

Clinton Says Russia Will 'Bear Responsibility' for Backing Assad

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U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton speaking Saturday at a conference on Syria in Geneva.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Friday that Russia and China must be told that they will be held responsible for supporting the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad and will "pay a price" for that backing.

Speaking at a Friends of Syria conference in Paris, Clinton renewed calls for a UN Security Council resolution that would include sanctions to punish the Assad government for its part in an ongoing bloody conflict with Syrian opposition forces that has left thousands dead.

Russia and China have blocked similar Security Council resolutions and have called on both sides of the conflict to halt the violence.

Clinton said the Assad regime was being sustained by "money from Iran and assistance from Russia" and the failure of countries at the meeting to impose sanctions against Damascus, CNN reported.

She implored participant countries at the meeting to pressure Russia and China to "demand that they get off the sidelines."

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov parried Clinton's claim that Russia supported Assad, reiterating Moscow's position that it does not back any figure in the Syrian conflict.

"We categorically reject the formulation that Russia supports President Bashar Assad in the situation that has taken shape in Syria," Ryabkov told journalists Friday, Interfax reported. "The question is not one of supporting particular political figures or leaders. The issue is one of putting processes in place to regulate the crisis on a normal political basis."

Ryabkov accused Western countries of using archaic notions of "us-versus-them" relations in describing their disagreement with Russia over the proper approach to resolving the Syria conflict.

"In the West, the concepts of 'us versus them,' 'who is whose client' and so on continue to operate. We thought such terminology should long ago have been left in the past. If it is still being used by these politicians, that means that they have lagged behind in their thinking."

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