

Syrian Government and Opposition to Resume Peace Talks in Russia



Damascus, December 3 (RHC)-- Syrian government and several foreign-backed opposition groups have agreed to resume peace talks mediated by Russia. Reports said on Tuesday that both sides have confirmed the initial agreement, which followed talks between delegations led by key opposition figure, Ahmed Moaz al-Khatib, and Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem in Moscow in November.

"The Russians want to take the initiative for a real search for political solution through dialogue. They got the agreement from the Syrian government," Bouthaina Shaaban, President Bashar al-Assad's adviser and government delegation member, said by phone from Damascus.

An unnamed source said that no schedule was announced for the talks yet. "The Russians are trying.... They have contact with several people. They told us that if we accept the idea, they would like to start steps to prepare for dialogue in Moscow."

Earlier on Tuesday, Khatib, leader of the so-called Syrian National Coalition, called for direct talks with the Syrian government. "It is in the Syrian people's interest for us to sit down together once and for all, and to find a way to save the people from this pain and suffering," he said. Khatib went on to say that it would

make sense for Assad to stay in power for a limited time and then resign on a later date. The opposition and its Western supporters insist that Assad must resign and a transitional government be formed in Syria.

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