



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Forty-sixth session

22 February–19 March 2021

Agenda items 2 and 4

### Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

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

## Written statement\* submitted by International Association of Justice Watch, 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 2021]

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



## **Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Covid-19: An Unprecedented Threat to the Universal Human Rights**

The outbreak of Covid-19 has caused an unprecedented crisis with far-reaching social, economic and political consequences worldwide. The pandemic has imposed the most serious threats to human rights standards, relinquished freedoms and challenged the global commitment of empowering people with vulnerabilities.

The fast-moving virus made even the most developed countries to pay a high price, displaying the fact that no one shall stand immune from the disasters. Lessons learned during Covid-19 mirrors our interdependent future and inevitable cooperation to realize the promise we jointly made to leave no one behind.

The Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran) has been one of the countries with the highest rates of Covid-19 cases, but, according to the concluding remarks of the World Health Organization representatives after their visit to the country, its strategies and priorities have been "evolving in the right direction" with the government's control on "strong national health system and disaster management capacities" to control and respond the outbreak.

The global common concern of the shortage of the protective equipment, disinfectants, diagnostic kits and ventilators, which has made the treatment process difficult against a crush of patients was also the cause of concern in Iran. However, the unfair unilateral and coercive sanctions imposed by the United States of America has hampered the Islamic Republic of Iran's rights to finance and purchase the essential medicine and medical supplies in order to save lives and prevent wider infection. As a result, Iranians' access to essential medicine and their right to health is violated.

American authorities are frequently repeating the big lie that "humanitarian assistance to Iran is wide open. It's not sanctioned". Nonetheless, the politicization of the human rights is undeniable when Iranians are blocked from the inter-bank transactions system (SWIFT) and the food and pharmaceutical companies, with restricted access to foreign currency, refrained from obtaining raw materials to manufacture.

The extraterritorial unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) against Iranians is the explicit violation of the United Nations (UN) Charter and international law and exemplifies the collective punishment of civilians in particular women, children and other vulnerable populations. Weaponizing Covid-19 in this regard can be taken into consideration as the most brutal form of "health and economic terrorism" and its continuation is utterly criminal.

### **Working Hand in Hand: The Pandemics Lessons Learned**

Covid-19 and its painful human experience bears also many lessons to be learned. The collaboration of the Iranian civil society and private sector with the government has been vital to minimize the consequences of the pandemic. The estimates indicate that the civil society's participation and supporting projects has multiplied up to 400 percent in cases required attention.

Emergency units were established particularly in remote areas to ensure an adequate standard of living for poor and marginalized families. Food security was the first concern as sufficient amounts of meat, rice, and groceries have been delivered. Even the religious referent groups began to present and help at hospitals. Awareness campaigns and providing access to medical services has been simultaneously conducted. Facemasks, which great amount were produced at 159 workshops by women heads of households, along with large amounts of sanitizers have been distributed. The indispensable significance of the children's education in remote and rural areas motivated various campaigns to provide sufficient learning equipment, e.g. tablets or printed material, to access the internet and national

remote learning courses. Notably, a great deal of such services has been given to the Afghan population living in Iran the same as Iranians.

Volunteer health experts and doctors employed various communication venues, face-to-face or digital, to ensure community safety and necessary family consultations. Mental health and wellbeing of children and families impacted by Covid-19 at lockdowns has been a priority, so, podcasts such as "Our Home" or "Marham" have been produced in collaboration with non-governmental organizations and were distributed in order to alleviate pains. Full-time counseling and intervening lines for crisis-related violence against women and children are another instance of such an approach.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Urge to establish fact finding missions and mechanisms to investigate the devastating effects of the UCMs to be integrated within the UN structure for further knowledgeable decision making.
  2. Urge the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran to re-consider the depth of the negative consequences of the UCMs with specific regards to women and children's human rights.
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