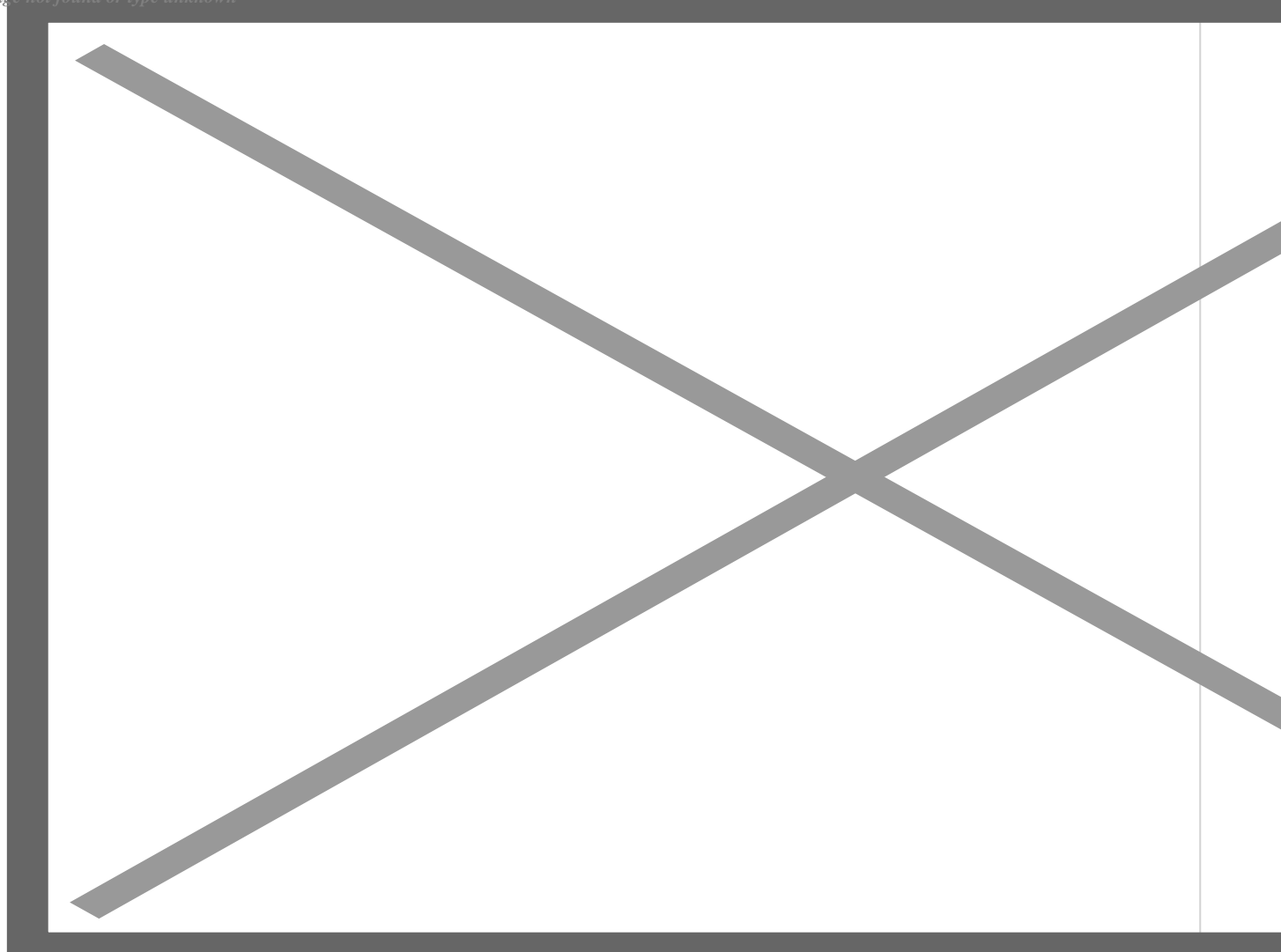


Russia's special envoy for Syria blasts Israeli missile strikes as unacceptable

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Repair works are seen at the Damascus International Airport, Syria, after an Israeli airstrike, on June 12, 2022. (Photo by Syrian Arab News Agency)

Moscow, June 16 (RHC)-- The Russian president's special envoy for Syria, Alexandr Lavrentyev, has denounced Israeli missile strikes against the war-ravaged country, stressing that such acts of aggression are "unacceptable."

"We will certainly consider the issue of intensified strikes on Syrian territory by Israel. We think that we will also need to focus on this. This is unacceptable," Lavrentyev said at the beginning of a new round of Syria peace negotiations within the Astana format in the Kazakh capital city of Nur Sultan on Wednesday.

On Sunday, Russian Ambassador to Syria Alexander Efimov strongly condemned the latest Israeli missile attack on the Damascus International Airport, calling on the Tel Aviv regime to put an end to its vicious acts and naked aggression or await serious repercussions.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Arabic-language al-Watan daily, Efimov stated that such irresponsible moves pose great dangers to civilian aircraft and civil aviation, and that the Israeli regime must stop such wicked actions straight away.

The airport was targeted by a volley of missiles fired from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights at approximately 4:20 a.m. local time (01:20 GMT) on Friday, state media reported.

The Syrian Ministry of Transport said in a statement on Saturday that runways remained out of service at the airport following the attack. "Landing and departing flights were suspended today till further notification as a result of the Israeli aggression, since it caused heavy damage to the airstrips in several localities and to the navigation lights in addition to the damage [that] occurred in the airport lobby," the statement read.

The ministry added that flights are expected to resume in cooperation with air carriers as soon as repair work is concluded.

Spokesman for Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry Aibek Smadiyarov told reporters on Tuesday that all negotiating parties for Syrian peace talks have confirmed their participation in the event, which started on June 15 and will conclude the following day.

"Delegations from the guarantor countries: Russia, Turkey and Iran, as well as the Syrian government and armed Syrian opposition will take part," Smadiyarov said.

A senior Iranian diplomat has sharply criticized the West for imposing unilateral and unlawful sanctions on the Syrian people amid international communities' inaction. He noted that the Russian delegation will be headed by Russia's special presidential envoy for Syria, Alexandr Lavrentyev, while Turkey will be represented by Selcuk Unal, the Director General for Syria in the Turkish Foreign Ministry.

The Iranian delegation will be headed by Ali Asghar Khaji, a senior aide on political affairs to Iran's foreign minister. "A UN delegation led by Robert Dunn, principal political affairs officer of the special envoy for Syria, a Jordanian delegation, representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross will also attend the meeting as observers," Smadiyarov pointed out.

The participating parties will reportedly discuss issues including the conditions for the safe return of Syrian refugees, the humanitarian and socio-economic situation in Syria, the work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva, confidence-building measures, the release of hostages and the search for missing persons.

Since January 2017, Moscow, Tehran, and Ankara have been mediating peace negotiations between representatives of the Syrian government and opposition groups in a series of talks held in the Kazakh city of Astana and other places, including Sochi.

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