

Interview des syrischen Präsidenten Bashar Assad mit dem libanesischen TV-Sender „Al-Manar“ am 30. Mai 2013

In dem Interview mit dem zur libanesischen „Hisbollah“ gehörenden TV-Sender „Al-Manar (Der Leuchtturm)“ bestätigt der syrische Staatspräsident Bashar Assad die Beteiligung von „Hisbollah“-Kämpfern – „ein Tropfen im Ozean“ der vielen hunderttausend syrischen Soldaten – gegen „Zehntausende Terroristen“ und verkündet, dass die Lieferung von russischen S-300-Abwehr-Raketensystemen gemäß den vertraglichen Vereinbarungen erfolge. Der für Juni geplanten Konferenz in Genf räumt er geringe Erfolgchancen ein. Hoffnungen auf die politische Rolle der Arabischen Liga seien regelmäßig enttäuscht worden, weil sie ihre Anweisungen von außen erhalte. Jede Vereinbarung, die in Genf getroffen werde, müsse einem Referendum in Syrien unterliegen, dies sei die einzige Bedingung für die Beteiligung seiner Regierung. Auf die israelischen Luftschläge am 03. Mai werde Syrien beim nächsten Mal antworten; das Militär sei auf verschiedene Szenarien vorbereitet. Russische Zeitungen haben die Lieferung der Raketen dementiert. Sie würde erst im zweiten Quartal 2014 erfolgen. Am 31. Mai gab ein Sprecher des russischen Verteidigungsministeriums die Lieferung von 10 MiG-Kampfflugzeugen an Syrien bekannt.

Al-Manar: In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Assalamu Alaikum. Bloodshed in Syria continues unabated. This is the only constant over which there is little disagreement between those loyal to the Syrian state and those opposed to it. However, there is no common ground over the other constants and details two years into the current crisis. At the time, a great deal was said about the imminent fall of the regime. Deadlines were set and missed; and all those bets were lost. Today, we are here in the heart of Damascus, enjoying the hospitality of a president who has become a source of consternation to many of his opponents who are still unable to understand the equations that have played havoc with their calculations and prevented his ouster from the Syrian political scene. This unpleasant and unexpected outcome for his opponents upset their schemes and plots because they didn't take into account one self-evident question: what happens if the regime doesn't fall? What, if President Assad doesn't leave the Syrian scene? Of course, there

are no clear answers; and the result is more destruction, killing and bloodshed. Today there is talk of a critical juncture for Syria. The Syrian Army has moved from defense to attack, achieving one success after another. On a parallel level, stagnant diplomatic waters have been shaken by discussions over a Geneva 2 conference becoming a recurrent theme in the statements of all parties. There are many questions which need answers: political settlement, resorting to the military option to decide the outcome, the Israeli enemy's direct interference with the course of events in the current crisis, the new equations on the Golan Heights, the relationship with opponents and friends. What is the Syrian leadership's plan for a way out of a complex and dangerous crisis whose ramifications have started to spill over into neighboring countries? It is our great pleasure tonight to put these questions to H. E. President Bashar al-Assad. Assalamu Alaikum, Mr. President.

President Assad: Assalamu Alaikum. You are most welcome in Damascus.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, we are in the heart of the People's Palace, two and a half years into the Syrian crisis. At the time, the bet was that the president and his regime would be overthrown within weeks. How have you managed to foil the plots of your opponents and enemies? What is the secret behind this steadfastness?

President Assad: There are a number of factors are involved. One is the Syrian factor, which thwarted their intentions; the other factor is related to those who masterminded these scenarios and ended up defeating themselves because they do not know Syria or understand in detail the situation. They started with the calls of revolution, but a real revolution requires tangible elements; you cannot create a revolution simply by paying money. When this approach failed, they shifted to using sectarian slogans in order to create a division within our society. Even though they were able to infiltrate certain pockets

in Syrian society, pockets of ignorance and lack of awareness that exist in any society, they were not able to create this sectarian division. Had they succeeded, Syria would have been divided up from the beginning. They also fell into their own trap by trying to promote the notion that this was a struggle to maintain power rather than a struggle for national sovereignty. No one would fight and martyr themselves in order to secure power for anyone else.

Al-Manar: In the battle for the homeland, it seems that the Syrian leadership, and after two and a half years, is making progress on the battlefield. And here if I might ask you, why have you chosen to move from defense to attack? And don't you think that you have been late in taking the decision to go on the offensive, and consequently incurred heavy losses, if we take of Al-Qseir as an example.

President Assad: It is not a question of defense or attack. Every battle has its own tactics. From the beginning, we did not deal with each situation from a military perspective alone. We also factored in the social and political aspects as well – many Syrians were misled in the beginning and there were many friendly countries that didn't understand the domestic dynamics. Your actions will differ according to how much consensus there is over a particular issue. There is no doubt that as events have unfolded Syrians have been able to better understand the situation and what is really at stake. This has helped the Armed Forces to better carry out their duties and achieve results. So, what is happening now is not a shift in tactic from defense to attack, but rather a shift in the balance of power in favor of the Armed Forces.

Al-Manar: How has this balance been tipped, Mr. President? Syria is being criticized for asking for the assistance of foreign fighters, and to be fully candid, it is said that Hezbollah fighters are extending assistance. In a previous interview, you said that there are 23 million Syrians; we do not need help from anyone else. What is Hezbollah doing in Syria?

President Assad: The main reason for tipping the balance is the change in people's opinion in areas that used to incubate armed groups, not necessarily due to lack of patriotism on their part, but because they were deceived. They were led to believe that there was a revolution against the failings of the state. This has changed; many individuals have left these terrorist groups and have returned to their normal lives. As to what is being said about Hezbollah and the participation of foreign fighters alongside the Syrian Army, this is a hugely important issue and has several factors. Each of these factors should be clearly understood. Hezbollah, the battle at Al-Qseir and the recent Israeli airstrike – these three factors cannot be looked at in isolation of the other, they are all a part of the same issue. Let's be frank. In recent weeks, and particularly after Mr. Hasan Nasrallah's speech, Arab and foreign media have said that Hezbollah fighters are fighting in Syria and defending the Syrian state, or to use their words "the regime." Logically speaking, if Hezbollah or the resistance wanted to defend Syria by sending fighters, how many could they send – a few hundred, a thousand or two? We are talking about a battle in which hundreds of thousands of Syrian troops are involved against tens of thousands of terrorists, if not more because of the constant flow of fighters from neighboring and foreign countries that support those terrorists. So clearly, the number of fighters Hezbollah might contribute in order to defend the Syrian state in its battle, would be a drop in the ocean compared to the number of Syrian soldiers fighting the terrorists. When also taking into account the vast expanse of Syria, these numbers will neither protect a state nor 'regime.' This is from one perspective. From another, if they say they are defending the state, why now? Battles started after Ramadan in 2011 and escalated into 2012, the summer of 2012 to be precise. They started the battle to "liberate Damascus" and set a zero hour for the first time, the second time and a third time; the four generals were assassinated, a number of individuals fled Syria, and many people believed that was the time the state would collapse. It didn't.

Nevertheless, during all of these times, Hezbollah never intervened, so why would it intervene now? More importantly, why haven't we seen Hezbollah fighting in Damascus and Aleppo? The more significant battles are in Damascus and in Aleppo, not in Al-Qseir. Al-Qseir is a small town in Homs, why haven't we seen Hezbollah in the city of Homs? Clearly, all these assumptions are inaccurate. They say Al-Qseir is a strategic border town, but all the borders are strategic for the terrorists in order to smuggle in their fighters and weapons. So, all these propositions have nothing to do with Hezbollah. If we take into account the moans and groans of the Arab media, the statements made by Arab and foreign officials – even Ban Ki-moon expressed concern over Hezbollah in Al-Qseir – all of this is for the objective of suppressing and stifling the resistance. It has nothing to do with defending the Syrian state. The Syrian army has made significant achievements in Damascus, Aleppo, rural Damascus and many other areas; however, we haven't heard the same moaning as we have heard in Al-Qseir.

Al-Manar: But, Mr. President, the nature of the battle that you and Hezbollah are waging in Al-Qseir seems, to your critics, to take the shape of a safe corridor connecting the coastal region with Damascus. Consequently, if Syria were to be divided, or if geographical changes were to be enforced, this would pave the way for an Alawite state. So, what is the nature of this battle, and how is it connected with the conflict with Israel.

President Assad: First, the Syrian and Lebanese coastal areas are not connected through Al-Qseir. Geographically this is not possible. Second, nobody would fight a battle in order to move towards separation. If you opt for separation, you move towards that objective without waging battles all over the country in order to be pushed into a particular corner. The nature of the battle does not indicate that we are heading for division, but rather the opposite, we are ensuring we remain a united country. Our forefathers rejected the idea of division when the French proposed this during their occupation of Syria

because at the time they were very aware of its consequences. Is it possible or even fathomable that generations later, we their children, are less aware or mindful? Once again, the battle in Al-Qseir and all the bemoaning is related to Israel. The timing of the battle in Al-Qseir was synchronized with the Israeli airstrike. Their objective is to stifle the resistance. This is the same old campaign taking on a different form. Now what's important is not al-Qseir as a town, but the borders; they want to stifle the resistance from land and from the sea. Here the question begs itself - some have said that the resistance should face the enemy and consequently remain in the south. This was said on May 7, 2008, when some of Israel's agents in Lebanon tried to tamper with the communications system of the resistance; they claimed that the resistance turned its weapons inwards. They said the same thing about the Syrian Army; that the Syrian Army should fight on the borders with Israel. We have said very clearly that our Army will fight the enemy wherever it is. When the enemy is in the north, we move north; the same applies if the enemy comes from the east or the west. This is also the case for Hezbollah. So the question is why is Hezbollah deployed on the borders inside Lebanon or inside Syria? The answer is that our battle is a battle against the Israeli enemy and its proxies inside Syria or inside Lebanon.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, if I might ask about Israel's involvement in the Syrian crisis through the recent airstrike against Damascus. Israel immediately attached certain messages to this airstrike by saying it doesn't want escalation or doesn't intend to interfere in the Syrian crisis. The question is: what does Israel want and what type of interference?

President Assad: This is exactly my point. Everything that is happening at the moment is aimed, first and foremost, at stifling the resistance. Israel's support of the terrorists was for two purposes. The first is to stifle the resistance; the second is to strike the Syrian air defense systems. It is not interested in anything else.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, since Israel's objectives are clear, the Syrian state was criticized for its muted response. Everyone was expecting a Syrian response, and the Syrian government stated that it reserves the right to respond at the appropriate time and place. Why didn't the response come immediately? And is it enough for a senior source to say that missiles have been directed at the Israeli enemy and that any attack will be retaliated immediately without resorting to Army command?

President Assad: We have informed all the Arab and foreign parties – mostly foreign - that contacted us, that we will respond the next time. Of course, there has been more than one response. There have been several Israeli attempted violations to which there was immediate retaliation. But these short-term responses have no real value; they are only of a political nature. If we want to respond to Israel, the response will be of strategic significance.

Al-Manar: How? By opening the Golan front, for instance?

President Assad: This depends on public opinion, whether there is a consensus in support of the resistance or not. That's the question.

Al-Manar: How is the situation in Syria now?

President Assad: In fact, there is clear popular pressure to open the Golan front to resistance. This enthusiasm is also on the Arab level; we have received many Arab delegations wanting to know how young people might be enrolled to come and fight Israel. Of course, resistance is not easy. It is not merely a question of opening the front geographically. It is a political, ideological, and social issue, with the net result being military action.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, if we take into account the incident on the Golan Heights and Syria's retaliation on the Israeli military vehicle

that crossed the combat line, does this mean that the rules of engagement have changed? And if the rules of the game have changed, what is the new equation, so to speak?

President Assad: Real change in the rules of engagement happens when there is a popular condition pushing for resistance. Any other change is short-term, unless we are heading towards war. Any response of any kind might only appear to be a change to the rules of engagement, but I don't think it really is. The real change is when the people move towards resistance; this is the really dramatic change.

Al-Manar: Don't you think that this is a little late? After 40 years of quiet and a state of truce on the Golan Heights, now there is talk of a movement on that front, about new equations and about new rules of the game?

President Assad: They always talk about Syria opening the front or closing the front. A state does not create resistance. Resistance can only be called so, when it is popular and spontaneous, it cannot be created. The state can either support or oppose the resistance – or create obstacles, as is the case with some Arab countries. I believe that a state that opposes the will of its people for resistance is reckless. The issue is not that Syria has decided, after 40 years, to move in this direction. The public's state of mind is that our National Army is carrying out its duties to protect and liberate our land. Had there not been an army, as was the situation in Lebanon when the army and the state were divided during the civil war, there would have been resistance a long time ago. Today, in the current circumstances, there are a number of factors pushing in that direction. First, there are repeated Israeli aggressions that constitute a major factor in creating this desire and required incentive. Second, the army's engagement in battles in more than one place throughout Syria has created a sentiment on the part of many civilians that it is

their duty to move in this direction in order to support the Armed Forces on the Golan.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel would not hesitate to attack Syria if it detected that weapons are being conveyed to Hezbollah in Lebanon. If Israel carried out its threats, I want a direct answer from you: what would Syria do?

