

Aftermath Of Government's 'By-Heart' Spending

IMF CLIPS WINGS OF BOG AT LAST

Economist Warns Of Challenging Times For Local Banks



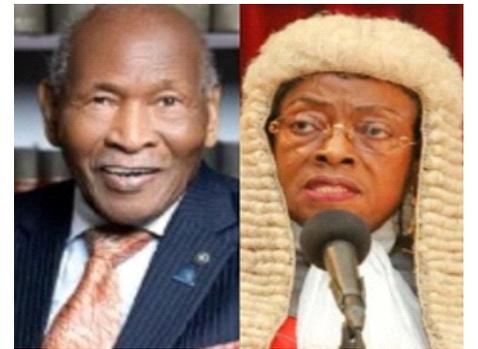
Prof. John Gatsi, Dean-University of Cape Coast Business School

Professor John Gatsi, Dean of Cape Coast University Business School has asked banks in the country to brace themselves up for challenging times ahead with the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) announcement of a resident advisor for the Bank of Ghana (BoG).

According to the renowned Ghanaian economist banks will suffer in meeting international standards when the International Monetary Fund resident advisor for financial sector supervision to the Bank of Ghana takes office. Professor John Gatsi having followed developments prior to the announcement of the IMF resident advisor believes banks will suffer

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The INSIGHT

— EDITORIAL

THE HIV/AIDS MENACE

The report released recently which showed a rise in HIV among pregnant women should be of utmost concern to all.

Even worrying is the Ghana AIDS Commission's admission that HIV/AIDS is on the ascendancy in the country.

Certainly, all these come against the backdrop of increased awareness and public sensitisation over the years, to get the menace effectively under control.

The government through the Ministry of Health, the Ghana Health Service, The Ghana Aids Commission and several world bodies and stakeholders succeeded to a large extent in creating the awareness of condom use and abstinence. The sudden rise in cases of HIV infections simply means that something is not being done or gone wrong.

It is the view of this paper that stakeholders in the health sector will once again come together to find lasting solutions to the problems giving rise to new infections and nib it in the bud.

Towards this end, it is the opinion of The Insight that new intervention measures would help to address the problem.

It is also the expectation of Ghanaians that past measures which helped in addressing the problem such as condom use, abstinence, among others will be revisited and employed in the fight including the individuals who spearheaded such bold initiatives.

Debt Exchange Sam Okudzeto Salutes EX-CJ Sophia Akuffo For Speaking Out

Legal luminary and Member of the Council of State, Sam Okudzeto, has commended the immediate past Chief Justice of Ghana, Sophia Akuffo, for her decision to join pensioners in picketing over the inclusion of their bonds in the government's Domestic Debt Exchange Programme.

According to him, the action by the former chief justice is in the right direction and is needed to ensure that the 1992 Constitution of Ghana works. Speaking at an IEA event on constitutional reform, Okudzeto said that the Constitution of Ghana will only work if people stand up and fight for their rights like Sophia Akuffo is doing. "The Constitution, so to speak, can never close all the loopholes... We can only hope to do no more than arm ourselves with all the legal tools to fight the designs of evil rulers, provided we have all the will to fight.

"No constitution works automatically; human will must be exerted to make it move in the right direction. The citizen, in other words, must stand up and fight for his rights.

"I think I will congratulate my lady [Sophia Akuffo] for that purpose," the statesman said at the event, which was held on Wednesday, February 15, 2023. He reiterated that Ghanaians cannot go to sleep thinking that the provisions of the Constitution alone will solve the



Sam Okudzeto (left), Sophia Akuffo (right)

country's problems.

The former Chief Justice of Ghana, who was appointed by President Akufo-Addo, has for the past few days made headlines after she joined retirees to picket at the Ministry of Finance in Accra over the government's plan to include their bonds in its Domestic Debt Exchange Programme.

THE INSIGHT

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Waiting For Biden's Definition Of Victory In Ukraine

By M. K. Bhadrakumar

There was an air of magical realism in the [day-long visit to Kiev](#) last Friday by the EU's policy commissioners comprising the executive branch of the group—the so-called College—led by the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

At the end of the day in Kiev on Friday, during a joint press conference in Kiev with President Volodymyr Zelensky, all that the EU's super bureaucrats would promise was that “Ukraine's future is in the EU.”

However, as the *BBC* reported, “Typically, it takes years for countries to join—and the EU has declined to set a timescale, describing the sign-up process as “goal-based.” It all depends now on what sort of Ukraine emerges out of the war. Surely, there is a pall of gloom in the Western media lately about the [war storms gathering on the horizon](#). A Ukrainian military officer told the *BBC* that the Russian forces have occupied a third of the highly strategic Bakhmut city, the hub of the so-called Zelensky Line in Donbass. Since then, there have been reports of more Russian successes. The Ukrainian defense line is cracking through which an elephant can pass to the steppes en route to the Dnieper River.

An [AP report](#) quoting Ukrainian officials in Kiev says, “Russian forces are keeping Ukrainian troops tied down with attacks in the eastern Donbass region as Moscow assembles additional combat power there for an expected offensive in the coming weeks.” *Reuters* too reports that Russian forces have been advancing “in relentless battles in the east. A regional governor said Moscow was pouring in reinforcements for a new offensive that could begin next week.”

