

Revisiting Syria, 20 - 25 June 2013

al-Qusayr,
Saturday, 22nd of June 2013

!!! Please visit the following links to watch the accompanying video reports and recorded witness accounts !!!

Video 1 : <http://youtu.be/hk9kl3QjDLc>

Video 2 : <http://youtu.be/ArCBzOYoT7E>

Video 3 : <http://youtu.be/T3JDz10ZAGo>

Video 4 : <http://youtu.be/14wUA5AsBNY>

Video 5 : <http://youtu.be/sR7qzu6pl20>



Al-Qusayr is a small city in Homs governorate. It is located about 35 kilometres from the provincial capital Homs and 15 kilometres from the Lebanese border overlooking a mountainous area.

Although its a small city, it has great strategic importance because of its proximity to Lebanon and it provides a direct gateway to the provincial capital of Homs, the coastal area around Tartous and also to Damascus countryside.

The small city of al-Qusayr grabbed the world's headline news in the last couple of weeks because of the ferocious battle which took place between the extremist militants and the so called Free Syrian army supported by the international anti-Syrian coalition on the one hand and the Syrian National Army on the other hand. The battle for the liberation of al-Qusayr began on the 19th of May and ended on the 5th of June 2013 resulting in a decisive victory for the Syrian National Army.

Because of its strategic importance, the extremist militants designed a plan to capture al-Qusayr and to use the city as a launching pad for further attacks and terrorist actions. Their operations started in February 2012 and were build around the same tactics used before in other parts of Syria, especially in the city of Dara'a near the Jordanian border. Just as Dara'a, the city of al-Qusayr is near to a border, in this case the Lebanese border, which made it an easy target to infiltrate. The master plan was to have some rough elements infiltrating the city and making trouble after the Friday prayers as to provoke the security services and police. The extremist elements hoped for a heavy handed intervention of the security services and by doing so provoking violence and conflict between the civilian population and the security services. The local administration, well aware of these attempts, didn't trap into this provocation and stayed as much as possible on the sidelines. When this provocation failed, some terrorists with a foreign nationality intervened and opened fire from sniper positions killing an innocent civilian hoping that the inhabitants would put the blame on the security services. This started a vicious cycle of violence and while making use of the confusion more terrorists infiltrated the city and began a campaign of sectarian cleansing in which they forced all Christians, Shi'a Muslims and Alawites out of the city or to be killed. When these families fled the city their houses were immediately taken by the terrorists and their belongings looted. From this moment on they started to terrorise the remaining inhabitants who decided to stay and to attack the local police- and security services gradually taking over full control of al-Qusayr.

It should be mentioned that some families refused to flee al-Qusayr and decided to stay whatever the cost and by doing so risking their lives and that of their relatives. One person became a local hero and a symbol for his actions representing others who made similar attempts to defend their streets and neighbourhoods till the last moment sacrificing their lives for the defence of the homeland. His name was Hanna (Arabic for John). Hanna was a Christian from al-Qusayr. When the extremist militants took over the city he refused to give in to the threats and organised with his family, friends and neighbours a self-defence brigade to protect his street and neighbourhood against the sectarian cleansing carried out by the terrorists. For more than four months he managed to defend the neighbourhood although fully surrounded by the extremists and even after the killing of his father and brother he continued his courageous defence efforts. When after four months Hanna himself was killed he became a symbol for the inhabitants of the city and the slogan "We are all Hanna" became a household name along the population of al-Qusayr used not only to honour Hanna but also to honour and remember all the other martyrs who gave their lives in the same circumstances to defend al-Qusayr and its inhabitants against the

barbaric acts of the terrorists. There was not only one Hanna but many Hanna's who sacrificed their lives for the noble goal of freedom and against extremism.

Once the terrorists took over al-Qusayr, they began implementing their diabolic plan of destroying every possible symbol of peaceful coexistence between the inhabitants of al-Qusayr. They destroyed the local church, mosques and other important places where Shi'a Muslims, Alawites or Christians used to come together.

