

FRANCESCO SANTOIANNI

SYRIAN FAKE NEWS

13 YEARS OF LIES
THAT HAVE DESTROYED SYRIA



I dedicate this book to the hundreds of thousands of Syrians who sacrificed themselves to defend their land and, in particular, to the memory of Khāled al-As'ad, director for 40 years of the Palmyra archaeological site.

In July 2015, he was kidnapped and tortured for weeks by ISIS cutthroats so that he would reveal where he had buried valuable archaeological artifacts to save them from looting and iconoclastic fury. In the face of his heroic silence, on August 18, on the square in front of the Palmyra Archaeological Museum, his tormentors beheaded him, then exposed his body by hanging his body on a column.

Instructions The linkography in this book, as well as on the last pages, can be accessed by framing the QRCode, thus avoiding having to type long strings of characters.

Many links in the linkography turn out to be encapsulated in the well-regarded archive.org site that holds deleted articles, presumably in hopes of making people forget what had been published.

This is the case, for example, with the FBI where the page announcing the bounty of ten million dollars on the terrorist al Jawlani (now put in charge of Syria's government) was nonchalantly replaced (retaining the same link) by one praising the FBI. This is the case with so many articles or official communiqués pertaining to Syria.



«You give me the photographs and I will give you the war.»

Telegraphic dispatch from publisher William Hearst to his photographer Frederick Remington that, in 1898, he could find no scene of unarmed civilians being killed in Cuba that would justify a U.S. invasion to «bring democracy.»

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Introduction

Syria is no more. After enduring, for thirteen years, criminal sanctions, bands of mercenaries financed and armed by the West and the petromonarchies, the looting of its oil resources by the U.S. and their ascendants, bombings ... it dissolved in a matter of days before the advance of an army of jihadists led by a terrorist, al Jawlani, responsible for so many heinous crimes that it earned him a bounty from the FBI of ten million dollars.

Thus, an ISIS cutthroat, thanks to whom the US justified its troops in Syria, has been turned into a vexed “statesman,” and a secular, multi-ethnic state that had managed to guarantee its citizens a decent standard of living and women rights such as divorce, abortion, education ... Meanwhile, to conceal this infamy and criminalize Syria’s past government, countless fake news stories—from the [mass grave](#) with 100.000 corpses, to [Assad’s Ferrari](#), to his [drug trafficking](#) ... —which, unfortunately, was on a par with those succeeding in thirteen years of aggression against Syria, managed, still, to convince countless people. Not least because the “information” on Syria by the mainstream media (i.e., those in the pay of the interests of the West and the petromonarchies) would be said to have been not the mere superimposition of fake news but an articulated media campaign with a single direction, almost a program of mental conditioning (think of the many videos of ISIS beheadings astonishingly disseminated by the mainstream media) that would be said to be second only to that aimed at supporting Israel. A program that, among other things, succeeded in making the few who protested against an aggression that caused 500,000 deaths and six million

refugees perceive themselves as “servants of Assad” and that has shaped, perhaps irreparably, what remains of the so-called “left.”

And, in this regard, I hope that the unmasking of the main fake news and media campaigns against Syria will serve to open the eyes of the many of my former comrades who, having disappeared political parties and ideologies, do not realize that they have become puppets in the hands of the mainstream media.

F.S.

Napoli, February 2025

From Iraq to Syria

On February 5, 2003, Colin Powell, U.S. Secretary of State, appeared before the United Nations Security Council waving a glass tube containing, it seems, talcum powder. It was “proof” that Saddam held Weapons of Mass Destruction, and that Iraq must be immediately invaded and destroyed before he exterminated the West. This, according to one



poll, had convinced 75% of the American population to accept the war on Iraq. Not least because out of the 740 news outlets then in the

United States, only two dared to declare that the “proof” of the existence of those weapons (based, essentially, on the “confessions” of one Rafid Ahmed Alwan alJanabi, an Iraqi engineer transfugee to Germany) was a colossal forgery. But if the overwhelming majority of the U.S. population believed what the media were telling them, quite different was the reaction of millions of people who, denouncing that fake news, filled squares all over the world on Feb. 15 protesting against the impending war. And it did not occur to anyone to point to the many pacifists in the squares as “servants of Assad.”

Pacifists who would be said to have disappeared eight years later when in March 2011, under the pretext of protecting phantom “insurgents,” a NATO-led coalition of

19 countries began bombing Libya. The main fake news that “justified” the aggression was a photo of the “mass grave of insurgents machine-gunned by Qaddafi.” A “proof” of very poor quality (that it was a still from a video about the enlargement of a cemetery in Tripoli was attested by the inscription of the videofestival at which the video was presented) but this failed to dissuade many former pacifists from mobilizing against the “tyrant Qaddafi.”

What had happened, in just a few years, to make so many pure political activists trained in mobilizations against State Truths accept fakes (and thus “humanitarian wars”)? The reasons are many, here we mention some of them. Meanwhile, today fake news is spread, in addition to newspapers and TV (as was the case in the past), mainly by social media and NGOs, two entities hardly ever perceived as expressions of the establishment.

NGOs (“Non-Governmental Organizations”) are, essentially a phenomenon of this millennium. Until 1984 (when they began to grow under the impetus of the anti SIDA campaign that gave birth to Live Aid) there were very few: basically the Red Cross (founded in 1861), Save the Children (1919), Oxfam (1942), Médecins sans frontières (1971). In 2003, there were as many as 2,350 NGOs recognized by the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Why this swirling growth? Because, [according to some observers](#), the collapse of the Berlin Wall (1989) brought a glimpse of the possibility of directing the energies of so many young people, who had remained “orphans of communism,” toward activities that were ostensibly “humanitarian” but which could contribute to the world geopolitical framework planned by the strategists of neoliberalism. They sprang up, thus numerous billionaires (christened “philanthropists”) who began to finance NGOs.

These soon became the most trusted sources of “information” from crisis areas (mainly those devastated

by wars) basically because of the presence in these areas of their many volunteers and officials. The results were seen during the aggressions on Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria, Venezuela... where it was precisely the NGOs that spread the most blatant fake news to promote “color revolutions” and “regime change.” The fake news spread by NGOs have had a devastating effect since, being conveyed by organizations deemed merely humanitarian or even “revolutionary” (see Otpor! whose emblem is a clenched fist). They have, especially among young people, a much higher credibility than the mainstream media.

As far as Syria is concerned, the work of NGOs present there was often aggravated by their operation in assisting refugees (stationed largely in [Turkey](#)), in managing so-called “humanitarian corridors” (in which, often, NGOs decided, in the most arbitrary manner, who should be hosted in European countries) and by being financed for these activities by governments engaged in aggression against the Assad government. This resulted, almost always, in a flattening of the positions of not a few NGOs to those of the governments that financed them. It is no coincidence that, with very rare exceptions, no condemnation of the sanctions imposed on Syria or any denial of the many fake news stories published in the media against the Assad government has ever come from NGOs.

But let us deal with Syria, which, as reported in the next chapter, was in the crosshairs of imperialism well before the beginning of the “colored revolution” in 2012. And as early as late 2010, the first media campaign structured through *story telling* begins, and that is a moving story that, by endearing the protagonist of the tragedy, succeeds in deeply outraging. As early as 1990 this was done with “Nurse Nayirah” who testified to the U.S. Congress about Iraqi soldiers who, in order to steal incubators from Kuwait, left dozens of infants to die on the ground (a media campaign carried out by the

public relations firm Hill & Knowlton); for Syria, the *story telling* was “Amina Abdullah, the Damascus lesbian,” born in Syria but raised in the United States and returned home in 2010 to support “the Syrian opposition,” who daily from her blog informed millions of readers of the harassment meted out to her and millions of Syrians by the Assad government. A poignant story of continued suffering that, for months, moved the world. Until, on June 6, 2011, an announcement appeared on her blog from her “cousin,” a certain Rania, telling of Amina’s abduction by Syrian intelligence services. Protests ramped up everywhere (in Italy, a Facebook page for Amina’s release gathered more than 15,000 adhesions in a few hours) and Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State, ordered an investigation into the incident since Amina was also a U.S. citizen.



However, soon the truth came out. Thanks in large part to the painstaking work of freelance journalist Andy Carvin who, involving his 40,000 Twitter contacts in his research, documented that the photos posted on Amina Abdullah’s

blog came from the blog of an unsuspecting student, and that no one in Damascus knew Amina. A subsequent search by [The Electronic Intifada](#) group succeeded in discovering who was hiding behind Amina's false identity: he was American Tom MacMaster, an Edinburgh resident and suspected of being in the pay of British intelligence.

The colorful revolution of 2012

Towards the end of 2011, the success of the war on Libya and the growing severity of the economic situation in Syria (produced, above all, by a drought that had been going on since 2006 and the presence of some 1.5 million refugees from the war in Iraq) prompted the CIA to activate a project already drawn up by the State Department in 2006, revealed by Wikileaks and published in the [Washington Post](#) to create a fifth column in Syria to foment an uprising against the Assad government. To this end, [BaradaTV](#) (a satellite TV station also visible on the Internet) was created, as well as a news agency, the [Syrian Observatory for Human Rights](#), which would become the main source of the countless fake news stories.

The reliability of this source, of course, has not been questioned by any mainstream media journalist, with a few exceptions. For example, [a journalist from La Repubblica who](#), on January 4, 2018, dared to publish an article titled *"Syria, the bogus narratives of the Syrian Observatory on Rights covering the crimes of the so-called 'rebels' (From several quarters it has been revealed that it has little or no reliability, being in fact run by a single person, moreover funded, apparently, by an unspecified British agency...)"* which was immediately replaced (retaining the same URL) by a lengthy anonymous editorial apologizing for the previous text that *"did not meet this paper's standards of accuracy and impartiality."*

Even worse, the next day, on Twitter, the said journalist thus cringed, *"I made a grave mistake. Inexcusable result of haste. I apologize, but the problem of the reliability of the Observatory remains. (...)"* The tweet was commented on (in addition to a pack of hyenas accusing the journalist of being in the pay of Assad) by many who pointed out

that it should have been Repubblica, and not him, who apologized. Then other tweets that (announcing the (likely) dismissal of the journalist by Repubblica) pointed out the perfidy of this newspaper that, not only demanded from one of its contributors the rewriting of an article but, after publishing it, buried it with another one of condemnation.

Quite different behavior, as we shall see, than of other journalists already in the early days of what was called the “Syrian revolution.” But on the subject of this, a clarification. According to the current vulgate, the one responsible for the Syrian tragedy would have been the Assad government, which, in 2011, by repressing what were peaceful protest demonstrations, would have given way to a resistance that was first armed and then also hegemonized by jihadist groups. [Not so.](#) As mentioned above, the aggression against Syria had been planned for years, and the Assad government (which, by the way, issued as many as three amnesties for those who were not guilty of heinous crimes) as early as March 2011 sought a confrontation with the opposition having on its side the support of the overwhelming majority of the Syrian population. A population that supported him, even with oceanic demonstrations, not because they were coerced by the Syrian intelligence services or out of blind subservience to Assad, as our media ranted, but because they feared that the *regime change* imposed by NATO would produce the same horrors that Libya was experiencing.

In February 2011, news ran rampant of children in the Syrian city of Daraa being raped by police (who also allegedly pulled out their fingernails) because they were accused of writing calls for revolt against Assad on the walls. The news was unsupported by anything, but it was enough for thousands of people across Syria to take to the streets in demonstrations that resulted in numerous deaths. Deaths produced by rooftop snipers firing indifferently at

protesters and police unleashed chaos: a dynamic identical to that of other “colored revolutions” (Bucharest, December 1989; Tbilisi, November 2003; Kiev, January 2014...).

Meanwhile, while a joint government-opposition commission was at work analyzing why the Daraa massacres took place, Saudi broadcaster al-Arabiya announced the fire at the Daraa courthouse. This news was indeed suspicious as the fire was set five hours AFTER the announcement. Evidence that the uprising was heterodirected prompted the immediate resignation [several journalists from al-Arabiya](#) and other Arab broadcasters as hundreds of youths in Tartous burned more than 5,000 subscription cards from al-Jazeera sports channels in the streets in response to its network coverage of events in Syria. Meanwhile, countless photos and videos (in some cases blatantly faked such as the video of [sniper shooting the protester who is filming him](#)) often created by public relations agencies—such as Bell Pottinger, The Rendon Group, Lincoln Group, Leo Burnett, Campbell-Ewald, GSD&M, J. Walter Thompson, Frankel & Company, Ketchum, Ruder&Finn Global Public Affairs...—flooded newspaper editorial offices around the world only to be published without any verification. We will dwell on some of these fake news stories that supported a war that caused 500,000 deaths and six million refugees. Now let us deal with the two most important media campaigns waged against Syria: the “Caesar photos” and “Assad’s sarin.”

Caesar's photos

Unlike Libya where the aggression ended in a matter of months, in Syria it lasted fourteen years. And the presence in Syria of areas occupied by the cutthroats, equipped with a first-rate media structure, has made available to them a population that, out of hunger or because they are threatened with death, has lent itself to being extras in a great many videos that we have since seen on TV or on the Internet. Videos that, in some cases, turned out to be real *snuff movies* with unwitting extras (in some cases children kidnapped from some village) being killed for the benefit of the cameras. More on this later. Now let us deal with the "Caesar photos," certainly the most effective fake news against Syria, having managed to develop an unparalleled criminalization campaign supported with countless articles, TV reports, books and exhibitions (among the most famous the one supported by [Five Star MEPs](#)). A piece of fake news that served to aggravate, in 2020 with the [Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act](#), the already fierce [sanctions](#) against Syria.

"The presiding French minister sits in the center, opposite Ahmad al-Jarba. Late in the morning, he surprisingly gives the floor to Khaled al-Attiyah. A few days earlier, the Qatari foreign minister had revealed to him that he had received a confidential document from an opposition group that he wished to show his colleagues. The proceedings are suspended. About 30 people are asked to leave the room. Only the 11 ministers remain around the table.

The lights go out. To the notes composed by Itzhak Perlman for the film Schindler's List parade photographs of naked bodies, with their clothes in tatters or only in briefs, of skeletal corpses,

sometimes mutilated, torn, burned. Some have had their eyes gouged out. Others have their faces disfigured by some chemical substance. Still others, finally, have been locked inside plastic bags and stacked under the porch of a hangar. The target lingers meticulously over the matriculation number matched to the

Muffled, the ministers leave the room with a grave and troubled expression stamped on their faces. John Kerry is as pale as a sheet. They barely touch their food at lunch. Laurent Fabius will confide to his staff, "It's appalling, abominable. It will take a lot of work, but every effort must be made to find out the truth about such important documents."

"Those images went to the heart of the matter, bringing to the surface the drifts of Bashar al-Assad's regime that France has been denouncing for years," a person close to the French minister would later declare. "Images not seen since the genocide of the Jews and the Khmer crimes. The accuracy with which the Syrian regime documents and catalogs its horrors takes us back seventy years."

It is an excerpt from the bestseller "[The Death Machine](#)" by Garance Le Caisne that gives an idea of the wave of terror and outrage that this fake news managed to inspire. For a detailed analysis of the blatant [inconsistencies](#) that punctuate this story, we refer to Rick Sterling's lengthy study [The Caesar Photo Fraud that Undermined Syrian Negotiations](#), and the technical documentation reported on [Adam Larson's website](#); here we summarize an Italian-language document produced in 2016 by Sibialiria's editorial staff, "[Report on the Reliability of the Caesar Photos](#)"

The report examines the reliability of "Caesar's Photos" (a self-styled Syrian Military Police photographer "tasked with photographing prisoners after their execution"), the veracity of the context in which they were allegedly taken and, more generally, "Operation Caesar" but does not at all

rule out, indeed deems them likely, heinous acts of cruelty inside the prisons of a Syria that has been under attack for years by a war that already in 2016 had claimed 250,000 lives. What most outrages the report's editors, however, is that it was Qatar—one of the most active players in promoting, through its “rebels,” the war on Syria—that financed Operation Caesar. There is then another reason for outrage. “Operation Caesar,” like other misrepresentations, such as, for example, those concerning the [foibe](#), turns reality upside down, turning victims into executioners and executioners into victims. See, for example, this [video](#), produced in 2016 by a group of Syrian activists, documenting how quite a few photos of “executed Assad opponents” presented by “Caesar” actually depict Syrian army soldiers killed by “rebels.”

