



Views on a new Near East

Weakening regime, weaker opposition

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By Aron Lund

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The Arab revolution has reached Syria, but its future remains highly uncertain. At the time of writing, in late April 2011, President Bashar al-Assad is still attempting a strategy of carrot and stick, mixing partial reform, to appease the silent majority of Syrians, with repression, to try to diminish the numbers already mobilised against the regime.

So far, this strategy appears mostly ineffective. It is possible that the protests will eventually overwhelm the regime, or force a split in the military/political elite. But the prospect of regime collapse may also encourage hardliners in the Alawite security establishment to try to settle the matter with force, despite the loss of legitimacy and the international stigmatisation that would follow. Alawites account for some 12 per cent of the population in Syria, but dominate the regime, and this sectarian issue is fundamental to Syria's politics: while many Sunnis resent minority rule, Alawites, Christians and others fear persecution if the secular Baath regime is toppled.

At this crucial moment, Syria needs an opposition leadership more than ever, but it has none. While the protests are national in feeling, and inspired by pan-Arab developments, they appear to be locally organised. The decentralised nature of the unrest means that it is impossible for the regime to 'decapitate' the revolt without a major, nation-wide crackdown, but also that there is no credible spokesperson for the protests, and no single list of grievances to address. This makes a negotiated political solution very difficult to achieve.

The only way out of this dilemma is if the various opposition forces could quickly coalesce into an alliance of national standing, to provide moral leadership and some strategic guidance for the protests. But this appears unlikely: the opposition seems barely capable of it, and the regime is highly unlikely to allow it.

Three 'generations' of Syrian opposition

Syria's opposition groups emerged, roughly speaking, in three overlapping 'generations', to which will undoubtedly be added a fourth if the regime survives the present round of protests.

The 'first generation' formed in the pre-independence era, and is today mainly represented by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). Its participation in an armed uprising in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and its Sunni sectarian agenda, makes the MB a particular *bête noire* of the regime, and Law 49 of 1980 bans membership of the group on pain of death.

The 'second generation' is made up by the National Democratic Gathering (NDG) and independent activists, who led pro-democracy protests in the late 1970s. That movement was crushed in a wave of arrests in 1980, but today these former prisoners form the veteran leadership of much of Syria's mainstream opposition.

A 'third generation' emerged during the 'Damascus Spring' of 2000-2001.¹ When Bashar al-Assad succeeded his father in the summer of 2000, political space opened up briefly, causing a flurry of activity among dissidents and an influx of new people, ideologies and tactics into the opposition movement.

The National Democratic Gathering²

The National Democratic Gathering, a secular political coalition, was formed in late 1979 by five illegal leftist and nationalist parties:

- The **Democratic Arab Socialist Union (DASU)**.³ The Nasserist DASU was formed in 1973. It is arguably Syria's largest opposition party, and heads the NDG, but is regarded by many as 'soft' in its opposition to the regime. At his death in 2000, the widely respected DASU founder Jamal al-Atassi was succeeded by his deputy, Hassan Abdelazim.
- The **Syrian Democratic People's Party (SDPP)**.⁴ Formerly known as the **Syrian Communist Party/politbureau**, the SDPP peeled off from the pro-Moscow and pro-regime SCP between 1969 and 1972, under the leadership of Riad al-Turk. The party was brutally repressed in the late 1970s/1980s, with Turk spending more than 19 years in prison. In 2005, the SDPP adopted its present name and renounced orthodox Marxism-Leninism. The present party leader is Giyath Uyoun-al-Soud, although the aging

Turk is believed to still play a major role.

- The **Arab Socialist Movement** (ASM). The original ASM was a populist-socialist group with roots in the land reform movement of the 1930s. It merged into the Baath during 1953-1961, then re-emerged, only to collapse in a series of splits. The NDG's faction broke off from a regime-supported group of the same name in 1972.
- The **Workers' Revolutionary Party** (WRP). The WRP was created by Syrian, Iraqi and Lebanese leftists in 1965, led by former Baathists of a Marxist-inspired tendency expelled in 1964.
- The **Democratic Baath Arab Socialist Party** (DBASP). The DBASP was formed by members of the radical *shubati* or 'Februarist' regime of Salah Jadid, who was overthrown by Hafez al-Assad in 1970.

