

Press Releases: Statement on Russia, Turkey, and Iran's De-Escalation Zones Plan for Syria

Press Statement
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Russia, Turkey, and Iran, at the conference in Astana, announced agreement today on an effort to reduce the violence in certain areas of Syria. The United States was represented at the Astana conference by Acting Assistant Secretary Stuart Jones. We were not a direct participant in the negotiations and are not, at this point, a party to the agreement.

The United States supports any effort that can genuinely de-escalate the violence in Syria, ensure unhindered humanitarian access, focus energies on the defeat of ISIS and other terrorists, and create the conditions for a credible political resolution of the conflict.

We appreciate the efforts of Turkey and the Russian Federation to pursue this agreement and have encouraged the Syrian opposition to participate actively in the discussions despite the difficult conditions on the ground.

We continue to have concerns about the Astana agreement, including the involvement of Iran as a so-called "guarantor." Iran's activities in Syria have only contributed to the violence, not stopped it, and Iran's unquestioning support for the Assad regime has perpetuated the misery of ordinary Syrians.

In light of the failures of past agreements, we have reason to be cautious. We expect the regime to stop all attacks on civilians and opposition forces, something they have never done. We expect Russia to ensure regime compliance.

The opposition must also live up to its commitments, with Turkey as the guarantor, to separate from designated terrorist groups, including Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, which continue to hijack the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people for a representative and accountable government.

We nonetheless hope that this arrangement can contribute to a de-escalation

of violence, end the suffering of the Syrian people, and set the stage for a political settlement of the conflict. We look forward to continuing our dialogue with the Russian Federation on efforts to that can responsibly end the Syria conflict. We continue to strongly support the UN-led process in Geneva, under the stewardship of Staffan de Mistura, as the center of international efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement.

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