The Moscow Times
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Russia Snubs Meeting on Syria

February 21, 2012

Russia will not attend an international meeting on the conflict in Syria this week because the Syrian government will not be represented, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Tuesday.

The Friends of Syria, backed by Western powers and the Arab League, will meet in Tunis on Friday to seek an international agreement on how to end the violence in Syria and are expected to put pressure on President Bashar Assad to step down.

The Russian Foreign Ministry regretted that the only Syrian representatives would be from the opposition and suggested that the United Nations Security Council should send a special humanitarian envoy to Syria.

"Thus, the meeting can hardly help start all-Syrian national dialogue in a search for ways to combat the internal crisis," ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said in a statement.

"We don't see a possibility for us to take part in the meeting," he said.

The Foreign Ministry made a new call for Europe, the United States and the Arab region to join forces and bring together the Syrian opposition and representatives of Bashar Assad's

government without preconditions to help them agree on reforms.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/02/21/russia-snubs-meeting-on-syria-a12789