
III. The Truth About Syria

VIRGINIA STATE SENATOR RICHARD BLACK

‘We Are Better Than This, Let’s Change Our Government’s Direction’

Virginia State Senator Richard Black spoke at the New York Sept. 10 Schiller Institute Conference: “Securing World Peace through Enhancing the Common Aims of Mankind.” This is an edited transcript.

Moderator Dennis Speed: I think everyone in this audience is aware that there has been an extensive battle around the question of Syria.

The next speaker has distinguished himself by being one of the few Americans who has taken on the corruption of the policy of the United States, and expressed his view of that policy directly and forthrightly. He is a State Senator from Virginia. It is my honor to introduce to you State Senator Richard Black.

Richard Black: Thank you very much. Thank you. I appreciate it very much. I’m going to talk to you about the background of the Syrian war, particularly on the issues of the moderate rebels and American involvement in this.

First of all, I want to let you know a little about me. I am a conservative Republican and I have very extensive combat experience. I have been wounded in action, had my radio man killed right beside me in battle, flew



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Virginia State Senator Richard Black addressing the Sept. 10 Schiller Institute Conference in New York City.

269 combat missions, and then, later, I served in the Pentagon on the general staff. I was a JAG officer advising the Senate Armed Service Committee, working on executive orders for the President, and testifying before committees in Congress. I come at this from a little different perspective than some people do. I just wanted to give that as background.

First of all, let me go back in time, and I’d like you to know a little bit about Syria and what Syria was like before the war began. Before the war, Syria was the safest of all Arab countries. There weren’t any kidnappings, you could walk

freely anywhere. It was a tremendously friendly place. There had been 40 years of peace with Israel, and interestingly, they had the greatest women’s rights of any Arab country. There was total religious freedom in Syria.

I think Syria is unique in the entire world, in terms of religious harmony. Not tolerance, where you are putting up with something you dislike, but a certain love among people of the Muslim faith, the Christians, the Alawites, really truly an amazing atmosphere. I visited with President Bashar al-Assad for a couple of hours

during a trip I took to Syria this year. He is an interesting individual: he is a very thoughtful, very brilliant man, soft spoken, almost a touch shy in a sense.

His wife, Asma al-Assad, is just a joyous woman, extremely bright. She was an investment banker, raised in London. And when the two of them took over in Syria, they came in with this zeal. They are young people, idealistic people, and they had a zeal for transforming Syria, rooting out corruption, improving the economy and so forth. Little did they know there were things under way that were going to prevent that.

I want to get one thing out of the way right up front. All of you have heard, probably a thousand times, that President Assad gassed his own people, that he used sarin gas in Damascus, that he crossed the red line. Well, this is totally incorrect, and this particular 2013 time-line will show you that all of this occurs in a three-month period. You go to March 30. In Turkey there was a series of raids. Thirteen al-Qaeda homes were raided by Turkish border authorities within Turkey. They did the raids based on probable cause that resulted from extensive wiretaps in which they recorded the fact that the al-Qaeda operatives were moving major supplies of sarin gas into Syria from Turkey. The precursor chemicals came from Western Europe,— I'm not sure which country, but it came out of the West,— so Western Europe, NATO was complicit in this. Anyway, these people were all arrested.

And then President Erdogan ensured that there was a new prosecutor assigned, the case was dismissed, and individuals crossed the border into Syria.

Okay, that was on May 30. On June 20, the Defense Intelligence Agency, which is probably one of the most respectable agencies of the United States government,— it comes under the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,— they issued a report saying that Al-Nusra has major sarin production units in operation. This is coming out of the Pentagon at a very high level.

Syria Was a Stable Country

You go to Aug. 13. This is a very, very odd day. The rebels, the terrorists, whatever you want to call them, called together a very important meeting that included the CIA, MI6, various representatives from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and all of those who have been so deeply involved in this war. They announced that there would be a war-changing development,— *and* that the United States would bomb Syria.

Now think about this. *Rebels* announced—here is

the Ghouta gas attack [of Aug. 21]. Rebels announced eight days before the Ghouta gas attack that there would be an important event that would cause the United States to bomb Damascus and enter the war openly. I have difficulty believing there were not representatives of the United States government who were in the know, because we held enormous supplies of weapons in warehouses in Turkey, the keys held by CIA. Based on that meeting, we *immediately* began transferring *immense* quantities of our most advanced weapons to the terrorists across the border in Syria.

