

# بشار الأسد

בשאר אסד (שם זמני)

## Bashar al-Assad (Temporary name) – Art Exhibition

Why did we decide to choose the character of Bashar El-Assad (“Assad Jr.”) as the antagonist of this art exhibition?

Assad Jr. is most definitely the current “It dictator.” His image is intriguing yet puzzling, a young ophthalmologist who parachuted out of nowhere to take his father place, instead of his older brother Bassal, the designated successor who died in a car accident. Upon his election, there were high hopes and expectations within Syria and the West for change, progress and enlightenment, after decades of a harsh tyrannical regime. Those hopes stood in strong contrast to the positions taken by military experts who predicted that any attempt at change would fail given the opposition within the ruling Syrian elite.

Under Assad Jr.’s rule, and with the undercurrent of the Arab spring rising up, Syria has found itself amidst a brutal civil war in which it has attempted to repress its opposition through violence and the use of weapons of mass destruction. Although the noose is tightening, Assad Jr.’s has managed to avoid international sanctions, and is alive, kicking, and still killing.

The images of the bodies of Syrian civilians who have become victim to the use of non-conventional weapons have served as a brutal reminder of our history of injustice and violence. It is these images that have stirred world-wide emotions and generated calls-to-action from various governments and relief organizations. These images have also solidified Assad Jr.’s place in history as a villain and war criminal. Be that as it may, this had no effect on Israel’s approach in the international political arena. Officially, the state of Israel chose to restrain itself and look to the other way.

These images have raised challenging humanitarian questions as to whether anyone really cares when Arabs kill Arabs in a land that has no Oil or McDonalds, particularly where it is difficult, if not impossible, to really know what is going on in Syria. In the case of Israel, Syria is not a remote exotic country, but rather a neighbor, albeit one who, because of the war and the politics of war, Israel does not understand, nor has it sincerely tried.

Art, in and of itself, does not offer solutions to bloody conflicts such as the war in Syria. Rather, art elicits questions and presents dilemmas that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. By using Assad Jr. as the subject of an art exhibit our hope is to ignite a lively discussion among contemporary urban artists—a group who may or may not be discussing these types of issues.

Our goal is not to set up yet another pop art exhibition, that revolves around cynical, kitsch and colorful cliché images of the latest dictator but, rather, to exhibit a brave and direct expression of opinions, opposing indifference.