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Support for Assad will continue: Russia to US

1/11/2014

Russia has told the United States that it will continue to support Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's campaign against foreign-backed militants.

The remarks were made during a meeting between high-ranking Russian diplomats and a US Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman in Moscow on Friday.

Sherman did not address reporters after her meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Ministers Mikhail Bogdanov and Gennady Gatilov, but the Russian Foreign Ministry said the two diplomats told Sherman that foreign-backed militants are a threat to both Syria's future and regional stability.

“The Russian representatives stressed the importance of uniting efforts by the Syrian government and the patriotically-inclined opposition to fight terrorist groups whose activities are threatening not only the future of Syria, but also regional stability,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Sherman's visit to Moscow comes just days before a crucial meeting in Paris between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on the upcoming Syria crisis conference.

According to Russian officials, Lavrov and Kerry would also hold a joint meeting in the French capital on Monday with UN-Arab League Special Envoy to Syria Lakhdar Brahimi.

The Geneva II conference, which is aimed at finding a political solution to the Syria crisis, is scheduled to be held in Switzerland in two parts. On January 22, the opening session of the event will be in the Swiss city of Montreux and then it will be moved to the UN office in Geneva on January 24.

Over 100,000 people have been killed and 8 million others driven from their homes, 2 million of them seeking refuge in neighboring countries, since conflict in Syria erupted in March 2011.