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Scores killed in Syria as 'Great Friday' protests are attacked

At least 75 people have been killed today in Syria during mass protests, local human rights activists told Amnesty International, as the government launched its deadliest crackdown yet on demonstrators calling for political reform.

Security forces fired live ammunition at demonstrators who had gathered across the country following Friday prayers.

Thirty were killed in the southern town of Izzra', 22 in Damascus, 18 in the Homs area and the rest in other towns and villages, activists said, in what is the deadliest day so far during weeks of protest.

Two boys aged 7 and 10 years old were among those killed in Izzra' as was a 70-year-old man.

“The Syrian authorities have again responded to peaceful calls for change with bullets and batons. They must immediately halt their attacks on peaceful protesters and instead allow Syrians to gather freely as international law demands,” said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa director.

“They must also immediately launch an independent investigation into what happened and ensure that any security forces found to have carried out these killings are brought to justice.”