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Lavrov and Kerry Agree on 'Cessation of Hostilities' in Syria

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U.S. Foreign Secretary John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stand before their bilateral talks in Munich, Germany, Feb. 11, 2016.

The United States and Russia on Friday announced a plan to curb hostilities in Syria for the provision of humanitarian aid, but stopped short of securing a cease-fire that would end Russian bombing there.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made the announcement at a joint press conference on Friday following talks with more than a dozen top officials at a security meeting in Germany's Munich, Reuters reported.

The leaders said the plan aimed to achieve the "cessation of hostilities" within a week.

"That will allow the Syrian regime and opposition groups time to take the necessary measures to prepare," Lavrov was cited as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

Lavrov said Russia would continue its air strikes on terrorist organizations, naming the

Islamic State and al-Nusra as targets.

Western leaders have accused Russia of largely aiming its bombing campaign at moderate opposition forces that have challenged the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad. Bolstered by Russia's support, Assad's government forces have in recent weeks advanced on the city of Aleppo — a former rebel stronghold — encircling civilians and triggering a humanitarian crisis.

The leaders said humanitarian aid for civilians caught in the crossfire would begin as early as Friday.

The Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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