

## **Gulf Finance House establishing Syria Finance House with SYP15bn**

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Gulf Finance House (GFH) announced that it is in an advanced stage for establishing one of the largest Islamic banks in Syria under the name of Syria Finance House (SFH).

GFH along with a number of prominent and reputed local Syrian business partners who are involved in the industrial, financial and commodity sectors, are working to position the bank as the leading and one of the largest Islamic banks in Syria, with a capital of SYP15bn, the equivalent of \$333mn.

Once the final stage of approval has been secured from the Central Bank of Syria, the Bank will conduct an IPO for 30% of its capital whilst 10% will be funded from the local partners and the remaining 60% will be funded from GFH, strategic financial institutions and its investors.

"GFH has an established record of creating successful tailored Islamic financial institutions and its unique ability to identify hidden value and unlock its potential across emerging economies and SFH will be no exception", said Chairman of GFH, Esam Janahi.

"We are aiming to establish a comprehensive Islamic bank that provides a suite of commercial and investment activities catering to the growing demands in the Syrian market, and we are delighted to receive the support of all Syrian authorities" he continued.

"Islamic commercial and investment banking in Syria promises great potential for growth with a significant demand for Islamic financial services and low penetration," commented GFH Group CEO, Ted Pretty.

"The Syrian market enjoys excess liquidity, with deposits amounting to 41% of GDP last year, which could be utilized in developing the country in line with the Syrian Government's plans ambitions for socio - economic growth and prosperity," he continued.

"We have been working closely with our Syrian partners for over a year, laying down the framework, strategy and business model for SFH," commented Head of Venture Capital and Private Equity, Hisham Alrayes. "We have also been discussing with the Syria Investment Authority on initiating a number of industrial and infrastructure projects in Syria to be undertaken by SFH."

Syrian co - partner Saib Al Nahas highlighted the significance of the announcement, commenting that "through SFH we aim to build the leading Islamic bank in Syria, capitalizing on the growing demand for quality Islamic financial products in the infrastructure, investment and commercial banking sectors. This is a great opportunity for the country as it begins to establish a strong and competitive financial sector, especially in the areas of Islamic banking, which has shown great resilience and proved its strengths in the wake of the global financial crisis. GFH will be bring their established industry know - how and expertise in Islamic finance to ensure the success of SFH."

"Cross - governmental reforms has seen Syria's economy transform into a more developed and dynamic system attracting growing foreign direct investment in recent times, particularly in the financial and infrastructure sectors. The Syrian government has adopted a proactive approach to facilitate and attract investment into the country, ensuring that the economy is well equipped with an international standard legal and financial framework for it to grow through a 6 year development plan," sated Dr. Ahmed A.Aziz, Head of Syria Investment Authority.

"The fact that a prominent investment bank like GFH has announced its intention to establish Syria's largest Islamic bank, is an indication of how far the country has progress under the leadership of His Excellency Dr. President Bashar Al Asad," he continued.