

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 13, 2018

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable John Bolton
National Security Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Mr. Bolton:

As Members of Congress and co-founders of the Friends of a Free, Democratic, and Stable Syria Caucus we are alarmed by recent developments in America's strategy to counter the barbaric regime of Bashar al-Assad.

The ongoing conflict in Syria has reached epic proportions with more than 500,000 Syrians dead, including more than 50,000 children. Over 13 million people in the country need humanitarian assistance and over 11 million people have been displaced by the violence. Bashar al-Assad, along with his Russian and Iranian backers, continues to kill and injure civilians with impunity as he seeks to consolidate his control over the last rebel-held areas in the country.

Last year, the United States, Jordan, and the Russian Federation agreed to establish a "de-escalation zone" in southwest Syria. However, recent reports indicate that Russian jets are targeting civilians in this area, constituting a gross violation of our agreement. We have also seen the Assad regime, backed by Iranian militias, within the southern de-escalation zone as part of the offensive, resulting in the displacement of over 320,000 people.

We formally request that the administration establish no-fly zones in southwest and eastern Syria, where we maintain a military presence, to ensure the safety of our coalition units, the humanitarian aid volunteers, and the Syrian citizens who have been forced to flee their homes. By bolstering these areas and making the U.S. presence known in the region, we can thwart the strongmen of Russia and Iran from pushing into these areas and targeting civilians.

In addition, we are alarmed by reports that the State Department has proposed closing American Forward Operating Bases in Syria in exchange for a withdrawal of Iranian-backed militias from the region. We believe that any early American withdrawal from Syria would simply hand victory to Assad and the Iranian and Russian regimes, jeopardize the security and safety of our regional allies, and abandon the Syrian people to the hands of an authoritarian murderer. By removing American troops from the region, we undoubtedly cede the territory won by our nation's military and partners to terrorist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda.

We ask that you work with your colleagues to establish a no-fly zone and to maintain a strong military presence in southwest and eastern Syria to deter such transgressions and further

demonstrate to the world that the United States is still the beacon of hope that continues to guide freedom-loving people to safety. Thank you for your leadership and consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



ADAM KINZINGER
Member of Congress



BRENDAN F. BOYLE
Member of Congress