

Despite Russia, Paris to Seek Syria Vote

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A man wearing a mask of al-Assad protesting outside the International Criminal Court in The Hague on Tuesday. **Michael Kooren**

WASHINGTON — France is ready to ask the UN Security Council to vote on a draft resolution condemning Syria for its brutal crackdown despite the threat that Russia will veto the measure, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said.

Juppe said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had lost his legitimacy to rule and it was time for the UN Security Council to make its views known.

"The situation is very clear. In Syria, the process of reform is dead and we think that Bashar has lost his legitimacy to rule the country," Juppe told a Washington think tank on Monday after a day of talks with U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

"We think, all together, that now we must go ahead and circulate this draft resolution in the Security Council," Juppe said, saying he believed that a resolution could attract at least 11 of the 15 Security Council votes in favor.

"We'll see what the Russians will do," he said. "If they veto, they will take their responsibility."

Maybe if they see that there are 11 votes in favor of the resolution, they will change their mind. So there is a risk to take and we're ready to take it."

Juppe's comments came after Russia and China — both veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council — last month raised concerns about the European-backed draft resolution to condemn Syria's bloody crackdown against anti-government protesters.

A previous European-led push to persuade the council to issue a statement rebuking Syria collapsed in May when Russia, China and India made clear they opposed it.

Juppe conceded that France and other Western powers risked accusations of a double standard when their response to the Syria crackdown is weighed against that for Libya, where they won a UN Security Council resolution authorizing use of force to protect civilians from forces loyal to longtime leader Moammar Gadhafi.

"We have condemned, in the same terms, the crackdowns in Libya and in Syria. But the evolution of the situation has been different," Juppe said.

Rights groups say 1,000 civilians have been killed in the protests that have swept from the southern city of Deraa to the Mediterranean coast and eastern Kurdish regions.

Diplomats say that in order to secure abstentions from Russia and China, the text of the draft resolution would have to be amended. But Juppe did not say whether this was under consideration.

Both the European Union and the United States have already slapped sanctions on leading figures in the Syrian government, including al-Assad.

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