

“We don’t deserve this”

The Impact and Consequences of US Sanctions



Venezuelans line up for water

DW/Michael Fox

**A report by the Sanctions Kill Coalition
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This report was produced by Rick Sterling, John Philpot and David Paul with support from other members of the Sanctions Kill Coalition and many individuals in sanctioned countries.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the US has increasingly used sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy.

Some [39 nations](#)¹ and territories are under direct or indirect sanctions. Most of these sanctions are not authorized by the United Nations Security Council and many of them are enacted by the US alone. They are called “unilateral coercive measures” at the United Nations. These US decrees and legislation are “extraterritorial” when they assume the right to impose regulations, restrictions and penalties on non-US countries, companies and individuals.

There are many types of sanctions: economic or financial restrictions, trade prohibitions, and blocking or seizing assets of individuals, organizations and countries. Greatly increasing the reach of sanctions, [“secondary sanctions”](#)² target non-US entities which are interacting with the “primary” target .

President Biden’s administration is currently reviewing US sanctions policy. On January 21, 2021, the [first National Security Memo](#)³ of the Biden administration called for a review whether US sanctions are hindering response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, administration leaders raised a second concern, [saying](#)⁴ “The goal of sanctions should not be to punish ordinary citizens for the actions of their leaders.” Then, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen expressed a third concern that sanctions are undermining “the US’s leadership role in the global financial system.”

The Biden administration review of sanctions is being conducted by an inter-agency team including State and Treasury Departments. As of this date (mid-September 2021), they have not released the results of their review.

Because this issue is vitally important, a coalition of non-profit and human rights organizations called [“Sanctions Kill”](#)⁵ has prepared the following report. The information and findings are the result of on-the-ground investigation in Syria plus questionnaires with citizens of some of the most severely sanctioned countries such as Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe.

The title of this report is “We don’t deserve this.” This is what a Syrian woman said when asked about the destructive impact of US sanctions on her country. The goal of this report is to inform North Americans about the real-life consequences of US imposed sanctions.

This report begins with our findings, then goes on to conclusions and recommendations. After that, there are quotes from some of the people interviewed and short synopses of the impact of sanctions in Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, North Korea, Syria, and Venezuela.

The final section includes resources which will be of interest to anyone looking further into this topic.

We invite your comments and collaboration. Contact us at info@SanctionsKill.org.

¹ <https://sanctionskill.org/2021/02/02/sanctions-fact-sheet-39-countries/>

² <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/sanctions-by-the-numbers-u-s-secondary-sanctions>

³ <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsm/nsm-1.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-administrations-review-of-sanctions-programs-could-take-months-white-house-official-says-11614732627>

⁵ <https://sanctionskill.org/>

FINDINGS

FINDING 1: Sanctions primarily hurt civilians. Humanitarian “exceptions” have not worked.

As [reported](#)⁶ by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, *“Targeted countries experience economic contractions and, in many cases, are unable to import sufficient essential goods, including essential medicines, medical equipment, the infrastructure necessary for clean water, health care, and food. The effects are devastating for everyday citizens.”*

Similar claims about the impact of sanctions are made by many others. For at least 25 years, study after study has shown that coercive economic sanctions are hurting the most vulnerable and driving middle class citizens into poverty.

An [article](#) at the Association of Certified Sanction Specialists acknowledges, *“In Venezuela, the sanctions’ regime has created a food deficit which in turn reduces the public’s caloric intake and increases disease as well as mortality rates... sanctions appear to be more of a collective punishment than an attempt to modify behaviors.”*

A former US foreign service officer [writes](#)⁷, *“Sanctions harm the poor and middle class the most.”*

The report titled [“Economic Sanctions as Collective Punishment: The Case of Venezuela”](#)⁸ says, “We find that the sanctions have inflicted, and increasingly inflict, very serious harm to human life and health, including an estimated more than 40,000 deaths from 2017-2018.”

Congressman Jim McGovern (MA02) recently wrote to President Biden [saying](#)⁹, “I believe sanctions like those the previous administration imposed on Venezuela are both misguided and immoral.”

The same is true of the dire suffering caused by US sanctions in the Middle East. US sanctions on the Syrian Central Bank have collapsed the currency. Products are four times as expensive as they were just one year before the imposition of these sanctions. Millions of Syrian civilians have been driven into poverty. With an Orwellian touch, the sanctions are named the [Caesar Civilian Protection Act](#)¹⁰.

As noted in a Carter Center [report](#)¹¹, “the exceptions process does not function as intended.”

⁶ <https://cepr.net/the-case-against-economic-sanctions/>

⁷ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/sanctions-harm-the-poor-and-middle-classes-the-most/2019/10/28/288c9230-f75f-11e9-b2d2-1f37c9d82dbb_story.html

⁸ <https://cepr.net/report/economic-sanctions-as-collective-punishment-the-case-of-venezuela/>

⁹ <https://twitter.com/RepMcGovern/status/1404550214766190592?s=20>

¹⁰ https://original.antiwar.com/rick_sterling/2020/06/19/caesar-tries-to-suffocate-17-million-syrians/

¹¹ https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/syria-conflict/navigating-humanitarian-exceptions-in-syria-oct2020.pdf

FINDING 2: US sanctions have hindered the response to Covid-19. As a result, many civilians have died, and the pandemic has spread further.

In March 2020, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres [said](#)¹², “*We are at war with a virus.*” He appealed for “*waving sanctions that can undermine countries’ capacity to respond to the pandemic.*”

The Trump administration ignored these appeals and added new sanctions. In March 2020, a Venezuelan request for an emergency \$5B loan to fight the virus was [rejected](#)¹³ by the International Monetary Fund. The report noted, “*The US is the biggest shareholder and has a veto over major decisions.*”

In April 2020, the Center for Economic and Political Research [reported](#)¹⁴ that Iran was having difficulty obtaining “*medical supplies, sanitation equipment, and other goods we now know are necessary to slow the virus’ spread.*” It commented, “*While the United States is fighting COVID-19 here at home, US sanctions against other governments are aiding the virus’ spread abroad. They’ve already likely contributed to many unnecessary deaths in Iran.*”

In October 2020, the UN Human Rights Office issued a press release saying “*Unilateral sanctions make it harder to fight COVID-19, must be dropped*¹⁵.” The report by Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan notes, “*Targeted countries face shortages of medications and medical equipment, including oxygen supplies and ventilators, protective kits, spare parts, software, fuel, electricity, drinking water and water for sanitation...*”.

Because of extraterritorial sanctions, Cuba has had enormous difficulty obtaining [syringes](#)¹⁶ even as they developed their own COVID-19 vaccine.

A few months ago, in early June 2021, Venezuela’s payment for 11 million COVAX vaccinations was [blocked](#)¹⁷ by UBS Bank because of US sanctions. The funds ultimately went through, but only after a delay and international protest.

In February 2021, twenty-seven Congressional representatives and senators sent a [letter](#)¹⁸ to President Biden encouraging the review of sanctions policy. They said existing policy has led to “*catastrophic humanitarian consequences.*” In March 2021, 55 human rights and religious organizations sent a [letter to President Biden](#)¹⁹ with recommendations including the suspension of sanctions on aid necessary for the treatment of COVID-19 and all sanctions on civilian sectors.

On June 17, 2021, the US Treasury Department announced [new guidelines](#)²⁰ for Syria, Venezuela, and Iran. General licenses will permit “certain activities” related to COVID-19 but such exceptions to the extreme sanctions have not made a significant difference.

¹² <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/war-needs-war-time-plan-fight-it>

¹³ <https://apnews.com/article/business-health-coronavirus-pandemic-420afb1fa856dedcc4cb3eddc8ac0a2>

¹⁴ <https://cepr.net/u-s-sanctions-in-a-time-of-coronavirus-are-morally-depraved-as-well-as-illegal-under-international-law/>

¹⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26393&LangID=E>

¹⁶ <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/u-s-deprives-cuba-of-syringes-it-needs-now/>

¹⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuela-says-payments-covax-vaccine-system-have-been-blocked-2021-06-10/>

¹⁸ <https://omar.house.gov/sites/omar.house.gov/files/sanctions%20letter%20final%20text%5B1%5D.pdf>

¹⁹ https://www.afsc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Sanctions%20Reveiw_Civil%20Society%20Letter%20to%20Biden_final_3_26_21.pdf

²⁰ <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0234>

FINDING 3: US sanctions and extraterritorial claims have led to the imprisonment of businesspersons and diplomats and the violation of international treaties.

