



PRESS RELEASE

**Co-Chairman
James P. McGovern**

**Co-Chairman
Frank R. Wolf**

October 17, 2011

For Immediate Release

Contact: Mike McVicker (202-225-3599)

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Co-Chairmen Condemn Continued Human Rights Violations in Syria and Urge International Partners to Take Firmer Stance against Abuses

Washington – Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Co-Chairmen James P. McGovern (D-MA) and Frank R. Wolf (R-VA) today strongly condemned the Syrian government for continuing to perpetrate serious human rights violations against peaceful protestors. The co-chairmen also urged the international community, including individual countries and intergovernmental entities, to take more vigorous measures against President Bashar al-Assad’s regime to stop the violence.

The Commission fully supports the right of the Syrian people to free speech and expression, to assemble for peaceful political action, and to protest against the government. Recent events during the “Arab Spring” have underscored the need for greater support of these fundamental human rights. The Syrian government’s response to peaceful protests that began in March 2011 has been swift, brutal, and reprehensible. According to the United Nations, over 2,600 Syrian citizens have been killed by government forces during the protests, and over 15,000 Syrians are estimated to have been detained and tortured by the regime. Independent human rights groups have also concluded that the Syrian government denied medical assistance to protestors, conducted politically-motivated disappearances of protestors, and executed prisoners followed by burying them in mass graves.

Rep. Jim McGovern stated, “The Syrian government’s barbaric treatment of its own people is shocking and repulsive. The entire international community must bring much greater pressure to bear against the Syrian government to stop the abuses and allow the Syrian people to build a better future for themselves.”

Similarly, Rep. Frank Wolf declared, “President Assad’s brutal repression of peaceful opposition again shows his callous disregard for the legitimate concerns of the Syrian people. The international community should come together to condemn this cruelty and support the Syrian people in their quest for universal rights.”

The bipartisan Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission was established in the U.S. House of Representatives to educate Members of Congress on human rights issues and advocate on behalf of human rights defenders world-wide.

###