

Syrian Conflict Part of Mideast 'Geopolitical Game'

By [Stop NATO](#)

Global Research, October 23, 2012

RIA Novosti

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Lavrov cited some unspecified opposition groups as telling Russia that Western countries urge them to continue the resistance, "to fight for their rights with arms until [President Bashar al-Assad's] regime falls."

MOSCOW: Some countries are apparently interested in fueling violence in Syria as part of a "geopolitical remapping" of the Middle East, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"It appears that every time the hope for progress in the Syrian situation arises, somebody attempts to prevent it from calming down and deliberately fuels the continuation of the bloodshed and civil war in Syria," Lavrov said in an interview with Rossiiskaya Gazeta on Monday.

Lavrov cited some unspecified opposition groups as telling Russia that Western countries urge them to continue the resistance, "to fight for their rights with arms until [President Bashar al-Assad's] regime falls."

The minister was especially critical of the terrorist tactics used by the opposition as a wave of attacks targeting senior government officials and pro-Assad forces had recently swept through the country.

The Syrian conflict has claimed up to 30,000 lives since March 2011, according to latest US estimates.

The West and some Arab countries are pushing for Assad's ouster while Russia and China are trying to prevent outside interference in Syria, saying that the Assad regime and the opposition are both to blame for the bloodshed.

According to Lavrov, the Syrian conflict is "part of geopolitical remapping of the Middle East, where various players attempt to safeguard their interests."

Assad, who is widely viewed as a close ally of Iran, has been unfairly made "a scapegoat" in this "big geopolitical game," Lavrov said.

He defended Assad by calling him "a guarantor of the security of national minorities, among them Christians, who have been living in Syria for centuries."

"By the most conservative estimates our Western partners quote in confidential contacts, he still enjoys support of at least a third of citizens as a man who vowed to prevent Syria's transformation into a state where minorities will be simply unable to live and exist," the Russian minister said.

Lavrov reiterated that foreign “recipes” would never provide a long-lasting and reliable solution to the Syrian conflict, and expressed hope that the visit of UN peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to Russia next week would help outline steps toward dialogue between warring parties in Syria.

Brahimi, who held talks with Assad in Damascus on Sunday, has urged the Syrian government and the opposition to cease fire for the duration of the Eid al-Adha holiday, which starts on Friday.

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