

Restructuring the Security Services



Syrians will recall that the rise of the country's security apparatuses and their interference in its political and social life began under Abdel Hamid al-Sarraj, who became head of the apparatuses and later of the Ministry of the Interior in the Syrian region created by the country's 1958–61 unification with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic. This period saw the expansion of the role of intelligence and security apparatuses and marked the start of their influence on society.

In 1963, as a result of the Ba'ath Party's coup, the power of the security services increased to a frightening degree. The political security apparatus that was then established was charged with monitoring the opposition parties and their movements. Abdel Kareem al-Jundi assumed the leadership of the security apparatuses as head of the Regional Security Office of the Ba'ath Party. Ali Haydar assumed responsibility for the Special Forces, a military unit used for intelligence missions. These apparatuses, which were protected by a state of emergency and newly formed state security courts, began to carry out their duties with fewer restrictions, and less accountability and oversight.

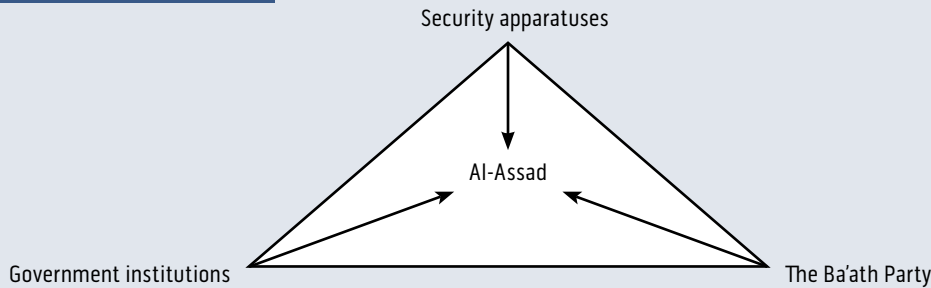
The rise of the "military committee" was clear inside the party apparatus, as it had taken on a critical role in deciding who would receive power and who would be controlled by it. Thus, the rising role of the

military hindered the development of civil institutions and at times paralyzed their work, as witnessed by the consecutive military coups in Syria from 1949 to 1970.

In the wake of his internal coup in 1970, Hafez al-Assad expanded the intelligence apparatuses, and brought their heads into state institutions. Assad established a military and security unit in 1971 called the Defense Companies (Saraya ad-Difa'a), putting their leadership in the hands of his brother, Rifaat al-Assad. The organization was granted a wide remit and began to form a special intelligence branch for itself to protect the regime from potential military coups. At the end of the 1970s, its members numbered more than 10,000. At that time, the Defense Companies were the most feared security units in Syrian society, because of the reputation they had gained for carrying out arrests, torture, and executions.

In 1976, Assad established a new apparatus, under the name of the Presidential Guard, which was led by Adnan Makhoul, with responsibilities limited to ensuring the president's direct personal safety and security. This apparatus grew steadily until it numbered 10,000, including within its structure a paramilitary organization.

Hafez al-Assad relied primarily during his rule on friends trained in military combat. Thus, the state's development was narrowed down to two main factors:

Figure 9.1. Assad's Pyramid State

loyalty being critical, along with a military background, which formed an unspoken yet key aspect of the civil state model that Assad tried to build.

In parallel, Assad built institutional structures with the aim of solidifying the state, with the true authority lurking behind the facade of civil institutions. At the same time, it was necessary to rebuild popular organizations such as the workers' and farmers' union and syndicates. Assad built the Ba'ath Party based on complete loyalty by concurrently expanding the government administration, the army, and the security apparatuses. This was made possible by an increase in the financial capacity of the state as a result of the immense amount of Arab aid offered to Syria after the 1973 war, as well as revenues from oil once it was discovered.

The way Hafez al-Assad built up the state's institutions was reflected in the way he exerted control over them through the drafting and ratifying of the constitution in 1973.¹ The 1973 constitution gave broad powers to the president of the republic. The office of the president also carried with it the role of secretary-general of the Ba'ath Party, and Article 8 made the president the head of state and society. Under the 1973 constitution, the president also serves as chief-of-staff for the army and armed forces according to Article 103, and as the head of the central leadership of the National Progressive Front. The presidency also encompasses legislative powers, including the right to appoint the speaker of the cabinet, his representatives, and his ministers, and also the right to relieve them of their duties (Article 95). The president of the republic may also declare war (Article

100) and states of emergency (Article 101).² This was without a doubt the starting point that allowed Assad to build a pyramid state (see figure 9.1), wherein the president of the state would be the top of the pyramid and its three branches would be, first, the government administration; second, the army and security apparatuses (intelligence); and third, the Ba'ath Party.

These three institutions are centralized in the form of a pyramid, starting with the leadership of the regime and proceeding downward to cities, then villages, and then neighborhoods in various, parallel steps. At the governorate level, the president is represented by the governor, since the fourteen governors of Syria carry out orders directly from the president, controlling and overseeing the work of administrations under the auspices of central government ministries and the public sector in the governorate and surrounding villages and regions. The governor is the executive head of the government administration. He is, by virtue of his position, also the chairman of the municipal council in his governorate. During states of emergency, he is also the leader of the police force and army in his governorate. In parallel with the governor, the Ba'ath Party's branch secretary in the governorate is a representative of the central authority as well. Branch secretaries of the Ba'ath Party in the governorates are carefully chosen and placed by the president as the secretary-general of the party, to whom they report directly. The branches of the party in all fourteen governorates monitor the administrative work and the governmental, educational, university, health, cultural, artistic, and athletic institutions and public-sector institutions through their

representatives or teams present in each institution. The branches' reports are given to the leaders of the branches. The branch secretary may also assume the position of governor if the governorate does not have one. On a third and final level, the party's different activities and administration on all administrative levels are monitored on a daily basis by the four security apparatuses in Syria.

These four security apparatuses are General Intelligence (State Security), which falls under the auspices of the National Security Office, which is nominally attached to the Ba'ath Party leadership; Political Security, which is one of the sections of the Interior Ministry; and Military Intelligence and Air Force Intelligence, which belong nominally to the Ministry of Defense. The National Security Office, under the auspices of the Ba'ath Party's provincial leadership, coordinates these apparatuses. Each has its own duties for local monitoring, with branches in each governorate and central branches in Damascus, with the exception of Air Force Intelligence, which has its own special duties.³

In light of the security competition between these different apparatuses, the role of certain security branches has greatly expanded, even at the expense of the administration of which it is a part. The power of any individual branch is connected to the power of the branch president, which is likely influenced by the strength of his direct relationship with the president. These branches frequently overstep their powers, a result of the legal immunity they receive. Article 16 of the law that created the State Security Administration, issued through Legislative Decree No. 14 on January 15, 1969, protects security employees from judicial process if they were to commit any crimes of torture, in spite of the law that criminalizes torture. The article stipulates that "it is impermissible to pursue any workers in the State Security Administrations for crimes they have committed during the execution of the specified duties they were authorized to carry out, except by virtue of an order to pursue issued by the director." These laws have remained in effect despite the issuance of a new effective constitution issued on March 3, 1973. These laws have contributed to making the security services the ultimate arbiter in

