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No Breakthroughs in Syrian Peace Talks

By Stephen Lendman
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In-depth Report: SYRIA

None were expected. Conflict continues. Ongoing since March 2011. Syria is Obama's war. There's nothing civil about it.

Death squad insurgents are US proxies. Recruited, armed, funded, trained and directed by CIA operatives and Pentagon special forces.

So-called IS, Nusra Front, Al Qaeda and other takfiri terrorists are imported from dozens of countries.

Longstanding US/Israeli plans call for regime change. Replacing Assad with pro-Western stooge governance.

Previous Geneva I and II peace talks accomplished nothing. Russia's best efforts were for naught.

Takrifi elements weren't involved in current ones. They control large parts of Syrian territory. They want it all.

Russia has done more than any other nation to end conflict diplomatically. On Friday, four days of peace talks in Moscow ended.

Russian Academy of Sciences Oriental Studies director Vitaly Naumkin served as moderator.

Before talks began, he said they'd include no preconditions. Free dialogue. No prearranged agenda.

No international pressure to direct things one way or another.

Syrians alone participated. In a personal capacity rather than officially representing groups opposing Assad.

Talks were private. Held in two stages. On January 26 and 27, opposition representatives met with Syrian civil society groups.

On January 28 and 29, they met with Syrian officials. Naumkin said talks weren't meant to replace Geneva I and II.

He called it "great if (they) help(ed) resume the Geneva process." At the same time, he said "no one expects an agreement to be signed."

The main objective was "mak(ing) personalities (on all sides) discuss the basis of dialogue."

"The issue of fighting terrorism was one of the key themes discussed. This is exactly what

brings the sides together as a key challenge to Syria's territorial integrity and unity."

In mid-January, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov said Moscow invited nearly 30 opposition group representatives to participate in talks.

Around 40 showed up. IS and other tarfiri elements were excluded. Washington-backed Syrian National Coalition representatives refused to participate.

So did opposition figure Mouath Al Khatib. Former National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces president.

They insist Assad must go. Naumkin commented saying "(i)f you are a Syrian patriot, why would you not want to use even a tiny possibility to come and talk?"

"(E)ven if you do not agree with Russia's position." Achieving peace involves advancing things one baby step at a time.

Anything helping to break impasse is a step in the right direction. Washington is the main obstacle. Obama didn't wage proxy war to quit. Conflict shows no signs of ending.

Syria's delegation included six representatives headed by its UN envoy Bashar al Jaafari. Commenting after talks ended, he said:

"We did not hear a single unified position from the opposition delegations. What some could agree on, others rejected."

Russia proposed so-called "Moscow principles." Including maintaining Syrian sovereignty. Its state institutions.

Its territorial integrity. Ending Israel's Golan occupation. Confronting terrorism. Countering foreign intervention. Resolving conflict diplomatically.

A separate document was presented. An "Appeal to the International Community."

Its four points asked international leaders for vitally needed humanitarian aid. Easing (lawlessly imposed) Syrian sanctions.

Denounced Israeli attacks on Syria and Lebanon. Condemned international interference in Syrian affairs. Brazenly illegal under international law.

Russia's initiative was helpful, said Jaafari. It helped break longstanding impasse between Damascus and attending opposition representatives.

"The Russian friends have succeeded where others have failed," said Jaafari. Talks will continue in early March, he added.

On January 30, Tass said participants approved Moscow principles. Russia's Foreign Ministry was cited saying talks "reflected growing sentiment inside Syria in favor of more active and effective steps aimed to restore peace…"

On January 28, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov welcomed participants to Moscow. Saying

> “(t)errorists and extremists of all kinds came to Syria from all over the world.”
>
> “We, as your true friends, are convinced that in the wake of these trials and tribulations, Syria will emerge as a single, sovereign, secular and prosperous state, in which all its citizens and all ethnic and religious groups will feel comfortable and safe, and their rights will be securely upheld.”
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> “Transitioning from confrontation to dialogue and bringing about solutions to pressing issues on the national agenda require considerable efforts, including the willingness to make inevitable mutual concessions and compromises.”
>
> “This is the only way to save Syria and defeat the forces that want to degrade its people, and split and undermine the unity of the country, while ignoring the risks of the spread of extremism and international terrorism across the region.”
>
> “Russia’s position on the Syrian crisis has always been consistent.”
>
> “We have always advocated for a settlement by Syrians themselves based on the principles of the Geneva communiqué of June 30, 2012, the basic principle of which is about achieving mutual consent of the Syrian sides through an inclusive national dialogue without any preconditions.”
>
> “This is exactly what we strive to promote as we provide you with a venue in Moscow for starting an inclusive dialogue.”
>
> “The whole point of the Geneva communique is that the settlement process cannot and should not be a zero-sum game.”
>
> “All Syrians must benefit from it. We are deeply convinced that external intervention, be it in the form of military actions or attempts to impose political dictate through unilateral sanctions, undermines the spirit and the letter of the Geneva communique.”

Last October, Lavrov, Moscow’s Middle East envoy Mikhail Bogdanov and other Russian officials met with Syrian opposition figures and government officials. Attempted to restart peace talks.

Participants in Moscow represented widely divergent views. Many more concerned about their own interests than what benefits ordinary Syrians.

In a recent interview, Assad explained saying “(y)ou have personalities who only represent themselves.”

“They don’t represent anyone in Syria. Some of them never lived in Syria, and they know nothing about the country.”

Moscow’s meeting wasn’t about “negotiat(ing) the solution. It’s only preparations for (a later to be held) conference.”

Reports suggest opposition elements dropped their demand for establishing immediate transitional government excluding Assad.

Agreeing to continue talks was modestly encouraging. Far from conflict resolution. Nowhere near in sight.

Nor can it be with IS and other takfiri terrorists rejecting peace. Continuing war. With full US

support and encouragement.

As long as Obama wants regime change. As long as Israel demands it. As long as rogue EU partners play by Washington/Israeli rules. Expect no end of conflict.

Forever talks won't end it. Countless thousands more will die. Maybe half of Syria's population will end up displaced.

Increasing parts of the country will be turned to rubble. Obama bears full responsibility. Another high crime on his rap sheet.

In mid-January, Pentagon officials announced sending hundreds of so-called US "specialists" and "enabling forces" to train anti-Assad elements.

Takfiri terrorists by any standard. Showing Washington intends escalated conflict. Training will be at US bases and facilities in Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.

Plans are to train thousands of extremist fighters annually. Perhaps double down on numbers US forces currently train.

Obama wants war, not peace. It bears repeating. Forever talks won't change things.

Anti-war activism alone perhaps can accomplish what diplomacy has virtually no chance of achieving. So far it's nowhere in sight.

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