

Foreign Minister Maas on the situation in Syria, Libya and Iraq

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Foreign Minister Heiko Maas issued the following statement today (19 May) following discussions with his French, UK and Turkish counterparts:

Today, we exchanged views with France, the UK and Turkey, particularly regarding the situation in Syria, Libya and Iraq, in a relaxed atmosphere and in a spirit of trust. In Syria in particular, the already difficult situation is being exacerbated considerably by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are most concerned about its possible impacts, especially on internally displaced persons in Syria. Extensive humanitarian assistance and a joint approach to securing access are required. We agreed that the extension of the UN (United Nations) mandate for cross-border assistance is essential to this end. Together, we want to continue to support the work of UN (United Nations) Special Envoy Geir Pedersen to ensure that the gridlocked negotiations in Geneva can be resumed.

In Libya, we are greatly concerned that the call for a humanitarian ceasefire, especially now during the month of Ramadan, has gone largely unheeded. Instead, the situation is continuing to escalate, with ongoing hostilities and further deliveries of arms on both sides. However, we will not cease to remind those who attended the Berlin Conference on Libya about the voluntary commitment they made in January. We will also do this in the Security Council tomorrow. Moreover, we will do our part to implement the arms embargo with the EU (European Union) operation IRINI, a matter that was also part of our discussions with Turkey today.

Furthermore, we talked about the situation in Iraq following the formation of a government, which we consider to be a positive signal. We are united in our willingness to continue to support Iraq in its stabilisation efforts, the fight against terrorism and economic reforms.

It goes without saying that the joint fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact was also the subject of today's talks. We hope that Turkey can likewise soon be a destination for German and European tourists once again. However, we must assess this in due course and in the light of strict health criteria. We are continuing our talks with Turkey on this issue as well.