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End to Syria Deadlock Remote As U.S. and Russia Fight at UN

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UNITED NATIONS — The United States and Russia clashed over Syria at the UN Monday after Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged the divided Security Council to speak with one voice and help the Middle East nation "pull back from the brink of a deeper catastrophe."

Washington and Moscow both called for an end to the bloody yearlong conflict — but on different terms, leaving in doubt prospects of breaking a deadlock in the council over a new resolution.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton rejected any equivalence between the "premeditated murders" carried by President Bashar Assad's "military machine" and the civilians under siege driven to self-defense.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Syrian authorities "bear a huge share of responsibility" but insisted that opposition fighters and extremists including al-Qaida are also committing violent and terrorist acts.

Lavrov said that if the priority is to immediately end any violence and provide humanitarian aid to the Syrian people, "then at this stage we should not talk about who was the first to start, but rather discuss realistic and feasible approaches that would allow [us] to achieve the cease-fire as a priority."

Clinton declared that the Security Council cannot "stand silent when governments massacre their own people, threatening regional peace and security in the process."

Lavrov flew to New York from Cairo, where he had a tense meeting with Arab League foreign ministers. They have endorsed a plan for Assad to hand power to his vice president, but the Russians are adamantly opposed to any resolution endorsing regime change.

In the end, the Arab League and Lavrov agreed on a five-point plan that the Russia foreign minister said could lead to an early solution of the Syrian crisis.

On the sidelines of the council debate, Clinton and Lavrov are scheduled to hold bilateral talks.

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