

Statement by the President on Syria

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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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Thirty years after his father massacred tens of thousands of innocent Syrian men, women, and children in Hama, Bashar al-Assad has demonstrated a similar disdain for human life and dignity. Yesterday the Syrian government murdered hundreds of Syrian citizens, including women and children, in Homs through shelling and other indiscriminate violence, and Syrian forces continue to prevent hundreds of injured civilians from seeking medical help. These brutal killings take place at a time when so many Syrians are also marking a deeply meaningful day for their faith. I strongly condemn the Syrian government's unspeakable assault against the people of Homs and I offer my deepest sympathy to those who have lost loved ones. Assad must halt his campaign of killing and crimes against his own people now. He must step aside and allow a democratic transition to proceed immediately.

The Syrian people demonstrated in large numbers across Syria yesterday to participate in peaceful protests commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Hama massacre. They labeled the protests, "We are Sorry, Hama – Forgive Us." We owe it to the victims of Hama and Homs to learn one lesson: that cruelty must be confronted for the sake of justice and human dignity. Every government has the responsibility to protect its citizens, and any government that brutalizes and massacres its people does not deserve to govern. The Syrian regime's policy of maintaining power by terrorizing its people only indicates its inherent weakness and inevitable collapse. Assad has no right to lead Syria, and has lost all legitimacy with his people and the international community.

The international community must work to protect the Syrian people from this abhorrent brutality. Earlier this week, our Arab partners called on UN Security Council members to take action to support a political solution to the crisis in Syria and stop Assad's "killing machine." The Council now has an opportunity to stand against the Assad regime's relentless brutality and to demonstrate that it is a credible advocate for the universal rights that are written into the UN Charter.

We must work with the Syrian people toward building a brighter future for Syria. A Syria without Assad could be a Syria in which all Syrians are subject to the rule of law and where minorities are able to exercise their legitimate rights and uphold their identities and traditions while acting as fully enfranchised citizens in a unified republic. The United States and our international partners support the Syrian people in achieving their

aspirations and will continue to assist the Syrian people toward that goal. We will help because we stand for principles that include universal rights for all people and just political and economic reform. The suffering citizens of Syria must know: we are with you, and the Assad regime must come to an end.

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