

# Did Assad and Maliki Facilitate the Rise of the Islamic State? An Interview with M. Zuhdi Jasser and Sherkoh Abbas

by Jerry Gordon (September 2014)



The rise of the Islamic State, formerly ISIS, amidst the Syrian Civil war and sectarian divide in Iraq raises questions of how this Salafist Supremacist group was left virtually undeterred? Was it perhaps with the acquiescence of both Shia leaders, Assad and Maliki, allies of the Islamic Republic of Iran? Moreover, did both Assad and Maliki fail to recognize the ultimate dangers of accommodating this Sunni extremist group, while affording it the opportunity to destroy opposition Sunni and Kurdish forces in their respective countries? Is this a case of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” an ancient proverb gone awry leading to the possible destruction of both countries? The untoward consequences of the actions of both autocrats have effectively pushed the US and others in the West to return to the Iraqi battlefield and possibly enter the fray in Syria. Endeavoring to combat the spread of the Islamic State may return thousands of foreign jihadists to threaten the EU, UK, Canada and the US. Warnings by Syrian secular opposition leaders like Dr. [M. Zuhdi Jasser](#) of the American Forum for Islam and Democracy and [Dr. Sherkoh Abbas](#) of the Kurdish National Assembly of Syria went unheeded here in the US, despite testimony presented to Congress in March 2011.

Abbas in a *Midah* Israeli magazine [interview](#) in early July 2014 noted:

Assad has attempted to portray the Syrian revolution to the international community as a Salafi, Al-Qaida-led terrorist insurrection. So the same people Assad sent to Iraq to kill American soldiers while the US was liberating Iraq ...were in Syria and working for him. They formed the various radical groups including Jabhat Al Nusra, the ISIS. These groups were all part of the Assad-Iran mechanism. They used them very successfully in Iraq, and ...in Syria to “come to the aid” of the Syrian revolution. That led the Syrian people to perceive them as friends, oblivious ... that they were meant to portray the

revolution as radical and Al-Qaeda-linked and prevent any support from the international community.

[...]

We believe it's all part of Maliki and Iran's plan to sow chaos, induce panic in the international community and receive its support in their campaign against the jihadi threat to the entire Middle East, make sure no rebels receive any outside support and at the same time give themselves carte blanche to bomb and kill anyone inside Iraq with impunity. It also allows for Iran to send its forces into Iraq and control that region. To sum up, the Shiite Crescent, Iran, Iraq and Syria have implemented this dual plan with Russian support, and the Iraqi and Syrian people are paying the price.

A *Wall Street Journal*, report on August 23, 2014, "[Assad Policies Aided Rise of Islamic State Militant Group](#)" noted the double game that both Assad and Maliki played:

Mr. Assad decided to mostly avoid [A Battle for the Soul of Islam](#). Happy to fill in for Lisa. This is the only program on Salem Broadcasting fully dedicated to protecting the American homeland, the West and its closest ally Israel. Week after week the Lisa Benson Radio Show for national security matters brings accurate, measured and intelligent information. It's my pleasure and honor to sit in for Lisa while she's away. I'm also honored to be joined by our co-host my good friend Jerry Gordon who is a Senior Editor of the *New English Review* and it's blog, *The Iconoclast*.



**Gordon:** Glad to be back.

**Jasser:** Thanks, it's great to have you with me and this is going to be an interesting program. We've just got so much to cover and we're also going to be joined by Dr. Sherkoh Abbas, a Veteran leader of the Syrian Kurdish community and President of the Kurdistan National Assembly of Syria. He is also a long time friend in the trenches especially on the Syrian issue, Sherkoh, welcome.



