



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 5

### Human rights bodies and mechanisms

## Written statement\* submitted by the Islamic Women's Institute of Iran, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

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

[5 February 2018]

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

GE.18-02440(E)



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## **Imposition of Unilateral Sanctions as Violation of Human Rights**

Resort to coercive unilateral measures, including economic sanctions, by certain powerful governments against other states has often been justified in the name of punishing policies and practices “violating international law” or “jeopardizing international peace and security or the general interests of the international community.”

Absence of effective guarantees to ensure compliance of states with their human rights obligations and weakness of the existing mechanisms for supporting basic human rights on a global scale have, as a matter of fact, led the international community to look for practical ways and means within the international legal system to compensate for such shortcomings, including through the United Nations Security Council. As it happens, powerful states have also taken it upon themselves, beyond the bounds of international legality, to resort to coercive unilateral measures of their own choosing against states whose policies and practices they find objectionable or unacceptable, whether in the field of human rights or in other fields. However, ample evidence from various situations point to the unfortunate fact that imposition of sanctions in the name of combating human rights violations in target societies has for all practical purposes caused widespread, and even massive, economic hardship and deprivation among the population; itself an obvious violation of basic economic human rights.

Numerous factual reports, including those presented by the UN Special Rapporteur on Coercive Unilateral Measures, show in very clear terms that innocent people living under the sanctioned government who have nothing to do with the state policies are in fact the main victims of imposed sanctions. Still worse, there exists no established international mechanism for compensation of the collateral damages incurred by the civilian population as a result of such unjustified coercive measures.

Moreover, as many reports demonstrate, imposition of unilateral sanctions also negatively impact the national economy of the target societies in various fields, in particular foreign trade, and banking and financial transactions and services. This is particularly the case for developing societies in general, and those dependent on the export of raw material and import of a wide range of goods and commodities in particular. Over and above such negative consequences of sanctions on the national economy of target societies, it is widely recognized that sanctions also violate the economic and financial rights of individual citizens of the target country, including through the seizure of assets and property by the state resorting to sanctions.

Another collateral impact of the unilateral sanctions imposed on a target state or its governmental institutions accused of unacceptable practices and activities finds itself in the negative effect on the state of economic, trade and banking cooperation between the target country and the outside world. As it happens, imposition of unilateral coercive measures by powerful states tends to frighten other countries and companies from engaging in or expanding economic and trade ties with the target country, even in the fields and areas unrelated to or not covered by the imposed sanctions. Negative impact of sanctions on food, medicine, and other essential goods and commodities are widely known.

It is also a matter of serious concern for human rights advocates across the world that resort to and pursuit of coercive unilateral measures are, more often than not, politically-motivated and remotely related to genuine concerns for the promotion of human rights in target countries. Genuine promotion of human rights, it is universally recognized, calls for apolitical, objective, and non-discriminatory approaches and actions.

In light of the above, The ISLAMIC WOMEN’S INSTITUTE OF IRAN, a non-governmental organization with a record of several decades of activity in defense of the rights of women in Iran and genuinely concerned with the effective promotion of human rights – political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights - believes that the Human Rights Council, as the main body within the United Nations human rights machinery, needs to address the question of coercive unilateral measures in earnest. We are sure that pro-human rights NGOs in other societies also share our

concerns and support our call. We believe the Council is in a unique position to assist with this matter and bring its highly respected status and weight to bear on the situation, including through specialized panel discussions and subsequent intergovernmental deliberations. Such an approach will – hopefully - lead to much-needed Council decisions in a critical area of international concern.

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