

**BBC WORLD SERVICE - THE HUB, 13 July 2012, 18:00 MET**

### **Interview of Lyce Doucet with Nikolaos van Dam**

*Lyce Doucet:* Well, now live from The Hague will be joining us Nikolaos van Dam, the author of *The Struggle for Power in Syria*.

Nikolaos van Dam, you have looked for years now at the power struggle in Syria. Can you see any way out of this worsening crisis?

*Nikolaos van Dam:* I am afraid it will remain extremely difficult. There will be no possibility, or a way out without stopping of the violence. I think Kofi Annan should have the maximum of support to at least try to achieve a peaceful solution, but it seems more likely now that there [will be] more violence, more civil war, and that in the end there will be a full scale bloody confrontation. But it will take some time, because the opposition does not really have the arms, but they [nevertheless] have occupied various villages, which have subsequently been attacked by the regime, which is much stronger. The regime is in a quite strong position. There is not much possibility, for the time being, that people who are really essential to the [power structure of the] regime will be defecting. For the time being, it looks as if it is going to be more and more bloody. The international community will ask for perhaps a kind of intervention, which will be blocked most probably by Russia and China, because they do not want to be drawn into another war, as happened in Libya.

*Lyce Doucet:* And what long term damage is done by these killings? There have been so many massacres, and this latest one in al-Traymasah is being regarded as the worst. They have been described as sectarian killings and with allegations that the *Shabbiha* militia are involved.

*Nikolaos van Dam:* Well, in fact, it is almost by definition sectarian, because the regime, the armed apparatus, like the *Shabbiha* and others, they are almost only [composed of] Alawites. And this village, al-Traymasah in the Ghab valley, this is, I think, a Sunni village surrounded again by Alawi villages, like also was the case in al-Hulah.

There are many accounts to settle in the future. It is not just this year or the year before, but it [has been] for tens of years that the people in Syria have been suppressed severely. So, there are a lot of accounts to be settled, which is going to happen if the opposition gets the possibility to do so. It is not THE opposition, because there are a lot of civilian or peaceful opposition [groups], but since the Free Syrian Army is getting more and more active, they will not be stopped. They have been provoked into violence and they have nowhere to go, so for them there is no way to have a peaceful end to this story.

*Lyce Doucet:* Nikolaos van Dam, thank you very much for joining us with your assessment from the Hague, veteran Dutch diplomat and author of *The Struggle for Power in Syria*, which goes on.