



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 August 2021]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## **Negative Impact of Unilateral Actions on Human Rights in the Syrian Arab Republic**

More than 10 years of war in the Syrian Arab Republic have caused enormous damages on the humanitarian, economic, and social levels. Infrastructure has been destroyed and all-important means of human life have been reduced. However, it cannot be said that this tragic reality is only a result of war. The internal war in Syria was accompanied by coercive external sanctions imposed by both the European Union and the United States of America over those years.

The direct impact of these unilateral sanctions on the life of the Syrian citizen was evident in all fields. Syrian youth are excluded from international exchange programs. The prices of commercial goods and medicines increased to extremely high levels close to 500%. The health sector has also suffered from a severe shortage of basic materials needed for hospitals and other medical centers to face the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the energy sector is suffering from an almost complete collapse as a result of the severe complications imposed by the sanctions in obtaining the gas and fuel materials needed to operate electric stations. Here, the hours of electricity rationing in some areas reached nineteen hours a day. The shortage of oil derivatives has also led to a stifling crisis in the transportation sector. In addition, the sanctions created great challenges to the reconstruction process, leaving most of the basic infrastructure destroyed and out of service. Today, the Syrian people are completely destroyed and almost isolated from the outside world. As these sanctions continue, the Syrian people may become cut off from life as well.

According to the World Food Organization, 12.4 million people in Syria are food insecure. These people need food aid and need to help them build their own capacities and earn a living on their own. However, this stifling blockade due to the economic sanctions that caused the internal economic collapse will restrict the attempts of individuals and families to establish small enterprises that contribute to economic stability or at least food security. It is worth mentioning that these individuals do not belong to any political party, but rather are civilians whose goal is to try to recover from the effects of the war.

Although the countries that imposed the sanctions on Syria assert that their purpose is to restrict the activity of some political figures to protect civilians, the reality confirms the serious impact of these sanctions on all human rights and on the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan. In addition, the European Union and the United States of America are not entitled to grant themselves the right to use coercive measures as a tool of external pressure to force peoples and states to submit to its directions. This is a violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, a violation of the sovereignty of the targeted countries, and a violation of the rights of their peoples.

In a report at the 45th session of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/45/7), the UN Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, Alena Douhan, referred to this aspect. The HRC and the UN General Assembly also emphasized that people should not be deprived of their own means of subsistence, particularly concerning food and medicine. In addition, it was emphasized that extraterritorial application of law affects international humanitarian law and human rights law.

ICSFT deplors the international community's disregard for the effects of economic sanctions on the basic rights of the Syrian people. ICSFT also emphasizes that under no circumstances should people be deprived of the basic means of their survival. It expresses his concern that these sanctions are not limited to Syria only, but extend to the countries that deal with them. This is a clear violation of the most basic principles of international law, as it leads to the coercion of countries to apply coercive measures as well. In addition, these coercive measures constitute the biggest obstacle to a political solution and the right of peoples to self-determination, and their impact could extend to destabilizing international peace and security.

**Recommendations:**

- Conducting an impartial investigation into the extent of the impact of unilateral sanctions on the Syrian people, the extent to which they violate international laws and charters, and their negative impact on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, under the direct supervision of Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan.
  - Adopting a resolution prohibiting the use of this type of coercive measures for political purposes.
  - Promoting and protecting human rights in the face of such coercive measures.
  - Lifting all forms of sanctions against the Syrian Arab Republic.
  - Providing technical and material assistance to avoid the direct effects of economic sanctions on the life of the Syrian citizen in all its dimensions.
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