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political, economic, and administrative decisionmaking, and have also contributed to their growth in an unsettling way. The number of employees in the different Syrian security apparatuses has reached 65,000 full-time staff members and hundreds of thousands of part-time ones. Accordingly, there is 1 intelligence service member for every 257 Syrian citizens. As 59.5 percent of the Syrian population is above the age of fifteen years, there is 1 intelligence employee for each 153 citizens, giving Syria one of the highest proportions in the world.⁴

Looking at the numbers to demonstrate the extent of bureaucratic expansion in the different state apparatuses during the Third Republic, the number of employees in the public sector in different governmental administrations in 1965 reached 70,000; however, this number had surpassed 685,000 in 1991,⁵ and 900,000 in 2004 (see figure 9.2). The numbers of those working in the army and different security apparatuses in 1965 were 65,000; in 1991, 530,000; and in 2004, 700,000.⁶

The Ba'ath Party grew according to the policy of "Ba'athification" followed by Assad. Lower-level leaders in the party were appointed by regional leaders "from above" by appointment and not through

Figure 9.2 Bureaucratic Expansion during the Third Republic

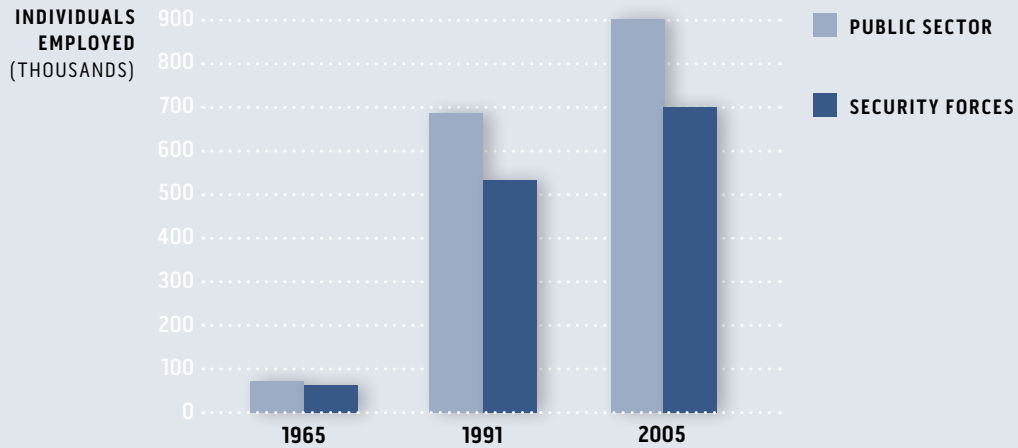
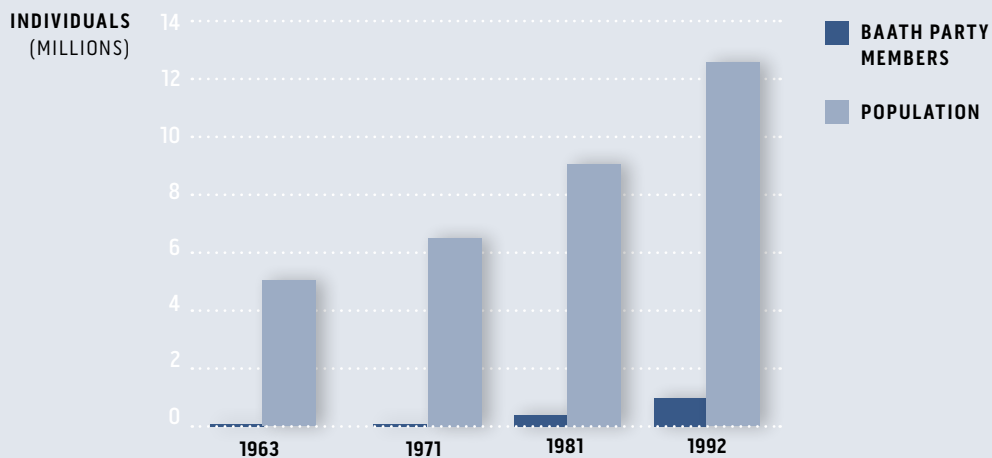


Figure 9.3 Baath Party Membership since 1963



elections by members of the party, as had previously been the case. From the time of his coup, Assad followed a policy of open Ba'ath Party membership, or "Ba'athification," in hopes of turning the party into a tool for maintaining security similar to the Soviet communist model. Several weeks after the coup, he declared that "from this day forth, the Ba'ath Party will not be the party of the elite."⁷ At the time of the 1963 coup, the number of members in the party did not exceed 400. By 1971, however, its numbers

had grown to 65,398 as a result of Assad's policy of opening membership to a wider swath of society (see figure 9.3). Ten years later, in 1981, the number of members in the party had grown to 374,332; and by the middle of 1992, the ranks had leapt to 1,008,243 members.⁸

This policy encouraged citizens to join as members of the Ba'ath Party with benefits and simple perks by opening the doors to them to the apparatuses of power. In addition, they also became a mechanism

for military enlistment, mobilizing and pressing for loyalty to the president, who oversaw with all other security agencies the official government workers who required constant party approval for their activities. With the help of party members and intelligence figures, the eyes, ears, and perceptive antennae reached all neighborhoods in every city, large and small. This oversight extended to remote rural areas, where the Secret Police and General Intelligence could not hope to go and effectively monitor.⁹

The three-sided pyramid of this immense bureaucratic apparatus is what permitted this Orwellian ability (in reference to George Orwell's novel *1984*, describing governmental control over people) to oversee the state, the regime, and the people. In this way, the boundaries for the political opposition and civil society organizations would be greatly limited—if not completely nonexistent. It would be difficult to evade the censorship of the different state apparatuses if even the state itself did not try to penetrate them or turn them into “compliant” or cooperative institutions at a bare minimum.

The following are the most important security apparatuses and their branches in Syria that formed the security system during the rule of both Hafez al-Assad and Bashar al-Assad. The information provided for each branch is for clarification and may not be entirely precise due to the difficulty of verification.

“CIVIL” SECURITY APPARATUSES

The General Intelligence Administration, or “State Security”

The General Intelligence Administration, or “State Security,” was organized under the National Security Office, under the nominal national leadership of the Ba’ath Party, and later became the Homeland Security Office. It is believed that the General Intelligence Administration has eight or nine main branches, the most important of which is Branch No. 251, known as the “Internal Branch,” with independent headquarters in Damascus. It also

has its own investigative institutions. It is believed that it is primarily responsible for the security of Damascus, with all its governmental and civil branches. The other general intelligence branches are mostly close to the general headquarters in Kafr Sousa, including the external branch, the information branch, the administrative branch, the investigative branch, the anti-espionage branch, and the assault branch. In addition to its central organization, the administration has other branches throughout the different governorates and regions of Syria.

The Political Security Division

One of the oldest security apparatuses in Syria, the Political Security Division is more an administrative than a field institution. It is the archive of information on the Syrian regime. This apparatus has a squad in every “directorate.” Its role in intelligence administration is large. Its most important branches deal with hotels, clubs, restaurants, students, employees, parties, and commercial and industry licensing. This apparatus is theoretically part of the Interior Ministry, the duty of which is to ensure that there is no organized political activity that seeks to weaken the regime or Assad’s authority. Its activities include monitoring political and diplomatic figures, foreigners living in Syria, and especially their communication with Syrians. It also monitors all printed and audiovisual materials in the media.

