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Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

CASE ANALYSIS

Deadly Neighbors: Jdaidet al-Fadl—A Paradigm for Sectarian Genocide in the Damascus Region

Contemporary Syrian Studies Unit – ACRPS | June 2013

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Series: Case Analysis

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Slums with a Mixed Sectarian Character	2
The Growth of Alawite-majority Slums	3
The Dhiyabia Massacre: The First Major Massacre in Greater Damascus	7
The Massacre in Jdaidet al-Fadl: Sectarian Violence Gone Mad	9
The Course of the Massacre	10
The Victims of the Massacre	11
Conclusion	13

Introduction

The Syrian crisis has over the last two years witnessed a series of bloody massacres in which hundreds of people have been killed in the most barbaric manner. Most Syrian and international human rights groups hold regime forces or associated militias (the *shabiha*) responsible for the murder and summary execution of non-combatant civilians. These actions have aimed to deter and punish Syrians for taking part in the revolution. Large-scale massacres first occurred in regions of Syria where there is a sectarian mix (e.g., Homs and Hama). The number of victims has been rising throughout the crisis, reaching a peak with the Houla massacre in May 2012 when, according to rights organizations, 108 people were killed.¹ Such events soon spread to other areas of Syria, including the capital Damascus, where the focus became centered in its peripheral slums that include neighborhoods with an Alawite majority contiguous to those with a Sunni majority.

Massacres have followed a specific pattern. Mostly, they start with an army-imposed siege on the targeted neighborhoods, cutting the electricity and water supplies, as well as communications, to coincide with the onset of shelling. Following this, security forces cleanse the area of any popular resistance prior to the final and most savage phase during which local, civilian militias are allowed to enter the neighborhood and begin the task of liquidation—slaughtering any men, women, and children they encounter, in addition to acts of theft, looting, and rape. Operations conclude with efforts to destroy evidence of the crime by setting fire to entire neighborhoods. While these atrocities are taking place, over a few hours or a number of days, the army and security forces ensure complete cover and provide a network of protection for the militias by preventing anyone from entering or leaving the neighborhoods until the task is completed.

The massacre in Jdaidet al-Fadl, a suburb on the edge of Damascus, stands out in the series of massacres that Syria has witnessed during the revolution because of the number of victims, the extended time-frame of the extermination, and its proximity to the capital (i.e., outside the traditional zones of sectarian friction in the country's center and west). Because there are neighborhoods divided by sectarian lines, housing Sunnites or Alawites, in a number of areas of Greater Damascus, the massacre of

¹ "Horrorific Details of the Massacre," 2013.

Jdaidet al-Fadl may become a familiar pattern for violence against civilians in the future, given escalating sectarian tensions and the regime's insistence on punishing the civilian incubator for the revolution in preparation to finishing it off.

Slums with a Mixed Sectarian Character

In Syria, slums were identified and defined at an early stage. A 1978 study undertaken by the UN expert at the Syrian State Planning Commission, Rushdi Butrous, states that slums are "inhabited areas, illegally occupied, that grew up on the fringes of cities and close to main highways. They were built with the cheapest construction materials, in violation of any sound planning principles and lack every kind of infrastructural provision."² According to the *Syria Vision 2025* report, the first core of slums was formed in parallel with the beginning of the Palestinian refugee problem at the end of the 1940s, followed by the displacement of Syrians from the Golan Heights subsequent to its occupation by Israel in 1967. Sites of temporary housing were gradually transformed into permanent agglomerations whose growth accelerated due to the rapid increase in their populations. The expansion and spread of these districts eventually contributed to the intensive and multifaceted waves of migration from the countryside to the city. The main drive behind this migration was the process of mobilizing society, particularly during what was known as the "stage of comprehensive expanded development mobilization" from 1970-1980.³

The growth of slums was compounded over the following years by periods of drought that gradually worsened over the years. Many farmers and Bedouins found themselves on the verge of starvation, and were forced to migrate to the cities in search of subsistence and a better standard of living. In addition, the Syrian economy, with its

² Arab Republic of Syria, State Planning Commission, *Comprehensive Regional Development Report 1978*, prepared by Rushdi Butrous, UN expert, and the expert and advisory group of the State Planning Commission as cited by Mohammed Jamal Barout (lead author), *Syria Vision 2025*, vol. I, (Damascus: UNDP and State Planning Commission, 2008), p. 177.