Individuals are put at risk of extradition to the United States and eventually to huge fines or long prison terms based on transactions outside the USA with a sanctioned country or individual. This extraterritorial claim has been declared contrary to international law by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 75/181. In defiance, the US continues to assert extraterritorial jurisdiction and seeks the extradition of individual businesspersons and even diplomats. It appears it is bullying or bribing countries such as Canada and Cape Verde to comply. The following are prominent examples:

The case of Alex Saab, a Venezuelan diplomat

Alex Saab, a Venezuelan diplomat, was arrested in Cape Verde on June 12, 2020, on a United States warrant for extraterritorial “money laundering.” He was on route to Iran to acquire basic food, medicine, and medical equipment against COVID-19, much needed by the people of Venezuela. He was detained during a stopover in Cape Verde, and has been held since that time, first in prison and then under house arrest. Saab points out that²¹ his “illegal detention is entirely politically motivated.”

In jail, Saab was kept in the dark for 23 hours a day, lying on a concrete floor, partially losing his eyesight, and losing 55 pounds. While the Cape Verde authorities approved his extradition to the US, the court of justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), declared his detention illegal and awarded him \$200,000 in damages. On June 8, 2021, the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations adopted interim measures ordering the suspension of the extradition and access to appropriate health care for the Mr. Saab who suffers from cancer. The African Bar Association and the American Association of Jurists likewise resolved that the diplomatic envoy should not be incarcerated. As this report goes to publication, Saab lost his final appeal in a Cape Verde court. He is expected to be extradited any day.

The case of Alex Saab is especially significant because his detention is a clear violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations²². The United States and the island archipelago nation of Cape Verde are signatories to this treaty which says, “The person of a diplomatic agent shall be inviolable. He shall not be liable to any form of arrest or detention.”

The case of Ms. Meng Wanzhou, Chief Financial Officer of Huawei

Meng Wanzhou faces charges of bank fraud for allegedly misleading HSBC, a British bank, about Huawei business dealings in Iran, causing the bank to violate US sanctions against Iran in 2013. On August 22, 2018, a US District Court in New York issued an arrest warrant for Meng, and Canada’s RCMP then arrested her in Vancouver on December 1, 2018. She has now been under house arrest for over two and half years. The Chinese government has called the detention “lawless, reasonless and ruthless.” There is no material link with the United States unless milliseconds of a bank transaction in the US SWIFT system links it to the USA. In September 2018, Donald Trump stated that her arrest could be reversed depending on trade negotiations with China. The Court proceedings in Canada have been followed and criticized the world over.

It is not known how many less prominent people have been charged or are being sought for violating US sanctions and claims to extraterritorial jurisdiction.

²¹ <https://orinocotribune.com/alex-saab-declares-to-efe-i-would-not-collaborate-with-the-united-states/>

²² https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf

FINDING 4: Sanctions are spurring countries to sell US securities and establish alternatives to the US dominated financial system.

Sanctioned countries have a material interest in departing a system based on US political and economic dominance.

For example, in 2012 Russia held over \$150B in US Treasury Securities. In June 2021 Russian [announced](#)²³ that it was eliminating US dollars from its reserve fund. The holdings have been reduced to \$4B and are going to zero.

China is also reducing its holdings in US securities and bonds. In September 2020 it was reported that [“China may ditch US treasuries as decoupling risk looms.”](#)²⁴

For decades, the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) has been the primary transaction network governing transfers between banks in every country of the world. Although SWIFT is based in Belgium, the US has been able to monitor and disrupt transactions when it chooses to. This way, the US has been able to impose extraterritorial sanctions on third party countries.

This has spurred the desire for an alternative. The European Union, China and Russia have all sponsored and launched alternatives to the SWIFT system. The EU has created the Instrument of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) which allows them to get around US unilateral sanctions against Iran. China has promoted the Cross-Border InterBank Payment System (CIPS). Russia has created yet another system dubbed SPFS. In April this year Russia announced that, whenever they choose, they are [“Ready for Disconnection from SWIFT”](#)²⁵.

The petro-dollar allows the US to dominate international finances and guarantees sales of the US dollar. That also is being challenged as more countries see the advantage of NOT using US dollars for oil purchases. As indicated in the article [“China Russia and EU Edge Away from Petrodollar”](#)²⁶, “The petroyuan for oil futures trading could become a tool to counter US dollar hegemony in the oil market.”

In a January 2021 [Overview on Economic Sanctions](#)²⁷, the Congressional Research Service wrote, *“Many foreign governments targeted by US financial sanctions and their economic partners are increasingly exploring and creating ways to reduce their reliance on the US dollar. If countries pivot from the US dollar to alternative currencies, the United States could face higher borrowing costs, among other economic effects.”*

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen’s concern about sanctions fueling the decline of US economic dominance is well founded.

²³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/russia-reserves/update-3-russian-rainy-day-fund-to-abandon-all-assets-in-u-s-dollars-idUSL5N2NL2AD>

²⁴ <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3100307/china-may-ditch-us-treasuries-decoupling-risk-looms-global>

²⁵ <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/russia-says-its-ready-for-disconnection-from-swift-2021-4-30-0/>

²⁶ <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/China-Russia-and-EU-edge-away-from-petrodollar>

²⁷ https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2021-01-15_IF11730_fd2be4c6e2fcf61b5d9ce988da60d2ee681e50b2.pdf

FINDING 5: Many US industries and farmers want to trade with sanctioned countries and call for a change in policy.

In November 2000 the CATO Institute published an article titled [“Going alone on economic sanctions hurts US more than foes²⁸.”](https://www.cato.org/commentary/going-alone-economic-sanctions-hurts-us-more-foes) It says, *“Using trade as a weapon of foreign policy has harmed America’s economic interests in the world without significantly advancing national security. The proliferation of trade sanctions in the last decade has been accompanied by their declining effectiveness. From Cuba to Iran to Burma, sanctions have failed to achieve the goal of changing the behavior or the nature of target regimes. Sanctions have, however, deprived American companies of international business opportunities, punished domestic consumers, and hurt the poor and most vulnerable in the target countries.”*

USA*Engage is a coalition of US businesses initiated by the National Foreign Trade Council. The director of the organization [described²⁹](http://www.usaengage.org/?id=1) their history and goals as follows,

*“USA*Engage, was established in 1997 to address the recurring imposition of unilateral economic sanctions as a substitute for the rigors of diplomacy. A broad-based coalition of manufacturing, agricultural and services producers, USA*Engage continues to advocate that the people-to-people intelligence and understanding conferred by commercial engagement trumps the demonstrable failure – witness Cuba and Iraq – of interdictions on commercial activity.*

“As a legislative stratagem, sanctions are in fact unfunded mandates whose costs are borne by individual enterprises and communities and whose stated goals and benefits fail to materialize. The historical record demonstrates that unilateral sanctions hurt the innocent and further empower the governing elites in the targeted country...”

*“USA*Engage continues to advocate for the primacy of normal commercial relations among countries; for diplomacy and engagement as our primary tools of foreign policy; and for the ability of the Executive Branch to conduct foreign policy in the spirit of the late Senator Arthur Vandenberg’s observation that politics stops at the water’s edge, and for adherence to the rule of do no harm, when it comes to attempting economic blackmail to realize foreign policy goals.”*

Millions of US farmers and workers depend on exports of their crops and commodities. They want to be able to export and trade with China, Cuba, and other countries where it is prohibited or severely restricted.

²⁸ <https://www.cato.org/commentary/going-alone-economic-sanctions-hurts-us-more-foes>

²⁹ <http://www.usaengage.org/?id=1>

FINDING 6: Many US sanctions are based on false claims of an emergency and threat to national security.

US sanctions are sometimes authorized by Congressional legislation. At other times, they are imposed by the President using [US Code 1701](#)³⁰ under the International Emergency Economic Powers. The president can authorize sanctions by declaring there is an “unusual and extraordinary threat” to the “national security, foreign policy, or economy of the United States.” Thus in March 2015, President Obama [declared](#)³¹ a “national emergency with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the situation in Venezuela.”

The claim that Venezuela poses a security threat to the United States is not credible. On the contrary, the reverse is true. It is the US that has threatened and engaged in aggression against Venezuela, including support for a coup attempt in 2002.

The Congressional Research Service has produced a report titled [“The International Emergency Economic Powers Act: Origins, Evolution, and Use.”](#)³² At the end of the report, there is an eighteen-page listing of “National Emergencies” leading to sanctions on countries which are no threat to the US. These sanctions can go on for decades, severely damaging economies and their chances for development. The CRS report questions whether the “oversight provisions are robust enough.”

