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The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.



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## One Party Has Produced a Candidate from the Same Family Over Fifty Years!”

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*Fadel Abdul Ghany*

### **UN Envoy to Syria Gives Disappointing Briefing to the Security Council, Devoid of Criticism of the People’s Assembly Elections:**

In 1963, the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party took control of power in Syria; since that date, no other party has been allowed to compete with it, despite all the political and economic disasters that have afflicted the Syrian state, for which it is considered to be primarily politically responsible. In 1971, Hafez al Assad seized power and remained the one and only candidate of the Ba’ath Party for thirty years until his death.

This party’s ludicrous claims that it enjoys popular support from millions of citizens is evidence of the Assad family’s use and absolute control of the Ba’ath Party, and further evidence that it is nothing more than a failed hereditary party built on demagoguery. The greatest indicator of the poverty and hollowness of this party was the absence of any of its members from consideration as leader to replace Hafez al Assad when he died in 2000; instead, the Ba’ath Party not only automatically nominated his son Bashar al Assad, an anomalous hereditary appointment process in a supposedly republican state, but this party that wholly dominates the People’s Assembly amended the constitution especially to take account of Bashar al Assad’s age, which was only 34 at the time; Article 83 of the 1973 constitution, which specified that the president appointed to head the republic must be at least 40 years of age on coming to power, was amended, with the age requirement reduced to suit Bashar al Assad. This confirms the extent of the al Assad family’s domination over the Ba’ath Party, providing further evidence that it is simply a worthless vehicle to serve the agenda of the ruling authority, no matter how hostile this is to Syrian society and the state.

### The Ba'ath Party Won All Elections Even After the Formal Amendment of the Constitution:

The Assad family suppressed any and all forms of partisan activity opposing it, and formed a bogus political bloc, the 'National Progressive Front', consisting of several shell parties to provide a formal, token image of democracy. This bloc's backbone and actual controller is the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party. Hafez al Assad legitimized dictatorship and tyranny through a provision included in Article 8 of the 1973 Constitution, which literally states that the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party is the leader of the state and society.

The Assad family's absolute control of the reins of power in Syria is further cemented by the conflation of the Presidency of the Republic with the post of Secretary-General of the Ba'ath Party in Syria, both of which are dynastic, passing from Hafez al Assad to his son Bashar al Assad.

This article, which contradicts the most basic principles of human rights and democracy, remained in force until the creation of a 'new' constitution in February 2012, which altered the previous one in minor detail only, with no perceptible difference in its application on the ground, and according to which the Ba'ath Party retained absolute control, with the Secretary-General's position remaining exclusively in the hands of the Assad family, being available to no other member of the party, with the Ba'ath Party controlling the majority of two-thirds of the seats in all parliamentary elections that have taken place since the Syrian revolution started, in the 2012, 2016, and 2020 elections.

For decades, this assembly has been and still continues to be one of the tools of the ruling authority and an institution shaped to serve it and do exactly as the authority wants, using it to issue whatever legislation the ruling family desires; this assembly has also been left incapable of dismissing a minister, disrupting the government's work in any way, or holding any member of the security or military forces accountable, especially in the wake of the Syrian people's catastrophic suffering due to the horrific violations perpetrated by the ruling regime since March 2011, including the displacement of nearly 13 million Syrian citizens, the use of chemical weapons and the deployment of barrel bombs, in addition to the related deterioration of the Syrian economy, with more than 85% of Syrians now living below the poverty line, while torture and enforced disappearance conducted by the security services have reached the level of crimes against humanity, according to a large number of UN reports. In spite of all this, the Ba'ath Party still wins 'elections' that are supposed to represent the people, with its only candidate remaining Bashar al Assad; in the event of his death, this party, which is a subservient to the Assad family, will most likely nominate Bashar's son, Hafez. Indeed, there is no doubt that the party will be willing to amend the current age requirement for the presidency of the republic in the constitution to match Hafez's age, regardless of his age at the time.

## The Briefing of the UN Envoy Is Disappointing and Encourages the Regime to End the Political Process:

In the latest of his periodic briefings to the UN Security Council on August 19, 2020, the UN Envoy to Syria presented the most prominent recent events and developments in Syria, and talked about the importance of holding the meeting of the Constitutional Committee's Small Body on August 24, 2020, after a hiatus of nine months (that is, since before the COVID-19 pandemic).

