

Stop the Turkish Invasion of Syria. US Out of Syria and the Middle East

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

The crisis in Syria has taken a new direction with the Turkish invasion into Syria ostensibly to push back the Kurdish peoples. The US has added to this crisis by its indifference toward the Kurds after using them as a proxy force in its battle against ISIS.

The US role in Syria, in the greater Middle East, has been destructive throughout this century. The invasion and occupation of Iraq have left destruction and chaos. The illegal bombing of Libya and the brutal murder of former prime minister, Muammar al-Gaddafi, has created a failed state. The alliance with Saudi Arabia in the war against Yemen has resulted in mass murder and destruction. The ongoing conflicts with Iran through illegal unilateral coercive measures (sanctions), regime change attempts, threats of war and military skirmishes create more instability in the region. And, the 'special relationship' with Israel has allowed the continued ethnic cleansing and land theft from the Palestinians and has been a US tool for instability in the region. The never-ending war in Afghanistan continues to cause destruction as the US remains even though it has been defeated.

All of these actions have resulted in more than a million deaths and [mass migration](#) which has not only impacted the region but Europe, causing political instability and the advance of right-wing, anti-immigrant forces.

It is time for the US to get out of Syria and out of the Middle East. The Middle East was better off, more stable and wealthier before the disastrous US actions of this century. The illegal US wars have also cost the US trillions of dollars for no benefit for the United States. US policy has not served any positive purposes but has caused instability, conflict and destruction. It is time for the US to get out of the Middle East.



Syria: A Major Defeat for the US and a Geopolitical Game Changer

The bi-partisans in Washington, DC and the foreign policy establishment are furious at Donald Trump for pulling out of the Kurdish region of Syria and allowing Turkey to invade the area. These groups were united when the US goal was removing President Assad from power, but with the culmination of this failed policy, there is political division. Seven years of murderous war have been destructive and accomplished little.

[Pepe Escobar describes Syria](#) as the biggest defeat for the CIA since Vietnam. It is a significant defeat, but US losses in Iraq and Afghanistan are in the running for the worst defeat since Vietnam. He describes Syria “as a massive geopolitical game-changer” that strengthens Assad in Syria as he [retakes control of northeast Syria](#), Russia as a guarantor for Syria and key player in the victory over US regime change, and Turkey which is getting protection from the Kurds. The losers are the United States and Kurds, although something might be developed for the Kurds in Syria.

The US contribution to the current chaos and destruction is bi-partisan and precedes Trump. While the brutal attacks by Turkey in Syria in are being blamed on Trump, in reality, they go back to President Obama. [Max Blumenthal reports](#) in The Grayzone that “many [of the Turkish fighters] were former members of the Free Syrian Army, the force once armed by the CIA and Pentagon and branded as ‘moderate rebels.’” Blumenthal cites a [research paper](#) published this October by the pro-government Turkish think tank, SETA, “Out of the 28 factions [in the Turkish mercenary force], 21 were previously supported by the United States, three of them via the Pentagon’s program to combat DAESH. Eighteen of these factions were supplied by the CIA” Further, the leader of this force is Salim Idriss, hosted John McCain when the late senator made his infamous 2013 incursion into Syria.

The Turkish attack in Syria has been filled with ugly extreme violence including beheadings that are causing outrage. They include mercenaries [sawing the heads](#) off of Kurdish fighters they had killed, a Syrian Kurdish legislator pulled from her car by the militiamen and [executed](#) along with her driver, unarmed Kurdish captives filmed as they were [murdered](#), the [vandalism of the corpse](#) of a female Kurdish fighter, the [deliberately freeing](#) of ISIS captives from unguarded prisons, and a [video message](#), one of the invading fighters promised mass ethnic cleansing if Kurds in the area refused to convert to his Wahhabi strain of Sunni Islam.

[Ajamu Baraka points out](#) that the US created “Free Syrian Army” (FSA) were the good guys when they were part of overthrowing Assad, but now have been turned into the “Turkish supported FSA,” especially after the gruesome graphic videos of the Turkish invasion emerged. In reality, Baraka points out “many of us knew, along with the CIA and most of the honest foreign policy community, that the FSA was always al-Qaeda’s Syria operation in the form of Jabhat al-Nusra and other jihadist militias.”

Blumenthal concludes:

“Left out of the coverage of these horrors was the fact that none of them would have been possible if Washington had not spent several years and billions of dollars subsidizing Syria’s armed opposition.”

These recent events need to be viewed through the context of fifty years of on-again, off-again coups and regime change campaigns have failed. [Timber Sycamore, the regime change project of the Obama administration](#), was a “secret” plan authorized by Obama which allowed the CIA to arm terrorists in Syria. Timber Sycamore, included Saudi Arabia, Qatari, Jordan and Turkey working with the US, officially began in late 2012 and ended in failure in 2017. The secret program included training future ISIS members as part of covert aid to the insurgents targeting Bashar al-Assad. The US was duplicitous and used terrorism as a tool as documented in the book [“The Management of Savagery”](#).

When Obama’s regime change strategy failed, the [US switched to occupying one-third of Syria](#), including the oil region. In January, Secretary of State [Tillerson announced](#) the US was creating a de facto Kurdish State including one-third of Syria with a 30,000-strong force of Syrian Defense Force (SDF) troops, with US air support, and [eight new US bases](#). In April 2018, UN Ambassador Nikki Haley [announced](#) that the US planned to maintain its illegal presence in Syria.

Obama’s effort to dominate Syria was [rooted in the Bush-era](#). In 2001, former NATO commander Wesley Clark was on record as stating that [Syria was on a list of targeted nations](#) to be toppled by the US and in 2002, former Secretary of State John Bolton said in a [speech titled “Beyond the Axis of Evil”](#) that Syria was among a handful of nations the US was targeting. The 2011 protests in Syria, which the US media claimed were to remove Assad, were quickly manipulated by the US and foreign powers who sought to destabilize Syria. CIA-backed [Muslim Brotherhood assets](#) were in place to snipe at both police and protesters when the demonstrations broke out and [Saudi Arabia provided weapons](#) to aid regime change.

Caitlan Johnstone points to [more evidence that Syria was not an organic uprising](#) but a foreign regime change effort from the beginning:

“The former Prime Minister of Qatar [said on television](#) that the US and its allies were involved in the Syrian conflict from the very beginning. A [WikiLeaks cable](#) and a [declassified CIA memo](#) both show the US government plotting to provoke an uprising in Syria exactly as it occurred, years before it happened. Former Foreign Minister of France [Roland Dumas stated](#) that he was informed that the UK was engineering an uprising in Syria two years before the violence erupted.”

But, even the Obama era regime change goal needs to be put in the context of fifty years of on-again, off-again efforts by the US to put in place a government the US could control. The [US has a long history of trying to control Syria](#) dating back to the 1940s. The first coup attempt by the CIA after it was created was in [Syria in 1949](#). Controlling Syria has been a consistent policy objective. [CIA documents from 1986](#) describe how the US could remove the Assad family. Obama’s policy carried out a long-established goal of US foreign policy to dominate Syria.

In January Trump called for withdrawal from Syria which was met with a [firestorm of opposition](#) and he [was outmaneuvered by war hawks](#) in his administration and Congress. There continues to be resistance to withdrawal today. The US is not leaving Syria, but merely moving troops from Northeast Syria to other areas. [David Macilwain reports](#)

“The truth of US intentions – to remain in Eastern Syria until they are driven out militarily – has now been emphasized by US Defence secretary Mark Esper. At a press conference where he confirmed the US intention to withdraw 1000 troops from Syria, when asked whether this meant from all of Syria he simply repeated what he had said – ‘from Northern Syria.’”

In March 2018, Trump tweeted that the US would soon be withdrawing from Syria, one month later Secretary of Defense [Mattis told Congress the US was not withdrawing](#) testifying “We are continuing the fight, we are going to expand it and bring in more regional support.” Each of Trump’s efforts to get out has been opposed by bipartisan war hawks.

It is past time for the US to leave Syria and end its longterm desire to dominate the country. People in the United States and around the world must insist on the US obeying international law which means, the US must leave Syria as it has no legal grounds for being in that sovereign nation.



The Rojava Cantons direct democracy governance without a state. Still from video

Kurds in Syria Negotiate Their Future With Damascus

Kurds are often regarded as “the largest ethnic group without a state.” With the US withdrawal from the Kurdish area of Syria, the Kurds must negotiate their future with Damascus. The [Kurds in Syria are now working with Damascus](#) to repel the Turkish invasion and [negotiating their future](#).

