

The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act: Why Washington Is Both Corrupt and Ignorant

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The creatures that lurk through the corridors of power in Washington DC have refined corruption to the point where almost anything goes and almost no one is ever held accountable. Traditionally, Congressmen reward their various constituencies by inserting riders into larger pieces of legislation that grant money, exemptions or favors to certain groups or individuals. It is sometimes referred to as "pork." The recent bloated [omnibus spending bills](#) totaling \$1.4 trillion, which passed through Congress and were signed off on by President Donald Trump, were for the shameless denizens of Capitol Hill a gold mine. The process was so corrupt that even some Senators like Ted Cruz joked that "Christmas came early in Washington. While you were with your family, while you were shopping for Christmas, the lobbyists were spending and spending. I present to you, the massive omnibus bill that Congress is voting on."

And no one is more corrupt in Congress than some of those at the top of the food chain, where the Speaker and the Minority leader in the House and the Majority and Minority leaders in the Senate have the final say on what gets cut and what remains. The lugubrious Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky is one of the most adept at milking the system to buy his continued reelection in a state where he is actually not very popular, with an approval rating of only 37%. Within the current spending bill [he has managed to include](#) more than \$1 billion worth of federal spending and tax breaks for some choice constituencies among the Kentucky voters. A tax break for the state's whisky distillers alone came to a projected \$426 million for 2020 and there were also breaks for the state's thoroughbred horse industry as well as hundreds of millions of dollars more for new federal construction.

One can only wish that politicians would actually commit themselves to doing good for the American people, but the sad reality is that they spend so much time raising and distributing money that they only respond to constituents with the deepest pockets or those who make the most noise. Rarely does anyone actually read the bills that are being voted on. Part of the omnibus spending bills was the \$738 billion dollar defense policy component, and, as in the case of the larger amounts intended to keep the federal government funded, the devil is frequently found in the details.

One part of the defense spending is called the ["Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act,"](#) which is intended to punish Syria and its President Bashar al-Assad with sanctions for alleged crimes committed during the country's eight year civil war. The Caesar Act is named after a Syrian military photographer who reportedly took and then smuggled tens of thousands of photographs out of the country that provided evidence for claims that war crimes had been

carried out by the Syrian government. “Caesar” eventually wound up in Washington where he briefed sympathetic lawmakers on the regime’s alleged crimes.

The Caesar Act will impose new sanctions on Syrian leaders and also on companies, states and even individuals that support the Assad government militarily, financially or technically. It will include placing new sanctions on Russia and Iran. Enab Baladi, a website run by opponents of the al-Assad government praised the move, writing that “[The bill] imposes sanctions on military contractors and mercenaries who are fighting for the Syrian government, Russia, Iran, or any of the parties against which sanctions have been previously imposed.” It also observes that the act would be a “deterrent” for anyone seeking to work with or help the al-Assad regime. The US, for its part, has pledged to support international prosecution of criminals in the Syrian government.

The use of sanctions is reminiscent of recent US action directed against Iran, Russia and Venezuela. Both Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the White House have been boasting of how Iran’s economy is being destroyed through economic warfare and it is clear that the intention is to do the same to Syria. The United States has been destabilizing Syria since the passage of the Syria Accountability Act in 2004. It imposed sanctions on the country even before the 2011 Arab Spring uprising, and they were regularly expanded by the Obama administration prior to the 2016 election.

Treasury Department sanctions have frozen assets of the Syrian government and also of hundreds of companies and individuals. They also ban most interactions with Syria by any US person, which means that anyone traveling to Syria and returning to report favorably on the al-Assad government can be plausibly prosecuted for providing a service to the regime.

To be sure no one is completely blameless amidst the turmoil that has engulfed Syria since 2011. Respectable organizations [including Human Rights Watch](#) have been able to identify some of the victims in the Caesar photos and have verified tales of torture and abuse, though it must be observed that fake photos and false testimony are easy to obtain.

But the Syrian regime response to the uprising against its authority is only part of the story, as the violence was fomented largely by Saudi Arabia, and Gulf States and the United States. And by far the worst atrocities against civilians have been committed by the groups actively or tacitly supported by the US, Turkey, the Gulf States and the Saudis, many of which have cooperated openly with the genuine terrorist groups that have been operating in Syria.

There also has to be some question raised about the general credibility of attacks directed against the al-Assad government. It has recently been revealed that both the United Nations Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the US media were [pressured to cover-up](#) the fact that Syria did not use chemical weapons against its own civilians in terrorist infested areas. A *Newsweek* reporter [even resigned](#) when he wrote a story seeking to expose the scandal. The magazine had refused to print the piece.

The US sponsored Syrian National Council has been most active in spreading reports about regime activity, much of which has been proven to be little more than propaganda. Caesar’s trip to Washington in 2015 to show his photos was, in fact, sponsored by the SNC and there is a whole series of fabrications spread by a number of groups supported by those who desire regime change in Damascus.

Consider for a moment the Oscar Award winning White Helmets, “the story of real-life heroes and impossible hope.” The group, which cooperates with the terrorist groups operating in its area, travels to bombing sites with its film crews trailing behind it. Once at the sites, with no independent observers, they are able to arrange or even stage what is filmed to conform to their selected narrative. Exploiting their access to the western media, the White Helmets thereby *de facto* became a major source of “eyewitness” news regarding what was then going on in those many parts of Syria where European and American journalists were quite rightly afraid to go, all part of a broader [largely successful “rebel” effort](#) to manufacture fake news that depicts the Damascus government as engaging in war crimes directed against civilians

The mainstream media is a major part of the problem as it generally only reports stories, like the White Helmets, that denigrate the Syrian government and its allies. Watching the recent BBC reporting of the Syrian Army’s push into Idlib province one learns that “Russian backed Syrian groups are attacking Idlib and creating a humanitarian crisis with 230,000 civilians fleeing the fighting.” The only problem with the coverage is that it does not really make clear that Idlib is terrorist occupied territory. Nor does it say where the civilians are fleeing to – nearly all have headed for the safety of Syrian government held areas.

And particularly for those strivers in Congress who are out hustling for money rather than finding out what is really going on in the world, it might be wise to recollect how gullible the Solons on the Potomac have been in the past. Going back to Ahmed Chalabi, who more than any single individual led the US government to believe that the invasion of Iraq would be a cakewalk, there has been a series of disastrous policy choices made after swallowing whole cloth lies and fabrications made by interested parties. Chalabi provided false intelligence on weapons of mass destruction and alleged ties of the Iraqi government to al-Qaeda. It turned out that he was working for several of the sides in the conflict that ensued, including the Iranian government.

And then there is the Magnitsky Act, sponsored by Russia-phobic Zionist Senator Ben Cardin and signed by President Barack Obama in 2012, which continues to be expanded and exploited by virtue of 2016’s [Global Magnitsky Act](#) to intervene in countries that are alleged to be human rights violators. In its original iteration, the Magnitsky Act, sanctioned individual Kremlin officials for their treatment of alleged whistleblower Sergei Magnitsky, arrested and imprisoned in Russia. Billionaire Bill Browder has sold a contrived narrative which basically says that he and his “lawyer” Sergei Magnitsky uncovered massive tax fraud and, when they attempted to report it, were punished by a corrupt police force and magistracy, which had actually stolen the money. Magnitsky was arrested and died in prison, allegedly murdered by the police to silence him.

Browder and his apologists portray him as an honest and honorable Western businessman attempting to operate in a corrupt Russian business world. Nevertheless, the loans-for-shares scheme that made him his initial fortune has been correctly characterized as the epitome of corruption by all parties involved, an arrangement whereby foreign investors worked with local oligarchs to strip the former Soviet economy of its assets paying pennies on each dollar of value. Along the way, Browder [was reportedly involved in](#) money laundering, making false representations on official documents and bribery.

Browder, who renounced his US citizenship in 1997 reportedly to avoid taxes, has been a frequent visitor to Capitol Hill where he tells congressional committees all about the corrupt and evil President Vladimir Putin. He is also a darling of the completely corrupted

mainstream press because he is saying what they want to hear.

So, is the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act just another bit of nonsense, like Chalabi and Magnitsky? Probably, and all it will do is punish the Syrian people by trying to wreck the country's economy while also limiting the ability of Americans to go independently to the region and see for themselves what is actually going on. It will prolong the pain being experienced by all involved while the legitimate government in Damascus seeks to restore its pre-war borders. It is, unfortunately, a prime example of the United States government in action.

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