

Course correction – Saving Ghouta

Given the deal to evacuate one militant group, Syria should reach out to the rest

The agreement reached between armed groups in Eastern Ghouta and a UN delegation to **evacuate** some militants from the **besieged enclave** is the first major concession the **rebels** have made since Syrian government attacks began a month ago. Under the deal, the Jaish al-Islam, the main rebel group, will evacuate militants linked to the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), formerly an al-Qaeda front, from Ghouta on the outskirts of Damascus. HTS militants will go to Idlib, a province in north-western Syria run by the rebels mainly the HTS. Over the past month, the rebels had refused to strike any deal with the **regime** even after repeated **bombardment**. At least 1,000 people have been killed in one month, with the UN warning of an "**apocalypse**" in Syria. The regime's argument was that it was seeking to liberate Eastern Ghouta from terrorist occupation. But about 400,000 people are **stuck** in the enclave; some report say the rebels are using them as human **shields**. But the regime and its Russian backers are paying little attention to human suffering. Last month, the UN Security Council **unanimously** passed a resolution calling for a **ceasefire** in Eastern Ghouta. Thereafter, the Syrian government eased the **siege** of the city, allowing aid groups to supply assistance. But the ceasefire is yet to take effect. The Russians, who voted for the resolution at the Security Council, continued to justify attacks by citing the presence of the HTS, which is linked to an internationally designated terrorist organisation.

With HTS fighters now being evacuated, it is an opportunity for Russia and the Syrian regime to cease **hostilities** and engage with the other armed groups, including Jaish and Faylaq al-Rahman, an affiliate of the Free Syrian Army. Both the rebels and the government can learn from the battle for eastern Aleppo, which regime forces captured in late 2016. After the rebels ran out of all options in the face of continued Syrian/Russian **assaults**, both from land and air, they finally decided to leave the city under Turkish mediation, handing it over to government forces. The battle for Eastern Ghouta bears an **eerie** similarity to that of eastern Aleppo. In Ghouta, the rebels do not have any meaningful support coming from outside that could allow them to resist regime forces. What they do now to **deter** regime advances is to shell the government controlled parts of Damascus and its suburbs, killing more civilians and giving further reason for the regime to justify its military operations. This will only **prolong** the conflict, **endangering** civilians on both sides. Given the Aleppo example and the reality on the group in Eastern Ghouta, the sooner the government forces and the armed gangs reach an agreement for evacuation, the better it will be for the hundreds of thousands of people in the enclave.

WORD LIST

1. **Evacuate** : (clear an area ; empty)

Synonym : abandon, depart, desert, discharge, displace, expel, leave, move out, pull out, remove, vacate, withdraw, decamp, eject, forsake, relinquish

2. **Besiege** : (surround; assault)
Synonym : beleaguer, beset, blockade, encircle, trap, assail, attack, confine, congregate, encompass
3. **Enclave** : (area of rule ; authority)
Synonym : ascendancy, authorization, command, commission, control, country, district, domain, dominance, domination, empire, government, jurisdiction, power, management, province.
4. **Rebel** : (Person who does not obey)
Synonym : guerrilla, insurgent, opponent, rioter, separatist, agitator, anarchist, antagonist.
5. **Regime** : (leadership of organization)
Synonym : administration, establishment, government, management, reign, rule, system, dynasty.
6. **Bombardment** : (barrage)
Synonym : assault, attack, blitz, bombing, onslaught, shelling.
7. **Apocalypse** : (mass destruction)
Synonym : annihilation, cataclysm, catastrophe, devastation, holocaust, end of the world.
8. **Stuck** : (tight)
Synonym : Stranded, perplexed, fastened, cemented, fast
9. **Unanimously** : (of one mind)
Synonym : collectively, commonly, consistently, universally, all together, communally
10. **Ceasefire** : (stop in fighting)
Synonym : armistice, truce, peace treaty, suspension of hostilities.
11. **Siege** : (beleaguer, as in blockade, as in hedge) (harass, besiege)
Synonym : annoy, bedevil, beset, plague, badger, harry, nag
12. **Hostility** : (antagonism, meanness)
Synonym : aggression, animosity, antipathy, bitterness, enmity, hatred, opposition, war, resentment.
13. **Assault** : (attack)
Synonym : charge, aggression, incursion, invasion, offensive, rape, onslaught, strike, violation.
14. **Eerie** : (spooky)
Synonym : awesome, bizarre, creepy, fantastic, frightening, ghostly, mysterious, scary, strange, supernatural, uncanny, weird.
15. **Deter** : (check, inhibit from action)
Synonym : avert, block, dampen, daunt, discourage, dissuade, forestall, frighten, hinder, impede, intimidate, obstruct, preclude, prevent, prohibit, restrain, scare, stop.
16. **Prolong** : (extend, draw out)
Synonym : continue, delay, drag out, lengthen, perpetuate, protract, stall, increase stretch.

