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23. 8. 2013 Obama's interview on CNN New Day

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30. 8. 2013 Obama's remarks on Syria, Kerry's interview on Syria on PBS (*Concluding That Syria Used Chemical Arms, Kerry Warns of 'Risk of Doing Nothing'*)

31. 8. 2013 President Obama asks Congress to vote on Syria strike

2. 9. 2013 Assad's interview with Le Figaro (*Syria's President Bashar al-Assad: 'Power lies in your ability to prevent wars, not in igniting them.'*)

3. 9. 2013 Obama talks Syria before Congress meeting

9. 9. 2013 Obama's interview for Fox News, Assad's interview with CBS News, NBC's interview with president Obama regarding Syria

10. 9. 2013 President Obama's speech on Syria

11. 9. 2013 Obama's interview with CBS News

13. 9. 2013 Assad's interview with Rossiya 24 TV Channel and SANA (*President Bashar Al Assad's Interview on Chemical Weapons*), Obama's interview for ABC News 'This Week' (*President Obama Speaks Exclusively to George Stephanopoulos on 'This Week'*)

18. 9. 2013 Assad's interview with Fow News and SANA (*President Bashar al-Assad's Interview on Syria's Chemical Weapons*)

Příloha č. 2: Legenda k označování mluvčích (text)

(Pozn.: Kurziva označuje reportážní vstupy.)

O = prezident B. Obama

R = reportér

K = ministr zahraničí J. Kerry

A = president B. Asad

S = ajatolláh Kazem Sedighi

M = místní obyvatel Sýrie

I = vyšetřovatel OSN

Q = dotazující z řad novinářů

Příloha č. 3: Analyzované originální texty doplněné o řádkování a zdroj (text)

Obama's interview on CNN New Day

(...vynechány části věnující se školnému pro chudé děti, kauze E. Snowdena a dalším tématům, druhá část rozhovoru vynechána zcela)

CNN, 23. 8. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/23/politics/barack-obama-new-day-interview-transcript/>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 O: All right. We're ready? OK.

2 (...)

3 R: Families certainly need the help. That's for sure. Let me ask you about some of the
4 emerging situations, most recently, Syria. You've seen the images; you know the situation
5 very well. Do you believe at this point you need to investigate in order to say what seems
6 obvious, which is, we need to do more to stop the violence in Syria that the U.S. needs to do
7 more.

8 O: Well, we are right now gathering information about this particular event, but I can say that
9 unlike some of the evidence that we were trying to get earlier that led to a U.N. investigator
10 going into Syria, what we've seen indicates that this is clearly a big event of grave concern.
11 And, you know, we are already in communications with the entire international community.
12 We're moving through the U.N. to try to prompt better action from them. And we've called on
13 the Syrian government to allow an investigation of the site, because U.N. inspectors are on the
14 ground right now. We don't expect cooperation, given their past history, and, you know, what
15 I do believe is that -- although the situation in Syria is very difficult and the notion that the
16 U.S. can somehow solve what is a sectarian, complex problem inside of Syria sometimes is
17 overstated...

18 R: But delay can be deadly, right, Mr. President?

19 O: ...there is -- there is no doubt that when you start seeing chemical weapons used on a large
20 scale -- and, again, we're still gathering information about this particular event, but it is very
21 troublesome...

22 R: There's strong proof they used them already, though, in the past.

23 O: ...then that starts getting to some core national interests that the United States has, both in
24 terms of us making sure that weapons of mass destruction are not proliferating, as well as
25 needing to protect our allies, our bases in the region. So, you know, I think it is fair to say
26 that, as difficult as the problem is, this is something that is going to require America's
27 attention and hopefully the entire international community's attention.

28 R: Senator McCain came on "New Day" very strong on this. He believes that the U.S.'s
29 credibility in the region has been hurt, that a situation like Syria -- that he believes there's
30 been delay, and it has led to a boldness by the regime there, that in Egypt, that what My
31 believe was a coup wasn't called a coup that led to the problems that we're seeing there now,
32 do you think that's fair criticism?

33 O: Well, you know, I am sympathetic to Senator McCain's passion for helping people work
34 through what is an extraordinarily difficult and heartbreaking situation, both in Syria and in
35 Egypt, and these two countries are in different situations. But what I think the American
36 people also expect me to do as president is to think through what we do from the perspective
37 of, what is in our long-term national interests? And, you know, I -- you know, sometimes
38 what we've seen is that folks will call for immediate action, jumping into stuff, that does not
39 turn out well, gets us mired in very difficult situations, can result in us being drawn into very
40 expensive, difficult, costly interventions that actually breed more resentment in the region. So,
41 you know, we remain the one indispensable nation. There's a reason why, when you listen to
42 what's happened around Egypt and Syria that everybody asks what the U.S. is doing. It's
43 because the United States continues to be the one country that people expect can do more than
44 just simply protect their borders. But that does not mean that we have to get involved with
45 everything immediately. We have to think through strategically what's going to be in our
46 long-term national interests, even as we work cooperatively internationally to do everything
47 we can to put pressure on those who would kill innocent civilians.

48 R: The red line comment that you made was about a year ago this week.

49 O: Right.

50 R: We know since then there have been things that should qualify for crossing that red line.

51 O: Well, Chris, I've got to -- I've got to say this. The -- when we take action -- let's just take
52 the example of Syria. There are rules of international law.

53 R: Uh-huh.

54 O: And, you know, if the U.S. goes in and attacks another country without a U.N. mandate
55 and without clear evidence that can be presented, then there are questions in terms of whether
56 international law supports it, do we have the coalition to make it work, and, you know, those
57 are considerations that we have to take into account.

58 R: You don't believe we've seen enough?

59 O: Now, this -- well, this latest event is something that we've got to take a look at. But keep in
60 mind, also, Chris -- because I know the American people keep this in mind -- we've still got a
61 war going on in Afghanistan.

62 R: True. True.

63 O: You know, we're still spending tens of billions of dollars in Afghanistan. I will be ending
64 that war by the end of 2014, but every time I go to Walter Reed and visit wounded troops, and
65 every time I sign a letter for a casualty of that war, I'm reminded that there are costs and we
66 have to take those into account as we try to work within an international framework to do
67 everything we can to see Assad ousted -- somebody who's lost credibility -- and to try to
68 restore a sense of a democratic process and stability inside of Egypt.

69 R: It doesn't have to be military, of course. I take your point, Mr. President. When you look at
70 Egypt, it's an example of that.

71 O: Right.

72 R: Senator McConnell is saying, hey, I think it's time to vote on the aid...

73 O: Right.

74 R: ... and whether or not you give it. That's a non-military measure that could make a
75 difference in a situation where now we see Mubarak is now in a hospital.

76 O: Right. Well...

77 R: Whatever that means.

78 O: You know, my sense is with -- with Egypt is that the aid itself may not reverse what the
79 interim government does. But I think what most Americans would say is that we have to be
80 very careful about being seen as aiding and abetting actions that we think run contrary to our
81 values and our ideals. So what we're doing right now is doing a full evaluation of the U.S.-
82 Egyptian relationship. We care deeply about the Egyptian people. This is a partnership that's
83 been very important to us, in part because of the peace treaty with Israel and the work that's
84 been done to deal with the Sinai. But there's no -- there's no doubt that we can't return to
85 business as usual, given what's happened. There was a space right after Mr. Morsy was
86 removed in which we did a lot of heavy lifting and a lot of diplomatic work to try to
87 encourage the military to move in a path of reconciliation. They did not take that opportunity.
88 It was worth it for us to try that, despite folks who wanted more immediate black-and-white
89 action or statements, because ultimately what we want is a good outcome there. But there's no
90 doubt that, at this point, we've got to take a look and see, what's in the long-term interests of
91 the Egyptian people? What's in the long-term interests of the United States?

92 R: Is it safe to say that we have a shorter time frame now, in terms of what the U.S. can use as
93 a period of decision...

94 O: Yes.

95 R: ... in Syria and Egypt?

96 O: Yes.

97 R: It's a more abbreviated timeframe now?

98 O: Yes.

99 (...)

100 R: Mr. President, I appreciate the time.

101 O: I enjoyed it. Thank you very much.

102 R: Thank you very much.

103 O: Appreciate it.

104 R: Thank you.

John Kerry's remarks on Syria

The White House, 26. 8. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/08/213503.htm>>
[cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 Well, for the last several days president Obama and his entire national security team have
2 been reviewing the situation in Syria, and today I want to provide an update on our efforts as
3 we consider our response to the use of chemical weapons. What we saw in Syria last week
4 should shock the conscience of the world. It defies any code of morality. Let me be clear: The
5 indiscriminate slaughter of civilians, the killing of women and children and innocent
6 bystanders, by chemical weapons is a moral obscenity. By any standard it is inexcusable, and
7 despite the excuses and equivocations that some have manufactured, it is undeniable. The
8 meaning of this attack goes beyond the conflict in Syria itself, and that conflict has already
9 brought so much terrible suffering. This is about the large-scale, indiscriminate use of
10 weapons that the civilized world long ago decided must never be used at all – a conviction
11 shared even by countries that agree on little else. There is a clear reason that the world has
12 banned entirely the use of chemical weapons. There is a reason the international community
13 has set a clear standard and why many countries have taken major steps to eradicate these
14 weapons. There is a reason why president Obama has made it such a priority to stop the
15 proliferation of these weapons and lock them down where they do exist. There is a reason
16 why president Obama has made clear to the Assad regime that this international norm cannot
17 be violated without consequences. And there is a reason why no matter what you believe
18 about Syria, all peoples and all nations who believe in the cause of our common humanity
19 must stand up to assure that there is accountability for the use of chemical weapons so that it
20 never happens again. Last night after speaking with foreign ministers from around the world
21 about the gravity of this situation, I went back and I watched the videos, the videos that
22 anybody can watch in the social media, and I watched them one more gut-wrenching time. It
23 is really hard to express in words the human suffering that they lay out before us. As a father,
24 I can't get the image out of my head of a man who held up his dead child, wailing while chaos
25 swirled around him; the images of entire families dead in their beds without a drop of blood
26 or even a visible wound; bodies contorting in spasms; human suffering that we can never
27 ignore or forget. Anyone who can claim that an attack of this staggering scale could be
28 contrived or fabricated, needs to check their conscience and their own moral compass. What
29 is before us today is real, and it is compelling. So I also want to underscore that while
30 investigators are gathering additional evidence on the ground, our understanding of what has
31 already happened in Syria is grounded in facts informed by conscience and guided by
32 common sense. The reported number of victims, the reported symptoms of those who were
33 killed or injured, the firsthand accounts from humanitarian organizations on the ground like
34 Doctors Without Borders and the Syria Human Rights Commission – these all strongly
35 indicate that everything these images are already screaming at us is real, that chemical
36 weapons were used in Syria. Moreover, we know that the Syrian regime maintains custody of
37 these chemical weapons. We know that the Syrian regime has the capacity to do this with
38 rockets. We know that the regime has been determined to clear the opposition from those very
39 places where the attacks took place. And with our own eyes, we have all of us become
40 witnesses. We have additional information about this attack, and that information is being
41 compiled and reviewed together with our partners, and we will provide that information in the
42 days ahead. Our sense of basic humanity is offended not only by this cowardly crime but also
43 by the cynical attempt to cover it up. At every turn, the Syrian regime has failed to cooperate
44 with the UN investigation, using it only to stall and to stymie the important effort to bring to

45 light what happened in Damascus in the dead of night. And as Ban Ki-moon said last week,
46 the UN investigation will not determine who used these chemical weapons, only whether such
47 weapons were used – a judgment that is already clear to the world. I spoke on Thursday with
48 Syrian Foreign Minister Muallim and I made it very clear to him that if the regime, as he
49 argued, had nothing to hide, then their response should be immediate – immediate
50 transparency, immediate access – not shelling. Their response needed to be unrestricted and
51 immediate access. Failure to permit that, I told him, would tell its own story. Instead, for five
52 days, the Syrian regime refused to allow the UN investigators access to the site of the attack
53 that would allegedly exonerate them. Instead, it attacked the area further, shelling it and
54 systematically destroying evidence. That is not the behavior of a government that has nothing
55 to hide. That is not the action of a regime eager to prove to the world that it had not used
56 chemical weapons. In fact, the regime's belated decision to allow access is too late, and it's too
57 late to be credible. Today's reports of an attack on the UN investigators, together with the
58 continued shelling of these very neighborhoods, only further weakens the regime's credibility.
59 At Obama's direction, I've spent many hours over the last few days on the phone with foreign
60 ministers and other leaders. The Administration is actively consulting with members of
61 Congress and we will continue to have these conversations in the days ahead. President
62 Obama has also been in close touch with the leaders of our key allies, and the President will
63 be making an informed decision about how to respond to this indiscriminate use of chemical
64 weapons. But make no mistake: president Obama believes there must be accountability for
65 those who would use the world's most heinous weapons against the world's most vulnerable
66 people. Nothing today is more serious and nothing is receiving more serious scrutiny.
67 Thank you.

Assad: 'Syria will never become a Western puppet state'

Global Research, Ivestia (SANA), 26. 8. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/president-al-assad-syria-will-never-become-a-western-puppet-state/5346955>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

- 1 R: Mr. President, the most pressing question today is the current situation in Syria. What parts
2 of the country remain under the rebels' control?
- 3 A: From our perspective, it's not a matter of labeling areas as controlled by terrorists or by the
4 government; we are not dealing with a conventional occupation to allow us to contextualise it
5 in this manner. We are fighting terrorists infiltrating particular regions, towns or peripheral
6 city areas. They wreak havoc, vandalise, destroy infrastructure and kill innocent civilians
7 simply because they denounce them. The army mobilises into these areas with the security
8 forces and law enforcement agencies to eradicate the terrorists, those who survive relocate to
9 other areas. Therefore, the essence of our action is striking terrorism. Our challenge, which
10 has protracted the situation, is the influx of large amounts of terrorists from other countries –
11 estimated in the tens of thousands at the very least. As long as they continue to receive
12 financial and military aid, we will continue to strike them. I can confirm that there has not
13 been any instance where the Syrian Army has planned to enter a particular location and has
14 not succeeded in eliminating the terrorists within it. The majority of those we are fighting are
15 Takfiris, who adopt the al-Qaeda doctrine, in addition to a small number of outlaws, so as I
16 said this not about who controls more areas of land. Wherever terrorism strikes, we shall
17 strike back.
- 18 R: Yet, Western mainstream media claim that the terrorists control 40% to 70% of Syrian
19 territory; what is the reality?

20 A: There isn't an army in the world that can be present with its armament in every corner of
21 any given country. The terrorists exploit this, and violate areas where the army is not present.
22 They escape from one area to another, and we continue to eradicate them from these areas
23 with great success. Therefore, I reiterate, the issue is not the size of the territories they
24 infiltrate but the large influx of terrorists coming from abroad. The more significant criterion
25 to evaluate success is – has the Syrian Army been able to enter any area infiltrated by
26 terrorists and defeat them? Most certainly the answer is yes; the army has always succeeded in
27 this and continues to do so. However, this takes time because these types of wars do not end
28 suddenly, they protract for prolonged periods and as such carry a heavy price. Even when we
29 have eradicated all the terrorists, we will have paid a hefty price.

30 R: Mr. President, you have spoken of Islamist Takfiri extremists' fighters who have entered
31 Syria. Are they fragmented groups who fight sporadically? Or do they belong to a coherent
32 major force that seeks to destroy the security and stability in Syria and the whole Middle
33 East?

34 A: They have both traits. They are similar in that they all share the same extremist Takfiri
35 doctrine of certain individuals such as Zawahiri; they also have similar or identical financial
36 backing and military support. They differ on the ground in that they are incoherent and
37 scattered with each group adhering to a separate leader and pursuing different agendas. Of
38 course it is well known that countries, such as Saudi Arabia, who hold the purse strings, can
39 shape and manipulate them to suit their own interests. Ideologically, these countries mobilise
40 them through direct or indirect means as extremist tools. If they declare that Muslims must
41 pursue Jihad in Syria, thousands of fighters will respond. Financially, those who finance and
42 arm such groups can instruct them to carry out acts of terrorism and spread anarchy. The
43 influence over them is synergised when a country such as Saudi Arabia directs them through
44 both the Wahhabi ideology and their financial means.

45 R: The Syrian government claims a strong link between Israel and the terrorists. How can you
46 explain this? It is commonly perceived that the extremist Islamists loathe Israel and become
47 hysterical upon hearing its name.

48 A: If this was the case, why is it then that when we strike the terrorists at the frontier, Israel
49 strikes at our forces to alleviate the pressure off of them? Why, when we blockade them into
50 an area does Israel let them through their barricades so they can come round and re-attack
51 from another direction? Why has Israel carried out direct strikes against the Syrian Army on
52 more than one occasion in recent months? So clearly this perception is inaccurate. It is Israel
53 who has publically declared its cooperation with these terrorists and treated them in Israeli
54 hospitals. If these terrorist groups were indeed hostile to Israel and hysterical even on the
55 mention of the word as you mention, why have they fought the Soviet Union, Syria and
56 Egypt, whilst never carrying out a single strike against Israel? Who originally created these
57 terrorist groups? These groups were initially created in the early 80's by the United States and
58 the West, with Saudi funding, to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. So logically speaking,
59 how could such groups manufactured by the US and the West ever strike Israel!

60 R: Mr. President, this interview will be translated into several international languages, and
61 shall be read by world leaders, some who may currently be working against you. What would
62 you like to say to them?

63 A: Today there are My Western politicians, but very few statesmen. Some of these politicians
64 do not read history or even learn from it, whilst others do not even remember recent events.
65 Have these politicians learned any lessons from the past 50 years at least? Have they not

66 realised that since the Vietnam War, all the wars their predecessors have waged have failed?
67 Have they not learned that they have gained nothing from these wars but the destruction of the
68 countries they fought, which has had a destabilising effect on the Middle East and other parts
69 of the world? Have they not comprehended that all of these wars have not made people in the
70 region appreciate them or believe in their policies? From another perspective, these politicians
71 should know that terrorism is not a winning card you play when it suits you and keep it in
72 your pocket when it doesn't. Terrorism is like a scorpion; it can unexpectedly sting you at any
73 time. Therefore, you cannot support terrorism in Syria whilst fighting it in Mali; you cannot
74 support terrorism in Chechnya and fight it in Afghanistan. To be very precise, I am referring
75 to the West and not all world leaders, if these western leaders are looking to achieve their
76 interests, they need to listen to their own constituents and to the people in this region rather
77 than seeking to install 'puppet' leaders, in the hope that they would be able to deliver their
78 objectives. In doing so, western policy may become more realistic in the region. Our message
79 to the world is straightforward: Syria will never become a Western 'puppet' state. We are an
80 independent country; we will fight terrorism and we will freely build relationships with
81 countries in a way that best serves the interests of the Syrian people.

82 R: On Wednesday, the rebels accused the Syrian government of using chemical weapons;
83 some Western leaders adopted these accusations. What is your response to this? Will you
84 allow the UN inspectors access to the site to investigate the incident?

85 A: The statements by the American administration, the West and other countries were made
86 with disdain and blatant disrespect of their own public opinion; there isn't a body in the
87 world, let alone a superpower, that makes an accusation and then goes about collecting
88 evidence to prove its point. The American administration made the accusation on Wednesday
89 and two days later announced that they would start to collect the evidence – what evidence is
90 it going to gather from afar?! They claim that the area in question is under the control of the
91 rebels and that the Syrian Army used chemical weapons. In fact, the area is in contiguity with
92 the Syrian Army positions, so how is it possible that any country would use chemical
93 weapons, or any weapons of mass destruction, in an area where its own forces are located;
94 this is preposterous! These accusations are completely politicised and come on the back of the
95 advances made by the Syrian Army against the terrorists. As for the UN Commission, we
96 were the first to request a UN investigation when terrorists launched rockets that carried toxic
97 gas in the outskirts of Aleppo. Several months before the attack, American and Western
98 statements were already preparing public opinion of the potential use of chemical weapons by
99 the Syrian government. This raised our suspicion that they were aware of the terrorists'
100 intentions to use these weapons in order to blame the Syrian government. After liaising with
101 Russia, we decided to request a commission to investigate the incident. Whereas we requested
102 an investigation based on the facts on the ground, not on rumours or allegations; the US,
103 France and the UK have tried to exploit the incident to investigate allegations rather than
104 happenings. During the last few weeks, we have worked with the Commission and set the
105 guidelines for cooperation. First of these, is that our national sovereignty is a red line and as
106 such the Commission will directly liaise with us during the process. Second, the issue is not
107 only how the investigation will be conducted but also how the results will be interpreted. We
108 are all aware that instead of being interpreted in an objective manner, these results could
109 easily be interpreted according to the requirements and agendas of certain major countries.
110 Certainly, we expect Russia to block any interpretation that aims to serve American and
111 western policies. What is most important is that we differentiate between western accusations
112 that are based on allegations and hearsay and our request for an investigation based on
113 concrete evidence and facts.

114 R: Recent statements by the American administration and other Western governments have
115 stated that the US has not ruled out military intervention in Syria. In light of this, is it looking
116 more likely that the US would behave in the same way it did in Iraq, in other words look for a
117 pretext for military intervention?

118 A: This is not the first time that the possibility of military intervention has been raised. From
119 the outset, the US, along with France and Britain, has strived for military intervention in
120 Syria. Unfortunately for them, events took a different course with the balance shifting against
121 their interests in the Security Council despite their numerous attempts to haggle with Russia
122 and China, but to no avail. The negative outcomes that emerged in Libya and Egypt were also
123 not in their favour. All of this made it impossible for them to convince their constituents and
124 the world that they were following sound or successful policies. The situation in Libya also
125 differs to that of Egypt and Tunisia, and Syria as I have said is very different from all these.
126 Each country has a unique situation and applying the same scenario across the board is no
127 longer a plausible option. No doubt they can wage wars, but they cannot predict where they
128 will spread or how they will end. This has led them to realise that all their crafted scenarios
129 have now spiralled out of their control. It is now crystal clear to everybody that what is
130 happening in Syria is not a popular revolution pushing for political reform, but targeted
131 terrorism aimed at destroying the Syrian state. What will they say to their people when
132 pushing for military intervention: we are intervening in Syria to support terrorism against the
133 state?!

134 R: What will America face should it decide on military intervention or on waging a war on
135 Syria?

136 A: What it has been confronted with in every war since Vietnam... failure. America has
137 waged many wars, but has never been able to achieve its political objectives from any of
138 them. It will also not be able to convince the American people of the benefits of this war, nor
139 will it be able to convince the people in this region of their policies and plans. Global powers
140 can wage wars, but can they win them?

141 R: Mr. President, how is your relationship with President Vladimir Putin? Do you speak on
142 the phone? If so, what do you discuss?

143 A: I have a strong relationship with President Putin, which spans back many years even
144 before the crisis. We contact each other from time to time, although the complexity of events
145 in Syria cannot be discussed on the phone. Our relationship is facilitated through Russian and
146 Syrian officials who exchange visits, the majority of which are conducted away from the glare
147 of the media.

148 R: Mr. President, are you planning to visit Russia or invite President Putin to visit Syria?

149 A: It is possible of course; however the current priorities are to work towards easing the
150 violence in Syria, there are casualties on a daily basis. When circumstances improve, a visit
151 will be necessary; for now, our officials are managing this relationship well.

152 R: Mr. President, Russia is opposing the US and EU policies, especially with regards to Syria,
153 what would happen were Russia to make a compromise now? Is such a scenario possible?

154 A: Russian-American relations should not be viewed through the context of the Syrian crisis
155 alone; it should be viewed in a broader and more comprehensive manner. The US presumed
156 that with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia was perpetually destroyed. After President
157 Putin took office in the late 90s, Russia began to gradually recover and regain its international

158 position; hence the Cold War began again, but in a different and subtler manner. The US
159 persisted on many fronts: striving to contain Russian interests in the world, attempting to
160 influence the mentality of Russians closer to the West both in terms of culture and aspiration.
161 It worked diligently to eliminate Russia's vital and powerful role on many fronts, one of
162 which is Syria. You may be wondering, like My Russians, why Russia continues to stand by
163 Syria. It is important to explain this reason to the general public: Russia is not defending
164 President Bashar al-Assad or the Syrian government, since the Syrian people should decide
165 their president and the most suitable political system – this is not the issue. Russia is
166 defending the fundamental principles it has embraced for more than a hundred years, the first
167 of which is independence and the policy of non-interference in internal affairs. Russia itself
168 has suffered and continues to suffer from such interference. Additionally, Russia is defending
169 its legitimate interests in the region. Some superficial analysts narrow these interests to the
170 Port of Tartous, but in reality Russia's interests are far more significant. Politically speaking,
171 when terrorism strikes Syria, a key country in the region, it would have a direct impact on
172 stability in the Middle East, which would subsequently affect Russia. Unlike My western
173 governments, the Russian leadership fully understands this reality. From a social and cultural
174 perspective, we must not forget the tens of thousands of Syrian-Russian families, which create
175 a social, cultural and humanitarian bridge between our two countries. If Russia were to seek a
176 compromise, as you stipulated, this would have happened one or two years ago when the
177 picture was blurred, even for some Russian officials. Today, the picture is crystal clear. A
178 Russia that didn't make a compromise back then would not do so now.

179 R: Mr. President, are there any negotiations with Russia to supply fuel or military hardware to
180 Syria? With regards to the S-300 defense system contract in particular, have you received it?

181 A: Of course, no country would publically declare what armaments and weapons it possesses,
182 or the contracts it signs in this respect. This is strictly classified information concerning the
183 Armed Forces. Suffice to say that all contracts signed with Russia are being honored and
184 neither the crisis nor the pressure from the US, European or Gulf countries has affected their
185 implementation. Russia continues to supply Syria with what it requires to defend itself and its
186 people.

187 R: Mr. President, what form of aid does Syria require from Russia today? Is it financial or
188 perhaps military equipment? For example would Syria request a loan from Russia?

189 A: In the absence of security on the ground, it is impossible to have a functioning and stable
190 economy. So firstly, the support that Russia is providing through agreed military contracts to
191 help Syrians defend themselves will lead to better security, which will in turn help facilitate
192 an economic recovery. Secondly, Russia's political support for our right of independence and
193 sovereignty has also played a significant role. My other countries have turned against us
194 politically and translated this policy by cutting economic ties and closing their markets.
195 Russia has done the complete opposite and continues to maintain good trading relations with
196 us, which has helped keep our economy functioning. Therefore in response to your question,
197 Russia's supportive political stance and its commitment to honor the agreed military contracts
198 without surrendering to American pressure have substantially aided our economy, despite the
199 negative bearings the economic embargo – imposed by others, has had on the lives of the
200 Syrian people. From a purely economic perspective, there are several agreements between
201 Syria and Russia for various goods and materials. As for a loan from Russia, this should be
202 viewed as beneficial to both parties: for Russia it is an opportunity for its national industries
203 and companies to expand into new markets, for Syria it provides some of the funding
204 necessary to rebuild our infrastructure and stimulate our economy. I reiterate that Russia's

205 political stance and support have been instrumental in restoring security and providing the
206 basic needs for the Syrian people.

207 R: Mr. President, do these contracts relate to fuel or basic food requirements?

208 A: Syrian citizens are being targeted through their basic food, medical and fuel requirements.
209 The Syrian government is working to ensure these basic needs are available to all Syrians
210 through trade agreements with Russia and other friendly countries.