**Abbas:** Hello Zuhdi, hello Jerry.

**Jasser:** The first thing that we have to talk about that has been obviously on the front of everyone's minds and prayers is the conflict in Israel and Gaza and the warmongering as Hamas continues to send rockets. I have to tell you first off; I am struck by just the venom, vitriol and sheer hate that has erupted in simply a matter of days here in the West, the U.S. and even beyond. Obviously the anti-Semitism, but just the sheer hate that is coming out from Hamas supporters all over the West and the US. Unfortunately, we are not hearing voices that say not only free Gaza, but free Gaza from Hamas. The fact is that Hamas started this. It is almost as if the further you get from the Middle East the more radical those voices are. You have seen so many columnists in the Middle East saying what is Hamas doing? Why are they continuing to stoke war and victimize their populations? We see columnists across the Arab world talking about that. Yet as we get further away from Israel, Western Islamists are run by Muslim Brotherhood organizations. Hamas offshoots like the Council on American Islamist Relations (CAIR) continue to stoke hate. We saw a video of a rally in Atlanta where various Islamists were attacking videographers and making it seem as if that this is no longer America. Jerry, what's your take on the level of discourse that we see?

**Gordon:** Discourse is rather biased in some of the mainstream media and in the social media battles that have been erupting, since this third Gaza War against Israel began in early July. We at the National Security Communications Task Force were fortunate to have launched a countering social media campaign using both Facebook and Twitter that hopefully defeated those who represented Hamas. The real story in this conflict was the discovery of a mega 9/11 plot by Hamas using over 35 tunnels that were discovered by the IDF. U.S. intelligence estimated that there could be upwards of 60 tunnels that Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) have excavated. Those tunnels were to be used for an attack on Rosh Hashanah this year. Hamas was to send hundreds, of suicide commandos through them to attack Israeli villages and towns in the South and infiltrate through the country to both kill and capture hostages. The rocket war took a very severe turn. That justified Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's decision to unleash the ground incursion in Gaza to destroy those terror tunnels, rocket caches and fighters. At this moment something in excess of 1,900 Palestinians have been killed against 64 Israeli soldiers and three Israeli civilians. However that lopsided figure hides a number of

things including the fact that upwards of seventy percent of those killed according to Al-Jazeera were men age 18 to 44 who are likely to be Hamas and PIJ fighters.

**Jasser:** The amazing thing Jerry is that as the world learns about these tunnels and we see videos of them, we start to realize the amount of effort, manpower, money and concrete that went into creating them. We look at the missiles that are being launched and we are learning that they came from Iran. You look at the amount of money that the Hamas leadership in Gaza had spent on this and you wonder why, with all of the Arab awakening happening, why the Gazans continue to allow themselves to be lead by corrupt leadership that has exploited their communities. Hamas Leader Khaled Mashal was revealed as having palaces, staying at the Ritz and living lavishly in Qatar and elsewhere, while his population suffers. Yet the narrative to the West has been that they are "occupied" and all the other nonsense that we see coming out of their propaganda. Why is that continuing to dominate? Yet the reality that we see now being revealed is actually quite the opposite, a corrupt leadership.

**Gordon:** Khaled Mashal, one of the leaders of Hamas who lives in luxury as you said in Qatar, was estimated to have wealth of over \$2.6 billion. Compare that with a study that was done recently about 160 children in Gaza who died in the course of excavating those very tunnels that we have been talking about. That is atrocious behavior. In addition, you have what only could be called a whole string of Pollywood Productions akin to what happened in September 2000 with the al-Dura Blood Libel accusation against the IDF. That Blood Libel continues in the accusation by a Hamas representative who said on CNN that Palestinian children in Gaza were murdered so that Jews could use their blood to make Passover Matzohs. This after it took Israel thirteen years to finally to resolve that the al Dura killing never occurred.

**Jasser:** As we are talking about Hamas we see Egypt, the UAE, the Saudis and many in the mafia club of the Arab League have even come out against Hamas. Having said that, what are the dynamics that we see evolving now different than it has been in the past? On the one hand these frenemies promote radical Wahhabism and Salafism ideology funded with billions of dollars across the world. On the other hand, some are now on the same side against Hamas in this conflict. Even more so than we have ever seen before. What is the regional dynamic that you think is happening there?

