

Syria's "Moderate Rebels" Seek Support of Israel

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Remember the SLA, or the South Lebanon Army? They were a largely Lebanese Christian militia backed and financed by Israel as part of its long-standing policy to keep Lebanon divided and weak - and to help Israel annex the southern parts of Lebanon, if the aims of early Israeli leaders like David Ben Gurion are to be credited.

The SLA's heyday was during Israel's near two-decade occupation of south Lebanon. The local response was the rapid growth of Hizbullah, those "Islamic extremists" who eventually liberated their country from both the Israeli army and the SLA.

If this Times of Israel story is to be believed, we're seeing the emergence of a Syrian equivalent.

An unnamed commander of the so-called "moderate" rebels in Syria, the Free Syrian Army, wants to be best pals with Israel. The FSA would apparently like to see Israeli war-planes enforcing a no-fly zone over Syria and shooting down Syrian aircraft to help its own forces win the day against Assad.

The commander is reported saying:

Israel could down any plane above that area and no one would blame it. Refraining from doing this means collaborating with the Assad gang in our murder. We are at a historic crossroads. Israel has the opportunity to win the hearts of all Syrians, whom the entire world has forsaken. If you get rid of this gang, your border will be protected. No one will even think of attacking you.

None of this is too surprising. Israel appears to have been cultivating relations with the FSA for a while, including allowing their fighters access to its hospitals through the Golan crossing point.

Last year the New York Times reported that Israel was working with the Syrian opposition, offering "humanitarian aid" and "maintaining intense intelligence activity". In an interview with the Argentinian media, the Syrian leader Bashar Assad accused Israel of having gone further, "directly supporting" opposition groups inside Syria with "logistical support", intelligence on potential targets and plans for attacking them.

It seems the FSA feels either that Israel is not committed enough to assisting it or that Israel's support is waning. Either way, one wonders what this FSA commander thinks Israel expects in return. Or maybe he thinks Israel just likes being charitable.

We are supposed to be cheering on the FSA as the true representatives of Syrian hopes for

independence and freedom. They are reportedly the good guys, the ones the US and its allies want to arm so that Syria can be liberated from Assad and al-Qaeda / ISIS.

But if the FSA is ready to cut a deal with an aggressive colonial neighbour like Israel, one has to wonder both how moderate they really are and quite how representative of the wider Syrian people.

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