

U.S. Suspends Embassy Operations in Syria

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The United States advised the government of Syria that it has suspended all embassy operations effective February 6, 2012, given ongoing violence and a deteriorating security situation. All official U.S. embassy personnel and their family members have departed. In a [statement](#), State Department Spokesperson Victoria Nuland said:

"We, along with several other diplomatic missions, conveyed our security concerns to the Syrian government but the regime failed to respond adequately. Ambassador Ford has left Damascus but he remains the United States Ambassador to Syria and its people. As the President's representative, he will continue his work and engagement with the Syrian people as head of our Syria team in Washington. Together with other senior U.S. officials, Ambassador Ford will maintain contacts with the Syrian opposition and continue our efforts to support the peaceful political transition which the Syrian people have so bravely sought."

The United States warns U.S. citizens against travel to Syria and recommends that U.S. citizens in Syria depart immediately. The Department continues to reach out to U.S. citizens we believe remain in Syria. Please direct inquiries regarding U.S. citizens in Syria to SyriaEmergencyUSC@state.gov. Callers in the United States and Canada may dial the toll free number 1-888-407-4747. Callers outside the United States and Canada may dial 1-202-501-4444. Go to travel.state.gov for the latest information.

Effective immediately, the Polish government, acting through its embassy in Damascus, serves as protecting power for U.S. interests in Syria. Only emergency services for U.S. citizens are available. Neither U.S. passports nor visas to the United States are issued in Damascus. For emergency assistance, U.S. citizens should contact the Polish Embassy at 963 954 666 693 or damaszek.usint@msz.gov.pl.

In a [statement](#), U.S. Ambassador to Poland Lee Feinstein said, "I thank our trusted Polish allies and friends for assuming this important responsibility in support of America and its citizens. On behalf President Obama and Secretary Clinton, I thank President Komorowski, Prime Minister Tusk, Foreign Minister Sikorski, and the people of Poland for this act of friendship and solidarity."