

## Answer to a Question

# The International Role in the Syrian Crisis!

### Question:

Hollande described the Russian airstrikes on Aleppo, "is truly a war crime." (BBC, 20/10/2016), after the inauguration of the Orthodox Russian Cultural Religious Center ceremony held in the absence of Putin on 19/10/2016. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has announced on 11/10/2016 that President Putin decided to cancel his official visit to Paris, scheduled for the 19<sup>th</sup> of this month, this was following the announcement of the French president of his reluctance to welcome Putin in Paris, after the use of Russia's veto against the French project concerning Syria resulting in tensions in their relations. What is the reason for this tension? And what impact will it have on Russian-EU relations? Will these events cause a change in the international actors in the Syrian crisis? In other words, will there be a role for the European Union and a decline of the Russian role? Jazak Allah Khair.

### Answer:

In order to have clarity for the reason for the tension, and whether its impact will result in a change in the international actors ... we need to review the following:

**First:** The idea of an international partnership yielded which the Obama administration executed by assigning Russia to carry out an international mission in Syria, and this is a fact in Washington, and it was uttered by some Russian politicians when they talked about American arrogance when discussing the issue of Syria with the Russians. America was behind entrusting Russia with the task of killing and destruction in Syria ... America was also behind the exclusion of the European countries, especially Britain and France, and stopping them from intervening in resolving the Syrian crisis.

In the meantime, Russia was confident that this international mission will transform Russia automatically to a functioning state on the international stage, but it would be surprised whenever America refused its involvement in other issues, even the Ukrainian crisis which is a very sensitive issue to Russia. The United States believes that cooperation with Russia in Syria does not lead to the recognition of Russian interests in Ukraine, Syria is one issue and Ukraine is another issue.

Thus, Russia has emerged internationally because of its intervention in Syria and restored the presence of its military to the forefront, and despite the criticism of some politicians in Washington to the policy of the International partnership. There was a document written by fifty diplomats at the US State Department, which demanded the administration to implement a unilateral solution to the Syrian crisis, i.e. without Russia, but using Russia was the implemented policy by Washington. This was the US policy, and its outcome of the emergence of Russia on the international arena is what incited major outrage in Western Europe.

**Second:** Russia saw its international position strengthened because of Syria, and the robe of grandeur has returned to it through its military presence and the Kerry-Lavrov meetings about Syria. Thus it played along with America to isolate Europe from Syria, Russia is happy to limit handling the crisis between it and America, especially that it is an outsider party to the zone of America's influence commissioned by Washington... But internationally Russia has emerged as America, that it does not care about the major countries in Europe, and probably the European countries were waiting to see that it does not follow Washington, but instead to support them in breaking the American hegemony on the international position. Thus, Russia's full following with America enraged Europe greatly.

**Third:** America is the real barrier in excluding Europe from the Syrian crisis and has limited handling of the crisis between it and Russia, but Europe has recently appeared to have found a way to break through this barrier hoping it will allow it to intervene in the Syrian crisis in the following ways:

1- During the past months, America was arduously seeking to make advancements in resolving the crisis in Syria, so as to achieve success and attribute it to President Obama who will be leaving soon, as well as to support the Democrats' campaign of Hillary Clinton in the US presidential election. This led to the United States-Russia agreements and the intensifying of Russian brutal bombing of the city of Aleppo. The last of the Russian-American agreements was on the cessation of hostilities in Syria on 09/09/2016.

2- The people of Syria rejected this agreement, i.e. they rejected the American plan, and they were followed by all the faithful revolutionaries, even those who have some decency could not bear the humiliation of the agreement, and they too rejected it to the extent that the rejection reached its peak and they refused to cooperate with US Special Forces introduced by Erdogan in the Operation Euphrates Shield. America saw that the bombardment of Aleppo must therefore intensify in brutality hoping that it will affect the people of Syria and the resistance and subdue them to agree to the American plan or to at least to a significant part of it, to be written as a success for Obama before the end of his term ... and because America portrays itself to be with the opposition, it has escalated tensions with Russia, so that America appears to be against the brutal Russian bombing. This was until the American declaration of ending the cooperation with Russia in Syria.

