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REVISTA DE PRENSA SOBRE SIRIA #21

Lunes 2 de enero de 2012

La prensa atlantista y la de los países del Golfo se focalizan en la moción del Parlamento árabe que reclama la retirada de los observadores desplegados en Siria ya que su presencia en el país sirve de aval a la versión de los hechos expresada por el gobierno de Bachar al-Assad.

Es importante señalar lo siguiente:

- *El Parlamento árabe es un órgano de consulta de la Liga Árabe. Si se le califica de "Parlamento" es únicamente porque lo componen 4 parlamentarios por cada uno de los 22 países miembros de la Liga Árabe, pero ese órgano no dispone en realidad de ninguno de los poderes legislativos ni de control característicos de un verdadero parlamento;*
- *Cerca del 25% de sus miembros no deben su mandato como parlamentarios al sufragio universal de sus pueblos sino que han sido simplemente nombrados por los soberanos de sus países respectivos;*
- *El Parlamento árabe fue el primero en exigir el despliegue de los observadores cuya retirada está pidiendo ahora;*
- *El Parlamento árabe fue también el primero en exigir la adopción de sanciones económicas contra Siria. Dichas sanciones fueron adoptadas como medio de preparar la guerra y su posterior levantamiento tuvo como objetivo permitir el despliegue de los observadores.*

Dos meses atrás, los militantes anti-Assad clamaban por el despliegue de los observadores de la Liga Árabe para que estos dieran fe de la crueldad de la represión. A su llegada a Siria, los observadores comprobaron la muerte de más de 2000 soldados y, a pesar de un total desacuerdo en cuanto a la cantidad de víctimas civiles y las circunstancias de sus muertes, la versión de la cruel represión desatada contra pacíficas protestas se ha vuelto insostenible. Así que los anti-Assad exigen ahora la retirada de los observadores, porque estos últimos han desmentido su versión de los hechos.

• Un artículo de Deborah Sherwood publicado ayer en el *Daily Star* (Londres), que había escapado a nuestra mirada, (ver p. 12) revela que los Estados Mayores de Estados Unidos y Gran Bretaña están preparando un posible bombardeo contra Siria. Con ese fin, agentes de la CIA y del MI6, así como comandos SAS y SBS, ya están recogiendo información de carácter militar en territorio sirio.

El artículo de Deborah Sherwood aborda la posibilidad de una agresión aérea y la selección de los blancos de los posibles bombardeos, pero no menciona el papel de Estados Unidos y de Gran Bretaña en la actual guerra no convencional.

La Ligue arabe se divise sur la Syrie

Un observateur a dénoncé ce week-end la présence de snipers à Deraa, avant d'être contredit par son propre chef.

PIERRE PRIER

PROCHE-ORIENT La mission d'observation de la Ligue arabe en Syrie semblait hier s'achever vers un constat d'échec, moins d'une semaine après son arrivée. L'acte de décès a été dressé au sein même de l'organisation panarabe par l'un de ses émissaires, le Parlement arabe. Son président a ouvertement demandé le retrait des observateurs, au grand embarras du secrétaire général. Sur le terrain, la mission est menacée d'implosion par son propre chef, le très confiné général soudanais Mohammed al-Dabi.

Renouçant à sa promesse de garder le silence, après ses premières

déclarations, jugées provocantes, Mohammed al-Dabi a carrément contredit samedi l'un de ses hommes. Ce dernier avait dénoncé l'utilisation de snipers (fumeurs embusqués) à Deraa, foyer de la contestation. « Nous avons vu des snipers de nos propres yeux », s'est exclamé l'enquêteur dans une vidéo diffusée samedi sur YouTube. Nous devons demander au gouvernement de les retirer immédiatement. »

Le général l'a aussitôt désavoué sur la BBC. « Il n'a pas vu de snipers, il a dit que s'il en voyait, il le signifierait », a-t-il protesté, contre toute évidence. Cette sortie a encore creusé le fossé entre le chef de la délégation et ses subordonnés, nombreux à l'avoir mis en quarantaine.

« Des actes inhumains »

L'affaire n'est sans doute pas étrangère au coup de sang du président du Parlement arabe. Le Koweïtien Ali al-Salem al-Dekhas a recommandé hier le « retrait immédiat » de la mission, dont la présence « revient à couvrir la poursuite des actes inhumains commis par le régime syrien sous les yeux de la Ligue arabe ».

Certes, Ali al-Dekhas vient d'un pays qui est le plus fidèle allié des Etats-Unis dans la région. Mais le vent de liberté des printemps arabes donne des ailes au Parlement arabe, instance consultative forte de 88 ressortissants de tous les pays représentés. Mis en place en 2005, il est destiné à se transformer un jour en assemblée élue, à



« Nous avons vu des snipers de nos propres yeux », a affirmé un enquêteur de la Ligue arabe dans une vidéo diffusée samedi sur Internet. SARA HOEIDA/MASSP

mouvements de l'opposition syrienne a été marquée par le leader du plus important des deux. Sur sa page Facebook, le président du Conseil national syrien (CNS), Bourhane Ghalioun, a précisé qu'il devait soumettre à l'assemblée générale du mouvement le document préparé avec le Comité national de coordination (CNC). Cette signature a suscité des critiques au sein du CNS, qui était jusqu'à présent très réservé à l'égard du CNC, essentiellement basé en Syrie et critiqué pour ses positions ambiguës vis-à-vis de Damas. ■

zoom

Goodluck Jonathan décrète l'état d'urgence au Nigeria

Le président Goodluck Jonathan a décrété ce week-end l'état d'urgence dans plusieurs zones du Nigeria contre la violente secte islamiste Boko Haram, tandis que le début de la nouvelle année était marqué par la mort d'une cinquantaine de personnes dans un conflit foncier entre



Le Figaro (France)

Des journalistes indépendants défient le régime sur la Toile

DELPHINE MINOUI
CORRESPONDANTE AU MOYEN-ORIENT

ELLE ÉCRIT comme elle parle. Un ton pressé, incisif, qui décrit à chaud le cauchemar de son quotidien : les blessés qui agonisent sur les trottoirs, les tireurs embusqués sur les toits, la pénurie alimentaire. Elle n'a pas le temps de se plaindre, Iman. Encore moins de pleurer tous ses morts, dont la liste s'allonge de jour en jour. À Homs, sa ville, endeuillée par neuf mois de répression, elle retient son souffle lorsqu'elle slalome, un carnet de notes enfoui dans sa poche, entre les postes de contrôle de l'armée pour aller récolter les témoignages de ses concitoyens.

« Pour moi, c'est le meilleur moyen d'éduquer les esprits à la démocratie »

IMAN, JOURNALISTE SYRIENNE

« Chercher à dire la vérité sur les massacres commis par le régime de Bachar, c'est signer son arrêt de mort. Mais je veux raconter notre tragédie, quel qu'en soit le prix ! », avance, depuis son domicile, la jeune journaliste syrienne de 33 ans, grâce à une communication pérennément établie sur Skype. Chaque semaine, ses articles remplissent les colonnes de *Souria bada hurriya* (« La Syrie veut la liberté »), un de ces nouveaux journaux indépendants qui fleurissent depuis quatre mois à l'ombre de la propagande du régime. Publié sur Internet et alimenté par des dizaines de reporters disséminés à travers le pays, cet hebdomadaire est également diffusé sous le manteau, sous forme de photocopies. « La violence du régime pousse, chaque jour, certains de mes concitoyens à prendre les armes pour se révolter. Mon combat, il est d'encre et de papier. Pour moi, c'est le meilleur moyen d'éduquer les esprits à la démocratie », précise Iman, qui jongle quotidiennement entre sa bataille au nom de la liberté et sa vie de famille – elle est mère de quatre enfants.

Résistance

Véritable mine d'information, son magazine est aussi une agora, à l'image du débat inédit qui prévaut depuis le début de l'insurrection contre Bachar el-Assad, en mars dernier. Et qui n'épargne personne : ni le régime, accusé de crimes contre l'humanité, ni la Ligue arabe, jugée trop complaisante envers les autorités syriennes, ni certains milieux de la dissidence minés par des querelles de

pouvoir. « Les tensions internes à l'opposition risquent de mener à l'échec de la révolution et à son infiltration par Bachar el-Assad », prévient le journaliste Melhem al-Droubi dans un article datant du 13 novembre 2011.

La vigilance à l'égard des douloureux lendemains révolutionnaires des pays voisins y est également à l'ordre du jour, comme dans ce texte signé par un certain Shammous. « Tous les révolutionnaires du monde arabe devraient tirer des leçons de la situation égyptienne. La révolution, ce n'est pas se contenter de renverser un régime, c'est aussi se dé-

barrasser de toute la culture qui va avec », met en garde l'écrivain, en référence à l'accaparement, au Caire, du pouvoir par les militaires depuis la chute de Moubarak.

