was refusing to put pressure on armed rebel groups.

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The Khaleej Times (EAU /UAE)

Defectors hit back in Syria

Fresh violence leaves 28 dead

DAMASCUS — Army defectors ambushed a Syrian security patrol on Tuesday, killing seven in revenge for a raid that cost 11 civilian lives, activists said, as the UN estimated more than 5,000 have died in the crackdown.

Syrian security forces fired on a funeral procession in a restive northwestern border region, killing two people and raising Tuesday's death toll to at least 28, activists said. The flare-up of violence in Idlib province highlighted how Syria's uprising, which earlier this year involved mostly peaceful demonstrations in small towns and cities, has become a virtual insurgency in the countryside along the Turkish border.

Rami Abdul-Rahman, director of the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, and other Syrian activists said thousands of people were taking part in the funeral of civilians killed there earlier in the day when the gunfire erupted.

Regime forces swept through villages in the area near the Turkish frontier and attacked infiltrators at the border, and anti-regime fighters staged a retaliatory ambush and assassinated a senior officer earlier on Tuesday, the reports and Syrian media said.

Military defectors known as the Free Syrian Army have found shelter alongside thousands of Syrian

ARAB MINISTERS TO MEET

CAIRO — Arab foreign ministers will hold an emergency meeting in Cairo on Saturday to respond to Syria's proposal to admit observers in exchange for an end to regional sanctions, the Arab League said. Mohammed Zaidi, an adviser to Arab League chief Nabil Al Arabi, said a ministerial task force on Syria would hold a preparatory meeting at the 22-member bloc's headquarters on Saturday, ahead of the emergency session. — AFP

refugees on the Turkish side, making use of mountainous terrain, local smuggling networks and support among villagers on the Syrian side to stage cross-border attacks. "Seven security force members were killed in an ambush by deserters on a convoy patrolling the Idlib-Bab Al Hawa road in response to the martyrdom of 11 civilians this morning," the Observatory said.

The 11 died when they were attacked by security forces and pro-regime Shabiha militiamen in two villages in northwestern Idlib province, it said earlier. — Agencies

» SEE ALSO PAGE 11

Khaleej Times (EAU /UAE)



A woman living in Turkey shouts slogans as a group of Syrians protest against President Bashar Al Assad's regime, in Istanbul. — Reuters

Syria crackdown toll over 5,000, says UN

14,000 detained, 12,400 fled to other countries

NEW YORK — More than 5,000 people are now believed to have been killed in the Syrian government's crackdown on protests, UN rights chief Navi Pillay told the UN Security Council on Monday.

Pillay also said there were reports of increased attacks by opposition groups on President Bashar Al Assad's security forces but highlighted "alarming" events in the besieged protest city of Homs, according to diplomats in the closed meeting.

More than 14,000 people are estimated to have been detained and 12,400 have fled into neighboring countries since the anti-government protests erupted in March, Pillay told the 15-nation council, according to diplomats.

With hundreds more killed in

December in Assad's crackdown "it is my estimation that the total number of people killed since the protests began earlier this year is now likely to exceed 5,000. This situation is intolerable," she was quoted as saying.

The Security Council held a private briefing on Syria with western nations stepping up pressure for the body to condemn the violence. Russia and China vetoed a resolution on the Syria crisis in October.

After meeting with Pillay, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle told reporters: "I think it is necessary that those countries in the Security Council which are still hesitating change their mind."

"I am really shocked about what I heard about the atrocities in Syria." "We owe this to those who lost

their lives," he said. Among the council members, Russia, China, India, South Africa, and Brazil opposed or had strong reservations about any formal resolution which they said could be a first step to a western campaign for regime change. At the meeting, France's UN ambassador Gerard Araud said "history will judge the silence of some and the indifference of others" and that "the honor of the Security Council is at stake," French diplomats said.

Pillay told the meeting that the Syrian protesters had remained largely peaceful. "However, reports of armed attacks by opposition forces, including the so-called Free Syrian Army, against Syrian forces have increased," she told UN envoys.—AFP

The National (EAU /UAE)

Sanctions take toll on Syrian economy

Power cuts and fuel crisis as deaths from violence hit 5,000

Phil Sands
Foreign Correspondent

DAMASCUS // Regular power cuts, long queues at fuel stations and shortages of cooking gas are now part of everyday life in Syria, as sanctions bite and the economy grinds to a halt.