Many NDG cadres were imprisoned in the early 1980s, and their organisations all but destroyed. The parties began to reorganise semi-openly by the late 1990s, but have generally failed to attract new members; most are now in their fifties or sixties. In 2006, a sixth group joined the NDG:

- The **Communist Action Party** (CAP). The CAP derives from a Marxist student movement founded in the 1970s by young intellectuals from provincial towns, including many anti-regime Alawites. It ran an energetic opposition campaign, but the regime responded with mass arrests, finally destroying the party by 1993. In 2004, the CAP was re-established by a small group of former members released from jail.

The NDG forms the historical core of Syria's opposition, but its influence has steadily diminished since the late 1980s, as new ideological trends (Islamism, Liberalism) and new activist tactics have claimed centre stage. In the late 2000s, there has also been considerable tension between the two dominant parties, DASU and SDPP. As a rule, the DASU favours a cautious, gradualist strategy and strongly rejects all Western or Arab interference in Syrian politics, while the SDPP has been striking alliances with Liberal, Kurdish and Islamist groups outside the NDG, and engages in more aggressive opposition.

The Kurds⁵

The Kurds have always been the odd-man-out in the context of the Syrian opposition. As the largest non-Arab minority in the Syrian Arab Republic, with some 8-10 per cent of the population, Kurds have had their cultural traditions and language banned by the Baath and a portion denied citizenship.

This treatment has alienated virtually the entire minority from the regime, but it has not translated into unified opposition. Syrian-Kurdish organisations have instead fractured endlessly, along local lines of conflict, or reflecting guerrilla politics in Turkey and Iraq. The 15 or so Kurdish opposition parties⁶ provide little actual leadership, despite collectively benefiting from strong popular support. Their political demands revolve around national recognition, civil rights issues and equality, with all parties having concluded that independence is undesirable or unfeasible given political realities.

The parties may be weak, but, as evidenced by the rioting in Qamishli in 2004, Kurdish

grass-roots resentment of the Baath remains a potent force. In the run-up to the 2011 protests, the regime opted for immediate appeasement of the Kurds, fearing major escalation if they joined the Arab opposition. In a series of swift presidential decrees, the citizenship issue was suddenly resolved after half a century of stalling, and other, symbolic actions have been taken as well – for example, Kurds were allowed to publicly celebrate Newroz on March 21.⁷ It remains to be seen whether this is enough; Kurdish hatred for the Baath Party is unlikely to disappear overnight. The regime may yet come to regret that it has weakened the Kurdish organisations to a point where they cannot control their own community.

The rise and fall of the Damascus Declaration⁸

On October 16, 2005, the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change was announced from the legal office of *maître* Hassan Abdelazim, spokesman of the NDG. The Declaration,⁹ a slightly rambling document that demands peaceful reform towards a non-sectarian democracy, was the product of an unprecedented collaborative effort among Syrian opposition activists.

The list of signatories included the NDG parties, as well as the CAP, the Committee for the Revival of Civil Society (a Damascus Spring-era organisation founded by independent writer Michel Kilo and others), the Assyrian Democratic Organization,¹⁰ two coalitions comprising a total of seven Kurdish parties, a number of high-profile individual dissidents (including the liberal industrialist Riad Seif; the Arab Nationalist intellectual Fida al-Hourani, who is the daughter of ASM founder Akram al-Hourani, a major figure in Syrian and Baathist history; and the Sunni theologian Jawdat Said), and, last but not least, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). Any form of contact with the MB had until then been considered a ‘red line’ for the opposition, sure to provoke a crackdown by the regime – but now, nothing happened.

The Syrian regime was under severe pressure, trapped in a cold war with the USA, France and Saudi Arabia. It had been forced out of Lebanon following the Hariri assassination in February 2005, and some observers felt this spelled the end of Bashar’s rule.¹¹ The former Vice President Abdelhalim Khaddam, an ally of Hariri, had left for Europe and was preparing to join the opposition. A few days before the signing of the Declaration, Syria’s minister of interior, Ghazi Kenaan, “committed suicide” after being embroiled in the Hariri affair. Days later, UN investigator Detlev Mehlis issued a report on the Hariri killing that pointed straight at Syria: a pre-release copy mentioned Bashar’s brother Maher and his brother-in-law Asef Shawkat as possible instigators. (Some of the Mehlis testimony has since been tainted by witness scandals, and investigations are now said to focus on Lebanese assassins connected to Hezbollah – which, of course, does not rule out Syrian complicity.)¹²

However, the Damascus Declaration signatories were strange bedfellows, with little in common except their opposition to the Assad regime. Already in January 2006, a Clarification Communiqué¹³ had to be issued, to address concerns about the role of Islam and the Declaration’s alleged soft-peddalling of Syria’s Arab character, which had irked nationalist and secularist participants such as the Nasserist DASU and the Marxist CAP.