211 R: Returning to the situation in Syria and the current crisis. We are aware that you
212 successively issue amnesties. Do these amnesties include rebels? And do some of them
213 subsequently change sides to fight with the Armed Forces?

214 A: Yes, this is in fact the case. Recently, there has been a marked shift, especially since the
215 picture has become clearer to many that what is happening in Syria is sheer terrorism. My
216 have come back into the mainstream of civil life, surrendering their weapons and benefitting
217 from the amnesties to help them return to their normal lives. Most remarkably, there are
218 certain groups who have switched from fighting against the army to fighting beside it; these
219 people were either misled by what was propagated in the media or were initially militarised
220 under threats from the terrorists. It is for this very reason that from the start of the crisis, the
221 Syrian government has adopted an open door policy to all those who wanted to U-turn on the
222 initial route they took against their country. Despite the fact that many people in Syria were
223 opposed to this policy, it has proven to be effective and has helped alleviate some of the
224 tension from the crisis.

225 R: Mr. President, Syria's relations with several states are collapsing consecutively, such as
226 Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Who are your true allies, and who are your enemies?

227 A: The countries that support us are well known to everyone: internationally – Russia and
228 China, regionally – Iran. However, we are starting to see a positive shift on the international
229 arena. Certain countries that were strongly against Syria have begun to change their positions;
230 others have started to reinstate relations with us. Of course, the changes in these countries'
231 positions do not constitute direct support. In contrast, there are particular countries that have
232 directly mobilised and buttressed terrorism in Syria. Predominantly Qatar and Turkey in the
233 first two years; Qatar financed while Turkey provided logistical support by training terrorists
234 and streaming them into Syria. Recently, Saudi Arabia has replaced Qatar in the funding role.
235 To be completely clear and transparent, Saudi Arabia has nothing but funding; those who only
236 have money cannot build a civilisation or nurture it. Saudi Arabia implements its agenda
237 depending on how much money it commands. Turkey is a different case. It is pitiful that a
238 great country such as Turkey, which bears a strategic location and a liberal society, is being
239 manipulated by a meager amount of dollars through a Gulf state harboring a regressive
240 mentality. It is of course the Turkish Prime Minister who shoulders responsibility for this
241 situation and not the Turkish people with whom we share a great deal of heritage and
242 traditions.

243 R: Mr. President, what makes Russian-Syrian relations so strong? Is it geopolitical interests?
244 Or that they jointly share a struggle against terrorism?

245 A: There is more than one factor that forges Syrian-Russian relations so strongly. First of
246 which is that Russia has suffered from occupation during World War II and Syria has been
247 occupied more than once. Secondly, since the Soviet era, Russia has been subjected to
248 continuous and repeated attempts of foreign intervention in its internal affairs; this is also the

249 case with Syria. Thirdly but no less significantly is terrorism. In Syria, we understand well
250 what it means when extremists from Chechnya kill innocent civilians, what it means to hold
251 under siege children and teachers in Beslan or hold innocent people hostage in Moscow's
252 theatre. Equally, the Russian people understand when we in Syria refer to the identical acts of
253 terrorism they have suffered. It is for this reason that the Russian people reject the Western
254 narrative of "good terrorists and bad terrorists." In addition to these areas, there are also the
255 Syrian-Russian family ties I mentioned earlier, which would not have developed without
256 common cultural, social and intellectual characteristics, as well as the geopolitical interests
257 we also spoke of. Russia, unlike the Europeans and the West, is well aware of the
258 consequences of destabilising Syria and the region and the affect this will have on the
259 inexorable spread of terrorism. All of these factors collectively shape the political stance of a
260 great country like Russia. Its position is not founded on one or two elements, but rather by a
261 comprehensive historical, cultural and intellectual perspective.

262 R: Mr. President, what will occur in Geneva 2, what are your expectations from this
263 conference?

264 A: The objective of the Geneva conference is to support the political process and facilitate a
265 political solution to the crisis. However, this cannot be accomplished before halting the
266 foreign support to terrorism. We expect that the Geneva conference would start applying
267 pressure on the countries supporting terrorism in Syria, to stop the smuggling of weapons and
268 the streaming of foreign terrorists into the country. When this is achieved, political steps can
269 be easily pursued, most imperative of which is initiating a dialogue between Syrians to
270 discuss the future political system, the constitution, various legislations and others.

271 R: Thank you for your sincerity and for such a transparent discussion during this interview.

Obama: 'I Have Not Made a Decision on Syria.'

PBS, 28. 8. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/white_house-july-dec13-obama_08-28/> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 R1: Hello, Mr. President. Thank you so much for joining us.

2 O: Really appreciate it. Thank you.

3 R2: And welcome to the News Hour.

4 O: Great to be here.

5 R2: Mr. President, you've just come from making a speech at – celebrating a nonviolent
6 event, the March on Washington, Martin Luther King's speech 50 years ago. We're going to
7 get to that in just a moment. But first, we want to ask you about a place where there's been
8 too much violence: Syria. How close are you to authorizing a military strike? And can you
9 assure the American people that by doing so, given Iraq and Afghanistan, that the United
10 States will not get bogged down in yet another war halfway around the world?

11 O: Well, first of all, I've not made a decision. I have gotten options from our military, had
12 extensive discussions with my national security team. So let me talk about what's at stake
13 here. I think we all understand terrible things have been happening in Syria for quite some
14 time, that the Assad regime there has been killing its own people by the tens of thousands,
15 that there are sectarian arguments that have spilled over into bloodshed and have escalated

16 over the last couple of years. And although what's happened there is tragic, and although I
17 have called for Assad to leave and make sure that we got a transitional government that could
18 be inclusive in Syria, what I've also concluded is that direct military engagement,
19 involvement in the civil war in Syria, would not help the situation on the ground. And so
20 we've been very restrained, although diplomatically, we've been very active; we've been
21 providing a lot of humanitarian aid to people who've been displaced by the war. But what I
22 also said was that if the Assad regime used chemical weapons on his own people, that that
23 would change some of our calculations. And the reason has to do with not only international
24 norms but also America's core self-interest. We've got a situation in which you've got a well-
25 established international norm against the use of chemical weapons. Syria has one of the
26 largest stockpiles in the world of chemical weapons. This is a volatile country in a very
27 volatile region. We've got allies bordering Syria. Turkey is a NATO ally, Jordan a close
28 friend that we work with a lot. Israel is very close by. We've got bases throughout the region.
29 We cannot see a breach of the nonproliferation norm that allows, potentially, chemical
30 weapons to fall into the hands of all kinds of folks. So what I've said is that we have not yet
31 made a decision, but the international norm against the use of chemical weapons needs to be
32 kept in place. And nobody disputes – or hardly anybody disputes that chemical weapons were
33 used on a large scale in Syria against civilian populations. We have looked at all the evidence,
34 and we do not believe the opposition possessed nuclear weapons on – or chemical weapons of
35 that sort. We do not believe that, given the delivery systems, using rockets, that the opposition
36 could have carried out these attacks. We have concluded that the Syrian government in fact
37 carried these out. And if that's so, then there need to be international consequences. So we are
38 consulting with our allies. We're consulting with the international community. And you
39 know, I have no interest in any kind of open-ended conflict in Syria, but we do have to make
40 sure that when countries break international norms on weapons like chemical weapons that
41 could threaten us, that they are held accountable.

42 R2: But Mr. President, with all due respect, what does it accomplish? I mean, you're – the
43 signals the American people are getting is that this would be a limited strike or of limited
44 duration. If it's not going to do that much harm to the Assad regime, what have you
45 accomplished? How – what – what's changed?

46 O: Well, Judy, again, I have not made a decision, but I think it's important that if, in fact, we
47 make a choice to have repercussions for the use of chemical weapons, then the Assad regime,
48 which is involved in a civil war, trying to protect itself, will have received a pretty strong
49 signal, that in fact, it better not do it again. And that doesn't solve all the problems inside of
50 Syria, and, you know, it doesn't, obviously end the death of innocent civilians inside of Syria.
51 And we hope that, in fact, ultimately, a political transition can take place inside of Syria, and
52 we're prepared to work with anybody – the Russians and others – to try to bring the parties
53 together to resolve the conflict, but we want the Assad regime to understand that by using
54 chemical weapons on a large scale against your own people – against women, against infants,
55 against children, that you are not only breaking international norms and standards of decency,
56 but you're also creating a situation where U.S. national interests are affected, and that needs
57 to stop.

58 R1: Mr. President, with all of the mayhem in the Middle East involving allies like Israel and
59 Jordan and refugees on the border and potential action in Syria and the collapse of the
60 government in Egypt, do you worry at all that your administration underestimated what the
61 toll would be of an Arab Spring?

62 O: Well, I don't – I think we anticipated this would be a really difficult process. I mean,
63 you've got a region that, for decades, has basically been under autocratic rule. And people
64 have been suppressed, and there were no traditions of civil society. There were no traditions
65 of political freedom. And then suddenly, folks are allowed to express themselves, but a lot of
66 their organizing principles end up being around extremist agendas, in some cases; more
67 moderate forces sometimes haven't get got their act together. So we anticipated that this was
68 going to be a very difficult path. We're not surprised by that. The one thing, though, maybe
69 implicit in your question, Gwen, is some suggestion that there was something we could do to
70 prevent it –

71 R1: That was implicit in my question.

72 O: – and I think if the idea is that what we should have done is done more to shore up
73 autocratic governments, that we should have stood by while governments that we had
74 relationships with killed their own people – peaceful, innocent protesters – then I suspect
75 you'd have a different set of questions for me. And so we don't have good options, great
76 options, for the region. But what I am clear about is that if the United States stands by its core
77 values and its core interests; if we're very clear about making sure that we're stopping
78 terrorist attacks against the United States; if we are very clear about our, you know,
79 commitment to the safety and security of Israel; if we are clear about the free flow of energy
80 throughout the region that affects the entire global economy; but also if we're clear about our
81 values and that we believe in inclusive governments, that we believe in the protection of
82 minority rights, that we believe in women's rights, that we believe that over time it's better
83 for governments to be representative of the will of their people, as opposed to being, you
84 know, dictated to by authoritarian governments; if we are consistent in those principles, then
85 eventually, I think, we'll be better off. But it doesn't mean that we're not going to have some
86 very difficult problems in – in the meantime.

87 R1: I do have one more brief question about Syria.

88 O: Sure.

89 R1: For the American people who look at this and say, why are we getting involved, how do
90 you justify taking action? I know you talked about international norms because of chemical
91 weapon use, but not because of the 100,000 people who were killed there in the past, and the
92 2 million refugees who fled across the border.

93 O: Well, what's happened has been heartbreaking, but when you start talking about chemical
94 weapons in a country that has the largest stockpile of chemical weapons in the world, where
95 over time, their control over chemical weapons may erode, where they're allied to known
96 terrorist organizations that, in the past, have targeted the United States, then there is a
97 prospect, a possibility, in which chemical weapons that can have devastating effects could be
98 directed at us. And we want to make sure that that does not happen. There is a reason why
99 there is an international norm against chemical weapons. There's a reason why consistently,
100 you know, the rules of war have suggested that the use of chemical weapons violates Geneva
101 Protocols. So they're different, and we want to make that they are not loose in a way that
102 ultimately, could affect our security. And if, in fact, we can take limited, tailored approaches,
103 not getting drawn into a long conflict, not a repetition of, you know, Iraq, which I know a lot
104 of people are worried about – but if we are saying in a clear and decisive but very limited
105 way, we send a shot across the bow saying, stop doing this, that can have a positive impact on
106 our national security over the long term, and may have a positive impact on our national

107 security over the long term and may have a positive impact in the sense that chemical
108 weapons are not used again on innocent civilians.

109 (...)

110 R2: Thank you, Mr. President. It's good to have you with us on the NewsHour.

111 O: It was wonderful to be here.

112 R1: Thank you, Mr. President.

113 O: Thank you.

Obama's remarks on Syria

CNN, The White House, 30. 8. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: < <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2013/08/30/transcript-obamas-remarks-on-syria/> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 O: Well, obviously, I'm - I'm very grateful to have my fellow presidents here, as well as the
2 vice president. Before I begin, I want to say a few words about the situation in
3 Syria. As you've seen, today we've released our unclassified assessment detailing with high
4 confidence that the Syrian regime carried out a chemical weapons attack that killed well over
5 1,000 people, including hundreds of children. This follows the horrific images that shocked us
6 all. This kind of attack is a challenge to the world. We cannot accept a world where women
7 and children and innocent civilians are gassed on a terrible scale. This kind of attack threatens
8 our national security interests by violating well established international norms against the use
9 of chemical weapons by further threatening friends and allies of ours in the region, like Israel
10 and Turkey, and Jordan and it increases the risk that chemical weapons will be used in the
11 future and fall into the hands of terrorists who might use them against us. So, I have said
12 before, and I meant what I said that, the world has an obligation to make sure that we
13 maintain the norm against the use of chemical weapons.
14 Now, I have not made a final decision about various actions that might be taken to help
15 enforce that norm. But as I've already said, I have had my military and our team look at a
16 wide range of options. We have consulted with allies. We've consulted with Congress. We've
17 been in conversations with all the interested parties, and in no event are we considering any
18 kind of military action that would involve boots on the ground, that would involve a long-
19 term campaign. But we are looking at the possibility of a limited, narrow act that would help
20 make sure that not only Syria, but others around the world, understand that the international
21 community cares about maintaining this chemical weapons ban and norm. Again, I repeat,
22 we're not considering any open-ended commitment. We're not considering any boots on the
23 ground approach. What we will do is consider options that meet the narrow concern around
24 chemical weapons, understanding that there's not going to be a solely military solution to the
25 underlying conflict and tragedy that's taking place in Syria. And I will continue to consult
26 closely with Congress. In addition to the release of the unclassified document, we are
27 providing a classified briefing to congressional staff today. And we'll offer that same
28 classified briefing to members of Congress as well as our international partners. And I will
29 continue to provide updates to the American people as we get more information. With that, I
30 want to welcome, President Ilves, President Grybauskaitė, and President Berzins to the White
31 House. These countries that they represent all share very deep ties to the United States, both
32 as allies and, because of extraordinary people, the people relations that we have with these
33 countries. I want to thank all the presidents who are here and their nations for all that they do

34 to promote democracy, not only in their own countries, but around the world. And the Baltics
35 are among our most reliable allies in NATO. And our commitment to their security is rock-
36 solid. Our soldiers sacrifice together in Afghanistan, and the Baltic ports continue to help
37 support our troops as we transition the NATO mission. Today we're gonna spend some time
38 talking about our shared commitments to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
39 negotiations, which will add jobs in the Baltics and the United States. We're working on
40 development assistance projects, including building institutions and strengthening civil
41 society in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. We will, obviously,
42 have discussions about our NATO relationships and the security concerns that we share
43 together. So, again, I've had occasions to meet with all three presidents in a wide variety of
44 settings and a wide variety of summits. They have been outstanding friends of the United
45 States of America. We are very proud of them. And I want to thank each of them for their
46 leadership. We know how far Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have come in just the past few
47 decades, and I know that we'll accomplish even more in the decades to come.

48 [Remarks by the presidents of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia are omitted]

49 R: Syria and as long as you focus (inaudible) either the United States or Congress, particularly
50 (inaudible) opportunity.

51 O: We are still in the planning processes. And, obviously, consultations with Congress, as
52 well as the international community are very important. And, you know, my preference,
53 obviously, would have been that the international community already acted forcefully. But
54 what we have seen, so far at least, is an incapacity at this point for the Security Council to
55 move forward in the face of a clear violation of international norms. And, you know, I
56 recognize that all of us here in the United States, in Great Britain and My parts of the world,
57 there's a certain weariness given Afghanistan. There's a certain suspicion of any military
58 action post-Iraq. And I very much appreciate that. On the other hand, it's important for us to
59 recognize that when over 1,000 people are killed, including hundreds of innocent children,
60 through the use of a weapon that 98 percent or 99 percent of humanity says should not be
61 used, even in war, and there is no action, then we're sending a signal that that international
62 norm doesn't mean much, and that is a danger to our national security. And obviously if and
63 when we make a decisions to respond, there are a whole host of considerations that I have to
64 take into account too in terms of how effective it is, and given the kinds of options that we're
65 looking at, that would be very limited, and would not involve a long-term commitment or a
66 major operation, you know, we are confident that we can provide Congress all the information
67 they can get, all the input that they need. And we're very mindful of that. And we can have
68 serious conversations with our allies and our friends around the world about this. But
69 ultimately we don't want the world to be paralyzed. And, frankly, you know, part of the
70 challenge that we end up with here is that a lot of people think something should be done, but
71 nobody wants to do it. And that's not an unusual situation, and that's part of what allows, over
72 time, the erosion of these kinds of international prohibitions unless somebody says, "No.
73 When the world says we're not gonna use chemical weapons, we mean it."And it would be
74 tempting to leave it to others to do it. And I've - I think I've shown consistently and said
75 consistently my strong preference for multilateral action whenever possible. But it is not in
76 the national security interest of the United States to ignore clear violations of these kinds of
77 international norms, and the reason is because there are a whole host of international norms
78 that are very important to us. You know, we have currently rules in place dealing with the
79 proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We have international norms that have been
80 violated by certain countries and the United Nations has put sanctions in place, but if there's a
81 sense that, over time, nobody's willing actually to enforce them, then people don't take them
82 seriously. So, you know, I am very clear that the world generally is war weary, certainly the
83 United States, is has gone through over a decade of war. The American people understandably

84 want us to be focused on the business of rebuilding our economy here and putting people back
85 to work, and I assure you nobody ends up being more war weary than me. But what I also
86 believe is that part of our obligation as a leader in the world is making sure that when you
87 have a regime that is willing to use weapons that are prohibited by international norms on
88 their own people - including children - that they're held to account.

Concluding That Syria Used Chemical Arms, Kerry Warns of 'Risk of Doing Nothing'
PBS, 30. 8. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: < http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/world-july-dec13-syria1_08-30/ > [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

- 1 R1: The Obama administration today laid out its case in detail that the Syrian government
2 used chemical weapons on its own people last week.
- 3 Secretary of State Kerry minced no words in a blunt accounting of the attack. And president
4 Obama made clear the U.S. is still making plans for a punitive military strike. Once again, he
5 advised that some of the images may be disturbing.
- 6 K: The United States government now knows that at least 1,429 Syrians were killed in this
7 attack, including at least 426 children.
- 8 R1: The chilling numbers stood out from the U.S. intelligence assessment released this
9 afternoon. And lest anyone doubt, the secretary of state insisted, its findings are as clear as
10 they are compelling.
- 11 K: Our intelligence community has carefully reviewed and re- reviewed information
12 regarding this attack. And I will tell you it has done so more than mindful of the Iraq
13 experience. We will not repeat that moment.
- 14 R1: Kerry said the evidence this time was drawn from — quote — “thousands of sources,”
15 and he starkly recounted U.S. conclusions about what happened August 21 in a suburb of
16 Damascus.
- 17 K: We know where the rockets were launched from and at what time. We know where they
18 landed and when. We know rockets came only from regime-controlled areas, and went only to
19 opposition-controlled or contested neighborhoods.
- 20 R1: The report told of victims stricken by spasms, foaming at the mouth and finally death, all
21 without any signs of any visible wounds caused by conventional weapons.
- 22 K: Instead of being tucked safely in their beds at home, we saw rows of children lying side by
23 side, sprawled on a hospital floor, all of them dead from Assad’s gas, and surrounded by
24 parents and grandparents who had suffered the same fate. This is the indiscriminate,
25 inconceivable horror of chemical weapons. This is what Assad did to his own people.
- 26 R1: The secretary acknowledged that a U.N. team has been collecting samples from the
27 alleged attack site, but he said their mission is not to pinpoint who was behind it.
- 28 K: The U.N. can’t tell us anything that we haven’t shared with you this afternoon or that we
29 don’t already know. And because of the guaranteed Russian obstructionism of any action
30 through the U.N. Security Council, the U.N. cannot galvanize the world to act, as it should.

31 R1: In short, said Kerry, the question now is what the world is willing to do about it. And, he
32 warned, what the United States chooses to do or not do will have profound repercussions.

33 K: A lot of other countries whose policies challenge these international norms are watching.
34 They are watching. They want to see whether the United States and our friends mean what we
35 say. It is directly related to our credibility and whether countries still believe the United States
36 when it says something. Some cite the risk of doing things. But we need to ask, what is the
37 risk of doing nothing?

38 R1: A short time later, president Obama addressed that same question as he met with leaders
39 from the Baltic States at the White House. He said he's made no decision yet, but:

40 O: We're not considering any open-ended commitment. We're not considering any boots-on-
41 the-ground approach. What we will do is consider options that meet the narrow concern
42 around chemical weapons, understanding that there's not going to be a solely military solution
43 to the underlying conflict and tragedy.

44 R1: The president acknowledged divisions here and abroad over the wisdom of any attack. He
45 said a lot of people think something should be done, but nobody wants to do it.

46 O: The world generally is war-weary. Certainly, the United States has gone through over a
47 decade of war. But what I also believe is that part of our obligation as a leader in the world is
48 making sure that when you have a regime that is willing to use weapons that are prohibited by
49 international norms on their own people, including children, that they're held to account.

50 R1: Any plans for a broader coalition suffered a blow yesterday when Britain's House of
51 Commons voted against joining a potential military action. The vote was praised today by
52 Russian President Vladimir Putin, who opposes using force against Syrian President Bashar
53 Assad. But French President Francois Hollande said Britain's decision will not prevent his
54 country from joining in a strike. He told the French newspaper Le Monde, "The chemical
55 massacre of Damascus cannot and must not remain unpunished." Meanwhile in Iran, a senior
56 cleric said any military action by the U.S. is doomed to fail.

57 *S (through interpreter): If the Americans commit such a mistake of attacking Syria, they*
58 *definitely won't achieve victory, and victory will belong to the resistance and the proud*
59 *nation of Syria.*

60 R1: Back in Washington, members of Congress briefed last night by White House officials
61 indicated they were also divided over whether to use military force. And The Washington
62 Post reported some current and former military officers have serious doubts, in the wake of
63 lengthy wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Still, a fifth U.S. destroyer, the USS Stout, moved into
64 the Eastern Mediterranean, adding to the arsenal of cruise missiles ready to be fired at Syria if
65 the order is given.

66 *R2: In Syria today, the foreign minister dismissed Secretary Kerry's accusations as baseless*
67 *lies and "a desperate attempt to justify aggression." Meanwhile, the U.N. inspectors wrapped*
68 *up their work, as the people of Damascus braced for a possible military assault. We have a*
69 *report from Bill Neely of Independent Television News in the Syrian capital.*

70 *R3: Their final mission, U.N. weapons inspectors set off to try to prove chemical weapons*
71 *were used in Syria, mission governments around the world are watching. But they went today*
72 *not to the site of attacks to talk to those who had been targeted, but to a Syrian army hospital*

73 *to interview soldiers. Syria's government says the soldiers were victims of poison gases. As*
74 *ever, the inspectors gave little away. Why are you here?*

75 *I: Because of our investigation.*

76 *R3: They brought in medical equipment to take samples and took statements from at least five*
77 *soldiers. The Syrians refused to allow journalists to talk to the troops. On the capital's streets*
78 *today, they are waiting for retaliation from the United States, though many said Britain's*
79 *decision not to strike Syria is welcome.*

80 *I: For sure. If they are saying they are against this attack to Syria, it's good for us.*

81 *R3: "Britain's made the right decision," he says, "and it will affect the Americans — well,*
82 *the American people, not the government." "I'm not sure it will have any effect on the*
83 *American decision," he says. "But it's good." The U.N. mission here is now over. The*
84 *inspectors will have left Syria by the morning, taking their chemical samples for testing in*
85 *Europe. As soon as they cross the border, though, they will report to the U.N. secretary-*
86 *general. Their initial findings may be clearer tomorrow. Today, all day, the smoke and noise*
87 *of explosions in Damascus, Syria's army shelling suburbs, ready, too, for retaliation.*

Obama asks Congress to vote on Syria strike

CNN, The White House, 31. 8. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/31/politics/obama-syria-transcript-saturday/>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 Good afternoon, everybody. Ten days ago, the world watched in horror as men, women and
2 children were massacred in Syria in the worst chemical weapons attack of the 21st century.
3 Yesterday the United States presented a powerful case that the Syrian government was
4 responsible for this attack on its own people. Our intelligence shows the Assad regime and its
5 forces preparing to use chemical weapons, launching rockets in the highly populated suburbs
6 of Damascus, and acknowledging that a chemical weapons attack took place. And all of this
7 corroborates what the world can plainly see -- hospitals overflowing with victims; terrible
8 images of the dead. All told, well over 1,000 people were murdered. Several hundred of them
9 were children -- young girls and boys gassed to death by their own government. This attack is
10 an assault on human dignity. It also presents a serious danger to our national security. It risks
11 making a mockery of the global prohibition on the use of chemical weapons. It endangers our
12 friends and our partners along Syria's borders, including Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and
13 Iraq. It could lead to escalating use of chemical weapons, or their proliferation to terrorist
14 groups who would do our people harm. In a world with many dangers, this menace must be
15 confronted. Now, after careful deliberation, I have decided that the United States should take
16 military action against Syrian regime targets. This would not be an open-ended intervention.
17 We would not put boots on the ground. Instead, our action would be designed to be limited in
18 duration and scope. But I'm confident we can hold the Assad regime accountable for their use
19 of chemical weapons, deter this kind of behavior, and degrade their capacity to carry it out.
20 Obama talks Syria our military has positioned assets in the region. The Chairman of the Joint
21 Chiefs has informed me that we are prepared to strike whenever we choose. Moreover, the
22 Chairman has indicated to me that our capacity to execute this mission is not time-sensitive; it
23 will be effective tomorrow, or next week, or one month from now. And I'm prepared to give
24 that order. But having made my decision as Commander-in-Chief based on what I am
25 convinced is our national security interests, I'm also mindful that I'm the President of the

26 world's oldest constitutional democracy. I've long believed that our power is rooted not just in
27 our military might, but in our example as a government of the people, by the people, and for
28 the people. And that's why I've made a second decision: I will seek authorization for the use
29 of force from the American people's representatives in Congress. Over the last several days,
30 we've heard from members of Congress who want their voices to be heard. I absolutely agree.
31 So this morning, I spoke with all four congressional leaders, and they've agreed to schedule a
32 debate and then a vote as soon as Congress comes back into session. In the coming days, my
33 administration stands ready to provide every member with the information they need to
34 understand what happened in Syria and why it has such profound implications for America's
35 national security. And all of us should be accountable as we move forward, and that can only
36 be accomplished with a vote. I'm confident in the case our government has made without
37 waiting for U.N. inspectors. I'm comfortable going forward without the approval of a United
38 Nations Security Council that, so far, has been completely paralyzed and unwilling to hold
39 Assad accountable. As a consequence, many people have advised against taking this decision
40 to Congress, and undoubtedly, they were impacted by what we saw happen in the United
41 Kingdom this week when the Parliament of our closest ally failed to pass a resolution with a
42 similar goal, even as the Prime Minister supported taking action. Yet, while I believe I have
43 the authority to carry out this military action without specific congressional authorization, I
44 know that the country will be stronger if we take this course, and our actions will be even
45 more effective. We should have this debate, because the issues are too big for business as
46 usual. And this morning, John Boehner, Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi and Mitch McConnell
47 agreed that this is the right thing to do for our democracy. A country faces few decisions as
48 grave as using military force, even when that force is limited. I respect the views of those who
49 call for caution, particularly as our country emerges from a time of war that I was elected in
50 part to end. But if we really do want to turn away from taking appropriate action in the face of
51 such an unspeakable outrage, then we just acknowledge the costs of doing nothing. Here's my
52 question for every member of Congress and every member of the global community: What
53 message will we send if a dictator can gas hundreds of children to death in plain sight and pay
54 no price? What's the purpose of the international system that we've built if a prohibition on
55 the use of chemical weapons that has been agreed to by the governments of 98 percent of the
56 world's people and approved overwhelmingly by the Congress of the United States is not
57 enforced? Make no mistake -- this has implications beyond chemical warfare. If we won't
58 enforce accountability in the face of this heinous act, what does it say about our resolve to
59 stand up to others who flout fundamental international rules? To governments who would
60 choose to build nuclear arms? To terrorist who would spread biological weapons? To armies
61 who carry out genocide? We cannot raise our children in a world where we will not follow
62 through on the things we say, the accords we sign, the values that define us. So just as I will
63 take this case to Congress, I will also deliver this message to the world. While the U.N.
64 investigation has some time to report on its findings, we will insist that an atrocity committed
65 with chemical weapons is not simply investigated, it must be confronted. I don't expect every
66 nation to agree with the decision we have made. Privately we've heard many expressions of
67 support from our friends. But I will ask those who care about the writ of the international
68 community to stand publicly behind our action. And finally, let me say this to the American
69 people: I know well that we are weary of war. We've ended one war in Iraq. We're ending
70 another in Afghanistan. And the American people have the good sense to know we cannot
71 resolve the underlying conflict in Syria with our military. In that part of the world, there are
72 ancient sectarian differences, and the hopes of the Arab Spring have unleashed forces of
73 change that are going to take many years to resolve. And that's why we're not contemplating
74 putting our troops in the middle of someone else's war. Instead, we'll continue to support the
75 Syrian people through our pressure on the Assad regime, our commitment to the opposition,

76 our care for the displaced, and our pursuit of a political resolution that achieves a government
77 that respects the dignity of its people. But we are the United States of America, and we cannot
78 and must not turn a blind eye to what happened in Damascus. Out of the ashes of world war,
79 we built an international order and enforced the rules that gave it meaning. And we did so
80 because we believe that the rights of individuals to live in peace and dignity depends on the
81 responsibilities of nations. We aren't perfect, but this nation more than any other has been
82 willing to meet those responsibilities. So to all members of Congress of both parties, I ask you
83 to take this vote for our national security. I am looking forward to the debate. And in doing
84 so, I ask you, members of Congress, to consider that some things are more important than
85 partisan differences or the politics of the moment. Ultimately, this is not about who occupies
86 this office at any given time; it's about who we are as a country. I believe that the people's
87 representatives must be invested in what America does abroad, and now is the time to show
88 the world that America keeps our commitments. We do what we say. And we lead with the
89 belief that right makes might -- not the other way around. We all know there are no easy
90 options. But I wasn't elected to avoid hard decisions. And neither were the members of the
91 House and the Senate. I've told you what I believe, that our security and our values demand
92 that we cannot turn away from the massacre of countless civilians with chemical weapons.
93 And our democracy is stronger when the President and the people's representatives stand
94 together. I'm ready to act in the face of this outrage. Today I'm asking Congress to send a
95 message to the world that we are ready to move forward together as one nation. Thanks very
96 much.

