

RELEASE IN PART B6

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**Sent:** Thursday, July 19, 2012 9:18 PM  
**To:** H  
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**Subject:** Syria  
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**Importance:** High

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It was great to see you today, both at FPAB and at the data summit. I've been avoiding haranguing you directly on Syria, putting my thoughts on the op-ed page instead. But this time I really think we have an opportunity that I'm afraid we are going to miss, at least judging by the presentation that Bob Ford gave today. I didn't want to say anything in front of the group, but here goes.

Below is the Declaration of Values that the nine commanders of the military councils of the FSA have signed and are making public. They are exactly the values that we would want a new Syrian government to subscribe to, put forward by military commanders on the ground who may not represent the entire Syrian armed opposition, but at least reflect a good part of it – and the part that we would most want to triumph or at least triumph enough to be able to share power with the Islamist groups. Further, if we put this together with the transition plan that Bob Ford came out of Cairo, we have something tangible to go on. Further, see the attached press release, which I just received, in which the FSA is following exactly the strategy that I laid out months ago. They are establishing safe zones, “perimeters where all Syrian citizens can live under an umbrella of peace and security, regardless of their ethnic background or religion.” I see six reasons why we should publicly declare that we support these safe zones and will be prepared to help defend them against the Syrian regime, in addition to the basic point that it is the right thing to do.

- 1) We have done much better in those MENA countries in which we have taken the initiative (Libya, Yemen) rather than hanging back and responding to events (Egypt, Syria). And if we can make a go of this and it comes out even half decently, then your legacy re US diplomacy in the equivalent of 1848 or 1989 will be remarkably good.
- 2) After the Russian/China veto yesterday we have the perfect opportunity to say that given their determination to support a murderous government, we are standing with the Syrian people and their regional neighbors.
- 3) The opposition is going to win and is going to ask where we were. Supporting the declaration below and the safe zones does not prevent us from reaching out to the Islamist opposition; on the contrary, we might be able to help broker a coalition, working with the Turks/Saudis.
- 4) The time to act is running out fast. This revolution is not going to wait on our election.
- 5) If we don't seize this opportunity, the Republicans will. The Syrian Support Group is a fairly well organized and funded group of Syrian-Americans, as you probably know, many of whom are from the mid-West and who are working every contact they have. This declaration of principles and the safe zones are going to make the issue look much more black and white from the perspective of the Romney campaign.
- 6) It will be easier to move covertly to secure chemical weapons if we are actively and openly working with relatively well-organized groups on the ground.

That's as succinct as I can make it. It's time to act.

Best,

AM

**Message from the Free Syrian Army to the World: "We're fighting for a democratic and peaceful nation, but we need your help."**

Last week, an extraordinary event occurred inside Syria that went largely unnoticed by almost everyone with exception of nine individuals and a few informed people abroad. The nine commanding generals of the Military Councils of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) --- the de facto opposition to President Bashar al-Assad's regime -- signed a "Declaration of Values" that would please the likes of Jefferson, Mandela and Liu Xiaobo. Pressed by the international media over abetting certain extremist factions including al-Qaeda, the FSA fighters are hitting back and telling the world that not only are they deeply misunderstood, but that they are fighting for fundamental human rights including liberty, justice and peace and against the barbarity and sectarianism that Assad's regime is inflicting upon the Syrian people. None of the nine commanders claim to run perfect military councils, nor have they denied that pockets of extremist groups are fighting on the side of the opposition. But what they will also say is that a political vacuum in Syria, the probability of which is increasing over time, will only mitigate shaping the future of the country, including removing undesirable elements of sectarianism and extremism. Either the international community provides the relevant capabilities, assets and intelligence to support the FSA or history will record that the world stood idle while both Syria and perhaps the wider region descended into turmoil. The declaration below is more than agreeable words - it is a plea from embattled freedom-loving soldiers to rational, fair-minded nations that their support is essential to end the bloodshed and bring about a lasting peace. Maybe it's time that we stop shrugging our shoulders and understand what they have to say:

Free Syrian Army

Declaration of Values

*We the Commanders of the Military Councils of the Free Syrian Army, and representing the General Council of Syria, hereby affirm this Declaration of our Values:*

- *We believe in a free and democratic Syria where all Syrian citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, creed, religion, or class, shall live in liberty, justice and peace;*
- *We believe in a pluralistic, multi-ethnic society which honors and upholds freedom of expression, thought and conscience;*
- *We believe in free association and assembly. No Syrian citizen shall be forced into a political association;*
- *We believe that the Rule of Law shall be honored by the Governing bodies of Syria and reign supreme throughout the nation;*
- *We believe that the Governing bodies and civil authorities shall protect its citizens from persecution, fear and cruel or unusual punishment;*
- *We welcome peace and security along our regional borders and we look forward to political partnerships and alliances in the Middle East and beyond;*

- *We believe that the Free Syrian Army military structure shall be guided by the decisions of a democratically elected civilian Government;*
- *We will fight to end the tyranny and dictatorship of the Assad regime and we welcome our international allies and partners to join us in this Revolution for Freedom.*

*Signed by the nine Commanders of the Military Councils of the Free Syrian Army*

Brian Sayers

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