As the regime began to apply pressure to the opposition again, and with the international tide slowly turning back in Syria's favour, the cracks widened. In March 2006, MB leader Bayanouni joined with Khaddam to create the National Salvation Front (NSF). This caused serious strains within the Damascus Declaration. Most members wanted nothing to do with Khaddam, and many secularists and dissidents of minority background feared that the MB was trying to build a Sunni bloc to dominate the opposition. Again, it was the DASU which led the charge, having all along wanted to keep the MB at arm's length. (A leaked US diplomatic cable claims that the DASU's role in the Declaration "had been permitted by the [regime] as a wedge to create division among reformist ranks".¹⁴) Still, the Islamists were not expelled; the MB is Syria's largest opposition group. Without them the Declaration could not credibly claim to represent the entire opposition, never mind the country.

Further problems ensued in December 2007, when a congress was called at the home of Riad Seif to reorganise the Declaration into a political movement. The DASU's Abdelazim failed to win a seat, and withdrew in protest, claiming the electorate had been stacked with anti-NDG independents. The elections saw Fida al-Hourani appointed head of the National Council – a kind of shadow parliament – and a reasonably fair distribution of ideological and sectarian backgrounds in the executive 17-member Secretariat. Day-to-day decisions, however, would be taken by the Secretariat's five-member Presidential Board, headed by Riad Seif, and also including Riad al-Turk and another well-known opposition hardliner, Ali al-Abdullah.

This seemed like a victory for liberals like Seif, Turk's SDPP, and some Kurdish and Islamist members. These groups favoured a more risk-taking strategy of opposition, were less impressed by the regime's Arab Nationalist credentials, and, at least according to their critics, more amenable to the idea of foreign support. As a result, the leftist-nationalist bloc around the DASU, including the CAP and some individual dissidents, froze their membership of the Declaration. Relations were further inflamed around Christmas 2007, when Riad al-Turk was quoted as thanking President George W. Bush for demanding the release of Syrian prisoners-of-conscience, greatly upsetting the Arab Nationalists.¹⁵ At around the same time, the regime began arresting and questioning the leaders elected in December, paralysing Declaration activities in Syria.¹⁶

On April 9, 2009, a hitherto unknown Temporary Secretariat Abroad suddenly announced that it would be taking charge, since it had become impossible to continue work in Syria.¹⁷ Heading the group was Anas al-Abdeh, leader of a recently created Sunni Islamist exile group called the Movement for Justice and Development (MJD),¹⁸ which had not been among the original signatories. The seven-member secretariat included representatives of the Kurdish groups, the Assyrian Democratic Organization and the SDPP. However, all were exiles, and both the nationalist tendency and the MB were left out. The MB refused to recognise the new secretariat, and some called the move a coup.¹⁹ (At the same time, all factions claimed to support the original Damascus Declaration, making their disavowal of the Temporary Secretariat somewhat ambiguous.)

The MJD's oversized influence – the group is very small, and has no history in the opposition – appears to rest on its control of funding for the London-based *Barada TV*,²⁰

which was launched in April 2009 as a mouthpiece of the Damascus Declaration. Run by full-time professionals, the channel represents a major step forward for opposition PR, but reports of American financing²¹ and a controversial editorial line – radical opposition, with an occasional Sunni sectarian slant²² – have further alienated parts of the opposition inside Syria. Still, this surviving faction of the Damascus Declaration²³ retains symbolic value, some support, and an important resource in the form of *Barada TV*.

The Muslim Brotherhood of Syria²⁴

The Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood²⁵ was founded in 1944. It participated pragmatically in parliamentary politics, but began to radicalise quickly after the Baathist takeover in 1963, which had heightened social and sectarian tension in Syria. In 1970-1975 the group split along regional and ideological lines, and the radical Hama branch spawned a Jihadist splinter faction, the Fighting Vanguard, which in 1976 began attacking Baathist and Alawite targets. The regime publicly blamed the MB, which after some hesitation joined the battle in September 1979. In the end, the rebels were defeated using brutal measures, most infamously the Hama massacre of February 1982. The Fighting Vanguard was extirpated by 1985, while the MB was forced into exile, and spent over a decade dealing with internal splits.

