

Foreign Ministry Denies Syrian Regime in Trouble

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The  **Moscow Times**

The Foreign Ministry released a statement on Friday denying that it had changed its stance on the Syrian conflict a day after a senior diplomat said rebel forces could overwhelm Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime.

On Thursday, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bodganov was reported as saying at a Public Chamber meeting that gains by Assad's opponents meant that their ultimate victory "can't be ruled out."

The comments were interpreted by some as a sea change in Russia's stance on Syria.

Russia has blocked three UN Security Council resolutions that would have ratcheted up pressure on its Middle Eastern ally and provided Assad with weapons despite an international outcry.

In its [statement](#) on Friday, the Foreign Ministry said that Bogdanov's comments were taken

out of context and that he was simply citing the point of view of Assad's opponents, who have predicted a "swift victory over the regime in Damascus."

The ministry stressed that Bogdanov had not given any official interviews to reporters in the past few days, even though Interfax cited Bogdanov as saying after Thursday's meeting that Moscow had laid plans for the evacuation of diplomats and their families from the Russian Embassy in Damascus.

Reaffirming Moscow's line on Syria, the statement added that any steps to resolve the conflict should be based on an agreement signed at an international ministerial meeting in Geneva in June.

That agreement stipulated that a transitional government should be set up in Syria to end the bloodshed and called for negotiations between pro-government and opposition forces.

It was unclear on Assad's role in any future Syrian government, however.

According to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, more than 40,000 people have died since the Syrian conflict erupted in March 2011. Half a million Syrians have sought refuge in other countries and nearly 3 million have been internally displaced, he said in comments last week.

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