

# Syrian Geopolitics: an analysis of the International coalition intervention led by the USA

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*"Who did not die from Assad planes, died from Al Saoud Planes, they are numerous planes and the bombing is one"*

In recent weeks we have seen the establishment of an USA led International coalition also composed of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Jordan to launch a joint military operation, on Syrian territory, with the tacit support of the Assad regime as we will see, against Daech (also known as the Islamic State (IS)).

Several levels of analysis are needed to understand the dynamics of this intervention.

## **USA led coalition targets Daech, but others as well, including civilians**

The initial declared objective of the USA led coalition was to target Daech military facilities and training camps, but more particularly its oil facilities to try to stem a source of revenues for the group.

Before the military operation initiated by the United States, IS earned about 3 million dollars (2.4 million euros) in revenue per day through oil. But since the strikes began, pumping in the fields under their control virtually ceased. The USA led coalition targeted various Daech positions.

For example on September 25, the USA led coalition targeted 12 Daech controlled modular oil refineries in eastern Syria.

On September 29, the coalition bombed the city of Tal Abyad, occupied by Daech, in A-Raqqa province and struck Tabqa airport eight times, a former regime base which Daech fighters captured in August.

The USA led coalition has nevertheless targeted since the beginning of its operation not only Daech, but also Jabhat al Nusra (official al Qaida branch in Syria), the affiliated Khorasan Group in Idlib and

Aleppo provinces and the salafist group Ahrar al-Sham in Aleppo, as well as civilians and civil infrastructures.

The U.S.-led air campaign has killed at least 233 persons, including 211 jihadists and 22 civilians, according to the Observatory in the first week of the bombing.

On September 29, coalition warplanes reportedly hit the city of Manbij, occupied by Daech, in the northeast of the city of Aleppo and one of the strikes may have mistaken the mills and grain storage areas for an IS base, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The strikes in Manbij appeared to have killed only civilians, the workers at the silos. The destruction of city's grain silos will provoke most probably a humanitarian disaster, according to the pro-opposition Aleppo Media Center.

According to local activists in Hasakah, the international coalition targeted the IS-held Ash-Shaddadi and the towns of Margada and al-Hol as well as the surrounding villages in the countryside of Hasakah on September 28, provoking mass displacement among civilians following the unexpected strikes. The coalition's air strikes also targeted the village of al-Fadgami (near the town of Margada), killing six civilians and injuring others though no IS members were present. [\[1\]](#)

On September 28, coalition warplanes struck the Daech-controlled Conoco gas plant in the city of Deir Zor, which is according to an activist, critically important, as it feeds several electricity generation stations in the country that produce electricity for approximately a quarter of Syria [\[2\]](#). A raid also hit Kuniko gas plant, which feeds a power station in Homs that provides several provinces with electricity and powers oil fields generators.

On September 23 in the village of Kafr Deryan in northern Idlib, missiles (Tomahawk cruise missiles, which are in the US arsenal.) from the coalition killed at least two men, two women, and five children. There is unverified information that the two men could have been members of Jabhat al-Nusra.

Once again civilians and civil infrastructure are the targets of a USA led intervention.

### **The issue of Kobani and the threat of Daech**

The USA led coalition has awaited September 30 to strike some Daech armed forces close to Kobani/ Ain al-Arab, which is nevertheless still under the threat of the jihadist force. On September 29, Daech was actually within 5 km (3 miles) from the Kurdish town of Kobani / Ain al-Arab near the Syrian-Turkey border.

This is the closest Daech militants have come to the city since Daech started their offensive two weeks ago. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that the jihadists were firing rockets that hit the town center.

Despite airstrikes by a US-led international coalition to stop Daech, the militants have made advances and captured 67 villages surrounding the area near Kobani / Ain al-Arab. This has resulted in at least 160,000 people fleeing across the border into Turkey,

Meanwhile, Turkish security forces clashed with displaced Kurds protesting along the border Sunday and Monday, deploying water cannons and tear gas. Turkish authorities have also been intermittently preventing people from returning to Syria, worried about members of its own Kurdish guerrilla group, the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, trying to join the YPG in the fight against

Daech.

