

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 2935

To prohibit any official action to recognize or normalize relations with any Government of Syria that is led by Bashar al-Assad.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 27 (legislative day, SEPTEMBER 22), 2023

Mr. RISCH (for himself and Mr. RUBIO) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## A BILL

To prohibit any official action to recognize or normalize relations with any Government of Syria that is led by Bashar al-Assad.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Assad Regime Anti-  
5 Normalization Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. MODIFICATIONS TO THE CAESAR SYRIA CIVILIAN**  
7 **PROTECTION ACT.**

8 (a) CAESAR SYRIA CIVILIAN PROTECTION ACT.—  
9 Section 7412 of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act  
10 of 2019 (title LXXIV of the National Defense Authoriza-

1 tion Act for Fiscal Year 2020; 22 U.S.C. 8791 note) is  
2 amended—

3 (1) in subsection (a)—

4 (A) in paragraph (1), by striking “the  
5 President shall impose” and all that follows  
6 through the end of the paragraph and inserting  
7 “the President—

8 “(A) shall impose the sanctions described  
9 in subsection (b) with respect to a foreign per-  
10 son that the President determines—

11 “(i) knowingly engages, on or after  
12 such date of enactment, in an activity de-  
13 scribed in paragraph (2);

14 “(ii) is an adult family member of a  
15 foreign person described in clause (i), un-  
16 less the President determines there is clear  
17 and convincing evidence that such adult  
18 family member has disassociated them-  
19 selves from the foreign person described in  
20 such clause and has no history of helping  
21 such foreign person conceal assets; or

22 “(iii) is owned or controlled by a for-  
23 eign person described in clause (i) or (ii);  
24 and

1           “(B) may impose the sanctions described  
2           in subsection (b) with respect to a foreign per-  
3           son that the President determines knowingly  
4           provides, on or after such date of enactment,  
5           significant financial, material, or technological  
6           support to a foreign person engaging in an ac-  
7           tivity described in any of subparagraphs (B)  
8           through (H) of paragraph (2);”.

9           (B) in paragraph (2)—

10           (i) in subparagraph (A)—

11           (I) by amending clause (i) to  
12           read as follows:

13           “(i) the Government of Syria (includ-  
14           ing any entity owned or controlled by the  
15           Government of Syria), a senior political  
16           figure of the Government of Syria, a mem-  
17           ber of the People’s Assembly of Syria, or  
18           a senior foreign political figure (as such  
19           term is defined in section 101.605 of title  
20           31, Code of Federal Regulations) of the  
21           Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party of Syria, in-  
22           cluding any such senior foreign political  
23           figure who is—

24           “(I) a member of the Central  
25           Command, Central Committee, or Au-

1 diting and Inspection Committee of  
2 such Party; or

3 “(II) a leader of a local branch of  
4 such Party;”;

5 (II) in clause (ii), by striking  
6 “or” at the end;

7 (III) in clause (iii), by adding  
8 “or” after the semicolon; and

9 (IV) by adding at the end the fol-  
10 lowing:

11 “(iv) Syria Arab Airlines, Cham  
12 Wings, or any foreign person owned or  
13 controlled by Syria Arab Airlines or Cham  
14 Wings;”;

15 (ii) by amending subparagraph (C) to  
16 read as follows:

17 “(C) knowingly sells or provides aircraft or  
18 spare aircraft parts—

19 “(i) to the Government of Syria; or

20 “(ii) for or on behalf of the Govern-  
21 ment of Syria to any foreign person oper-  
22 ating in an area directly or indirectly con-  
23 trolled by the Government of Syria or for-  
24 eign forces associated with the Government  
25 of Syria;”;

1 (iii) in subparagraph (D), by striking  
2 “or” at the end;

3 (iv) in subparagraph (E)—

4 (I) by striking “construction or  
5 engineering services” and inserting  
6 “construction, engineering, or com-  
7 mercial financial services”; and

8 (II) by striking the period at the  
9 end and inserting a semicolon; and

10 (v) by adding at the end the following:

11 “(F) purposefully engages in or directs—

12 “(i) the diversion of goods (including  
13 agricultural commodities, food, medicine,  
14 and medical devices), or any international  
15 humanitarian assistance, intended for the  
16 people of Syria; or

