

# “Main Victim of Caesar Act Is the Syrian Citizen.” Ambassador Bashar Al-Ja’fari

Exclusive Interview with SYRIA TIMES Newspaper

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*The Caesar Act comes at a time when the whole world is suffering not only in the health arena (Covid-19) but also in the financial one.*

Syria specifically is suffering from great duress. Coming out of a ten year long war which has exhausted the country in all its sectors, Syria now faces more hardship.

Sanctions have long plagued Syria, European and American ones. Since the war started on Syria, the USA and the West have sanctioned Syria, starting with Syrian companies and Syrian individuals and ending with non Syrians that trade with Syria.

The transport of oil and gas to Syria’s ports was forbidden. This had adverse living conditions on the ordinary Syrian citizen. Many Syrians suffered from the cold due to lack of heating fuel and gas. Unable to even guarantee that they had enough gas to cook a simple meal, Syrians resorted to other alternatives like using wood or electricity when and if available.

Today Wednesday 17/6/2020 the Caesar Act comes into effect, punishing the Syrian civilian population in obtaining its most basic needs.

Syriatimes was lucky enough to exclusively interview Syria’s permanent representative to the UN and one of its most vociferous defenders **Dr. Bashar Al-Ja’fari**.

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**Syriatimes:** “What does the implementation of the Caesar Act mean to the ordinary Syrian?”



**Ambassador Ja’afari:** The unilateral coercive economic measures, mistakenly called sanctions, are based on a shared unethical principle by governments that impose such blockades, based on belief that whoever possesses economic, military and political influence is capable of imposing his own will, decisions and policies on any country in the world by just trapping them commercially, economically and impeding their banking system, while totally ignoring and condoning the fact that these measures are illegal according to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. With regard to the so-called “Caesar’s Act”, let me say that Syria has been subject to US sanctions for decades since 1979 under the

pretext of supporting terrorism and threatening the security of Israel, but since the terrorist war on Syria began, the US government has issued eight executive orders to impose or tighten economic, commercial and banking unilateral measures on Syria. These punitive measures, which were accompanied by similar European ones, had and still have clear impact on the Syrian economy and on the Syrian citizen.

The main idea behind drafting “Caesar’s Act” is to exercise political pressure and psychological warfare on Syria, because measures contained in this act are already imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic. The main new factor in the act is the practice of economic and financial terrorism on any government or foreign party that might consider doing business with Syria or to contribute to the process of reconstruction. On the other hand, this act focuses more on the status of the Syrian Central Bank, as it is responsible for controlling the exchange rate of foreign currencies, by trying to accuse it of practicing money laundry.

Allow me to point out here an important fact, which is that the Western ambassadors in the Security Council have always said publicly in all meetings of the Council regarding the political and humanitarian situation in Syria, that their governments will not contribute and will not allow the reconstruction process to be launched in Syria unless the Syrian government and its allies accept political concessions that these Western governments want. Meaning, they are taking Syria and its people hostages of their own schizophrenic policies. Needless to say, that the required concessions from Syria and its allies are totally incompatible with the national and security interests of Syria, and that they target Syria’s political independent choices and ultimately aim at achieving the mere interests of Westerners and Israel. In conclusion, the practical application of the US economic blockade imposed on Syria and other countries is to prevent any country that is subject to Unilateral Coercive Economic Measures from free and sustainable access to the global banking system and free trade without restrictions or obstacles. This is exactly what the US government and the European Union are doing against the Syrian Arab Republic. When the Syrian government and private banks are prevented from accessing the global banking system and benefiting from its facilities and transfers, this inevitably means that the ability of Syrian commercial institutions and entities is very limited in concluding deals and commercial partnerships and in carrying out import and export operations in a free and stable manner. Consequently, the main victim is the Syrian citizen, because restricting the free movement of trade and import means higher prices, less materials, and weakening the purchasing power of the Syrian citizen.

**Syriatimes:** “Will this act not hurt the very citizen it claims it wants to protect?”

**Ambassador Ja’afari:** It is well known that successive American administrations rely in their foreign policy on specific tools, foremost of which are military power and aggression, economic blockade, and destabilization in order to change legitimate governments. The claims of Americans and Europeans that they impose Unilateral Sanctions in order to protect citizens in some countries are false, and facts on the ground expose that. The Americans and Europeans claim that the sanctions target Syrian government institutions exclusively! Any sane man will ask a question about the role of the government in any country of the world, and the answer is that the government is responsible for providing services to citizens in various fields starting with medicine and food to providing water, electric power and basic services and needs for citizens. Therefore, if the State institutions have been targeted with punitive measures that subsequently means that their capability to perform their primary services role is targeted.

On the other hand, the unilateral measures that target countries such as Cuba, Iran, Venezuela, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Syria, have been and will always be targeting citizens. These countries, among others such as Russia and China, are a target of these measures because of their political stances against the American and Western hegemony over the world. One of the biggest Western governments lies is that they are seeking to "protect democracy and human rights" in the world by imposing unilateral coercive measures. Everyone knows that the American government and the European Union are the allies of the most brutal dictatorial religious regimes in this world, just as they are the true allies of Israel, which occupies Arab lands to this day.

