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Foreign Minister Baerbock prior to her departure for Damascus

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Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock issued the following statement today (20 March 2025) prior to her onward journey to Damascus:

More than three months after the end of the Assad dictatorship, the people in Syria long for a fresh start and genuine prospects for rebuilding their lives in their country. Their hopes and expectations for a first spring in freedom and full of opportunities are as pressing as their concerns. While, for example, food prices across the country have fallen dramatically, 90 percent of the population still live below the poverty line. Many simply lack the most basic essentials, such as food, healthcare, electricity, schooling and employment. What is more, many of them fear that life in Syria will, also in the future, not be safe for all Syrians.

The horrific outbreaks of violence two weeks ago destroyed a huge amount of trust. The targeted killing of civilians is a terrible crime. The transitional government must have control over the actions of the factions within its own ranks and hold those responsible to account. In order for reconciliation to succeed, a functioning transitional justice system and the prosecution of Assad’s crimes are now vital. Experienced international organisations can provide support to this end.

The mammoth task facing the Syrian transitional government under Ahmed al-Sharaa is to bring peace to the country, to continue to take steps to root out the seeds of extremism and terrorism, to forge ahead with the political transition and to swiftly offer the people economic prospects.

It is clear that this path is long and difficult, full of obstacles and certainly also winding. But it is also clear that we want to support the Syrian people together with our European partners and the United Nations – for example, with 300 million euro for humanitarian assistance and access to education and psychosocial support, as Germany announced at the Brussels conference on Syria just last Monday. Or with the gradual easing of sanctions with which we as the

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have taken a first important step towards the reconstruction of the country.

With my trip today, I am therefore reiterating my clear message to the Syrian people: a political reset between Europe and Syria, between Germany and Syria, is possible. However, this is also bound up with the clear expectation that freedom, security and opportunities in Syria are there for everyone – women and men and members of all ethnic groups and religions. The historic agreement with the Kurds in the northeast shows that a united Syria is within reach. A similar approach to other population groups is needed so that the Druze, Alawites, Christians and others can also feel that they are part of a new Syria.

Ultimately, it is the Syrians themselves who will determine their country’s future with their own sovereign decision. The influence of foreign actors has brought nothing but chaos to Syria in the past. Attacks on Syrian territory are jeopardising the country’s stability even today. All sides are called upon to exercise maximum military restraint and to refrain from undermining the intra-Syrian reconciliation process.

This reconciliation must now be worked towards with all due urgency so that the legitimate hopes and expectations of so many people can become a reality – a life in freedom and security and with economic prospects in their own country.

Background information:

Foreign Minister Baerbock is travelling to Damascus this morning for a one-day visit. This is her second trip to Syria. She last visited the region on 3 January 2025 together with her French counterpart Noël Barrot on behalf of the European Union. Foreign Minister Baerbock will, among other things, hold talks with interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and meet representatives of Syrian civil society. The Foreign Minister will be accompanied on her trip by Armin Laschet, Member of the German Bundestag and its Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Overview "Newsroom"

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