Under Ali Sadreddine al-Bayanouni (1996-2010) the reunited MB has called for negotiations with the regime, moderated its agenda, and tried to reconnect with secular opposition groups. These efforts culminated in two documents, the *National Compact* of 2002, which was drafted in collaboration with secular exiles, and the MB's own *Political Project for the Future Syria* of 2004, which argues for a non-sectarian multi-party democracy. The Damascus Declaration (2005) has helped reintegrate the MB in the general body of the opposition, but Bayanouni's participation in the 2006 National Salvation Front (NSF) was widely criticised as a sell-out. In January 2009, Bayanouni again attempted to appease the regime by publicly "suspending opposition" during the Israeli assault on Gaza. This led to the disintegration of the NSF,²⁶ but the regime refused to open talks. In 2010, as Bayanouni's mandate expired, he was succeeded by Mohammed Riad al-Shaqfa, in what some saw as a hardening of the group's stance.²⁷

The MB is the single largest Syrian opposition group. Despite having had no significant presence in Syria since its military defeat, it remains a symbol of opposition for many conservative Sunnis, and could potentially reorganise quickly inside the country. However, much has changed on the ground since the 1980s. While Syrian society is now more openly devout than in the past, a relegalised MB would also face tough competition from other conservative preachers and groups, which have proliferated in Syria during the past decade.²⁸

The National Salvation Front and Abdelhalim Khaddam²⁹

In spring 2006, the MB joined with former Vice President Abdelhalim Khaddam to form the National Salvation Front.³⁰ It managed to attract a small number of exiles, but was shunned by most major opposition groups. The main reason was the presence of Khaddam, who had spent over four decades serving the Baath regime, and had a

reputation for corruption. He broke with the Assad family only after it turned on him in 2005, following the Hariri assassination affair; as one of the regime's few powerful Sunnis, Khaddam had been close to the Hariris and their Saudi sponsors.

In 2009 the NSF fell apart after the MB left the group, and Saudi Arabia and the Hariri family reached an understanding with the Syrian regime. Khaddam scaled down his activities, and closed his private satellite channel, *Zenobia TV*. The NSF has since been regarded as a spent force, but it is possible that today's volatile situation could enable Khaddam to make another bid for power.

Refaat al-Assad & Sons

Refaat al-Assad, brother of Hafez and uncle of Bashar, was thrown out of Syria after attempting to seize power in 1983.³¹ He lives in Europe, until recently in Marbella, but now in London. Using his personal wealth and Saudi support, he continues to keep a number of retainers and front groups on his payroll, including the supposedly pan-Arab United National Group,³² the Knights of Refaat al-Assad in Lebanon,³³ and the ANN satellite channel.³⁴

Refaat formerly had a major power base among the Alawites central to Syria's security establishment, and there may be lingering sympathies for him in these circles. To the population at large, on the other hand, he is remembered chiefly for corruption, brutality and Alawite sectarianism, to an even greater extent than Hafez, and certainly more so than Bashar. The mainstream opposition refuses to deal with him. Perhaps to offset this, Refaat's son Ribal al-Assad has in recent years been launched as the new face of the family.³⁵

A new opposition?

Despite the impressive courage and good faith of many individual dissidents, the Syrian opposition is structurally weak and disorganised, and manifestly unprepared to take charge of the country, or even of the current protest movement. Still, most opposition organisations appear, at the time of writing, to remain intact and active. Despite increased surveillance and arrests of some high-profile dissidents, including the leaders of the SDPP and the DASU,³⁶ there has as of yet been no wholesale repression of the established groups.

Syrian politics are changing fast. The flood of newcomers to the opposition, from among the youths now defying the government in Syrian streets or connecting with pro-revolutionary exiles online, will surely overtake some of the veteran groups. But both the protestors and the regime are presently searching for credible interlocutors, creating an opportunity for the moderate opposition. Diaspora activists are well positioned to act as international conduits of information and spokesmen for the Syrian uprising. Internally, some of the more tightly organised groups, or locally influential individuals, could plausibly manage to insert themselves in leading roles, as new political structures begin to take shape inside Syria.

