

Russia says Syrian President Assad left the country and gave orders for peaceful power transition



People stand atop a toppled statue of Syria's late President Hafez al-Assad in Damascus on

Moscow, December 8 (RHC)-- Russia says Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has issued orders for a peaceful transition of power before he resigned and departed from the country.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Sunday that President Assad decided to step down after negotiations with "a number of participants in the armed conflict on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic." Assad, Russia said, gave "instructions for a peaceful transfer of power."

The ministry did not provide further information regarding Assad's whereabouts.

According to the statement, Moscow "did not participate in these negotiations," but it calls on all "parties involved to refrain from the use of violence and to resolve all issues of governance through political means."

Moscow said Russia's military bases in the Arab country had been put on a state of high alert, but that there was no serious threat to them at the current time.

On Saturday evening, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi urged "political dialogue" between the Syrian government and militant groups after a meeting with foreign ministers of Russia and Turkey in the Qatari capital of Doha on Saturday evening.

Araghchi said there was a consensus among all the participants that hostilities in Syria must end immediately and the country's territorial integrity and national sovereignty must be respected based on the UN resolution.

The meeting was also attended by United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen, who had urged all parties "to spare bloodshed and focus on a political solution in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2254."

The conflict began when Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) militant group launched a large-scale attack in Aleppo and Idlib provinces in the northwest of Syria on November 27, seizing several areas.

The group took control of parts of the country's second-biggest city, Aleppo, and advanced southward toward the city of Hama. Earlier on Sunday, the armed group declared that they had captured the capital, Damascus.

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