

Russia Looks for 'Democratic' Egypt

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A protester arguing with a policeman in Cairo's Tahrir Square on Sunday. **Emilio Morenatti**

A "democratic" Egypt is key for peace in the Middle East, President Dmitry Medvedev said Saturday.

"A strong, democratic Egypt is an important factor for the peace process in the Middle East," Medvedev said in a statement e-mailed by the Kremlin press service. "Russia will continue playing an active role in international efforts to contribute to this process."

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak ceded power to the military Friday, toppled by a popular revolt after 30 years in charge of the Arab world's most populous state.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also called for peace to be restored swiftly in the country.

"We hope the latest developments will help restore stability and normal functioning of all power structures. We hope that not only the government but also the opposition will show willingness to stabilize the situation," he said Friday after Mubarak's resignation.

However, it remained unclear Sunday when stability may be restored, as the Egyptian military

dissolved the parliament and "annulled" the constitution, which is to be amended on a referendum.

Looting continued in Cairo, with thieves stealing numerous artifacts, including two statues of the pharaoh Tutankhamun, the country's antiquities chief Zahi Hawass said Sunday.

Egypt was the second most popular destination for Russian tourists last year, but less than a dozen of the 45,000 Russians vacationing at local resorts before the riots began last month still remain in the country, a Federal Tourism Agency spokesman said Saturday, Interfax reported.

(Bloomberg, MT, Reuters)

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