



Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity demands urgent aid to Rukban camp and calls on the international community to prevent forced return of the displaced to Assad-held areas

Istanbul, Rukban, 27 February, 2019

Syrians displaced to Rukban camp are facing unbearable living conditions since 19 February, when Russia and Assad's regime closed all access routes to the camp and stopped the most basic supplies, even those that were smuggled in, from reaching the camp. This was done in order to pressure the displaced people to use their so-called "humanitarian corridors" to return to the regime-controlled areas of Syria. What awaits them there has been illustrated by the fate of people who trusted Russian guarantees in the past and returned from camps in Lebanon and elsewhere, or decided to stay in their areas under the so called "reconciliation" agreements.

In the light of the aforementioned events, the Syrian Association for Citizen's Dignity (SACD), a movement defending the rights of the displaced Syrians everywhere, demands the following:

- Urgent action by the United Nations, European Union and the United States, to end the unbearable suffering of some 40.000 displaced Syrians in Rukban camp who are lacking basic food, medicine and medical care due to the actions of Assad regime and its Russian allies.
- Swift action by the United Nations and relevant international bodies to prevent the forced return of the displaced to Assad-held areas, where they face detention, disappearances and forcible recruitment into Assad's Army, which is being engineered through the so-called "humanitarian corridors" and under false Russian guarantees.
- We call on the UN to respect the demands of the displaced not to be returned to Assad-held areas - where they will not be safe from persecution and humiliation - which they have clearly communicated to the United Nations in the recent survey with some 3,000 residents of the camp.
- The direct intervention of the United Nations and the international community to secure safe passage and repatriate displaced people from Rukban camp to areas of their choice. Any participation by the United Nations or any international actor in implementing the Assad regime plans regarding Rukban camp situation (under Russian "guarantees") is the equivalent of directly taking part in killing and imprisoning Syrian civilians and send them into forced recruitment to become cannon fodder in the on-going war.

There is not a shred of doubt at this point in time, and after having carefully examining the Assad regime and his Russian allies track record on dealing with the displaced and refugees who were misled or forced to return to their areas or remained in them under the so-call "reconciliation" agreements, that there cannot be any talk about a safe return for the displaced and refugees to Assad-held areas. A truly voluntary, safe and dignified return has to be preceded by the release of all prisoners, the establishment of a true political solution with the relevant international guarantees and the necessary monitoring mechanisms to ensure its implementation.