

UN Envoy Hopes for Syria Conference After July

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Hopes of another international peace conference on Syria before the end of July are fading, the U.N.'s special representative for the war-torn country said Tuesday.

On his way into daylong talks between the U.S. and Russia, Lakhdar Brahimi told reporters he still hoped a second round of international negotiations to find a political solution to the conflict could be convened in Geneva, but not until later in the summer.

"Frankly, now I doubt whether the conference will take place in July," he said, noting that the Syrian opposition is not meeting until early July and probably would not be ready. "Since our previous meeting here on June 5, the situation on the ground in Syria has hardly improved. It is still relentless destruction, killing, more suffering, more injustice, and more uncertainty for the future of the Syrian people."

Brahimi was mediating a meeting between the U.S. and Russia, which are at loggerheads over

the conflict that has killed more than 93,000 people. He expressed concern that the killings of more than 50 people in Lebanon a day earlier "are a stern reminder to all of the risks of the conflict in Syria spreading across the border to neighboring countries."

He also said Tuesday's meeting between Wendy Sherman, U.S. undersecretary of state for political affairs, and Russian Deputy Foreign Ministers Mikhail Bogdanov and Gennady Gatilov at the U.N.'s European headquarters might not resolve issues such as how the conference should be conducted and who should participate.

"The government said it would participate, the opposition is talking among its various organizations. I think they will confirm that they are coming," he said. "Nobody expected that the meetings would be easy between the two sides. ... If they agree to talk, it will already be a step forward."

Brahimi said the aim of the talks between Russia, which has provided arms to the regime of President Bashar Assad, and the United States, which is backing elements of the opposition, was to lay the groundwork for another Geneva conference that will have "the best chances of success."

"I am also confident that we will make progress, but I cannot be certain that we will resolve all these basic questions today," he said.

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