CHAPTER 35—INTERNATIONAL EMERGENCY ECONOMIC POWERS		
Sec. 1701.	Unusual and extraordinary threat; declaration of national emergency; exercise of Presidential authorities.	Sec. “This Inter
1702.	Presidential authorities.	Sec. provis
1703.	Consultation and reports.	valid,
1704.	Authority to issue regulations.	there!
1705.	Penalties.	
1706.	Savings provisions.	
1707.	Multinational economic embargoes against governments in armed conflict with the United States.	Pub ed by Stat.
§ 1701. Unusual and extraordinary threat; declaration of national emergency; exercise of Presidential authorities		“SEC “Th and D
(a) Any authority granted to the President by section 1702 of this title may be exercised to deal with any unusual and extraordinary threat, which has its source in whole or substantial part outside the United States, to the national security, foreign policy, or economy of the United States, if the President declares a national emergency with respect to such threat.		“SEC “In “(terr
(b) The authorities granted to the President by section 1702 of this title may only be exercised to deal with an unusual and extraordinary threat with respect to which a national emergency has been declared for purposes of this chapter and may not be exercised for any other purpose. Any exercise of such authorities to deal with any new threat shall be based on a new declaration of national emergency which must be with respect to such threat.		U: ti th Co Se Re “(erat Sud ing, equ pers tus “(cy” Offi U.S. ““
(Pub. L. 95-223, title II, §202, Dec. 28, 1977, 91 Stat. 1626.)		

Authorization to declare “unusual and extraordinary threat.”

³⁰ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title50/pdf/USCODE-2011-title50-chap35-sec1701.pdf>

³¹ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/09/fact-sheet-venezuela-executive-order>

³² <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R45618.pdf>

FINDING 7: A large majority of world nations believe US sanctions violate international law and the UN Charter.

In December 2020, the United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 75/181 on “[Human rights and unilateral coercive measures](#)³³.” The representatives of 131 nations approved the motion saying,

“Unilateral coercive measures and legislation are contrary to international law, international humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States.”

Similar resolutions, approved by 70% of world nations, have been passed for many years.

In September 2014, the United Nations Human Rights Council created the position of Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights. The first Special Rapporteur was [Idriss Jazairy](#)³⁴. In 2018 Ambassador Jazairy said that unilateral sanctions are depriving innocent people of food and medicines and should end immediately. He [said](#)³⁵, “*Unilateral sanctions that restrict nearly any financial transaction, or which seek to prevent third countries from engaging in legal trade with a country, are illegal and immoral forms of coercion.*”

The current Special Rapporteur, appointed in March 2020, is [Alena Douhan](#)³⁶. She has made increasingly vocal and urgent requests to end Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCMs). In August 2020 she [reported](#)³⁷, “*Sanctions are bringing suffering and death in countries like Cuba, Iran, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen.... Sanctions that were imposed in the name of delivering human rights are in fact killing people and depriving them of fundamental rights including the rights to health, to food and to life itself.*”

Filipe Nyusi, president of Mozambique and chair of the Southern Africa Development Council, has [said](#)³⁸, “*Sanctions without UN approval are a violation of our (United Nations) Charter and run against the spirit of multilateralism. As SADC, we reaffirm the urgency of the removal of all sanctions imposed on the Republic of Zimbabwe. The sanctions must be removed now for the good of the region and the world.*”

The international consensus regarding the US embargo against Cuba is overwhelming. For the [29th year in a row](#)³⁹, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the US to end the embargo against Cuba. The vote was 184 to 2, with only Israel and the US opposed.

³³ <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/181>

³⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/UCM/Pages/IdrissJazairy.aspx>

³⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23731&LangID=E>

³⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/UCM/Pages/AlenaDouhan.aspx>

³⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26155&LangID=E>

³⁸ <https://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/statement-his-excellency-filipe-jacinto-nyusi-president-republic-mozambique-and-chairperson-sadc-anti-sanctions-day-25-october-c/>

³⁹ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210623-un-assembly-condemns-us-embargo-on-cuba-for-29th-time>

FINDING 8: There has been virtually no reporting on international criticism and recommendations regarding US sanctions.

The global criticism of US sanctions is ignored by western media. Although more than two-thirds of the United Nations General Assembly has passed resolutions condemning unilateral coercive measures, this has not been reported in the West. Incredibly, the New York Times archives do not show a single reference to “unilateral coercive measures.”

The UN Human Rights Council has appointed a diverse array of experts to study and report on the impact of sanctions and what should be done. In 2012, the US lawyer Alfred De Zayas was appointed to be Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order. Over the next seven years, he produced major [reports](#)⁴⁰ documenting the impact of economic sanctions in numerous countries. Ugandan attorney Livingstone Sewanyana is the current holder of this position.

The Algerian diplomat Idriss Jazairy produced major [reports](#)⁴¹ documenting the realities faced in countries under economic assault. Belarus lawyer and author Alena Douhan was appointed to be the second Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures. She has researched and produced reports on the impact of sanctions on [Venezuela](#)⁴², the [fight against COVID-19](#)⁴³, and a [Human Rights Guidance Note](#).⁴⁴

The newspaper of record in the US, the New York Times, along with virtually all western media, have simply ignored these United Nations experts, their investigations and reports.

⁴⁰ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1640958?ln=en>

⁴¹ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1652290?ln=en>

⁴² <https://reliefweb.int/report/venezuela-bolivarian-republic/preliminary-findings-visit-bolivarian-republic-venezuela>

⁴³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/unilateral-sanctions-make-it-harder-fight-covid-19-must-be-dropped-says-un-expert>

⁴⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/UCM/UCMCOVID19GuidanceNote.pdf>

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1. Unilateral coercive sanctions violate basic human rights.

These sanctions are contrary to the UN Charter which provides for the inalienable rights to economic and social development and health. Unilateral economic sanctions violate the right of a country to self-determination as established in Articles 1 of both the [International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#)⁴⁵ and the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)⁴⁶. The right to self-determination is a fundamental collective human right. Economic and Social rights are basic human rights on a par with Civil and Political Rights.

Since these sanctions deprive targeted countries of revenues to support essential infrastructure and public services for the whole population, they are a form of collective punishment, comparable to a war-time siege as stated in the Geneva and Hague Conventions, both signed by the US. These coercive measures are the main obstacle to countries being able to confront the COVID-19 pandemic by denying revenues and blocking transactions for the purchase of vital medical supplies. To exacerbate the suffering of an entire civilian population during a severe health crisis, to force a change of government, is morally corrupt and a clear disregard for basic human rights.

CONCLUSION 2. Sanctions undermine peaceful relations and the sovereign equality of nations.

The [UN Charter](#)⁴⁷, a binding international treaty, requires non-interference in the internal affairs of nations and affirms the sovereign equality of all nations. The only potentially legitimate form of economic, trade and financial sanctions are based on a resolution of the United Nations Security Council. This rule applies to the US.

Indiscriminate unilateral coercive measures amount to the use of force in international relations. A form of war, they reflect a foreign policy adopted and implemented with hegemonic aims.

In January 2019 the UN Special Rapporteur Idriss Jazairy [said](#)⁴⁸, concerning Venezuela “*The use of sanctions by outside powers to overthrow an elected government is in violation of all norms of international law....I urge all countries to avoid applying sanctions unless approved by the United Nations Security Council, as required by the UN Charter.*”

In 9 May 2019, Mr. Jazairy [said](#),⁴⁹ “*Regime change through economic measures, likely to lead to the denial of basic human rights and indeed possibly to starvation, has never been an accepted practice of international relations....Real concerns and serious political differences between governments must never be resolved by precipitating economic and humanitarian disasters, making ordinary people pawns and hostages thereof.*”

⁴⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

⁴⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

⁴⁷ <http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/index.html>

⁴⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/SP/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24131&LangID=E>

⁴⁹ <https://www.twn.my/title2/unsd/2019/unsd190501.htm>

These measures violate international law and the Charter, particularly in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic preventing countries from responding to and recovering from the pandemic. International humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States inspired Resolution 75/181.

CONCLUSION 3. Sanctions create potential criminal and civil liability for US authorities.

The United States and its leaders face potential criminal responsibility or civil liability at the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice or before a possible specialized *ad hoc* criminal or civil court created in the future.

