

Syrian foreign minister says Damascus determined to fight terrorism

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Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad. (Photo: EPA)

Damascus, February 23 (RHC)-- Syrian Foreign Minister Faysal Mekdad has reiterated his country's determination to combat terrorism and practice its legal right to put an end to any illegitimate military presence on its soil. Mekdad, who is also a former permanent envoy to the United Nations, made the remarks in a speech via video to the 46th session of Human Rights Council in Geneva.

"Terrorism remains a major threat and some countries are trying to exploit our country's suffering for political pressure," Mekdad said, emphasizing: "Syria is determined to continue fighting terrorism and to exercise its legal right to end any illegal presence on its territory."

The top Syrian diplomat pointed to rights violations committed by occupation forces in his country, particularly the recent activities by the Turkish military in addition to Ankara's support for terrorist groups in Syria.

During his virtual speech on Monday, Mekdad also touched on the issue of illegal sanctions imposed on Syria and called on Human Rights Council to place the grave and systematic violations resulting from the U.S. and European unilateral coercive measures against the Syrian people as a top priority.

"Those who claim that these coercive measures do not affect ordinary citizens are lying because they only affect the citizens in their basic needs," he said. "Some of those who adopted the draft resolutions related to Syria and others are among the governments that violate human rights the most."

The United States recently imposed a round of sanctions against Syria known as the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act. The sanctions came into effect on June 17 -- six months after being signed into law by former U.S. President Donald Trump -- targeting individuals and businesses anywhere in the world that operate directly or indirectly within the sphere of Syria's economy. This includes entities that help the Arab country produce oil or fight terrorism in any way.

The U.S. economic measures have effectively blocked imports of essential goods, impacting the Syrian people's access to medical equipment, food, fuel, natural gas, and electricity. Moreover, EU sanctions on the Syrian government have been in force since December 2011 and are subject to annual review.

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