

Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban

Restore International Law: Respect Syria's Perfect Sovereignty

Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban is a Political and Media Advisor to the Syrian Presidency. She delivered these remarks to the first panel, "The March of Folly: Can Mankind Still Extinguish the Now-Lit Fuse of Thernuclear War?" of the May 8, 2021 Schiller Institute conference, "The Moral Collapse of the Trans-Atlantic World Cries Out for a New Paradigm."



Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban

Good morning to all of you! I would like first to thank my friend Helga LaRouche and the Schiller Institute, all of you, for extending this invitation to me to be with you this morning, on a topic that touches my heart.

I'd like to speak about Syria and the world order, and reflect on what happened during these last ten years, and how that is relevant, in my opinion, to what your respectful conference is discussing.

Fighting a Double-Edged War

Right from day one of the war on Syria, on March 15, 2011, we felt that we were fighting a double-edged war, one that was going on in the streets, with people of flesh and blood, being led by well-organized, secret forces, which instruct them what to do and how to do it; and the second, parallel war, that deals with concepts and narratives, and focusses on confusing the Syrian people about what is happening in their country and what is the ultimate objective for these extraordinary movements, both in the streets and in Western media.

I remember that on the 24th of March, the Syrian regional leadership and the government of Syria met and took great decisions, which were meant to answer all the requests reiterated by all those on the streets. I convened a press conference for all the media corps in Damascus on the same day. And the Syrian people were so happy that evening, and some of them went out

celebrating, believing that the whole problem was over.

Far from it. The movement on the streets and the media war against Syria seemed to get new fuel, and to spread into new areas in the country.

Now that we got to read some leaks from different directions, we know, according to leaked British papers, for example, that the UK officially found Syrian men and women, calling them "eyewitnesses," through different agents.

All Western and Gulf media were withdrawn from Syria, and the entire Western media derived its news from these "eyewitnesses," and from one man, who sits in Coventry, UK whose name is Rami Abdul Rahman, who invented for himself a platform called the "Syrian Observatory for Human Rights." Western and Gulf governments were pressing Syrian officials to dissent and bribing some of them with money to join those against the Syrian government, assuring them that the political system was going to fall and collapse within a week or two.

Early in April 2011, I used to meet with the American, British and French ambassadors, and tell them that, what you are instigating in Syria is not going to make the lives of Syrian people better. On the contrary, it will make their lives much worse, and Iraq is a live example.

Now, after all the destruction that has befallen Syria and all the death, bloodshed, and loss of life and institutions, and our ecology, and part of our civilized identity, it is very obvious to us, that Western governments, especially their military and intelligence services, planned, trained, and sent thousands of terrorists, with Qatari and Emirates money and Turkish backing, to destroy Syria. They were never interested in making Syria a better place for its people. Rather, they wanted to turn Syria into a destroyed satellite state that follows their orders, and so they can loot its resources, just like the wars on Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

Imperial Subjugation and Destruction

Thinking more deeply about this point, Western powers have always treated us as the colonized, actually, and derived their views about us from the Orientalists who looked down on us, rather than from our reality, history, and from our set of values. Subjugating Syria was important for Western forces, because Syria, as everybody knows, is the “jewel of the crown” in the Arab world: That’s why they devoted billions of oil money, arms and terrorists to do their job for them.

Once they recognized that this was “mission impossible,” due to the resilience and sacrifices of the Syrian people, they shifted the focus from a military war, to horrifying, criminal, coercive, unilateral measures against the Syrian people, which are *illegal* on all counts, because they are a form of collective punishment to the Syrian people.

Once major terrorists were defeated, the U.S. sent its own military to starve the Syrian people, and break their will.

It is now quite clear from what has taken place in Iraq, Syria and Libya, and Yemen, that Western powers are intent on destroying our country and looting our resources. The good byproduct of the war on Syria, if there is any good byproduct, is that China and Russia got together in taking double veto more than ten times in the Security Council, to prevent further military aggression by Western forces against Syria.

A New Paradigm Is Rising

The case of Syria was very important in highlighting the need for a new paradigm.

The irreverent American sanctions against Russia and China, and their blatant interference in Chinese internal affairs, through what they call the cases of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang, is hastening the birth of this new paradigm. I think one of the reasons why President Biden was elected is to restore the trans-Atlantic relationship that suffered greatly during the previous administration.

But their efforts will not reach the result they desire, for more than one reason:

First, China is an ascending economic, technological, and moral force, and its alliance with Russia and other countries will certainly establish a multipolar system.

The other reason is that the war on Syria helped to

prove beyond any doubt that Western policies toward Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen, are bankrupt, and the narrative that filled their decrees and papers is no longer credible. I am telling you from the point of view of our people: We no longer believe in the Western narrative.

Many friends of mine, I’m included, used to be avid followers of Western media. Now, none of us wastes his or her time to know what they are fabricating, and what truth they are trying to conceal.

Credibility is of utmost importance, whether regarding people, or states, or systems, and once it is lost, the party no longer exists. The latest example is what the OPCW [Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons] did toward Syria. Although those who went on the ground to investigate the case gave clear evidence that the OPCW changed the facts found out by the team, and wrote its own, untruthful report to incriminate Syria, still, they voted against Syria. The loser here is not Syria: It is the OPCW, because it has lost its credibility in the eyes of neutral and logical people.

On the other hand, China and Russia are gaining credibility in the eyes of the world, and their address of the COVID-19 and of its vaccines is a clear example of the efficiency of China and Russia, compared to the inefficiency of most Western countries in handling this plague. As far as our people and countries are concerned, we are sure that the trans-Atlantic world is a colonial power, but its reality and the lack of concern about life and the greed of its ruling class in other people’s fortune, and the lies that their media are publishing to market their criminal policies worldwide have never been as exposed as they are today.

I think we are witnessing the gradual collapse of 500 years of old Western colonial empires, and the rising dawn of the East. But we all have to be active partners in founding the new world system, and in making sure that it reflects the ambition of humanity and the hope of a better, safer, more peaceful, and more prosperous future.

The consistent efforts exerted by the Schiller Institute and by all of you at different platforms are important contributions toward that dawn, that we, our children and our grandchildren are waiting for.

Thank you very much, very happy to join you, and thank you again for inviting me to speak at this very important forum.

Dialogue with Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban

Dr. Shaaban is a Political and Media Advisor to the Syrian Presidency. She engaged in this dialogue, including questions from conference participants, following her remarks to the first panel, “The March of Folly: Can Mankind Still Extinguish the Now-Lit Fuse of Thermonuclear War?” of the May 8, 2021 Schiller Institute conference, “The Moral Collapse of the Trans-Atlantic World Cries Out for a New Paradigm.”

Moderator: Thank you very much, Dr. Shaaban. I have a question from a military veteran about the OPCW controversy, the suppression of the truthful story, or better said, the made-up story, of the use of chemical weapons by Syria. He wrote, “The whistleblowers who say there was no evidence that Syria used chemical weapons were suppressed by the OPCW, and the media will not cover them.” And he asks further, “What can you say about the role of London-based groups such as the White Helmets and the one you mentioned, in promoting the narrative that it is Syrian government corruption which is the problem?”

Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban: Thank you very much for this question. I think there is such a huge gap between what is circulated in the Western media and the reality in Syria. All those who are interested in Syria and who are doing real investigative work in Syria know that the White Helmets are agents of many terrorist groups, and those terrorist groups are the ones who are fighting the war of the U.S. and the West on the ground of Syria.

The OPCW case, handling the Syrian situation regarding chemical weapons, should really be highlighted as a very flagrant violation, not only of human rights and international law, but of the freedom of speech. Because all these whistleblowers were asking to be heard by the OPCW, and yet, they were not given the opportunity to present their cases. But the Russian Ambassador, [Vassily] Nebenzia, at the UN [on May 5], gave, through an “Arria-Formula Meeting” [a meeting called by a member or members of the UN Security Council, though not a formal meeting of the Security Council], an important session where all these people spoke. In my opinion, and in the opinion of many others, they proved beyond any doubt that all the evidence on Syria was fabricated, and so many circumstances that proved that Syria did not use any chemical weapons were omitted from the report of the original investigators.

I would like to conclude by mentioning one thing, that in 2013, the OPCW started investigating chemical weapons in Syria. They ended up in two years by writing a report that Syria is free of all chemical weapons, and that the Syrian government has cooperated in handling all its chemical weapons. How could they come back and invent stories accusing Syria of such a crime, which is absolutely groundless?

Moderator: I have a question from a blogger who writes, “You offered what seemed to be an optimistic assessment of the future. What has given you and the people of Syria the courage to remain optimistic about the future?”

Dr. Shaaban: Thank you for this question; it’s a very important question. The reason is that I’m talking to you from the oldest continuously inhabited capital in the world—Damascus—that is over 10,000 years old. So many invaders came and killed and destroyed; but they were defeated. And the Syrian people came up again and built their country, and continued their civilized history, and continued to be a haven for other people—whether in the region or out of the region—who suffered from injustices like the war on the Armenians and the Assyrians that was done in Ottoman Turkey in 1915. Thousands of Armenians joined the Syrian people, and became Syrian people. We are very proud of the heritage they brought with them with which they enriched our culture.

When the war on Iraq took place, about 3 million Iraqis came to Syria; not a single tent was put up. All of them went into our homes, into our houses, into our schools and universities. These are the Syrian people; this is the history of the Syrian people. And I don’t think any power can change this resilient spirit, and this hope and faith in a better future. Not only for us, but for humanity at large.

Moderator: Dr. Shaaban, thank you. I don’t have any more questions. Helga, did you want to say something?

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: Yes. First of all, I want to greet you, Dr. Shaaban. I’m very happy that you are joining us here. I would like to ask you a question. Cardinal Zenari [Papal Nuncio in Syria] basically said that there must be peaceful development; that the only way

this situation can be remedied is by economic development. There was a donors' conference recently, where people collected something like \$7 billion for Syria, but as far as I know, did that go in coordination with the Syrian government? I think there are still the views that you have to have, first, a post-Assad government before any real reconstruction is allowed to take place. I would like you to comment on that.

And lastly, if you think that my idea to take the region as a whole, all of Southwest Asia as an extension of the Silk Road, is that in your view a realistic idea? And if so, what can be done to further the realization?

Dr. Shaaban: Thank you, my friend Helga. I really wanted to comment on your very important keynote speech, but after I address your question.

I think that the policy of the Syrian government now, and the Syrian people, is to go back to what we do best, which is agriculture and industry. We are very ancient in plowing the land and growing the crops. I can assure you that this year, we feel a great difference between the years of the war and now. So many people went back to promote agriculture, to rebuild their factories. Even small, tiny workshops. But the Syrian people realize now that they have to do their own economic development regardless of all the pressure and all the criminal measures that are taking place by the West against the Syrian people. And I'm sure we can do it.

But I'm also sure that things cannot continue this way. The American occupation of the northeast of Syria—they are looting our wheat during the day; they are looting our oil; they are preventing the Syrian people from their own natural resources. With the will and help of people such as your good self, I'm confident that the future is going to be much better, and we are going to be able to stop occupiers, terrorists, and all those who do not believe in a human community, to stop them from further destruction.

I would like to go back to greet you, Helga, and say to you, thank you very much for your keynote address. And to say that I felt, while you were talking, that I would love to carry this speech and circulate it the world over, because it is the antithesis of what Western colonial powers are doing.

And I would like to say to you how I read it. I read it that you, Helga, and the Schiller Institute, look at humanity, see humanity, see all of us as global brothers and sisters, while the imperial and colonial powers have always treated us or looked at us as second- or third-

fourth- or fifth-class citizens of the world. They continue to do that because they are interested only in looting our resources, and in making money for themselves while depriving our people of our own resources.

