

US-led Coalition Intends to Turn Raqqa into ‘Second Mosul’: “Counter-terrorism” Pretext and Fate of 400,000 Civilians

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Global Research, April 02, 2017

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity, Terrorism, US NATO War Agenda](#)

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The situation in Mosul is deteriorating on a daily basis and it's most likely that Syria's Raqqa will face the same. The U.S. Command is reportedly considering launching a so-called "counter-terrorist operation" there in the near future.

The U.S.-led coalition has repeatedly demonstrated destructive consequences of its actions. The coalition Air Force regularly strikes residential areas of Mosul, resulting in dozens and even hundreds of civilians casualties. Besides, it was proved that the coalition forces used depleted uranium munitions.

In this regard, on Thursday, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, **Stephen O'Brien**, stressed that that the Syrian armed groups and the US-led international coalition should ensure the safety of the population during the upcoming counter-terrorist operation in Raqqa.

He also expressed concern about the fate of 400,000 civilians, who may suffer because of the operation. According to Under-Secretary O'Brien, the UN continues to receive reports that "fighting and air strikes result in deaths and injuries of scores of civilians and damage to civilian infrastructure, including schools, bakeries, markets and water infrastructure".

In particular, O'Brien drew attention to the air strike that had targeted a school near Raqqa on March 21, as well as the strikes at a bakery and a market in Tabqa on March 22. In addition, on March 27, as a result of the coalition air strike in the same area, several volunteer engineers who visited the Tabqa Dam to evaluate damage were killed.

The majority of the Syrian experts consider that the coalition's efforts to capture the main ISIS stronghold in Syria is unlikely to lead to any positive results. Considering that the US-led coalition command doesn't intend to coordinate its plans and actions with the Syrian government, experts predict that the so-called "counter-terrorist" operation will be delayed indefinitely and will lead massive casualties among civilians.

It should be mentioned that during the recent negotiations in Geneva, Syria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, **Bashar Ja'afari**, said that any U.S. involvement in Raqqa would be illegitimate. He also stressed that the operation would be a direct violation of the sovereignty of Syria.

His opinion was also shared by Stephen O'Brien. He described the current situation in Syria as "one of the largest man-made humanitarian crisis", that had left hundreds of thousands of people killed and millions injured, while over 5 million people became refugees.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon has recently stated that the coalition command doesn't intend to change its combat tactics. This is another proof that the coalition ignores and will continue to ignore civilian casualties caused by its air strikes.

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