THE SYRIAN REVOLUTION

CAUSES & RESULTS

More than a decade after the start of the revolutionary movement in Syria, given the devastation the country has suffered at all levels and the ongoing human tragedies, it is important, as we have stressed before, to find a solution to the Syrian crisis that will save the country and make it a decentralized, pluralistic and democratic state that guarantees the rights of national and religious components, as well as the political, economic, social and cultural rights of all citizens, groups and individuals without any discrimination based on race, gender, religion or language.

The Syrian revolution has gone through many difficult stages, has been diverted from its path of liberation, and has created a distorted reality that runs counter to the aspirations of the Syrian people for freedom, dignity, and democracy. Due to this tragic reality that the Syrian people have experienced, the Syrian Democratic Council considers it important to make a comprehensive assessment of the stages that the Syrian revolutionary movement has gone through and to seek solutions on an objective basis, away from the exclusionary mentality and the illusion of victory, and to focus on the common constants based on the unity of the country, sovereignty, rights, freedoms and political pluralism.

The popular revolutionary movement that began in March 2011 soon spread to all Syrian territories, from Daraa to Al-Qamishli, as the protesting masses demanding freedom and dignity were met with bullets and inhumane treatment by the Damascus government security services that showed the brutality of the tyrannical regime unprecedented in the modern era. Regional and international interventions led to the militarization of the revolutionary movement, in which bloody events unfolded and the country became a theater for proxy wars, the rise of extremism and sectarianism, the perpetration of crimes, attempted assassinations, arrests and kidnappings outside the law.

In this initial phase, the government in Damascus released extremist Islamic leaders from their prisons to reinforce the impression that there was no mass revolutionary movement but jihadist terrorist organizations, in conjunction with regional and international interventions aimed at arming the revolution and changing its peaceful path. This enabled the dominance of political Islam over the Syrian opposition and contributed to the emergence of organizations with a non-national extremist Islamic ideological background, such as Jabhat Al-Nusra and Ahrar Al-Sham, up to the terrorist organization ISIS. This completed the description of counterrevolution in its ugliest form.

The regional and international interventions and their support for the opposition, which was shaped by political Islam, served the regime's claims of portraying the revolution as extremist and sectarian on the one hand, and on the other hand led to the authority of Damascus being saved from collapse.

The Syrian revolution turned into a counterrevolution and a struggle for power between the regime and the Islamist political opposition, and the legitimate demands of the Syrian people for freedom and dignity were pushed off the political stage. Syria became a theater for the struggle of regional and international powers, and their agendas were carried out by some of the Syrian parties themselves. As a result, Turkey occupied about 15% of Syrian territory. The civil war resulted in the death of more than half a million people, the displacement of more than half of the Syrian population, and the destruction of more than 70% of the infrastructure.

For these reasons, the Syrian Democratic Council believes that it is necessary to evaluate the results and consequences of the Syrian revolution and regroup the ranks of the national democratic opposition within a participatory structure that believes in a unified and realistic vision for a political solution to lead the country to a better future at all levels. The Council believes that Syria urgently needs a national solution that will end the political, social, and economic crisis and turn the country into a democratic, pluralistic political system that guarantees the rights of Arabs, Kurds, Syrians, Assyrians, and the rest of the Syrian people, and considers freedoms and human rights as the constitutional basis for them. Since Syria is a state with many cultures, ethnicitfies, religions and sects, a decentralized system is the best solution for the administration of the state. The experiences of similar nations and countries have shown that decentralized regimes achieve sustainable development in resource management and preserve civil peace and national unity.

In order to achieve a political solution in Syria, it is necessary to agree on a social contract that makes the principles of the common homeland, democratic republic, component rights and free citizenship its foundations, as well as a democratic national constitution that represents the will of all Syrians and guarantees civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in accordance with the two international covenants of the United Nations.

Causes of the Syrian revolution

First, the subjective causes:

1. The authoritarian, repressive regime: The Arab Socialist Baath Party in Syria, since its coup in 1963, consolidated the idea of the leading party for the state and society, taking the nationalist ideology as a basis and establishing a centralized repressive regime led by a mafia family network, strengthening the security agencies and suppressing freedoms and political life.