I think your idea is great, but the problem is that they don't allow, the Americans. The reality here is that many Arab countries wanted to open their embassies immediately after we defeated the terrorists. But the United States would not let them open their embassies. The United States would not allow the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, for example. It will not allow the good relations and cooperation among Arab countries. So, by using their military force and their hegemony, they are the ones who are really dictating how these states are behaving.

The basic reason for all this war on Syria is that Syria has its own stubborn independent decision, and we do not take orders. I have been in the political sphere for the last 30 years, in the Non-Aligned [Movement], in the Islamic organization [Organization of Islamic Cooperation], in the Arab League. All the time, the American ambassador or envoy will bring a written text and ask countries to accept that text and to adopt it in their final communiqué. Syria was always, always the one who refused to take text or orders from Americans or from Western powers. Because we are very proud people, and we believe we deserve to be at least equal. Thank you.

Moderator: We have another couple of minutes for one final question for you. This comes from Dr. Marie-Luise Heuser [from the Institute of Space Systems at the Technical University of Braunschweig, Germany]. She says, "Syria is known for good coexistence of different religions." She asks if you could say something about that.

Dr. Shaaban: Well, when I gave that press conference on the 24th of March in 2011, I said in that press conference that what all the West is targetting is the coexistence in Syria. Because we are very proud of our culture. We are brought up as Muslims and Christians, as Assyrians and Armenians. I am a Muslim woman, but I go to churches, I go to Saydnaya, I go to Ma'lula. Christian people always congratulate us on our Eid or on our anniversaries, or on our holy days. No one in Syria ever, at all, asks anybody, "What is your religion?" It is an extremely socially impolite and unacceptable question. People go to seek a job, to sit [for] an exam, to

do whatever, in any Syrian city, in any place in Syria, nobody will ask you what your religion is, because it is irrelevant. For Syrians, religion is between the person and God.

I'll give you one final, very important example. When the terrorists went to the Idlib area—the Idlib area is mostly composed of Sunni Muslims, although we hate to mention that, but that is the truth. About 2 million people migrated from rural Aleppo and the Idlib area to Mashta-al-Helou, to Tartus, to Latakia, where the population is almost completely Christians and Alawites. And there was not a single incident; quite the contrary, people started establishing factories together, working together, learning from each other, and loving being together.

Now, although many rural areas in Aleppo were liberated, many of the people decided to stay where they are in Latakia or in Tartus or in Mashta-al-Helou or whatever. In fact, this is the jewel of the lives of the Syrian people, and it is inherited one generation after another. It is our culture; it is absolutely embedded in the milk we drink from our mothers. I would love for that to be an example for other countries rather than to be targetted by Western imperialist countries.

Moderator: Dr. Shaaban, I think we completely share that sentiment you just expressed. I thank you again for joining us. We look forward to hearing from you in better times; especially after we end the Caesar sanctions.

Dr. Shaaban: Thank you. Is that a question, or just your statement?

Moderator: That's just a statement.

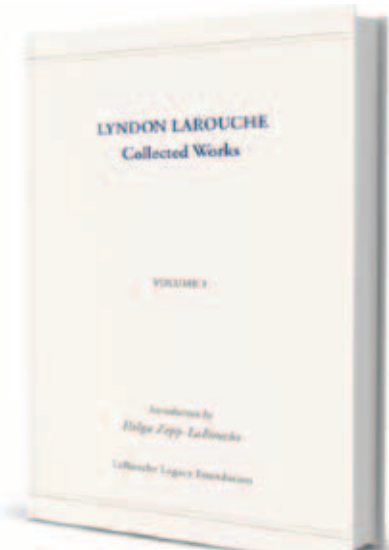
Dr. Shaaban: Thank you so much. Thank you, Helga, for inviting me, always. I think this is the time to make the Schiller Institute a leading narrative; your narrative to be a leading narrative in the world. I think most people everywhere need this, and want this, and are ready to join party with you and work with you for this noble cause you have been embracing for the last 50 years. Thank you very much.

Zepp-LaRouche: Thank you very much for joining us. We will do more things together.

Dr. Shaaban: Hopefully. Thank you very much. God bless you. Thank you. Take care.

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