By attacking Kobane / Ain al-Arab, Daech is attempting to consolidate control over its territory between strongholds in Aleppo's al-Bab city and A-Raqqa city. Daech began fighting joint PYD and FSA forces in the Kurdish-majority area of Kobane / Ain al-Arab in July. It escalated its campaign mid September by employing tanks, heavy artillery and surface-to-surface missiles, publishing photos of the heavy machinery in action on Daech-affiliated media websites.

It is most probably in this framework of catastrophic situation and no alternative was provided to save these people leaving their homes to escape Daech that the Kurdish PYD leader Salih Moslem has declared its support to the US coalition's bombings. He stated that the US attacks were a positive step for the fight against Daech [3].

### **The bombings will benefit the counter revolutionary forces**

These bombing are an attempt by Western imperialist forces and regional regimes led by Saudi Arabia to reimpose their hegemony over the region.

The only political groups that will benefit from these bombings are the two sides of the counter revolutions: the Assad regimes on one side and the reactionary Islamic and Jihadist political forces.

The Assad regime will most probably benefit on the short term from these bombings militarily with the weakening of strong military actors, Assad forces have actually continued its attacks on various areas of the country, but moreover the regime sees a chance to regain "legitimacy" with the West as part of an alliance in the War against Terrorism.

The bombing might probably weaken on the short term military Daech, Jabhat al Nusra and other reactionary forces, but will also most likely to prove counterproductive for the Syrian revolutionaries upholding the objectives of the revolution by increasing the popular support for IS, Jabhat al Nusra and other reactionary forces, driving even more recruits to their ranks. These forces are already painting themselves as the only serious anti-imperialist movement, rather than the reactionary and sectarian outfit they have.

On September 26, more than 200 fighters had actually joined Islamic State in Syria's northern Aleppo province since U.S. President Barack Obama said the United States would strike the jihadist organization. Rami Abdelrahman, who runs the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said that the pace of recruitment in September was higher than average but below the surge in July, after Daech declared a caliphate in the territory it controlled in Syria and Iraq and called on Muslims to join a holy war. Most of the new men came from al Qaeda's Syrian wing, the Nusra Front, and were mostly Syrian. [4].

This had of course consequence on Jabhat al Nusra as well, which has not stopped to radicalize even more its discourse to prevent the departure of its members, especially foreigners, to Daech. Following the bombing of their positions in Idlib, some members have claimed their will and readiness to fight with Daech [5].

This summer for example, before the strikes, Al Jolani declared that "We took up arms to uphold the word of Allah and its arbitration, and deter aggressors, as stipulated by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah", and in another recording he said "Either Sharia arbitration or fighting for the sake of Allah". It is at this period as well that Jabhat al Nusra withdrew from the legitimate bodies of Damascus and Aleppo, working individually to expand its influence, and also launched campaign in

Idlib's countryside to "deter corruptors", mainly targeting pro revolution activists.

On September 27, following the strikes targeting them, the leader of Jabhat a-Nusra actually threatened to target the West.

"The battle against our countries will come to you," said Nusra chief Abu Mohammed al-Jolani. "You won't be safe in your own countries unless you resist the decision of your leaders" to bomb Syria." Jolani's threats come a day after Nusra said that nations participating in the alliance have become legitimate targets for mujahideen "all over the world," describing international airstrikes as an "ugly crime against Syrians" and a "war against Islam" in a statement released by official spokesman Abu Firas a-Suri.

These bombings have definitely strengthened relatively the support of Jabhat al Nusra and other Islamic political forces on the ground as we can see in several demonstrations such as in Aleppo [6] Idlib [7] and Homs, demonstrators chant "We are all Nusra" or "Jabhat al-Nusra came to support us when the world abandoned us" [8].

This increase in popularity will most probably be temporary, but will definitely strengthen these organizations.

The opposition to the strikes in Syria by the coalition and against Daech, Jabhat al Nusra and other Islamic reactionary organizations in no way should make us forget that increasing and multiple popular protests occurred against these counter revolutionary forces because of their authoritarianism and reactionary practices.