Réseau interactif

D'autres articles s'intéressent aux différentes formes de résistance. L'un, par exemple, se penche sur la grève de la faim. Et dans un pays où l'humour s'est vite imposé comme une arme contre la censure, la page réservée aux caricatures épingle régulièrement les différents tortionnaires du régime. Comme la

plupart des nouveaux médias de la révolution syrienne, la préparation hebdomadaire de « La Syrie veut la liberté » obéit à un système qui fonctionne par réseau interactif. Rédigés depuis Damas, Homs ou encore Deraa, les articles sont ensuite édités et mis en ligne par des « relais » disséminés dans plusieurs pays : Arabie saoudite, Égypte, Jordanie... « Il y a une vraie solidarité entre Syriens de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur », relève, depuis Dubaï, Naji Tayara. À 32 ans, ce jeune activiste en exil, dont le père croupit dans une geôle syrienne depuis sept mois, est le porte-parole de la « Radio de la révolution syrienne », lancée à l'automne dernier. Diffusée sur Internet et financée par un riche homme d'affaires syrien, elle offre des témoignages de manifestants et d'habitants des villes assiégées par l'armée pour « que les personnes bloquées chez elles sachent ce qui se passe dans le quartier voisin ou dans d'autres régions ».

Un support de communication très précieux mais qui se heurte à divers obstacles. D'abord, les attaques des hackers du régime, qui forcent Naji Tayara à reconfigurer régulièrement le site Web de la radio. Ensuite, la limitation de la diffusion à Internet, auquel de nombreux Syriens n'ont pas accès. « L'idéal serait de pouvoir émettre nos programmes via la FM, grâce à un dispositif installé dans un pays frontalier. Mais ni le Liban ni la Turquie ne sont prêts à prendre le risque de fâcher Damas », concède-t-il. ■



Matériel informatique de bloggeurs syriens dans le village de Güveççi, en Turquie, près de la frontière syrienne. SKOWRONEK/COSMOS

L'Iran réplique aux sanctions par

Alors que la pression de l'Occident s'accroît, Téhéran a procédé hier

ADELE SMITH
NEW YORK

MOYEN-ORIENT Le bras de fer continue entre l'Occident et Téhéran sur le programme nucléaire iranien. Samedi, les États-Unis ont renforcé leurs sanctions. Hier, l'Iran a répliqué par un tir de missile de moyenne portée et affirme avoir testé de nouvelles barres de combustible nucléaire « dans le cœur du réacteur de Téhéran pour vérifier leur bon fonctionnement », une étape supplémentaire dans le processus d'enrichissement d'uranium. Quant à l'Union européenne, qui a déjà accru ses sanctions, elle doit prendre une décision sur un éventuel embargo pétrolier avant la fin du mois.

La loi de financement du Pentagone, promulguée samedi par Barack Obama, prévoit de punir les banques commerçant avec la banque centrale iranienne. Le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a tenté de minimiser la mesure, rétorquant que la banque centrale peut faire face « aux pressions de l'ennemi », mais l'effet se fait déjà sentir sur la monnaie iranienne, qui se trouvait hier en forte baisse. La mesure vise à réduire les revenus pétroliers de l'Iran, cinquième exportateur au monde. Elle accentue considérablement la pression sur le régime. Celui-ci compte sur ses échanges avec Pékin pour en atténuer les effets mais la première raffinerie chinoise, Sinopec Corp, a signalé qu'elle réduirait ses importations de moitié ce mois-ci afin de pousser son partenaire à réduire les prix. Le bras de fer est risqué

pour tous. Les Occidentaux redoutent une envolée des prix du pétrole. La Maison-Blanche, sous pression du Congrès et d'Israël, veut éviter à tout prix de se laisser entraîner dans une spirale militaire. Et l'Iran a beaucoup à perdre d'une aggravation de la situation.

Nervosité palpable

Afin de prévenir une déstabilisation des prix du pétrole, l'Administration américaine a introduit des mesures d'exemption aux nouvelles sanctions. Il s'agit notamment de laisser une marge de manœuvre à des pays comme le Japon et la Corée du Sud, tous deux gros importateurs de brut iranien. Le président américain aura en outre le pouvoir de reporter les sanctions de six mois et celui de lever certaines pénalités, si un pays a en-

De Morgen (Belgique / Belgium)

Waarnemersmissie in Syrië lokt steeds meer controverses uit

BRUSSEL • Een belangrijk adviserend orgaan binnen de Arabische Liga eist de onmiddellijke terugtrekking van de waarnemers die in Syrië moeten toezien op het einde van het overheidsgeweld. De waarnemers zouden de bloedige onlusten enkel maar aanwakkeren en tegenstellingen tussen observatoren ondermijnen de geloofwaardigheid van de missie.

DOOR KOEN VIDAL

Syrië was een van de weinige landen ter wereld waar Nieuwjaar niet werd gevierd. Wel kwamen opnieuw tienduizenden burgers op straat om "het jaar van de vrijheid" aan te kondigen. Daarbij riepen ze slogans tegen president al-Assad die "een somber 2012" werd toegewenst. Bij de betogingen schoot het leger opnieuw met scherp en daarbij vielen opnieuw doden en gewonden. In de opstandige stad Daraa kwamen zeker drie mensen om het leven waaronder een kind van zeven. Ook in de hoofdstad Damascus waren er betogingen.

Het aanhoudende geweld blijft ook aan de geloofwaardigheid van de waarnemersmissie van de Arabische Liga knagen. Hoewel er ondertussen al meer dan honderd observatoren in Syrië toekijken op de terugtrekking van het leger uit bevolkingswijken, is het geweld de jongste dagen alleen nog maar verergerd.

Dat is de belangrijkste reden waarom een belangrijk adviserend orgaan van de Arabische Liga pleit voor de directe terugtrekking van de waarnemers. Ali al-Salem al-Dekbas, de voorzitter van het Arabische parlement, vindt dat Assad de waarnemers belachelijk maakt. "We zijn getuige van een escalatie. Deze missie geeft het Syrische regime een dekmantel om verder te gaan met zijn onmenselijke acties. Dit heeft bij veel



■ Een waarnemer maakt duidelijk dat hij scherpshutters heeft gezien in Daraa. Later wordt dat ontkend door de voorzitter van de waarnemersmissie.

Arabische mensen woede opgewekt."

Het parlement roept secretaris-generaal Nabil Elaraby van de Arabische Liga op om de buitenlandministers van de lidstaten op te roepen en tot de onmiddellijke terugtrekking van de observatiemissie te beslissen. Maar een hoge bron binnen de Arabische Liga verklaarde dat het nog te vroeg is om een eindoordeel te vellen over het werk van de waarnemers: "De missie zal een maand ter plaatse blijven en pas dan kunnen we conclusies trekken."

Tegenspraak observatoren

Gisteren bleek trouwens ook dat er behoorlijk wat spanningen zijn onder de observatoren zelf. Bij een bezoek aan het opstandige Daraa zou een van de observatoren zich hebben laten ontvallen dat hij op de daken van de gebouwen meerdere scherpshutters had gezien. Op een aantal beelden

Orgaan binnen Arabische Liga eist onmiddellijke terugtrekking van de waarnemers

uit Daraa is te zien hoe een vermoedelijke waarnemer het volgende zegt tegen een omstander: "Zegt u mij dat er snipers zijn? U hoeft me dat niet te vertellen want ik heb ze met mijn eigen ogen gezien." De man voegt eraan toe dat hij zijn bevindingen zou overmaken aan de Arabische Liga en dat er binnen de 24 uur maatregelen zouden worden genomen.

Vreemd genoeg werden die uitspraken later ingetrokken door generaal Mistafa al-Dabi, de Soedanese voorzitter van de waarnemersmissie.

"Wat die waarnemer gezegd heeft", zei Dabi, "is dat indien hij snipers zou zien, hij dat onmiddellijk aan de Arabische Liga zou rapporteren." Dit bochtenwerk zou de al bestaande kritiek op generaal Dabi wel eens verder kunnen aanwakkeren. Generaal Dabi bekleedde jarenlang topfuncties in het leger van de Soedanese president al-Bashir, die door het Strafhof van misdaden tegen de mensheid wordt beschuldigd. Dabi zaaide vorige week controverse toen hij zich minimalistisch uitliet over het bloedige geweld in de stad Homs.

Gisteren ontstond ook onduidelijkheid over een akkoord dat twee belangrijke oppositiegroepen dit weekeinde zouden hebben gesloten. Op zaterdag zei een woordvoerder van het Nationale Coördinatie Comité (NCC) dat zijn groep met de Syrische Nationale Raad (SNC) een routekaart had uitgestippeld voor democratie in Syrië na de val van Bashar al-Assad.