Nine months into a deadly uprising that has left more than 5,000 civilians and army defectors dead, according to the latest United Nations estimate, the blackouts and shortages have become entrenched in the country's daily routine.

Amid the growing hardship, many Syrians still refuse to believe such violence is actually taking place in their country. They are encouraged to downplay the depth of the country's crisis by the authorities, who continue to assure the public that the worst has now passed and that "Syria is fine".

But even those living in areas nominally insulated from the revolt, or those who would prefer not to notice it altogether, have not been able to ignore the fuel and power shortages.

"The other day I had to wait for almost eight hours to get diesel for my tractor," said a farmer on the southern outskirts of Damascus. "It is like a full-time job, the whole day waiting to try and get fuel, how am I supposed to do my actual work?"

His solution has been to send one of his young sons with a 25-litre plastic container, to stand in line for him at the local filling station, where he waits with dozens of other men and boys for the daily fuel delivery. Coaches, tractors and minivans, and a long, orderly line of plastic jerry cans stretch down the road.

Diesel is traditionally used to heat Syrian homes, but, in its absence, electric heaters have become popular. That, in turn, has led to a dramatic rise in demand for power – a 40 per cent increase, according to government officials.

The national electricity network, already working to its limits – power cuts in poorer neighbourhoods were not uncommon even before the crisis – has been pushed over the edge.

Many districts of Damascus, even those in upmarket neighbourhoods such as Mezzeh and Abu Rumaneh, now have regular blackouts.

The National (EAU / UAE)



People queue to refill empty cooking gas cylinders in Deir Balaba near Homs last week. Mandel / Reuters

Shortages take their toll on Syria's poor

→ Syria, from page 1

Less affluent areas may have two or three a day, lasting up to two hours each. Power is often cut entirely to protect hot spots.

After weeks of denying any problems existed, last Wednesday the ministry of electricity launched a rationing programme, acknowledging the de facto rationing that had been under way for more than a month.

Those with money to spare have begun buying small petrol generators to see them through blackouts. A resident of the wealthy Mezzeh villa district said his family had given up trying to find diesel for their central heating system and were now reliant on electric heaters.

When the power in their block of flats cuts out, they wrap up in warm clothes and wait the hour or so until it returns.

"There is a big generator in the basement for the whole building but we can't really get the diesel we need to run that and it's so expensive to get it on the black market that we just don't bother," he said. Shortages of cooking gas have also been pronounced, with long queues forming at local distribu-

tion centres when shipments are due in. While the official price for a 15-kilogram cylinder remains at about US\$6 (Dh22), scarce supplies mean the actual cost in many areas has risen to more than \$10 and in some places as much as \$20.

Officials insist sufficient amounts of heating fuel have been stockpiled to see the country through the winter. They say any shortages are the temporary result of attacks on transport routes by armed insurgents or stockpiling by unscrupulous middlemen seeking profits.

A key question for both the authorities and the opposition is which side the public will blame.

Activists' huge support for the president, Bashar Al Assad, will be eroded by growing hardships, while regime loyalists expect protesters will be accused of recklessly sowing chaos as sanctions hit home. So far, there is little indication as to where the majority is directing its ire.

"Now all the money I earn goes on paying for fuel for the car or the house and we don't always bother with heating any more because it's very expensive," said Abu Omar, a delivery driver who lives in Barakat, in central Damascus.

A critic of the regime, he said that while sanctions were directly causing the shortages and that the poorest Syrians were suffering the most, the authorities were ultimately to blame.

"If the elites would give us freedom and share some of their wealth and power with the ordinary people, we would not be facing sanctions, so this crisis is their responsibility," Mr Otaar said. "The rich will be fine through this, they have enough money to last them 200 years even if they never earn another penny. The rest of us will be cold and hungry if this continues."

The European Union, US and Arab League have imposed sanctions on key parts of the Syrian economy, including its oil and gas sector.

Suncor Energy, a Canadian group, said on Sunday that it was suspending operations in Syria as a result of the embargo, following similar moves by Shell and Total. Suncor was involved in supplying gas to Syrian power stations.

Regime supporters say western economic warfare and domestic insurgents have created the shortages. "The Europeans and Americans have a conspiracy to ruin our lives so they have tried to blockade

us," said a Christian resident of Damascus. "Syria is used to this and it will not break us."

