

The “Civil Peace” Conference in Damascus: Overlooking Facts and Exoneration of the Henchmen of the Previous Bashar Regime

(Translated)

By: Naser Sheikh Abdul Hai*

On Tuesday, June 10, 2025, the “Civil Peace Committee” held a press conference at the Ministry of Information building in Damascus, to address the latest developments related to the committee’s work. The event was led by committee member Hassan Soufan and attended by the spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, Nour Al-Din Al-Baba, and Minister of Information, Hamza Mustafa.

Soufan opened the conference, by raising the issue of officers recently released from the ranks of the defunct regime. He explained that they had joined the military effort since 2021, and had voluntarily turned themselves in via the Iraqi border and the Al-Sukhna region, under what is known as the “safe conduct.” They underwent investigations, during which no responsibility for war crimes was proven.

Soufan emphasized that their continued detention lacks legal justification and does not serve the nationalistic interest, particularly given the sensitive security situation, in areas like the coastal region. He stressed that their release is part of measures aimed at promoting civil peace, and is not a substitute for transitional justice.

Local media outlets reported that the release was mediated by Fadi Saqr, a former leader of the so-called National Defense Militia, who is accused of committing war crimes against civilians during the era of the former regime. Meanwhile, Socrates Al-Ruhayyah, one of the released detainees accused of committing war crimes in the cities of Jobar and Madaya in Damascus and its countryside, published a video clip in which he thanked Fadi Saqr for his mediation in securing the release. This sparked public outrage on social media platforms.

Soufan stated that the presence of controversial figures like Fadi Saqr, a former militia leader affiliated with the previous regime’s forces, within this process sometimes helps to untangle security and social complexities, even though the committee understands the anger felt by the families of martyred victims of the former regime.

This press conference sparked a widespread wave of outrage among Syrians, especially among the families of martyrs and the missing, as well as supporters of the revolution, due to the stances it adopted, which many considered a compounded injustice and a clear provocation to the victims’ families. It was seen as a blatant disregard for the sacrifices of the revolutionaries, a belittling of the blood of their martyrs, a denial of glaring facts, and an explicit attempt to justify war criminals and normalize relations with icons of the defunct previous regime under the banner of “civil peace” and “prevention of bloodshed.”

The public outrage was ignited following Soufan’s remarks during the conference, in which he defended the policy of releasing several officers from the former regime without prosecuting them through public legal trials, foremost among them Fadi Saqr, while ignoring their blood-soaked records. Soufan even went as far as to describe some of them as “partners in victory,” claiming they contributed to “preventing further Syrian bloodshed” and “cooperated with the military leadership during the liberation battles.” He challenged critics to provide “credible evidence” of their involvement in crimes.

As the poet rightly said, وَلَيْسَ يَصِحُّ فِي الْأَفْهَامِ شَيْءٌ * إِذَا إحتَاجَ النَّهَارُ إِلَى دَلِيلٍ “Nothing can be understood or accepted— when daylight itself needs evidence”!

No sooner had Soufan announced the exoneration of these officers than social media platforms and online pages were flooded with visual documentation and evidence proving the involvement of several of the released individuals, foremost among them Fadi Saqr and Socrates Al-Ruhayyah, in killings and blatant violations against civilians.

What enraged people the most, however, was Soufan’s claim that figures like Fadi Saqr play a role in untangling crises, resolving problems, and confronting the dangers facing the country. He asserted that transitional justice does not mean holding every person who served the former regime accountable, but rather focusing on the senior criminals responsible for severe crimes and violations. He argued that including controversial figures in the reconciliation process is part of an attempt to address the country’s structural crises.

Soufan further stated that granting safe conduct to Fadi Saqr came after assessing the overall situation and that he was given amnesty by the leadership, instead of being detained, based on a situational judgment, as a means to prevent bloodshed in volatile areas and to reassure local community platforms.

