

Issue 2: Syrian Armed Conflict

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1. Background

The Syrian crisis is escalating with the Israeli bombing in Syria on May 5, 2013. The origin of the current armed conflict in Syria traces back to 1964 when the Ba'ath Party government came to power after a successful coup d'état. In 1966 another coup overthrew the traditional leaders of the party. In 1970, the Defense Minister Hafez al-Assad seized power and declared himself as president, a position which he held until his death in the year 2000. Assad found a strong regime built on a firm internal security grip as well as a series of external alliances, which in turn enabled him to hold the longest rule in the country since the demise of the Ottomans.¹

The current Syrian regime is a totalitarian system with more than 17 policies, including an intelligence branch directed against the people. The people of Syria are denied freedom of speech. The regime controls all government departments and institutions. All security and intelligence branches are under the control of the Alawite sect from which president Hafez al-Assad governs Syria. Assad has injected his beliefs and ideas into a State curriculum for all institutions. In addition to other privileges, he also holds a monopoly over senior positions.

On July 10, 2000, Bashar al-Assad became president, succeeding his father Hafez al-Assad who had ruled Syria since 1971. Bashar continued to position the country beneath the orbit of secret police and military forces as his father did, which stayed Syria as a private farm of the Assad family, absent political and economic freedom.²

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¹ Staff Writer, *Hafez al-Assad Obituary*, THE GUARDIAN, Jun. 15, 2000, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2000/jun/15/guardianweekly.guardianweekly1> (last visited on May 1, 2013).

² P. Manfreda, *Syrian Uprising*, MIDDLE EAST ISSUES, available at <http://middleeast.about.com/od/syria/tp/Syrian-Uprising.htm> (last visited on May 1, 2013); See also Redazione, *Samir Seifan, Inside Bashar Al-Assad's mind*, SIRIALIBANO, Jan. 30, 2012, available at <http://www.siriailibano.com/siria-2/syria-inside-bashar-al-assads-mind.html> (last visited on May 1, 2013).