



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on June 13, 2013

Western-backed Syrian Rebels Massacre Shia Villagers

Less than a month after a spokesman for the Western-backed “Free Syrian Army” threatened in a television interview [to exterminate Shia Muslims](#) across the nation, dozens of Shia villagers in Syria were massacred by Sunni rebel forces this week, according to international news reports citing government officials and opposition fighters. Analysts said the brutal killing spree, segments of which were recorded on video and posted online, illustrated the problems with the bloody “regime change” operation being waged by the Obama administration, European powers, Sunni Arab dictators, and [oftentimes foreign jihadists](#) on the ground. About two weeks ago, rebels [also massacred a Christian village](#).



Media accounts of the latest bloodbath reported that between 30 and 60 Shia civilians were killed by rebel forces in Hatla, a village in Deir al-Zour close to Iraq invaded by thousands of foreign-backed jihadists this week. While the Bashar al-Assad regime and opposition “activists” have offered slightly differing accounts of what happened, a general outline of the slaughter is starting to emerge — particularly as [video](#) evidence continues to surface [online](#). The picture it paints is not pretty, and even some factions of the opposition have condemned the attacks on civilians amid an increasingly sectarian conflict fueled in large part by foreign powers.

In video recordings of the attack, rebel fighters — more than a few of whom were wearing what the Associated Press [described](#) as “Al-Qaida-style headbands” — boast about their murderous rampage. Amid the now-typical and incessant Islamist shouts of “Allahu Akbar,” opposition fighters can be seen torching civilian homes and celebrating over dead bodies. “This is your end, you dogs,” one rebel says, cursing the executed “pug-nosed” Shia Muslims shown in one video. Another man can be heard shouting “the homes of the infidel Shiites were burned.”

In an online film [cited](#) by the *New York Times*, rebel forces show off the signature black flag used by al-Qaeda, its Syrian affiliate al-Nusra, and other Islamist terror groups. “We have raised the banner of ‘There Is No God but God’ over the houses of the rejectionist Shiite apostates,” an opposition fighter chants as the village burns, referring to Shia Muslims as “rejectionists” due to their different interpretation of Islam. “Here are the jihadists celebrating their storming of the rejectionists’ houses — the Shiite rejectionists!”

The secular Assad regime, which has support among minority communities including Shia Muslims and Christians, promptly condemned the killings. In official statements, the brutal dictatorship, which has tried to protect minorities from jihadist attacks, said foreign-backed terrorists had “carried out a massacre against villagers in which older people and children were killed.” The regime’s official news



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agency said the terror group al-Nusra, which [merged with al-Qaeda in Iraq](#) earlier this year and is considered among the most effective fighting forces, had “perpetrated a massacre” that killed some 30 civilians, “among them women and children.”

Opposition “activists,” meanwhile, said that over 60 Shias had been killed, but that at least some of them, if not most, were members of pro-government militias. Rebels [cited](#) in the U.K. *Independent* newspaper said the attack had been triggered by the dictatorship’s decision to arm villagers, who are surrounded by Sunnis in an oil-rich province controlled by jihadist opposition forces.

The anti-Assad so-called “Syrian Observatory for Human Rights” was cited in media reports claiming that the victims were “mostly” armed supporters of the regime and that 10 rebels had also been killed. “These atrocities were carried out on a sectarian basis,” the Observatory was quoted as saying about the massacre of Shias, adding that it was often hard to tell the difference between fighters and civilians.

More than a few analysts have long questioned the veracity of the bizarre “Observatory” — an outfit that apparently [consisted](#) of just one man behind a computer in Britain with supposed “sources” in Syria. However, the “Observatory” continues to be widely cited in the establishment press. The regime’s credibility, of course, is also in serious doubt, but on multiple occasions its information has [proven correct](#) while rebel claims parroted in the Western press have been debunked.

The U.S. State Department, which was exposed by WikiLeaks showering millions of American tax dollars on Syrian opposition groups since long before the outbreak of civil war, had a spokesperson condemn the attack in statements to reporters. Apparently the Obama administration was “appalled by reports that rebels have killed 60 Shia in Hatla village,” the department was quoted as saying.

Unsurprisingly, no mention was made of the president’s own well-documented role in fomenting the conflict by supporting jihadist rebels with weapons, funds, and training. “The motivations and circumstances surrounding this massacre remain unclear, but the United States strongly condemns any and all attacks against civilians,” State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki [told](#) the Associated Press.

The fact that Shias are in the crosshairs, though, should not be a surprise. As *The New American* reported last month, the FSA — the primary alliance of opposition fighters — had [already promised](#) to target Shia Muslims, and especially members of the Alawite community to which Assad belongs, as part of a broad ethnic cleansing program.

In a TV interview with a Turkish television program, a spokesman for the rebel coalition announced that minority communities would be “wiped off the map” if the regime’s forces managed to capture the city of Al-Qusair. The Syrian military recently finished taking control of the key city from rebels, cutting off a main supply line to the opposition.

According to a report in Bloomberg, rebel Free Syrian Army “Colonel” Abdel-Hamid Zakaria made the threat to exterminate minority-denomination Muslims in Syria on Al-Arabiya television. “We don’t want this to happen, but it will be a reality imposed on everyone,” Zakaria said during the interview, referring to his alliance wiping certain minority communities off the map if regime forces succeeded in taking Al-Qusair. “It’s going to be an open, sectarian, bloody war to the end.”

The public genocide announcement came shortly after Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) [blasted](#) his Senate Foreign Relations Committee colleagues for voting to arm the rebels, many of whom openly fight under the banner of al-Qaeda. “This is an important moment,” Sen. Paul said about the vote. “You will be funding, today, the allies of al Qaeda.”



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Goaded on by RINO Republicans such as Sen. John McCain, who made a recent trip to Syria and accidentally [got caught posing with rebel kidnapers](#), the Senate Committee expressed its backing for arming groups that openly threaten to exterminate minorities. Syrian Christians, who are perceived as pro-Assad because the regime protected them from Islamist violence for decades, are also being slaughtered by rebels.

As *The New American* has documented extensively, the U.S. government, [a former ally of Assad](#), began supporting the opposition years before open warfare began. President Obama, however, despite trying to create the public perception that his administration was offering mostly rhetorical and humanitarian backing to rebel forces, has [ramped up](#) that support to unprecedented levels. U.S. troops are currently stationed along the Syrian border helping to train rebel fighters even as the administration continues to funnel taxpayer money and weapons to the jihadist opposition.

On the other side of what many analysts argue is essentially a “proxy” war, meanwhile, are Assad’s foreign allies. Among the most important: the Islamist regime in Tehran, Russia’s Vladimir Putin, and the Lebanese Shia militia known as Hezbollah, which the U.S. government considers to be a terrorist group. The Russian and Iranian governments are both reportedly [supplying](#) the dictatorship in Damascus with weapons while Hezbollah fighters pour across the border into Syria to beat back rebel forces.

As the conflict intensifies, the United Nations estimates that more than 80,000 people have been killed so far. More than a million have already fled abroad to escape the fighting, too. At this point, analysts largely agree that the brutal war will almost certainly continue raging as foreign powers pour more fuel on the fire in the form of weapons and money. Civilians, meanwhile, will stay stuck in the crossfire, with Christians and Shias among the primary rebel targets.

Photo of Syrian rebels: AP Images

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