

# *United Nations Withdraws Iran Invitation to Syria Talks*

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United Nations, January 21 (RHC)-- United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has rescinded his invitation to Iran to participate in the forthcoming international conference aimed at achieving a political solution to the Syrian crisis under pressure from the United States.

Speaking at a press briefing at the UN headquarters in New York on Monday, UN spokesman Martin Nesirky said Ban is "deeply disappointed" at Iran's statements rejecting the June 2012 Geneva communiqué. Nesirky added: "Given that it has chosen to remain outside that basic understanding, he has decided that the one-day Montreux gathering will proceed without Iran's participation."

The 2012 Geneva communiqué outlines measures for a transition of power in Syria, and its key demand means Syrian President Bashar al-Assad will have to step down. On Sunday, the UN chief said Iran has been invited to the Geneva II conference. Ban Ki-moon announced: "As I have said repeatedly, I believe strongly that Iran needs to be part of the solution to the Syrian crisis."

But the United States, Britain, Saudi Arabia and the foreign-backed Syrian opposition were strongly opposed to Iran's participation in the event. And Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the upcoming international talks about the Syrian crisis will resemble "hypocrisy" without Iran's participation.

"Among the countries also invited [to the Geneva conference] are Australia, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, Japan, Brazil, India, Indonesia, and many others. So if there is no Iran in this list... I

think the peace talks will resemble hypocrisy." Lavrov emphasized that Iran is among the countries that has a direct interest in the settlement of the Syrian crisis "without any additional damage to the stability of this most important region of the world."

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