The apparatus has a special branch called the Political Parties Department, whose duties and missions tend toward this type of activity. There is another branch specializing in student affairs called the Student Activities Department, and also one for monitoring and pursuing called the Wanted and Monitoring Department, and a branch that covers Damascus called the City Branch. Though the work of the Political Security Division was focused on organized political forces and possible political activities, in recent years it has begun to monitor and oversee the government. The branch that follows up with the performance of this duty is called the Government Institutions Security Department.

MILITARY SECURITY APPARATUSES

The Military Intelligence Department

The Military Intelligence Department is considered one of the largest intelligence branches, and its role increased greatly during the 1980s and with the beginning of the Syrian revolution. Some of the many branches of the Military Intelligence Department have become relatively independent. Among these branches are the ill-reputed Palestine branch and the area branch, which enjoy a relatively great deal of independence and influence. There is the military investigation branch in addition to the department of security and polling in Lebanon, regarded as being responsible for many of the arrests and abductions in Lebanon before the withdrawal of Syria in 2005.

Air Force Intelligence

Air Force Intelligence was led for an extended period by Mohammed al-Kholi, a general who Hafez al-Assad frequently used to arrest his opponents after he took power in 1970. The mission of Air Force Intelligence was to protect Syria's military weaponry, in addition to the president's airplane, his safety while abroad, and the security of embassies. As the branch authorized itself with expanded powers, it turned into one of the more important administrations under the chiefs of staff of the Syrian army, becoming a real competitor to Military Security in protecting the regime and reinforcing loyalty to it. Its establishment was overseen by Hafez al-Assad during his leadership of airpower.

The responsibilities of Air Force Intelligence expanded to the point where they went beyond military matters. It played an important hand in arresting the regime's civilian opponents and also became very effective and influential in secret foreign missions. In addition to the main headquarters for the Air Force Intelligence Administration, it has five other centers in Damascus, as well as its own Investigations Department. It also has three branches in three governorates, including Aleppo, Homs, and Latakia.

THE ROLE OF THE SECURITY APPARATUSES IN THE SYRIAN REVOLUTION

With the outbreak of protest movements in February and March 2011—following the revolutionary wave that swept a number of Arab countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen—the security apparatuses all played a large role in trying to snuff out the protests and silence the peaceful demonstrators. The security apparatuses arrested and investigated dozens of political opposition members, banning them from traveling. Prisons were filled with thousands of activists who were protesting against the policies of the regime, a great number of whom were subjected to torture, which killed some of them, in addition to a number of erroneous and unfounded arrests.

The security apparatuses deployed their personnel among the demonstrators and abducted a number of the leaders of the popular movement, most of whom were youth. They used batons and tear gas before escalating to increasingly bloody means since the first demonstrations in February 2011.

The “al-Shabiha” phenomenon (the name of the militias loyal to the government that receive weapons from the security apparatuses and are funded by members of the Assad family) spread intense terror among civilians, especially in the areas of Damascus, Homs, Daraa, Hama, Idlib, and Aleppo. Al-Shabiha-backed security apparatuses worked to disperse, and prevent demonstrations and protests. But they went further still, invading places of worship that had become a starting point for the massive demonstrations, which, especially on Fridays, were occasions for dozens or hundreds of deaths to occur at the hands of the security apparatuses and al-Shabiha. Extensive operations were carried out where homes and shops were raided in search of wanted people and seeking to terrorize those providing shelter to the protest movements. A number of girls and children were arrested in this campaign, and thousands of stories emerged about the rape and torture of girls, children, and women. Then the image was published in Daraa of a thirteen-year-old boy who had been killed following extensive torture that included extinguishing

cigarettes on his body and cutting off his genitals. This incited waves of rage on the Syrian street and in the international community, even though the regime that represented Assad denied any responsibility for what had happened.

With the Syrian regime's adoption of the security solution in facing protesters and demonstrators and the spread of the al-Shabiha phenomenon, demonstrators proceeded to form popular committees made up of residents of the region charged with protecting it from criminals and warning demonstrators of any coming security intervention. This prompted the regime to deploy its military forces to face the unarmed people after failing to stop the protest movements against the security apparatuses in Syrian cities.

In reality, this was not the only reason for the army to intervene. The forces from the Fourth Division had gone in to stop massive, enraged demonstrations and protests in Daraa following the arrest of the children who had written antiregime messages on the walls of their schools. The security apparatuses and the governor of Daraa refused to return these children to their families, even after notables from the Daraa tribes intervened. The security apparatuses exhibited the worst of their oppressive tactics in an escalatory, rapid way during the Syrian revolution. This incited popular feelings and prompted a huge reaction from the street.

In addition to its reaction toward the oppressive manner adopted by the Syrian security apparatuses, the Syrian public had long been concealing a large degree of enmity toward these apparatuses that had violated civil rights, making the security branch the worst imaginable place in the minds of Syrians. Several attacks by demonstrators on security centers and checkpoints spread through all of Syria underscored this ill will. It is worth noting the fact that the security apparatuses, especially the military components, are staffed by a large percentage of Alawites, and this added a sectarian element to both sides of the conflict. Sectarian strife intensified as the conflict became military in character, and in the wake of a number of barbaric massacres waged against civilians in regions of Sunni/Alawite strife, especially in western Syria.

The most famous massacres carried out in the past two years for which the security apparatuses and armed forces along with al-Shabiha are accused include:

- ▶ The Sanmin massacre in Daraa on March 25, 2011, after a number of popular demonstrations broke out protesting the actions of political intelligence head Atif Najib. According to Syrian opposition sources, 20 people were killed by live bullets in the massacre, along with dozens of injuries.
- ▶ Rastan and Talbiseh from April 16 to 19, when a number of peaceful demonstrations broke out, and security forces reacted with gunfire that led to the deaths of about 20. This was nearly a month and a half after an army attack in which more than 40 were killed and hundreds were injured.
- ▶ The Friday of Children of Freedom massacre in Hama, on June 3, 2011, when a demonstration took place that was recognized as one of the largest in the Syrian revolution, with about 500,000 participants, according to lower estimates. The demonstration was called the Friday of Children of Freedom in protest of the state's announcement of a curfew in the city. In spite of this large crowd, the security forces insisted on attacking the demonstrators, carrying out a massacre that resulted in an estimated death toll of 70.
- ▶ The Hama Prison massacre, on August 1, 2011, following disobedience by political prisoners after the outbreak of events, when the security apparatuses exterminated dozens of prisoners, according to opposition sources. The number of deaths was estimated at more than fifty, and eyewitnesses claimed that trucks had been transporting the bodies far away from the prison in order to cover up the massacre.
- ▶ The Kansafra massacre in Idlib on December 19, 2011, when, following the attempt by regime soldiers to defect, soldiers killed all of them, leaving 72 dead.
- ▶ The Kafr Ayoud massacre in the Idlib Governorate, one day after the Kansafra massacre, where

the army forces and al-Shabiha attacked the city of Kafr Ayoud, bombarded the city, closed it off, and pursued those families fleeing the bombardment and state of terror, leaving 160 dead while the National Council claimed that the death toll surpassed 200.

