

## I. Syria

# Political Battle Erupts Over Genocidal Sanctions Against Syria

by Daniel Platt

LOS ANGELES, March 4— Following the 7.8-magnitude earthquake which struck Syria and Türkiye Feb. 6, the Anglo-American policy of using economic sanctions to impose genocidal conditions upon the nation of Syria has come under increasing scrutiny. The weeks ahead may be decisive for the survival of this beleaguered nation.

Over the past decade, the War Party of the Anglosphere has become increasingly frustrated over its failure to impose “regime change” on the Syrian Government. It was particularly galling to them that their efforts to engage the Obama Administration in a “hot war” with Syria were skillfully deflected by the diplomacy of Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2013. The standard neocon tactic of cultivating extremist groups within a target nation in order to destabilize its govern-



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The Schiller Institute’s Lena Platt at the Federal Building in the Westwood section of Los Angeles in an End the Siege rally, sponsored by the Arab Americans for Syria, March 4, 2023.

ment, such as the nurturing of ISIS/ISIL and the al-Nusra Front (Jabhat Fatah al-Sham) in Syria, had also failed.

In order to punish Syria for failing to lose the U.S.-sponsored proxy war which began in 2011, the U.S. Congress passed the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, which was signed into law by President Donald Trump. It intentionally sanctions any individual or group that engages in economic activity that would allow any reconstruction of Syria in the

wake of the war, as Trump Administration officials have admitted. (See *EIR*, [Feb. 17](#), “Earthquake Shows Why U.S. Syria Sanctions Must Be Overturned.”)

The “Caesar Sanctions” have effectively prevented emergency aid from reaching the citizens of Syria, following the earthquake which has killed as many as 6,000 Syrians. On Feb. 6, the Schiller Institute released a [statement](#) which said, in part:

This situation confronts us, as Western nations, with our responsibility to uphold the values we claim to embody. Are we going to continue to apply the measures that we very well know have led to the unimaginable suffering, misfortune, and death of innocent



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A large contingent from Arab Americans for Syria joins in the Rage Against the War Machine sister rally in Los Angeles, Feb. 18, 2023.

people? Or are we going to finally make the decision to lift these criminal sanctions? Don't we know, after so many years of use, that the weapon of sanctions only hurts the people?

The following day, the Middle East Council of Churches issued a similar [statement](#), calling for sanctions to be lifted “so sanctions may not turn into a crime against humanity.”

On Feb. 14, Max Blumenthal and Aaron Maté of the independent news website *The Grayzone* posted a [video](#) titled, “Sadistic U.S. Sanctions Block Syria Earthquake Aid.” This was partially in response to a remarkably

ernment. So why not reach out to the Syrian Government? They are in power. They're the ones that run these rescue operations or aid operations and so on. It would be a great gesture. Another gesture would be to sort of lift the sanctions that have basically suffocated Syria.

**Mr. Price:** Said, I'm going to resist the temptation to go into your advocacy rather than questioning. But I will make the point that it would be quite ironic, if not even counterproductive, for us to reach out to a government that has brutalized its people over the course of a dozen years now—gassing them, slaughtering them, being responsible for much of the suffering that they have endured.

Price is aware that his allegations against the Syrian government have been widely discredited by independent journalists. Further propaganda efforts were clearly required in order to deflect criticism. On Feb. 9, the U.S. Department of the Treasury issued “Syria [General License 23](#) Authorizing Transactions Related to Earthquake Relief Efforts in Syria,” which it promoted as relief from the sanctions for 180 days, but “General License 23” applies only to relief efforts by “NGOs, International Orga-

nizations, and by the U.S. Government,” meaning in practice that any disaster aid would have to be channeled through anti-Syrian proxy organizations such as the White Helmets. It further keeps in place sanctions against any third parties who might dare to transport relief materials or transmit funds.

The cavalier attitude of the U.S. establishment toward the suffering of the Syrian people has provoked condemnation around the world. The World Council of Churches, along with UN Human Rights experts, also made the point that the sanctions do indeed hamper earthquake relief efforts and rebuilding. World Food Program Executive Director David Beasley characterized the situation in Syria as a “catastrophe on top of a catastrophe,” referring to the past 12 years of civil war. He stressed the urgency of scaling up food deliveries to Syria “through all routes—without any restrictions,”



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*Riad Saeid, Coordinator for the Arab Americans for Syria, addresses demonstrators at the Rage Against the War Machine sister rally in Los Angeles, Feb. 18, 2023.*

brazen opinion piece in the *Washington Post*, published Feb. 9 under the title, “Don't Lift Sanctions on Syria To Help Earthquake Victims,” written by Wa'el Alzayat, employed as a Middle East policy expert at the U.S. Department of State for ten years, including as Senior Policy Advisor to the notorious U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Samantha Power, now Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). She is an expert at lying about aid.

Another apparent instance of sadism applied to foreign policy was the response of State Department Spokesperson Ned Price to a question from correspondent Said at the Feb. 6 press briefing:

**Question:** ... The Syrian Government, as far as I know, it's a government that you still recognize. You have never unrecognized the Syrian Gov-





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*Diane Sare, candidate for U.S. Senate, leads a rally in NYC, coordinated with End the Siege rallies around the world. March 4, 2023.*

and called for “all parties to facilitate access.”

In Los Angeles, the Schiller Institute’s Lena Platt announced that the “sister rally” to the national Rage Against the War Machine [demonstration](#) of Feb. 19 in Washington had added to its list of demands that the sanctions against Syria be lifted, and on Feb. 18 a spirited contingent of the organization Arab Americans For Syria turned out with signs and banners. More rallies have followed, including on March 4 in Los Angeles, and in New York City, where Schiller Institute demonstrators sang what has become the peace anthem, *Dona nobis pacem*. Diane Sare, candidate for U.S. Senate, briefed the crowd on the need to stop the U.S. warfare against Syria, and the entire Global NATO onslaught.

