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Obama: Assad is slaughtering his people, must quit

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Created 08/18/2011 - 9:26am

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POSTED: Thursday, August 18, 2011 - 9:26am

UPDATED: Saturday, August 20, 2011 - 1:52am



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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama says the time has come for Syrian President Bashar Assad to resign for the sake of his brutally repressed people.

In a stinging written statement, Obama says Assad has overseen a vicious onslaught of his people as they protest for freedoms. He says the Syrian people should decide their country's future and Assad is standing in their way and must go.

Obama also says that Assad's calls for reform ring hollow while he is, in Obama's words, "imprisoning, torturing and slaughtering his own people."

This was Obama's first explicit call for Assad to step down. His administration also is slapping new sanctions on Syria.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is set to speak about the government's tougher stance later Thursday morning.

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