

Qatar ist in der arabischen Liga isoliert

PRESSESCHAU SYRIEN #29

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Während das Mandat der Beobachter der arabischen Liga Donnerstag abläuft, hat der Premierminister von Qatar eine mögliche arabische Truppenentfaltung in dem Land erwähnt, ohne selbst die Schlussakte und die Versammlung der Außenminister Sonntag in Kairo abzuwarten. Das Emirat benützt sein Präsidium pro tempore der Liga, das bis Ende März läuft, um die Ereignisse zu forcieren.

Präsident Obama hat anlässlich eines Pressepunktes im Weißen Haus diesen Schritt indirekt gestützt, wobei er das unzulässige hohe Gewaltniveau in Syrien anprangerte. Seinerseits hat von der Türkei aus Oberst Riad el-Assad, Befehlshaber der syrischen freien Armee, seinen Wünschen für eine internationale militärische Intervention Ausdruck verliehen.

Die syrische Regierung hat diese Option kategorisch zurückgeworfen. Mehrere Mitglieder der Liga haben eine Strategie denunziert, die die Türen einer Intervention der Großmächte öffnen und die Organisation ruinieren würde. Russland seinerseits hat ja schon dem Sicherheitsrat der Vereinten Nationen Einhalt geboten, indem es Montag ein neues Resolutionsprojekt vorgelegt und die westlichen Änderungsanträge zurückgewiesen hat.

- Der Aufruf des Kommandanten der freien syrischen Armee für eine internationale militärische Intervention zeigt im Gegenteil, dass die bewaffnete Opposition zugibt, nicht im Stande zu sein, allein die Macht an sich reißen zu können.
- Der christliche Intellektuelle Michel Kilo appelliert im *Le Figaro* an die zivile Gesellschaft, „die syrische Diktatur zu stürzen“. Ihm gemäß würde die Unterdrückung, falls die Opposition ihre Demonstrationen einstellt, mindestens 46 000 Tote verursachen. Am Rande gibt er zu, dass die freie syrische Armee keine Chance hätte gegen die nationale Armee aufzukommen; dass die meisten Leader des Nationalen Rates seit langer Zeit im Exil leben und dem Volk ungekannt sind; und dass die „Revoluzzer“ noch das Volk auf ihre Seite bringen müssten.
- Ray Hanania fragt sich im *Jerusalem Post*: wie kann Assad behaupten, der Vorkämpfer der Palästinenser zu sein, wo er doch sein eigenes Volk unterdrückt? Stattdessen bemerkt die Neue Zürcher Zeitung (Schweiz), dass Syrien tatsächlich das Land ist, in dem die palästinensischen Flüchtlinge am besten integriert sind.

Le Figaro (France)

Kilo : « C'est à la société civile de renverser la dictature syrienne »

Opposant syrien historique, il appelle les « comités de base » à prendre le pouvoir.

PROFOS RECUEILLIS PAR
PIERRE PRIER

PROCHE-ORIENT Figure centrale de l'opposition syrienne depuis les années 1980, souvent emprisonné, Michel Kilo, de passage à Paris, veut faire entendre une voix indépendante.

LE FIGARO - L'opposition syrienne paraît divisée. Comment y remédier ?
MICHEL KILO - Il y a le mouvement populaire, qui est proche des intellectuels, et l'opposition des partis organisés, comme le Conseil national syrien à l'extérieur ou le Comité national de coordination (CNC) à l'intérieur. Mais ces formations ont toujours été en retard sur le mouvement historique du peuple.

Que pensez-vous de l'annonce de la création d'un Conseil militaire, dirigé par le général déserteur Moustapha al-Cheikh ?

Avec quelques milliers de soldats, qui ne constituent pas une armée, il veut s'attaquer à une armée de 400 000 soldats ! Il va plonger le pays dans un chaos sans fin. C'est de la folie. Protéger les civils, d'accord. Mais on ne peut pas créer l'illusion d'une guerre contre le régime. Et puis nous ne voulons pas, après la victoire, être à nouveau gouvernés par des militaires. Les militaires doivent obéir aux politiques.

Alors, quelle est la solution ?
On ne peut pas se contenter de dire qu'on veut faire tomber le régime. Il faut dire comment. Au début, nous, les intellectuels, nous avons proposé le dialogue national.

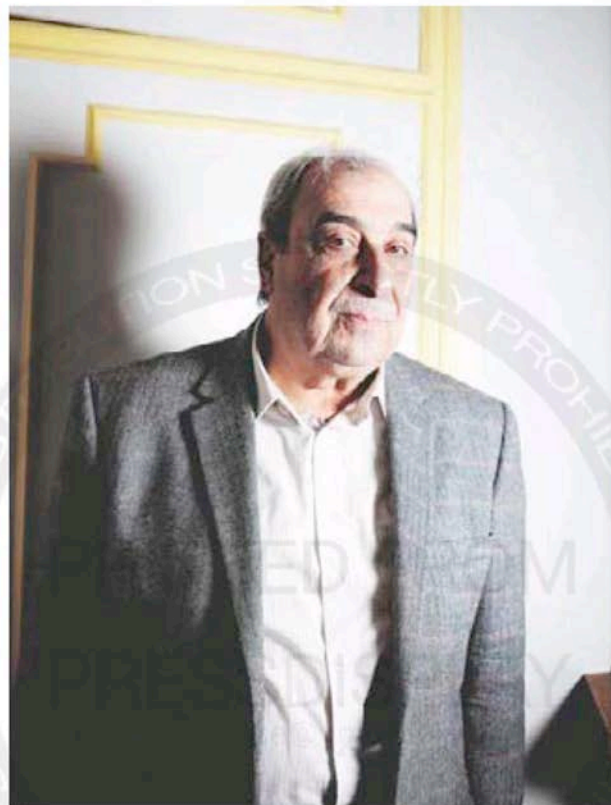
Le dialogue avec qui ?
Avec tout le monde, même avec le régime. Le but était de gagner à notre cause de nouvelles couches de la population. Bien sûr, le régime aurait refusé de céder. Mais c'était justement le but : montrer aux indécis qu'il y avait une solution politique et que le régime la refusait. À ce moment-là, descendre dans la rue était légitime.

Est-on maintenant dans une impasse ?
Oui. Le régime ne peut pas obliger les manifestants à quitter la rue, et les manifestants ne peuvent pas faire tomber le régime.

« ...
S'ils arrêtent, la répression sera comparable à celle qui s'est abattue sur Hama en 1982, où il y a eu 46 000 morts »

Est-ce que les révolutionnaires sont en train de mieux organiser les forces populaires, de convaincre les couches neutres de participer au mouvement. Ils poussent maintenant à la formation de comités de base partout dans le pays. Ce sont eux qui formeront le futur gouvernement de la Syrie, avec le CNS ou les partis de l'intérieur. En Europe, dans les pays de l'Est, ce sont les intellectuels, la société civile qui ont renversé les dictatures. Nous avons lutté pendant 50 ans contre le régime. La plupart des gens du CNS vivent à l'extérieur depuis longtemps, ils étaient presque inconnus du peuple.

Que proposez-vous ?
Les révolutionnaires sont en train de mieux organiser les forces populaires, de convaincre les couches neutres de participer au mouvement. Ils poussent maintenant à la formation de comités de base partout dans le pays. Ce sont eux qui formeront le futur gouvernement de la Syrie, avec le CNS ou les partis de l'intérieur. En Europe, dans les pays de l'Est, ce sont les intellectuels, la société civile qui ont renversé les dictatures. Nous avons lutté pendant 50 ans contre le régime. La plupart des gens du CNS vivent à l'extérieur depuis longtemps, ils étaient presque inconnus du peuple.



Michel Kilo, mardi, à son domicile parisien. LUCIEN LUNG

Le peuple syrien peut-il tenir encore longtemps ?

Jusqu'à la fin de l'histoire. J'ai posé la question à des personnes à Deraa. Elles m'ont répondu : « Nous n'avons pas le courage d'arrêter. » S'ils arrêtent, la répression sera comparable à celle qui s'est abattue sur Hama en

1982, où il y a eu 46 000 morts.

Le départ de Bachar el-Assad est-il inévitable ?
Il est nécessaire pour trouver une solution.

Vous allez rentrer en Syrie. N'est-ce pas dangereux ?
En Syrie, des gens meurent tous les jours pour la liberté. Il est honteux d'avoir peur. ■

Libération (France)



SYRIE Le militant des droits de l'homme Najati Tayara (photo) a été libéré hier. Il était incarcéré depuis le mois de mai pour avoir critiqué le régime d'Al-Assad et dénoncé la répression. PHOTO DR

De Morgen (Belgique / Belgium)

'ASSAD IS BINNEN

Burhan Ghalioun, de voorzitter van de Syrische Nationale Raad, is in Europa om het Westen aan te sporen het regime van president Bashar al-Assad zwaarder onder druk te zetten. Niet met een militaire interventie maar met strenge sancties. Ghalioun is ervan overtuigd dat de opstand van het syrische volk met de dag aan slagkracht wint en in staat is om na meer dan veertig jaar een einde te maken aan de Assad-hegemonie. Een exclusief interview.



■ Leden van de Syrische veiligheidsdiensten tonen hun wapens in een demonstratie.

