

# Fake News in Overdrive: President Assad “Created ISIS”

Journalist Roy Gutman's Hakawati

By [Moon of Alabama](#)

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*The so called “journalist” [Roy Gutman](#) is marketing an old fairy tale in three acts. It was the Syrian President Assad who created ISIS. Assad also faked the Al-Qaeda bombings in Syria to get sympathy in the “west”. The Daily Beast even paid Gutman to publish [this nonsense](#):*

This series charts Assad’s major role in the rise of Islamic extremism from the inside.

...

the regime likely staged bombings of its own security facilities in 2011 and 2012 to foster the impression that al Qaeda had an armed presence in Syria long before it did.

...

Syrian intelligence received orders to stand by when al Qaeda fighters crossed from Iraq into Syria in 2012.

But where did Gutman get such extraordinary *information*? One would think that some very credible witnesses were needed and on-the-ground research would be necessary to verify these claims. But as he himself writes:

Raed Ilawy, **an Islamist recruit** from Hama, was among the Syrians who traveled to the mosque. Some of the trainers, he recalled in **an interview at an Istanbul café**, ...

and

Dendal **was introduced to this reporter by a former regime judge from Aleppo who deserted to the opposition. Interviewed in a café in Istanbul’s popular Fatih district**, ...

Deserters and Islamist *activists* telling stories which blame their declared enemies – excellent *witnesses*. Those stories then must be true. Right? Gutman himself writes that the CIA does not believe the fairy tales he was told over coffee in Istanbul, [nor does anyone else](#) who is knowledgeable about the issue. Gutman is unable to get any official confirmation for his claims. Indeed the DNI refutes his tales:

The CIA declined to comment but did not dispute the validity of the question. “I

looked into this, and there is nothing we can add," a spokeswoman said.

...

The CIA declined to comment.

...

After bombings in Damascus Jan. 6 and Aleppo Feb. 10, 2012, James Clapper, the director of National Intelligence, told Congress in mid-February that the explosions "had all the earmarks of an al Qaeda-like attack." He added: "And so we believe al Qaeda in Iraq is extending its reach into Syria.

In 2012 Rania Abouzeid [interviewed](#) Jabhat al Nusra (al-Qaeda) fighters in Raqqa and wrote about it [for Time](#). They confirm that many came from Iraq and were silently in Syria even before the "revolution".

But whatever - *activists say* the Syrian government did it ... - is all the validity Gutman needs.

In the second act of the farce Gutman meets another *witness*:

the actual numbers were smaller, according to **Abdullah Hakawati**, an activist who helped organize anti-government protests in Aleppo ... Hakawati provided the name of the officer, but he could not be reached to verify the account.

Elijah Magnier [urged](#) Gutman (who does not speak Arabic) to find out what that *activist's* alleged surname means.

From the description of a book titled [The Hakawati](#) we learn:

As the family gathers, stories begin to unfold: Osama's grandfather was a hakawati, or storyteller, and his bewitching tales are interwoven with classic stories of the Middle East.

So this was one of Gutman's witnesses?



Pic: [Syria: 'al-Hakawati' - the Storytelling Tour in Sweden 2015](#)

Ha! Some Syrian *activist* made a joke over duping a gullible *journalist* over coffee in Istanbul by giving his name as Mr. Storyteller! Dumb as bricks the *journalist* and his editors at the Daily Beast fall for it.

Gutman stenographed a great fairy tale just as the various hakawatis in Istanbul's cafes tell it. With that he vividly demonstrated how "fake news" are created. I doubt though that this was his intention.

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