³ For further definitions of this term and its contexts and uses, see: Barout, *Syria Vision 2025*, cited above.

semi-rentier character, entered a structural crisis, forcing decision-makers to “recognize slums as a fact” and provide them with services.⁴

Although the spread of slums on the edges of urban centers is not something unique to Syria, since it occurs in all developing countries, the social and sectarian makeup of some of these peripheral neighborhoods has given them a particularly Syrian character, as has become evident during the current crisis. Slums with a predominantly Sunni population have formed the main areas of opposition to the regime, while Alawite neighborhoods have provided the regime with its gangs and main supporting reserve of men for the *shabiha*.

The Growth of Alawite–majority Slums

The dynamics of internal migration from rural and desert regions to the cities governed what went on in the slums in comparison to organized neighborhoods subject to regulated urban planning standards. The noticeable formation of slums went hand-in-hand with the development of the Syrian manufacturing industry in the 1950s. Wide scale rural migration increased because incomes from agricultural work were insufficient to make ends meet due to drought, leading people to seek better-paid work in factories. However, with the expansion of the role of the state and its spread into the various aspects of social and economic life, including the increase of the military, civilian, and government apparatuses and administrative centralization, slums spread on a large scale. This excessive spread took place in the first half of the 1980s, and again during the drought in the middle of the same decade. The expansion of the size of military units in Damascus also had an effect on the rural population of all religious confessions, all of which witnessed successive waves of migration, comprising thousands of families who arrived from various historically marginalized regions in search of work and a better life in the big cities. However, the confrontation between the Syrian regime and the Muslim Brotherhood during the late 1970s and early 1980s added a political dimension to the phenomenon. The expansion of the army and the security apparatus⁵ led to the creation of slums to house these recruits and their

⁴ For details of the salient features of this period, see: Ibid., Chapter 3, “From excessive expansion to crisis containment: The end of the stage of comprehensive expanded development mobilization—the path of ‘the ostrich’ (1980-1986),” pp. 178-82

⁵ The majority of professional members in these groups became Alawites following the Brotherhood’s uprising, which formed an existential threat to the regime at the time.

families on the outskirts of Damascus, where the security and military installations were based. Many family members were absorbed into other state bodies, particularly in the teaching profession, the media, and nursing, where the workforce was predominantly female and Alawite; it was common to find the wives of Alawite officers in the security services and army holding posts as teachers or nurses in the capital's schools and hospitals. Some feel that the regime exploited the wave of drought that hit Syria at that time by encouraging peasant farmers, particularly those from the coast, to enlist in the army and security apparatus and take jobs in the government administration, which had steadily become a mainstay of the regime and one of the reasons for its survival.⁶ Equally, the militarization of society contributed to the expansion of slums as they absorbed large numbers of new recruits to units of the Syrian Army in the context of what was known as the Program for Strategic Balance, which led to the army's growth, especially in the south.

Some estimates from before the revolution put the number of people working for the various Syrian security bodies at 65,000 full-timers and hundreds of thousands of part-timers. The following figures demonstrate the extent of bureaucratic expansion in the various agencies of the Syrian state since the Baath Party's advent to power: in 1965, the number of civil servants in government departments stood at 70,000; this number exceeded 685,000 in 1991, and was more than 900,000 in 2004. Those working for the army and the various security bodies numbered 65,000 in 1965, had risen to 530,000 in 1991, and topped 700,000 in 2004.⁷

Expansion of the civil service, army, and security apparatus coincided with increased state financial capacity as a result of major Arab aid granted to Syria after the 1973 war, and, subsequently, continued growth in returns to state coffers as a result of oil discoveries. The fixed oil income during the 1990s granted the Syrian regime relative independence from the earlier Arab aid that had funded a large portion of the development process and the building of state institutions, especially the military and security apparatus.

A large part of the manpower of these bodies came from the same Alawite community as the president. They headed for Damascus and settled there via two avenues. First, in

⁶ Prethes, *The Political Economy*, pp. 135-7.

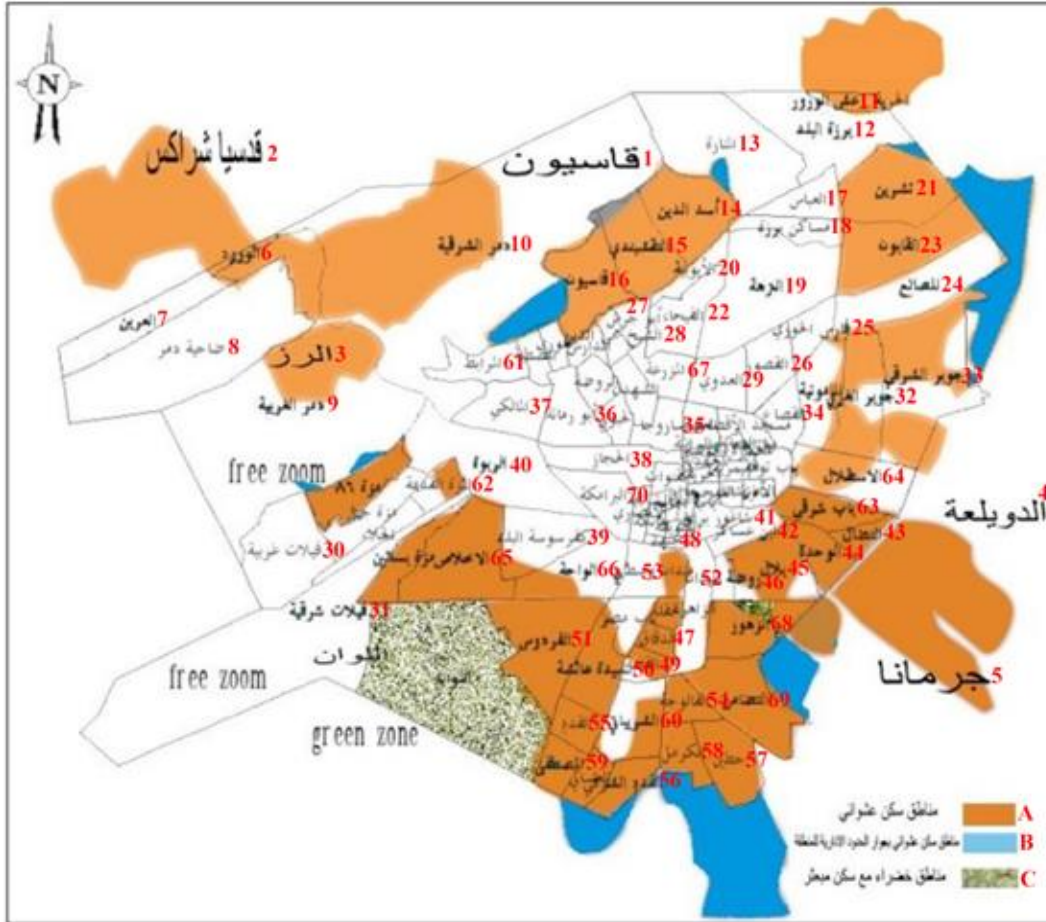
⁷ Ziyadeh, *Power and Intelligence in Syria*, p.68.

army housing provided for officers in the security services and army, constructed either by the Military Housing Establishment or the Military Construction Corporation (*Mutaa*), both of which answer to the Ministry of Defense. This housing was built on state-owned land on the outskirts of Damascus. A representative selection includes the suburbs of Tishrin and al-Assad to the east of the capital, and Masakin al-Haras and al-Sumeria (after Sumer, the son of Rifaat al-Assad) to the west. Secondly, poor Alawites, both civilians and those in the military, established slums on common or state-owned land around the capital, particularly on the barren hills overlooking it—including well-known neighborhoods such as Esh al-Warwar near the Barza district towards the east of the capital and Mezzeh 86 towards the west. For many reasons, slums in general—including those with an Alawite-majority population—have formed a ring stretching around most of the capital from the northeast to the southwest. In the southeast, the slums that are predominantly Shiite, Set Zaynab and Hajira, have formed a counterpart to other agglomerations during the revolution.

The main reason for the dominance of a specific religious sect in these neighborhoods either goes back to their inability to assimilate within a Sunni environment, despite the inhabitants of some neighboring Sunni districts being from backgrounds of similar socio-economic status (poor rural workers and farmers), or potentially the outcome of the Sunni community's negative attitude toward absorbing them as a result of various cultural and social factors. On the fringes of Greater Damascus, according to the *Syria Vision 2025* report, there are 17 slums. Five of these have an Alawite majority due to high residential density: Esh al-Warwar and Tishrin in the capital's north and Mezzeh 86 and Mezzeh Khazan, al-Sumeriya, and al-Ward in the west (see Map below).

Damascus showing distribution of slums⁸

مخطط لمدينة دمشق يوضح تَوَزُّع العشوائيات^٧



- 1) Qasioun; 2) Qudsaya Sharakes; 3) Al-Roz; 4) Doueillaa; 5) Jermana; 6:Al-Wouroud 7) Al-Areen;
- 8:Dummar Suburb 9) Western Dummer; 10) Eastern Dummar; 11) Esh al-Warwar; 12) Burza al-Balad;
- 13) Al-Manarah; 14) Asadeddin; 15) Al-Naqeshbandi; 16) -Qasioun; 17) Al-Abbas; 18) Housings of Burza;
- 19) Al-Nuzha; 20) Al-Ayyoubiya; 21) Teshreen; 22) Al-Fayhaa; 23) Qaboun; 24) Al-Masaneh; 25) Fares al-Khouri;
- 26) Al-Qusour; 27) Abu Jarash; 28) Al-Sheikh; 29) Al-Adawi; 30) Villat Gharbiyeh; 31) Villat Sharqiyeh;
- 32) Western Jobar; 33) Eastern Jobar; 34) Al-Qassaa; 35) Saroujah; 36) Abou Rummana; 37) Al-Maliki;
- 38) Al-Hijaz; 39) Kfarsousah al-Balad; 40) Al-Rabwah; 41) Al-Shaghour; 42) Ibn Asakir; 43) Al-Nidal;
- 44) Al-Wehdah; 45) Bilal; 46) Rawdah; 47) Al-Dakkak; 48) Al-Mujtahid; 49) Al-Qaa; 50) Al-Sayyida A'isha;
- 51) Al-Fardos; 52) Al-Midan; 53) Al-Midan al-Wastani; 54) Al-Falouja; 55) Al-Qadam; 56) Eastern Qadam;
- 57) Hoteen; 58) Al-Carmel; 59) Al-Mustapaha; 60) Al-Shraybani; 61) Al-Marabet; 62) Old Mazzah;
- 63) Bab Sharqi; 64) Al-Istiqlal; 65) Al-Ikhlās; 66) Al-Waha; 67) Al-Mazra'a; 68) Alzuhour; 69) -Al-Tadamon-;
- 70) Al-Baramkeh.

⁸ Barout, *Vision Syria 2025*, p. 260.

Key:

- A) Slums.
- B) Slums on the administrative district border.
- C) Green zone with scattered housing.

Because the regime does not produce statistics using sectarian categories, there are no approximate figures concerning the numbers of Alawites residing in the capital and its rural hinterland. Nevertheless, there might be hundreds of thousands of Alawites in the capital, taking into account the size of the army and security bodies and their proportion in the government administration, which far exceeds their proportion of the population as a whole. According a very important 1940 study on the Alawites of Syria by the French academic Jacques Weulersse, *Le Pays des Alaouites*, Sunnis and Alawites did not live together in any Syrian town of over 200 people. In 1945, only 400 Alawites were recorded to be living in the capital.⁹

The Dhiyabia Massacre: The First Major Massacre in Greater Damascus

The holy shrines of the Prophet's family members hold a central place in Shiite religion, so at the end of January 2013 when the media reported that a mortar shell had hit the mausoleum of Sayyida Zaynab, daughter of Ali ibn Abi Talib, while fighting raged around it, causing damage to one of its minarets, some Shiite fighters entrusted with defending the site became enraged. Set Zaynab is a slum in the southeast of Damascus whose original residents were mostly Sunnis displaced from the Golan Heights, but many of those residents moved to adjacent neighborhoods for financial reasons, as many Iraqi and Lebanese Shiites were purchasing property for investment in the area. This was due to its importance as a place of pilgrimage and general tourist site for Shiites over the past 20 years after the government adopted a policy of promoting religious tourism in the 1980s, though this was never formally announced.

