

Statement by the Press Secretary on Violence in Syria

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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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We strongly condemn and deplore the Syrian government's use of violence and mass arrests in response to ongoing demonstrations. We again salute the courage of Syrian protestors for insisting on their right to express themselves and we regret the loss of life on all sides. Over the past two weeks, it has been made abundantly clear that the Syrian government's security crackdown will not restore stability and will not stop the demands for change in Syria. It is also clear that false reform announcements, such as ending the emergency law but then expanding the scope of arrests without even the pretense of judicial warrants, also do not satisfy the demand for change in Syria. The Syrian government continues to follow the lead of its Iranian ally in resorting to brute force and flagrant violations of human rights in suppressing peaceful protests.

The United States and the international community will adjust their relations with Syria according to the concrete actions undertaken by the Syrian government. On April 29, the President signed an Executive Order imposing sanctions against senior Syrian officials and other Syrian and Iranian government entities responsible for human rights abuses, including the use of violence against civilians and the commission of other abuses. These sanctions are in addition to those the United States maintains pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and Executive Orders 13338, 13399 and 13460, as a part of the national emergency with respect to Syria.

The United States believes that Syria's deplorable actions toward its people warrant a strong international response. Absent significant change in the Syrian government's current approach, including an end to the government's killing of protestors and to the arrest and harassment campaigns of protestors and activists, coupled with a genuine political reform process responsive to the demands of the Syrian people, the United States and its international partners will take additional steps to make clear our strong opposition to the Syrian government's treatment of its people. In this context, the United States welcomes today's decision by the European Union to impose sanctions on Syrian regime officials responsible for human rights abuses in Syria.