EU's response to Syria's new government

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Headline

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Overall Summary (approx 120 characters, incl spaces → serves as social media caption & summary on the website)

This brief analyzes the European Union's ongoing interactions with the new Syrian regime since the overthrow of Assad's government.

One-Sentence Summary of Each Event You Report On (Bullet points OR full sentences, has to be consistent within one post. Will be posted on 2nd slide of the Instagram post)

Article

Since December 8th, 2024, the European Union (EU) has been working to determine how its relations with the new Syrian government will evolve. Among all asylum seekers in the EU, Syrians were the largest group of migrants in 2023, a trend that continues since 2013. With Germany among the top host countries of Syrians, the future of Syria is of utmost importance for Europe. At the same time, the EU follows strict economic sanctions on Syria since May 2011, which were last extended until June 2025. These two topics are thus at the center of current discussions on EU-Syria relations.

As anti-immigration sentiments rose in European politics, many states halted Syrian asylum seekers' application procedures. EU countries are already discussing the return of some of their Syrian residents. However, according to the UNHCR, the situation in Syria is too unpredictable to stop asylum eligibility and the risk of relapse into conflict remains in light of Syria's currently fragmented governance. European states are thus hoping for a more stable situation in Syria and aim to avoid any new wave of refugees due to conflict escalation.

Meanwhile, Syria is left with a shattered economy and millions of displaced people. Estimates show that around 90% of Syria's population live in poverty, while the country needs approximately 400 billion USD to rebuild itself. This cost cannot be covered solely by the current supporters of the new regime. Syria ultimately needs the help of other international powers, especially the EU. While the Union provides humanitarian aid to Syria, a sustainable recovery necessitates the loosening of currently imposed sanctions to enable meaningful economic opportunities.

The EU's foreign policy towards the new Syrian government links the migration concerns of the former and the economic concerns of the latter through conditionality. Statements by both the EU and its member-states underscore the importance of human rights, notably minority and women's rights, in exchange for the restoration of economic relations. Several European countries have submitted a proposal to loosen economic sanctions on Syria, which will be formally discussed on January 27th. The countries expect to lift some of their sanctions towards Syria, however, this would be a controlled and reversible lift, as EU countries will assess whether the new regime practices good governance. This conditionality in current EU-Syria relations marks the Union's ultimate desire for more stability and safety in Syria and the prevention of future migration flows.

The Syrian leader Ahmad Al Sharaa concluded various meetings where he made reassuring statements on the rule of law in the country. This shows the new government's desire to soothe both domestic and international concerns. Nevertheless, Syria plans to write a new constitution, raising worries about whether these statements will be reflected in the legal system.

As the situation in Syria evolves rapidly, EU countries are vigilant. Member states wait for tangible steps towards human rights protection before moving forward with diplomatic and economic relations. While Syria appears willing to comply with Western demands, how this will unfold in practice remains uncertain.