Mtanos Habib, an economics professor at Damascus University and a former Syrian oil minister, said sanctions were hurting the country and that the poor were hit harder than the rich.

"Those gambling on sanctions or economic collapse to make the people rise up against the regime will be wrong," he said. "Those who put the sanctions in place should not expect the regime to be toppled by them."

The latest estimate of more than 5,000 dead since the uprising began was announced on Monday by Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The figure did not include soldiers or security forces killed by opposition forces, she said.

Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, yesterday accused the West of taking an immoral position by failing to stop armed members of the opposition while at the same time criticising Moscow for not condemning the crackdown by government forces.

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Today's Zaman (Turquie /Turkey)

Syria death toll hits 5,000 as violent insurgency spreads

Syria's actions could constitute crimes against humanity, said UN human rights chief Pillay, issuing a fresh call for the council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court. The sharp rise in the death toll is bound to lend weight to those arguing for increased international intervention to stop the bloodshed in Syria. A violent security crackdown failed to halt the unrest – inspired by popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
 Syria's actions could constitute crimes against humanity, said Pillay, issuing a fresh call for the council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court.

"It was the most horrifying briefing that we've had in the Security Council over the last two years," British Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant said after the session, which was arranged despite opposition from Russia, China and Brazil.

The sharp rise in the death toll is bound to lend weight to those arguing for increased international intervention to stop the bloodshed in Syria.

Assad, 46, whose minority Alawite family has held power over majority Sunni Muslim Syria for four decades, faces the most serious challenge to his rule from the turmoil which erupted in the southern city of Deraa on March 18.

A violent security crackdown failed to halt the unrest – inspired by popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya – which turned bloodier in the last few months as defecting soldiers join armed civilians in fighting back in some areas.

Dawn bloodshed

In the latest violence around dawn on Tuesday, security forces shot dead 11 people and wounded 26 others in Idlib, a northern protest hotbed, the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. At the flashpoint central province of Homs, an explosion set a gas pipeline on fire on Monday, the second reported pipeline blast in the area in a week. "The fire lit the night sky," said a resident who gave his name as Abu Khalaf.

State news agency SANA said the pipeline, near the town of Rastan, supplied gas to an electricity power plant. SANA also said border guards foiled an attempt by "an armed terrorist group" to cross into Syria from Turkey on Monday, the second such reported incident in a week. It said they shot dead two of the 15-strong group.

The Observatory said a pro-Assad armed group was holding 17 workers seized in Homs on Saturday. Despite the spiraling violence, Syrian authorities held local elections on Monday as part of what they say is a reform process, but Assad's critics described the voting as irrelevant. Monday was also the second day of the opposition's "Strike for Dignity," but its success was hard to gauge in some cities where violence has kept many residents in their homes. Though the strike has found support in protest strongholds around the country, it has not taken hold in central parts of the capital Damascus or the business hub of Aleppo. Syria has barred most independent journalists, making it hard to assess conflicting accounts of events there.

'Systematic attack'

In New York, Western envoys on the Security Council said Pillay's briefing on Monday was horrifying and termed it scandalous that the council, paralyzed by opposition from Russia and China, had taken little action on Syria.

"Independent, credible and corroborated accounts demonstrate that these abuses have taken place as part of a widespread and systematic attack on civilians," Pillay said, according to briefings notes seen by Reuters. French Ambassador Gerard Araud said,



Demonstrators shout slogans as they protest against the government of embattled Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Istanbul on Sunday.

Syria training Bahrain opposition figures, King Hamad says

Syria is training opposition figures in Bahrain, the Gulf island state's king said in an interview published on Tuesday, in which he also denied systematic rights abuses during state crackdowns on pro-democracy protests earlier this year.

King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa's interview with Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper comes a day after he met British Prime Minister David Cameron, who urged the king to press ahead with national reconciliation

and to engage with Bahrain's opposition.