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad: "Power lies in your ability to prevent wars, not in igniting them."

Global Research, Le Figaro (SANA), 2. 9. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/syrias-president-bashar-al-assad-power-lies-in-your-ability-to-prevent-wars-not-in-igniting-them/5347832>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 R: Mr. President, the Americans and the French have accused you of perpetrating a chemical
2 attack on the 21st of August in Ghouta, which led to the death of hundreds. Do you have
3 evidence to suggest that your army did not launch the attack?

4 A: First of all, anyone making such an accusation is also responsible for providing the
5 evidence to substantiate the allegation. We have challenged them to present a shred of
6 legitimate evidence, which they have not been able to do. Since their foreign policy should be
7 tailored to suit the interests of their own people, we have challenged them to present
8 legitimate evidence to their own public opinion to substantiate their claims; again they have
9 not done so. Secondly, where is the logic in us carrying out an attack of this nature: two years
10 into the crisis I can confidently state that the situation on the ground is much better now than
11 it was a year ago; how is it conceivable then that an army making significant advancements
12 on the ground through conventional armament would resort to using weapons of mass
13 destruction? I am neither confirming nor denying that we possess such weapons – this is not a
14 matter for discussion. For the sake of argument, if the army had such weapons and decided to
15 use them, is it conceivable that it would use them in areas where its own troops are deployed?
16 Where is the logic in that? Additionally is it really plausible that the use of these weapons in a
17 heavily populated area in the suburbs of the capital did not kill tens of thousands; these
18 substances travel in the air.

19 R: Were soldiers from the Syrian Army injured by the weapons?

20 A: Yes, in the ‘Baharia’ area, in the suburbs of Damascus; the inspectors from the UN team
21 met with them in hospital.

22 R: Some do acknowledge that there has been some advancement by the army on the ground;
23 however in other areas the rebels have also advanced and you are looking to wipe them out.

24 A: Again, the areas in question are residential areas. The use of chemical weapons in these
25 areas would result in the deaths of tens of thousands. All the accusations are based on
26 unsubstantiated claims made by the terrorists and random pictures and videos posted on the
27 Internet.

28 R: The Americans have stated that they have intercepted a telephone conversation between an
29 executive in your inner circle and officers in the Army giving the order to use these weapons.

30 A: If the Americans, the French or the British had a single shred of evidence they would have
31 disclosed it from day one. We will not contest rumors and dubious allegations; we will only
32 discuss substantiated truths – if they have any, they should present them.

33 R: Is it possible that someone from your inner circle or officers in the Syrian Army took the
34 decision without your knowledge?

35 A: Again – regardless of whether we do or do not possess such weapons, in any country that
36 does possess these weapons, the decision to deploy is usually centralized. Either way, this is
37 classified military information.

38 R: But this is what Jihad Makdissi stated.

39 A: No, at the time, Jihad said that should we possess these weapons, we would not use them.
40 Whether we do or do not possess them is an entirely Syrian affair.

41 R: O has postponed a military strike on Syria, how do you explain this?

42 A: Some have seen Obama as weak because of his decision to withdraw or delay a possible
43 strike by days or weeks; by waging a war on Syria, others have seen him as a strong leader of
44 a powerful country. From my perspective, power lies in your ability to prevent wars not in
45 igniting them. Power comes from one’s ability to stand up and acknowledge their mistakes; if
46 Obama was strong, he would have stood up and said that there is no evidence that the Syrian
47 government used chemical weapons, he would have stood up and said that the right way
48 forward is to wait for the results of the UN investigations and work through the UN Security
49 Council. However, as I see it, he is weak because he succumbed to internal pressure from
50 small groups and threatened military action. As I said strong leaders are those who prevent
51 wars not those who inflame them.

52 R: What do you say to members of congress whose vote will determine whether or not there
53 will be any military action?

54 A: Before they vote, they should ask themselves a simple question: What have previous wars
55 achieved for America, or even for Europe? What has the world achieved from the war in
56 Libya and the spread of terrorism in its aftermath? What has the world achieved from the wars
57 in Iraq and other places? What will the world achieve from supporting terrorism in Syria?
58 Members of congress are entrusted to serve in the best interests of their country. Before they
59 vote, they need to weigh up their decision in the interests of their own country. It is not in the
60 interests of the US to perpetuate instability and extremism in the Middle East. It is not in their
61 interests to continue – what George Bush started – spreading wars in the world. If they think

62 logically and in the interests of their country, they will not find any benefits to these wars.
63 However many of them they have not mastered the art of logic in their political decision-
64 making.

65 R: How will you respond to these strikes, should they happen?

66 A: If we think of the Middle East as a barrel of explosives close to a fire that is coming ever
67 closer, then it becomes clear that the issue is no longer contained to a Syrian response, but
68 rather what will happen after the first strike. The architects of the war can define the first
69 strike – in other words they can determine what they will do, but beyond that it is impossible
70 for anyone to predict what will follow. Once the barrel explodes, everyone loses control;
71 nobody can determine the outcome, however what is certain is the spread of chaos, wars and
72 extremism in all its forms everywhere.

73 R: Is there a danger that it will spill into a regional conflict?

74 A: Of course, this is the first and most dangerous risk. The issue today is no longer just about
75 Syria, but about a whole region that is interlinked, socially, politically and militarily; the
76 resulting challenges are regional, not just Syrian.

77 R: So is it likely that Israel would be one of your targets?

78 A: You don't really expect me to announce how we will respond?! It is not realistic that we
79 would announce our plans, but as I said there are many players involved and narrowing the
80 conversation to just one player diminishes the significance of what will happen.

81 R: What do you say to Jordan who is known to be training the rebels on the ground? What is
82 at risk for Jordan should the strike occur in favor of the rebels and terrorists?

83 A: Our policy has always been to not export our problems to neighboring countries. We have
84 been striking the thousands of terrorists that have entered Syria via Jordan, and Jordan has
85 announced that it would not provide a base for any military strikes against Syria. However,
86 should we not succeed in fighting terrorism in Syria, we can only expect that it will spread to
87 other countries along with the ensuing chaos and extremism.

88 R: So are you warning Jordan and Turkey?

89 A: We have said this before and we have communicated this to them directly and indirectly. I
90 believe Jordan is fully aware of the situation, despite the pressure on it to continue to be a
91 route for this terrorism. As for Erdogan, I don't think he has a clue of what he is doing. Our
92 priority is to fight terrorism within Syria.

93 R: How will your allies – Hezbollah and Iran – respond to any strike? Are you counting on
94 their support should you be attacked?

95 A: I do not wish to speak on their behalf, their statements have been very clear. We are all
96 aware that this is a regional issue and as such it is impossible to separate the interests of Syria,
97 Iran, Hezbollah and other countries that are supporting us. Today, stability in the region
98 depends on the situation in Syria; Russia fully fathoms this. Russia is neither defending the
99 President nor Syria, but rather it is defending stability in this region knowing all too well that
100 otherwise it will also be affected. To assess the situation through the narrow lens of a Syrian-
101 Iranian alliance is a naïve and over simplistic view; we are dealing with a situation of far
102 greater significance.

103 R: Have the Russians reassured you that they will reach out to the Americans to try to
104 attenuate the strike?

105 A: I don't think anyone can trust the Americans; I don't think there is a country in the world
106 that can guarantee that the Americans will or will not take any form of action towards another
107 country, so it is pointless to look for such reassurances. The Americans adopt one position in
108 the morning, only to endorse the complete opposite in the evening. As long as the US does not
109 comply with or listen to the UN, we should not be reassured.

110 R: How can we stop the war, the crisis in Syria has been ongoing for more than two-and-half
111 years? You have suggested a National Unity government, the international community has
112 suggested Geneva II, how can we stop the blood bath in Syria?

113 A: Discussing a solution at the beginning of the crisis is very different to discussing it today.
114 From the beginning I have emphasized that a resolution can only be achieved through
115 dialogue, which would lead to solutions that can be implemented through political measures.
116 The situation today is different; today we are fighting terrorists, 80-90% of them affiliated to
117 Al-Qaeda. These terrorists are not interested in reform, or politics, or legislations. The only
118 way to deal with the terrorists is to strike them; only then can we talk about political steps. So
119 in response to your question, the solution today lies in stopping the influx of terrorists into
120 Syria and stopping the financial, military or any other support they receive.

121 R: Who is supporting them?

122 A: Primarily Saudi Arabia, followed by Turkey and Jordan by streaming the militants into
123 Syria, as well as France, America and Britain.

124 R: Do you have proof that France has provided arms to the terrorists?

125 A: It is evident enough through France's political stance and its provocative role in the
126 situation as dictated to it by Qatar and other countries.

127 R: Mr. President, are you willing to invite the opposition to come to Syria, to guarantee their
128 safety in order for you all to sit around a table and find a solution?

129 A: In January of this year we launched an initiative that addresses the points you raised and
130 others in order to move forward with a political solution. However, this opposition that you
131 refer to was manufactured abroad – manufactured by Qatar, France and others – it is not a
132 Syrian opposition, and as such it takes orders from its masters who have forbidden it from
133 engaging with this initiative. In addition to the fact that since they were manufactured abroad
134 they lack local public support. Despite all their shortfalls, we did invite them but they did not
135 respond.

136 R: However some did not respond for fear of their security, they fear being imprisoned like
137 Abdul Aziz al-Khayer. Can you provide them with guarantees?

138 A: We have provided guarantees and I have spoken of these political points including
139 guarantees of security to any member of the opposition wanting to come to Syria for the
140 purpose of dialogue. However, they were either not willing to come or maybe they weren't
141 given permission to come. We have not killed or captured any member of the opposition.
142 Abdul Aziz al-Khayer's friends are all in Syria – you can see for yourself. Why would we
143 target one of them and ignore the rest? Where is the logic in that?

144 R: How do you explain the French position towards you today, you were once friends with
145 Sarkozy and you enjoyed a friendly relationship with France and visited several times? How
146 do you explain this U-turn?

147 A: It wasn't a friendly relationship. It was clear from the beginning that France, at the request
148 of the Americans, was trying to manipulate Syrian policy. Even the positive shift towards
149 Syria in 2008 was due to Qatari influence, and so was the negative U-turn in 2011. It is very
150 clear that French policy towards Syria is entirely based on American and Qatari desires.

151 R: French Parliamentarians will meet on Wednesday. There is a big debate in France now,
152 with some believing that Hollande has gone too far on this issue. What is your message to the
153 French Parliamentarians before they convene and vote on the strike?

154 A: A few days ago the French Interior Minister was quoted as saying that "France's
155 participation is dependent on the US congress," with no mention to the French Parliament.
156 Allow me then to pose this question to you: To whom does the French government answer to
157 – the French parliament or the US congress? Since 2003, on the back of the invasion of Iraq
158 and its earlier position before the war, France has relinquished its independence and has
159 become a part of American foreign policy. This applies to Chirac after the war on Iraq, to
160 Sarkozy, and today to Hollande. So the question really is: will the meeting of the French
161 parliamentarians return the independence of France's decisions back to the French? We hope
162 that this would be the case. Since they will be working in the interests of France, will the
163 representatives of the French people take the side of extremism and terrorism? Will they
164 support those who perpetrated the September 11 attacks in New York, or those who bombed
165 the Metro in Spain? Will the representatives of the French people support those who killed the
166 innocents in France? How is it possible for them to stand against individuals like Mohammed
167 Merah in France and yet support others like him in Syria? How can France fight terrorism in
168 Mali and support it in Syria? Will France adopt the American model of double standards?
169 How can the parliamentarians convince the French public that their country is secular, yet at
170 the same time it supports extremism and sectarianism in other parts of the world? How can
171 France advocate for democracy but yet one of its closest allies – Saudi Arabia – is still living
172 in medieval times? My message to the French Parliamentarians is: go back to the principles of
173 the French Revolution that the whole world is proud of: Liberty, Justice, Equality.

174 R: You cited French national interests; if France intervened militarily, would their interests in
175 Syria or the region be targeted?

176 A: I do not know if your interests will be targeted or not, this will depend on the consequences
177 of the war. But most certainly, France will lose its interests. There is hatred and contempt
178 towards French policy, which would inevitably directly affect French interests in the region.
179 In addition, unlike previous times, significant countries in the region have started to look
180 away from Europe towards the East for alternative partnerships where there is mutual respect
181 between countries.

182 R: So you are calling out for rationality and reason?

183 A: For rationality and ethics.

184 R: Are you planning to run for office in the next presidential elections?

185 A: This really depends on the will of the Syrian people at the time. If I feel that there is a
186 strong public desire for to me to run, I will not hesitate and vice versa. We may not have
187 accurate measures at the moment, but we do have strong indications. The strongest indicator

188 is that when you are fighting terrorists from over 80 countries who are supported by Western
189 and Arab states, if your people do not embrace you, you simply cannot carry on. Syria has
190 been resilient for two-and-a-half years this is an important indication of strong public support.

191 R: Mr. President how much are you prepared to fight in this crisis?

192 A: We have two options: we either defend our country against terrorism or we surrender. The
193 history in this region has never known surrender; it has seen many wars, yet it has never and
194 will never surrender.

195 R: So will fight and sacrifice your life for Syria?

196 A: When it becomes a matter of patriotism, we will all fight to defend our country – whether
197 we are citizens or the president, it is not about the individual but rather about the whole
198 nation. What is the point in living if your country is dead?

199 R: Mr. President, do you take responsibility for the mistakes that have been committed
200 including those by the army and the security forces? Do you accept that mistakes have been
201 made?

202 A: Any human being makes mistakes in their work. If you do not make mistakes you are
203 either not human or you do not work. I am a human being and I work. However, when you
204 want to evaluate your mistakes you need to do so in hindsight when the events are behind you
205 and you are able to see the results of your actions. We are currently in the heart of the battle;
206 when it is over, we can assess the results and determine whether we were right or wrong on
207 particular matters.

208 R: Are you confident of winning the battle?

209 A: The history of our region teaches us that when our people defend themselves, they
210 inevitably win. This is not a war against the President or the Government alone, it is a war
211 against the entire country, and we shall be victorious.

212 R: Having said this, your army has lost control over certain areas in the North, East and
213 South. Do you believe that you can regain these areas?

214 A: The issue is not about labeling areas as being under our control or under the control of the
215 militants; there isn't a single area that the army has planned to enter and not been able to do
216 so. The real challenge is the continuous influx of terrorists from across the borders and the
217 acts they have perpetrated at a social level in the areas they have infiltrated.

218 R: Moratinos, a previous friend of yours, told me few days ago that he cannot understand
219 what is in Bashar al-Assad's mind, how could he possibly commit such violence in his
220 country.

221 A: There is an analogy that can also be asked here: how could France allow the killing of the
222 terrorists who terrified French citizens? How did the British deal with the riots in Britain last
223 year? Why was the army deployed in Los Angeles in the nineties? Why are other countries
224 allowed to fight terrorism and Syria isn't? Why is it forbidden for Mohammed Merah to stay
225 alive in France and to kill civilians and yet terrorists are allowed to remain alive in Syria and
226 kill innocent people?

227 R: Mr. President, how has your daily routine changed in terms of leading the country since the
228 beginning of the crisis? Some suggest that after two-and-a-half years Bashar al-Assad is
229 leading the country alone.

230 A: This is what I meant earlier, if the West is against me and so were the Syrian people, if I
231 was alone, how could I conceivably be leading the country? This is illogical. I can continue to
232 lead because of the strength of public support and the strength of the Syrian state.
233 Unfortunately, those in the West do not view this reality objectively.

234 R: Mr. President, a number of French journalists have been held in Syria. Do you have any
235 idea of their situation? Are the Syrian authorities holding them?

236 A: Do you mean that we are holding them?

237 R: They were taken hostage in the North of Syria; do you have information on their fate?

238 A: If they were taken hostage by the terrorists, you will have to ask them. If anyone is arrested
239 by the government for entering the country illegally, they will be taken to court rather than
240 being held in jail. They would face charges according to Syrian law and this would be public
241 knowledge.

242 R: Are you looking to cooperate with France on security issues? This was an area that went
243 well in the past.

244 A: Any cooperation, be it security, military or economic requires political consensus. You
245 cannot maintain security cooperation with any country when there is a conflict of interests.

246 R: When your father passed away, you visited France and were received by President Chirac.
247 Everyone viewed you as a youthful and promising president and a successful ophthalmologist.
248 Today, since the crisis, this image has changed. To what extent have you as a person
249 changed?

250 A: The more imperative question is: has the nature of this person changed? The media can
251 manipulate a person's image at a whim, yet my reality remains the same. I belong to the
252 Syrian people; I defend their interests and independence and will not succumb to external
253 pressure. I cooperate with others in a way that promotes my country's interests. This is what
254 was never properly understood; they assumed that they could easily influence a young
255 president, that if I had studied in the West I would lose my original culture. This is such a
256 naïve and shallow attitude. I have not changed; they are the ones who wished to identify me
257 differently at the beginning. They need to accept the image of a Syrian president who
258 embraces his country's independence.

259 R: Has France become an enemy of Syria?

260 A: All those who support the terrorists financially or militarily are enemies of the Syrian
261 people. Anyone who facilitates the killing of a Syrian soldier, or works against the interests of
262 Syria and her people is an enemy of Syria. I am not referring to the French people since I
263 believe that the French government is working against the interests and will of its people.
264 There is a difference between the concepts of adverse government and adverse nation. The
265 French people are not our enemy but the policy of their government is one that is adverse to
266 the Syrian people.

267 R: Is the French government an enemy of Syria?

268 A: The more adverse the policies of the French government are to the Syrian people, the more
269 the government is an enemy to the Syrian people. The current policies, that we mentioned
270 earlier, adopted by the French leadership are hostile towards Syria. This hostility can only end
271 when the French government readdresses its policies.

Obama talks Syria before Congress meeting

Politico, White House, 3. 9. 2013

Dostupné na WWW: <<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/09/obama-syria-remarks-congress-meeting-96198.html>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 O: I want to thank the leaders of both parties for being here today to discuss what is a very
2 serious issue facing the United States. And the fact that I've had a chance to speak to many of
3 you, and Congress as a whole is taking this issue with the soberness and seriousness that it
4 deserves, is greatly appreciated and I think vindicates the decision for us to present this issue
5 to Congress. As I've said last week, as Secretary Kerry made clear in his presentation last
6 week, we have high confidence that Syria used, in an indiscriminate fashion, chemical
7 weapons that killed thousands of people, including over 400 children, and in direct violation
8 of the international norm against using chemical weapons. That poses a serious national
9 security threat to the United States and to the region, and as a consequence, Assad and Syria
10 needs to be held accountable. I've made a decision that America should take action. But I also
11 believe that we will be much more effective, we will be stronger, if we take action together as
12 one nation. And so this gives us an opportunity not only to present the evidence to all of the
13 leading members of Congress and their various foreign policy committees as to why we have
14 high confidence that chemical weapons were used and that Assad used them, but it also gives
15 us an opportunity to discuss why it's so important that he be held to account. This norm
16 against using chemical weapons that 98 percent of the world agrees to is there for a reason:
17 Because we recognize that there are certain weapons that, when used, can not only end up
18 resulting in grotesque deaths, but also can end up being transmitted to non-state actors; can
19 pose a risk to allies and friends of ours like Israel, like Jordan, like Turkey; and unless we
20 hold them into account, also sends a message that international norms around issues like
21 nuclear proliferation don't mean much. And so I'm going to be working with Congress. We
22 have set up a draft authorization. We're going to be asking for hearings and a prompt vote.
23 And I'm very appreciative that everybody here has already begun to schedule hearings and
24 intends to take a vote as soon as all of Congress comes back early next week. So the key point
25 that I want to emphasize to the American people: The military plan that has been developed
26 by the joint chiefs and that I believe is appropriate is proportional. It is limited. It does not
27 involve boots on the ground. This is not Iraq and this is not Afghanistan. This is a limited,
28 proportional step that will send a clear message not only to the Assad regime, but also to other
29 countries that may be interested in testing some of these international norms, that there are
30 consequences. It gives us the ability to degrade Assad's capabilities when it comes to
31 chemical weapons. It also fits into a broader strategy that we have to make sure that we can
32 bring about over time the kind of strengthening of the opposition and the diplomatic and
33 economic and political pressure required so that ultimately we have a transition that can bring
34 peace and stability not only to Syria but to the region. But I want to emphasize once again:
35 What we are envisioning is something limited. It is something proportional. It will degrade
36 Assad's capabilities. At the same time, we have a broader strategy that will allow us to
37 upgrade the capabilities of the opposition, allow Syria ultimately to free itself from the kinds
38 of terrible civil wars and death and activity that we've been seeing on the ground. So I look
39 forward to listening to the various concerns of the members who are here today. I am
40 confident that those concerns can be addressed. I think it is appropriate that we act

41 deliberately, but I also think everybody recognizes the urgency here and that we're going to
42 have to move relatively quickly. So with that, to all of you here today, I look forward to an
43 excellent discussion.

44 Q: Mr. President, are you prepared to rewrite the authorization, and does that undercut any of
45 your authority, sir?

46 O: I would not be going to Congress if I wasn't serious about consultations, and believing
47 that by shaping the authorization to make sure we accomplish the mission we will be more
48 effective. And so long as we are accomplishing what needs to be accomplished, which is to
49 send a clear message to Assad degrading his capabilities to use chemical weapons, not just
50 now but also in the future as long as the authorization allows us to do that, I'm confident that
51 we're going to be able to come up with something that hits that mark.

52 Q. Are you confident that you'll get a vote in favor of action?

53 O: I am. Thank you, guys.

Obama's interview with Fox News

FoxNews, 9. 9. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: < <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/09/09/transcript-president-obama-interview-with-fox-news-chris-wallace/> > [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 R: Mr. President, thanks for talking with us.

2 O: Thank you so much.

3 R: Syrian President Assad says there will be repercussions if there's a U.S. military strike,
4 that we should, quote, "Expect everything." You keep talking about limited targeted military
5 action, but the fact is, you don't know what happens after you order a strike.

6 O: Well, actually, we know what Assad's capabilities are. And, you know, Mr. Assad's are
7 significant compared to, uh, a bunch of opposition leaders, many of whom are not
8 professional fighters. They're significant relative to over 400 children that were gassed. Uh,
9 they're not significant relative to, uh, the U.S. military. Uh, some of their allies -- Iran,
10 Hezbollah -- do have the capacity to carry out asymmetrical strikes, but keep in mind that, uh,
11 even Assad's allies recognize that, uh, he crossed the line in using chemical weapons. Iran
12 itself was subjected to chemical weapons use by Saddam Hussein. Their populations
13 remember what terrible weapons these are. There is a reason why, uh, almost the entire
14 international community, uh, has, uh, signed, uh, a ban on chemical weapons, even during hot
15 wars. And it's because they're indiscriminate. And so my narrow concern right now, uh, is
16 making sure that Assad does not use those chemical weapons again. And, you know, we've
17 seen some indications from the Russians as well as the Syrians today, uh, that they may be
18 willing to look at the prospect of getting those weapons under control, perhaps even, uh,
19 international control, and getting them out of there, where they could be vulnerable to use by
20 anybody. And that's something that we're going to run to ground over the next couple of days.

21 R: Well, let me ask you about that, because there has been this interesting development
22 today.

23 O: Right.

24 R: The Russians say they're going to push Syria to put chemical weapons under international
25 control. The Syrian foreign minister says he welcomes that.

26 O: Right.

27 R: Will you delay a strike...

28 O: Um-hmm.

29 R: -- to see how that plays out?

30 O: Uh, I think it's fair to say that, uh, we would not be at this point without a credible threat
31 of a military strike, but I welcome the possibility of the development and, uh, John Kerry will
32 be talking to his Russian counterparts. Uh, I think we should explore and exhaust all avenues
33 of diplomatic resolution of this. Uh, but I think it's important for us to keep the pressure on
34 and to, quote a -- or to paraphrase, at least -- a -- a, uh, former U.S. president, Ronald Reagan,
35 it's not enough just to trust, I think we're going to have to verify. So the question is, can we
36 construct something that allows the international community to have confidence that these
37 terrible weapons will not be used again?