Iran en Rusland blijven wapens leveren aan Syrisch regime

BRUSSEL ● Ondanks de internationale verontwaardiging over de situatie in Syrië en een wapenembargo van de EU wordt het regime van president Assad nog geregeld bevoorrad met wapens en munitie. Die zouden in hoofdzaak afkomstig zijn uit Rusland en Iran.

DOOR AYFER ERKUL

In de afgelopen weken hebben de Turkse autoriteiten vijf vrachtwagens in beslag genomen die van Iran op weg waren naar Syrië. Dat gebeurde na een tip aan de politie, aan de Turks-Syrische grens. Volgens de gouverneur van Kilis, waar de inbeslagname gebeurde, hadden de vrachtwagens materieel aan boord dat gebruikt wordt in de wapenproductie.

De Turkse autoriteiten blijven op de vlakte wat betreft de inhoud van de vrachtwagens. Iran ontkende dat er wapens in de trucks zaten, maar het Turkse gerecht zegt dat er een onderzoek bezig is. "De autoriteiten onderzoeken of deze vrachtwagens een lading hebben die een inbreuk vormt op Turkse of internationale wetten", zei een

stond met president Assad, heeft zich aan de zijde van de opstandelingen geschaard en kampen opgericht voor vluchtelingen uit Syrië. Ook de VS verklaarden afgelopen week dat Iran wapens levert aan Syrië. Het initiatief zou vooral uitgaan van de Revolutionaire Garde van Iran. Zo zou Qasem Soleimani, het hoofd van de Quds-elite troepen binnen de Revolutionaire Garde vorige maand nog op bezoek zijn geweest in Damascus. "We weten zeker dat hij daar op het hoogste niveau onthaald is door de Syrische regering", zei een Amerikaanse regeringsbron vorige week aan persagentschap AFP. "Volgens ons gaat het om Iraanse steun voor de pogingen van de Syrische regering om de opstand de kop in te drukken." Soleimani is erg machtig binnen het Iraanse regime en wordt hier en daar zelfs aangeduid als mogelijke opvolger van president Ahmedinejad. Zijn naam duikt ook op op de sanctielijst van de VS tegen Iran.

Daar Syrië over een groot wapenarsenaal

Vorige week nog zou een Russisch schip 60 ton 'gevaarlijk materiaal'

beschikt, is een publiek geheim. De afgelopen decennia heeft de Assad-familie zich bevoorrad met ballistische raketten en chemische wapens, daarin bijgestaan door niet alleen Iran, maar ook China, Noord-Korea en Rusland. Dat laatste land gaat trouwens door met wapenleveringen aan Damascus. Nog maar pas meerde een Russisch schip, dat in Syrië wapens had geleverd, aan voor de Turkse kust voor Iskenderun. De Chariot werd vorige week onderschept in Cyprus nadat het door het slechte weer in de problemen geraakte en aan Limasol aanmeerde. Daar bleek, na controle door de Cypriotische douane-autoriteiten, dat het schip met bestemming Syrië en Turkije een 'gevaarlijke lading' aan boord had. Daarop kreeg de kapitein geen toestemming om te tanken en te vertrekken voordat de zekerheid werd verkregen dat de Chariot zijn bestemming zou veranderen. Die verzekering werd gegeven door Westberg Ltd, de eigenaar van het schip in Sint-Petersburg. Vervolgens mocht de Chariot opnieuw vertrekken.

Maar in plaats van naar Turkije te varen, verdween het schip van de radar nadat het het Automatic Identification System (AIS)

ENKELE MAANDEN WEG'



■ Burhan Ghalioun heeft maar één boodschap voor de buitenwereld: 'steun het Syrische volk en vergroot de druk op het regime'.

FOTOGUÉL MEDINA / AFP

BRUSSEL • Uitdrukkingen als 'gewapende interventie' ten behoeve van 'regime change' komen niet voor in het vocabulaire van Burhan Ghalioun, althans nog niet, niet in deze fase van de opstand in Syrië. Wat in zijn land gaande is, zegt hij, is 'een vreedzame revolutie, geleid door de jonge generatie van ons land, een generatie die ongekende moed toont en een geest van buitengewone vastbeslotenheid'.

DOOR ROB VREEKEN

Het beëindigen van het regime-Assad zal een zaak zijn van het volk zelf, niet van buitenlandse legers. Maar hulp is van harte welkom en broodnodig. De oproep waarmee de voorzitter van de Syrische Nationale Raad (SNC) hoofdsteden afreist is daarom: steun het Syrische volk en vergroot de druk op het regime.

Dinsdag was Ghalioun – hoogleraar politieke wetenschappen aan de Sorbonne in Parijs – met die boodschap in Den Haag.

Het plan van de Arabische Liga is voornamelijk het uitgangspunt in de diplomatieke missie van Ghalioun. Maar van het plan is nog vrijwel niets terechtgekomen. De waarnemersmissie van de Liga is zo goed als mislukt. Tijd voor straffere maatregelen, vindt de SNC.

"Het Arabisch initiatief mag niet mislukken door gebrek aan middelen. Het moet nu worden overgenomen door de

Veiligheidsraad. Doel is de burgers te beschermen, en om de Syriërs in staat te stellen zelf te beslissen over door wie ze worden geregeerd.

"Voorkomen moet worden dat het leger nog langer op de mensen schiet. Er zijn veel krachtiger middelen nodig om te zorgen dat het plan van de Arabische Liga wordt uitgevoerd, zo nodig dwangmaatregelen van de kant van de Veiligheidsraad. Dat zou ons bescherming kunnen bieden."

Militaire dwang?

"Als de Veiligheidsraad het initiatief overneemt en het Syrische regime echt onder druk zet, denk ik dat militaire middelen niet nodig zijn. En zo niet, ja, dan zal men geweld moeten gebruiken om het regime ervan te overtuigen dat het moorden moet stoppen."

Sinds enige tijd wordt er niet alleen vreedzaam gedemonstreerd in Syrië, de oppositie krijgt nu steun van het Vrije Syrische Leger (FSA), gededeserteerde eenheden van de strijdkrachten. Is er sprake van een burgeroorlog?

"Nee. Het Vrije Syrische Leger is er nooit van uitgegaan dat de revolutie een gewapende revolutie is geworden. Het FSA beperkt zich tot het beschermen van vreedzame demonstranten.

"We glijden niet af naar een gewapend conflict. Maar bij gebrek aan Arabische of internationale bescherming van burgers, hebben de mensen nu zelf hun

bescherming georganiseerd. De gewapende eenheden van het FSA die de betogers beschermen, verlaten hun onderkoms alleen voor dat doel. Ze verzaken niet hun plicht de burgers te beschermen, maar ze vallen nooit wie dan ook aan."

Maar wordt door die gewapende 'bescherming' van demonstranten op den duur niet de kans groter dat het een burgeroorlog wordt?

"Nee, absoluut niet. Daar heb ik totaal vertrouwen in. Ten eerste hebben de mensen van het FSA geen echte militaire middelen. Ze hebben kleine, eenvoudige geweren. Het is geen georganiseerde kracht die in staat is in een echte veldslag een confrontatie aan te gaan met het leger.

"Ik denk dat dat risico overdreven wordt. Een veel groter gevaar is het ineenstorten van de economie, van het maatschappelijk leven, de negatieve effecten van een langdurige crisis op de

samenleving. Dát is het ware gevaar. Precies daarom hebben we humanitaire steun nodig, zodat de mensen kunnen doorgaan met hun vreedzame strijd voor vrijheid en democratie."

Hoe verloopt de samenwerking tussen de SNC en het Vrije Syrische Leger?

"We praten. Het gaat ons om twee dingen. Ten eerste om een akkoord waarin het FSA vastlegt dat zijn operaties alleen dienen ter bescherming van vreedzame betogers. Wij willen dat deze revolutie vreedzaam blijft en van het volk. Ten tweede willen we dat het FSA alle gewapende eenheden, alle gedeserteerde soldaten in zich opneemt. Er moet orde en discipline zijn onder één politiek gezag, dat wil zeggen het gezag van de SNC.

"Wij zijn een politieke organisatie, en het FSA accepteert politiek gezien onder haar gezag te staan. Wij voeren niet het militair bevel, maar wij vragen van het FSA niet af te wijken van de beginselen van de revolutie. Onder die voorwaarden steunen wij het Vrije Syrische Leger."

Hoe lang duurt het nog voor Assad weg is?

"Niet heel lang meer. Binnen een paar maanden, denk ik. Ik heb alle vertrouwen in de overwinning van deze revolutie van de democratie, van de waardigheid, van de vrijheid. Ik denk niet dat hij de revolutie nog veel langer zal kunnen weerstaan."

Ik heb alle vertrouwen in de overwinning van deze revolutie van de democratie, van de waardigheid, van de vrijheid

UN bildet Syrien-Beobachter in Kairo aus

Damaskus warnt Araber vor Einmarsch / Russland unnachgiebig im Sicherheitsrat

Her./amr. BAGDAD/FRANKFURT, 17. Januar. Trotz der Erfolglosigkeit ihrer bisherigen Bemühungen, die Gewalt in Syrien einzudämmen, bereitet die Arabische Liga eine weitere Beobachtermission vor. Das UN-Hochkommissariat für Menschenrechte gab am Dienstag in Genf bekannt, auf Bitten der Liga würden UN-Fachleute von der kommenden Woche an Beobachter für den Syrien-Einsatz ausbilden. Zunächst müsse aber das Treffen der arabischen Außenminister am Wochenende in Kairo abgewartet werden. Die Arabische Liga hatte in den vergangenen Tagen den Vorschlag der UN abgelehnt, eigene Beobachter nach Syrien zu entsenden.

