

January 28, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump

President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We, the undersigned 161 American, Syrian, and international organizations and groups, write to urge your immediate attention to the issue of U.S. sanctions on Syria. The Syrian people have endured unimaginable suffering, including chemical weapons attacks, widespread torture, enforced disappearances, mass forced displacement, and the systematic targeting of civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure and properties. However, after 54 years of authoritarian rule and 14 years of war, their patience and persistence has paid off. **The collapse of the Assad regime and its allies marks a historic and pivotal moment in Syria's history. Syria now desperately needs an urgent economic recovery—which will require sanctions to be eased or lifted.**

Bashar al-Assad left behind a failed economy, destroyed infrastructure, impoverished people, shattered state institutions, one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, and the legacy of multiple sanction regimes. While the six-month General License (GL) 24 is a step in the right direction, it falls short of the comprehensive relief Syrians need. Intensive sanctions continue to choke Syria's economy and complicate the provision of aid to the country. Accordingly, **we respectfully request the Administration immediately take the following interim measures:**

1. **EXPAND GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF GL 22:** Now that the Assad regime is gone, the Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) should expand General License 22, which authorizes investments and commercial transactions in several economic sectors in parts of Northwest and Northeast Syria, to cover all areas of Syria.
2. **EXPAND NGO LICENSE TO ALLOW MORE ACTIVITIES:** OFAC should amend the general license referenced in 31 CFR § 542.516 to authorize NGO transactions related to or in support of economic development projects that directly benefit the Syrian civilian population and the removal of landmines and unexploded ordinances. This would allow NGOs to carry out the activities in section (g) without the need for specific licenses.
3. **EXTEND AND EXPAND GL 24:** OFAC should expand the recently-issued GL 24 to (a) run indefinitely or at least for two years, giving it more meaningful effect, (b) authorize all transactions with the Central Bank of Syria, (c) authorize new investments by U.S. persons in Syria, and (d) authorize all transactions incidental and necessary to the exportation of goods to Syria permitted by a new export license exception. OFAC should also clarify what types of transactions with Syrian governing institutions are allowed under GL 24, and

particularly authorize the provision of professional, engineering, construction, and internet/telecom services. This would align GL 24 to broader licenses the U.S. has issued for [Afghanistan](#), [Iraq](#), and [Sudan](#), after a change of government.

4. **RESOLVE COMPLIANCE CONTRADICTIONS:** The State Department should clarify the distinction between Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and the Syrian government and consider removing HTS' FTO designation. To counteract the chilling effect of material support laws, which are not excused by OFAC licenses, the Justice Department should provide comfort that it will not prosecute any dealings allowed by OFAC with HTS or Syrian governing institutions as "material support for terrorism" or a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2332d.
5. **REMOVE THE BAN ON U.S. INVESTMENTS AND SERVICES:** The President should issue a new Executive Order that amends E.O. 13582 by striking sections 2(a), (b), (d), and (e), in order to permit new investments in Syria and the exportation, sale, or supply of services to Syria by U.S. persons. With U.S. aid for Syria currently frozen, this would enable Syrian-Americans and U.S. businesses to play a proactive role in Syria's recovery.
6. **ISSUE A BROAD EXPORT LICENSE EXCEPTION FOR SYRIA:** U.S. export controls prohibit the export of most items except for food and medicine to Syria, challenging the work of humanitarian organizations. The Commerce Department (DOC) should issue a broad license exception that mirrors OFAC's authorizations and allows more U.S. exports to Syria without requiring individual export licenses. The exception should include equipment needed for electric grids, construction, clearing landmines, education, and internet. DOC should commit to expedite specific license processing as it did after the 2023 earthquake.
7. **TEMPORARILY SUSPEND CAESAR ACT SANCTIONS:** The Caesar Act was untimely extended for five years shortly after the fall of the Assad regime, hindering much-needed foreign assistance to Syria as well as FDI that could accelerate Syria's recovery. The President should find the conditions for suspension in Section 7431 of the Caesar Act met and temporarily suspend the imposition of all Caesar sanctions for 180 days.

These measures address emergency needs and facilitate Syria's stabilization and recovery, while allowing for lengthier discussions on its future and a roadmap for lifting other sanctions, including Syria's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. **These measures are also reversible and allow for U.S. oversight.** Sanctions can always be reimposed if conditions change. By taking these pragmatic steps however, the United States can set U.S. engagement with the new Syria on the right track, preventing backsliding, fostering stability, and developing a constructive partnership with the Syrian people.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SYRIA SANCTIONS

Sanctions on Syria were imposed to hold the Assad regime accountable for its destabilizing behavior and deprive it of access to the global financial system. These sanctions have fulfilled their

purpose and are now outdated and no longer justified. **Maintaining sanctions on a free Syria would disproportionately punish an entire population for a regime no longer in power and impede Syrians' ability to rebuild their country at this fragile moment.**

- **Humanitarian Impact:** Syria sanctions and export controls hamper the ability of Syrians to access essential goods, services, and agricultural supplies, exacerbating hardship for millions and worsening an already dire crisis. Humanitarian needs are critical and widespread across all of Syria, with shelter, access to food, and electricity as the top three needs.
- **Limiting Shelter:** Syria sanctions and export controls hinder the reconstruction of destroyed houses. In 37% of communities assessed in a recent [study](#), the majority of people were living in either a damaged residential building, unfinished or abandoned house, non-residential structure, or in tents.
- **Economic Impact:** Sectoral sanctions cut off Syria from the global financial system, restricting commercial transactions, paralyzing the economy, hindering business activities for small and medium-sized enterprises, and discouraging foreign investors—stunting opportunities to generate jobs and drive economic recovery, a precursor for political stability.
- **Digital Impact:** Syria sanctions obstruct access to the internet, software and digital services, including by Big Tech companies, which hinders the development of Syria's inadequate digital infrastructure. This negatively impacts Syrian society's ability to innovate, access information, communicate with the outside world, work virtually, participate in business, cultural, and educational activities, and exercise their fundamental human rights.
- **Disabling the Diaspora:** Syrian-Americans are eager to help rebuild Syria and tackle its humanitarian and socioeconomic crises by volunteering their medical, psychological, legal, and technical expertise, but sanctions prohibiting investments and services hold them back.
- **Preventing Refugee Returns:** Syria sanctions and export controls restrict access to equipment and financing needed to repair infrastructure, restore basic services and utilities, rebuild schools, and clear explosives, in addition to impeding the generation of jobs. The country's electricity crisis has cascading effects on other essential needs and services, including water pumping, heating, and internet. **These issues pose severe challenges to Syrians and disincentivize millions of refugees and IDPs from returning home.** System strain and infrastructure damage were one of the two main reasons why IDPs who initially went back to their place of origin eventually returned to camps.

Syria's humanitarian and economic crisis demands an urgent response, and sanctions relief would accelerate stabilization and early recovery. Accordingly, **sanctions originally imposed on Assad's regime should not be continued or repurposed for unrelated goals. Without major sanctions reform—not just carving out partial exemptions or temporary suspensions—Syria has no realistic path toward humanitarian recovery and economic renewal.** The U.S. Government should coordinate and harmonize efforts to rescind sanctions on Syria with key allies and

international bodies, several of whom already have roadmaps or are calling for lifting sanctions. Syrians deserve the chance to rebuild their country and livelihoods free from the burden of sanctions.

SANCTIONS RELIEF FOR SYRIA ADVANCES U.S. INTERESTS

Sanctions relief for Syria aligns with America's values, commitment to democracy, and leadership in the Middle East. It also serves U.S. strategic interests, particularly at this sensitive juncture with Syria facing destabilizing factors and competing influences and agendas.

Early recovery and economic stability in Syria are an essential precursor for the stable, inclusive political transition we all hope to achieve. This is why measures to ease sanctions on Syria are critically needed now—precisely because the country's political future is taking shape, not in spite of it. **Sanctions relief makes America safer and stronger for the following reasons:**

- **Countering Radicalization and ISIS Resurgence:** With over 90% of Syria's war-weary population living in poverty and the security situation in Syria still unstable, the conditions that drive radicalization persist and are ripe for exploitation by bad actors and ISIS terrorists. Sanctions relief can prevent Syria from falling back into chaos and suffering.
- **Facilitating Checks and Balances:** Sanctions relief would revitalize the private sector and civil society. Facilitating private investments would help restore Syria's shrinking middle class. These factors foster checks and balances on the government—benefiting both U.S. and Syrian long-term interests.
- **Fostering Resilience and Regional Stability:** U.S. engagement in Syria's recovery can help transform local institutions into resilient mechanisms that effectively serve the people, protect human rights, and ensure security and stability in Syria and the region.
- **Reducing Future Financial Burdens:** Lifting Syria sanctions could reduce long-term reliance on U.S. and international aid by allowing Syrians, international companies, and the private sector to rebuild infrastructure, industries, and institutions.

Further, the United States is able to employ less harmful tools, alongside diplomatic engagement, to ensure its national security interests and encourage good behavior. Thus far, the transitional authorities in Damascus have demonstrated themselves to be good-faith, rational actors who can be engaged through negotiations and diplomatic channels. This approach reduces the need for maintaining coercive measures such as sanctions, **which would only risk undermining the global standing of the U.S. dollar,** making America weaker.

Thank you for your attention and we look forward to your leadership in addressing this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Access Centre For Human Rights (ACHR)

Access Now

Action For Humanity

Adalaty Organisation

Administrative Development Center

Al Sham Humanitarian Foundation

Al-Baghouz Hope for Development

AlKafaat Team (Congregation of Competencies)

Amal Organization for Relief & Development

American Coalition for Syria (ACS)

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Americans For A Free Syria

Arab American Association of New York

Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU)

Association Sans Menottes

Assyrian Democratic Organization (ADO)

Assyrian Human Rights Network

Ataa Development Organization

Awda Organization for Development

Bader for Development

Balloon Organization

Basmet Amal for Humanitarian Relief

Baytna pour le soutien de la société civile

Bedaya Organization

Beit Alkoll (All House Team)

Big Heart Foundation

BINAA Organization for Development

Brücken der Hoffnung (Jusoor Al-Amal) Organisation

Caesar Families Association

Change Makers Organization

Charity & Security Network

Chemical Violations Documentation Center and Research (CVDCR)

Child Guardians (Syrian Child Protection Organisation)

Christian Aid

Citizens for a Secure and Safe America (C4SSA)

CIVICUS

Civilian Council for American Security

Council on American-Islamic Relations

Damma Organization

Deirna Organization

Doctors of the World-USA

Emgage Action

Engineering Creative Team

Enma Al Jazeera Development

Enmaa Development Organization

Ensaf for Development

Fajjet Khuraq Atelier Project

Families For Freedom

Future Makers Team	Karam Shaar Advisory Limited
Ghiras Al-Nahda	Kattee Family Foundation
Global Justice	Kesh Malek
Halab Today TV	Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights (LDHR)
Hand in Hand for Aid and Development (HIHFAD)	Leading Women Organization
Hope Organization	Lelun Victims Association
Hope Revival Organisation	Let's Build (LBD) Team
Horan Foundation	Life for Relief and Development
Humanists Volunteer Team	Local Development & Small-Projects Support (LDSPS)
Ihsan Relief and Development	Mahabad Organization for Human Rights (MOHR)
Immigrants Act Now	Masarat Initiative
Inaash Organization For Development	Massar Families Association
Innovative and Powerful Vision (IPV)	MedGlobal
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)	Mehad
International Humanitarian Relief (IHR)	Mercy Without Limits (MWL)
Ishtar Development Organization	Mizan Organisation for Legal Research and Human Rights
Jaber Othurat Al-Kiraam Team	Molham Team
Judy Organization for Relief and Development (JORD)	Mozaic
Jusoor	Multifaith Alliance
Jusoor Al-Amal (Bridges of Hope) Organization	Musawa Women's Studies Center
Justice Paths	Musawat (Equality) Organization
Kara Family Foundation	Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)
Karam Foundation	Nihna Qudha Group

Nisan Cultural Forum	Syria Solidarity Campaign
Observatory of Political and Economic Networks	Syria Students Union (SSU)
Omran Center for Strategic Studies	Syrian American Council (SAC)
Orange Organization	Syrian American Development & Investment Quorum (SADIQ)
Physicians Across Continents Turkey	Syrian American Engineers Association (SAEA)
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness	Syrian American Lawyers' Network
Pro-Justice	Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)
Rahma Worldwide Aid and Development	Syrian British Consortium (SBC)
Rajeen Initiative	SBC Investigations Team
Roya Organization for Training and Development	Syrian Canadian Foundation
Sada Aljanub	Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
Sadad Humanitarian Organization	Syrian Christians USA
Sanabel Al-Furat Organization	Syrian Computer Society
Shafak Organization	Syrian Economists' Syndicate
SKT Organization	Syrian Expatriates Medical Association
Sobh Cultural Team	Syrian Forum USA
Social Development International (SDI)	Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)
Souriyat Across Borders (SAB)	Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA)
Stabilization Support Unit	Syrian Orphans Organization
SYCAC	Syrian Society for Scientific Research (SySSR)
Syria Faith Initiative	Syrian Youth Empowerment (SYE) Initiative
Syria Film Festival	SYRIAWISE
Syria Relief & Development (SRD)	Takaful Al Sham (TAS)

Task Force of Survivors of Chemical Attacks
in Syria

Tayif Humanitarian Organization

The Day After (TDA)

The Empower Peace Initiatives and Strategies
of Action Organization (EPISA)

The MENTOR Initiative

The Syria Campaign

The Syrian Legal Development Programme
(SLDP)

The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy
(TIMEP)

The White Helmets (Syria Civil Defense)

Together For AlJarniyah

Union of Medical Care and Relief
Organizations (UOSSM)

Union of Revolutionary Bureaus

Violet Organization

Warsheh Team

We Are With You Charity Team

Woman Support Association

Women Support Unit

Women's Support and Empowerment Center
in Idlib

Zat Initiative

Zenobia Association for Syrian Women

Zorna Development Organization