17 “(ii) the dealing in proceeds from the  
18 sale or resale of such diverted goods or  
19 international humanitarian assistance, as  
20 the case may be;

21 “(G) knowingly (directly or indirectly) en-  
22 gages in or attempts to engage in, the seizure,  
23 confiscation, theft, or expropriation for personal  
24 gain or political purposes of property, including

1 real property, in Syria or owned by a citizen of  
2 Syria;

3 “(H) knowingly (directly or indirectly) en-  
4 gages in or attempts to engage in a transaction  
5 or transactions for or with such seized, con-  
6 fiscated, stolen, or expropriated property de-  
7 scribed in subparagraph (G); or

8 “(I) knowingly provides significant finan-  
9 cial, material, or technological support to a for-  
10 eign person engaging in any activity described  
11 in subparagraph (A).”; and

12 (C) by adding at the end the following:

13 “(4) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

14 “(A) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COM-  
15 MITTEES.—The term ‘appropriate congressional  
16 committees’ means—

17 “(i) the Committee on Foreign Rela-  
18 tions of the Senate;

19 “(ii) the Committee on Banking,  
20 Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate;

21 “(iii) the Committee on Foreign Af-  
22 fairs of the House of Representatives; and

23 “(iv) the Committee on Financial  
24 Services of the House of Representatives.

1           “(B) COMMERCIAL FINANCIAL SERV-  
2 ICES.—The term ‘commercial financial services’  
3 means any transaction between the Government  
4 of Syria and a foreign bank or foreign financial  
5 institution operating in an area under the con-  
6 trol of the Government of Syria that has a valu-  
7 ation of more than \$5,000,000.

8           “(C) FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.—The term  
9 ‘financial institution’ means a financial institu-  
10 tion specified in any of subparagraphs (A)  
11 through (K), (M), (N), (P), (R), (T), (Y), or  
12 (Z) of section 5312(a)(2) of title 31, United  
13 States Code.

14           “(D) SIGNIFICANT TRANSACTION.—The  
15 term “‘significant transaction’” includes any  
16 natural gas, electricity, or other energy-related  
17 transaction.

18           “(E) TRANSACTION.—In making a deter-  
19 mination under subparagraph (a)(2)(A), the  
20 term ‘transaction’ includes in-kind trans-  
21 actions.”; and

22           (2) by adding at the end the following:

23           “(c) CONGRESSIONAL REQUESTS.—Not later than  
24 120 days after receiving a request from the chairman and  
25 ranking member of 1 of the appropriate congressional

1 committees with respect to whether a foreign person know-  
2 ingly engages in an activity described in subsection (a)(2)  
3 the President shall—

4 “(1) make the determination specified in sub-  
5 section (a)(1) with respect to such foreign person;  
6 and

7 “(2) submit, to the chairman and ranking mem-  
8 ber who submitted the request, a report with respect  
9 to such determination that includes a statement ex-  
10 plaining whether the President has imposed or in-  
11 tends to impose the sanctions described in sub-  
12 section (b) with respect to such foreign person.”.

13 (b) EXTENSION OF SUNSET.—Section 7438 of the  
14 Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 (22 U.S.C.  
15 8791 note), is amended by striking “the date that is 5  
16 years after the date of the enactment of this Act” and  
17 inserting “December 31, 2032”.

18 (c) DETERMINATIONS WITH RESPECT TO SYRIA  
19 TRUST FOR DEVELOPMENT.—

20 (1) DEFINED TERM.—In this subsection, the  
21 term “appropriate congressional committees”  
22 means—

23 (A) the Committee on Armed Services of  
24 the Senate;



1 (B) the Committee on Foreign Relations of  
2 the Senate;

3 (C) the Committee on Banking, Housing,  
4 and Urban Affairs of the Senate;

5 (D) the Committee on Armed Services of  
6 the House of Representatives;

7 (E) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of  
8 the House of Representatives; and

9 (F) the Committee on Financial Services  
10 of the House of Representatives.

