

The Impact of Caesar Act on the Syrians

Mr. Ghassan Chahine, Syrian Citizen, Director for a local NGO doing relief and development work in both government and non-government controlled areas of Syria.

“Syrians Can’t Breathe”

First, thank you for your words and concern for what is happening in Syria

So far (6-12-20), 164 cases of COVID19 have been registered, the majority are among returnees from abroad, mainly from the Golf area

This is a very small number compared to the behavior of the Syrian people. If there was a spread of the virus, we would have seen the infected and the dead on the streets

Is it the will of our Lord

Frankly, the Corona-virus is the last interest of Syrian people compared with the economic situation we are living in

As for the prices of some food and non-food items you mentioned, to compare the current price with the pre-war price, here are some of them, and you can see the prices before and after the war

Bread 10 SYP in 2011 - 50 SYP in 2020

Eggs 30 SYP - 2400 SYP

Cheese 50 SYP - 5000 SYP

Milk 400 SYP - 12,000 SYP

Meat 300 SYP - 14,000 SYP

Chicken 200 SYP - 4000 SYP

Tomatoes 5 SYP - 1000 SYP

Rice 35 SYP - 2000 SYP

Sugar 35 SYP - 2000 SYP

Diesel 15 SYP - 300 SYP

Benzin 30 SYP - 225 SYP

It seems that what the regional and international powers could not achieve in nine years of war, they try to get it now depending on the economic war

The exchange rate of the dollar was 50 Syrian pounds in 2011, while in June 2020 it reached 3,000 Syrian pounds

Caesar's ACT, sanctions, intervention at the exchange led to a rapid deterioration of the exchange rate

Burning wheat, barley, and cotton crops in Hasakeh governorate by the Turkish army and by the Kurds who work under the protection of American forces in northeastern Syria, or by agents in Daraa governorate to prevent the supply of any crops that may contribute to improving the economy, in addition to direct negative impact on food security of the Syrian citizen

So far 19,000 hectares were burned

What an oppression the farmer felt when he saw the burning of his field at the harvest season

This is a dirty war crime are committed by these criminals and no one is held accountable

It is stupid to believe that these will affect only the Syrian government

It is so naive to think that this does not affect the Syrian citizen in his food, medicine and livelihood

Does Caesar's ACT distinguish between the government and cancer patients who need the drug

Does it distinguish between the government and children who need milk

Does it distinguish between the government and the majority of the people, the majority of whom are now living below the poverty line

Before the war, Syria was not indebted to a single dollar to any country in the world

Before the war, Syria was food-rich and exported vegetables and fruits to several countries

Before the war, Syria was among the first five countries in the world to produce and export wheat

Before the war, Syria used to export the medicine it manufactured according to international standards to dozens of countries

Now thousands of patients do not find the drug and if it is, it is with high prices

I have a colleague in the office, she is a cancer patient, and she is no unable to find the medicine in Syria, and because of the closure of the borders with Lebanon, she has not been able to secure this medicine since last March, this is just an example of what the patients are suffering

With the deterioration of the economic and political situation in Lebanon, high prices and the closure of borders, this has also contributed to the deterioration of the situation in Syria

Even the international organizations working in the humanitarian field and because of Caesar's law, are afraid to transfer money because transferring money from Lebanese banks to Syria has become subject to new measurements that prevent this

I see no positive side of Caesar's ACT unless if I consider the next conversation between my son and me is positive

In my previous work, I have been offered the Canadian citizenship 10 times and the American one 3 times and rejected it all because I did not and would not want to leave my country, and I asked my son a short time ago if it was better if I accepted the American citizenship and he answered me by saying, you did well because I do not want to be an American and feel Ashamed of what US is doing in all around the world

Consequently, this law has one positive thing, which is the consensus of the Syrian people on the fact that the American administration is criminal

We all know that all this is happening to make Syria weak, which makes it easy to implement the deal of the century

The biggest challenge we face today is to preserve our humanity and our Christianity believe

Are these experiences that the Lord put us in is to know the truth of our faith

Honestly, I admit that many others and I are start thinking in a bad way that makes us happy with what is happening in America

