



The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

February 14, 2022

Dear Mr. President,

In the wake of Monday's devastating earthquakes in southern Turkey and northern Syria, we urge you, once again, to lift the economic sanctions on Syria imposed by you and your predecessors.

In doing so, we add our voice to a growing number of others who have called on you to do the same, including Pope Francis, the World Council of Churches, the Middle East Council of Churches, the UN Special Rapporteur for Unilateral Coercive Measures, Caritas International, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and the patriarchs of the Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Syriac Orthodox churches and the heads of the other churches in Syria.

At the beginning of your presidency two years ago, more than 90 academics, human rights activists, diplomats, politicians and religious leaders signed an open letter to you, warning you of the humanitarian catastrophe being caused by the U.S. and its allies' unilateral sectoral sanctions against Syria, and asking you to end these sanctions.

You chose instead to continue the sanctions, albeit with some modifications.

Since that time, according to the World Food Program and the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs:

- Food prices in Syria have increased almost twelve-fold, leaving 70% of the population food insecure or at risk of becoming food insecure.
- The number of severely food insecure people in Syria has nearly doubled, from 1.3 million to 2.5 million.
- The number of people in need of humanitarian aid increased from 13.4 million to 15.3 million.
- 85% of Syrian households are unable to meet basic needs, compared to 65% when you became president.

All of this was before the earthquakes.

Officially, your sanctions against Syria provide for humanitarian exemptions, including the blanket 180-day exemption for “earthquake relief” the Treasury Department issued on February 9. But these exemptions count for little when broad sectoral sanctions deprive Syrians of the fuel necessary to deliver food and generate electricity, prevent them from importing generators, pipes, fertilizer, software for medical equipment, and other essential goods, and actively deter financial institutions from having any dealings with Syrians. They also mean little against the secondary sanctions the Caesar Act threatens against any person or company, anywhere in the world, who participates in “reconstruction.”

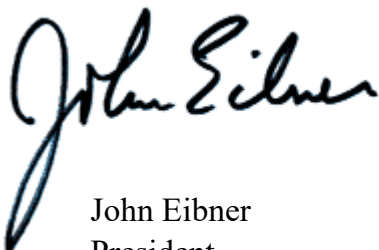
In government-held Syria, the earthquakes revealed the lack of capacity that the sanctions have caused. In just a few hours, thousands of people died and tens of thousands were left homeless in cities where there was no functioning healthcare system, little electricity, and little fuel to run digging equipment and ambulances.

We will never know how many lives were lost that might have been saved, had Syria not been subjected to this comprehensive sanctions regime. What we do know is that the humanitarian crisis in Syria has never been greater, and the need for unhindered aid, economic activity, and reconstruction has never been more urgent.

The United States now has an opportunity to show true leadership in the Middle East. We urge you to lift the sectoral and secondary sanctions on Syria, and to send direct aid to all areas of Turkey and Syria affected by the earthquake, including reconstruction aid.

We remain convinced that it is possible to pursue the U.S.’s legitimate interests in Syria – including holding those who commit atrocities to account – without waging economic warfare on the entire population.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Eibner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John Eibner
President
Christian Solidarity International