

Beat: Politics

Syria; Assad announces sweeping ;general amnesty...

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USPA News - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has announced a sweeping "general amnesty" for all crimes committed before Monday and is offering leniency for fugitives if they soon turn themselves in, the government said, less than a week after Assad won the presidential election. Assad issued the general amnesty for all crimes committed before Monday by signing Legislative Decree No.

22. The government said the decree is a step towards national dialogue and aims to boost national unity and improve coexistence in society, but a general amnesty was also part of Assad's election program. The amnesty commutes all death sentences to life penal labor, all life penal labor sentences to 20 years of penal labor, and sentences of life in prison to 20 years in prison. It also commutes the entire sentence for prisoners who are suffering from an incurable terminal illness and convicts who are 70 years of age or older. Sentences for persons convicted of abductions will also be commuted under the amnesty if the offender released their victim without taking a ransom. Offenders who are currently holding hostages will also see their future sentences commuted if they hand over their victims to authorities within a month of Monday's decree being signed. Others benefiting from the decree are foreigners who traveled to Syria to join a terrorist organization or to commit a terrorist act, the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) reported. It said those foreigners would also receive amnesty if they decide to turn themselves in within the next month. "Deserters are also granted full amnesty, both those who are inside Syria and abroad and who are not fugitives from justice. Fugitives wanted for other crimes can also benefit from the amnesty if they turn themselves in within three months," SANA said in a dispatch, adding that the general amnesty does not cover convictions from personal lawsuits. The crisis in Syria began as a pro-democracy protest movement in March 2011, similar to those across the Middle East and North Africa. The Syrian government violently cracked down on the protests, setting off an armed conflict between pro-Assad forces and anti-government forces. The United Nations estimates that more than 100,000 people, many of them civilians, have been killed and millions more have fled to neighboring countries since the start of the uprising that has escalated into a full-blown civil war. Opposition groups estimate the number of deaths has already exceeded 200,000, but those figures cannot be independently verified.

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