



Geneva, 15 July 2022

The Honourable **Joseph R. Biden**  
President of the United States of America  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Via email: [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

**Re: Syria Sanctions**

Mr President,

Greetings from the World Council of Churches (WCC) and from the ACT Alliance in Geneva, Switzerland. We pray that God will continue to grant you wisdom and strength for the heavy responsibilities you carry as President of the United States of America.

On 8-12 July 2022, a delegation from WCC and ACT Alliance visited Syria to express solidarity with the Syrian people as they continue to struggle for lives in safety and dignity in the midst of the ongoing impacts of a bloody and brutal conflict. We met with religious leaders and communities from all Christian denominations (Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant) and from other faiths, as well as ordinary people and communities facing the challenges caused by the war and the impact of political decisions that undermine human dignity.

We heard from children, women and elderly people the challenges they have faced and continue to face in this context. After 11 years of war, catastrophic levels of destruction have left most people remaining in Syria in dire poverty, not to mention the millions that were displaced and forced to seek refuge in other countries. Syrian people are living in conditions that threaten their livelihoods and lives, and the future of their communities.

As the ecumenical movement, we are providing humanitarian and spiritual support to Syrians in facing these challenges. But we are seeing a continuing outflow of young people migrating to look for a better future abroad, a tide that improved conditions in the country could help turn around. Churches and ACT members in Syria have developed institutions that specialize in humanitarian relief and development, and that serve all people without discrimination. In addition to schools, medical and health facilities, and community centres, psycho-social services are provided, and small businesses supported.

However, the humanitarian relief and development efforts are insufficient to counterbalance the widespread suffering caused by international sanctions. Though intended to target those in power, such sanctions are in fact having an adverse effect on the basic livelihoods and humanitarian situation of the Syrian population as a whole, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, and impeding our capacity to respond to their needs.

We understand that international sanctions are political and economic instruments against states, organizations and individuals in order to promote respect for international law and human rights, and to respond to threats to international peace and security. However, based on the testimonies we have heard and our own observations, we have not seen evidence of the current sanctions achieving these purposes, but rather of them doing harm to the Syrian people. The sanctions are severely limiting medicines, building supplies, and other necessities from reaching Syrian civilians, especially the poorest and most marginalized groups, without apparently affecting politicians and those in power.

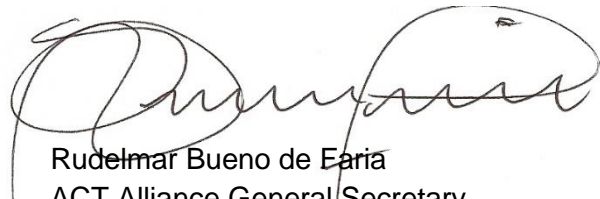
Mr President, as expressed on another occasion, there is a time to tear down and a time to build, there is a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. We believe that there must be other ways to address the purposes for which the current sanctions against Syria were imposed, without affecting ordinary people who simply want to live in dignity and security.

We therefore appeal to you to find ways in which the intended purposes of these sanctions can be pursued without such harm being inflicted on ordinary Syrians, and so that their lives, wellbeing and human dignity are not sacrificed to political purposes.

Yours respectfully,



Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucă  
WCC Acting General Secretary



Rudelmar Bueno de Earia  
ACT Alliance General Secretary