3- And so the war of words between Russia and the United States peaked in the General Assembly meetings in New York on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 22/09/2016... This renewed the American predicament in Syria and led America to have a ceasefire i.e. the Kerry-Lavrov failure to reach a settlement and America's declaration that it is looking for other options. This was the opportunity, which Europe found to break through America's barrier. The European states started to herald in New York's General Assembly meetings the end of the Kerry-Lavrov solution to resolve the Syrian crisis, and held on tightly to this opportunity to play a role alongside America in the Syrian crisis... Then it sought to increase the rift between it and Russia in hopes to persuade America to push Russia away from Syria, this is the reason for the new tensions between Europe and Russia.

**Fourth:** It was natural in this new atmosphere and with the European vision in mind that Europe tries to enter through the crack in the American barrier, by giving statements and making European initiatives to try to enter the Syrian crisis, and France was at the forefront, this included:

1-Since America's official announcement of the end of US cooperation with Russia in Syria, France rushed forward and announced the French project in the Security Council to enforce the cessation of hostilities, it meant Russia by that. France paved the way for its project by the visit of its foreign minister, Ayrault, to Moscow on 5-6/10/2016 to convince the Russian side of the French project. The French project calling for an immediate end of aerial bombardment of Aleppo, which is opposite of the US-Russian previous agreement of the necessity of more strikes to subdue the revolutionaries. Russia was embarrassed during this visit by the French minister; because on one side it was saying that the French project simplifies things, and on the other side it was wary of its refusal. In continuation of the efforts of France to achieve the success of the project, the French foreign minister also visited Washington after Moscow to ensure US support for the project in the Security Council.

2- Russia's veto thwarted all the French efforts in the Security Council on 08/10/2016... This had incited tensions between Russia and France, along with European countries, which saw in Russia a new barricade that prevents them from accessing the Syrian crisis. As if America has deliberately created an opportunity to tempt the European countries to make this move, after it ensured Russia's firm position on the role that it assigned for it.

3- The visit, which was planned for Russian President Putin, to Paris on 19/10/2016 coincided at the same time with this tension in Russian-French relations, and despite being a private visit of the opening of a Russian cultural center and an orthodox church, since it had been agreed to the participation of the French President with Putin during the opening ceremony. Because of this tension, the French President on 10/10/2016, was first to declare his reluctance to receive Putin during his private visit, at a time when the Kremlin announced from Moscow the continuation of arrangements as usual of the Russian president's visit, and so Russia was in an awkward position. When France announced that the French President will only discuss with Putin during the visit the Syrian crisis, and he will not share the opening ceremony, which was scheduled out of courtesy. The French leader said he did not consider the possibility of his Russian counterpart's visit to Paris except to exclusively discuss the Syrian file, and Hollande let him know he wouldn't take part in the opening of the new center and was only interested in talks about Syria. (Russia Today, 11/10/2016). Russia was furious and Moscow announced on 11/10/2016 the cancellation of the Russian president's visit to Paris. Thus, Russian-French tensions were high between the two countries.

4- French escalation continued: "French President Francois Hollande has said he does not plan to ease the pressure on Russia over its support for the Syrian government in its fight against rebels, but that he remains ready to meet President Vladimir Putin to discuss the war, a regional French newspaper reported on Sunday." (Reuters, 10/16/2016)

5-( The French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel strongly criticized on Thursday, 20/10/2016, the air strikes by Russia and the Syrian regime on the city of Aleppo, during a joint press conference with Merkel at the end of the French - German - Russian summit in Berlin. Hollande described these airstrikes as a "true war crime" ... For her part, Merkel described the Russian and Syrian raids on Aleppo as "inhumane" ...) (BBC Arabic, 20/10/2016)

