

2016-10-04

## Fråga-svar

### Syrien. Demonstrationer i Latakia mars – juli 2011

#### Fråga

Information önskas om polisen roll i Latakia under perioden mars-juli 2011.

Har det under den perioden förekommit våldsamheter mellan polisen och demonstranter i Latakia?

Slog polisen aktivt ner demonstrationer eller agerade de enbart om demonstranterna försökte förstöra egendom?

Var polisen beväpnad med handeldvapen under den här perioden eller enbart med kravallutrustning i form av sköld och/eller batong?

Finns det rapporter på att polisen ska ha begått någon form av övergrepp mot demonstranter antingen under eller med anledning av demonstrationerna?

#### Svar

Den nyhetsrapportering som finns från den här perioden är motstridig och tar i många fall tydlig ställning för en part i konflikten, vilket gör det svårt att i slutändan klargöra det egentliga händelseförloppet. I en artikel publicerad i The New York Times (2011-03-28) konstateras också att informationsflödet var begränsat under den här perioden:

Details of the unrest, as well as exact numbers of the dead, are uncertain because the government has blocked foreign reporters from entering or working in Syria.

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The official Syrian Arab news agency, SANA, reported that at least 10 people were killed in Latakia by "armed gangs." Government

supporters were dispatched to provide the government's account, which denied that government forces opened fire. In phone conversations with people in Syria, many said they were too frightened to talk, and others rescinded earlier condemnations of the government's use of violence.

Ytterligare en försvårande aspekt är otydligheten i begreppet "security forces;" en benämning som förekommer hos många källor samtidigt som det är osäkert om det används samstämmigt. Begreppet kan innefatta armé, säkerhetstjänst och lokala miliser, men även i vissa fall polis. Det kan dock tilläggas att det i en rapport av Lifos konstateras att den civila polisen enligt de konsulterade källorna inte spelat en stor roll när det kommer till brott mot mänskliga rättigheter, även om avvikelser mot detta kan förekomma (Migrationsverket, 2013-12-13, s. 11-12).

Nedan följer en sammanställning av citat från olika källor kring händelseförloppet under våren och sommaren 2011 i Latakia.

## **Mars**

UN Human Rights Council (2011-09-15):

In the city of Al Ladhiqiyah (capital of Al Ladhiqiyah Governorate, located on the Mediterranean coast in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic), two demonstrations were held, on 18 and 25 March, without any confrontation with security forces. During a demonstration on 26 March, security forces fired at demonstrators when they tried to topple a statue of the President. Witnesses said Shabbiha members fought alongside the security forces, reportedly attacking some of the demonstrators with knives. A demonstration on 8 April was described as particularly bloody, although witnesses were unable to say how many demonstrators were killed or injured. They claimed that, after the shooting stopped, garbage trucks were brought in by the security forces to pick bodies up off the streets. (s. 17-18)

Institute for the Study of War (2011-12-01):

On March 25, 2011 the Friday after the initial escalation of the conflict in Dera'a, Latakia became the second city to receive the Assad regime's attention when shabiha violence preceded major clearance operations. The security forces established checkpoints, isolating Latakia and, according to some reports, began to bus in regime supporters from the surrounding countryside. Over the next two days, armed regime supporters clashed with protestors and armed resistance in the city. The Syrian government blamed the violence on fundamentalists and Palestinian refugees from southern Latakia's Ramal neighborhood, but residents accused the pro-government gangs. Before the violence escalated on both sides, the uniformed security services moved in and established a modicum of

control over the city but opened fire on unarmed demonstrators in the process. (s. 19)

Associated Press (2011-03-25):

An activist told the AP that witnesses had reported one demonstrator shot dead by security forces in the coastal city of Latakia, and another slain in the central city of Homs. He said several people had been hospitalized in Latakia.

The Blaze (2011-03-26):

A Syrian activist in touch with protesters in Latakia said hundreds had been demonstrating there since Friday evening, burning tires and shouting "Freedom!" A few protesters were attacking cars and shops, the activist said on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue.

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[Syrian presidential advisor Bouthaina Shaaban ] said that a group of Palestinians had come into Latakia from a refugee camp with weapons and opened fire, killing a policeman and two protesters.

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A Syrian official told The Associated Press that two passersby were killed and two others wounded in Latakia by sniper fire from rooftops. He denied that the army had opened fire on protesters.

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Footage on a Facebook site run by Syrian activists showed what it said were the dead and wounded in Latakia. Young men carried one man by his limbs through a street, then another. They laid the second man limp in the street.

"It's the military police!" one shouted.

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The authenticity of the footage could not be independently confirmed.

Human Rights Watch (2011-03-28):

Confrontations between protesters and security forces also took place in Latakia on March 26, leading the Syrian army to deploy in the city at night. A Syrian official told SANA, the Syrian state news agency, that 12 people were killed, including security forces and protesters. Human Rights Watch spoke to two residents in Latakia, but both were too afraid to provide any details of the events. Anti-government demonstrators in Latakia who spoke to television outlets accused the security forces of opening fire on them, while officials and pro-government protesters accused the anti-government protesters of having guns and shooting at police.

