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UN Envoy: Syrian Rebels Need to Accept That They Didn't Win War

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Commenting today in the lead-up to ceasefire talks in Kazakhstan, UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura said it's time for the rebel forces to recognize that they didn't win the six and a half year long Syrian War.

Mistura is pushing a proposal in which, as soon as the rest of ISIS territory gets overtaken by various factions, a nationwide ceasefire would result, leading to negotiations on a permanent settlement of the conflict.



“For the opposition, the message is very clear: if they were planning to win the war, facts are proving that is not the case. So now it's time to win the peace,” Mistura told reporters. He added that the only real victory would be a sustainable resolution.

That's going to be a tough sell all around, even with the idea of “freezing” the situation in rebel-held Idlib for the sake of negotiations. Even without ISIS there are a lot of factions in Syria, and getting them all to come together will be difficult.

The most significant part of the comments is not the proposal for peace talks, however, but the recognition that the war isn't going to be won. That's something everyone's been dancing around for some time, and likely something rebels are going to get mad at Mistura for drawing attention to .

Non-ISIS rebel territory includes Idlib, tiny parts of the Jordan border, a small fraction of Hama Province, and the northern half of Aleppo. Kurdish YPG forces hold the whole northeast, and represent another problem because Turkey will almost certainly not let them be in on any peace talks. Both the US and Russia envision a future Syria with a strong central government, and the US has been very clear about no regional autonomy. The two sides, however, have wildly different ideas of what that endgame will look like.