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Syria

“We want to live”

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Syria faces many socio-economic problems. The global Covid-19 pandemic has intensified them and provoked new demonstrations. Before the pandemic broke out in mid-March 2020, the poverty rate of the population in Syria was estimated at more than 85%. It has certainly increased since then. In addition, the value of the Syrian pound has fallen steadily, down by around 105% since the beginning of May against the US dollar and by almost 360% since June 2019. The living conditions of the great majority of the Syrian population are increasingly miserable. This is without forgetting the consequences of the massive destruction caused by the war, estimated at around US\$500 billion, and the continuing authoritarian and neoliberal policies of the despotic Assad regime.

Events

Since 7 June, popular demonstrations have broken out in the regions of Sweida and Daraa as well as on the outskirts of the capital Damascus, in the city of Jaramana. They denounce the high cost of living and demand the fall of the Assad regime and the departure of its allies, Russia and Iran. The main slogan of the demonstrators is "We want to live", as a call for more social justice and democracy.

To try to minimize the impact of these protests, the Syrian regime launched counter-protests denouncing the US sanctions. The police also violently repressed and arrested demonstrators in the town of Sweida.

The conditions that led to the popular uprisings still exist. The regime has not only been unable to resolve them but has exacerbated them. Despite all the support of its foreign allies and despite its resilience, the Assad regime faces insoluble problems. Its failure to resolve the serious socio-economic problems of the country, combined with its relentless repression, has provoked criticism and further protests.

Complicated horizon

However, these conditions do not automatically translate into new political opportunities, especially after more than nine years of a destructive and deadly war. The absence of a structured, independent, democratic, progressive and inclusive Syrian political opposition makes it difficult to unite the diverse popular classes. This convergence will be necessary to challenge the regime again at the national level.

This is the main challenge. Despite the difficult conditions engendered by repression, impoverishment and social dislocation, a progressive political alternative must be organized within the local expression of these resistances.

Damascus and other regional capitals believe they can maintain their despotic rule by constantly resorting to massive violence against their populations. This is doomed to failure, as the explosions of regional popular protests continue to demonstrate.

PS:

“We want to live”

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