2. The end of politics: Political life in Syria has come to a standstill since the Al-Baath coup against the government, and the various social groups in Syria were not allowed to form truly influential parties, which weakened political life in general, as many political leaders were sent to prisons and detention centers and some of them were exiled.

3. The crisis of identities: The Syrian regime has worked for 50 years to create a homogeneous identity that denies differences and diversity based on a single nationalism, a single language, a single religion, and a single science, and based on a nationalist ideology that is the same as the fascist regimes that existed at the beginning of the 20th century. A large part of Syrian Kurds were deprived of Syrian citizenship and racist policies were implemented against them. The Ba'athist regime consolidated identity divisions in Syria and worked to create a distorted national identity that did not express the diversity of the Syrian people. Syria remained without a pluralistic national identity that encompassed ethnic, national, cultural, religious and social diversity.

4. The economic situation: Despite the socialist slogans propagated by the Baath Party, state capitalism was introduced during the rule of Hafez al-Assad, making large segments of Syrian society poor. When Bashar al-Assad introduced formal reforms in the name of openness and neoliberalism in the early 2000s, the gap between sections of Syrian society widened, and poverty and unemployment increased, leading to an exodus of Syrian workers abroad. Development was concentrated in some cities, while rural areas did not develop, leaving Syrian communities with more responsibilities than before.

5. The social situation: The Syrian regime's policies have reinforced the division between the different parts of Syria at the level of identities and regions and have produced sectarianism and extremism within Syrian society. The policies of repression, cultural isolation and lack of freedoms have led to the emergence of a society without politics and culture.

6. The structural crisis of power in Damascus: The Syrian regime is a system based on tyranny, centralization, and a security state that does not accept political pluralism, freedom of expression and organization, or decentralization of state administration as in the developed countries of the world. Added to this is the integration of corruption, nepotism, and illegal acts into the structure of Syrian State institutions. All these factors have led to the Syrian regime suffering from a permanent structural crisis and have made the country what we are now.

Second, objective causes:

1. The end of the Cold War era: After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the war on terrorism in Afghanistan, the occupation of Iraq, and the expulsion of Syrian forces from Lebanon, it became clear that the world was ruled by the United States of America, with no parallel force in the international arena. This destabilized the geopolitical balance in the Middle East and prepared the chances for Western intervention and legitimized the idea of using force to change authoritarian regimes, posing a threat to them and increasing the possibility of popular uprisings demanding change.

2. The Arab Spring (the Spring of the Peoples): The initial spark of the Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia, quickly spread to most Arab countries. The Arab regimes in Egypt and Tunisia changed, and the revolution in Libya and Yemen turned into a civil war, as did Syria, which has not ended to this day.

3. The traditional Nation-State in the Middle East: After the end of the Cold War era and the American leadership role in the world, it became clear that many traditional nation-States have become an obstacle to the liberalization of markets and the application of neoliberal concepts, as the American intervention in Iraq was an indication of the beginning of the collapse of the traditional nation-state form in the Middle East. The process of transition in the form of the traditional nation-state in the region continues to this day.

Deviation of The Syrian Revolution's Path

In the early years, the Syrian arena became a scene of regional and international conflicts, the political and military opposition was divided, and the Syrian territory was in general chaos. The revolution turned into a civil war, extremist terrorist organizations emerged, and Syria's human, material, service, and economic infrastructure was destroyed. The opposition, which is characterized by political Islam, bears the responsibility for deviating the revolution from its path, just as the Syrian regime bears the responsibility for eliminating it, which brought the two parties with common goals together to create the counter-revolution.

We believe that the deviation of the path of the Syrian revolution is due to the following reasons:

1. The Syrian regime's intransigence and its refusal to accept reforms, changes and a domestic solution, as well as the adoption of a military and security solution as the only option to eliminate the popular movement from the beginning and drive it to arming and counter-revolution.

2. The absence of an effective leadership capable of overseeing the process of change and democratic transition, for many reasons, the most important of which is the lack of a correct vision of the Syrian reality and its future prospects, as well as the absence of strategies and plans to develop this movement, which has turned it into a complex crisis.

3. The abandonment of the power of the opposition, which allowed the Syrian sovereignty to be controlled by external interventions, until the external parties became the decisive factor and in many cases the only control in the management of the crisis, so that the interventions became countless and the sources of funding were numerous, with these sources being able to use the Syrian arena for fighting and serving their strategic and tactical interests.

4. The control of the extremist and terrorist armed Islamic groups that operate on the Syrian stage according to the plans of some regional countries.

5. The international intervention in favor of the opposition and the regime, on the one hand, and the conflicting interests of these countries in Syria, which have turned the country into an arena for regional and international conflicts, on the other. As a result, the Syrian crisis was internationalized and the political decision in Syria was not made by the Syrians.

6. The control of political Islam over the Syrian opposition and its dominance over the centers of international support for the opposition.

7. The division of the opposition militarily and politically, and there is no political program and unified leadership of the opposition that could represent the demands of the Syrian people for freedom, dignity and democracy.

8. The absence of representatives of the real forces of Syrian society at the international negotiations in Geneva. In addition, the lack of seriousness of the international community to end the crisis and find a political solution.

9. The dependence of the parties of the Syrian opposition on the Turkish decision and its acceptance to support them in Syria and to help the Turkish State to occupy parts of the Syrian territory.

The consequences of the Syrian revolution

At the political level:

1. The inability of the international community to find a political solution to end the crisis in Syria and turn the country into a democratic state as defined by UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

2. The weakness of the Syrian opposition due to the lack of a real representation of the democratic opposition forces active in Syria.

3. The lack of representation of the democratic forces active in the political process in Geneva and in the committee drafting the Syrian constitution.

4. The low importance of the Syrian dossier in the priorities of international actors and the maintenance of the Syrian situation as a sphere of influence.

At the socio-human level:

1. The difficulty of agreeing on a comprehensive Syrian national identity.

2. The increasing intensity of sectarian division, social division, and loss of trust between the different parts of the Syrian people.

3. The spread of poverty, the low standard of living, the increase in unemployment and crime, various forms of illegal business, child labor, the increase in violence against women, the emigration of young people abroad, and the loss of cohesion and belonging to the Syrian identity.

4. The deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, with more than 90% of Syrians living below the poverty line. According to the United Nations, there are about 6.9 million internally displaced persons, and more than 14.6 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

5. Tens of thousands of detainees in prisons and detention centers, in addition to those abducted and forcibly disappeared.

At the economic level:

1. The collapse of the economic infrastructure and the damage to the productive, agricultural and vital sectors.

2. The warlords' control of the market, the spread of illicit work, money laundering and illegal financing.

3. The exodus of artisans, industrialists and traders from the Syrian market.

4. Foreign control over the Syrian economy and the elimination of local and national capital.

5. The destruction and theft of factories, weakening local and national productive capacity.

6. The depreciation of the Syrian pound and the Western sanctions imposed on the central bank.

7. The spread of the phenomenon of external financing and political money aimed at making local forces serve their agenda.

At the level of military security:

1. The spread of armed Islamic groups and jihadist organizations linked to Al-Qaeda and the ISIS terrorist organization in Syrian territories.

2. The spread of cross-border sectarian groups and militias linked to the agendas of regional countries.

3. Iranian and Russian military intervention and support for the Syrian regime.

4. The intervention of global coalition forces to fight ISIS in Syria.

5. Turkey's occupation of parts of Syrian territory and establishment of permanent bases in northern and western Syria.

6. The armed groups and the Turkish occupation forces have committed crimes against humanity by forcibly relocating the local population in Afrin, Serekaniye and Tal Abyad and by demographic changes.

7. Some armed groups have turned into mercenary groups on demand, fighting in Libya, Azerbaijan and other places.

8. The division of Syria into three spheres of influence: the areas under the autonomous administration, the areas under the control of the authority in Damascus, and the areas under Turkish occupation.

