



عشرة أيام قضاها الصحفي البريطاني "جيمس هاركين" بصحبة الثوار المحاصرين في سوريا الأبية، نقتطف منها مشاركته في أحد الجنازات الشعبية لخمسة شهداء، من بينهم طفلين، تحت رقابة الشبيحة؛ لأنها تطرقت إلى تفاصيل تشرح الوضع بعمق أكثر مما تفعل العناوين الإخبارية.

في أحد أيام شهر فبراير الماضي تلقيتُ رسالة فيسبوكية من ناشط سوري يخبرني بأن تظاهرة ستبدأ بعد نصف ساعة في جزء يخضع لحراسة مشددة من دمشق. كانت المناسبة تشييع جنازة؛ لذلك كان من المرجح أن تكون التظاهرة كبيرة. أوضحت الرسالة أنها "جنازة خمسة شهداء من بينهم طفلين، وأن جنازات الأطفال دائماً ما تكون كبيرة".

ركبتُ سيارة أجرة إلى حي كفر سوسة، الذي يستضيف كثيراً من المباني الحكومية، ومشيتُ لمدة 20 دقيقة، حتى قابلتُ قرابة 75 رجلاً يحملون أسلحة رشاشة. هؤلاء كانوا من "الشبيحة" الذين يرتدون ملابس مدنية، ويشكلون المليشيات، الموالية للحكومة، والمتصدرة لقمع الاحتجاجات. كان تواجدهم يعني أنني أسير الاتجاه الصحيح.

تابعتُ عدداً ضئيلاً جداً من الشباب في أحد الشوارع السكنية الجانبية. وقف عدد من كبار السن في الجوار بعصبية، كما لو كانوا في انتظار حدوث شيء. اندفع طفل في نحو العاشرة إلى وسط الشارع، يحجب وجهه جزئياً رداءً ذي قلنسوة. صاح وهو يركض: "الله أكبر". مشيتُ وراه، وبعد اجتياز صف آخر من الرجال المدججين بالسلح، كان هناك مسجد عادي، يتجمع خارجه بضعة آلاف من المشيعين.

كانت جثة صبي يبلغ 12 عاماً محمولة على لوح خشبي، يبدوا أن الجيش أطلق النار عليه خلال احتجاجات سابقة. لم أر صحفيين غربيين، أو أي شخص من التلفزيون الرسمي السوري. تسلق السكان المحليون ظهر شاحنة مهجورة، وكانوا يصورون باستخدام الـ(آي باد) وأجهزة التسجيل الرقمية. حينما أخرجتُ هاتفي لالتقاط الصور، اقترب رجل مقنع، واقترح أن أبقى الهاتف بعيداً.

لبعض الوقت، بدا كما لو كان الشبيحة لن يسمحوا لأحد بالمغادرة. في نهاية المطاف، بدأ موكب الجنازة يتحرك، يتقدمه مجموعة من المراهقين. أخبرني رجل ملتجٍ بأن هذا المشهد شائع؛ موضحاً أن الشباب "لديهم طاقة أكثر منا؛ لذلك يأخذون زمام المبادرة".

اقتربتُ من شاب في منتصف العشرينات، يرتدي قبعة وسترة صوفية، وقدمتُ نفسي كصحفي. فأجاب: "هل بحوزتك

كوكاكولا وبصل"؟.

هذا الرد لم يكن غير ذي معنى، كما يبدو في الظاهر؛ فحينما تُستهدف التظاهرات بالغاز المسيل للدموع، يفرك المتظاهرون عيونهم بالكوكاكولا ويستخدمون البصل للوقاية من الرائحة النفاذة.

بينما كنا نسير، أخبرني الشاب، واسمه محمد، بأن المتظاهرين يهتفون مخاطبين الطفل (الشهيد): "والد يقول: ارفع رأسك عالياً، ومخاطبين والديه: "كلنا ابنك". وأوضح أن المشيعين يتجنبون العبارات السياسية؛ حتى لا يستفزوا الجيش أو الشبيحة، ذلك أن مجرد النطق باسم بشار يمكن أن يثير وإبلاً من الرصاص. حذرتني قائلاً: إذا حدث أي شيء، لا ينبغي أن أجري إلى الأمام أو الخلف، بل أأخذ شارعاً جانبياً، مضيئاً: "لا يمكن أن يُلقى القبض عليك.. ستكون صوتنا".

بينما كنا نسير في شوارع ضيقة، تجمع الناس في الشرفات، للمشاهدة وإظهار الاحترام. كانت وجوه الكبار جامدة، لكن الأطفال كانوا يبتسمون، بينما يرقص واحداً أو اثنان. بدأت مجموعة من الفتيان في مهاجمة شبكة حديدية لأحد المتاجر المغلقة، لكن محمد، الذي بدا وكبيراً غير رسمي، هتف بهم ليذهبوا بعيداً. وأوضح أن مالك المتجر يشتبه في أنه يعمل لصالح الشرطة السرية، ونحن لا نريد إعطاء الحكومة أدنى ذريعة.