"We have evidence that a number of Bahrainis who oppose our government are being trained in Syria. ... I have seen the files and we have notified the Syrian authorities, but they deny any involvement," the king said, giving no further details. King Hamad visited London on Monday, weeks after an independent inquiry found evidence of systematic rights abuses and said Bahrain's Sunni Muslim

rulers used excessive force to cow protesters and detainees. Syria is dominated by President Bashar al-Assad's Alawite sect, an offshoot of Shiite Islam, and is allied with Shiite Iran, long blamed by Bahrain for stirring trouble among its majority Shiite population. Bahrain's Shites hold frequent protests against what they see as state discrimination in jobs, services and political representation, charges the government denies. London Reuters/AP

adding. "The tragedy is that if things were allowed to degenerate and to go in the direction of further provocation, of fuelling further confrontation, then maybe [there would be] hundreds of thousands dead." Russia joined China to block Western efforts to pass a resolution against Syria in the UN Security Council. Syrian Ambassador Bashar Ja'afari said Pillay should never have appeared before the council for a session that was part of a "huge conspiracy concocted against Syria from the beginning."

Assad's government portrays the municipal polls as part of a process leading to a parliamentary election next year and constitutional reform. But crit-

ics say local elections have little meaning in a country where power is highly centralized.

Prime Minister Adel Safar urged voters to "stand together to save our country from the conspiracies against us" and SANA said Syrians had flocked to the polls in 9,849 voting centers.

Assad has said reforms cannot be rushed in Baathist-ruled Syria, which is a close ally of Iran, a key player in nearby Lebanon and supporter of militant anti-Israel groups. Some of his opponents see civil disobedience such as the strike action as preferable to armed confrontation, with the risk of civil war looming. Amman Reuters/AP

Al Ahram Hebdo (Egypte / Egypt)

SYRIE. Malgré les sanctions imposées par la Ligue arabe, la répression se poursuit. L'opposition affirme que Homs pourrait être l'objet d'un massacre alors que la Turquie craint une dégradation de la sécurité régionale.

La situation se dégrade encore

Un appel à la grève générale a été lancé par l'opposition dans tout le pays. Cette dernière entend entamer une vaste campagne de désobéissance civile. « La plupart des facultés de l'Université de Damas, notamment celles de médecine, d'ingénierie informatique et d'économie, ont observé la grève », selon les Comités locaux de coordination (LCC), un des groupes organisant les manifestations sur le terrain.

Selon eux, cette grève marque le début d'une campagne de désobéissance qui doit se poursuivre sous d'autres formes de contestation. La fermeture de routes importantes et d'autoroutes, des sit-in, des grèves dans les universités, dans les transports et la fonction publique pourraient voir le jour.

Entre-temps, le Conseil National Syrien (CNS), qui réunit la majorité des courants de l'opposition, a dit craindre un « massacre » à Homs, cible d'une répression violente depuis des semaines. « Toutes les informations, les vidéos ainsi que les militants sur le terrain affirment que le régime se prépare à commettre un massacre collectif pour faire taire la révolution à Homs et en faire un exemple pour les autres régions ». Le communiqué de l'opposition ajoute que « le régime prétexte des incidents confessionnels pour justifier ses actes ». Toujours selon le CNS, les forces de l'ordre incendieraient des mosquées, torturaient et tuaient des jeunes et enlèveraient des femmes et des enfants. Le président du CNS, Burhan Ghalioun, a déclaré vouloir préserver les institutions du pays. « L'opposition n'est plus prête à négocier avec des assassins », a-t-il rappelé. « Mais elle est prête à parler aux fonctionnaires civils et militaires qui ne représentent pas le régime mais les institutions. Nous ne voulons pas refaire les erreurs qui ont été commises en Irak, nous voulons que les institutions publiques, et avec elles l'ordre et la paix



Un appel à la grève générale a été lancé par l'opposition.

sociale, soient conservées », a-t-il insisté.

Sur le plan diplomatique, la Ligue arabe, qui a imposé des sanctions économiques à la Syrie, a prévu en fin de semaine prochaine deux réunions au Caire sur la Syrie. Elles visent à discuter des conditions posées par le régime de Bachar Al-Assad qui a exigé une levée des sanctions en échange de sa signature du protocole sur l'envoi d'observateurs arabes chargés de rendre compte des violences et de tenter de mettre fin à la répression qui a fait, selon l'Onu, plus de 4 000 morts depuis la mi-mars.

Par ailleurs, la réunion de la délégation ministérielle arabe en charge du dossier syrien, prévue samedi 17 à Doha, a été annulée. Le secrétaire général de l'institution panarabe,

Nabil Al-Arabi, a toutefois proposé d'organiser cette rencontre le 16 ou le 17 décembre au Caire. « La Syrie devrait accepter le plus rapidement possible le plan proposé par la Ligue arabe de manière à éviter des sanctions économiques de la part du monde arabe », a déclaré Al-Arabi.