The first part of the Sibialiria Report deals with the credibility of the Carter-Ruck Report's sources. On January 20, 2014, two days before the Geneva 2 negotiations on the Syrian conflict began, the sensational “[Report into the Credibility of Certain Evidence with Regard to Torture and Execution of Persons Incarcerated by the Current Syrian Regime](#)” appeared on all televisions and on the front pages of newspapers around the world. It had been commissioned by Qatar from the prestigious (Recep Erdoğan among its clients) London law firm Carter-Ruck to “verify” (through its “experts”) the claims of “Caesar” (self-styled Syrian Military Police photographer) and his 55,000 photographs showing, according to “Caesar,” some 11,000 Syrian political prisoners after their execution. The report's conclusions (“*Caesar is trustworthy and his photographs show killings on an industrial scale*”) unleashed the world press, helping to nip the Geneva negotiations in the bud.

Of course, very few journalists took the trouble to analyze the Carter-Ruck Report and to ask obvious questions. For example, who is “Caesar”? According to

the report (pp., 4-5) *“Caesar is a defector from Syria. Prior to his defection, he was serving with the Military Police as a photographer. In that role (,,) with the outbreak of the civil war, like his colleagues, he had to photograph the corpses of prisoners, brought from their places of detention to a military hospital. (...) In the course of his work he concealed tens of thousands of images of corpses photographed by his colleagues and himself. Other similar images were smuggled in by other people. In all, about 55,000 images; on average, four or five photographs taken of each body for about 11,000 inmates killed.”* A true scrapbook of horrors, then; even though the Carter-Ruck experts (who assure us they have viewed as many as 55,00 photos) ultimately enclose only ten photos (*“the most representative”*) in their report, on which they will dwell.

But why would Assad’s Military Police transport prisoners to a military hospital, kill them, photograph them, and thus make this gruesome collection? According to Carter-Ruck’s Report (pp. 6-7 *“The reason for photographing executed people was twofold: first, to allow a death certificate to be produced without the families needing to see the body, thus preventing the authorities from having to give a truthful account of their deaths; second, to document that orders to execute had been carried out.”* But why would the authorities have to show a death certificate (*“for heart problems and respiratory attacks,”* p. 13) to the families of the 11,000 opponents who allegedly disappeared in Syrian jails? To push them to have their loved one’s body back and thus note the signs of torture? Besides, what regime would keep such detailed records of its crimes? Always, from Nazi concentration camps to Pinochet, opponents just disappear. Desaparecidos, precisely. Other than death certificates to families or immense photo archives at the disposal of some sadistic regime satrap or some unreliable Military Police employee.

But, since none of the ten photos specify who the victim is, does the report even want to say who this Caesar

really is? No. It cannot reveal it *“for security reasons,”* despite the fact that Caesar has, for some time, (p. 12) *“been living outside Syria with his family.”* And good thing the report, instead, reveals that *“for 13 years Caesar worked as a photographer in the Syrian Military Police.”* Of course, with so many of his colleagues busy photographing tens of thousands of battered corpses, perhaps he can still hope to blend in.

More would be added about Caesar’s bona fides attested in a flash—his last examination by the experts of the Commission of Inquiry was (p. 6) on Jan. 18; the “version to print” file of the report posted on CNN’s website bears the same date: Jan. 18, or about that of his (anonymous) relative (p. 15), guarantor of Caesar’s identity, who, *“being outside Syria and militating in the Syrian Opposition,”* allegedly received from him (who, at the time, was in Syria, custodian of such shocking documentation and, moreover, a relative of an opponent) *“tens of thousands of images.”* Perhaps some other means of ascertaining who he was and what Caesar really did for a living could have been tried: for example, questioning some of the many policemen (including Military Police) who defected and fled outside Syria. But considering the investigative acumen of the Carter-Ruck experts (who trust two identity documents shown to them by Caesar, see p. 12), it was too much to ask.

But let us deal with the [photos](#). Since they were taken by the “Assad regime” in order to create the grisly database of killed prisoners, it is obvious that in the “five-pack” of photos documenting the torture and death of each victim, there should have been at least one depicting the face of the unfortunate victim. In fact, if one analyzes the photos included in the Carter-Ruck Report, it becomes apparent that not only does none of them allow for an identification of the condemned man but that, even, in the most pregnant photos to prove that torture took place the face is censored

by black rectangles. Why? The report has the gall to assert (p. 19) that *“For security and privacy reasons faces or other potentially identifying features in the photos have been removed.”* Security and privacy reasons? For people whose identification would have meant an unequivocal indictment of the perpetrators? For families who certainly would be entitled to know the fate that befell their loved ones? For the condemned themselves, who in this revelation could have externalized their final testimony? Nothing. *“Security and privacy reasons.”* And so nothing can be said about the identities of the martyred and murdered people.

As mentioned above, the Carter-Ruck Report shows (out of a stated total of 55,000) just 10 photos and only 5



Figure 5 - Belt type object on the neck with a ridged pattern highly consistent with the ligature mark seen in a different individual in Fig. 4



Figure 6-7 Emaciated individual with tramline injuries across lower chest wall



of them show any sign of injury. Photos, moreover, which are dotted with unwarranted black rectangles and which, had it not been for a strap (see [photo 5](#))—which the report does not specify whether it had

been “forgotten” by the Military Police executioners or had been lent by them to take the photo—allegedly used for strangulation, could have been taken anywhere. For example, in a hospital morgue, as the otherwise unexplained gauze, some affixed to wounds (photos [6](#) and [7](#)), would

suggest. This, likely, determined the need to publish more photos by entrusting, in December 2015, the entire collection of the “Caesar Photos” to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) organization, which examined them. Despite the fact that HRW can hardly be said to be a supportive organization of the Assad government (just consider its support for blatant, as much as lying, media campaigns—such as “Assad’s sarin in Goutha,” “napalm launched from Damascus on schools,”

Ayham Ghazzoul



© Private

© 2012 “Caesar” collection

Assad’s snipers firing on pregnant women” ...) resounding was the initial consideration made in his [Report](#): (HRW pp 2-3) “...more than 46% of the photos (24,568) do not show people tortured to death by the Syrian government but, on the contrary, show dead Syrian soldiers and victims of car bombs or other forms of violence.” How does HRW arrive at this consideration? Simple, by checking the classification code affixed to the corpses: the same one used by the Syrian state for these types of deaths. What about the other photos? For HRW, the remaining 28,707 would depict 6,786 individuals who died in government detention centers, attesting to this is the particularity of the 5 classification code, a claim this disproved by the painstaking [investigation of mortuary](#)

[codes in Syria](#) carried out by a U.S. researcher, Adam Larson

But despite initial clarifications and assurances that it had interviewed hundreds of Syrians to name the photographed dead, the HRW Report names only eight of them. But, even in these cases, there is no shortage of surprises. As in the alleged photos of Ayham Ghazzoul, Oqba al-Mashaan and Mohammed Tariq Majid in which the beard of the subject who was allegedly killed is exactly identical—treated, presumably, with an electric razor—to that of the living subject. A detail, together with the lack of obvious traces, would seem to invalidate the hypothesis of an execution after an allegedly long detention

What's more, the HRW Report, after having, too, reposted the same inexcusable panes concealing the faces of dead people—and, even, the mortuary code labels—and showing us two [courtyards](#) full of corpses (none of which would be said to show signs of torture but all of which appear to have died of starvation) that we are assured are Assad's prisons—concludes by making the Carter-Ruck Report's conclusions its own. He will get a substantial number of photos of them in return for an exhibition of his own—"Caesar Photos: Inside Syrian Authorities Prisons," hosted by the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., in the UN Glass Palace in New York, in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, in numerous other institutions and museums... Exhibitions visited by droves of indignant and moved people. After all, why on earth would they have sensed any deception behind those terrible photos? They unequivocally represented people being killed. "Obviously" by the Assad regime: even the title of the exhibition said so, and also immaculately named organizations, which one would never suspect of working alongside the warlords, such as [Amnesty International](#) or the [Syrian Observatory for Human Rights](#). So what else to do in front of those photos but call for the destruction of yet

another rogue state?

Let us now deal with the aforementioned book by Garance Le Caisne based on a series of interviews given by “Caesar, himself.” A truly [grotesque](#) book, dripping with unbelievable episodes (as on p. 68: corpses of prisoners transported in pickup trucks from Homs to Damascus *“certainly to show the heads of the security departments that those men had been arrested and killed”*) pressing twists and turns (*“a story worthy of a spy novel”* announces Le Figaro on the back cover) and “clarifications” on what “Caesar” has already said so far that end up being a patch worse than the hole.

For example, to the obvious question why on earth Assad’s Military Police would transport prisoners to a military hospital, kill them, photograph them and thus make this macabre collection, Caesar, putting aside his outlandish explanations given in the Carter-Ruck Report, (the death certificates to be shown to the victims’ families) thus expresses himself (p. 130): *“But I am a simple man, not a politician: I will give you a simple answer. The (Syrian) intelligence security departments are not directly coordinated by the regime. Each of these departments does not know what the others are doing (...) The regime documents everything so that nothing is forgotten. Why then not document those deaths? (...) We just followed the usual routine, without the regime even remotely suspecting that one day all this would turn against it. (...) Sometimes I wonder if those in charge of the security services are not actually more stupid than we think.”*

But beyond other astonishing claims, the most interesting part of the book is the substantial boycott that parts of the U.S. establishment have reserved for the “Caesar Case.” Worth mentioning for all is the phantom FBI dossier that Garance Le Caisne, (on p. 207) quotes, *“... the FBI will end up officially announcing that the photos in the dossier are authentic. In a five-page report delivered to the State*

Department in June 2015, and of which the Yahoo News website was able to obtain a copy, the FBI states that the photos under review were not manipulated... Rather, they depict real events and real people. Quite a hot potato."

In fact, this [now-famous](#) FBI report, although also [cited](#) by HRW in its exhibition catalog, like the Arabian Phoenix, is nowhere to be found. Yahoo, which allegedly, more or less, purloined it, never published it, and so did the FBI and the State Department. But why does Garance Le Caisne consider this report a "hot potato"? To know, one must dwell on the truly distressing chapter—the "conspiracy" hatched by the U.S. Congress after Caesar's hearing—that concludes Garance Le Caisne's book: a cynical machination dictated by Obama's inability to bomb Syria and by no less specified diplomatic rogues.

The director of this umpteenth betrayal of the West to the values of Democracy and Freedom? Stephen Rapp, U.S. ambassador in charge of International Justice. Who thus states (p. 206) to the author of the book, *"When we launched the facial recognition project, I was convinced we would find a hundred matches. We have millions of photos in our databases but we ended up with less than ten matches."* But the worst Garance Le Caisne reveals later: *"Passing through London in March 2015, Rapp opens his computer and shows us two photos of men who actually bear a strange resemblance: one is dead in a Syrian detention center, the other is alive and well on an ID card. Rapp continues, "We are not 100 percent sure that this is the same person. We should do additional investigations."*

Indeed, the publicity barrage, organized mainly by France, which had accompanied Caesar in his hearing before the U.S. Congress (in reality, a fleeting as much as it was choreographed appearance before a subcommittee; an appearance commented on by many members of Congress with ritual statements characterized, however, by a tone certainly more [resigned](#) than those which, years earlier,

had welcomed another “testimony”: that of “Nayirah,” a self-styled nurse from Kuwait), proved to be a boomerang. This *défaillance* of the media operation prevented the Caesar case from landing at the International Criminal Court. France then consoled itself, in October 2015, by having the Paris Prosecutor’s Office indict Assad precisely on the “[evidence](#)” produced by the Caesar—Garance Le Caisne duo.



Meanwhile, Operation Caesar—albeit wearily—proceeds. Now the entire archive of its alleged photos is owned by the by the “pro-rebel” website [SAFMCD](#), which, presumably, continues to feed it, picking up photos of the dead just about everywhere; photos, by the way, that SAFMCD watermarks with its own logo, in the likely hope of getting paid copyright if anyone goes to republish them on the web or in the media. And among the many (and often, gruesome) [photos, two photos](#) that crowd SAFMCD’s website cannot help but astound: they show, unmistakably, two inpatients in some hospital, to whom, after their death, a morgue label has been affixed to their foreheads. Label which, of course, has been made illegible by the SAFMCD editors. Maybe that way they can better sell the photos to some journalist.

Assad's Sarin

In January 2014, the Danish ship Ark Futura, manned by officials of the OPCW (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons), loaded with tons of chemical weapons and the equipment to produce them, left the Syrian port of Latakia en route to Civitavecchia, the headquarters of Cetli, the Interforce NBC Logistics Technical Center (according to other sources, to the U.S. cargo ship "Cape Ray"). There toxic gases such as sarin were rendered harmless and the equipment to produce them destroyed. It was the consequence of the Assad government's [adherence](#) (Sept. 12, 2013) to the International Chemical Weapons Convention/CWC, which provided for, even sudden, inspections by OPCW personnel in areas suspected to be the scene of chemical attacks or in establishments where their production was suspected.

Verisimilarly, the Assad government by joining the Convention hoped to no longer be accused in the media of using chemical weapons and to allow the OPCW to document that these acts were, instead, carried out by "rebels." He was wrong. Despite clear evidence, OPCW reports accused (though not explicitly) government forces of using chemical weapons in Ghouta, and in the towns of Talmenes, Sarmin, Qmenas, Khan Sheikhoun, Aleppo, Ltamenah.

On the reliability of the OPCW reports, numerous in-depth dossiers have been compiled by antiwar activists (e.g., "[The chemical attacks on east Ghouta](#)" by ISTEAMS, a Syrian humanitarian organization headed by Agnes Mariam) which, however, having been ostracized by the media, are still ignored by the public. Among the few exceptions is a [study](#) by the prestigious MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) that, on par with

a masterful journalistic investigation by [Seymour Hersh](#), began to undermine the authoritativeness of the OPCW, an authoritativeness that, in 2018, was shredded by journalist [Jonathan Steele](#) revealing US pressure and blackmail on the OPCW to accuse the Syrian armed forces of chemical attacks committed, in reality, by US-backed “rebels.” A scandal also denounced by [media](#) usually prone to U.S. imperialism, by documents published on [Wikileaks](#) and by the documentary “[Symphony for a Common Man](#),” which, among other things, sheds light on the defenestration of the OPCW’s first Director, Jose Bustani, imposed by the CIA. One final note.

And now let us deal with some incidents presented in the media as “chemical attacks by Assad’s armed forces.” The most famous took place, on August 21, 2013, in the area of [Gohuta](#), Jobar, on the outskirts of Damascus and, according to the media, killed through sarin gas from “*at least 281 to 1,729 civilians*.” This fake news became gospel in Italy also thanks to many “influencers” such as [Roberto Saviano](#) according to whom, “*Of the approximately 400,000 inhabitants by whom Ghouta is inhabited, about half are children*” (...) “*The tactic is always the same first encircle the whole area, isolate it starve it and then bomb it.*” Of course, Saviano did not ask why Assad would indiscriminately bomb a population, such as that of Gouta, which, during the “colored revolution” had remained loyal to the government in Damascus and which, precisely because of this, in August 2013, together with the Syrian army, was fighting against bands of jihadist cutthroats who had arrived in the area. And, worse than Saviano was the NGO [Médecins Sans Frontières](#), which immediately espoused the theory of sarin gas spread over Gouta by Syrian armed forces’ planes and missiles; a story debunked, by the way, by the [only Italian journalist](#) who, instead of taking NGO communiqués as gold poured, went to Gouta in person.

