

Questions Regarding Change in Syria

Circle Statement

Background

For the last several decades, Syria was under the dictatorship of the Ba'ath Party. The resistance that emerged against this dictatorship in 2011 involved several ideological trends and forces. These included liberals, regionalists, nationalists (Kurds), capitalists (investors), and Islamic groups. In general, these rebel forces were supported by the U.S. and France, while Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah opposed them. By 2013, the insurgent struggle had evolved into a military resistance. Liberal forces receded into the background, and capitalists (investors) struck a compromise with the Ba'ath Party. The military struggle was continued by the Kurds and Islamic Mujahideen. The Kurds enjoy the support of the U.S., while the jihadi forces have been supported by Turkey. However, it remains unclear what stance the U.S. adopted toward the jihadi forces. It is also uncertain what position the Muslim Brotherhood (which has a large presence in Syria and has ruled Syria in the past) has taken vis à vis these forces.

Current Situation

Jihadi forces have succeeded in the military struggle and the militants have also achieved some partial victories in their areas. We do not know what

precipitated the retreat of the Baathist army. The retreat has significantly benefited Israel, which has occupied Syrian territory of the Golan region and is destroying Syrian military installations. We do not know whether Israel intends a regional expansion of its war against the Palestinians. We also do not know about the role the US played in the retreat of the Ba'athist army and what is the nature of its relationship with the Jihadi forces. We also do not know whether the Mujahideen received battlefield intelligence through the American communication system or not.

Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic of Iran have been supporters and allies of the Ba'athist government since 2011. It is clear that the basis for this support is not sectarian as the Ba'athist government is not a Shia government. It has been a nationalist-neoliberal government whose dominant faction is Alevi. Alevis consider Hazrat Ali رضي الله عنه وكرم الله وجهه الكريم to be the incarnation of God and the ruling Twelver Shia scholars of Iran openly regard Alevis as unbelievers and misguided. Alevis make up less than one percent of the Syrian population.

Iran and Hezbollah's support for the Ba'athist regime is rooted in their anti-imperialist stance. Anti-imperialism has made Iran and Hezbollah the two most effective allies of the Sunni Palestinians, while

the so-called Sunni states (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Morocco, and Turkey) have not provided any military aid to the Palestinians. In fact all these countries except Turkey have generally designated Hamas as a terrorist organization and advocate for a two-state solution. The reality is that Sunni-Shia differences play no significant role in the mutual conflict between Muslim countries. This is just imperialist propaganda.

Today, world powers are trying to promote their interests in Syria. The U.S. and the European Union want to establish a constitutional democratic government that recognizes Israel. Russia is focused on safeguarding its established military bases. Iran and Hezbollah have expressed willingness to reconcile with the leadership of HTS (Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham). Hezbollah has urged HTS not to disengage from the Jihad in Palestine. Meanwhile, China remains silent in the Arab region and tolerating the U.S. advances. It is focused solely on confronting the U.S. aggression in the Pacific region.

The Future

Two key questions arise:

What type of government will be established in Syria?

If a democratic constitutional government is formed, it is highly likely that Western imperialist powers will prevail and the way for a reconciliation

with Israel will be paved. Syria will then align with the camp of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, and Morocco. But this is not necessary. After the establishment of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, a democratic government was also formed which included liberals and nationalists. Yet, while preserving a democratic constitutional structure, Islamic scholars eventually prevailed and the opposition to imperialism has continued.

Does HTS possess a leader like Imam Khomeini? Do the jihadi forces in Syria recognise the necessity of establishing the hegemony of the Ulema and Sharia Mutahara? Do they have the ability to sustain the kind of struggle that the Iranian Ulema waged from 1979 to 1983? They are not compelled to reconcile with the military, as Imam Morsi had to in 2012. But we do not know whether they will be able to oust the secular imperialist forces (from the positions of power and influence).

What is the military capacity of Syria?

Israel is currently launching direct attacks on Syria, and in the event of the establishment of a jihadi Islamic government, these attacks are likely to intensify. The leader of HTS recently stated, *"We have become exhausted during the prolonged resistance and are no longer able to sustain the struggle."* This suggests that HTS leadership finds itself unable to support the Jihad in

Palestine. Is this true? We do not know. Nor do we know if HTS intends to overcome this powerlessness. Does it view accepting Israeli-American domination as a temporary necessity or a permanent reality? The answers to these questions will determine Syria's role in the Jihad in Palestine.

Our Position

Two points are crucial:

We must not doubt the sincerity of any Islamic group and hence become part of imperialist propaganda. We regard all Islamic groups, including Iran, Hezbollah, HTS, their allies, and the Muslim Brotherhood, to be sincere. We do not view the ongoing conflict in the Arab world as a Sunni-Shia dispute but as a struggle between Islam and imperialism.

We are realistic, not idealistic. We do not construct idealistic frameworks. We take into account the temporal/spatial constraints of all Islamic groups. We understand that every Islamic state that will be established today will be an exceptional state surrounded by imperialist forces. Evaluating the actions of such a state against idealistic standards is unrealistic. Our longing is that a Jihadi state like Afghanistan or an Islamic Republic like Iran is established in Syria. However, we recognize that Syria's ground realities and potential constraints may

not allow this. Or maybe the establishment of a secular or non-secular state in Syria that has a greater potential for the protection of the Islamic way of life and continuing the struggle to establish the hegemony of Islam compared to what was available in the Ba'athist regime is all that can be realistically hoped for today. We do not know all this. *Thus, we should refrain from passing judgments and pray for all Islamic factions involved.*

Statement by our Study Circle
Translated from Urdu by Dr. Syed Z. Arshad