

## **The Middle East Council of Churches calls on Biden to remove US sanctions on Syria**



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط  
The Middle East Council of Churches

### **The Middle East Council of Churches, Churches Leaders and elites in a Letter to President Biden: “USA Interests Can Be Pursued Without Collectively Punishing the Syrian People”**

Once again, in defense of human rights and human dignity, the Middle East Council of Churches renewed its call for the lift of the economic sanctions imposed on the Syrian people, violating their right to live in dignity and anticipating an unprecedented humanitarian disaster in the region.

In a direct and urgent call to end the restrictions on the Syrian people, Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches Dr. Michel Abs, signed a letter that held the signatures of many Middle Eastern Churches Leaders, including Their Beatitudes Syriac Catholic Patriarch Ignatius III Younan, Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch Youssef Absi, Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Ephrem II as well as a number of religious, political and social leaders. The letter was addressed to the new American President Joe Biden. The letter urged the 46th President of the

United States for an immediate response to the severe humanitarian crisis in Syria. After congratulating him on his inauguration, they call on him to work towards lifting the economic sanctions the Syrian people have been struggling with for years, along with difficult life conditions and daily worsening economic, social and health crises, especially with the Coronavirus and its catastrophic repercussions.

The letter was based on the report of UN expert Alina Dohan, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Unilateral Coercive Measures and their negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights, issued on December 29, 2020 in Geneva.

In the report she states: “The violence and conflict affected terribly the Syrian people’s ability to enjoy their basic rights, massively destroying homes, medical units and other facilities. The broad scope of the US Penal Code coming into force last June targets any foreigner who helps in the reconstruction process, or even employees of foreign companies and humanitarian agencies helping rebuild Syria.” She expressed her concern that imposed sanctions would exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation in Syria, especially in the course of Covid-19 pandemic, exposing Syrian people to the risks of major human rights violations.

The letter stated: “Ten years ago, Syria was a breadbasket for the region. Today it is on the verge of not just hunger, but of starvation, according to the World Food Program (WFP).” It emphasized on the fact that “millions of hard-pressed Syrians go to bed hungry and cold,” stressing that the unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States increase the economic plight of the Syrian people.

Authors of the letter then proceeded by calling on President Biden to urgently help Syrians to alleviate a humanitarian crisis threatening the Middle East and the world with a new wave of instability by implementing the UN Special Rapporteur’s recommendation.

The letter concluded: “We believe that the legitimate national interests of the United States can be pursued without collectively punishing the Syrian people by means of economic sanctions.”