

Concern in Israel that masses of E. Ghouta refugees will stream to its Golan border

Description

Via Debka



A Russian promise on Monday, Feb. 26 to set an evacuation route for civilians to leave besieged Eastern Ghouta has sparked deep forebodings in Israel. This promise accompanied an announcement by Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu that President Vladimir Putin had ordered a daily five-hour “humanitarian pause” in the fighting, which has left hundreds dead. It is estimated in Israel that between 50,000 and a quarter of a million inhabitants of the embattled enclave near Damascus may be directed through this evacuation route to Quneitra opposite the Israeli Golan.

Israeli authorities are fearful on two counts: In the absence of Syrian facilities, Israel will be confronted with the sudden responsibility to supply their basic needs for food, water, medicines and shelter; but, most of all, the certainty that hostile entities will exploit this mass exodus to disguise the infiltration of terrorist networks right up to Israel’s northern doorstep. Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan are already contending with these threats to their security.

The Russian evacuation route will initially serve to bring urgent food and medical assistance to the 400,000 inhabitants of Eastern Ghouta, who have been besieged for weeks under savage Syrian government, Iranian and Hizballah bombardment. But the evacuation will equally serve the Assad regime for distancing a large Sunni population away from Damascus. And so, rather than allowing the refugees to reach such population centers as Homs or Hama, they will be permitted to exit through a single door, one heading south to Quneitra.

DEBKAFfile reports that the Russian truce-cum-evacuation initiative was prompted by more than humanitarian concerns. It was based on the positive start in the truce negotiations that the Assad regime has secretly launched with the two main rebel groups fighting in Eastern Ghouta. They are the Faylaq al-Rahman organization, which is linked to the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, and Jaish al-Islam, a collection of Sunni Muslim Salafi extremists. Both groups have committed to evicting from the enclave the fighters of Saryat al Tahrir, most of whose members are affiliated to Al Qaeda. However, seen from Israel, the immediate consequence of a Russian-guaranteed truce of this kind will

be the opening of the floodgates for a new peril to reach its northern border. As matters stand now, there is nothing much Israel can do except hold on and hope for the best.