



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Policy Recommendations to End the Killing in Syria**

1. Re-engage and lead diplomatic efforts pushing for a negotiated settlement and leading to a political transition as per UNSC Resolution 2254.
  - a. Pushing full engagement and leadership in diplomatic processes to ensure the prevalence of the Geneva process rather than the Astana/Sochi process. The current constitutional committee in Geneva is actually part of the Astana process and is not part of the immediate steps outlined by the Geneva process.
  - b. Prevent an Assad military victory by increasing economic pressure and engagement in non-regime held areas through stabilization and governance support in Northern Syria. This will augment military operational costs for Assad's offensives, thus building deterrence to Assad's military moves.
  - c. Identify and use leverage to push Assad to engage in the political process and UNSCR 2254. Leverage includes ensuring long term strategy in Syria, increasing support for stronger and more stable civil governance in non-regime controlled areas, effectively acting as deterrence for Assad's military offensives.
2. Ensure security and stability in NW Syria (particularly Idlib). Civilians in Idlib are at the highest risk of mass atrocities and the situation in Idlib presents major risks to U.S. interests. These include: doubling the refugees in Europe, emboldening terrorist propaganda and recruitment, and further endangering coalition forces in the NE.
  - a. Uphold and protect the current ceasefire by supporting Turkey's efforts to protect NW Syria through the provision of logistical and intelligence support, as well as military-to-military conversations.
  - b. Work with European and NATO allies to establish a clear diplomatic stance outlining a zero tolerance policy concerning the Assad offensive against Idlib.

- c. Utilize targeted sanctions, including through the Caesar Act, to lower the Assad regime, Russian and Iranian capacity to engage in a military offensive in NW Syria.
    - d. Restart the stabilization fund and invest in independent civil society organizations and local civil governance structures.
  - 3. Allow cross-border humanitarian aid supplies into regions where they are needed.
    - a. Extend the UN authorization for cross-border aid through Bab al-Hawa, the only border crossing currently authorized for humanitarian aid. This authorization is set to expire in July 2021.
    - b. Push Russia and China to reopen the 2 border crossings that previously carried cross-border aid but were closed at Russia's behest: Al-Yaroubiyah, which has been closed since January 2020, and Bab al-Salam, which has been closed since July 2020.
    - c. Hold Russia accountable by using US leverage as a major humanitarian donor to the UN in order to ensure that all border crossings are and remain open. Russia's latest move is a deceit which overtime will aim to close all border crossings permanently and effectively starve non-regime controlled areas.
  - 4. Full implementation of the Caesar Act and other targeted sanctions aimed at protecting civilians.
    - a. Expand the Caesar Act implementation to go beyond previously sanctioned individuals, as a majority of those sanctions have come on entities and individuals that are already sanctioned.
    - b. Prioritize sanctioning individuals based on who is most actively responsible for the current violence against civilians, including detention and military mid-level personnel, over symbolic sanctions. These sanctions should act as a deterrence measure, targeting chemical weapons, detention facilities, business facilitators outside Syria currently providing fuel and energy.
  - 5. Addressing the release of the over 200,000 men, women and children detained by the Assad regime, including American citizens.
    - a. Establish a clear and strong stance emphasizing that the immediate release of detainees is non-negotiable, and will not be accepted as part of a negotiated settlement.
    - b. Politically and financially support the creation of a mechanism to account for all the missing and disappeared around Syria. There is currently no unified database or cross system data comparison.

- c. Use targeted and Caesar Act sanctions on anyone associated with the detention apparatus in Syria, as a deterrent for those working within the Assad intelligence and detention apparatus.
6. Ensure security and stability in N.E Syria (particularly Deir Ezzor).
    - a. Ensure that all democratic processes/structures of governance are free of corruption and are representative of the communities they serve.
    - b. Ensure inclusivity of all Arab and Kurdish actors into the structure of Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES).
    - c. Rid the AANES of PKK elements that have ties to Iran, Russia and the Assad regime.
    - d. Work towards an eventual bridging between NE & NW Syria politically and economically to leverage against the Assad regime, Russia, and Iran, opening up the possibility of a place where refugees can return and offering a stable and free alternative to regime-controlled areas of Syria..
  7. Resolve humanitarian crisis in Rukban.
    - a. Provide direct humanitarian aid from al-Tanf Garrison to those most vulnerable amongst the camp's 10,000 civilians. The UN, ICRC, USAID and State Department have all failed to provide direct aid to the people of Rukban due to the Assad regime and Russian siege of Rukban IDP camp. Jordan and Iraq have closed their borders to direct humanitarian aid to the camp.
    - b. Provide direct sustained humanitarian aid via the Al Walid road connecting Syria and Iraq by negotiating with the Iraqi government on potentially opening that border point for humanitarian aid.
    - c. Transfer the willing civilian population of Rukban to a non-regime controlled location.
    - d. Work through a US-led coalition based at al-Tanf Garrison to help facilitate the establishment of a hospital and educational facility that can cater to the camp's civilians. There are multiple NGOs able and willing to provide the manpower and funding, but they need logistical support and access.

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