- ▶ The Khalidiyeh massacre in Homs on February 3, 2012, where the regime orchestrated a large massacre in cooperation with the army, which was shelling the city with mortars and heavy weapons along with the security apparatuses that had raided the region. According to the opposition, the death toll surpassed 300.
- ▶ The Karam az-Zeitoun massacre in Homs on March 11, 2012, where al-Shabiha carried out a massacre against women and children in Karam az-Zeitoun in Homs following severe shelling of the city by the army. The opposition accuses al-Shabiha and security elements of killing children and women with knives after raping and torturing them. The number of dead is estimated at more than 70, most of whom were women and children. The massacre is regarded as among the worst crimes committed by the Syrian regime in the way it targeted civilians and took on a sectarian aspect. Most of the families were driven out of the region for fear of a similar massacre happening, making some opposition groups describe the massacre as religious cleansing.
- ▶ The Baba Amer attack in Homs in March 2012, the region that had come under the control of the Free Syrian Army and thus came under intense shelling, leading to the destruction of a large part of the area following the shelling and the entrance of the army and security apparatuses. Eyewitnesses speak of neighborhood sweeps that led to the arrest of hundreds and the execution of dozens. The security apparatuses are accused of burning a number of houses and storehouses that had been raided and searched.
- ▶ The Houla massacre in Homs on May 25, 2012, when the army and al-Shabiha carried out a horrifying massacre in the city of Houla, where most victims were women and children. According to the head of the international observer delegation, the number of deaths reached at least 92. This massacre is regarded by many as a dangerous turning point toward the increasingly sectarian nature of the Syrian crisis because it happened in a Sunni city and most of the attackers were Alawite.
- ▶ The Qabeer massacre in June 2012 in the city of Hama, where 100 were killed, many of whom were women and children. It is believed to have had sectarian dimensions.
- ▶ The Tremseh massacre in Hama on July 12, 2012, which was carried out with the participation of the Air Force, which bombarded the region along with artillery shells. The opposition accused the security apparatuses and al-Shabiha of killing dozens of civilians in cold blood with knives, including women and children. The number of dead was estimated at more than 100, while the opposition claims this number was more than 200.
- ▶ The Izaz massacre in the Aleppo countryside on August 15, 2012, when Syrian jets randomly shelled the city, leaving a large number dead, estimated at 80, all of whom were civilians, including a number of women and children. The attack also destroyed large parts of the city.
- ▶ The Darayya massacre in the Damascus countryside on August 26, 2012; the opposition claims that a number of Fourth Division troops had executed and exterminated more than 360 in the city following attacks on their homes. Videos came out depicting the intensity of the massacre and the scale of human losses.
- ▶ The Jebeileh massacre in Deir ez-Zor in October 2012, when the Syrian opposition accused the regime army of gathering dozens of youth accused of cooperating with the Free Army in a certain place, killing them, and burning their bodies.
- ▶ The Halfaya Bakery massacre on December 23, 2012, when the Air Force shelled the city of Halfaya a few days after it came under the control of the Free Syrian Army, targeting the long lines of

civilians in front of the city's bakery, killing more than 90.

- ▶ The Telbeeseh Bakery massacre, one day following the Halfayah massacre, when Syrian planes shelled the line in front of the Telbeeseh bakery and also a field hospital next to the bakery, killing 15.
- ▶ The Jdeidit al-Fadal or Jdeidit al-Artouz massacre in the Damascus countryside on April 21, 2013, which was one of the worst massacres of which the Syrian army, security forces, and al-Shabiha had been accused. It occurred following battles between fighters from the regime army and the Free Syrian army. The security forces and the army-backed al-Shabiha raided the area and killed a large number of families and unarmed civilians. The bodies of hundreds of women, children, and the elderly were witnessed and it was said that a large number of the dead were killed while burying their own dead following the battles. Opposition sources estimated the number of dead at more than 500, prompting intense international condemnation.
- ▶ The Beida Massacre in Tartous on May 3, 2013, a day after the deaths of a number of security forces and al-Shabiha by the Free Syrian Army. The army and al-Shabiha raided the village of Beida, killing around 70, a large number of whom appeared to be women and children. This massacre appeared to have sectarian motivations.
- ▶ The Baniyas massacre on May 6, 2013, in what seemed to be sectarian escalation following the Beida massacre. The security forces and al-Shabiha attacked the neighborhoods of the city of Baniyas, killing dozens of civilians. The opposition estimated there to have been hundreds of deaths. Video clips leaked images of bodies being burned and piled up in one area. The regime saw the operation as targeting terrorists who had been eliminated.

GOALS AND PRINCIPLES FOR REFORMING THE SECURITY APPARATUSES

It is certain that one of the most significant reasons for the rage churning within Syrians that exploded with the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in March 2011 is the current regime's security structure. It is doubtless that the cruel and violent response by the security apparatuses and Syrian army served to increase anger and incite feelings. As mentioned above, the Syrian regime, like any oppressive regime, has used the security apparatus to protect its position and participated in expanding it in a way that has served its interests but is intolerable to the Syrian people.

It was not enough for the security apparatuses to monopolize a significant portion of the Syrian state budget, either in wages, salaries, equipment and training along with other expenses. They went beyond this, infringing in a terrifying way upon the freedoms, rights, and private property of individuals. There was also no system to effectively monitor the performance of the security apparatuses. It was not possible to hold them accountable; rather, the law gave them permission to violate rights and commit crimes.

Syrians went out in the first days of the revolution chanting for the reformation of the regime, and then for its downfall. The most important institutions of this regime are the security apparatuses, which the revolutionaries regard as having constricted them and instilled terror and fear in them over many long years. They also contributed to dividing society, crushing its willpower and hurting its dignity. Thus, for the people who revolted and sustained the harshest security response, their demands cannot be met except through a radical change in the country's political, security, and economic regimes.

The Syrian revolution made its first step toward building a new security institution. It freed the Syrian individual from the chains of deep-seated fear. Syrians began to go out in demonstrations, calling out slogans, speaking to television stations, and working to bring down the system. Syrian experts have begun to study how to break down the security apparatuses

according to a responsible national vision prepared by a specialized professional team and to rebuild them after the regime falls, turning them from regime apparatuses into national institutions.

Security sector reform is based on the concept of providing security for all citizens so that they can enjoy political, economic, and cultural freedoms. This same concept also provides opportunities to create, innovate, and guarantee freedom of thought and expression. The rebuilding of these apparatuses will also create security institutions under civil

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administration that work with transparency and accountability to ensure that the regime defends the sovereignty of Syria and the unity of its land while also preserving its social fabric.