38 R: So would you delay a Congressional vote...

39 O: (inaudible).

40 R: -- until you see where this goes?

41 O: Well, I -- I -- I think that, uh, in discussions with members of Congress, what we've said to
42 them is that there's a reason why I slowed this thing down to allow for a Congressional
43 debate. Uh, part of it was because given that the threat was not direct and imminent to the
44 United States, despite, uh, me believing I have the authority to take, uh, action, I thought it
45 was best for us to actually have this debate, because we've gone through a lot of war and
46 people are, frankly, suspicious of a lot of, uh, decisions...

47 R: -- but, sir...

48 O: But I...

49 R: We have limited time.

50 O: (inaudible).

51 R: I just want to ask, will you delay a vote?

52 O: The, uh, I am going to make sure that, uh, this does not change the calendar of debate in
53 Congress, but there is no expectation that this would be -- that Congress would, uh, be
54 finished with its deliberations over the next week or so. I mean, clearly, it's going to take
55 more time, partly because the American people aren't convinced. So, uh, I'm doing interviews
56 tonight. I'm going to speak to the American people tomorrow. A debate will begin in
57 Congress over the next...

58 R: But you think...

59 O: -- several days...

60 R: -- that's going to go over a couple of weeks?

61 O: Uh, I do believe that it's going to take some time. Look, uh, you know, Chris, you a -- you
62 guys have polls and, uh, you do head counts. And right now the American...

63 R: (inaudible).

64 O: -- right -- right now, the American people are not persuaded. Right now, members of
65 Congress, who are just getting back, still have questions. So we're going to have time to have
66 a good deliberation in Congress. We will pursue this diplomatic track. Uh, I fervently hope
67 that this can be resolved in a non-military way. But I think it is important for us not to let the,
68 uh, you know, the pedal off the metal when it comes to making sure that they understand that
69 we mean what we say about these international bans on chemical weapons.

70 R: Had you discussed this, when you were in St. Petersburg, with President Putin, the idea of
71 Russia intervening, uh, to try to get them to turn over their chemical weapons or do you worry
72 that this could be the Russians -- and they have a history of this -- trying to throw a monkey
73 wrench into this whole process?

74 O: Uh, I did discuss this with President Putin. Uh, this is something that is not new. I've
75 been discussing this with, uh, President Putin for some time now. The last time we were at a
76 G-20 meeting in Los Cabos last year. Uh, I suggested the need for the United States and
77 Russia to work together to deal with this particular problem. It doesn't solve the underlying
78 Syrian conflict, but if we can solve this chemical weapons issue, which is a threat to us, uh,
79 and the world, then it does potentially lay the groundwork for further discussions around how
80 you can bring about a political settlement inside of Syria that would -- would provide relief to,
81 uh, people who, right now, are being displaced or killed on almost a -- a continuing basis.

82 R: But would you set some kind of a deadline or a time frame for the con -- the Syrians...

83 O: Yes.

84 R: -- to turn over their chemical weapons? You're not going to let this go on for months.

85 O: No, and so I -- I think that we should be able to get a fairly, uh, rapid, uh, sense of how
86 serious they are. Uh, we have -- the, uh, U.N. inspectors are going to be issuing a report fairly
87 soon, uh, I think in parallel with some of the debate that's taking place in Congress. We are
88 going to be immediately talking to the Russians and looking for a -- a -- some actual language
89 that they might be proposing. Uh, the U.N. secretary-general, uh, has expressed an interest in
90 working with us on this. And so we'll put this on a fast track. Uh, I am, uh, in part, confident
91 about our ability to thoroughly examine this because, in consultation with the Joint Chiefs of
92 Staff, they've assured me that, uh, when I make a decision to launch a strike, they can do it
93 and still be effective, whether it's today, tomorrow or a month from now.

94 R: Finally, sir, I want to talk -- you talk about the hole that you're in on Capitol Hill. The
95 latest vote count shows 238 members either against or leaning against, 26 members in favor.
96 A new Fox poll finds just 36 percent of Americans support a U.S. attack. And I guess my
97 question is how much responsibility do you think you bear...

98 O: Um-hmm.

99 R: -- for the opposition? Uh, for two years, you said we did not have a direct national security
100 interest in Syria. Uh, you said that -- the White House said that they did not see -- you did not
101 seek Congressional approval until you decided that you did. Uh, you talk more about what
102 you're not going to do in Syria than what you are going to do. And today, John Kerry said

103 that any attack would be unbelievably small. The chairman of House Intelligence, Mike
104 Rogers, says that you have done -- the White House has done a bad job at explaining, that this
105 has been a mess.

106 O: OK. Uh, that -- that was a long question. Let's see if I can keep the shor -- the answer
107 shorter. I -- I think that this is a very difficult situation in Syria. Everybody understands that.
108 Uh, I continue to believe that there is not a military solution to the underlying conflict, uh,
109 which is, in part, sectarian, uh, and that the American people are right not to want to have us
110 entangled in a sectarian civil war inside of Syria. Uh, but I have also been consistent in saying
111 that the ban on chemical weapons is something that does affect our interests directly. That
112 has been a consistent position. I have not changed it. Uh, and I think that there is a tendency
113 to say if we are going to solve the chemical weapons ban, then that must mean we also have
114 to take on and own the entire -- entire Syrian conflict. I reject that proposition. I think that we,
115 as we're seeing now in these international discussions, uh, with the -- the Russians and
116 potentially the Syrians -- there is a way for us to preserve a ban against the worst weapons
117 that threaten our troops, that threaten people around the world, that threaten in terms of
118 proliferation, uh, you know, attacks -- threaten to -- to -- to lead to a -- eventual attacks on us,
119 while still recognizing that the only way we're going to solve the underlying Syrian conflict is
120 through some sort of political settlement and we're going to have to work through the
121 international community in order to accomplish that. We can't own that, uh, because we've
122 done -- been down that path. And, uh, it's too costly in blood and treasure and it is not
123 something that we ultimately think would be effective.

124 R: Mr. President, thank you.

125 O: Thank you. Appreciate it.

Assad's interview with CBS News

Global Research, CBS News (SANA), 9. 9. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/president-al-assads-interview-with-cbs-news/5349165>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 R: Mr. President thank you very much for this opportunity to talk to you at a very important
2 moment because the President of the United States will address the nation this week and, as
3 you know an important conversation is taking place in Washington and important things are
4 happening here in your country. Do you expect an airstrike?

5 A: As long as the United States doesn't obey the international law and trample over the
6 Charter of the United Nations we have to worry that any administration -- not only this one --
7 would do anything. According to the lies that we've been hearing for the last two weeks from
8 high-ranking officials in the US administration we have to expect the worst.

9 R: Are you prepared?

10 A: We've been living in difficult circumstances for the last two years and a half, and we
11 prepare ourselves for every possibility. But that doesn't mean if you're prepared things will
12 be better; it's going to get worse with any foolish strike or stupid war.

13 R: What do you mean worse?

14 A: Worse because of the repercussions because nobody can tell you the repercussions of the
15 first strike. We're talking about one region, bigger regions, not only about Syria. This
16 interlinked region, this intermingled, interlocked, whatever you want to call it; if you strike
17 somewhere, you have to expect the repercussions somewhere else in different forms in ways
18 you don't expect.

19 R: Are you suggesting that if in fact there is a strike; there will be repercussions against the
20 United States from your friends in other countries like Iran or Hezbollah or others?

21 A: As I said, this may take different forms: direct and indirect. Direct when people want to
22 retaliate, or governments. Indirect when you're going to have instability and the spread of
23 terrorism all over the region that will influence the west directly.

24 R: Have you had conversations with Russia, with Iran or with Hezbollah about how to
25 retaliate?

26 A: We don't discuss this issue as a government, but we discuss the repercussions, which is
27 more important because sometimes repercussions could be more destroying than the strike
28 itself. Any American strike will not destroy as much as the terrorists have already destroyed
29 in Syria; sometimes the repercussions could be many doubles the strike itself.

30 R: But some have suggested that it might tip the balance in the favor of the rebels and lead to
31 the overthrow of your government.

32 A: Exactly. Any strike will be as direct support to Al-Qaeda offshoot that's called Jabhat al-
33 Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. You're right about this. It's going to be direct
34 support.

35 R: This is about chemical warfare. Let's talk about that. Do you approve of the use of
36 chemical warfare, the use of deadly chemicals? Do you think that it is an appropriate tool of
37 war, to use chemicals?

38 A: We are against any WMD, any weapons of mass destruction, whether chemical or nuclear.

39 R: So you're against the use of chemical warfare?

40 A: Yes, not only me. As a state, as a government, in 2001 we proposed to the United Nations
41 to empty or to get rid of every WMD in the Middle East, and the United States stood against
42 that proposal. This is our conviction and policy.

43 R: But you're not a signatory to the chemical warfare agreement.

44 A: Not yet.

45 R: Why not?

46 A: Because Israel has WMD, and it has to sign, and Israel is occupying our land, so that's we
47 talked about the Middle East, not Syria, not Israel; it should be comprehensive.

48 R: Do you consider chemical warfare equivalent to nuclear warfare?

49 A: I don't know. We haven't tried either.

50 R: But you know, you're a head of state, and you understand the consequences of weapons
51 that don't discriminate.

52 A: Technically, they're not the same. But morally, it's the same.

53 R: Morally, they are the same.

54 A: They are the same, but at the end, killing is killing. Massacring is massacring.
55 Sometimes you may kill tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands with very primitive
56 armaments.

57 R: Then why do you have such a stockpile of chemical weapons?

58 A: We don't discuss this issue in public because we never said that we have it, and we never
59 said that we don't have it. It's a Syrian issue; it's a military issue we never discuss in public
60 with anyone.

61 R: This is from the New York Times this morning: Syria's leaders amassed one of the
62 world's largest stockpiles of chemical weapons with help from the Soviet Union and Iran as
63 well as Western European suppliers, and even a handful of American companies. According
64 to American diplomatic cables and declassified intelligence records, you have amassed one of
65 the largest supplies of chemical weapons in the world.

66 A: To have or not to have is a possibility, but to depend on what media says is nonsense, or to
67 depend on some of the reports of the intelligence is nonsense and that was proven when they
68 invaded Iraq ten years ago and they said "Iraq has stockpiles of WMD" and it was proven
69 after the invasion that this was false; it was fraud. So, we can't depend on what one magazine
70 wrote. But at the end, I said it's something not to be discussed with anyone.

71 R: You accept that the world believes that you have a stockpile of chemical weapons?

72 A: Who?

73 R: The world. The United States and other powers who also said that you have chemical
74 weapons.

75 A: It isn't about what they believe in, it's about the reality that we have, and this reality, we
76 own it, we don't have to discuss it.

77 R: Speaking of reality, what was the reality on August 21st? What happened in your
78 judgment?

79 A: We're not in the area where the alleged chemical attack happened. I said alleged. We're
80 not sure that anything happened.

81 R: Even at this date, you're not sure that chemical weapons – even though you have seen the
82 video tape, even though you've seen the bodies, even though your own officials have been
83 there.

84 A: I haven't finished. Our soldiers in another area were attacked chemically. Our soldiers –
85 they went to the hospital as casualties because of chemical weapons, but in the area where
86 they said the government used chemical weapons, we only had video and we only have
87 pictures and allegations. We're not there; our forces, our police, our institutions don't exist
88 there. How can you talk about what happened if you don't have evidence? We're not like the
89 American administration, we're not social media administration or government. We are a
90 government that deals with reality. When we have evidence, we'll announce it.

91 R: Well, as you know, Secretary Kerry has said there is evidence and that they saw rockets
92 that fired from a region controlled by your forces into a region controlled by the rebels. They
93 have evidence from satellite photographs of that. They have evidence of a message that was
94 intercepted about chemical weapons, and soon thereafter there were other intercepted
95 messages, so Secretary Kerry has presented what he views as conclusive evidence.

96 A: No, he presented his confidence and his convictions. It's not about confidence, it's about
97 evidence. The Russians have completely opposite evidence that the missiles were thrown
98 from an area where the rebels control. This reminds me – what Kerry said - about the big lie
99 that Collin Powell said in front of the world on satellites about the WMD in Iraq before going
100 to war. He said “this is our evidence.” Actually, he gave false evidence. In this case, Kerry
101 didn't even present any evidence. He talked “we have evidence” and he didn't present
102 anything. Not yet, nothing so far; not a single shred of evidence.

103 R: Do you have some remorse for those bodies, those people, it is said to be up to at least a
104 thousand or perhaps 1400, who were in Eastern Ghouta, who died?

105 A: We feel pain for every Syrian victim.

106 R: What about the victims of this assault from chemical warfare?

107 A: Dead is dead, killing is killing, crime is crime. When you feel pain, you feel pain about
108 their family, about the loss that you have in your country, whether one person was killed or a
109 hundred or a thousand. It's a loss, it's a crime, it's a moral issue. We have family that we sit
110 with, family that loved their dear ones. It's not about how they are killed, it's about that they
111 are dead now; this is the bad thing.

112 R: But has there been any remorse or sadness on behalf of the Syrian people for what
113 happened?

114 A: I think sadness prevails in Syria now. We don't feel anything else but sadness because we
115 have this killing every day, whether with chemical or any other kind. It's not about how. We
116 feel with it every day.

117 R: But this was indiscriminate, and children were killed, and people who said goodbye to
118 their children in the morning didn't see them and will never see them again, in Ghouta.

119 A: That is the case every day in Syria, that's why you have to stop the killing. That's why we
120 have to stop the killing. But what do you mean by “indiscriminate” that you are talking
121 about?

122 R: Well, the fact that chemical warfare is indiscriminate in who it kills, innocents as well as
123 combatants.

124 A: Yeah, but you're not talking about evidence, you're not talking about facts, we are talking
125 about allegations. So, we're not sure that if there's chemical weapon used and who used it.
126 We can't talk about virtual things, we have to talk about facts.

127 R: It is said that your government delayed the United Nations observers from getting to
128 Ghouta and that you denied and delayed the Red Cross then the Red Crescent from getting
129 there to make observations and to help.

130 A: The opposite happened, your government delayed because we asked for a delegation in
131 March 2013 when the first attack happened in Aleppo in the north of Syria; they delayed it till
132 just a few days before al-Ghouta when they sent those team, and the team itself said in its
133 report that he did everything as he wanted. There was not a single obstacle.

134 R: But they said they were delayed in getting there, that they wanted to be there earlier.

135 A: No, no, no; there was a conflict, there was fighting, they were shooting. That's it. We
136 didn't prevent them from going anywhere. We asked them to come; why to delay them? Even
137 if you want to take the American story, they say we used chemical weapons the same day the
138 team or the investigation team came to Syria; is it logical? It's not logical. Even if a country
139 or army wanted to use such weapon, they should have waited a few days till the investigation
140 finished its work. It's not logical, the whole story doesn't even hold together.

141 R: We'll come back to it. If your government did not do it, despite the evidence, who did it?

142 A: We have to be there to get the evidence like what happened in Aleppo when we had
143 evidence. And because the United States didn't send the team, we sent the evidence to the
144 Russians.

145 R: But don't you want to know the answer, if you don't accept the evidence so far, as to who
146 did this?

147 A: The question is who threw chemicals on the same day on our soldiers. That's the same
148 question. Technically, not the soldiers. Soldiers don't throw missiles on themselves. So,
149 either the rebels, the terrorists, or a third party. We don't have any clue yet. We have to be
150 there to collect the evidences then we can give answer.

151 R: Well, the argument is made that the rebels don't have their capability of using chemical
152 weapons, they do not have the rockets and they do not have the supply of chemical weapons
153 that you have, so therefore they could not have done it.

154 A: First of all, they have rockets, and they've been throwing rockets on Damascus for
155 months.

156 R: That carry chemical weapons?

157 A: Rockets in general. They have the means – first. Second, the sarin gas that they’ve been
158 talking about for the last weeks is a very primitive gas. You can have it done in the backyard
159 of a house; it’s a very primitive gas. So, it’s not something complicated.

160 R: But this was not primitive. This was a terrible use of chemical weapons.

161 A: Third, they used it in Aleppo in the north of Syria. Fourth, there’s a video on YouTube
162 where the terrorists clearly make trials on a rabbit and kill the rabbit and said “this is how
163 we’re going to kill the Syrian people.” Fifth, there’s a new video about one of those women
164 who they consider as rebel or fighter who worked with those terrorists and she said “they
165 didn’t tell us how to use the chemical weapons” and one of those weapons exploded in one of
166 the tunnels and killed twelve. That’s what she said. Those are the evidence that we have.
167 Anyway, the party who accused is the one who has to bring evidences. The United States
168 accused Syria, and because you accused you have to bring evidence, this first of all. We have
169 to find evidences when we are there.

170 R: What evidence would be sufficient for you?

171 A: For example, in Aleppo we had the missile itself, and the material, and the sample from
172 the sand, from the soil, and samples from the blood.

173 R: But the argument is made that your forces bombarded Ghouta soon thereafter with the
174 intent of covering up evidence.

175 A: How could bombardment cover the evidence? Technically, it doesn’t work. How? This is
176 stupid to be frank, this is very stupid.

177 R: But you acknowledge the bombardment?

178 A: Of course, there was a fight. That happens every day; now you can have it. But, let’s
179 talk... we have indications, let me just finish this point, because how can use WMD while
180 your troops are only 100 meters away from it? Is it logical? It doesn’t happen. It cannot be
181 used like this. Anyone who’s not military knows this fact. Why do you use chemical
182 weapons while you’re advancing? Last year was much more difficult than this year, and we
183 didn’t use it.

184 R: There is this question too; if it was not you, does that mean that you don’t have control of
185 your own chemical weapons and that perhaps they have fallen into the hands of other people
186 who might want to use them?

187 A: That implies that we have chemical weapons, first. That implies that it’s being used,
188 second. So we cannot answer this question until we answer the first part and the second part.
189 Third, let’s presume that a country or army has this weapon; this kind of armaments cannot be
190 used by infantry for example or by anyone. This kind of armament should be used by
191 specialized units, so it cannot be in the hand of anyone.

192 R: Well, exactly, that’s the point.

193 A: Which is controlled centrally.

194 R: Ah, so you are saying that if in fact, your government did it, you would know about it and
195 you would have approved it.

196 A: I'm talking about a general case.

197 R: In general, you say if in fact it happened, I would have known about it and approved it.
198 That's the nature of centralized power.

199 A: Generally, in every country, yes. I'm talking about the general rules, because I cannot
200 discuss this point with you in detail unless I'm telling you what we have and what we don't
201 have, something I'm not going to discuss as I said at the very beginning, because this is a
202 military issue that could not be discussed.

203 R: Do you question the New York Times article I read to you, saying you had a stockpile of
204 chemical weapons? You're not denying that.

205 A: No, we don't say yes, we don't say no, because as long as this is classified, it shouldn't be
206 discussed.

207 R: The United States is prepared to launch a strike against your country because they believe
208 chemical weapons are so abhorrent, that anybody who uses them crosses a red line, and that
209 therefore, if they do that, they have to be taught a lesson so that they will not do it again.

210 A: What red line? Who drew it?

211 R: The President says that it's not just him, that the world has drawn it in their revulsion
212 against the use of chemical weapons, that the world has drawn this red line.

213 A: Not the world, because Obama drew that line, and Obama can draw lines for himself and
214 his country, not for other countries. We have our red lines, like our sovereignty, our
215 independence, while if you want to talk about world red lines, the United States used depleted
216 uranium in Iraq, Israel used white phosphorus in Gaza, and nobody said anything. What
217 about the red lines? We don't see red lines. It's political red lines.

218 R: The President is prepared to strike, and perhaps he'll get the authorization of Congress or
219 not. The question then is would you give up chemical weapons if it would prevent the
220 President from authorizing a strike? Is that a deal you would accept?

221 A: Again, you always imply that we have chemical weapons.

222 R: I have to, because that is the assumption of the President. That is his assumption, and he is
223 the one that will order the strike.

224 A: It's his problem if he has an assumption, but for us in Syria, we have principles. We'd do
225 anything to prevent the region from another crazy war. It's not only Syria because it will start
226 in Syria.

227 R: You'd do anything to prevent the region from having another crazy war?

228 A: The region, yes.

229 R: You realize the consequences for you if there is a strike?

230 A: It's not about me. It's about the region.

231 R: It's about your country, it's about your people.

232 A: Of course, my country and me, we are part of this region, we're not separated. We cannot
233 discuss it as Syria or as me; it should be as part, as a whole, as comprehensive. That's how
234 we have to look at it.

235 R: Some ask why would you do it? It's a stupid thing to do if you're going to bring a strike
236 down on your head by using chemical weapons. Others say you'd do it because A: you're
237 desperate, or the alternative, you do it because you want other people to fear you, because
238 these are such fearful weapons that if the world knows you have them, and specifically your
239 opponents in Syria, the rebels, then you have gotten away with it and they will live in fear,
240 and that therefore, the President has to do something.

241 A: You cannot be desperate when the army is making advances. That should have happened
242 – if we take into consideration that this presumption is correct and this is reality – you use it
243 when you're in a desperate situation. So, our position is much better than before. So, this is
244 not correct.

245 R: You think you're winning the war.

246 A: "Winning" is a subjective word, but we are making advancement. This is the correct
247 word, because winning for some people is when you finish completely.

248 R: Then the argument is made that if you're winning, it is because of the recent help you have
249 got from Iran and from Hezbollah and additional supplies that have come to your side. People
250 from outside Syria supporting you in the effort against the rebels.

251 A: Iran doesn't have any soldier in Syria, so how could Iran help me?

252 R: Supplies, weaponry?

253 A: That's all before the crisis. We always have this kind of cooperation.

254 R: Hezbollah, Hezbollah fighters have been here.

255 A: Hezbollah fighters are on the borders with Lebanon where the terrorists attacked them.
256 On the borders with Lebanon, this is where Hezbollah retaliated, and this is where we have
257 cooperation, and that's good.

258 R: Hezbollah forces are in Syria today?

259 A: On the border area with Lebanon where they want to protect themselves and cooperate
260 with us, but they don't exist all over Syria. They cannot exist all over Syria anyway, for many
261 reasons, but they exist on the borders.

262 R: What advice are you getting from the Russians?

263 A: About?

264 R: About this war, about how to end this war.

265 A: Every friend of Syria is looking for peaceful solution, and we are convinced about that.
266 We have this advice, and without this advice we are convinced about it.

267 R: Do you have a plan to end the war?

268 A: Of course.

269 R: Which is?

270 A: At the very beginning, it was fully political. When you have these terrorists, the first part
271 of the same plan which is political should start with stopping the smuggling of terrorists
272 coming from abroad, stopping the logistic support, the money, all kinds of support coming to
273 these terrorists. This is the first part. Second, we can have national dialogue where different
274 Syrian parties sit and discuss the future of Syria. Third, you can have interim government or
275 transitional government. Then you have final elections, parliamentary elections, and you're
276 going to have presidential elections.

277 R: But the question is: would you meet with rebels today to discuss a negotiated settlement?

278 A: In the initiative that we issued at the beginning of this year we said every party with no
279 exceptions as long as they give up their armaments.

280 R: But you'll meet with the rebels and anybody who's fighting against you if they give up
281 their weapons?

282 A: We don't have a problem.

283 R: Then they will say "you are not giving up your weapons, why should we give up our
284 weapons?"

285 A: Does a government give up its weapons? Have you heard about that before?

286 R: No, but rebels don't normally give up their weapons either during the negotiations; they
287 do that after a successful...

288 A: The armament of the government is legal armament. Any other armament is not legal. So
289 how can you compare? It's completely different.

290 R: There's an intense discussion going on about all the things we're talking about in
291 Washington, where if there's a strike, it will emanate from the United States' decision to do
292 this. What do you want to say, in this very important week, in America, and in Washington,
293 to the American people, the members of Congress, to the President of the United States?

294 A: I think the most important part of this now is, let's say the American people, but the polls
295 show that the majority now don't want a war, anywhere, not only against Syria, but the
296 Congress is going to vote about this in a few days, and I think the Congress is elected by

297 people, it represents the people, and works for their interest. The first question that they
298 should ask themselves: what do wars give America, since Vietnam till now? Nothing. No
299 political gain, no economic gain, no good reputation. The United States' credibility is at an
300 all-time low. So, this war is against the interest of the United States. Why? First, this war is
301 going to support Al-Qaeda and the same people that killed Americans in the 11th of
302 September. The second thing that we want to tell Congress, that they should ask and that
303 what we expect them to ask this administration about the evidence that they have regarding
304 the chemical story and allegations that they presented. I wouldn't tell the President or any
305 other official, because we are disappointed by their behavior recently, because we expected
306 this administration to be different from Bush's administration. They are adopting the same
307 doctrine with different accessories. That's it. So if we want to expect something from this
308 administration, it is not to be weak, to be strong to say that "we don't have evidence," that
309 "we have to obey the international law", that "we have to go back to the Security Council and
310 the United Nations".

311 R: The question remains; what can you say to the President who believes chemical weapons
312 were used by your government; that this will not happen again.

313 A: I will tell him very simply: present what you have as evidence to the public, be
314 transparent.

315 R: And if he does? If he presents that evidence?

316 A: This is where we can discuss the evidence, but he doesn't have it. He didn't present it
317 because he doesn't have it, Kerry doesn't have it. No one in your administration has it. If
318 they had it, they would have presented it to you as media from the first day.

319 R: They have presented it to the Congress.

320 A: Nothing. Nothing was presented.

321 R: They've shown the Congress what they have, and the evidence they have, from satellite
322 intercepted messages and the like.

323 A: Nothing has been presented so far.

324 R: They have presented it to the Congress, sir.

325 A: You are a reporter. Get this evidence and show it to the public in your country.

326 R: They're presenting it to the public representative. You don't show your evidence and
327 what you're doing and your plans to people within your own council. They're showing it to
328 the people's representative who have to vote on an authorization to strike, and if they don't
329 find the evidence sufficient...

330 A: First of all, we have the precedent of Collin Powell ten years ago, when he showed the
331 evidence, it was false, and it was forged. This is first. Second, you want me to believe
332 American evidence and don't want me to believe the indications that we have. We live here,
333 this is our reality.

334 R: Your indications are what?

335 A: That the rebels or the terrorists used the chemical weapons in northern Aleppo five
336 months ago.

337 R: And on August 21st?

338 A: No, no, no. That was before. On the 21st, again they used it against our soldiers in our
339 area where we control it, and our soldiers went to the hospital, you can see them if you want.

340 R: But Ghouta is not controlled by your forces, it's controlled by the rebel forces. The area
341 where that attack took place is controlled by rebel forces.

342 A: What if they have stockpiles and they exploded because of the bombardment? What if
343 they used the missile by mistake and attacked themselves by mistake?

344 R: Let me move to the question of whether a strike happens, and I touched on this before.
345 You have had fair warning. Have you prepared by moving possible targets, are you moving
346 targets within civilian populations, all the things that you might have done if you have time to
347 do that and you have had clear warning that this might be coming?

348 A: Syria is in a state of war since its land was occupied for more than four decades, and the
349 nature of the frontier in Syria implies that most of the army is in inhabited areas, most of the
350 centers are in inhabited areas. You hardly find any military base in distant areas from the
351 cities unless it's an airport or something like this, but most of the military bases or centers
352 within inhabited areas.

353 R: Will there be attacks against American bases in the Middle East if there's an airstrike?

354 A: You should expect everything. Not necessarily through the government, the governments
355 are not the only player in this region. You have different parties, different factions, you have
356 different ideologies; you have everything in this region now. So, you have to expect that.

357 R: Tell me what you mean by "expect everything."

358 A: Expect every action.

359 R: Including chemical warfare?

360 A: That depends. If the rebels or the terrorists in this region or any other group have it, this
361 could happen, I don't know. I'm not a fortuneteller to tell you what's going to happen.

