

Terror - The Islamic State, or the main reason for the millions of refugees from Syria?

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The vast majority of television programs, articles and so called experts talking about millions of refugees from Syria have the same discourse: the problem is the Islamic State (IS). Some even say that we should coordinate with the Assad regime and its allies Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran to resolve and end the problem of the IS and therefore refugees. Without being surprised by these statements, I'm still a little disillusioned.

To be clear, the IS is an ultra reactionary and barbaric organization, killing and terrorizing whole populations of all religions and ethnicities. This ultra reactionary organization forced into exile hundreds of thousands of people, and probably even more than one million, between Iraq and Syria [\[1\]](#). This movement must be fought relentlessly, like other religious fundamentalist organizations of the region such as Al Qaeda and other jihadist and Salafist forces backed by Gulf monarchies or private networks of these countries, but before reaching the solution against such organizations, I would like to simply remind some facts about the reasons for the exile of millions of people from Syria.

Firstly, the establishment of the IS in Syria was in Autumn 2013 and already before that millions of Syrians were displaced outside and inside the country.

On September 3, 2013, the UNHCR declared that the number of Syrians forced to flee as refugees in foreign countries since the beginning of the popular uprising in Syria in March 2011 had exceeded the threshold of two millions. This meant an average of about 5000 Syrians fleeing on daily basis to neighboring countries. Over 97% of Syrian refugees were hosted in countries located in the surrounding area. In addition, some 4.25 million people were displaced within Syria, according to statistics dating from August 27, 2013 published by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Taken together, these figures totaled more than six million displaced people.

The reasons that prompted millions of people to flee their homes were the Assad regime that killed, bombarded and repressed large parts of the Syrian population who had risen against its tyranny and barbarism. Here are some examples.

In October 2012, the entire Al Masaa Arbaeen's neighborhood in the city of Hama, whose inhabitants were seen as favorable to the opposition of the Damascus regime, was destroyed. 3256 buildings in total were completely destroyed.

In May 2013, the historic pedestrian bridge over the Euphrates in the city of Deir Zor was bombed by the Syrian regime. It allowed to access the city of Hasakeh. Its destruction deprived of access tens of thousands of people.

In July 2013, in the city of Homs, called the capital of the revolution at the beginning of the uprising, in which some 900,000 people were living at the beginning of 2011, 60-70% of Khaldiye district was

destroyed, most the houses were uninhabitable, the neighborhoods of Old Homs were in ruin and destruction of the besieged neighborhoods of Homs was done in a systematic way, according to the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights. The city was under siege and bombardment of the regime's forces since February 2012.

From the end of summer 2012, the regime began to bomb certain neighborhoods of Aleppo.

The Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk in Damascus has suffered a hard and strict siege imposed from summer 2013, with the prohibition of movement of persons and foodstuffs, to the neighborhoods that joined the uprising South of Damascus, by the Assad regime and Palestinians organizations linked to the latter, in particular the Popular Front of the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC), controlled by Ahmad Jibril. There was between 15 000 and 20 000 people in the camp in November 2014, before 2011 Yarmouk had a total population of 250,000 people.

This is not to mention the massive use of rape by the security forces and militias of the regime against the female opponents and civilians and others or the chemical attacks of the regime against some regions such as in the countryside of Damascus region, Ghouta, in August 2013.

But what about after the establishment of the IS in October 2013 in Syria? Was this still the case? Yes absolutely, let's look at the facts for the first six months of 2015. The helicopters of the Assad regime dropped 10.423 barrels bombs on various regions of the country, while the regime forces killed almost 90% of the total civilians dead over the same period, seven times more than the IS.

In March 2015, human rights defense NGOs investigated the terrible atrocities of the regime: almost 13,000 Syrians have died under torture in its jails since the beginning of the uprising. Tens of thousands more are still languishing in the regime's prisons, and many are missing.

In May 2015, around hundred people, mostly civilians, were killed in a raid of the Syrian military aviation on a market in the city of Douma.

Barbarism has many faces in Syria and that of the Assad regime is the worst. The Assad regime and its allies (Iran, Russia and Hezbollah) are responsible in its vast majority of the more than 200 000 people killed in Syria and of the around 10 million of external and internal refugees since the uprising began in March 2011.

Conclusion

So what is the solution? The solution does not lie in the collaboration with authoritarian regimes like the Assad regime. The solution is of course to oppose the IS and other reactionary and jihadists forces, which as a reminder the Assad regime has encouraged their developments at the beginning of the popular uprising in Syria while killing and repressing democratic and progressive forces, but also and especially the barbaric, criminal and authoritarian regime of Assad. The Assad regime is the main responsible of the disaster in Syria and of the exile of millions of Syrians. Both actors are barbaric and they feed themselves and are therefore to be overthrown to hope to build a democratic, secular and social society in Syria and elsewhere.

This requires the support of democratic and popular movements that oppose these two counter revolutionary forces and different forms of imperialism (United States and Russia) and sub-regional imperialisms (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey) that are all fighting against the interests of the people in struggle in the region. These activists still exist in Syria struggling every day, despite all the difficulties, against the Assad regime and the Islamic fundamentalist forces [2]. For example, let's also consider the case of Iraq, the country in which the IS originated. In recent weeks a popular

movement developed and expanded, which challenged the regime in Baghdad, backed by Iran. These massive demonstrations called for a secular state in opposition to a sectarian state, against the division between Sunni and Shi'a populations, for women's rights and equality, and clear condemnations of sectarian political parties. The demonstrators also accused the sectarian Iraqi regime to be partly responsible by its policies for the development of the IS as we could read on some placards saying "the parliament and the Islamic State are two sides of the same coin" and "Daech was born out of your corruption".

Beyond the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, we do not forget the negative role of the imperialist Western states in this situation. The racist and security policies of the European Union (EU) on migration are also responsible for the daily dramas of refugees on the roads, land and sea, to Europe. The policies of the border closure pushed hundreds of thousands of people fleeing war and misery to use illegal and dangerous means to try to reach European countries. Just as we need to condemn the imperialist policies of the EU and the war caused by this latter responsible of political and economic problems that are also the sources of displacement of populations and therefore of creating more refugees.

It is with this understanding that we can get out of the nightmare of dictatorships and fundamentalisms of all kinds and especially enable millions of people to have a dignified and free life.

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P.S.

* Syria Freedom Forever. Posted on September 9, 2015 :
<https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2015/09/09/the-islamic-state-or-the-main-reason-for-the-millions-of-refugees-from-syria/>

Footnotes

[1] See articles on this blog that has always condemned the Islamic State or other religious fundamentalist organizations in the region.

[2] See many articles and posts on this blog that show this popular resistance.