On the events in Ghouta, there is an official report prepared, most likely in the early days of September 2013, by OPCW inspectors who, despite the fact that Syria had not yet acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention, had long ago been authorized by Damascus to operate in Syria, providing them with armed escorts to protect them from already numerous ambushes against them carried out by jihadist cutthroats. On September 15, 2013 (two days after Syria acceded to the International Chemical Weapons Convention (and thus to compliance with OPCW acts), the OPCW made public its [Report](#) on Ghouta (which Assad would declare “an insult to common sense”) a truly stunning “[investigation](#)” that, hypocritically, while not openly naming the instigator of the massacre, outlined an “evidentiary framework” that nailed the Damascus government.

The report is based, in essence, on the wreckage of a missile, studded with Cyrillic characters; hence the fanciful trajectory the missile allegedly followed to hit Ghouta that has a nearby Syrian Air Force base identified as its base of departure. Scrap missile that OPCW inspectors had not found but was brought to them by anti-Assad “rebels.”

Let us read, then, some excerpts from the OPCW Report.

“On August 26, the mission visited Moadamiyah of West Ghouta for two hours. On August 28-29, the mission visited Zamalka and Ein Tarma of East Ghouta for a total time of five and a half hours. Despite the time constraints imposed, and repeated threats of damage, including an attack on the convoy by an unidentified sniper on August 26, the mission was still able to gather a considerable amount of intelligence and collect the necessary amount of samples.” (Paragraph 18, p. 3). That is, in just seven hours, OPCW inspectors were reportedly able to “interview nine nurses, seven attending physicians, 28 eyewitnesses” (p. 16) survivors and other witnesses; analyze

munitions and their subcomponents; take environmental samples; assess symptoms in survivors; and collect hair, urine and blood for later analysis.” But how many people did the Inspectors’ team consist of to be able to perform all these functions in seven and a half hours? The report does not say but we believe it should not have been that many, considering that as reported in the media the OPWC convoy that left Damascus consisted of just four cars that also carried drivers, interpreters, OPWC private guards, equipment...

Equally important, then, is another question: who had organized the inspectors’ field inspections? Who was telling them where to go to look, where to look, what samples to collect, what witnesses to hear? The report (Appendix 3, p. 10) explains this: *“A leader of the local opposition forces—who was considered pre-eminent in the area to be visited—was identified and asked to take ‘custody’ of the mission. A point of contact within the opposition, he was used to ensure the security and movement of the mission, to facilitate access to the most critical cases/witnesses to be interviewed (...) thus enabling the mission to focus on its core activities.”* A great starting point for ensuring the reliability of the investigation!

But let us deal with sarin, which some laboratories—assures the report—have traced both in the blood and urine of some survivors and in samples of soil and various objects in the Ghouta area. Meanwhile, a clarification. Sarin kills with infinitesimal doses (DL 50 i.p. for guinea pig of 0.4 mg/Kg), just a droplet on the skin is enough. This means that even smaller doses must be traced in survivors. The few studies not covered by military secrecy attest that assessment of the low level of activity of circulating erythrocyte pseudokinesterases (in red blood cells) can provide some indication of the presence of sarin only if this analysis is done promptly.

We do not know whether the laboratories used by

the OPCW used any diagnostic technique known only to them, but we wonder why, instead of ineffable analyses of urine and blood samples, taken at least a week after the alleged exposure, the investigation was not carried out on the bodies (and possibly also on the clothes) of the people who were supposed to have been killed by sarin, in whom—as metabolic disposal was absent—the traces of sarin could have been evident. An unanswered question, as the analysis protocols (Appendix 2, p. 8 of the report) are secret and, to this day, analysis data remain secret. In the absence of these, one has only to rely on the good faith of the OPCW inspectors. It is the same regarding sarin allegedly traced to soil samples pointed out to the OPCW inspectors by the accompanying rebel leaders.

Even more suspicious is the inspectors' claim to identify sarin from the survivors' symptoms, symptoms, mind you, that the report does not specify whether they were still present at the time of the medical history or were only evoked by the survivors. But what symptoms? The OPCW Report lists (on p. 13) the symptoms that occur in survivors of sarin attacks: difficulty breathing, blurred vision, irritation in the eyes, miosis, loss of consciousness, convulsions, vomiting. All but one, reported in any civilian defense manual or scientific publication: loss of bowel and bladder control and, therefore, uncontrolled leakage of feces and urine. Without this last symptom, (dictated by the inhibition of the enzyme cholinesterase, which hydrolyzes the neurotransmitter acetylcholine) absolutely absent in the 36 survivors examined by the OPCW inspectors, the clinical picture can be traced to any gas. Not surprisingly, this symptom is absent in the admittedly numerous videos produced by the "rebels" who purport to document victims of sarin gas.

And even another symptom typical of sarin was absent from these videos: miosis, and that is pupil constriction.

Until a [video](#) released by CNN showed—finally!—to the world the famous miosis. Sarin? No, inoculation of a Pilocarpine-based eye drops, (commonly used to control glaucoma). Had it been sarin, as evidenced by some of the aforementioned reports written by anti-war activists, the eye and eyelid, with the gas-induced disruption of the nervous system, could not have had those movements recorded in the video. Movements that, of course, cannot be captured in the video frame that towers on page 14 of the OPCW Report, while the eventual video of this “evidence” remains classified to this day.

Then there is the matter of missiles. Missiles. Not already artillery shells loaded with gas like those used by the “rebels” and touted by them in numerous videos. But rather missiles engraved with letters in the Cyrillic alphabet (diligently photographed on page 19 of the report). Assad’s missiles, then. Missiles, as we have seen, rediscovered to the UN inspectors by the “rebels.” The matter of the missiles, then, could end there. Were it not for the curiosity of finding out what the UN inspectors embroidered on them. Five pages (18 to 23) in which, using artifacts and alleged traces of impact craters, they claim to prove the azimuth and trajectory of some of the missiles. Five pages that would be said to have been put there to plump up a desultorily deficient report were it not for annotations (p. 22) that are truly tasty: *“During the time spent at these locations, some individuals arrived bringing us more ammunition.”* The report, wisely, points out in the next sentence that this might be a possible attempt to pollute the evidence. Too bad it also did not ask how the willing collaborators were handling missiles already loaded with sarin while continuing to stay alive. And, while they were at it, the inspectors might as well have asked the rebels, who immortalized them in their videos circulated on the Net, how the “rescuers” who carried “sarin victims” by the armful stayed alive.

Another pearl when the report (point 22, p. 4) claims to attest to the intention to carry out a colossal massacre with missiles and gas by taking advantage of the particular time of the attack. "The morning of August 21 shows a drop in temperature between 02:00 and 05:00 a.m.; this means that the air does not move from the bottom to the top, but rather the opposite. In the event of a chemical attack such weather conditions maximize the potential impact of the gas, which, being heavier than air, can remain close to the ground and penetrate lower levels of buildings and constructions where many people were seeking shelter."

Agreed, on the drop in temperature, which, by the way, occurs on all days of the year. Less so, about the effectiveness of a gas attack at night, when people are partly protected by their home walls. Not at all, on the choice of killing people who would take refuge on the lower floors and in the basement, not least because it is hard to see—with a gas as odorless and immediately paralyzing as sarin—how they could have been alarmed and had time to take refuge on the lower floors and in the basement. But, since so much emphasis is placed on atmospheric issues, perhaps it would have been appropriate to also mention in the report the powerful winds that had been blowing, for days, in the Gouta area and which, in addition to reducing the effectiveness of the gas, would have directed it into the center of Damascus, Assad's stronghold.

A final comment on the allegations (swirled in the media) that the investigation was characterized by superficiality and sloppiness due to the Assad regime, which, until the very end, obstructed the entry of UN Inspectors into the Ghouta area to allow its thugs to make the evidence disappear. Not so. As mentioned above, for months, OPCW inspectors were already in Syria, invited by the Assad government, to investigate a whole series of chemical attacks carried out, with all evidence, by the

“rebels.” And when the news of the “immense massacre at Ghouta “ certified by [Médecins sans frontières](#) (“355 dead, 3600 hospitalized”) went around the world, the Damascus government did not hesitate a second to ask the OPCW inspectors to go to Ghouta. To Ghouta, where, in all evidence, a small number of people were killed, not already by a sarin missile attack, but by toxic gas—as documented in the aforementioned [Seymour Hersh](#) investigation—which emanated from a tunnel in which the “rebels” were building their homemade chemical devices.

But the most disturbing aspect of the “documentations,” produced by the “rebels” and supposedly attesting to attacks conducted by the Damascus government with sarin on defenseless populations are the videos (e.g., [this one](#) referring to Ghouta) characterized by the absence of the mothers (or parents) one would expect to see next to their intoxicated or dead children. Videos that show, in addition to the presence of children lying on the ground, only males who are often brandishing weapons and would be said to be militiamen. But where do these children come from? The aforementioned ISTEAMS Report suggested that many of the bodies depicted in the videos may be those of children kidnapped, months earlier, for extortion purposes by the “rebels” (mainly, in the Latakia area). A hypothesis that is not impossible to verify by tracing photos of those children who, likely, were still kept by their parents. Unfortunately, the chaos of the war, with the resulting flood of refugees, and the difficulties of a small and resourceless organization like ISTEAMS made this comparison impossible. Not least because the international investigation requested by the Damascus government from the UN was never carried out.

Even more dramatic is the [real cause of death](#) of the many children depicted in the “rebel” videos. Swedish Doctors For Human Rights, an NGO dealing with war victims, headed by Marcello Ferrada de Noli, a former professor at

Stockholm University and member of Karolinska Institutet, has been concerned with these subjects. This organization pointed out that in many videos from Syria never together with these newly dead children are their parents or even their mother alone. Another oddity was that the bodies of these children were shown, often clutched, as if they were a trophy, by men who clearly showed no mercy for them. But the most shocking revelation was in analyzing a video in which a “Syrian rebel” introduces the needle of an adrenaline syringe into a child’s heart without injecting anything into it but by twisting the syringe and then the needle until the heart is crushed. This was not the only technique used to kill [children to be shown later in videos](#). In other cases, for example, their necks were broken or they were shot in the head.

As mentioned above, there are quite a few articles and videos on the internet of alleged chemical attacks conducted, according to the mainstream media, by Assad’s armed forces that present a quite different reality; among them, I point out a [video](#) of mine analyzing the alleged chemical attack in Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib Governorate from which some text and images are given here.

In April 2017, a colossal disinformation campaign ran rampant. Virtually all newspapers and television channels broadcast video images of an alleged sarin gas bombing conducted by the Syrian air force in Idlib province. Public outrage was at fever pitch. And Trump himself denied the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria that he had promised during the election campaign by ordering, in “retaliation for the deaths in Khan Sheikhoun,” a missile strike against Damascus. But what had really happened? Most likely, an accidental explosion in an arsenal of the jihadists, placed in a quarry, which had produced a gas leak from crates of chemical weapons stored there. None of the albeit numerous videos about Khan Sheikhoun show any bombing of

buildings that could have also disseminated sarin gas while the presence in the arsenal of chemical weapons we believe can be confirmed by this photo (frame from a jihadists' video) showing two "rebels," equipped with NBC protection complete with self-contained breathing apparatus who are starting inside the quarry.



While the presence of a sentry box (equipped with a long radio antenna) above the quarry and the orientation of the rubble along with the tightness of the roof, in the next

photo, we believe confirms the hypothesis of an accidental explosion inside the arsenal. Verisimilarly, the incident having occurred, someone proposed to use the scenario of destruction and deaths to set up a movie set and, therefore videos, with which to blame the "Assad regime," and here



are the photos of the "missiles" in a population center. Too bad, as TV Russia1 was pointing out by interviewing experts from the U.S. MIT, that those "missiles" shown on TV could not have been missiles intended to harbor toxic or nerve gases and that the impact of these devices on the ground should have left traces quite different from those depicted in the jihadists' videos.

And to complete the staging, in addition to the dead

children, extras to play either the roles of “rescuers” (about whose credibility we have already said) or “victims” (still alive) of Assad’s gas. It is a pity that the White Helmets Media Group (which made most of the videos later filmed by our mass media) always used the same extras for the different scenarios.



The angels of Good and the devils of Evil.



Let us now deal with some of the many fake news stories to support the war on Syria. But first a few words about the media manipulation of the Kurds and ISIS.

The year 2013 saw the irruption into the Syrian scenario portrayed by the mainstream media of the Kurds: a people—residing in officially Turkish, Iraqi and Syrian territories—who have always fought, rightly, for the recognition of their cultural identity (and therefore autonomy or independence) and who, for this, have been suffering fierce military repression by the Ankara government for years. Of the cause of the Kurds, very few had taken care of it in Europe (just think of the Italian governments handover of Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan to Turkey in 1999, which passed almost unnoticed) until the aggression against Syria prompted the West to turn the Kurds—on a par with, for example, the Kosovars in the war on Serbia—into its pawns. The occasion was the descent onto the Syrian chessboard of ISIS (also known as al Nusra,

Daesh, Islamic State...), against which—according to the Western media—only the Kurds were fighting.

Thus begins a gigantic media operation. The internet and TV are flooded with videos of beheadings (and other heinous crimes) carried out by ISIS as if to suggest that it was only this organization that carried them out and not already the many other cutthroat gangs used by the West and the petromonarchies in the aggression against Syria. This media washing of the “Syrian rebels” counterbalanced in the media an apologia for the Kurdish cause by emphasizing, for example, the role of the [Kurdish women fighters](#) (forgetting that already in 2013 a female battalion of 800 women was operating in the Syrian army) and, more generally, by presenting as unique in the Middle East the equality with males of Kurdish women, forgetting that this had been present for decades in Syria. The boundless admiration for the Kurdish cause, espoused even by the likes of [Roberto Saviano](#), [Matteo Renzi](#) or [Bernard Henri-Lévy](#), took on staggering levels in Europe and Italy. One only has to think of the triumphant reception at the 2016 Venice Film Festival of [Karim Franceschi](#), already the host of countless TV appearances, presenting his documentary of fighting alongside Kurdish militiamen. And all this while in Italy, the few supporters of the Donbass separatists who had dared to externalize their solidarity, bringing there nothing but medicine and basic necessities, often, spent days in police headquarters or courts defending themselves against accusations of being terrorists.

This interest in the Kurdish cause was, finally, clear to many during the (2015) siege by ISIS of the Syrian town of Kobane when U.S. troops, in order to “save the Kurds,” arrived in Syria, subsequently building there an airport and as many as five military bases. This gave rise to a military coalition, the so-called “Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF),” which, in addition to Kurds and Americans

also incorporated many of the cutthroats used in the war on Syria; a coalition that also oversaw the sale, mainly to Israel, of illegally extracted oil, which, until 2011, constituted one of the Syrian state's most important revenues.

Having thus created the “angels of Good,” the media, in order to justify a war, labored to create the “[devils of Evil](#)”. The breakout of ISIS in the war on Syria basically dates back to the summer of 2014 when a vast area bordering Iraq and Syria was invaded by long columns of off-road vehicles carrying thousands of militiamen, perfectly armed, who soon pounced on villages and towns massacring the defenseless inhabitants and imposing a medieval Sharia law on all women. Where did those men come from? And, more importantly, who had armed them? The media pretended to grope in the dark when, at last, the “truth” occupied the front pages of newspapers (among them [Il Manifesto](#)): it was Assad who had created those gangs of criminals. A simply grotesque accusation espoused by then Prime Minister [Matteo Renzi](#) at the NATO Summit in Wales “*The Assad regime contributed to the emergence of ISIS in Syria and its expansion beyond this country*” and supported in countless editorials (just see [here](#) and [here](#)). All based on two mere suppositions; the first: Assad would have let the “rebels” maul each other, thus objectively favoring the dominance of ISIS; the second: Assad would have released from its prisons terrorists who later merged into ISIS.

