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Syria Rebels Face Growing List of Crimes

By John Glaser

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The rebel militias fighting to topple the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad face a growing list of accusations of [executions, murder, and war crimes](#), but aid and support from the US and its allies continues to flow.

The accusations have increased ever since a video appeared online showing the apparent aftermath of a mass slaughter of pro-Assad fighters who were killed execution-style after being captured by the Free Syrian Army. An eyewitness account from a Turkish reporter confirmed the event, which Human Rights Watch called an apparent “war crime.”

The men “were forced into a building, then brought before a court of the Free Syrian Army on the back of a pickup truck, after which they were lined up and shot at lightning speed,” the Turkish reporter wrote.

And this does not appear to be an isolated incident. “A McClatchy reporter traveling with a unit of the Free Syrian Army was told that rebels had captured about 45 Assad loyalists in fighting in Al Tal, north of Damascus. Asked later what had become of the prisoners, a rebel said eight had been executed, 25 had been released and the rest were being held in hopes of a future prisoner exchange,” [reports McClatchy news](#).

A string of media reports have uncovered similar stories of both extra-judicial executions and torture. Almost three months ago, a [United Nations investigation found](#) that both Syrian government forces and rebel militias trying to topple President Bashar al-Assad committed serious human rights abuses.

“We strongly condemn summary executions by either side in Syria. We condemn actions like that,” White House Press Secretary Jay Carney told reporters this week. The Obama administration doesn’t seem to be shying away from their support of the rebels, though.

The increase in rebel crimes has increased in tandem with expanded US support as well as the increased [infiltration of al-Qaeda](#) and other Sunni extremists.

The CIA is supposedly employing a “vetting process” to avoid having the aid get into the hands of Islamic extremists, but the process is made up of untrustworthy, third-party sources and intelligence officials have recently told the [Washington Post](#) and the [Los Angeles Times](#) that the truth is that the US [doesn’t know](#) who is getting the money and weapons.

Apparently, even arming and strengthening al-Qaeda isn’t enough to disrupt [Washington’s plan to change the regime in Syria](#), in order to eliminate Iran’s main ally in the Middle East and to gain an even stronger foothold in the region.

But extremist infiltration of the Syrian opposition carries other problems. The Obama administration runs the risk of helping to bring these extremists to power if and when the Assad regime finally does collapse. Moreover, as happened in Afghanistan after the US proxy war there with the mujihadeens, the potential for [deadly blowback is very real](#).