

APPENDIX

Syrian Activists on Israel's Role in the Crisis in Syria

For the purpose of this study, the Institute for National Security Studies distributed a questionnaire in mid-2015 (directly and via intermediaries) to members of the Syrian opposition associated with different groups, most of whom operate outside of Syria, primarily in Turkey, and with some operating in Syria itself. The questionnaires included general questions on the crisis in Syria, the preferred ways to solve it, and the role that the individuals and their organizations seek to play, but they primarily addressed specific questions regarding Israel's role in the Syrian context. As agreed on with the respondents, full names are not disclosed, with identities given only through initials. The questionnaires do not constitute a representative sample of the Syrian activists. They do, however, offer a qualitative glimpse into individual perceptions, whose importance should be assessed in light of the personal profile, organizational affiliation, position, and influence of each respondent. By its very nature, the questionnaire suffers from significant limitations, as it presents the perceptions of only eleven activists who were willing to respond and whose answers were presumably influenced by the knowledge that they would be publicized. At the same time, the responses to the questionnaire are also suggestive of prevalent moods among Syrian activists – particularly those associated with moderate pragmatic groups – and demonstrate the points of agreement, the divisions, and the marked gaps in their approaches to relations with Israel.

Personal Background

Y. S., a 45 year-old Sunni who lives in Quneitra, is a military electrical engineer by training and a former officer in the Syrian army. He deserted

Assad's army in the course of the war and joined the Southern Front's Sayf ash-Sham Brigade, which has 4,700 fighters and is deployed in Damascus, Rif Dimashq, al-Zabadani, Quneitra, and Daraa. According to Y. S., the group espouses an Islamic ideology but operates on behalf of all Syrians, regardless of religious or sectarian affiliation. The group's goal is both to rebuild Syria as a unified state that accommodates all its ethnic groups, and to enable the Syrian people to elect its representatives democratically.

B. H. is a Sunni who was born in Aleppo in 1973, studied law at the University of Beirut, and before the war managed a company that specialized in planning events, exhibitions, and conventions. He holds a liberal worldview and is a member of the political committee of the Revolutionary Union for the Future of Syria, an organization that, by his account, has approximately 10,000 members and seeks to promote an ideology of openness and freedom among the Syrian people. During the revolution, he has been active in the military, social, political, and medical realms. He lives in Istanbul, where he is responsible for the foreign relations of the Istanbul office of the Revolutionary Union, which aims to increase coordination among the forces of the revolution.

E. A. A., born in 1976, is a Sunni from the city of al-Qamishli. One of the leaders of the Shammar tribe, he has a high school education and works independently. He believes that the liberal worldview holds the ideal solution for Syria. He is an active member of the Revolutionary Union for the Future of Syria in Amman, a founding member of the national association of Syria and the national bloc, and is currently serving as director of the political bureau of the Syrian Tribal Council. He aspires to help Syria find its place in the new world order as a democratic society that respects principles of human rights.

A. M. H., a Sunni from Rif Hamma with a liberal worldview, was born in 1987, studied veterinary medicine in al-Latakia, and was one of the first people to take part in the anti-regime demonstrations in the city upon the outbreak of the revolution. After being involved in revolutionary activity in Sahel al-Ghab at the outset of the revolution, he left Syria for Turkey in late 2012 and now lives in Istanbul. In early 2013, he joined the Revolutionary Union for the Future of Syria, which, by his account, is a non-military political organization that seeks to play a positive role in the present Syrian reality and help build future Syrian security by maintaining relations with all the world powers.

T. M. N., a Sunni who was born in 1956, is a university graduate in civil engineering. Prior to the war, he worked in Syria and Saudi Arabia as a contractor for 34 years. He espouses a nationalist worldview and has been a member of the Arab Socialist Union for 45 years. During the war, he left his organization to work with a number of civil society political organizations that seek to play an influential role in advancing democracy in the present and influencing additional realms in the future. He currently lives in Cairo and, in the course of the revolution, has held a large number of positions, including representative of the local council of the city of Douma; founder of the Association of Freedom Fighters of Douma in Exile; founder of the coalition of the Freedom Fighters of the Syrian Governorates in Riyadh; founder of the Union of Syrian Engineers in Exile; general coordinator and founding member of the Syrian National Coalition; a founder of the Union of the Syrian Civilian National Committees for Preparation and Building; a member of the Supreme Council of the Syrian Revolution; and founder and leader of the Syrian Public Body for Refugees.