362 R: But we'd like to know more, I think the President would like to know, the American
363 people would like to know. If there is an attack, what might be the repercussions and who
364 might be engaged in those repercussions?

365 A: Okay, before the 11th of September, in my discussions with many officials of the United
366 States, some of them are Congressmen, I used to say that "don't deal with terrorists as playing
367 games." It's a different story. You're going to pay the price if you're not wise in dealing
368 with terrorists. We said you're going to be repercussions of the mistaken way of dealing with

369 it, of treating the terrorism, but nobody expected 11th of September. So, you cannot expect.
370 It is difficult for anyone to tell you what is going to happen. It's an area where everything is
371 on the brink of explosion. You have to expect everything.

372 R: Let's talk about the war today. A hundred thousand people dead. A million refugees. A
373 country being destroyed. Do you take some responsibility for that?

374 A: That depends on the decision that I took. From the first day I took the decision as
375 President to defend my country. So, who killed? That's another question. Actually, the
376 terrorists have been killing our people since the beginning of this crisis two years and a half
377 ago, and the Syrian people wanted the government and the state institutions and the army and
378 the police to defend them, and that's what happened. So we're talking about the
379 responsibility, my responsibility according to the Syrian constitution that said we have to
380 defend ourselves.

381 R: Mr. President, you constantly say "it's terrorists." Most people look at the rebels and they
382 say that Al-Qaeda and other forces from outside Syria are no more than 15 or 20 percent of
383 the forces on the ground. The other 80% are Syrians, are defectors from your government,
384 and defectors from your military. They are people who are Syrians who believe that their
385 country should not be run by a dictator, should not be run by one family, and that they want a
386 different government in their country. That's 80% of the people fighting against you, not
387 terrorists.

388 A: We didn't say that 80%, for example, or the majority or the vast majority, are foreigners.
389 We said the vast majority are Al-Qaeda or Al-Qaeda offshoot organizations in this region.
390 When you talk about Al-Qaeda it doesn't matter if he's Syrian or American or from Europe or
391 from Asia or Africa. Al-Qaeda has one ideology and they go back to the same leadership in
392 Afghanistan or in Syria or in Iraq. That's the question. You have tens of thousands of
393 foreigners, that's definitely correct. We are fighting them on the ground and we know this.

394 R: But that's 15 or 20% of this. That's a realistic look at how many.

395 A: Nobody knows because when they are dead and they are killed, they don't have any ID.
396 You look at their faces, they look foreigners, but where are they coming from? How precise
397 this estimate is difficult to tell, but definitely the majority are Al-Qaeda. This is what
398 concerns us, not the nationality. If you have Syrian Al-Qaeda, or Pakistani Al-Qaeda or Saudi
399 Al-Qaeda, what's the difference? What does it matter? The most important thing is that the
400 majority are Al-Qaeda. We never said that the majority are not Syrians, but we said that the
401 minority is what they call "free Syrian army." That's what we said.

402 R: Do you believe this is becoming a religious war?

403 A: It started partly as a sectarian war in some areas, but now it's not, because when you talk
404 about sectarian war or religious war, you should have a very clear line between the sects and
405 religions in Syria according to the geography and the demography in Syria, something we
406 don't have. So, it's not religious war, but Al-Qaeda always use religions, Islam – actually, as
407 a pretext and as a cover and as a mantle for their war and for their terrorism and for their
408 killing and beheading and so on.

409 R: Why has this war lasted two and a half years?

410 A: Because of the external interference, because there is an external agenda supported by, or
411 let's say led by the United States, the West, the petrodollar countries, mainly Saudi Arabia,
412 and before was Qatar, and Turkey. That's why it lasted two years and a half.

413 R: But what are they doing, those countries you cited?

414 The West wanted to undermine the Syrian positions

415 A: They have different agendas. For the West, they wanted to undermine the Syrian
416 positions. For the petrodollar countries like Saudi Arabia, they're thinking undermining Syria
417 will undermine Iran on sectarian basis. For Turkey, they think that if the Muslim Brotherhood
418 take over the rest of the region, they will be very comfortable, they will be very happy, they
419 will make sure that their political future is guaranteed. So they have different agendas and
420 different goals.

421 R: But at the same time, as I said, you used Hezbollah and got support from Iran, from
422 Russia. So, what is happening here. Is this a kind of war that exists because of support from
423 outside Syria on both sides?

424 A: This is cooperation, I don't know what you mean by support. We have cooperation with
425 countries for decades. Why talk about this cooperation now?

426 R: Then you tell me, what are you receiving from Iran?

427 A: Political support. We have agreements with many countries including Iran, including
428 Russia, including other countries that are about different things including armament. It's
429 cooperation like any cooperation between any two countries, which is normal. It's not related
430 to the crisis. You don't call it support, because you pay money for what you get. So, you
431 don't call it support, it's cooperation, call it whatever you want, but the word "support" is not
432 precise. From Russia for example, we have political support, which is different from the
433 cooperation. We have cooperation for 60 years now, but now we have political support.

434 R: Well, the Russians said they have ongoing support for you, but beyond just political
435 cooperation. I mean they have treaties that existed with Syria.

436 A: Exactly.

437 R: And they provide all kinds of defensive weapons.

438 A: You said treaties, and a Russian official said; we have not agreement... contracts, that we
439 have to fulfill, and those contracts are like any country; you buy armaments, you buy anything
440 you want.

441 R: But do you believe this has become a conflict of Sunni vs. Shia'a?

442 A: No, not yet. This is in the mind of the Saudis, and this is in the minds of the Wahabists.

443 R: And in the minds of the Iranians?

444 A: No, no, actually what they are doing is the opposite. They tried to open channels with the
445 Saudi, with many other Islamic entities in the region in order to talk about Islamic society, not
446 Sunni and Shi'ite societies.

447 R: Was there a moment for you, when you saw the Arab spring approaching Syria, that you
448 said "I've seen what happened in Libya, I've seen what happened in Tunisia, I've seen what
449 happened in Egypt, it's not gonna happen to Bashar al-al-Assad. I will fight anybody that tries
450 to overthrow my regime with everything I have."

451 A: No, for one reason; because the first question that I ask: do I have public support or not.
452 That is the first question that I asked as President. If I don't have the public support, whether
453 there's the so-called "Arab spring" – it's not spring, anyway – but whether we have this or we
454 don't, if you don't have public support, you have to quit, you have to leave. If you have
455 public support, in any circumstances you have to stay. That's your mission, you have to help
456 the people, you have to serve the people.

457 R: When you say "public support" people point to Syria and say a minority sect, Alawites,
458 control a majority Sunni population, and they say "dictatorship" and they do it because it
459 because of the force of their own instruments of power. That's what you have, not public
460 support, for this war against other Syrians.

461 A: Now, it's been two years and a half, ok? Two years and a half and Syria is still
462 withstanding against the United States, the West, Saudi Arabia, the richest countries in this
463 area, including Turkey, and, taking into consideration what your question implies, that even
464 the big part or the bigger part of the Syrian population is against me, how can I withstand till
465 today? Am I the superhuman or Superman, which is not the case!

466 R: Or you have a powerful army.

467 A: The army is made of the people; it cannot be made of robots. It's made of people.

468 R: Surely you're not suggesting that this army is not at your will and the will of your family.

469 A: What do you mean by "will of the family?"

470 R: The will of your family. Your brother is in the military. The military has been... every
471 observer of Syria believes that this is a country controlled by your family and controlled by
472 the Alawites who are your allies. That's the control.

473 A: If that situation was correct – what you're mentioning – we wouldn't have withstood for
474 two years and a half. We would have disintegration of the army, disintegration of the whole
475 institution in the state; we would have disintegration of Syria if that was the case. It can't be
476 tolerated in Syria. I'm talking about the normal reaction of the people. If it's not a national
477 army, it cannot have the support, and if it doesn't have the public support of every sect, it
478 cannot do its job and advance recently. It cannot. The army of the family doesn't make
479 national war.

480 R: Some will argue that you didn't have this support because in fact the rebels were winning
481 before you got the support of Hezbollah and an enlarged support from the Iranians, that you

482 were losing and then they came in and gave you support so that you were able to at least start
483 winning and produce at least a stalemate.

484 A: No, the context is wrong, because talking about winning and losing is like if you're
485 talking about two armies fighting on two territories, which is not the case. Those are gangs,
486 coming from abroad, infiltrate inhabited areas, kill the people, take their houses, and shoot at
487 the army. The army cannot do the same, and the army doesn't exist everywhere.

488 R: But they control a large part of your country.

489 A: No, they went to every part there's no army in it, and the army went to clean and get rid of
490 them. They don't go to attack the army in an area where the army occupied that area and took
491 it from it. It's completely different, it's not correct, or it's not precise what you're talking
492 about. So, it's completely different. What the army is doing is cleaning those areas, and the
493 indication that the army is strong is that it's making advancement in that area. It never went
494 to one area and couldn't enter to it – that's an indication. How could that army do that if it's a
495 family army or a sect army? What about the rest of the country who support the government?
496 It's not realistic, it doesn't happen. Otherwise, the whole country will collapse.

497 R: One small point about American involvement here, the President's gotten significant
498 criticism because he has not supported the rebels more. As you know, there was an argument
499 within his own counsels from Secretary of State Clinton, from CIA Director David Petraeus,
500 from the Defense Department, Leon Penetta, Secretary of Defense, and others, that they
501 should have helped the rebels two years ago, and we would be in a very different place, so the
502 President has not given enough support to the rebels in the view of many people, and there's
503 criticism that when he made a recent decision to give support, it has not gotten to the rebels,
504 because they worry about the composition.

505 A: If the American administration want to support Al-Qaeda – go ahead. That's what we
506 have to tell them, go ahead and support Al-Qaeda, but don't talk about rebels and free Syrian
507 army. The majority of fighters now are Al-Qaeda. If you want to support them, you are
508 supporting Al-Qaeda, you are creating havoc in the region, and if this region is not stable, the
509 whole world cannot be stable.

510 R: With respect, sir, most people don't believe the majority of forces are Al-Qaeda. Yes,
511 there is a number of people who are Al-Qaeda affiliates and who are here who subscribe to
512 the principles of Al-Qaeda, but that's not the majority of the forces as you know. You know
513 that the composition differs within the regions of Syria as to the forces that are fighting
514 against your regime.

515 A: The American officials should learn to deal with reality. Why did the United States fail in
516 most of its wars? Because it always based its wars on the wrong information. So, whether
517 they believe or not, this is not reality. I have to be very clear and very honest. I'm not asking
518 them to believe if they don't want to believe. This is reality, I'm telling you the reality from
519 our country. We live here, we know what is happening, and they have to listen to people
520 here. They cannot listen only to their media or to their research centers. They don't live here;
521 no one lives here but us. So, this is reality. If they want to believe, that's good, that will help
522 them understand the region and be more successful in their policies.

523 R: Many people think this is not a sustainable position here; that this war cannot continue,
524 because the cost for Syria is too high. Too many deaths – a hundred thousand and counting,
525 too many refugees, too much destruction; the soul of a country at risk. If it was for the good
526 of the country, would you step down?

527 A: That depends on the relation of me staying in this position and the conflict. We cannot
528 discuss it just to say you have to step down. Step down, why, and what is the expected result?
529 This is first. Second, when you're in the middle of a storm, leaving your country just because
530 you have to leave without any reasonable reason, it means you're quitting your country and
531 this is treason.

532 R: You say it would be treason for you to step down right now because of your obligation to
533 the country?

534 A: Unless the public wants you to quit.

535 R: And how will you determine that?

536 A: By the two years and a half withstanding. Without the public support, we cannot
537 withstand two years and a half. Look at the other countries, look what happened in Libya, in
538 Tunisia and in Egypt.

539 R: You worry about that, what happened to Gaddafi?

540 A: No, we are worried that rebels are taking control in many countries, and look at the results
541 now. Are you satisfied as an American? What are the results? Nothing. Very bad - nothing
542 good.

543 R: There was a report recently that you had talked about, or someone representing you had
544 talked about some kind of deal in which you and your family would leave the country if you
545 were guaranteed safe passage, if you were guaranteed that there would be no criminal
546 prosecution. You're aware of these reports?

547 A: We had this guarantee from the first day of the crisis.

548 R: Because of the way you acted?

549 A: No, because of the agenda that I talked about. Some of these agendas wanted me to quit,
550 very simply, so they said "we have all the guarantees if you want to leave, and all the money
551 and everything you want." Of course, you just ignore that.

552 R: So, you've been offered that opportunity?

553 A: Yeah, but it's not about me, again, this fight is not my fight, it's not the fight of the
554 government; it's the fight of the country, of the Syrian people. That's how we look at it. It's
555 not about me.

556 R: It's not about you?

557 A: It's about every Syrian.

558 R: How will this war end? I referred to this question earlier. What's the endgame?

559 A: It's very simple; once the Western countries stop supporting those terrorists and making
560 pressure on their puppet countries and client states like Saudi Arabia and Turkey and others,
561 you'll have no problem in Syria. It will be solved easily, because those fighters, the Syrian
562 part that you're talking about, lost its natural incubators in the Syrian society – they don't
563 have incubators anymore; that's why they have incubators abroad. They need money from
564 abroad, they need moral support and political support from abroad. They don't have any
565 grassroots, any incubator. So, when you stop the smuggling, we don't have problems.

566 R: Yeah, but at the same time, as I've said before, you have support from abroad. There are
567 those who say you will not be able to survive without the support of Russia and Iran. Your
568 government would not be able to survive.

569 A: No, it's not me, I don't have support. Not me; all Syria. Every agreement is between
570 every class and every sector in Syria; government, people, trade, military, culture, everything;
571 it's like the cooperation between your country and any other country in the world. It's the
572 same cooperation. It's not about me; it's not support for the crisis.

573 R: I mean about your government. You say that the rebels only survive because they have
574 support from Saudi Arabia and Turkey and the United States, and Qatar perhaps, and I'm
575 saying you only survive because you have the support of Russia and Iran and Hezbollah.

576 A: No, the external support can never substitute internal support, it can never, for sure. And
577 the example that we have to look at very well is Egypt and Tunisia; they have all the support
578 from the West and from the Gulf and from most of the countries of the world. When they
579 don't have support within their country, they couldn't continue more than – how many
580 weeks? – three weeks. So, the only reason we stand here for two years and a half is because
581 we have internal support, public support. So, any external support, if you want to call it
582 support, let's use this world, is... how to say... it's going to be additional, but it's not the base
583 to depend on more than the Syrian support.

584 R: You and I talked about this before; we remember Hama and your father, Hafez al-Assad.
585 He... ruthlessly... set out to eliminate the Muslim Brotherhood. Are you simply being your
586 father's son here?

587 A: I don't know what you mean by ruthlessly, I've never heard of soft war. Have you heard
588 about soft war? There's no soft war. War is war. Any war is ruthless. When you fight
589 terrorists, you fight them like any other war.

590 R: So, the lessons you have here are the lessons you learned from your father and what he did
591 in Hama, which, it is said, influenced you greatly in terms of your understanding of what you
592 have to do.

593 A: The question: what would you do as an American if the terrorists are invading your
594 country from different areas and started killing tens of thousands of Americans?

595 R: You refer to them as terrorists, but in fact it is a popular revolution, people believe, against
596 you that was part of the Arab spring that influenced some of the other countries.

597 A: Revolution should be Syrian, cannot be revolution imported from abroad.

598 R: It didn't start from abroad; it started here.

599 A: These people that started here, they support the government now against those rebels,
600 that's what you don't know. What you don't know as an American you don't know as a
601 reporter. That's why talking about what happened at the very beginning is completely
602 different from what is happening now – it's not the same. There's very high dynamic, things
603 are changing on daily basis. It's a completely different image. Those people who wanted
604 revolution, they are cooperating with us.

605 R: I'm asking you again, is it in fact you're being your father's son and you believe that the
606 only way to drive out people is to eliminate them the same way your father did?

607 A: In being independent? Yes. In fighting terrorists? Yes. In defending the Syrian people
608 and the country? Yes.

609 R: When I first interviewed you, there was talk of Bashar al-al-Assad... he's the hope, he's
610 the reform. That's not what they're saying anymore.

611 A: Who?

612 R: People who write about you, people who talk about you, people who analyze Syria and
613 your regime.

614 A: Exactly, the hope for an American is different from the hope of a Syrian. For me, I should
615 be the hope of the Syrian, not any other one, not American, neither French, nor anyone in the
616 world. I'm President to help the Syrian people. So, this question should start from the hope
617 of the Syrian people, and if there is any change regarding that hope, we should ask the Syrian
618 people, not anyone else in the world.

619 R: But now they say – their words – a butcher. Comparisons to the worst dictators that ever
620 walked on the face of the Earth, comparing you to them. Using weapons that go beyond
621 warfare. Everything they could say bad about a dictator, they're now saying about you.

622 A: First of all, when you have a doctor who cut the leg to prevent the patient from the
623 gangrene if you have to, we don't call butcher; you call him a doctor, and thank you for
624 saving the lives. When you have terrorism, you have a war. When you have a war, you
625 always have innocent lives that could be the victim of any war, so, we don't have to discuss
626 what the image in the west before discussing the image in Syria. That's the question.

627 R: It's not just the West. I mean it's the East, and the Middle East, and, I mean, you know,
628 the eyes of the world have been on Syria. We have seen atrocities on both sides, but on your
629 side as well. They have seen brutality by a dictator that they say put you in a category with
630 the worst.

631 A: So we have to allow the terrorists to come and kill the Syrians and destroy the country
632 much, much more. This is where you can be a good President? That's what you imply.

633 R: But you can't allow the idea that there's opposition to your government from within Syria.
634 That is not possible for you to imagine.

635 A: To have opposition? We have it, and you can go and meet with them. We have some of
636 them within the government, we have some of them outside the government. They are
637 opposition. We have it.

638 R: But those are the people who have been fighting against you.

639 A: Opposition is different from terrorism. Opposition is a political movement. Opposition
640 doesn't mean to take arms and kill people and destroy everything. Do you call the people in
641 Los Angeles in the nineties – do you call them rebels or opposition? What did the British call
642 the rebels less than two years ago in London? Did they call them opposition or rebels? Why
643 should we call them opposition? They are rebels. They are not rebels even, they are
644 beheading. This opposition, opposing country or government, by beheading? By barbecuing
645 heads? By eating the hearts of your victim? Is that opposition? What do you call the people
646 who attacked the two towers on the 11th of September? Opposition? Even if they're not
647 Americans, I know this, but some of them I think have nationality – I think one of them has
648 American nationality. Do you call him opposition or terrorist? Why should you use a term in
649 the United States and England and maybe other countries and use another term in Syria? This
650 is a double standard that we don't accept.

651 R: I once asked you what you fear the most and you said the end of Syria as a secular state.
652 Is that end already here?

653 A: According to what we've been seeing recently in the area where the terrorists control,
654 where they ban people from going to schools, ban young men from shaving their beards, and
655 women have to be covered from head to toe, and let's say in brief they live the Taliban style
656 in Afghanistan, completely the same style. With the time, yes we can be worried, because the
657 secular state should reflect secular society, and this secular society, with the time, if you don't
658 get rid of those terrorists and these extremists and the Wahabi style, of course it will influence
659 at least the new and the coming generations. So, we don't say that we don't have it, we're
660 still secular in Syria, but with the time, this secularism will be eroded.

661 R: Mr. President, thank you for allowing us to have this conversation about Syria and the war
662 that is within as well as the future of the country. Thank you.

663 A: Thank you for coming to Syria.

NBC's interview with president Obama regarding Syria

Americanow, NBC, 9. 9. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://www.americanownews.com/story/23384005/transcript-nbcs-savannah-guthrie-interviews-pres-obama-regarding-syria>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 R: Syria's Foreign Minister said today that Syria would consider placing international
2 inspections around its chemical arsenal. Do you believe it? Are you skeptical? Do you think it
3 might be a stalling tactic?

4 O: Well, I think you have to take it with a grain of salt initially. But between the statements
5 that we saw from the Russians-- the statement today from the Syrians-- this represents a

6 potentially positive development. We are going to run this to ground. John Kerry will be
7 talking to his Russian counterpart. We're going to make sure that we see how serious these
8 proposals are. And my preference consistently has been a diplomatic resolution to this
9 problem. But what we have to also keep in mind is that Syria has large chemical weapon
10 stockpiles-- they have been in denial mode for quite some time-- we have been in discussions
11 for a long time now about trying to do something about these chemical weapons with the
12 Russians as well as the Syrians and we haven't gotten movement.

13 R: So does it feel like a ploy?

14 O: Well, you know, I think what we're seeing is that a credible threat of a military strike from
15 the United States, supported potentially by a number of other countries around the world has
16 given them pause and makes them consider whether or not they would make this move. And
17 if they do, then this could potentially be a significant breakthrough. But we have to be
18 skeptical because this is not how we've seen them operate-- over the last couple a years.

19 R: You said that these strikes, if they take place, will be limited.

20 O: Uh-huh (affirmative).

21 R: My question to you is how could you possibly know that? If we strike and Assad retaliates
22 or Iran does or Hezbollah, they strike U.S. interests or even strike U.S. citizens at home, what
23 then? You may want limited action, but can you really promise it?

24 O: Well look, nothing is 100% guaranteed in-- in life. But I think it's fair to say that our
25 military is outstanding, our intelligence is outstanding, and we have shown ourselves capable
26 of taking precision strikes on military installations in ways that would degrade Assad's
27 capabilities to deliver chemical weapons-- that would have a significant impact. But that
28 would not lead to escalation. And you know, when we went into Libya, I indicated that these
29 were going to be limited strikes as part of a broader NATO effort. And in fact, they were.
30 There was no sense of a slippery slope. There was no boots on the ground. There was no--
31 you know, continuation beyond the narrow mission that had been set.

32 R: But-- but Syria is different--

33 O: It has (unintel) it's poss--

34 R: As you know, and Assad today, when asked if he would retaliate, had a message. He said,
35 "Expect everything." And members of Congress are saying, "We're skeptical because we don't
36 think the administration has a strategy for day two, day three, day four"--

37 O: Well, and I have to say that that's just not the case. First of all, Syria doesn't have
38 significant capabilities to retaliate against us. Iran does. But Iran-- is not going to risk a war
39 with the United States over this. Particularly given that our goal here is to make sure that
40 chemical weapons are not used on children. You know, we have seen consistently that-- when
41 it comes to Iran, when it comes to Hezbollah, those that could potentially engage in
42 asymmetrical strikes against us that they would only do so if they thought that the threat was
43 extraordinarily significant towards them and their interests. And chemical weapons are not
44 something that they-- in fact are deeply invested in. This is Assad's tactic. Even his allies, I
45 think, disagree with the use of chemical weapons. We know that the Iranians, for example,

46 having had experience with Saddam Hussein gassing their own people don't-- think that it's a
47 good thing to use chemical weapons. And so it-- it is very unlikely that we would see the
48 kinds of retaliation that would have a significant impact-- on U.S. interests in the region.

49 R: Your chief of staff called these strikes "limited and consequential." Which in a way,
50 seemed almost a contradiction in terms to me. Today, Secretary of State Kerry said, "The
51 strikes would be unbelievably small." What does that mean? I mean, are we talking a
52 pinprick?

53 O: No.

54 R: A knockout blow? A punch in the gut?

55 O: The-- the U.S. does not do pinpricks. Our military is the greatest the world has ever
56 known. And when we take even limited strikes, it has an impact on a country like Syria. But
57 does not have-- a tremendous military capability. They have a tremendous military capability
58 relative to civilians. They have-- they have a significant military capability relative to children
59 who are being gassed. But they don't have a military that matches up with ours in any kind of
60 way. So for us to take actions that degrade his military capabilities, that is limited in time and
61 scope, still has a significant effect on their calculation about using chemical weapons. And I
62 just have to emphasize, Savannah, what's at stake here. The chemical weapons ban that has
63 been in place is not something that only protects civilians. It also protects our own troops.
64 You know, they don't have to wear gas masks even in tough battlefields because there is a
65 strong prohibition and countries generally don't stockpile them. And if we see that ban
66 unravel, it will create a more dangerous world for us and for our troops when they're in theater
67 as well as for civilians around the world. It is worth preserving.

68 R: When you saw those videos, and I assume you have, can you tell me your reaction to them
69 not just as a president, but as a father?

70 O: I was heartbroken. And-- and I think anyb-- I-- I would recommend everybody look at
71 these videos. Look, horrible things happen around the world all the time. Horrible things
72 happen inside of Syria every day. And you know-- all of us, I think, recognize that America
73 cannot try to solve every problem around the world or stop every terrible thing from
74 happening. But whether a few things that we know are important to humanity, when 98% of
75 the world says, "These are the worst kinds of weapons," because they're indiscriminate. They
76 don't differentiate between somebody in uniform mother, or the child. And as a consequence,
77 you have a treaty that was ratified by the United States, overwhelmingly in the United States
78 Senate by countries representing 98% of the world's populations, there's a reason for that. And
79 we have to make sure that that ban does not erode. Because when that ban starts eroding, then
80 other weapons of mass destruction start looking more acceptable because the international
81 community's not willing to stand up on their behalf. Now, last point I'll make on this. You
82 know, when we talk about limited strikes, no boots on the ground, limited in time and scope--
83 I have to emphasize that over the last four and a half years, I've shown great restraint when it
84 comes to using military power. And I know how tired the American people are of war
85 generally. And particularly war in the Middle East. And so I don't take these decisions lightly.
86 But if we are going to have any kind of serious-- enforcement of this international ban on
87 chemical weapons, then ultimately the United States has to be involved. And a credible threat
88 may be what pushes the kind of political settlement that I think we'd all prefer.

89 R: I don't have much time, I know you've been asked this and-- I'll just try to pin you down a
90 little bit. If this resolution fails in Congress, would you act without Congress? Be it-- the
91 answer could be, yes, no, or, "I haven't decided."

92 O: Yeah, I-- I think it's fair to say that I haven't decided. I am taking this vote in Congress and
93 what the American people are saying very seriously. I knew by bringing this to Congress that
94 there was a risk that the American people-- you know, just could not arrive at a consensus
95 around even a limited strike. Because if you ask somebody, you know, I read polls like
96 everybody else. And if you ask somebody, if you ask Michelle, "Do we-- do we want to be
97 involved in another war?" The answer is no. People are-- are-- wary about it, understandably.
98 They have seen the consequences of this last decade. They think in terms of blood and
99 treasure it has not been worth it. It's not what they expected when they signed onto the Iraq
100 War back in 2003. And so I recognize how important that debate is. And it's my belief that
101 for-- for me, the president-- to act without consensus in a situation where there's not a direct
102 imminent threat to the homeland or interest around the world. But that's not the kind of
103 precedent I want to set. I think it's important for me to listen, to-- to engage in Congress, we're
104 going to spend this week talking to members of Congress, answering their questions, and I'm
105 going to speak to the American people tomorrow night directly. And I'll evaluate after that
106 whether or not we feel strongly enough about this that we're willing to move forward. And--
107 and I-- I've made my decision about what I think is best for America's national interests, but
108 this is one where I think it's important for me to play close attention to what Congress and the
109 American people say.

110 R: And you're confident you're going to get the vote?

111 O: I-- you know, I-- I wouldn't say I'm confident. I'm confident that the members of Congress
112 are taking this issue very seriously and-- and they're doing their homework and I appreciate
113 that.

114 R: Thank you.

115 O: Thank you so much, Savannah.

116 R: Appreciate it.

117 O: You bet.

President Obama's speech on Syria

Washington Post, The White House, 10. 9. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/running-transcript-president-obamas-sept-10-speech-on-syria/2013/09/10/a8826aa6-1a2e-11e3-8685-5021e0c41964_story.html> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 My fellow Americans, tonight I want to talk to you about Syria -- why it matters, and where
2 we go from here. Over the past two years, what began as a series of peaceful protests against
3 the repressive regime of Bashar al-Assad has turned into a brutal civil war. Over 100,000
4 people have been killed. Millions have fled the country. In that time, America has worked
5 with allies to provide humanitarian support, to help the moderate opposition, and to shape a
6 political settlement. But I have resisted calls for military action, because we cannot resolve
7 someone else's civil war through force, particularly after a decade of war in Iraq and

8 Afghanistan. The situation profoundly changed, though, on August 21st, when Assad's
9 government gassed to death over a thousand people, including hundreds of children. The
10 images from this massacre are sickening: Men, women, children lying in rows, killed by
11 poison gas. Others foaming at the mouth, gasping for breath. A father clutching his dead
12 children, imploring them to get up and walk. On that terrible night, the world saw in gruesome
13 detail the terrible nature of chemical weapons, and why the overwhelming majority of
14 humanity has declared them off-limits -- a crime against humanity, and a violation of the laws
15 of war. This was not always the case. In World War I, American GIs were among the many
16 thousands killed by deadly gas in the trenches of Europe. In World War II, the Nazis used gas
17 to inflict the horror of the Holocaust. Because these weapons can kill on a mass scale, with no
18 distinction between soldier and infant, the civilized world has spent a century working to ban
19 them. And in 1997, the United States Senate overwhelmingly approved an international
20 agreement prohibiting the use of chemical weapons, now joined by 189 governments that
21 represent 98 percent of humanity. On August 21st, these basic rules were violated, along with
22 our sense of common humanity. No one disputes that chemical weapons were used in Syria.
23 The world saw thousands of videos, cell phone pictures, and social media accounts from the
24 attack, and humanitarian organizations told stories of hospitals packed with people who had
25 symptoms of poison gas. Moreover, we know the Assad regime was responsible. In the days
26 leading up to August 21st, we know that Assad's chemical weapons personnel prepared for an
27 attack near an area where they mix sarin gas. They distributed gasmasks to their troops. Then
28 they fired rockets from a regime-controlled area into 11 neighborhoods that the regime has
29 been trying to wipe clear of opposition forces. Shortly after those rockets landed, the gas
30 spread, and hospitals filled with the dying and the wounded. We know senior figures in
31 Assad's military machine reviewed the results of the attack, and the regime increased their
32 shelling of the same neighborhoods in the days that followed. We've also studied samples of
33 blood and hair from people at the site that tested positive for sarin. When dictators commit
34 atrocities, they depend upon the world to look the other way until those horrifying pictures
35 fade from memory. But these things happened. The facts cannot be denied. The question now
36 is what the United States of America, and the international community, is prepared to do
37 about it. Because what happened to those people -- to those children -- is not only a violation
38 of international law, it's also a danger to our security. Let me explain why. If we fail to act,
39 the Assad regime will see no reason to stop using chemical weapons. As the ban against these
40 weapons erodes, other tyrants will have no reason to think twice about acquiring poison gas,
41 and using them. Over time, our troops would again face the prospect of chemical warfare on
42 the battlefield. And it could be easier for terrorist organizations to obtain these weapons, and
43 to use them to attack civilians. If fighting spills beyond Syria's borders, these weapons could
44 threaten allies like Turkey, Jordan, and Israel. And a failure to stand against the use of
45 chemical weapons would weaken prohibitions against other weapons of mass destruction, and
46 embolden Assad's ally, Iran -- which must decide whether to ignore international law by
47 building a nuclear weapon, or to take a more peaceful path. This is not a world we should
48 accept. This is what's at stake. And that is why, after careful deliberation, I determined that it
49 is in the national security interests of the United States to respond to the Assad regime's use
50 of chemical weapons through a targeted military strike. The purpose of this strike would be to
51 deter Assad from using chemical weapons, to degrade his regime's ability to use them, and to
52 make clear to the world that we will not tolerate their use. That's my judgment as
53 Commander-in-Chief. But I'm also the President of the world's oldest constitutional
54 democracy. So even though I possess the authority to order military strikes, I believed it was
55 right, in the absence of a direct or imminent threat to our security, to take this debate to
56 Congress. I believe our democracy is stronger when the President acts with the support of
57 Congress. And I believe that America acts more effectively abroad when we stand together.

58 This is especially true after a decade that put more and more war-making power in the hands
59 of the President, and more and more burdens on the shoulders of our troops, while sidelining
60 the people's representatives from the critical decisions about when we use force. Now, I know
61 that after the terrible toll of Iraq and Afghanistan, the idea of any military action, no matter
62 how limited, is not going to be popular. After all, I've spent four and a half years working to
63 end wars, not to start them. Our troops are out of Iraq. Our troops are coming home from
64 Afghanistan. And I know Americans want all of us in Washington-- especially me -- to
65 concentrate on the task of building our nation here at home: putting people back to work,
66 educating our kids, growing our middle class. It's no wonder, then, that you're asking hard
67 questions. So let me answer some of the most important questions that I've heard from
68 members of Congress, and that I've read in letters that you've sent to me. First, many of you
69 have asked, won't this put us on a slippery slope to another war? One man wrote to me that
70 we are "still recovering from our involvement in Iraq." A veteran put it more bluntly: "This
71 nation is sick and tired of war." My answer is simple: I will not put American boots on the
72 ground in Syria. I will not pursue an open-ended action like Iraq or Afghanistan. I will not
73 pursue a prolonged air campaign like Libya or Kosovo. This would be a targeted strike to
74 achieve a clear objective: deterring the use of chemical weapons, and degrading Assad's
75 capabilities. Others have asked whether it's worth acting if we don't take out Assad. As some
76 members of Congress have said, there's no point in simply doing a "pinprick" strike in Syria.
77 Let me make something clear: The United States military doesn't do pinpricks. Even a limited
78 strike will send a message to Assad that no other nation can deliver. I don't think we should
79 remove another dictator with force -- we learned from Iraq that doing so makes us responsible
80 for all that comes next. But a targeted strike can make Assad, or any other dictator, think
81 twice before using chemical weapons. Other questions involve the dangers of retaliation. We
82 don't dismiss any threats, but the Assad regime does not have the ability to seriously threaten
83 our military. Any other retaliation they might seek is in line with threats that we face every
84 day. Neither Assad nor his allies have any interest in escalation that would lead to his demise.
85 And our ally, Israel, can defend itself with overwhelming force, as well as the unshakeable
86 support of the United States of America. Many of you have asked a broader question: Why
87 should we get involved at all in a place that's so complicated, and where -- as one person
88 wrote to me -- "those who come after Assad may be enemies of human rights?" It's true that
89 some of Assad's opponents are extremists. But al Qaeda will only draw strength in a more
90 chaotic Syria if people there see the world doing nothing to prevent innocent civilians from
91 being gassed to death. The majority of the Syrian people -- and the Syrian opposition we work
92 with -- just want to live in peace, with dignity and freedom. And the day after any military
93 action, we would redouble our efforts to achieve a political solution that strengthens those
94 who reject the forces of tyranny and extremism. Finally, many of you have asked: Why not
95 leave this to other countries, or seek solutions short of force? As several people wrote to me,
96 "We should not be the world's policeman." I agree, and I have a deeply held preference for
97 peaceful solutions. Over the last two years, my administration has tried diplomacy and
98 sanctions, warning and negotiations -- but chemical weapons were still used by the Assad
99 regime. However, over the last few days, we've seen some encouraging signs. In part because
100 of the credible threat of U.S. military action, as well as constructive talks that I had with
101 President Putin, the Russian government has indicated a willingness to join with the
102 international community in pushing Assad to give up his chemical weapons. The Assad
103 regime has now admitted that it has these weapons, and even said they'd join the Chemical
104 Weapons Convention, which prohibits their use. It's too early to tell whether this offer will
105 succeed, and any agreement must verify that the Assad regime keeps its commitments. But
106 this initiative has the potential to remove the threat of chemical weapons without the use of
107 force, particularly because Russia is one of Assad's strongest allies. I have, therefore, asked

108 the leaders of Congress to postpone a vote to authorize the use of force while we pursue this
109 diplomatic path. I'm sending Secretary of State John Kerry to meet his Russian counterpart on
110 Thursday, and I will continue my own discussions with President Putin. I've spoken to the
111 leaders of two of our closest allies, France and the United Kingdom, and we will work
112 together in consultation with Russia and China to put forward a resolution at the U.N.
113 Security Council requiring Assad to give up his chemical weapons, and to ultimately destroy
114 them under international control. We'll also give U.N. inspectors the opportunity to report
115 their findings about what happened on August 21st. And we will continue to rally support
116 from allies from Europe to the Americas -- from Asia to the Middle East -- who agree on the
117 need for action. Meanwhile, I've ordered our military to maintain their current posture to keep
118 the pressure on Assad, and to be in a position to respond if diplomacy fails. And tonight, I
119 give thanks again to our military and their families for their incredible strength and sacrifices.
120 My fellow Americans, for nearly seven decades, the United States has been the anchor of
121 global security. This has meant doing more than forging international agreements -- it has
122 meant enforcing them. The burdens of leadership are often heavy, but the world is a better
123 place because we have borne them. And so, to my friends on the right, I ask you to reconcile
124 your commitment to America's military might with a failure to act when a cause is so plainly
125 just. To my friends on the left, I ask you to reconcile your belief in freedom and dignity for all
126 people with those images of children writhing in pain, and going still on a cold hospital floor.
127 For sometimes resolutions and statements of condemnation are simply not enough. Indeed, I'd
128 ask every member of Congress, and those of you watching at home tonight, to view those
129 videos of the attack, and then ask: What kind of world will we live in if the United States of
130 America sees a dictator brazenly violate international law with poison gas, and we choose to
131 look the other way? Franklin Roosevelt once said, "Our national determination to keep free of
132 foreign wars and foreign entanglements cannot prevent us from feeling deep concern when
133 ideals and principles that we have cherished are challenged." Our ideals and principles, as
134 well as our national security, are at stake in Syria, along with our leadership of a world where
135 we seek to ensure that the worst weapons will never be used. America is not the world's
136 policeman. Terrible things happen across the globe, and it is beyond our means to right every
137 wrong. But when, with modest effort and risk, we can stop children from being gassed to
138 death, and thereby make our own children safer over the long run, I believe we should act.
139 That's what makes America different. That's what makes us exceptional. With humility, but
140 with resolve, let us never lose sight of that essential truth. Thank you. God bless you. And
141 God bless the United States of America.

Obama's interview with CBS News

CBS News, 11. 9. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/obama-i-understand-american-people-arent-with-me-on-syria-strike/>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

In an interview Monday, President Obama responded to a surprising late proposal that could head off a military strike against Syria. The Syrians agreed to a Russian proposal to put their chemical weapons under international control and destroy them. I talked to president Obama about that, and about a threat Syrian dictator Bashar Assad made during an interview with Charlie Rose.

1 R: Can you accept the Russian/Syrian proposal?

2 O: Well, we don't know the details of it yet. But I think that it is a potentially positive
3 development. I don't think that we would've gotten to the point where they even put

4 something out there publicly, had it not been -- and if it doesn't continue to be a credible --
5 military threat from the United States and those who support Syria's responses to what
6 happened inside of Syria. But, you know, my central goal throughout this process has not
7 been to embroil ourselves in a civil war in Syria. I have shown great restraint, I think, over the
8 last two years, despite the heartbreak that's happened there. But what I have said is that the
9 ban on chemical weapon use is something that is of U.S. national interest. It protects our
10 troops, so that they don't have to wear gas masks whenever they're in theater, the weapons by
11 definition are indiscriminate and don't differentiate between somebody in uniform and a child.
12 And when we see images of 400-plus children being slaughtered without a mark on their body
13 through these weapons, I think it is important for the international community and the United
14 States to stand up and say, "This cannot happen." Now the good news is I think that Assad's
15 allies, both Russia and Iran, recognize that this was-- this was a breach, that this was a
16 problem. And for them to potentially put pressure on Assad to say, "Let's figure out a way that
17 the international community gets control of-- of-- of these weapons in a verifiable and forcible
18 way" -- I think it's something that we will run to ground. So John Kerry will be talking to his
19 counterparts in Russia, we will contact the U.N. Security Council members as well as the
20 Secretary General of the U.N. And let's see what happens over the next several days to see if
21 in fact what they're talking about is realistic.

22 R: What do you need to see in a diplomatic deal?

23 O: Well, as I said, the key is -- to paraphrase Ronald Reagan, that we don't just trust, but we
24 also verify. And so the-- the importance is to make sure that the international community has
25 confidence that these chemical weapons are under control, that they are not being used, that
26 potentially they are removed from Syria and that they are destroyed. And there are a lot of
27 stockpiles inside of Syria, it's one of the largest in the world. Let's see if they're serious. But
28 we have to make sure that we can verify it and enforce it, and if in fact we're able to achieve
29 that kind of agreement that has Russia's agreement and the Security Council's agreement, then
30 my central concern in this whole episode is resolved. It doesn't resolve the underlying terrible
31 conflict in Syria. And, you know, that I've always said is not amenable to a military solution.
32 We're gonna have to get the parties to arrive at some sort of settlement. But this may be a first
33 step in what potentially could be an end to terrible bloodshed, and millions of refugees
34 throughout the region -- that is of deep concern to us and our allies.

35 R: Is the only agreement you would accept one in which we can be assured that all of Syria's
36 chemical weapons are destroyed?

37 O: I-- you know, I think it's premature for me to start drafting language. I think I want to see
38 what exactly is being proposed, and in the interim, it is very important for Congress and the
39 American people to recognize that we would not be getting even ticklers like this if it weren't
40 for the fact that we were serious about potentially taking action in the absence of some sort of
41 movement. And so we-- we need to keep the pressure on, and tomorrow I'll have the
42 opportunity to explain to the American people just why it is that this chemical weapons ban is
43 so important. It's it in part humanitarian. Any parent who sees those videos of those children
44 being gassed I think understands what a human tragedy it is. But I want people to understand
45 that this ban that almost every country in the world has signed onto and has been observed in
46 conflicts around the world is something that helps protect our people, our troops. You know,
47 it means that there's less production of chemical weapons, which means it's less likely to fall
48 into the hands of terrorists who would have no compunction about using it in the United
49 States of America. And that norm is worth protecting, particularly if we can do it in a limited,

50 surgical way that does not involve troops on the ground or a long air campaign that would be
51 both costly and could draw us into this long-term conflict.

52 R: What could Syria do right now to show its good faith?

53 O: Well, you know, I think the first thing that we're gonna want to see is both the Russians
54 and the Syrians putting a serious proposal on the table, and let's take a look and see what it
55 says.

56 R: Assad essentially put you on notice today. In the interview with Charlie Rose, he said of
57 the United States, "If you strike somewhere, you have to expect the repercussions somewhere
58 else in a different form, in a way that you don't expect." He brought up 9/11 as an example of
59 the kind of thing America did not expect. Do you take that as a threat?

60 O: Well, I mean, I think it was intended as a threat. I don't take it as a credible threat in the
61 sense that Mr. Assad doesn't have the capacity to strike us in a significant way. Some of his
62 allies like Iran and Hezbollah do have the capacity to engage in asymmetrical strikes against
63 us. Our intelligence, I think, is very clear that they would not try to escalate a war with us
64 over limited strikes to deal with this chemical weapon issue. Keep in mind, Iran was subjected
65 to chemical weapons use by Saddam Hussein. So the Iranian population thinks chemical
66 weapons are terrible and probably consider what Assad did to be a grave mistake. So I don't
67 think they would start a war with us over that. But what is true is that, you know, our
68 embassies in the region, U.S. personnel in the region, they're always potentially vulnerable to
69 asymmetrical attacks. But the truth of the matter is, those threats already exist from a whole
70 range of groups. And we understand what those threats are and take those precautions very
71 seriously.

72 R: Mr. President, the administration has described evidence to the American people and the
73 world but it hasn't shown evidence. And I wonder at this point, what are you willing to show?
74 What are we going to see in terms of the evidence that you say we have?

75 O: Well, keep in mind what we've done is we have provided unclassified evidence. But
76 members of Congress are getting a whole slew of classified briefings. And they're seeing very
77 directly exactly what we have. Keep in mind, Scott, that the-- this is not a problem I'm
78 looking for. I'm not looking for an excuse to engage in military action.

79 And I understand deeply how the American people, after a decade of war, are not interested in
80 any kind of military action that they don't believe involves our direct national security
81 interests. I-- I get that. And members of Congress I think understand that. But in this situation
82 where there's clear evidence that nobody credible around the world disputes that chemical
83 weapons were used, that over a thousand people were killed, that the way that these weapons
84 were delivered makes it almost certain that Assad's forces used them, when even Iran has
85 acknowledged that chemical weapons were used inside of Syria. In that situation, I think the
86 issue is not the evidence -- most people around the world are not questioning that chemical
87 weapons were used. I think the question now is what-- how does the-- how does the
88 international community respond. And I think it is important for us to run to ground every
89 diplomatic channel that we can. There's a reason why I went to Congress in part to allow
90 further deliberation, not just here domestically but also internationally. But I think it's very
91 important for us to make sure that we understand this is important. And if the American

92 people-- are not prepared to stand up for what is a really important international norm, then I
93 think a lot of people around the world will take that signal -- that this norm is not important.

94 R: The people aren't with you.

95 O: Yeah, well, not yet. And I, as I said, I understand that. So I'll have a chance to talk to the
96 American people directly tomorrow. I don't expect that it's gonna suddenly swing the polls
97 wildly in the direction of another military engagement. If you ask the average person --
98 including my household -- "Do we need another military engagement?" I think the answer
99 generally is gonna be no. But what I'm gonna try to propose is, is that we have a very specific
100 objective, a very narrow military option, and one that will not lead into some large-scale
101 invasion of Syria or involvement or boots on the ground, nothing like that. This isn't like Iraq,
102 it's not like Afghanistan, it's not even like Libya. Then hopefully people will recognize why I
103 think this is so important. And that we should all be haunted by those images of those children
104 that were killed. But more importantly, we should understand that when we start saying it's
105 okay to -- or at least that there's no response to the gassing of children, that's the kind of
106 slippery slope that leads eventually to these chemical weapons being used more broadly
107 around the world. That's not the kind of world that we want to leave to our children.

108 R: Thank you.

President Bashar Al Assad's Interview on Chemical Weapons

Global Research, Rossiya 24 TV channel (SANA), 13. 9. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/president-bashar-al-assads-interview-on-syrias-chemical-weapons-transcript/5350429>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 R: Why did Syria agree to the Russian initiative which proposes handing over its chemical
2 weapons to the international community? Why so rapidly?

3 A: Over 10 years ago, Syria presented the UN with a proposal for a WMD-Free Middle East;
4 this was because the region is turbulent and has been immersed in wars for decades. Thus
5 removing unconventional weapons would be rational in order to enhance stability, at that
6 particular time the U.S hindered the proposal. Firstly, in principle we strive for peace and
7 stability therefore we do not perceive the existence of WMD's in the Middle East to have any
8 positive effect. Secondly, in relation to current developments, Syria as a state genuinely seeks
9 to avert another war of lunacy on itself and countries in the region, contrary to the efforts of
10 warmongers in the U.S who seek to inflame a regional war. We continue to pay the price of
11 U.S wars, be it in geographically distant Afghanistan or neighboring Iraq. We believe that a
12 war on Syria shall be destructive to the region and embroil it in a quagmire of instability for
13 decades or generations to come. Thirdly, and most remarkably, what was most encouraging
14 was the Russian initiative itself, without which we would not have been able to pursue this
15 path. Our relations with Russia are founded on trust which grew during the crisis throughout
16 the last two and a half years. The fact that Russia has proven itself to have an insight into
17 events in the region with high credibility as a reliable major power encouraged Syria to work
18 towards signing the Chemical Weapons Convention.

19 R: For example, the American O and his Secretary of State John Kerry stated that Syria's
20 acceptance of the Russian initiative to place the chemical weapons under international
21 observation only derived from threat of missile strikes. Is this true?

22 A: This is American propaganda; Kerry, Obama and the American administration seek to
23 appear victorious, as if their threats yielded success. This is insignificant to us; what matters is
24 for the decision to be based on Syria's convictions and a significant Russian role. Only weeks
25 ago, the American threats of a military strike were not for disarming Syria of WMDs, but
26 based on American allegations regarding the use of chemical weapons. The Americans began
27 to mention this not before, but after the G20 summit. Furthermore the main catalyst in this
28 move was the Russian initiative alongside our discussions with Russian officials. Without the
29 Russian initiative, the matter would not have been deliberated with any other country.

30 R: Yesterday, statements circulated that Russia presented the US a plan for fulfilling the
31 initiative on international control of Syrian chemical weapons. Would Your Excellency please
32 explain what was discussed in terms of proposed steps?

33 A: Over the forthcoming days, Syria shall send letters to the UN and the Organisation for the
34 Prohibition of Chemical Weapons with the technical records necessary to sign the convention.
35 Subsequently, work shall commence to sign the anti-chemical weapons convention which
36 prohibits its production, storage or usage. I believe the agreement will come into effect a
37 month after signing it and Syria will start submitting data regarding its chemical weapons
38 stockpile to international organizations. These are standard procedures which we shall adhere
39 to, however it does not mean that Syria will sign the documents, fulfill the obligations and
40 that's it. It is a bilateral process aimed principally at making the US cease pursuing its policy
41 of aggression against Syria and proceed in compliance with the Russian initiative. When we
42 see the US genuinely working towards stability in the region and stop threatening, striving to
43 attack, and delivering arms to terrorists then we will believe that the necessary processes can
44 be finalized. From a Syrian perspective, we perceive that this is achievable and can be
45 implemented; however this is not a single-track process. The only country capable of
46 undertaking this role is Russia, due to the absence of trust and contact between us and the
47 Americans.

48 R: Were the initiative to be implemented, which international body would the Syrian Arab
49 Republic favor as the Organisation to control the chemical weapons? The situation in Syria is
50 hardly ordinary.

51 A: We believe that the logical and appropriate body is the Organisation for the Prohibition of
52 Chemical Weapons. It is the only organization that has the capability and experts which
53 oversaw the implementation of this convention in all countries.

54 R: We all comprehend that Israel signed but has never ratified the Chemical Weapons
55 Convention. Will Syria demand that Israel fulfils this requirement?

56 A: When we proposed a project on the elimination of WMDs in the region, the US opposed it;
57 one of the reasons was to allow Israel to possess such weapons. If we desire stability in the
58 Middle East, all countries in the region should adhere to these agreements, and Israel is the
59 first that should do so, since Israel has nuclear, chemical, biological and other types of
60 weapons of mass destruction. No country should possess weapons of mass destruction. That
61 would protect the region and the world from devastating and expensive wars in future.

62 R: Syria will hand over its chemical weapons to international control; however we all know
63 that Russian experts confirmed the use of poisonous chemical substances in Aleppo suburbs

64 by an extremist terrorist group, what is your take on this? What do you suggest to protect
65 Syrians and neighboring countries from these groups that may launch chemical attacks?

66 A: The incident you cited was in March 2013 when the terrorists launched missiles carrying
67 poisonous chemical materials on civilians in Khan al-Asal near Aleppo and tens were killed.
68 Subsequently, we requested the UN to send a commission of experts to confirm and document
69 what occurred in order to subsequently determine the identity of those responsible for the
70 attack. As it was obvious that the terrorists were responsible, the US hindered the deployment
71 of the commission to Syria. Therefore, alongside the Russian experts, we submitted all the
72 details and indications to Russia. The evidence confirmed that the attack was perpetrated by
73 the terrorists in Northern Syria. The delegation of experts on chemical weapons – who were in
74 Syria a week ago – are yet to return to implement the agreement we signed with them during
75 their last visit, which stipulates inspecting a number of areas of which was Khan al-Asal was
76 amongst the top. This must be carefully investigated to determine the nature of the materials
77 used, who used them and most importantly which countries provided these poisonous
78 materials to the terrorists and subsequently to hold them accountable.

79 R: Mr. President, is it possible to confiscate these poisonous materials from the terrorists? Is
80 this feasible?

81 A: This ultimately depends on which countries are connected to the terrorists. All countries
82 claim that they do not cooperate with terrorists, yet we know for certain that the West
83 provides them with logistical support, claiming that it is a non-lethal military support or
84 humanitarian aid. However, the reality is that the West and particular countries in the region,
85 including Turkey and Saudi Arabia, maintain direct contact with the terrorists and supply
86 them with all measure of arms. We believe that one of these countries has supplied the
87 terrorists with chemical weapons. One would assume that these states can cease supplying the
88 terrorists with such weapons; nevertheless there are terrorists who would never comply. When
89 they have arms and the opportunity to inflict havoc, they would never submit, even to those
90 who provided them with weapons and money.

91 R: Mr. President, certain American media outlets reported that officers in the Syrian Arab
92 Army on several occasions asked for your permission to use chemical weapons in fighting the
93 armed opposition, you did not approve, however they used these poisonous weapons
94 independently. Is this credible?

95 A: This is a part of American propaganda which spares no effort to justify aggression. This
96 reminds us of the actions of Collin Powell under George W Bush's administration ten years
97 ago, when he presented what was claimed as evidence of Saddam Hussein's possession of
98 WMD's which was later proven to be false. They are now repeating similar lies; what you
99 quoted amounts to that. The reality is that, firstly, approving the use of chemical weapons was
100 never discussed in Syria by any party. Secondly, the use of such weapons in different
101 countries remains centralized and not at the disposal of the troops. No infantry or armoured
102 divisions would have such armaments. These armaments are used by specialized units.
103 Therefore these lies are neither logical nor credible.

104 R: Mr. President, very recently, the Congress was presented with what was pronounced as
105 credible and indisputable evidence. There was video proof to prove the American narrative
106 that chemical weapons were used in Eastern Ghouta by the Syrian Army. What is your
107 opinion on this?

108 A: They failed to produce any evidence, not to Congress or the media; hence they did not
109 present any proof to their own people or even to Russia with whom they are currently holding
110 talks or any other country for that matter. It is just mere talk and an extension of American
111 propaganda. Logically it is not conceivable to use WMD's only hundreds of meters away
112 from your own troops. Those weapons cannot be deployed in residential areas since they
113 would kill tens of thousands; nor when you are making major advances using conventional
114 weapons. The rhetoric used was unconvincing which placed this American administration in a
115 difficult position domestically. They were less skillful than Bush's administration that could
116 convince part of the world of their lies. This administration could not even persuade its own
117 allies of its lies. Therefore these allegations bear no value; they are unrealistic and un-
118 credible.

119 R: Mr. President, the last question which I cannot spare since it concerns wider general safety
120 and security. There are Russian specialists and media outlets who reported that terrorists may
121 prepare for chemical attacks against Israel from government controlled areas. As commander
122 in chief do you confirm this information?

123 A: Firstly, since it is certain that chemical materials are owned by terrorist groups and were
124 used against our soldiers and civilians; this denotes that these materials are readily available.
125 Secondly, we comprehend that these terrorist groups, or those who mobilize them, were
126 seeking to provoke an American strike and, prior to that, they had attempted to involve Israel
127 in the Syrian crisis. For the same reason, your proposition is not unlikely; a regional war
128 would create more chaos which would enable these terrorist groups to inflict more destruction
129 and sabotage. This is a genuine challenge since the terrorists do possess these chemical
130 materials and certain countries are supplying them.

