

Syrian Coalition calls on Russia to support Syrian democracy

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Press Statement
Syrian Coalition
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Russia's position towards the conflict in Syria seems geared towards perpetuating a doomed dictatorship regardless of the cost instead of honouring its commitment to peace, stability and democracy.

Russia accused the Friends of Syria group on Thursday of trying to revise the terms of the understanding that forms the basis of planned peace talks.

Russia's position seems to be based on a central misunderstanding; the conflict in Syria is not the result of competing factions claiming power. In 2011, the Assad regime faced a popular uprising against five-decades of mafia-like rule by one family. It responded to popular calls for change by ordering troops to open fire on unarmed demonstrators. Since then, it has jailed peaceful activists and emptied jails of extremists in an effort to morph the nature of the conflict.

The declaration following the London conference only stated a simple fact; it is impossible for Bashar Assad, and his clique, to stay in power. By using its most feared weapons on civilians, the regime removed the fear upon which it had built its rule. Syrians have now faced warplanes, Scud missiles and chemical weapons. All of this has only increased their desire to see a future free of the Assad. The question is not whether the Assad regime will end, but when.

Russia has either cynically ignored or negligently overlooked the reality of opposition to Assad's rule. The vast majority of Syrians want change. The regime's reluctant and duplicitous promises of limited reform are not enough.

The Coalition represents real Syrians with legitimate demands. On the other hand, it is highly doubtful the regime is able to represent, in any meaningful way, people it has been trying to kill for nearly three years.

For negotiations to have any hope of meeting the aspirations of Syrians – thousands of whom have been killed for these basic rights – Russia must accept the tide of history has turned against the Arab, one-party dictatorship.