

# *Advisor to Syrian President Says Damascus Ready to Join UN Peace Talks*

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Damascus, December 24 (RHC)-- A top adviser to Syria's president says Damascus is prepared to join UN-backed talks aimed at bringing peace to the Arab country.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's political and media adviser, Bouthaina Shaaban, said that the Syrian government approves last week's UN resolutions endorsing an international roadmap for peace in the war-torn country, Reuters reported on Wednesday.

The resolutions, which were passed on Friday, called for a ceasefire, talks between the Syrian government and opposition forces, and forming a transitional government. She added that the Syrian government also acknowledges a softening of the West's stance on Assad's removal, and that the "Russian intervention has had great importance in the Syrian crisis."

"It was not easy for the West to retreat. This is the first time that the West's word has been defeated over Syria... The Russian strategy in getting these (diplomatic) understandings is successful and clever and will bear fruit," she said.

Referring to a Saudi-backed opposition body comprised of some of the major militant groups active in Syria, she said it was "shameful" that the West wanted to create democracy in Syria with the aid of a "country that has no parliament or elections."

The Syrian conflict, which started in March 2011, has claimed the lives of more than 250,000 people and left over one million others injured, according to the UN. The world body says 12.2 million people, including more than 5.6 million children, remain in need of humanitarian assistance. The foreign-sponsored militancy has also internally displaced 7.6 million people.

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