

# U.N. calls for end to Syrian violence

Security Council OKs observers

By Edith M. Lederer  
Associated Press



U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice said, "The council has taken a step towards fulfilling its own responsibilities." AP

UNITED NATIONS — For the first time since the Syrian conflict began more than a year ago, the U.N. Security Council on Saturday united behind a legally binding resolution calling for violence to end immediately and peace talks to begin to move the authoritarian country toward democracy.

The resolution by the previously divided council sent a message to the Syrian government and opposition fighters that the U.N.'s most powerful body wants to see international envoy Kofi Annan's six-point peace plan fully implemented immediately — and it will consider "further steps" if it isn't.

Russia and China vetoed two previous resolutions that would have condemned Syrian President Bashar Assad's government for its bloody crackdown on protesters, calling them unbalanced because they demanded the government stop attacks, but not the opposition. Russia, accused Western nations of seeking regime change.

But the Russians and Chinese, allies of Assad's government, joined the U.S. and European opponents of the Syrian regime in supporting this resolution, which backs Annan's plan initially by authorizing the deployment of the first wave of U.N. military

observers to monitor a fragile cease-fire that held fairly well for two days but was broken more seriously on Saturday.

Annan welcomed the action, saying he and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon "were both very relieved and happy that the council has passed a unanimous resolution authorizing the deployment of the observers, and we will try to get them in there as quickly as possible."

Ban urged the international community to unite and "do all ... we can in one voice to help this cessation of violence continue."

British U.N. Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant said the proposal by Annan, the joint U.N.-Arab League envoy, "offers the last opportunity to finally put an end to the bloodshed."

tion of violence since the cease-fire took effect April 12 is "a tentative and positive first step towards ending the crisis," he said. "But it is just that — a first step. ... Innocent civilians have been killed since April 12. And heavy weapons remain deployed in population centers."

The resolution calls on both sides to immediately "cease all armed violence in all its forms" and condemns "the widespread violations of human rights by the Syrian authorities, as well as any human rights abuses by armed groups." It calls on Assad's government to "visibly" implement its commitment to pull troops and heavy weapons out of towns and return them to barracks.

"With this resolution, the Security Council has indicated it will judge the Syrian regime by its actions, not its words," U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice said. "In doing so, the council has taken a step towards fulfilling its own responsibilities. And it's about time."

The relative de-escalation

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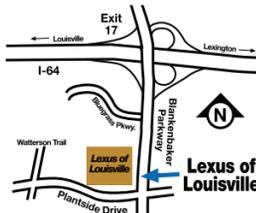


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