

Russian-Syrian talks in narrow and expanded format with top Russian officials took place at the Kremlin.
Vladimir Putin: Mr President,

Let me wish you a warm welcome to Moscow. Despite the dramatic situation in your country, you have responded to our request and come here to Russia, and we thank you for this.

We took the decision upon your request to provide effective aid to the Syrian people in fighting the international terrorists who have unleashed a genuine war against Syria. The Syrian people has been practically alone in putting up resistance and fighting these international terrorists for several years now, and has suffered great losses. Lately though, there have been some major positive results in this fight.

The attempts by international terrorists to bring whole swathes of territory in the Middle East under their control and destabilise the situation in the region raise legitimate concerns in many countries around the world. This is a matter of concern for Russia too, given that sadly, people from the former Soviet Union, around 4,000 people at least, have taken up arms and are fighting on Syrian territory against the government forces. Of course, we cannot let these people gain combat experience and go through ideological indoctrination and then return to Russia.

On the question of a settlement in Syria, our position is that positive results in military operations will lay the base for then working out a long-term settlement based on a political process that involves all political forces, ethnic and religious groups. Ultimately, it is the Syrian people alone who must have the deciding voice here.

Syria is Russia's friend and we are ready to make our contribution not only to the military operations and the fight against terrorism, but also to the political process. We would do this, of course, in close contact with the other global powers and with the countries in the region that want to see a peaceful settlement to this conflict.

Once again, I wish you welcome, Mr President.

President of Syria Bashar al-Assad (retranslated): Thank you very much, Mr President.

First of all, I want to express our tremendous gratitude to the Russian leadership and people for the help they are providing Syria. Thank you for supporting Syria's unity and independence. Most important of all is that this is being done within the framework of international law.

I must say that the political steps the Russian Federation has been taking since the start of the crisis made it possible to prevent events in Syria from taking an even more tragic turn. If it were not for your actions and decisions, the terrorism that is spreading through the region now would have made even greater gains and spread to even wider territories. You have confirmed your course of action by joining in the military operations as part of a common front in the fight against terrorism.

Of course, we all know that any military action must be followed by political steps. Of course, our common goal is to bring about the vision the Syrian people have of their own country's future.

We must be particularly aware that military strikes against the terrorists are essential above all because we must fight terrorism, and also because terrorism is a real obstacle on the road to reaching a political settlement. Of course, the entire nation wants to take part in deciding the country's fate, and not just the government.

I want to thank the Russian people once more for the help you are giving Syria and express the hope that we will vanquish terrorism and continue working together to rebuild our country economically and politically and ensure peaceful life for everyone.