



Reporting on Syria: Former Germany correspondent uncovers contradictions (Interview with Aktham Suliman)



Aktham Suliman is a Syrian journalist and author. In 1989 he moved from Syria to Berlin where he studied among others Islamic studies and political science. From 1998 until 2002 he worked as a freelance employee for the Arabian programme of the "Deutsche Welle" (a German international broadcaster). From 2002 until 2012 Suliman was correspondent of the Arab news channel Al Jazeera in Berlin. In October 2012 he left the TV station with a reproof of a creeping influence and meanwhile massively political influence of the Qatari government on the TV station....

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"That is the problem, the West defends its own interests and the others do legitimately, too. They are called war criminals, but that the Western politician cannot sleep because in the Middle East does not exist any democracy, I cannot believe, sorry." That what Suliman and many else bother about the West is their arrogance: For instance that an American president says, that Saddam Hussein has to go. Eventually would come some state secretary and would say Assad had to go. This arrogance has to disappear, this sense that I am a Middle East expert, I decide on the Middle East, I am a Western politician, I am in charge of those systems over there. That attitude has to come to an end, so Suliman in that talk show. On October 26, 2016, Suliman spoke on the "free Syrian army" on the sidelines of the congress "Trouble Spot Syria" nearby Kassel and he answered the question if democratic and

legitimate opposition groups exist anyway in Syria. More details you hear in the following interview, dear viewers. But especially Suliman pointed out the contradictions of the Western reporting on Syria. The problem is that they who cry allegedly for democracy want anything else but elections. Assad has to go in the first place and eventually will be voted. Suliman criticises the Western reasoning :If anyone reason, you have to respect the normal common sense. Now listen for yourself, what Suliman has to say in an interview with RT-Deutsch (German).

Interviewer: It's said that Al Jazeera in-vented the Free Syrian Army. Could you explain that to me, please?

Suliman:

Some terms get into the media and nobody knows where they come from. Thank God we know where 'Free Syrian Army' comes from. This was Al Jazeera's work. Deserting soldiers - allegedly deserting soldiers - where shown and represented as the up-coming, so-called Free Syrian Army. But, we all know that there never was a Free Syrian Army like this. There never was an army of renegade soldiers in the peak time of the Free Syrian Army - If we are even allowed to use this term - then there were not even 10 % deserters from the regular army according to Western sources. Point 1.

The term Free Syrian Army is very, very, very problematic. It would be nice if the en-tire world had free armies but army is al-ways the opposite of free. An army always means an obligation, one enlists and obeys orders, and anything else is not an army. This Free Syrian Army was a linguis-tic invention in order to conceal that there are many jihadist ground troops who are fighting against the regular army and have killed many, many soldiers. And how could you explain that? It doesn't work with 'peaceful demonstrators'. So you need a Free Syrian Army. What has happened? 100 soldiers of the regular army more or less died – so you say, it was the Free Syri-an Army.

That's why now, when this propaganda is no longer necessary, you don't hear about Free Syrian Army anymore. Now they speak in plain terms: Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra, and IS. Suddenly, these boys are some-where else.

Interviewer:

Does a democratic opposition exist in Syria that can be taken seriously as a negotiat-ing party?

Suliman: Yes, of course. There is a demo-cratic opposition in Syria, in fact a political opposition that is left to left-liberal to cen-trist Islamist, of course, it exists. But those are parties, groups of people not armed gangs; that is the difference. In Syria, as in any other country, there are groups who are not satisfied with the governments' work, with the executive's work. Admittedly, it didn't work out in Syria to integrate all this in a developed political system. This can happen. But to jump from this point, from this opposition and to claim that the gangs that kill on the streets, are a part of it – for God's sake, I wouldn't want to impute this to the opposition – those are real terrorists, gangs, fighters. But where does an

opposition exist that is fighting with weapons – in Germany? In Russia? In America? Only in our Syria? For God's sake, how would they vote? With weapons? The opposition is doing its job politically, then on the streets with demonstrations and protests, but not with weapons.

Interviewer:

How do you see the situation with Assad? Does he have to go; is he the legitimate leader of the country? How do you see him?

Suliman:

I think that for Mr. Assad, it probably doesn't matter at all how I see him. It is important that the same applies for Mr. Assad as for everyone who wants to govern Syria: if he has the majority of the Syrians behind him, then he is the president. If they vote him out, then he is no longer president. This applies for anyone; it is also according to our constitution. Now you could observe if this is the case when there are new elections, a new constitution. The problem is that those who allegedly scream for democracy don't want elections at all. What they are saying is: First, he has to go and then we'll have elections. Since when is there an exclusion from elections? Then they say: He is a mass murderer. Then it is said: Well, a mass murderer runs for election, and the people that are being murdered would certainly be angry and they would vote him out. Or are they implying that the Syrian people would be so stupid as to elect a mass murderer?

The truth is: It is known that if Assad runs for election, he would have at least the biggest group behind him, if not the absolute majority. That means that for the states that don't like this, the game would start all over again but they want to achieve something. So you see how weak the arguments are. At the beginning it was said that ISIS and Islamists do not exist. That they are just peaceful demonstrators. At some point it was not possible to conceal it anymore. So they do exist but it is Assad's fault because Assad had them in his prisons and then he opened the doors and they ran and started a revolution, became radical Islamists and were ruined. Eventually, this was not believable anymore.

What can be done? Well, they are fighting Assad, but Assad is still the problem because Assad is a magnet, so this is the physical version - the model - the terrorists are metal pieces and a magnet attracts metal pieces. I would say: "You should be happy, because you got rid of the metal pieces and now they are with him. Why should the magnet go?"

So you see how perverse and superficial the argumentation is – without speaking for Assad or someone else now. It's important, when arguing to respect, normal common sense.

from dd.

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(Zusammenschnitt Aktham Suliman bei Maybrit Illner)

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