

Freed Syrian rights advocate vows to pursue struggle

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Syrian rights advocate and attorney Anwar al-Bunni,

Syrian rights advocate and attorney Anwar al-Bunni, released at the weekend after five years in jail, urged authorities on Monday to free all political prisoners and vowed to continue his struggle for human rights.

"My freedom is not really complete because there are still many others held in prison," Bunni told AFP. "The release of political prisoners is a necessary step that would give credibility to the government's stated intention to implement reforms."

The 52-year-old father of three, freed after completing his sentence, noted that Syria was living a historic moment, referring to the more than nine weeks of pro-democracy protests that have swept the country threatening the authoritarian regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

"I believe we are living a critical and interesting moment," he said. "Something like this happens every 200 or 300 years.

"Even if it stops now, it is obvious that there will be a big change."

Bunni was arrested in 2006 and jailed after signing the so-called "Damascus Declaration", a petition by Syria's liberal opposition calling for democratic change.