

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## Syria's Assad Should Step Aside, President Obama Says

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama joined several world leaders in calling for Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad to relinquish power after months of a brutal government crackdown targeting Syrians seeking a peaceful transition to democracy. Obama also announced strong new U.S. sanctions targeting the Assad regime.

In an August 18 statement, Obama said the United States has been inspired by the Syrian people, who began their peaceful demonstrations for political reform in March. Obama said they must be allowed to choose their leaders and enjoy universal rights and dignity.

"It is time for the Syrian people to determine their own destiny, and we will continue to stand firmly on their side," Obama said.

"They have braved ferocious brutality at the hands of their government. They have spoken with their peaceful marches, their silent shaming of the Syrian regime, and their courageous persistence in the face of brutality — day after day, week after week," he said.

Obama said the Assad government has responded to their calls with "a sustained onslaught" against the demonstrators, "disgraceful attacks on Syrian civilians," and by arresting opposition figures "who have been denied justice and subjected to torture." U.S. officials have said they believe more than 2,000 Syrians have been killed by their government since the demonstrations began.

By its actions, Obama said, the Assad government has shown "flagrant disrespect for the dignity of the Syrian people" and earned worldwide condemnation. Syrian officials now can "look only to Iran for support" for their actions.

"For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step aside," Obama said.

The president's call for Assad to leave came in conjunction with similar statements by the leaders of the European Union, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Canada.

Obama said the United States "cannot and will not impose this transition upon Syria," and acknowledged the strong Syrian desire that "there not be foreign intervention in their movement." The United States will support Syrian aspirations for a democratic and inclusive state by standing up for their universal rights and by pressuring Assad and his regime, he said.

The president announced the immediate freeze of all Syrian government assets that are subject to U.S. jurisdiction. He also banned the import of any petroleum or petroleum products that come from Syria. Americans are now prohibited from engaging in any transaction with the Syrian government, operating or investing in Syria or having any dealings with the country's petroleum industry.

U.S. officials have acknowledged that U.S. economic and political ties with Syria are limited and have called on countries with more influential ties with Damascus to increase pressure on the Assad regime by sanctioning Syria's oil and gas sectors and by ending arms sales to the country.

Obama said he expects that the most recent U.S. actions against Syria will be "amplified by others."

### FINANCING VIOLENCE

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said August 18 that since the Assad regime began responding to Syrian demonstrators with violence, the United States has undertaken "a relentless and systematic effort" to increase pressure on the Assad regime through both unilateral and multilateral methods.

Speaking at the State Department, she said the latest U.S. sanctions will further isolate Syrian officials and "strike at the heart of the regime."

The United States is trying to disrupt the Assad regime's "ability to finance its campaign of violence," Clinton said. The Obama administration will also "take steps to mitigate any unintended effects of the sanctions on the Syrian people," she added.

### INCREASED VIOLENCE DURING RAMADAN

A senior White House official who asked not to be identified told reporters August 18 that President Obama's call for Assad to leave and the additional U.S. sanctions had been coordinated with U.S. allies in advance and come as a result of increased violence against the Syrian people during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"We saw an uptick in violence, horrific brutality against the Syrian people that made it perfectly clear to everybody within Syria and around the world that President Assad had no credibility, that anything he said about pursuing reform or pulling back his forces was a lie and an empty promise, and that we had lost patience with him," the official said.

During August, President Obama spoke with U.S. allies to

ensure that the call for Assad to leave would come about "in an internationally coordinated way," and U.S. officials worked to accompany that message with a robust set of new sanctions against the Assad regime.

### **Vice President Biden, China's Xi Discuss Range of Issues with Focus on Economy**

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — Vice President Biden held talks August 18 with Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping in Beijing on bilateral, regional and global issues, with a special focus on global economic recovery.

