

Obama, Putin agree to assist further in cessation of hostilities in Syria

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Washington: US President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin today agreed to assist further in securing a cessation of hostilities in Syria.

According to a statement issued the White House, Obama spoke Putin to express his concern over the status of cessation of hostilities in Syria as the two leaders affirmed the need to end attacks and ensure humanitarian access to all besieged areas.

"President Obama spoke today by phone with President Vladimir Putin of Russia to share his concern over the status of the Cessation of Hostilities in Syria between the Syrian regime and its allies on the one hand and the armed opposition on the other," the White House said.

During the call, Obama stressed the importance of pressing the Syrian regime to halt its offensive attacks against the opposition.

"The two leaders committed to intensify their efforts to shore up the Cessation of Hostilities and affirmed the need to end attacks by all parties and ensure humanitarian access to all besieged areas," the White House said in a statement.

Obama also said that progress on these issues needed to be made in parallel to progress on political transition to end the conflict in Syria, it said.

On Ukraine, Obama asked Putin to take steps to end the significant uptick in fighting in eastern Ukraine and stressed the urgent importance of moving forward with full implementation of the Minsk agreements, the White House said.

The White House Press Secretary, Josh Earnest, said Obama continues to make a forceful case to President Putin that he should abide by the commitments that he made in the context of the Minsk talks.

Â Â Â **"The United States continues to believe and President Obama continues to make a forceful case that Russia needs to abide by their commitments, and by doing so, they can begin to relieve some of the isolation they have sustained as a result interfering in the sovereign activities of their neighbours in Ukraine," he said.**

The Obama Administration, he said, has for years now encouraged Putin and the Russian government to use the influence that they have with the Assad regime to compel them to act constructively and more recently that means to live up to the commitments that they made in the context of the cessation of hostilities.

"President Putin has publicly expressed his view that this kind of political transition is critical to both Russian and US interests in that country and in the broader region and this is an opportunity where our interests overlap and it's an opportunity for the president to, once again, make the case to President Putin that he should use his influence with the Assad regime to live up to the commitments that they've made in the context of the cessation of hostilities," he said.

"Unfortunately, we've seen that the cessation of hostilities continues to be fragile and increasingly threatened due to continued violations by the regime," Earnest said.

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