The process of reforming the security sector can be defined as “the transformation of the security regime including all active sides and their roles, responsibilities, and procedures in a way that it is administered and utilized to be more in keeping with peaceful democratic standards and principles for the guiding authority, helping to create a well-performing security apparatus.”¹⁰

The philosophy behind security sector reform is rooted in the concept of human and societal security. The main goal for the security apparatuses and their institutions should be to protect both the security of citizens and their status as citizens, as well as

respecting their rights, protecting the general order, and defending the sovereignty of Syria and the unity of its lands and its diverse social fabric. This idea is in stark contrast to the role of the various security apparatuses mentioned above and their uses during the Assad dynasty.

The new Syrian security apparatuses must be built based on the following principles:¹¹

- ▶ Effectively providing security to all Syrian citizens in a way that they are able to enjoy their political, economic, social, and cultural freedoms, protecting the general order, respecting human rights, and defending the sovereignty of the state and the unity of its lands.
- ▶ Building durable relations among the security apparatuses and the people, and civil society, based on principles of democracy. The armed forces, the security apparatuses, and the police forces should work according to the order of elected civil authorities.
- ▶ Improving the manner in which security and judicial services are provided to Syrian citizens and providing professional training and development opportunities for all those working in the security sector. This training should include the fields of human rights and citizenship, in addition to technical skills such as criminal investigations, crowd management, and the management of different crises. This also includes laying out a clear legal framework to specify the remit of the security apparatuses in accordance with international human rights agreements and standards.
- ▶ Separating the security sector from politics entirely, preventing partisan posturing within this sector. The security sector should concern itself with serving the interests of the people, not any partisan or sectarian interests.
- ▶ The establishment of effective administration, oversight, and accountability systems for the security apparatuses, wherein these oversight bodies are entitled to review documents that disclose the professional and national performance of the security institution according to standards of highly professional performance.

- ▶ Strengthening the culture that the security sector is a basic constituent of the new democratic regime that serves society and its citizens, based on the application of transitional justice, the sovereignty of the law, and strengthening and embodying the idea of citizenship. This culture is a real dividing point between democratic and authoritarian systems.

At the beginning of the building process, the means of legal and societal oversight and accountability must be improved within the Interior Ministry and outside it through parliamentary and judicial oversight. Civil society forces and citizens may also play an important role in strengthening accountability through oversight mechanisms.¹²

The above-mentioned elements are the pillars for security-sector reform and were essential to the success of a democratic transition in several countries. In Spain, for instance, similar steps were gradually taken after the death of the dictator General Francisco Franco in 1975, leading to the transition into power to the Socialist Party after the historic elections of 1982. In South Africa, the “White Papers” provided a comprehensive reform program for national defense in October 1994, after abolishing the racist apartheid system.¹³

Today, the Arab Spring nations, including Syria, are witnessing the same reforms toward democratic transitions following their revolutions. In Tunisia, which ignited the flames of the Arab revolutions, the Interior Ministry presented an official report on democratic security during the transition toward democracy and state building, which discussed the transition of the security sector from being based on repression to serving and responding to new challenges from crime. Libya also worked to reform its security and military sectors, bringing together revolutionary elements in security and military institutions. If these processes failed, then the entire democratic transition process would be likely to fail.¹⁴

CHALLENGES TO SECURITY-SECTOR REFORM

Even though security service abuses are the most important reason for the revolution and reforming them is the most prominent of the demands made by the revolutionaries; and despite the reality that the security-sector status quo is no longer acceptable politically or logically, the task of reforming them may be difficult for Syrians. This is the case for a number of reasons, the most important of which are:

1. The process of reforming the security apparatuses requires several preconditions, the most important of which is creating powerful political and administrative institutions that possess the genuine will to effect serious change with broad popular support to realize this reform. This does not mean only the executive institutions, given that the reform process requires enacting some laws and amending or nullifying others. Thus, there must be a powerful legislative entity along with the executive authority.
2. The absence of a judicial authority that enjoys the confidence of the people is another issue. The current judicial authority is considered a basic part of the regime whose downfall is desired. Thus, the Syrian people will need a long time to be able to rely on the judicial authority and to deal with it in confidence.
3. The absence of a unified military force that gives the state prestige and enforces security is also a serious problem. Currently, there are two combating military forces, one being the regime army and the other being the militias and the generals who defected from the regime army. The possibility of forming a unified national army that the country’s political administration can rely on is illogical today, in addition to the Free Syrian Army in reality being composed of militias and generals and the central link between them is superficial and fragile.

4. The immense number of security apparatus elements is still another issue; some see it as unreasonable for the security apparatuses to maintain this number, needing to be reduced greatly for reasons related to the economy and the state budget, while others feel that letting go dozens, hundreds, or thousands of security personnel would be dangerous for society and could lead to dangerous consequences.
5. The authoritarian mentality of security personnel is deeply entrenched. The staff members of most security apparatus elements that were the nucleus of the future technocratic security apparatus need to be requalified and trained. Any new blood that might be included in the future security system will need professional and advanced training.
6. The collapse of the Syrian economy is a significant impediment to the reform of any apparatus or institution in the state. The Syrian economy has been compromised to the extent that it has nearly collapsed. Two years of international sanctions, along with the collapse of the Syrian currency, have made leading the coming period and carrying out the desired reforms a matter dependent on priorities and available capabilities.
7. With respect to sectarian division, it is unacceptable to deny the fact that the conflict in Syria has taken a dangerous turn that has affected the entire region. It has transformed the conflict from a political to a sectarian one. Sunnis make up the majority of Syrians, demonstrators, and revolutionaries, and most of the defectors from the military are Sunni. Meanwhile, armed Islamist groups proliferate amid a religious discourse ranging from moderate to extreme. Conversely, most of the security forces and military leaders are from the Alawite sect backed by international forces with affiliations such as Iran, Iraq, and Hezbollah in Lebanon. It must be admitted that the sectarian situation has become a basic part of the conflict, sparking fears that the reform process and cleansing will be directed against the Alawites, possibly complicating the process and exacerbating tensions.
8. Security chaos is a serious issue; and security, stability, and reforming institutions are not possible in an environment fraught with this chaos, especially with the proliferation of weapons among militant groups and individuals. The spread of arms is not only considered dangerous for the idea of reforming and building, but is also seen as the biggest danger to stability and social security.

REFORMING THE SECURITY APPARATUSES

The most important steps for rebuilding the security sector are:

- ▶ The rapid intervention of internal security forces and the Free Syrian Army, in cooperation with unarmed local committees in villages and city neighborhoods, immediately after the regime falls to protect people and their property as well as the important centers and institutions of the public sector. These include real estate authorities, banks, civil affairs, heritage, museums, prisons, and mental health institutions.
- ▶ Dissolving all security apparatuses from the former regime, with the exception of the internal security forces (the police) by ministerial resolution from the Interior Ministry in the transitional government; the security headquarters are to be shuttered, with guards to watch over them to protect the documents and property inside.
- ▶ Cleansing the Interior Ministry and its subsidiary apparatuses of officers who committed crimes of extrajudicial torture and murder, disarming them, and pursuing those who have fled. This is to happen through a ministerial committee that includes reputable police and judiciary leaders, representatives from human rights organizations, and the lawyers' syndicate, as long as they have gone through intensive and appropriate training. Files and search documents should also be examined and general security cases should be investigated.
- ▶ Make an audit of senior leaders from the police or those in retirement to determine who among

them are trustworthy, and appoint these police to leadership roles in the security-sector rebuilding process.