I always talk to Jesus Christ and ask him to forgive me because I am thinking in a wrong way, because I cannot lay on him and hide my feeling not toward the victims, but toward the government

Is it God's will that all the deaths now occurring in America happen without a single bullet

Has the American citizen during the past two months become aware of the death danger that the citizens of the poor countries feel throughout their lives

I was stunned to see D Trump carrying the Bible a few days ago in front of the media and he reminds me of what G W Bush said when invading Iraq that God is with him and after he killed millions of Iraqis, including half a million children it was recognized that there were no weapons of mass destruction

What was the reaction of the American people?, nothing

What was the reaction of the American people after knowing who was behind the events of September 11 and who was behind them?, nothing

What was the reaction of the American people after the killing, cutting, and dissolving of the Saudi journalist Khashoggi and knowing who did this?, nothing

What was the reaction of the American people to the kidnapping and detention Hariri the Lebanese Prime Minister in Saudi Arabia?, nothing

Because in these cases, economic interests, as D Trump said, are more important than punishing Saudi Arabia

Frankly, I fully believe now that most of the American people are guilty because they know what their successive administrations is doing and never react about that, and do not care about what is happening outside their country

If they know what the successive governments are doing, this is a calamity

And if they do not know, it is a greater calamity

They enjoy the prosperity due to the stolen money from abroad by stealing gas, stealing oil, fabricating wars and waging wars, arms deals, and all of these provides tremendous money that supports the economic situation at inside the country and makes them living well at the expense of the poor countries of the world

As D Trump repeats concerning Syria (I love Syrian oil), so his forces remain in the oilfield areas, so what is the response of the American people

Is it logic and justice to achieve the principles of humanity inside your country at the expense of the people outside it

Are millions of victims abroad not worth kneeling on one foot as it is now in US

Syrian people lives matter

Jesus Christ said while he was on the cross addressing the Lord, forgive them, Father, because they do not know what they are doing

But I am sure God will never forgive these people because they know exactly what they are doing

The impact of Caesar act on Syria

Rev. Firas Farah, National Evangelical Church in Kamishli

Things are getting more complicated in Syria, and the war is still going on, but it takes new dimensions and new stages, and all these changes are never useful in solving the Syrian crisis in general nor for the good of the Syrian citizens in particular.

Although the Syrian government is working hard to end this crisis with accelerated measures to solve people's problems, by offering immediate solutions in all necessary areas of life, whether in foodstuffs, medicine, clothing, fuel, education, electricity and water, even if at least by maintaining the level of meeting the necessary needs of the people, once a single problem is solved or one of the needs is met, we find U.S and European countries rushing to create a new problem that brings the situation back to what it was before, for example, the presence of the American occupation in Al Jazeera region in northeast Syria has made it impossible for the government to obtain the necessary fuel to meet the needs of people for heating and operating machinery and professions, so the government was pushed to purchase fuel from abroad from Iran and others, the result of this, after a short period of time, U.S and Europe imposed new sanctions on those who supply oil or gas to Syria. This is what happens in all matters, because they do not want the war to end in Syria to achieve their political goals, but what can the Syrian people do to face these endless troubles, they wait in the cold winter in a long line containing a hundred people at the gas station, to get even a few liters of fuel oil to ensure some warmth for their families, and the same applies to gas and bread..

Not to mention the miserable electricity situation, whenever the Syrian government finds any solution in some way, they impose new sanctions or they launch a new attack against the country, either militarily or economically, and the people suffer and want salvation.

Another example, I am from Al Jazeera region, where the Turkish occupation has penetrated into Syrian northern lands, and the American occupation has penetrated into the northeastern region. These days, they are burning wheat crops in the farms, and farmers who harvested their crops before being burned, are banned from selling it to grain centers of the Syrian government. Or they will be subject to accountability, punishment with fines, confiscation of the crop, prison of the

owner of the land, and the crops are stolen and taken to Turkey or to regions outside Syria through their agents, SDF, Kurdish forces and others... And all of that is just to keep the Syrian government without a stock of wheat, which is the mainstay of life for the Syrian people.