Concerning the first point, we can only dismiss it by making our own the words of [Michele Giorgio](#) in “Il Manifesto”: “*It is true that Assad for a long time watched with satisfaction the armed clash between ISIS and other rebel militias. But what side in the war does not watch with complacency as enemies kill each other?*” The second point, however, deserves further study.

In January 2012, Western media gave news of a “first amnesty” granted by Assad for “all crimes committed

during the protests, between March 15, 2011 and January 15, 2012.” It was not the first. Back in November 2011, the Damascus government had announced the release of the 4,000 detainees who “do not have blood on their hands” and proclaimed an amnesty for gun owners, to be handed over to the authorities within eight days. Other measures had taken place on May 31, 2011, with the release of political prisoners, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood, locked up mostly in the notorious Sednaya prison. Another pardon measure there had been on June 21 for all crimes committed up to the day before. Despite this, there were those who protested the “narrowness” of these measures: [Amnesty International](#), for example.

In June 2014, after his electoral success (88% of voters), Assad announced a [new amnesty](#): it also affected foreigners who fought in Syria if they decided to surrender, turning some death sentences into life sentences, life imprisonment into 20 years of imprisonment, reduced the time of provisional detention for various charges, released terminally ill detainees and those over 70 years old; mild punishments for kidnappers who—within a month of the date of the measure—released the kidnapped without the payment of a ransom. But, even for this measure, there were those who protested its “narrowness”: [The Syria Observatory](#) [mno for Human Rights](#), for example, because not all detainees in Adra prison “*whom the Assad regime considers terrorists*” had been freed, some others, however,—enigmatically—because unspecified “*actions of the oppositions*” would be excluded from the benefits of the amnesty.

But leaving the star&striped defenders of “human rights” to their complaints, let us ask a question. Is it possible that some of the many released detainees later joined some jihadist gangs? Of course yes, indeed it is likely. After all, even in Italy, about half of the former prisoners are destined

to return to their cells. And we are talking about Italy; let alone in Syria where joining some gang could also have been a “solution” to survive the prevailing hunger. The obviousness of the answer, therefore, forced the theorists of the Assad-ISIS alliance to do something more sophisticated. For example, the murky affair of the Sednaya prison from which Assad, in May 2011, allegedly [let out](#) dangerous terrorists who later merged into ISIS; indeed, to allow them to build ISIS.

The truth is quite different. In 2011 Sednaya Prison, already the scene of bloody riots and crowded to the hilt (as many as 5,000 inmates in truly inhumane conditions) also benefited from the amnesty. As already mentioned, it is possible that someone among the countless released from Sednaya took up or resumed arms. Who? To our knowledge, no NGO report (not even those not holding with Assad such as [Human Rights Watch](#)) has ever provided a single name of detainees released from Sednaya who have become prominent ISIS elements, not even to compare them to the many who remain imprisoned there. And the only “source” in this regard remains an [article](#) published in January 2014—and compiled by the authors’ own admission on Turkish intelligence information—reporting the release in March 2011 from Sednaya (as well as of such Abdul Rahman Suweis, Hassan Aboud, Ahmad Aisa Al Sheikh) of Zahran Aloush, commander of Jaish Al Islam, who later merged with ISIS.

Syrian authorities have always denied both these releases and that the four had been held in Syrian jails. But beyond that, one would have to wonder why on earth the Western media waited three years to report this “release” despite the fact that Zahran Aloush had in the [meantime](#) been responsible for unprecedented heinousness. Then there would be another objection. What interest would Assad have in releasing future ISIS terrorists in 2011,

when, that is, the Syrian “uprising” seemed already tamed and recruitment in Libya and the subsequent invasion of mercenaries into Syria had not yet begun? No one among the “authoritative terrorism experts” rampant in the mass media has ever asked this obvious question.

But the confusing accusations that Assad has, with knowledge, “released terrorists” pale in comparison to what the U.S. has, instead, done. Meanwhile, let’s talk about Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, leader of ISIS, later killed by the U.S. under very [mysterious](#) circumstances . Detained since 2004 in the U.S. prison at Camp Bucca, Iraq for having hundreds of people’s throats slit, he was released back to freedom in 2009 on the recommendation of a commission — *Combined Review and Release Board* — which recommended his “[unconditional release](#)”. Why would that be? According to journalist [Gianni Riotta](#), a former member of the “High Level Group for the Fight against Fake News” set up by the European Union: “*it is the usual errors of bureaucracy.*” It may be, but for others the release of Al Baghdadi is part of the US plot to procure bloodthirsty fanatics for use in theaters of war. For that matter, around the same time, despite his [terrifying record](#), Sufyan bin Qumu is released from Guantanamo — after six years of detention — who will end up captaining the “[revolt](#)” against Gaddafi. And there are numerous other, to say the least, “suspicious” releases that have been de-secreted by WikiLeaks. After all, after the [mock execution](#) (May 2, 2011) of the now-unrepresentable Osama bin Laden, Al-Qaeda begins, more and more openly, to be used by the US. The names of the organizations change (Al-Qaida, Al Nusra, ISIS...) but the purpose is always the same. And there is always some journalist who pretends to tear his hair out talking about a “Frankenstein’s monster” that has become uncontrollable. Not so: the “monster” is always on the leash of the US. And if they release him, it is so that they can then justify a war, officially against his

nefarious deeds. And to make these known, you need a news agency. For example, the SITE.



Characteristic of ISIS has been maniacal care in the production of its videos, starting with the now famous one of the beheading of U.S. photojournalist [James Foley](#). Videos broadcast (in some cases in full version) on TV, and almost always, marked with the SITE logo: a news agency, headed by [Rita Katz](#), which provided these videos to the media after “certifying” their authenticity. Yes, but how come such heinous videos found a place on TV that almost never in the past (especially when it was the so-called “Syrian rebels” who were killing) had published such stuff? Wasn’t SITE thus becoming the news agency of ISIS? Wasn’t publishing these videos risking that famous “incitement to hatred” in the name of which countless posts were deleted from social media? Legitimate questions but they did not end the Katz-certified carousel of horrors until the sending of Western troops to Syria and weapons to the “rebels” to

fight ISIS was demanded by Furor di Popolo.

The interest of the ISIS videos, it seemed, then disappeared. Until July 2015, when the revelation that the videos were fakes produced on a film set caused a stir. The “proof” of this discovery was a CD video that was allegedly purloined by phantom Ukrainian anti-NATO “hackers” (Cyber Berkut) from the bag of a staffer of U.S. Republican Senator John McCain during a trip to Ukraine. In fact, even a cursory analysis of the “stolen” video pointed out that that movie set depicted on the CD never could have made the (tragically “real”) beheading videos put online by ISIS. So what? Why was so much space given to this fake news? Verisimilarly, because of that sloppy video, soon denounced by the media as “fake,” was part of a media campaign aimed at rehabilitating John McCain who was put under indictment in those very days for his documented [meetings](#) with ISIS leader al Baghdadi.



So, are all the ISIS videos shown to us on TV and the web authentic? Absolutely not. Years ago, it came out that a public relations firm—British Bell Pottinger—had entered into a lucrative contract with the Pentagon to produce,

among other things, fake videos to be attributed to ISIS and Al Qaeda. In the face of that scandal, the Pentagon's official explanation was far-fetched indeed: *"the CDs containing those videos (stealthily left behind by marines during raids on homes and villages) were equipped with code that allowed them to track who was watching them on the computer and transmit the IP address through Google Analytics."* Yes, but that should have assumed that even the most remote Syrian villages had Internet coverage. Besides, what interest would the Pentagon have had in tracking who was taking a look at CDs *"stealthily left behind by the marines"*? A look could have been given by anyone, not necessarily a cutthroat or an ISIS "sympathizer."

One could go on at length about the U.S. use of ISIS citing dozens of other evidences documented by testimonies, videos, photos. But it would, perhaps, be wasted effort since much of this evidence is no longer traceable on the Internet (some only through archive.org which, in any case, is difficult to consult since it does not have an internal search engine). A situation (which one would say was taken from the novel 1984 where the protagonist had to cut out from the encyclopedias information disliked by the regime) today exacerbated by the social media's claim to impose fact-checking coordinated by NewsGuard, a consulting firm that boasts General [Michael Hayden, former CIA director](#), on its advisory board (the link opposite, of course, we had to take from archive.org).

May God have in Glory archive.org!

He who sows wind reaps storm

In September 2015, the Russian Federation, called upon by the Assad government, intervened militarily in Syria by striking with air and missile strikes, in addition to convoys of Syrian oil smuggled into Turkey, installations of ISIS, al Nusra and other cutthroat gangs. A determination to destroy these organizations that the U.S. and its allies certainly had not, officially, for [fear](#) of indirectly aiding the Assad government

The subsequent recapture by the Damascus government of large areas of Syria began to provoke a [withdrawal of the jihadists](#), withdrawal facilitated by the Damascus government, for example, granting in 2018 a [safe-conduct](#) to move away, without bloodbaths, from the Aleppo neighborhoods they had occupied for years. This withdrawal also began to provoke a disengagement by European governments towards jihadist formations (hosted, financed and armed by countries such as France, Belgium, Germany, Britain). And so, having archived the times (April 26, 2013) in which Didier Reynders, Belgian Foreign Minister and former EU Commissioner of Justice, [declared](#) to a journalist (who asked him why, in Belgium, a gathering of jihadists recognized as responsible for heinous crimes in Syria had been authorized) *"perhaps we should make a monument to these heroes of the Revolution."* We moved on, [in 2016](#), to proposing aid to ISIS cutthroats to rebuild their lives. As proposed, for example, by Gilles DeKerchove, EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator (*"I bet that in a year Daesh will be destroyed, and these fighters then will return to Europe. (...) When that happens we will inevitably have to be able to reintegrate them since we cannot lock them all in prisons, either because we will not have enough evidence or because they will*

have to be offered a new alternative life”), or even the ANSA correspondent in Beirut (“... we forget the fact that a lot of people today are also with al Qaeda for socio-economic reasons, not for ideological reasons: we should understand why they prefer al Qaeda’s salary, which is higher, than the American salary. Maybe salaries should be raised to bring them to our side and not just bomb them.”). Soon, however, some jihadist formations began to bite their masters with heinous attacks in France, Belgium, Germany United Kingdom, likely to force them not to abandon them under the attack of Russian planes and the Syrian army. And [otherwise inexplicable](#) inconsistencies in the investigations and countless fake news spread after these attacks would be said to reveal a sharp divide within governments and security services on how to deal with this threat.



Exemplary, in this regard, is that which occurred after January 7, 2015, when, in Paris, after a jihadist attack on the headquarters of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo (17 dead), the brothers (Saïd and Chérif) Kouachi and by Amedy Coulibaly were immediately identified as the culprits. And this was thanks to an identity card of Said Kouachi, “found” on the seat of a car a few hours after

the attack and immediately circulated on the web and by the media. This was just one of the [many inconsistencies](#) dotting the Charlie Hebdo case. A case that ended with the killing (in two different episodes) of the three alleged perpetrators. Killings (for example, like those at [Toulouse](#) or at [Sesto San Giovanni](#)) that were absolutely unmotivated except by the need to [make disappear](#) any possible solution to the investigation or, even, an involvement of the secret services in the planning of the massacre. A script that one would say has been replayed in the other jihadist massacres that have bloodied Europe: Paris Nov. 13, 2015 (137 dead), Brussels March 22, 2016 (35 dead), Nice July 14, 2016 (87 dead), Berlin Dec. 19, 2016 (12 dead), Manchester May 22, 2017 (23 dead), London June 4, 2017(11 dead), Barcelona Aug. 17, 2017 (25 dead), Hanau (Germany) Feb. 19, 2020 (11 dead).



Massacres (the full list can be found in this [study by ISPI](#)) that have seen, even in the main stream media, the dissemination of countless fakes aimed, presumably at [intoxicating public opinion](#). Such as the [loss of the identity](#)

[document](#) of the alleged perpetrator of the Nice massacre (allegedly reported, two years earlier, on phantom “Arab social media”); “crisis actors” paid to play the victims of the Bataclan massacre; [dummies and blow-up dolls](#) to play the victims of the Barcelona massacre; the news, spread by many mainstream media outlets and branded as fake news by as many, of the [destruction of more than 27 thousand hours of video surveillance footage](#) in the aftermath of the July 14, 2016 attack in Nice; the “Israeli journalist,” Richard Gutjahr, who was “coincidentally” present at the scene of both the Nice and Munich massacres...

Meanwhile, the main stream media were doing their utmost to present as [fakes the ISIS-produced videos](#) such as the one depicting the beheading of Foley [or 21 Copts](#) or the [45 people in cages burned](#) alive , or the [Jordanian pilot](#) burned alive... and [denounced](#) that the thousands of foreign fighters who left France to go and fight in Syria, scandalously, in addition to lucrative emoluments disbursed by the intelligence services, were also given, due to a “bureaucratic glitch,” monthly unemployment benefits.

What political dynamics can be glimpsed in the intertwining of jihadist attacks and the convulsive media campaigns that dotted Europe between 2015 and 2020? One of the most thoughtful studies is the one produced by the [Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media](#) which hypothesizes a conflict between intelligence apparatuses and respective governments (and also within these structures) with respect to how to deal with terrorist groups protected, financed and armed to wage the proxy war on Syria. Conflict that had also crossed the media linked to the bangs of the aforementioned apparatuses and governments. Thus could be explained, for example, episodes such as the news spread only in some newspapers (and declared to be fake news according to others) that Amedy Coulibaly, barricaded in a supermarket where he

had taken hostages granted a [telephone interview](#) to a TV network after shouting to the policemen, *"You know very well who I am, you know who I am."* This could explain, the ploy considered fake news by many media outlets, the accidental discovery of the identity card (the same miracle that occurred at [Berlin](#)) thus revealing Said Kouachi's name without revealing, for the time being, how this had been discovered. A finding, however, deemed authentic by not a few media outlets.

Much of the above news may have been created and disseminated by sectors of the government who, given the likely imminent unraveling of the proxy war on Syria, were about to abandon the jihadists to their fate. By miscalculating. And that is without considering that the jihadists now had considerable blackmail power by being able to reveal who had commissioned atrocities and crimes on them, and that, even worse, the same power was held by the intelligence services who, moreover, without a quid pro quo, were now unwilling to surrender the immense power that had been granted to them in order to be able to secretly manage not only the "rebels" (as established by the [Group of Friends of Syria](#)) but also openly terrorist organizations and, for that reason, banned by all European Union resolutions.

The consequences have been, not only the massacres but also a strengthening, in many European countries, of the so-called Deep State and that is to say, very powerful structures and people nestled in ministries, newspapers, intelligence agencies that are not accountable to governments, parliaments, judicial authorities... for their actions. He who sows the wind reaps the storm.

The many fake news stories against Syria

The main purpose of the fake news against the Assad government has been to present a war of aggression (waged by proxy by arming various jihadists and cutthroats) in a kind of popular uprising, a “civil war” that the government has attempted to win by resorting to the most heinous means. Hence comes the need to present Assad as a mere terrorist; hence come fake news such as the deliberate destruction of schools, children’s hospitals, bakeries; the “barrel bombs”; Assad’s snipers training by firing on the bellies of pregnant (Syrian) women...

