

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



DIRECTORATE Security Policy and Conflict prevention

Sanctions Policy
Head of Division

Brussels, 19.12.2016

Subject: PETITION

Dear Petitioners,

The European Union (EU) has taken note of your support for the appeal of the three patriarchs of Syria regarding international sanctions on Syria and the humanitarian situation in Syria that you submitted to our attention.

The EU restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria are not aimed at the civilian population. They are a response to the repression by the Syrian regime of the civilian population in Syria. They are part of a larger comprehensive approach to a lasting solution to the conflict in Syria, in which the EU fully takes part. The EU is working hard for the return to the cessation of hostilities, first in Aleppo then in the entire country, to alleviate the Syrian people's tremendous suffering and to try to convince all involved parties to return to the negotiation table in Geneva. In the current tragic context, we launched an emergency humanitarian initiative on Aleppo and besieged areas on 2 October.

EU restrictive measures in Syria are imposed under Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP and Council Regulation (EU) No 36/2012, as published in the Official Journal of the EU. They are comprised of sectoral and individual measures targeting those responsible for the violent repression of the civilian population in Syria, those who benefit from or support the regime and those associated with them.

EU restrictive measures do not apply to key sectors of the Syrian economy such as food and medicine and include exemptions to avoid the negative effect of sanctions on the civilian population, by creating the possibility for operators to resort to the humanitarian exception.

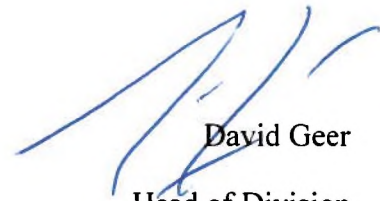
The EU keeps the impact of restrictive measures under constant review and regularly considers options to mitigate any unintended consequences. For example, on the 6th December the Council adopted measures to allow certain NGO's to purchase fuel for

humanitarian purposes and clarified the scope of licenses in order to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance on the ground.

Any decision to amend the sanctions must be agreed by unanimity by the (28) Member States in the Council, if the Council deems that its objectives have not been met.

At the same time the EU continues to provide significant humanitarian assistance, with a humanitarian aid budget amounting thus far to €1.4 billion from the European Commission, and to €3.5 billion from the EU Member States to address the needs of the Syrian population in Syria and beyond.

You can rest assured that the EU is fully committed to contributing to and supporting all efforts to bring an end to the suffering of the Syrian people, from all ethnic and religious backgrounds, and to finding a lasting solution that will end this conflict, as recalled in the Council Conclusions on Syria of 17 October 2016 and in the European Council Conclusions of 20-21 October 2016.



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