More specifically, these Kurdish forces working under the American umbrella (whether at the direction of the American forces or not is unknown, but it is difficult to believe it is without American knowledge), are also preventing flour from arriving to the bakery. So now, bread is more and more difficult to find in al-Jazeera area. A bag of bread that cost 200 Syrian Pounds (SP) several months ago now costs 1,000 SP. Even the prices of hummus, falafel, meat, and chicken have all gone up, leaving people very hungry. They cannot afford these prices.

This is also the part of Syria where the oil fields are located. But even though this is our resource, we do not benefit. The price for a liter of fuel has risen from 400 SP to 1,800 SP. This increase in price is also driven by the US presence in this area. So now people are not able to travel to work or to other activities.

In addition to the high cost of living, the international economic sanctions on our country have caused a decrease in the exchange rate of the Syrian pound, which has led to a rise in the prices of all materials to almost 30 times, and an increase in the number of people living below the poverty line.

Besides all of that, this evil demonic act comes, which started today and people are afraid and upset about what will happen to them, as they hardly live and hardly try to stay in the country in which they were born, brought up and lived.

They want to pressure the Syrian state and its allies through this act, to surrender to the projects of the West, but the first victim will be the people, and Christians in particular, because they are the remaining minority to preserve the legacy of the remaining faith, to preserve the message of love and live in peace in life, to preserve the church, to preserve the Syrian society. Christians are the safety valve for the Syrian society and its people, since the beginning of the war on Syria; the Church has been striving to preserve the lives of people, its sons and sons of the country.

It was and still providing aid, and helps with guidance and preaching, and provides various humanitarian support (food, health, medical, winter, small projects ... etc.)

What is noticeable from this war is the goal of eliminating ecclesiastical work and Christian presence, and during the past years of war still today, there were intended terrorist acts against Christians. Here they are thousands of Assyrians migrating as a result of the ISIS attack in 2015 and the whole world was watching that, they were slaughtered, looted and displaced from their homes and villages And their lands, and scattered in far distant lands, Here are the explosions, whose smell is still pervading the streets of the Christian neighborhoods in Qamishli, and also in the streets of Christians in Hasaka in 2015 killing their youth and children, and pushing them to flee to faraway places and other homelands that they do not desire and do not want to live in. Here are the artillery shells of terrorist militants in Jobar and Ain Tarma, with rockets and mortars shelling churches, homes, streets, and cafes of Christians in Al-Qasaa and Bab Touma in Damascus.

And today, Caesar act comes to degrade the deadly weight on the lives of all people. Today the employee's salary in Syria equals \$17, which is not enough to live just for one day, the lack of the necessary foodstuffs, medicine, and other things began to increase, and it brought the opportunity for corrupted merchants of war to prey on people more than before. How will the people live? and Christians are part of this people, their lands are burned, their shops and their professions closed because of the high prices, many of them lose their jobs, is this the solution for the Syrian people, America? Is this the democracy and freedom which the war in Syria was broke out for?

We, as a church and as Christians, live in this country still this moment and we will not leave it, and we will not stand against our country or our government, because it is oppressed and we are also oppressed with it. We reject this act and demand that it be abrogated, and if those whom imposed this act on us do not hear and do not want to respond, we have God who supports and helps us, and He will certainly punish those who try to deprive us of the life which is our right and in our land.

God help us,

Thank you

The Impact of Caesar Act on the Syrians

Rev. Ibrahim Nseir, National Evangelical Church in Aleppo

The Caesar sanction that is adopted by U.S.A government over Syria is an unjust attitude which will add more problems to Syrian society, and more suffering to Christian community.

1 - The first department that will be highly damaged will be the health department. The consequences of this sanction came up to the surface even before it takes place. In fact, much of medicines are very rare or even not available anymore; and if it can be found, the price will be doubled at least 30 times. Here we should know that the Christian community is considered among the weakest communities because those who are wealthy left the country and those who remained are the poorest category.

