

## Harper, Hypocrisy, Syria, and Degrees of Freedom

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, May 25, 2011

<https://politicsrespun.org/2011/05/harper-hypocrisy-syria-and-degrees-of-freedom/>

Yesterday I lifted my head from some work to watch the Ottawa journalists in Twitter filling us all in on John Baird's first press conference as the majority Conservative government's Foreign Affairs minister. They noted he read from the speech: very odd.

It was a signal of a new degree of hypocritical oddity now besetting Canada. Last summer, the Harper government suspended Canada's constitution and rounded up around 1,000 activists, peaceful protesters and innocent bystanders [in and around G20 venues](#), and even in a "free speech zone." Various, those hundreds were then persecuted, beaten, deprived of medicine, humiliated in cages, suffered the suspension of their constitutional and legal rights and unceremoniously dumped in the streets.

They, in essence, suffered violations of their constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of expression and assembly. And those innocent bystanders were violated by having their right to merely stand on a sidewalk in public violated by the state.

Yesterday the new benchmark of gall bounced around in Ottawa as the government rightly sanctioned Syria for killing its citizens as they tried to peacefully assemble and express themselves.

One conclusion I can draw from this hypocrisy is that as long as a government does not actually murder its citizens, then the suspension of expression and assembly rights is tolerable.

This is not tolerable.

*PM announces sanctions on Syria*

*24 May 2011*

*Ottawa, Ontario*

*Prime Minister Stephen Harper today announced that targeted sanctions would be imposed against members of the current Syrian regime. This action is in response to the on-going and violent crackdown by the military and security forces against Syrian civilians who are peacefully protesting for democracy and the respect of human rights.*

*“Canada is gravely concerned at the excessive use of force by the Syrian regime against its own people, which has reportedly resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians and the detention of thousands more,” said Prime Minister Harper. “The sanctions being announced today are a repudiation of Syria’s blatant violation of its international human rights obligations that threaten the security of the entire Middle East.”*

*Canada is also concerned about the humanitarian situation in cities and towns that remain under military lockdown, and by reports that hundreds of Syrians are fleeing the country.*

*Our Government will be implementing the following sanctions against Syria which are aimed at pushing for democratic reform:*

*A travel ban to Canada imposed on designated people associated with the current Syrian regime;*

*An asset freeze against people associated with the current Syrian regime and entities involved in security and military operations against the Syrian people;*

*A ban under the Export and Import Permits Act on the export from Canada to Syria of goods and technology that are subject to export controls; and,*

*A suspension of all bilateral cooperation agreements and initiatives with Syria.*

*The measures announced today directly target members of the current Syrian regime and individuals and entities involved in the crackdown. They are not intended to cause harm to the Syrian people.*

*Canada stands with the Syrian people's call for democratic reform and calls on the current regime to immediately cease the use of excessive force against peaceful demonstrators.*

*"The best way to ensure peace and stability in Syria is through democratic reform and respect for human rights, not violent repression," Prime Minister Harper added.*

via [PM announces sanctions on Syria - Prime Minister of Canada](#).