

NATO SUPPORTED DEATH SQUADS? Syria Categorically Denies Responsibility of the Syrian Forces for al-Houla Massacre

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Spokesman for the Syrian Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ministry, Jihad Makdissi, has categorically denied responsibility of the Syrian forces for the massacre that took place in al-Houla area in Homs Province.

In a press conference on Sunday, Makdissi condemned in strongest terms this terrorist massacre against the Syrian civilians as he condemned accusing the Syrian forces of doing that.

Makdissi stressed that no tanks or artillery entered al-Houla town, adding that hundreds of gunmen, armed with various kinds of heavy weapons, attacked al-Houla area in Homs countryside after they assembled in various areas in a deliberate and planned manner, indicating that "The law-enforcement members never left their positions and were in a state of self-defense."

Makdissi said that Syria also condemns the "tsunami" of lies against the Syrian government in the past couple of days and the ease in leveling accusations against the Syrian government by some foreign ministers and media.

"We've talked to the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry and the authorities concerned to put us in the picture of what happened in Houla," said Makdissi.

Makdissi added "It has been confirmed that hundreds of gunmen gathered at 2:00 o'clock on Friday afternoon , using Pick-up cars loaded with up-to-date and heavy weapons, like mortars, machineguns and anti-tank missiles, which are newly used in the confrontation with the state forces."

"The gunmen headed to al-Houla area which is guarded by the government forces at five points where law-enforcement members and security are positioned, which lie outside the places where the massacres happened. The attack lasted from 2:00 pm o'clock until 11:00 pm. 3 law-enforcement members were martyred and 16 injured, some critically, and there were charred bodies."

Makdissi said that there has been a massacre in al-Shoumarieh village where crops, houses

and the national hospital were burnt down., indicating that Al-Houla is only part of a larger terrorist attack.

Makdissi said that the attack is an unjustifiable act that deserves a Security Council meeting to find out who is funding, arming, hosting and instigating terrorists.

"A military judicial committee was formed to conduct investigation and the results will be announced in three days," Makdissi added.

"Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem has spoken to the UN envoy to Syria, Kofi Annan, and informed him of the details of what happened and the official investigation underway," Makdissi said.

"We regret that foreign ministers of some countries have rushed to level baseless accusations in such forums as the UN Security Council and the EU, based on statements by opposition figures or biased media."

"The savage pattern of killing as shown by the images, children, elderly and women were killed in a way which is alien to the morals of the valiant Syrian Arab army," Makdissi said.

"The Syrian state is responsible for protecting civilians according to the constitution and Syria preserves its right to defend its citizens," he said.

"It is not the Syrian army, who have taken an oath to protect civilians, who committed the crime. Those who come from hideouts and mountains and kill innocent civilians are well known. There might be clashes and there is a high-level independent investigation at the ministries of defense and interior."

The suspicious coincidence between the attacks in parallel with the visit of UN Special Envoy to Syria, Kofi Annan, is a slap to the political process, said Makdissi.

Answering a question on the beneficiary from this crime against the Syrian people, Makdissi said " What happened does not serve the interests of the Syrian state, and we are committed to Annan's plan and wish him success," stressing that "We don't trade with the Syrian blood."

Makdissi said that the regional countries which are hosting terrorist groups and turn a blind eye to the infiltration of terrorists and the countries which are publically funding them are complicit in the crimes against the Syrian people.

On the report of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Syria, Makdissi said "I read the report and we have reservations about it...We already know that Ki-moon and Annan are involved with 15 other countries at the UNSC, which is a diplomatic and political labor, because most of these countries are hostile to Syria."

"There is no such thing as armed opposition as the report called them. There is either intellectual opposition that is welcomed to a dialogue that we've never shut the door on, or terrorists. Taking up arms against the state is unjustifiable, whatever the political excuse," said Makdissi.

Makdissi pointed to the contradiction in Ki-moon's report which states that some Syrian cities have become outside the control of the Syrian government as he says that tanks and heavy machines haven't been removed.

"There may be neighborhoods outside the control of the Syrian government due to the presence of gunmen, but not whole cities as the report said, that's why we hope that the coming reports would be more professional."

Answering a question on the opposition's benefit from committing such a crime, Makdissi said "This question should be put to the opposition...there is an intellectual opposition and terrorists to whom the opposition turns a blind eye...It is not condemning their acts after all. Hence, there is an tacit alliance between the two."

On the issue of the kidnapped Lebanese, Makdissi "We heard that there was a phone call between the Turkish authorities and the Lebanese foreign minister...We condemn this act and Syria will spare no effort to offer help in this regard."

Makdissi said that a the Syrian government submitted a draft statement condemning the massacre to the UN Security Council.

"We admit that we have a crisis, but the solution does not lie in destabilizing Syria. But if they are out for confrontation, we'll be there for it and we are determined to defend our country."

"If the outside opposition and the countries backing them agreed to political solution, we can say that the crisis is coming to a close. Syria has agreed to dialogue and to the Chinese plan and the Russian proposal for hosting an initial dialogue session, but the ones who fear the street rejected. We are sure that President Bashar al-Assad enjoys the majority necessary to change Syria in a democratic way," added Makdissi.

Makdissi indicated that the terrorism and crimes have increased since Syria's approval on Annan's plan because they don't want to make the plan a success.

He said that the armed terrorist groups committed more than 3,500 violations of Annan's plan, adding that "non-stability is a good environment for terrorists... there are al-Qaeda and takfiris but we won't allow them to make use of this environment no matter how long the confrontation takes."

Makdissi stressed that the solution to the crisis in Syria lies in lending a helping hand to the Syrian government.

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