E. A. is a 47 year-old Sunni originally from Kafr Nabl in the Idlib Governorate who currently lives in Kuwait. E. A. has a university education and, prior to the revolution, worked as an English teacher. He was responsible for the strategic planning of the Syrian Rebels Front in the north and is currently responsible for the political activity of the Knights of Justice Brigade (Liwa Fursan al-Haqq), which operates under the auspices of the Free Syrian Army, and he is an active member of the Revolutionary Union for the Future of Syria. E. A. espouses a liberal worldview and is not an armed fighter but rather a publicist, responsible for planning the political vision of the organizations to which he belongs. This vision calls for a civil state and individual freedoms. By his account, his current organization seeks to help in the effort to overthrow Assad and, at the same time, survive against the terrorist factions. He intends to continue adhering to his principles and working for their realization in the future as well.

M., 56, is a university-educated independent journalist who believes in freedom and justice. He aspires to help build a free and humane media in the present and help rebuild Syrian society when the civil war comes to an end.

A. R. is a 34 year-old university graduate who worked as an information engineer before the war. Once a member of the Muslim Brotherhood with a senior military and organizational position in Rif Hamma, Syria, and in Istanbul, where he met with Western delegations, he subsequently left the

movement and, in his words, now holds a liberal worldview. He held a significant position in the revolution, primarily at its outset, and expects to hold a leading position in directing the political process once the fighting is over.

Prior to the revolution, M. N., a 43 year-old Sunni high school graduate majoring in literature, worked in real estate and served as a member of the Baath Party. After the onset of the revolution, he began to work from his home in Turkey to help topple the sectarian regime. In the future, he hopes to contribute to the Syrian economy and to the struggle against terrorism.

Prior to the war, Y. A., a 50 year-old Sunni with an academic education from the Syrian air force college, was a flight officer in the Syrian military and a member of the Baath Party. Today, he holds a liberal worldview and is active in the Free Syrian Army in Turkey. He is currently working to preserve the unity of Syria, including all the ethnic groups living in it, and in the future hopes to play a role in the reconstruction of the state based on principles of freedom and democracy.

S. Y. is a 28 year-old female Kurdish activist of Syrian origin living in Madrid who holds a liberal-nationalist worldview and describes herself as closely associated with the Syrian Kurdish Yekiti Party. Since 2006, she has lived primarily in Iraqi Kurdistan, where her family was forced to flee due to their opposition to the Assad regime. She holds a Bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Sulaimani in Kurdistan and a Master's degree in planning and urban design and planning from Cardiff University. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in planning and urban design at the University of Alcalá in Madrid and engaged in research on city planning and economics. As a result of the crisis in Syria, she has taken part in activities that are humanitarian in character and has helped organize workshops and courses for Syrian activists. As long as the forces that are currently dominating the territory remain in place, however, she expects that neither she nor activists like her will play a more significant role in shaping the reality in Syria. With regard to the Yekiti Party, S. Y. has indicated that the party is working toward the establishment of a Kurdish autonomy either within the state or within a decentralized secular Syrian federation and may play a positive role in shaping Syria in accordance with its vision based on its broad influence on Kurdish public opinion. Still, she maintains that moderate forces such as the Yekiti Party, which represents the Kurdish public, find it difficult to contend with extremist forces – which seek to exclude them from the arena and rely

on broad external-regional support. The moderate forces thus call for more determined intervention by the international community on their behalf.

Highlights of the Responses to the Questionnaire

1. What do you think should Syria look like the day after the revolution?

- Y. S.: A unified state, of course, which accommodates all ethnic groups in Syria.
- B. H.: A unified state.
- E. A. A.: A small, unified state divided into governorates, each with an elected governing council that appoints the government. The major role of the council will be coordination and development of the governorate in accordance with the national policy determined by a democratic parliament working toward development of the economy, separation of the branches of government, development of society, and the provision of civil liberties.
- A. M. H.: A unified state.
- T. M. N.: A unified state.
- E. A.: A unified state.
- M.: A decentralized state (*dawla la markaziyya*), efficiently run as part of the geographical unit of the natural state of ash-Sham [the Levant, Greater Syria].
- A. R.: A unified state that ensures proportional representation and protects the rights and uniqueness of its minorities.
- M. N.: A unified state.
- Y. A.: A unified state.
- S. Y.: A state divided along sectarian, ethnic, and regional lines. In my opinion, the state should be divided according to sectarian or ethnic affiliation. The modern Syrian state was established as a result of international agreements signed after World War I and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, which forcibly combined sects and ethnic groups that had waged bloody wars against one another under the Ottoman imperial regime, which, for its part, fomented disagreement and extremism among them. This policy created powerful enmity between these sects and ethnic

groups, and the modern Syrian state failed to accommodate all the groups in one homeland based on equal rights and obligations. Moreover, it also operated to a great extent to deepen the bitterness and create mistrust between them. Most of the groups harbored immense bitterness toward one another, but the dictatorship deterred them all from engaging in efforts against it. Now, due to the state of war and anarchy that currently exists in Syria, the initial manifestations of destructive civil war have started to emerge. For this reason, the attempt to reconnect these groups within one central state appears to be almost impossible, and if it is possible, it would be an undertaking that would last decades. Therefore, it would be best for each group to engage in the self-administration of its own region within a decentralized regime.

2. What do you think of the role that Israel has played in the civil war in Syria thus far?

- Y. S.: My opinion thus far is negative. We are hoping for broader involvement on the part of [Israel] to help the [Syrian] people, which is being eliminated on a daily basis, as a first step [toward the establishment of relations] between the states.
- B. H.: Positive. Israel helped treat our wounded in the southern region and provided humanitarian services within the framework of international and European organizations.
- E. A. A.: Extremely positive in the humanitarian realm, and in some instances, also in terms of political, moral, and military support.
- A. M. H.: Neutral.
- T. M. N.: Largely neutral.
- E. A.: Negative. It was clear from the outset that Israel supports the continued rule of the Assad regime, even at the expense of the establishment of an Alawite state. The green light [given to the Assad regime] was leaked during a conversation between a senior Israeli official and the Russian ambassador, ostensibly regarding the partition solution. This is extremely negative and widens the chasm between the Syrians and the Israeli people.¹

- M.: Negative. The Israeli role has been negative in general, as Israel has stood beside the tyrannical regime against the Syrian revolution that has demanded freedom. Over the past four years, this position has had a severe impact on Israel's moral credit and has significantly decreased the chances of building peace in the future.
- A. R.: [The Israeli position has been] neutral, although as a revolutionary I do not like neutrality but rather prefer those who identify themselves with and support the revolution.
- M. N.: Negative, because it defends Bashar [al-Assad] in the international arena.
- Y. A.: Negative, because it keeps Bashar [al-Assad] in power.
- S. Y.: [The Israeli position has been] neutral. I believe that the position of the Israeli government is equidistant from the position of the opposition and the position of the regime. Although it has provided the moderate opposition with humanitarian aid, Israel's political role has remained neutral.

3. In your assessment, what are Israel's interests in Syria, today and in the future?

- Y. S.: Maintaining its security by preventing Iran, Hezbollah, and the extremists from achieving power and rule.
- B. H.: Full comprehensive peace in the region as a whole and change in the culture of the Syrian people, from the hatred toward Israel that was ingrained by the regime to cultivation of a generation that believes in the right of all people to live in security and tranquility in the region.
- E. A. A.: Peace and normalization based on mutual respect.
- A. M. H.: Peace, economics, and politics.
- T. M. N.: Lasting peace.
- E. A.: Peace, water, and oil.
- M.: Peace.

- A. R.: Israel's primary interest is to remove the spirit of hatred and enmity instilled in the hearts of Syrian citizens, and to build lasting peace with the Syrian people.
- M. N.: To maintain security vis-à-vis any new Syrian regime.
- Y. A.: To safeguard its borders and its security and to establish peace.
- S. Y.: I believe that Israel's most important interest is the establishment of a Syrian state that safeguards the security of its people and its neighbors, respects international laws and criteria, and conducts itself in accordance with them. Most important is that [the Syrian state] does not intervene in the affairs of its neighbors and prevents support of any terrorist groups.

4. Have you heard about any Israeli military, civilian, or humanitarian activity during the war?

- Y. S.: Yes, we noted Israeli attacks on posts of Assad's army, which pleased everyone.
- B. H.: Yes. It contributed to [humanitarian] aid operations in international organizations.
- E. A. A.: Yes. Israel and Israeli organizations took part in a number of military, civilian, and humanitarian operations in Syria, including the bombing of offensive and defensive positions of the Assad regime in a number of locations, and the provision of medical treatment and aid to wounded Syrians.
- A. M. H.: No, I have not heard of any.
- T. M. N.: Yes. Somewhat positive activity occurred in the provision of medical aid to wounded Syrians at the border between the countries.
- E. A.: Yes. Israel launched air attacks against army units belonging to the regime with ties to the terrorist [organization] Hezbollah. I hope this will continue until the liquidation of the terrorists, Assad and Hassan Nasrallah. I also know that Israel is treating wounded Syrians [that were injured] as a result of Assad's air attacks.

- M.: Yes, I have heard vague information, leaks of sorts, regarding an unofficial Israeli policy of the Israeli government regarding the revolution in Syria.
- A. R.: [Israel] carried out sporadic bombings of regime and Hezbollah positions and a number of humanitarian operations for the benefit of wounded Syrians. However, they were few and insufficient.
- M. N.: Yes. Bombings of Hezbollah positions, and in the humanitarian realm, the provision of medical treatment to wounded Syrians.
- Y. A.: Yes. The Israeli air force bombed positions of the Syrian regime and provided treatment to wounded Syrians at the Israeli border and in Israeli hospitals.
- S. Y.: Yes. I met a number of individuals working within Israeli civil society groups that extend elements of humanitarian aid to the opposition. As for military activity, Israel has carried out a number of significant air strikes against important military positions of the Syrian regime.

5. Did you consider contacting or requesting aid from Israeli parties in the course of the war?

- Y. S.: I did not consider requesting aid. The Israeli side should provide aid to the exiled Syrian people even in the absence of such a request and should open its gates to receive the wounded openly and unapologetically.
- B. H.: Yes. We are still considering it. We made contact [with Israeli parties] on behalf of the Revolutionary Union for the Future of Syria and Assembly Chairman Muhammad Adnan spoke with them.
- E. A. A.: Yes. [We considered requesting aid] to serve the Syrian people in the humanitarian realm, liberate it from the ideology inherited from the culture of the Assad regime, and prepare them for the next stage on a psychological and ideological level and in terms of morale.
- A. M. H.: Yes, humanitarian and military aid.
- T. M. N.: No, never.
- E. A.: No.

- M.: No.
- A. R.: Yes, but we are not familiar with channels of contact. The aim was to prevent clashes between the two countries in the future, and Israel will bear responsibility [for the failure] as a country preaching democracy and human freedom and protection. As for direct aid, as revolutionaries, we were and continue to be in need of all kinds of support, without exception.
- M. N.: Yes. Bombings of Hezbollah positions, and in the humanitarian realm, the provision of medical treatment to wounded Syrians.
- Y. A.: Yes. I call on Israel to clarify its position regarding the matter of the Syrian people.
- S. Y.: Yes, for humanitarian aid and for making contact with [Israel, which as] a neighboring country [must find] the situation in Syria relevant.

6. Do you regard Israeli activity as supporting a specific side in the fighting in Syria?

- Y. S.: [Israel's position] thus far is not clear.
- B. H.: No. Israel's open, sincere position regarding the revolution in Syria has not been clarified. We regard this as support of the regime. Therefore, we are calling on you to make an historic precedent by standing beside the Syrian revolution and helping it put an end to the regime.
- E. A. A.: Yes, the opposition.
- A. M. H.: No.
- T. M. N.: I don't think so.
- E. A.: Yes, the side of the regime.
- M.: Thus far, Israeli activity has reflected support of the regime.
- A. R.: No.
- M. N.: I am of the opinion that it serves the regime.
- Y. A.: It [Israel] tends toward the Syrian regime.
- S. Y.: No.

