

President Bashar al-Assad: U.S. and Its Western Allies Are to Blame for Failure of Latest Ceasefire

By [Bashar al Assad](#) and [Politika](#)

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President Bashar al-Assad asserted that the United States and its Western allies are to blame for the failure of latest ceasefire, because terrorism and terrorists are for them a card they want to play on the Syrian arena.

In an interview given to the Serbian newspaper Politika, President al-Assad said that Russia is very serious and very determined to continue fighting the terrorists, while the Americans base their politics on a different value as they use the terrorists as a card to play the political game to serve their own interests at the expense of the interests of other countries in the world.

President al-Assad pointed out that Western countries wanted to use the humanitarian mask in order to have an excuse to intervene more in Syria, either militarily or by supporting the terrorists.

Following is the full text of the interview.

Question 1: Mr. President, why has the latest Syria ceasefire failed? Who is to blame for that?

President Assad: Actually, the West, mainly the United States, has made that pressure regarding the ceasefire, and they always ask for ceasefire only when the terrorists are in a bad situation, not for the civilians. And they try to use those ceasefires in order to support the terrorists, bring them logistic support, armament, money, everything, in order to re-attack and to become stronger again. When it didn't work, they ask the terrorists to make it fail or to start attacking again. So, who's to blame? It's the United States and its allies, the Western countries, because for them, terrorists and terrorism are a card they want to play on the Syrian arena, it's not a value, they're not against terrorists. For them, supporting the terrorists is a war of attrition against Syria, against Iran, against Russia, that's how they look at it. That's why not only this ceasefire; every attempt regarding ceasefire or political moving or political initiative, every failure of these things, the United States was to be blamed.

Question 2: But which country is supporting terrorism? Saudi Arabia? Qatar?

President Assad: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey...

Journalist: Turkey?

President Assad: Because they came through Turkey with the support of the government, direct support from the government.

Journalist: Directly?

President Assad: Direct support from the government, of course.

Journalist: With money or with armament?

President Assad: Let's say, the endorsement, the greenlight, first. Second, the American coalition, which is called "international coalition," which is an American. They could see ISIS using our oil fields and carrying the oil through the barrel trucks to Turkey under their drones...

Journalist: This is the Syrian oil?

President Assad: In Syria, from Syria to Turkey, under the supervision of their satellites and drones, without doing anything, till the Russians intervened and started attacking ISIS convoys and ISIS positions and strongholds. This is where ISIS started to shrink. So, the West gave the greenlight to those countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, and actually those countries, those governments are puppets; puppets to the West, puppets to the United States, they work as puppets, and the terrorists in Syria are their proxy, the proxy of those countries and proxy of the West and the United States.

Question 3: But money for marketing this oil, who has the money? Turkey?

President Assad: In partnership between ISIS and Turkey. Part of the money goes to ISIS because this is how they can make recruitment and pay salaries to their fighters. That's why ISIS was growing before the Russian intervention, it was expanding in Syria and in Iraq. And part of the money is going to the Turkish government officials, mainly Erdogan himself and his family.

Journalist: Erdogan himself?

President Assad: Of course, of course. They were directly involved in this trade with ISIS.

Question 4: Mr. President, do you believe the Russians and Americans can ever agree over Syria? Can Russia and the USA be partners in the war against terrorists in Syria?



President Assad: We hope, but in reality, no, for a simple reason: because the Russians based their politics on values, beside their interest. The values are that they adopt the international law, they fight terrorism, and the interest that if you have terrorists prevailing in our region, that will affect not only our region but Europe, Russia, and the rest of the world. So, the Russians are very serious and very determined to continue fighting the terrorists, while the Americans based their politics on a different value, completely different value, their value is that “we can use the terrorists.” I mean the Americans, they wanted to use the terrorists as a card to play the political game to serve their own interests at the expense of the interests of other countries in the world.

