

## Mosul Operation in Two Months: Overview of Military and Humanitarian Situation

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**USPA NEWS** - It has been more than two months since the operation was launched to liberate Mosul from ISIS on 17 October 2016. According to the information obtained, ISIS suffers big losses thanks to the successful operations of Iraqi soldiers and the subsidiary forces. Until this very moment,

When this analysis is being written, Iraqi military forces have reclaimed 45 out of 50 neighborhoods (75%) in the east of Mosul (left) from ISIS. Considering this number, Iraqi Army will soon reach the left bank of the Tigris which divides Mosul into two regions. On the other hand, some observers believe that Iraqi Army achieves great success but the Mosul operation makes progress slowly. The reason for this is that no military operation has yet been launched in the west of Mosul (right) and no neighborhood has been liberated from ISIS even though it has been two months since the operation began. In this region are very large districts and towns of Mosul like Tal Afar and al-Hadar.

The commanders of Iraqi Army who lead the Mosul operation explain that the slow progress made in the operation is caused the plans implemented to reduce the loss of civilians in the regions where they live. This is reasonable given that ISIS uses civilians as human shield. Iraqi soldiers also think that the slow progress in the operation leads to ISIS' quick collapse in the right part of Mosul, especially in Tal Afar and al-Hadar.

Some observers associate the slow progress of the Mosul operation with the difficult circumstances endured by the civilians living in the neighborhoods under ISIS' control. According to the news regarding the mentioned neighborhoods, the humanitarian situation of the civilians has reached tragic dimensions because they cannot find food, water, heating and healthcare materials while they also suffer from the risks of air bombardments and armed conflicts. Within this context, it is loudly indicated that the strategic plans implemented in the operation to liberate Mosul should be changed and corrected.

It isn't a sign of weakness to change the military strategy in wartime. On the contrary, it is a natural action and the soldiers make continuous changes during the war. There is a saying on this matter: "If the military plans previously made don't resist the enemy in the first conflict, they are restored or corrected upon a new plan." Strategic plans include two phases: Strategy evaluation and strategic calendar.

The phases of the strategy evaluation are as follows: (i) Finding answers to the question "Are the strategic plans available to reach the goals?" (ii) The following question should be answered in order to determine the importance of the military strategy: "Can I close this deal by current means?" (iii) This question should be answered to find whether the military strategy will be accepted: Will the political elites accept the effects, methods and used materials? (iv) The general degree of danger should be understood by comparing the known, assumed and unknown dangers at the level of strategic implementation.

At the phase of strategy review, the successful and unsuccessful levels of the military strategy should be known and necessary corrections should be implemented in order to reach the goals.

On the other hand, the method of governing Mosul in the post-ISIS period and the political amendments to be made become more interesting and all the meetings and discussions are concentrated on this topic. The powerful actors that aren't interested in nothing but their own interests show their own influence over the decisions to be taken with respect to Mosul's future for their own interests.

The necessary warnings should be made from now on and the necessary amendments should be promptly put into practice for the humanitarian problems which will arise in Mosul in the post-ISIS period given that the entire city of Mosul will soon be liberated from ISIS. In the current picture, the majority of the people in Mosul, whose houses and possessions are damaged by the war, are deprived of the financial possibilities which will cover these losses or replace the damaged possessions since state officials don't receive wages for two years.

The agricultural and private sectors are completely frozen. In the meantime, both the buildings and the vehicles of the state departments, notably the municipality and health departments, have been seriously damaged due to the conflicts.

The other important problem is that 5 bridges linking the east and west of Mosul have been damaged and become completely unavailable due to the air bombardments. The traffic congestion which disturbed the people in Mosul was all over the city before ISIS captured Mosul. Despite the capacities and availability of the bridges over the Tigris, the people in Mosul had great difficulties in going from the east bank of the city to the center or from the center to the east bank.

So, what kind of situation will the people in Mosul face when these 5 bridges can no longer be used? It was normal to pass from the east bank to the center or from the center to the east bank even though there were civilians living on both sides of Mosul and the population was one and a half million. Because the state departments, education and healthcare institutions in Mosul were accessible on both sides. That is, neither side of Mosul was dependent on each other. Therefore, it should be calculated well what kind of situation the post-ISIS Mosul will be in.

Especially the financial crisis faced by the Iraqi government may delay the reparation of these bridges in Mosul. Even though Iraqi government may build temporary bridges for military purposes over the Tigris, they will never replace the damaged bridges due to their capacity.

Regarding these crisis, the concerns over the future of Iraqi economy and the political conflict between the political actors which may be faced after Mosul's liberation are clearly seen at the moment. The real political and humanitarian crisis will break out, overcoming the power of the local politicians,

The current local authorities in Mosul and the central government in Baghdad immediately after Mosul is liberated from ISIS. Humanitarian aid is needed -more than regional and international political and military aid- to rebuild Mosul which had a population of over 3 million in the pre-ISIS period. Besides, international efforts are necessary for both the security of Mosul and the political and social stability. Since the dangers arising from these crises will be reflected on Mosul's security and social conjuncture as long as a correct solution isn't found.

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