It goes without saying that the illogicality of these exploits inevitably ends up provoking a “cui prodest?” — what advantage would these exploits guarantee Assad? But this reaction concerns only a few individuals; for so many others, fake news—according to the dictates of the inventor of war propaganda Edward Louis Bernays—succeeds in “speaking to the belly,” arousing deep disturbances of the unconscious by prompting people to act in the direction desired by the Masters of News.

Let us deal, then, with some of these fake news stories.

Hospitals bombed by Assad

Since the proxy war on Syria began (2011), fake news relaunched by mainstream newspapers and TV stations has been occurring at a rate of at least one every three days: about 1,300 articles and TV reports, often signed by influential journalists, to convince people of the need to destroy yet another rogue state along with the satrap of the day.

Among the first fake news stories were those against Asma Assad. Sporty, likeable, multi-talented, hailed for her elegance and being a champion of women's rights by Vogue and many other media outlets, when in 2008, she came to Rome to accompany her husband Bashshār Assad to receive from the hands of President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano the nomination of Knight of the Grand Cross "for her commitments to peace." The media was raving about her. And, even more so, to the point of idolizing her as "the rose in the desert" when Napolitano, in 2010, went to Damascus to [praise](#) the Assad government.

Two years later, the proxy war against Syria broke out, and the media turned her into the [Marie Antoinette of Syria](#) who, according to [Corriere della Sera](#) spent "over \$6,000" to buy herself "crystal-encrusted shoes," according to [Sole-24 ore](#) 450.000 for a chandelier, according to [Ants.net](#) \$12,000 on chandeliers... Source of these reports: the British newspaper The [Guardian](#) which was drawing on phantom emails intercepted by members of the opposition gathered in the Supreme Council of the Revolution.

As the aggression against Syria escalated, [the fake news](#) multiplied. Almost invariably, sources of these the [Syrian Observatory for Human Rights](#) (a London-based structure founded in 2006, likely a longa manus of British intelligence services) and NGOs, especially *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF), an organization founded, just for good

measure, by Bernard Kouchner, foreign minister of the Sarkozy government at the time of the planning of the aggression on Libya.

On August 24, 2013, [Médecins Sans Frontières](#) with this [communiqué](#), later deleted, announced a sarin gas attack that occurred on August 21 in Ghouta near Damascus. A communiqué that after unequivocally describing the symptoms of a neurotoxic agent such as sarin (convulsions, excessive salivation, constricted pupils, blurred vision and difficulty breathing) indulged in frankly unbelievable statements.

“Three hospitals in Damascus governorate supported by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported receiving about 3,600 patients with neurotoxic symptoms in less than three hours.” Meanwhile, which hospitals? After a round of e-mails to Syrian acquaintances living in Italy, I phoned (and then redialed the next day) the MSF Italy press officer to find out. But her response was always the same: *“Médecins Sans Frontières cannot disclose the names of the hospitals for security reasons.”* Three MSF-supported hospitals located in Damascus? I could have understood that for a few MSF outpatient clinics lost in territory manned by “rebels.” But in Damascus? An area, under the full control of the Assad government, by the way, in those days traversed by numerous OPWC Inspectors (who had come precisely to investigate similar “toxic gas” allegations of a few months earlier) and accompanying journalists. What were the “security reasons” that legitimized the omission of the names of the three hospitals that allegedly received “3,600 patients with neurotoxic symptoms in less than three hours”? And if these three hospitals were so secret that they could not be named, how did the 3,600 people managing to reach them in “less than three hours” know them so well? And where had the 355 sarin deaths flaunted in the *Médecins Sans Frontières* communiqué ended up (buried? cremated?

Hidden in some cold storage...)? Alleged victims that no one has been able to see. Nothing. No photos, no videos, no OPWC report. All that was left, then, was to resign oneself to seeing the video flaunted by [l'Espresso](#) which, in documenting the massacre, went so far as to show only a poor dog, presumably, bludgeoned to death who knows where and being petted by a person, obviously immune to the alleged sarin that coated the animal's skin.

But this was not the only time in which Médecins Sans Frontières refused to say where its phantom hospitals were located in Syria. It happened, for example, while the [saga of "children's hospitals"](#) raged (at least [seven](#)) that, for no known reason, Assad ordered to be bombed. A [saga](#) that lasted [a full two years](#) and was "documented" by really incredible [videos](#) in which there was no sign of children or their mothers but only men, often in camouflage suits and armed. In short, they were outpatient clinics to provide medical aid only to "rebels"; posts which, because they did not have a red cross drawn on their roofs or their location was not communicated to the parties to the conflict (thus becoming protected by the Geneva Convention), were bombed, like any military post, by the Russian and Syrian air forces. It is from a [highlight](#) that Médecins Sans Frontières in Afghanistan behaved quite differently: *"to all parties to the conflict they had communicated the coordinates of our hospital."* Not in Syria where, likely, it would have been unpopular to let it be known that Médecins Sans Frontières was providing medical relief not already to all, but only to "rebels" wounded in combat.

As mentioned earlier, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, there were at least seven children's hospitals bombed by Assad, three of them in [Aleppo](#) alone, garnering, in the early days, headlines and news openings. However, the realization that in the various photos or videos of these alleged hospitals, children or their

mothers were never likely to be seen began to arouse some suspicion, even among some mainstream media outlets, marginalizing the periodic news. Attempted to thin it out was the Press Officer of the [White Helmets](#) by putting on [Twitter](#) photos of a ward of an alleged children's hospital in eastern Aleppo (the area of the Syrian city occupied from 2012 to 2016 by jihadist militias) with children and their parents. A ward that appeared to be fully functional, clean and brightly lit (in an Aleppo without electricity and fuel for months) and with perfect ironing of patients' gowns? Along with other activists, who were also working to expose fake news, I asked this publicly of the Reuter agency that had released the images you see here. Obviously, getting no response.



Schools made to be bombed by Assad

Having exhausted the “children’s hospitals bombed by Assad” and killed (again on Assad’s orders) [the last pediatrician in Aleppo](#), the saga of schools bombed by Assad began. Of course, no one in the mainstream media (almost everyone had dismissed the [jihadist massacre at the school in Homs](#) with a blurb) deigned to explain what interest Assad would have in having Syrian pupils and teachers bombed, but so be it. It goes without saying that anyone with a modicum of intellectual honesty who had paid attention to the “evidence” that supported the school bombing story would have realized, easily, that it was fake news. In this regard, let us dwell on the “evidence” of two alleged schools bombed by Assad.



This is the photo that [mainstream media](#) claimed should have documented the effects of an airstrike, ordered by Assad, which, hitting a school in Idlib province, allegedly killed 22 children and six teachers. It goes without saying that an airplane bomb destroying the wall of this alleged classroom should have wiped out the opposite wall which, instead, appears intact; just as, judging from the shadows and the image on the right, the roof of the classroom and,

even, the stained glass window would appear to be intact. To this must be added the miracle of the chairs and desks remaining where they were after the explosion.



Even more faux, the “news” of the “[school made to be bombed by Assad with napalm](#)”

spread by an incredible [BBC video-report](#) (and immediately taken up, in Italy, by [ANSA](#), [RAInews](#), [La Stampa](#), [Corriere della Sera](#), il [Fatto quotidiano](#)...) of the school in northern Syria hit by napalm dropped by Assad’s

air force: “at least 10 children killed and many more injured.”

Meanwhile, two words about napalm, a gelatinous substance that develops extremely high heat (up to 1,200 degrees) and sticks to the skin burning (even when sprayed with water) for 10-15 minutes. It is no coincidence that, with a few very rare exceptions, people directly affected by napalm (which, by the way, results in absolutely characteristic burns) have never been found alive, but only those affected by foliage and other objects burned by this substance. Foliage, indeed. Inasmuch as napalm (by the way, now in disuse, even in its Napalm-B variant) is a weapon made to hit land submerged by vegetation (such as the forests of the Apennines in 1944 or the Vietnamese countryside); certainly not urban areas (where its effect would be minimal).

That said, let us deal with the fake news spread by the BBC by dwelling on the [video](#) produced by “war correspondent” Ian Pannell, who—despite the absence of any sign, desks, posters on the walls, blackboards, backpacks and abandoned books—claims to be speaking from a “school hit by napalm. And despite the presence there of a swimming pool, which would suggest it is, instead, the cottage of some local notable. Verisimilarly unaware of this, Pannell, to prove that it is a school, dwells on a plastic slide not wondering, of course, how the plastic did not melt under the heat produced by napalm. Same conundrum for a prissy women’s shoe and a boot (both without any trace of fire) that is unclear what they are supposed to attest to.

But the most incredible part of the video is in the final part shot in a hospital. As already mentioned, of the bodies of the napalm-affected children, there is no trace, and not even of their parents, who likely should have flocked to the hospital in large numbers (nor their cars, as evidenced by the [half-empty parking lot](#) in front of the hospital). We

must, therefore, be content with the performance of this [child](#) who, sitting in a chair, with absolutely untouched skin (not to mention hair) covered in cream, without even taking off his wristwatch, tries hard to convince us. Certainly, less compelling is the [chick](#) with the veil on her head (obviously intact, as is the dress) but still covered in the same cream, which, since it cannot be a soothing anti-burn (the chick is, in fact, entering the hospital) is supposed to represent the infamous napalm. As unconvincing as the screaming women and the guy with a mustache next to her. All constructed scenes in the video? Probably not. Some clips might depict genuine burns (certainly not from napalm). But burns are not uncommon in Italy (an average of 100,000 each year), let alone in Syria. And the likely ones, depicted in the video, involve two men and a boy, not children already.



But what really remains the “top” of the video is this [scene](#)—filmed in a room that could be anything but an albeit improvised hospital shelter (considering the presence of a mirror, a curtain but no bed or cot)—where five guys lying on the floor (three with their clothes intact,

ça va sans dire), try their best to improvise (although the guy in the back, in the white shirt, evidently annoyed, gets up at one point and declares forfeit). Towering over the scene is a man with a tattered tank top and spots on his skin that, (like the boy in the yellow shirt) might as well be real burns (certainly not from napalm, since he enters the building [with his legs](#)) if it were not for the two “rescuers” (without gloves, but harnessed in a mask and blue T-shirt from the “humanitarian” organization Hand-in-hand-for-Syria) who would be said to be ignoring them, focusing their “care” on two other boys lying on the ground, improvising. Rescuers who, by the way, insist on harnessing themselves in a perhaps “scenic” but frankly suspicious manner as this guy with [gas mask](#) exiting the ambulance or [this](#) who, in a courtyard, with a fine-dust filter mask, gives an interview.



The “barrel bombs”



As absurd as it is, the story of the barrels laden with explosives and scrap metal (the so-called “[barrel bombs](#)”) dropped by Assad (which, according to a poignant [video by Repubblica](#) , after their explosion were transformed by the industrious and environmentally friendly “Syrian rebels” into wind turbines to produce electricity) deserves to be analyzed especially because it reveals how fake news conveys, often, subliminal messages.

Meanwhile, why would Assad have helicopters drop barrels loaded with explosives and scrap metal instead of aviation bombs (which are present in large numbers in Syrian arsenals and which, certainly, have a much higher accuracy and disruptive charge and, therefore, lethality, than the barrels)? Because in those days with the “Syrian rebels” already beheading and slaughtering civilians, one had to attach to the Damascus government, and only to it, the license of “[terrorist](#)”. And what was better to attest it than to spread photos of (water or gas) tanks or, even,

of fire extinguishers and propagandize with these the existence of “heinous” devices such as barrels loaded with explosives, scrap metal, nails... thrown by Assad’s thugs on markets, schools, people? Not surprisingly, the hoax of “Assad’s barrels,” immediately conveyed by the most important NGOs and our own [*Maîtres à penser*](#), had a huge media response, managing to outrage half the world.

Grotesque then are the mainstream media’s attempts to explain why on earth Assad should use barrels instead of airplane bombs. According to [*Corriere della Sera*](#), for example, “*Perhaps (Assad) wants to preserve the arsenal in case of a clash with invading forces.*” “Preserve the arsenal?” That is, Assad, while sending an expensive helicopter and crew, in order to save something, employs barrels and not bombs? And to say that these “barrels” are not even “homemade” but imported from Russia, as [*suggests*](#) the Courier: “*And where are they built? Do the Cyrillic inscriptions represent a clue or are they simply “shells” used to prepare the devices?*” That is, the Russian Federation, according to the Courier, instead of sending bombs to the Assad government, employed its own ships or planes to send them empty barrels, which, certainly, were not lacking in Syria.

But the Courier outdoes itself when, [*a year later*](#), it attempts to explain the “technological evolution” these barrels would have known: “*Initially—as the very talented blogger Brown Moses who has conducted research explained—they were triggered by lighting a long fuse, a dangerous system for the crews of the helicopters carrying them.*” More than dangerous, we might add, truly bizarre in that, (as anyone would understand) if the fuse turns out to be short in relation to the time of fall, the barrel explodes in the air without doing too much damage; if it turns out to be long, however, no barrel explodes as it smashes to the ground, letting out explosives, tar and nails. These must not have been rare inconveniences since the Courier adds, “*They*

were later fitted with devices that activate them on impact with the ground." That is, a detonator! The good old detonator that has always served aircraft bombs! And, then, why—in the name of God!—instead of "bombs" we insist on talking about "barrels"? We'll get to that right away. In the meantime, let's deal with the "very good blogger Brown Moses," a Corriere della Sera talking point.

Who Brown Moses (a pseudonym for Eliot Higgins) is was [told](#) us by himself. Thirty years old, an office worker, two years ago, he was laid off from a company in Leicester, UK. Having nothing better to do, he put himself in front of a computer and, viewing YouTube footage, began to "specialize in the study of armaments," particularly those used in the Syrian conflict, a field about which—by his own admission—he knew absolutely nothing. He soon became a "celebrity," a point of reference for countless media outlets such as the BBC, Financial Times, CNN, Guardian, Sky.... For the New Yorker, Brown Moses is *"the best expert on the munitions used in the war in Syria"*; for our own Huffington Post, even, *"a sort of bible for knowing what weapons are circulating in Syria."*

Why the media, instead of relying on authoritative institutes of military studies (such as, for example, SIPRI or Jane's) relied on the opinions of an amateur (*"Before the Arab Spring I knew no more about weapons than the average Xbox owner"*) is unclear. Perhaps because they needed to baptize as an "expert" someone who would consecrate at any cost the hoaxes put out by the "Syrian rebels" and their sponsors. Be that as it may, it would seem that "fame" has, progressively, gone to the head of the good Brown Moses who has ended up frantically picking up any garbage on the web, stamping it "approved by the expert." The mainstream media needs only [that](#) anyway.

Among the gems published by Brown Moses are a [slew](#) of videos, photos, and graphics—evidence that he claims

should attest to the existence of the “barrels” dropped by Assad. Were it not for the tragedy they pull behind them, one would snicker at the ramshackle realization of this “evidence” gathered by Brown Moses. What else to do, indeed, in front of the photo (fig. 4, see the previous link), (purporting, evidently, to have been taken in a helicopter, in flight, of the Syrian army) in which one can see a hand lighting the fuse of one of the many “barrels” deposited in bulk on the platform. Or in front (fig. 3) of the two little black clouds—one would say a clumsy photomontage—that, according to Brown Moses, would attest to the explosion of two barrels with too short a fuse (but why on earth are the two clouds at the same altitude? Two helicopters, each with an equally clumsy bomb squad?). What then of this [“barrel”](#) that would have fallen from a helicopter and which turns out, instead, to be so intact as to allow such a clean cut of the plate? Even more intact, then, is this other “barrel.” Here, on the other hand, a “barrel” plunges into the ground (without a shred of crater), explodes (as the gash would claim to attest) without any trace being left on the rest of the (still perfectly tubular) casing.

