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The local situation in Syria

**Conference: Window of Opportunity or Collapse of a Region? -
Western Middle East Policies and Israel after the Deal with Iran**

22. November 2015

When the Syrian people tried to gain freedom, the totalitarian corrupt regime confronted them with cruel sectarian violence. The growth of Islamic Jihadist groups was also supported by neighbors and the Gulf States, who were afraid that movements for liberal rights and freedom would also be knocking on their doors.

The Syrian people is divided between those continuing to support the revolution (mostly poor Arab Sunnis, especially in villages and shanty towns) and those committed to the regime (Alawites and minorities, among them the rich corrupt class). However, the majority tries to stay out of the conflict by keeping silent or leaving the country.

This general situation became more complex through outside intervention, especially of Hezbollah and Iran, which brought the most fanatic international Jihadists to Syria and distorted the situation on the ground by a lot of propaganda and deception.

Now it is difficult to understand the situation, not only due to the ideological propaganda and the distortion of facts, but also because of external investment and intervention. Syria is in the middle of the world and the conflict uncovers the world's competition. I am afraid that the conflict in Syria might be a start for a third world war.

When we only look at the map and fronts we misunderstand the more complex reality. Hamah, as an example, perceived to be the most fanatic Sunni city, is still with the regime. Damascus and parts of Aleppo do not support the regime, Raqqa and Dairezzour do not support ISIS. A lot of Alawites who now support the regime do so because they have no other option. Idlip and Homs are not altogether a region of fanatic Jihadists. In general we can say: Syria is now under the occupation of gangs: gangs of the regime, Iranian militias, ISIS and other international Jihadists.

The military organizations are not stable, they change according to resources and support. That means that maps, names and statistics are not reliable. The situation is changing all the time, and any study can be proven wrong by the time of publication.

The needs of the Syrian people are like any other people's needs. The reaction of the people will be defined by the question, who will prevent further violence and how.

The violent suppression led to the creation of the local armed group named FSA. In the beginning the FSA included the majority of fighters. Sectarian behavior of the regime led to the establishment of the sectarian Islamic Jihadists. The Iranian intervention encouraged interventions by Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Russian assaults unified groups under the flag of AL-Qaeda. However, the main actor is still the regime, who bears all responsibility. What remains constant is the will of the regime to continue fighting by all means and also the will of the people to be free and independent.

The Syria regime depends on a big army and armed securities, also militias related to the Baath party (called public militia). The regime also got used to create and cooperate with gangs who supposedly are enemies. These gangs can do anything they want without assuming any responsibility. Among them are Islamic Jihadists as ISIS or Palestinians like Fateh al Islam, Kurds as PKK, Shiites as Hezbollah, Alawites as Shabbiha and Druze.

The regime looks like the director of different gangs in Syria. However, the failure of the Syrian state is not new. The failure in establishing a patriotic political system and the rule of law is old, and did not start because of the revolution in 2011, which had only one aim - knocking down the walls of prisons. (الشعب يريد اسقاط النظام).

It is wrong to look at the sectarian militias independently from the regime. The Sunni Jihadists became sectarian in reaction to the sectarian massacres of the regime. The main conflict in Syria is between the regime and the people. Any initiative for peace that does not recognize this will fail and only extend the conflict, as happened in the last weeks in Vienna.

The military opposition is composed of two main groups:

- 1- Local military groups (free army), classified as moderate, because they are independent, patriotic, not ideological. Because of that, there are complaints about the lack of organization and support. The external support until now goes to the Islamists via the Muslim brotherhood, which is most welcome in Turkey and Qatar. They rule the coalition and the ousted government and all the institutions of the opposition until now.
- 2- Ideological Jihadist groups, which have good indirect support from the outside or have their own resources, behave as states or emirates of war. All of them are violent fanatics using terrorism, but also defend the people from assaults of the regime: I mean the Al Nusra Front and its sister organizations Jaish al-Fatah, Jabhat al-Shamiah, Jaysh al-Islam and Ahrar ash-Sham. ISIS is different, it is more independent and more violent against the people; it came from Iraq and behaves like an occupation force in Syria as do Hezbollah and the Shiite militias, PKK and the similar groups.

To classify the members of these fanatic groups we have three categories:

- 1- 10% who refuse to fight under any other flag, most of them are outside volunteers.
- 2- 30% who accept to leave their organizations under special conditions (for logistic supports for example). This group represents the Syrian fanatics. However, half of them became fanatics only recently, because of the massacres and war.
- 3- 60% who work with the Jihadists and are waiting for a time to leave it. They have different aims like the moderates, and changed their loyalties due to the circumstances. The situation is different in the south because of the influence of Jordan and Israel. I have visited Israel and still encourage them and Jordan to continue helping in the south.

When we search for a moderate opposition we have to bear in mind the total collapse of the Syrian society (political structure, institutions, civil society) because of the war, of occupation, terrorism, emigration and displacement and the fact, that there is no democratic representation of the people. **In these circumstances** it is impossible to find a legal or acceptable representation for Syrians now. What is needed is a long term investment in administration and organization. It is important to bear in mind that regional influence will continue to help the fanatic ideology.

The forces we see now do not represent the Syrians. The Alawites are not represented by the regime, the Shiites are not represented by Hezbollah, the Kurds are not represented by the PKK, and the Sunni are not represented by Al-Qaeda or ISIS.

All these forces got their power due to the problems, the real Syria can only be seen in besieged areas inside and in the refugee camps outside. Democratic Syrians like me find themselves dismissed from their homes.

There is a strange coalition consisting of international security agencies and other interest groups. These groups have conflicts, and there are conflicting interests among different agents (Qatar and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). The Jihadist groups also don't represent the will of the Syrians and neither does the criminal tyrannical regime.

Whoever thinks we have to let the fanatics exhaust each other, does not take into account that they get more powerful and spread their influence during that time. What is lost with the time is humanity, the basis for our society and our security.

The widespread ignorance and corruption, the absence of the rule of law and legal authorities leads to a more and more criminal and cruel culture, especially in the new generation. All of this proves that time is against us. As time goes by, the humanitarian price we pay gets higher and higher.

No magical solution can be found in Geneva or Vienna; however there is no way to work with the criminals in building a new legal system, there is no wisdom in recycling the regime and no wisdom in working with the corrupt opposition.

We need to start working in defined areas and build new democratic entities, and support them in order to expand to other areas.

It is very important to create safe zones in the south and north and help the people to return and reinstall their own lovely Syria. In this way, the whole region could find a new way away from criminals and crimes, establishing a new order on the basis of the will of the people and not on the basis of foreign armies, using the power of life instead of the power of death.

This is the only way that will make us say one day that the blood of Syrians was not spilled in vain.

22 November 2015

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