Ces sanctions, les premières de cette ampleur à l'encontre de l'un des 22 membres de la Ligue, prévoient notamment un gel des transactions commerciales avec le gouvernement syrien et de ses comptes bancaires dans les pays arabes. La signature de ce protocole a fait l'objet de plusieurs ultimatums de la Ligue face à l'absence de mesures de Damas pour appliquer le plan de sortie de la crise arabe, que la Syrie

avait pourtant accepté « sans condition » début novembre. Ce plan prévoyait l'arrêt des violences, la libération des détenus et l'ouverture du pays à des observateurs arabes et à la presse étrangère.

Pour soutenir les décisions arabes, la Turquie a annoncé qu'elle allait suspendre à son tour un accord de libre-échange avec la Syrie et prendre des dispositions pour éviter la Syrie dans ses relations commerciales avec le Proche-Orient. Le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu, a menacé le régime syrien en annonçant que la Turquie ne pourra pas rester les bras croisés si la répression syrienne en venait à menacer la sécurité régionale. ●

Maha Salem

The Daily Telegraph (Royaume-Uni / United Kingdom)
Cet entretien a été publié hier (13 décembre) et commenté aujourd’hui
This interview was published yesterday (December 13), and today commented.



World News

'There is no ethnic cleansing and no genocide in Bahrain'

By Con Coughlin

THE King of Bahrain yesterday defended his role of anti-government protest leader. He said he had no power to go and kill people on the roads, and that Bahraini security forces did not indulge in "ethnic cleansing or genocide".

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, who was exiled at Sandhurst, blamed Syria and Iran for stirring up our people". He claimed that Syria was training young Bahrainis to overthrow the ruling family. Responding to the accusations published that month, which found the Bahraini police force had used excessive force against anti-government protesters, King Hamad said he would implore our wali - ranging regions where the aim of the protests is to overthrow the system". In the Gulf state, Bahraini authorities have responded to the protests by killing more than 150 people, mostly men, with tear gas, rubber bullets and sticks of matches.

"If people have done something wrong then they should play around with our laws," King Hamad said. He was prompted to establish the inquiry into the disturbances because of who he believed were misleading reports. "What began as a protest over better living standards who sought the overthrow of the dynasty, has turned into a massacre," he said. "We have evidence that a number of Bahrainis who were trying to move away from the problems of our government are being beaten in Syria, because people look instead of Bahraini and we have noticed the Syrian

colonial psychological torture" such as "shaming, whiplash, floggings, slaps, electric shocks, beatings, and other forms of torture".

There are Bahraini police officers that have been arrested, including those said to be responsible for the torturing to death of two detainees. The Head of the National Security Agency has been replaced.

A group of protesters jailed for participating in the protests have had their trials cancelled and been released on bail, even though the commission found evidence that some had been tortured and beaten severely for the international media.

King Hamad has hired Bahraini lawyer, the former Assistant Commissioner of the Metro Police, and the former police chief of Maysan, to review a major overhaul of the internal security apparatus.

After talks with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, King Hamad said he had accepted the recommendations of the commission, which has recommended that the royal family should be granted full autonomy.

King Hamad is very close to Prince Saud, who is the son of King Fahd, and he has been instrumental in persuading him to accept the recommendations of the commission.

In Bahrain, no mass graves have been found, and there is no evidence of killing anyone, he said. "We have always tried to patch up our differences," he said. "This is the beauty of a constitutional monarchy, it is built on the principles of equality and freedom of expression."



66
We have had trouble before – but have always managed to patch up our differences

An anti-government protester in Bahrain in February



King Hamad of Bahrain gave an exclusive interview to The Telegraph while in London yesterday

authorities, but they do – my brother in law has main property now, he had divisions within Bahrain and to undertake the reforms necessary to avoid a repeat of the violence. We have had trouble before – in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. But we have always managed to patch up our differences," he said. Some opposition campaigners had been given senior appointments in the government. "We do not keep them outside your tent – you bring them inside the tent," he said. "This is the beauty of a constitutional monarchy, it is built on the principles of equality and freedom of expression."

over our differences.

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There is no ethnic cleansing and no genocide in Bahrain. No mass graves have been found, and there is no evidence of killing anyone, he said. "We have always tried to patch up our differences," he said. "This is the beauty of a constitutional monarchy, it is built on the principles of equality and freedom of expression."