

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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REMARKS

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on the Situation in Syria

**August 18, 2011
Treaty Room**

SECRETARY CLINTON: Good morning. For months, the world has borne witness to the Asad regime's contempt for its own people. In peaceful demonstrations across the nation, Syrians are demanding their universal human rights. The regime has answered their demands with empty promises and horrific violence, torturing opposition leaders, laying siege to cities, slaughtering thousands of unarmed civilians, including children.

The Asad government has now been condemned by countries in all parts of the world and can look only to Iran for support for its brutal and unjust crackdown.

This morning, President Obama called on Asad to step aside and announced the strongest set of sanctions to date targeting the Syrian Government. These sanctions include the energy sector to increase pressure on the regime. The transition to democracy in Syria has begun, and it's time for Asad to get out of the way.

As President Obama said this morning, no outside power can or should impose on this transition. It is up to the Syrian people to choose their own leaders in a democratic system based on the rule of law and dedicated to protecting the rights of all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, religion, sect, or gender.

We understand the strong desire of the Syrian people that no foreign country should intervene in their struggle, and we respect their wishes. At the same time, we will do our part to support their aspirations for a Syria that is democratic, just, and inclusive. And we will stand up for their universal rights and dignity by pressuring the regime and Asad personally to get out of the way of this transition.

All along, as we have worked to expand the circle of global condemnation, we have backed up our words with actions. As I've repeatedly said, it does take both words and actions to produce results. Since the unrest began, we have imposed strong financial sanctions on Asad and dozens of his cronies. We have sanctioned the Commercial Bank of Syria for supporting the regime's illicit nuclear proliferation activities. And we have led multilateral efforts to isolate the regime, from keeping them off the Human Rights Council, to achieving a strong presidential statement of condemnation at the UN Security Council.

The steps that President Obama announced this morning will further tighten the circle of isolation around the regime. His executive order immediately freezes all assets of the Government of Syria that are subject to American jurisdiction and prohibits American citizens from engaging in any transactions with the Government of Syria or investing in that country. These actions strike at the heart of the regime by banning American imports of Syrian petroleum and petroleum products and prohibiting Americans from dealing in these products.

And as we increase pressure on the Asad regime to disrupt its ability to finance its campaign of violence, we will take steps to mitigate any unintended effects of the sanctions on the Syrian people. We will also continue to work with the international community, because if the Syrian people are to achieve their goals, other nations will have to provide support and take actions as well.

In just the past two weeks, many of Syria's own neighbors and partners in the region have joined the chorus of condemnation. We expect that they and other members of the international community will amplify the steps we are taking both through their words and their actions.

We are heartened that, later today, the UN Security Council will meet again to discuss this ongoing threat to international peace and stability. We are also working to schedule a special session of the United Nations Human Rights Council that will examine the regime's widespread abuses. Earlier this week, I explained how the United States has been engaged in a relentless and systematic effort with the international community, pursuing a set of actions and statements that make crystal clear where we all stand, and generating broader and deeper pressure on the Asad regime.

The people of Syria deserve a government that respects their dignity, protects their rights, and lives up to their aspirations. Asad is standing in their way. For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for him to step aside and leave this transition to the Syrians themselves, and that is what we will continue to work to achieve.

Thank you all very much.

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