



General Assembly

Distr.: General
23 August 2019

English only

Human Rights Council

Forty-second session

9–27 September 2019

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Organization for defending Victims of Violence (ODVV), 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.

[19 August 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons

Economic sanctions are creating an instrument for continuing the trend in systematic violation of the rights of civilians, especially the elderly, living in target countries. Despite the claims made on the exemption of vital items such as food, medicine and medical equipment from sanctions,¹ the ugly on-the-ground reality proves the contrary with many civilians suffering the bitter consequences of scarcity of humanitarian items that in some cases threaten thousands of lives. For example, there are records of about 40 thousand deaths in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from 2017–2018,² and death of half a million children in Iraq³ as a result of Unilateral Sanctions, indicating that Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCM)s are proven to be a form of collective punishment and they are associated with “crimes against humanity.”⁴ It is unfortunate that the most recent report⁵ prepared by the OHCHR following the UN High Commissioner’s visit to Venezuela evaluates the sanctions on the country as “targeted” sanctions while the unilateral measures that focus on banking systems are instruments of indiscriminate violation of human rights by nature.

The extensive violation of human rights caused by UCMs will never leave the elderly unaffected, because of the vulnerability of the group to medicine and food scarcity. The inhuman effects of UCMs violates the right to life and the right to health for all the aged civilians while the mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and the reports submitted by the mandate to the Human Rights Council reiterate on the necessity of guaranteeing equal access to medical services⁶ for the elderly and eliminating any discrimination against the aged people in terms of access to medical services.⁷

Unilateral Coercive Measures directly target the economy sector of the sanctioned countries, consequently, they hamper all national plans for improving the rights of older persons including insurance programs, social security programs, education and life-long-learning programs, health care programs, poverty eradication programs, employment programs, programs for addressing violence, abuse and discrimination against the older persons, programs that encourage the participation of older persons in social life, the programs that facilitate their equal access to justice and even the programs that improve the accessibility of urban infrastructures for the elderly. Additionally, UCMs reverse all the positive developments and achievements attained in various fields of human rights for all civilians specially the older persons and other vulnerable groups.

UCMs violate Universal Declaration of Human Rights Specifically Article 25 (1) of the Declaration reiterating on the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond people’s control. All the mentioned rights are indiscriminately violated by the Unilateral Coercive Measures that target the economy and banking transactions of a country as in the cases of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Cuba.

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/iranians-say-us-sanctions-blocking-access-to-needed-medicine/2019/07/30/935dea88-b294-11e9-acc8-1d847bacca73_story.html?noredirect=on.

² <http://cepr.net/images/stories/reports/venezuela-sanctions-2019-04.pdf>.

³ https://www.democracynow.org/2004/7/30/democracy_now_confronts_madeline_albright_on.

⁴ A/HRC/39/47/Add.1.

⁵ A/HRC/41/18, pp 25.

⁶ A/HRC/33/44. pp.37.

⁷ A/HRC/30/43, pp. 27, 29, 32, 4.

Recommendations

The Organization for defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is urging the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons to:

- Study the challenges and protection gaps created by UCMs for the elderly people in target countries and report the findings to the Human Rights Council.
 - Publicly support NGOs that make efforts for the effective realization of the rights of older persons in countries targeted by UCMs.
 - Remind the UCM source countries of their international commitment to protect the rights of the elderly in target countries.
 - Inform the international community of the contradiction between imposition of UCMs and promotion of the rights of the older persons through public statements.
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