
Germany calls for 'complete ban' on all military flights over Syria to save ceasefire

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Germany's foreign minister is calling for a temporary ban on all military aircraft flying over Syria to try and preserve the current ceasefire. Earlier US Secretary of State John Kerry demanded that only Russian and Syrian planes should be grounded.

Trends [Russian anti-terror op in Syria](#), [Syria unrest](#)

Speaking at the UN General Assembly in New York, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said that all military aircraft, including those belonging to the US, should be temporarily banned from flying over Syria for a week.

[?@GermanyDiplo](#) FM [#Steinmeier](#) on [#Syria](#): If ceasefire is to have any chance at all, there needs to be a ban of military flights for a limited period. [#UNGA](#)

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With the attack on the humanitarian aid convoy, the conflict in Syria reached a new low. The ceasefire so recently agreed between the US and Russia is in danger of total collapse.

The situation in Syria today is on a knife-edge. If the ceasefire is to have any chance at all, there needs to be a complete ban on all military flights over Syria for a limited period – three days at least, though seven would be better.

This would make it possible for the United Nations to resume its humanitarian assistance missions to the people suffering and under siege.

At the same time, it would create scope for precise agreements within the International Syria Support Group on coordinated measures against IS and al-Qaida and for the resumption of negotiations on a transitional government for Syria.

“The situation in Syria is now on a knife edge,” Steinmeier said according to a statement tweeted by the Foreign Ministry in Berlin on Thursday.

“If the ceasefire is to stand any chance [of succeeding], the only path is a temporary, but complete ban of all military aircraft movement in Syria - for at least three days, better would be seven days,” Steinmeier said.

His comments come in the wake of the US Air Force admitting it killed 62 Syrian government troops during an airstrike aimed at Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) extremists near Deir ez-Zor on September 17.

Meanwhile an aid convoy carrying aid traveling near Aleppo was destroyed, killing 21 people, with the US quick to blame Russia for the incident. Moscow has denied playing any part in the attack on the convoy.

Steinmeier’s comments come after Kerry demanded that Russian and Syrian planes should be grounded immediately, adding that he believed this was the only way to salvage the ceasefire and find a way *“out of the carnage.”*

“To restore credibility to the process we must move forward to try to immediately ground all aircraft flying in those key areas in order to de-escalate the situation and give a chance for humanitarian assistance to flow unimpeded,” Kerry said. He added that the alleged bombing of the aid convoy raised *“profound doubt whether Russia and the Assad regime can or will live up to”* ceasefire obligations.

Moscow has criticized Kerry’s plan to keep Russian and Syrian planes out of the skies, while adding that the US had come to its conclusions about Russia being responsible for the attack on the aid convoy despite an investigation not having taken place.

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"I think that this is a reflection of the position which has been taken by Washington regarding the responsibility of Damascus and how they maintain that the Russian side was responsible for the attack on the humanitarian convoy," said Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov, according to TASS.

Kerry's Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov called on Wednesday for a full and impartial investigation into the accident, adding that Moscow has provided all the data it has on the attack on a humanitarian convoy.

The UN initially said that an airstrike was to blame for the convoy being partly destroyed, however, the organization has since backtracked regarding its position.

"We are not in a position to determine whether these were in fact airstrikes. We are in a position to say that the

convoy was attacked," UN humanitarian spokesman Jens Laerke said.

The UN said it would deliver aid to areas near Damascus on Thursday after deliveries had been halted for 48 hours following the attack on the aid convoy in order to review security procedures.

"We are sending today an inter-agency convoy that will cross conflict lines into a besieged area of Rural Damascus," Laerke told Reuters. *"We will advise on the exact locations once the convoy has actually reached those locations."*

German Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel says that Russian President Vladimir Putin is determined that the delivery of humanitarian should not be halted and wants the US to protect aid convoys in Syria following a meeting with the Russian president in Moscow.

It is Putin's wish that *"not only Russia is prepared to monitor these convoys with its own forces,"* Gabriel said. *"That's one of the big conflicts - that the Americans are not prepared to do that - at least not yet,"* he added, as cited by Reuters.
