

Russia's Stance on the Syrian Crisis

By [The Voice of Russia](#)

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International experts have discussed the problem of chemical weapons' removal from Syria. A meeting of representatives of Russia, the USA, China, the UN, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with the participation of the Syrian delegation was held in Moscow on Friday. The session took place behind closed doors, but some details became known.

Thus, Russia together with the Chinese side will provide security during transportation and loading of dangerous materials. Moscow is already helping Damascus to implement the Geneva agreements, and not only by means of diplomatic words, but in practice.

Russia participates in the destruction of the Syrian weapons with both its funds and technology, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said in the Voice of Russia broadcast.

"The Russian Federation's contribution in this process is very impressive. We have transferred 75 trucks using the recourses of the military transport aviation of the Russian Federation in literally three days and presented them to Damascus. This is a great achievement and an important contribution to our common efforts. Besides, we've contributed two million dollars to the UN fund for destruction of the Syrian chemical arsenal. We provide daily expert and political support, as well as diplomatic support of contacts of all participants of the Syrian chemical weapons' destruction process. At the same time we are sure that it will be possible to complete the process in the next six months as it was recorded in the Geneva agreement."

The Deputy Minister has explained that toxic substances were stored in the form of so-called precursors that is "semi-finished products", components of chemical weapons. They are to be transferred to the Syrian port of Latakia. The chemical weapons will be destroyed on board the American cargo ship Cape Ray equipped with special equipment. It is to sail from Norfolk, Virginia, to the Mediterranean on January 3.

While other interested parties are occupied with settling the Syrian problem, the opposition forces are on the watch. They have broken the truce in Muadamiyat-al-Sham located in the suburbs of Damascus. The government forces had to gather more troops there. But the main thing is that attacks of the militants on warehouses of chemical weapons have become more frequent.

The Russian Foreign Ministry is sure that this is a deliberate action aimed at disrupting the operation of destroying toxic substances. Moscow states that such actions of the opposition

are a challenge not only to Damascus, but also to the international community, to the decisions that were adopted by the UN Security Council.

The conclusions of Russian diplomats are confirmed by statements of some Syrian opposition leaders regarding the convocation of the Geneva-2. According to Bashar al-Assad's opponents, there are no prerequisites for holding the conference: the Syrian leader ostensibly has not fulfilled any of the decisions of the first Geneva meeting. And this is despite the fact that the date and venue of the international conference on Syria are already agreed upon.

The meeting is to kick off on January 22 in the Swiss town of Montreux. The official Damascus will be represented there by a delegation headed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Walid Muallem. According to expectation, the delegation of the Syrian opposition is still unknown. Moreover, it is still not decided whether the opposition will participate in the conference in principle.

It was let know that putting forward any preliminary conditions, including those related to the presidency of Bashar al-Assad, was unacceptable. At the same time, the opposition's presence at the negotiating table is highly desirable, Director of the Institute of Strategic Planning and Forecasting Alexander Gusev notes.

"During the last six months, the Syrian opposition sometimes consents, sometimes refuses (to come), and now its participation in the Geneva-2 conference is questionable. The political will of such countries as the USA and France is needed for the representatives of the Syrian opposition to attend this conference, because without their participation we will not succeed in regulating the political process in Syria."

Russia considers Iran's participation in the conference on Syria no less necessary. However, so far, Tehran's presence is undecided, head of the Russian Foreign Ministry Sergey Lavrov says.

"The Iranians told us that if they receive an invitation to participate in the Geneva conference, like all the others, without preconditions, they will accept the invitation. We are receiving signals that Iran may have a positive impact on the settlement process. Almost everybody is talking about it in private conversations. Some even began to speak out publicly in favor of not depriving the conference of such an important participant as Iran. In particular, this was stated by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Those, who oppose the Iranian participation, do not do it for the good of the cause, but for ideological reasons."

The USA, as well as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Israel are most of all opposed to the Iranian participation in the Geneva-2. Everyone has his own reasons to protect the Syrian settlement from Iranian interference or at least to severely limit Tehran's field of activity, General Director of the Center for Strategic Estimates and Forecasts Sergey Grinyaev notes.

"The Russian position is motivated by the fact that Iran de-facto is a participant of the events in Syria. It's not a secret, that some armed units of the Islamic Republic have directly participated in the hostilities. This is quite explicable. The fact is that the Iranian leadership viewed the conflict in Syria as a harbinger of a possible escalation against Iran itself. Moreover, in recent years, Iran has turned into a full-fledged regional player possessing not only powerful armed forces, but also strong enough political power capable of formulating and solving not only regional, but also some global issues. That is why Iran's full

participation in the Geneva-2 conference is justified.”

Today, delegations from 26 countries have agreed to participate in the Geneva-2. They are to put an end to the conflict in Syria and stop the bloodshed on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué of June 30, 2012. This goal is difficult to achieve: numerous radical groups, for whom the peace process isn't profitable at all, are operating in the country.

Nevertheless, all the participants of the “Syrian story” understand: the peak of the conflict is in the past, they have once again managed to prevent a full-scale war in the Middle East. Of course, diplomatic battles are still going on; how can we do without them. But Damascus is already thinking about its peaceful future. On December 25, Syria signed a 25-year agreement on oil and gas exploration in its territorial waters with the Russian Soyuzneftegaz company.

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