The Western political mindset knows well that economic embargoes are primarily harmful to citizens, but its political institutions continue to press ahead with punitive measures against people in order to create stifling social crises and push people to stand against their national governments and hold these governments accountable for their suffering.

**Syriatimes:** "The USA claims that the Caesar Act will not affect daily necessities like medicine-How true is that claim?"

**Ambassador Ja'afari:** Most of the illegal measures in the so-called "Caesar Act" are not new, and Syria has been subject to the last wave of unilateral US and European coercive measures since ten years ago until today, and they amount to war crimes and constitute economic and financial crimes of terrorism. These punitive measures cause great economic and social damages, and their profound impact is no less than the impact of the crimes committed by terrorist armed groups against Syria and its people during these years.

American and Western governments are so brazen. They openly declare that they will continue to impose an economic blockade on Syria until the Syrian state succumbs to their political, economic and military blackmail. They already know that this blockade directly affects health, banking and education sectors, as well as communications, transportation, electricity and basic services sectors, and every sector that relates directly to the daily details of the life of the Syrian citizen.

It is one of the ugliest forms of political hypocrisy embodiment in our world. The United Nations is subject to the pressure of these powers in order to limit the organization's contribution in Syria to only providing humanitarian relief and refrains from launching projects to rehabilitate infrastructure and reconstruction. These Westerner governments do not find anything wrong with saying that they only allow the flow of humanitarian aid to Syria, but they will not allow the early recovery process that will directly affect the lives of Syrian citizens at home, and will provide the appropriate economic and social conditions for the return of Syrian refugees.

**Syriatimes:** "American and European sanctions have been implemented in Syria for some time now. How is this different?"

**Ambassador Ja'afari:** This new US Act seeks to impose a kind of territorial division on the Syrian state, by excluding the area controlled by the unpatriotic Kurdish separatist factions from the consequences of Caesar Act. The US administration wants to undermine the reconstruction efforts and seeks to deprive the Syrians of their natural resources, paralyze production mechanisms, close production gates, and stop import and export operations, in addition to impeding the normalization of relations with Syria and undermining the contribution of Syrian expatriates to reconstruction efforts.

The so-called “Caesar Act” seeks to stifle Syria politically and economically after Washington was unable to strangle it with terrorist war. What is new in this Act is that it extends to include Damascus’ main allies, such as Russia and Iran, which the Act mentions by name.

In order not to repeat myself, I would say that more than 95% of the punitive measures mentioned in this Act are already imposed on Syria, and what the Americans, along with the Europeans and the Turks want is to target public opinion in Syria, to create a state of uncertainty and weak confidence in the local currency and the ability to promote self-sufficiency and in the capability and credibility of Syria’s allies that fought terrorism with it over the past years and will not abandon it in the face of this economic blockade.

The most important element in this battle is to know the goals of your enemy. Today, we are fully aware that Americans and Europeans want to compensate for their defeat when they supported terrorism, by exerting economic and social pressure on the Syrian state and its allies and preventing them from proving their capability to recover damages caused to the Syrian economy and launch the reconstruction process. In sum, our battle with them is a battle of existence, settling old and new accounts, and targeting the Syrian nation and national identity. We have no option to retreat after we succeeded in our war on terrorism that was and still supported by same governments.

**Syriatimes:** “What can be done politically (in the UN arena) to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people?”

**Ambassador Ja’afari:** We used to say within the diplomatic community of the United Nations, that this Organization is not a charity, and that what ultimately prevails in it is the logic of political and financial polarization. Needless to say that this does not lead us to despair, as much as, it pushes us to be realistic and to strive with our allies to confront as much as possible the attempt of Western domination of the frameworks of the United Nations by adhering to the provisions of the Charter and international law.

The main dilemma while addressing Unilateral Coercive Measures is that the United Nations periodically rejects and condemns them, but due to Western domination of the United Nations, this Organization has not been able, to date, to adopt clear legal and practical mechanisms or instruments to end these punitive measures or to mitigate their impact on the peoples of the targeted countries. Nevertheless, during the last period, especially with the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to push the Secretary-General and relevant international organizations and bodies to issue statements and adopt positions that speak candidly about the profound inhumane impacts of this economic blockade on the peoples of the targeted countries and the ability of the United Nations to achieve global collective solidarity in confronting this health pandemic.

In recent years, the Syrian government has sent many letters and appeals to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council regarding the impact of Unilateral Coercive Economic Measures imposed on the Syrian people. We have succeeded during the past months in creating sufficient lobbying power within the United Nations that embarrassed and provoked the American and European representatives and their governments.

However, the final evaluation is that these Western governments will not abandon the policy of military intervention or the imposition of Unilateral Economic Measures on every country that politically disagrees with them, including friendly countries such as Russia, China and

Iran.

Therefore, options and methods of addressing this challenge are mostly national, and should focus on developing economic and industrial strategies that deal with these punitive measures and provide local alternatives to meet basic needs, and build strong and sustainable economic, industrial and banking relationships with our real friends, especially in light of the fact that governments imposing the economic blockade also control international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank Group, in order to define the course of the global economy.

Once again, our battle requires complete awareness of the goals of our enemies in the region and the world, and a clear definition of the limits of their capabilities and wills, so that we can address the main goals for which these Unilateral Coercive Measures were imposed, namely economic and social pressure on citizens and limit the state's ability to secure the basic requirements for life.

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