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Report: Syrian Rebels Responsible for Houla Massacre

By John Glaser
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The massacre of over 90 Syrians which caught the world's attention and renewed calls for war against the regime of Bashar al-Assad may have been carried out by rebel fighters, according to a new report.

A new report in one of Germany's leading newspapers, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), the Houla massacre was in fact committed by anti-Assad Sunni militants, and most of the victims killed were members of the Alawi and Shia minorities, which have been largely supportive of Assad. The reports cites anonymous opponents of Assad who admitted their involvement in the massacre.

According to the report, rebel fighters attacked Syrian army road-blocks in a 90 minute battle, in which dozens were killed on both sides.

“According to eyewitness accounts,” the FAZ report continues, “the massacre occurred during this time. Those killed were almost exclusively from families belonging to Houla's Alawi and Shia minorities. Over 90% of Houla's population are Sunnis. Several dozen members of a family were slaughtered, which had converted from Sunni to Shia Islam. Members of the Shomaliya, an Alawi family, were also killed, as was the family of a Sunni member of the Syrian parliament who is regarded as a collaborator.”

The report continues: “Immediately following the massacre, the perpetrators are supposed to have filmed their victims and then presented them as Sunni victims in videos posted on the internet.”

Initial eyewitness accounts of the massacre, relayed by major western media outlets and Human Rights Watch, described the massacre as having been the work of Syrian forces and their heavy artillery. But other eyewitness accounts, like those from members of the Monastery of St. James in Qara, Syria, said the attack came from Sunni militants who then tried to frame it as a massacre by the regime, presumably in the hopes that it would provoke a foreign intervention to unseat Assad.