But, since there had been talk of explosives in “barrels,” here it is, in this [video](#), curiously identical to the lime that abounds around there and, moreover, featuring the same lumps (which cannot be present in an explosive powder). Strange then the [clean cut](#) to the sheet metal of this other “explosive barrel.” How was it made by the “rebels”? With a “flex” (circular chainsaw)? What about the sparks? And, again speaking of inconsistencies, what credibility do the formulas given in Fig. 8, which would claim to calculate mortality according to the part of the body hit by the fragments contained in the barrels, have—in what military medicine manual would they be reported?

But the most stunning thing about the “exploding barrels” fake news would be their [unprecedented power](#):

“Every time one of these barrel bombs explodes-and, in Syria, this happens about 50 times a day—it is the seismological equivalent of a 7.6 magnitude earthquake,” [affirmed](#) James Le Mesurier, a former British military instructor and founder of the self-styled Syrian “relief organization” White Helmets, funded with millions of dollars by NATO and so dear to the Western media that in 2017, it deserved the [Oscar-winning](#) for a documentary released in Italy by Netflix.

P.S. The earthquake that devastated five Italian regions on Nov. 23, 1980, was magnitude 6.5: one-tenth of what Mesurier said was triggered by a single “barrel bomb.”



Assad and the bakeries



The bakery bombings conducted by Assad's air force (see [here](#), here, [here](#)...) have been among the most popular fake news stories (second only to sarin bombings) in the 13-year war on Syria. Among the most famous is the "[Christmas bakery massacre, three hundred dead](#)" that allegedly took place in Halfaya, south of Aleppo, on December 23, 2012; a massacre that, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and, therefore, according to all mainstream media, would have been ordered by the Syrian government in "*retaliation against the advance of the armed opposition.*" Too bad that on that very day UN envoy Lakdar Brahimi was arriving in Damascus to speak with President Assad, and to send a plane to slaughter starving defenseless people, and on Christmas day to boot, would have been not only a monstrous act but also political suicide by drawing the ire of the world on himself and alienating those who continued to support negotiation rather than military intervention.

But let us dwell on the "evidence" of the "Christmas bakery massacre."

Was it really a bakery? It was, until December 18, 2012. With the invasion of the village by al Qaeda cutthroats, it had been turned into their military post surmounted by four black flags placed on the roof of this building, a detail that is present in a great many videos produced by the “rebels” and disseminated by the media (including [RAI](#)) without prompting any reflection among the many witty journalists. Incidentally, one would have to wonder what would attest to the fact that this was a bakery still in operation considering that there is only [a few stills](#) to attest to it (see the aforementioned RAI video provided by the “rebels”) in which someone is seen depositing a loaf of bread inside a puddle of blood on the asphalt. In another [video](#), moreover, someone can be [heard](#) ordering them “On the blood, on the blood,” suggesting that a staging was taking place.

Another issue, also documented by the RAI video, that would have deserved some attention is that (except for one, [carried on her back](#)) there were no women among the wounded and in the crowd; a very strange circumstance considering that—given the context—these should have been the ones, perhaps accompanied by their children, who were most numerous in the bread line. Instead, in the video released by Rai, only males, many with machine guns slung over their shoulders, were among the wounded and in the crowd.

If we look, then, at the “bakery” building (where damage is limited, basically to the collapse of the balcony parapet while the walls and roof appear intact) and the absence of a crater produced by an airplane bomb or missile, the evidence suggests that it was not an airstrike but, probably, an explosion, perhaps a car bomb, that occurred outside the building that caused the massacre (a few dozen dead).

Despite this, the “news” of the 300 dead in the bakery

bombed by Assad (first launched by the Saudi satellite TV al Arabiya, to be clear, the one of the “ten thousand protesters killed by Gaddafi”) was taken as gospel by all mainstream media. Among them, Il Fatto Quotidiano (Dec. 24 print edition) is worth noting: *“No one expected that the ruthless Syrian regime would halt its bomb-laden jets and scud firing to allow Syrian citizens of Christian faith to prepare for Christmas.”* Yet, the witty editors of Il Fatto should have known that Christians in Syria were in the crosshairs not of Assad but of armed Islamist opposition groups.



The fake news of the Halfaya bakery bombing (which echoed that of the Sarajevo bakery of May 27, 1992, sixteen dead, blamed on the Serbs but committed by Muslim militias) essentially served to derail the negotiations between Syria and the United Nations and keep the war going. In this regard, we would like to quote here the words of Michel Collon, a Belgian journalist long active against the fake news of war.

"On May 27, 1992, a bomb kills at least sixteen people queuing in front of a bakery in Sarajevo; a hundred are injured. Immediately the besieging Serbs are blamed. The UN Security Council decrees economic sanctions against what remains of Yugoslavia, namely Serbia and Montenegro, accused of supporting the Bosnian Serbs. An investigation into those responsible, carried out later at the UN, will never be published. The British newspaper The Independent later explained: 'UN officials and senior Western officials believe that some of the worst massacres in Sarajevo, and even the bread massacre, were carried out by Muslims, defenders of the city, and not by the besiegers, to force a Western military intervention.' (...) The two bombings that hit the Sarajevo market in February 1994 and August 1995 can be traced back to the same strategy. The first came just to derail the peace plan proposed by the Europeans in the face of the intransigence of the U.S. and Bosnia's Muslim leader, Izetbegovic (the percentage of Americans in favor of an armed attack against the Serbs went from one-third to over half at a stroke). The second legitimized the massive attacks against Serb positions around Sarajevo." Let us add that months after the first Markale massacre, Feb. 5, 1994, Jasushi Akashi, UN special delegate for Bosnia, told Deutsche Presse Agentur that a secret UN report had immediately blamed Muslims for the massacre, but that Secretary General Butrous Ghali had not mentioned it for reasons of political expediency. Shortly thereafter Akashi was removed from office."

The story of the Halfaya bakery bombing, despite

resounding evidence that attested it was fake news, was taken as gospel not only by the main stream media but also by sectors of the “antagonist left” who pointed to as “servants of Assad” anyone (such as the editors of [Sibialiria](#) or those of [Syriatruth](#) or the authors of a [really comprehensive Youtube video](#)) who had immediately questioned the official version. A year later, a small [satisfaction](#): the fake news of the Halfaya bakery bombing was finally unmasked thanks to the testimony of a worthy [photojournalist](#). Of course, no one, not even the many on the “antagonist left” who had pointed at the Sibialiria editors on social media as “servants of Assad,” felt compelled to apologize.

Assad's snipers and pregnant women

Among the many fake news stories, the stunning one about [Assad's snipers](#) training by shooting pregnant Syrian women's bellies deserves a prominent place in this book. If only because so many "prestigious" Italian media (such as [Repubblica](#), [Corriere della sera](#), [Sole 24 ore](#), [Unità](#), [Il Giornale](#), [TGCOM](#), [Libero](#)...) that had published it. Who knows why they have not yet deleted it; and those who want to verify it for themselves will not have to suffer by consulting the (well-respected but very slow) archive.org graveyard of news that has become "inconvenient" for the regime and its pen-pushers.

On October 19, 2013, a British surgeon—one David Nott—claimed first to The Times and then to the BBC that he had worked as a volunteer in unspecified "hospitals in Syria." There he would witness a shocking truth. Bashar Assad's snipers practiced daily by firing at specific points on the bodies of civilian victims. Points that were determined by their commanders from day to day to test their capabilities and that at least one day a week targeted the bellies of pregnant women. *"On a single day more than six pregnant women were hit by snipers and the next day two more. All the mothers were saved but the fetuses in their bellies did not survive. The pregnant women were all hit in the uterus. (...) It was almost a game in which the snipers were rewarded with packs of cigarettes."* And to confirm his truth, he showed an image of an X-ray: a fetus with a bullet lodged in its skull.

It goes without saying that any journalist worth his salt would have asked himself a few questions before publishing such a hoax. For example, what interest would Assad have in having pregnant Syrian women shot? Or what astounding weapon would have succeeded in killing a fetus while saving (eight times out of eight!) the woman

who had it in her belly? But a glance at the “X-ray” would have been enough to kick distinguished surgeon David Nott out of the newsroom: what bullet would have managed to enter a skull without crushing it or, at least, shattering it?



Siria, la denuncia: cecchini si allenano contro donne incinte

Lo ha dichiarato al britannico Times il chirurgo David Nott, che ha lavorato nel paese come volontario. "Almeno otto casi, hanno mirato all'utero: i bambini non ce l'hanno fatta". Scontri a Damasco, i ribelli prendono roccaforte lealista. Washington Post: la mancanza di fondi spinge i combattenti verso gli estremisti

Cecchini di Assad in gara per colpire donne incinte

Damascus Un pacchetto di sigarette per ogni donna incinta colpita. Così funzionava un disumano gioco tra i cecchini siriani al sud di Assad. Il medico britannico David Nott, che ha trascorso di recente cinque settimane in Siria come volontario in un ospedale, ha riportato le testimonianze di alcuni dei civili ricoverati nel pronto soccorso, secondo cui i cecchini scommettevano ogni giorno su parti diverse del corpo da colpire, fra queste anche il ventre delle donne incinte che sfidavano i proiettili per andare a procurare cibo. «In effetti in un solo giorno ne arrivarono sei, tutte colpite all'utero. Un altro giorno le ferite erano tutte al collo, un altro ancora si sono spaccate, un altro all'inguine. Un inferno mai visto nemmeno a Bosnia, in Libia o in Sudan».

But is it ever possible that no journalist felt compelled to ask these obvious questions? Really unlikely, but no big deal. If someone blames his painful rushing to the bowl of regime information, he can always charge “the haste that reigns in the newsroom” as the cause of the careless publication. Or, shamelessly, quote Mark Twain’s: “The journalist is he who distinguishes the true from the false ... and publishes the false.”

ISIS crowdfunding.



In March 2016, then U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump [accused](#) Obama and Hilary Clinton of funding ISIS (which, in those very days, was sowing carnage in Syria). This [was absolutely true](#). And all the [pathetic attempts](#) to prove that there would be no meeting between U.S. Senator John McCain and ISIS leader Al Baghdadi [dissolve](#) before a careful examination of the videos and photos documenting it. Al Baghdadi who, by the way, like another U.S. puppet, Osama Bin Laden, was [jettisoned](#) when he was no longer of use to U.S. imperialism.

But let's deal with the funding of ISIS.

After Trump's resounding statement, the mainstream media went to work to prove that funding to ISIS came from a very different source. Among the numerous articles on the subject was one published by [Il Fatto Quotidiano](#) and based on a truly wacky report: "[Islamic state: the economy-based terrorist funding](#)", drafted by two well-known figures in the news: [Jean-Charles Brisard](#) and [Guillaume Dasquié](#) and

published in 2014; that is, barely a year after ISIS (which came into being as an autonomous entity in spring 2013) took the field. And in just one year, according to the report, ISIS would have been able to structure itself into a state entity, endowed with an autonomous commercial and fiscal network and, above all, a, albeit resigned, “consensus.”

“As in any state organization, al-Baghdadi’s men impose taxes on property, services, basic necessities and business operations.” (...) “Among the many factors that make it so powerful, not only economically, and independent of foreign donations (our emphasis n.d.r.) is its very nature. The Caliphate possesses such characteristics as to be likened to a state: it controls a territory within which it manages to administer the lives of millions of people, imposing laws, providing services and forcing the inhabitants to pay taxes.” These claims were “attested” by the numerous “photos of daily life” that accompany the report published by “[Il Fatto Quotidiano](#).” These include a schoolroom full of smiling little girls, one even with her smartphone prominently displayed on her desk.

But let us go further into the examination of the text.

“About half of the Islamic State’s total revenue comes from taxes, duties and extortion imposed on the local population.” Of course, one would have to wonder what—albeit by heinous means, such as kidnappings—ISIS could have squeezed out of a population and society, such as—for example—Syria’s, which has been reduced to starvation. But the issue would not be said to touch the author of the “research.” The same reticence when mentioning ISIS’s other source of livelihood: exports (oil, works of art, phosphates, cement...) for which not a single line is spent to indicate the buyers or who provides the facilitators of these exports (e.g., oil rig experts to replace those killed or escaped, tanker drivers, banks...).

On the other hand, among the systems used by ISIS to enrich itself, the author enlightens us about bribes to

heroin traffickers (but why on earth did traffickers, from Afghanistan, have to pass right through the Caliphate?); about “organ trafficking” (but how would they be transported, in a matter of hours, from some Syrian or Iraqi desert to Western metropolises?); on the “sale of women to be given as brides to the fighters” (but with what money would these fighters pay them?); on the production of Captagon (an amphetamine produced—more or less, in broad daylight—everywhere in the Middle East and Eastern Europe and which would earn ISIS “a billion dollars”).

But glossing over obvious absurdities (such as “...A large slice of the oil extracted is reused by the Islamic State to build infrastructure, such as asphalt roads”) or randomly thrown figures (“\$323 million from the trafficking of refugees”) let us deal with the most scabrous matter and that is the money coming to ISIS from abroad. Indeed, it was coming; for, per the author of the “research”: *“Foreign donations to the Islamic State account for only a fraction of the terrorist organization’s income, but they held particular importance especially in the early days of the movement, when the Caliphate and its economy did not yet exist. Between 2013 and 2014, the Islamic State received \$40 million from supporters in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.”* That’s all? Just \$40 million? Yet, even the [U.S. Treasury Department](#) had to reveal other figures. After all, one need only do the math on how much the fleet of brand-new [Toyota](#) off-road vehicles or never-before-seen missile batteries in the Middle East cost to realize the absurdity of the “\$40 million.” And, most importantly, of the ways in which—according to the author—the majority of this money would be raised: *crowdfunding* on the web. *“Crowdfunding is also developed online, especially on the jihadists’ favorite social networks, such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook or Telegram. Militiamen try to attract the most donations by explaining to sympathizers what can be done with the donated amount. From buying a rifle to supplying ammunition for a*

brigade of fighters, from funding training camps to providing food and medicine, the idea of making a concrete contribution encourages sympathizers to donate their money." That ISIS uses the internet (also thanks to the dissemination of its proclamations and heinous videos, guaranteed by Israeli Rita Katz's [SITE](#)) is out of the question, but that, through Facebook and other social media, it organizes *crowdfunding* to buy weapons and ammunition is a hoax that can only be spread by media such as "Il Fatto Quotidiano"; a newspaper that even surpasses "Repubblica" or "Corriere" in its claim to impose a war at all costs. Even at the cost of ridicule.

A fake news made to be exposed



Let us now deal with the [“Syrian child pretending to be dead to save his little sister”](#), a fake video made to be debunked. Before we delve into the story, a clarification, fake news made to be later debunked are far more numerous than people think and, intoxicating the information circuit, are usually aimed at neutralizing voices outside the chorus.

One of the most famous examples was a photo of what appears to be an Israeli soldier leveling his weapon at a defenseless little girl lying on the ground, a post that immediately earned an avalanche of comments on social media against the state of Israel. After a few days, twist: an avalanche of critical comments (many, most likely, written by “trolls” in the pay of some public relations firm) and a photo that “proves” that the previous one published was a fake depicting only a detail of a fictitious “theatrical performance” organized by the Palestinians. The purpose of those who disseminated the first and second photos was

twofold: on the one hand, to dissuade anyone from posting photos documenting ethnic cleansing in Palestine on social media; on the other hand, to present pro-Palestinian activists to the public as “Fake news makers” to be banned on social media or taunts to stay away from.



Intossicazione tramite “troll” La «rappresentazione teatrale dei Palestinesi»

veramente una dimostrazione fittizia di testate, giustamente in ordine arabo, con tanto di dardi che scendono e adulti che scattano foto, sia al soldato che a qualcuno nella parte superiore e destra che non è però possibile realizzare in foto.

