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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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Subject: Fw: Europe shocked, appalled by Syrian Hama assault

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Subject: Europe shocked, appalled by Syrian Hama assault

LONDON (Reuters) - European leaders said they were shocked and appalled by Syria's use of tanks to storm the city of Hama on Sunday, an assault that activists say killed 80 civilians.

President Bashar al-Assad's decision to send troops and heavy armour into the city where his father crushed an Islamist uprising in 1982 suggested he intends to use all means to snuff out protests rather than carry out his promises of reform.

Some analysts regarded the offensive, which came on the eve of Ramadan, as an attempt to deter further unrest during the Muslim holy month of fasting.

"This attack and the continuing crackdown in other Syrian cities is even more unacceptable coming on the eve of the holy month of Ramadan," said European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton.

"The Syrian army and security forces have the duty to protect citizens, not to massacre them indiscriminately."

EU governments plan to extend sanctions against Assad's government on Monday by slapping asset freezes and travel bans on five more people. The EU has already imposed sanctions on Assad and at least two dozen officials and targeted military-associated companies in Syria.

"I am appalled by the reports that the Syrian security forces have stormed Hama with tanks and other heavy weapons this morning, killing dozens of people," British Foreign Secretary William Hague said.

"The attacks are all the more shocking on the eve of the Muslim holy month. President Bashar is mistaken if he believes that oppression and military force will end the crisis."

Italy called for a U.N. Security Council move on Syria, something opposed by Russia up to now.

Even Syria's former ally Turkey joined others in calling for dialogue and a political settlement to end the violence.

"Along with the rest of the Muslim world, Turkey is deeply disappointed and saddened at these developments on the eve of the holy month of Ramadan when it was expecting work to create an atmosphere of peace and quiet," the Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"The ongoing developments leave open to question the Syrian administration's sincerity and will to solve the problem by peaceful means," it said.

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