

SYRIA POLICY OF CHP: A PATH TO PEACE

October 7, 2019



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While the war which has been going on in Syria since March 2011 produces new threats to the security of our region, it also keeps on creating negative impacts and causing damages on the security, economy, social peace and international position of our country. In other words, as Syria keeps bleeding, Turkey bleeds, too.

On the other hand, effects of the problems associated with the crisis in Syria have acquired global dimensions, going far beyond the boundaries of our region. The interventions and influences of regional and non-regional countries into Syria, the presence and actions of jihadist terror organizations in different geographies, and millions of refugees who had to flee their countries as a result of conflicts are some of the complicated global effects of the crisis in Syria.

The ruling party has made Turkey one of the primary responsible actors of the destructive war in Syria through its wrong policies insistently pursued since 2011 despite all the warnings. By sending arms to some non-state actors fighting in Syria and conducting military interventions on Syrian territories, through its partial and interventionist understanding, Ankara has blown the fire in our neighbor. By closing the channels of diplomatic communication with the Syrian Administration, the ruling party has destroyed its own room for maneuver and has been enslaved by its wrong decisions, chain errors of calculation and obsessions fueled by its adventurist and sectarian policies. AKP administrations have made their choices in favor of war rather than peace, leading to protracted conflicts and continuous deferral of peace.

However, we share a common history and culture, the longest land border and transboundary rivers, kin and relative communities with Syria, which is also our gate to the Arab world in terms of both transportation and trade. Until 2011, we used to have gradually improving relations with Syria, one of the key states in Middle East, and we managed to live in peace without conflicts despite the serious bilateral problems experienced in the past.

The most persistent guarantee for our security and interests is a Syria that has attained peace and stability. For this reason, it is imperative for us to design our policies on the principles of peace and rule of law, based on our wellbeing and the stability of our neighbor, instead of ideological and sectarian principles and the interests and priorities of non-regional countries. The peace and welfare of our neighbors mean the peace and welfare of Turkey. Therefore, our most fundamental security goal about Syria must be to end the war and establish peace as soon as possible.

It is not possible to isolate the motive for good neighborly relations, friendship and peace with Syria from our bonds with other regional countries. Therefore, our regional goal must be to ameliorate Turkey's relations with all countries in this critical geography, beginning with Egypt. Turkey's efforts to ensure peace in Syria will be effective to the extent we get closer to achieving our regional goal.

Under these circumstances, Turkey needs a new Syria policy based on the following principles and grounds of mutuality:

1. Basic principles:

- a) Independence, sovereignty and respect for territorial integrity,
- b) Non-interference in domestic affairs,
- c) Adoption of the principles of international law and good neighborly relations,
- d) Adherence to the treaties and agreements in force,
- e) Approach to regional problems with an understanding of regional ownership,
- f) A vision focused on peace and stability.

2. Goals:

- a) Provide concrete contribution to creating an environment that could end conflict in Syria.
- b) Provide full support to the UN's Geneva process.
- c) Address the Astana process and the UN's Geneva process as integral parts that complement each other.
- d) Contribute to the creation of an environment where the future of the country can fairly and freely be decided by the people of Syria, with the participation of all groups and segments of the society in the country (in terms of ethnic origin, religion, sects and tribes).
- e) Protect the pluralistic and secular structure of Syrian society.
- f) Mutually re-operationalize embassies and consulates.
- g) Fully ensure border security through negotiations and in this context withdraw all our troops on Syrian territories.
- h) Combat terrorism jointly and in cooperation.
- i) Hold discussions about the fate of opposition groups in Syria.
- j) Ensure the security of Turkmens.
- k) Produce a solution to the issue of Syrian refugees in compliance with respect to human rights.
- l) Contribute to the reconstruction of Syria.
- m) Start the initiative of Organization for Peace and Cooperation in Middle East (OPCME) to serve the objectives of regional ownership, peace and stability.

3. Methodology:

- a) As a first step, the government should send an advance delegation to Damascus to contact the Syrian Administration in order to understand their approach to the goal of normalizing relations with Turkey,
- b) If the reaction of Damascus to a potential initiative is positive, the second step should be to send a fully authorized delegation to Damascus to discuss the timetable of a negotiation process for the normalization of relations, in line with the goals outlined above.
 - i. The delegation should include specialists who have conducted research on the Syrian issue,
 - ii. The delegation should consist of individuals who attribute priority to peaceful policies and focus on the interests of our country and feature a supra-party composition.
- c) Negotiations should be held in Damascus and Ankara, according to a rotational order to be agreed.
- d) The agenda items on which agreement can be reached should be immediately implemented -if they can be implemented prior to agreement on other agenda items- in order to achieve a positive impetus, and confidence building measures must be urgently put into implementation in this framework,
- e) In agreement with the Syrian side, the UN, EU, USA, Russia and Iran should be informed about the normalization process of Turkey-Syria relations, at the stages and to the extent to be agreed.

4. Conclusion and Political Realism:

Implementation of the framework drawn up above in the strongest way possible can be possible if it is adopted as a national text of agreement. CHP stands ready to take on responsibility on this issue and provide any contribution to the efforts of achieving this goal, for the high interests of our country and nation, the peace in our neighbor Syria, and the future of our region. Indeed, our OPCME initiative is a proof of our readiness.

Tough decisions are taken during tough times. Our sole objective is to ensure the wellbeing of our country, our neighbors and our region. CHP deems taking such an initiative for the adoption of a new, integrated and peace oriented policy on the Syrian issue as a responsibility towards our country and a duty towards our nation.



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