**Gordon:** I think the dynamic there is basically a very loose coalition between Qatar on the one hand and Turkey. These are the frenemies. The U.S. administration has cultivated relationships with both countries. They are clearly Islamist. They are Muslim Brotherhood supporters. You may recall that the November 2012 Operation Pillar of Defense concluded in eight days with a cease fire brokered by former Egyptian President Morsi, a Muslim Brotherhood

leader. Qatar put on the table over \$405 million dollars to “fund reconstruction of Gaza.” There is more than ample evidence that a goodly portion of that was diverted for the creation of these massive underground cities of tunnels and entrances that facilitated this current war.

**Jasser:** Look at Qatar’s information operation through Al-Jazeera. We saw a Democratic Congressman Brad Sherman a couple of weeks ago talk about how Qatar is facilitating enemies of America by defending Hamas and enemies of Israel. Yet few and far in-between have spoken out the way Brad Sherman and others have. The bottom line is look at their information operations, while on the other hand we have done very little. We are allowing Egypt and others of our frenemies to be the counter balance when they of work with them as the lowest common denominator or the lowest hanging fruit if you will.

**Gordon:** The Israelis are very good about high tech. They are very good about being the most significant military power in that troubled region. However, when it comes to telling their story they never get it across. Some of that may be attributable to Israelis and Jews being held to “a higher moral standard” by those people who really want to destroy them.

**Jasser:** I think that is such a good point. How do we get out of this cycle of debating moral equivalency which is absurd between the war that Israel is fighting versus the terrorism that Hamas is doing and the loss of innocent life we would all want to prevent. We saw this in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars where our soldiers, our sons and daughters were fighting a legitimate war for global security against the Taliban, against their housing of Al-Qaeda, against the forces of Saddam and others in Iraq and Al-Qaeda. Yet the images in the West and globally were that somehow we were killing civilians and that was our intent, when obviously Hamas’ intent is to kill civilians and they view every Israeli citizen as being a potential victim. While in the West we have a very different moral standard. How do we get that message out that it is that we have a very different moral standard in the West?

**Gordon:** I think it was simply said by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu who indicated that Israel uses missiles to defend its people. While Hamas and its terrorist partners in Gaza use people to defend those missiles and rockets that they are sending against innocent lives in Israel.

**Jasser:** Let’s turn to a neighboring country that has seen almost 200,000 dead and five million people displaced and are continuing to suffer when we talk about Syria. Our next guest is Dr. Sherkoh Abbas, the veteran leader of the Syrian Kurdish community and President of the Kurdistan National Assembly of Syria and a longtime friend in the trenches on the Syrian

issue. Sherkoh, could you finish off the discussion on Israel and Hamas adding any thoughts you may have as we transition into discussing about Syria.

**Abbas:** Great, it was a good discussion actually. As Jerry mentioned about 1900 Palestinians have been killed so far in the Gaza war and probably several thousand more were injured. This is basically a fertile ground for Hamas, for Al-Qaeda or the Muslim Brotherhood to recruit from those families who have suffered losses, That is why Hamas has always tried to prevent Palestinians from leaving certain areas and always launching rockets from areas where civilian people reside putting them into harm's way. Subsequently, they try to recruit them. So in essence really what Hamas is doing is destroying Palestinians. This is the problem that we see with Arab nations from Saudis to Qataris, Egypt, Syria, Iraq; all of their ideologies seek to destroy Israel. To destroy anybody not an Arab. In the Middle East to bomb Israelis, Kurds, other minorities such as Coptics and Assyrians. So the bottom line is that these ideologies need to be changed. It has been more than five or six decades that they have been teaching this culture of hate, killing and destruction. Their ideology of hate revolving around one thing. It's how to get rid of a human being or a life, to destroy life. Instead of building the future for their people and building cultures, cities, towns and a better life for their people. All they are doing is making it difficult for their people and destroying their lives and blaming it on everybody else. Maybe we deserve these kinds of leaders because we accept them and work with these regimes in general. Unfortunately the Syrian people as you can see, are trying to get rid of some of that but what kind of solution or help they are getting? My take on this, Hamas is actually a terrorist organization just like Hezbollah, just like other groups in the Middle East like Al-Qaeda. We need to find a way to deal with them but it has to be in a comprehensive way once and for all. You cannot just do this every couple of years. I think we need to find a way to make sure that the Palestinian people do not engage or accept those kinds of people as their representatives.