De SNC vertegenwoordigt veel oppositie buiten Syrië en probeert zich als vertegenwoordiger van het Syrische volk te presenteren, terwijl de NCC voornamelijk leden in Syrië heeft. Het is onduidelijk hoeveel invloed beide groepen hebben op demonstraties in Syrië.

Volgens het Amerikaanse persbureau Associated Press, dat een kopie van het document heeft, stelt de overeenkomst dat beide groepen buitenlandse interventie in Syrië afwijzen, tenzij deze afkomstig is uit Arabische landen. Ook stelt het een overgangperiode van één jaar voor na de val van Assad, zodat een grondwet geschreven kan worden die een 'civiele, pluralistische parlementaire democratie' garandeert. Daarna moeten parlements- en presidentsverkiezingen volgen.

Een woordvoerder van de SNC ontkende het akkoord gisteren tegenover de zender Al Jazeera. Volgens hem is het slechts een idee waarover de SNC nog moet beslissen.

Wat doen die waarnemers eigenlijk?

#Syrie

De Arabische Liga heeft aindelijk waarnemers naar Syrië gestuurd. Helemaal weet niemand wat ze uitspoken.

Eva Ludemann
Amsterdam

Het is maar een ideeje: een internationale delegatie waarnemers om te kijken wat de waarnemers van de Arabische Liga in Syrië precies doen. En waar ze dat doen. Met zijn hoewel en zijn ze? Informatie over de missie is schaars. De Arabische Liga geeft geen lijst met de namen van de missieleden.

'Salaam aleikum', klinkt het door de telefoon vanuit het hoofdkwartier van de Liga in Caïro. 'Ten lijst met namen van waarnemers? Sorry mevrouw, ik kan u niet helpen. Nee, mijn collega's weten het ook niet.'

Vanuit Caïro gaat de questie naar Damascus, waar de missie haar hoofdkwartier heeft ingericht. Kolonel Afifi neemt de telefoon op. Hij is de Egyptische gezant van de Liga in Syrië en de contactpersoon voor de

internationale media. 'Bel me maandag maar terug', zucht hij vermoed. De kolonel spreekt geen woord Engels. Of hij doet alsof.

Helemaal niemand

Amnesty International, de internationale civiele actiegroep Avaaz.org, de grote persbureaus en media als de BBC, CNN, Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya, niemand kan vertellen wie de Arabische waarnemers in Syrië precies zijn, en hoe en met hoeveel man ze het geweld van het regime tegen de burgers in dat land onderzoeken.

De aantallen variëren van 60 (Al-Jazeera) en 72 (Al-Arabiya) tot 200 (Reuters) en 500 (de Arabische Liga zelf). Volgens Gulf News gaat het om 50 politici, voorvechters van de mensenrechten, topmilitairen en tien functionarissen van de Arabische Liga.

Na veel zoekwerk komt mede met behulp van het Franse kantoor van mensenrechtenorganisatie Human Rights Watch een twintigtal namen bovendien, al is het niet honderd procent zeker dat die lid zijn van de

sadeurs van de verdreven Egyptische dictator Mubarak, en hun Marokkaanse ambtsgenoot Abderrahmane Benomar. Op enkelen na zijn de vermeendelijke waarnemers allemaal hoge pieken in de Arabische Liga.

Een onafhankelijke missie lid is Mustafa al-Hassan, een advocaat van het Hisham Mubarak Center for Human Rights in Caïro, dat zich het afgelopen decennium heeft geprofileerd als centrum tegen marteling. Alaa Shalaby, Mohammed Radd en Hisham Abu Alenen zijn vertegenwoordigers van de Arab Organisation for Human Rights, ook uit Caïro.

En dan is er de missieleider, die afgelopen week onder veel kritiek kwam te staan: de controversiële luitenant-generaal Ahmed Moustafa al-Dabi. Hij weet als voormalig chef van de Soedanese veiligheidsdienst als geen ander hoe je kritische geluiden onder de bevolking in de kiem moet smoren. Geen Syrische demonstrant is zo gek om met hem te praten. 'Er is hier niets om bang voor te zijn, alles is oké in Homs', zei al-Dabi met een uitgestreken smool tegen een achter-

grond van door pantservoertuigen en raketten verpulverde huizen. Terwijl hij praatte, klonken schoten, al is het onduidelijk of die werden afgevuurd door de Syrische militairen of door gewapend opstandelingen.

Westerse twijfel

De Syrische oppositie eist dat al-Dabi af treedt als hoofd van de waarnemersmissie. Ook in het Westen klinkt twijfel over de geloofwaardigheid van de missie.

De Arabische Liga zelf gaf vrijdagavond een verklaring uit die veel leek op een poging die geloofwaardigheid op te krikken. 'We krijgen veel klachten binnen uit Damascus. Onze waarnemers krijgen lang niet overal toegang toe', aldus Adnan Isa al-Khudayr, de Koeweit assistent-secretaris-generaal van het departement van Financiën van de Arabische Liga. 'We ontvangen aldoor e-mails en telefoontjes van onze mensen.'

Dit in weerwil van de verklaring van waarnemer Adnan Issa al-Khudayr diezelfde dag dat 'de Syrische autoriteiten zeer behulpzaam zijn'.



Ahmed Moustafa al-Dabi.

waarnemersmissie. Op de lijst staan onder anderen brigadiers Jalal Sounoussi en Abdul Latif Jabali uit Tunisia, kolonel Mohammed Bin Hussain Bin Yousuf (Marokko) en luitenant-kolonel Khalid Bin Rubaian al-Rubaihan (Saoedi-Arabië). Verder zijn er Waqubh Hanafi, Samir Seif al-Yazal en Nabih al-Arabi, voormalig ambass-

Tageszeitung (Allemagne / Germany)

Uneins über Scharfschützen

SYRIEN Der Chef der Beobachtergruppe der Arabischen Liga weist einen entsprechenden Bericht zurück. Die Opposition legt einen gemeinsamen Plan für die Zeit nach dem Sturz von Präsident Assad vor

NIKOSIA *afp* | Unter den Beobachtern der Arabischen Liga in Syrien gibt es offenbar Meinungsverschiedenheiten über den Einsatz von Heckenschützen der Regierung in der südlichen Stadt Daraa. Der Leiter der Beobachtermission wies Angaben zurück, eines seiner Teammitglieder habe die Präsenz von Heckenschützen bestätigt.

Der die Mission der Arabischen Liga leitende sudanesischer General Mohammed Ahmed Mustafa al-Dabi sagte in der BBC, ein in einem Video zu sehender Mann mit einer Weste der Liga habe über die Präsenz von Heckenschützen nur im Konjunktiv gesprochen. Der Mann habe ge-

sagt, wenn er Heckenschützen selbst sähe, würde er das umgehend melden. Die Syrische Beobachtungsstelle für Menschenrechte mit Sitz in London hatte zuvor ein auf Freitag datiertes Video veröffentlicht, in dem ein Mann mit orangener Weste zu einer Menschenmenge in Daraa sagt: „Es gibt Heckenschützen, wir haben sie mit unseren eigenen Augen gesehen. Wir fordern die Behörden auf, sie sofort abzuziehen. Wenn sie es nicht binnen 24 Stunden abziehen, wird es andere Maßnahmen geben“. Der namentlich nicht genannte Mann fügt in dem Video hinzu: „Andernfalls wären wir umsonst hierher gekommen“.

Die syrische Opposition schloss unterdessen eine Vereinbarung über die Zeit nach dem Sturz von Präsident Baschar al-Assad. Das Nationale Koordinierungsgremium für einen Demokratischen Wandel, dem vor allem linksgerichtete sowie kurdische Gruppen angehören, und der Syrische Nationalrat einigten sich auf ein in der ägyptischen Hauptstadt Kairo unterzeichnetes und im Internet veröffentlichtes Dokument, das unter anderem die „Gründung eines bürocratisch-demokratischen Staats“ vorsieht. Das Dokument beinhaltet eine Unterstützung für die aus Deserteuren gebildete sogenannte Freie Syrische Armee, die

gegen Assads Truppen kämpft. Eine ausländische Militärintervention zum Schutz der Zivilbevölkerung wird jedoch abgelehnt.

Die Freie Syrische Armee setzte nach Angaben ihres Chefs Riad Assad für die Dauer der Anwesenheit der arabischen Beobachter ihre Aktivitäten aus. Ob es dabei bleibe, hänge allerdings von der weiteren Entwicklung ab, sagte der Oberst. Derzeit nähmen die „Massaker“ täglich zu. Die Beobachtungsstelle für Menschenrechte berichtete am Sonntag von acht getöteten Zivilisten, von denen drei am Samstag von Sicherheitskräften erschossen worden seien.