Question 5: The situation about bombing the Syrian Army near the airport in Deir Ezzor... How did the American air attack on the Syrian Army happen? Was it a coincidence or not?

President Assad: It was premeditated attack by the American forces, because ISIS was shrinking because of the Syrian and Russian and Iranian cooperation against ISIS, and because al-Nusra which is Al Qaeda-affiliated group had been defeated in many areas in Syria, so the Americans wanted to undermine the position of the Syrian Army; they attacked our army in Deir Ezzor. It wasn't by coincidence because the raid continued more than one hour, and they came many times.

Journalist: One hour?

President Assad: More than one hour. There were many raids by the Americans and their allies against the Syrian position. At the same time, they attacked a very big area; they didn't attack a building to say “we made a mistake.” They attacked three big hills, not other groups neighboring these hills, and only ISIS existed in Deir Ezzor. There is no... what they called it “moderate opposition.” So, it was a premeditated attack in order to allow ISIS to take that position, and ISIS attacked those hills, and took those hills right away in less than one hour after the attack.

Journalist: ISIS attacking Syrian position after American...?

President Assad: Less than one hour, in less than one hour, ISIS attacked those hills. It means that ISIS gathered their forces to attack those hills. How did ISIS know that the Americans would attack that Syrian position? It means they were ready, they were

prepared. This is an explicit and stark proof that the Americans are supporting ISIS and using it as a card to change the balance according to their political agenda.

Journalist: And after that, America said sorry, huh?

President Assad: They said they regret, they didn't say sorry. [laughs]

Question 6: Mr. President, who is responsible for the attack on the Red Cross convoy near Aleppo, and what weapons were used for the destruction of the Red Cross convoy?

President Assad: Definitely the terrorist groups in Aleppo, because those are the ones who had an interest. When we announced the truce in Aleppo, they refused it. They said "no, we don't want a truce." They refused to have any convoys coming to eastern Aleppo, and that was public, it's not our propaganda, it's not our announcement, they announced it. And there was a demonstration by those militants to refuse that convoy. So, they have interest in attacking that convoy, we don't have. It wasn't in an area where you have Syrian troops, and at the same time there were no Syrian or Russian airplanes flying in that area anyway. But it was used as part of the propaganda, as part of the narrative against Syria in the West; that we attacked this humanitarian convoy, because the whole war now in Syria, according to the Western propaganda, is taking the shape of humanitarian war. This is the Western mask now; they wanted to use the humanitarian mask in order to have an excuse to intervene more in Syria, and when I say intervene it means militarily or by supporting the terrorists.

Journalist: This is like the situation in former Yugoslavia, in the war in Yugoslavia, also in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the war in Kosovo, humanitarian problems.

President Assad: It's a different era, maybe, a different shape, but the same core, what happened in your country, and what's happening now in our country.

Question 7: And the Western propaganda spoke about the problem of using the chemical weapons and the barrel bombs.

President Assad: The same, to show that you have a black-and-white picture; very very bad guy against very very good guy. It's like the narrative of George W. Bush during the war on Iraq and on Afghanistan. So, they wanted to use those headlines or those terms in their narrative in order to provoke the emotions of the public opinion in their countries. This is where the public opinion would support them if they wanted to interfere, either directly through military attacks, or through supporting their proxies that are the terrorists in our region.

Question 8: I see the news in the last days, the Amnesty International condemned a terrorist group for using the chlorine, the chemical weapons in Aleppo.

President Assad: In Aleppo, exactly, that happened a few days ago, and actually, regardless of these chemical attacks, we announced yesterday that the terrorists killed during the last three days more than 80 innocent civilians in Aleppo, and wounded more than 300. You don't read anything about them in the Western mainstream media. You don't see it, you don't hear about it, there's nothing about them. They only single out some pictures and some incidents in the area under the control of the terrorists just to use them for their political agenda in order to condemn and to blame the Syrian government, not because they

are worried about the Syrians; they don't care about our children, or about innocents, and about civilization, about infrastructure. They don't care about it; they are destroying it. But actually, they only care about using everything that would serve their vested interests.

Question 9: And now, your army... you are the supreme commander of Syrian military forces. Your army now has not any chemical weapons?

President Assad: No, we don't. Since 2013, we gave up our arsenals. Now, no we don't have. But before that, we have never used it. I mean, when you talk about chemical weapons used by the government, it means you are talking about thousands of casualties in one place in a very short time. We never had this kind of incidents; just allegations in the Western media.

Question 10: Mr. President, when do you think the Syrian war will end?

President Assad: When? I always say less than one year is enough for you to solve your internal problem, because it is not very complicated internally. It's becoming more complex only when you have more interfering by foreign powers. When those foreign powers leave Syria alone, we can solve it as Syrians in a few months, in less than one year. That's very simple, we can, but providing that there's no outside interference. Of course, that looks not realistic, because everybody knows that the United States wanted to undermine the position of Russia as a great power in the world, including in Syria. Saudi Arabia has been looking how to destroy Iran for years now, and Syria could be one of the places where they can achieve that, according to their way of thinking. But if we say that we could achieve that situation where all those foreign powers leave Syria alone, we don't have a problem in solving our problem.

How? First of all, by stopping the support of the terrorists by external countries like the regional ones like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, and by the West, of course, mainly the United States. When you stop supporting terrorists in Syria, it won't be difficult at all to solve our problem.

Question 11: Mr. President, is it true that Syria is the last socialistic country in the Arab world?

President Assad: Today, yes. I don't know about the future, how is it going to be. We are socialist, but of course not the closed type.

Journalist: Humane socialism, because your government is supporting the education with the subvention, like the Swedish-type socialism.

President Assad: I don't know a lot about the Swedish-type, but let's say that in Syria, we have an open economy, but at the same time we have a strong public sector, and that public sector played a very important role in the resilience of the Syrian society and the government during the war. Without that public sector, the situation would have been much more difficult. So, we're still socialist, and I think the war proved that the socialism system is very important for any country, taking into consideration that I'm talking about the open socialism, that could allow the freedom of the public sector to play a vital role in building the country.

Question 12: And your big companies... this is the state companies or private companies?

President Assad: We have both. But usually in such a situation, the public sector always

plays the most important part. As you know, the private sector could feel the danger more and could suffer more and in some areas could quit the whole arena, the economic arena, because of the insecurity. So, that's why you have to depend in such a situation more on the public sector, but still the private sector in Syria plays a very important part beside the public.

Question 13: And you have very very tolerance atmosphere with other churches, Christians, Muslims, and...

President Assad: It's not tolerance, actually; they are part of this society. Without all different colors of the society - Christians, Muslims, and the different sects and ethnicities - you won't have Syria. So, every Syrian citizen should feel fully free in practicing his rituals, his traditions, his beliefs. He should be free in order to have a stable country. Otherwise you won't have Syria as a stable country. But I wouldn't call it tolerance. Tolerance means like we accept something against our will; no, Muslims and Christians lived together for centuries in Syria, and they integrate in their life on daily basis, they don't live in ghettos.



Question 14: No separate schools for Muslims, for Christians, young people, no?

President Assad: No, no. You have some schools that belong to the church, but they are full of Muslims and vice versa. So, you don't have, no. We don't allow any segregation of religions and ethnicities in Syria, that would be very dangerous, but naturally, without the interference of the government, people would like to live with each other in every school, in every place, in every NGO, in the government, that is the natural... That's why Syria is secular by nature, not by the government. The Syrian society has been secular throughout history.

Question 15: And, Mr. President, it's been one year since Russian air forces took part in the Syrian war, how much has Russia helped you?