**Jasser:** Jerry, you want to start us off on a discussion on Syria?

**Gordon:** I want to focus on what is occurring in the Northeastern quadrant of Syria that is very dangerous. It is the return in massive force of a new and revitalized Islamic State formerly ISIS once a minor portion of Al-Qaeda that has vanquished Al-Qaeda itself. ISIS or IS has really conducted a barbaric jihad conquering large swaths of Syria and Iraq ejecting Christians and slaughtering Muslim opponents. Who aided the launch of ISIS in Syria and why has it emerged so rapidly as a major threat to the region and the West?

**Abbas:** It did not start under ISIS first. In fact the first group was recruited by Assad and Iran to attack American troops in Iraq. They were successful in harming Americans and

derailing Americans in Iraq by sending suicide bombers and killing Americans. This is one of their tactics they used by Assad's regime. When Americans put some pressure on Assad about what was occurring in Iraq a lot of these Islamic terrorists were put in prison in Syria. Later on when the Syrian Revolution started, where the people wanted a democracy, freedom, Assad released those terrorists to hijack Syrian revolution. The early people in the Syrian revolution wanted change and democracy. Believe me, none of those were terrorists. None of them were Al-Qaeda or ISIS groups. They were basically people who wanted democracy, freedom and change. They wanted to have a different culture of change and be friends with the West. They were seeking a better relationship with neighbors. However Assad's regime was very clever. With Iran's help they releasing these Salafist terrorists, criminals, others to discredit the revolution and basically label it as an Al-Qaeda terrorist organization. Those people were working on behalf of Assad who allowed them to rob and kill in those areas. Their job was to infiltrate the Free Syrian Army and the revolution to send a message to the West that alternative to Assad is much worse. They succeeded by not allowing any funding to go or any help to the democratic groups like Zuhdi and myself. Basically all the help went to radicals. Eventually some of those who got so big that they started to take over the oil field in the Deir Ezzor, Raqqa and Hasaka areas becoming more powerful than Assad. Maliki wanted per Iran's plan to use similar scenarios in Iraq to duplicate what Assad was doing in Syria. Basically to discredit any opposition and bomb anyone in any area they wanted. That gave a green light for any action that they could undertake to get help from the U.S. and the West. However this plan was derailed. Initially they were supposed to go March on the Kurdish area in Iraq, against the Kurdish federal region. Izzat Ibrahim al Douri, Saddam's long time friend had several months before held meetings with the Saudis to counter this plan. The Saudis convinced many of their long time Ba'athist and the Arab tribes in Iraq to work with them. They basically got out of control from Assad and Iran in Iraq. Syria is another matter. Still most of them are under the influence of General Muhammad Mansoura – Political Security Directorate and General Ali Mamlouk- National Security Bureau of the Regional Command. However it looks like in recent weeks they lost control in Hasaka, Raqqa and Deir Ezzor as well. It looks like they are starting to lose. Unfortunately Arab Sunni settlers who were moved to the Kurdish area by Assad are switching sides to join this savage group ISIS that makes Al-Qaeda look moderate.

**Jasser:** I think Sherkoh what people should understand is that there is a sort of evil alliance that happens. ISIS as a Sunni radical group went into Iraq and Assad stood on the sidelines. Assad, and Sunni Arabs stood on the sidelines because the generals wanted to see Maliki go down and allowed them to flourish in Northern Iraq. It fed their strategy to destabilize Maliki so we see this happening in every Arab country. In Syria Assad has not

bombed the ISIS areas because he uses them to legitimize murder and pillaging.