US officials cannot claim they “did not know” the consequences of sanctions. The promoter of the original sanctions on Cuba was clear about US goals. On April 6, 1960, Deputy Assistant Secretary Lester Mallory wrote a [secret memo](#)⁵⁰ saying *"Most Cubans support Castro... The only possible way to make the government lose domestic support is by provoking disappointment and discouragement through economic dissatisfaction and hardships ... Every possible means should be immediately used to weaken the economic life ... denying Cuba funds and supplies to reduce nominal and real salaries with the objective of provoking hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the government."*

US official’s mindset has not changed over the decades. In October 2018 William Brownfield, ex-ambassador of the US in Venezuela, [stated](#)⁵¹ the regime change goal and knowledge that US sanctions would cause civilian suffering: *"If we are going to sanction PDVSA [Venezuela state owned oil and gas company]), this will have an impact on the entire people, on the ordinary citizen ... at this moment perhaps the best solution would be to accelerate the collapse even if it produces a period of suffering of months or perhaps years."*

Such unilateral coercive measures constitute crimes against humanity. Long prison terms for United States authorities are possible if the criminality is substantiated by proof of intention of predictable large-scale suffering and the occurrence of such suffering.

The damages caused by illegal United States sanctions can justify reparations of the order of billions of dollars. “If you hurt someone, you must pay the damages” could become the rule. These consequences can be mitigated by the abolition of the sanctions as recommended in this report.

CONCLUSION 4. Media has failed to inform the public about the consequences and global condemnation of US sanctions.

Most US citizens have little or no understanding of the severe harm being done to millions of residents of countries such as Venezuela, Cuba, Syria, Iran, Zimbabwe, etc. If the media brought an accurate accounting into the nation’s living rooms, we believe they would strongly oppose the policy of imposing crushing sanctions and economic war.

It seems the continuation of this foreign policy depends on preventing people from knowing the reality.

⁵⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lester_D._Mallory

⁵¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJBoe3AvSvc>

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE US GOVERNMENT

1) Implement the [16 point plan](#)⁵² proposed by UN Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan with the respect to the pandemic including:

** Under no circumstances should trade in essential humanitarian goods and commodities, such as medicine, antivirals, medical equipment, its component parts and relevant software, and food, be subject to any form of direct or indirect unilateral economic measure or sanction. Accordingly, any impediment to such trade – including trade barriers such as tariffs, quotas, and other non-tariff measures; impediments to appropriate contracts, financial transactions, transfers of currency or credit documents and transportation that hamper the ability of states to effectively fight the COVID-19 pandemic and deprive them of vital medical care and access to clean water and food – should be lifted or at least suspended until the threat is eliminated.*

** States shall not take measures preventing other states from getting external aid of any character, including international loans to combat the pandemic both from other states and international organizations.*

** No national law or regulation of regional international organizations shall have extraterritorial application. Therefore, any sanctions, including administrative and criminal charges against individuals and companies involved in the delivery of medical goods and food to sanctioned states in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights norms, should be lifted or at least suspended to prevent fear and over-compliance from the side of states, banks, donors, humanitarian operators and other relevant actors.*

** Humanitarian exemption regimes shall not be limited to the medicine or medical equipment and software necessary to treat COVID-19 or for imminent life-saving activity only. They shall guarantee the availability of medicine and medical equipment necessary to treat other diseases, food, and other essential goods, and shall include reconstruction projects to enable targeted states to repair national economies, to restore civilian healthcare and educational institutions and to guarantee the protection of the civilian population.*

2) Undertake and apply a review of US foreign policy with respect to UN Charter principles regarding multilateralism and the sovereign equality of nations. Abrogate all unilateral coercive measures adopted outside the UN Security Council.

3) Require Congressional oversight regarding presidential claims that there is an “extraordinary threat” to national security. The current situation, whereby the president can impose warlike sanctions on other countries based on dubious claims without any oversight, should be reformed.

⁵²<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/covid-19-human-rights-guidance-note-covid-19-pandemic-humanitarian-concerns-and>

VOICES FROM THE SANCTIONED

“Due to the lack of fuel, we are not able to generate the electrical energy that is needed. This leads to blackouts. This affects the civilian population because it can ruin the food that is refrigerated, which people have spent much work to acquire. The blackouts and starting / stopping can damage all types of electrical equipment and their replacement is very difficult given the lack of spare parts.”

- Rosaida, medical doctor from Cuba

“One hard shock that we are confronting is the lack of antibiotics, especially the components needed to manufacture them. There have also been many difficult moments in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the lack of even simple swabs used to do the PCR test. These could be obtained easily if we were not blockaded. Even the glass materials essential for these exams are very difficult to obtain.”

-Norma, psychologist from Cuba

“The embargo that Biden is enforcing, what we here in Cuba call the blockade, is a cruel policy designed to make our lives miserable. The US government is like a cop with its knee on our throat. “We can’t breathe!” Sure, there is a lot to criticize about Cuba. It’s not perfect and no one says it is. Not even the Cuban government. But those who criticize Cuba now remind me of the people who talked about George Floyd’s supposed character flaws to justify a policeman slowly killing him while other police officers stood by and watched with guns drawn. A blockade is an act of war. So is it now time to analyze Cuba’s problems versus its virtues. To stand by with your hands folded and watch or to do something to actually get the boot off the neck of us Cuban people?”

Pablo - North American musician/composer and resident of Havana, Cuba since 1966

“The financial reserves robbed from our nation are not available for the maintenance and replacement of parts for our water system. This results sometimes in failures of the distribution of water for months, resulting in people being forced to walk long distances carrying water. This harms the health, hygiene, and economy. People who are not able to carry water, like the elderly and disabled, must pay high prices for it. Others make long lines at outdoor tanks which are not well treated, causing diarrheal illnesses and the spread of mosquitos.”

- Ana from Venezuela

“Water supply depends on electricity to run the water pumps. When the power comes on, we rush home and turn on the faucet to fill the bathtub with water.”

– Teri from Venezuela

“One significant problem with sanctions is that it makes commercial bodies and investors nervous, because they don’t want to break the law and are also unsure if sanctions will be tightened in future. This deters investment and makes it difficult to send money for aid projects, etc.

A wider point is that sanctions do not directly affect those they are aimed at. Daniel Ortega and his family are well off, have no need to travel to the US and are unaffected by general sanctions, and probably not greatly even by those aimed at family members directly. The same applies to big business, which has ways to circumvent sanctions. It is inevitably poor people who are most affected since sanctions affect government programs aimed at assisting them.”

- John, resident of Masaya, Nicaragua

“Everything is expensive now. Before, Syria was the best country in the world. We are suffering sanctions because we are against America and the Gulf.”

– elderly man selling products on street in Damascus

“We hope the sanctions end The US is trying to subjugate us.”

– teacher in Douma, Syria

“We respect the American people, the Saudi people, even the Israeli people. We have problems with the governments of those countries. We wish to live peacefully. This is the view of the majority of Syrians.”

– Syrian Red Crescent staff member Suleiman in Homs, Syria

“We want the American people to stand with us. We don’t deserve this.”

– Rana in Damascus

“Gasoline is often not available because the US-EU sanctions prohibit Syria from importing crude oil to refine into gasoline. A taxi ride which used to cost 100 lira now costs 1,000. People wait days in line at the gas stations to fill up their cars and the amount is rationed due to low supply. Syria had produced and refined their own oil from domestic wells. However, the largest oil field at Al Omar near Deir Ezzor is occupied by the US-backed SDF who steal the oil and have a contract with Delta Crescent Energy, a US firm.”

– Lilly in Latakia, Syria

EXAMPLES OF THE IMPACT OF SANCTIONS ON SOME INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES

“Modern-day economic sanctions and blockades are comparable with medieval sieges of towns with the intention of forcing them to surrender. Twenty-first century sanctions attempt to bring not just a town, but sovereign countries to their knees. A difference, perhaps, is that twenty-first century sanctions are accompanied by the manipulation of public opinion through ‘fake news’, aggressive public relations and a pseudo-human rights rhetoric so as to give the impression that a human rights ‘end’ justifies the criminal means.” - [Report](#)⁵³ of the United Nations Human Rights Council Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, Alfred de Zayas

This section of the report focuses on some of the most severely sanctioned countries: Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, Syria, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. Beyond the focus of this report are the more than 30 other countries and territories under US unilateral sanctions, which include: China, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Belarus, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Mali, Gaza and the Palestinian territories, Russia, Rwanda, Somalia, Libya, Afghanistan, Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, and Tunisia among others.

A recent addition to the sanctioned countries is the government of Kabul, Afghanistan. In mid-August 2021, the Taliban took effective control of the country. Already the United States has announced [sanctions](#)⁵⁴ on the new government and blocking its access to Afghanistan’s \$9.4B in international reserves. This is leading to a rapid decrease in the nation’s currency value, raising prices for many goods and indicating the Afghanistan peoples’ suffering will continue.

