



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on September 9, 2013

Rebel Atrocities in Syria Escalate, Sparking Alarm Over Obama Plan

A series of fresh revelations about atrocities and war crimes perpetrated by Western-backed Syrian “rebels” have sparked alarm among analysts, further complicating Obama’s already-tough push for support to launch military strikes against the Assad regime. As opposition to U.S. military intervention in Syria [grows](#) among the public, Congress, and the so-called “international community,” the latest atrocities are being cited by critics of the warmongering as more reasons not to join the civil war on behalf of ruthless jihadists — more than a few of whom are [openly fighting with al-Qaeda](#) to take down the secular regime.



One of the most shocking revelations in recent days was video footage of rebels brazenly perpetrating war crimes and murder. The film, smuggled out of Syria by a former opposition fighter disillusioned with rebel brutality, promptly made waves around the world. Also sparking alarm was news that al-Qaeda-linked opposition forces had seized control of an ancient Christian town. The “rebels” reportedly burned down and looted churches while killing and terrorizing local Christians, ordering them to convert to Islam or die, following a [long pattern](#) of [atrocities aimed at Christians](#).

Separately, pictures posted on Facebook feature the rebels sporting black al-Qaeda flags and heavy weaponry — much of it probably provided with U.S. assistance. Analysts said the troubling images offer more insight into the jihadist opposition and its long-term aims.

The War-crimes Video

Last week, the *New York Times* obtained a video — a still photo of which appeared [across the front page of the newspaper](#) — showing Syrian rebels executing bound and brutalized prisoners. By any standard, the cold-blooded executions represent a clear example of a war crime. “We swear to the Lord of the Throne, that this is our oath: We will take revenge,” the rebel commander, apparently known as “the Uncle,” says before the seven captured Syrian soldiers are shot through the head and placed in a mass grave. After an edited version of the video footage was posted by the *Times* last week, it promptly went “viral,” sickening conservatives and liberals alike.

The film was so shocking that even establishment analysts [said](#) it was shifting the supposed “debate” about potential direct U.S. military intervention on behalf of the rebels. Despite being sought by the Obama administration and a coalition of Islamist Arab dictators hoping to unseat their secular counterpart in Syria, there is very little actual “debate” — the public and even Congress both [remain overwhelmingly opposed](#) to offering even more U.S. support for roving bands of lawless jihadist terrorists operating in Syria.



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“Because the White House and, more broadly, those arguing for direct U.S. military intervention are portraying this as a battle between ‘good guys’ and the ‘bad guys,’ to put it in crude terms, this video demonstrates that there are bad guys on both sides,” said senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies Ed Husain at the global government-promoting Council on Foreign Relations, who last year [celebrated the decisive role al-Qaeda was playing](#) in leading the [establishment-backed](#) Syrian “rebels” to victory. “It does make a mockery of Secretary Kerry’s praise on Wednesday [before the House Foreign Affairs Committee] for the Syrian opposition.”

Perhaps sensing the tsunami of public opposition, other CFR luminaries [quoted in a report](#) by the *Daily Beast* have reversed their support for deeper U.S. intervention. Almost ludicrously, however, top U.S. warmongers attempted to spin the atrocity and its significance. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), for example, one of the chief U.S. supporters of the rebels, suggested the war crimes were simply the work of “extremists,” as opposed to the non-existent “moderate” opposition. Ironically, when McCain went to Syria earlier this year to meet with the “moderate” rebels, it later emerged that the senator [had been meeting and posing for pictures with kidnappers](#).

Secretary of State John Kerry, meanwhile, also downplayed the video, claiming falsely that American strikes on Assad would not be creating a de-facto alliance between the Obama administration and Islamic terrorists. “In fact, I believe that those men in those videos are disadvantaged by an American response to the chemical-weapons use because it, in fact, empowers the moderate opposition,” he argued, adding implausibly that the war criminals shown in the video “are not part of the opposition that is being supported by our friends and ourselves.” Of course, even the pro-Obama administration *New York Times* has [debunked such claims](#).

Speaking before Congress the day before the video was released, Kerry again parroted almost certainly bogus claims about the rebels. “There is a real moderate opposition that exists,” he alleged, contradicting the analysis of virtually every credible analyst — including among the establishment. Of the supposed 70,000 to 100,000 “oppositionists,” the largely discredited secretary of state claimed only 15 percent to 20 percent were extremists or “bad guys.” It was not immediately clear which of the myriad rebel factions Kerry believed to be “good guys,” but even the rebel forces touted by pro-interventionists as “moderate” have been exposed [slaughtering civilians](#), [threatening ethnic cleansing](#), and more.

