

Syria: The Downward Spiral of Desolation

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Destruction of a street in Aleppo, Syria. [File photo]

15th March this year marked the beginning of the fifth year of the civil war in Syria. With all the brutality that has been witnessed over the last four years, it seems that the reasons behind the build-up of this bloodshed have become lost in the violence itself.

The people of Syria were initially inspired by a desire for change and political reforms under the influence of the Arab Spring. In their quest for a better future, they engaged in largely peaceful demonstrations against the decades-old and oppressive Ba'ath regime. Their motive was to reject the Assad regime that had long denied them any of the freedom and dignity that every human being deserves.

In this quest, what started as a spark of hope for a better future turned into a nation devastated by war and reduced to rubble. Today, Syria has become a wretched country of ruined cities, towns and desperate people.

The fifteenth of March this year marked the beginning of the fifth year of the civil war in Syria. With all the brutality that we've witnessed over the last four years, we might have lost track of the causes of this civil war, horrifying in every sense of the word.

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As the Syrian war has now entered its fifth year, almost every news outlet ran stories covering the misery of the country and the ineffable human suffering it has witnessed. These are the horrific stories of people, even children, who have to spend their daily lives under the shadow of sniper's bullets. In the cities we live in it is hard to imagine

a child being shot dead in the nursery school where he is taken care of; but in a city like Aleppo, it is not a remote possibility to witness a five-year-old being killed while playing in the nursery playground. [1].

The children of Syria have experienced what no child in this world should ever have to. Helicopters hovering around, explosive-packed barrel bombs, fighter planes, missiles, artillery; these are the things they see on a daily basis instead of toys or playgrounds. Little babies' sleep is disrupted by falling bombs. Sometimes their parents grab them in frantic haste, being forced to flee on foot to nearby villages.

In most cases, there is no escape from a barrel bomb, a rather crude improvised explosive device. It is constructed from large oil drums, water tanks or gas cylinders filled with scrap metal, nails and high explosives.

Assad's forces routinely carry out barrel bomb attacks during which an average of 250 kids each month lose their lives. In the Cobar region of Damascus, medics have had to operate on little children with no anesthesia. In the cities, there are tens of thousands of homeless crammed into the rubble of bombed-out buildings.

Every statistic, every figure, every photograph of Syria and its people are heart-wrenching. Across Syria, there are scores of missile strikes and bombings on a daily basis. Around 210,000 people killed, 1.5 million civilians seriously injured, at least 200,000 detained, 2400 reportedly missing:10.9 million people have been displaced. [i]

Meanwhile, human rights abuses are rampant on all sides of the Syrian Civil War. War crimes committed by the Assad regime - which takes place before the very eyes of the world and thus leaves no room for doubt - have been documented by reports and photographs. In a country where the police force and law enforcement have long since ceased to exist, petty crimes also constitute a major problem for civilians in towns and cities.

What was once a home to a texture of cultures, ethnicities and faiths has been entirely shattered in these past four years. On these lands, the Sunni, Shiite Muslims, Christians, Kurds, Alawites, Yazidis and many other communities making up the social fabric of the country used to co-exist in peace for centuries. However the war has torn apart the various sects and communities and turned once-friendly groups against one another, making things even more complicated and difficult.

There is also another aspect of the Syrian conflict. Outside Syria there are three million refugees who try to survive in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan. In these camps, each day brings a fresh challenge to making ends meet. After having gone through unspeakable afflictions they could only make it to these camps where they now live virtually destitute in difficult conditions. Meanwhile a generation of young Syrians has grown up unschooled with only minimal access to information, thus leaving them susceptible to being radicalized.

Syria has become synonymous with human tragedy in the early 21st Century. The worst part is that it seems to have no end. However, until stability is established, the international community must recognize its responsibilities. In this sense, at least our conscience must not fail us in providing the necessary aid to those affected by this brutal, ongoing war.

[1] <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/in-aleppo-all-i-think-about-is-how-my-family-will-survive-shelling-starvation-and-the-snipers-bullet--but-we-are-still-the-lucky-ones-10107104.html>

[i] <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/03/left-syria-150317133753354.html>

Adnan Oktar's piece on Middle East Monitor:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/17801-syria-the-downward-spiral-of-desolation>

<https://www.harunyahya.info/en/articles/syria-the-downward-spiral-of-desolation-56725>