In May 2021, the US imposed visa restrictions and economic sanctions on government and military officials from Ethiopia, and several others from Eritrea in the context of an internal conflict in this important strategic region on the Horn of Africa by the Red Sea. In late August 2021, the US Treasury sanctioned the Eritrean army’s chief of staff for his involvement in the conflict in neighboring Ethiopia.

The consequences of these new sanctions could be very important. The United States should be abandoning unilateral coercive measures and not increasing them.

⁵³ <https://mronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/un-report-on-venezuela-and-ecuador-alfred-de-zayas.pdf>

⁵⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/21/business/afghanistan-economy.html>

CUBA

Cuba has suffered a severe economic, commercial, and financial blockade for the past 60 years. President Trump imposed 240 additional coercive measures, and even more are being imposed by President Biden. This has resulted in a severe economic crisis, widespread suffering and hardship in Cuban’s daily lives. The methods of sanctions include:

Blocking trade and financial transactions. US and foreign businesses are reluctant to trade with or ship goods to Cuba under the threat of penalties. There are exemptions for some humanitarian aid, but the licensing process is lengthy, costly, and many suppliers refuse to participate due to the threat of sanctions. Even when a contract is made for a purchase, most financial institutions refuse to process the transactions, forcing Cuba to purchase essential goods and spare parts from distant and costlier sources. The US also requires that ships from other countries that bring goods to Cuba must wait 6 months before entering US ports and can face heavy fines.

Restricting US travel to Cuba. This has worsened the effect that COVID-19 has had by reducing Cuba’s main source of revenue from tourism. This has caused significant job loss in public and private sectors.

Undermining Covid Response. Cuba has developed its own COVID-19 vaccines, but it is difficult to import components to produce them and syringes to administer them. A US shipping company refused to transport a large shipment of masks, test kits, and ventilators from China. Swiss medical companies stopped shipping medical supplies after being [bought out by a US company](#)⁵⁵. Cuba’s Health Missions have helped control COVID-19 in other countries. Due to US pressure and a campaign to discredit these missions, some countries have cancelled contracts with Cuba for this assistance.

Blocking the import of medical supplies. Cuba’s healthcare system has been severely affected due to the difficulty in purchasing supplies needed to treat the most vulnerable, including women, children, elderly, and disabled. Medical suppliers in the US who are often the only providers of specialized medications for many cancers and medical devices have mostly refused to respond to Cuban requests. Purchases of equipment to treat heart failure, dialysis and for prosthetics for children have been blocked, as well as assistive technologies for the blind, and deaf.

Blocking fuel imports. This causes severe shortages of gas needed for all forms of transport to move food and basic goods within the country, including the ability to maintain production of electricity, vital for hospitals, food preservation, and pumps for water infrastructure.

Reduction in Remittances. Families in the US have been forced to greatly reduce the amount of money they send to relatives in Cuba, vital for the purchase of basic goods.

Undermining Agricultural production. Sanctions result in lack of access to fertilizers for soil enrichment and fuel needed for farm equipment.

Blocking advanced technology. Internet services are restricted, limiting the availability of social media platforms, domestic and international communications and educational exchanges.

⁵⁵ <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621191/bp-cuba-blockade-women-250521-summ-en.pdf>

IRAN

Iran has been sanctioned by the United States of American since 1979. In 2015, the United States signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States—plus Germany abolishing most US sanctions on Iran in exchange for Iran limiting its nuclear program. On July 20, 2015, the JCPOA was adopted unanimously by the Security Council thereby binding all the parties. In May 2018, President Trump announced that the USA would withdraw from the JCPOA and imposed some new sanctions with full withdrawal effective November 2018. President Trump decided that anyone doing business with Iran could not do business with the USA, hence: the scourge of third-party sanctions.

Some 1600 sanctions have been imposed by the United States and huge sums of the order of 100 billion dollars of Iranian money and assets are frozen outside Iran.

President Joe Biden USA campaigned on the commitment to return to the JCPOA.

Our investigations confirm the terrible and fully documented effects of these sanctions particularly with respect to the civilian population. Serious financial hardships have arisen especially outside the cities with less access to food. The price of oil has increased, and health care has suffered on a large scale. The Iranian currency was devalued by 85%.

The pandemic has been very severe in Iran according to Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director of the WHO. Iran lacked supplies of personal protective equipment from the beginning of the pandemic and remains one of the worst hit. According to Dr Ryan, Director of the Emergency Health Program, Iran is still struggling to obtain medical equipment such as ventilators and intensive care materials as well as medicines.

Officially, medicines are not under sanctions, but companies are not willing to deal with Iran because of the threat of sanctions. A US researcher from Virginia Tech, Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, estimated sanctions had caused an additional 30,000 COVID-19 deaths as of October 2020.

Legally, the United States sanctions on Iran are a crime against humanity since they amount to an attack causing terrible suffering for the Iranian population with the full knowledge of the United States Government.

NICARAGUA

The US used sanctions against Nicaragua in the 1980s along with mining the country’s ports and arming and training the Contras. Nicaragua successfully took action in the International Court of Justice. When Daniel Ortega won reelection in 2006 and again in 2011, his opponents began to lobby the United States to reimpose sanctions. This led, in 2016, to the Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act, which was eventually [passed](#)⁵⁶ in December 2018. It is known as the NICA Act.

When violent protests failed to overthrow the Nicaraguan government in 2018, the US Congress passed new legislation targeting Nicaraguan government officials and requiring US officials to oppose loans to Nicaragua from international financial institutions.

[Opinion polls show](#)⁵⁷ that, 85% of Nicaraguans oppose US sanctions. Even the Organization of American States described the NICA Act as “counterproductive.”

The NICA Act’s targets are government ministers, but its victims are Nicaragua’s poorest communities. The World Bank, having praised Nicaragua’s use of international funds to relieve poverty and having financed over 100 successful projects since the Sandinistas first took power in 1979, suddenly halted funding in March 2018. It did not resume work for nearly three years, until late 2020 when the bank responded to the pandemic and two devastating hurricanes. The Inter-American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund similarly stopped funding large projects.

Sanctions on individual Nicaragua government leaders are based on flimsy evidence. For example, former health minister Sonia Castro was falsely accused of instructing hospitals not to treat opposition casualties during the violence in 2018. Much respected for her work in transforming the country’s health services since 2007, Castro had to leave her post when sanctioned, as she could no longer handle international financial transactions.

Sanctions have hit specific projects benefiting poor communities and have also begun to impact mainstream services such as healthcare, where replacing defective equipment or obtaining supplies during the pandemic has proven to be problematic. Nicaragua is one of the few Latin American countries to receive no US vaccine donations so far: supplies have been promised but none have arrived. Gaps have been partly filled using Nicaragua’s strong ties to other countries and with the Central American Integration Bank which, unlike other international financial institutions, stepped up its assistance.

The RENACER Act, short for “Reinforcing Nicaragua Adherence to Conditions for Electoral Reform,” was recently [approved](#)⁵⁸ by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. If approved by the Senate and House, it will intensify sanctions on Nicaragua and expand the targets of personal sanctions to ordinary Sandinista party members. In the opinion poll, 83.7% of Nicaraguans believe US sanctions are a manifestation of US intervention in Nicaragua’s internal affairs.

⁵⁶ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1918>

⁵⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BMHe6cMayw>

⁵⁸ <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/committee-approves-renacer-act-to-hold-ortega-regime-accountable-for-subverting-democracy-in-nicaragua>

NORTH KOREA

Trade with Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has been restricted since 1950, the official beginning of the Korean War. North Koreans have lived with restrictions, embargoes, and scarcities imposed and enforced by a variety of sanctions from the United States and the United Nations. These sanctions had targeted the military and elite, but then in 2016, sanctions became sectoral, targeting entire industries.

Since the beginning of the DPRK nuclear tests in 2003, the Bush and Obama administrations respectively lifted some sanctions to facilitate negotiations around DPRK denuclearization, and then reinstated them when the negotiations failed to produce the results desired.

On March 2, 2016, the Security Council issued Resolution 2270, draconian measures affecting weapons transactions, proliferation of nuclear activities, maritime and air transport, export control of weapons of mass destruction, foreign trade, financial transactions including the freezing of assets, banning the export of gold, vanadium, titanium, rare-earth metals, as well as coal and iron. North Korea reacted immediately rejecting the Resolution and intensified nuclear tests and issuing warnings of preemptive actions. There has been a sizable decline in the DPRK’s external trade.

The Trump administration elaborated on DPRK sanctions by returning the DPRK to the State Sponsors of Terrorism list, targeting the DPRK’s access to international shipping, instituting a travel ban, and adding new measures targeting several DPRK industries.

