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Russia, Iran and Turkey Agree to Syrian 'De-escalation Zones'

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Delegations of Russia, Iran and Turkey hold talks on Syrian peace in Astana, Kazakhstan, Jan. 23, 2017. **Sergei Grits / AP**

Russia, Iran, and Turkey have signed a memorandum on the establishment of "de-escalation zones" in Syria during talks in Kazakhstan, the Kazakh Foreign Minister announced Thursday.

"During the past two days, participants in the Astana talks reviewed the implementation of the ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities agreements," Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov said in Astana. "As a result, the guarantor countries have agreed to sign a memorandum on setting up de-escalation zones in Syria."

Representatives of Syrian opposition groups interrupted the signing ceremony when they walked out of the negotiations to oppose Iran's role in the agreement, the Interfax news agency reported. Neither the opposition, nor the Syrian government have signed the

memorandum.

"We do not accept Iran's role as a guarantor country," one member of the opposition delegation shouted during the ceremony.

The Syrian conflict, now in its seventh year, has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and displaced nearly one-half of the country's population. In September 2015, Russia entered the war on the side of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, ultimately turning the tide in the government's favor.

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