President Obama Speaks Exclusively to George Stephanopoulos on 'This Week'

ABC News, 13. 9. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2013/09/full-transcript-president-obamas-exclusive-interview-with-george-stephanopoulos/>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 R: Mr. President, thank you for doing this.

2 O: Great to see you.

3 R: So just about two weeks ago, exactly at this moment– it looked like you were poised to
4 strike Syria. Took that walk with Dennis McDonough, your chief of staff, went to Congress.
5 And now, two weeks later, you're in negotiations with the Russians. Is that what you
6 imagined then? And are you confident the U.S. is in a better position now?

7 O: Well, we're definitely in d– better position.

8 R: Why?

9 O: Keep in mind that my entire goal throughout this exercise is to make sure that what
10 happened on August 21st does not happen again, that we do not see over 1,000 people, over
11 400 children– subjected to poison gas– something that is a violation of international law, and
12 is a violation of–

13 R: Are you confident that won't happen again?

14 O: –common decency. Well, I think we have the possibility of making sure that it doesn't
15 happen again. Think about where we were. This event happens, and the initial response is
16 the Syrians act as if they don't know anything about it. At that point, they're not even
17 acknowledging that they've got chemical weapons. The Russians are protecting the Syrians,
18 suggesting that there's no possibility that the Assad regime might have done this. And the
19 inspectors weren't even in yet. And as a consequence of the pressure that we've applied over
20 the last couple of weeks, we have Syria first– for the first time acknowledging that it has
21 chemical weapons, agreeing to join– the convention that prohibits the use of chemical
22 weapons. And the Russians– they're primary sponsors, saying that they will push Syria to get
23 all of their chemical weapons out– out of– out–

24 R: But aren't they still–

25 O: –of the country. So– look, we're not there yet. We don't have– an actual, verifiable deal
26 that will begin that process. But the distance that we've traveled over these couple of weeks
27 is remarkable. And my position, and the United States' position, has been consistent
28 throughout. Which is that– the underlying civil conflict in Syria is terrible. I believe that
29 because of Assad's actions, his response to peaceful protests– we've created a civil war in
30 Syria that has led to 100,000 people being killed and six million people being displaced. But
31 what I've also said is that the United States can't get in the middle of somebody else's civil
32 war. We're not gonna put troops on the ground. We can't enforce– militarily, a settlement
33 there. What we can do–

34 R: But in the past, you said he had to go.

35 O: What we can do– what we can do is make sure that the worst weapons, the indiscriminate
36 weapons that don't distinguish between a soldier and an infant, are not used. And if we get
37 that accomplished, then we may also have a foundation to begin what has to be an
38 international process– in which Assad's sponsors, primarily Iran and Russia, recognize that
39 this is terrible for the Syrian people, and they are willing to come, in a serious way, to arrive
40 at some sort of political settlement that would– deal with the underlying terrible conflict–

41 R: And you're– and President Putin has become your unlikely partner–

42 O: Yeah.

43 R: –in this. And, you know, even in this op-ed, which has stirred up a lot of controversy here
44 in United States, he said, "There's every reason to believe that the rebels are the ones who
45 used the chemical weapons." So does that tell you he's willing to lie to protect Assad?

46 O: Well, nobody around the world takes seriously the idea that the rebels– were the
47 perpetrators of this—

48 R: He wrote it in The New York Times.

49 O: Well, I understand. What I said is nobody around the world takes seriously the idea that
50 the rebels perpetrated this attack. Now what is true is that there are radical elements in the
51 opposition– including folks who are affiliated with al-Qaeda, who, if they got their hands on
52 chemical weapons, would have no compunction using them in Syria or outside of Syria. And
53 part of the reason why we've been so concerned about this chemical weapons– issue is

54 because we don't want— those folks gettin' chemical weapons, anymore than we want Assad
55 to have chemical weapons. And so the best solution is for us to get them out of there. But—
56 with respect to Mr. Putin— I have said consistently that where the interest of the United States
57 and Russia converge, we need to work together. And I had talked to Mr. Putin a year ago—
58 saying to him— the United States and Russia should work together to deal with these chemical
59 weapons stockpiles, and to work to try to bring about a political transition—

60 R: But do you trust—

61 O: —inside of Syria.

62 R: —he has the same goal? Do you really trust that?

63 O: Oh, I don't think that— Mr. Putin has the same— values that we do. And I think— obviously,
64 by— protecting Mr. Assad— he has a different attitude about— the Assad regime. But what I've
65 also said to him directly— is that we both have an interest in preventing chaos, we both have
66 an interest in preventing terrorism, the situation in Syria right now is untenable, as long as Mr.
67 Assad's in power, there is gonna be some sort of conflict there, and that we should work
68 together to try to find a way in which the interests of all the parties inside of Syria, the
69 Alawites, the Sunnis, the Christians, that everybody is represented and that there is a way of
70 bringing the temperature down so that— that horrible things that are happening inside the
71 country—

72 R: Are you—

73 O: —are continuing to happen.

74 R: Are you —

75 O: And I think there's a way for— Mr. Putin, despite— me and him having a whole lot of
76 differences, to play an important role in that. And so I welcome him being involved. I
77 welcome him saying, "I will take responsibility for pushing my client, the Assad regime— to
78 deal with these chemical weapons." Because— I think that if, in fact— not only Russia gets
79 involved, but if— potentially Iran gets involved— as well in recognizing that what's happening
80 there is a train wreck that hurts not just Syrians but destabilizing the entire region—

81 R: But aren't you worried at all that Putin is playing—

82 O: —we can do something like it.

83 R: —for time and playing you?

84 O: Well— you know, Ronald Reagan said, "Trust but verify." And I think that that's always
85 been the experience of— U.S. presidents when we're interacting with— first, Soviet leaders, and
86 now Russian leaders. You know— Mr. Putin and I have strong disagreements on a whole
87 range of issues. But— I can talk to him. We have worked together on important issues. The
88 fact of the matter is— is that— we couldn't be supplying all of our troops in Afghanistan if he
89 weren't helping us— in— in transporting— those supplies— through— the northern borden—
90 northern borders of Afghanistan. So there are a whole range of areas where we currently work
91 together. We've worked together on counterterrorism operations. And so— you know— this is

92 not the Cold War. This is not a contest between the United States and Russia. I mean the fact
93 of the matter is— is that— if Russia wants to have some— influence in Syria— post-Assad, that
94 doesn't hurt our interests. I know that sometimes this gets framed or— or looked at through the
95 lens of— the U.S. versus Russia. But that's not what this is about. What this is about is how
96 do we make sure that we don't have the worst weapons in the hands, either of a murderous
97 regime, or— in the alternative, some elements of— the opposition— that— are as opposed to the
98 United States— as they are to Assad.

99 R: You said, "Post-Assad." If, one year from now, Assad is in the process of surrendering his
100 chemical weapons, but he's strengthened his hold on power, is that a victory?

101 O: Well— the chemical weapons issue is the issue I'm— concerned about first and foremost,
102 simply because that speaks directly to U.S. interests. It speaks to the potential that other
103 countries start producing more chemical weapons that the ban on chemical weapons unravels,
104 and it becomes more accessible to terrorists— which, in turn, could be used against us.

105 R: Is that the—

106 O: So I have a— so I have a— a primary concern there. I also believe that the U.S. has an
107 interest in seeing a stable— Syria in which people aren't being slaughtered. And it is hard to
108 envision how Mr. Assad regains any kind of legitimacy after he's gassed— or his military has
109 gassed— innocent civilians and children. And so part of my argument here is, that we will not
110 intervene militarily to bring that transition about. But all the countries in the region, and I
111 think the entire world and the United Nations, should have an interest in trying to bring about
112 that stability.

113 R: How much time does he have to give up the weapons?

114 O: Well— I know John Kerry is talking right now to his counterpart, his Russian counterpart.
115 Let's see how these negotiations— unfold. I— you know, there are a lot of technical issues
116 about getting chemical weapons out, generally. It becomes even more complicated where
117 you've got a live war going on. On the other hand— if we have a verifiable (VOICE)
118 agreement with specific timelines, that the Russians have taken— responsibility for, along with
119 Assad— that, in and of itself, is a very positive development. It becomes much less likely that
120 chemical weapons are used again. And there's a mechanism whereby the world can
121 potentially hold— hold— Syria accountable.

122 R: What do you think Iran makes of all this? You mentioned Iran. Do you think they can
123 look at all this and say, "Maybe all options aren't on the table, you're not willing to use
124 force?"

125 O: No, I think— I think the Iranians, who we communicate with— in— indirect ways—

126 R: Have you reached out personally to the new president?

127 O: I have. And— and he's reached out to me. We haven't spoken— directly. But—

128 R: Letters.

129 O: Yeah. And– I think what the Iranians understand is that– the nuclear issue– is a far larger
130 issue for us than the chemical weapons issue, that– the threat against Iran– against Israel, that
131 a nuclear Iran poses, is much closer to our core interests. That– a nuclear arms race in the
132 region– is something that would be profoundly destabilizing. And so I– my suspicion is that
133 the Iranians recognize they– they shouldn't draw a lesson that we haven't struck– to think we
134 won't strike Iran. On the other hand, what is– what– they should draw from this lesson is that
135 there is the potential of resolving these issues diplomatically. And–

136 R: You think they're there? You think they believe that?

137 O: I think they recognize, in part, because of the– the extraordinary sanctions that we placed
138 on them, that the world community is united when it comes to wanting to prevent a nuclear
139 arms race in the region. And– you know, negotiations with the Iranians is always difficult. I–
140 I think this new president is not gonna suddenly make it easy. But– you know, my view is
141 that if you have– both a credible threat of force, combined with a rigorous diplomatic effort,
142 that, in fact– you can– you can strike a deal.

143 R: But–

144 O: And– and I– and I hold out– I hold out that hope.

145 R: Final foreign policy question. You've had some– a lot of armchair criticism.

146 O: Yeah.

147 R: I'm sure you're used to that.

148 O: I am.

149 R: Senator Corker, Foreign Relations Committee, said– you're not comfortable as
150 Commander-In-Chief, it's like watching a person who's caged. The president of the Council
151 on Foreign Relations Richard Haas, "Words like ad-hoc, improvised, unsteady come to mind.
152 This is probably the most undisciplined stretch of foreign policy in your presidency." What
153 do you make of that?

154 O: Well– you know, I– I– I think that– folks here in Washington– like to grade on style. And
155 so had we rolled out something that was very smooth and disciplined and– linear– they would
156 have graded it well, even if it was a disastrous policy. We know that, 'cause that's exactly
157 how they graded the Iraq– War– until it ended up–

158 R: So this doesn't change your view–

159 O: –blowing in our face.

160 R: –of President Bush.

161 O: No– no. What it– what it– what it says is that I'm less concerned about– style points, I'm
162 much more concerned about getting the policy right. And– what I've said consistently
163 throughout is that– the chemical weapons issue is a problem. I want that problem dealt with.
164 And as a consequence of the steps that we've taken over the last two weeks to three weeks,

165 we now have a situation in which Syria has acknowledged it has chemical weapons, has said
166 it's willing to join the convention on chemical weapons, and Russia, its primary sponsor, has—
167 said that it will pressure Syria to reach that agreement. That's my goal. And if that goal— is
168 achieved, then— it sounds to me like we did something right.

169 (...)

170 R: Mr. President thanks very much.

171 O: I enjoyed it. Thank you, George.

President Bashar al-Assad's Interview on Syria's Chemical Weapons

Global Research, Fox News and SANA, 18. 9. 2013

Zdroj: Dostupné na WWW: <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/president-bashar-al-assads-interview-on-syrias-chemical-weapons-transcript/5350429>> [cit. 5. 5. 2014].

1 R1: Hello Mr. President, thank you very much for providing R with this opportunity for an
2 interview. I'm joined by my colleague, reporter Greg Palkot, and we're very interested in
3 proceeding. As you know, there's been a number of breaking stories which we need to discuss
4 with you. The UN has just released its chemical weapon report. My colleague Greg Palkot
5 will be discussing that with you in a moment. I want to talk to you about other major
6 developments regarding the chemical weapons plan, which has been agreed to by the US and
7 the Russian government. Do you agree with this plan to secure and to eventually destroy the
8 chemical weapons?

9 A: Last week we joined the international agreement of preventing chemical WMDs, and part
10 of this agreement, the main part, is to not to manufacture these armaments, not to store, and
11 not to use, and of course not to distribute, and part of it is to get rid of those materials, the
12 chemical materials. Of course, when we are part now of this agreement, we have to agree on
13 that chapter.

14 R1: You have to agree on...?

15 A: On getting rid of all these armaments, I mean to destroy them.

16 R1: Why do you agree now?

17 A: No, actually it's not now. If you go back ten years ago, when we were a non-permanent
18 member of the Security Council in 2003, we proposed to the United Nations, to the Security
19 Council, a Syrian proposal to get rid of the WMDs from the Middle East, to have chemical-
20 free zone or WMD-free zone in the Middle East. And actually, the United States opposed that
21 proposal, so as conviction, we wanted to see our region free of WMDs, all kinds of WMDs
22 because it's a very volatile region, it's always on the verge of anarchy and wars, so that's why
23 we don't say that we agreed now.

24 R1: We know that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have said in the past that you were
25 lying – that's their word, not mine – when you said that you didn't have any chemical
26 weapons. A few days ago, in an interview with Russia Channel 24 you admitted you had
27 chemical weapon stockpiles. Now, I just want to make sure we're clear before we go forward:
28 do you or do you not have chemical weapons?

29 A: First of all, regarding what Obama and Kerry said, I dare them to say that we said “no”
30 once. We never said it. We never said no, we never said yes, but we always say it’s a
31 classified issue, we don’t have to discuss it, and if we want to talk about it, we say “if” and
32 “if” means you may have it, you may not. So, this is a blatant lie.

33 R1: Okay, but can you tell us now? Do you have chemical weapons or don’t you?

34 A: Of course, when we joined the treaty last week, it means that we have, and we said that, so
35 it’s not secret anymore.

36 R1: So, as far as the American people, you will agree that you do have a stockpile of chemical
37 weapons?

38 A: That’s why we joined the international agreement, in order to get rid of them.

39 R1: My former colleagues in Capitol Hill are skeptical about your agreement with this plan.
40 They say it’s just a stalling tactic. Is it?

41 A: A stalling tactic? To join the agreement?

42 R1: That you’re stalling right now for time, and that you really don’t have any intention of
43 going along with the plan. Are you stalling?

44 A: When you join the agreement, you have a mechanism, and you have to obey this
45 mechanism, and according to the history of Syria, we never made an agreement with any
46 party in this world and we didn’t fulfill what we have to do or our role in that agreement,
47 never.

48 R1: So you would say that President Obama then can trust you to follow through?

49 A: I don’t think that President Obama should trust me; first, the Syrian people should trust
50 me, not President Obama. Second, when you talk about agreements and the international
51 relations, you have mechanisms, and those mechanisms should be based on objective criteria,
52 so if you want to trust or not trust, watch this country, see if they obey those mechanisms and
53 those rules or not. This is where you can trust them or not. It’s not a personal relation.

54 R1: I understand. So, you’re under a tight time deadline. Are you going to be able to provide
55 the list that is part of the agreement, a list of chemical weapons?

56 A: It is a part. You should provide a list of the arsenal you have to the organization of
57 chemical weapons.

58 R1: And are you ready to open chemical weapons sites to international inspection?

59 A: We didn’t say that we are joining partially that agreement or that organization; we joined
60 fully. We sent the letter, we sent the document, and you are committed to the full
61 requirements of this agreement.

62 R1: Would you be ready to let our Fox News cameras have access to some of the chemical
63 weapons sites so that the American people can see for themselves? Is that possible?

64 A: In Syria we have institutions, we have rules, we have conditions, so we have to go back to
65 these institutions to ask them for that request, and after they study the request, they can say
66 yes or no, but it's not about the President to take that decision alone. So, we have institutions,
67 and you can do that after this interview, you can ask for permission.

68 R1: Can you destroy these chemical weapons quickly, and if not, why not?

69 A: I think it's a very complicated operation technically, and it needs a lot of money, some
70 estimated about a billion for the Syrian stockpile. We're not experts in that regard, but that's
71 the estimate that we've had recently. So, you have to ask the experts what do they mean by
72 "quickly" because this has a certain schedule, it needs a year, maybe a little bit less or a little
73 bit more. So, what do you mean by "quickly"?

74 R1: Since it's the United States that demanded you give up chemical weapons, would you be
75 prepared to turn over your chemical weapons to the US government for the purposes of safely
76 destroying those weapons?

77 A: As I said, it needs a lot of money, it needs about one billion, and it's very detrimental to
78 the environment. If the American administration is ready to pay this money and to take
79 responsibility of bringing toxic materials to the United States, why don't they do it? But of
80 course it is going to be in cooperation with a specified organization in the United Nations.

81 R1: But you're prepared to hand them over at some point for the safe destruction of them?

82 A: It doesn't matter where. As I said, in the end, if you're going to destroy them, it doesn't
83 matter where they go.

84 R1: Are there any conditions?

85 A: No, we don't have any conditions. Send it anywhere. In the end, if they're going to be
86 destroyed, they could be destroyed anywhere. As I said, it's very detrimental to the
87 environment, so whichever country is ready to take risk of these materials let them take it.

88 R1: Do you have a security agreement with the Russian government that, if and when you
89 give up your chemical weapons, that you, in fact, will be protected so that you're not
90 vulnerable to attacks? Because we know there are other nations which gave up their weapons
91 then they were attacked.

92 A: You know, the Russian role, politically, was very efficient during the crisis in Syria,
93 during the last two years and a half, and they vetoed three times in the Security Council, so
94 actually they protected Syria politically. They don't have to have a security agreement with
95 Syria regarding this. It's not only about the army and the war; it's about politics. So, I think
96 they are doing their job without having this agreement.

97 R1: So, just so summarize, you do have chemical weapons, you're prepared to go along with
98 the plan to destroy them, and that you're prepared to cooperate with the international
99 community in that.

100 A: Again, as I said, what you mentioned all are part of the international agreement, and when
101 we agreed to join this agreement we wanted to fully cooperate with this agreement, not
102 partially. I think this is very clear.

103 R1: Greg?

104 R2: Thank you, Dennis. Mr. President, this is so important, let me just follow up on just one
105 or two points then move on. Again, no conditions; you will agree to this plan to destroy your
106 chemical weapons. You had put conditions on this in the past, in the past week or so. No
107 conditions?

108 A: The only conditions that the agreement will entail propose and provide. So, now we are
109 going to discuss the details with the international organization, so I don't have all the details
110 to discuss it with you now, and I'm not the expert; we have specialized people to discuss the
111 details. But in general, as headlines, whenever we join an agreement, as Syria, we are always
112 committed to those agreements.

113 R2: Your problem was that there was a threat of force coming from the United States, there's
114 still discussion of the so-called Chapter Seven resolution being put forward to the UN which
115 would include the possibility of force. Would that be a deal-breaker for you if that went
116 forward?

117 A: What is the deal-breaker?

118 R2: Chapter Seven resolution in the UN which allows bodies in the UN to use force if you're
119 not complying.

120 A: There's a misunderstanding that we agreed upon this agreement because of the American
121 threat. Actually, if you go back before the G20, before the proposal of this Russian initiative,
122 the American threat wasn't about handing over the chemical arsenal; it was about attacking
123 Syria in order not to use the arsenal again. So, it's not about the threat. Syria never obeyed
124 any threat. Actually, we responded to the Russian initiative and to our needs and to our
125 conviction. So, whether they have Chapter Seven or don't have Chapter Seven, this is politics
126 between the great countries.

127 R2: So that's irrelevant to you?

128 A: No, no, irrelevant. We obeyed because we want to obey, we have completely different
129 incentives.

130 R2: And again that timeframe which Dennis mentioned, one week to come up with a full
131 account of your chemical weapons, November for the first inspectors to come in, mid 2014
132 for all your chemical weapons to be destroyed; that's an ambitious timetable even by expert
133 standards, but you think that is doable?

134 A: Yeah, but we have to discuss these details with the organization first, this is first. Second,
135 the time is not our problem; it is the problem of the organization, how much time do they
136 need to implement this agreement.

137 R2: You don't necessarily sign on to that time limit?

138 A: No, no. The only thing we have to do is provide the information, and to make them
139 accessible to our sites, which is not a problem. We can do it tomorrow, we don't have any
140 problem.

141 R2: You could do it tomorrow?

142 A: Yeah, of course. We don't have a problem. The problem is how fast they can be in getting
143 rid of any chemical material, because this is a very complicated situation. It's not about will;
144 it's about techniques. So, only experts can answer your question.

145 R2: Which leads to my last question on Dennis's topic and that's exactly what some people
146 are saying, that this is just a ruse, just a game, because it is so difficult. Experts say it will be
147 so difficult to get rid of these chemical weapons, especially in a war situation like this. This is
148 indeed buying you a lot of time.

149 A: Even if you don't have war, it is difficult. Even if you have all the requirements afforded
150 by every party, it takes time to get rid of them.

151 R2: So you're saying this could take years?

152 A: As I said we don't have experience in that regard, but some say it takes one year. I didn't
153 say years. As I heard it takes about one year, maybe a little bit less, a little bit more. But at the
154 end we have to see the experts, and they will tell us.

155 R2: Let's go on to the latest breaking news. There's a lot of breaking news in this region right
156 now, and that's the just-released UN report on the chemical weapon attack last month in the
157 outskirts of Damascus right now. According to this report, and this is the report you said you
158 were waiting for. You said you didn't want to hear the US, you didn't want to hear the UK,
159 you didn't want to hear France, you want the UN to speak, and they have spoken, and they
160 have said and I quote "there's clear and convincing evidence that the nerve gas sarin has been
161 used", and they base this on environmental, chemical, medical samples, they say the killing
162 happened on a relatively large scale, that killing included children. Do you agree with this
163 assessment?

164 A: They have the samples, and they're supposed to be objective. We didn't have any formal
165 report, but the question is if I agree about the use of Sarin gas.

166 R2: No, do you agree with the assessment that a chemical weapon attack occurred on the
167 outskirts of Damascus on August 21st?

168 A: That's the information that we have, but information is different from evidence.

169 R2: It's different. You disagree with the UN report?

170 A: No, no, I don't disagree. You have to wait till you have evidence. You can agree or
171 disagree when you have evidence.

172 R2: They have the evidence. They've interviewed 40-50 people on the ground.

173 A: Yeah, we have to discuss the evidence with them. We have to discuss it with them because
174 they are coming back; they haven't finished their mission yet. They are going back, and we
175 have to discuss it with them, we have to see the details, but we cannot disagree without
176 having the opposite evidence. So, nobody said that it was not used, because in March, we
177 invited the delegation to Syria because sarin gas was used in March. We have the evidence
178 that it was used in March in Aleppo. So, when I talk as an official, I can talk about the
179 evidence that I have.

180 R2: Okay, but they put out a 38-page report; I mean it's been posted since yesterday. I don't
181 know whether you've had a chance to look at it.

182 A: No, not yet. We have to look at it, we have to discuss it before saying we agree or disagree.
183 It's only yesterday evening.

184 R2: Let's go hypothetical then. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said that this is in
185 fact a war crime, that it is despicable, and that it is a grave violation of international law. If
186 that event happened as they say it did happen, would it be despicable, would it be a violation
187 of international law?

188 A: That is self-evident of course.

189 R2: Self-evident.

190 A: Of course, that's self-evident, it is despicable, and it's a crime.

191 R2: Because I'm sure you've seen the videos that we have seen of the child gagging on the
192 ground, of the people vomiting on the floor.

193 A: Yeah, but no-one has verified the credibility of the videos and the pictures. No one verified
194 them. The only verified things are the samples that the delegation went and took; samples of
195 blood and other things from the soil and so on.

196 R2: Which is what they say they have.

197 A: But you cannot build a report on videos if they are not verified, especially since we lived
198 in a world of forgery for the last two years and a half regarding Syria. We have a lot of
199 forgery on the internet.

200 R2: There's a last key element to this UN report, and while the UN inspectors did not lay
201 blame, that is they did not place culpability for the attack, there are many experts interpreting
202 this report, some that I've spoken to in the last 12 hours, they frankly say this attack looks
203 firmly like an attack coming from your government, from the Syrian government. They point
204 to a few things; they say it was a large amount of gas, sarin gas, maybe as much as a ton. The
205 rebels could not have had that. They said the type of rocket, an M-14 artillery at 300
206 millimeters never used by the rebels before, that they needed large vehicles to send these
207 rockets up, the rebels don't have that, and maybe most importantly they point to the trajectory
208 of the rockets. They say they were able to trace the rockets back from the impact point to
209 where they came from, and in two different occasions, this is according to the UN, they say
210 that the start point was Qasyoun Mountain, the headquarters of the republican guards. What
211 do you say to that?

212 A: Everything you mentioned is part of the report? All these points are part of the report?

213 R2: These points are all part of the report. These are all facts.

214 A: The report didn't mention anything regarding the republican guards or things like this.

215 R2: They said they gave the azimuth tracking of the trajectory, and people have extrapolated
216 from the azimuth track that is where it was coming from, north-western Damascus.

217 A: First of all, the Sarin gas is called kitchen gas, do you know why? Because anyone can
218 make Sarin in his house.

219 R2: They said it is very high quality. Higher quality than even used in Iraq by Saddam
220 Hussein, your neighbor at the time.

221 A: First of all, any rebel can make Sarin. Second, we know that all those rebels are supported
222 by governments, so any government that would have such chemical material can hand it over
223 to those.

224 R2: The experts say that they have tracked nothing like this, a ton of Sarin gas, it is launchers,
225 it is rockets, it's a whole fleet, which happens to be, from time to time, those kinds of
226 armaments, those kinds of munitions, happen to be in your bases.

227 A: This realistically cannot be possible. You cannot use the Sarin beside your troops, this is
228 first. Second, you don't use WMD while you are advancing, you've not been defeated, and
229 you're not retreating. The whole situation was in favor of the army. Third, we didn't use it
230 when we had bigger problems last year. When they talk about any troops or any unit in the
231 Syrian army that used this kind of weapon, this is false for one reason because chemical
232 weapons can only be used by specialized units. It cannot be used by any other units like
233 infantry or similar traditional units. So, all what you mentioned is not realistic and not true.
234 Definitely, so far as government, we have evidence that the terrorist groups have used Sarin
235 gas and those evidences have been handed over to the Russians. The Russian satellites, since
236 the beginning of these allegations at the 21st of August, they said that they have information
237 through their satellites that the rocket was launched from another area. So, why to ignore this
238 point of view? So, the whole story doesn't even hold together. It's not realistic. In one word,
239 we didn't use any chemical weapons in the Ghouta, because if you want to use it, you would
240 harm your troops, you would have harmed tens of thousands of civilians living in Damascus.

241 R2: Just to conclude this portion, Mr. President, will you allow more investigation? Will you
242 allow UN investigators to come in, maybe to further investigate this attack, as you say, other
243 attacks? There's something like 14 different attacks where accusations are being made on
244 both sides and even a UN team to decide on the culpability, the blame for this attack. You will
245 allow those UN teams to come in?