The administrative hurdles placed on international aid organizations and outright bans on items containing metal instituted by Obama’s US and UN sanctions have had devastating effects on the DPRK agricultural, medical, and sanitation systems. In 2018, 3,968 people in the DPRK, who were mostly children under the age of 5, died because of shortages and delays to UN aid programs caused by sanctions.

On the Korean peninsula, the US polices the inter-Korean affairs of reunification through sanctions. After the Korean leaders signed the Panmunjom Declaration on April 27, 2018, the US-led UN Command which oversees the DMZ, blocked development of the inter-Korean railway.

SYRIA

Syria has been under US sanctions for many years but efforts to damage the Syrian economy reached a new level in June 2020 with the “[Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act](#).⁵⁹”

The “Caesar sanctions” prohibit any US or foreign citizen from assisting in maintaining oil or gas production or any kind of construction or engineering. The sanctions declare that the Central Bank of Syria is primarily for “money laundering” and thus prohibits all interactions with the bank. The goal is to make it impossible or extremely difficult for Syria to conduct normal trade. Consequently, the Syrian pound has lost much of its value and the cost of goods has skyrocketed.

UN Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan has [said](#)⁶⁰ regarding Syria:

“The sanctions violate the human rights of the Syrian people, whose country has been destroyed by almost 10 years of ongoing conflict... What particularly alarms me is the way the Caesar Act runs roughshod over human rights, including the Syrian people's rights to housing, health, and an adequate standard of living and development. The US government must not put obstacles in the way of rebuilding of hospitals because lack of medical care threatens the entire population's very right to life.”

Interviews with people in Syria reveal the consequences of the draconian US sanctions. A Red Crescent staff member says that before the war, Syria produced most of their own pharmaceuticals and medicines. Now, because of sanctions, they are prevented from rebuilding the factories. In those factories which were not damaged, they cannot import the raw materials to make the medicines. Thus, medicines must be imported and are 5 times as expensive.

A British journalist who is married to a Syrian woman says that anesthetics are almost out of stock. He had to endure leg surgery without anesthesia. Antibiotics are also in short supply, leading to infections. He knows a child who had hydrocephalus (water on the brain) who died for the lack of the correct medical device (shunt). Before the war and escalation of sanctions, Syria had one of the finest medical systems in the region.

A pharmacist explains that medicines cost vastly more now because they need to be imported and bought on the black market. Hotel staff explain that sanctions have devastated the tourist industry because Visa and other credit cards do not work in Syria.

The situation is compounded because the oil fields in eastern Syrian are controlled by US forces occupying the area and supporting a secessionist group. With Caesar sanctions targeting the energy sector and prohibiting reconstruction, electricity is in short supply. Some areas only have a few hours of electricity per day; in other areas, electricity is four hours on, four hours off. In the West, we complain if the electricity is cut off for a few hours.

US sanctions prohibit any support or investment which enables Syrian government reconstruction of hospitals, schools, or residences. Even zoom teleconference software is unavailable.

One analyst [explains](#)⁶¹: “The US has multiple goals. One goal is to prevent Syria from recovering. Another goal is to prolong the conflict and damage those countries, like Russia, which have assisted Syria.”

⁵⁹ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-116s52is/pdf/BILLS-116s52is.pdf>

⁶⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26630>

⁶¹ https://original.antiwar.com/rick_sterling/2020/06/19/caesar-tries-to-suffocate-17-million-syrians/

VENEZUELA

For over 20 years, the US has attempted to destabilize the Venezuelan government with over 100 economic, commercial, and financial coercive measures. This has resulted in an economic crisis and widespread suffering in people’s daily life. The following are some of the key sanction methods and consequences:

Blockade of oil exports. This has reduced Venezuela's main source of revenue needed to import most essential goods. Revenues have been [reduced to just 1%](#)⁶² of the levels prior to sanctions. The US has blocked access to loans that could have enabled Venezuela to recover from the economic crisis brought on by the drop in oil prices in 2014. The US Government Accounting Office [admitted](#)⁶³ that “the sanctions on state oil company in 2019 contributed to the steepest decline in the Venezuelan economy which led to hyperinflation, low salaries, and public sector job losses.

Blocking of diesel imports and the chemical needed to produce its own. This has been devastating for the whole economy. It is crucial for electrical generation, water pumping and treatment plants, heavy equipment to transport of basic goods, agricultural machinery, and crop irrigation. Unable to import diluents, refineries cannot produce enough gas, forcing many to wait in line for days to get gas for vehicles.

US seizure of Venezuelan assets. These total \$8 billion from Venezuela’s Citgo oil facilities in the US and the freezing of additional billions in foreign banks. This has prevented the purchase of food, medicines and spare parts for the repair and maintenance of electricity, gas, and water infrastructures, resulting in frequent power outages and water shutoffs. The threat of large penalties on any foreign companies, banks, shipping firms, and food suppliers who try to trade with Venezuela, has forced Venezuela to buy from distant third parties with greatly increased costs and delays. Banks from the US, UK and Portugal have refused to release Venezuelan assets, including over 1 billion dollars of Venezuelan gold by the Bank of England.

Sanctions impacting the health sector. Effects on the health sector and response to COVID-19 are severe and affect the most vulnerable. Exemptions exist for some humanitarian aid but are ineffective and insufficient due to lengthy and costly procedures. Vaccines, including basic child immunizations, from the WHO backed COVAX program had been delayed for over one year because the payments by Venezuela had been blocked. Medications to treat severely ill COVID-19 patients, as well as COVID-19 protective equipment, are very expensive due to having to purchase them from distant sources. Spare parts for medical equipment, especially ventilators, come from the US companies and trade with them is prohibited. A report by Center for Economic and Policy Research found that even before COVID-19, sanctions caused over 40,000 deaths in less than 2 years, in part due to an increase in infant and maternal mortality, diabetics without insulin, lack of dialysis equipment, and shortages of drugs for HIV, heart disease and cancer. [Children with leukemia](#)⁶⁴ are awaiting bone marrow transplants abroad, and 14 have died while a bank in Portugal refused to release the funds for it.

Reduction of food imports. This has affected 6 million Venezuelans who depend on the Government subsidized food program. Obstacles to food imports have resulted in a steady growth of malnourishment, with many reducing to 1-2 meals a day. Over 2.5 million Venezuelans have slipped into food insecurity.

⁶² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26747&LangID=E>

⁶³ <https://cepr.net/press-release/gao-report-findings-show-that-biden-administration-should-scrap-trumps-economic-sanctions-that-have-killed-tens-of-thousands-of-people-in-venezuela-cepr-co-director-says/>

⁶⁴ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1096202>

ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe has been sanctioned severely by the United Kingdom and the United States since 2002. Australia, Canada, and New Zealand have also maintained targeted sanctions against Zimbabwe. The sanctions policy responded to Zimbabwe land reform distributing the land mostly taken by white British colonists from the African population. The land reform was a major issue in the independence campaign of Zimbabwe which triumphed in 1979.

In 2002–2003, the United States and the European Union introduced several unilateral coercive measures including blocking Zimbabwe’s access to international loans inflicting direct damage on the population. At least 140 Zimbabwean entities and individuals are on the US targeted sanctions list which were prolonged by both Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Zimbabwe policies allegedly posed an unusual and extraordinary threat to US foreign policy. Civilians are the major victims of these sanctions.

Regarding healthcare, Zimbabwe was denied access to international financial relief and vaccines to fight the COVID-19 pandemic because of sanctions. The Chinese government has provided vaccines to Zimbabwe. In addition, Zimbabwe and few other southern African countries are moving forward to produce their own, indigenous African vaccine for widespread use. Zimbabwe has apparently vaccinated about 1.2% of the country’s population but limitations on access to resources have had a negative impact on vaccination. Full circulation of scientific knowledge including the lifting of patent authorization in the United States as well as the free distribution of COVID-19 vaccines is desirable.

Major hydroelectric dam construction and repair have been delayed due to the inability to acquire international funding and balance of payment restrictions. Water purification projects as well as construction projects have been delayed by the same financial hardships. There is limited access to water decontamination chemicals and parts and materials. Agricultural fertilizers and pest control chemicals have been limited, preventing relief from drought conditions. Road construction and repair, upgrading and purchasing of public transportation vehicles have been delayed due to financial limitations.

Purchasing Power and Currency Devaluation

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund have been able to control the former colonial countries – Zimbabwe, being no exception. However, following Zimbabwe’s institution of land reform through the reacquisition of stolen colonial land a conscious attempt to crash Zimbabwe’s economy through currency manipulation was seriously undertaken by the West (US, Britain, and Canada in particular). Only through consistent and often brilliant tactics of the governmental financial management and the discipline and understanding of the people has Zimbabwe been able to weather the harshest effects of these Western policies. These difficulties must be mitigated.