L'Unita (Italie / Italy)

Il dossier

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Gli spari riecheggiano in quelle vie trasformate in un campo di battaglia. Gli scontri si susseguono da due giorni e investono interi quartieri della capitale siriana. A fronteggiarsi sono le forze lealiste e centinaia di disertori. È la battaglia di Damasco. L'ordine ricevuto dalle truppe fedeli al presidente Bashar al-Assad è perentorio: stanare i disertori, arrestarli, anche se ciò significa agire casa per casa. Un video su YouTube mostra un gruppo di soldati fare irruzione in una casa di Damasco e trascinarne fuori il corpo senza vita di un uomo. E in questo scenario di guerra totale, il parlamento della Lega Araba, organo consultivo dell'organiz-

Bilancio di sangue
Nel 2011 i morti civili sarebbero stati 5800, di cui 395 bambini

zazione panaraba, ha chiesto ieri il ritiro degli osservatori dalla Siria, denunciando la repressione ancora in atto nel Paese nonostante la presenza dei rappresentanti dell'organizzazione panaraba. Il Presidente dell'Assemblea, Salem al-Diqbassi, ha rivolto un appello al segretario generale della Lega Araba, Nabil al-Arabi perché «ritiri immediatamente gli osservatori arabi, visto che il regime siriano continua a uccidere civili innocenti». Le azioni di Damasco, ha denunciato in un comunicato, «rappresentano una chiara violazione del protocollo della Lega araba che punta a proteggere il popolo siriano».

CRESCENDO DI VIOLENZA

«Quello che stiamo vedendo è un crescendo di violenza, sempre più persone uccise, compresi i bambini, e tutto questo in presenza degli osservatori della Lega Araba», ha aggiunto al-Diqbassi che ha insistito su un punto: «Tutto quello che sta avvenendo alla presenza della missione di osservatori sta facendo crescere la rabbia della gente araba e infida la ragione stessa per cui si è deciso di inviare una missione di questo tipo»; in questo modo, denuncia sempre al-Diqbassi, si rischia di fornire al regime siriano «una copertura» che gli permette di compiere crimini «sotto gli occhi della Lega Araba». Da quando è iniziata la missione degli osservatori fondi-



Durante le proteste ad Adib i manifestanti si coprono la faccia per i lacrimogeni lanciati dalle forze di sicurezza

Siria, i soldati di Assad a caccia di disertori nelle strade di Damasco

Ormai si combatte anche nella capitale, mentre continuano le manifestazioni. Intanto l'opposizione lavora ad una «road map» per il dopo-regime

indipendenti hanno contato ben 286 morti: otto solo ieri.

Venerdì scorso, sempre alla periferia di Damasco, si erano registrati violenti scontri tra le forze di sicurezza e i manifestanti anti regime. Gli agenti hanno fatto uso di bombe imbottite di chiodi, di gas lacrimogeni e di granate per disperdere oltre 60 mila manifestanti. I dimostranti hanno risposto con lanci di pietre e 24 di loro sono rimasti feriti. A riferirlo è l'Osservato-

rio siriano per i diritti dell'uomo (Osdh). Cronaca di guerra: tre civili sono stati uccisi ieri da proiettili delle forze di sicurezza, mentre i cadaveri di quattro civili, arrestati e poi uccisi in carcere, alcuni con evidenti segni di tortura, sono stati restituiti ai loro familiari, annuncia l'opposizione, che parla anche di manifestazioni spontanee per il Capodanno e contro il regime inscenate simultaneamente: Faltra notte a Idleb, Aleppo, Zabadani

(non lontano da Damasco), Deraa e Qameshl. In un comunicato il Comitato locale di coordinamento, che organizza sul terreno le manifestazioni anti-regime, stilano un bilancio di 5.862 civili uccisi nel 2011, inclusi 395 bambini, dalle forze di sicurezza nella repressione delle manifestazioni.

Da il campo di battaglia a quello politico. I rappresentanti del Consiglio nazionale siriano (Cns) e del Comitato nazionale per il cambiamento de-

mocratico (Cncd) – i maggiori gruppi di opposizione siriani - hanno annunciato la firma, venerdì sera al Cairo, di una bozza d'accordo su come realizzare una democrazia dopo la caduta del regime baathista. L'accordo «definisce i principi della lotta democratica per il periodo di transizione» della Siria verso un Stato democratico, indica il Cncd in un comunicato, aggiungendo che questo "periodo di transizione inizierà alla caduta del regime» del presidente Bashar al-Assad. Questo accordo «rifiuta ogni intervento militare che possa attentare alla sovranità e all'indipendenza del Paese», ha detto ancora il Cncd. Inoltre, sottolinea che «l'intervento arabo non è considerato come un intervento straniero» e afferma la necessità di «proteggere i civili con tutti i mezzi legali». L'accordo è stato firmato dal capo del Cns Burhan Ghaliun e da un membro del Cncd, Haytham Manaa, dopo «oltre un mese di discussioni tra i dirigenti dei due gruppi, per l'edificazione di uno Stato civile e democratico». È la prima volta dall'inizio della rivolta popolare, (Marzo 2011), che le opposizioni siriane trovano una intesa su una road map per il dopo-Assad. Un segnale atteso dalla comunità internazionale. ♦

El Mundo (Espagne / Spain)

El modelo de transición divide a la oposición siria

SERENE ASSIR / El Cairo
Especial para EL MUNDO

La oposición a Bashar Asad tiene claro su objetivo de derribar la dictadura siria, pero no tanto cómo gestionar la transición. Mientras continúan las protestas contra el régimen, un borrador de pacto elaborado el pasado 30 de diciembre divide estos días a los enemigos del tirano.

El texto lo firmaron dos de los disidentes de mayor peso político, Haizam al Manna, del Comité de Coordinación Nacional para el Cambio Democrático (CCN), y Burhan Galiun, del Consejo Nacional Sirio (CNS).

Mientras en el primer grupo no parece haber «ninguna discrepancia», según Al Manna, en el CNS han surgido diferencias en torno a un borrador que rechaza una posible intervención militar extranjera y que propone un modelo de transición a la democracia basado en el pluralismo, el respeto a las minorías y la protección de los civiles según el derecho internacional.

El borrador lo firmó Galiun, pero «parece que dentro del CNS hay más de un punto de vista, lo cual está bien», dijo Al Manna. «Pero no puede ser que trabajemos sobre un pacto tan detallado y que no hayamos llegado al punto en el que todos podamos respetar unos principios básicos de democracia. Estamos de acuerdo en que queremos que el régimen de Asad caiga, pero también necesitamos un programa constructivo».

El diálogo se produce al mismo tiempo que continúan las manifestaciones multitudinarias en ciudades clave como Homs. Según los Comités de Coordinación Locales (CCL), con una amplia red de voluntarios extendida por todo el país, unas 5.800 personas han muerto a manos del régimen desde que estalló la revolución el pasado marzo.

Tras dos meses de presiones y negociaciones, la Liga Árabe logró enviar unos 150 observado-



fotografía una protesta siria. / REUTERS

res y aún quedan por llegar unos 300. Según el Parlamento Árabe, organización consejera de la Liga, los expertos deberían retirarse porque su presencia no ayuda a acabar con la matanza, sino todo lo contrario.

Irish Times (Irlande / Ireland)

Arab League urged to withdraw monitors from Syria

MICHAEL JANSEN

AN ADVISORY body linked to the Arab League yesterday urged it to withdraw its monitors from Syria, pointing out that violence was continuing in spite of their presence.

Ali al-Salem al-Dekbas, chairman of the 88-member Arab Parliament, consisting of delegates from the league's 22 members, said: "For this to happen in the presence of Arab monitors has roused the anger of Arab people and negates the purpose of sending a fact-finding mission."

The deployment, he charged, "is giving the Syrian regime an Arab cover for continuing its inhumane actions under the eyes and ears of the Arab League . . . [and] is a blatant violation of the Arab League's protocol" governing the operations of the monitors.

The parliament asked League secretary general Nabil ElAraby, to convene a foreign ministers meeting to order the withdrawal of the monitors.

However, a League official replied it was too early to pull out the mission since its mandate ends

only at the end of this month.

Late on Friday, the National Council, a coalition of exiled groups, and the National Co-ordination Committee, representing dissidents inside Syria, appeared to put an end to opposition bickering by signing a draft unity agreement.

However, yesterday the council denied there had been a deal, while committee representative Haytham Manna said members of the council disagreed with the provision, saying the sides "reject any military intervention that harms the sovereignty or stability of the country, without considering Arab intervention to be foreign".

Monitors began their mission last week with the objective of halting violence from all sides, securing the release of prisoners, and ensuring withdrawal of the army from urban areas. Local activists say 130 civilians have been killed since monitors began their mission.

The Philippine government has advised its citizens working in Syria to depart as soon as possible.

The Independent (Royaume-Uni / United Kingdom)

Opposition factions join forces to resist Assad

Syria's rebel leaders set aside their differences to present alternative to regime

By **CATRINA STEWART**
in Jerusalem

Two of Syria's nascent opposition factions have set aside their differences to unite over a road map for a transition to democracy should the embattled Assad regime fall after months of pro-democracy protests that have left an estimated 5,000 people dead.

