

Russia, Iran, Turkey, Qatar Eye Talks on Syria Rebel Offensive – Reports

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Opposition fighters conduct prayers on a street in Aleppo, Syria. **Mohammed Al-Rifai / EPA / TASS**

The foreign ministers of Russia, Iran, Turkey and Qatar could [meet](#) next week to address the recent escalation in Syria, where an Islamist-led rebel alliance seized territory from the control of President Bashar al-Assad's government in a lightning offensive.

The four-way talks could take place in Doha on Dec. 7-8, according to Russia's state-run TASS news agency, which cites Iranian and Arabic media coverage of bilateral talks between Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Russia, Turkey and Iran have held talks on Syria's future as part of the Astana peace process since at least 2015.

Syria has been at war since Assad cracked down on democracy protests in 2011. The conflict has since drawn in foreign powers as well as jihadists, and has left 500,000 people dead.

The war had been mostly dormant with Assad back in control of much of the country, until

last week when the Islamist-led rebel alliance Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) began its offensive.

The attack has seen swaths of Syria fall to rebel control, including the second city Aleppo, home to 2 million people, for the first time since the start of the civil war.

Nearly 50,000 people have also been freshly displaced as of the end of November, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported Monday.

Russia first intervened directly in Syria's war in 2015 with strikes on rebel-held areas.

Related article: [Syria, Russia Conduct Deadly Strikes To Push Back Islamist Advance](#)

On Monday, President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian pledged “unconditional support” for the Assad government, according to the Kremlin.

Earlier that day, Assad slammed the HTS-led rebel offensive in a call with Iran’s Pezeshkian as an attempt to redraw the regional map in line with U.S. interests.

The United States, the United Nations and the European Union called for de-escalation, with the EU condemning Russia for conducting air strikes in support of Assad.

AFP contributed reporting.

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