Furthermore, these terrorist elements began to dig tunnels under all public buildings and placed explosives beneath them to blow them up. Especially those building which provided a service to the community as the public hospital that had such an excellent reputation that it even was used extensively by the Lebanese living over the border, but also schools, electricity- and water supply infrastructure were destroyed. The purpose of these destructions was to erase every form of peaceful cohabitation between the citizens of al-Qusayr and make living conditions so harsh as to force the Christian, Shi'a and Alawite community out of the city or to be killed. It should also be mentioned that in the sick and twisted minds of these extremists the public buildings were not there to provide services to the population but symbolised the authority of the Syrian government. According to their vision the public hospital providing healthcare for the whole population of al-Qusayr and surroundings was "the hospital of Bashar al-Assad". The schools providing education for the children of al-Qusayr were in analogy "the schools of Bashar al-Assad", etc... . In this twisted logic every public building or infrastructure providing services to the population had to be destroyed bringing living standards in al-Qusayr back to the stone ages.

On the 19th of May 2013, the Syrian National Army began a massive military operation to liberate al-Qusayr. This resulted in a decisive victory and the Syrian army regained full control of al Qusayr on June 5th. The terrorists, faced with an absolute defeat, began implementing the tactic of the scorched earth. While retreating, they carried out the destruction of the whole city by blowing up the remaining private houses or using them as hiding places to open fire on the advancing Syrian army. At the end of the battle of al-Qusayr, not a single house or building in the centre of the city was spared by the destructive actions of the terrorists. Not a single house or building in al-Qusayr was or demolished or heavily damaged. These destructions didn't really have a military tactical purpose but was carried out by these extremist militants for the sake of the destruction itself. To make a return by the inhabitants of al-Qusayr to their homes or what is left of it as difficult as possible and also to let the Syrian authorities face the tremendous task of rebuilding the demolished city from scratch.

The Western media were quick to accuse the Syrian army for the destruction of the city as a result of its military operations but all witness reports from the local inhabitants who were still trapped in the city during the battle point to the coalition of Jabhat al-Nusra fighters and the so called Free Syrian Army as the culprits and perpetrators of the destruction of al-Qusayr. Moreover, it would make no sense at all for the Syrian National Army to destroy the city and this for several reasons. First of all, the Syrian National Army is the army for every Syrian independent of their sectarian background. The ultimate goal of liberating al-Qusayr was to make it possible for all its citizens to return to their homes in safety to rebuild and continue their lives. Destruction of the city would make this goal much more difficult as everything has to be rebuild and, most importantly, the local population put their trust in the Syrian army as defenders of the homeland. It would be totally illogical and contradictionary to think that the Syrian army, being the liberators of al-Qusayr and defenders of the homeland, providing security to its citizens, would have an interest in destroying al-Qusayr. To underline the positive role of the Syrian army and authorities it must be stressed that the same day the Syrian National Army liberated al-Qusayr the

governor of Homs province came to the city to support the citizens and make an account of the destructions perpetrated by the terrorists. Forthwith a full inventory was made of priority repairs to be done to provide the citizens as soon as possible with all the basic amenities and utilities to facilitate the return to their houses. Just days after the liberation of al-Qusayr workshops were already implementing these repairs restoring water and electricity to some parts of the city, removing debris and clearing streets. Because of the scale of the destruction new power-lines and pipes for the distribution of electricity and water have to be rebuild all over the city but engineering units and mobile workshops are working day and night to gradually restore these services in every neighbourhood of al-Qusayr.

Another element of the battle of al-Qusayr which was highlighted in the Western media was the role played by the Hezbollah resistance movement in the liberation of the city. The view put forward by these Western media outlets was that without the direct involvement of Hezbollah the Syrian army would not have succeeded or would not have been able to liberate al-Qusayr and defeat the terrorists and extremists active in the city.

As an answer to these faulty statements made to influence and disinform the general public it should be underlined that the role of Hezbollah was a supportive role while the liberation of al-Qusayr and the accompanying military operations where fully carried out by the Syrian National Army according to a tactical plan designed and implemented by the command of the Syrian army itself. The main reason of the involvement of Hezbollah was to secure the border areas cutting off supply routes to the extremist militants and by securing the border areas also making sure that the conflict would not spill over to the villages on the Lebanese side of the border. Another aspect, generally not known by the Western public, is that a significant number of Lebanese citizens are living on the Syrian side of the border. These Lebanese civilians are extremely vulnerable as the Lebanese army cannot provide them with security because they are living on the Syrian side of the border and the Syrian army was fully engaged in liberating al-Qusayr and providing security to its own citizens. Because of this precarious situation, the Hezbollah movement had no choice as to intervene and secure the borders to avoid a massacre by the retreating extremists.