In addition, the limited medical equipment - which are not able to breathe any more - are facing a very critical future. This means that the percentage of deaths will increase, and it will contain the younger ages because of lack of medicine and medical equipment which can help in saving lives. For instance, we have only two M.R.I in Aleppo which has almost four million people. People who have cancer cannot be treated by radiation except in Damascus because Syria is not allowed to import this equipment and the one in Damascus is already 12 years old. Another example—the medical equipment named “Pet Scan” which can discover the locations of Cancer in the body is not available in all the cities of Syria except only one or two in Damascus, and the cost of one scan is 200 - 300 thousand Syrian pound while the average of the income is 60 thousand in a month. The society in Syria in general and Christians specifically are going to face calamities, because Caesar sanction will affect the marginalized, the poor, and minorities.

2 - Another domain that will be afflicted is the economical one; however, not the wealthy and the rich. You should know that the prices have doubles almost 30 - 40 times while the churches almost spent all its savings because they were providing for last ten years of war; and I think they are not able to do this anymore and if some still have something to give, it will be very limited. For example, as a religious leader in Aleppo, I meet almost every day 30 individuals (from different beliefs) who come asking for help (food baskets - hygiene baskets- fuel etc.) to live in dignity. Those who come to my office asking for help belong to different religious groups. In fact, because Christians belong to specific spiritual heritage and some others (none Christians) are also people of great ethical commitments, they cannot be involved in the corruption dirty game, therefore, Christians and others of the ethical community will pay the highest price of these sanctions, and it will be at the cost of their daily life and the future of their coming generations.

3 - This Caesar sanction comes after ten years of war; therefore, the crimes will increase in society; and the worst victims will be Christians and others of the ethical community, because they do not believe in violence and revenge as a response to crimes against them. Furthermore, because of tribalism the government is challenged in losing its prestige, which means more power to tribalism who are used to protect its members - even if they are mistaken. This means that the Christian and others of the ethical community will be vulnerable to attacks in their property and dignity.

To conclude, the Caesar sanction will target the society; and who claims something different than this is either deluded or very far away from reality.

The impact of Caesar Act on the Syrians

Archimandrite Sergius Aladra, Homs Syria, Greek Orthodox

Before announcing the implementation of Caesar Act on the Syrians, and it clearly and explicitly enters into effect since yesterday, we as Syrians have gone through nine years of war whose results were clearly catastrophic on all social, health, humanitarian and economic levels, as it is known to everyone that Christians were not involved in this war, but we paid the price and it was catastrophic, as most Christians have deserted their villages and lost their homes and properties and some of them have reached the status that they have lost a family member (kidnapped / killed / martyr). And some of them migrated and left their homes and country forever, because there is nothing left for them.

Who stayed here were those who could not leave and were working hard to get their livelihood, and they were able to withstand the difficult conditions of life through the war, even though it was almost impossible due to the continuous increase of prices on the one hand, and the lack of job opportunities on the other hand.

Therefore, this act had more disastrous consequences than war. Since this act affects the personal income of the individual, as most Christians have sold everything they saved in previous times. Consequently, today they have very little financial resources to fulfill the extreme need.

Today there is a severe destitution in Syria. As the church that was able to provide any kind of support, today it is also completely powerless under the impact of this act, since it is no longer possible to provide financial resources due to economic sanctions on banks in Syria, and the inability to reach neighboring countries to obtain any financial resource due to the current closure of the borders through the crisis of Corona Virus. This makes the situation worse.

As for the health situation of Christians in particular, it is a bad and bitter situation due to the lack of most medicines, especially medicines for chronic and cardiac diseases in pharmacies and hospitals, Also, the individuals can no longer follow up their health status due to the higher costs of medical care after they have risen more than 50%, therefore, in the coming days we will witness an increase in cases of severe illness without being able to lend them a helping hand.

As for the economic reality, Christians have clearly gone out of business because of the loss of capital or their emigration outside the country, and the suspension of commercial relations due to this unjust act and the loss of job opportunities.

With regard to educational reality, this act will affect students, especially those talented ones. There is no longer any possibility of student exchange with foreign universities, or to provide any student scholarships and even church scholarships.

Therefore, the results of this act have clearly appeared from the first day of its entry into effect, on those very few who stayed in the country, and it will be very difficult for them to withstand for more than one year if the situation remains like this.