

Southern Syria is in Desperate Need of Aid

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Brief Analysis

Day after day, the Iranian and Russian occupation forces supporting the Syrian sectarian regime apply a brutal scorched earth policy, destroying areas of Syria not under regime control and displacing the civilians who have withstood the earlier attacks of the regime over the years. This most recent assault, which began in mid-June, has used internationally prohibited ground and air weapons to ensure that there is no longer a safe area in the south of Syria for the Syrian people, whether they be opposition or civilians.

Now, we are raising our voices to the international community, searching for some respite from the attacks against us as forces push into Quneitra and Daraa. In the past week, more and more refugees have traveled to the edges of Syria to seek asylum in Israel and Jordan, traveling highways on foot in order to protect themselves. More than 350,000 people now stand on the Syrian-Israeli border, requesting the protection of Israel and appealing to the humanity of its citizens.

They are also looking for the protection of the international community established in order to prevent these atrocities: the United Nations Security Council, the United Nations more generally, and those states with international influence to put an end to Russian and Iranian aggression in Southern Syria. So far, opposition forces have faced negotiations mediated by Russia, an obviously biased participant.

While opposition forces, including the Southern Front, originally called for a ceasefire agreement mediated by outside actors, the pressures of the attacks forced them to negotiate with the regime under Russian guidance, which has little interest in holding the regime accountable to any promises reached in the ceasefire agreement. And while the regime and opposition forces reached an agreement on July 19, experience shows that the regime does not keep its promises to those it has conquered. As the regime has taken back territories, civilians who remain have lost their most basic protections, and any Syrian perceived unfavorable to the regime is arrested.

As a civilian with a history of dissident against the regime and aid to civilians in opposition-controlled areas, I have no expectation that these purported agreements will apply to myself, or to many of the other refugees who are currently stranded at the border. These refugees have arrived there because they believe that their two choices are to either cross the borders or be killed, yet the borders remain closed.

As Syrians without a government to protect us, we call for the opening of humanitarian corridors under the guidance of the United Nations into Israel so that the injured and displaced can find treatment. We call on the United Nations

to return UNDOF to its former deployment area within Syria in order to provide some protections to those trapped on the border. We call on human rights organizations to intervene and shelter the displaced, who have left their homes and now live in tents in an attempt to protect themselves from the advancing regime forces. We call on Doctors Without Borders to intervene in order to provide health assistance to the wounded victims of this war. These organizations exist in order to maintain the health and security of those who are not protected by their government, yet they are failing in their support of Syria's displaced citizens.

Meanwhile, the influx of Syrian refugees at the Israeli border is only increasing, and will continue to do so long as regime forces secure their control of Southern Syria. As a dissident who has worked to help secure aid from Israel, I can testify that we are grateful for this aid, yet we are frustrated that the borders remain closed to us as we face the destructive capacity of the regime on the other side. ❖

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