

SYRIA



» *The United States must fulfill its commitment to withdraw military forces from Syria and replace them with a diplomatic and humanitarian surge that encourages international accountability and depoliticizes post-conflict reconstruction.*

Since 2015, U.S. military presence in Syria has entrenched the battle lines and perpetuated the war. In December 2018, President Trump announced that the U.S. would end its military occupation of the country. Now, a new approach focused on diplomatic engagement is essential:

- The U.S. must fulfill its commitment to withdraw military forces from Syria & resist calls to delay or reverse that order.
- The U.S. must support an inclusive peace process, the creation of accountability mechanisms, and help lead the establishment of an international trust fund for post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction.
- Rather than rely overwhelmingly on military force, U.S. counterterrorism strategy in Syria must be transparent, accountable, and address local drivers to conflict.

ENDING THE WAR

Since 2011, more than 560,000 Syrians have died as the civil war evolved into a conflict involving multiple countries, militant groups, and widespread human rights atrocities. **The longer the war goes on, the more difficult post-conflict recovery and reconstruction will be.** The U.S. should prioritize ending the war by:



- Working multilaterally to establish a reconstruction and stabilization fund as a point of leverage for an inclusive peace settlement.
- Supporting calls to establish a representative, Syrian-led constitutional committee to rewrite the constitution and pave the way for future, inclusive elections.
- Lobbying for the establishment of a truth commission to conduct investigations into allegations of forced disappearance, torture, and human rights abuses conducted over the course of the war.

WITHDRAWING U.S. FORCES

The withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria is necessary and must be accompanied by long overdue diplomatic negotiations.



- The U.S. should remove all forces and close all bases as expeditiously as possible.
- The U.S. must engage diplomatically with Russia, Iran, and Turkey, as well as reopen diplomatic channels with the Syrian government, to call for a settlement that protects U.S.-partner forces, deters a Turkish incursion into Syria, and prevents the reignition of hostilities across Syria, particularly in the northeast.

REEXAMINING U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY

The prosecution of U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Syria has undermined the campaign to defeat the so-called "Islamic State" (IS).



- Civilian casualties and widespread destruction resulting from the U.S.-led coalition's campaign to defeat IS, coupled with allegations of forced displacement and abuse by U.S.-supported rebel forces and partner forces, contribute to the resurgence of IS in Syria.
- The U.S. must investigate allegations of abuse, offer reparations to victims, and reorient its counterterrorism strategy towards addressing local drivers to conflict,

THE WAR IN SYRIA



13.1 MILLION

Syrians require humanitarian assistance, with almost 3 million people in hard-to-reach or besieged areas.

6.6 MILLION

Syrians are internally displaced. 5.6 million have fled the country since 2011.

60%

of Syrians now live in extreme poverty, as compared to just 12.3% in 2007.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONGRESS

The U.S. must end its military involvement in Syria and seek to empower a peace process that includes accountability for abuses. Members of Congress can take positive action to help bring an end to the war and address the humanitarian crisis by advocating for and enacting the following policy recommendations:



END MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN SYRIA

Enforce the administration's decision to withdraw U.S. forces and prevent a reversal by defunding military operations in Syria. Oppose the use of military force in Syria, including drone strikes, and demand congressional authorization for any such actions.



INTRODUCE OR SUPPORT LEGISLATION THAT REPEALS THE 2001 & 2002 AUMFs

The outdated and expansive 2001 and 2002 AUMFs have been used to justify military actions in Syria never intended by Congress and contribute to mission creep across the region.



INCREASE HUMANITARIAN AID & SUPPORT SYRIA'S RECONSTRUCTION

Release the funds previously earmarked for Syria's stabilization, increase funding for humanitarian assistance, and support multilateral efforts to establish a pooled fund for reconstruction.



SPEAK PUBLICLY ABOUT REASSESSING U.S. CT STRATEGY

In interviews and town halls, speak out about the ineffectiveness of the Trump administration's emphasis on countering "ideology" through bombs, rather than addressing local drivers to conflict.

STABILIZING NORTHEASTERN SYRIA

The campaign to liberate northeastern Syria from IS came at a steep cost to civilians. In Raqqa alone, the U.S. and its coalition partners reportedly killed more than 1,400 civilians and destroyed 70% of the city. Yet the U.S.-led coalition admits to causing only a hundred deaths and Trump's slashing of \$230 million earmarked for Syria's stabilization jeopardizes funding for essential projects that will prevent the return of conflict, like demining and the restoration of vital infrastructure. **The U.S. must accept responsibility for the civilian casualties and infrastructural damage caused by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes, release Syria's stabilization funds, and conduct transparent investigations.**



SYRIA'S REFUGEE CRISIS

The war in Syria has forced 5.6 million people to flee the country and exacerbated the global refugee crisis. The U.S. should increase and better allocate funds to UN agencies working to aid Syrian refugees. Domestically, the Trump Administration should rescind the Muslim Ban barring Syrian nationals from entering the U.S., re-designate Temporary Protected Status for Syria, and fully fund and increase annual refugee resettlements, not dismantle, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

For further questions and additional resources:



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