

Russia: The Friends of Syria Group supports Terrorism

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A resolution adopted by the Friends of Syria Group in Rome on Thursday encourages extremists there to seize power by force, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said on Friday.

US, EU and Arab officials who met in Rome on Thursday pledged more assistance to the Syrian opposition fighting against President Bashar al-Assad's regime, recognizing the National Coalition as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people.

"There is a general understanding within the international community that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis," Lukashevich said in a statement posted on the ministry's website.

"Meanwhile, judging by incoming reports, the decisions made in Rome, as well as the statements that were made there, both in letter and in spirit encourage extremists to seize power by force, regardless of the inevitable suffering of ordinary Syrians." He did not elaborate.

The Rome statement praised the opposition National Coalition for its reform efforts, urged Assad's regime to end "indiscriminate bombardments against populated areas," and deplored "the unabated arms supply to the regime by third countries."

The US pledged \$60 million in "non-lethal" assistance for the Syrian political opposition.

Secretary of State John Kerry said on Thursday the US would send the Syrian opposition an additional \$60 million in non-lethal aid, but still refuses to supply the weapons and sophisticated military supplies the rebels have said they need.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday Moscow's position on Syria stems from its concern for the Syrian people, and not the fate of President Bashar al-Assad.

The United States has called for Assad to step down, but Russia says it is concerned that the Syrian president's forced departure would make the conflict worse.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said last Tuesday foreign military supplies to Syria's armed opposition have been growing. He reiterated Russia's official position that Moscow will not carry out fresh arms deliveries to the Syrian government, but is only supplying arms and military equipment under contracts signed before the civil war, which has claimed some 70,000 lives according to the latest UN estimates.

Last Monday, Lavrov denied Moscow had tried to smuggle arms components into Syria via Finland, and said there are no Russian troops in Syria apart from several dozen technical staff at the Tartus naval support facility. Russia's state-run arms dealer Rosoboronexport said on Wednesday it is supplying air-defense missile systems and maintenance and servicing equipment to Syria, but not combat aircraft.

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