



## The Assad emails


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# How do we know the Assad emails are genuine?

It is impossible to rule out the possibility of fakes in the email cache, but several pieces of evidence suggest they are authentic

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## Why does the Guardian believe the emails are genuine?

The cache of 3,000 emails passed on by a source in the Syrian opposition reveals a wealth of private information - including family photographs and videos, a scan of the president's identity card and a birth certificate belonging to a family member - that would be difficult for even the best resourced hoaxer or intelligence agency to

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## What has the Guardian done to verify the emails?

The Guardian has contacted 10 people whose emails appear in the cache. All have confirmed the time and content of the emails or refused to deny they are genuine. People contacted include Thomas Nagorski, ABC News's managing director of international coverage, [who emailed Sheherazad Jaafari](#) while trying to arrange an Assad interview with Barbara Walters, and Sir Andrew Green, Britain's former ambassador in Syria. Two of Green's messages feature in the email haul: one, dated 6 October 2011, was to Assad's father-in-law; the other, dated 26 June 2011, was to members of the British Syrian Society. Green confirmed that the emails were genuine. Also copied in was Lord Powell, Lady Thatcher's former foreign policy adviser and one of the society's trustees. Asked about the email, Powell said: "It sounds familiar but no time to search my records."

Asma al-Assad used the email address [ak@alshahba.com](mailto:ak@alshahba.com) and is believed to have used the pseudonym Alia Kayali when ordering expensive designer goods from Britain. All four British suppliers mentioned in the emails and contacted by the Guardian confirmed that the email exchanges were real.

The Lebanese businessman Azmi T Mikati - a friend of Asma al-Assad who features in many of the emails - refused to deny the veracity of the emails when contacted by the Guardian despite being offered the opportunity to do so. Only one figure, who asked not to be named, said he did not recognise a mail from himself that appeared in Assad's inbox, though he acknowledged that he had sent a number of emails that appeared in a different string. [The Guardian](#) also made attempts to contact Wafic Said, the Syrian-born businessman and philanthropist, who features briefly in the email trail, and Hussein Mortada, a pro-Iranian businessman whose emails appear in the cache, but neither returned calls.

The Guardian also consulted Abdul Halim Khaddam, the former interim president of [Syria](#), now in exile in France, who was unable to confirm the authenticity of the emails. In other cases the Guardian has checked facts set out in the cache. In one email, a partner at a law firm suggested to one of the extended Assad family that he demand a published apology over an article about him.

The partner informed his client in another email that the apology would be published that day, and the newspaper did so, including much of the exact wording demanded.

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## What is the evidence that "Sam" is Bashar al-Assad and that "AK" is Asma?

There are several email conversations in which "Sam" and Bashar are clearly identified as the same person. In November, for example, Hadeel al-Ali, Assad's press assistant, emailed sam@alshahba.com [about an interview Assad had given to a student activist](#), Hussam Arian, six months earlier. She attached a picture of Arian with Assad, and screenshots of [the student's Facebook page](#), which featured the article. She said to "Sam": "I took many shots of the page of Hussam Arian and the article he wrote about you."

Another email to the address from Asma relates: ["Fares closed all your twitter accounts!"](#) Fares Kallas is Asma al-Assad's assistant, and other emails in the chain show that he had [asked Twitter to close several fake accounts](#) purporting to belong to Bashar.

In Asma's case, there are a host of emails sent between ak@alshahba.com and Asma al-Assad's family which offer compelling proof. Many emails sent to "ak" from her family begin "Hi Asma", and one of her family's email header lists ak@alshahba.com as Asma Akhras, Asma al-Assad's maiden name.

There are many other examples of family members sending affectionate emails to Asma at the "ak" account. On 21 November 2011, one of her brothers sent her photos of their father's recent birthday party, with the subject line "Dad's birthday 2011". The photos show Asma together with identifiable family members standing in a kitchen. The brother also circulated the photos to her other brother.

## Could a third person be using either of the accounts?

Emails from the "ak" account sometimes sign off with "Alia". Syrian opposition activists say this is Asma borrowing the name of a company secretary, Alia Kayali, who works at al-Shahba's London office. They say the real Kayali had no access to the "ak" account. The Guardian has been unable to contact the real Alia Kayali to verify this, but it seems unlikely that such an intimate email account would be available to an underling. In a conversation with her friend Sheikha al-Mayassa al-Thani, the daughter of the emir of Qatar, Asma was asked if al-Thani could pass Asma al-Assad's private "ak" email address to the wife of Turkey's prime minister, who wanted to get in touch. Asma al-Assad replied four days later: "I would prefer

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## Why does the Guardian believe it is justified in publishing private correspondence?

We believe a number of disclosures, including evidence of Assad taking advice from Iran and receiving detailed briefings on the situation in Homs, are of clear public interest. Given the nature of the Assad regime's brutal crackdown on the Syrian people, we believe the more detailed picture of the workings of Assad's inner circle that emerges from the mails, and the extent to which he and his wife have managed to sustain their luxurious lifestyle, are also of public interest. The Guardian did not solicit the material.

We have chosen not to publish personal information, including photographs and video footage belonging to the wider Akhras family, that does not relate to the activities of the first family and the way Syria is governed. We have redacted details of third parties in the emails we have published online and in print.

## What does the Syrian government say?

When the passwords to 72 email accounts in the Syrian ministry of presidential affairs were published by hackers in February, state TV dismissed the hack as a joke and a "childish game". They denied that sam@alshahba.com was Bashar al-Assad's private email. Syrian officials contacted by the Guardian have refused to comment.

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