Writing for *Bloomberg*, Hal Brands at the American Enterprises Institute, drastically trims the Biden administration's priorities to “reluctance to further inflame Putin's ire.” Hal sums up: “Washington's goal is

a Ukraine that is militarily defensible, politically independent and economically viable; this doesn't necessarily include retaking difficult areas such as the eastern Donbass or Crimea.”

There is no more talk about destroying the Russian “war machinery” or an insurrection against the Kremlin and a regime change.

Two recent think tank reports that appeared in the US last month—[Avoiding a Long War](#) by the Rand Corporation (affiliated to the Pentagon) and [Empty Bins](#) by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies—epitomize a rude awakening. The Rand Corporation report starkly warns that given the NATO countries' indirect involvement in the war—“breathtaking in scope”—keeping a Russia-NATO war below the nuclear threshold is going to be “extremely difficult.”

It introduces another chilling thought that a protracted war in Ukraine, which “many” in the Beltway subscribe to as a means to degrade the Russian military and weaken the Russian economy, “would also have consequences for US foreign policy,” as the US' ability to focus on other global priorities—particularly, competition with China—will remain constrained.

The Rand report argues that “Washington does have a long-term interest in ensuring that Moscow does not become completely subordinated to Beijing.” The report concludes that the paramount US interest lies in avoiding a long war, since “the consequences of a long war—raging from persistent elevated escalation risks to economic damage—far outweigh the possible benefits.”

The report presents a frank assessment that “it is fanciful to imagine that it [Kiev] could destroy Russia's ability to wage war.” Its most astounding finding, perhaps, is two-fold: firstly, the US does not even share Ukraine's drive for retrieving “lost” territories”; and, secondly, that it is in the American interest that Russia remains independent of China with a measure of strategic autonomy vis-a-vis the US-China

rivalry.

On the other hand, the CSIS report, authored by the well-known strategic thinker Seth Jones (formerly at the Rand) is a wake-up call that the US defense industrial base is grossly inadequate for the “competitive security environment that now exists.” The report has a chapter titled Ukraine and the Great Awakening, which underscores that the US arms supplies to Ukraine have “strained the [US] defense industrial base to produce sufficient quantities of some munitions and weapon systems.” Jones represents the duality of the US military-industrial complex, which is disinterested in the objective of the war in Ukraine as such. His grouse is that the US defense industrial base—including the munitions industrial base—is not currently equipped to support a protracted conventional war, although, as the UK newspaper [Sunday Times wrote last week](#), “All wars spawn profiteers, and the Ukraine conflict is no exception... The enormous supply of western arms to Ukraine has bolstered all weapons manufacturers, mainly in restocking NATO's own arsenals and fulfilling the big orders from countries now spending more on defense.... In the US, Lockheed, Raytheon and Northrop are among the big arms and jet fighter manufacturers with bulging order books.” The Rand and CSIS reports appeared at a time when the war has reached a tipping point. Thus, within the last month, the US has [announced](#) three of the largest aid packages to Ukraine in a sign of ongoing support as the war nears its one-year mark. And on Friday, the Biden administration announced yet another new Ukraine security package worth approximately \$2.2 billion that includes longer-range missiles with a range of 90 miles for the first time. Herein lies the paradox. On February 1, four senior Defense Department officials [reportedly told](#) the US House Armed Services Committee lawmakers in a classified briefing that the Pentagon doesn't believe Ukraine has the ability to force Russian troops out of the Crimean



A Ukrainian soldier adds wood to a fire to stave off the bitter cold, Bakhmut, Donbass. (File photo). There is no more talk in Western media about destroying the Russian “war machinery” or an insurrection against the Kremlin and a regime change.

peninsula. After the briefing, the House Armed Services Chair Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) asserted in an interview that the war “needs to end this summer.” Senator Rogers said: “There's a school of thought ... that Crimea's got to be a part of it. Russia is never going to quit and give up Crimea... What is doable? And I don't think that that's agreed upon yet. So I think that there's going to have to be some pressure from our government and NATO leaders with Zelensky about what does victory look like. And I think that's going to help us more than anything to be able to drive Putin and Zelensky to the table to end this thing this summer.”

This is the first time that a top US political personality has called for a timeline for the war. It came as no wonder, as Senator Bob Menendez the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who presided over the hearings on Ukraine on January 26—also addressed the core issue in a question for the record to the US Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland who was testifying.

The influential senator bemoaned that Washington has “no definition of victory,” and sought an answer from Nuland, who was rendered speechless. But it must have rankled her, for, at the fag-end of the hearing, she volunteered a reply: “If we define winning as Ukraine surviving and thriving

as a cleaner democratic state, it can, it must, it will.” Period. Nuland fudged. But that is also what [President Biden did](#) in his State of the Union address on Wednesday by sticking to his tiresome mantra—that the US will support Ukraine for “as long as it takes.” That said, significantly, Zelensky has taken off for a tour of major European capitals to discuss what could possibly constitute peace. Indeed, all this is a far cry from [Von der Leyen's rhetoric](#) as she set out for Kiev last week: “With the visit of the College to Kyiv, the EU is sending today a very clear message to Ukraine and beyond about our collective strength and resolve in the face of Russia's brutal aggression. We will continue supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes. And we will continue to impose a heavy price on Russia until it ceases its aggression. Ukraine can count on Europe to help rebuild a more resilient country, that progresses on its path to join the EU.” There is something that either Von der Leyen doesn't know about, or doesn't want to talk about. Meanwhile, Biden seems closer to her than to Rand and the CSIS or Senator Menendez and Nuland—leave alone Republican Senator Rogers. That must be an optical illusion. *MK Bhadrakumar* is a former diplomat. He was India's ambassador to Uzbekistan and Turkey. The views are personal.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

Colombians Hit The Streets In Support Of Petro's Progressive Reforms

Hundreds of thousands of Colombians on Tuesday, February 14, took to the streets across the country to express their support for the economic and social reforms put forward by President Gustavo Petro as part of his progressive government's plans to achieve greater social equity in the country.

In the capital Bogotá, members of various left-wing political parties, popular movements, social organizations, trade unions and citizens in general marched from different parts of the city to the Nariño Presidential Palace and to Bolívar Plaza. The National Prison Movement (MNC) also participated in the mobilization at Bolívar Plaza, demanding solutions to the prison crisis from the Petro government, while expressing their support for its social policies.

Massive rallies in support of the Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez government were also held in Popayán, Cali, Pasto, Cúcuta, Medellín, Villavicencio, Sincelejo,

Neiva, Montería, and Bucaramanga, among other major cities.

These mobilizations were called for by President Petro with the purpose of informing the population about the social reforms that will be carried out in 2023 and strengthening support for them, including the health reform that he presented to Congress the day before.

Petro's health reform is one of the key proposals by his government, which established that health should be a right and not a privilege or a business. The reform seeks to strengthen primary care and disease prevention, increase nationwide access, raise healthcare-sector salaries and fight corruption by eliminating payment intermediaries such as the Health Promotion Entities (EPS).

Health Minister Carolina Corcho, on Monday, said that with this reform the government seeks to guarantee the fundamental right to health to all citizens without exceptions and/or conditions.

At the same time, President Petro explained that "what we want is for a doctor to be able to attend to the home of a peasant family, no matter how far away it is." He added that the extra budget required to finance public healthcare will continue to come from taxpayers and the State. On Tuesday, from the presidential palace, President Petro said that he needs the support of the people to implement social reforms that the opposition rejects. He reiterated that he plans to present reforms on labor and pensions as well as promote programs to guarantee free universal access to university education, and provide subsidies to impoverished families and the poor elderly.

Petro recalled that "change" was the central word of his presidential campaign, and the reason why millions of people voted for him in the 2022 elections. In this regard, he vowed to implement measures to bring



On February 14, hundreds of thousands of Colombians took to the streets across the country to express their support for the economic and social reforms promoted by President Gustavo Petro. Photo: Gustavo Petro/Twitter. President Gustavo Petro recalled that millions of people voted for "change" in the 2022 elections, and vowed to implement measures to bring about the essential social changes in favor of the working class majority

about the much-needed social changes in favor of the working class majority of Colombians.

"Change is not possible without the people. What the people elected was not only a person. It was returning power to the people, and that has to be expressed in historical reality, in everyday life," said Petro.

"What has brought us to this

human crisis is an ideology, it is a way of understanding the world, the people, the States, the policies, it is called neoliberalism. Today we know that change means getting out of these fundamentalist ideologies and moving on to build another path. Social welfare is built if we guarantee universal rights," he added.

Tunisia's Presidential Coup Continues With More Arrests Of Kais Saied's Critics

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk on Tuesday issued a [statement](#) expressing his concerns over the "deepening crackdown against perceived political opponents and civil society in Tunisia" and continued attempts to undermine the independence of the judiciary.

He also expressed concern about the harsh charges leveled against some of those arrested, such as "conspiracy against state security" and "causing offense against the head of the state," as well as the fact that some of the trials are being conducted by military courts. The UN called on the Tunisian state to desist from such practices and uphold the rule of law.

Tunisia's security forces have unleashed a wave of political arrests in the country since Saturday. More than a dozen people—activists, judges, and journalists, among others—have been

arrested so far.

On Monday, three people were arrested by the security forces. Among them was Nouredine Bhiri, vice-president of Ennahda, the main opposition party, who was [arrested from his home](#), as reported by *Middle East Eye*. Bhiri's wife claimed that hundreds of people surrounded their house and conducted a raid before he was arrested. Bhiri had been arrested last year as well, after being accused of sending youth from the country to Syria to fight on the side of the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist group.

The head of one of Tunisia's largest and most popular radio channels, *Mosaïque FM*, Nouredine Boutar, was also arrested on Monday, along with Lazkar Akremi, founder of the Nidda Tounes party.

On Saturday, security forces arrested

Khayen Turki, leader of the social democratic Ettakatol party and a critic of President Kais Saied. According to [his lawyers](#), Turki has been charged with "conspiring against state security."

The Tunisian government, however, [defended the arrests](#), saying that these were "serious cases related to national security" and dismissed claims of political repression. It also criticized the UN statements as "hasty and inaccurate."

"Reminiscent of pre-revolutionary practices"

The arrests are being viewed as part of a fresh wave of political repression under President Saied. Reacting to Boutar's arrest, Yassine Jelassi, president of the National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT), [called it](#) a "step backward." Referring to the long years of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's

authoritarian rule in the country before the 2011 popular uprising, she called the arrest "reminiscent of pre-revolutionary practices."

