

Mr. President,

We extend to you our congratulations upon your inauguration as the 46th President of the United States.

We wish to lose no time approaching you for an urgent response to the severe humanitarian crisis in Syria. The UN Special Rapporteur on Unilateral Coercive Measures, Prof. Elena Douhan, appealed at the end of December for the United States to lift its complex web of economic sanctions that severely harm the people of Syria.

The Special Rapporteur stated that that U.S. sanctions “violate the human rights of the Syrian people” and “exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation in Syria, especially in the course of COVID-19 pandemic,” by blocking the aid, trade and investment necessary for Syria’s health system and economy to function. The Special Rapporteur’s findings reflect a growing consensus in the humanitarian aid and human rights communities that this form of collective punishment of the civilian population is driving Syria into an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe.

Ten years ago, Syria was a breadbasket for the region. Today it is on the verge not just of hunger, but starvation, according to the World Food Program (WFP). Last June, the WFP’s Director, former Governor David Beasley, warned that half of all Syrians were going to bed hungry, and that the country was on the brink of “mass starvation.” Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic is raging through the country, unhindered by a healthcare system largely destroyed over ten years of war.

Millions of hard-pressed Syrians will go to bed hungry and cold tonight. Unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States make the economic plight of the Syrian people worse.

We urge you, Mr. President, to help Syrians to alleviate a humanitarian crisis that threatens a new wave of instability in the Middle East and beyond by implementing the UN Special Rapporteur’s recommendation.

We believe that the legitimate national interests of the United States can be pursued without collectively punishing the people of Syria by means of economic sanctions.

Respectfully,

Blue Marists