Course correction – A welcome quietus

The Supreme Court finally ends unjustified curbs on Hadiya's personal freedom

Hadiya has at last won her freedom. The curious aspect of her case is that it took such a long time for the courts to acknowledge that the 25 year old woman from Kerala enjoys as much freedom of choice in her marriage as in her religious belief. The Kerala High Court had caused quite a **muddle** when it **annulled** her marriage **solely** on the **suspicion** that it was a ruse to scuttle habeas corpus proceedings before it. On her father's complaint that she had been **indoctrinated** and brainwashed into embracing Islam, and his fear that she was a victim of a movement to convert Hindu women and send them to overseas battle zones, the high court ordered her confinement in her parents' home. The Supreme Court's categorical ruling that the high court was wrong in invalidating a marriage under its writ jurisdiction constitutes a welcome end to the unjustified **curtailment** of her freedom of movement and her life choices. The **verdict**, for which detailed reasons are yet to be **pronounced**, restores the liberty of Ms. Hadiya, who chose to convert to Islam more than a year ago and later married a Muslim man. Last November, the **apex** court had freed her from her parents' custody and allowed her to complete her **internship** as part of a homoeopathy course she had taken up in Tamil Nadu. However, even this was somewhat unsatisfactory, as it appeared to be a compromised between being in parental custody and being allowed to live with her husband.

It is possible that her father, K.M. Asokan, was **gripped** by fear as her conversion came **amid** reports of **radical** groups recruiting young people on behalf of the Islamic State. The high court did not question her conversion, but suspected the **veracity** of her claim that she was married, as it happened in a day's break between hearings. However, these facts were not enough for the court to annul the marriage and label it a "sham". The court made odd observations on how a woman's marriage requires the involvement of her parents and that Ms. Hadiya was "at a vulnerable age". Even in the Supreme Court, Ms. Hadiya could explain to the judges that she stood by her marriage to Shafin Jahan only after other parties had advanced arguments on "indoctrination" and "**conspiracy**" and the National Investigation Agency had its say. Finally, the court has now given primacy to her view. The implications of her **ordeal** are disquieting: it is not difficult in this country to question the life choices of an adult woman by casting doubts on her volition and personal autonomy, and her freedom to choose her way of life can sometimes be judicially curtailed. While a lawful investigation into organised recruitment by radical groups must not be impeded, courts should strive even harder to protect personal freedoms without being swayed by mere suspicion.

WORD LIST

1. **Muddle** : (confused state)
Synonym : ataxia, awkwardness, chaos, clutter, complexity, complication, confusion, difficulty, dilemma, disorder, hash, haze, mess.

2. **Annul** : (void an agreement)
Synonym : abolish, abrogate, cancel, declare, delete, dissolve, invalidate, nullify, quash, reverse, revoke, undo, vacate
3. **Solely** : (only, alone)
Synonym : completely, entirely, exclusively, individually, merely, purely, simply, totally, wholly
4. **Suspicion** : (doubt, hint, trace)
Synonym : conjecture, cynicism, distrust, impression, jealousy, misgiving, mistrust, notion, skepticism, uncertainty, wariness.
5. **Scuttle** : (destroy)
Synonym : abandon, sink, submerge
6. **Indoctrinated** : (convinced)
Synonym : brainwashed, persuaded, programmed, educate, indoctrinate, convince, influence, instil
7. **Curtailment** : (decrease)
Synonym : abbreviation, condensation, cutback, reduction, devaluation discount, rebate, degradation, minimization.
8. **Verdict** : (law judgement)
Synonym : answer, award, conclusion, decision, decree, finding, opinion, ruling, sentence.
9. **Pronounced** : (distinct, evident)
Synonym : clear-cut, conspicuous, decided, definite, marked, noticeable, obvious, unmistakable
10. **Apex** : (top, high point)
Synonym : apogee, culmination, pinnacle, climax, crest, crown, height, maximum, peak, zenith, roof, summit.
11. **Internship** : (teaching fellowship) (teacher's assistantship)
Synonym : graduate, fellowship
12. **Grip** : (hold tightly)
Synonym : clutch, grasp, clasp, clinch, nab, seize, snag, snatch.
13. **Amid** : (middle)
Synonym : amidst, among, amongst, between, during, mid, over, throughout
14. **Radical** : (fundamental, basic, deviating by extremes)
Synonym : profound, basal, bottom, cardinal, constitutional, essential, native, natural, organic, original primary, primitive, foundational, inherent, innate.
15. **Veracity** : (truth)
Synonym : accuracy, authenticity, credibility, fairness, genuineness, honesty, impartiality, integrity, probity, rectitude, rightness, sincerity, trustworthiness, truthfulness, actuality, exactness, reality
16. **Conspiracy** : (collusion in plan)
Synonym : Plot, scheme, sedition, treason, cabal, connivance.
17. **Ordeal** : (trouble, suffering)
Synonym : agony, anguish, calamity, difficulty, nightmare, torment, torture, trial

SOME IMPORTANT IDIOM AND PHRASES

1. In high spirits

Example – He was in high spirits when I met him in the office.

