



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
8 March 2024

English only

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-fifth session

26 February–5 April 2024

Agenda item 4

### Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

## **Written statement\* submitted by Network of Women's Non-governmental Organizations in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 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.

[29 January 2024]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **The Impact of the United States of America's Sanctions on Iranian People's Access to Medicine**

Fair access of the people to medicine and medical equipment is among the essential functions and components of responsible governments. Any actors causing direct or indirect limitations in this field, playing with people's lives, should be addressed in

international courts and human conscience, and an appropriate response should be provided. Enduring 35 years of escalating American sanctions on the international level, even during the Islamic Republic of Iran-Iraq War, hindered Iranian victims' access to antidotes for chemical injuries.

The imposition of sanctions, led by the United States of America's government, in the economic sphere has resulted in the economic regression of governments, lack of foreign investment, and the inability to repatriate human and financial capital to the country. This has led to increased difficulty in people's access to essential medicines and medical equipment.

Sanctions shocks, of an extrinsic nature, imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran by the United States of America have disrupted foreign and domestic trade for numerous American and non-American companies engaged in international transactions. These shocks have led to disruptions in production, price increases, and reduced quality of food, cosmetics, health, and pharmaceutical products.

Unfortunately, continuing economic pressures, including the United States of America's efforts to force the Islamic Republic of Iran out of the international dollar cycle, intimidating foreign banks against cooperating with Iranian companies, and creating economic insecurity, have raised the risk level for companies to interact and collaborate with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the United States of America's Department of the Treasury has sanctioned more than 975 Iranian companies, at least two banks, and 12 companies related to the food and pharmaceutical sectors, through various measures. Moreover, the United States of America aims to eliminate any chance of executing payments through conventional mechanisms for the Islamic Republic of Iran, directly or via European banks. It seeks to create extensive restrictions, even in the field of supplying food and pharmaceutical materials for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Essentially, the United States of America is endeavoring to eliminate the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign exchange resources from oil sales and create difficulties in obtaining non-oil export revenues. This demonstrates the most antagonistic policy of any Western government against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Furthermore, it is important to note that sanction measures cannot be unidimensional; they encompass various aspects of operations, including banking, international trade, customs, and more. The interconnected state of the world's economy today, often referred to as the global village, means that economic sanctions affect all dimensions and can disrupt access to foreign medicines and raw materials for domestic pharmaceutical production. The situation becomes even more painful when, despite deceptive claims by various administrations of the United States of America, they consistently pursue a unified approach towards the Islamic Republic of Iran and act in the same way regarding sanctions.

Therefore, it is necessary to highlight the impactful factors of sanctions on the healthcare system as follows:

1. According to the latest indicators of the country's food security level, calibrated with the income level of urban households, the caloric intake has gradually decreased, contrary to international treaties and conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Charter, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Fourth Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocol, and the Vienna Convention. The economic shocks on the country over the past years have consistently lowered the caloric intake per household.

2. Given the statistics of 200,000 burn victims and 30,000 hospitalized due to burn-related incidents, around 3,000 deaths resulting from the lack of medical facilities due to sanctions occur. Under current sanction conditions, the price of each burn dressing has increased from around one million to seven million tomans, the cost of burn clothing ranges from 5 to 10 million tomans, and the additional cost of 300,000 to 500,000 tomans for imported ointments has led many patients to be unable to afford the treatment cost of 400 to 500 million tomans and consequently face death. Additionally, the rehabilitation and paramedical costs associated with treatment processes should not be overlooked.
3. Regrettably, due to unjust sanctions, 600 patients with hemophilia have lost their lives in the country as a result of deceitful claims of justice and humaneness. Moreover, over 10,000 more are at risk due to the continuation of these conditions.
4. The reality is that epidermolysis bullosa (EB) patients die without dressings. The biggest challenge this community of 850 people faces is obtaining special dressings for their condition. Unfortunately, American sanctions prevent access to these dressings for children with EB, made in Sweden. In 2019, 15 children with EB died due to sanctions and lack of medication, which has drawn global attention and prompted UNICEF, with financial support from the German government, to provide specialized dressings for these children from the Swedish pharmaceutical company Mölnlycke. It is crucial for the world and human rights organizations to know that the responsibility for the deaths of 15 EB patients during the unjust sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran lies squarely with the United States of America. Their withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between 2018 and 2019 led to the halt in sending dressings for EB children.
5. The imposition of sanctions, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, has posed problems for the Islamic Republic of Iran. To the extent that despite depositing and ordering vaccines through the coordinating body, the necessary vaccines have practically not been delivered. Sanctions have become a serious barrier to direct purchasing from manufacturing companies, including those in China, until the United States of America becomes self-sufficient in vaccine production within its own country.
6. Unfortunately, the escalating sanctions from the United States of America have recently presented serious challenges, even in the purchase of medical equipment such as MRI machines, CT scans, radiology, and angiography devices. Additionally, at the onset of the pandemic, despite officially placing an order to purchase 5 million COVID-19 diagnostic kits from the Republic of Korea, the Korean bank suspended the order due to sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran.
7. The pressures of sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran's economy have led to difficulties in securing financial resources for the country. Ultimately, with the removal of preferential currency access and the need for high liquidity, access to various medications has become challenging due to the delayed import of raw materials.
8. Due to pressures resulting from pharmaceutical sanctions, domestic manufacturing companies have also encountered difficulties in importing raw materials, causing concerns about patients' access to their medications. In a recent example, a manufacturing company producing latanoprost eye drops announced that due to currency transfer issues, they have not been successful in importing raw materials for drug production this year. Despite America's claims of exceptions for drug and equipment sales to the Islamic Republic of Iran, in practice, there are no exceptions. Exporting companies have clearly stated since 2018 that due to sanctions, banks do not cooperate and they are unable to export drugs to the Islamic Republic of Iran, even in emergencies and vital situations.

9. In numerous letters between banks, pharmaceutical companies, and their Iranian customers, it has been shown that the United States of America's "maximum pressure" sanctions have blocked even ordinary financial transactions related to medical equipment for treating various diseases in the Islamic Republic of Iran. For example, companies like Coloplast, a manufacturer of urology equipment, Mölnlycke, a producer of wound dressings for EB patients, and Nortis, a manufacturer of desferal for thalassemia patients, have indicated that despite these products not falling under the United States of America export control or international sanctions, they are faced with the inability to deliver due to international banks' refusal to conduct financial transactions with the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the case of pharmaceutical sanctions, unfortunately, the United States of America government has also applied secondary sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran and has prohibited any foreign company that deals with the Islamic Republic of Iran from doing business with the United States of America.
10. Last year, around 90 thalassemia patients lost their lives due to lack of access to medications as a result of unjust sanctions. This year, another 60 thalassemia patients have suffered the same fate.
11. So far, 300 MPS patients have been identified in the country, the most crucial medication they need is an enzyme that should be provided to them on a weekly basis. These patients require 50 doses of medication for a treatment course, but unfortunately, due to problems caused by sanctions, they have received only 5 to 10 doses of medication, causing even more serious harm to their health.

In conclusion, the unilateral and one-sided sanctions imposed by the United States of America have unfortunately led to the import of low-quality and cheap products from unreliable Chinese brands, particularly in the field of medicine and medical equipment. This has created challenges in the treatment process for patients. Therefore, it is necessary for the government to take a defensive stance against such actions and to standardize heating systems, hospital treatment methods, strategic storage of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, education and raising awareness in the community, and pay attention to public institutions to neutralize the effects of the United States of America's sanctions and support the health of patients.

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