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## Weekly Press Conference: Assad's Massacres in Ramadan - August 06, 2013

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Dr. Louay Safi  
Spokesperson  
Weekly Press Conference  
Istanbul, Turkey  
August 6, 2013

### TRANSCRIPT:

**SAFI:** (Speaking in Arabic) We are here today to discuss a new report we issued on Assad's massacres during the month of Ramadan, the month that is dear to the Syrian people; especially Muslims in Syria. Assad's regime continued to shell villages and towns across Syria during that month. President of the coalition proposed a truce at the beginning of the month, but the Assad regime refused it.

In one or two days, we have Eid. The Syrian people are sad in those days. Assad's forces continue to kill and slaughter them on a daily basis while the whole world stands silent.

We will hand out the report in Arabic, and you will also have a readout of the press conference's statement in Arabic and in English. I will talk in Arabic and I will answer question in both Arabic and English.

In short, the paper that you have talks about more than 20 massacres Assad's regime committed during the month of Ramadan. We have more than 1700 martyrs of whom 250 were the victims of Assad's massacres during Ramadan. Assad has used all kinds of weapons: ballistic missiles, Scud missiles, slaughtering people with knives, burning people alive- and that happened in Baniyas. In Homs, a mosque was hit and more than 150 worshipers died martyrs.

The Assad regime is talking about the possibility of a political solution while at the same time intensifies its attacks on the ground. It is obvious, Assad is seeking a military victory, and this is evident from the massacres the regime is committing and also from the head of the regime's latest remarks. Assad speaks about "wiping out terrorists." In fact, by "terrorists" Assad means the Syrian people.

The report, as I said, is detailed. And there is a version for the media and another legal one we will send tomorrow to the head of the international commission of inquiry on Syria.

Assad's forces and militias have committed more than 20 massacres, as I have said. In Sikhna, the countryside of Homs, people were slaughtered with knives. In Bayda, Baniyas, people were burnt alive. Assad's forces also used chemical weapons in Yarmouk Palestinian Camp, Damascus and in Adra the countryside of Damascus. Though in small amounts, chemical weapons used had a fatal effect on people. In Homs, as I mentioned, there was a massacre in a mosque. People go to the mosque to pray after Iftar (breaking the fast). Assad's forces targeted them in the mosque; a holy place respected by all religions. Assad's regime even shelled towns and villages at the time of Iftar. Instead of breaking the fast, people were shelled and killed across Syria.

This detailed report should be used to further expose Assad's criminal actions.

The continued crimes against the Syrian people by Assad constitute additional evidence that Bashar Assad has taken a decision to slaughter the Syrian people; all of them, just to remain in power. This is absolute tyranny and selfishness. We have seen tyrants in Egypt and Tunisia, but we have not seen a despot like Assad who is willing to literally kill all the Syrian people or half of them just to remain in power.

Assad's forces and militias continue to infringe international conventions pertaining to the protection of civilians. We welcome a probe team that would investigate all massacres across Syria. We welcome any team that would investigate chemical weapons use and massacres and we will cooperate fully with such a team. We call on Assad's regime to allow this team unfettered access to all parts of Syria. Now I will take some questions. I will answer in the same language as the question.

**QUESTION:** (Speaking in English) (inaudible) Associated Press... you said that chemical weapons were used. First of all, how can you be sure that they were used? Second, the United Nations- the team of the United Nations, I think they are inside Syria. Do you know what they have found so far? My second question is: the U.S. has promised you weapons- to the Free Syrian Army- to the Syrian Opposition- have you received anything?

**SAFI:** (Speaking in English) I will answer in English. The question about the use of chemical weapons, we have evidence. Some of this evidence was made available to international investigators. Britain has declared that chemical weapons have been used by the regime, and we call on the regime to open up and help facilitate investigation. Of course, the regime is very manipulative and trying to manipulate the evidence, and the ability of those investigative teams to move in the country. Now, we all know that yesterday and the day before and last week the Free Syrian Army has made great gains despite what the head of the regime has been saying. In Latakia yesterday, there was great gains. Even in the suburb of Damascus, we know that here has been an intensive campaign to take over Qaboun, Daraya, Jaramana, but the FSA has been able to repel those forces.

**QUESTION:** (Speaking in Arabic) I will ask in Arabic.

**SAFI:** (Speaking in Arabic) Go ahead.

**QUESTION:** (Speaking in Arabic) (inaudible)...from Al Hurra channel. First of all, thank you. Second, what practical steps are you going to take to face Assad's massacres which, unfortunately, we are witnessing on a daily basis? Especially in light of the newly elected leadership of the Syrian Coalition- what steps are you going to take? What has changed?

**SAFI:** (Speaking in Arabic) Good question. First of all, we call on the regime to accept a political solution that would lead to the transfer of power into a transitional government that represents the Revolution and its goals. Assad has to hand over power and put an end to the bloodshed because Assad's fall is inevitable and he will not be able to win over the Syrian people. The Coalition is working on two separate levels: first to close ranks, politically speaking. And the expansion was part of this process. We are trying to advance a vision of a new structure that allows the participation of all parties to join this struggle for freedom and dignity. As for the situation on the ground, we are trying to combine all fighting groups and battalions under one umbrella which will make us stronger.

