The hearing will come to order.

We will get started. I want to thank everyone for being here

today. I will have an opening statement, and then we will go to the

statement from our witnesses and then go to questions.

I want to thank everyone for being here today.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee meets today and our

Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian

Affairs meets to examine U.S. policy toward Syria. We know that

Syrian men, women, and children have courageously—and that is

an understatement—engaged in demonstrations for more than 6

months in their country. They seek basic democratic reforms and

protection for human rights, but the Assad regime in Syria has responded

with terrible, unspeakable violence. The United Nations

estimates that more than 3,500 people have been killed since the

unrest began in March of this year.

Over the past week, Syria’s third-largest city of Homs has been

engulfed in perhaps the worst violence we have seen in Syria this

year. In just a week, more than 100 people have reportedly been

killed, all of this coming during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha,

and all of this coming after months and months of repression and

violence.

And perhaps most important of all, this violence comes 1 week

after the Assad regime agreed to an Arab League deal for reform.

In direct violation of this agreement, Assad’s forces have not

removed their tanks and armored vehicles from the streets of

towns across the country. Violence aimed at demonstrators has not

stopped or even slowed. Political prisoners—and there are reportedly

tens of thousands of them—have not been released. Neither

international journalists nor human rights monitors have been

admitted into Syria.

Assad made it clear to the world that he has no interest in or

no intention to pursue democratic reform. In fact, he has proven to

the world that democratic reform is now not possible while he remains

in power.

For months, I and others have spoken about this grave situation

in Syria. I have shared accounts of a regime whose brutality affects

22 million Syrians, as well as my constituents in Pennsylvania. I

have told the story before of Dr. Hazem Hallek, a Syrian American

who lives in suburban Philadelphia. He was visited by his brother

Sakher earlier this year. Sakher, who is also a doctor, was not engaged

in politics of any kind. Upon his return to Syria after visiting

his brother, he was tortured and killed by Assad’s forces just for

having visited the United States of America.

The press has reported accounts of school children arrested, parents

and community members murdered, disappearances and mutilations

all across the country of Syria.

In an August Washington Post op-ed, I wrote that Mr. Assad

must step down from power. We, who recognize the horror in Syria,

have a responsibility to bear witness to the truth, the truth of this

slaughter, and to work against it.

Ambassador Robert Ford has taken on this critical task and represented

the United States with honor and distinction, and I would

also add with remarkable courage. I applaud the work of the

Ambassador and his top-notch Embassy staff. We are grateful for

their sacrifice and their service.

But we must continue to take specific and visible actions to support

democratic reform.

First, we need to make it clear to the regime’s supporters that

their behavior will not be tolerated and they will be held accountable

just as the regime will be held accountable. The administration,

working with our European allies, should sanction more individuals

within the regime who are complicit in the repression of

protests. To date, 17 individuals and 18 entities have been sanctioned.

The world needs to know their names and they need to

decide whether they, those who are complicit, will continue to aid

and abet a regime which has killed thousands. This week, I will

send a letter to the Treasury Department to urge the administration

to expand the list of individuals to be sanctioned by the United

States. The administration can do this by Executive order and

should do so as soon as possible. That is first.

Second, the United States must play a constructive role in isolating

or, I should say, continuing to isolate the Assad regime. In

October, I called for the establishment of a Friends of the Syrian

People contact group. This contact group can serve as a main point

of international engagement for the democratic opposition and the

Syrian people. The Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council

countries, and others could form the core of such a group, which

would send a clear message of international solidarity and support

of democratic change in Syria. I hope that this suggestion would be

seriously considered by the Arab League when it meets to discuss

Syria this Saturday. The United States should continue to fully

support these regional efforts to pressure the regime.

In its agreement with the Assad government, the Arab League

committed to sending international monitors to see firsthand the

situation in Syria. Those monitors are needed now, not days or

weeks from now, but now. The Arab League should send them

today. If Assad blocks the deployment of these monitors, the Arab

League should suspend Syria’s membership in the organization.

The United States should also make another push to pursue a resolution

condemning the Assad regime at the United Nations. Strong

international opposition and commitment to isolating the Assad

regime is the key to bringing about democratic reform.

The U.S. Senate as well should also support these efforts to isolate

the regime. Through our regular interaction with embassies

here in Washington, individual Senators can express concern for

the ongoing violence and show their support for democratic change

in Syria.

Third, the courageous Syrian political opposition must work to

communicate a unified vision for the future of Syria. This opposition

faces many disadvantages that other protesters from across

the region did not face. Syrians do not have a Tahrir Square on

which to gather in large numbers. They do not have open borders

through which they can leave at will and find safe haven. They do

not have the full attention of the international media, which have

been barred from the country.