246 A: We invited them to come to Syria first, in March, and we've been asking them to come
247 back to Syria to continue their investigations because we have more places to be investigated.
248 The United States is the one who made pressure on them to leave recently before they finish
249 their missions. When we invited the delegation, we wanted this delegation to have full
250 authority to investigate everything, not only the use of the Sarin gas or the chemical weapons,
251 but to investigate everything about who did it and how, but the United States made pressure in

252 order to keep it only about was it used or not. Why? Because, I think the United States
253 administration thought that if they're going to investigate who and how, they're going to
254 reach the conclusion that the rebels or the terrorists have used it, not vice versa.

255 R2: Thank you, Mr. President. Dennis?

256 R1: Thank you. Mr. President, one of the things that appear possible is that Syria's place as a
257 secular state is at risk. Would you agree with that?

258 A: Of course, when we have this kind of extremism and terrorism and violence, that will
259 render the whole society into a more closed society, more ideologically fanatic, and that's
260 what the extremists are doing.

261 R1: But what does it mean to have a secular state? I mean there are questions about whether
262 or not your position is authoritarian, whether you believe in democratic values. What is the
263 secular state mean to Syria?

264 A: Secular state means to deal with its citizen regardless of their religion, sect and ethnicity,
265 because Syria is a melting pot. We have tens of different cultures in Syria. If we don't have a
266 secular state that reflects this secular society, Syria will disintegrate. So, that's what it means
267 to have a secular society.

268 R1: One of the notions about this very serious conflict is that it's a civil war. Would you agree
269 with that characterization that you're involved in a civil war?

270 A: No, civil war should start from within the society. Civil war needs clear lines, geographical
271 lines, social lines and sectarian lines, but we don't have these lines in Syria. Civil war doesn't
272 mean to have 80 or 83 nationalities coming to fight within your countries supported by
273 foreign countries. What we have is not a civil war; what we have is a war, but it's a new kind
274 of war.

275 R1: So, you're blaming outside interests for the acceleration of war. Now, there's just some
276 statistics that have come out from IHS James. They're a defense analyst group. They estimate
277 the opposition as a hundred thousand, 30,000 of which are hard-line Islamists sympathetic to
278 the 10,000 Al Qaeda-inspired Jihadists. Are any of these Syrians? Are they all outsiders?
279 Where are they getting their money?

280 A: First of all, no-one has these precise numbers. This is exaggeration, because most of the
281 Jihadists, when they come to Syria, don't come through countries or organizations. They just
282 come by plane to neighboring countries and they cross the border like any other one, and they
283 just want to come to Syria for the Jihad with the other Jihadists. So nobody has these
284 numbers. We know that we have tens of thousands of Jihadists, but we are on the ground, we
285 live in this country. What I can tell you is 80, and some say 90 – it is difficult to be precise,
286 you don't have clear and precise data – 80 to 90% of the rebels or terrorists on the ground are
287 Al Qaeda and their offshoots.

288 R1: These are the rebels? You're not maintaining that all of your opponents are Jihadists, are
289 you?

290 A: No, not all of them. Of course we have many other different groups, but they are small,
291 they are becoming a minority. At the very beginning, the Jihadists were the minority. In the
292 end of 2012, and during this year they became the majority with the flow of tens of thousands
293 from different countries.

294 R1: Where are they getting their money from? Can you tell us right now?

295 A: Mainly from donations.

296 R1: But donations from where? Can you name nations that are donating?

297 A: From everywhere in the Islamic world. They mainly come from individuals, not from
298 countries. We don't know if some countries support them directly, we don't have any
299 information. I have to be very precise, but mainly from donations from people who carry the
300 same ideology in their minds.

301 R1: You mentioned before that some figures that are given are exaggeration. Can you tell us
302 now how many Syrians have died in this conflict?

303 A: We have tens of thousands of Syrians that have died, mainly because of the terrorist
304 attacks, assassinations, and suicide bombers, the majority.

305 R1: And how many are your government's soldiers?

306 A: More than 15,000.

307 R1: And how many are insurgents or Jihadists?

308 A: We don't have numbers, because we cannot count them.

309 R1: But there are innocent people being killed in this. And the reports are that your
310 government has bombed villages in which innocent people are killed. What about them, Mr.
311 President?

312 A: The majority of the innocent people have been killed by the terrorists, not by the
313 government. No wise government in the world would kill its own people. How can you
314 withstand if you kill your own people for two years and a half, while the West is against you,
315 many of the regional countries are against you, and your people are against you while you kill
316 them? Is it possible? Is it realistic?!

317 R1: So you're saying you're not killing your own people, but your forces have launched
318 attacks on villages where your own people have been killed.

319 A: No, actually what you're talking about is when the terrorists infiltrate residential areas in
320 villages and sometimes in the suburbs of the cities, and within large cities, and the army has
321 to go there to get rid of those terrorists. The army should defend the civilians, not the
322 opposite. You cannot leave the terrorists free, killing the people, assassinating the people,
323 beheading the people and eating their hearts. When we go to defend them, you say you are
324 killing your own people! You don't, but in every war, you have casualties. This is war. You
325 don't have clean war, you don't have soft war, and you don't have good war.

326 R1: The international community reports that Syrian rebel forces opposed to you are equally
327 if not more worried now about Jihadist fighters than they were previously by your
328 government. Now, in this new development, is there an opening for you to achieve a
329 rapprochement with your Syrian opponents?

330 A: Yeah, here we have to differentiate between what you call opposition and the terrorists.
331 Opposition is a political term. When you oppose somebody, like in your country and any
332 other country in the world, you have your own program, your own vision, you have your own
333 grassroots, and you go and propose whatever you want regarding the political system or
334 anything else, and you can change that system if you oppose the other party. Opposition
335 doesn't mean to carry weapons, kill innocent people, destroy school and infrastructure, and
336 behead. What's the relation between opposition and beheading?

337 R1: Well, let me then, as a follow-up, ask you about diplomacy. What diplomatic moves are
338 you prepared to make as confidence-building measures towards peace in your country?

339 A: Any diplomatic move without having stability and getting rid of the terrorists is going to
340 be just an illusion. Any diplomatic move should start with stopping the flow of the terrorists,
341 the logistical support of those terrorists, the armament support and the money support. Then,
342 you have a full plan, the Syrians could sit on the table, discuss the future of Syria, the political
343 system, the constitution and everything.

344 R1: Would that future include negotiations with the Syrian opposition?

345 A: Exactly, that doesn't mean negotiating with the terrorists.

346 R1: I understand. Now, but does it mean that you're ready for, let's say, a program of
347 reconciliation with those who have opposed you? Are you ready for that?

348 A: Of course, we announced it at the beginning of this year. We said we are ready to discuss
349 with any political party inside and outside Syria.

350 R1: Let's take this down the road into next year. Would you be prepared to offer amnesty to
351 all the Syrians who opposed your government?

352 A: They didn't breach the law, so if they oppose the government, they can come to Syria
353 without amnesty. Amnesty should only be offered to anyone who violates or breaches the
354 Syrian law. If you oppose it, it is not a crime.

355 R1: Do you believe in amnesty as a path towards peace?

356 A: That depends on to whom; if it's to whom stained their hands with Syrian blood, it could
357 be as part of a national reconciliation.

358 R1: Would that include reparations to the families of those who were killed?

359 A: It's not the President who should put all these details. I think the Syrian meeting of every
360 faction or all the parties that will define all these details.

361 R1: What would you say, Mr. President, to the millions of Syrians who are now refugees, as
362 you move towards the peace process? What would you do to say “please come home?”

363 A: Of course we want them to come back to their villages, to their cities, to their houses, to
364 their homes, we want them to. But we have to help them with getting rid of the terrorists,
365 because the majority of those refugees left because of the terrorists, not because of the
366 government. Actually, we have refugees within Syria that are being helped by the
367 government.

368 R1: Let me ask you this, have you spoken to President Obama?

369 A: Never.

370 R1: Have you ever spoken to him?

371 A: No.

372 R1: Are you interested in speaking to our President?

373 A: That depends on the content. It’s not a chat. (laughing)

374 R1: If you want to send him a message right now, what would you say to him?

375 A: Listen to your people; follow the common sense of your people. That’s enough.

376 R1: And Pope Francis instructed the international community to lay aside the futile pursuit of
377 a military solution. Do you believe the Pope’s advice is valid, for your government as well as
378 other countries?

379 A: Of course, we invited every militant in Syria to give up armament, and offered amnesty to
380 whoever laid down his armament and wants to go back to his normal life as a Syrian citizen.
381 Of course we believe in that.

382 R1: Thank you, now before I give this back to my colleague, I want to ask you a question
383 that’s been bothering me and perhaps other Americans. Not everyone who’s watching this
384 interview today knows that you’re a doctor, you’re an MD. You’ve done this before you were
385 President. As you know, doctors take an oath never to do harm to anyone. That’s a direct
386 quote from the Hippocratic Oath. Does a doctor give that up when he takes political office?

387 A: First of all, doctors take the right decision to protect the life of the patient, so you cannot
388 say they don’t do harm physically because sometimes they have to extract the bad member
389 that could kill the patient. You could extract an eye, a leg and so on, but you don’t say that
390 he’s a bad doctor. It is still a humanitarian job whatever they do; the same for politicians but
391 in a larger scale. A doctor deals with one patient while the politician should with the public,
392 with millions or tens of millions and so on. So, the question is whether your decision should
393 help the life of the Syrians or not in such a situation. Nobody likes the violence, we are
394 against the violence. But what will you do when the terrorists attack your country and kill the
395 people? Will you say that I’m against violence or you defend? You have an army, you have
396 police, they have to do their job, this is the constitution, and this is the role of any
397 government. What did you do in Los Angeles in the 90s when you had rebels? Didn’t you

398 send your army? You did. So this is the mission of the government. The most important thing
399 is, when you take the decision, whether it harms or not, it should help the majority of the
400 people. It is better that you take the decision that could help everyone, but sometimes, in
401 certain circumstances, in difficult circumstances, you cannot, so you have to take the less
402 harmful decision.

403 R1: Thank you, Mr. President. Greg?

404 R2: Mr. President, our time is limited and I want to briefly go back in time a little bit. I was
405 here in 2000 for the funeral of your father. You assumed the position of President, and at that
406 time some people had real hopes for you as a reformer, to change things, to bring more
407 democracy to this country. In fact, however, critics and analysts say you pulled back to the
408 point where now you are branded other things; you're branded "dictator" and much, much
409 worse. How does that make you feel when people say you lost the plot, that is, you lost the
410 trail of what you might have done then, that might have avoided all of this now?

411 A: First of all, if you want to talk about the hope, I would say I'm the hope of the Syrians, it
412 doesn't matter if I'm the hope of any foreign person, whether he's official or any other one.
413 So, all the terms that you've used in your question should be referred to the Syrians to see
414 whether they agree upon these terms or not. At the end, it's not about the term, it's about the
415 content. It doesn't matter what they say, whether he is dictator or reformer. Today, you have
416 propaganda. Do they say the same word about their allies in the Gulf States? Do they talk
417 about dictatorship in the Gulf States?

418 R2: We're talking about Syria.

419 A: Yeah, I know, but I have the right to answer about the other states that are much far from
420 democracy than the Syrian state. Going back to your question, the reform is not the job of a
421 certain person in a country, whether the President or the government or the people. The
422 President and the government can lead the reform, but the reform is a social process, and it's
423 influenced by many different things including the external factors, whether you have a war,
424 whether you have stability, whether you have better economic conditions, whether you have
425 very bad ideologies coming from abroad. So, talking about the reform in the way that I
426 presented at the very beginning and I still believe in the same concept, values and principles.
427 You should have democracy that reflects our own traditions, but democracy is not a goal; it
428 means to reach prosperity, and democracy based on accepting the other. When you have a
429 closed ideology and many taboos that prevent you from accepting the other culture in your
430 country, you are going backwards. It doesn't matter what the President does in that regard.
431 Not the constitution, not the law, not any other process can make the democracy a real one, a
432 realistic one in such a society. Only when the society makes this democracy, you can talk
433 about it. It's a culture. So, I'm still a reformer, I still believe in the same values, but if you go
434 back to the history of the past decades, the most complicated situations happening in our
435 region, this is one of the reasons why the democracy – not in Syria – in the whole region, is
436 going backwards. We are going farther from democracy, not closer.

437 R2: But again, to stay with your country, and stay with a little bit of recent history, move back
438 just two and a half year ago, that was the first protest here in this country. People said that
439 was still a sign that people were unhappy, your own Syrian people, about your move to
440 democracy, and that was simply what they were asking for: more democracy, more reform.
441 They weren't even asking for you to step down at the time. Critics will say you moved in too

442 hard, too fast, with tanks, targeting protestors, torturing, etc. That is the critique of yours, and
443 once again, missed another chance. How do you feel about that, two and a half years on?

444 A: Let's ask a very simple question: if we want to oppress those people because we don't
445 accept their requests, why did the President himself – I said in one of my speeches at the very
446 beginning of the conflict, why did I say publically that those people have legitimate demands?
447 This is first. Second, if we are going to use the force, why did we change the constitution?
448 Why did we change the law? Why do we have now more than 15 new political parties in
449 Syria? Why did we change so many laws that they asked for? Because we knew it wasn't
450 about democracy. If they asked for democracy, how they did kill some of those people – I'm
451 not generalizing – some demonstrators demonstrated for the reasons you mentioned, but some
452 others they killed soldiers and killed policemen in the first week of the conflict. What is the
453 relation between asking for democracy and killing and assassinating? So, we have to be very
454 precise and differentiate between people who ask for democracy and terrorists. Part of those
455 people who were opposing the government at the very beginning, today they support the
456 government against the terrorists, because they asked for reform, but they didn't ask for
457 terrorists. So, you're talking about two completely different situations between the beginning
458 of the conflict and today. So, we're still moving forward in the path of democracy, and part of
459 the solution that I just mentioned few minutes ago when we sit around the table, the Syrian
460 people will say what is the best constitution, what is the best political system. Do they want it
461 parliamentary, presidential, quasi-presidential, and so on. What laws do they want?
462 Everything! So, it's not the president who is going to set. If the people want to set up their
463 own system, this is democracy.

464 R2: Well, you bring up a point that leads to my next question. Some people will say that you
465 have waged a war of attrition, that is, that you have weighted and ground people down, and
466 some of those that felt, very peacefully, that they wanted a change here and democracy, now,
467 after two and a half years of fighting, they're willing to give in a little bit, and at the outset
468 you talked about terrorists coming inside, and now you've created a situation on the ground
469 because of the long period for the terrorists to come here. My point is: you're not really
470 changing people's minds; you're just forcing them into this box, this box where, over two and
471 a half years on, 110,000 people dead, cities in ruins, and you're hoping that your people will
472 surrender to the idea. I mean, is that really where you wanted to go with that idea?

473 A: So the core of the idea, is that I created the atmosphere to invite terrorists to Syria?

474 R2: You held on long enough against the demands of the people who wanted peaceful
475 demands.

476 A: From the very beginning we accepted the demands.

477 R2: You accepted the demands?

478 A: From the very beginning, before the terrorists or those foreigners coming to Syria. From
479 the very beginning, in 2011, six days after the conflict, we said we are going to change, and
480 we started the process of changing the constitution two or three months after the beginning.
481 And we had the vote. I didn't change the constitution; there was a referendum, and the people
482 voted in that referendum for this new constitution, in the beginning of 2012, in February,
483 before the end of one year of the conflict. So, what you're saying is a far cry from reality, it's
484 a completely different story, none of these things happened in Syria. This is about maybe

485 another country. What happened in Syria, from the beginning we said if there are any
486 demands, we are ready to change anything. What would the President do or how could he
487 succeed if the people are against him? How can he succeed? Do you want to be the President
488 just for the sake of being President? That's not realistic, that's impossible.

489 R2: Did you back your tactics in this war? A year ago, we stood in Homs, one of your great
490 cities, and we watched as your artillery which was lined out around the outskirts of the city
491 pound again and again relentlessly the centre of the city. You say you're going for the enemy,
492 you say you're going for the terrorists, but that, some would call it indiscriminate shelling, has
493 left many, many civilians dead and, frankly, left that city, and many of your other great cities
494 like Aleppo and others, in ruins. I mean, is this the way to go after, if you think that there are
495 some terrorists out there, the terrorist enemies of your state?

496 A: So, it's like if you say that when the terrorists infiltrate some area or attack a certain part of
497 any city, the civilians would stay? That's impossible. Whenever the terrorists enter an area,
498 the civilians would leave unless they use them as human shields, but in most of the cases the
499 civilians would quit their area because of the terrorists, and that's why you have so many
500 refugees. So, in most of the cases, the Syrian army attacked an area where there's no civilians
501 living in it. In most cases, you can hardly find civilians with terrorists.

502 R2: But there are estimates, Mr. President, of the total of the 110,000 dead so far, is at least
503 about 50,000 civilians. Are you saying that there were 50,000 human shields?

504 A: First of all, what is the source of your information?

505 R2: That is a breakdown by analysts who look at these numbers. You think it is lower?

506 A: Analysts living in the United States or Europe? You can only talk about facts; you cannot
507 talk about estimations and allegations.

508 R2: 110,000 is a fact that everyone agrees with.

509 A: Of course, I said there are tens of thousands of dead. I didn't say the exact number for one
510 reason: because we have thousands of missing people. We cannot count them as dead till we
511 know that they are dead. It's a war now. So, talking about the number, you have to be very
512 precise. You're talking about the number as a spread sheet, without knowing that they have
513 family, this is tragedy. We live with these people. This is a human tragedy. It's not about
514 numbers; it's about every family in Syria lost dear ones, including my family. We lost
515 members of family. We lost friends and that's why we're fighting terrorism. So, should we
516 allow the terrorists to continue without fighting them, this number, if it's close to the real
517 number, will be so many folds, will be millions, not hundreds of thousands.

518 R2: We don't want to be lost in numbers, because as you say, it's a human issue here. But
519 again, you used the figure of 90% of the opposition, the rebels, are Al Qaeda. You stand by
520 that? 90%?

521 A: 80 to 90%, no one has the exact number. You don't have the exact number, because they
522 are coming and flowing irregularly.

523 R2: You don't think that's too high? I mean, people are putting that lower, at least 50/50. One
524 would say that it's at least 50/50.

525 A: Which people? I'm sure not the Syrian people. No-one from Syria says they are 50/50.
526 From abroad maybe, they have their own estimations. But at the end, it's our conflict, we live
527 here, it's our own country. We can tell how much. But 50/50, how did they count it?

528 R2: But again, just to sum up on what you've been saying, in one quote you said "the
529 opposition has been manufactured from abroad." Do you really feel that?

530 A: It's not a feeling, and it's not about how I feel. It's about what facts are presented in front
531 of us. If they don't have Syrian grassroots – because we have opposition in Syria that has
532 grassroots – Why to have opposition abroad, how do they live? Who gives them money? How
533 are they financed? And we know that some of them belong to the United States, and Britain,
534 and France, and Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Real opposition only belongs to the Syrian people.
535 As long as it doesn't belong to this people, it's made by other country. It's self-evident.

536 R1: I just listening to the exchange with Greg Palkott, there is one thing that I am sure of...
537 Are you minimizing the deaths by saying it's not 50,000, it is 40,000 or 30,000?

538 A: You cannot minimize it because in every house you have pain today; in every house you
539 have sadness. You cannot minimize, whether this number or higher number. It's a tragedy.
540 We live in Syria. But we have to talk about the reasons. Who killed those? Not the
541 government; the terrorists. We are defending our country. If we don't defend, this number
542 will be many folds that is what I meant.

543 R1: I just wanted to clarify that. Now, looking at a broader picture here; this appears to be a
544 watershed moment for the world, from here in war-torn Syria, a new road map towards world
545 peace may be developing, by starting with you relinquishing your chemical weapons, and
546 then moving forward with a concrete plan for peace in Syria. Do you think that we are at that
547 kind of a moment?

548 A: Are you talking about the situation within Syria? There's no direct relation between the
549 chemical issue and the conflict within Syria. It is completely different. So, if we want to move
550 forward towards the political solution, we can, but that's not related to the chemical
551 agreement.

552 R1: I understand, but the fact that this chemical issue has brought the world together, to
553 finally pay attention; is this a moment you can build from?

554 A: That depends to large extents on the countries that are supporting the terrorists in Syria.

555 R1: Before I go back to Greg; there are a lot countries now involved in this process; not just
556 the US and Russia, but Iran, Israel, Turkey and even China. So much depends on Syria's
557 cooperation with the Geneva process. Are you prepared to make sure that this opportunity
558 doesn't fall apart?

559 A: We supported the Geneva process from the very beginning. We cooperated with the UN
560 envoys that came to Syria. Actually, the one who put obstacles wasn't Syria neither Russia
561 nor China; it was the United States, for many different reasons. One of the main reasons is

562 that they don't have real opposition abroad. They know this is one of their main problems,
563 because the core of the Geneva conference is to be based on the will of the Syrian people, so
564 whatever we agree upon in Geneva will be proposed to the Syrian people, and if you don't
565 have grassroots, you cannot convince the Syrian people to move with you. This is the
566 American problem with their puppets, to be very clear and very frank.

567 R1: Thank you Mr. President. Greg.

568 R2: Following up on that, Mr. President, others think indeed that there is a way forward here,
569 that you are for the first time in this last two and a half years speaking seriously to the
570 international community about a negotiation track, granted, just a narrow track of chemical
571 weapons, and in fact, there could be the possibility of longer range talks. Could you be a part
572 of that, or if your strong allies and, basically, the sponsor of this new wave of discussions and
573 negotiations, Russia, feels that perhaps it would be more helpful not to have you in the
574 position, what would be your stand? Are you in this to the end, or if it would facilitate things
575 were you to step aside for the good of your country, would you do that as well?

576 A: Being here or not being here, that position, as President, should be defined and decided by
577 the Syrian people and by the ballot box, no-one else whether friend or opponent or anyone has
578 word on that issue. If the Syrian people want you to be President, you have to stay. If they
579 don't want you, you have to quit right away, with the conference or without a conference.
580 That's self-evident, we don't discuss it, and I said it many time. So, no-one has to say that,
581 and Russia never tried to interfere in the Syrian matters. There's mutual respect between Syria
582 and Russia, and they never tried to involve themselves in those Syrian details. Only the
583 American administration, their allies in Europe, and some of their puppets in the Arab world
584 repeat these words, whether the President should leave, what the Syrian people should do
585 what kind of government; only this bloc interferes in the matters of a sovereign country.

586 R2: I know you said that there are elections scheduled here, at least, in 2014. You would stand
587 for those, and you would see if the people should decide for or against you, and those could
588 be conducted in this current atmosphere?

589 A: You have to probe the mood of the people, the will and desire of the people at that time to
590 see whether they want to run for presidency or not. If they don't see it that they are positive,
591 you don't run. So, it is too early now because you have something new every day; it is too
592 early to talk about it. I can make my decision before the elections.

593 R1: Mr. President, according to the New York Times President Obama said the greater goal
594 with respect to Syria is to curb chemical weapons use and proliferation of chemical weapons
595 worldwide. Do you believe this could be a chance to reset Syria's relations with the United
596 States?

597 A: That depends on the credibility of the administration; any administration, and that depends
598 on the US administration.

599 R1: But you do not say that our president does not have credibility; I am asking you if this is
600 an opportunity for you to reset relations with the United States?

601 A: As I said, the relation depends on the credibility of the administration. We never looked at
602 the United States as enemy; we never looked at the American people as enemy. We always

603 like to have good relations with every country in the world and first of all the United States
604 because it is the greatest country in the world. That is normal and self-evident. But that does
605 not mean to say and to go in the direction that the United States wants us to go in. We have
606 our interest, we have civilization and we have our will. They have to accept and respect that.
607 We do not have a problem with mutual respect. We want to have good relations, of course.

608 R1: Let me ask you some specifics with respect to going forward, are you going towards a
609 kind of constitution for Syria that guarantee more freedom for the people of Syria? Will you
610 really work for that?

611 A: Our constitution today guarantees more freedom but that depends on the content of
612 freedom. That's what the Syrian parties could discuss on the table. It is not the constitution of
613 the president; it is not my vision or my own project. It should be a national project. So, the
614 Syrians should define exactly what they want and I have to accept whatever they want.

615 R1: What, for example, do you think of free elections?

616 A: Of course, we have free elections now in this constitution. We are going to have free
617 election next year in May 2014.

618 R1: Is there anyone else who can be a president of Syria?

619 A: Of course, anyone who wants to be now can be a president.

620 R1: So, you are not the only person who could do so?

621 A: No, I would not be the only person.

622 R1: So, you believe that it is possible for Syria to have peaceful transition without you in
623 power? Is that possible?

624 A: What do mean be transition; transition of what?

625 R1: A transition towards a resolution of the conflict and the war, is that possible with you not
626 being in power?

627 A: If the Syrian people want me not to be in the transitional, permanent or normal or natural
628 situation, this means it is going to be peaceful. Anything people do not want cannot be
629 peaceful.

630 R1: Let us look five years into the future, what will Syria look like?

631 A: We have so many challenges if we get rid of this conflict, of course, the shorter one is to
632 get rid of the terrorists as I said, but the most important thing is their ideology. We have no
633 doubt that the existence of terrorists from all over the world – extremist terrorists – have left
634 so many side-effects within the hearts and minds of at least the young people. What would
635 you expect from a child who tried to behead somebody with his hand! What would you expect
636 from children that have been watching beheading and barbecuing heads and watching
637 cannibals in Syria on the TV and the internet?! I am sure it has a lot of psychological and
638 side-effects and bad effects on the society. So, we have to rehabilitate this generation to be

639 open again as Syria used to be. Of course, I am talking about local focal that if we leave it, it
640 is going to be like a ripple in the water that expands into the society, this is first. Second, we
641 have to rebuild our infrastructure that has been destroyed recently, to rebuild our economy
642 and, as I said, to have a new political system that suits the Syrian people and the economic
643 system, and other accessories regarding main headlines.

644 R2: Mr. President, as a reporter, I just want to tell you what I see and I travel around the
645 country. I have seen this crisis going on. Right now, looking as you do at your country with
646 may be 60% or 70% of your territory out of your control, and may be 40% of your population
647 out of your control; six million people are displaced; almost third of your country have been
648 displaced by this war. We talk about the death toll and those who were injured. Do you see
649 any way back, do you see any way that the people could again be behind you in totality? Do
650 you see anything that you could do at this point to make up for these two and a half years of
651 horror, bloody grinding war which this country had been put through?

652 A: Today, after the majority of the people experienced the meaning of terrorism – I am
653 talking about the country that used to be one of the safest countries in the world; we used to
654 be number four on the international scale of safety – and after they directly experienced the
655 extremism and terrorism, those people are supporting the government. So, they are behind the
656 government. It does not matter if they are behind me or not. The most important thing is for
657 the majority to be behind the institutions. Regarding the percentage you put, of course it is not
658 correct. Anyway, the army and police do not exist anywhere in Syria, and the problem now is
659 not a war between two countries and two armies that if you say that I took that land and I
660 liberated the other land and so on. It is about the infiltration of terrorists. Even we liberate or
661 get rid of terrorists in certain area, they will go to another area to destroy, kill and do their
662 routine. The problem now is the infiltration of those terrorists into Syria and the most
663 dangerous problem that we are facing is their ideology; this is more important than what
664 percentage we have and what percentage they have. At the end, large numbers of them are
665 foreigners not Syrians, and they will leave someday or they will be dead inside Syria but
666 ideology will be the main worry of Syria and neighboring countries, and this should be the
667 worry of any country in the world, including the United States.

668 R2: Thank you, Mr. President.

669 R1: Mr. President, Thank you very much for this interview.

670 A: Thank you for coming to Syria.