Mosaïque FM radio issued a statement demanding the immediate release of Boutar, claiming that his arrest was an "operation of intimidation" to undermine "the independence of the radio and the freedom of journalistic work."

A statement against the arrest of Boutar was issued on Twitter by Reporters Without Borders as well, saying that it was "unacceptable" and indicative of the "repression that is falling on the press in Tunisia." Ennahda also issued [a statement](#) on social media condemning the "abductions and systematic abuse of critics of the Kais Saied coup." It also expressed solidarity with Boutar and demanded "the release of all those detained outside the framework of the law."

Using long-term instability and the popular perception of corruption as a pretext, Tunisian President Saied suspended and later dissolved the parliament and dismissed the government in July 2021. He initiated a set of changes in the country, including a new constitution and new electoral laws with far greater centralization of power. He also dismissed over 50 judges after [reconstituting the judicial council](#).

The opposition has called Saied's so-called political process a "presidential coup" and organized numerous protests demanding his resignation. Due to their boycott calls, the [referendum](#) in July last year for a new constitution and the national elections held earlier this year saw a historically low voter turnout.

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from front page

dearly in meeting international standards as the IMF move will now make the governor and deputies at the Bank of Ghana powerless. It would be recalled that the IMF on Tuesday officially assigned a Resident Advisor in financial sector supervision to the Bank of Ghana to provide technical assistance and to assist in building the capacity of the banking supervision function. The move was at the request of the Bank of Ghana and fully funded by Switzerland's State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

Commenting on the appointment on Accra based Starr Fm on Wednesday, Mr. Gatsi described the

move as "turbulence news" for the country's financial sector. "By the appointment, all the powers that are held by the governor, his deputies and key officials are subject to the powers given to the Resident Advisor. To the extent that clearance will be sought in taking major decisions of the bank. That is the implication of the appointment and they are aware of that and they will comply accordingly. "There is going to be strict adherence to International Financial Standards in terms of reporting the accounts of the bank. There is going to be adherence to strict governance structures and practices. There is not going to be political inducement in the governance structures as we

see. So that will be good but in terms of accounting that puts some stress on the bank in terms of adherence to the strict requirements in the International Financial Reporting Standards" Mr. Gatsi explained. He said as a result of the Banking Sector Cleanup since 2018 banks in the country have been "mutilated" to the extent that some of the banks are only standing and not strong. "Some of the banks for about five years they have not filed their annual report, they have not had their ADM. So those things will become a challenge when the resident advisor begins work and pressing on for the requirement of



Prof. John Gatsi, Dean-University of Cape Coast Business School

applying International Financial Report Standards," the CCUBS dean added.

Minority On Alleged Bank Of Ghana Secretly Printing Monies To Buy Gold In Gold-For-Oil Policy

Meanwhile, the Minority leader of Parliament, Dr [Cassiel Ato Forson](#) has raised serious concerns about the government's gold-for-oil deal which seeks to reduce the prices of petroleum products in the country. Speaking on TV XYZ, the former Deputy Minister for Finance alleged that the [Bank of Ghana](#) is secretly printing cedis to give to the Precious Minerals Marketing Company (PMMC) to purchase gold for the government. "Where is the BoG getting money to purchase to give to PMMC to purchase the gold?" Dr Forson asked while pointing to the illegality that is surrounding the policy. "The [Bank of Ghana](#) has secretly printed GH¢50 billion this year without Parliamentary approval. He did that with Finance Minister [Ken Ofori-Atta](#), and we don't know where the money has gone," he said. He explained that the secret printing of cedis began in 2020. "From 2020 till now, the [Bank of Ghana](#) has printed GH¢90 billion cedis. GH¢40 billion printed between

2020 and 2022. This year alone, they have printed GH¢50 billion cedis," Forson disclosed.

Dr Forson who is also the MP for Ejumako-Enyan-Essiam Constituency also indicated that the Minority would hold the Governor of the Central Bank accountable for the illegality. The 'Gold for Oil' policy is to buy oil products with gold rather than U.S. dollar reserves.

It is meant to tackle dwindling foreign currency reserves coupled with the demand for dollars by oil importers, which weakens the Ghana cedi and increases living costs. Dr Ato Forson believes the deal is marred by corruption as he explained that the government did not buy oil with gold in its first transaction under the policy.

"They bought the oil with dollars; they didn't buy with gold as we were told. Even with that, instead of buying the oil at 95 dollars per metric tonne, they bought it at around 101 or 105 dollars per metric tonne.

"This means there is a middleman somewhere who is making 5 dollars profit around the deal," Dr Forson noted and assured that his side of the law-making chamber will unveil the face behind that illegality.

Family Health Medical School Trained Doctor Excels At Greater Accra Regional Hospital

Dr. Elorm Adzei Tuadzra, an alumnus of Family Health Medical School, has recently received the Outstanding Worker Award by the Greater Accra Regional Hospital (GARH) for being their Team C's Overall Outstanding House Officer for the year 2022. Dr. Adzei Tuadzra graduated from Family Health Medical School with the Premier Class of 2020, after undergoing a six-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB) programme. Following the induction by the Medical and Dental Council in 2021, into the medical profession, he and his classmates began their mandatory two-year Housemanship in various hospitals within the country. In an interview, Dr. Adzei Tuadzra revealed that the training and supervision that he had from his lecturers and professors at Family Health Medical School, as well as the cooperation and encouragement from the 'Team C' members contributed to his

excellent performance, which resulted in his recognition as the Overall Outstanding House Officer for the year 2020.

