

Syria Takes Rotating Presidency of UN Disarmament Conference in Geneva, US Protests

By [Press TV](#)

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Syria has taken the rotating presidency of the United Nations (UN)'s Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, prompting disruptive objection by the United States.

The chairing of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) rotates alphabetically among the body's 65 members every four weeks, and Syria's turn came on Monday.

Syrian Ambassador Hussam Edin Aala opened the conference's latest round on Tuesday.



Image: Syria's Ambassador to the United Nations (UN) in Geneva Hussam Edin Aala presides over the Conference on Disarmament at the UN in Geneva, Switzerland, May 29, 2018. (Photo by Reuters)

American disruption

The US, opposed to the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, objected to Syria's takeover of the committee's presidency.

"Syria's presence here is a travesty... and it is just unacceptable for them to be leading this body," US Ambassador Robert Wood said just before the session began on Tuesday.

The US delegation — led by Wood — then briefly left the room in protest and returned shortly afterwards.

Back on the floor, Wood voiced Washington's displeasure.

Image: US Ambassador Robert Wood walks out in protest at Syria's presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, May 29, 2018. (Photo by Reuters)



“Let me be clear: we cannot permit ‘business as usual’ in the CD while Syria presides over this body,” Wood said, referring to potential plans to disrupt upcoming meetings. “During the next four weeks, we will be present in this hall to ensure that Syria is not able to advance initiatives that run counter to the interests of the United States, but we will fundamentally alter the nature of our presence in the plenaries.”

After making that statement, the US ambassador moved to a seat usually reserved for assistants, apparently in protest.

Ahead of the session, Wood had stressed that his country did not plan to boycott the CD during the four weeks of Syrian presidency.

A number of ambassadors from other countries, including Britain, Australia, and France, echoed Wood’s remarks.

He claimed that the US sought to hold Syria to account for its alleged use of chemical weapons.

The Syrian government surrendered its stockpiles of chemical weapons in 2014 to a joint mission led by the UN and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which oversaw the removal and destruction of the weaponry.

Western governments and their allies, however, have continued to accuse Damascus of having conducted chemical attacks on a number of occasions during the conflict in Syria.

The Syrian government has rejected all allegations of chemical attacks and has pointed to the conclusion of the UN-OPCW mission to make the case that it is no more in possession of chemical armaments.

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