



Policy Analysis /

## TWI Series on Syrian Safe Havens/Zones

by [Fabrice Balanche](#), [Lt Col John R. Barnett](#), [Anna Borshchevskaya](#), [Nicholas Burns](#), [Soner Cagaptay](#), [Michael Eisenstadt](#), [James Jeffrey](#), [Col. Nora Marcos](#), [Nadav Pollak](#), [David Schenker](#), [Andrew J. Tabler](#)

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### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



#### [Fabrice Balanche](#)

Fabrice Balanche, an associate professor and research director at the University of Lyon 2, is an adjunct fellow at The Washington Institute.



#### [Lt Col John R. Barnett](#)

Lt Col John R. Barnett, an officer in the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) and also an Air Force Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS), was a 2015-16 visiting military fellow at The Washington Institute.



#### [Anna Borshchevskaya](#)

Anna Borshchevskaya is a senior fellow at The Washington Institute, focusing on Russia's policy toward the Middle East.



#### [Nicholas Burns](#)

Nicholas Burns is a professor at Harvard University and former undersecretary of state for political affairs.



#### [Soner Cagaptay](#)

Soner Cagaptay is the Beyer Family fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute.



#### [Michael Eisenstadt](#)

Michael Eisenstadt is the Kahn Fellow and director of The Washington Institute's Military and Security Studies Program.



### James Jeffrey

Ambassador is a former U.S. special representative for Syria engagement and former U.S. ambassador to Turkey and Iraq; from 2013-2018 he was the Philip Solondz Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute. He currently chairs the Wilson Center's Middle East Program.



### Col. Nora Marcos

Nora Marcos, a colonel in the U.S. Army, was a 2015-16 visiting military fellow at The Washington Institute.



### Nadav Pollak

Nadav Pollak is a former Diane and Guilford Glazer Foundation fellow at The Washington Institute.



### David Schenker

David Schenker is the Taube Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute and former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.




### Andrew J. Tabler

Andrew J. Tabler is the Martin J. Gross fellow in the Geduld Program on Arab Politics at The Washington Institute, where he focuses on Syria and U.S. policy in the Levant.

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**Understand the policy implications of humanitarian safe havens, safe zones, buffers, or no-fly zones in Syria with these assessments of the who, what, where, why, and how of the various options.**

## **Intervention to Assist Fleeing Syrians: Who, What, Where, Why, and How**

 *Col. Nora Marcos*

Establishing humanitarian corridors, safe havens, safe zones, or buffer or no-fly zones could turn the tide of Syria's humanitarian crisis, but it could also pose numerous complications and create second- and third-order effects for the region.

## **Establishing and Securing Safe Zones in Syria: Historical Lessons**

*John Barnett and Michael Eisenstadt*

Experience in Iraq, Bosnia, and Libya shows that safe-zone operations require unambiguous legal authorities, clear political and military guidance, robust air and ground forces, and a viable plan for displaced persons and refugees.

## **The Israeli Perspective on Safe Zones in Syria**

*[Nadav Pollak](#)*

Despite the potential benefits of a safe zone along the Jordan-Syria border, Russia's presence in the war would probably limit Israel's ability to openly support or contribute to such an initiative.

## **A Safe Zone in Southern Syria**

*[David Schenker](#) and [Andrew J. Tabler](#)*

As the Assad coalition and the Islamic State turn their attention southward, Jordan and the thousands of displaced Syrians waiting outside its border face an increasingly perilous security situation.

## **How to Prevent al-Qaeda from Seizing a Safe Zone in Northwestern Syria**

*[Fabrice Balanche](#)*

Strong ground support for moderate rebels would be needed to keep any buffer zone in the northwest from falling under the control of al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate.

## **Kerry Neither Rules Out nor Supports Safe Zone Concept**

*[James F. Jeffrey](#)*

The assertion that such an effort would require up to 30,000 U.S. troops, and that it could risk a direct confrontation with Russia, requires a much closer look.

## **Two Potential Safe Zones in Northern Syria**

*[Fabrice Balanche](#)*

Both Idlib province and eastern Aleppo province have been relatively spared from the fighting, and their rural communities remain strong.

## **The First Step Should Be to Create Buffer Zones in Syria**

*[Andrew J. Tabler](#)*

Any safe zones would need to be secured by the military forces of Syria's neighbors, such as Turkey and Jordan, as well as by U.S. air and ground support.

## **Safety First in Syria**

*[Anna Borshchevskaya](#)*

However difficult it might be to implement safe zones after years of inaction, the humanitarian disaster will only grow without them, as will the threat to regional and European stability.

## **A Turkish 'Secure Strip' in Syria: Domestic Concerns and Foreign Limitations**

*[Soner Cagaptay](#) and [Cem Yolbulan](#)*

Although Ankara has the necessary parliamentary authorization and professional military capacity to establish a safe zone, it would still need Western intelligence help, air support, and diplomatic backing to cover the operation and deter Russian retaliation.

## **Legal Justifications for a Safe Zone in Syria**

*[James F. Jeffrey](#)*

UN Security Council Resolutions 2170, 2249, and 2254 offer ample grounds for establishing a zone to protect refugees and counter the Islamic State, but shaping the international diplomatic response would be paramount

given the legal gray areas inherent in such action.

## Countering Russian and Assad Regime Responses to Safe Zones

*Anna Borshchevskaya*

For such zones to succeed, they must be backed with militarily enforced no-fly zones and a persuasive response to Moscow's inevitable small-scale violations and disinformation campaign.

## The Diplomatic Case for America to Create a Safe Zone in Syria

*Nicholas Burns and James F. Jeffrey*

The potential risks of inaction -- including thousands more civilians killed, millions more refugees, the spillover of fighting into Turkey, Jordan, and Israel, and a Russian-Iranian military victory -- greatly outweigh the dangers of moving forward.



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THE  
WASHINGTON INSTITUTE  
*for Near East Policy*

1111 19th Street NW - Suite 500  
Washington D.C. 20036  
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