

# *U.S. blocks UN Security Council support for Syria ceasefire*

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United Nations, March 8 (RHC)-- The United States has blocked adoption of a United Nations Security Council statement supporting a ceasefire agreed between Russia and Turkey in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib, although the deal has led to direly-needed de-escalation in the province.

Diplomats cited by AFP said the U.S. stonewalled the measure that Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia had asked the other 14 member states to adopt, with Washington calling it "premature."

Washington's position was echoed by Britain and Germany. "There are a lot of questions about how it will work in practice, who will monitor it," remarked British Ambassador Karen Pierce, while her German counterpart Christoph Heusgen said: "We have to see if this will work."

Russia and Turkey's presidents, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, had announced the truce that took force in Idlib at 00:01 a.m Friday, after three hours of face-to-face talks in Moscow on Thursday. The deal was clinched amid a pressing need for pacification in Idlib, where Turkish violations had brought about an unwarranted flare-up of already high levels of deadly violence.

The escalation came when Turkish forces that are tasked with manning a number of observation posts in Syria to supposedly contribute to de-escalation efforts, ventured outside the areas assigned to the posts, engaging with the Syrian military.

The province, though, began experiencing “calm” after the truce that allowed the Syrian government to secure two strategic routes running through it, reports by AFP and the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), a UK-based monitor, showed.

Meanwhile, Putin told Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in a phone call that the truce would stabilize the situation in Idlib, the Kremlin said. "Bashar al-Assad rated the outcome of the talks between the leaders of Russia and Turkey highly and expressed his gratitude to Russia's president for supporting the fight against terrorist groups," the Kremlin statement said.

Idlib contains the largest remaining concentrations of militants and Takfiri terrorists in Syria, who have fled there from concerted anti-terror drive by Syria and its allies, Russia and Iran. Russia lends aerial support to the Syrian Army's operations, while Iran provides it with military advisory assistance.

Contrary to the Russian and Iranian involvement that came after Syria's relevant requests, the US and its allies maintain an illegal presence in the Arab country under the pretext of confronting Daesh. Syria and its allies that defeated the Takfiri terror group back in 2017 strongly oppose the American-led interference for its complete lack of legitimacy and justification.

Diplomats, meanwhile, told AFP that Moscow had signaled it could oppose endorsement of a recently-signed agreement between the US and the Afghan militant group of Taliban at the Security Council following the US's opposition to the Syria ceasefire.

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