

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Sunday, November 20, 2011 1:34 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Arab League rejects Syrian request over monitors (Reuters)

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Sunday, November 20, 2011 07:12 AM
To: Syria Unrest; NEWS-Mahogany
Subject: Arab League rejects Syrian request over monitors (Reuters)

CAIRO (Reuters) - The Arab League has rejected a request by Damascus to amend plans to send a monitoring mission to Syria, where troops and tanks have been used to repress protests against President Bashar al-Assad, Egypt's state news agency reported on Sunday.

It said the League rebuffed Syria's approach in a letter from its Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby to Syria's foreign minister. The League wants to send a 500-strong mission of monitors to Syria to assess the situation there.

"The additions requested by the Syrian counterpart affect the heart of the protocol and fundamentally change the nature of the mission," the letter said, MENA reported, adding that the pan-Arab body rejected the demand.

The League had given Damascus three days from a meeting on Nov. 16 to abide by a deal to withdraw military forces from restive cities and start talks between the government and opposition. The plan included sending an observer team to Syria.

The Arab League said in its statement that it was committed to an Arab solution for the Syrian violence and was working to end the crackdown on civilians in Syria.

An Arab League source said the mission's visit was now "in question" because it cannot take place until the Syrian government signs a protocol with the League.

The Arab League set the Saturday deadline for Syria to comply with a peace plan, entailing a military pullout from around cities and towns, and threatened sanctions if Assad failed to halt the violence.

It was not immediately what action the League would take after the deadline was disregarded.

"Although the time frame has ended, there have been no meetings or calls for meetings except at the level of delegations (to the League)," a representative of one Arab state at the League told Reuters.

NewsTickers alert senior Department officials to breaking news. This item appears as it did in its original publication and does not contain analysis or commentary by Department sources.