

The International Political Changes on Syria

Ten years have passed since the Syrian War broke, which has become one of the largest and deadliest humanitarian crises in history. Political statements around the world accused the Assad regime of committing war crimes and announced their position against it. Many international reports have documented the violations that occurred in Syria, followed by dozens of resolutions that demanded this regime to engage in a political process based on steps that would stop the crisis.

But is the international community really serious in its position vis-a-vis the Syrian crisis, or could it change its position or reverse its policies providing changes in their political interests, even if these changes affect the Syrians and prolong their suffering?

Political steps towards the Assad regime

It is difficult to ignore many indications that show clear political changes, both in the policy of the international community or that of the US, towards the Syrian case. The changes began in the Arab arena a few years ago, when some countries such as Egypt and the UAE embraced the Assad regime's re-floatation and asked for its return to the Arab League, not to mention the preparation of some Arab countries to reopen their embassies in Damascus.

These efforts were responded by James Jeffrey – when he was US Syria envoy - when he said that “The UAE knows that we absolutely refuse that countries take such steps,” referring to the developments including the reopening of the UAE embassy in Damascus, further describing the move as a “bad idea”^[1].

This latest policy change is not limited only to the Arab countries. Something also changed in international NGOs. The World Health Organization (WHO) elected Syria as an Executive Board member for the Middle East, ignoring all the reports of the hospitals and medical facilities targeted by the Assad regime and how it prevents the entry of medicines and aid into areas besieged by its forces.^[2] WHO has found no shame in dealing with a war criminal who has targeted its facilities and staff. Moreover, it ignored the objections forwarded by Syrian and non-Syrian organizations that denounce this step.

In the same context, The United Nations Special Committee for the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples has elected, by acclamation, Syria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Bassam Sabbagh, as its rapporteur^[3]. This means that the very organization that is concerned about defending human rights has welcomed a country that has committed violations, war crimes, and crimes against humanity against its people, as one of their own.

On the other hand, Denmark Government's approach in repatriating Syrian refugees to Syria seems incomprehensible, especially since it considers that Syria has become a safe place as fighting has ceased in the country. But it ignored the fact that many refugees fled as a result of their political positions, which means that Denmark would only put these people's lives at risk by forcing them to return before a political solution can be found.

In its latest development though, US policy toward the Syrian issue has also begun to change after Biden assumed presidency. With the passage of the Caesar Law that is putting pressure on the Assad regime and its supporters, the American administration has lately begun to ease its grip on those on whom sanctions were imposed.

Furthermore, some American voices have begun to offer new policy options calling to tacitly agree that Assad - though a war criminal - can stay in power for the near term and give Syria triple of whatever financial aid Iran was giving the country if he kicks out the Iranian forces from Syria.^[4] This proposal, made by New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman, does not see any embarrassment in this suggestion. Even though Assad opposes human rights and supports a state sponsored terrorism, Friedman places America's interest above all else.

The political resistance campaigns

There is a political change that must be observed on Syria, especially with a Russian-led diplomatic movement that has been working to put pressure on global players to re-accept the Assad regime in accordance with Russian interests and gains. The Syrians must brace themselves for all scenarios and organize for political battles no less difficult than the military ones they were forced to take.

Syrians have many margins for their movement, especially if they understand how to exploit their cause the right way. They can launch an international campaign to mobilize public opinion against Assad's crimes, which can embarrass international governments in relation to what they think about how they deal or cooperate with a war criminal.

Syrians around the world have many stories and experiences, with thousands of videos documenting their suffering and lives which can be made into documentary films or human stories that show the hidden human relics caused by the regime's crimes. Turning their stories into art, music, films, series or books in many languages can contribute to create a solid public opinion that supports their human rights cases in the face of dictatorships' political efforts.

They can also establish many partnerships with human rights organizations to take their cases to international courts to punish those who were involved in such crimes.

It will not be an easy path to take, but it is not impossible, especially as there are a lot of evidence, witnesses, and events that have gravely affected people who have suffered from arrests, sieges or bombings, or were forcibly displaced, or experienced medical complications because of the medical supplies prohibition. The popular political resistance tools may be slower than states' political tools, but these tools still can have a profound impact on the consciousness of peoples if used properly.

[1] US singles out UAE over Assad rapprochement, warns of sanctions, TRT WORLD, 19/5/2020, <https://bit.ly/2SPI7dT>

[2] WHO Syria on Twitter, 28/5/2021, <https://bit.ly/3gSa5fQ>

[3] Syria's Permanent Representative to UN elected as Special Committee on Decolonization Rapporteur, SANA agency, 15/6/2021, <http://sana.sy/en/?p=237892>

[4] Tom Friedman's Latest Stratagem Is Having US Taxpayers Subsidize Syria's Assad, allgemeiner, 19/6/2021, <https://bit.ly/3gKrxEo>