**QUESTION:** (Speaking in English) I read, of course, the statement about the massacres and you mentioned the perpetrators- who do you hold accountable in addition to those? To what degree does the international community bear responsibility? My second question is: are you calling for a truce for Al Eid? And the regime has called the SNC with different names. President Assad did mention that members of the Opposition were asking for big posts in the government in Syria. Well what is your comment on that?

**SAFI:** (Speaking in English) We are, as I said, for a political solution. That is our preference; to have a political solution to spare the Syrian people all the atrocities committed by the regime provided that this is leading to a transformation of power to the Revolutionary Forces that are calling to a free democratic Syria.

We are- we will condemn, we have condemned, and we will continue to condemn any atrocities committed by any side although we know that these atrocities are committed by the regime. There are some cases where there have been accusations of certain groups that belong to the Opposition or the fighting forces against the regime that they had been implicated in such practices. Those cases you know in past were investigated. We call for investigation of any other claims of atrocities, and we are not going to condone that. But the FSA has a code, unlike the regime, a code that they will abide by the Geneva Convention, and that is for us very important.

**QUESTION:** (Speaking in English) What about the truce- are you calling for a truce?

**SAFI:** (Speaking in English) Well, I mean, let me answer in Arabic. (Speaking in Arabic) the question was: is there a call for a truce during the three days of Eid? Of course, at the beginning of Ramadan, president of the coalition called for a truce in Ramadan to relieve the Syrian people of the suffering and pain; the daily killing, and as I have said the regime is targeting people at the time of Iftar. The regime is mainly targeting populated areas. It is for sure that the regime will refuse. Despite that we call for putting an end to the bloodshed in Eid. We renew our call. But unfortunately, this is a criminal monstrous regime which is willing to terrorize, intimidate, and kill in order to remain in power. But there is no doubt eventually the regime is going to be toppled. Assad knows very well he cannot win on the ground. The Free Syrian Army is gaining ground on a daily basis.

**QUESTION:** (Speaking in English) Sorry could you answer that in English?

**SAFI:** (Speaking in English) I will answer in English. What is the question?

**QUESTION:** (Speaking in English) About the truce.

**SAFI:** (Speaking in English) The truce. I said we have called for a truce at the beginning of Ramadan. We call again for a truce during Eid so the Syrians can be spared of the agonies and the atrocities that they are facing every day, but unfortunately we know that the regime has never responded to any call for peace or truce. Yesterday, the head of the regime has threatened to hit with an iron fist his people, called them terrorists, and threatened to continue massacring them.

**QUESTION:** (Speaking in English) (inaudible) ... a follow up on the chemical weapons question; is there new evidence in your report you said you (inaudible)?

**SAFI:** (Speaking in English) As I said there are three places where during this month of Ramadan that the regime has used chemical weapons. It has been used. These weapons have been used in Adra, the suburb of Damascus, in Douma, and the report points to other places. We have evidence we called- we invited the international community to come and send investigators to investigate those crimes, and we would like to see the international community pressure particularly the Russians who have been protecting this regime; to pressure this regime to open up to investigation so that the world would know who are really committing those atrocities.

**QUESTION:** (Speaking in English) And what kind of evidence is it? Is it chemical analysis or witnesses?

**SAFI:** (Speaking in English) Well I mean usually that is what happened. There are certain symptoms that are seen on those who have been targeted by those weapons beginning with the color of the smoke, with the smell, and with the symptoms; the response, the suffocation, and involuntary shaking and all of that. And on the top of that, samples are collected. Some of those samples have been tested. Others are collected and saved. So we would like really the whole world to take a firm stand so that these atrocities can end because the regime feels the more they can use it and the world is silent this is a green light for them. That is how they think because they have twisted minds. We call on the international community to take a firm stand against chemical weapons, and on the top of that, the international community should not allow this dictatorship to use its all military force against the towns and cities where ordinary Syrians live.

**SAFI:** (Speaking in English) One more. The final question. Yes ma'am.

**QUESTION:** (Speaking in English) Basically, we know that there is a fight going on between PYD and Al Nusra in the north of Syria. I was wondering how you are going to overcome the fragmentation inside the Syrian Opposition.

**SAFI:** (Speaking in English) Now our position is that the territory of Syria must be united should not be divided we are not going to allow that. We have called, and we have sent teams to try to mitigate some of those differences between the fighting forces although we know some of those who are fighting have been instigated by the Syrian regime in order to complicate the call for freedom and make the whole attempt to end the dictatorship to look like an internal fighting. So we know that there are certain forces who are cooperating with the regime but nevertheless we are calling on all parties to stop- not to go to that trap,

and we are going to go for a peaceful solution and trying to resolve those differences by bringing the leadership political and the elders of those communities to come and talk to each other. Thank you very much.

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