### **The Syrian regime approves the bombing**

The Syrian regime has welcomed the strikes from the USA led coalition. In a statement from the official news agency SANA, Bashar Al Assad, although without specifically mentioning the bombing, said he supported "all international counterterrorism effort".

In addition, Ali Haidar, Syrian minister for national reconciliation said that "As for the raids in Syria, I say that what has happened so far is proceeding in the right direction in terms of informing the Syrian government and by not targeting Syrian military installations and not targeting civilians" [9].

The pro-regime news network Damascus Now hailed the strikes since the beginning as a historic moment, in which "happiness was etched on the faces of the majority of Syrians, because they found international support towards eradicating a cancer which has been rooted in the diseased Syrian body," referring to the revolutionaries.

On September 29, Syria's foreign minister said that his government is satisfied with the U.S.-led bombing campaign against the Islamic State group, adding that the airstrikes should be expanded to include all other militant groups in Syria. In an interview with The Associated Press, Walid al-Moallem said the fight against terrorism has aligned Damascus with Western and Arab opponents in fighting the same enemy. Al-Moallem said the U.S. does not inform Syria of every strike before it happens, "but it's OK."

As a reminder the Assad regime only started to target Daech forces mid of August while before it led it spread to various areas while targeting democrats and the FSA battalions mainly. Before this date, quasi no military conflicts occurred between Daech and Assad forces.

## **Opposition of the Syrian opposition forces to the bombings**

These bombings have resulted in wide range of opposition from groups on the ground and the popular movement, while also mounting strong suspicions to the objectives of the USA led coalition. The Syrian National Council and of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces have supported and welcomed the USA led coalition bombings.

Colonel Riad al-Asaad, Founder of the FSA opposed USA planned airstrikes before the beginning of the operations and declared that it will eliminate Syrians' revolution as it will strengthen Bashar al-Assad and his key ally, Iran. Al-Asaad called on moderate rebels to mass efforts for more unity to revive the Syrian revolution after saying that this latter was being kidnapped by radical Islamist groups and West-backed agendas [10].

Before this call, 10 armed groups in Eastern Ghouta suburbs near Damascus announced in video statement the establishment of the 'Nation Army' as a new armed faction seeking to overthrow Bashar al-Assad's regime as well as to protect civilians and cooperating with other armed opposition groups [11].

Harakat Hazm, a FSA battalion composed of few thousands men and that operated mostly in Hama condemned the US led coalition bombing on September 23. They denounced the strikes as "an attack on national sovereignty" and work to "undermine the Syrian revolution". They added that foreign intervention "will harm the revolution, especially seeing as the international community continues to ignore revolutionary forces' calls for weapons," the group said, adding that "the only side to benefit... is the Assad regime, without any real strategy to bring about its downfall." [12].

Regarding armed groups, Abu Ammar al-Halabi, former leader of the Islamic Front in Aleppo, expressed his condemnation of the coalition's strikes because they do not target the regime "which used chemical weapons in Eastern Ghouta -southern Syria- in 2013, killing 1400 people in one day".

A number of other groups have raised their opposition to USA led coalition strikes, such as the Jaish al-Mujadeen [13], Abu Ratib, head of the Al-Haq Brigade, part of the Islamic Front, characterized the intervention "a total war against Muslims" [14]; Suqour al-Sham, the main Islamic Front unit in Idlib, condemned the airstrikes and said they "will breed more extremism and terrorism" [15]; the Army of Islam, the IF unit in Damascus, also condemned the strikes; the FSA Forqat 13 issued a statement condemning US-led airstrikes as "aimed at weakening the revolution" in Syria [16].

A number of popular organizations and opposition armed groups have also opposed the international coalition bombings.

