

Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of International Development to mark 10 years since the peaceful protests in Syria

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Statement

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The Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Honourable Karina Gould, Minister of International Development, today issued the following statement:

“Ten years ago, Syrians peacefully stood up to demand change and a better future for their children. Their bravery was brutally repressed, and in the decade that followed, Syrians repeatedly suffered human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Assad regime has engaged in torture, forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and the use of chemical weapons. The regime and its enablers—notably Russia—have also deliberately attacked civilian targets, including hospitals and schools.

“Over half of Syria’s pre-civil war population is now displaced, and more than 13 million people inside the country need urgent help. The international community must continue to search and strive for a lasting political solution consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which endorsed a road map for a peace process in Syria.

“Accountability for international crimes is critical, which is why Canada, together with the Netherlands, will take further steps to hold Syria accountable for its grave human rights violations and for torture in particular. Canada and the Netherlands have formally requested negotiations with Syria to address Syrian human rights violations under the UN Convention against Torture.

“The conflict has resulted in one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. In response, since 2011, Canada has provided more than \$800 million in funding for humanitarian, development and security and stabilization assistance for vulnerable populations in Syria. This funding has helped to provide food and health care, as well as support access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene for millions of people. The funding has also supported women’s grassroots political participation and the livelihoods of thousands of women, youths and people with disabilities.

“This is a solemn moment to pause and remember all who have suffered in this terrible conflict. They also include the more than 73,000 Syrian refugees we have welcomed, many of whom became Canadians. Today, we all warmly embrace them once again and we thank them for making our country better.”

Contacts

Syrine Khoury
Press Secretary
Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs
Syrine.Khoury@international.gc.ca

Guillaume Dumas
Press Secretary
Office of the Minister of International Development
Guillaume.Dumas@international.gc.ca