If it manages to seize the day, the established opposition – however weak it may be – has the chance to wield greater influence than ever before, in this rare revolutionary

moment.

1. Alan George, *Syria: Neither Bread Nor Freedom*, (Zed Books, 2003).
2. Information on the NDG and its member parties has been collected from interviews with present and former activists, including Hassan Abdelazim (DASU), Riad al-Turk (SDPP), Hassiba Abderrahman (CAP), and others, as well as from party and NDG websites, and the political encyclopedia of Feisal Derraj & Mohammed Jamal Barout (ed): *al-ahzab wal-harakat al-qawmiya*, and *al-ahzab wal-harakat al-yasariya* (Arab Centre for Strategic Studies, last volume in the series printed in 2006).
3. See <http://www.ettihad-sy.net>.
4. See <http://www.arraee.com>.
5. This section is based on Harriet Montgomery, *The Kurds of Syria. An existence denied* (Berlin: Europäisches Zentrum für Kurdische Studien, 2005), and on interviews with Abdulbaset Sieda (Uppsala 2009 & 2011), Khelil Kerro of Azadi (Uppsala 2009), Kurdish Internet activist Siruan H. Hossein (Stockholm 2009), Kamiran Hajo of the KDPS/al-Parti (Västerås 2009), Sheruan Hassan of the PYD (e-mail 2009), and others.
6. They include: the Party of Democratic Unity (PYD, affiliated with Turkey's PKK), the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria (affiliated with Iraq's PUK), the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (affiliated with Iraq's KDP; often referred to as "al-Parti"), the Kurdish Freedom Party in Syria ("Azadi"), the Future Current ("Peseroj"), the Syrian Kurdish Popular Union ("Yekiti"), and others.
7. "Damascus: President again announces solution to the problem of the stateless," *KurdWatch*, April 2, 2011, <http://www.kurdwatch.org/index?aid=1373>; "Syria: Newroz 2011 more peaceful than ever", *KurdWatch*, March 23, 2011, <http://www.kurdwatch.org/index?aid=1328>, accessed April 25, 2011.
8. This section is largely based on statements from the Declaration and its member parties, and interviews with a number of Syrian dissidents, including Hasan Abdelazim of DASU (Damascus 2008), Riad al-Turk of the SDPP (Damascus 2008), Riad Seif (Damascus 2008), Ali Sadreddine al-Bayanouni and Zoheir Salem of the MB (London 2009), Malek al-Abdeh of the MJD (London 2009), Kamiran Hajo of the KDPS/al-Parti and the Damascus Declaration's Temporary Secretariat (Västerås 2009), and others.
9. "Damascus Declaration in English", *Syria Comment*, <http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/L/Joshua.M.Landis-1/syriablog/2005/11/damascus-declaration-in-english.htm>
10. See <http://en.ado-world.org>.
11. Volker Perthes, "Syria: It's All Over, But It Could Be Messy," *New York Times*, October 5, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/04/opinion/04iht-edperthes.html?_r=1, accessed April 25, 2011.