The move by the Syrian National Council (SNC), an exile group formed in Istanbul in September, and the Syria-based National Co-ordination Body for Democratic Change in Syria, marks the first serious attempt to bridge divides within the fragmented opposition to challenge President Bashar al-Assad, who has overseen a brutal crackdown against dissenters to his rule.

The challenge came as protesters denounced an Arab League observer mission, sent in to ensure that Mr Assad sticks to an agreed peace plan and stops the bloodshed, after General Mustafa al-Dabi, its Sudanese head and a veteran military intelligence officer, described the situation in Syria last week as "good".

Fears that the mission is providing cover for the Syrian authorities' continued abuses against the population prompted the Arab Parliament, an advisory body attached to the pan-Arab League, to call yesterday for the immediate withdrawal of the monitors.

The nearly 100-strong mission entered the country last week after weeks of prevarication by the Syrian government, which eventually gave way to head off the prospect of tougher sanctions. But the mission's presence has failed to prevent scores more deaths. "For this to happen in the presence of Arab monitors has roused the anger of Arab people and negates the purpose of sending a fact-finding mission," the Parliament's chairman Ali al-Salem al-Dekbas said. "This is giving the Syrian regime an Arab cover for continuing its inhumane actions."

The Syrian authorities have consistently portrayed the uprising as a foreign-backed insurrection by "terrorist armed gangs" and claim more than 2,000 members of the security forces have been killed. With expectations

VOICES OF DISSENT THE LEADERS

**Burhan Ghalioun,
SNC chairman**

A political scientist and Paris-based professor, Ghalioun is seen by some as a consensus figure with the potential to draw together the fragmented opposition movement.



**Hassan Abdul-Azim,
NCC chairman**

A critic of the Assad government, Abdul-Azim was the only leading opposition figure to be arrested earlier this year. He was later freed.



low that the monitors, whose numbers will be expanded in the coming days, will be successful in holding the regime to account, opposition factions appear to have sidestepped major differences in putting forward their transition plan.

The two opposition groups reportedly signed the deal on Friday, which rules out any foreign intervention "that harms the sovereignty or stability of the country", although Arab League intervention is not considered foreign. It also envisions a one-year transitional period, during which Syria would adopt a new constitution that would lay the foundations for a "democratic, pluralistic civil state".

The deal, which will be put to other opposition factions, is significant in that it commits the SNC to dropping its calls for a Libya-style intervention, one of the main stumbling blocks preventing a broader opposition alliance. But it remains unclear to what extent the deal will win support from rank-and-file members of both groups amid complaints that they were not consulted.

It is also uncertain if the two groups represent ordinary Syrians. The SNC is seen as a party dominated by exiles with little connection to activists on the ground. Others are putting their faith in the Free Syrian Army, a force of army defectors, which has struck with increasing effectiveness against the regime.

Arab League warned that mission is causing more bloodshed in Syria

By Adrian Blomfield

THE Arab League feared calls from its own parliament to withdraw observers from Syria yesterday amid claims that the mission is causing more bloodshed, according to President Bashar al-Assad.

The 88 member Arab parliament effectively declared that it had lost confidence in the much-vaunted mission, saying the observers' presence had encouraged the

Assad regime in its campaign of violence against civilian protesters.

"For this to be happening in the presence of Arab monitors has roused the anger of Arab people and prepared the ground for a new wave of violence," said Ali al-Saleh, al-Dubai, the parliament's chairman. "This is giving the Syrian regime an Arab cover for carrying its inhumane actions under the eyes and ears of the Arab League."

Mr. Assaf's reluctant acceptance of the

regional observers last month was hailed as a breakthrough to end five months of violence that has seen more than 5,000 civilian deaths since Syria's uprising began last March.

The mission was added to verify the Syrian government's compliance with a regional peace plan designed to end the bloodshed, but from the outset it has been beset by controversy.

Much of the anger has been directed at Lt Gen Mustafa al-Dabi, the chief

observer, whose perceived sympathy for the regime has frustrated the Syrian opposition.

A Sudanese intelligence officer, who has been linked to war crimes in Darfur, Gen Dabi visited the capital, Damascus, yesterday after he withdrew one of his

observers, who said he had witnessed government snipers in action against protesters in the southern city of Daraa.

"We saw snipers in the town, we saw them with our own eyes," the unidentified

observer last week after he told reporters that he had seen nothing disturbing in the city of Homs, the most violent theatre of the insurrection. His handling of the mission has raised fears of a withdrawal.

Gen Dabi insisted his colleague was not present in the Syrian opposition will not want the observers withdrawn as their presence has encouraged a record

numbers to take to the streets.

More than 40 people have been killed across the country since Friday.



SYRIA WILL BE BLOODIEST YET

BRITAIN is gearing up for fighting in Syria that could be bigger and bloodier than the battle against Gaddafi. MI6 and SAS gear up for war

The Ministry of Defence is drawing up secret plans for a NATO-sponsored no-fly zone but first it needs backing from the United Nations Security Council.

As the unrest and killings escalate in the troubled Arab state, agents from MI6 and the CIA are already in Syria assessing the situation, a security official has revealed.

Special forces are also talking to Syrian dissident soldiers.

They want to know about weapons and communications kit rebel forces will need if the Govern-

ment decides to help. "MI6 and the CIA are in Syria to infiltrate and get at the truth," said the well-placed source.

"We have SAS and SBS not far away who want to know what is happening and are finding out what kit dissident soldiers need.

"Syria supports Hezbollah. That threatens Israel and the whole of the Middle East.

"This has been given the highest priority as the whole thing could implode.

"This is all going like Libya but this will be bigger and bloodier.

"Syria is killing civilians. It's looking bad all round."

The NATO-backed flight ban over Syria has been discussed by the British Cabinet's National Security Council.

And the Ministry of Defence

has made provisional plans to implement any government order. The security source revealed military planners are considering the use of Tornado GR4 attack fighters and other aircraft.

NATO forces took eight months to oust Gaddafi with his army of mercenaries. But they accept that the Syrian forces are far better trained and armed.

Their airforce has highly-rated MIG29 Russian jet fighters.

The Foreign and Commonwealth office has warned Prime Minister David Cameron that a UN Security Council sanction would be required before any action. But it is likely to be vetoed by Russia or

China. But if killings in Syria escalate even further then the UN will come under intense pressure to take action.

American Republicans have called for a no-fly zone, while the Arab League is considering a similar plan with Turkish warplanes tipped to take the lead.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said: "It is all speculation.

"It is not our job yet. We are looking at what-ifs all the time."

A Foreign Office spokesman said: "We are monitoring the situation in Syria. We are obviously very concerned about increasing violence and we are calling for an end to the killings."



The Globe and Mail (Canada)

Monitors ineffective in Syria: Arab group

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A pan-Arab body called for the immediate withdrawal of the Arab League monitors in Syria because President Bashar al-Assad's regime has kept up killings of government opponents even in the presence of the observers. The 88-member Arab Parliament said that Arabs are angered by the Syrian regime's ongoing killings while the nearly 100 monitors are in the country. The monitors are supposed to be ensuring Syria complies with terms of the League's plan to end the nine-month-old crackdown.

However, the Kuwaiti head of the Arab Parliament, Ali Salem al-Deqbasi, said the presence of the monitors is distracting from the "flagrant violations" committed by Mr. al-Assad's regime.

"The killing of children and the violation of human-rights law is happening in the presence of Arab League monitors, raising the fury of Arab people," he said.

The Arab League created the Arab Parliament, which is made up of lawmakers and advisers from states around the Middle East. Its recommendations are nonbinding and it operates separately from the Arab League.

Mr. al-Deqbasi's remarks about the observer mission represents growing concern about the monitors' ability to deter Assad's regime from killing protesters.

According to activists, more than 150 people have been killed across the country since the observers began their one-month mission on Tuesday. The UN says more than 5,000 people have died since the revolt began.

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Associated Press

The New York Times – International Herald Tribune (USA)

Arab politicians urge monitors to quit Syria

CAIRO

Regime uses presence of observers as a cover, delegates contend

FROM NEWS REPORTS

An Arab League advisory body called Sunday for the immediate withdrawal of the organization's monitoring mission in Syria, saying it was allowing the authorities in Damascus to cover up continued violence and abuses.

The Arab League has sent a small team to Syria to verify whether President Bashar al-Assad is keeping his promise to end a crackdown on a nine-month uprising against his rule.

The observer mission has already stirred controversy. Rights groups have reported continued deaths in clashes, and tens of thousands of protesters have taken to the streets to show the observers the extent of their anger.

The Sudanese head of the mission also caused some anger by suggesting that he was reassured by his first impressions of Homs, one of the main centers of unrest.

The Arab Parliament, an 88-member advisory committee of delegates from each of the League's member states, said Sunday that the violence was continuing to claim many victims.