- ▶ Establishing a committee issuing from the transitional government to prepare for and oversee the process of reforming the security sector during the transitional period. The committee should comprise national forces specializing in security, the judiciary, syndicate work, and military psychology, working according to the following strategy:
 - Restructuring the Interior Ministry and its administration by a civilian minister, transferring the nonsecurity departments and jobs—such as passport administration, the civil registries, civil defense, and Hajj organizing—to other ministries. The new administrations within it are to be brought up to date, such as the social reform centers, rapid response forces, human rights administration, the societal police administration, and the riot police.
 - Fully reviewing the training systems and methodologies, working to change the study materials to reflect concepts of the security of the people instead of the security of the regime, and to emphasize the police’s duty to serve and not control the community.
 - Changing the standards for promotions within the Interior Ministry and anchoring an integrated system of competency, performance, training, and qualifications, and detail this system in the new police law.
 - Updating the leaders and personnel of the Interior Ministry through what are known as continuing training courses, in accordance with globally recognized training methods with tactics for riots, qualifying them to being able to uphold professional respect for basic human and constitutional rights, and providing them with the equipment needed to protect the public order.
 - Merging Air Force Intelligence with Military Intelligence, with the new body being empowered only to protect the security of military officers, and create a new administration for military intelligence under a different name.
 - Merging political security with the new security apparatus, the responsibility of which will be to protect the security of the Syrian people, and annulling all the political security apparatus’s former duties and establishing a new apparatus for internal intelligence.
 - Establishing a new apparatus for foreign intelligence and joining it with general intelligence; replacing the term “national security” with “homeland security.”
 - Merging some of the fighting elements from the revolution who wish to join the Interior Ministry, for those who meet the conditions necessary for this and qualifying them through the necessary training.
 - Opening the door for work in the security sector for all Syrians, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds or sectarian affiliations.
 - Drafting a new police law to replace the current one to reflect the above-mentioned recommendations.
- The structuring of the security sector is regarded as the most precise way of measuring the legitimacy of the new regime, its national credibility, and its commitment to true democracy. In conclusion, the following are necessary:
- ▶ Establishing effective outside oversight mechanisms of the security sector, such as the attorney general’s office, Parliament (the Council of Representatives), the human rights council, and civil society organizations, enabling the internal oversight sector to carry out its professional authority according to the objective standards in the new police law.
 - ▶ Working to draft a freedom-of-information law, organizing the procedure of publishing parliamentary circulars to ensure the public oversight of government officials, and to guarantee the

professionalism of officers and ensure that the Interior Ministry's budget is soundly spent.

- ▶ Separating the security sector from politics, preventing it from practicing politics and partisan posturing, except under conditions that guarantee its independence and integrity.

In the end, the reintegration programs will facilitate the transition of society from conflict to a natural state of growth. The nominal goal of the reintegration program will be to support former fighters in their aspiration to assimilate into civil society socially, economically, and in work. This calls for study of likely sources of funding for this project, in addition to studying and specifying the factions targeted by the project and the elements that may hinder it. These factions include people with mid- to high-level positions in fighting groups. Their expectations for the results of the program may be higher than what is actually possible.

In the context of the integration process, several of the fighters who suffer from health problems that need treatment must be cared for. For the integration program to be successful, it must include health care services. Also, all physical and mental health problems must be dealt with after fighting has stopped. This matter remains a priority during the period of the program's establishment.

The process of letting go personnel from the security sector and army (both the regime and the Free Army) may cause additional changes in the work market and the chance of renewed violence and tension. Allowing the economy to remain as it was during the war, with a weak state, may negatively affect the postconflict period, the sovereignty of the law, and the democratic process. A society in upheaval and the weak or less-than-capable state cannot meet the requirements of fighters or help them settle in a society where they are becoming more and more powerful. Thus, and for the sake of the success of the reintegration program, work must be done to meet the needs of the future society immediately.

Cleansing and Auditing Committees

As mentioned above, the Syrian Expert House has called for the formation of a committee to cleanse the security apparatuses that are part of the Interior Ministry. These committees, however, are charged with dangerous, sensitive, and essential national work, and thus several important factors must be taken into consideration:

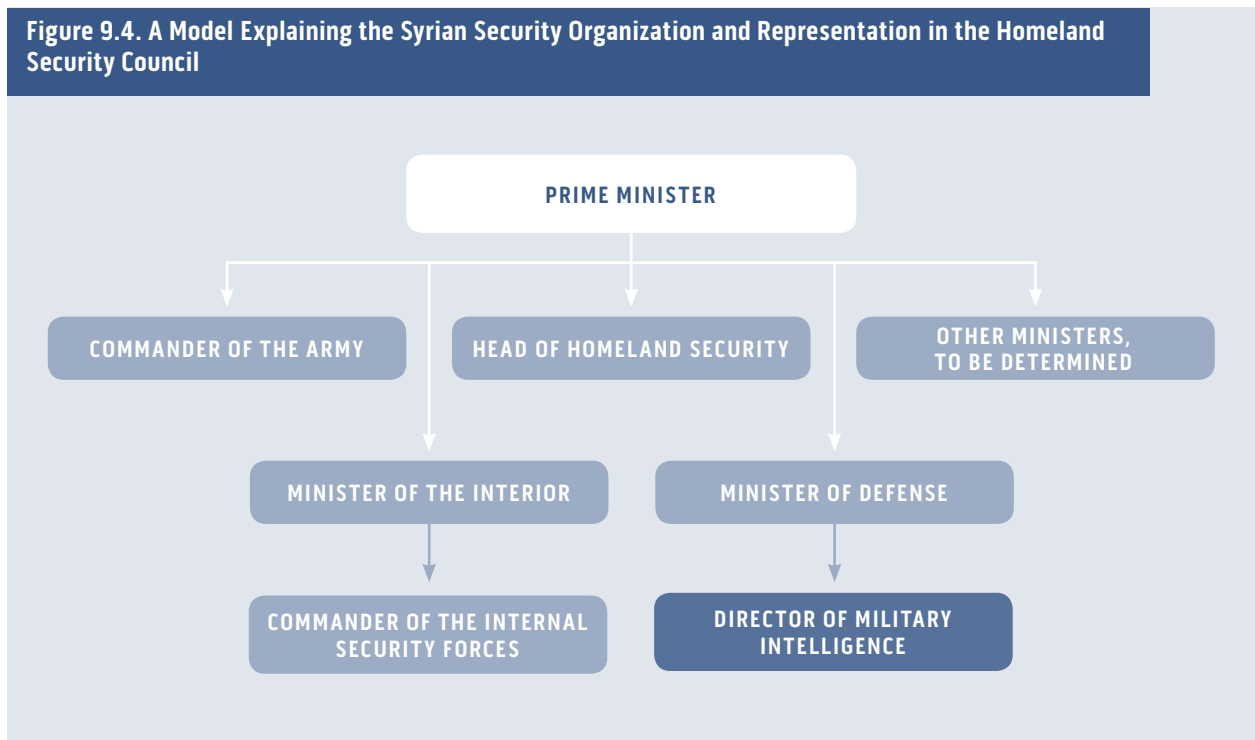
1. The committees should be civil and or generally civil in character.
2. The members of these committees shall be subject to intensive, high-level training.
3. The members of the committees shall be chosen according to clear and transparent standards. It is proposed that the security-sector Committee for Cleansing and Auditing include a member from the Transitional Justice Authority, a member from the Supreme Judiciary Council, and a member from the current legislative council (the Constituent Council).
4. The cleansing procedures should be carried out according to a carefully devised plan. The committee shall sort workers in the security apparatuses into several groups to benefit from them as much as possible in various sectors.

