

Al-Moallem: We will always consider Turkey's presence in Syria as illegal

Sochi, SANA, 11 October 2017 – Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign and Expatriates Minister Walid al-Moallem said his meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday addressed coordination of political and military issues, in addition to the economic dimension, which has stood out powerfully in the discussions of the bilateral relations.

In a statement to SANA following the meeting, which took place in the Russian resort city of Sochi, al-Moallem described the meeting as “constructive” and “useful”, saying that both sides discussed the situation in Syria and the region as well as the situation in the international arena, and “we agreed on continuing consultation between both countries in the various fields.”

The meeting also touched upon the need to hold Astana 7 meeting and Geneva conference, in addition to the efforts exerted by the Syrian army in the fight against ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra and their affiliates, al-Moallem added.

In his response to a question on the Syrian government's attitude towards more countries joining the Astana process as observers, al-Moallem said “We accepted the requests of five countries, and

now we have received a request from Venezuela I think. We welcome the involvement of these countries and expanding participation in Astana meetings.”

Commenting on the fourth de-escalation zone in Idleb, al-Moallem affirmed that this zone was agreed on at the latest Astana meeting under the patronage of the guarantor countries “with the hope that it will be implemented on the ground.”

“We started from our desire to stop the Syrian bloodshed, and in the end, such agreements have a fixed period of six months, and accordingly they are part of our right to maintaining the unity of Syria, land and people,” al-Moallem said.

He elaborated by saying that he believes that what is going on now in Idleb is “part of fixing issues between Turkey and its tools.”

“We still and will always consider the Turkish presence in Syria as illegal. The Turks say their presence is taking place under the Astana umbrella, but I realized today that Astana has nothing to do with this Turkish act. Therefore, any measure that is not coordinated with the Syrian government is an act of aggression, and we don't recognize its legitimacy,” al-Moallem said.

Earlier during his meeting with Lavrov, al-Moallem affirmed that the international coalition led by Washington is destroying everything in Syria except for ISIS terrorist organization.

He said that Syria will demand the disbanding of the US-led international coalition which Washington uses to destroy the country and prolong the war indefinitely.

In turn, Lavrov affirmed that the victories achieved by the Syrian Arab Army, supported by the Russian Air Force, have made the efforts of solving the crisis in Syria more successful.

“Today we have a chance to discuss foreign policy aspects of our partnership, first of all that besides the success in the war on terror while the Syrian army is advancing backed by

Russia's Aerospace Forces, the preparations for political settlement are becoming more pressing," he added.

"We will also strongly counter any attempts to politicize the chemical dossier and the attempts to accuse the Syrian government without any proof or professional investigation of a whole number of incidents, which occurred with the use of chemical warfare agents on your country's territory," Lavrov said.

He pointed out that the attempts continue on the part of the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council to "politicize the situation around the Syrian settlement and put forward one-sided accusations."

Lavrov added that he also discussed cooperation of delegations from the two countries at international venues, including in New York and Geneva.

The Russian Foreign Minister also welcomed the joint success of the two countries in the war on terror.

Lavrov recalled that "certain decisions" were reached on Tuesday at a meeting of the Russian-Syrian intergovernmental committee, attended by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin.

[Al-Moallem: US-led international coalition should be dissolved, Turkish presence in Syria illegitimate](#)

In a relevant context, al-Moallem called for dissolving the US-led illegitimate coalition formed under pretexts of fighting ISIS terrorist organization.

In a statement to Russia Today TV channel, al-Moallem stressed the need to punish the international coalition for committing heinous crimes against the Syrian people which claimed the lives of thousands of civilians, the majority of them were women and children within two months, adding that the coalition is protecting the ISIS terrorist organization instead of fighting it, moreover it targets the Syrians.

On deployment of Turkish troops in Idlib, the Foreign Minister stressed the illegitimacy of Turkish presence on the Syrian territory, indicating to the close cooperation between Turkey and the terrorist organizations since the very beginning of the crisis.

He highlighted the coordination between the Syrian government and Russian side, reiterating Syria's commitment to all provisions of Astana meeting's final statement, particularly that one concerning Idlib.

Regarding dialogue with Syrian Kurds, Al-Moallem stressed the Syrian government's readiness whenever they are ready, noting that the Kurds are still deceived by the US and its support to them.

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