

**UN Syria sanctions draft targets Assad, family**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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UNITED NATIONS, Aug 24 — Western nations circulated a draft UN resolution yesterday that calls for sanctions against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, influential members of his family and key associates.

US and European delegations hope to put the draft resolution to a vote in the 15-nation Security Council as soon as possible. The sanctions are the Western nations' response to Damascus' five-month crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators, which the United Nations says has left 2,200 civilians dead.

But Russia, which has veto-power, said it does not think sanctioning Damascus is the right approach at the moment.

The resolution, drafted by Britain, France, Germany, Portugal and the United States and obtained by Reuters, says the council "strongly condemns the continued grave and systematic human rights violations by the Syrian authorities" and "demands an immediate end to the violence."

While it would call for freezing Assad's (picture) financial assets, as it does for 22 other Syrians, it excludes him from the list of Syrians facing an international travel ban. The draft also lists Assad's passport number as D19093.

Others targeted for sanctions include Assad's brother Maher, commander of the army's 4th armored division, which is said to have played a key role in suppressing protests, Vice President Farouq al-Shara, and Assad's cousin Rami Makhlof, a tycoon who controls Syria's biggest cellphone firm Syriatel.

Among the other individuals on the sanctions list are the defense minister and several senior intelligence officials.

The resolution would impose sanctions on Syria's General Intelligence Directorate and three companies that it says provide funding for the government. One of the firms, the Military Housing Establishment, is partly controlled by the Syrian defense ministry, the resolution says.

Russia isn't convinced

The others on the proposed blacklist, Al Mashreq Investment and Bena Properties, are owned by Makhlof. Bena is Syria's largest private real estate company and Al Mashreq is the largest shareholder in Syriatel.

The draft resolution would also forbid "the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to Syria ... of all arms and related materiel" as well as arms exports by Syria.

An arms embargo would not likely be welcomed by Russia, which is a key supplier of weapons to Damascus.

Moscow's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin was going into a regular Security Council meeting yesterday when he was asked whether he thought it was time for sanctions on Damascus.

Churkin told reporters, "No, we don't think so."

Russia, along with Britain, China, France and the United States, has the power to veto any resolution, and Churkin's remarks suggested that persuading Moscow to back tough measures would not be easy for the drafters of the sanctions text.

Russia is not alone. China, South Africa, Brazil and India have indicated that they would have trouble supporting punitive measures against Damascus. Council resolutions need nine votes in favor and no vetoes to pass.

Diplomats said the text will be revised before it is put to a vote in the council. During negotiations on it, diplomats say, Russia and China will try to dilute the proposed steps.

Diplomats had told Reuters that an earlier version called for referral of the Syrian violence against protesters to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, as happened in the case of Libya earlier this year.

The draft delivered to council members, however, only contains a vague threat that ICC referral was a possibility. It has the council "noting (UN human rights chief Navi Pillay's) recommendation that the Security Council consider referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court." — Reuter

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