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## US insists on Assad's overthrow

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The United States says any political solution in Syria should result in the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said during a press conference in the Swedish capital Stockholm on Sunday, "Assad's departure does not have to be a precondition, but it should be an outcome" of any such political solution, AFP reported.

Her comments came hours after Assad addressed Syria's parliament, saying that Damascus would keep fighting the armed gangs sabotaging security in the country, while it is still ready for dialog with its opponents.

Clinton has also asked Russia to join international efforts to increase pressure on Assad. She spoke to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov by telephone at the weakened.

"My message to the foreign minister was very simple and straightforward," she said, adding, "We all have to intensify our efforts to achieve a political transition and Russia has to be at the table helping that to occur."

Moscow has been opposing calls for foreign intervention in the country, and has so far blocked two United Nations Security Council resolutions condemning Assad's government.

The unrest in Syria began in March 2011, with demonstrations being held both against and in support of Assad's government.

The West and the Syrian opposition accuse the government of killing protesters, but Damascus blames "outlaws, saboteurs, and armed terrorist groups" for the unrest, insisting that it is being orchestrated from abroad.