

Frosty Faces as Hollande, Putin Discuss Syria

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Russia's President Putin and French President Hollande

French President Francois Hollande and Russian President Vladimir Putin had an in-depth discussion on Syria on Friday in which they "tried to narrow down differences on political transition," an aide to Hollande said after the two met in Paris.

The aide did not say if they had succeeded in any way in the 1 1/4-hour conversation, which took place ahead of a meeting the two men will have with the leaders of Germany and Ukraine aimed at resolving the Ukraine crisis.

They discussed the three conditions required by France for cooperation with Russia in Syria, the aide said. Those are: attack ISIS and Al Qaeda and no other targets, ensure the safety of civilians, and put in place a political transition that will see the departure of Russia's ally Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Both Hollande and Putin looked stern and frosty-faced as the French leader welcomed his Russian counterpart in the yard of the Elysee palace, exchanging a couple of terse handshakes in front of photographers and cameramen.

Russia bombed Syria for a third day on Friday, mainly hitting areas held by rival insurgent groups rather than the Islamic State fighters it said it was targeting, according to UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Russia says Assad's government should be the centerpiece of international efforts to fight militants.

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