



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 20, 2013

## Syrian Rebels Fire on Civilian Protesters

A series of recent scandals plaguing Western-backed rebel forces in Syria have sparked a firestorm of controversy surrounding the entire foreign-backed “regime change” operation — at least in some of the international media, if not yet in Western halls of power. With news that opposition fighters [fired on unarmed civilian protesters](#) in Damascus last week, however, the global image of rebel forces just went from bad to worse.



Of course, increasingly serious human rights abuses perpetrated by anti-regime militants have been surfacing since open warfare first erupted in Syria more than two years ago. This year, though, has seen more than a few major scandals and ghastly crimes committed by rebels exposed in the world press — and they are fast becoming more frequent, more alarming, and far more barbaric.

Last month, for example, one of the top rebel groups in Syria, the al-Nusra front — which controls wide swaths of territory and oil facilities, and is also considered one of the most effective fighting forces — [officially merged with al-Qaeda](#). In early May, opposition forces were [accused by United Nations investigators of using chemical weapons against civilians](#) and then blaming the crime on the regime.

Last week, meanwhile, a rebel brigade chief [publicly defended eating a dead soldier’s body organs on film](#) and promised to eat the hearts of his enemies. “I swear to God, soldiers of Bashar, you dogs — we will eat your heart and livers!” the cannibal commander says on video before taking a bite out of a dead pro-regime fighter’s organ.

As if all of that were not enough, a British journalist with Sky News [reported](#) on May 15 that opposition forces fired on unarmed, pro-regime civilian protesters during a march in the capital city of Damascus. “Please tell the world the truth! We don’t want the fighters here, we want the army to kill them!” demonstrators, some of whom were carrying portraits of the dictator, reportedly yelled during the protest.

One male protester shown in Sky News video footage said the rebels were foreign, pointing to Saudi Arabia and Qatar, both of which are ruled by Islamic dictators supporting, financing, and arming the “revolutionaries” in Syria. A woman at the demonstration also told Sky’s Foreign Affairs Editor Tim Marshall that members of the rebel “Free Syrian Army” (FSA) were “dogs” and that the fighters were actually from Chechnya and Afghanistan — not Syria.

While those specific allegations were not confirmed, *The New American* has been [documenting](#) the [massive influx of foreign jihadists](#) for over a year. Indeed, many of the fighters have [previous experience waging Jihad against the West](#), and [hundreds or even thousands of hardcore Islamists from Europe](#) are currently in Syria fighting the existing regime. More than a few hope to [replace the secular dictatorship with sharia law](#).

Islamist rebel groups backed by the Obama administration, European governments, Sunni Arab dictatorships, and [powerful elements of the establishment](#) are desperately trying to unseat the ruling



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Bashar al-Assad regime for reasons that [are not entirely clear or coherent](#). Not everybody in Syria, however, is happy about it, and some went out in the streets to voice their opposition to the rebels wreaking havoc in their country.

According to the Sky report, the protesters, primarily residents of the Yarmouk district in Damascus who fled when rebel forces took over about eight months ago, were demanding that armed opposition groups leave the area. A few members of the Syrian military escorted the protesters and reporters who went with them, but militant rebel factions had already vowed not to allow the demonstration to proceed.

When a thousand or so furious protesters advanced toward opposition forces, gunfire broke out as rebels fired on the marchers — just as the rebels had promised would happen if the demonstrators did not disperse. Religious leaders and some women were apparently at the front of the demonstration when the hail of bullets began raining down.

“The shooting began almost immediately. A man went down, followed by others,” according to the Sky News report, which added that multiple civilians were shot and that the Syrian Army officer who insisted on escorting reporters was also hit by shrapnel. “The demonstrators broke ranks and fled back across no man’s land, some of the women crying with fear.”

Following the armed attack on protesters by rebel forces, which injured at least five civilians, more Syrian troops arrived and a battle raged for more than an hour. The machine-gun fire, snipers, and explosions that broke out amid the fight reportedly left 10 rebel fighters dead and three Syrian soldiers injured.

“I’ve been in areas held by Syrian FSA fighters where there was clearly support for the opposition forces, but almost two years ago I first came across areas where the FSA was feared by the population and the Syrian Army viewed as liberators,” noted Marshall, who added that some of the protesters thought the [foreign jihadists](#) had been paid to kill people in Damascus. “It’s impossible to gauge the numbers of people who fall into the two camps.”

While virtually nobody questions the brutality of the Assad regime, the latest news out of Damascus is particularly ironic considering that the whole “civil war” in Syria broke out following unsubstantiated reports that regime forces had fired on unarmed protesters without provocation two years ago. Back then, even though [Syrian police were being shot and regime buildings burned to the ground](#), Western leaders promptly sprang into action demanding that the despot step down for the alleged crime.

Documented footage of rebel forces firing on civilian protesters, however, has drawn no furious condemnation from the Obama administration or European powers supporting the so-called “revolutionaries.” Instead, from Washington and London to Paris and Riyadh, foreign governments are actually [ramping up their arming, financing, and training of opposition fighters](#) in a bid to oust Assad — supposedly for firing on civilians.

In reality, however, as *The New American* has documented since the war broke out, the “revolution” in Syria has little to do with “democracy” or “human rights,” as its powerful foreign backers claim. The rebels themselves have [openly admitted their plan to establish an Islamic theocracy](#), and more than a few have publicly announced their intention to target Israel and the West once they are finished with Assad.

In the meantime, estimates suggest up to 100,000 people have been killed in the fighting so far. [Especially vulnerable are minority communities](#) — Christians, Jews, Shia Muslims, and members of the



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Alawaite sect to which Assad belongs — trapped between foreign-backed rebel Sunni fighters and the brutal regime that once protected them from radical Islamist violence.

Despite increasingly frequent reports of brutal human rights abuses by rebel fighters — including, most recently, firing on civilian protesters and cannibalism — the Obama administration is [brazenly helping to arm, train, and fund opposition forces](#). Earlier this month the U.S. government [announced that it was considering openly arming the rebels](#), who have received American taxpayer money since before the “revolution” even broke out. Syria, meanwhile, remains surrounded by U.S. troops in Turkey and Jordan.

On the other side of the conflict, Assad has secured strong support from Russian strongman Vladimir Putin, who continues to send advanced weapons to the regime. The Islamic dictatorship ruling Iran and the militant Hezbollah group in Lebanon have also been staunch allies of the embattled despot in Damascus. Behind the scenes, there are [undoubtedly other players](#), too.

If and when the ruling dictatorship in Damascus falls, as Western and Sunni Muslim foreign powers hope, the conflict may well continue to rage on as various rebel factions struggle for power — similar in some ways to the current situation in Libya, which remains in chaos following the Obama administration’s previous “regime change” plot. Innocent civilians, meanwhile, will keep paying the price whether the bullets are fired by the regime or by the rebels.

*Photo of rebel forces in Syria: AP Images*

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