Before we jump back to Syria breaking news is that President Obama has insisted and declared that there is an immediate cease fire in the Israel/Hamas conflict. You know I have to tell you it seems that he has missed what Secretary Kerry failed to understand when he asked for a cease fire that Hamas doesn't seem to listen. What do you think?

**Gordon:** The administration is using Islamists Turkey and Qatar essentially by as "leverage" to get Hamas to the table. It's clear that Egypt doesn't want that. Egypt just announced today that it destroyed another thirteen tunnels in the Rafah Gap area. Certainly the Saudis, the UAE and others ironically in the Arab League are supportive of Israel's current operation, although in the end who knows where they'll end up?

**Jasser:** Exactly and as we look at Syria you know, the administration's policy has been proven repeatedly to not only be a failure but to allow the flourishing of Jihadists. You know it is just befuddling that nobody sees that the Assad regime, the Ba'athist of Iraq that still exist and are trying to regain control from Maliki, who was just replaced as Premier. Maliki was basically being annexed by Iran. All of these power brokers benefit from allowing radical Islam to grow. ISIS continues to expand its Caliphate. Then all of a sudden those that spawned its growth become their victims. They claim to be taken by surprise and then they start dealing with them. We saw this with Mubarak and the Brotherhood, we saw it with the Saudis and the Wahhabist extremist groups, Al-Qaeda and then they claimed to be our friends. So the issue isn't Syria. Anyone who tells you that they know what's going on inside Syria really don't know what they are talking about. Because nobody really knows what is happening. Sherkoh, what do you think we should do?

**Abbas:** On the cease fire in the Gaza war, I think this is another way of bolstering Hamas. They would basically claim it as a victory again. So instead of trying to fix the root cause it is basically putting on a band-aid and helping Hamas. On the Syria issue, you are absolutely right. Many experts come on TV and radio and have absolutely no clue what's going on in Syria. Syria is very complicated. Overall the majority of people want freedom. The Assad regime has been able to penetrate the Syrian opposition, Syrian National Coalition and Syrian National Council and penetrated radical Free Syria Army groups. However, core al Qaeda affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra, and ISIS unfortunately grew and became more radical and less pro Assad. Whether they will succeed remains to be seen. Assad is very clever with the help of Iran and Russia they know how to maneuver. However, given what has occurred in Hasaka, Deir Ezzor and Raqqa, the Assad forces lost to ISIS. In terms of the number of people killed in Gaza, 1,900 Palestinians, compare that with the casualties in Syria where more than 2800 were



killed in the last few weeks in the civil war.

**Jasser:** What can we do, understanding the limitations of President Obama's lack of a policy? What can people of conscience in the West, who understand national security, do to fill this vacuum that enlarges the Jihadist?

**Gordon:** Why has the administration's policy failed and why has it abandoned any leadership role in supporting a free, democratic and federated Syria against the onslaught of a barbaric jihad like that perpetrated by ISIS?

**Jasser:** In order to counter an ideology you have to provide an ideology to fill in that vacuum. If you don't have anything to provide, you lead not only from behind but as a bystander. The bottom line is they don't want to provide an alternative, number one. Number two they don't really want to identify who the enemy is and see it as one common enemy. They continue to compartmentalize every country into a separate issue, be it Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Homeland Security here at home and the Brotherhood. They don't even want to identify Islamism. Unfortunately, we do not have a national consensus in Washington or across the country that we are fighting a common ideology of political Islam and its offshoots that include ISIS, Hamas, Al-Qaeda, the jihadists and the Muslim Brotherhood that took over Egypt. You know that these ideas some of which are terroristic and some of the others are socialistic and fascistic that take over governments and democratic ways as we saw in Iran. You are not going to be able to have any type of feasible strategy that needs a doctrine. This president has not had a doctrine which we have called for as being a liberty doctrine. Unfortunately without that doctrine we are going to continue to be missing in action. I think Syrians have been the biggest victims of this because there was such a profound opportunity when Sherkoh and I got together in March of 2011, we saw the Syrians doing what we asked them to do begging them for decades to do against the Ba'athist and Assad. We thought there was an opportunity there as Syria was the nexus of such diversity of many different faiths and cultures and yet it was missed. Now we see a radicalization of a population.