The Guardian (2011-03-27):

Earlier on Sunday the country's state-run news agency said armed gangs had attacked neighbourhoods in Latakia, firing guns from rooftops. Anti-government protesters accused government forces – which were deployed in Latakia on Saturday – of opening fire on them.

Activists said some demonstrators burned tyres, attacked businesses and set fire to an office of the ruling Ba'ath party. Ten people, including members of the security forces, residents and two members of "armed elements" died in the Latakia violence, the state-run news agency said, adding that at least two people were killed by rooftop snipers.

Around 200 others, mostly members of the security forces, were reported to have been injured.

Bloomberg (2011-03-27):

Khalid Kamal, an imam in the port city, said in a phone interview with Al Jazeera that "military police and unknown snipers opened fire randomly on protesters."

The New York Times (2011-03-27):

At least two demonstrators in Latakia were killed after protesters set fire to the local headquarters of the Baath Party. Ammar Qurabi, the chairman of the National Association for Human Rights, said two witnesses reported seeing Syrian Special Forces open fire into a crowd.

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Mr. Qurabi, the chairman of the human rights group, said that more than two dozen protesters were killed Friday, including /.../ 4 in Latakia /.../. Mr. Qurabi blamed live ammunition for all those deaths on Friday.

BBC (2011-03-28):

Officials blamed foreign forces for the violence [in Latakia], but residents said pro-government gangs started the clashes.

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Jihad Makdissi, the spokesman for the Syrian embassy in London, told the BBC World Service that an inquiry was under way into the violence and deaths during recent anti-government protests.

He said the president had intervened to put an end to a "chaotic situation" in Latakia, where people were "vandalising government institutions" and burning cars.

Associated Press (2011-03-28):

According to the witnesses and footage posted on social networking sites, shooting erupted after nightfall Tuesday that protesters blamed on security forces, and unrest erupted that continued until Saturday. Syrian officials said the government moved the army into Latakia in heavy numbers by early Sunday.

Syrian officials said 12 people had died in the city, and blamed the deaths on unidentified gunmen firing from rooftops.

An Associated Press photographer saw traces of what appeared to have been a serious battle in Latakia's main Sheik Daher square. Two police cars had been smashed and rocks and telephone cables torn from overhead poles were strewn across the streets and sidewalks.

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Just before sundown, gangs of 10 to 15 young men began roaming the streets, many armed with sticks and a few carrying guns or swords. Some of the gangs could be seen closing streets and alleys with metal barricades and large rocks.

Their allegiances could not be immediately determined, but pro-government groups of men in civilian clothes and armed with hunting rifles and other firearms also could be seen pulling over drivers, asking them for identification and the reason for their presence in Latakia.

The Baath party's office in Latakia did not appear to be burnt, despite reports from activists Saturday that it had been set ablaze, which the government had denied.

Trend News Agency (2011-03-30):

Police opened fire on protesters in the Syrian coastal city of Latakia shortly after President Bashar al-Assad ended his speech in parliament, opposition activists told the German Press Agency dpa.

Al Jazeera (2011-04-03):

Bashar al-Assad, Syria's president, warned in a speech this week that such gangs are part of a foreign plot to drive a wedge between Syria's different religious and ethnic communities. But in interviews with residents, journalists and eyewitnesses in Latakia almost all say the same thing: Shabeha are almost exclusively Alawites from the region, described by one reliable source as the private militia of the Assad family itself.

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Witnesses and journalists in Latakia say that during protests in the city members of the shabeha have been used to instigate and fuel violence against protestors, in what many consider to be an attempt by the regime to divide the local Sunni and Alawite communities.

"The protesters were chanting 'peaceful, peaceful' while another group of people stood at the end of the street dancing to songs praising the president," said a resident of Lattakia, an Alawite, who witnessed a protest last week.

"After a while, the two sides began fighting without any security forces or army present. Then there were people from both sides dropping dead from sniper shots. From both sides, those with the regime and the protestors."

Only then did members of an official Syrian security force arrive on the scene, said the witness, but rather than tackle the gunmen on the rooftops they also shot at the pro-democracy protestors.

After that the streets were left to the shabeha. "We saw cars with armed men in the streets shooting at people indiscriminately - Alawite, Sunni, pro-regime or against the regime, everyone," the eyewitness said, describing the city as being "in a state of terror".

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"Hundreds of security men in plain clothes demonstrated against us shouting pro-Assad slogans. They came close to us and started to push us," said Ali. "It was then that the security forces began to fire on us. We were demonstrating in a peaceful and civilian way and shouting national slogans. None of us were shouting anti-Alawite slogans."

A local journalist who says he has spoken to 10 residents of Lattakia over the past week said they had all delivered the same message about who the agitators roaming the streets were. "All of them are saying one thing: 'They are shabeha'," he said.

A Syrian political expert, who declined to be named, said he had no doubt the shabeha had been used on the streets of Lattakia. "They are the ones who are on the streets shooting people," he said. "It's a kind of out-sourcing: They are the regime, but they're not the regime. The regime doesn't want to take the risk of using an official security body to start the shooting of protestors."

Syria's state news agency has blamed the deaths of protestors on "armed gangs," but has not explained why these gangs, little seen until now in the tightly policed state, have yet to target any of the large, exclusively pro-regime rallies.

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Having emerged in the 1970s, when Hafez al-Assad, the president's father, took power, the shabeha are nothing new to many Syrians but remain largely unknown to those outside the country.

According to a number of experts on Syria, the shabeha have easy access to arms through their close ties to Syria's military and security forces, hail from the mountain stronghold of Qardaha, which overlooks Lattakia, and answer to the orders of local Assad family elders.

## April-

UN Human Rights Council (2011-11-23):

The commission received several testimonies indicating that military and security forces and Shabbiha militias had planned and conducted joint operations with “shoot to kill” orders to crush demonstrations. Such operations were conducted in the centre of Al Ladhqiyyah around Sheikh Daher Square in early April, and also in the Ramel suburb of Al Ladhqiyyah on 13 and 14 August. During the latter incident, at least 20 people, including children, were reportedly killed. In other incidents, officers ordered their personnel to attack protesters without warning, hitting them with batons. (s. 10)

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The commission is aware of acts of violence committed by some demonstrators. However, it notes that the majority of civilians were killed in the context of peaceful demonstrations. Accounts collected by the commission, including those of defectors, indicated that protesters were largely unarmed and determined to claim their rights and express their discontent peacefully.

46. Snipers were responsible for many casualties. On some occasions, snipers appeared to be targeting leaders of the march and those using loudspeakers or carrying cameras and mobile phones. The commission heard several accounts of how those who were trying to rescue the wounded and collect the bodies of demonstrators also came under sniper fire. The commission documented several cases in Dar’a, Hama and Al Ladhqiyyah. (s. 11)

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Witnesses informed the commission that children (mostly boys) were killed or injured by beatings or shooting during demonstrations in several locations across the country, including Sayda, Dar’a, Idlib, Hama, Homs, Sarmeen Al Ladhqiyyah and Dayr Az Zawr. Reliable sources indicated that 256 children had been killed by State forces as at 9 November. (s. 14)

UN Human Rights Council (2011-09-15):

Victims and witnesses reported widespread attempts to cover up killings by the security forces, including the use of mass graves. In Al Ladhqiyyah, on 8 April, garbage trucks were seen collecting dead bodies. Civilians stored murdered victims in makeshift refrigerators during the sieges. There were several reports, however, of security forces killing injured victims by putting them into refrigerated cells in hospital morgues. [One of the cases reported to the mission took place in Dar’a.](s. 22)

International Federation for Human Rights (juli 2011):

On Friday April 29 /.../ In Lattakia, 16 people died during a demonstration, after political Security Forces fired live ammunition on the crowd.

On Friday May 6, ("Friday of Challenge") The Security Forces and Shabiha killed 27 demonstrators in several cities. Four died in /.../ Lattakia.

Associated Press (2011-04-10):

Early Saturday, security forces fired live ammunition to disperse hundreds of protesters in Latakia, witnesses said.

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In Latakia, residents reported hearing hours of heavy gunfire overnight as security forces forcefully broke up a sit-in by protesters. /.../ There was no immediate word on casualties from the shooting.

BBC (2011-04-29):

There are unconfirmed reports of security forces shooting protesters dead in Homs and Latakia.

Associated Press (2011-04-29):

A witness in Latakia said about 1,000 people turned out for an anti-government rally when plainclothes security agents with automatic rifles opened fire. He said he saw at least five people wounded. Like many witnesses contacted by The Associated Press, he asked that his name not be used for fear of reprisal.

CNN (2011-07-30):

At least 23 people died Friday [July 29th] when demonstrations across the country were met by a fierce government crackdown, activists told CNN.

/.../ [One fatality occurred] in Lattakia /.../, the activists said.

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Demonstrators chanting anti-government slogans marched in Damascus, Homs, Lattakia and other cities, and were frequently met by security forces who fired into the crowds and beat protesters, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

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CNN could not independently verify the reports.

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Denna sammanställning av information/länkar är baserad på informationssökningar gjorda under en begränsad tid. Den är sammanställd utifrån noggrant utvalda och allmänt tillgängliga informationskällor. Alla använda källor refereras. All information som presenteras, med undantag av obestridda/uppenbara fakta, har dubbelkontrollerats om inget annat anges. Sammanställningen gör inte anspråk på att vara uttömmande och bör inte tillmätas exklusivt bevisvärde i samband med avgörandet av ett enskilt ärende. Informationen i sammanställningen återspeglar inte nödvändigtvis Migrationsverkets officiella ståndpunkt i en viss fråga och det finns ingen avsikt att genom sammanställningen göra politiska ställningstaganden. Refererade dokument bör läsas i sitt sammanhang.

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