

Russia Proposes Six-Month Extension of Syria Cross-Border Aid: UN Sources

By [AFP](#)

July 08, 2021



ZUMA Wire

Russia submitted a draft resolution Thursday to its 14 UN Security Council partners providing for a six-month extension of the authorization of cross-border aid to Syria, UN and diplomatic sources said.

This Russian text -- tabled following the formalization of the draft proposed by Ireland and Norway calling for an extension of one year -- suggests a "possible prolongation" later, one of the sources told AFP.

Russia requested a vote on the draft take place on Friday.

This is the first time that Russia, which holds veto power on the council and is a staunch ally of the Syrian regime, has raised the possibility of extending the authorization.

Previously, Moscow had wanted to stop cross-border aid, maintaining that continuing to provide it without Damascus's approval violated Syria's sovereignty.

The United States has stressed in recent weeks that it viewed the renewal of the UN authorization as a test of possible cooperation between Russia and Washington, after the June meeting in Geneva between US President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

During the meeting, Biden had pleaded for an extension of cross-border aid, which is set to expire Saturday.

Relief supplies into Syria -- where the UN estimates that 12.3 million people, or most of the population -- need assistance, can enter only one crossing: Bab al-Hawa on the Turkish border.

The draft proposed by Ireland and Norway, two non-permanent council members in charge of the humanitarian component in Syria, provides for a one-year extension of the authorization to pass through Bab al-Hawa, as demanded by the UN and multiple humanitarian organizations.

Renewing authorization "for at least 12 months is a red line" for the United States, Britain and France and several other members, a diplomat told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Washington, London and Paris, all permanent council members, have veto power.

On Friday, the council must technically vote on the western resolution first before voting on Russia's. A similar scenario occurred at the end of 2019, and Russia -- along with China -- had vetoed the western draft.

"Let the games begin," another diplomat told AFP, also speaking anonymously, after the two drafts were announced. Until the vote, negotiations may still take place between council members in order to reach a consensus on a single text.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, Russia has used its veto 16 times on related resolutions, and China 10 times.

Original url:

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