

FACT SHEET ON SYRIA

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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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The United States has taken a series of steps and actions to work toward putting an end to the Syrian government's violence, arrests, and torture, supporting the Syrian people's universal rights, and pushing for a democratic transition.

Executive Orders, Sanctions, and other Financial Actions

Syria has been designated a State Sponsor of Terrorism since December 1979. An additional layer of sanctions was added in May 2004 with the issuance of Executive Order 13338, which implemented the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 and imposed additional measures pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. Subsequent Executive orders have imposed additional sanctions targeting, among others, the President of Syria.

Since the beginning of Syrian unrest, we have intensely pursued targeted financial measures to increase pressure on the Syrian regime. We have specifically targeted those responsible for human rights abuses, senior officials of the Syrian government, and Syrian businessmen linked to the Syrian regime. Our goal is to put an immediate stop to the Syrian government's use of violence against civilians and its policies of mass arrests and torture, and to pressure the Syrian regime to allow for a democratic transition as per the demands of the Syrian people. Our actions to date include:

- Today, President Obama signed a new Executive Order taking additional steps pursuant to the national emergency with respect to Syria that blocks the property of the Syrian government, bans U.S. persons from new investments in or exporting services to Syria, and bans U.S. imports of, and other transactions or dealings in, Syrian-origin petroleum or petroleum products. This is the strongest financial action we have taken against the Syrian regime thus far. This Executive Order is consistent with the remaining sanctions provisions of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act.
- Since the unrest began in mid-March, we have designated 32 Syrian and Iranian individuals and entities, including Syrian businessmen and their companies. These actions freeze the assets of and prohibit all U.S. persons from doing business with the identified individual or entity, thereby isolating them from the U.S. financial system.

- On August 10, pursuant to E.O. 13382, the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated the Commercial Bank of Syria for its involvement in proliferation activities, and also designated its subsidiary, Syrian-Lebanese Commercial Bank. The Commercial Bank of Syria was identified by the Treasury Department as a financial institution of primary money laundering concern in 2004 and, pursuant to Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act, has been subject since 2006 to a final rule prohibiting U.S. financial institutions from maintaining correspondent accounts for the Commercial Bank of Syria.
- On July 8, the Treasury Department issued a warning to U.S. financial institutions alerting them to the potential for increased illicit financial activities involving accounts held by or on behalf of senior political figures in Syria, as a result of the unrest in Syria.
- On May 18, President Obama signed Executive Order 13573 targeting senior Syrian government officials due to their government's continuing escalation of violence against the Syrian people. President Assad and six other regime officials were listed in the Annex to this Order.
- On May 18, the Department of Commerce suspended specific licenses related to Syrian Air's Boeing 747 aircraft.
- On April 29, President Obama signed Executive Order 13572 imposing sanctions on certain individuals and entities listed in the Annex to the Order and providing the authority to designate persons responsible for human rights abuses in Syria, including those related to repressing the Syrian people. Notably, President Assad's brother Maher al-Asad and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) were listed in the Annex to this Order.
- On April 29, the Department of Commerce revoked commercial export licenses pertaining to Syrian official VIP aircraft.

Actions at the United Nations and Other Diplomatic Efforts

The United States has led an international effort at the United Nations (UN) to push for a UN Security Council Resolution that would increase pressure on the Syrian government to stop its brutal repression of the Syrian people. Additional actions taken include:

- On August 3, with strong U.S. leadership, the UN Security Council adopted by consensus a Presidential Statement condemning the Syrian government's widespread human rights abuses and use of force against civilians.
- The United States worked with allies to ensure that, after a protracted diplomatic struggle and in the face of significant opposition from the Syrian regime and other non-democratic governments, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) granted UN accreditation on July 25 to the Syrian non-governmental organization the Center for Media and Freedom of Expression. This was the first Syrian NGO ever to receive ECOSOC accreditation, which allows it to attend and take part in UN events.

- On July 22, the State Department imposed travel restrictions on the Syrian Embassy in Washington, D.C., in response to Syrian efforts to restrict the movement of U.S. diplomats in Damascus. Syrian diplomats now must request permission prior to leaving Washington, D.C.
- On June 15 in Geneva, the United States and Canada drafted a statement signed by 54 UN member states that addressed the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria and urged the Syrian government to allow access to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' fact finding mission.
- The United States led the call for a Special Session on Syria at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. On April 29, the Human Rights Council passed a strong resolution condemning the Syrian government and calling for an investigation by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. To date, Syria has refused access to the High Commissioner's investigative team, despite calls from the Security Council and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.
- The United States actively lobbied to prevent Syria from being elected to the UN Human Rights Council. Our lobbying efforts against Syria's offensive campaign resulted in Syria withdrawing its candidacy on May 11.