The forces of the revolution and the Syrian opposition:

The historical Syrian political forces, personalities, and parties have not been able to lead the Syrian revolutionary scene because they were not qualified for the stage and in many cases were disconnected from reality, as all the political parties that were formed after the Syrian movement began were not able to bear the necessary responsibility. They have not been able to establish a political program that unites them and makes them a force for radical and comprehensive democratic change in Syria. This has allowed intervening forces and transnational organizations to change the path of the revolution.

The Syrian Democratic Council

The Syrian Democratic Council is a national democratic framework composed of social and political forces and independent figures who accept its documents. It is open to all political organizations and personalities to assume their responsibilities for saving Syria and realizing the aspirations of the Syrian people for comprehensive democratic change, gender equality, justice and establishing a system that expresses the national project. The Council was established on December 9, 2015.

The Syrian Democratic Council has worked on the project of unity of the Syrian national democratic opposition from the very beginning. However, the subjective and objective circumstances have not allowed it to achieve this goal so far, for many reasons:

1. The chauvinistic preconceived notions and attitudes that the authorities have solidified in the minds of a large part of Syrian society in Damascus.

2. The arrogant view of the Syrian political class on everything outside the framework of Arab nationalist concepts and the mentality of the central authorities.

3. The Islamist phenomenon that regional and international forces have helped to generalize, making political Islam the ruler of the Syrian scene.

4. The concepts and hostilities imposed by the Turkish occupiers on the Syrian opposition were a prerequisite for obtaining their support, as was the accusation of the separatist project against the Syrian Democratic Council.

5. The regime's and Turkey's promotion of the accusation of Kurdization of the Syrian Democratic Council and its departure from the Syrian national character according to the Syrians.

6. The weak communication between the democratic political forces and the inability of the Syrian Democratic Council to make its vision clear to all Syrians.

The Syrian transition

After reviewing the work of the past years and assessing the path of the Syrian revolution and the state of the national democratic opposition, the Syrian Democratic Council affirms that there will

be no solution in Syria unless Syrians themselves unite to find a solution for their country and rely on themselves to save Syria and achieve a better future for the next generations of Syrians. Today, the Council is working to revive this path and correct it through the project of unity of the opposition's visions and programs to achieve the goals of Syrians for freedom, dignity and democracy.

The international reality does not care about solving the Syrian crisis, which has been shown over the years through the internationalization of the Syrian issue and the control of its management by the interfering regional and international powers that pursue their own interests and agendas and work to create a conflict against the Syrians. Today, the State of Syria is experiencing the worst fate ever, as its sovereignty is constantly violated, large parts of its territory are under the control of the occupation, its territories are divided, its people are internally and externally displaced and its citizens live below the poverty line, and the authority in Damascus has increased its brutal security even more than before. A country facing severe Western sanctions and international and regional isolation, unable to perform the minimum tasks and functions of state institutions, from services to defending the sovereignty and dignity of the country and its citizens.

In light of this painful and tragic Syrian reality, the Syrian Democratic Council believes that all national democratic forces in Syria have a historic responsibility to intensify communication and work to correct the path of the Syrian revolution, despite all internal and external challenges. The Council believes that there is still hope and that these forces must overcome the situation of distance, division and lack of trust in each other and work together to develop a strategy and plan for a clear political solution to present to the Syrians, and the international community should adopt it and work on it after all official international channels that have been approved have failed. Since no political solution can be formulated with the same means and goals, it is necessary to start from the real reality of what the real forces are to achieve the goals of the Syrian revolution.

In the face of all these facts and challenges, there are no patent solutions to the crisis in Syria, and the national democratic forces have no choice but to choose between two options:

- Either they settle for the current reality and remain inferior to the non-national and undemocratic projects, thus bearing the responsibility for the risks and their impact on Syria.

- Or to unite and work on a unified vision and program, whose solutions should be clear in the councils of nations, and turn into a real body that takes responsibility for itself to carry out the process of transition and radical and comprehensive democratic change in Syria.

On March 15, 2022.

The Syrian Democratic Council

Contact :