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From: OpsNewsTicker@state.gov [mailto:OpsNewsTicker@state.gov]
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Subject: Egypt cancels regional Syria talks because of Turkey's absence (Reuters)

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - Egypt's Islamist President Mohamed Mursi has canceled a meeting of four regional powers on the Syria crisis because of the absence of Turkey's prime minister from this week's U.N. General Assembly, according to Egypt's presidential spokesman.

The quartet of Egypt, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia arose from an initiative by Egypt, whose new president is looking to make his mark with what he has described as a balanced foreign policy.

"There was supposed to be (a) meeting this week, but due to the absence of the Turkish prime minister it's now canceled," presidential spokesman Yasser Ali told reporters late on Tuesday, referring to Turkey's Tayyip Erdogan.

Saudi Arabia stayed away from the quartet's last meeting, which Cairo hosted on Sept. 17. Saudi Arabia's decision was seen by diplomats and Western officials as a reaction to the presence of Shi'ite Muslim Iran, the major rival of the Sunni Muslim kingdom.

Iran is the only state in the quartet that is an ally to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and has accused Saudi Arabia and Turkey of helping the rebels who are fighting to topple him.

"We believe that through negotiations and not military intervention the situation in Syria can be resolved. The president (Mursi) believes that progress can be made through the quartet committee," Ali added.

Activists say that 27,000 people have been killed in Syria's uprising, which began as peaceful demonstrations for reform 18 months ago but turned into an armed insurgency fighting to topple Assad, with sectarian overtones that could drag in regional powers.

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