**Abbas:** I echo exactly what you said. I think there is a lack of leadership, lack of any ideas but I wonder if that begs the question. Who is benefitting from all of this chaos? Iran has benefitted, Russia is benefitting, all of the enemies of the West, enemies of democracy, enemies of the U.S., Israel, Europe. All the democratic groups within Syria in the Middle East are losing so somebody else is benefitting. We lost billions if not trillions in liberating the Iraqi people, U.S. handed them back to Iran. In Syria they had a perfect opportunity to do something there. Again we lost that opportunity. I start to wonder why everything is going to

benefit Iran and Russia?

**Jasser:** We have seen ISIS kill twelve to fifteen Imams just in the past week in Northern Iraq. Muslims are, I believe, are the first victims. The moderate Muslims that should fight this.

**Abbas:** You are absolutely right. In the past three months more than 1,000 Kurdish young people, from 14 to 30 years old, had their heads were cut off by ISIS in Syria. Again this group PYD or YPG is forcing the Kurds to work with them against the Syrian opposition. This group hijacked the Kurdish cause just like the Syrian regime and terrorists hijacked the Syrian Revolution. They are working in contact with General Muhammad Mansoura and General Ali Mamlouk, and preventing any reference to Kurds! Radical Islamists / ISIS and PYD/YPG have been staging the fights. As a result many Kurds have been killed. This is Assad's policy of divide and conquer. Now the Kurds are being slaughtered in that area. We need to ask ourselves, what is the root cause and what can be done? I think the root cause is really about putting dictators in their place or removing them. The map of the Middle East needs to be redrawn. We need a democratic group who can influence and become the engine of change in that region. Iraqi Kurdistan has been a great example protecting Christian minorities and others. It is a democratic friend of the US, and the West. The Kurds could be a model in the Middle East. After all there is an Israeli nation, a Turkish nation, a Persian nation and 22 Arab nations. Why shouldn't there be a Kurdish nation? Having a Kurdish nation in the region could be influential in promoting democracy and preventing or eliminating ISIS/ISIL.

**Jasser:** But are you calling for a redrawing of the Syrian borders?

**Abbas:** I think we will redraw the whole Middle East. Otherwise Iran is entrenched in that area, it would be very difficult to do this. Looking at the whole Middle East and Iraqi Kurdistan, why can't they declare an independent nation? I think it's something you could be looking at as a minimum in a federated Syria.

**Jasser:** Absolutely, the federal part I agree with. I think ultimately though we take one step at a time. We need to get to the ideological battle first. I think Syria has diversity. If Kurdistan breaks off from Syria then you end up radicalizing even exponentially the other two segments. You see Assad now moving not against the ISIS region of Syria. In the last two weeks we have seen the most deaths in Syria in the entire revolution. Why? He's moving on Aleppo which we always said when I testified to Congress in the summer of 2011, Aleppo hadn't woken up to the revolution. We said when they wake up so will the rest of Syria because that is where the Sunni business and intellectual community is centered. Now Assad is destroying that

city from its core. That cannot be allowed to divide the rest of Syria.

