

Russia Supports UN Statement on Syria

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The UN statement condemns Syrian violence but contains no provisions for sanctions or other punitive measures. **Osman Orsal**

UNITED NATIONS — In its first substantive action on Syria's five-month uprising, the UN Security Council on Wednesday overcame deep divisions and condemned Damascus' bloody crackdown on civilian protesters, a move long blocked by Syrian allies Russia and China.

The council's statement "contains an unambiguous and clear-cut call to end all sorts of violence," Russia's UN ambassador, Vitaly Churkin, told reporters before its adoption.

It "urges all sides to act with utmost restraint and to refrain from reprisals, including attacks against state institutions."

That phrase was a gesture to Russia and other countries that had called for a balanced statement that would apportion blame to both sides for the violence in the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad. Syria says it faces opposition by armed extremists.

The statement ends weeks of frustration for Western nations, which had faced a threatened veto of their resolution by Russia and China and had been unable to persuade temporary

council members Brazil, India and South Africa to support it.

Russia had argued that it did not want a repeat of a March 17 council resolution on Libya that was cited by Western countries as justification for airstrikes on the forces of leader Moammar Gadhafi. Moscow said that was an abuse of the terms of the resolution.

The bloodshed in the city of Hama, where Assad launched a military assault on the city on Sunday, appeared to have broken the logjam in the council, diplomats said. The agreeing to the statement signaled limits to Russia's backing for Damascus as the death toll in Syria passes 1,600, according to rights activists.

The statement contains no provision for sanctions or other punitive measures against Syria.

(Reuters, Bloomberg)

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