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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Note verbale dated 24 May 2012 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Further to its previous notes verbales on the prevailing situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Mission has the honour to provide herewith information on the implications and negative effects of unilateral coercive measures on populations, particularly the Syrian population.

The General Assembly and Human Rights Council issue resolutions every year in which they emphasize that the imposition of unilateral economic measures on developing countries constitutes a flagrant violation of the international law norms set out in the Charter. While the principles and purposes of the United Nations are unequivocal, as are the recommendations made by the United Nations General Assembly in the relevant resolutions, certain States and regional entities continue to use coercive measures against certain developing countries and to subject them to political pressure.

These parties continue to impose unilateral economic measures on Syria outside the framework of international law. Indeed, they persist in expanding the scope of these deplorable, illegal and inhumane measures and encourage other States to follow suit. No sooner does one of these States impose sanctions on Syria than those in the orbit of that State introduce a series of unilateral coercive measures that adversely affect the Syrian people and their livelihood and development. They use the same terms and names; they even make the same linguistic errors.

The United States, the European Union, the League of Arab States, Turkey, Switzerland, Canada, Australia and Japan have all imposed illegal unilateral coercive measures on Syria. Recently, they have considerably picked up the pace at which they expand the sanctions with a view to making political gains from Syria and finishing what they started when they imposed an unprecedented economic embargo on the Syrian Government and the Syrian people, targeting the Syrian people and the country's economy and development. This embargo has inflicted huge losses on the State and the Syrian people.

These States have introduced more than 58 packages of illegal, unilateral coercive measures on the Syrian people, targeting all areas of economic, financial, agricultural and industrial activity and the food, pharmaceuticals, tourism, transport, science and culture sectors. It should be explained that each set of sanctions includes several subsets, meaning that the real number of sanctions is far higher than 58. Thus, one can imagine the scale of the suffering and pressure on the Syrian people.

Most of these measures have been focused on the oil, gas, financial, banking, electricity, technology and infrastructure sectors. They have had an extremely negative impact on the Syrian economy, which has been deprived of revenue from these vital sectors and which has sustained huge losses in terms of unrealized income. Indeed, the oil sector alone is losing over US\$ 2 billion a day in the present crisis, because export bans have led to a cut in production of 180,000 barrels a day (excluding losses due to deliberate damage, bomb attacks, sabotage and theft). This in turn has led to price hikes and has had a knock-on effect on the incomes of Syrians, on their day-to-day lives and on the availability of health, educational and social services and employment.

The Syrian Arab Republic provides here below some examples of the economic sanctions imposed on the Syrian population. These measures have raised many questions among Syrians about the genuineness of claims by States that call for the protection and defence of the Syrian people.

1. One of the clearest examples of the hypocrisy of Western States regarding Syria and of how they use human rights as a pretext for interfering in the affairs of other States and taking control of them can be seen in their actions at the United Nations to stir up passions in defence of “freedom of opinion and expression in Syria” while at the same time imposing sanctions on, and freezing the assets of, major Syrian print and broadcast media outlets, and even websites. Syrian bloggers are trying to bring the facts about what is really happening in Syria to light, facts that these States are working hard to conceal. These States impose unilateral coercive measures that infringe the right to freedom of opinion and expression in Syria while claiming that they are imposing sanctions in order “to defend the Syrian people”. Instead, they are killing them and trying to erase all trace of Syrian civilization.
2. Otherwise, how is the imposition of sanctions on exports of software programs to Syria to be interpreted? Western States have worked hard at the United Nations to have the right of access to the Internet recognized as a fundamental right. Yet, they have imposed sanctions on the Syrian people prohibiting the importation of programs and of material used to manufacture computers and wireless and other communications equipment and sanctions on the electricity sector, which is vital for access to Internet services.
3. How is one to construe the imposition of sanctions on the Syrian national standards authority, which, like its counterparts throughout the world, was established to serve consumers, artists and inventors and protect them from fraud? What justification can there be for imposing sanctions on the authority, freezing its assets and prohibiting all forms of cooperation with it?
4. To give another example, the United States of America, the European Union, Canada and those in the orbit of these countries imposed an embargo on the Syrian people last winter, forcing them to suffer the cold of winter and depriving them of access to heating fuel in flagrant violation of the right to health and is in contravention of the principles on which the international human rights system was founded, namely, freedom from want and from fear (preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). These States imposed sanctions prohibiting imports to Syria of petroleum products including gas and fuel oil for domestic use. They deprived the Syrian people of heating fuel and farmers of heating fuel for winter farms, thereby depleting food stocks at the disposal of the Syrian