7. Has the civil war in Syria influenced the prevalent view of Israel among your colleagues and acquaintances?

- Y. S.: Every Israeli attack on Assad's positions results in a change in thinking among the members of the Syrian people who are longing for aid on a larger scale.
- B. H.: Thus far, my colleagues and acquaintances are waiting for a serious stand from Israel in support of political cooperation with us and with the world to topple the existing regime.
- E. A. A.: [The war] has had a positive impact, and they [the positions on Israel] continue to improve.
- A. M. H.: Most of my colleagues today regard Israel as a friendly state.
- T. M. N.: Israel fears the terrorism of [groups of] *takfir* [the jihadists], as do we.
- E. A.: Everyone believes that Israel is interested in preventing the fall of the Assad regime, which is behind the destruction underway in Syria.
- M.: At the outset of the revolution in Syria, most Syrians – even the extremists among them – tended to view Israel as a state that supports human rights. However, the Israeli government's position in favor of the continued rule of the dictatorial regime has stripped it of its reliability in this realm. Most Syrians regard Israel as bearing fundamental responsibility for maintaining Assad in power and protecting the vestiges of his regime by means of the Israeli lobby in Washington.
- A. R.: The war underway in Syria has served Israel by portraying it as an “innocent lamb” in comparison to the crimes of the regime and those behind it.
- M. N.: Many claim that Israel prefers the Syrian regime and does not want it to be overthrown.
- Y. A.: Israel is perceived as a party that possesses the ability to help the Syrian people in the war but is not doing so.
- S. Y.: The war has had an impact on the opinions of many Syrians. For the sake of its survival, the regime has attempted for decades to mislead people into thinking that Israel is lying in wait of them, conspiring against Syria, and attempting to harm the Syrian

people in a variety of ways. However, after the outbreak of the revolution and the regime's use of extremely harsh means to fight its opponents and work with all possible parties against its own people, many have come to recognize the hypocrisy of the regime and doubt the credibility of its propaganda against Israel. At the same time, some of the Islamist and radical Arab nationalist forces continue to mislead the people by telling them that Israel is protecting the Assad regime [and preventing its] fall.

8. What kind of short term help could Israel provide to bring about an end to the war in Syria?

- Y. S.: Political, social, humanitarian, and military.
- B. H.: Taking a clear stand beside the Syrian people and expressing political support for its just claims against the regime.
- E. A. A.: Providing assistance to the Syrian people through the creation of a no-fly zone and the provision of high quality weapons and anti-aircraft [weapons].
- A. M. H.: Extending political backing to the opposition and withdrawing legitimacy from the regime.
- T. M. N.: Calling on its allies to support democratic forces in Syria in light of their intellectual openness and desire to live in comfort and in peace.
- E. A.: If Israel were to destroy the Iranian nuclear project, then the Iranian regime, the Iraqi regime, and the Assad regime would all collapse overnight.
- M.: Israel can help end the war in Syria by adopting an effective policy supporting the building of peace in the state of ash-Sham in its natural borders, and by openly supporting the establishment of a system of justice and peace in the region; by withdrawing all suggested or manifest support for the continued rule of the dictatorial regimes that are passed down through inheritance in the region; and by using the Israeli lobby in Washington to support a policy of building just and democratic regimes that strive for peace and the welfare of the region.

- M. N.: Pressuring the American government and persuading it to topple the Assad regime.
- Y. A.: Using all military means, and political means via international forums.
- S. Y.: I believe that ending the war is not a simple undertaking. In light of the deep involvement of regional forces in the war, Israel alone cannot bring about an end to the war. Based on its international connections, it may be able to pressure the international community to find a solution to the crisis, which has started to impact on the entire region.

9. Do you support peace between Syria and Israel after the war?

- Y. S.: Yes, I support it. If and when Israel helps the Syrian people against Assad, I believe that extremely widespread support for peace with [Israel] would emerge. The Syrian people will not forget those who stood by its side and helped it.
- B. H.: Yes, we support it and aspire to fulfill all the obligations involved in peace.
- E. A. A.: Peace with Israel is an essential necessity for the sake of both peoples who dream of peace, liberty, and welfare.
- A. M. H.: Yes, I support peace between Syria and Israel after the war, as states can only be built by peace.
- T. M. N.: Yes, because our enmity has to do primarily with occupied land that will be returned through negotiation, [after which] peace will prevail.
- E. A.: Yes, I support the establishment of equal relations between the two countries, which will engage in economic relations and maintain deep friendship.
- M.: Yes. Peace in the region as a whole is an essential need for everyone and is what will protect everyone.
- A. R.: Yes, on the condition that it is based on mutual respect and shared interests.
- M. N.: Yes. We have had enough wars, which do nothing but destroy the state.

Y. A.: Yes – for regional stability, peace between the countries and the peoples, and an end to the conflicts and wars.

S. Y.: Yes, I support it. As I noted, the current enmity toward Israel is the product of [an industry] of illusions of the Syrian regime. Therefore, an important step that the Syrian state can implement in the future is to initiate a peace process with Israel and commit to agreements and treaties that will deepen the trust between it and its neighbors, including Israel.

