

West Pressing Russia to Give Assad Asylum

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Syrian President Bashar Assad

The West is trying to convince Russia to offer Syrian President Bashar Assad political asylum, although Russia claims it has no intention of doing so, a news report said Wednesday.

"Western countries, and above all the United States, are making active attempts to persuade Moscow to take in the Syrian leader and provide him with political asylum," a source in diplomatic circles told business daily Kommersant.

But the source added that Russia has never entertained such plans.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has repeatedly denied that Russia would harbor the unpopular Syrian president, whose country has been wracked by an internal conflict lasting more than a year.

"We aren't defending Assad," an unidentified Kremlin source told Kommersant. "The

president of Syria has missed his chance. The likelihood of him remaining in power is slim, about 10 percent."

Russia has been accused of protecting Assad after blocking several UN Security Council resolutions drafted by Western powers calling for Assad's ouster.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Assad must leave at an international conference on Syria in Geneva last week, while UN and Arab League special envoy Kofi Annan pushed for a transitional government to smooth the effects of Assad's exit.

According to human rights organizations, more than 15,000 people have died — including significant civilian casualties — since the armed uprising against Assad began in March 2011.

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