Christians Attacked

Shortly after the *Times* video was released, the Associated Press [reported](#) that the al-Qaeda-linked Nusra Front rebels had captured, or “liberated” depending on one’s perspective, the ancient Christian community of Maaloula — one of the few remaining places on Earth where Aramaic, the language of Christ, is still spoken. While residents there had previously been protected from Islamist “rebels” by the secular Assad regime, the self-styled al-Qaeda fighters reportedly managed to seize control of the town from Syrian forces after a heavy battle. They eventually began shelling the town from mountains overlooking it, AP reported.

Christian villagers quoted in [news reports](#) said the rebels had, among other atrocities, ordered them to convert to Islam or be murdered while shouting the now-infamous “Allahu Akbar” war cry. Christian homes and churches were reportedly attacked, ransacked, looted, and burned as the marauding rebels “liberated” the town. “They shot and killed people,” a local Christian was quoted as saying in British news reports. “I heard gunshots and then I saw three bodies lying in the middle of a street in the old quarters of the village. Where is President Obama to see what has befallen us?”



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Another Christian villager cited in media reports about the rebel takeover said one Christian church had been burned down. Two other churches, meanwhile, were stormed by rebel gunmen and looted. "I saw the militants grabbing five villagers and threatening them and saying, 'Either you convert to Islam, or you will be beheaded'," [reported](#) yet another villager quoted in international news accounts. According to reports, villagers said many of the "rebel" fighters were speaking foreign Arabic dialects, probably imported jihadist mercenaries from Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Chechnya, and other Muslim regions. The reported attack on Christian Maaloula is hardly the first time rebels have [massacred Christians](#).

The Rebels' Views and Goals

Amid the growing wave of reported atrocities perpetrated by rebel forces, news reports also highlighted some new revelations offering deeper insight into what the opposition is really about. According to multiple reports, a supposedly "moderate" rebel Free Syrian Army (FSA) faction known as the "Al-Aqsa Islamic Brigades" was caught posting highly alarming images on social media services. One of the images, for example, featured heavily armed masked Islamists marauding through a burning Washington, D.C. as the U.S. Capitol burned in the background, even as the Obama administration was [working fiendishly](#) to deliver more U.S. military support to opposition forces in Syria.

Senior partner Evan Kohlmann with the security firm Flashpoint Intelligence, who also serves as a terror consultant to NBC, found the controversial images and provided them to reporters. Noting that the Islamist terror brigade has not been designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. government, Kohlmann explained that the group fights alongside another FSA faction affiliated with Jabhat al-Nusra, which has officially been classified as a terror organization by the American State Department.

"As a group that claims affiliation to the generally pro-Western Free Syrian Army, it is difficult to reconcile the fact that it has plastered such a lurid anti-American image as the banner on its own official Facebook page," Kohlmann was [quoted as saying](#) by NBC News. "It raises the unfortunate but inescapable fact that not every group within the Free Syrian Army is closely aligned with U.S. interests in the region." For years, rebels have been [publicly threatening](#) to attack America and Israel after defeating Assad.

As *The New American* and countless other sources have been documenting for years, despite [high-level leaders closely affiliated with the Western establishment](#), the rebels appear to be completely under the control of radical Islamists bent on violently spreading and enforcing a certain interpretation of Islam. [Countless Christians](#) and [Shias](#) have already been [massacred](#) by the "rebels," including [whole towns](#). A spokesman for the "Free Syrian Army," supposedly among the "moderate" opposition groups, even [threatened during a TV interview earlier this year to unleash an ethnic-cleansing campaign against Shias](#).

Rebel forces have also been exposed [engaging in cannibalism on video](#), [murdering children](#), [using chemical weapons](#), [firing on civilian protesters](#), [beheading Christians](#), [brutally enforcing sharia law](#), and much more. With al-Qaeda and other Islamist factions likely to take over the nation if and when Assad falls — a process that would be made much easier with U.S. missile strikes on the regime — the ongoing bloodbath could easily go from bad to worse in an instant, especially for minorities.

As *The New American* documented extensively last year, it appears as though the ongoing extermination of ancient Middle Eastern Christian communities is among the most alarming [fruits of U.S. foreign policy](#). With the Obama administration now all but openly turning al-Qaeda and other



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Islamic extremists into U.S. allies in places like Syria, however — [and before that, in Libya](#) — analysts say believers in Christ all throughout the region will remain under mortal threat. Unless Congress [steps in to restrain](#) the administration, [or even if it does at this point](#), the [future of Syria, its Christians](#), and [even the world](#) is likely to look unimaginably bleak.

Photo of Senator John McCain with Syrian rebels: AP Images

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