



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS

CHAUSÉE DE HAECHT 55, 1210, BRUXELLES-BRUSSELS, BELGIQUE-BELGIUM

info@iadllaw.org www.iadllaw.org

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS DEMANDS THAT COVID-19 SERVE AS A CALL FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY RATHER THAN ECONOMIC WAR AND DEVASTATION THROUGH LIFTING OF ALL UNILATERAL COERCIVE MEASURES

The International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) is a non-governmental organization with consultative status in ECOSOC and UNESCO. Founded in 1946 to promote the goals of the United Nations Charter, IADL and its affiliated organizations throughout the world have consistently fought to uphold international law, promote human rights and address threats to international peace and security. From its inception, IADL members have protested racism, colonialism, and economic and political injustice wherever they occur.

IADL recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic poses a major threat to people throughout the world and that it will especially impact those countries which are suffering from sanctions, blockades, occupation and siege.

- The COVID-19 pandemic represents a serious threat for all countries. The number of new infections is rising daily on every continent and the total death toll has already exceeded 18,000 and will grow. International organizations have already warned about the dramatic consequences of this crisis. The world is facing the risk of an unprecedented humanitarian disaster.
- Countries with comparatively limited financial means are facing greater difficulties in their struggle against the pandemic. This is particularly true when the virus spreads in countries where the populations already endure difficult living conditions due to wars, poverty, climate change, neoliberal policies and other human made disasters, like unilateral coercive measures (UCM).

Considering that:

- Defence of public health is a stated purpose of the UN Charter (Art. 55). All States are obliged to contribute to this end (Art.56); and
- Health constitutes a common and indivisible heritage of the whole of humankind. Given the capacity of viruses to spread rapidly all over the world, it is unthinkable - practically as well as morally and legally - to protect health only in certain countries or regions while neglecting the others.

Considering further that:

- UCM (unilateral coercive measures), often referred to as economic sanctions, imposed by one or a group of States, are illegal under international law as only the United Nations



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS

CHAUSÉE DE HAECHT 55, 1210, BRUXELLES-BRUSSELS, BELGIQUE-BELGIUM

info@iadllaw.org www.iadllaw.org

Security Council under Article 41 has the right to impose such coercive measures necessary to ensure compliance with international law. The imposition of unilateral sanctions to coerce States to take certain political positions or alter their existing positions represents a clear violation of the fundamental right of self-determination and is contrary to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the overall spirit of the UN Charter;

- UCMs that aim to destroy the economy and living standard of another state constitute an act of war, as their effects are analogous to those of war - mass-scale violations of fundamental rights, beginning with the rights to life and health.
- Even if the UCMs or blockade do not expressly or directly cover food and medical supplies, the exclusion of a country from international trade and the international banking system deprives it of the ability to acquire them through normal commercial mechanisms.
- All States have the right to obtain the necessary means in order to avoid the further transmission of COVID-19. Unilateral coercive measures imposed today on several States constitute a serious obstacle to the attainment of this fundamental goal.
- UCMs further deprive the Western countries and the people living therein of the benefits of scientific research conducted in the countries subjected to blockades and sanctions, and of commerce with them;

Alarmed that:

- The United States is continuing to impose new UCMs, even now during the pandemic, against various countries, particularly Iran, despite the fact that Iran is experiencing a serious, deadly outbreak of COVID-19;
- There is no apparent intention to remove these sanctions in order to allow the people to obtain the means to resist the pandemic, and the Iranian population and health workers in particular are placed at significant risk to their lives due to these sanctions;
- The IMF, controlled by the US government, is refusing an emergency loan requested by the Venezuelan government in order to fight the pandemic; and
- The first two cases of COVID-19 have just been reported in the Gaza Strip, which is part of the occupied Palestinian territories and subjected to a siege by Israel which is supported by Egypt, the United States and the European Union. The siege of Gaza poses the risk of a humanitarian tragedy, given the population density, lack of basic access to health care equipment, ventilators, personal protective equipment and other items that are critical to protect the lives of people affected by COVID-19.



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS

CHAUSÉE DE HAECHT 55, 1210, BRUXELLES-BRUSSELS, BELGIQUE-BELGIUM

info@iadllaw.org www.iadllaw.org

IADL expresses its deep concern about the severe impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCMs) on the enjoyment of human rights by large sectors of world's population and calls for them to be lifted immediately.

In particularly, we urge the U.S. government:

- **To immediately lift all UCMs against Iran, a targeted nation that is heavily affected by COVID-19. While these sanctions persist and have even been expanded, 1,934 Iranians have lost their lives to COVID-19, including health workers and patients whose lives may have been saved with access to essential health items;**
- **To immediately lift sanctions against Syria in order to allow the government to buy all necessary medical supplies needed to cope with the pandemic;**
- **To take immediate action to end the siege of Gaza, including addressing the use of substantial amounts of U.S. military aid by Israel and Egypt in order to enforce the siege against over two million Palestinian civilians threatened by COVID-19;**
- **To immediately lift the blockade against Cuba, a State which is playing a critical role in stopping the pandemic. Hundreds of members of Cuban health brigades are supporting COVID-19 patients in various parts of the world where many countries requested their assistance. The Cuban health brigades are in place in the Lombardy Region of Italy, the most affected area of the world; Cuban scientists have developed drugs which could provide effective in treating the virus and need testing, and**
- **To immediately lift all sanctions against Venezuela.**

We further urge the immediate withdrawal of sanctions against Nicaragua, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and other sovereign States subjected to UCMs by the United States in order to coerce regime change.

We further urge the governments of Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the countries of the European Union to end their own UCMs directed against many of the same countries, including Iran, Venezuela, Syria and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The governments that have imposed sanctions are also complicit in the spread of the pandemic in areas where these sanctions are in place.

IADL demands that COVID-19 must serve as a call for global solidarity rather than economic war and devastation.

27 March 2020