

# Battling the Lion of Damascus:

## Syria's Domestic Opposition and the Asad Regime

by [Seth Wikas \(/experts/seth-wikas\)](/experts/seth-wikas)

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### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Seth Wikas is a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute, focusing on opposition elements to the Syrian regime.



### In-Depth Reports

In April 2007, Syria's nationwide parliamentary elections passed with little fanfare, as much of the population showed apathy toward a process they view as undemocratic. Despite the unusually open display of skepticism among the people, the country's organized opposition movements could do little more than call for a voter boycott. Indeed, the domestic opposition today is a loose, disorganized, and heavily persecuted movement. What are its prospects for success in the battle against the Asad regime -- which, as the "lion of Damascus" in more ways than one, seems to be solidifying its grip on internal power?

In this Washington Institute Policy Focus, Syria expert Seth Wikas takes a comprehensive look at the opposition's past victories and more recent setbacks. Drawing from his months of research while living in Damascus, he offers an on-the-ground perspective on the challenges that opposition members face in attempting to organize and speak out despite vigorous regime suppression. He also outlines the major regional developments that have allowed the regime to further divide and dilute the various factions arrayed against it. Throughout, he sheds light on past and potential missteps -- from strengthening already potent Islamist factions to mismanaging initiatives aimed at funding worthwhile opposition efforts -- that U.S. policymakers must avoid if they hope to help rather than hinder the Syrian opposition.

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## RECOMMENDED

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ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

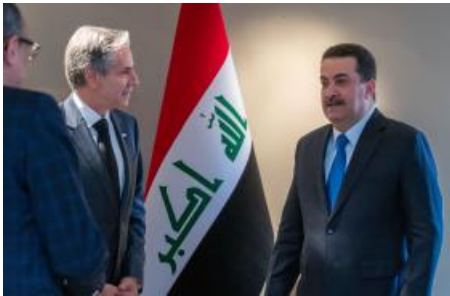
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