

## Unilateral coercive measures

### What are unilateral coercive measures and who uses them?

- The term “unilateral coercive measures” usually refers to *economic measures taken by one State to compel a change in the policy of another State*. Examples of such measures include trade sanctions in the form of embargoes and the interruption of financial and investment flows between sender and target countries. More recently, so-called “smart” or “targeted” sanctions such as asset freezing and travel bans have been employed by individual States in order to influence persons who are perceived to have political influence in another State.
- They depart from the United Nations conception of sanctions which requires a resolution to be passed in order for the multilateral body to impose them. Today, the majority of economic measures are imposed unilaterally by the United States.

### How many countries is the United States currently sanctioning?

- 1/3 of the world’s population
- At least 30 countries are currently under sanctions imposed by the US (many countries are facing multiple, overlapping sanction programs)
- The US has imposed 8,000 sanctions against individuals, entities, and transportation worldwide

### Why are sanctions and war interconnected?

- Sanctions are skillfully employed against other countries to deprive the country of basic resources and sow conditions for internal unrest. They are one tool in the US’ hybrid wars used to ensure full spectrum domination. The measures directly impact a country’s ability to trade which not only hurts economic growth but also its ability to access food, medicine, and other key resources. Sanctions have led to hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths in Iraq, Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, DPRK, etc.

### Are sanctions legal?

- International law and conventions, including the Geneva and Nuremberg Conventions, United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, explicitly prohibit the targeting of defenseless civilians, especially in times of war. (Sanctions Kill Coalition). Sanctions are a form of collective punishment.
- Hilal Elver, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food said “History has shown that unilateral economic sanctions generally have dramatic and detrimental impacts on economic, social and



JUNE 8, 9, 10  
LOS ANGELES, CA, U.S.  
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cultural rights. As a result, the wellbeing of the civilian populations becomes severely compromised."

- Elena Douhan, UN Special Rapporteur on unilateral coercive measures and human rights said "The devastating effect of sanctions imposed is multiplied by extra-territoriality and over-compliance adversely affecting public and private sectors, Venezuela citizens, non-governmental organizations, third country national and companies", said Douhan, -- "humanitarian exemptions are lengthy, costly, ineffective and inefficient".

#### **Material impact of sanctions:**

- A report about the impact of sanctions in Venezuela by Mark Weisbrot and Jeffrey Sachs of the Center for Economic Policy and Research suggests the sanctions may have caused an additional 40,000 deaths in Venezuela in 2017-18 alone. In 2020 Human Rights expert, Alfred de Zayas, estimated that more than 100,000 Venezuelans have died as a result of the sanctions and that such deaths were due to the impossibility of timely access to medicines.
- The CEPR report of 2019 showed an 85% shortage of essential medicines; 80,000 HIV positive people denied retrovirals since 2017; 16,000 needing dialysis; 16,000 with cancer; and 4 million with diabetes and hypertension who lack reliable access to insulin and cardiovascular medicine.
- Sanctions target the most vulnerable in a population because they are already marginalized under a global capitalist system. Women, children, the elderly, disabled, and sick people are the first to suffer.
- Due to sanctions, \$7 billion dollars of Venezuelan reserves are blocked in 40 international banks. 32 tons of gold, with a value of approximately 1.6 billion dollars, are currently seized in the city of London in the United Kingdom
- The US embargo on Cuba is believed to have cost Cuba over \$130 billion in six decades.
- From 1961 to 2019, the Cuban Health Sector suffered 2.9 Billion in damage and losses.

#### **How do sanctions divide & harm the global working class?**

- Sanctions destabilize the global economy and can make sanctioned products more expensive, like gas coming from Russia or food coming from Nicaragua.
- They also threaten the stability and power of unions in countries that are sanctioned. In Nicaragua, for example, farmer unions produce the food that is eaten in the United States. These unions struggle for better work conditions like reduced use of harmful chemicals that impact not only them but also the consumer. The ability of these unions to struggle for all of us is threatened when their ability to work and make a living is put at risk by sanctions.