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## Fine, No strike! Here are the Alternatives

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Najati Tayara

ترجمة: رنا عيسى



It seems that the democratic process in the West froze the projected military strike. It all started when the British House of Commons voted against the cabinet decision. Debates in the French parliament followed suit, while the French Leadership preserved its mandate to decide and did not request the vote of the parliament, who would have probably voted against a strike. The American president renounced his mandate by deferring to Congress a vote on the decision, thereby flinging wide open a debate which

may result in freezing the strike. Obama looks to be both democratic and in harmony with his own political strategy and program that he announced in his first round of presidency.

It is obvious then that the Western people are fed up with wars and with military interventions, especially in our countries. There is even a prevalent conviction that Western intervention in Iraq and Libya had strengthened the Iranian and Salafi camps. The West and its civil societies, the primary engines behind political decisions, are unwilling to sacrifice their soldiers and citizens for the sake of unguaranteed changes. Previous experiences had proven their reverse and fostered negative attitudes towards the West. This is why during the Libyan revolution the West was content with areal bombing, at a time when the oil and its Arab countries was shouldering the remaining costs.

To begin with, the strike was not proposed for the protection of the Syrian people and for the support of the revolution. Such support has been absent for the past two and a half years, with a death toll that exceeds a hundred thousand people, and another hundred thousand prisoners, wounded, handicapped not to mention around two million refugees to neighboring countries and millions of internally displaced, making this the most colossal continuing human catastrophe of our times according to UN sources... Instead, the strike was intended to protect America's friends and allies, their interests, and not to mention their aura. If things went in this direction, and the strike was withdrawn, what would this mean?

Simply put, it means that the Russian/Iranian alliance will

spiral out of control and will impact not only Syria—for there it is not possible to commit worse than what is being committed today—but it will break loose on the Arab and international communities. The fear of this alliance is the underlying reason behind the strike. Withdrawing the strike means the demise of International Law and all its red lines, not only on the use of chemical weapons, but on all kinds of intervention and boosting, including the Russian agents and arms trade, as well as the Iranian ideological state with its extreme Shii, Persian extremism.

All this also means that if it is permissible to withdraw from the strike, it is not permissible to retract from its aims, not only from the perspective of international Law and Western interests, but also from the perspective of the Syrian revolution, the interest of our people, as well as the interest of regional nations. Therefore drawing up a strategic alternative plan is needed to replace the current confusion, as we wait for a strike that would save us and save the goals of the Syrian Revolution.

The intention of this strategy must be holistic, beginning with striking at the heart of the regime military capabilities, especially the ability to use chemical weapons and its rocket arsenal; placing the chemical weapons under international control; pressuring the grip of the embargo in order to affect its ability to replenish its arsenal; and perhaps ending with enforcing a no-fly zone on his military air force, and creating safe passage ways for the protection of civilians, as well as providing the Free Syrian Army with sophisticated weapons that can target his air force and rocket capabilities. If the strike is no longer acceptable—for understandable reasons—then it is no longer acceptable not to respond to the uncontrollable Syrian regime, especially

after the chemical attack. There is a real possibility for response today even if it seems far fetched.

All this underscores the primary responsibility of the revolutionary forces, including the diverse factions within the Free Syrian Army, as well as the Syrian National Coalition and others. These groups carry the biggest burden to demand that others support us to achieve our strategic goals, where punishing the regime is transformed into an all-inclusive strategy to topple him. We must also honestly reconsider the workings of our own ranks, our military factions, and political forces. All of us must rise to meet the level of the sacrifice inculcated by our people, and the image of our revolution, where we need to admit to the deformations that plague it, where we are the only ones who carry the responsibility to remove these deformations and retrieve the noble image of our revolt.