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## **Identical letters dated 31 March 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council**

On instructions from my Government, and in the light of the false statements that United States Department of State official James Jeffrey made on Monday, 30 March, I should like to address this official letter to you in order to clarify certain facts related to the profound and sustained negative impacts of the unilateral coercive economic measures that the United States Government has imposed for decades on the Syrian people.

- The above-mentioned statements can only be characterized as being irresponsible and misleading. This was simply an attempt to cover up the crimes and violations committed by the United States of America against the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, and against the security, peace, stability and prosperity of the Syrian people. Such statements reflect the continuing policy of denial and arrogance being pursued by a Government that cannot be relied on to play any humanitarian and global leadership role in combating the spread of the epidemic.
- From 1979 to the present, the Government of the United States of America has imposed a wide range of coercive unilateral economic measures on the Syrian Arab Republic. Over the past nine years, the extent and effect of those illegal measures against the Syrian people has increased because the previous and current American Administrations have issued eight executive orders that tighten the economic blockade against the Syrian people and impose additional, unprecedented punitive measures against the banking, energy, investment, import/export, communications and air, sea and land transport sectors. The aim of those moves is to heighten these illegal sanctions and increase their effect to such a degree as to deprive the Syrian people of its basic rights, in particular its rights to adequate medicine, health care, food, water, electricity and communications, and the ability to move within or outside the country.
- Following are the most significant direct and indirect negative impacts of the unilateral coercive economic measures that the United States of America has imposed on the Syrian people:



- (a) The ranking of Syria on the Human Development Index dropped into the category of least developed countries (Human Development Report 2016).
  - (b) These illegal measures have had a significant negative impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance (report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, Mr. Idriss Jazairy) and have undermined the ability of the Syrian people to meet their basic needs and reduced the ability of the Syrian Government to provide basic services to citizens, in particular energy services.
  - (c) These unilateral measures directly impede the effective functioning of key sectors of the economy, in particular the energy, banking, health care, industrial, transportation and communications sectors. Moreover, they adversely affect internal and external trade and the local currency and cause the cost of all essential goods and services to increase.
  - (d) These illegal measures also indirectly affect many activities in Syria, in particular education, investment and investment in development, and impede the country's ability to repair essential infrastructure and attain economic and social development goals and objectives.
  - (e) These unilateral coercive measures affect the country's ability to cooperate with or enter into contracts and work with any foreign party, including governments and private entities. These measures, by their nature, make it difficult for public and private entities to conclude contracts with the Syrian Government or any Syrian company or individual, because they have serious concerns about being subjected to financial and banking penalties and blacklisted by the States that are imposing the unilateral measures.
  - (f) For example, owing to these punitive and illegal measures, Syrian public and private medical entities have not been sufficiently able, for many years, to import or domestically manufacture medical equipment and develop modern medical technologies, nor have they been able to import sufficient amounts of medicines and medical items, because the coercive unilateral measures have had an especially harsh effect on the Syrian banking sector, most notably in relation to the execution of external transfers. Moreover, many medical and pharmaceutical companies refuse to do business and conclude contracts with public- and private-sector Syrian companies, because they fear that they will be subjected to the financial, banking and commercial sanctions the American Government imposes on any "third party" it considers to have violated its economic blockade of the Syrian Arab Republic.
- As our world endures the pandemic caused by the spread of the coronavirus and COVID 19, the Syrian Arab Republic, the people of which is suffering from the severe negative impacts of the unilateral coercive economic measures that have been imposed on the country, is under additional pressure and faces challenges of a different kind as it responds to the pandemic. These illegal measures have affected and will continue to affect the well-being of civilians, their daily lives and their ability to enjoy their basic rights, including health, education and good services. The ongoing crisis caused by the spread of this dangerous virus poses unprecedented challenges for the Syrian Government, the most significant of which are:

- (a) Providing health-care agencies with basic infrastructure and the essential goods that they need to provide preventive services, testing and treatment to all, without exception.
  - (b) Providing essential medical goods, food and services to all, without exception.
  - (c) Strengthening the economy so as to enable the Government and the public and private sectors to support and finance plans and measures aimed at preventing the virus from reaching the country or limiting its spread and transmission. Those plans and measures include sterilization, isolation, closure of public and private places and facilities, or even asking civilians to stay in their homes and not to go out for a reasonable period of time.
- In parallel with this stifling economic blockade, the Government of the United States of America continues to pursue a hostile policy towards Syria that is based on aggression, direct military occupation, supporting, financing and providing weapons to armed terrorist and separatist groups, coordinating with occupying Turkish forces to attack the Syrian Arab Republic and covering up the crimes of the Turkish regime against the Syrian people, the latest of which has been to cut off the water supply to one million Syrian civilians in the north-east. The American Government and other governments continue to obstruct and intervene in a destructive manner in the political process, and to prevent reconstruction and recovery, impede the return of Syrian refugees to their country and prevent the United Nations system from making the transition from providing humanitarian assistance to supporting recovery and reconstruction projects and enhancing the Syrian economy's capacity to meet the basic needs of Syrian civilians.
  - The aforementioned United States Department of State official, speaking on behalf of his Government, lied and levelled spurious accusations when he said, "I want to assure the Syrian people that US sanctions do not in any way impact the delivery of food or humanitarian goods, including medicines and medical supplies, entering Syria. Since our sanctions were implemented, we have provided exemptions for humanitarian aid in all areas of Syria." The Syrian Government would like to reaffirm that the so-called exemptions provided by the United States Department of the Treasury have been and continue to be shaped by politicized considerations. As a result, aid is being delivered to areas controlled by armed terrorist groups, which seize it and prevent it from reaching its rightful recipients. The aim of this exercise is to solidify the situation of those groups, prolong the war and decrease the likelihood of arriving at a final and comprehensive settlement. Contrary to what United States Department of State official James Jeffrey claimed, that aid has never reached its rightful recipients in Syria. Moreover, the mechanisms and means by which that aid is being delivered and brought into Syria are not consistent with the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions or General Assembly Resolution [46/182](#), which sets out the rules and guiding principles for the delivery of humanitarian assistance in disasters and other emergencies.
  - Accordingly, the hostile policies being pursued by the Government of the United States of America against the Syrian people can only be deemed to be a direct and flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and international humanitarian law, and Security Council resolutions concerning the situation in Syria. The fact that the Government of the United States of America continues to impose unilateral coercive economic measures against the Syrian people, despite the immediate and serious threat that the spread of this pandemic poses to all humanity, is further evidence that

the American Government does not value humanitarian considerations and pays no heed to the calls for global solidarity in response to the epidemic that have been made by the leaders of the United Nations and its organizations, as well as by world leaders and the global public.

- The Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the Government of the United States of America to take immediately the following actions:
  - (a) Lift immediately and unconditionally all the unilateral coercive economic measures that it has imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic, including those related to the banking, air and maritime transport, communications, energy and oil sectors, so as to allow the free flow of medical supplies and equipment, in particular, and strengthen the ability of Syria to respond to this epidemic and prevent its spread, without any restrictions.
  - (b) Withdraw occupying American military forces from all Syrian territory, in particular oil and gas fields, and allow the Syrian State to re-establish control over all such areas and to rebuild and repair oil and gas plants and direct their resources exclusively to the Syrian people.
  - (c) Shut down all illegal settlements and camps that the United States of America and its illegal separatist militias have established in Syrian territory and do so in manner that ensures all foreign terrorist fighters, including the terrorists of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and their family members are removed from Syrian territory and returned to their countries of origin. Moreover, the United States Government must put an end to the dangerous and irresponsible charades whereby foreign terrorist fighters are freed periodically and smuggled out of detention facilities, such as those located in the prisons of Hasaka and other cities, that are supervised by the Syrian Democratic Forces separatist group.
  - (d) The Syrian Government reserves the right to hold the United States Government and its partners in the so-called international coalition legally, morally and financially liable for the destruction of the cities of Raqqah, Dayr al Zawr, Ayn Arab, Hajin and other areas of the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as for the illegal military operations that this coalition has carried out in which it targeted the infrastructure of Syria, including roads, bridges, electrical power plants, oil and gas wells, and supply routes, causing its total or partial destruction.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that it has mobilized all its human, medical and food resources to serve all Syrians, wherever they may be, in response to this pandemic. The Syrian Arab Republic greatly appreciates the positions that the Secretary-General has taken and the statements that he has made recently, in which he has called for the ending of unilateral coercive measures that have been imposed on many peoples of the world, including the Syrian people. The Syrian Government notes that any collective and global effort to limit the spread of and eliminate this dangerous virus cannot succeed as long as certain Governments, notably that of the United States of America, maintain a policy of imposing economic blockades on more than 2 billion people around the world.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 123, and of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* **Bashar Ja'afari**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative