

UPDATE PAPER

This committee will meet on the 324th day of the sea, air and land blockade imposed ten months ago on Qatar by four Arab nations.

This update paper shall seek to assess the effects of this blockade on the countries of the Arab League.

The siege began when several countries abruptly cut off diplomatic and trade relations with Qatar in June 2017. These countries included Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Mauritania and Egypt. The severing of relations included withdrawing of ambassadors and imposing trade and travel bans, after the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the mentioned countries issued official statements regarding the same.

The embargo continues without the enactment of any laws or regulations by any of the boycotting Gulf States. The restrictions imposed on the movement of goods, vessels etc. between the involved nations have largely been introduced in the form of circulars issued by relevant authorities.

The cutting of diplomatic and trade links comes with a variety of accusations against Qatar, including financing of terrorism, relations with Iran, biased media coverage by the Qatar-funded Al Jazeera news agency and interference in the political affairs of embargo-initiating countries by Qatar, among others. These charges have been refuted by Qatar.

On 22nd June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain issued Qatar a list of 13 demands that Qatar should agree in full within 10 days, which expired without fulfilment on 2nd July 2017.

Banks and other institutions from siege-inducing countries quickly began pulling deposits out from Qatari banks- a threat to the already foreign money-dependent banking system in the country. Despite the blockade, Qatar looks economically capable of coping.

However, the impact of the embargo is in no way limited to Qatar, but can potentially affect the economic and political dynamics of the entire Middle East. There has been no official contact between the nations in the GCC since

the rift caused by the siege, and a senior OPEC official is quoted to have said that a politically dead GCC will certainly have (negative) implications on the OPEC as well.

On September 8th 2017, US President Donald Trump said that he would be willing to step in and mediate one of the worst disputes in decades among the US-Allied Arab States and Qatar.

Kuwait's Emir has been an active mediator from the beginning of the blockade, travelling from one Gulf capital to the next in the attempt to bridge the gap between the blockading countries and Qatar.

Due to their heavy reliance on oil and gas exports, the GCC States maintain weak trade and investment with each other, limiting the economic effects of this blockade.

Qatar also announced the signing of a concession agreement with Qatar Petroleum for the continued operation of the Al Bunduq offshore oil field, shared between Qatar and the UAE.

The League of Arab States is yet to discuss this blockade and its potential implications. Though not directly impacting the oil market, it is a significant current development in the Middle East. Delegates are encouraged to keep foreign policy dynamics such as the situation described in this paper in mind while negotiating for the fulfilment of their individual and collective goals in committee.