"For this to happen in the presence of Arab monitors has roused the anger of Arab people and negates the purpose of sending a fact-finding mission," said the organization's chairman, Ali al-Salem al-Dekbas. "This is giving the Syrian regime an Arab cover for continuing its inhumane actions under the eyes and ears of the Arab League."

The Arab Parliament was the first body to recommend freezing Syria's membership in the organization in response to Mr. Assad's crackdown.

The organization called on the Arab League's secretary general, Nabil Elaraby, to convene a meeting of foreign ministers to adopt a resolution to withdraw the mission immediately.

The continued abuse and killing of innocent Syrian civilians is a "blatant violation of the Arab League's protocol," Mr. Dekbas said.

Some of the Arab delegates who had gone to Syria to prepare for the visit of

the monitors before the first team arrived last week returned to Cairo on Sunday.

The delegation's head, Samir Saif el-Yazel, an assistant to Mr. Elaraby, refused to talk to reporters at the Cairo airport and said any new developments on the mission to Syria would be announced in statements by the Arab League.

On the political front, the two largest Syrian opposition groups announced Saturday that they had agreed on a common approach to organizing a transitional government, a move that could help unify a movement divided between exiles and domestic dissidents that has differed about how to topple Mr. Assad.

In their agreement, the two groups, the Syrian National Council and the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change in Syria, said that they rejected any foreign military intervention, a statement that seemed to preclude a Libya-style intervention in Syria.

They left open, though, the possibility of an Arab military presence. One of the leaders of the National Coordination Body, Haytham Manna, said that might include Arab peacekeepers, for instance, in Homs.

The groups had also favored different approaches to toppling Mr. Assad, with some of the domestic dissidents represented by the National Coordination Body saying they were open to a negotiated end to the conflict. But many exiles, and some protesters as well, have rejected that approach. Mr. Manna said the groups were still open to talking, but only with people "not implicated in crimes against humanity or corruption."

Opposition figures also said that the agreement was intended to serve as a notice to Mr. Assad's allies that the opposition was growing stronger. "The agreement aims to tighten the noose around the regime, and tell the Russians and the Chinese that we will be the regime," said Khalaf Dahowd, a member of the Syrian National Coordination Body in Exile.

As the Syrian conflict continues to raise fears of sectarian strife, the opposition agreement, signed Friday in Cairo, emphasizes minority rights and freedom of religion and belief.

Nine people were killed Saturday, according to the Local Coordination Committees, which reported that government snipers were firing on people from buildings in HOMS. (AP/WIDEWORLD)

Los Angeles Times (USA)

Arab body seeks exit of monitors

A pan-Arab body called for the immediate withdrawal of the Arab League monitors in Syria because it says President Bashar Assad's regime has kept killing government opponents even in the presence of the observers.

The 88-member Arab Parliament said Arabs were angered by the Syrian regime's ongoing killings while the nearly 100 monitors are in the country.

The monitors are supposed to be ensuring Syria complies with terms of the league-brokered plan to end the 9-month-old crackdown on dissent — a plan Syria agreed to on Dec. 19.

The Arab League created the Arab Parliament, which is made up of lawmakers and advisors from states around the Middle East.

Its recommendations are nonbinding and it operates separately from the Arab League.

According to activists, more than 150 people have been killed across the country since the observers began their one-month mission Tuesday.

The United Nations says more than 5,000 people have died as the government has sought to crush the revolt.

The Arab League plan demands that the government remove its security forces and heavy weapons from cities, start talks with the opposition and allow human rights workers and journalists into the country. It also calls for the release of all political prisoners.

Arab body says monitors should quit Syria promptly

German-Syrian politician attacked in his apartment in Berlin by suspected Assad agents

• BY BENJAMIN WEINTHAL
in Berlin and Reuters

An Arab League advisory body called on Sunday for the immediate withdrawal of the organization's monitoring mission in Syria, saying it was allowing Damascus to cover up continued violence and abuses.

The Arab League has sent a small team to Syria to check whether President Bashar Assad is keeping his promise to end a crackdown on a nine-month uprising against his rule.

The observer mission has already stirred controversy. Rights groups have reported continued deaths in clashes and tens of thousands of protesters have taken to the streets to show the observers the extent of their anger.

The Sudanese head of the mission also infuriated some observers by suggesting he was reassured by first impressions of Homs, one of the main centers of unrest.

The Arab Parliament, an 88-member advisory committee of delegates from each of the League's member states, said on Sunday that the violence was continuing to claim many victims.

"For this to happen in the presence of Arab monitors has

roused the anger of Arab people and negates the purpose of sending a fact-finding mission," the organization's chairman Ali al-Saleem al-Dekhas said.

"This is giving the Syrian regime an Arab cover for continuing its inhumane actions under the eyes and ears of the Arab League," he said.

The Arab Parliament was the first body to recommend freezing Syria's membership in the organization in response to Assad's crackdown.

An Arab League official, commenting on the parliament's statement, told Reuters it was too early to judge the mission's success, saying it was scheduled to remain in Syria for a month and that more monitors were on their way.

The parliament called on the League's Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby to convene a meeting of Arab foreign ministers to adopt a resolution to withdraw the mission immediately.

The continued abuse and killing of innocent Syrian civilians was a "blatant violation to the Arab League's protocol," Dekhas said.

Syria's state news agency SANA said there had been "massive demonstrations"

throughout Syria on Friday in support of Assad, and

in foreign countries. Syrian critics in the US have complained to the State Department in Washington about Syrian intelligence agents working to intimidate and silence opponents of the Syrian regime in the United States.

Abma fled Syria 15 years ago and is active in the local Berlin Green Party. He works as a translator in connection with integration affairs.

The German Foreign Ministry requested a meeting with Syria's ambassador to discuss the attack on Abma. However, the German government, which has had traditionally close relations with Assad's regime, did not summon the Syrian ambassador to the Foreign Ministry, which would have meant a formal diplomatic complaint.

The Foreign Ministry warned the Syrian Ambassador to Berlin Roshwan Lutfi that "threatening Syria's apparatus in Germany with violence or intimidation will in no way be tolerated."

According to a 2010 report by the German domestic intelligence agency Verfassungsschutz, "The Syrian intelligence agencies monitor in Syria and abroad opposition groups and individual persons whom the Syrian agencies see as a danger for the regime."



AN ARAB LEAGUE observer (right) speaks with anti-government protesters on the streets in Adleb on Friday. (Reuters)

denouncing "the plot which Syria is exposed to."

It said demonstrators had denounced "the pressure and biased campaigns targeting Syria's security and stability" and the "lies and fabrications of the misleading media channels."

Syrian authorities have accused foreign powers of arming and funding "terrorists" in the country and say 2,000 of the government's soldiers and police have been killed.

In addition, Syrian security agents, who were likely com-

missioned by the Assad regime in Damascus, attacked German-Syrian politician Ferhat Abma on Christmas eve in his Berlin apartment.

According to an article in the online Der Spiegel magazine on Sunday, Abma, an

opponent of Assad's govern-

ment, is listed as number 236 on an internal security document of Assad's regime.

The list consists of 287 names of exile Syrians and was brought to the fore by kurdwatch.org. According to Spiegel, the authenticity of the list cannot be independently verified. The people on the Syrian regime security list are being sought for "criminality against the state" in Syria.

Two men stormed the apartment of the 37-year-old Abma and assaulted him before Christmas. He told the German media that two men beat him with "clubs" and "a friend came who was there to visit, and began to scream, a neighbor who was alarmed opened the door. The perpetrators fled. I was lucky that I was not alone at home."

As a result of the attack, Abma suffered wounds and bruises to his body. He is a member of the Syrian National Council, a group seeking to remove the Assad regime because of its brutal repression of the civilian population, which has resulted in the deaths of over 5,000 Syrians.

The German case is not the first example of Syria's regime working to repress dissidents

Gulf News (EAU / UAE)

Syria mission in trouble

ARAB LEAGUE PANEL URGES PULLOUT OF MONITORS, SAYING IT ALLOWS COVER-UP OF VIOLENCE

Cairo (Reuters & AFP) An Arab League advisory body yesterday called for the immediate withdrawal of the organisation's monitoring mission in Syria, saying it was allowing Damascus to cover up continued violence and abuses.

The Arab League has sent a small team to Syria to check whether President Bashar Al Assad is keeping his promise to end a crackdown on a nine-month uprising against his rule.

Eight more people were reported killed yesterday when security forces fired on protesters in the Damascus suburb of Daria, raising the toll to at least 286 people since the mission began on December 23.

The observer mission has already stirred controversy. Rights groups have reported continued deaths in clashes and tens of thousands of protesters have taken to the streets to show the observers the extent of their anger.

The issue of snipers triggered a dispute among the observers. In a video released by the Observatory, a man wearing an orange vest with the Arab League logo said in Daria: "There are snipers; we have seen them with our own eyes. We ask the authorities to remove them immediately; if they don't remove them within 24 hours there will be other measures," the unnamed speaker in the video said.

But Sudanese military intelligence officer General Mohammad Ahmad Mustafa Al Dabi, who is heading the mission, said the official seen in the video was making a hypothetical remark.

“ For this [killing of child] to happen in the presence of Arab monitors has roused the anger of the Arab people and negates the purpose of sending a fact-finding mission.”

Ali Al Salem Al Dekbas
Arab Parliament chairman

"This man said that if he saw — by his own eyes — those snipers he will report immediately," Al Dabi told the BBC's *Newshour*. "But he didn't see" any.

The Arab Parliament, an 88-member advisory committee of delegates from each of the League's member states, yesterday said the violence was continuing to claim many victims.

Yesterday, a child was shot dead, becoming the first victim in 2012 of the regime's crackdown on dissent.

"For this to happen in the presence of Arab monitors has roused the anger of Arab people and negates the purpose of sending a fact-finding mission," the organisation's chairman Ali Al Salem Al Dekbas said. "This is giving the Syrian regime an Arab cover for continuing its inhumane actions under the eyes and ears of the Arab League."

Editorial comment — Page 8
See also Page 10



'I saw with my eyes'

An Arab League monitor describes seeing a sniper in Daria. A dispute emerged after the observer reportedly accused authorities of posting snipers on rooftops and demanded they be removed. But the Sudanese head of the mission said the official was making a hypothetical remark. This image is made from amateur video and made available by Shaam News Network.

Gulf News (EAU / UAE)

AL ASSAD REGIME MUST ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL TALKS

By unifying their demands, the opposition can negotiate from a position of strength

S yrian opposition groups are beginning to question the effectiveness of the Arab League observer mission after watching its operations for the past 10 days. The opposition is growing more pessimistic and fear that their nation is on a slow but sure slide into civil war. That's an outcome that should not happen, and every effort must be made to ensure it does not.

While civilians are dying daily, it's difficult to understand the full plight faced by anti-government protesters in the troubled nation.

From a distance, it's easy to call on the opposition to show patience — a commodity that is hard to come by when security forces under the control of President Bashar Al Assad use all the force at their disposal to suppress the demonstrators. But patience is required at the moment. The Arab League observers are slowly going about their work, and they are achieving small but notable successes. In the restive city of Daraa, the observers noted the presence of Syrian military snipers and immediately called for the personnel to be removed. The snipers had been positioned in the town after opposition leaders called for mass anti-government protests.

The observers too are well aware that where tanks were stationed before the delegation arrives, those positions are empty, with the armour returning after their departure. Clearly the deaths and violence of these past months in Syria cannot go on indefinitely, and there has to be a resolution to this bloody chapter. With the spectre of civil war rising in the minds of some opposition leaders, dialogue and negotiations are needed as never before. By unifying their goals and demands and by adopting a common front, opposition groups are effectively recognising that they can negotiate from a position of strength. With observers on the ground, now is the time for meaningful dialogue with Al Assad's regime.



Hoping for freedom

Lebanese and Syrian activists hold a candle light vigil and Syrian revolution flags in Beirut on New Year's Eve in mourning of Syrians killed since the uprising against the Al Assad regime began in March. The banner in Arabic reads: "2012 Syria is free."

Seven-year-old Syrian boy first victim of 2012

5,862 people killed in crackdown on dissent across the country last year — Local Coordination Committees

Damascus (AFP) Syrian pro-democracy protesters saw the New Year in with demonstrations, activists said, as a child was reportedly shot dead, becoming the first victim in 2012 of the regime's crackdown on dissent.

"The first victim of 2012," said a statement by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is a seven-year-old child killed in central Hama province when gunfire struck the vehicle he was riding in.

Meanwhile, Arab League monitors toured several flashpoint areas across the country, official media said, as a dispute emerged after one observer reportedly accused authorities of posting snipers on rooftops and demanded they be removed.

"The youths of the revolution held huge and simultaneous protests overnight to welcome the New Year," said the Local Coordination Committees (LCC) network of activists.

YouTube videos

Protesters took to the streets in Daraa, Idlib and Aleppo, in the mostly Kurdish city of Qamishli and in Zabadani near Damascus, the LCC said in a statement received by AFP in Nicosia.

YouTube videos circulating on the Internet showed protesters across Syria celebrating 2012 with



On a mission

Arab League observers (in orange jackets) check on the wounded at the national hospital in Daraa.

Idlib, hundreds of protesters are seen carrying torches and singing songs lauding "national unity" as fireworks light the night sky.

In Aleppo, a protester held up a sign that said: "Long live free Syria."

A YouTube video shot in Zabadani near Damascus, shows hundreds of people dancing around a Christmas tree and chanting: "The people demand the

without Al Assad and pro-regime militias accused of brutal attacks on demonstrators.

On Sunday, dozens of protesters demonstrated in the Idlib village of Al Tah, according to a video circulated by Observatory which also showed signs with messages critical of the Arab League observer mission.

"The watchers are with Bashar. They don't say the

ise of a free Syria," the LCC said after more than nine months of anti-regime protests and a lethal regime crackdown on dissent that has killed thousands of people.

Hail of bullets

According to the LCC a total of 5,862 people were killed in the crackdown on dissent across Syria last year, including "321 male children, 74 female chil-

AL ASSAD TIES MAKHLouF DENIED VISA

Geneva The Swiss supreme court has rejected a demand by a cousin of Syrian President Bashar Al Assad to visit his lawyer in Switzerland.

Hafez Makhlouf had petitioned Switzerland's Federal Tribunal to grant him a visa so he could discuss with his lawyer how to overturn international sanctions imposed against him.

The 40-year-old army colonel heads the Damascus branch of Syria's General Intelligence Directorate.

European Union sanctions against Makhlouf say he is close to Al Assad's younger brother Maher, believed to be leading the crackdown against regime opponents.

— AFP

The Khaleej Times (EAU / UAE)

League panel advises monitors to quit Syria

Says Damascus exploiting Arab cover

AMMAN — An Arab League advisory body called for the immediate withdrawal of Arab monitors from Syria, where eight more people were reported killed on Sunday, saying their mission was allowing Damascus to cover up unabated violence and abuses.

President Bashar Al Assad's forces, keen to prevent huge public protests under the monitors' eyes, have killed at least 286 people since the mission began on December 23, according to local coordination committees who tally casualties.

Some of Sunday's eight deaths occurred when security forces fired on protesters in the Damascus suburb of Daria, they said.

The observer mission has already stirred controversy for its lack of numbers and comments by its Sudanese leader, General Mohammed Al Dabi, suggesting he was reassured by first impressions of Homs, one of the main centres of unrest.

The Arab Parliament, an 88-member advisory committee of delegates from each of the League's member states, said the violence was continuing to claim many victims. "For this to happen in the presence of Arab monitors has roused the anger of Arab people and negates the purpose of sending a fact-finding mission," the organisation's chairman, Ali Al Salem Al Dekbas, said.

"This is giving the Syrian regime an Arab cover for continuing its inhumane actions under the eyes and ears of the Arab League," he said.

The monitors are supposed to check Syria's compliance with an Arab League plan that calls for a verifiable withdrawal of troops and heavy weaponry from towns and cities, the release of thou-

ASSAD'S COUSIN DENIED VISA

GENEVA — A cousin of Syria's President Bashar Assad has lost his legal bid to get a visa for Switzerland, where he wanted to meet a lawyer to challenge international sanctions imposed against him. Switzerland's Supreme Court rejected Hafez Makhoul's request, saying the army colonel could use other means — like a telephone — to speak with his Swiss lawyer. — AP

sands of detainees and a dialogue with opposition groups.

Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby had said it should take only a week to see if Assad was keeping his word.

"The presence of monitors has not affected the behaviour of the regime with hundreds killed and no let-up," said Rima Fleihan, from the opposition Syrian National Council.

The Arab Parliament was the first body to recommend freezing Syria's League membership in protest at the bloodshed.

Arab monitors visiting Deraa, a southern town viewed as the cradle of the nine-month-old revolt, went to the home of Sheikh Ahmad Hayasneh, elderly imam of the Omari mosque where the first big protests against Assad's 11 years in power erupted in March.

It was unclear if the monitors met Hayasneh, who residents say has been under house arrest for at least five months for his role in the movement to rid Syria of decades of Baathist rule. — Reuters

› SEE EDIT & PAGE 6

The Khaleej Times (EAU / UAE)



Lebanese and Syrian activists hold a candle light vigil in Beirut in mourning of Syrians killed since the uprising against President Bashar Assad regime began in March. — AP

League split over Syria snipers claim

Rights activists urge monitors to do more

NICOSIA — Arab League officials monitoring violence in Syria appear to be in conflict over whether government snipers are perched on rooftops in the southern flashpoint city of Daraa.

