

UNSC backs sending observers to Aleppo as evacuations resume, Syria says resolution a 'propoganda'

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Beirut: The UN Security Council on Monday unanimously approved a resolution urging immediate deployment of monitors to former rebel-held eastern Aleppo as the evacuation of fighters and civilians from the last remaining opposition stronghold in the northern city resumed after days of delays.

A Syrian child evacuated from the city of Aleppo during the ceasefire

The resolution calls for the United Nations and other institutions to monitor evacuations from eastern Aleppo and demands that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urgently consult Syria and other parties on security and arrangements for the immediate deployment of the monitors.

France and Russia, who submitted rival draft resolutions, announced agreement on a text after more than three hours of closed-door consultations on Sunday.

France said the monitors were needed to prevent "mass atrocities" from being committed by Syrian government forces, especially militias. But thousands have already been evacuated and the operation will likely be over before the observers arrive.

Another evacuation is underway in two rebel-besieged Shiite villages, where the sick and wounded were being allowed out until gunmen torched several buses being used for the operation on Sunday. That evacuation has since resumed.

The resolution adopted Monday morning calls for the United Nations and other institutions to monitor evacuations from eastern Aleppo and demands that U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urgently consult Syria and other parties on security and arrangements for the immediate deployment of the monitors.

The resolution also demands that all parties allow unconditional and immediate access for the U.N. and its partners to deliver humanitarian aid and medical care, and "respect and protect all civilians across Aleppo and throughout Syria."

Syria call resolution 'propoganda'

Syrian Ambassador to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari termed the resolution a 'propoganda'.

"France and Britain's insistence on presenting and adopting such a resolution is just another part of the continued propoganda against Syria and its fight against terrorists. While we respect the Security Council resolutions, we are aware of the real purpose of their efforts which is to protect the terrorists," Ja'afari said.

He further said, "I would like to share with you that right now the last terrorists in some districts of the eastern part of

Aleppo are evacuating their strongholds and Aleppo this evening will be clean."

"Despite our belief that some member states within the Council seek to rescue their spoiled moderate terrorists from facing their fate, we are dealing with the adoption of this resolution as a legal and moral test for these countries " as a chance if you want for them to prove their good intentions, if they do have any," he added.

Evacuations resume in Aleppo

The evacuation of Aleppo began last week after Turkey and Russia brokered a cease-fire as government forces were closing in on the rebels' last redoubt in the country's largest city, but has been repeatedly delayed.

The evacuation of more than 2,000 sick and wounded from the besieged Shiite villages of Foua and Kfarya was tacked onto the deal at the last minute. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the pan-Arab Al-Mayadeen TV said 10 buses left with civilians on Monday.

There are also plans to evacuate hundreds of people from two Madaya and Zabadani, two besieged, rebel-held villages near the Lebanese border. The Observatory and Mayadeen said 15 buses entered the two villages on Monday.

Rebel-held eastern Aleppo has been besieged for months, with several previous cease-fires breaking down and virtually no humanitarian aid reaching its tens of thousands of residents.

The Observatory and Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu later said that since midnight Sunday, some 4,500 people have been evacuated from eastern Aleppo.

Reports differed on how many people remain in eastern Aleppo, but estimates converge around 15,000 civilians and 6,000 fighters.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency said a total of 131 wounded people " including 46 children " were brought to Turkey for treatment since the evacuations began last week. The agency said five of them have since died.

The departure from the Shiite villages had stalled Sunday after militants burned six empty buses assigned to take the villagers out.

Bashar al-Ja'afari, Syria's U.N. ambassador, told reporters in New York the bus drivers were taken hostage and three were killed.

If the evacuation from Aleppo is completed later on Monday, it will close another chapter in Syria's civil war, now in its sixth year, with the government in control of Syria's five largest cities and its Mediterranean coastline.

The rebels captured eastern Aleppo in July 2012 and held on to it despite a ferocious assault in recent months by

Syrian government forces, backed by Russia and a host of Shiite militias from Iraq, Lebanon, Iran and Afghanistan. Capturing the entire city would be President Bashar Assad's biggest victory since the Syrian conflict began in March 2011.

The Observatory's chief, Rami Abdurrahman, said he expected the Aleppo evacuations to be completed later on Monday.

He said the evacuations will happen in three phases.

First, 1,250 people from Foua and Kfarya will leave in return for the government allowing half of the people still in eastern Aleppo to head to rebel-held parts of the country.

Then, another 1,250 people will leave from the two Shiite villages, in exchange for the departure of all remaining civilians and opposition fighters in eastern Aleppo.

The third phase will include 1,500 people leaving from Foua and Kfarya and, in return, 1,500 people will be allowed to leave Madaya and Zabadani.

- (With AP inputs)