

I Have a Dream of a Democratic Syria

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Brief Analysis

It seems that more than five years of the Syrian crisis are not enough for a Syrian to say, “I have a dream!”

Fifty-three years ago, Martin Luther King delivered his famous speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom that gathered 250,000 people. Martin Luther King called for an end to racial discrimination in the United States, using his famous words: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character... I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.”

As a Syrian, the case of America makes me wonder why no one has appeared in Syria to scream, “I have a dream... a dream of a better future for my country and people... my country that has sunken into one of the cruelest and most hideous wars in the history of humanity.”

For over five years, I have not seen or heard one voice raised in a such a call for love and forgiveness. For over five years, Syrian journalists and activists have been competing to take selfies over dead bodies. For over five years, the words “crackdown accomplished” have accompanied pictures of the dead.

It has been over five years now, and every time we see a picture or a video of the limbs of dead children we still ask about their identity, ethnicity, and sect to decide whether to mourn or rejoice.

It seems that more than five years of the Syrian crisis are not enough for a Syrian to say, “I have a dream!”

It was the late Syrian writer and poet Saadallah Wannous who said that “we are condemned to hope.” So I, a Syrian citizen, declare that I refuse to live with nightmares. I have a dream. I have a dream that terrorism will be eradicated, and for this to happen the forces engaged in the fight against terrorism, in particular the People’s Protection Units (YPG), must receive continuous support.

The alliance between the U.S.-led international coalition and the YPG has proven to be serious and effective. After

Manbij was liberated and ISIS expelled from the area, the whole world saw how Syrians went back to their normal selves and usual way of life.

We did not see the same images when the Turkish army entered Jarabulus alongside the Islamic forces (the Nour al-Din al-Zenki movement, the Levant Front, Sham Legion, and the Sultan Murad Division). Many civilians living in Jarabulus said that ISIS was merely replaced with radical Islamist factions.

I have a dream that we, Syrians, will have a ruling authority whose members are chosen based solely on competence, not religion, sect, ethnicity, or gender. No official who lacks proper qualifications will be appointed to power for the sole purpose of maintaining a sectarian and ethnic balance.

Based on the competence criterion, all officials could be Christians, Muslims, Arabs, or Kurds. All officials could be men or women. People's faith in their leadership would guarantee that citizens will not object to such appointments as long as competence is the sole deciding factor. Religion, sect, ethnicity, and gender-based power sharing has proven to exacerbate rather than solve problems, as seen in Iraq. In spite of a Kurdish president, Shiite prime minister, and Sunni speaker, these groups are still missing a sense of stability and belonging. Power-sharing increased the isolation and mistrust of each component.

These dreams, along with a civil, democratic, decentralized, and citizenship-based country, can only come true if the balance of political powers is readjusted. A broad trans-sectarian and transnational alliance must also be established away from the "pro-government" and "opposition" appellations that have become repulsive in the current disaster. Many projects were aborted because their patrons cared more about their opposition status than the success of that project, as if this term would grant them forgiveness.

The success of this alliance rests first on the support of marginalized groups, the so-called silent class. Patrons of this alliance must be able to appeal to this silent class to turn it into an effective group that acts as a real protector and guarantor of the country. Second, it needs the support of the international community. The fight against terrorist organizations in Syria – which is essential for a successful political solution to the Syrian crisis – can only be fruitful through joint international efforts. Establishing peace and security in Syria is a moral duty set forth by all international charters.. How can the world lead a normal life with an ailing heart?

Rezan Haddou is a Kurdish Syrian political writer, analyst, and human rights activist. ❖

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