



By: TA | AP Brief

# David Lammy visits Syria, renewing ties after 14 years of conflict



British Foreign Secretary David Lammy met in Damascus on Saturday with Syria's interim **President** Ahmad al-Sharaa, marking the restoration of relations after 14 years of tension during Syria's conflict and Assad family rule.

Syria has been improving relations with Western countries following the fall of President Bashar Assad in December in an offensive led by al-Sharaa's Hayat Tahrir al-Sham Islamist group.

Al-Sharaa's office said Lammy and the president discussed mutual relations and ways of boosting cooperation and the latest regional and international developments. Lammy later met his Syrian counterpart, Asaad al-Shibani, state media reported.

A statement issued by Britain's foreign office said the visit showed London's commitment to support Syria as the new government seeks to rebuild the country's economy, deliver an inclusive political transition and forge a path to justice for the victims of the Assad government.

It added that there will be new U.K. funding to assist with the removal of Assad-era chemical weapons and provide urgent humanitarian assistance in Syria, to bolster U.K. and Middle East security and tackle irregular migration.

The statement said the British government wants to ensure that the Islamic State group's territorial defeat "endures, and they can never resurge."

IS once controlled large parts of Syria and Iraq, where it **planned** attacks worldwide. It was defeated in Syria in March 2019 when the extremists lost the last sliver of land they once controlled.

The statement said Britain's support for Syria is set to continue, with the additional 94.5 million pounds (\$129 million) package announced Saturday. It will provide urgent humanitarian aid to Syrians, support Syria's longer-term recovery through education and livelihoods, and support countries hosting

Syrian refugees in the region.

## Lammy met in Beirut with Lebanese President

In April, the British government **lifted** sanctions against a dozen Syrian entities, including government departments and media outlets, to help the country rebuild after Assad's ouster.

Weeks earlier, the U.K. had dropped sanctions against two dozen Syrian businesses, mostly banks and oil companies.

Earlier this week, U.S. President Donald Trump **signed** an executive order ending many American economic sanctions on Syria, following through on a promise he made to al-Sharaa.

Syria's new leaders have been struggling to rebuild the country's decimated economy and infrastructure after nearly 14 years of civil war that has killed half a million people.

In recent months, al-Sharaa visited oil-rich regional countries and France in May in his first **visit** to the Europe Union.

Also on Saturday, Lammy met in Beirut with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and they discussed the situation along the Lebanon-Israel border following the 14-month Israel-Hezbollah war.

A statement issued by Aoun's office, quoted the Lebanese leader as telling Lammy that Beirut plans to raise the number of Lebanese troops along the border with Israel to 10,000.

Aoun added that the only armed sides on the Lebanese side of the border will be Lebanon's national army and U.N. peacekeepers.