بعد خمس دقائق، استجابوا. وقف الحشد صامتاً تماماً يستمع إلى خطبة جنازية مختصرة. بعد فترة وجيزة، حاول الحشد الاندفاع للأمام لكن الشبيحة بدؤوا الهجوم. سارع الجميع للاختباء، وتسابقنا أنا ومحمد إلى زقاق. بعد حوالي 100 متر، نظرنا خلفنا فلم نجد أحداً يتبعنا.

كانت هذه زيارتي الثالثة لسوريا. زرتها للمرة الأولى في أكتوبر 2010، ومرة ثانية في نوفمبر العام الماضي. هذه المرة كنتُ حريصاً على لقاء الناشطين الشباب الذين يمثلون قلب الحركة المناهضة لنظام الأسد. ثلاثة من بين كل 5 سوريين دون سن الـ 25، وبعيداً عن الكليشات الكسولة الجديدة حول (جيل الـ فيس بوك)، لا يعرف الغرب الكثير عن من هؤلاء، ولا ماذا يريدون. وهكذا عدتُ إلى سوريا لعشرة أيام، ليس كصحفي رسمي، ولكن كمديني يعيش في فنادق دمشق العادية، ويلتقي بأكبر عدد ممكن من الناشطين السوريين.

ترجمة/ علاء البشبيشي

المقال بالإنجليزي

The Stalled Revolution

On a Monday in late February, I received a Facebook message from a Syrian activist notifying me that a demonstration was due to start in half an hour in a heavily guarded section of Damascus. The occasion was a funeral, and so the protest was likely to be large. "Two of the five martyrs are children, and funeral processions for children are always big, " the message explained.

I took a cab to the Kafr Sousa district, an area that is home to many government buildings, and walked for 20 minutes, until I came upon about 75 casually dressed men toting machine

guns. These were the shabiha—the plain-clothes, pro-government militia who have taken the lead in suppressing the rebellion. Their presence suggested that I was headed in the right direction. I followed a barely perceptible trickle of young people down a residential side street. Old men stood around nervously, as if waiting for something to happen. A boy of about ten came darting up the middle of the street, his face partly obscured by a hoodie. “Allahu Akbar, ” he shouted as he ran. I fell in behind him and, after passing another line of heavily armed men, there it was: a nondescript mosque with several thousand ululating mourners huddled outside. The body of a twelve-year-old boy was being held aloft on a wooden board—he had apparently been shot by the army during a previous protest. I could see no Western journalists or anyone from Syrian state television. Locals had clambered on the back of a disused truck and were shooting footage on iPads and digital recording devices. When I took out my phone to take a picture, however, a masked man approached and suggested that I put it away. For a time, the shabiha looked like they might not let anyone leave. Eventually, however, the funeral procession began to move, with a group of teenagers at the front. A bearded man told me that this was common: Young people “have more energy than us, ” he said, “so they take the lead.” I approached a nattily dressed young man in his mid-twenties wearing a beret and a cardigan, and introduced myself as a journalist. “Have you Coke and onions?” he replied. This response was not as nonsensical as it sounded: When the demonstrations are targeted with tear gas, protesters rub Coca-Cola into their eyes and use onions to take care of the acrid smell. The young man, Mohammed, told me as we walked that the demonstrators were shouting to the child, “Your father said, ‘Hold your head up high, ’” and to his parents, “We are all your son.” At funerals, he explained, mourners avoid political statements so as not to provoke the army or the shabiha. A single mention of Bashar Al Assad could provoke a hail of bullets. He warned me that, if anything happened, I shouldn’t run forward or backward but tear off down a side road. “You can’t get arrested, ” he said. “You are going to be our voice. ” As we marched through narrow streets, people congregated on their porches and balconies to watch and pay their respects. The adults were stony-faced, but the children were smiling, and one or two were dancing. A group of boys began pounding hard on the iron grille of a closed shop front, but Mohammed, who seemed to double as an informal steward, shooed them away. The owner, he explained, was suspected of working with the secret police: “We can’t give the government the slightest excuse. If we so much as light a fire, they will come for us. ” Five minutes later, they did. A brief funeral oration was read, during which the crowd stood perfectly silent. Shortly afterward, it tried to push forward and the shabiha charged. Everyone dashed for cover; Mohammed and I raced down an alleyway. After about 100 yards, we looked

behind us and saw no one was following. We emerged at an incongruously pristine shopping mall,
and I invited Mohammed for coffee.