Dr. Adzei Tuadzra was grateful for the continuous mentorship and guidance from some lecturers of his alma mater. He also praised his team members for keeping up the energy during their first year Housemanship at the Departments of Medicine and Obstetrics & Gynaecology at GARH.

Dr. Adzei is currently undergoing his second year Housemanship at the Police Hospital with the Surgery and Pediatrics Department.

The Management and Staff of Family Health Medical School are indeed proud of this feat, and wish him, and his colleagues success in their chosen field of Medicine.

The Family Health Medical School is committed to the holistic training of Medical professionals



in the advancement of human health. The school offers a six-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB) programme for WASSCE, SSSCE, and 'A' Level candidates, and a four and a half-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB) Graduate Entry Medical Programme (GEMP), for first degree holders in science-related disciplines. The School has recently obtained the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduate (ECFMG) Sponsor Note, thereby making its students and graduates eligible to apply for ECFMG Certification and United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE).

The Long Struggle For Sahrawi National Rights

ON November 13 war resumed in the Western Sahara, though most people will have missed it. There's been a news blackout by the occupying power — Morocco — and the media of the previous colonial regime — Spain — also avoided the story.

The trigger point was a Moroccan military incursion into a demilitarised zone between Western Sahara and Mauritania, attacking an encampment of Sahrawi refugees protesting against Morocco laying a highway across the strip of land to facilitate a massive increase in commercial traffic carrying produce plundered from the occupied bulk of the Western Sahara southwards and EU fish catches northwards. The Guerguerat crossing has long been a point of tension.

Four years ago, the UN promised a commission to resolve the issue. It did nothing.

The Rabat regime drew the appropriate conclusion and broke the terms of the 1991 ceasefire agreement with the Sahrawis' Polisario Front, invading the border strip.

In response, a new generation of Polisario guerillas launched a series of attacks on Morocco's 1,600-mile defensive wall. Those attacks have continued every day since. Make no mistake, the invasion at Guerguerat was important in its own right. The crossing enables Moroccan and EU companies to increase their profits through the occupation of the Western Sahara.

It threatens the independence of enfeebled Mauritania, thus further destabilising the whole of the Maghreb and Sahel, already reeling under the impact of war in Libya, Islamist insurgencies across the regions, entrenched poverty and Covid-19.

But the ceasefire breach was just the final straw. After dictator Franco died in 1975, Spain withdrew from the Western Sahara, handing the bulk of the territory to Morocco and a tranche to Mauritania, despite an International Court of Justice ruling that neither had any valid claim to sovereignty.

The UN ruled that the people of the territory should determine their own future. In the meantime, Morocco invaded, triggering resistance by Polisario guerillas. The bulk of the Sahrawi population ended up in refugee camps in Algeria with the rest suffering a brutal occupation.

The 1991 ceasefire was predicated on a referendum of self-determination to take place within six months. Thirty years later, the Sahrawis are still waiting.

There has been no referendum because the UN Security Council has consistently bent to Morocco's obstruction, knowing that its mentor — permanent member France — would always veto any move to further Sahrawi national rights.

Even a revised plan drawn up by former US secretary of state James Baker was rejected by Rabat, having been accepted by Polisario. It is nearly two years since there has been a special envoy of the UN secretary-general in place to go through the motions of furthering a settlement.

The UN peacekeeping force is the only post-cold war mission not to have a human rights mandate. For the Sahrawis, the situation is dire. The 165,000 refugees in the camps suffer increasing levels of infant malnutrition, devastating floods in the winter, and temperatures of 50°C in the summer.

Unsurprisingly, many seek a future in neighbouring countries or Europe. Equally unsurprisingly, the clamour for a return to armed conflict has been building for years. In the occupied territory, a courageous civil rights movement that sprang up in the 1990s has continued its struggle even after the 2010 Gdeim Yzik protest camp — identified by Noam Chomsky as the first iteration of the Arab Spring — was broken up with mass arrests and beatings.

Nineteen activists were sentenced by a military court to 20 years to life in prison. Since the ceasefire

broke down, repression has intensified and there are real fears Morocco will unleash pogroms.

Since the invasion, Morocco has colonised the Western Sahara so the indigenous population is now heavily outnumbered by subsidised settlers, often drawn from the troublesome slums of northern Morocco.

Apart from right-wing nationalist visions of a Greater Morocco incorporating Western Sahara, Mauritania, and parts of Algeria and Mali, a key motive for the invasion was seizing the territory's phosphate reserves in a bid to make Morocco the fertiliser equivalent of Saudi Arabia in the oil market.

Since then, the exploitation of Western Sahara has branched into fisheries, oil and gas exploration, even the sale of its sand to Spanish beach resorts. More recently, its sunshine has been stolen for solar panel farms, tomato production and tourist destinations. Inevitably, foreign capital is active. The list of culprits is long.

Examples are Mitsui, Enel, General Electric, GDF Suez, Total, Siemens. The Gulf Arab autocracies are now getting in on the act too. In there are British companies Cairn Energy and International Power. Tesco and Morrisons admit to selling tomatoes produced in Dakhla and mislabelling them as Moroccan.

There are question marks over some British supermarkets' Morocco-labelled tinned fish, French beans and courgettes. For much more information on the plunder, see the excellent website of [Western Sahara Resources Watch](#).

The solidarity movement has had some success in combating the theft. A phosphate shipment was even seized by the South African courts in 2017. Activists in New Zealand last year picketed docks to protest against imports of stolen phosphate and the Norwegian



Sahrawi women protesting against the Moroccan occupation, 2005
Photo: Western Sahara / Creative Commons
Much of the media is ignoring Morocco's breach of a 1991 ceasefire with a military incursion into Western Sahara. TOBY SHELLEY shines a light on a forgotten occupied territory whose people are preparing for another long war.

government pension fund has excluded some fertiliser companies from its portfolio because of their purchase of Western Sahara phosphates. EU member states are determined that their fishing fleets continue to work Saharan waters with no benefit to the Sahrawi people and Polisario is currently challenging them in court. Boris Johnson has an "oven-ready" deal with Morocco that would mirror the EU deal, giving British companies cover for exploiting the Western Sahara.

This is likely to be challenged in the courts by the Western Sahara Campaign.

After the resumption of armed conflict in November, outgoing president Donald Trump made the last of his acts of transactional diplomacy in a three-way deal between the US, Morocco and Israel. In return for Moroccan recognition of the Zionist state, the US and the Tel Aviv regime recognised Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara.

That the move was contrary to international law mattered little to the parties. Israeli companies will soon be piling into the Western Sahara and Moroccan companies into Israel. Trump pimped a deal

between well-matched parties — the similarities between the occupation of the Western Sahara and the Palestinian territories are obvious.

Even if the Biden administration revokes US recognition of Morocco control over Western Sahara, the marriage between Rabat and Tel Aviv will last.

Meanwhile, the Sahrawis are preparing for another long war. They have learnt that rights are only granted when they are won. They face a formidably armed enemy supplied with the most up-to-date weaponry and surveillance gear by the US, the EU, Israel and some Arab states. They are outnumbered and outgunned. But they were in the last war, in which they were undefeated.

The morale and desert craft of their fighters saw them land blow after blow on Morocco's rag-tag army of conscripts, with the peace agreement they won betrayed in the conference chamber of the UN Security Council.

Toby Shelley is author of Endgame in the Western Sahara (Zed Books) and is on the committee of the Western Sahara Campaign (www.smalgangen.org).

Dome, Taifa Market Women Deny Alleged Maltreatment Of Traders By Ga East MCE

Some traders from markets in Dome, Taifa, Abokobi and Kwabenya in the Greater Accra Region have broken their silence over the seeming penchant by Madam Felicia Karley Okoe Amui to needlessly attack Municipal Chief Executive of Ga East, Mrs. Elizabeth Kaakie Mann.

The traders were quick to distance themselves from a demonstration purported to have been carried out by 'market traders' on Thursday February 9, 2023.

The said demonstration, which was held to demand the removal of the current Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), Elizabeth Kaakie Mann, is believed to have been sponsored by the former MCE, Janet Tulasi Mensah. According to the leadership of these markets, they are not aware of the organization of any such demonstration and that their members were not part of the group who stormed the Dome Market on Thursday to demonstrate. Addressing a press conference in Dome market on Monday February 13, 2023, the Public Relations Officer of the Dome New Market Association, Diana Dowuona-Owoo, alleged that the former MCE of Ga East Municipal Assembly, Mrs Janet Tulasi Mensah, and some individuals, whose interest is to destroy the market to their advantage, have constantly launched several diabolic attacks on the only queen mother of the Dome Market, Madam Evelyn Abena-Sebie and her leadership. She said that after realizing they have failed, Janet Tulasi and her cohorts hatched another plan to attack and call for the removal of the Municipal Chief Executive

(MCE) of Ga East, Madam Elizabeth Kaakie Mann. "We want to put on record that, these disturbances and attacks are being sponsored by no other person but the former MCE Madam Janet Tulasi Mensah. Janet Tulasi Mensah during her time as MCE, caused serious troubles in Dome market and we can say for a fact that all the controversies surrounding the tension in the market are her handiworks," she said. She noted that the so-called demonstrators were organised and imported with the sole aim of causing disaffection. Diana Dowuona-Owoo added that the leaders of that demonstration are dissatisfied members of the dissolved Oversight Committee, which was set up by Janet Tulasi Mensah, to be collecting unapproved monies in the market. "We therefore don't need anybody to tell us who are behind these attacks. Evidence are clear that Janet Tulasi Mensah who is out of office is doing all she can to ensure that Dome market does not see peace. This indeed, has failed. We want to send a message to her and her cohorts that the current MCE in the person of Elizabeth Kaakie Mann is one of the best MCE's we have ever had," she added. She described the current MCE, Elizabeth Kaakie Mann, as "affable, down to earth and a team leader. She stated that the collection of unapproved monies, harassments and attacks on traders are now things of the past under the current MCE and she is the right person for the job. "We want to tell the President, His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo that Elizabeth Kaakie

Mann, our MCE of this Municipality is the right person for the job and that people are calling for her interdiction because she refused to condone their diabolic activities." The PRO said the former MCE had advanced plots to get Felicia Karley Amui installed as Queen mother when there was a sitting and legally installed Queen mother in the person of Madam Evelyn Abena-Sebie, thereby eroding the peace being enjoyed by traders in the Dome Market over the years.

