

US Senators Request to Ease Sanctions Against Venezuela, Iran

The Trump administration's sanctions are hindering the free flow of medical supplies.

By [Telesur](#)

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U.S. Senator Christopher Murphy and 10 other lawmakers sent a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin urging them to alleviate the [sanctions that the U.S. keeps against Iran and Venezuela amidst the Covid-19 pandemic](#).

“We are writing to express our concern regarding the deteriorating humanitarian crises in countries under U.S. sanctions as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to spread. We are particularly concerned about the impact of sanctions on the Covid-19 response in Iran and Venezuela,” the Democratic senators said.

“As these countries struggle to respond to their domestic health crises, U.S. sanctions are hindering the free flow of desperately needed medical and humanitarian supplies due to the broad chilling effect of sanctions on such transactions, even when there are technical exemptions,” they added.

On Thursday, Attorney General William Barr announced that the United States designed Venezuela as a state sponsoring terrorism.

Besides being arbitrary, this accusation makes it even more difficult for the Bolivian people and their government to buy basic goods in international markets.

Trump [#HandsOffVenezuela!#MaduroValentíaYDignidad#QuédateEnCasa](#)
<https://t.co/qTdiioBx8K>

— Alberto Torres (@Marabino2010) [March 27, 2020](#)

The meme reads, “Solidarity with President Nicolas Maduro and the Venezuelan leaders unjustly and illegally persecuted by the US. This new outrage also seeks to hide the catastrophe that Covid-19 is causing under the Trump administration.”

Democratic senators also recalled that the short term abeyance of sanctions has “ample

precedent” in the U.S. foreign policy.

“For instance, when a massive earthquake struck Iran in 2003 killing 26,000 people, the Bush administration temporarily suspended sanctions to send 150,000 pounds of medical supplies and more than 200 aid workers... to help,” Sen. Murphy and his colleagues highlighted.

Although the sanctions are not supposed to cover medicines, it is recalled that companies are refraining from making transactions with Venezuela and Iran for fear of being punished.

“Our sanctions regime is so broad that medical suppliers and relief organizations simply steer clear of doing business in Iran and Venezuela in fear of accidentally getting caught up in the U.S. web sanctions,” the lawmakers stressed.

UN, EU Urge Venezuela Sanctions Relief as Coronavirus Outbreak Intensifies
<https://t.co/9MMupl6syX> End the US imperialism sanctions.

— Paul Patrick (@PaulTyredagh81) [March 26, 2020](#)

“Moreover, the administration’s decision to impose additional new sanctions amidst the coronavirus outbreak has only contributed to the sense among companies that they should avoid doing any business involving these countries, even if their work is humanitarian.”

The Democratic senators called on the Trump administration to provide a license authorizing specific medical goods and equipment such as testing kits, respiratory devices, and personal protective equipment.

They also for setting new financial channels for Venezuela and Iran to pay for humanitarian goods as well as unconditional delivery of aid through a third-party country or entity.

The letter was also signed by Senators Tom Carpenter, Patrick Leahy, Tim Kaine, Benjamin Cardin, Tom Udall, Sherrod Brown, Brian Schatz, Jeffrey Merkley, and Richard Blumenthal.

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Featured image: Christopher Murphy at the McCall Center for Behavioral Health, Torrington, Connecticut, U.S, March 6, 2020. | Photo: Twitter/ @rep_am

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