11 (2) DETERMINATIONS.—Not later than 120  
12 days after the enactment of this Act, the President  
13 shall—

14 (A) determine whether the nonprofit orga-  
15 nization chaired by Asma Al-Assad, the First  
16 Lady of Syria, known as the “Syria Trust for  
17 Development” meets the criteria for the imposi-  
18 tion of sanctions—

19 (i) under section 7412(a) of the Cae-  
20 sar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019,  
21 as amended by subsection (a);

22 (ii) under Executive Order 13894 (84  
23 Fed. Reg. 55851; relating to blocking  
24 property and suspending entry of certain

1 persons contributing to the situation in  
2 Syria); or

3 (iii) by nature of being owned or con-  
4 trolled by a person designated under any  
5 executive order or regulation administered  
6 by the Office of Foreign Assets Control;  
7 and

8 (B) submit to the appropriate congres-  
9 sional committees each such determination, in-  
10 cluding a justification for the determination.

11 (3) FORM.—The determination made pursuant  
12 to paragraph (2)(B) shall be submitted in unclassi-  
13 fied form, but the justification specified in such  
14 paragraph may be included in a classified annex.  
15 The unclassified determination shall be made avail-  
16 able on a publicly available website of the Federal  
17 government.

18 (d) FINDINGS REGARDING APPLICABILITY WITH RE-  
19 SPECT TO SYRIAN ARAB AIRLINES, CHAM WINGS AIR-  
20 LINES, AND RELATED ENTITIES.—Congress finds the fol-  
21 lowing:

22 (1) In 2013, the President identified Syrian  
23 Arab Airlines as a blocked instrumentality or con-  
24 trolled entity of the Government of Syria and con-  
25 currently sanctioned Syrian Arab Airlines pursuant

1 to Executive Order 13224 for acting for or on behalf  
2 of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods  
3 Force of Iran.

4 (2) In 2016, the President sanctioned Syria-  
5 based Cham Wings Airlines pursuant to Executive  
6 Order 13582 for having materially assisted, spon-  
7 sored, or provided financial, material, or techno-  
8 logical support for, or goods or services in support  
9 of, the Government of Syria and Syrian Arab Air-  
10 lines.

11 (3) Section 7412(a)(2)(A)(iii) of the Caesar  
12 Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 (22 U.S.C.  
13 8791 note) mandates the application of sanctions  
14 against any foreign person that “knowingly provides  
15 significant financial, material, or technological sup-  
16 port to, or knowingly engages in a significant trans-  
17 action with . . . a foreign person subject to sanc-  
18 tions pursuant to the International Emergency Eco-  
19 nomic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) with re-  
20 spect to Syria or any other provision of law that im-  
21 poses sanctions with respect to Syria,” which ap-  
22 plies to airport service providers outside of Syria.

23 (e) SEVERABILITY.—If any provision of this Act, or  
24 the application of such provision to any person or cir-  
25 cumstance, is found to be unconstitutional, the remainder

1 of this Act, or the application of that provision to other  
2 persons or circumstances, shall not be affected.

3 **SEC. 3. PROHIBITION OF RECOGNITION OF ASSAD REGIME.**

4 (a) STATEMENT OF POLICY.—It is the policy of the  
5 United States—

6 (1) not to recognize or normalize relations with  
7 any Government of Syria that is led by Bashar al-  
8 Assad due to the Assad regime’s ongoing crimes  
9 against the Syrian people, including failure to meet  
10 the criteria outlined in section 7431(a) of the Caesar  
11 Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 (22 U.S.C.  
12 8791 note);

13 (2) to actively oppose recognition or normaliza-  
14 tion of relations by other governments with any Gov-  
15 ernment of Syria that is led by Bashar Al-Assad, in-  
16 cluding by fully implementing the mandatory pri-  
17 mary and secondary sanctions in the Caesar Syria  
18 Civilian Protection Act of 2019 (title LXXIV of  
19 Public Law 116–92) and Executive Order 13894;  
20 and

21 (3) to use the full range of authorities, includ-  
22 ing those provided under the Caesar Syria Civilian  
23 Protection Act of 2019 and Executive Order 13894,  
24 to deter reconstruction activities in areas under the  
25 control of Bashar al-Assad.

1 (b) PROHIBITION.—In accordance with subsection  
2 (a), no Federal official or employee may take any action,  
3 and no Federal funds may be made available, to recognize  
4 or otherwise imply, in any manner, United States recogni-  
5 tion of Bashar al-Assad or any Government in Syria that  
6 is led by Bashar al-Assad.

