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Towards “Somalization”? Syria Swings between “Dialogue”, Chaos and Bloodshed

By Dr. Ismail Salami
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It is admittedly not hard to imagine how someone can predict a vision of hell in a country like Syria which has become a hornet’s nest of terrorism and which is tumbling into further chaos and bloodshed.

Lakhdar Brahimi, who represents the United Nations and the Arab League, has predicted as many as 100,000 people could be killed “in the next year as Syria moves toward Somalization and rule by warlords.”

Apart from his foreboding tone, his remarks are testimony to a broader gamut of interference at the hands of those who have infiltrated into the country from abroad. In point of fact, what is corroding Syria is not an internal unrest but a ‘foreign-made’ crisis.

The Syrian opposition group insists that the start of dialogue would be made possible only with the departure of President Assad and says that it would not be ready to engage in any dialogue with Russia without any clear agenda.

“If Russia has a proposal to stop the bleeding in Syria, it should submit it and we will respond,” Mouaz al-Khatib, head of the main bloc of Syrian opposition groups, has told Al Jazeera. “We can’t meet with the Russians without a clear agenda.”

In the meantime, Russia and Iran are playing pivotal roles in preventing a human catastrophe in the country and seeking to resolve the crisis through diplomacy.

After talks in Moscow on Saturday with Lakhdar Brahimi, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia could not press Assad to give up power. Besides, he has once again clarified his country's stance on Syria and said Russia "isn't in the business of regime change. He has repeatedly said, both publicly and privately, including during his meeting with Lakhdar Brahimi not long ago, that he has no plans to go anywhere, that he will stay in his post until the end, that he will, as he says, protect the Syrian people, Syrian sovereignty and so forth. There is no possibility of changing this position."

The implication is very simple. Russia does not want a regime change in Syria as there is supposedly no point in seeking such a solution. This policy is also strongly shared and seconded by Iran which has already set forth a six-point peace plan for Syria. Hossein Sheikholeslam, an advisor to Iran's Majlis speaker for international affairs has said that Tehran's six-point peace plan would be the only solution to the unrest in Syria and that no country should intervene in the internal affairs of the Arab country.

"The six-point plan presented by Iran is a very appropriate solution to the crisis in Syria because it has been prepared based on international principles."

The proposal was originally announced on October 14, when Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi submitted it to Lakhdar Brahimi during a meeting in Tehran.

According to Iran's six-point peace plan, the Syrian nation has the legitimate right to decide their fate and future through an internationally-recognized democratic process.

In brief, the plan urges:

- an immediate end to any armed actions;
- ushering in a UN-monitored democratic process;
- Damascus and the opposition to cooperate with UN and its special committee to stop armed operations especially in the residential areas to restore peace and stability;
- an immediate, serious and just distribution of humanitarian aids to Syrian people;
- the lifting of economic sanctions on the Syrian people in order to prepare the ground for the return of all Syrian refugees to their homeland;
- the resumption of comprehensive national dialogues by different opposing social and political parties and Damascus to rapidly form a national reconciliation committee in order to unanimously form a transitional government;
- a free and competitive election for the formation of a new parliament and senate and the composition of a constitution;
- the immediate release of all political prisoners from all parties by the government and opposition groups, and establishment of a competent court of justice to investigate cases of those who committed crimes in that country.

The plan also urges that media stop spreading wrong information about Syria.

Though a comprehensive plan which can technically and practically put an end to the ongoing crisis in Syria, it was looked upon with an eye of pessimism and cynicism by the opposition group in Syria.

In a statement, the Syrian National Coalition slammed Iran's initiative as a "last-ditch bid to save the regime of President Bashar al-Assad".

"As the free forces of the Syrian people accomplish one decisive political and military victory after another, the regime and its allies keep on launching lackluster and overdue political initiatives," said the National Coalition.

"The Iranian initiative represents one example of these desperate attempts to throw a lifeline to the inevitably sinking ship of the Assad regime," it said in a statement.

Despite all this, Syria says it will respond to any initiative meant to solve Syria's 22-month-old crisis through talks

While impertinently attributing the crisis in Syria to "the brutality and ruthlessness of ruler Bashar al-Assad and the family clique around him, and their supporters in Iran and Russia", an editorial on Washington Post which, evidently reflects Washington's policies, lashes out at the West for its "massive failure", and "particularly American leadership" and implicitly encourages the West's prompt action against the government of Assad.

After all, the materialization of a meaningful peace in Syria cannot and should not be pursued through irrational anger and abortive resort to any brute means such as hiring and infiltrating mercenaries into Syria, and psyching up public mind about the possibility that the government of Assad may use chemical weapons against its own people.

Instead of ignoring Iran's constructive and effective initiative to put an end to the bloodbath in Syria, the opposition group could have seized the chance, looked at Iran as a regional well-wisher and resolved the crisis in the country.

What is vitally important at this juncture in time is that a tragedy of immeasurably inhumane proportions is taking place in Syria and a rapid solution should be carved out before it's too late.

Indeed, Syria is by slow gradation descending into hell whose flames are devouring the innocent and the guilty alike and even on a more appalling scale as Mr. Brahimi has predicted, tens of thousands of people will die soon and as long as there is resistance to any peace-inspiring proposal in the country, Syria will inch towards an eventual Balkanization.