

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

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62887>

Damascus message comes through loud and clear: Assad won't relinquish power

Syria will send delegates to Geneva peace conference under Assad's orders, but his grip over country will not be under discussion.

11/27/2013



Syria will send delegates to a Geneva peace conference under President Bashar al-Assad's orders, but his grip over the war-torn country will not be under discussion, an official said Wednesday.

The announcement comes a day after the opposition insisted Assad must not have a role in a future transition, echoing repeated calls by Western powers for

the president to step down.

The January 22 peace conference dubbed Geneva 2 is aimed at ending the nearly three-year-old civil war, a bloody stalemate which has killed an estimated 120,000 people and driven millions from their homes.

"Syria announces the participation of an official delegation under the orders of (Assad) and the demands of the Syrian people, with the top priority eliminating terrorism," a foreign ministry source said, quoted by the official SANA news agency.

The source also said the delegation was not going to Geneva to hand over power, and that the condition stipulated by Syria's opposition and the West that Assad must not have a role in the country's future was out of the question.

"The official Syrian delegation will not go to Geneva to hand over power, but to take part (in talks) along with those who are committed to furthering the interests of the Syrian people and who support a political solution for Syria's future," the source said.

"Our people will not allow anyone to steal their right to choose their future and their leaders, and what is key about Geneva is to assert the Syrians' rights, and not of those who are spilling the people's blood."

The source criticised "the French, British and other foreign ministries as well as their agents in the Arab world who have insisted that there can be no place for President Assad in the transitional period.

"The ministry reminds them that the age of colonialism is over, and they need to wake up... Otherwise it will be useless for them to attend Geneva 2."

On Tuesday, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said the peace talks would take place in the Swiss city without the presence of Assad or his radical opponents.

His remarks came as the opposition National Coalition, an umbrella group increasingly at odds with rebels on the ground, insisted Assad must go, casting doubt on whether a compromise can be found.

The Coalition affirmed its "absolute rejection of Assad or any of the criminals responsible for killing the Syrian people playing any role in a transitional body... or in Syria's political future".

But while the Coalition enjoys Western support, it is unclear how much control it has over the hundreds of rebel groups fighting on the ground.

A newly formed rebel alliance said Tuesday it wants to replace Syria's regime with an Islamic state.

The covenant of the Islamic Front, Syria's largest rebel grouping with tens of thousands of fighters, spelt out its intention to play a role in politics and society as well as on the battlefield.

Under the subheading "democracies and parliaments," the Front said representative government "is based on the notion that the people have the right through institutions to (determine) legislation, whereas in Islam God is the sovereign".

The document added the only way to bring about its objective to bring Assad down was through "military rebellion".

On the ground, fighting raged on key fronts near Damascus.

In Eastern Ghouta east of Damascus, where rebels launched a major offensive aimed at breaking a year-long, suffocating army siege on opposition-held areas, "fighting raged on in Marj... where 17 rebels were killed, among them 12 non-Syrian" jihadists, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Rebels in the region face regular Syrian troops as well as Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah fighters and Iraqi members of the Abul Fadl al-Abbas militia.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a security source said the army was "trying to tighten the ring" around the rebels "while the armed men are making a desperate attempt to break through it." He also said the rebels were suffering "huge losses".

North of Damascus, fighting raged on around Nabuk in the strategic Qalamoun area, which is located along the Lebanese border.

For several days, the town has been under intense fire from loyalists trying to wrest it from rebel control, according to the Observatory.