

Lavrov Calls for Libya Talks, Warns on Syria

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ALMATY, Kazakhstan — Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called on Friday for negotiations as soon as possible between Libyan rebels and Moammar Gadhafi's government and emphasized Moscow's opposition to any foreign interference in Syria or other regional states.

In wide-ranging remarks in Kazakhstan, Lavrov also said Iran must engage in "serious conversation" with global powers to dispel concerns it could be seeking nuclear weapons.

"We do not want the Libya scenario to be repeated — not to mention that the situation in Libya itself must be brought into a political channel as swiftly as possible," Lavrov told Russian journalists.

"It is necessary to utilize the services of the UN secretary-general's special envoy and the mediation proposals of the African Union in order to sit down and seek agreement without any conditions," Lavrov said.

He suggested that a resolution of the conflict would usher in a new government but that talks

with Gadhafi's government were unavoidable.

The result of dialogue "will be a new political system, but it is necessary to seek agreement also with those upon whom the prospects for calming the situation depends," Lavrov said.

Russia says a Western-led coalition conducting airstrikes in Libya is overstepping its UN Security Council mandate to protect civilians, and has vocally opposed foreign intervention in other conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa.

Lavrov said efforts to end bloody confrontation in Syria were complicated by "the desire of some participants in these processes to attract external forces to support their actions," Interfax reported.

"Efforts to multiply the Libyan experience in other countries and regions is very dangerous, whether it is Yemen, Syria, Bahrain," Lavrov said.

On Iran, which has been involved in a diplomatic to-and-fro with Russia and five other global powers over potential new talks on its nuclear program, Lavrov said Tehran must not avoid questions about activities that fuel suspicion.

He said any talks with Iran would have to include "a serious discussion of the Iranian nuclear program.

"We all want to be 100 percent certain that there is no military element" in Iran's nuclear program, he said.

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