This press conference served as a confirmation of the current administration’s trajectory during the transitional phase and its policies, whether in dealing with remnants of the former regime, shifting its stance on the revolution’s core principles and goals, or addressing the demands of the revolution’s supporters for justice and accountability of those involved in the spilling of innocent blood.

This led many to assert that no party has the right to forfeit the rights of the victims, to forgive on their behalf for their blood and dignity, or to equate the oppressor with the victim. Warnings were also raised about the potential escalation of tensions, due to the disregard for the feelings of the families of martyrs and the missing, as they witness the release of one war criminal after another, considering such pardons as a “partnership in the crime.”

The issue of lifting sanctions has been a point of pressure exerted by the US and Europe on the current administration to impose their vision of governance, steer its direction, and control its pace, ranging from the so-called “war on terror,” to enforcing secularism, to violating the country’s sovereignty, by keeping it tethered to the West and its decisions and dictated agendas. This includes the gradual reintegration of remnants of the defunct regime, and its thugs, into state institutions, under various flimsy pretexts, slogans, and justifications.

As for publicly glorifying the criminal Fadi Saqr and others like him, without the slightest sense of shame, it constitutes a blatant provocation to the feelings of Syrians, especially given his appearance alongside the Governor of Damascus, with all the implications and messages such an image conveys.

Instead of prosecuting those involved through clear and swift criminal law, authorities resort to deceptive and hollow initiatives under the guise of dialogue, national unity, civil peace, and societal reconciliation. It is as if the events of the past 14 years were merely a civil war, and not one of the greatest revolutions in history!

It is a striking irony that while a handful of individuals with a criminal history against the revolution and its people now dominate the scene, a large number of Dawah carriers, prisoners of conscience, revolutionaries, and mujahideen continue to languish unjustly in the prisons of Idlib for years. At the same time, many of our people remain stranded in

displacement camps, unable to afford returning to their hometowns to rebuild the homes that were destroyed by those who have merely changed their skins and swapped roles.

The appearance of Fadi Saqr and many former regime-era leaders at the forefront of those calling for “civil peace,” along with the provision of security protection for them, as well as for prominent businessmen and notorious war criminals known for their loyalty to and support of the defunct regime who have recently returned to Damascus, adds to the outrage. This also includes pro-regime militias, artists, and public figures who for years supported the fugitive tyrant and shamelessly called for killing and destruction, yet remain safe and unaccountable under the pretext of “civil peace.”

All of this only fuels feelings of resentment and anger among the general Syrian population, especially among the families of martyrs and the missing.

The revolutionary base and its strength, drawn from its faith and conviction, is the natural support, after Allah (swt), for any governance that seeks honor through Islam. Turning one's back on this base, and its immense sacrifices in the mistaken belief that the approval of America and the West is the path to salvation is a dangerous slope and a looming evil, whose harm and consequences, Allah forbid, will affect everyone.

Allah (swt) has clearly shown us in His Book the ideological way to deal with our enemies who lie in wait, seeking every opportunity to strike us.

The revolution in Al-Sham rose to end an era of oppression and oppressors. It emerged with clearly defined goals and unshakable principles, to establish justice, security, safety, tranquility, and a dignified and prosperous life, so that people may live with honor, victory, and empowerment.

This can only be achieved after fulfilling the first of these principles, which is the overthrow of the defunct former regime, by implementing Islam through an Islamic State governed by the laws, rulings, and legislation of the Deen. It must be a system that stems from the core of our creed, as commanded by our Lord, not a secular system that separates Deen from life, the state, and society, a system the West seeks to impose on us. Such a system only pleases our enemies, brings us misery, and drags us back to square one, in terms of suffering, injustice, and subjugation to the enemies of the Ummah across the East and West.

﴿إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ﴾

“Indeed in that is a reminder for whoever has a heart or who listens while he is present in mind.” [TMQ Surah Qaf 50:37]

*** Member of the Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir in Wilayah Syria**