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in light of Syrian revolution**

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Demographic change (Forced displacement) in light of Syrian revolution

Definition of demographic change:

It is meant by demographic change, the transformation from a demographic situation to another, and it related to population and factors of their growing and their quality and quantity balance. Its concepts affected by economic, social and political transformation that taking place in the modern human societies well as it related to measuring specific characteristics of the population such as their size and distribution according to work, industry, and their Political, religious and national affiliation.

Demographic change can happen as a result for environmental factors such as natural disasters or social, political and economic factors.

The demographic change meaning in this research is to do acts and actions in order to change the demographics in an area, by evacuation of population belonging to the same race, doctrine or specific religion and bring others who have another race, doctrine or religion through several ways by convincing or intimidate them.

Demographic change in Syria before 2011:

Since the arrival of Al-Baath party to power in Syria, the major Syrian cities especially the capital "Damascus" started witnessing the demographic change, where thousands of Alawites coastal villagers started moving to the capital to fill the civilian and military positions and in the end of sixties, their own coastal dialect had become easily noticed in government directorates.

as a result, for this move, special neighborhoods for Alawites started forming in Damascus and lesser extent in Homs.

The most important of these neighborhoods in Damascus are: Aush Al-Warwar, Mazzah 86, Al-Soumaria, Masaken Al-Haras, suburb of Al-Assad and many others. They differ in economic and social levels, because the high ranks officers were living in high economic level enabled them to live in the high-class neighborhoods of the capital or in the officers' complexes, while the low ranks officers and soldiers lived in random houses.

Assad regime granted privileges for Alawite sect which is not more than 6% but also offer incentive to encourage marriage and childbearing .this policy supported by Rifaat Al-Assad

at the end of seventies ,and his brother Jamil Al-Assad was responsible for dissemination of the doctrine in the eastern provinces ,homs countryside and homs through Al-Mourtada association which he was its director and also provided legal facilities for Alawites of Turkey and Lebanon to live and acquire the nationality in Syria.

The army and security institutions reflect the sectarianism policy of Al-Assad regime so, Alawites officers controlled leadership of all units of army while the security institution was formed from Alawites even its low rank members, and also military Alawites units completely were formed such as brigades of defense and Republican Guard.

Assad regime push towards integration the Shiite concepts in the Alawite doctrine in order to rapprochement attempts with Shi'ism after Khomeini revolution in Iran 1979, and this rapprochement led to strengthening of relations with Iranian regime which was searching for strategic partners in the regime also contributed to the openness of Alawites society on the Shiite society especially in Lebanon and Iraq which its effects were clear after 2011 Al-Assad regime was seeking to integrate so it gave wide facilities for Shiite pilgrims, also provided economic, legal and religious facilities for Shiite individuals and instaurations. some areas in Damascus changed into mainly Shiite neighborhoods very fast such as: Jaraman and Al-Sayeda Zaenab, also the Shiite religious institutions practiced missionary activities sponsored directly by the cultural SACM at Iranian embassy.

Demographic change after 2011:

Analyzing of field events that took place in Syria since 2014 shows that there is a systematic plan to change the demographic reality in Syria as a whole and in the mixed areas particularly.

until mid-2016, the number of martyrs in Syria estimated about 300 thousand people, and the number of refugees is about 4.7 million people, in addition to about 7 million people displaced inside Syria according to the lesser numbers in the statistics.

the absolute majority of them belong to the Sunni sect and the cities that exposure to the greatest destruction are (Homs, Aleppo, Daraa, Deir Ez-Zor, Damascus) which are cities with Sunni majority too.

ways of demographic change:

The regime used many ways to apply his policy in demographic change since 2011, the important of these ways are:

1- Purchasing of lands and demolishing of buildings:

As the regime did in Al-Mazzah Orchards in 2012 that have a population about 125 thousand people through the decree No.66 for 2012 which included displacing people and in order to create two organizational areas in Damascus surroundings, and the seminaries had a big role in purchasing of real estate as in Al-Ammarah, Al-Shagour and Al-Salehya neighborhoods (Batraa, Venicea and other hotels which have been purchased and changed them into headquarters of Abu Al-Fadl Al-Abbas militias).

