

US Sanctions Are Killing Syrians and Are a Human Rights Violation

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[Damascus is now bitterly cold](#) and is soon to be blanketed with snow. About 12 million Syrians are facing a deadly winter without heating fuel, gasoline for transportation, and dark houses each evening without electricity. Aleppo, Homs, and Hama are also extremely cold all winter.

Imagine being ill and having to walk to the doctor or hospital. The ambulances in Syria will now respond only to the most life-threatening calls because they must conserve gasoline, or face running out entirely. Gasoline on the black market costs Syrians an equivalent of [50 US dollars for a tank](#) of 20-liter fuel.

Sanctions against Syria were imposed by the European Union, the United States, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, the Arab League, as well as other countries beginning in 2011. The sanctions were aimed at overthrowing the Syrian government, by depriving it of its resources. US-sponsored 'regime change' has failed but the sanctions were never lifted.

For 12 years the US and EU have been imposing economic sanctions on Syria which have deprived the Syrians of their dignity and human rights.

New UN report asks for lifting sanctions on Syria

UN Special Rapporteur on human rights, [Alena Douhan](#), [urged sanctions to be lifted against Syria](#), warning that they were adding to the suffering of the Syrian people since 2011.

"I am struck by the pervasiveness of the [human rights and humanitarian impact](#) of the unilateral coercive measures imposed on Syria and the total economic and financial isolation of a country whose people are struggling to rebuild a life with dignity, following the decade-long war," Douhan said.

After a 12-day visit to Syria, Douhan said the majority of Syria's population was currently living below the poverty line, with shortages of food, water, electricity, shelter, cooking and heating fuel, transportation, and healthcare. She spoke of the continuing exodus of educated and skilled Syrians in response to the economic hardship of living at home.

Douhan reported that the majority of infrastructure was destroyed or damaged, and the sanctions imposed on oil, gas, electricity, trade, construction, and engineering have diminished the national income, which has prevented economic recovery and reconstruction.

The sanctions prevent payments from being received from banks, and deliveries from foreign manufacturers. Serious shortages in medicine and medical equipment have plagued hospitals and clinics. The lack of a water treatment system in Aleppo caused a severe Cholera outbreak in late summer, and the system cannot be bought, installed, or maintained under the current US sanctions against Syria.

Douhan said,

["I urge the immediate lifting of all unilateral sanctions](#) that severely harm human rights and prevent any efforts for early recovery, rebuilding, and reconstruction."

US sanctions are not effective

In 1998, [Richard Haass wrote, 'Economic Sanctions: Too Much of a Bad Thing'](#). He cautioned US foreign policymakers that sanctions alone are ineffective when the aims are large, or the time is short. The overthrow of the Syrian government is a massive aim, and the sanctions did not accomplish that goal.

Haass predicted that sanctions could cause economic distress and migration. In the summer of 2015 about half a million Syrians walked through Europe as economic migrants and were taken in primarily by Germany.

There is a moral imperative to stop using sanctions as a foreign policy tool because [innocent people are affected](#), while the sanctions have failed.

The US steals Syrian oil, and will not allow imported oil to arrive

According to the [US government, the sanctions on Syria](#) "prohibits new investments in Syria by US persons, prohibits the exportation or sale of services to Syria by US persons, prohibits the importation of petroleum or petroleum products of Syrian origin, and prohibits US persons from involvement in transactions involving Syrian petroleum or petroleum products."

There is a [waiver that can be requested](#) from the Department of Commerce, to circumvent the sanctions; however, it only applies to sending items to the terrorist-occupied area of Idlib. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham was the Al Qaeda affiliate in Syria and is the only terrorist group now holding territory in Syria.

On October 22, the media [Energy World](#) reported the US occupation forces had smuggled 92 tankers and trucks of Syrian oil and wheat stolen from northeastern Syria to US bases in Iraq. The theft is ongoing and continuous.

The US has partnered with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) which is a Kurdish militia that has a political wing following the communist ideology begun by the PKK's Abdullah Ocalan. President Trump ordered the US military to remain to occupy northeastern Syria and he ordered the US soldiers there to steal the Syrian oil so to prevent the Syrian people in the rest of the country from benefiting from the gasoline and electricity produced from the wells.

The Syrian Oil Ministry said in August that the US forces were stealing 80 percent of Syria's oil production, causing direct and indirect [losses of about 107.1 billion to Syria's](#) oil and gas industry.

Because the Damascus government is deprived of the oil its wells produce, it is forced to depend on costly imported oil, usually from Iran. The US routinely commandeers Iranian tankers, such as the incident recently when the US Navy took a tanker hostage off the coast of Greece on its way to Syria but was eventually released by Greece.

Gasoline shortage

The government has instituted a three-day weekend for schools and civil offices, as well as suspended sports events to save fuel.

[Maurice Haddad](#), Director of the General Company for Internal Transport in Damascus, told the al-Watan newspaper that the government has set stricter diesel quotas, leading to fewer daily bus services.

Athar-Press news website reported that several bakeries in Damascus have had to shut down because of the lack of fuel.

Fuel is needed to generate electricity in Syria, and the lack of domestic or imported fuel means most homes in Syria have about one hour of electricity at several intervals each day, and the amount is diminishing daily.

Sanction exemptions for Idlib and the Kurds only

The only two areas in Syria which are not under the Damascus administration are Idlib in the northwest and the US-sponsored Kurdish region in the northeast. The US sanctions are exempt from sending items to those two places only. But, those two places represent a small number of Syrians in comparison to the civilians across the country, and the main cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, and Latakia. The US makes sure the people who are against the Syrian government continue to be rewarded with supplies and reconstruction, while the millions of peaceful civilians are kept in a constant state of suffering and deprivation.

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