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UN Syria Aid Vote Likely Friday, Russia or China Support Unclear

By The Moscow Times

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UNITED NATIONS — The UN Security Council will likely vote on a draft resolution to boost humanitarian aid access in war-torn Syria on Friday, diplomats said, but it was unclear if Russia and China would support or veto the Western- and Arab-backed text.

Australia, Jordan and Luxembourg finalized the draft on Wednesday, which includes demands for cross-border aid access, an end to shelling and aerial bombardment — including barrel bombs — and threatens "further steps" in the event of noncompliance.

These were among the main sticking points during almost two weeks of negotiations. Western diplomats said it was unclear if Moscow and Beijing — two of the five veto-wielding powers on the 15-member council — would support or block the resolution.

Russia, supported by China, has shielded Syria on the UN Security Council during the three-year-long civil war. They have vetoed three resolutions condemning Syria's government

and threatening it with possible sanctions.

"Of course the decision will be taken in Moscow," said a UN diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity. "It does remain uncertain but, objectively, nothing in this humanitarian text should be unacceptable for any delegation."

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday that Russia would block the adoption of a resolution that allowed aid convoys to enter Syria without the consent of the Damascus government. He also warned earlier on Wednesday that the draft resolution should not be "politicized."

"If nobody in the Security Council seeks to politicize this issue, to promote one-sided approaches, I am convinced we will be able to reach an agreement in the coming days," Lavrov told a Gulf states meeting in Kuwait, Interfax reported.

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