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Agenda item 2

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

Written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, 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.

[23 August 2020]

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

General debate on oral update by HC, oral updates on Nicaragua and Venezuela, and report of IIMM

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) expresses its highest appreciation for the UN High Commissioner repeated call on sanctioning countries, to lift sanctions under the current emergency so that the countries under sanctions will be able to use their full potential to fight against the virus and save as many lives as possible.

According to the High Commissioner's statement on Coronavirus on March 6th, 2020, addressing the Human Rights Council, "To effectively combat the outbreak means ensuring that everyone has access to treatment, and is not denied health care...". This is while, in countries targeted by economic blockades or illegal unilateral economic sanctions, including the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the people cannot have access to health care the same as the people living in other countries of the world. ODVV is seriously alarmed by the challenges created by US sanctions and this form of medical terrorism for the people living in sanctioned countries, including all health workers.

Prevention of banking transactions, leads to lack of access to basic medical treatment, and purchase of essential medicine and medical equipment, such as X ray and CAT scan machines or maintenance of the available machinery and equipment, which is essential in fighting against Covid-19. Also, the illegal sanctions prevent the target countries from access to fundamental items including food, clean water and sanitation. Sanctions target all civilian infrastructures including hospitals that are required in the fight against Covid-19.

ODVV urges the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Fact Finding mission on Venezuela to study the detrimental effects of comprehensive sanctions on people, the sanctions that the Special Rapporteur on Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCM)s considered as economic warfare¹.

ODVV urges the High Commissioner for human rights to continue condemnation of sanctions and reiteration on necessity of international cooperation to combat Covid-19. ODVV requests the High Commissioner to encourage a stronger international will and more concrete action for ending comprehensive Unilateral Coercive Measures and the pain of civilians in UCM target countries.

According to the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the states should refrain from any form of political or economic coercion against the political independence of other states. Also, according to the General Comments offered by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) states must respect human rights abroad (12, para.36; GC 14, para.39; GC 15, para.31; GC 19, para.53).

Therefore, ODVV calls on the UN High Commissioner for human rights, Human Rights Council committees, the Special Procedures and the fact finding mission on Venezuela to study the ways to remove, minimize and redress the adverse impact of comprehensive sanctions that impose disproportionate pressures on the target populations now threatened with the new virus.

¹ A/HRC/39/54, A/HRC/42/46