



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Forty-fifth session

14 September–2 October 2020

Agenda items 2 and 4

### Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

## 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.

[18 August 2020]

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

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## **Lift the sanctions on the Syrian Arab Republic now**

The unilateral economic sanctions on the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) are entering its tenth year, as the United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU) have imposed economic and political sanctions on Syria since 2011. Since that time, it has been under the heavy weight of sanctions that are getting harder and harder to endure as Syrian people have reached the point of searching for their lost livelihoods whilst turning away from necessary matters. This made the economic sectors in Syria shift from a stage of stagnation to a stage of recession, whereas the food sector became the priority on which all the country's resources were used in light of the war. The outcome of this situation has resulted on Syrian citizens moving from the stage of searching for safety to the stage of searching for a livelihood.

With all the many miserable conditions and a painful reality, the Covid-19 pandemic is making matters considerably worse. The health sector has been placed in an unparalleled confrontation with this pandemic, which requires sterilization campaigns, preventive supplies and additional health centers in the event of an increase in infections.

Although the countries that imposed economic sanctions on Syria claimed that the health sector was not directly targeted, this scenario showcased how the sanctions imposed on other sectors ceased to protect the country from being affected in this particular front.

On the other hand, the economic sanctions that have been gradually imposed on Syria since mid-2011 have also left their direct and indirect effects on the pharmaceutical industry, on both the sourcing of the raw materials and their prices, which have increased today by an approximate 300%. Consequently, in certain cases, many Syrian families now have to choose between buying food or buying medicine. This is to say that food prices have now increased by 400%, which has resulted in the higher demand of food aid.

The tragic reality imposed by the unilateral economic sanctions on the Syrian people, in addition to being a flagrant violation of all international charters and standards, has reached the point of becoming criminal against a people who remained resilient in their country despite all circumstances and the impediment of the 2030 Sustainable Development plan.

After the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council, Resolution A/HRC/43/L.2 was adopted and it stresses that unilateral coercive measures and legislation are inconsistent with international law, international humanitarian law, the United Nations (UN) Charter and the rules and principles governing peaceful relations between states. This expresses deep concern about their negative effects on human rights, the right to development, international relations, trade, investment and cooperation.

A group of independent UN human rights experts also called on countries to lift, or at least reduce, sanctions to allow affected countries and communities access to vital supplies needed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The experts said, "The sanctions imposed in the name of realizing human rights in reality kill people and deprive them of their basic rights, including the right to health, food and the right to life itself."

The International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights affirms its rejection of all unilateral economic sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States of America on Syria, stressing that these coercive measures have far-reaching consequences that negatively affect basic human rights and have a profound impact on the poor and the most vulnerable. They also undermine the chances of a political solution. ICSFT affirms that under no circumstances should people be deprived of the basic means of survival. We express our concern about the severity of these sanctions, which are not limited to Syria, but extend to the countries that deal with it. This is a clear violation of the most basic principles of international law because it leads to forcing countries to apply coercive measures as well.

With the beginning of the 44th session of the Human Rights Council and with the World Health Organization warning that a country like Syria, which is witnessing turmoil and war on its soil, is the most vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19, especially because the health and food sector suffers from severe weakness and limitations. ICSFT urges Member States and United Nations agencies to take immediate measures to abolish those coercive measures and to avoid using economic measures, political measures, and other measures to pressure other countries to exercise their sovereign rights. It affirms that basic commodities such as

food and medicine should not be used as a tool for political coercion. This is to say that in any case, people should neither be deprived of their livelihood nor their development. ICSFT appreciates the declarations of Alena Douhan Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures which are bringing suffering and death in countries such as Cuba, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Sudan, Syria, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Yemen. ICSFT appreciates her appeal to lift all unilateral sanctions that prevent countries subject to sanctions from fighting COVID-19. ICSFT calls for an investigation into the humanitarian crimes that EU and USA sanctions have caused on the Syrian people. It calls for an immediate mechanism to be implemented with the aim of putting of pressure on those countries to withdraw and end the sanctions and support the Syrian state to overcome this crisis.

Within the agenda of the 45th session, ICSFT hopes that the Human Rights Council and all relevant bodies in the United Nations take practical and effective measures to end these unilateral coercive sanctions on the Syrian people to avoid a serious humanitarian disaster that has already begun.

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