President Assad: As I have said, we have informed the relevant states that we will respond in kind. Of course, it is difficult to specify the military means that would be used, that is for our military command to decide. We plan for different scenarios, depending on the circumstances and the timing of the strike that would determine which method or weapons.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, after the airstrike that targeted Damascus, there was talk about the S300 missiles and that this missile system will tip the balance. Based on this argument, Netanyahu visited Moscow. My direct question is this: are these missiles on their way to Damascus? Is Syria now in possession of these missiles?

President Assad: It is not our policy to talk publically about military issues in terms of what we possess or what we receive. As far as Russia is concerned, the contracts have nothing to do with the crisis. We have negotiated with them on different kinds of weapons for years, and Russia is committed to honoring these contracts. What I want to say is that neither Netanyahu's visit nor the crisis and the conditions surrounding it have influenced arms imports. All of our agreements with Russia will be implemented, some have been implemented during the past period and, together with the Russians, we will continue to implement these contracts in the future.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, we have talked about the steadfastness of the Syrian leadership and the Syrian state. We have discussed the progress being achieved on the battlefield, and strengthening the

alliance between Syria and the resistance. These are all within the same front. From another perspective, there is diplomatic activity stirring waters that have been stagnant for two and a half years. Before we talk about this and about the Geneva conference and the red lines that Syria has drawn, there was a simple proposition or a simple solution suggested by the former head of the coalition, Muaz al-Khatib. He said that the president, together with 500 other dignitaries would be allowed to leave the country within 20 days, and the crisis would be over. Why don't you meet this request and put an end to the crisis?

President Assad: I have always talked about the basic principle: that the Syrian people alone have the right to decide whether the president should remain or leave. So, anybody speaking on this subject should state which part of the Syrian people they represent and who granted them the authority to speak on their behalf. As for this initiative, I haven't actually read it, but I was very happy that they allowed me 20 days and 500 people! I don't know who proposed the initiative; I don't care much about names.

Al-Manar: He actually said that you would be given 20 days, 500 people, and no guarantees. You'll be allowed to leave but with no guarantee whatsoever on whether legal action would be taken against you or not. Mr. President, this brings us to the negotiations, I am referring to Geneva 2. The Syrian government and leadership have announced initial agreement to take part in this conference. If this conference is held, there will be a table with the Syrian flag on one side and the flag of the opposition groups on the other. How can you convince the Syrian people after two and a half years of crisis that you will sit face to face at the same negotiating table with these groups?

President Assad: First of all, regarding the flag, it is meaningless without the people it represents. When we put a flag on a table or

anywhere else, we talk about the people represented by that flag. This question can be put to those who raise flags they call Syrian but are different from the official Syrian flag. So, this flag has no value when it does not represent the people. Secondly, we will attend this conference as the official delegation and legitimate representatives of the Syrian people. But, whom do they represent? When the conference is over, we return to Syria, we return home to our people. But when the conference is over, whom do they return to five-star hotels? Or to the foreign ministries of the states that they represent – which doesn't include Syria of course - in order to submit their reports? Or do they return to the intelligence services of those countries? So, when we attend this conference, we should know very clearly the positions of some of those sitting at the table – and I say some because the conference format is not clear yet and as such we do not have details as to how the patriotic Syrian opposition will be considered or the other opposition parties in Syria. As for the opposition groups abroad and their flag, we know that we are attending the conference not to negotiate with them, but rather with the states that back them; it will appear as though we are negotiating with the slaves, but essentially we are negotiating with their masters. This is the truth, we shouldn't deceive ourselves.

Al-Manar: Are you, in the Syrian leadership, convinced that these negotiations will be held next month?

President Assad: We expect them to happen, unless they are obstructed by other states. As far as we are concerned in Syria, we have announced a couple of days ago that we agree in principle to attend.

Al-Manar: When you say in principle, it seems that you are considering other options.

President Assad: In principle, we are in favour of the conference as a notion, but there are no details yet. For example, will there be

conditions placed before the conference? If so, these conditions may be unacceptable and we would not attend. So the idea of the conference, of a meeting, in principle is a good one. We will have to wait and see.