Kris Janssen
Belgium

The Church





The City Centre



























The Terrorist Dens







The National Hospital













Tunnels dug by the terrorists









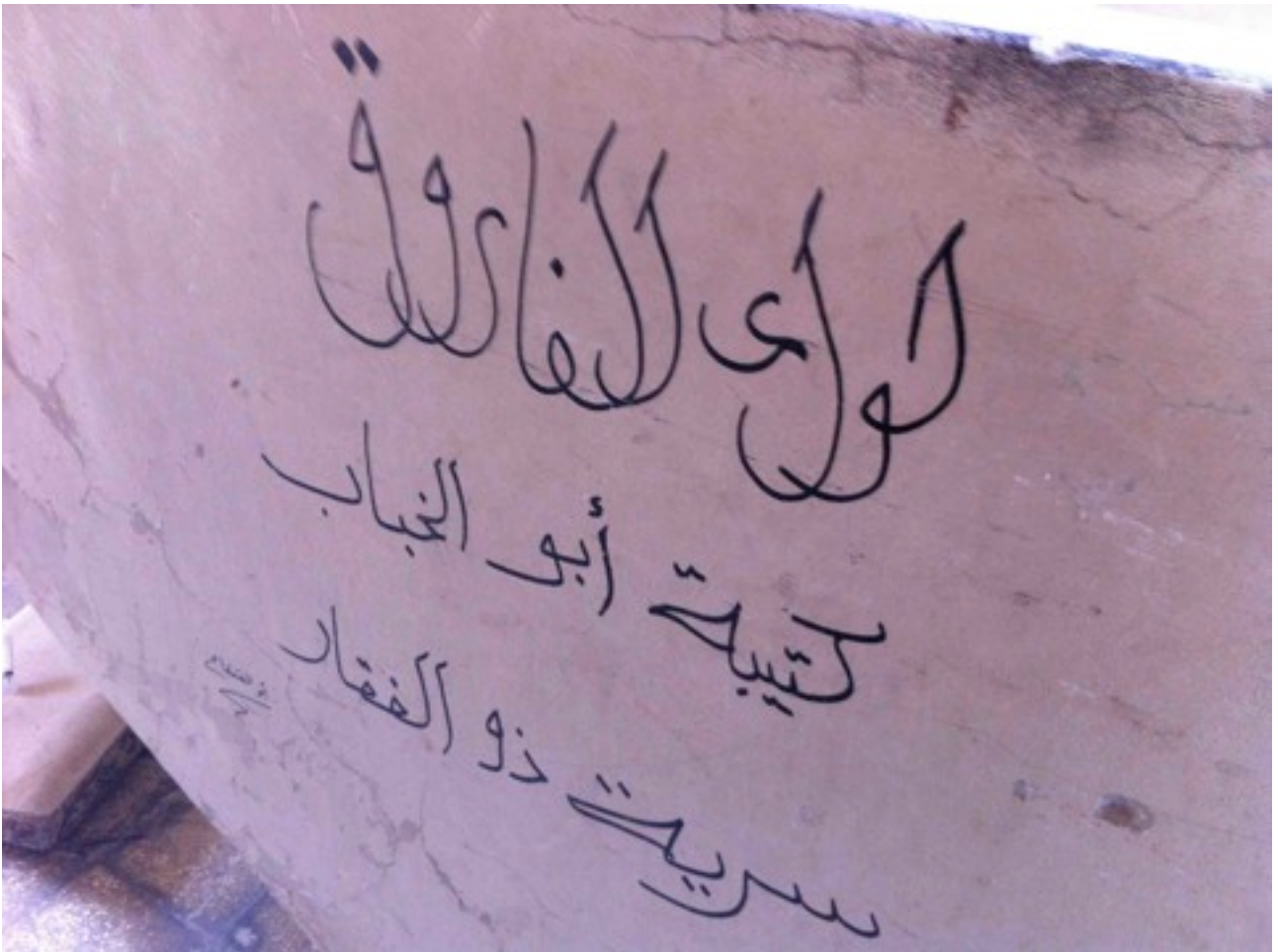








Graffiti by the terrorists



Hideouts of the terrorists



