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Almost Half of Russians Think Syrian Campaign Should End — Poll

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Russian Defence Ministry's Press and Information Department / TASS

Almost half of Russians say the Kremlin should withdraw from its military campaign in Syria, according to the results of a Levada Center poll published Tuesday.

Some 49 percent of respondents said Russia's intervention in the Syrian conflict should end while 30 percent, less than one-third, were in favor of Russia's continued involvement in the conflict, now in its sixth year.

Russia entered the Syrian war in 2015 with a series of airstrikes it said targeted Islamic State, a banned terrorist organization in Russia. The Kremlin's intervention on the side of Bashar Assad is widely seen as having turned the tide of the war in favor of the regime.

Almost one-third of respondents, 32 percent, said Russia's campaign in Syria was in danger of becoming a "new Afghanistan," referring to the Soviet Union's decade long war with the Taliban in Afghanistan, which cost more than 10,000 lives.

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Forty percent said they did not expect Russia to become entrenched in a conflict comparable to the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan.

According to Levada, 18 percent of Russians closely follow the war in Syria and are up to speed with its latest developments, while 26 percent of respondents said they don't know anything about Russia's role in Syria.

The poll comes as a Russian frigate in the Mediterranean on Tuesday fired on Islamic State targets in Syria, Russia's Foreign Ministry said in an online statement. The ministry said the strikes targeted militants from Russia and the former Soviet Union, estimated at 9,000 in 2017.

Levada's survey was conducted between Aug. 18 and 22 among 1,600 people in 48 Russian regions.

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