The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Foreign Ministry Accuses UN Secretary-General of Bias

By Anna Dolgov

February 09, 2016



UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon

The Russian Foreign Ministry has accused UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of an anti-Moscow bias in his assessment of its actions in Syria, according to remarks published on the ministry's website Monday.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova claimed that "intentionally or unintentionally" Ban became involved in a "campaign unleashed in foreign [Western] media to distort Russia's role in settling the Syrian crisis, including the Russian Aerospace Force operation and the alleged civilian victims that supposedly resulted from it."

"We have always believed and continue to believe that comments by the chief administrative official of the global organization [UN] should, in line with his status, preserve impartiality and objectivity," Zakharova said. "In this case it clearly did not happen."

The Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, known for her virulent anti-Western and pro-Kremlin rhetoric, was referring to Ban's interview with the Financial Times, published on Feb. 5.

Ban said Russia's air strikes in Syria a week earlier had caused the breakdown of peace talks in Geneva, and warned that an immediate ceasefire was needed for diplomatic efforts to have a chance of succeeding, the Financial Times reported.

Neither Russia nor Syria have been "faithful" in implementing a UN Security Council resolution, adopted unanimously in December 2015, that calls for a nationwide ceasefire and an end to the bombing of civilians, Ban said, FT reported.

Despite the increased cooperation Russia had shown since late last year, Moscow's involvement in the search for a diplomatic solution to the crisis was still "not enough," Ban was quoted as saying.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg echoed Ban's comments last Friday, saying Russia's air strikes in Syria were "undermining" efforts to find a peaceful solution to the civil war, Agence France-Presse reported.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday accused Russia of indiscriminate bombings of civilians in Syria's Aleppo, Reuters reported.

"We are now, over the last few days, not only appalled but also shocked by the human suffering of tens of thousands of people through bombing attacks, and also bombing attacks originating from the Russian side," she was quoted as saying during a visit to Turkish capital Ankara.

Turkey's President Recep Erdogan, whose country is a member of NATO, described his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin as an "occupier" in Syria, Bloomberg reported Monday.

Erdogan's comments came after the recent suspension of a UN-hosted peace conference on Syria in Geneva — talks that were adjourned over the recent offensive of Moscow-backed Syrian government forces against rebels near Aleppo.

Russia claims its air strikes in Syria, which began on Sept. 30, 2015, are targeting terrorists. But Western governments accuse Moscow of seeking to bolster the regime of Syria's President Bashar Assad by targeting his political opponents.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/02/09/russian-foreign-ministry-accuses-un-secretary-general-of-bias-a51758