President Assad: Let's talk about the reality. Before the Russian interference, ISIS was expanding, as I said. When they started interfering, ISIS and al-Nusra and the other Al Qaeda affiliated groups started shrinking. So, this is the reality. Why? Of course, because it's a great power and they have great army and they have great firepower that could support the Syrian Army in its war. The other side of the same story is that when a great country, a great power, like Russia, intervene against the terrorists, in coordination with the troops on the ground, and in our case, it's the Syrian Army, of course you're going to achieve concrete results, while if you talk about the American alliance, which is not serious anyway, but at the same time they don't have allies on the ground, they cannot achieve anything. So, the Russian power was very important beside their political weight on the international arena, in both ways they could change the situation, and they were very important for Syria in

defeating the terrorists in different areas on the Syrian arena or battlefield.

Question 16: Is the Syrian society divided by the war today?

President Assad: Actually, it's more homogenous than before the war. That could be surprising for many observers because the war is a very deep and important lesson for every Syrian. Many Syrians before the war didn't tell the difference between being fanatic and being extremist, between being extremist and being terrorist. Those borders weren't clear for many, because of the war, because of the destruction, because of the heavy price that affected every Syrian, many Syrians learned the lesson and now they know that the only way to protect the country and to preserve the country is to be homogenous, to live with each other, to integrate, to accept, to love each other. That's why I think the effect of the war, in spite of all the bad aspects of any war like this war, but this aspect was positive for the Syrian society. So, I'm not worried about the structure of the Syrian society after the war. I think it's going to be healthier.

Question 17: And a question about the American presidential elections; who would you like to win in USA presidential elections, Trump or Hillary?

President Assad: I think in most of the world, the debate about this election is who's better, Clinton is better or Trump. In Syria, the discussion is who's worse, not who's better. So, no one of them, I think, would be good for us, let's say, this is first. Second, from our experience with the American officials and politicians in general, don't take them at their word, they're not honest. Whatever they say, don't believe them. If they say good word or bad word, if they were very aggressive or very peaceful, don't believe them. It depends on the lobbies, on the influence of different political movements in their country, after the election that's what is going to define their policy at that time. So, we don't have to waste our time listening to their rhetoric now. It's just rubbish. Wait for their policies and see, but we don't see any good signs that the United States is going to change dramatically its policy toward what's happening in the world, let's say, to be fair, or to obey the international law, or to care about the United Nation's Charter. There's no sign that we are going to see that in the near future. So, it's not about who's going to be President; the difference will be very minimal, each one of them is going to be allowed to leave his own fingerprint, just personal fingerprint, but doesn't mean change of policies. That's why we don't pin our hopes, we don't waste our time with it.

Question 18: Mr. President, the last question: The relation between Serbia and Syria, do you have any message for people in Serbia?

President Assad: I think we didn't do what we have to do on both sides in order to make this relation in a better position, before the war. Of course, the war will leave its effects on the relation between every two countries, that would be understandable, but we have to plan for the next time because your country suffered from external aggression that led to the division of Yugoslavia and I think the people are still paying the price of that war. Second, the war in your country has been portrayed in the same way; as a humanitarian war where the West wanted to intervene in order to protect a certain community against the aggressors from the other community. So, many people in the world believe that story, the same in Syria; they use the same mask, the humanitarian mask.

Actually, the West doesn't care about your people, they don't care about our people, they don't care about anyone in this world, they only care about their own vested interest. So, I

think we have the same lessons, may be a different area, we are talking about two decades' difference, maybe different headlines, but actually the content is the same. That's why I think we need to build more relations in every aspect; cultural, economy, politics, in order to strengthen our position, each country in his region.

Question 19: But Syrian government, you and Syria's state, supporting Serbia in the problem of the Kosovo?

President Assad: We did, we did, although the Turks wanted to use their influence for Kosovo, in Kosovo's favor, but we refused. That was before the war, that was seven or eight years ago, and we refused, in spite of the good relation with Turkey at that time. We supported Serbia.

Journalist: Mr. President, thank you for the interview, thank you for your time.

President Assad: Not at all. Thank you for coming to Damascus.

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