7 **SEC. 4. INTERAGENCY STRATEGY TO COUNTER NORMAL-**  
8 **IZATION WITH ASSAD REGIME.**

9 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

10 (1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-  
11 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-  
12 mittees” means—

13 (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations of  
14 the Senate;

15 (B) the Committee on the Judiciary of the  
16 Senate;

17 (C) the Committee on Banking, Housing,  
18 and Urban Affairs of the Senate;

19 (D) the Committee on Appropriations of  
20 the Senate;

21 (E) the Select Committee on Intelligence  
22 of the Senate;

23 (F) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of  
24 the House of Representatives;

1 (G) the Committee on the Judiciary of the  
2 House of Representatives;

3 (H) the Committee on Financial Services  
4 of the House of Representatives;

5 (I) the Committee on Appropriations of the  
6 House of Representatives; and

7 (J) the Permanent Select Committee on  
8 Intelligence of the House of Representatives.

9 (2) COVERED TRANSACTION.—The term “cov-  
10 ered transaction” means a transaction, including an  
11 investment, grant, contract, or donation (including a  
12 loan or other extension of credit) that—

13 (A) is provided by a foreign person located  
14 in Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt,  
15 Jordan, Iraq, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, the  
16 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria,  
17 Morocco, Libya, or Lebanon; and

18 (B) is received by a person or entity in any  
19 area of Syria held by the Assad regime.

20 (b) REPORT AND STRATEGY REQUIRED.—

21 (1) SUBMISSION.—Not later than 180 days  
22 after the date of the enactment of this Act, and an-  
23 nually thereafter for 5 years, the Secretary of State,  
24 in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury,  
25 the Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Admin-

1       istration, and the heads of other appropriate Federal  
2       departments and agencies, shall submit to the ap-  
3       propriate congressional committees a report and  
4       strategy to describe and counter actions taken or  
5       planned by foreign governments to normalize, en-  
6       gage with, or upgrade political, diplomatic, or eco-  
7       nomic ties with the regime led by Bashar al-Assad  
8       in Syria (referred to in this section as the “Assad  
9       regime”).

10           (2) ELEMENTS.—The elements of the report  
11       under paragraph (1) shall include—

12           (A) a description of violations of inter-  
13       national law and human rights abuses com-  
14       mitted by Bashar al-Assad, the Government of  
15       the Russian Federation, or the Government of  
16       Iran and progress towards justice and account-  
17       ability for the Syrian people;

18           (B) a full list of diplomatic meetings at the  
19       Ambassador level or above, between the Syrian  
20       regime and any representative of the Govern-  
21       ments of Turkey, the United Arab Emirates,  
22       Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait,  
23       the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria,  
24       Morocco, Libya, or Lebanon, respectively;

25           (C) a list including an identification of—

1 (i) any single covered transaction ex-  
2 ceeding \$500,000; and

3 (ii) any combination of covered trans-  
4 actions by the same source that, in aggre-  
5 gate, exceed \$500,000 and occur within a  
6 single year;

7 (D) for each identified single transaction  
8 or aggregate transactions, as the case may be,  
9 included in the list described in subparagraph  
10 (C), a determination of whether such trans-  
11 action subjects any of the parties to the trans-  
12 action to sanctions under the Caesar Syria Ci-  
13 vilian Protection Act of 2019, as amended by  
14 section 2;

15 (E) a description of the steps the United  
16 States is taking to actively deter recognition or  
17 normalization of relations by other governments  
18 with the Assad regime, including specific diplo-  
19 matic engagements and use of economic sanc-  
20 tions authorized by statutes or implemented  
21 through Executive orders, including—

22 (i) the Caesar Syria Civilian Protec-  
23 tion Act of 2019 (22 U.S.C. 8791 note);



1 (ii) the Syria Accountability and Leb-  
2 anese Sovereignty Restoration Act (22  
3 U.S.C. 2151 note);

4 (iii) the Comprehensive Iran Sanc-  
5 tions, Accountability, and Divestment Act  
6 of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8501 et seq.);

7 (iv) Executive Order 13894 (84 Fed.  
8 Reg. 55851; relating to blocking property  
9 and suspending entry of certain persons  
10 contributing to the situation in Syria);