Now look: Aug. 21, the Ghouta gas attack which all of you heard about. Of all things, Syria, which was engaged in probably five multiple battle fronts where there was a desperate struggle going on, somehow chose to cross the red line by firing sarin gas at civilian targets. That's irrational. I'm going to tell you President Assad is not an irrational person. If he had been willing to have the United States enter the war, if he was willing to risk that, he *certainly* would not have wasted the chemicals. He certainly would have used it on the battle front where he could have at least turned the tide of battle.

The weapons all arrived somewhere between Aug. 21 and 23. As you can imagine, it takes a tremendous logistic effort to get these things there. So that leaves us the question: How did the rebels know the United States was going to bomb Syria? A very disturbing question, I think.

The answer to this—Turkey and Al-Qaeda executed the gas attack. We have significant evidence of this. First, we know that the 2.2 kilograms were seized. This was widely reported. This occurred three months before the red line gas attack. Also, if you really want to become educated, read the writings of Pulitzer Prize winning author Seymour Hersh. He is the guy that broke the story on the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War, and he analyzes in great depth how Turkey and Al-Qaeda executed the sarin gas attack, blaming it on Bashar al-Assad for the purpose of pulling the United States openly into the war.

Now, this is sort of the icing on the cake. The other things you can say, these are coincidental or circumstantial. However, in December 2015, Turkish members of Parliament,— two individuals, incredibly heroic, at great risk to their lives,— held an extensive press conference in which they laid out all of the evidence that had been seized by Turkish authorities—the wiretap information—and they disclosed how Turkey



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Senator Black describing how Al-Qaeda carried out the gas attack against civilians in Syria with Turkish involvement.

had sent the sarin gas, and the rockets, to deliver them into Syria for the purposes of provoking the U.S. attack. Those people were immediately charged with treason for revealing state secrets. And I'm going to tell you what: in Turkey, if you cross the government, in such a significant way, your life is not worth a plugged nickel. So I've got to hand it to these people. Anybody who thinks that that is not proof beyond reasonable doubt, I'm going to tell you, those guys are likely to die for what they did. God bless them. They are true heroes.

Now, we have all heard that the Syrian war began with the Arab Spring in 2011. That's when it occurred, in 2011. The fact is, the Syrian war countdown begins immediately after 9/11. Gen. Wesley Clark, the former Supreme Allied Commander Europe, has stated very unequivocally on videos that he was in the Pentagon and he was informed that there was a top-secret document that had come down, and that the Pentagon had been instructed to draft plans to overthrow seven Arab governments within the next five years. This is not some remote source. This is the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe saying that. This is the senior four-star general outside of the Pentagon.

Five years pass. WikiLeaks—God bless them. I'll tell you what. At first I was a little reluctant, but now the more I read the documents and see the onion peeled away, the happier I am to see the information. In 2006, the U.S. Embassy drafted detailed plans on how to destabilize and overthrow Syria. Now, remember, there were no demonstrations. This was a stable country. It really was sort of the ideal in the Arab world, of what we would hope they would have, in terms of freedom, and women's rights, and things of that sort. But we had decided they were going to go down, and the plans were drafted.

We Opened Pandora's Box

One of the most sinister and unpleasant things about it, was that part of the plan involved creating religious divisions and hatred, where they did not exist. Because, as you have heard before and you will hear again, Syria had this atmosphere of religious harmony, unique in all of the world—honestly.

Okay, 2011: By then, Hillary Clinton is the Secretary of State. Now most people think that the Department of Defense starts wars. The DOD does not start wars. They are the executive agency. They carry out the orders given. It is the State Department/CIA,— which are really one and the same,— they are the ones who concoct the wars, draft the propaganda, and so forth. So, 2011, this is when I got involved, because we launched an unprovoked attack on Libya. We had had our problems with them, but we resolved them some six or eight years earlier. Colonel Qaddafi was our number-one ally in the war on terror in North Africa. Libya was the most prosperous of all North African countries, on a per-capita basis.

We launched an attack that utterly destroyed Libya. Libya does not have a government. There are various groups we recognize from time to time. Last year, the Libyan government had to meet in a ship offshore, because they could not control a ten-acre plot of the coun-

try of Libya. That is not a government. So there is no government; the place has been utterly crushed and destroyed. Why did we do it? I thought it was perhaps oil, and began to look into it. I came to discover the reason was that Qaddafi had a very large store of advanced weapons. We needed them to overturn Syria.

