



Background Information on Iraqi sanctions


Economic Sanctions against Iraq: Six More Months

On Thursday November 29, 2001, the United Nations' Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1382 to extend economic sanctions against Iraq for another six months.

Basic Facts about the Sanctions

 *Civilians are the real targets of the sanctions:* UN documents show that 11 years of sanctions have resulted directly in a decline in the quality of life. According to a UNICEF report, there has been a 160 per cent increase in the children-under-five mortality between 1990 and 2000. The current death rate of 5-6,000 children a month is due predominantly to contaminated water, lack of medicines and malnutrition. These are all direct consequences of the UN imposed sanctions.

 *The Oil -for-food program does not even meet the essential needs of the Iraqi people:* The current oil-for-food-program, amounts to only \$120 per person per year. This money is intended to cover all expenses from electricity to water, sanitation, food and medicine. To put this in perspective, the average per capita personal income of a US citizen in 1999 was estimated at \$28,546!


 *The United States and Britain have constantly tried to sabotage the oil-for-food program:* The most recent report of the UN Secretary-General, in October 2001, states that the US and British governments' blocking of \$4 billion in humanitarian supplies is by far the greatest constraint on the implementation of the oil-for-food program. In contrast, the report says that the Iraqi government's distribution of humanitarian supplies is fully satisfactory.


Iraqi Sanctions: a Brief History


Following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 the UN Security Council imposed all-out economic sanctions against Iraq. These cut virtually all economic ties between Iraq and the outside world. While originally intended to pressure Iraq out of Kuwait, the sanctions created enormous economic hardships for Iraqi civilians and have resulted in tens of thousands of civilian deaths while strengthening Hussein's control of Iraqis.


In 1996 in response to the outcry of the international community and humanitarian agencies over the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, the Security Council imposed a modified version of economic sanctions, known as the oil-for-food program. Under the program, Iraq is allowed to sell oil on the condition that the income be spent on food, medicine and other humanitarian goods after 25 percent of the whole income is deducted for war reparations. Although Iraq can now theoretically sell as much oil as it wants, the proceeds are put into a United Nations escrow account. Baghdad can purchase goods with this money only following approval by the U.N. sanctions committee.

According to the Security Council Resolution 687, adopted in April 1991 at the end of the Gulf War, sanctions cannot be lifted until UN inspectors determine that Iraq's programs to build weapons of mass destruction have been dismantled. The UN weapons inspection team (UNSCOM) left Iraq ahead of US-British air strikes in December 1998. Iraq has barred them from returning, saying that they have already dismantled Iraq's arsenal and hence all sanctions must be lifted before any new inspections.

 *UN prevents Iraq from spending its oil revenue on the welfare of its citizens:* Despite the severe inadequacy of the oil revenue to meet the basic needs of the Iraqi people, 25 cents from each dollar is currently diverted to compensate outsiders for losses that allegedly incurred as a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. This diversion of funds is managed by the UN Security Council at the behest of the US and UK governments. If this money had been made available to the Iraqi people, it could have saved many lives.

 *“Smart Sanctions” are the proposed new version of economic punishment for Iraq:* In response to ever increasing objections from the international community over the unjust sanctions against Iraqi civilians, the US and UK designed a new, more precise and allegedly less destructive version of economic sanctions known as “Smart Sanctions.” Among other things, it is meant to give a permanent status to the Iraqi sanctions, and so formally legitimize the ongoing suffering of the Iraqis. The US and UK governments want to use smart sanctions as a cover so they will no longer be blamed for the human tragedy that will certainly continue in Iraq under their plan. Furthermore, the “smart sanctions” virtually make it impossible for the Iraqi government to exercise its national sovereignty and reduce the country to a Security Council's protectorate. That's why the majority of countries, including almost all Iraq's neighbors as well as other members of the Security Council, have outspokenly opposed it, arguing that overhaul must address the lifting of sanctions, rather than prolonging the status quo. The Iraqi government itself categorically dismisses “Smart Sanctions” as unacceptable and asks for lifting of all the sanctions in return for a negotiated arrangement for the return of UN weapon inspectors to Iraq.

 *As long as UN sanctions are in place, Iraqi people cannot live a normal life:* In his July 1991 report on humanitarian conditions in Iraq, UN official Sadruddin Aga Khan estimated the cost of restoring Iraq's power, oil, water, sanitation, food, agriculture, and health sectors to pre-war levels to be \$22 billion. Damage caused by the Gulf War was at least \$30 billion (*New York Times*, 2 June 1991). Unless the international community helps Iraqis to rebuild their devastated economy, there is no hope for Iraqi civilians to recover from the deadly side effects of the 1991 Gulf War and the sanctions.

 *And finally,* the economic Sanctions against Iraq are the most sweeping longest-lasting sanctions ever imposed by the UN.