Meaning – In a cheerful mood.

2. Struck several bad patches

Example – He struck several bad patches before he made good.

Meaning – Had many professional difficulties.

3. A chip off the old block

Example – Truly he is a chip off the old block.

Meaning – Very similar to his father.

4. Bitten off more than one can chew

Example – Suresh has unknowingly bitten off more than he can chew.

Meaning – To take up a task which one may not be able to accomplish due to lack of ability.

5. The bare bones

Example – The bare bones of the conversation had been that he hated my performances in that project.

Meaning – The main point.

6. Takes no prisoners

Example – The Indian Army's order was to take no prisoners.

Meaning – To kill the enemy rather than seize them as prisoners.

7. Pandora's box

Example – Unfortunately, his decisions opens a Pandora's box of domestic violence.

Meaning – To do something that causes a lot of new problems that one did not expect.

8. Beat a dead horse

Example – Do you think its' worth sending the reapplication to the company or I am beating a dead horse.

Meaning – To waste time doing something that has already been attempted.

9. Left to his own devices

Example – Sumit's father left to his own devices for the new project.

Meaning – To allow you to decide for yourself what you do.

10. Shoestring budgets

Example – The restaurant is running on a shoestring budget, so they can't afford more stuff.

Meaning – Characterized by a small amount of money.

11. In the same boat

Example – Suddenly Rohit was in the same boat as any other employees who had lost their job.

Meaning – Experiencing the same situation or condition.

12. Keep one's word

Example – Keeping one's word is necessary to the legal profession.

Meaning – To do what you promise to do./To uphold one's promise.

13. Knocked over

Example – I didn't mean to knock you over./The thief knocked over the television set from my house.

Meaning – To push or strike someone or something./To steal something.

14. To catch a tartar

Example – Our neighbor thought I would give up if my complaint had to go to the court. They will soon realize that they have caught a Tartar.

Meaning – To deal with someone or something that proves unexpectedly troublesome or powerful.

15. To lose face

Example – He denied that he made a mistake because he didn't want to lose his face.

Meaning – To do something which makes other people stop respecting you.

16. The rank and file

Example – The party leadership seems to be losing the support of the rank and file.

Meaning – The ordinary members of an organization and not its leaders.

17. Once in a blue moon

Example – Once in a blue moon day, I get time to travel.

Meaning – Something that happens very rarely.

18. Beating around the bush

Example – The politician was beating around the bush when people demanded a reason for the scam.

Meaning – Avoiding the topic.

19. Chip on your shoulder

Example – He has a chip on his shoulder for being abandoned by his friends in school days.

Meaning – When someone is upset about something that happened a while ago.

20. A piece of cake

Example – Music is my piece of cake.

Meaning – Something that is easy to understand or do.

21. Blessing in disguise

Example – The course that I took was a blessing in disguise and I realize it now.

Meaning – Something good or useful that did not initially seem that way.

22. Come hell or high water

Example – I have decided that come hell or high water, I will finish my work.

Meaning – Possible obstacles in your path.

23. Taste of your own medicine

Example – Bad people will surely have a chance to taste their own medicine.

Meaning – When someone receives the same treatment, usually negative, that he/she gives to others.

24. Golden handshake

Example – It's better to offer a golden handshake to the aged employees.

Meaning – A big amount of money given to a person when he/she leaves a company or retires.

25. Apple of one's eye

Example – My mother is always an apple of my family's eye.

Meaning – Being cherished more than others are.

26. Feeling a bit under weather

Example – I am not going to gym today as I am feeling a bit under weather.

Meaning – Feeling slightly ill.

27. Mean business

Example – The border is surrounded by forces who mean business.

Meaning – Being serious/ dedicated.

28. The best of both worlds

Example – I had the best of both world since I worked as an ordinary member but got to learn from the leaders.

Meaning – The benefit of widely different situations, enjoyed at the same time.

29. Hear it on grapevine

Example – I heard it on grapevine that he has cheated the organization.

Meaning – To hear rumors about something or someone.

30. Can't judge a book by its cover

Example – It is wise not to judge a book by its cover.

Meaning – Can't judge something primarily by it's appearance./ Don't judge someone based on how the person looks like.

**DO HARD LABOUR...
ONE DAY GOD WILL GIVE YOU
A SURPRISING GIFT.**