

## **Syria - “The regime’s strategy is to destroy the social fabric of the liberated areas”**

Wednesday 23 July 2014, by [NAISSE Ghayath](#) (Date first published: 22 July 2014).

**Ghayath Naisse, a Syrian socialist in the Revolutionary Left Current, compares life in government and rebel held zones.**

In many ways life is much easier for people in regime controlled areas of Syria than in rebel areas.

For one thing, they are not constantly under attack. And Bashar al-Assad’s regime tries very hard to ensure that basic demands are met.

Inflation and unemployment are still high, but people have bread, water and their basic needs catered for.

The regime’s aim is to polarise society so that people think they would be worse off under rebel control.

At the same time regime controlled areas have very tight security. There are checkpoints in every neighbourhood and people’s mobility is very restricted.

These areas have become very overcrowded. Any political action against the regime is attacked.

This isn’t just about demonstrations—individual activists have been kidnapped, arrested and tortured.

The regime doesn’t just rely on militias like Hizbollah from Lebanon. It has its own militias, called the National Defence Army.

The regime recruited these groups of thugs, but they ran out of its control.

They operate a reign of terror. Sometimes they continuously fire weapons in the street through the night to terrorise the population.

They run their own investigations and interrogations, and demand a fee from the local population for “protection”.

When the Syrian army occupies areas it is these militias who carry out the massacres and rapes.

But the reality is that the situation is really hard in rebel areas. Years of daily bombing by the regime have left the majority of these areas destroyed.

Scattered

With the exception of Homs and Aleppo most of the areas still under rebel control are smaller cities and towns scattered across a vast area.

As the revolution has become militarised we have seen the rise of the number of Islamist groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra, connected to Al Qaida, and Isis.

These groups have mobilised against revolutionary activists, secular groupings and at the same time against the local populations.

So both the regime and these groups smash the local councils and the popular committees—the Local Coordinating Committees—that made the revolution.

The groups target them, kidnapping and killing activists. Then they occupy areas and try and run them themselves.

Despite this there are still popular political mobilisations, though they are much fewer and smaller than they were.

People mobilise against the regime's atrocities and there is a lot of opposition to the Islamist groups—especially when they kidnap local people.

But destruction has also created space for a new layer of warlords to develop. They have their own parallel economy involving smuggling, and the arms trade.

That means that even in the rebel areas any political activity needs to be protected. Activists cannot just move around.

So for example Isis started shooting at demonstrators in the city of Raqqa.

The regime's strategy is to destroy the social fabric of the liberated areas. They want to force people to flee and not to be able to organise in these areas.

This is the environment that allows groups such as Isis to grow and recruit.

When you are under siege the idea of a caliphate becomes very attractive.

But in cities such as Homs and Aleppo it's different. If Isis was to go to the big urban working class areas the people would throw them out.

**Ghayath Naisse**

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**P.S.**

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