Auf dem Ministertreffen soll nach Angaben des oppositionellen syrischen Nationalrats auch der Vorschlag des Emirs von Qatar zur Sprache kommen, zur Beendigung der blutigen Niederschlagung der Proteste arabische Truppen nach Syrien zu entsenden. Diese Forderung hatte Hamad Bin Chalifa Al Thani am Wochenende in einem Interview mit dem amerikanischen Fernsehsender CBS erhoben. Qatar hatte bereits beim Sturz

des libyschen Machthabers Gaddafi innerhalb der arabischen Welt die politische und militärische Führung übernommen. Ein syrischer Regierungssprecher drohte den arabischen Staaten am Dienstag mit den Worten: „Es wäre bedauerlich, wenn arabisches Blut auf syrischem Boden vergossen würde, um ausländischer Interessenpolitik zu dienen, nachdem die Verschwörung gegen Syrien offensichtlich geworden ist.“

Fast kein Politiker hat den Vorstoß des Emirs von Qatar kommentiert. Der Chefredakteur von „Al Sharq al Awsat“, der größten panarabischen Zeitung, unterstützte die Initiative, forderte aber ein koordiniertes Vorgehen der Staatengemeinschaft und eine Resolution des UN-Sicherheitsrats, damit diese Erfolg habe. Neben Qatar müssten die Türkei, Saudi-Arabien sowie die Vereinigten Staaten, Frankreich und Großbritannien eine Rolle übernehmen, schrieb Tariq al Humaid. Der Leitartikler der englischsprachigen Zeitung „The National“, die in Abu Dhabi erscheint, lehnte dagegen einen Einmarsch in Syrien ab. Eine Intervention wäre mit viel Blutvergießen verbunden,

weil sie nicht schnell abgeschlossen werden könne, schrieb Faisal al Yafai.

Im UN-Sicherheitsrat verteidigt die Votomacht Russland weiterhin die Interessen des Assad-Regimes. Einige Wochen nach der deutlichen Kritik westlicher Staaten an seinem Entwurf für eine Syrien-Resolution legte Russland in New York einen neuen Text vor, der teilweise noch weiter von den Forderungen der Amerikaner und Europäer abweicht als die vorherige Version. Unter anderem will Russland die Regimegegner für ihre „Terroranschläge“ und Übergriffe gegen Sicherheitskräfte und deren Familien verantwortlich machen. Die Forderung, dass die Verantwortlichen für die Gewalt gegen Oppositionelle zur Rechenschaft gezogen werden, wurde in Moskau aus dem Entwurf gestrichen.

Neue Zürcher Zeitung (Suisse / Switzerland)

Syriens Palästinenser zwischen den Fronten

Treue zu Asads Regime in Widerspruch zur Sichtweise der Muslimbruderschaft

Die über 500 000 in Syrien lebenden Palästinenser lavieren zwischen Regimetreue und Widerstand gegen Asads Regime. Sie sind in Syrien besser integriert als in andern Gastländern der Region.

Hubertus Ecker

Als der Hamas-Führer Ismail Haniya Ende Dezember den Sudan besuchte, stürzte ein syrischer Aktivist auf ihn zu und fragte ihn nach seiner Meinung zum syrischen Aufstand. Haniyas Antwort: «Unsere Herzen sind mit euch.» Was er nicht bemerkte, war, dass der Aktivist ihn filmte – mit einem Mobiltelefon, das er in seiner Handfläche verbarg. Haniyas Worte überraschten Damaskus indes nicht: Seit Monaten laviert die Hamas. Einerseits ist sie dem syrischen Regime verpflichtet, von dem sie politische wie militärische Hilfe erhält. Andererseits muss sie, als Tochterorganisation der Muslimbruderschaft, auf deren geistigen Führer Scheich Yussef al-Karadawi achten – einen der vehementesten Befürworter des Sturzes von Bashar al-Asad. Dass die Hamas nun auf seine Linie einzuschwenken scheint, dürfte ihre Beliebtheit unter Syriens Demonstranten steigern.

Ein enttäuschter Kämpfer

Zu ihnen gehört der Menschenrechtsanwalt Khaled. 1950 flüchteten seine Grosseltern aus Palästina, doch der 34-jährige Jurist fühlt sich heute als Syrer. Er wohnt im Zentrum von Damaskus, weit entfernt von allen palästinensischen Flüchtlingslagern, und hat vor allem syrische Freunde. In der Hamas sieht er die Verlängerung der syrischen Diktatur. «All das Gerede von Widerstand gegen Israel soll nur den Fortbestand des Asad-Clans rechtfertigen», empört er sich. Dabei habe dieser nie ernstlich Widerstand geleistet – was Khaled keineswegs stört. Seit langem schon, meint er, hätte das Kapitel über den Palästina-Konflikt beendet werden müssen, indem die Hamas und andere Gruppierungen ihre Waffen an Israel aushändigten, das eine wahre Demokratie gezeitigt habe. Zugleich, argumentiert er, könne das Leben der Palästinenser kaum schlimmer werden.

Khaleds Logik nachvollziehen zu wollen, speziell vor dem Hintergrund seines Kampfes um globale Menschenrechte, ist ebenso sinnlos wie jede weitere Diskussion mit ihm. Der junge Mann ist geprägt vom Hass auf Syriens Diktatur. Eine Debatte mit dem Palästi-



Palästinensische Aktivisten am 44. Jahrestag des Sechstageskriegs auf der syrischen Seite der Grenze im Golan.

AHKAM SERI / PANOS

nenserführer Ahmad Jibril wäre kaum ergiebiger. Der 74-jährige Gründer der Volksfront zur Befreiung Palästinas – Generalkommando (PFLP-GC) verkörpert mit seiner Regimetreue das andere Extrem. Im letzten Juni warfen ihm Opponenten vor, für die Turbulenzen im palästinensischen Flüchtlingslager Yarmuk bei Damaskus verantwortlich zu sein. Die 30-jährige Fatmeh, eine Bewohnerin des Lagers, kann sich an diese Ereignisse gut erinnern.

Ein bezahlter Protest

Anfang Mai hatten Jibrils Mitarbeiter ihren Mann, der sich als Taxifahrer verdingt, angesprochen. Gemeinsam mit anderen Palästinensern und Syrern solle er unbewaffnet auf die Golanhöhen marschieren, um des Jahrestages der Nakba (der Vertreibung der Palästinenser als Folge der Gründung Israels 1948) am 15. Mai zu gedenken. «Mein Mann tat dies auch aus Überzeugung», sagt Fatmeh. Am 6. Juni tat er es erneut, nun zum Gedenken an den Jahrestag des Sechstageskrieges von 1967. «Diesmal erhielt er dafür sogar etwas Geld. Die Israeli hatten beim ersten Marsch sieben Protestierende erschossen», berichtet Fatmeh. Beim zweiten Marsch ka-

men 23 Demonstranten um, unter ihnen einige aus Yarmuk. Fatmeh und ihr Mann wohnten den Beerdigungen im Lager bei. Die Bewohner sollen gerufen haben: «Unsere Söhne sind kein Kanonenfutter», erzählt sie. Der Zorn habe sich entladen, das Büro der PFLP-GC im Lager sei attackiert worden, Jibrils Kommandos hätten das Feuer eröffnet, und elf weitere Zivilisten seien umgekommen. Seither halten sich Fatmeh und ihr Mann von allem Geschehen fern. Sie möchte weg, aber weiss nicht wohin. So gut wie unter Asads Regime hätten es die Palästinenser nirgends in der arabischen Welt, sagt sie. Yarmuk sei kein Lager, sondern eine richtige Stadt mit 120 000 Einwohnern. Man habe Recht auf Arbeit, Handel, Reisen und oft auch auf Hausbesitz.

Brisante Verhaftung

Andere Palästinenser sehen darin nichts als heuchlerische Almosen. «Freiheit für die in den Gefängnissen des syrischen Regimes inhaftierten Palästinenser» heisst eine von syrischen Palästinensern betriebene Facebook-Seite. Auch jene 30 Palästinenser, die seit Ausbruch des Aufstandes ums Leben kamen, sind dort namentlich aufgeführt.

Die Trauer um jeden Einzelnen ist spürbar. Dennoch wirkt die Seite wie ein Dokument, das belegen will: Die Palästinenser lassen die Syrer in deren Befreiungskampf nicht im Stich. Entsprechend hervorgehoben wurde die Verhaftung von Ibrahim ash-Shakaki am 31. Dezember. Der 20-jährige Mann, der sich an einem Protestzug im Damaszener Viertel Midan beteiligt hatte, ist der Sohn von Fathi ash-Shakaki. Dieser hatte 1979 die Bewegung Islamischer Jihad Palästinas gegründet und war 1995 von Agenten des israelischen Auslandsgeheimdienstes Mossad in Malta ermordet worden. Die Meldung von der Festnahme seines Sohnes schlug hohe Wellen. Bereits am 2. Januar liessen Syriens Behörden Ibrahim Shakaki wieder frei. Jibrils Leute, erzählt Fatmeh, hätten nach dem Vorfall starken Druck auf die Bewohner von Yarmuk, in dem al-Shakaki lebt, ausgeübt. Seit zwei Wochen herrsche wieder Ruhe, zumindest äusserlich.

