

Dennis Ross Interview in al-Sharq al-Awsat

by [Dennis Ross \(/experts/dennis-ross\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Dennis Ross \(/experts/dennis-ross\)](#)

Dennis Ross, a former special assistant to President Barack Obama, is the counselor and William Davidson Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute.

On June 13, Arabic daily al-Sharq al-Awsat interviewed Washington Institute counselor and former Obama advisor Dennis Ross on Syria, Iran, and other regional issues. Below is a brief summary of his remarks; the full interview is available above in Arabic.

According to Ambassador Ross, there can be no solution to the Syrian crisis without the participation of Russia. He called upon the United States and the international community to increase pressure on Assad to step down, establish safe havens on the Syrian-Turkish border, and send assurances to the Alawite community, in order to avoid Syria's collapse as a state. He warned of the danger that the Syrian arsenal of chemical and biological weapons could fall into the hands of terrorists.

Ross stressed that there is a strong prospect of a protracted civil war and sectarian division in Syria as long as Assad stays in power. At the same time he pointed out that the fall of Assad holds significant risk that the Islamists will come to power following their ascendance in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. Islamist control of Syria will create pressure on Jordan, as well as threatening Israel and the stability of the entire region.

On the Iranian nuclear issue, the former Obama adviser indicated that there is agreement between the United States and Israel in their assessment of the development of Iran's nuclear program, while their views on the timing of the use of the military option differ. He stressed that it is impossible to coexist with a nuclear Iran because of the risk of nuclear war in the Middle East.

While the world is preoccupied with the Arab Spring upheaval, Ross sees a possible opportunity for the Palestinians and Israelis to sit together and negotiate without external pressure to reach an agreement on the establishment of two states. Ross acknowledged that he supports Israel, stressing that it does not come at the expense of his belief in peace. ❖

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