

Iran says Turkey can have bases on own soil, but not in Syria



Tehran, October 21 (RHC)-- Iran has expressed opposition to Turkey establishing military bases inside Syria, calling on Ankara to respect the Arab country's territorial integrity.

"The Turks can have bases on their own side of the border, but establishing bases on Syrian soil is unacceptable and amounts to violating [the sovereignty] of a member of the United Nations," Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said Monday.

Mousavi said Turkey's security concerns, while legitimate, should be resolved amicably and with full respect for Syria's sovereignty. "Syria's sovereignty and integrity must be respected by all countries of the region," he said, noting there were already various mechanisms and agreements in place that could be used to address Turkey's concerns.

The spokesman said Iran was ready to engage Syrian Kurds, Syria's government as well as Turkey in order to bring them closer.

Turkish military forces and their FSA proxies launched an invasion of northeast Syria on October 9 in a bid to clear Kurdish militants of the so-called People's Protection Units (YPG) from its border areas.

Ankara has blacklisted the U.S.-backed YPG as a terrorist organization tied to the homegrown Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militant group, which has been waging a bloody war on Turkey since 1984. The Syrian government has condemned the offensive as an act of aggression.

Mousavi repeated Iran's position that none of the existing crises in the Middle East could be resolved through military intervention and that dialogue was the only way. Tehran has showed from the beginning of the Syria crisis that it is looking to reduce tensions in the region and has already tried practical measures to stop the violence, the spokesman said.

Mousavi did not rule out Iran's role in resolving the ongoing crisis in northern Syria as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan plans to travel to the Black Sea resort of Sochi for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Mousavi also confirmed that there have been "new developments" in ties between Iran and the United Arab Emirates recently. "We welcome any move that helps reduce tensions and brings together regional countries, especially with the Emirates," he said. "We hope our friends in the Persian Gulf region would arrive at this conclusion that they will find no better friend than Iran if they are looking for stability and peace."

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