The Homeland Security Council

The Homeland Security Council is the higher council responsible for protecting the security of the Syrian state from any outside attack or crisis that might affect national security—be it military, security, economic, health related, or the result of natural disasters.

The Homeland Security Council is headed by the prime minister (the executive authority pyramid) and includes the interior minister, the defense minister, the leader of the army, and the head of the homeland security apparatus, along with ministers directly concerned with emergency crises (see figure 9.4). It is a civil, independent apparatus in and of itself, the authority of which is not subject to the Defense or Interior ministries. It is directly related to the president of the executive authority (the head of the Homeland Security Council), in what is considered

Figure 9.4. A Model Explaining the Syrian Security Organization and Representation in the Homeland Security Council



the directorate of the internal security forces that are administratively under the jurisdiction of the interior minister.

The Homeland Security Apparatus

This Homeland Security Apparatus specializes in gathering information related to the security and interests of Syria, analyzing this information, and presenting it in reports to concerned apparatuses. It is a civil institution that shall not be directed by a military figure during the performance of his military service. No person shall be appointed with political affiliations as director of this institution, except if he or she has resigned from his or her political party.

“Homeland Security Apparatus” serves as the title for the foreign intelligence apparatus concerned with gathering information and data to be analyzed in order to protect the homeland from any danger to the country’s security and interests. The Information Department (the internal intelligence department) is part of the directorate of internal security, and administratively a part of the Interior Ministry.

The Directorate of Internal Security

The Directorate of Internal Security is normally directed by a member of the military, who is chosen through appointment by law (after gaining the confidence of Parliament). A special law is organized by the security forces showing the standards for the selection of this director, for his or her powers and term of service, and for all the directors of administrations under this directorate. This directorate may administratively be a part of either the Interior Ministry or the Homeland Security Directorate. The basic directorate responsible for preserving the security of the state is entrusted with a number of basic missions, categorized into several fields.

In the field of administrative policing:

1. Providing order and establishing security.
2. Ensuring general calm.
3. Protecting people and property.
4. Protecting liberties within the framework of the law.
5. Taking care to apply the laws and regulations entrusted in it.

In the field of law enforcement:

1. Performing law enforcement duties.
2. Carrying out judicial fines and orders.
3. Carrying out judgments and judicial memoranda.

In other fields:

1. Supporting the general authorities in the performance of their duties.
2. The guards chosen by the authorities specializing in administrations and general institutions.
3. Guards and administration of prisons as necessary.
4. Guards of diplomatic missions in Syria.

The Directorate of the Internal Security Forces is made up of several departments (see figure 9.5). The first, General Administration, is in charge of administrative work, particularly that having to do with the senior administration of the Internal Security Forces and representing the direct reports of the general director of the Internal Security Forces as well as providing counsel to the director and producing research and studies.

The Central Administration manages the Internal Security Forces structures, overseeing the technical divisions, securing the necessities for operations, and managing accounts.

The Social Services Administration has several missions: to manage public relations, issuing statements, publications, and other services related to the administration of other athletic, social, and intellectual clubs and services.

The Regional Gendarmerie has personnel who are charged with protecting security outside governorate centers (cities, villages, and suburbs).

The Roving or Mobile Forces unit is responsible for all mobile forces and preserving the security of external areas or streets.

The Central Police units are responsible for the security of major cities (governorate centers).

The Judicial Police are responsible for criminal proceedings across all Syria's lands, such as investigating crimes.

The Diplomatic Police protect embassies and foreign diplomats in Syria.

The Police Discipline Department is an entity concerned with receiving complaints from citizens related to members of the Internal Security Forces. It is the department responsible for monitoring the performance of different police administrations and organizes the law of their powers.

The Internal Security Institutes are responsible for managing the Internal Security Forces institutes, faculties, and training centers.

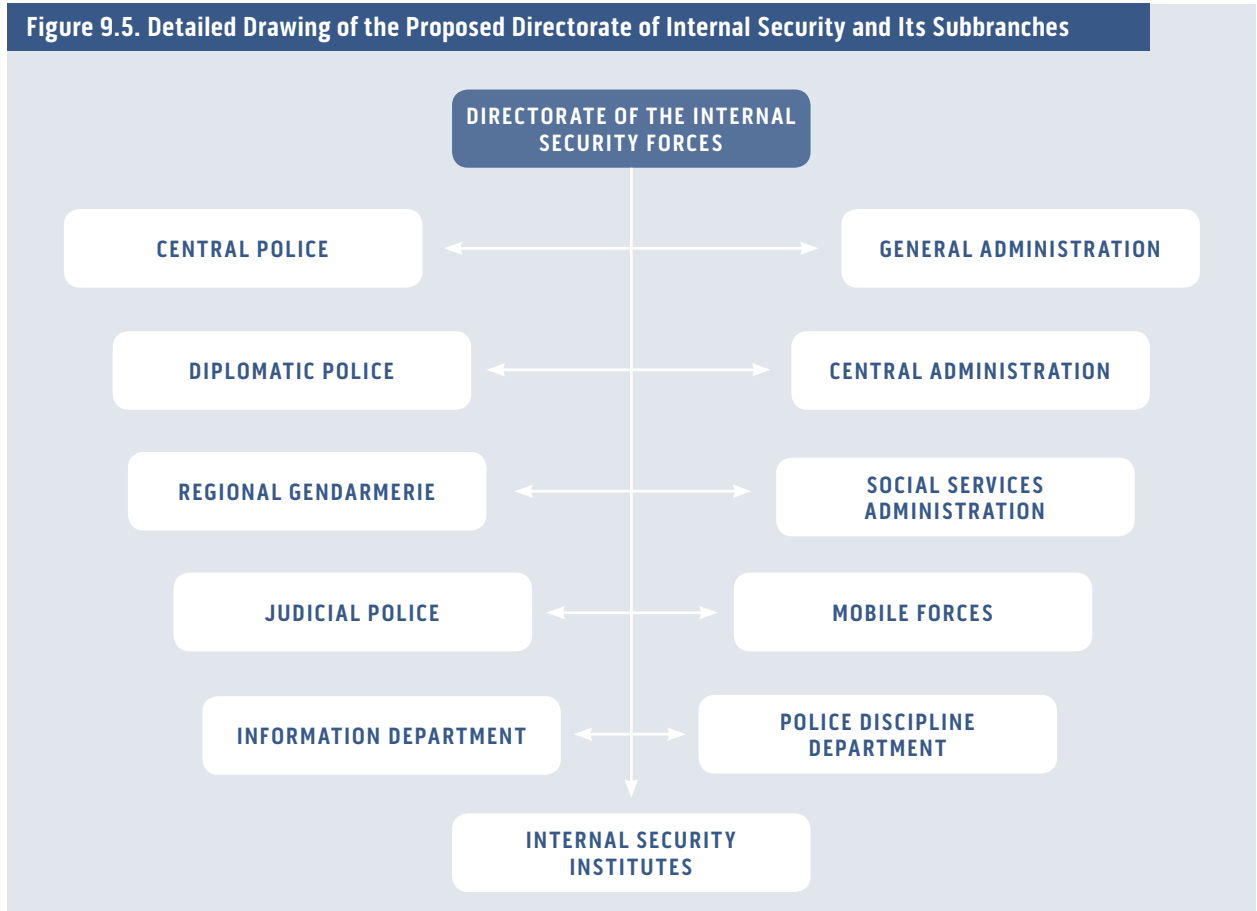
The Information Department receives complaints from citizens; it issues notifications and searches for possible information about any accident or crime that has occurred or may occur or any event that may threaten homeland security, citizens, and public safety; and it carries out analyses and provides findings from investigations.

