

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

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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.

This piece is part of a TWI [series on Syrian safe havens/zones](#).

Of the critical global challenges faced by the Obama administration in its final year, Syria may be the most confounding. The brutal Syrian civil war has reached a crisis point, with more than 250,000 dead and 12 million Syrians homeless. The cancer of this war has metastasized into neighboring countries and the heart of Europe. It could destabilize the Middle East for a generation.

We believe that President Obama can no longer avoid providing stronger American leadership to reverse this tidal wave of suffering and violence in the Levant. U.S. strategic interests and our humanitarian responsibilities as the world's strongest country dictate a change of strategy, as well as of heart, in Washington. As former career diplomats, we believe diplomacy is most often effective when it is backed by clarity of purpose and military strength. Those have been noticeably absent in U.S. policy toward Syria. For that reason, the administration should take steps to reinforce U.S. strength in the difficult negotiations ahead in Geneva. Most important, we believe the Obama team will have to reconsider what it has rejected in the past: the creation of a safe zone in northern Syria to protect civilians, along with a no-fly zone to enforce it...

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