



Are Syrian Rebel Forces as Bad as Assad?

Members of Congress have pointed to the violence in Syria as an opportunity to launch a humanitarian effort, i.e. a military endeavor, to aid the anti-Assad forces. However, increasing evidence indicates that the “rebels” are indiscriminate terrorists who seek to overthrow the Syrian government at the expense of civilian lives. In fact, the most recent indications of the rebels’ terrorist activity were the four suicide [bombings](#) in Aleppo last week that killed approximately 40 civilians and wounded many more, prompting the United Nations Security Council to [condemn](#) the perpetrators.



A Syrian government official has blamed the “terrorist” rebels for the coordinated effort. The *Daily Mail* explains that the square targeted by the suicide bombings is in a government-controlled district in western Aleppo. According to the *Mail*, “Rebels have resorted to bomb attacks in areas still controlled by President Assad.”

Jebhat al-Nusra, a group linked to al-Qaeda, has taken credit for the bombings.

Gert Rosenthal, the current UN Security Council president, read a council statement Friday that expressed “deep sympathy and sincere condolences to the families of the victims of these heinous acts and to the people of Syria.”

The council also called on nations combating terrorism to comply with international law, “in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.”

The bombings in Aleppo are just several of the many examples of violence against civilians conducted by the anti-Assad forces. For instance, the rebels were also responsible for the massacre of over 90 people in [Houla](#) earlier this year. Immediately following that event, the United States, France, Great Britain, and Germany blamed al-Assad for the killings and expelled Syria’s ambassadors from their countries in protest. Later reports, however, pointed to evidence that the massacre was in fact carried out by anti-al-Assad rebel forces.

At the time, the United States unquestioningly blamed Assad’s regime for the slaughter. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland stated,

We hold the Syrian government responsible for this slaughter of innocent lives. This massacre is the most unambiguous indictment to date of the Syrian government’s flagrant violations of its U.N. Security Council obligations.

Likewise, the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International jumped on board with anti-Assad rhetoric.

A number of U.S. lawmakers began using the Houla killings as a means to push for military engagement in Syria. For instance, Senator John McCain expressed [outrage](#) at the news and called for greater



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 8, 2012

international intervention. Calling Obama's policies in Syria "feckless," he declared, "This is a shameful episode in American history."

GOP presidential contender Mitt Romney was also banging the war drum, using the Houla massacre to question President Obama's leadership in the Middle East. He stated,

After nearly a year and a half of slaughter, it is far past time for the United States to begin to lead and put an end to the Assad regime. President Obama can no longer ignore calls from congressional leaders in both parties to take more assertive steps.

The United States should work with partners to organize and arm Syrian opposition groups so they can defend themselves. The bloodshed in Houla makes clear that our goal must be a new Syrian government.'

Critics point out that unfortunately, it seems it was those very opposition groups with whom Romney recommended that the United States military work who actually perpetrated the massacre.

The *National Review* [writes](#):

But according to [a new report](#) in Germany's leading daily, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), the Houla massacre was in fact committed by anti-Assad Sunni militants, and the bulk of the victims were member of the Alawi and Shia minorities, which have been largely supportive of Assad. For its account of the massacre, the report cites opponents of Assad, who, however, declined to have their names appear in print out of fear of reprisals from armed opposition groups.

The *Washington Post* confirmed that despite this information, Syrian rebels have received an "influx of arms with Gulf neighbors' money" through U.S. coordination:

Syrian rebels battling the regime of President Bashar al-Assad have begun receiving significantly more and better weapons in recent weeks, an effort paid for by Persian Gulf nations and coordinated in part by the United States, according to opposition activists and U.S. and foreign officials.

A senior State Department official said, "We are increasing our nonlethal assistance to the Syrian opposition, and we continue to coordinate our efforts with friends and allies in the region and beyond in order to have the biggest impact on what we are collectively doing."

Daniel McAdams of [LewRockwell.com](#) contends that despite evidence that the rebel forces are just as dangerous as the regime they are trying to overthrow, the propaganda machine will continue to encourage western intervention in the region:

We are being told that this is the work of one small radical faction allied with al-Qaeda. However, this is just a technique of isolating this indefensible act from the rebellion as a whole. But it is a [lie](#). [Time and time again](#) the rebels have attacked civilians and blamed the attacks on the government. It is how a [guerrilla](#) insurgency is fought.

President Obama has just recently pledged to send the Syrian rebels an additional \$45 million.

The *Washington Post* reports:

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the U.S. would contribute an additional \$15 million in non-lethal gear — mostly communications equipment — to the civilian opposition trying to oust Assad as well as \$30 million in new humanitarian assistance to help those affected by the continuing violence.



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“Conditions in Syria continue to deteriorate as the Assad regime relentlessly wages war on its own people,” Clinton said. “We see more bodies filling hospitals and morgues and we see more refugees fleeing their homeland and flooding into neighboring countries. The regime of Bashar al-Assad must come to an end so that the suffering of the Syrian people can stop and a new dawn can begin.”

And a U.S. administration change would likely have little impact on American foreign policy in Syria. CNS News reports that Mitt Romney has recently declared, “It’s time to change course in the Middle East.” He asserts that the United States must work with other countries to [arm the rebels](#) in Syria with weapons that can defeat Assad’s army.

Photo: In this image taken from video obtained from Ugarit news, Syrian rebels gather as they engage government forces in Aleppo, Syria, Sept. 28, 2012: AP Images



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