10. How do you view the possibility of normalization of relations with Israel in the future, at the end of the civil war?

Y. S.: It is possible, depending on Israel's attitude toward the current Syrian problem.

B. H.: We are open to full and comprehensive normalization.

A. M. H.: Relations will be diplomatic and economic in nature.

T. M. N.: It will require [the birth of] a new generation, as we still remember the wars, but the thinking has been freed up and has turned toward the fulfillment of and devotion to common public interests.

E. A.: If Syria is divided, Israel will enjoy the friendship of the “Alawite state” and be subject to the enmity of all others.

M.: Reconstruction of the political system of the states of ash-Sham as a geographic regional federation will, in the future, contribute to the building of peace that ensures justice, security, and welfare for all.

A. R.: The ball is in Israel's court. No popular Syrian opposition is expected if the Israeli side conducts itself with sincerity.

M. N.: [This will be possible] by the demonstration of good intentions between the two peoples and two countries and the equal treatment of both sides.

Y. A.: [This will be possible] by recognizing the rights of the other – by returning the land of each side, the demarcation of borders, and normalization on the official and the popular level.

S. Y.: I believe that relations can definitely be normalized with Israel, on the condition that the future regime in Syria is secular and

democratic and removed from certain nationalist and religious ideologies. In such a situation, no party will be able to impose its opinion or shape foreign relations in an exclusive manner. However, if Islamists or nationalist extremists come into power, it will be much more difficult.

11. Rank from 1-10 the impact of the following obstacles on progress in Syrian-Israeli relations: (a) Islamist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel (b) nationalist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel (c) absence of a solution to the Palestinian problem (d) another obstacle.

- T. M. N.: The main obstacle is the restoration of Syrian land, followed by an acceptable solution to the Palestinian problem.
- E. A.: Islamist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel – 10
Nationalist ideology that rules out recognition of Israel – 4
Absence of a solution to the Palestinian problem – 5
Other – The partition of Syria will make the establishment of relations with Israel impossible for all parties except Assad and the Kurds – 10
- M.: Another obstacle – Israel's overall policy remains a major obstacle to cooperation. By siding with the dictatorial regimes in the region, it plays a major role in creating obstacles to peace and helping generate extremism and the development of religious and nationalist counter-ideologies. The absence of a just solution to the Palestinian problem fuels most manifestations of extremism.
- A. R.: Islamist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel – 3
Nationalist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel – 1
Absence of a solution to the Palestinian problem – 5
- M. N.: Islamist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel – 10
Nationalist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel – 4
Absence of a settlement to the Palestinian problem – 2
Other – Vestiges of the Assad regime are the most serious obstacle.

- Y. A.: Islamist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel – 10
 Nationalist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel – 5
 Absence of a solution to the Palestinian problem – 1
 Other – The Assad regime is the major obstacle.
- S. Y.: Islamist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel – 8
 Nationalist ideologies that rule out the recognition of Israel – 8
 Absence of a solution to the Palestinian problem – 5

12. How, in your opinion, can these obstacles be overcome?

- Y. S.: We must establish broad cooperation because we have a mutual enemy: Iran. We must open the doors wide for the provision of [Israeli] aid in the medical, humanitarian, and military realms.
- B. H.: Through dialogue, as dialogue between the sides will lead to solution of the most difficult problems. Sitting down with any person or state for a dialogue means full recognition of the other side.
- A. M. H.: Through joint action for peace among the Israeli and Syrian peoples, building good relations between the Israeli and Syrian peoples, the entry of Israeli companies into Syria, and resolution of the Palestinian problem.
- T. M. N.: We are unable to understand how 21 years of negotiations have failed to yield a solution to the [the Syrian and Palestinian territorial] problem. The reason is that there is no sincere desire. Our fear is that the other side [Israel] is conducting negotiations for the sake of negotiations, and the problem is left pending. As for mutual interests and peace, it is also necessary to deal with the psychology and the general mood of the Syrian people. If we are convinced of the sincere intention of the other side, and if it helps put an end to our internal problems, we will be among those calling for peace between the peoples, in which we have a fundamental interest.
- E. A.: First, Israel must officially declare that the Assad regime is a criminal and Nazi regime that must be genuinely and entirely done away with, and not simply for the sake of appearance.

