Syria: A New Aggravation of the Situation

Recently, the relations between Syria and Turkey worsened to such an extent that official Damascus was forced to send a complaint to the UN. Syria’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Bashar al-Jafari, sent a message to the UN Secretary General and the President of the UN Security Council, where he stated that the Turkish Army had assisted in the terrorist attack on the Syrian-Turkish border.

“As part of ongoing efforts taken by some regimes in the region and abroad to undermine the political measures to solve the crisis in Syria, and to continue a course of violence and terror, the armed terrorist groups, the majority of which are associated with terrorist organizations such as Jabhat al-Nusra and the Army of Islam penetrated into Turkish territory and attacked the Syrian side on the Syrian-Turkish border near Kasab in the north of Latakia,” the documents state. When the official Syrian Army units repelled the attack, the Turkish Army assisted the attackers, giving them logistical and military assistance.

In other words, this position of Ankara provides sufficient evidence of Turkey supporting terrorism in the region, thus proving that Turkey is providing military support to Al-Qaeda and its affiliated organizations. Consequently, this is a flagrant violation of international law, the UN Charter and foundations of friendly and neighbourly relations between countries.

Therefore, the Syrian government demanded that the UN Security Council condemn the terrorist attack from Turkey and Turkey’s participation, which consisted in providing assistance and cover for the attack on Syrian territory. Moreover, the government demanded forcing the Turkish authorities to refrain from giving any overt or covert assistance to terrorist groups, belonging to the Al-Qaeda organization, in Syria.

We can recall that the day before, members of radical Islamist groups of the Islamic Front penetrated from Turkish territory and attacked border checkpoints. The attackers managed to capture a few blockhouses, but soon, with the support of military aircraft, the Syrian army was able to repel them. In this battle near Latakia, 7 Syrian soldiers and 17 militants were killed.

It is worth mentioning, in this context, the incident of Syrian aircraft being attacked by Turkey. Turkish authorities claim that Turkish defenses shot down the Syrian plane for violations of its airspace. According to Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, the Syrian fighter plane trespassed about one kilometer into Turkish airspace, and that is why it was shot down. According to the representative of the Syrian Armed Forces, the Syrian fighter plane was shot down as it was preparing to attack a group of rebels in the province of Latakia, near the border with Turkey. Official Damascus called the actions of the Turkish side “an act of naked aggression”.

The UN Secretary-General and his senior advisers are in contact with the authorities in Syria and Turkey in connection with reports about the downed Syrian aircraft, said the deputy spokesperson of UN Secretary, Farhan Haq. “The UN leadership calls on the parties to establish the circumstances of this incident, and to refrain from
further hostilities and take steps to de-escalate the situation. Reciprocal actions may worsen the situation, which neither of the parties will benefit from,” said Farhan Haq.

“In the context of the events that have occurred in northern Syria, we appeal to all stakeholders to show restraint and prevent any military escalation,” this information was presented in the comments issued by the Information and Press Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry. “It is clear that in the current tense atmosphere, it is necessary that all parties act in strict accordance with Geneva Communique of June 30, 2012 (according to which, all the parties and countries in the region participated in the international conference on Syria in Montreux on January 22, 2014).

“We still believe,” notes the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “that the armed conflict can be stopped only through dialogue and not through force, which would prove fatal for Syria, and for the whole Middle East, as well as threaten the entire international community. We believe that the current situation requires joint efforts of all parties in the name of a decisive struggle against the phenomenon of terrorism, which should not have any support, as the well-known UN Security Council provisions require.”

Despite all the difficulties in the ongoing civil war, which is actively being famed by the West and some conservative regimes of the Persian Gulf, Syria is meticulously fulfilling its international obligations. First of all, this concerns the removal of chemical weapons from Syrian territory. Syria is getting rid of one third of its chemical weapons under an agreement signed between Russia and the U.S., as was reported by Reuters, referring to the representatives of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). International experts have reported on the shipment out of the country of the sixth lot of the dangerous weapons, which Damascus possessed. The organization plans to take abroad the rest of the arsenals by the end of April, and then by the end of June to destroy all stocks of deadly gases. The OPCW staff, dealing with the question of Syrian chemical weapons, believes this term to be quite realistic.

Six lots, according to the BBC, represent 35% of all chemical weapons, declared by the Syrian authorities. At the same time, the exported arsenals represent 23% of the most dangerous substances of first-degree priority, and 63% of the least dangerous arsenals, which are considered as being in the secondary-degree priority.

These chemical weapons are usually sent from the Mediterranean port of Latakia, and that is why, it is not surprising to see the increased activities of the militants in this region. The weapons are transported by trucks from Syrian military depots to shore warehouses. After that, the toxic weapons are loaded onto Danish and Norwegian cargo ships, which move under the protection of warships. Ultimately, the chemicals are transferred to the American ship MV Cape Ray, which is provided with special equipment to neutralize the hundreds of tons of hazardous chemicals.

Damascus has brought its military-chemical potential to zero, according to Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “There have been destroyed chemical weapons production facilities, special equipment for its mixing and equipment, and means of delivery,” announced the Ministry, adding that the only chemical warfare agent available to Damascus, yperite, has been completely taken out of the country. Meanwhile, the Ministry noted that Moscow was “not inclined to dramatize” the fact that the Syrian authorities have failed to meet export deadlines, set by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

At the meeting with the Director General of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Ahmet Üzümcü (The Hague, March 24, 2014), Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said: “We appreciate your professionalism and that of your employees in all that you do, and especially as concerns the Syrian chemical disarmament process, where such is required.

I am glad that the process is developing satisfactorily. We have all the prerequisites to believe that the terms will be met and the chemical weapons will be removed from the territory of Syria by mid-2014.”

Apparently, it is difficult not to agree with Moscow’s position, which calls for continuing the ongoing dialogue between all stakeholders, in order to solve the bloody Syrian conflict. Only by means of peace talks will it be possible to end to the civil war and the wave of terrorism that threatens to flood the entire Middle East.

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