11 (v) the Global Magnitsky Human  
12 Rights Accountability Act (22 U.S.C.  
13 10101 et seq.);

14 (vi) the Countering America's Adver-  
15 saries Through Sanctions Act (22 U.S.C.  
16 9401 et seq.); and

17 (vii) the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin  
18 Designation Act (21 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.);

19 and

20 (F) an assessment of how recognition or  
21 normalization of relations by other governments  
22 with the Assad regime impacts the national se-  
23 curity of the United States, prospects for imple-  
24 mentation of the United Nations Security  
25 Council Resolution 2254, prospects for justice

1           and accountability for war crimes in Syria, and  
2           the benefits derived by the Government of the  
3           Russian Federation or the Government of Iran.

4           (c) SCOPE.—The initial report required under sub-  
5 section (b) shall address the period beginning on January  
6 1, 2021, and ending on the date of the enactment of this  
7 Act, and each subsequent report shall address the 1-year  
8 period following the conclusion of the scope of the prior  
9 report.

10          (d) FORM.—Each report required under subsection  
11 (b) shall be submitted in an unclassified form, but may  
12 contain a classified annex. The unclassified section of such  
13 a report shall be made publicly available on a website of  
14 the United States Federal Government.

15 **SEC. 5. REPORTS ON MANIPULATION OF UNITED NATIONS**  
16 **BY ASSAD REGIME IN SYRIA.**

17          Not later than 180 days after the date of the enact-  
18 ment of this Act, and annually thereafter for the following  
19 5 years, the Secretary of State shall submit a report to  
20 the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and  
21 the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Rep-  
22 resentatives describing the manipulation of the United Na-  
23 tions by the regime led by Bashar al-Assad in Syria (re-  
24 ferred to in this section as the “Assad regime”), includ-  
25 ing—

1           (1) a description of conditions, both explicit and  
2           implicit, set by the Assad regime with respect to  
3           United Nations operations in Syria including with  
4           respect to implementing partners, hiring practices,  
5           allocation of grants and contracts, and procurement  
6           of goods and services;

7           (2) a description of the extent to which the  
8           United Nations has rejected or otherwise opposed  
9           any of the conditions described in paragraph (1);

10          (3) an identification of officials or employees of  
11          the United Nations (including funds, programs and  
12          specialized agencies of the United Nations) with ties  
13          to the Assad regime, including family ties, or per-  
14          sons designated for sanctions by United Nations  
15          donor countries;

16          (4) a full account of access restrictions imposed  
17          by the Assad regime and the overall impact on the  
18          ability of the United Nations to deliver international  
19          assistance to target beneficiaries in areas outside re-  
20          gime control;

21          (5) a description of ways in which United Na-  
22          tions aid improperly benefits the Assad regime and  
23          its associates in defiance of basic humanitarian prin-  
24          ciples;

1           (6) a description of the due diligence mecha-  
2           nisms and vetting procedures in place to ensure enti-  
3           ties contracted by the United Nations to ensure  
4           goods, supplies, or services provided to Syria do not  
5           have links to the Assad regime, known human rights  
6           abusers, or persons designated for sanctions by  
7           United Nations donor countries;

8           (7) an identification of entities affiliated with  
9           the Assad regime, including the Syria Trust for De-  
10          velopment and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, for-  
11          eign government ministries, and private corporations  
12          owned or controlled directly or indirectly by the  
13          Assad regime, that have received United Nations  
14          funding, contracts, or grants or have otherwise en-  
15          tered into a formalized partnership with the United  
16          Nations;

17          (8) an assessment of how the Assad regime sets  
18          arbitrary or punitive exchange rates to extract fund-  
19          ing from the United Nations, as well as the total  
20          amount extracted by such means;

21          (9) an assessment of the degree to which the  
22          various forms of manipulation described in this sec-  
23          tion has resulted in compromises of the humani-  
24          tarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impar-  
25          tiality, and independence of the United Nations; and

1           (10) a strategy to reduce the ability of the  
2 Assad regime to manipulate or otherwise influence  
3 the United Nations and other aid operations in  
4 Syria and ensure United States and international  
5 aid is delivered in a neutral and impartial manner  
6 consistent with basic humanitarian principles.

○