As a Syrian citizen and human rights defender, I awaited the UN envoy's clear comment and opinion on the People's Assembly elections held by the Syrian regime on July 19, 2020, since this was one of the most important and dangerous developments that occurred in relation to Syria in recent times, and because it is very pertinent to the work of the UN Envoy and to the political process, including the upcoming meeting of the Constitutional Committee.

The exorbitant sacrifices of Syrians demanding freedom, dignity and democracy had previously prompted the Security Council to issue resolutions charting a political transition process towards stability and change in Syria, in both the Geneva Communiqué, which was included in Security Council Resolution No. 2118 of September 2013, and secondly in Security Council Resolution No. 2254 of December 2015. Both these resolutions clearly stipulate that the solution to the internal armed conflict in Syria is the formation of a transitional governing body exercising full executive powers with representation from both the regime and the opposition, which could then create a new constitution, and could only then hold parliamentary and presidential elections based on this new constitution. The failure of the international community and all the United Nations envoys to agree on a political transition throughout those years still does not allow the Syrian regime to override UN Security Council resolutions and hold unilateral elections. These are clearly illegitimate elections that violate Security Council resolutions and the political process, and which took place under the force of arms embodied by the absolute control of the regime security services.

After such total disregard for UN resolutions, we can only ask what is the use of the regime's participation in the political process and the Constitutional Committee's talks, as the regime took the unilateral initiative to hold parliamentary elections, in which the party controlled by the Assad family won. Worse still, this sham election and 'victory' met with zero condemnation or other response from the Security Council and the UN Envoy; this provides tacit encouragement for the regime to move forward with its plans and hold equally fraudulent presidential elections under the control of the brutal security services. The results of these elections are pre-decided for the 'victory' of Bashar al Assad, the only candidate of the Ba'ath Party, which has millions of fake cadres, and will be followed by Bashar al Assad's announcement of ending the political process and withdrawing from participation in it.

## A War Assembly, a Quarter of Whose Members Are of Those Involved in War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity:

Commenting on these recent elections, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) issued [a report](#) in which it noted that, according to its database, 56 members of the People's Assembly, who recently won the elections, nearly a quarter of the Assembly members, are directly involved in committing violations, some of which constitute crimes against humanity.

This confirms that this assembly is a war assembly, and that the Syrian regime is no longer concerned with providing even the most transparent cover, even in the form of some formal regulation, by some members of the People's Assembly. Through this, the regime is clearly stating that it will select and choose whoever fights for and alongside it regardless of the cost.

## There Is No Salvation for Syrians Without a Political Transition, and the Regime Is a Major Obstacle:

The sharp vertical divisions that previously afflicted Syrian society have expanded in the wake of the outbreak of the 2011 popular uprising for democracy, as one part of Syrian society demanded the transformation of the ruling system in Syria away from the Assad family's dynastic dictatorship and towards freedom and democracy, while another part of society stood with the regime and contributed to its commission of crimes against humanity. It is impossible to build a social contract in light of the survival of the system built on rule by the Assad family and its security services, which are by far the greatest source of societal conflict.

In light of all these facts, the UN Envoy should have clearly condemned the farcical elections held by the regime, and demanded that the Security Council pass a resolution condemning those unilateral elections, and that his statement should have included clear words of warning to the regime in the event of its moving forward with this illegitimate process and building upon it to succeed in equally illegitimate presidential elections. The fact that this did not happen has made the regime leadership very happy, secure in the knowledge that it has consistently violated the Security Council resolutions on the political process and accomplished its first important step towards presidential elections and is unlikely to face any censure for doing so. The regime now has further reassurance that, rather than facing even slight condemnation for these latest blatant breaches of UN resolutions, its violations are not even considered worthy of reference, let alone rebuke by the UN Envoy, and that despite this, it is still being treated as though it has done nothing wrong or noteworthy.

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[www.snhr.org](http://www.snhr.org) - [info@sn4hr.org](mailto:info@sn4hr.org)