



[The Importance of What the Lifting of U.S. Sanctions Would Mean for Syria](#)

The news of President Trump's pledge to lift longstanding crippling U.S. sanctions on Syria was met with warranted jubilation and optimism this week. The sanctions have been widely seen as a major obstacle to the country's prospects of economic recovery and political stability, and their removal would help bring vital investment into Syria as it emerges from decades of repressive rule under the deposed Assad regime. They have also resulted in troubling shortages of essential goods such as fuel and medical equipment, while hindering the ability of humanitarian agencies to receive funding and operate due to the ongoing restrictions regarding financial transactions, investment, and international trade. The lifting of U.S. sanctions would alleviate this problem and increase the flow of goods into Syria, providing the country and its nascent government – which is currently navigating a delicate political transition – greater access to the global economy and international financial systems at this critical juncture in time. All of this would create opportunities for economic and societal development, and allow Syria to attract the foreign investment needed in order to rebuild infrastructure devastated by years of conflict and oppression.

One of the most positive transformative impacts that the lifting of U.S. sanctions would have is on Syria's ability to reintegrate into the global financial system, and receive the necessary levels of humanitarian aid and reconstruction investment. While they were put in place to serve as punitive measures against the brutal Assad regime and its array of abuses, U.S. sanctions – as actions like this often do – ultimately ended up hurting ordinary Syrians the most. Experts estimate 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, while much of the nation's infrastructure including public facilities like schools, electrical grids, and hospitals are severely damaged and in need of repair. The opening of avenues for investment that the removal of U.S. sanctions provides would contribute greatly to improving these conditions. The Caesar Act sanctions implemented in 2019 have been especially harmful, as they allowed the United States to punish companies in other countries if they engaged in transactions with Syrian entities – all to the detriment of the Syrian population at large. Under the host of sanctions, Syrian businesses have been restricted from using the SWIFT international banking system, creating a situation where international businesses were reluctant to engage in transactions with Syrian banks – limiting their access to the global financial network even further. Additionally, paving the way for this economic growth and development would also increase the likelihood of a stable Syria with a successful political transition given that it would bolster the legitimacy of the new government in the eyes of the country's citizens and the world. To be viewed as worthy of support and enhance the prospects of stability, there needs to be a sense that societal circumstances are getting better.

On top of the aforementioned beneficial effects, the removal of U.S. sanctions would display a powerful vote of confidence in the new Syrian government as well. Due to the central role that the United States plays in the global financial system, the lifting of sanctions is highly consequential. Coming from a major global power like the United States, the move would hold a great deal of weight in influencing other entities to ease their restrictive policies and gives the transitional government in Syria an abundance of further legitimacy and opportunity for rebuilding and investment. For example, Qatar had previously expressed that it would provide millions in funding to help pay for public sector wages in Syria, but the process of implementing this had been delayed because of concern over

the potential impact of U.S. sanctions on this and whether or not the action would be exempt from them. Now, however, should Trump follow through on the pledge to remove Syrian sanctions, deals such as this could move forward too and open up the door for others like it. Trump's meeting with Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa earlier this week also sends a strong message and signals to the rest of the world that the isolation the country faced under previous despot Bashar al-Assad should end.

Trump's announcement of his intention to lift sanctions on Syria could eventually help facilitate the country's economic recovery following years of repression and conflict. However, even if implemented, this will take time, and the process for removing the sanctions is far from straightforward and clear. For now, there is at least a rejuvenated sense of hope that the road to recovery is within reach.