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Technical assistance and capacity-building

Written statement* submitted by Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[9 August 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The United States of America Sanctions on Sudan*

Since 1997, the Sudanese people have lived under a sanctions state imposed by the United Governments of America. How should we measure the effect of such sanctions on the peace and security of the civilians affected? By the growing number of child deaths caused by the lack of access to adequate health care. By the number of illnesses going undiagnosed or untreated. By the blighted life chances of Sudanese youth denied access to the Internet and to the education that should be theirs by right. Or by the development projects frozen because of the cancellation of billions of dollars' worth of inward investment?

By any measure, the 18 year long sanctions state has been catastrophic for Sudan's people.

Indeed, eighteen years is a fitting distance from which to assess the damage wrought by these measures. Almost fifty per cent of the country's population is under eighteen years of age. That means half the Sudanese population were not even alive when the sanctions were originally imposed back in the 1990s.

Through their presence and work in Sudan, the Ma'arij Foundation for Peace and Development and the Global Network for Rights and Development have witnessed the devastating effects of sanctions on children and young adults in particular.

In the worst of cases, they lack the basic essentials to survive and are left dependent on humanitarian aid, the delivery of which may be sporadic and contingent on prevailing security conditions. Sanctions have become a collective punishment against a civilian population already engaged in a bitter struggle against poverty and scant resources. It cannot be right that a sanctions state continues for decades and that the goalposts for it being lifted are moved again and again. If applied at all, sanctions by one country against another must have clear measurable objectives, be subject to international oversight and be time-bound.

Through talks and deliberations with partner NGOs, Sudanese government representatives, lawyers and academics, the Ma'arij Foundation and GNRD are convinced that American sanctions against Sudan fail to meet these criteria. The sanctions imposed on Sudan should be lifted immediately. Furthermore, the entire issue of coercive measures and sanctions should be reconsidered by the international community, putting the interests of civilians at the very centre of its deliberations.

In deciding to impose such measures, therefore, the overriding concern for the authorities, whether they be multilateral or unilateral, must be the well-being of innocent civilians, especially women, children and other vulnerable groups of the population.

In Sudan, the GNRD and Maarij are extremely concerned that the health and development of innocent civilians has been detrimentally affected by the imposition of sanctions by the United Governments in 1997, since taken up by many other members of the international community. Coercive measures break the economy and leave civilians dependent on humanitarian aid, the delivery of which may be sporadic and dependent on security conditions. People are often left without the basic essentials to survive.

The MFPD and GNRD would like to refer to their participation in the workshop on the impact of the application of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights by the affected populations, particularly their socio-economic impact on women and children, which was held on 23 May 2014 at UNOG and to remind the council with the recommendation of the workshop specially the remarks of Mr. Craig Mokhiber, the head of Development, Economic and Social Issues Branch at the OHCHR, said lessons needed to be learnt from the past about the need for more stringent accountability mechanisms.

He said that International Humanitarian Law prohibits collective punishment and that coercive measures impacted all 3 pillars of the UN Declaration: for peace and stability, development and human rights. HE underlined the right of all individuals to food, shelter, medical care and the necessary social services.

Targeted sanctions, therefore, he said, should be proportional, of fixed duration and subject to adequate safeguards applied by an independent body.

The debate was then opened to the floor, with the Iranian delegate speaking on behalf of the non-aligned member Governments. He called for the lifting of all unilateral coercive measures applied against any Government, arguing that they endangered food security, adversely impacted the job market and disrupted basic services such as health and sanitation.

Many other Governments and NGOs backed this view. The Global Network for Rights and Development also made a statement arguing coercive measures states be re-assessed and that sanctions against Sudan be lifted.

So, the coercive measures are too often a form of collective punishment, which, if applied during time of war would be an unacceptable breach of the Geneva Conventions. The same rules should also apply between nations and multilateral organizations during periods of tension or undeclared conflict. After all, the effect on vulnerable civilians remains the same.

Civilians should not be used as a pawn in political power games between governments. The Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development (MFPD) and the Global Network for Rights and Development (GNRD) calls on the coercive measures state to be lifted against Sudan. It further expresses the belief that the whole issue of coercive measures be reconsidered by the international community, putting civilians at the centre of its deliberations.

* Global Network for Rights and Development (GNRD) NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.