

Col. Richard Black (ret.)

The Immorality of Sanctions: The Case of Syria

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I'm Senator Dick Black. First of all, let me introduce myself. I spent 32 years in the military; I fought in Vietnam as a Marine Corps officer. I flew in combat as a helicopter pilot. My plane was hit by enemy fire four times. I then fought on the ground in some of the most fierce combat of the war. I was wounded; both my radiomen were killed right beside me fighting. So, I come at this as a patriotic American. I've shed a bucket of blood for this country. I want my country to succeed, but I also want it to be a good and decent country.

Let me recap for you the history of the United States in the war in Syria. In 2011, that was the year that the war first began. The war has been going on for 10 years, but it started in 2011. Before it had actually developed into a full-fledged war, there were domestic protests in Syria. The Central Intelligence Agency sent agents from the Special Activities Center; they surreptitiously entered the sovereign territory of Syria against all international laws. Their mission was to lead al-Qaeda-linked terrorists in overthrowing the government of Syria. Keep in mind that al-Qaeda was the group that flew the jets into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on 9/11, killing 3,000 Americans in the greatest terrorist attack in our history.

These were the people that the CIA was organizing and leading. They used weapons looted from the U.S. attack on Libya. Those weapons were funneled across the border into Syria where they were used in a campaign that involved mass, deliberate rape of women and children. It involved beheadings; it involved crucifix-

ions. We were literally crucifying Christians on crosses. This was being done at the instigation of the Central Intelligence Agency, and with their funding and with their leadership, and their direction of al-Qaeda.

As this went on, the al-Qaeda terrorists actually opened slave markets in certain places, and they made bond slaves of Christian and Yazidi women and children. They actually had published price lists in which the highest prices went for the smallest girls. It was the

desire of these terrorists to rape little girls. Unfortunately, this was happening with the support, with the arms, with the organization supplied by the United States.

Despite what we had done, despite the enormous force that was rallied against Syria to overthrow it, the people of Syria rejected radical Wahhabi Islam, and they rallied around their president and around the army. They drove the terrorists from most of Syria. In 2014, there was a nationwide election conducted, and President Bashar al-Assad was overwhelmingly elected in a fair and free election that involved 3/4 of all the electorate of the country. It was monitored by over 30 nations; I think almost everybody agreed that, yes, it was a full and fair election.

'Plan B': Stealing and Sanctions

So, he won the election then. By 2015, the war was beginning to turn badly against the terrorists. In 2016, the al-Qaeda terrorists suffered their great defeat in the industrial city of Aleppo. It was very much like the lost battle at Stalingrad that signaled the demise of the Nazi army in the Second World War. The loss of Aleppo was a stunning and huge defeat for al-Qaeda, and for the forces of the United States that had orchestrated this movement against the people of Syria.

In 2015, Secretary of State John Kerry announced, out of frustration with the failure of the terrorists to seize the country, he said we're going to have a 'Plan

B.’ This was very vague what he said, but the facts disprove the promises of Barack Obama that not one boot would set foot on the ground of Syria. Immediately, the United States began pouring U.S. troops onto the ground in Syria, and we seized control of northern Syria from the Syrian government.

The reason that this was especially important is that northern Syria is the breadbasket of Syria. It also supplies the oil and natural gas for Syria. As a consequence, the legacy of Syria, the thing that all Syrians relied on for their food and for their fuel was *stolen* from them. The United States actually authorized an American company to build a \$150 million refinery and to do drilling in northern Syria in order to steal their legitimately-owned oil and natural gas.

The objective of all of this was to starve to death the Syrian people and to cause them to freeze to death in the winter. We began then—we enacted what were called the Caesar sanctions. This was during the time that Mike Pompeo became Secretary of State. He announced maximum pressure campaigns, because the United States had figured out a workaround so that even though international law said that it was unlawful to blockade a nation and prevent them from receiving supplies unless you were at war, we found that we could do this. First of all, we just ignored the provision on blockades; we actually have a naval blockade in place. But beyond that, we had discovered that by taking control of the banking system that facilitates transactions in Syria, we were able to effectively block them from receiving medical supplies.

I know when I visited in 2016, that women were dying of breast cancer because they could not get ordinary medication that saves the lives of women in this country from breast cancer. We did this deliberately to create this intense feeling of suffering and hopelessness. Today, there are breadlines in Syria. We have imposed—Congress passed what are called the Caesar sanctions [Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act]. Using the Caesar sanctions, we have imposed these tremendously harsh sanctions on the nation which have caused breadlines to form, and there is active starvation taking place. There is a famine in Syria on a very massive basis. People freeze during the Winter; now we’re coming out of the Winter, so the freezing has stopped. Those people are dead; they’re gone. Now, the starvation takes hold; that’s the primary weapon the United States uses.

There was an op-ed published in *Politico* last June by a fellow named Charles Lister, who advocates for the overthrow of the Syrian government. He said that with the coming of the Caesar sanctions, there will be even greater levels of destitution, famine, worsening criminality and predatory behavior as a result of the new sanctions. And he said cheerfully, that this was an opportunity for the United States to achieve regime-change in Syria. I’ve got to tell you that I am not proud of my nation for creating breadlines, for creating starvation and famine, for causing children and elderly people to die.

Deliberately Causing Mass Famine

You know, Syria was a very moral country, a very moral, decent, merciful, loving people. They’re very kind people in Syria. Now, we’re forcing children in Syria to resort to prostitution and to prostitute themselves in order to get a slice of bread so that they don’t starve to death and drop dead in the streets. This is not something that America should take pride in; this is despicable. The *Los Angeles Times* said that the sanctions have been especially harsh on medical supplies, making chemotherapy drugs increasingly difficult to obtain. The *Financial Times* on June 24, 2020 reported that the Caesar Act’s first impact was not on regime insiders, but on ordinary Syrian peasants, who saw their money devalued, prices soar, and the breadlines form.

We are causing, we are deliberately causing mass starvation, mass famine. These are things that we accused the Nazis of in the Nuremberg Trials at the end of the Second World War. If it was a crime for the Nazis to do these things, it is a crime for us to do it. It is loathsome; it is despicable. The idea that we have used mass rape across the country as a tool of war is just loathsome.

I would never have been a part and never would have taken action personally. I had declared that if the My Lai massacre had occurred when I was there, I’d have taken my rifle and I’d have shot the company commander who ordered it to take place. I think what we’re doing here is far worse than the My Lai massacre. It is on a massive, nationwide scale; it is despicable; it is loathsome. We need to reject it.

It is time the American people found out what is being done; found out about our close alliance with al-Qaeda; and put an end to it. Thank you.