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## **RUSSIA AND US TO JOIN NEW TALKS ON SYRIA, MOSCOW SAYS**

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(CNN)The United States, Russia and other countries linked to the Syrian conflict will meet Saturday for talks on a new ceasefire in Syria, officials said Wednesday.

US Secretary of State John Kerry will meet with foreign ministers in Lausanne, Switzerland, to "discuss a multilateral approach to resolving the crisis in Syria, including a sustained cessation of violence and the resumption of humanitarian aid deliveries," the State Department said.

The Russian Foreign Ministry also confirmed the meeting.

Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told CNN's Christiane Amanpour in Moscow that the meeting should also include Turkey, Saudi Arabia and possibly Qatar.

"We would like to have a meeting in this narrow format, to have a businesslike discussion, not another General Assembly-like debate," Lavrov said, referring to the UN General Assembly.

The talks would come at a time when Moscow faces mounting pressure over the deaths of civilians in the Syrian military's Russian-backed assault on the Syrian city of Aleppo.

Lavrov said he hoped the discussion might "launch a serious dialogue on the basis of the principles contained in the Russian-American deal," the ceasefire agreement that collapsed last month.

Lavrov: Americans violated Syria ceasefire

Questioned by Amanpour, Lavrov pointed the finger at the United States for the failure of the deal.

"The violation of the ceasefire happened by the American coalition who attacked the Syrian government, which they were not supposed to do, and which they said they would never plan," he said.

The days-long deal crumbled after a strike by US-led coalition warplanes on a Syrian army post killed dozens of troops. The US military did not dispute the strike but characterized it as "unintentional" and relayed its "regret" to Syria through Russia, saying the intended target had been ISIS.

Shortly after the ceasefire ended, a UN-Syrian Arab Red Crescent aid convoy was hit in an airstrike, killing about 20 people. US officials blamed Russia, while Moscow denied that Russian or

Syrian warplanes were responsible.

War crimes in Aleppo?

Lavrov also suggested the United States had not wanted to fulfill its commitment under the ceasefire deal to separate extremist fighters in Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly al Nusra Front, from moderate rebel factions in rebel-held eastern Aleppo.

"I don't want to suspect them of encouraging terrorism, but what they do as regards Nusra makes me very, very suspicious," he said.

Talking to regional powers as well as the United States could be more effective, Lavrov added.

President Bashar al-Assad and Russia insist they are only targeting terrorists in Syria. Western diplomats have accused them of war crimes because of their disregard for civilian life in their assault on Aleppo.

Asked if Russia feared being on the wrong side of history over Aleppo, Lavrov responded: "It's exactly the 250,000 civilians about whom we think -- we say, if it takes getting a couple of thousand terrorists out of the city to save a quarter of a million lives, then let's do it."

Child victims

Shown a photo of Omran Daqneesh, the 5-year-old boy who sat shell-shocked in an Aleppo ambulance after an August airstrike on his family's home, Lavrov agreed the situation was tragic for Syrian families such as his.

"It's really a tragedy, and they must insist that the moderates who want to protect them, they must separate themselves from al Nusra," he said, referring to the Islamist rebel group.

His name is Omran: The bloodied boy in Syria

Photos: His name is Omran: The bloodied boy in Syria

Lavrov also said war crimes in Syria "must be investigated."

At least 25 people were killed and 45 injured in airstrikes Wednesday on the besieged rebel-held neighborhoods of eastern Aleppo, according to the Syria Civil Defense volunteer group, also known as the White Helmets.

On Tuesday, 41 people were killed in renewed airstrikes on east Aleppo after six days of relative calm.

The UN children's agency, UNICEF, condemned a Tuesday strike on an elementary school in Daraa, Syria, that killed five children ages 4 to 16 and injured 15 others.

Syrian state media and a UK-based monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said rebel forces had shelled the government-held al-Shahari neighborhood, but it was unclear which rebel faction was responsible.

"Death and injury of children in Syria has become a daily reality," UNICEF said in a statement. "The killing must stop."

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Kaynak/Source: