



Syrian regime's is falsely linking economic sanctions and the fight against COVID-19

The Syrian regime has launched a political and media campaign calling for the lifting of economic sanctions against it, claiming this is needed to cope with the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the areas of Syria it controls.

The Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity (or the list of signatories..etc) is astounded by these demands and allegations, and warns the international community and the relevant countries against entertaining such demands for the following reasons:

- The economic sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime do not affect the health sector.
- The Syrian regime has so far denied any cases of COVID-19 in areas it controls, despite the fact that, amongst others, the Pakistani government confirmed that the cases where the virus was spread in Pakistan by those coming from Syria. In addition, the regime has arrested several Syrian doctors who reported cases of COVID-19 infections in Damascus.
- The Syrian regime did not take any possible and affordable measures to prevent the spread of the virus, and began some superficial measures very late and without a genuine policy of raising awareness among the population.
- The regime - through an official in the Ministry of Health - stated that there are no cases of COVID-19 virus in Syria, but on the contrary, that international governments are asking for help and expertise from the regime to confront the virus. This is yet another example of complete dissociation from the reality and manipulation with the health and life of Syrians.
- Experience has shown that any economic aid reaching the Syrian regime will be used to support corrupt practices of the regime, including the sale of humanitarian aid, and that such aid, if not administered directly to the people, will never reach Syrians for whom it is intended.
- Lastly, the regime has too long a record of targeting and destroying hospitals and killing medical personnel to be trusted to act out of genuine concern for the health of Syrians.

All these points indicate that the Syrian regime is not concerned with the fate of the Syrians and their health, and any aid that is sent to the regime for distribution in areas it controls, that is not purely in the form of medical supplies, is likely to be invested in more killing, repression and depriving the Syrians of the most basic elements of a decent and healthy life.

In the interest of the safety and health of the Syrians anywhere, we ask the World Health Organization in Syria to reject the false figures promoted by the Syrian regime about the number of cases of COVID-19 virus, and to pressure the Syrian regime to take the necessary measures to prevent the spread of the virus and provide prevention and necessary treatment for citizens.

We also demand that United Nations and international organizations working with the regime to secure permission to enter the regime's prisons, review the situation of prisoners regarding COVID-19 and provide the necessary treatment, as there are real concerns that prisoners will be executed or left to their fate under the pretext of containing the spread of the virus.