

Trump Ends Major U.S. Sanctions on Syria in Landmark Policy Shift

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WASHINGTON – In a significant policy change, President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order ending many long-standing U.S. economic sanctions on Syria. The move fulfills a promise he made to Syria’s interim leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, and signals a new approach to dealing with the country’s long-running civil conflict.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt described the decision as “another promise made and promise kept,” saying it would help Syria rebuild and rejoin the global economy.

The executive order immediately lifts restrictions that have blocked Syria's access to international banks and trade for nearly 20 years. Treasury officials said the action will "end the country's isolation from the international financial system" and encourage new investment from the United States and neighboring countries.

The order also ends the national emergency declared by former President George W. Bush in 2004 over Syria's occupation of Lebanon and efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction. Five other executive orders related to Syria's military and weapons programs have been removed as well.

However, not all sanctions are gone. Penalties against ousted President Bashar Assad, his family, and senior officials accused of war crimes, corruption, and human rights abuses remain in effect. The strong sanctions under the Caesar Act, which target anyone who supports Syria's military or intelligence services, also remain. While the administration has issued temporary waivers, only Congress has the power to permanently repeal the Caesar Act.

In addition, the United States still classifies Syria as a state sponsor of terrorism, and al-Sharaa's group is designated a foreign terrorist organization. A State Department official said those designations are under review but did not provide a timeline for possible changes.

The European Union announced it would also lift almost all of its remaining sanctions on Syria to encourage reconstruction and trade.

While the decision drew support from some allies who see it as a path toward stability, human rights organizations warned it could weaken efforts to hold former Syrian leaders accountable for atrocities committed during the war.

Despite concerns, the news brought a wave of optimism in Damascus and other cities, where Syrians hope the change will ease years of economic hardship. Following the announcement, the Syrian pound quickly strengthened against the dollar, highlighting the potential impact of the policy shift.

Leavitt said the administration believes this step will "open a new chapter" in U.S.-Syria relations.