In mid-2012, Assad’s forces largely withdrew from the Kurdish area, and the battle against ISIS was left to the Kurdish militias: the YPG (People’s Protection Units) and the YPJ

(Women's Defense Forces), the autonomous women's militias. When the Free Syrian Army failed, [the US funded the Syrian Kurdish militias](#) known as the Peoples Protection Unit with a new name, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The Kurdish never targeted the Syrian government but focused on ISIS. Now, the Syrian Kurdish militias have come to an agreement to work with Damascus to combat the Turkish invasion.

[The Kurdish, Rojava cantons](#) are a [liberated area](#) in Syria led by socialist-feminists and a population that makes decisions through local councils. Their economy is [based on a cooperative model](#) with thousands of co-ops, but private businesses are allowed. The co-ops are initiated and controlled by the communes, i.e. the community assembly structures. Their [basic principle is the participation of everyone](#) in production. In the words of a minister of economics: "If a single loaf of bread is manufactured in Rojava, everyone will have contributed to it."

Their governing model is [direct democracy governance without a state](#), built on local assemblies. There are multiple levels with neighborhood councils, District Councils and a People's Council for the entire region. And there is also 'Democratic Self-Administration' which is a more conventional government structure of legislative and executive bodies as well as municipal administration. These bodies are not limited to Kurds but open to all religions and races. Women hold 40 percent of leadership positions at all levels. Three leftist enclaves making up an area slightly smaller than the state of Connecticut.

Some see Rojava's [governance without hierarchy, patriarchy or capitalism](#) as a model for the future of the Middle East [and beyond](#), and as [an antidote to capitalism](#). It is the [Communist Model](#) of Democratic Confederalism [an adoption of the ideas](#) of the [Zapatistas](#) in Chiapas and the work of [Murray Bookchin](#).

In Turkey, Kurds remain part of Turkey and "[have formed a political party \(Peoples Democratic Party - HDP\)](#) which unites progressives of all ethnicities. In the 2015 Turkish election, HDP emerged as the third most popular party and stopped Erdogan's election domination." The HDP opposes Turkey's invasion of Syria.

Turkey is concerned that the Kurds will use the territory they've captured to establish an independent Kurdish state for the region's [25 to 35 million](#) Kurds, roughly [15 million](#) of whom reside in Turkey. Four percent of Kurds reside in Syria, approximately 1.6 million people. Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic group in the region after Arabs, Persians, and Turks. After the Ottoman Empire's defeat in World War I they were not granted a homeland.

The Syrian and the Kurds must determine the future of the Kurdish areas. Peace activists and popular movements around the world should be in solidarity with the Kurdish peoples desire of a semi-independent territory. The Kurdish population exists over multiple countries. A contiguous Kurdish state is an impossible dream and negotiation will be required by each population in the country where they reside.



US Out of Syria Internationalist protest in NYC (Internationalist photo).

US Out of Syria and Out of the Middle East

We agree with [the US Peace Council which demands](#) “the US peace movement to organize a united national campaign in support of the Syrian people and demand the total withdrawal of all occupying forces from Syria. Leave Syria to the Syrian People!”

The movement’s first demand must be the US out of Syria and out of the Middle East because the US is not leaving Syria or the region. [Reports indicate](#) between 200 and 300 U.S. troops will remain at the southern Syrian outpost of Al-Tanf and 1,000 troops will shift leaving Syria and going into western Iraq adding to the than 5,000 troops the US has in Iraq, US forces may conduct operations in Syria from Iraq. On October 11, the US announced it was [sending an additional 1,800 troops to Saudi Arabia](#). An additional 14,000 US troops have been deployed to the Middle East since spring, including more than 6,000 who are part of a naval strike group. The [US is fighting in](#) at least [seven countries](#) in the Middle East and North Africa: Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Niger, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen.

We must also be in solidarity with the Kurdish people and call for an end to the Turkish invasion of Syria. The [Turkish invasion is already backfiring](#) and people mobilizing against the invasion will lead to its retreat. Syria will need to ensure there are no threats to Turkey from Syria.

And, the US must accept immigrants from Syria, Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan where migration crises have been caused by US wars. Rebuilding nations destroyed by the United States is a costly endeavor that the US owes to the region. These countries do not want the US meddling in their efforts so retribution must be made through the United Nations without any US strings attached.

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