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Russia, Iran reject foreign intervention in Syrian crisis

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Russia and Iran confirmed Friday their principal position that the Syrian crisis must be settled with no foreign intervention.

During a meeting between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov and his visiting Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir- Abdollahian, both sides also urged the end to violence in the crisis-torn Syria, according to the Russian Foreign Ministry.

"The two sides highlighted the necessity to stop bloodshed and violence in that country, whatever it originates from, with no delay to settle the intra-Syria problems by the Syrians themselves with no outside involvement," the ministry said in a statement.

The two diplomats also urged "consolidated international efforts" for a peaceful settlement to the 17-month Syrian crisis based on UN-Arab League joint special envoy Kofi Annan's peace plan and the Geneva agreements that envisage a Syrian-led transition, the ministry said.

The meeting was initiated by the Iranian diplomat, who said Iran "condemns foreign intervention" in the Syrian crisis.

"We believe the situation in Syria cannot be settled by military means. The settlement must be political," Amir- Abdollahian said.

He also regretted that "some countries" attempted to undermine Annan's six-point peace plan.

Annan's widely accepted plan calls for the withdrawal of heavy weapons and troops from populated areas, a daily halt of fighting for the delivery of humanitarian aid and treatment of the injured, and talks between the government and opposition.

Annan, who assumed his current post about five months ago, said in Geneva on Thursday that he was disappointed over the lack of progress in the Syrian peace process and that he would step down after his current mandate expires on Aug. 31.

Russia on Friday expressed "deep regret" at Annan's resignation and urged that a successor be found quickly.