

UPR Submission

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The Syrian Arab Republic



سازمان دفاع از قربانیان خشونت
Organization for Defending Victims
of Violence

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About ODVV

1. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-political organization in Special Consultative Status to ECOSOC. ODVV was established in 1988 in Tehran and has been active in the field of human rights and humanitarian activities.

2. ODVV is also associated to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), a member of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), AMAN Network of Rehabilitation Centers in the Middle East and North Africa and International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT). ODVV has cooperated with international organizations in a variety of issues and has working relations with many NGOs in Iran and around the globe.

3. ODVV is focused on promoting human rights, supporting victims of violence, empowering Iranian civil society, and offering human rights consultations to the Iranian institutions and organizations. ODVV is actively involved in running various human rights education courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences. Other activities include:

- Participation in UN Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva;
- Publication of different books and booklets on human rights such as Rights of the Child, Unilateral Coercive Measures (Economic Sanctions), Racism, Racial Discrimination, Islamophobia and Xenophobia;
- Publishing *Defenders Quarterly* (in English), human rights news and developments *Weekly* (in Farsi), daily updating ODVV websites in English, Farsi and Arabic;
- Internship for Iranian and international students.

4. ODVV is submitting the following report on the human rights situation of the Syrian Arab Republic, in order to contribute to the improvement of human rights inside the country.

The Situation in Syria

5. Syrian people have been suffering from war and instability for over a decade. The situation has led to shortages of humanitarian items and unprecedented human suffering and hardship for the Syrian people and depriving them of their basic needs.

6. An alarming 13 million Syrians¹ are dependent upon humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, the dire humanitarian situation is exacerbated by unilateral sanctions against Syria targeting its population especially the most vulnerable ones, including the women, children and the patients.

7. The unilateral coercive measures imposed on Syrian people target vital economic and service sectors and constitute one of the main factors that contribute to violations of all human rights of the Syrian people, including their standard of living and provision of their basic needs including access to medicine, food, vaccine, medical equipment, oil, energy, transportation.

8. The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, intensified the need for international solidarity and cooperation. This is while the people living in countries targeted by economic sanctions are prevented from any international co-operation even under the pandemic.

The Effect of Sanctions on People

9. The long term instability has led to widespread violation of all social, economic and cultural rights in Syria with the government, the UN bodies, national and international NGOs struggling to help the people meet their basic needs.

10. This is while the illegal and unjust Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCM)s reverse all the efforts by the mentioned institutions aimed at improving human rights and living standards in the country. The sanctions prevent people from rebuilding their homes destroyed by the long term conflict, depriving them from their most basic rights, including access to food, medicine, vaccine and safe homes.

11. The Caesar sanctions prevent international aid from reaching Syrians because many agencies fear violating the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, adopted by the United States. The Act threatens many lives in the country and violates Syrian's rights to housing, health, and an adequate standard of living and development. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Unilateral Coercive Measures, enforcement of the Act worsen the existing humanitarian crisis,

¹ . <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/01/1000012-syria-13-million-people-desperate-need-seventh-war-torn-winter-sets-un-warns>

because it prevents the Syrian people from the chance of rebuilding their basic infrastructure which is destroyed in the war and “If people are forced to live in degrading and inhumane circumstances because rebuilding is prevented, this could affect their physical and mental integrity, and may under some circumstances amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment”².

United Nations Stance on the Sanctions

12. In addition to the repeated calls by the UN Secretary General³ and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights⁴ on the necessity of sanctions lifting especially under the emergency of the Covid-19 pandemic, Syria sanctions are condemned and criticized by the UN Special Rapporteur on Unilateral Coercive Measures.

13. Calling on the sanctioning countries to remove the UCMs against Syria, the UN Special Rapporteur on Unilateral Coercive Measures, Professor. Alena Douhan, reiterated that ““The sanctions violate the human rights of the Syrian people, whose country has been destroyed by almost 10 years of ongoing conflict,” adding that ““The conflict and violence have already had a dire impact on the ability of the Syrian people to realize their fundamental rights, having extensively damaged houses, medical units, schools, and other facilities.”

Recommendations

14. Considering the appalling humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) calls for immediate lifting of the unilateral coercive measures that target the economic and service sectors in the Syrian Arab Republic and exacerbate the human suffering of the Syrian people, especially in light of the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on the Syrian’s right to life and right to health.

² . <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26630&LangID=E>

³ . “I ... appeal for the waiving of sanctions that can undermine countries’ capacity to respond to the pandemic” António Guterres’, March 27, 2020; <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20024.doc.htm>

⁴ . “At this crucial time, both for global public health reasons, and to support the rights and lives of millions of people in these countries, sectoral sanctions should be eased or suspended. In a context of global pandemic, impeding medical efforts in one country heightens the risk for all of us,” Michelle Bachelet, March 24, 2020; <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25744&LangID=E>

15. ODVV echoes the call made by the UN officials and experts and NGOs on the necessity of lifting UCMs imposed on the Syrian people.

16. ODVV is alarmed by the effect of Cesar Sanctions on Syrians and calls for the immediate lifting of all killer UCMs including the Cesar Sanctions.

17. Finally, ODVV calls on the Syrian people to document the killer effect of all unilateral sanctions and refer the cases to international courts and tribunals.