

Bashar Al-Assad: End Syria Sanctions Programmes!

We, the undersigned Syrian organisations, in Syria and abroad, call upon Bashar al-Assad to end the Syria sanctions programmes immediately. Assad holds the keys to ending the sanctions by engaging genuinely in the political process outlined by in the UN Security Council resolution 2254, ending human rights violations and submitting to the pillars of genuine justice.

In 2011, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation in Syria between 15 March – 15 July 2011, stated “The mission found a pattern of human rights violations constituting widespread or systematic attacks against the civilian population...”¹ Following such UN documented violations, in April 2011, Barack Obama signed Executive Orders (EO), starting with EO 13572 imposing specific sanctions against the Syrian government and its leadership, citing human rights violations and continuous violence against protestors. The EU followed suit and imposed its sanction in May 2011.² ***Your actions triggered Syria sanctions programmes.***

Instead of responding to calls by the UN for ending the sanctionable human rights abuses, you doubled down and increased the scale of violations against Syrians, attracting more sanctions. These violations were recorded in as recently as the report of the UN independent Commission of Inquiry (COI) in March 2020. The COI was created by the same body, the Human Rights Council, that created the mandate of the rapporteur on unilateral coercive measures. Additionally, the UN Security Council resolution 2254, adopted December 2015, endorsed a road map for peace process in Syria.³ The resolution was approved unanimously, including by Russia and China.

You refused to engage in any meaningful political process. In March 2014, the former UN-Arab League special envoy to Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, described the actions of the government in Damascus as slamming “the door to the Geneva negotiations for the foreseeable future.”⁴ Brahimi resigned from his position two month following that statement. Three years later, in December 2017, the former UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, who succeeded Brahimi, declared his disappointment in the lack of engagement from the Syrian government in the political process.

Sanctions programmes are accompanied by clear messaging of how they can be ended. The message is summarised in a statement made by the UK Ambassador to the Security Council, Jonathan Allen, on 20 January 2021 “the path to the removal of sanctions is clear. Rather than interfering with aid, bombing schools and hospitals and detaining and torturing its people, the Syrian regime must heed the calls of its population, engage seriously the Special Envoy Pedersen and the UN-led political process, and achieve a peaceful end to the conflict.”⁵ This is also stated in the statement of policy of the US Caesar Act of 2019 (Section 7402).⁶

The path to ending sanctions is clear. Under the government of Omar al-Bashir, Sudan suffered from decades of sanctions. Only following its political transformation and the ending of the human rights violation that sanctions were lifted. Sudan’s isolation finally ended.

Assad: It is in your power to end Syria sanctions programmes. Engage in the UN agreed political process, end human rights violations and submit to the pillars of genuine justice.

¹ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/countries/SY/Syria_Report_2011-08-17.pdf P. 20.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:121:0011:0014:EN:PDF>

³ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12171.doc.htm>

⁴ <https://www.dw.com/en/un-renews-syrian-peace-push-three-years-into-civil-war/a-17498542>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/ensuring-humanitarian-access-and-a-political-solution-to-end-crises-in-syria>

⁶ <https://www.congress.gov/116/crpt/hrpt333/CRPT-116hrpt333.pdf> P. 1110.

Signatories

Families from Freedom



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