

The Asad Regime Crackdown on Syria's Pro-Democracy Protestors

by [Andrew J. Tabler \(/experts/andrew-j-tableer\)](/experts/andrew-j-tableer)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Andrew J. Tabler is the Martin J. Gross fellow in the Geduld Program on Arab Politics at The Washington Institute, where he focuses on Syria and U.S. policy in the Levant.



Articles & Testimony

Testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. House of Representatives.

"Recently, I journeyed to Lebanon's Wadi Khaled to visit with Syrian refugees who fled from the Sunni Muslim village of Tal Kalakh, which is surrounded by a constellation of villages dominated by Alawites -- the heterodox offshoot of Shia Islam from which the Asad regime hails. What I found was appalling: a people traumatized by roving gangs predominantly made up of Alawites called the shabbiha or "ghosts," who threatened to kill or assault protestors in the Syrian countryside and around the coastal cities. Sporting shaved heads and black outfits mixed with camouflage, these groups are believed to report directly to members of the Asad family..."

[Download Mr. Tabler's full prepared remarks \(PDF\).](#)

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/TableerTestimony20110712.pdf> ❖

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