Russia Condemned For Bombing Civilians In Syria

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A coalition of countries has condemned Russia for killing civilians and not targeting Islamic State (IS) forces in its deadly bombing raids on Syria.

The UK, US, France, Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey voiced "deep concern" over Moscow's actions as Russian jets carried out a third day of airstrikes in the war-torn country.

They said in a statement they are especially concerned about "attacks by the Russian Air Force on Hama, Homs and Idlib since yesterday (Thursday) which led to civilian casualties and did not target Daesh (IS).

"These military actions constitute a further escalation and will only fuel more extremism and radicalisation.

"We call on the Russian Federation to immediately cease its attacks on the Syrian opposition and civilians and to focus its efforts on fighting ISIL (IS)."

Russian President Vladimir Putin's jets appear to be targeting rebel groups trying to topple his ally Syrian President Bashar al Assad.

They reportedly hit a camp operated by a rebel group trained by American CIA agents.

However, Russia says its Sukhoi-34 jets are attacking IS forces, and [**destroyed a command centre and training camp**](http://news.sky.com/story/1562747/russian-jets-strike-is-command-centre-in-syria) used to prepare "terrorists".

Moscow says it has carried out 18 attacks in Syria since Thursday night, with 12 of them hitting IS targets.

The Kremlin has denied reports that its strikes have killed at least 36 civilians, including five children.

[**:: Why Is Putin Joining The Syrian Conflict?**](http://news.sky.com/story/1561802/why-is-putin-joining-the-syrian-conflict)

The US-led coalition criticised Russia as Mr Putin held talks with French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Paris to try to overcome differences on whether Mr Assad should stay in power.

The Syrian President is Russia's main ally in the Middle East, while Western leaders are firmly opposed to his rule.

Mr Hollande told Mr Putin that Russian airstrikes must be confined to targeting IS militants.

And Mrs Merkel added the leaders "said very clearly that Daesh (IS) was the enemy that we needed to fight".

Mr Putin left the Paris meeting without comment and did not appear alongside the French and German leaders.

Russia's raids have triggered discussions in the Pentagon about whether America should use military force to protect US-trained and equipped rebels if they are bombed by Moscow.

US President Barack Obama said: "An attempt by Russia and Iran to prop up Assad and try to pacify the population is just going to get them stuck in a quagmire and it won't work."

He said Russia is also failing to differentiate between IS and more moderate insurgents in Syria.

"From their perspective, they're all terrorists. And that's a recipe for disaster," said Mr Obama.

Meanwhile, the United Nations said it had been forced to suspend planned humanitarian operations in Syria, including evacuating the wounded, due to a "surge of military activity".