

Foreign minister urging restraint from Turkey following its invasion of northeastern Syria

Jeppe Kofod fearful that military action could end up releasing scores of IS fighters



Many thought they had seen the back of this threat (photo: Mirwais Bezhan (VOA))

October 10th, 2019 11:15 am| by Thess Mostoles

Ahead of Turkey's invasion of Syria yesterday, the foreign minister, Jeppe Kofod, was adamant that Turkey should hold back.

Turkey "[should stay](https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/udenrigsminister-bekymret-syrien-har-sendt-et-kraftigt-signal-til-tyrki) (<https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/udenrigsminister-bekymret-syrien-har-sendt-et-kraftigt-signal-til-tyrki>) back in order not to create more war in a country that is so ravaged and where the civilian population has suffered for so many years", the minister wrote in a message sent to the Turkish government through the Danish embassy in Ankara.



(<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=dk.cphpost.mobileapp&hl=en>).



(<https://itunes.apple.com/dk/app/cphpost/id1100883052?mt=8>).

The foreign minister believes the invasion will ignite the existing troubles in northeastern Syria.

Turkish invasion could free IS fighters

Following the US withdrawal from northeastern Syria, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan confirmed to US President Donald Trump by phone that his country planned to launch a military offensive (<http://cphpost.dk/news/denmark-wary-of-trumps-withdrawal-from-syria.html>) and create a 30 km security zone inside Syrian territory dividing it from Turkey – plans that the US does not condone.

US troops will remain in other parts of the country because “there are no reports of withdrawing US forces from Syria as such,” added Kofod.

International observers worry that the invasion might end up freeing IS fighters in the area. Turkey is among the countries to consider the Kurdish YPG militia a terror organisation, but it has been one of the West’s best allies against Islamic State and they hold tens of thousands of detained IS fighters.

The EU and the West must stick together

Kofod contends that it is important to maintain the commitment to the Western Coalition against IS fighters so that “the Islamic State does not regain its footing,” and so the efforts can eventually find a “way for a political process that can lead to peace in Syria”.

The Foreign Policy Committee in Denmark has held an emergency meeting and its chair, Martin Lidegaard, has asked Kofod to enlist Denmark’s allies in putting pressure on Turkey.

Next Monday, Kofod will meet in Brussels with other EU foreign ministers to discuss the situation in Syria.

“It is really important that Europe comes together to send a clear message to Turkey (<https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/udenrigsminister-bekymret-syrien-har-sendt-et-kraftigt-signal-til-tyrkiet>) and Erdogan that now is the time for restraint and not creating war and dissent in Syria” he said, adding it is necessary to “ensure that we can still maintain the fight against Islamic State”.

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