Critiche arrivano anche da blogger arabi, come ad esempio Omar Badawi, che sottolinea come in tanti non si sono preoccupati di controllare l'attendibilità della foto.

Ora, al di là del gesto, che potrebbe tranquillamente e legittimamente essere un modo per rappresentare il disagio di un'opinione che sta vivendo una tragedia, di grossi addoloramenti come basti veramente poco per discreditarla.

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But let us go further into our history.

In November 2014, the viral (five million views within four days) video of the [“Syrian child pretending to be dead to save his little sister”](#) was put online. Given the need to respond immediately to what, at first glance, appeared to me to be fake news, I got in touch with two No-War activists (one from England, the other from the U.S.) who, like me, were in the business of exposing war lies with whom I spent hours and hours analyzing the video until we were able to compile a list of what appeared to be the most glaring inconsistencies.

- Why was the video maker standing around filming the entrance to the building before the exit of the man who later became the target of hidden snipers?

- And then why does the video maker then start shouting the ever-present “Allah U Akbar”? To be located by snipers?

- Ten seconds pass (in which absolutely nothing happens);

then, finally, the boy on the ground is filmed. But is it possible that the videographer had not already seen him? Or did he wait for him to enter the scene and lie on the ground before filming him?

- Why is it that the child sitting on the ground, after hearing the shot fired on the wall, instead of lying down, gets up and starts running?

- Why does the child stagger thus exposing himself to the sniper's fire, which—as it happens—does not shoot him?

- And the sniper doesn't even shoot when the child (after pretending to be dead) gets up and goes toward the girl. Eight seconds without the sniper firing. Why?

- For what absurd reason does the child, who knows of the sniper's presence, drag his little sister (wisely barricaded behind the carcass of the car that protects her) to the right of the scene exposing her, thus, in the line of fire?

- Why don't the two of them follow the same line of escape (to the left) as the man in the first scene walked out the door?

- And why on earth does the sniper in front of two such "easy" targets fire two shots that go astray?

Beaming to expose the hoax, I set about writing the article, which, as was my custom, should have had links to the articles that, passing it off as true, had spread the hoax. To my surprise, I discovered that all of the albeit numerous articles in mainstream newspapers had been deleted as it was an [admittedly fake video](#). What had happened was that one Lars Klevberg, a Norwegian filmmaker had made [\(in Malta, not Syria\)](#) the video of the Syrian child rescuing his little sister *"to raise awareness of the plight of children in wars,"* or more likely, to get publicity.

The whole thing might appear to be a mere goliard to be forgotten but the behavior of the mainstream media deserves some consideration. As already mentioned, most of them, in the face of journalistic deontology, without a shred of apology or explanation, after the revelation of the forgery made by the director of the video, simply [deleted](#) the articles about the Syrian child from the Internet. A few

others, such as [Republic](#), probably hoping it will attract some clicks and thus advertising revenue, preceded by the surprisingly pharisaical statement: *"On authenticity many doubts remain and networks around the world that broadcast the short film explain that it could also be a fake"* still keep it online. Even worse is the [BBC](#) which, obviously after the announcement of the director of the fake video, after boasting that it had previously published the news expressing "doubts" about its veracity (which, in fact, are not found) announced that its fake news expert, a certain Amira Galal, host of the "debunking" program ["BBCtrending"](#) *confirmed that the video was fake*. The same expert and the same program that had endorsed (or would later endorse) fake news such as "Napalm on school in Syria," "Assad's explosive barrels," "Sarin massacre in Goutha," "Assad snipers firing on pregnant women."



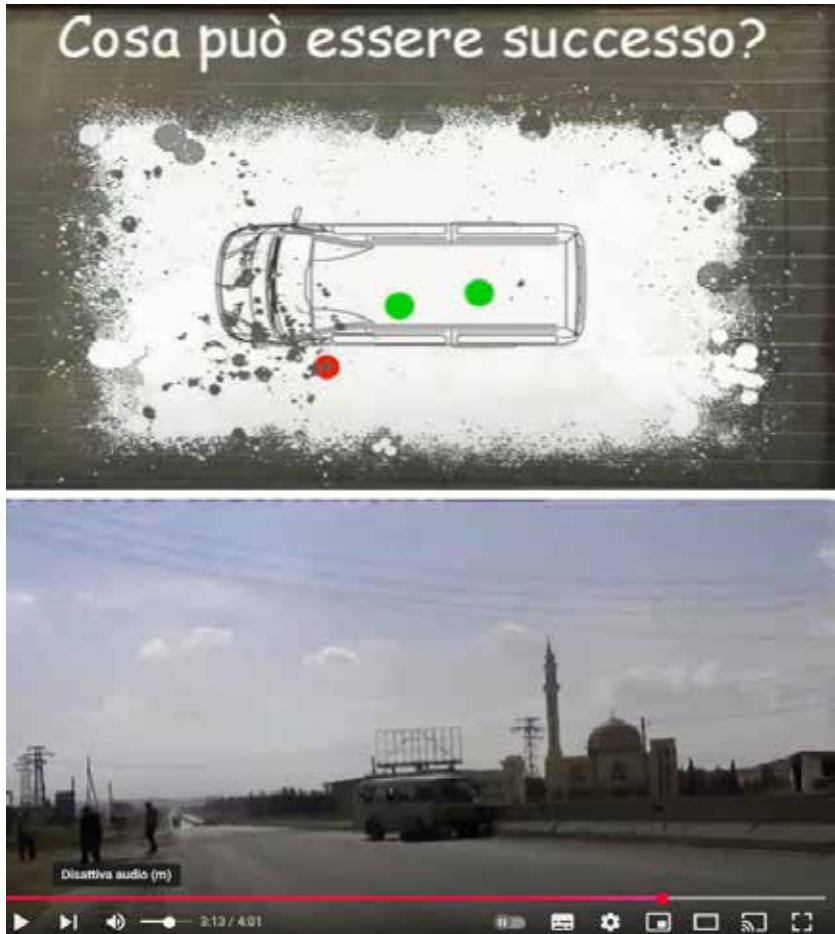
Assad's Mig and the defenseless kurds.

Among the countless fake news stories against Syria, that of the defenseless civilians killed by Assad-ordered bombings is certainly the most overblown. Let's be clear: that unarmed civilians died as a result of bombings by the Damascus government's armed forces or their Russian allies, as in all wars, is certain. Quite another thing is the intentional killing of these civilians, which, as far as Syria is concerned, turns out to be fake news; on par with, say, the [machine-gunning by helicopters](#) ordered by Gaddafi that allegedly killed thousands of defenseless protesters in Libya in February 2011. That said, let's move on to the fake of "[Assad's Mig intentionally killing defenseless Kurds.](#)"



The video starts with a statement by a militiaman in camouflage suit who declares that the victims of Assad's Mig *"are Kurdish civilians, unarmed and innocent (...) civilians I tell you and non-combatants; they were not carrying controlled weapons; they were innocents"* (see in a previous chapter

the role the media had assigned to the Kurds) and to demonstrate this, he shows what he claims is the PKK flag. In reality, the flag shown (which, with the van in motion, would partially obstruct the view from the rear window) is not the PKK flag but a flag taken from who knows where, presumably to better organize the show to be shown to the media. But let us analyze, now, the effects of the alleged machine-gunning by the Mig.



The blasts from an attack (considering the caliber of armament of a Mig) would have to have left very obvious

traces; the van, however, appears intact, and the few bullet holes noted on the sides would appear to have been produced by a portable weapon. Other details suggest that it was not aerial machine gunfire, but shots fired by someone standing beyond the driver's window: the state of the windows, for example. The one in the rear window is shattered but not the windshield; the right rear window is shattered but not the left. The roof of the van is not visible in the video, but it is truly amazing that a machine gunning from above would have left the plastic sign on the roof intact.

Let us now deal with the positioning of the van. If an aerial machine-gun fire had occurred, the driver would have suddenly braked to run off and we would have found, therefore, traces of the braking on the roadway; if the driver, on the other hand, had been immediately killed, the van continuing on its course would have crashed into some obstacle and we would have found it out of its lane. Instead, there are no skid marks on the asphalt while the van appears neatly pulled over to the side of the road. Everything suggests, then, that the van's occupants were killed while the van was stopped at a checkpoint, in territory occupied by so-called "Syrian rebels." Who, evidently, have turned the scene of their crime into a spectacle to be shown to the media.

Assad's dwarf soldier



And now let us deal with the “debunkers” and that is, people who, in various capacities, are in charge of debunking fake news; an activity that is certainly meritorious if it were not for the fact that under this term are nowadays counted mostly people sponsored (if not even financed) by the Information and Warlords, above all, to support military aggression. Suffice it to say, as mentioned above, that Newsguard the company that on behalf of Facebook was in charge of “countering fake news” had on its advisory board General [Michael Hayden, former director of the CIA.](#)

Regarding the aggression on Syria, the albeit many regime debunkers have been very careful not to point out even very obvious fake news spread by the main stream limiting themselves, in some cases, to presenting with “Assad’s servant” those who, like the writer, dared to question them or to refuting those who dared to point out fake news with “documentation” that, most likely, no one would be able to verify. On this last point, let me cite a personal experience.

Years ago, in a Facebook post, I reported the beheading

of a Palestinian teenager in Syria by militiamen from the Nour al-Din al-Zinki group, incorporated into the Free Syrian Army (a terrorist organization funded by the West and the petromonarchies) who believed he was an informant for the government in Damascus. This crime had been communicated to me by a Syrian friend by sending me some articles in Arabic (which I had automatically translated using the internet). The story told there seemed plausible to me, and convincing me of its reliability was a video (linked in the articles that had been sent to me) produced by the terrorists, posted and later deleted from YouTube, which I had managed to retrieve from a French colleague (he dealt with fake news on the well-respected site [Investig'Action](#)) who had thoughtfully downloaded it immediately to his computer.

Having published the post, I would have soon forgotten about it if the story of the little boy beheaded by terrorists had not been fingered as fake news in the [website](#) (here, to all intents and purposes, is the [screenshot](#) of the article) by the man who, even today, is considered the most distinguished expert in fake news in Italy, who revealed that it was not a teenager at all but, rather, a “dwarf soldier of Assad.”

A staggering claim (since when are dwarves drafted into armies?) that the “debunker” claimed to attest to by publishing a screenshot of an improbable statement, in English, from the *“parents of the Syrian soldier identified as a boy”* (according to whom their son was a dwarf “because he had Thalassaemia”), an equally improbable Syrian army ID card, and bad photoshopped images in which the boy’s face was tacked onto that of a person in uniform. All, of course, without any link to trace the source of that “evidence” and followed by a statement from the Nour al-Din al-Zinki group apologizing for the incident (inexplicably, considering the [countless beheadings of Syrian soldiers](#) carried out by this

group). I decided to find out more by researching TinEye and then Icanh.org, where I learned that the first site to disseminate the photos attesting to the “dwarf” story was headed by a “debunking” company listed on the [NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence](#), perhaps the world’s largest hotbed of fake news.

Meanwhile, the “debunker” in question has made a career out of becoming a fake news censor on behalf of Facebook.

APPENDIX The sanctions on Syria

For the past fourteen years, Syria, to the substantial indifference of the media and, therefore, public opinion, has been subjected by the U.S. and the European Union to fierce sanctions that have turned into an abyss of misery, disease, destruction, fanaticism... what, to make [Father Daniel](#)'s words our own, was *"a peaceful and orderly society (...) where stealing and insolence were practically non-existent and where ethnic and religious groups lived in harmony with each other. A country where there was no homelessness, despite hosting over two million refugees from neighboring countries, and where services such as universities, medical care, free medicines were free."*

On these sanctions, there is a [document](#) by the Committee to Stop Sanctions on Syria, a committee created in 2016 and which, despite the presence in it of influential Syrian Catholics and the support of Nobel Peace Prize winner Mairead Maguire, has failed to break the ostracism that for more than a decade has affected anyone who dared to denounce the West's aggression against Syria.

What Sanctions on Syria Really Are

On May 9, 2011, the Council of the European Union, with Decision 2011/273/CFSP, kicked off the embargo on Syria, a measure whose seriousness hardly anyone seemed to realize and which, in fact was the first move in a war that the European Union (and therefore our country) has also been waging on Syria for five years, to the indifference of public opinion. A war, so far, only by proxy—unlike the war on Libya in 2011—but one that has already caused 250,000 deaths, six million displaced people and five million refugees. Refugees who are now also trying to land towards our continent, dividing a public opinion that, one would think, does not realize that the real problem is not what "solution" to find for the refugees but how to remove

the causes that made them so.

Against the sanctions on Syria (unfortunately renewed by the European Union, on May 27, 2016) exponents of the Syrian Catholic world have launched an appeal to support which we have formed, here in Italy, a committee and structured a petition that has already seen the adhesion, in addition to parliamentarians, of thousands of signatures. A certainly important result—considering that the issue of sanctions on Syria is almost unknown to the Italian public—but still unsatisfactory. And to raise awareness about an issue that should become a moment of debate and mobilization, we have produced this text that we hope you will have the patience to read to the end.

How it began

Let's begin by analyzing the official reasons that, in 2011, prompted the Council of the European Union to impose sanctions on Syria: "...grave concern about developments in the situation in Syria and the deployment of military and security forces in several Syrian cities (and condemnation of the) violent repression, carried out including the use of live bullets, of peaceful protest demonstrations that took place in various locations in Syria (...)"

It would be appropriate to ask why on earth the European Union, before talking about repression of peaceful protest demonstrations (which certainly, in Syria, as in all Arab countries there had been) did not examine the why and how of their transformation into shootings. We refer, for example, to the presence of anonymous snipers who, from the rooftops, indiscriminately targeted both the crowd and the police; snipers who, for the Western media, could only be "Assad's agents" despite the fact that, since the time of the first "colored revolution," the one against Ceausescu in 1989 (like the one in Ukraine in 2013) the use of snipers to turn marches into massacres has been the preference of anti-government forces, very often fortified

by foreign powers.

Similarly, it seems significant that the heinous episodes that marked the point of no return in the situation in Syria, such as the burning down of the Palace of Justice in Daraa (which took place three hours after the Arab broadcaster al-Arabiya had given “news” of it) or the assault on the police station in Lattakia (10 policemen dragged into the street and killed there) did not see as protagonists the participants in the demonstrations but, rather, “masked men who came from nowhere and disappeared into thin air, absolutely unknown to the organizers of the demonstrations.” The same dynamic, after all, that in January 2011 characterized the assault on the Misrata police barracks in Libya as one of the leaders of the demonstrations at the time had to declare.

This, of course, does not mean that behind every demonstration of protest there must, necessarily, be the hand of some foreign power. There was, certainly, widespread discontent in Syria, dictated by an economic and climatic crisis and aided by media campaigns conveyed, especially by television networks such as al-Jazeera. What, however, we would like to emphasize here is that—in our opinion—in Syria, it was not (as many still think today) the gradual escalation of the confrontation between “peaceful protesters” and government forces that led to the first deaths, but the implementation of a precise design, dictated by foreign powers, which for at least a decade had been planning riots, assassinations, assaults on police stations... to plunge Syria into the situation in which it finds itself today.

A devious strategy

But let us return to the subject of this text. The 2011 European Union Sanctions on Syria (which slavishly reiterated what had already been established by the 2007 U.S. sanctions) seemed to the public to be a legitimate, as much as a calm, response to the repressions of a “regime”

already crucified in all the media. Article 4 of the document in fact limited itself to: “(freeze) all funds and economic resources belonging to, owned, held or controlled by those responsible for the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria and natural or legal persons or entities associated with them, listed in the annex.” An annex that lists, among Syrian security service and police leaders, strangely enough, a banker, one “Rami Makhoulf (...) Syrian businessman. Associated with Maher Al-Assad; finances the regime enabling the repression of protesters.” Beyond the EU accusations, it should be pointed out that Rami Makhoulf ran numerous businesses including a telephone company, which, of course, as a result of the sanctions, could no longer have any contact with European companies, not even for the supply of spare parts.