Set Zaynab is ringed by a group of Sunni slums, the main ones being al-Dhiyabia, al-Husseinia, Beit Sahm, Aqraba, Yalda, al-Bahdalia, and Babilaa. During 2012, there were

⁹ Landis, "Do the Massacres Portend Ethnic Cleansing?," 2013.

reports that a number of these communities had been victim to armed attacks that locals attributed to Shiite fighters, who were loyal to the regime, from Set Zaynab. This culminated with the al-Dhiyabia massacre in September 2012, where 107 people including women and children were killed.

Al-Dhiyabia is a Sunni-majority slum situated to the south of Set Zaynab on the road between Damascus and al-Suwayda. Most of its 60,000 inhabitants are displaced persons from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. According to various reports, the victims were kidnapped or detained at the checkpoints surrounding the area; they were then tortured and summarily executed before their corpses were mutilated and dumped in the fields around the adjacent al-Bahdalia district.¹⁰ The Revolutionary Military Council in Rif Damascus accused "army and security forces along with sectarian militias from the Set Zaynab area of committing the massacre," and stated that "many women, children and adolescents were taken to the checkpoints after being arrested inside their homes. They were then brutally tortured before their bodies were dumped in the fields close to these checkpoints."¹¹ Despite areas of rural Damascus, and even some on the fringes of the city itself, having witnessed sectarian-based mass killings, as occurred in Muadamiat al-Sham, al-Qaboun, and Barzeh al-Balad, the Dhiyabia massacre was the first on such a scale in the Rif Damascus region. It led to increased sectarian tensions in areas that had not suffered sectarian disturbances in the past.

At the end of 2012, Hezbollah sent groups of fighters claiming this was to defend the mausoleum of Sayyida Zaynab. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah admitted this in a speech he gave at the end of April 2013.¹² The regime exploited the issue to attract more sympathy from Shiites by portraying the conflict in Syria as one aiming to destroy the Shia and their religious symbols.

Since that time, sectarian tensions have been steadily rising in and around Damascus. In parts of the capital, there have been tit-for-tat kidnappings and killings between Alawite and Shiite neighborhoods, on the one hand, and Sunni neighborhoods on the other, as happened, for example, between the Alawite residents of Esh al-Warwar and the Sunni residents of Barzeh al-Balad. The massacre at Jdaidet al-Fadl marked an

¹⁰ Al-Alawani, "The Dhiyabia Massacre".

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Nasrallah: Syria's friends will not allow it to fall," 2013.

unprecedented escalation and a turning point in the violence perpetrated by militias associated with the regime against residents of neighboring districts in Damascus with a different sectarian makeup.

The Massacre in Jdaidet al-Fadl: Sectarian Violence Gone Mad

Jdaidet al-Fadl is situated on the western edge of Greater Damascus along the highway to Quneitra. It is some two kilometers from Muadamiyat al-Sham, and is bordered by Jdaidet al-Balad to the south, and Jdaidet Artouz and Qatana to the west. Its population is an estimated 65,000, most of whom are descended from the Arab al-Fadl clan from the Quneitra region. In addition, more than 5,000 families have taken refuge in the neighborhood, fleeing from Darayya, Muadamiyat al-Sham, and other stricken areas, such as the settlements in and around Damascus and its countryside, known as *Rif Dimashq*, such as al-Hajr, Al-Aswad, and Tadaamun, where there are people displaced from the Golan Heights.

To the north of the Mawali neighborhood is the base of Company 100, an artillery unit, which is considered the most savage in Greater Damascus because of its shelling various regions of the countryside surrounding the capital, including Muadamiyat al-Sham, Darayya, Artouz, Jdaideh al-Balad, Khan al-Shaykh, Drousha, and al-Sbeineh, in addition to Jdaidet al-Fadl. The neighborhood is bounded to the east by the Saraya al-Siraa housing complex—an army housing estate with an Alawite majority; residents of the complex, from the army, police, and *shabiha*, have carried out systematic attacks and assaults against the people of the area in general, and against the people of Jdaidet Artouz in particular. Jdaidet al-Fadl also borders the Youssef al-Azama housing complex—another Alawite-majority army housing estate whose residential buildings have been turned into sniper positions for regime forces. Large numbers of local residents have been killed by these snipers, both before and during the siege and massacre. There have also been daily humiliations orchestrated by the residents of the housing complexes against local residents, as well as kidnappings for ransom, car thefts, and the looting of shops.

