

# Statement by the Press Secretary on Syria

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December 21, 2011

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

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The United States continues to believe that the only way to bring about the change that the Syrian people deserve is for Bashar al-Assad to leave power. The words of the Assad regime have no credibility when they continue to be followed by outrageous and deplorable actions. Only two days following the Assad regime's decision to sign the Arab League initiative, they have already flagrantly violated their commitment to end violence and withdraw security forces from residential areas. The United States is deeply disturbed by credible reports that the Assad regime continues to indiscriminately kill scores of civilians and army defectors, while destroying homes and shops and arresting protesters without due process. While Syrian security forces have also taken casualties, the overwhelming majority of the violence and loss of life in Syria stems from the actions of the Assad regime, and we call on all parties to put an end to violence.

Time and again, the Assad regime has demonstrated that it does not deserve to rule Syria. It's time for this suffering and killing to stop. It's time for the immediate and full implementation of all terms of the Arab League agreement, including the full withdrawal of security forces, the release of political prisoners, and unfettered access by monitors and international media to all parts of Syria. It's time for the Syrian people to have the universal rights that they deserve. The Assad regime is already facing growing isolation and sanctions that are choking off its resources. We urge Syria's few remaining supporters in the international community to warn Damascus that if the Arab League initiative is once again not fully implemented, the international community will take additional steps to pressure the Assad regime to stop its crackdown. Bashar al-Assad should have no doubt that the world is watching, and neither the international community nor the Syrian people accept his legitimacy.