

The War Will be Over When We Get Rid of the Terrorists: Syria's President al-Assad

Interview with Italy's TG5 Channel

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Question 1: President Assad, a few days ago, the Syrian Army, with the help of the Russian force, took the control of most of Aleppo. We can say that the war is almost over?

President Assad: No, not yet, you cannot talk about the war is over until you get rid of the terrorists in Syria, and those terrorists unfortunately still have formal support from many countries including Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and many Western countries. So, this hasn't changed, and this kind of support will make the war drag on. But the defeat of the terrorists in Aleppo is an important step toward ending the war. If you don't have that external support to those terrorists, it won't be difficult at all to get rid from the terrorists everywhere in Syria, and at that time we can talk about the end of war.

Question 2: But what can you say on the huge number of victims among the civilians, and this is a big problem.

President Assad: In Syria in general?

Journalist: Yeah, yeah.

President Assad: Of course, it is a big problem; the most important thing than the infrastructure and the buildings are the people who have been killed, the families that lost their dear ones, children, their sons, brothers, sisters, mothers, and so on. This is the suffering, they're going to live with this pain forever. But at the end, the only way to solve the problem in Syria is for everyone to forgive every other one. So, I think we have this feeling, that this is the main orientation, on the public level.

Question 3: And the role of Daesh here in Syria.... You defeat Daesh, because we have problem in Europe too with Daesh, you know, the Berlin attack. What can we do with Daesh?

President Assad: As Europeans?

Journalists: As Europeans and...

President Assad: Yeah. The problem is not only ISIS. ISIS is the product, one of the products of extremism. When you talk about Daesh, you can talk about al-Nusra, you can talk about many other different organizations, they have the same mentality and the same dark ideology. The core problem of those organizations, first of all, is the ideology, the Wahabi ideology.. If you don't deal with it in Europe and in our region and in the world in general, we

cannot deal with the extremism and its product, the terrorism, anywhere in the world. I mean, in that regard; if you don't deal with the ideology, you are dealing only temporarily with the problem. If you want to deal with the issue of terrorism permanently, you have to deal with the pillar of that terrorism, which is the Wahabi ideology.

This is first. But currently you have another pillar of the problem; it's the Western support of those terrorists, maybe not ISIS in general, but they give different labels: "moderates, white helmets," they give all these humanitarian – sometimes – and moderate labels just to give them the cover in order to achieve their political goals. So, their priority in Europe – I'm talking about the European governments – their priority is not fighting terrorism; their priority is using those cards in order to change governments, and to get rid of presidents, and so on. So, with this policy, you cannot defeat terrorism in around the world, and that's why, as you see, during the last few years, there's nothing happening regarding terrorism in Europe; the terrorists are still attacking freely, with no change in the situation, because the Western officials are not serious in dealing with this problem.

Question 4: And the last question: so, do you think that the election of Donald Trump could change something here in the role of the United States in this area?

President Assad: Let's say we are more optimistic with caution, because we don't know what is the policy that he's going to adopt regarding our region in general, how can he deal with the different lobbies in the United States that oppose any solution in Syria and any good relations with Russia. But we can say part of the optimism could be related to better relation between the United States and Russia, not the West and Russia; because Europe doesn't exist on the political map. I'm talking about only the United States. If there's good relation between these two great powers, most of the world, including small countries like Syria, will be the beneficiary of this relation. In that regard, we can say there will be a solution in Syria. At the same time, he said – Mr. Trump, during his campaign – that his priority is fighting terrorism, and we believe that this is the beginning of the solution, if he can implement what he announced.

Journalist: Okay, thank you.

President Assad: Thank you.

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