Zimbabwe’s development has certainly been curtailed by Western sanctions.

Africa and the South African Development Community (SADC) have stood by Zimbabwe and stated the principles about development and self-determination. October 25 is now the SADC Anti-Sanctions Day. The SADC includes all African countries south from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to South Africa.

In 2020, the USA and the European community rejected outright the October 25 anti-sanctions campaign.

Graphics and Photos



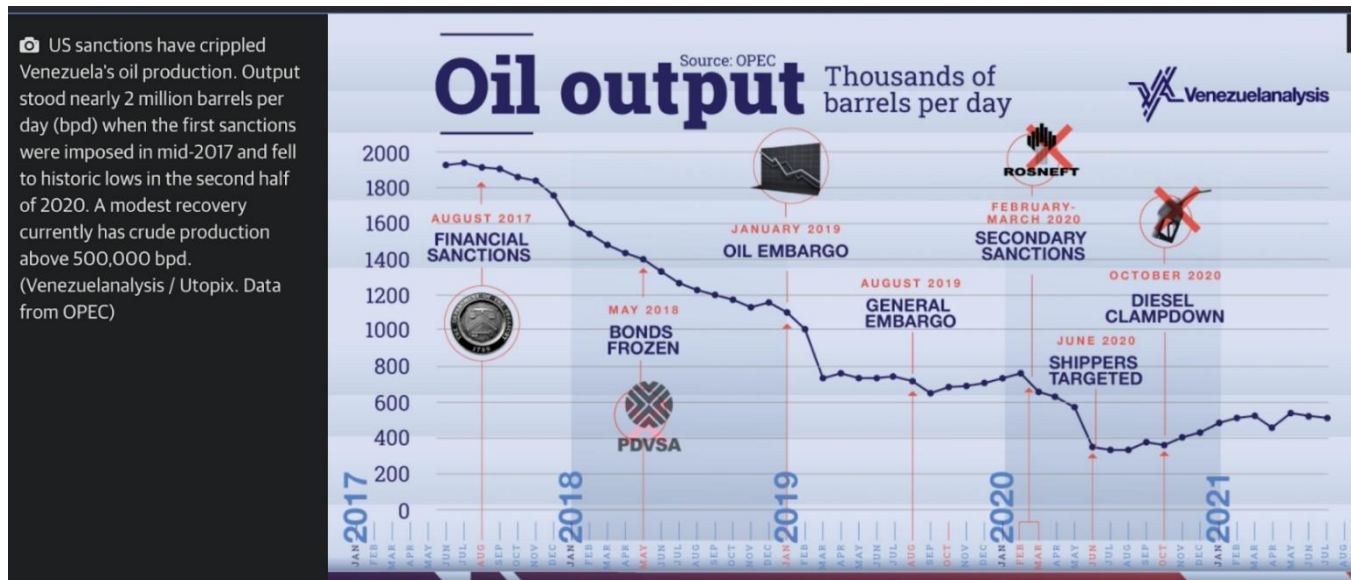
Billboard showing how US sanctions boomerang on farmers and workers.



President Trump signing Executive Order imposing sanctions



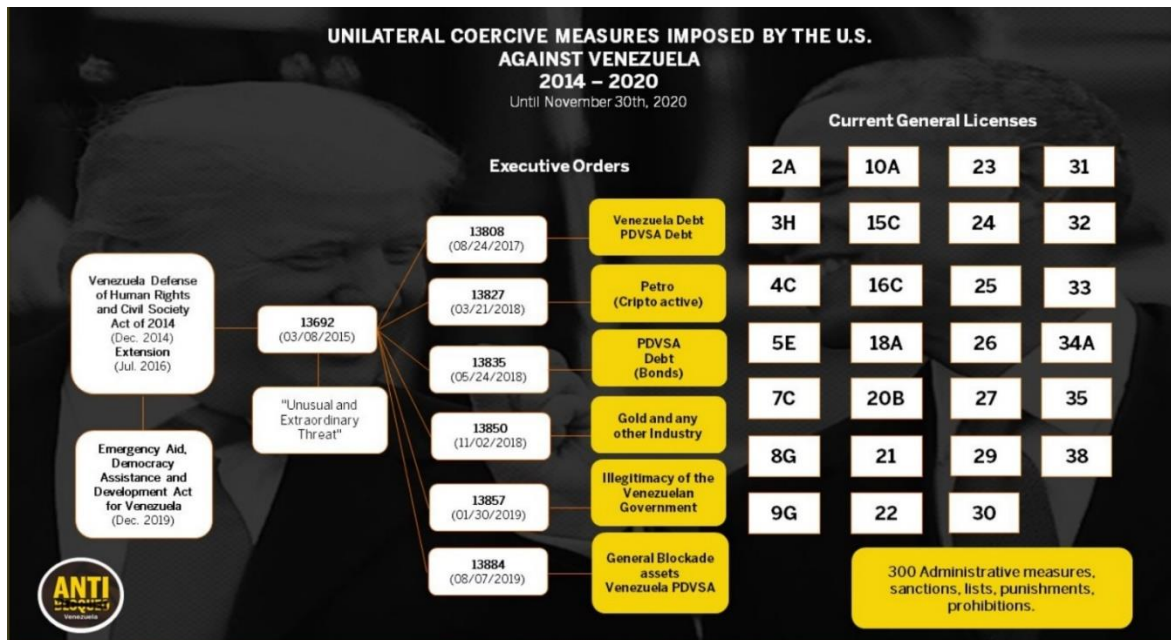
Coercive Economic Measures and Consequences in Venezuela



How US sanctions have impacted Venezuela oil output



How US sanctions are collective punishment of the Venezuelan people.



83% of Nicaraguans think US sanctions are “manifestation of interventions in their internal affairs”

US SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN

First phase

Starting August 7, Iran stands to lose the following business transactions because of the re-imposition of US sanctions.



\$39.5 bn

230 AEROPLANES

\$20bn contract to sell **110 Boeing planes** to Iran Air and Aseman Airlines cancelled.

\$19bn contract to sell **100 Airbus planes** to Iran cancelled; **only 3 planes** delivered to Iran Air.

\$536 million contract to sell **20 ATR planes** to Iran Air cancelled; **13 planes** delivered as of August 5.



\$424 m

5,400 TONNES OF CARPETS EXPORTED

Fiscal year 2017

Iran's hand-woven carpet industry **controls 30 percent** of the **global market** and **employs an estimated 2 million** Iranians.

The **US** is the **biggest market** for Iranian carpets.



\$852 m

96,000 TONNES OF PISTACHIO EXPORT

March 2017 to December 2017

US and Iran are the **main competitors in pistachio production with 85 percent** of the annual world market.

China is the biggest buyer of Iranian pistachios in 2016.



\$1.37 m

557KG CAVIAR

First shipment of caviar to the US in **25 years**, **weighing 10kg and worth \$13,000**, took place after sanctions were lifted in 2016-2017.



1.6 million

CARS SOLD IN IRAN

Fiscal year 2017

Iran was the **12th-biggest car market in 2017** and had **18 percent growth** in sales.

French company, PSA, maker of Peugeot, said it will stop its operation in Iran. PSA controls an estimated 34 percent of Iran's automotive market.



64.5 tonnes

GOLD

Fiscal year 2017

Trading of gold and other precious metals with Iran is prohibited. In the past, gold was used as payment to buy Iranian oil to circumvent banking sanctions.



