
FROSTY FRANCO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

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France has become Russia's most outspoken critic over its part in the alleged war crimes happening in Syria. Determined to end the crisis in Aleppo, Chief French Diplomat, Jean-Marc Ayrault, has gradually toughened his stance with Moscow. Though he said he considers Russia a partner country, not an adversary, Ayrault has continued to build diplomatic pressure.

After a visit to Moscow last Thursday, he set off for Washington where, shoulder to shoulder with John Kerry, the French Foreign Minister announced: Tomorrow we will have a moment of truth. This moment of truth will address all members of the Security Council. Do you want a cease-fire in Aleppo or not? And the question is asked in particular to our Russian partners. I told Sergey Lavrov this yesterday.

On the same day, Ayrault kept up the pressure. At the French Embassy in Washington he pleaded for Russia not to veto the French-Spanish UN draft resolution that would impose an immediate ceasefire.

French foreign minister- Jean-Marc Ayrault

I have said the same thing to Sergey Lavrov in Moscow. I expressed my concern and indignation, and I also said I hope that Russia won't want to be complicit in this terrible tragedy that will mark the history of humanity. So I still have hope that the resolution will be passed.

All his efforts were in vain. The diplomatic confrontation between the West and Russia reached its peak last Saturday night. Eleven of the fifteen Security Council members supported the resolution drafted by France but Russia vetoed it.

Since 22nd September this year, Damascus and its Russian allies have rained a barrage of airstrikes on rebel-held districts of Aleppo. Even hospitals and aid agencies have been targeted. The battle for Aleppo will likely mark a major turning point in this five-year-long war.

On Monday, Jean Marc Ayrault did not hide his frustration at the Russian veto but seemed determined nevertheless.

Jean-Marc Ayrault

There are war crimes [being committed], it was the United Nations Secretary General who said it, and it's obvious. Next we must identify those responsible. We are in the context of international

law, and there is an international criminal court.

France wants to bring the matter to the International Criminal Court Prosecutor to see about opening an investigation. But the ICC has no jurisdiction over Syria as its not a member state. The only way forward would be through the UN Security Council, but Moscow would be able to block that with a veto as well.

Kaynak/Source: