

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد      بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم      از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/970466.shtml>

## Cease-fire offers tentative hope for Syria

By Zhao Jianming

2/25/2016

Since the agreement over the Iran nuclear issue was finally signed, Syrian peace process has become the trickiest challenge in the Middle East. Given the effort of the international community, the temporary truce deal, which was signed on Monday and will take effect this Saturday, may bring some hope to the country.

The deal itself is of great significance. It is an important move in implementing the outcome of the fourth foreign ministers' meeting of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG). It means that Syrian peace process, which is under the framework of the UN, has turned from proposal into real actions. It is also the first step of a long course.

Regardless of the content and duration of the truce, it is good news for the Syrian people. Since the country's civil war broke out in April 2011, Syria has experienced almost five years of turmoil. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed. The nation has become the headquarters of radical terrorist groups including the Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra. Millions of Syrians have become refugees, and those who still live in the country are enduring severe shortage of

food, medicine and other necessities of life. The cessation of hostilities will be a good opportunity for international aid agencies to send relief goods to their hands.

However, there is still a long way to go from this cease-fire to real peace.

To begin with, the nature of the current conflict, a proxy war between several nations, won't be changed because of a piece of paper. Bitter clashes have been unfolding between those backing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, including Iran, and the anti-Assad forces such as Arab members from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) including Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The cutting off of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran has intensified the conflict. If such nature of proxy war cannot be eliminated, peace in Syria will be no more than empty talk.

Cease-fires and peace talks depend to a large extent on the changing situation of war. For the moment, neither Assad nor the opposition has showed obvious sign of losing the battle. In particular, Russia's involvement in the war in the name of anti-terrorism has injected hopes for the Assad regime.

Therefore, given the current stalemate in the war, the will for compromise and peace from each party is not strong enough, and the goals from opposite sides have not changed. Hence, the truce is more of a chance for them to have a rest while taking a peek at the other side's cards. The hope of real peace is slim unless one of the sides takes an overwhelming advantage in the war.

Moreover, contradictions between the US and Russia have not cleared up. Washington and Moscow are the biggest decision-makers of the situation in Syria, either wars or peace talks. Yet they have been taking different stances over the case.

For the White House, Damascus is an effective tool to ramp up pressure on Tehran. After all, breaking up the alliance between Syria and Iran plays a crucial role in solving the Iran nuclear issue as well as appeasing US allies in the region like Israel.

For Russia, given the signing of the Iran nuclear deal, relaxation of relations between Washington and Tehran, and Iran's "Looking West" foreign policy, consolidating its own influence in the Gulf region and China and even keeping Iran under control is of great importance.

By getting involved in the Syrian Civil War through the fight against terrorism, Russia could also influence the oil price by creating geopolitical contradictions, and ease the sanctions imposed by the US and Europe.

But the Kremlin's calculations are not necessarily unnoticed by the US, and the Syrian issue is far from enough to persuade Washington and Europe to give up their sanctions against Russia.

What's more, the existence of the Assad regime is still the focal point of controversies among each party. The gap over maintaining or removing it among domestic forces, regional countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, the US and Russia, is too wide to bridge. Due to the severe divergences, any incident can destroy the newly-reached truce agreement.

In light of this, the current cease-fire deal can only cool down the situation, while the peace process still has a long way to go.