

# Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)

## Joint UPR Submission

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The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela



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## About ODVV

1. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-political organization in Special Consultative Status to ECOSOC. ODVV was established in 1988 in Tehran and has been active in the field of human rights and humanitarian activities.

2. ODVV is also associated to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), a member of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), AMAN Network of Rehabilitation Centers in the Middle East and North Africa and International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT). ODVV has cooperated with international organizations in a variety of issues and has working relations with many NGOs in Iran and around the globe.

3. ODVV is focused on promoting human rights, supporting victims of violence, empowering Iranian civil society, and offering human rights consultations to the Iranian institutions and organizations. ODVV is actively involved in running various human rights education courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences. Other activities include:

- Participation in UN Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva;
- Publication of different books and booklets on human rights such as Rights of the Child, Unilateral Coercive Measures (Economic Sanctions), Racism, Racial Discrimination, Islamophobia and Xenophobia;
- Publishing *Defenders Quarterly* (in English), human rights news and developments *Weekly* (in Farsi), daily updating ODVV websites in English, Farsi and Arabic;
- Internship for Iranian and international students.

4. ODVV and FUNDALATIN are submitting the following report on the human rights situation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in order to contribute to the improvement of human rights inside the country.

## **The United States Sanctions on Venezuela**

5. Venezuela has been under US sanctions for years. In 2015, United States sanctioned a number of Venezuelan individuals and entities on the allegation of being involved in drug trafficking. In 2017, the US sanctioned government and its entities and blocked their transactions and access to U.S. financial markets.

6. In 2018, the US increased its sanctions on the country, on the grounds of economic mismanagement, corruption, repression of political opposition groups and undermining democracy. In 2019, the US imposed a total economic embargo on Venezuela including the Central Bank, some government officials, the gold and other mining, food and banking sectors. In addition, the US is believed to have threatened companies of third-states from having trades with Venezuela.

7. The US unilateral sanctions violate the rights of Venezuela people to self-sovereignty and political independence while violating the rights of third state companies.

## **The Effect of Sanctions on People**

8. As in all countries targeted by Unilateral Sanctions, the Venezuelans are facing violations to all their economic, social and cultural rights in addition to the right to life. The sanctions have caused disproportionate and unnecessary pain and sufferings to the civilian population in the country violating all their human rights especially the right to health and access to essential items including food, medicine and vaccine.

9. Since the Venezuela's economy has been totally dependent on oil export as the main source of national income, all sectors of the society have been affected by the ban on oil sale. The sanctions have had negative impact on national programs that were designed to improve health care, housing, education, literacy, food, electricity and water supplies, family planning, computer literacy, poverty reduction and living standard in general. A study conducted in 2018 has documented that unilateral sanctions have led to the alarming death of 40000 people in one year in the country<sup>1</sup>.

## **United Nations Stance on the Sanctions**

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<sup>1</sup>. <http://cepr.net/publications/reports/economic-sanctions-as-collective-punishment-the-case-of-venezuela>

10. In addition to the repeated calls by the UN Secretary General<sup>2</sup> and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>3</sup> on the necessity of sanctions lifting especially under the emergency of the Covid-19 pandemic, Venezuela sanctions are condemned and criticized by the UN Special Rapporteurs on Unilateral Coercive Measures and International Order.

11. "...sanctions imposed against Venezuela, its citizens and companies affect people in Venezuela and beyond its territory in both the public and private sectors...while low-income people, women, children and people with special needs or chronic or severe diseases are affected most with regard to the whole scope of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development."<sup>4</sup> concluded professor Alena Douhan, UN Special Rapporteurs on Unilateral Coercive Measures, in the preliminary report published following her recent visit to Venezuela, from 1 to 12 February 2021.

Earlier, the UN Special Rapporteur on International Order, Professor Alferd de Zayas, following his visit to Venezuela, from 26 November to 4 December 2017, had reiterated that "...sanctions can amount to crimes against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court."<sup>5</sup>

### **Recommendations**

12. Being concerned with the situation of people affected by Unilateral Sanctions including the people of Venezuela, we call on all recommending States to publicly denounce and condemn the unilateral coercive sanctions imposed against Venezuela which have generated and exacerbated the economic and human rights situation of the Venezuelan people.

13. Also, we note the Venezuela's decision to refer the case of sanctions to the International Criminal Court and calls on the country to continue its efforts to document the effects of sanctions on the population and use international mechanisms to protest against the sanctions.

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<sup>2</sup>. "I ... appeal for the waiving of sanctions that can undermine countries' capacity to respond to the pandemic" António Guterres', March 27, 2020; <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20024.doc.htm>

<sup>3</sup>. "At this crucial time, both for global public health reasons, and to support the rights and lives of millions of people in these countries, sectoral sanctions should be eased or suspended. In a context of global pandemic, impeding medical efforts in one country heightens the risk for all of us," Michelle Bachelet, March 24, 2020; <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25744&LangID=E>

<sup>4</sup>. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26747&LangID=E>

<sup>5</sup>. A/HRC/39/47/Add.1

14. Finally, we call on the sanctioning countries and the corresponding banks to unfreeze assets of the Venezuela Central Bank in order to facilitate the process of purchasing medicine, vaccines, food, medical and other equipment, spare parts and other essential goods to guarantee humanitarian needs of the people of Venezuela and the restoration of public services.