
EU CONDEMNS RUSSIA OVER ALEPPO, TO IMPOSE MORE SYRIAN SANCTIONS

-

18.10.2016

18.10.2016

EurActiv

EU foreign affairs ministers yesterday (17 October) condemned Russias air campaign in Syria, saying it may be guilty of war crimes, and it vowed to impose more sanctions on President Bashar al-Assads government.

Calling for an immediate ceasefire in rebel-held east Aleppo, the European Unions 28 foreign ministers sought to show their anger at the Russian-backed campaign, which has killed several hundred people including dozens of children since the collapse of a truce brokered by Russia and the United States.

Since the beginning of the offensive by the regime and its allies, notably Russia, the intensity and scale of the aerial bombardment of eastern Aleppo is clearly disproportionate, the EU said in a statement. Some 275,000 people are believed to be trapped in the area.

The bloc berated Moscow for the deliberate targeting of hospitals, medical personnel, schools and essential infrastructure, saying that targeting civilians with barrel bombs and chemical weapons may amount to war crimes.

UK, FRANCE AND GERMANY SEEK EU CONDEMNATION OF RUSSIA OVER SYRIA

Britain, France and Germany aim to persuade the European Union today (17 October) to condemn Russias devastating air campaign in Syria and pave the way for imposing more sanctions on the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

EurActiv.com

The EU said the atrocities in Syria should be referred to the International Criminal Court, although it was unclear how or when.

It called for an immediate end to conflict, so a peace process could start after almost six years of war, seeking a wider role for EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini to talk to regional powers including Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

While the European Union has no military role in the conflict, the statement marked its harshest criticism of Russias role in Syria and came after days of negotiations and resistance from Russias allies in Europe.

It was Europes second attempt to isolate Russia diplomatically this month, after France and Spain

led a push for a UN-backed ceasefire in New York, which Russia vetoed.

As food supplies run low in Aleppo, the scale of the destruction unleashed by the Syrian governments Russian- and Iranian-backed offensive has horrified even Moscows long-time backers in Athens, Budapest and Nicosia, diplomats said.

Russia is Europes biggest energy supplier, and relations have sunk to lows not seen since the Cold War over the crisis in Ukraine. Some countries, including Austria and parts of the German government, worry about worsening ties even further.

But France and Britain pushed hard for the support of all the blocs 28 governments, hoping that a unified chastisement of Russia would help bring an end to the bombing since peace talks between Moscow and Washington broke down earlier this month.

BRITAIN, FRANCE SEEK MORE EU SANCTIONS ON SYRIA, RUSSIA OVER ALEPPO

Britain and France are leading EU efforts to impose more sanctions on Syrians close to President Bashar al-Assad in response to the devastating bombing of Aleppo, diplomats said on Wednesday (12 October), signalling that Russians may eventually be added to the list.

EurActiv.com

Frances Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said the European Union had a moral obligation to act and to stop the massacre of the population of Aleppo.

A briefing by UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura at the meeting in Luxembourg appeared to help swing doubters.

De Mistura, who has been at the heart of peace efforts in Geneva, warned that Aleppo was at risk of being reduced to rubble. Between now and December, if we dont find a solution for Aleppo, Aleppo wont be there anymore, De Mistura said.

Sanctions, but not on Russia

The European Union also said it was ready to put more Syrians under travel bans and asset freezes, suspecting them of directing attacks on civilians in Aleppo. That is in addition to the EUs existing sanctions list and its oil and arms embargo.

The EU has a list of 208 people and 69 companies under sanctions, and that was likely to grow to pressure the Assad government and those benefiting from it, diplomats said.

In their statement, EU foreign ministers said the EU will act swiftly * with the aim of imposing further restrictive measures against Syria, targeting Syrian individuals and entities supporting the regime as long as the repression continues.

Britain has also raised the prospect of sanctions on Russians involved in the Syrian conflict, diplomats told Reuters although that had less support on Monday.

British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, who held talks with US Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday in London, said London was considering imposing additional sanctions on Assads supporters, without naming Russia.

Spain would back Russian sanctions if they helped bring Russias position closer to ours acting Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo said.

European Union leaders will discuss Russia and possibly talk about new sanctions at a summit on Thursday. Russias closest EU allies – Greece, Cyprus and Hungary – oppose such penalties.

FRANCE WANTS EU SUMMIT TO DISCUSS RUSSIA SANCTIONS

France on Monday (20 June) called for EU leaders to have a full discussion on the future of economic sanctions imposed on Russia over Ukraine, even though they are expected to be rolled over shortly.

EurActiv.com

Austria, a transit point for flows for Russian gas to Europe, also voiced its opposition on Monday.

AUSTRIA BACKS GRADUATED RUSSIA SANCTIONS

Brexit continues to have far-reaching consequences, among which is the potential for normalised relations with Russia. Austria is seeking a leading role in this push. EurActiv Germany reports.

EurActiv.com

The idea to have additional sanctions against Russia would be wrong, Austrias Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz told reporters. We do not need a further escalation, he said.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier rejected imposing more punitive measures on Russia, although a German newspaper cited sources saying that Chancellor Angela Merkel favoured the idea.

GERMANY, AUSTRIA FAVOUR GRADUAL PHASING OUT OF RUSSIA SANCTIONS

The German and Austrian foreign ministers said that EU sanctions on Russia should be gradually phased out as the peace process progresses, abandoning previous positions that sanctions could be lifted only if the Minsk peace plan is fully implemented.

EurActiv.com

The West imposed broad economic sanctions on Moscow over its 2014 annexation of Crimea and its support for rebels in Ukraine.

Kaynak/Source: