



Russia Questions the West's Silence on Syria's Strategic Victory against ISIS in Palmyra

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The Russian embassy in the UK has publicly questioned why the British government has failed to address the retaking of Palmyra from ISIS militants. The Sunday recapture by the Syrian government was made possible with the help of Russian airstrikes.

Calling the retaking a "major victory over Islamic State [IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL]," the embassy tweeted that the British Foreign Office and the government branch dedicated to defeating the group has failed to acknowledge the efforts.

Liberation of Palmyra a major victory over ISIS. Wonder why [@UKagainstDaesh](#) & [@foreignoffice](#) keep silent about it pic.twitter.com/BNRKPZxeN

— Russian Embassy, UK (@RussianEmbassy) [March 28, 2016](#)

Later on Monday, the UK Foreign Office said it welcomed action against IS, but laid responsibility for the conflict and the fate of the UNESCO World Heritage site on « *the Syrian regime*. »

« *...It is the Syrian regime that is ultimately responsible for this conflict. It is deeply regrettable that the iconic site of Palmyra has become a pawn in the wider Syria conflict,* » a Foreign Office spokesman told Sputnik.

« *The only way out of [the Syrian conflict] is a political settlement,* » he added.

[#Palmyra](#) 'not just an archaeological site but a symbol of Syria' - UNESCO
<https://t.co/sy3qjlvph2> pic.twitter.com/fSRmg7ufky

— RT (@RT_com) [March 27, 2016](#)



Image: SANA/Reuters

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister David Cameron has kept silent about the recapture, which released the ancient city from the hands of IS for the first time since May 2015.

According to the Russian Center for Reconciliation in Syria, Russian air forces *“carried out 40 sorties to Palmyra’s area within 24 hours.”* Eight command center buildings, 12 bases, two tanks, three artillery units, eight vehicles, and six ammunition warehouses were destroyed in the strikes. Eighty militants were also killed in the operation, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

President Obama has also refused to acknowledge the retaking of the ancient city, with a reporter from the Los Angeles Times speculating that this is because the US has portrayed the battle against IS as a task for Washington and its allies, while accusing Russia of attacking moderate rebels instead of extremists.

The US-led coalition in Syria has previously butted heads with Russia when it comes to conducting airstrikes in the war-torn country. In December, the US and Moscow [accused](#) each other of launching a strike which killed three Syrian soldiers at an army base.

NATO is also refusing to comment on the recapture of Palmyra, an alliance official told TASS on Monday.

“As a NATO official, I suggest you contact with your question NATO’s allies, which are all contributing to the International Coalition against ISIL, » the official said.

Meanwhile, London Mayor Boris Johnson has chosen to speak out, despite the silence of his country’s prime minister.

Praising the *“ruthless clarity”* of Russian President Vladimir Putin in aiding the Syrian government’s removal of “maniac” Islamic State jihadists from Palmyra, Johnson said that Moscow has made the West look *“ineffective.”*

"If reports are to be believed, the Russians have not only been engaged in airstrikes against Assad's opponents, but have been seen on the ground as well. If Putin's troops have helped winkle the maniacs from Palmyra, then (it pains me to admit) that is very much to the credit of the Russians. They have made the West look ineffective; and so now is the time for us to make amends, and to play to our strengths," Johnson wrote in his column for the Telegraph.

Johnson went on to note the archaeological and historical significance of the city, much of which has been destroyed by Islamic State.

"The victory of Assad is a victory for archaeology, a victory for all those who care about the ancient monuments of one of the most amazing cultural sites on Earth," Johnson wrote.

"The monsters of ISIL were not just content to murder anyone who refused to accept their barbaric version of Islam. They were so small, so narrow, so stunted in their understanding of the will of God that they regarded any pre-Islamic building or structure – no matter how beautiful – as being somehow a blasphemy. They have mined, bombed and demolished some of the most sublime buildings in the world," he continued.

Palmyra is home to dozens of remarkable monuments of antiquity, and a number of historical sites have been destroyed by IS jihadists since they captured the city – among which were the 2,000-year-old Temple of Bel and the Arch of Triumph.

Giovanni Boccardi of UNESCO's Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit told RT on Sunday that it remains unclear what can be restored or rescued.

[Drone Footage from Palmyra](#) Drone buzzes Palmyra after Syrian forces retake city from ISIS

Posted by [RT Play](#) on Monday, March 28, 2016

"We are looking at the web and we have seen footage of the city as it looks today, and it looks that there might be even more destruction than what we expected, so it is critical now to be able to go there and to conduct a total assessment as soon as the security conditions will allow, » he said.

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