

President Al-Assad: We Are Ready To Discuss Anything Including Constitution, Defending Borders Is Our Right

By [SANA](#)

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Damascus, SANA-President Bashar al-Assad said in a statement given to Russian media that we are ready to discuss anything, including the constitution, adding that defending our borders is our right and it is a duty.

Following is the full text of the statement:

Question 1: Mr. President, are you familiar with the Russian proposal to create a commission on research of a new constitution? What do you think about it?

President Assad: Yesterday, I think, our representative in the United Nations, Mr. Jaafari, announced that we support the Russian initiatives – different initiatives, not only this one – as headlines, and now we are discussing with the Russians the details. The problem is that we went to Astana recently, as you know, the other delegation, the delegation of the militants, didn't join that meeting, they didn't go to Astana, and we all believe that this is the negative influence of the Turks. So, how can we start something concrete if you don't have a partner? So, we said we are ready to discuss anything including the constitution, but we need to see who's going to be in Geneva, are they going to discuss the same paper or not? But for us, as a government, our position is very clear: that we are ready to discuss it in details, but we support the headline, of course.

Question 2: Mr. President, there are reports that the United States-led coalition are planning to start the operation in Raqqa in the beginning of April. Do you have confirmation on that, and if Raqqa is liberated, will it be under control of Damascus, or are there any other agreements on that? And is the American troops' presence in Syria legal?

President Assad: Any military operation in Syria without the approval of the Syrian government is illegal, and I said if there's any troops on the Syrian soil, this is an invasion, whether to liberate al-Raqqa or any other place. This is first. Second, we all know that the coalition has never been serious about fighting ISIS or the terrorists, so we have to think about the real intention of the whole plan, if there's a plan to liberate al-Raqqa. To liberate it from who? From ISIS? To give it to who? So, their plan is not to fight terrorists, not to help the Syrian government, it's not for the unity of Syria, it's not for the sovereignty of Syria, it must be something else not of these factors that I just mentioned, but all that we have till this moment are only information, we don't have any fact on the ground regarding this.



Question 3: Mr. President, as far as we know, the Syrian Army does its best in fighting with terrorism, you fight with terrorists fine, but war isn't over, so I wanted to know whether Damascus is going to ask Russian air forces to increase its presence in Syria, and will you ask Russia to start a ground troops operation in Syria?

President Assad: Actually, if you talk about the relation between the Syrian government and the Russian government, it goes back in history for decades, so they know the details of Syria, and after the war they know more details about what's happening. So, if we want to talk about fighting terrorism, we discussed in details the requirements to support the Syrian Army. For this stage, the Russian support by air raids was enough for the Syrian Army to advance on different fronts, mainly in Aleppo and Palmyra as you know. I'm sure that if the Syrian and the Russian officials and military officials feel that we need more support to defeat the terrorists, they're going to do it, but till this moment, the level of support is good and effective.

Question 4: Can you evaluate the participation of Russian troops, Russian army, in liberation and demining in Palmyra? And maybe you can tell us about the level of destruction in Palmyra in the last month, and maybe your government has some plan of rebuilding and restore this ancient city.

President Assad: Of course, it's not only Syrian heritage; it's international heritage, and I think the whole world should be worried about the



destruction of Palmyra. Of course, some of the destruction could be repaired. Now we are evaluating, because you know if the stones turn into rubble, it could be difficult for anyone to restore this heritage, but if you have the stone safe and sound, you can do it. When we liberated Palmyra the first time, President Putin himself, when he spoke to me and congratulated me for the liberation of Palmyra last year, he said Russia was very interested in the restoration of Palmyra. Of course, as you know,

ISIS came again to Palmyra, and it was liberated again, but now there's more destruction, so we have to re-evaluate Palmyra again to see what we can do, but I think it's not only about Syria and Russia; it's about the UNESCO, it's about the other institutions, and it's about other countries that they always claim that they are worried about the human heritage and human culture and so on.

Journalist: And the participation of the Russian army in the liberation, can you evaluate it?

President Assad: Usually we don't speak about military issues, but there was important support on the ground, but I don't have to tell you the details of that kind of support.

Question 5: Mr. President, will you continue to protect, to defend Syrian borders after the threat of Mr. Avigdor Lieberman, to protect with missile defense systems, of course, and how international diplomacy, maybe Russia diplomacy can help to prevent the conflict between Israel and Syria?

President Assad: Defending our borders is our right, and it's our duty, not only our right. If we don't do it as officials when we can do it, we should be blamed by the Syrian people, we should be held accountable. So, we don't have to ask ourselves that question, whether there were statements by Israeli officials or not. We don't base our policy and decisions on their statements. So, of course, it's our right and duty, again.

As we heard this morning, that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the Israeli ambassador, they invited him to the Ministry in order to discuss the Israeli violation of the Syrian sovereignty. So, I think Russia can play an important role in that regard, and the whole policy of Russia is based on the international law, it's based on the Charter of the United Nations, and the Security Council resolutions. So, they can discuss the same issues with the Israelis depending on this criteria, and they can play a role in order that Israel not attack Syria again in the future.



Question 6: My turn. Mr. President, the now infamous groups such as the White Helmets and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights have reported recently about the airstrike by the United States-led coalition that killed 50 civilians in a mosque near Aleppo. Now, the Pentagon said they were present in the area, but they had nothing to do with the destruction of the mosque. Previously, Washington held those two groups as reliable sources when they were critical of Damascus, and now they are silent about it. Are we looking at a situation of double standards?

President Assad: The American policy is based on many standards, not double; they have

maybe ten standards because they don't base their policy on values or on international law; they base it on their own vision, their own interests, sometimes on the balance of different lobbies and powers within the American institutions.

We all know that. So, we don't talk about double standards, this is very normal for the US. For example, their raids against ISIS in Mosul in Iraq were something good, or let's say, positive, while the same raid by the Syrian and Russian army airplanes or troops on the ground in Aleppo to liberate the people of Aleppo is against human rights according to their political discourse.

So, this is natural for the American policy and for the West in general, not only the Americans. White Helmets are Al Qaeda, they're Al Qaeda members and that's proven on the net; the same members are killing or executing or celebrating over dead bodies, at the same time they are humanitarian heroes, and now they have an Oscar as you know. So, that's to be expected by the Americans, we have to ignore all their narratives, their own public doesn't believe their narrative anymore. They don't know the truth yet; the public opinion in the West in general, they know there's a lie, but they don't know what the truth is, and that's why they have a problem with RT for example, for that reason.

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