Council of the European Union — Press release

Earthquake in Türkiye and Syria: EU amends restrictive measures in place regarding Syria to facilitate the speedy delivery of humanitarian aid

2023-02-23

EU sanctions in place regarding Syria target the Assad regime and its supporters, as well as sectors of the economy from which the regime was making profit. The sanctions regime does not prohibit the export of food, medicines or medical equipment by the EU to Syria, and does not target Syria's healthcare system. The sanctions regime includes a wide-ranging humanitarian exception to ensure the continued provision of humanitarian assistance to any part of the country.

The Council remains deeply concerned about the situation in Syria, where the conflict is far from over and remains a source of suffering and instability. The tragic earthquake of 6 February 2023 further increases the suffering of the Syrian population.

The EU and its member states are leading donors of humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflict in Syria. Since 2011, the total amount of humanitarian funding from the European Union and its member states for the Syria crisis (Syria plus neighbouring countries) is €27.4 billion. Since the devastating earthquakes, the EU and its member states have already provided €5.5 million to address the most urgent needs, in additional humanitarian aid to all affected areas.

In view of the gravity of the humanitarian crisis in Syria exacerbated by the earthquake, the Council decided today to adopt an additional humanitarian amendment to further facilitate the speedy delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The amendment applies for a period of six months.

With this amendment, the EU has waived the need for humanitarian organisations to seek prior permission from EU member states national competent authorities to make transfers or provide goods and services intended for humanitarian purposes to listed persons and entities.

Background

In its conclusions of 9 February 2023, the European Council extended its deepest condolences to the victims of the tragic earthquake of 6 February 2023 and expressed its

solidarity with the people of Türkiye and Syria. The EU reaffirmed its readiness to provide further assistance to alleviate the suffering in all affected regions. It called on all to ensure humanitarian access to the victims of the earthquake in Syria irrespective of where they are and called the humanitarian community, under the auspices of the United Nations, to ensure the speedy delivery of aid.

On the day of the earthquake, the EU activated the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) to coordinate EU support measures in response to the earthquake, while on 8 and 9 February 2023 respectively, the Syrian authorities and the World Food Programme in Syria requested to activate the EU civil protection mechanism.

Ten EU countries have already offered tents, sleeping bags, mattresses, beds, food items and winter clothing. In addition, the EU has so far provided €3.5 million in humanitarian assistance to cover the most urgent needs, such as cash for shelter and non-food items, water and sanitation, health, and search and rescue.

The EU’s sanctions regime was introduced in 2011 in response to the violent repression of the Syrian population by the Syrian regime and those linked to it and includes 291 persons targeted by both an assets freeze and a travel ban, and 70 entities subject to an assets freeze.

Official journal of the EU (with amended documents)

Earthquake in Türkiye and Syria: Council presidency triggers activation of IPCR (press release, 6 February 2023)

Earthquake: EU support for Türkiye and Syria (background information)

Syria: EU response to the crisis (background information)

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