

Canada Reduces Staff at Embassy in Syria

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News Release

January 31, 2012 - Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird and the Honourable Diane Ablonczy, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), today issued the following statement regarding Canada's embassy in Syria:

"Due to the growing instability in Syria, Canada has reduced its diplomatic staff in Syria to core personnel only. Canada's embassy remains open and continues to offer limited services in Damascus and in Aleppo through our honorary consulate.

"However, due to travel restrictions imposed by the Syrian authorities and the ongoing deterioration of the security situation, our ability to help Canadians in other locations in the country has been significantly reduced.

"The Visa and Immigration Section at the Canadian embassy in Damascus is closed, and services have been transferred to visa offices in neighbouring countries. More information on visa services in the area will be posted online at [Citizenship and Immigration Canada](#).

"During the past month, our officials have placed more than 3,400 calls to Canadians that were known to be in Syria. Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada staff received more than 1,580 calls, and the embassy in Damascus received more than 470 requests for expedited services.

"As Canadian citizens are under no obligation to inform the embassy of their movements, the exact number of those who have left Syria cannot be known. That said, since December 15, approximately 300 Canadians have informed us that they have left Syria. We hope that more will follow their example.

"Canada condemns the escalation in violence by Syrian security forces over the weekend, which resulted in the suspension of the Arab League monitoring mission on Saturday. The Arab League has led international efforts to bring a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

"As the slaughter of innocent Syrians continues, Canada calls on the members of the United Nations Security Council to come together in support of these efforts and adopt a resolution that addresses the deteriorating situation in Syria.

"We continue to urge Canadians still in Syria to leave now."

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