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Subject: New York Times Op-Ed by Anne-Marie Slaughter

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Please find below the text of an op-ed authored by Anne-Marie Slaughter. The piece appears in today's edition of the *New York Times*.

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/24/opinion/how-to-halt-the-butchery-in-syria.html?_r=1&hp

OPINION

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

How to Halt the Butchery in Syria

By ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER

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Princeton, N.J.

FOREIGN military intervention in Syria offers the best hope for curtailing a long, bloody and destabilizing civil war. The mantra of those opposed to intervention is "Syria is not Libya." In fact, Syria is far more strategically located than Libya, and a lengthy civil war there would be much more dangerous to our interests. America has a major stake in helping Syria's neighbors stop the killing.

Simply arming the opposition, in many ways the easiest option, would bring about exactly the scenario the world should fear most: a proxy war that would spill into Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan and fracture Syria along sectarian lines. It could also allow Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups to gain a foothold in Syria and perhaps gain access to chemical and biological weapons.

There is an alternative. The Friends of Syria, some 70 countries scheduled to meet in Tunis today, should establish "no-kill zones" now to protect all Syrians regardless of creed, ethnicity or political allegiance. The Free Syrian Army, a growing force of defectors from the government's army, would set up these no-kill zones near the Turkish, Lebanese and Jordanian borders. Each zone should be established as close to the border as possible to allow the creation of short humanitarian corridors for the Red Cross and other groups to bring food, water and medicine in and take wounded patients out. The zones would be managed by already active civilian committees.

Establishing these zones would require nations like Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Jordan to arm the opposition soldiers with anti-tank, countersniper and portable anti-aircraft weapons. Special forces from countries like Qatar, Turkey and possibly Britain and France could offer tactical and strategic advice to the Free Syrian Army forces. Sending them in is logistically and politically feasible; some may be there already.

Crucially, these special forces would control the flow of intelligence regarding the government's troop movements and lines of communication to allow opposition troops to cordon off population centers and rid them of snipers. Once Syrian government forces were killed, captured or allowed to defect without reprisal, attention would turn to defending and expanding the no-kill zones.

This next step would require intelligence focused on tank and aircraft movements, the placement of artillery batteries and communications lines among Syrian government forces. The goal would be to weaken and isolate government units charged with attacking particular towns; this would allow opposition forces to negotiate directly with army officers on truces within each zone, which could then expand into a regional, and ultimately national, truce.

The key condition for all such assistance, inside or outside Syria, is that it be used defensively - only to stop attacks by the Syrian military or to clear out government forces that dare to attack the no-kill zones. Although keeping intervention limited is always hard, international assistance could be curtailed if the Free Syrian Army took the offensive. The absolute priority within no-kill zones would be public safety and humanitarian aid; revenge attacks would not be tolerated.

Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, is increasingly depending on government-sponsored gangs and on shelling cities with heavy artillery rather than overrunning them with troops, precisely because he is concerned about the loyalty of soldiers forced to shoot their fellow citizens at point-blank range. If government troops entered no-kill zones they would have to face their former comrades. Placing them in this situation, and presenting the option to defect, would show just how many members of Syria's army - estimated at 300,000 men - were actually willing to fight for Mr. Assad.

Turkey and the Arab League should also help opposition forces inside Syria more actively through the use of remotely piloted helicopters, either for delivery of cargo and weapons - as America has used them in Afghanistan - or to attack Syrian air defenses and mortars in order to protect the no-kill zones.

Turkey is rightfully cautious about deploying its ground forces, an act that Mr. Assad could use as grounds to declare war and retaliate. But Turkey has some of its own drones, and Arab League countries could quickly lease others.

As in Libya, the international community should not act without the approval and the invitation of the countries in the region that are most directly affected by Mr. Assad's war on his own people. Thus it is up to the Arab League and Turkey to adopt a plan of action. If Russia and China were willing to abstain rather than exercise another massacre-enabling veto, then the Arab League could go back to the United Nations Security Council for approval. If not, then Turkey and the Arab League should act, on their own authority and that of the other 13 members of the Security Council and 137 members of the General Assembly who voted last week to condemn Mr. Assad's brutality.

The power of the Syrian protesters over the past 11 months has arisen from their determination to face down bullets with chants, signs and their own bodies. The international community can draw on the power of nonviolence and create zones of peace in what are now zones of death.

The Syrians have the ability to make that happen; the rest of the world must give them the means to do it.

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