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

Written statement* submitted by Iranian Thalassemia Society, 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.

[19 August 2024]

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



The Negative Impact of Sanctions on Thalassemia Patients

Introduction

The right to have the highest attainable health standards or the right to health is one of the human rights whose importance is emphasized in human rights documents. Personal health is considered one of the most important components of the dignity of every human being. Therefore, the right to health has been recognized as one of the fundamental human rights in the international human rights system. Over the years, economic sanctions have not only affected the economy but also led to a grave violation of the right to health in various countries. In recent years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been a stark example, subjected to unilateral and comprehensive economic sanctions by groups of countries. These sanctions have directly violated the right to health of Iranians, a fundamental human right in the international human rights system.

Sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Challenges Faced by Thalassemia Patients

The access of Iranian citizens suffering from thalassemia to vital drugs has faced many problems following the imposition of unilateral sanctions by the United States of America directly and indirectly and by some European pharmaceutical companies as suppliers of the mentioned medicines. Apart from the American companies that refused to sell and send medicine for thalassemia patients to the Islamic Republic of Iran following the imposition of sanctions, Swiss and French companies are complicit in this crime.

UN experts announced that the Swiss pharmaceutical group Novartis - the leading supplier of these medicines and the main ingredients produced by the French company Roquette Frères - have been banned from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Experts believe that being in a situation where there is no medicine at the time of medicine sanctions has led to a 10-year reduction in the life expectancy of Iranian citizens with thalassemia, the death of 750 thalassemia patients, and the risk of premature death of 23,000 more of these patients occurred in the middle of imposing the consequences of medicine and medical equipment sanctions.

Iranian citizens with thalassemia, like other people with thalassemia around the world, need to take special medicines and medicines that control the amount of iron deposition in their bodies. Not using these medicines causes patients to develop secondary diseases in a short period and even die in a short time.

These sanctions are in clear and undeniable conflict with the laws the global community accepts. For this reason, they should be considered as a planned decision that is applied to violate the rights of a group of the most vulnerable Iranian citizens. Since the withdrawal of the United States of America from the JCPOA and the tightening of sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1,100 patients have lost their lives, and 12,000 people have been injured.

In a report, Alena Dohan, the UN special rapporteurs on UCMs issues referred to the problems that some patients in the Islamic Republic of Iran have in accessing the medicine and medical equipment they need due to the United States of America's sanctions. She emphasized that these sanctions prevent these patients from enjoying their human rights, especially the right to health. According to the report, healthcare costs have increased by 67% since November 2018, and there are significant challenges in obtaining life-saving drugs and medical equipment produced by foreign companies for the treatment of rare diseases, including certain types of cancer, thalassemia, and hemophilia. There is also MS and diabetes.

Recommendations

- We call on the HRC to urge States to ensure that pharmaceutical companies comply with human rights obligations and that thalassemia patients in the Islamic Republic of Iran can access life-saving medicine.
 - Sanctioning countries should refrain from imposing any restrictions that could hinder the ability of healthcare systems to address public health threats.
 - Companies supplying thalassemia medications are responsible for protecting patients' human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In this regard, we request these companies to adhere to their commitments and responsibilities,
 - We demand severe and immediate supervision by the Human Rights Council on the mechanisms of these companies to comply with human rights law.
 - We urge the HRC to ensure that individuals or entities conducting business and cooperating with the Islamic Republic of Iran are not subjected to secondary sanctions.
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