

Statement by the President on Syria

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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of force by the Syrian government against demonstrators. This outrageous use of violence to quell protests must come to an end now. We regret the loss of life and our thoughts are with the families and loved ones of the victims, and with the Syrian people in this challenging time.

The Syrian Government's moves yesterday to repeal Syria's decades-old Emergency Law and allow for peaceful demonstrations were not serious given the continued violent repression against protesters today. Over the course of two months since protests in Syria began, the United States has repeatedly encouraged President Assad and the Syrian Government to implement meaningful reforms, but they refuse to respect the rights of the Syrian people or be responsive to their aspirations. The Syrian people have called for the freedoms that all individuals around the world should enjoy: freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, and the ability to freely choose their leaders. President Assad and the Syrian authorities have repeatedly rejected their calls and chosen the path of repression. They have placed their personal interests ahead of the interests of the Syrian people, resorting to the use of force and outrageous human rights abuses to compound the already oppressive security measures in place before these demonstrations erupted. Instead of listening to their own people, President Assad is blaming outsiders while seeking Iranian assistance in repressing Syria's citizens through the same brutal tactics that have been used by his Iranian allies. We call on President Assad to change course now, and heed the calls of his own people.

We strongly oppose the Syrian government's treatment of its citizens and we continue to oppose its continued destabilizing behavior more generally, including support for terrorism and terrorist groups. The United States will continue to stand up for democracy and the universal rights that all human beings deserve, in Syria and around the world.