

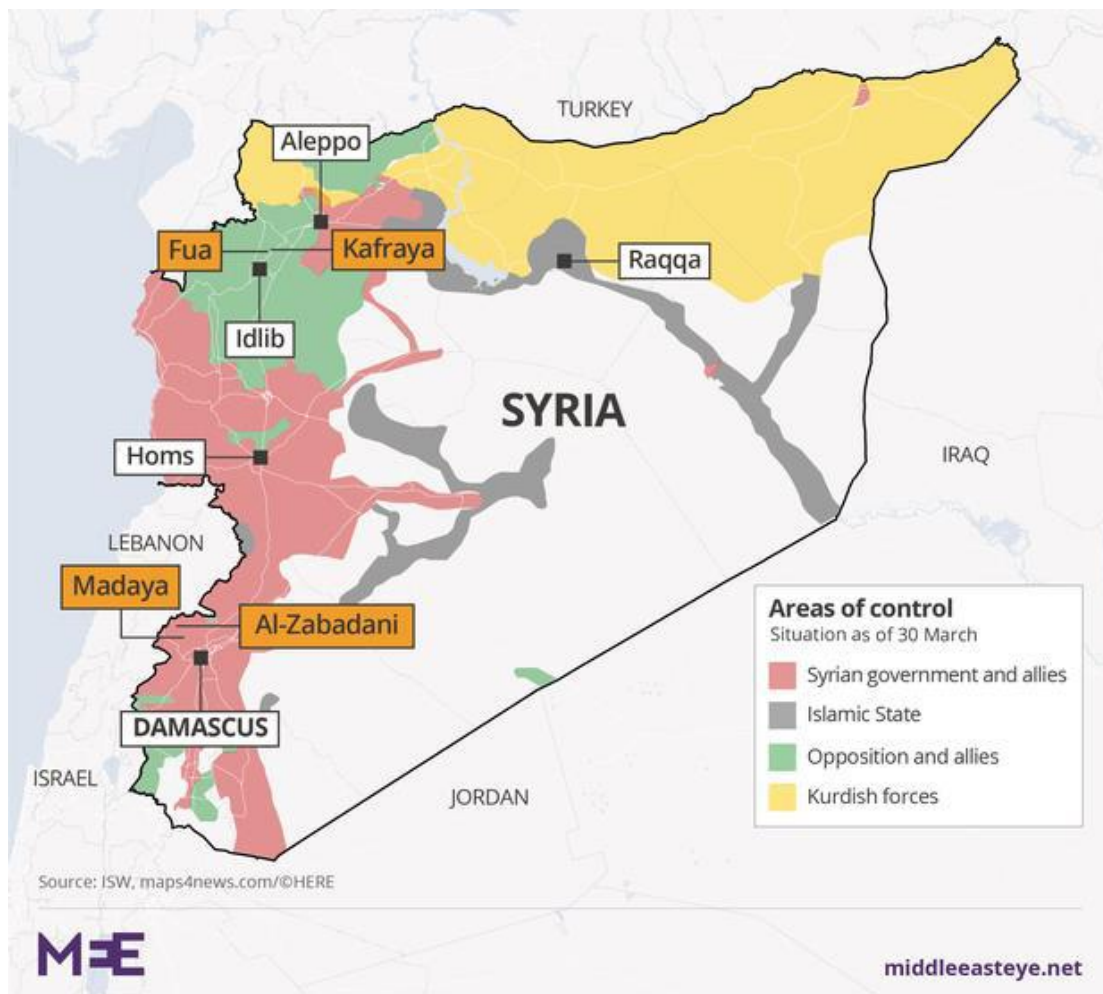
A New Demographic Reality: The Motives and Impacts of Ethno-Sectarian Reshuffle in Syria

Tuesday, February 20, 2018

Lancaster Hotel, Beirut

KAS Syria/Iraq Office

Maison du Futur



CONCEPT NOTE

A New Demographic Reality: The Motives and Impacts of Ethno-Sectarian Reshuffle in Syria

The Syrian civil war, which has led to large-scale destructions and humanitarian disaster, is approaching its eighth year. Largely unnoticed by the public, the developments of the past years have also brought a shift in Syria's demographic framework. As this is significantly altering realities on the ground, it could have a long-term effect on the country's ethno-sectarian structures.

Throughout the past years, three different types of demographic reshuffle could be observed in Syria, the most prominent example of which being the "Four-Town-Agreement". Negotiated by Iran and Qatar, a swap between the Shia populations of the towns Al Fu'ah and Kafarya in the Idlib Governorate and the Sunni inhabitants of Madaya and Zabadani in the Rif Dimashq Governorate was initiated. This demographic reshuffle is allegedly intended to establish a sectarian divide throughout the country with the purpose of making it easier for the regime to control its core territories. In addition, the phenomenon of "Shiification" has been increasingly mentioned in expert coverage of the topic. This describes not only the strategic purchase of large properties by Iranians, but also the focused settlement of non-Syrian Hezbollah fighters and their families in the Qalamoun Mountains. Besides the sectarian aspect contributing to a possible new demographic reality in Syria, the conflict of the Kurds and Turks in the North is ongoing, with both parties trying to gain influence. This includes the expulsion of Arab families and the destruction of their properties in the province of Raqqa by the Kurds, as well as the targeted settlement of Turkmen in the Turkish-controlled area of the Euphrates Shield corridor.

In light of these circumstances, this conference brings together experts aiming to discuss these developments on the ground in detail, debate the intentions behind them, and give an outlook on the impacts that an ethno-sectarian reshuffle might have on the political, economic and social aspects of a future Syria.

PROGRAM

09:00 – 09:30 Welcoming Words

09:30 – 11:00 **Panel 1: Approaching Seven Years of War – Demographic Shifts in Syria**

- Input 1: Madaya, Zabadani, Al Fu'ah, Kafarya – The Regime's Strategy of Population Swaps
- Input 2: Silent Sectarian Cleansing? Iran's "Shiification" of Syria
- Input 3: Ethnic Reshuffle in the North – Turkish and Kurdish Ambitions
- Questions and Answers

11:00 – 11:30 **Coffee Break**

11:30 – 13:00 **Panel 2: A New Syrian Reality? The Scope and Impact of Ethnic-Sectarian Reshuffle**

- Input 1: The Politics of Demographic Shifts – What Future for a Sustainable Solution?
- Input 2: Location Matters – What Changes for the Economic Structure of Syria?
- Input 3: Towards Further Polarization? Effects on the Syrian Society, Reconciliation and the National Identity
- Questions and Answers

13:00 – 14:30 **Lunch**