On Feb.21, the Schiller Institute sponsored a [forum](#) titled “Syrian Sanctions Must Be Lifted,” featuring Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche, former head of the Army’s Criminal Law Division at the Pentagon and Virginia State Senator Col. Richard H. Black, Malaysian human rights activist Chandra Muzaffar, and independent journalists Vanessa Beeley and Marwa Osman. Moderator Dennis Speed accused the Anglosphere of “weaponizing the earthquake.” [See accompanying article in this issue for a report on this event.]

The neocon-dominated U.S. Congress responded with one of the most remarkably cynical resolutions in recent memory. Introduced Feb. 16 and passed Feb. 27, [H.Res. 132](#) is swathed in verbiage expressing sympathy for the victims of the earthquake and support for relief efforts. Indeed, based on responses to inquiries from constituents, many congressmembers thought this to be the actual purpose of the resolution for which they voted. However, had they read the text with greater care, they would have found, amidst the copious croco-

dile tears, that the meat of the matter is the following:

Whereas the Assad regime has shamefully used the earthquake to call for the lifting of United States sanctions, falsely claiming that such sanctions impede the aid response ... Resolved, That the House of Representatives ... urges the Biden administration to remain committed to the protection of the Syrian people including by implementing the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019.

This appallingly disingenuous resolution passed the House with a staggering margin of 414 to 2.

### Renegade Republicans

The two votes in opposition to H.Res.132 did not come, as one might naively expect, from the Progressive Caucus or the “Squad.” The lone dissenting votes were those of Rep. Thomas Massie (R–Kentucky) and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R–Georgia). They are part of a group, comprised mainly of Trump loyalists, which has been fighting a rear-guard action against the neocon juggernaut in Congress, in particular by opposing the allocation of astronomical sums for the proxy war in Ukraine. Taylor Greene, who has espoused many positions which may charitably be described as peculiar, has nonetheless spoken out courageously against the rush to war. A full year ago she tweeted:

And to top it all off, NATO has been supplying the neo-Nazis in Ukraine with powerful weapons and extensive training on how to use them. What the hell is going on with these #NATONazis?

These renegade Republicans have been the target of particular venom in the media, since any resistance at all threatens the shaky edifice of the “narrative” which manufactures consent for a new world war. Several of them were vilified for their failure to participate in standing ovations during the Leni Riefenstahl-style media extravaganza around Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky’s Dec. 21, 2022 address to a joint session of Congress.

One renegade who is frequently pilloried on cable

news is Florida Republican Matt Gaetz, sponsor of the “Ukraine Fatigue Resolution,” [H.Res.113](#), introduced Feb. 9, to halt U.S. aid to Ukraine. On Feb. 21, Gaetz introduced another resolution, [H.Con.Res.20](#),

Directing the President, pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution, to remove the United States Armed Forces from Syria by not later than the date that is 15 days after the date of the adoption of this concurrent resolution.

The resolution forces the Congress to vote on the question of removing U.S. troops from Syria, within 18 days after it is ruled as having been accepted as filed.

Although Matt Gaetz looks at the issue from the standpoint of an America First Policy, he nevertheless sees his resolution as forcing the question in Congress of the need for a bipartisan anti-war policy. His resolution provides flanking support for his Ukrainian Fatigue Resolution in this regard. A *Fox News* story on the resolution quotes Gaetz as saying:

One of my great disappointments in the 118th Congress is that people I thought were anti-war Democrats seem to be consumed, have become cheerleaders for our armed conflict. “The Squad” used to be anti-war. Now they are waving their pom-poms for NATO. And so, I am looking for where the anti-war coalition resides in Congress.

A Dave DeCamp [article](#) in *Antiwar.com* on Gaetz’s resolution makes the broader point about Gaetz challenging the “progressive Democrats” for supporting the war in Ukraine:

Gaetz criticized progressive Democrats for supporting U.S. involvement in Ukraine and said he wanted to see where the “antiwar coalition” in Congress falls when it comes to the Middle East. “Is it more on the right, is it more on the left? Is it some amalgamation thereof? But this resolution will test who is truly adherent to what I believe is America First Foreign Policy and who continues to believe in Middle Eastern adventurism,” he said.

In regard to this resolution, DeCamp makes the



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*U.S. Representative Matt Gaetz has introduced a resolution in Congress which, if passed, would call upon President Biden to pull U.S. troops out of Syria.*

ironic observation that in July 2022, the House voted on an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 7900), introduced by Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY), that would have cut all funds for the U.S. presence in Syria within a year if President Biden did not get the approval of Congress. Although the amendment was voted down, 60% of the Democrats voted for it—130!—including such notable “progressives” as Ro Khanna (D-CA) and Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), now the leader of the Democratic Caucus, and House Minority Leader.

### A Test Case for the Sanctions Regime

According to the [website](#) maintained by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, there are at least 23 different nations that are presently sanctioned by the U.S. government. Sanctions, as has been frequently noted, are a form of warfare, and the people who die from lack of access to food or medical care are just as dead as those who are killed in military conflicts.

The defense of sanctions in Syria is a defense of the sanctions policy in general worldwide, because if they are undermined in Syria, then the entire sanctions policy is called into question. In addition, the defense of the sanctions policy in Syria by the Feb. 27 House vote, is undoubtedly intended to also defend against the upcoming vote on the Gaetz bill under the War Powers resolution to pull U.S. troops out of Syria. If the U.S. were to end the sanctions, why not remove the troops, since these are two sides of the same policy?