2- Burning of real estate registries and the civil registries:

To obliterate the rights of civilians in their real estate (mostly Sunnis) and replace them by Shiites and Alawites ownerships (as did in Homs in 2013 and as the PYD militias did in Manbej in 2016) .

3- wide massacres:

Which effected the Sunni areas exclusively and were the cause for migration of people, with arresting, killing, stealing and rape crimes committed by these militias at military checkpoints.

4-policy of siege:

To force residents of besieged cities to sign truces in order to stop shelling on them and allow some food to enter them as a prelude to force residents to leave their cities and villages under pressure of hunger and siege which have begun in 2013.

PYD militias have applied the same policy in the north and east of Syria especially in Raqqa countryside, Hasaka, Tal Abyadh, and Tal Rifaat and they targeted Arab and Turkmen in order to create northern Kurdish belt controlled by them.

some Human Rights Organizations such as Amnesty International Organization and Human Rights Watch have documented these activities in 14 locations, the most notable are Al-Husayneah and Al-Slouk.

Areas targeted by demographic change:

1 - Al-kaseer:

Hezbollah militia invaded al-kaseer in 2013 and displaced its people and destroyed its mosques and prevented people to return to it, and bring Shiites from sectarianism militias instead of them and the most important of these militias are Al-Redha brigade.

the party did not keep secret that it decided to change al-kaseer to a safe place for Shiites, where the Lebanese MP (Moeen Al-Moreibi) confirmed that people from Hezbollah who

are wanted from Lebanese government, are living in al-kaseer and they are protected by Hezbollah militia.

2 - Neighborhoods of Homs:

The demographic change started in these neighborhoods, where they exposure to heavy shelling led to destroy them totally and oblige their people to leave their houses while the others who stayed in these neighborhoods left through a deal in 2014 after a difficult siege and shelling.

3 - Al-Zabadani:

An agreement was signed and some besieged people were evacuated from zabadani according to the agreement in exchange for evacuation of wounded from Kafrya and Al-Fouaa and this agreement was signed Under supervision of Iran in 2015 but it did not end the siege.

4 - Daryya:

Its population was about 400 thousand Sunni people and the regime committed a massacre in it 2012 where about 600 civilians were killed including 61 women and 10 children. after that regime besieged it and began committing massacres through shelling. at the end of August 2016, all Darayya's people went out through a deal with regime. The Syrian human rights network documented dropping about 7846 barrels on Daryyaa, killing about 817 civilians including 67 children and 98 women with registering 56 assault on civil active centers ,8 attacks with chemical weapons ,3 attacks with cluster bombs and 4311 forced disappearance cases, before the exit of the remaining population from it. press sources reported later that 300 families belong to Al-Noujabaa Iraqi Shiite movement have arrived in Daryya to live in it.

5 - Qazhel and Oum Al-Qasab:

They are located in western countryside of homs with Turkmen majority and about 12 thousand people were living in them, the regime displaced them to the northern countryside of homs in exchange of stop shelling them two months ago.

6 - Al-Akrad and al-Turkman mountains:

Al-Turkman mountain extends to 530 square kilometers with a population of more than 300 thousand who has been completely displaced and their towns were occupied in the last year.

7 - Aleppo:

Most of its population has been displaced by shelling and barrels, so its population decrease in the eastern free areas from 3 million to 400 thousand people and it is besieged now by regime and the foreign forces supporting regime

8 - Countryside of Hama:

Such as: Al-Asharena, Qabr Fedha and Al-Ramlah villages where their population were displaced by shelling and other families came to live in it from Ishtabraq which is Alawite village.

9 - Tal Abyadh, Tal Rifaat and Manbej:

Sources emphasized that Arab and Turkmen without Kurds were displaced from Tal Abyadh villages in a city with a population of 70% from Arab and Turkmen who are more than 30 thousand people, also more than 15 thousand people were displaced from Tal Rifaat and its Surroundings by PYD militias.

10 - countryside of Raqqa and Hasaka:

Human Rights Organizations such as Amnesty International Organization and Human Rights Watch documented the PYD attacks against 14 locations such as Al-Husayneah and Al-Slouk, and they displaced their people who are not Kurds from these locations.

The threatened cities by forced displacement are:

1 - Al-Mouaddamya:

It signed a truce since 2013 after a siege for a year, the besieged people are about 45 thousand. Regime threatens them by displacement as it did recently in Daryyaa.

2 - Qudsyya:

It signed a truce since 2015 after a long siege and the besieged people are about 600 thousand, half of them are from out of Qudsyya. Regime threatens them by displacement as it did recently in Daryyaa.

3-Al-Waar:

It witnessed heavy shelling recently after stop shelling for a year and two years of siege. its population is more than 80 thousand civilians and the regime is trying to put pressure on them to Evacuate as it did in Daryyaa within a difficult siege.

4-The Eastern Ghouta:

The besieged people in at are about 750 thousand, after a heavy siege for its towns for

more than two years

5- The Western Ghouta:

About a million besieged people are in its towns.

6-Al-Tal:

There are million people in it and the regime do all Shabiha activities on them, and prevent civilians from going in and out it.

7-Madhaya:

It was besieged by regime then by Hezbollah since 2015, and its population is about 40 thousand people.

the last Caravan of aids entered it since more than six months and the Meningitis is spreading in it now without any medicine or Quarantine.

8-Areas covered by the truce:

Are (Barza, Kaboun, Teshreen, Bayt Sahem, Yald, Babbila, Al-Qadam and Assali)

The legal description for the crime of demographic change:

The collective displacement is a crime against humanity and war crime according to Geneva conventions in 1949 and the its two protocols in 1977 in the international law defines forced displacement that: “it is the forced and illegal evictions for a group of individuals and population from the land they live in it “ and the articles 6,7 and 8 from the Rome statute consider the forced displacement a war crime ,and the article 49 from the fourth Geneva convention of 1949 banned the collective or individual transport for people and changing their place ,also the article (71--d) provided that forced displacement is a crime against humanity.

Reactions to the crime:

Arab League unlike usual issued a statement condemning the evacuation of cities of its indigenous population and forcing them to leave under threat which is contrary to international humanitarian law, and the scenario of Daryya is a prelude to similar compromises involve changing demographic of the situation of Syrian cities.

The United Nations has not done enough to condemn this crime and contributed several times to supervise transfer the population out of their lands, also participated in sponsoring less intense campaigns in Al-Waar and Madhya, and contributed directly and indirectly to increase suffering of besieged people by not doing enough for entering food and medicine to them.

The United Nations has denied its knowledge of Darayya’s agreement to evacuation it from population ,its participation or supervision of the city’s evacuation so, Steven O’Brien,

United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator said that the agreements that resulted collective evacuation for civilians after very long period of siege ,are not compatible with the international human rights law ,and it should end the siege and should not be any agreement lead to forced displacement for civilians population.

Will the plans of demographic change succeed??

It is said that demographic change needs decades to settle down and it needs enough human element to occupy places which were evacuated and to protect these areas permanently for reconstruction, and the regime and his allies do not have time or means to do that.

Also, those who are responsible for displacement project are minority, surrounded by huge population societies which will make the attempts of changing unlikely to be unstable in the long term.

history has told us a lot of failed attempts for demographic change such as the attempt of crusaders in Palestine despite its continuation for 200 years.

the demographic replacement element does not succeed if applied by minorities not by majorities and without supporters' population extension or against a huge opposition population extension.

so, the attempts of regime to change demography will be desperate because Sunni are the majority and because the Shiite who will be resettled are strangers from demography ethnically and culturally and they will not melt in the religious and ethnic components of Syria.

Is the demographic change just targeting Syria?

Demographic change that Iran did is not restricted to Syria only, but it is a part from its expansion plan and draw the Shiite crescent to be a regional state

Iran is going to this goal through several ways:

1-Dissemination of Shiism as it did in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon and recently in Malaysia, Algeria, morocco and Mauritania which cause the governments of some states to make serious decisions towards this extension, Bu Abdullah Ghulam, the minster of religious affairs in the Algerian government said that they will not allow the spread of Shiism in Algeria and they will deal firmly against any similar attempt.

The seminaries and cultural SACM play a major role in this field, which push Malaysia to classify any Shiite gathering as irregular political opposition and punish those who do it to life imprisonment and decided to demolish all worship places for Shiites and confiscation their money and all its contents since 2014.

2- killing Sunnis and displace them from their towns as in Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere.

in Iraq:

The Sunnis Arabs is displacing in Dayala under supervision of Revolutionary Guards and by execution by Popular Mobilization Forces.

human rights watch said on 1st of February 2016 said that the kidnappings carried out by Shiite fighters supported by Iran such as Bader and Asaeb Ahel Al-Haq organizations against Sunni civilians in the east of Iraq and attacks their properties maybe considered as a war crime.

Salah Al-Jabouri, president of Dayala coalition emphasized that militias had new violations ,he said that the Popular Mobilization Forces is seeking for new campaign to force civilians to leave their houses and displacing them from Al-Makhesah and Al-Aswad by repeated attacks and continuous bombardment.

Belt of Baghdad: it is included the area around Baghdad from the fourth directions (Al-Mahmoudyah district includes half a million person, Abu Ghraib district includes 750 thousand people , Al-Tagi includes half a million people , Al-Madaeen includes 100 person, al-Tarmmeyah includes half a million and Al-Istiqlal includes a million people) ,and since the beginning of the revolution from al-Mawsel ,Al-Maleki forces started fortifying the capital by spreading military units enhanced by the armored ninth division and the federal police and elite forces to displace hundreds of thousands Sunni people from areas such as Jarf Al-Sakher , Al-Basra ,Dayala.

They have not been allowed them to return, and the number of displaced people for just Kurdistan region are 3 million Sunni displaces people.

in Yemen:

As in the provinces of Yemeni Dhali which witnessed a strong displacement after the heavy random shelling of Houthis that led to evacuate whole villages such as Qaataba Directorate and the same situation also is in Taiz.

How are we preventing the demographic change plans?

The forces of revolution and their allies must do a lot of steps to face this policy which are:

1- To consider Iran and its militias enemies of the Syrian people, their presence in Syria is an occupation and the Syrian regime with its government is a tool for them.

2- Create an operation room to face their extension, isolate Iran from all Islamic organizations and groups, and expose their intention covered by sectarianism.

3- To reject the idea of protecting the Ahel Al-Bayet graves and consider it an excuse to extend within the Iranian extension plan, and raise awareness of Shiites that they were used as tool for these plans to prevent using them.

4- To raise awareness of Syrians especially damascenes about the Iranian expansion (real estate expansion) and expose the middlemen and brokers by mentioning their names and listed them in black lists to punish them severely

5- To call neighboring and regional states, and Arabic and Islamic people to support the Syrian liberation war using all possibilities and to emphasize that the Syrian people is facing the Iranian expansionist on behalf of all countries in the region.

6- Besides, the factions must prevent the demographic change project through stability in the places that at risk of displacement and focus the military operation on the areas which regime, Iran and Hezbollah are seeking to occupy them such as; the coast, al-zabadani and Homs.

As well, trying to fail the plans of PYD party to demographic displacement, so in this context, it is necessary to mention the significant achievement of the FSA within Dere Al-Furat battels and purify these areas from ISIS before PYD entered, where there was not any recorded displacement, killing or stealing cases in all villages and towns that have been liberated even though the large area of Jarablus and others which is about 845 km.

The rebels also must continue their battles to set Al-Bab, Raqqa and others free, and they must do more to restore the towns of northern countryside of Aleppo that controlled by PYD and evacuated it from its population (Tal Rifaat, Minneg and others).

7- It should be political and media campaigns in all international forums to put the united

nations and human rights organizations in front of their responsibilities to protect innocent and to stop all killing and forced displacement, and to seek for referral the criminal regime and its allies involved in the forced displacement crimes to the international courts on charge of forced displacement as a war crime and a crime against humanity according to Geneva convention and UN conventions.

Conclusion:

Syrian regime and his allies are working for the systematic forced displacement from the areas with Sunni majority by using many ways since 2011 until now.

Iran specifically had a big role in this plan through wide military support to the regime directly or through its Iraqi and Lebanese militias.

Iran also participated through sponsoring purchasing lands and real estates or through dissemination of the Shiite thoughts and encouraging Shiites to fight and live in Syria. also, we will not forget the Russian support and PYD crimes of displacement for Arabs and Turkmen in the northern and eastern areas in order to establish their entity.

This policy needs awareness from all revolutionary and opposition forces to face it in all fields and to stop the demographic and population change in the Syrian targeted areas. and it also needs special support from the Arab and Islamic countries to stop this crime which happened before in Iraq and happening now in Syria and Yemen.



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