

A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT IN SYRIA

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Responsibility is on the leaders of Iran, Turkey, Russia and Syria to come together and make a decision regarding a joint military operation to eradicate active terrorist organisations which are a threat to Syria and the entire region

We yearn for peace in the Middle East but the Syrian Civil War is still at the top of the global agenda as many parties are actively involved. Our ultimate desire is to end this conflict, as far too many Syrians have suffered and lost everything they had. Turkey, along with Russia and Iran, have made significant efforts to stabilise Syria for some time. In this regard, they created the Astana Peace Process, which represents the most important initiative to date to end the conflict.

One of the main repercussions of the Astana Talks is creating de-escalation zones in Syria. Idlib was also agreed to be the fourth de-escalation zone in 2017. This Province is particularly important in the eyes of the affiliated countries for various reasons.

First, Idlib, which has a border with Turkey, is home to many armed radical groups, including ones transferred from Aleppo. These radical groups are to be contained in an area to prevent them from advancing to the Turkish border; Russian and Turkish troops have already been deployed in Idlib since the agreement. However, some violations have been determined in the zone that has put the process into jeopardy. If the situation in Idlib is solved, the process will continue unabated.

The responsibility lies on the shoulders of the guarantor countries that have to show great effort to keep this process alive along with the contribution of Turkey. Recently, there have been some drone attacks on Russian military bases in Syria which apparently took off from the region controlled by Turkey, but later Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a phone call to clear the situation.

In a statement, Putin said, "There were provocateurs there, but they were not Turks, we know who they are. We know whom and how much they paid for these provocations." It is important for these countries not to fall into the games designed to put them at loggerheads. The leaders of these countries have always put the integrity of Syria at the forefront and have always overcome the ruses of other countries that are disturbed by this unity since the beginning of this process.

The Russian Center for the Reconciliation of Warring Parties in Syria reported that violations of ceasefire were recorded in the Provinces of Idlib and in the suburbs of Damascus. The Russian military stressed that the cessation of hostilities is the only opportunity for a solution in the country.

Turkish President Erdogan rightly sees the terrorist corridor of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)/Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) as the most dangerous threat on our border. The prospect of a Western-backed communist state in the region is a risk not only for Turkey, but for all the countries of the region, including Russia.

With the Euphrates Shield Operation, aimed to remove the Islamic State (IS) from the region, Turkey managed to prevent the PYD from connecting the two cantons of Cobane and Afrin on the Syrian-Turkish border.

Then, with the declaration of the de-escalation zones, Turkey deployed its troops in Idlib so that the PYD was blocked from the south to move further down into Syria. On January 14, Turkey retaliated in kind to the harassment fire of the PYD. President Erdogan stated the next day: "In the coming days, god willing, we will continue with Afrin to purge terrorism from our southern borders. We will eradicate the separatist terror group that has cost the lives of our 50 thousand people in the past 34 years."

The PYD's efforts to legitimise itself as the so-called representative of the Kurds, with the aim of terrorising the Syrian people, must not be allowed whatsoever. A terrorist organisation cannot be the representative of any people, nor can it be allowed to hide behind its so-called veil of legitimacy.

It should be noted that the PYD does not represent the Kurds: On the contrary, this terrorist group has brutally oppressed the Kurdish people and destroyed any Kurd in opposition to their views. They have caused great suffering for the Kurds living in the region, killing thousands of religious Kurdish people; thousands more have taken shelter in neighboring countries to escape the persecution of the PYD.

Despite this tragedy, the US has kept on arming the PYD and is now planning to declare it as a federation inside Syria along the Turkish border. Even though President Trump promised not to supply more weapons to the terrorist group, the Pentagon acted otherwise and flow of arms has continued. Even a delegation of executive officials, headed by Max Martin from the US Department of State, paid a visit to Northern Syria to meet with PKK/PYD top officials. The members of the

terror group told the American officials that they sought the establishment of a federal system in Syria.

It is an open secret that since the First World War, the overall policy has been to keep the

Middle East under control by dividing it into smaller parts. Today, many circles discuss re-drawing the borders in the region and the current pawn being used to break up Syria and redraw its borders, is the PKK.

According to the plan, after Syria's fragmentation, Turkey and Iran will follow suit, and a vast area of conflict will be created that stretches as far as Russia. The basic Turkish policy to preclude this possibility lies in preserving the territorial integrity of the Syrian state and Syrian lands.

To this end, it is crucial that the Turkish Government officially recognises the current Syrian

Government and state as legitimate bodies, because if there is not a sovereign Government in Syria, then it would provide an opportunity for the PYD/PKK to be legitimized.

This is what the circles that use the PKK as a pawn are trying to achieve: Leaving Syria without a state, turning the current Government against Turkey and the neighboring countries and taking advantage of the resultant power vacuum to build a communist terror state that would be under their control.

Since the Syrian Government is currently not recognised, many other parties want to attempt a land-grab for their own benefits. However, if Turkey contacts the Syrian state and recognises it as a legitimate state and if the Syrian Government convenes its Assembly and announces that it expects support from the alliance of Russia, Iran and Turkey, this plan will be completely foiled. Russia is in a unique position to set up the required stage for this step. The leaders of Iran, Turkey, Russia and Syria should come together to make a decision regarding a joint military operation to eradicate all the active terrorist organisations, particularly the PKK, which is a threat to the entire region.

Both presidential and parliamentary elections could be held after purging all the terrorist groups from Syria. When the region settles down, a democratic fair election in Syria would be possible. This newly-elected Government should seek solutions within the framework of diplomacy and understanding. The alliance of the three countries would produce fruitful solutions for the well-being of the Syrian people, who have the right to decide for their own future.

(The writer is a Turkish author)

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