

Syrian opposition welcomes Trump election, discuss civilian protection with German FM

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A delegation of the Syrian National Coalition, led by President Anas Al-Abdah, met today with German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

President Abdah thanked Foreign Minister Steinmeier for Germany's ongoing support to the Syrian people, in particular vital humanitarian aid and its continued leadership on the refugee crisis. During the meeting, President Abdah and Foreign Minister Steinmeier discussed the importance of a comprehensive new approach to the Syria crisis which prioritises the protection of civilians, and welcomed the election of Donald Trump.

Commenting after the meeting, President Abdah said:

"Firstly, we welcome the election of President Donald Trump, and look forward to discussing new US leadership on Syria with him and his team. We hope President Trump can prove his critics wrong by showing greater leadership over Syria than his predecessor, and take forward a comprehensive new approach which centres on the urgent need for concrete steps to protect civilians. In this regard, we welcomed Foreign Minister Steinmeier's commitment to support steps to protect civilians.

Foreign Minister Steinmeier also made clear that Germany shares our common goal of a political solution in Syria, and our commitment that the Assad regime cannot play any part in Syria's future or any credible political transition towards a diverse, democratic, pluralistic nation. We reiterated that more must be done to ensure the future for Syria that Syrians deserve. We welcomed Foreign Minister Steinmeier's clear commitment that they are prepared to consider all options towards this goal, and that Germany will convene with European partners over the weekend to discuss next steps.

In parallel, we reiterated to our German partners the urgent need for concrete steps to protect civilians in Syria. As the UN's Aid Chief, Stephen O'Brien, has recently stated, the responsibility to protect civilians now falls on those UN Member States with the military means to do so. Deterring all indiscriminate attacks with a nationwide no-bomb zone – the threat of limited strikes onto regime targets from ships – will save lives, make the delivery of humanitarian aid less challenging, reduce the refugee exodus, improve the fight against extremism, and force the regime back to Geneva to negotiate a political transition.

“We urged our German partners to increase the pressure on the Assad regime’s backers by imposing targeted EU sanctions against Russian entities complicit in war crimes through the ongoing supply of arms and finances to the Assad regime. It is clear that neither the Assad regime nor Russia will abandon a military solution in Syria unless compelled to do so.

“Finally, we reaffirmed that the catastrophe we are seeing in Aleppo now is a result of the international community’s abject failure to protect civilians or lift the sieges across Syria. Any plan to resolve the situation in Aleppo and across Syria cannot provide cover for the forcible displacement of civilians. In this regard, we are grateful for Germany’s clear commitment to the protection of civilians.”