**Headline:** Sanctions as Civilizational Warfare: The Human Cost of US Economic Pressure

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**[Article Body:]**

Economic sanctions are often described as ‘peaceful’ alternatives to war. Yet for millions in countries like Iran and Venezuela, they feel like war by other means. These sanctions, mainly driven by US foreign policy, have devastated healthcare systems, inflated food prices, and disrupted daily life. This is not simply economic pressure – it is a form of civilisational warfare aimed at dismantling the social fabric of nations.

In Iran, years of US sanctions have severely restricted access to medicine. Human Rights Watch reports that patients with cancer, epilepsy, and other chronic illnesses routinely face life-threatening shortages. Although humanitarian exemptions exist on paper, secondary sanctions – penalising foreign banks and companies for dealing with Iran – have led to widespread overcompliance. The result: even legal imports of vital medicine are blocked.

As a Tehran oncologist noted, ‘We have the knowledge to treat our patients, but not the tools. The sanctions have turned simple treatments into impossible tasks’. One tragic case is Armin, a 7-year-old with haemophilia, whose family couldn’t obtain a critical clotting factor. ‘The medication exists’, his mother said, “but no one dares to sell it to Iran’. Armin died of preventable complications due to this silent siege.

In Venezuela, UN experts have called the situation a ‘humanitarian catastrophe’. Hospitals lack basic supplies, and millions have fled due to economic collapse. In 2020, UN rapporteur Alfred-Maurice de Zayas declared, ‘Modern economic sanctions and blockades are comparable to medieval sieges’.

These policies do not merely pressure governments; they corrode entire societies. Banking restrictions paralyse humanitarian aid. Inflation and food scarcity weaken civil cohesion. Local industries collapse under the weight of isolation. This is not diplomacy – it is economic warfare cloaked in legal language.

Even within liberal thought, these sanctions are contradictory. Thinkers like Locke and Smith emphasised voluntary exchange and inalienable rights, principles undermined when sanctions punish entire populations. In practice, sanctions transform the ‘free market’ into a strategic weapon wielded by dominant powers to punish dissent and disobedience.

This contradiction exposes a deeper truth: sanctions are not just tools of foreign policy – they represent the betrayal of liberalism by the very regimes that claim to defend it. When the West imposes economic punishment that deprives children of medicine or families of food, it undermines the moral foundation of its own political philosophy.

Yet resistance continues. Sanctioned nations are forging new alliances. Iran deepens ties with China and Russia. Venezuela receives fuel aid from allies. Across the Global South, voices are rising against collective punishment.

In 2023, over 200 organisations urged the UN to [address the humanitarian toll](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/IPI-E-RPT-Safeguarding-Humanitarian-Action2023.pdf) of sanctions. Groups like Code Pink protested in Washington, D.C., against the siege economy that harms civilians more than states.

Importantly, with recent political developments, such as the fall of the Assad government in Syria, the global discourse around sanctions is entering a new phase. While past sanctions under the United States’ [Caesar Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesar_Syria_Civilian_Protection_Act) severely hindered reconstruction and aid, the future trajectory remains uncertain. What is clear, however, is that the use of sanctions as a tool of dominance must be critically examined in both policy and principle.

Targeting a nation might serve short-term strategic goals. But when that isolation causes a child to miss insulin or a patient to die untreated, it becomes something far darker. It is no longer policy – it is cruelty systematised.

Sanctions must be recognised for what they are: economic warfare. And like all wars, their victims deserve justice.