



Report

Syria -- Status of Uprising, Regime Cohesion 18-24 May

Conflict between government and opposition forces continued during the week, generally following the established pattern of government military attacks and security raids against centers of opposition, on the one hand, and ambushes and bombings by opposition forces on the other. The Syrian conflict also continued to spark clashes in neighboring Lebanon. Further turmoil among the top leadership of the opposition Syrian National Council (SNC) reflected the opposition's continued difficulty in unifying ranks. Syria and the United Nations traded accusations on the subject of human-rights violations.

Update on Clashes

Reports from opposition sources transmitted via Arab media -- such as the influential, London-based, pan-Arab daily *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* -- described widespread clashes between government and opposition in and around several major population centers. Opposition sources typically claimed that government forces killed dozens of individuals in various daily assaults, though such claims remain impossible to verify.

- Government forces reportedly used artillery and helicopters during bombardments in Al-Rastan, Homs, Idlib Province, and villages near Aleppo.^{1 2 3 4}
- Clashes were also reported in a southwestern district of Damascus and specifically on 23 May in the city of Aleppo, the scene of antigovernment demonstrations. Various opposition sources described the Aleppo protests as comprising "1,500," "tens," or "hundreds" of thousands of demonstrators.⁵
- A large car bomb, apparently targeting military intelligence facilities, exploded in the eastern town of Dayr al-Zawr on 19 May, resulting in several deaths. Another deadly bomb attack occurred in the Damascus neighborhood of Qabun during the night of 21-22 May.^{6 7}

Reports of clashes transmitted by the state-run SANA news agency followed a familiar pattern of branding opposition attacks as terrorist in nature and hinting of foreign support.

- SANA reported several deadly attacks by "armed terrorist groups," typically against isolated security forces, such as border guards.⁸
- It also reported military engineers' success in disarming a number of "terrorist" bombs.⁹
- According to SANA, security forces discovered a "terrorist" weapons-manufacturing warehouse in Homs and intercepted several "Tunisian terrorists" attempting to infiltrate into Syria from Turkey.^{10 11}

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More Clashes in Lebanon

Clashes between pro-Syrian Government and pro-Syrian opposition factions continued in Lebanon, and a number of Lebanese Shiites were abducted in Syria under unclear circumstances.

- Following a week of clashes in Tripoli between Sunnis hostile to the Syrian regime and Alawite regime supporters, fighting broke out in Beirut during the night of 21-22 May, reportedly resulting in two deaths.¹²
- Ahmad Abd-al-Wahib, a Sunni cleric belonging to the pro-Syria 14 March alliance, was killed under disputed circumstances by Lebanese Army troops at a security checkpoint in northern Lebanon on 20 May.¹³
- Approximately one dozen Lebanese Shiites, said to be pilgrims returning to Lebanon via Syria from Iran, were seized at gunpoint in Aleppo on 22 May. Family members and Syrian state media blamed the assault on the Free Syrian Army (FSA), but the FSA denied all responsibility and accused the Syrian Government of staging the incident.¹⁴
15 16

Crisis Within SNC

The SNC formally accepted the resignation of Burhan Ghalyun, who had been reelected president on 15 May, and announced a new presidential election on 9-10 June. Ghalyun resigned under pressure from critics within the SNC who accused him of monopolizing power and failing to support properly the uprising.¹⁷

Mutual Accusations Regarding Human-Rights Violations

In a report addressed to the UN Human Rights Council on 20 May, the Syrian Foreign and Expatriates Ministry charged that Syria is the victim of human-rights violations, both through "direct killing operations" by "armed terrorist groups" and through "the sanctions imposed by the countries, which are funding, backing, and hosting these groups."¹⁸

In a report released on 24 May, the UN's Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria charged that the Syrian Army and security services were responsible for most of the human-rights violations documented by the commission, both in the form of direct attacks against individuals and the "systematic denial" of food, water, and medical care.¹⁹

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¹ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120519825002 | 19 May 2012 | | Syria: Report on Demonstrations, Government Forces' Actions in Various Provinces | | (U) | (U) | London Al-Sharq al-Awsat Online in Arabic -- Website of influential London-based pan-Arab Saudi daily; editorial line reflects Saudi official stance. URL: <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/>]

² [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120520001003 | 20 May 2012 | | Syria: Report on Government Forces' Actions, Explosions in Various Provinces | | (U) | (U) | London Al-Sharq al-Awsat Online in Arabic -- Website of influential London-based pan-Arab Saudi daily; editorial line reflects Saudi official stance. URL: <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/>]

³ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120521825002 | 21 May 2012 | | Syria: Report on Government Forces' Actions in Various Provinces, Explosions | | (U) | (U) | London Al-Sharq al-Awsat Online in Arabic -- Website of influential London-based pan-Arab Saudi daily; editorial line reflects Saudi official stance. URL: <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/>]

⁴ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120523825004 | 23 May 2012 | | Syria: Report on Government Forces' Actions, Clashes With Defectors, Explosions | | (U) | (U) | London Al-Sharq al-Awsat Online in Arabic -- Website of influential London-based pan-Arab Saudi daily; editorial line reflects Saudi official stance. URL: <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/>]

⁵ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120523966123 | 23 May 2012 | | NOW Lebanon: Syrian troops fire on Aleppo demonstrations, activists say | | (U) | (U) | Beirut NOW Lebanon in English -- A privately-funded pro-14 March coalition, anti-Syria news website; URL: www.nowlebanon.com]

⁶ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120519648005 | 19 May 2012 | | Al-Jazirah Reports on Dayr al-Zawr Blast, Interviews Syrian Politicians | | (U) | (U) | Doha Al-Jazirah Satellite Channel Television in Arabic Influential Qatari Government-funded pan-Arab news channel; generally critical of US Middle East policy; provides platform to opponents of some Arab governments; promotes human rights and political and social reforms.]

⁷ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120522966047 | 22 May 2012 | | NOW Lebanon: Damascus suburb rocked by overnight bomb, activists say | | (U) | (U) | Beirut NOW Lebanon in English -- A privately-funded pro-14 March coalition, anti-Syria news website; URL: www.nowlebanon.com]

⁸ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120524966061 | 24 May 2012 | | SANA: Armed Group Kills a Number of Border Guards in Deir Ezzor...Terrorists Kill 2 Citizens in - Microsoft Internet Explorer O | | (U) | (U) | Damascus SANA Online in English -- Website of the official press agency of the Syrian Government; URL: <http://www.sana.sy>]

⁹ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120520966197 | 20 May 2012 | | SANA: Four Explosive Devices Planted by Terrorists Dismantled in Idleb | | (U) | (U) | Damascus SANA Online in English -- Website of the official press agency of the Syrian Government; URL: <http://www.sana.sy>]

¹⁰ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120523625002 | 23 May 2012 | | SANA: Syrian Authorities Discover Weapons Manufacturing Warehouse in Homs | | (U) | (U) | Damascus SANA Online in English -- Website of the official press agency of the Syrian Government; URL: <http://www.sana.sy>]

¹¹ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120521966049 | 21 May 2012 | | SANA: Tunisian Terrorists Confess to Entering Syria via Turkey with Coordination between So-Cal - Microsoft Internet Explorer O | | (U) | (U) | Damascus SANA Online in English -- Website of the official press agency of the Syrian Government; URL: <http://www.sana.sy>]

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¹² [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120521700009 | 21 May 2012 | | NOW Lebanon: Beirut Clashes Leave 2 Dead, Syria Spillover Feared | | (U) | (U) | Beirut NOW Lebanon in English -- A privately-funded pro-14 March coalition, anti-Syria news website; URL: www.nowlebanon.com]

¹³ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120520966337 | 20 May 2012 | | Al Jazeera Online: Tension in Lebanon Over Checkpoint Deaths | | (U) | (U) | Doha Al Jazeera Online in English -- Website of the Al Jazeera English TV, international English-language news service of Al-Jazirah, influential Qatari Government-funded pan-Arab news channel; generally critical of US Middle East policy; provides platform to opponents of some Arab governments; promotes human rights and political and social reforms; URL: <http://aljazeera.com>]

¹⁴ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120523966168 | 23 May 2012 | | Al Jazeera Online: Returning Lebanese Tell of Kidnapping | | (U) | (U) | Doha Al Jazeera Online in English -- Website of the Al Jazeera English TV, international English-language news service of Al-Jazirah, influential Qatari Government-funded pan-Arab news channel; generally critical of US Middle East policy; provides platform to opponents of some Arab governments; promotes human rights and political and social reforms; URL: <http://aljazeera.com>]

¹⁵ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120523966060 | 23 May 2012 | | NOW Lebanon: Free Syrian Army denies abducting Lebanese pilgrims | | (U) | (U) | Beirut NOW Lebanon in English -- A privately-funded pro-14 March coalition, anti-Syria news website; URL: www.nowlebanon.com]

¹⁶ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120523615001 | 22 May 2012 | | Syria: FSA Officer Denies Abduction of Lebanese Visitors, Blames Regime | | (U) | (U) | Doha Al-Jazirah Satellite Channel Television in Arabic – Influential Qatari Government-funded pan-Arab news channel; generally critical of US Middle East policy; provides platform to opponents of some Arab governments; promotes human rights and political and social reforms.]

¹⁷ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120524966030 | 24 May 2012 | | NOW Lebanon: Syrian rebel chief formally resigns | | (U) | (U) | Beirut NOW Lebanon in English -- A privately-funded pro-14 March coalition, anti-Syria news website; URL: www.nowlebanon.com]

¹⁸ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120520644004 | 20 May 2012 | | SANA: Foreign Ministry's Report: Sanctions on Syria Violate Human Rights | | (U) | (U) | Damascus SANA Online in English -- Website of the official press agency of the Syrian Government; URL: <http://www.sana.sy>]

¹⁹ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20120524966075 | 24 May 2012 | | NOW Lebanon: Syrian army behind majority of rights abuses, say UN investigators | | (U) | (U) | Beirut NOW Lebanon in English -- A privately-funded pro-14 March coalition, anti-Syria news website; URL: www.nowlebanon.com]

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