**Abbas:** The point I'm making is there are more than thirty to forty million Kurds in the Middle East who deserve to have a nation. Kurds just like anybody need and deserve to have a nation, a just cause and it is a moral thing to do. Having the Kurds being a moderate influence in the region is the Liberty ideology Zuhdi that you are advocating. So this is something positive that would be positive for the region. Iraqi Kurdistan could be independent. They could influence other regions because even the Sunni now ask for federalism in Iraq because they see what Kurds have achieved for their own people. Having federalism in Syria is a positive thing and I think we need to look at the whole Middle East. By not allowing this Assad dictatorship to survive because it makes their people suffer and then blame it on the West and Israel. Ultimately, Iran will rule the whole Middle East. Kurdistan can be a buffer between Sunni and Shia Crescents to stop radicalizations and prevent it from reaching Europe or the West.

**Jasser:** And the key is to be evolved beyond two sides. There are more than two sides on the battle in Syria and Iraq and elsewhere.

**Gordon:** Syria lies on Israel's Golan frontier. What has Israel contributed to the alleviation of the plight of Syrians and has there been any relationship between the democratic opposition in Syria and the Israeli government?

**Jasser:** I think that's such an important question and the Syrian National Council, they are still slowly coming around to that view. I would ask people to look at some of the writings and comments of Dr. Kamal al-Labwani who in the past few months has come out and said we should have visited more closely with Israel and guaranteed them security on the Golan as being a mechanism by which we could actually protect some of the more moderates in Syria. He's realizing that there was no hope for the Syrian National Council (SNC) because it was being protected by Turkey and Qatar. The Islamists, including many American Syrians including Louay Safi and others who went back to run the SNC from an Islamist Brotherhood perspective. Labwani is awakening to the fact that the West is his friend, Israel is at the head of that coalition and the Golan is part of that. Sherkoh, what do you think of that?

**Abbas:** I agree with you that we have some disagreement about Dr. Labwani, based on my discussion with him and /or his statements regarding the Kurds. He always muddies the water on the Kurdish issues but for sure that is the change in the opposition's position. In fact Israel missed an opportunity here. Many Syrian people do not view Israel as the number one enemy as the Ba'athists have portrayed them. They are starting to view Israel as a possible

savior. They could come to their help but for some reason Israelis stayed on the sidelines. My sources said they had a lot of pressure from Obama's administration to stay out of it. However, I think Israel should engage the opposition and democratic groups and look at Syria as being a federated country next to them to prevent radicals from controlling the whole country. Their issues could be resolved peacefully and could pollinate in the region bringing them peace.

**Jasser:** Ultimately there could have been a piece meal strategy in areas like the Southeast and others where there are less Islamists and more moderates. The other part we haven't talked about is the destabilization regionally of the three to five million displaced Syrians that are in Jordan and Turkey and Lebanon. Ultimately that is a major security threat to Israel and the entire region.

**Gordon:** I agree. Israel has made efforts to alleviate the humanitarian concern of those Syrians on the Golan frontier by establishing a field hospital there to take care of them. In more serious cases they are airlifted to the major medical centers in Central Israel for treatment. I think that has been appreciated by what we understand from those Syrians who have been involved.

**Jasser:** I think you know ultimately as we look for what the right policies are moving forward we need leaders, perhaps not in the Obama administration, but leaders in Washington, to begin to call out not only the Russians but the Iranians. Syria has become a client state of Iran and we need to link the reason the nuclear talks are failing to the fact that they see us doing nothing in Syria. Putin basically sees that as a green light no different when the Russians saw our lack of activity in Syria to allow them to do whatever they want in Ukraine and elsewhere. We need to begin to have this conversation and pressure that will develop a strategy for promoting liberty. What is the legacy of our faith? Is it to leave Hamas and ISIS behind or is it to actually leave modernity and vibrant democracies that protect all faiths, Jews, Christians and others in the way our founding fathers did in America. To pray for the safety of all, the West, Israel and its fight for freedom.

Thank you Jerry Gordon from *The Iconoclast* and Editor of the *New English Review*. Thank you Sherkoh Abbas, of the Syrian Kurdish community and thank you most especially to Lisa Benson for the opportunity to share our thoughts with her listeners. This is Zuhdi Jasser from the American Islamic Forum for Democracy wishing you all well. God Bless America. Take care.

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