Despite these challenges, I believe that the Syrian opposition will

be involved directly in the country’s future. It is imperative that

the Syrian National Council answer questions about its composition

and its intent. Who are the members of the Syrian National

Council? Where does it stand on the role of the international community

in stopping the violence and supporting democratic reform?

And most importantly, how will minorities be treated in a post-

Assad Syria? We have yet to hear a clear message from the opposition

on these most essential issues.

The Syrian National Council must be committed to protecting

all—all—of Syria’s ethnic and religious groups, including Christians

and Alawites. The Syrian National Council must speak with

one voice and make it clear that it will advocate for minority rights

in the new government it hopes to create. The Syrian people

deserve answers to these key questions which will, in large part determine

the degree of support the opposition has inside and outside

the country.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in a speech on Monday

that Assad ‘‘cannot deny his people’s legitimate demands indefinitely.

He must step down; and until he does, America and the

international community will continue to increase pressure on him

and his brutal regime.’’ So said Secretary Clinton. My questions

today will center primarily on how we can and will increase the

pressure on this regime.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on a number of key

issues.

First, what can regional powers, including the Arab League and

Turkey, do to play a more constructive role in supporting the democratic

reform process in Syria?

Second, what is the impact of current U.S. sanctions on the

Assad regime?

Third, how is the United States working unilaterally and with

the European Union to strengthen sanctions on Syria?

Another question is, How does the United States assess the current

state of the Syrian National Council. What are the criteria

by which this movement should be judged in order to gain international

legitimacy?

And finally, what are the assessments of our witnesses of growing

sectarianism in Syria and whether it could lead to civil war?

We are fortunate today to have with us two witnesses who can

speak about U.S. policy in Syria: the Honorable Jeffrey Feltman,

Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs at the

Department of State—Mr. Feltman, we are grateful you are here—

and Luke Bronin, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing

and Financial Crimes at the Treasury Department. We are

grateful you are here as well. These witnesses have extensive experience

and expertise in the region, and I look forward to their insights

as to why our policy has not yet produced the desired results

and what more we can do. We are grateful for their testimony

today and grateful for their service.

And I would say in conclusion, before turning to Senator Risch

if he has any opening comments, that this is a matter, I think, of

basic justice for the people of Syria. A long time ago, St. Augustine

said without justice, what are kingdoms but great bands of robbers.

And the people of Syria for a long period of time, but especially

over these last horrific number of months have been robbed of a lot

of things, robbed of their dignity, robbed sometimes of their life and

their freedoms. And we have to speak out with one voice on a matter

of basic justice for this country. And I know that there are a

lot of Americans that are deeply concerned about this issue.

And we are grateful that we have so many people here to listen

today to this testimony and to listen to the questions of our witnesses.

And I am grateful for our colleagues being here.

And I wanted to ask our ranking member, Senator Risch, if he

has any opening comments.

Thank you, Senator Risch.

So we will start with the opening statements, and then we will

go to questions. I spoke to both of our witnesses and they have

agreed to try to keep within 5 minutes if they can. Both of your

full statements, of course, will be made part of the record for this

hearing. And we will start with Assistant Secretary Feltman.

Thank you.

Thanks very much.

Thank you very much.

We will start with one round of questioning.

Mr. Feltman, I wanted to ask you, first of all, about the region

and, in particular, maybe we can review a couple of countries in

the region that can and will and should play a role in this. But let

me start with Turkey.

In your full statement, you mentioned some of the parts of the

statements that Prime Minister Erdogan has made. You said in

your statement that he has said he believes the opposition will be

successful in ‘‘their glorious’’ resistance to the ongoing government

crackdown. Certainly that is helpful when you have a neighbor saying

that. And then what he has said in September in a visit to

Libya, those who repress their own people in Syria will not survive,

and he goes on from there.

I guess I would ask you maybe a broad question and then more

specifically. No. 1, on this idea of a contact group, how do you

assess that and is there any effort to be undertaken by the State

Department or the administration to move that forward—a contact

group. That is the broad question.

The second, more specific question is what about the role that

Turkey has played and can play. What can we do to move them

from being somewhat constructive so far to being even more helpful

to put pressure on the regime and to help in the region? Does that

make sense? I know that second question is not as specific as you

may want it.

Let me just interject there. I think the fact that

the Arab League has now made an attempt that he seems to be

kind of thumbing his nose at—for lack of a better description—

I realize that a couple weeks ago or months ago there might have

been a sequencing problem, but I think now that the Arab League

has taken some action, I would hope that that would set the table

for what could be a broader effort. But that is just an opinion I am

interjecting.

I guess I would ask you as a followup to that

question on Turkey, what would you hope that they could do in the

next couple of weeks to be constructive.

That is very helpful.

Senator Risch.

Thank you, Senator Risch.

Senator Boxer.

Thanks, Senator Boxer.

Senator Lugar.

Thank you, Senator Lugar.

Senator Shaheen.

Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Rubio.

Thank you, Senator Rubio.

Senator Durbin.

Thank you, Senator Durbin.

We will go to a second round. We may not all have questions, but

I wanted to raise at least two or three more points.

Mr. Bronin, I wanted to raise with you—and today we probably

do not have enough time to cover all of this, but I wanted to raise

a question about an article that appeared in the Wall Street Journal.

It is dated October 29 of this year. The title of the article is

‘‘U.S. Firm Acknowledges Syria Uses Its Gear to Block Web.’’ I will

just read two pertinent parts, really the first two paragraphs, short

paragraphs.

‘‘A U.S. company that makes Internet blocking gear acknowledges

that Syria has been using at least 13 of its devices to censor

Web activity there, meaning Syria, an admission that comes as the

Syrian Government cracks down on its citizens and silences their

online activities.

‘‘Blue Coat Systems, Incorporated of Sunnyvale, CA, says it

shipped the Internet, ‘filtering,’ devices to Dubai late last year believing

they were destined for a department of the Iraqi Government.

However, the devices which can block Web sites or record

when people visit them made their way to Syria, a country subject

to strict U.S. trade embargos.’’

And I will just read one more part. ‘‘Blue Coat told the Wall

Street Journal the appliances were transmitting automatic status

messages back to the company as the devices censored the Syrian

Web. Blue Coat says it does not monitor where such ‘heartbeat’

messages originate from.’’ And it goes on from there.

I know that you and your team are familiar with this.

I guess the basic question I have—and I know I am putting you

on the spot, but if you have an answer, we would want to hear it

today. Has this company, Blue Coat Systems, Incorp., violated the

U.S. trade embargo. That is the first question.

Secretary Feltman, I do not know if you have

either an answer or a comment.

Just for the record just so that we are clear, I

would suggest to the administration to make sure that an answer

is forthcoming, whether it comes from the Commerce Department

or from whatever agency the answer would emanate because part

of our responsibility here is not simply to point fingers at other

countries and impose sanctions that are kind of far away. We got

to make sure that our Government, our companies are doing the

right thing here as it relates to Syria.

I wanted to ask a broader question that has been referred to by

a number of us, but I wanted to try to get it in a summary form

before we conclude about sanctions. We know and I know that both

of you have spoken to the issue of sanctions. In fact, there was a

recent CRS report that outlined—and I am looking at a report that

is rather recent, but the last two pages of this report—this is a

report dated November the 4th. But they set forth a table where

they listed all of the sanctions and the individuals sanctioned.

I guess I would ask you two questions. No. 1 is how would you

assess the success or impact of sanctions to date—both U.S. and

other sanctions; EU and others. And No. 2, what if anything can

you tell us that is forthcoming by way of sanctions? I have some

ideas about whom should be sanctioned, but I want to hear from

you first about the assessment of where we are and, second, where

we could be headed with additional sanctions. And it is really for

both our witnesses.

Mostly because of oil?

And just a quick followup. Would it be accurate

to say—and I guess I am getting this from a couple of places, including

your testimony. Let me rephrase the question. You say in

your testimony on page 4, prior to the imposition of sanctions, the

Assad regime generated one-third of its revenue—that is total revenue—

from the oil sector and that has been effectively eliminated.

Is that correct?

Mr. Feltman.

What can you tell me—maybe you do not know

the answer to this. It is a tough one to answer I guess. Sanctions

as it relates to Turkey—why do you not think they have taken that

step and can they, will they?

I do not know if any of our colleagues have more

questions, but I just have one comment. I was asking our staff not

too long ago when you consider the number of people slaughtered

here, by one estimate now more than 3,500, if you do the math in

terms of population proportionally, it is the equivalent of more

than 43,000 Americans being killed by our Government. I know it

is a different world. It is not necessarily comparable in terms of the

way we have traditionally responded to our own challenges here.

But it is hard to comprehend that that kind of a slaughter is taking

place, and it does not get near enough attention in this town. So

we are going to keep at it.

Unless Ranking Member Risch or Senator Lugar have any other

questions—Senator Lugar?

I want to thank both of our witnesses.

Let me just say for the record before we go that the record will

be kept open for 1 week for members of the committee.

Second, we have received testimony for the record from the following

organizations. They are three: No. 1, the Foundation for the

Defense of Democracy; No. 2, the Washington Institute for Near

East Policy; and No. 3, Human Rights Watch. So those will be

made part of the record as well.

So if there is nothing further, we are adjourned.

We want to thank our witnesses and this hearing is adjourned.