The LCC declared that "an end to the Islamic State needs to happen concurrently with an end to the equal terrorist threat represented by Bashar al-Assad's regime," and note that they "are herewith confirming their previous stances considering Assad's regime the foremost enemy of the Syrian people and assuring that extremism and terrorism were the products of the regime's crimes." [17]

Several popular committees and organizations operating in Damascus and its countryside issued a statement rejecting the military operations of the international coalition led by USA and supported by some Arab regimes, which bombed several sites in Syria targeting civilians under the pretext of targeting the organization of the Islamic State. They reject the strikes against jihadist groups that stood on the side of the Syrian revolution and the defense of civilians, while accusing these bombings of serving only the interests of the Assad regime, and not the interests of the Syrian people and the revolution. On September 27, a demonstration in Qaboun neighborhood of Damascus was organized to refuse the international military operations against Syria, and rejecting any kind of

foreign intervention [18]

The Local Coordination committee of al-Hara City, in Daraa province, wrote on its facebook to condemn the bombings the following thing: "Screw you [lit. screw your moustache] and screw every Arab leader who participated in the oppression of the Syrian people and declared them fair game...Really, Arabs no longer have any shame." [19]. In the same time, LCC in Salqin, Idlib, wrote on its facebook page that "The international coalition will pursue the destruction of infrastructure—roads, bridges, electricity stations, different economic institutions—and the goal is to destroy the life and resilience of our people."

We can also see in both videos (the first taken in liberated areas of Aleppo () and the second among Syrian refugees in Turkey [20] that people oppose the bombings against other targets that Daech, no illusions exist in the USA led coalition and these bombings are not in the interests of the Syrian revolution but of the countries of the region and of the Assad regime.

The Violations Documentation Center has also opposed these strikes arguing that: "The present air strikes against those groups raise concerns that civilians may also pay a heavy price, as such groups establish command centers in civilian areas, in various Syrian towns and villages. Furthermore, a number of the command centers have been converted by those groups to become detention centers. Thousands of inmates and persons who have been kidnapped, including many activists and journalists are now detained in such centers. Those groups also control installations containing dangerous materials, including the Conoco gas plant, in the Khasham village near Dei Ezzor. This plant contains one of the largest ISIS centers. If its gas stocks are hit, this may cause enormous destruction as well as an environmental hazard of incalculable proportions."

We have also seen banners condemning the bombings or the hypocrisy of the regime such as "the planes coalitions showed the lie of the conspiracies ya "moumani3" (people who supports the regime on a so called "Resistant" and "anti imperialist" basis")

The Revolutionary Left Movement have opposed these bombing since the first day [21].

The National Coordinating Committee for Democratic Change in Syria also rejects USA intervention in Syria, even with the Syrian government's approval.

In the same time, some Syrian revolutionaries in the city of Da3el have condemned the fact that UN security Council have adopted a binding resolution to stem the flow of foreign jihadists in Syria and Iraq, and oppose the threat they pose to their country of origin, while not a single word was said of foreign fighters on the said of the Assad regime, particularly of Hezbollah and Iraqis sectarian militias, Pasdaran.

## **FSA and Kurdish coordinations and collaborations**

The YPG (People's Protection Units), arm branch of the PYD, recently sealed an anti-IS alliance with various groups affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (FSA), founding what they call the Joint Action Center. Its purported goal is to liberate all territories held by IS in Syria. The announcement was made in a joint statement in the Kurdish city of Sari Kani in northern Syria.

In the statement both groups call on the international community to assist them militarily so they can eradicate the extremist group.



## Conclusion

The objectives of the USA led coalition are not to assist and help the Syrian revolutionaries or to protect them from Daech or the regime. The objective is to reimpose their hegemony over the region and guarantee a form of stability, especially to the reactionary regimes of the Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, by putting an end to the revolutionary processes.

These strikes are also in the framework of reaching a Yemeni solution, as it has since the beginning, in other words reaching an agreement between the Assad regime (or section of it) and the opposition linked to Western and Gulf regimes. The approval of the US Congress of the \$500 million to support President Barack Obama's plan to arm and equip five to 10,000 Syrian rebels, which Washington describes as "moderate" in their fight against the Islamic State and Syrian regime forces, goes in the same direction as we can see in the text of the resolution:

"The Secretary of Defense is authorized, in coordination with the Secretary of State, to provide assistance, including training, equipment, supplies, and sustainment, to appropriately vetted elements of the Syrian opposition and other appropriately vetted Syrian groups and individuals for the following purposes:

(1)Defending the Syrian people from attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and securing territory controlled by the Syrian opposition.

