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THE ARMENIANS IN SYRIA AND THE NUBAR OZANIAN BRIGADE AFTER THE REGIME CHANGE

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The fall of the Assad regime after the long civil war in Syria marked the beginning of a new era and transformation, not only for Syria, but also for the region. On the one hand, the new order that is expected to be established in Syria is underway, and on the other hand, it is being questioned what kind of influence this new order will have on the region.

When the process in the region is analyzed in the context of Azerbaijan-Armenia relations, it is seen that Türkiye and Azerbaijan acted as allies during the civil war in Syria, while Armenia continued to cooperate with the Assad regime. In an interview on April 17, on the occasion of Syria's Independence Day, Armenian President Khachaturian congratulated the ousted President Assad, stating that he cherishes the centuries-old Armenian-Syrian friendly relations and highly values the development of cooperation in various fields.[1] These good relations were not only verbal, but in 2019 Armenia sent a 100 troops to Aleppo in Syria, which is under the control of the Assad regime.[2] The Assad regime also openly expressed its support for Armenia during the Karabakh War II.[3]

With these developments, there is a similarity between what the Assad regime in Syria inflicted on the Syrian people and what the Armenian-backed forces inflicted on the Azerbaijanis in Karabakh. Like the Syrians in Syria who were forced to flee their lands due to the war, Azerbaijanis who faced Armenian occupation during the First Karabakh War were also forced to flee. While the Assad regime tortured dissidents in the Sednaya Prison, Azerbaijanis captured in the same way were subjected to various tortures and captivity.[4]

As a result of Armenia's policies, Armenians living under Assad's rule have not been subjected to any pressure or emigration by the regime and have always stated that they maintain good relations with Assad.[5] Likewise, Assad has invited Armenians who have emigrated from Syria to return to the country and emphasized his trust in Syrian Armenians with the words Armenians are our trusted, beloved and hardworking citizens

and they have contributed greatly to the development of Syria.[6]

The development of good relations between Assad's Syria and Armenia has led to the evolution of the activities of terrorist groups in the region. One of these terror groups is the Nubar Ozanyan Brigade, which was established on April 24, 2019 as a battalion of the YPG/PKK. The terrorist brigade, which states that it was established to protect Syrian Armenians and defend Rojava against Türkiye, has announced that it will operate in Hasakah, Ras al-Ayn and Amoudah, and in the Tel Abyadi, Aynularab and Ras al-Ayn regions on the Turkish border.[7] It is also claimed that members of the terrorist group went to Armenia to fight against Azerbaijan in the Karabakh War.

The terrorist group, whose activities gained momentum as a result of the relations developed with the Assad government, has occasionally issued statements that they will protect Syria from Türkiye. After the fall of the Assad regime, the terrorist group began to engage in disruptive activities against the current regime. The group issued another statement on December 19, reiterating its previous pledge to defend Syria in light of the recent events.[8]

As a result, the terrorist group, which operated in Syria under the Assad regime without being suppressed by the regime, is taking steps to destabilize the region in order to benefit from the current conjuncture after the regime change. Ensuring a stable regime in Syria, restricting the area of activity of terrorist groups in the region, and ensuring security in the region with the official military will be the key to the stabilization of Syria.

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