12. *The Washington Post*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/syria/mehlis.report.doc>; Special Tribunal for Lebanon: <http://www.stl-tsl.org>; Gary C. Gambill: "The Hariri Investigation and the Politics of Perception", *Global Politician*, August 27, 2008, <http://www.globalpolitician.com/25158-hariri>
13. Damascus Declaration, "bayan tawdihi," January 31, 2006, http://www.annidaa.org/modules/news/article.php?com_mode=nest&com_order=0&storyid=84
14. Cable from the US Embassy in Damascus, "Murky alliances: Muslim Brotherhood, the Movement for Justice and Democracy, and the Damascus Declaration," dated July 8, 2009, released by *Wikileaks* and *al-Akhbar* (Lebanon) in April 2011.
15. *Quds Press* interview by Adel al-Hamedi, December 24, 2007.
16. "Leaders of Damascus Declaration Sentenced Two Years and a Half," Syrian Human Rights Committee, <http://www.shrc.org/data.aspx/d3/3743.aspx>; "Syria: Free Activist Who Criticized Iran," Human Rights Watch, December 17, 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/12/17/syria-free-activist-who-criticized-iran>
17. Damascus Declaration, "al-i'lan 'an tashkil al-amana al-muaqqata li-i'lan dimashq fil-kharij," April 9, 2009, <http://www.annidaa.org/modules/news/article.php?storyid=1144>
18. See <http://www.forsyria.org>.
19. The Independent Islamic Democratic Current inside Syria, "bayan min al-tayyar al-islami al-dimuqrati al-mustaqill fi al-dakhil al-souri," April 15, 2009, <http://www.thefreesyria.org/f-s-1/rawafed-190409-2.htm>
20. See <http://www.baradatv.com>.
21. Craig Whitlock, "U.S. secretly backed Syrian opposition groups, cables released by WikiLeaks show," *The Washington Post*, April 17, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-secretly-backed-syrian-opposition-groups-cables-released-by-wikileaks-show/2011/04/14/AF1p9hwD_story.html
22. See for example episode 201 of the program "Nahwa taghyir" (Towards Change), where the Iraqi guest Rabie al-Hafez goes on at length about Iranian plots and the problems caused by Shiism and minorities: <http://www.baradatv.com/19-8-2-%D9%86%D8%AD%D9%88-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%BA%D9%8A%D9%8A%D8%B1.aspx>
23. See <http://www.nidaasyria.org>.
24. This section is based mainly on the political encyclopedia of Feisal Derraj & Mohammed Jamal Barout (ed): *al-ahzab wal-harakat wal-jamaat al-islamiya* (Arab

Centre for Strategic Studies, last volume in the series printed in 2006); Omar al-Ezzi: "al-Ikhwan al-souriyoun: Thalathun 'amman bahthan 'an madkhal", published at islamyoon.islamonline.net on Sep. 17, 2009; and interviews with then-MB leader Ali Sadreddine al-Bayanouni and MB spokesman Zoheir Salem (London 2009), as well as with non-MB-affiliated Syrian opposition activists.

25. See <http://www.ikhwansyria.com>.

26. Mohammed Al Shafey, Fatima el Issawi and Saad Jarous: "Syrian Muslim Brotherhood Withdraws from Opposition Group," *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (English online edition), April 6, 2009, <http://aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=1&id=16306>. Also see statements by the MB on April 4, 2009 and the NSF on April 8, 2009.

27. Mohammed al-Masri: "al-muhariboun al-qudama yasta'idoun maqalid al-sulta. al-bayanouni yataqa'ud fi khitam wilayati-hi al-thalitha wa-shaqfa muraqiban 'amman lil-ikhwan al-souriyin", *al-Quds al-Arabi*, August 8, 2010, page 1. For more discussion of this, see my guest post at *Syria Comment*, "The Syria Muslim Brotherhood: Leadership Transition from Bayanouni to Shaqfa", August 21, 2010, <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/?p=7037>

28. Sami Moubayed, "The Islamic Revival in Syria", *MidEast Monitor*, vol. 1, no. 3, September-October 2006, http://www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0609/0609_4.htm

29. Information on the NSF is based on interviews with Syrian opposition activists, including Abdelhalim Khaddam and the former *Zenobia TV* editor Ghassan al-Mufleh (Brussels 2009), and the MB's Ali Sadreddine al-Bayanouni and Zoheir Salem (London 2009). For more on Khaddam, see Gary C. Gambill: "Dossier: Abdul Halim Khaddam", *Mideast Monitor*, vol. 1, no. 1, Feb. 2006, http://www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0602/0602_6.htm

30. See <http://free-syria.com>.

31. Patrick Seale, *Asad. The Struggle for the Middle East* (University of California Press, revised edition, 1995).

32. See <http://www.unitedng.com>.

33. See <http://alfursan.org>.

34. See <http://www.anntv.tv>.

35. Ribal al-Assad formerly ran his father's television network, the ANN. He recently created the Organization for Freedom and Democracy in Syria (<http://www.odf-syria.org>), and also heads the Iman Foundation (<http://www.iman-worldwide.org>).

36. AFP, "i'tiqal al-amin al-'amm li-hezb al-shaab al-dimuqrati fi souria", April 10, 2011, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5i1XbwKu0CMQj7AUKLeFDMp5hPzQA?docId=CNG.708a9a766b95928dc9b17566d825d201.61>; National Organization for Human Rights in Syria (NOHR-S): "al-sulutat al-souriya ta'taqil

al-mu'arid al-souri al-bariz hasan isma'il 'abd al-azim", May 1, 2011,
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