A month later, after the Libyan uprising, the Syrian uprising and the Syrian war begins. One month apart. Let's look at the causes of the war in Syria. Okay, some people have said, "oh it's a domestic uprising." I'll tell you, I have spoken to people who were demonstrators and they said, "initially"—you know, all of us have probably been involved in a demonstration of some sort. Pro this or anti that, or whatever. That's the kind of demonstrations that took place. They weren't trying to bring down the government.

But what happened is very shortly al-Qaeda flags began to show up at the demonstrations. They said, we don't want al-Qaeda flags. Then, automatic military weapons showed up, and they said "get rid of those, we don't want that." They don't have a Second Amendment in Syria. You don't go down to the corner drug store and buy a Kalashnikov. It doesn't happen. They come from somewhere. They come from covert intelligence agencies.

The third thing that happened is that they began to proselytize religious hatred. They began to exploit these little fractions, and there are always religious differences among people. I spoke with one fellow, and he said, "my uncle was the head of the demonstrators." "He kept trying to push these elements out. In the seventh month Al-Qaeda murdered him." So it was not a domestic uprising.

However, Saudi Arabia for many years had wanted to run an oil pipeline across Syria, and they had been unsuccessful in getting Syria's agreement to allow them to do this. Then, as the war approaches, Qatar, which,—their only product is natural gas,—it is a country that is basically sand dunes and gas wells. There is nothing else there. My wife Barbara and I have been there and seen it. So they asked for a gas pipeline. Syria refused the gas pipeline, and this immediately caused a flood of wealth starting to move from Qatar to the rebels in Syria.

The other thing I would say was an element of this was the weaponization of religion. This is something that the United States, unfortunately, began triggering during the conflict in Afghanistan with the Soviet Union. We began to create this mujahideen movement,

and we armed it, and when we found out that it was not big enough to overthrow the Soviet Union, we then worked with Saudi Arabia, CIA, and to some extent Pakistani Intelligence, and they set up these madrassas, and they taught, not the mainstream Islam, but Wahhabism. It was extremely violent, and we had, at that point, opened Pandora's box.

There Are No Moderate Rebels

And we have continued—you would think we would have learned our lesson and said, "Hey this is really dangerous. Put the top on the box." But instead we said, "Gosh, this is kind of neat. We can create hatreds between this group and that group and fissures, and we can use it in Iraq and we can use it everywhere." It is one of the most terrible things that has ever been done. And ironically it wasn't done by Osama bin Laden, it wasn't done by some terrorist, it was done by planners at the Central Intelligence Agency, who looked at the possibilities that were available, *if we could create these religious divisions*. And now, of course, they have gotten well out of hand.

Here are the competing oil and gas pipelines. Those are the ones favored by Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Iran had a plan to do one, also. Neither of those have been built as a result of the war.

If you read the works of Seymour Hersh, he wrote "The Red Line and The Rat Line," a magnificent article and if you are interested in this, you have got to look it up: ["The Red Line and the Rat Line."](#) The Red Line was Obama's threat to enter the war if poison gas was used. Very convenient. And it tied right in with what the Turks were doing. The other thing was the Rat Line. The Rat Line was the movement of Libyan weapons into Syria. This is the way it went. Qatar had a major air fleet. They sent transports into Libya. They were loaded with weapons. The weapons were transported to Turkey, and Turkey then funneled them across the border into Syria, where they supplied all sorts of terrorist groups.

Now, this became a major concern for the Pentagon. And the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Defense Intelligence Agency to do a very extensive, highly classified project, to determine where we stood in Syria. The concern was that if Syria fell, the Pentagon believed it had major strategic implications for the entire Middle East, and perhaps beyond. The DIA rendered findings in the middle of 2013. Here is what they found: They said, first of all President Assad must remain in power or Syria will collapse in chaos, just as Libya has

done. Next, they said that if Assad falls, he will be replaced by extremists.

Now, the CIA had ostensibly formed this rat line to supply moderate rebels. The Defense Intelligence Agency determined that by 2013 the Central Intelligence Agency was giving full support to all rebels, including Al-Qaeda and ISIS: the entire spectrum. Importantly, DIA determined that *there are no moderate rebels*. They do not exist. That is not to say there is not some fellow out there on the battlefield, but for any practical purposes, the moderate rebels do not exist. As a consequence, the United States is arming extremists.

Now, this is the Defense Intelligence Agency, this is not my speculation or some particular group. The DIA warned of dire consequences from toppling Assad, and they repeatedly warned the White House of the dramatic strategic danger we faced if this were done. Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn was the commander of DIA. He was their director during the relevant time, and here is a quote from him:

The Administration's policy was contradictory. They wanted Assad to go, but the opposition was dominated by extremists. We knew this, the White House knew it, and we forged on.

Here is where we are today. We've got a question, who will win the war in Syria? Well, first of all, we know it is not going to be the moderate rebels. We have a Defense Intelligence Agency finding that the moderate rebels do not exist. So it is not going to be them! Have I made that point? [Laughter.] All right.

There are two alternatives. President Assad, who is heavily supported by the army, who is heavily supported by the people of Syria, either they will win, or Al-Qaeda and associated groups—there is a whole panoply of groups, they all take different names—I can't help but believe that the use of these names is designed to make things so complex that ordinary people can't comprehend it, and they give up and say, OK, whatever



Courtesy of Sen. Black

Senator Black at the ruins of Palmyra, a World Heritage Site that has been liberated from ISIS.

the government says. But the fact is, that the moderate rebels are no different from Al-Qaeda.

How Palmyra Fell to ISIS

Those are our two choices: Al-Qaeda or the government that is in power in Syria today. So you have to ask the question: Are we prepared for Al-Qaeda to take over Syria? We have experience with Al-Qaeda. We are about to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Al-Qaeda bringing down the Twin Towers and turning the Pentagon into a fireball. What awaits the Christians, the Alawites, the moderate Sunnis, the Shi'ites, the Druze? We know what will happen if Al-Qaeda takes over, because we have *seen* what happens when Al-Qaeda takes over, and this is the fate that awaits the good people, the decent people of Syria, what you see right here.

I have to go back to this idea: Syria has this magnificent tradition of religious harmony. This is in 2013. The war had been going on for two years. They erected a magnificent statue of Jesus Christ that overlooks Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. Can you imagine the difficulty we would have in this country, if we did it? [laughter] You can't do that in America! You have to do it in Syria! I had to go to Syria to experience the religious freedom that I knew when I was a child!

I spoke with the Grand Mufti. He's the leader of all of the Sunnis and I think to a good extent to the Shi'ites as well. Magnificent, wonderful man! He made the

comment,—now there are 23 million Syrians—he said, “We Syrians are 23 million Christians.” He said, “My mother’s name was Myriam, like Mary, mother of Jesus.”

Then I went and spoke with the Patriarch, the Christian Patriarch of Syria and the East, and he made the comment, he said, “We Syrians are 23 million Muslims.” And when he said that I said, “That’s interesting you say that, it’s the reflection of what the Mufti said.” And he stroked his beard, and he said, “Well, some people say I have a Muslim beard.”

This is a reflection of the *love* and the affection,—it is genuine—between people of different faiths.

I went to a choral presentation one evening, and I was *stunned*. This is in a 70% Muslim city, the city of Homs, and all of a sudden, I’m watching and I couldn’t tell what they were singing about,—they were singing in Arabic,—but they were singing about Christ’s crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension. It was the Christian Easter, and here they were, and I leaned over to the wife of the governor of Homs province, who is a Muslim, and said, “this is kind of surprising to me.” She said, “Oh, many of the members of the choir and many of the members of the audience are Muslim as well.”

Where else? Where else, but in Syria? This is on the final day of my visit. I gave an extensive interview to SANA, which is like the Fox News of Syria, and as I was walking out, I looked over, and here’s a Christmas tree in the press pit, and I said “What is this?” And they said “This is the martyrs’ Christmas tree.”

You’ll see the photographs there. There are seven people. All of them have been killed reporting on the Syrian war, which has been *horrific*. I mean this was like the American Civil War with the percentage of people slaughtered. And it occurred to me, I said here’s a Christmas tree, there is a star on the top of it, it’s even got the Christmas Grinch on there somewhere. And most of the pictures there are Muslims. It’s sort of like, the Christians’ way of honoring the Muslims for what they have done. So, it is unique in Syria.

Now, I went out to Palmyra. Palmyra is very interesting. It is one of the architectural gems of the entire world. And ISIS had captured it and the generals were showing me how they had managed to recapture, it once the Russians came in with an expeditionary force



courtesy of Sen. Richard Black

A Christmas-tree-shaped cutout in Homs as a memorial to journalists, most of whom are Muslim, who have been killed in Syria.

that provided some additional air support. Tremendously heroic people. And they had captured it.

However, ISIS had been allowed to capture Palmyra, and you can see the devastation. This was truly one of the architectural wonders of the world. It wasn’t just a possession of Syria. It was a possession of all mankind, and it was allowed to be destroyed by ISIS. It just angered me, and I think you can see that when I’m talking to the press. Because we had a coalition of 67 nations, with aircraft that were supposedly working against ISIS, and ISIS was able to assemble a huge army—now let me just back up a second.

The Meaning of Aleppo

ISIS had to travel 100 miles across open desert, with hundreds and hundreds of vehicles—tanks, artillery pieces, trucks, all of these things. I cannot imagine that that coalition did not have the ability to spot everything that was going on, and I have confirmed they did not drop *one single bomb* to stop ISIS from taking Palmyra. Why? Because Palmyra is mid-way between the areas controlled by ISIS, and Damascus itself.

And I believe that we were so intent on toppling the government of Syria that we were willing to have ISIS, after all of the viciousness and horrors they had inflicted, we were willing to inflict that on Damascus, Syria, and to empower them with a far greater Caliphate than they

had ever had. And it just infuriated me, and I think you can tell from the look on my face, my emotions there.

Now this will just give you some idea of where the war stands. If you look, the Syrian government—the government-controlled areas are shown in the reddish-orange there—they control 75-80% of the population of Syria. Much of Syria is desert. The white area is simply desert. It had very little population. The gray area is the area that was controlled by ISIS. It's gradually shrinking. You can see where Palmyra is, right in the center, right here. So you can see—they had to travel with a huge army across the desert to Palmyra, and we *deliberately* allowed them to do it, so that they could capture Palmyra, hoping that they would drive on to Damascus.

Now, just to bring you very current, the biggest battle that is taking place in Syria today is the battle for Aleppo. Aleppo is the industrial heartland of Syria. The rebels have held about 20% of the city for years. The government has held the vast majority of the city, but Al-Qaeda controls it—it's called Al-Nusra over there, but it's Al-Qaeda. Even the White House has said they're Al-Qaeda. And they had a supply route that went into the pocket and supplied it. And the Syrian army had tried for many years to try to seal that off. They finally attacked and they were able to do that, and they cut the supply line, and they created the Aleppo pocket.

Now, if you listen to the American mainstream media, you would think that all that's happening with Aleppo is that some civilians are in there, and they're just being bombed for no purpose whatsoever. The fact of the matter is, we really should be rejoicing, because there is a major al-Qaeda army that is trapped in there, and particularly on 9/11, we should say—Rah, here we go! We've trapped Al-Qaeda! We're going to get even with these people that brought down the Twin Towers, and sent people leaping from the flaming buildings, and leaping to their death a quarter of a mile below.

But anyway, the next thing is that Al-Qaeda assembled an army of 40,000 people. Now you won't know this from the mainstream media! 40,000 troops! That's *two* heavy American divisions,—and Al-Qaeda, they've done really well. They started with 19 people on 9/11; now they're up to two, full armored, mechanized divisions, and what they did is, they attacked. The forces inside attacked, and the forces outside attacked. Now, let me tell you. If you think for a moment that the Aleppo pocket is simply civilians, they attacked with *thousands* of terrorists, supported by 95 main battle tanks. 95 tanks!

This is one of the biggest armored battles in our lifetimes—not a word of it in the media. You've got to really dig and find it out. That's a lot of tanks.

But anyway, they managed to briefly breach the barrier, but the Syrian Army very, very skillfully drove them back, and have driven both of those arrows back, and they now have resealed the Aleppo pocket. And because they can't obtain new weapons and supplies inside, they're withering very quickly. The Syrian army is moving very quickly, and it appears that, absent something extraordinary, they have lost the battle of Aleppo.

I just want to let you know who these people we're supporting, the ones we call moderates,—who are these moderates?

