



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

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

**Joint written statement\* submitted by Association of Iranian Short Statured Adults, Family Health Association of Iran, Hazrat-e Fatemeh Zahra Charity Institute, Iran Autism Association, Iranian Thalassemia Society, Jameh Ehyagaran Teb Sonnati Va Salamat Iranian, Maryam Ghasemi Educational Charity Institute, Medical Support Association for Underprivileged Iranian Patients, Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, Peivande Gole Narges Organization, The Society for Recovery Support, non-governmental organizations 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 2024]

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

## Adverse Impacts of UCMs

Despite numerous United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and Human Rights Council (HRC) resolutions condemning Unilateral Coercive Measures (1) (UCMs) and multiple warnings by the Special Rapporteur on UCMs about the adverse effects of Unilateral sanctions on human rights and their humanitarian impact, resorting to unilateral sanction regimes by most developed countries in recent years, namely the United States and the European Union as the first foreign policy tool to obtain from developing countries, such as Iran, subordination of their sovereign rights and securing advantage from them has rapidly expanded.

A review conducted by the U.S. Treasury in October 2021 indicates that the application of U.S. sanctions has risen to 933 percent from 2000 to 2021, with 912 to 9,421 in 37 distinct sanctions programs (2). This figure does not include additional restrictive actions, such as visa limitations and export controls. Unilateral sanctions are mostly accompanied by extra-territorial secondary sanctions with severe civil and criminal penalties for violations of primary sanctions which lead to over-compliance and de-risking policies of banks, businesses and other actors. The penalties for alleged violations of U.S. sanctions regimes, only for the first semester of 2023, was more than \$556 million (3). Moreover, in 2024, the U.S. government extended the statute of limitations for civil and criminal violations of sanctions regulations from 5 to 10 years (4).

A good example of exercising extra-territorial jurisdiction through secondary sanctions is the case of Société Internationale de Télécommunications Aéronautiques (or “SITA”), a worldwide provider of information technology services for the civilian air transport sector that was penalized by the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control to \$7,829,640 for providing services to Mahan Air and Caspian Air of Iran as well as Syrian Arab Airlines based in Syria (5).

As a result, businesses prefer to discontinue their activities and exclude any nexus to sanctioned jurisdictions for fear of such penalties, resulting in the complete isolation of sanctioned countries and their nationals. Due to Overcompliance, countries under sanctions face serious challenges in maintaining and developing supply chains, trade routes and economic relations, including for essential goods. It also intensifies the adverse impacts of primary UCMs that infringe upon nearly all human rights principles enshrined in international instruments, including the right to development. Moreover, over-compliance leads to discriminatory practices against nationals and residents of sanctioned States based on their nationality, descent, or residence.

UCMs and over-compliance significantly affect the right to education. They exert broad and indiscriminate effects on students at schools and universities, as well as on academics. This is manifested through the cessation of academic programs, travel limitations, restricted access to training materials, textbooks and barriers to online databases caused by Internet protocol address blocks (6). Furthermore, there are instances of payment processing failures for academic fees and memberships in scholarly and scientific associations. Additionally, academics from sanctioned countries may be removed from editorial boards of scientific journals, and scholars from sanctioning countries may hesitate to collaborate with institutions in sanctioned countries due to concerns about further consequences. According to UN experts, sanctions have impeded Iranian scientists from engaging in joint research projects abroad and even prevented them from accessing online databases and courses (7).

They also hinder access to and delivery of food, violating the right of everyone to be free from hunger. Due to financial and payment restrictions and excessive caution exercised by various stakeholders in the supply chain, sanctions create substantial obstacles to the effective delivery of food even in emergency contexts. In Cuba, restricted access to foreign currency and international food markets has led to a marked decrease in the availability of food products and agricultural machinery (8). Reports indicate that even UN food programs are facing challenges due to escalating import costs, the cancellation of maritime transport

agreements, delays in the delivery of goods and complications in banking transactions with suppliers (9).

As regards the right to health, there have been many withdrawals of medical and pharmaceutical companies from countries facing sanctions rendering humanitarian carve-outs in UCMs inefficient. Following the implementation of the U.S. Presidential Executive Order 13692 in Venezuela, over half of the foreign pharmaceutical companies exited the market within a year, including Bayer, Sanofi, Bristol, Roche, Lundbeck, etc (10). Similarly, the pharmaceutical industry in the Syrian Arab Republic has significantly contracted since 2011. Refusals from delivery and insurance companies, compel entities in these sanctioned nations to seek alternative procurement methods that are both riskier and more expensive. This situation may lead to negative consequences regarding the quality of the medical supplies acquired, particularly due to the potential neglect of proper storage conditions for sensitive medications and vaccines.

Sanctioning States should abide by their obligations under international law and international human rights law, cease their unlawful UCMs immediately and make comprehensive and unconditional exemptions for basic goods instead of the existing narrow and often confusing carve-out regimes. We value the recent efforts taken by the Special Rapporteur and request her to engage in more practical solutions such as a compensation fund to reduce the negative impact of UCMs on the enjoyment of human rights in the sanctioned States. We urge companies to avoid over-compliance policies and adhere to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights framework and States to take all necessary measures to ensure that the private businesses under their jurisdiction and control fully comply with human rights standards.

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1- For example, A/RES/78/202; A/RES/77/214; A/RES/76/161; A/HRC/RES/55/7;

A/HRC/RES/54/15; A/HRC/RES/52/13;

2- United States, Department of Treasury, “The treasury 2021 sanctions review” (October 2021).

3- <https://ofac.treasury.gov/civil-penalties-and-enforcement-information>.

4- <https://ofac.treasury.gov/recent-actions/20240722>

5- United States, Department of Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, “Settlement Agreement between the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control and Société Internationale de Télécommunications Aéronautiques SCRL”.

6- A/HRC/51/33/Add.1; A/HRC/48/59/Add.2; A/HRC/51/33/Add.2.

7- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/12/1131887>.

8- A/78/196, ¶47.

9- Ibid.

10- Ibid.