

Russia Takes Part in Talks Between Syria and Kurdish-Led SDF

By [Reuters](#)

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Cavit Ozgul / AP / TASS

The Syrian government and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have been holding negotiations with Russian participation, a Syrian Kurdish politician said on Sunday, expressing hope for a deal that would halt a Turkish attack.

Ahmed Suleiman, a senior member of the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria, said the talks were being held at Russia's Hmeimim airbase in Latakia, although a source close to the Syrian government said they were taking place in Damascus.

Suleiman did not say if he or his party — which is independent from the SDF — had a role in the process.

The head of the SDF media office, Mustafa Bali, said he had "no comment" when asked about Suleiman's remarks. "We have confirmed from the start of the (Turkish) invasion that we will

study all options that could spare our people ethnic cleansing," he said.

The source close to the Syrian government said meetings between the SDF and Damascus had taken place before and after the latest Turkish offensive.

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Suleiman, who is from the city of Qamishli in a part of Syria held by the SDF, said he hoped for a deal.

"We are now in Damascus, this is what I can say at present. We hope an agreement is reached that halts the war and its dangerous and catastrophic consequences on the citizens east of the Euphrates," he told Reuters via Whatsapp messenger.

His party, one of Syria's oldest Kurdish groups, is not involved in the autonomous administration set up by the SDF and other Kurdish groups such as the PYD party in northern Syria.

Russia is President Bashar al-Assad's most powerful ally.

Turkish forces backed by Syrian rebel groups launched an offensive on Wednesday into areas of northern Syria controlled by the SDF. Ankara says it is targeting Kurdish forces linked to an insurgency on Turkish territory.

The Turkish attack began after U.S. forces that have backed the SDF withdrew from part of the Syrian-Turkish border. The SDF, a major ally of the United States against Islamic State, called it a stab in the back.

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said on Sunday the United States was poised to evacuate about 1,000 U.S. troops from northern Syria after learning that Turkey planned to extend its incursion further south and west than originally planned.

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