

Putin to Discuss Syria With Annan

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Annan

President Vladimir Putin will meet UN special envoy Kofi Annan in Moscow on Tuesday to discuss the crisis in Syria, the Kremlin said Sunday.

Annan is expected to increase international pressure on Russia to do more to help end the bloodshed in Syria following accusations by the Syrian opposition that Moscow is prolonging the conflict by propping up President Bashar Assad.

The Kremlin said Putin would underline Russia's support for Annan's peace plan, which calls for both the government and opposition in Syria to work together to end the crisis.

"During the course of the upcoming meeting, the plan is to ensure Russia's support for Annan's peace plan for the political, democratic regulation of the crisis in Syria," Putin's press service said in a statement. "It is the Russian side's understanding that this plan is the only viable platform for the solution of Syria's internal problems."

Russia has repeatedly defended Assad at the UN Security Council since the start of the uprising in Syria 16 months ago, and vetoed several Western resolutions calling for foreign intervention in Syria.

Annan is expected to meet Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Monday. An aide to Annan had said Friday that the envoy also expected to see Putin during his visit.

Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said Friday that Russia would urge Annan to work more with the Syrian opposition.

"To be honest, we do not see our partners being as ready [as Russia] to work with the opposition, and Kofi Annan is the main mediator of this process," Gatilov told Interfax.

"Unfortunately, so far we don't see any practical results from his and his team's contact with the opposition," he said.

It was not clear what message Russia wanted Annan to convey to the opposition, with which Moscow has failed to reach agreement on how to resolve the crisis, notably because the opposition insists that Assad's departure must be a precondition of political dialogue in Syria.

The Syrian opposition leaders left Moscow last week saying Russia's policies were helping prolong the bloodshed, and Moscow has said both sides in the conflict must work to end it.

Annan's trip will be his second to Moscow to discuss the Syrian crisis in the past four months.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry on Friday condemned a massacre that Syrian opposition sources said killed about 220 people, and called for an inquiry into bloodshed that it said served the interests of parties who want to fuel a religious conflict.

But the Foreign Ministry, in a statement, gave no direct indication of whom it blamed for the massacre in a village in the rebellious Hama region of Syria.

(Reuters, MT)

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