**A Brief Insight into some of the Important facts related to Developments in Syria \***

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**1.What is going on in Turkey in a nutshell in connection with refugees?**

Turkey has been conducting a major fight at Europe’s doorstep for nine years, the Syrian crisis, which has constantly brought new disasters for humanity. Since May 2019, the crisis has taken a new turn. The regime in Damascus intensified its already brutal military campaign against millions of innocent Syrians cornered in Idlib province. It is no longer possible for Turkey to defend Europe alone, in the face of European indifference and in spite of Europe itself. Millions of people displaced people in Syria are on their way to Turkish borders. The Middle East is in Europe’s immediate vicinity. Turkey has become the country with the most asylum-seekers in the world. Criticizing Turkey for not receiving additional millions does not make any sense.

**2. How does Turkey perceive the background of the crisis ?**

After the Syrian civil war started in 2011, the Assad regime started to wage a war against its people, in response to legitimate demands from the Syrian people. At least half a million people have lost their lives and nearly ten million have been displaced to date.  Cities have been destroyed; people are worn down. 3.6 million of the asylum seekers -meaning two-thirds of all Syrian asylum seekers in the world- have come to Turkey.

Among many terrorist organizations, including PKK/YPG, that have taken up residence in Syria, the only one that the international community has fought against jointly was DAESH. Even so, the real turning point in the fight against DAESH was Turkey’s military operation "Euphrates Shield", launched in 2016. DAESH was wiped out from an large area. And after that, it could not recover itself anymore. Since 2014, the Assad regime, with the support of Russia and Iran, has started a total, destructive offensive against the opposition, ignoring civilians. Turkey tried to contribute to the search for a solution with Russia and Iran, rather than seeking a solution with actors who had no effect on the field or at the negotiating table. It was also necessary to revitalise and save the UN process, protect the lives of thousands of people and prevent them from becoming refugees. With the formula of "Astana Mechanism", ways to protect people against the mass destruction strategy of the Assad regime were developed. And finally, such a mechanism was established in Idlib. There are also radical elements there, and Turkey has taken the initiative to separate moderates from the radicals. During that, on the pretext of fighting terrorism, the Assad regime attacked, without making any distinction, the civilian population and most recently, Turkish soldiers who were deployed as observers of the ceasefire. Now, the regime has seen what it means to attack Turkish soldiers and it will continue to do so.

When all this was happening and especially in the phase after 2014 -during which the Assad regime focused on the strategy to destroy its own cities and citizens with outside support- the influx of people escaping from Syria to other countries accelerated. All neighbouring countries became overcrowded with them. Turkey has become the country with the most asylum-seekers in the world. In 2015, chaos broke out in Europe when asylum-seekers turned towards Europe, leaving Turkey. On 18 March 2016, Turkish government reached an agreement with the EU. This agreement left the burden of the asylum-seekers mainly to Turkey yet again. Nevertheless, Turkey welcomed the fact that the EU was prepared, albeit only partially, to share the burden. Mutual commitments were made and in the last four years, Turkey has fulfilled all its obligations under the 18 March Agreement.

**3. Is it true that the EU makes significant financial contributions to Turkey for Syrian refugees? Does the EU actually contribute to Turkey so that the latter would cope with Syrian refugees more easily ?**

It is not true that the EU makes significant financial contributions to Turkey for Syrian refugees given the fact that Turkey all alone spent around 40 billion dollars. The EU, has still not kept its promises on the following issues:

-A contribution of six billion euros was to be made, however only half of it has been delivered. And that contribution did not reach Turkey or the asylum-seekers directly, but was passed on to various humanitarian aid agencies. That amount is not even worth mentioning, bearing in mind that Turkey spent at least forty billion US Dollars from its own resources in that respect; however even this amount of six billion has not been delivered.

-A Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme has not been  launched.

-Turkey was not supported in implementing its proposal for the establishment of a secure zone in Syria.

In addition, the EU commitments to Turkey regarding the upgrading of the Customs Union, Visa Liberalisation, revitalisation of the Accession negotiations, holding of Turkey-EU summits and cooperation in the fight against terrorism have also not been fulfilled.

**4. What is the significance of Idlib ?**

Turkey has long insisted that “order in Idlib must be maintained, so that the population of four million people can be protected against a criminal regime and the outbreak of a flow of asylum-seekers can be prevented”. Unfortunately, voices supporting Turkey were very weak. As a result, Idlib once again left its mark in human history with blood – turning into a tragedy in 2020. The area has been razed to the ground by aircrafts of the regime's supporters. Since December 2019 alone, almost two thousand  civilians have lost their lives and at least one and a half million -80% of them being  women and children- have been moving towards the Turkish border. Turkey can no longer shoulder this burden alone. It should not be forgotten that almost four hundred million US Dollars is needed for the next six months alone to provide support to the people displaced from Idlib.

The attacks of the tyrannical Assad regime have not been limited to his own people. Most recently, an airstrike by the Assad regime on Turkish soldiers, who were protecting the de-escalation zone, thirty-six Turkish soldiers became martyrs.

**5. Is Turkey blackmailing ? :**

It should be underlined once again: Turkey can no longer shoulder the heavy burdens that it has assumed alone. It is indecent to regard this statement as a threat, blackmail or political manoeuvre. Turkey continues to provide the necessary protection and support to approximately four million people in its territories. It adheres to the principle of non-refoulement. There is no change in Turkish refugee policy. On the other hand, Turkey has no obligation to stop the asylum-seekers wishing to move on to safe countries. Turkey will not stop asylum-seekers who prefer to leave its country and go to safe countries by their own free will. Actually, Turkish authorities do not have the right to do so either. However, according to international law and the EU law, the countries they are going to must accept them. Just as Turkey has done so.

**6. What is the solution of the current problems ?**

Basically, for the vast and challenging environment in which Europe finds itself, the best strategy is cooperation with Turkey and mutual respect. Turkey is a member of NATO and a candidate country to the EU. The problems of Europe or its vicinity will not be solved in one day. However, without Turkey's help, they cannot be solved at all. This is clear as crystal and it is up to our European friends to understand it or not. During his visit Brussels on 9 March 2020, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with the EU's top officials and demanded more support in this regard.

There are still millions of people left in Turkey. We should, in cooperation with the UN, create conditions for their voluntary, regular, safe and dignified return. In addition, the EU should not generate irresponsibility, but responsibility. It also should cooperate, above all, with Turkey.

The main problem of our age is displaced persons. The most sensible thing to do is to solve this problem at its source. As regards Syria, our solution is as follows: together, we must prevent Assad's military solution and revive the political process. We must work together to ensure that Syrians can return to and settle in the areas freed from terrorists by Turkey. Furthermore, without distinguishing between terrorist organisations, we must together strengthen our fight against terrorism. We must also work towards an order in the Middle East, based on territorial integrity and universal norms.