Our Honor

One of the groups which we support is called Jaesh al-Islam. This is taken in the area of Damascus, and Jaesh al-Islam despises the Alawites. The Alawites are considered friends of Christians. They're much more moderate. And they [Jaesh] captured Alawite women, and they put them in steel cages—no privacy, no facilities, and they parade them around town in cages. This is one of the groups that the United States supports, and the U.S. State Department refuses to call them extremist. I would call that pretty extreme.

But if you don't think that's extreme, here's another example. Russia and Syria insisted that Ansar al-Sham be labeled as terrorist. Secretary Kerry refused to do it, and on the 13th of May of this year, they committed the massacre at Al-Zahra. This is a photograph that they have admitted is valid, but they said that the housewives that you see on the floor, they were fighters. Look for some weapons. What fighters go into battle barefooted? What kind of fighters go into battle wearing housedresses? What kind of fighters have world geographic maps on the wall, so that they can teach their children geography?

After they murdered these women, they captured—now, the children watched as they murdered their mothers. These are American allies! These are the moderates we support. After the children had to watch their mothers slaughtered, they were doused with gasoline, lit on fire, and burned to death.

What's happened to our country? What has happened to our country?

Here's a very recent one. The United States backs a group called Al-Zinki—it's Nour al-Din al-Zinki. They give them all these crazy names to make it hard to keep

up. The United States pays the entire al-Zinki force. It's about a thousand terrorists. This group of five, paid for out of your pocket, and yours and yours, went into a hospital. They captured this little Palestinian refugee boy, terrified—if you look closely, you'll see that there's still an IV hanging out of his arm. They took him out to a town square in a pickup truck, and you can see one of them has him by the hair. And that individual who had him by the hair took him, slammed him down, sliced his head off with a knife, waved it to the crowd—"Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar!" A little boy who was so terrified, so frightened, so frail, suffering from a blood disease. The United States supports these people. We pay his salary! Your tax money pays his salary! Your tax money pays the salary of that man whose hand is on the head of that boy, and then severed it seconds later!

You won't hear about this in the mainstream media, but we also funnel TOW anti-tank missiles through these so-called moderate groups, knowing that they're going to Al-Qaeda, knowing that they're going to ISIS.

This is the Syrian ambassador, the UN Ambassador from Syria, Bashar Ja'afari, a magnificent, heroic man, who—[laughter] Mr. Ambassador. [applause] I have to tell you a small story about him. One of the things that we do when we're toppling nations, is we try to buy off ambassadors, and get them to turn on their nations. Ambassador Ja'afari was approached. He was given a blank check—I think, do you still have that check? But, in any event, he's a great man of honor and courage, and he said, no, I will *not* betray my people; I will not slaughter my people for money. [applause] And I am very proud to know the Ambassador.

Now, people ask me, they say, why are you so passionate about this? You don't have any Syrian relatives. You don't have any Middle Eastern relatives. Well, you know, I was a Marine, and I started at Parris Island as a private. We used to stand at night, and we'd sing the Marine Corps hymn, and we said that "I will fight for right and freedom, and to keep our honor clean. I'm proud to claim the title of United States Marine." *Our honor is disgraced.* Our honor has been laden with filth in Syria. There is nothing more vile than what we have done to the people of Syria that's resulted in 400,000 deaths, and I want to change, I want to bring peace there. I want the people to have self-determination. I



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Senator Black (right) and Syrian Ambassador Ja'afari at the Sept. 10 Schiller Institute conference.

don't want a bunch of foreign nations coming down and saying, this is the puppet government we want to install. The people of Syria want Bashar al-Assad. They should have the person that they want.

Now finally, I'll tell you, this is a group of Christian school children. We took a picture with the Patriarch, and if you look at the faces, it'll help to explain the passion that I have. If the United States continues on its present course, if the United States succeeds in toppling the government of Syria, it will be replaced by Al-Qaeda. And within two years, all of those joyous, smiling young children that you see, will be dead. That's why I'm very deeply concerned, and I am *determined* that we will turn around American policy in Syria.

Finally, just a last photo of what happens when people like Al-Qaeda take over. Now this is ISIS. They both are progeny of Al-Qaeda. They captured these 19 Yazidi women, and they tried to force themselves on them, and the women refused have multiple sex with strangers. And they took them out, and seconds after this photo was taken, they took them one at a time, and they burned them to death publicly for refusing to have sex with these people. *What has America done? What have we become?*

We're better than this. I know the American people are better than this. But the American federal government is not. And we need to make sure that somehow we change the direction that we've taken. Thank you very much.