

# *Syrian De-escalation Zones Deal Takes Effect*

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Damascus, May 6 (RHC)-- An agreement to create four "de-escalation zones" aimed at ending the conflict in war-torn Syria has come into force in the Arab country, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

The agreement on creating four de-escalation zones in four areas in northern, central and southern Syria, where the most intense fighting is underway between the Syrian government and different militant groups, took effect at midnight local time on Saturday (2100 GMT on Friday).

The enforcement of the deal came a day after Iran, Russia and Turkey signed the agreement during the fourth round of the Syria peace talks in the Kazakh capital Astana, and two days after Moscow put forward the proposal.

The four safe regions are situated across eight of Syria's 14 provinces. The first zone includes the northwestern province of Idlib, the western province of Latakia, the western-central province of Hama, and the northern province of Aleppo.

The second zone covers the northern parts of the central Homs province. The third zone encompasses the Eastern Ghouta district near the capital Damascus, while the fourth zone includes southern Syria, particularly Dara'a and Quneitra provinces.

The four zones are only safe for the so-called armed opposition factions and exclude the Takfiri terrorist groups of Daesh and the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly known as al-Nusra Front.

Meanwhile, Russian Deputy Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Alexander Fomin expressed optimism that the de-escalation zones in Syria would end the years-long war in the Arab country.

"The implementation of the memorandum will allow for stopping the combat activities by warring sides and practically put an end to the civil war in Syria, which is why the document is of great importance for the political settlement in the country," Fomin said on Friday.

He added that all "main players concerned," namely "the United Nations, the U.S. administration, the Saudi Arabian leadership and other authorities," supported the de-escalation agreement, a move that could be a "certain guarantee" for the implementation of the deal.

Meanwhile, Colonel General Sergei Rudskoi, the head of the Russian General Staff's Main Operations Department, said Moscow had already stopped using its air force in the four zones since May 1st.

According to the deal, the three guarantor states -- Iran, Russia and Turkey -- have a month to define the exact borders of the de-escalation zones.

Rudskoi also said at a press conference on Friday that the zones would improve the position of Syrian army troops, adding: "The Russian Air Force will continue supporting them in their operations aimed at eliminating the terrorists."

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