(2)Protecting the United States, its friends and allies, and the Syrian people from the threats posed by terrorists in Syria.

(3)Promoting the conditions for a negotiated settlement to end the conflict in Syria."

The will of the USA to constitute armed groups in Syria loyal to their interests is nevertheless thwarted by the reality on the ground and the will of the opposition armed groups in their vast majority to collaborate only if they are able to maintain their independence and autonomous decision and if the collaboration includes a clear plan for the overthrow of the Assad regime. Colonel Riad al-Asaad, the leader of the Free Syrian Army, for example said it would not join the alliance against the Islamic State unless it receives assurances on toppling the Syrian regime. He added that "If they want to see the Free Syrian Army on their side, they should give assurances on toppling the Assad regime and on a plan including revolutionary principles." Other armed groups present in the Supreme Military Council of Syria, close to the USA, also expressed their resentment to the USA and other Western forces for their lack of support. In addition, they said that coalition airstrikes against ISIS targets were not enough. The strikes must also hit al-Assad's forces, they said. One of the commander said that "we need to deal with this problem at its root cause: Assad, the gangs that support him and Daech. Those are the three problems every Syrian deals with." Many armed groups were also critical of the way the strikes were being carried out and as we have seen many inside the country on the side of the revolution reject these bombings.

The Jihadist and Islamic reactionary forces are used by the Western imperialist and regional forces as the entry point for this new military intervention, but also because these they have gone too far in their process of expansion for Western and regional imperialist forces by ignoring State borders and creating unwilling instability for these powers. We should remember that Daech that was established in 2006 was of no interest to these powers when they were confined to specific geographic locations in Iraq first and later Syria and was even financially supported by some Gulf private networks in the beginning.

Although Daech and other sister organizations are a factor of instability for the global imperialist

system, we should be clear they are in no ways actors for the emancipation and liberation of the people of the region, they are very much the opposite.

The revolutionary processes are in a difficult period with the domination of two counter revolutionary forces, represented first by the old regimes supported by Saudi Arabia such as in the case of Sissi 's Egypt, and Islamic reactionary forces, its best representative being the Muslim Brotherhood, supported by Qatar. We can nevertheless see once more that the rivalries between the various imperialist and sub imperialist forces can be overcome when they have shared and common interests, as it the case with the current bombings in Syria and Iraq by the USA led coalition and welcomed or at least tacitly by Russia and Iran.

A third progressive and democratic front gathering the objectives of the revolutions (democracy, social justice and equality) and able to oppose all foreign imperialist and sub imperialist forces have not been able yet to constitute itself as a credible alternative political force until now for the masses on the regional basis. All efforts should be put forward to build this third democratic and progressive alternative.

We are living a revolutionary crisis on many aspects as described by Gramsci: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear". Daech symbolized on many aspects "this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear", while old regimes are far from dead.

In the same time, the bombings from the USA led coalitions have killed more civilians and destroyed most needed civilian infrastructure.

These are the reasons why we should oppose these bombings.

In addition, to believe that Daech, Jabhat al Nusra and other similar organizations can be defeated with the same tools that created them is completely insane. These reactionary forces are indeed the consequences of the criminal authoritarian regimes (for example Assad in Syria and Saddam Hussein in Iraq) and foreign international (mainly Western countries led by the USA at its head) and regional (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Iran) interventions. This new military intervention has indeed no objective of overthrowing the Assad regime.

As a banner held by a Syrian protester in Aleppo last week said: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results, Albert Einstein" and below "Afghanistan 2001, Iraq 2003, Syria 2014.

Only the popular mass movement is capable of confronting these reactionary forces and the authoritarian regimes.

We must support and express solidarity with all the democratic and progressive forces in Syria and Iraq as well as the Kurdish democratic forces that resist against the two actors of the counter revolution: the Assad regimes on one side and the jihadist and Islamic reactionary forces on the other side.

In this perspective it is necessary to defend a local dynamic of self-defense rather than increasing stranglehold of imperialism and therefore we should also support the provision of weapons and arms to these democratic forces in the region to combat both counter revolutionary forces. These are important element that could empower the democratic forces on the ground and give them the tools to defend them.