Im Internet verschärft sich aber der Tonfall. Syrisch-palästinensische Facebook-Seiten bezeichnen Jibril als Verräter und preisen Haniya als kämpferischen Bruder. Und selbst der Anwalt Khaled empfindet den Hamas-Chef neuerdings als etwas annehmbarer.

La tribune de Genève (Suisse / Switzerland)

Mon espoir pour la Syrie

L'invité

Jean-François Duchosal
Volontaire humanitaire



J'ai appris dans vos colonnes la mort du reporter français à Homs, en Syrie. Ce cas dramatique montre bien toute la complexité des affrontements en cours. D'un côté, la sécurité gouvernementale avec l'armée et une quinzaine de services de police dont certains ont la gâchette facile. De l'autre, une opposition composée principalement d'une jeunesse désemparée qui aspire légitimement à plus de libertés, plus de démocratie sans savoir exactement laquelle. Avec au milieu, une zone grise où l'on retrouve des rivalités de toute nature, des groupes non identifiés, des déserteurs, des contrebandiers, des bandes armées soupçonnées de recevoir des moyens financiers et des armes de l'extérieur, etc. Il est donc difficile dans ce contexte de s'y retrouver lorsque des civils ou des militaires tombent. Les Syriens en ont assez de ces massacres et souhaitent la paix au plus vite, car plus rien ne fonctionne dans ce pays. L'embargo, qui ne punit que le peuple, paralyse complètement l'économie. La minorité chrétienne (environ 10%), jusqu'ici acceptée et respectée par le gouvernement, reste sur la réserve face aux événements par pur réflexe de peur quant à son avenir pour le moins incertain.

Avec quelques membres de l'Association des amis de Mar Moussa de Genève, nous avons décidé, par une action de soutien et de solidarité, de passer le dernier réveillon en compagnie du Père Paolo Dall'Oglio, fondateur d'une communauté mixte, œcuménique et consacrée au dialogue islamo-chrétien. Le monastère de Mar Moussa, nid

d'aigle entièrement rénové par le Père avec sa communauté et des ouvriers de la région, est situé dans la montagne entre Damas et Homs. Le Père Paolo, jésuite venu d'Italie, est un homme charismatique, véritable trait d'union interreligieux, qui prêche la réconciliation en luttant contre toute forme de violence, y compris celle du gouvernement. Cette prise de position lui a valu récemment

«J'ai le privilège de bien connaître ce peuple à la citoyenneté très marquée»

une menace d'expulsion. C'était compter sans la renommée de cet homme de bien reconnu dans tout le pays. Une importante manifestation regroupant des musulmans et des chrétiens a empêché son départ de Mar Moussa.

J'ai le privilège de bien connaître ce peuple resté authentique et à la citoyenneté très marquée. En marchant de village en village en 2007, j'avais pu apprécier l'accueil (le *welcome* syrien n'est pas un vain mot), le sens illimité de l'hospitalité ainsi qu'un profond respect de l'ancien. Pour terminer sur une note d'espoir et sans vouloir me lancer dans une analyse politique, je pense qu'une force d'interposition internationale onusienne pourrait éviter une guerre civile, que tout le monde craint. A ce stade, une intervention militaire (OTAN ou autre) serait certainement une erreur, car la position stratégique, politique, religieuse et historique de la Syrie n'est pas comparable avec d'autres pays de la région.

La Suisse, qui, à mon sens, a rappelé son ambassadeur trop tôt, pourrait, dans le cadre d'une neutralité active, apporter ses bons offices et ses connaissances pour poser la première pierre d'une base démocratique.

The Daily Telegraph (Royaume-Uni / United Kingdom)

Assad will be deposed within three months, says Syrian MP

By Richard Spencer

SYRIA'S President Bashar al-Assad will be driven from power within three months, an MP for the embattled city of Homs told *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday.

Imad Ghalioun, who defected from the regime and landed in Cairo on Sunday, claimed that the situation in the city was "more difficult than anyone can imagine". But he also said that the crisis was destroying the regime from within.

"Economically speaking the regime can't hang on longer than two months, politically speaking it can't stay longer than two months," he said.

"My estimate is that the regime would

collapse in maximum three months." The regime yesterday rejected calls from Qatar for Arab troops to be deployed in Syria. A foreign ministry statement said such a move would "worsen the crisis... and pave the way for foreign intervention".

Diplomats and even opposition activists acknowledge that the balance of power inside Syria remains firmly in Mr Assad's favour.

However, it is also clear that the regime's capacities are being slowly eroded. An economic crisis as foreign investment has fled, combined with sanctions, has hit power supplies and raised prices in the shops.

The Independent (Royaume-Uni / United Kingdom)

Arab League meeting to condemn Syria brutality

By **ALASTAIR BEACH**
in Cairo

The Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad looked dangerously isolated last night, with a wall of regional opposition steadily building around him and Arab League sources suggesting his regime will face unprecedented condemnation when the organisation meets this weekend.

International observers are now preparing their final report on the Assad's 10-month crackdown and look likely to deliver a stinging rebuke to his government, which the UN says is responsible for killing more than 5,000 civilians since last March.

"Everyone is saying it will be bad," one Arab League source told *The Independent* last night. "There was a meeting today with delegates from across the region. Nobody thinks it will be good for Syria."

The League is due to hold a meeting

this weekend where member states will decide what action to take. Despite the presence of international monitors this month – after they were reluctantly allowed in to see whether Assad would comply with an Arab peace plan – the shooting of protesters has continued unabated, according to the UN.

It leaves Arab League delegates with the unenviable task of deciding how to punish one of its own, a country which, until recently, was a cornerstone of regional politics. The options range from ditching the monitors, to extending the mission or even allowing in armed protection and ramping up the international presence.

But according to Wissam Tarif, a Syria specialist from the New York-based Avaaz human rights group, Assad – whose name means lion in Arabic – may be beyond taming. "He is under the illusion he can manipulate the whole world," he said.

Le Soleil (Canada)

La Syrie ne veut pas d'Arabes

Agence France-Presse

DAMAS — La Syrie a rejeté hier tout déploiement de soldats arabes sur son territoire, comme l'a proposé le Qatar pour faire cesser les violences, que le président américain, Barack Obama, a jugées «inacceptables».

«La Syrie rejette les déclarations de responsables du Qatar sur l'envoi de troupes arabes qui amplifient la crise, font avorter l'action arabe et ouvrent la voie à une intervention étrangère», a expliqué le ministère syrien des Affaires étrangères dans un communiqué.

«Le peuple syrien refuse toute intervention étrangère sous n'importe quelle appellation. Il fera face à toute tentative qui porte atteinte à la souveraineté de la Syrie», selon le communiqué.

Lémir du Qatar, cheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al-Thani, s'était dit samedi favorable à l'envoi de troupes arabes en Syrie afin de «mettre fin à la tuerie».

Le secrétaire général de la Ligue arabe, Nabil Al-Arabi, a indiqué que cette idée pourrait être examinée lors de la réunion en fin de semaine au Caire de l'organisation panarabe, qui doit réévaluer sa mission en Syrie,

critiquée pour son incapacité à faire cesser l'effusion de sang.

Selon le chef de la diplomatie marocaine, Saad Eddine Othmani, cette réunion se tiendra le 22 janvier parmi les ministres des Affaires étrangères, en présence du chef de la mission d'observateurs, pour décider «de la suite de la mission» et de «la forme» qu'elle pourrait prendre.

Malgré la présence depuis le 26 décembre de dizaines d'observateurs arabes chargés de surveiller l'arrêt des violences, les exactions n'ont pas cessé. Selon un responsable de l'ONU, elles ont fait 400 morts dans les deux premières semaines de la mission.

Les violences ont fait plus de 5000 morts depuis le début de la contestation, à la mi-mars 2011.

À Washington, M. Obama a fustigé ces violences, en recevant le roi Abdallah II de Jordanie. «Nous continuons à être témoins de niveaux de violence inacceptables dans ce pays», a-t-il dit.

«Nous allons continuer nos consultations étroites avec la Jordanie pour créer le genre de pression internationale qui encourage le régime syrien actuel à se retirer pour qu'un processus et une transition plus démocratiques puissent se produire en Syrie», a assuré le président américain.

The Washington Post (USA)

Syrian protesters hail monitors during visit

But residents fear more violence once observers leave Damascus suburb

BY ABIGAIL FIELDING-SMITH

KESWA, SYRIA — Anti-regime protesters in the Damascus suburbs gave an Arab League peace observers' mission an ecstatic welcome Tuesday, but warned that President Bashar al-Assad's security forces would attack as soon as they left.

After monitors passed the sandbag-protected police post at the entrance to the main street of the Keswa district, people approached them first in a trickle and then a flood, desperate to tell their stories of family members arrested and killed.

Some of the women were in tears, while a man brandished a phone with a picture of a bloodied corpse he said was his son. Another man warned: "When you go from here, Bashar al-Assad's terrorists will come here and kill us, just remember this!"

The outpouring underscored both the importance and the limitations of the much-criticized observers, on a day when a rebel army chief called for international military intervention to replace a mission he said had failed to halt a bloody crackdown by regime forces, and the U.N. Security Council members were preparing to debate a draft Syria resolution drawn up by Russia — one of Assad's main international allies.

Violence flared anew Tuesday across the country. According to the Associated Press, the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 18 people were killed in Syria on Tuesday, most by troops or pro-government

gunmen. The Local Coordination Committees, another activist group, said 32 people were killed, 19 of them in the restive central province of Homs.

