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Moscow to Host Gadhafi Envoys

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Representatives of Moammar Gadhafi's government are expected in Moscow on Tuesday, and the government also hopes to host Libyan rebel envoys soon, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday.

"We have agreed to meetings in Moscow with representatives of both Tripoli and Benghazi. Envoys from Tripoli will be here tomorrow. Envoys from Benghazi were supposed to be here on Wednesday, but as they informed us, they were forced to ask us to postpone this visit for technical reasons," Lavrov said at a meeting in Moscow with the UN envoy for Libya, Abdelilah al-Khatib, Itar-Tass reported.

"We hope it will take place in the foreseeable future," Lavrov said, casting Russia as a potential peacemaker.

"We are ready to conduct dialogue with all," he said.

Lavrov repeated Russia's call for an end to fighting in Libya and the start of talks. "Moscow is very, very interested in the swiftest halt to the bloodshed in Libya and for a shift of the situation into the channel of political dialogue."

Earlier Monday, the International Criminal Court prosecutor requested arrest warrants for Gadhafi, his son Saif al-Islam and the country's intelligence chief on charges of crimes against humanity.

Although Moscow appeared set on establishing a diplomatic conduit out of Libya's civil war, analysts were skeptical.

"I think if an agreement doesn't begin with Gadhafi and his immediate family leaving office, it isn't going to fly with the opposition or with NATO," said David Hartwell, Middle East analyst at IHS Jane's.

Lavrov also said Russia backed an initiative by the UN humanitarian coordinator "for the declaration of a humanitarian pause to clarify the situation on the ground and provide aid to the population across all of Libya."

UN humanitarian chief Valerie Amos said May 9 that the way sanctions were being applied on Libya over the Gadhafi government's war with pro-democracy rebels had been delaying delivery of supplies to its population.

Russia, a veto-wielding permanent member of the UN Security Council, abstained from the March vote on a resolution that authorized military intervention to enforce no-fly zones.

Russia has accused the NATO-led forces carrying out airstrikes of going beyond their mandate to protect civilians, saying the coalition has essentially taken sides in a civil war.

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