



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on November 17, 2011

Syrian Opposition Seeking Support from Overseas

A report published in the *New York Times* suggests that the Syrian opposition forces are “buoyed” by increasing “international pressure” on the government of President Bashar al Assad (left) to follow in the footsteps of other former middle eastern rulers and step down.



As the story goes, the Arab League, Russia, and Turkey are all being wooed by forces seeking to oust Assad and end his “bloody crackdown” on political protestors.

These new developments come in the wake of renewed and redoubled violent responses to those suspected of participating in the movement to remove Assad from Damascus.

According to information provided by the [Syrian Observatory for Human Rights](#), an non-governmental organization (NGO) chronicling alleged government atrocities in that nation, every day dozens of citizens are killed by the armed forces of Syria loyal to President Assad’s regime.

In its post for Tuesday, for example, the group reports:

23 people were killed yesterday in the towns and villages of Baser Al-Harrir, Nahtah.

The Eastern Malyha and Al-Attash Malyha, in Daraa, in gunfire from security and army barriers on the way between Kherbet Ghazala and Al-Heraak.

In the meantime, at least 34 members of the regular army and security forces were killed, in the same area, in clashes with suspected defectors who destroyed military vehicles belonging to the regular army. There were casualties from the suspected defector’s side as well where at least 12 of them were killed.

However, the number of dead people could rise as there are more than 60 wounded persons where some of them are in critical conditions.

A spokesman for another opposition group was quoted in the *New York Times* piece as saying, “We don’t have any confirmation of what they’re claiming.”

Evidently, the precise tally of those killed or arrested by the government is difficult to determine as various outlets report conflicting numbers. What is certain, however, is that President Assad is determined to defy these protesters and maintain his control over Syria.

In an apparent effort to deflect the growing criticism from neighboring nations, the government of Syria claimed to have released 1,180 political prisoners. The *New York Times* questions the timing of this announcement reporting that it was made “only hours before the Arab League was set to suspend Syria as punishment for President Bashar al-Assad’s repression of dissent.”

The [Arab Spring](#) that saw the demise of dictators throughout the region (Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya) is threatening to bring the blossoming of “regime change” to Damascus, as well. Even former allies are



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edging their way away from Assad's side in this conflict. As reported by the *New York Times*:

Faced with Mr. Assad's intransigence, the normally placid Arab League voted last weekend to suspend Syria from the group. On Monday King Abdullah II of Jordan called on him to step down. King Abdullah is the first leader from one of Syria's Arab neighbors to go that far.

At the Cairo headquarters of the Arab League, the group held meetings with other representatives of the Syrian National Council and asked them to devise plans for a transition of power.

The Syrian National Council was formed in Istanbul in August of this year and the [declared purpose](#) of its creation was to "represent the concerns and demands of the Syrian people". According to a spokesman for the group, the council membership would be composed of over 100 representatives from the various Syrian opposition organizations.

Turkey, Syrian's neighbor has ersatz ally, has grown disdainful of the repression of which the Assad government is being accused.

As the *New York Times* reports:

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, who has castigated Mr. Assad before, said Turkey no longer had confidence in the Syrian government. Mr. Erdogan said he hoped that Syria, "now on a knife edge, does not enter this road of no return, which leads to the edge of the abyss."

Other outlets are also reporting on Turkey's progress on severing ties with Syria.

As stated in a recent [article](#) in the *Guardian* covering Turkey's response to the violence in Syria:

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister, urged Syria's government to "turn back from the edge of the cliff". He threatened to cut electricity supplies to its southern neighbour if its president, Bashar al-Assad — "feeding on blood" — did not change course.

Turkey's president, Abdullah Gul, added: "Unfortunately, Syria today has entered a dead end." Turkey also announced the suspension of joint oil exploration with Syria.

Actions of this sort by Syria's neighbors are not only expected but are to be admired in light of the reprehensible repression of protests in that country apparently ordered by President Assad. What, however, is to be the world's (in particular, the United States's) response to the worsening situation in Syria? As *The New American's* Alex Newman [reported](#) in August:

As protests and unrest continue to spread across Syria, Western pressure including sanctions and even open talk of military intervention is mounting against the regime of "President" Bashar Al-Assad (left).

Numerous sources report that NATO is already plotting an invasion as foreign powers covertly arm Syrian rebels. And some analysts believe military intervention against Damascus would merely serve as a prelude to an attack on Iran.

Then, there is the corroborating [piece](#) published by CBS News back in April of this year citing secret cables made public by Wikileaks that indicate that the government of the United States is financing the rebel forces and once again flexing its regime toppling muscle in the middle east.

The State Department has secretly financed Syrian political opposition groups and related projects, including a satellite TV channel that beams anti-government programming into the country, according to previously undisclosed diplomatic cables.



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The London-based satellite channel, Barada TV, began broadcasting in April 2009 but has ramped up operations to cover the mass protests in Syria as part of a long-standing campaign to overthrow the country's autocratic leader, Bashar al-Assad. Human rights groups say scores of people have been killed by Assad's security forces since the demonstrations began March 18; Syria has blamed the violence on "armed gangs."

Barada TV is closely affiliated with the Movement for Justice and Development, a London-based network of Syrian exiles. Classified U.S. diplomatic cables show that the State Department has funneled as much as \$6 million to the group since 2006 to operate the satellite channel and finance other activities inside Syria.

The U.S. money for Syrian opposition figures began flowing under President George W. Bush after he effectively froze political ties with Damascus in 2005. The financial backing has continued under President Obama, even as his administration sought to rebuild relations with Assad. In January, the White House posted an ambassador to Damascus for the first time in six years.

It is unclear whether the State Department is still funding Syrian opposition groups, but the cables indicate money was set aside at least through September 2010.

The last word on just how far America will proceed in its support for the Syrian opposition may have come from President Obama himself. As [reported](#) last month by *The Daily Mail* (U.K.):

Obama said the fall of Tunisia, Egypt and now Libya in revolutions dubbed the Arab Spring proved that the leaders of Syria and Yemen should be fearful of similar endings.



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