The discrepancy could not be resolved.

"Unfortunately we're continuing to see unacceptable levels of violence inside that country," President Obama said in Washington after meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah II.

"We will continue to consult very closely with Jordan to create the kind of international pressure and environment that encourages the current Syrian regime to step aside," he said.

The observers arrived in Keswa — a protest hot spot outside Damascus — to a near-silence that was broken by one man's shout of "The people want to hang the president!" as the convoy passed.

Once the observers halted, residents emerged, and the monitors were mobbed and left struggling to write down the stories they were being told, fragments of the 10-month uprising that has left an estimated 5,000 people dead.

This brief protest was the first demonstration in more than a week in Keswa, residents said, after a crackdown by the security forces made people too afraid to come out. "If there is a demonstration, it will be immediately shot at," one man said.

People seemed genuinely grateful for the mission's presence, using phone cameras to film the monitors' orange jackets. Two of the observers were even lifted shoulder-high like sports heroes.

For all the elation, the demonstrators were aware how temporary their feeling of security was likely to be and pointed to security force members at the end of the road and in a nearby building.

— *Financial Times*

The Washington Post (USA)

Going into Syria?

*The Arab League's dilemma:
intervene militarily or lose face*

HERE'S ONE MEASURE of how much the Middle East has changed in the past year: Amr Moussa, the former Egyptian foreign minister and Arab League secretary general, is calling for Arab states to consider an armed intervention in Syria.

For Mr. Moussa, who hopes to be elected president of Egypt this year, this is an astonishing transformation. For decades he exemplified the region's ossified and impotent politics; he frequently inveighed against Israel but took little notice of massive human rights violations — even acts of genocide — by Arab autocracies. Now, seconding the suggestion of the emir of Qatar, he has endorsed intervention by Arab troops to stop the war being waged by Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad against his own people.

The talk of intervention, which may be taken up formally by the Arab League at a meeting this weekend, reflects a sense of desperation. For months the Arab governments have been trying to pressure Mr. Assad into ending attacks on civilians, withdrawing troops from cities, releasing prisoners and opening negotiations with the opposition. Last month, they dispatched some 150 observers to the country to monitor implementation of the plan.

But Mr. Assad, predictably, never took any meaningful steps; instead he has gone on killing people at a shocking pace. According to the United Nations, more than 400 have died in the past three weeks, in addition to more than 5,000 killed since last March.

The Arab observer force has been a failure, and one of its own members has called it a farce. So the Arab League, which like Mr. Moussa has tried to regain credibility in this new Middle Eastern era, must choose between humiliation and stronger

The Washington Times (USA)

Assad insists no foreign troops will be allowed in Qatar leader calls for Arab forces to deploy

By ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT | Syria “absolutely rejects” any plans to send foreign Arab troops into the country, the foreign ministry said Tuesday, as the death toll mounted from the 10-month-old uprising against President Bashar Assad.

Mr. Assad has insisted there be no foreign intervention in Syria. He agreed under heavy regional pressure to admit some Arab League observers, but their effectiveness has been limited.

Activists said at least 18 people died Tuesday, and six Syrian soldiers were killed late Monday near Damascus. The revolt has turned increasingly militarized in recent months, with a growing risk of civil war. The United Nations says about 400 people have been killed in the last three weeks, on top of an earlier estimate of more than 5,000 dead since March.

Syrian activists said most of Tuesday’s dead were shot by security forces or pro-regime gunmen. The reports could not be independently verified.

Attacks also were reported for a fifth day in the Damascus suburb of Zabadani, near the border with Lebanon.

The government rejection of armed intervention followed a remark from the leader of Qatar, Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who was quoted Sunday as saying troops from other Arab countries should be sent to Syria to stop the deadly violence. His remark was the first by an Arab leader calling for the deployment of troops inside Syria.

Qatar, which once had close relations with Syria, has been a harsh critic of the crackdown. Since the wave of Arab uprisings began more than a year ago, Qatar has taken an aggressive role, raising its influence in the region.

“The Syrian people reject any foreign intervention in its affairs, under any title, and would confront any attempt to infringe upon Syria’s sovereignty and the integrity of its territories,” the Syrian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The government claims terrorists are behind the uprising, not reform-seekers, and that armed gangs are acting out a foreign conspiracy to destabilize the country. The regime says 2,000 members of the security forces have been killed.

Syria agreed last month to an Arab League plan that calls for a halt to the crackdown, the withdrawal of heavy weaponry like tanks from cities, the release of all political prisoners, and allowing foreign journalists and human rights workers in.

About 150 Arab League observers are working in Syria to verify whether the government is abiding by its agreement, and the league said Tuesday another 10 will head into Syria shortly.

So far they appear to have made little impact, and the conflict has reached a bloody stalemate, with both sides refusing to back down.

The British-based Syrian Observatory for

Syrian rebel chief asks world to stop bloodshed

At least 24 reported killed in fresh violence • Mandate of Arab monitors expires Thursday

• BY ERIKA SOLOMON

BEIRUT (Reuters) — A Syrian rebel army chief urged the world on Tuesday to protect civilians in Syria, saying Arab peace monitors had failed to curb President Bashar Assad's violent response to a 10-month-old revolt against his rule.

Big powers have also proved unable to stop the bloodshed in Syria, where UN officials say more than 5,000 people have been killed and Damascus says its security forces have lost 2,000 dead.

Riad al-Asaad, Turkish-based commander of the rebel Free Syrian Army, called for international intervention to replace the Arab-observer mission, which has just days to run.

"The Arab League and their monitors failed in their mission and though we respect and appreciate our Arab brothers for their efforts, we think they are incapable of imposing conditions in Syria or resisting this regime," he said by telephone. "For that reason we call on them to turn the issue over to the UN Security Council and we ask that the international community intervene because they are more capable of protecting Syrians at this stage than our Arab brothers."

Iran condemned what it called foreign interference in the affairs of its closest Arab ally, Syria, and praised reforms President Assad has promised as "problem-solving."

"We are fundamentally against interfering in the affairs of other countries. We think it does not solve the problems but will only make them more complicated," Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told a news conference.

Assad, while promising reform, has vowed

to crush his opponents with an "iron fist" but Syrians bracing bullets and torture chambers appear equally determined to add him to the list of the past years' toppled Arab leaders.

Army deserters and other rebels have taken up arms against security forces dominated by Assad's minority Alawite sect, pushing Sunni-majority Syria closer to civil war.

"Jerusalemites" firing rockets killed an officer and five of his men at a rural checkpoint near Damascus, and wounded seven others, the state news agency SANA reported Tuesday, a day after government assassinated a brigadier general near the capital.

Eight people were killed when a bomb hit a minibus on the Aleppo-Halab road, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

In Homs, tank fire crashed into the Rihayda district after a night rally against Assad there, activists said. YouTube footage showed a crowd dancing at the rally and waving the old Syrian flag used before the 1945 Party seized power in 1963.

The British-based Observatory said eight people were killed in violence in Homs, a flashpoint city of one million racked by unrest, crackdowns and Sunni-Alawite sectarian killings.

Activists also reported fighting between rebels and troops trying to edge into Rihayda, a neighborhood that is home to Sunni tribesmen and lies next to the Alawite district of Mezza.

Tanks were firing sporadically at the rebel-held town of Zabadani, near the Lebanese border, which has been under attack since Friday, activists said. They added that several soldiers who had tried to defect to the opposition had been killed.

Syrian forces shot dead a man at a road



MEMBERS OF the Syrian Free Army are seen at the western border of the rebel-held town of Zabadani on Monday. (Reuters)

possible sanctions. Russia presented its own draft on December 13 and Western countries agreed to discuss and negotiate it, but there has been little progress since then.

A Syrian lawmaker told Reuters on Monday he had fled the country to join the opposition after losing hope that Assad would enact reforms or stop the violence.

"Blood is in the streets," said Inad Ghalioun, from the restive city of Homs, who took refuge in Cairo two weeks ago.

"The whole country is bleeding. I do not think there will be any reforms because the young people have taken their decision," he said. "This is a revolution and there is no going back."

Israel, it is allied to Iran and Hezbollah. The U.S., the EU, Turkey and the Arab League have announced sanctions against Syria, but while these have hurt its economy, they have yet to prompt Assad to change course. Opposition to sanctions from some of Syria's trading partners, notably Lebanon and Iraq, also dilutes their impact.

Council members have been divided for months over the uprising against Assad, with Western countries pushing for strong condemnation of the government's bloody crackdown but Russia seeking to shield its ally Damascus.

In October, Russia and China vetoed a European-drafted resolution that threatened

Falafel, fences and Syria

Is the Assad regime really the 'champion' of the Palestinian cause when it oppresses its own people?



YALLA PEACE

• By RAY HANANIA

A day never passes without an Arab complaining about Israel. Of course, a day never passes without an Israeli complaining about the Arabs, either. The complaints vary widely, covering everything from food to violence.

A common complaint is that Israel "stole" the falafel. Well, Israel has stolen Palestinian land, but can you really steal a food?

I recently read an Israeli official's counter to this claim: has Israel also "stolen" Italian food? To be fair, Israelis don't go around bragging about their "Israeli spaghetti" the way they promote "Israeli falafel."

But to be even more fair – is that allowed in the Arab-Israeli conflict? – many Israeli Jews are from Arab countries (Sephardim) and have been making falafel and other Arab delicacies for centuries, too.

