

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Hanley, Monica R <HanleyMR@state.gov>
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To: H
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Subject: Annan urges Syrian regime to lay down arms first (AP)

GENEVA (AP) - An official says U.N.-Arab League envoy Kofi Annan is urging the Syrian government to lay down its weapons first in order to immediately end the nation's crisis.

Ahmad Fawzi, a spokesman for Annan, says "the deadline is now" for Syrian President Bashar Assad to end the fighting but that a deputy to Annan also will demand that the government opponents "lay down their arms and start talking."

Fawzi told reporters Friday in Geneva that Annan is "appealing to the stronger party to make a gesture of good faith" to bring an end to more than a year of violence that the U.N. says has killed over 9,000 people.

Fawzi said Annan is arranging visits to Iran and Saudi Arabia seeking support for his peace plan but that no dates have been fixed yet.