

## **Syrian President Bashar al-Assad blames Europe for refugee crisis**

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**Moscow:** Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, in an interview published on Wednesday by several Russian media outlets, blamed Europe for the refugee crisis since "it supported terrorism"

"Europe is responsible because it supports terrorism, as I said a short while ago, and is still supporting terrorism and providing cover for them," the Syrian leader said, adding that "it still calls them 'moderate' and categorises them into groups, even though all these groups in Syria are extremists".

"We are sad for every innocent victim, but is the victim who drowns in the sea dearer to us than the victim killed in Syria? Can you feel sad for a child's death in the sea and not for thousands of children who have been killed by terrorists in Syria? And also for men, women, and the elderly?" he asked, Xinhua reported.

According to al-Assad, this was a clear sign of the "double standards" of the European Union.

The Syrian president said that Europe will only slow the flood of refugees if they "stop supporting terrorists", who are the "core of the whole issue".

"If we ask any Syrian today about what they want, the first thing they would say is: We want security and safety for every person and every family. So we, as political forces, whether inside or outside the government, should unite around what the Syrian people want," said the president.

He reiterated that his stay in power is a matter decided by the people of Syria in elections and "doesn't go as a result of an American decision, a Security Council decision, the Geneva conference or a Geneva statement."

Assad denied that Iranian military units are fighting on the side of government forces, but said that Iran has supplied weapons.

On Tuesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Moscow will continue to support the Syrian regime with military aid in its fight against terrorist groups like the Islamic State.

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