"She had assembled known members of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) to form a Committee to oversee the administration of the activities of the market with the sole aim of taking over the leadership and administration of the market and handed it over to Felicia Karley Amui. "When she took over as MCE, Madam Janet Tulasi Mensah claimed she cannot work with the Queen mother and her leadership hence decided to establish the Oversight Committee," she noted. She mentioned that the Association took the Assembly to court over the establishment of the Oversight Committee setup by Janet Tulasi Mensah and the court ruled on July 19, 2021 in their favour. However, Janet Tulasi according to her, ignored the court orders and installed Felicia Karley Amui on four different occasions as the Market Queen, but in all these installations market women have refused to accord her that recognition as they described her as "illegally" installed. Felicia Karley Amui and her cohorts led by the Former MCE, Janet Tulasi Mensah have also written to the Onamroko Adain Family, Traditional Owners of the



property on which the Dome Market is sited, for their assistance in the selection and appointment of Dome Market Queen. However, the Onamroko Adain Family which is very aware of the existing Market Queen and the Market Association, wrote to the Association seeking clarification of whether there is a current Market Queen and who it is and what regulation there is regarding the installation of a Market Queen. After furnishing the Onamroko Adain Family with all the details of whatever they were seeking for, the family in avoiding backlash withdrew from the purported installation of Felicia Karley Amui as requested by the Former MCE. That notwithstanding, Felicia Karley Amui wrote a letter on September 7, 2020 to some traders in the market asking them to accord her the recognition as their Market Queen because she has been installed. This development came to the attention of the current MCE, Elizabeth Kaakie Mann who called for meetings over the matter and later referred the matter to the Regional Coordinating Council where it

was established that the market already has an issue relative to enstoolment of market queen and hence the collecting of money by Abena Fosua be suspended. On Wednesday 14th December 2022, the Assembly through its officer went to announce the suspension of that money collection at the market. Abena Fosua protested this announcement and took the microphone forcefully from the Assembly officials and tried to incite traders against the Assembly officials which led to her arrest. Last Thursday, February 9, 2023, a group of persons wielding placards stormed the Dome market claiming to be traders from Dome, Taifa, Abokobi and Kwabenya markets attacking the MCE. However, when reached to get her side of the allegations levelled against her, Mrs Mensah stated that she was not ready to respond to their allegations. She said someone has sent all the details about the allegations against her but she has forwarded the statement to her lawyers for advice.

Cuba, Venezuela And China Are Rushing Aid To Earthquake-Hit Syria, But US Can't Even Fully Withdraw Sanctions

On Thursday, February 9, the United States Treasury Department announced a temporary waiver of certain sanctions imposed on Syria to facilitate relief and recovery efforts in the earthquake-hit country. The move follows growing international outrage and public appeals, including by the Syrian government and countries such as Venezuela and China, to remove the brutal and illegal sanctions that the US has imposed on Damascus.

At least 21,719 people have died—as of February 10—after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake on February 6 devastated large parts of southern and central Turkey as well as northern and western Syria. Over 79,000 people have been injured and over 3.7 million have been displaced since then, with rescue operations still underway in search of survivors in the midst of aftershocks. The US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) [issued](#) a “blanket” Syria General License (GL) 23, “which authorizes for 180 days all transactions related to earthquake relief that would be otherwise prohibited by the Syrian Sanctions Regulations (SySR).”

Addressing a joint press conference at the United Nations headquarters on February 7, Syria's Permanent Representative to the UN Bassam al-Sabbagh [explained](#) how sanctions were impeding humanitarian relief and access: “Lots of cargo planes refuse to land at Syrian airports because of the American and European sanctions. So, even those countries who want to send humanitarian assistance, they cannot use the airplane cargo because of the sanctions.” The head of the Syrian Red Crescent, Khaled Hboubati, [stated](#) during a press conference on Tuesday that “There is no fuel even to send [aid and rescue] convoys, and this is because of the blockade and sanctions.”

Meanwhile, in its statement on February 9, the US government reiterated that its sanctions do not target “legitimate humanitarian assistance”—a

claim proven false in other countries that have also been [targeted](#) by US sanctions. The risk of obstruction of humanitarian aid is also heightened due to possible overcompliance, and particularly in the case of Syria due to the “unfettered emergency powers” and “[extraterritorial reach](#)” granted under the US's [Caesar Act](#). The US claims that GSL 23 “expands upon” the “broad humanitarian authorizations already in effect under the SySR for NGOs, international organizations (IOs) and the US government.”

However, over the past week, people on social media platforms have [reported](#) that US-based fundraising company GoFundMe was suspending accounts that were attempting to raise money for Syria.

Countries dispatch aid to Syria and Turkey

While the [US and its allies](#) rushed to mobilize and dispatch rescue teams and supplies to Turkey, they have dragged their feet to provide even the bare minimum aid for Syria by refusing to meaningfully lift sanctions to allow aid to reach the country. Despite this, there are countries around the world that have been providing critical on-ground assistance to both Syria and Turkey.

On Thursday, 25 specialists part of the Simon Bolivar Humanitarian Task Force arrived from Venezuela to Damascus accompanied by 12 tonnes of medicine, drinking water, and food. A day prior, the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro had dispatched 52 specialists to Turkey and Syria to assist with relief efforts.

A team of Cuban doctors from the Henry Reeve International Brigade has also arrived in Turkey. On Wednesday, Syria's ambassador to Cuba Ghassan Obeid [confirmed](#) that 27 doctors from Cuba will also arrive in Syria soon to assist affected populations and local authorities. China announced that it will be providing the first tranche of \$5.9



Syrian Red Crescent members conducting a rescue operation. (Photo: @SYRedCrescent/Twitter). The US Treasury has issued a 180-day waiver on certain sanctions imposed on Syria to allow for earthquake relief. However, the US and its allies have yet to offer meaningful assistance to Syria even as Venezuela, China, Palestine, and others have dispatched aid and specialists

million in emergency aid to Turkey. Beijing also dispatched an 82-member rescue team that arrived in Turkey's Adana airport on Tuesday, bringing with them 20 tonnes of medical aid and rescue supplies.

On Thursday, China's ambassador to Syria Shi Hongwei told *CGTN* that the first Chinese rescue team had arrived in Damascus, accompanied by an initial batch of medical supplies. A spokesperson from the Chinese Foreign Ministry had announced on Wednesday that China will offer USD 4.4 million in emergency aid to Syria.

A team of [73 rescuers](#), including members of the Palestinian Red Crescent and the Palestinian Civil Defense, headed by the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA), left for Jordan from the Occupied West Bank on Thursday, from where they will be divided into two teams—one headed to southern Turkey and another headed to northwest Syria.

Russia had dispatched four aircrafts on Monday with over 100 emergency response specialists, including medics to assist in search and rescue operations in Turkey and Syria. Algeria also sent over 100 tonnes of medical supplies, food, and tents, as well as a Civil Protection team that [arrived](#) in Aleppo earlier this week. India has also dispatched aid supplies to Syria, along with dispatching rescue teams to Turkey.

Countries including Iraq, Jordan, UAE, Pakistan, and Tunisia have also provided emergency assistance and supplies, even as various other countries have expressed messages of solidarity.

The UN has stressed that sanctions should not prevent the delivery of assistance to the Syrian people.

According to the International Organization of Migration (IOM), 14 humanitarian aid trucks had crossed into northwestern Syria on Friday, bound for rebel-held Idlib.

From Iran, the sixth plane carrying humanitarian aid, including infant formula and food, was [reported](#) to have landed in Syria early on Friday.

The Iranian army and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) have also dispatched equipment for a 50-bed mobile hospital along with 70 relief and medical staff to Turkey. The first Iranian plane had landed in Damascus on Tuesday, carrying 45 tonnes of food and medical supplies. Iran has also sent planes carrying aid to Latakia and Aleppo—where IRGC commander Brigadier General Esmail Qaani arrived late on February 8 to supervise aid delivery.

Meanwhile, Israel has already [threatened](#) a military attack, with an unnamed military official citing “information” that “indicated” that Iran might “take advantage” of the situation and send weapons along with humanitarian aid to Syria. Israel has continued to carry out illegal and unilateral acts of aggression against Syria, including airstrikes that have killed numerous civilians and caused damage to critical infrastructure. According to *Al Mayadeen*, the airport in Damascus, which has been repeatedly targeted in such attacks, is reportedly still undergoing repairs after it was hit by an [Israeli airstrike](#) in January.

Sanctions on Syria

The urgent need for the removal of illegal sanctions on Syria is not

limited to the immediate earthquake recovery efforts. The fact is that Western sanctions had already precipitated an economic and infrastructural collapse in Syria well before the earthquake hit this week.

In November 2022, following a visit to the country, UN Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan [described](#) the impact of the “outrageous” and “long-lasting” unilateral sanctions that were “suffocating” millions of Syrians. Douhan stated that 90% of Syria's population was living below the poverty line, and access to food, water, electricity, fuel, shelter, transportation, and healthcare were limited. She added that more than half of the country's vital infrastructure had either been completely destroyed or was severely damaged.

At the same time, unilateral sanctions on key sectors including oil, gas, electricity, and trade had “quashed” the national income and undermined efforts towards economic recovery and reconstruction.

“Maintaining unilateral sanctions amid the current catastrophic and still-deteriorating situation in Syria may amount to crimes against humanity against all Syrians,” Douhan had warned.

Threats to public health and food security have been heightened due to the unavailability of equipment and spare parts to fix water distribution and irrigation systems. There are acute disruptions in access to electricity, which have also impacted the functioning of medical equipment in hospitals.

As the US boasts of its “commitment to support the people of Syria through their ongoing earthquake crisis,” the question arises: what does a 180-day waiver on earthquake relief transactions actually achieve in the face of this level of destruction?

As Syria looks towards long-term reconstruction and recovery, any commitments of support or assistance are rendered meaningless in the absence of the total lifting of the illegal and inhumane sanctions that continue to choke the country.