

Al-Assad's inner circle

Power in Syria is concentrated in the hands of President Bashar al-Assad, his brother and various aides, most of whom are related to the president or are members of his minority Alawite community



Asef Shawkat ▲

Deputy chief of staff of armed forces
President's brother-in-law. Formerly among Syria's top security chiefs but sidelined in last several years. Preliminary UN report implicated him in 2005 killing of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri



Maher al-Assad ▲

Republican Guard chief
Assad's brother controls Presidential Guard and Fourth Armoured Division – backbone of state's security. Reputedly violent and emotionally unstable. Thought to have helped persuade Bashar to end talk of reform



Rami Makhoulf ▲

Assad's cousin, controls

Syria's mobile phone network, two banks and owns large firms in construction and oil sectors. Analysts claim no foreign companies can do business in Syria without his consent

Jamil Hassan
Head of Air Force Intelligence
Seen as elite agency of Syria's intelligence empire

Hisham Ikhtiar
Director of National Security Bureau
Co-ordinates Syria's intelligence agencies, initially ordered to quell protests

Hafez Makhoulf
Head of GSD in Damascus
Opposition says he has more influence over Assad than Ali Mamluk

Ali Mamluk
Head of General Security Directorate
Civilian intelligence service plays key role in quelling internal dissent

Mohammed Dib Zaitoun
Head of Political Security Directorate
Monitors organised political activity

Zuhair Hamad
GSD deputy head
Played key role in campaign of arrests of opposition figures in months leading up to unrest

Abdul Fatah Qudsiya
Head of Military Intelligence
Ensures leadership's personal safety and loyalty of army

Mohammed Nasif Kheirbek
Deputy vice-president for security affairs
Key role in Syria's relationship with Iran

Rustum Ghazali
Head of Military Intelligence in Damascus Countryside
Allegedly involved in repressing dissent in Deraa

Ali Habib Mahmoud
Minister of defence
Army sent to major centres of unrest ▼