If this were just about food, it might be funny. But that's not the case. What's not so funny is how, when pushed to the wall, Arab dictators quickly start to sound like the Israelis they often frequently denounce.

For example, I recall the first time I ever heard the phrase "iron fist" was when then-General Yitzhak Rabin vowed to break the arms of Palestinian protesters during the first intifada.

Last week, I heard Syria's strongman Bashar al-Assad, whose last name means "Lion" in Arabic, vow to crush pro-democracy protesters with an "iron fist."

I didn't hear a lot of Arabs complaining about that. In fact many Arabs are cheering Assad, the feeble-voiced eye doctor, with their usual double-vision and hypocrisy.

Assad's army is also firing "rubber bullets" at protesters. I thought rubber bullets were an Israeli invention?

NEXT THING you know, Assad will probably be declaring, with typical Arab bluster, that if the protesters don't shut up and accept their restrictive, unfree lives, that he will "drive them into the sea."

Or, he might start building a 28-foot-tall concrete wall around the most disruptive areas, where protesters have been most active. Assad will probably also call the wall a "fence," to soften the political impact.

If there are any Jews left in Syria, Assad could have them build the "Oppression Wall" the way Israel has Arabs building its Wall – err, fence, err, barrier, err, whatever.

Maybe the United Nations might find a few moments to organize an inquiry into the Syrian uprising. They could have some renowned Arab jurist, as

its lead author, outline the war crimes that Assad is engaging in as he orders his tanks and planes to fire missiles on civilians.

That is a war crime, isn't it? (There's even a debate on that in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Since when is killing a civilian a war crime?)

Of course, there is a long list of things the UN could do but doesn't. It could order similar inquiries into the brutal oppression against protesters in Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Yemen and, well, all 22 Arab countries.

If they can't find an Arab to lead the inquiries, maybe they could convince former jurist Richard Goldstone to do it. He could follow up the 2009 Goldstone Report with The Goldstone Report Part II: Syria. And The Goldstone Report Part III: Egypt. And the Goldstone Report Part VI: Saudi Arabia. It could become an encyclopedia of alleged oppression, easily a 22-volume set.

Oy vey! There are so many crimes being committed against civilians in the Arab World, it would all become a blur. Or maybe the "blur of oppression" might be given a formal name. We can just call it the "Arab League."

This "fog of conflict" in the Arab World is actually very easy to see.

In fact, although the Arab World claims ownership of falafel, there is one dish that it serves often that it didn't invent but of which it could just as easily claim ownership.

That dish is called hypocrisy.

Arabs are always pointing to Israel and claiming they are "hypocrites." They might be. But I don't hear the Arabs screaming that Israel "stole" hypocrisy from the Arab World the way they scream that Israel "stole" their falafel. They close their eyes to brutality in the Arab World but have 20-20 vision when it involves brutality by Israel.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying Israel is any kind of angel in this whole mess. I mean, when Israel announced last week that it would take in Syria protesters and refugees, that sounded a little shallow considering Israel refuses to take in Palestinian refugees from 1948 and 1967 and refuses to recognize Arabs as citizens who marry Israelis.

But I am saying that the very Arab critics pointing fingers at Israel are doing the exact same thing that they claim Israel has done.

Syria's Assad says the heart of the issue is that Syria has been the champion of Arab Nationalism and the Palestinian cause. Is the Assad regime really the "champion" of the Palestinian cause when it oppresses its own people? How can that be?

The writer is an award winning columnist and radio talk show host. He can be reached at www.RadioChicagoland.com

L'Orient-Le Jour (Liban / Lebanon)

La Syrie refuse l'envoi de troupes arabes sur son sol

Révolte La poursuite des violences est « inacceptable », affirme Obama.

La Syrie a rejeté hier tout déploiement de soldats arabes sur son territoire. « La Syrie rejette les déclarations de responsables du Qatar sur l'envoi de troupes arabes qui amplifient la crise, font avorter l'action arabe et ouvrent la voie à une intervention étrangère », a expliqué le ministère syrien des Affaires étrangères dans un communiqué. « Le peuple syrien refuse toute intervention étrangère sous n'importe quelle appellation. Il fera face à toute tentative qui porte atteinte à la souveraineté de la Syrie », selon le communiqué. « Il serait regrettable que du sang arabe coule sur le territoire syrien pour servir des (intérêts) connus », a ajouté le ministère sans autre précision. En outre, selon l'agence SANA, Moscou a également rejeté l'envoi de troupes arabes en Syrie, assurant qu'il s'opposerait fermement à une telle proposition si elle devait être présentée au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU.

L'émir du Qatar, cheikh Hamad ben Khalifa al-Thani, s'était dit samedi favorable à l'envoi de troupes arabes en Syrie afin de « mettre fin à la tuerie ». Le chef de la Ligue arabe, Nabil al-Arabi, a indiqué que cette idée pourrait être examinée lors de la réunion le 22 janvier au Caire de l'organisation panarabe, qui doit réévaluer sa mission en Syrie, critiquée pour son incapacité à faire cesser l'effusion de sang. Une source arabe a indiqué hier que Damas ne s'opposerait pas à une prolongation du mandat de la mission des observateurs, mais rejeterait une extension de leur champ d'action. Le mandat des observateurs expire demain.

Malgré la présence depuis le 26 décembre des observateurs arabes, les exactions n'ont donc pas cessé. Selon un responsable de l'ONU, el-

les ont fait 400 morts dans les deux premières semaines de la mission. Hier, 14 civils ont encore été tués, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH). Huit personnes ont été tuées dans l'explosion d'une bombe au passage de leur minibus sur une route reliant Idleb à Alep. Un militant a également été tué par un tireur embusqué à Khan Cheikhoun, dans la province d'Idleb. A Homs, des transports de troupes blindés « ont ouvert le feu aveuglément, tuant un civil et en blessant neuf autres ». Dans la même ville, des tirs des forces de sécurité ont tué quatre civils, selon l'OSDH. D'après la chaîne satellitaire al-Jazira, citant des militants, 37 manifestants ont été tués hier.

Zabadani

Et pour la 5e journée consécutive, les forces de l'ordre pilonnaient hier Zabadani, obligeant les habitants de la ville à fuir, selon les comités de coordination locaux, qui précisent que plusieurs militaires ayant tenté de faire défection ont été tués.

L'OSDH a en revanche rapporté la libération de Najafi Tayyara, un célèbre opposant et militant des droits de l'homme, qui avait été arrêté en mai pour avoir dénoncé les atrocités commises par les forces du régime. Le président Assad avait annoncé dimanche une « amnistie générale pour les crimes commis pendant les événements », une démarche jugée peu crédible par l'opposition.

Menaces de radicalisation de la lune

Par ailleurs, Riad al-Asaad, chef de l'Armée syrienne libre (ASL), a appelé les membres de la Ligue arabe à « transférer rapidement le dossier syrien devant le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU ». L'ONU a

annoncé qu'elle mènerait dans les prochains jours une formation pour des observateurs de la Ligue arabe, afin de les aider à évaluer la situation en Syrie. Mais les soldats dissidents réclament une action plus musclée, avec un « recours au chapitre 7 de la Charte de l'ONU ». Ce chapitre donne au Conseil de sécurité la possibilité d'entreprendre « toute action qu'il juge nécessaire au maintien ou au rétablissement de la paix ». Parallèlement, le chef de la plus grande tribu de Syrie, Nawaf al-Bachir, qui a fui son pays la semaine dernière, a menacé à Istanbul d'une radicalisation de la lutte contre le régime si le Conseil de sécurité n'intervenait pas pour mettre fin à la répression.

Recevant hier le roi Abdallah II de Jordanie, le président des États-Unis, Barack Obama, a affirmé que la poursuite des violences en Syrie était « inacceptable ». Il a salué le fait que son invité avait été le premier chef d'État arabe à appeler M. Assad à quitter le pouvoir. « Nous allons continuer nos consultations étroites avec la Jordanie pour créer le genre de pression internationale qui encourage le régime syrien actuel à se retirer pour qu'un processus et une transition plus démocratiques puissent se produire



Une photo publiée par l'agence SANA montre un observateur arabe supervisant la libération de prisonniers syriens, en vertu de l'amnistie décrétée par le président Assad.

Photo AFP

en Syrie », a encore assuré M. Obama.

Dans le même temps, l'Iran a démenti des accusations françaises sur l'envoi d'armes en Syrie. « Les déclarations des responsables français sont inexactes. Malheureusement, régulièrement on assiste à des

prises de position politiques sans preuves et sans fondement de la part de responsables de certains pays européens et cette fois de responsables français », a déclaré le porte-parole du ministère iranien des Affaires étrangères, Ramin Mehdanparast. « Il vaut

mieux qu'ils évitent de faire de telles déclarations. Nous sommes totalement hostiles à l'ingérence dans les affaires intérieures de n'importe quel pays. Nous respectons aussi cela », a-t-il ajouté.

(Sources : agences et rédaction)

Israël s'inquiète des stocks d'armes en cas de chute du régime

Israël est très inquiet de ce qui adviendra des « énormes stocks » d'armes chimiques et biologiques en Syrie en cas d'effondrement du régime du président Bachar al-Assad, qu'il juge inéluctable, a déclaré hier le général Amir Eshel, responsable de la division de planification de l'armée israélienne, en précisant : « La

question est quand (le régime d'Assad tombera), ce n'est pas si [...] ». « C'est une inquiétude majeure parce que je ne sais pas qui va mettre la main sur les armes la jour d'après (la chute d'Assad) », a-t-il indiqué. « Quelle est la part qui sera transférée au Hezbollah, aux factions syriennes ? » s'est-il interrogé.

Le projet de résolution russe est « insuffisant », estime l'Occident

Un nouveau projet de résolution sur les violences en Syrie, qu'a fait circuler la Russie lundi au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, est confus et ne fait pas apparaître si Moscou accepterait un durcissement envers Damas, réclamé par les Occidentaux, ont déclaré des diplomates en poste aux Nations unies. Des experts des 15

pays membres du Conseil de sécurité devaient se réunir hier pour discuter du texte russe. Hier, Washington, Paris et Berlin ont jugé la nouvelle résolution russe « insuffisante » et qu'elle nécessitait « davantage d'efforts ». Toutefois, Londres s'est montré pessimiste sur un éventuel changement de la position russe.

Obama: Syria violence unacceptable

Assad regime rules out Arab troop deployment, says it would pave way for foreign intervention

DAMASCUS/ WASHINGTON: Obama condemned as "unacceptable" Tuesday Syria's continuing crackdown on protesters and repeated his call for President Bashar Assad's government to leave power.

"We're continuing to see unacceptable levels of violence inside that country, and so we will continue to consult very closely with Jordan to create the kind of international pressure and environment that encourages the current Syrian regime to step aside," Obama said after White House talks with Jordan's King Abdullah.

Meanwhile, Syria said Tuesday it would not object to extending an Arab League mission to monitor its compliance with a peace plan, but ruled out any deployment of Arab troops as pro-

posed by Qatar to halt 10 months of deadly unrest.

It warned that such a move would serve to "worsen the crisis ... and pave the way for foreign intervention," the foreign ministry said.

"The Syrian people refuse any foreign intervention in any name. They will oppose any attempt to undermine the sovereignty of Syria and the integrity of its territory," it said in a statement.

"It would be regrettable for Arab blood to flow on Syria's territory to serve known interests," the ministry added, without elaborating.

In an interview with U.S. television aired over the weekend, Qatar's emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, said he favored sending Arab troops to Syria to "stop the killing."

The Arab League is due to meet on Syria Saturday and Sunday and is expected to discuss the fate of its widely criticized observer mission in the violence-stricken country.

"The outcome of the contacts that have taken place over the past week between the Arab League and Syria

have affirmed that Syria will not reject the renewal of the Arab monitoring mission for another month ... if the Arab foreign ministers call for this at the coming meeting," an Arab source said Tuesday.

Some Arab countries say the monitoring need is broader: mandate to help stop violence, if the mission is to be continued, but sources said that Syria would reject any expanded mandate and would not permit monitors into "military zones" that are not yet agreed.

From its base in Turkey, the Free Syrian Army has called on the 22-member Arab League to "quickly transfer the case of Syria to the U.N. Security Council," in a statement signed by its leader Riyadh al-Asaad, a dissident colonel.

The United Nations has pledged to assist the Arab mission deployed in Syria since last month, saying Monday it would start training the bloc's observers within days.

But the defector force is seeking much bolder action from the world body and urged the international com-

munity to "act quickly against the regime through Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter to maintain peace."

The United Nations Security Council's robust Chapter 7 provision allows for U.N.-backed forces to initiate military action, rather than merely responding when attacked.

U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon Monday said "the situation in Syria has reached an unacceptable point," and urged the Security Council to respond with "seriousness and gravity and in a coherent manner."

Syria PAGES 7&8

However, tough action by the Security Council has been repeatedly blocked by Damascus allies China and Russia, which vetoed a Western draft United Nations resolution in October of 2011 that would have condemned Assad's regime.

Russia, which has accused the West of fomenting Libya-style regime change in Damascus, distributed Monday its sec-

ond draft resolution that blames both sides for the crisis and opposes strong United Nations action, Western diplomats said.

France dismissed the Russian draft Tuesday, saying that it fell "very far from responding to the reality of the situation in Syria."

Syria's warning against the deployment of Arab troops comes amid signs of stronger coordination between the military and political opponents of President Bashar Assad's regime.

The Syrian National Council, a political umbrella group, said it has opened a liaison office and hotline with the FSA to follow developments on the ground.

The FSA claims to have gathered some 40,000 fighters under its command since an anti-regime revolt broke out in Syria in mid-March. The crackdown on dissent has since cost more than 5,000 lives, the U.N. estimates.

A media adviser to a top Syrian army defector, General Mustafa Ahmad al-Sharh, said last week that a special council is being set up to

oversee all military operations.

Meanwhile, reports that Syrian troops fighting rebels in the town of Zahadani near Lebanon had agreed Tuesday to a cease-fire under which the army would withdraw and insurgents would leave the streets, a senior opposition leader in contact with residents said.

Rebels in the town, 30 kilometers from the capital Damascus, have been resisting tank fire and mortar shells for several days.

"Tank bombardment has stopped. Preachers are broadcasting the agreement from the minarets of Zahadani," Kamal al-Lahwani told Reuters.

In more violence Tuesday, at least 14 civilians were killed, including eight who died as a blast hit a minibus in the northwestern province of Idlib, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

A senior military official in Israel, meanwhile, said his country had serious concerns about what will happen to "huge stockpiles" of chemical and biological weapons if the Assad regime collapsed. — *Agence-France Press*

Today's Zaman (Turquie / Turkey)

SYRIAN REBEL CHIEF ASKS WORLD TO STOP BLOODSHED

Riad al-Asaad, a Turkish-based leader of the rebel Free Syrian Army, called for international intervention to replace the Arab observer mission, which has only days to run. Army deserters and other rebels have taken up arms against security forces dominated by Assad's Alawite sect

A Syrian rebel army chief urged the world on Tuesday to protect civilians, saying Arab peace monitors had failed to curb President Bashar al-Assad's violent response to a 10-month-old revolt against his rule.

Big powers have also proved unable to stop the bloodshed in Syria, where UN officials say more than 5,000 people have been killed and Damascus says its security forces have lost 2,000 dead.

Riad al-Asaad, a Turkish-based leader of the rebel Free Syrian Army, called for international intervention to replace the Arab observer mission, which has only days to run. "The Arab League and their monitors failed in their mission and though we respect and appreciate our Arab brothers for their efforts, we think they are incapable of improving conditions in Syria or resisting this regime," he told Reuters by telephone.

"For that reason we call on them to turn the issue over to the UN Security Council and we ask that the international community intervene because they are more capable of protecting Syrians at this stage than our Arab brothers," Asaad said.

President Assad, while proffering reform, has vowed to crush his "terrorist" foes with an "iron fist," but Syrians braving bullets and torture chambers appear equally determined to add him to the past year's list of toppled Arab leaders.

Army deserters and other rebels have taken up arms against security forces dominated by Assad's minority Alawite sect, pushing Sunni Muslim-majority Syria closer to civil war.



Rockets and tank fire

"Terrorists" firing rockets killed an officer and five of his men at a rural checkpoint near Damascus, and wounded seven others, the state news agency SANA reported on Tuesday, a day after gunmen assassinated a brigadier general near the capital.

In Homs, tank fire crashed into the Khalidiya district after a night rally against Assad there, activists said. YouTube footage showed a crowd dancing at the rally and waving old Syrian flags used before the Baath Party seized power in 1963.

Activists also reported fighting between rebels and troops trying to edge into Khalidiya, a neighborhood that is home to Sunni tribesmen and lies next to the Alawite district of Nozha.

Tanks were firing sporadically at the rebel-held town of Zabadani, near the Lebanese border, which has been under attack since Friday, activists said. They added that several soldiers who had

tried to defect to the opposition had been killed.

Syrian forces shot dead a man at a roadblock in the restive Damascus suburb of Qatana, they said, and an activist was killed by sniper fire in the northwestern town of Khan Sheikhoun.

The Arab League must decide soon whether to withdraw its 165 monitors, whose mandate expires on Thursday, or keep them in Syria, even though they are set to report that Damascus has not fully implemented a peace plan agreed on Nov. 2.

The Arab plan required Syria to halt the bloodshed, withdraw troops from cities, free detainees, provide access for the monitors and the media and open talks with opposition forces. Qatar has proposed sending in Arab troops, a bold idea for the often sluggish League and one likely to be resisted by Arab rulers close to Assad and those worried about unrest at home. The League could ask the UN Security Council to act, but until now opposition from Russia and China has prevented the world body from even criticizing Syria, an old ally of Moscow. Western diplomats said a Russian draft resolution handed to the Council on Monday did not make clear if Moscow would accept tough language demanded by the West.

Few Western powers favor any Libya-style military action in Syria, which lies in the heart of the conflict-prone Middle East. Bordering Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Israel, it is allied to Iran and the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah group. **Beirut Reuters**

Syria warns against foreign intervention

Damascus reacts strongly to Qatar Emir's suggestion to deploy Arab troops to end violence

Gulf News Report

Dubai Syria "absolutely rejects" any plans to send Arab troops into the country, its foreign ministry said yesterday as the death toll continued to rise.

"The Syrian people reject any foreign intervention in their affairs, under any title, and would confront any

attempt to infringe upon Syria's sovereignty and the integrity of its territories," the foreign ministry said.

