Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding

this hearing today. A fundamental principle of democracy is the

right of self determination and freedom of expression. The people

of both Syria and Iran this right has been denied. They have been

denied freedom of speech and freedom of expression by oppressive

regimes clinging to power however they can.

This is an important time in our nation’s history. This is not only

a regional conflict. It’s one of global consequence as well. The whole

world is watching, civilian populations as well as authoritarian regimes,

to see what the response of the United States will be.

We have a moral obligation to continue efforts to undermine

Assad, to encourage his departure as quickly as possible, and I look

forward to the expert testimony of our panel here today.

Thank you.

Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. The communication

coming from the panel indicates that the civilian population of

Syria is comfortable and supportive of the United States’ position

relative to Assad. Is that an accurate assessment?

Got it. You know, Assad is a bad guy. He lacks legitimacy.

He murders his own people. His father destroyed Hama

in 1982, some 10,000 people were killed. Streets were plowed down.

It would seem to me that a strong declarative statement by the

United States with respect to Assad stepping down would sent the

appropriate message to the international community and authoritarian

regimes throughout the world about what is going to be tolerated

and what is not.

Is there not a concern, a public policy concern within the State

Department about not taking that decisive step and calling explicitly

for his removal?