Al-Manar: Let's talk, Mr. President, about the conditions put by the Syrian leadership. What are Syria's conditions?

President Assad: Simply put, our only condition is that anything agreed upon in any meeting inside or outside the country, including the conference, is subject to the approval of the Syrian people through a popular referendum. This is the only condition. Anything else doesn't have any value. That is why we are comfortable with going to the conference. We have no complexes. Either side can propose anything, but nothing can be implemented without the approval of the Syrian people. And as long as we are the legitimate representatives of the people, we have nothing to fear.

Al-Manar: Let's be clear, Mr. President. There is a lot of ambiguity in Geneva 1 and Geneva 2 about the transitional period and the role of President Bashar al-Assad in that transitional period. Are you prepared to hand over all your authorities to this transitional government? And how do you understand this ambiguous term?

President Assad: This is what I made clear in the initiative I proposed in January this year. They say they want a transitional government in which the president has no role. In Syria we have a presidential system, where the President is head of the republic and the Prime Minister heads the government. They want a government with broad authorities. The Syrian constitution gives the government full authorities. The president is the commander-in-chief of the Army and Armed Forces and the head of the Supreme Judicial Council. All the other institutions report directly to the government. Changing the authorities of the president is subject to changing the constitution; the

president cannot just relinquish his authorities, he doesn't have the constitutional right. Changing the constitution requires a popular referendum. When they want to propose such issues, they might be discussed in the conference, and when we agree on something – if we agree, we return home and put it to a popular referendum and then move on. But for them to ask for the amendment of the constitution in advance, this cannot be done neither by the president nor by the government.

Al-Manar: Frankly, Mr. President, all the international positions taken against you and all your political opponents said that they don't want a role for al-Assad in Syria's future. This is what the Saudi foreign minister Saud al-Faisal said and this is what the Turks and the Qataris said, and also the Syrian opposition. Will President Assad be nominated for the forthcoming presidential elections in 2014?

President Assad: What I know is that Saud al-Faisal is a specialist in American affairs, I don't know if he knows anything about Syrian affairs. If he wants to learn, that's fine! As to the desires of others, I repeat what I have said earlier: the only desires relevant are those of the Syrian people. With regards to the nomination, some parties have said that it is preferable that the president shouldn't be nominated for the 2014 elections. This issue will be determined closer to the time; it is still too early to discuss this. When the time comes, and I feel, through my meetings and interactions with the Syrian people, that there is a need and public desire for me to nominate myself, I will not hesitate. However, if I feel that the Syrian people do not want me to lead them, then naturally I will not put myself forward. They are wasting their time on such talk.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, you mentioned the Saudi foreign minister Saud al-Faisal. This makes me ask about Syria's relationship with Saudi Arabia, with Qatar, with Turkey, particularly if we take into account that their recent position in the Arab ministerial committee was relatively moderate. They did not directly and publically call for

the ouster of President Assad. Do you feel any change or any support on the part of these countries for a political solution to the Syrian crisis? And is Syria prepared to deal once more with the Arab League, taking into account that the Syrian government asked for an apology from the Arab League?

President Assad: Concerning the Arab states, we see brief changes in their rhetoric but not in their actions. The countries that support the terrorists have not changed; they are still supporting terrorism to the same extent. Turkey also has not made any positive steps. As for Qatar, their role is also the same, the role of the funder – the bank funding the terrorists and supporting them through Turkey. So, overall, no change. As for the Arab League, in Syria we have never pinned our hopes on the Arab League. Even in the past decades, we were barely able to dismantle the mines set for us in the different meetings, whether in the summits or in meetings of the foreign ministers. So in light of this and its recent actions, can we really expect it to play a role? We are open to everybody, we never close our doors. But we should also be realistic and face the truth that they are unable to offer anything, particularly since a significant number of the Arab states are not independent. They receive their orders from the outside. Some of them are sympathetic to us in their hearts, but they cannot act on their feelings because they are not in possession of their decisions. So, no, we do not pin any hopes on the Arab League.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, this leads us to ask: if the Arab environment is as such, and taking into account the developments on the ground and the steadfastness, the Geneva conference and the negotiations, the basic question is: what if the political negotiations fail? What are the consequences of the failure of political negotiations?

