



A human rights approach to combat illicit trade: the case of Syria **24 February 2022, 16:00-17:30**

Exacerbated by a complex and intertwined regional conflict, illicit trade flourishes in Syria, increasing criminal and terrorist profits, contributing to political instability and feeding mechanisms that favor impunity and fuel human suffering, ultimately prolonging the conflict. The conflict has determined the complete collapse of all socio-economic structures within Syria, compounded for the past two years by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the emergence of an unregulated and informal economic and trade system within Syria, which is fueled on the one hand by the need to acquire financial and economic resources to feed the military operations but also on the will to gain and amass political power to avoid accountability and establish a system of impunity based on the “rule of might”.

The massive level of violence witnessed in Syria for the past decade diverted the attention from the economic and trade interests of the warring parties. While the international community has established various mechanisms, such as the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry and the IIIM, to monitor and report the massive human rights violations perpetrated by all warring parties; the focus and attention on the economic and trade repercussions of the conflict have been mostly limited to the exploitation of antiquities, narcotics and sanctioned goods. Although countering international illicit trade is one of the most densely regulated area of international law, these instruments only have a sectoral approach and focus solely on the protection of the property rights of those who produce, sell or buy them. This approach risks leaving in the shadow the economic, social, political and humanitarian consequences of illicit trade.

As the EU remains the biggest international donor in assistance for needs inside Syria, it is critical that European institutions develop a human rights approach to the challenges posed by the emergence of war economies and trafficking in conflict situations and look into the necessary tools and mechanisms for effectively addressing these challenges. It is also crucial that civil society and the private sector acquire an increased awareness on the nexus between illicit trade and human rights violations against individuals and communities as a basis for greater commitment to counteracting illicit trade.

This event aims at highlighting how war economies and illicit trade have serious and tangible costs for human rights and for the erosion of the rule of law, increasing the suffering of civilians, contributing to political instability and feeding mechanisms that favor impunity and underline the need for a human-rights based approach to countering illicit trade and the effects of war economies on the affected populations.

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School of Advanced Studies – Pisa

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PROGRAM

Co-Chairs: Hussein Sabbagh, Euro-Syrian Democratic Forum
Niccolò Figà-Talamanca, No Peace Without Justice

Panel: Hon. Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Member of the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs
Abdulbaset Sieda, Syrian politician and academic; former President of the Syrian National Council
Naghham Ghadri, Human Rights advocate and former Vice-President of the Syrian National Opposition Coalition
Luca Poltronieri Rossetti, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies
György Tatár, Budapest Center for Mass Atrocities Prevention
Mr. Mohamad Almrwah, Syrian human rights activist and researcher
Munaff Koman, Omran Centre for strategic studies, and member of Syrian Council for International Relations

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