

UNAC Statement on the War Against Syria

9/19/2018

The Syrian offensive against al Qaeda-held Idlib, the last of the strongholds of the so-called Syrian rebels, is on hold. Idlib was one of the earliest areas where violence emerged in Syria in the spring of 2011 when some “rebels” in the city of Jisr al Suger ambushed and massacred a group of soldiers who they had called to assist them. The area is populated with tens of thousands of foreign extremists who have come over the border from Turkey along with “rebels” that have been moved to the area as part of the reconciliation programs instituted by the government in other parts of the country as they were liberated.

Most recently, Turkish president Erdogan has moved Turkish militias and military units into the province as well. Regime change is the goal shared by the “rebels” and the US and its NATO and Middle Eastern allies such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Israel, as well as Turkey. Idlib is primarily governed by Hayt al Tahrir, the former Al Nusra Front, acknowledged by all to be the Syrian branch of al Qaeda.

Much of the original population of Idlib has fled to government-controlled areas. Christians have been driven out everywhere in Idlib and their homes are now occupied with fighters affiliated with Hayt al Tahrir and other “rebel” groups. The entire indigenous population of the Idlib city of Jisr Al Suger, a city on the Turkish border, has fled, and the city has been occupied by tens of thousands of Uighurs, imported from China with their families by Turkish President Erdogan to fight against the Syrian government. The Syrian civilian population has been greatly reduced but the western media calls the area, “heavily populated” to bolster their propaganda campaign alleging that the Syrian government is killing its own people.

Although much of the civilian population has left the area, the battle for Idlib will be a major battle and protecting civilians is a central concern. As Western governments claim that a genocidal slaughter is at hand, the Syrian government and their allies are facing fighters who have already rejected reconciliation once as well as many foreign fighters. Even so, the Syrian government is implementing humanitarian corridors to allow civilians to leave the area. This effort, however, requires cooperation from surrounding areas. Since Idlib borders Turkey and other US and Turkish controlled areas of Syria, instead of cooperation, the Syrians face threats from the US and its Turkish backers.

At a talk before the right-wing Federalist Society, US security advisor, John Bolton, said that if Assad uses chemical weapons in Idlib, there will be a response from the US, Britain and France that will be much greater than similar attacks from the US in the past. As if on cue, the US is now claiming that they have intelligence showing that Assad has approved the use of chlorine gas in the offensive to take back Idlib. In a recent report from the Wall Street Journal, we learn that Trump may now be ready to attack Syria, even if there is no allegation of chemical weapons use.

In 2013, the Syrian government gave up all of its chemical weapons to the UN Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), who destroyed them on US ships in the Mediterranean. Since then, unproven allegations of the use of chemical weapons continue to be published without question in the mainstream media. The US has twice retaliated against Syria with missile attacks before any investigation occurred. In every case, reputable sources have debunked these claims of chemical weapons use by the Syrian government following investigation. In every case, the claim that Syria is using chemical weapons has occurred in anticipation of some major victory by the Syrian Army in reclaiming “rebel” held territories. In every case, these “rebels” regularly shelled residents of nearby government held areas with mortars.

Idlib is the last major enclave held by extremist forces in Syria, and governed by al Qaeda. Russian and Iranian forces are lining up behind the Syrians to support them. The Russians are also engaged in a massive diplomacy initiative to neutralize the threat from Turkey. Turkey is a major threat. On the

one hand, Erdogan still wants to occupy Northern Syria. On the other Turkey has the challenge of dealing with hostile forces it has imported into Syria over the course of the war. The recent agreement between Russia and Turkey to create a de-escalation zone in Idlib attempts to address these issues. However, the situation is tense. US support for Kurdish militants in Syria and small pockets of ISIS fighters increase these tensions.

An escalation by the US and US allies in Syria at this time creates a very dangerous situation in which the US may confront Russian forces, which have moved 13 naval ships carrying missiles into the area in anticipation of a battle. Israel, which regularly bombs Syrian sites, recently destroyed a plane on the tarmac at Damascus International Airport despite the successful deployment of Syrian defense systems which limited the damage. The US has threatened Syria and moved military ships into the region. Recently, Israel flew F16s, bombing civilian sites in Syrian coastal cities in Tartus and Latakia near the Russian port and airbase. At the same time, a French frigate on the Mediterranean was also launching missiles at the Syrian coast. A Russian transport plane was accidentally shot down by Syrian defenses because there were Israeli F16s shadowing it. This is a very dangerous escalation.

The US had been intervening in Syria for several years before the Syrian government asked for Russian help. The US and US allies provide arms, training and even payroll to both local “rebels” in Syria and foreign fighters. Russia has provided training, advice and airpower to back up the Syrians, and also supported their reconciliation ministry, formed in early 2012. They have provided desperately needed civilian aid and used their air force to deliver it. Unlike Russia, the US has not been invited into the country, and its presence is a violation of international law. The US has been a proponent of regime change and social divisiveness within Syria, while blocking the delivery of aid that the Syrian people desperately need. Moreover, the US occupies nearly a third of Syrian land, which is lightly populated but is the location of significant resources the Syrians need to rebuild.

As Syria rids its country of imperialist supported “rebels” and foreign terrorists, we demand:

US and Israeli hands off Syria!

End the occupation of Eastern Syria!

Stop the bombing!

End the Sanctions!