



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on February 6, 2012

Russia, China Block UN Vote on Syria Regime Change

The governments of China and Russia blocked a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad to hand over power, sparking outrage among Western and Arab leaders supposedly concerned about a bloody conflict that has already claimed thousands of lives. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton responded to the UN vetoes by vowing to redouble the Obama administration's efforts to take down the regime.



The UN resolution in question called on Assad to step down and transfer power to his vice president as the nation moved toward "democracy." If the regime refused to cooperate, the language threatened Syria with "further measures."

But the Russian and Chinese governments — both of which used their Security Council vetoes to scuttle the plan despite its support from the 13 other member governments on the council — said the resolution was "biased" against the Assad regime. Russia also accused Western leaders of undermining a meaningful peace process and said the UN should not interfere in the internal affairs of member states.

The Russian government, which has an important naval base in Syria and continues to sell the country weapons, considers the Assad regime a key strategic ally. As such, it has vocally opposed any more foreign military intervention in the region — especially in the wake of NATO's devastating war on Libya, instigated using a UN resolution, that [left tens of thousands dead, a questionable regime in power, and heavy weaponry in the hands of terrorists](#).

"Some influential members of the international community, unfortunately, including those sitting around this table, from the very beginning of the Syrian process have been undermining the opportunity for a political settlement," Russian Ambassador to the UN Vitaly Churkin (above) said after the vote. His government has repeatedly warned of a widespread regional conflict that could erupt if the West did not stop meddling.

But Western leaders — and especially President Obama — have been loudly demanding regime change in Syria for months. After the UN veto, outraged U.S., European, and Arab officials blasted the two governments for blocking the resolution and vowed to press on with regime change anyway.

"Any government that brutalizes and massacres its people does not deserve to govern," President Obama declared in typical fashion, ignoring a host of other brutal governments that are known to have massacred their own people in recent years. Secretary of State Clinton, who was also instrumental in taking down the Gadhafi regime in Libya, was particularly furious about Russian and Chinese defiance.



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“What happened yesterday at the United Nations was a travesty,” Clinton told reporters. “Faced with a neutered Security Council, we have to redouble our efforts outside of the United Nations with those allies and partners who support the Syrian people’s right to have a better future.”

Syrian opposition activists abroad, meanwhile, said the veto has essentially handed Assad a “license to kill” protesters and revolutionaries. “The SNC holds both governments accountable for the escalation of killings and genocide,” said the anti-Assad Syrian National Council in a [statement](#).

But despite the widespread perception that “peaceful protesters” are being savagely slaughtered by a mad despot — largely painted by the international press and Western officials — the reality on the ground is not so simple. According to experts on the situation, including more than a few former intelligence officials, there is actually [much more going on than meets the eye](#).

Rebel groups in the nation being secretly armed by the West and an assortment of Islamist groups first openly clashed with the Assad regime in March of last year. During the early days of the protests, at least seven Syrian police officers were killed. A local court and the ruling Bath Party’s headquarters were also set ablaze by protesters.

The chaos prompted Assad to take action, responding to the uprising with what observers called a brutal crackdown. The dictator promptly labeled the rebels “armed gangs” and “terrorists” being used as stooges in an international “conspiracy,” vowing to restore “stability” at all costs.

But even though his claims were largely ignored or dismissed out of hand by Western officials and much of the international media — as in Libya last year — there is likely at least some truth to them, according to experts. And since then, tensions within the country have only escalated as advocates of regime change — many of whom are undoubtedly sincere in their desire to remove the long-serving despot — have unleashed waves of violent attacks on government forces.

According to Israeli intelligence sources, the rebel groups were [using](#) “heavy machine guns” and anti-tank defenses months ago in their battle against the dictatorship. And the U.K. *Guardian* [reported](#) this week that Syrian insurgents, many of whom defected from the army, were even blowing up government tanks.

The U.S. government, of course, has been waging a long and expensive covert campaign to overthrow the Assad regime, according to American diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks. Among other measures, the cables [showed](#) that the U.S. government had been covertly funding Syrian opposition groups for years. And it appears that its efforts are now paying off.

In recent months, the violent unrest in Syria has exploded. Estimates on the death toll so far are in the neighborhood of 5,000 to 7,000. And a massacre this week reported to have taken place in the city of Homs allegedly left hundreds dead.

The Assad regime claims his forces never attacked the city. The state-owned news agency, meanwhile, said the bodies on display were actually “martyrs” killed by the “terrorists” that were being used by unscrupulous rebels to deceive the world and build international pressure against Syria.

But the regime’s accounts were once again largely dismissed across the globe. Due to restrictions on the media, it has been impossible to confirm what is really going on in the nation. Much of the international press, however, has been relying almost entirely on rebel accounts to report what is happening, similar to what occurred in Libya.

In response to the ongoing turmoil in the nation, a coalition of Middle Eastern and North African



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regimes under the “Arab League” banner called for Assad to step down. The group of governments, which includes the Saudi Arabian monarchy and more than a few other unsavory dictatorships in the region, also led the charge to pass the most recent UN resolution essentially calling for regime change in Syria.

But the Russian government stood firm despite Western and Arab pleas to approve the measures. “I thought that there might be some ways to bridge, even at this last moment, a few of the concerns that the Russians had,” [said](#) Secretary of State Clinton. “I offered to work in a constructive manner to do so. That has not been possible.”

In October of last year, Russia and China also blocked a resolution backed by the European Union that would have condemned the Syrian regime and threatened it with sanctions. Both governments have indicated that they will continue to support Syria and work toward a “peaceful” political solution to the violence in Syria. The Assad regime, meanwhile, has vowed to continue its efforts to “restore stability.”

As the UN option crumbled, Western leaders and Syrian opposition groups called for an international coalition outside of the global body to take action. Radwan Ziadeh of the anti-Assad Syrian National Council was quoted by the Associated Press — echoing Clinton’s recent statements — calling for enemies of the regime to form an international coalition “whose aim will be to lead international moves to support the revolution through political and economic aid.”

Still, despite the turmoil, Assad does have plenty of supporters within the country, according to experts. Christians in Syria, for example, worry that if Assad is overthrown by the rebel groups — widely perceived as a coalition of Islamic extremists with Western backing — Christianity could be brutally suppressed as in other Arab nations.

“Syrians want change,” [noted](#) former British intelligence MI6 officer Alastair Crooke, who serves as a high-level EU advisor and runs a non-governmental organization in Lebanon. “But whether Westerners believe it or not, most people in Damascus, in Aleppo, the middle classes, the merchant classes and the [sectarian] minorities believe Assad is the only person who can bring in reforms.”

That is one reason why covert Western assistance has been key in fomenting the current unrest. While some of the arms being used against Assad did indeed come from army defectors, much of the weaponry and many of the foreign agents on the ground entered through Turkey.

“French and British special forces trainers are on the ground, assisting the Syrian rebels while the CIA and U.S. Spec Ops are providing communications equipment and intelligence to assist the rebel cause,” [wrote](#) former CIA officer Phil Giraldi in a recent article. “Americans should be concerned about what is happening in Syria, if only because it threatens to become another undeclared war like Libya but much, much worse.”

There is more, too. According to a wide array of experts and officials, regime change in Syria is likely just a [prelude to a war on Iran](#) — a conflict that could ultimately engulf the whole world in a bloody battle with unimaginable devastation.

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Photo: Russian representative Vitaly Churkin leaves the podium after speaking to reporters following a meeting of the United Nations Security Council at U.N. headquarters, Feb. 4, 2012: AP Images



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