

## **EDITORIAL**

# Lift All Sanctions on Syria End the U.S. Occupation

Feb. 25—The sanctions against Syria can no longer be tolerated. Pax Christi USA joined several faith-based groups in an open [letter](#) asking “the Biden administration and Members of Congress to affirm the dignity of all persons by lifting sanctions, continuing diplomacy, and sending aid to those most affected in Türkiye and Syria.”

The Schiller Institute’s two-hour-plus live Feb. 21 [webcast](#), “Syrian Sanctions Must Be Lifted,” is a powerful weapon of truth, directly addressing the fact that the sanctions and war, which have forced 90% of the Syrian population into poverty, go hand in hand with the military occupation of Syria by the United States, which must also end.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute; Vanessa Beeley, British independent journalist now living in Damascus; Marwa Osman, a professor, author and TV presenter from Lebanon; Col. Richard H. Black (ret.), former Virginia State Senator; and Chandra Muzaffar of Malaysia, leader of JUST (International Movement for a Just World) presented the scale of destruction inflicted by United States and its European allies on Syria since 2007.

After the devastating earthquakes this February, the necessity of the complete abrogation of the unilateral economic and financial sanctions by which the United States and European Union are blocking reconstruction—and now, even aid to that country—is imperative.

The call went out: “You must demand that the U.S. Congress lift the ‘Caesar’ Sanctions. This is collective punishment of the civilian population” of Syria. Moderator Dennis Speed noted that as the seminar was going on, Schiller Institute delegations were in Congress pressing for an end to NATO’s war in Ukraine and to the sanctions on Syria.

### **Action Beginning**

In the U.S. House of Representatives, a “War Powers Resolution,” was submitted Feb. 21 by Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) to get all U.S. troops out of Syria. By

law, that action is a privileged measure, which must be voted upon within 18 days. If it is voted up, the Biden Administration will have 15 days in which to implement the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The LaRouche movement is mobilizing to target Congress, which has blood on its hands, to pass this resolution, which will be an important first step in stopping the barbarism of sanctions in Syria, and worldwide.

### **Reports From Experts**

**Vanessa Beeley**, speaking from Syria reported: “Syrians are resilient, they’re resourceful. And despite the fact that 90% of the population is below the poverty level, they have survived.... Now, they have a terrible humanitarian tragedy, five million estimated homeless in Syria. Even in the northwest, which is under the control of Western-backed terrorist groups, it is a humanitarian tragedy. But the West is not helping.” She underscored that sanctions are a part of the occupation of Syria, which has “three of its four borders controlled by hostile powers.” Moreover, she said, “The West is exploiting this tragedy to effectively kick start the war again against Syria,” letting “humanitarian” aid in only through the Idlib crossings from Türkiye which al-Qaeda controls. She concluded, “What Syria needs now is for the sanctions to be lifted; but more than anything, it needs the U.S. occupation ended.... [The U.S.] occupies the southeast in their Al-Tanf military base which also controls the Rukban refugee camp. It has established a 55-kilometer no entry zone around it, where it’s training and arming armed groups, including ISIS. So, end the occupation, please.”

**Chandra Muzaffar** emphasized, “In all, sanctions wouldn’t mean a thing without occupation.... We must understand that occupation continues in West Asia.” Syria, he said, has become since 2007 a state which is not able to function as a state, because large parts of it are occupied by foreign powers and various groups backed by those powers. Syria had outdone many of

the richer countries in Southwest Asia in providing both health care and education to all its people, equal rights and respect to women, tolerance in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society. It is a victim of “U.S. hegemony,” he said, which must end. “We should be able to work together to bring about a world of development.”

**Marwa Osman** was very specific in suggesting to Americans: Go to associates or neighbors and raise some funds to aid the tens of thousands of Syrian victims of the earthquakes. Then contact your member of Congress and ask for assistance in sending those funds to people or charities in Syrian cities like Aleppo, and ask that Member to explain to you why that’s blocked, not possible, although the sanctions were supposed to be “suspended for 180 days” [the financial sanctions were not suspended]. Then demand that that Member change it. Even NGOs in neighboring Lebanon, Ms. Osman said, are afraid that they’ll be sanctioned by the United States and EU if they convey funds to Syrians across the border.

**Col. Richard Black**, who has made numerous visits to Syria, graphically described the nature of the terrorists supported by the U.S. government, stating that we have turned over large parts of the country to terrorists “who take selfies standing on the backs of innocent women. It is disgraceful! And now, we’re following up by taunting the people of Syria who are under this terrible earthquake devastation, and we’re taunting them about how they really should have gone the other way. They should have been on our side, and now they’re getting what they deserve is essentially what the State Department is saying.

“It is a disgrace! It is a horror! If the American people understood what is happening, this government would fall. This government could not exist in the United States if the American people were not shielded by this complicit media in the horrors that we have imposed on the Syrian people.

“It is a shame. I hate to see it, because I love my country. I want it to be a better place, than it was when I was growing up. And I have hope and prayer that it will become better, but we could certainly start by ending these obscene Caesar Sanctions that are imposing famine and freezing on innocent people.”

## Faith-Based Groups

An urgent [appeal](#) was issued on Feb. 6 by the Middle East Council of Churches, an affiliate of the World

Council of Churches, stating “We urge the immediate lifting of sanctions on Syria and allowing access to all materials, so sanctions may not turn into a crime against humanity.”

On Feb. 17, an open letter was released by a group of faith-based organizations in the United States. The letter states in part:

Therefore, we as a community ask Congress and the Administration to:

- **Lift sanctions** in order to expedite aid delivery, open commercial access, and expand relief services to civilians in need.
- **Remove the 180-day sunset** on the new General License for Syria.
- **Extend applicability** for the newly adopted Global General License for material support in all of Syria.
- **Continue to communicate** with Syrian and UN counterparts during the earthquake response, and work to open new border crossings for personnel to access Northern Syria.
- **Issue letters of comfort** to financial institutions and aid organizations to help facilitate emergency assistance in Syria.
- **Coordinate** the opening of banking channels to help NGOs and INGOs get aid to where it is needed; including family remittances.
- **Appropriate** additional funds to USAID and UN programs to support Türkiye and Syria through the earthquake response and recovery.

The letter was signed by the Alliance of Baptists; American Friends Service Committee (AFSC); Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP); Community of Christ; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL); Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns; Mennonite Central Committee U.S. (MCC); National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; Pax Christi USA; Presbyterian Church (USA); The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society; Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC); and United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries.