

US, Britain, France call for immediate ceasefire in Aleppo; accuses Russia of blocking emergency help

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Washington: The US and five other countries, including Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the UK, today called for an immediate ceasefire in Aleppo asserting that a humanitarian disaster is taking place in the Syrian city.

Smokes rise in a east Aleppo neighborhood during a battle

"The urgent need now is for an immediate ceasefire to allow the United Nations to get humanitarian assistance to the people in eastern Aleppo and to provide humanitarian relief to those who have fled eastern Aleppo," leaders of the six countries said in a joint statement issued by the White House.

They also accused Russia of blocking emergency help and efforts to halt the atrocities.

"A humanitarian disaster is taking place before our very eyes. Some 200,000 civilians, including many children, in eastern Aleppo are cut off from food and medicine supplies. Aleppo is being subjected to daily bombings and artillery attacks by the Syrian regime, supported by Russia and Iran," they added.

Noting that the opposition have agreed the UN's four point plan for Aleppo, they said the regime needs to agree to the plan too.

"We call on the Syrian regime to do this urgently to alleviate the dire situation in Aleppo; and call on Russia and Iran to use their influence to help make this happen," the joint statement said.

Russia, they alleged, is blocking the efforts of UN Security Council, which is therefore unable to do its work and put an end to the atrocities.

"The regime's refusal to engage in a serious political process also highlights the unwillingness of both Russia and Iran to work for a political solution despite their assurances to the contrary," the statement said.

The White House Press Secretary, Josh Earnest, told reporters later that the strategy is essentially to apply pressure on Russia because of the tactics that they have been willing to not just condone but in some cases actively support that have resulted in significant innocent loss of life.

"It is continuing. The president does not believe it's an effective strategy to gloss over or somehow obscure Russia's complicity in this sordid affair in order to reach a solution. In fact, we actually believe that Russia bears special responsibility to help bring about a diplomatic solution because of the way they have intervened on behalf of the Assad regime and because of their own stated significant interest and the outcome of the situation inside of Syria," he said.

"So we're not gonna advance a diplomatic solution by somehow acting like Russia has been a good actor when they haven't or pretending that Russia somehow doesn't have a stake in the outcome. When the truth is, they've got as big a stake in the outcome as any other country outside of Syria," Earnest said in response to a question.

"So it's time for them to play a responsible role and thus far they haven't and that's isolated them in the international community, it's what makes them the object of so much criticism and even scorned from the international community because of their willingness to support, actively, the depraved tactics of the Assad regime to try to bomb innocent civilians into submission," he said.

- With PTI Inputs