This was my third trip to Syria. I first visited in October 2010 and again in November last year. This time, I was particularly eager to meet the young activists who are the heart of the movement against the Assad regime. Three out of five Syrians are under 25, and, beyond the lazy clichés about a new “Facebook generation,” there’s little understanding in the West of who they are and what they might want. And so I came back to Syria for ten days, not as an officially sanctioned journalist but as a civilian—living in ordinary Damascus hotels and meeting as many Syrian activists as I could.

I HAD BEEN NOTIFIED of the funeral procession by a young woman named Nadia—a sassy, fast-talking 21-year-old student at Damascus University. (I’ve changed the names of some of the activists with whom I spoke.) She’d shown up for our first meeting wearing a glamorous white hijab and a plastic raincoat. Nadia seemed well-to-do—her parents, she told me, were comfortable but not rich—and she spoke in perfect, American-accented English. She refused my offer of coffee. “In the coffee bars, someone’s always listening,” she explained. So we walked to the nearby Ummayyad Mosque and sat down outside.

Nadia had been involved with the anti-government movement for less than two months. She’d been quietly sympathetic to the protesters when demonstrations first broke out across Syria last March. But she hadn’t joined in, because of the horror stories about the way the Syrian regime treats female political prisoners. Then, in December, Arab League observers had arrived to monitor the regime’s treatment of the opposition. Baathist supporters of the Assad government decided to organize rallies to demonstrate their strength. One was planned for Damascus University; those who didn’t want to take part were ordered to leave the campus. Nadia told me that a friend of hers stayed behind and was raped by a shabiha. Not long afterward, Nadia went on her first protest.

Since then, she has become accustomed to the threat of violence. She told me almost matter of factly about one demonstration she’d attended in a district called Mezzeh—about 20,000 people gathered amidst falling snow. (Footage of this rally can be seen on YouTube.) Without warning, the shabiha opened fire. “I hit the ground immediately,” Nadia told me. “Most of the bullets went above our heads. I could hear them whizzing past.”

Together with a group of fellow students, Nadia helps organize demonstrations. She would occasionally send me cryptic text messages inviting me to check my Facebook account, where I would find directions to protests. Her texts tended to arrive at the last minute: The pervasive security presence in Damascus means demonstrations are frequently organized on the fly.

Her group also coordinates the delivery of medical supplies to beleaguered opposition strongholds like Homs, where activists fear hospital employees will turn them in to the authorities. Their caution is justified: In February, a report released by the U.N.'s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights found that security forces "systematically arrest wounded patients in State hospitals...to interrogate them, often using torture." The report also noted that sections of two hospitals had been converted into "torture centers, " where security agents "chained seriously ill patients to their beds, electrocuted them, beat wounded parts of their body or denied them medical attention and water. "

As we sat talking outside the mosque, a posse of shabiha wandered past in green khakis, handcuffs jangling from their waists. Some appeared to be barely more than teenagers. But Nadia was more concerned by a pudgy, bearded man holding a camera and staring in our direction. "Secret police, " she said. Nadia estimated that one in four Damascenes have some kind of relationship with the sprawling Syrian security state. In March, documents allegedly leaked from the Syrian security apparatus and published by Al Jazeera noted that 1, 000 security staff were deployed around the Ummayyad Mosque alone. (The day after I met Nadia, I discovered that the secret police had been asking questions about me. "State security. They wanted to know who you were and who you'd been meeting, " a man told me. "It's normal, but be careful. ")

Nadia suggested there might be fewer prying eyes in the mosque, so we removed our shoes and walked inside. Nadia belongs to Syria's Sunni Muslim majority. The political ruling class, however, is dominated by Alawite Muslims, a minority offshoot of Shia Islam. Nadia told me that her opposition cell contains both Christians and Alawites as well as Sunnis, but all the same, she is eager to see a democracy with a Sunni coloring. And, like many Sunnis, she sees a conspiracy in Assad's apparent invincibility. She's convinced, for example, that Barack Obama and the Israelis are working together to keep Assad in power.

It wasn't long before Nadia lost her faith in the possibilities of a peaceful revolution. In the middle of December, Syrian opposition groups called a national general strike. Everything duly closed down in rebel strongholds like Dara'a, but participation in the main cities—Damascus and Aleppo—was patchy, either because of passive support for the status quo or because people were simply afraid. Nadia became deeply angry—at the government, but also at her fellow Damascenes, many of whom

have been quietly keeping their heads down during the uprising. "How can they just sit around in coffee bars and enjoy themselves, pretending all this just isn't happening?" she demanded

المصدر: موقع الإسلام اليوم، نقلاً من :
<http://www.tnr.com/article/world/magazine/102110/syrian-revolution-fsa-assad-protest-torture>

المصادر: