

Russia Says Syrian Opposition Should Seek Dialogue

By [The Moscow Times](#)

November 12, 2012

The  Moscow Times

Russia said Monday that a new Syrian opposition coalition that aims to oust President Bashar Assad should seek an end to the Syrian crisis through negotiation and reject outside interference.

The Foreign Ministry gave the coalition, formed in Qatar on Sunday with Western and Arab backing, a cool reception in a statement, which cited media reports saying that coalition members had agreed not to enter talks with Assad's government.

Russia's "main criterion ... remains the readiness of such alliances to act on the platform of a peaceful resolution of the conflict by Syrians themselves, without external interference, through dialogue and negotiations," the ministry said.

Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said separately on Twitter: "Unification of the Syrian opposition can be helpful if it enters into political dialogue with the government."

Representatives of groups including rebel fighters, veteran dissidents and minority groups agreed, after days of wrangling and cajoling by Arab, U.S. and other officials, to join a new assembly that can form a government in exile.

A member of the Syrian National Council based in Moscow said the group had decided to join the coalition in hopes that what he called promises of extensive aid, including weapons, would be borne out.

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