

U.S., Russia Disagree on Syria Strategy

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Syrians stepping on a Russian flag at a rally Saturday in Amman against Russia's backing of Syria's regime. **Muhammad Hamed**

The United States and Russia disagree on how to respond to the situation in Syria, where U.S. President Barack Obama's administration wants a strong UN condemnation of Bashar Assad's regime and the Kremlin is seeking continued dialogue.

U.S. officials said Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented the U.S. case in a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Monday in New York. They said she told Lavrov that the UN Security Council must speak out against the Assad regime's "inexcusable violence."

But the officials said Lavrov presented a counterview, calling for dialogue between Assad and the opposition.

The Obama administration already has given up on Assad's pledges of reform and has called for the Syrian leader to step aside.

The officials spoke about the private meeting on condition of anonymity.

Syria's ruling elite, from the country's Alawite minority sect, has intensified military assaults in the last few weeks to stop a six-month uprising that has triggered increasing defections among the mostly Sunni rank-and-file military.

The United Nations human rights division said pro-Assad forces had killed 2,700 protesters since an uprising demanding his removal started in March, including at least 100 children.

(AP, Reuters)

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