

Headlines:

- **European Rhetoric**
- **Syria: Russian Ceasefire**
- **The Battle for Mosul begins**

Details:

European Rhetoric

The European Union has strongly condemned Russia for causing "untold suffering" through its bombardment of the Syrian city of Aleppo, but stopped short of considering new sanctions on Moscow. "Since the beginning of the offensive by the regime and its allies, notably Russia, the intensity and scale of the aerial bombardment of eastern Aleppo is clearly disproportionate," European Union foreign ministers said in a statement after talks in Luxembourg on Monday. This statement comes one week after French president Francois Hollande made a similar comment, even going as far as to say that he may shun Putin on 19th October when he visits Paris to meet him. The EU went on to state, "The deliberate targeting of hospitals, medical personnel, schools and essential infrastructure, as well as the use of barrel bombs, cluster bombs, and chemical weapons, constitute a catastrophic escalation of the conflict ... and may amount to war crimes." The statement is nothing but political bubbles. Had they been serious about these statements and expressed a genuine concern for the Syrian people then these statements and efforts should have come very early on in Russia's entry into Syria; and in fact even when the European states intervened with aerial bombardment, as they stated these tactics have been around for a very long time.

Syria: Russian Ceasefire

Russia announced a 'humanitarian pause' in its bombing of Aleppo this week. Moscow reportedly halted their operations on Thursday for an eight-hour period to enable civilians and rebels time for evacuation from the city, the Russian defence ministry said. Despite the time allotted, the UN reported that at least 12 hours were needed for that to happen. These announcements transpired on the very day that 14 members of a single family were killed in an airstrike on Aleppo. Russia itself has recently come under heavy scrutiny from the West, over its attacks on rebel-held east Aleppo. The EU have even accused the Russian government, stating that 'since the beginning of the offensive by the regime and its allies, notably Russia, the intensity and scale of the aerial bombardment of eastern Aleppo is clearly disproportionate of war crimes'. It is clear that this ceasefire will do little to quell the bloodshed within the country, that has been initiated not only at the hands of Russia but at the hands of the West as well.

The Battle for Mosul begins

On Monday 17th October, Iraqi forces with the support of Shia militias, US, France and Britain announced their advance to retake the ISIS stronghold of Mosul in Iraq. This was after the success of similar offences in other areas where the fall of Mosul will be seen as the most significant achievement. Just like there were many questions concerning the initial takeover of Mosul by ISIS, many questions are asked of the various factions involved in this advance. The constant mention of the advance being "Iraqi led" is clearly to add legitimacy to a military which has lost control of its security. In reality however, this battle has already flared further sectarian tensions due to the inclusion of the Kurdish Peshmerga and the Shia militias who have undertaken numerous human rights violations in Sunni areas. Whilst on the surface, the Iraqi forces with foreign help will quickly defeat ISIS, only time will tell how successful the operation has truly been.