Unlike neighboring districts, such as Qatana, al-Muadimiya, and Darayya, Jdaidet al-Fadl did not have a reputation for taking part in the Syrian revolution during any of its phases, peaceful or armed. Revolutionary action in the town remained very limited due to the influence of tribal notables in the area, some of whom are close to the regime.

As a result, when the revolution was still in its non-violent stage, the revolutionary youth of Jdaidet al-Fadl joined demonstrations taking place in neighboring towns. Armed actions did impinge, however, as a result of the repeated incursions into al-Muadamiya, Darayya, and Jdaidet Artouz. Until recently, because of its relative calm in comparison to neighboring communities, Jdaidet al-Fadl served as a place of refuge for many families fleeing nearby hotspots.

The Course of the Massacre¹³

On April 15, 2013, there were clashes between brigades of the armed Syrian opposition and regime forces at one of the checkpoints surrounding the community of Jdaidet al-Fadl. According to the opposition, these forces were abusing local residents in an abhorrent manner. The following day, a large number of army units completely surrounded the Mawali neighborhood, and prevented any coming and going. These units, as usual for such operations, also cut off electricity, severed communications with the area, and deployed snipers to tighten the siege. In detail, regime forces to the south completely closed the Damascus-Quneitra highway between al-Sumeria and Khan al-Shaykh, and massed tanks along the road. To the east, snipers were posted on the buildings next to the neighborhood in the Youssef al-Azama housing complex. To the west, routes out of the neighborhood, linking the fields of Artouz with those of Jdaidet al-Fadl, were sealed by more than a dozen snipers. The northern route was the harshest due to the presence of Battalion 100 facilities. At about 4pm on Monday, April 15, 2013, the battalion launched the first shells into the neighborhood. Shelling was at times intensive and at others intermittent. In the first days of the bombardment, the town's only bakery was targeted along with the entire infrastructure in order to starve and punish the population.

After two days of bombardment under siege, the regime began to invade and storm the neighborhood from the north under heavy artillery cover from Battalion 100 and Battalion 135, which was centered on top of Kawkab Hill in Artouz. The tanks amassed on the highway also entered the neighborhood at the same time as the infantry troops. The regime's forces followed a systematic policy by destroying one street and any signs of life in it before moving on to another. The targeted and random shelling to soften up the town killed dozens and hit civilian homes indiscriminately.

¹³ This account draws on the testimony of the massacre's survivors as documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights and commendably presented to the team preparing this analysis.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights observed that, until day three of the massacre, there was no sign of weapons or clashes within the area. In fact, all those present in the neighborhood up to that point were civilians. On the evening of the third day, following the spread of reports that at least 45 local residents had died—slaughtered, burned to death, and bombed—and after successive appeals for help from residents, a few brigades of the armed opposition reached the environs of the suburb and clashed with regime forces. These clashes continued until day five—April 19, 2013—by which point regime forces had been through most parts of the neighborhood. Armed opposition fighters then attempted to break through from the south and open a passage in order to evacuate the wounded and save civilians. They were unsuccessful in this. Friday prayers were not held in any of the town’s four mosques that day. Regime forces also executed the imam of al-Fadl Mosque, Sheikh Omar al-Saadi, along with the women and children in his family, inside their home. The armed opposition brigades withdrew at dawn on Saturday, day six, when their ammunition ran out.

With the battle over, the stench of death filled the place. Corpses were strewn across the ground; the wounded were still bleeding. Then, the regime’s forces began their summary executions. On day seven, dozens of the regime’s troops occupied and slept in people’s homes, their owners having either been killed or fled; looting and theft began using army and police vehicles, followed by the arson of whatever could not be stolen. Around midday, the roads were opened and the regime’s forces asked the remaining civilians to leave, “the area having been cleansed of terrorists.” The flight of local residents continued all that day as they feared a resumption of the slaughter. Hundreds of eyewitnesses saw the bodies of women and children lying in the streets, many of which had been mutilated and burnt.

