

# Russian Army Chief Slams Western Media, Says Battle for Mosul Hasn't Yet Begun

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Iraqi forces are deployed during an offensive to retake Mosul from Islamic State militants outside Mosul.  
**AP**

The battle for the Islamist-occupied city of Mosul has not yet begun, warns one of Russia's top military officials.

Army General Valery Gerasimov, head of the General Staff for Russia's Armed Forces, slammed the "Western media" for reporting that the operation has already begun in earnest.

"For all the hype on Western television screens, it should be understood that the operation essentially has not started yet," he said.

The Russian army says it is currently working to ensure that Islamic State militants will not flee the city into Syria.

“We must not drive the terrorists from one country to another. We need to destroy them [where they are],” Gerasimov argued.

Some 5,000 people are believed to have fled from the Iraqi city of Mosul in recent weeks, according to the charity Save the Children. Kurdish and Iraqi government forces are working with an international coalition to prepare an assault on the city, which has been controlled by the Islamic State since June 2014.

The Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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