

Damascus seeing Turkish presence in Northern Syria as illegal – Presidential adviser

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Presence of the Turkish army in the north of Syria is illegitimate, and Damascus will react accordingly, Bouthaina Shaaban, political adviser to Bashar Assad, said Tuesday.

In October, the Turkish Armed Forces said that Turkish military units had crossed the border into Syria's Idlib province to conduct expeditionary activities and observe the implementation of the de-escalation zones agreement. The deployment of the Turkish troops has been criticized by the Syrian side, demanding Turkey's withdrawal from Idlib.

"We consider the presence of Turkish forces on the Syrian territory illegitimate ... we will deal with them accordingly in due time," Shaaban told reporters.

The adviser noted that Turkey's actions go beyond the agreements reached during the Astana talks on Syrian reconciliation.

During the sixth round of Astana talks, held in the Kazakh capital on September 14-16, the participants reached an agreement on four de-escalation zones in Syria including the final one in Syria's northern province of Idlib.

In March, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim announced the completion of Operation Euphrates Shield, during which Turkish-led forces drove out the Islamic State from a number of settlements in northern Syria. However, Ankara has continued military operations against Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), suspected by Turkey of having links with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).