

## DARAA IS A TARGET AGAIN

### An analysis of the latest updates and its effect on the civilians

**31<sup>th</sup>, July 2021**

In June 2021, a military escalation took place in Daraa in Syria, after the people of Daraa governorate refused to participate in the presidential elections and demonstrated in opposition to the process. The regime forces surrounded the city after the demonstrations on June 25, and asked the central committee responsible for negotiations for the people of Daraa to hand over light weapons, but the committee rejected the demands, and 20 young men from the governorate were arrested and the city was besieged.

On June the 27<sup>th</sup>, the central committees issued a statement from the province community leaders, objecting to the Russian position because it turned from a guarantor of the settlement to a pressure on the people of the province. Then the regime forces began shelling the Daraa al-Balad area. The Central Committee announced that they were ready to hand over light weapons and accepted the deployment of regime checkpoints to spare the people of the province from war. And indeed, barriers belonging to the 15th Division began to spread in Daraa al-Balad, but at the same time crowds of the Ghaith forces of the Fourth Division were coming to storm Daraa al-Balad and the western countryside, and fired indiscriminately at civilians after the regime rejected the entire proposals of the negotiating committee from the dignitaries of Daraa.

Subsequently, local groups from Daraa governorate attacked the regime's checkpoints and military barracks in a number of villages and towns, and these groups were able to control a number of villages, towns, military checkpoints, and security headquarters in Jassem, Tafas, Yadudah, Umm Al-Mayathen, Al-Naima, Nassib and Taseel after Most of the personnel at the checkpoints surrendered to these groups.

The regime forces intensified the bombing of populated areas, where they committed a massacre against civilians, including children and women, as a result of targeting their homes with a missile, while the city of Jassim was bombarded with heavy artillery, which led to **the death of two civilians**, and the city of Inkhil was subjected to artillery shelling, **resulting in injuries to civilians**. The neighborhoods of Daraa al-Balad were also bombarded with rocket launchers, heavy artillery, heavy machine guns and mortar shells, which led to **the death of five civilians and the wounding of others in light of the shortage of the medical system in that area after the regime targeted the only medical center there**. During the campaign, the regime did not stop bringing reinforcements from various regions and directing them to the southern region. During the campaign, reconnaissance aircraft flew intensively in the city of Daraa and its countryside. **The total number of victims reached 45 victims, if whom 12 were women and 5 were children.**

### REASONS FOR THE ESCALATION OF HOSTILITIES:

**The first reason:** the Syrian regime forces' attempt to regain control of Daraa, as it is the center of the popular protests.

**The second reason:** security threats and reprisals by several parties.

**The third reason:** the location of Daraa al-Balad and Al-Sad as connecting points between the eastern and western countryside, thus completely separating Daraa al-Balad from its surroundings.

### POSSIBLE SCENARIOS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CIVILIANS:

Possible scenarios in this context:

- Continuing escalation and violent actions, and continuing violations against civilians (arrests, enforced absences, and displacement).
- The regime's control and obligating all those who did not accept the settlement to make a new settlement, and the arrest of those who refused, and consequently campaigns of arrests, forced recruitment, human rights violations, escalation of tension and hostilities at all levels.
- Arresting those wanted for forced conscription, and prosecuting some of them in field and arbitrary trials that are not subject to the protection of the law, and thus have a significant impact on civilians.
- Expanding the control of the non-governmental militias affiliated with Iran by giving them wide powers over new areas in Daraa, spreading them widely, and putting pressure on civilians, which raises the sensitivities of sectarian and religious conflict in the region.

### CONCERNS ON THE HUMANITARIAN LEVEL:

- 1- The most important impact is the loss of the relative stability that civilians have experienced since July 2018.
- 2- The return of clashes and shelling in some areas and the escalation of violence, tension and hostilities.
- 3- The lack of an emergency and medical system for these areas and the absence of any supply line for them.
- 4- Loss of basic needs and materials, especially flour and bread, with the interruption of all the bakeries' supplies of flour.
- 5- The civilians have great fear of losing their livelihoods and property, especially since a large percentage of Daraa residents have reopened their businesses and commercial activity, and repaired their shelter houses in the hope that the battles will stop once and for all in the south.

## **DARAA PEOPLE'S MESSAGE:**

“We as the people of Daraa since the beginning of the 2018 agreement do not want war and by accepting the peace agreement, we wanted to ease the burden on civilians, but it was the regime that brought in reinforcements, besieged the city, and started the bombing. We had called for the army to be withdrawn from the vicinity of the city, to open roads, to lift the siege, and to protect civilians, but the regime refused, and began its violent attack on all neighborhoods.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Thus, the reality of civilians in Daraa can be summarized as they have become besieged from all sides within a square that does not exceed 2 km<sup>2</sup>. There is a shortage of basic necessities and no food, flour or fuel enters them, and they do not even have a medical point after the only medical point was targeted with many casualties and deaths.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Urgent recommendations:**

- Lifting the siege, opening roads, a comprehensive ceasefire for all of Daraa, protecting civilians, not using them as tools of pressure, and returning the army to its military barracks.
- Allowing the evacuation of the wounded and the introduction of fully equipped medical points, and allowing the entry of medicines, not only basic first-aid medicines, but also medicines for chronic diseases (pressure, heart and diabetes) where there is already a shortage.
- Humanitarian organizations in Syria standing up to their humanitarian responsibilities to meet basic needs and access humanitarian aid through the United Nations, international humanitarian agencies, and the International Red Cross, and to secure food, water and medicine.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE:**

- Demanding the Russian guarantor to return to the terms of the 2018 agreement, which guarantees the stability of the army in its barracks,
- avoidance of civilians, and solving legal problems related to individuals and groups
- In the event of working on a new settlement or a new agreement, these agreements must guarantee the protection of civilians, and be balanced towards all parties.
- A negotiated political solution based on international resolutions and Security Council Resolution No. 2254 is the guarantee for a better future for the Syrians, the protection of civilians, and the provision of lasting stability and peace.
- Protecting civilians in Daraa and southern Syria is the responsibility of the international community and the Security Council to maintain international peace and security.