

Serbia to Help Russian Aid Operation in Syria

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The Serbian and Chinese defence ministries were the first to respond to Moscow's international call for help in Syria, [Russian news agency Tass reported on Tuesday](#).

"The Russian defence ministry is grateful to the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Serbia, who were the first to come out in support of the Russian-Syrian initiative to conduct a humanitarian operation," the Russian ministry said in a statement.

"We count on further practical steps by these countries' defence ministries in support of the Russian efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the population of Aleppo," it added.

Official invitations to join the operation have also been dispatched to the US military and to most European and Asian countries.

Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoygu announced the beginning of a major humanitarian operation in Aleppo on July 28.

Apart from calling for the help of armed forces worldwide, his ministry said it had asked various international humanitarian organisations, which also agreed to help.

Some 250,000 people are believed to live in rebel-held parts of Aleppo which have been under siege by Bashar al-Assad's government forces backed by Russia for weeks.

The United Nations on Tuesday called for a ceasefire in the city to allow the delivery of food and medicines and water facilities to be repaired.

"The UN stands ready to assist the civilian population of Aleppo, a city now united in its suffering," a UN statement said.

"At a minimum, the UN requires a full-fledged ceasefire or weekly 48-hour humanitarian pauses to reach the millions of people in need throughout Aleppo and replenish the food and medicine stocks, which are running dangerously low," it added.

The US on Monday called on the UN Security Council to ensure that all sides in Aleppo received aid, not just areas loyal to al-Assad.

"If the fighting continues it is conceivable that civilians on both sides of Aleppo could be cut off from the basic assistance they need. We cannot allow this to happen," said the US ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power.

Power also urged Russia to "to stop facilitating these sieges and to use its influence to press the regime to end its sieges across Syria once and for all".

Moscow however has accused Washington of politicising the humanitarian aid issue.

Russian military intervention in Syria in support of Bashar al-Assad started last September but has been criticised by several international rights organisations over civilian casualties caused by air strikes.

The Russian military has denied intentionally endangering civilians.

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