

UN chief urges Syrian President to stop killing his own people, 15 January 2012



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses high-level meeting on Reform and Transitions to Democracy in Beirut. Photo: UN Photo/Evan Schneider

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today renewed his call on the Syrian leadership to end the ongoing bloodshed in the country, stating that the era of one-man rule and the perpetuation of family dynasties are crumbling.

"I say again to President Assad of Syria: Stop the violence. Stop killing your own people. The path of repression is a dead end," Mr. Ban said in a **keynote address** at the High-Level Meeting on Reform and Transitions to Democracy, held in Beirut.

He told the gathering, held under the auspices of the Lebanese Government and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), that the "remarkable" events of the past year transformed the region and changed the world, and their lessons are clear.

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"The winds of change will not cease to blow. The flame ignited in Tunisia will not be dimmed," he stated, referring to the popular uprising that one year ago brought down that country's president-for-life, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Tunisia's revolution set off a wave of uprisings across North Africa and the Middle East, later described as the Arab Spring, which also led to the toppling of long-standing regimes in Egypt, Libya and Yemen.

"None of these great changes began with a call for a regime change," noted the Secretary-General. "First and foremost, people wanted dignity. They want an end to

corruption. They want a say in their future. They want jobs and justice? a fair share of political power. They want their human rights.

"The old way, the old order, is crumbling – one-man rule and the perpetuation of family dynasties ? monopolies of wealth and power? the silencing of the media? the deprivation of fundamental freedoms that are the birthright of men, women and children on this planet," he added.

For democracy to succeed in the Arab world, Mr. Ban cited four prerequisites: real and genuine reform inclusive dialogue ensuring that women are at the centre of the region's future and heeding the voices of the young.

He pledged the UN's firm commitment to help Arab countries through their transition.