Qatar's Emir Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani was quoted on Sunday as saying that Arab troops should be sent to Syria to stop the violence — the first statement by an Arab leader calling for the de-

ployment of troops inside Syria.

Meanwhile, Russia introduced a new version of its draft UN resolution on Syria, but excluded western proposals aimed at military intervention in the country, foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said.

"We are disappointed

that western nations during consultations on the Russian draft resolution tried to introduce a whole series of amendments which removed all the positive aspects," Lukashevich said. "Nothing in this resolution should be seen as opening the possibility of a military solution to the problem."

See also Page 12

Gulf News (EAU / UAE)

Rebel army chief calls for UN intervention in Syria

SAYS ARAB MISSION HAS FAILED TO CURB VIOLENT RESPONSE TO REVOLT

Beirut (Reuters) A Syrian rebel army chief urged the world yesterday to protect civilians in Syria, saying Arab peace monitors had failed to curb President Bashar Al Assad's violent response to a 10-month-old revolt against his rule.

Big powers have also proved unable to stop the bloodshed in Syria, where UN officials say more than 5,000 people have been killed and Damascus says its security forces have lost 2,000 dead.

Riad Al As'ad, Turkish-based commander of the rebel Free Syrian Army, called for international intervention to replace the Arab observer mission, which has just days to run.

"The Arab League and their monitors failed in their mission and though we respect and appreciate our Arab brothers for their efforts, we think they are incapable of improving conditions in Syria or resisting this regime," he told Reuters by telephone.

"For that reason we call on them to turn the issue over to the UN Security Council and we ask that the international community intervene because they are more capable of protecting Syrians at this stage than our Arab brothers," the rebel army chief said.

Iran blasts interference

Iran condemned what it called foreign interference in the affairs of its closest Arab ally, Syria, and praised reforms President Al Assad has promised as "problem-solving".

"We are fundamentally against interfering in the



Emotional reunion

Freed Syrian prisoners with their relatives after they were released from Adra Prison on the north-east outskirts of Damascus, Syria, on Monday.

“The Arab League and their monitors failed in their mission and though we respect and appreciate our Arab brothers for their efforts, we think they are incapable of improving conditions in Syria or resisting this regime.”

Riad Al As'ad

Turkish-based commander of the rebel Free Syrian Army

affairs of other countries. We think it does not solve the problems but will only make them more complicated," Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told a news conference.

Al Assad, while proffering reform, has vowed to crush his opponents with an "iron fist", but Syrians braving bullets and torture chambers appear equally determined to add him to the list of the

past year's toppled Arab leaders.

Army deserters and other rebels have taken up arms against security forces dominated by Al Assad's minority Alawite sect, pushing Sunni Muslim-majority Syria closer to civil war.

Checkpoint attack

"Terrorists" firing rockets killed an officer and five of his men at a rural checkpoint near Damascus, and wounded seven others, the state news agency Sana reported yesterday, a day after gunmen assassinated a brigadier-general near the capital. Eight people were killed

when a bomb hit a minibus on the Aleppo-Idlib road, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

In Homs, tank fire crashed into the Khalidiya district after a night rally against Al Assad there, activists said. YouTube footage showed a crowd dancing at the rally and waving the old Syrian flag used before the Baath Party seized power in 1963.

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The Khaleej Times (EAU / UAE)

Arab League in dilemma on ending Syria deadlock

Monitoring mission mandate expires tomorrow

CAIRO — After weeks of observing bloodshed in Syria armed with nothing but pens, Arab League monitors will report on Friday that Damascus has failed to fully implement a peace plan. Now what?

In the short-term, the League will have to decide on the fate of its monitoring mission, whose mandate expires on Thursday. It can either be scrapped, extended or possibly beefed up to include more observers and even an armed element.

In the longer term, Arab states will have to decide what sort of punishment they are prepared to inflict on Syria's President Bashar Al Assad for failing to halt 10 months of violence.

Qatar has proposed sending in Arab troops, in what would be one of the boldest moves ever taken by the 67-year-old Arab League. But Arab League sources say it could be difficult to rally support for such a move, which would face resistance from Arab rulers allied to Damascus or worried about unrest at home.

If the League cannot agree action on its own, Arab states will be under increasing pressure to give their blessing to wider international measures. But the West has so far shown no stomach for the sort of intervention it mustered last year to help topple Libya's Muammar Gaddafi.

The first decision Arab leaders will have to take is whether to extend the monitoring mission's mandate beyond Thursday.

The mission's critics say its month-long investigation has made the situation in Syria worse by doing little to halt violence while buying the government of President Bashar Al Assad more time to continue a crackdown on opponents.

At least three of the monitors have reported humanitarian suffering taking place in Syria, with the observers unable to do anything to stop it.

In that light, some countries will be reluctant to extend the mission in its present form, said a delegate to the Cairo-based League from one Arab state. But others believe the monitors have done some good, and will oppose withdrawing them, he said. "The third scenario will be



Freed Syrian prisoners are hugged by their relatives after they were released from Adra Prison on the north-east outskirts of Damascus, Syria. — AP

to increase the number of monitors to 3,000 and include some security elements that have more ability to stop violent operations."

When the Arab League suspended Syria, threatened sanctions, came up with a peace plan and agreed to send in observers to monitor compliance, it seemed the 22-member body - long derided as little more than a talking shop - had overcome internal rivalries to lead Arab affairs.

Just months on, the League is in a tough position, with its monitors having failed to deter violence but with little consensus on what next steps to take.

The Arab League's peace plan called for an immediate halt to violence, for Syrian troops to withdraw from cities, for the release of political prisoners detained during the uprising and for freer access for monitors and media. The monitoring team set up in December was given about one

month to report whether Syria was implementing the plan.

A preliminary report by the monitors earlier in January found the violence, which the United Nations says has killed over 5,000 people, had slightly eased. But days later, Assad made a live address in which he mocked the League and vowed to intensify his crackdown.

Three bombs have gone off in Syria since December 23, after an advance monitoring team arrived. Some 11 monitors have been hurt after coming under attack from pro-Assad demonstrators, and a French journalist was killed by grenade or mortar fire in a pro-government area of the restive city of Homs.

Syria blamed the blasts on terrorists. Assad's opponents say attacks were the work of Syria's intelligence services trying to undermine the opposition, hamper the monitors and offer Arab detractors

and foreign journalists a taste of how nasty things could get if pressure rises on Assad.

In a bid to ratchet up pressure on Syria, Qatar's Amir, Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani told the US broadcaster CBS "Some troops should go to stop the killing."

He gave no details on what shape such a force might take, but League sources cast doubt on whether such an escalation would attract support from other Gulf states, let alone Syria's neighbours Lebanon and Iraq, which oppose action against Assad.

Qatar, which was one of the Arab belligerents in the war against Gaddafi's Libya, has led the charge against Assad. Also taking a stand is Saudi Arabia. Qatar and Saudi Arabia can usually rely on support from other Gulf Arab countries. But one Arab League source said Oman and Bahrain were starting to "reconsider their position" in light of protests at home. — Reuters

Moscow Times (Russie / Russia)

Russia's Syria Resolution Disappoints West

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS @VOLT

UNITED NATIONS — Russia has circulated a revised UN Security Council resolution on the violence in Syria, but Western diplomats said it fell short of their demand for strong condemnation of President Bashar Assad's crackdown on civilians.

The Security Council has been unable to agree on a resolution since the violence began in March because of deep divisions between its veto-wielding permanent members.

In October, Russia and China vetoed a Western European draft resolution, backed by the United States, that condemned Assad's attacks and threatened sanctions.

Russia took the council by surprise in mid-December, introducing a draft resolution that called on all parties to stop the violence.

Although the Russian draft put forward Monday didn't meet Western demands, the United States and its European allies saw it as a potentially positive sign and submitted a series of

amendments. Western nations have complained at Russia's slow response in coming up with a revised text — a charge UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin has rejected.

Diplomats said the draft resolution sent to the 15 council nations Monday doesn't appear to be a compromise. Rather than producing new language, diplomats said, it included the original text alongside most amendments proposed by other council members — but Moscow didn't make clear whether it has accepted any changes or not.

Syria rejects Arab troops, UN urged to take charge

Syria has ruled out any deployment of Arab troops to halt 10 months of deadly unrest, as army defectors urged the UN Security Council to intervene in the country's violent upheaval.

"Syria rejects the statements of officials of Qatar on sending Arab troops to worsen the crisis and pave the way for foreign intervention," the foreign ministry said.

"The Syrian people refuse any foreign intervention in any name. They will oppose any attempt to undermine the sovereignty of Syria and the integrity of its territory," it said in a statement.

"It would be regrettable for Arab blood to flow on Syria's territory to serve known (interests)," the ministry added, without elaborating.

In an interview with US television aired on the weekend, Qatar's emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, said he favored an option of sending Arab troops to Syria to "stop the killing."

From its base in Turkey, the Syrian Free Army (SFA) called on the 22-member Arab League to "quickly transfer the case of Syria to the UN Security Council," in a statement signed by its leader Riyadh al-Asaad, a dissident colonel.

The United Nations has pledged to assist the Arab mission deployed to Syria since last month, saying Monday it would start training the bloc's observers within days.

However, the defector force is seeking much bolder action from the world body and urged the international community to "act quickly against the regime through Chapter 7 of the UN charter to maintain peace."

The Security Council's robust Chapter 7 provision allows for UN-backed forces to initiate military action, not simply respond when attacked.

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AFP