President Assad: This is quite possible, because there are states that are obstructing the meeting in principle, and they are going only to

avoid embarrassment. They are opposed to any dialogue whether inside or outside Syria. Even the Russians, in several statements, have dampened expectations from this conference. But we should also be accurate in defining this dialogue, particularly in relation to what is happening on the ground. Most of the factions engaged in talking about what is happening in Syria have no influence on the ground; they don't even have direct relationships with the terrorists. In some instances these terrorists are directly linked with the states that are backing them, in other cases, they are mere gangs paid to carry out terrorist activities. So, the failure of the conference will not significantly change the reality inside Syria, because these states will not stop supporting the terrorists – conference or no conference, and the gangs will not stop their subversive activities. So it has no impact on them.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, the events in Syria are spilling over to neighboring countries. We see what's happening in Iraq, the explosions in Al-Rihaniye in Turkey and also in Lebanon. In Eرسال, Tripoli, Hezbollah taking part in the fighting in Al-Qseir. How does Syria approach the situation in Lebanon, and do you think the Lebanese policy of dissociation is still applied or accepted?

President Assad: Let me pose some questions based on the reality in Syria and in Lebanon about the policy of dissociation in order not to be accused of making a value judgment on whether this policy is right or wrong. Let's start with some simple questions: Has Lebanon been able to prevent Lebanese interference in Syria? Has it been able to prevent the smuggling of terrorists or weapons into Syria or providing a safe haven for them in Lebanon? It hasn't; in fact, everyone knows that Lebanon has contributed negatively to the Syrian crisis. Most recently, has Lebanon been able to protect itself against the consequences of the Syrian crisis, most markedly in Tripoli and the missiles that have been falling over different areas of Beirut or its surroundings? It hasn't. So what kind of dissociation are we talking about? For Lebanon to dissociate itself from the crisis is

one thing, and for the government to dissociate itself is another. When the government dissociates itself from a certain issue that affects the interests of the Lebanese people, it is in fact dissociating itself from the Lebanese citizens. I'm not criticizing the Lebanese government – I'm talking about general principles. I don't want it to be said that I'm criticizing this government. If the Syrian government were to dissociate itself from issues that are of concern to the Syrian people, it would also fail. So in response to your question with regards to Lebanon's policy of dissociation, we don't believe this is realistically possible. When my neighbor's house is on fire, I cannot say that it's none of my business because sooner or later the fire will spread to my house.

Al-Manar: Mr. President, what would you say to the supporters of the axis of resistance? We are celebrating the anniversary of the victory of the resistance and the liberation of south Lebanon, in an atmosphere of promises of victory, which Mr. Hasan Nasrallah has talked about. You are saying with great confidence that you will emerge triumphant from this crisis. What would you say to all this audience? Are we about to reach the end of this dark tunnel?

President Assad: I believe that the greatest victory achieved by the Arab resistance movements in the past years and decades is primarily an intellectual victory. This resistance wouldn't have been able to succeed militarily if they hadn't been able to succeed and stand fast against a campaign aimed at distorting concepts and principles in this region. Before the civil war in Lebanon, some people used to say that Lebanon's strength lies in its weakness; this is similar to saying that a man's intelligence lies in his stupidity, or that honor is maintained through corruption. This is an illogical contradiction. The victories of the resistance at different junctures proved that this concept is not true, and it showed that Lebanon's weakness lies in its weakness and Lebanon's strength lies in its strength. Lebanon's strength is in its resistance and these resistance

fighters you referred to. Today, more than ever before, we are in need of these ideas, of this mind-set, of this steadfastness and of these actions carried out by the resistance fighters. The events in the Arab world during the past years have distorted concepts to the extent that some Arabs have forgotten that the real enemy is still Israel and have instead created internal, sectarian, regional or national enemies. Today we pin our hopes on these resistance fighters to remind the Arab people, through their achievements, that our enemy is still the same. As for my confidence in victory, if we weren't so confident we wouldn't have been able to stand fast or to continue this battle after two years of a global attack. This is not a tripartite attack like the one in 1956; it is in fact a global war waged against Syria and the resistance. We have absolute confidence in our victory, and I assure them that Syria will always remain, even more so than before, supportive of the resistance and resistance fighters everywhere in the Arab world.

Al-Manar: In conclusion, it has been my great honor to conduct this interview with Your Excellency, President Bashar al-Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic. Thank you very much.

President Assad: You are welcome. I would like to congratulate Al-Manar channel, the channel of resistance, on the anniversary of the liberation and to congratulate the Lebanese people and every resistance fighter in Lebanon.

Al-Manar: Thank you.
