

Assad's Control Erodes as Warlords Gain Upper Hand in Syria **World**

Posted by:

Posted on : 2017/3/14 20:52:55

The article below qualifies as today's MUST READ for anyone with an interest in international affairs – and most especially Russian citizens, whose national budget is being squandered to support the evil regime of Bashar al-Assad. It might be logical if in return Russia was gaining firm control of Syria but Russian rubles and Russian blood is buying nothing except temporary control of limited parts of a country that are no longer under control of Assad. Instead, Assad – and by extension Russia – must deal with the fact that real power in Syria today is controlled by criminal gangs with loyalty only to themselves. If you read nothing else today, I urge you to read the article and to consider its long-term implications.

By Fritz Schaap (Text) and Christian Werner (Photos) for Spiegel Online, Mar 8, 2017 On a cool morning, an elderly man is standing at his espresso machine on a street in eastern Aleppo. It's shortly after 8 a.m., and this part of the city -- destroyed in the war and reconquered by the regime in December -- is waking up. Green grocers arrive and set out their boxes of produce on the rubble piled in front of their stores. Others are shoveling debris from the roads. The name of the man with the espresso machine must go unmentioned, otherwise he would soon be dead. A fire is burning in a metal drum next to his improvised coffee counter, and he is using it to periodically warm his hands. Several weeks ago, just after the neighborhood was retaken, he returned to the small workshop where he had run a motorcycle repair shop -- but it was already too late. He immediately saw that someone had shot open the lock. Inside, he found uniformed fighters from a militia affiliated with the regime. They were in the process, he says, of removing a motorcycle, his German tools and all replacement parts from the garage. Two of the militia members, he says, silently threatened him with their Kalashnikovs, leaving him no choice but to leave as the men loaded his belonging into a pick-up truck. As he relates his story, other civilians approach the fire and begin nodding. One of them, the owner of a general store, says that regular army soldiers had hardly left before militia members began emptying out his store. Another relates the story of how militia members murdered his brother. The brother had been lying wounded in bed when five fighters forced their way into his apartment. Bring him out, the fighters ordered before claiming the apartment as their own. The man protested, saying his brother was unable to walk -- whereupon one of the militia members pulled out his gun and shot the brother in the head. Then the fighters looted the apartment. For access to complete text and a gallery of photos, link below: [http://www.spiegel.de/international/w ...html#ref=nl-international](http://www.spiegel.de/international/w...html#ref=nl-international)