

Syria demands withdrawal of Turkish & U.S forces, warns of consequences

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem demanded an immediate withdrawal of all U.S. and Turkish troops from his country and warned about the consequences which could lead towards countermeasures by the Syrian forces.

The United States troops are around 1,000 in number tackling Islamic State militants. Similarly, Turkey controls around 3,460-square-kilometre area in Syria which encompasses around 499 settlements, including towns such as Afrin, al-Bab, Azaz, Dabiq, Jarabulus, Jindires, Rajo and Shaykh al-Hadid.

Turkey has launched military incursions into the North Syrian regions, targeting Islamic State and majorly Kurdish YPG fighters, who are fighting for the freedom of Kurdish territories in northern Syria.

YPG mainly consists of ethnic Kurds, their strength also includes Arabs and foreign fighters. This group also battled Islamic State militants where they won a major victory over ISIL at Kobani. This group enjoys receiving air and ground support from the United States-led coalition, which is a big irritant between the United State and Turkey.

Syrian Foreign Minister said, "Any foreign forces operating in our territories without our authorization are occupying forces and must withdraw immediately," while addressing the UNGA in New York.

"If they refuse, we have the right to take any and all countermeasures authorized under international law," he said.

However, President Trump, last year ordered the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syrian territory - only to later be convinced to leave some forces behind to ensure that Islamic State militants cannot stage a comeback.

The U.S. intervention in Syria began with airstrikes in September 2014 under the Obama administration.

While Syria did not approve a U.S. presence there, the Obama administration justified the military action under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, which covers the individual or collective right of states to self-defence against armed attack.

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U.S. troops in Syria/ Image: NBC

“The United States and Turkey maintain an illegal military presence in northern Syria,” al-Moualem said, describing the U.S. and Turkish efforts to create a “safe zone” inside Syria as a violation of the United Nations Charter.

The United States and Turkey have started joint land and air patrols along part of Syria’s border with Turkey, but Ankara remains angry with Washington’s support for the YPG, which has been a key U.S. ally in fighting Islamic State in Syria.

A crackdown by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on pro-democracy protesters in 2011 led to civil war, and Islamic State militants used the chaos to seize territory in Syria and Iraq.

Syrian forces have been backed by Russian air power and have been waging an offensive in the Idlib region in the country’s northwest, the last major chunk of territory still in rebel

hands after more than eight years of war.

Western states have accused Russian and Syrian forces of targeting civilians in northwest Syria, a charge they deny. They say they are targeting militants.

“We are determined to continue our war against terrorism in all its forms until rooting out the last remaining terrorist,” al-Moualem said.

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