Thus began a truly devious strategy perpetuated in the subsequent sanctions that—beyond the declared embargo on oil and on the activities of the Central Bank of Syria—do not explicitly prohibit the export to Syria of goods or equipment essential for the lives of the populations (such as, for example, seeds or foodstuffs). But if one has the patience to read through the countless annexes to the sanctions (a series of continuously updated lists approved not by the Council of Europe but by anonymous European Union officials, such as, for example, those of the “Mashreq/Maghreb (MaMa) Group,” one discovers that the sanctions applied “ad personam” concern “businessmen” presented as “supporters of Assad” (as of February 2015, there were 211) who were providing, in various capacities, for the marketing of countless kinds of equipment. And so, even spare parts essential to operate, for example, a bread oven, an electric grid, an aqueduct, medical equipment... can no longer be exported to Syria.

Annex 2014/C 373/06 then closes the circle by listing not only economic operators (“businessmen”) but

ministers (including the one for Water Resources and the one for Health) who—to borrow our terms from the May 2011 document—certainly “control” the procurement and maintenance of the services entrusted to them.

Dual Use

Another ploy of the European Union to condemn Syria to starvation, while maintaining an aura of “respectability,” is the embargo (in addition to equipment aimed at repression that, hardly, any “rogue state” would purchase abroad, such as guillotines, electric chairs, restraint chains, thumb clamps...) of Dual Use products and technologies that can be used, that is, to build artifacts for both civilian and military use and listed in the European Union Council Regulation No. 1334/2000 (and subsequent updates thereof).

Regulation that in addition to covering chemical products indispensable for activities that should be perfectly lawful (this is, for example, the case of certain nitrates indispensable for the production of fertilizers) also includes certain types of electronic circuits and software once used mainly in the military but now commonly installed on electromedical equipment or control devices for industrial production. What’s more, this committee conducted a small investigation into the odyssey that companies have to go through when they apply to the Ministry of Economic Development for the much-needed Nulla Osta to be able to export their manufactured goods (in this case, some relays for a damaged power plant and disinfectants) to Syria. Despite the fact that these relays and disinfectants did not appear at all in the lists annexed to Regulation No. 1334/2000, the Commission that was supposed to grant the Nulla Osta, probably sensing the possibility that what the companies (among others, very prominent) that had produced them had attested was not true, imposed so many verifications and bureaucratic delays that they eventually resulted in the cancellation of the sale.

The blocking of financial transactions

But what if even a European company, in order to trade with Syria, wanted to bypass the embargo (a criminal offense punishable, under Legislative Decree 96/2003, by imprisonment for two to six years and, among other things, a fine of up to 250,000 euros) by carrying out, for example, a “triangulation” (using a third country as a fictitious recipient), how could it be paid? We refer to a particularly devastating aspect of the sanctions on Syria: the financial transaction freeze, established by the Council of the European Union, in Decision 878 of September 2, 2011. This decision, too, hypocritically masquerades as an *ad personam* measure: “(...) *the freezing of funds and economic resources of other persons and entities that receive benefits from or support the regime. The additional list of persons, entities and bodies to which the freezing of funds and economic resources applies is set out in the annex to that decision.*” And in the wake of 273, Sanction 878 also contemplates a long list of economic actors (directors of Chambers of Commerce, brokerage firms) labeled as “supporters of the Syrian regime” to be punished. More will follow with other attachments.

Worse still is what Switzerland will do in 2014 to protect its bankers, making European Union sanctions its own but allowing the release of money from Syrians or the National Bank of Syria deposited in its banks for the unspecified purpose of “protecting Swiss interests.”

The effects of the freeze on financial transactions are summarized in the Syrian Catholic Leaders Appeal as follows: The situation in Syria is desperate. Food shortages, widespread unemployment, impossibility of medical care, rationing of drinking water, electricity. Not only that, the embargo also makes it impossible for Syrians settled abroad even before the war to send money to their relatives or family members who remained at home. Even nongovernmental organizations engaged in assistance

programs are prevented from sending money to their workers in Syria. Businesses, power plants, waterworks, hospital wards are forced to close due to the inability to get some spare parts or gasoline.

"Today, Syrians see the possibility of a livable future for their families only by fleeing their homeland. But, as we can see, even this solution encounters not a few difficulties and causes heated controversy within the European Union. Nor can flight be the only solution that the international community can propose to these poor people. (...) And the rhetoric about refugees fleeing the Syrian war appears hypocritical if at the same time we continue to starve, prevent treatment, deny drinking water, jobs, security, and dignity to those who remain in Syria."

Oil

On September 2, 2011, a new European Union Council decision (2011/522/CFSP) tightened sanctions on Syria by, among other things, imposing a ban on the purchase, import or transportation of crude oil and petroleum products from Syria.

To understand the seriousness of this measure, one figure is enough. In 2010, Syria (its oil reserves are estimated at 2.5 billion barrels) was extracting 375 thousand barrels of oil per day, of which about 150 thousand were for export. With the price of a barrel in the market exceeding \$100, this translated into a fixed income of about \$16 million a day, or nearly \$6 billion a year. A resource that together with tourism (6 million foreign tourists in 2010) and the pharmaceutical industry (Syria exported drugs to more than 50 countries) had enabled this country to achieve relative prosperity and the attainment of significant living standards (including a good health care system and the disappearance of illiteracy). In addition, oil fueled significant electricity production (in 2010 46 billion kilowatts per hour) that also supplied Lebanon.

But the most outrageous aspect of the sanctions

imposed by the European Union is that it permits the so-called “Syrian rebels” to bypass the sanctions, thus being able, in the areas they “liberated,” to export oil and import weapons.

“Rebels” and the sanctions

II December 13, 2012, Italy recognized the “National Coalition of Syrian Opponents” as the “sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people.” This decision—taken, of course, without any vote or, much less, discussion in Parliament: only a fleeting hearing of Foreign Minister Terzi, on December 12, at the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber—descended from Italy’s membership, which took place, also quietly, as early as July 2012, the group “Friends of the Syrian people” where Italy pledged to ensure “a massive increase in aid to the opposition to the regime of Bashar Al-Assad.” This group, moreover, saw, among others, the participation of representatives of Saudi Arabia and Qatar who, for some time now, had been sending their self-proclaimed “National Coalition of Syrian Opponents” cutthroat bands to Syria.

On the exploits of these gangs (minimally composed of Syrians; most of the militiamen come from Jordan, Libya, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia...) that some, even today, insist on considering “rebels” or “fighters for democracy,” there is now copious documentation. Beheadings and executions of soldiers, policemen, defenseless Syrian civilians “guilty” of not opposing the government in Damascus; car bombs in front of schools, barracks, hospitals; crucifixions and floggings of “infidels”; construction of devices loaded with toxic gas... are documented by videos placed on the internet by the “rebels” themselves.

Yet, for years, the West (and its media) preferred to avert its eyes from the heinousness of its “rebels,” until it was decided to give great luster to the exploits of ISIS (another band of cutthroats, also created by the petromonarchies and

the West) identified as the Absolute Evil to be eradicated at any cost, including by supplying the “rebels” with heavy weapons or invading and bombing Syria.

But let us return to the subject of sanctions. On May 31, 2013, the European Union Council of Foreign Ministers in Decision 2013/255/CFSP lifted the embargo on oil from areas “liberated by the rebels” who have been “legally” selling Syrian oil to Western oil companies ever since. Having already destroyed, in February 2012, the Bab Àmro refinery (Syria’s largest, near Homs) and killed almost all the workers, the “rebels” rushed to get technicians there from Saudi Arabia and, more importantly, tankers (the pipeline from the refinery flows into the port of Tartus) to transport oil products to Turkey. From there, the Syrians’ oil, certainly, (although no official information is given on this; see below) reaches European companies and the money from this to the “rebels.”

Weapons to the “rebels”

Even worse was another point in the decision that lifted the embargo on arms destined for the “rebels.” And this despite the protest of countries such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden, summed up by the then Austrian Foreign Minister: “Sending arms is against the principles of Europe, which is a community of peace.” Neutralizing the protests over the arms waiver was certainly the ambiguous position of Germany and Italy, aimed at “favoring a compromise.” “Compromise” that was interpreted by France and Britain as a green light to supply arms to the rebels.

Beyond the rift in the Council of the European Union (demurely hushed by the media)—dictated, presumably, by France and Britain hoping to repeat the same blitz they carried out in Libya in 2011 and by the need for Germany and Italy not to find themselves, once again, at the window—one would have to wonder why the “elasticity” of then

in waiving, for arms, the sanctions against Syria was not then granted for other aspects of these. Be that as it may, the ambiguity held then by the European Union resulted in a hodgepodge in the ensuing decision, which reads as follows:

“With respect to the possible export of arms to Syria, the Council noted the commitment by some member states to proceed in their national policies as follows:

- the sale, administration, transfer and export of military equipment that could be used for internal repression will be for the Syrian National Coalition of Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and intended for the protection of civilians;*

- member states should require, before authorizing, appropriate safeguards, particularly important information concerning the use and final destination of the delivery;*

- member states should evaluate export license applications on a case-by-case basis, taking full account of the criteria set forth in Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of December 8, 2008, which defines common rules governing the control of the export of military technology and equipment. Member states will not proceed with the delivery of such equipment at this stage. The Council will review its position by August 1, 2013 on the basis of a report by the High Representative, after consultation with the UN Secretary General, on developments related to the U.S.-Russia initiative and the engagement of the Syrian parties. “*

It goes without saying that these “assessments” and documents that should have caused the EU’s position to be “revised” are not to be found in any of the subsequent documents listed in the, albeit ponderous, dossier pertaining to sanctions on Syria, let alone in the latest EU Decision that extended sanctions on Syria on May 31, 2016.

In this regard, the online newspaper L’Antidiplomatico in early June wrote to the Press Office of the Council of the European Union to ask why these glaring omissions (which, by the way, contrast with the fastidious precision boasted

by Brussels bureaucrats) and, in particular, asked whether the lifting of sanctions on oil and arms to “rebels” had been confirmed or, in any way, regulated. The answer was, to say the least, evasive. On the waiver of sanctions on arms, there was no answer; worse still on the modalities of the waiver inherent in the marketing of oil stolen by the “rebels”: “With regard to restrictions on the importation of Syrian oil, under certain conditions and after consultation with the National Coalition of Opposition and Revolutionary Forces, Member States may authorize exceptions to this prohibition.

And so, so much for the “transparency” in which the European Union claims to cloak itself, we cannot know either who are the European states importing Syrian oil today or who are the “rebels” selling it or bartering it for weapons. What we do know for sure is that since the approval of sanction 2013/255/CFSP, the supply of heavy weapons and missile systems to Syrian “rebels” has increased exponentially, especially by France. Not coincidentally, given that, back in 2013, Minister Laurent Fabius claimed that Al Nusra (a branch of al Qaeda) “*was doing a good job in Syria.*”

The effects of sanctions on the Syrian population

How many victims of the sanctions imposed by the European Union are there? There are already—in addition to countless, poignant testimonies of Syrians and journalists—some exhaustive studies (particularly this one, unfortunately dated) on the sanctions’ impact on Syrian society and others (including this one and this one) that analyze some aspects of Syria’s disastrous situation, but, at the moment, there are no scientific literature on the effects of sanctions on the population. To understand them, however, a comparison with the sanctions imposed on Iraq (see, for example, this study and this brief paper), which, according to a Unicef Report, caused, among other

things, the death from malnutrition and disease of 500,000 children, may be useful.

But let us try to outline the effects of sanctions on the Syrian population, breaking them down by affected sectors, starting with the medical-health sector.

One of the main effects of sanctions on Syria today is the spread of infections that cannot be adequately addressed. Syria, prior to 2012, had a thriving pharmaceutical industry (with the exception of those for cancer, Syria was 95 percent self-sufficient in terms of drug production) and a satisfactory hospital system, whose “flagship” was certainly, the “Al Kindi” Oncology Center in Aleppo, the largest in the Middle East (and blown up by “rebels” with a truck bomb).

Today, without electricity and with the generators also out of fuel, (and thus with refrigerators and sterilization equipment out of use) what remains of the network of hospital garrisons that escaped destruction is practically collapsing. The result is a very high number of hospital infections that, among other things, cannot be addressed due to the lack of antibiotics.

It is even worse for other infections such as tetanus and measles. In December 2012, a measles outbreak, despite the intervention of Unicef assets, took thousands of children with it; since then, there have been other outbreaks that could not be adequately addressed, mainly due to the lack of fuel. Then there are the gastrointestinal infections brought about by the inability to restore aqueducts and water lifting systems damaged by war or wear and tear. On the number of people who have died in Syria in recent years as a result of infections (even for those that are not a problem in the West) there are no estimates, and the same is true for people who have died as a result of the inability to follow certain therapies (first among them those against diabetes or cancer) as documented in an article in the

medical journal “The Lancet.”

Then, there is the drama of malnutrition. According to some estimates published in “The Lancet” article, more than 80 percent of the Syrian population now lives in poverty, with one-third of them living in conditions defined as extreme poverty, (inability to obtain basic foodstuffs); life expectancy has thus been reduced from 75-79 years in 2010 (one of the highest in the Middle East) to 55-57 years in 2014. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate has risen from 15 percent in 2011 to 57 percent in 2014, while the cost of basic foodstuffs has increased sixfold since 2010.

In this tragic situation, it is mocking that it is impossible for Syrians living abroad to be able to send money to their loved ones left at home. And so, with the international banking circuit that served Syria blocked by sanctions, for many—even some NGOs—all that is left is to hide some banknotes in their clothes and cross the border from Lebanon, hoping not to be looted by gangs of robbers or starving desperados.

Omar’s testimony

As mentioned above, there are countless testimonies from scholars, politicians, journalists, humanitarian workers... about the effects of the sanctions the European Union is inflicting on Syria. We prefer, however, to conclude this text by giving the word to a Syrian friend of ours, Omar, a former tour guide, now a refugee in Italy and who, by the way, had participated in the many protest demonstrations held in Damascus in 2011.

“I introduced Syria to thousands of Italians and there was not one who was not enchanted by the mildness of our people. Some came to Syria convinced that they had to defy who knows what pitfalls: they recanted after a few days being able to walk freely, even in the middle of the night; admiring the mosques, the churches, the synagogues filled with quiet worshippers; watching the girls free to be able to go everywhere undisturbed. And, despite

my views, I was proud when I talked about our universities, the excellence of our health care system, our relative prosperity. And also of the myriad groups and organizations that animated political and cultural life in Syria.

Even today I am in contact with many Italians. And from time to time via e-mail or Facebook I have happened to talk to them about the sanctions imposed on Syria also by Italy or other initiatives of your government such as the denial a few years ago of entry visas to Syrian parliamentarians who were to meet in Rome with their Italian colleagues. They are falling from the clouds. They don't know anything about it. Nothing. No information from TV or newspapers. The only thing my Italian friends know—and that makes them either moved or angry—is the flood of Syrian refugees pouring onto Italian shores every day. And they think that this exodus depends either on the repression of the Assad government or on ISIS attacks. Nothing about the responsibilities of your governments. Nothing.

Some of my Italian contacts believe that the Syrian crisis can be solved by ousting Assad and restoring democracy in Syria. But how can you think of exporting democracy if you don't know anything?"

Links



To view it, scan the QR code.

Or:

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He who sows the wind reaps the whirlwind •

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