



[Syria's Crucial Pursuit of Sanctions Relief as It Responds to the List of Conditions Laid Out by the United States](#)

Syria's transitional government has recently responded to a list of conditions made by the Trump administration for U.S. sanctions relief – as it continues its important pursuit of the endeavor. The [conditions laid out](#) include the call for Syrian authorities to “adopt a policy of non-aggression to neighboring states, destroy weapons of mass destruction, assist in the recovery of U.S. citizens who have disappeared in Syria, and ensure the security and freedom of all Syrians,” among several other demands. In its response to the United States, Syria has outlined that it has acted on most of the conditions, and that the remaining ones require “mutual understandings” with Washington. Since the ousting of the Assad regime in December of last year, there have been widespread calls for the removal of sanctions against Syria. These measures, imposed by the United States and others, date back multiple decades and were instituted as punitive actions against the repressive Assad regime. While the sanctions were a means of hindering Assad, they also placed a great deal of strain on the Syrian people. Now, with the toppling of the dictatorial regime and the emergence of a new caretaker government, it is critical for both the prospect of a successful transition and the well-being of ordinary Syrian civilians that the opportunity is given for Syria to re-engage with the global market and build the country from the ground up following years of oppressive rule.

The European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom have lifted major sanctions on the new transitional Syrian government, and while the United States did lessen restrictions for 6 months back in January, these alone are simply not enough. It is estimated that over 90 percent of Syrians live below the poverty line, with more than half of the population suffering from substantial levels of food insecurity. Humanitarian aid is required by 16.5 million Syrians to help them meet their basic needs, not to mention that after 14 years of conflict, much of the nation's infrastructure is all but gone and public facilities like schools, roads, electrical grids, and hospitals are heavily damaged. In other words, the country is currently in dire economic straits. The only way for Syria to truly begin to recover is with the time and money that would be brought about by sanctions relief. Many of the sanctions that the United States has in place have to do with blocking investment and petroleum in Syria. There are also some sanctions that impose an arms embargo, the freezing of assets, and travel bans. Back in February, the EU lifted several sanctions on Syria in the hopes that it will promote an “inclusive political transition” that can lead to economic recovery and stability. If the United States were to remove the sanctions on human essentials and banking, the people of Syria will at least be given a real chance to recover.

In March, it was reported that the Trump administration had given Syria a list of conditions that Damascus must fulfill before sanctions can be removed. Aside from the litany of demands that the United States under Trump is asking for, they also [plan to](#) “observe the actions of the interim authorities and will determine (their) actions (in turn) based on a pattern of behavior.” This vagueness and timidity on the United States' part is simply not a viable solution for Syria. Asaad al-Shaibani, Syria's foreign minister, [explained](#) that “these sanctions force Syria to play the role of an aid dependent country rather than being a partner in global economic growth.” He also described how “these restrictive measures imposed against the previous regime prevent capital and expertise from entering our country while allowing illicit networks to flourish.” As al-Shaibani highlighted during his recent remarks to the United Nations Security Council, Damascus has addressed many of the U.S. conditions, while the others call for

mutual cooperation, grace, and leniency towards the new transitional government – all things that Syria and its citizens deserve in the aftermath of the deposing of a brutal regime.

There are a lot of unknowns when it comes to the caretaker government that make the situation complicated, however, many of the challenges that Syria faces are directly affected by the sanctions that are still in place – which were designed to punish the previous Assad regime and its cohorts for their human rights abuses, not the Syrian people as a whole. Infrastructure is lacking, and hospitals are destitute and baren of necessary equipment. While foreign companies are allowed to talk with Syrian officials, banks are still not allowed to process their transactions into Syria. All of this means that much of the country is at a standstill until funding and trade are accessible. To break this predicament, the United States should begin lifting sanctions that would get in the way of basic human rights issues. More specifically, it would be helpful for the Syrian people if sanctions were lifted on global financial systems, energy access, and trade of essential goods because if the current transitional government is to be seen as legitimate by the people, then economic growth and improvements are a necessity. Otherwise, instability will more than likely prevail instead.