In a video released by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a man wearing an orange vest with the Arab League logo said in Daraa: “There are snipers; we have seen them with our own eyes.”

“We ask the authorities to remove them immediately; if they don’t remove them within 24 hours there will be other measures,” the unnamed speaker in the video, which was dated on Friday, told a crowd of people.

“Otherwise our coming here is for nothing,” he added.

Veteran Sudanese military intel-

ligence officer General Mohamed Ahmed Mustafa Al Dabi, who is heading the observer mission, said however that the official seen in the video was making a hypothetical remark.

“This man said that if he saw — by his own eyes — those snipers he will report immediately,” Dabi told the BBC’s Newshour programme. “But he didn’t see (snipers).”

A first team of 50 observers arrived on Monday as part of an Arab plan endorsed by Syria on November 2, which calls for the withdrawal of the military from towns and residential districts, a halt to violence against civilians and the release of detainees.

The Arab League mission has been the focus of controversy, with some Syrian opposition members unhappy with the choice of Dabi

to head it. For some the general is a controversial figure because he served under Sudan’s President Omar Al Bashir who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes allegedly committed in the Darfur region.

The general ruffled opposition feathers by saying Syrian authorities were so far cooperating with the mission and by describing his visit to the flashpoint city of Homs as “good.”

Rights activists have urged the Arab monitors to do more to protect civilians from regime forces.

The Britain-based Observatory reported that Syrian forces on Friday used “nail bombs” to disperse anti-regime rallies, and fired live ammunition, tear gas and stun grenades at tens of thousands of pro-democracy protesters. — AFP

The National (EAU / UAE)

Arab monitors asked to leave Syria

Presence of observers
'giving regime cover to
commit inhumane acts'

CAIRO // A pan-Arab body yesterday called for the immediate withdrawal of the Arab League monitors from Syria because President Bashar Al Assad's regime has continued with the killing of govern-

ment opponents, despite the presence of the observers.

The 88-member Arab Parliament said Arabs were angered by the Syrian regime's ongoing killings while the almost 100 monitors were in the country.

The monitors are supposed to be ensuring Syria complies with the terms of the League's plan to end the nine-month crackdown on dissent. The UN says more than 5,000 people have been killed.

But the Kuwaiti head of the Arab Parliament, Ali Salem Al Deqbasi, said the presence of the monitors was distracting from the "flagrant violations" committed by the regime.

"The killing of children and the violation of human-rights law is happening in the presence of Arab League monitors, raising the fury of Arab people," he said.

"The mission of the Arab League team has missed its aim of stop-

ping the killing of children and ensuring the withdrawal of troops from the Syrian streets, giving the Syrian regime a cover to commit inhumane acts under the noses of the Arab League observers," Mr Al Deqbasi said.

"This is giving the Syrian regime an Arab cover for continuing its inhumane actions under the eyes and ears of the Arab League."

Syria, continued on a9 →

Arab League's monitors asked to leave Syria

→ Syria, from page a1

Activists say more than 150 people have been killed across the country since the observers began their one-month mission last Tuesday.

The Arab League plan demands the government remove its security forces and heavy weapons from cities, start talks with the opposition, free political prisoners and allow human-rights workers and journalists into the country.

The Arab League created the Arab Parliament, which is made up of lawmakers and advisers from states around the Middle East.

Its recommendations are non-binding.

While the Arab Parliament has little sway on Damascus or the Arab League, Mr Al Deqbasi's remarks about the observer mission represent growing concern about the monitors' ability to deter Mr Al Assad's regime from killing pro-



[The continued abuse of civilians is] a blatant violation to the Arab League's protocol

Ali Salem Al Deqbasi Kuwaiti head of the Arab parliament

testers. The continuing violence in Syria and questions about the human-rights record of the head of the Arab League monitors, Sudanese Lt Gen Mohamed Ahmed Mustafa Al Dabi, are reinforcing the opposition's view that Syria's limited cooperation with the observers is merely a ploy by the government to buy time and forestall more international condemnation and sanctions.

The Syrian opposition has called for the removal of Gen Al Dabi, a long-time loyalist of the Sudanese president, Omar Al Bashir, who is wanted on an international arrest warrant on charges of genocide in the Darfur region.

Gen Al Dabi has infuriated some observers by suggesting he was reassured by first impressions of Homs, one of the main centres of unrest.

An Arab League official, commenting on the parliament's statement, said it was too early to judge the mission's success, saying it was scheduled to remain in Syria for a month and that more monitors were on their way.

The parliament called on the League's secretary-general, Nabil Elaraby, to convene a meeting of Arab foreign ministers to adopt a resolution to withdraw the mission immediately.

The continued abuse and killing of innocent Syrian civilians was a "blatant violation to the Arab League's protocol", Mr Al Deqbasi said.

Syria's state news agency, Sana, said there had been "massive demonstrations" throughout Syria on Friday in support of Mr Al Assad, and denouncing "the plot which Syria is exposed to".

It said demonstrators had denounced "the pressure and biased campaigns targeting Syria's security and stability" and the "lies and

fabrications of the misleading media channels".

Syrian authorities have accused foreign powers of arming and funding "terrorists" in the country and have said that 2,000 of the government's soldiers and police have been killed.

Hundreds of soldiers have deserted and joined the uprising against Mr Al Assad, taking what began as a peaceful protest movement close to civil war.

The violence has forced thousands of people from their homes, some fleeing to neighbouring Lebanon.

The Arab League has imposed economic sanctions on Syria, stopping trade, dealings with its central bank and halting government-funded projects in the country.

The Swiss supreme court has rejected a demand by a cousin of Mr Al Assad to visit his lawyer in Switzerland.

Hafez Makhoul had petitioned Switzerland's Federal Tribunal to grant him a visa so he could discuss with his lawyer how to overturn international sanctions imposed against him.

The verdict published on Thursday was reported yesterday by Switzerland's *NZZ am Sonntag* newspaper.

The 40-year-old army colonel heads the Damascus branch of Syria's General Intelligence Directorate.

European Union sanctions against Col Makhoul say he is close to Mr Al Assad's younger brother Maher, believed to be leading the crackdown against regime opponents.

Last week, Switzerland said it had frozen 50 million Swiss francs (Dh194.5m) linked to senior regime officials.

★ Associated Press and Reuters

Today's Zaman (Turquie / Turkey)



Arab League observers speak to each other in Idlib as Syrian security forces continue to kill protesters.

Arab body says observers should quit Syria promptly

▶ An Arab League advisory body called on Sunday for the immediate withdrawal of the organization's monitoring mission in Syria, saying it was allowing Damascus to cover up continued violence and abuses. The Arab League has sent a small team to Syria to check whether President Bashar al-Assad is keeping his promise to end a crackdown on a nine-month uprising against his rule.

The observer mission has already stirred controversy. Rights groups have reported continued deaths in clashes and tens of thousands of protesters have taken to the streets to show the observers the extent of their anger. The Sudanese head of the mission also infuriated some observers by suggesting he was reassured by first impressions of Homs, one of the main centers of unrest. The Arab Parliament, an 88-member advisory committee of delegates from each of the League's member states, on Sunday said the violence was continuing to claim many victims. "For this to happen in the presence of Arab monitors has roused the anger of Arab people and negates the purpose of sending a fact-finding mission," the organization's chairman Ali al-Salem al-Dekbas said.

"This is giving the Syrian regime an Arab cover for continuing its inhumane actions under the eyes and ears of the Arab League," he said. The Arab Parliament was the first body to recommend freezing Syria's membership in the organization in response to Assad's crackdown. An Arab League official, commenting on the parliament's statement, told Reuters it was too early to judge the mission's success, saying it was scheduled to remain in Syria for a month and that more monitors were on their way. The parliament called on the League's Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby to convene a meeting of Arab foreign ministers to adopt a resolution to withdraw the mission immediately.

The continued abuse and killing of innocent Syrian civilians was a "blatant violation to the Arab League's protocol," Dekbas said. Syria's state news agency SANA said there had been "massive demonstrations" throughout Syria on Friday in support of Assad, and denouncing "the plot which Syria is exposed to." It said demonstrators had denounced "the pressure and biased campaigns targeting Syria's security and stability" and the "lies and fabrications of the misleading media channels." Syrian authorities have accused foreign powers of arming and funding "terrorists" in the country and say 2,000 of the government's soldiers and police have been killed.

Plan for post-Assad future

On Saturday, two leading Syrian opposition parties have agreed a road map to democracy should a popular uprising succeed in toppling Assad, according to a copy of the document seen by Reuters.

Hundreds of thousands had taken to the streets across Syria on Friday, aiming to demonstrate the strength of their movement to Arab League monitors checking whether Assad is implementing a pledge to halt a violent crackdown on unrest that has been raging since March. The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said security forces had shot dead 27 people