TIMEFRAME

The Syrian Expert House believes that the process of restructuring Syria's security institutions, even if only at a bare minimum, must begin as soon possible, starting in the liberated regions. This will help to restore security and protect both public and private property from harm. It is likely that this role will be played by individual revolutionary civilians and fighters with the backing of the Free Syrian Army brigades and defectors from the army and security apparatuses.

To ensure that security is achieved and to prevent the country from descending into chaos, the Syrian Expert House feels that it is necessary to coordinate with armed brigades working on the ground to guarantee the good behavior of their members. This would avoid compromising the security of citizens and demonstrate commitment to the unity of the Syrian state by submitting to the authority of the state and to any national transitional government formed after the regime's fall. Thus, these brigades can serve to protect the peace and security of people and defend

Figure 9.5. Detailed Drawing of the Proposed Directorate of Internal Security and Its Subbranches



the country from any outside aggression. They should then be incorporated into the rebuilt Syrian Army and the Internal Security Forces following their qualification for these tasks.

As soon as the transition process begins and a transitional government is formed, serious work must begin to reform and perhaps build up the nation's security structure. The transitional government must immediately take several specific, calculated steps based on recommendations presented by the Syrian opposition and Syrian and international political, strategic, and security research centers. These include dissolving a number of security apparatuses and their branches spread across Syria, and combining others.

During the transitional period, a clear vision for the security sector must be set forth and ratified by the elected Constituent Assembly. The Syrian Expert House sees it necessary to build a powerful security system represented by the Homeland Security

Council, led by the executive authority pyramid, and joined by a number of ministers and security and military leaders. The Syrian Expert House also believes it is necessary to restructure the Internal Security Forces.

In addition, the government, starting from its first days, must work toward the formation of Cleansing and Auditing Committees, doubling down on diplomatic efforts to ensure the training and requalifying of Syrian security cadres at the first opportunity. This requires the transitional government and the elected constituent assembly to draft several laws that help to establish security in the state later on, appointing an executive authority to execute the necessary reform as quickly as possible.

A plan with precise standards and specified clauses must be set forth in coordination with political forces and armed revolutionary battalions to disarm civilians and to do away with any weapons outside the authority of the state. This process should include

bringing battalion members into the army and Internal Security Forces if they so desire.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See: Abdel Aziz Shehada al-Mansour, *The Water Issue in Syrian Politics Toward Turkey* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2000); and *The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic in 1973* (Damascus: Touri Institution, 2002).
- 2 Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic in 1973. For more on this, see: Kamal al-Ghaly, *Principles of Constitutional Law and Political Systems* (Damascus: Al-Arouba Printing House, 1987).
- 3 For more on this, see Middle East Watch Committee, ed., *Syria Unmasked: The Suppression of Human Rights by the Regime* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991).
- 4 See: Alan George, *Syria: Neither Bread Nor Freedom* (London: Zed Books, 2003), 2–3.
- 5 Volker Prethes, *The Political Economy of Syria under Assad* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1995), 141–45.
- 6 This is based on estimated and calculations that relied on personal observation. There are no confirmed official or unofficial numbers on this subject.
- 7 George, *Syria*, 71.
- 8 Ibid., 10. Syrian Ministry of the Interior Records show that the population of Syria at the beginning of 2004 had reached close to 20 million. In 2000, the population was 16.32 million, and in 1997 it was 15.1 million. Surveys carried out in 1994 showed that the population of Syria was 13,78 million; however, in the statistics gathered in 1981, the number was 9 million. In 1970, it was 6.3 million; while in 1960, according to official statistics, it was 4.57 million.
- 9 Ibid., 87.
- 10 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Economic Cooperation and Growth Guide*, Committee for Development Aid for Reforming the Security Sector, Support for Security and Justice (Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2007), 20.
- 11 See the Security Council, the report on the reform of the security sector No. 1/14, Shabbak, 2007.
- 12 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Economic Cooperation and Growth Guide*, 112–18.
- 13 Aris Sisran, *Military Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 27.
- 14 Omar Ashour, *Reforming the Security Sector in Egypt: The Dilemmas and Challenges* (Doha: Brookings Doha Center–Stanford University Project on Arab Transitions, 2012), 4.

Recommendations

The Syrian Expert House recommends several steps to gradually achieve security, on one hand, and to rebuild and reform the security apparatuses, on the other.

First: Before the Fall of the Regime

The Syrian Expert House recommends that the following steps be taken immediately, without waiting for the end of the Syrian crisis and the creation of a national transitional government:

- 1 Coordinating with the leaders of armed revolutionary battalions and leadership of the Free Syrian Army to guarantee the compliance of their armed elements and the commitment of their leaders to the framework of the Syrian state represented by civilian authority.
- 2 Working to prepare training and qualification programs for armed elements, whether they are defecting military personnel or civilians, as a preliminary step toward requalifying and training all elements of the security apparatuses and armed forces following the end of the Syrian crisis.
- 3 Preparing studies and research related to the reform of the security apparatuses; dissolving parts of them and integrating others; restructuring and building the security apparatuses and systems in Syria; and preparing committees for cleansing and auditing and instituting standards for choosing their members, mechanisms of work, and powers, along with development and training programs.

Second: The Transitional Period

The Syrian Expert House recommends that the government carry out the following steps at the start of the transitional period:

- 1 Issuing decisions on the dissolution of a number of security apparatuses and integrating some of them, which must have been well studied before the beginning of the transitional period by Syrian research centers.
- 2 Forming committees for cleansing and auditing with specified and studied standards.
- 3 Working to disarm civilians in coordination with armed battalions and leaders from the Free Syrian Army.
- 4 Devising a plan to integrate militants who so desire to work under the authority of the state in the Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces.
- 5 Begin the execution of intensive qualification and training programs in a number of allied and friendly states.
- 6 Presenting a project for rebuilding and structuring the security apparatuses by the elected Constituent Assembly for it to ratify.
- 7 The Syrian Expert House recommends considering all plans and programs included in this report related to the reformation and rebuilding of the security apparatuses and working to implement them, using the standards specified by the Syrian Expert House.