

Steinmeier: ceasefire in Syria is an encouraging sign

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30.12.2016 - Press release 

In an interview with the “Passauer Neue Presse” (published on 31 December 2016), Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier spoke about the prospects for a ceasefire in Syria:

How do you rate the prospects for the ceasefire that has now been agreed in Syria?

We have always worked to try and bring about a ceasefire at long last, after six years of bloody and brutal civil war in Syria. The fact that both the Syrian Government and representatives of Syrian opposition groups have agreed to a nationwide ceasefire is an encouraging sign. While this gives us renewed hope, we must be on our guard, however. We do not yet know all of the details about the agreement, and it appears that a number of key points have not yet been fully clarified.

Only in the coming few days will we be able to tell whether the agreement is holding.

Isn't President Putin playing a game of cat-and-mouse with the Western negotiating partners nonetheless?

At any rate, it must be clear also to Russia that there can be no military solution in Syria in the long term. And it has also been clear to us all along that there can be no political solution for Syria without the involvement of Moscow and the important regional powers. The ceasefire that has now been agreed between Turkey and Russia can only hold if other regional actors such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are involved. At the same time, setting political negotiations in motion as soon as possible on the basis of UN (United Nations) Resolution 2254, which outlines the framework for a peaceful solution, remains a priority. UN (United Nations) Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura has already announced this and has welcomed the new ceasefire with this in mind. It is also important to ensure humanitarian access to all besieged areas without delay and that such access no longer be the exception.

How can a permanent end to the war be achieved?

Do you remember the talks on Syria in Munich in February? We already agreed to a ceasefire on that occasion. However, experience since then has shown one thing in particular, which is that, in the absence of genuine political negotiations, it is only a matter of time before a ceasefire in Syria collapses and the bloodshed continues. This

mustn't be allowed to happen again – 2017 must be a year of hope for the people in Syria and the many millions of Syrian refugees. The news about the ceasefire shows us that this is possible if there is political will on all sides.

What can be done to ensure that the humanitarian disaster does not get even worse and that those in need can finally receive aid?

We are already doing a great deal to this end and are taking the lead internationally. Since 2012, we have provided over 2.6 billion euros in support of the Syrian crisis, over half of which has been for humanitarian aid. We also recently set aside another 55 million euros for eastern Aleppo in order to provide the civilian population fleeing the city with basic necessities. Alongside food, tents and medical supplies, our priority now is to provide blankets, ovens and warm clothing for the winter.

The complete interview with Foreign Minister Steinmeier will be published in the "Passauer Neue Presse" on 31 December 2016.

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