**•These are the reasons for the escalation of tensions in the French-Russian relations, which have become the forefront of the events, especially the Syrian crisis ... especially that France, like Russia, is not good at political maneuvering, i.e. any tension leads to more tension and can reach to the point of straining of bilateral relations...**

**Fifth:** As for the impact of the tensions of the Russian-French relations on European relations in general and the implications of those relationships is as follows:

1-The Russian-French tension is a strain in Russia's relations with the whole of Europe, especially the effective European countries, Britain, and to some extent Germany. The position of France and its decision in the Security Council represents the European Union, including Britain, which is still a member, but Britain coordinates its policy with France greatly. France with its usual rash and uncalculated boldness represent the spearhead of the European Union and Britain in particular, in international politics, and more of an indication of that, is the speed in which the Russian-French tension turned into a British-Russian tension, "Shortly after the Security Council vote, the British representative confirmed strongly in his speech that the Russian veto represents the "shame" that we know of the actions of Russia" (Arab News, 8/10/2016). Also the Middle East Online stated on 11/10/2016, "If Russia continues on its current path then I think that great country is in danger of becoming a pariah nation," Johnson told parliament, calling on anti-war protest groups to demonstrate outside the Russian embassy. "I'd certainly like to see demonstrations outside the Russian embassy," he said. (Reuters) All the available evidence points to the responsibility of Russia for these terrible acts, referring to an attack on a convoy of humanitarian aid. Russia responded the next day according to the Russian Sputnik on 12/10/2016, "The Russian Defense Ministry considered Johnson's claims are caused by a neurological disease that affects all those harboring hostility to others. A spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry, Igor Konashenkov said that the allegations by Johnson represent symptoms of "Russophobic hysteria" which is inherent in some of Britain's political leaders"... and the statement that we

mentioned above: "Hollande described these airstrikes as a "true war crime" ... For her part, Merkel described the Russian and Syrian raids on Aleppo as "inhumane" ..." (BBC Arabic, 20/10/2016)

I.e. tension with Russia continues on to include the European Union, and there are more loud voices in Europe calling to put pressure on Russia and the imposition of new sanctions over it because of Syria. Thus, France, Britain and other European countries are moving towards further strained relations with Russia, expressing its rejection of Russia and its policies, and all in the hope that these countries will have a place in the Syrian crisis as being the number one issue internationally. These countries have no good intentions for Muslims, the issue for the European countries are not the massacres committed by Russia against the Muslims in Syria, since the positions of these countries are one of indifference to the bloodshed flowing as rivers in Syria during the past six years, rather their issue is that these countries want to be involved, as superpower countries, in resolving the Syrian issue...

2- Events have accelerated in the European Union with the tension in the French-Russian relations. "Britain and France called on the European Union to condemn Russia's air campaign in Syria and to impose further sanctions on Moscow ... the French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said that the pressure on Russia should be strong, pointing out that showing a unified position, the EU can move forward to stop what he described as massacres of the population in Aleppo. Britain and France want to impose a travel ban on twenty more Syrians, as well as adding 12 Russians to the sanctions list, which includes another two hundred, including three Iranians, for their role in current conflict in Syria ..." (Al-Jazeera, 17/10/2016). The subject of financial sanctions is practiced without issuing a sanctions' resolution: "Russia Today news network announced that a British Bank froze all its bank accounts, without stating the reason behind this decision. RT quoted the chief editor Margarita Simonyan as saying - in a tweet via her twitter account - "They blocked all our accounts in Britain, all of the accounts! the decision is not subject to revision." ..." (Al-Jazeera, 17/10/2016) ... "and the European leaders will discuss their relations with Russia in Brussels on Thursday, 20/10/2016, and one of the suggested options is to impose sanctions on Moscow as a result of its actions in Syria ..." (Reuters Arabic, 19/10/2016)

3- If the tension increased in the French and European relations with Russia, then the gateway of conflict between Russia and Europe will increase, and its repercussions will show in Ukraine or any other area in Eastern Europe, and European countries may impose sanctions on Russia. The causes of the increased tension in Russian- Europe relations are many, and not limited to the Syrian crisis even with its international importance, and if Russia did not take the initiative to show prudence in dealing with Europe, it will be the bigger loser of the deterioration of its relations with Europe. With its domination in the Syrian crisis, Russia does not show sufficient prudence in its international relations, at a time when the world is talking about war crimes in Syria, Russia increases the pace of bombardment of Aleppo, and it stems from Russian political short sight. They are reassured today due to their relations with America, and they know that the apparent tension in Russia's relations with the United States regarding Syria is not real. Amid this tension the US State Department announced that a meeting between Kerry and Lavrov will take place in Lausanne, and it was already held on 15/10/2016 after it engaged some followers and supporters to save face because they had already announced the suspension of meetings with Russia yet it is now meeting with it! At a time when it prevents Europe from attending!

4- It seems that Russia has realized its predicament, the United States made it the spearhead of the brutal bombing, and Europe took advantage of this artificial tension between America and Russia, and escalated the position against the Russian brutal attacks ... Russia wanted to soften the European pressure, so it began to speak of a truce. "Russia has announced a "humanitarian pause" in which it will stop its bombardment of the Syrian city of Aleppo. Russia has said it will stop the bombardment of the city of Aleppo next Thursday 20/10/2016 for eight hours, starting at eight in the morning local time, 5 am GMT

until four o'clock in the afternoon... This move comes in conjunction with the news of the killing of 14 people from one family, during the aerial bombardment of Aleppo..." (BBC, 17/10/2016) Putin also agreed to discuss the Syrian issue with the Europeans after previously rejecting to do so with Hollande: "The French presidency announced yesterday, that the French president Francois Hollande and the Russian president Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, will hold a "workshop" dealing with the Syrian crisis, today on Wednesday in Berlin ..." (Agencies, Khaleej Newspaper, 19/10/2016).

**\* Thus, the tension in the French-Russian relations has reflected on the European Union and pushed Russia in trouble with Europe, and it is trying to find a way out of this impasse. It met with EU and discussed the Syrian crisis after refusing to discuss it with Hollande, which caused the cancelation of Putin's visit and the escalation in the heat of events more than before...**

**Sixth:** Will the result of these events change the regional or international parties involved in the Syria crisis? It is expected that no change will take place, the international actors will remain the same: i.e. America and its proxies Russia, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, will remain the same. And the European Union does not have much of a chance, despite the escalation in Europe's tone against Russia and its strenuous attempt to get closer to America, to have a role in the Syrian crisis. America called for the Lausanne meeting on 15/10/2016 and excluded Europe from attending, Russia, was close to American in that meeting, despite what was shown by the Americans in terms of breaking up with Russia and strained relations! When America noticed that Europe is annoyed by this, America called for a meeting of consolation on 16/10/2016 with Europe without the presence of the other parties and chatted with them, nothing significant happened in that meeting, ended pretty much as it started.

**Therefore it is likely that the international role in the Syrian crisis will remain confined to the United States, and Russia's proxies, and furthermore the followers.**

This is in terms of international and regional parties, they plot and scheme but in Ash-Sham and other places there are men faithful to Allah (swt), honest with the Messenger of Allah (saw) who would not enable America and Russia and their followers to achieve their cunning evil plans for stability in ash-Sham, Allah willing, be like those who preceded them:

﴿قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَى اللَّهُ بُنْيَانَهُمْ مِنَ الْقَوَاعِدِ فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ﴾

**"Those before them had already plotted, but Allah came at their building from the foundations, so the roof fell upon them from above them, and the punishment came to them from where they did not perceive." [An-Nahl: 26]**

19 Muharram 1438 AH

20/10/2016 CE