"There's no more important relationship that we need to establish on the part of the United States than a close relationship with China," Biden said August 18 from the Great Hall of the People, where Xi held an official ceremony welcoming Biden earlier in the day. The two leaders delivered remarks at a joint news conference prior to their discussions of issues that included the global economy, energy, regional cooperation, military ties, the environment and sustainable development.

The White House said the two discussed at length their countries' efforts to sustain growth and create jobs, and both emphasized the importance of working together toward economic recovery.

"I'm absolutely confident that the economic stability of the world rests in no small part on the cooperation between the United States and China," Biden said. "It is the key, in my view, to global economic stability."

At the welcoming ceremony, Xi said China also wants closer cooperation with the United States on economic growth, as well as on a series of other issues of common interest. He said Biden's visit marks a "major event ... pushing forward the building of the China-U.S. cooperative partnership." This visit by Biden is his first as vice president, but Biden's first visit to China was in 1979 as a member of the U.S. Senate.

After meeting with Xi, Biden met with National People's Congress Chairman Wu Bangguo at the Great Hall. The chairman said Biden's visit "will further promote the steady and sustainable growth of China-U.S. ties." Biden said the two countries have a "central, critical relationship," in which mutual success benefits the international community. He added that as the world's two largest economies, China and the United States "hold the key to generating growth and jobs worldwide."

Biden had lunch that afternoon with U.S. Ambassador to China Gary Locke at a small family-owned restaurant near the Drum Tower, according to White House press pool reports. The two were joined by Locke's wife, Mona,

as well as Biden's daughter-in-law and granddaughter.

The vice president is scheduled to attend a banquet dinner hosted by Xi August 18.

Biden is visiting China at the invitation of Xi, the first in a series of planned reciprocal visits between the vice presidents announced by President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao during Hu's state visit to Washington earlier in 2011. Biden is scheduled to meet with President Hu and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and to take part in a round-table discussion with U.S. and Chinese business leaders before leaving Beijing for the southwestern city of Chengdu.

Biden will deliver a major policy speech on U.S.-China relations at Chengdu's Sichuan University on August 21. Following his speech, Biden will meet with senior provincial officials from Sichuan. He will then travel to Dujiangyan, a city in Sichuan province that was severely damaged in the May 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, according to the White House.

Biden and Xi will meet with students at the rebuilt Qingchengshan High School. After the visit to Chengdu, Biden travels to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and then to Tokyo and Sendai in Japan. He returns to Washington August 26.

The three-nation trip is part of the Obama administration's efforts to "renew and intensify the U.S. role in Asia," according to senior White House officials. Obama will host the 19th annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders in Honolulu November 12-13, where he will likely meet with Chinese President Hu. The two have met nine times before, and likely will meet again during the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Bali November 17-19, and at the East Asia Summit, which follows the ASEAN Summit.

### **U.S. Terrorism Report Cites Attacks in 72 Countries in 2010**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer | 18 August 2011

Washington — There were 11,604 terrorist attacks in 72 countries in 2010, which resulted in 49,901 victims, according to the annual U.S. report on terrorism.

"Although the number of attacks rose by almost 5 percent over the previous year, the number of deaths declined for a third consecutive year, dropping 12 percent from 2009," the report said.

The U.S. Department of State released its congressionally mandated *Country Reports on Terrorism 2010* on August 18

in Washington. The annual report, which breaks down global terrorist attacks and terrorist group activity by region and country, includes a statistical annex that is prepared by the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC).

The latest report notes that the transnational terrorist group al-Qaida (AQ) remains the “preeminent terrorist threat to the United States in 2010. Though the AQ core in Pakistan has become weaker, it retained the capability to conduct regional and transnational attacks.”

The report includes a list of 47 foreign terrorist organizations designated by the United States, and it lists the four nations designated as state sponsors of terrorism: Cuba, Iran, Sudan and Syria.

Based on a yearlong collection of reports from every nation, of the 49,901 victims of terrorist acts, there were 13,186 people killed in 2010. That is down from 15,310 deaths due to terrorist incidents in 2009 and 15,708 deaths reported in 2008, according to the NCTC.

The NCTC notes that in 2010 there were more terrorist attacks, compared with 10,969 attacks in 2009, but still less than the 11,662 attacks reported in 2008. There has been a gradual decline in the number of terrorist attacks over the past five years worldwide.

“For the second year in a row, the largest number of reported attacks occurred in South Asia, which also had the largest number of victims for the third consecutive year,” the NCTC reported. “More than 75 percent of the world’s terrorist attacks and deaths took place in South Asia and the Near East.”

The NCTC report notes that the number of deaths from terrorist attacks fell by more than 30 percent in Africa, and that the number of attacks and deaths in Europe and Eurasia declined slightly in 2010, with the vast majority again occurring in Russia.

The fewest incidents of terrorism were reported in the Western Hemisphere, where both attacks and deaths fell by about 25 percent. Terrorist attacks in East Asia declined in 2010, most significantly in Thailand and the Philippines, the report said.

Armed attacks were the most common form of terrorist incidents, accounting for more than a third of the global total. “Bombings, including suicide attacks, were far more lethal, causing almost 70 percent of all deaths,” the NCTC report said. “In particular, suicide bombings continued to be the most lethal type of terrorist attack, resulting in nearly 13.5 percent of all terrorism-related deaths.”

Overall, though, the number of suicide attacks declined

for the second consecutive year, from 299 in 2009 to 263 in 2010, just under 2 percent of all terrorist attacks last year.

The NCTC said that more than half of the people killed by terrorists in 2010 were civilians; more than 600 were children. Police officers and other paramilitary or private security officers accounted for more than 2,000 victims last year.

### **The Sweet Taste of Pakistan’s Mangoes Arrives in the U.S.**

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer

Washington – Members of Chicago’s Pakistani-American community finally have gotten to taste again the type of mangoes they grew up with. The occasion was a mango-tasting party at a downtown Chicago hotel to celebrate the first U.S. imports of the fruit from Pakistan.

Pakistan’s mangoes are among the sweetest in the world. After helping Pakistan’s growers reach their highest level of exports ever in 2010 to other markets, the United States is now importing the popular mangoes with the first shipments reaching U.S. customers in July. At the July 29 event, hosted by the Pakistani Consulate in Chicago, mangoes showed up in such treats as ice cream, tarts, chutney, cake and drinks.

As part of an ongoing, three-year infrastructure program, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) trained more than 2,700 Pakistani mango farmers in pre- and post-harvest practices, built three processing facilities – inaugurating a facility at Zarpak Horticulture Products Farm in Multan on August 18 – and helped Pakistani mango producers ship their fruit to importers in Europe for the first time. By September 2011, USAID will equip 15 farms in Pakistan with processing facilities. The Zarpak farm’s productivity has increased 15 percent since the new processing technology was installed, the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad said in a press release August 18.

As the Pakistani mangoes enter the United States, they stop briefly at food treatment facilities, where they pass under electric laser beams and receive a specified dose of irradiation as part of routine practices for food imports. Irradiation, a safe and economical alternative to other pest-control methods such as fumigation and cold and heat treatments, eliminates harmful pests the fruit might carry, said Donna West, a senior import specialist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

Only commercially produced and shipped mangoes from Pakistan are allowed into the United States, and APHIS requires that each shipment be certified by Pakistan’s plant protection organization, which is standard procedure for fruit imports.

Demand for mangoes is growing around the world, and new sources to satisfy U.S. customers are welcome, West said. The United States is the largest importer of mangoes.

Producing more than 1.5 million tons of the fruit in 2010, Pakistan's mango growers, especially in Southern Punjab and Northern Sindh, are set for more growth. "Everyone from growers to people who work in packing houses to airline staff that transport the fruit will benefit" from access to the U.S. market, West said.

Chicago is home to one of the largest concentrations of Pakistanis in the United States, according to the Pakistan Consulate in Chicago.

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