

Western Media Report New Syrian Massacre as US Pushes For Military Intervention

By [Finian Cunningham](#)

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Here we go again. More high-flown Western mainstream media reports of “another massacre” in Syria – once again blamed on the government forces of President Bashar Al Assad.

The latest alleged atrocity occurred Thursday morning in the village of Tremseh, in Hama Province. CNN, BBC, Financial Times, Guardian, Daily Mail, among a clatter of Western media outlets, claim that over 200 civilians were massacred by the Syrian army and pro-Assad militia in what is said to be the single-biggest atrocity in the 16-month conflict.

The reports bear the same formula of previous massacres in Syria, such as in the villages of Houla and Qubair on 24 May and 6 June, when 108 and 78 people were reportedly slaughtered.

Strident headlines rush to accuse the Syrian army of the killings; but the text of the articles contains scant details that can be verified on who carried out the attacks.

A recurring feature is that all the reports rely on ubiquitous, unnamed “opposition activists” for their claims. A closer look at the individual media outlets’ sources shows a preponderant use of one or two news agencies, Reuters or Associated Press.

In its reporting of the latest massacre, Britain’s Guardian claims that there are many narratives coming out of Tremseh all saying the same thing, that it was the result of regime forces, and therefore this must be credible. The fact is that the “many narratives” that the Guardian is referring to are actually coming from the same source of unnamed opposition activists whose allegations are being relayed by one or two news agencies, which are then picked up and amplified by a plethora of outlets, such as the Guardian. This is not independent corroboration; it is simply repetition of unverified claims.

CNN, a multi-billion-dollar corporation, in its account of the Tremseh killings takes the standard of news reporting to a new low.

It reports: “Activists in the city of Hama told CNN that witnesses inside Tremseh told them by telephone that Syrian military forces had launched a full-scale attack against the opposition Free Syrian Army inside the town, which was surrounded by government tanks and artillery.”

In other words, CNN, a supposedly world-class news service, is getting its information third hand from faceless, unnamed voices down a remote phone line.

Typically, in the Western media reportage, buried beneath several paragraphs, comes the usual disclaimer: “We are not able to independently verify these claims”. But, by then, the damage of biased reporting has been done. The reader is liable to be inculcated with the headlined assertion that the Syrian armed forces have committed another atrocity.

Admittedly, these reports do give a line or two to the government version of events that the killings are the work of foreign-backed armed terrorists. But the government’s line is always put in quotation marks that imply “this is unreliable hogwash”. It is also telling that, despite the consistency of such government claims, there is no follow-up investigation by the Western mainstream media into what are alarming implications, that is that Western governments and their allies are supporting terrorist subversion in a sovereign country. That is a war crime on multiple counts.

All the Western mainstream media outlets claim that the village of Tremseh was subjected to hours of artillery shelling and fire from helicopter gunships. Then the unknown pro-government militia, referred to as Shabiha, are said to have allegedly moved into the village to kill civilians “execution style”.

This same scenario was reported for the earlier massacres at Houla and Qubair. Yet careful follow-up reports published by the German newspaper, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Russia Today, among others, have found that the perpetrators of such atrocities were in fact Western and Arab-backed mercenaries. This has been corroborated independently by Catholic Church sources and other civilian sources in Syria.

Another significant factor is the timing of these atrocities. The massacre at Qubair happened just as the UN/Arab League Special Envoy Kofi Annan was about to submit a report to the Security Council on violations of the 12 April ceasefire. The ceasefire was dismissed from the outset by Washington and London as being “flouted by Assad” even though the Syrian government had signed up to it and the violations being reported at the time were by the Western-backed armed groups. The West’s Qatari ally – and arms supplier of the opposition – Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani said that the proposed Annan truce “had only a three per cent chance of succeeding”. Why was such pessimism expressed so confidently? Conveniently for the Western powers, a massacre allegedly committed by Assad’s forces should occur at that sensitive moment.

This latest outrage comes hours before another sensitive meeting of the Security Council members in which the US, Britain and France are pressurizing Russia and China to vote on a resolution that would pave the way for a NATO-style military intervention in Syria.

For the government of Bashar Al Assad, the latest massacre in Tremseh could not come at a worst time. For others, however, the timing is more than welcome.

Finian Cunningham is Global Research’s Middle East and East Africa Correspondent

cunninghamfinian@gmail.com

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Articles by: **Finian
Cunningham**

About the author:

Finian Cunningham has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. Many of his recent articles appear on the renowned Canadian-based news website Globalresearch.ca. He is a Master's graduate in Agricultural Chemistry and worked as a scientific editor for the Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, England, before pursuing a career in journalism. He specialises in Middle East and East Africa issues and has also given several American radio interviews as well as TV interviews on Press TV and Russia Today. Previously, he was based in Bahrain and witnessed the political upheavals in the Persian Gulf kingdom during 2011 as well as the subsequent Saudi-led brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protests.

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