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Partial Victory for Syrians: U.S. General License Marks Progress but Leaves Key Needs Unmet

Washington, D.C. – January 6, 2025 The American Coalition for Syria (ACS) welcomes the issuance of [General License \(GL\) No. 24](#) by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) in the U.S. Treasury, which seeks to ensure that sanctions do not impede essential governance-related services in Syria following the fall of the Assad regime. GL 24 authorizes transactions incidental to personal remittances sent to Syria and energy sales to or within Syria and certain transactions with governing institutions, such as for customs, taxes, permits, or fees, or to provide or pay for essential services and public employees' salaries. This authorization lasts only six months, as GL 24 will expire on July 7, 2025, unless extended.

Today's license builds on existing general licenses in Syria, including those that authorize certain NGO activities. Guidance issued by OFAC clarifies, for example, that transactions in support of transitional justice, accountability, democracy building, and civic participation activities in Syria are authorized. However, while GL 24 represents a step in the right direction, it falls short of addressing the critical humanitarian and economic crisis in Syria and the comprehensive needs of Syrians.

"This new general license is a necessary acknowledgment of the need for policies that allow Syrians to rebuild their communities and lives. However, it is not enough. Serious sanctions tied to the Assad regime's legacy remain in place, hurting the very people they were designed to protect," said Sameer Saboungi, attorney and policy officer at ACS.

Issuance of GL 24 follows ACS's meeting with Secretary of State Antony Blinken last Friday, during which the Coalition advocated for a broad, inclusive general license to ease the challenges faced by Syrians in rebuilding their communities. ACS's initial request called for a [two-year license](#) allowing commercial and financial transactions in Syria that would include:

- **Humanitarian operations:** Authorization of transactions in support of a broader set of activities than those already authorized in current sanctions regulations to address the comprehensive needs of Syrians.
- **De-mining action:** Authorization of transactions necessary for efforts to clear unexploded mines.
- **Early recovery activities:** Authorization of infrastructure repairs and essential services, including commercial and energy-related projects that would benefit the Syrian people directly.
- **Limited investments for MSMEs:** Support for micro, small, and medium enterprises as economic recovery and stability engines.

ACS is also calling for a broad export license exception to be issued by the Department of Commerce to remove restrictions against the export of U.S.-origin goods to Syria to facilitate access to the equipment

necessary for humanitarian aid delivery, early recovery, and reconstruction. Additionally, ACS is calling for the revocation of Executive Order 13582 that prevents new investments in Syria by U.S. persons, thus holding back the affluent Syrian American diaspora from contributing to their motherland's recovery, as well as the suspension of Caesar Act sanctions, and the eventual rollback of the comprehensive sanctions regime against Syria.

"The current license is a step in the right direction, but we will continue advocating until these additional measures are adopted. The road to stability and prosperity in Syria demands a reconsideration of comprehensive sanctions policies to empower Syrians fully. This is a multi-year process that will require efforts from future administrations to fully unwind the sanctions regime associated with Assad's atrocities and enable a stable, democratic, and thriving Syria," added Sabounji.

Among the many layers of sanctions still in effect are those tied to Syria's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism and export controls and asset freezes related to the Assad regime's military occupation of Lebanon, use of chemical weapons, and human rights abuses. These measures continue to hinder Syria's ability to recover and rebuild after the fall of the Assad regime, leaving ordinary Syrians to bear the brunt of these policies.

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The American Coalition for Syria is a coalition of specialized, multi-faith, US-based organizations that support a principled US policy based on democratic reform, human rights, accountability, and women's empowerment in Syria.

For more information about ACS, please visit <https://acsyria.org/about-us>.