Tripartite summit in Turkey focuses on U.S. intervention in Syria

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Ankara, September 17 (RHC)-- The leaders of Turkey, Iran and Russia met on Monday for a tripartite summit in Ankara. At the conclusion of the meeting, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said that the illegal presence of the United States in Syria poses a major threat to territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Arab country. He called for the rapid withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Syria.

Rouhani added: “I emphasize that it is necessary for American forces to leave this region as soon as possible, so that, the sovereignty of the Syrian government could be extended to eastern and northern Euphrates regions like other parts of the Syrian territory.”

Rouhani then focused on recent aerial attacks by Israel against Syria and a number of other neighboring countries, saying: “The Zionist regime has increased its aggressive assaults against the Syrian territory in the past months while officials of this regime have claimed responsibility for those assaults and have even extended those acts of aggression to Iraq and Lebanon.”

“Such attacks [by Israel on the regional countries] are blatant examples of provocative and illegal hostile measures, which can lead to extensive tension and conflict in the region,” Iran's president said.

Criticizing international organizations for failing to show a suitable reaction to widespread acts of aggression by Israel against regional countries, Iran's president added, “It is obvious that regional governments and nations have the right to defend themselves against such acts of aggression on the basis of the UN Charter.”

He added that Iran has always stressed the importance of preserving Syria's territorial integrity and national sovereignty, respecting its independence and putting an end to foreign interference in the country's internal affairs.

Iran's president emphasized that all necessary grounds should be prepared for restoration of stability and peace to Syria. Rouhani noted that an assessment of the three countries' efforts to solve the Syrian crisis through peaceful

approaches, anti-terror fight, establishment of a UN-backed constitutional committee, return of refugees, facilitation of humanitarian aid and reconstruction of the war-stricken country was high on the agenda of the summit.

In a meeting with Geir Pedersen, UN special envoy for Syria, in Tehran earlier this month, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the United States is throwing a wrench in efforts to form a UN-backed constitutional committee in Syria, which would seek to pave the way for a political solution to the Arab country's eight-year conflict.

Iran's foreign minister Zarif says the US is hampering efforts to set up a UN-sponsored constitutional committee tasked with drafting a post-war constitution for Syria. He once again reiterated the Islamic Republic's determination to help solve the Syrian crisis through peaceful approaches, saying Tehran supports positive interaction between Damascus and the UN to that effect.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian president once again reiterated the Islamic Republic's stance on the importance of resolving the Syrian crisis peacefully, saying this would only be achieved through constructive interaction and active participation of all walks of life in the Arab country.

"The fight against terrorism, particularly Daesh, al-Qaeda and affiliated groups, should continue until their full eradication," Rouhani said, adding, however, that the anti-terror campaign should not endanger civilians' lives or undermine security.

A review of Syria's constitution based on people's demands can play a leading role in ending the ongoing crisis, the Iranian president said, adding that efforts by Tehran, Ankara and Moscow and the United Nations have led to considerable progress in the formation of a UN-backed Constitutional Committee.

Writing a new constitution for a post-war Syria is part of a potential political solution to end the eight-year crisis in the Arab country. To that end, an agreement was made in the Russian city of Sochi last year for a UN-backed Constitutional Committee to be formed composed of 50 members from the incumbent Damascus government, 50 opposition members, and another 50 independent figures chosen by the world body.

In an earlier meeting with his Turkish counterpart, the Iranian president said cooperation among Iran, Russia, and Turkey, as the three guarantor states of a ceasefire regime in Syria, has promoted security in the war-ravaged Arab country.

Iran's President Rouhani says cooperation among Iran, Russia, and Turkey promotes security in Syria. "It is necessary to help the Syrian government in its fight against the remaining terrorists, especially in the Idlib region and east of Euphrates, and cooperation [with Damascus] must continue until terrorism is uprooted in the region," Rouhani said.
Edited by Ed Newman