

# Navigating the Syria Sanctions Conundrum

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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**Washington should act quickly to facilitate transactions for key sectors such as electricity, food, and rubble removal, lest public discontent lead to widespread protests and possibly government collapse.**

America's sanctions policy for Syria is broken, but the answer is not to pretend existing licenses and waivers are working or to summarily terminate all sanctions. Instead, Washington should quickly take steps to allow financial transactions for key sectors such as electricity, food, and rubble removal, and begin to assess the conditions under which sanctions could be rolled back more broadly. The Syrian people are desperate, and within weeks, they could take to the streets to protest the country's dire conditions, possibly leading to collapse for the interim government, led by Ahmed al-Sharaa. This would be in no one's interest, including America's, in large part because it could allow Iran and the Islamic State to reassert themselves in Syria and across the region.

In this Policy Note, former Treasury official Matthew Levitt explains how the United States can facilitate urgently needed investment in Syria by extending sanctions waivers, opening up a banking channel, and considering steps like delisting Hayat Tahrir al-Sham as a foreign terrorist organization. ❖

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