Second, it must create a Palestinian state and divide Jerusalem in a just manner.

M.: The future of the Jews in the countries of ash-Sham involves strategies of true and lasting peace based on the integration of Jews into the societies of the countries of ash-Sham. Israeli society can serve as a pioneering model, as part of internalization of the reality in the coming century. The choice of peace for all those living in the states of ash-Sham is a choice that will ensure the secure future of the Jews, as well as Muslims, Christians, and other ethnic, racial, religious, and sectarian groups.

It will require the practical adoption of an open strategy of peace based on justice, security, prosperity, and welfare. Unfortunately, Israel still employs the strategy of an entity subordinate to Western economic power and claims a monopoly over representation of the Western political system of morals and principles in the countries of ash-Sham, without effectively fulfilling a pioneering role of a disseminator of enlightenment. This makes Israel an entity that is not working to integrate itself as a force that is here to stay but rather using power as a means to guarantee its survival among the lands of ash-Sham. This is a serious danger for the Jews, and more so for the other religious and ethnic elements in the lands of ash-Sham.

A. R.: [The obstacles can be overcome] by means of serious dialogue based on shared interests, concern for the future security of the two countries and their peoples, the honoring of international agreements, non-intervention in internal affairs, and action in accordance with the principle of good neighborly relations.

M. N.: This will require toppling the Assad regime and dialogue among all parts of the Syrian people with the aim of formulating a unified position regarding peace with Israel.

Y. A.: Initiating an open, official dialogue with Israel before and after the overthrow of the Assad regime.

S. Y.: I believe that Syrian forces will have difficulty cooperating with Israel as long as they remain vague in their proposals regarding the future regime in Syria and as long as most opposition frameworks (primarily the Arab ones) continue to espouse

Islamist or nationalist ideologies. This makes cooperation difficult not only with Israel but with the rest of the international community. Therefore, cooperation will [require the Syrian forces] to reassure Israel by stressing that they pose no threat to its security and declaring their commitment to international treaties and conventions.

In addition, the Syrian forces must understand that the Palestinian problem is a Palestinian-Israeli matter, and that only the two involved parties have the right to decide how to solve it. As for the Israeli side, I believe that Israel must invest greater efforts in supporting the moderate Syrian forces, which have been pushed to the sidelines as a result of the deep regional involvement in the war. This situation has helped, and continues to help extremist groups and elements impose themselves on the arena and persecute the moderate forces.

- 16 Anshel Pfeffer, "For the First Time Ever: Jewish Organizations to Implement Projects in Syrian Refugee Camps in Jordan," *Haaretz*, July 24, 2103, www.haaretz.co.il/news/world/middle-east/.premium-1.2080429.
- 17 Arik Bender, "Jewish-Arab Donations Committee Established to Provide Humanitarian Aid to Syria," *Maariv*, October 19, 2014, www.maariv.co.il/news/new.aspx?pn6Vq=E&0r9VQ=GGMFD.
- 18 See www.facebook.com/pages/Hand-in-Hand-with-the-Syrian-refugees/136844413170394?fref=photo.
- 19 See <http://mustiben.wix.com/syria-aid-committee>; and www.facebook.com/SyriaAidCommittee/timeline.
- 20 "The Coalition: The Regime's Forcing of Syrians to Receive Medical Treatment in Israel Provides a Mutual Service to Both Sides," Syrian National Coalition, February 19, 2014, <http://goo.gl/AiTZgL> (Arabic).
- 21 Al-Labwani, "Israel (Identity versus State)."
- 22 Miller, "Jihadists Capturing Southern Syria, Local Fighter Warns."
- 23 Private letter from a Syrian opposition activist to one of the authors of this memorandum; Nir Boms, "Summary of the Jordan Meetings," June 15-17, 2014.
- 24 See note 14 of this chapter.

Notes to Appendix, Syrian Activists on Israel's Role in the Crisis in Syria

- 1 This is apparently a reference to the meeting discussed in the following link, which makes reference to statements ostensibly made in a similar spirit during a conversation between the Russian ambassador in Tel Aviv and an Israeli colleague: "The Russian Ambassador in Tel Aviv in a Conversation Leaked on YouTube," *al-Mandasa al-Suriya*, February 28, 2012, <http://the-syrian.com/archives/69361> (Arabic).