

Western powers block Syria aid resolution after Russia, China veto rival plan



United Nations, December 22 (RHC)-- The Western countries have blocked a UN Security Council resolution sponsored by Russia and China on cross-border aid deliveries to Syria, after Moscow and Beijing vetoed a rival motion.

In 2014, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2165 allowing humanitarian convoys, headed for Syria, to cross four border crossings of Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa in Turkey, al-Ya'rubiya in Iraq and al-Ramtha in Jordan. It is extended every year and its current mandate will expire on January 10th.

The Security Council voted on a Russian draft resolution that would have extended deliveries for six months and kept the two crossing points in Turkey. It received five "yes" votes, six "no" votes and four abstentions, failing to get the required nine "yes" votes for adoption.

France, Britain and the U.S. were among the UNSC member states that opposed the resolution while Belgium and Germany abstained. It came after Russia and China vetoed a rival resolution, drafted by Belgium, Kuwait and Germany, that would have authorized humanitarian deliveries for a further 12 months from two points in Turkey and one in Iraq. The remaining 13 UNSC member states voted in favor

of the motion.

The initial Western-backed draft sought to add a new crossing point to the four existing points and extend the mandate for aid deliveries for a year. It was, however, watered down, dropping the Jordan crossing point and allowing the other three for six months. The three countries, which had drafted the resolution, claimed in a joint statement that the Security Council had failed the more than four million Syrians in need of cross-border assistance.

In response, Russia's UN Ambassador Vasily Nebenzya estimated that currently only one million Syrians are receiving cross-border aid. He also noted that the humanitarian situation in Syria had improved and that the council had to recognize that change.

The Jordan crossing point has not been used "for a lengthy period of time" and the volume through the Iraqi crossing "is insignificant ... and could be done from Syria," he added. Nebenzya further expressed Moscow's readiness to provide humanitarian aid where it was vitally needed. He also criticized the co-sponsors of the Western-backed draft resolution for seeking "political goals."

Similarly, China's Ambassador to the UN Zhang Jun said cross-border aid was actually meant to be temporary and that the situation had improved. "Syria has primary responsibility for improving the humanitarian situation in Syria and we should prioritize providing humanitarian assistance from inside of Syria," he said.

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