population and pushing up food prices. As manufacturers also cannot get access to the fuel they need for manufacturing equipment, large numbers of plants have shut down and workers and their families have become trapped in unemployment. The European Union has imposed harsher collective sanctions on the Syrian people: the European Investment Bank stopped funding electricity generation projects, a purely civilian sector that serves the population, particularly in the harsh winter season when people use electricity for heating in order to make up for the fuel shortage. Armed terrorist groups have followed the lead of their backers which subject the Syrian people to collective punishment. These groups steal oil rucks, blow up oil pipelines and use domestic gas canisters as bombs for killing Syrians. The European Union has imposed sanctions on several officials of the electricity and oil ministries, whose employees work under extremely difficult conditions to repair the damage that armed terrorist groups do to pipelines and oil and electricity sector infrastructure, while these groups try to stop them from getting near destroyed facilities or they kill, abduct, terrorize or beat these employees. Armed groups also destroy electricity networks and deprive the population, hospitals and factories of this key service. The sanctions on transportation have inflicted an embargo on the Syrian population: oil may not be transported to or from Syria in any vessel that flies the flags of the States concerned. This is just one example of the impact that unilateral resolutions have on the lives of millions and the scale of the damage that they cause. Then we hear the officials of the States concerned go out to the press and say: “The sanctions are not targeted at the Syrian people”.

5. Another example of sanctions raises an important question. Why impose sanctions on a popular credit bank or a post office savings bank? To explain, these two Syrian banks cater for people with average and low incomes, small savers and investors and owners of microenterprises. Some account holders have as little as US\$ 10 deposited with these banks. This is a paltry sum for the States that impose sanctions but a large amount for savers. These two banks are wholly and solely dedicated to serving the Syrian population. So, how can these people be persuaded that sanctions on their savings have been imposed to defend human rights?

6. In the same vein, how is one to interpret the freezing of assets belonging to the Syrian Real Estate Bank, which is an important source of financing for Syrian families on average or low incomes that wish to buy a home? How can violating the right to housing be construed as providing “support for the Syrian people”? The same question applies to the industrial and agricultural banks. The two banks, as their names make clear, lend to small farmers and Syrian manufacturers. The consequences are obvious.

7. Other examples are: the targeting of the Syrian financial sector; the freezing of the assets of the Commercial Bank of Syria, which is a mainstay in financing of Syrian imports; the termination of all transactions with the Central Bank; and the ban on imports of coins that Syria has contracted other States to mint in their factories.

8. To take a further example, the United States has not just imposed a large number of sanctions — more than 21 sets — on exports and re-exports of goods to Syria but has prevented Syria from utilizing the global banking system in which United States banks and the dollar play an important part. By an executive order signed by the President of the United States on 1 May 2012, the United States stepped up its economic terrorism against those who do business with Syria and with the Syrian banking sector, even people who are not its nationals and who do not live in the United States. Sanctions have been imposed on all those who do not align themselves with United States sanctions against Syria. United States officials tour the region issuing threats to officials and bankers about the consequences of non-compliance. This is a new form of terrorism and coercion inflicted to States that do not bow to the will of the West. Yet, how can this be explained to a Syrian who studies abroad in order to bring knowledge back to his community? How will

manufacturers be able to pay for imports of production inputs? Is the plan to close down more factories and push up unemployment because of these sanctions and acts of terror that are funded by the States that imposed the sanctions?

9. Syrian citizens are wondering what the justification is for imposing sanctions on investment projects in Syria and squandering the precious resources needed for development. These are projects that were supposed to provide young Syrians with jobs. Is it not about impoverishing the Syrian population and denying the Syrian people the right to work and to development and the right not to be pushed into grinding poverty?

10. Some States have imposed bans on flights from and to Syria. But are flights not used to transport goods and tourists and to further exchanges between cultures? The embargo on flights is nothing but a flagrant violation of the right to freedom of movement.

It is clear from the above examples that the sanctions form a chain that is being used to strangle the Syrian population. States are taking swift action to tighten the chain, in flagrant breach of all human rights treaties and relevant United Nations resolutions. The sanctions are not designed to help the Syrian population. Their purpose is to destabilize the economy, marginalize growing numbers of Syrians and subject them to collective punishment for failing to join schemes set up to destroy Syria. This is exactly the same as the punishment meted out by armed terrorist groups, which bomb, kill or intimidate the people in order to stop them from expressing their opinion about shielding their country from mayhem and terrorism.

The Syrian people are victimized by armed terrorist groups in two ways: first, directly through murder campaigns and second, through the sanctions imposed by the States that fund, support and harbour these groups so as to allow them to inflict a slow death on Syrians and to gradually erase all traces of Syrian culture and civilization.

What adds to the immorality and hypocrisy of the positions taken by these States is their practice of announcing allocations of “humanitarian” assistance for the Syrian people while simultaneously imposing these harsh inhumane conditions on them through the sanctions and through the provision of support, funding, weapons and shelter to armed terrorist groups.

The Syrian Arab Republic calls on the international community to condemn these and other unilateral measures imposed on developing countries. It calls for the full and unconditional implementation of General Assembly resolution 66/156 and the rejection of these measures, which are used as instruments of political and economic coercion against developing countries, and are employed to undermine the freedom of choice of these countries and their populations and to impoverish and marginalize States that refuse to yield to the hegemonic ambitions of others.

What follows is a non-exhaustive list of 58 sets of harsh unilateral sanctions that have been imposed on Syria to date. We repeat that a set of sanctions can include more than one sanction and thus the total number of sanctions is far higher than the aforementioned figure.

A. United States sanctions

1. The Syria Accountability Act of 2004 introduced the following sanctions:

- (a) A prohibition on all exports from the United States to Syria, except for food and medicines;
- (b) A ban on Syrian aircraft taking off from, landing in or overflying the United States of America.

2. In March 2006, the United States Department of the Treasury issued a regulation requiring United States financial institutions to sever correspondent accounts with the Commercial Bank of Syria.
3. Under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, the President of the United States instructed the Secretary of the Treasury to freeze the assets of Syrian nationals and Syrian Government holdings subject to the jurisdiction of the United States of America.
4. Presidential Executive Order No. 13399 was issued on 25 April 2006 to block the property of persons in accordance with United States law with respect to Syria.
5. On 18 January 2006, the Department of the Treasury issued a decision freezing the assets of an additional Syrian national and banning trade with that person.
6. On 4 January 2007, the United States of America placed three entities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre on the sanctions list (assets freeze and transaction ban), namely, the Syrian Higher Institute of Applied Research and Technology, the Electronics Institute and the National Standards and Calibration Laboratory.
7. Between 1 August 2007 and 21 February 2008 the United States authorities issued three further decisions imposing sanctions on individual Syrian nationals.
8. In December 2009, the United States rejected a request from AIRBUS to sell aircraft to Syria.
9. On 29 April 2011, the President of the United States issued Executive Order No. 13572 blocking the property of certain Syrian officials. The sanctions were extended to include a number of governmental entities that were made subject to a transaction ban.
10. On 29 April 2011, the President of the United States issued two executive orders blocking property of high-ranking Syrian officials and imposing sanctions on additional governmental agencies.
11. On 23 May 2011, the United States imposed sanctions on a number of State companies, including the Military Industrial Organization and the Syrian Scientific Research Centre (additional sanctions). United States government entities were prohibited from having any dealings with these institutions and from selling to or buying from them, or from funding or providing assistance or assistance programmes for them.
12. On 29 June 2011, the United States Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on four Syrian institutions and froze their assets in locations under the jurisdiction of the United States authorities.
13. On 4 August 2011, the Department of the Treasury issued a decision imposing sanctions on Syrian businessman Muhammad Hamsho and the Hamsho International Group.
14. On 10 August 2011, the Department of the Treasury froze the assets of the Commerce Bank of Syria and the Syrian Lebanese Commercial Bank; it had imposed a total ban on transactions with them in 2006. United States authorities also froze the assets of the Syrian mobile phone company SYRIATEL.
15. On 18 August 2011, the President of the United States issued Executive Order No. 13582 imposing the following sanctions:
 - (a) All assets of the Syrian Government in the United States or those thereafter to come within the United States were blocked, and prohibitions were imposed on the following:
 - (b) Exports or re-exports by the United States persons to Syria;

(c) The importation into the United States of petroleum or petroleum products of Syrian origin;

(d) Any transaction or dealing by a United States person related to petroleum or petroleum products of Syrian origin;

(e) Investment in Syria by a United States person, wherever located; and

(f) Any approval, financing, facilitation or guarantee by a United States person, wherever located, of a transaction by a foreign person where the transaction by that person would be prohibited in the United States under the sanctions regime;

(g) Sanctions were imposed on the General Petroleum Corporation; the Syrian Petroleum Company; the Syrian Gas Company; and SYTROL with respect to the sale of Syrian petroleum abroad.

16. On 30 August 2011, the Department of the Treasury announced the imposition of sanctions on other Syrian officials, including an ambassador.

17. On 1 December 2011, the Department of the Treasury imposed a ban on business dealings with the Syrian Real Estate Bank, the Military Housing Establishment and two additional Syrian nationals.

18. On 5 March 2012, the Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on the Syrian Public Radio and Television Corporation.

19. On 30 March 2012, the names of two Syrians were added to the list of persons subject to an assets freeze in the United States.

20. On 22 April 2012, the President of the United States issued an executive order seizing the property of individuals and companies that supply the Syrian and Iranian Governments with electronic and information technology and barring them from entry to the United States.

21. On 1 May 2012, the President of the United States signed an executive order prohibiting business transactions with Syria and the entry into the United States of persons who had not complied with the requirements of United States sanctions against Syria.

B. European Union sanctions

1. On 12 December 2005, the European Union imposed sanctions on a number of Syrian nationals.

2. On 9 May 2011, the European Union imposed restrictive measures on a number of Syrian nationals, froze their assets and banned them from travelling to the European Union or through it in transit.

3. On 17 May 2011, the European Union extended the restrictive measures to include a further 13 Syrian nationals whose assets were frozen and who were banned from travelling to or through the European Union.

4. On 23 May 2011, the European Union froze the assets of a further 10 Syrian nationals.

5. On 23 June 2011, the assets of four Syrian entities were frozen, namely, those of the Al-Mashreq Investment Fund, the Construction Establishment, the Hamsho International Group, and the Military Housing Establishment.

6. On 1 August 2011, the European Union added five Syrian nationals to the sanctions list, freezing their assets and subjecting them to a travel ban.

7. On 23 August 2011, the European Union added 15 Syrian nationals and 5 Syrian institutions to the sanctions list, freezing their assets and subjecting them to a travel ban.
8. On 2 September 2011 the European Union imposed a comprehensive embargo on Syrian oil and petroleum products, prohibiting:
 - (a) Imports of Syrian crude oil or of petroleum products manufactured in Syria, if they originate in Syria or are located there;
 - (b) The purchase of Syrian crude oil or of petroleum products manufactured in Syria, if they originate in Syria or are located there;
 - (c) The transportation of crude oil or petroleum products, if they originate in Syria or are exported from Syria to any other State in the world;
 - (d) The provision, by direct or indirect means, of financing related to any of the above prohibitions as well as insurance and reinsurance;
 - (e) Participation in activities whose object is to circumvent the above sanctions.
9. On 23 September 2011, the European Union imposed sanctions on SYRIATEL, Al-Dunya Television and three Syrian construction and investment companies.
10. On 13 October 2011, the European Union decided to freeze the assets of the Commercial Bank of Syria and prohibit transactions with it.
11. On 14 October 2011, the European Union froze the assets of a further 18 Syrian nationals. The European Investment Bank was prohibited from making any disbursements or payments to Syria in connection with existing loan agreements and all existing technical cooperation arrangements and contracts with Syria were suspended.
12. On 2 December 2011, the assets of 12 Syrian nationals were frozen, together with those of the Syrian newspaper *Al-Watan*, the Cham Press Television network and 9 Syrian enterprises. A ban was imposed on exports of equipment for the Syrian oil and gas sectors and of surveillance equipment.
13. On 8 January 2011, the European Union imposed sanctions prohibiting exports of communications surveillance equipment to Syria and participation in infrastructure projects in Syria or investment therein. It also imposed additional sanctions on transfers of funds and on Syrian economic resources.
14. On 22 January 2012, the European Union added a number of Syrian nationals and institutions to the list of those subject to an assets freeze and a travel ban.
15. On 27 February 2012, the European Union imposed a new round of sanctions consisting in the following:
 - (a) The assets of the Central Bank of Syria were frozen;
 - (b) A prohibition was introduced on transactions in gold and other precious metals;
 - (c) A ban was imposed on Syrian cargo flights;
 - (d) A visa ban was imposed in respect of seven Government ministers, including the Minister of Electricity and the Minister of Local Administration.
16. On 23 March 2012, the European Union froze the assets of an additional 12 Syrian nationals and 2 Syrian entities: the Syrian Petroleum Company, and the Mahrukat Company, which deals with the storage and distribution of petroleum products in Syria.
17. On 23 April 2012, the European Union decided to ban exports of luxury goods to Syria.

18. On 15 May 2012, the European Union decided to freeze the assets of the governor of the Central Bank of Syria and of two additional individuals, as well as those of the General Tobacco Organization and the Altoun Group.

C. Sanctions imposed by the League of Arab States

The League of Arab States adopted Decision No. 7442 of 27 November 2011 by which it imposed sanctions on Syria consisting in the following:

1. A ban on travel by Syrian VIPs and officials to Arab States.
2. Halting of flights from and to Syria.
3. Halting of transactions with the Central Bank of Syria.
4. Halting of commercial transactions with the Syrian Government, except with respect to strategic goods (not specified) of importance for the Syrian population.
5. Freeze of the financial assets of the Syrian Government.
6. Halting of financial transactions with the Syrian Arab Republic.
7. Halting of all transactions with the Commerce Bank of Syria.
8. Halting of financing of governmental commercial transactions by Arab central banks with the Central Bank of Syria.
9. A request to Arab central banks to monitor bank remittances and commercial credit arrangements, except for remittances sent by Syrian workers abroad to their families in Syria.
10. Freezing of funding by Arab States of projects to be carried out in Syria.

D. Turkish sanctions

1. On 30 November 2011, the Turkish Government announced that it had decided to freeze all commercial transactions between Syria and Turkey and to suspend transactions between the two countries' central banks. It also suspended the free trade agreement between the two countries and froze the assets of a number of Syrian nationals.
2. On 7 December 2011, the Turkish Government imposed a 30 per cent tax on goods coming into Turkey from Syria.

E. Japanese sanctions

1. On 9 September 2011, sanctions were imposed on 15 Syrian nationals and 5 Syrian entities. A licence requirement was introduced for making payments to or engaging in capital transactions with designated individuals and entities.
2. On 23 December 2011, Japan added the names of four Syrian nationals and six Syrian entities to the sanctions list.
3. On 9 March 2012, Japan decided to freeze the assets of the Commerce Bank of Syria, the Syrian Lebanese Commerce Bank, the Syrian Petroleum Company and the General Petroleum Corporation.

F. Australian sanctions

1. On 13 May 2011, Australia imposed sanctions on Syria consisting in the following:
 - (a) Restrictions on capital transactions with a number of designated Syrian nationals and entities;
 - (b) A travel and visa ban with respect to a number of Syrian nationals;
 - (c) A prohibition on exports of defence and “strategic” goods.
2. In January 2012, Australia imposed a travel ban and coercive financial measures on a number of Syrian nationals and entities.
3. On 7 February 2012, Australia announced that a further 75 Syrian nationals and 12 Syrian entities had been added to its sanctions list.

G. Canadian sanctions

1. On 24 May 2011, Canada applied its Special Economic Measures Act to Syria, freezing the assets of several Syrian nationals and imposing restrictions on transactions with them. These persons included businessmen.
2. On 13 August 2011, Canada suspended all bilateral cooperation treaties between the two countries and added four citizens, the Commerce Bank of Syria and SYRIATEL to the list of individuals and entities subject to an assets freeze.
3. On 3 October 2011, Canada added new names to the list of Syrian nationals whose assets had been frozen. It imposed the following sanctions:
 - (a) A prohibition on the importation, acquisition, or transportation of oil or petroleum products, excluding natural gas, from Syria;
 - (b) A prohibition on new investment in the oil industry in Syria.
4. Canada also prohibited funding of investment in the Syrian oil industry.
5. On 24 December 2011, 22 Syrian nationals were added to the list of individuals whose assets in Canada had been frozen. These individuals included businessmen. The assets of the following four Syrian banks were frozen:
 - (a) The Industrial Bank;
 - (b) The Popular Credit Bank;
 - (c) The Post Office Savings Bank;
 - (d) The Agricultural Cooperative Bank.
6. On 8 March 2012, Canada imposed a new round of sanctions, consisting in the following:
 - (a) Canada modified the sanctions on funding for and investment in the Syrian oil and petroleum products sector to include all financial services relating to Syria;
 - (b) The names of seven Syrian nationals were added to the list of those subject to an assets freeze;
 - (c) A ban was imposed on dealings with the Central Bank of Syria and the Bank’s assets in Canada were frozen.

7. On 30 March 2012, the names of 12 Syrian nationals were added to the list of persons subject to an assets freeze, together with those of 2 entities, the Syrian Petroleum Company and the Mahrukat Company (for storing and distributing petroleum products).

H. Swiss sanctions

1. On 18 May 2011, Switzerland imposed sanctions freezing the assets of 13 Syrian nationals and banning those individuals from travelling to Switzerland. It also banned the sale of military equipment to Syria.

2. On 24 May 2011, Switzerland added the names of 10 Syrian nationals to the list of persons subject to an assets freeze.

3. On 24 September 2011, Switzerland added the names of a further 19 Syrian nationals and 8 Syrian entities to the list and introduced a prohibition on the provision of funding, insurance or reinsurance to the Syrian oil sector.

4. On 6 February 2012, Switzerland froze the assets of 34 Syrian nationals, including the Minister of the Economy and Finance, and of 19 Syrian companies as well as the Syrian General Petroleum Company, the Syrian Lebanese Commercial Bank, the Agricultural Bank, the Syrian newspaper *Al-Watan* and Cham Press Television.

5. On 8 March 2012, Switzerland added the names of a further seven Syrian nationals to the list of persons subject to an assets freeze. These individuals included the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education, the Minister for Oil and Petroleum and the Minister of Telecommunications.

6. On 23 May 2012, Switzerland added the names of four Syrian nationals to the list of persons subject to an assets freeze and to a ban on travel to Switzerland.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic should be grateful if the present note verbale could be circulated in the official languages of the United Nations as an official document of the Human Rights Council at its twentieth session.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic takes this opportunity to convey to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.
