

General Assembly Resolution Overcomes 'No' Vote on Syria

February 19, 2012

The  Moscow Times

Russia opposed a draft resolution on Syria at the UN General Assembly on Thursday, joining 11 other countries in voting "no."

Despite Russian opposition, however, the General Assembly overwhelmingly approved the resolution, which endorses an Arab League plan calling for Syrian President Bashar Assad to step aside.

"Today, the UN General Assembly sent a clear message to the people of Syria: The world is with you," U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice said in a statement.

The resolution, similar to one Russia and China vetoed in the Security Council on Feb. 4, received 137 votes in favor, 12 against and 17 abstentions, although three countries said their votes failed to register on the electronic board.

Unlike in the Security Council, there are no vetoes in the General Assembly, but its decisions lack the legal force of council resolutions.

Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said the new document differs little from the Security Council resolution that Russia and China vetoed.

"We can't vote for that resolution because it still remains unbalanced," Gatilov said, Russian news agencies reported. "It directs all the demands at the government and says nothing about the opposition."

General Assembly resolutions are nonbinding, but they reflect world opinion on major issues. Supporters of the Arab-sponsored resolution hoped for a high "yes" vote to deliver a strong message to Assad's regime.

Arab countries rejected amendments to the resolution proposed by Russia.

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