The Victims of the Massacre

The massacre continued for a number of days, during which the Syrian Network for Human Rights—working under the siege and the communications blackout—documented the killing of 191 individuals. Other estimates put this number far higher in light of the difficulty in identifying many of the bodies. The dead included 17 members of the armed opposition and 174 civilians, including nine children and eight women whose names and pictures have been recorded. The number of nameless,

unphotographed victims is not known, and there are dozens unaccounted for and more than 120 detained.¹⁴

On this basis, other sources with less stringent documentation standards than the Syrian Network for Human Rights estimate the number of victims of the massacre in Jdaidet al-Fadl at 500 people, and the number of the detained and missing at around 400. According to the testimony of one survivor,

The popular committees [militias loyal to the regime] entered the neighborhood and carried out house-to-house searches. They made all the residents come outside and made the women form a long line. The militiamen searched them, touching them all over their bodies. This made their male family members object, some of whom were killed. Others were blackmailed and made to pay what they had to protect their women. One man paid 10,000 lira, another paid 100,000 lira, another handed over his mobile phone. There was also the women's gold, TV sets, cars and other portable and valuable things. What couldn't be carried was smashed and burned. After that the militiamen gathered up about 30 men and made them shout slogans in support of Bashar al-Assad while threatening them with a meat cleaver.¹⁵

Shamil al-Julani, activist and correspondent for the Shaam News Network told al-Arabiya, "What's happening is a crime against humanity. Between the Sikka and Mustawsaf areas of Jdaidet al-Fadl more than 100 bodies were seen. The regime forces wiped out whole families and finished off the wounded. They burned their bodies and dumped them in the streets."¹⁶

The regime forces wasted no time in whisking away the corpses of the dead in the Sikka area and the Martyr's Graveyard, where they exhumed bodies in an effort on their part to conceal the number of the dead and prevent documentation of the magnitude of the crime. There were then celebrations devoid of all humanity with the regime's militia driving around the streets of the town shouting support for Bashar al-Assad.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Jdaidet al-Fadl: A mass grave," 2013.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Conclusion

The Jdaidet al-Fadl massacre is the latest in a series of massacres perpetrated by the regime's forces and its associated, subordinate local militias. The horrific nature of the massacre reveals just how depraved the regime has become in its punishment of the towns and cities that have risen up against it when it unleashes unrestrained militias against non-violent civilians. After Jdaidet al-Fadl, the areas on the edges of residential areas and slums inhabited by the *shabiha* have been struck with fear. Such suburbs in the east and west of Greater Damascus appear to be awaiting death and collective punishment of the most cruel and violent kind.

The crisis-ridden regime, in its attempt to find ways out of the crisis and save itself from the crimes perpetrated by the security apparatus, has in one way or another used the fomenting of sectarian strife to make it appear as if the problem is between different religious communities and not between a tyrannical regime and its people. From day one of the revolution, the regime's media has harped on about Salafi emirates, Salafi emirs, and al-Qaeda. When that plan failed, the regime leaked video clips and films showing security officers—with coastal highlands' accents—insulting symbols and individuals, and other images showing regime troops burning the Quran and shouting slogans invoking sectarian discourse. This campaign by the official media has helped to first politically polarize supporters and opponents of the regime, and then divide them using a sectarian slant, which reflected to varying degrees the makeup of Syrian society and the divisions within it. It should be pointed out that the extent of sectarian polarization has remained under control as a result of the firm stance of the revolutionary forces against sectarian thinking.

Now, after the commission of massacres tantamount to ethnic cleansing on a sectarian basis as happened in Jdaidet al-Fadl, matters may deteriorate in a manner that the already precarious mechanisms for social control in many areas will be unable to stop. This suggests that the massacre in Jdaidet al-Fadl might become the paradigm for sectarian genocide in parts of Syria. It would be implemented by criminal militias mobilized on a sectarian basis. Recent events in Banyas are a sign of the trend, and recent massacres may be the chosen recipe for this, particularly in areas with a sectarian mix, whether in the center or west of the country, or on the fringes of the major towns and cities, Damascus among them.

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