Drew McAward

Arab Spring Speech

As someone who did not know much about the Middle East, I was very intrigued by Bassam Haddad 's speech on the Arab Spring. He spoke of the Syrian uprising and the regime that is in place at the moment. Bassam pointed out the large gap between the upper class and the rest of society that exists in Syria. Because of this authoritarian government, the populations in these Arab countries became frustrated and were left to do little other than revolt. As one country began rioting, a domino effect of the discouraged majorities in neighboring country occurred, because of the cultural, geographical, and political proximity of this area.

In Syria, the same regime has ruled for 4 and a half decades. In the 1980s, the state attempted to adopt socialistic policies in a market economy, at the expense of many. By the late 2000s, more than 7,500 people were killed in the continuous uprisings. These uprisings started in the countryside and are still strongest in the rural regions of Syria, which strongly contradicts the average life in Damascus, the country's capital.

Bassam Haddad, after a student's question, made it clear why this regime has not been uprooted. He spoke of the strong unity between everyone in the regime and the lack of agreement throughout all of the minority groups, saying that the Syrian society is anything but homogenous. By constantly pushing the minority groups away from one another, the regime manipulates society, leading to these uprising stalling because of an inability to unite as one voice.

In his opinion, one must think twice about instantly believing in U.S. involvement in Syria. Haddad pointed out that N.A.T.O.'s involvement in Lybia only drastically increased the death toll. Many Syrians are even unsure if they want a change of the regime, for fear that the next governing body will be worse.

Bassam's speech was highly entertaining, leaving me on the edge of my seat. Taking us away from our world, he put us in a world that we are completely shielded from, and therefore cannot truly comprehend. We live in a country where stability in the government is an afterthought and freedom is unquestionable. This speech gave me a view on the Middle East that was shocking, but at the same time, very entertaining and enlightening.