*Fiscal year 2017 (March 2017-March 2018)



The high cost of sanctions on Iran

“We don’t deserve this” / The Impact and Consequences of US Sanctions



Venezuelans in long wait for gas due to severe shortages



Cubans queue to buy food in Havana in May. Díaz-Canel has admitted that food imports stand at just a quarter of 2019 levels © Yamil Lage/AFP/Getty Images

Cubans queue for basic food items due to decrease in food imports



Searching for scarce food in Syria



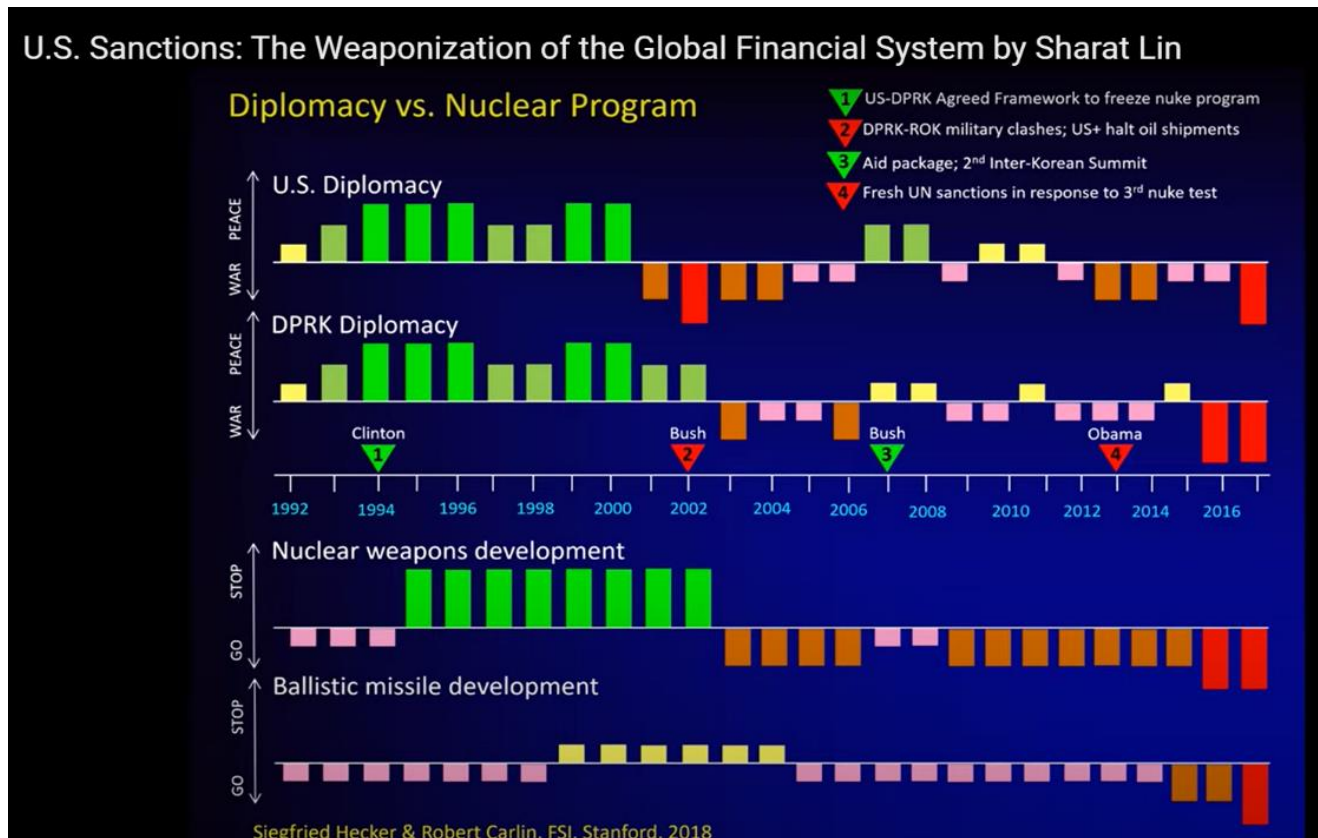
Effect of fuel shortages in Syria



“We hope the sanctions end.... The US is trying to subjugate us.”

Teachers in Douma (greater Damascus), Syria

The following chart demonstrates the ebb and flow of nuclear and missile development in North Korea inversely related to the state of diplomatic relations with the United States independent of the political party in power. When the Clinton and Bush administrations were conciliatory, there was less nuclear and missile development but later under the Bush and Obama administrations which were less conciliatory, the nuclear and ballistic missile development was more intensive. More sanctions lead to more danger and fewer sanctions mean greater possibility of détente.



UN General Assembly calls for US to end Cuba embargo for 29th consecutive year



Voting Result: 184 to 2

SOURCES AND INFORMATION ON SANCTIONS / UNILATERAL COERCIVE MEASURES

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY / SANCTIONS

<https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/sanctions-programs-and-country-information>

UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTIONS

2020 UN General Assembly Resolution on Human Rights and Unilateral Coercive Measures

<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/181>

UN Human Rights Council Resolution

<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/45/7>

UNITED NATIONS REPORTS

Reports to the UN Human Rights Council on impact of unilateral coercive sanctions

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/ucm/pages/reports.aspx>

Negative Impact of unilateral coercive measures: priorities and roadmap

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Negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/42/46>

Reports to the UN Human Rights Council on impact of unilateral coercive sanctions

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/ucm/pages/reports.aspx>

Negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights

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Negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights

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NGO & INDEPENDENT REPORTS

The Case Against Economic Sanctions

<https://cepr.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Briefing-CEPR-Sanctions-2020-01-10.pdf>

“Economic Sanctions as Collective Punishment: The Case of Venezuela”

<https://cepr.net/report/economic-sanctions-as-collective-punishment-the-case-of-venezuela/>

“Maximum Pressure” US Economic Sanctions Harm Iranians’ Right to Health

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/10/29/maximum-pressure/us-economic-sanctions-harm-iranians-right-health>

“Engaging North Korea”

<https://www.afsc.org/engaging-north-korea-iii>

“We don’t deserve this” / The Impact and Consequences of US Sanctions

The Human Costs and Gendered Impact of Sanctions on North Korea

<https://koreapeacenow.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/human-costs-and-gendered-impact-of-sanctions-on-north-korea.pdf>

Impact of Sanctions on Poverty and Economic Growth

<https://gsdrc.org/publications/impact-of-economic-sanctions-on-poverty-and-economic-growth/>

The Impact of Financial and Oil Sanctions on the Venezuelan Economy by Luis Oliveros, Oct 2020

<https://www.wola.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Oliveros-report-summary-ENG.pdf>

POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS and SLIDESHOWS

PowerPoint on US Sanctions: The Weaponization of the Global Financial System

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3vFRUtdRJQ>

The US Economic War Waged at Home and Abroad (Slideshow)

<https://sanctionskill.org/toolkit/>

Sanctions and Syria (slide show)

https://justworldeducational.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Isssa_22_04_20_sent.pdf

MOVIES & VIDEO

Make the Economy Scream, 2019 video documentary

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/maketheeconomyscreamen>

Fuel Shortages in Venezuela: Causes and Consequences.

<https://venezuelanalysis.com/video/15061>

Apples of Discord: documentary about where sanctions and retaliation lead

<https://rtd.rt.com/films/apples-of-discord-cost-russian-sanctions-eu-farmers/>

CONFERENCES

Conference on UCMs with Iran, Cuba, Venezuela officials

<https://www.aeoi.org.ir/portal/file/?302141/booklet-of-ucm-seminar-28-october-2019-finalized.pdf>

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION SYLLABUS

An Empire of Sanctions – Syllabus from the Historians for Peace and Democracy

<https://www.historiansforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Empire-of-Sanctions-Syllabus.pdf>

A FEW ARTICLES

Venezuela delivers report to the International Criminal Court on the effect of sanctions against the Venezuelan civilian population

“We don’t deserve this” / The Impact and Consequences of US Sanctions

<https://albaciudad.org/2021/08/venezuela-entrego-informe-ante-la-corte-penal-internacional-sobre-el-efecto-de-las-sanciones-contr-la-poblacion-civil-venezolana/>

Sanctions, Making Venezuela Scream: Interview with Alex Main

<https://venezuelanalysis.com/interviews/15209>

Iran: The Double Jeopardy of Sanctions and COVID-19 <https://www.indiachinainstitute.org/2020/09/19/iran-the-double-jeopardy-of-sanctions-and-covid-19/>

US Deprives Cuba of Syringes it needs now

<https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/u-s-deprives-cuba-of-syringes-it-needs-now/>

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To End Collective and Cruel Punishment, Biden Must Go Further on Sanctions Relief

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2021/07/09/end-collective-and-cruel-punishment-biden-must-go-further-sanctions-relief>

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The Case against Sanctions

<https://cepr.net/events/the-case-against-sanctions/>

How US meddling in Ethiopia & Eritrea is destabilizing strategic Horn of Africa / Gray Zone.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8vRaWgl86Q>

U.S. meddlers behind Tigray "Crisis", Taylor Report,

<http://www.radio4all.net/index.php/program/109575>

BOOKS

“The Visible Hand of the Market: Economic Warfare in Venezuela” by Pasqualina Curcio

https://77b6196f-0d53-4604-9208-8e2e39bded53.filesusr.com/ugd/c68724_bd52dbd1b61e42fd8bb56689310a0f36.pdf

WEBSITES

Sanctions Kill Coalition SanctionsKill.org

USA*Engage USAEngage.org