For the people who feel not at ease with the fact of demanding arms and weapons with no political



conditions attached from the West, I would like to invite them to read the text of Trotsky "Learn to Think" and cite this passage:

"Let us imagine that in the next European war the Belgian proletariat conquers power sooner than the proletariat of France. Undoubtedly Hitler will try to crush the proletarian Belgium. In order to cover up its own flank, the French bourgeois government might find itself compelled to help the Belgian workers' government with arms. The Belgian Soviets of course reach for these arms with both hands. But actuated by the principle of defeatism, perhaps the French workers ought to block their bourgeoisie from shipping arms to proletarian Belgium? Only direct traitors or out-and-out idiots can reason thus.

The French bourgeoisie could send arms to proletarian Belgium only out of fear of the greatest military danger and only in expectation of later crushing the proletarian revolution with their own weapons. To the French workers, on the contrary, proletarian Belgium is the greatest support in the struggle against their own bourgeoisie. The outcome of the struggle would be decided, in the final analysis, by the relationship of forces, into which correct policies enter as a very important factor. The revolutionary party's first task is to utilize the contradiction between two imperialist countries, France and Germany, in order to save proletarian Belgium.

Ultra-left scholastics think not in concrete terms but in empty abstractions. They have transformed the idea of defeatism into such a vacuum. They can see vividly neither the process of war nor the process of revolution. They seek a hermetically sealed formula, which excludes fresh air. But a formula of this kind can offer no orientation for the proletarian vanguard."

This does not mean of course that we are uncritical of the leadership of the PKK and FSA democratic sections, which do not have a socialist leadership, but neither were the Palestinian Liberation Organization or the National Liberation Front in Algeria and this did not stop revolutionaries to support them. We have to understand that the various International (USA and Russia) and regional (Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar) imperialist powers have been trying to smash these revolutionary processes and these groups as well because they challenge the global capitalist and imperialist system by their struggle against authoritarian regimes and reactionary groups, which were part of this system.

As a fundamental principle of revolutionaries, we first need to support these forms of liberation and emancipation struggle unconditionally, before we are entitled to criticize the way they are led.

**Joseph Daher**

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**P.S.**

\* Syria Freedom For Ever. Posted on September 30, 2014:

<https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/syria-an-analysis-of-the-international-coalition-intervention-led-by-the-usa/>

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**Footnotes**

[1] <http://aranews.net/2014/09/civilians-killed-u-s-led-anti-isil-strikes-syria-activists/>

- [2] <http://syriadirect.org/rss/1586-syria-direct-news-update-9-29-14>
- [3] [http://civiroglu.net/2014/09/23/pyd\\_airstrikes/](http://civiroglu.net/2014/09/23/pyd_airstrikes/)
- [4] <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN0HL0V120140926?irpc=932>
- [5] <http://eldorar.com/node/60262>
- [6] <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/ByTcYjYCcAEeOnA.jpg:large>
- [7] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ww2LT-Wcpcc&feature=youtu.be>
- [8] <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/ByTtNQkIYAETWtU.jpg:large>
- [9] [http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/24/us-syria-crisis-minister-idUSKCN0HJ19S20140924?utm\\_source=twitter](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/24/us-syria-crisis-minister-idUSKCN0HJ19S20140924?utm_source=twitter)
- [10] <https://www.zamanlws1.net/en/news/6704.html>
- [11] <https://www.zamanlws1.net/en/news/6679.html>
- [12] see full statement here <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/ByPSsxMIYAQy2Wt.jpg>
- [13] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ClRaIMESbk&feature=youtu.be>
- [14] <http://syriadirect.org/rss/1580-syria-direct-news-update-9-24-14>
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- [18] <http://www.damas-mo.com/home-page/hot-news/item/892-البيان-الاجتماعي-للمجلس-الوطني-لدمشق.html>
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- [21] see statement:  
<https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2014/09/23/revolutionary-left-movement-in-syria-position-around-the-bombings-of-the-international-coalition-led-by-the-usa/>